

Next issue:
Feb. 9-10

The Main Street WIRE

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

in association with Website NYC10044



Happy New Year Wearing traditional costumes, members of the Island's Korean community treated themselves and their neighbors to their national cuisine at a New Year's celebration on Tuesday at the Senior Center.

RIOC Schedules Half-Dozen Evening Meetings for 2001

The Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) will hold five evening meetings over the next nine months, beginning with a February 15 meeting at 6:00 p.m. The new schedule was agreed to unanimously Thursday morning at the Board's January session.

The Board scheduled evening meetings, all at 6:00 p.m., for February 15, April 12, June 14, September 13, and November 10. Morning meetings are set for the alternative months: March 8, May 10, July 12, and October 11. While the meetings are scheduled for 9:30 a.m., the Board's typical pattern is to meet briefly, then go into executive session, returning to a public session later. The public portion of this week's meeting started at 11:00 a.m., for example.

The Board discussed public interaction in the course of setting the schedule. Leo Kayser, who asked for the increased evening schedule, proposed to continue public sessions after a formal adjournment. "We could then adjourn Board meetings into town hall meetings

for the community," he said, to allow for "more frequent give and take between the Board and the community on specific issues." Referring to his desire to move toward a modified privatization of the Island and its possible return to the jurisdiction of the City, Kayser added, "I think we're going to have a lot more subject matter as we enter a more dynamic phase in

See **RIOC**, page 2

Subway Confusion, Criticism at MTA Hearing on Plan for Changes

by Francine Lange

Sounding at times like reciters of out-of-sequence alphabets, commenters at a Tuesday MTA public hearing on proposed subway service changes spoke out about the E, F, R, G, Q, and a new V train.

Roosevelt Island was represented by Judith Berdy of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA) Common Council, who pointed out the train crowding that will occur for residents boarding at

Island House, Westview, Eastwood Face, and Are Fighting, Rent Increases

by Robert Laux-Bachand

A wave of rent increases is making Roosevelt Island a more expensive place to live, and some residents fear that it may change the character of the community.

The first ripples were felt at Manhattan Park, in the private sector, where the managers in 2000 sought to keep pace with New York's overheated housing market.

Next up are Westview and Island House, which operate under the rules of New York State's middle-income housing program known as Mitchell-Lama. Whereas tenants at Manhattan Park were confronted in some cases with rent increase demands of 25 percent, the managers of Westview and Island House opened their bidding at an even more aggressive level.

Westview's rent, under the proposal submitted to the State last fall, would rise 31 percent, and Island House would go up more than 33 percent. The current per-room rates are \$300.55 at Westview, \$273.54 at Island House. Neither building receives any direct government subsidies. The proposed increases amounted to more than \$90 per month per room, a figure that Audrey Berman, who chairs the Island House Task Force, called

"ridiculous" – ten times more than what some tenants consider to be a reasonable request.

At Eastwood, where there are subsidies, the Roosevelt Island Housing Management Corporation has proposed increases ranging from \$77 for a studio apartment to \$193 for a four-bedroom over two years. Those increases are generally in a range of 12.5 percent to 15.5 percent over two years.

Some longtime residents describe the proposed increases, particularly those at Westview and Island House, as alarming – some-

thing that could force lower-income people to leave. One-bedroom apartments, for example, now priced from \$909 to \$1077 at Westview, would go up by as much as \$317 a month.

Opher Pail (pronounced pah-EEL), a ten-year resident who heads the Westview Task Force, said people in his building were angry, both at the size of the rent proposal and with what he described as conditions of disrepair. He became a Westview activist last year in an

See **Rent Hikes**, page 7

Rent Determination Hearings for Westview and Island House are scheduled February 8 at the DHCR offices, 25 Beaver Street, Manhattan. The Westview hearing is set for 10:00 a.m., Island House at 2:00 p.m.

In Eastwood, Making an Issue of Public Safety

by Robert Laux-Bachand

The Eastwood Building Committee has retained an attorney to bring its concerns about building security to the upcoming rent determination conference conducted by the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR).

The co-chairs of the committee, Fay and Ronald T. Vass and Harry C. De Vine, say that public safety is Topic No. 1 among residents at all of their meetings. Residents complain of intruders who destroy and deface property, urinate in elevators, mess up the stairwells, deal drugs and generally create an aura of menace in public areas of the Eastwood complex, a sprawling 1,003-unit apartment building whose nine main entry points are not monitored by concierges or other staff people in the manner of the other dwellings on Roosevelt Island.

The Vasses and De Vine say that Eastwood tenants are tired of the wide-open atmosphere. They contend that they're paying \$1,047 per day for the services of the Island's Public Safety Department, but are not



Leading Eastwood rent fight centered on Public Safety performance are Fay Vass, Harry De Vine, and Ron Vass of the Eastwood Building Committee

getting their money's worth. They want to move some Public Safety officers off the streets and into the building, where they could function as a sort of quality-of-life patrol to make Eastwood as humane and livable a place as the more upscale buildings. The streets, they say, should be the responsibility of the New York City Police Department.

To accomplish this goal, Eastwood has hired a Manhattan attorney, Jay Itkowitz, specifically to deal with the policing question at the rent conference, a meeting with the building's owners that is devoted primarily to determining the rent for the next two years. DHCR has not set a date. But the Eastwood representatives consider the rent determination

See **Eastwood**, page 2

RI Co-Generation Once Again a Hot Topic As Energy Costs Soar

Starting with letters to *The WIRE* from Island House resident Barbara Potts, and continuing Thursday with comments to the RIOCI Board of Directors by Rivercross resident Robert Liss, a consulting engineer, co-generation using the Island steam plant has become a hot old subject.

The matter was explored decades ago by Residents Association committees, on which Potts served, but languished until recently, when energy costs began to soar. Rivercross, for example, is experiencing a 25% increase in electricity charges, and imposing a five percent maintenance increase to cover the costs.

See **Co-Gen**, page 3

Briefly

A parking crackdown is in preparation at Public Safety, announced Director Jim Fry at Thursday's RIOCI Board meeting. It's subject to a delay while some vending machines that spit out those parking vouchers are repaired, Fry said, but it's coming soon.

