

The Human Resources Committee of Community Board 3 recommended two community residences for the developmentally disabled last night — one with the community's blessing, and the other after angry outbursts.

Gathered in the board's Rossville headquarters, the committee heard Manhattan-based United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) introduce proposals for a home at 31 Englewood Ave., Charleston, and 102 Champlain Ave., Oakwood.

Both sites will have four residents, in the mild to moderate range of mental retardation and cerebral palsy. The Charleston ranch cornering Arthur Kill Road will have two men and two women, ages 11 to 23. Three women and one man will live in the Oakwood ranch off Hylan Boulevard. Three residents are in their 20s and one woman is in her late 40s.

UCP will need to make each house handicapped-accessible.

Residents will attend day programs and will be supervised 4 hours a day. An advisory committee comprised of neighbors and UCP representatives will be established for each home if they are approved by the state.

Board members read a letter from the Charleston Civic Association supporting the Englewood Avenue home, and one from Borough President Guy Molinari praising the group for its support.

"We are glad you are in the district and our office is open to you," said Robin Lucey, a representative of Councilman Stephen Fiala (R-South Shore).

"It was a fine choice. It has a country setting," said board

member Esther Kosa, who lives in Charleston and is a member of the civic association.

The board also embraced the group and offered its services.

"It is not every community, as we know, that would reach out like this. It's not an ordinary thing you've done here," said Angelo Aponte, a former city consumer affairs and state housing commissioner, whose 23-year-old daughter, Erin, will move into the Charleston home.

Discussion of the Oakwood home didn't go quite as smoothly.

"You are pushing me out of my house. I have to worry that a few houses away are rapists. Can you guarantee us nothing will happen?" said Isabel Cifone, a mother of three girls who has lived on Champlain Avenue for 21 years.

There were about 15 people present during the Charleston hearing, but attendance swelled to about 25 when the Oakwood home came up for review.

Oakwood residents were primarily concerned with staff qualifications and property values decreasing.

"I worked for UCP in college. I don't have a problem with the people living in the home. They are lovable people. But these things we are worried about," said Marc Berger of Oakwood, a special-education teacher, who was referring to concerns about staff and real-estate values.

Residents asked if the staff is drug-tested or fingerprinted. The agency is not required by law to drug-test, and fingerprinting is only required for staffers who work with children.

They also asked if the house could be sold and have another use.

"It can go to an agency doing the same work, but it can't be used for substance abuse or an AIDS clinic. I guarantee you that can't happen," said William D'Ambrosio, chairman of Human Resources Committee.

UCP representatives explained the agency has been operating for 50 years and has no plans to go out of business.

"I find it more offensive when people move into my neighborhood and convert their house into apartments or don't mow the lawn for five years," said Linda Agello of Prince's Bay, whose 6-year-old daughter Megan has cerebral palsy. However, she admitted she would prefer the staff be drug-tested if her daughter lived in the home.

All residents of the proposed homes are from Staten Island, and about half are from the South Shore. Both homes are near bus stops, which was a priority for Francine Balk of Eltingville. Her 25-year-old stepdaughter, Erika, who is travel-trained, will be living in the Oakwood home.

"She will be able to use the bus to visit family," said Ms. Balk.

While the facility is state-funded, families have a hand in selecting sites for their children.

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