

Next issue:
May 21-22

The Main Street WIRE

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

in association with Website NYC10044



Hanna Jamel (right) in the title role of *Little Mary Sunshine* scolds Loren Ballard as Nancy Twinkles in the Main Street Children's Theatre production, coming up next weekend. Three casts will perform six performances Friday through Monday at 7:30, with additional matinees at 3:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Tickets are \$8 for adults, \$5 for children, and available at **371-4449**.

Town Meeting Warns of Development And Possible Mitchell-Lama Buy-Outs, Raises \$10,000 to Kick Off Legal Fund

“Southpoint goes forward over my dead body.”

Applause broke out at Tuesday night's Town Meeting when Gifford Miller, Roosevelt Island's City Councilmember, stated his position on a plan to put a hotel and condominium towers on parkland at Southpoint.

“I believe that Southpoint is the worst example of the wrongheaded way RIOC has gone about promoting development on the Island,” Miller said, adding, “I have problems with the way the current administration has done most everything on this Island.”

Miller warned residents that the community needs a legal fund to fight unwanted commercialization



Councilmember Gifford Miller

Meeting agenda, and although a third of the audience had left by then, over \$10,000 was received in checks and pledges. Pledge forms distributed at the meeting (and reprinted on page 2) suggest a pledge equivalent to one month's rent. (Editorial, page 2.)

Miller came down hard on the State and the Pataki administration: “Why do you say, ‘how can you make money with this piece of land?’ To me, that is absurd. The whole purpose of this community is to be a planned community. RIOC (the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation) should sit down with residents and citizens. Southpoint is a jewel which is there to benefit the residents of the Island, of the City, and the people of the world.”

Residents Association Offers Plan For Managing Its New Legal Fund, Asks for Resident Comments

The Common Council of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA) started the process of formalizing a plan to manage a legal fund on Wednesday night.

A resolution (reprinted on page 13), prepared by Ken MacDermotRoe of Island House, was put before the Council, and is to be considered Monday night at a meeting of its Executive Committee, then at a follow-up extra session of the Common Council. It specifies three purposes for the fund:

- To ensure that residents of Mitchell-Lama housing will not be displaced by increased rents in the event of buy-outs.
- To force the State to include elected representatives of Island residents as equal partners in decisions on new development.
- To force the State to adhere to the Island's General Development Plan (GDP), particularly with re-

gard to requirements that the Island be a mixed-income community.

The GDP is the subject of a major disagreement. The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) has taken the position that the GDP is not a fully binding part of the arrangement under which the State of New York holds Roosevelt Island under lease from the City of New York. Others, including City Councilmember Gifford Miller (see related story, this page), contend that the GDP is binding and that RIOC must formally seek consent before undertaking development not specifically allowed by the plan.

The MacDermotRoe plan calls for creation of a committee of residents to manage the legal fund, to be chaired by a member of the RIRA Common Council. The committee is to recommend a law firm, then work with the firm on a strategy to achieve the fund's purposes.

The plan also specifies initial steps, including consideration of litigation. The draft resolution is reprinted on page 13 of this issue of *The WIRE*, along with a pledge form residents are asked to use in making contributions to the fund.

of the Island. He said he intends to ask for legal help from City Council's attorneys, but can't be certain they'll take on the case. In any case, he said, residents should have their own representation.

“Some people have spoken to me, and I gave them the advice that I have given others. I have seen other groups be successful in taking on City, State, and developers. Those groups have been most successful when they retain their own counsel, for a number of reasons – principally because you can raise different issues than you can as an elected official. They're responsible to you.”

He continued, “The other thing that is successful about groups that retain their own counsel is that they have a very clear agenda.”

Residents were asked to contribute to a legal fund late in the Town

RIOC Board Open Meeting 7PM Thursday

The Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) will hold one of two evening meetings Thursday night at 7:00 at the Manhattan Park Theatre Club. Residents who wish to address the Board may do so by signing up in advance at RIOC, 591 Main Street, or by calling RIOC at **832-4540**.

The Councilmember also dealt briefly with Mitchell-Lama buy-outs, the other topic of Tuesday night's meeting. Under the housing law, owners of Mitchell-Lama

See **Town Meeting**, page 14

Working With Dolls to Turn Roosevelt Island Into Friendship Island

by Anusha Shrivastava

Come summer, Manhattan Park resident Fiona Delaney will do all she can to make Roosevelt Island into “Friendship Island.” She is hoping to enlist volunteers, especially children and young adults, to make 2,000 “friendship dolls” in a little room in Motorgate. The dolls will be exhibited at the United Nations to welcome the year 2000. Her partner and friend, Lourdess Darveniza, is an Australian artist who creates handmade dolls, and is eager to share her skill with others. Together, they have set up the Friendship World Foundation, whose headquarters, they envision, will be Roosevelt Island.

Delaney and Darveniza intend to hold what they call “funshops,” where people will get together to make the targeted number of dolls. These dolls are the tools for their message of peace and non-violence, as well as their symbols of “implementing and supporting the hand-crafted process.”



“Roosevelt Island is a great place for this,” says Lourdess. “It is a small, well-knit community, with children from different schools and backgrounds.”

The story of the Foundation goes back two years when, on a visit to Australia, Fiona, who works with rural communities living in tropical rainforests, met Lourdess. She liked the work Lourdess was doing in her community, distributing dolls made by students, and planting trees. Fiona felt their ideals regarding community service matched well enough for them to pair up, so she invited Lourdess to New York. Lourdess, in turn, saw this as an opportunity to further her work. She accepted the invitation. Once in New York, she went to various hospitals and schools in the City and presented handmade dolls to patients and students. She urged the youngsters to make dolls so that they could then present them to patients in order to cheer them up.



On the Island, the pair went to Coler Hospital and distributed dolls in the pediatric ward. They also participated in the Beacon Program at PS/IS 217 to encourage students to make dolls. Enthusiastic students put fabric, paint, beads, cotton and recycled plastic together to create their own friendship dolls. Keturah Burnette, an 11-year-old, says of the experience, “We had a

See **Dolls**, page 14

Litigation Power – What Is It Worth to You?

The character of Roosevelt Island is under threat. This Island home of ours, conceived as a beautiful, pragmatic experiment in which all kinds of people would live together, and populated by families and individuals who believe in its dream and live it every day – today, this Island home of ours, and the dream that created it, are threatened.

Its very soul is at stake.
First, the Mitchell-Lama threat: Legislation extending the Mitchell-Lama law is stalled in the State Senate. If it is not enacted, and you live in Westview, Island House, or Eastwood, **your rent could one day triple**, as it already has at similar Mitchell-Lama residences in Manhattan. The facts underlying this threat are complex and present a wide range of possibilities, but there is a real threat. RIOC has power to help, but could easily choose not to protect us.

Second, haphazard development: RIOC is pushing hard for four projects:

- **Southtown.** It is sure to be built, but it should be an extension of the Island's character, not a departure from it.
- **Eldercare.** It's clumsily sited as a 31-story tower looming over the noise and poor air of the Queensboro Bridge. It would destroy part of Sportspark, which could become a valuable facility when Southtown is built.
- **The minicondos.** RIOC wants to trade your neighbors' views and property rights for an insignificant pittance of annual return.

• **Twin-tower hotels on Southpoint**, built on the City's last ten acres of great parkland, which RIOC proposes to sacrifice for all the wrong reasons. It would mean three shift-changes of hotel workers straining Main Street, trucks delivering supplies, garbage trucks, private cars and taxis coming and going with guests. It's a strain our residential Main Street can't take – unless its residential nature is sacrificed, too.

Twin-tower hotels could turn Roosevelt Island into a commercial free-for-all. *Imagine it:* Selling off the last ten acres of great parkland for a hotel.

The minicondos are a slap in the face to residents. They are a theft of view that disregards the careful design of three well-conceived building complexes, plus a threat to the character of the existing town – a callous taking, just for a tiny plug for RIOC's unsound budget.

If they are built, the minicondos could be the dam breaking. After allowing RIOC to disregard existing residents so undemocratically – all bets are off.

Eldercare represents failure, on RIOC's part, to work skillfully with the developer awarded the Southtown site. That developer should include Eldercare within the Southtown area, but hasn't – and RIOC has done

Join your neighbors in this great effort to preserve the small-town character of a moderate-income Roosevelt Island. Pledge a month's rent, or what you can.

nothing to urge greater flexibility. Once again, RIOC is backing haphazard development at any cost.

What is it worth to you to gain a resident voice?
While the self-governance legislation Pete Grannis has put before the State Legislature could eventually give residents the democratic power that is their birthright, it won't work its way through the system for several months – perhaps years. And there's no guarantee it will become law. In the meantime, RIOC races to turn the Island's resources into cold cash.

There is only one credible way residents can assert themselves. That is the threat of legal action. That is why a litigation fund is necessary.

