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Saturday, February 22

The Main Street **WIRE**TM

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

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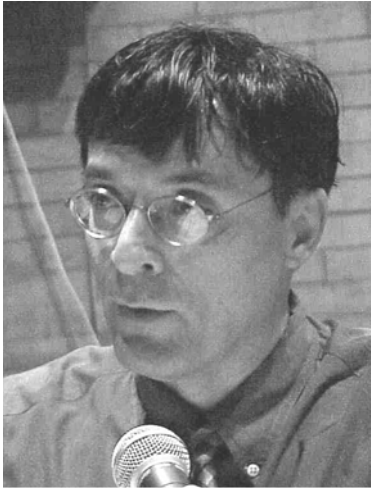
RIOC Board Puts Ryan on 60-Day Leave Pending Inquiry by NYS Inspector General



Robert H. Ryan, June 10, 1999



Robert H. Ryan, December 12, 2002



Patrick Siconolfi

RIOC President Robert H. Ryan in photos from his first days as the Island's Chief Executive, and a December 12, 2002, appearance that touched off speculation on how long he might last. At right, CFO Patrick Siconolfi, now Acting President.

CFO Patrick Siconolfi at Helm; Ryan, Outraged, Says He Has No Idea What Charges Might Be Unanimous Votes in Emergency Meeting

by Dick Lutz
with Erik Kriss in Albany

Robert H. Ryan, President of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), was escorted from his office Tuesday afternoon by Public Safety officers.

Forty-five minutes later, at an emergency meeting in Manhattan, the RIOC Board of Directors convened and later voted unanimously to place him on administrative leave, "pending an inquiry" being conducted by the State Inspector General, according to a representative of the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal. No Board member or State source would comment, on Wednesday, on the specifics of the inquiry, but it would be unusual for the Inspector General's office to become involved without a specific accusation, and possible evidence, of criminal wrongdoing.

At that meeting, Patrick Siconolfi, RIOC's Chief Financial Officer, was made Acting President of RIOC, the State agency responsible for the operation and development of the Island. The Board's vote was unanimous on that, as well.

Ryan was outraged and sounded dumbfounded when reached by *The WIRE* Wednesday afternoon at his home. "I'm aghast that the Board did not ask that I appear before them and face the charges, because I would have responded to any charges," he said. "It would be inappropriate for me to comment at this moment since no one has told me what charges have been brought against me. I have done nothing unethical; I have

See **Ryan**, page 10

Manhattan Park Bans *WIRE* Door-Drop Distribution Over Resident's Letter

by Irwin P. Starr

Manhattan Park has banned door-drop distribution of *The Main Street WIRE*. The action came in response to a resident's letter printed in the January 11 issue.

On January 10, after the next day's issue of the newspaper had been distributed in Manhattan Park buildings, personnel there were ordered to remove the issue from apartment door knobs, where it had been hung in the customary plastic bags. On January 24, volunteers were in-

Residents who subscribe to *The WIRE*'s e-mail bulletin service have followed this controversy on the Internet over the past ten days. To sign up for the service, which is free, send an e-mail to editor@MainStreetWIRE.com with the subject, "Add Me."

formed by doorstation personnel that they would not be allowed to door-drop the January 25 issue, breaking a six-year tradition that has allowed *The WIRE* to assure advertisers of being able to reach

every residential door on the Island. There had been no advance notice of the ban to *The WIRE*.

In an exchange of letters (see pages 6-8), Manhattan Park General Manager Sandra Holden and *WIRE* Managing Editor Dick Lutz traded their views on the matter, after Lutz had requested an appoint-

ment to discuss the ban. Holden said *The WIRE* could be left in boxes in mail rooms of the buildings; Lutz responded that such a method of getting the newspaper to residents would

make future censorship too easy, and that having to withdraw the guarantee of every-apartment delivery would put *The WIRE* in financial peril because advertisers would be likely to cancel their ads.

Wednesday night the Residents Association Common Council unanimously adopted a resolution supporting *The WIRE*, printed in full on page 8 along with letters from

See **Ban**, page 7

Island's Public Safety Services Get an Official Look and Some New Promises

by Robert Laux-Bachand

U.S. Representative Carolyn Maloney convened a meeting here on January 24 to deal with an issue that her staff said has produced more complaints than any other on Roosevelt Island — public safety. Officials from the criminal justice system and from City and State housing agencies and the New York State attorney general's office answered Maloney's summons, as did about 40 residents and Island officials.

Although the three-hour session was, at times, a welter of accusations and flak-catching, two initiatives emerged in announcements from Maloney and Deputy Inspector David Barrere, commander of the 114th Precinct in Queens:

- Resumption of community policing service by a city police officer.
- Creation of a system to tell residents what is happening when major police operations are carried out on the Island.

The officer, Thomas Liuzzo, went to work a day after the meeting.

The notification system, which has yet to be put into practice, recognizes the Island's small-town character. Under the plan, the 114th Precinct would call Matthew Katz, the Residents Association president, and other Island representatives or officials, in cases of major police activity. The Islanders would spread the word with phone calls or e-mail.

The idea is to counteract the sort of fears and confusion that arose on Dec. 7. The police "shut down the Island," as they put it, in their pursuit of a robbery suspect that night, but both the police department and the Island's Public Safety

Department refused to explain what was going on, alarming many families. Weeks afterward, many residents still thought that the operation at 2-4 River Road, which involved a task force of about 40 officers and emergency services personnel, was a hostage situation or drug bust.

"It was all brought under control in a couple of hours," Barrere told Maloney's gathering in the Island House community room. "But I could see how a helicopter, police cars, and me shutting down the streets, it could be disturbing to people on the Island. I apologize."

Barrere said a telephone network could be activated by his desk of-

ficer and community affairs officers and would help "to make sure reality and perception are the same." He said he was also considering an e-mail system as a way of quickly dispersing brief messages.

Barrere said that the community policing officer "is going to be the sheriff of the Island" and would work closely with James Fry, director of the Island's Public Safety Department. "I want him to be proactive," Barrere said, explaining that the officer would get to know the community through his patrols and by attending meetings of tenants and organizations.

Nellie Velez of the Eastwood
See **Public Safety**, page 9

Tax Program Offers Aid, Seeks More Volunteers to Provide It

Seniors and low-income individuals can get help with taxes at the Senior Center starting Tuesday.

The Tax-Aide program, sponsored by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), is free. It's currently scheduled for Tuesdays, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., with Islander Geof Kerr as the only volunteer. But Kerr would like to recruit other volunteers to expand the program, especially as the tax season rolls on.

Volunteers get some IRS training and have to be approved, and Kerr can help arrange for the training, and then set up a volunteer schedule. He's at 1-212-684-5296 (days) or 1-212-751-9241 (home). The commitment is four hours a week, or more if possible.

Seniors and users of the Senior Center can use the service on a walk-in basis. Others are asked to make appointments by calling Kerr's numbers; those appointments will be scheduled for late February and beyond so that seniors will have first use of the service.

Users of the service are advised to bring their tax records, including last year's return. Other items required are Social Security card(s), dates of birth for the filer, spouse, and dependents, W-2 and/or 1099 forms, and reports of interest and dividends, pensions, and unemployment insurance payments. For those who might itemize deductions, a list of expenditures is required, including charitable contributions, interest paid, and health-care costs with supporting documentation, insurance payment information, and taxes paid. Also important are any payments for child care, including the Social Security number of the care provider, and any tuition payments.

For further information, those planning to use the service should call ahead.

Briefly...

The Octagon Apartments Project cleared another hurdle, as expected, at last week's RIOC Board meeting. The Board voted to declare the project would have no adverse environmental impact, and to seek amendment of the Island's General Development Plan to accommodate the 500-unit project with a below-grade garage under the Octagon tennis courts.

The PTA International Dinner is coming up Wednesday night at 6:00. "It's an opportunity for us to celebrate the fact that our school community includes students from more than 50 countries," says a PTA representative. PTA members attending are asked to bring dishes of their native lands, but the culinarily challenged are welcome, too. For information, call 1-212-588-0388.

The Main Street turnaround, just south of Rivercross and Blackwell House, should be back in service by the end of February, according to a report of the RIOC Operations Committee given at last week's RIOC Board meeting by resident Board member Patrick Stewart. Matters pending are signage, which is on order, and a cold-patch to deal with a four-inch drop between the existing road surface and the new road surface.

An **Auction Fund-Raiser** is in the works for the Residents Association. It'll happen March 22 at 7:30 in the Senior Center. More in future issues of *The WIRE* but, for now, the group putting the auction together is looking for donations of merchandise, products, and services. Call Fay Vass at 755-4089, Sandra Morabito at 223-1975, or Vicki Feinmel at 223-1108 (all 1-212 numbers).

The Editorial Page

Out of the Bunker?

Patrick Siconolfi has become Acting President and Chief Operating Officer of the Roosevelt Island Operation Corporation at a difficult time – as if there were ever a time *not* difficult.

The WIRE has been a steadfast sponsor of the keenly democratic idea that Roosevelt Island residents should elect the members of the RIOC Board of Directors – and that the elected Board should be empowered to hire professional management for this community, removing political appointment and patronage from the operation and development of this very special place.

That makes it hard to welcome yet another change of command imposed on a community that voted, in 1998, by a margin of 92%, to make a transition to resident control.

At the same time, it's hard *not* to welcome Siconolfi to the job and wish him well. He has demonstrated a level of professionalism and candor unique to RIOC. There is a sense, at least, that he has tried to move out of "Bunker RIOC" and connect with concerned residents.

We were disappointed, therefore, that Siconolfi chose not to return phone calls from The WIRE Wednesday and Thursday – on orders, perhaps, not to speak up in a way that might muddle the situation in which President Robert H. Ryan finds himself, but *nonetheless* perpetuating an image of RIOC as an organization that would prefer residents not to inquire into its affairs.

As ambivalent as we feel, then, we're disposed to give Siconolfi a real chance to reorient RIOC. Ryan's leave gives him at least two months and – depending on events yet to play themselves out – perhaps more.

We remain committed to the idea of an elected RIOC Board empowered to hire professional community management. But we are where we are, and because we love this community, we cannot help but wish the best of success to RIOC's new Acting President.

Into a Bunker?

Pages 6-9 of this issue provide a liberal extension of The WIRE's opinion section, which is normally confined to this editorial page (with the RIRA column adjacent on page 3). It's all a major to-do over whether The WIRE will be barred from door-drop distribution in Manhattan Park.

It's a critical issue for The WIRE, which has always lived on the edge of a financial crevasse and, in the last half-decade, has approached a cure for that condition by guaranteeing advertisers delivery to every residential door on the Island. In that sense, the Manhattan Park ban could be fatal for The WIRE.

Equally important, however, is the right to free expression infringed by Manhattan Park in suppressing a letter from a resident, on the one hand, and partially suppress The WIRE by eliminating door-drop delivery, on another.

Those who care about these issues have been very supportive over the past two weeks, and we thank them. For the sake of continued service by this community institution called The WIRE, we must hope this crisis will be lifted before the February 22 issue goes to press.

