

Next scheduled issue:
Saturday, January 26

The Main Street WIRE

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

in association with Website NYC10044 www.nyc10044.com

Delegation to Meet with Pataki on Elected RIOC

A delegation from the Maple Tree Group (MTG) was scheduled to meet Friday with Governor George Pataki to discuss legislation to convert the appointed Board of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) to a Board of residents, elected by residents.

The meeting, scheduled after *The WIRE*'s final deadline, was arranged by State Senator Olga Mendez. It was originally scheduled, but postponed, for several dates prior to the September 11 attack, then delayed while the City and State coped with its aftermath.

Wednesday night, Steve Marcus, Chair of the Residents Association's Government Relations Committee, told members of its Common Council of the meeting. He listed a delegation of a half-dozen members of MTG, which has been working since 1997 toward legislation for a locally-elected RIOC Board supervising a professional community manager.

Legislation for locally-elected governance of Roosevelt Island has been introduced in the State Legislature several times, but has consistently foundered on legislative gridlock over the State budget, or suffered from lack of coordination and cooperation between Assemblymember Pete Grannis and Senator Mendez. Grannis called upon MTG to get the Governor on board, which resulted in planning for a meeting through Mendez, who has the Governor's ear, having supported him for re-election.

Resident Wins Award in 1998 Tram-Crane Crash

The first of the personal-injury cases stemming from the Tram-crane collision of January 24, 1998, was settled this week on the eve of a jury trial.

Manhattan Park resident George Reither was awarded \$700,000.

Reither and more than a dozen other passengers were injured when a crane being used in work on the Queensboro Bridge reached into the path of the Tram cabin. When the cabin hit the crane, its forward motion tipped the cabin nearly 90 degrees. It then swung wildly. (See reprinted report, page 7.)

Reither sustained injuries to his neck that ultimately required the fusing of several vertebrae and surgical implant of a metal support. His medical costs approached \$100,000.

"It isn't worth it," Reither said Wednesday, weighing six months of lost time, "horrendous surgery," and a stiff neck that makes driving and other ordinary activities more difficult than before.

Recalling the accident, Reither said, "I was standing in the back of the Tram, in the southeast corner, and all of a sudden I heard a crunch. I tried to hold on as the cabin started to tip, but I went flying backwards. I noticed that I hurt my elbow. I don't know if I broke my elbow

See **Crash**, page 7

Briefly...

Father Luke McCann is leaving Roosevelt Island and St. Frances Cabrini Parish. The Archbishop has reassigned him to Tivoli, New York, near Kingston.

The 80-or-so physicians at Coler-Goldwater have won a minimum 9% raise over three years in their first union contract, ratified December 17. Over 6% of the raise is retroactive to January 1 or July 1, 2001. The doctors had voted January 18, 2001, to be represented by a union called Doctors Council. A contract provision which establishes higher base salaries means that nearly half the doctors will actually receive increases of 10% to as much as 25%.

Tramway Down to Mid-February As Problem of Short Cable Considered

by Robert Laux-Bachand

Mid-February is the goal for resumption of Tram service, Red Blomer, president of American Tramways Inc., said this week.

The Tram has been shut down since November 24, when American Tramways began a major repair and maintenance project. The work was nearly finished during the week of December 16 when the company's technicians committed one of the nightmarish mistakes of the aerial Tramway and ski-lift industry: In connecting a new haul rope to the Tram cabin assemblies, they trimmed the excess cable too much, leaving it a little over eight feet short of the length necessary to allow both cabins to dock in their proper places.

The mistake, a "human error," as Blomer called it, wasn't noticed until the workers tried to dock the cabins.

On December 21, one day after the Tram's scheduled resumption of service, American Tramways, which is based in Watertown, N.Y., abruptly laid off its entire Roosevelt Island work force. The employees had been helping with the project. Twenty-one people were out of work: four supervisors, including the lead supervisor, Armando Cordova, three mechanics, nine cabin attendants and four station attendants, all members of the International Union of Operating Engineers, plus one nonunion cashier. One worker is putting in a few hours a week checking and maintaining the correct tension on the cables.

The workers were left without their regular paychecks after the holidays and now face the possibility of losing their health benefits at the end of the month. Stopgap

measures, such as federally guaranteed COBRA coverage (an acronym for Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act), are expensive – well over \$600 per month.

Blomer said there was no alternative to the layoffs and shutdown. With no fares coming in, there is no money for the payroll. And although the Austrian-made rope is "perfectly fine," he said, it "cannot dock properly to allow proper boarding and debarking."

Blomer has been in the business

for many years and has supervised much of the Roosevelt Island Tramway's heavy maintenance work since the late 1980s. In that period, the haul rope has been replaced about five times. The cable, which runs through a bullwheel on Roosevelt Island, supplies the torque that moves the cabins back and forth over the East River. It is about 1,000 meters long, weighs more than 38 tons, and consists of a polypropylene core wrapped with six steel strands. Blomer said he

See **Tram**, page 4

RIRSD Plans Further Appeal on Southtown

Roosevelt Islanders for Responsible Southtown Development (RIRSD) is planning to appeal December's ruling in its Article 78 challenge to Southtown.

The case, originally heard in May, 2000, challenged the RIOC Board's go-ahead on the Southtown plan of developers Related and Hudson on several grounds, among them that it encroached on land reserved for a six-acre Blackwell Park buffer between Northtown and Southtown.

The initial court decision went against two resident groups – RIRSD and Robert Chira's Alternative Southtown Development Committee – and went to the Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court, which essentially affirmed the lower ruling last month. A detailed story on the Appellate ruling was part of a *WIRE* extra issued December 21; its main report is reproduced in part on page 6, along with a letter from RIRSD and another from RIRA's counsel.

In their letter, the RIRSD steering committee writes, "Our counsel is convinced that the recent decision erred in numerous areas and they're optimistic that the Court of Appeals will be willing to hear this case. Given the intricacy of some of the legal issues involved, the public importance of the case, and their belief that the lower court just got some things wrong, [our counsel is] as anxious as we are to continue this fight."

The law firm of LeBoeuf Lamb is trying the case pro bono.

The RIRSD letter continues, "Our lawyers expect to file the appeal request by the end of the week. Too much is at stake for the future of the Island for us to stop at this point."

RIRSD hoped to have a further appeal – to the highest and last level available – under way by week's end.



George Reither

First Person

Mugged on Promenade, Resident Fights Back, Wins

by Lee Edelman

I was mugged on the promenade. And I did what I had to do.

I was on my way home from work the evening of December 20, a little later than usual but not too late, about 8:30.

And I took my normal route out of the subway, crossing at the crosswalk before the bus stop and down to the promenade to walk along the river and enjoy the water vistas so beautifully afforded us who live here. Occupied with thoughts of my wife and son with whom I would soon be spending the remains of a very long work-day, I was paying little attention to what was going on around me. It wasn't until I was approaching the second set of stone stairs that head up from the promenade to the street above that I noticed them.

There was the small one walking in the opposite direction toward the subway. There was another, taller and slim just ahead to my left as I was walking, and a third similar to the second, dead ahead. Still nothing entered my head except a few youths walking along. The small one

looked intently at me as we passed. I looked at him and thought of saying hello but changed my mind. A couple of steps more and the three of them were on me, pushing me up against the wall. The little one whipped out a long-barreled gun, and in a flash of silver or white it was up against my neck, under my jaw.

"Give us your money," the middle one demanded.

"Please, don't take my ID," I said as my hands went up.

The middle one and the one to my right, the two taller ones, started to go through the pockets of my pants, shirt and open jacket.

They weren't finding anything. I keep my wallet in my side bag that was slung over my shoulder.

The few seconds of their frantic search and rising frustration gave me a moment to recover from the initial shock of the attack, and thoughts rushed into my mind. The gun that was held to my neck and at that moment was being withdrawn – I was sure was plastic. It had that light, hollow, and somewhat slippery feel that is so characteristic of plastic.

I was sure it was not a real gun.

"Where's the money!" the tall one in front of me demanded, frustrated and angered.

"It's not there," I responded. "It's in the bag."

Years earlier I had been attacked similarly, but in an even more open and public place, the concourse level of Rockefeller Center right outside the post office. In that instance all they used was a finger. At that time, I listened to everything I had ever heard: "Don't resist,"

"Give them whatever they want." They got clean away with a lot of value. Afterward, for the longest time I was upset with myself. I had let myself be violated and deeply abused by a finger. The sense of impotence was deeply disturbing and it took me a long period of fantasy-filled nights and frustration-laden days for me to recover. A

long time.