Tour guides for visitors to Roosevelt Island will soon be trained by the Roosevelt Island Historical Society. Judith Berdy, the organization's president, says the organization is also seeking those who have command of a second language to accommodate foreign visitors. Berdy can be contacted at **688-4836**, by fax at 207-8845, or by e-mail at RooseveltIslandHistory@usa.com. Classes are being scheduled for March.

RIOC received compliments from residents on the quick clean-up of snow after the seasons's first storm a couple of weeks ago, said President Robert H. Ryan at Thursday's Board meeting. "They worked a lot of hours and did a really good job," Ryan said, obviously pleased at the compliments from people in the community.

the Island station because of the F train rerouting. On the other hand, an MTA official points out that F-train service will pass through the Roosevelt Island station every four minutes during peak hours, as opposed to Q service at seven- to eight-minute intervals now.

Berdy also spoke of ongoing confusion with service change signs. "Your signage is abominable," she said. "There must be a way to write comprehensible signs in English and in Spanish so that people know where they're going." To laughter from the audience, she added, "People come out of Roosevelt Island [station], they think they're on Roosevelt Avenue. Lexington Avenue, the orange station, is not Lexington Avenue on 53rd or 59th. There are people lost all over this line every single weekend now. And no one seems to care. There's not a staff member from MTA at any of these stations helping people."

Jeffrey Hochman, another RIRA Common Councilor, also pleaded for clear signs in stations. Explaining that he is the RIRA coordinator for transportation, he said, "I'm not doing a very good job. I'm supposed to tell the Island people what's going on on the subway."

Listening were E. Virgil Conway, MTA Chair; Douglas Sussman, Deputy Director, MTA Government and Community Relations; Lawrence Reuter, MTA President-NYCT; and three board members. The session is the only scheduled public meeting on the proposed changes to be made once the 63rd Street Tunnel Connector is completed in August. Other speakers – individuals, elected officials and

See **Subway**, page 6

Plan for Octagon Apartments Gets Resident Thumbs-Down

Residents speaking last week at a presentation on a plan for apartments at the Octagon presented a range of doubt about the idea, ranging from violation of the Island's General Development Plan (GDP) through concern that its mix of housing units wouldn't contribute to population stability here.

Margie Smith, current Co-Convenor of the Maple Tree Group (MTG) and a litigant in the case

against the current RIOCI-endorsed plan for Southtown, said of the Octagon, "We all want something there. We don't want to leave it in ruins. ... But it was never meant to be a residential site." While praising the developer, Becker and Becker, Smith told the Becker team, "The GDP says there's a basic program. There's going to be a new community. The new commu-

See **Octagon**, page 2

Editorial view

On Making a Liability Into an Opportunity

For Governor George Pataki, the present state of Roosevelt Island is a political and financial liability. The Island’s infrastructure is crumbling, and the race to find a way to fund its repair without a State budget line item is not likely to be won, no matter how hard it is run.

Meanwhile, the haphazard rush to develop virtually anything that can support a structure promises to destroy the planned nature of Roosevelt Island. If ever a piece of land needed careful planning to be viable, a long, narrow island like this one certainly qualifies.

Breaking away from the plan – the General Development Plan that’s part of the Lease between City and State – is dangerous, but the present RIOC administration, in what appears to be a desperate and frantic search for any possible source of income, is doing it by following through on development ideas brought forth under Jerome Blue who, after all, was simply doing his best to cope with a situation bound to become more desperate month by month.

Violating the comprehensive development plan for the Island, without a comprehensive replacement plan – doing it piecemeal – is a tragic and unnecessary mistake.

But there is a great opportunity here for a New York State Governor with vision.

This deteriorating model community could be made even better than ever imagined if George Pataki will adopt the idea of a United Nations National Park at Southpoint, take it to President George W. Bush and the Republican-dominated Congress, enlist the support of Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton and Charles Schumer, and Representative Carolyn Maloney, and move forward on making Southpoint a world-class attraction complete with ferry service from the vicinity of the United Nations and elsewhere in Manhattan.

With that idea in place, imagine the world-class community that would have to serve as host for such a park and, perhaps, the Museum of International Affairs which might accompany it. With such a vision in place, it’s only a small step to see that an investment in making Roosevelt Island shine in every way is a good investment for New York State, the City, and the nation.

The time and the conditions are right. The Governor has the opportunity to do this now, and to count it forever as perhaps his greatest achievement while in office.

DL

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www.nyc10044.com

now has *WIRE* archives from September 26, 1998 through the present. More back issues, features and photo-essays are being added every month.



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IGP Seeking Women Mentors

The Island Girls Project (IGP), expanding its mentoring program, is looking for women willing to share their time and experience with Island girls.

According to Maureen Santella, who administers IGP for the Roosevelt Island Youth Program, the group seeks college students, senior women, homemakers, and professional women who are willing to impart their knowledge and the benefit of their experience to young girls. “We believe there is an extraordinary wealth of knowledge and experience here on Roosevelt Island,” said Santella. “We hope these women recognize their gifts and would like to share them. The commitment is minimal and the reward is maximal.”

Maureen Santella, Annette Padilla, or Alicia Padilla can be contacted at **935-3645**.

Octagon from page 1

nity will be developed in two areas, Southtown and Northtown. We’ve got Northtown, we may or may not have Southtown, and [there is] open space to be developed as parks. That wasn’t the intent of the GDP, to put a residential building there.”

[A major part of the Q&A portion of the Octagon session is available on *Website NYC10044* www.nyc10044.com.]

A Residents Association Common Councilor, Jeff Hochman, emphasized Smith’s point about the GDP: “You must understand that Roosevelt Island is and has been and will remain a planned community. The current [RIOC] administration does not want to continue the planned community essence which is the basis of this Island. If you look at the history of planned communities around this country, once the buildings that were built did not continue in the planning area, these communities ended. They just became one part of a big maze of the city and their character had ended and eroded.”

Another MTG member and Southtown litigant, Linda Heimer, emphasized that the GDP “is our only zoning. We don’t have City zoning here, and if we allow the GDP to be violated, it can be violated with all other development.” Referring the Marriott Hotel plan for Southpoint, she added, “We don’t want this to be a commercial Island. It’s a planned community for families and residents.”

On the matter of the apartment mix, RIRA Common Councilor Judith Berdy told the Becker team,

“To put 350 units into this at eight stories is really cramming in a lot of units in a small space... You do not bring families to Roosevelt Island... 33% studios, 60% one-bedrooms, and about six percent two-bedrooms? That is bringing single people. That is not bringing families... That’s not bringing people that are interested in our community.”

