

Next issue:
Feb. 4-5

The Main Street **WIRE**

Roosevelt Island’s Community Newspaper

in association with **Website NYC10044**

Southtown Snag: GDP May Say It’s All Parkland Under Blackwell Field

Maps and Words of Master Plan Are in Conflict; RIOC & Developers Standing Firm

RIRSD Acts to Prevent Building in the Disputed Area, Schedules Open Meeting

Roosevelt Islanders for Responsible Southtown Development (RIRSD) is filing an Article 78 proceeding against RIOC. If successful, the proceeding will force RIOC to repeat several steps on the road to Southtown.

Specifically, RIRSD is challenging the RIOC Board’s September 22 decision to confirm Hudson/Related as developers, and to approve their project. According to Douglas Ward of Young, Sommer, Ward, the attorneys representing RIRSD, the claim will include “the fact that the decision violated the State Environmental Quality Review Act, the Lease and General

project relied on environmental impacts being about the same as in the 1990 plan.)

Ward said he anticipates a March court date, when the matter will be argued before a judge. In the meantime, there could be negotiations between the parties. RIRSD seeks

to have all RIOC approvals on the project vacated. In its suit, it alleges RIOC has not complied with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), and asks that RIOC be required to comply with both SEQRA and CEQRA, the City’s environmental review law.

RIOC, Developers, Insist Southtown Plan Is Legal

“RIOC stands by its position that the soccer/softball field is not part of Blackwell Park.” With those words on Thursday, RIOC President Robert H. Ryan delineated RIOC’s stand on the development planned for the area between Northtown and the Tramway.

David Kramer of The Hudson Companies spoke to *The WIRE* for both his firm and The Related Companies, who jointly have received the RIOC Board of Directors’ final designation as Southtown developers. “When we heard about it, we looked into it,” Kramer said. “We reviewed all of the legally-binding maps for Roosevelt Island that have been approved by the City and amended by the City, including 1969 and 1977, and in every legally-binding map we reviewed, the northern boundary of Southtown is the fork in the road.” Kramer’s use of “legally-binding maps” indicates Hudson/Related will rely on the maps from which they worked, claiming they take precedence over the GDP’s words.

Kramer continued, “Every map I’ve been shown which doesn’t show the Southtown boundary at the fork in the road is usually some exhibit to the Ramati plan, which is not legally binding. When this issue came up, we were relieved that our Southtown map’s master plan is clearly located within Southtown’s boundaries.”

Ryan, when asked, “What’s RIOC going to do next on this?” responded, “Proceed with the development of Southtown.”

Overnight, on Southtown, everything may have changed. Residents researching legality of the RIOC-approved plan for Southtown have rediscovered a provision of the General Development Plan (GDP) that requires a six-acre Blackwell Park between Northtown and Southtown.

Those who’ve measured it say that to get to six acres, the existing areas commonly considered part of Blackwell Park – Meditation Steps, Rivercross lawn, Blackwell House grounds, and the basketball courts – are not enough. It appears the requirement can be met only by including Blackwell Field (the soccer field and baseball diamond) as part of Blackwell Park. If that’s true, the demand of Roosevelt Islanders for Responsible Southtown Development (RIRSD) that no buildings be built on the playing field agrees with provisions of the Lease between City and State, which incorporates the GDP by reference.

In 1990, the City Board of Estimate rejected a proposed GDP revision that would have reduced Blackwell Park acreage from “approximately six” to “approximately three.” In the GDP, these words appear: *The Open Space areas are... Blackwell Park, approximately six acres separating the North Town Area and the South Town Area, containing a landmark, the Blackwell House...* The Board of Estimate responded, in approving other amendments of the GDP, that “such amendment shall not include a reduction in the size of Blackwell Park...”

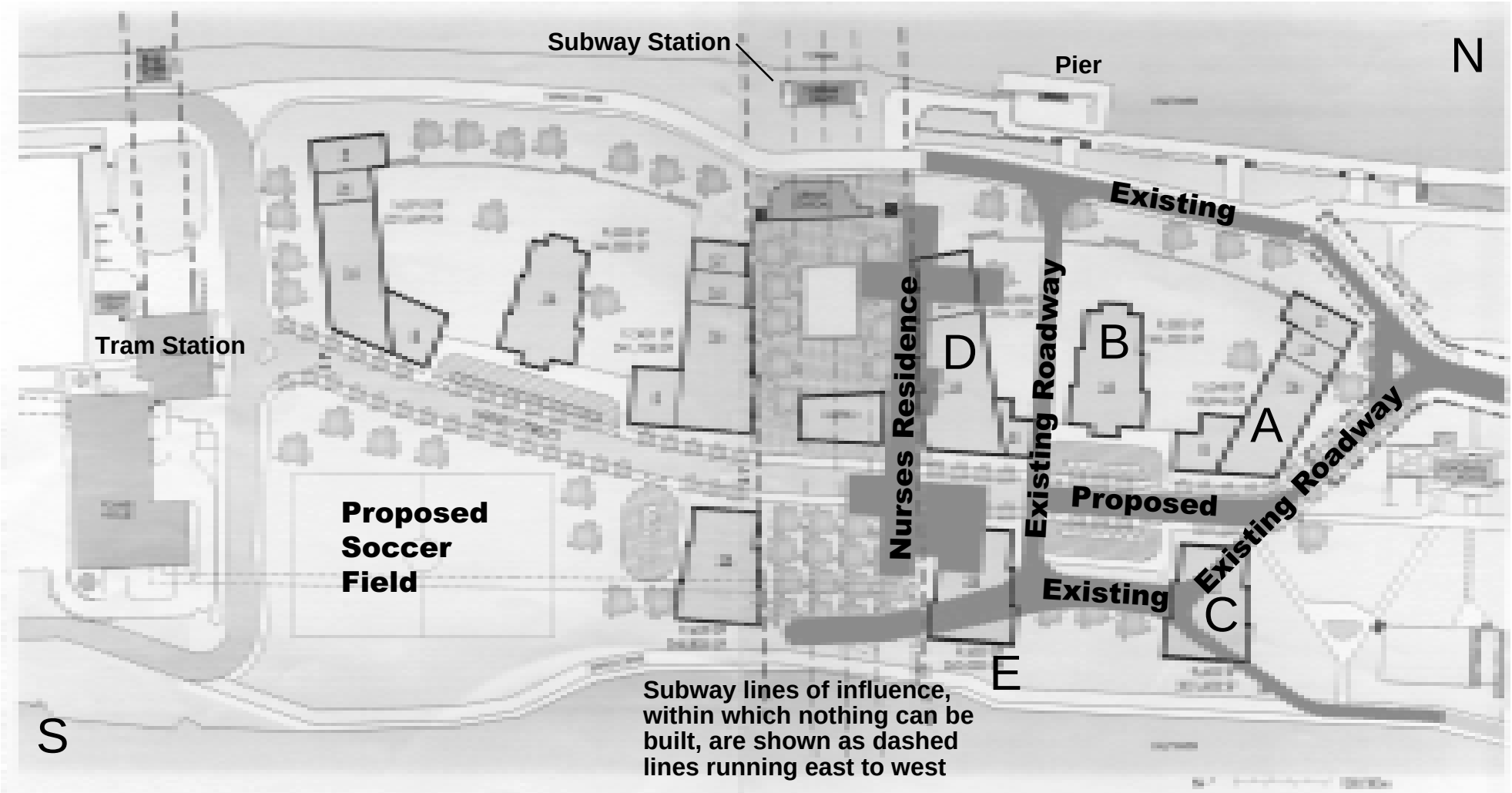
Just under two weeks ago, three groups of Islanders were aware, in varying degrees, of the six-acre question. It was first revealed publicly at the January 12 meeting of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) Board of Directors, when Residents Association Vice President Joan Christianson presented a letter written to RIRA’s legal counsel, Bob Cook of DeForest & Duer, by Karen Stewart. (**Full text** on *Website NYC10044*, at www.nyc10044.com.) The letter noted that the information was closely-held until RIOC attorney Barbara Espejo “chose to defend RIOC’s position” in a January 11 meeting. That led to a decision to release the information for use by groups opposing construction on the playing fields. Stewart is the wife of RIRA President H. Patrick Stewart.

