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The Main Street WIRE

EXTRA

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper in association with ***Website NYC10044*** www.nyc10044.com

Spencer Platt, Getty Images

A fireball rips across the gap between Twin Towers as a second highjacked aircraft finds its target. Both Towers were gone within an hour and a half.

Amid Terrorist Attack on City, Islanders React in Calm Horror

A Morning of Disbelief

by Anusha Shrivastava

The sky was clear and there was a nip in the air as people on Roosevelt Island walked to the subway or Tram stops around 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday on the way to work, to school or to attend to chores in the City. Some stopped to watch a cylindrical stream of dark gray smoke, dense and thick, billowing out of the South tower of the World Trade Center as it towered behind the Queensboro Bridge.

Along the East River, groups of residents gathered to see what looked like huge clouds of smoke rising up and blowing toward Brooklyn. Doctors, nurses, and patients from Coler-Goldwater Memorial Hospital stood along Cherry Tree Drive, wondering what was going on. At first, all they knew was that a plane had crashed into one of the Towers. Fire was visible halfway up the South Tower of the Twin Towers.

The sound of wailing sirens filled the air as rows of fire trucks and ambulances rushed south toward downtown Manhattan on FDR drive. Strangely enough, the azure sky was silent. The usual drone of airplanes and the sputtering sound of helicopters was missing. The sky looked blank, as if something was not right.

More residents spilled out into the street along the East river, cameras in hand. They took pictures, not knowing what would happen next. News was trickling out as more residents came out after watching television news.

On the street, people switched on their car radios to hear what was going on. Several offered their cellphones to residents who wanted to call family and friends in the downtown area but it was virtually impossible to get through.

There was a collective gasp as the first Tower collapsed. The smoke looked ominous. The gray columns mixed with puffs of thick, white smoke that the building seemed to cough up. Shocked onlookers witnessed the collapse of the second tower. "Oh my God," said Mullika Shrivastava, who had brought her grandson out in a stroller. "This is unbelievable." All those around her shook their heads in disbelief. Some cried softly.

All of it was happening very quickly – too fast to be absorbed and understood just then.

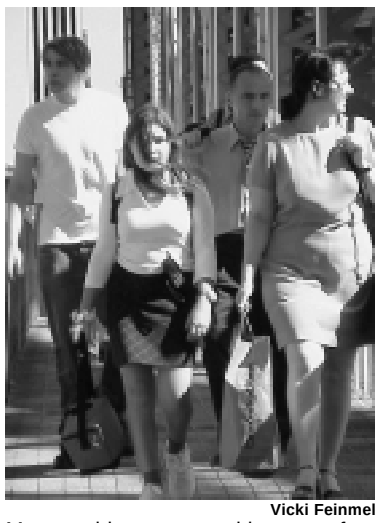
Hordes of people went to the supermarket to stock up on food and water. "It was like war had been declared," said Meg van Dijk, a Manhattan Park resi-

See **Disbelief**, page 3

Then, Getting Home

by Gabrielle Parnes

Mid-afternoon on Roosevelt Island on Tuesday, September 11, 2001, things looked almost like business as usual. A few couples and families strolled along Main Street. A child rode his bike near the fountain next to Blackwell House. The sky directly overhead was the crisp blue of the end of summer.



Vicki Feinmel

Many residents returned home on foot Tuesday afternoon.

But toward the southern end of the Island, the 59th Street Bridge was not clogged with its usual midday traffic of taxis and trucks. Rather, it was laden with a seemingly endless procession of pedestrians making their way out of Manhattan, their shadowy outlines marching toward Queens. Downtown New York was covered in a cloud of smoke – a sickly mixture of yellow, gray, and brown, like a gigantic black and blue mark. The sky above LaGuardia airport in Queens, normally a ballet of airplanes taking off and landing, was ominously barren.

On Main Street, the Chapel was open and candles were lit. Islanders sat inside, praying. Residents walked slowly but purposefully, not dawdling to catch the last of the summer sun or engage in lively chats with their neighbors. They kept their heads bent toward the ground; when they allowed their eyes to meet, people shared a solemn nod of the head.

There was nothing else for residents to do or say. Everyone was struggling to make sense of the day that America, in less than an hour, suffered the worst terrorist attack in history, with the destruction of the Twin Towers that have stood vigil over our City for the past 25 years. Islanders have not been immune to the devastation, and each one of us has been touched in his own way.