Berdy and Hochman also expressed concern about the Octagon site being too far from the existing community to be integrated into its life.

In response to the concerns, Bruce Becker said his firm is willing to reconsider the apartment mix, and reconsider the focus on biomedical research personnel. Hochman had said, emphasizing a point made by Berdy, “If you continue with what they want to do in Southtown, our Island is going to be overwhelmed by hospital workers. I have no problem with hospital workers. But they are temporary people, even doctors and nurses who stay here for one or two years. We know this Island began as an Island of hospitals. We don’t want it to end the same way.”

The Becker team was conciliatory toward the residents and Becker emphasized he is sincere in wanting to accommodate community concerns. He said that any proposal must be economically viable, but said, “We’re very resourceful,” then adding, “I don’t believe that we would be designated [by RIOC as developer of the site] if we didn’t have some sort of economically-viable plan to start

Eastwood from page 1

meeting as a point of maximum leverage. Ultimately, they hope to redo the Public Safety contract between the housing company and the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC).

The Vasses (510 Main Street, #462) and De Vine (546, #742) are asking for \$10 donations from all Islanders to support their cause. They started last month with the idea of enlisting Rivercross, Island House and Westview – fellow Mitchell-Lama developments that help pay for Public Safety – in the effort. (An Eastwood flier said: “Maybe we can influence the future of who runs Roosevelt Island – in unity there is strength.”) They’ve since resolved to go it alone, if they have to. But they’re disappointed by the lack of cooperation thus far from Island House and Westview, which they say share some of the same security and “desecration” problems.

“The rent hearings would be and are the best platform for united effort by the three rental buildings,” Vass said. “There is not a better platform or audience for the three buildings, because you’ve got all the ears: the management, the State of New York, everybody who is philosophically and politically involved. Not to bring this up is political ignorance.

“We need more indoor protec-

tion and we want the police of the streets of New York on the streets of Roosevelt Island,” Vass added.

“The problems are not recognized, the problems are not responded to,” he said. “The statistics, which are given out by Public Safety, are what make us void of ample police protection, so in essence they don’t do the job, and they’re keeping the police who could do the job off the streets. We’re being punished two ways.” In other words, Vass contends, the City police force is not being given a true picture of what is happening on the Island.

Jim Fry, Director of Public Safety, disagreed with Vass’ assessment of the situation. He said his officers have patrolled Eastwood and other buildings, and have issued summonses for loitering and other offenses. As for changing the contract itself, he referred the question to RIOC President Robert H. Ryan, who had not responded to a phone message at press time.

Fay Vass said, “The majority of our tenants here, they will call Public Safety, and we have stressed this endlessly: ‘If you have a problem, call the 114th Precinct [instead].’ But they don’t.”

The Vasses have been at Eastwood since 1978, and De Vine is coming up on his 24th year. They have their ears to the ground but have not engaged in any systematic collection of crime data. They concede that much of their in-

RIOC from page 1

restructuring.” Kayser said that since the expanded public interaction would follow adjournment, Board members would be free to stay or go as their individual preferences or schedules might dictate.

Resident Board member David Kraut raised the question of whether post-meeting public sessions might afford residents a real opportunity to have impact on Board decisions. “I think what the public would like is that before we vote on an issue, the public would have an opportunity to discuss it... and then we would take our decision based on having heard from the public.”

In response, Patrick Stewart, another resident Board member, suggested a modification under which public comments would be taken at the beginning of the formal session, but only on scheduled agenda items. Kayser suggested that post-meeting discussions might then be considered in future Board actions.

The Board Chair, Mary Beth Labate of the State Department of Housing and Community Renewal, commented that the Board would be feeling its way on the handling of public comment in the evening meetings. While no formal decision was made on how to handle the public comment or Q&A portions of the meetings, it appeared the Board was favorably disposed toward the Stewart configuration in which comments on agenda matters would be heard near the beginning of Board meetings, with other matters left for an open-ended town-hall-style meeting after adjournment of the formal meeting.

with. But we’re more than willing to revise if we can find other sources of funding to be more oriented to public uses... My sense is, that would be challenging... I would certainly make the commitment to pursue it.”

Residents speaking at the meeting praised the Becker team for forthrightness and the quality of their plan, but lamented that RIOC has moved forward on development of a site not provided for as residential housing in the GDP.

formation is anecdotal – based on reports from fellow tenants, and from their own observations.

But that has not deterred them from pushing this campaign. “It’s not unheard of, and has taken place more so at Eastwood,” Vass said, “that when we get good and angry, and I’m not threatening it yet, there is something known as a rent strike, where we stop the flow of cash completely, until we get them to their knees.” The Vasses said they have won four or five of these tussles already, and can count on a core of at least 150 Eastwood apartments to back them up. How many people on Roosevelt Island know how to run an official rent strike? The Vasses and De Vine repeated that they were not making threats, but do want the “powers that be” to consider their request.

The Eastwood representatives praised the Roosevelt Island Management Corporation. They said that the porters who go to work in the morning are doing a good job of cleaning the building’s public spaces. Indeed, anyone who walks the halls of Eastwood during the day will be impressed by its cleanliness and by the building’s architecture, which makes it a spacious, airy, well-lit place.

No, the Vasses’ complaint is not with Eastwood’s staff and crew. All they want is to upset the Island’s applecart and change the way it is policed.

Kaffee-Klatch Series – Informal, Informative Weekly Get-Togethers

by Francine Lange

When Jim Tendean-Luce and his family moved to the Island in March 1998, his work hours didn’t allow for much community involvement. But a job change freed up some time and he began checking into the Island’s offerings. He then joined the Parent Teacher’s Association, as a grant writer; Public School 217, as an executive leadership committee member; the Cub Scouts, as a scout parent; the Toastmasters public speaking club, as Secretary; the Historical Society, as a member; and the Roosevelt Island Residents Association, as an alternate delegate to the Common Council. As he came into contact with each group, he searched for a place where he could meet other leaders on the Island, all at once. He was not successful, so he took action. “I decided to host one myself,” he says.

