

Next scheduled issue:
Saturday, March 8

The Main Street **WIRE**

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

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



The Acting President of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, Patrick Siconolfi, discussed a wide range of issues with *WIRE* reporters Wednesday. A partial transcript appears on page 8.

Maple Tree Group Urges Resident Pressure for an Elected RIOC Board

The Maple Tree Group (MTG) urged Roosevelt Islanders to campaign for community “self-governance” on Sunday afternoon, February 23.

Some 65 to 70 residents heard David Bauer, founder of the group, describe five years of effort to produce and pass legislation that would eliminate gubernatorial appointments to the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC). Bauer explained that the effort culminated in a new law signed by the Governor in September – “not what we

wanted” – to give appointed residents a majority of the seats on the Board. “We would like to move on to the next step,” Bauer said, referring to a Board seating a majority of elected residents rather than appointed residents.

See **MTG**, page 13

Briefly...

Monday is **Irish Night** at River Music. Story, page 12.

Engine Company 261, the Island's second-response FDNY unit, is threatened again by City budget cuts. Story, page 14.

There's a new **stop sign** for north-bound drivers at the turnaround, which was recently reopened.

RIOC has RFPs out on **Blackwell House** and Good Shepherd Chapel. Stories, pages 9 and 13.

Subway station escalators are to be replaced in 2004. Story, page 14.

Even before final approval, the **Octagon Apartments** have won a huge tax break from the State. Story, page 13.

RIOC Gets a Red-Tape Cutter, Promising Openness, as Chief

News analysis by Robert Laux-Bachand

Patrick Siconolfi became the Acting President and Chief Operating Officer of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation on February 4, after the RIOC Board suspended President Robert H. Ryan and asked for a State investigation of extravagant bonuses that Ryan was reported to have awarded to himself and 14 other RIOC employees for their volunteer work at ground zero. Ryan was placed on a 60-day paid administrative leave.

In taking over for Ryan, at least on a temporary basis, Siconolfi, 52, appears to be playing a familiar role, one that began when he came to Roosevelt Island in December, 1999. Siconolfi was widely viewed at the time as a troubleshooter who would straighten out the Island's finances after several years of turmoil. Direct State subsidies had ended and RIOC was making the transition to becoming largely self-supporting.

In generating surpluses for the past three years, Siconolfi fulfilled the promise that Ryan made when

he introduced him as Chief Financial Officer and Vice President of financial affairs three years ago: that he was “bringing quality people to work on Roosevelt Island.”

managing a campaign that catapulted an obscure Republican State Senator, George E. Pataki, into one of the nation's most powerful governorships. Siconolfi, at the time, was laboring in the Office of Rent

News McNuggets

Patrick Siconolfi made these announcements in his interview this week with *The WIRE*:

- Permit fees for the use of picnic sites on the Island, now \$25 per day, will be eliminated.
- Fees for use of the Ramati pier on the west channel esplanade near the subway station, will be eliminated. The fee had been \$25 per hour for performances.
- Further restoration work will be done on the Good Shepherd Chapel.
- Blackwell House restoration work is out for bids.
- The doors at Motorgate will be replaced to conform with ADA requirements (Americans with Disabilities Act).

Now Ryan's appointee has become his successor. The difference between the two men is striking, and perhaps instructive, as Islanders ponder the possibility that Ryan will not return. In 1994, Ryan was

Administration of the state Division of Housing and Community Renewal, a huge housing and development agency that is now responsible for regulating rents in 1.2 million privately-owned units.

One man is a politician, given to bluster and salty language and unsolicited blow-by-blow war stories about bruising election campaigns and press tactics and old government development schemes. The other, a native of the Bronx, could be called a technocrat, an architect by degree (from the very demanding Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York), who tends to deploy generalities unless brought up against one or another of a reporter's abrupt “5 W's.” Then he is precise and illuminating, and quite capable of imparting an effective spin on a topic in an open and friendly manner.

In interviews, Ryan would joust with the press and run out the clock in extra innings. Siconolfi, in his first sit-down with *The WIRE* as Acting President this week, set a time limit of 30 minutes and successfully sidestepped most of the blue-sky topics that had been building up on matters of Island development for the past several months. Any discussions of the State Inspector General's inquiry into

See **Siconolfi**, page 8

Group Plans “Mission Paper” for PSD

Roosevelt Island's public safety issue just won't go away. The issue, to be precise, of Roosevelt Island's Public Safety Department (PSD).

Last week, the Roosevelt Island Committee of Community Board 8 (CB8) spent two hours on the subject, concluding with an informal decision to create a mission description for the Department. Complaints aired at the meeting – or referred to in passing – centered on whether PSD is effective and on whether the department, as a whole, knows what it should do to be effective in the eyes of residents.

One key complaint aired by RIRA Common Council member Byron Gaspard, a frequent critic of PSD, was that there is no job description and no contract spelling out the Department's duties. That led to a conclusion, reached without a vote, that a group of residents should create such a description, then seek ways to hold PSD to the performance standard it sets forth.

The work is to be undertaken by RISK, the Roosevelt Island Safety Committee, in cooperation with resident representatives of the apartment buildings on the Island.

RISK is proposing that the mission description would become the basis for a kind of watchdog committee. According to Gaspard, it would include residents, housing management companies, and the RIOC Board, in an attempt to include all stakeholders. A key ele-

ment would be a citizens' review board. But participants in the meeting were quick to point out that, in its present configuration, PSD reports only to RIOC, the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation. RIOC's Board of Directors would presumably have to agree to any plan under which residents would do performance reviews on PSD.

Patrick Stewart, a RIOC Board member and former president of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA), seemed to agree with the notion of better-delineated responsibilities for PSD. “I would recommend creating a sample contract that RISK believes would be what citizens can expect from Public Safety,” he said. “That would be a sort of benchmark [saying] ‘here's what the residents require; here's what various people have agreed to, over time.’”

With the departure of RIOC Board member Joan Dawson, which was effective March 1, Stewart may become chair of the RIOC Board's Public Safety Committee, and be in a position to influence the overall direction of PSD.

Proponents of the contract plan favored forming the committee or committees first, however, then having the committees draw up a kind of “bill of expectations.” Stewart responded, “I'm trying to take an or-

See **PSD**, page 7

Abe Shulman, Island's Eldest, Holocaust Survivor, Is Dead at 99

Abe Shulman died last week, days after attaining the age of 99.

He had lapsed into a coma in December shortly after a fall at his son's home in New Jersey. He was soon transferred from a New Jersey hospital to the Goldwater campus of Coler-Goldwater. His daughter, Zophia, said, “If he was to die, he would want it to be on his beloved Roosevelt Island.”

Abe Shulman's wife died at the hands of Nazis in Germany, in 1942. He was a Holocaust survivor, as are his children. In the course of his long life, he was a soccer player, an actor who performed with his wife in Jewish theater, and “a Democrat, a liberal” who was proud to have a great-grandson serving the United States in the Mideast with the 82nd Airborne, according to Zophia.

He was President-for-life of the mutual aid society formed by himself and others who came to the United States after World War II under the Truman Doctrine. He was buried this week on Staten Island in a portion of a cemetery maintained by that mutual aid society.

The WIRE published this profile in 2001, and we repeat it here in fond memory of a man who was not just the eldest among us, but also an icon and an institution.



by Anusha Shrivastava (from *The WIRE*, June 2, 2001)

He is a short man with a long memory. Abraham Shulman, 97, remembers events that are set on three continents, span close to ten decades, and use two World Wars as bookmarks. The pictures in his mind's eye include a ghetto in Warsaw, a concentration camp in Lodz, Poland, and a slave-labor camp in Austria.

Sitting upright on a chair in his ninth-floor studio apartment in Eastwood, Shulman could easily pass as a 75-year-old man. It is as if he aged up to a point – and then stopped. Time does not seem to have much meaning for him anymore.

He stoops slightly when he walks but he does not use a walking stick. His frame is small, his face bright, and he speaks with long pauses. “History,” says Shulman, as he gets up to pull out papers from five plastic bags, “these bags are full of history.”

He takes them out one by one, handling them gently and with fondness. A lease agreement for a six-bedroom apartment in the Bronx, dated 1946. Three diplomas for evening classes from a high school in Brooklyn from the 1950s. Black and white pictures of his family in Poland. Then, the one document that helped change his life – a certificate from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society that sponsored his immigration to the U.S. and recorded the date of his travel from Austria as November 8, 1948.

“The 42nd Rainbow Division of the U.S. Army liberated me in 1945,” recalls Shulman. “The Russians liberated my son Louis and daughter Zophia at about

See **Shulman**, page 6

DHCR as Cavalry

A quiet, benign coup has apparently been in progress at the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation since February 4, when the Board met to send President Robert H. Ryan packing and installed Patrick Siconolfi as Acting President.

Why would a coup be necessary? It's because of the absurd system under which Roosevelt Island is managed – from Albany – with no local control.

Legal and administrative personnel have been brought over from DHCR to assume roles at 591 Main Street. It's not yet clear how long they're expected to stay, nor how comprehensive their takeover may be. What *is* clear is that DHCR Deputy Commissioner Marybeth Labate, whose responsibilities include Roosevelt Island and the chairing of RIOC Board meetings, had simply *had it*. When Ryan's excessive grab of bonuses based on post-9/11 "volunteer" work came to light, the opportunity arose to depose Ryan, the Governor's associate and beneficiary of his patronage.

This is a simple extension of the move former DCHR Commissioner Joe Lynch found it necessary to make when he took over the chair at RIOC Board meetings during the time of Dr. Jerome Blue. Like Ryan, Blue was a political-buddy appointee of Governor George Pataki through their shared bond of indebtedness to then-Senator Al D'Amato. Like Ryan, Blue was acting under the authority of the Governor, badly, and he sorely needed the checks and balances of political life. Lynch brought them.

But those checks and balances would be part of ordinary political life had Blue and Ryan reported to a locally-elected RIOC Board.

