

Next scheduled issue
November 21

The Main Street WIRE

Roosevelt Island’s Community Newspaper

in association with Website NYC10044



Margery Rubin
All dressed up and ready to strut. Halloween was a hit, as always, as Housing Management put together the popular annual parade. More of Marge Rubin’s photos of the day’s participants appear on page 6.

A Record Turnout

Christianson is RIRA VP; Stewart Retains Top Spot

A record turnout of 1,566 residents voted Tuesday in the Residents Association election. Although detailed figures on voting in the general election will not be available for another two weeks or more, there are indications the level of interest in Island issues also drew voters to the polls and resulted in a higher-than-usual Island turnout for those contests.

Voters returned Patrick Stewart, running unopposed, to the RIRA Presidency, but gave him a new First Vice President, Joan Christianson, who will move up from her Common Council seat as a representative of Eastwood.

In most buildings, there were fewer candidates for Common Council than seats available, resulting in the election of all running. There were contests in two buildings, Rivercross and Westview.

In the results listed below, numbers next to building names indicate the number of Common Council seats allocated to the building. Winners are shown in boldface type. Incumbents are indicated by the symbol **i**.

Total votes cast	1,566	4 River Road (1)	
Ballot Question		Alvie Rivera	54
Yes 92.2%	1,049	10-40 River Road (8)	
No 7.8%	89	Sherie Helstien i	143
President		Matthew Katz i	142
Patrick Stewart i	1,337	A. Levitas Tanis	142
First Vice-President		Harry Small i	140
Joan Christianson	703	Jeremy Burns	136
Ronald Schuppert i	366	Tom Shaker	134
Frank Farance	173	546 Main Street (2)	
Common Council		Mary Lou Risley	234
Rivercross (3)		Joan Matula i	230
Linda Heimer	262	Eastwood (8)	
Al Weinstein i	206	Joan Christianson i	242
Ron Schuppert	179	Gwen Almo-Duvar i	213
Malcolm Cohen i	104	Walter Hill i	212
Jeff Hochman i	91	Vicki Feinmel i	209
Westview (3)		James Kaufman i	208
Deidre Breslin i	108	Joyce Mincheff	201
Rhoda Jacklin	100	Byron Gaspard i	197
Zakieh Wazani i	88	Island House (4)	
Joseph Palermo i	85	Judith Berdy i	153
Ken Diebner	72	Joan Brooks i	147
2 River Road (1)		Graham Cannon	113
Kathie Niederhoffer	43	Frank Farance i	101

Self-Governance Wins Ballot Appeal By 92%

News Analysis by Dick Lutz

Roosevelt Island residents overwhelmingly voted Yes on Tuesday’s ballot question calling for local elected control of the governmental entity that manages the Island. The vote has no legal effect, but it makes public record of a decisive popular rejection of New York State management of the Island – and popular acceptance of a plan for an elected Board of Resident Directors empowered to hire professional community management.

The uncontested re-election of Patrick Stewart as President of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA) can be seen as a further signal of resident disgust with the administration of Dr. Jerome Blue, President of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC). For the two years of his first term as RIRA President, Stewart has been a symbol of unwavering opposition to the style and substance of Blue’s management.

And the general election defeat of Senator Alfonse D’Amato, Blue’s political sponsor as an appointee of Governor George Pataki’s administration, is seen by many as the dominant factor in shaping a new political landscape that could serve as the backdrop for changes in the way Roosevelt Island is run.

As a result, many Island leaders view the next several weeks as a period of potential changes – a replacement for Blue, perhaps, or an opportunity to prepare the way for sympathetic State consideration of Assemblymember Pete Grannis’s proposed legislation for self-governance of the Island. Just what change is likely – or even reasonable to expect – remains a major unknown.

Grannis commented Thursday that the vote was “a stunning statement about how angry people are about how the Island has been managed under the current administration.” He said, “The goal now will be to mobilize that dissatisfaction to get a bill through both Houses of the legislature.”

Majority approval of the idea of democratic self-government was expected, but the 1,046 to 89 margin

of affirmation was something of a pleasant surprise for members of the Maple Tree Group (MTG), who had worked since July 7, 1997, to assess the Island’s condition and needs, and produce the draft legislation – now the Grannis bill – addressing a clearly-identified need for greater resident participation in guidance of Island affairs.

MTG leader David Bauer responded to the vote by calling it a significant victory. “The people of Roosevelt Island have won the second skirmish with an overwhelming vote to proceed with the Drive for Democracy. We are in a struggle for our Island and the future looks bright.