Blend of present and proposed future shows possible boundaries of conflict. The present soccer/baseball field, bounded by the existing roadway, is the subject of resident assertions holding that for Blackwell Park to be “approximately six acres,” as called for in the General Development Plan (GDP), that land must be included. If that’s correct, proposed Southtown buildings A, B, and C are on existing parkland, and presumably could not be built without a City agreement to change the GDP. Buildings D and E, north of the subway zone excluded from construction, are probably outside the “approximately six acres” of park area and could be built. (The existing Nurses Residence would be demolished and is shown only for reference.) One resident proposal suggests building on the proposed new soccer field as a way of securing enough land for Southtown’s proposed number of apartments – about 2,000.

RIRSD has scheduled an open meeting to discuss its action for Thursday night (January 27) at 8:00 in Good Shepherd Chapel.

Development Plan, and local law.” Ward was not ready, at deadline, to list specifics of the filing.

Ward said the petition “will take issue with the plan insofar as it allows for project intrusion upon open space and parkland,” and said it “creates a radically different plan from that which was contemplated under the approved 1990 project design.” (Approval of the current



Pages of Thought and Opinion

The recent history of planning for Roosevelt Island and Southtown:

I believe that the Jerome Blue administration of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) generated so many ill-conceived, irresponsible, and simplistically commercial development proposals in recent years that the recent proposals for Southtown were not taken as seriously by the community as they should have been. It is now time to realize that the developers for Southtown are unquestionably a worthy and responsible entity and that something big is really going to happen with Southtown.

There have been many plans for Southtown. The original development plan from the 1970’s proposed commercial office buildings with retail as a “town center” located at the arrival point from public transportation.

The next, done in the late 1980’s by Raquel Ramati, proposed a highly-ordered, regular, and symmetrical series of buildings marching relentlessly through the entire area without any particular regard to any existing features. This plan was presented in models and drawings with the buildings developed in elaborate architectural detail. Like them or hate them, the drawings and models were an explicit statement of architectural intent and an unambiguous statement about a standard of quality and design. I believe that the most important things to be learned from that plan are as follows:

- A regular and symmetrical pattern of buildings might look attractive in an architectural presentation but it wreaked havoc on the existing landscape of the island.



- The architectural character of the buildings makes a big difference in the quality of the final built product.
- Ramati was hired as an independent consultant by the State of New York and was not working for housing developers. She also designed the delightful pier and esplanade just north of the subway station. She was hired for these projects because she had a well-deserved reputation as a distinguished urban designer.

In response to the rigidity and formality of the Ramati plan, Thoresen and Linard Architects proposed a plan with a series of smaller buildings arranged along a “continuation of Main Street.” This was characterized as a “continuation” because it tended to extend the existing quality of Main Street by strongly defining the street with building walls just as the original Main Street buildings do.

Nothing became of these plans because an economic and real estate recession enveloped the area during the 1990’s and talk of buildings and plans became academic. Now much more is again being said and written about the proposals for Southtown, because the issue is again real and urgent with a strong economy and a real estate market that will actually generate housing development.

Now for my contribution to the discussion about the Southtown plans and buildings. Here are some questions that need to be asked and some suggestions for answers.

What is quality architectural and urban design?

Quality is embodied in the immediately adjacent buildings of the original 1975 Roosevelt Island housing development. These buildings were developed

under the guidelines of a master plan developed by Philip Johnson, unquestionably one of the leaders of American architecture in the twentieth century. The buildings in the plan by Johnson were in turn developed by some of the most distinguished architects of the day.

The significance of the Johnson plan was that it set high standards of architectural and urban design that were not simply geared to the formulas and priorities of developers. Johnson did not have the conflict of interest of working directly for the developers. The Johnson plan prescribed the building massing, the architectural articulation of circulation elements such as stairs and elevator banks in the building design, and many other details that made the original Roosevelt Island buildings so successful. Johnson could focus on issues of urban design without being constrained by developers’ notions of design. Having an independent high-profile architect for master planning is not a luxury that every development can afford, but it would seem that Southtown is more than large enough to absorb this relatively small cost.

What is not quality architectural and urban design?

I believe that the real problem with all of the plans that have been proposed for Southtown is that they have not really made any attempt to develop buildings that will be uniquely appropriate for the Southtown context. They have not attempted to preserve any of the quality of the existing environment and simply dropped “standard” buildings (of approximately 10,000 square feet) around.

Architects working for the housing developers are proposing the current plans without any strong incentive to think outside of, or beyond, the limited interests of the developers. The developers want a simple pattern of phaseable, parcelable, optimally economi-

cal buildings. Why would the developers make a larger agenda for the architects? The former Roosevelt Island administration was not even basically competent on development issues. It is unimaginable for that administration to have thought of adding sophisticated and esoteric issues of urban design to the agenda for the architects preparing the plans. It was also consistent with the “privatization-of-everything” philosophy of that administration to cut corners and have the developers do the planning.

