

Next scheduled issue
in three weeks:
Saturday, April 12

The Main Street **WIRE**™

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

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



Peace Vigil About 100 Islanders gathered in Good Shepherd Plaza Sunday night as part of a "rolling world-wide vigil for peace." They marched to Meditation Steps for songs and a moment of silent contemplation. With alert levels raised, RIOC says it is taking its lead from City and State authorities on Island security measures (see letter, page 2).

RIOC Presents a Tight Budget; \$2 Tram Fare Follows MTA Hike

by Robert Laux-Bachand

For a State organization like the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, the waning weeks of winter are a time for New Year's resolutions.

If one were to characterize these resolutions, which are in RIOC's 2003-04 budget proposal, the promises might be as follows: We will go on a diet, downsizing our executive corps and removing the appearance of temptation. We will save for the future. We will forgo pay raises and, at the end of the fiscal year, next March, we will record another surplus.

The big picture, though, requires no paraphrasing. Here are the words of Patrick Siconolfi, RIOC's

acting president, in his March 13 presentation to the board: "Total revenues at \$14.8 million will be up about a million dollars from the year before. And expenditures at \$12.7 million will be down significantly, about \$700,000 from the year before. So we're in a position that I want to emphasize: Revenues are up, expenditures are down. OK?"

OK. But even the most frugal household typically has at least one budget-bender. On Roosevelt Island, it is the Tramway. RIOC is estimating a loss of \$2,329,400 in the coming year in its Tram account, despite a 30 percent gain in anticipated revenue. The Tram is expected to cost \$3,810,400, while its income is estimated at \$1,481,000. In May, the fare will rise to \$2, as required, to match the MTA's subway and bus increase.

Even after subtracting for capital improvements, depreciation, and "indirect" costs (the Tramway's share, for accounting purposes, of RIOC's overall administrative costs), the Tram would still show a deficit of more than \$1 million. To put this in perspective, if every apartment on Roosevelt Island — including the new Southtown units — were to share equally in making up this loss, the yearly charge would be about \$274. That is equal to a rent or co-op maintenance increase of about \$23 per month. Add back the money for Tramway re-

pairs and accounting adjustments, and the monthly cost per apartment or co-op would be about \$53.

Of course, RIOC has no power to charge such fees, and would never devise such a comparison itself. But the presence of such a large loss in one account does represent a constraint on the organization. How to cope with this deficit, given a static base of operational income? Siconolfi's solution appears to be in cost-cutting in other areas. In the 2003-04 budget, the biggest savings will be in salaries and fringe benefits, which have been set at \$4,975,000, a decrease of almost \$800,000 from the current year.

Siconolfi, who has retained the title of Chief Financial Officer, said much of the savings were achieved by the elimination of five positions from RIOC's 101-person workforce in December, mainly in administration. For example, the job of vice president, which had been held by Robert Antonek, has been eliminated. The top information technology job has also been cut. And one personnel account — which may have tempted some excess in the past — will be eliminated entirely: that is the "central services vacation buyback," which is projected to cost \$90,000 in the current fiscal year.

As Siconolfi reviewed the job cuts, Board member David Kraut expressed concern. See **Budget**, page 2

Tramway Is Safe, RIOC Board Is Told, But It's Time to Budget for New Parts

by Robert Laux-Bachand

Recent engineering reports have confirmed the safety of the Roosevelt Island Tramway, but Island officials have decided not to test the ultimate longevity of an aging system. The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation's proposed budget for 2003-04 seeks to jump-start a program of replacing major components of the Tram, including its cabins.

The budget calls for spending \$500,000 to replace one of the cabins, and another \$100,000 for carriage repair. The carriage is the heavy hanger that connects the cabin to the track ropes spanning the East River.

Residents can thank their soon-to-be new neighbors for providing these repairs. The money will come from a "restricted capital fund," or endowment, that is being set up with payments from the first two buildings of Southtown. About 800 new residents, the families of workers from East Side medical institutions, are expected to move in this summer. From a budgetary standpoint, they represent a pool of new customers for the Tram and the source of capital to pay for the Island's future needs.

Doppelmayr CTEC, an Austrian company with an office in Watertown, New York, operates the Tram under a contract with RIOC. Larry Wollum, a Doppelmayr engineering representative based in Watertown, answered questions last week at the RIOC budget meeting.

"The average life span of an aerial tramway cabin and hanger is about 25 years, based on 300 days of operation, nine hours a day, which is about 67,000 hours of operation," he said. "Roosevelt Island has run 27 years of 360 days for 20 hours per

day, which is about 190,000 hours, so it is about three times the life span of a tram cabin, based on operating cycle. There is no other installation in the world that has that many cycles for hours of operation."