Eager to return home, residents trudged over the

See **Getting Home**, page 3

The September 22 issue of *The WIRE* will carry Islanders' stories of September 11, if necessary including a list of Island casualties. Please contact *The WIRE* with your story: Editor@MainStreetWIRE.com or call (212) 826-9055.

In a Chapel Gathering, Residents Share Grief

by Anusha Shrivastava

"My son is still working out there, so pray hard," Estelle Doyle asked a gathering of Roosevelt Islanders at Good Shepherd Chapel last night. Christopher, a paramedic, was deployed to downtown Manhattan as soon as the attack on the World Trade Center happened. "He stepped out of his vehicle and, a few minutes later, it was destroyed. I thank God for having saved him."

Doyle spoke during an hour-long non-denominational prayer meeting held last night in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd to help residents deal with their grief over Tuesday's events. Over 70 attended to connect with others who had been through a day of turmoil.

Speaking first, Sister Regina Palamara said that in ten years of praying at the Chapel, she had never seen nor heard anything like what she had witnessed a few minutes earlier, just before the prayer meeting began. She said a man had walked up the aisle, knelt down, raised his arms and yelled at God for over fifteen minutes. "I witnessed someone really experience the prayer of Job," she recalled on Wednesday, "...the man who has nothing left." Concerned, she called Public Safety officers, who stood by and later escorted the man out of the Chapel.

He was Anthony Deligia, not an Island resident. He had witnessed the carnage at the World Trade Center earlier in the day, then had walked to the Island with a colleague who lives here. "I worked on a U.S. military submarine from 1980 to 1992," said Deligia. "I slept on missiles and realized that fifteen minutes was all it took to blow everything away. I left the service when the Cold War ended, and I thought that really was the end of the war. Today, I saw it start again."

Since his release from the military, the 43-year old Deligia has worked as a Unix programmer at a Japanese bank located on the 50th floor of one of the now-demolished World Trade Center Towers. He said he saw women with their skin peeling off as he descended 49 floors to the street.

"Once I got outside, I saw people jump out of the building. They looked like toys falling into a ball of smoke. It was unreal, like a game," said Deligia. "I am angry with God, who let all this happen."

See **Chapel**, page 4

Linda Heimer

Residents held hands at Tuesday evening's service as Judith Berdy led them in a Jewish prayer. Other prayers were also offered.

Coffee at Starbucks, Then Ground Zero

by Anusha Shrivastava

Rahul Shukla picked up a coffee at Starbucks as he entered Three World Financial Center at 8:45 a.m on Tuesday. He was to meet a friend who works at the American Express office in the building right across from the World Trade Center. "As I entered the lobby, I saw people running out, screaming that there had been a plane crash. I ran out and saw office-goers run into the Towers. No one knew what was going on."

Shukla saw fire and smoke. He heard people screaming. He thought about his sister, Ruchira, who works in an office close to the Towers and lives in Manhattan Park. He tried calling her but he could not get through. "I began running towards her office, thinking I might bump into her, somewhere," said Shukla. He abandoned the effort when he realized there was too much confusion. "I turned and looked at the Tower and saw a big hole in it. I saw two bodies fall out. One was definitely a man. I could tell he was wearing a suit. It was impossible to tell whether he jumped out or was thrown out because of the explosion. A woman who saw the bodies started screaming."

Debris flew in all directions. Glass was shattering. Aluminum bits were flying. Smoke was filling the streets. Shukla ran into a hotel lobby. Lines of people were waiting to call family and friends. "What freaked me out was the people calling their friends who were in the Towers, on lower floors. Those people did not know that their building had been hit," said Shukla, his voice sounding very shaken. "I did manage to contact my sister, who said she was fine."

There were masses of people everywhere. Long lines were forming and people were trying to make their way around. Shukla walked up to 42nd Street, where he saw a cab discharging passengers. He jumped in. "The driver could hardly move because of the people. He drove on the pavement for a few blocks. It was terrifying."

Two blocks farther up, they found a man motioning desperately, trying to stop the cab. The man got in and began crying. "I worked in the World Trade Center all night on Monday. I was laying cables," he told Shukla, who does not know the man's name. "The man got out after telling me that the cab driver was an angel," said Shukla.

