

The Ray Abrams Big Band July 4, 4-6 pm

Free *River Music* Jazz Concert, Good Shepherd Plaza • Contributions accepted to benefit *The WIRE*

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Next issue:
July 28-29

WELCOME
FIREWORKS
VISITORS!

The Main Street **WIRE**

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

in association with **Website NYC10044**



More than Fireworks Visiting the Island for the fireworks? You'll get one of the more spectacular views of Manhattan from Southpoint. But there's more to Roosevelt Island than the Fourth of July festivities, or for that matter, more than the politics and controversy you'll read about in this issue of *The WIRE*. At the other end of the Island, opposite Gracie Mansion, Lighthouse Park provides a serene setting for visitors, Islanders, and patients at the Island's hospitals. The lighthouse, which dates back a century and a half, was designed by the same architect responsible for Saint Patrick's Cathedral. It's recently been relighted.

Website NYC10044 www.nyc10044.com

Free Big Band Jazz Concert July 4 Features Abrams Group in *WIRE* Funder

The Ray Abrams Big Band will present a free two-hour concert from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. on The Fourth of July (Tuesday) in Good Shepherd Plaza.

The Abrams band is a virtual living history of the Brooklyn jazz scene, one of three New York jazz orbits that dominated local music at mid-20th-century. Drummer Max Roach, among others, came out of the Brooklyn milieu. The Abrams band was originally led by trumpeter Hank Doughty and arranger Ray Abrams, both deceased. Abrams played on the first be-bop record ever cut, *Disorder at the Border*. Currently led by saxophonist Ervin Simpson, the 18-piece orchestra was once the performing home of many first-line players, some of whom later became leaders of

their own groups. They include trumpeters Red Connors, Dave Simpson, Irvin Stokes (who has performed on Roosevelt Island with Jazzmobile), and Eddie Preston of the Duke Ellington Orchestra; pianist Joe Knight; trombonist Jimmy Buxton; alto and baritone saxophonist Marion Davis; vocalist Pat Spann of the Clefones; and Calvin Lynch, tenor sax, who is now the senior sideman in the group.

The concert is a production of River Music and is presented as a fund-raiser by *The Main Street WIRE* with Roosevelt Island Housing Management as a co-sponsor, and with assistance from the Roosevelt Island Historical Society, the Roman Catholic Parish, See **Concert**, page 11

Manhattan Park Rents Are Going Up

by Anusha Shrivastava

Manhattan Park rents are going up. The size of the increases means some residents may have to move.

In 1998, Kim Biagioli chose to live in a two-bedroom Manhattan Park apartment on Roosevelt Island. She had triplets and thought the place was convenient, safe and a great place for children to grow up. In April of this year, she moved out, even before the kids turned two. "The rent has been hiked so much that it is better to buy a place in New Jersey than continue living here," said Kim. "It simply does not make economic sense to live here anymore."

One resident, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that she was very upset about having to leave. "My rent was increased from \$1500 to \$2000 all at once. I thought that was outrageous because the service is no better and

there has been no improvement in the apartment. In fact, it has not been painted even once in the past six years that I have been living here. To top it all, I was given just three weeks to decide whether I wanted to renew my lease or not and I really felt as if I was being forced out."

Matthew Katz belonged to the first group of residents who moved into Manhattan Park 11 years ago. Five years ago he upgraded to a two-bedroom apartment because the Manhattan Park management offered him a price break. "I think that was because they were not filling the buildings at the time," said Katz. "Now the story is different and I have been told that my rent will be increased by at least a thousand dollars when it comes up for renewal. When we moved in, we were told that rent increases with each new lease would be about 3-4%, but that verbal assurance has been violated."

Katz is currently paying \$1700 for a two-bedroom apartment. When he met Brian Baker, the Director of Leasing, regarding the rent increase, Baker told him that the only solution was to move to a smaller apartment or apply for a cheaper apartment in another building. "We will have to move," said Katz.

In a random survey of people moving out of Manhattan Park,

every single person interviewed cited the exact same reason for the move – the huge increase in rent this year.

Devorah Fong, the spokesperson for Manhattan Park, said that the steep hike was justified, given the strong market. "Rent is based on what the market can bear. It could increase as much as 50% or as little as 5% depending on when the first lease for an apartment was signed. For apartments that were rented out

Inside:

Southtown Law Suits • 12

MiniCondo Vote • 2, 6

Island Ideal for Disabled • 10

Fantasticks Photos • 16

ten years ago, the rent simply had not caught up. In January of this year, it was decided by the owners that as the leases came up for renewal, they should be brought to market rates based on the current strong market."

The range of rents is from \$1890 for a one-bedroom apartment devoid of a balcony and crippled with a "poor" view to \$2200 for a high-floor apartment of the same size with a balcony, a desirable view and proximity to the river. A two-bedroom apartment rents for approximately \$2700. A "good" three-bedroom is being rented out for up to \$4600. "We are still 20% below comparable units in Manhattan," says Devorah. "But this is not exactly Manhattan," said Matthew.

See **Manhattan Park**, page 11

New for Seniors: Meals on Heels

The Senior Center is offering daily Meals-on-Heels starting this month. The program is available to residents aged over 60 who have difficulty getting out, find it difficult to cook for themselves, and have no home attendant or other home help. For those who qualify, the program will deliver hot lunches Monday through Friday.

For information, residents are asked to inquire at the Roosevelt Island Seniors Association at 546 Main Street, or call (212) 980-1888.

Call 911, Says Precinct's Top Cop

Police Department Deputy Inspector James T. O'Brien met residents at PS/IS 217 on Monday, May 31, to address concerns in the community. Despite publicity, the gathering was sparsely attended.

O'Brien told his audience that, year-to-date, the Island has had eleven major crimes, which include murder, rape, robbery, felony assault, burglary, grand larceny burglary, and grand larceny-burglary auto. These are the FBI statistics. No other specific statistics are kept by the NYPD, other than the number of 911 calls directed to each precinct.

O'Brien urged that residents call 911 to report incidents, so that statistics will be tracked properly. Unlike Public Safety, the NYPD system provides 911 with the originating location of every call, which can

be critical information in an emergency.

Based on statistics, the precinct beefs up patrols where necessary.

Residents attending the meeting reported they all had observed drug usage and deals, public drunkenness, loitering, and loud music.

There is information about the 114th Precinct on the NYPD's website, at www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/nypd/html/pct/phn114.html. Some key phone numbers – all 718 area code – are:

Precinct: **626-9311**

Domestic Violence: **626-9316**

Youth Officer: **626-9337**

Crime Prevention: **626-9324**

Detectives: **626-9334**

Community Relations Officer Dwayne L. Palmer can be reached at **718-626-9327**.



Margery Rubin

Members of the 18-piece Ray Abrams Big Band in a rehearsal this week for Tuesday afternoon's concert. Left to right, front: Sidney Richards, lead alto sax; Don Echoles Conway, second alto; Calvin Lynch, tenor sax. Behind them are Theodore Wilson, bass; and trombonists Ulysses Corbett, Don Robinson, and Cyril Greene. In the last row shown is lead trumpeter Ron Scott.

Pages of Thought and Opinion

Guest Editorial:

Let’s Unify and Focus
On RIRA’s Losing Politics of Personality
by Graham Cannon

On a day that we celebrate the triumph of representative government, why do we seem to be having such a hard time making it work on Roosevelt Island?

Perhaps it’s because we keep on failing to observe some of the basic rules of politics – letting the political become the personal and too often the perfect the enemy of the good.

“We must all hang together,” said Benjamin Franklin as he signed the Declaration of Independence, “or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately.” What he meant was that despite the vast disagreements that had preceded the signing of what was essentially a compromise document, they could not be carried over into the newly-formed government, not just because of the advantage the British would seek to exploit but because the government would simply be unable to function if factionalism triumphed over cooperation.

Two centuries later David Ben-Gurion told Jewish Settlers in 1940’s Palestine that “We must assist the British in the war as if there were no White Paper and we must resist the White Paper as if there were no war.”

Of all the inequities perceived by the early Zionist pioneers, the infamous White Paper was among the worst – a British policy paper considered almost anti-Semitic in its virulent betrayal of an earlier promise to support a Jewish State. But to Ben-Gurion, a master strategist of the route to statehood, he knew he had to keep the issues distinct and separate and there was no question that self-interest and self-preservation at that time demanded full cooperation with a duplicitous colonial overseer.

Obviously, choosing to side with the British against the Nazis is on a different order of magnitude from the issues we face on Roosevelt Island; but that said, when it comes to figuring out how to pursue our own self-interest, the principles of successful political organization remain the same.

Never ever let politics become personal. Far too often, our Residents Association (RIRA) meetings have degenerated into invective and name-calling to the incredible detriment of the people who elected us. There’s nothing more amateurish than letting strongly-held political views affect personal relationships, because the basis of representative politics, particularly in a non-political-party-based environment, is coalition building around an ebb and flow of interests and issues that often require opponents on one matter to become allies on the next. We’re all to blame for the atmosphere of distrust and dysfunction that pervades RIRA and, unless we take some dramatic confidence-building actions such as a day-long, perhaps weekend-long, off-Island retreat, this could well be remembered as the most unproductive session in RIRA’s history.

Even on issues where we’re fighting the issues on their own merits, such as development, we’re still hindered by personal factionalism that simply has no place in the process. It has to end.

Don’t merge political fights. These days, whether at a RIRA meeting, Town Hall Meeting or in *The WIRE*, a standard answer for anything we don’t like on the Island has become, “If we had self-government, it (name the issue) wouldn’t be a problem.” Maybe – even likely – that’s true. But as Matthew Katz, one of the most informed and articulate self-rule advocates, acknowledged in the last issue of *The WIRE*, “The Grannis self-governance legislation is locked in both Assembly and Senate committees and we have not been led to believe that the State Legislature will vote on it any time soon.”

Yet attend a RIRA meeting and, increasingly, instead of tackling the issues that our constituents care about from crime to seawalls, as matters that stand or fall on their own merit, we argue as to whether or not home rule would provide a more effective solution. I don’t mean to single out self-governance activists on this. Just as often it is their opponents who initiate what has become a sterile and pointless debate. The truth is that we are going to have to deal with RIOC, the City and other officials on various issues not on the basis that their involvement will soon be history but in the reality that they are the gatekeepers and decision makers with whom we need to interface to get things done. As elected officials we’ll be judged in November less by the resonance of our rhetoric than the reality of our achievements – drug arrests in our building corridors or the size of the potholes on Main Street.

The sad part is that over the last eighteen months I’ve had the privilege of serving with a group of colleagues who are some of the smartest, most focused and hardest-working individuals I’ve ever met and who, outside of RIRA, are at the core of every aspect of successful Island life – mentoring kids, running Youth Center and Beacon Programs, managing religious and cultural services, advocating for safer subways or more parkland. Yet, somehow, within RIRA, we use that energy to undermine ourselves rather than move on the issues that we were elected to resolve.

So, for Independence Day, why not take a lesson from those who succeeded in gaining self-rule? Let’s find a way to work as colleagues, not enemies. Let’s fight for the issues we care about and work with whom we need as if there were no self-rule bill while, if we choose, we fight them on self-rule as if we needed them for nothing else.



Graham Cannon represents Island House on the RIRA Common Council and is President of Medium4.com www.medium4.com. He may be reached by e-mail at gcannon@foreignntv.com.

Letters

To the Editor:

This is an open letter to any lending institution considering financing the Roosevelt Island minischools conversion-to-condominiums project.

To ensure that the project is completed with a chance of success, please attend to the following issues:

Property Lines: Ensure that new construction falls within the property lines of the project, which it does not, as of the project’s June 2000 approval by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC).

NYS Building Code: Ensure that construction complies with Part 738 of Subchapter B of Chapter 1 of Subtitle S of the Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York, entitled Prevention of Exterior Fire Spread, which it does not, as of the project’s June 2000 approval by RIOC.

One-Story Units: The developer has advised RIOC’s Capital Planning and Development Committee that single-story units at this location are not marketable. Yet three of the 16 units are single-story. Ensure that the developer has an effective marketing strategy for these units.

Security: Entrances to 10 condominium units and operable windows of all 16 units are at ground level immediately adjacent to public space, yet no window protection or security system is provided. Ensure that potential condominium buyers are offered a security solution.

Maintenance: There is no plan for on-site maintenance personnel nor plans to contract for maintenance service. Ensure that potential condominium buyers are offered a maintenance solution.

Remote Location: Entrances to ten units are on a non-vehicular promenade. All residents, visitors and deliveries must be dropped off at the nearest road, Main Street, which is an uncovered 150- to 250-foot walk away. Ensure that the developer is prepared with a solution to offer potential buyers that may include signage at Main Street to minimize visitor/delivery confusion; protective awnings along the route and at condominium entrances; and some method of luggage/package conveyance that will ease deliveries and drop-offs.