Here I was again being attacked with a phony weapon, and I knew if I didn't act I would be doomed to more of the awfulness I had experienced before, only now, having it so close to

See **Edelman**, page 8

Now that Roosevelt Island is served by the F train, with a route that goes deeper into Queens, is there a chance of increased crime here? Judging by this recent incident, it may be asking too much of criminals to think through the lack of escape routes on an Island. *The WIRE* asked Lee Edelman to recount his experience.



The Editorial Page

Same Thing, Only Smarter

Would an Island governed by a RIOC Board composed of elected residents, setting policy for professional community management, have prevented the short-cutting of the Tramway haul cable? That would be – you should excuse the expression – a stretch. So, probably not.

But it very likely would eliminate the kind of speculation heard Wednesday night at the RIRA Common Council meeting – that, although the cable was not deliberately cut short, RIOC may try to use a long outage as its “proof” that Roosevelt Islanders don’t need the Tramway. Such are the suspicions clouding around New York State management of this community.

Meanwhile, we hear of wheelchair-bound residents waiting in the cold in Manhattan for an hour because the red buses can handle only a limited number of wheelchairs at a time. Those motorized chairs just can’t get on and off the subway, and the subway is useless anyway, when you can’t predict what elevators will be working when you get into Manhattan.

So an essential service is out, and residents are raising suspicious questions about RIOC motives.

Here, we can let the question of motives go unresolved.

But we can take heart that members of the Maple Tree Group are finally meeting (on Friday, after the deadline for this issue) with Governor George Pataki for a serious talk about giving residents here responsibility for their Island community. As we have observed so many times before, local people in charge of local affairs is bedrock America, except here. And most everybody recognizes that professional community management, supervised by elected residents, would deliver better value than we’re getting now.

Wednesday night, when a doubter asked Common Council alternate Margie Smith what residents would do if in charge at 591 Main Street, in place of the current bunch of political appointees, she answered, *Same thing they’re doin’, only smarter.*

And, we might add, they’d do it with a greater consciousness of this community as a place where people live.

Go, Gifford!

One of the Island’s great friends, Councilmember Gifford Miller, has become Speaker of the City Council. We can’t help but be happy for him, and to note that this may put him in a better position to scrutinize New York State’s mishandling of New York City property – namely, Roosevelt Island. That’s the subject of a meeting, in ten days, of the Roosevelt Island Committee of Community Board 8 (see *ComingUp*, page 2).

So we might hope that the Governor, faced with a choice between a four-year-old movement for self-governance backed by 92% and 80% votes of residents on the one hand – and a City cry of *Default!* on the other, might focus quickly on the merits of local people running local communities.

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Letters

To Robert Ryan, President, RIOC
Dear Mr. Ryan, and Dear Ms. Labate:

Monday, January 7th brought our first real winter storm of the season. Starting with rain, it turned to a light snow, leaving a light covering of snow and ice overnight. Tuesday morning at 8:30 I walked from Rivercross to the tennis bubble. The sidewalk was salted up to the end of the Rivercross lawn. From there to the subway sidewalk, there was a thin layer of ice and snow with no salt or sand covering. The sidewalk in front of the subway was clear. From beyond the subway sidewalk to the tennis bubble there was no salt or sand treatment. Footing was treacherous for commuters and school children walking to the subway, for Goldwater employees walking from the subway to work and for the few lucky tennis players on their way to the bubble.

By my return trip at 10:00 the walkways had been salted, so some time after 8:30 the RIOC’s work crew got the job done, but that is much too late for the many who were exposed to hazardous walking conditions before the salting.

Is this what we can expect from RIOC in reaction to winter storms for the rest of the season?

Richard FitzPatrick

In an **EXTRA** dated December 21, *The WIRE* reported on the decision by the Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court rejecting an appeal by two resident groups contesting a July, 2000, State Supreme Court decision on Southtown development. The following letters, and additional letters on page 6, react to that decision (full text on *Website NYC10044* at www.nyc10044.com) and the reports in the **EXTRA**.

To the Editor:

While I am personally disappointed with the outcome of the Southtown lawsuit, especially considering that the GDP (General Development Plan) for Roosevelt Island) is now considered merely “illustrative,” I am very thankful that our fellow neighbors have invested so much of their time, their efforts, and their *money* on behalf of the Roosevelt Island community.

In particular, I’d like to thank the RIRSD folks (Lee Edelman, Linda Heimer, Nurit Marcus, Steve Marcus, Joyce Mincheff, Margie Smith) and the former RIRA Legal Action Fund Chair (Sherie Helstien) for spreading community awareness, their leadership and reasoned arguments, and their fundraising efforts.

Regardless of one’s opinion on the Southtown lawsuit or its outcome, I think we can all appreciate the honor of “Fighting the Good Fight” on behalf of the community. I hope other residents will extend a *Thank You* to these volunteers.

Frank Farance

To the Editor:

With the outcome of this [Southtown] lawsuit, we have learned nothing new. We already knew that the residents of Roosevelt Island were considered irrelevant, seen from all the decisions taken by the management of RIOC, which does not care for this Island, except to exploit it and take their fat salaries.

Why care? They do not live here and at the end of a working day they go back to their homes elsewhere. I would like to know if they are also considered “irrelevant” in the places where they live! I think the arguments on which the judges’ decision was based are outrageous and insulting.

Happy New Year.

Adriana Vink

To the Editor:

I have never lived on Roosevelt Island, but my parents, Paula and Patrick and brothers, Peter and Anthony, were here at the beginning. So I have been interested to watch the news and progress of the Island.

The recent court decision that the people of Roosevelt Island have no standing in regards to development in their neighborhood goes against the principles of land-use laws. Residents have my sincere empathy for what is a truly disheartening event. I am guessing that there may be further legal maneuvers available to have your voices heard.

But what really must follow from all this is a lesson for all New York State: gubernatorial “authorities” are anti-democratic at their roots. They should have ceased with the death of Robert Moses.

Among the good people of Roosevelt Island are talented writers, journalists, researchers, and those who know and work with them. Someone, please write the story of how the people were ignored, as a warning to the voters, when faced with the next bond issue creating an “authority.” It may prove to be as big a bestseller as *The Power Broker*.

Paul Sheridan Brooklyn, NY

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: By e-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com (ASCII text preferred or use any wordprocessing software, but no MSWord files with macros), or PC-standard 3.5-inch floppy disk left at 531 Main Street for *The WIRE*. **Alternatives:** Typed, double-spaced copy left at 531 Main Street or faxed to (212) 755-2540. Clearly handwritten 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.

Letters deadline for Jan. 26 issue: Jan. 21
Letters received after deadline will be considered on a space-available basis

COMING UP

Compiled by *WIRE* staff – Fax information to 755-2540
e-mail ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com
or click on the e-mail link at www.nyc10044.com

Sat., Jan. 12, 10:00 a.m.-12 noon, Adult Computer Class: Introduction to Microsoft Word, Library. Pre-registration required; call 308-6243; limit of four in class.

Sat., Jan. 12, 10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m., ABC's of Private School Admission, seminar led by Dr. Gina Lipton; first in a series of four family-related topics, \$20, at Island Kids, 536 Main Street. Information: 758-8408.

Mon., Jan. 14, Island Kids spring semester starts; brochures at Public Safety or call 758-8408 for information.

Tue., Jan. 15, 6:30 p.m., Book Discussion, *Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri, Library. Advance registration required.

Thur., Jan. 17, 6:30 p.m., Nuts & Bolts of Writing Fiction with Island novelist Gwynne Forster, Library. Pre-registration required; call 308-6243.

Fri., Jan. 18, 10:00-11:00 a.m., Adult Computer Class: E-mail for Beginners, Library. Pre-registration required; limit of four in class; call 308-6243.

Tue., Jan. 22, 7:00 p.m., Meeting of Roosevelt Island Committee of Community Board 8, Island House Community Room, 575 Main Street. Topic: Future actions of the committee.

Thur., Jan. 24, 6:30 p.m., Nuts & Bolts of Writing Fiction (part 2) with Island novelist Gwynne Forster, Library. Pre-registration required; call 308-6243.

Thur., Jan. 24, 6:30 p.m., meeting of RIRA Housing Committee and RIRA Membership Committee. Information: 758-8634.

Sat., Jan. 26, next issue of *The Main Street WIRE*. **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., Jan. 18; decision on staffers for *The Bag*, Mon., Jan. 21, with materials due Thur., Jan. 24. **Future issues** generally every two weeks as follows: Feb. 9, Feb. 23, Mar 9, Mar 23, Apr. 6, Apr. 20, May 4, May 18, June 1, June 15, June 29 (Fourth of July issue), July 27 (reduced summer schedule), Aug 24, Sept. 7, Sept. 21, Oct. 5, Oct. 19, Nov. 2 (pre-election issue), Nov. 9

(post-election), Nov. 23, Dec. 14 (holiday issue). **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 ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com.