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In this space there normally appears a list of the many volunteers who help to stuff and distribute The WIRE every two weeks. We apologize for pre-empting them this issue, at the same time knowing that they value The WIRE so highly that they will be tolerant of this incursion, and will know our thanks are no less heartfelt.

Letters

To the Editor:

I would like to respond to Jim Baehler's letter in the last WIRE ridiculing the *Living Library* project brought to Roosevelt Island by Bonnie Sherk, and reported on in your January 11 issue. I found his language to be ungracious and supercilious and his conclusions mean-spirited.

To take his objections in order, the term "living library" is obviously a metaphor that refers to computer linkages between projects. Nowadays, books don't need to be paper-and-ink objects. Baehler objects to Ms. Sherk's use of somewhat bombastic language. However, she backs it up with in-the-ground, successful projects that have replaced chain-link fence, asphalt, and concrete with growing things for children to learn from and adults to enjoy. She has obtained several hundred thousand dollars in grants, \$50,000 earmarked for the planning stage of a project here, from the Ford Foundation, which is not known for flights of whimsy.

Finally, Baehler took exception to Ms. Sherk's former career as a performance artist – a cheap shot. Participation in avant-garde art does not preclude more mainstream work in later life. I once wore bell-bottoms and peasant blouses; I don't any more. This doesn't mean I must repudiate my former predilections. I've simply moved on, and so has Ms. Sherk.

Baehler should have delved more deeply into the Living Library website. There are respectful articles from *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *New Horizons for Learning*, *Artweek*, *The Independent*, and the U.S. Dept. of Education *Community Update Newsletter*. As a partner in Partnership in Family Involvement in Education, she was hailed as a candidate for the *Computerworld* Smithsonian Awards Program, "which archives case studies by nominees who use information technology in innovative ways to benefit society." The Smithsonian doesn't think she's a joke. If he had looked carefully, Baehler would have seen other funding Ms. Sherk has received from the NEA and the California Arts Council. In her San Francisco-Three Schools Project, she and the schools have been able to gain the support of the business community (Home Depot, Microsoft, Pacific Gas & Electric), politicians, and community leaders. They don't think she's a joke, and they seem to have either understood or learned to bridge the gap between her conceptual art lingo and real life.

If this will help make it easier and perhaps more palatable for Baehler and others who were confused by her presentation, perhaps the following statement will help clarify what Ms. Sherk had an admittedly difficult time expressing in words, especially without the use of her video to give a clearer, visual picture to the Common Council: "The goal of *Life Frames* is to develop an electronic network of *Branch Living Libraries* around the world that would provide a repository of information to show the relationship between biology, culture, and technology."

I don't know where this project will lead. The RIRA Council approved the basic premise cautiously and based on Bonnie Sherk's track record of accomplishment. Anyone who wants to bring Ford Foundation money here with the expressed intention of enhancing our parkland has my attention and should have yours. This project costs us nothing except the time and effort of those willing to participate. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Perhaps Mr. Baehler should curb his scathing wit and give the Living Library a chance.

Sherie L. Helstien
Secretary, RIRA

Editor's note: The following letter refers to The WIRE's December 14 report of the Octagon environmental hearing, held December 12. It was e-mailed January 9, too late for the January 11 issue, which went to press just before it was sent. Unfortunately, it was held up by an e-mail snafu and did not reach The WIRE until January 27. We welcome this viewpoint on the exchanges in the December hearing (see www.nyc10044.com/wire/wire2308.html), but offer the minor correction that this was a hearing not before the RIOC Board, but a hearing to create a record of community comments. Three resident members of the RIOC Board were present in the audience, though one (David Kraut) left in apparent disgust before the hearing's end. The RIOC Board was otherwise absent, but its members received a transcript of the hearing.

To the Editor:

With respect to my remarks at the December 12 meeting for the RIOC Board to hear community response to the plans for the Octagon as reported in the last issue of The WIRE, I would like to offer some correction, context and clarification.

I did not, in fact, voice just these "two words into the microphone:" "Shut up." In fact, I said these five words: "Don't *stand up*, *shut up*!" The context was this: I was being verbally assaulted by Robert Ryan from the front and hearing behind me shouts of "Stand up!" directed to him. My response was directed as much to the people shouting behind me as to Mr. Ryan. "Melée" was an apt description of the situation.

As for my comments about ego involvement – I don't think that ego involvement is a bad thing in and of itself. Much good has been accomplished as a result of ego. Nevertheless, ego involvement can blind one to the realities of a situation. The reality of the Becker & Becker proposal for the Octagon is that it has never been a financially viable project in spite of the substantial incentives available by attaching itself to an historic structure under the guise of "adaptive reuse." I would suggest that those involved with promoting this scheme are simply unable to view it objectively and, instead, propose to force this unneeded and unwanted project on the Island and its residents.

I would like to offer clarification of the point I was attempting to make, which is that the current proposal does not respect the historic fabric of the building. By "historic fabric," I mean the architecture itself, the purposes to which it was put, what it says about its time and place as well as what it says about the society which created and altered it. I am reminded of what used to be a familiar refrain in the historic preservation movement: "They had to destroy it to save it!"

The Becker & Becker proposal would certainly "destroy" the essence of the Octagon with little evidence that it would in fact "save it." It is a desecration. As for Robert Ryan's statement that the hearing was called to address only environmental issues, this proposed structure (a behemoth) constitutes visual pollution at its worst. I believe that the Octagon can and should be saved but not as a part of this scheme. Let the Becker & Becker proposal die the quick death it deserves.

Erik Bradford Stocker

To the Editor:

As an environmental artist, performer, and designer of public spaces with integrated community programs, I have often embraced humor as a means to address such serious issues as social justice, environmental protection, and (yes!) *world peace*. Hence, I can appreciate the effort Mr. Baehler invested to pen a satirical response to my proposal for *A Living Library* on Roosevelt Island that appeared in the January 25 WIRE. I also appreciate the opportunity to respond in the spirit of Mae West (who paid for her humor with a brief and involuntary stay on your Island in 1927). In her words "...It's better to be looked over than overlooked."

Those engaged by the descriptions of some of my early "*performance art*" may view these internationally published and exhibited works and other more recent and immediately relevant accomplishments online at www.alivinglibrary.org. Indeed, I encourage them to do so. As an educator (as well as an artist, environmental architect, and humorist), I take no offense at being labeled by Mr. Baehler as an *intellectual*. I do, however, want to correct Mr. Baehler's perception that my concept is for a library "...in which no books are to be found." There *will* be books and research accomplished using them. There will be electronic media. *And*, there will *also* be a broad array of locally meaningful artifacts, artworks, flora and fauna, and people attracted by welcoming spaces that please the eye, soothe the soul and tease the mind. The resulting "learning environments" will reflect the unique ecology, social, and economic history of Roosevelt Island, and the rich current resources.

A Living Library will foster learning, growth, and a deeply ingrained sense of place through personal experience and respectful interactions. Roosevelt Island's *Living Library* participants, of all ages and of diverse cultural and linguistic traditions and economic means, will come to more fully understand themselves, each other, and the place in which they live. They will work together more effectively to identify and achieve the environmental, economic, and social priorities of your singular place. They may also learn from others in *Branch Living Libraries* in distant locales. And yes (!), I believe that, while enriching life in your own community, they will also contribute to *global peace* and sustainability through their personal growth, shared accomplishments, and by learning to laugh *together* instead of *at* one another.

Bonnie Ora Sherk
Founder and Director
A Living Library; Life Frames, Inc.

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; anonymous letters are not considered for publication.

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 addressed to The WIRE. **Alternatives:** Typed, double-spaced copy left at 531 Main Street or faxed to 1-212-755-2540 (verify receipt by calling 1-212-826-9055). 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.** Recommend maximum length, 300 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space. Questions? Call 1-212-826-9055.

The second meeting on public safety to be convened by Representative Carolyn Maloney took place here on January 24, too late for a report to appear in the last *Main Street WIRE*. You may recall my report on the first meeting in October that appeared in the November 9 issue.

The Roosevelt Island Safety Kommittee (RISK), representing the various Island building committees and the Residents Association and under the leadership of Byron Gaspard and Nellie Velez, put together an audience of concerned residents. The panel again included Ms. Maloney and her Director of Constituent Services, Jessica Fox; representatives of Assemblymember Grannis; the 114th Precinct commander; and the offices of the Attorney General, the Manhattan District Attorney, RIHMC, NYCHA, DHCR, and HUD. Joining them were RIOC President Robert Ryan, and Public Safety Chief James Fry.

Maloney had requested a "wish list" of resident concerns regarding the policing of Roosevelt Island, and the RISK group (not to be confused with an earlier community group with a similar acronym) had complied. We asked that a new CPOP (community patrol) officer be assigned from the 114th Precinct, and the commander, Deputy Inspector Barrere, said that had been accomplished. Police Officer Tom Liuzzo is that CPOP officer and his name was given to the RIRA Common Council at their December 4 meeting. Officer Liuzzo started his tour as the "Sector Robert" (Roosevelt Island) CPOP officer last Tuesday, and was good enough to visit with me at home to discuss Island policing issues. I suggested that he introduce himself to the residents at the Farmer's Market if he is patrolling on Saturdays. I hope you will make him welcome when you meet him on Main Street. Inspector Barrere announced the new, City-wide Quality of Life hotline telephone number, 311, which is now in operation, replacing the old eleven-digit number.

The bulk of residents' concern was with RIOC's Public Safety Department, although it seemed that the public officials present were intent on discussing NYPD issues. We requested the specifics of the Public Safety officers' duties beyond "providing a safe environment and enforcing New York City law," Chief Fry's only response to that question. Only when we understand the details of their responsibilities can we measure their success or failure and hold them accountable. This is a reasonable request, given that we pay their salaries through the fees for service paid by the housing companies and derived from our rent or maintenance payments. Residents stated that it was imperative that Public Safety, as well as the NYPD, make more and better information available to the community through its elected representatives (me) and through the newspaper.

Two years ago, the RIOC Board created a Public Safety advisory committee. In the intervening years, this group, composed of housing managers, resident RIOC Board members, and a community rep from RIRA, set itself one project: to conduct a survey of residents' impressions of Public Safety service. This task was never completed and I've commented on this lapse in these pages. RISK believes that the project should be revised and completed or officially dropped rather than being left in limbo. The committee chair, Dr. Joan Dawson, delegated the job to the resident members of the committee a year ago, but the ultimate responsibility is still that of the committee chair and the RIOC Board. At Thursday's RIOC Board meeting she again passed the buck to her subordinate members. The expression "fish or cut bait" comes to mind.

Our public servants had issues as well. President Ryan discussed the rampant rumor-mongering so typical of small towns, especially when hard information is withheld or hard to come by. He mentioned stories about fraternization by Public Safety officers with members of the opposite sex and with drug dealers and requested that specific information be turned over to the appropriate authorities for action if it exists. He said that phone numbers for those authorities (State Attorney General's Office, Manhattan DA) would be posted in the Public Safety Office. Ryan's right. If these egregious conditions exist, we should put up or shut up.

