

CB 3 says 'no' to group homes on South Shore

200 turn calm into chaos

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Community Board 3 last night voted against the placement of three group homes on the South Shore after more than 200 people turned the monthly board meeting from calm to chaotic.

Most of the opposition concerned the 770-772 Drumgoole Road West site in Annadale, where the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Services Office (SIDDSO) plans to house 10 developmentally disabled adults.

A public hearing was held at board headquarters on Nov. 12 concerning proposed group home sites at 40 Nash Court, Great Kills; 192 Butler Ave., Tottenville, and the Annadale site.

The board's human resources committee at that time opposed the Great Kills and Tottenville sites. They approved the Annadale location because there were not enough similar group homes in the area, the only criteria the board could use to reject the site according to the Padavan law, which makes provisions for small group homes to be placed in residential areas.

People packed the cafeteria at Staten Island University Hospital, Princes Bay, yesterday to speak during the public session before the board meeting.

Some of the issues brought up by the Annadale residents included the proximity of other group homes, the lack of nearby shopping and the danger the group home residents would face from motorists who speed through the area.

Many speakers questioned whether the house would always serve the developmentally disabled or could one day house the homeless. Others expressed anger at the Padavan law.

"Padavan only protects the retarded, not the taxpayers or the homeowners," one speaker said.

The board was presented with two sets of petitions with more than 800 signatures opposing the Annadale site.

Following the public session, Board 3 chairman Al Brumme asked for approval of the minutes from committee meetings held earlier in the month. Numerous audience members asked for the minutes, but were told there were not enough copies for them.

Until this point, the meeting had been conducted calmly, but then audience members angrily demanded that the minutes be read out loud. When Brumme refused, the audience became disruptive, chanting "No" over and over.

Human resources committee chairman Robert Gibbons read his committee's minutes, and the board was asked to approve the motions concerning the three group homes. Some board members felt not enough research was done on the Annadale site and that the oversaturation factor presented by the audience should be taken seriously.

The board voted 33-4 to reject all three proposed sites. A roll call vote was taken concerning the Drumgoole site and the board members who voted in favor were booed by the audience.

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SIDDSO said the board now will issue a letter to the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) requesting a hearing. The community board will be notified of the hearing date and the public will be invited.

At the hearing, the board and the agencies proposing the group homes will give testimony in the presence of an arbitrator, or hearing officer. This testimony will be sent to OMRDD Commissioner Elin Howe in Albany, who will make a decision concerning the sites.

The group home opponents left after the vote.

In other business, Louis Fraser was approved as the chairman of the environmental committee. He replaced Charles Talley, who left due to business obligations.

The board enthusiastically approved the land use committee's motion opposing any cosmetic changes to the proposed Rossville jail site. Members said the board is opposed to the jail and is opposed to anything that would facilitate its construction.

The board also approved a motion by Gibbons to put a committee together to propose changes to the Padavan law.