

New group home gets thumbs up

CB 2 told facility will not downgrade area

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Building a new group home for 10 mentally retarded adults in South Beach will not substantially alter the area's character, according to a ruling by the state commissioner of the Office of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD).

In September, Community Board 2 asked for a hearing before the state after rejecting a proposal by the Brooklyn-based Independent Living Association to build a group home at 144 Ocean Avenue.

"From reviewing the record, it is clear that Community Board 2 does not object to the establishment of this facility in general," Commissioner Elin Howe wrote, "but instead argues that the particular site in question is not appropriate for the proposed residence."

The board cited other facilities in the neighborhood, including Lily Pond Nursing Home in Arden and the New Broadview Manor Home for Adults in South Beach, as evidence of saturation

of state-licensed facilities in the neighborhood.

But Howe ruled that he was "not persuaded by the Community Board's presentation to sustain its objection to the establishment of the facility at the 144 Ocean Ave. location."

Rosalie Flanagan, the borough hall liaison to the Island's Community Boards, said the commissioner apparently did not consider the board's concern that the siting of the group home did not meet the criteria of the Willowbrook Consent Decree, which said group homes must be located in the midst of neighborhoods, not on their fringes. The board maintains that the Ocean Avenue site is on the outskirts of the neighborhood.

"The issue of rhythm of life was not addressed," Ms. Flanagan said.

Board 2 District Manager Kathy Dodd said the board is looking into other actions it can take to appeal the ruling.

John Welch, the executive director of the Independent Living Association, said the agency plans to go ahead and develop the site,

although no timetable has been prepared for construction. When the site opens, a group home at 163 Ocean Avenue that currently houses three developmentally disabled clients will close, and those clients moved to the new home.

In another case concerning a group home in Board 2, representatives from the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Services Office (SIDDSO) of the state OMRDD met with board members last night to discuss the expansion of an existing state-run facility in Castleton Corners.

Kathy Kennedy-Shields, director of planning and development for SIDDSO, and Jim Stanley, administrator of its community residence program, spoke to the board about the possibility of the state buying a small apartment building at 962-966 Manor Road.

The building, which currently houses two apartments for a total of six SIDDSO clients, is being foreclosed. The Island office is considering acquiring the property and using the other two apartments to house clients. The current apartments provide homes for three men who require minimal supervision and three who require 24-hour supervision.

A home at 120 Welbrooke Ave., Willowbrook, would be closed, and

the three residents in that house would move to the apartments if the plan is carried out, Ms. Kennedy-Shields said.

The board members seemed amenable to the plan, and said they would discuss it at an upcoming meeting and issue an opinion soon.

Ms. Kennedy-Shields said the state has not done any studies on the site to determine if the plan is feasible, because she did not want to go ahead with the costly and time-consuming process unless the board approved.

"Without the support of the community board, we certainly wouldn't go ahead with this one," she said.

The SIDDSO also has released three additional addresses, all in Community Board 3, as sites for new group homes.

Ms. Kennedy-Shields said there are about 250 developmentally disabled Staten Islanders who are awaiting placement in community-based group homes. The state hopes to open 10 new homes each in Boards 2 and 3 before the end of 1992.

Board 3 will hold hearings Nov. 12 on three suggested sites — 192 Butler Ave., Tottenville; 40 Nash Court, Great Kills, and 770-772 Drumgoole Road West, Annadale.