

Next scheduled issue:  
Saturday, September 8

# The Main Street **WIRE**

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

in association with **Website NYC10044** [www.nyc10044.com](http://www.nyc10044.com)



Two dozen residents carried posters and watched on Friday, August 17, as... Photos: Margery Rubin

## RIOC Gets 3000 Answers (So Far) to Tram Cutback Question: “Hands Off”

Residents have presented RIOC’s Board of Directors with a firm answer to the notion of eliminating the 10:00 p.m. shift at the Tramway: No. The possibility was raised at the Board’s July meeting, and it asked for community input at that time.

The answer came in the form of nearly 3,000 signatures on petitions and letters, presented before RIOC’s deadline of August 18. Actually, the presentation took place Friday, August 17, outside RIOC offices, when Robert Antonek, Vice President of the public-benefit corporation that manages the Island, accepted the material from Residents Association President Matthew Katz.

Katz’s letter to RIOC appears on page 8, and it is a subject of his column in this issue (page 3).

Two dozen Islanders were

present for the presentation, most elderly or in wheelchairs. Motorized chairs used by many disabled residents can’t negotiate the transition from the subway platform to subway cars, thus making a 10:00 p.m. end of Tram service a virtual curfew for the disabled. Many older residents and women traveling alone avoid the subway in late hours because they consider the 63rd Street and Roosevelt Island stations unsafe at a 10-story depth where help is unavailable.

At the petition presentation, one resident carried a placard reading: “RIOC isn’t an icon of New York. The Tram is. Which one would you shut down?” Other posters suggested a similar depth of feeling in the community.

In addition to the petitions and letters, RIOC has received “a

See **Answers**, page 9

## Seawall Report, Finally Public, Shows No Imminent Danger

**by Robert Laux-Bachand**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has issued the final report on its Roosevelt Island Seawall Study, a report that should put to rest the often-repeated contention here that seawall repairs will cost \$6 million.

The report has a final figure but no bottom line. It’s a prescription for more studies by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) and by the people who run the Coler-Goldwater Memorial Hospital. It’s an open-ended work order for engineers and archaeologists, for RIOC’s maintenance

crew, and – judging from some of the Corps’ jurisdictional terminology – for the Island’s lawyers and politicians.

“It’s not like on September 15, we’re going to have a solution,” RIOC President Robert H. Ryan said in an interview this week. “This is going to be a whole process of negotiations, with Health and Hospitals, with the Army Corps, with the Federal government and the State.”

The final figure is, indeed, \$6,222,000, as suggested from draft reports circulated over the past several years. But that figure does not measure the true dimensions of the work, for two reasons.

First, it is not an estimate of seawall repairs. It includes the cost of building the cheapest type of shoreline stabilization system for Southpoint, which lacks a seawall and is undeveloped except for Metropolitan Transit Authority facilities and the ruins of historic buildings. The price for a so-called vinyl-sheet pile bulkhead at Southpoint is \$3,640,000.

Second, the report estimates the price of only one part of an elaborate program that the Corps’ New York District recommends that RIOC carry out to maintain the sea-

wall. That is the price, \$2,512,000, of replenishing riprap – rocks that protect the existing seawall – for portions of the seawall where the riprap is either depleted or missing. Another \$70,000 would be used for “cultural investigations” to determine whether some repairs should be carried out under historic preservation standards. Because Roosevelt Island was once the site of the City’s prison and insane asylum, parts of the seawall constructed from gneiss quarried by the inmates may qualify for the National Register of Historic Places, according to the Corps.

Critical and high priority areas of riprap replenishment will require 11,000 tons of rock at a cost of \$660,000, figured at 1999 prices, the Corps said. The rest of the riprap work could be done for \$1,624,000.

Complicating the picture, however, is that neither of these expenses – Southpoint construction and riprap – directly concerns the seawall itself, a system of rock and concrete walls that circles most of the Island, and includes a large steam tunnel built along the East shore in 1949. The 4,200-foot tunnel houses steam pipes that run

See **Seawall**, page 7



...Residents Association President Matthew Katz presented petitions and letters with nearly 3,000 signatures to RIOC Vice President Robert Antonek.

## Grannis Asks City Controller to Audit RIOC Lease Compliance

Pete Grannis is asking the City Comptroller to audit RIOC’s books.

Grannis, the Democrat who has long represented Roosevelt Island in the State Assembly, asked for the audit earlier this month in a letter to Comptroller Alan Hevesi. Hevesi, who is running for Mayor, is also a Democrat.

But the Grannis move complies with the requests of Island residents, who have repeatedly asked the City to take a more active role in overseeing the State’s execution of the terms of the Lease under which it is developing the Island, which is City property.

Simultaneously, Grannis has repeated a demand to Robert Ryan, President of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), for information on the Island’s capital needs. In a letter to Ryan following up on March and April letters, Grannis is threatening a public hearing on the Island “to gather information on the current state of the Island’s infrastructure and RIOC’s record to date and future plans for addressing the Island’s needs.”

Both Grannis letters appear on page 6 of this issue of *The WIRE*.

In the letter to Hevesi, Grannis points out that the Lease gives the City the right to audit State compliance with its terms. He writes, “This request stems from ongoing concerns that RIOC has failed to properly maintain the infrastructure of the Island as required by the Lease, including... the Island’s vital perimeter seawall, has virtually abandoned the Island’s several landmarked buildings, most notably the Chapel of the Good Shepherd and Blackwell House...”

Grannis also notes that RIOC has, “over the past several years, repeatedly sought to find ways to develop on the open spaces designated in the GDP (the General Development Plan, an attachment to the Lease) as parkland.”

The Grannis moves – both the audit request and the threat of a hearing – put pressure on Ryan and on the

administration of Governor George Pataki, who appointed both Ryan and most current members of the RIOC Board. The State has taken the position that Roosevelt Island is financially “self-sufficient,” and has provided no funds for Island capital or operating needs for about five years. (This year’s RIOC budget projects a tiny surplus.) Yet RIOC has sought to free up funds by considering elimination of Tramway service after 10:00 p.m., and has hired a real estate marketing consultant to generate further development activity.

Grannis and many Island residents, by contrast, have insisted that the State should honor the terms of the Lease and GDP. The Lease calls for State support, as necessary, until the GDP is fully executed and the Island’s population has reached 16,000 (reduced from an original target of 20,000).

Grannis describes RIOC’s approach to Island management as “penny-wise, pound-foolish” and “reminiscent of the actions that precipitated many of the problems the City faced resulting from its neglect of its infrastructure needs during the fiscal crisis of the 1970s.” Grannis continues by expressing the fear that RIOC’s approach “will end up costing this or some future administration dearly.”

Grannis has introduced legislation in the State Assembly that would provide for local election of the RIOC Board and give its resident members the right to hire professional management to run the Island. If passed into law, the legislation would eliminate the practice of political appointment of the RIOC administrator and the members of the RIOC Board of Directors. The bill didn’t receive serious consideration in the Legislature in the current session, which is ending in a squabble – even law suits – between the Governor, who is trying to hold the line on spending, and the Legislature, where the Democratic majority in the State Assembly seeks a more generous budget than the one proposed by Pataki.

## First Person Eleven Trapped an Hour In Subway Elevator Snafu

by Maurice Bleifeld

As my wife, Belle, and I were returning home by subway on Sunday, August 12, we took the elevator at the Roosevelt Island station, as we had done countless times before. But this time it was an unexpectedly different routine.

As we neared the end of our upward journey, there was a sudden loud crashing noise that shook us out of our thoughts. Then silence. The elevator stopped moving and we were suspended somewhere between the station below and the waiting room above.

After a moment we stirred uneasily. We looked around at other passengers. They seemed as bewildered as we were. Then a man who was standing at the door had the presence of mind to move to the buttons. Pressing one of them, he announced in an anxious voice, “Hello, hello... We’re stuck in the elevator. Can you call for help to get us out of here?” A voice, evidently the token clerk’s, replied, “OK, I’ll do that.” About a minute later he announced, “They’re coming. They’ll be here in about 15 minutes.”

I looked at my watch. It was 7:30 p.m. I counted my fellow passengers: Eleven. A woman wondered out loud, “How will they get us out of here?” A young man pointed to the ceiling of the car where there was an outline of a panel – apparently an escape hatch. Then the young man grinned and he said, “We ought to write this up for *The WIRE*.” I thought about his idea and decided it had merit – many of the readers use the subway elevators and would identify with our predicament. If I ever got out of here in one piece, maybe I would write the story.

See **Elevator**, page 11

## Tonight at 10:00 at the Pier: RIRA Dance Under the Stars

The Editorial Page

As earthlings ushered in the 21st Century some months ago, some Roosevelt Island residents reminisced about having lived for 25 years on this unique, idyllic Island. I happen to be one of them.

America celebrated its bicentennial year on July 4, 1976, and on that day I drove from Flushing to Roosevelt Island for a spectacular view of the vessels which formed an armada and traversed the East River. This was the last of my visits to the Island prior to moving here. Although all of the rental buildings were open for occupancy at that time, this was not true of Rivercross, the Island’s only “proposed cooperative” apartment building.

In August of that year, the Urban Development Corporation (precursor to Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation), decided that the thirteen families who were potential shareholders could move into the building even though the Certificate of Occupancy was pending. This meant that although there was electricity in the building, there was no gas and some construction was still being performed. Of course, no gas meant no cooking; and you might wonder how did we survive. My answer is, “With difficulty!” as is always the case with pioneers. Yes, all Island residents who arrived here in the mid-1970’s were called “pioneers.”

Then, this totally new community was a centerpiece for New York State and the City. Our government officials and managers were especially supportive. Urban planners from several states and foreign countries toured Main Street. Residents were extremely friendly and desirous of pulling together to form worthwhile organizations to benefit the community. Neighbors were conscientious about placing trash, chewing gum, etc., in the receptacles. Children followed the designated signs for playing their many ball games. Management made home visits to some rental applicants and prepared them to live harmoniously with their neighbors. The Island was crime free and our most serious problem was that of pigeon control.

