

Post-election issue:
Saturday, Nov. 9

The Main Street WIRE

ELECTION
SPECIAL

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

News updates on Website **NYC10044** www.nyc10044.com



RIRA's Presidential candidates posed for *The WIRE's* camera after their debate last week. Left to right, Byron Gaspard, incumbent Matthew Katz, and James Whalen. A transcript of the debate appears in this issue, starting on page 8.

In a Sparsely-Attended Town Meeting, Revised Octagon Design Gets Panned

by Dick Lutz

Residents attending a RIRA Town Meeting last week on the revised Octagon Apartments project gave mostly negative reactions to the latest version presented by Becker and Becker Associates. About 40 heard and saw the presentation by Bruce Becker and a team of five in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

At one point, as Becker changed slides from the last version to the current plan, there were groans from the Islanders attending the meeting. During the Q&A portion, words like "abomination" and

"blocky" were used in reaction to the new design.

In an explanatory preamble, Becker said, "We have been pushed in a lot of different directions by various constraints" imposed by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), landmark preservation agencies, and funding sources. Even so, he said, the firm likes the current plan better than earlier versions.

Showing a diagram headed, "Integrated and Iterative Planning Process to Target & Guide Successful Development," he told the audience that the latest design is the result of an unavoidable interplay among several factors. The slide showed "design quality and construction restraints" interacting with "capital

costs and financing constraints," and "building uses, market constraints and politics."

Rivercross resident Larry Parnes, a professional urban planner, thanked the architects for changes he said responded to community concerns expressed in earlier meetings, but most comments were critical.

Most of the residents who spoke in criticism of the plan focused on three matters: Wings that have grown from an original six floors to thirteen; the elimination of a mansard roof on the wings that hinted at the project's heritage; and on-site parking, a deviation from the Island practice of locating all parking in Motorgate. Residents

See **Octagon**, page 6

Briefly...

First Sunday, First-Person are key elements of a new series featuring interesting Islanders, starting tomorrow at Gallery RIVAA. See page 3.

Firefighters' Field opened in Southtown last Saturday in a RIOC ceremony. Photo, page 18.

Elevators have been out at both the subway station and Manhattan-side Tram station for several days. According to RIRA President Matthew Katz, RIOC Engineer Vincent Kopicki agreed, during a meeting this week, to extend use of the Tram wheelchair elevator to passengers with non-wheelchair medical concerns. It doesn't apply to strollers or large packages, however.

Oops... Last issue we erroneously reported (in *Briefly*) that the subway would be out of action for the weekend of October 19. *Wrong!* The Q replaced the F, that's all. We apologize, with the explanation that the word came at the last minute as the issue was going to press, and we took RIOC's word for it – on postings around the Island – without checking.

Islanders

An International Helping Hand, Extended to Orphans

by Linda Humphrey

Jim Luce arrived in Indonesia out of the blue, for a friend's funeral. It was 1995, and he had landed on the island of Sulawesi, known for its coral reefs and coffee (Starbucks sells Sulawesi blend). But he skipped the beaches and headed for the orphanage.

Driving through rain forest and banana plantations, he found the children "in the shadow of an active volcano." "They had no toys," Luce said, recalling that first trip to the Pacific Islands. "Their clothes were full of holes. [The place] was clean but unbelievably poor."

He recently had rescued a one-eyed poodle, three other dogs and two cats from the streets of New York. "And I thought, if I can help animals, why not children?"

He "didn't know a thing" about Indonesia, a nation of 17,000 islands. A native of Ohio – his mother was a child psychologist, his father a French professor – he had studied in Tokyo and landed a job at a Japanese bank in Manhattan.

Once back from Sulawesi, he began typing in a church office, hammering out a program to rescue orphaned children in Third-World countries. At times he would type

See **Luce**, page 17



Jim Luce, in Indonesia among *Project Family Reunion* kids he has helped to reunite with their parents. They had been "economic orphans."

RIRA Election Tuesday

Only Contests: President, VP, and Rivercross Council Seats

Candidates for the RIRA Common Council are uncontested in all building-districts except one – Rivercross – in Tuesday's election.

But the eight-seat district comprised of 10-40 River Road has shown a surge of interest in RIRA, with five nominations, more than at any time in recent years.

And the Residents Association's contest for First Vice President drew five candidates, another high-water mark in recent years, though one pulled out Tuesday. (Candidate profiles appear on page 16.) Some of the the Vice Presidential candidates are also running to represent their buildings as delegates, as are two of the presidential candidates.

There are three contenders for the presidency (debate photo at left). Incumbent Matthew Katz is being challenged by his 2000 running mate, First Vice President Byron Gaspard, and by the current delegate from 4 River Road, James Whalen. The three appeared in a contentious debate last week; the transcript is in this issue, beginning on page 8. Both Gaspard and Whalen are also candidates for Council seats.

On a not-for-attribution basis, some current members of the Common Council have told *The WIRE* they were urged to stay out of the race. Another candidate, Abraham Hassan, told *The WIRE* that Patrick Stewart, the former RIRA President who lost the post to Katz in the 2000 election, agreed to nominate him for the Vice Presidency and a delegate seat, but then presented him with a list of "people to avoid" that included one or more *WIRE* staffers and Common Councilors who are members of the Maple Tree Group (MTG), a sub-committee of the RIRA Common Council. Stewart has not responded to a request, made two weeks ago, that he comment on the allegation.

In last week's debate, Gaspard made an issue of MTG efforts to turn the Board of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) into a locally-elected body rather than one composed of people selected by the Governor. He lashed out at Katz, a member of the group, for not including him when an MTG delegation met with Governor George Pataki to discuss the governance issue. Although the session did not lead to a locally-elected RIOC Board, the Pataki administration agreed to a new law, sponsored by Assemblymember Pete Grannis and State Senator Olga

See **Election**, page 15

Candidates

- President**
Byron Gaspard
Matthew Katz
James Whalen
- First Vice President**
Franz Aliquo
Joseph Cristiano
Steve Marcus
Ron Schuppert
- Building Delegates**
2 River Road
James Whalen
- 4 River Road**
No candidate
- 10-40 River Road**
Lynn T. Chambers
Mark S. Chipman
W. Russell DiBello
George Reither
Doris L. Speer
- Eastwood**
Byron Gaspard
Virginia Granato
Abraham Hassan
Edward J. O'Flynn
Jim Tendean-Luce
- 546 Seniors**
Dolores Green
- Island House**
Frank Farance
Vicki Feinmel
Debbie Mount Cornet
- Rivercross**
Bubu Arya
Joseph Cristiano
Nurit Marcus
Ethel Romm
Ron Schuppert
Margie Smith
- Westview**
Franz Aliquo
Erin R. Feely-Nahem
Sherie Helstien

Cast Your Vote Tuesday in the Residents Association Election

Debate transcript and candidate information in this issue. All residents, including non-U.S. citizens, are eligible to vote.

The Editorial Page

Choice 2002: Matthew Katz – Not Just a RIRA for the Residents, But a RIOC, too, for the Residents

Three issues have emerged in this campaign for leadership of our Residents Association. As much as we feel a genuine fondness and appreciation for one challenger, and feel bemused by the antics of the other, on each of those three issues, the smart balance of choice goes heavily to the incumbent, Matthew Katz.

Public Safety

We have yet to hear either challenger finish this sentence in a practical and plausible 25 words, less or more: *I will improve Public Safety on Roosevelt Island by...* The rant that it just isn't good enough is powerful, but the rest of us are essentially powerless to improve the performance of the Public Safety Department (PSD), or to get better NYPD policing. That's because the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) supervises PSD, and RIOC has a miserable track record when it comes to heeding resident views or needs. And as long as the State maintains a go-it-alone posture with regard to the City, RIOC is not about to ask for more NYPD here. And the City and NYPD are not likely to move on this problem unilaterally.

Katz, on the other hand, is involved in producing a real solution. Read on.

Affordable Housing

Are we suddenly in an episode of *Fear Factor*, threatened with loss of our apartments? Yes, there's a crisis in the City with conversion of the State-backed mortgages of Mitchell-Lama to private mortgages. No wonder, with interest rates at new lows month after month. The rant about saving our affordable housing here is stirring rhetoric, but here's another unfinished sentence: *I will save our affordable housing by...*

Katz, on the other hand, has found the way to a real solution. Read on.

A Contentious Common Council

Many Vice Presidential and building-delegate candidates have called for more civil discourse at Common Council meetings. Call it the *Let's Not Fight* plank in a platform of overall disgust. We might all wish for less rancor and more reasoned discourse, but ranting doesn't make it so, and blaming the present RIRA administration for contentiousness misses the point that the old 1998 administration, in the form of Patrick Stewart, has hung around organizing supporters to toss lugnuts into the gears at every opportunity.

Katz, on the other hand, has made real progress on real problems despite the serious efforts to frustrate his leadership.

On Public Safety –

Resident control of RIOC is the key.

Without control of RIOC, there's no control of Public Safety. Katz, working with the Maple Tree Group (and leading it for a time), has been a key factor in the first real change in Roosevelt Island governance in 25 years: **A resident majority on the RIOC Board of Directors.** Through a five-year campaign aimed at democratic election of that Board, MTG has wrested from government the middle-ground compromise of new law putting a resident majority in control of the RIOC Board. The new resident majority on RIOC can demand and get better public safety, both by controlling PSD *and* by calling in the cavalry in the form of NYPD – something a State-proud RIOC would never do.

On Affordable Housing –

Without control of RIOC, there's no control of the ground leases that underlie affordable housing here. RIOC could, at any time, cut a quick-cash deal that would pull the rug out from under Mitchell-Lama housing here. But the key in each case is the ground lease, and RIOC controls the ground leases.

The new resident majority on RIOC can make sure that no screw-the-residents ground-lease deals are cut with building owners. Again, the key is the **resident majority on the RIOC Board.** That's the Katz position, and the MTG position, and the right approach for a politics-smart Residents Association.

So our choice is Katz, on all points, all the way.

When you seek better public safety, you want **resident control** of RIOC. When you seek to insure affordable housing, you want **resident control** of RIOC. That was the key element of Matthew Katz's 2000 platform, and he delivered. It remains the key element today.

The MTG solution – **resident control of the RIOC Board** – is the key promise on which Katz delivered over the past two years. And all the obstructionism of his won't-go-away lost-the-2000-election (*two to one, mind you*) opposition doesn't change that, or the fact that **resident control** is a **real overarching solution**, while piecemeal ranting about scary problems is not a real solution.

As for contentious Common Council meetings, rational contention is a path to consensus if real consensus is truly wanted. If it isn't wanted – and Katz's badly defeated won't-go-away opposition from 2000 clearly doesn't want it – then it's just one three-hour meeting a month in which the circus performers get to twist the process and the possibilities out of shape while, in dogged pursuit of real goals and genuine difference-making activities for RIRA, the Katz team goes on and on day after day like the Energizer Bunny.

For two years, real things have been done: squelching the plan to kill the Tram's late-night shift, 9/11 relief, real progress toward MetroCard transfers on the Tram, real memorials, a real relationship with the Island's firefighters, real involvement with the community, real social events that bring the community together, real policymaking, a real working relationship with both the Island's legislative representatives, **and** a newly open RIOC where residents can observe the policy-making process.

Above all, Roosevelt Islanders now have **real legislated resident control of the RIOC Board** and through it, our very first real look at a remade **RIOC for the residents.**

That's the genuine value of Matthew Katz's last two years, and it generates a bright prospect for the next two years. Vote against Katz, and you're voting *against resident control*. Vote for him, and you're endorsing the path of change called for by 92% of voting residents in the 1998 election: **Resident control of the RIOC Board.**

Let's keep our eyes on the prize. On Tuesday, Katz gets our vote. Vote for him, and you're voting for the key to this Island's better future: **Resident control of RIOC.**

DL

Letters

To the Editor:

I couldn't agree more with the sentiments expressed by Mario Naves about the extremely loud Friday and Saturday night "rock concerts" Trellis subjects us to all summer. Those of us whose apartments face Main Street have nowhere to go or hide from this torture. I think music is fine, but why so loud? And as the evening wears on, the decibels are turned up higher and higher.

I have talked to the owner about it the last two seasons, but he simply looks back at me as if I am slightly retarded and replies, "You can actually hear it in your apartment? I can't believe it. Everybody loves it."

It is relentless. Every Friday, every Saturday, all summer long. I cannot understand what business it generates for him. When the music is this loud, who can even talk to his dinner companion above the noise? And those who want to listen to the music can simply stand outside on the sidewalk and tap their feet. I pray for rain as the weekend approaches.

Mayor Bloomberg does have a good idea – perhaps if enough of us call the NYPD Quality of Life Hotline (888-677-5433) next summer, we could get some relief.

Gilda Hannah

To the Editor:

I have withdrawn my name from candidacy for a seat on the RIRA Common Council.

For the last two of my six years on the Common Council, I have watched RIRA used as a personal platform for certain individuals who are more interested in their own self-interest than the good of the community.

Month after month, I have sat at See **Letters**, page 16

To the Editor:

Integrity and an ability to create a positive change in our community, and, of course, the courage to stand behind what you say and stand for, are qualities I live by. I am a family man and activist who, like you, the residents of Roosevelt Island, require a safe and clean environment to live in. Matthew Katz and I met three times before the election to discuss the development of an effective platform to fight for the improvement of Public Safety, especially the implementation of timely lateral patrols in our buildings. We also had discussed the importance of meeting with our political leaders to get a police substation (satellite station) on Roosevelt Island, in addition to getting around-the-clock police presence and beat officers to patrol Main Street and our side roads. We also discussed meeting with our political leaders and RIOC about implementing projects to maintain and create affordable housing for our middle income community and to construct a RIRA that would avail itself to bring every one who cares about this community to the table so that we could effectively work together for the betterment of our community. In addition, last but certainly not least, we discussed the need for self-governance. We met with all the buildings. We met in community rooms, and in residents' homes with this platform. We were eventually elected based

See **Gaspard**, page 16

Letters deadline for November 9 issue: **November 4**
Letters received after this deadline will be considered on a space-available basis

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" 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. Questions? Call (212) **826-9055**.



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Jeffrey B. Hochman

Jeffrey B. Hochman passed away on Monday, October 21. The cause of death was leukemia.

A celebration of his life will be held at 2:00 p.m. today (Saturday, November 2) at the New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 West 64th Street.

Jeff Hochman loved urban life completely, especially New York City and Roosevelt Island in particular. He completely embraced the idea of city citizen, earning a Masters degree in Urban Planning from New York University and working on the PhD degree at the City University of New York. He helped to establish the Planners Network, a society of Urban Planners. He was employed full-time as a Project Manager at the City Department of Design and Construction, and part-time as an adjunct professor at LaGuardia Community College. He participated actively on the Common Council of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association, and the Rivercross Committee for Concerned Shareholders, attending meetings and providing data and other information to both. It was also during this period that he battled his illness on his own terms, always doggedly pushing forward, while contributing to both the City and the community that he loved.