“The first skirmish ended with success when the State Assembly legislative drafting service cleared the See **Self-Governance**, page 6

As Election Day Neared, Jerry Blue Starred in a Minor Backstage Drama

News Analysis by Dick Lutz

Would the RIRA voting be on machines, or not?

Would RIOC ever write the check?

In the final days before Tuesday’s election, those questions hovered in the zone of conflict between Jerome Blue’s administration at the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) and the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA). Before the final answers were known, the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) was drawn in, and Blue appeared to be doing everything possible to defy not only his boss at DHCR, but the RIOC Board, as well. It became a drama worthy of a bad high school production.

This account was pieced together through interviews with Audrey Berman, who ran the election for RIRA; See **Blue**, page 6

For RIRA’s Non-Citizen Voters, A Special Experience with American Democracy

by Anusha Shrivastava

If you wanted to see the mosaic nature of Roosevelt Island in its full glory, you should have been at PS/IS 217 on Election Day. That’s when residents who are citizens of countries as far apart on the globe as Brazil and Japan queued up to vote for RIRA officers and on Island self-governance. Italian Michele Falavigna was delighted that non-US citizens could vote. “Given the high percentage of aliens on the Island, it is good to involve them,” said Falavigna, who works at the UN and returns to Italy each time he has to vote.

While their level of enthusiasm was equally high, the reasons motivating the “aliens” to exercise their right were varied. Yashiro and Naoko Nagata moved to the Island six months ago and voted so that they could “begin participating in Island politics.” Fellow Japanese Takashi and Tomoko Yoshimura have lived here for over five years and voted because the elections

would “help make decisions about the governance of the Island.”

Albert E. Neyfakh is a refugee from the former Soviet Union who moved to the US in 1992. “I lived in an anti-democratic country all

my life, so now I want to participate in the democratic process.”

Contrary to his experience is that of Sri Lankans’ Chandi and Arjuna Kadirgamar, who voted diligently

See **Voters**, page 7



On Tuesday at PS/IS 217, Lawrence Brodsky helped a foreign resident with voting procedure in the RIRA election.

Put Your Business Card in the Thanksgiving WIRE

Promote business, or do it just to support your community newspaper – *deadline Fri., 11/13* – see page 3

Three Viewpoints: Getting Serious About Self-Government

A BID for RI?

On Tuesday, we elected people to represent us at the Federal, State and City levels of government. On Tuesday, we also voted overwhelmingly in favor of the self-evident notion that we on Roosevelt Island should be able to vote for people to represent us at the local level of government as well.

A week earlier, some 100 of us had gathered in the Chapel to hear how the movement for local self-rule was faring and how it was likely to proceed. Local rule for Roosevelt Island will require State legislation. Last week's WIRE reported that Assemblymember Pete Grannis was guardedly optimistic about the likelihood of the necessary legislation making its way through Albany over the next year or two. (Incidentally, Grannis deserves boundless thanks from this community for his consistent tending to our needs. He is truly one of the finest examples of what a politician should be like – helping his constituents when their requests are legitimate but letting them know when their demands are unreasonable.)

It's been some time since I attended a Town Meeting. By the end of this one, two things seemed clear to me.

This Won't Be Easy... Is There An Alternative?

Grannis, a Democratic Assemblymember, explained that the legislative process would require the active support of a Republican member of the State Senate. Republicans control the latter body and it is almost impossible to pass legislation without their support. The legislation would then have to pass through the Governor's office. It would be impossible, Grannis explained, to override a Pataki veto.

Given those barriers, it seems prudent to have an alternative plan. A possibility is a Business Improvement District (BID). In many parts of the City, you can see security and maintenance services being provided by uniformed individuals who are not, however, wearing New York City uniforms. A consortium of local businesses and residents who pay for their services – a BID – employs these people. There is existing legislation that provides for the creation of these BIDs. Their creation requires the cooperation of City government. A BID could provide most – perhaps even all – of what we are looking for in self-rule without requiring the State Legislature to pass legislation.

While I think it would be preferable to have home rule for Roosevelt Island established by an act of the Legislature, we should put some energy into simultaneously investigating what it would take to create a Business Improvement District for our community.

This Won't Be Easy... We'll Need Money

Another thing seemed clear at the Town Meeting. Some of the attendees believed that Roosevelt Island could expect to see its State subsidy return if only we had local rule.

Assemblymember Grannis did, in fact, list several sources of funds for specific Island needs that he believed could have been obtained had our leadership but asked for it. But these are not the multi-million dollar subsidies that we enjoyed in our earlier years.

The rationale for our State subsidy was that we were to become self-sufficient when our population reached 20,000. We've been stuck at under half that number because the State did not complete its task of developing the Island. We can't expect the State to continue its support if the community blocks further development. Of course, the State can't expect the community to allow development to proceed without significant participation by our representatives in the process.