Today, most Island pioneers will tell you that times are different – residents and management should be more focused on maintaining the higher quality of life that existed in the 1970’s. There is an element of truth to this. Yet, we know everything must change – very few things remain the same.

Of course, there are things I certainly did not want to remain the same. How many of you remember these 1976 happenings?

- Manufacturers Hanover Bank operating from a small trailer near Coler Hospital. (This was before it moved to Eastwood and then to Westview, becoming Chemical Bank and ultimately Chase.)
- The deli operating within the Eastwood courtyard.
- No supermarket! How delighted we were when Sloan’s finally arrived, even with its Manhattan prices. (No one complained then.)
- The electric minibus which, twice a week, took us to Broadway near C-Town in Queens to purchase food and other essentials.
- The New York Fire Department’s training site across from Motorgate before the first community garden was developed. (Manhattan Park is there now.)
- The baseball field under the Queensboro Bridge, which was never used because of falling debris from the bridge.
- No tennis courts!
- The hospital laundry across from the Tram, which constantly spewed out polluting detergents into the East River.

These are just a few cherished memories of a quarter-century on Roosevelt Island. Too often, New Yorkers whine and focus on the negatives. Hopefully, I have triggered fond memories of the way we were. More importantly, each of us can put Island politics aside and get involved to insure that for the next quarter-century this Island (including Southtown) will continue to be a delightful place to live with even more pleasant memories.

Essie D. Owens



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# Tram Letters

To the RIOC Board:

I am a potential future resident of the Cornell Medical housing that will be constructed on Roosevelt Island. If Tram hours were curtailed as proposed, I would not move to the Island. As a surgeon frequently required to work late and on-call for emergencies, the ability to get to the mainland easily and safely late at night is essential. I know this is true for a majority of my colleagues at the Medical Center.

Marc Goldstein, MD, FACS

Dear Mr. Ryan:

It is my understanding that the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation is proposing elimination of the third shift of the Roosevelt Island Tram, and has solicited community response to this proposed closure. I am writing to voice my opposition to this proposed closure, and to strongly urge RIOC to listen to the residents of the Island who have overwhelmingly voiced their disapproval of this change in Tram service.

The Tram is an integral part of Roosevelt Island and its identity. To eliminate the 10:00 p.m. to 3:30 a.m. shift of the Tram would deny those residents who must travel to and from the Island late at night what to them is the only safe and reliable method of transportation. With the addition of Southtown and the many Memorial Sloan-Kettering and New York Hospital employees who will be living on the Island, the Tram becomes an even more important link to the Island, particularly late at night. In addition, to the many seniors and disabled residents of the Island, this is the only mode of transportation they can use, as the elevator to the subway is frequently out of service.

I strongly urge you to listen to the voices of the residents, and ensure that this vital and all important Tram service is not eliminated.

C. Virginia Fields  
Manhattan Borough President

To RIOC:

One has to wonder, will the battle for a decent affordable quality of life here on Roosevelt Island ever end? As a longtime resident of 25 years (there are fewer and fewer of us) I find myself pretty much fed up and burned out. Enough already.

This letter addresses the proposed early closing of the Tram – our lifeline to Manhattan (conveniently submitted at the height of summer when many residents are out of town). Don’t tell me about the subway – ten stories down in the bowels of the earth. I’ve heard enough horror stories to know better than to take it after a certain hour. As an alternative (for those of us who have a choice not to ride at night), who can’t or don’t choose to spring for a cab, or who are physically disabled and can’t manage the subway – for all these, shall we just “roll up the streets” of Roosevelt Island after 10:00 p.m., as we enter a state of monkhood (“early to bed, early to rise,” etc.)?

In our own case, we are seriously considering moving to a place where we can have some peace of mind (one of the important reasons we originally chose to move here).

As for the future of this Island, until Roosevelt Island can actually become a democracy, we are forced to shout loud and clear – *Mr./Ms. “Power Broker,” give the residents a break!*

Deborah Beck

To RIOC:

Being financially oriented, I always like to start by understanding the numbers. In the case of Roosevelt Island this is always difficult, as RIOC has always guarded numbers and information with great jealousy. This is in stark contrast with the town of New Fairfield, Connecticut, where I once owned a house, and was very impressed in the first year to receive in the mail the town budget, provided in line-item detail, by department, several weeks in advance of the Town Meeting at which it was to be debated.

Numbers I have seen suggest that the operating costs of the Tram are in the order of \$2.1 million, the Tram revenues from fares are \$1 million and the annual excess of expenses over fare revenue amounts to \$635,000. The Public Notice that I received strongly implied, but did not directly state, that this deficit is the result of the third shift, and elimination of this shift would result in saving these costs. It also suggests that the cost per rider in the third shift is \$6.45, thus implying ridership of about 100,000 per annum after 10:00 p.m. The Tram presently operates for 143 hours per week, and 31 of these, or 21.7%, fall after 10:00 p.m., in the third shift.

From this limited information available to me I have prepared two alternative scenarios. The first is a “best case” (for cost reduction) and assumes that *all* Tram operating costs change in direct proportion to the hours the Tram is operated. This would result in the present \$2.1 million of operating costs being reduced by 21.7% as a result of eliminating the third shift, or a reduction of \$456,000. Off-

setting this would be the loss of fares from 100,000 riders who would have to find their way home by some other means, leaving a net deficit reduction of \$306,000. *This is the best case.*

For the second scenario I have made the more likely assumption that not all costs vary proportionately with the hours of operation, and I have somewhat arbitrarily assumed that 50% of the costs vary directly in relation to the hours of operation, these being costs such as operators’ pay and electricity (direct costs), 25% of the costs will not change at all, such as management oversight and regular maintenance (fixed costs), and the remaining 25% of costs will vary partially with changes in operating hours (semi-variable costs). In this case elimination of the third shift would yield a reduction in expenses of \$285,000 and, after the loss of income, the deficit would be reduced by \$135,000.

My guess would be that reality lies somewhere between these two scenarios but, whatever the financial benefit that could be obtained from discontinuing the third shift, it clearly would come nowhere near eliminating the deficit.

I suggest that you try thinking more positively about the Tram. I personally use the Tram regularly, it being more bicycle-friendly than the subway, but switch to the subway in order to avoid double fares when I plan to change transport during a trip. Implementing the MetroCard for the Tram would eliminate the second-fare penalty presently in effect, and would undoubtedly result in a significant increase in ridership. I would certainly use it more often.

Geoffrey Kerr

Letters deadline for Sept. 8 issue: Sept. 4

To the RIOC Board:

I am not going to try to address every issue relevant to the proposed Tram-service reduction (and by extension to the overall funding and management of Roosevelt Island) – others know those issues better than I do, and have spoken to them more eloquently and accurately than I can. I shall focus on the items that I can delineate most reliably:

For those of us who work in the vicinity of the Tram, having it close at 10:00 p.m. would be a great hardship. The 63rd/Lex station, deep underground and with few riders on the platform after 8:00 p.m., is far too dangerous an alternative (especially until 2004, while the through traffic to Queens is so reduced). The potential Southtown residents at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and New York Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center, near my 64th/York office, will feel at least as strongly about this, since many of them will work even later hours. And we cannot afford a routine nightly cab ride to Roosevelt Island.

A late-evening subway trip from Roosevelt Island to Manhattan is dangerous for the same reasons – deep underground and few waiting riders. Having this as the only option would be a serious shortcoming for potential new residents of *any* building on Roosevelt Island.

A 10:00 p.m. Tram shutdown would be, in essence, a curfew. It would drive away existing residents as well as potential new ones.

Paradoxically, RIOC clearly, like us, considers the Tram an essential service – it provides red bus service for the full normal schedule during planned shutdowns.

The Tram is a potent marketing tool not only as transportation, but also as a symbol – does RIOC really want to reduce the appeal of the Island in that way, particularly while trying to attract new residents and otherwise increase the revenue stream?

Besides these issues of quality of life and unintended pocketbook consequences, there is the simple logic that our public transportation should not have to be self-sufficient when no one else’s is.

If RIOC weren’t turning down and/or failing to pursue the funding possibilities that would not come at a high price to Roosevelt Island, perhaps *all* of our infrastructure could be out of jeopardy.

Ashton Barfield

# More Tram Letters

### To the Editor:

If the Tramway ceases running at 10:00 p.m., the quality of my life will be greatly reduced. I will not be able to have dinner guests, because I wouldn't dare ask guests (especially single women) to take the subway here or at 63rd Street late at night, nor would I consider doing it myself. Who would hear me if I screamed for help down there? At other subway stations, one is near the ticket taker's window, and help is readily available in case of an attack. Some of our neighbors have been victimized at the Lexington/63rd Street station. Further, isn't anyone at RIOC aware that the theater, opera and concerts are not over until around eleven, and that if one goes out to dinner, the likelihood of getting back to the tram by 9:45 is slim, even if one gobbles down the food in a hurry rather than dines at leisure? This Island promised an earthly Heaven when my family moved here in November 1976, but what has materialized over the years is far from it. If the Tram is shut down at 10:00 p.m., there will be no advantage to living on Roosevelt Island. On the contrary, we will be prisoners here.

Gwendolyn Johnson Acsadi

### To RIOC:

This is to respond to your request for comments regarding the proposed abbreviation of the hours of operation of the Roosevelt Island Tram.

On behalf of the Racquet Club, we would view any reduction of Tram service before midnight to be very detrimental to our business between 9:00 p.m. and midnight on the days where there would be no Tram service. Approximately 50% of our customers use the Tram in the evening hours, since the subway is not perceived to be safe at night.