Teaching was his passion. His



friends and family have established a scholarship in his name to be awarded to those most in need of tuition assistance. The family asks that well-wishers join their efforts and contribute to the fund. Tax-deductible donations can be sent to LaGuardia Community College, LaGuardia Education Fund, Inc., 31-10 Thomson Avenue, Room E-413, Long Island City, New York 11101, with the notation, *Jeffrey Hochman Scholarship Fund*. (Acknowledgment will be provided for tax purposes.)

Jeffrey Hochman opted for the

road less traveled. He lived his life as if it were an ever-evolving process of moral growth. He believed in the worth and dignity of everyone and he was committed to changing this world, individual by individual. When he witnessed acts or forms of anti-Semitism, racism, sexism, ageism, or homophobia, he challenged the person or policy. He was not the type to pick and choose his battles. Instead, he was consistent and persistent in addressing all injustices, no matter the consequences to himself, and indeed there were consequences. The world has never been kind to those who point out its flaws and challenge people to think and change. However, Jeffrey Hochman's inner strength was never, ever breached, and he seemed to gain strength even under the most arduous of circumstances. His vision always remained clear and steadfast.

He is survived by Dr. Jacqueline Pope, his wife, and by stepchildren Nneka Pope, Donna Pope Tomlinson, Rhonda Pope and Lauren Pope Forbes; by his father, Sam Hochman; his sister, Lori Hrica and her husband John Hrica; and by niece Jennifer Hrica, and nephew Matthew Hrica, as well as numerous friends and family.

-Nneka Pope

New Series Kicks Off Sunday Evening With Globe-Trotting UN Photographer

A new series of first-Sunday first-person reminiscence events will begin tomorrow (Sunday, November 3) at 5:00 p.m. with a presentation by Karina Freudenthal at Gallery RIVAA. The series, planned by Vicki Feinmel, Margie Smith, and Alan Ulick, is intended to give Islanders a chance to meet other residents who have led unusual lives or broken ground in their fields.

Freudenthal returned recently from two years on the South Pacific Island of East Timor, working as public information officer and photographer for the United Nations. She's multilingual and a pilot who represents Mexico as team leader at Paragliding World Championships and World Air Games. She's lived in cities on at least four continents. On Sunday, she'll share anecdotes and experiences from a life on the road.



The Main Street WIRE has always afforded RIOC the opportunity to contribute a column to its pages. This is a wonderful way to address directly the residents of Roosevelt Island and tell you all some of the work that RIOC is doing to improve the Island.

In September, Governor George Pataki signed into law legislation that preserved Roosevelt Island's open space and increased the number of residents on the RIOC Board. The Governor also announced a \$200,000 grant from the State Environmental Protection Fund toward the restoration and preservation of Blackwell House.

Governor Pataki said at the time that the legislation and the grant for Blackwell House was a way to preserve the Island's green space as well as helping preserve a significant State historic structure.

Governor Pataki also said, "By increasing the number of resident members on the Roosevelt Island Board of Directors, we are recognizing the importance of having local residents determine the geographical and financial future of the Island."

The legislation was sponsored by State Sen. Olga Mendez and Assemblymember Alexander "Pete" Grannis.

The four open-space areas are Lighthouse Park, Octagon Park, Blackwell Park, and Southpoint Park. The law mandates these parcels and statutory open space areas, ensuring that they will be preserved and developed for park purposes, forever guaranteeing public access. Southpoint, in particular, is important because it is viewed by many residential developers as one of the most valuable properties in the world, given its spectacular views of the East River, the rest of Manhattan and Queens.

Right now, because of security concerns, and its proximity to the United Nations, Southpoint is closed to the public.

Certainly, planning for how to properly transform Southpoint into workable, usable open space is a priority for RIOC and the RIOC Board.

Another amenity to the Island was dedicated last week at the Island's new \$750,000 soccer field, which was named *Firefighters' Field* in honor of the fallen of September 11, 2001. It is also dedicated to the memory of Island residents who perished in the terrorist attack.

The name *Firefighters' Field* is especially fitting here on Roosevelt Island because the Island serves as headquarters for the FDNY Special Operations Command.

The field, which was a public/private partnership between RIOC and the Hudson and Related companies, developers of Southtown, was inaugurated by members of the Island's youth soccer organization. New York State Secretary of State Randy Daniels represented Governor Pataki at the event on Saturday, October 26.

The state-of-the-art field, which has a state-of-the-art sprinkler system, will open for use sometime in the spring of 2003. This is because the field must sit through the winter for the grass to become fully established and ready for extensive use.

RIOC hopes that, once *Firefighters' Field* is open for play, we will be able to refurbish the other soccer field on the Island. This would provide Roosevelt Island with arguably the best soccer facilities in Manhattan, if not the entire City.

As most of you know, shortly after the Governor signed into law the new RIOC Board majority requirement, he named Island resident Mark Ponton as the newest RIOC Board member.

Finally, in the next few days following this issue of *The WIRE* you'll notice new plantings for fall in the planters along Main Street.

The RIOC Column



Robert H. Ryan
President and Chief Operating Officer
Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation

COMING UP

Exhibition – Les Sculptures Marika, Rivercross window gallery, through Nov. 30, sponsored by the Mother Earth Committee.

– This Weekend –

Celebration of the Life of Jeff Hochman (see obituary at left), Ethical Culture Society, 2 West 64th Street, **Sat., Nov. 2**, 2:00 p.m.



Tex Allen's new CD

Reception and Performance for release of Island resident Tex Allen's *Prince of Peace*, solo piano CD, at St. Mark's Church, 2nd Avenue at East 10th Street, **Sun., Nov. 3**, 2:00-5:00 p.m.

Our Lives – Roosevelt Islanders Reminiscence, first in a series of first-person reminiscences by interesting residents, Gallery RIVAA. This session: Karina Freudenthal, multilingual international ambassador of peace. **Sun., Nov. 3**, 5:00 p.m.



Karina Freudenthal

– The Coming Week –

Roosevelt Island Historical Society meeting, Island House community room, 555 Main Street. *All the News 'Twas Fit to Print*, shared readings of reports about the Island from *The New York Times* of a century ago. **Mon., Nov. 4**, 7:30 p.m.

Election Day (both general and Residents Association elections); balloting at PS/IS 217. **Tue., Nov. 5**, 6:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.

RIRA Common Council Meeting, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. **Wed., Nov. 6**, 8:00 p.m.

Parent and Baby Class at Island Kids, 536 Main Street community room. \$8 per class. Information: **317-0216**. **Fri., Nov. 8** (and every Friday), 11:00 a.m.

The Main Street WIRE post-election issue – Sat., Nov. 9. Deadlines: Advertising in the paper, Sun., Nov. 3; decision on stuffers for *The Bag*, Mon., Nov. 4; materials due Thur., Nov. 7. **Future issues:** November 23 (Thanksgiving issue) and December 14 (Christmas issue); then at two-week intervals starting in January, 2003: January 11, 25; February 8, 22; March 8, 22; April 12, 26; May 17, 31; June 14, 28; July 26; August 23; September 6, 20; October 11, 25; November 8, 22 (Thanksgiving issue); December 13 (Christmas issue 2003). **Phone/fax** for news, **826-9055/755-2540**; phone/fax for display and classified advertising placement and information, **751-8214/755-2540**; to list your organization's Island events here (no charge), fax information to **755-2540**, or send it by e-mail to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com.

Postal Commemorative Cancellation Event for Nellie Bly stamp, part of the *Women in Journalism* stamp set, Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main Street, featuring a performance by Irene Clark of Nellie Bly's writings; presented by Roosevelt Island Historical Society and the U.S. Postal Service. **Sat., Nov. 9**, 11:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

– Future Events –

Toastmasters public speaking group. Visitors welcome. Information: **751-9577** or **759-0396**. **Mon., Nov. 11**, 8:00 p.m.

RIOC Board of Directors Meeting, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. **Thur., Nov. 14**, 5:30 p.m.

Seniors Association Fashion Show, Manhattan Park Theatre Club. \$5 advance sale, \$7 at the door. **Sat., Nov. 16**, 8:00 p.m. (doors open 7:15)

Seven Women Reading Their Poetry, open mike, and wine reception, Gallery RIVAA. Admission, \$5. **Sun., Nov. 17**, 4:00 p.m.

Book Discussion – Empress of the Splendid Season by Oscar Hijuelos, Library. Advance registration required; book available at the Library. **Thur., Nov. 21**, 6:30 p.m.

Historical Society Annual Meeting, including election of officers, Island House community room. **Mon., Dec. 2**, 7:30 p.m.

Islander **Roy Eaton** with the **New York Pops Orchestra**, Carnegie Hall, playing Ravel & Joplin, a benefit concert for the Lauri Strauss Leukemia Foundation. **Mon., Dec. 9**, 7:30 p.m.

Book Discussion – Girl with a Pearl Earring by Tracy Chevalier, Library. Advance registration required; book available at the Library. **Thur., Dec. 19**, 6:30 p.m.

Senior Center

Monday
10:30, **Blood Pressure Screen**
12:30, **"Oldies" Movies**
1:00, **Tai Chi**
7:00, **Dance** (Beginners)

Tuesday
10:30, **Jazzercise**
7:30, **Games** (RISA)
Wednesday
9:00, **Stay Well**
10:00, **English as Second Language**
7:00, **Pokeno** (RISA)

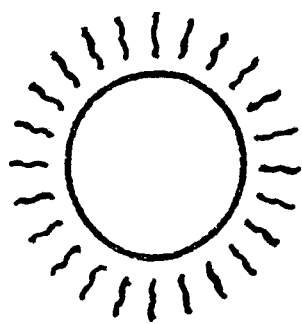
Thursday
10:00, **Tai Chi**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
12:30, **Movie**
7:00, **Dance Class** (Advanced)
Friday
10:00, **English as Second Language**

10:15, **Yoga Stretch**
1:00, **Bridge Class**
7:30, **Lotto**
Saturday
7:30, **Bingo** (RISA)

Special Events

Mon., Nov. 11, 11-12:30, **MetroCard Bus**
Wed., Nov. 13, 10:00, **Stress Management**
Sat., Nov. 16, 8:00, **Seniors Fashion Show**, Manhattan Park Theater Club
Sat., Nov. 23, 6:00, **Annual Dinner** (RISA members only)

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



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and Roosevelt Island's Families for Over 20 Years**

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- All Groups (ages 3-13) led by Professional Educators
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- Red Cross Instructional Swim Program
- Music, Drama and Dance
- Tennis Instruction
- Origami and Arts & Crafts
- Skill Development in Team Sports
- Nature/Science Program

**Call Doug Volan or Stan Friedmann, Directors, to enroll,
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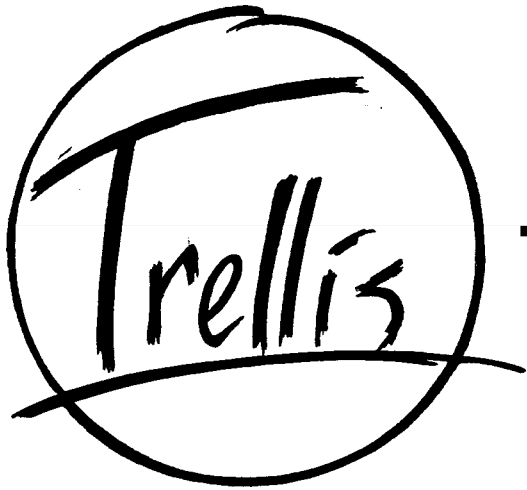
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Octagon from page 1

called again, as in past meetings, for Motorgate to be used for cars belonging to residents of the new building.

Becker explained the taller wings in these words: “In order to fund the \$10 million restoration of the Octagon, we’re relying on the [federal] historic tax credit program, which effectively covers 20% of the cost... [The National Park Service] asked us to double the length of the low-rise connectors separating the Octagon from the wings, so the only way we could actually maintain the number of apartments was to add height to the wings.”

He added, “We’ve actually come to like this design even more than the original, al-



A peak audience of only 40 listened as the team of architects described the project redesign last week.

though it certainly is a different approach. It reflects the National Park Service philosophy... And, unfortunately, we don’t really have much choice in the matter if we’re going to renovate the Octagon. We have to comply with their design mandates.” The mandates included elimination of the mansard roof.

Part of the change increases the number of apartments from 460 to 500. In explanation, Becker said, “We really have to pay attention to the financing constraints... We have to maintain a critical mass.”

Regarding parking, Becker said RIOC has never offered availability of Motorgate for Octagon Apartments parking. While RIRA had asked RIOC to supply a representative for the Town Meeting, it did not, so there was no explanation of what considerations have kept the agency from offering the Becker firm the opportunity to expand Motorgate, either upward or into its last unbuilt quadrant.

A member of the Becker team presented a slide summarizing parking demand after completion of a full nine-building Southtown, saying that the 250 spaces re-

quired for the Octagon Apartments would not be available in Motorgate. But the unbuilt quadrant was not factored in. In response, one resident pointed out that there is currently no guarantee that Southtown will be completed.

The project’s proposed underground garage will extend from under its north-south oriented residential wing to space under the current tennis courts. The courts will be raised 12 to 18 inches, along with surrounding terrain. Becker said great expense was being incurred to make the parking essentially invisible. “We do have a requirement to provide parking in order to finance this project,” he said, but later added, “The only thing that we have to do is have a parking solution so that when we build our apartments we have parking associated with them.”

In a later e-mail to *The WIRE*, Becker said, “Moving the parking to Motorgate has never been an option for us. Furthermore, there are compelling reasons to have it on-site. It will offer... convenient parking to families and people with disabilities without adding any additional traffic to the commercial section of Main Street. To address community concerns, we have completely mitigated its visual impact by making it entirely below grade.”

Asked if eliminating the underground garage would reduce project costs and permit a reduction in the scale of the residential wings, Becker indicated it would not. He wrote, “The garage is self-supporting so moving the parking to Motorgate would not have a financial impact. We are buying development rights for 500 units for a fixed amount. If we were to reduce the scale of the project the project would no longer be financially feasible.”

To meet Fire Department requirements for vehicle-maneuvering space, and to raise the tennis courts without losing mature trees, the courts would be reduced from six to four. The presenters outlined a plan to build up to three additional courts in the Water Tunnel area, but pointed out that the City still controls the Water Tunnel site, and no arrangements yet exist for the space to be made available for new or interim courts. Becker said an effort would be made, in construction timing, to avoid loss of courts during the peak tennis season.

- Key changes in the project include:
- The increase to 13 stories and 500 apartments, expected to house 1000 people.
 - The doubling of the connectors.
 - Addition of two 1500-foot geothermal wells for environmentally-benign heating and cooling.



Becker and Becker model of a restored Octagon building shows the central spiral staircase, an architectural element for which the building was long known. In the restoration, following National Park Service rules, the staircase will be modernized, but will remain a key feature.

