

CB3 OKs group home in Great Kills

Faces little opposition

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ADVANCE SOUTH SHORE BUREAU

In an air of calm, Community Board 3 last night approved a state-run group home sited for Great Kills — a setting that contrasted with the angry protests expressed by residents at a meeting last week.

Members voted 36 to 3 in favor of the plan, despite last Tuesday's public meeting hosted by the human resources committee at

which irate residents vehemently opposed the group home to be located at 931 Armstrong Ave.

Fearing further protests from the residents, board officials had several police officers in attendance. But there was little opposition expressed from the more than 50 people who came to the full board meeting at Staten Island University Hospital, Prince's Bay.

Proposed by the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Service Office (SIDDSO) — the local agency of the state office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) — the home is for eight develop-

mentally disabled adults ranging in age from 21 to 40.

Joann Loporcaro McMahon, who has a 24-year-old brother with epilepsy currently living in a Bay Terrace group home, spoke in favor of the Armstrong Avenue facility.

"My mother searched high and low for a place comfortable for him ... he came from the South Shore," she said. "The group home teaches him how to do the laundry, make his bed — things we take for granted."

Countering comments made by residents at

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last Tuesday's meeting that the group home would lower the property values of area homes, Ms. McMahon said, "I'm a homeowner myself. Your home cannot lose its value by these people living there... these people are the most lovable people you'll ever meet."

Jay Correia, vice president of the board that manages the Armstrong Gardens Condominiums, said, "I represent the minority opinion. We share the same concerns as the other residents, but we're willing to give these people a chance in our community."

One area resident, Ursula Melendy, spoke against the home and presented a petition with more than 95 signatures opposing the facility.

"We're worried about the

state's ability to run the home," she said.

The facility must be approved through a site selection process in which Community Board 3 is required to vote on the issue according to the Padavan Law. The law provides for the placement of group homes for the developmentally disabled in residential areas. Over-saturation of similar homes in the area is the only criterion for voting down a home.

Board 3 voted in favor of the home with one stipulation: that a certified statement be presented to the board from the 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.

In other business, Eltingville residents came to protest a city proposal to open up King Street, which is currently a dead-end. As part of the completion of a Department of Environmental Protection sewer project, the city Department of Transportation, Emergency Fire Department, Emergency Medical Services and city Sanitation Department have proposed to open up the dead-end once the street is paved, according to Thomas M. LaGuidice, traffic and transportation committee chairman. He said Board 3 will not take a stand on the issue.

King Street resident Carmella Catiagno presented the board with a petition signed by more than 200 people opposed to opening the dead-end street.

"We never had a problem getting emergency vehicles down the street," she said. She and other speakers also contended that if the street were opened it would become a raceway for motorists endangering area children.

Also at last night's meeting, Board 3 members approved a zoning change for a portion of Tottenham from an R 3-2 zone — which allows for the construction of one- and two-family detached and semi-attached homes and townhouses — to an R 3-A zone, which prohibits the development of townhouses and semi-attached homes.

Board 3 members also approved a list of 40 capital and 25 expense items to be funded by the city. Top priorities include three new public elementary schools for the South Shore, construction of ball fields and road widening projects.

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