They didn't. Under the protective umbrella of the State Administration, free to ignore elected representatives at both City and State levels, they abused the powers of the RIOC Presidency, largely ignoring the community, letting the basics go, and promoting wrong-headed development ideas (remember the Marriott Twin Towers and the minischool condos?). The RIOC Board, also appointed by the Governor, rarely found means or motivation to exercise serious control.

Over the past six and half years, then, the RIOC Presidency became a home for loose artillery with the right political connection to stay in office and keep firing hot cannonballs across the deck.

So we can welcome this coup because it's a chance to set many things right, and Acting President Siconolfi seems determined to do just that on many fronts – particularly in terms of repairing and rebuilding management's relationships with residents. Ryan has 28 days to go on his 60-day paid absence and, as a matter of form and legal caution, the *word* is that he is just on leave while the Inspector General checks things out. But nobody seriously expects him back. So what happens in these remaining four weeks may tell us just how complete is DHCR's re-assertion of control the chain of command gives it.

We haven't yet encountered an Islander who is upset by all this. Nor is *The WIRE*. The result appears to be right, for now, and the only real question is *what took you so damned long?*

What took so damned long is that Ryan was a satellite orbiting around Governor George Pataki. In the face of that gravitational bond, the RIOC Board needed some genuinely repulsive act to assert itself. *Never mind* that RIOC

had been blundering along for six and a half years under Blue and Ryan. *Never mind* that basic maintenance was neglected. *Never mind* that a flood of mixed signals about development were confusing consultants hired to market what properties remain that might be developed. *Never mind* that what could have been solid working relationships with City Council Speaker Gifford Miller, Assemblymember Pete Grannis, and Senator Olga Mendez had turned from rude to rancid to rancorous when they might have been nurtured to the benefit of the Island. *Never mind* that no reasonable development plan has been put forward to replace the General Development Plan, which – *never mind* – seemed to be scrapped. And never mind that the *genuine creative opportunity* of making this wonderful Island community a powerful showcase to the world was lost for more than a half-decade.

The RIOC Board, and Labate, ignored all those things until a smoking gun presented itself. Below the surface, lots of guns that misfired or smoked only a little were allowed to pass because of Blue's and Ryan's connection with Pataki. The standard of performance in the RIOC Presidency became *not doing anything totally awful* rather than *leading Roosevelt Island to new heights of excellence*.

Who sets the bar so low? Why do we ask so little of political appointees? Why do they ask so little of themselves?

This change is a chance for a new start. We may be happy that DHCR stepped in, even while unhappy about the half-decade of decay and disorganization it took to get to work on the problems.

We can applaud a number of actions Patrick Siconolfi has taken to make the relationship between RIOC and the community better, even while we lament that a half-decade passed while that relationship foundered. And now...

Now, we might hope for a truly open RIOC working in partnership with those who dwell here – not just a passive-aggressive "well, my door is always open" response – the standard answer, in the past, to everything from nagging concerns to inspired initiatives.

Now, we might hope for a radically retooled RIOC that asks more of itself – that recognizes the opportunities inherent in rising above the disengaged, the ordinary, and the safe.

Now, we might hope for an open-armed reception to reasonable suggestions and chronic complaints alike, to the point where soaring ideas are encouraged. We might hope that RIOC will tap the human resources in this community for all they can offer – connecting, listening, cooperating, leading.

And one more thing: Let's hope a lesson has been learned in Albany. The lesson, for the Governor, is this: Don't insult us by treating Roosevelt Island as a personnel dump for minor leaguers not ready for prime time. Don't send us another of your political debts for on-the-job training as President of RIOC. Instead, cut your losses and turn the current astounding embarrassment into a political and governmental opportunity. Recognize that the only sensible way to manage Roosevelt Island is through the power of the local ballot box, expressed by the people who have made their homes here. How?

Here's how: Move forward *now* on legislation for an elected RIOC Board empowered to hire professional community management.

DL

Letters

To the Editor:

It has been exactly one month to the day since we left Roosevelt Island. Our "turbine evaluation vessel" may have weighed anchor thirty days ago, but we of Verdant Power have not. Our affections remain tethered to "The Island."

We recall numerous accounts of courtesy, friendliness, and hospitality extended to us during our month of camping out in recreational vehicles beneath the Roosevelt Island Bridge. January may have been an unseasonably cold month for sleeping under your bridge and working on your river, but it was far surpassed by the extraordinary warmth we received from your community.

Such a reception made our work that much more pleasurable and the operation of our demonstration project that much more gratifying. In fact, the results from that operation of our tidal-energy turbine exceeded our expectations. That means we will be returning to Roosevelt Island to install a small underwater field of these turbines to generate electricity.

Needless to say, we can hardly wait to get back. Your community has made it easy for us to call it our second home. Thank you!

**Trey Taylor
President
Verdant Power LLC**

More letters on page 11

To the Editor:

In his last RIRA column Matthew Katz tells of his participation in an anti-war rally intended to send a message: "Mr. President, this war on Iraq is the wrong war against the wrong enemy at the wrong time." One might ask of Mr. Katz what he would consider the right war against the right enemy at the right time? Presumably, those criteria would apply to the war against Japan after we were attacked without warning on December 7, 1941. Would the Gulf War to drive Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait meet Mr. Katz's criteria? If not, should we have allowed Saddam Hussein to remain unopposed in Kuwait with his eye next on Saudi Arabia? If the Gulf War does meet the specified criteria, is not the next use of force to oppose Saddam Hussein simply a logical extension of the Gulf War? Does anyone doubt that the world would be a better, safer place if Saddam Hussein were not ruling Iraq? Even those who marched with Mr. Katz could hardly disagree with that statement. The real question is, should we take action now against Saddam Hussein or wait and hope that somehow, some way he will become less of a threat to his neighbors and to the United States?

Perhaps the anti-war marchers feel that while Saddam Hussein has demonstrated he is a threat to his

See Baehler, page 11

Guest Shot

David Kraut

I have read with much interest comments by the editor and others in *The WIRE* (February 8, 2003) and on *Website NYC10044* (www.nyc10044.com) concerning the current push for "self-governance" on Roosevelt Island. I would like to correct some misimpressions and then offer some views, if I may.

First, recent legislation extending a RIOC Board majority to Island residents is not the most important piece of legislation in the Island's history. That title must belong to the act which created RIOC itself, which was passed through the efforts of many residents at that time through efforts not dissimilar to those now being extended by MTG. Prior to that, this Island was run by a couple of faceless strangers in a room somewhere, with no Board oversight of any kind. The RIOC act established a Board, although with a minority of Island residents. The current legislation provides for a majority of residents. It is an increment, not a revolution.

I was pleased to see the editor as well as Mr. Bauer in his quoted comments refer to RIOC and the question in general as one of "management" or "operation" of this Island, not one of "government," because, in fact, RIOC's current mandate is to "develop, operate, and maintain" ... but not to govern. An off-Island Board member recently described the corporation as "a development company" and he was not too far wrong. As currently constituted, RIOC raises funds from ground

rents in order to maintain and operate Island services, and that's about all. The further we develop, the more money we have with which to maintain and operate. That is how the corporation is currently constituted.

Mr. Katz in *The WIRE* and as quoted at Sunday's meeting, now joined by Mr. Bauer, referred to "self-government" for this community. In his *WIRE* column, Katz made reference to "local, elected government similar to any other small town in America." But we are not a town: we are a State-sponsored development project on an Island belonging to the City of New York. We have no property rights, except insofar as some people are Mitchell-Lama co-op owners. We have no tax rights. We have no courts nor judges nor justices. No one here can perform a marriage, register a birth or do a post-mortem. Our basic services such as schools and fire protection and first-response police protection are all provided by the City of New York. Such social services as are available here are mostly funded by the City. We do not issue bonds nor could we possibly issue bonds as we have no "faith and credit." We have no credit of any kind because, as I mentioned, we do not tax. We have in fact no standing as a town and it is highly unlikely that the City would let us leave the municipality and so establish ourselves. And

See Kraut, page 14



David Kraut was President of the Residents Association 1992-94, and is a current resident member of the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC).

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 (call ahead to 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.

Letters deadline for March 22 issue: Monday, March 17

Letters received after deadline will be considered on a space-available basis.

Between issues, get WIRE e-mail bulletins: Send an "Add Me" to nyc10044@rcn.com

I'd like to start off with some kudos for some folks who have enhanced life here on Fantasy Island. First, my thanks to the RIOC maintenance staff for dealing so effectively with the Blizzard of 2003. I've been aware of a concerted effort to improve snow and ice removal, culminating in the Herculean task of dealing with two feet of snow over the Presidents' Birthday weekend. Let's hope that our winter woes are behind us, and that the damage to our streets and sidewalks is negligible. Also, you may have noticed that Tony Capobianco Field is again designated as such with the return of signage on the chain-link fence. This is very appropriate and very welcome. And a tip of the hat to Doryne Isley, Carol da Silva, and RIHMC for restoring a public bulletin board to the 625 Main Street laundry room. This Westview address had the distinction of being the only residential building on Roosevelt Island without a public bulletin board. I spend a significant portion of my time, tape dispenser in hand, hanging posters all over the Island for one thing or another, and now my neighbors can sell a sofa or seek a lost pussycat in their own environs. Way to go!

Not everything on Roosevelt Island proceeds with the same alacrity, however. We are entering the twenty-first month since the Westview swimming pool and health club closed, ostensibly to repair a botched paint job. After a year and a half of seeking DHCR approvals, a new liner was installed (the work took about a month) and there the pool sits, sparkling and pristine, filled with water but not with people. It seems that the American Leisure Company declined to continue managing the pool at the offered rate of reimbursement. And so, bids will now be put out, requiring DHCR approvals that will require *x* number of weeks? months? to complete. Westview residents were asked to revive the dormant pool committee for the purpose of advising Housing Management on a new fee structure and new operating hours, and we have done so under the leadership of Maureen and Felix Santella. RIHMC General Manager Doryne Isley has told us that the approval process will be put on a "fast track," and the current expectation is an opening some time in April. This health facility will be offered to every resident of Roosevelt Island at attractive rates, and I'll keep you informed as this

process wends its interminable way towards completion.