- Elimination of apartments earlier planned within the restored Octagon structure. The tower will now contain fitness facilities, administrative offices, meeting rooms, a gallery, one or more classrooms, and offices that might be used for Island organizations.
 - Extension of Octagon Park all the way to the river promenade.
 - An inner courtyard, “primarily for residents” of the buildings, that includes a swimming pool that might offer outside memberships.
- In discussing the impacts of the project

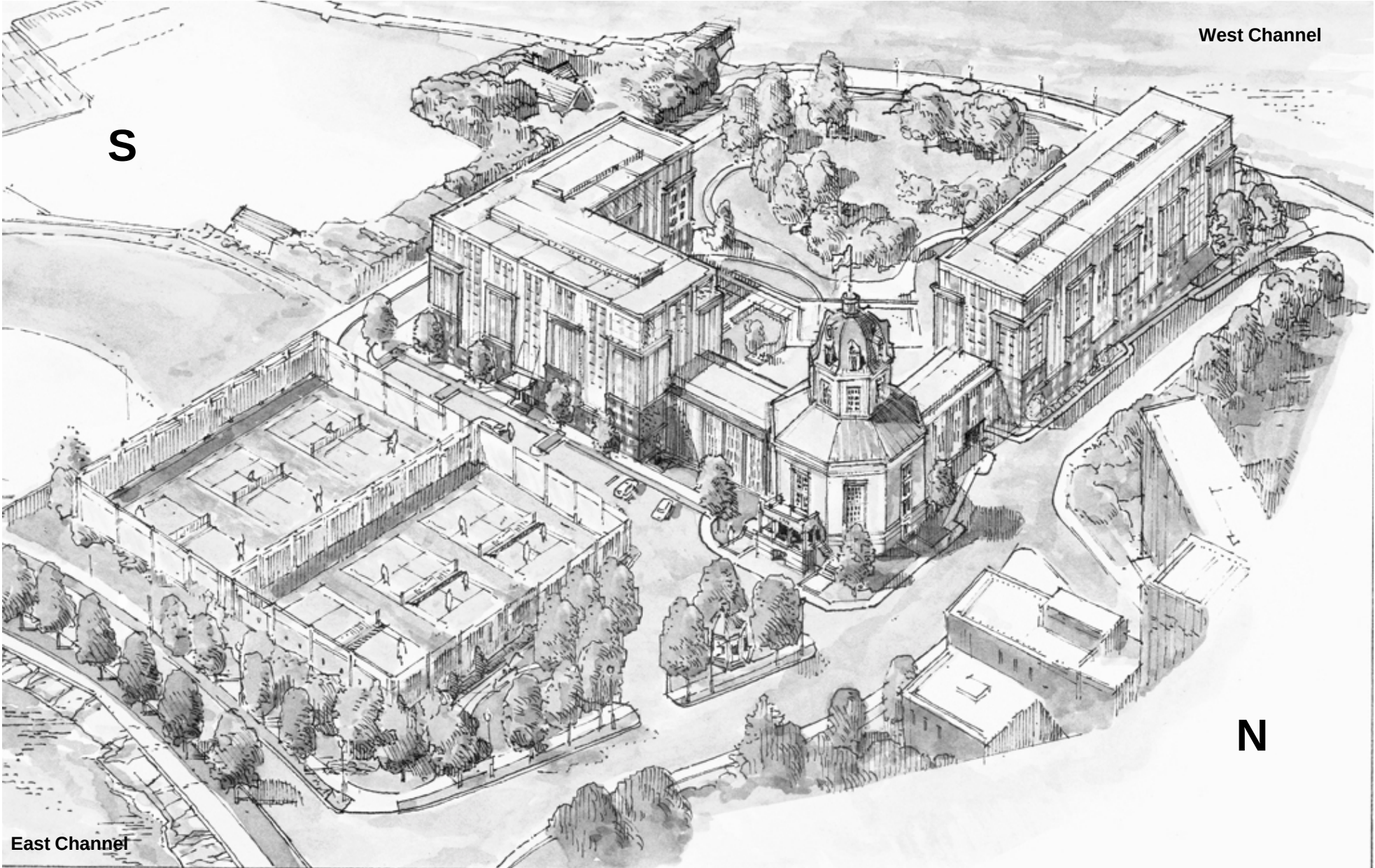
when combined with the anticipated impacts of Southtown, the Becker team said traffic, noise, and pollution would not increase significantly, but said that the Island school “will fill up.” The presenters said the project would make a major financial contribution to the Island through ground rent, and to Public Safety costs, as well as to the extension of the minibus route.

Becker said the project will provide “very, very significant revenues to RIOC.” He declined, however, to discuss specifics of the lease under which his firm will control five



Before/After: Original elevation drawings for the Octagon Apartments had residential wings well below the peak of the Octagon tower (drawing immediately above). A year ago (right), they gained a little more bulk. In the most recent presentation, an original six stories had become 13, with lengthened connector structures to provide some distance between the landmark Octagon and the residential wings.





acres of the Octagon Park area of the Island.

Critical residents included Judy Berdy, President of the Roosevelt Island Historical Society. She had worked closely with the Becker firm on aspects of the project involving the landmark Octagon structure, which was designed by a prominent architect of the 19th Century, Alexander Jackson Davis, as one corner of a City institution for the insane. “I didn’t even have to open [the October 19 issue of] *The WIRE*,” Berdy said, “and right on page one was *this thing*. I look at this and I say, what is this abomination? What happened?” Many of the 40-or-so residents in the audience applauded at this point.

She continued, “There is no way that a project that started out with such good intent, that got along fine... Why 500 units? Is it to pay the ground rent? Is it that RIOC thinks they can just get so much money out of you?”



Bruce Becker

Later, Berdy added, “This building is just a block... It just doesn’t appeal. It just looks like the top four stories were just stuck on.” The remark was applauded. Joan Christianson was among the residents concurring: “I’m not pleased with the higher buildings.” Speaking later, she amended her comments: “I was being too polite earlier. It’s ugly. It’s like a Chia Pet. Every time I see it, it gets bigger. Please do something to make it more attractive. I don’t want to have to turn against something I’ve been in favor of.” Sherie Helstien called the revised design “utterly ugly.”

A member of the Residents Association Common Council, Margie Smith, raised a legal question, pointing out that the Island’s General Development Plan (GDP) specifies residential areas only at Northtown and Southtown. She asked, “Did you get permission to build a third area of housing – to amend the GDP, or are you just taking a risk that nobody is going to challenge it?” In response, Becker revealed that “RIOC is exploring possible amendments [to the GDP]. We understand that they are anticipating making some minor amendments that would insure that we are in full compliance with the GDP... an amendment that would remove [any] ambiguity.”

Another resident, Debra Mount Cornet,

told Becker, “It sounds to me like no matter how many times we come up here and tell you we really don’t want parking there, we get it.” When Becker said he had observed “a range of opinion” on that, and said a resident had earlier spoken privately with him in favor of on-site parking, Cornet took an impromptu poll in which most audience members raised their hands to indicate they did not want parking on the Octagon site. “*There*,” said Cornet. Becker responded by asking, “What is the reason that you’re concerned about parking on site? Is it based on legal...” Cornet responded by citing disruption of the tennis courts area during construction, and the traffic that would result from cars accessing the Island at the foot of the ramp leading off the bridge from Queens, a comment later seconded by Joan Christianson and Ken Diebner, who called the intersection of the ramp and Main Street “a danger zone.”

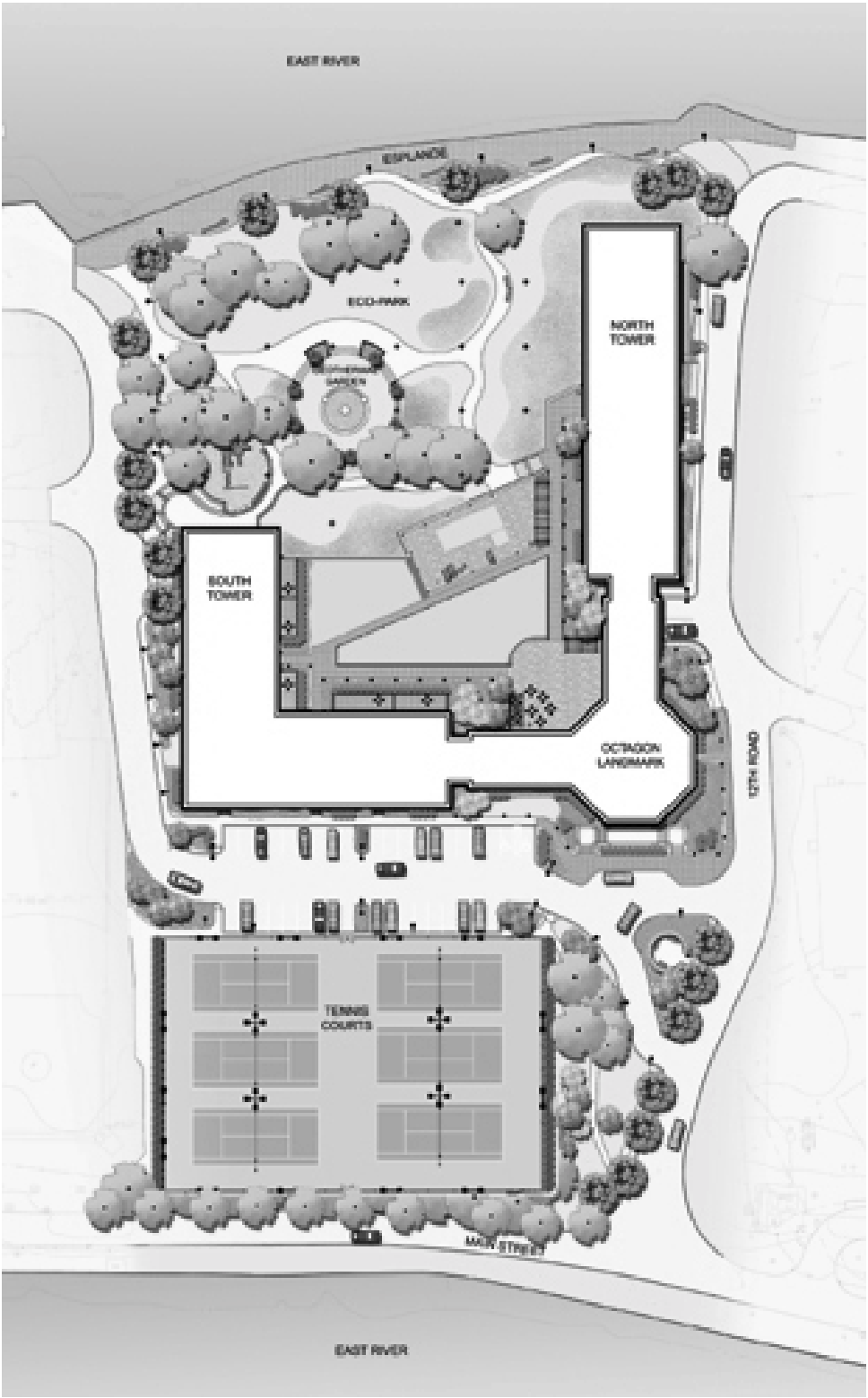
Becker responded to some of the criticism with a general statement. “Obviously, if we didn’t have financing constraints, there would be no limit to what we could do. We could do something that no one would object to. But obviously to have a viable project, we have to balance different interests and requirements. This is the best job we’ve been able to do so far. We’ll continue to try to improve it. It’s obviously something we want to be proud of. We’re here tonight because we’re interested in your suggestions.” He added, “What I prefer to hear are constructive comments on finishes or materials or landscaping – things that we really can respond to... The one condition that we have to meet is there’s a certain scale that we have to meet in order to make this financially feasible. We’ll certainly do everything we can to address everything we’ve heard tonight. Our reputation is built on listening carefully and responding.”

In other comments:

- Sherie Helstien asked for a dog run for the growing number of canines on the Island.
- Mickey Karpeles-Bauer raised the question of whether dogs would be permitted in the development. A show of hands indicated that most residents attending would prefer a no-dogs policy.
- Gladys Dixon expressed concern about traffic as it might affect Coler Hospital residents moving about the area in wheelchairs.
- Ken Diebner and others who spoke regretted the disappearance of a mansard roof on the residential wings, a change mandated by the National Park Service, which requires

that new construction be clearly distinguished from restored landmarks. Diebner said, “This is a politically-active community.

If you need petitions, we can supply them.” Becker said that his firm feels it must accept the National Park Service ruling on the roof.



In a Debate, RIRA’s Presidential Candidates Trade Charges and Describe Widely Differing Plans for the Residents Association

This is the full transcript of the debate held Thursday, October 26, minus incidental and procedural remarks. Biographies immediately below were provided by the candidates at *The WIRE’s* request. Photos are from the debate, which was moderated by Seymour Williams, Chair of the RIRA Election Committee.

Byron Gaspard

I am a family man, married to Margaret Gaspard for 27 years. I have a 15-year-old son. I’ve been an activist fighting for the concerns of this community for five years. I am a New Yorker, born and raised here. I have a Masters Degree in clinical psychology and am presently studying for my doctorate. I am the First Vice-President of RIRA. I was appointed by the State as a member of the Capital Planning and Development Committee and of RIOC’s Public Safety Advisory Committee. I co-chair the Eastwood Building Committee, chair the Public Safety Committee of RIRA, and am Vice President of Social, Cultural and Educational Services for RIRA. I’m an activist in various concerns of the community and RIRA. I assisted the Child School/Legacy High School in gaining access to the vacant school buildings here. I initiated a fundraiser for the victims of The Eastwood and Westview fires. In addition, I’m a member of The 114th Precinct Community Council.



Matthew Katz

My name is Matthew Katz and I’m running for re-election as RIRA President. I offer as credentials my record during the past two years. We have addressed the essential Roosevelt Island questions – governance, housing, transportation, policing, maintenance, and repair – while offering the community a range of social activities – parties, breakfasts, dances – and crisis interventions – 9/11 fundraising and blood drive, threats to tram hours – that my opponents neither endorsed nor participated in. Mr. Gaspard’s campaign signage says we must concentrate on the essentials before dabbling in the fun things. Like walking and chewing gum at the same time, I think the Common Council is fully capable of doing both, and we’ve proved that over the past two years. Please vote for me and for the Common Council Members from your building who have helped to create our record of achievement.



James Whalen

I have accomplished absolutely nothing of any civic consequence in my life. However, I am currently President of the Roosevelt Island Irish Catholic Existential Society and President/Founder of the Roosevelt Island St. Patrick’s Day Parade. I am an old resident of this Island. If I were young and rich, I would live on Sutton Place. I believe the name of this Island should be changed to Welfare Island. I don’t like cats, children, tennis players, old people, gays, lesbians, bagels, yentas, and poor people. I love rich people and hope to join them. After a life of business failures, I remain a life long ne’er-do-well. Finally, I grew up to be the guy my mother told me not to hang out with. All in all, I do need your vote.



Opening Statements

James Whalen: I beg your pardon. I must have been drifting off. I promised some people early today that I would not discuss several topics. One of them is my anger. I promise not to bring it up again. I will refuse to answer any questions concerning that subject. Number two, the Irish Catholic Existential Society – I will not answer any questions about that organization. I hope that will not pose a problem for members of this congregation, this audience.

Why am I running for office? I’m... A few weeks ago I had no intention of running for office. But then I began to fear that something was wrong. Something that is wrong is indicative of the audience, or the lack of an audience this evening. I think the Presidency of RIRA is a very important post. Apparently not enough residents of this Island believe so, or if they do believe so, judging from what happens at some Town Meetings, I fear they think sometimes, “Why bother?” or “Does it make any difference?” and I think it does make a difference, a great deal of difference. RIRA has no power, no funds, no nothing, really, so we run I suppose an advisory group, but an important advisory group. We have input through this group to RIOC, to other organizations, who hopefully will listen to it.