The cab dropped Shukla off at the Queensboro Bridge. "There was a mass procession on the bridge. It was a relief seeing all these people walking home."

The Editorial Page

Late-Breaking News

Suspicious Package, Found at Tram Station, Destroyed by Bomb Squad

At deadline Wednesday afternoon, around 2:00 p.m., NYPD officers found what they called "a suspicious package" near the Tram. Traffic was stopped, the Bomb Squad was called in, and hospital employees were prevented from proceeding to the Goldwater campus. At about 4:40 p.m., a loud popping sound was heard. A U.S. Coast Guard vessel sailed back and forth in the East River. Within minutes, Goldwater personnel were allowed to pass and the incident was over. Assistant Public Safety Chief Rene Bryant said, "They didn't find what they were looking for."

Together in Our Grief, United in Our Courage

This is a special issue of a *WIRE* that usually minds only the business of Roosevelt Island and its residents.

But there are events that cross every border of the mind and command the attention of every resource. Tuesday's acts of raw cowardice will forever live on that page in the history of the human race.

By such deeds, we are only momentarily brought to our knees. Then we stand, unite, and act. As Dwight D. Eisenhower put it near the beginning of World War II, America's enemies should "...beware the fury of an aroused democracy."

Roosevelt Islanders have their part to play in the drama that will unfold over the next weeks and months. We are, as the census is showing, a diverse and varied group that sets before the world an example of the tolerance and acceptance and brotherhood that is the ideal of American society. We can proudly show off those colors, just as Trellis flew the flag on Tuesday.

And we can give blood. RIRA President Matthew Katz is working with Lee Bellamy at Coler-Goldwater Hospital, Alci da Silva of the Icla da Silva Foundation, and others to set up an Island blood drive. For the moment, there is a shortage of materials needed to take blood, but there is a sign-up sheet at Trellis, and your signature there will show your solidarity with those whose lives have been changed forever in this tragedy.

If you prefer, you can donate blood sooner at Elmhurst Hospital by calling **1-718-334-4000**. To donate on the Island, watch for the posters on Main Street kiosks.

Meanwhile, this is a time to be alert, as Wednesday afternoon's finding of a suspicious package near the Tram shows. Vigilance and unity are our allies and in them there is the strength that will bear the United States and the world proudly through this episode.

DL

Alex Gamburg

The WIRE

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First Person

Like a War Zone...

by Apurva Varma

It started out like any other weekday. I reached my 15th-floor office in 90 Broad Street at about 8:45. Shortly after I had settled down, a colleague rushed in to tell me that a plane had crashed into the Twin Towers. I looked out and saw thick, gray smoke blowing east and emanating somewhere from the north. There was paper flying high in the air. Strangely enough, it reminded me of a ticker-tape parade.

I calculated that if the Towers fell, their approximately quarter-mile-height would be insufficient to hit 90 Broad. I called home to tell my wife, who was on the Island, to witness this incredible event. At the time, we thought it was a freak accident.

While we were looking at the CNN website, we heard what sounded like thunder and felt our entire building vibrate. We turned on the radio and our fear that this was a terrorist attack was confirmed when we heard that a second plane had crashed. At that point, we began to wonder whether it was safer to stay in the building or leave. We had no clue if the subway was running. We did not hear any evacuation instructions on radio so I decided to stay put.

When the first building collapsed, we heard a muffled explosion. We saw a flash of light. We decided to leave 90 Broad for open space in Battery Park. I picked up my laptop because I feared that if my building collapsed, all my work would be lost. We took the elevator down.

As we reached street level, I could see an advancing cloud of debris and dust down the Broad Street canyon. For a moment I thought the New York Stock Exchange had been bombed. Two of us started walking towards Battery Park. We heard a plane that we could not see. There was dust and smoke everywhere. We hoped it was a fighter jet enforcing the no-fly zone that we had heard about on the radio rather than another aircraft on a suicide mission.

Debris and dust were hurting our eyes. I put up my handkerchief to cover my mouth. People were moving in an orderly way. I saw some people, covered in dust, coughing and sputtering. I could see some people crying. The sirens of passing fire-engines made it impossible to think or talk.