Wollum was guided in his presentation by Patrick Siconolfi, RIOC's acting president. Wollum said: "It doesn't mean there is a need for immediate replacement, but See **Tramway**, page 6

Briefly...

Additional security will now be evident around the Island and its transportation links, according to a RIOC representative, but RIOC's and Public Safety's policy is not to publicize specifics of its planning. (See letter, page 2.)

Both **Joan Dawson** and **Susan Whitaker** have resigned from the RIOC Board, leaving two openings. "The Governor's appointment office is aware of the openings," said Board Chair Marybeth Labate at last week's Board meeting.

PS217 is looking for **Career Day** speakers for May 30 — people willing to talk about their work to grades 6 to 8. To pitch your occupation, call Guidance Counselor Susan Cohen at 1-212-980-0294, ext. 2422.

RIRA Auction Set Tonight

Everything from computer help to theater tickets, ballroom dancing lessons to art, and much else donated by Islanders, will be auctioned off tonight (Saturday, March 22) by the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA) in a fund-raising effort.

Auctioneers Ron Roth and Ron Vass will start the session at 7:30 at the Senior Center, but the items up for bids will be available for examination starting at 6:30.

Some of the near-100 items to be auctioned include a gold, ruby, and emerald ring; a half-hour body massage; résumé coaching; a painting by Bonnie Goodman; a photograph by Harry Small; advertising space in *The WIRE*; a pair of VIP tickets to *A Long Day's Journey Into Night* starring Brian Dennehy and Vanessa Redgrave; a dental examination; and lessons in golf, dancing, and fitness.

Proceeds will support Residents Association activities over the coming year.

Artists Group Seeking \$100,000 and Space at SportsPark for Studios

At its meeting last week, the RIOC Board put off a vote on a request from the Roosevelt Island Visual Arts Association (RIVAA) for \$100,000 in public purpose funds and space in SportsPark for artist's studios. Board Chair Marybeth Labate, in proposing that the matter be tabled, said she wanted more information on the specifics of RIOC's marketing of that and other space on the Island.

RIVAA, which is celebrating the first anniversary of its gallery at 527 Main Street in the space formerly occupied by Bigelow Pharmacy, first put forward its plan to create seven art studios at the Sportspark before 9/11/01 but, as RIOC Board member David Kraut explained in presenting the RIVAA plan, there were subsequent distractions, including the opening of Gallery RIVAA.

The RIVAA plan calls for seven studios — ceramics, photography, printmaking, painting and drawing, sculpture, woodworking, and computer-based multi-media — at a cost for equipment and construction totaling \$90,300 and ranging from \$4,280 for the sculpture studio to \$16,500 for the computer studio. The group proposes to provide in-kind and dollar funding of over \$104,060 to match the contribution from the Public Purpose Fund maintained by RIOC.

The Public Purpose Fund was created when Manhattan Park was built, with payments in lieu of sales tax. At one time, the Residents Association (RIRA) and the Roosevelt Island Council of Organizations (RICO) had a role in reviewing proposals for the expenditures ulti-

mately approved by the RIOC Board, but the resident organizations were removed from the process during the RIOC Presidency of Jerome Blue (1966-1999).

One traditional rule for expenditures from the Public Purpose Fund has been a requirement that organizations receiving a one-shot grant provide for future self-sufficiency. The RIVAA grant request specifies that it will seek grants from the New York State Council for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Fund for Creative Communities, and from State and City officials, as well as anticipating an expansion of membership from 30 artists to 60 at an annual membership fee of \$200. The group also plans to offer classes, and anticipates they will produce \$10,000 in fees.

Artists join RIVAA through a jurying process in which their work is judged by existing members. They See **RIVAA**, page 2

Gallery RIVAA Marking One Year

The first anniversary of Gallery RIVAA (Roosevelt Island Visual Artists Association) will be celebrated Saturday, March 29, with an admission-free opening reception for the exhibition *Vernissage II*. The event is scheduled for 6:00-9:00 p.m.

Gallery RIVAA opened in March of 2002 after the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation provided unused space in the Rivercross storefront formerly occupied by Bigelow Pharmacy, and its artist-members prepared it for exhibitions with the help of RIOC staff. The opening exhibition was *Vernissage*, followed by four additional cycles of exhibitions. The gallery also hosts poetry readings (including one tomorrow, Sunday, March 23, at 4:00 p.m.) and the *Our Lives* series (including Erin Feely-Nahem Sunday, April 6).