Prior to... for some time now, RIRA has been engaged in what I call “RIOC bashing.” It’s popular to knock RIOC for all of our problems. I have a feeling that if you keep knocking the people who supply the funds, vicious attacks, Mr. Ryan, his staff, it’s counterproductive, it doesn’t get us any place, so it’s confrontation and I don’t think that’s necessary.

I’m running not so much against these gentlemen here, but I am running against the Maple Tree Group, who I frequently refer to as “the evil empire,” because they are the evil empire. They’ve taken over, to a degree, a good part of this Island. The Governor came down here some weeks ago, his meetings, and met with the Maple Tree Group, not RIRA, but the Maple Tree Group. Why with them? They are a subcommittee of a subcommittee. They’re eight people. Why didn’t he meet with Mr. Katz and members of the Common Council? It’s a mystery. They have awesome power, and they’re nobodies, they’re eight people. They have covens down here in Rivercross, and they march around this... fires. They are sinister. Where did they get this power from? I don’t know. They got the power because they [UNINT] the community. And we sit by and let them do things. *The WIRE*, our newspaper here, with Mr. Lutz, is a captive of the Maple Tree Group. As you can judge from the output, the input, the newspaper. Again, he’s RIOC-bashing. Mr. Katz, I’m sad to say, I’m sorry to say, seems at times also to be a captive of the Maple Tree Group.

We spent six months of the past year arguing something, it was a tragedy, whether Mrs. Katz should remain on the Common Council. That’s a voting matter. Mrs. Katz. It went on and on and on. There was no reason for it. The constitution is clear that if you move you lose your seat. If you move from New Jersey to Connecticut you lose your seat. We spent six long months hashing it out, and one of the byproducts of that terrible, terrible debate was people took sides, and it continued [UNINT]... you move, you lose your seat. We wasted an awful lot of time on that, and I don’t think we have any time to waste.

I have some figures here on the income and so forth, what they’re gone, and I’m surprised to say we spend more on the Tram than we do on Public Safety. I never knew that until right now. There’s something wrong there. Why do we...

where are these funds going? We need more input, we need more... we need more meeting.

Finally, let me say one thing. We talk about... Mr. Katz... OK, one last thing, I think a big issue on this Island is, aside from – not the MetroCard – we have several thousand apartments which are Mitchell-Lama, and your 20- or 25-year grace period is up. If the owners of the apartments, if they decide to privatize them, the Island, and certainly the residents of those apartments, are in serious trouble. First, what are we going to do about Mitchell-Lama? I am not personally involved in it, but it’s a tremendous issue. We should pay more attention to it.

Matthew Katz: Good evening, everyone. Two years ago you elected me to be RIRA President. You gave me the job with a two-to-one majority based on my Common Council experience and based on the vision I had for what RIRA and Roosevelt Island could become.

Two years later, I’m coming back to you with a record of accomplishment. I’m proud of the things we’ve done, of what we’ve attempted to do, and of the work that is still in progress.

My primary goal two years ago was to bring together the human and the financial resources that would allow RIRA to become an intrinsic part of this community. Previous Common Councils failed to raise a dime or spend a dime, and so RIRA was unable to offer much. After I was elected, a small core of members formed, eager to work with me, and to create something new and worthwhile. We immediately started planning a dinner-dance fund-raiser in the Manhattan Park Theatre, which produced the renewed RIRA treasury. With these resources in place, RIRA became fertile ground for new ideas – a place where imagination and innovation were encouraged and supported.

This meant that when the idea arose to offer a free breakfast to the Roosevelt Island Day volunteers, we were able to do it last year and again this past June. RIRA had never participated in Roosevelt Island Day before, and I hope this will become a tradition for future Common Councils.

The two summer promenade dances were also gifts we were able to give to the community. But having resources in place wasn’t all about social events. When the Twin Towers fell, RIRA was there. I organized a blood drive that resulted in over 100 pledges of blood at a time when the City’s blood stores were again low. And we raised almost \$10,000, every penny of which was given to the families of the victims to tide them over until insurance and federal money kicked in.

We thanked our firefighters in the Special Ops Firehouse by serving them a first-class Thanksgiving dinner last year, and we intend to do it again this year. And the dedication of the memorial plaque and flowering cherry tree was a wonderful day of remembrance.

These things don’t happen by accident. I was determined that RIRA should participate fully in Roosevelt Island life and I believe that we’ve set a new standard for future RIRA leadership to meet.

The RIRA President can also make a difference working independently. When the RIOC board threatened the third shift of the Tram, I organized a Town Meeting that produced a petition drive. The petition drive resulted in 3,000 signatures and hundreds of letters, many from our elected officials, that halted RIOC in its tracks and saved Tram service after 10:00 p.m. And currently, I’ve presented my plan to incorporate the Tram into the MetroCard system to the

Transit Authority and to the RIOC Board, and I expect these negotiations to bear fruit.

The most significant change in these past two years, really the most significant change in the way Roosevelt Island is governed since RIOC was created in 1984, has been the legislation that Governor Pataki signed into law last month. I’m proud to say that, for the past five years, I’ve been a part of the group, the Maple Tree Group, that has worked tirelessly to create and pass the statutes that would give us the right to govern our own hometown. When I met with the Governor last January as part of a carefully crafted presentation team, we were able to convince him that his advocacy of local control of local government applied to Roosevelt Island. When his appointments are completed and the RIOC Board has a majority of Islanders on it, we, the residents, will determine how and where the Island should be developed, we will determine how the island should be policed by Public Safety, we will determine the priorities for the maintenance and repair of our streets, our lights, our playgrounds, and all of our infrastructure.

We’ve created new expectations for RIRA accomplishment and success, and I want to build on this record with those Council members who have shown themselves ready, willing, and able to roll up their sleeves and get to work. If you re-elect me to the RIRA Presidency I offer you my full-time efforts, and the same innovation and imagination that I’ve brought to the job these past two years. Thank you.

Byron Gaspard: I want to thank everybody for coming out to this meeting. You got the notice, I apologize for the notice, it did not give you adequate time for us to have a fuller Town Meeting and debate. My name is Byron Gaspard, I am running for President of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association.

Why am I running? I’m not sure that RIRA’s credibility has not been entirely destroyed with the Island’s true activists on the crucial issues of housing, public safety, and transportation, by the nonsense of the last two years. So many of the people who have historically done that real hard work of getting things done are refusing to run for Common Council. We have had two years of philosophy and rhetoric about the constitution and about self-governance, when RIOC doesn’t govern us at all; they run a housing project, sort of a legalized coop-type board.

At this point, 22 members of the Common Council elected in the last election have resigned, either actively or passively. If I were Mr. Katz, I’d be ashamed. Mr. Katz’s focus has been very different than the promises he made me when I announced to him that I was running for First Vice President. I understand why I was a valuable asset in getting him elected. The truth is that I was had, and it’s important for me to acknowledge that fact here. I missed the last campaign. I was in the hospital the entire three weeks before the election. I would never have approved the soft-money expenditures for signage and the *WIRE* ads that so disturbed the Common Council during the last election. It is a little-known fact that over 2/3 of the Common Council signed the following letter which Patrick Stewart then so graciously vetoed from distribution. The letter was on Common Council stationery and it read as follows:

Dear Residents:
The RIRA constitution limits campaign spending for a RIRA election to \$250 per candidate or per slate. That limit is there to insure an even playing field for those who are unable or unwilling to spend money for signs or ads in *The WIRE* to get elected. For 25 years the RIRA elections have been won or lost on 8½ by 11 Xeroxes and personal efforts it takes to distribute them, plus the integrity and credibility of the message of those flyers.

My main problem is this, is that there is an integrity issue here. I don't have to take the credit from other people who have worked so hard in this community to do the work. Matthew does, because he occupies his time with abstractions and doing nothing. I've occupied my time on the safety issues and security issues of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association, getting more police on this Island, going to the precinct meetings.

If you ask Matthew Katz and his entourage how many precinct meetings they attended, they will say one out of two years. Deirdre, I, and myself and Patrick have gone to almost every precinct meeting and we've used it as a force to air the differences that we had with the public safety system that is not meeting the security needs of our community. And we've talked about getting a beat officer on this Island, days and nights, We've talked about getting police cars going up and down our streets. We have accomplished this. It's about security. If we don't have a clean and safe environment, where are we? Where is this community? This community is nowhere. If we don't have excellent schools, where are we? This community is nowhere. If we have a small group of people in Rivercross who want to gentri... who want to get involved in gentrifying our community so they can have self-control for their own self-interest, where are we? We are nowhere. This community is rich in diversity and that's what we should be celebrating. That's what we should be working so hard for, to support the diversity of this community, the hard-working people that get out and actually do the work. In addition to that, let's talk about that. Let's talk about that.

OK. In 14 years, especially in the last two years, we have not worked with our task forces. Our task forces have done the work. They're the ones that's meeting with the people, they're the grass root activists that are working directly with the residents here on Roosevelt Island. We have failed to connect with the task forces, all right, and also, in the last two years, we have failed, really, to really reach out to all the people to bring everyone to the table. Matthew met with me and stated that he would bring people to the table, that he would help me fight with... to get a better Public Safety on this Island, that he would help me get police on this Island, that he would help to fight the cause of Mitchell-Lama and keep the poor and housing for the middle class on this Island. He avoided that. Instead he spent his time doing self-governance and doing his campaign with his specific people, namely the Maple Tree Group. We don't want this Island controlled by the few. We want this Island controlled by the residents that live here. The island... the destiny of this Island is a safe and clean and healthy environment controlled by the residents that live here. They should have control, not the small group that celebrates the justification of this community.

If you elect me I will fight against that. I will fight against having this type of support, and have the support where it belongs, with the residents, a RIRA for the residents.

Question and Answer Segment

Seymour Williams (moderator): **What accomplishments, not simply affiliations, can you cite that make you feel qualified to be RIRA President?**

Gaspard: One of the major accomplishments that I'm very proud of is that we were able to get the vacant school buildings filled with a private school, an excellent private school that serves the needs of kids of special needs. Also we were able to get a high... I was able to get a high school, working with RIOC, that much that we, along with Mr. Soso, who is the Principal of the Child School, and also legacy high school, we were able to get a legacy high school here to



fill up those buildings. Those buildings was costing us \$100,000 plus to fill vandalized, vacant buildings. Now those buildings will be bringing an income in to this Island and we will also have an excellent school on this Island. And I was appointed to the Public Safety Advisory Committee, also the Community Planning Board to attack the problem of overdevelopment of our Island, was the Chairperson of the Public Safety Committee, and also the co-chair, along with Nellie Velez, of the Eastwood Building Committee, and we are working directly with the Island House Task Force and the Westview Task Force. So the accomplishments that I've had have been working... I haven't lived here as long as some people but within those five years I've been able to accomplish a lot. In addition to that we've been able to get more police presence on this Island, to deal with the drug-abuse problem that we've had on this Island effectively having undercover narcotics people on this Island to deal with

those situations I've dealt with, people problems as a people person.

Katz: When Byron and I decided to run together two years ago I understood that Byron's primary focus was going to be policing of this Island. It's two years later and the policing of this Island is no better than it was two years ago, and in many ways worse. I intended that he would make a real difference in public safety. I made sure that he was included on the Public Safety Advisory Committee of the RIOC Board when no one from the Residents Association had been included at that time. That Board was supposed to produce the report based on a survey done; it was supposed to have been done last March. The Chair of that committee turned it over after it was clear that the report that they had done had not included the participation of those Island resi-



dents who were included in that committee. It was turned over to those Island residents – Byron Gaspard, Ron Schuppert, Patrick Stewart. It is now eight months later. There is no report. This was an opportunity for a real difference to be made. I contend that I have made more of a difference in how this Island will be policed, by changing the nature of the RIOC Board to a majority of Island residents, than Byron's efforts have made in the last two years.

Whalen: Fifty-four years ago I voted for Harry Truman. I'm active in the Democratic Party, a hotbed of contention ever since. I'm the Treasurer of the Lenox Hill Democratic Club, another hotbed of contention. So I'm used to arguments, jumping and shouting. I've been a union man all these years, I've been to a thousand meetings, and they're all pretty much the same, but at the end of a meeting, we do get something done. We pass a resolution and we move on, and it stops. So it's my hope, plain ambition, to get very difficult people together, and do something, whatever that will be. Thank you.

Williams: **This is a question posed to Byron. Why did you run as a ticket with Matt only to abandon him to assist Patrick, and why should we ever trust you again?**

Gaspard: I'll be glad to answer that. First of all, first of all, when I first announced that I was running for First Vice President, I met with Matthew three times, and we had developed a mutual platform, on concerns and issues that we thought were important to the community, and had came to an agreement that this would be the issues that we would deal with in the next two years. The minute Matthew got into office, an office that he would not have got into if it wasn't for him being on a ticket with me, you know, he would not have gotten, he abandoned all of the issues that he was supposed to deal with. He abandoned the issues of public safety, he abandoned the issues of policing, he abandoned the issues of even going to the precinct meeting for which he attended one in two years, he abandoned the issues of drug sales and trafficking on our Island, he abandoned those quality-of-life issues which would have made a difference in how we live on this Island, and this is why I have decided to run for President, because I think these issues are too important to let go. They make this community impossible for it to be a safe and clean community.

Katz: All I really have to say is that I made campaign promises two years ago and I fulfilled every single one. I said RIRA was going to become proactive in this community. We've put on social events, we've reacted to tragedy. I said I was going to try to change the constitution, and I tried my best. There has not been the incentive to do so, but I said I would try, and I did. I said that I would be continuing to work on self-government, and I had the illusion that Byron was in favor of this, too, but his commitment to this idea has certainly wavered over the years. I can think of no more important issue than who decides what gets spent on this Island, who makes the decisions on this Island. We have made a significant change in that process now, but we're not done. We intend to continue working until the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation Board is elected by this Island and gets to put a trained, professional, experienced Community Manager in the place of the Presidency.

Williams: The next question goes to Jim. **Your outrageous behavior derailed Council meetings, your inappropriate anti-woman, anti-gay, anti-foreigner e-mails destroyed the RIRA listserver. Why would you wish to be President?**

Whalen: I have never been anti-women. I resent that. The others, I will pass. It's a silly question, so I don't intend to answer it. If my behavior's outrageous, it's rightfully so. A lot of time is wasted at the meetings by silly questions

such as this one, homophobia and all that other nonsense. I try to prevent it. I try to stick to the agenda and getting things done, not pursue needless, foolish discussions.

