

# Board 1 approves group homes

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Community Board 1 approved two group homes for the mentally retarded planned for Port Richmond and West Brighton at its monthly meeting last night.

One is slated to open in the spring at 71 DeKay St. in West Brighton. It will be operated by On Your Mark, a non-profit organization that works with the mentally retarded. The other is slated to be built on a vacant lot on Faber Street, between Larkin Avenue and Richmond Terrace, in Port Richmond. The Association for Children with Retarded Mental Development Inc. will operate the home. Both are being funded by the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD).

The homes are two of six that will go before Board 1 for approval in upcoming months. To date there are 25 group homes on the North Shore.

"I would welcome this organization, even into Rosebank," board member Charles Langere said of On Your Mark. "Even though I've fought other group homes coming into Rosebank."

Langere worked with the group this summer, organizing a little league for retarded children.

A faction of 12 board members voted against the homes, protesting the state's siting practices.

Board member Thomas Pastore called the process "one big con job."

He argued that while OMRDD asks for proof that an area is over-saturated with group homes as grounds for site rejections, the local citizenry isn't made privy to the agency's criteria for rejection.

Board member Chris Rooney called the state laws regarding the siting of group homes for the mentally retarded "very strong legislative policy" and "very much in favor of it (siting facilities)."

An attorney and chair of the West Brighton area committee, Rooney voted to call for a state hearing on the DeKay Street home at a hearing Monday night. Last night, however, the board rejected a resolution to call for a hearing, and he voted in favor of the home.

Board member Terry Rafferty viewed the siting process as unfair as well, but for different reasons.

"Retarded people should not have to come and ask to live in our community," she said. "In fact they're good for us; we can learn from them."

Unlike previous meetings, no residents spoke out against either group home last night. A presentation was made to the residents by On Your Mark at the Monday meeting.

In other matters, Board 1 passed a strongly worded resolution in support of maintaining its youth coordinator, Noreen Besio. A full-time employee, Mrs. Besio works out of the board's Tappen Park office, where she deals

with North Shore youth organizations.

It is rumored that the city's 42 youth coordinators will be laid off by the city Department of Youth Services to meet a \$2.1 million spending cut to this year's budget.

Board officials believe Youth Services Commissioner Richard Murphy will announce the layoffs of the coordinators tonight at a meeting in City Hall.

Youth coordinators are local level planners who direct local youth groups to funding sources, private and public. They also monitor groups receiving funds doled out under their supervision by Youth Services, and help local groups apply for funds, writing grants for them and recommending them for funds.

In its resolution, Board 1 charged that the elimination of the youth coordinator position would be a violation of city law and a city agreement with the state to maintain local planning for youth activities.

The resolution states such a move would "erode locally based planning," which is protected by the City Charter.

"The mayor said tonight his number-one priority is kids," board member George Doyle said. "Letting these youth coordinators go is like giving the children a slap in the face."

Jereen Maltese was sworn in as a board member. She is replacing a former board member, Richard Nacchio, who exited the board to become an attorney for Borough President Guy V. Molinari.