Y'know, I get so damn frustrated when I see the hard work of my neighbors trashed by the unthinking actions of a few idiots. Another of the terrific "History Walk" plaques, this one in front of the

The RIRA Column

M&D Deli, has been vandalized by some jerk with too much time on his hands. The project was conceived by Eagle Scout Neil Tandon and built with the support of our Historical Society and RIOC. The first one to be destroyed was in front of PS/IS 217. If you see some resident bozo fouling his own nest by destroying something useful or beautiful, please make it your busi-



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

ness to report the crime (and it is criminal behavior) to Public Safety ASAP.

I met with the acting RIOC president, Patrick Siconolfi, last week to establish a relationship with the new administration and to get some answers to my questions and yours. RIRA First Vice President Steve Marcus and Government Relations Vice President Margie Smith accompanied me. Pat was flanked by his brand-new assistant, Sari Dickson.

Our first order of business was to wish the new RIOC team the very best of luck. I made it clear that my preference for Island governance was still a system of elected repre-

sentation, but that we hold considerable respect for Pat's knowledge and integrity. I stated that I intended to report back to my constituents in these pages whatever information he was prepared to share with us, especially in answer to those questions you have given me to raise with RIOC. Pat, quite logically, said that RIOC is undergoing a restructuring and that, until the dust settles, many of my questions would need to be put on hold.

I asked if his appointment to the presidency was permanent or interim, and Siconolfi said that he couldn't comment. His predecessor, Robert Ryan, is on a 60-day "administrative leave," and so I expect that any comment might be considered premature. He expressed an interest in producing a column for this newspaper to share his thoughts with the community. I hope that he will do so and make it an ongoing feature in *The WIRE*. As long as it doesn't curtail my column inches of ripe blather, that is.

We discussed the need for a better understanding of Public Safety's role. We "blue-skied" various options for the policing of Roosevelt Island and recalled the days when Main Street long-term parking was not allowed. It seemed evident that Siconolfi was willing to consider any and all ideas that might enhance Island life.

Margie and Steve came with a list of "nuisance issues;" small items that make us all crazy. They include the restrictions on picture-taking around the Island, the charges to residents for playing fields and picnic-area barbecues, the placement of bus stops (especially at the subway) and the perennial hassle in getting streetlights fixed. Siconolfi is reviewing our concerns and I expect answers to our questions in short order. Two pieces of good news: The vehicular turn-around just south of Blackwell House is now up and running, so southbound traffic is no longer required to drive down to the Tram in order to reverse direction and head north. Also, the doors to Motorgate are in the process of being restored; very welcome if you are seeking shelter while waiting for a bus at Gristede's.

Over the past year, Pat and I did much of the heavy lifting in the negotiations between the Transit Authority and RIOC for the Tram MetroCard. Everyone is pleading poverty these days, but I hope we will be able to resurrect the discussions and convince the TA that finding a solution is in the best interests of all New Yorkers. As Pat has said, the Tram deficit is a significant portion of the RIOC financial picture, but is hardly a "rounding error" in the TA's billion-dollar budget. It's a year since I broached this subject, but if the incentive is still there in RIOC and Mr. Reuter's Transit Authority, I'm still game to give it a shot. Stay tuned.

There are so many questions to be answered. In a post-9/11 world, what is the nature of Roosevelt Island's emergency and disaster plan and should residents be familiar with it? Should there be a defibrillator and trained personnel on the Island and where should the device be kept? Who writes grant proposals for RIOC that might bring special sources of revenue to Roosevelt Island? Does the RIOC public relations department still exist, who runs it, and what are its responsibilities? Many initiatives, some from RIRA and some from other Island organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, will remain in stasis while RIOC stabilizes and reinvents itself. I'm looking forward to building on the work that has come before to create a concerted Island effort that will result in all of us pulling in the same direction. I can dream, can't I?

COMING UP

— This Weekend —

Gallery RIVAA hours Saturday and Sunday, 11:00-5:00.

— The Coming Week —

River Music's Eighth Annual Roosevelt Island Irish Night with Brian Conway, fiddle; John Nolan, button accordion; Felix Dolan, piano; and the dancers of the Tir N Gael School of Irish Dancing; and Irish folksongs by Julie Glaub; Chapel of the Good Shepherd, **Mon., Mar. 10**, 6:00 p.m. Admission free; \$8 contribution appreciated.

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

Mitchell-Lama Housing Forum—Showdown 2003, Chapel of the Good Shepherd (downstairs), **Tue., Mar. 11**, 7:30 p.m.

RIOC Board Meeting, Thur., Mar. 13, 9:30 a.m. Agenda items include creation of a real-estate development advisory committee, and a request for public-purpose funding from the Roosevelt Island Visual Art Association.

PTA Book Fair., Sat., Mar. 15, PS/IS 217, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

— Future Events —

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.

Performance/Lecture, History of the Guitar, presented by Antoinette Davis, Library, **Sat., Mar. 22**, 11:00 a.m.

The Main Street WIRE — next scheduled issue, **Sat., Mar. 22. Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., Mar. 14; decision on stuffers for *The Bag*, Mon., Mar. 17; bag materials due Thur., Mar. 20. **Future issues:** 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.

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

Five Roosevelt Island Poets (and others) reading their works, Gallery RIVAA, **Sun., Mar. 23**, 4:00 p.m. Open mike. Free; suggested donation \$5.

Historical Society Presentation—Top of the World slide show and lecture, with photographer Dave Frieder, Westview community room, **Mon., Mar. 24**, 7:30 p.m. Free.

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

Forum on Rent Control / Rent Stabilization, Tue., Mar. 25, 7:00 p.m., Einhorn Auditorium, Lenox Hill Hospital, 131 East 76th Street.

Opening Reception for First Anniversary Celebration, Gallery RIVAA, **Sat., Mar. 29**, 6:00-9:00 p.m. Free. Gallery hours: Wed. and Fri., 6:00-9:00 p.m.; Sat.-Sun., 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Information: **1-212-308-6630** or www.rivaa.com. Mixed-media exhibition, *Vernissage II*, runs March 29-May 4.

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.

Our Lives—Roosevelt Islanders Reminisce: Erin Feely-Nahem, President of the PTA, Gallery RIVAA, **Sun., Apr. 6**, 4:00 p.m.



Brian Conway

There is no charge to list Island events here. E-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com or leave copy at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. Provide a telephone number for possible follow-up.



Queensboro Bridge
by Dave Frieder



Poet Helen Roht



At Gallery RIVAA

The WIRE

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e-mail Editor@MainStreetWIRE.com
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Website NYC10044 www.nyc10044.com

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Reporters — Mary Camper-Titsingh,
Linda Humphrey, Anusha Shrivastava
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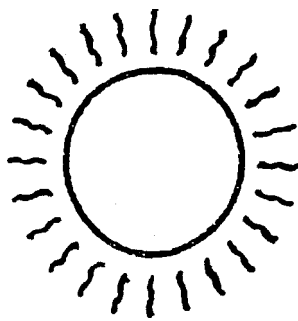


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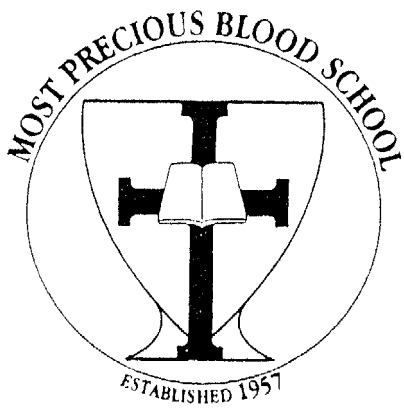
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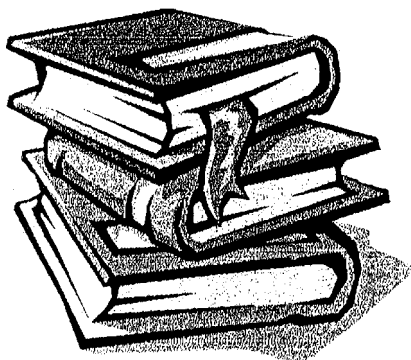


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Shulman from page 1



Abe Shulman in his 40's

the same time and we moved to New York three years later. My wife and a younger daughter never came back from the concentration camp in Treblinka.”

Born in Serokolia, Poland, in 1904, Shulman’s earliest memories are of life in a rural township. He lived with seven siblings in a house built by his father after their original home was burned down in the first World War. “My mother used to carry me on her back to take me to a Hebrew school. She would pack pumpnickel bread with crystal sugar for me to eat at school,” says Shulman. “There was a water mill in the village and I remember being whipped with a leather strap by my teacher for having gone swimming in its waters with my friends.”

A more tragic memory is of his parents’ death in 1916. “My mother was not told that my father had died in the morning. When his body was being taken away, she was told he was being taken to the hospital. The same evening, she died right after nursing the baby. I think both my parents died of cholera.”

The family fell apart after that. Shulman’s oldest sister went to work in Warsaw as a nurse’s aide while his oldest brother joined the Czar’s army. The baby was given to a childless couple, and five other children, including Abraham, were sent to live with an uncle.

Restless and unhappy, Shulman ran away to Warsaw to his oldest sister, who then sent him to live with a shoemaker’s family in Grodzisker. Shulman began to work as an apprentice. At the age of 19, he joined the Jewish soccer team in his town. A picture of this team, torn at the edges, hangs on the wall of his apartment. “The team was like my family,” he says. His son, Louis, 73, says Shulman’s fondest memories are of that time. “He is an old man and he forgets a lot but this period is etched clearly in his mind.”

In 1925, Shulman got married and had three children. He was working as a shoe salesman at the time. “The women drove me crazy because they could not decide what they

wanted to buy. So I started selling men’s army boots,” says Shulman.

With the German invasion of Poland in 1939, the Shulman family’s troubles began. “Our town was bombarded on the first day itself,” says Louis Shulman. “My father was an air-raid warden and he herded several families into a shelter in Warsaw. The Germans bombarded Warsaw for three weeks and we were burned out. We were forced to evacuate and were taken to a ghetto. When the Germans discovered my father was a shoemaker, they put him to work.”