Perception greatly impacts value. We believe that continuing the current level of service at least until midnight is very important not only to us but also to the perception that Roosevelt Island is an easy and safe place to visit.

We urge you not to reduce the hours of Tram service.

Lewis (Skip) Hartman  
RI Racquet Club

### To the RIOC Board:

I am opposed to the proposal set forth at the RIOC Board of Directors meeting that would discontinue the third shift of the Roosevelt Island Tram after 10:00 p.m. I am a frequent rider and would be very disappointed if the third shift were to be discontinued.

I understand that the proposal was set forth at the meeting as a result of the lack of ridership during the time period from 10:00 p.m. to 3:30 a.m., but the Board of Directors should take into consideration that I and many other residents and visitors to Roosevelt Island have come to rely on the Tram as their primary mode of transportation to and from the Island. I am an evening student and arrive home late every night during the week and, as a result of the unreliable and infrequent train arrivals, I have come to rely on the Tram as my mode of transportation in the evenings. As a suggestion for the next RIOC Board of Directors meeting, maybe the tram could be discontinued at 12:00 midnight or 1:00 a.m.

Please find a way to keep the Tram in operation seven days a week, running at least until midnight or 1:00 a.m.

Jill-Elana B. Browne

Clip&Carry

## The Subway

Additional Clip&Carry copy on page 10

|                                                                       |                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Mon-Fri day & eve<br>5am-10pm<br>(exc Labor Day 9/3)                  | S<br>6Av to/from<br>Bwy/Laf |
| Nights<br>10pm - 5am<br>to 9/4                                        | F<br>via 6Av                |
| Weekends<br>10pm Fri - 5am Mon<br>(+ Labor Day 9/3<br>to Tue 9/4 5am) | F<br>via 6Av                |
| Nights<br>Tue-Fri 9/4-9/7<br>11:30pm-5am                              | S<br>to/from<br>57th & 7Av  |

More information on the MTA's website at  
<http://www.mta.nyc.ny.us/nycct/service/subsrvnf.htm>

## COMING UP

Compiled by WIRE staff – Fax information to 755-2540  
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**Today (Aug. 25) through Wed., Aug. 29, Tramway Shutdown;** service scheduled to resume Thursday, Aug. 30, at 6:00 a.m. Red bus service to Manhattan on the hour from Public Safety Office, 6:00 a.m.-2:00 a.m. (Saturday to 3:00 a.m.); from Manhattan on the half-hour 6:30 a.m.-2:30 a.m. (Saturday to 3:30 a.m.) from Favia restaurant at northeast corner of 2nd Avenue and 60th Street. **See subway schedule, this page.**

**Tonight (Aug. 25), 10:00-midnight, RIRA Dance on the Pier;** free (contributions welcomed). Soft drinks and snacks will be available.

There is no charge to list Island events here. E-mail information to [MainStreetWire@rcn.com](mailto:MainStreetWire@rcn.com), fax to 755-2540, or leave copy at desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*.

**Wed., Sept. 5, 7-9 p.m., Auditions for Main Street Theatre Musical Revue** benefit. Information: 371-4449. (Also Sat., Sept. 8, 11 a.m.-1:00 p.m.)

**Sat., Sept. 8, next issue of The Main Street WIRE. Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., Aug. 31; decision on

stuffers for *The Bag*, Tue., Sept. 4, with materials due Thur., Sept. 6. **Future issues:** Sept. 22, Oct 6, Oct. 20, Nov. 3, Nov. 17, Dec. 1, Dec. 15, then every two weeks starting early in January, 2002. **Phone/fax** for news, 826-9055/755-2540; phone/fax for advertising inquiries, 751-8214/755-2540; to list your organization's Island events here (no charge), fax information to 755-2540, or e-mail [MainStreetWIRE@rcn.com](mailto:MainStreetWIRE@rcn.com).

**Tue., Sept. 11, 6:30 p.m., Discussion and Book Signing, Another Time, Another Place,** with authors Gerald Chatanow and Bernard Schwartz, Library. (Book available at the stationery store.)

**Wed., Sept. 12, 8:00 p.m., Meeting of the Common Council** of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA), Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

**Thur., Sept. 13, 6:00 p.m., RIOC Board of Directors meeting,** Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

**Tue., Sept. 25, 6:30 p.m., Book Discussion, The Fisher King** by Paule Marshall, Library. Advance registration required.

**Wed., Oct. 3, 8:00 p.m., Meeting of the Common Council** of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA), Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

**Oct. 8-14, week-long celebration of New York History Festival and Roosevelt Island Historical Association's 25th Anniversary.** Events to be announced.

## Senior Center

**Monday**  
9:00, **Citizenship**  
10:00, **English as 2nd Language** (beginner)  
11:00, **English as 2nd Language** (intermediate)  
**Tuesday**  
1:30, **Games** (RISA)  
**Wednesday**  
9:15, **Stay Well Exercise**  
10:00, **English as 2nd Language** (beginner)  
11:00, **English as 2nd Language** (intermediate)  
**Thursday**  
10:00 (starting 9/20), **Tai Chi Class**  
10:30, **Creative Arts**  
12:30, **Movie**  
7:00, **Dance Class**  
**Friday**  
10:00, **Yoga Stretch**  
7:30, **Lotto**  
**Saturday**  
7:30, **Bingo** (RISA)

### Special Events

**Mon., Aug. 27, 10:00, Reducing and Preventing Backaches** and Blood Pressure Screening  
**Wed., Aug. 29, 11:00, Movie Trip** to Lincoln Center, *Innocence*  
**Sun., Sept. 2, 2:00, Labor Day Party**  
**Wed., Sept. 5, 11:00, Shopping** Bus to Queens  
**Wed., Sept. 5, 12:30, Group discussion, Special Love Relationships**  
**Mon., Sept. 10, 11:00 a.m., MetroCard Bus**  
**Wed., Sept. 12, Atlantic City trip** (RISA)  
**Sun., Sept. 16, 2:00 p.m., Italian Festival**  
**Wed., Sept. 19, Health Awareness Lecture** (additional sessions Sept. 26, Oct. 3, Oct. 10)  
**Wed., Oct. 24, 9:30-11:30 a.m., Free Flu Shots**

Home-delivered meals available: 744-5022, ext. 1203

The dog days of August have overwhelmed us with days of oppressive heat and then set us free. I wish to report on what I did on my summer vacation for show and tell. My intention was to sit by the pool sipping cool drinks and attending Mostly Mozart every night. The threat to our Tram put the kibosh on those plans.

The August 1 Town Meeting set a challenge for this community: to convince the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) Board of Directors that we are united in our opposition to any curtailing of Tram hours. The response from tenants, merchants, hospital workers and residents, elected representatives, and Tram riders has been inexorable and overwhelming. Last Friday morning, before an audience of two dozen seniors and residents in wheelchairs, I presented RIOC Vice President Robert Antonek 2,973 signatures, letters, notes, and comments from every facet of Roosevelt Island society and Tram ridership. This outpouring of ire represents one out of every three Islanders – men, women and children. And the signatures keep pouring in.

I'm tempted to say "thank you" to everyone who participated in this labor-intensive effort, but you didn't do it for me. You did it for yourselves and for your neighbors and for the community. This started as a Residents Association project but quickly became everyone's project, as I had hoped it would. Special attention must be paid, however, to Dolores Green, who started the petitions rolling even before the Town Meeting, and to Rhoda Jacklin, who organized the Westview-lobby petition drive. Also, hats off to Scoutmaster Geoffrey Kerr, who collected signatures at Saturday Greenmarkets, and to my own Sherie Helstien, who was responsible for hundreds of signatures at the Tram, on the subway platform, on the streets, everywhere.

One caveat, however: This began with a Town Meeting under RIRA auspices and presided over by RIRA leadership. If you didn't see your RIRA building reps out collecting signatures, ask them where they were. You elected us to act on your behalf in crises like this one and, if your expectations have not been met, you deserve to know why. And if the explanation doesn't satisfy you, remember your building leadership at the polls next year.

The press and media coverage of the Tram debate has been mixed, at best. The broadcast presentations offered a more balanced presentation of the issues, to my mind, with the *New York Daily News* and the Sunday *Times* offering less comprehensive summaries. In both print stories, RIOC president Robert Ryan was quoted saying, "I don't know of any other community in New York City that has as many transportation alternatives as Roosevelt Island. One can take the buses [buses? There's the Q102 and what?], subway, car, cab and Tram." This is a neat piece of misdirection, it seems to me, given that the debate is about *public* transportation, to and from *Manhattan*, after 10:00 p.m. The bus goes to Queens (apparently, no one at RIOC read of Jo-Ann Spector's anguish in Queens Plaza which was recorded as part of the Town Meeting transcript in last month's *WIRE*), cars and cabs are private and not the issue, and the subway is inaccessible or fearsome to many of our neighbors. This quote makes us look spoiled and petulant, and we are neither. How many times and to how many RIOC Boards must we make the same old case and keep reinventing the wheel?

The issue of Tram hours will culminate at the RIOC Board meeting on Thursday, September 13. The Board Chair, Commissioner Mary Beth Labate, has assured me that this meeting will take place in the evening, at 6:00 p.m., allowing many working residents to attend. The community will not be allowed to speak until after the vote on Tram hours has been taken and the formal meeting adjourns, but we all must make every effort to fill every seat at the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Bring signs and let them be mute testimony to the depth of our concern. Our input to RIOC must not end with our petition signatures.