Williams: This third question is addressed to Matt Katz. **RIRA has previously participated in Roosevelt Island Day. Tram problems have always been solved to the residents' benefit. Funds have been collected in the past to help families in trouble. Mr. Katz, do you believe nothing would have been done without you?**

Katz: Thank you for that question. It's a good one. I've been volunteering my time at Roosevelt Island Day for about six years now and I've got a collection of six color T-shirts to prove it. In all those years I have never seen anyone from RIRA participating as a member of RIRA. Sure, we all come out and participate as individuals, but in the booklet that has been produced by Housing Management to talk about Roosevelt Island Day, RIRA has never been thanked because RIRA has never participated. These last two years we were out there smearing cream cheese on bagels and serving coffee at 9:00 in the morning and then picking up our trowels and our rakes and going out and planting flowers. Give me the next part of that question.

Williams: Tram problems have always...

Katz: Tram problems. Tram problems don't solve themselves. It is unfortunate that we have to reinvent the wheel every time RIOC wants to balance their budget on the backs of Tram riders. I wish it weren't so. I wish RIOC were not tied to a political system so that every time a Republican replaces a Democrat or a Democrat replaces a Republican in the State House, RIOC clears out, takes the institutional memory with them, and we have to teach them what's important on Roosevelt Island all over again. That's the problem with the system. What's the third part?

Williams: Families in trouble...

Katz: OK. Case in point: Some years ago, you may recall that Eastwood had a terrible fire and people were burned out of their homes. We're Roosevelt Islanders and we all came out there and we did what we could. We collected money, we collected clothing, we collected furniture, but it was done by individuals. Why? Because there was no groundwork done on RIRA to do this as an organization. When 9/11 happened just over a year ago, there was an organization in place, funds in place, there were people in place, the financial and human resources that I referred to, to make a response, to donate the blood, to get the money for the fundraising for the families that were involved, to do the plaque and the cherry tree. These things don't happen unless you plan for them.

Gaspard: All right, in the first place, Matthew had absolutely, he was missing in action when it came to the fires in Eastwood. Matthew, he's missing in action in terms of most of the activities that have taken place in Eastwood. I was the one that initiated the financial drive for Darlene and friends that were victimized by the fire, and Karen and Fay Vass initiated getting the materials. They're sitting right there. We counted the money in Judy Berdy's house, not in Matthew's house, not in Matthew and Sherie's house, but we sat right there, me and Ken Diebner, Judy Berdy, and myself, and counted the money in the initial financial things that I started and had the jar sitting in front of the Public Safety Officer and everyone made contributions and we put it in the Public Safety Office to make sure that no one took the money and we knew that it would be safe in the Public Safety office. He had absolutely nothing to do with it because he simply wasn't there. So for this man to [UNINT] to sit there and lie to this community like that is absolutely outrageous.

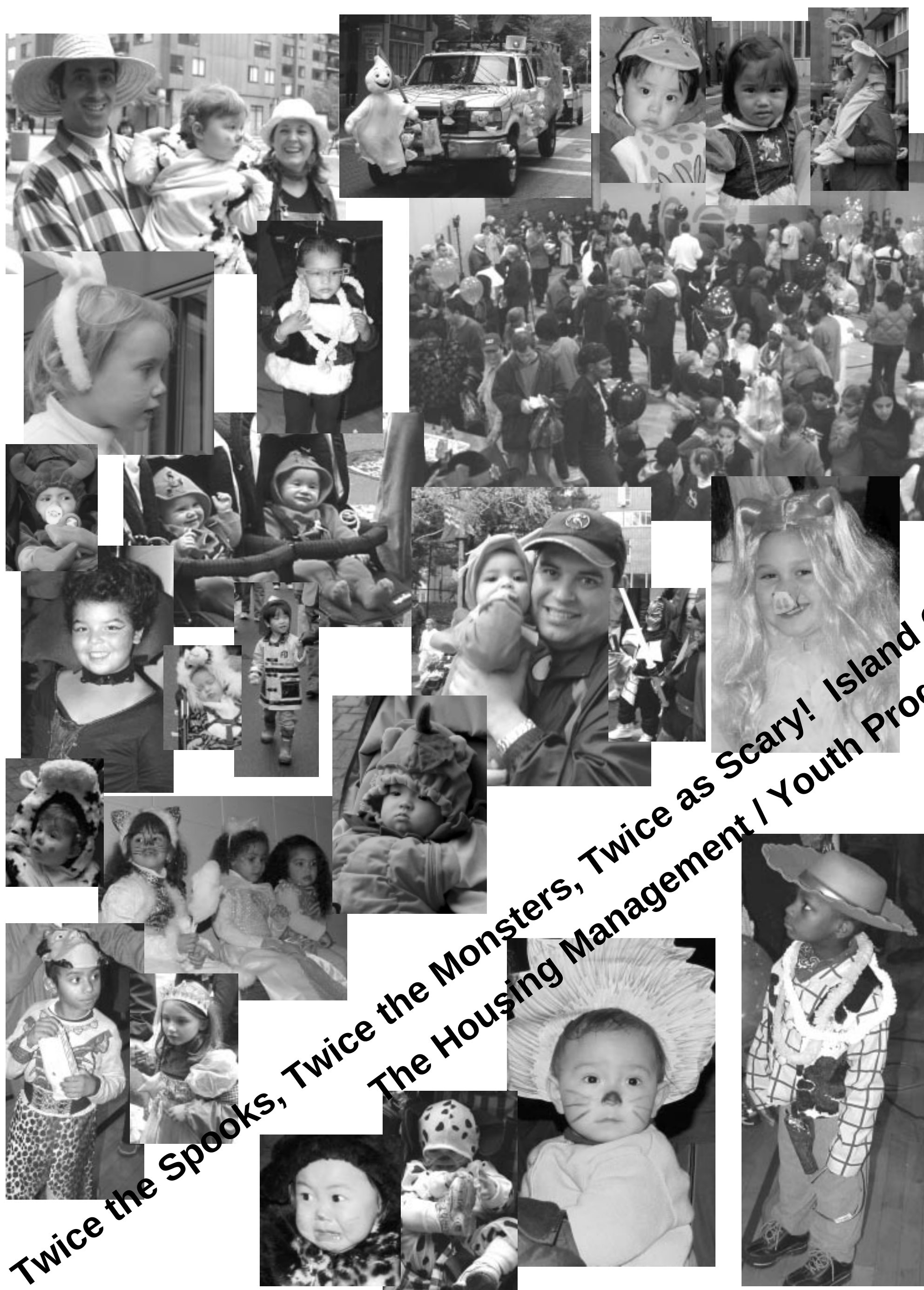
Whalen: I guess I would just say, if elected, there would be no dinner dance, except for St. Patrick's Day, of course,



there would be no free breakfast, including bagels, there would be no blood drive, there would be no MetroCard. I would concentrate on what I consider to be important matters.

Williams: The next question is for Matt. **When I asked why Pete's two Eastwood resident members were reduced to one, Matt said I was looking at the wrong document. It turns out per the WIRE transcript of 2/19/2000 that it was the MTG group who argued for the reduction. Can Matt explain?**

Katz: OK, I'll answer the question. I'd like to go back instead to two Februarys ago when we met with Pete Grannis and Olga Mendez to talk about the legislation which would give a RIOC Board elected by the residents of this Island. There was a question then, and it still remains for future
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deliberation, as to whether the format that’s used for RIOC [sic; RIRA intended], a weighted system of members on this RIOC Board should be introduced, or whether there should be a single member from each of the buildings on the Island, more like the Senate rather than the House of Representatives. I was arguing for the Senate side of the idea because I’ve seen what happens when we’ve got a Board of 25 or 30 people. It’s very hard to get anything done. The RIOC Board is currently nine people, and I think 9, 10, 11 people is the proper size for a board that has to deliberate on a budget of \$10-11 million a year. I thought the only way on an Island this size, and to make sure all the buildings were represented, was to have a single representative from each building. This hasn’t been decided now, it’s not going to be decided again until the debate is again joined on what to do about the governance of Roosevelt Island. Keep in mind that both Pete Grannis and Olga Mendez have said in their newsletters that the current legislation that was passed is an interim measure. Everybody understands that these folks are still being appointed by the Governor, which has got nothing to do with elected representation or democracy. Not until the Board is elected by the members of this community will there be true democracy.

Gaspard: In the first place, I’m not against democracy on this Island, and Matthew very well knows that. I believe in democracy, I think we should elect our residents to the



RIOC Board, but I am against a plan would destroy this Island financially and physically. I am against unfair representation of the buildings in terms of self-governance. How can you have a development like Eastwood, which has 1003 apartments only represented by one vote when you have the whole other side of Northtown that hardly doesn’t even measure up to the amount of people that live in Eastwood. On that side of

the street, you have one representation, on the other side you have three, simply unfair. You ignore the disabled, you ignore the seniors, you ignore a proportion of our community, and any bill that does that is not a fair bill. I believe in democracy, I’m against this bill.

Williams: No one seems to be able to budge the City and RIOC regarding the MetroCard for our Tram. You’ve been active with this. Please tell us what prospects or results you expect and when we’ll be able to use our MetroCards on our Tram. This is a question addressed to Matthew.

Katz: This is an example of the kind of thing that you can do if you’ve got the time and the inclination to do it as President. Last February I saw a sign in the subway station that said that there was a transit riders’ meeting downtown and that the President of the New York City Transit Authority, Lawrence Reuter, would be taking questions from subway and bus riders. I figured there was nothing to lose by coming as a Tram rider. Nobody runs any meetings for Tram riders, and so I made a pitch for the MetroCard on the Tram. I assumed that I was going to be sloughed off, that nobody was particularly interested in that, but Mr. Reuter surprised me by saying that he was very interested in the idea, and would I please take it back to the RIOC Board for their consideration. As it turns out, the RIOC Board was meeting that night. I presented the idea during the public portion of the meeting, which is available to residents every other month, the evening meetings. Mr. Ryan made the statement that this had been discussed before and nobody was interested in doing it and why were we bringing it up again, but the RIOC Board members, specifically Leo Kayser, who’s a non-resident Board member, said that he was very interested in pursuing the idea and would I be amenable to being an honest broker in meetings between the Transit Authority and RIOC. I started doing that then, and there have been a series of meetings between the Transit Authority President and Mr. Ryan, between the MetroCard Senior Vice President, Tom Savage, and members of Mr. Ryan’s staff, and I’ve seen a shift over time from the question of “should we do this thing” to “how can we do this thing.” I understand that there have been meetings at the very highest level last month in which the possibility of funds from other sources have been broached, and it’s the funds that have been the sticking point all this time because nobody wants to pay to install this system. It’s not a great deal of money as far as things go from the Transit Authority, which is a billion-dollar public-benefit corporation. We’re talking about something between \$500,000 and \$800,000 to get this thing on the line, so I’m very hopeful that if I am able to continue using the forum of the RIRA Presidency, I can make this thing happen. It’s a good idea, it’s an idea whose time has long come, and I intend to pursue it.

Whalen: Five hundred to eight hundred thousand dollars. As Senator Dirksen said, one of my many heroes, a hundred thousand there and a hundred thousand here, add up. Five hundred thousand dollars that a few people could ride for half-fare. We are on the Titanic. You’re talking about the menu. We’ve hit the iceberg. We can’t be worried about the MetroCard. I don’t care about the MetroCard. If you’re old, as some of you are, you can go for half-fare on

the Tram. There’s not an issue. If you’re not old, speaking for myself, of course, I take the subway. If you don’t like the subway, there are a million people ride the subway every day, and some discomfort. It’s part of the system. I don’t see the MetroCard as an issue at all. We have 102 problems, and that’s 103. I’m sorry to disappoint you. If you feel strongly about the MetroCard, Mr. Katz is your candidate.

Williams: The next question: Can Mr. Katz explain why the MTG group met with the Governor on January 11 and did not tell the Council, which met on January 9, that they were doing so?

Katz: For those of you who aren’t aware of it, the Maple Tree Group has been acting as a subcommittee of the Government Relations Committee of the Residents Association. They have been more conscientious about reporting their activities to the Common Council than virtually any other committee of the Common Council. We had determined that the committee reports each month should be submitted in writing. Maple Tree Group and possibly one other committee have been the only ones who have ever done that.

No, we didn’t talk about the meeting with the Governor prior to it because we had been disappointed so many times when the meeting was cancelled. We reported on that meeting fully after the fact. It took the Maple Tree Group one solid year to get that meeting. We worked our fingers to the bone to give the best presentation we knew how to convince the Governor that giving this Island representative control of government was the right thing to do. What we’ve accomplished is that we’ve gotten a majority on the RIOC Board. I think this will change our lives dramatically. But there’s more work to do and the initiation of this process has been the Maple Tree Group’s, and exclusively the Maple Tree Group’s. Anybody who wants to be involved in getting self-governance who had any doubts about the legislation as it existed was free to join this group and participate in the discussions. Byron, over the past two years, has come to one meeting and never come to another. He had an opportunity to present his ideas; he declined.

Gaspard: First place, I came to more than one meeting. I saw that the meeting, in my opinion, was not to the satisfaction to address the community. I sat around a group of people who were there for their own self-interest, and had very little concern about their community. That is not the type of people that I care to sit with on a continuous basis. I want to sit with doers, I want to sit with people that really love this community like I do. Get out there and do the hard work, and do the work not for themselves, to benefit themselves, but to benefit the community because when you do work to benefit the community, you benefit yourselves and you benefit your families. Now, the thing is, I’m not one to take credit for things that I don’t do. Unfortunately, my opponent does, because when you do nothing, when you represent abstraction, you have to add substance by taking responsibility for what other people do. One of the reasons that I was very angry about the meeting that they had with the Governor is because that was an opportunity for them to address the Governor about getting State Troopers on the Island, about getting a satellite police station on the Island, about getting more police protection, about investigating the Public Safety contract, about addressing the availability of housing for the middle class and maintaining Mitchell-Lama, and they blew that opportunity because all they wanted to service is their own self-interest. I do not represent that. I represent you. I work for you. Matthew and his company work for themselves.

Whalen: I’m glad Mr. Katz has come out of the closet. He’s openly admitted he’s a captive, a lackey, of the Maple Tree Group. I’ve accused him of that all along but he’s finally said yes. He said “we” five times in the last minute. “We” refers to the Maple Tree Group, not RIRA. He is a member of the Maple Tree Group and he’s running as such. So RIRA would become an adjunct of the Maple Tree Group and not the other way around.

Remember when eight feet of wire was missing from the cable? I happened be taking a walk one night down here by the, I mean the big Mary, the DMZ zone. I have a special pass to go in there but I won’t go into that. I noticed a fire, people dancing around the fire. I noticed they were members of the Maple Tree Group, and they were singing songs, and on the ground was a piece of wire eight feet long. Dancing, leaping with joy, hurray, hurrah. I was terrified. I snuck away. That’s the Maple Tree Group – the evil empire. If you want them running things, vote for Mr. Katz, and you’ll be.... Halloween is coming. It would be appropriate.

Williams: Two of the Presidential candidates listened to the Tuesday presentation on Octagon. What is the opinion of Katz and Gaspard?

Gaspard: I do have concerns. One of my concerns is the overpopulation of this Island, as the completion of Southtown. Right now we, before I even get to that, right now we have 9,500 people right here on Roosevelt Island. At the completion of Southtown we’ll have close to 25,000 on this Island. With the completion of Octagon Park, they

already have site approval, there’s not really much we can do about that, at the completion we’ll have close to 30,000 people on this Island. Now we do have some fundamental problems. We’ll have transportation problems. Now we have the F train coming into the station. There are often times you’ll have to let a train go by, it’s difficult to even get into work, to get onto the train at 9,500 people. What are we going to do with 25-30,000 people, how is transportation going to accomplish this increase?