I read in one of the recent WIRE articles that some residents felt that the architects were inclined to “listen” to the needs of Roosevelt Island residents. The real needs of Roosevelt Island are not going to be well met just because the architects listen to complaints in meetings.

Only highly-qualified architects who are working with some independence from the housing developers can develop the best plan for Southtown. They need to be supported by a Roosevelt Island administration that is sympathetic to more sophisticated and esoteric issues of urban design.

What is the great quality of the Southtown site on Roosevelt Island?

First and foremost, quality is in the area surrounding the existing “soccer” field. This area has many wonderful features that should somehow be preserved in whole or part. It is a complexly-defined park space that presents itself as a sharp contrast to the walled street environment of the original building development along Main Street. The field is completely surrounded by mature trees and affords views to the water on both sides. Ironically, the strongest and most

See Gray, page 6

Letters

To the Editor:

I am writing to respond to the information printed in the RIRA President’s Column, January 8 issue, concerning PS/IS 217 and the overcrowding issue. Resident children total approximately 98% of our student population. A small minority of children with special needs are bussed in from other parts of the City to attend designated programs or as part of the District 2 Middle School Initiative Option. Reduced class size initiatives (registers of no more than 20 children in grades Pre-K-2), and specialty classrooms (music, art, computers, library, cooking, etc.) bring classroom usage nearly to capacity.

I remain available to discuss future educational needs and plans with the Roosevelt Island community.

Sherry Gregory
Principal, PS/IS 217

To the Editor:

As a member of the steering committee for RIRSD (Roosevelt Islanders for Responsible Southtown Development) I want to respond to the remarkable number of mistakes in Patrick Stewart’s column in the last WIRE and to provide the readers with an update on our committee’s progress. I am distressed that Mr. Stewart, as chief elected officer of our Residents Association, has so vocally and actively opposed any change in the Southtown plans, when the few details of the plan provided to date have been so unsatisfactory to so many Island residents.

His column starts with a rousing statement that, “Last night the RIRA Common Council voted overwhelmingly not to support... RIRSD... in their drive to stop the development of Southtown.” Actually, a second resolution supported our efforts and the committee overwhelmingly resolved in an emergency Saturday meeting (by 18-0 with three abstentions) to ask that RIOC rescind its approval of the RIOC Southtown plan.

Among the “flagrant misstatements” he refers to, you be the judge: “Southtown is being rammed down our throats.” The community input that I have heard has been overwhelmingly negative to this plan; and a meaningful community input has been limited to three-minute comments, which are then largely ignored. The last opportunity for “community input” was a November 10 RIRA meeting with developers that saw resident after resident blast this plan.

Stewart is particularly dismissive of objections to the huge apartment house to be constructed directly on the soccer field just past the Blackwell House turning circle. We have characterized this as a “wall” which blocks any vision south from Main Street and puts Blackwell park in shadows. Patrick’s defense of this monstrosity is, essentially, that whatever door you exit today on Main Street you see a wall anyway. I fail to understand why this justifies building another one, turning our “canyon” into a “gulch.” What we are asking is simply that construction on the current field be moved to the site near the Tram reserved for the new soccer field – then we have no blocked views, shadows, loss of tot-lots and open spaces.

Stewart claims proudly that “RIRA will be able to demonstrate incontrovertible facts” on this plan. To date RIRA hasn’t provided any more facts than were available when the builders put forth their last styrofoam mock-ups. Since nothing has been revealed to the public about the apartment size, pricing or construction schedule of this project, and RIRA common council has not seen fit to even review the existing documentation, we obtained the 1999 Comparison to the 1990 Environmental Impact Statement and can provide the following information: The plan calls for 1956 units, 400 studios, 1000 one-bedroom, 300 Junior 4’s, 200 two-bedroom and 56 three-bedroom apartments. Two hundred 2’s and fifty-six 3’s! So much for family housing.

Furthermore, development is to be phased, with the north-end buildings to be started this year, and other phases [of an unspecified number] to be spanned over 4 to 7 years. We don’t know if RIOC chooses to enforce this requirement, if not this pain could extend for much more than 7 years. The statement also avers that, since the project is in smaller phases, the builders don’t have to commit to waterborne conveyance of construction materials – which of course means lots of truck traffic for years to come.

Stewart claims that “...without construction of Southtown this community is doomed to fiscal failure.” This is a serious point, and deserves serious attention. Our Island, even with RIOC staff salaries, was only \$440,493 in the red in the last year (as per 10/99 RIOC Board Meeting), this with no income at all from the State (even though as taxpayers we certainly deserve it). The RIOC website has detailed the expected per annum revenues on each of their harebrained projects: SouthPoint (\$2 million), MiniCondos (\$250,000) and destruction of Sportspark for the Eldercare facility (\$1 million). Only Southtown has no estimated revenue. This project uses 19.5 acres of enormously valuable land. Before we pave it over forever, perhaps we should all be assured that the best bargain is being struck with the developers. But instead, \$4.56 million dollars are being spent by RIOC (some from funds earmarked for Octagon Park) to provide infrastructure. So a project put in place to stave off “fiscal failure” starts by spending what represents over 10 years of deficit coverage.

Stewart repeatedly states that our committee is some sort of Rivercross interest group dedicated only to preserving their property values and views. While this sort of divisive allegation is not worthy of a community leader, let me say that almost as many Eastwood windows will have views obstructed. Furthermore, if we take “property values” to be an indicator of neighborhood desirability, why would anyone want a project so poor that it causes values to drop?

Finally, he accuses us of “drama concocted out of misinformation and distortion ... created for hidden motivation.” We have gone to great lengths to uncover facts that should have been made available long ago. As far as drama goes, we have only until January 21 to take legal action to protect the best interests of our community – the drama is not concocted, it’s real.

Thanks to good support from all parts of our community, we are able to begin legal action to force RIOC to respect our wishes, and to defer or avoid construction on our fields. However, we still very much need your financial support for the battles to come. When you formulate your position on this plan, we urge you not to take our word for it, or Patrick’s. Just look at the plan, look at our alternative plan, and decide for yourself which one works best for the community.

