

Juanita Fleming Holiday Jam Tonight (Sat., Dec. 2)

A River Music Concert underwritten by The Main Street WIRE. Suggested contribution \$5. Kids, seniors & disabled \$2

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Next issue:
Seasonal
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The Main Street WIRE

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

in association with Website NYC10044



Website NYC10044 www.nyc10044.com
Ron Roth, Samantha Stone and various ghosts of the season appear in Main Street Theatre's new musical adaptation of *A Christmas Carol* opening next weekend. (Schedule in *ComingUp*, page 3; Ticket information, 371-4449.)

MST Presents New Musical Of Dickens' Christmas Carol

by Kevin Gates

An evening of entertainment here on Roosevelt Island? Bah! Humbug! Don't be a Scrooge. The Main Street Theatre and Dance Alliance's annual benefit this year, opening next Friday, will be a new musical adaptation of the Charles Dickens classic, *A Christmas Carol*. Bob McDowell has written original music and arranged traditional carols. Proceeds will benefit the MST&DA scholarship fund. In addition to a cast of MST&DA stalwarts, Ron Roth, who most recently appeared as Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, returns in the role of Yuletide bad guy Ebenezer Scrooge. Ron has appeared in several feature films, including *The Super*, with Joe Pesci. MST&DA provides residents with high-quality instruction in the Creative Arts, offering classes in acting, dance, voice, fitness (aerobics, yoga) to students of all ages and experience levels. Classes are taught by professionals and offered at a cost below comparable programs in Manhattan. As inexpensive as these classes are, there are still many children on the Island who would like to get involved, but whose parents simply can't afford the expense. That's where the annual winter benefit comes in. The bulk of the proceeds from the production go to a scholarship fund for disadvantaged kids and adults. "The show is really a labor of love," says MST&DA Di-

rector Nancy Howe. "Many cast members come home from work every night in October and November only to go to rehearsal for several hours. There's a real sense of community among cast members, and the addition of children and teens in the benefit shows has provided a burst of energy and fun. Knowing that their efforts are for a good cause heightens the feeling of good will." There will be ten performances of *A Christmas Carol* Friday-Monday, December 8-11 and 15-18. All seats are \$15 except Monday, Dec. 11, which is a \$10 special for seniors and the disabled. Tickets must be purchased at the box office. Call 371-4449 for box office hours and other information.

Briefly...

- **Al Weinstein**, the longtime champion of the Tramway who died two years ago, will be remembered by fellow residents today at noon in a ceremony near the Island Tram station, where a bronze plaque and Braddock pear tree will be dedicated.
- **Volunteer Korean interpreters** are needed by the Senior Center to assist with visits to doctors, reading mail, and other everyday needs. (Some 15% of the Island's seniors are Korean.) Call 980-1888.
- **Subway Changes** for track work means shuttle service on 20-minute intervals next week, Monday through Friday. Trains will run between 21st Street/Queensbridge and the 34th Street N/R station in Manhattan, with a stop at 63rd and Lexington. (More detail in MTA ad, page 10.)
- **The RIOC Board of Directors** has an evening meeting scheduled for Thursday, December 14 at 7:30 in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, but it may be canceled or postponed for lack of any important business, according to RIOC President Rob Ryan.
- **A Toy Drive** for Harlem Hospital is being conducted by the Roosevelt Island Seniors Association. Contributors should bring new toys (not wrapped) to 546 Main Street anytime before December 10.

RIOC Adopts a Market-Driven Plan for Island Development

by Robert Laux-Bachand

Leo Kayser III, a Manhattan lawyer who joined the RIOC Board this spring, has gained the Board's approval of the first step in a plan that could eventually reshape the governance and landscape of the Island. In meetings with residents, reporters, and officials, Kayser is building a case for cashing in now on facilities and undeveloped land controlled by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) under its long-term lease with the City, which bought the Island in 1828. RIOC, a State entity, would sell subleases, which are tax-exempt and have a remaining life of 68 years, to the highest bidder or bidders. The buyers would

determine how the properties would be used, subject to public hearings and within the context of existing agreements such as the Island's Lease and General Development Plan (GDP). "We could realize substantial capital for the island," Kayser said in explaining the proposal at the November 20 RIOC Board meeting. "We're talking about, potentially, tens of millions of dollars, which could then be used for capital improvement in various areas that are needed on the Island. We can finance this ourselves through this process." The first step will be to choose a marketing agent or other real estate professional. The Board voted unanimously. **See RIOC, page 2**

An extended interview with Leo Kayser and the RIOC Board's resolution appear on pages 5-8, with supplementary materials on Website NYC10044 www.nyc10044.com

Island's Catholic Parish Facing Serious Shortfall of Collections

by Anusha Shrivastava

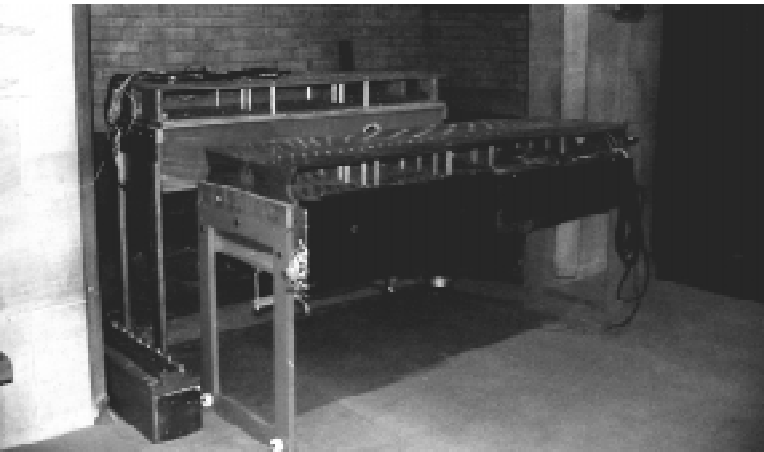
In the past 18 months, Father Luke McCann has made three requests to his parishioners to contribute more towards the running of the Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini Parish or else see closure. "This is America and when you don't pay your bills, you have to leave," said Father McCann. Not wanting to close the doors of the Church, the priest is trying to make alternative arrangements but is not sure of the outcome. "I have applied for inter-parish financing, hoping that the more affluent parishes can pay our bills, but there is no guarantee of that. The archbishop knows our problems. He knows that we have a dependent population here who cannot always go across the river to attend Mass. It is up to him now. After all, somebody is going to have to pay the rent. "Our overheads are beyond control," Father McCann said. "Over twenty years, our rent has gone up from \$300 to \$1200. We have six paid positions, we pay for the elevator, for the cleaning and maintenance of the water tower and other supplies. Liability insurance costs us \$3249 per year. Heating in the large Chapel costs us \$2050 per season. Security costs us over

\$400 and air-conditioning costs us nearly \$1,000 per season. We are not in commerce and I wonder where all this escalation in operating costs is going to lead us. We provide a service to the Island. The Church represents stability and yet we are treated like a commercial entity." Father McCann estimates that the operating costs for the parish are \$2,300 per week. The weekly income is less than half at \$1000. Sister Regina Palamara explains that this shortfall can be made up

if more Catholics attend. "Right now, we have about 350 active members, who cannot possibly come up with the operating cost. There are nearly 1,000 Catholics on the Island but they do not come to Church. They remain anonymous and are not registered. I call them whimsical and social Catholics. We are in a society of unconnected and disconnected people. Even so, we are here when they need us," pointed out Sister Regina. "Our collections will rise when **See Cabrini, page 8**

Good Shepherd Chapel Getting a Pipe Organ

A pipe organ is being installed in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. The organ is the gift of Mrs. Norman N. Higgins of Saddle Brook, New Jersey. She originally gave the organ to an Episcopal congregation in Rochelle Park, New Jersey, but that congregation disbanded recently, making the organ available. She chose Good Shepherd Church here on Roosevelt Island, which makes the instrument available to the Island's Catholic parish and other groups, as well. Residents are mounting a fund-raising effort to support the installation of the organ, with a first event scheduled tomorrow (Sunday, Dec. 3), 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. in the lower room at Good Shepherd. Carole Kennedy, former President of the Island Historical Society and an award-winning jewelry designer, is donating some of her own creations to be sold as part of the effort to raise cash. Gwendolyn Johnson Acsadi, who writes fiction as Gwynne Forster, is donating a carton of her recent novels, which she will autograph for buyers. Acsadi is a former United Nations senior officer who won awards for best public ethnic romance novel three years running, 1997-1999.



Organ installation is under way at the back of the Chapel in the space last occupied by the baptismal font.

Editorial view

Past Time

On November 7, residents of Roosevelt Island voted by an 80% margin to urge passage of legislation granting residents elective authority over their community. In that same election, advocates of a RIOC Board composed of residents elected by residents won the RIRA executive offices by a 9 to 5 margin.

Why? Because those who have considered the question believe that elected residents supervising professional management can do a better job of running Roosevelt Island than is being done now.

But less than two weeks later, the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation – including three resident members (Kevin Fullington was absent) – unanimously approved a resolution that takes the Island in a completely different direction: market-driven development and, eventually, a return of Roosevelt Island to the governmental jurisdiction of the City of New York.

Could the RIOC Board have provided any clearer signal that it is truly uninterested in residents' views? Did anybody on the RIOC Board consider, for a moment, how this plan might fit in with residents' call for local control?