As I understand the agreements, all of Northtown is entitled to "vertical patrols," that is, patrolling of the building halls and public spaces, by Public Safety. I

mentioned to RIHMC General Manager, Doryne Isley, that I had never seen an officer above the lobby floor in Westview. She assured me that vertical patrols take place in Eastwood, Island House, and Westview. Once upon a time, these patrols were monitored with security key systems, whereby the officers were required to punch in at designated stops in every building. Those no longer exist; perhaps they should.

There were many other items on the wish list, but the bottom line was better communications and better public relations. At the end of the meeting I sought out Jim Fry to attempt to set up a meeting between the two of us. He noted, heatedly, that I had not sought such a meeting since my election two years ago. I pled guilty as charged, with the explanation that I take all my RIOC concerns, including Public Safety, to the RIOC president, Rob Ryan, as the arbiter and decision-maker for the Corporation. I delegate the day-to-day concerns with street incidents to the RIRA Public Safety Committee. I suggested that the Maloney meeting might be a good foundation on which to base some talks between us. Fry said he was in his office daily and turned his back on me.

While I had not contacted Mr. Fry, neither had he picked up a phone to call me, and the phones work both ways. Perhaps I should have sought out his input some time over the last two years. However, you elected me to represent this community and Fry is a public servant serving this community. If he had or has concerns regarding his department's uneasy role in this community, he needs to make it his business to seek me out, as well as other community leaders. Jim, the ball is in your court.

When I confronted him again, I said that the people of this community have a terrible impression of Public Safety, and that we could address these PR problems with better communication. Fry said that he was "not in the public relations business" and again rebuffed me. Many of my neighbors have considered Mr. Fry part of the problem and not part of the solution. They may be right.

As you know, I support this newspaper with this column and with my labor as one of an army of residents who aid in its distribution. We are fortunate to have a record of Island events and to have it made accessible, free of charge, at every apartment door, at every shop, and at every Island institution. But there are those on Roosevelt Island who react badly to criticism. It has come to my attention that Manhattan Park will no longer allow *The Main Street WIRE* to be distributed to apartment doors. The reason Manhattan Park management has given for interdicting free expression and the First Amendment is a letter from an anonymous Manhattan Park tenant, printed in the January 11 *WIRE*, that castigated Manhattan Park for questionable rental practices.

And make no mistake; if the New York newspapers can be dumped in front of residents' doors in Manhattan Park and the *WIRE* can't, it is a violation of Constitutional guarantees. That *The WIRE* is distributed free of charge does not make it any less of a legitimate medium of free speech. *The WIRE* is not an advertising circular, to be stacked in the mailroom. The cost of producing *The Main Street WIRE* is covered only by advertising, with the promise to advertisers that the paper reaches every residential door on the Island. If Manhattan Park is permitted to prevent door-drop distribution, our hometown paper may be forced to cease publication. No editor is obliged to print disclaimers for letters printed in a newspaper; editorial opinion is identified as such and the difference is clear.

This is a disgrace and every resident of the Island, not just Manhattan Parkers, should telephone General Manager Sandra Holden at 759-8660 and demand resumption of permission to distribute. For too long, Manhattan Park has held itself apart from the rest of the Roosevelt Island community with both the tacit and overt compliance of its housing management. This incident is just one more example, and the message it sends for the coming residents of Southtown (and, possibly, the Octagon) is disheartening. Our Island community is too small for us to allow "divide and conquer" tactics to be countenanced. When will this crap stop?

WIRE editor Dick Lutz was asked by a RIOC Board member to make a statement at Thursday's Board meeting. When he finished Board Member John Mannix said, "You know, Dick, he who lives by the sword, dies by the sword," a smug reflection on the *The WIRE*'s often critical coverage of RIOC and its Board. Wrong, Mr. Mannix. Dick Lutz is a journalist and lives by the pen, not the sword. You should know better.

The RIRA Column



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

Editor's note: The President of RIOC has a standing invitation to provide a companion *RIOC President's Column* for publication in *The WIRE*.

COMING UP

— This Weekend —

St. Bart's Players production of Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel* with Roosevelt Island's Veronica Shea, final performances this weekend (**Sat.-Sun., Feb. 8-9**) Park Avenue at 50th Street. Tickets from \$17. For reservations, call 1-212-378-0248.

Jazz concert by the Tex Allen Sextet (reception to follow), St. Mark's Episcopal Church, East 10th Street at Second Avenue, **Sun., Feb. 9**, 2:30-4:30 p.m.

— The Coming Week —

Toastmasters public speaking group. Visitors welcome. Information: 1-212-759-0396. **Mon., Feb. 10**, 8:00 p.m.

Picture Book Hour for children 2-5, **Wed., Feb. 12** and every Wednesday, Library, 11:00 a.m.

PTA International Dinner, PS/IS 217, **Wed., Feb. 12**, 6:00 p.m. Call 1-212-588-0388 or 1-212-223-1975 for information.

— Future Events —

Book Discussion — *Eight Men* by Richard Wright, Library. **Thur., Feb. 20**, 6:30 p.m. Pre-registration no longer required; book available at the Library.

The Main Street WIRE — next scheduled issue, **Sat., Feb. 22**. **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., Feb 14; decision on stuffers for *The Bag*, Mon., Feb 17; bag materials due Thur., Feb. 20. **Future issues:** Mar. 8, 22; Apr. 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 (holiday issue). **Phone/fax** for news, 1-212-826-9055/755-2540; phone/fax for display and classified advertising placement and information, 1-212-751-8214/755-2540. To list your organization's Island events here, e-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com, or leave it, addressed to *The WIRE*, at the desk at 531 Main Street; provide a telephone number for follow-up.

Toastmasters public speaking group. Visitors welcome. Information: 1-212-759-0396. **Mon., Feb. 24**, 8:00 p.m.

Roosevelt Island Committee of Community Board 8 meeting, Island House Community Room, **Tues., Feb. 25**, 7:30 p.m. Topics on the agenda include air quality and public safety.

Our Lives — Roosevelt Islanders Reminisce, Graham Cannon, Gallery RIVAA, **Sun., Mar. 2**, 4:00 p.m.

RIRA Common Council meeting, **Wed., Mar. 5**, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Open to the public; public comments invited near start of meeting.

Toastmasters public speaking group. Visitors welcome. Information: 1-212-759-0396. **Mon., Mar. 10**, 8:00 p.m.

PTA Book Fair., Sat., Mar. 15, details to be announced.

Book Discussion — *A House for Mr. Biswas*, by V.S. Naipaul, Library. **Thur., Mar. 20**, 6:30 p.m. Pre-registration no longer required; book available at the Library.

RIRA Auction Fund-Raiser, the Senior Center, **Sat., Mar. 22**, 7:30 p.m. (Donations of goods and services being sought; call 1-212-644-2142.)

Toastmasters public speaking group. Visitors welcome. Information: 1-212-759-0396. **Mon., Mar. 24**, 8:00 p.m.

RIRA Common Council meeting, **Wed., Apr. 2**, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Open to the public; public comments invited near start of meeting.

Book Discussion — *Selected Poetry*, various poets. **Thur., Apr. 17**, 6:30 p.m. Pre-registration no longer required; book available at the Library.

RIRA Common Council meeting, **Wed., May 7**, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Open to the public; public comments invited near start of meeting.

Book Discussion — *The Silent Cry*, by Kenzaburo Oe, Library. **Thur., May 15**, 6:30 p.m. Pre-registration no longer required; book available at the Library.

RIRA Common Council meeting, **Wed., June 4**, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Open to the public; public comments invited near start of meeting.

Senior Center

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

Tuesday
2:00, **Computer Class**
6:30, **Yoga Class**
7:30, **Games** (RISA)

Wednesday
9:15, **Stay Well**
7:00, **Pokeno** (RISA)

Thursday
10:00, **Tai Chi**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
12:30, **Movie**
7:00, **Dance Class** (Advanced)
Friday
9:30, **Yoga Stretch** (new time)

1:00, **Bridge Class**
7:00, **Games** (RISA)
Saturday
7:30, **Bingo** (RISA)

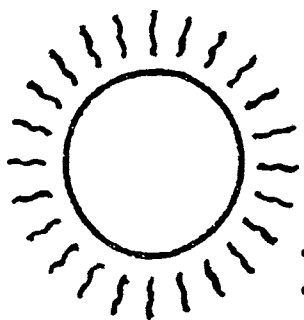
Special Events

Sat., Feb. 8, 6:30, **Korean New Year's Party**
Tuesdays, beginning **Feb. 11**, 9:00-1:00, **Free Tax Preparation** help
Fri., Feb. 14, 7:00, **Valentine's Day Party**
Wed., Feb. 19, **Atlantic City trip**
Sat., Feb. 22, 9:00 (all day), **Black History Month Celebration**
Fri., Feb. 28, 12:30, **Birthday Party**

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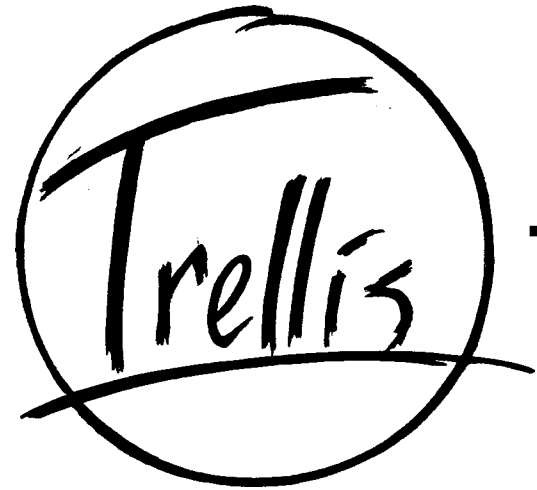
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Over a Critical Letter Published January 11, The WIRE and Manhattan Park

Letter to The WIRE from Sandra Holden, General Manager of Manhattan Park

The following letter was received after *The WIRE* contacted Manhattan Park asking why door-drop delivery of *The WIRE* had been banned.

[To:] *The Main Street WIRE*:
Manhattan Park has for many years been supportive of *The Main Street WIRE*. Therefore, it was with great dismay that I read the January 28, 2003 column entitled *Manhattan Park Bans WIRE Distribution*” [on *Website NYC10044*]. This column continues what is becoming a disturbing pattern by *The Main Street WIRE* of printing unsubstantiated materials injurious to Manhattan Park and its business reputation.
On January 24, 2003 [sic], *The WIRE* printed a letter entitled *To Manhattan Park Residents* signed by an unnamed *Tenant in Manhattan Park*. This letter was riddled with inaccuracies, and contained statements which were likely to be injurious to Manhattan Park’s business reputation.
The Main Street WIRE subsequently stated that it communicated numerous revisions to the writer of the letter, and hence had a hand in the final printed version. Nevertheless, *The Main Street WIRE* never once bothered to verify any of the “facts” set forth in the letter with Manhattan Park management, nor did it provide Manhattan Park with an opportunity to provide its version of the story.
The Main Street WIRE has now belatedly offered Manhattan Park an opportunity to respond, but it is virtually impossible to undo the damage to one’s business caused by inaccurate statements in the news media. The January 24th [sic] edition of *The WIRE* also contained no disclaimer that it did not represent *The Main Street WIRE*’s opinion (which is standard journalistic practice), and for all intents and purposes the way the letter was printed gave the impression that it was from *The Main Street WIRE*. Quite frankly, Manhattan Park is shocked that such a “letter” would be printed without ever bothering to speak to anyone in our office.
Your January 28th follow-up article now conveys the impression that Manhattan Park is trampling on *The Main Street WIRE*’s first amendment rights. This is simply not true. *The Main Street WIRE* remains free to distribute its publication in the lobby area of any Manhattan Park building, which is where all non-subscription publications and materials are placed at Manhattan Park.
It is my sincere hope that *The Main Street WIRE* will, in the future, check its facts before allowing its pages to be used in a manner than can cause harm to an individual or entity.

