

S. J. Advance

Wednesday, March 4, 1992

2 group homes gain state's OK

Residents, community board opposed

By **KERRY DIAMOND**
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

Two proposed South Shore group homes for the developmentally disabled have received final state approval despite strong community opposition.

State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Commissioner Elin M. Howe approved the sites proposed for 40 Nash Ct., Great Kills, and 192 Butler Ave., Tottenville.

According to the Padavan law, which provides for the placement of group homes in residential neighborhoods, the sites could only be rejected if there were too many similar facilities in the area. Ms. Howe did not find evidence of oversaturation at either site.

Last November, Community Board 3 voted against both sites at a meeting attended by 200 angry residents opposed to the projects.

Proposed by the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Services Office, the Great Kills site will house 10 adults with severe to profound developmental disabilities.

Residents complained that this site, because of its long, narrow driveway, could not be reached by emergency vehicles and that Nash Court does not provide enough parking for residents, let alone future employees and visitors of the group home.

The Brooklyn-based Independent Living Association has proposed building a facility on Butler Avenue for eight moderately disabled individuals. The residents protesting against this site disagreed with the need to place group homes in residential neighborhoods. They also expressed concern about safety conditions on the street during construction of the home, the small size of the yard and the availability of parking for employees and visitors.

"While such concerns are important and may be considered by this agency under other regulatory reviews, they are not relevant to the decision I must render at this time," Ms. Howe wrote in a letter to Board 3.

The commissioner noted that the developmental disabilities office would be cooperating with

the Fire Department to ensure proper fire safety for the residents of the Nash Court home.

Representatives from the Independent Living Association and the disabilities office could not be reached for comment yesterday on when construction would begin.

In January, the board rejected a group home at 524 Lamoka Ave., Eltingville, proposed by the Independent Living Association for 10 moderately disabled adults.

A state hearing on the site will be held at 10 a.m. March 11 in the first floor conference room of the Manhattan Developmental Services Office, 75 Morton St. A member of Community Board 3's human resources committee will present the board's position.

Eltingville residents already are planning to attend.

"We are going. We have nothing against the mentally retarded. It's just that the state is trying to create these mini-institutions. Do you know anyone who has 14 people living in their home? They should scale down these projects. Smaller ones would fit better in our community," said Diane Coccozza, an Eltingville resident who lives near the site of the proposed home.