

The Main Street **WIRE**

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

in association with Website NYC10044

Town Meeting Asks Ouster of Blue at RIOC, Calls for Transit Solutions at Tram & Subway

RIRA rallied the community Wednesday night in a sometimes boisterous Town Meeting that demanded transit solutions and an end to the RIOC administration of Jerome Blue. Well over 400 residents crammed the sanctuary of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, applauding condemnations of Blue and

every suggestion that he be removed from his position, and voicing a general insistence on a prompt restoration of Tramway service. The tone of the Residents Association meeting ranged from the fervor of a pentecostal tent show to dull, but there was never a doubt about the sentiment of the crowd: Not one

word was spoken in defense of Blue. Not one utterance suggested the Island can do without the Tramway.

"Jerry Blue did not drive the crane last Tuesday, but he did steer the Tram onto an eventual collision course with tragedy," charged RIRA Common Council member Judith Berdy in one of the early speeches of the meeting. Like other speakers, she was interrupted by frequent applause.

As others did throughout the evening, Berdy was speaking of Blue's removal of Console Operators from the Tramway in an attempt to save money. According to RIRA President Patrick Stewart, Blue has admitted no actual economies were achieved by the move, and Stewart describes Blue as "grossly negligent" in eliminating the Console Operator position, which RIRA considers necessary for safe operation. Tramway workers (see related story, this page) and others have contended that a Console Operator would have seen last week's accident about to happen, and would have been able to prevent it.

"The information Jerry Blue puts out is inaccurate and incomplete and useless," Berdy said, calling the RIOC President "the great non-communicator." "His public meetings are a sham," she charged, "to meet the letter of the law and say a meeting was held."

"We are now here to unite our community, to fight for our Tram, to bring back our community spirit, be proud of where we live. We will be here long after Mr. Blue, so it's time to say goodbye to Mr. Blue, and it's time to take back our Island, and have it run by our elected officials and our community – and not by hacks."

In opening the meeting, RIRA President Patrick Stewart expressed anger that Blue had taken a week to respond to the transit crisis created – for the disabled, elderly, and children

who attend school off-Island – by failing to provide the alternative bus service that has always been put on immediately in past Tramway shutdowns. Stewart also accused Blue of duplicity in asking for Island Public Purpose Funds, reserved for use by Island organizations for social purposes, to fund emergency buses despite the fact that Albany had already authorized the necessary funding.

The chair of RIRA's Tram Committee, Al Weinstein, spoke with even more than his usual fervor in condemning Blue and in speaking for restoration of console operators. He brought an empty chair to the microphone, slammed it down, and said: "My wife knows that I always try to speak in diplomatic language," he said, "but tonight I have to put that aside... This chair is the chair of the missing Dr. Blue. Tonight represents a special time for the future of Roosevelt Island. Now is the time, this is the place, to move ahead toward a more vibrant community. Tonight is the time that we are going to take our shackles off, and become the masters of our own destiny here on this Island. The Tram has always represented our quality of life, our lifeline... it is our Statue of Liberty, our George Washington Bridge, rolled into one. It is a sym-



Judith Berdy

bol of the Island's spirit and a truly indispensable part of daily life.

"Dr. Blue or not," Weinstein continued, "we are on a projectory that is unstoppable: the force of Roosevelt Island public opinion that will bring back the operation of the Tram and the safety net of the Tram, the console operators."

RIRA used the meeting as an opportunity to pass the hat, asking for funds to cover possible legal costs as it pursues various actions against RIOC and the State. RIRA Council member Joan Christianson announced a "T'Amato to D'Amato" campaign in an effort to enlist New York State's U.S. Senator in removal of Blue, who is widely believed to be a D'Amato lackey, appointed to the Presidency of RIOC by Governor George Pataki at D'Amato's behest. (See RIRA letter, page 3.)

See Town Meeting, page 7

Mayor Nominates Stewart, Whitaker

Mayor Rudy Giuliani is sending two Roosevelt Island names to the Governor as nominees for the Board of RIOC: **Patrick Stewart**, President of RIRA, and **Susan Whitaker**, Chair of the Roosevelt Island Council of Organizations. That news was brought to Wednesday night's Town Meeting by Lou Carbonetti, a resident who is a longtime friend of the Mayor.