Views: All ground-floor windows facing the East River and Manhattan are immediately adjacent to a public promenade. The views out of these condominiums will likely be blocked at the ground floor by opaque window treatments intended to protect privacy. Ensure that potential condominium owners have an opportunity to take advantage of these views by raising the level of the first floor and positioning the fenestration to allow views out but not in.

To the Editor:

I am a member of the RIRA Common Council and the Maple Tree Group (MTG), and, like the rest of this community, I see the vote by resident members of the RIOC board approving the minischool/condominium conversion as a betrayal. It is also the first test of the long-standing controversy on how best to achieve self-government on Roosevelt island. MTG has been steadfast in its belief that only elected, representative government is true to basic American ideals and will adequately reflect resident views on development and all Roosevelt Island issues as well. Some, including Patrick Stewart, president of the RIRA Common Council, have suggested that an evolution toward a Governor-appointed board as exists now but including a majority of Island residents would produce the same effect without the *sturm und drang* that the legislation providing an elected board would entail. I hope the vote on June 10 has put that chimera, that impossible and foolish fancy, to rest once and for all.

For two years the community has been unanimous in its opposition to the minischools project. We were asked to produce alternatives to the Wilson plan, and we did. The resident advisory committee to RIOC, the Capital Planning and Development Committee, voted

See Helstien, page 17

Joseph Lynch
Commissioner
NYS DHCR

Dear Commissioner Lynch:

Given that multi-storied condominiums have been consistently and unanimously opposed by Island residents and their elected representatives, RIOC Board’s vote on June 8 “giving developer Diane Wilson the go-ahead to add second stories to the Island’s west-shore minischools,” providing she could get financing (*The Main Street WIRE*, June 10, 2000), was probably the most cynical action ever taken by this State of New York agency.

Residents Sound Off on
RIOC’s MiniCondos Vote
More Letters, page 17

Given your position in the governance of the State of New York, RIOC’s action should be a source of embarrassment. It should be because RIOC is charged with the development of this community according to its General Development Plan in place since the beginning and modified in 1990. Thus, RIOC holds itself out as serving the residents of this community. In practice it does no such thing, as Leo Kayser made clear on June 8:

“From the degree of diligence that we’ve seen so far, I don’t believe the developer has her financing in place....We’ll leave it to the marketplace to determine whether

See Donovan, page 17

cent to a public promenade. The views out of these condominiums will likely be blocked at the ground floor by opaque window treatments intended to protect privacy. Ensure that potential condominium owners have an opportunity to take advantage of these views by raising the level of the first floor and positioning the fenestration to allow views out but not in.

Trash Removal: It will be required of these condominium owners to discard their trash by an outdoor walk to rooms located up to 150 feet away from their units. No trash cans will be allowed by RIOC outside each unit and no provision has been made to store trash within the condominium buildings. Ensure that potential condominium buyers are offered a trash removal or temporary storage solution with con-

sideration of a redesign of the units to provide for such space.

Package Delivery: No system has been set up to accept delivery of packages at these condominiums. Ensure that potential condominium buyers are offered a package delivery solution.

Planning: Six units require owners to carry kitchen trash through the living/dining area to the front door. Three units require bringing furniture to the main bedroom up spiral stairs. Eight units have second-floor windows along less than 40% of the river-view elevation. Some units have guest bathrooms that are further from the living/dining area than other bathrooms. Ensure that these units have minimum conveniences that even lower- and middle-income dwellings on Roosevelt Island have.

Annual Fees: When the developer added a second story to the project, RIOC increased the annual ground rent from \$100,000 to \$250,000. That cost, when passed onto condominium owners, is an average of \$1,300 per month per unit. This yields a possible range of \$900 for single-story units to \$1,700 for corner two-story units. Compared with other cooperative and condominium apartments, this contribution to ground rent is extraordinarily high. Ensure that this cost does not destroy the marketability of these condominiums by negotiating with RIOC to revert to the original and more viable \$100,000 per year.

Your Role: Finally, understand that the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation – which has overlooked building code violations, security, maintenance and planning issues to approve this project pending its receipt of financing – has transferred the responsibility to you, the lending institution, to ensure that these issues are solved and to prevent a legal and marketing failure.

Marc Diamond



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On the Matter of Self-Governance

Another July 4, and Roosevelt Islanders still don't control their local government.
The WIRE and Maple Tree Group asked our legislators why that is.

Grannis: Budget Problematic

by Assemblymember Pete Grannis

In response to [*The WIRE's*] June 14 letter, I want to reiterate my unwavering commitment to the concept of "self-governance" for the residents of Roosevelt Island in the management of RIOC or a successor entity and regret that the legislation I am carrying with Senator Mendez to bring this about did not happen this session.

I take issue with the analysis offered you by your "experienced Albany observers" that the introduction of the self-governance legislation at the request of the Island's Maple Tree Group was simply to assuage a small but vocal constituency. For my part, nothing could be further from the truth and your informants are particularly ill-informed when it comes to my role in this endeavor and how I go about carrying out my responsibilities. As you know, my staff here in the city and in Albany and I have spent many hours on this subject, and I have every intention of seeing it to a successful conclusion in a way that will protect both the Island's long-term interests and the pocketbooks of its residents. With the safeguards now incorporated into the bill and agreed to by the MTG, I am confident that it properly addresses both these concerns.

On the status of the bill, the amended version was approved by three Assembly committees and ended the session on the floor of the Assembly, where its approval was never in question. Throughout the year, however, I was waiting for word that the Senate leadership was willing to go along with the agreement worked out with Governor Pataki by Senator Mendez for State assumption of the substantial costs for repairing and maintaining the Island's neglected physical infrastructure. Unfortunately, this never came and, in fact, the Senate leadership finally told Senator Mendez as the session neared its conclusion that they would not consider her bill. I am told that this intransigence was at least partly influenced by the Pataki administration's anger over the lawsuit challenging the construction of Southtown.

For the information of your readers, Senator Mendez and I agreed to an amendment to the bill lowering the annual threshold for RIOC's post-conversion maximum contribution from \$500,000 to \$250,000 for new capital projects following the state's completion of its obligations to put the Island right. We decided on this course of action after reviewing the budget figures released by RIOC in May which showed a budget surplus in the general fund of only \$19,243 for the year ending March 31, 2000 and a projected surplus of only \$35,000 for the next fiscal year. We were startled to find that these figures were far, far below the optimistic predictions we were assured repeatedly would be the case by the MTG.

I shudder to think of the consequences had we plunged into self-governance on the basis of the MTG's rosy predictions of annual surpluses of hundreds of thousands of dollars which could be used for meeting the Island's capital needs. In helping to craft and agreeing to sponsor this legislation, Senator Mendez and I had been relying on the MTG's analysis of RIOC's financial health. With this work being so far off the mark, we felt it imperative to lower RIOC's financial exposure to ensure that the new RIOC, with its resident elected board of directors, would not be confronted by the same desperate financial choices which the residents and *The WIRE* have vehemently opposed when advanced by RIOC in the past: cutting services or pursuing unwanted development projects.

In the more than two years that I have been working on this legislation with the MTG, I have always made my position clear: the new RIOC should not come into being saddled with the burden of having to pay for the State's neglected commitments for repairing and maintaining the Island's costly infrastructure, and Island residents should not be assessed or faced with loss of key services to pay for future capital projects. I am particularly mindful of several of my discussions on this issue with the MTG. The Seawall is a case in point. Citing infallible sources and with no factual information in hand, Senator Mendez and I were assured that the cost of the repairs of the Seawall would not exceed \$1 million. However, in the draft report shared with us by the Army Corps of Engineers, this vital repair project is pegged conservatively at \$6 million. In our last conversation with the Army Corps, we were told that the draft report has been given to RIOC for the agency's review and official response, and only then can it be officially released.

In addition to the Seawall project, there are a number of other outstanding capital projects – the Good Shepherd

MTG: Deep Disappointment

To Assemblymember Pete Grannis:

As members of the Roosevelt Island Maple Tree Group, we want to express our deep disappointment with the failure to pass the Grannis bill for the second year.

We know that you've had a very busy year, but you gave us every reason to expect that you would introduce a bill some time before the final week of the session that would be acceptable to both the Assembly and Senate.

We know that you have serious concerns, as do we, with our ability to fund any annual "deductible." Certainly your revision of the bill from a \$500,000 to a \$250,000 deductible is preferable from our standpoint. However, the RIOC budget has been available to us for months. There was ample time to negotiate a unibill between the Senate and Assembly leadership as we discussed on October 5 and agreed to on February 10. But, if it fails passage in the Senate, or is never presented for a vote as now seems the case, it merely subjects us to another year of the incompetent management by RIOC, a State agency whose only interest seems to be to squeeze as much capital out of our community as they can. If we lose much more time in gaining control of our own destiny, there will not be much left to save.

Pete, you and Sen. Mendez really are the last hope for a sane solution to our management problems. We hope you and Olga can get past your political differences for the sake of this community. We believe the residents of Roosevelt Island are far more innovative and considerably more motivated than you have been led to believe in coming to grips with our budgetary problems, certainly more so than the political hacks at RIOC. We hope you will give us a chance to prove it.

**The members of the Maple Tree Group
Matthew Katz, Interim Convener**

Chapel, Blackwell House and the Octagon Building – that must be addressed. Since RIOC has no authority to raise capital through direct borrowing, levying of taxes or the issuance of bonds, RIOC's current budget picture seems very problematic.

As you and most Island residents are well aware, I have been vocal in expressing my anger and frustration over Gov-



Pete Grannis and Olga Mendez, after a February 10 meeting with the Maple Tree Group

ernor Pataki's shirking of the State's obligation to fund the capital needs of the Island in the State budget. It is my opinion that this has occurred because of his misguided belief that RIOC can be made self-sufficient simply through the belt-tightening of current operations. RIOC has compounded the problems this has caused by its adamant refusal to seek State support or even confirm that it cannot meet its obligations within its current budget. This has resulted in a steady deterioration of the Island's infrastructure.

I care deeply about the well-being of the Island community and intend to continue to do all in my power to ensure that if and when self-governance comes about, it does so in a way which will not put the Island's future well-being and the financial security of its residents at risk.

Mendez: Missed Cues

by Senator Olga Mendez

When 92% of Island residents vote for self-governance, that is something I hear loud and clear. As my Counsel, Jorge Vidro, explained in his meeting with the Maple Tree Group on Monday, June 19, no one on Roosevelt Island can doubt my support, commitment and struggle for self-governance for Roosevelt Island.

As you know, last year I had negotiated a bill with the Governor's office and the Senate majority, which got through committee and reached the Senate floor. Unfortunately, the Assembly never participated in the negotiations, even while I had urged their inclusion, and consequently the bill never came up for a vote, partly because it would only be a one-house bill.

On October 5 of last year, there was a community forum at the Chapel where Assemblymember Grannis outlined his concern with the bill I had negotiated. I agreed then that he had legitimate concerns and I made it very clear that I wanted him to take the leadership of putting together a bill that would secure the fiscal and physical stability of the Island once a new self-governing entity assumed control. I also made it perfectly clear that I would await word of the commitment of the Assembly Speaker to Assemblymember Grannis that this bill would be a priority in that House. It would be *then* that I would initiate the calls to the Governor's office and the Majority Leader's office so that *all* the players would be at the table negotiating a bill that would be satisfactory to everyone.

In the February 10 meeting this year myself, Assemblyman Grannis and MTG members met to hammer out the particulars of the bill, and I again reiterated my commitment to work with Pete Grannis and to await the commitment of the Speaker to prioritize the bill. As a consequence of that meeting, Assemblyman Grannis drafted a bill which I signed on to because it was what had been agreed to by all of us at the February 10 meeting.

But it was not enough that we agreed to this version of a uni-bill, i.e. Grannis-Mendez bill. I considered that to be the model from which we would negotiate with the Governor's office and the Senate Majority. Since Pete sits in the majority in his House, what I wanted was for the Assembly Speaker to give him the assurance that he (the Speaker) would make sure that as the session proceeded, he would insist that the self-governance bill was a *must do* for the Legislature before adjourning. That would mean that the Senate Majority would then seriously negotiate with the Assembly for the bill. Naturally, the Assembly could pass the bill in any way and at any time since it is sponsored by a member of the majority. However, without negotiation with the other house, it is certain to be a one-House bill. I wanted the Roosevelt Island self-governance bill to be treated in the same manner as the COLA increase legislation, the Hate Crimes legislation, the Burnless Cigarette legislation were all treated: *as a priority, must-do bill* that had to be dealt with prior to adjournment.

The fact that I had a commitment from the Governor's office to negotiate a \$500,000 deductible was not the only thing I had to do. The particulars of our uni-bill also had to be dealt with. It would be naive to believe that the Assemblymember and I produced a bill that no one would have problems with and that would be passed by both houses, as is. This is particularly true of a bill of this nature which affects the prerogative of the Governor to make appointments, and especially since it was amended on the last day of session changing the deductible from \$500,000 to \$250,000, an amount lower than what the Governor's office said they would be willing to talk about.