But we mustn't delude ourselves. If we win the right to self-rule, our representatives will be faced with substantial financial problems – problems that will require further development for their resolution.

Jack Resnick

On Tuesday, the Island voted decisively for elected self-governance and professional community management. Newly re-elected Assemblymember Pete Grannis has already introduced proposed legislation originally drafted by the Maple Tree Group. And the start of a new term for Governor George Pataki may produce some changes in his portfolio of appointments.

Meanwhile, dialogues continue about how Grannis's bill might be fine-tuned, what alternatives might be available, and just how best to leverage the current situation.

To the left is WIRE Founding Publisher Jack Resnick's guest editorial on the Business Improvement District model as a possibility for the Island. We also present the thoughts of RIOC Board member David Kraut on his belief that the State of New York will require a role in any governmental structure for the Island. And new RIRA Common Council member Graham Cannon (right) writes on the need for hard work to take advantage of the current situation and climate.

On Keeping the State Involved & Interested

Editor's note: In the following discussion, RIOC Board member David Kraut discusses the question of a State role on the elected Board of Residents that would oversee Island operations under the self-governance legislation drafted by the Maple Tree Group and introduced in the State Assembly by Pete Grannis.

In his published agenda for the November 2 Maple Tree Group meeting, David Bauer raised several points which I would like to comment on. The agenda suggested, among other things, that the community should be discussing ex-officio, non-voting participation in Board affairs from the State level.

I perceive that giving only a non-voting status to certain State representatives will be a major stumbling block in the effort to develop self-government here. The State has a large investment on Roosevelt Island, and will want to protect that investment. There is a large bond debt to be retired, and the State will likely insist on enough oversight to be sure that process proceeds properly. We may well have to concede a seat on the Board to the Comptroller's office, at least until such time as the bondholders have been repaid.

Similarly, despite the fact that the current government of the State has shown little interest in our affairs, I remind everybody that this has not been the case in all the years since this community was founded. And there is no way to say what any future administration's interest might be. In any case, Roosevelt Island is an important part of the mental landscape of the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), even if DHCR itself currently plays a diminished role in State affairs. I suspect that DHCR will also want a voting say-so in our affairs during the life of the State's lease, although I see no compelling reason why the Commissioner of DHCR should automatically be chair of the board.

A further question is who will chair the board. Board chairs, by the nature of their position, have a strong role in the setting of agendas and the conduct of business through control of Board meetings. I suggest this issue might be a suitable subject for MTG to consider.

Bauer's agenda also raised a question concerning the range of Island residents who will be eligible to vote for the Board of Directors. I confess to being a little bit conservative in this area. As a former president of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA), I was and remain highly insistent that RIRA be open to all bona fide residents of voting age, whether or not they are citizens of the US or official New York residents or registered to vote in other

elections. However, I would remind the MTG that RIRA, representative voice of the Roosevelt Island community at large, is not a government entity, but rather a representational forum to express the community's needs to government. But the new, elected Board of Directors proposed by the MTG would, in fact, be a government, by most definitions of the term that I can imagine. In this case, I personally prefer that the franchise be circumscribed as carefully as it is in the other city, state, and federal elections in which we participate, and that voting eligibility should be determined by the New York City voter registration rolls.

This discussion brings up another point, by the way: What should be the function of RIRA under the new format? Properly speaking, this question does not come under the purview of the Maple Tree Group's mandate. But I believe that anyone who thinks RIRA's function will or should disappear under the new system is perhaps fatally sanguine. RIRA's function has always been to speak to governmental power on behalf of the community, and that function will always be as necessary in this polis as in all others.

David Kraut

Seizing the Day: Now the Tough Part

If 90% of life is just showing up, 90% of politics is recognizing and then seizing opportunity. For the last three years, we've had to deal with an adversarial, often malicious and always incompetent RIOC Administration. Again and again we've had to battle RIOC-generated threats to our quality of life ranging from collapsing infrastructure and declining public safety to the real possibility of a permanent shutdown of the Tram.

But last Tuesday, with our overwhelming vote for self-rule, the election of a reinvigorated RIRA, not to mention the defeat of Senator D'Amato, the election of Chuck Schumer, and even the reelection of Governor Pataki, we're suddenly confronted with one of those rare occasions when real change is possible.

Of course, the second rule of politics is that there's nothing more dangerous than victory. The easy assumption is that we've won; that Jerry Blue, as a D'Amato appendage, will somehow seamlessly disappear; that we can all return to Trellis, sip coffee into the wee hours and congratulate one another for a campaign well fought.

