

Westerleigh residents decry plans for home

Residents fuming over proposed group home for 8 adults

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Last night's Community Board 1 committee hearing on a proposed group home for profoundly retarded adults was met with angry responses from Westerleigh residents.

The board's human resource committee held the hearing, which took place at the College of Staten Island, St. George, so community members could comment on the home and question representatives from the not-for-profit Independent Living Association.

Earlier in the summer, the association had recommended the intermediate care facility be located on 183 South Greenleaf Ave., Westerleigh.

Associate Executive Director Arthur Palevsky announced that the federally funded home would house eight severely retarded adults over the age of 21, with care provided by a trained staff.

He said the house and property would cost about \$340,000 and alterations to change the bathrooms, give the building wheelchair accessibility and conform

to the house to fire codes would cost an additional \$171,000.

"No one is saying this isn't a good idea, but the state is spending too much. This is a disgrace," called out a resident, as most of the 40-person audience applauded.

"Who initiated this? Half a million for eight residents? Is that normal?" yelled a woman in the audience.

Palevsky replied that three different appraisers estimated the value of the house and it was a fair price, but failed to provide a name when residents asked him to

Page 1
of 2

identify the appraisers.

"The price is way above market value. Some people don't like the idea of mentally retarded people in their neighborhood, but if the house was sold for a fair price, it would be different," said Angela Fumando, who lives behind the proposed home. She said the appraised price is twice the cost of an average home in Westerleigh.

She also voiced a concern shared by many residents about a decrease in property values, which Palevsky said does not happen because of group homes.

Ms. Fumando did admit that if the price was lower, many of the people would still complain be-

said the facility was a "done deal" and the community input meant nothing.

Palevsky tried to assure the audience that the deal was not complete and asked any interested parties to tour the association's other group homes to see how they function. He also said residents could join the neighborhood advisory committee that would serve as a liaison between the community and group home.

Jane Vredenburgh, Community Board 1 human resource committee chairwoman, said the board will meet soon and make its recommendations regarding the home.

cause they did not want mentally retarded people in their neighborhood.

"There are some people who (think) the mentally retarded are to be avoided, but I've worked with retarded children and I know they are loving and do not pose a threat," she said.

Many of her neighbors disagreed.

"They can get out and roam the neighborhood and kill one of us," said June Clark, a resident of nearby Constant Avenue.

At the end of the meeting, one man yelled out that he and his neighbors were not properly notified about the proposed home. He

Page 2
of 2