Sandra Holden
General Manager, Manhattan Park

A Reprint: The original letter that offended Manhattan Park...

The original letter, to which Manhattan Park took offense (see letter above from Sandra Holden) appeared four weeks ago. It is reprinted here so that readers will have the background of the current controversy.

To Manhattan Park Residents:
If your lease was renewed in the past half-year without a reduced rental rate, this letter is intended for you.
The rent of free-market apartments in Manhattan has been going down steeply over the past year. The same is true for Manhattan Park, which advertised a “two months free rent” deal on one- and two-bedroom apartments for several months (i.e., May-July) in *The New York Times*.
The ads suggest that if we vacate our apartments, Manhattan Park would lease them to the new tenants at a reduction of 17% from what we have paid. On the other hand, if we renew, I believe Manhattan Park should treat us equally to the new tenants and reduce the rent we pay by at least 17%.
Since the landlord is only profiting by keeping the existing tenants, I believe it is customary to offer to these tenants an “insiders” rate, lower than the free-market value. Accordingly, the “lease renewal form” contains two options: An “insider” rent rate lower than the advertised rate and offered provided the tenant signs within three weeks, and an “outsider” rate, the advertised rate offered to new tenants if the tenant hesitates and signs after the three-week period.
The rent rate offered to existing tenants in the “lease renewal form” was not reduced to the advertised rate. Instead, it was increased in both categories. Based on my experience, I believe both the “insider” and “outsider” rents offered to existing tenants for identical apartments were higher by several hundred dollars than that offered to prospective new tenants. In short, the landlord is taking advantage of the reluctance of existing tenants to pack, unpack, and pay moving expenses, and is thereby extracting from existing tenants a rent higher than the advertised rate.
The landlord is relying on the fact that each individual tenant is unlikely to take legal action. Legal fees would exceed the refunded rent. But if we unite, individual legal

Letter from The WIRE Responding to Sandra Holden, Manhattan Park

The following letter was sent to the General Manager of Manhattan Park in response to her letter (at left).

Dear Ms. Holden:
I am pleased to respond to your letter dated January 30, for which I thank you.
Indeed, Manhattan Park *has* been supportive of *The WIRE*, and thanks are due you and your colleagues for that support, which benefits the entire community by insuring the continued service of its community newspaper. That said, I have to note that your letter does not deny that your action in terminating *The WIRE*’s ability to distribute to its subscribers (all Roosevelt Island residents are subscribers; all are free to ignore the newspaper) was retribution for *The WIRE*’s operating normally and, thereby, failing to give Manhattan Park some special treatment.
It is not *The WIRE*’s custom to verify the “factual” basis of the opinions of those whose letters it prints in its *Letters* section. The letter in question (published January 11, not January 24) recounted a resident’s personal experiences and her perspective on those experiences. It would be inappropriate to ask someone in the Manhattan Park office to verify the accuracy of her perceptions. On the other hand, as I have stated, it is *The WIRE*’s necessary custom to remove libel from such letters, as well as to refuse to print random charges not supported by the allegations of fact in a letter. Hence, the revisions of the letter that were insisted upon, by *The WIRE*, before publication. Apart from these, *The WIRE*’s assistance was limited to the minor corrections of spelling and grammar provided for all who submit letters. *The WIRE* had no “hand” in creating the letter-writer’s impressions of Manhattan Park’s practices.
I should note that your suggestion that it is “standard journalistic practice” to print a disclaimer with letters from readers is incorrect. Check any letters section of *The New York Times*, for example. A disclaimer is unnecessary, because it is self-evident that letters are letters and not the opinion of the publication.
Neither is it *The WIRE*’s custom to provide everyone mentioned in a letter with an opportunity to respond in the same issue. Such a practice would lead to an infinite loop of activity. The next edition of the newspaper is generally adequate, as it would have been in this case had you chosen that option. Instead, you chose to censor the letter-writer by de-distributing the issue, and to punish the messenger by restricting *The WIRE*’s distribution rights. If you will review past issues of the newspaper (available on-line at www.nyc10044.com), you will find that a lively dialogue is often carried on from issue to issue as one letter-writer responds to another’s comments. It’s free speech, and the

costs will be lower.
The “lease renewal form” I received from the Director of Leasing notified me of an increase of the rent by \$110 (“insider” rate) or by \$400 (“outsider” rate) above the current rate. A quick survey showed that the rent offered to new tenants for an apartment identical to mine was lower by \$300 or \$500 from either rate offered to me. It was also lower for apartments better than mine. For example, the rent of new tenants for an apartment in my building that is identical to mine in size but better-situated on a higher floor, and with a Manhattan view (mine is a courtyard), was lower by \$155 than the rent offered to me for an inferior apartment.
When I asked to pay the same rate as the new tenants, the Director of Leasing wrote: “If you would like to move to something less expensive, I will be happy to show you. Your unit is priced at higher rent because you are tree-top level and your placement is more desirable.” But my apartment is five flights below tree-top level.
There are several lawful venues available to us to persuade the landlord to reduce our rent retroactively to the current free-market value. If you would like to join forces for the purpose of keeping the extra rent in your pocket, please call/leave a message at (917) 929-6054.

A Tenant in Manhattan Park

... and a reaction to the controversy from its writer

The Manhattan Park tenant who wrote the letter that touched off Manhattan Park’s ban on door-drop distribution by The WIRE read exchanges of correspondence on the matter on Website NYC10044, and provided this additional comment by e-mail.

To the Editor:
As the Manhattan Park tenant who wrote the letter that was published in the January 11 issue of *The WIRE* I would like to make a few comments in response to the January 30 letter from the General Manager of Manhattan Park, Ms.

Does the owner of an apartment building have a right to censor a free press by stopping building residents from receiving The WIRE?

Over the past two weeks, that question has been at the heart of the controversy between Manhattan Park management and *The WIRE*. It appeared in that weekend’s issue of *The WIRE*, building person-to-person communication between residents of apartments in the buildings after it had already been done by the building’s management, including schoolchildren earning community-service credits for their work, and the custom for six years.
While Manhattan Park offered the alternative of leaving the door open for the *Letters* column, the method of distribution would make mass censorship very easy. If the door were closed, the boxes discarded. Given Manhattan Park’s recent actions, the door is closed.
That method of distribution would also jeopardize *The WIRE*’s status as a critically important source of financial support. The question has both legal and moral dimensions. Legally, the First Amendment guarantees that one General Manager can effectively act as a censor. It may also have legal dimensions rooted in the First Amendment.
Door-drop distribution to every residential door on Roosevelt Island is a method of distribution that guarantees that every resident, who have known they can reach every apartment through the door, will receive the *Letters* column. A guarantee may cause loss of advertising, a return to red ink.
In short, Manhattan Park is demanding not only the right to censor, but also the power of life or death over the community’s news. In effect, the power of life or death over the community’s news.
On these pages are the root of the controversy – the correspondence between the General Manager of Manhattan Park and the Managing Editor of *The WIRE*. The crisis on *Website NYC10044* www.nyc10044.com.
There is a related editorial on page 2.

refreshing banter of a democracy.
“Distribution,” incidentally, is to *the apartment door* for any newspaper. *The WIRE* is *not* advertising material to be placed among menus, car service solicitations, and other purely commercial expressions. It is journalism, protected by the First Amendment. The headline on the *Website NYC10044* article, *Manhattan Park Bans WIRE Distribution*, is accurate. Headlines never tell the whole story, and the specific “door-drop” reference was included in the first paragraph (the sixth word, in fact) of both the e-mail bulletin and the linked report. To repeat: Relegation to the shelf with advertising materials is not “distribution.” The headline was accurate.
But back to your options: There is no rational reason why you should assume that *The WIRE*’s *Letters* column would be closed to you. It is not, and your suggestion that *The WIRE* is now “belatedly” offering Manhattan Park an opportunity to respond is simply inaccurate. The *Letters* column remains open to all at all times (subject to limitations of good taste, libel law, and space) and your timely response would

Sandra Holden [as published on *Website NYC10044*], specifically about her following two statements:
1. “On January 24, *The WIRE* printed a letter... and ... for all intents and purposes the way the letter was printed gave the impression that it was from *The Main Street WIRE*.”
2. “This letter was riddled with inaccuracies, and contained statements which were likely to be injurious to Manhattan Park’s business reputation. ... *The WIRE* has now belatedly offered Manhattan Park an opportunity to respond.”
First, my letter was published January 11, not in the January 25 issue; it was printed with a letter by Torres on page 2 in the *Letters* section. Given the clear layout/content of page 2, including the deadline for letters and the *Letters Policy*, the question is: How could an individual who trumpets “facts,” “honest,” “fairness,” etc., claim that “for all intents and purposes the way the letter was printed gave the impression that it was from *The Main Street WIRE*?”
Second, it is never too late to expose the truth and defend “Manhattan Park’s business reputation.” Thus far the facts show that Ms. Holden arbitrarily, as of January 11, launched a strike against *The WIRE*, attempting, apart from censorship of my letter, also to punish and financially damage *The WIRE*.
The onus is on Ms. Holden to rebut the “inaccuracies” in my letter. Thus far she did not deliver even one shred of evidence to protect the “business reputation.”
The basic observation of my letter was that the rents offered for identical apartments to existing tenants were higher by several hundred dollars than the rent offered by the landlord to prospective new tenants.
For a start, does Ms. Holden deny that Manhattan Park advertised in *The New York Times* in May through July 7, 2002, offering “2 MONTHS FREE RENT” on “1 & 2 BRS?”
Next, did Manhattan Park make the same offer during the months May-July 2002 in the lease renewal given to any of the existing tenants? I never received such an offer when my lease was renewed.
If such an offer was made, please provide the facts, i.e., list apartment numbers and addresses.