Tue., Jan. 29, 6:30 p.m., Magician Matess, Library. Free. Children of all ages are welcome.

Sat., Feb. 2, 7:00 p.m., Concert – Georgie Bonds and the Blues-keepers, PS/IS 217 Auditorium, presented by the PS/IS 217 Beacon Program of the Roosevelt Island Youth Program. Free.

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

Tue., Feb. 19, 6:30 p.m., Book Discussion, *Surfacing* by Margaret Atwood, Library. Advance registration required.

Sat., Mar. 2, 7:00 p.m., Concert – Los Soneros de Oriente, Son style Afro-Cuban song, PS/IS 217 Auditorium, presented by the PS/IS 217 Beacon Program of the Roosevelt Island Youth Program. Free.

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

Tue., Mar. 19, 6:30 p.m., Book Discussion, *The Reader* by Bernhard Schlink, Library. Advance registration required.

Wed., Apr. 3, 8:00 p.m., Residents Association Common Council Meeting, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Tue., Apr. 16, 6:30 p.m., Book Discussion, *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood* by Rebecca Wells, Library. Advance registration required.

Wed., May 1, 8:00 p.m., Residents Association Common Council Meeting, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Tue., May 21, 6:30 p.m., Book Discussion, *Cold Mountain* by Charles Frazier, Library. Advance registration required.



Eugene Schapiro

A resident of Rivercross for almost 25 years, Eugene Schapiro died December 29. Known to all his friends as Gene, he was married for 56 years to Evelyn (Lynn), who died in November, 1999.

Born June 16, 1919, in Manhattan, Gene served as a navigator in a bomber squadron in World War II. After the war, he worked as an accountant at several firms, then went back to college in 1985 to earn an MSW. He worked several years as a social worker with homeless veterans. Upon retirement, he was a volunteer tutor at PS 217 on the Island, helping many young students to achieve their potential.

After open-heart surgery in 1975, he started running and subsequently ran the New York City marathon several times in his late 50's and 60's.

Both Gene and Lynn were active members of the Ethical Humanist Society of Long Island. Born March 12, 1921, the youngest of five children, Evelyn traveled to Texas to his Army Air Corps training base to marry Gene. They had three sons, two of whom, Stan and Joe, survive them.

Memorial contributions may be made to OneStop Senior Services, 747 Amsterdam Avenue, New York 10025, or in the names of Eugene and Evelyn Schapiro to a charity of one's choice. Some of Gene's friends on the Island may want to join others in a memorial gift to the PS/IS 217 PTA. For information, call 935-9705.

Library Series – Forster on Fiction

Gwynne Forster, the award-winning novelist, will present a two-part workshop, *The Nuts and Bolts of Fiction Writing*, as a special program at the Island Branch of the New York Public Library.



Part one is scheduled at 6:30 p.m. Thursday (January 17), and will cover how to craft a novel. The second part, January 24, will advise on how to make the first sale.

This is the second time the workshops have been given by the author, who was asked to return by Frannie Crook, the branch's Chief Librarian, because of the popularity of her first series. Admission is free, but pre-registration is required due to limited seating.

Gwynne Forster (her nom de plume) is Gwen Johnson-Acsadi to her Roosevelt Island friends. Her first mainstream, general-fiction novel, *When Twilight Comes*, will be published February 1.

Happy New Year, neighbors! The Chinese curse is, "May you live in interesting times," and 2001 was nothing if not interesting. Here's hoping that 2002 will spare us from the curse of making interesting history and that our nation and the world will find a rationale for peace.

Sherie and I celebrated New Year's Eve with River Music, the PTA, and *The Main Street WIRE*, dancing to the big band sounds of the Ray Abrams Orchestra. What a terrific evening! Thanks, everyone. New Year's Day, we were up early to attend Mike Bloomberg's inauguration as New York City's 108th mayor. The next day I sent him the following letter:

Dear Mayor Bloomberg:

It was so nice to see you again yesterday on such a happy occasion. My wife and I want to thank you and your staff for inviting us to participate in such a happy, hopeful day. Everyone involved was helpful and courteous. The hot cider and blankets at City Hall were such a thoughtful touch and, I'm sure, prevented some frostbitten toes during the ceremonies in sub-freezing weather. The reception in the stunningly renovated Tweed Courthouse was great fun and impeccably organized. The catering was terrific and we especially liked the Big Apples in the centerpieces.

Now that the campaign is over, I hope to continue our discussions of Roosevelt Island and its lack of elected representative government. We've just learned (and perhaps you are unaware) that our Tram is down "indefinitely" as a result of the engineering company who operates and maintains it cutting a new haul cable eight feet too short. RIOC responded by laying off the entire Tram operating staff just four days before Christmas. As a businessman, I'm sure you will demand a level of competence in City Hall that is, sadly, missing in the administration of Roosevelt Island. We hope that we can persuade you and your administration to hold RIOC and the State of New York accountable in their stewardship of New York City property.

Happy New Year, Mr. Mayor, and our best wishes for a successful four years.

*Matthew Katz, President
Roosevelt Island
Residents Association*

You may recall that our new Mayor addressed a Town Meeting here last October. Did you know that he came out here with his daughter on the Fourth of July for the fireworks? He was outraged to find that his Metrocard didn't work on our Tram and, after breakfasting with a group from the Island, myself included, gave a press conference in Tram Plaza to decry the state of affairs.

The good news is that Wengerd Farms is still ensconced under Motorgate for the immediate future. The bad news is that we are without a Tram "indefinitely." What RIOC has told me, and what has finally been disseminated by RIOC in official postings, is that the New York State Department of Labor must determine whether the Tram may operate with an eight-foot-short haul cable. With luck, it can, and when I know, so will you.

Other good news: Our blood drive netted 63 pints of Roosevelt Island blood to supplement a diminished City supply. This happened only because you Islanders are who you are. As the Aussies say, "Good on ya, mates!" This compares with the 65 pints raised last Roosevelt Island Day during balmy weather and heavy foot-traffic on Main Street. I know that the Icla da Silva Foundation and the New York Blood Center are pleased. Perhaps our goal of 100 pints was too ambitious. Still, there are 7.9 gallons of blood available to save lives that weren't there on January 4.

Many thanks to RIRA Common Council members Vicki Feinmel, Dolores Green, Rhoda Jacklin, Debbie Julian, Cookie Lugo, Mosud Mannan, Larry Parnes, Ethel Romm, Margie Smith, and David Stone for braving the cold at the Farmer's Market to persuade y'all to sign up and squeeze out a pint. And special thanks to those residents, RIRA members all, who volunteered because that's just the kind of people they are: Sangeeta Goyal, Sherie Helstien, Bruce Kolins, George Rubin, Teri Sheridan, Ron and Fay Vass, and Robin Williams.

My respect and admiration for the effort, professionalism and caring of Alci and Airam da Silva, founders and leaders of the Icla da Silva Foundation, know no bounds. They kept it together when New York Blood Center staffing glitches caused unconscionable backups Saturday morning. My apologies to those of you who had to wait and my thanks to those of you who left and returned to donate later in the day.

As I write this, our Councilmember, Gifford Miller, has just received the votes of his colleagues to become Speaker of the City Council. Our heartiest congratulations to Gifford; we expect great things of you! In Governor Pataki's State of the State address today, he mentioned the need for affordable housing so that New Yorkers aren't forced to leave their communities. Was he thinking of us? The Governor is on record in his support for local control of small communities and for the preservation of parkland. Let's hope we can get his attention as arbiter of Roosevelt Island's future.

As the Common Council starts the second half of its term we will try to continue sponsoring those events that make us visible on Main Street: parties and dances, fundraisers, and Town Meetings. If your building reps aren't out there sharing information, selling Cokes, pushing a broom, making Roosevelt Island a better place to live, kick 'em in the butt and make them do better. You elect us, we serve you. Make your vote count by insisting on excellence!