Thus, the question:
What is the soul of Roosevelt Island worth to you?

We suggest it is worth the equivalent of one month's rent or maintenance, not all in cash, but as a pledge – as your promise to back the effort over the next six months or year.

When you do the math, that's what's needed to defend Roosevelt Island against the greed in RIOC's proposals.

When you do the math, and think ahead ten years, it's pennies a day. Pennies a day, to...

- **Save Southpoint as parkland.**
- **Stop the minischool minicondos.**
- **Act to keep the Island's apartments affordable.**

Granted, it is a lot to ask. But it's a bargain.

DL

To the Editor:

I believe that in the interest of fairness, I must take strong exception to the conclusions drawn in your Island Observer column of April 24, "Read the face of the event." Although you open the column by specifically stating that "What seems obvious may not be the truth," the speculative conclusions you put forward seem to me to be at best counterproductive.

The initial unavoidable postponement of the May RIOC Board of Directors Meeting was handled in a timely manner by DHCR. The cancellation of the second meeting was due to a family medical emergency of Commissioner Lynch's. In each case, RIOC's handling of the public notices of these events was deplorable and high-handed, and entirely typical of RIOC.

To take what we know to be typical of RIOC and, on the basis of no evidence whatsoever, broadly assign the same underhanded motivations to others seems to me just as high-handed and just as deplorable.

I am baffled by your analysis of the Planning and Development Committee meeting, since you were there yourself. There is no room for speculation on why a vote was not taken. It was not taken because I introduced the Point of Order regarding RIOC's failure to produce relevant documents for the committee, without which we are unable to vote. This Point of Order will prevent any vote on the matter until RIOC provides these documents. Without a vote, the matter cannot move to consideration by the Board of Directors. Surely, this is a position you favor.

I have been dealing with Commissioner Lynch for two and a half years, through difficult times, and I have found him to be at all times a man of unimpeachable integrity. To my knowledge, he has never once failed to deliver upon any commitment he has given, nor has he once withheld a commitment he knew to be the community's due. Think, for a moment, where we might be, were it not for Commissioner Lynch's direct intervention in Island affairs.

Francis R. Angelino, Esq.
DeCampo, Diamond and Ash
805 Third Avenue, 6th Floor
New York NY 10022

Dear Frank,

At the last meeting of RIOC's Advisory Committee on Capital Planning & Development I made a suggestion that RIOC explore the feasibility of establishing a Marina and Boathouse on the east side of Roosevelt Island. The original Master Plan for our island's development included plans for such a Marina and Boathouse to be located just north of the Queensborough bridge where there is a rudimentary dock at present. I made that suggestion because as "Resident Advisors" we do not wish to always be in the position of opposing plans for development

on Roosevelt Island. Rather, we wish to propose development projects that are in keeping with the residential nature of our community, as well as providing enhancement of the quality of life not only for residents of Roosevelt Island, but also for residents in the greater New York City area.

What could be nicer than to have lots of pleasure boats bobbing in the waters of the East River? How convenient for boat owners and renters on Manhattan island if a Marina were located a few steps away from our aerial tram! What a great recreational opportunity Roosevelt Island could offer! How educational for children, teens and adults to have access to a sailing school here! Perhaps a good fish

and seafood restaurant could be located in the Boathouse?

Yes, I know this kind of development will not bring the millions of dollars that RIOC wants to get from a skyscraper hotel and conference center complex at Southpoint. But a Marina is much more in keeping with the residential nature of our community. It would mean far less traffic on our Main Street – during construction and after – and it would increase passenger traffic on our unique aerial tram. Certainly boat owners would be much more interested in living on Roosevelt Island. The attached article makes clear that there is a need for a Marina, though we could do better than park a barge here for that purpose.

Mary Camper-Titsingh

DL

Donation and Pledge Form

I pledge a total of \$_____ to SOS (Save Open Spaces), the Roosevelt Island Defense Fund for Responsible Development. I will contribute as checked below.

Please give what you can now: \$_____

☐ My check, payable to SOS/RIDF, is attached.

Please pledge what you can for the future: \$_____

☐ By check. Bill me at the address below.

☐ monthly in 12 payments over the next year, starting (date) _____

☐ quarterly in 4 payments over the next year, starting (date) _____

Bill me at the address below.

Name(s)_____

Address_____ Telephone_____

Please check below any item that applies:

I am willing to help solicit funds. Contact me to help.

☐ I prefer not to solicit funds, but I'd like to help in other ways. Contact me.

☐ Call me for another contribution if it's needed.

Suggested pledge/contribution total is the equivalent of one month's rent.

Whatever you can afford, please give what you can now, and pledge what you can for the ongoing campaign. (Contributions are not tax-deductible.)

This form can be sent by mail to:
Roosevelt Island Defense Fund
PO Box 175
Roosevelt Island, NY 10044

Or drop off form & contributions:
at:

Montauk Credit Union
on Main Street

An additional copy of this form appears on page 13

I have lived on Roosevelt Island for a little over 13 months. A baby to most of the residents here. During my relatively short stay, I have experienced a variety of attitudes, behavior patterns, and agendas; some obvious and others more hidden. I see Roosevelt Island as potentially one of the greatest communities anywhere. However, for this to become a reality, we need to weed out the high levels of political and economic self-interest which are so self-defeating and which, in my opinion, stagnate the growth of our community here on Roosevelt Island.

This small piece of land is a Mecca of cultural, racial, sociological, political and economic diversity. To some extent, that has also been our

Achilles heel; all too easily exploited by self-interested agendas and the selfish, mindless “development” of our community, and sometimes by just plain old racial and economic discrimination and hatred.

However, I would like to take a break from this for a moment to talk about a group of seniors on Roosevelt Island, especially in Eastwood, who unselfishly decided on their own to honor six members of the Eastwood Building Committee for their successful efforts against the proposed rent increases requested by Management. On Sunday evening, April 18, Ms. Dolores Green and her wonderful committee organized a scrumptious dinner by retired chef, Mr. Lu, for the following honorees: Fay and Ron Vass, Harold Devine, Vicki Feinmel and Margaret and Byron Gaspard. If any of us had any woes in life, Mr. Lu’s menu of barbecue ribs, broccoli with beef slices, shrimps and rice created a wonderful avoidance-mechanism for at least that evening. We humbly thank the seniors for that wonderful experience.

On that particular night, that group of positive and grateful seniors reminded me of the advantages of positive efforts and how they can set a more favorable standard when we work together. Now let’s get back to my opening statements.

Let’s talk about what I interpret as mindlessness and selfishness. RIOC proposes to take our most valuable real estate, land that has been designated as parkland, and develop and build a twin-tower luxury hotel and conference center. Diane Wilson and her developers, if they and RIOC have their way, will turn our mini-schools into half-million-dollar condominiums without any

advance compensation to the owners/and/or management or to our residents whose views will be blocked or altered. RIOC, though presumably well intentioned, are giving outside developers great opportunities to provide facilities to the rich while throwing our middle class community a bone. I consider that mindless and irresponsible. I don’t want to get into RIOC bashing. There is too much of that. Instead I would rather focus on the positive. The things we can do. Example. Getting more involved in our community. That includes everybody – youth, parents, singles, professionals, black, white, yellow, green (if it exists). This is our community. This is not RIOC’s community.

Ms. Nellie Velez recently stated to me that we need to focus on those immediate quality-of-life issues that affect us every day. For example Public Safety, or the lack thereof. Ron Vass of the Eastwood committee points at our need to renegotiate Public Safety’s contract. I agree and support him on that. When was the last time sidewalks were cleaned on the Eastwood side? When are adequate security cameras going to be placed in Eastwood, and who of any reliability is going to monitor them?

Are we waiting for a few people to continue working their buns off while we sit, wait, observe and complain? Passive aggression is not going to build our community. Racial discrimination and/or hatred is not going to build our community. Isolated groups of people socially, economically and politically divided will not build our community. We need you at meetings: Town Meetings. Everybody. We need your letters to the New York State Assembly, to your Congresswoman and to our Senate Representatives.

Bashing behind closed doors is not the answer. Well-focused and planned action is. Let us respect each other more and learn from our cultural differences. Dolores Green, president of RISA, stated she is on a cultural quest: that we should make a firm effort to be aware of each other’s cultural differences in this community. In the end we may find that we are not very different at all.

Plan now to have your business card in the July 4 WIRE



Principals For a Day

Former Mayor David Dinkins and Assemblymember Pete Grannis were Principals for a Day at PS/IS 217 last week. At this breakfast meeting in the school library, topics included the Littleton, Colorado school shootings, the satisfactions and difficulties of public service, and race relations. The former Mayor met his namesake, Island resident and PS/IS 217 student David Dinkins, and autographed some books for him. The event was sponsored by the PTA.