Steve Marcus
More Letters, pages 3 and 6

Letters

To the Editor:

I have watched with some interest the current controversy around the Nurses Residence Field and its possible inclusion in Blackwell Park. I make two points:

First, it should be noted that every map I’ve seen, whether in the General Development Plan or in Dr. Blue’s RFP, clearly shows that the southern boundary of “Blackwell Park” is very clearly at the Y in the road where Main Street divides just south of Rivercross. The field formerly known as the “Nurses Residence Field” is south of this point and was never a part of the Blackwell Park site. It was carved out of a gravel lot as a temporary measure before Octagon Park was built, and occupies ground which all concerned at the time knew would eventually be part of Southtown. It was upgraded with grass seed and fencing during the Lerman administration with this caveat always in mind, which is why it was never graded or finished properly as either a soccer or baseball field, and all of us who worked on it at that time knew it would eventually be subsumed by Southtown construction. This tendency to call it “Blackwell Field” is a recent convenience, and is entirely artificial. It was always considered temporary; it is south of the Y which marks the southern boundary of Blackwell Park on every single map; calling it Blackwell Field does not in any way make it part of the original Blackwell Park site.

Second, all of this is by-the-by. At my urging, Dr. Jerry Blue was quick to add a new, larger and better-built soccer field to the Southtown project. Current RIOC President Rob Ryan has repeatedly affirmed his commitment to seeing that field built as soon as possible after the start of construction. Neither I nor anyone else has any reason whatsoever to disbelieve him.

David Kraut
Director, RIOC; Former President, RIRA;
Former Director, Little League; Former Soccer Dad

To the Editor:

It seems strange that the *Island Observer* (January 8, 2000) has decided to criticize the Capital Planning and Development Committee (CDPC) of RIOC in relation to its role in Southtown. The criticism seems more related to process than to substance, and, while the column mentions “facts,” the background behind the facts is sorely missing.

First let me point out that committee members from the island are volunteers who responded to a request from DHCR Commissioner Joseph Lynch. We were not chosen to represent RIRA or any other specific Island group.

It is stated that the committee meetings were not open to the public until last “spring.” Well, that’s factually correct since our first meeting was held on March 16. At that meeting, we were unsure as to what our role was to be and whether meetings were open to the public. Upon determination by DHCR that they were, all subsequent meetings were open to the public and in fact *The WIRE* was represented at those meetings.

Committee meetings were scheduled for Manhattan as a convenience to the committee members who came directly from work. It is odd that the usual meeting time of 6:30 is considered “unworkable,” considering it’s right after work, and allows members to get home at a reasonable hour. It is certainly better time than the 11:00 a.m. RIOC board meetings.

The *Island Observer* implies that the committee should have invited community residents to its meetings. While we never saw these meetings as public forums, it is incorrect to say that “only members of the Committee and designated developers or RIOC staff were allowed to speak.” One quickly forgets the impassioned presentation made by one Rivercross resident in opposition to the mini-schools proposal. And the committee certainly solicited public opinion and at convenient times and locations. After the disastrous RIOC hearing on the mini-schools proposal, the CDPC held its own hearing on the island, in the evening. The committee conducted a tour of the mini-schools with the developer at which several island residents attended and the committee members attempted to contact residents whose views might be affected by the proposal.

It is true that not all the meetings dealt with Southtown and in fact that most of our time had been spent on the mini-schools because it had been the pressing issue. When CDPC did meet on Southtown in the summer, it was only to give *its assent to the developer and concept for Southtown*. This decision came only after we were assured by RIOC that specific details involving design and construction impacts would return to the committee for further discussion.

Letters continue on page 6



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I have made the decision to withdraw this column from *The Main Street WIRE*. For some time, various members of the Common Council have been pressing me to return to the more traditional format of a freestanding RIRA newsletter that will include this column as well as other RIRA matters. It is a move that will both allow the Common Council to put a greater array of information before you, and will better offer me the freedom to ignore *The WIRE* when I feel its positions don’t merit comment.

Patrick Stewart

The initial rationale for the column was to increase Island solidarity around the critical issue of Jerry Blue’s administration of our community. That time has long passed, and for some time I have been concerned about the appropriateness of my maintaining the column.

There is no question but that my decision is in part based upon the editorial direction of *The WIRE* itself

over the past several months. I am frequently (too frequently) asked by Islanders whether, by virtue of my own presence in *The WIRE*, I therefore support *The WIRE*’s position on Island issues and events. Nothing could be further from the case.

RIRA needs its separate voice, with other contributions as well as my own. There are practical matters, including cost, that have prompted us for some time to take the all too human action of no action at all. By my taking this definitive step, made possible by new volunteers for the RIRA Communication Committee, we will make what should be a reality.

We will have something before you soon, and I know you wish us well in our new venture.

RIRA President’s Column

Editor’s note: This space will now be made available to members of the RIRA Common Council who care to address the community. As always, *The WIRE* encourages those who disagree with its editorial positions (or, for that matter, its news coverage) to avail themselves of the *Letters* column. Publication is not automatic, but *The WIRE* tries to find space for all voices on subjects of reasonably wide interest.

When you can’t take the heat...
...build your own kitchen?
Sooner or later, most governments wish they could control the press. Many of them work at it pretty hard, with everything from repressive laws of long ago to the spinmeisters of today.

I regret Patrick Stewart’s decision to terminate his *WIRE* column, whatever the course of the more closely-control-able newsletter he plans for RIRA. The balance of this newspaper is important to me – perhaps as important as its responsibility and the truth of what it prints.

That having been said, I can understand Stewart’s run for cover.

After all, *The WIRE* has given editorial support to the movement to avoid construction of apartment buildings on the community’s greensward, while Stewart repeatedly said the community had had enough input on the matter and that the RIOC-approved plan was just fine. Of course, there’s that inconvenient matter of the General Development Plan (GDP) to contend with, since it supports *The WIRE*’s position.

And there’s the matter of the RIOC Board (including Stewart, by both his silence and his statements) approving a plan for Southtown even though the RIOC Board’s Capital Planning and Development Committee (CPDC) had been told explicitly they weren’t passing on the plan. When the RIRA Common Council passed a resolution January 8 asking that the RIOC

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observer

Board rescind approval of the “project and plan,” the 18-0 vote (three abstaining) was a direct rebuke to Stewart’s go-along-with-RIOC position. *The WIRE* admits to keeping the issue alive through editorial comment despite Stewart’s efforts to make it go away.

Of course, it’s all a moot point, anyway, since the plan and approval Stewart defended so determinedly turns out to be contrary to the GDP.

Then there’s the question of self-governance for Roosevelt Island. *The WIRE* has backed it in most of the forms its been presented, feeling it’s

critically important to get out from under a Governor-appointed management system that’s frequently anti-resident and generally so error-prone that it’s an embarrassment to ordinary good business practice, let alone democracy. Stewart not only abstained when given an opportunity to vote for the original self-governance bill introduced by Assemblymember Pete Grannis; he then proceeded to raise a long series of fool’s-errand hobgoblin questions in an effort to hamper the process – despite a resident vote by a 92% margin to get on with it.