The truth is that the toughest part is only just beginning. Yes, the overwhelming majority of Islanders voted for self-rule, but they did so after a well-run voter education campaign capped by a well-organized get-out-the-vote operation. And the reality remains that not only are Jerry Blue and RIOC not going anywhere fast, but translating what was essentially an advisory vote into concrete action by the State



Legislature will take hard, focused and sophisticated work and a rededication to the unity of purpose that's gotten us this far.

Here's the politics. While Blue holds his job courtesy of his long-time relationship with ex-Senator D'Amato and his administration is staggeringly inept, his policies – especially his refusal to seek any kind of funding for the Island – accurately reflect the Governor's political philosophy. In other words, even if Blue goes, and that will take a fair amount of agitation, there's no guarantee that he won't be replaced with someone equally objectionable. That said, there's a fair probability that a Governor with White House aspirations might have concern about carrying a defeated Senator's patronage baggage into the glare of the national media spotlight – but it's going to be up to us to make that case. And it would be unfair not to point out that a Democratic Governor, absent protest to the contrary, could just as easily use the Island as a dumping ground for his/her own unqualified appointees.

The ballot initiative and the work of the Maple Tree Group that stands behind it offers another way and one that holds the promise of systemic, positive change – but it won't be easy. Self-government for Roosevelt Island requires significant changes in State law, which means passage of complicated legislation by the Democratic-controlled State Assembly, the Republican-controlled Senate, and finally the assent of Governor Pataki. We've crossed a major first hurdle with Assemblymember Pete Grannis's aggressive sponsorship of the initial Assembly bill. But in a political process where the vast majority of bills never come close to becoming law, the onus is on us to develop a cogent case and then effectively take our arguments to the key elected officials and opinion leaders who can help move this process forward. Grannis was unusually blunt and precisely correct when he reminded a Town Meeting last week that elected officials, especially on issues where they have no personal stake, often respond to the better lobbyists rather than the better arguments. So the more intense our pressure, the more sustained our campaign, the easier it is for him to find support and build the kind of consensus that can move the bill towards passage.

So what does all this mean for us? As a newly-elected RIRA Common Council member, it seems to me that we're going to have to make some choices. Do we want to invest our political capital and volunteer resources in a final push to get rid of Jerry Blue, or do we want to focus on the legislative route, or can we develop and sustain the kind of high-level campaigns where we can succeed at both? And then there's the host of other serious Island issues that remind all of us that the one option that isn't available is a return to the status quo anti. From Island development and the future of Mitchell Lama status at Westview and Island House to safety and co-oping in Eastwood or the opportunity to help build on the promise of a newly revitalized PS/IS 217, we're going to have to become even more professional, rigorous and inclusive about identifying and managing the issues we care about and then making sure we understand how to capture the attention and support of the public officials who can help us succeed. We're demanding the right to run ourselves and build a prosperous, successful community, under rights that millions of people across the country take for granted. But however legitimate our claim, no one's going to hand any of this to us on a platter. We're going to have to fight, hard, smart and together, every step of the way.

Graham Cannon

COMING UP

compiled by Claire Friedland • phone/fax 317-8523

Saturdays, 11:00 a.m., Time-Warner Cable channel 34, **Charlie's House**, produced by the Roosevelt Island Youth Program.

Mon., Nov. 9, Toastmasters. Visitors welcome. Information: 751-9577.

Tue., Nov. 10, 6:00 p.m., RIOC-sponsored meeting with **Southtown Developers**, including presentation of plans for residential buildings and use of open space, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Wed., Nov. 11, inaugural meeting of the newly-elected **RIRA Common Council**, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Thur., Nov. 12, 10:00 a.m., **Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation** Board meeting, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

At the Senior Center Every week

Mondays

9:30 **Stay Well** (exercise)

Tuesdays

10-11 **Blood Pressure Screening**

1:30 **Bingo**

Wednesdays

9:30 **Stay Well** (Stretch)

10:00 **English as 2nd Language** (Beg)

11:00 **English as 2nd** (Intermediate)

1:30 **Lotto** (Games)

Thursdays

10:00 **Tai Chi**

12:30 **Movie**

Fridays

10:00 **Billiards/Pool Table Open**

10:00 **English as Second Language**

12:30 **Blood Pressure Screening**

Saturdays

7:30 **Bingo & Games**

Special Events

Mon., Nov. 16, 1:00, **A New Light on Depression in Older Adults**, video presentation and discussion. William J. Apfeldorf, MD, Dept. of Psychiatry, New York Hospital-Cornel Medical Center.

Fri., Nov., 13, at the Senior Center, **International Fashion Show**. Refreshments & money tree. Donation, \$5. Information, **980-1888**.