We report extensively on this RIOC plan (report, page 1; interview, page 5) in this issue of *The WIRE*. The creation of Board member Leo Kayser III, it holds the potential for massive change in the way the Island is managed and developed, and it runs counter to sentiments expressed by residents in two elections. In 1998 it was a 92% majority. In 2000, it was 80% even with formal opposition from the RIRA incumbent President and First Vice President.

Change is good. Change is needed here. And it is inevitable.

But what is troubling about Leo Kayser's plan is that it was set in motion without consultation with residents, other than those who serve at the pleasure of Kayser's good friend, the Governor. And it contemplates extensive development (perhaps even of designated open spaces earmarked for parks) with developers gaining control of the properties *first*, *then* setting forth their plans.

That's backwards for a planned community with a General Development Plan.

Once developers control Island land, they have a heavy financial investment in doing what they want with the land. At that point in the process, residents who oppose a particular plan would have only one option – legal challenges much like the Southtown cases now on appeal. A series of costly legal battles to assert residents' will is simply out of the question. Residents would be fighting cash-rich developers, who would be defending construction plans on land for which they've already paid and are eager to jump-start a return cash flow. Any such developer plan would become a fait accompli.

You have to admire Leo Kayser's absolute faith in the marketplace. It's true that the marketplace inflicts severe punishment on investors who make mistakes with their capital. Unfortunately, mistakes expressed in bricks and mortar just don't get undone, and the community suffers, too.

Kayser is selling his idea with a long-term goal of returning the Island to the administrative precincts of the City of New York. But the closest residents would get to democratic election of the local decision-making authority might be a Business Improvement District (BID) or special status in Community Board 8. And we know nothing, at this point, about any concessions that might be granted to retain the special character of Roosevelt Island.

Furthermore, there's a cart-and-horse problem here, as RIRA President-elect Matthew Katz points out in his column on page 3. After every available parcel on the Island has been sublet to developers, there will be little reason for residents to elect those who call the shots. Anyway, developers and those who hold the land would probably be the controlling influence on the Board of any BID.

We marvel at the purity of Kayser's thought and his ability to express a political and economic philosophy in real movement toward real goals. Alas, those goals are not the community's goals, as demonstrated decisively at the polls last month.

One part of Kayser's plan is State forgiveness of any debt related to Roosevelt Island so that funds generated here can stay here and be used for improvements, maintenance, and other community needs. If that's possible, it should also be possible under a plan that makes elected residents a majority of the RIOC Board, overseeing professional management.

It's past time for Roosevelt Island residents to take charge of their Island's destiny – to judge, adopt, and improve on ideas of the kind Leo Kayser has brought forth. That's called democracy.

And it's past time.

DL

RIOC from page 1

mously to authorize RIOC President Rob Ryan to begin the search. He will obtain proposals and the Board will hire a marketing agent based on his recommendations.

The agent will identify properties that can be marketed, and the agent's job after that, according to the resolution, will be to negotiate "the highest and most value for its development subleases."

"What this would entail is a different way of the Corporation's doing business from the way things have been done in the past," Kayser told the Board. He told *The WIRE* last week that he expects to receive criticism of his plan, and welcomes scrutiny, and, indeed, some of the initial reaction has been skeptical.

Gifford Miller, who represents Roosevelt Island on the City Council, said he believed that the State, City, and residents first need to agree on "the appropriate level of development" and proceed from there. Letting developers decide what should be built here, he said, is "yet another example of RIOC's wrongheaded approach to the development of Roosevelt Island."

The Southtown project, which is already going forward, would not be part of the new marketing effort. But the Octagon Park site, Southpoint, the RIOC-owned power plant, and Sportspark are possibilities. "In other words, we have a number of places – anything that is not already encumbered, we have a right to sell," Kayser told *The WIRE*.

What about the Tramway? Kayser said it could be included in the inventory of properties, but as a practical matter it probably would not be, because it is not currently making a profit.

In essence, Kayser is suggesting a free-market solution to the problem of paying for Island repairs and improvements. "This would throw open the entire process to competitive bidding," he told the RIOC Board. Competition and private sector ownership, he argues, will bring more money to the Island, take the politics out of development, and improve the quality of life.

"I would make it all private within the next two or three years if I had my way, except for the city hospitals and so forth," Kayser said in the interview. Of course, he knows that the clock cannot be dialed back to 1827, when John Adams' son was president. But Kayser sees no need for the Island's residents to remain, in a political sense, wards of the State forever. "The overview is to bring the Island back into the City of New York, to [eliminate] this RIOC ultimately, at least as cutting people off from their normal rights as citizens of the city."

Kayser is not advertising his plan as the State's going-out-of-business sale. But if RIOC succeeds in raising capital for an Island "endowment," reduces its holdings, and reallocates debt, its role could be greatly diminished and the citizens here could forge stronger connections with the City, which – unlike the State – is in the business of providing municipal services. That's the concept.

The resolution itself caught most of the audience at the RIOC Board meeting by surprise, and only one other Board member, David Kraut, commented on it at the November 20 meeting. He questioned whether RIOC had to "work through the existing process" with SSJ Development, which has proposed a Marriott hotel on Southpoint, before pursuing a new initiative.

No one took up that question, although the resolution itself may

Juanita Fleming & Friends
Holiday Jam Tonight
(Saturday, December 2)



Roosevelt Island's own **Juanita Fleming** will present a River Music program of standards, light Duke Ellington jazz, Christmas music, and gospel classics tonight (Sat., Dec. 2) at 8:00 p.m., in a concert underwritten by *The Main Street WIRE*, in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

provide an answer by saying that RIOC is seeking appraisals "affecting the value of the waterfront properties on Roosevelt Island, including the value of the several responses received from interested parties."

A resident, Shirley Margolin, touched off the only interaction on the resolution when she read a statement, at the beginning of the meeting, opposing the hotel. A news item had appeared in *The New York Post* indicating that the project was moving forward. She said Southpoint was supposed to be a park.

Kayser responded in his formal presentation: "If Ms. Margolin has an objection with respect to the current project and she has some ideas as to some other use, she is free to go to the capital markets if your idea has merit, and put in your own bids.

"Test your idea against other ideas in the marketplace of ideas and the marketplace of projects," he said. "And you will be empowered."

Then it was up to Kraut to spell out one of the subtexts of the discussion: RIOC is basically broke and hasn't asked its controlling legal authority (Gov. George Pataki) for an allowance lately.

"We lost our State subsidies both in operating and capital areas," Kraut said in explaining his vote in favor of the resolution. "As a practical matter, therefore, I am in support of developing areas of this Island which can accrue a reasonable financial return to us so that we can continue in our main mandated mission."

But many questions remain. Tony Morenzi, the district office manager for the Island's Assembly-member, Pete Grannis, attended the RIOC meeting but didn't get a chance to study the resolution until several days later.

"Can they do this?" is a basic question, Morenzi said this week, noting that no RIOC legal opinion

was attached to the resolution. "Does the proposal itself fit in with the lease and the GDP? If different buyers take control of different properties, who is the overseer to enforce the terms of the earlier agreements? Would a buyer of the Sportspark, for example, have to continue to maintain it as a service to the community?"

Morenzi said there may even be some dispute over the resolution's terminology saying that the Island's plan of development may be amended by the mayor and the RIOC president.

He said the State budget line for RIOC is under the sole jurisdiction of the Governor, and the Governor has chosen to leave it blank. Grannis thus has had to obtain piecemeal funding for Island projects such as repairs to the Chapel, Morenzi said.

His message to Kayser: "You're going to have to sell it to us."

Miller, the City Council member, expressed a similar sentiment. Although the lack of development here during the recent real-estate boom is a testament to RIOC's failed leadership, Miller asserted, he described himself as "completely noncommittal" regarding the new approach. He said he was "not philosophically opposed to a change in status" for the Island, but asked whether it was proper, in effect, to reward the State by relieving it of its obligations simply to let the Governor "drop a political albatross."

Kayser told *The WIRE* that this is his plan, not the Governor's, but that, in any case, the Governor would listen to all sides, as would he. "This is a work in progress, and there will be all sorts of modifications coming about based on objections and criticisms," he said. "That's the democratic process."

For now, Kayser said, he is willing to be a catalyst for change. "You have to lay it out, let people see the vision, and then get into nuts and bolts."

About subscriptions: *The WIRE* does not solicit off-Island subscriptions, but as a courtesy, provides first-class mailing on day of publication. The cost is \$50/ year (for about 24 issues) to cover postage and materials. A check payable to *The WIRE* should be sent, with delivery address, to *The WIRE*, 531 Main Street #413, NYC10044.

Tribute to Eugenie

Friends and neighbors paid tribute to Eugenie Martin and her husband, Peter Reeve, at a party Sunday, marking the occasion of their departure for a winter home in Ocala, Florida (8595 SW 91 St. #C, Ocala FL 34481). A longtime Islander, Eugenie is known for her work with The Main Street Theatre and Dance Alliance, Toastmasters, as Roosevelt Island tour guide, as a tutor and cat-sitter, for irrepressible ubiquity and ever-active creativity. Years ago, she was the creator of the idea of using Southpoint to view the Macy's Fireworks, and she was involved in starting the Island's carnival.