The RIRA Column



Matthew Katz
RIRA President
e-mail: matthewkatz@rcn.com

Senior Center

Monday
10:30, **Blood Pressure Screening**
12:45, **Arts & Crafts** (RIDA)

Tuesday
10:00, **Jazzercise**
1:30, **Games** (RISA)

Wednesday
9:15, **Stay Well Exercise**
10:00, **English as 2nd Language** (beginner)
11:00, **English as 2nd Language** (intermediate)
12:30, **Oriental Calligraphy** (Jan. 16)

Thursday
10:00, **Tai Chi**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
12:30, **Movie**
7:00, **Dance Class**

Friday
9:00, **Citizenship**
10:00, **English as 2nd Language** (beginner)
10:15, **Canceled until February: Yoga Stretch**

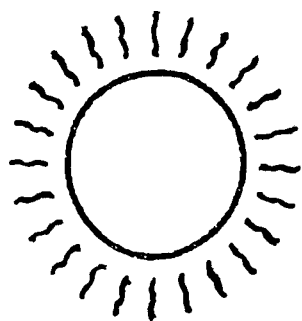
11:00, English as 2nd Language (intermediate)
11:15, **Stay Well**
7:30, **Lotto**

Saturday
7:30, **Bingo** (RISA)
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Tram from page 1

knows what people are thinking. “For the layperson, ‘Look, how the hell can you be eight feet short?’” he said.

But it’s not as simple as cutting five feet of yarn, he said: the procedure is complicated, there are “layers and stages to go through,” and in the ski-lift and Tram business, mistakes do happen. “It’s not the first time and it won’t be the last,” he said. “I’d do anything to have it back, but it’s not a reality, and the reality is that we have to find a way to cope with the situation.”

The solution that American Tramways arrived at – after considering “a dozen different scenarios,” Blomer said – was to modify the way the haul cable is attached to the approximately meter-wide bollard, or drum, at



Tram cabin #2 sits on the grass at the Island Tramway station while the short-cable problem is sorted out.

the top of the cabin’s carriage assembly, in such a way as to recover 11 feet of cable. “We’re saving one wrap around that,” he said, “and increasing the plate clamps that hold the initial section of the rope to create the same equivalent holding force.” The holding power and rope tensions would be altered to achieve “the same amount of safety” associated with a multiple wrap around the bollard.

Going from a 2.5 to a 1.5 wrap is essentially an engineering problem, one that must be reviewed by the Division of Health & Safety of the New York State Department of Labor.

Blomer said that the company’s Swiss-based engineers were making a submittal of technical information and drawings to the State agency.

In preparing for the submittal, Blomer said, the company’s personnel had already met with State engineers on site to brief them on the proposal and show them the components. “They commented very favorably on the proposal,” he said. “They are willing to work with us on this thing as long as we could provide them with a good engineering package that answers the questions.”

The Division of Health & Safety’s engineering services unit is in charge of permit

applications for a grab bag of events and devices: large tents, elevators, ski lifts and Tramways, window cleaning scaffolds, places of public assembly. Its industry inspection bureau enforces safety regulations covering these activities, doing 9,000 carnival ride inspections a year, for example. There’s even a Passenger Tramway Advisory Council, supported by the bureau, which advises the State labor commissioner.

Blomer’s hope for a mid-February reopening rests on the smooth completion of several approval steps, and the rigging and testing of the line.

A spokeswoman for the Labor Department said that the plans that American Tramways will submit to Albany must first be stamped, or approved, by a New York State licensed engineer. Once that is done, the division’s engineers will take up the matter; she said they can generally pass on an application within about a week after they receive it.

The final green light has to come from the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, which owns the Tram. John Melia, RIOC’s newly-appointed vice president for public information and community affairs, said RIOC would follow the Labor Department’s findings. If the State rejects the modification, a new cable would have to be installed, in which case, Blomer said, it could be months before service resumes.

RIOC, which has been closely monitoring the situation, said that the plans were to be delivered from Europe to Watertown this week. American Tramways is a unit of the Doppelmayr group of Austria. The Tramway was built by the Swiss company Von Roll, whose aerial transportation business was absorbed by Doppelmayr in 1996. Thus, the adjustments under review now are coming from the same company that installed the system 26 years ago.

Melia described the overall repair project, which cost \$350,000, as the most extensive in the Tramway’s history. Blomer said the carriages, which connect the cabins to the stationary track cables, were rebuilt. Bearings, bushings, hanger arms, axle components, and the main hanger tubes were replaced, and the hydraulic track-rope brakes on both cars were rebuilt. An engineer from Switzerland conducted a mechanical inspection, and the welds and electrical system were also inspected.

Island residents have complained about the timing of the work, and Blomer conceded that it’s preferable to do a shutdown in the summer. American Tramways did not get the contract to operate the Tram until July, the cable had not been ordered at that time, and other problems pushed back the work, he said.

“The maintenance had to be done,” Blomer said, and it was his judgment that for safety reasons it couldn’t wait until July, 2002, for example. Others familiar with the project said that a Canadian testing company had found numerous flaws in the 6-year-old haul cable, and Blomer himself told *The WIRE* last summer that it had exceeded its normal usefulness by a year or two.

“We want it to be safe and to get to the other end without a problem,” Blomer said, adding that it’s in the best interests of American Tramways employees, Island residents, and the company itself to get the Tram running again as soon as possible.

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would like to extend our warmest thanks to everyone who helped make our New Year's Eve Fundraiser, featuring the Ray Abrams Big Band, a swinging success.

We'd like to acknowledge the following individuals; without their assistance we would never have been able to pull it off.

Dick Lutz and *The Main Street WIRE* for the inspiration and for getting the message out.

Robin Russell and River Music for bringing us the sound.

Nancy and Worth Howe of The Main Street Theatre for the loan of the risers.

Pete, José, Manuel, Pedro, Rickey, and Julio from PS/IS 217 for their dedication to our children, their labor, and their sweat.

Israel and Wengerd Farms for the wonderful fruits and veggies we munched on, and his continuing support.

John Catsimatidis and Gristede's for the New Year's cake and the large gift basket of sweets we raffled off.

Julie's Sports Bar for taking a chance on us.

Dolores Green of RISA for the great deal on the hors d'oeuvres.

Marilyn and the staff from The Manhattan Park Theater Club for giving us the time we needed to set up.

And last but not least, Fay Christian, a PS/IS 217 teacher who came back to help us clean up at 1:00 a.m. on New Year's morning.

Happy New Year!



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Roosevelt Island on the Web

Island History:

www.nyc10044.com/timeln/timeline.html

Southtown History:

www.nyc10044.com/stnchron/chron.html

WIRE back issues, too

In Landmark Ruling, Court Rejects Residents’ Southtown Challenge

by **Robert Laux-Bachand**
The Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court has dismissed a challenge to Southtown, allowing the long-stalled housing development to go forward.
The unanimous decision of the five-judge panel, handed down Tuesday (December 18), is a victory for the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) and the developers it selected to build the 1,956-unit complex, the Related Companies, LP, and The Hudson Companies, Inc.

The first two buildings on the 19-acre site, which has been fenced off since early 2001, are expected to house workers from Upper East Side medical institutions.

The Hudson/Related plan and RIOC’s approval of it in September, 1999, were challenged by three sets of residents: Roosevelt Islanders for Responsible Southtown Development (RIRSD); the Alternative Southtown Design Committee; and the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA).

In an unusually-long 33-page opinion written by the presiding judge, Eugene Nardelli, a 1999 appointee of Governor George Pataki, the Court rejected all of the arguments presented by RIRSD and Alternative in their briefs and at the June 12 oral arguments. The judges also rejected the Residents Association’s attempt to intervene in the proceedings, saying that the trial court acted properly when it excluded the organization, which filed its motion to intervene three months after a statutory deadline.

The decision supported all but one of Justice Harold Tompkins’ rulings in his trial-court decision in July, 2000. His one error was confusing RIRSD with RIRA, and thereby finding that RIRSD was too late in filing its papers.

In fact, the bulk of Nardelli’s opinion is devoted to RIRSD’s appeal, which was prepared on a pro bono basis by LeBoeuf, Lamb, Greene & MacRae, a large Manhattan law firm. The opinion contains only passing references to

Alternative’s appeal, which was prepared by Robert Chira, a lawyer and Island resident.

The Appeals-Court decision deals with three major questions:

- Was the RIOC board’s 4-0 vote to approve the project valid?
- Did RIOC violate the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) when it decided against ordering a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement?
- Does the plan violate the Island’s General Development Plan? The court describes the GDP as setting forth “a broad program for the development of the Island” into two distinct areas, Northtown and Southtown, which were to be separated by “approximately six acres.”

On the first point, the Court concluded that “the unanimous vote by the four [RIOC Board] members present at the Sept. 22, 1999, meeting, who constituted a majority of the six members then in office, was a valid action by the board.” RIRSD had argued that under New York’s General Construction Law, the four members at the meeting failed to constitute a quorum even though several of the nine Board slots were unfilled. Nardelli held that the explicit language of the RIOC act, allowing action by a “majority of the directors then in office,” permits a variance from the General Construction law.