Every morning, Abraham Shulman was escorted out of the ghetto to work for the Germans and then sent back at night. “I was not allowed to walk in the middle of the street and had to take off my hat when I saw a German soldier,” says Abraham Shulman.

On November 9, 1939, a day the older Shulman remembers very clearly, 19 men from the ghetto were rounded up and taken to a freight train. German soldiers boarded up the windows and the captives were taken to an empty kerchief factory in Lodz near Warsaw. “More than 1500 of us were locked up in that five-story factory. We were constantly beaten and kicked and had no idea what would become of us. We were fed rice soup in which you could count the grains of rice in the bowl.” Shulman recounts this experience with clarity and calm, but it is easy to tell that it was an experience that altered his very existence.

Six weeks after being captured, Shulman was moved to Krakow to a detention camp. He escaped one night using false documents. “We moved to Eastern Poland to a town where people were hiding Jews,” recalls Louis Shulman. “The Gestapo was raiding towns for Jews. It was like a hunt for animals. The townspeople were asked to deliver 150 Jews at a time for execution, and the first to be handed in were refugees like us. There was constant movement and we were running from town to town to try to save ourselves.”

In 1942, the family split up. Abraham and Louis were sent to work for the Germans in Austria. Abraham repaired shoes at a veterinarian depot while Louis tended and then slaughtered fowl for the German soldiers’ meals. Shulman’s wife, Hinda, was unable to work as she had a small child with her. Hinda, along with her two daughters, Zophia and Liebe, was put on a train to the Treblinka concentration camp. On the way, Hinda pushed Zophia, the

older daughter, off the train in an attempt to save her from certain death at the camp. Her ploy worked. At the end of the war, Abraham managed to find Zophia in Poland and the three of them — Abraham, Louis, and Zophia — sailed for New York in 1948.

Abraham set up a shoe shop and was happy to stay in New York, but Zophia wanted to move to Israel. So, in 1949, father and daughter went to Israel. Abraham joined the Israeli army while Zophia worked as a nurse’s aide. Abraham preferred his life in New York and, after a couple of months, returned to the United States. He worked as a shoemaker, earning \$30 per week. He lived with his son for a few years until Louis had a second child and the space became too tight. “I began to work in a button shop in the garment district,” recalls Abraham. “Many of my co-workers called me a refugee and resented the fact that I had been given a position of responsibility receiving supplies, but I did not care. I worked until 1972 so that I would be eligible for a pension and now I get \$120 per month from them.”

When he heard about the development on Roosevelt Island in the early ’70s, Shulman went to the management office, at that time located at 50th Street and Madison. “After I decided to move here, I came to visit every Sunday to see my building being constructed. I was one of the first to move in. Management gave me 123 keys and asked me to choose the apartment I wanted to live in. I chose this one because I can see trees and the Church from my window.”

Enjoying retired life on the Island, Shulman says he constantly brushes off his daughter’s attempts to move him to an assisted-living facility. “I have a family here. If I don’t go

down to the Senior Center to eat on any day, someone knocks at my door to find out why. I want to live my own life here.”

A friend and neighbor, Joan Matula, says Shulman treats everyone he knows like a family member. “He is a remarkable man who worries about everyone. I have known him for 25 years. He is a kind man,” says Matula.

Having been through all the hardships he has, Shulman is a non-religious person. “Where was God when millions of Jews were being killed? It is easy saying millions were killed, but my whole family was wiped out. They were not just a number for me. I don’t have any philosophy of life. I don’t like to think about my past. At the end of my life, I will say to my children and grandchildren that they should live like I did — an honest, hardworking life, that is all.”

Though he shies away from discussing his beliefs, it is clear that he feels very strongly about the madness that engulfed the world during the wars. In a poem he wrote several years ago, Shulman offers some clues to his mindset:

*They all met the same fate
because of one man’s hate.
The agony and pain
must never happen again.*

*The world must care,
the shame it must bear:
Never forget or forgive
as long as we live*

*What one man can do,
be he Christian or Jew,
for it could happen to you
and you and you.*



In his late teens, Shulman played on this soccer team. He’s front row, left.



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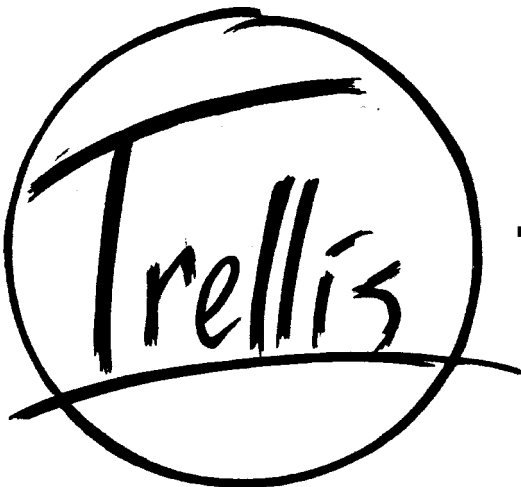
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PSD from page 1



At the meeting: Byron Gaspard, who favors a renewed definition of Public Safety responsibilities, Margaret Gaspard, and Shirley Margolin. A dozen residents and officials attended (right).

ganized approach to this so that there isn't a meeting like that Carolyn Maloney meeting in which everybody was screaming at everybody else." Stewart was referring to a January 25 meeting (reported in *The WIRE* February 8) in which U.S. Representative Carolyn Maloney gathered police and prosecutorial officials, including Chief James Fry of Public Safety, for a lightly-attended mid-day session with residents. "It's important from an organizational point of view to begin with the source and then be able to document that," Stewart said.

One advocate of the plan responded, "We need to have a legal empowerment in terms of what PSD's responsibilities are," referring to the fact that residents currently have no sanctioned voice in how PSD is run. The person, who later asked not to be identified in print, continued, "As things stand, we don't know anything about these people [who

wear the Public Safety uniform]. We don't know if background checks are done. We need people on the Board who will deal with the interests of the residents as opposed to the interests of just one organization - RIOC."

Steve Marcus, a Rivercross resident who listened through most of the two-hour session, praised the work of RISK (not to be confused with RISC, the Roosevelt Island Safety Coalition, which several years ago crusaded successfully for installation of video equipment at the subway stations here and at the Lexington/63rd station). "My hat's off to RISK for its constant effort. Keep it up. Think it through, come out with a high-quality document, and then maybe RIOC will be willing to have more community people involved in oversight of Public Safety."

Marcus derided the current system. At the RIOC Board meetings, he said, "Fry comes up and gives a pie-in-the-sky report and every-

body buys it. There's a huge vacuum of action. There's no accountability. There is the other issue of what they are supposed to be doing. RIOC should say, 'Look, this is what we expect you guys to do.' RIOC doesn't. We can either gripe about the vacuum, or we can, as residents, come up with something that does the job that RIOC should be doing. RISK has done a good job in finding out that there is nothing on paper. If we write it, we might like it. If we wait for somebody else to write it, they're sure to screw it up."

NYPD's 114th Precinct took advantage of the CB8 committee meeting to introduce CPOP Officer Thomas Liuzzo, whose beat is Roosevelt Island. Liuzzo's supervisor took a few minutes to discuss allegations of hard-drug dealing on the Island, and pointed out that drug enforcement is not the responsibility of a beat officer, but is handled by a drug enforcement unit. He promised an investigation of alleged use of the public areas of residential buildings for drug dealing and other illegal activity.



CPOP Officer Thomas Liuzzo, now assigned to the Island



Clearly Comfortable with a New Role at RIOC Talks About Cooperation, Openness, and a P

Patrick Siconolfi was interviewed by
Robert Laux-Bachand and Dick Lutz

The WIRE: In these few weeks that you moved from one office or desk to another, have you gained any kind of new perspective on just the way things work here from moving from the purely financial aspects to Acting President?

Patrick Siconolfi: The question is almost philosophical in nature. You know, I'd like to think that every role you play you gain some additional experience and you learn something new and it broadens your horizon, so I would say absolutely that's the case here.

W: Would you talk about how you see the relationship between residents and RIOC, both – to the extent you feel comfortable doing it – past, and what

ing leases and in real-estate negotiations, we can't discuss that sort of thing, and we don't. But we do want to know about what's on Islanders' minds.

W: They brought you a kind of laundry list, as I understand it.

PS: Well, they brought me two lists. They brought me a list of things they liked, and they brought me a list of things they didn't like. It was, and I have to emphasize, I thought it was a very positive meeting, and again, not to put words in their mouths, I think they would probably say some positive things about it. But be that as it may...

One thing did come out of it, and I will announce it here, so that you can report to your readers. We've agreed, as a direct result of that meeting, to suspend or eliminate certain kinds of fees that we charge to

group of interested citizens. I mean, they came under no organizational heading. In addition to that, I've met with RIVAA, the Visual Arts Association, and I've been meeting – mostly by phone because she travels a lot – with Judy Berdy about Blackwell House, so there are multiple points of contact, and I would hope to continue those multiple points.

W: Let me just ask you to talk a bit about general budget issues. One of the big concerns of people living in Westview, Island House and, to some extent, Eastwood, has to do with the potential for ground leases being extended and housing circumstances changing rather substantially on the Island. Do you have an overview of that – any sense of where that might go or how you feel about it?

PS: Well, earlier in the discussion we talked about



you think you'd like to see develop over time.

PS: Let's talk about the future, because that's really the only thing we can affect. And here's what I would look forward to – and I'm in no way characterizing what went on before – I would look forward to cooperation, communication, openness with the community. Last week I met with Matt Katz of RIRA and with his Vice Presidents, Margie Smith and Steve Marcus, and I think it was a very productive meeting. I hope it would be the first of several. That was a very open meeting, a very candid meeting, in fact we talked about, "what do you like, what don't you like?" It was very open. I don't want to put any words in anyone's mouth, but I think they found it effective. And I met with Margie and Matt and some other people about finances of the Island. We went into some detail about budgets and finances and cash flows and so forth.