Presuming both become RIOC Board members, the Island will have four resident members on the nine-member Board. The others are Ron Vass and David Kraut. Their terms have expired, however.

As one questioner, Joyce Mincheff, pointed out at Wednesday night's meeting, if the DHCR Commissioner or his representative votes with Island members of the RIOC Board, a 5-4 vote can be used to rein in Blue, or perhaps call for his ouster.



Al Weinstein with Jerome Blue's empty chair



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Elliot Isaac, on duty when his Tramway cabin was struck by the boom of a construction crane over the East River on January 27, simulates the moment just after the collision. His left hand, turned to a 45 degree angle, represents the Tramway cabin swinging back and upward after being struck. He has been praised by passengers who were aboard at the time of the accident for his cool handling of the situation.

Elliot Isaac: His own words

The cabin went up like the Titanic...

"Before this happened, we had to stop the Tram many times because, although the crane had limit switches [to prevent it from hitting the Tram], a number of times they didn't have the limit switches on. Time and time again these guys moved the crane without informing us. We had to stop the cabin many times [because they were too close or in the way]."

"We had three radios: one in the Manhattan token booth, one with the mechanics, and one with the supervisors. The cabin attendants didn't have that frequency. They didn't call [before the accident]."

"We got hit, before we reached tower #2, from the blind side and the cabin went up like the Titanic, straight up, and everybody fell straight to the seats, to the front, on one another. It went all the way up. A mechanic saw it from tower three. They said they had never seen the cabin go up that far before. The crane hit so hard the car just went straight up and down, so quickly."

Elliot Isaac was the Tramway employee aboard when Cabin #1 was hit last week by a construction crane. He provided this account of the incident in a conversation with The Main Street WIRE.

"I said, 'The damn crane!' I knew what it was right away. I was really angry. "We had a few passengers who were cut up pretty bad. "Once the cabin went up just like a swing, it swung a couple of times. We let them [the supervisor and cabin #2] know

that the crane hit us. My supervisor, Armando, hit the slow button. I really didn't have a chance to hit the slow button myself – I was holding on – but as he slowed it down it got more stable for us.

"Once it slowed down, it got stable. We moved slowly to pick up the mechanics, Ron Perez and Bob Kelly, on tower 3. If they had been on tower 2 they would have been injured. I let the ladder down, and let them through the hatch, and they came down and assisted me with the passengers. They helped everybody on the floor. Ron put a headband around one of the passengers. Some passengers were back up on their feet, but I told them, if you're on the floor, just stay there. They were in shock, some of them, and shouldn't move."

"As soon as we got to Manhattan I went to the booth and asked the booth attendant if he had heard from the crane on the radio, and he hadn't heard anything. So as soon as I did that, I knew they were careless and didn't notify us."

"Afterward, I was really mad because it all could have been avoided if there had been a Console Operator in the booth."

"These people... I think of all of them as my neighbors. Where I live, I leave for work at 4:00 a.m. I never see my own neighbors. I think of these people on Roosevelt Island as my neighbors."



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Well over 400 attended this week's standing-room-only Town Meeting. Many others were turned away by Public Safety officers for safety reasons. Applause was frequent and sustained.

Jefferson and I

With the very changeable weather, I've been confined to the apartment more than I like to be, so I've been reading even more than usual, including a bit of political history. I finally have decided that, although raised by a GOP grandfather, most of the time my reactions would label me a follower of Thomas Jefferson, who championed social responsibility and mistrusted taking too much power away from individuals and their communities. Or maybe it's just that recent events here have convinced me Jefferson was right.



A Time to Rise Up

As this is being written, the Island is preparing to attend a Town Meeting. Indications are that it will be well attended; a number of people have assured me that they will be there, perhaps spurred by *The WIRE's* special edition. Now is the time for those of you who have been sitting things out to get off your seats and rise up in protest with those of us who have been carrying the fight for so long.

Worst Regards

That Jerome Blue, president of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), did not immediately provide alternate transportation after the Tram was struck by the crane boom last week once again indicates how little regard he holds for us. Especially for our children, disabled and seniors. And if he couldn't reason that out for himself, there is lots of history available here to tell him how such emergencies were handled in the past by capable administrators. One of the problems that Blue perhaps faced in making such a no-brainer decision might have been caused by him. Remember all those firings of veteran personnel? If there is no one around to ask for advice, the buck stops pretty quickly.