COMING UP

Compiled by Claire Friedland – phone/fax 317-8523

Tue., May 11, 8:00 p.m., meeting of the **Roosevelt Island Seniors Association**; membership drive and nomination of officers. Senior Center, 546 Main Street.

Thur., May 13, 7:00 p.m., RIOC Evening Board of Directors Meeting, Manhattan Park Theatre Club.

Fri., May 14, 7:00 p.m., Maple Tree Group Auction on the River, Senior Center. Goods and services auction to raise funds for self-governance effort. Admission free. Refreshments. Bidding starts at 8:00 p.m.

Fri., May 14 through Mon., May 17, Main Street Children’s Theatre presents *Little Mary Sunshine* 7:30 nightly, and 3:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Tickets, **371-4449**. Adults \$8, children 11 & under, \$5.

Fri., May 21, 5:30 p.m., Time-Warner cable channel 34, **CB8 Speaks** program on self-governance for Roosevelt Island, with Assemblymember Pete Grannis, RIRA President Patrick Stewart, and Maple Tree Group member Matthew Katz. (Repeat of May 6.)

Fri.-Sat., May 21-22, next issue of *The Main Street WIRE*. **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., May 14; decision on stuffers for *The Bag*, Mon., May 17; bag materials due May 20. **Future issues:** June 12 (Father’s Day issue); July 3 (Fourth of July/Fireworks/**Business cards issue**), July 31; Aug. 28 (Labor Day/Back-to-School issue); Sept. 11 (Rosh Hashanah issue), Sept. 25; Oct. 9, Oct. 23 (Halloween issue); Nov. 6, Nov. 20 (Thanksgiving/Business Cards issue); Dec. 4, Dec. 18 (Christmas/New Year issue); Jan. 8, 2000; Jan. 22, 2000. Advertisers wishing to be included in unscheduled **extra editions**, without notice at the time, are invited to call **826-9055** to make their interest known. **Phone/fax** for news, (212) **826-9055/755-2540**; urgent/breaking news, 917-353-1647; phone/fax for advertising inquiries, (212) **751-8214/755-2540**; phone/fax to list your Island organization’s event here, **317-8523**.

Sun., May 23, 1:00 p.m., Senior Day at the Senior Center. Information, **750-3952**.

Sun., May 23, 4:00 p.m., Spring Concert, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Classical compositions of Island resident Michael R. Margolies, performed by students of the Mannes College of Music. Admission free.

Tues., May 25, 7:00 p.m., Election of PTA Officers at PS/IS 217, and election of parent members of the School Leadership Team, a new group that will plan the school’s educational programs.

Sat., June 12, 7:00 p.m., Sensational Seniors Fashion Show, Senior Center, 546 Main Street. Refreshments and door prizes. Donation \$5. **750-3952**.

Sat., June 19, all day, Third Annual Roosevelt Island Day. Information, **838-4747**.

At the Senior Center Every week

Mondays

9:00 **Stay Well** (exercise)
10:00 **English as 2nd Language** (Beginner)*
10:00 **Computer Class**
12:00 **English as 2nd Language** (Intermediate)*
12:30 **Putting on a Show**, Play-Comedy Workshop (every Monday and Friday)
12:45 **Arts & Crafts** (RIDA)

Tuesdays

9-10 **Korean/English Class**
1:30 **Bingo and Games**

Wednesdays

9:00 **Stay Well** (Stretch)
10:00 **English as 2nd Language** (Beginner)
11:00 **English as 2nd** (Intermediate)
12:30 **Games**

Thursdays

10:00 **Tai Chi**
12:30 **Movie**

Fridays

10:00 **Creative Arts**
10:00 **English as 2nd Language** (conversation)
10:00 **Blood Pressure Screening** (to 11:30)
12:30 **Putting on a Show**, Play-Comedy Workshop (every Monday and Friday)

***Note:** Resumes May 12

Special Events

Sun., May 23, **Senior Day Celebration**, 1:00 p.m.
Mon., May 31, **Memorial Day**, closed



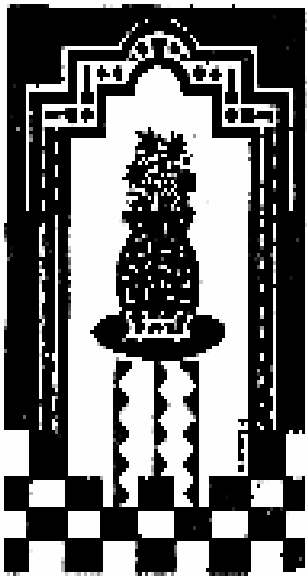
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-Ellen Levy

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-Bruce Bell

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-Bernard Silverman

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NYC’s Mitchell-Lama Crisis Comes Home to Roosevelt Island

Roosevelt Island’s “Grandpa” Al Lewis hosts a weekly Saturday radio program on WBAI, FM 99.5, noon to 1:30 p.m. A recent program, moderated by Karen Ingenthron, dealt with the Mitchell-Lama situation in the City and on Roosevelt Island. Audrey Berman of the Westview-Island House Task Force was one of the guests. Here is a condensed transcript of the discussion.

Karen Ingenthron (KI): I’m very happy today to have a wonderful panel of guests. We’re going to be talking about Mitchell-Lama buildings. We have Bob Woolis, a member of the Mitchell-Lama coalition, who’s come to Roosevelt Island many times to help us with our budget rent determinations. He’s helped us with the history of Roosevelt Island with regard to Mitchell-Lama and helped us understand the whole system. We also have representatives from buildings in New York City. Each one of them has a different situation, and we’ll discuss that as well. Bob, would you like to give us an overview of Mitchell-Lama and what’s going on?

Bob Woolis (BW): The decade of the 1960’s was really the start of the Mitchell-Lama program. It was a time of ferment, and this troubled a lot of our legislators. They were afraid that things might start happening in New York or Albany – wherever there were segments of disenfranchised population. So they decided to build low and moderate-income housing, mostly in New York City. At that time, there was no real bickering among Republicans and Democrats. Everyone knew about the housing shortage.

There are a couple of kinds of Mitchell-Lama Housing, not really different but different kinds of supervision, by Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) for the City, and for the State, the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR).

My group, the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition was organized in 1982. The co-founders were our great Congressman, Charlie Rangel, and myself, and another person who’s passed away.

KI: We want to talk about this 20-year buy-out.

BW: Article 35 of the Private Housing Finance Law says owners have the right to buy out of the Mitchell-Lama program by paying off the mortgage. They have the right after 20 years of occupancy. It’s as simple as that. And unfortunately, the law is very clear, and the process, once it starts, becomes mostly relentless.

Lila Dies (LD): I’m the President of the Tenants Association for Ruppert Yorkville, between 90th and 92nd Street on Third Avenue. We’ve been up about 25 years. There’s also in the buy-out a very important date, which is January, 1974. Buildings occupied before January, 1974, go into rent stabilization when the buy-out takes place. Buildings occupied after January, 1974, don’t have that protection, so that when our building goes out, our rents can go to fair-market rate.

There are no restrictions. It won’t cover any senior citizens. It won’t help anyone who’s disabled. So we will go a little less than market rent. In June, our management company announced to us that they were going to buy out. We have a lawyer and we are fighting this. We’ve been very successful in organizing our tenants to raise money. We represent between 2000 and 3000 people. We have low-income people, moderate-income people, and even some high-end.

When the owners announced, the Sunday before Thanksgiving, we had a huge meeting at the 92nd Street Y. They were actually brutal in terms of their announcement. They were saying that a one-bedroom apartment would go up to \$1,590, a two-bedroom apartment would be about \$2,000, and I think a three-bedroom would be around \$2,500. I’m in a one-bedroom apartment, and I’ve been there 20 years. I pay \$700 a month now. My rent would more than double to about \$1,700, right after our leases run out.

Management got so angry, by the way, when we went to court, they were so angry with us that they counter-sued us, and in their counter-suit they’re telling us we have to pay them \$1.25 million a month because they’re saying we’re taking away their ability to earn that extra income, because they couldn’t get a mortgage. Once we went to court, we stopped them from getting a mortgage, and no lender was going to lend them money. But we’re really under the gun and we’re very, very concerned.

Ari Goodman (AG): I’m a resident of Westgate, on the West side, and I’m also Chair of the legislative committee of the Borough President’s Mitchell-Lama Task Force. Our building has already been bought out of the program.

We were occupied in 1968, so we went into rent stabilization, so you would think we had some protections.

It wasn’t enough for our landlord. Within one month of going into rent stabilization, he made an application saying now he has high taxes, rents are too low, he wants the rents to increase 300 to 700 percent to be like the other rents in the area so he can meet his expenses. He knew what he was getting into when he bought out. He is making enough money. He just wants to get rid of the tenants, turn this building into a luxury building.