COMING UP

Compiled by Alain Pinset – phone and fax 208-2907
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Sat., Dec. 2, 8:00 p.m., Juanita Fleming in Concert, Chapel of the Good Shepherd, underwritten by *The Main Street WIRE* and presented by River Music in cooperation with Cabrini Parish. Suggested contribution: \$5. Kids, seniors, disabled, \$2.

Sun., Dec. 3, 11:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Jewelry and Book Sale in support of installation of an organ in Chapel of the Good Shepherd, at the Chapel, lower level.

Wed., Dec. 6, 8:00 p.m., Residents Association Common Council Meeting, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Fri.-Mon., Dec. 8-11 and Dec. 15-18, times vary, **Main Street Theatre** benefit production of *A Christmas Carol* musical. Fridays and Saturdays at 8:00, Sundays at 2:00 and 7:30, Mondays at 7:30. \$15; seniors and disabled \$10 Monday, Dec. 11.

Tue., Dec. 12, 7:30 p.m., Eastwood Building Committee Meeting, Senior Center, on rent increase application and Public Safety.

Thur., Dec. 14, 7:30 p.m., RIOC Board of Directors meeting, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Sat., Dec. 16, holiday issue of *The Main Street WIRE*. **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., December 8; decision on stuffers for *The Bag*, Mon., December 11; bag materials due Thur., December 14. **Future issues:** January 13, 27, 2001; February 10, 24; March 10, 24; April 7, 21; May 5, 19; June 2, 30 (July 4 business cards issue); August 4, then every two weeks starting early in September. 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, **826-9055/755-2540**; urgent/breaking news, 917-353-1647; phone/fax for advertising inquiries, **751-8214/755-2540**; phone/fax to list your organization's Island events here (no charge), **208-2907**, or e-mail alpinset@cs.com.

There is no charge for listing Island events here. E-mail information to alpinset@cs.com or fax/call 208-2907.

Senior Center

Monday
10:00, **Internet Class**
10:30, **Blood Pressure Screening**
12:45, **Arts & Crafts** (RIDA)
Tuesday
10:00, **Jazzercise**
1:00, **Games** (RISA)
Wednesday
9:15, **Stay Well** (stretch)
10:00, **English as 2nd Language** (Beginners session at 10:00, Intermediate session at 11:00.)
7:00, **Glee Club** (except 12/6)
Thursday
10:00, **Tai Chi**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
7:00, **Dance Class**
Friday
9:00, **English as 2nd Language** (Beginners session at 9:00, Intermediate session at 10:00)
11:00, **Citizenship Class**
7:30, **Lotto** (RISA)
Saturday
7:30 p.m., **Bingo** (RISA)

Special Events

Sat.-Sun., Dec. 2-3, 10:00-5:00, Annual Flea Market
Sat., Dec. 9, Atlantic City (RISA)
Mon., Dec. 11, 11:00-12:00, Metrocard Bus
Thur., Dec. 14, 12:30, Visiting Nurse Service
Sat., Dec. 16, 7:00 p.m., Holiday/Birthday Party
Mon., Dec. 25, closed
Sun., Dec. 31, time to be announced, New Year's Eve Party

Home-delivered meals available
Call **744-5022**, ext. **1203**

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 phone number must be provided. All letters subject to acceptance, and may be edited for length and clarity. **Preferred methods of submission: PC-standard 3.5-inch floppy disk left at 531 Main St. for The WIRE, or by e-mail to nyc10044@rcn.com** (ASCII text preferred or use any word-processing software). Alternatives: Typed, double-spaced copy left at 531 Main St. or faxed to (212) **755-2540**. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered. We cannot take telephone dictation of letters.

Letters deadline for Dec. 16 issue: Dec. 10

Letters received after deadline will be considered on a space-available basis

The Common Council Class of 2000 has yet to be seated or convene, but your president-elect has been busy as hell. Many of our Island's political representatives have called or written to wish Byron Gaspard, 1st vice-president, and myself well. I've met with some and intend to meet with the others over the next week or so. Let me bring you up to date.

Rob Ryan, RIOC President, called to extend his congratulations and to invite me to meet with him. Over the course of a cordial hour's meeting many issues important to the Island came up. Rob reported that repair work on the ramp leading to the Roosevelt Island bridge was being conducted "even as we speak." We discussed the difficulties in getting ConEd to honor its obligations for maintaining street lights, and Vincent Kopicki, chief engineer, reported on his expectations of a resolution within the week. Keep your eyes on the street lights, neighbors, and let us know if the work is getting done. Finally, Vinnie informed us (and this has been corroborated by Assembly-member Pete Grannis) that the final draft of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers report on our seawall should be ready, and available to the community, by the first week in December. This is critical to an understanding of the cost of infrastructure work that has been neglected since we lost our capital budget subsidies from the State. Both Rob Ryan and Jim Fry, Chief of Public Safety, offered me an open door policy and a readiness to address the RIRA Common Council when necessary.

I met with Pete Grannis on Tuesday morning and he reiterated his long-standing support for the bill that bears his name. He has pledged to work toward a viable bill to give us an elected RIOC Board and professional Island management. His main caveat was the necessity of convincing the Governor to sign such a bill, which would deprive him of a source of appointments to use as favors for services rendered. The Common Council and the whole community will need to put pressure on the Governor to convince him of how correct and how timely passage of the Grannis bill would be.

Leo Kayser, RIOC Board member, was good enough to give the Maple Tree Group a second chance to meet with him on Monday evening. He is pushing a plan for the future of Roosevelt Island that is described elsewhere in *The Wire*. His plan would use the services of a sales agent to sell our open spaces to developers for the 68-year duration of the Master Lease between the City and the State. The fees would be paid up front rather than annually as ground rents. This would accrue a considerable amount of money that could be used to repair and maintain Island infrastructure and to create a trust fund for Island needs. At some point, the Island would revert to the City, with some entity, perhaps a sub-committee of Community Board 8, replacing the General Development Plan to represent the needs of the residents. Superficially, the plan is intriguing, but MTGers recognized the following flaws: 1) The sales agent would be constrained only by the GDP, any applicable environmental impact statements (EIS), and the marketplace. I haven't noticed the New York City marketplace building much affordable housing in recent years, have you? This plan eliminates any sense of aesthetics, of ethics, or any understanding of proportion or quality of life that currently drives, we hope, the current RIOC Board in their planning of Island development. And wasn't the purpose of creating this planned community to override the callousness of the marketplace? 2) The plan puts the cart before the horse. It sells off the Island and then enfranchises the residents. By the time we get any say about the Island's future, that future will have been frozen in concrete and steel. If this sales agent was offered a lucrative hog-rendering plant (to take an extreme example) for Southpoint that conformed with the GDP and an EIS, there would be no recourse to fight its construction. Mr. Kayser has said there is support for this plan, and in fact, the RIOC Board voted unanimously (as they usually do) to support it. However, I know that Council Member Gifford Miller and Assemblymember Pete Grannis are highly skeptical of this economically ultra-conservative approach to Island development and rule.

By the way, Vicki Feinmel and Margie Smith have been elected co-chairs of the Maple Tree Group, replacing yours truly. This should give me a bit more time to devote to RIRA, and give MTG a separate and distinct voice. I'll continue to participate in MTG (and you should too!) but I'm happy to turn over the leadership to such capable hands.

I've met with Councilmember Miller, and plan to meet with DHCR (Department of Housing and Community Renewal) Commissioner Joe Lynch, Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields, Rep. Carolyn Maloney, State Senator Olga Mendez and anyone else who will talk to me in the near future. I'll report on these meetings in subsequent columns.

One other hot flash to report on. Wednesday evening the new Common Council met in what I call a Freshman Orientation to familiarize new (and old) members with the procedures, rules and regs of the organization. The turnout was good and refreshments were served (I reminded the members not to expect such luxe treatment in the future). We examined Council agendas and minutes and every member got a copy of the Constitution to read, and read again. The agenda for the first meeting of the Class of 2000 was distributed and we should roar into our first session on December 6 up to speed and in overdrive.

Why don't you come on down to the Chapel of the Good Shepherd on Wednesday evening (at 8:00) and watch us do our stuff? More anon...



Matthew Katz
Residents Association President-Elect



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Become a Foster Parent



Sheltering Arms

Open Your Arms to Help A Child
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122 East 29th Street New York, N.Y. 10016
212.689.1702

Season's Greetings

from the Scouts of

**Boy Scout Troop 59
and Cub Scout Pack 59**

Help Roosevelt Island's Scouts by
buying your Christmas Tree from us.

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Leo Kayser Has a Plan for Roosevelt Island...

Leo Kayser became a member of the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation last Spring, and quickly asserted himself as a Board activist. His approach has already had an effect on staff work. At the November 20 RIOC Board meeting, Kayser proposed a resolution, adopted unanimously, which holds the potential for changing the way RIOC markets properties it holds under Lease from New York City, and might bring substantial changes to the Island. Kayser was interviewed by Robert Laux-Bachand and Dick Lutz of *The WIRE*.

Dick Lutz: Tell us about this motion and resolution.
Leo Kayser: I'd like to speak just as my own opinion, personal opinion, and the weight it should be given is based upon the merits and logic of whatever I have to say.