Then there was the proposal in Common Council to require a disclaimer on Stewart’s column – one saying the column contained his views, not the Common Council’s. Stewart readily agreed to it to avoid a vote on the matter. The disclaimer was included once. I wonder if it’ll appear in his *RIRA Newsletter* column?

DL

COMING UP

Compiled by Claire Friedland – phone/fax 317-8523

Mon., Jan. 24, 8:00 p.m., Toastmasters. For information, call **687-4010**.
Fri., Jan. 28, 7:00 p.m. (and each Friday), Roosevelt Island Art Association, Sketch Session, live model, 546 Main Street. Information, **921-5939**.

Tue., Feb 1, 6:00 p.m., PTA Executive Board meeting; all parents of 217 students are welcome.

Wed., Feb. 2, 8:00 p.m., RIRA Common Council Meeting, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Sat., Feb. 5, next issue of The Main Street WIRE. Deadlines: Advertising in the paper, Fri., Jan. 28; decision on stuffers for *The Bag*, Mon., Jan. 31; bag materials due Feb. 3. **Future issues:** Feb. 19; Mar. 4, 18; Apr. 1, 15, 29; May 13, 27; June 10; July 1 (for July 4); Aug. 26; Sept. 9, 23; Oct. 7, 21; Nov. 4, 18; Dec. 2, 16; Jan 13, 2001;

generally every two weeks thereafter. 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 (no charge), **317-8523**.

Thur., Feb. 10, 6:00 p.m., Annual International Dinner of PTA in school cafeteria. Information: **980-0294**.
Sat., Feb. 26, all day, Black History Month Celebration, sponsored by Housing Management. Marilyn Engstler of Community Relations, at **838-4747**, is seeking volunteers, and ideas for this event, which is to include entertainment, educational workshops, ethnic food, and more.

At the Senior Center

Monday
9:15-10:15, **Stay Well** (Exercise)
10:00-11:00, **English as 2nd Language** (beg)
10:00-12:00, **English as 2nd** (intermediate)
12:45 **Arts & Crafts**
6:30, **Evening Line Dancing**
Tuesday
9:45-10:45, **Jazzercise**
1:30, **Bingo** (RISA)
Wednesday
9:00-10:00, **Stay Well** (Stretch)
10:00-11:00, **English as 2nd Language** (beg)
10:30-11:30, **Creative Arts**
11:00-12:00, **English as 2nd** (intermediate)
1:30, **Games** (RISA)
Thursday
10:00-11:00, **Tai Chi**
12:30, **Movie**
Friday
10:00-11:00, **Citizenship Class**
10:30-11:30, **Blood Pressure Screening**

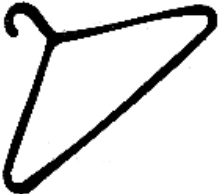
Special Events

Call in advance for details: 980-1888

Mon., Jan. 24, Metrocard Bus
Tues., Jan. 25, 12:30, VNS Service
Fri., Jan. 28, 12:30, Birthday Party
Sat., Feb. 8, Mohegan Sun Casino (RISA trip)
Sat., Feb. 15, 22, 29; 7:00 p.m., Bingo

Sophia Adams, Amy Ambrosino, Russell Aragon, Judy Aronds, Rafael Asenjo, Sonia Asenjo, David Bauer, Judy Berdy, Steve Bessenof, Virginia Boykin, Laurence Brodsky, Mary Camper-Titsingh, Melanie Castine, Lynn Chambers, Malcolm Cohen, Debra Mount Cornet, Shirley Cruz, Harold Davis, Valerie Davis, Morty Dinerstein, Arlise Ellis, Norm Ellis, Regina Harrington, Enrique Fernandez, Mary Fitzgerald, Sarita Fonseca, Claire Friedland, Karen Ganzi, Atul Golchale, Jayashree Golchale, Teresa Hasing, John Hennessey, Saraj Johnson, Peter Kaplan, Mickey Karpeles-Bauer, Matthew Katz, Ruth Limmer, Curtis Lowery, Nina Lublin, Lena Lutz, Hazel Lynch, Clarissa McCraley, Donny McIntyre, Merle McLean, Dorene McQueen, Myrna Mendis, Jill Milner, Terry Moses, Bruce Munsch, Louise Munsch, Sandra Narine, Juan Nieves, Nancy Olivera, Elizabeth Powell, Joan Raimone, Steve Raimone, Gladys Rasheed, Margery Rubin, Ron Schuppert, Bernie Schwartz, Beryl Seaforth, Susan Secula, Marilyn Sherman, Claire Shuldiner, Peter Shuldiner, Harry Small, Stuart Solway, Joyce Speziale, Karen Stewart, Pearl Thomas, Luis Torres, David Tsreshkin, Elena Vrinceanu, Rece Walford, Maggie Warner, Robin Williams, Nina Winteringham, Rose Woods

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Great opportunity to make a difference on your Island! Island Kids, Inc., seeking assistant for Learning Groups I and II. 15 Hours per week. Mature, responsible, patient, reliable, good-humored person; experience preferred. Must enjoy working with preschool-age children. Contact Gina Enock, Director, at 212 758-8408.



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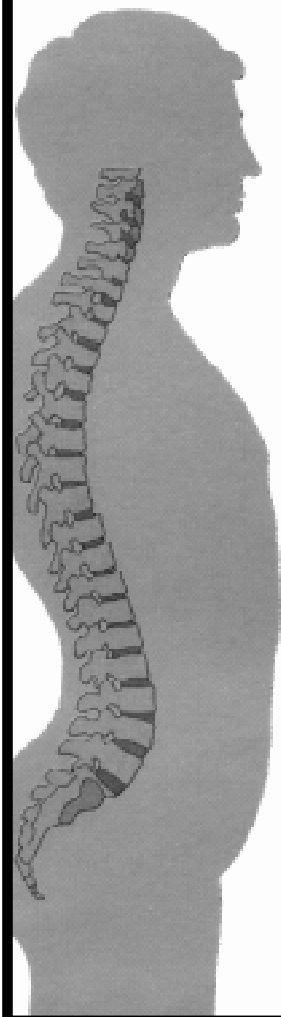
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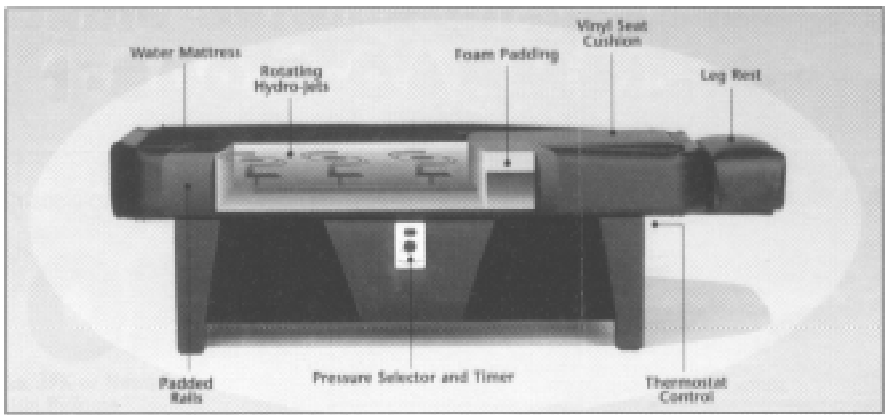
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Letters from page 3