A Tenant in Manhattan Park

Manhattan Park Join an Issue of Censorship and Property Rights...

an apartment building free community newspaper g-wide distribution?

heart of a conflict joined as a result of two acts by Manhattan
tter critical of Manhattan Park rental-pricing practices ap-
nnel were ordered to remove the newspaper from the doors
or-dropped by volunteers. Two weeks later, volunteers –
s – were barred from door-dropping *The WIRE*, as has been

y boxes of loose newspapers in its mailing rooms, such a
asy for the building's General Manager – just by ordering the
, *The WIRE* deems this unacceptable as a sole means of

WIRE's ability to include advertising inserts with the newspa-

gally, Manhattan Park controls its property. This means,
ct as censor for all who rent there, and that's a moral issue.
ndment to the U.S. Constitution.

velt Island has been an important selling point for advertis-
rough *The WIRE*. The result of having to withdraw that
k, and possibly termination of publication.

to control distribution of the newspaper in its buildings but,
newspaper.

original critical letter – plus letter exchanges between the
tor of *The WIRE*, and reactions from residents who followed

have been more than welcome.

As for “statements likely to be injurious to Manhattan
Park’s business reputation,” *The WIRE*’s readers deserve
this much respect: They are intelligent enough to see that
the letter was from one individual and not from *The WIRE*,
and intelligent enough to know that the opinions expressed
might not be 100% valid, especially given that they recount
personal experiences and could therefore easily be self-serv-
ing. Any supposed “injury” would easily be eliminated by a
response from you in the next issue, and beyond that, you
might have gained greatly by issuing a clear statement about
your rental pricing practices. Unfortunately, you chose in-
stead to suggest that the letter-writer actually has a point,
by having the January 11 issue removed from apartment
doors as though you feared having the information reach
your tenants – and then, on the occasion of the next issue
two weeks later, to punish *The WIRE* for allowing the resi-
dent to express her opinion. Such actions, in themselves,
are far more likely to be “injurious” to Manhattan Park’s
business reputation than any tenant letter.

A serious problem with your suggestion that *The WIRE*
be placed in boxes in building mail rooms (apart from the fact
that newspapers aren’t delivered that way) is that it sets up
a situation in which you can censor *The WIRE* by simply
ordering that the boxes be removed from the mail rooms.
You can therefore understand why this is not an acceptable
method of “distribution,” and why your tenants and others
are contacting you to urge that you change your position.

Now that you understand, hopefully, that there is no “dis-
turbance pattern,” but merely good, solid publishing practice, I,
too, urge that you reconsider your action. Either way, you
have made news and called considerable additional attention
to what was, until you acted, a minor set of complaints from one
of your residents exercising her right to speak out.

I’ll print your letter in the February 8 *WIRE*, along with this
response, many other letters received from your tenants,
and those from other residents of Roosevelt Island.

Thank you for writing and providing your view of the
situation. I hope this response clarifies *WIRE* policies. Again,
as I suggested in my letter last Sunday night, I am available
to discuss this matter with you, and I can be reached at
1-212-826-9055.

Dick Lutz
Managing Editor

Ban continued from page 1

residents on the controversy. It reads, in part, “the Common
Council of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association con-
demns unequivocally any effort to censor the contents of
The Main Street WIRE, to restrict or lessen residents’ ac-
cess to the publication, to terminate door-drop privileges, or
in any other way damage this vital community resource.”

Early last week, the New York Civil Liberties Union agreed
to work on the legal dimensions of the case on behalf of *The*
WIRE, working with Island attorney Lew Perkiss, *The WIRE*’s
counsel.

At mid-day on Thursday, a Holden aide set up a meeting
between Holden and Lutz for Monday, though there was no
resolution of how the February 8 issue might be distributed
in River Road buildings. Plans were being made to hand out
copies of the newspaper outside the buildings on Friday
night and Saturday morning as a way of getting the issue
into the hands of Manhattan Park residents.

...And Islanders react by e-mail to Website NYC10044 coverage of the controversy

Over the past 10 days, residents who were informed of developments through *The WIRE*’s e-mail bulletin service,
offered on *Website NYC10044*, have responded to the controversy with e-mails and calls. Here, we can print only
a sampling of the many received. (If you would like to receive the e-mail bulletins, issued only on important news
between issues of *The WIRE*, send an e-mail to Editor@MainStreetWIRE.com with the subject “Add Me.”)

To Sandra Holden, Manhattan Park (copy to *The WIRE*):

My family resides at 40 River Road. We like the quality of
life on Roosevelt Island, its tranquility and green spaces,
and sports facilities, despite the fact that many goods and
services provided do not always have the quality we would
prefer.

One of the points that make Roosevelt Island unique is its
own little newspaper. It is the *only* regular source of infor-
mation about the Island that Islanders have. I am not aware
of any other biweekly newsletter on the Island, or anything
the buildings put out to regularly update their residents.
Therefore, *The Main Street WIRE* is highly valuable to us
residents. So valuable, in fact, that it is a selling point of its
own when we advertise Island life to our friends.

It should therefore be in your own interest to keep this
newspaper alive. It is a unique aspect of our life. Does the
Upper East Side, or Astoria, have a *WIRE*? Not that we know
of. *The WIRE* is a treasure of our Island, and also remedy for
the fact that our Island is often overlooked by larger publi-
cations.

My family might not necessarily agree with the articles
that appear in the paper, nor with the opinions expressed by
its readers. Thus, we are in the same boat with you on this.
In fact, we might even disagree with most opinions voiced.
Nonetheless, one has to appreciate that they are an expres-
sion of the diversity of our Island.

We have recently learned that non-distribution of the pa-
per to every Island household puts its economic viability at
peril. A discontinued distribution to our residents would be
a huge loss for everybody on the Island, including yourself.
Non-distribution in Manhattan Park alone would isolate
Manhattan Park further from the other buildings on the Is-
land. We should try everything to avoid this outcome.

You might not agree with the opinion, about Manhattan
Park management, of the letter writer in the January 11 *WIRE*.
Don’t take it personally. It was the expression of free speech
of one individual. You should respond with the same means.
If you feel personally offended, write a letter to the editor. If
your company was depicted in a bad light, respond to the
WIRE on company stationery. But don’t shoot the messen-
ger by banning the paper.

My family urges you to revise your decision against fu-
ture door-to-door distribution of *The WIRE*. Losing *The*
WIRE would be a disservice to the Island, its residents, and
to your tenants. We need *better* services on Roosevelt Is-
land, not fewer or worse ones.

Just for the record, my family has no affiliation with *The*
WIRE, its editor, any of its staff, or the individual who wrote
the letter you considered offensive.

We are looking forward to your response.

Jan Buenner & Family

To Grenadier Realty:

I am a Roosevelt Island resident who enjoys and appreci-
ates *The Main Street WIRE* for the articles that concern Is-
land residents. Therefore, it is very disturbing to find that a
simple letter from a tenant, who is expressing her opinion by
criticizing Manhattan Park management, can cause you to
make the decision to ban the newspaper from door-drop
distribution. Just because the article is not to the liking of
Manhattan Park management gives you no right to punish
the newspaper.

The WIRE is offering the opportunity for management to
reply if they wish to clarify any misunderstandings or wrong
information. Instead, management takes this censorship-
like approach in order to make the threatening comments
disappear. This makes me believe the tenant’s letter was
right on the money.

If you believe you are right and you have something to
say about it, I urge you to send your reply to *The WIRE* so it
can be published and read by all Roosevelt Island residents.
Do not ban door-drop distribution.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Gustavo Alori

To the Editor:

To presuppose that Sandy Holden’s sole motivation in
banning distribution of *The WIRE* in our buildings is cen-
sorship is unfair and, without some supporting documenta-
tion, should not have been published [on *Website*
NYC10044]. It was handled as if it were nothing more than
gossip.

That much said and, as a Manhattan Park resident, my
respect for Sandy Holden notwithstanding, it is hard to un-
derstand why an institution as unique and valuable as *The*
WIRE would be banned from distribution. The service it
provides, beyond the great value of information and ads
that all of us can use, is inestimable. In this beautiful com-
plex, so rich with people from around the world who are in
New York for periods that are often far too brief, *The WIRE*
provides outreach to newcomers, strangers, and the unfam-
iliar that is unobtainable from any other source. *The WIRE*
democratically reaches all of us and makes us feel part of a
greater Roosevelt Island community, an outreach that is
sorely lacking in any other way.

Agree with the editorial policy or not, *The WIRE* provides
a quality of journalism far, far in excess of what a community
with so few people would receive. Free! The commitment of
the volunteers who write for and distribute the publication
is astonishing in a city where we all work far too many hours
and have precious little leisure time to spare. Making *The*
WIRE less accessible is a disservice to, not just the editorial

See **Letters**, next page

Remarks Before the RIOC Board by the Managing Editor of The WIRE, and Reaction

WIRE managing editor Dick Lutz was asked to brief the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation Thursday, January 30. This is a transcript of his remarks, followed by comments of members of the RIOC Board

America is the land of free speech, free press, and free expression. We trumpet that message around the world, but last week at Manhattan Park, where so many representatives of foreign governments live, Roosevelt Island proved it to be untrue.

On January 10, when *The Main Street WIRE* published a letter from a Man-
hattan Park resident complaining about
rental pricing practices there, building
personnel were ordered to de-distrib-
ute *The WIRE* by removing it from resi-
dents’ doors where it had already been
distributed.

On January 24, with no prior notice,
Manhattan Park stopped volunteers
starting a door-drop distribution of *The*
WIRE, and told them it would no longer
be allowed.

Communication with Sandra Holden,
the manager of the buildings, has been
difficult, but this morning she said that
The WIRE would be allowed to distrib-
ute only to subscribers – that is, to a
list of names and apartments where the
residents had specifically requested
delivery, or that it could be “distrib-
uted” by leaving a box of newspapers
in each mail room. In that call, she nei-
ther confirmed nor denied the assess-
ment, compelled by her timing, that her
action is an act of retaliation and cen-

sorship for publishing a critical letter.

There are severe practical problems
with either method she would allow –
boxes in the mail rooms, or a subscriber
list. One is that any future effort to pre-
vent Manhattan Park residents from ex-
pressing themselves through *The*
WIRE, or reading *The WIRE*, could eas-
ily be carried out by Manhattan Park
management just by removing and dis-
carding the boxes of newspapers. An-
other is that advertising inserts, on
which *The WIRE* depends, would
quickly become litter in the mail rooms.
And asking volunteers, some of whom
are children, to abide by a restrictive
list of subscribers, is impractical. Un-
der either plan, *The WIRE* could no
longer promise advertisers delivery to
every residential door on the Island, and
it is possible that advertising revenue
would drop to a point that would put
The WIRE out of business.

Although a pro bono attorney is re-
searching this matter currently, it is at
least possible that legal hairsplitting
would misclassify *The WIRE* as an ad-
vertising flyer, a pennysaver or shop-
per, merely because it is free.

But the fact is, *The WIRE* is, and al-
ways has been, a newspaper. The fact
is that, for six years, it has been deliv-
ered to every residential door on the

Island. The fact is that Manhattan
Park’s objection to door-drop delivery,
although raised and dropped once be-
fore, several years ago, remained dor-
mant until *The WIRE* published a
resident’s letter critical of Manhattan
Park management.

The WIRE supports the resident’s
right to speak and be heard. *The WIRE*
supports the right of Manhattan Park
to respond in kind. But Manhattan Park
appears to claim the right, instead, to
punish *The WIRE* for publishing the
resident’s views.