If I could just back up a bit before I answer... I came in and started making an analysis of the problems out at Roosevelt Island. One of the problems is that there's basically a disconnect or disenfranchisement of the population out there, the people who live on the Island, from the traditional mechanisms of government within the City of New York. That exists because of the current unique structure. Just for purposes of putting that in context, we have a Lease from the City of New York, which owns the Island, under a [99-year] Lease [with 68 years remaining] which, through a series of assignments, now exists in the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, which is RIOC.

There's been a waiver, under the legislation that set up RIOC, and under the terms of the Lease arrangement, with respect to zoning, a waiver with respect to Uniform Land Use Reviews prior to development. There is a tax-exempt status that exists with respect to the land out there. There are provisions for payments to the City in lieu of taxes under certain circumstances, theoretically, provided you're making certain levels of money. There is debt outstanding between RIOC and various entities of the State of New York. There have been renegotiations in the past with respect to that indebtedness, the latest one being under something called an Allocation Agreement, which I've not seen yet even though I've asked for it.

People have not paid much attention to that indebtedness because there has not been the ability or facility of the Island to pay it. But it's certainly out there, to the tune of several tens of millions of dollars.

There has been a deterioration in the capital structure of the Island. I don't know how many millions of dollars of work need to be done, but it's in the millions of dollars. And the people out there don't have a say with respect to how any of this stuff is treated except indirectly, through some residents who are appointed by the Governor to the [RIOC] Board, confirmed by the Senate, and that's basically it. People have a right to articulate their positions but,

The first step in Leo Kayser's plan to change the way Roosevelt Island is developed is embodied in this resolution, passed at the RIOC Board's November 20 meeting. It starts the process of hiring a real-estate professional to market the Island's remaining parcels of land for private development.

Authorization to Request Proposals for Real Estate Marketing Agents for the purpose of Subleasing Various Development Sites

Whereas, the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation ("RIOC") has issued its Request for Proposals for Waterfront Development (RFP97-11044) in April 1997 and the Commercial Space Application contained therein; and

Whereas, several responses have been received from interested parties; and

Whereas, RIOC seeks to obtain appraisals and other marketing information affecting the value of the waterfront properties on Roosevelt Island, including the value of the several responses received from interested parties; and

Whereas, RIOC seeks assistance from marketing agents and/or real estate professionals for the purpose of negotiating the highest and most value for its developmental subleases,

Now therefore, it is hereby resolved by the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation of the State of New York as follows:

Section 1. that the President/Chief Operating Officer is hereby authorized to issue a request for proposals for marketing agents and other real estate professionals for the purpose of identifying potential development sites on Roosevelt Island and interested parties capable of developing such sites at the highest and best price associated with capitalized long-term subleases subject to the Lease Agreement between the City of New York, as Landlord, and RIOC, as Tenant and successor in interest to the Urban Development Corporation, dated as of December 23, 1969, as amended, and that certain general development plan attached thereto as Schedule 2, as the same may be amended from time to time by the Mayor of the City of New York and the President of RIOC, and subject to any requirements imposed by the State Environmental Quality and Review Act;

Section 2. that upon completion of the request for proposals for such marketing agents and/or real estate professionals as described in Section 1 above, the President/Chief Operating Officer shall rate and rank the qualifications and proposals of such marketing agents and/or real estate professionals and make a selection recommendation to this Board for approval;

Section 3. that this resolution shall take effect immediately.

as you know, I've not been satisfied with the degree of give and take and responsiveness that exists there, but we are making some movement, I hope salutary in nature, to opening things up to more of a dialogue, restructuring those relationships.

So we are beginning to look at all the different problems. We're trying to address them. You can't do it all at once, you've got to look at each area sort of discretely.

Coming back now to this resolution, another one of the problems that I've looked at is the way in which the Island has been developed up to now. Some of these projects which are afoot have been very controversial, but it's too late for us to act on [them]. The way things have been done is that they've put out RFPs [Requests for Proposals] and negotiated with developers and selected the projects they thought fit best, for whatever reason, and negotiated lease payments over a long period of years.

At Board meetings I've raised some questions, at the last meeting or two when developers testified, as to where the risk really lies... I think there's much too much risk still retained by Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, and not enough risk being put upon the developers, giving them too much flexibility, too many options to opt out and not perform. And there's no assurance that the price we're getting is full market value for the properties when you negotiate the nature of the project and what the Lease payments are going to be. I'm critical of that. I know other people on the Island have been critical of whether we're getting full value.

So this resolution was to retain a marketing agent. We're going to do it in a competitive manner and in conformity with the law. We're doing it the same way that Battery Park City has done it, so that's the parallel that we're using in terms of retaining a marketing agent, basically to sell our 68-year sublease in discrete areas. In other words, anything that is not already encumbered, we have a right to sell, all subject to the General Development Plan (GDP). The Board still has to approve that. There'll be public hearings with respect to any project that ultimately comes out of this, these sales of sublease...

Let me say "sales sublease." It's a sublease we're letting out. When I say "a sale," the idea is to take a lump-sum payment up front. We're capitalizing it. It's still a sublease, and we have full authority to do that under our Lease with the City. But instead of taking payment over time, we're going to take the capitalized stream of income and take those payments up front. Now there's a great advantage to us, several advantages, to doing it. One, the risk shifts entirely to the developer. Two, the Board or administration is not making a subjective review of who is appropriate and not appropriate to be a developer, because you don't need to; it takes the politics out of who can come in to do it or not do it. You have an objective standard, which is cash. Three, the administration and the Board does not make a determination as to what is the best project or is not the best project, subjectively. Whoever's going to bid on the particular projects will have their conception of what they can do. They will do their calculations as to what net incomes will be, and returns on capital, and so forth. They will do it in terms of a neutral market-based approach. They [will] know it's going to have to be in conformity with the General Development Plan, and they [will] know that ultimately it's going to have to be approved, to meet Environmental Impact Review.

DL: Is it fair to conjecture that your economic and political philosophy on this is pretty parallel to Governor George Pataki's? You're seen, to some extent, as Governor Pataki's shock troops, sent in to straighten things out, and I'm just wondering to what extent you'll own up to that.

LK: Well, I think that the Governor is going to have the ability to review the realities as they occur. So he hasn't approved of anything that I'm doing, nor has he disapproved.

DL: But your guess is that he would approve...

LK: If we were successful in satisfying the interest of the people on Roosevelt Island, and the people on Roosevelt Island on balance are pleased with what happens, I don't know that the Governor would want to disappoint people out there, if they were pleased. If they were displeased with what's going on, you have a Governor who's very open-minded and will listen to all sides. I'm probably much more of a purist, in terms of theory, than the Governor is. I'm not an elected public official, and I'm not balancing all the interests of the State and I don't have the degree of complexity and concerns that the Governor has to have. I don't know where I fit in with respect to the Governor's overall balance-

ing of a very complex job.

Robert Laux-Bachand: You haven't really gone into the specifics of this proposal with the Governor?

LK: No, all the Governor knows is that the... I've had like two seconds of comments with him to let him know where we're headed.

RLB: But he does have an interest in general terms in what should happen on the Island. Have you talked, just in general in terms of what the future should be with Roosevelt Island?

LK: Well, in terms of what specific discussions I've had or haven't had with the Governor, I would think it would not be appropriate for me to discuss that here.

What we're doing on the Island is going to have to stand on its own merits, and the Governor is available always to review those merits as we go along, and if he thinks that it's



not meritorious in some way, I'm sure the Governor will let us know that, and if he thinks it is, we'll just keep proceeding.

Let me say that these things that we're doing here are not going to occur if there is any rationally-based objection that somebody can bring. Everything we're doing here is open, and if somebody has an objection to this, I would be the first to want to hear it.

We have two people on the Board who are head of State agencies. The Chairman of the Board of the State Department of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), and the State Budget Department. So you have two people on the Governor's Cabinet who are on the Board. In addition, I have made reports to appropriate people within the chain of command, as well as whatever I may have said directly. Nothing is being done without people being aware of it.

RLB: It seems like this is the first step in a process, and I was just wondering if you could lay out in succinct terms what you see as the steps of what this is supposed to lead to.

LK: The overview is to bring the Island back into the City of New York, to [eliminate] this RIOC ultimately, at least as cutting people off from their normal rights as citizens of the City and the protections they normally would have as citizens – so they're not disenfranchised any longer – they have the same enfranchisement as any other citizen of the City of New York.

The City has a reversionary interest at the end of the 68-year Lease. In other words, for 68 years the City of New York has been divested of ownership by way of a Lease, but at the end of that Lease, ownership reverts to the City of New York.

That reversionary interest has some value now. And if it were held in private hands, as opposed to government hands, it would broaden the tax base of the City and the City would get some tax revenue on that reversionary interest, whatever it is, 68 years out. It would be discounted to present value, which probably would be a fairly small value at this point, but nevertheless some value, and the highest value that reversionary interest would have would be in those people who have a 68-year leasehold interest in front of the reversionary interest, so that they have some degree of certitude as to who will have title of the underlying ground 68 years hence.

We have not done this yet, but I am going to propose at some point that we open up a negotiation with the City of New York so that they can sell off their reversionary interest and the City would receive some money out of that. It would enhance the value of those 68-year subleases to some extent, I should think. It would give us a cleaner transaction.