Gallery hours are Wednesday and Friday, 6:00-9:00 p.m., and Saturday-Sunday, 11: a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Letters

To Patrick Siconolfi:

Users of public transport in New York City are shortly going to be paying substantially higher fares, and for riders of the Roosevelt Island Tram, for whom there are no discounts available, this will amount to an increase of 33%. If ridership remains the same this should result in an increase in fare revenues of \$400,000-\$500,000 per annum. It is my understanding that previous requests that the MetroCard be introduced for the Tram were rejected on the grounds that too much revenue would be lost, and it seems to me that this moment, when a substantial fare increase is being implemented and subway tokens are being phased out, represents a golden opportunity to introduce MetroCard to the Tram without a significant loss in revenue, while simultaneously mitigating the effects of the fare increase for Tram riders. If all Tram riders in future were to use multi-trip MetroCards, there would still be an 11% increase in fare revenue. While there might be some fare splitting with the MTA when Tram riders also use a bus or subway, this would work both ways. I know that when I use public transport to reach my office my preferred transport is Tram and Second Avenue bus, but as this is now two fares I use subway and crosstown bus.

Introducing MetroCard for the Tram would also

encourage Tram ridership among the new residents of Southtown, as I understand that most of them will be traveling to facilities in the York Avenue area, and a Second Avenue landing in Manhattan is likely to be more convenient than Lexington Avenue, unless it were to involve two fares.

Once MetroCard is implemented, and the Tram is better integrated into New York City public transport, RIOCI should be far more proactive in seeking a reasonable share of transport funding for the Tram, which is probably the only public transport in the country which is expected to be fully paid for by the users, either directly through fares or from other funds provided from the community's budget. Even privately-operated bus lines providing service to some of the outer areas of the City boroughs receive subsidies from the City. It seems to me that it might be easier to do this if Roosevelt Island transport were a separate entity and I therefore suggest that consideration should be given to establishing a Corporation that I shall call the Roosevelt Island Transport Corporation, which would be responsible for the Tram and the buses. I would expect it to be easier, with the help of our elected representatives, to obtain funding for this entity than for the general budget of RIOCI.

Geoffrey Kerr

To Marybeth Labate and Patrick Sinconolfi:

This week, I should be celebrating my 20th year on Roosevelt Island. And there is much to celebrate. But, as an eyewitness to the attacks on and the destruction of the World Trade Center, and as the resident who immediately called the Roosevelt Island Public Safety that morning to alert them to secure the Tramway after witnessing the first attack, I have a strong memory of feeling "insecure." I am sending you both this letter in the hope that DHCR and RIOCI will be a little more aggressive about securing the Island and its residents, employees, guests, bridges, Tramway and other assets as we go to war.

Adding hours to the already over-burdened and under-equipped (and sometimes inefficient) Public Safety Department is not enough. Even with the advent of warmer weather, it is disturbing to see Public Safety Officers still in the token booths, on their cell phones, reading newspapers at both Tram stations, when they should be out and about on the platforms, the surrounding areas, and (if they had binoculars) surveying the towers and their bases. Just getting the PSO on the Island side to face west would be more than enough to hope for. Removing or moving the bulletin board in that booth would open up a view of the station, cars, and tower area. I am also disappointed not to see anyone from the 114th Precinct keeping an eye on the Tram or at the blue substation near the subway station, as was previously done.

What steps are being taken to work with the 114th and 19th precincts to provide better coverage at the foot of the 36th Avenue Bridge and the base of the Tramway station in Manhattan, as well as the two towers in Manhattan? Are the police who are assigned to the two Health and Hospitals Corporation facilities on the Island being asked to provide some screening coverage at the base of the 36th Avenue Bridge or at the other end, by the garage and ramp entrances where, after September 11, it was mostly our PSOs providing the surveillance? Let's not forget that most of the cars that come here belong to the employees of the two hospitals. HHC could at least be asked to help in certain locations. Where is the police presence at and in our subway station? Where is some of the river and air presence I see at other locations around the City?

While Police Commissioner Kelly keeps making public statements about this alert, and Operations Atlas and Hercules, I would sure be interested in DHCR and RIOCI getting out some messages (and not waiting for *The WIRE* to come out) to the 10,000-or-so people living and working here, that they are doing everything possible, working with all local, State, and Federal agencies, to secure and promote our safety.

Budget

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pressed some concerns. "We don't have a whole lot of extra people," Kraut said. "If you need people to get something done, you've got to hire them."

Siconolfi said that "most of the separations were administrative staff." A breakdown of personnel accounts shows that spending for the wages of bus drivers and mechanics is supposed to decline by \$109,102. The grounds crew will be going down \$172,786. The only group showing an increase is the 38-member Public Safety Department, RIOCI's largest single employee unit. Projected salaries for Public Safety this fiscal year are \$1,242,900; the proposed budget would increase that amount by more than \$57,000.