The reason I'm telling you this is that I want you to understand that I view openness as a good thing. Obviously there are certain things when we're negotiat-

members of the community. These were small fees for use of the community by community residents. In particular, fees for the use of the esplanade – the promenade – and fees for the use of the picnic and barbecue areas – we're eliminating them.

W: How about field fees?

PS: We'll take a look at field fees.

W: So a lot of these things are still under review.

PS: Well, of course, they're under review. But these two that I've mentioned are really ones that we can live without.

W: Any other kinds of changes that you can talk about? What other kinds of things do you see happening?

PS: Well, you know it's an interesting question when you say "what other kinds of things?" Meeting with RIRA is not a small thing. RIRA is an organization with a lot of participation, so to me that's an important thing, but you should also know that we've met with some interested citizens, and the group that I was meeting with about the finances of the Island was just a

the fact that where there are negotiations ongoing, we're not permitted to go into that, so that's not really something I can comment on now.

W: Let's talk a little bit about overall maintenance. Somebody told me that in the course of time they've been on the Island, which for them I think was nine or ten years, they feel they've seen a lot of deterioration. I've been here 21 years, and I would say that in the last 8 to 10 years I've seen more deterioration than I'm comfortable with – things like bricks that have been pulled up and not quite gotten back into the right place, roads that are kind of wavy because the sand under them has shifted – that sort of thing. My sense, based on just the snow removal from the last storm, is that you're getting after such things. But there must be a helluva budget impact from that to start taking on all of these maintenance issues that, at least in the eyes of many residents, seem to have been let go.

PS: That question is interesting in several regards.

Siconolfi from page 1

Ryan's activities, or of various real estate negotiations, were off-limits.

But the two men, for all their contrasts, have one tall, lanky common denominator, and that is the man who, ultimately, is in charge of Roosevelt Island: Governor Pataki. It takes a bit of collation to establish the connection, but it's unmistakable. Siconolfi, a 15-year veteran of DHCR, made his reputation in the rent office. Before that, he was DHCR's Director of Finance, at a time when the Division's staff doubled to handle the city's rent control and rent stabilization programs.

"I was instrumental in operating that system, one of a team of people who ran that system for the City and the State," Siconolfi told *The WIRE*, speaking of the DHCR rent

office. "We were involved in reducing some years-long backlog of cases, legal processes there."

Ryan told the RIOC board in December 1999 that "Mr. Siconolfi would be going to Albany next week to receive an award for making innovations in government." The award was the state WorkForce Champions Award presented by the Governor's Office of Employee Relations.

And what was the award for? The answer is on the division's Web site, which notes that in 1995, Pataki's first year in office, "DHCR undertook a strategic planning process to make the agency more efficient, effective, and responsive."

As part of the governor's initiative, "The rent caseload was reduced by 70%, from approximately 79,000 in January 1995 to under

23,000 as of early 1999. This was achieved by improving productivity and expanding automation. In order to make this possible, many unnecessarily burdensome rules and regulations were also eliminated."

In other words, Siconolfi, in his professional life, has been a classic cutter of red tape, and he has continued in this vein on Roosevelt Island, where one of the items on the March 13 RIOC agenda, besides the adoption of the 2003-04 budget, will be a proposal for a new, computerized financial system.

In the same manner, Siconolfi has reached out to the Island's opinion leaders and activists in the past month, bypassing some formal – or more ritualized – venues. And in his interview with *The WIRE*, he did stake out one unambiguous position regarding the Island's devel-

opment, in a discussion of Southpoint.

Siconolfi referred to a bill approved by the Legislature last year, the Roosevelt Island Open Spaces Protection Law (Chapter 493 of the Laws of 2002, sponsored by Assembly member Pete Grannis), which provides for "no further development or construction other than park purposes" of the Lighthouse, Octagon, Blackwell, and Southpoint parks.

The two sites that are still in play are Octagon and Southpoint.

Siconolfi did not comment on the Octagon, where restoration of the landmark insane asylum of *Snakepit* fame would become the focal point of a proposed 500-unit housing development. But he did comment on Southpoint. Residents now are cut off from the southern

part of the Island, south of the Goldwater hospital complex, by a tall wooden fence topped by razor wire, which is opened only once a year to admit people who are willing to pay to watch the Macy's Fourth of July fireworks. It is the Island's equivalent of the Berlin Wall, and successive RIOC administrations have yet to devise a plan to liberate an area that is universally conceded to be the most spectacular piece of undeveloped parkland in the metropolitan area.

"You ask what my personal view is," Siconolfi said. "My personal view about Southpoint is that it's an extraordinary site. I think that anybody who's ever been there knows that, and we want to see that whatever improvements are done to it are consistent with the legislation."

, Acting President Patrick Siconolfi

Partnership with the Community

First of all, I think over the last several years an awful lot has been going on, [though] it may not always be visible. And let me mention one in particular. In late spring, Main Street South will be opening. Obviously that didn't just start, [but] that'll be a very significant thing in terms of how the Island looks, how the Island operates. Traffic circulation will be vastly improved, that portion of the Island will appear much more broad and open, with beautiful vistas. That's an important thing.

But let's talk about some other things. You mentioned the snow removal and I think this is actually an important piece. That snowstorm a couple of weeks ago was apparently the fourth largest on record in New York City, and we made a point of making sure that the Island was taken care of, and I was pleased to see that it was taken care of. I live in Manhattan, and I have to tell you, Roosevelt Island was in better shape than some neighborhoods in Manhattan. So I think we did a good job there and I want to thank you for acknowledging it. And quite a number of other people came up to me spontaneously in an unsolicited way and said they recognized and appreciated what was going on.

But, you know, there's a lot more than that, too. We can talk about snow removal and certainly we'll try and do our best there, but let me tell you some other things that are in the works. You should be aware that we are in the process of purchasing new doors – ADA-compliant doors – for the whole Motorgate atrium complex. The RFP (Request for Proposals) was just written for that,

W: *ADA-compliant – you mean they'll have like a button so they'll open automatically or something?*

PS: Without getting into the details, the bidder will have to make their proposal for making it ADA-compliant, but it has mostly to do with sizes. They're not standard door sizes, so we have to do some customizing to get it to be ADA-compliant, so that's one issue, but we think that's an important issue, and that complex actually has nine sets of doors, so this is no small matter. There are actually 18 doors there.

Another thing we're doing, and your readers might not be aware of this, we have begun the process of restoring Blackwell House. We applied over a year ago for a grant to restore Blackwell House. We have won that grant, and it's a matching grant, so RIOC will be putting in its own money, as well, and we'll be restoring

restoration work to the Chapel. I think you know there was a Sacred Sites grant available for that. And that is under way, as well.

W: *What is that work?*

PS: The scope of work has yet to be determined, because there has to be an engineering look at it, but it's probably going to include some work on the roof, to make sure that we have a weather-tight shell, and some pointing and waterproofing on the sides. But that's to be determined yet.

Then there's the turnaround. It's available for people to use. Could you also let people know, for safety's sake, that there's a stop sign, a new stop sign in the northbound lane just before you get to it, to allow people going south to safely make the turnaround. So people should be aware of both of those things. But the turnaround is there, and I think that'll work nicely when Main Street South continues.

Firefighters Field is... They're just doing some additional work down there, but at some point Firefighters Field is going to open in the near future.

W: *Let me just augment that question by bringing up again some of the chronic things like the bricks, the wavy streets, that sort of thing. It's kind of hard when Southtown is still being constructed, with regard to the street. The sidewalks are sort of a different matter. Any plans for that in the near future?*

PS: We'll take a look at it.

W: *Do you feel overwhelmed? Or like you've hit the ground running?*

PS: No, I don't feel overwhelmed. Do I feel like I've hit the ground running? I've been here for three years. What's to hit the ground? I'm not the only person here, obviously. There's a team of people here, and they all know their jobs.

W: *Who's the acting Chief Financial Officer?*

PS: That's me.

W: *You haven't...*

PS: I haven't named anyone. You know, the finance office has some real strength in it, and real depth in it, so there's not a problem there.

W: *The State's facing an \$11 billion deficit over the next two years, and obviously the Governor said he's not going to raise taxes. How would the current State budgetary situation affect your plans going forward?*

your architectural background and having been here three years, and looking forward, do you see any... How do you see that?

PS: I could write a book on what you just asked me. That's a long question, but let's just see if we can focus in on a couple of specific things. First of all, at Southtown, buildings 1 and 2 are up, as is very apparent, and they are likely going to open for occupancy in July of this year. Southtown obviously is in the General Development Plan (GDP); it's called for there. The development is, as I think you know, of the same size as is called for in the GDP, so Southtown is proceeding. There are some early discussions on building 3, so that's proceeding. And I have to say, just from my own point of view, that those two buildings that have gone up are attractive buildings. I think they're a credit to the rest of the community. I think the developers have done a good job, at least aesthetically, with those buildings.

And I think you know, Southpoint is another obvious one. There's been some recent legislation which had Southpoint as one of its main issues. We're very much cognizant of that, and anything we do down there we intend to do completely consistent with that legislation, so that, to me, seems quite planned and quite deliberated. I would think the community and the Corporation would be hand in hand on that issue. I happen to think... You ask what my own personal view is. My personal view about Southpoint is that it's an extraordinary site. I think that anybody who's ever been there knows that, and we want to see that whatever improvements are done to it are consistent with the legislation.

So I think that gives you a handle on the development situation.

W: *Could you just deal with this subject of piecemeal development for a moment or two?*

PS: I'm not sure how to answer that, because again Southpoint is addressed in legislation and so will be handled in that manner. And Southtown is clearly part of the General Development Plan, so I think that accounts for, clearly not everything, but most of it.

W: *One last area – Public Safety. There's a lot of concern about Public Safety in the community – its future, its role. There was a meeting recently in which a group of residents decided to get together and develop what they called a mission paper for Public safety, feeling that it's unclear what Public Safety is*



the infrastructure of the building, some of the systems of the building, as well as the exterior, to preserve it from further deterioration. That, we think, is kind of important. Blackwell House is, to me, a visual symbol of the Island. It's close to the heart of the Island, and if we can fix that up I think that'll be important. And you should know that we're working closely with Judy Berdy and her people [of the Roosevelt Island Historical Society] on that.

