

Group home closing without opposition under state budget

BY BOB CONNER Gazette Reporter
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The Gloversville Group Home will be officially closed as a result of the state budget being passed this week.

Pat Cantiello, spokeswoman for the state Office of Children and Family Services, confirmed that the state will not renew its lease with the adjacent St. Mary's of Mount Carmel Church, which owns the property. The lease runs until the end of June.

The group home is part of the state's juvenile justice system. It has been little used in recent years and does not currently have any residents, according to state officials, who also tried to close it last year.

David Smingler, spokesman for Sen. Hugh Farley, R-Niskayuna, said Farley accepts the need to close the home as an economy measure for the state government. Assemblyman Marc Butler, another Republican whose district includes Fulton County, said he has heard no objections to the closure and does not oppose it.

Gloversville Mayor Timothy Hughes said he would like to see the South Main Street building restored to the tax rolls. He estimated it is a three- or four-family "real nice house," that could go back to being used as private residences.

Ken Goldfarb, spokesman for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, said he did not know what would happen to the building. St. Mary's of Mount Carmel representatives could not be reached for comment.

In January, OCFS said it wanted to close six juvenile facilities, including the Gloversville Group Home. The final budget will keep two of the facilities open, according to The Correctional Association of New York, a non-profit policy analysis and advocacy organization based in New York City.

The Correctional Association released a statement criticizing the decision to keep open Great Valley Residential Center in Cattaraugus County and Pyramid Intake Center in the Bronx.

"In a return to the 'good old days' of backroom budget deals, when youth of color were locked up in the name of upstate economic development, Governor David Paterson and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver have reportedly agreed to Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno's proposal keeping open two ineffective youth facilities," the statement began.

Senate Republicans also blocked the executive budget proposal to close four adult prisons, including Camp McGregor in Saratoga County. The prisons will stay open.