A Course of Action

What actions might be taken during RIRA's Town Meeting will be covered in our news columns this issue. The RIRA goals were listed in our "extra" Tuesday. It is a list that we all deserve, not as residents of the Island, but as taxpayers of New York City and State.



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island observer

If you're wondering what you, personally, might do to further the goals RIRA set forth in Wednesday night's Town Meeting... The Governor's telephone number is (212) 681-4580. Call and say you've had it with mismanagement of Roosevelt Island by Al D'Amato's camp follower, Jerome Blue. Ask that your message be passed on to the relevant aide to George Pataki. Or call the office of Senator Al himself: (212) 947-7390. Tell the message-taker that you know Blue is posted here as a parking spot for someone who knows too much about AI, and too little about how to run this place - and you want him out. And while you're talking to the Governor's office, tell them you want Island residents to *elect* the members of the RIOC Board... all of them. Remind them this is a democracy. Finally, make a contribution to **The RIRA Action Fund, PO Box 335, Roosevelt Island, NY 10044**, because it's clear some costly action lies ahead.

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters to the Editor, to the community, and to officials, and will consider publication *Name Withheld* basis, but the writer's name, address, and telephone number must be provided. Preferred methods of submission: IBM-compatible 3.5" floppy disk (any word-processing software) left at 531 Main Street for *The WIRE*; by ASCII text email (72260.20@compuserve.com); or typed, double-spaced copy left at 531 Main Street or faxed to (212) 755-2540. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered. All letters are subject to editing for length and clarity.

To the Editor:

It has been our intention from the very beginning to provide the good people of Roosevelt Island with the very best megastore possible. We wanted a store which would provide most of the needs for all the Islanders. We have invested a great deal of time, effort and considerable expense to bring the store to a level which the island deserves. We sincerely feel we have created a quality supermarket, with first class products and fair pricing. We may not be the least expensive on every item, but when our sale items are compared to competitor sale items or regular prices, and comparable products are matched and compared fairly, we are most competitive. The article "Comparison Shopper" by Nina Lublin was skewed to reflect unfavorably on our store. There is not a \$77 vs \$60 difference in the market basket of the items that were compared. For example, your reporter put a price of \$5.99 for Holland Red Peppers which are imported vs the ordinary red peppers in the Trade Fair and Associated. The common red peppers we also carry in our store at competitive prices. I am not going to apologize for carrying first class products. The other uncharacteristic items compared were for example, a 6 roll pack of Scott tissue to a 6 roll pack of Marcal. The quality between these two products is miles apart and of course is reflected in the retail price. On some of the other items like detergent, they had Wisk on sale and we had All or Tide on sale. Your reporter unfairly picked out my retail price against their sale price. In our meat department, we carry certified Angus beef and Perdue Chickens, and all I ask you to do is taste the difference. Again, I will not apologize for carrying premium class products. However, that which made me most angry was the fact there will always be a fluctuation of a dime (higher or lower) in the market place. The way your paper presented it, with the market basket being \$77 vs. \$60, is completely misleading to the consumer who reads the bottom line. The bottom line difference in your article was derived unfairly and inaccurately.

John Catsimatidis
Chairman & CEO

[Editor's note: Scott and Marcal items, and others where brands were not comparable, were not included in the totals shown. The shopping list used was created in advance without information on what specials were on offer at the stores surveyed.]

Dear Councilmember Miller:
This is in response to the June 30 letter sent by Assemblymember Grannis and you regarding MetroCard free transfers for certain trips made to and from Roosevelt Island. As your letter stated, the MetroCard automated fare collection system is technologically capable of handling rail-to-rail transfers. While rail-to-rail transfers improve customer convenience, they also offer additional opportunities for customers to make free roundtrips so there is concern over revenue loss. We are working on ways to minimize the potential for fare abuse before introducing a limited number of rail-to-rail transfers. Although 63rd Street line customers already have access to all East side buses, we will take your suggestion of a walking transfer from Lexington Avenue-63rd Street to 59th Street-Lexington Avenue under advisement. Extending free transfers to Roosevelt Island Tram customers poses both policy and operational issues. MetroCard equipment would have to be procured for and installed on the Tram before it could be included in the free transfer program. Additionally, the revenue implications of including the tram in the free transfer program would have to be quantified and a plan for dealing with the revenue shortfall would have to be developed. Any decision to include the Roosevelt Island tram in the MetroCard program would have to be approved by the MTA Board as well. Thank you for bringing these suggestions to our attention. If I may be of further assistance on this or any other transit-related matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Lawrence G. Reuter
President, MTA