The grant is \$250,000 and we're adding \$250,000, so that's the number.

Similarly, Good Shepherd Chapel. We already did some work with respect to the HVAC system in Good Shepherd Community Center. In addition to that, though, an RFP has just been let for some additional

PS: Starting roughly three years ago we ended that year with a surplus and we have been in surplus ever since, and although this fiscal year isn't over, it's my belief that we'll end this fiscal year with a surplus, as well, unless there are some big surprises. So it's three or four years in a row with surpluses. Now, you know, we would look forward to maintaining that kind of fiscal probity as we move forward.

W: *Talk about development for us just a bit. Do you have any view, from your professional perspective, of where development on Roosevelt Island ought to go, or how it should be managed from here out? I ask that question in the context of knowing that a lot of residents feel that development has become piecemeal and unplanned and not part of a total structure. With*

supposed to be doing. At least they think maybe the officers don't have a clear picture of it, and that the community lacks a clear picture of what they should be doing. RIOC supervises Public Safety. Where are you going to go with that?

PS: You know, that's a question I'm not going to answer today, because what you're raising is a very important subject, and I think we should devote time sufficient to it, and the one thing I will say about it is that when Matt Katz and his associates were here from RIRA we talked about it, and we had a very much off-the-record, just brainstorming session, and I found it very informative, and I still need to learn more.

I want to thank you for this.

W: *Thank you.*

Hands Across Generations

RIYP's Island Girls Project Creates a Day of Pampering for Senior Women



Shayna Mijas and Yesinia Morales with Beryl Seaforth



With an unidentified senior, Engracia Sampaio, Asharay Sowell, and Damaris Sanchez



Last weekend, the Island Girls Project (IGP) of the Roosevelt Island Youth Program (RIYP) obliterated the generation gap with a day of hands-on pampering, complete with home-made cookies and cake, at the Senior Center.



Roseanne Lopez does nails for Ymeluida Santos



Aliyah Rademaker with Camelita Hill



Yesinia Morales and Amy Sall with Frances Sheppard

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More Letters

To the Editor:

I enjoy Matthew Katz's *RIRA Column* every issue – except the last (February 22). I cannot accept his cavalier agreement with Governor Pataki's robbing us of our legal subsidy since 1996. Under the General Development Plan, the State must subsidize Roosevelt Island until our population reaches 16,000.

Due to the deprivation of this money, RIOC has made many decisions harmful to us. Has Matthew forgotten RIOC's attempt to give us a Tram curfew?

Frances Salten

To Matthew Katz:

In each issue of *The WIRE*, I read your column with great interest.

It is my understanding that you are afforded this column in order to report on the affairs of Roosevelt Island, and you usually do just that, in a very capable manner.

In the last issue of *The WIRE*, however, you also included your views on the possibility of war with Iraq.

While I grant the fact that you – anyone – has a right to a view on this very important and sensitive matter, I don't believe that the column you are afforded is the proper forum in which to express your beliefs and views regarding that subject.

Name Withheld

Baehler letter continued from page 2

neighbors, he is not a threat to us. If that is their belief, then they must also believe after Saddam Hussein suffered a humiliating defeat at our hands in the Gulf War that he harbors no real animosity towards the United States. Would any President be justified in establishing a strategy on that basis?

Is it the marchers' position that Saddam Hussein does have a deep and abiding hatred for the United States (which he has stated on many occasions) but that he is no immediate threat to us and that we should wait and see if things can improve without resorting to military force? If so, there are a number of problems with that strategy. First, and foremost, while we are waiting there is nothing to prevent Saddam Hussein from continuing to develop weapons of mass destruction. He expelled the United Nations inspectors some years ago and only read-

mitted them under the threat of U.S. military forces. In the interim, he continued his weapons programs in mobile laboratories that can be moved to avoid the re-admitted inspectors. The scientists and technicians who have defected from Iraq all testify to Saddam Hussein's unwavering effort to develop such weapons. Why should we expect him to abandon those efforts? Is there anything in his past history to suggest that he will now begin to show restraint? To the contrary, we are dealing with a man who has invaded two of his neighbors (Iran and Kuwait) and murdered tens of thousands of his own citizens with poison gas. He pays a bounty of \$25,000 to the family of each suicide bomber who manages to murder Israeli civilians. He holds his nation in a grip of terror so complete that

To the Editor:

When Chase left the Island, they left us in quite a mess. I am talking about the old and/or disabled residents of Roosevelt Island. To the rest, it may not matter very much.

The new bank? About six months ago, they announced that they were going to supply us with debit cards. They are still not delivered.

To me, such a card is a necessity, as I cannot travel, being both elderly and disabled. I cannot visit stores, and buy or order what I need, and that is quite a hardship, as Roosevelt Island has no stores to speak of. I cannot get a credit card, and would not want one anyway, since I like to pay my bills the minute they come in. I don't owe anything to anybody, since I never have any debts. Call me old-fashioned, but I grew up during the Great Depression, and we knew the value of money back then. I still do, and live by those rules to this day.

Any news when this card will be available? Not having such a card is just one more not-so-nice thing about living on Roosevelt Island.

Dorothy Cusce

he is proud to boast of receiving 100% of the votes in an election. Any person who can make that statement is either a megalomaniac or psychotic. Is this the kind of individual we want to watch and patiently wait to see what his next aggressive move might be?

Should President Bush follow a strategy of waiting and hoping that things will get better, the result is predictable: At some point in the not too distant future, Saddam Hussein will have developed weapons of mass destruction and will turn them against the United States. When that happens, the death toll will not be in the thousands as it was on 9/11 but in the tens of thousands, or even worse. Such an unthinkable catastrophe could be visited upon us without the direct involvement of Saddam Hussein. He could simply provide a suitable weapon to any of the many terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda who have vowed to destroy the United States. Does anyone truly believe that armed with immense destructive capability Osama bin Laden, or anyone else with a fanatic hatred of the United States, would hesitate to use that power?

President Bush took an inauguration oath in which he swore to "preserve and protect" us. There is only one way to fulfill that oath,

To the Editor:

Last Saturday the senior citizens were treated to a day of pampering by young women from the Island Girls Project of the Youth Program. Around 20 young ladies arrived at the Senior Center armed with combs, brushes, rollers, bobby pins, nail polish, hand lotion, and their wonderful enthusiasm. They also supplied homemade baked goods and various beverages.

They spent the day curling and braiding hair, painting nails, and rubbing backs, necks, temples, and hands. When a senior entered the Center, she was greeted and asked if she would like something to eat and drink. They were then escorted to a seat where their nails were painted, hair styled, and backs rubbed. They were served home-baked cookies or cake and had a choice of coffee, tea, or soda.

The day was enjoyed by all the seniors who participated and, I believe, by the young ladies who made this day possible. I would like to thank Charlie DeFino and his staff for the wonderful job they are doing with the Island youth. Keep up the good work.

All are looking forward to more shared activities that will bring the young together with the young at heart.

Dolores Green, President
Roosevelt Island Seniors Association

to remove the immediate and present danger that Saddam Hussein represents. That danger is not a fantasy, it is real and growing. To wait until that danger becomes an act of incalculable destruction would amount to criminal neglect of duty by President Bush or anyone else who might hold that office. Instead of sending messages that only serve to encourage Saddam Hussein in his defiance of the U.N. and the United States we should be rallying in support of a President who is dealing with a menace unprecedented in human history and who has resolved upon the only course of action which can effectively remove that menace.

Jim Baehler

A Gift Subscription For a Former Islander?

About subscriptions: *The Main Street WIRE*, which is delivered free to every residential door on Roosevelt Island, does not normally solicit off-Island subscriptions but, as a courtesy, provides first-class mailing on day of publication. The cost is \$50/year (for about 20-24 issues, published fortnightly September-May, and less often June-August) to cover postage and materials. A check payable to *The WIRE* should be sent, with delivery address, to *The WIRE*, 531 Main Street #413, NYC10044. Much of each issue also appears, with many archived back issues, on *Website NYC10044* at www.nyc10044.com.

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Coler-Goldwater Gets a 30-Year Vet As New Chief

byAnusha Shrivastava

It was a slow and steady climb, one that took about thirty years from summer intern to Executive Director of Coler-Goldwater Hospital, but it was well worth it for Claude Ritman, who was appointed to that position in January this year. “I thought if I worked hard, good things would come to me,” said Ritman, 50. He is a mild-mannered, soft-spoken man who joined the New York Health and Hospitals Corporation three decades ago.

Unlike most people who think about health care and hospitals only when they need one, Ritman was fascinated by the system ever since high school. Its greatest attraction for him was that the system operated 24/7 and that he felt he could contribute something towards it because work done at a medical facility always seems to have an impact.

Growing up in Elmhurst, Queens, Ritman says there were over a hundred kids in his neighborhood who went into some form of medical care.



Even so, he enrolled for a bachelor’s degree in public administration at Baruch College after high school, working as an intern at Elmhurst Hospital. His involvement with the institution grew as he became a senior clerk and then a supervising clerk at the hospital. Later on, as recently as three years ago, he studied for a Master’s degree in Health Care Administration at Iona College.

It was at Elmhurst Hospital that he met his wife, Nancy Guzman, with whom he has two children, Stephen, 6, and Stephanie, 5. Ritman says his regular workout has been replaced with activities related to child-care. “Handling kids is like a workout,” Ritman said, listing all the sports and extra-curricular activities he participates in with his offspring.

Balancing work and time with his family is important to him. “I am a hard worker but I want to make sure I enjoy time with my children.”

Friends say Ritman is very family-oriented and his children are the center of his life. Stephen Gallo, a dentist, has known Ritman for over forty years, having lived across the street from him in Queens, attended the same grammar school, and was in the same church choir. “Claude has always been interested in people and is good with them,” Gallo said. “We always knew he would do well because he was very focused and very committed to doing whatever he did well.”