Hairsplitting about subscriber lists
and paid publications is an inappropri-
ate smokescreen.

The fact is that *The WIRE* is a unique
service, serving a unique and special
community. It is journalism and free
speech. Its future is now in doubt with-
out an ability to guarantee advertisers
delivery to every residential door, be-
cause that is one of the key elements
that changed *The WIRE* from a money-
losing financial cripple into a break-
even effort with the ability to pay good
reporters and even publish the occa-
sional extra.

One supporter – a Manhattan Park
resident – this week wrote, “Agree with
the editorial policy or not, *The WIRE*

See **Statement**, next page

Letters on the Conflict Over Door-Drop Delivery in Manhattan Park *continued from previous page*

staff and writers of letters to the editor, but to all those fellow citizens in this complex who are touched by the community in no way ever so generously as by *The WIRE*.

As a ten-year resident of a complex I consider the best deal in town, I would ask Sandy and her supervisors to reconsider, sit down with *The WIRE* and consider your mutual grievances rationally. This action holds the potential for damage only. There is nothing to be gained by those of us who live here and no advantage to the buildings’ management.

Dave Stone

Editor’s reponse:

Some supposition was initially necessary, since Holden would be the only possible source of information about her “sole” motivation and she was not responding to communications from *The WIRE* seeking to discuss this matter. Ultimately, her letter confirmed her motive.

To the Editor:

I read the letter in *The WIRE* [January 11] about the varying rental rates charged by Manhattan Park management and thought it was very informative and educational. I was impressed that the writer had found out about those variations by reading the ads Manhattan Park management placed, and comparing those rates with the rents being charged to current tenants. It was an excellent letter and, even though I do not reside at Manhattan Park, I learned a lot from it. *The WIRE* did us all a service in publishing the letter.

And now I understand why Manhattan Park management wants to suppress *The WIRE*: Clearly, they do not want their tenants to learn of the type of rate comparison that the letter revealed. Their suppression of *The WIRE* is in a way an admission of their “guilt” and in fact underlines what the writer of the letter reported – that the current tenants are kept in the dark about the lower rents new tenants are charged for the same apartments.

This is an issue that the tenants of Manhattan Park have every right to know about. If Manhattan Park management are honest business people, when a current tenant wishes to re-rent their apartment, they could work out a compromise taking into account the current rental price. As the

writer of the letter said, a tenant could always vacate their apartment and then rent an apartment anew and thus rent at the lower rate. If Manhattan Park management wished to be forthcoming and extend some good will to their current tenants who wish to re-rent, they could work out a compromise so the tenants would not have to vacate and rent anew in order to get the lower rent. This is the essence of the matter: Even though Manhattan Park management is in the business of making money, they could give the current tenants a break when they re-rent their apartments as a gesture of good-will. Instead they wish to keep the tenants in the dark about the prices being charged now so that they can continue to charge higher rents when tenants wish to re-rent their apartments.

Nonetheless, it was just one letter in one issue of *The WIRE*. I think Manhattan Park should continue to allow *The WIRE* to be distributed to every door in their complex. The notion of “subscribers” is preposterous; also, leaving it in a box in the mailrooms would make it that much easier for Manhattan Park management to suppress *The WIRE* should they wish to. *The WIRE* provides a vital community service, and is an important link for every Roosevelt Island resident. Not everyone is going to agree with every letter or article published in *The WIRE* but that doesn’t mean *The WIRE* should be forced out of business by someone or some group that disagrees with a particular letter.

This should be brought to the attention of Manhattan Park management: Can they imagine what would happen if, for example, the City of New York disagreed or was offended by a critical article in the *Daily News* and decided it would no longer permit distribution of that newspaper in NYC-owned properties? NYC would and probably could never do that. Even thinking of doing something like that smacks of a dictatorship and suppression of free speech.

Someone must point these (I think, obvious) things out to Manhattan Park management so they will see that their decision is wrong and will lead to antipathy from their tenants. Manhattan Park management should permit distribution of *The WIRE* to every resident of Manhattan Park as before.

I hope Manhattan Park management comes to their senses on this issue as soon as possible.

Helen Chirivas

Editor’s Statement to RIOC Board *continued from previous page*

provides a quality of journalism far, far in excess of what a community with so few people would receive. Free! The commitment of its volunteers who write for and distribute the publication is astonishing. Making *The WIRE* less accessible is a disservice to” – and paraphrasing now – every resident in Manhattan Park.

Actually, because of the economics, this decision may make *The WIRE* inaccessible to the entire community.

However you may feel about *The WIRE*, it is part of this community.

Whatever you may think of residents who comment or complain, they are a part of this community, and they have a right to be heard.

The WIRE supports that right in a way that rises above the parchment upon which the First Amendment is written, and makes it a real right that lives and breathes today in this very special community.

This action by Manhattan Park has the practical effect of denying free expression to the residents of Manhattan Park, and may have the practical effect of causing suspension of publication for economic reasons. It is thus a threat to the life and breath of free expression. For *The WIRE* to survive, and for residents’ rights to speak freely to remain intact, *The WIRE* must have unencumbered distribution in Manhattan Park as it does in every other building, present and future, on Roosevelt Island.

Reactions from RIOC Board

Leo Kayser: While *The WIRE* may not have always cast me or the members of this Board or the administration in the light we always would like to have been cast, I think that’s not the issue. My own opinion is that *The WIRE* is a first-rate piece of journalism.

I have a personal bias for the idea of a local newspaper that follows the community and keeps it informed. I think it’s an invaluable asset for the Island. I think it would be an absolute tragedy, and I mean that seriously, both figuratively and literally, if you were to lose *The WIRE* for economic reasons, or for any other reason, for that matter. I think it’s a great added value to the quality of life to the people of this community.

And if it generates debate and discussion, all the more benefit that flows from it. That’s what makes journalism what it is. And I might hasten to add for this country, the thing that makes the United States a special place is the fact that even when we disagree, or people take issue with us, on a personal level or a policy level, nevertheless, the general position of an American is to stand up to try to protect the free flow of information, and speech, and press, and so forth. I just think it’s in the highest tradition of the country and citizenship.

And that’s the reason I asked simply that the subject be brought before the Board. Not that, from a legal rights perspective there’s anything we can do, but I think that certainly to express the importance of protecting periodicals and journalism... it would be a terrible loss not to have that.

I think that Manhattan Park is within their legal right [in barring door-drop distribution].

The real question is, is there any malice here from their perspective, based upon content of what was published, with respect to this letter that was critical of something that went on at Manhattan Park, are they taking retribution there or not? ... It may not be something that they should be proud of, and to the extent you can raise this as a public matter in a discussion before the community, there’s something called shame...

David Kraut: I have written for *The WIRE*, probably as much copy as anybody on this Island, under my own name and some other names. I anticipate, after I leave my involvement with this organization, I’ll write for them again. And if there’s a problem with *The WIRE*’s viability based on the actions of Manhattan Park, I personally will help or attempt to help Mr. Lutz get his paper reinserted into that building, with whatever prestige I have in this community.

To Sandra Holden, Manhattan Park:

I am a former 13-year resident of Manhattan Park. I was shocked to hear of your order to Manhattan Park staff to remove an issue of *The Main Street WIRE* (January 11) from your residents’ apartment doors, presumably because you took offense at a letter to the editor discussing the writer’s opinions of your complex’s rental habits.

The correct and appropriate response would have been to write a rebuttal letter, not to take out your anger on your tenants. By not responding in writing with your own letter in the following edition, you single-handedly solidified an impression in the community that, indeed, Manhattan Park not only actively attempts to separate itself from the rest of the community, but your company, Grenadier, may fear charges of unethical business practices. I didn’t think that the letter-writer was necessarily correct, but by acting as a self-interested censor, you’ve sure given the letter-writer credence.

Following the January 11 “pulling” of the newspapers, your next response was truly out of proportion – issuing an order to your doorkeepers to stop door-to-door distribution of the January 25 issue. By doing so, you have done a real disservice to Manhattan Park tenants and you strongly suggest that management would seek retribution against any tenant who tries to speak his or her mind. I don’t think this was your intent, but it is what has been demonstrated so far. What a shame. None of this had to happen. I hope it can be undone.

Finally, as Distribution Manager for *The WIRE* in Rivercross, Island House, Westview, and all of Manhattan Park, I’d like to point out to you the huge volunteer effort that goes into getting the paper ready for distribution. Following the stuffing, bagging, and boxing of the newspaper, there is another massive effort to make sure that there are individuals, everyone of them a volunteer, who will walk down every hall in every one of these buildings, to deliver the paper to their neighbors – tedious and sometimes hard work. These folks serve the community reliably every two weeks because they believe that we should all have access to news and events of this Island. Sandy, these are all very dedicated volunteers to whom you have done a disservice. You should be aware that some of the distributors are young kids who are doing this for school “community involvement” credits. And, Sandy, I understand that your own daughter has even helped one of my young volunteers in your building at 20 River Road. Your daughter is a youngster now, but what lesson do you really want to impart to her, as she grows up, regarding freedom of speech and the fear of exercising it?

Sherie Helstien

To the Editor:

Sandra Holden has every right, as we all do, to “retaliate” to a critical letter in *The WIRE*, or anywhere else, with a letter of her own.

What she does not have is the right to steal residents’ newspapers from their doors.

I think that a class action suit by the residents, asking for a large sum to repay for the stolen January 11 issue, and for the value of all copies no longer delivered, would be a valuable lesson to Ms. Holden, and would amount to a rent reduction.

Or maybe a rent strike would return *The WIRE* more quickly.

Frances Salten

RIRA Council Condemns Manhattan Park Censorship

The Common Council of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association passed the following resolution at its meeting Wednesday evening.

Whereas *The Main Street WIRE* has, for 23 years, provided Roosevelt Island residents with their primary source of news focused specifically on Roosevelt Island affairs, and

Whereas *The WIRE* has, for the past six years, been delivered to every residential door on the Island, and

Whereas the General Manager of Manhattan Park has admittedly taken punitive action against *The Main Street WIRE* for publishing a letter from a resident, by forbidding door-to-door distribution of the newspaper in the buildings of Manhattan Park, and

Whereas, door-drop delivery is a key element of *The WIRE*’s dissemination of news and events to Island residents, and Whereas, if such decision were not to be reversed, the financial viability of *The Main Street WIRE* will be severely compromised,

Now, therefore, the Common Council of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association condemns unequivocally any effort to censor the contents of *The Main Street WIRE*, to restrict or lessen residents’ access to the publication, to terminate door-drop privileges, or in any other way damage this vital community resource.

Follow Breaking News as It Happens Between WIREs Sign Up for WIRE E-Mail Bulletins

Send an “Add Me” message to editor@MainStreetWIRE.com

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Public Safety continued from page 1

Building Committee pressed for a greater commitment – that the officer be provided with an office, or be at “a certain place at a certain time” – noting that “if there’s an emergency in Queens, he’s called away.”



Public Safety Chief James Fry and Member of Congress Carolyn Maloney, at the January 24 meeting in Island House.