He planned a series of small, informal gatherings where organization leaders and residents could meet, share coffee and other refreshments as well as opportunities and ideas to improve the community. Called the Kaffee Klatch Series, the Saturday afternoon meetings, which are held in the Tendean-Luce living room, run from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Last Saturday’s meeting featured Erin Feely-Nahem, President of the PTA, and Luca Gatto, President of the Roosevelt Island Toastmasters Group. Sister Regina Palamera will speak today (Saturday, January 27). Tendean-Luce welcomes speaker suggestions for future programs in the series. Meetings are open to all interested individuals on the Island, but because of space limitations, he can host no more than 12 visitors per session.

Residents wishing to join in the sessions are asked to call Jim Tendean-Luce at (212) 755-7285 or contact him by e-mail at JimLuce24@aol.com. Future sessions include:

January 27, Sister Regina Palamera, St. Cabrini Roman Catholic Parish and Thrift Shop

February 3, Dick Lutz, Managing Editor, *The Main Street WIRE*

February 10, Judith Berdy, President, Roosevelt Island Historical Society

February 17, Matthew Katz, President, Roosevelt Island Residents’ Association (RIRA)

February 24, Dolores Green, President, Roosevelt Island Seniors Association

March 3, to be announced

March 10, Byron Gaspard, Vice President, RIRA

March 17, Fadhela Chentouf-Rijal and Arlene Stock, Vice Presidents, Roosevelt Island Toastmasters Club

March 24, Nneka Pope, Representative, Community Board 8

March 31, Nancy Howe and Worth Howe, Directors, Main Street Theatre/Dance Alliance

April 7, Charles DeFino, Director, Roosevelt Island Youth Program

COMING UP

Compiled by Alain Pinset – phone and fax 208-2907
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Mon., Jan. 29, 7:45 p.m., **Maple Tree Group** meeting, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Planning for Island self-governance.

Wed., Jan. 31, 7:00 p.m., **Glee Club**, Senior Center. All singers welcome. (No sessions Feb. 7, 14; sessions resume Feb. 21.)

Wed., Feb. 7, 8:00 p.m., **RIRA Common Council meeting**, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Sat., Feb. 10, next issue of *The Main Street WIRE*. **Deadlines:**

Advertising in the paper, Fri., Feb. 2; decision on stuffers for *The Bag*, Mon., Feb. 5; materials due Thur., Feb. 8. **Future issues:** Feb. 24; Mar. 10, 24; Apr. 7, 21; May 5, 19; June 2, 30; Aug. 4, then every two weeks starting early in September. **Phone/fax** for news, **826-9055/755-2540**; 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.

Thur., Feb. 15, 6:00 p.m., **RIOC Board of Directors** meeting, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Mon., Feb. 26, 7:30 p.m., **Historical Society** meeting, *Memories of Blackwell House*, with **Geniza Madden**, resident of Blackwell House 1951-56.

Sat., Mar. 3, 8:00 p.m.-midnight, **RIRA’s Swingin’ Soiree Fun’Raiser**, Manhattan Park Theater Club. \$10 admission (seniors and disabled, \$8).

Senior Center

Monday
10:00, **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** Choral Group
(except Feb. 7, 14)

Thursday
10:00, **Tai Chi**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
6:30, **Dance Class**

Friday
9:00, **Citizenship**
10:00, **English as 2nd Language**
(Beginners session at 10:00, Intermediate session at 11:00)

7:30, **Lotto** (RISA)

Special Events
Tue., Jan. 30, 12:30, **Arthritis/**
Joint Pain Lecture (tentative)

Sun., Feb. 4, 2:00,
Champagne Brunch

Mon., Feb. 5, 11:00, **Food**
Shopping (RIDA & RISA)

Mon., Feb. 12, 11-1,
MetroCard Bus

Mon., Feb. 12, 11:30,
Sally Jesse Raphael Show

Wed., Feb. 14, 7:00,
Valentine’s Party

Sat., Feb. 17, all day,
Black History Celebration

Wed., Feb. 21,
Atlantic City (RISA)

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meals available
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Co-Gen

from page 1

At Thursday’s RIOC meeting, Liss asked for permission to examine and evaluate the Steam Plant, and he is to confer with RIOC President Robert H. Ryan about that. For his part, Ryan responded to Liss’s comments by saying that RIOC has approached a couple of firms involved in the operation of co-gen plants. “We see a great benefit in using the plant more efficiently,” Ryan said.

Liss’s statement was contained in a December 29 letter to RIOC and the Residents Association:

“Can co-generation work on Roosevelt Island? Perhaps for the first time in Roosevelt Island history an opportunity exists whereby RIOC, RIRA and our neighboring hospitals could benefit by sharing an existing facility and satisfy their respective interests.

“A recent article in *The Main Street WIRE* revealed that RIOC was planning to divest itself of various properties in order to achieve further development. To my surprise I learned that one of the parcels that RIOC has in its possession is the steam-generating plant located directly beneath the 59th Street Bridge. This high-pressure steam-generating plant presently services both Goldwater and Coler Hospitals utilizing only a fraction of its total capacity. The engineering solution is simple. The political solution is far more complicated.

“Co-generation of steam and electric power is not a unique idea but what is unique is that the power companies today are prepared to buy back electric power from an outside co-generation plant. The requirement for Roosevelt Island would be a generator of 50 MW which will not only supply the electrical needs of Roosevelt Island, but will also provide a surplus of power for use by a power company.

“The purpose of this letter is not to make a sweeping or simplistic approach to the problem, but to present certain facts to the residents as well as RIOC. The facts are the following:

“1. Presently there exists a steam-generating plant servicing both hospitals on the Island.

“2. The new housing planned for Southtown could incorporate steam heat from the co-generation plant as opposed to spilling off excess steam power not being utilized presently by both hospitals.

“3. Southtown could become the eventual end user of electricity produced by the co-generation plant.

“4. Anticipated co-generation will have a benefit for every household by reducing their electrical cost by 30% per year.

“5. Present electrical costs for Eastwood, Island House, Westview and Rivercross approach \$5 million per year.

“6. Residents can also anticipate 20% increases within the next year based upon increased fuel costs. It should be noted that the average two-bedroom apartment on Roosevelt Island consumes between \$200 to \$250 per month in electricity, and the estimated savings for a two-bedroom apartment would approach \$100 per month.

“Residents of the Island realize we pay for our ‘free electricity’ by observing our annual increase in maintenance and rent. Perhaps the first requirement is for the residents to be fiscally responsible and have meters installed within our apartments; simultaneously the owners should

I’d like to talk about responsibility in today’s column. Specifically, I’d like to talk about the responsibility that your RIRA Council Members have assumed, and from where that authority is derived.