Bargaining with the various union locals will determine the final numbers. But as RIOCI cuts its payroll, other expenses are going up, most notably for "consulting and legal/contractual" services - everything from auditors and engineers to elevator repairs and the outsourcing of information technology services. This category alone shows an increase of \$433,000, to \$647,000. Insurance premiums are expected to rise to nearly \$1.1 million, an increase of \$181,000, even without the addition of terrorism coverage, which is still being negotiated.

The bottom line, on the spending side, is a general fund budget of \$10,774,000, compared to \$10,835,000 this year.

On the revenue side, nearly \$10.9 million is expected for the general fund, a total that is little changed over

the past three years. The biggest source of this money, 43.4 percent of it, or almost \$4.7 million, will come from the tenants of Manhattan Park. The next largest contributors are the Motorgate parking garage, 14.2 percent, and the Tram, 14 percent.

The original "WIRE" housing developments on Roosevelt Island - Westview, Island House, Rivercross and Eastwood - buildings that account for 66 percent of the Island's currently available apartments - contribute 10.8 percent of the income to RIOCI's general fund. Almost all of this money, \$1,136,000 (no increase from 2002-03), is assessed for Public Safety, which is authorized to conduct patrols inside these buildings; Manhattan Park's contract is limited to perimeter patrols, according to Public Safety officials. Manhattan Park's share of the Public Safety budget is \$223,000.

Siconolfi this year broke out his ground rent request for Rivercross, a co-op, from its Mitchell-Lama step-sister, Island House, which is managed as a rental by Roosevelt Island Housing Management, Inc. (The other Mitchell-Lama buildings, Eastwood and Westview, are not charged ground rent.)

Last year, RIOCI budgeted a total of \$41,000 in ground rent from Island House and Rivercross. This year, it has broken the numbers out, calling for \$31,000 from Island House (no change), and \$12,000 from Rivercross, an increase of \$2,000. Rivercross has not paid its ground rent for 2002-03, according to RIOCI. The president of the Rivercross Board, John Weatherhead, did not reply to messages seeking comment on the question of how it intends to handle these charges.

These minor budget entries serve at most to raise the issue of fairness among the residents of Roosevelt Island, at least insofar as RIOCI has chosen to illustrate the problem during Siconolfi's tenure as chief financial officer. Simple arithmetic shows that the full range of RIOCI services amounts to about \$4,266 per year in direct charges for each Manhattan Park apartment, while the "WIRE" households are charged only \$528, even though the era of state subsidies is almost universally described here as having ended with the ascension of the Pataki administration. In his budget materials, Siconolfi has tried to point out the extreme disparities that have developed over the past several years, but he appears to have had little success in generating a debate about this issue by the RIOCI board.

Other budget entries hint at policy changes.

For example, "Main Street Parking," which is expected to finish this year with revenue of \$76,000, is proposed at \$100,000 in 2003-04, an increase of more than 30 percent. Island activists have been clamoring for stricter enforcement of parking regulations, and this could well be RIOCI's response.

"Commercial Rent" is another entry in this category. RIOCI is counting on its Main Street business tenants to provide 7.4 percent of the budget next year, compared with 7 percent in 2002-03, an increase of \$43,000. As Siconolfi described it to the Board, RIOCI is trying to "maximize the value of its assets" and has sought to convert "nonperforming [assets] to performing assets." This was a polite reference, in part, to bringing in a card shop operator who will pay his rent.

The most opaque aspect of RIOCI's budget picture is its treatment of Southtown revenue, more than \$3.6 million for 2003-04, which has been largely dedicated to pay for Island repairs and projects, and to set up a restricted capital or endowment fund. Siconolfi said that a \$2.1 million payment from Southtown Building No. 1 shows up in the budget as \$33,000 because the money is subject to amortization over the 65-year life of the lease. "Even though the cash will be in hand - it will be in the bank - we will recognize a very small piece of it each year," he said. This is a method of sheltering the money for future uses, he said.

Siconolfi told the Board that substantial additional payments are still being negotiated.

"Unrestricted" money from Southtown, \$616,000, has been budgeted next year for numerous maintenance and repair projects (work on the AVAC system, the esplanade and playgrounds, even \$175,000 in legal fees, among other entries). That leaves \$3 million to be used for long-term, big-ticket items. RIOCI has devised a capital management plan to account for these expenditures. A new Tram cabin (\$500,000) is part of it, as are some of the costs of fixing Blackwell House and improving the plaza of the Good Shepherd chapel.

More than \$2 million, however, is basically going into the bank, dedicated to the Island's future capital needs.

While the budget was presented at last week's RIOCI Board meeting, it was not passed, and will be considered at the April meeting, currently set for Thursday evening, April 10. [When the budget is made available after final approval, it will be posted on *Website NYC10044* at www.nyc10044.com.]