RIRSD had framed part of its argument on this question in broad terms, asserting that the RIOC Board “could conceivably dwindle to one member,” thus defeating the basic purpose of a quorum requirement, which is to assure that governmental proceedings are democratic. The appellate decision does not stray into this territory. Nardelli also dismissed a claim that the board members representing the State housing commissioner and budget director were improperly designated because they came from a pool of designees.

On the second question – compliance with the State environmental law – Alternative and RIRSD

This **WIRE EXTRA** was published Friday, December 21 (2001), reporting on a decision in the Southtown case by the Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court. Because distribution was spotty during the holiday period, the lead story is republished in this issue, along with letters from RIRA’s attorney and from the steering committee of one of the litigants, Roosevelt Islanders for Responsible Southtown Development (RIRSD). The full issue is available on Website NYC10044 at www.nyc10044.com, along with the text of the appeal decision. Some printed copies may still be available at merchant storefronts.

contended that RIOC should have ordered a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on the Hudson/Related plan, which differs greatly from the original 1990 plan for the site.

But the Court approved of the way RIOC handled the matter, noting that, at RIOC’s direction, Hudson/Related hired the same company that prepared the full Environmental Impact Statement for the original project – a 600-page report – to do an environmental assessment of the changes planned for Southtown. The trial court held this was a sufficiently “hard look” at the possible effects, and said the changes fall short of the extensive requirements for additional studies.

The size of Blackwell Park figures in this part of the ruling:

“Petitioners first assert that the Related/Hudson site plan reduces the size of Blackwell Park by more than a third, from approximately six acres to 3.86 acres, although they fail to acknowledge that the park was actually encroached upon by prior development in connection with Northtown.

“Further, the Related/Hudson



site plan increases the total amount of open space from 8.2 acres to 15.1 acres, with 5.4 acres of open space between Northtown and Southtown, which is ‘approximately six acres,’” even though the space is not contiguous.

The Court’s open-space finding closely follows the arguments presented by the respondents’ law

firms, Carter, Ledyard & Milburn, for RIOC, and Sive, Paget & Riesel, for Hudson/Related.

Nardelli also rejected the assertion that the 1999 environmental assessment failed to adequately evaluate the impact of shadows on Blackwell House. Hudson/Related’s buildings will be closer
See **Ruling**, page 9

RIRSD: “Too much at stake...”

To The Community:

Many of you saw the last issue of *The WIRE* and probably concluded that the Southtown fight was over. Not so. We (RIRSD) are taking the case to a higher level.

We filed our original suit to stop the current plan for Southtown because we sincerely believe it will be disastrous for the Island. We simply cannot give up now, especially since the legal decisions handed down have been so flawed.

We’ve been told that we, as a community, have no legal standing when it comes to how the Island will be developed. They refer to us as “merely an incidental beneficiary.”

Our counsel (LeBoeuf Lamb) is convinced that the recent decision erred in numerous areas and they’re optimistic that the Court of Appeals will be willing to hear this case. Given the intricacy of some of the legal issues involved, the public importance of the case, and their belief that the lower court just got some things wrong, they are as anxious as we are to continue this fight.

Procedure requires that we first get permission to appeal. When and if permission is granted, we can then do the actual filing. While less than a third of these motions for permission to appeal are approved, those that are approved have a good chance of success at the higher court level.

Our lawyers expect to file the appeal request by the end of the week.

Too much is at stake for the future of the Island for us to stop at this point. We want to thank the huge number of residents who supported us so far and we hope all will join us as we go higher until we, as a community, are heard.

So, before this new year ends, we offer you our warmest wishes for a Roosevelt Island where you can make a U-turn without driving several miles, where our open spaces are beautified, not reduced, where development is carried out in the manner envisioned by the General Development Plan, where the Island is administered by people directly elected by the residents and, of course, peace, health and tranquility for our little Island, our City, and our globe.

We’ll keep *The WIRE* posted on our legal progress.

Roosevelt Islanders for Responsible Southtown Development
Lee Edelman, Linda Heimer, Steve Marcus, Nurit Marcus, Margie Smith

RIRA’s Counsel Says Court Has “an ill-considered expansive view of the powers of the RIOC Board...”

To the Editor:

I am writing to clarify certain misconceptions regarding the opinion of the Appellate Division in its consideration of the challenges to the Related/Hudson Southtown project.

First, let me congratulate *The WIRE* for its swift, comprehensive, and overwhelmingly accurate analysis of the opinion. As the attorney for RIRA in the litigation, I must concur that the opinion takes a regrettably restricted view of the role of the residents of Roosevelt Island in the land-use decisions affecting their daily lives, and an ill-considered expansive view of the powers of the RIOC Board to make those decisions.

However, the picture is not quite as bleak as RIOC’s counsel, and RIOC Board members Kayser and Kraut, have articulated. The opinion does not hold that the General Development Plan is “illustrative only.” Rather, the Court states, in what it calls the Background portion of the opinion, that the site plan set forth in the GDP is “illustrative only and does not indicate the final form or location of the improvements.”

This statement, while of significance in supporting the Court’s denigration of the RIRA-RIRSD argument that the maps in the GDP formed a basis for the claim that Blackwell Park continues to be located within the proposed Southtown development, does not render the GDP “illustrative only.” While in the Court’s view the specifics of land planning may differ

from what is mapped in the GDP, I do not read the opinion as modifying the requirements of the GDP or that it can be ignored by RIOC. Specifically, I see no basis in the opinion for a view that Southpoint, designated in the GDP to be open space, can be converted to any form of commercial or residential use without amendment of the GDP.

I also see nothing in the opinion to substantiate the view, apparently expressed by Mr. Kraut, that neither RIRA nor individual residents of Roosevelt Island have standing to attack land-use decisions through litigation.

RIRSD sought to persuade the appellate court that the standard of review that should be used in evaluating the RIOC designation for Southtown should be the expansive standard that applies to governmental leases, rather than the restrictive standard of review applicable to, among other things, challenges to alleged inadequate environmental impact statements. The Court declined to apply the more generous standard of review, holding that RIRSD, and by extension any Roosevelt Island resident or group of residents, was not a third-party beneficiary of the lease of Roosevelt Island from the City to the State.

I find the Court’s analysis of this issue deficient. But even if the Court’s view is accepted, it says nothing about the standing of RIRSD, RIRA, or any Island resident to seek review of the RIOC designation of Related/Hudson as violative of the GDP as incorpo-

rated in the RIOC statute. Rather, the Court proceeded to analyze the RIRSD/RIRA arguments whether the Related/Hudson project violated the GDP. Unfortunately, the Court found the project not in violation of the GDP. In other words, the Court did not find that an Island resident can’t challenge a violation of the GDP in court, only that the challenge will be adjudicated under the strict criteria applied to such governmental actions as environmental decisions.

There is no doubt that the courts will give great latitude to RIOC in fashioning the future of Roosevelt Island. But the opinion in the Southtown case does not give RIOC a blank check to ignore the vision of Island development written into the General Development Plan, and, through the RIOC statute, into the law of the State of New York. In my view, the GDP is incorporated in State law by its specific inclusion in the statute that established RIOC. As a matter of State law, I believe, the GDP is binding on RIOC, and divergence from the requirements of the GDP can be attacked by any Islander. While it is evident that the Appellate Division will give RIOC a long leash in interpreting the GDP, witnessed by the Court’s dismissal of the arguments regarding the mapped location of Blackwell Park, still, I believe, RIOC ignores the GDP at its litigation peril.

Jeffrey E. Glen

Glen, a member of the law firm Anderson, Kill & Olick, is litigation counsel to RIRA.

Pain and Suffering Award Recalls 1998 Tram-Crane Accident



Photo from Roosevelt Island shows the reach of the barge-based crane in relation to Tramway tower height. Website NYC10044

A Routine Tram Trip, Then Chaos, Terror Over the East River

Reprinted from *The WIRE*, February 4, 1998
An 8:52 a.m. trip.
Tuesday, January 24.
Weather clear.
A RIOC surveillance tape would later show that more than two dozen boarded Aerial Tramway Car No. 1, Manhattan-bound.

Summerville crane would be ranging near the very predictable path of the Tramway’s cabins.
Tram workers had noticed, days before, that the crane operator must be lifting limit switches, and there had been complaints and discussion to reinforce safety.
Even then, this was a routine trip.



