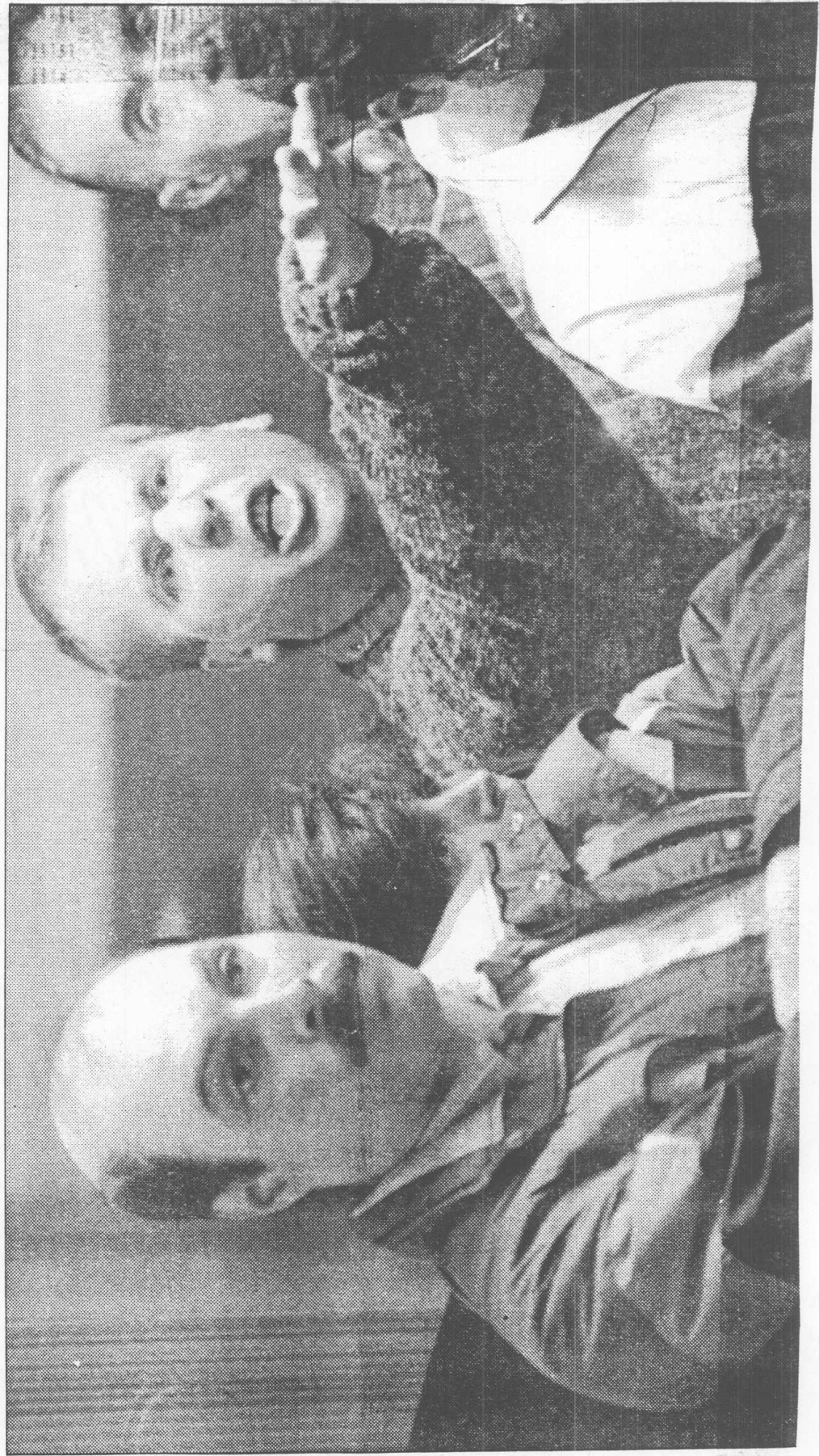


Two proposals ... one reaction



An angry resident makes his feelings known about the group home.