Over the years, Ritman has worked in different departments of various hospitals, mainly in personnel, giving him an opportunity to look at the working of the hospitals from different points of view.

Now that he is the Executive Director, he has an ambitious agenda. Smoothing operations at the two campuses on the Island and at Gouverneur Health Care Services in downtown Manhattan tops the list. He says he wants to create a good environment for the staff at the hospitals and ensure that they remain competitive. “With the impending budget cuts, there will have to be negotiations and everyone will have to pitch in,” Ritman said. “We saw a high level of commitment during the recent blizzard when all our staff showed up.” He expects to see similar behavior when the question of increased productivity from unions comes up.

Increased nurse recruitment is important as this service sector faces shortages. Ritman wants to attract people who would be willing to stay for long tenures, thereby reducing turnover issues. “Once they see what we are about, most nurses are happy to stay.”

On the issue of remaining competitive, Ritman explains that the therapeutic milieu on the Island is a highly attractive factor that he wants to use to advantage. “The atmosphere is very conducive to the healing process and I want people to see that Roosevelt Island is not impossible to get to,” Ritman said. “Once they realize they can actually park their cars here, they will appreciate the beautiful surroundings and the high quality of care we provide.”

He also thinks it is time for the buildings to be renovated so that their integrity is maintained. The Goldwater campus dates back to 1939, while the Coler campus was built in 1952. With this agenda before him, Ritman says he sees himself here “for several years.”

Camper-Titsingh Tapped As RI’s Library Advocate

Mary Camper-Titsingh has been named to represent Roosevelt Island’s branch with the New York Public Library’s Branch Libraries Borough Advocacy Network. Among other objectives, the 85-member group addresses branch funding needs in each community.

“Despite the deep cuts in public funding we face now, I hope that, at the very least, the leaky and moldy ceilings of our Roosevelt Island branch will get some attention,” Camper-Titsingh told *The WIRE*.

Camper-Titsingh has an M.S. degree from Columbia University’s Graduate School of Library Service. She headed the Investment Research Library at the Ford Foundation for 18 years. After retirement in 1983, she moved to Roosevelt Island and volunteered as the Librarian here, in the community library that became an NYPL branch in 1998.

“I also hope to address the need for more space in the Island branch, with Southtown opening soon. It’s obvious there’s just not enough space in the Library for a community our size,” Camper-Titsingh said.



On Monday Evening, River Music Goes into 8th Year of *Irish Night*

The traditional Irish dancers of the TirNa Gael School of Irish Dancing will present River Music’s 8th Annual Roosevelt Island *Be Irish for a Night* event Monday (March 10) at 6:00 at the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Singer Julie Glaub will also appear, presenting Irish folk songs. Musicians include Felix Dolan, piano; John Nolan, button accordion, and Brian Conway, fiddle.

The event is free. Posters publicizing the event say “\$8 contribution appreciated.”

In past years, members of the audience have joined in Irish dances



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RIRA Wants Donations for Auction Fund-Raiser

RIRA wants your stuff. Services, too. The Residents Association plans a fund-raising auction for Saturday night, March 22, at 7:30., at the Senior Center.

Meanwhile, those planning the auction are seeking donations of both goods and services to be offered at auction. Service donations might include shopping services, chauffeuring, babysitting, resumé-writing, or computer instruction. Donations of goods can be both used and new, according to the auction organizers.

Islanders and others ready to make a donation can contact any of the following: Cookie Lugo, 644-2142; Sandra Morabito, 223-1975; Fay Vass, 755-4089; Vicki Feinmel, 223-1108; Erin Feely-Nahem, 339-0016.



RIOC Issues Bid Request for Restoration Work on Blackwell Farmhouse

RIOC has issued a Request for Proposals for Blackwell House, listing restoration work to begin “no later than Spring of 2004.” The announcement papers ask for proposals by April 4, 2003.

The \$500,000 budget for the work is to be funded by a \$250,000 grant from the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and a matching \$250,000 from RIOC. Work listed includes cost estimating, design, document preparation, and construction supervision for restoration of the exterior of the building.

The last restoration of the Island’s only building dating to post-Revolutionary times was done in 1973, but over the past 30 years the building has again fallen into disrepair. The porch on the front of the building, which actually faces Queens, is in dangerous and dilapidated condition, and other exterior work is required to make the building sound.

The history of Blackwell House places its construction between 1796 and 1804, when the Island was known as Blackwell’s Island. That name survived through purchase by the City in 1828, but it was later changed to Welfare Island, a recognition of its use by the City for various institutions, including hospitals, an almshouse, and a prison. The name Roosevelt Island was adopted when the City leased the Island to the State in the ’70’s to be developed as housing for a housing-short New York.

Additional Blackwell House and Island history is available on *Website NYC10044* at www.nyc10044.com.

MTG from page 1

Bauer was joined by Residents Association President Matthew Katz and MTG member Margie Smith. Katz described an MTG persistence: “There have been eight bills that I know of – and [before we’re finished] there may be eight more... Our function here is to try to create a mechanism that will serve our purposes – that will incorporate us into the decision-making process, because that’s our right – because it’s the American, democratic way of life. It is the function of the MTG to try and make this happen.”

“We are here today to ask for your help,” Katz said.

“We just don’t make enough noise here,” Smith told the group gathered in the Westview community room. Referring to a current investigation of RIOC President Robert H. Ryan, Smith added, “Now we have this issue in RIOC where Rob Ryan is possibly out – he’s on 60-day leave, but will probably not be back. Now is an important time on this Island. We need to make sure that, if they’re going to replace someone, they replace someone with someone residents want in that job. We need it for a couple of reasons – number one, the Island is beginning to fall apart. You can let things deteriorate for just so long until you pass the point of being able to fix them. We’re getting close to that. Number two, there is no plan to develop this Island. We have [only] the General Development Plan [and it] is continually being violated.”

Questions from residents attending the meeting centered on Island services. Some



Joe Cristiano

expressed a concern that maintenance, for example, has diminished over the past several years, leaving the Island less appealing than they remember.

Rivercross resident Joe Cristiano, speaking during the Q&A portion of the meeting, saw an opportunity: “We lucked into a situation. Patrick Siconolfi (the Acting President of RIOC) is an excellent person. I have not heard one word against him. He has the heart of the people on the Island in mind,

and if I had three wishes, one of them would be to pressure the Governor to appoint him to replace Robert Ryan. If we have a majority on the RIOC Board [as called for in the law the Governor signed in September] and a person such as Patrick Siconolfi, I think we’re going to be – short term – in very good standing. If we walk away from this meeting and do nothing else, Patrick should be our candidate.”

Smith responded, “I don’t care if all those Board members are the best people on the planet. We’re not looking for a benevolent dictatorship here. We’re looking for people we elect. I don’t think we need the Governor to find somebody that can do a good job here. Look at this room. In this room, you could probably find a better Board because everybody here cares.”

MTG members urged residents attending the meeting to write to the Governor and to their elected State representatives, Senator Olga Mendez and Assemblymember Pete Grannis, asking for action on legislation to move toward an elected resident majority on the RIOC Board. Smith offered to supply

sample letters to residents willing to write.

A partial transcript of the Sunday session, including Q&A, is available on *Website NYC10044* at www.nyc10044.com/wire/2313/mtg-trans.html.

MTG speakers provided these addresses and other contact information for the Governor, Mendez, and Grannis:

Assemblymember Pete Grannis

1672 First Avenue
New York, New York 10128
Telephone (212) 860-4906
Fax (212) 996-3046

Senator Olga Mendez

87 East 116th Street
New York, New York 10029
Telephone (212) 860-0893
Fax (212) 831-0530

Governor George Pataki

State Capitol
Albany, New York 12224
Telephone (212) 681-4580
Fax (212) 681-4643

Octagon Plan Gets a Tax Break

Although the Octagon Apartments project proposed by the architectural and development firm of Becker and Becker has yet to receive final approval from the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, Governor George Pataki has already awarded it tax breaks as a “green” building.

The tax credit of \$6,602,894 is the largest awarded in February under a law Pataki signed in May of 2000. It allows building owners and developers to deduct from their State taxes the eligible expenses associated with the design and construction of environment-friendly buildings. Examples of eligible expenses include improved energy efficiency, use of environmentally-benign materials, and improvement of indoor air quality. The Octagon building will have a geothermal well system, among other “green” features.

The Octagon project received more than a third of the \$18,878,528 awarded in February to a total of five buildings. Three other projects are in New York City, and one is in Albany.

The Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) recently voted to seek a change in the Island’s General Development Plan (GDP) in order to provide for a residential building at the Octagon site. The lease under which New York State is developing Roosevelt Island for housing provides that both City and State must agree on any changes. Without a change, the GDP has no provision for housing at Octagon Park, which the GDP designates as an ecological park.

The project is also being challenged by Assemblymember Pete Grannis. Grannis says that, while the landmark Octagon building itself can be restored, the “open spaces” law signed by the Governor in September does not allow construction of the planned residential wings.

The Octagon was part of a “pauper lunatic asylum” built on what was then known as Blackwell’s Island and opened in 1839. Designed by Alexander Jackson Davis, among the most noted architects of the time, it was never fully completed, but housed as many as 1,700 at one point – more than double the designed capacity. In recent times, the building has been “stabilized,” but then damaged by fires. Today, it stands open to the weather, in ruins.



MTG Convener David Bauer as he spoke last weekend to a gathering in the Westview community room. Some 60 to 70 Islanders attended the session advocating a locally-elected RIOC Board.

Volunteer for *The WIRE*

The Main Street WIRE relies on many Island volunteers to fill important jobs in the distribution process, and there’s a role for **you** if you’d like to help. On Fridays, when *The WIRE* comes off the press, we have a stuffing crew at work from about 10:00 a.m. to about 1:45 p.m. (lunch is provided). Later on Fridays (and early Saturday), volunteers deliver the newspaper to every apartment door on the Island, as well as to merchants, the hospitals, and other locations. It’s hard work, but an important service to the community, and satisfying. If you’d like to join this dedicated group, please call **935-7534**, or 826-9055. (Leave your number if a machine answers, and we’ll call you back.) ***The WIRE* and *Website NYC10044* also seek news and feature writers. Call 826-9055.**

Subway Station Escalators Slated for Replacement in 2004

The Island subway station is scheduled to get eight replacement escalators in Spring, 2004.