It's not an impediment if the City does not want to do that,

but there’s no reason I can think of why the City would not do that. There’s no great benefit to government having title as opposed to the title being in the private sector, because government then receives a tax on what’s owned in the private sector.

All you’re really doing is changing where management comes from and where decision-making is, and all of the decisions in the private sector are subject to laws which are passed in a democratic way. So people who have private ownership still are subject to public regulation and laws and they pay taxes.

The 68-year Lease right now is tax-exempt. So whoever bids on that 68-year sublease pay[s] no taxes for 68 years. Now they compute that into the value of what they’re getting, and that gets capitalized, and that benefit goes to RIOC, because RIOC owns that 68-year [primary] Lease.

I’m suggesting there’s no reason for the government to own any of it.

DL: So at the end of that 68 years it’s all private.

LK: I would make it all private within the next two or three years, if I had my way, except for the City hospitals and so forth...

DL: And the streets [and infrastructure].

LK: Yes, of course.



You’d make a deal with the City of New York to keep the streets [and infrastructure. And] for example, we have a budget right now on Public Safety: We’re paying over \$2 million a year in Public Safety. We have almost 40 people on payroll for a population of [about] 8,000. People [are] paying for that. Half of it comes out of their rents. If we could reduce that cost and still keep the quality up, we could get some rent reduction for the people on the Island. We also would increase our cash flow within the RIOC budget.

These are things that need to be looked at. I don’t know where you come out. But they certainly are worthy of scrutiny. But whether or not you need a separate Public Safety unit, or whether or not we could make a deal with the City, with that \$2 million, where part of it goes to the City to give us additional police protection, and we can beef that up, so that you get a better quality...

I don’t know how people perceive the current arrangements and so forth, but all of this needs to be looked at. And then maybe it’s all rejected, but not to look at it, and consider this stuff, when you see a \$2 million budget, with 40 people on the payroll, for 8,000 people. I mean, facially, it seems to me out of line. But I could be very wrong on this. But I’d like to hear about it.

Also, you have things falling between cracks, between jurisdiction of the City of New York Police Department and Public Safety, and sometimes things don’t get adequately administered to because one throws it off on the other, and therefore you don’t have an evenness of jurisdiction. So there’s a flaw in the structure out there, so that although you’re paying \$2 million a year, keeping your rents higher than they otherwise would be, and draining off other resources, you may not be getting as good Public Safety response as you would get if you had a unified jurisdictional system.

I’m not saying anything in absolutes here. I’m just saying it’s worth scrutiny.

DL: How would you do that scrutiny?

LK: With a subcommittee of the Board, probably composed of all three people who live out there, plus maybe one other Director who doesn’t, and let them work with the administration to let them devise the way they would look into it as a subcommittee.

You’d also negotiate with the City, see what your alternatives are... see how many additional police the City would assign if we were to pay them a million dollars a year, plus what they’re currently giving us, and we take a million dollars a year and pass half a million a year, if we could, along to rent reduction. Now, you’d need to negotiate with the housing corporations and make sure that it just doesn’t go into their pockets, so that you get a pass-through to the tenants, or make some deal with them where they save a little bit and the tenants save... But all those are subject to negotiations.

It’s a matter of bringing people together to reach agreement, where it’s win-win-win all the way around. If you can get efficiencies, it’s the same as expanding a larger pie. It makes agreements easier. If you have created efficiencies in the way things are done, there’s more that you can give to everybody, and parcel it out in some way. It’s a much better way of handling things.

RLB: Is there any comparable situation where you’ve taken a so-called utopian or planned community, and tried

to change things in this way? Or is this in a sense a unique situation and sort of a market experiment?

LK: Well, in the past the planned communities have been private, most of them in this country. If you go to other places like Reston, near Washington... Reston was done by Robert E. Simon. He did it entirely through private financing – no government, so you didn’t have the problem of government being in the picture to start with.

Most planned communities around this country have been private, so what’s unique here is that you had the government starting out to do it this way to begin with. And one wonders, really... You know, it was done because they tried to have a certain mix of income levels and things like that, and there were certain governmental objectives to do that, and I’m not going to comment as to the wisdom of that. That was a political decision, but when you get those political decisions then you end up with some fairly convoluted structures, and you live with them or don’t live with them, but you also begin to see the downside to the structures in terms of inefficiencies, people being disenfranchised, debt being accumulated in the public sector, as opposed to the private sector, risk being on the taxpayers.

These are things that aren’t debated so much in this part of the country. You notice we just had an election in this

country. And it has been evident, a difference in perspective in populations in certain parts of the country, which have shown up fairly dramatically in the way certain states went and other states went and where things were close. Things were not close where we are here, but if you were to take the popular vote, in the United States, and basically exclude New York City and its environs from it, you’d have an overwhelming popular vote for Bush. But only by putting in the population here do you get the large shift in popular vote. It’s because [here] there is not much discussion as to the accepted principles by which government occurs in this part of the country, as opposed to the rest of the country.

[DL: On the U.S. Constitution, it sounds to me like you are a strict constructionist.]

LK: Of course... You’ve got to construe the words to mean what they say and not judicially legislate, or it all becomes subjective [and] you don’t have any rights. It all becomes illusory. And then the courts have usurped the initial protections that you have.

DL: Economically, it seems to me that you’re square in the center binding of Adam Smith.

LK: Yes, I am.

DL: And that you believe very strongly that the power, the decision-making power, of the marketplace should be relied on as the primary decision-making – perhaps after the rule of law, perhaps after the rule of contracts – but in any case it should be the primary guide for the economic decisions that we make.

LK: It’s the natural-law principles. The law of supply and demand, things like that. Because I was an honors divisional major when I was at Yale in politics and economics, I’m somewhat schooled in this stuff...

To the extent that Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation had been sort of through a command influence, reviewing what they had considered with this little group of elite people, reviewing what they considered to be the best projects, and then approving the developers and then trying to sell it from a P.R. point of view to the population, but if the population doesn’t buy it, too bad for the population out there – that’s where you’re disenfranchised, that’s what’s been going on. That’s not market economics. That’s a political decision-making process which has obviously created a lot of consternation among a large group of people on Roosevelt Island. They’re not happy with it, but of course they don’t analyze why it is they’re not happy with it. What’s the origins for their not being happy with it?

DL: You say it’s because it’s not market economics.

LK: Yes. And I’m not a pure... We still have democracy [and] government regulation. We still have review processes with respect to environmental impact. [But] you [want] to start with a platform, a fundamental basis for market economics, which are your basic efficiencies, then you want to interfere as little as possible there, but nevertheless there is interference through certain review processes because you want to smooth off the harsher edges which may occur from pure, unbridled competition.

We’re talking about a framework of certain parameters that are enunciated in advance, subject to a General Development Plan [and] environmental impact review, [both of] which we have to work with.

The opportunity for people to come in on a non-discriminatory basis, subject to the parameters, [is] there.

DL: Are you a strict constructionist with regard to the General Development Plan?

LK: Yes. Now, I’ve read the GDP with some care. And the Lease, and I think you have to read everything strictly. But there is a lot of flexibility built into those documents with regard to the words themselves.

For example, there seems to be some misconception... There are provisions in the GDP for open space. That means those were open-space areas that were not specifically planned for. You have these open-space areas such as Southpoint, Octagon Park. Those open-space areas are not “parks.” That’s a different definition for “park.” There’s an express provision in the Lease for the Board to develop [the] open-space areas. When you read it you’ll see that there’s a mandate to develop open-space areas. Open-space areas are not parks.

But yes, very much I subscribe to reading the document for what it says, but not misconstruing it, either. It should be construed, and not distorted, and read accurately and fairly.

DL: You’re saying Southpoint, for example, the 10.3 acres, are open space, not strictly parkland.

LK: I’ve got to go back and look at the document, but I can tell you that the whole thing is not a park. Let me read

the language to you. On page 47 of the General Development Plan, Schedule 2. It reads as follows:

The open space areas will be developed to serve residents of the City as a whole, as well as residents of Roosevelt Island.

In other words, it will be developed. So there’s no provision for those... There’s no restriction as to how they’re to be developed except that they’re to be developed to serve residents of the City as a whole as well as the residents of Roosevelt Island.

DL: And you interpret that to mean it could be commercialized...

LK: Sure, it could be anything.

DL: ...and it would be serving the residents of the City if, for example, there were a hotel there available for people to visit.

LK: Sure. Also, I think you’re serving the City as a whole if it’s residential, too, because there’s a shortage of residences. The City, economically, needs more space. Anything which adds to the economic viability of the City as a whole would meet the open-space provision of the General Development Plan. Still, that does not suggest that you don’t make it subject to environmental-impact considerations and things like that.

DL: There are some people who would say that they interpret that language to mean parkland.

LK: But it doesn’t say parkland, so what they’re doing is they’re reading something that is not there. It’s just not there. And there are other express provisions for parkland. If you want your protection for parkland, don’t start merging parkland in with other things that can be developed, because then you lose your parkland. That’s the other side of not being a strict constructionist. You lose your rights if you want to try to expand, encroach, through a more nebulous construction. Parkland is parkland. You want to start saying it’s open space, then maybe it can be developed, too. I’m not saying that, of course.

DL: [What about] the GDP calling for a six-acre park between Northtown and Southtown?