Had this bill passed the Assembly, it would not have passed the Senate and not for any other reason except that *it was not negotiated*. I would have accepted the defeat of this bill during this legislative session if it had been as a consequence of all parties not being able to agree on an acceptable version after countless hours of deliberation and debate. Instead, I never heard that the Assembly was ready to negotiate the bill. In fact, it was not until the eleventh hour, with one day left in the legislative session, and on the very day Mr. Vidro met with the MTG, that I heard from Assemblyman Grannis' office that he wanted to pass an amended version of the uni-bill. The Senate majority leadership had not gotten any indication that it had become a priority bill. The minority leadership (all of whom knew this was a priority for me) were also waiting in order to participate in negotiations. This never occurred due to the failure of the Assembly to communicate to me, as the Senate sponsor, to proceed with negotiations.

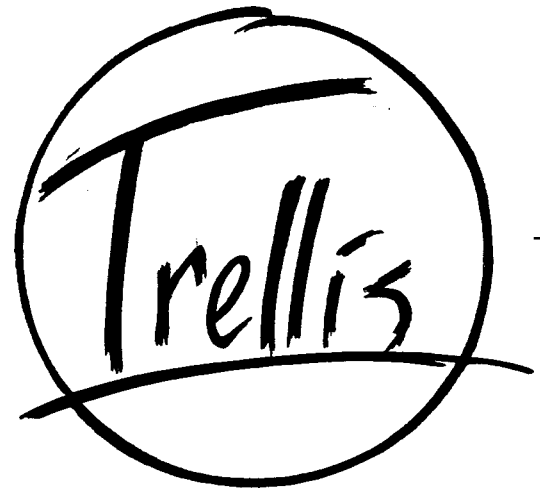
This is my hope: that during the time we are off session, we can get back on track and begin to negotiate this bill. I have contacted the Governor's office and we have a preliminary meeting set for the near future. This time I will be inviting and insisting that Assemblyman Grannis' office be a part of all the discussions with Majority leadership, DHCR and the Governor's Counsel office. I want my and Assemblyman Grannis' commitment to work together to continue, and I hope that the end result to be what I believe will be the best that both of us can attain for the benefit of our constituents.

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Development

Trying to Decipher the RIOC Board’s MiniCondo Vote

Were the controlling votes trying to avoid a law suit?

News Analysis by Dick Lutz

What happened, exactly?
When the RIOC Board of Directors voted June 8 to advance developer Diane Wilson’s plan to add a second story to the Island’s west-shore minischools and turn them into luxury condos, what was going on?
By one interpretation, about half the Board members thought they were forestalling a lawsuit.
By another, there was confusion.
And for public consumption, they were taking the next logical step – or perhaps only a half-step. The vote gives Wilson the go-ahead. But the resolution requires the matter to come before the Board again, rather than allowing RIOC President Robert Ryan to finalize terms of the deal.
Whatever each Board member had in mind, it appears clear only that there was no unified reasoning behind the nearly unanimous vote.

The Wilson plan, fostered under the RIOC presidency of Dr. Jerome Blue (which ended a year ago) and inherited by the administration of Robert H. Ryan, would put the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation in the position of doing something quite unusual in the annals of real estate marketing. As many have observed after listening to the complaints of those whose views would be affected by those second-floor additions, if you live in Manhattan proper, you live with the possibility – perhaps even the likelihood – that a neighboring property will one day sprout a view-blocking structure. It’s the nature of things: Your view is at risk.
But when it happens in Manhattan, it’s another property, another owner, another developer – exercising separate rights.
On Roosevelt Island, it’s effectively all one “owner” – RIOC.
RIOC sold those exquisite Manhattan views once, to the owners of Westview, Island House, and Rivercross. If Wilson gets the approvals and lease she seeks, RIOC will be selling the same views a second time – in effect, selling the same commodity twice. Such a move is probably not completely unprecedented, but on an Island where the hallmark is development through careful planning, it seems, to some, anathema.
As for RIOC budget relief, the Wilson plan would yield about \$17 million for RIOC over about 68 years. At \$250,000 a year, that averages \$1,300 per month per apartment over the life of the deal. Too little, say some, to justify the problems the plan raises.
The RIOC Board’s vote was unanimous except for the abstention of Patrick Stewart. In the meeting, a resolution was put forward – not quite introduced in a formal sense – proposing approval for Wilson and her plan. Board member Leo Kayser, suggesting the Board should let the financial marketplace judge this particular developer and the specifics of her plan, put forward a change in language that would require Wilson to return to the Board with a plan more fully developed – specifically, with evidence that she has financing. Though there was some ambiguity in the parliamentary procedure, the proposed resolution was then introduced with that change, and a vote taken.
Why did all but Patrick Stewart vote for it? For that matter, why did Stewart abstain, rather than voting no as he vowed he would?
Stewart hasn’t responded to a *WIRE* invitation to explain his abstention on the record. But he has told several residents that he believed that if he voted “no,” he would be “out of the loop” in future discussions of the minischools, and that, in any case, “abstaining is the same as voting no.”
In addition to Stewart, several other Board members were asked to comment. Leo Kayser and Kevin Fullington indicated they preferred to stand by statements made in the RIOC meeting before the vote; others offered insight into their decision by fax or e-mail.

Confusion

Susan Whitaker, a Rivercross resident who is one of four voting residents on the Board, didn’t realize she was voting for the combined language. “My vote was yes,” she wrote in response to a *WIRE* query, “but it was intended for the amendment proposed by Leo Kayser.”
Under the rules governing most meetings of this kind, once a resolution is introduced, any language altering the motion must be voted on separately. Once the language is finalized, the revised resolution is voted.
But that didn’t happen in this case, since the resolution wasn’t formally introduced until after Kayser’s changes of language were informally accepted. Thinking she was voting to incorporate Kayser’s revised language in the resolution, Whitaker unwittingly voted for the resolution itself.
Some observing the meeting were similarly confused.

“They didn’t actually vote on the resolution, did they?” one person in the audience asked.
Whitaker’s vote wasn’t what she intended. “I fail to see the minischool project as a positive addition to the community,” she wrote to *The WIRE*. “I therefore unequivocally vote no... The developer has not demonstrated the ability to satisfactorily complete the project. The developer offers no meaningful compensation to the residents directly impacted by the second-story addition.” Whitaker added, “The minischool conversion is the smallest of all the projects scheduled for development on the Island but will have the greatest negative impact on the community. The small financial gains to be realized... can be easily absorbed by the larger projects to be developed. We need to pay more attention to the objections being raised [and] reject the minischool project... We need to move forward with more care and sensitivity and perhaps a higher level of planning.”
Certainty
But resident Board member David Kraut says he was certain of what he was doing. “My vote... is totally consistent with a position I enunciated in a *WIRE* interview last August. As a director, I am charged with taking a long-term

page 2.) Doubts were raised about the marketability of luxury condos whose ground-level front windows look out on a promenade where passing youths might peer through windows unshuttered to admit the view. And doubts about whether owners of luxury units would accept a requirement that they walk in the open from street to entrance in all sorts of weather, and obey rules against auto traffic on the promenade. There were doubts about luxury apartments requiring an outside trip to dispose of garbage at a distant AVAC chute. Residents were vehement about loss of their views; one called the taking of the views “immoral.” Another lamented that she would be faced with loss of her view or, because of Mitchell-Lama family composition requirements, would lose her multi-bedroom apartment. Not one resident, save Board member Kevin Fullington, spoke in favor of the conversion in the course of those two Board meetings. And ten months earlier, the Board’s Capital Planning and Development Committee had come down against the project, every resident member expressing opposition, in varying degrees and kinds, to the second-story additions that would degrade the views of existing apartments.
So why would the Board say yes?

Fear of Litigation

For months, Diane Wilson’s appearances at meetings about her plan for the minischools condominium conversion – minicondos for short – have been characterized by the presence of her attorney. In a Capital Planning and Development Committee meeting held last September, and in subsequent contacts with residents, the lawyer has sometimes injected a litigious tone into discussions. When asked by one resident about possible compensation for those whose views would be degraded, he is reported to have responded, “Maybe fifty dollars.”
And when Wilson presented her plan in May for the benefit of recent Board appointees, she didn’t stay to hear subsequent deliberations or public comments. With the lawyer, she left immediately after her last words in a move that suggested to some that her appearance was merely *pro forma* – perhaps aimed at laying the groundwork for a lawsuit.

Residents wondered: Had Wilson reached her own conclusion that the minicondos will be unmarketable at the prices she’d have to get? Had she converted her strategy into a plan to recover her costs by suing RIOC after a “no” vote? Or had Jerome Blue so led her on with promises and implicit guarantees that she felt she could do better in court than by actually building the units?
And did some RIOC Board members vote for the go-ahead resolution, as revised by Kayser, to pull the rug out from under any plan for a Wilson suit against RIOC? Some observers have suggested exactly that – that a go-ahead vote, with one more opportunity to pass on the project, puts the ball back in Wilson’s court and forces her to muster the financing that some doubt she will be able to find. They feel she’ll fail at this stage through her own relative inexperience as a developer, or that the project itself will look too chancy when examined by careful lenders.
During the June meeting, before the vote was taken on her project, Wilson and her legal sidekick sat at the back of the sanctuary in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, listening as more

Background

All the Roosevelt Island apartment buildings erected in the mid-70’s have “minischools” within them or adjacent to them. They were abandoned when a new school was built for Island children, and at least one responsible party in the City Board of Education said the Board had no further interest in the properties.
For years, they have been abandoned, subject to break-ins and vandalism.
When the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) invited developers to submit proposals for adaptive reuse of the minischools, developer Diane Wilson presented a plan to convert those with Manhattan views into luxury condominiums. She received “conditional designation” from the RIOC Board of Directors. That status meant that the Board would consider no other proposals for use of the properties until her plan had been worked up fully and voted up or down.
At the time, it was thought that her plan would involve use of the minischools without changes to their exterior structure. But her final plan pro-

posed addition of a partial second story for several of the sixteen condos.
There was immediate controversy – objections that buyers who can afford half-million-dollar residences would be unlikely to purchase properties where ground floor windows are adjacent to a public walkway, and objections that luxury condos have no place amid Roosevelt Island’s affordable housing, and vehement objections from those who would have prized Manhattan views degraded. (See **Letters**, page 2.) RIOC originally claimed only two apartments would be affected, but a later study revealed that 100 or more would suffer some loss of view.
The matter languished for well over a year, tabled, removed from RIOC Board agendas, studied at length (and rejected) by an advisory committee to the RIOC Board. More recently, with changes in the membership of the RIOC Board, it was the subject of a May presentation by Wilson, and then a go-ahead vote on June 8, discussed in this article.

view on the viability of the total Roosevelt Island community, and the minischool conversion serves four goals toward this end. It brings income to the Island; it reduces our operating expenses for the upkeep of the buildings; it reduces the general risk of something bad happening so long as those buildings are unoccupied; it brings us new neighbors.”
Kraut continued, “There might have been other uses for those buildings, and as long ago as August I made clear that I would welcome any viable alternative. In the ten months since, I have heard none. No one listened, or even appeared to listen until very recently when the vote became imminent. People have come to me to ask the Board to hold off until other options have been developed, and I promised them that I would try to delay the vote to give them the necessary time. Having nothing in my hand to work with, I was unable to forestall the vote.
“I am not totally comfortable that this would have been the best possible use of these buildings, but it is the only choice I had to work with. I am comfortable with the notion that I made the best choice possible under the circumstances. It was a hard thing to do, but those of us who take real responsibility for this community must be willing to make hard choices. This won’t be the last. I accept that.”
Kraut’s fellow residents did bring ideas for alternatives to the RIOC Board meetings, of course. But they faced an inherent difficulty in RIOC’s procedures: Having previously given Wilson “conditional designation” status, RIOC can’t seriously consider other possible uses or users until the proposal has been disposed of. So few other developers or potential users are likely to invest the time and money necessary to produce a real alternative.
That meant that although residents had *ideas* for alternatives, they brought nothing fully formed to the table. So they focused on their objections to the Wilson plan.
Objections, indeed. In two successive RIOC Board meetings, a parade of residents blasted the plan. (See **Letters**,



Developer Diane Wilson and her attorney listened June 8 as a dozen residents spoke against her plan to convert the Island’s west-shore minischools into luxury condominiums, adding partial second floors.

than a dozen residents denounced the project, patiently waiting for a vote.
Late last week, Wilson told *The WIRE* that she’s in the process of negotiating with RIOC over the schedule for producing evidence that she has financing. She said nothing much would happen until after the Fourth of July; that could be because RIOC President Ryan would be away the last week in June. But Wilson firmly rejects the notion that the Board was playing chicken with her.