Barrere replied: “We can work on a place where he’s available, but one of the things I want my community police officer to do is to patrol around. I don’t want a desk officer sitting behind a desk.” He said the officer “should be visible on patrol,” but he added that “post-

ing hours becomes a safety issue for police officers.”

Roosevelt Island is one of 15 sectors in the 114th Precinct, and Barrere said that “this by far is the safest sector I have of all my 15.”

No residents stepped forward to dispute this assertion, and, in fact, there were few suggestions that the Island is a dangerous place. But the commander’s statements did nothing to hold back the complaints of a number of residents, who appeared to treat Maloney and her

assistant, Jessica Fox, as the keepers of a floodgate.

The residents’ reservoir of grievances, directed at the Public Safety Department and at the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, which controls Public Safety, has been filling up for years, and has come to express itself in demands for greater citizen control of the Department and a change in its tactics to make it more of a building security service, as opposed to a semi-private police force.

The most prominent protagonists for the building security regime are Velez and Byron Gaspard, of the Eastwood Building Committee (EBC), and their predecessors on the committee, Ronald and Faye Vass. But the Department also has its staunch defenders, none more important than Dorene Isley, General Manager of the Roosevelt Island Housing Management Corporation. She credited the Public Safety officers for saving lives by responding quickly to fires and reports of heart attacks.

Fox, who moderated the session after Maloney left for another event, put the conflict into the sharpest focus: “I think one of the problems we hear is that there is a general feeling Public Safety is not doing their job, but there has never been any documentation of that.” (“There is none! There is none!” Ronald Vass retorted.)

A Tale of Two Precincts

Deputy Inspector David Barrere, the commander of the New York Police Department’s 114th Precinct, wants Roosevelt Islanders to stop thinking in terms of codes – zip and area codes – when it comes to police protection.

The Island is geographically part of the 19th Precinct in Manhattan, but police coverage is provided by the 114th, which is headquartered on Astoria Boulevard in Queens. Some residents, including Deirdre Breslin, an Island resident and Community Board 8 member, have said this is a problem because the 114th’s arrests are processed in New York County.

The implication is that the arrangement is a disincentive for the Queens-based force because it does not receive “credit” for its arrests here. Serious crimes become part of the department’s CompStat reports for the Upper East Side precinct.

Barrere tried to dismiss this concern at the Jan. 24 public safety meeting called by Representative Carolyn Maloney. “You’re making a mountain out of a molehill,” he told Breslin. “Unless you would be willing to make Roosevelt Island part of Queens County, that’s the way it has to be.”

“I’m a New York City police officer,” Barrere said, earlier in the meeting. “I have no problem working over there” with the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office. “We’re all one City; we will get the job done, I can assure you of that. It would be ludicrous to try to have the 19th try to cover this command. The tram is a wonderful thing, but can you imagine a police officer in an emergency taking the tram over? We have the only access to the Island over 36th Avenue.”

Barrere said he himself worked with the Island’s Public Safety Department on a DWI arrest last week and handled the booking in a Manhattan precinct. “It’s not a problem,” he said.

In any event, Roosevelt Island hardly registers in the numbers of “index crimes” that are compiled as part of the city’s tracking of major complaints (CompStat), and in the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reports Program. The city counts cases of murder, rape (all degrees), robbery, felony assault, burglary, grand larceny, and auto theft (the FBI adds arson and breaks out forcible rape as the reportable crime).

Barrere told *The WIRE* on Tuesday that no index crimes had been reported on Roosevelt Island in the past 28 days. The NYPD’s CompStat Unit re-

ports are posted on Monday and lag a week from the reporting day. In the 28-day period ending January 26, the 114th Precinct recorded 204 major crime complaints (the biggest categories were burglary, 52, and robbery, 45), a decrease of 11.7 percent from the same period last year. In the 19th Precinct, there were 288 complaints, an increase of 28 percent. In that precinct, which is headquartered on 67th Street, the top categories were grand larceny, 176, and burglary, 62.

The most recent crime to cross the CompStat threshold on the Island was the unattended theft of PTA receipts after a New Year’s Eve dance. This was classified as grand larceny because the amount, reported as about \$1,375, was more than \$1,000. The only other crime in recent months was a robbery in December.

“It was a guy who had been in jail who came back home and robbed people he knew,” Barrere said. “He was arrested and is in jail.”

And that was it. Not even one theft in recent months from Motorgate, where, as Barrere noted, “there’s some nice cars” – nicer than many of the vehicles that were stolen in the 14 other sectors of his precinct (44 in the 28 days ending Jan. 26, down 34.3 percent from 2002).

Barrere’s mission is to keep crime off the CompStat radar screen, and part of that effort

was the assignment of a CPU (Community Policing Unit, often called CPOP) officer, Thomas Liuzzo, to Roosevelt Island.

The commander said Liuzzo requested the assignment and was given flexible hours, but he generally will work during the late-night hours of “prime-time crime.” This will be the officer’s full-time assignment, although he will be called away at times for major police operations in other parts of the precinct. Barrere said that the officer has been making the rounds, “doing verticals,” and networking with Islanders.

The philosophy of community policing is crime prevention, and it is widely credited with helping to drastically reduce the City’s crime rate over the years. A glance at the CompStat sheet for the 114th gives just one example of how much safer New York has become. In 1993, there were 8,690 serious crime complaints in the precinct. In 2002, the number had fallen to 3,270, a decline of 62 percent.

The record is similar in the 19th Precinct: a decrease from 11,976 to 3,667 crimes from 1993 to 2002, or 69 percent.



Commander David Barrere of the 114th

Drugs. What About Drugs?

Is there a major drug-dealing problem on Roosevelt Island?

Some Islanders clearly think so, and it was their concerns that helped to set in motion the series of meetings on public safety that have been conducted by Carolyn Maloney, the Island’s representative in Congress.

In a column in *The WIRE* describing an earlier session held on October 31, Matthew Katz, president of the Residents Association, said: “Our group made it clear that we see a burgeoning danger from drug use and sales in housing and on the street, and from gang presence on Roosevelt Island. ... The officials were clearly shocked by the stories of rampant drug trafficking on Roosevelt Island offered by Island residents.”

One of the facts that has come out since Katz made his report is that the NYPD narcotics unit conducted an undercover operation on Roosevelt Island, an effort that has been confirmed recently by police officials and by the Island’s Public Safety Department.

At a meeting of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation Board of Directors this week, Robert Ryan, the RIOC president, posed this question to James Fry, the Public Safety director, regarding the drug investigation: “Did they not have an apartment here on the Island, during those number of months when they were doing surveillance, and during those number of months, did they not come up with anything?”

Fry said: “They were here for months, provided space that was adequate to set up surveillance. Narcotics are sensitive investigations and you don’t make public what’s about to take place when or where. It was done and they were here for months. The few arrests that were made were made for possession of marijuana. There were no arrests made for any, what the penal law calls, narcotic drugs. The penal law does not refer to marijuana as a narcotic drug. In the penal law, marijuana is a ‘mild hallucinogenic.’”

Fry’s account was similar to an assessment offered by Deputy Inspector David Barrere, commander of the 114th Precinct.

“People automatically feel that there’s drug dealing” when there are incidents of “kids smoking marijuana in the hallways” of the Island’s buildings, where they live, or on the seawall, Barrere said. But basically, he said, “It’s Island kids selling to Island kids.”

Fry defended his department at the RIOC meeting, responding to allegations that were raised by residents at Maloney’s January 24 session.

“People say we don’t do vertical patrols,” Fry said. “It would be one thing if they said, ‘We don’t think you’re doing enough vertical patrols.’ That is not generally the statement. The statement is, ‘Interior vertical patrol is not done,’ which is ridiculous.”

Fry discussed, at some length, his department’s patrol procedures and its interaction with Roosevelt Island Housing Management, which operates the Island’s state-supervised rental properties. Some tenant representatives at Eastwood have pushed for Public Safety officers to essentially serve as watchmen in the huge building, although they do not describe their requests in that manner, instead calling for more frequent patrols.

The distinction between what could be called a guard presence as opposed to the current system of patrol verification can be deduced from Fry’s comments at the RIOC meeting about Public Safety’s handling of loitering situations, one of the frequent complaints at Eastwood:

“The other thing that comes out of these building checks are ‘C’ summonses. These are for individuals who are 16 or more and who are lingering and hanging out in an unauthorized part of the building, and who have no justifiable reason for being where they’re at. If they’re 16 or more, the law says we can issue a ‘C’ summons. A ‘C’ summons is a summons that is returnable to criminal court,” Fry said.

“If they are less than 16, we take them into custody and we bring them into Public Safety, and we get in touch with their parent or guardian and we have their parent or guardian come to Public Safety and then we generate what’s called a youth report. The general manager gets these reports and has these people’s family come in and discuss the fact that they were in the building in an unauthorized manner doing particular acts. It’s quite clear, if anybody really wanted to understand what we do in interior vertical patrols, there is a host of ways that that could be checked and that could be verified.”

As the Public Safety debate goes on, some of the Island’s senior officials are showing signs of fatigue.

“Having sat in four or five of those meetings in the last two months, it’s the same ol’, same ol’, and I, for one, am tired of it,” Patrick Stewart, a board member, said at the RIOC meeting this week, repeating a sentiment he had expressed at the January 24 session with Maloney, complaining about Roosevelt Islanders’ apathy.

“If we can get citizens concerned beyond wailing and moaning and put a plan together and help Public Safety as it exists today, then I’m all for it,” Stewart said.

Felix Santella, a member of the Westview Task Force, tried to restate the matter as a lack of communication. “There is a chasm between Public Safety and the residents on this Island,” he said. “From my perspective I know this is a safe Island, relatively safe, but the perception around this Island is, it’s not,” Santella added. “You have a problem.” His solution was to get people together to talk about solving clearly-defined problems.

“Sir, that takes place on a regular basis,” said Robert Ryan, the RIOC president.

Fox replied, “You know, I’m hearing that it’s not,” setting off a roomful of commotion.

Ryan was alluding to the existence of a Public Safety Advisory Committee of the RIOC Board of Directors, and to the fact that the Board has several resident members and would be getting more under recent State legislation.

But that was thin gruel for this crowd, and the gathering soon sunk its teeth into fresh accounts of previously unreported crimes, angry recapitulations of last year’s noise

See **Public Safety**, page 10



by Seth Kaufman

SPORTSWIRE

BASKETBALL The standings in the Youth Program’s Winter Basketball League are:

11-13 Division		14-16 Division	
Team 2	1-0	Red	2-0
Team 3	1-0	Orange	1-1
Team 1	0-1	Green	1-1
Team 4	0-1	Blue	0-2

11-13 Division: In action February 1, Team 2 defeated Team 4 in a close game, 45-40. Joshua Hart led Team 2 with 20 points. David Dinkins was the second leading scorer with 11, while Jonathan Douglas added 10. Team 4 had a balanced scoring attack, led by Vernon Thomas with 13 points (all but three in the second half), followed by Emilio Estevez with 11, Jesse Kahah with 8, and Neil Stueber with 6.

