

Vote on

Westerleigh residence for developmentally disabled adults comes at sometimes raucous meeting

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Community Board 1 last night overwhelmingly voted in favor of a proposed residential facility in Westerleigh for eight developmentally disabled adults during a sometimes raucous three-hour meeting in All Saints' Episcopal Church, Willowbrook.

The tempers of some Westerleigh residents flared when Theresa Rafferty, Board 1 chairwoman, would not let a resident speak about Independent Living Association Inc.'s proposed home at 858 Jewett Ave. because time was running out during the board's public comment session.

"We're out of time — we have to vote," Ms. Rafferty said, as Westerleigh resident Gigi Resulani walked to the podium.

"You've silenced us enough. We don't want this," said Ms. Resulani, a mother of four, after Ms. Rafferty allowed her to speak.

Ms. Resulani said the Independent Living Association did not give her or her neighbors adequate time to learn anything about the agency that wants to put the facility in her community.

She said only eight people attended the joint meeting of Board 1's Human Resources and Westerleigh committees March 20, and had only learned around eight days earlier about the Brooklyn-based agency's plans from Tony

Cupo, a Markham Place resident and board member.

Ms. Resulani voiced many of the same complaints others have made in the last few months regarding similar state-funded residential facilities. The Independent Living Association is funded by the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

Ms. Resulani said she recently spoke to neighbors of a nearby Independent Living Association home at 183 South Greenleaf Ave. and was told the home caused

noise, sanitation and parking problems.

"Why is Westerleigh being targeted?" she asked. "We have a great community, now it's someone else's turn. When one goes up behind Guy Molinari's house, then we'll support it," she said, drawing applause from some of the approximately 150 people at the meeting.

Molinari recently voiced strong support for residential facilities for the developmentally disabled. His remarks came after Community Board 3 voted against the placement of a community residence for the developmentally disabled in Greenridge. Molinari has urged the board chairman to reconsider that decision.

Last night's Board 1 vote was 36-0 in favor, with one abstention and one board member ineligible to vote.

In other action, the board also passed a motion opposing Camelot Counseling Services of Staten Island's proposed halfway house at 1390 Richmond Terr., West Brighton. The West Brighton site was an alternate for a site in Sea View

Hospital Rehabilitation Center and Home, which was approved by Community Board 2 in January.

"I think they intelligently sidestepped the issue," Luke Nasta, Camelot director, said after the non-roll call vote. "I think if it were voted on person by person, there would have been a different outcome. I consider it hypocritical," Nasta said.

The board also approved a motion against the halfway house proposed by Sisters of Charity Healthcare for 24 recovering substance abusers on the grounds of

"When one (facility for the retarded) goes up behind Guy Molinari's house, then we'll support it."

— Gigi Resulani

its Bayley Seton Campus. The halfway house was slated for 333 Broadway last summer, but nearby residents protested it until the hospital chose a second site.

In other business, members voted to approve renaming the intersection of Forest and Simonson avenues to Kathy Kiernan Way, after the former Daytop director who died in December 1998.

The board also voted to urge Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and the City Council to provide funding for the city Department of Health's Bureau of Pest Control to educate the public about pest control and the possible future spraying of malathion.

The board also gave certificates of appreciation to city Department of Transportation First Deputy Commissioner Anthony J. Fasulo; Borough Commissioner John Giaccio, and Island Director of Street Maintenance Anthony Barile, for their efforts in the reconstruction of Front Street, Stapleton.

Ms. Rafferty said that work was refused each year by the city because there was not enough money in the budget but, according to Ms. Rafferty, "Tony Fasulo heard us and got the money way before it was supposed to happen."