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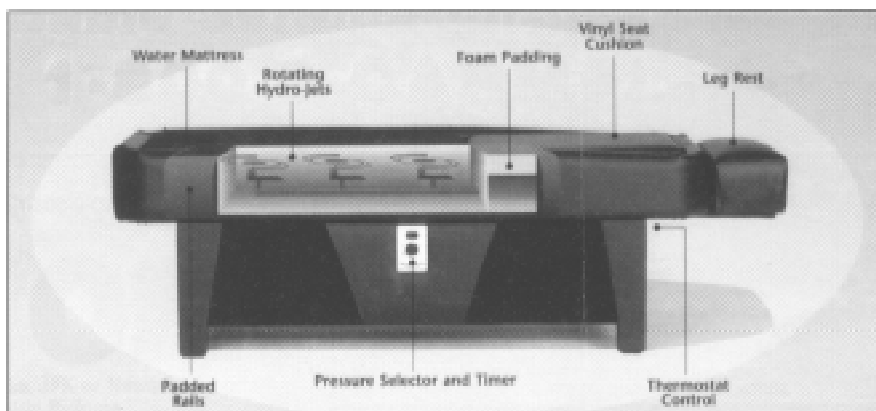
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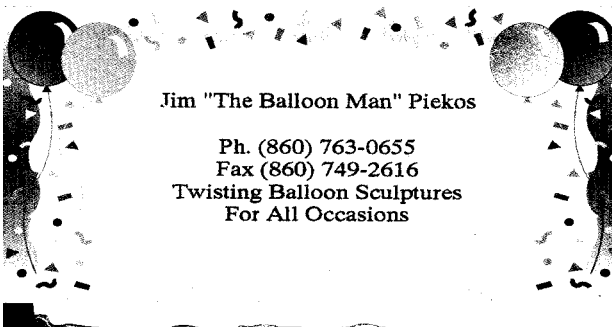
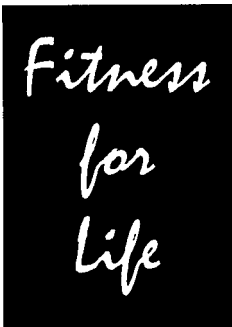
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Cases in Point

Roosevelt Island: Near-Ideal Setting for Disabled Residents

by Anusha Shrivastava
Principal Photography by Margery Rubin

Michelle Vidra was 16 when a car accident left her in a coma for a year and a half at Elmhurst Hospital. “The doctors said her chances were close to nil and that even if she woke up, she would neither walk nor talk,” reminisces Fay Vass, her mother. “I thought I might lose her so I visited her in the hospital every single day, whispering into her ears, hoping she would pull through, and finally, she did. The doctors don’t know everything. My Michelle has come a zillion-billion miles since the day she came out of that coma.



Michelle Vidra in the RISA Fashion Show, with stepfather Ron Vass

She was like an infant then. I had to give her baby food and toilet-train her. Today, at age 41, she lives in a separate apartment in Eastwood. She manages 80% of her life and that’s pretty good for someone who was supposed to die.”

Michelle believes that her mother gave her life twice over and she is probably right. The other factor that has helped her progress is the fact that she lives on Roosevelt Island. Ron Vass, her stepfather, points out that she could not have lived as comfortably anywhere else in the City. “Many doors are open to her here that are not open elsewhere. She can be a part of any organization she chooses, she has freedom of movement and several friends. The Roosevelt Island Disabled Association (RIDA) provides a lot of support and helps solve problems like transportation,” says Ron.

After a two-year stay in Goldwater Hospital, Michelle moved into an apartment with her parents, who in turn had moved to the Island so that the hospital would remain easily accessible. Michelle now lives with an attendant in a separate apartment. The apartment is not a specially designed one but it does have wide doors and a bar in the bathroom so she can get in the tub.

“The Island is great because everything is accessible and it is very safe,” she says. “People are very friendly and they make you feel like you are like a normal person. There is a wide variety of people so I never feel discriminated against. I can go to Trelis and eat there or hang out with friends. Off the Island, people are not as friendly and talk to you as if you are incapable of understanding adult conversation. They don’t take the time to see that you are different. Here, I am just a neighbor, another person,” says Michelle.

Nancy Brown has had polio since she was seven years old. She spent eleven years in Goldwater Hospital and then decided to move into an apartment in Eastwood for the same reason as Michelle – easy access to the hospital. “I have



Nancy Brown at her computer

lived here for 25 years and I love it here. Several of my friends moved out of the hospital into apartments on the Island and now we visit each other. We never feel isolated,” says Nancy, as she strokes the head of her dog, Misty.

Not all the disabled people who live in the Island’s residential housing have moved out of Goldwater Hospital. Margaret and William Graham moved to the Island from



Margaret and William Graham

Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, in 1996. They had heard this was a good community to live in because there were several disabled people here, and changes had been made to accommodate them. “Our old apartment building had an elevator that was always broken. We had to call the Fire Department several times to rescue us. Here, the Public Safety Department helps and we hardly ever feel trapped. We can get out of the house easily and take part in several activities,” said Margaret. Her husband of 21 years, William, added, “The apartment is well constructed. There are no stairs, the bathroom has rails and an emergency switch and the kitchen cabinets have been made lower. We can commute to the City easily and use Access-a-Ride if the subway does not suit us.”

RIDA President Virginia Granato says that the fact that the Island was created with the disabled in mind has helped the entire 100-odd disabled population who live in Eastwood and in 2-4 River Road. “The two hospitals have always been here, the streets are level and all the spots are accessible. The apartments have lower peepholes for those confined to wheelchairs. The sinks have special faucets. The kitchen entrances are wider than in other apartments and there are special machines in the laundry rooms. We have a strong organization that plans outings to museums and shopping trips,” says Virginia.

She does have a wish list, though. The elevators in the subway station are often not working, which poses a huge problem. Their maintenance needs to be looked into, says Virginia, adding, “We need wider aisles in stores and merchants should be forced to keep things off the floor. Also, I think we should have more space assigned to us like the seniors so that we can plan more activities.”



Virginia Granato, RIDA President

Dexter Benjamin: On the Move



Central station, making \$100 a day on a good day. I was homeless and spent some time in a shelter where people stole my money and even my shoes. We were given two chairs to sleep on. If you had a third, it was taken away. I vowed to myself that I would not live like that. One day, a lady from the Bronx gave me some money in exchange for painting her house. I have never looked back since then. I collected money to buy a bicycle and found a job as a messenger. I earned a mere \$17 for the first week of work but payday was the happiest day of my life because I got my self-esteem and respect back,” said Benjamin.

For the past eight years, he has been working as a courier in Manhattan, zipping around on his custom-made bike, even setting up his own company for a while. It didn’t work out, as bikes kept getting stolen, so he decided to freelance.

Benjamin moved to Roosevelt Island in 1998 when he heard about it from his girlfriend, Beverly Harris, whose mother had been a patient at Coler Hospital. “This is the best place to live for me. It is quiet, there is no crime, everything is close by and I have a lot of friends here. Everyone is greeted the same way and the attitude of the people is very good. All the disabled people smile and inspire and encourage each other,” says Dexter. “However, there is no McDonald’s and no movie theater. The City, where they are available, is often not a friendly place to be in. My bicycle is like my wheelchair but people don’t see it as that. In several buildings in the City, I am not allowed to take my cycle in. People feel bad for a guy in a wheelchair but because I am active, I am put down and made to feel odd. When I am sent out of a museum or a McDonald’s, I feel frustrated.”

“When we travel, we just put him in a wheelchair and you should see how differently he is treated,” says Beverly Harris. “People look at him with a different perspective altogether, a different mindset. If they see him on his bike, all of six feet and two inches, they don’t think of him as being disabled and they often don’t think about what they are saying.”

“Well, actually, even the drivers of the red buses on the Island discriminate against me,” said Benjamin. “My bicycle is my wheelchair but they don’t let me on. I argue that if you can let strollers, wheelchairs and shopping carts on, why not me, but they don’t listen. That hurts.”



Ira Holland: Self-Direction

If you saw Ira Holland on the street, you would probably notice his wheelchair first. If you took the time to speak with him, you would realize that this man is not ordinary. He is probably more able than many of the able-bodied you interact with. He is the CEO of a company and a man with a mission.

Disabled by polio in 1955 when he was 16, Ira spent 21 years in Goldwater Hospital before moving into Eastwood. "I have spent 22 years on the Island," he says. "I was part of the initial planning committee that was set up to make the Island and Tram handicapped-accessible."

In 1977, Ira set up a non-profit corporation called Concepts of Independence that serves disabled people. The company provides personal assistants to the disabled, including some who live on the Island. "It is a consumer-directed program that started with six people. In our set-up, the consumer interviews, hires and fires the assistant. I found that it is much cheaper to live in an apartment with an assistant of your own choice, rather than in a hospital when you are not using all their services. This gives a person the flexibility to live as he or she chooses. We now service over a thousand people and help employ 2300 personal assistants. My company has an office staff of 35, and our employees provide 3.4 million hours of service annually. It is the largest company of its kind in the country," says Ira.

Working from home with a voice-activated computer, a fax machine and a special telephone, Ira goes to his office in downtown Manhattan twice a week. He says he finds living on the Island very convenient because commuting is easy from here.

"I have been disabled for 46 years and I think I have accomplished a great deal and am continuing to do so. My motto is *self-direction*. I see it as both a right and a responsibility. If you wish to live in a particular manner, you have a responsibility to yourself. You can choose to control your life in every way possible," says Ira.



Josh Waldman

Josh Waldman, the 33-year-old son of Rivercross resident Bonnie Waldman and of Stuart Waldman, stepson of Liv Mann, and brother of Peter Waldman and Luke Mann, died Wednesday, May 24. He had attended PS/IS 217 through eighth grade.

Josh's life revolved around his passion for music. He played drums at a young age and performed in bands while still in middle school. He received additional musical training at the High School of Music and Art and the State University of New York at Purchase. He was a lover of opera.

Deciding he wanted a broader education, Josh transferred to NYU, where he majored in political science. Upon graduation, he combined his love for music with an entrepreneurial spirit. He developed a rap music study aid for high school students, which he called Rap Notes. This series of audiotapes incorporated curriculum material from subjects such as chemistry, biology and world history into the lyrics of original rap songs. Working with educators, Josh wrote the music, the lyrics, and produced the tapes. He also formed his own company, Worldwise, to market Rap Notes.



River Music and *The WIRE* Offer July 4 Concert Featuring Roy Abrams Big Band

Concert from page 1

Pepsi-Cola Bottling Company of New York, Costco, and the Roosevelt Island Youth Program. Admission is free, but contributions will be taken for *The WIRE*.

WIRE Managing Editor Dick Lutz says the newspaper and River Music plan a repeat next year if this year's event reaches break-even. Lutz said the Fourth of July date was chosen to attract the fireworks audience to other events on the Island, and as part of an effort to create a Roosevelt Island "destination" for cultural events.

The band's arrangements, most done by Abrams, are often reminiscent of the Count Basie Band, but the repertoire ranges over Duke Ellington standards and those of other stellar music figures of the last century.

Theodore Wilson, who plays bass with the band and combines jazz and classical music careers, told *The WIRE* that the Abrams band has always been chock-full of outstanding jazz artists "that history overlooked" because they were part of the Brooklyn jazz scene rather than the better-publicized scenes in Harlem and on West 52nd Street.

The concert will run from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., ending just as the gate opens at Southpoint for the Macy's Fireworks.

About River Music

River Music is now in its seventh season of presenting a wide variety of classical, jazz and world music to Roosevelt Island and Metropolitan area audiences. Founded by its director, Robin Russell, River Music presents a wide spectrum of artists, ranging from opera to spirituals, string quartets to chamber orchestras, and jazz ensembles to big bands. The series has celebrated the winter holidays with Medieval music and St. Patrick's day with its annual *Irish Night*. Artists have included pianist Ruth Laredo, conductor Jens Bygaard and the Jupiter Symphony, Phil Meyers (principal horn of the New York Philharmonic), and jazz greats Barry Harris, Walter Bishop, Jr., and Junior Mance. The series is noted in *The New York Book of Music*, by *New York Times* music critic Ira Rosenblum.

River Music received an award from the Manhattan Community Arts Fund, and has received favorable notice in *The New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Daily News*, and public radio station WNYC.

Manhattan Park from page 1

"When one pays rent, one does not pay only for the apartment. You also pay for the amenities and the surroundings, the accessibility to markets and restaurants and theaters and so forth. I think the owners are going to find that this quest for a fiercely fair market rent is not going to pay off. When people move to Manhattan, they expect certain things and Roosevelt Island, however wonderful, does not provide all of them," said Katz.

Devorah Fong wonders why people are complaining. "The marketing of this development has gone extremely well. We have enough traffic to rent the 880 apartments without having a waiting list. Our renewal rate is excellent and we have no vacancies. We pre-lease because of the strong market and as many that move out, move in. Our vacancy rate has not changed since the increase in rent. The turnover is not impacting the units. If the occupancy is stable, it means we are maintaining marketability and stability," said Devorah.

