

Island news

3 group homes accepted by CB2 committee

Sites to house developmentally disabled

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With a roomful of disgruntled neighbors in attendance, the health services committee of Community Board 2 last night unanimously allowed three group homes for the developmentally disabled to be placed within the board area.

The three sites approved by the committee are located at 2778 Amboy Rd., New Dorp; 498 McClean Ave., South Beach, and 1048 S. Railroad Ave., Grant City. Respectively, the group homes will be operated by Staten Island Aid, On Your Mark and the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Service Office (SIDDSO). The health committee's deci-

sion to allow the group homes will be voted on by the full board May 19.

At the meeting held on the grounds of Sea View Hospital and Home, representatives from the three organizations gave presentations on their proposals to a standing-room-only audience, many of whom were residents of the targeted neighborhoods.

Staten Island Aid director Joan Hodum said the Amboy Road group home would be for 10 mildly developmentally disabled people, who will be under 24-hour watch by a two-person staff.

"The mildly retarded look and sound just like us. Some are gainfully employed or are in a work-training program," she said.

"Some will definitely be able to move into their own apartments and move out of our system altogether."

She said her group has placed five similar group homes in Community Board 3 to much opposition, but that opposition dissipates once the residents move into the home.

"Some of the objectors become very close friends of the home," she said. "We would like to lift some of your fears if we can. Our homes are beautifully furnished and kept well."

Last night, however, area residents didn't care about the inside of the home, instead focusing on the actual existence of the group home.

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Post at 2750 Amboy Rd. at 7:30 p.m.

South Beach residents also complained about not being informed of the McClean Avenue proposal, which is slated for 10 adults with moderate mental retardation. Some feared the nearby Stapleton Houses residents wouldn't interact well with the clients; others feared for their property value.

"We tried to blanket that community with information," said On Your Mark director Eugene Spatz. "We're an Island-based organization and you will have an ear if any problems should arise. We're here to work with you."

No Grant City residents were on hand to hear the SIDSSO proposal, which calls for an eight-bed group home, half for the mildly retarded and half for the profoundly retarded.

and rape old ladies. Well, we have school teachers arrested for molesting people, even clergy."

In response, New Dorp resident Richard Cicero said he attended the meeting to find out information on the group home since he hadn't heard of the proposal until early this week.

"I respect Father John immensely and I want him to know that most of us aren't against the mentally retarded. But I came here to find out what this program is all about," he said. "I didn't even know it was a house only for the retarded."

Ms. Hodum agreed her group "erred" by not informing the immediate community. To that end, a van will be provided Monday for anyone interested in inspecting a similar Staten Island Aid facility. The van will be in front of the Kells-Grennie American Legion

"About 95 percent of the people in that area are all senior citizens," said one resident. "And these people are very fearful for their lifestyle. My mother lives above me. I cannot see her living next door to a home for the mildly retarded. I feel sorry for the kids, but I also feel sorry for my mother."

After other residents voiced opposition, Monsignor John Servodidio of St. Joseph's R.C. Church, Rosebank, delivered an emotional speech in favor of the proposals, telling the audience they couldn't ask for better neighbors.

"Sir, your mother would be the safest woman in the community. These are peaceful people of joy," he said. "You won't hear any loud radios, no souped-up cars, no teenage parties. Most of you have no idea about them (the group home residents); like they might get out

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