There are tenants living there 30 years, they built the neighborhood. The building has tenants of all ethnicities, races. Everyone gets along; we’re an excellent community. The landlord is making a good profit. Under Mitchell-Lama he was making at least six percent. He doesn’t really care about the tenants. Other buildings are in worse shape. They had to go straight to fair market rate. Hopefully all the tenants will get together and convince the legislators to clamp down on this and not allow this to happen.

KI: What does the Borough President’s Task Force hope to do?

AG: We hope to influence legislators to pass legislation. There’s some on the floor right now, to increase the amount of years necessary to buy out of the program, to give longer notice. Right now they just give six months notice that they’re buying out.

There’s all this talk about building new affordable housing, middle-income housing. Something seems wrong here. We have all this housing there. We should preserve it. It’s cheaper and easier to preserve housing. We also have to build more housing. But people seem to forget that we could preserve the affordable housing we have now. They’re trying to give incentives to builders to build. Let’s give owners incentives to stay in affordable programs.

BW: Nobody seems to be interested, particularly our present people, Pataki, in Albany – you may gather he’s not one of my buddies – and certainly Giuliani. We met with Fran Ryder a couple of years ago, who was a deputy mayor then, and he indicated he’s not interested in Mitchell-Lama. They want to privatize everything. The supervising agencies, namely DHCR and HPD and HUD, they haven’t been doing what they’re supposed to be doing, namely supervising to make sure the buildings are in the best possible shape, to make sure finances are OK, to make sure this money is used for the purpose it was intended for.

LD: If you think about the numbers, we’re talking about 3,000 people or more in our building... if you think about it, if you had a town like Troy, New York, the entire town of Troy would have to vacate. You have this huge number of people who are under the gun.

KI: This history of these other buildings is what Roosevelt Island really needed to know about 5-10 years ago. It sets the stage for what is happening there. Let me introduce my neighbor, Audrey Berman, who is Chair of the Westview-Island House Task Force.

Audrey Berman (AB): Westview and Island House are 700 middle-income rental apartments on Roosevelt Island. We are under DHCR supervision. We were occupied after 1974. We anticipate that at any moment what has happened to your buildings may happen to us. Knowing this, we’ve actually been meeting with our owner for the last two or three years to try for some kind of tenant ownership. We felt that was the only way to maintain affordable housing – that perhaps we could convert from a Mitchell-Lama rental to a Mitchell-Lama cooperative, or even if we went out of the Mitchell-Lama program as owners, it would be affordable.

On Roosevelt Island the irony is that we don’t know what the market will bear. We just don’t know yet, and that’s to our advantage. But, by the same token, our rents already

seem to be quite a bit higher than what you were mentioning.

I think it’s important to understand that tenants in Mitchell-Lama buildings are paying rents. Landlords and owners are not giving us a subsidy. The average one-bedroom rent on Roosevelt Island is \$950 a month. That’s just below Manhattan market, and this is not subsidized housing the way most people think of it.

We feel there is a flaw in the Mitchell-Lama legislation which says we could be bought out at any moment, and we are operating with that in mind – that our owner, given the right time, is going to take us out of the program. And we’ve been meeting for over two years about the ownership. We understand there has been no movement on it because he’s waiting to see what’s going to happen.

LD: Our landlord has never wanted to meet with us. He’s been very resistant to meeting with us.

AB: Since the Ruppert Towers story has broken we have not met with our landlord. He’s from Texas and probably was not as informed, but since this has happened we have not really sat down with him for the last year. We were meeting quite regularly until then.

AG: Let me point out a law is not like a contract. If the landlord had a contract that they could buy out it would be a done deal. It’s a law. Laws can be changed. The Legislature can change the laws. They could increase the years before buy-out is permitted. They could do away with the buy-out. There’s a lot that could be done.

KI: What can we do to launch a campaign to protect this affordable housing for people?

LD: There is Legislation that’s already passed in the Assembly. There are three bills. One bill would provide that all buildings that go out are rent-stabilized. That’s the one that we’re most interested in. Even though that may not be the answer to everything, it at least gives us some level of protection.

BW: That rent stabilization law expires in 2001.

LD: The same three bills are being introduced in the State Senate by Olga Mendez, and we have to put pressure on the Senate, which is really the key – the Republican State Senate.

AB: Is it true that the Mitchell-Lama legislation has not even reached the Senate floor for a vote?

BW: Of course it hasn’t. If we even had the support of the metropolitan area Senators, then it would pass. Now somebody like Roy Goodman... he’ll sign onto a bill, that’s fine, but we really need his

leadership.

LD: We really need Roy Goodman because he’s a Republican. Most of the Mitchell-Lama complexes are in Democratic areas, not in Republican areas, so it’s very, very hard to convince Republicans to support us.

BW: All we want them to do, and this applies to Goodman, – something he’s never done – is to get these bills to the floor where they can be discussed in a democratic way and have the opportunity to vote them up or down.

KI: Roy Goodman’s phone number is (212) 298-5515, and his fax number is (212) 298-5518. On the local level we also want to hit City Council. The telephone number for the Mitchell-Lama Coalition is (212) 465-2619.



Karen Ingenthron



Audrey Berman



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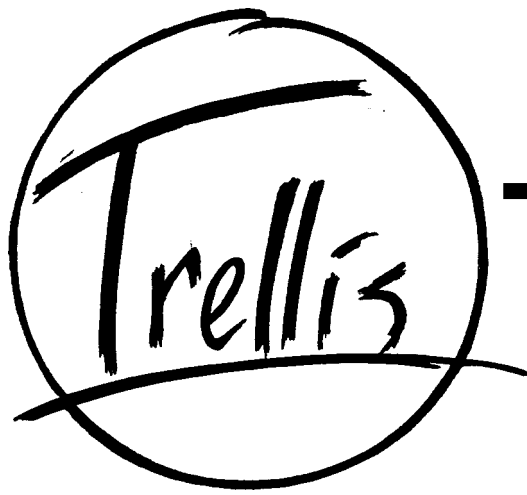
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Main Street Theatre’s Fund-Raiser Has Islanders Cutting a Rug, In an Evening-Long Time-Machine Trip Back to the Swing Era



The Jive Sisters, Denise Davidson, Mary Jo Schager, and Nancy Howe get the joint jumpin' with *The Bugle Call Rag*, before launching into a poignant rendition of *I'll Be Seeing You (in All the Old, Familiar Places)*.



Quinn Hemley sings about *Looking For a Boy*



Bernard Dove and Jeanette Baffa, jivin'



Rod Ferrone and Marietta Clark dazzled the audience as they tapped to Gershwin's *'S Wonderful*



"Professor" Bob McDowell played for this benefit as he has played for many MST&DA productions



Marilyn Atkins and Anita Michaels reflect the 1940's in their Swing Era attire.



During a song, Denise Davison is surprised by the nimble footwork of audience member Bob Chazin.



Yenneki and Michael dazzled onlookers with a dazzling array of groovy moves

Small-Town USA in the Heart of the Big Apple:

On Last Week’s Sunny Friday, the Island Observed Arbor Day With Tributes to Trees and Their Best Friend, Maury Bleifeld



Gathering under the trees



A Conversation With Trees by Marilyn Engstler of Housing Management

A beautiful day it was last week,
when I had my first conversation with the trees.
On the isle of Roosevelt, along the seawall,
I started my walk and soon was lost in the beauty of it all.

I was traveling north, on the east side facing Queens,
when I suddenly felt an uplifting breeze.
It lifted me and swirled me around,
I danced with hundreds of blossoms before it put me down.
I landed in front of some cherry trees,
their branches laden with pink flowers,
they seemed to beckon me.

Then I heard a noise and looked around,
but there was no one to be found.
This couldn’t be, I shook my head;
I hastened my step and off I sped.
But I heard it again in a whispery voice.
Whether or not you believe my story,
it sounded like someone said, “Do you know Maury?”

I pretended I didn’t hear, and went on my way,
but the trees were linked in a telepathic way.
The branches of a weeping willow seemed to signal me, but I
kept on going as if I didn’t see.
Again I heard the sway of trees
and a voice that questioned, “Do you know Maury?”

“Maury Bleifeld?” I asked. “Sure, he’s a friend of mine.”
But I quickly moved on and ran around Goldwater in record time.
Then a beautiful oak stood in my way and recited these lines
on that remarkable day, “Give him our best, he’s quite a fellow.
It’s because of him that we flourish.
Without him we wouldn’t multiply,
our numbers would be down at least thirty five.”
“Yes, of course,” I remarked, as I couldn’t believe
I was having a conversation with the trees.

Then a little farther down the path, just past Manhattan Park,
all of a sudden another tree remarked,
“He’s devoted and nurturing, that guy’s on the ball!
We owe him a lot but so do you all.”
So the next time you see that devoted “tree guy”
give him a wave and a nice big smile.