Given that a third of the apartments are rented directly by the United Nations, the development is certainly assured of clientele. Marymount Manhattan College students also comprise a sizeable chunk but their leases are running out as they are building their own dormitories. Half the leases ended this year, so 20 and 40 River Road will be "student-free" while the other half will end next year. "We can't have such a huge number leave all at once so the leases end over a three month period next summer," said Devorah.

"Well, once the students leave, the Manhattan Park management may find that their overly aggressive attitude and optimism have gotten them into trouble. I seriously doubt they will have full buildings next year," said Katz.

Saxophonists Pritchard Cheesman, Percy Brown, and trumpeters Ron R. Scott (lead) and Dave Simpson are among the 18 musicians of the Ray Abrams Big Band





Composite aerial photograph shows all of Roosevelt Island with Manhattan in the foreground, Queens in the background. Current law suits challenge RIOC’s approval of construction in Southtown, claiming required environmental studies were skipped, and that part of the development is planned for a portion of a six-acre park set aside in the lease between City and State. Triangular objects in foreground are part of aircraft.

Looking Ahead

Islanders, Developers Wait with Southtown and a Park in the Balance in Suits Challenging RIOC’s Handling of Environment and Island Master Plan

News Analysis by Dick Lutz

What’s likely to happen as the State Supreme Court sifts through the issues in the Southtown suits? Those are the Article 78 challenges in which groups of residents have charged that the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) overstepped by green-lighting the Hudson/Related plan for Southtown, the residential development to be situated north of the Tramway landing.

Anticipating is difficult in such cases. Still, there is a profound human urge to see the future, and for journalists, a drive to be not just current, but to be abreast and ahead. And these cases have the potential of shaping much of Roosevelt Island’s future – both because of the specific development being contested, and because of general precedents likely to be set.

The outcome also could affect whether residents are discouraged from challenging RIOC in the future, or encouraged to do so.

In the Southtown cases, there are three ways to look at the issues:

- From the perspective of the litigants – the residents who brought the suits – and what they really want; and from the viewpoint of RIOC and the developers.
- From the perspective of the lawyers who are pleading the cases and must work within the bounds of what can be challenged (or defended) in court.
- From the viewpoint of the judge, who must pick his way through a snarl of arguments, counter-arguments, and counter-counter-arguments and reach a decision that inevitably will disappoint one side or the other – and almost surely lead to an appeal.

Resident Viewpoint

Current residents – those involved in the suit, at least – are looking for the best Southtown they can get. They don’t see a “best Southtown” in the Hudson/Related plan RIOC approved.

Their objections center on a first building that allegedly would create a “wall” separating the existing Northtown residential complex from Southtown, rather than open space, which is seen as more likely to draw the two neighborhoods together. For some, preserving a high ratio of open space is key to arresting deterioration of a quality of life that they feel has gone downhill since the State withdrew financial support of Island operations and capital needs – arresting that deterioration and averting what could be a final nail in the coffin of a once-celebrated quality of life.

Residents also worry about the new neighbors, and express reservations on a plan top-heavy in studio and one-bedroom apartments that are not likely to be desired by the families the Island needs for long-term stability and a sense of settled community.

Another worry is that RIOC has sacrificed too much to get this particular development going – allegedly diverting millions of dollars from construction of Octagon Park (an-

other quality-of-life issue) to pay for Southtown infrastructure, and then setting the developers’ ground rents so low that the project adds little to the financial underpinning RIOC needs to run the Island. (In fact, the equivalent amount of money invested in simple bonds would pay better.)

Then there’s the matter of unavoidable construction inconvenience – as much as a decade, perhaps, before it ends – and construction traffic likely to tear up Main Street and create pedestrian detours which, at times, could make getting to the subway or Tram a maze that would rattle a resident.

The RIOC Viewpoint

Concerned with catching the wave of current economic conditions, RIOC simply wants to get on with Southtown. At least in some measure, today’s RIOC simply must follow through on work started under Dr. Jerome Blue, who left the RIOC Presidency a year ago. Perhaps it’s also a matter of pride to show that the organization did this particular thing right. And RIOC’s motivations may also hinge on the additional income Southtown would produce for its operating budget.

The Lawyers’ Translation

Making legal hay of all this sunshine and rain is another matter. The issues must be translated into something legally pleadable before a judge – something that can cite law and rely upon case precedents.

For the petitioning residents, that means pressing their interpretation of the Island’s General Development Plan (GDP), part of the lease through which the State controls most of this 147 acres of property until 2068, and on finding ways to challenge RIOC’s execution of the administrative steps in approving the plan.

The GDP requires a six-acre park separating Northtown and Southtown. That’s physically impossible, given the layout of the Hudson/Related plan. In a nose-to-nose confrontation on this point, RIOC and the developers respond that it’s physically impossible given the acreage set aside for Southtown.

On procedure, those suing complain that RIOC avoided a serious assessment of environmental impact – a process that could have consumed a year at a time when the developers were eager to get started because they have a tenant lined up for the first building.

On those claims have the lawyers placed their bets, couched in the language of litigation.

Judgment

The buck stops with the judge, of course – in this case, Justice Harold Tompkins of the State Supreme Court. Though he may draw upon resources within the Court system, in the final analysis it is his judgment which could be tested on appeal. It is therefore useful to imagine oneself in his shoes and robe to see a complex case from his perspective.

It happens that landowners and developers have gotten pretty good at finding their way through the approval processes, so the deck tends to be stacked against petitioners bringing Article 78 actions like those before Tompkins.



Website NYC10044 www.nyc10044.com

Justice Harold Tompkins as he listened to opposing attorneys from the bench May 17.

When they can find it, judges in such cases prefer to find evidence of something fairly flagrant on the part of landowners or developers, rather than technicalities. So it helps, in playing imaginary judge, to be truly hard-nosed in evaluating a petitioner’s chances.

But even on that rigid standard, RIOC appears to be highly vulnerable on two key points, either of which could provide the judge with sufficient grounds to send RIOC back through parts of the approval process.

General Development Plan

The General Development Plan is unequivocal in requiring a park of approximately six acres separating Northtown and Southtown. And in 1990, the City Board of Estimate reaffirmed that requirement by specifically rejecting a RIOC request for a GDP amendment that would have reduced Blackwell Park to about three acres.

As viewed from 63rd Street, Manhattan:

Rivercross

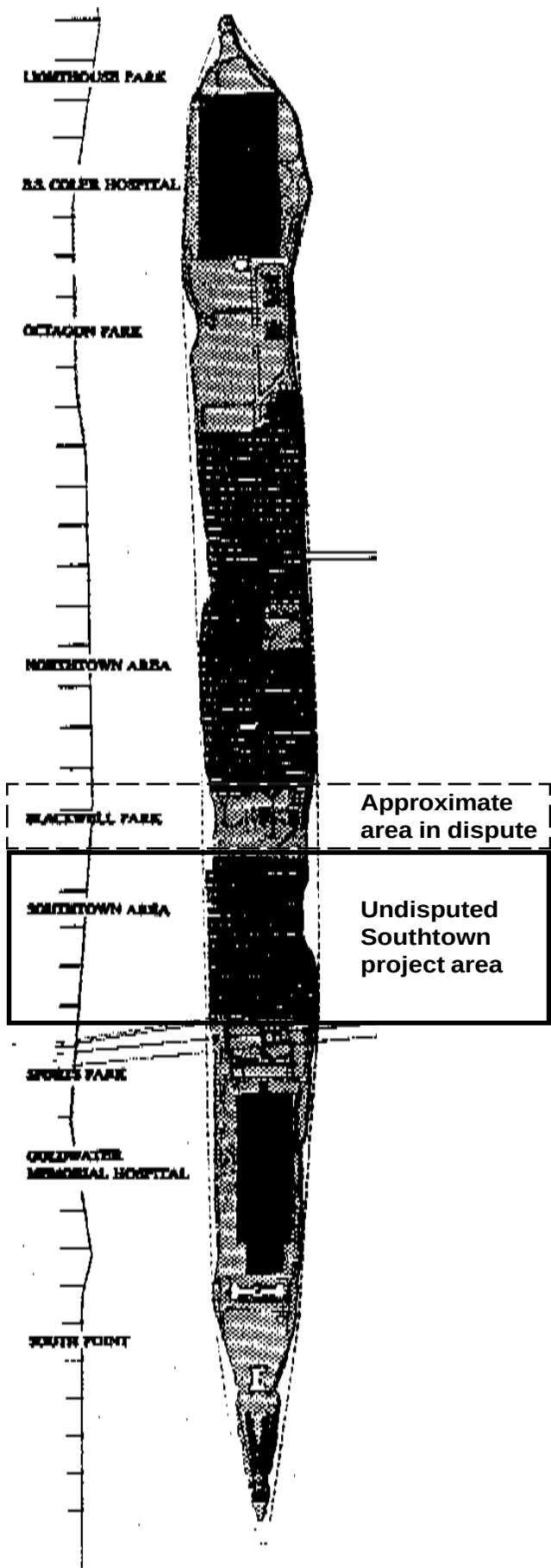
Blackwell Park

Blackwell Soccer/Baseball Field



Southtown will occupy land north and south of the abandoned Nurses Residence, which is to be razed. Among other issues (procedural and environmental), the suits currently before the State

Supreme Court challenge RIOC’s intention to allow construction of five buildings north of the Nurses Residence. Petitioners claim one to three of those buildings would be on parkland, while RIOC and



This puts RIOC in a position of claiming, in effect, that the Board of Estimate rejection of the GDP change (even while it was approving several other changes) should simply be ignored or overridden. Trying to provide the judge with reasonable justification for such a ruling is a formidable argumentative challenge. In fact, RIOC’s lawyers have

argued that the Board of Estimate simply failed, out of some unsubstantiated confusion, to rubber-stamp a park reduction that was already fact because Eastwood and Rivercross had been overbuilt onto parkland. Yet both Rivercross and Eastwood had already been standing for well over a decade when the Board voted to retain the six-acre requirement.

So it’s hard to imagine the judge going along with the notion that the City’s lawmaking body of the time failed, in some bureaucratic muddle, to consider the realities of the situation. To do so would be an effective declaration that the City of New York is irrelevant, stripped of its landlord rights by virtue of the State’s mistake in allowing construction on land set aside to be part of a park.

Environmental Impact
RIOC also appears particularly vulnerable on assessment of environmental impact. In fact, the calendar record seems to show that the agency pushed through a hurried ruling that a new Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was unnecessary – that the EIS done in 1990 (for the Ramati plan) was sufficient because the 1990 and 1999 versions of Southtown are nearly identical.

Making that case is difficult. As the petitioning residents point out, buildings are in different positions, of different heights, casting longer shadows. Views are changed, and the main road is relocated. For far less, judges in similar cases have ruled that a full EIS is required.

The consultant opinion holding that no new EIS would have to be done in the Southtown case came from one of the City’s most prestigious environmental consulting firms, Allee, King, Rosen and Fleming (AKRF), but it was funded by the developers, not RIOC, leading to a suggestion that its objectivity may have been compromised.

There’s also evidence that RIOC allowed legal consultants only a week to provide it with advice that it need to undertake a new environmental assessment. Both consultants hedged. Neither produced a definitive opinion on the matter.

In the law, a “hard look” is required. That is, RIOC was supposed to examine the possible need for a new EIS rather rigorously. If the judge senses that the evidence shows such a hard look was avoided, he has sufficient grounds to rule that RIOC must go back through the process.

Relative Harm
Faced with a tangle of conflicting evidence and pleadings, and particularly if there’s a relative balance between the sides, judges often will consider the relative harm that might result from deciding a case either way.

Looking to cause the least harm in his decision, Judge Tompkins might weigh the potential harm inflicted on the community by immediate construction of a plan not fully studied against the harm inflicted on RIOC and the developers by requiring a new EIS, which might delay construction a year. In the equation, that’s permanent construction and potential permanent damage on one hand, weighed, on the other, against a year’s delay to produce an EIS.



Just how far south Blackwell Park goes, and how far north Southtown goes, are key issues in pending challenges to the RIOC Board of Directors’ September 22 resolution approving the Hudson/Related plan for Southtown. This satellite view shows the entire Southtown site, including the area in dispute, just south of Rivercross and Eastwood.

come important facets of a case. In this case, the EIS, or environmental impact study, might be taken as a kind of case-closer. Ruling that RIOC and the developers must produce a new, thorough EIS, complete with community hearings and a full-blown record, would generate a one-year delay – about the same delay that could be brought on by an appeal.

While RIOC and the developers might appeal a ruling that a full EIS must be done, they might instead simply accept the one-year delay involved, and do the EIS. There is also the possibility, of course, that RIOC and the developers might elect to negotiate an end to the legal process – but that’s a possibility that has been rejected so far.

Conclusions
Predictions are risky. But that temptation to see the future is powerful.

All things considered, despite the fact that developers and landowners almost always get their way in the end, the cases brought by the Alternative Southtown Design Committee and Roosevelt Islanders for Responsible Southtown Development (RIRSD) seem to invite judicial caution – a decision in favor of a further careful look before concrete is poured.

Time will tell – no decision is expected anytime before mid-July, and it could be longer.

