

Last night's meeting was markedly quieter and less emotional than recent gatherings to discuss the homes, although the lines were clearly drawn.

"People came here as a pack of wolves ready to destroy, not get information," Monsignor John Servodidio, pastor of St. Joseph's R.C. Church, Rosebank, said last night, referring to the previous hearing. But he found himself defending the disabled again.

"These are our brothers and sisters, they are not animals. If they lose their rights, yours are in jeopardy too," explained Monsignor Servodidio, urging residents to embrace their new neighbors.

"I was brought up that you take care of your own. If we don't, who will?" asked Dee Vandenburg, a Huguenot resident and area chairwoman for the Staten Island Taxpayers' Association.

Meanwhile, the board was faced with another weighty decision, and rejected an application for a variance to build a Walgreens on Richmond Avenue, an area surrounded by schools in a residentially zoned area.

Currently, the spot is occupied by Sweetbrook Nursery and Garden Center, which plans to relocate nearby.

Eltingville residents stormed a Land Use Committee meeting in the board's Rossville office last week to vehemently oppose the planned drugstore.

Area residents were worried about the hundreds of schoolchildren who will travel through the area (PS 42 is across the street and Eltingville Lutheran School is in back of the site); the increased traffic and lower property values, and the disruption of wildlife in Sweetbrook Creek, which abuts the rear of the garden center.

The board's decision is a recommendation to the Board of Standards and Appeals, which ultimately has authority to grant the variance.

Finally, the board passed a downzoning application for 234 acres in Annadale. Formerly R-3-2, allowing for townhomes, the new zoning is R-3-X, allowing for only detached homes on 40-by-100-foot lots, which describes 93 percent of the homes in the area.

It is the third downzoning application from the borough president's office.

The board will meet again in September.

D. J.
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