Fall is right around the corner, more's the pity, and the Common Council will hit the boards running. The autumn meetings have been reserved in the Chapel for the first Wednesdays of the month (except September, when the meeting will be September 12) and, as always, the public is invited. In between mourning the inevitable loss of my great tan, I've scheduled a get-together of RIRA Vice Presidents and Committee Chairs prior to the start of Council meetings. We intend to examine what we've attempted so far, how successfully we've accomplished those objectives, and to set near-term and future goals for ourselves. This is an opportunity to allow us to find worthy projects for the Common Council to address and to accomplish this in a smaller and quieter setting. I anticipate that the synergism of committee chairs planning and working together will create a total effect greater than the sum of its parts. I'm reminded of (and will end with) a quote from Michael Crichton's *The Lost World*:

"...innovation only occurs in small groups. Put three people on a committee and they may get something done. Ten people, and it gets harder. Thirty people, and nothing happens." And that's why the thirty members of Common Council need committees!

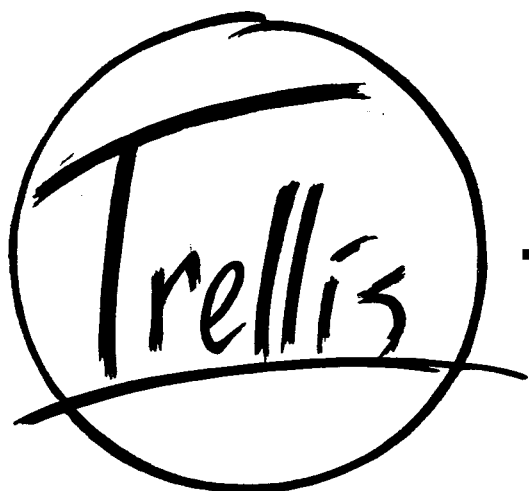
## Letters Policy

The *WIRE* welcomes letters to the Editor, to the community, and to/from officials. Publication on a *Name Withheld* basis will be considered, but the writer's name, address, and phone number must be provided for verification and for our records. **Preferred methods of submission:** PC-standard 3.5-inch floppy disk left at 531 Main Street for *The WIRE*, or by e-mail to [MainStreetWIRE@rcn.com](mailto:MainStreetWIRE@rcn.com) (ASCII text preferred or use any wordprocessing software, but no MSWord files with macros). **Alternatives:** Typed, double-spaced copy left at 531 Main Street or faxed to (212) 755-2540. Clearly hand-written letters will be considered if brief, but we cannot take telephone dictation of letters. **All letters are subject to acceptance and to editing for length and clarity.** We recommend observing a maximum length of 300 words, but will consider longer letters if their content merits the required space.

## The RIRA Column



Matthew Katz  
RIRA President



## More Music...

...through the end of September, as Trellis continues to provide that “extra” community center next to Chapel of the Good Shepherd. We hope you’ve enjoyed the music all this summer, along with our efforts in the culinary and beverage line. At Trellis, we’re always happy to see you, indoors or out – or just to hear from you on the phone for your favorite take-out order.

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Letters

Grannis Letters Pressure RIOC

**To the Editor:**  
I sympathize with Bruce Barniker’s views in the August 4 issue but see little hope of improvement under the existing Public Safety Department, which flaunts the regulations as much as, if not more than, anybody else.  
Public Safety Department vehicles are frequently parked for extended time on the Eastwood side of Main Street next to the distorted sign stating “No Stopping, Standing or Parking” in spite of the fact that the reserved “prime” parking area in front of Island House is wide open.  
The guy on a bicycle, who sometimes tickets some of the cars parked without proper permit, is a step in the right direction; but he apparently has to allow for many unwritten exceptions to the regulations.

M. Petersen

**To the Editor:**  
Perhaps RIOC will consider hiring Bruce Barniker as the “parking enforcer.” I will take the number-one prize, but not for the reason Bruce Barniker states. My number-one prize will be for dedication and commitment. My family and I have been service providers on this Island since the beginning. We are talking about more than 25 years. We are truly dedicated and let me say consistent. We hire others so that they can provide for their families. We support the Boy Scouts and provide other support no need to mention. So here we have Bruce Barniker squirming about a few minutes he had to wait because he was going on vacation. Should we laugh? How sad! This guy is selfish – and for a New Yorker – rather naive about the realities of City living. We all have to wait. Wait for the cab, wait for the red light, etc. Sometimes I have to wait for deliveries. Sometimes I have to wait for the Mrs. Sometimes I have to wait for my children. Sometimes I have to wait for the window washers. But when the moment connects, we just greet each other, not always with a smile but we don’t make a big deal out of it.

He writes, “Two days ago, two patrol officers were munching on pizza at the outdoor window gabbing with the owner while I observed his car had a tag on the windshield which had expired 50 minutes prior.” Excuse me, Editor – this is so serious. Think about what you are putting in *The WIRE*. Bruce Barniker is implying that I am involved in bribery.  
Now shall we talk about violations. I am serious! Bruce Barniker I can forgive, but *The WIRE* does not have to telegraph through this community such irresponsible comments. Is it that *The WIRE* needs material to fill space?  
Well, I will hint at a story of great importance to this entire community. In our efforts to get a fair deal on this Island, we merchants are confronted with challenges of significant financial consequences. Like all hard-working families on Roosevelt Island, we struggle in our efforts to be successful here. The favoritisms go not to us but to the big fish. You could indeed call us the sardines swimming against the sharks, hoping not to get eaten up. Our struggle to survive is a serious one. We do have a story to tell. Talk to us! Print a real human-interest story. You are welcome to interview us at any time.  
Is it not more neighborly for us Islanders to work together minus the ego trips? I for one would encourage *The WIRE* to take care to read letters in a more insightful manner, avoiding hurt to others. Let’s show respect. Thank you.

Tony Moccia  
Capri Restaurant

**Editor’s note:** *The WIRE* last reported in depth on merchants’ survival problems in April, 1998, and the writer makes a good point in suggesting that further coverage is warranted. (*The WIRE* attempted to join the Roosevelt Island Chamber of Commerce to become actively involved in dealing with merchant concerns, but membership was refused, initially with the reason given that *The WIRE* does not rent space from RIOC, and other reasons given subsequently. There seemed to be a disagreement among merchants as to how directly the Chamber should deal with problems presented by their relationship with RIOC.) Bruce Barniker’s letter in the August 4 issue of *The WIRE* primarily made the point that Public Safety enforcement of parking limits and regulations is inadequate. The implication was one of laxness or favoritism, not of bribery. And there does seem to be a problem of merchant vehicles parked on Main Street for long hours.

**To the Editor:**  
As a Montauk Credit Union customer, I was surprised a year ago to learn that my account was being depleted by an insurance company called Benefit Consultants, Inc., which is associated with CNA Administrators. I signed an account with Montauk in 1998 and accepted a certificate of insurance provided by MCU – an additional certificate that would debit my account automatically was also linked to the offer. Note, they sent no reminders or insurance statements. If you forgot about it, as I obviously did, you may be surprised to learn that your account is dwindling.  
The amount appears on the bank statement as “date, number, term life ins 8” for \$12.92 per month, which may not call attention to itself. But after a year it can wreak havoc on a small account like mine. Customers should note that ATM use shows up on your statement as “term” (short for terminal) followed by a number. You may overlook this insurance premium thinking it’s an ATM event.  
To halt their activities, I called Benefit Consultants last summer. They continued to charge my account until I called them again this summer. They recently credited my account for what they took.  
I like Montauk Credit Union for their service and affordability. It is unfortunate that they provide opportunity for operators like Benefit Consultants to take advantage of their customers.  
Check your bank statements – someone may be making off with your account without your knowledge and they will keep the money unless you state otherwise!

Name Withheld

Letters deadline for Sept. 8 issue: Sept. 4

**Dear Comptroller Hevesi:**  
On behalf of the more than 8,000 constituents of mine who reside on Roosevelt Island, I am writing to request that you exercise your authority to inspect and audit the books and records of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), the assignee of the New York State Urban Development Corporation (UDC), now d.b.a. Empire State Development Corporation, to determine whether it is in compliance with the terms of the lease (and the General Development Plan [GDP] referenced therein), entered into in 1969 with New York City granting UDC the right to develop and manage the residential community on Roosevelt Island. Section 20 of the lease sets out your office’s authority for this undertaking.  
This request stems from ongoing concerns that RIOC has failed to properly maintain the infrastructure of the Island as required by the lease, including but not limited to the Island’s vital perimeter seawall, has virtually abandoned the Island’s several landmarked buildings, most notably the Chapel of the Good Shepherd and Blackwell House, and has over the past several years repeatedly sought to find ways to develop on the open spaces designated in the GDP as parkland.  
Between 1996 and 1997, Governor Pataki eliminated all support for RIOC in the Executive Budget based on what I believe was the misguided notion that the Island can and should be self-sufficient before the completion of the GDP. Previously, funding had been included as a matter of course in the State budget for needed capital projects and to cover annual operating shortfalls, which increased substantially with the decline of ridership on the Tramway following the opening of the Island’s subway stop in 1989. With limited revenue sources and no authority to borrow, issue bonds or directly assess residents, RIOC’s management has resorted to raising fees, reducing services and putting off capital expenditures. I have offered to assist RIOC in seeking budget appropriations to address the Island’s needs. But despite repeated requests by my office and by the Island’s other elected officials, RIOC has either been unwilling, or more likely unable, to provide a list of its current or projected capital project needs, their anticipated costs, or any viable explanation of where it intends to find the funds for such projects.  
In many ways, RIOC’s actions are reminiscent of the actions that precipitated many of the problems the City faced resulting from its neglect of its infrastructure needs during the fiscal crisis of the 1970s. As was the case with the City, I am fearful that RIOC’s penny-wise pound-foolish approach in meeting its obligations under the lease will end up costing this or some future administration dearly for such fiscal missteps.