Another problem I have with this is open spaces. The open spaces, right now, our children are playing in the street, they’re playing in the buildings, they’re playing in the backyards because they have no place for recreation. You know, slowly but surely all of our open spaces that should be there for our children, that makes this community very attractive, is being taken away from us. And that’s my perception about Octagon Park. It’s a good development but I have reservations to it for those reasons.

Katz: I’d have to agree with that. Becker and Becker, which are the developers of this, have been coming to us for about two years now, and the quality of their work is very



good. But what we’ve seen is that the nature of this development has gone from a six-story apartment house to a 13-story apartment house. It’s gone from a design that included a mansard roof and was very attractive to one now that looks like a plain slab of concrete and is not particularly attractive. We’ve seen a development that didn’t include parking and now includes an underground parking lot, when parking space still goes beg-

ging in Motorgate. I’m glad that they come to the community. I hope they’re listening to the community; I have no expectation that they are. I hope that RIOC is listening to this community.

Tuesday the turnout was very small and, unless the community takes a stand on this and makes it clear what their preferences are in this development, I don’t know if anybody will be listening. It’s the community’s voice, 9500 people, that makes a difference. I’m concerned about the overcrowding on the Island. I’m concerned about what building residential apartments on land that is parkland will do to the remaining parkland on this Island. Do it in Octagon, you can do it in Southpoint, and we don’t have much open space left. These are serious concerns and I think we all should be paying attention.

Whalen: Humbug. I want the Octagon and I want it bigger. We need people on this Island. The stores are closed from here on down because we don’t have enough people. The Maple Tree Group fought Southtown. It cost the citizens of this community several hundred thousand dollars to fight the evil empire, the gang of eight, because they were against Southtown. They’re against development. They’re against everything. If Becker pulls out of the Octagon project, that building will fall down. I hope to contain some of it, but if you nitpick and nitpick and you don’t like this and that, they’ll never go on.

As far as the tennis courts are concerned, I don’t like tennis players. Never did and I never will. I’m not too pleased about golf players, either. And your open space, that soccer field down there, those brats, those rich brats that go to the Dalton School, come over on the Tram and take seats away from me, pardon me, away from the senior citizens, every afternoon, and yell and shout and scream, supply a soccer field for those brats? Are there any parents here from the Dalton School? All right, then, the Dalton School, they’re mean and vicious and I don’t care about soccer, either. Watch it on TV. I want people and more people and more people. We have enough space. We have enough park. We need people, people and more people. We need stores.

If you want a safe community, we need people on the streets. Walk out here tonight and there’s nobody on the street. Why? For 101 reasons. But the more people we have the safer this community will be, and we need those parks and we need Southtown.

Williams: This is addressed to Matt. Thank you for your very best efforts in steering an unsteerable body. My question is, why bother? RIRA has no power. Why subject yourself and your family to such idiocy?

Katz: It’s really a question for all of us but I’m glad to take a shot at it. It’s true. RIRA doesn’t have any governmental power, but we have power as the voice of this Island. I’ll have more to say about that in my closing statement, but the fact of the matter is, if we don’t speak up for ourselves, nobody else will. It’s the only power that RIRA has. We have the opportunity to do things on the street, to put on parties, to react to crises, but essentially the reason that we’re here is that we are the only elected organization that represents the residents of this Island and only the residents of this Island. It is essential to keep that voice alive, because nobody else speaks for us. If we don’t, who will?

Whalen: I think it’s very simple. Why does anyone bother? Why run for City Council? Why run for any particular office? Why become a teacher? Why become a social worker? Because it’s a need, I think it’s a need. It’s an inner need which is so important. You know, Matthew talks about \$500,000 for the MetroCard. To preserve this build-

ing will take, I don't know, a couple hundred thousand dollars. Why preserve an old church like this, it's a hundred years old. It's cold, we're all sitting here freezing and we need heat, because it's important to preserve the church. It's an important building, it's an important structure, in our lives. The building is important. We don't want it to fall down. Why? If you have to ask that question there isn't any answer to it. Either you know it's important and it's meaningful, or you don't. And if you don't know, then I certainly won't try to convince you. So why run? Because it's important for the community and for my inner needs, whatever they may be. It's important that people actively do something, however small, and however thankless it might be. But it's important to make some contribution, or to try to make a contribution, and maybe even fail in it.

Gaspard: RIRA has no power with the residents because RIRA has not been for the residents. RIRA has been for themselves, a small group of people in this last two years have turned around and involved RIRA in projects that have been solely for the benefit of themselves and their own desire to control this Island. If I'm President of the Common Council I will change that. RIRA is called the Roosevelt Island Residents Association, which means we are here for you. We are here to work with you for a cleaner and safe community, and if I'm elected, that's exactly what I'll do. I'll work for a RIRA that's for the residents. I will work with the task forces who are doing the lion's share of the work now, and not involve myself in phony politicizing that only served to serve myself or the self-interests. That's why RIRA has no power, because RIRA has relinquished that power, because they simply have not been about the residents.

Williams: Special projects that RIRA undertakes. How can you as an officer fit the demands of the projects into your schedule? How much time will you be able to devote to the position. Do you think it will be enough to be effective?

Whalen: I've decided to devote 90% of my time, 90%, to this position. I notified my girlfriend, Samantha... Why do people laugh when I say [UNINT]... this is serious. I've notified my girlfriend, Samantha, that if I win this election, she has to go. She can come weekends. Saturday, that's it. The rest of my time... You're laughing about her coming on the weekends, is that... 90% of my time will be devoted to RIRA, promise.

Katz: I'm retired, and I intended when I took this job to make this a full-time responsibility. I've done that. It's been pretty much of a seven-day-a-week kind of proposition. I've been able to take on special projects because I've found projects that were of interest to me that I could take on in addition to chairing the Common Council meetings, trying to work with the groups that have been putting social programs as well as reactive programs onto the Roosevelt Island streets and into our public spaces. I have the time to do this. I feel that I have done that over the past two years, and I intend to continue if I'm elected.

Gaspard: The only way that I can answer that question is, I will put as much time as necessary to get the job done. Since I've lived on this Island, I've put an enormous amount of time into this community. Those who know me, and I've fought, and I've put in an awful lot of time, sometimes much to my detriment. In the five years that I've lived here I've spent two stints in the hospital from overwork and really working hard and really trying to deal with the issues here on Roosevelt Island. I love this community, I care about this community, I will do what is necessary to keep this community a clean and safe environment. As opposed to other communities, we're still the safest community in town, and I'd like to keep it that way, but I'd like to make sure that it continues that way by fighting for those issues that will maintain it.

Williams: The next question is addressed to all three presidential candidates. We know that Matthew Katz favors elected Island representation on the RIOC Board. We also know that Mr. Whalen and Mr. Gaspard both oppose elected representation. Would each of you please explain your reason to us tonight?

Gaspard: First of all, I don't oppose resident representation. What I do oppose is political appointees, and political appointees can be residents or appointed people that don't live on this Island. I want access on that Roosevelt Island, on that RIOC Board. I want people that really represent this

community. I don't want stool pigeons, I don't want people that are lame ducks to the Governor. I want people that have a vested interest in this community, and that's the residents that I want on a RIOC Board. I'm not against democracy. I'm not against a resident-controlled RIOC. But I am against this bill that does not represent the Roosevelt Island Residents Association and does not represent the residents of Roosevelt Island.

Katz: I'm not sure what bill Byron is referring to, given that the bill that was passed in September is now the law of the land. It puts a majority on the RIOC Board of residents of this Island. It also presumes to protect our open space, although I do see some dangers there with loopholes. The law that I think Byron's referring to is the one that has evolved over a period of five years that I've been working on it to give this Island elected representation. The final form of this bill when it's finally passed, I can't imagine what it will say, whether it will include weighted representation from buildings or not weighted representation, guarantees of money or not guarantees of money, these are the decisions that we will try to influence to the betterment of the Island, but these are decisions that our elected officials will ultimately decide and negotiate between themselves. It's the way the system works. What I am convinced of is that the Founding Fathers of this country got it right. It's the way you do it is you have federal, state, and local government, all elected of the people that they represent. Two hundred and twenty-six years ago they fought a war about no taxation without representation. We don't have it here, and it's just dead wrong. The way it's supposed to be done, and I intend to continue working on that.

Whalen: A few years ago, the Maple Tree Group wanted something called "people's republic of Roosevelt Island," independent, with their own government, ambassadors, and types to the UN and so forth. One day again I was wandering down here by the, that forbidden zone down here and I saw the editor of our newspaper and he had on his special uniform, military, I counted six stars, not five stars, but six



Left to right: Joe Cristiano (chair of the nominations committee), Byron Gaspard, Seymour Williams (chair of the election committee and moderator), Matthew Katz, James Whalen.

stars, I said I will not mention his name, I said, "Mr. ... What are you doing?" He said, "Well, I'm going to be the secretary of defense for our new government, the people's republic of Roosevelt Island," and he had guns. I said, "Well, isn't it a little dangerous?" and he said, "You'd better step back, buddy." And then all of a sudden a car pulled up with a flashing red light and who was driving the car but Mr. Katz, was going to be president of the people's republic of Roosevelt Island, and these people were all sponsored by the MTG.

So this is a delusion that somehow we need people living on the Island, especially the Maple Tree people, to be our representatives. I hope we will never see the day they are our representatives. We, the people who live on City Island do not have a free government. The people who live on Staten Island do not have a free government. They are part of the community, a part of New York City, which I hope we will be some day.

Williams: The very last question for tonight is for Byron Gaspard and Ron Schuppert, but I believe Ron is not here, so for Byron: Mr. Gaspard, as one of the resident representatives placed on the RIOC Board member Joan Dawson's Public Safety Committee at the behest of Matt Katz, and Mr. Schuppert as a representative of Rivercross, also serving on the same committee, would each of you please explain why neither of you have produced the final report based on the survey taken over a

year ago that Dr. Dawson left in your hands last March, over eight months ago?

Gaspard: First of all, the report was not left in my hands, it was left in Vice Presidential candidate's Ron Schuppert's hands, who was the Vice President of Island services, who within the two years that he served as the Vice President of Island services, he held approximately three meetings. Very little was done in Island services, and very little was being done about this report. I sat on this committee and I fought very hard to get a worthwhile report to the community. It was I that released a version of the report to *The WIRE* and to Matthew Katz, so that the community would have some idea of what was going on with the Public Safety report after no one else was willing to take the responsibility.

Katz: You know, since last March I've been going to every single RIOC Board meeting and asking Dr. Dawson on those rare occasions when she's showed up, "Where's the report?" And she told me that she turned it over to Ron Schuppert and that he, with the other resident members of that committee, would produce the report. But I think this is more about leadership than anything else. If you see a job that needs to be done, you do it. I think this was an opportunity for my First Vice President here, to take charge of a report that was desperately needed by this community, to see a job that had to be done and just do it. It's eight months later, it hasn't been done.

First Vice President Candidates

Williams: At this time we're going to hear from one of the Vice Presidential candidates.

Joseph Cristiano: At this point of the evening, it's comforting to know that we have a resident psychologist on the RIRA Board, OK? Somebody raised the question, why are you crazy to run? Well, in my case and in the case of my fellow candidates, so to speak, we're doing it because we have a sense of the community. In that sense, let me say this:

Over the last two years, I missed one meeting because of

illness. I belong to RICO, I belong to RIRA, I belong to the Senior Association, I'm retired. I devote as much time as I have to, to get the job done. I was a block association president, I ran with school boards, board #2, with Tony Alvarado. Every meeting that we had to go to, I was there to select a principal and assistant principal, and etc. You reach a point in life where you have to give back to the community. I'm a native New Yorker and I learned one thing, you don't get anything for nothing. You have to work. I have made some good friends on the RIRA Council, and some people don't like me that much. But I respect them.

I want to speak about three people in particular who I have a great deal of respect for, because they got things done for RIRA and the community. We have Judy Berdy, as everybody knows, tremendous job. We have Margie Smith, who has done a tremendous amount of work with the firemen after 9/11. I have a great deal of respect for her. We have Vicki Feinmel who, when we had to put up a monument in

the park, she worked tirelessly. She had to endure a lot of guff from people like me because I'm a stickler for rules and regulations, OK? I don't dislike anybody, but if we are not governed by rules and regulations, by a constitution, by Roberts Rules of Order, we're going to have chaos. We have simply too much work to do on this Island.

Now, Jim alluded to something that, let's expose, something that with the advent of new buildings going up, we still have only one F train. You can't get on the train, as it is. My lovely wife, who's sitting in the front row, will tell us time and time again, you can't get on the train. Now with the new buildings going up, and with Octagon Park going up, it's going to be the same train. So what is our alternative? The Tram. And as my lovely wife, Margaret, has mentioned, it's going to cost me \$2 in the future to go over, another \$2 to take the bus from First Avenue to New York Hospital, but many people who are not quite seniors are taking the Tram, they take the Second Avenue bus downtown. That might be in the near future \$4 each way. That's \$8 a day. That's \$40 a week. Some people live on that amount of money. It's not a small thing. If I am fortunate enough to get on as Vice President, one, I will work very hard. But you have to get into office with a philosophy, you just can't say, "I want the job," and go on an ego trip. If you look at me, I have no ego. I'm a worker, OK? And one of the things I want to bring out is, I am that concerned about the new field that is going up and dedicated this Saturday (Oc-

See **Debate**, page 14

Debate from page 13

tober 26), I hope everybody attends, what is RIOC going to do with that? With the advent of people on the Island, I have this vision of what happened, I think it was Portugal with the British soccer team, and the British fans causing a riot. We won't have that. But are we going to get extra security?

I am also a little concerned about the fact that Capobianco Field no longer has that sign on it. We're concerned, I'm concerned, for reasons I won't go into. But also I hear from my friends and neighbors that this Mitchell-Lama situation that's brewing on the Island might cause me to lose many of my friends, not so much from Rivercross where I live, be-



Joseph Cristiano

cause we own our apartments, but I have friends in 555 and other buildings. We're not getting a clear picture on what the Mitchell-Lama situation is. Because if we do get a clear picture, we can lend our weight to whatever legislation needs to be done to make sure that if it happens, it's fair. I don't want to lose friends. At my age, I'm a senior, I don't have that much time to make new friends. I like the ones I have. I want them to stay on the Island.

My other concern is that we have to get those people accountable for reporting, to report. We're going to have a safety problem on this Island, if we don't have it already. There are certain organizations that should be reporting to RIOC and to RIRA and to *The WIRE*, what's going on, on the Island. We're having... we had a shooting, maybe it didn't amount to much, but with 8,500 people, maybe we have a little more crime than, you know, we know about. I know there's a drug problem. My lovely wife comes home late at night, and she sees people on the street corner. They're not all out for the fresh air. There's something going on. One of the members of RIRA, who sought to resign, mentioned a drug problem and how she confronted some people. I and others pulled her to the side and said, "Don't do that. It's very dangerous." OK? Hopefully she took our warning and let the police handle it. But where do I come from? If I am in a position to make decisions – as a Vice President I probably won't be – I believe in giving people who are ready, willing, and able to work, their head to do the work. I believe in saying, "Hey, Judy, or Vicki, or Margie, you did a heck of a good job." It doesn't make me any taller taking credit for what they've done. And I've only mentioned three. There are many more on the Council who work behind the scenes.