NewsChannel4

No babies in strollers, no children, no wheelchairs.
An experienced cabin attendant, Elliot Isaac, veteran of 18 years on the Tramway, secured the straps at the turnstiles, slid the platform barrier gate into place, closed the cabin doors. Then, at the controls, he did what he had done hundreds of times before to start a trip.
Routine.
Nothing, at the start, to suggest that within minutes there would be a dozen injuries, seconds of chaos and minutes of terror, then news choppers overhead, ambulances, and – in the small way that Roosevelt Island sometimes manages – media attention and history.
Precautions
Weeks before, there had been special Tram trips, pausing over the East River while operators of a crane helping with repairs of the Queensboro Bridge set limit switches that offered assurance their long reach, sometimes augmented by estuary tides, would stay out of the path of passing Tram cars. Arrangements were in place for communication – not directly with cabin attendants, but through supervisors – when the huge

elected to stay there even after ordinary impulse told them they might stand again.
Facts
The accident is being investigated by New York State, as required by law, and an official report will ultimately be issued. But some key facts have been established through conversations with informed observers and those at the scene at the time of the collision:
• No Console Operator was on duty at the time of the accident. Though a supervisor was in the console booth because maintenance workers were on the tower, he was not functioning as a Console Operator – not there to monitor the Tram’s proximity to the crane. Console operators were eliminated by RIOC in the Fall of 1997 in an attempt to economize.
• After the accident, a RIOC spokesperson asserted at first that a Console Operator would not have been able to see the accident, later that there was a Console Operator on duty. Those familiar with Tramway operation say a Console Operator, functioning in that capacity, would have had a clear view of the accident about to happen.
• The automatic limit switches, set up when the crane operation began, were supposed to keep the crane at least 12 feet from the Tram. There is speculation, as yet unconfirmed, that the limit switches were not restored after an overnight period of crane activity during Tramway down time.
• A representative of the crane operator has offered to pay medical expenses for at least one injured passenger.
• Two trips prior to the accident, children and wheelchair-bound riders were aboard.
• RIOC President Jerome Blue did not go to the scene of the accident.
• The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation has made no known attempts to contact the passengers who were injured.
A group of passengers who were injured have gathered to discuss the possibility of legal action. Patrick Stewart, President of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association, has suggested that a suit against RIOC and RIOC executives might be appropriate. “We warned them repeatedly,” Stewart says, “that elimination of the Console Operators would reduce the safety of the operation.”
Aftermath
Immediately after the damaged car docked in Manhattan, perhaps



Channel 7 Eyewitness News

a dozen passengers left the station, but some 20 registered their presence on a sheet of paper that Public Safety holds, and eleven were taken to hospitals – at least one on a stretcher, another in a wheelchair, others limping or dazed.
Some injuries drew blood, while others went unnoticed in the excitement, even until the next day when pain presented itself unexpectedly as notice of damage or a strain.
RIOC announced, at first, that Tramway service would be suspended for about a week, then changed the time period to “indefinite” in notices posted on Island kiosks.



Crash from page 1

then, but I did break it.” The plexiglas window next to Reither was dislodged and lost during the event. Reither thinks his elbow may have done it.
“I wound up landing in the middle of the Tram, probably about eight to ten feet from where I was initially, on my back, toward the center where the doors are.
“I tried to get up, and I felt pain down my back and both arms, and I thought, ‘Whoa, I’m not going to move.’ I couldn’t move my head. a couple of people came over to me. My eyes were closed most of the time, I was in a tremendous amount of pain.
“They took me to New York Hospital on a board. They did x-rays and sent me home, with Super-Tylenol pills. It didn’t get better.” Reither said that after some attempts at physical therapy, an MRI revealed that surgery would be needed.
A 26-year resident of the Island (he first lived in Island House), Reither said, “The first couple of times back on the Tram were a little bit nerve-wracking. I’ve been on the Tram a few times when there were emergency stops, and there’s that ‘whoa’ feeling again.”
The insurance carrier for the firm doing the bridge work paid Reither’s damage award, which is shared with his attorney, David Golomb, and various members of

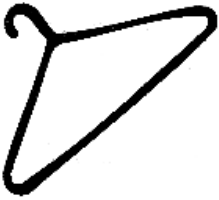
the medical team that treated his injuries.
Golomb said that, although the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation was named as a defendant in the pain and suffering case, RIOC was eliminated from the defendant list once the crane operator’s insurance carrier conceded full responsibility for the accident. “This was not the fault of the Tram people, but was exclusively the fault of the crane people who failed to follow in-place safety precautions. They didn’t follow the drill. Somebody just didn’t do what they were supposed to do. There really was no defense in terms of causing what happened, and the negligence of the contractor,” Golomb said. “The only issue became what compensation [my client] was entitled to for pain and suffering and limitations on activities.”
Reither, who is a self-employed telecommunications consultant, is 54. He said this week, “I can’t move my neck very far because all the disks are fused. My elbow has some minor limitations – I can’t straighten it out all the way. My lower back hurts. I sometimes have minor pains down my arms and fingers. You take Tylenol and you live with it.”
Reither said he was surprised that no one from RIOC contacted him after the accident. “I never heard once from RIOC. No ‘How are you, is there anything we can do?’ – nothing. They were totally absent during this whole thing.”

RIRA President Stewart and five other Islanders secured a next-day appointment with RIOC President Blue, who then failed to show up and sent two deputies in his place. The residents then decided to leave for lack of a RIOC decision-maker who could respond to the crisis actively.
Unlike custom established in all past interruptions of Tramway service, by the weekend RIOC had still not provided alternative transportation for schoolchildren and the disabled. On Friday, though the State had provided emergency funds for bus service, RIOC Presi-

dent Blue faxed members of the RIOC Board of Directors asking authorization to spend \$20,000 of Island public purpose funds for bus service. (Public purpose funds are earmarked for Island social purposes, not as RIOC emergency money.)
RIRA, which was already planning a Town Meeting on transit in the face of impending subway service cuts and lack of MetroCard transfers from the Tramway, held an emergency Common Council meeting Sunday night, confirming a Town Meeting for tonight.

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Mugging from page 1

home, on our Island, it would only be much worse. I had to do something. I had to act. The small one on my left had almost disappeared. The other two were tall but slim and certainly not muscular. And we were in a moment of hesitation. They had not found what they thought they would, where they thought they would. I had just told them they wouldn't, they had to look elsewhere. In that split-second, when they had to re-orient themselves to become aware of the bag hanging over my shoulder, I decided to act. I bolted to the right heading for the stairs only three or four feet away and started to scream, "Police!" and "Help!" as loud as I could. They grabbed at me. I struggled to get free pulling hard. My jacket tore. I fell on the stairs a step or two up. My bag fell off. They let go. It was the wallet in the bag they had been after. I made it to the top of the stairs. There were two more on the broad stone walkway that leads from the stairs to the street – one only five or six feet away, the other closer to the street clearly blocking my way, menacing. Now, I felt I would have to face them. I turned and headed back down the stairs. My bag was at the bottom, and I could see two of the original three running toward the subway, perhaps thirty to forty feet away. I picked up my bag and made a few steps after them. They stopped and looked like they were going to come at me. I didn't feel brave enough to face them. I turned and ran back up the stairs continuing my screaming for "police" and "help." The two who had been on the stone walkway had disappeared. I ran to the street and looked toward the subway. One was entering. A second was not far behind. The first apparently had already disappeared under ground. I took off for the subway. As I ran I searched my bag with one hand and found my keys. That was a big relief. I tore into the subway. I told the token booth clerk that I had been assaulted and they had run into the subway. He got on the microphone and apparently started whatever procedure is mandated for such a situation. "Can you stop the train?" I demanded. No response. "Can you stop the train?" I demanded again even more forcefully. "No," he responded. The thoughts flashed through my head again: It had been a phony gun... I was right about that... If they had anything more, like a knife, they would have used it in the struggle... One is small, the other two slim and not powerful... I was sure of that from how I had been able to struggle against two of them... There would be more people on the platform... The odds were slim, but maybe I could do something. Besides, I had to act. I couldn't just stay there cowering, scared, waiting for someone to pay attention, to help. No one had even bothered to look my way during all my screaming of "police" and "help" out on the promenade and stone steps. "Hold my keys," I shouted to the token booth clerk as I slid them through the change slot. I didn't want to chance losing them again. I bolted through the gate and ran down the