Mon., Nov. 16, video/discussion, Senior Center, **Depression in Older Adults** (see Senior events listing).

Fri.-Sat., Nov. 20-21, Thanksgiving issue of **The Main Street WIRE**. **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, including business card page, Fri., Nov. 13; decision on stuffers for *The Bag*, Mon., Nov. 16. **Future issues:** November 21; December 5, 19; thereafter generally every two weeks. **Unscheduled extra editions** may be published as news and advertising support warrant; advertisers who would like to be included in one or more **extra** editions, *without advance notice at the time*, are invited to call **826-9055** to make their interest known. **To include your business card in the Thanksgiving issue, send it with \$35 check payable to The WIRE to The WIRE, 531 Main St. #1611, NYC10044.** Phone/fax for news, (212) **826-9055/755-2540**; urgent/breaking news, 917-353-1647; phone/fax for advertising inquiries, (212) **755-8214/755-2540**; phone & fax to list your Island organization's event here without charge, **317-8523** (provide call-back number for possible follow-up).

Sun., Dec. 13, Special Guest Performance, **The Morgan Scott Ballet Company**, Coler Hospital. Times & tickets: **848-6043**.

Mon., Dec. 14, Toastmasters. Visitors welcome. Information: 751-9577.

Fax or phone event information to 317-8523. Please provide a phone number for follow-up. There is no charge for listing Island events here.

RIRA President's Column

bara Allen, aide to Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields, was, of course, everywhere at once. Things seemed to work smoothly at the polls, with people happily chatting in line, and kids everywhere. The evening rush from six to nine even went smoothly.

The outcome of the election is, of course, enormously gratifying for RIRA, with a record-breaking number of votes. To put it in perspective, almost twice the percentage of our total Island population voted for RIRA as the percentage of the statewide population voted for either Shumer or Pataki – and theirs were considered landslides. It takes considerable effort to vote for RIRA. Another list to sign, another line to stand in, another (and different) voting booth to figure out. How RIOC management will be able to continue to call us “just another club” with these results defies logic.

The Common Council has worked tirelessly for the past two years, putting in countless hours of toil that should and would not have been necessary were there any minimal level of professionalism at RIOC. Had we been able to put the same effort into positive community service, the Island would be the place we all want it to be – the model it has been for so many years. Were we not constrained by the need to stop each new lunacy that comes out of RIOC, we could put our energies where we so long to put them, back into the community we all love in positive and expanding ways.

So we are very much heartened by your unprecedented support, and we thank you – each of you.

We welcome some remarkable new members to the Common Council, and perhaps even more remarkably, the willing return of our most able incumbents, offering with no illusions their unstinting energies for the next two years. Each of them has my respect and well-deserved gratitude.

As does Audrey Berman, who handled the thankless nightmare of the election operations and logistics with her own unique mixture of sound sanity and grace.

I also want to thank DHCR Commissioner Joe Lynch and the RIOC Board of Directors for their energetic help in securing the voting machines for the RIRA election.

Congratulations are due Al and Karen Lewis for their historic achievement in securing a permanent line on the New York State ballot for the Green Party.

And, lastly, I know that each of you will join me in wishing Al Weinstein a speedy end to his stay at New York Hospital. We are all waiting to welcome him home. It won't truly seem like RIRA until he gets back.



Patrick Stewart

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Deadline: Fri., Nov. 13 (publication date Nov. 21)

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If you prefer not to publish a business card but would like to support *The WIRE*, contribute \$20 and have your name on a list that will accompany the business cards. **Thank you for supporting *The Main Street WIRE*.**

Photos: If you photograph a community event and would like to make your work available to *The WIRE* for possible publication, please leave prints (retain your negatives) addressed to *The WIRE* at the lobby desk at Rivercross, 531 Main Street. Prints (color or b/w) or TIF scans to 3.5-inch disk preferred. Slides acceptable with adequate lead time to have prints made. Please provide identification, information for a credit line, and a phone number, along with a caption and other relevant information. Materials will be returned if return information is provided. Questions? Call (212) **826-9055**.