LK: Yes, I’ve read the lower-court decision on that. The lower court basically uses an old legal doctrine which goes back to Louis Brandeis, which had to do with encroachments... The encroachment which occurred the court found was in the north side. The court was not going to use its injunctive power to cause those buildings to be torn down, which is what the Brandeis philosophy was: It’s too late, because when you look at the balance of the burden, balance the equities, and who’s going to be dislocated, you’re not going to cause those buildings to be torn down. What the lower court said was, it may be that you have some encroachment up there, and therefore you have reduced the size, but that has long gone and it went without criticism at the time, and that should not be used now as an argument to impede the Southtown plan which in and of itself does not encroach. It only encroaches by way of what’s happened in the past, on the north side. Well, anyway, that was a court making that determination. Fortunately, I wasn’t there as a Director at the time...

I didn’t approve the deal. I would have done it differently. I would have done it the way we’re trying to do these other sites, which is lump-sum payments up front, risk on the developer, let anybody come up with the plan after the

fact. Let them pay their money, buy the thing, buy the sub-lease, and factor in all the economics of it, and they know what the General Development Plan is, and they have to be in compliance. And we might give some guidance, but...

DL: Take the Southtown situation as a model. What are your criticisms of the way that deal was done?

LK: Well, I don't think I want to go beyond what I've said in the Board meetings, which is that I think there's too much risk that has been assumed by the Corporation; there is no certitude with respect to other phases of the development, the time frame is totally in the hands of the developer. I mean, the deal, in my opinion, wasn't... didn't protect the Corporation as much as it should have been protected. And what we're getting in terms of payment, under the ground lease... there was a negotiated deal instead of a bid situation. Therefore you don't know if you're getting your full value there that you would have gotten if you had bid it out. I would have bid it out. I would have done it differently. The way they did it was the way things had been done previously. There was a consistency with respect to the way that government agency had worked since its inception. And it's a mentality which is endemic through the governmental process, I might say... everywhere. It's one of the things that makes government suspect to me, because it makes it subject to political influence, and it's why people get all



upset about political contributions and influence within government...

DL: Let's say some group wanted all of Southpoint to be a park. How could they do it?

LK: They could bid for it. But from an economic point of view, I'd suspect if you could raise \$30 million, or \$25 million, or what we expect the thing might bring, cash up front, you buy it in, you make it a park.

DL: OK, then the question is, since that's economically very difficult to make feasible, do you see a proper role for government in setting aside land like that, or for RIOC, for that matter, in setting aside land to make it a park?

LK: That's a purely legitimate political decision that can be made, but those people making the decision in government have to look at it in terms of the overall financing requirements of the Island. And there's a trade-off there. Yes,

it could be set aside as park. You could be foregoing 20, 30, 40 million dollars [in up-front money]... (that's what I think it would bring). I mean, you're talking about this current [Marriott Hotel] plan here, these folks are talking about paying \$2 million a year over 38 years, or \$2.5 million, on that plan with the Convention Center and so forth. Well, that puts you immediately at a discounted present-value basis of about \$22 or \$25 million, somewhere in there. So we know already somewhat without bidding it out what a current proposal might bear if we change the structure of it. So people on the Island if they were to say, we have all these capital needs that need to be addressed on the Island, we can solve this, we have the facility of solving it simply by bidding out these subleases.

We're going to be able to raise, as I mentioned, tens of millions of dollars was what I said in the Board meeting the other day, if you noticed. And we would like the input of people on the Island as to how to allocate this money, this capital, and then the rest of it can be put in trust funds, to get an income stream out of it in the future, of what you don't spend immediately...

So you've got to look at what your trade-offs are. So people who want to set things aside and put it in a vacuum, without looking at the other side of the equation, it's like reading The New York Times – you only see one side.

DL: [So] if a group wanted that to become parkland, what do they do?

LK: Bid for it. The Board's made a determination to market the stuff. If somebody wants it to be parkland, go out and talk to a charitable foundation or somebody who would be prepared to... Get the grants to bid it in. Museums, by the way, when they want a piece of [art] work, bid for it, to put it in the museum. They put a painting in there. They go in the marketplace and they're bidding as private bidders, and they put the painting in the museum. People make contributions to museums so they can bid for the paintings. It's the same concept. I would be delighted to see it as a park if people could raise that money and people saw that was where it went, and we'd still have the capital for the other purposes on the Island, so people would not suffer on the other side of the equation. If you can raise that money

for a park, and that's what people want... I'm not against parkland.

The opportunity is there. And that's all we can offer, an opportunity... a fair, even opportunity, and we'll see what happens. The theory, for classical economics, is that you get much better results than you can even envision at the beginning, because you've opened it up – you have not put blinders on to start with, with respect to use and outcome and how different people balance utility.

It was important for me to enunciate that at the Board meeting, in public, because that gives a certain amount of notice to people, that they can begin the process now, if they choose to, to compete, and we're talking about several months before there would be an actual marketing or bidding process. So the gun's gone off, and people have notice. And I wish the best to everybody in this. And I think we're going to get an excellent result in terms of the other side of the equation, too, in terms of our finances, because we need the capital.

RLB: I guess it's not altogether clear yet to me, some components of this plan. Subject to all these hearings and bids and this sort of thing, these properties are marketed and sold. The money would go to RIOC.

LK: Yes.

RLB: OK, so RIOC is the repository of this capital that

can then be used for whatever the purposes of fixing things on the Island...

LK: Or setting up a fund...

RLB: ...setting up trust funds.

LK: It probably would be both, by the way.

RLB: Eventually, though, if the City... Eventually if this then leads to Roosevelt Island then becoming just an ordinary part of the City, and RIOC disappears or whatever, what happens to this capital?

LK: It all would have to be dedicated to Roosevelt Island, one way or another. The form of which that dedication takes place, whether RIOC as an entity remains in existence simply to hold the money as a stakeholder, those things are yet to be focused on. One of the better things to have to worry about is in what form and who should hold, for the benefit of Roosevelt Island, several tens of millions

A Litigator's Case for Privatization

by Robert Laux-Bachand

At first glance, Leo Kayser's proposals for Roosevelt Island appear to flow from a party-line analysis of private sector versus public sector economics. On one level he is simply following the approach of the Republican governor, George Pataki, who is praised on the RIOC Web site ("Better Than Ever") for having "shifted the focus of State government away from the failed policies of the 1980s and early 1990s and toward policies that promote freedom, encourage economic growth and prosperity and improve the quality of life for New Yorkers."

But Kayser brings more than a partisan zeal to these issues, and it is soon apparent, in conversation, that he prefers to build a case on many levels. As he proceeds, clause by clause, a practical matter only remotely related to Roosevelt Island seems to veer off into a complete digression, only to be pulled back into relevant focus and as part of a coherent, logical scheme. Perhaps most surprising is the consistent streak of populism that threads its way through Kayser's rather scholarly lectures.

The following exchange between *WIRE* editor Dick Lutz and Kayser is presented as a sample of a Leo Kayser "flight," if you will: an analysis that manages to connect the East Side condo market with the war in the Balkans, and the theory of tax regression, and wind up back right here on Roosevelt Island.

DL: You sit on a number of Boards.

Kayser: Well, I started out on the United Nations Development Corporation Board. About five years ago the Governor appointed me to that, and I have been involved in the privatization efforts there. The idea is that this is just a real-estate holding company.

There was no reason for any of that real estate to be held in a governmental entity. And we've sold off the United Nations Plaza Hotel – that was for \$102 million. We've sold off 633 Third Avenue... for 50-odd million dollars. We've sold off buildings on First Avenue, one of which was to Bhutan, which got some press because people got Bhutan confused with Burma. They were looking at human rights issues, but that [was] finally approved after about a two-year delay.

And we're in the process now of trying to sell off the balance of three buildings. And then we'll be out of the business of managing real estate over there. And what you do, by the way, when you sell these buildings off, is they go back on the tax rolls, you broaden the tax base, that property then becomes a part of your economy in the private sector.

When you have too much of your capital resources owned by the government, it really puts a dampening effect upon the vibrancy of your economy, and one of the reasons, in my opinion, why the economy in the Northeast, and particularly in the New York-New Jersey area, has not been as exuberant as in the South and other parts of the country is because so much of our capital structure is owned by government – just billions of dollars of capital structure owned by government – which could be privatized and used as collateral for other projects if it were in private hands, because government people are not that creative. They don't have the incentive. They want to see to it that things are run honestly and well and that they don't get criticized, but risk-taking and risk-reward evaluations and things like that – those equations just don't happen in a great natural fervor.

DL: So you're applying the same kind of philosophy as the UNDC work to RIOC to a certain extent.

LK: Well, I would not want to say it's the same. It's quite distinct and different. There are very different considerations. One, you don't have a constituency within the United Nations Development Corporation. This is pure bricks and mortar. There's not the issues of living conditions and quality of life and any of those things that you have [on Roosevelt Island], so that's very distinctive.

