



**BOROUGH OF STATEN ISLAND
COMMUNITY BOARD #3**

1243 Woodrow Road - 2nd Floor

Staten Island, NY 10309

Telephone: (718) 356-7900 Fax: (718) 966-9013

Website: www.nyc.gov/sicb3

Email: sicb3@cb.nyc.gov

**Health & Human Services Committee Public Hearing
Report**

DATE: March 1, 2022
TIME: 7:00PM
PLACE: Via Video Conference

Committee Members Present

Frank Morano, Chairman of the Board
Diane Peruggia, Chair, Health & Human Services
Michael Ciacciarelli
Patricia Conway
Jerome Goldman
Harold Kozak
Dennis McKeon
Michael Pinto

Committee Members Absent

Verna Lauria

Board Members Present

Patrick Donahue
Albert Klingele
Owen Reiter
Wayne Rosenfeld

Staff

Charlene Wagner, *District Manager*
Stacey Wertheim, *Community Coordinator*
Susan LaForgia, *Community Coordinator*

Guests

Diane Buglioli, Co-Founder, A Very Special Place; Co-Chair, Willowbrook Legacy Committee
Susan Conlon, Richmondtown-Clarke Avenue Civic Association
Patricia Baroz, Dean, IS75
Kathleen Baroz, Area Resident
Karen Cirillo, Area Resident
Nicole Cirillo, Area Resident
Lynne Galdamez, Area Resident

Public Contact Session

None

Agenda

Diane Buglioli, Co-Founder, A Very Special Place, Co-Chair Willowbrook Legacy Committee spoke about the origins of Willowbrook **“Lessons from Willowbrook.”** In 1947 Willowbrook opened as a residential safe school for approximately 1,500 people. By the 1960’s, there were over 5,000 people living there. Since Willowbrook was run under DOHMH, they only thought their job was to keep the people alive and medically well. They were considered patients. But in actuality, they needed supports and services. Diane was 19 when she started working there. She was given a key and told to go to Building #26. She opened a steel door, another steel door, down a hallway, to another steel door. There she found 40 toddlers. Some approached her, some didn’t move. She didn’t understand why they were locked behind the steel doors. She came to learn that those steel doors locked people away from society and services. A failure in oversight led to horrific conditions that were to be later exposed. In 1971, the Staten Island Advance published a series of articles called **“Willowbrook: Inside the Cages.”** Jane Kurtin told the story of Willowbrook and what was happening behind those doors. Six months later the world learned of these conditions from Geraldo Rivera’s expose, **Willowbrook: The Last Great Disgrace.** The lessons we learned are stark, sad, examples of inhumane treatment. When Willowbrook was being de-institutionalized, there were 5,000 people in it, and they needed to reduce that number to 250. In 1998 budget cuts started. In the last 10 years alone, \$2.5B was removed from the budget. **The Willowbrook Mile Collaboration** is an interactive walking trail that goes through CSI, the Elizabeth Connelly Center and the Institute for Basic Research. There are 10 stations that tell the story of the property. It helps us remember what happened in the past and reaffirms what we know that we cannot and must not go backwards in time. Willowbrook opened 75 years ago in 1947
Willowbrook closed in 1987.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Peruggia

Chair, Health & Human Services Committee