We got onto FDR Drive North. As we crossed South Street Seaport, there was a second explosion and a massive dust cloud formed to our west. We figured that the second tower had fallen. I tried calling home on my cell-phone but it took more than forty-five minutes to get through the first time.

Thousands of people were ahead of us already so we just walked. At several points we had to cross traffic dividers. Elderly people were having trouble doing that. A woman in a wheel-chair had to be lifted and carried across the barrier. There were police cars, vans and fire trucks heading in the opposite direction at a high speed. The last thing we wanted was to get hit by a truck.

I decided to walk home directly instead of crossing over on the Brooklyn Bridge with my colleague who lives in Brooklyn. I headed uptown on Second Avenue, toward the Queensboro Bridge. I walked for three and a quarter hours to reach Roosevelt Island. As I carried my computer, it struck me that though heavy, it was lighter than my 30-pound, 2-year old son Dhruv, who was safe on the Island.

I reached home at 1:30 p.m, covered in soot. I thought: "This is what it must be like in a war zone."

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dent who bought cans of soup for the family and diapers for her daughter, Emma. "No one knows if supplies will come in the next few days," she said.

At about noon, streams of people began arriving on the Island, crossing over the 36th Avenue Bridge. Most had walked miles to get home. Subway and Tram services were suspended.

Ken Barry works in Citigroup, the global commercial bank. One of the bank's offices is located close to the West Side Highway, a couple of blocks away from the World Trade Center. "I saw the second plane hit the second tower," said Barry, who walked for five hours to reach Roosevelt Island, where his girlfriend lives. "It was horrible and very upsetting. I watched people jump out of the buildings. When the second tower collapsed, panic set in. We were asked to evacuate immediately." Barry's colleague, Mircea Nicalescu, a resident of Island House, also saw the second plane going into the second tower. "There was panic and we just walked out of the building as soon as we could," said Nicalescu, his white shirt, black trousers and black shoes covered in dust.

Another resident of Island House, Jonathan Man, saw the explosion from his 10th floor office on Houston Street. "It was just horrible," said Man, a heavy-set tall gentleman who had lugged his laptop and office bag all the way down. Having walked for over five hours to get to the Island, Man said he did not understand why the Tram was closed but that "walking is a very small hardship compared to what some of the people had been through."

For seven-year-old Alisa and her ten-year old sister Angelica Boyle, it was certainly not easy walking over four hours from 23rd Street in Manhattan where their school, the United Nations International School, is located. By sheer chance, their mother, Song Sri, had remained in the neighborhood after dropping the girls at school and was able to pick them up. They met up with the girls' father, Tim Boyle, who works at the United Nations Development Program. "I grew up in England in the 1970s when the IRA terrorist attacks were at their peak, so I know there is not much you can do to protect yourself from terrorism," said Boyle.

Annabel Gat, a student at St. Jean Baptiste School on 75th Street and Lexington Avenue, was asked to leave the school along with her classmates. "The teachers told us what the safe routes were and we set out right after the second period." Gat said she walked for over two hours to get home. "Scores of people were walking so I did not feel scared."

"It seemed as if all of New York was walking," said an exhausted Natasa Bosnjakovic. She had trudged slowly from her office in Chelsea Piers on the West side to the East side before walking uptown to reach the Island. For her, it was a four-hour journey.

Employees of the United Nations were asked to wait outside the building as soon as officials got news of the attack. Nicola Koch works at the Department of Peacekeeping. "We were made to wait in the plaza and, after a short while, to leave. We tried to figure out if we could do something to help but we were told to go home."

People like Dr. Manlan Narcisse, a member of the Advisory Committee of Administration and Budget Question of the U.N., who had arrived there well before 9:00, watched television inside as soon as news of the attack filtered in. "We realized the day was over as far as work was concerned so we walked home."

Luckily for Eliza Kimball, another U.N. employee who lives on the Island, a friend was to have flown in from Rome later that afternoon, so she drove into town and parked her car in a garage on 38th Street. When she was not allowed to enter the U.N., she drove out to pick up her son from his school on 62nd Street and then drove back to the Island before vehicular traffic was stopped on the Queensboro Bridge. She said she saw a lady having trouble walking so she gave her a lift to Jackson Heights, first. "I guess my friend from Rome will not be arriving, after all," said Kimball.