There are some general principles which I do bring to the analysis, which is that I suppose I still hold to Jeffersonian ideas that while you need government and government brings order to the relationship of people, that to the extent that government has a cost attached to it and you have to have taxes associated with it, and those taxes fall upon the economy as a whole, they generally filter down and hit lower-income people the hardest. Even though they may not be where the taxes fall, ultimately, the people who are hurt most by the cost of government are still your lower-income people, no matter how progressive theoretically your taxes are, it's still a tax on capital, a tax on labor, and it ultimately falls upon the poor people. You can try to redistribute it, which is the liberal-progressive philosophy, in order to keep it from hitting those lower-income people so badly, but the fact is that as you begin to recycle percentages of the economy through a governmental filter, with all sorts of social planning and the best of ideas and the best of objectives, there are inefficiencies which creep into that process: bureaucracy, all sorts of costs that get into the structure, and then a terrific amount of infighting and contro-

versy as to how you divide up that pie, which has been sort of scraped off the top – skimmed, that's the word I'm looking for – you're skimming a certain part of the economy into a governmental public sector. And then people fight over it, and those fights become very politicized and subjective, and that's what's led, in the socialist countries in Europe, where so large a percentage of the economy is in government, that's why you have these ethnic groups at each other's throat, and the political process becomes, really, taking bread out of somebody's mouth and putting it in somebody else's mouth. That's why you have so much of the ethnic conflict in places like Yugoslavia, which is a highly socialized part of the world.

This country has been able to avoid a lot of that by trying to keep the private sector as large as possible and keeping the public sector as small as possible, but in this part of the country, in New York, we have a large public sector, and it does get into the public structure of the system. I mean, you see it in the ethnic politics we have in New York... and you see it in Roosevelt Island in the issues that people raise out there.

So I think there are going to be all sorts of benefits that come from people knowing that there's going to be a private-sector solution that is nondiscriminatory, not arbitrary, and people who have the initiative – you don't have to have the capital yourself, if you have the ideas and the initiative and it makes economic sense, you can get the capital through putting your deals together, and people on Roosevelt Island will have that opportunity as will anybody else. I mean, it's open access to where capital comes from in these projects we're talking about.

of dollars. That would be a “terrible problem.” That’s something we certainly will address, and we’ll have their input on it, and I don’t know what the result would be.

Roosevelt Island will never be just an “ordinary part” of New York City. The political structure could be rationalized so that Roosevelt Island is integrated into New York, but I think it’s going to have a special status. I’ve already had discussions. I’ve had a number of meetings, which by the way, last time I met with the Maple Tree Group, it was before we’d had any discussions with people. We’ve now met with the staff [and] General Counsel of the Manhattan Borough President, who are, in principle, fully supportive of where we are headed here – integrating this Island back in[to the City of New York, administratively], and we have to do it in a way which will make the people on the Island feel good about it.

I’ve met with the City Councilman for the Island, Gifford Miller (and that was with Patrick Stewart), and Gifford was the only person who was relatively non-committal, and he basically wants to see how this goes with the people out there, and I think if the people are supportive of it, Gifford would be. I told Gifford that we’re going to need him. We need him as a political point man to get some of the benefits... in other words, we need some zoning variances and things like that, if we were to go back and integrate back into the City, we need Gifford to be our man to make sure that we can maintain some beneficial status as an Island out there with certain self-government aspects, which by the way the Borough President’s office is supportive of, which have to do with the Community Board, which is in Manhattan, which Roosevelt Island is part of, but they indicated support of having a special sort of home-rule status for Roosevelt Island within the Community Board.

And then there are other things that we’ve discussed which have to do with self-rule operations out on Roosevelt Island, which has to do with Business Improvement Districts [BID] and Residential Improvement Districts [RID] out there. And there’s been sympathetic approach to give Roosevelt Island its own BID or RID so there would be the ability to see to it that things are maintained at a certain level. I’m pleased to say that there’s been a sympathetic response by everyone that we’ve spoken to on this.

RLB: You’ve really been doing a lot of lobbying already.

LK: Well, I think you need to... I would not use the word lobbying. I think you need to inform people of what our thinking is, and what we think our needs are, in order to bring about this fairly rapid evolutionary change, to integrate the island back into the City and to provide the capital that we need to provide the energy to people, the protections that people have, and the protection for the unique features that exist out there, and to enhance the quality of life of everybody. I don’t see it suffering at all, eroding, on any of this. But that’s for people that live out there to determine. I don’t live out there. You do.

RLB: What sort of timetable do you think is likely in this process?

LK: Well, I’ve been asked that by various folks, and I’ve said three years. I picked a number out. I thought maybe we could do it in three years. But that’s utterly speculative. Also, when you deal with the government, everything takes longer...

RLB: So in theory it might be possible that there wouldn’t be any RIOC in three years.

Cabrini from page 1

people come back,” said Father McCann. “I have baptized the four hundred forty-first child on the Island. If we can get people to attend our religious and adult education programs, we could manage. If we made a great effort, we could get all the estranged people back. We hold three masses on weekends, three during the week and some during the holidays. If more people volunteer, we could keep the Chapel open for longer hours.”

“What we need to do is to offer bread for the soul,” said Sister Regina. “We need good liturgies, good services and something that will get people juiced up for the week. We want our parishioners to go out and evangelize. We want more parishioners to come for the Sacraments.”

Father Luke McCann points out that the problem stems from the fact that Southtown was not built according to the General Development Plan. “When the Island was projected as a parish in 1972, it was to have included both Northtown and Southtown, but since the latter has not been built, the numbers originally projected to maintain a viable parish never became a reality. We have been hobbled ever since.” In his letter to parishioners, Fr. McCann wrote that Southtown is projected to provide “studio occupancy housing,” and continues, “Studio apartments would not foster family residency. Thus prospects for FXC as a sizable, self-supporting family parish have diminished.”

The parish is unique in that it does not own any building, so the rent keeps going up every year. “We are never going to amortize anything. Our only revenue comes from our parishioners and we can only look to those who live on the Island. In other congregations, people drive to attend Church. Here, we only have the people who are residents and many are transients,” said Father McCann. “This is a desperate situation.”

In his parish letter, Father McCann wrote, “We are on the way to becoming a mission church [with] a priest of one of the mainland parishes traveling over for one mass on Sunday.”

LK: Well, it would take an Act of the Legislature to dissolve RIOC. There’s another aspect which I haven’t mentioned to you, which is an allocation agreement with respect to debt, where everybody’s left us alone up to now. If we had come up with a potful of money, which I anticipate we will have, I do not want the State to suddenly be coming down on RIOC and siphoning off our capital to pay off that debt. Right now the way things have been managed up to now there’s been no realistic expectation that there’s going to be any repayment of that debt. Now, we’ve come up with some mechanisms for raising substantial capital. Now, I want to renegotiate with the State with respect to the [Revenue] Allocation Agreement and with respect to that debt, so that we can get a significant forgiveness of debt. We might make some payment to the State in exchange for that significant forgiveness, but I want to get us out from under the debt.

In other words, I’d like to free up those people out on Roosevelt Island from tens of millions of dollars of debt as part of this, also. So if you want to talk about a total balance-sheet improvement of the finances out there... of course, I’d have to persuade the Governor to do that, and the people in [the State] Budget [Office]. But I’ve already been thinking about that negotiation and getting going on it. As I say, I’ve asked Barbara Espejo to give me the Allocation Agreement; she still hasn’t done it. I need that document before I can begin thinking about how we want to negotiate the debt forgiveness.

RLB: This is the money that was used to build Roosevelt Island and put all the facilities and things there?

LK: That’s correct.

RLB: Is that like a general obligation of the State or is it revenue bonds?

LK: These are revenue bonds, I think, through the Urban Development Corporation, initially. But I’d like to read the agreement before I... I have some impressions, [but] I like to read documents, and I’m at a disadvantage currently from being able to move on that front.

DL: [You mentioned the Maple Tree Group...] One of the things MTG has been trying to move toward is professional management of the Island, as opposed to political appointees. What’s your feeling about that, in general?

LK: I know that there was another vote just recently with respect to self-rule again, with the idea of electing the [RIOC] Board, and presumably if the Board was elected [professional management is] what they’re talking about.

We also met with Pete Grannis because he had sponsored some of the legislation relating to self-rule issues. [That’s] not viable, as I mentioned to the Maple Tree Group when I first met with them, as long as this debt is outstanding, that the Corporation owes to the State. The State cannot cede to the people out on Roosevelt Island the ability to elect Directors, as opposed to the Governor appointing them, because you have debt on the Island, and there’s a fiduciary obligation by the elected political leadership to protect those bondholders. It’s unrealistic to think that you can be a debtor and [unilaterally] change the rules in midstream with respect to protection of the creditors.

Now, that’s one of the reasons that I’d like to get a forgiveness of the debt as part of this entire process, get this Island out from under that debt, and have the Island have trust funds, and then integrate it back into the City, where you have full political rights and protections, which is a clean way of going, and you still have the uniqueness of the Island, its special status, its special situation with respect to community planning boards, protections, your own BID and/or RID, and all of these features that will permit that Island to become more vibrant. You’ll be economically sound. In fact, that Island will be the only significant community in the City with its own trust fund – endowment.

And there will be the ability, maybe, at that point, for people to elect their representatives as to how that endowment is to be used later. But you’ve got to get rid of the debt first, and set it up within some other structure. But my effort is to see to it that there is self-determination out there. And you don’t get it unless you are economically independent. You need the economic independence just to have your own group of people who are in control. If you’re subject to the debt and you had to recognize that debt, and didn’t have the other resources available to you, what good is your self-election anyway if you can’t do anything with it because you’re in an economic bind? It’s illusory. See, I’d like to deliver something that’s real to people out there.