To the Editor:
I am surprised that, in *The Main Street Wire* issue of January 24, my name was utilized in a letter to the editor without the publication attempting to contact me for a response or an explanation. To clarify, here is a summary of the situation that the letter referred to. I was accused of neglecting my child medically by Roosevelt Island's PS217, after I had discontinued the daily dosage of a certain medication intended as a sedative. I did so upon reading studies that suggest that this substance might inhibit physical growth in some children. *This letter continues on page 7*
More Letters on pages 3 & 7

... More Letters ...

Sen. Alphonse D'Amato
370 7th Avenue
New York, NY 10001

Dear Senator D'Amato:

Your longtime political associate, Jerome Blue, is an incompetent who is destroying Roosevelt Island. He's been at it for too long, and it has to stop.

We know he is in his position, as President of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, because you have caused his appointment to be made. **We want him out. Now.**

Blue's 20 months have been marked by mismanagement, disregard for the community and its residents, a neglect and gradual degradation of the physical facilities of the Island, and a total unwillingness to work with residents and the residents' elected representatives (in the Residents Association and in the City Council, the State Assembly, and the U.S. House of Representatives).

Last week's Tramway accident, in which a dozen people were injured, is only the most recent example – an



Joan Christianson and a "T'Amato for D'Amato"

and no children were on board.

As your constituents, we need your help. We need you to stop excusing yourself from this matter by claiming "it's a state affair." If you must provide a place for Blue, *please* put him somewhere else – where it won't be possible for him to affect adversely the lives of citizens of the State of New York. Please help us restore our community to the wonderful place it was before Blue arrived and began behaving like a petty dictator.

As voters and taxpayers, we are entitled to competent and effective

local government. **We hold you responsible** for the fiasco Jerome Blue's management of Roosevelt Island represents.

We ask that you act swiftly to work with the Governor to correct this situation. We will wait only a short time before moving to escalate our attempts to draw additional media attention to this matter.

These tomatoes are a gift from the people of Roosevelt Island. We are delivering them to you in the hope that you and Governor Pataki will be able to make a salad and eat it in peace and harmony. We hope you and the Governor will use these tomatoes for the purpose God intended, but please understand that – in the age-old tradition of throwing fruit and vegetables at those who perform poorly – those hundreds of protesters last night wanted very much to throw them at Jerome Blue, the Governor, and you. As this election year goes on, we hope we will not have reason to throw these at you, symbolically, across the State of New York.

[For] the angry, concerned and frustrated residents of Roosevelt Island,

**Patrick Stewart
President, RIRA**

To the Editor:

After last week's accident involving the Roosevelt Island Tram, *The New York Times* ran an article claiming that perhaps the "quaint...little red cars" are dispensable. I wholeheartedly disagree, and I know that Roosevelt Island's residents share my sentiments.

Even though a subway runs to the island, half of the 6,000 Roosevelt Islanders a day who use public transportation take the tram. Why is the number of tram riders so high? Simply because many people feel safer traveling above the city in the Tram, rather than underneath the streets in the dark subway. For the senior and disabled residents and schoolchildren, the tram is the easiest and most secure transportation option. These reasons alone validate the tram's significance as an essential lifeline for Roosevelt Island.

The quick repair of the tram should be the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation's (RIOC) top priority, as well as determining why this acci-

dent happened. I, along with Assemblyman Pete Grannis and Councilman Gifford Miller, have written to the National Transportation Safety Board to investigate the accident. It is essential that we understand why this accident happened so that we will be able to prevent further catastrophes from occurring. Eleven people were injured in this accident—that is eleven people too many.

