

CB3 panel OKs home for disabled

Hearing is low-key, with no outbursts

By KERRY DIAMOND
ADVANCE STAFF WRITER

Community Board 3's human resources committee yesterday unanimously approved a proposal to build a group home for 12 developmentally disabled adults in Richmond Valley.

About 30 people attended the public hearing on the proposed United Cerebral Palsy home at 62-66 Madsen Ave.

This was the seventh group home hearing at Board 3 headquarters in Great Kills in as many months. The full board had opposed five of the six proposed sites, but Commissioner Elin M. Howe of the state Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities approved all the sites,

including the latest at 107 Jumel St.

Some human resources committee members remarked that yesterday's hearing had run more smoothly than the others because past hearings had been attended by large, angry crowds opposed to the sites. Chairman Bruce Eckhouse attributed it to the presentations by Esther Nitzburg, assistant to the executive director of United Cerebral Palsy, and Kathleen Kennedy-Shields, Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Services Office planning and development director.

The audience and committee watched "Right at Home, Right in the Neighborhood," a video about the various types of group homes and programs for the develop-

mentally disabled.

Eckhouse reminded the audience that the committee had to vote according to the Padavan law, which provides for the placement of group homes for the developmentally disabled in residential areas. Over-saturation of like group homes in the area, the only criteria for voting down a home, was not valid for this site, he said.

Some residents were concerned the large, one-story house proposed for the site would not fit in with other homes in the neighborhood. Others asked about an increase in traffic and said the safety of children who play in the area would be threatened. One

woman asked if the home could be used for another purpose, such as housing the homeless, should United Cerebral Palsy shut down.

Ms. Nitzburg noted these are issues frequently raised at group home hearings. She said that architects will try to make the home look like others in the area, that there will not be a significant increase in traffic and that the home would be maintained as a developmentally disabled group home by the state should something happen to her organization.

The full board will vote on the proposed home during its meeting, May 26 at 7:30 p.m. in Staten Island University Hospital, Princess Bay.