**To the Community:**  
The family of Benjamin Malcolm thanks all of you who touched our lives during his illness and in the past few months.  
A special thanks to Hospice for its specialized program of care and involvement when it was needed during the last few weeks of his illness. Specifically, I would like to express my gratitude to Registered Nurse Eileen Diaz, who was a constant source of strength and support. My thanks to her for being there when the need was greatest.  
Thanks to Rivercross General Manager Mitchell Hammer and the building staff for their concern, assistance, and support.  
A special thanks also to the Islanders who shared brief moments with my husband over coffee and snacks during his illness. The cards, letters and phone calls provided support and were appreciated. Thanks to all who expressed their concern in this manner.  
A very special thanks to the Commissioner and staff of the New York City Department of Correction for their support and ceremonial contribution. My thanks also to the Department of Correction Historian for the interesting work he did on my husband’s life experience. Gratitude to my neighbors who gave their support and presence.  
Finally, a very special thank you to the former co-workers and Counseliers, Inc., whose presence and personal touch were so gratifying.

Susan Whitaker-Malcolm

**Dear Mr. Ryan:**  
I am writing to tell you of my dismay over your failure to reply to my letters of March 15 and April 12, 2001 (copies enclosed) seeking information regarding the capital project needs on Roosevelt Island and RIOC’s plans for securing the funding needed to undertake such initiatives.  
I am particularly troubled by the fact that since we first met in my District Office in October 2000 and discussed all the same issues raised in my letters, RIOC has not requested an appropriation from Governor Pataki in his Executive Budget submissions, nor, to my knowledge, has it nailed down alternative funding sources. On this front, I learned recently that your application for a grant from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation for the much needed repairs to Blackwell House was denied. I also now have in hand the Army Corps of Engineers final report on the seawall, and the overall cost estimates for the needed repairs and maintenance appear to be the same as was cited in its February 2000 draft. While this project might be eligible for some federal funding, where do you propose to find the difference?  
I am reissuing my request for a full listing of RIOC’s capital-project needs and their anticipated costs and ask that you respond promptly to my earlier correspondence. I understand from *The Main Street WIRE*’s report on Senator Mendez’ meeting with the Governor that he may be considering a visit to the Island during the fall. Coincidentally, should I not receive a satisfactory response to my inquiries, I have been contemplating convening a public hearing on the Island within the next few months, possibly with Councilmember Miller and Congressman Maloney, to gather information on the current state of the Island’s infrastructure and RIOC’s record to date and future plans for addressing the Island’s needs. Should this take place, I would expect you and other officials from RIOC and DHCR to figure prominently in such a proceeding.  
I await your overdue reply.

Alexander B Grannis  
Member of Assembly

Thank you for your attention to this very important request. I will be glad to provide your staff with whatever information we have available to assist you in deciding whether to pursue this investigation. Please feel free to contact Tony Morenzi, who runs my District Office, or me at (212) 860-4906 if you have any questions.

Alexander B. Grannis  
Member of Assembly

— More Tram Letters —

**To the Editor:**  
The proposal to eliminate the late shift on the Roosevelt Island Tram is a condemnatory assault on public safety and will reduce life on the Island to nearly ghetto-like conditions. Curtailing the Tram schedule, in effect, sets a virtual 10:00 p.m. curfew for many Island residents.  
Many of my neighbors, including college and high-school-age young people, use the Tram exclusively when returning from Manhattan to avoid forbiddingly-empty subway platforms. If you listen, you can hear the mantra of parents warning their kids to “take the Tram if you’re going to come home late.  
RIOC’s half-baked solution seemingly solves the Tram’s deficit problem as it simultaneously creates a much larger problem affecting the public weal. The 10:00 p.m. closing will choke the remaining life out of this diminishing community. It is ironic that as services are reduced, new buildings are going up.  
Please help us defeat RIOC’s destructive and ill-considered proposal.

Leonard Slonevsky

**To the Editor:**  
The following letter was sent to Olga Mendez, Pete Grannis and Gifford Miller. I had written previously to RIOC’s “Tram Comments.”  
RIOC wants to shut down the Tram at 10 p.m. This will cause great hardship and expense to tenants who work off-hours and those who wish to spend an evening at the theater. Many seniors and handicapped tenants are part of that group. The subway is not the answer to these people.  
Please remind our Governor and Mayor that Roosevelt Island is part of New York State and New York City and we are not receiving the assistance that we are entitled to to maintain the R.I. Bridge, the seawall, and the Tram.  
What is the reason for this? Roosevelt Island is expected to foot all the bills.  
Please help us!

Marian Valentine

Additional letters on the Tram appear on pages 2, 3, 8, and 9, and on Website NYC10044 at www.nyc10044.com

# Seawall from page 1

from the power plant near the Tram to the Coler Hospital campus on the North end of the Island and to the Goldwater campus and Sportspark on the South.

“Most of the seawalls surrounding the Island are in fair condition with varying needs for preventive maintenance,” the report says. But the details of this maintenance – ranging from patching cracks and fixing stanchions to the possible replacement of some wall and tunnel sections – will have to be determined through further studies, the Corps says.

“Only internal testing of the wall (not visual inspection) can accurately determine the structural integrity and remaining useful life of the wall sections. Since any wall repair may disturb the fronting riprap prior to repair work, it is advisable to place riprap improvements after the wall repair,” the Corps points out. “Failure to perform the necessary repairs or maintenance could eventually lead to undermining of the promenade, creating an unsafe condition.”

RIOC requested the study in 1996 and paid the Corps \$100,000 to do it. It is a “reconnaissance type study” assessing the adequacy of coastal structures around the perimeter of the Island, and is aimed at helping RIOC set priorities for repairs and improvements. The study also presents alternatives for Southpoint, addresses the need for archaeological investigations in that area, and deals with the matter of who should pay for the work.

The basic Phase I survey took about a year. The Corps then proceeded to a more detailed Phase II study after consulting with RIOC in June 1998. The final report, turned over to RIOC on July 31, 2001, combines the results of both phases and runs to well over 200 pages, with six appendixes of maps, photos and other data. (Trivia buffs may find some interesting facts in these pages. For example, in this part of the East River tidal strait, the West channel depth is 35 feet and the maximum current flow is eight feet per second. Can you take a train to Southpoint? Yes, but only in an emergency. An exit for the 53rd Street subway line is not far from the Strecker Memorial Laboratory landmark, which was partially restored by the MTA to house electrical equipment.)

The report, heavily laced with flood-control jargon, says that the shoreline structures at the North end of the Island are sufficient to prevent an adverse impact to “important public infrastructure,” such as roads, from a storm that could be expected to occur once in 150 years.

“As a result, it does not appear that there would be sufficient storm damage reduction benefits to justify federal participation in a traditional shore protection project at the Northern end of the Island,” the report says.

As for the Southern end of the Island, the report notes that “future developments may not be used to economically justify a Federal project.”

“A Federal project may not be justified based upon development for which it would potentially provide impetus,” the report continues. “However, if development and plans are already committed in the future without project condition, then such benefits could possibly be employed in evaluating federal interest.”

If RIOC has little reason to expect immediate Federal help with those parts of the shoreline, it could, however, take advantage of a program under the Flood Control Act for repairs to the steam tunnel,

which the Corps said “may be considered a vital public works infrastructure.”

The report says that the tunnel is leaking from both the land and seawall sides, caused by damage to joints, inadequate riprap, tree roots and poor storm drainage. In addition, the piles and piers supporting the tunnel may have deteriorated.

“In the event of a failure, the steam tunnel services from the power plant will be compromised,” the report says. “This situation warrants an independent study beyond the scope of this investigation. Since it currently supplies the hospitals and since there is a need to maintain the steam tunnel for use by the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC), then it would be incumbent upon that agency to undertake the required further study.”

In other words, the report suggests, the Corps could get involved in further studies and work to solve the steam tunnel problem if HHC showed that a disruption in its supply of steam would constitute an emergency. Although RIOC owns the power plant, it does not derive any revenue from it; and the system, which runs year-round, is operated and maintained by the hospitals, with a small portion of the steam going to Sportspark.

In dealing with the steam tunnel, Ryan said, “The immediate next step is sitting down with Health and Hospitals.”

A section of the report, “Coast Structures Adequacy Assessments,” summarizes the preliminary findings.

On the West shore, the report says, “Failure of the concrete structures becomes evident with some form of visible distress such as cracking, leaching, spalling, wear, settlement, deflection, etc.” The Northernmost concrete seawalls “appear to be in the poorest condition,” the report says. Railings and stanchions need to be repaired, and continuous riprap provided “to reduce the scouring effects of currents and waves.”

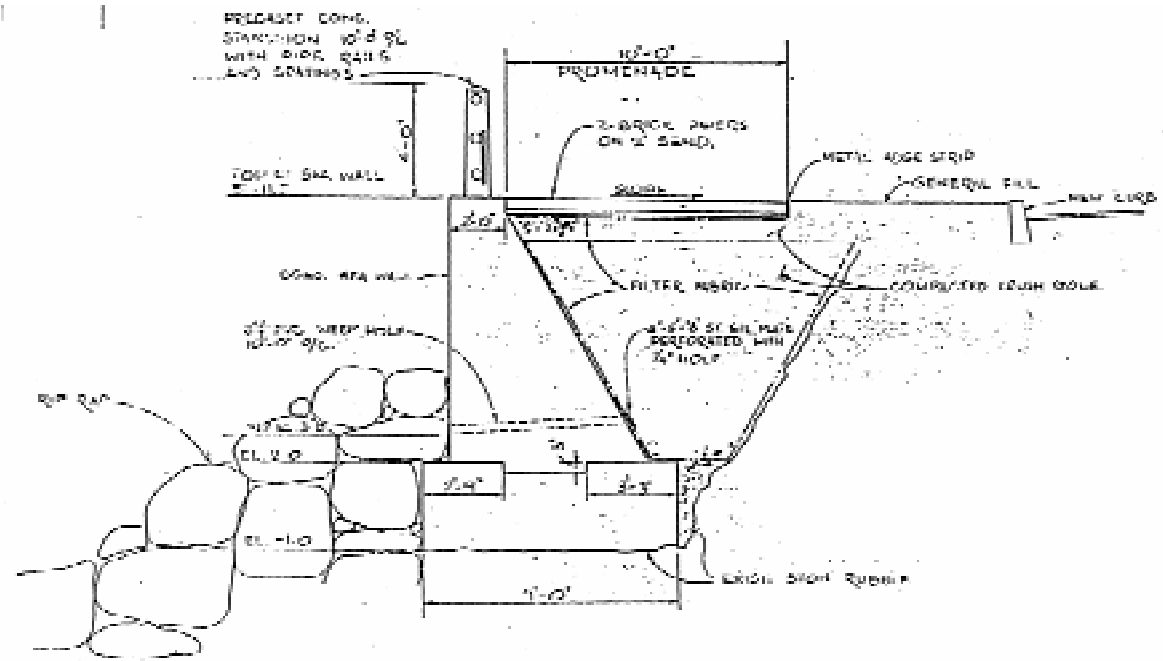
On the East shore, the report says, wall joints and timber bulkheads need repair, riprap should be added, and deteriorated pilings removed.