In the other game, Team 3 defeated Team 1, 44-35. Austin Lee led Team 3 with 21 points, while Jimmy Elias added 10, 8 of them in the second half, and Darren Roy had 7. For Team 1, Riki Bonano led the scoring with 22 points.

14-16 Division: In action from the first week of the season, January 25, Red defeated Blue 57-36, and Orange defeated Green 86-76.

Chris Chatman led the balanced attack for Red with 13 points. He was supported by Fabian Williams, who had 12, Mirza Avdovic, who had 10, Remy Armenakis with 8, and Fode Bah with 7. DeShawn Pearson was the high scorer of the game, with 18 points, and Jonathan Singh added 9 points for Blue.

In the other game that week, Paul Brown led Orange with 22 points. Sika Franco and Shirome Dixon also had great games, each scoring 20 points. Jonathan Hart added 12 points as well. For Green, Anthony Simmons was the leading scorer with 24 points, while Steven Morgan added 20, and Dan Moraru added 12.

In the second week of the season, last Saturday (February 1) Green defeated Blue 74-46 to even out their record. José Marte had a big game with 26 points, while Anthony Simmons had 21 points, scoring over 20 for the second straight week. Steven Morgan and Rahim Drame each had solid games, with Steven scoring 10 points and Rahim adding 8. Blue was led for the second straight week by DeShawn Pearson, who put in 25 points.

In the other game, Red edged Orange 66-65 to move into sole possession of first place. Red overcame an 18-point deficit early in the second half and won on two free throws by Chris Chatman with only seconds remaining. Chatman led his team with 40 points, and led the comeback by scoring 32 of those points in the second half. Fabian Williams added 14 points for Red. Orange was led by Sika Franco with 23 points and Paul Brown with 21 points, while Quincy Leon added 10 points, and Shirome Dixon added 7.

Public Safety from page 9

complaints, and accusations of corruption and collusion leveled at unnamed Public Safety officers. Velez, for example – just to quote one of the milder charges – said that “the problem that we have is that some of these officers are too friendly with the criminal element.”

These narratives produced Emmy-award winning double-takes from the representatives of the New York County District

within the building itself”; condition reports, based on the officers’ observations while on patrol, and noise complaints. Finally, if there is overnight damage or “party debris,” she said, her porters take pictures of it when they come to work in the morning.

“When those pictures hit my desk I go running next door to Fry and dump ‘em on his desk and he knows exactly what to do with them.” In other words, she said, the vertical patrols can be adjusted to respond to changing needs.

Who You Gonna Call?

Officer Thomas Liuzzo of the city Police Department can be contacted through the 114th Precinct’s Community Policing Unit at **1-718-626-9712** or **1-718-626-9717**. A Community Policing liaison will take the information and pass it along.

For emergencies, dial **911**.

Other numbers: 114th Precinct, **1-718-626-9311**; community affairs, **1-718-626-9327**.

Roosevelt Island Public Safety, **1-212-832-4545**.

Quality of Life Hot Line, **311** replaces **1-888-677-LIFE** (5433). This number is for noise complaints and other quality-of-life problems. Operators at the new Citizens Service Center will be able to handle most requests for information and connect callers to various agencies that can deal with complaints.

Attorney’s Office and of the Attorney General.

Much of the discussion centered on Eastwood, which does not have attendants in its entryways. Corridors on the fourth and seventh floors run the full length of the complex and lead to numerous exits. “We tried to break up the building at one point because of the run-through hallways,” said Elliot Ashrey, assistant director of the management bureau of the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal, which supervises the building. He said that the City Building Department turned down that proposal because of concerns that it would impede access to elevators and fire exits.

Fry told *The WIRE* that Public Safety’s contracts allow it to perform so-called vertical patrols in all of the housing complexes except Manhattan Park. The main emphasis is on Eastwood, he said, especially in winter. Outdoor patrols get extra attention in the summer.

Isley said she gets three types of reports from Public Safety every day: incident reports, based on calls to the department involving “either a resident who resides in one of my buildings or something that happens

Isley says the reports are logged by management and serve as the basis for “holdover proceedings” against tenants – evictions for anything other than non-payment of rent. “I have been extremely successful with using these complaints and these reports to do evictions, to put families on probation, and to quiet down situations,” she said.

Gaspard argued, however, that these reports do not verify that vertical patrols are being done in a timely fashion. Earlier in the meeting, in pushing for a citizen review board, he had insisted that Fry had failed to curb vandalism and criminality.

Later, he made a pitch for hourly patrols. “We are literally patrolling the hallways ourselves,” he said. “This last week I was threatened by a kid physically, and I’m going to tell you something, I’m going to put it on the public record. When it gets to the point where I have to worry about the safety of my family and myself, I will deal with that situation, because I’m not going to live in fear like this! And that’s what is happening with a lot of residents in Eastwood. We’re living in fear.”

Tony Morenzi, an assistant to Assemblymember Pete Grannis, said, “They’re not going to do hourly vertical patrols.”

Isley urged the Eastwood contingent to start being specific. “Let’s test the system,” she said. “You see something, write it down. Call Public Safety, write down whom you spoke to, and wait to see whether there is a response.”

Testing the system, however, was not on



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Ryan from page 1

done nothing wrong. And until I know [what the charges are], I cannot comment.”

Asked what he thought might be going on, Ryan said, “I have no goddamn clue.”

Ryan’s leave is 60 days with pay of over \$10,000 a month. The abruptness of his removal makes it unlikely those in authority expect to work with him again. But the unceremonious handling of his exit from the RIOC offices was apparently not directed by the RIOC Board as a whole; it acted later in the day.

Indications are that the RIOC Board members had no idea of the specifics when notified of the meeting. On the other hand, Assemblymember Pete Grannis told a *WIRE* reporter on Wednesday that Ryan was heavily involved in Andrew Eristoff’s 2002 campaign for State Senate in the 26th State Senatorial District (he lost to Liz Krueger), and questions have been raised as to how Ryan’s time was accounted for in RIOC’s records.

Late Thursday, Ryan told *The WIRE*, “It’s political. If Pete Grannis has any questions about people in political campaigns, he can come right to Rob Ryan and ask him to his face. Pete Grannis has a problem because I ran a campaign against him in 1984. Pete Grannis should step up. In the end, if you have honor and courage, you win the day.” Ryan was upset about reports in mainstream media saying he was taken out of his office in handcuffs.

Grannis had complained to the Commissioner of DHCR, Judith Caligaro, about Ryan’s behavior at a December 12 hearing on the environmental impact of the Octagon Apartments project. Ryan, who ran the hearing, got into shouting matches with at least two residents who spoke at the hearing. In some cases he called them back to the lectern to disagree with points they had made. It is not likely, however, that the Inspector General would become involved for any reason related to his style in office, but his performance led to quiet speculation about how much longer he might last in the top RIOC post.

Over his two-year period as CFO at RIOC, Siconolfi has won praise from Ryan, RIOC Board members, and others for improving the agency’s control over, and understanding of, its finances. RIOC is supposed to be self-sufficient, and Siconolfi is credited with finding ways to improve financial results even on deals concluded before he came aboard. There was no indication this week of whether he might be expected to remain in the top job if Ryan doesn’t return.

Traditionally, the top job and some other posts at RIOC have been patronage appointments. Ryan had run George Pataki’s first campaign for governor, and his predecessor, Dr. Jerome Blue, had close ties with former Senator Alfonse D’Amato, who in turn had close ties with Pataki.

Presuming he does not return, Ryan’s time in office was three and a half years, slightly longer than Blue’s, who left after a stormy tenure in which residents repeatedly demanded his removal. Ryan had a “honeymoon” period with residents, but his administration was soon described as having a “bunker mentality,” even though Ryan repeatedly said he was diligent about meeting with residents and returning their calls.

the agenda of several participants. Some were looking for an overthrow.

Whereas Ryan said that residents should be thankful that they had “two levels of law enforcement,” Joyce Mincheff, an Eastwood resident, stated toward the end of the meeting that “we don’t like the position that we feel we’re being under-policed.”

Addressing Fox, she said: “Maybe you and Carolyn can make an investigation into how we can get the budget for Public Safety out from under the RIOC umbrella and have it dealt

with in a separate nonpartisan budget.”

This was one of the few explicit references to the basic political situation: The Island, like most of the City, votes Democrat but is administered by the Republicans. Its elected representatives are all Democrats, with the exception of State Senator Olga Mendez, who recently switched parties. Ryan and Fry were not even invited to Maloney’s previous meeting; Velez said the reason was that “people in the community were afraid to discuss the issues” in their presence.

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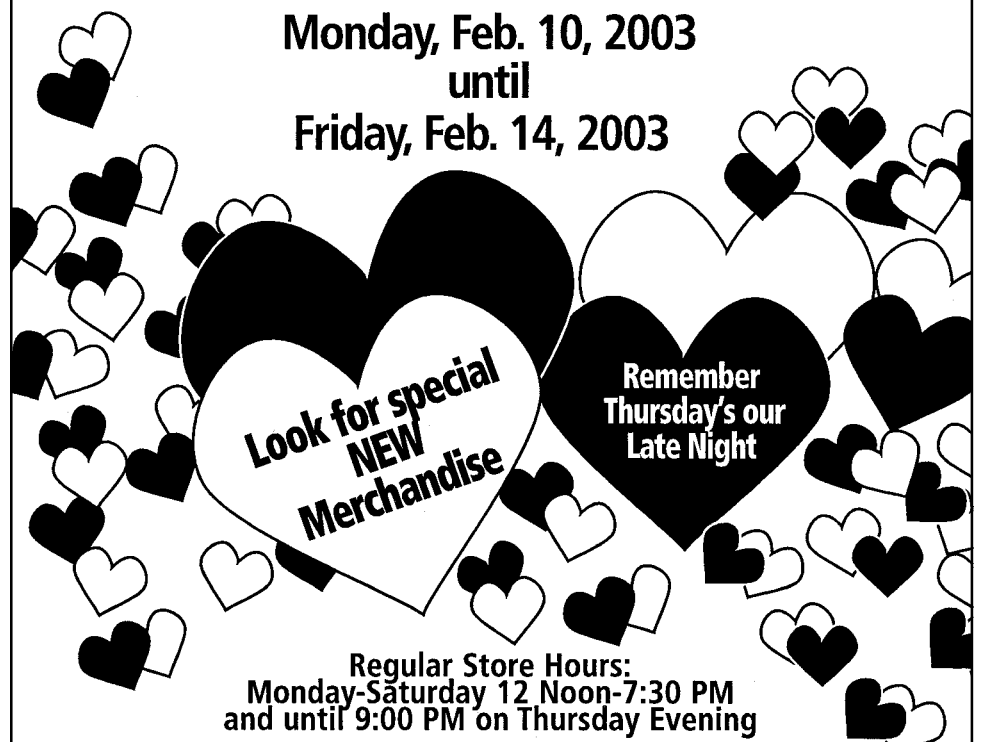
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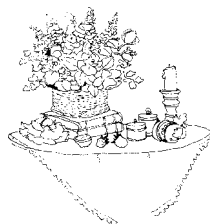


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