

Shelter head's status still being debated

By Robin Kamen
Staff Writer

funding from the Bergen County Freeholders.

TEANECK — For more than three hours in last night's cold, Sandy Ramos stood on a porch waiting to learn whether she'd been fired as executive director of Shelter Our Sisters, county-funded shelters for battered women.

The executive director is less conventional than most administrators and the board wants stricter controls in the shelters. The sides disagree for instance, about psychological testing for battered women. The board wants mandatory counseling. Ms. Ramos suggests it be optional.

The board of directors for the shelters was meeting in closed session at a board member's home, and Ms. Ramos wanted to stick around.

But board Chairman Ron D'Angelo said no vote was taken on whether to fire Ms. Ramos, who has been grappling with the board over how to administer the shelters. Some board members informally discussed using mediation to settle differences with the executive director, he said.

"I think mediation would be great, if it's done fairly," Ms. Ramos said.

D'Angelo said another meeting to discuss Ms. Ramos's status probably would be held in the next two weeks.

Six weeks ago, the board asked Ms. Ramos to resign the position, which pays \$27,000 a year. She refused. The board then talked about firing her, but decided to hold off. Ms. Ramos has said she would consider challenging a dismissal in court.

About 10 of Ms. Ramos's supporters dropped by shortly after the meeting began at 7 p.m., among them state Sen. Gerald Cardinale, a former battered wife, Teaneck residents, and women's organization representatives.

They came to submit letters or speak to the board on the director's behalf. Some stayed on the porch for a while, freezing toes forgotten as they offered sympathy or expressed outrage and occasional sarcasm about the board.

Cardinale, R-Demarest, was allowed inside to speak for about 10 minutes. He said he told board members they would lose the respect of citizens and officials, as well as some funding, if they fired Ramos.

"That is not a threat," he said when he returned to the porch. "I'm just talking reality."

He added, however, "I didn't get the impression [the speech] made any difference."

Ms. Ramos founded the shelters in the 1970's, at first housing battered women in her Hackensack home. She fought for and eventually won

Shelter directors put off firing Ramos

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Ms. Ramos and other staff members was "confusing" to the women in the shelter.

"I didn't intend it to be used as a dagger," to hurt Ms. Ramos, Ms. Beam said of the letter. Another former resident of the shelter said she

thought the board was treating Ms. Ramos unfairly. After their remarks, the board closed the meeting.

The loud, angry voices of trustees could be heard outside the small room in the First Presbyterian Church, as Ms. Ramos waited for the board to reach a decision.

But when the meeting adjourned, board members left the building without speaking to her. The board attorney, Alice Myer, said only that the evaluation of Ms. Ramos's job performance would be referred back to the personnel committee and reviewed by the board at the next meeting, Dec. 4.