We, who ran for office in November, all signed a pledge stating that (1) we understood the responsibilities of the office, and (2) that we would serve out our full terms. The Common Council has done a good deal in the six weeks since it was seated, and I know the Members intend to accomplish a great deal more. I said many times during the campaign that my personal effectiveness would be in proportion to and dependent upon the sincerity of purpose of the Common Council.

What is equally true is that the effectiveness of the Common Council is in proportion to and dependent upon the participation of this community. I bring this up in light of the paltry turnout for the Town Meeting called by RIOC to hear what Becker & Becker Associates, the potential developers of the Octagon landmark, had to say. This is a project that could conceivably add over 360 units of fair-market housing plus a restored Octagon plus an ecological park to our residential mix. I thought it unfortunate that only two dozen residents thought this potential undertaking significant enough to attend the meeting.

Now it may be that RIOC simply didn’t publicize the meeting sufficiently. However, it was announced in the last *Main Street WIRE*. It may be, as someone said, that, after many presentations by many developers, this community no longer believes that our opinions are being solicited in good faith. Or, it may be that the community felt that it had learned what it needed to know from the reports in the *WIRE* of Becker & Becker’s presentation to the Common Council. I disagree. The only strength this community has is in unity. A strong turnout would have given credence and emphasis to the opinions presented at the Town Meeting that this remains a community of affordable housing and families, and that apartment prices and size must reflect that basic premise. Also, the General Development Plan (GDP) defines the 15 acres south of Coler Hospital as Octagon Park. Any construction on the property must comply with the GDP definition of Open Space, or must acquire the appropriate amendments to permit the construction of for-profit, fair-market residential housing.

I was impressed with Bruce Becker’s presentation, his portfolio of past work and his ability to listen to us and ask good questions. However, I’ve seen the pitfalls of a housing complex not responsive to the community as a whole in my own Manhattan Park. In the recent RIRA elections, only 265 votes were cast from the 1,000 apartment units here. Only four of the eight Council seats from Manhattan Park have been filled, and 4 River Road failed to present a single candidate for their seat.

My point is that everyone needs to take responsibility. The time to criticize the Island developers’ plans is now, not when their buildings blot out the sky. And to make these critical decisions, we must *all* make it our business to be aware and informed.

In the coming weeks you will be asked to support various RIRA activities and fundraisers. Vicki Feinmel and her committee are working as you read this, preparing a gala party on March 3 for the purpose of having some fun, lifting us out of the late-Winter doldrums and raising some money to give RIRA the clout to support new programs and ventures. Also, the RIRA Legal Committee has voted to appeal the denial of the RIRA intervention in the RIRSD suit requiring the Southtown developers to proceed responsibly. Our law firm has made it clear that they are proud to represent the Roosevelt Island Residents Association, and, by extension, you. They have given us rock-bottom rates for first-rate work, they must be paid, and this community must foot the bill.

You made it clear in November’s election that you support community control of development and elected control of Island management by sending to the Common Council many candidates, including myself, who espoused these issues. And now, you must put your money and time and intensity and support where your votes were. When RIRA asks for your bucks, be generous. Make yourself a knowledgeable citizen of Roosevelt Island by attending RIRA meetings and RIOC Board meetings and Town Meetings and by reading this newspaper. If Roosevelt Island is to remain a planned community, all of us will need to stand up and be counted. Thomas Jefferson was thinking of us when he said in 1807: “We are a people capable of self-government, and worthy of it.”

be required to reduce the maintenance [and rent] based on cost savings. The adversarial position between the residents and RIOC has always boiled down to dollars and cents, namely Public Purpose Funds versus those monies that are returned to Albany. Today we are presented with a clear opportunity for Roosevelt Island to benefit from an existing facility which already produces steam heat and has the ability to produce electricity with the addition of a steam generator at very low cost. The political solution is perhaps for both sides to share the initial cost and benefit from the surplus? This requires that RIOC, the

residents of Roosevelt Island, and both hospitals have an agreement that benefits all concerned. Finally, if any individual has a solution how this might be accomplished before we price ourselves out of ‘affordable housing on Roosevelt Island’ feel free to contact me. My e-mail address is RLiss@att.net.”

Public Safety Blotter
appears this week on

Website NYC10044
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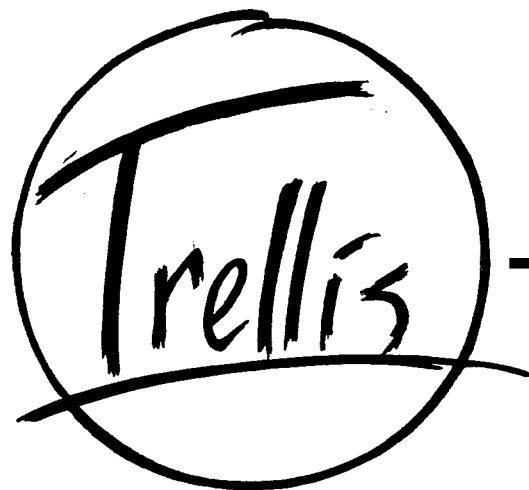
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Subway from page 1

representatives of advocacy groups – raised concerns about service frequency, crowding, weekend service for certain areas, and accessibility for people with disabilities.

There was even criticism over the location of the hearing, at Long Island City High School in Queens, which caused a hardship for some attendees, who complained that the school was not easy to find, or not easily accessible via public transportation. (Bus travelers from Roosevelt Island would have had to use two buses; subway riders would have had to transfer once or twice and then take a bus to get to the school.)

Public Advocate Mark Green said: “It’s curious that the MTA plans (for now) no other hearings about the extensive subway reroutings that will take place this year.” He and other speakers asked for more meetings to give Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Bronx residents the chance to suggest improvements to the proposed service to their areas. He added, “Elected officials and concerned citizens also share these concerns and so I’m distributing a letter to you from 59 elected City officials and groups including the Straphangers Campaign.” The latter is an advocacy group for subway riders, part of the New York Public Interest Research Group, or NYPIRG.