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

Dear Dr. Blue:

The article in *The New York Times* on Sunday, February 1, "Damaged Roosevelt Island Tram to Be Out of Service 'Indefinitely,'" raises a number of serious questions concerning transportation options for Island residents as well as questions about the impact of this unfortunate incident on RIOC's budget. We request that you provide us with an immediate response to the following questions:

With the Tram still out of service, what plans have you made to accommodate the thousands of seniors, school children, disabled residents and others who rely on this service?

Do you have any contingency plans for transporting these riders if this or another tram outage extends beyond the planned February 22 start of track work on the B and the Q subway lines?

How much will it cost to repair the damage caused by this accident?

Other than outlays for immediate repairs, do you anticipate other costs related to the accident? If so, would you please itemize them for us?

Since the Governor cut off support for RIOC in last year's State Budget and has done so again in his just released proposed budget for FY 1998-99, where will the money come from for repairing the Tram and covering other costs related to the accident?

Thank you for your immediate attention to this request. If we can be of help with getting the Tram back in service promptly, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress
Alexander B. Grannis
Member of Assembly
A. Gifford Miller
Member of Council

While we were at our Town Meeting Wednesday night, my wife, Karen, was in a cab in Chicago, on her way to a convention dinner with three businessmen she had just been introduced to. They were respectively from Palm Beach, Atlanta and San Diego. Someone asked where she was from, and she gave her standard "little island in the East River" speech. Two of the men, simultaneously, said "Oh, Roseately Island," and one of them went on to ask, "wasn't there an accident on that cable car thing last week?"

If they know about us in Florida and Georgia, why can't we get anyone in Albany to pay the least attention?

I was so very proud of all of you Wednesday night. So humbled by the capacity for endless devoted hard work by the members of the Common Council, so grateful for our elected representatives, Gifford Miller, Pete Grannis, and

RIRA President's Column

Carolyn Maloney, each of whom has worked so tirelessly in behalf of our small community. So reassured by the caliber of both Joe Lynch and Otis Jones, whose professionalism as public servants is so great.

George Pataki and Jerry Blue have determined that as residents in their special community, we are not entitled to democracy. Jerry Blue, in his arrogance, has shown us again and again that he will not be satisfied with any title less than King, able to rule with arbitrary, absolute authority.

This tin-pot tyrant is incapable, seemingly, of understanding that in his role here he has not been placed on the throne he so craves, but has been instead officially designated a trusted public servant for the public benefit of the residents of this community. That is, in fact, the literal definition of his official role, and in it he has failed absolutely.

We have been able to corroborate that Blue was aware of the emergency funds designated by the State to provide alternative bus transportation while the Tram was down before he made the request to his Board members to use the residents' Public Purpose Funds for that purpose. His tiny vans are a further insult hurled at the community. His refusal to communicate with the representatives of the community on any of the pressing issues of our transportation crisis is an entire abrogation of his responsibility. His layoff of the Tram workers is mean-spirited at best.

There were more than a dozen representatives of the New York press at our Town Meeting, and that will, no doubt, bring further aid to our cause. It is amazing to me that we must go to such lengths before Governor Pataki will acknowledge even our existence, let alone our very real plight at the hands of his personal appointee.

I deeply believe that democracy will win out on Roosevelt Island eventually, thanks to all your efforts.

I want to make special mention of, and express my deep personal gratitude to, Al Weinstein, without whose tireless and passionate advocacy of Tram safety and Tram availability to the community, we would most likely at this point be without a Tram at all. We all are indebted to him far more than we know.



Patrick Stewart



Deterioration of Blackwell House is evident in this photo of its roof with a straight line superimposed. The building is the oldest still standing on Roosevelt Island, and one of the oldest in New York City. Although there is litigation to evict a tenant, the RIOC still has the obligation to maintain the property, according to attorney James Kaufman, an Island resident. Michael Greason of RIOC has responded that work must await conclusion of legal action.



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COMING UP

Compiled by Claire Friedland • 317-8523

Sun., Feb 8, Health Club Open House, 12-4 p.m., Westview Health Club, 625 Main Street. Fitness demonstrations, free food and drinks.

Mon., Feb. 9, Roosevelt Island Toastmasters Mid-Season Open House Meeting, 8:00 p.m. For information call **935-3017**.