Editor's note: RIOCI public relations representative John Melia tells *The WIRE* that specifics of Roosevelt Island preparedness are under the jurisdiction of City and State authorities, and will not be publicized, as a matter of security.

Nina Lublin

Letters deadline for April 12 issue: Monday, April 7
Letters received after deadline will be considered on a space-available basis.

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters to the Editor, to the community, and to/from officials. Publication on a *Name Withheld* basis will be considered, but the writer's name, address, and phone number **must** be provided for verification and for our records; 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 (to fax, 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**.


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RIVAA

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are required to pledge volunteer time, including gallery-sitting. The current proposal envisions that "the new Artist Studio Facility will provide RIVAA members free day and evening access to... studios," monitored by trained volunteers. It also anticipates making the studios available to "non-members on a limited time basis at low-cost hourly rates, thereby encouraging non-members to take classes at the studios and to become participating members of RIVAA." According to the proposal, classes will be offered weekly for three-month periods.

RIVAA is headed by Arline Jacoby, President; and Vice Presidents Tad Sudol and Esther Piaskowski Cohen.

Island’s Pre-K Programs to Continue

by Linda Humphrey
As the State threatens to slash pre-kindergarten funds, the Island’s public school and Day Nursery plan to keep their programs afloat with grants, fund-raising, and parent volunteers.
“We will probably lose the funding, but I am hopeful that we will still have pre-K classes, said Sherry J. Gregory, principal of PS 217,

which already has registered four-year-olds for morning and afternoon classes. “We will look for other funding and will probably ask parents to help.” The two-and-a-half-hour-a-day program may lose its paraprofessional (assistant teacher) and family worker (a social worker who holds parent workshops), Gregory said.
The State’s pre-K program,

launched in 1997, allots about \$3,000 per child, depending on the school. At the Roosevelt Island Day Nursery, the funding has slashed pre-K tuition for the past three years. Director Sara Seiden plans to register four-year-olds on Monday at the full cost – \$10,500 – with a proviso that, if the funding comes through, tuition will be reduced by about \$3,000.

“I worked for several years to get this pre-K funding,” Seiden said. “It has made our seven-hour program much more affordable. A lot of people on Roosevelt Island can’t afford a program like this. If we lose this funding we will have to try to find a way to do an affordable program.” Seiden said she might add half-day pre-K classes and will seek scholarship money through fund-raising and grants.

Information and updates on pre-K funding are available on the web at www.winningbeginningny.org.

Card Shop Renovating

by Mary Camper-Titsingh
“All of the services provided by the former Roosevelt Island Corner Store [the Card Shop] will remain the same,” says Rakesh Patel, the new owner of the shop where Islanders have bought their newspapers and lottery tickets for many years.

“Ali Khan, the former owner, gained much respect in this community and we hope to do the same,” Patel told *The WIRE* Tuesday. “We are remodeling the shop with wider aisles so that our customers can move around more easily. The carpet was installed yesterday and the new front door will provide easier access for customers in wheelchairs,” he said over the din of carpenters hammering away at new display shelves.

Patel arrived in the United States on December 28, 1990, from western India, and became an American citizen in 1996. He and his wife, Kilpa, have two small boys, one five years old, the other eleven months. Ankit, his young nephew, often comes to help in the store on weekends.

One of Patel’s brothers, employed as a supervisor at the Coler campus of Coler-Goldwater Hospital, became aware that the store here was for sale, and in 2003 he and his three brothers purchased it and added it to the three other newsstand shops they own in the New York City suburbs.

They plan to add some new services and merchandise to the current fax and copy machines, magazines, cards, office and school supplies, gifts, candy, and sodas. There will be a bill-payment center. MetroCards and tickets for Atlantic City bus trips will also be available in the future. Credit cards may be used for purchases other than cigarettes and newspapers, but Patel is waiting to see if there is a demand for video games or cell phones. The shop is open while remodeling goes on.

If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant.

—Anne Bradstreet, *Meditations Divine and Moral*

Spring has finally come to Roosevelt Island, and not a moment too soon! Last weekend saw temperatures in the 60’s for the first time since last September. Friday heralded the vernal equinox and the start of our Island’s most glorious season. Buds are on the trees; can fragrant cherry blossoms be far behind?

I made it my business last week to meet with the heads of employee housing for Cornell/Weill Medical College and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. These folks represent the hospital employees and medical school faculty who will inhabit the first two buildings of Southtown. Occupancy seems likely for some time this summer.