Speakers throughout the evening asked for changes including an E line extension to Forest Hills and free MetroCard transfers between the F and Lexington Avenue lines. Individuals also asked for weekend service for the new V train. (The current proposal provides for only weekday service in Queens and Manhattan.) Among them, Rochelle Slovin, Director of the Museum of the Moving Image, argued that the institution, which will be accessible by that line, serves tourists as well as city dwellers from other boroughs. “We’re studied and admired worldwide for our innovative exhibitions, adventurous film programs and pioneering work in digital media,” she said. She added that of their more than 70,000 visitors every year, 41 percent of them arrive by subway, and efficient service was needed.

Andrew Albert, representing the Straphangers Campaign, also asked for increased express service for the E and F trains, as well as an extension of the G train into Forest Hills. He demanded that MTA representatives meet with local officials representing riders.

Mr. Sussman said comments gathered at the hearing will be reviewed before a final recommendation is given to the MTA board for approval, sometime in March.

New York Road Runners Sponsoring New After-School Program for Middle-Schoolers

Starting the week of February 5, middle-school students at PS/IS 217 can join the Roosevelt Island “Running Partners Team,” a free after-school running program sponsored by the New York Road Runners Foundation.

Running Partners is an initiative of the New York Road Runners Club with leadership provided by Grete Waitz, Chair and nine-time winner of the New York Marathon, and Allan Steinfeld, President of the New York Road Runners Club and Race Director of the New York City Marathon. Programs similar to this one are in place in 12 city schools where there are few or no extracurricular sports programs. Running Partners expects to have 23 schools involved by the end of 2001.

Two trained coaches will be provided by Running Partners. Frank Cherry will volunteer as coach from Roosevelt Island, together with Ms. Kaye Kerr, the Middle School math teacher, who will coach and will be the point of contact within the school. Jennifer Stockbridge, Running Partners Program Director, will provide overall supervision, on and off site.

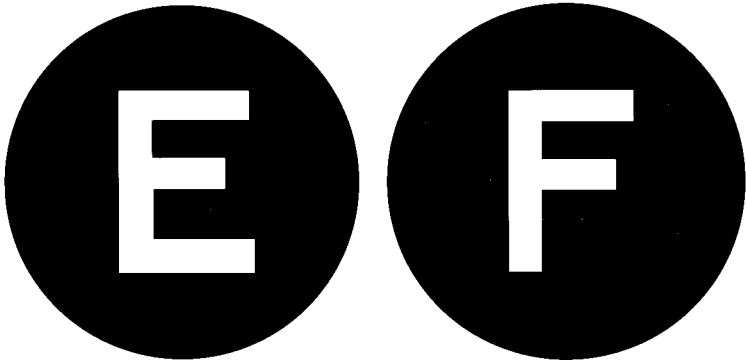
All middle-schoolers, no matter how fast, experienced, or fit, are eligible. The only requirements, according to Cherry, are the desire to run and the commitment to work hard and be a responsible team member. Practices will take place on Mondays and Wednesdays from 1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. starting on February 5, rain or shine. On-island contact can be made with Cherry at **486-2377** or with Ms. Kerr at the School, **980-0294**. There’s more information about the New York Road Runners Foundation and Running Partners on the program’s website, www.nyrrc.org/divisions/foundation.

In addition to weekly practices, participants will receive team uniforms, a monthly newsletter, distance patches, a regularly-updated website, the opportunity to meet and run with elite runners such as Grete Waitz, and optional participation in races sponsored by the New York Road Runners Club at no cost. The group also organizes road running events in Central Park, track events at several city locations, and cross country events in Van Cortlandt Park, so that participants are exposed to all three running sports.

The philosophy underpinning the Running Partners program is that participation and achievement in running can lead to superior academic performance and the building of character traits such as perseverance and self-esteem, and social skills such as teamwork, camaraderie, and lasting friendships.

Parents and teachers are urged to discuss with their children this great opportunity to be a member of a dynamic team, to get in shape, meet new friends, and set goals for achievement and success.

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- F trains will detour between Roosevelt Ave. and 47th-50th Sts. stopping at the 21st St.-Queensbridge, Roosevelt Island, Lexington Ave.-63rd St., and 57th St.-6th Ave. Q stations.
- The 23rd St.-Ely Ave., Lexington Ave.-53rd St., and Fifth Ave. stations will be closed.
- There will be no transfers between the 4, 6 and the E, F at Lexington Ave./51st St.
- There will be no transfers between the G and E, F at 23rd St.-Ely Ave./Court Sq.
- A shuttle bus will connect the Queens Plaza, 23rd St.-Ely Ave./Court Sq., and 21st St.-Queensbridge stations.
- For travel alternatives, pick up a take-one at your station or call (718) 330-1234.

This work is part of MTA New York City Transit’s ongoing effort to upgrade and maintain the subway system. We regret any inconvenience you may experience.



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SPORTSWIRE

BASKETBALL The standings in the Roosevelt Island Youth Program’s Winter Basketball League after two weeks are:

Junior Division (12-14)	Senior Division (15-17)
Terminators 2 - 0	Mavericks 2 - 0
NY Heat 2 - 0	Blazers 1 - 1
Giants 0 - 2	Holla 1 - 1
Knicks 0 - 2	Da Kingz 0 - 2

In the Junior Division, the Terminators and the NY Heat got off to fast starts, each winning their first two games. In week 1, the Terminators defeated the Giants 45-39 and the NY Heat defeated the Knicks 43-30. Deshawn Pearson and Lamar Burrows led the Terminators with 14 points each, while Pedro Valerio added 8 points. Tony Simmons was the high scorer for the Giants with 19 points, while Brandon Stueber and Jose Marte added 8 points each. For the NY Heat, Paul Brown led the scoring with 15 points and Fabian Williams added 11 points. For the Knicks, Byron Gaspard scored 10 points and Dan Moraru scored 9 points. In week 2, the NY Heat defeated the Giants 63-43 and the Terminators bested the Knicks 67-32. Sika Franco dominated the backboards and led all scorers with 22 points, while Fabian Williams added 15 points and Fode Bah 14 points for the NY Heat. For the Giants, Tony Simmons scored 19 points, Ahmadu Fall scored 7 points and Seif Dorani scored 6 points. For the Terminators, Keith Summers could not be stopped off the boards and was the leading scorer with 24 points, while Deshawn Pearson added 14 points and Lamar Burrows 13 points. Anthony Santiago led the Knicks with 19 points.