But what is my qualification? My qualification is that what we have now on RIOC, this idea of having five members was originally my idea. I knew the Governor would not relinquish his prerogative of naming people. So five years ago I said, get him at least to appoint a majority of people. I was laughed at, "that'll never happen, we want a direct vote." And I gave good and sufficient reason why the Governor should appoint five, a majority, so that we do have a majority, but yet, there is some control by the Governor. Sure enough, that's what happened. Many of the good things that happen on this Island for which we all should take credit, happen because many people worked on them. OK? I am a doer, I hope to get things done. I'm running with some very, very talented people, Ron Schuppert is one of my opponents, he's a great friend of mine, do what you think best, elect the people you think will do the most for the Island. Remember, it's not how hard you work, it's how smart you work. Thank you.

Franz Aliquo: I'll only take a second of your time. It's really, the only reason I ran for this position right now is because I've been a resident of Roosevelt Island for well over 25, well, not well over, but 25 years, you know? And



Franz Aliquo

RIRA right now just makes me sick. I've come to a few meetings here and there, and just having to deal with the kind of piddling issues that people deal with here, the shouting, it's seriously, it's like a sixth-grade election, and it really makes me sick to my stomach, so I just felt it was time for me, someone who really hasn't been involved much in Island politics at all, to come in and see if I can, as Vice President, granted, start small and try to move up. I would like to try something new here, because obviously it's not working the way it is.

Arguing about the MetroCard does nothing for us. You know? Arguing about like a sign on a park does nothing. There are huger, huger issues here that just aren't addressed. I agree with you very much about the crime issue, it's huge on the Island. It needs to be addressed. It's not... people aren't doing what needs to be done about that. I agree with Whalen about like the buildings. We need the buildings. It's essential to have them in order to get the community back in business. It hurt me so much to see the stationery store close, well, the ownership to change, you know? As a small child, I used to go there. I used to, like, hang out with Ali and stuff, and it hurts me, like, if RIRA came together and actually worked, and tried to get the rest of the residents involved, and stop, like, arguing about ridiculous things, about answering stupid questions, if people started coming together and actually trying to get others, new people, involved, this auditorium wouldn't be empty right now. And it makes me sick and sad to see it like this because I care about the Island. And that's all I have to say. Thank you. My name's Franz Aliquo.

Closing Statements

Williams: Thank you very much. Now, we're going to let the Presidential candidates give their closing statements – three minutes or less.

Whalen: I won't take the three minutes. I'll take 30 seconds. I think you're aware of where I stand. I'd like to be of service to the community. But in conclusion I'd like to say that I would like to thank Byron and Matthew for their work of the last two years, a difficult, difficult job. The two of them have done, I think, extremely well. I disagree with many of their decisions, many of their actions. However, it's been a difficult two years and I would publicly like to thank them for the work they did. It's a thankless task in many ways, and an awful lot of abuse. Thank you, Mr. Katz, Byron. Thank you very much for your time and effort.



Gaspard: OK, I'm going to make this statement. To me, being a leader in a community, having a position of leadership in the community, means that you are willing to do what's necessary to protect your community, because we all live here. It means that you are about integrity. It means you don't have to take the credit for other people's work. If you simply haven't done anything, if you haven't amounted to anything, this is your first time around, it's understandable. Integrity is very important. With me, I don't have to take the credit for anything because I've worked hard since I've lived in this community. I live to try to clean up the criminality problems on this Island. I live to try to get Public Safety to be more effective on this Island. Right now Public Safety has a total expenditure of \$2,308,609. With your dollars, residents pay into management \$867,726 of that money to Public Safety with a payroll of \$1,663,000. Now, it is ludicrous to me to have a Public Safety system that something doesn't meet the needs of the community, and especially the community. I've fought, I promise to continue to fight for a public safety system that completely benefits the security needs of Roosevelt Island, and the residents. I vow to fight for a police substation on Roosevelt Island. I vow to fight for increase of Public Safety police presence on Roosevelt Island. I vow to support Island, the Island task forces and building committees. I vow to support and protect our seniors and disabled. I vow to have a Residents Association for the residents, and not for the special interests. I'm not basically against those people who want democracy. I want democracy. But I don't want a bill that doesn't equally represent this community, and that's all I have to say. If you elect me, you will get a person that will work hard as we always have worked hard, for the community. As President, I will continue to work hard for the community. I am running for President because I want the opportunity to be a leader of residents and reorganize RIRA for a new leadership and a new responsibility for this Island, and it can't happen and it will not happen if you put Matthew in there for two years.



Katz: You know, two years ago, at these debates, someone asked me how much time I intended to give the presidency if I were elected. I really didn't know, and I said, "as much time as it takes." I didn't realize at the time that this was exactly the right answer. I've found myself attending committee meetings four nights a week, doing RIRA business at my desk seven days a week, meeting with our politicians in their New York and Albany offices, and trying to attend as many Island events as possible. When crises have struck or when my own projects have gotten hot, this has become a full-time job and more. My opponents, both officers of the Common Council, have been conspicuous by their absence at most of the events RIRA has produced over the last two years. The first rule in making a difference is showing up. I believe I've made a difference and I hope you agree.



People have asked me why I bother, when RIRA seems so powerless to affect our lives on Roosevelt Island. I tell them that you must remember that RIRA is the only organization elected to represent this community, and only this community. RIOC can't make that claim. Neither can our elected public officials who have often had the Island tacked onto their main constituencies. Therefore, RIRA has a prime responsibility to speak for Roosevelt Islanders and to represent us to RIOC, to our politicians, to the media and to the world.

As we speak, I'm working with NYC&Co., the City's tourist and visitors bureau and with our Chamber of Commerce, to find ways of enhancing Island business by making Roosevelt Island a tourist destination. And RIOC just asked me to update our listing in the Michelin Green Guide, which is carried by every European visitor to New York.

As RIRA president I've had the opportunity to speak up for the inequities that have resulted from our falling through the cracks between City and State government, and from the inadequate governance we receive from a public benefit corporation that answers to the Governor, any Governor, and not to us. You, the residents, are RIRA, and when RIRA speaks with one voice, people listen. We proved that when the Tram was threatened and we proved it again when your overwhelming endorsement of elected home rule convinced Governor Pataki to sign the Grannis/Mendez bill.

What the Common Council achieves will depend in great measure on the energy, the seriousness of purpose, and the quality of the contribution of the people you send there to represent you. We've accomplished a great deal because a small group of people decided that it was time that RIRA became an effective contributor to Island life.

The record speaks for itself. You know what we've done; you've participated in what we've done. You wouldn't be here, listening to this debate, if you weren't involved and concerned about the threats to Island life and services.

I'm asking for another two years to build on what we've started, but I'm also asking for your personal participation, your care in sending representatives to the Common Council, and perhaps most importantly, your help in getting out the vote. Votes count, and on Roosevelt Island, with a population of 9,500, every vote counts. A committed Common Council with a supportive RIRA constituency behind it, can make a difference. Please let me continue the work by re-electing me as your President. Thank you.

Williams: I'd like to thank all of the candidates for coming out so that you could hear their views and opinions on matters of importance to the community.

All Island residents 18 and over are eligible to vote in the RIRA election, whether citizens or not. Vote Tuesday, November 5, at PS/IS 217.

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Election from page 1

Mendez, giving residents a majority of the seats on the RIOC Board. Although the meeting was specific to the governance issue, Gaspard said he would have used it to bring additional issues to the Governor’s attention, including public safety.

For his part, Katz indicated pride in his work with the Maple Tree Group (MTG), pointing out that the efforts of the RIRA subcommittee had brought about the most significant change in Island governance – the resident majority on the RIOC Board – since the creation of RIOC. That prompted Whalen to thank Katz for “coming out of the closet,” though Katz has never made a secret of his MTG affiliation. Katz headed the group for a time before becoming President of the Residents Association. Whalen also tried humor during the debate, claiming he had seen MTG members dancing around a fire in a kind of “evil empire” ceremony.

(*The WIRE* has given editorial support to the MTG’s goals of an elected RIOC Board empowered to hire professional community management to replace political appointees. Its managing editor, Dick Lutz, was a founding member of the group during the RIOC administration of Dr. Jerome Blue.)

When Gaspard accused Katz of ignoring public safety issues, Katz pointed out that he had delegated the public safety area to Gaspard at Gaspard’s request, and had secured Gaspard a seat on RIOC’s Public Safety Advisory Committee. The two differed on whether the performance of the Island’s Public Safety Department has grown better or worse during the past two years.

While both Katz and Gaspard expressed concern about possible overpopulation of the Island, Whalen called for “more people” in larger buildings as a solution to both safety problems and the plight of the Island’s merchants.

Election coverage in this issue of *The WIRE* includes the debate transcript (page 8), an editorial (page 2), and profiles of the candidates running for First Vice President (page 16). A post-election issue is planned for next weekend.

RIRA Election By Paper Ballot

RIRA voting will be done on paper ballots this year, a break from the use of machines that started with the 1996 election.

Machine rental would cost nearly \$3,000, according to members of the RIRA Common Council who have investigated the matter.

For the three elections from 1996 through 2000, funds for the machines came from the Island’s Public Purpose Funds, controlled by the RIOC Board. This year, the Public Purpose Funds advisory committee denied the RIRA Election Committee’s last-minute application for the funding, pointing out that Public Purpose grants are intended as seed money. Seed money is usually given only once to an organization, though exceptions have been made, as in the case of voting machines in two prior elections. Committee Chair David Kraut told *The WIRE* that RIOC “hasn’t funded any Island entity for this long without insisting they find other funding.” He said, “The organization was warned after the last occasion that the prospect of future funding was highly unlikely.” The current RIRA President, Matthew Katz, says he received no such warning.

Other members of the Public Purpose Funds advisory committee are Patrick Stewart and Susan Whitaker, though Whitaker did not participate in the decision on the machines.

Prior to 1996, according to Kraut, machines were not used in the RIRA elections. “When I served on the Common Council and when I ran for president in 1994, we just put our paper ballots into cardboard boxes, and a bunch of people sat around late and counted them.”

Kraut said the RIRA request for voting-machine funding will go to the full RIOC Board with a recommendation that it be denied. With this in mind, no members of the current Council have volunteered to advance the funds, as Stewart did in 2000 when the machines had to be ordered without yet having a RIOC guarantee that the cost would be covered out of Public Purpose Funds.

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Seniors Party in Saying Goodbye



Members of RISA, the Seniors Association, parted last week as they bid farewell to Selina Ng, Director of the Senior Center. She and Seniors President Dolores Green exchanged a hug (right); Lena Sears danced to the music of “Elvis” (left); and members of the Korean community were among those who saw her off (below).



Letters from page 2

meetings where we are not discussing and acting on: housing issues, landmarks, crime, drug dealing, public safety issues, children’s services, youth services, traffic issues, transportation, new construction, co-oping, privatization, and the future of our community. We are instead bickering about changing the by-laws to accommodate one person. This issue took up six months. We are arguing about points-of-order, quorums, and anything that will preclude us from getting the job done. Aside from some social and 9/11- related activities, which were all spearheaded by two members, RIRA is not worth the effort. My thanks to those individuals. I will choose to work with other community groups and individuals who are effective and target their objectives to the benefit of this wonderful rock in the river.

Judith Berdy

Gaspard from page 2

on our platform promises; promises Matthew Katz completely vacated as soon as he got into office. The first two months of our term, Matthew Katz and Steve Marcus (Vice-President of Government Relations) met with key political leaders (specifically Senator Olga Mendez and Assemblymember Pete Grannis) without inviting me – to discuss *only* self-governance. Then they met with Mary Beth LaBate of DHCR to discuss *only* self-governance: Once again without inviting me who was, at the time, and is the First Vice-President of RIRA. These were clearly opportunistic for Matthew and I to address not only self-governance, but to address the issues of increased violent crimes on our Island, addressing the need for a police satellite station, and an increased police presence in our community. In addition, we could have addressed the problems our community was having with the lack of security that was directly attributed to our faltering Public Safety Department. Right now Public Safety’s total expenditures are \$2,308,609 dollars with a payroll of \$1,663,000 dollars, with Management paying (from residents’ rents) \$867,726 dollars. We are hardly getting the value of our community’s security for our buck. Matthew Katz had the power again to address our community’s concerns when he and members of the Maple Tree Group had a meeting with the governor without notifying the Common Council. They failed to address the community’s concerns again. They only addressed their own self-interest and self-governance. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, I was fighting to get better service from Public Safety as Chairperson of the Public Safety Committee for RIRA. In addition, I am an appointed member of RIOC’s Public Safety Advisory

Committee. I, along with a member of the 114th Precinct Community Council, am addressing continually the issues of getting more police officers to patrol our community. I am also addressing these issues as Co-Chairperson of the Eastwood Building Committee. To this date in Matthew Katz’ two years in office, he has attended only one monthly 114th Precinct Community Council meeting to address our community’s need for an increase of police patrols on Roosevelt Island. I and Deirdre Breslin of the Common Council have been to almost every precinct meeting to address the community’s concerns. The result: we have more police patrolling our community. The issues of Public Safety are being addressed, and there is more of a community awareness of Public Safety than ever before. RIOC has a special committee to explore how we can improve Public Safety based on the community’s need. The Eastwood Building Committee had and continues to work with our political leaders to address what Matthew Katz has failed to do; our faltering Public Safety system, increase of police presence in our community, addressing the increase of violent crimes on Roosevelt Island and the need for a Police Satellite Station on a growing Roosevelt Island community. However, he has fallen flat on his face on everything else, especially our community’s concerns. As far as Sherie Helstein’s cookbook to benefit the PTA, I provided assistance, in the beginning, in the format of this project and in 16 months she has produced nothing yet – nice going sweetie. Residents get out and vote. Vote for change. Vote for me, Byron Gaspard, for President of RIRA. **Byron Gaspard** First Vice-President, RIRA

Statements by Candidates for RIRA’s First Vice President in Tuesday’s Vote

Franz Aliquo

I have been a Roosevelt Island resident for 25 years, and I am running for RIRA Vice-President because I can no longer sit idly by and watch quality of life and safety decline here. I always thought I would want to start my own family here and live here forever, but when I see the roads and streets falling apart and hear about muggings, shootings, and robberies, I feel less sure. However, rather than abandon my home, I want to try to stop the decline. Crime – Island Residents pay \$900k of the Public Safety Department’s \$2 mil budget, but we have serious problems with drug-dealing and crime. Before our population grows with new residents from Southtown, we need a Resident’s Association that will actively lobby our State and City leaders to bring a satellite NYPD station here. Affordability – Mitchell-Lama is currently attempting to normalize rents to fair-market value. This would devastate countless families living here. We need a Residents Association that will lobby Mitchell-Lama and our elected officials to make sure that if there are any increases, they will not result in mass exodus. RIRA has failed us in numerous ways: Rather than being a platform for residents to tackle important issues, it has squandered its efforts on accomplishing minor goals. Extended Tram hours and fundraising dances are useless if we can’t live here affordably and safely. We need an administration that will deal with important issues first. It is time for change; it is time to think about the future of our Island.



