

# Corsons Brook homes decision due soon

By DAN JANISON  
ADVANCE ALBANY BUREAU

ALBANY — The fate of the controversial Corsons Brook Woods in Willowbrook "hopefully" be decided "fairly soon," according to a top aide to Gov. Mario M. Cuomo.

Though he declined to say when, Dr. Henrik Dullea, state director of operations, said a final environmental impact statement on the site is in its "final stages."

Officials of the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) have designated the natural area, which local conservationists seek to protect, as a site for community residences.

Dullea made the forecast after hosting a meeting in which Staten Island's two Democratic Assembly members reportedly discussed various grievances with state Environmental Commissioner Henry Williams.

Elizabeth Connelly, who chairs the Assembly mental health committee, said she stood firm in pushing for OMRDD's current plans for the Richmond complex near the current Staten Island Developmental Center (SIDC) grounds.

Assemblyman Eric Vitaliano, D-Dongan Hills, said he wants to see a "compromise" between conservationists and advocates for the retarded.

Both elected officials said Williams postured against the current plans, but said if they are ultimately adopted there were still some steps his agency could take to protect the woods.

Mrs. Connelly, D-West Brighton, said the meeting grew out of a sense she was getting from the governor's aides that they were backing off earlier support for current OMRDD plans.

She said she based the impression on a conversation with Cuomo a few weeks ago, a chance meeting with Williams in a corridor here and a subsequent letter from Williams.

Contacted yesterday, Dullea said: "There have been a series of

**'The governor has been kept abreast, he's asked more questions, and hopefully there will be a determination fairly soon' — state operations director Henrik Dullea**

ongoing discussions with all interested parties. We've spoken with environmental group representatives, obviously with advocates for the clients."

"The governor has been kept abreast, he's asked more questions, and hopefully there will be a determination fairly soon," Dullea said.

The fate of the woods has stood unresolved for several months. Mrs. Connelly said she called for action as soon as possible and insisted that inaction could further delay the court-ordered phaseout of SIDC, slated to close by April next year.

Also attending the conference Wednesday was Carol Ash, the new regional administrator for the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

Ash reported a doubling in recent years of the acreage designated as protected wetlands within Staten Island.

The administrator said the agency remains open to solutions for conflicts between development plans and environmental protection, according to the Assembly members.

"There is a willingness to discuss an exchange of property" long planned between the Howland Hook containerport and the Procter and Gamble plant adjoining each other on the Island's north shore, Vitaliano said.

Activity at the industrial area created a wetlands, and the compromise might lie in "creating somewhere else, a wetland of

equal value," to be negotiated among concerned parties, he said.

Vitaliano credited Ash, based on their conversation, with a "common sensibility not heard before from that office."

Williams also heard both elected officials ask for further action on the Fresh Kills landfill. It was reported that within a week, asbestos to be taken to the landfill by the city Sanitation Department will be covered with tarps to keep the substance's dangerous fibers from rising.

Mrs. Connelly noted that she pressed several years ago to have coverings systematically placed over open trash barges to minimize odor. Several full barges caught fire last year.

Williams also was asked whether the state could become a more visible force within the Interstate Sanitation Commission (ISC), the agency to which New Jersey air pollution problems on Staten Island are reported.

Williams and other DEC officials have found ISC's performance lacking in its main assignment, that of policing water pollution.

Vitaliano, who chairs a subcommittee on interstate cooperation, called it "good news" that New Jersey is now accepting New York environmental agency complaints about air quality as official.

In other words, he said, a new arrangement allows "a New York state agency to develop data to be used by a New Jersey agency to enforce New Jersey's stiffer air pollution codes."