So it seems that for that small action we have been taken to task. But we met for several months to discuss the mini-schools project and were never criticized for how our meetings were conducted. Let’s not forget that the committee all but unanimously opposed the developer’s scheme. To criticize the committee at this juncture is unfair to its members who have given considerable time and expertise to benefit Roosevelt Island.

Larry Parnes

Editor’s note: *The WIRE* applauds the unpaid resident members of CPDC. The *Island Observer* column in question found fault with a Patrick Stewart claim that off-Island meetings of the CPDC were a genuine opportunity for residents to comment on Southtown. *The WIRE* has also criticized the RIOC Board for approving the Southtown “plan and project” when CPDC arguably recommended only final designation of the developers (not the plan). Parnes and the other resident members of CPDC do solid work.

To the Editor:

During the monthly Common Council meeting on January 5, 2000, in response to a question asking the name(s) of the law firm(s) under consideration by RIRSD, Linda Heimer, a Rivercross rep, who is also the Council’s VP of Government Relations, a member of the Steering Committee of RIRSD, a former member of the RIRA Legal Action Defense Fund, a member of the Maple Tree Group, and a recognized Island activist (no conflict(s) of interest(s) there!) replied that unless RIRA voted financial support for RIRSD first, there was no need to supply any such information to the Council.

In the January 8th edition of *The WIRE*, available in some buildings by mid-day January 7th, Steve Marcus, chair of the RIRSD Steering Committee, is quoted as saying his group has decided not to release figures that might be useful to the opposition. And who might that be, since “we all support Southtown?”

At an emergency meeting of the Council on Saturday, January 8th, a memo dated January 7th from an Albany-based law firm (Young, Sommer... LLC) on their letterhead, written by Douglas H. Ward and Willard H. Peck to Linda Heimer, indicates that the RIOC resolution on Southtown *appears* to be a “Final Action” by the Board. They go on to justify filing an Article 78 petition even if it is later determined that the Resolution by the Board was not a “Final Action.”

Wouldn’t the more intelligent, mature, sane, and responsible course of action for all the interested parties to have taken have been to determine the status of the RIOC Board resolution *before* recommending that RIRA spend money that it did not have and, more significantly, inciting fear and suspicion in the hearts of residents?

Perhaps the buildings that elected us should take a long, hard look at their Common Council reps and let us know if we are, in truth, representing the wishes of those who elected us.

As for Patrick Stewart and Joan Christianson, let it be duly noted by all advocates of democracy, that only those two were elected by the total votes of all the residents in all the buildings who chose to vote.

Kitty Berman
Island House Alternate, RIRA

To the Editor:

As a RIRA Common Council member (Island House alternate), I wish to address several points raised in the January 8th issue of *The WIRE*. In the first of three editorials on page 2, you state: “So we applaud the Marcus effort, through RIRSD, to rally their fellow residents to act, particularly when their repeated pleas to the RIRA Common Council went unheeded – and particularly when the Common Council failed to notice the ticking clock in the 120-day window.” While extensive coverage was devoted to the viewpoints of the Marcus family and RIRSD [Roosevelt Islanders for Responsible Southtown Development, to which the Marcus family also belongs], much of the substance of the January 5th RIRA meeting was underplayed. Contrary to the statement in *The WIRE*, it has not been definitively determined that the 120-day period to contest development plans began with the RIOC board vote of September 22nd. RIOC and the developers have not yet signed an agreement, and conflicting opinions were expressed at the RIRA meeting as to whether the period begins with the board vote or the date that such an agreement is signed. After a protracted and disruptive public session, it was finally decided that Joan Christianson, RIRA first vice-president, would contact De Forest & Duer, attorneys under retainer to RIRA for consultation on land-use/development matters, for clarification of this matter, as you reported.

At the Saturday morning emergency RIRA meeting, Ms. Christianson submitted a report on the 120-day issue based on consultation with De Forest & Duer, and a meeting with RIOC, with DeForest & Duer being present by telephone conference. Some RIRA members who are also RIRSD members, and some Island residents argued strenuously on Wednesday and Saturday that no harm could be done by filing an Article 78 action, in order to protect rights should the 120-day period begin with September 22nd. According to the report, RIRA’s attorneys, one of the City’s most prestigious land-use firms, with extensive knowledge of Roosevelt Island, has advised that Article 78 litigation can be expensive and protracted, and filing such a suit prema-

turely (in this case, before an agreement is signed) is even more so. It must be emphasized that RIRA is not in any way obstructing the ability of individuals or groups to file their own Article 78 suit. RIRA members do, however, have a right to decide whether or not to join in an action with RIRSD, as well as sharing its attorneys and legal funds with them, as was proposed at the 12/28/99 RIRA Legal Action Committee meeting (both motions were defeated). If RIRA commits itself to supporting other groups in this way without due consideration, it may well compromise its own future legal course of action and its ability to raise funds in the community. RIRSD has not simply asked for RIRA “action,” it has also asked for the legitimacy of community support that RIRA, as an organization, supposedly represents.