Letters

The WIRE welcomes letters to the Editor, to the community, and to/from officials, and will consider publication on a *Name Withheld* basis, but the writer's name, address, and telephone number must be provided. **Preferred methods of submission:** IBM-compatible 3.5-inch floppy disk (any wordprocessing software) left at 531 Main Street for *The WIRE*; by ASCII text e-mail (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. We cannot take dictation of letters by telephone. **All letters are subject to editing for length and clarity.**



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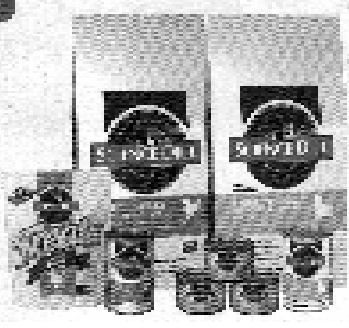


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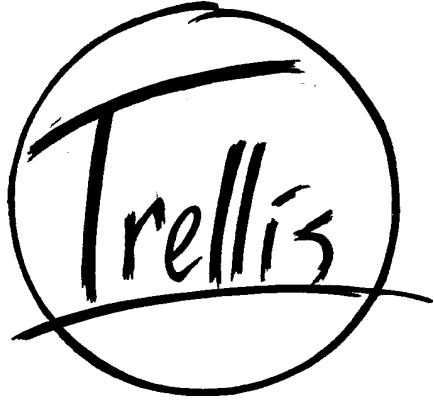


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Halloween Parade Brings Out Island’s Goblins



Photos by Margery Rubin

Self-Governance from page 1

Pete Grannis bill to free the Island from the rule of carpetbaggers.” The “carpetbaggers” comment is a reference to the fact that Blue does not live on Roosevelt Island, nor do any members of the RIOC Board, except for David Kraut. (Kraut and two other Islanders comment on the movement for elective democratic control of the Island on page 2.)

Bauer continued, “There is a whole series of skirmishes ahead. We cannot afford to pause in the effort. To date, a total of 77 people have added their collective wisdom to the development of the plan to be our own people.” Bauer paid tribute to several MTG members: Mary Camper-Titsingh, Vicki Feinmel, Laurence-Marie Brodsky, Sherie Helstien, Rhonda Jennings, John Miller, Linda Heimer, Patrick Stewart, and Ron Vass.

“The Maple Tree Group will continue to meet in weekly sessions,” Bauer added, pointing out that the meetings are open to all residents. (The hour-long sessions take place Mondays at 7:30 in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.) “There is room in this effort for the interests and talents of every Island resident,” Bauer said.

While not an official arm of RIRA, the Maple Tree Group effort has involved members of the RIRA Common Council, and it received a Common Council endorsement of the draft legislation several months ago.

Blue from page 1

Attorney Jim Kaufman, an active Republican who serves on the RIRA Common Council; a representative of the company that provided the voting machines; and two sources who insisted on anonymity.

Before it was over, Blue’s resistance to cooperating in the RIRA election extended even to a refusal to provide a temporary bus stop at PS/IS 217, where votes were cast in both the general election and the RIRA election.

The dilemma for Blue was classic: In the two and a half years of his administration, he has refused to recognize any special RIRA status as the elected representative of Island residents. Yet, he was being asked, then *told*, to write the check that would fund RIRA’s election. In Blue’s official vocabulary, RIRA has always been “one of 54 Island organizations” (the number varies), and he has declined every opportunity to use RIRA resources in shaping the Island’s future, or even to shape public opinion on his plans for the Island. In return, RIRA has successfully opposed Blue on moves to hike field fees for Little League and other youth sports, to stop Tramway service after 9:45 p.m., to put commercial hotel towers on Southpoint parkland, or build a high-ticket commercial eldercare facility on land long designated as Octagon Park.

Blue and RIRA have never really agreed on anything, in fact. RIRA is resident-oriented, and sees Blue’s RIOC as interested only in development and cutting services to fit a strangle-tight budget and refusing all offers of State funds, despite a standing agreement between City and State that the State would subsidize Roosevelt Island until its population reached 20,000.

So was set the stage on which the drama of the voting machines was played. And played. And played. If Jerome Blue is cast as its villain (and there seems to be little disagreement on that), its hero is probably Joe Lynch, the Acting Commissioner of DHCR. Significant cameos include a DHCR attorney and Frank Rubino, RIOC’s attorney, in a duel of legal strategies and opinions.

Act One

“The whole thing probably started with trying to arrange for the election machines at the end of August,” says Audrey Berman, recalling her first activities as the volunteer coordinator of the RIRA election process. “First, we tried to get them free, from government sources, but when that didn’t work out, I had conversations with Commissioner Lynch and Dr. Blue.”

As Jim Kaufman remembers it, when RIRA President Patrick Stewart and Common Council member Al Weinstein talked with him about the coming election, he saw an immediate equation that produced net value for DHCR by avoiding controversy over the legitimacy of the RIRA election. “I told Joe Lynch, ‘This is going to be the cheapest case you ever settled for this kind of nuisance value.’ He agreed completely, saying ‘We don’t want the elections challenged.’”

Lynch thus came down early on the side of supporting the funding of the RIRA elections – from the RIOC budget, as

participants recall it, though in a final rewrite of the script, it didn’t turn out that way.

