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In Your Opinion:

Group Homes

To The Editor:

In light of the recent announcements of plant to site group homes and other similar facilities in northeastern Queens, I wish to share my proposal to improve the opportunity for input and review and to provide accountability in the siting of state-licensed groups homes, also known as community residences.

gest one or more alternate sites, or object 1) based on the oversaturation of the community board with community residences or facilities or 2) based on the oversaturation of the same kind of group homes in the area in proximity to the proposed facility.

As a result, most people come away from the public hearings with the sense that the decision was

ed facility; 3) provide a 60 day comment period following the public hearing; and 4) provide residents the opportunity, presently afforded community boards under existing law, to propose alternate sites and/or present arguments of oversaturation.

My proposal would stop the present practice that pits neighbor against neighbor. The present procedure has the unintended affect of putting neighborhood residents who serve on a community board in the position of approving a group home near many of their neighbors.

The current law gives local community boards very little ability to say yes or no. A community board can either approve the site recommended by the agency sponsoring, for example, a group home, sug-

I developed this proposal out of my concern to avoid the needless tensions fostered by the provisions of Section 41.34 of the New York State Mental Hygiene Law (the Padavan Law). I have attended numerous public hearings and meetings over the placement of groups homes and, as a result of a hearing I attended two years ago in Little Neck, I remain convinced that the present law, although well-intended, actually exacerbates community tensions rather than mitigate community concerns.

As a neighborhood activist and as an attorney with extensive experience in government at both the state and city levels, I propose:

Require the State agency that licenses the proposed facility in a community, rather than a New York City community board, to: 1) notify affected community members; 2) hold a public hearing in the community near the propos-

really made before the hearing started. My more preferable approach stops that sham hearing and substitutes a real hearing that solves problems, not makes them worse.

In addition, I recommend a prohibition on the acquisition of any proposed site at a cost greater than the market values of any property based upon its zoned or intended use.

Any process where tensions become so great and at which unruly proceedings remain the rule, rather than the exception, is a great sham and merits another look. My proposal brings a needed new look and, more importantly, substitutes a more meaningful process for considering state-licensed facilities proposed for our neighborhoods in residential areas.

Corey Bearak
Bayside