Further, disagreement with the Marcus family is not the same as “inaction.” RIRA members have listened to their presentations, sometimes by three family members on the same evening. Their flyer to Rivercross residents calling a meeting on December 21st to discuss the 120-day limit and the design of Southtown, asks residents to protect the “value of their Rivercross apartments,” presumably endangered by the cited loss of views and additions to the Island’s current “transient population” (“U.N. people” and “Marymount students,” that is, “short-term visitors who have no interest in the Island’s future”). Such a document speaks for itself and does not in any way compare to “the ride of Paul Revere” as you claim. Certainly people are entitled to be motivated by self-interest, but let’s be honest about such motivations, especially after they appear in print, rather than taking up Council time with emotional pleas for the inalienable right to hold “impromptu family picnics” on the soccer field, to preserve it as a landing field for Canadian geese, or to have “river-to-river” views. And let’s not forget that the “new community” of Roosevelt Island was created to provide housing for New York City (5,000 units) with designated open spaces to “serve residents of the City as a whole, as well as residents of the Island,” as stated in the GDP, part of the City/State lease. Monies from ground leases are crucial in helping the Island reach economic self-sufficiency and sufficient population to help Island businesses prosper. Many issues need to be resolved, such as clarification of the plan itself, transportation of materials, infrastructure costs, population mix, etc. Litigation is only one way, and perhaps not the most effective way at present, to address them. The problems we face today can be traced back to the City’s fiscal crisis of 1974-75, which prevented the construction of Southtown. The community must work from a position of informed strength to negotiate with RIOC and the developers to get the best Southtown it can now, while the economy prospers.

Finally, much has been made of Patrick Stewart’s conflict of interest as President of RIRA and as a board member of RIOC. The State law incorporating RIOC calls for Island residents to be appointed to the Board. The RIRA constitution calls for the President to “serve as the duly elected representative of RIRA on the RIOC board of directors.” The obvious intention is that the President, an elected representative, will represent the interest of residents. Patrick Stewart, twice-elected President of RIRA, has done and will do his best to carry out his duties properly, bringing to bear his intelligence, integrity and the advice of legal counsel in case of potential conflict, which is all that can be asked of any human being filling that position. While *The WIRE* is certainly entitled to its opinion, to refer to him as the Pataki administration’s “chief resident pretender and apologist” borders on insult, and does nothing to promote the interests of this community. Perhaps the editorial page of *The WIRE* should be posted on the Trellis door and kiosks as well, so that non-*WIRE* readers can get the full import of the paper’s message.

Susan Waide

To the Editor:

The Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) voted at their January meeting to award the Day Nursery \$50,000 of public-purpose money to support scholarships for Roosevelt Island families. This was in response to our increased need for funds to assist the Island’s lower- and middle-income families who need preschool and child-care services for their young children.

Our increased need comes because:

- There has been a two-year freeze on the vouchers from the NYC Agency for Child Development (ACD) which, for many years, had helped pay tuition for lower-income families
- Since the PreKindergarten classes in the NYC public schools are only two-and-a-half-hour programs, parents needing full-day coverage come to the Day Nursery seeking support. Although we have written proposals to the Board of Education, additional money to help fund seven-hour school-day programs has not yet been made available to Roosevelt Island.

• Finally, many private foundations do not think of Roosevelt Island as a high-need area and turn down our grant proposals.

We are especially grateful, therefore, that public-purpose money has been made available to us. We want to invite families to come to the Day Nursery to see our wonderful programs and inquire about financial assistance. The Parent Board of Directors of the school makes a continued commitment to fund-raise to make it possible for more Roosevelt Island children to attend the Day Nursery.

Lauralee Schreiber, Chair, Parent Board
Sara Seiden, Director

Gray from page 2

charming definition of this space is by the architectural massing of the derelict nurses’ dormitory. This huge building has many features that make it perfectly appropriate for its location and role as a major element of definition of the “soccer” space. It has a pleasant height, it has prominent wings that reach out and subtly suggest a definition of an outdoor space that corresponds to the “soccer” space. The large, almost symmetrical building mass is perceived as the “south end” of Main Street as one travels south toward the subway and makes the “soccer” space visually part of the street.

The fact that it is a derelict building that has to be demolished clouds the essential fact that this is a highly appropriate building for this site and location. This building says volumes about what could be quality for this site.

What would characterize a good plan for Roosevelt Island Southtown?

The plan would be more responsive to the existing qualities and features of the Island. For example, if the derelict nurses’ dormitory is understood as appropriate to the site in all respects, other than no longer being a useful building, then why not use it as a model of sorts for a new complex of buildings on the same site? Why not make a sort of historical reference and renew the “soccer” site without totally destroying it?

The original Roosevelt Island buildings have some part of the public halls or elevator lobbies on each floor expressed as windows or other glass areas in the façade of the buildings. Why not continue the “tradition” of expressing the circulation elements in at least some of the buildings? This would be another way of making the new buildings contextual to Roosevelt Island. When the circulation elements are expressed, the public corridors tend to have some outside awareness, orientation and natural light. This is a significant benefit to the building tenants. This might not be the



cheapest possible way to plan a building, but the premium is not necessarily large.

The plan should address issues of building materials and façade design. Although the current architects have highly distinguished records for designing housing in New York, the architectural result could still be mediocre if the developers are calling all the shots.

For example, the apparent scale of a development can be somewhat diminished if there are lower buildings covered with brick and other masonry which are located to define the scale of urban spaces and, where there are higher buildings, they are predominantly glass and not located to define spaces.

If the developers are controlling the plan, there is no incentive to deal with any of these kinds of manipulations.

A good plan for the best interests of Roosevelt Island residents will best be developed by professionals working with an independent mandate and embracing all the factors in the situation.

Why is the current plan for Roosevelt Island Southtown not really a good plan?

It totally destroys the soccer-field area and replaces it with a banal series of towers.

It is totally geared to a simple pattern of phaseable, parcelable, optimally economical buildings and has little of the sophistication of the earlier Roosevelt Island developments.

The plan proposes a symmetrical pattern of buildings that looks more like an anachronistic high-rise housing project than something that belongs on Roosevelt Island.

The first phases of the Island, which were master-planned by Philip Johnson, are a much more sophisticated urban complex that has varied vistas, an interesting series of spaces defined by the buildings and a cohesive yet varied architectural vocabulary. The buildings were developed by different architects within the context of complex guidelines set up by Johnson. Battery Park City in lower Manhattan is certainly another exemplary model of contemporary market rate housing by different architects and developers within guidelines similarly set by a master plan architect. Why doesn’t the next phase of Roosevelt Island deserve something more sophisticated?

What should happen next in the plan for Southtown?

RIOC should enlist the help of a highly qualified independent professional to set guidelines for and/or work with the existing architectural team to develop a higher level of planning proposal. Or RIOC could hire an independent professional to develop a master plan independent of the existing architects.