The four older units that connect the street level to the middle and lower mezzanines are to be replaced, along with the short escalators that connect the lower mezzanine to the Queens-bound and Manhattan-bound platforms.

“These escalators have reached the end of their useful life and are subject to frequent breakdowns,” says a letter from New York City Transit to RIOC Acting President Patrick Siconolfi. The letter cites a \$36 million cost and a construction-installation period of 45 months to complete. The replacements will reduce energy consumption, says MTA, while providing greater safety and “better and more accurate responses by maintenance staff.”

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ROOSEVELT ISLAND POSTCARDS – Color Views of Tram and Lighthouse Park; sets of 20 (10 each) for \$8, or two sets, \$15. Check payable to *The WIRE* to 531 Main Street with your address, phone, e-mail address (if available). Questions: **1-212-826-9055**. Sorry, no phone or credit card orders.

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Kraut from page 2

so we cannot form a government nor speak properly of “self-governance.” Rather we should continue to be speaking of “self-management” or “self-operation.”

For these reasons, I see no better solution to our problems at this time than to take the next step, and to provide for elected membership to the RIOC Board. I say “at this time” because I am not totally sure that it is the best way to run this Island although I don’t clearly see an alternative. I hold out the expectation that, if a better way should present itself in the future, we should again seek change.

In answer to a question often asked me privately, I am not sure if I would run for an elected Board position. On the one hand, after nine years on this Board – my appointment from Governor Cuomo came in May of 1994, after an 18-month fight to put the president of RIRA onto Mr. Cuomo’s Board – I may well find I’ve had enough of it by the time the new Board takes over. On the other hand, I think I might enjoy the election process, matching my views and vision – plus a little bit of facts, truth, experience, and history – against those of other candidates.

And this leads me to conclude with a question of far greater importance to the community at large: How would such a Board be elected? Personally, I hold to two basic principles of American democracy, one weakly in this context, and one unalterably.

1. Generally, the vote in public elections is reserved for American citizens. I wonder how this would apply in this community where so many resident stake-holders are not, in fact, citizens. And I ask how much accommodation should be made to their interest?
2. (And I believe I am beyond argument here) I hold firmly to the principle of “One person, one vote.” I am not sure whether all seats on the Board should be elected at large, or whether seats should be apportioned by building, but any such apportionment must fairly reflect building population numbers, or any future of democracy on this Island would be a total sham.



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Basketball Roosevelt Island’s abbreviated version of “March Madness” begins this weekend as the playoffs in the Youth Program’s Winter Basketball League are scheduled for Friday evening beginning at 6:30 P.M. (14-16 Division) and Saturday afternoon beginning at 3:15 P.M. (11-13 Division). The final regular season standings are:

11-13 Division		14-16 Division	
Green	4-1	Orange	4-2
Red	3-2	Green	4-2
Orange	2-3	Red	3-3
Blue	1-4	Blue	1-5

11-13 Division: In action February 15, Blue defeated Orange 60-56 for its first win of the season. Ricky Bonano led Blue with 26 points, while Daniel Folla added 8, and LeQuan Francis and Pierre Tall added 6 each. For Orange, Jonathan Douglas led the scoring with 19 points, while Joshua Hart added 18, and Noel Polanco added 8. In the other game that day, Green defeated Red 43-37 to tie Red for first place. Green was led by Joshua Cushnie, who had 18 points, while Vernon Thomas added 17 points. Austin Lee led Red with 20 points, while Shawn Lee added 6.

The next week, the final week of the regular season, Green defeated Blue 86-54 to finish in first place. Joshua Cushnie had a season-high 52 points, while Jesse Kahah added 17. Ricky Bonano led Blue with 22 points, while LeQuan Francis added 12, and Daniel Folla added 9. The other game of that day was decided on a free throw with one second left on the clock, as Orange edged Red 43-42. Joshua Hart had a game-high 16 points for Orange, while Noel Polanco added 9, and Jonathan Douglas added 8. Darren Roy led a balanced Red attack with 12 points, while Austin Lee added 10.

14-16 Division: In week five of the season, Green defeated Blue 80-64. Anthony Simmons had 28 points to lead Green, while José Marte added 24, Steven Morgan added 14, and Derrick Davis added 8. Lamar Burrows, who had a game-high 30 points, led Blue, while John McNeil added 12 points. In the other game that week, Red defeated Orange 74-49. With Red and Green’s wins, Red and Green moved into a three-way tie for first place with Orange. Red was led by Chris Chatman, who had 26 points, Fabian Williams, who had 19, and Mirza Avdovic, who had 16. Paul Brown led Orange with 28, while Shirome Dixon added 15.

In the final week of the season, Green defeated Red 87-83 in an extremely close game. Rahim Drame connected on two late free throws to seal the game for Green. Anthony Simmons led Green with 32 points, while José Marte added 20 and Steven Morgan added 17. Red, which trailed by 13 points at the end of the first half, came back to take a six-point lead with eight minutes remaining, before Green regained the momentum and the lead. Chris Chatman led Red with 40 points, followed by Fabian Williams, who added 27. Orange remained in its first-place tie with Green by defeating Blue 87-79. Sika Franco had a game-high 37 points to lead Orange, while Paul Brown added 27. Lamar Burrows led a balanced scoring attack for Blue with 27 points, while Deshawn Pearson added 15, Andrew Rousseau added 14, and Karam Hider added 12.

Baseball Registration for Little League Baseball has been extended until March 14. Forms are available at the Youth Center at 506 Main Street and at the Beacon Program at PS/IS 217. There are still openings for Majors (11-13), Minors (8-10) and Tee-Ball (6-7).

Engine Company 261 Is Again Threatened by City Budget Cut Station Is Island’s Second-Response Unit

The New York City Fire Department’s second-response unit for Roosevelt Island is in danger again.

The Mayor’s budget cuts last threatened the firehouse in November, and both Islanders and residents of Astoria responded with an overwhelming protest that appeared to take the company off the cut-list, but only temporarily.

The City Administration’s cuts include closing of some fire companies from midnight to 8:00 a.m. and a reduction in the size of responding crews – from five firefighters to four.

Material circulated by the firefighters of Engine 261 says that response and operation time would increase, under the Mayor’s cuts, from 10 minutes, 3 seconds (10:03), to 14:36, then adds, “In a serious fire or emergency, an extra five minutes will be the difference between life and death for New York residents!”

The firefighters’ material also says the Mayor’s budget cuts include elimination of a third of the City’s fire marshals in the Bureau of Fire Investigation (BFI). The firefighters say that such cutbacks create, in mixed-use industrial and residential neighborhoods like Astoria and Long Island City hit hard by the current economic downturn, an increased incentive for arson. One result, they say, could be an increase in fire-insurance premiums.

The WIRE published a sample protest letter in November, as part of an editorial. It is available on *Websiite NYC10044* at <http://nyc10044.com/wire/2307/edit2307.html>, and is reprinted below:

To our City and State officials:

The undersigned demand the retention of Engine 261, Long Island City. We understand the importance of fast response to all fires, and understand the importance of personnel who know our situation. The safety of Roosevelt Island’s residents, and the firefighters who protect us, requires that Engine 261 remain active.

Name

Signature

Address

Telephone

Call 1-718-476-6267 for information on how to get this form to the Firefighters of Engine 261.

Mitchell-Lama Housing Forum Set for Tuesday Night by RIRA

The Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA) plans a Mitchell-Lama Housing Forum for Tuesday night (March 11) at 7:30 at the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

The speaker, Helen Schaub of an organization called Tenants and Neighbors, will address concerns about Mitchell-Lama buy-outs under which owners of buildings in the Mitchell-Lama program can privatize the buildings, removing them from control of rental rates exercised under the law by the State Department of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR).

On Roosevelt Island, Mitchell-Lama buildings include Westview, Island House, Eastwood, and Rivercross. The privatization process involves owners paying off their State-backed low-interest mortgages, and remortgaging with a private lender. Once out of the Mitchell-Lama program, owners are free to raise rents.

Both Island House and Westview have explored approaches to tenant ownership, which could occur under Mitchell-Lama, after privatization, or as part of a transition out of the Mitchell-Lama system. Several New York City Mitchell-Lama buildings have privatized in recent years, and the Island buildings in the program are also eligible to go private. However, it is generally regarded as unlikely any would do so without an extension of their ground leases, which are controlled by RIOC.

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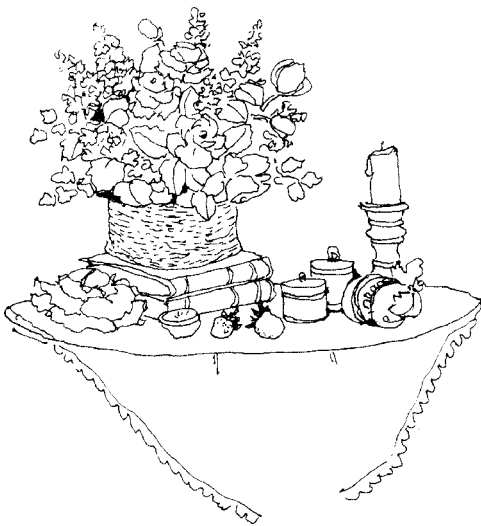
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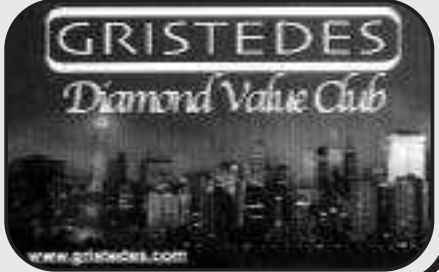
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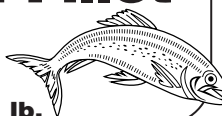
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