In the Senior Division, the Mavericks were the only undefeated team after two weeks of play. In week 1, the Mavericks defeated the Blazers 80-51 and the Holla defeated Da Kingz 63-53. Charles McCoy led all scorers with 31 points, while James Williams added 25 points and Kendrick Gibson 13 points for the Mavericks. For the Blazers, Jason Burnette scored 24 points and Steven Parades scored 11 points. Marcus Moore led the way for the Holla with 28 points, while Devin Epps added 16 points and John Matthews 8 points. For Da Kingz, Alex Sheppard scored 18 points, Mark Comrie 12 points and Bobby Blanco 10 points. In week 2, the Mavericks defeated Da Kingz 77-67 and the Blazers defeated the Holla by a 64-62 score. Charles McCoy again led all scorers with 31 points, while Marcus Harrison added 19 points for the Mavericks. Alex Sheppard led Da Kingz with 19 points, while Wayne Neal added 18 points and Herman Kouadio added 11 points. In the closest and most interesting game of the first two weeks, the Blazers led by 10 points early in the second half, only to fall behind by 7 points under an unrelenting full court press by the Holla, but then came from behind to tie the score on a free throw by Scott Davis and win the game when Jason Burnette put in a rebound of a missed shot with 9 seconds left in the game. Jason Burnette led the Blazers with 26 points, but received strong support from Vernon Jonas (17 points), Anthony Delgado (12 points) and Scott Davis (9 points). For the Holla, Marcus Moore had 28 points, Devin Epps had 18 points, and John Mason and Alhussein Camara had 5 points each.

The Senior Division games are played at PS/IS 217 on Friday evenings from 6:30 to 9:30 PM, and the Junior Division games are played at PS/IS 217 on Saturday afternoons from 1:15 to 4:00 PM.

Rent Hikes from page 1

effort to assure fairness in this round of negotiations. Two years ago, he said, Westview rents went up 10 percent, more than in Island House, because of a lack of preparedness. He doesn't want to make that mistake again, and some of his associates are even considering chartering a bus to take residents to the DHCR meeting on February 8.

Berman said, "To me, it was an outrage that they would even suggest \$90." In a flier seeking to mobilize resident opposition, Island House organizers said it was OK to tell the State that "such an increase would force me and my family out of our apartment." But Berman and other veterans of these negotiations have told the tenants not to be too shocked at what they described as the equivalent of a used-car sticker price, and she said there really isn't a feeling of fear or panic among the residents. Rents for Mitchell-Lama housing are set by the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), and the tenant groups have been working for several months to knock down the proposed increases.

The tenant groups at all three buildings are being assisted by Resnick and Co., an accounting firm in Valley Stream, N.Y. Jeffrey Resnick is analyzing the housing company and State figures in preparation for rent determination conferences to be held February 8 at the downtown DHCR office at 25 Beaver Street. The Westview meeting will be at 10 a.m., with Island House at 2 p.m. A conference date has yet to be scheduled for Eastwood.

DHCR has countered the housing company's initial proposal for Island House with a \$20.48 per room increase. Resnick's associate, Andrew R. Martin, noted that under the DHCR proposal, the increase, if done in equal steps, would be \$13.65 this April and \$13.65 the following year. Under the housing company's budget, the steps would be \$59.40 each year.

The comparable figures for Westview are \$13.80 per room per year under the State's budget calculations, and \$61.20 under the company's. The State's one-step basis there is \$20.70.

Resnick told about 40 Island House residents at a meeting last week that "the dance has already begun" between the company and the State, in terms of differing cost projections. He said that "these buildings are 'net zero' buildings," meaning that the properties are supposed to break even, not make a profit.

Doryne Isley, the general manager of Roosevelt Island Management Corp., said, "I think that most of the residents who have been involved in the process already understand that it is a process." Under the process, Jerome Belson & Associates, the management company for all three buildings, presents its two-year estimates of expenses, and the DHCR staff goes over the numbers in order to determine the income needed to pay the bills.

Arriving at the bottom line is fairly clear. In the case of Island House, the company projects expenses of \$7.8 million per year, producing a deficit of \$1.72 million. Divide the deficit by 12 and by the number of rooms in Island House (1,832), and one can see clearly enough where the increase is coming

from, subject to several State adjustment factors.

The State recomputed the same set of expenses and projected an Island House deficit of \$359,700 in the first year and \$434,000 in the second. The difference came, in part, from much lower DHCR cost estimates for gas, electricity, and debt service. Resnick indicated that the company has already taken the third step in this waltz by responding to the State's workup. Neither Belson nor the State would disclose the working numbers at this stage. The figures should come into clearer focus by the time of the rent conference.

Berman made it clear, however, that Island House would not be satisfied simply with the State's estimates. "We're a little more alarmed by this \$20 per room than the \$90, in a way, because that indicates what DHCR and the State's thinking is, and we are hoping that it could be \$9 or \$10," she said. And beyond the question of finances, the biennial meeting serves as a forum to present the tenants' concerns about a wider range of issues to a powerful audience that includes top management, State officials, and representatives of elected officials from the City Council, Borough President's Office, and Legislature.

Pail, too, sees this as an opportunity to press for changes. He led an expedition last fall through all 19 floors of Westview to document damage in its hallways and other public areas (43 defective doorknobs, 19 leaks, etc.), and has pushed Housing Management to make repairs. "It's gotten to the point that even management itself defines some areas of the building as war zones," he said. "It's your home, it's not just a dormitory." Pail argues that there is no incentive for the company to improve its efficiency under the present system, and criticizes what he sees as instances of waste, such as the use of antiquated lighting fixtures.

On a larger scale, Task Force members and other residents in both buildings agree that one of their biggest added expenses stems from the heating and air conditioning system, which is not individually metered to the apartments. A common complaint is that some tenants treat electricity as though it were free because it's included in the rent. But everybody in the building pays for lights and electric heaters that are left on continuously.

Berman said energy inefficiency extends to single-pane windows and poorly-insulated apartments. In certain sections of Island House, people complain of freezing, she said, and keep their ovens on for heat. Rooms on the south side of the building, on the other hand, can be solar-heated on some days.

Another issue that has come up for discussion is the company's plan to rehabilitate the Island House swimming pool, which

has been shut down for about 17 years. A \$300,000 budget item for repairs is included in the second-year budget, chargeable to a reserve fund. Another \$10,000 is budgeted for pool maintenance – an item accepted by the State. Isley said it was "a very lovely pool at one point," and that some residents were looking forward to the day they might get it back.