The North shore is most exposed to the elements – it was inundated in the “175-year” storm of December 1992, when the storm surge reached 12.8 feet NGVD (National Geodetic Vertical Datum), about 8 feet higher than the top of the tidal range. The wall at the end of the Island was rebuilt after a barge struck it, but the Corps says the riprap there, too, is insufficient.

Vincent Kopicki, RIOC’s director of engineering, said that the findings, in general, should not be a cause for panic. “I’ve heard – I don’t know how many times in the past – the seawall is falling apart. Now, according to this, and these guys are supposedly the experts, yes, it needs some preventative maintenance, but I don’t think that the seawalls are falling apart or that we’re in a disastrous state here. The important thing is, we’re OK, we need to do some work but we’re not sinking.” In reviewing the report, he said, “I don’t think there’s any seawalls that have to be torn down or replaced.”

Kopicki said the RIOC maintenance crew already handles minor repairs that it finds itself or which are reported by residents: “We can do the railings, we can do the gratings, we can do the stanchions, but you’re talking major stuff – we can’t do that.”

Another section of the report



Over centuries, currents wearing away on the Island at various levels “crowned” it, wearing away more at its edges than near its middle. For the Island to host residences, however, a gentle slope down to dangerous East River waters was inappropriate, so fill material was added and much of the Island “squared off,” with the fill being protected by a seawall. This engineering drawing shows a cross-section, with riprap breaking up currents and waves that would otherwise “scour” and undercut the added wall. Over time, seams between sections of concrete wall become loose or worn and must be replaced. The drawing represents just one scheme for holding the line; other approaches differ primarily in detail.

summarizes design alternatives to protect the South end of the Island. The least-costly method would be an anchored vinyl-sheet pile wall set back 12 to 15 feet from the shore and extending for 3,400 feet, to guard against a “100-year storm event.” The wall would have an exposed height of 7 feet above the existing grade and would be back-filled and anchored with tie rods every 10 feet to concrete weights (called “deadmen”) sunk in the ground 23 feet from the sheet piling. A timber cap would be attached to the bulkhead and support a 4-foot-high aluminum railing.

This bulkhead, priced in 1999 dollars, would cost about \$3.6 million. A comparable concrete wall set back from the shoreline would cost about \$5 million, the report says, while a concrete wall on the perimeter of the shoreline, extending for 3,600 feet, would cost about \$11 million.

The report says that construction of the vinyl bulkhead has the potential “to disturb potentially significant archaeological deposits” associated with the City Hospital, the Small Pox Hospital and Strecker Laboratory. The report recommends that field testing and documentary

research be carried out, along with a structural assessment of the effect of construction on the Strecker and Small Pox properties.

“Ideally, all of the historic properties at Roosevelt Island should have a management plan for their basic preservation and maintenance to prevent further deterioration, while maintaining them in a ‘mothballed’ (unused, but stabilized, maintained) condition,” the report says.

Archaeological investigations and structural assessments, estimated at \$280,000, are included in the cost of the vinyl bulkhead.

## Residents on RIOC Board Have a Task Ahead...

by Robert Laux-Bachand

Island residents serving on the RIOC Board could play a key role in determining how the recommendations in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers seawall study are carried out.

Board member Patrick Stewart, who heads RIOC’s Operations Committee, said it would meet to consider the Corps’ findings and then go to the full board to fashion a resolution advising RIOC how to proceed. Stewart said the committee would have to set priorities, proceeding from the points that the Corps identified as the most dangerous locations on the seawall.

David Kraut, Susan Whitaker and Kevin Fullington, the other RIOC appointees from the Island, are also on the Operations Committee.

Stewart was asked whether the report presented any compliance issues – whether the Corps was laying out federal requirements for RIOC action. He said that did not appear to be the case, although the loss of steam to the hospitals in the winter would be the worst possibility.

“Then you have patients in the hospitals who are freezing; to me, that’s the worst-case scenario,” he said.

Kraut said that Dr. Jerome Blue, RIOC’s former president, originally commissioned the Corps to study only the need for a seawall around Southpoint, “and when I heard of this, I said no, we have a lot of seawall issues around this Island.”

Kraut said he wanted the Corps to “look at it all,” and his viewpoint prevailed. “So I’m just damned pleased that the report, A) has finally come out, and B) that it covers the whole Island, inch by inch, and not just Southpoint.”

In studying the report, Kraut said, “I don’t see anything which to my untrained layman’s eye would fall apart, but I sense weaknesses throughout the system.” He said the section that “scared me the most” is the steam tunnel between Motorgate and the Coler Hospital campus on the East side of the Island. “The whole seawall gets lower, it gets cracked, it’s crumbling, it looks really bad,” he said.

Elected officials and members of the RIOC staff, and other agencies, are just beginning to study the Corps’ report, which has been in gestation for about four years – a period that some officials contend was too long.

U.S. Rep. Carolyn Maloney, a Democrat whose 14th District includes Roosevelt Island, issued a press release this month saying that her staff had repeatedly contacted the Corps to “push for action” in completing the report.

“We can breathe a little easier knowing there is no immediate danger for residents on the Island, but the repair work should be done promptly,” Maloney said. “If it’s delayed as the study was, costs will certainly go up and the seawall will deteriorate even more.” She urged RIOC to move forward with repair work.

RIOC’s professional staff, while not disagreeing with Maloney’s assessment, called attention to the larger perspective in her own district. The condition of Roosevelt Island’s seawall, for example, is probably better than the walls along the Manhattan side of the East River, where “big chunks” of the FDR Drive were visibly missing at low tide even as Corps inspectors studied the shores of the Island, according to RIOC engineer Vincent Kopicki. As he and the Corps engineers were looking at the Island’s shores, he said, “We’re saying, ‘We’re looking at the wrong one.’”

There is a matter of aesthetics, too, Kopicki said. “Nobody designs for a 175-year flood. You would have walls up – it would be like the Great Wall of China around the Island. And instead of having a water view, which everybody likes, you have a wall view. You’d be protected, but you’d be looking at concrete.”

Kraut takes a more conservative angle. “The major significance is it holds the Island together, and I’m not so sanguine as some people” about the condition of the seawall, he said. “I’ve been in wave hurricanes in my life a couple of times and they scared the hell out of me.”

Kraut said he had been in two Force-4 hurricanes, in other parts of the country. He alluded also to the power of Winter nor’easters, such as the 1992 storm that buried Lighthouse Point. “Once in a while, the statistically impossible things do happen,” he said, saying he considered that his stewardship on the board, in this respect, at least, extends to the year 2068, until the State’s Roosevelt Island lease with the City expires.

“I want the seawall to be made sound and firm,” Kraut said. “How we get the money for it, I’m not sure.” He noted that RIOC has a capital reserve fund for emergency repairs, but that, for ongoing maintenance, “we, RIOC, have to go out and get busy and go after whatever funding is available, to demand our share.”

Stewart noted that the seawall project now is a State responsibility but that it would be desirable to enlist the City Health and Hospitals Corporation and the City administration itself. “The more people involved from a financial point of view, the better off you are,” he said.

# More Tram Letters

**To the RIOC Board:**

I am a 40-year-old quadriplegic and am wheelchair bound. The cutback to the hours of the Roosevelt Island Tramway is unfair to the residents here and especially to those of us who are disabled, since the subways are really not accessible. Women and the disabled will be put at greater risk of being victims of crime having to wait long periods of time for buses or on subway platforms. The disabled will be greatly inconvenienced to have to take buses to Queens Plaza (an unsafe area at night), and wait again to catch another bus back to Roosevelt Island. There are those who will no longer be able to go and enjoy an evening in Manhattan because of these fears and unreasonable inconveniences.

Therefore I am asking you to do whatever you can to keep the third shift of the Roosevelt Island Tramway open and running.  
Thank you.

**David Tyack**

**To the RIOC Board:**

Please do not eliminate the third shift on the Roosevelt Island Tramway, especially at a time when the New York City subway system is going through a major overhaul which will last for quite a few years. On many occasions, at night or over the weekends, there has been a lot of confusion as to what train goes to Roosevelt Island and what last-minute changes in service have been made, resulting in great delays for us to arrive home. As not all of us can afford to get a cab ride over the Queensboro bridge, the Tram is the most reliable and civilized way of reaching Roosevelt Island after hours, that is unless those who make decisions about the Tram operations and schedule consider us cattle that can be transported to the final destination however and whenever.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

**Rodica Mischiu**

**To the RIOC Board:**

We are writing this letter in reference to the proposed reduction in Tram service. We have been living on the Island for five years and been using the Tram exclusively for transportation. We are opposed to the reduction for the following reasons.

The late hours are the most dangerous on the subway. The platforms are deserted and unpatrolled. This poses a specific problem for residents returning from the City late in the evening, including nurses, MDs, and others working the late shift.