Nurses Residence Subway station and air shaft

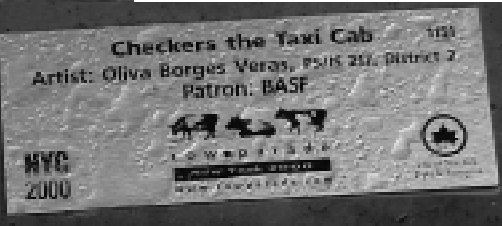
Queensboro Bridge



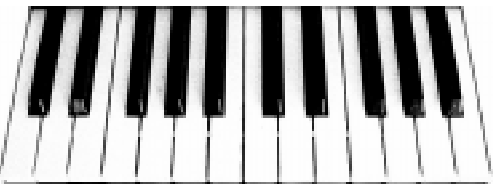
the developers defend their intention by saying Blackwell Park was reduced from the intended six acres, *de facto*, when Eastwood and Rivercross were built farther south than originally envisioned. Nine buildings are planned; four would be placed south of the Nurses Residence footprint, five north. Panoramic photo by Website NYC10044 www.nyc10044.com



Calling Phil Rizutto! At the Port Authority Bus Terminal, *Checkers the Taxi Cab*, by Roosevelt Island's Olivia Borges Veras, leads part of the City's summer Cow Parade – all bovines of the livery persuasion. *Holy Cow!* Another of the fiberglass heifers, by Rivercross resident Connie Tanner, is on duty at South Street Seaport.



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(Kitchen open till 1AM)**



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-New York Times

Sally Speller – Settling in At Island’s NYPL Branch

by Kate Whitehead Nicoll

Stop, don’t walk on by. With all the news we hear of poor literacy in our schools, one might imagine a librarian would be overjoyed to see her library filled with teenagers every afternoon. But for Sally Speller, Branch Manager of Roosevelt Island Library for the last six months, the popularity of her books and computers among the most vocal section of the population has become something of a problem.

She arrived from the Epiphany Branch on East 23rd Street at the beginning of the year and found that things couldn’t be more different. “It’s like night and day. There we were very busy, our clientele was mainly adults and children. Here our largest group is the teenagers. After school it gets kind of rambunctious, and a lot of adults feel uncomfortable.” This is nothing new, it seems. Even before the computers arrived it was a problem: “We’ll get one group under control, learning how to behave in a library, then a new group of 12- and 13-year-olds will emerge and we’ll have to start all over.” Sally believes it’s partly to do with the geography. “If this wasn’t an island they would range further; there aren’t many places here for them to hang out, so they tend to do it here.” But it seems something of their surroundings is beginning to sink in: “While they’re waiting for the computers they’re looking at the books and we’re beginning to get more requests for paperback fiction, which is great.”

So how does Sally intend to tackle this particular challenge? It’s not official yet, nor is it a secret. The library is hoping to expand, so that a quiet area can be set aside for adults, while the young adults and children can have a separate, noisier space as in most other branches. The library’s budget is partly determined by floor space. So the larger the space, the bigger the budget. The other factor is the circulation figures, and that is another of Sally’s problems. People might come in, but they don’t take enough out. This means the budget isn’t there to buy new books that people might want to take out, a vicious circle that Sally has to try to break.

One of the strategies she is employing has been borrowed from a spell in retail before her training as a librarian. “I have my loss leaders by the door that I hope will entice people in.” This is the shelf of free books with the sign “Help Yourself,” and it has brought in a few newcomers, suspicious at first that there might be a catch. Perhaps that is the nub of the problem. Very few things in this city are free, and the New York Public Library is one of them. People just seem not to value things unless they can display how much of their hard-earned wealth they have shelled out. Teenagers are not yet troubled by such sensibilities.

Enter any library in the city at the moment and you might well be approached by an earnest woman with a clipboard, requesting you to write to the Governor. This is the season of the Budget Action Initiative, when NYPL has to fight for its slice of the annual cake. The campaign is more discreet on the Island, but the yellow fliers are still in evidence. “It is always a scramble,” complains Sally. “Newer libraries outside the city made sure they had a percentage of the tax base built into their charter; we have to fight for our corner every year.” The main result of this is that city librarians’ salaries have fallen far behind those in the suburbs, and, like the teachers, they are moving out in droves. Salaries need to increase by 15% to catch up and stem the tide, thus allowing for the longer opening hours that the public would like.

Another of Sally’s strategies to entice people in is to increase the number of special programs: readings, book discussions, courses and so on that would appeal to adults. She is very keen for any local authors to use the branch as a venue for book launches and would be happy to stay open late and organize the necessary publicity. She has also increased the World Languages Section to reflect the special demographics of the Island. There are more and more requests for books in French and Russian, and these are added to the existing collections in Spanish, Chinese, Korean and German. Audio tapes are being considered, although there is a problem of space as well as budget.

So how does Sally, the full-time librarian who still likes to paint in her spare time, sum up her first six months in the job? “Readers Advisory was one of the aspects of the job I loved most, when people would come in to tell me of a book they had finished and ask for another one like it, and then we’d go to the shelf and look around. But not one person has asked me to do that since I’ve been here. It’s been breaking my heart... I just wish I could snag some of the people coming off the subway and walking down Main Street. I know this is a bedroom community, I know a lot of people work, eat, and play in Manhattan and just come back here to sleep, but if a few of them would just stop in on the way home to pick up some bedtime reading it would make us very happy.”



COMING UP

Blackwell House Deterioration Goes On; Island’s Historical Society Demands Action

Compiled by Alain Pinset – phone and fax 208-2907
e-mail alpinset@cs.com

Mon., July 3, 7:30 p.m., **Free Performance, *The Lion in Winter*,** two-character version of the movie, with Mel Haughwout and Eve Marlowe, amphitheater in courtyard at 536 Main Street.

Tue., July 4, 4:00 p.m., **Ray Abrams Big Band** in concert, Good Shepherd Plaza. Free; contributions will be accepted to support *The Main Street WIRE*.

Tue., July 4, 9:00 p.m., **Fireworks at Southpoint.** Tickets, \$15, available at RIOC office, 591 Main Street.

Wed., July 5, 6:00 p.m., **RIOC’s Summer Sounds, *New York Brass Entourage*** (classical), free concert, Promenade Pier.

Wed., July 5, 7:30 p.m., **Free Performance, *It Never Snows in Texas* and *Crazy Street*** by Roosevelt Island’s Lila Gilbert, and ***Garden of Songs*** by Eve Marlowe, amphitheater in courtyard at 536 Main Street.

Thur., July 6, 7:30 p.m., **Roosevelt Island Greens** meeting, Island House Community Room. Information, **308-2210**.

Mon., July 10, 7:30 p.m., **Free Performance, *The Visit*** with Eve Marlowe and Mel Haughwout, amphitheater in courtyard at 536 Main Street.

Wed., July 12, 6:00 p.m., **RIOC’s Summer Sounds, *Sweet Grass*** (modern country/R&B), Pier.

Wed., July 12, 8:00 p.m., **Residents Association Common Council meeting,** Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Thur., July 13, 11:00 a.m., **Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation Board of Directors meeting,** Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Tue., July 25, 6:00 p.m., **Lecture and Walking Tour of Blackwell House,** led by Judy Berdy of the Roosevelt Island Historical Society; meet at Library, 524 Main Street. Free. Information: **308-6243**.

Sat., July 29, next scheduled issue of ***The Main Street WIRE***. **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., July 21; decision on stuffers for *The Bag*, Mon., July 24; bag materials due Thur., July 27. **Future issues:** Aug. 26; Sept. 9, 23; 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**.

Tue., August 1, 6:00 p.m., **Lecture and Walking Tour of Chapel of the Good Shepherd,** led by Judy Berdy of the Roosevelt Island Historical Society; meet at Library, 524 Main Street. Free. Information: **308-6243**.

Tue., August 8, 6:00 p.m., **Lecture and Walking Tour of The Octagon,** led by Judy Berdy of the Roosevelt Island Historical Society; meet at Library, 524 Main Street. Free. Information: **308-6243**.

At the Senior Center

Monday

9:15-10:00, **Stay Well** (Exercise)
9:30, **Basic Computer class**
10:00-12:00, **English as Second Language**
11:00-12:30, **Metrocard Bus**
6:30-7:30, **Line Dancing**

Tuesday

(closed July 4)
10:00, **Jazzercise**
12:30-2:30, **Visiting Nurse Service**
1:30, **Games** (RISA)
7:00, **Korean English**

Wednesday

9:15, **Stay Well** (Stretch)
10-12, **English as 2nd Language**

Thursday

10:30, **Creative Arts**
12:30, **Movie**

Friday

10:00-11:00, **Citizenship**
10:30-11:30, **Blood Pressure Screening**

Saturday

7:30 p.m., **Bingo** (RISA)

To the Board of Directors of RIOC:

I was before you a few months ago and presented each of you with photographs of Blackwell House. I regret to tell you that no work has been done to repair and stabilize the house to this date.

The Roosevelt Island Historical Society has been attempting to work with RIOC since the house was put in their control last October.

The Historical Society has been unsuccessful in participating in discussions about the future of the house (and other Island landmarks). Mr. Ryan has constantly told us that he “is working on it.” A meeting was scheduled between RIOC and the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation last week. We were told that it was canceled at the last moment.

Blackwell House has been tossed in the bag of the future of all Island landmarks and park lands. That means that no attention is being paid to its desperate current condition. We were told by RIOC that the house interior is not in as bad shape as the exterior is.

The RIHS has extensive connections in the preservation system and has been rebuffed in all its attempts to work with RIOC, the architects and off-Island preservation groups by RIOC. We have funding sources that do not seem to interest RIOC.

As Board Chief Operating Officer, Deputy Commissioner Steve Hicks and the members of the Board of Directors, we implore you to instruct Mr. Ryan to start emergency repairs to the house immediately. We hope that the Board will oversee the urgent repairs needed on this Island.

Sincerely yours,
Judith Berdy





Nicholas Ortiz as El Gallo

The Fantasticks

The Main Street Teenage Theatre



Matthew Davidowitz as The Mute



Caitlin Donovan as Luisa



Jed Resnick as Matt



Ellior Marcus as Henry



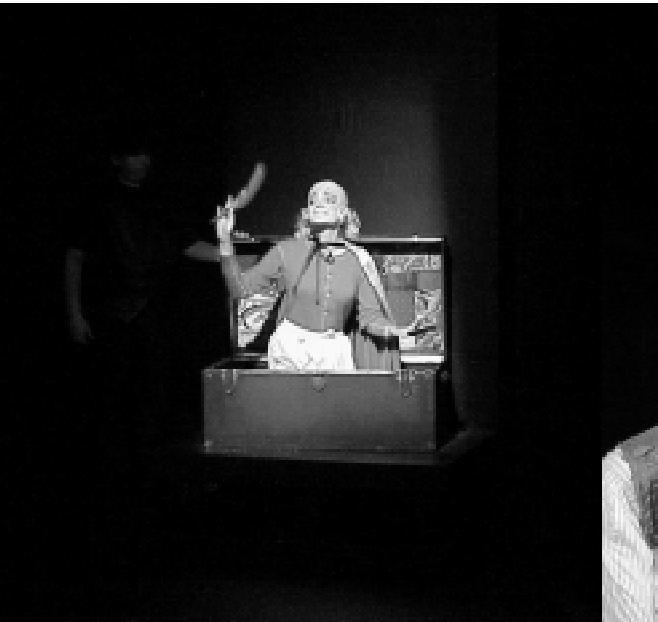
Direction / Nancy Howe
Lighting Design & Costumes / Worth Howe
Scenic Design & Painting / Elizabeth Gates
Musical Director / Bob McDowell



J.D. Zamfirescu and David Cohen as Bellomy and Hucklebee, the fathers



Micheil Yohannes as Mortimer



Letters

continued from page 2

To the Editor:

Last Friday after work, I ascended the subway escalator and arrived at Roosevelt Island on one of those lovely summer eves. The air was redolent with the aroma of the lawns and the trees, and animated with sounds of children playing on the baseball field and their elders on the adjacent soccer field. Whenever I have the opportunity, I try to take a mental snapshot of these wonderful scenes, because we may not have them that much longer. If our lawsuit fails and Ryan and friends at RIOC get their way, a long and damaging con-

struction program on these same fields will commence.

As I passed the rotting Blackwell House, I noticed Patrick Stewart and a common acquaintance sitting on a bench near the sidewalk. I waved and Patrick called out, “How’s your lawsuit coming?” I smiled and continued, whereupon he yelled, “I hope it’s costin’ you a lot!”

It’s been about eight months since I first went to Patrick’s home turf on the RIRA Common Council in a futile attempt to rouse the Council to fight this disgraceful project. It’s exactly a half-year

since I joined the steering committee of Roosevelt Islanders for Responsible Southtown Development (RIRSD) and began working with wonderful and dedicated compatriots to mount a legal battle. While this period has been quite taxing on all of us, we are gratified by the results to date and by the impressive support that the community has shown. I’d like to share with you some of the things I’ve learned since we began our efforts.