DL: Just ratchet back, if you would, to this subject of professional management vs. politically-appointed...

LK: Oh, yes. Well, I think the BID, or RID, at that point,

will hire management. That’s what they do. You have professional management.

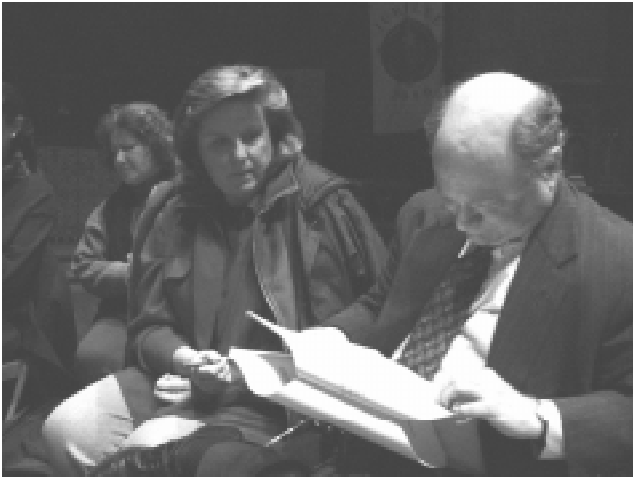
I want to get rid of the political. I would like to see all political appointments, to the extent there is any out there, non-paying... I don’t want to see the million or two million or whatever it is for political appointees go... That’s another skimming off of taxpayer money, or economic resources. I’d like to get rid of political patronage, altogether, that go with features of government. And I see it done within the structure of a BID or a RID. That’s where you get your management. What are you managing? You’re seeing that the streets are kept, that the potholes are filled, that everything gets a paint job, that...

RLB: Lights.

LK: Lights... But that’s what BIDs do. And RIDs, in other parts of the City. And of course you also, to the extent that we sell the reversionary interest and get a little tax revenue out of that, the City of New York takes over more of the upkeep, because everything’s back in the City again, and the City really pays for a lot of this stuff again, too. There are all sorts of benefits that are derived from more efficient use of your resources out there. Fair use.



Leo Kayser met Monday night with the Maple Tree Group to discuss his plan for Island development. Below, MTG’s new co-convenor (with Vickie Feinmel) Margie Smith pointed out language in the General Development Plan calling for the Island’s open spaces to be developed “as parks.”



DL: Do you see any downside at all in this plan?

LK: No.

DL: That’s a very direct answer.

LK: Let me say what the downside is. It’s not in the plan itself, but anyone proposing change is a target. You raise your profile. But somebody has to be a catalyst to enunciate these ideas. Somebody has to defend them from poeople who rightfully have the right to question. Everything should be questioned. In fact, I welcome the scrutiny that should be given to any proposal for change, and the ability to defend it. You have to lay it out, let people see the vision, and then get into nuts and bolts, and adjustments have to occur.

This is a work in progress, and there will be all sorts of modifications coming about based on objections and criticisms that people have that I anticipate. That’s the democratic process. So that one is flexible here, and you try to meet people’s legitimate, rational concerns, and the way you get those legitimate, rational concerns articulated is meeting with members of the press, laying out the ideas, disclosing them in the Board meetings that are open, having the more open forums that we’re planning to have, and being available to the Fourth Estate, which serves a vital function in anything of this nature.

RLB: I can’t speak for the people who have been on the Island for a while, but it sounds fairly radical compared to a lot of the things that, previously, over the last couple of years, have been going on.

LK: Well, keep in mind, when the United States was founded, with our Declaration of Independence and our Constitution, these were radical ideas at the time, and they still are. They’re the most radical ideas in the world. But [what] we’re talking about in terms of individual freedom and liberty and marketplace concepts, and democracy were totally radical 220 years ago. And for Europe, until just recently, it’s been radical for the last 200 years, all this stuff. This is radical, really.



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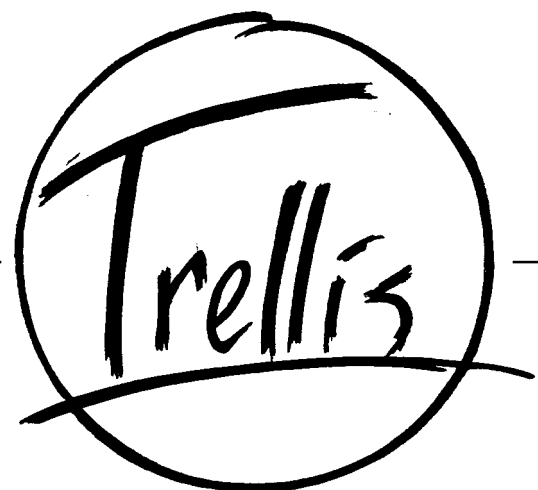
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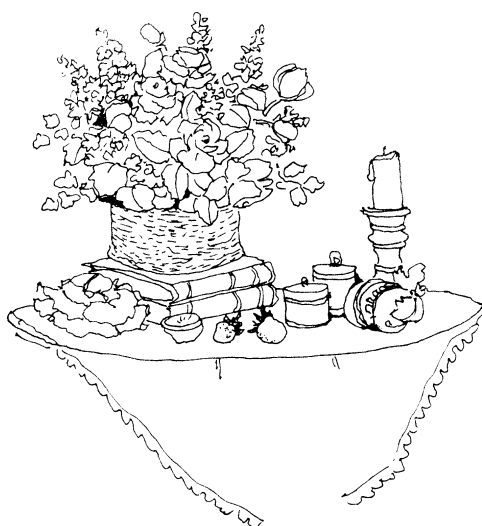
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Islander Editing Skating Club Newsletter

Frank Cherry, longtime Island resident and endurance sport enthusiast, has been named Editor of *Out of the Loop*, the monthly newsletter of The Empire Skate Club of New York, the largest inline skating club in the United States.

Empire Skate organizes over 200 skating events and activities throughout the year including technique workshops for all skaters and racers, group skates in and around the City, fund-raising events for charities, and social exercise occasions. Empire Speed, a division of the club, has over 100 members who race, including several elite racers with national reputations.



Frank Cherry

Most Empire Skate Club events are staged in Central Park – some six weekly events in the April to October period. Other events are scheduled for Prospect Park, a calmer environment.

Even in the winter the Empire skaters keep stroking and rolling: the Tuesday Night Skate, New York’s longest running group skate, heads out so long as the streets are dry; there are indoor sessions on a hard wood floor three times a week, and members join together for skate cruises to the Caribbean, for snow-skiing and skiing outings to Hunter Mountain, and for ice skating and skiing trips to Lake Placid, to name a few of the winter activities.

The club plans a mini-workshop on Roosevelt Island, given by one of our expert instructors, in conjunction with a day-skate roll across the Island into Queens.

The club operates a website, www.empireskate.org. Cherry can be contacted via email at fcherry@msn.com for additional information on the club and its activities.

Roosevelt Islanders for Responsible Southtown Development (RIRSD)

sincerely thanks all who contributed to our October 22 fundraiser. Your helping hands, contributions, and purchase of tickets helped make it a success and we are most grateful.

We are currently engaged in the appeals process and will file in the next few months.

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SPORTSWIRE

FLAG FOOTBALL The standings after 5 weeks of the regular season in the Youth Program’s Flag Football League are:

Junior Division (Ages 11-13)

Cowboys	3 - 2
Raiders	3 - 2
Titans	3 - 2
Rams	1 - 4

Senior Division (14-16)

Chiefs	3 - 2
Jets	3 - 2
Vikings	3 - 2
Titans	1 - 4

In Week 5 action in the **Junior Division**, the Raiders defeated the Cowboys 44-12, and the Titans defeated the Rams 26-6, forcing a three-way tie for first place. Eric Miranda led the Raiders to victory, throwing five TD passes, two each to Dax Armenakis and Tyrrell Ander-

son, and one to Remy Armenakis, while Maurel Clark ran for another score. In the Titan win over the Rams, Lamar Burrows had a monster game, intercepting three passes and throwing for three TDs, including two TD passes to Mohamed Camara.

In **Senior Division** action, the Vikings manhandled the Chiefs 51-12 and the Jets defeated the Titans 40-25, also creating a three-way tie for first place. In the Viking victory, Mark Comrie ran for three TDs, while Blas Loor scored two TDs and Terry Moses added another on a TD pass from quarterback John Mason. However, the key to the victory was a strong defensive effort that led to three interceptions, including a critical interception by Karam Hider in the first half when the game was still tied. For the Chiefs, Seth Kaufman and Rakeem Cummings caught TD passes. Quarterback Brian Morgan threw three TD passes to Brian Reyes and one to Eddie Cullen, as the Jets, trailing 19-12 at halftime, rallied in the second half for the win over the Titans.



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- Normal Q service runs between 57 St./6 Ave. and Stillwell Ave.
- After Dec. 8, shuttle trains will continue to run between 21 St./Queensbridge and 34th St./Broadway nights from 10PM to 5AM and weekends.
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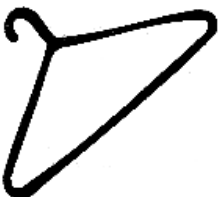
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