My intentions were twofold: first, to establish a relationship between these two institutions and the Roosevelt Island community through its elected representative, RIRA. With the arrival of these newcomers looming, it’s time to consider how to incorporate this new population into the flow and vitality of Island life. The Common Council will need to revise its constitution to accommodate new Southtown members in numbers proportionate to the other residential buildings. Also, we shall need to consider the impact on our policing and public safety, on traffic and parking capacity, on classroom capacity at PS/IS 217, on commuter transportation on our overcrowded F train and Tram, and, of course, on the printing and distribution of this newspaper. Hospital representatives have begun visiting our streets and I hope to discuss with them how best to make these junior faculty and staff members not only welcome but also incorporated (as much as their busy schedules allow) as a part of this unique, civic-minded example of small-town America.

My second issue was that of the Tram and MetroCard service. It seems likely that these new residents will commute to work almost exclusively by Tram. This will increase the population of Tram riders who are inconvenienced by our inability to avail ourselves of the MetroCard system and also, inevitably, will increase the revenue at the fare box. I suggested to the hospital housing reps that their Boards and supporters, composed of the cream of New York soci-

ety and some of the most influential people in this town, might be prevailed upon to use that influence in bringing about this obvious improvement.

The Tram fares are linked by franchise agreement with the City to subway and bus fares, and so Tram riders will be obliged to pay \$2.00 along with the rest of New York’s straphangers. And with the phasing out of tokens, the Roosevelt Island Tram may be the last vestige of this century-old form of payment. If ever the time was ripe to incorporate our Tram into the MetroCard system, it’s now. Our elected officials are on record in favor of this idea, and Community Board 8 passed a unanimous resolution to that effect last June. Even in a time of fiscal austerity, this modest proposal should be able to find proponents and financing. I intend to keep plugging away at this until we are successful or I’m convinced that it’s a waste of time. Stay tuned.

Tonight – Saturday, March 22 – marks the first fund-raising event of the new RIRA Common Council. You may recall the dinner-dance we produced in March 2001 that raised the bulk of the money we needed to provide the many events and services that marked the last Common Council: free break fasts for volunteers on Roosevelt Island Day, dances on the Promenade, Thanksgiving dinner for the firefighters at our FDNY Special Ops firehouse, and, of course, the plaque and cherry tree located in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd plaza and dedicated last April to the memory of our September 11th victims.

Once again, Vicki Feinmel and her team have had the inspiration, done the planning, and accomplished the scut work that events like tonight’s auction require. Several years ago, the Maple Tree Group sponsored an auction that put over one hundred items on the auction block. It was not just a successful fundraiser, it was loads of fun. This time, we will offer an eclectic variety of goods and services including fine jewelry, theater tickets, FreshDirect gift certificates, original artworks, dance lessons, fitness classes, and much, much more including a dental exam! There are bargains galore with refreshments available, so come on down to the Senior Center and support your Residents Association. How often do you get the chance to do well by doing good? Doors open at 6:30 p.m., with bidding to start at 7:30 p.m. How much am I bid for Sunday morning breakfast by a master short-order cook (me)?



Matthew Katz
Residents Association President
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PS 217 Among Most Improved

The Roosevelt Island School has won a “most-improved” award from the State Education Department. Twenty-five Manhattan schools made the statewide list, based on fourth-grade reading-test scores. PS 217’s 2002 scores shot up 25% over those of 1999, Principal Sherry Gregory said, adding that fourth-graders now focus on literacy for “most of the morning.”

COMING UP

– This Weekend –

Gallery RIVAA hours Saturday and Sunday, 11:00-5:00.
Sculptures of Roosevelt Islander Maureen Leong on exhibit daily 3:00-7:00 p.m. at Rongio Gallery, 201 Eastern Parkway, Suite 5C, Brooklyn. For information: **1-718-636-0892**.

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

RIRA Auction Fund-Raiser, the Senior Center, **Sat., Mar. 22, 6:30** for viewing, auction starts at 7:30 p.m.

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



Poet Helen Roht

– The Coming Week –

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.



At Gallery RIVAA

– Future Events –

Concert: The Tex Allen Septet, recording live, **Sun., Mar. 30, 2:30 p.m.**, St. Mark’s Church, East 10th Street at Second Avenue. Admission, \$20; reception after concert.

Memorial Service for Abe Shulman, **Mon., Mar. 31, 12:30 p.m.**, Senior Center.

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.**

RIOC Board Meeting, **Thur., Apr. 10**, evening, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

The Main Street WIRE – next scheduled issue, **Sat., Apr. 12. Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., Apr. 4; decision on stuffers for *The Bag*, Mon., Apr. 7; bag materials due Thur., Apr. 10. **Future issues:** Apr. 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.

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

The Abandoned Quarantine Islands of New York, photographic voyage to institutions on Swinburne, North Brother, South Brother, and Hart Islands, with Molly McDonald, presented by the Roosevelt Island Historical Society. Island House community room, 555 Main Street, **Mon., Apr. 28, 7:30 p.m.**

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*. Be sure to provide a telephone number for possible follow-up.

