

Board 2 gives OK to New Dorp group home

Approval unanimous despite opposition

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Despite prior opposition from area residents, a group home proposed to house seven mild to moderately retarded adults in New Dorp was unanimously approved last night by Community Board 2.

The proposal by the Staten Island Developmental Disabilities Service Office (SIDDSO) to establish the group home at 262 Bryant Ave. drew concerned residents to a public hearing on the issue last Thursday at the board office in Sea View.

Residents opposed the group home last week, saying the street is already congested and lacks parking for current homeowners. They also feared the property values of their homes would decrease should the group home be established.

However, at last night's Board 2 full board meeting, none of the residents of Bryant Avenue came out to make their feelings known to the entire board.

During the public session, which is held a half hour before the full board meeting, only one person spoke against the group home. Joe Valetin, co-chairman of the Staten Island Taxpayers Association, said the borough is already "saturated with thousands of different facilities" that "take advantage of the borough's good-hearted people."

"There is a point where you have to say enough is enough. We are not heartless . . . just because we are the nicest borough doesn't mean we have to be saturated," Valetin said.

He expressed his disappointment after the board's unanimous vote by adding, "they (group homes) are surrounding us, not the board members. Staten Island

does more than its share."

The two-family home, which the state is interested in purchasing, will be staffed 24 hours a day with at least two staff members on rotating eight-hour shifts. The four male residents will be housed on one level while the three female residents will live on the other.

There will actually be two separate units with separate staff, according to SIDDSO officials.

There are currently 13 group homes run on Staten Island by the SIDDSO.

Tom Prisco, chairman of the health committee that introduced the resolution to the board, was pleased with the vote, adding that his board worked hard in researching and discussing the issue when it was brought before it.

Fred Mednick, health committee member, said the board members "tried to be understanding to the opposition."

Referring to group home residents, Mednick said "we're talking about people who are less than perfect and it is for Staten Island people."

In other business, members of the Todt Hill/Castleton Corners community spoke against the installation of a 300-foot-high microwave radio tower proposed by the state police for Todt Hill.

Resident Julie Iannuzzo suggested the state police improve towers on existing sites if necessary rather than erect another on Todt Hill.

Rosemary Greco, who also lives in the area, said Staten Island has become the "repository" for hazardous items, such as the Fresh Kills landfill and now a microwave tower.

Both women, who are members of the newly formed Citizens Against Towers, are concerned about health hazards from living near the tower should it be established in their neighborhood.

Rosalie Flannagan, the community board liaison from the borough president's office, announced at the meeting that a Crime Prevention Forum will take place Saturday from noon to 5 p.m. at New Dorp High School. The event, which will feature workshops on self-defense, auto theft, child safety, home security, domestic violence and fire prevention, is being sponsored by Borough President Guy V. Molinari and the Advance with cooperation from the Police Department.