Thur., Feb. 12, 10:00 a.m. RIOC Board Meeting, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Individuals wishing to address the Board meeting must register in advance at **832-4540**.

Thur., Feb. 12, Windows on Welfare photographic exhibit. Photos by Dannielle B. Hayes of Welfare (Roosevelt) Island in 1968. **Opening reception**, 6-8 p.m. Cultural Center. Exhibit continues through March 15.

Sun., Feb. 15, Roosevelt Island Art Association regular meeting. Art Studio, 12th floor, 546 Main Street. Live model sessions now being planned. **421-5939**.

Sun., Feb. 15, Dining-Out Group of Roosevelt Island trip to Greenfields, Corona, Queens. To join, or for information, call Harry Small at **583-0064**.

Fri.-Sat., Feb. 20-21, next scheduled issue of *The Main Street WIRE*. Deadlines: Advertising in the paper, Fri., Feb. 13; in *The Bag* (stuffers), Mon., Feb. 16. Future issues March 6, 20, April 3, 17, and generally every two weeks. **Phone/fax** for news, (212) **826-9055/755-2540**; phone/fax for advertising inquiries, (212) **751-8214/755-2540**; phone & fax for events, **317-8523**.

Mon., Feb. 23, Roosevelt Island Toastmasters Mid-Season Open House Meeting, 8:00 p.m. For information call **935-3017**.

Wed., Mar. 4, meeting of the Common Council of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Public invited, and invited to make comments during the public session at the beginning of the meeting. For information, **317-3223**.

At the Senior Center

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Stay Well (Exercise), Mondays 10-11 a.m., Wednesdays 9:30-10 a.m.

Bingo, Tuesdays 1:30 p.m.

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Arts & Crafts, Mon. 12:45-2:30 p.m.

Scheduled activities & events:

Tuesdays, 10-12 a.m. & 1-3 p.m., **Tax help**

Thur., Feb. 12, 10:30 a.m., **Personal Safety Lecture**, 114th Precinct

Fri., Feb. 13, 8:00 p.m., **Valentine & Birthday Party**

Tue., Feb. 17, 10:30 a.m., **Personal Emergency Reponse System**

Public Safety Blotter

Jan. 13 – Various charges, 300 Main Street. An Island resident, Jay Levine, was taken into custody when he allegedly refused to pay a return-trip fare on the Tram after escorting a visitor to the Manhattan station. When PSD officers tried to arrest him, he reportedly resisted. He was charged with theft of services, resisting arrest, criminal mischief and disorderly conduct.

January 21 – Criminal Mischief, 560 Main Street. A PSD officer discovered that three dryers on the 3rd floor laundry room had been broken into. The area was searched with negative results.

January 25 – Criminal Mischief, 560 Main Street. A PSD officer passing by at 3:26 a.m. spotted a shadow going by a window in a laundry room and investigated. He found that four coin slots in the washers were loose enough to be removed.

January 26 – Various charges, 546 Main Street. A RIHM maintenance worker phoned the PSD report-

ing that two people were breaking open coin boxes in washers. Officers responded and allegedly found one man with a hand in a washer trying to retrieve coins and dropping several quarters. Another intruder was also placed under arrest. They were searched and \$66 in quarters as retrieved from the first male; \$26.50 from the second male, as well as a knife. They were charged with criminal mischief, possession of stolen property, petty larceny, etc. Perpetrator #2 was also charged with possession of a knife. The pair were identified as Barrish Bromidge, 22, and Emanuel Wilson, 17, both of 560 Main Street.

February 1 – 510 Main Street. A deliverer for a local restaurant reported that after making a delivery he got into an elevator that held another passenger. The latter allegedly asked him how much money he had. When he said none, the man searched the victim and took \$20 from his pocket. PSD officers conducted a search for the perpetrator without success.