escalator. I had no idea which side they might be on but, out of habit, I ran down the stairs to the Manhattan bound platform, almost as if I were going to work. I hit the platform and turned. Bingo! I was face to face with the small one. A momentary stare – I at him, he at me – and he was running down the platform. He disappeared up the escalator just as a Queens-bound train on the other side was off-loading passengers. I turned and tore back up the stairs to the mezzanine just in time to hear the signal of the doors closing and my assailant cross the mezzanine to try and make the train. "You'll never make it," I screamed after him. Then I heard the doors being held. Obviously his buddies had made it, and they were holding it for him. I flashed across the mezzanine and down the stairs. The doors had closed and the train had just started to move. I whipped around and ran up to the conductor before the train had a chance to gather much speed. "I've been assaulted," I screamed. "They're on the train. Stop the train!" Her hand shot up. The emergency was pulled. The train jerked to a stop. Only the front car had left the station. It was the newer-type train with the locked cars. They were trapped. Public Safety was there shortly. Then the police. A couple of people who had seen which car they had run into, came forward. I identified them. They were taken off and put up against the wall to be frisked. "Hey, man, what ya...", one of them gave lip trying to turn back around. The police made short work of that and his hands were back against the wall, his feet spread apart. One of the passengers on the train told the police, "The heat is under the seat." There they found the gun, a white plastic toy. It was some time in the station with many questions and explanations to make. Back up by the token booth, I had to ask an officer to borrow a quarter to call home. "Kasia," I said to my wife, "I'm all right." Of course, she knew something was wrong. And then I explained what had happened. As I waited for her and my son to come, answering questions from various police officers, they brought the three attackers up in handcuffs. "Hey," I shouted as they were brought by, "tell me what you did with my wallet and I'll think about dropping the charges." They didn't respond. I really hadn't expected them to respond, but I had to say it. Saying it – and especially the way I said it – was sending them a clear message: *You were awfully stupid to think you could so easily scare someone and simply get away with it.* Soon, I boarded a police van to head to the district office. (Because the arrest had been made in the subway, the *districts*, not *precincts*.) As we were sitting preparing to depart, a woman walked up and held up my wallet. She had found it on the promenade,

"I've been assaulted," I screamed.
"They're on the train. Stop the train!"

BE AN INFORMED PARENT

Island Kids is pleased to offer a series of four seminars on matters important to parents of active children. All seminars are led by Dr. Gina Lipton-Psychologist, former Admissions Director and Roosevelt Island resident.

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Saturday, February 9 from 10:00-11:30 am \$20.00
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Saturday, March 23 from 10:00-11:30 am \$20.00
4. What's Next? Career Development for Mothers.
Saturday, April 27 from 10:00-11:30 am \$20.00

Total if you register for all four seminars - \$70.00.

Island Kids brochures available at Island Kids and Public Safety or call Gina Enock at 758-8408 to reserve a seat.

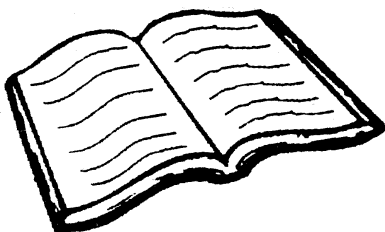
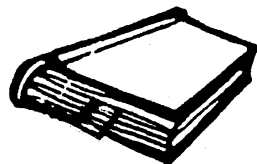


in the dock area. All my credit cards and ID were there. Only the cash – eleven dollars and change – was missing. At the police station, it is a long process in such a situation. After I'd waited quite some time, a detective took a statement from me. He told me that one of my attackers – the short one who had put the gun to my neck – is only fourteen. Afterward, they asked me to wait in the lunchroom where I would be distant and removed from the suspects. Then it was mostly waiting and waiting. After a long time, I stepped out into the corridor to stretch my legs. When I looked down the corridor to the front of the station, I could see two women with coats on sitting in the waiting area. The detective who had interviewed me was talking to one of them. Then he left. I looked closely at her. She was visibly upset. I reasoned that she must be the mother of one of them. My initial thought was to go to her, to talk to her. Then I thought that this is probably frowned upon. This is not considered to be the "appropriate" or "right" thing to do. I was sure the police thought this way, and probably most people and society at large, as well. Then, I thought, if I had followed what was "appropriate" or "right" in response to the attack, how would I feel now? I had to act the way I had, and I had to walk that corridor and talk with that mother. "I'm sure this is terribly upsetting and stressful for you," I said, taking my hat off. "I am sure this is awful for you, and I feel very much for you and am sorry for all you are going through." "Are you a policeman," she asked me. "No, I'm the person they attacked," I said calmly trying to be as reassuring as I could. "He was only tagging along with the others," the other woman said. I turned toward her. Now I was sure these were relatives of the 14-year old. I didn't want rancor or to be shocking, so I chose not to tell her that it was he who held the gun

to my head. "Even if he were tagging along, he was with them. He knew what they were up to. He was involved." Her response was only a small nod of the head. "I'm sorry that it happened," I said, directing my attention back to the mother, "but I cannot let it drop. It would give a terribly wrong message to them. I can only hope that your son will be able to take this and learn from it and go on and straighten out." There was no response but somehow I sensed she knew I was right. By this time the detective reappeared and admonished me for talking to them and shooed me back to the lunchroom. There was quite a bit more waiting, but eventually, as all things do, it came to an end. I was home by 2:30 a.m. Since then, there has been a grand-jury indictment. And should they not plead guilty, a trial will roll around in eight or nine months. My left knee, which received a fairly severe hit, is healing nicely and will shortly be as good as new. My wife and son are reassured and life at home and work and community is back to normal. But it didn't come quite so easily. I had to react the way I did. If I hadn't, I would have been emotionally lacerated, perhaps scarred. It is even painful just to think how it would have felt. And even with the way I reacted, it took me a week or more to be satisfied with my response. For several nights, I woke from sleep and found my mind filling with fantasies of fighting them instead of trying to run away. I couldn't clear my head of the fantasies and go easily back to sleep. I found myself imagining vividly and in some detail how I would have pounded them into the ground. I was feeling I hadn't done enough to satisfy my emotions. As much as I might tell myself I had reacted well, that I had succeeded remarkably well, it somehow was not enough. So it took several nights of disturbed sleep and fantasies and, above all, time for those feelings to become resolved and to feel a sense of emotional satisfaction with what I had done. What I had had to do.



"THE ONE WHO READS IS THE ONE WHO LEADS"

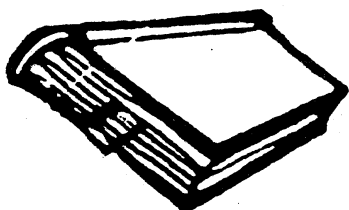
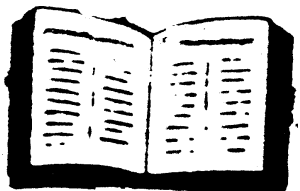


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Ruling from page 6

to the landmark house, he noted, but they will also be considerably shorter than the buildings envisioned in the 1990 plan.

On another matter, Nardelli wrote, "Alternative also complains that the northernmost building of Southtown will block views, from Northtown, of the Queensboro Bridge, but photographs disclose that the current view of the bridge from Northtown is extremely limited due to the canyon-like effect of Northtown's close buildings." The Court similarly dismissed objections based on the new plan's potential effects on pollution and traffic, and on its different treatment of retail space and "small-town character."

Nardelli concluded that RIOC's review of the site's environmental assessment was, indeed, a "hard look," and that its decision was not arbitrary or capricious.

On the final question, "the GDP Requirements," the Court defined the GDP as a contract, "in that it is incorporated into the lease" between the city, which owns Roosevelt Island, and RIOC, the State agency that runs the Island. He wrote that RIRSD failed to show that it has legal standing to enforce this contract. To have standing, a party must be an "intended beneficiary" of the contract, "rather than merely an incidental beneficiary," the opinion says, quoting case law.

"There is no dispute that RIRSD is not a party to the GDP and, in my view, it lacks standing to challenge any breach of that plan," Nardelli writes.

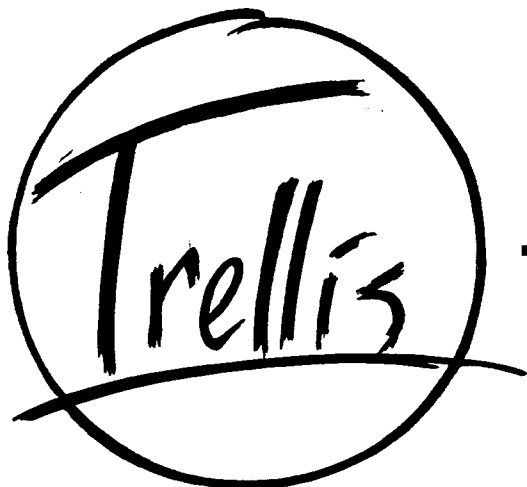
With regard to the reduction of Blackwell Park, Nardelli wrote, "RIRSD additionally argues that RIOC's prior attempt in 1990 to amend the GDP and reduce Blackwell Park from 'approximately six acres' to 'approximately three acres' is inconsistent with RIOC's current position and, therefore, should not be accorded deference." He then responds, "I reject this argument, however, for as RIOC notes, it merely sought to amend the GDP to formally recognize an encroachment that had already been effected by the construction of Northtown. It is unclear why that amendment was rejected by the [City's] Board of Estimate, as no explana-

tion was provided at that time," the judge notes.