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January 4 - January 17, 2000

1/5, Dispute, 686 Main St., Female resident phoned PSD, stated she was followed & harassed by Gristede's security guard & was told not to enter store any more. She requested PSD, who responded, spoke w/ security guard (who is victim in this incident). He stated she had assaulted an employee & will be arrested if she enters store in future. Gristede's mgr. did not press charges.

1/9, Verbal Dispute, 2/4 River Rd., Officers saw male enter vehicle & go up ramp, another vehicle followed, both were stopped @ Queens end of bridge. They were involved in dispute over cellular phone, each drove off in separate directions.

1/10, Hazardous Condition, 570 Main St., Officer responded to scene, where "Z" bricks had sunk, causing a hazardous condition. RIOCC Superv. notified. Four cones were placed at location. Condition to be corrected.

1/11, Reckless Endangerment, 540 Main St., Resident entered PSD, stated her underage son was walking in f/o 540 when unk. person(s) shouted out open window to gain his attention. Victim looked up & saw unk. object that had been thrown coming towards him. He moved out of way & it did not strike him. Object was a cassette holder. He did not sustain any injuries. Officer searched area w/ negative results. Y.O. spoke w/victim's mother.

1/11, Larceny, 30 River Rd., Two underage youths approached China I's delivery man, snatched food from bike basket, fled. The latter followed youths, caught them, led them to 30 River Rd. door station. PSD Sgt., Y.O. responded to scene, parents of both youths were asked to come to PSD w/sons. They complied. Victim refused to press charges.

1/12, Dispute, 540 Main St., Female resident entered PSD, said she had been approached by a friend with whom she had an argument over items he had given to reporter. Officers referred the latter to small claims court. She refused NYPD report.

1/13, Assault, 510 Main St., Arrest. PSD officer responded to assist NYPD in aided incident. Non-resident victim stated he was attempting to voluntarily give resident perp. money, when the latter demanded more money in anger & struck victim on forehead w/keys which caused laceration in victim's forehead. Perp went to PSD attempting to register a complaint. EMS responded, transported victim to Mt. Sinai. Perp was arrested for assault 3, by PSD officer in PSD office & transported him to 19 Pct. for processing & from there to central booking.

1/14, Dispute, 686 Main St., Officer responded to dispute, resident said security guard was harassing her. Resident was violating store policy. Condition corrected.

1/14, Hazardous Condition, 580 Main St., Officer responded to scene, tenant stated she saw sparks, heard small explosion emanating from window heater. Other officers responded w/fire extinguisher. RIHM supervisor responded, examined heater, it was broken. Apts. above/ below were searched, there was no damage.

1/15, Hazardous Condition, 625 Main St., Resident entered PSD, said she smelled gas in hall. Officers responded, confirmed it. FDNY responded, searched apt., confirmed leak was emanating from gas stove, which was replaced & inspected by Con Ed. No injuries reported.

1/15, Found Property, 555 Main St., Concierge entered PSD, turned in wallet w/driver's license, US\$139.+ in currency & misc. other items. Property was secured @ PSD.

1/16, Verbal Dispute, 549 Main St., Two male residents were engaged in verbal dispute. Each accused the other of using disparaging remarks. Officers responded, both parties refused NYPD report & were escorted out of premises.

1/16, Assault, 575 Main St., Resident entered PSD, reported domestic incident on 1/13 during which her husband had splattered hot food on her face, causing small burns. At present victim is staying w/friend. NYPD prepared domestic report.

1/17, Absconded, 560 Main St., Resident told Children's Services agency that daughter had absconded from the agency. Agency called YO stated she wanted child removed from apt. Synopsis: Child had not absconded, and mother was informed not to evict child from apt. NYPD stated child did not have PINS warrant against her. Mother was told to make arrangements with family court. Youth appears to be in good condition.

1/17, Dispute, 556 Main St., Male entered PSD, said he had stopped two male youths from fighting, one of them was bleeding from nose. They exited the premises headed towards sea wall. He requested PSD officer be dispatched to clean up blood. He also said there were six other youths watching the fight. Officers searched area, saw blood, but no youths. RIHM supervisor responded.

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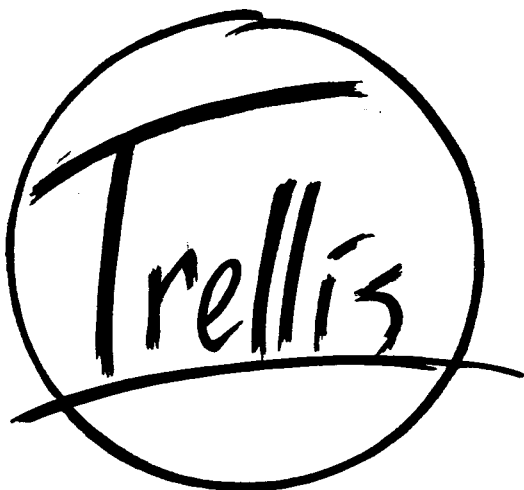
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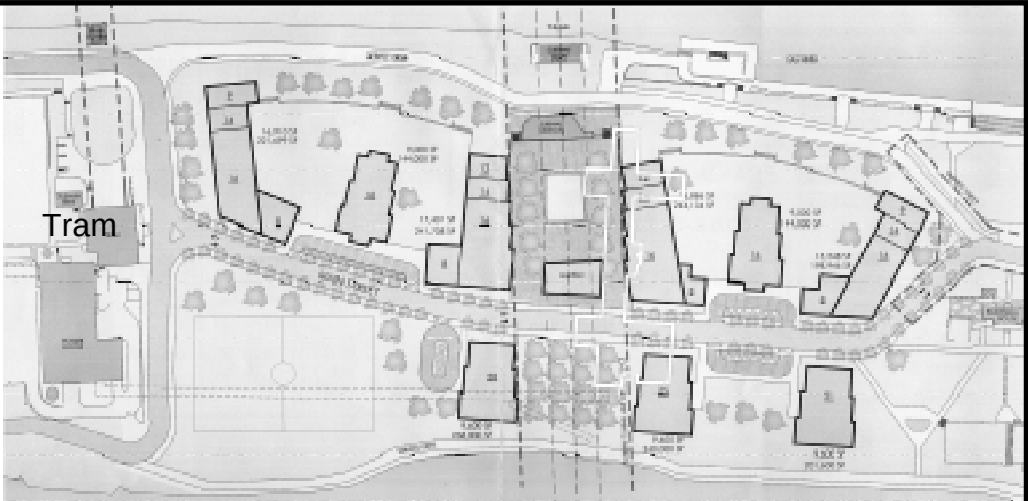
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