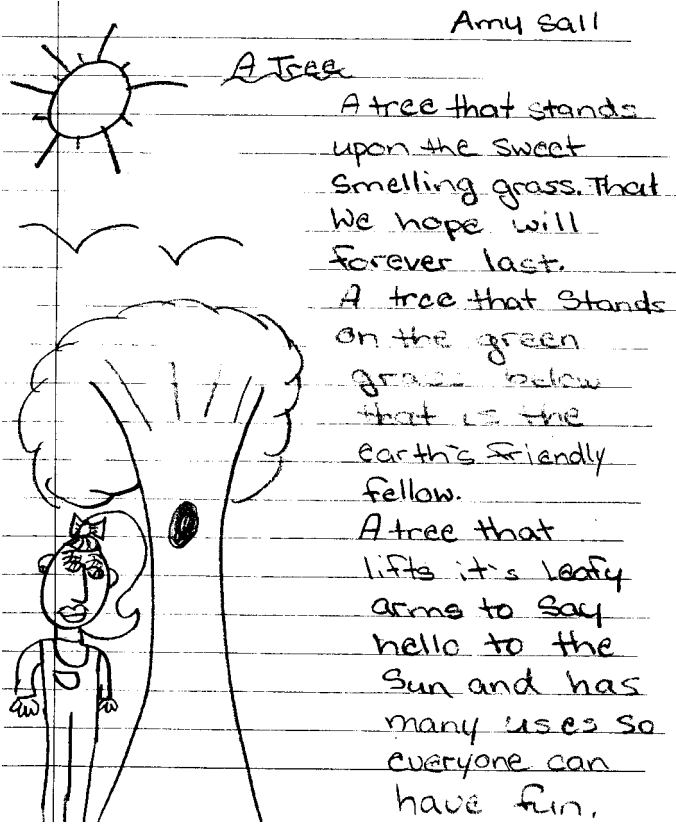
Planting a tree



Choral recitation of *Trees* by third-grade students

Trees, trees, trees
You give shade to the people
Trees, trees, trees
You give homes to the animals
Trees, trees, trees
You make the Earth green
Trees, trees, trees
You give oxygen
Trees, trees, trees
Your color looks beautiful
Trees, trees, trees
You grow so tall
and that’s why
I like trees
Jovente Samondo

In the spring it’s green.
In the summer it’s colorful.
In the fall the leaves are falling down.
And in the winter we say good-bye to its colorful dress.
And then comes the spring again, and now I say...
Hi! To my best friend the tree.
Nina Psoncak



Amy Sall
A Tree
A tree that stands
upon the sweet
Smelling grass. That
We hope will
Forever last.
A tree that stands
on the green
grass below
that is the
Earth’s friendly
fellow.
A tree that
lifts it’s leafy
arms to say
hello to the
Sun and has
many uses so
everyone can
have fun.

I never saw
saw a tree
as
lovely as you!
You are
Part of my life
and I love you.
Thank you for your
oxygen
Thank you for your
wood.
Thank you for your
nuts and seeds.
I could not
live

with
out
you!
Clement Fournier



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The official proclamation



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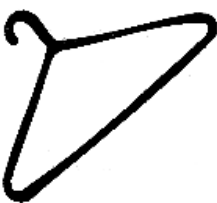
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On *CB8 Speaks*: Grannis, Stewart, Katz

Island’s Self-Governance Drive as Exercise in Practical Politics

Residents Association President Patrick Stewart appeared Thursday night on *CB8 Speaks*, a public access program carried on Time-Warner Cable Channel 34. The program will be shown again Friday, May 21, at 5:30 p.m. Appearing with Stewart were RIRA Common Council member Matthew Katz, and Assemblymember Pete Grannis, who has introduced legislation that would replace RIOC with an elected Board of Residents empowered to hire professional municipal management for the Island, replacing the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, its President, and its Board of Directors, who are appointed by the Governor. The program is hosted by Richard Speziale.

Richard Speziale (RS): Good evening and welcome. You’re watching *CB8 Speaks*, the voice of Community Board 8. I’m Richard Speziale. Tonight, we return to the quite beautiful place called Roosevelt Island. It’s unique in all of New York State, and tonight we’re going to be speaking about some of the unique aspects of the government and some of the concerns of the residents of Roosevelt Island. With me tonight are State Assemblyman Pete Grannis of the 65th Assembly District, which includes Roosevelt Island; Matthew Katz, who is a member of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association Common Council, and a member of the Maple Tree Group on Roosevelt Island; and Patrick Stewart, the President of the Residents Association, and a member of Community Board 8. We should point out that several attempts were made by *CB8 Speaks* to contact Dr. Jerome Blue of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, and Commissioner Joseph Lynch of the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) in an attempt to have a balanced program, and we regret that they did not get back to us and participate in this show tonight.

Let’s start with you, Assemblyman Grannis. You have recently introduced a bill that addresses the way the Island is governed. Why don’t you give us a brief overview of why a bill needs to be introduced and the unique situation...

Pete Grannis (PG): This is the latest step in a long line of steps for the Island to achieve some measure of self-control and self-governance. Actually, the bill I introduced was written by the Maple Tree Group, Matthew’s group, and

other people who’ve worked long and hard on trying to re-fashion this State-chartered Public Benefit Corporation, into a more community-oriented entity, in which the members of the Board of Directors would be not Governor’s appointees and the Director of the Budget and the Commissioner of Housing Preservation and Renewal, but members elected by the people on the Island, the thought being that the Island’s destiny is very much a matter of concern for the 8,200 residents on the Island. This is a unique planned community, planned for the benefit of the people who are living there, not for anybody else, and the families and individuals who live on the Island ought to be in charge of their own destiny. There have been a number of events that have led to this. This used to be a corporation that was supported by the State government. The Governor of the State used to provide operating subsidies and support for the capital infrastructure of the Island. Both those supports have been removed by Governor Pataki in the last several years, so the Island is, for all intents and purposes, self-sufficient, operating on its own revenues, and the feeling among the Island residents – a strong feeling – is that if they are paying for the operation of the Island they ought to be in control, or at least have more of a say in the running of the corporation that controls their destiny.

RS: Matthew, why don’t you tell us just a little about the Maple Tree Group, and some of its concerns, and why you helped to shape this legislation.

Matthew Katz (MK): About two years ago a group of residents sat down under a maple tree behind our landmark building, Blackwell House, which is a 200-year-old farmhouse, to discuss the problems of the Island, to see if there was a way we could make an inventory of the problems of the Island and perhaps come up with some solutions. This was done about a year ago, when it seemed apparent that while the RIRA Common Council, the Residents Association, was very effective under Patrick Stewart’s tutelage in dealing with the crises that were occurring, given that we were now self-sufficient, or supposedly so, in terms of raising revenues on the Island in inappropriate ways, in dealing with shortfalls by simply not maintaining the Island sufficiently, by not making repairs, we decided the problem was a systemic one, that as long as people who did not live on the Island were responsible for the Island’s destiny, then we would have no control; the Island would go in directions we were not a part of, and we saw a continuing road of disintegration for the Island.

A decision was made to create legislation, based on the original 1984 legislation that created the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), and over the past year this legislation was crafted to replace an appointed Board, an appointed President of RIOC, with an elected Board – elected from the residents of the Island, who would then hire a City Manager to run the Island. It was our contention that residents of the Island who had a stake in what was going on could do a better job of it than an appointed Board, that we could find efficiencies that the State could not, that we could find sources of income that the State could not. We’ve done this, we’ve consulted a great many people in the process. Certainly, Pete Grannis has been one of them, and some of the people who were there at the initiation of the Island, to give us guidance, and members of DHCR, and we’ve

put together a piece of legislation that we’re proud of, and that we feel has found a place in time right now, given that there is a great deal of development scheduled for the Is-

Patrick Stewart: *This particular Public Benefit Corporation is neither for the public nor the benefit of the public, unfortunately, which is why we are moving toward Pete’s bill and the Maple Tree Group’s bill.*



Patrick Stewart, as he chaired a recent meeting of the RIRA Common Council

land, and that if we are to have any impact on this development, we need to assert ourselves right now.

RS: Patrick, I believe the last program in this series focused on the building of a Marriott Hotel at the south end of the Island, on land that is designated parkland. Can you give us an update on what’s happening with that hotel?

Patrick Stewart (PS): I’d be happy to do that Richard. I believe Pete mentioned a Public Benefit Corporation, which is correct. This particular Public Benefit Corporation is neither for the public nor for the benefit of the public, unfortunately, which is why we are moving toward Pete’s bill and the Maple Tree Group’s bill. Currently, there is proposed \$1.1 billion worth of development under consideration for Roosevelt Island. There is Southpoint, at the southern tip of the Island, which is, at least for Roosevelt Islanders, the most valuable piece of real estate in the City of New York. It is the proposed site for a \$400 million hotel, conference center, spa, restaurant, etc., which will intrude upon 15 acres of designated parkland.