Senior Center

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

Tuesday
9:00-11:00, **Free Tax Filing Help**
10-11, **Dance & Relax**
10-11, **Latchhook Class**
6:30, **Yoga Class**
7:30, **Games (RISA)**

Wednesday
9:15, **Stay Well**
10-12, **Elder Craftsmen**
7:00, **Pokeno (RISA)**

Thursday
10:00, **Tai Chi**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
12:30, **Movie**
3:00, **Computer Class** (advance registration required)
7:00, **Dance Class** (Advanced)

Friday
9:30, **Yoga Stretch** (new time)
1:00, **Bridge Class**
7:00, **Games (RISA)**

Saturday
7:30, **Bingo (RISA)**

Special Events

Thur., Mar. 27, 3:00, RISA Goes to the Circus

Fri., Mar. 28, 12:30, Birthday Party
Sun., Mar. 30, 2:00, Sunday Brunch

Mon., Mar. 31, 12:30 p.m., Memorial Service for Abe Shulman, at the Senior Center

Tue., Apr. 8, 7:00 p.m., General nominations meeting

Wed., Apr. 16, 9:00, Atlantic City trip

Fri., Apr. 25, 12:30, Birthday party
Sat., Apr. 26, 6:30, Seder

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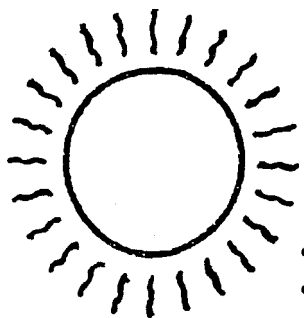
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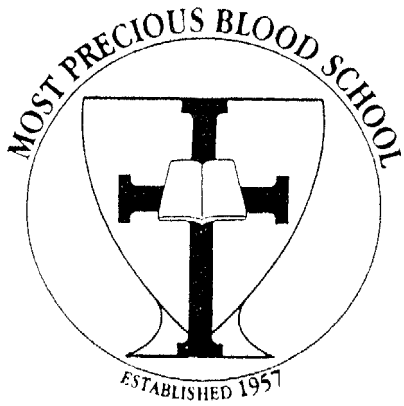
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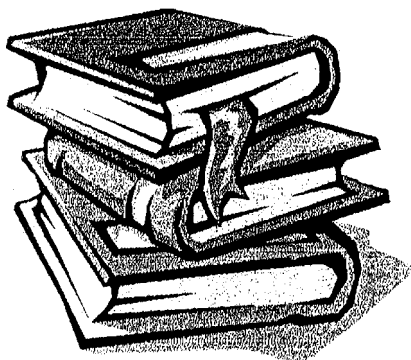


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Tramway from page 1

the investigation of whether it should, should begin.” He also pointed out that two of the track ropes – fixed wires that are the equivalent of railroad tracks – can no longer be repositioned to relieve the pressure on contact points, because they have gotten too short after years of adjustments. Those wires will have to be replaced.

Board member David Kraut emphasized the unique nature of the Island's system. “No one does it anywhere else in the world, and so virtually every step we take is a new step,” he said. “We're making policy here for how to run a tramway as a commuter transportation system.”

In looking over the engineering reports, Kraut estimated that the cost of upgrading the system would be at least \$5 million. “With the exception of the towers themselves, virtually every part of the tram is probably going to need replacement over the next 10 years

at a huge, for us, capitalization,” he said.

Board member Mark Ponton raised several basic questions. First, how can you tell when a carriage or cabin is getting worn out?

Wollum noted that the carriage, like an airplane, is fashioned from aluminum. “Aluminum is not quite so predictable as steel, and it needs a more thorough analysis,” he said.

“Steel always gives some warning signs that are fairly easy to determine with nondestructive testing, and we've approached at least one company that does monitoring and analysis of aluminum parts and we have a quote from them for that work.” The cabin itself is mostly aluminum, too, he said.

Ponton later questioned Siconolfi about the logic of replacing just one of the Tram cabins this year. “It seems to me they both start on the same day, they both run at the same time,” he said. “We're either doing one too early or one too late, I think. And I want to know which one I should ride on, among other things.”

Siconolfi said: “Both will be replaced earlier than necessary, is the answer to your question.” He said that Doppelmayer and RIOCI's engineers from Kinley-Horn and Associates, a major consulting company, had determined that “starting five years from now” is when the “buckets [cabins] and the hangers” need to be replaced.

Siconolfi said that he and Vincent Kopicki, RIOCI's director of engineering and capital projects, and their consultants had discussed “how close to the edge do you want to play it.”

The decision, he said, was: “Let's do it sooner rather than later. So if you do one this year and one next year we will still be early.”