Joseph P. Cristiano

I was born in Manhattan. I attended Fordham Prep High School and went on to college. I received a B.S. degree in Business Administration from Fordham University and an MBA in Business Administration from the same university. I entered the U.S. Army Reserve in 1960 and served as an Army Reservist for eight years. I was discharged in 1967 with the rank of Captain. I was fortunate enough to work for several top-notch corporations in New York City during my 42-year work history. I learned the insurance business from Liberty Mutual, selling from Xerox, and the financial world from Merrill Lynch after 26 years. I am presently retired and active in Roosevelt Island activities. My background in the business world and desire to make this a better community drive me on to serve. I believe that this City has been good to me and I want to make it a better place for all of us. I have a lovely wife, Margaret, and two sons, Robert and James. (I also have a cat called Misty.) We love Roosevelt Island and want to do our share to make it a better place to live. In the past I served as President of the 300-400 East 68th Street Block Association (four years), and as PS158 representative to School Board No. 2. Presently I am an active member of the Roosevelt Island Council of Organizations (RICO), a voting member of the Common Council of the Residents Association, an alternate delegate to RIRA from Rivercross, and a member of the Roosevelt Island Seniors Association. I would like to continue serving my community as First Vice President of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association.



Steve Marcus

Despite the fractious nature of RIRA meetings, we have had successes in which I’ve been pleased to participate. Most notably, we were able to raise and distribute almost \$10,000 to local families who lost loved ones in the 9/11 tragedy, and to co-sponsor a memorial service for our neighbors and firefighters who lost their lives. I’ve also volunteered for our blood drive and to produce free waterside dances. I’m convinced that control of RIOC through democratic elections must be our top political priority. Without a board that reflects the will of the residents, we’ll continue to see our priceless open spaces sold for peanuts to political cronies, continued decay of infrastructure and landmarks, efforts to reduce Tram service and a completely ineffective public safety department. I am proud to be an active member of the Maple Tree Group, which successfully lobbied for a majority of RIOC’s Board to be residents. As chairman of the Government Relations Committee, I coordinated Town Meetings and visits with candidates Bloomberg, Hevesi, Vallone and Green. I’ve had frequent discussions with our elected representatives to enlist their support on vital community issues. I am the president of the Roosevelt Island Jewish Congregation, board member of the Roosevelt Island Youth Program and founder of RIRSD (led the fight against the Southtown disaster). Your vote for me is a mandate for more citizen control over our neighborhood, more efficient use of our rents, which entirely fund RIOC and Public Safety, and support for our kids and open spaces.



Ron Schuppert

After 25 years with the New York City Police Department, I retired and started Linden Security Associates, Inc., a private Investigation firm. My wife Jennifer and I have lived on Roosevelt Island for over 25 years. We raised our two daughters, Alexandra and Margaret, here. We made wonderful friends and are indebted to Roosevelt Island for a great life experience. I am running to try my best to insure that Roosevelt Island continues to offer a wonderful life style for all present and future residents. I served as First Vice President during Patrick Stewart’s Presidency and am now Vice President for Island Services in Matt Katz’s term. I also am on RIOC’S Public Safety committee. In addition, I am treasurer for the Roosevelt Island Council of Organizations, and I serve on the Rivercross Board of Directors. The issues that confront Roosevelt Island are many and complex and RIRA has its work cut out for it. However, we cannot get the job done by fighting with each other. What I will bring to the table is respect for both sides. I have worked with all of them and know that they all have the best interests of Roosevelt Island in mind.



Luce from page 1

all night, bumping into the pastor at 7:00 a.m. Three years later, he wrapped up a 350-page report.

“People thought I was nuts,” Luce said. Still, they signed on to help. Armed with his Initial Report, he recruited a team of fifty contributors, trustees and coordinators.

A group in Indonesia rallied for the project as well: Luce had married Sulawesian Rini Tendean. Her family offered a nine-bedroom farmhouse and surrounding coffee-and-clove plantation. Her brother Jeffry – who holds a master’s degree in pediatric social work – enlisted as director of the Sulawesi project; her cousin Sony signed on as architect.

Luce now lives in a book-lined apartment on Roosevelt

their parents just couldn’t feed them,” Luce said. “They could go home if they had a little money in their pockets. So we pulled out some wads of cash, their parents were ecstatic, and they took the kids home.” Most of the children – ages seven to seventeen – had lingered at the orphanage since they were in diapers. These *Project Family Reunion* kids will each gain a sponsor sending \$25 per month.

Luce’s 22 dinner guests included a half-dozen Roosevelt Islanders – friends from the Residents’ Association (RIRA) and Toastmasters, the Island’s public-speaking club.

Islander Ethel Romm, an entrepreneur and designer, “came for the food” and signed up to sponsor a girl in Guyana. “My rent went down 30 percent when I moved from Island House to Rivercross,” she said. “What better way to spend



In North Sulawesi, Indonesia, Luce opens Orphans International's first house with houseparents and volunteers.

Island with his wife and their son, Mathew. He treks to Rockefeller Center for his “real job” as assistant to the president of an investment bank. He also earns one dollar a year as founder and executive director of Orphans International America (OI).

Last August, the program sheltered its first four children. Four more arrived in October. They live with hired “houseparents” in the Tendean farmhouse, amid coffee and clove trees. Each has a sponsor sending \$50 a month.

At a recent fundraising dinner in his Eastwood apartment, Luce described the environment OI is trying to create: “We’re not warehousing kids. We’re trying to replicate a family structure.” Flipping sheets of paper as rain pounded the windows, he flashed a blueprint of the 40-acre campuses OI plans to build in Indonesia, Haiti, and Guyana: sixty houses – each with four children and a houseparent – schools, medical clinics, libraries, playgrounds, gardens, Victorian guest cottages, a swimming pool.

A campus plaza offers Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Islamic houses of worship, as OI plans to bring in orphans of all faiths. (Indonesia is 80% Muslim, 20% Christian, Hindu or Buddhist.)

“We want to raise the kids as global leaders in their country,” Luce added. “If they come here and work at Citibank, that doesn’t help their country.” Instead, Luce’s program sends child sponsors overseas. Sponsors may bunk on the top floor of their child’s house or a guest house for a week each year. (The food is included; the plane ticket is not.) For the rest of the year, child and sponsor will exchange e-mail messages. Report cards and school photos will arrive in the mail. Once the children reach their 17th birthdays, they may jet to their sponsor’s hometown for a summer vacation. Sponsors may even apply for retirement apartments on campus.

As guests dined on beef rendang, perkedal potatoes, and spicy fish, Luce waved a picture of a bewildered girl with knobby knees. “Amy” was born on Christmas Eve six years ago. (The program nick-names the children to protect their privacy.) “Her father killed himself; her mother couldn’t handle it and fled the family,” Luce said. “She was so hesitant, like a dog that had been beaten.” This is as far as Luce will go with horror stories, though. “It’s our policy not to push the harsh pictures. No Sally Struthers walking through dumping grounds,” he said, recalling the old sponsor-a-child television spots. (For those who want to know, the OI Web site delves into the nightmares: stories of parents hawking their children as prostitutes for a few dollars a day.)

Amy and her brother, eight-year-old Stanley, had never met an American before Luce and his crew landed in their village of Remboken, population 1,000. In the whirl of a ribbon-cutting party at the Tendean farmhouse, Stanley met Luce, his sponsor. The two sat on the steps, chatting about the crowd and the food. “He had no idea, really, who I was or why I was there,” Luce said.

Another group of kids, however, was thrilled to see Luce again. When funds collapsed at a Remboken orphanage last year, OI took over. But the 22 kids “all had family [in town];

the money than on a child?”

Margie Smith talked of rallying Islanders “as a community” to pitch in for the program.

Islander Doris Chernik, who holds a PhD in Experimental Psychology, heads the Haiti project, set to open by Christmas. Chernik and her daughter Nina first journeyed to Haiti three years ago for a Christmas vacation.

“I have traveled to 94 countries and had never experienced so much variety in art – masks, wall hangings, sculptures in wire, paper maché, clay, metal, semi-precious stones, rubber – any material they can find,” she said. “We were so delighted.” When Luce, a friend from Toastmasters, mentioned plans to pioneer OI Haiti, the Cherniks signed on.

“Then Jim sent me a list of 200 non-government organizations working in Haiti,” Chernik said. I told him he was crazy if he expected me to do anything about the list! But I finally wrote to more than a hundred.”

Back in Haiti, she and the OI platoon met with some of those organizations. She explored orphanages ranging from clean-and-cheerful to bleak. The worst, run by two nuns, had crowded forty-three kids into a four-room house. “When a baby is dropped on their doorstep, the nuns keep it for three months and then give it to the older children – fourteen and fifteen-year-olds – to care for. The children cook



Not an autograph session. Luce is writing words of advice to each of these *Project Family Reunion* kids as part of their English practice.

How to Help

- **Attend a fundraising dinner:** The Bali Fundraising Dinner at the Indonesian Consulate, 5 East 68th Street, is set for Thursday, Nov. 14. Ramdani “Dani” Sirait, the U.S. bureau chief of Indonesia’s international news agency, is coordinating the Bali project. For information or to reserve a place at the dinner, contact Mr. Sirait at **1-917-833-8371** or Danisirait@aol.com.
- **Sponsorship** (one-year minimum commitment):
 - Child sponsor: \$50 per month
 - Co-sponsor: \$25 per month
 - Sponsor of a *Project Family Reunion* child: \$25 per month
 - Home Builder: \$7,500 to build a house for four children and a houseparent. Home Builders may name their home in honor of anyone.
- **Donate your old laptop.**
- **Send a present to a child.**
- **Volunteer at an Orphans International project** on your vacation.
- **Travel to a project** with an Orphans International group tour.
- **Join an Orphans International professional working group.** Groups include accountants, administrators, advertising people, airline staff, architects, artists, bankers, clergy, consultants, dentists, designers, desktop publishing experts, diplomats, doctors, economists, fundraisers, lawyers, librarians, marketing specialists, non-profit staff, nurses, professors, programmers, publicists, social workers, teachers, and travel agents.
- **Subscribe** to the Orphans International listserver at communities.msn.com/OrphansInternational/_tools.msnw.
- **After 2005, host an Orphans International exchange student.**

For more information:
internationalorphans.org
jim@internationalorphans.org
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the meals. We saw them cutting up chicken on the dirt floor of the small kitchen.”

Another Toastmaster friend, Malcolm Cohen, recruited a colleague for the Guyana venture.

Patrick Stephens, who grew up in Guyana – “climbing mango trees, playing cricket, and swimming in the irrigation canals” – coordinates OI Guyana, to be launched this summer.

“I was eager to meet this American who had never even visited Guyana but was committing his time, his money, and his family’s resources toward saving the lives of the children of my country,” he said.

There, orphans live in “barrack-like” facilities, Stephens said, often struggling for clothes, medical attention, and even food.

As guests pulled on their raincoats after Luce’s dinner party, he handed out Indonesian soccer balls made from reeds. His next fundraising dinner has drawn a crowd too large for his apartment. The Indonesian Consulate will throw a gala to launch OI Bali. The Hindu island, known for resorts and surfing, recently was shaken by terrorist bombing. But Luce’s Orphans International is forging ahead, “trying to create something.”

(Photos by Jennifer Howd)

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by Seth Kaufman

SPORTSWIRE

SOCCER The Youth Program participated in the dedication of the new Southtown field as the Senior Red and Blue soccer teams played the inaugural match, with Red defeating Blue, 5-2. The Soccer League standings following October 26 games are:

Minors (7-8)			Juniors (9-10)			Seniors (11-14)		
Blue	2-0-0	(6 points)	Gold	4-2-0	(12 points)	Gold	3-1-2	(11 points)
Red	1-0-1	(4 point)	Red	3-1-1	(10 points)	Silver	2-2-1	(7 points)
Gold	0-1-1	(1 point)	Silver	2-2-2	(8 points)	Red	1-1-3	(6 points)
Silver	0-2-0	(0 points)	Blue	0-4-1	(1 point)	Blue	1-3-2	(5 points)

Minors: In October 19 games, Blue defeated Gold 8-2, while Red defeated Silver 4-0. Marvin Hartung, Aidan Strein, Leo Folla, and Thomas Diamond had 2 goals each to lead Blue, while Assane Dessables had 2 goals to provide the scoring for Gold. In Silver's 4-0 victory, Alexander Dow, Daniel Egner, Jared Francis, and Nana Osei-Danquah scored goals.

Juniors: In games played on October 19, Red shut out Gold 2-0, and Silver edged Blue 2-1. Ahmed Aboulez had both goals for Red to lead them to victory, while Alberto Marzan scored both goals for Silver in their victory. In a night game Friday, October 25, Gold defeated Silver 2-1 in a match for first place. Oussama Boutaleb scored the goals for Gold, while Alberto Marzan scored a goal, his fourth in two weeks, in a losing effort.

Seniors: In the night game October 25, Gold defeated Blue 2-1. Kwaime Phillips scored both goals for Gold and Thomas Herlihy had the goal for Blue. On October 26, Silver defeated Gold 2-1. Elliot Levine had two goals for Silver, which moved to within four points of first place Gold, with a game in hand. In the field dedication game, Red defeated Blue 5-2 to move into third place. Olivier Bucyana scored two goals for Red, while Radmilo Trojanovic, Ilija Trojanovic, and Klaud Lucas each had one goal. Anass Dorani scored both goals for Blue.

FLAG FOOTBALL After two weeks of the Youth Program's Flag Football League, the Chargers and the Broncos were tied for the lead in the Senior Division (ages 15-17) with 2-0 records. In October 25 action, the Broncos, trailing 39-27 early in the second half, rallied and scored a touchdown in the last minute to defeat the Raiders, 53-46. Matthew Brodsky quarterbacked the Broncos to the victory, as Lamar Burrows, Erin Carmelli, Chris Dominguez, Seif Dorani and Anthony Pompey all scored touchdowns. For the Raiders, Brandon Stueber and Paul Brown threw touchdown passes and Sasha Agosta, José Marte, Anthony Simmons, and Scott Davis scored. In the second game that day, the Chargers broke open a close game that was tied 33-33 early in the second half and stormed to a 65-45 win over the Chiefs. Fode Bah, Rahim Drame, Jason Fell, and Karam Hider caught touchdown passes from the Charger quarterback Seth Kaufman, but the outstanding performance of the day was turned in by Shirome Dixon, who ran for three TDs, caught a pass for another and returned an interception for a TD. For the Chiefs, Terry Moses threw touchdown passes to Eric Miranda, Jonathan Hart, Jonathan Singh, and Alex Fell.

Assemblymember Pete Grannis led officials, soccer players, and guests in the Pledge of Allegiance last weekend at the dedication of Firefighters Field, just north of the Tram station. Additional photos, in color, next week on Website NYC10044 at www.nyc10044.com.



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