“All along the way,” Kaufman continues in his account, “Jerry was putting up red flags – fictitious litigation against RIOC going back some years, erroneous legal opinions put forward by Frank Rubino, other stuff. It became obvious to me that Rubino, as RIOC counsel, with Blue, was working at cross-purposes with Joe Lynch. They had a divergence of interests.”

At that point, Lynch sought legal advice within DHCR, whose counsel provided a contrary legal opinion –effectively a trump card thrown across the Rubino interpretation of the law.

But Blue, whose RIOC budget is believed by many to be far tighter than he admits, was looking for ways to keep the \$2,650 expenditure out of his expense column. “Dr. Blue called me to say that he needed me to fill out forms requesting public purpose funds,” says Berman. “But I was getting a different feeling from Lynch.”

Act Two

Enter a minor player: Monika Graf, an employee of the Election Machine Service Company, Inc., provided Berman with a requested invoice to document her filing for public purpose funds – monies administered by RIOC but held for special community purposes only. Though Berman believed Lynch wanted the machines funded from the RIOC budget rather than public purpose funds, she decided to play along, giving Blue not only the application he wanted, but the invoice, as well.

Graf recalls that two years ago, “It took forever to get final payment” from RIOC, “so we had to have a guarantee of payment.”

Berman presented her case to Blue’s Advisory Committee, believing it was essentially a formality, given the assurances she had from Joe Lynch that the costs would be covered. But the next day, she had an urgent fax from Graf: “Call me ASAP. I’ve just gotten a nasty note from RIOC. They’re not going to pay for the machines.”

The letter, from General Counsel Frank Rubino, was blunt: “I have included with this fax a copy of an original invoice that has come into my possession. This letter is to inform you that the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation cannot honor this invoice... The order was not placed by an authorized party nor are any of the parties listed on the invoices employees or agents of this corporation.” Referring to routine inclusion of RIOC’s tax-exempt number on the invoice, Rubino concluded his letter, “In addition, the use of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation’s tax exempt number without its expressed permission may constitute a violation under the New York State Tax Law and the New York State Penal Code.”

Berman remembers that at the Advisory Committee meeting, “Blue had said nothing to me. At that point I became somewhat livid.” She called Lynch, and received renewed assurances from him that the funding would be forthcoming, then tried to reach both Rubino and Blue, who did not return her calls. Instead, she received calls from another bit player, RIOC employee Nicole John. After several exchanges, Berman re-

fused to speak further with her, saying the matter was too far along to brief her fully on background details.

Act Three

Under State law and RIOC operating procedures, Blue could have the check for \$2,650 – a relatively minor amount in the scheme of things – written on his own authority. That, essentially, was what Joe Lynch had asked of him.

But as the road blocks continued to appear, Lynch took the matter to the RIOC Board of Directors to secure a directive to Blue that the check be written. “Outside members of the Board told me they were frustrated and fed up with Blue’s attempt to micromanage, his way, the outcome of Board votes,” recalls Jim Kaufman. “They decided to take things into their own hands.”

Berman says that both Joe Lynch and RIOC Board member Nancy Reuss were “truly fine public servants through all of this.” Reuss called her for information about RIRA and its role in the community; Lynch stayed with the battle to break the funds loose. Kaufman points out that while Roosevelt Island should probably be no more than ten percent of what demands Joe Lynch’s attention, he probably spent at least a third of his time and mental energy on it through this controversy.

Lynch took a vote of the RIOC Board by telephone, and the fate of the matter was sealed: RIOC would have to write the check, though to expedite matters, Lynch allowed the funds to be taken from Island Public Purpose Funds rather than from the RIOC budget. Even so, the check wasn’t ready when Patrick Stewart called for it, and to insure availability of the voting machines, he wrote a personal check, knowing he could collect later.

By the end of Thursday before election day, the curtain was down on the drama, and the reviews were coming in:

• Kaufman: “Joe Lynch was a very positive influence and a good friend of the residents of Roosevelt Island.”

• Berman: “Jerry is continuing to behave as he always has. Through all of this, Blue was being Blue. But Joe Lynch and Nancy Reuss are good public servants in whom I have absolute trust. The RIOC Board really did the right thing. They didn’t buy all these obstacles that were being put into place by Blue’s people. I really believe there could now be a new working relationship between RIRA and the RIOC Board because there was communication and trust and understanding, as we all worked around what the local RIOC office was trying to do.”

• Stewart: “I am grateful to Joe Lynch for sticking with us and making sure the funds were made available. It was time-consuming, and he was extremely diligent and extremely cooperative.”