Moving north, near the Tramway there is a 31-story eldercare facility, about \$200 million in construction. Unfortunately, it’s my understanding that very few people on Roosevelt Island would be able to use that facility, simply because of the costs of that. Then you move up to Southtown, which is a 2,500-unit apartment complex in buildings. This project, of the four, is the only one that has general citizen approval. It is apartments, designed to fit into the General Development Plan that is contained in the lease between the City and the State of New York, and therefore of great benefit to the Island in building it up population-wise. And the fourth, and the smallest, and probably the most contentious, interestingly enough, is this little operation called mini-school conversion. At one time, all of the kids on the Island went to schools in separate buildings. Now, we have a school that has them all. The mini-schools were then abandoned, and I think the Board of Education left \$500,000 for the rehabilitation, making them safe, and so on. And the Operating Corporation has been looking for a way to use that space in a profitable way, which is fine and reasonable. They came briefly to the citizens with an idea of turning those mini-schools into fifteen condominiums, and that seemed like a perfectly reasonable idea. They then came back to us with an additional floor atop the condominiums, which therefore would ruin the view of a substantial number of residents who are in the existing buildings. So the citizens have taken the view that we would give up far more in terms of quality of life, for the residents who are already there, to have these sixteen condos built. So all of that adds up to 1 billion, 105 million dollars. That’s a lot of money. That’s a lot of money to be spending on a 2-mile long, 800-yard wide island.

RS: Obviously, somebody thinks this real estate can be very profitable. I think that’s obvious to anybody who has ever been to the Island.

PS: One would assume so.

RS: Right. And the residents simply want a say in the way the profit is generated. I don’t think there’s too many people who are against all development. There seems to be room for development. There seems to be certain needs to be fulfilled on the Island.

MK: There is. Sure.

PG: The Roosevelt Island plan was not to use the land for the most valuable, for the biggest return to the City. The whole plan for this planned community was to have an economically integrated, racially mixed Island with people from all walks of life, from all backgrounds, living in a planned community in the middle of the East River. There were other things that would probably have generated a great deal more money.

RS: And that’s largely been fulfilled.

PG: Well, the plan was originally to have a community of nearly 20,000 people. During the very early days of the plan’s development, the State Agency in charge of developing it, the Urban Development Corporation (UDC), went belly up. At least it got into a great deal of financial diffi-

See **CB8**, page 12



Matthew Katz, as he spoke at a recent RIRA Common Council session.



Assemblymember Pete Grannis as he spoke in Tramway Plaza at a Rally for Self-Governance, October 27, 1997

CB8 from page 11

culty. And the development of the Island stopped, at more or less at the size it is today.

RS: Which is about 8,200, you said. And it’s largely integrated, economically integrated. That part is a success.

PG: That part has been very successful. But the goal of the Island was not to sell it off to the highest bidder.

RS: Right.

PG: And it’s all subject to a very complicated master plan that laid out how the Island was to be developed. I think everybody there understands that it’s not a plan written in stone. It can be changed. It has been changed. But there was a goal to have this broad base of integrated community living where people knew each other. It was a small community located in a big city isolated by the East River on both sides. And the idea was to have a community that functioned and operated much like a small town. And, in fact, that’s what it is. In many ways, it is a small town in the middle of the City. It’s not a community like Yorkville. Because of its unique barriers with the River on both sides. And I think that brought a great deal of strain on the City, on the residents of the Island, because while, in fact, they are a small community, they’ve been manhandled, for the last four years, by the Pataki administration. And they’ve been basically ignored by the City. It’s City land leased to the State, turned over to the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, on which there are the homes of now 8,200 New York City residents, possibly several thousand more, if the next phase of the development goes ahead. But the master plan still should be the guiding principle that says how the Island is developed. And to make that work, we all believe the residents ought to be an integral part of the planning process. And under the current State administration, they’ve been excluded from this planning and development, and the discussion about where their community is headed.

RS: Now what about RIOC, the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation. The Governor appoints – is it nine members?

PS: Nine members.

RS: Are a majority of these people Island residents?

PG: Well, there’s a scheme for how the appointments are made. Some of them are supposed to be on the recommendation of the Mayor of the City of New York. Both of those positions are unfilled.

PS: Unfilled.

PG: And have been for quite some time. The Mayor has said he’s made his recommendations to the Governor. The Governor hasn’t acted on the recommendations from the Mayor. Whether that’s true or not, we don’t know. But the point is, there are at least two openings from the City that have not been filled. The Governor then makes recommendations on his own. One of the recommendations is supposed to be the head of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association. It’s been a sort of unwritten commitment to have an Island elected resident on the Board.

RS: It seems logical.

PG: Yes, it does, if for no other reason, then just to be able to have a way for the Island’s voice to be heard. Several other members of the Board are Island residents, but their appointing authority is not on the basis of recommendations from the Island community. However, these appointments get made through the Governor’s process and the Mayor’s review process. The State Controller, the State Director of the Budget, sits on the Boards by legislation, the State Commissioner of Housing and Community Renewal is on the Board. Basically, this is an agency that is answerable through the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal. But the only elected Island appointee that is meant to be there, at this point, is the elected President of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association. That, so far, has been denied.

RS: So, Matthew, it seems to me that a great deal of the residents are literally up in arms because the Island seems to have been cut loose. We did a show in the past couple of years, on how the operating budget, the capital budget, was reduced to zero. The way it’s set up, it certainly needs some money from the State. It was designed like that from the beginning.

MK: Oh, yes. Well, we’ve seen our infrastructure suffer, as a result. Our streets are not being fixed. The seawall, the railings around our Island – we have a beautiful promenade, have not been repaired. There are a great many equally neglected facets of the Island. They have tried to make up revenue in bizarre ways. They’ve tried to quintuple the fees to our Little League for our own community ballfields. The RIRA Common Council fought that back, but it’s been one brush fire after another. And it doesn’t need to be this way. We are capable of running the Island ourselves. There is a very talented pool of people on the Island who could do this. The original intent of the Island was that it be self governing at some point. And we would like to make that happen now.

RS: Patrick, you mentioned a very contentious issue having to do with the mini-schools. I understand there was a meeting recently in the Chapel, and residents were quite annoyed and turned as a group and walked out of the meet-

Goods & Services Auction Slated Friday As Maple Tree Group Fund-Raiser in Continuing Push for Self-Governance

The Maple Tree Group has an Auction set for Friday (May 14) in the Senior Center, the second of its events (the first was a concert) aimed at raising money to fund the push for self-governance. The event will be held in the Senior Center. Viewing starts at 7:00 p.m., with bidding at 8:00.

Some of the items up for bids:

- Various framed pictures of Roosevelt Island are being offered by several photographers on the island, among them Marge Rubin, whose work has appeared in *The WIRE*.
- Artist Jose Baca has donated paintings.

- High Tea for 2-4 people.
 - A trip to the movies for two kids (a break for Mom and Dad).
 - Sammy Sosa & Mark Maguire baseball cards.
 - Dinner for two at Favia.
 - Three dozen homemade cookies, delivered, once a month for six months.
 - An Energy Body Work session.
 - Group of 17 classical CDs.
 - A day in the country, including transportation and meals.
 - Six hours of chauffeured driving.
- A shopping list of items up for bid will be provided for all participants. Refreshments will be available.

Islander Ron Vass is the Auctioneer.

Funds raised through this event and others will be used to support the lobbying effort necessary to educate and advise the State’s legislators on the proposed law geared to put control of Roosevelt Island management in the hands of its residents, through an elected Board of Residents empowered to hire professional municipal management.

The bill, drafted last year by the Maple Tree Group, has been introduced by both Assemblymember Pete Grannis and Senator Olga Mendez, who represent Roosevelt Island.

ing because they felt somebody who was supposed to be there...

PS: Well, essentially, the President of the Operating Corporation chose not to be there, and left it to a commercial developer to stand in his stead, which was not acceptable to us.

This whole thing to me is very interesting and almost not understandable in that the Roosevelt Island situation could be synonymous to a situation like this: The Mayor of New York City tells the people of Chelsea, let’s say, that they don’t get anything more – no more sanitation, no more fire protection, no police, no more nothing – that they have to be self-sufficient. Or the Governor tells the town of Peekskill that they have to be self-sufficient. Well, there is no such thing as self-sufficiency. There is no community in the country, there is no state in the country, that is self-sufficient. The country itself is the biggest debtor nation in the world. So to talk about self-sufficiency in those terms is sort of an insult, because as I sit here and look at what seems to be going on here is that not only are we supposed to be self-sufficient, but we are supposed to be a profit center for the State of New York. And I take great umbrage at that. We pay taxes to the City of New York, we pay taxes to the State of New York, and we pay federal taxes. The taxes we pay to the City and the State, we get nothing in return, literally. People in Manhattan, for instance, do not worry about whether the seawall is going to cave in. We do. And on and on and on. It’s the old story, I think, you can make money by not maintaining things, or save money by not maintaining things. And wait until they break. And when they break,

Pete Grannis: *The Roosevelt Island plan was not to use the land for the most valuable, for the biggest return to the City. The whole plan for this planned community was to have an economically integrated, racially mixed Island with people from all walks of life, from all backgrounds, living in a planned community in the middle of the East River.*

you fix them. But if you wait until they break, it’s going to cost you ten times more money than if you had maintained them in the first place.