The elevators and escalators are often out of service. This causes hardship and possible injury for seniors, the handicapped, and those with luggage and carriages.

We pose one question to you regarding the hospitals that have contracted to build in Southtown. Have they been informed of the impact this proposed reduction in safe and convenient transportation will have on their employees and the future residents of the Island?

Do you really believe that money issues should take priority over the safety and welfare of our citizens? If funds were properly appropriated, this could be remedied. All City transportation is subsidized. Why isn't the Tram?

We strongly urge you to reconsider this proposal to delete the third shift.

**Elizabeth Berg, R.N.  
Elaine M. Kane, R.N.**

**To the RIOC Board:**

The idea of suspending the service of the Roosevelt Island Tram during the late-evening hours is not a good one.

The Island has, as you know, a large senior and disabled population. The Tram is also the mode of choice for many of personnel working in New York hospitals and for evening employees at the United Nations. We should not deny these good people a safe, reliable and affordable means of getting around late at night.

**Amb. Phillip V. Sanchez**

**To RIOC:**

As a resident of Manhattan Park, I was deeply disturbed to find out that service cuts for the Tramway were being considered. Frankly, we don't get enough services from RIOC. There have been many times that I wished the red bus ran more frequently, so that I didn't have to walk with a four-year old to the subway or Tram. And now, you are proposing to cut services from the residents of Roosevelt Island when you should be increasing the services to make it a more convenient place to live.

I am frequently required to travel to Manhattan's East Side and the Tram is the only good option for getting there. If you cut Tram services, you will be impacting me from a convenience and economics standpoint. I cannot afford to take a taxi to Manhattan nor can I afford to waste twice the time it would take via the subway.

There is not a single resident that I have spoken with about this issue that is in favor of these cuts. So, let's stop the nonsense. Say "no" to Tramway service cuts! Say "yes" to additional RIOC services!

**Karri Lucas**

**To the RIOC Board:**

There are aspects of the current dispute concerning the Tram schedule that have been overlooked. The newspaper article acknowledges that the operating deficit is being paid for from the renters in Manhattan Park. As one of those renters, I signed a lease with certain representations being made to me concerning accessibility to Manhattan, primarily by use of the Tram. If you are going to depreciate the value of that lease by substantially reducing that service, are you going to heal the breach by reducing my rent accordingly? Obviously the accessibility and the conditions of that accessibility to Manhattan are a critical element in determining the value of my apartment.

There are only two ways that we are going to stop these small-town upstate politicians from screwing us over. One is to take them to court for breach of contract and the other is to let them know that they will never get another Republican vote again from any resident of Roosevelt Island. It is bad enough that they are cheating every child who goes to school on this Island out of their fair share of State funds as they are diverted to upstate political supporters... now they are cheating us out of services we pay for with our rent. We will have to settle with what we allow these clowns to do to us. It's time we stopped them. Just think of rushing through your meal in order to leave the restaurant in time to catch the Tram, or returning from theater via subway (when it is running) – and who knows where the Q train is from day to day?

**Irwin Sayer**

**To the RIOC Board of Directors:**

At your July 12 meeting you raised the perennial question of Tram-operating deficits and their solutions. Again, as other RIOC administrations have done, you put on the table the simplistic solution of cutting service to save money. This was an untenable idea four years ago under the Jerome Blue administration, and it remains so today.

At that meeting, you requested input from this community regarding the impact of cutting the third Tram shift and eliminating Tramway service after 10:00 p.m. We assume that request was genuine, although this community is on record again and again as to our universal and unwavering opposition to any curtailing of Tram hours. We, the Roosevelt Island community, have endeavored in the time allotted to us, to respond to this request to the best of our ability. You have received countless e-mails and letters from every stratum of Island society, including housing residents, Coler and Goldwater Hospital residents and workers, and commercial tenants. You have received uncompromising letters from our elected officials as well, including Congressmember Carolyn Maloney, Assemblymember Pete Grannis and Councilmember Gifford Miller. I expect you are also aware that the Town Meeting called by the Residents Association to address this potential crisis was standing-room only, and that not one voice was raised in favor of your proposal.

At that Town Meeting we determined to supplement your request for letters with a petition drive in order to hear from those uncomfortable with letter-writing or with the English language and to hear from every Tram rider, friend of a Tram rider or neighbor of a Tram rider who opposes the potential cuts in service. The result is the document being presented to you today. The enclosed letters, comments and 2,973 signatures include the opinions of more than one out of every three citizens—men, women and children—residing on Roosevelt Island, and represent a massive answer to your question.

For all the reasons mentioned in all the letters, all the e-mails and all the petition statements, we demand that the Tram shifts and hours be maintained on the present schedule. The Tram is essential to some of us, but precious to all of us. We, all of us, are entitled to the same level of commuter service that is enjoyed by all New Yorkers as their right. Restore to Roosevelt Island the subsidies necessary to provide that level of service.

You are a public-benefit corporation. We 8,300 Islanders are your public. You must act on behalf of this constituency as the public servants you are.

If our voices have any power at all, your decision is clear. We will be present at the evening meeting of the RIOC Board on September 13. Do the right thing.

**Matthew M. Katz  
President, RIRA**

**To the RIOC Board:**

I would like to congratulate and thank RIOC for accomplishing what no one else in my ten years on Roosevelt Island has been able to accomplish. You have, in a single stroke, galvanized all the residents into a single, unified voice in opposition to your boneheaded proposal to shut down the Tram at 10:00 p.m. Clearly, this was not a proposal you thought had any chance of acceptance, and you were just trying to bring us together. Nice!

If this effort doesn't yield the spectacular success it seems destined for in uniting us, I would suggest you next try offering to reduce the already meager infrastructure and maintenance support you provide. Infrastructure upkeep and street cleaning don't produce revenue either, so you would be on solid, logical ground here also. The residents would react so emotionally, it would be months before they realized that nobody is stupid enough to propose this sort of thing seriously. By then, you will have united us in our disgust for the petty politics of George Pataki and his crowd.

So, thanks, Mr. Ryan and company. And, especially, to our resident board members, David Kraut and Patrick Stewart. Behind closed doors, they must have really stuck up for us in ways we've never seen. Otherwise, this great act of political genius would never have taken shape. It took insight and the savvy of being a long-time Island resident to come up with such a brilliant plan. You are a great bunch of caring, decent humanitarians, and I for one appreciate it. Thanks!

**David Stone**

**To RIOC:**

I have worked on Roosevelt Island more than ten years. Though I do not reside here, I frequently have to take that Tram (although I have used the subway, of course). My thoughts on the present "problem" are not unique but I should like to express them anyway.

- I'd be strongly opposed to the 10:00 p.m. cutback of services. Why? My reasons are similar to those of Ethel Romm, who writes in *The WIRE* her well-established and well-stated reasons for not wanting this critical cutback!

- For years, many of us have argued that lack of the MetroCard on the Tram is both strange and painfully short-sighted. The debt could probably be worked down in a short time if the MetroCard were made a viable option here. I recall how one gentleman said to me in 1999, "It's State! State run! We won't have the MetroCard connection. Period!" Who was he? A member of the Tramway staff, of course. That ridiculous, rank-smelling answer is a bureaucrat's answer, the response of someone who wants to hold on to his monopoly but doesn't care about ordinary people. *The time has come for all that to end!* Get the MetroCard connected with the Tram, as it is with almost all other *public* services in the City. Why is it so vastly difficult for Pataki and others to see this?

- The handicapped and some seniors would *indeed* suffer by any 10:00 p.m. stoppage, but so would *a lot of other persons*. Some late-shift nurses at both of the hospitals use the Tram. I have had occasion on weekend nights to use it when I had to stay overnight at the South Campus (Goldwater). I feel a big mistake would be made in forcing us to use the often-changeable, tricky subway trains which are, in a sense, less reliable than the beautiful, safe, smooth Tramway.

You have heard from us. Isn't it time to give a *positive*, and *practical* answer?

**Father Peter Murray  
Chaplain, Coler-Goldwater**

**To the RIOC Board:**

As a 25-year resident, I am both dismayed and confused about the decision to reduce the Tramway hours – dismayed because the safety of our citizens is affected during late hours on the subway. The Tram has always been the safest trip in New York City and you would be closing it down at the worst time of the night.

My confusion lies as to why you contemplate this now when Southtown is ready to be built and you will have many more riders within the next six months or so. If, as contemplated, the initial buildings will be for the use of hospital staff, you are taking the most convenient mode of travel away from them. As you may or may not be aware, shifts at hospitals usually include a 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. shift and an 11:00 p.m. to 7 a.m. shift. This new traffic alone will go a long way to alleviate Tram money shortages.

Please reconsider this inane action and keep the Tram running as it always has and hopefully always will.

**Clarice Rothenhaus**

**To Whom It May Concern:**

I am writing in protest of RIOC's plan to shut Tramway service at 10:00 p.m.

A lifetime resident of Roosevelt Island, I have been dependent on Tram service for 24 years. Not only is the Tram Roosevelt Island's only reliable, safe connection to Manhattan, it also represents the spirit of our Island. Closing the Tram early would mean crushing the spirit of our community, and chasing away hundreds of families who have made this place home. Roosevelt Island is a unique community, one of New York's only successful experiments in mixed-income living. It will, no doubt, be destroyed if Tram service is cut back.