Berman said other residents would prefer that the money be spent on other improvements. She recounted a long battle to upgrade the laundry rooms, for example – work that Isley said is being completed.

It's a matter of priorities, Isley said, pointing out that roof, elevator and plumbing repairs have been done. Carpet replacement is

also in the budget, along with kitchen appliances and cabinets.

The budget, in a sense, is a snapshot of Roosevelt Island. Island House's vacancy rate is projected at 1.1 percent for the next two years. This is in line with Isley's observation that she has only one or two vacancies per month in Westview and Island House, buildings with a total of 761 apartments. She said the waiting list to get in is a minimum of two years. Many of those who move originally settled in Manhattan Park.

Isley was asked whether the Manhattan Park increases had created a sudden spike of new applications. She commented

that it was "not a sudden spike but a sudden desperation." But the migration of Manhattan Park tenants has been steady over the years.

That's because the Mitchell-Lama program still represents a bargain for many New York apartment-hunters. The median rents posted on the City's Rent Guidelines Board website for all "core Manhattan" apartments, market and rent-stabilized taken together, are \$1,653 for a one-bedroom, \$2,505 for a two-bedroom. Roosevelt Island, part of Manhattan, could be considered part of the core. The City's figures, although based on a survey that is surely out of date by now, nevertheless illustrate the fact that, even if Belson could impose its \$90-per-room increase at will, Island House residents who occupy two-bedroom units would still be getting one of their bedrooms "free," compared with the rent being paid by many people who live on the west side of the river.

Pail, Berman and the other Task Force members undoubtedly appreciate the savings. But they argue that there are two sides to the Mitchell-Lama bargain, and that it's more than a matter of personal advantage for a certain class of people. The State program

generated 269 projects and 105,000 apartments in its formative years. Berman said the provision of affordable housing for the middle class – people who work in government, in education, and in other middle-income occupations – has helped revitalize previously unattractive sections of the city. Mitchell-Lama brought community-builders to places like Tribeca and parts of the Upper West Side, she said, and to Roosevelt Island, helping to create new markets and opportunities for everyone.

Berman said the ideals of the Mitchell-Lama program are worth fighting for, and that's one of the reasons she's working to assure a strong presence at the Island House rent hearing.

Pail said that as the rent moves up, "We feel at the current point that Roosevelt Island is actually going to be composed of two kinds of people: Type A, the transients, doctors and students who are going to be here only one or two years, and those on subsidies, those on welfare. ... In the process, we are destroying the current island, and in fact a lot of people are moving out."

Thus far, the Island's standard-issue Mitchell-Lama rentals – Island House and Westview – appear to have retained their character as middle-income developments. But the middle class that Pail and Berman talk about may be a moving target.

Mitchell-Lama has an income cutoff for admission: seven times the annual rent for a family of three or fewer, eight times the rent for a family of four or more, according to the DHCR. Tenants are required to file income affidavits with the management company, which the state checks against their tax returns. Families whose income exceeds the multiples are supposed to be assessed surcharges of up to 50 percent of their rent.

The level of surcharges should be a rough measure of an apartment complex's conformity with the goals of Mitchell-Lama, and Island residents say that Isley is enforcing the rules. At Westview, it appears that a family of three in a two-bedroom apartment could have an adjusted income of nearly \$114,000 before having to think about surcharges. This is double the "HUD-Adjusted Median Family Income" of \$56,200 listed by the DHCR for the New York metropolitan area.

Island House residents paid \$93,714 in surcharges for 1999, a tiny fraction of the building's total rental income, which is estimated at \$6 million in the current budget. And a DHCR spokeswoman said this week that only 9 percent of Island House tenants, and 5 percent of Westview's, are paying surcharges.

The effect of rent increases on this aspect of the system is a matter of conjecture. But it would appear that raising the rent could open the buildings to higher-earning tenants and possibly mitigate some of the surcharges being paid by the 50 or so Island House and Westview tenants whose income has risen above the admission standard.



Website NYC10044
Accountant Jeff Resnick listened to a resident's question last week at a meeting of the Island House Task Force. Resnick will prepare the residents' cases for holding the line on rent increase in Island House, Westview, and Eastwood.

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and start learning how to manage their finances

FEATURES:

LOW \$25 Minimum Balance lets you start saving right away

NO Monthly Service Charges

NO Maintenance Fees

BENEFITS:

Dividends paid on balances of \$25 or more

Deposit funds in person, by mail, direct deposit or payroll deduction

Access funds by mail, telephone (MON-TALK), or in person

Convenient access to funds and account information 24 hours a day

We recommend that a parent or guardian become joint owners with children under 18.

Call today for more information.

Children opening an account will receive a free gift (while supplies last).

Montauk Credit Union

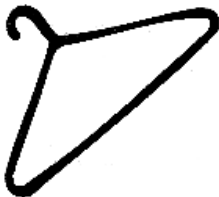
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Ellen Levy
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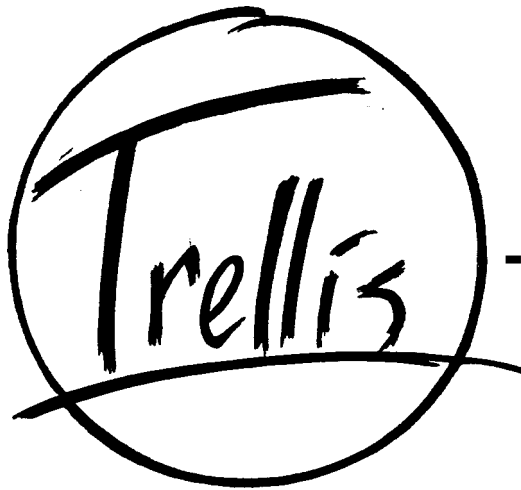
751-8214

The WIRE needs you...

Every two weeks, dozens of your fellow residents help deliver *The Main Street WIRE* to every residential door on the Island. They need help, and there's always room for another volunteer. Call 935-6043 or 935-7534 (leave a message) or e-mail mgrubin@erols.com



**WIRE
BUCK\$BACK**



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**Trellis: 6:00 a.m. to midnight,
7 days every week.**

See you at Trellis
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next to the historic Chapel of the Good Shepherd*