RS: Exactly. We’ve seen the situation with the Williamsburg Bridge being ignored for many years, the entire subway system was ignored for many years. Just to play catch-up with all the repairs got very, very expensive. And this is what’s going on, on the Island.

PG: Exactly. It’s a lesson that seems to have been forgotten. The City, penny-wise and pound-foolish, failed to invest in its infrastructure, and paid a very stiff price, not only in taxpayer dollars but in our credit rating, in trying to pay catch-up to get the subways running, and the bridges fixed, and all the roads and all the other problems that had been allowed to deteriorate.

RS: And Matthew, you mentioned the streets have not been maintained, and I’m thinking that there are not a lot of streets on Roosevelt Island. There’s one main street and a few other roads that shoot off of it.

MK: And on opening day of our Little League, we have a parade down Main Street. We’re like small-town America. I did want to add one point – that the idea of self-government is not an idea of a small group of people that has been foisted on the rest of the community. Last November, during the elections that brought me to the Common Council, we put a question on the ballot, asking the residents, to paraphrase, “Would you be in favor of self-government and specifically would you support the Grannis bill?” We worked very hard to educate the residents of the Island as to what this entailed. Ninety-two percent of the residents voted to support the Grannis bill. Also, the Common Council voted this past February to actively support the Grannis bill. This is a groundswell from the community. We’ve seen the future and we want to have a stake in it.

RS: And Patrick, self-rule, this sounds like something the Queen bestows on certain African nations in the 1950’s when she cut them loose from the Commonwealth. It seems kind of bizarre to be talking about a apart of New York City or any part of the United States that involves self-rule.

PS: It’s a good point, and I will not make the comparison of George III of England and George Pataki. However, the situation is such that we are the only community in the United States that does not elect the people who operate the Island. Thank God we’ve got Pete Grannis and Gifford Miller as our local representatives, but Pete and Gifford don’t run the Island. The State of New York runs the Island. And prior to this administration, that had not been a problem. Now it is a problem, and when it becomes a problem like that people begin thinking, “Well, we’re living in a situation right here, right now, and have been for a long time, that is essentially unconstitutional.” The last time I know of a community like Roosevelt Island, it was Washington, D.C., when Congress ran it. But that’s unacceptable from the constitutional point of view.

And as I said before, to add on to that, we the taxpayers pay \$4 million to the Operating Corporation for payroll. that’s adding insult to...

RS: How much is that?

PS: \$4,100,000, to be exact. Those of us who have been around for a while know that you can do it for less, and that you can do a far better job for less, and that should be done.

RS: Let me ask you, Matthew. The \$4 million goes out there. Nobody’s sure where it’s spent, is that correct?

MK: That’s true. The communication between RIOC and the community has not been good. More than anything, that is what drew me into the local politics of Roosevelt Island. My wife and I found ourselves at a RIOC meeting in which the community was encouraged to make comments and ask questions, and we did so for one solid hour. We were told that, at the end of that hour, there would be answers forthcoming. And at the end of

that hour, there was a cardboard box produced, and plunked down on the table, and we were told that these were position papers and that all our answers would be found there. I thought this was rude. And at that point I resolved to get a bit more active in the local politics of Roosevelt Island, and that’s escalated ever since, and I’ve never regretted a minute of it.

RS: So, Assemblyman, what needs to happen with this bill now? What would you like to see happen next? What needs to happen for this bill to become a reality?

PG: The bill has been introduced in both the Assembly and the Senate, by me and by Olga Mendez, who represents the Island in the State Senate. The goal will be to get it past both houses and to the Governor’s desk, and to get him to sign it. I think we have to concentrate now. There are some technical issues involved in how you deal with public benefit corporations, so that we don’t jeopardize outstanding obligations. But I think we can resolve those.

I think the Island group, the Maple Tree Group, has done an extraordinarily good job in preparing this draft and in working with the residents of the Island to understand what it means in practical and technical terms, in the changes that are necessary. The goal over the next several months is to get it in final shape and past the Assembly and, hopefully, past the Senate, and then we have to worry about what the Governor will do with it if we ever get to that point.

RS: Matthew, if there are people watching who would like to get involved with your group, how can they...?

MK: The Maple Tree Group has met every Monday night for the past two years. We meet in the cafeteria of our school, PS/IS 217, at 7:30 in the evening. We encourage everyone to come out. We’ve been a group of as many as 80 residents of the Island, although there’s a core of about 15 people. We’re convinced that the more ideas that come our way the better prepared we’ll be for taking control of our own future.



Art at Westview

Island artist Esther Piaskowski Cohen is displaying her work in the window at 625 Main Street, next to the Westview lobby. The painting above, which is included in the exhibit, is named *Why?*

Senior Day May 23

Roosevelt Island’s seniors are putting together another all-day Seniors Day, on the calendar for March 23. The whole community is invited to attend for entertainment, food, dance, and general fun at the Senior Center, 546 Main Street.

The Roosevelt Island Seniors Association (RISA) has an election coming up Tuesday (May 11) at its 8:00 p.m. meeting, in the Senior Center.

The Center has a membership drive in progress, and is looking for Island seniors for a wide range of activities. In particular, Mah-Jong and Bridge players are needed. The Center has a busy roster of activities, including creative art, a comedy workshop, exercise classes, tai chi, a weekly movie – and more.

Lunch is available daily for all seniors who sign up before 11:00.

The Center sponsors trips to Atlantic City, including one this month on Wednesday, the 19th.

For information on events and joining in Center activities, or joining RISA, call 980-1888.



The season of flea markets in Good Shepherd Plaza has begun. Last weekend, vendors and buyers were out in force. Here, Carol Kennedy shows her wares to a potential customer.



Comments Sought on Draft Resolution on Management of Community’s Legal Fund

At its Wednesday night meeting, the Common Council of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association voted to seek community comment on a proposed resolution governing the management of the Defense Fund, for which fund-raising had begun Tuesday night at a Town Meeting. Residents are asked to direct their comments on the resolution below to (email) **jbird134@aol.com**, (fax) **308-6050**, (mail) **PO Box 175**, Roosevelt Island, NY 10044, or by leaving them for Linda Heimer at the Rivercross door station, **531 Main Street**.

Draft Resolution of the Common Council of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association Organizing The Roosevelt Island Legal Defense Fund

WHEREAS, the Roosevelt Island Common Council passed a resolution creating the Roosevelt Island Legal Defense Fund at its April 7, 1999 meeting, in order to clearly state the Defense Fund’s purpose, organize it, and insure its accountability to the Council and the residents of the Island, the Common Council resolves as follows:

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of the Defense Fund is as follows:

1. To insure that the residents of the Island’s Mitchell Lama projects will not be displaced by increased rents should the projects be removed from the Mitchell Lama program,
2. To require the State to include elected representatives of the residents of the Island as equal partners in decisions regarding new developments on the Island,
3. To require the State to adhere to the provisions of the General Development Plan of the Master lease especially the provision that the Island be a mixed income community and to protect our open spaces.

THE DEFENSE FUND COMMITTEE

1. The Defense Fund shall be managed by a committee of residents who shall be accountable to the Common Council. The Defense Fund Committee Chairman and its members must be approved by a majority vote of the Common Council. Although non-Council members may serve on the Defense Fund Committee, the Chairman must be a member of the Common Council.
2. It shall be the duty of the Defense Fund Committee to recommend to the Common Council a law firm to represent the Fund for approval by the Council. Once a firm has been approved by the Common Council, the Defense Fund Committee will work with the law firm to develop and execute a strategy to achieve the Fund’s purpose.
3. The Defense Fund Committee will seek the advice and consent of the Council with respect to significant disbursements of funds and with respect to major strategic decisions, ie. the commencement of litigation.

4. To assure accountability of the Defense Fund to the Common Council and the accountability of the Common Council to the residents of the Island, the Defense Fund will report to the Common Council at its monthly meetings. The report will include information regarding income and disbursements and any significant developments.