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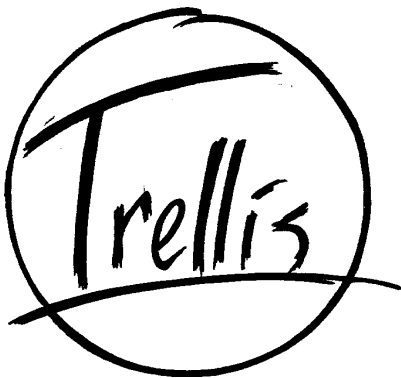
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Season of Love, Season of Caring

Valentine's Day presents an opportunity to pay special tribute to those to whom we give our warmest affections, but it's more than a season of love... It's also a season of caring. And our Island is one of the most caring communities in the world. This is the place where every third person says hello on the street. It's the place where you wave, across the restaurant, to every third person who walks in the door.

At Trellis, we're proud of our part in that feeling of community and closeness. For the friendliest small town in the toughest big city in the world, we're the community gathering place at the center of it all.

You supply the love and caring.
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the music, too.**

JAZZ

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-NY Daily News



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Letters

from page 2

The school made this accusation before the New York Bureau of Child Protective Services. Not surprisingly, the school's accusation of medical neglect was dismissed as unfounded by the New York City Bureau of Child Protective Services, after its regulatory two visits.

My son's pediatrician felt that the accusation had no medical basis. (Shouldn't an official accusation of "medical neglect" be supported by a written statement from a physician? I saw no evidence of that.) My lawyer told me I was being harassed (but she believed I had no legal recourse - though the whole thing smells like a violation of civil rights to me). Even the Bureau caseworker who visited us was skeptical of the accusation, of its source and its motivations, and commented on it. Allow me to explain.

I had been dissatisfied with the quality of my son's education at PS217, and had expressed that dissatisfaction in meetings at the school by asking questions, offering suggestions and requesting guidance. My overtures were met with either manifest hostility or patronizing reassurances of the child's scholastic progress (despite concrete evidence to the contrary).

But the worst part is, by charging me with "medical neglect", PS217 tried to force me to continue to sedate my son shortly after I had requested that his educational needs be better addressed. A novel approach to education, indeed I could elaborate on the magnificently Orwellian overtones of the school's actions, but I won't.

Suffice it to say that after I obtained his transfer to a funded private school, my son appears to be happier, better adjusted, and finally learning; and that so far, there have been no demands for sedation from the educators who now minister to his needs. But then, I expected as much.

You see, the sad message contained in all of this is that many caring parents would rather withdraw their kids from public school than attempt to battle the system's bureaucracy, which appears more concerned with protecting educator's jobs than with educating children.

As far as Roosevelt Island, I am not alone. Other controversial incidents have sparked a grass roots struggle to make the local school more responsive to the community's needs (though this may be denied by some elements whose representative nature I seriously question).

I continue to sympathize with the community's efforts, but the bottom line is, I have removed my son from PS217. I can only hope that somehow, somewhere, somebody in government realizes that by refusing to acknowledge the parents and children they are supposed to serve, the public schools of this country may be contributing to their own demise.

Patricia Duarte Perez

To the Editor:

Wednesday night's town meeting was a disappointment. It's marvelous that RIRA has enough clout to pull elected officials (or at least their representatives) from all levels of government to attend such meetings. However, they should have been required to sit and listen, not allowed to natter on endlessly. Did the person who set the 3-1/2 minute time limit even once enforce it?

Furthermore, the standing-room-only crowd most decidedly did *not* come to this meeting to hear the same complaints and allegations they've heard so many times before raised by the same people who get so much ink in *The WIRE* issue after issue. Those of us who were attending a town meeting for the first time were scolded in person, as we have been previously in print, for not showing any community spirit before. But I gotta say, if every RIRA meeting is run the way this one was, they've blown a golden opportunity to foster an increased level of community participation.

What we needed to do was to extract promises from the officials present about specific actions they can take to solve our transportation problems. We needed to make clear assignments for 1) getting tramway service restored ASAP (preferably with a console operator on duty), 2) delaying the planned cuts in subway service, and 3) getting Dr. Blue to provide bus service at state expense until tramway service is restored.

Although some new information was presented during the first ninety minutes, and the news about the Mayor's appointment of two residents to the RIOC board was heartening, over half the people in attendance at the beginning of the meeting gave up and went home well before 10 p.m., convinced that no effective, focused discussion (much less action) was likely to take place. All the panelists claimed to have tried everything they could think of to get Dr. Blue to do what we need done, but they admitted they haven't had a great deal of success. Maybe it's time to add a few new techniques to our repertoire. How about non-violent protest? How about sit-ins at the RIOC office? How about making Dr. Blue call Public Safety to get protesters out of his face? How about the mother of all voter registration drives, and a pledge drive for those already registered, so we can throw Pataki and D'Amato (and therefore their appointee, Blue) out of office?