Under the Hudson/Related plan, which replaces the sports field south of Rivercross and Eastwood with new fields near the Tramway, the 5.4 acres of open space between Northtown and Southtown will be divided by a road — 3.86 acres on one side, 1.54 acres on the other. Given the history of the Blackwell site, the judge says, and the fact that the open space will still be about six acres, "I conclude that RIOC's decision not to interpret the GDP as mandating [addition of] compensatory acreage from Southtown was not arbitrary and capricious."

Finally, Nardelli dispensed with a claim regarding the income mix of the planned housing, writing, "I find no support in the record for petitioners' claims that the Hudson/Related site plan does not conform to the GDP requirements concerning the allocation of subsidized housing and accommodations for families with children."

The complete ruling is available on Website NYC10044 at www.nyc10044.com.



A New Year...

... and a fresh start. We salute the sacrifices and spirit of giving evident in the Roosevelt Island community in 2001, even while praying that the suffering of the past year will not be asked of any of our people in 2002. Even as the calendar nudges us into an uncertain future, we will always remember those, living and dead, who gave so much in 2001. We celebrate that feeling of community.

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Manhattan Community Board 8

Roosevelt Island Committee

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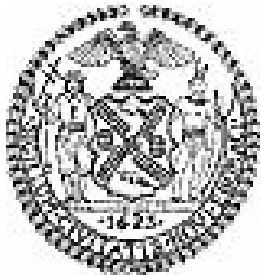
The Roosevelt Island Committee of Community Board 8 will meet on Tuesday, January 22, at 7:30 p.m. in the Island House Community Room at 555 Main Street.

Hear about the recent unanimous vote by Community Board 8 to request that the City Council hold hearings on the current lease of Roosevelt Island from the City by the State of New York.

Island House Community Room

January 22, 2002

7:30 P.M.



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Deadline for Jan. 26 issue: Jan. 18

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VOLUNTEER TYPIST – *The WIRE* needs a volunteer typist for jobs ranging from short to long, from rush to long-term. No compensation, but lots of satisfaction in being part of one of the community’s oldest institutions. Call (212) **826-9055** or e-mail editor@MainStreetWIRE.com.

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Letters from page 2

creased by 50% by the time the actual repairs commenced in November.

Now American Tramways has laid off the regular Tram staff for the duration of repairs (and just before Christmas!). Is American Tramway faced with penalties for the extended outage, or can it just “shrug” its shoulders because “accidents happen”? What happened to American Tramways’ great experience? Maybe, like General Motors, they should focus on construction and authorize others to handle maintenance and repairs.

It would be most interesting if *The WIRE* can find out whether RIOC is covered by loss of revenue insurance in case the Tram is out-of-service for an extended period?

I look forward to your continued coverage of these matters.

Mogens Petersen

To the Editor:

I have put off writing to you but I can no longer contain myself. About two weeks ago Westview residents were informed by a colorful management memo that RIOC was “giving” residents a close bus stop and these residents should be thankful and express their thanks to RIOC. I can *not* believe these residents should be thankful for RIOC doing their job. I do, however, have a list of things I would like to be thankful for, to both RIOC and management.

The list is as follows:

- Make the Tram part of the MTA.
- Find a way for traffic patterns to avoid driving to the Tram just to legally turn around.
- Change the parking patterns which treat residents as second-class citizens. Currently there are loading zones for commercial tenants and contractors who park all day. Next comes management personnel and their friends. Lately, there is also a resident who works for DEC and parks his official car nights and weekends which is an abuse of his official responsibilities. Lastly are residents and their guests who, of course, pay the bills.
- Keep Westview entrance doors locked 24 hours, seven days a week.

- Have all the elevator buttons and directional arrows light up properly in Westview as they seem to be deteriorating on a daily basis.

- Check the heating system before the cold sets in and maintenance “discovers” that the system does *not* work on all floors.

- Change the pitch in the driveway next to the school, or install a drain, so you don’t have to wade through a puddle on the sidewalk every time it rains.

- Hold ConEd accountable for the repair of River Road after they dug it up as it now looks like a washboard.

- Hold someone accountable for cleaning the sidewalk north of the post office (pigeon droppings).

- Have garage personnel set aside spaces for vans so they don’t take up two spaces wherever they park.

- Have security enforce the regulations against bicycles on the sidewalks.

- Have DHCR and RIOC review the rent increases for Westview now that energy costs have declined 40% from the projections used to obtain the largest increases in NYC. Perhaps a waiver or deferment is in order!

Please withhold my name.

Name Withheld

To John Catsimatides of Gristede’s:

I am offering you a slightly different way to look at what you have “invested” on Roosevelt Island. It is not a \$3 million investment in a store. A store is a stand-alone entity, a mere physical structure. You should instead look at your big investment as an investment in a community. A community that is very faithful to its own and protective of what it holds dear. This community can be likened to a powerful community of peaceful bees who are united and work together. These bees can make you enjoyable amounts of honey, rather than swarming and showing their stingers.

Become part of the hive, and thrive. And, thank you for your greatly improved look and increased variety of foods.

Martin Atkins

SPORTSWIRE

JETS WIN FLAG FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP The Jets won the Flag Football Championship of the Youth Program’s 12-14 Division on Saturday, December 15, defeating the Giants 25-6 in a game that was closer than the final score would indicate.

The Jets won the toss and elected to receive, but could not generate any offense. The Giants, however, scored on their first possession to take a 6-0 lead. The touchdown, which came on a short pass from Paul Brown to Shirome Dixon, was set up by a 50-yard pass-and-run play, also from Brown to Dixon. The Jets then drove down the field for the tying touchdown, which was scored on a pass from quarterback Richard DeLaCruz to Le-Quan Francis. When the Jets converted the extra point on a pass to Eyosyas Tadesse, they took a 7-6 lead which they never relinquished. The rest of the first half was dominated by both teams’ defenses; however, right before halftime, the Jets took a 13-6 lead on a pass to Matthew Brodsky, which was set up by a 30-yard run by Daymond Walford.

The Giants received the ball to start the second half and marched down the field. Just when it looked like the Giants would tie the game, Jack Huang of the Jets intercepted a pass in the end zone to stop the Giants drive. The game then settled into the same tight, defensive struggle that marked the first half. Late in the second half, the Jets broke the game open on touchdown passes from Richard DeLaCruz to Jack Huang and Eyosyas Tadesse. In the end, the ability of the Jets defense to completely shut down the Giants offense determined the outcome of the contest.

Members of the championship Jets included Matthew Brodsky, Maurel Clark, Richard DeLaCruz, Le-Quan Francis, Jack Huang, Harrison Riley, Eyosyas Tadesse, and Daymond Walford. The team was coached by Paul Sokoloff and Abe Tordjman.



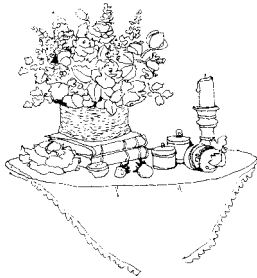
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To the Community:

We thank all who supported, attended, and made possible our two successful fundraisers for the installation of the Community Pipe Organ. Residents and their guests will enjoy the music of the organ for years to come.

We also salute and thank Police Officer Daniel Rodriguez, who volunteered his time and his magnificent voice to help raise funds for the installation of the organ in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Fr. Luke W. McCann
Sr. Regina Palamara
Mary Eileen Fitzgerald (Committee Chair)
St. Frances Cabrini Parish

To the Editor:

Manhattan Park Management would like to thank those organizations and individuals who participated in our Children’s Holiday Celebration December 17, including: Dolores Green, Pearl Cooper, Juanita Elliott, Ruth Kolins, Marion McLaurin, Frances Sheppard, Selina Ng, Annie Pena, Fay Vass, Gladys Rivera, Rose McCarthy, Fiona Delaney; from the FDNY Special Operations Command, Jack “Santa” Rooney, Ed Monahan, Tom Mazaras, Wayne Ludwig, and Bob Foley; the Roosevelt Island Seniors Association; the Red Cross of Greater New York.

Marilyn Engstler

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