INITIAL STEPS

1. As soon as practical, the Defense Fund Committee will undertake a search for a law firm and present recommendations to the Common Council regarding the selection.
2. When a law firm is approved by the Common Council, the Defense Fund Committee shall retain the law firm and engage it to undertake the following initial work:
 - (a) Create a new legal entity if deemed advisable by the attorneys to effectuate the work of the Defense Fund.
 - (b) Determine what steps may be taken to minimize the personal liability of members of the Defense Fund Committee and the Common Council and what additional steps might be taken to assure the accountability of the Defense Fund Committee to the Council and the residents.
 - (c) Authorize the law firm to undertake the legal research required to develop a list of options, including litigation to achieve the Fund’s purpose. These options are to be presented by the Defense Fund Committee to the Council for consideration and action.

FUNDING

The Defense Fund Committee shall be responsible for supervising the fund raising for payment of legal fees and related disbursements. It shall establish and maintain the appropriate records which shall be available for inspection by residents. Copies of monthly bank statements will be provided to the Common Council.

APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS

The following persons are appointed to serve on the Defense Fund Committee:

[Section to be completed.]

The Common Council may approve additional members as it deems appropriate.

Donation and Pledge Form

I pledge a total of \$_____ to **SOS (Save Open Spaces)**, the **Roosevelt Island Defense Fund for Responsible Development**. I will contribute as checked below.

Please give what you can now: \$_____

- ☐ My check, payable to **SOS/RIDF**, is attached.

Please pledge what you can for the future: \$_____

- ☐ By check. Bill me at the address below
- ☐ monthly in 12 payments over the next year, starting (date) _____
- ☐ quarterly in 4 payments over the next year, starting (date) _____
- Bill me at the address below.

Name _____

Address _____ Telephone _____

Please check below any item that applies:

I am willing to help solicit funds. Contact me to help.

- ☐ I prefer not to solicit funds, but I’d like to help in other ways. Contact me.
- ☐ Call me for another contribution, if it’s needed.

Suggested pledge/contribution, either in one installment or over the next year, is the equivalent of one month’s rent. But please give what you can now, and pledge what you can for the ongoing campaign. Contributions are not tax-deductible.

This form can be sent by mail to:
Roosevelt Island Defense Fund
PO Box 175
Roosevelt Island, NY 10044

Or drop off form & contributions:
at
Montauk Credit Union
on Main Street

Your comments are welcome. Please use an additional sheet if needed.



The Director of the Roosevelt Island Day Nursery, Sara Seiden, was honored last weekend in a party at Manhattan Park Theatre Club. She's been on the job for 20 years. Many of her former students, and their parents, attended the event, which served as a fund-raiser for the Day Nursery.

Town Meeting from page 1

apartment buildings can pay off their State-backed mortgages, exit the Mitchell-Lama system, and charge market-rate rents. (Related story, page 6.) Miller expressed his opposition to buy-outs that could drive tenants from their homes, but pointed out that the City Council has no say in the matter. "Whatever can be done at the City level," he said, "I'm prepared to do, but there's not a lot. I'll be pushing DHCR to do that."

During the course of the Town Meeting, Residents Association President Patrick Stewart introduced guest speakers on the Mitchell-Lama problem. Ari Goodman, of the Borough President's Task Force, told of resident-sponsored legal battles to prevent rent hikes of 300 percent to 700 percent. Goodman was a guest on a recent WBAI radio program; a condensed transcript is printed on page 6.

Judy Berdy, a member of the Residents Association Common Council, told residents near the end of the Town Meeting, "We have tried in vain for three years to protect our community from unplanned and illegal development. We still have the Southpoint, Eldercare, and Mini-school plans dangling before our eyes." She urged residents to contribute to the community's legal action fund, saying, "Our war chest must be filled and ready to be called into action on a moment's notice."

Julie's Sports Cafe

is having a Post-Mothers-Day makeover

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Saturday	1:00 PM-5:00 PM

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Dolls from page 1

lot of fun doing it, and I learned a lot about art."

But the doll-making is not just about fun. A message of non-violence and companionship goes out with each doll. "We give dolls to people and hope they will understand that it is our hand of friendship," says Keturah, sounding a lot older than her age.

"When people think of dolls, they think of porcelain or Barbie dolls," says Fiona. "Our dolls are different in that they are handmade. One can feel the energy of the people who have made them. They are the result of an interactive art."

"Our long-term plan is to go to different communities in different parts of the world, and provide youth and women the opportu-

nity to have employment through making and selling these dolls. For instance, we have created a hand-painted doll made of bark, which has a black pearl pendant. In Papua New Guinea, where I come from, there is a matrilineal community that does black pearl farming. This doll would help popularize their work. As of now, we are busy trying to raise funds because so far we have been paying for everything ourselves, or relying on friends."

It remains to be seen if Delaney and Darveniza succeed in making Roosevelt Island *Friendship Island*. But as they work at it, Islanders can join their *funshops* and learn how to make dolls. To sign up, they can call Fiona Delaney at **753-0810**.



by Ralph Hennen

SPORTSWIRE

“Steeerike!” shouted the umpire, as the face-off between the Major Little League “Orioles” and the “Dodgers” played out at 9:30 on a sunny Saturday morning, May 1, at Capobianco Field. In the dugout the coaches barked last minute instructions at their teams before they ran out on the field. These were no-nonsense games, as fielders scurried to catch fly balls and batters swung intently at oncoming pitches. The “majors” standing in four game are:

- Orioles (Team 1) 1-1
- Cardinals (Team 2) 0-4
- Dodgers (Team 3) 3-0

Team members:

Orioles: Coaches, Paul Sokoloff & Vaughn Anglesey; Nadine Anglesey, Nicole Anglesey, Edwin Cruz, Chamar Delesline, Zahra de Souza, Andy Enhsaihan, Jorvier Falcon, Jason Fell, Taylor Jones, Jonathan Singh, Melissa Stein, Brandon Stueber, Joe Vehling, Gordon Williams.

Cardinals: Coaches, Joe Pagano & Mark Silverschotz; Sasha Agosta, Matthew Brodsky, Marco Castillo, Shirome Dixon, Christopher Dominguez, Omani Guy, David Malary, Luis Noe, Edward Pagano, Schuyler Penny, Andrew Ramsingh, Adam Silverschotz, Christopher Sullivan, Niasia Wallace.

Dodgers: Coaches, Ian Kross & Steve Marcus; Lemar Burrows, Aaron Cohen,



- Orioles (Team 1) 2-0
- Brewers (Team 2) 1-1
- Dodgers (Team 3) 0-2
- Cardinals (Team 4) 1-1

Team members:

Orioles: Coach, Jim Armenakis; Alex Armenakis, Dax Armenakis, Remy Armenakis, Dimas Encarnacion, Carl Keast, Kenneth Liz, Timi Mucunski, Emira Perezic, Kenny Pizarro, Brendan Ramirez, Dylan Ramirez, Devin Santella, Kelsey Santella, Jenna Stueber, Neal Stueber.

Brewers: Coach, Tim Sullivan; Shivonne Burgess, Richard de la Cruz, Hugo Genes, Laura Genes, Samuel Johns, Max McMillan, Jerry O’Sullivan, Jae Parker, Dennis Perezic, Charlton Roussell, Elvis Santana, Brian Sullivan, Jon Uzuner, Daniel Vithlani, Emmanuel Ynoa.

Dodgers: Coach, Andy Russem; Anass Dorani, Ben Duffy, Tulga Enhsaihan, Daniel Folla, Julio Gonzalez, Adrian Gordan, Adam Johnson, Lukas Korterec, Austin Lee, Raphael Macapinlac, Jonathan Meed, Steven Morabito, Saul Nadel, Jake Russem, Andrew Scott.

Cardinals: Coach, James Herlihy; Benoit Adadie, Alexander Boela, Tyler Cannon, Jack Conery, Joshua Hart, Nicole Herlihy, Thomas Herlihy, Mikko McDonald, Allie Michels, Ayumi Moore, Oren Rosenbaum, Jonathan Sanchez, Jonathan Stein, Sean Suarez, Wesley Williams.

Fun was the name of the game at the schoolyard T-Ball skills training workout. Coach Luis Diaz labored successfully developing the love of baseball in all players. These 5- through 8-year-olds rallied to their positions after Lewis captivated these kids by demonstrating how to throw, catch, and swing the bat. Big smiles filled the players’ faces as each came to the plate to take a turn hitting the ball on the batting post. Everyone won at the schoolyard as parents pointed cameras at sons or daughters taking their place on the field of dreams.



Abdule Dione, Seif Dorani, Rahim Drame, Roger Eckstein, Jonathan Garcia, Sebastian Gherardi, Jonathan Hart, Damola Mabogunje, David Marcus, Jose Marte, Jr., Eric Miranda, Jason Santana.

Energy abounded at Blackwell Field as the Minor Little Leagues learned to concentrate on the ball and complete the play. The coaches worked with the players helping them with their skills before each team member stepped up to the batting plate. Parents watched intently as their sons or daughters took their positions on the grassy field. The “minors” standing after four games are:

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