Siconolfi said that a custom-built cabin would take eight months to build, and Wollum said that it would take about two weeks to install.

Ponton suggested that both cabins be replaced at about the same time, in order to minimize downtime, and added that if the work had to span two fiscal years, one cabin could be installed at the end of March 2004, and the other one in early April 2005. But Siconolfi said both cabins could be replaced in the same fiscal year, if the board wanted to do so.

Siconolfi also suggested that people should start thinking about possible “imaginative” uses for the old cabins.

Mary Beth Labate, who chairs the RIOCI board, brought up the question of the \$2 Tram fare, which will take effect in May. Under the Island's franchise agreement with the city, the Tram fare has to match the Metropolitan Transit Authority's standard subway and bus fare, which is going up by 50 cents. “Now might be an opportune time to push harder on the Metrocard,” Labate said, in other words, tying in the Tram to the rest of the MTA system.

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by Seth Kaufman

SPORTSWIRE

Basketball Red in the 14-16 Division and Orange in the 11-13 Division captured the 2003 championships in the Youth Program's Winter Basketball League.

In the championship game in the 14-16 Division, Red defeated Blue 83-80 in an enormously exciting game that was not decided until the final seconds. Red, behind strong three-point shooting, built a 12-point lead at the half, 44-32, and the lead remained in double digits for most of the second half. However, Blue scored 10 straight points to tie the game at 72 with less than five minutes remaining. The intensity continued to build as the score was tied again at 74, 76, and 78. With thirty seconds left in the game, Deshawn Pearson scored to give Blue a two-point lead. However, with 10 seconds remaining, Chris Chatman scored, was fouled and converted the free throw to put Red back in front 81-80. Blue had one last chance but could not convert, and Chris Chatman added two free throws with 1.4 seconds left on the clock to seal the victory. Chris was the leading scorer in the game with 36 points, but received important help from Mirza Avdovic with 17, Fabian Williams with 15, and Remy Armenakis with 11. Blue was led by Lamar Burrows with 31 points, while Karam Hider scored 14, Andrew Rousseau scored 13, and Deshawn Pearson added 11. Congratulations to all of the members of the championship Red team – Dax Armenakis, Remy Armenakis, Mirza Avdovic, Fode Bah, Matthew Brodsky, Chris Chatman, Seif Dorani, Eric Miranda, and Fabian Williams – and their coaches, Jim Armenakis and Felix Santella.

In the 11-13 Division championship game, Orange upset the first-place Green team 57-49 in a game that was closer than the final score would indicate. Green led at the half 27-23; however, Orange came back and overtook Green as Joshua Hart scored 13 of his 23 points in the second half, David Dinkins had 12 of his 17 points, and Jonathan Douglas added 7 of his 11 points. For Green, Joshua Cushnie had a game-high 27 points, while Vernon Thomas scored 14 and Emilio Estevez added 6. Congratulations to all of the members of the championship Orange team – Mark Anderson, David Dinkins, Jonathan Douglas, Nachiketa Goyal, Joshua Hart, Massi Ladjouzi, Noel Polanco, Seth Vacirca, and David Walker – and their coaches, James Hart and Mike Cagle.

Baseball Evaluations for the Minors (ages 8-10) will be held at 2:00 p.m. Saturday, March 22, in the PS/IS 217 gym. Evaluations for the Majors (ages 11-13) will be held at 11:00 a.m. Saturday, March 29, at Capobianco Field (opposite Westview).



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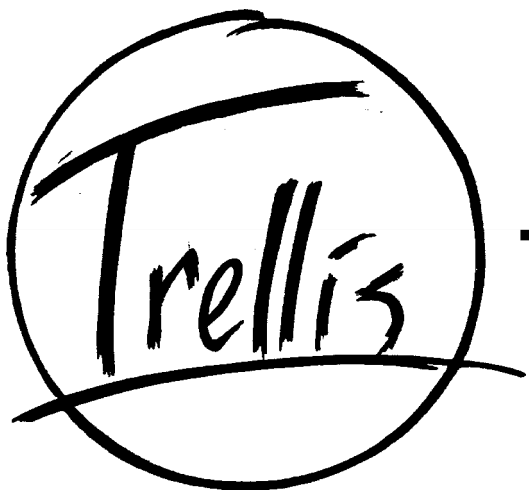
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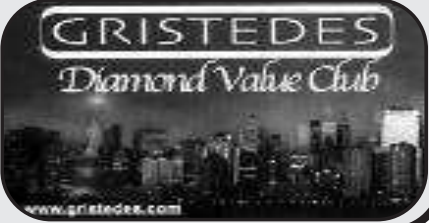


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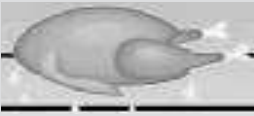


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