It is, in fact, late-night Tram service that keeps our residents happy. Late-nights, many Islanders feel unsafe riding the subway. Furthermore, the elderly and handicapped are dependent on the Tramway, and shutting the Tram at 10:00 p.m. would, essentially, be giving these residents a curfew. Finally, I must note that the idea of cutting back late-night Tram service is ludicrous, given the abominable subway service to Roosevelt Island. With all the construction over the past year and a half, our service has changed uncountable times, often requiring residents to take a different train, on a different track, when they leave for work in the morning and when they come home in the evening. Sometimes, shuttle service only comes every 20 minutes, and it is often a guessing game to find the right train. A native New Yorker, I have gotten lost and dead-ended more than once trying to find my way home. The MTA workers knew less than I did, and provided no help. Unlike other New Yorkers, Roosevelt Islanders cannot take just any train to a nearby station and walk the rest of the way. The subway being absolutely unreliable, late-night Tramway service is especially crucial for all residents.

Please listen to the concerns of our residents, and do not destroy our community's lifeline. The closing of the Tram and the subsequent deterioration of our Island would be tragic not only for our residents, but for the City and State as well.

**Gabrielle Parnes**

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## More Tram Letters

**To Governor George Pataki:**

Do you really want RIOC to close the Tram’s third shift and give our most vulnerable residents a *curfew*? Furthermore, you and your appointees need to consider that, if the subway should fail those of us who do use it, we have *no other way home*, when coming from work, theater, or just visiting with friends! This RIOC has also conveniently neglected to remember or is just plain ignorant of the fact that the subway for us has been under constant scheduling changes for the last three years on almost every weekend and during the week, and we’re not sure if we’re due for another three years.

Robert Ryan lives in Manhattan and apparently knows nothing about our transportation means, and has proven it out loud, in public. Contrary to Rob Ryan’s faulty belief and public statement to a *New York Daily News* reporter, we do not all have the option of taking an automobile to get on and off this *Island* on a regular, daily basis. Further on in his statement to the reporter last week, he claimed that we have a bus as an alternate form of transportation. Mr. Ryan left out a crucial bit of information, and the reporter did not see fit to do a fact check, on the Q102 bus. The Q102 actually takes riders to and from Queens, 180 degrees away from Manhattan. This bus is not and never has been an alternate form of transportation for residents, most of whom travel between this Island and Manhattan Island for work, school, shopping and entertainment. I might point out that your prior administrator, Jerry Blue, also had trouble with these concepts.

Your appointees also have ADA

(Americans with Disabilities Act), Title III, to contend with. Wheelchair-mobile residents, if they can get to a subway platform, if/when elevators are running, cannot get their wheelchairs onto the subway cars. The lip of the door is not level with the platform and, therefore, it is difficult to impossible to lift a chair (especially motorized) onto the floor of the subway car. My husband and I once tried to help a wheelchair rider into a subway car and very nearly re-herniated discs in our backs trying to lift the chair with the weight of the rider and the battery. The doors kept closing on us during our efforts. Forget this issue when the elevators are not even working. I have personally witnessed someone in a wheelchair holding on to both sides of the escalator while balancing the chair on a step. This is a major danger to the disabled person and to others riding below them. The image alone should bother you. Thank goodness we’ve no bad news to report from this kind of transit. Yet.

The Tram third shift shut-down – what a monumentally *bad* idea. This particular question should never have seen the light of day. We have learned that unless media are present, RIOC knows no shame. These public servants (we do pay their salaries with our rents, not even our tax dollars make it back to us) continue to prove their ignorance and lack of concern for all of us and, worse for our most vulnerable citizens, at their every turn. We thought Jerry Blue was pretty horrendous. But Mr. Ryan has proven to be Blue’s equal. For sure.

Let me remind you that the MTA

is not a money-making business. The MTA has subsidies. It is not “self-sufficient,” nor is the City in which it’s located. The State and Federal government (supported by our taxes) are always present on some level of support or other. San Francisco, Los Angeles, Denver, Seattle, Washington D.C., and Boston all have mass transit that receives government aid. Mass transit has never been a profitable venture, it is a public service provided for with taxes we pay. Furthermore, those cities, like New York, that do not close down altogether, keep their mass-transit systems running, if only on a “skeleton” service level. Are you (and your Board) even aware that our Tram actually does shut down at 2:00 a.m. (weekends at 3:30 a.m.)?

Ryan contends that he needs to shut the Tram to balance the budget when, in fact, anyone who’s looked at the last published financial report can clearly see a surplus (albeit small), and thus this threatened shutdown of our third shift from 10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. is a ploy to try to divide and destroy this community and use the “extra” money for what?

No other city is required to run as a self-sufficient entity. Governor, why are you holding Roosevelt Island to a standard not required for all other cities? Why won’t you restore our capital and operating subsidies so that we can function like other small towns, at least until our Southtown development has been completed, as is required according to our General Development Plan (a part of the Lease between the City and New York State)?

**Sherie Helstien  
Member RIRA Council**

**To the RIOC Board:**

The following are some facts, arguments and suggestions for your consideration:

The most just and fair solution for covering Tramway losses is a fare increase.

1. I, a resident of the Island – like dozens of other residents – ride the Tramway back to the Island (on a daily basis) during the period 10:30 p.m. to midnight.

2. I, a taxpayer, should be provided with the services equal to all other residents of the Island, of New York City, of New York State, etc.

3. If cutting service is the solution: The RIOC Board should provide the “late” residents, whose daily lives extend beyond 10:00 p.m. and who use the Tramway after 10:00, with a sound, lawful explanation as to why we should be discriminated against and deprived of services given to the “early” residents.

Incidentally, was the ridership survey conducted in January? In the summer-fall time the Tramway is crowded with commuters way beyond midnight.

4. Roosevelt Island is not a detention center and/or correctional facility subject to a 10:00 p.m.-6:00 a.m. *curfew* imposed by New York State.

5. Roosevelt Island is not a welfare colony maintained by the good will of the RIOC of New York State.

6. The residents of Roosevelt Island are lawful New York State taxpayers and should be treated accordingly.

7. The Tramway is the only quick, safe, and civilized mode of transportation available to the residents of the Island.

8. It is the duty of RIOC to main-

tain this mode of transportation and extend it to 24-hour service.

9. Like any other public transportation in NYC, some hours are busier than others. Cutting down the services appears to be an unfair and unjust solution.

Suggestions for eliminating the deficit:

1. Increase the fare. It appears that an increase of a dime should do it.

2. Additional source of revenue: Charge a higher fare for the tourists, the non-residents.

Thank you for your attention.

**Nurit Kalderon**

## Answers from page 1

couple hundred” e-mails (Tramway@RIOC.com) on the subject, according to Antonek’s August 17 statement. Many of the e-mails and letters have been sent to *The WIRE*, as well, and many appear in this issue (with more on *Website NYC10044* at [www.nyc10044.com](http://www.nyc10044.com)).

The RIOC Board will next have an opportunity to consider the possibility of a service cut at its September 13 meeting, scheduled to be held in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd in the evening. (The public session starts at about 6:00 p.m., after a closed executive session.)

Historically, proposed Tramway cuts have galvanized and unified the Roosevelt Island community. A standing-room-only crowd filled the Chapel August 1. In February of 1998, residents also jammed the Chapel when RIOC President Dr. Jerome Blue laid off Tramway staff following an accident in which a construction crane collided with a Tram cabin and damaged it.

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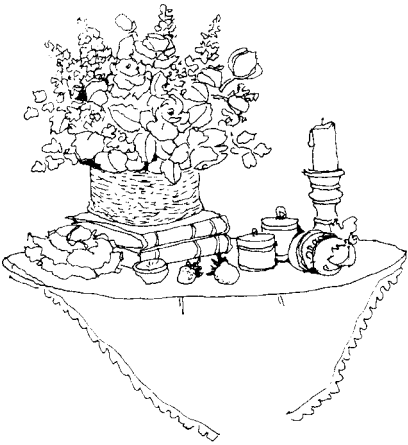
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## Elevator from page 1

It was getting uncomfortably hot. Some people fanned themselves with scraps of paper. The man at the door pressed a button and he heard an alarm bell ring. He then called the token clerk and asked, "Can you call 911?" The reply came clearly, "OK, I'll do that." The man slid the door open, but all we could see was a dark well. Much to our regret, there was no fresh air coming in.

Although we were impatient to get out, there was no panic, no complaining, and not much conversation. Only dull patience. At 7:45 p.m., we heard sounds above us. Help had arrived! We didn't wonder where they came from and prepared ourselves mentally for our rescue. There was shuffling of boots above us as someone moved about trying to unscrew the escape panel. That took a very long time – or so it seemed. Our eyes were glued to the panel in the ceiling and finally it was lifted away.

Then a voice warned, "Watch out below." A chain link ladder was lowered slowly and a man announced that he was coming down. Some of us reached out to hold the sections of the rickety ladder firmly as he climbed down. We welcomed him warmly. He described the route we would take to get out. One by one we would ascend the link ladder until we stood on top of the cab; there we would be guided by two other men to another ladder which led up to the open elevator door. His

knowledgeable demeanor reassured us that we would be in good hands as we made our way out. It was now 8:15 p.m.

Juanita Fleming volunteered to leave first and we helped her as she slowly reached out, rung after rung up the flexible ladder. When my turn came, I realized how dark the shaft was. Fortunately, the man waiting for me on top of the car carried a flashlight and I dimly made out another ladder propped against the wall. I grasped a pair of greasy cables on each side for support as I climbed up, and with a helping hand from the two rescuers, lifted myself up and out of the opening onto the floor of the waiting room. One of the people greeting me mentioned that a "selective tape" on the elevator had snapped.

He ushered me through a door I had never noticed before that led to a washroom. I was relieved to wash the grease from my hands. Then we made our way past the token booth and waved our thanks to the clerk for his help. As Belle and I left the subway building we were greeted by a police officer who asked how we were feeling and whether we would need a lift home in his patrol car. We were so glad to breathe the refreshing cool air outside that we thanked him and said we would prefer to walk home. It was now 8:30 p.m.

In retrospect, we had the feeling that we had been through an unexpected plight, but thanks to the expert help of the subway crew, we were grateful to come out walking.

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