First, RIOC has got to go, before they wreck the Island entirely. The bureaucracy managed by Robert Ryan, like bad fish, stinks from the head down. These are people that view our community solely in terms of how much money we can provide for the State and the Governor’s cronies. Their ill-conceived plans for MiniCondos, the seven year Southtown boondoggle, and the Southpoint “convention center” will do permanent and irreparable damage to the Island by paving over all of our available open space for minimal gains – not affordable housing, not family housing and not even much income – just bonanzas for builders. Additional schemes such as the Eldercare facility which destroys most or all of Sportspark and the Octagon Park housing project built on more reserved parkland, loom in the near future and will further lower our quality of life.

These appointees have neither the ability nor inclination to serve us effectively. RIOC is not able to maintain historic Blackwell house nor the Church of the Good Shepherd, they can’t replace street lamps, nor shovel snow in the winter or keep the Octagon Park baseball field in usable shape in the summer. Through pure bureaucratic stupidity, they have actually turned down opportunities to repair the Church and make the field useable.

I’ve come to the conclusion that self-government is our best and perhaps only hope to manage the Island effectively and put it on a sane development path. In fact, this is exactly the goal of the Maple Tree Group which has included over one hundred talented and dedicated people and has met more or less weekly for over three years with the objective of replacing the incompetent party hacks in RIOC with a government elected by Island residents. In a referendum conducted by RIRA in the 1998 elections, 92% of the voters approved MTG’s vision of self-government. This year they were able to work with Albany legislators to get a seawall bill that protects the Island. Next year may be the year we get self-government.

While the Maple Tree group has shown real leadership, and real results, Patrick Stewart, our RIRA President and RIOC Board member stands in stark and unfortunate contrast. In the eight months that I’ve had the opportunity to observe him, Mr. Stewart has stated his opposition to self-government and has done nothing to stop the mini-condo fiasco.

He has defended the current Southtown plan even while his Residents Association has intervened to stop the project. While no one disputes that the Island desperately needs revenue, he has documents showing that the Southtown developers will only pay the Island an absurd \$155,000 per year in ground rents in the first, and likely only, phase to be built. He has never attempted to explain why RIOC saw fit to throw in an

Mr. Carl McCall
Comptroller
The State of New York
Dear Comptroller McCall:

The State of New York has seriously mishandled its fiscal responsibility for Roosevelt Island.

Robert Ryan, the President of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), and a direct appointee of Governor Pataki, released the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), from \$3.4 million of a \$6.8 million debt in order to secure \$3.4 million of those funds for the discretionary use of his agency.

In doing so, Mr. Ryan and the RIOC Board of Directors deprived the Roosevelt Island community and the State of New York.

The \$6.8 million debt resulted from damages that the DEP produced while constructing a water tunnel whose entrance is located at Octagon Park on Roosevelt Island. The DEP put a hole in the Island’s western seawall and promenade as well as destroying approximately five acres of land in the midst of Octagon Park. In addition, the DEP needed an access road, work that RIOC performed. However, no figures have been released to the public as to whether RIOC was compensated for their expense.

RIOC completed the repair to the seawall and promenade. The audited figures for that work, which the DEP was obligated to reimburse, came to \$3,400,242.84. Because the DEP’s water-tunnel work continued during and after the building of Octagon Park, the land they occupied was not landscaped along with the rest of the original park project. In order to retain the space, the DEP entered a contract with RIOC to carry out a landscaping plan for the park once they vacated the space.

According to an affidavit the DEP submitted (in their defense to an Article 78 challenge to RIOC’s proposed Southtown construction on Blackwell Park), they estimated the cost of that landscaping to be the same as the audited cost of the seawall/promenade repair, which was \$3.4 million. The affidavit also admits to the “trade” made between the DEP and RIOC.

Although the combined total for all aspects of the DEP’s repair responsibility would total \$6.8 million, (\$3.4 million for the seawall/promenade and \$3.4 million for the landscaping), and their contract locked RIOC into utilizing the seawall/promenade reimbursement for landscaping the park, on September 30, 1999, Robert Ryan signed a “Superseding Agreement” along with Diana Chapin, Assistant DEP Commissioner, relieving the DEP of its burden to pay \$3.4 million to complete the park’s landscaping, and placing the \$3.4 million reimbursement for the seawall/promenade in RIOC’s hands for discretionary spending, minus the provision for landscaping.

RIOC has committed the entire \$3.4 million to excavate further parkland at Blackwell Park, and install infrastructure there for a build-

ing developer. RIOC lacks funds to complete the Octagon Park project.

Although Mr. Ryan announced at a public meeting that the DEP is still responsible to complete the park, my discussion with Diana Chapin proved otherwise. When I asked her what the DEP sees as their obligation for completing Octagon Park, she said they have none. “We’ll give you a couple of bags of grass seed and rake the ground,” she said, “but I wouldn’t call that a park.” When I asked how she could do such a thing, she said, “Your problem is with RIOC, not with me!”

Ms. Chapin completely ignored the fact that the DEP *had relieved themselves* of their burden to complete the landscaping project (a \$3.4 million savings), and for that savings, *had also released RIOC* from their responsibility to spend the seawall/promenade reimbursement for landscaping expenses.

RIOC has issued an RFP to attract building development on Octagon Park. It is presumed that RIOC intends to negotiate with the builder to complete landscaping in unfinished areas of Octagon Park that lie beyond the footprint of their building. Becker & Becker has proposed construction of an eldercare facility and RIOC is seriously considering the project even though it further depletes Roosevelt Island’s limited parkland.

Governor Pataki’s RIOC operatives have:

1. Entered into an unscrupulous agreement with the DEP that deprives the Roosevelt Island community and the State of New York of \$3.4 million dollars.
2. Consistently disregarded their responsibility to protect Roosevelt Island’s parkland even though Governor Pataki campaigned for re-election throughout New York on a “Parks Preservation” platform.
3. Pledged the entire \$3.4 million they secured from the DEP to provide infrastructure to a building project whose annual return to the State of New York is \$155,000, far less than the return on practical, safe, alternative investments that could be made with the money. While Public Housing may be a justification for low return, the project RIOC has approved provides housing that will be available only to personnel from a private institution, and none of it will be available to the general public.

Please let me know what you can do to rectify this problem.

Joyce Mincheff

Letters Policy: *The WIRE* welcomes letters to the Editor, to the community, and to/from officials, and will consider publication on a *Name Withheld* basis, but the writer’s name, address, and telephone number must be provided. All letters subject to acceptance for publication. **Preferred methods of submission:** PC-standard 3.5-inch floppy disk left at 531 Main Street for *The WIRE*, or by e-mail to nyc10044@rcn.com (ASCII text preferred or use any wordprocessing software, but no MSWord files with macros). Alternatives: Typed, double-spaced copy left at 531 Main Street or faxed to (212) 755-2540. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered. We cannot take telephone dictation of letters. **All letters are subject to editing for length and clarity.**

To: Robert Ryan, President, RIOC From: Eastwood Building Committee

We would like to bring to your attention the deplorable condition of Main Street, especially on the Eastwood side.

In the morning, the garbage on our street is unreal, half-eaten Chinese dinners, pieces of pizza, onion rings, French fries, half-empty soda cans and bottles, candy wrappers, and just plain old garbage.

Where is Public Safety when all of this is going on?

Capobianco Field, across from Westview, is the worst, and this is your responsibility. Why can’t there be something done about this? Perhaps more awareness about what is going on by Public Safety, perhaps more and better cooperation between RIOC and Housing Mangement on street cleaning is needed.

There must be something that all of us can do to make this a cleaner place in which to live.

We of the Eastwood Building Committee would gladly sit down with RIOC and Management to try to find a solution to this problem.

**Harry De Vine
Fay Vass
Ronald T. Vass**

Donovan from page 2

or not this is a qualified person to proceed.”

In other words, Show us the money and we’ll do it, whatever “it” may be.

One might think from his remarks that Mr. Kayser, new to this outpost, thought that the multi-storied condominiums were opposed by residents because they didn’t think the developer had the money to do the job right and not for the project’s seeming lack of a good-faith Environmental Impact Assessment, and/or for its violation of the GDP and/or the fact that it will eliminate classroom inventory that will be needed under the most conservative estimate of Southtown family units and/or the insertion of \$500,000 condos in a lower- and middle-income community and/or etc.

But one can’t cut the same slack for resident Board members – Ms. Whitaker, and Messrs. Fullington, Kraut and Stewart. They live here. They know. Yet, three voted Yea – if she gets the money, we’ll do it – and Mr. Stewart, the president of RIRA, the duly-elected representatives of residents which has consistently opposed the multi-storied condominiums, after a speech assailing the development, inexplicably abstained – I’ll not commit to any action. No need to go into motives; suffice to say resident Board members (excluding Ron Vass, who resigned) have seldom if ever represented resident interests in terms of standing up for the GDP. One wants to say, Commissioner Lynch, save us from those who purport to serve us.

And what a shame that this charade trashed the substantial and pro bono labors of the Capitol Planning and Development Committee, a committee which you founded and later praised on the strength of their CV’s to evaluate Island development. Indeed, this committee of talented residents in their deliberations knew the difference between bad and good development – they voted against the multi-storied con-

Helstien from page 2

against the plan. All our elected politicians have repudiated the plan. With four of nine votes on the RIOC board in the hands of residents, we had reason to hope for at least a split vote.

In the end, there was not one vote against the conversion plan. David Kraut voted for it. Susan Whitaker voted for it. Kevin Fullington voted for it. And Patrick Stewart, after an eloquent speech condemning the plan, abstained from voting. He says that an abstention is the same as a vote against. I say, a no vote is a no vote is a no vote. He says he did it to “stay in the loop” with his fellow board members. I say that governors, board members, and community alike admire and respect leaders with the courage of their convictions and that Patrick made no friends anywhere with that abstention.

The dictionary defines a quisling as “a traitor who serves as the puppet of the enemy occupying his country.” I fear that the analogy is not far off the mark. We know what to expect from appointed outsiders who have been dumped on our Island to run things. But spare us from our so-called friends! There’s a phrase, “You dance with the one who brung ya.” If the Governor “brung” even our neighbors to the dance, how can we expect them to represent us, the residents? Only when we can elect *and remove from office* those who make decisions for this Island can we be assured of a system that works.

Sherie L. Helstien

dominiums (six to one), but for the developers of Southtown.

As a resident of Roosevelt Island and, like so many others who became one based on the promise of the GDP, I can say RIOC is not fulfilling its promise. We all hear the phrase, “If it’s not broke, don’t fix it.” Commissioner Lynch, RIOC is broke. And you can fix it.

Richard Donovan

additional \$4.5 million dollars of funding to induce the developers to build here.

Mr. Stewart has shown no leadership at all in any of the other issues facing the Island. After vowing at a RIRA meeting “to do everything I can” to stop the mini-condo project he actually *abstained* on the RIOC vote that took place *twelve hours later* using the absurd reasoning that if he voted “No” he’d be kept out of the loop. While he is astute at being “in the loop” and has gained important positions,

he has utterly failed to translate this power into anything of value for Island residents but has instead used it to fight those working for positive change. It’s time to point out that the emperor has no clothes.

I don’t know why Mr. Stewart wants the Southtown lawsuit to “cost a lot of money,” but I can assure him that it does. I am deeply grateful to the many residents who have supported this fight with money and volunteer work, and I urge all others to join with us.

Steve Marcus

Public Safety Blotter

June 1-15, 2000

6/1/00, Found Property, Bus Garage, 684 Main St. RIOC bus driver found wallet in Bus #8, officer retrieved wallet (containing US\$26, Visa card, etc.), brought it to PSD where it was secured. Subsequently owner retrieved wallet and contents at PSD.

6/1/00, Investigation, Gristede’s, 686 Main St. Officer responded to scene. Upon arrival Gristede’s manager asked him to remove a male from the store. Officer removed man from store. Manager said he would have to discuss matter with owner of store. Male left area, refused to give personal information.

6/2/00, Unsecured Premises, 30 River Rd. Officers and Manhattan Park service personnel responded to report of open patio door at management office, searched area with negative results.

6/2/00, Urinating in Public, rear of 543 Main St. Female informed officer she’d seen male urinating at rear of Chapel, pointed perp out walking northbound. Officer spoke with him and he admitted having urinated. He was warned and admonished.

6/2/00, Found Property (follow-up), PSD, 552 Main St. Female in-house to claim Motorola beeper found on 5/26. Victim verified ownership of said pager, was given property, took possession and signed for same.

6/2/00, Harassment, Lobby, 580 Main St. Resident female in-house, stated she was approached by unidentified male who was screaming at her. Officers searched area with negative results.

6/2/00, Criminal Mischief, Motorgate 4C level. Officer responded to scene for criminal mischief report, verified left and right side mirrors and molding missing from vehicle. NYPD responded, prepared report. Officer searched area with negative results. Motorgate Mgr. notified.