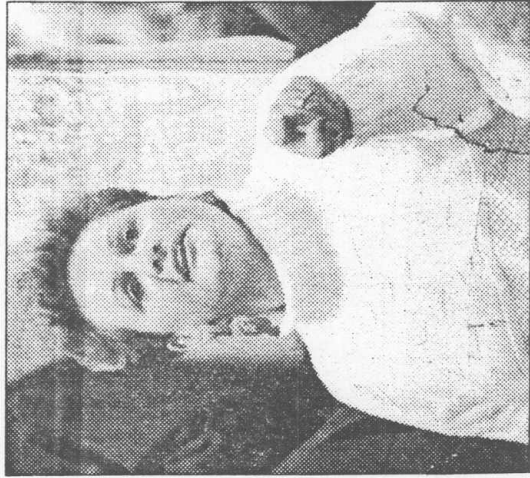
Group home for 8 adults draws objections of fearful neighbors

By TRACEY PORPORA
ADVANCE SOUTH SHORE BUREAU

Great Kills residents strongly protested a proposed state-run group home last night because they fear the value of their homes will decrease with eight developmentally disabled adults living in their community.

A public meeting was held in Community Board 3's Rossville headquarters in response to a proposal by the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Service Office (SIDDSO) — the local agency of the state office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) — to purchase and renovate a privately owned home for more than \$230,000 at 931 Armstrong Ave.

About 100 Great Kills residents came out to protest the group home — for eight developmentally disabled adults ranging in age from 21 to 40 — last night because they felt it



A woman makes her point about social services in residential neighborhoods.

would lower the value of their homes, increase traffic congestion in the area and that the residents of the homes would be taunted by area teen-agers.

"This is Great Kills — we're tired of being dumped on. We don't want this in our neighborhood," yelled one woman who refused to give her name to the Advance.

"Why don't you put the home in Stapleton where it won't have as great an effect on the community?" said a man who also refused to give his name.

Thomas Tierney, deputy director of SIDDSO, noted that group

homes have been sited in each of the three Island community board areas this year. Dorothy Fitzpatrick, district manager for Board 3, added, "We have group homes in every town in the Board 3 area."

Tierney said all of the future group home residents — who have mild to moderate developmental disabilities — currently live in other Island group homes or health care facilities.

New Brighton resident Laura Kennedy, who has a 12-year-old handicapped daughter and is a member of the Staten Island Retardation and Disabilities Council, spoke to the group in an effort to describe the disabilities the future residents possess.

"I never thought I'd have a handicapped child. When I first found out I was devastated," she said.

"Families need a break. They're all Islanders. They're all of us — it's our family, it's not the city or the state — it's us," she added.

But her words did little to dissuade residents' unwillingness to welcome the group home.

Because of residents' resistance toward the home, Tierney said SIDDSO would set up a community advisory board, where representatives of the area would meet with agency officials and discuss all matters pertaining to the group home.

Despite the outcry of protests from disgruntled residents, the human resources committee of Board 3, which hosted the public meeting last night, voted in favor of the group home. That's because the only way they could vote against it by law is if there were an oversaturation of group homes in the area, said Bruce Eckhouse, committee chairman.

But the committee approved the home with one stipulation: that a certified statement be presented to Board 3 from OMRDD saying that if the house is no longer a group home for the developmentally disabled it must go back on the real estate market, rather than be used by the state for another purpose.

Tierney said during the meeting that if the home was no longer used to treat developmentally disabled adults, by law it would go back on the real estate market.

The facility must be approved through a site selection process in which Board 3 is required to vote on the issue, according to the Padavan Law. As with the committee, the full board can only vote against the proposed group home if there are too many similar facilities in the area.

The full board will vote on the issue Tuesday at its meeting in Staten Island University Hospital, Prince's Bay, at 8 p.m. A community session will be held at 7:30 p.m.



Thomas Tierney, deputy director, addresses the meeting.

Page 3 of 5