Several residents never reached work at all, having been stopped en route. Joyce Mincheff was stuck in a subway close to the World Trade Center where she works. "We sat in the train for over an hour. Then the conductor announced that, due to police action, we were not going to be let off the train. He told us to get home as soon as we were able. We were let off in midtown Manhattan." Mincheff told a friend that as fighter planes roared over the Queensboro Bridge packed with people fleeing the City, the hikers broke into cheers.

Others, like Georganna Galateau of Rivercross, had not left home at the time of the attack. Her brother called from Connecticut to warn her not to step out. "I did go to buy groceries but I could not use my credit card because the machines were not working. The phone lines were down."

Horrified by the events of the morning, she said, "It does not seem to fit. It is such a beautiful day."

Linda Heimer

The scene from Roosevelt Island Tuesday morning after a second highjacked airliner struck one of the World Trade Center Twin Towers. Both were still standing, though wounded, when this picture was taken from inside Rivercross. By Wednesday afternoon, the odor of the rubble had reached Roosevelt Island.

Getting Home from page 1

Roosevelt Island Bridge, via the Queensboro. One weary family pulled luggage behind them. A pair of police officers guarded the entrance to the Island, checking all motor vehicles. Only residents were allowed entry. Any suspicious vehicles, such as a large van filled with six men, were turned away.

By three-thirty, most of those arriving to the Island by foot had come from areas less directly affected by the morning's tragic chain of events. They were exhausted after treks that had lasted as long as four hours.

Rivercross resident Cathy Holmes and her daughter Genny crossed the bridge hand in hand. They had walked uptown from East 23rd Street, where Cathy had picked up Genny, a sixth grader at the United Nations International School. "The whole FDR drive was shut down," said Genny Holmes. Like many students, Genny had been well informed of the day's events. "We could see from the downstairs window all the ambulances, fire trucks, everything coming down." The first thing Cathy Holmes planned to do when she got home was to pray "for all those people." Genny, who fell into tears when she spoke that evening at the nondenominational service held at the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, became solemn. She was going to "see how my uncle's doing. He's a Navy captain."

Other Islanders talked about emotional reunions with their loved ones. Yolanda James, Eastview resident and sophomore at the St. Jean Baptiste High School on East 72nd Street, thought first about her mother when her school announced the bombing. "I was not scared for myself. I was scared for my mother – she works at the ABC building on 66th Street. I didn't think that anything had happened, but there's something still in the back of your mind."

It wasn't until four hours after the initial announcement that she was finally reunited with her mother, who picked her up at school at two o'clock. She broke into a smile the width of her face when she remembered the moment they were reunited. "My God, I gave her a hug." Some of her friends may not have been so lucky. "My friend said they think her father was on the plane that bombed the World Trade Center."

Rivercross resident Larry Blumberg, who was walking over the Roosevelt Island bridge with his wife, Robin Lynn, was also concerned about those who had lost loved ones. "I already know someone who died," he said. "The son of a friend of mine was in the plane that crashed." Lynn, who works at the Jewish Museum on 92nd Street, which was evacuated immediately after the bombings, offered sentiments that echoed throughout the day on Roosevelt Island.

"I just hope none of our neighbors were there," she said. And although she lived through the first terrorist attack on U.S. soil, in 1975, Lynn was shaken by the day's events. "The scope of it is what scared me. Is it the aftershock? Is it over? Is it continuing? You don't know," she said. Blumberg was quick to point out that, despite their exhaustion, the couple had been extremely lucky. "It's a big nothing compared to what's going on out there," he said.

Other residents were closer to the chaos. Trial lawyers Mark Herman and Bill Beinin, and Herman's daughter Briana, who recently finished law school, were heading to court in lower Manhattan when the first plane crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. "We actually saw the building disappear, we felt the shock," Mark Herman said.

Not knowing where else to go, the three decided to get something to eat. "When we went in to lunch there were two buildings, when we came out, they were gone," said Briana Herman. Mark Herman said the scene was "like the walking dead. People were dazed and shocked. Covered with ashes and soot."

Beinin likened the atmosphere to a war zone. "You see these movies of World War II, and people, refugees, running into different countries to escape terror? That's what it was. It's like the day of the refugees." Briana Herman said, "People were bloody, they had no shoes on."