6/3/00, Smoke Condition, 580 Main St. Officers responded to scene for fire alarm. Resident had front door open and said a pot had burned on the stove. No damage or injuries were incurred.

6/3/00, Criminal Mischief, 560 Main St. Resident female phoned PSD, stated unidentified perp had thrown a rock at bottom window of her kitchen, shattering it. RIHM service personnel notified, taped it up until it can be replaced.

6/4/00, Found Property, Street, 560 Main St. Non-resident female turned in at PSD a pouch containing credit cards, driver’s license, etc. Officer contacted concierge at 531 Main, where owner resides. Property was safeguarded at PSD, where owner subsequently retrieved same.

6/4/00, Investigation, Entrance/laundry, 576 Main St. Unknown resident phoned PSD, stated unknown male was removing plant from lobby, cart from laundry room. Officer responded to scene, searched area with negative results.

6/5/00, Graffiti, stair D-1, 516 Main St. Officer noticed graffiti at scene.

6/5/00, Investigation, stair D, 516 Main St. Officer noticed damage at lower level exit door, which was loosened at lower level from wall at the top & bottom hinges, and door was off track.

6/7/00, Criminal Mischief, Pool, 551 Main St. While officer was patrolling noticed that a window had been cracked on north side by unknown object. Super was advised. Officer checked and there were no other broken windows.

6/8/00, Investigation, Bakery, 546 A Main Street. While on patrol, officer overheard verbal dispute between victim and male customer, who was just leaving Bakery. Victim stated she had refused him service because he was speaking in rude and discourteous manner to her. Victim refused NYPD.

6/8/00, Criminal Mischief/Fire, stairs T-4, 580 Main St. Officer responded to scene for report of smell of smoke. Upon arrival officer observed small flames emanating from recycling bin at stairwell T, 4 floor, and extinguished fire. The bin was damaged, but there was no further damage to property.

6/9/00, Fire Hazard, stairs, 580 Main St., Officer responded to scene to check out exit door at V stairwell, found exit to be broken and could not exit from it. RIHM super on duty was notified.

6/9/00, Verbal Dispute, 40 River Rd. Officers responded to verbal dispute between attendant (victim) and female patient. Victim said

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the latter refused to take medicine & was using obscenities. EMS, NYPD refused. Patient agreed to take medicine.

6/9/00, Disorderly Conduct, sidewalk, 579 Main St. Officers responded to scene, saw 2 females fighting, additional officers responded, perps (1 resident, 1 non) were escorted to PSD, issued “C” summonses and released.

6/10/00, Robbery, 36 Avenue Bridge. PSD officer responded to scene, for a grand larceny auto in progress. Victim was picked up at Motorgate arrival gate and tried to follow vehicle off Island but it had already fled. Non-resident male had picked up perp in Queens, who robbed him of approx. US\$35 - 50, victim did not see weapon & they were still fighting when victim was pushed out of vehicle. Perp made U turn and drove off in same. Victim informed PSD officer, who arrived at scene. NYPD responded, vehicle info put on air, NYPD took victim to canvas area with negative results.

6/11/00, Investigation, 4 River Rd. Officers responded to apartment of female who informed officer that next door neighbor chronically complains about her banging on wall (shared wall), neighbor wrote note, placed it under her door. Officers asked both tenants to take up matter with Manhattan Park, which they agreed to do.

6/12/00, Investigation, 546 Main St. Home attendant in-house, stated she was looking for resident. She had knocked on door, no answer. Officers and RIHM service employee responded to apt., man was not there. They searched apt., apt. was secured.

6/13/00, Fire Threat, 501 Main St. Officer responded to scene for several FDNY engines on scene. Was advised by office manager that when she booted up, she heard crackling sound and smelled what she thought was electrical smoke. Firefighters did not smell said smoke, they searched area with negative results. No injuries reported.

Rivercross general manager and super on scene.

6/13/00, Property Damage, Lobby, 580 Main St. Officer responded to scene, upon arrival saw broken window which was taped up until repairs can be made by RIHM service. Area searched for perp with negative results.

6/13/00, Harassment, Street, 531 Main St. Female informed officer that while walking north bound a car with three occupants approached, one male made nasty sexual remark at her while faking to throw bottle. Officer stopped vehicle, complainant refused to press charges. Perp denied allegations, was warned and admonished by officer.

6/13/00, Vehicle Accident, 100 Main St. Driver of vehicle #1 told officer he was backing up to leave parking space when his car struck vehicle #2, causing minor damage. NYPD responded, prepared accident report, advised both drivers to go to 114 Pct. on 6/14. EMS was not required.

6/13/00, Water Leak, 546 Main St. Officer responded to scene for water leak. RIHM super at scene, apartment was opened, toilet was overflowing. Resident was asleep. Repairs were made.

6/14/00, Criminal Mischief, Motorgate. Officer responded to scene, resident stated left front signal light had been removed from his vehicle. He said he would contact 114 Pct. upon his return (he had to leave). He just wanted PSD report for the present.

6/14/00, Dispute, Motorgate. Officer saw a vehicle driven by female with a male passenger stop short before stop sign, saw male strike female with fist in the head, the female hit the male. Car accelerated and drove towards Queens. Other officers responded, checked Queens side with negative results.

6/14/00, Investigation, Lighthouse Park, 900 Main St. Officer responded to scene. Unknown vehicle or object had knocked down a concrete barrier, leaving red paint on it. Officer checked both parking lots with negative results. RIOC supervisor responded and will have damage corrected.

6/14/00, Smoke Condition, 546 Main St. Officers responded to scene for alarm sounding on 9th floor. They knocked on door with negative results. RIHM responded, opened apartment door, tenant was not home but had left food in oven which had started burning, oven turned off and window opened, apartment was secured.

SPORTSWIRE



Vicki Feinmel

The Dodgers celebrate their victory with the traditional “piling-on” ceremony.

The Youth Program’s baseball playoffs concluded with championship games on June 17.

In the Minor League (ages 8-10), the first-place Dodgers were upset in the first round of the playoffs by the fourth-place Braves, 12-8, while the second-place Brewers defeated the third-place Cardinals, 9-2. In the championship game, the Brewers prevailed over the Braves by an 8-5 score in a game that was closely contested throughout. Members of the championship team are Beatrice Ajaero, Alexander Beola, James Brackley, Tyler Cannon, Sanger Devine, Anass Dorani, Colleen Herlihy, Nicole Herlihy, Samuel Johns, Max McMillan, Eric Nadel, Saul Nadel, Brendan Ramirez, Dylan Ramirez and Vernon Thomas.

In the Major League (ages 11-13), the opening round of the playoffs saw the first-place Dodgers beat the Cardinals 5-4 in extra innings, while the second-place Braves came from behind with two runs in the fifth inning and two runs in the last inning to defeat the Brewers 7-6. The first-round winners met on Saturday, June 10, with the Dodgers defeating the Braves by an 8-6 score, in a game where no team led by more than two runs at any time. In the second game on June 10, the Cardinals eliminated the Brewers from the playoffs by a 9-5 score. The Cardinals opened an early 9-0 lead and managed to hold on as the Brewers mounted a furious late-inning comeback. The Braves then played the Cardinals on Wednesday, June 14, for the right to meet the Dodgers in the championship game. The Braves built an early 6-0 lead, but the Cardinals closed the lead to 6-4 and had the tying runs on base in the last inning, when the Cardinal batter hit a line drive to the first baseman, who caught the ball and doubled the Cardinal baserunner off second base for the final out of the game.

In the championship game played on June 17, the Braves took a 1-0 lead in the top of the first inning when Jenna Steuber walked with the bases loaded. However, the Dodgers scored five runs in the bottom of the first inning, keyed by hits from Jose Marte, Andrew Ramsingh, Tommy Corbisiero and

Adam Silverschotz. The Braves immediately countered with five runs of their own in the top of the second inning, as Chris Sullivan drove in one run with an infield single and Deshawn Pearson followed with another hit to score two more runs. It looked like the Braves would escape trouble in the second inning as they recorded two quick outs, but the Braves pitcher walked two batters to load the bases, Thomas Herlihy singled to score two runs and Jose Marte followed with another single to give the Dodgers an 8-6 lead. What looked like a very high scoring game then turned into a pitching duel. Dodger pitcher Tommy Corbisiero, after giving up 6 runs in the first two innings, settled down and did not allow another run the rest of the way. The Dodgers added one more run in the third inning, but the Braves brought in Lamar Burrows to pitch and he shut down the Dodger bats the rest of the game. Members of the championship team are Jack Conery, Tommy Corbisiero, Edwin Cruz, Richard De La Cruz, Chris Dominguez, Andy Enhsaihan, Jonathan Garcia, Sebastian Gherardi, Thomas Herlihy, Jose Marte, Jason Moreno, Jae Parker, Jake Russem, Andrew Ramsingh, and Adam Silverschotz.

In the Senior League, the RIYP Mets were upset by the Yorkville Giants in the semifinals by a 9-7 score. The Mets fell behind in the first inning and spent the rest of the game trying to catch up. Trailing 8-3 in the top of the fourth inning, the Mets closed the gap to 8-6 after five innings, but the Giants got an insurance run in the top of the sixth inning to lead 9-6. In the bottom of the sixth inning the Mets got one run back, but the rally died when the Giants left fielder threw out a baserunner trying to score from second base on a single. The Mets threatened again in the final inning, but stranded the tying runs on base. Seth Kaufman led the Mets with three hits, while Kenny Hovi, Junior Ruiz, and Carlos Hiraldo added two hits apiece.

The Youth Program is entering teams in the Little League tournament beginning today (July 1) at the Minor League level (ages 9-10), at the Little League level (ages 11-12), and at the Senior League level (ages 14-16).



Vicki Feinmel

The Major League champion Dodgers with coaches Ian Kross and Mark Silverschotz.

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GIANT APARTMENT SALE Saturday only! Dressers, night tables, lamps, mirror, clothing, footwear, crystal, kitchen and miscellaneous items. Rivercross, 531 Main Street, apartment 627. Saturday, July 1, 10AM-4PM.

EXPERIENCED TUTOR for children, teens, adults. Specialties: Math, English. (212) 223-0157

LICENSED MASSAGE THERAPIST / CERTIFIED REFLEXOLOGIST – Island resident Diana Brill. Gift certificates available. (212) 759-9042

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED to assist disabled adults at a barbecue on Roosevelt Island Saturday, July 15. Sponsored by Independent Recreation for the Disabled, Inc. 718-545-1529.

PART-TIME BOOKEEPER AND PHONE SALES PERSON needed for small skincare distributor's office on R.I. If you have the right skills and are retired or a mother with children in school or a student who is interested in working please call Marilyn, (212) 415-8585 or fax your resume to (212) 421-4107.

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MiniCondos from page 6

Whatever the case, the RIOC Board's action unquestionably raised the bar for the final approval she seeks: She'll have to demonstrate financing, and even then, the project might be rejected by the Board.

Mannix

Board member John Mannix, responding to *The WIRE's* inquiry about his vote, seemed to be suggesting, at least obliquely, that there's nothing final about the Board vote: "The members of the Board, particularly those that had little or no history with the project, were in an awkward position of assessing both sides of a long controversy with very little time to discuss the matter amongst ourselves and to assess any viable alternatives that were or are being proposed."

"There were obvious reservations shared by many of us (and articulated by many of the residents opposed to the project) which, if not adequately dealt with in subsequent negotiations, may result in a negative vote."

But Mannix went on to decry the motives of some who object to the luxury aspect of the Wilson project: "The argument against 'luxury' housing and the statements made and quoted in *The WIRE* by residents who are opposed to people of a different socioeconomic background moving to the Island is outright distasteful and smacks of discrimination, no different at its core than discrimination for reasons of religious beliefs, ethnic background, sexual preference or political persuasion. The fact that this discrimi-

nation appears to be acceptable to many of the people opposed to this project is sad. There may be a host of legitimate reasons to oppose the project, but that certainly is not one of them."

Mannix continued with a word of advice and caution for project opponents: "I would ask some of those who openly (and sometimes viciously) criticize RIOC and its Board members to do so constructively and with legitimate solutions being offered to the issues which are raised. Perhaps their voices might be heard more clearly if logic, reason and reality replaced anger, sentiment and personal agendas."

Of course, Mannix is new to the business of dealing with the wake left by Jerry Blue's three-year RIOC Presidency.

Where It Stands

At this writing, the Board has given RIOC President Robert Ryan the job of working out deadlines by which Wilson must show she has the financing she needs, and presumably provide evidence that she has worked through some other potential objections – perhaps the compensation matter.

For some, meanwhile, the Board's seeming endorsement of Wilson's plan symbolizes an utter lack of resident influence over decisions about Roosevelt Island's future.

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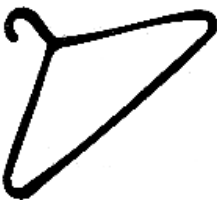
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