I applaud the efforts of all those present Wednesday night who are working night and day to make our common life better, and I want to be part of the solution. The fact that the place was packed indicates that I'm not alone. Now that RIRA's got our attention, enough commitment to get us out of our homes on a nasty night, and our names on that sign-in sheet, let's hope they don't squander all this collective energy. No more speeches, put us to work!

Dawn Helene

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Town Meeting

from page 1

There was little hard information in Wednesday night's meeting, though Attorney James Kaufman, a member of the RIRA Council, reported that the Swiss company brought in to evaluate the Tramway after last week's accident has now signed off on its safety. Kaufman reported the Department of Labor has also signed off on the Tram as a safe workplace. The implication is that the only force keeping the Tram from resuming operation is Blue.

Like others, Kaufman praised DHCR Acting Commissioner Joseph Lynch and his deputy, Otis Jones, as "hand-working and honest friends of the Island" and portrayed them as being just as frustrated as Island residents are by Blue's RIOC administration. "They understand the ramifications of the mismanagement of this island," Kaufman said. "Otis and others told him, instructed him, to have buses running late Friday or early Saturday. In essence, the instructions were ignored. He defied the instructions. Jerry Blue is ignoring the mandate of his bosses." This was followed by a brief chant from the audience: "Blue must go."

Kaufman pointed out that the Island's subway station is not acceptable transit, under the Americans with Disabilities Act, for many physically-challenged riders. "People with disabilities must have access, ingress and egress from the island," Kaufman said, pointing out

that "most of the disabled cannot get on the subway. The cars don't meet the platform. Escalators are too frequently not running. The elevator at 63rd Street [was] not functioning [recently], and no one in the station knew anything about it." Kaufman said the Tramway is essential for the Island's handicapped residents.

City Councilmember Gifford Miller condemned Blue's absence: "The person who is in charge of RIOC is in charge of this island... ultimately that person responds to us, to the residents of this island, and he should be here tonight to explain what's going on. I tried to get a meeting with Dr. Blue immediately after the accident. I can't report that I've had that meeting yet. It was supposed to be this morning, but Dr. Blue's schedule prevented that and it was put off until Friday... I'm sure if I don't meet with Dr. Blue soon, I'll meet with Godot."

Other elected officials represented at the Town Meeting were Assemblymember Pete Grannis and U.S. Representative Carolyn Maloney, who along with Miller were praised often by speakers for standing by the people of Roosevelt Island.

The Transit Authority was represented by Steve Strauss. To suggestions that subway track work be delayed until Tramway operations are restored, he offered an explanation that the February 22 start date for substitute shuttle service to two Manhattan stops, spaced

20 minutes apart, is firm because a complex 15-month construction schedule hangs in the balance. Strauss did say, however, that the MTA is actively investigating the possibility of free "walking rail-to-rail transfers" between the Q-line station at Lexington Avenue and 63rd Street, and the Lexington Avenue station at 59th and Lexington, and hopes to have an answer—not necessarily affirmative — by the February 22 start of a scheduled 15-month period of diminished service.



James Kaufman



Gifford Miller



RIRA President Patrick Stewart, Gwen AlmoDuvar, Joan Christianson, and Linda Heimer delivered "T'Amatos to D'Amato" Thursday morning, but were refused entry to his Manhattan office.

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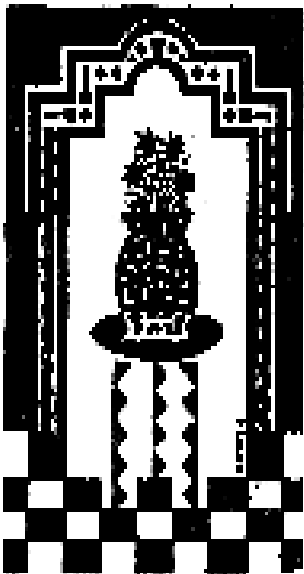
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