A Comedy Trailer

The day RIOC’s check was picked up, Berman received a letter from Nicole John of RIOC. It was a list of all the things RIOC would need if RIRA were to be given the funds.

By that time, of course, the money was in the bank.

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Voters from page 1

back home as well. “Voter participation in Sri Lanka is over eighty percent, so we are used to a strong political process,” said a proud Arjuna. Richard Jolly of Sussex, England, said that he felt “strongly” about being able to vote for people who govern one’s community, so he decided to be there.

Rekha and Shanti Prakash are from India, the largest working democracy in the world. Their primary reasons to vote were “to participate in any form of American democracy and have a greater say in the happenings around us.”

The prize for translating the desire to participate into actual votes, however, goes to the South Koreans living on the island. Over three dozen came to vote, thanks to the combined efforts of Oak Soon Hong and Chi Kim Hak, who encouraged their countrymen to exercise their right and helped them use the voting machines, which clearly baffled some. “They left their country for better lives, so they should use their vote to obtain and cherish their lives here,” declared Hong.

A desire to bring about change on the Island drew many people out. “I want to help improve the quality of life on the Island,” said Mira Kurien, who has lived here for the better part of the last decade. Amanda Lorenzetti of Brazil said she came because “choosing who governs us is important.” Bertrand Mendis of Sri Lanka pointed out that this election was “crucial,” because it provided “an opportunity to do more than just complain.” His wife, Myrna, added, “Our voices must be heard so that changes can be affected.” A more proactive Katarzyna Edelman of Poland said, “I want to see good changes on the Island. I don’t want to deal with Mr. Blue, who doesn’t care about Islanders.”

The most interesting reason for having come to vote was offered by Sakiusa Rabuka of Fiji. “I was the Supervisor of Elections in Fiji, so was curious to see the American voting machines and the voting process.”

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Islanders Finish the Marathon

On a day with perfect running weather, nine Roosevelt Island residents were among the 31,459 finishers of the 29th New York City Marathon. Eric Ohlson of 10 River Road, the top Island finisher in the August Roosevelt Island 10K, beat out other Island runners with a time of 3:12:25. Veteran husband and wife racewalkers, Karen and Nicholas Bdera, of 560 Main Street, began the race this year with Karen’s father and stepmother, Ed and Judy Polcer, former Island residents. Karen (walking her 11th NYC Marathon) and Nicholas (walking his 16th) crossed the finish line together in 6:58:09. According to Karen, “It was terrific, a lot of fun. Much better than last year. The weather and the crowds were wonderful, and the temperature was perfect. It felt like sight-seeing.”

Another former Island resident, Roberta Warshawsky, who retired to Arizona several years ago, ran the race to celebrate her 65th birthday and finished in 6:45:52.

Graciela Ramirez, a wheelchair competitor who lives in Coler Hospital, finished her fifth marathon in 7:05:41 and was proud to represent Coler. “They initially encouraged me to compete. It’s always a good experience. If I can do this, I can do anything.”

Island finishers, their times, and their ages:

Eric Ohlson	3:12:25	49
Marc Diamond	3:46:38	37
Thomas Geppert	4:11:43	29
Claude Lambelet	4:38:45	38
David Eaton	5:36:03	36
Naresh Gurbuxani	6:03:20	31
Karen Bdera	6:58:09	37
Nicholas Bdera	6:58:09	50
Graciela Ramirez	7:05:41	32

NYJTL Starts Today

The New York Junior Tennis League Winter program begins today (Saturday, November 7), 6:00 to 8:00 a.m., at the Roosevelt Island Raquet Club. The program is provided free of charge to all children aged 8-18. Participants who attend on Saturday will receive free admission Thursday (November 12) to the Corel tournament at Madison Square Garden featuring the top 16 women players in the world.

The NYJTL program will continue each Saturday and Sunday morning through March.

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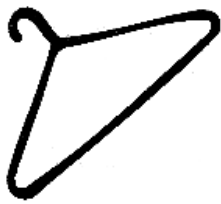
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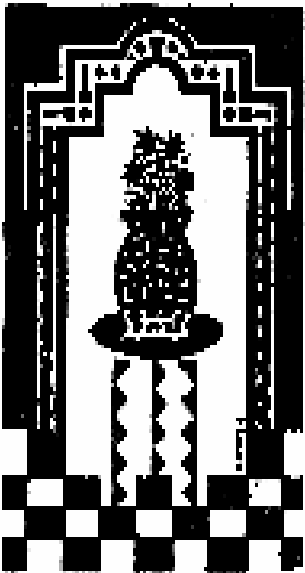
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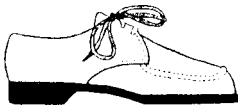
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