Barbara Kurka, a Rivercross resident, worked in the World Trade Center when it was the target of a terrorist attack in 1993. Today, as she walked home from 56th Street with Jim LaBarbera of Westview, she could only think about how lucky she was that her company had relocated. "I'm glad we moved out, and I'm uptown," she said.

Like the majority of New Yorkers, Roosevelt Islanders dealt with the day with great courage and aplomb, always remembering to keep things in perspective. Although Anne Kubisch joked that her daughter, Marina Montgomery, a third grader at Brearley, had complained the whole walk home from her school on 83rd Street and East End Avenue, Marina managed to smile as she tugged on her mother's hand to hurry them home. The mother and daughter got a free ride over the Queensboro Bridge from a Samaritan cabbie who had been taxiing doctors to hospitals and other New Yorkers around the City for free all day. Kubisch gave him a $20 tip after he dropped them off at Queensboro Plaza.

Marina, who was impatient to return home since her mother began recounting their experience, tugged at Kubisch's sleeve as they were about to continue towards home, and whispered something in her mother's ear. "Our taxi driver's niece was in the World Trade Center, and he's not sure if she's okay. He was going to go home and call and see if they knew anything," Kubisch said, repeating her daughter's whisper.

Back on Main Street, Rivercross resident Toby Coddington was walking toward Motorgate in full Army fatigues, with a large pack on his back. He looked ready to go off to war. After spending the day trying to reach his military superiors, Coddington finally got through and was called to duty in Staten Island. As he continued northward on the Island, Coddington was an unfamiliarly haunting figure for a country that has taken peace and security for granted.

After the subway reopened, the streets became more crowded, as people began to stream in from the Island's southern end. Residents walked back from Gristede's with groceries under their arms, in an attempt to carry on with normal life. Their purchases swung in plastic yellow bags with bright blue lettering bearing the name of the supermarket and an imprint of the New York City skyline. It is a zigzag of rooftops that has become so familiar that even chain markets and coffee cups have adopted it as their symbol. Among the nondescript high rises, the Twin Towers stand out proud and vigilant. Today, the bag seemed a mocking reminder: This is a skyline that exists no longer.

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While some felt anger, others felt betrayed by God. "I am having a hard time believing in God today," said Kate Halpern, 21, who has lived on the Island all her life. She said she had believed the United States was an invincible superpower, but now she felt unsure and unsafe. "I saw two buildings collapse before my eyes – two buildings that I had seen out of my window all my life."

Pointing out that, just the way the previous generation was asked where they were when Kennedy was assassinated, her generation would be asked where they were when the Twin Towers were sabotaged. "I just hope there'll be something better tomorrow," she said.

The audience cried when 11-year old Genevieve Holmes sobbed that she did not understand why people hurt one another and why wars are fought. She said she feared for the safety of her uncle, who is in the military and might be hurt in a war.

Sheila Chazin struck a chord when she said she had spent the day thinking about what is really important in life. "I realized that a lot of what I spend time on is not really important. The important thing is to talk to and spend time with those we care about. I spent the day calling people to see if they were all right and if they needed to talk." Her thoughts were backed by Ronnye Halpern, the coordinator of Grief Services at Cabrini Hospital, who said that it was important to stay connected and talk. "Talking will help us get through this," said Halpern.

Linda Heimer

Estelle Doyle asked those gathered in the Chapel to pray for her son, a paramedic deployed to duties at the World Trade Center.

Several people felt unable to protect their children and said that made them feel vulnerable. "I am afraid for the children," said Joe Strong. "This was a violent act towards them, my family and this country." He then asked everyone to join him in singing "God Bless America." They did.

A mother of two young boys, Hsien Tan, said her sons wanted to know why this violent act was committed and, though her first instinct was to sugar-coat her explanation, she thought it necessary to tell them the truth. Nneka Pope suggested parents tell their children to remain focused and "centered on doing good."

Prayers were offered in different ways: kneeling and praying silently, through singing hymns, in the Jewish tradition by holding hands, and in the Christian tradition by reading psalms aloud.

Updates on
WEbsite NYC10044
www.nyc10044.com

RIOC Meeting Cancelled

Thursday morning's scheduled meeting of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation Board of Directors was cancelled in the wake of Tuesday's events in Manhattan.

There is no definite schedule for returning the Tram to service, but absent additional threatening events, it may be running again as early as Friday.

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