

Next scheduled issue
in three weeks:
Saturday, May 17

The Main Street **WIRE**TM

Roosevelt Island’s Community Newspaper

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



How About a Picnic Sunday? The grassy southernmost point of Roosevelt Island, used on the Fourth of July as a fireworks seating area for VIPs, has been seen by few Islanders. This week, it and much of the rest of Southpoint opened for public use.

Southpoint Park Is Open

RIOC opened Southpoint to the public on Wednesday. The park is open daily until a half-hour before sunset. A new chain-link fence, ten feet high in most places, keeps visitors from getting up close and personal with the dangerous ruins of the Smallpox Hospital or close to the restored Strecker Laboratory, but there is adequate space for picnicking, exercising, or contemplating the extraordinary views of Manhattan, including the United Nations. The ten-acre area was made ready for use as a park on an initiative presented to the RIOC Board of Directors by its newest member, Mark Ponton, a longtime Island resident.

Tram Ride Goes to \$2 May 4, But What About MetroCard?

The fare on the Roosevelt Island Tramway will go to \$2 starting 12:01 a.m. May 4, keeping it in line with the cost of a subway ride. That was the word this week from the Acting President of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), Patrick Siconolfi. The change is required by the franchise agreement with the City under which RIOC runs the Tramway. But neither Siconolfi nor MTA officials had much of anything to say about the long-delayed addition of the Tramway to the MetroCard, though Lawrence Reuter, MTA President, told Residents Association President Matthew Katz that after a year or more of work, “We think we’ve basically laid out a framework to get RIOC involved.” Katz addressed Reuter and members of the MTA Board and staff at the annual “MTA President’s Forum,” reminding Reuter that 14 months ago they had agreed that Katz would act as an honest broker in attempting to get the MTA and RIOC together on a deal for MetroCard on the Tram. “When I spoke here 14 months ago,” Katz told Reuter, “I said that this was an idea whose time had come. I was mistaken. The Tram should have been included ten years ago when the MetroCard was brought on line.”

See **MetroCard**, page 10

Islanders

On a Journey from Agnosticism to the Ministry, a Brief Diversion in Design

by Anusha Shrivastava

When the chickens they were trying to raise at school died, teachers asked students to pen their views on death. Christopher Calderhead wrote simply: “You are dead when you are dead. That’s it.” Raised by agnostic parents, Rev. Calderhead, then 11, says he was a “militant atheist.” He never went to church and believed there was neither mystery nor spiritual angle to death, or even, for that matter, to life. Six months later, the militant stance melted, giving way to curiosity about faith, religion, and God. Swelling year after year, the spirit of inquiry grew until Calderhead realized he wanted to become a priest. He says a quote by Frederick Buechner resonated deeply for him:

“Your vocation is where your joy meets the world’s need.” By age 30, he says, he derived very little pleasure from the paycheck he got as a freelance graphic designer and calligrapher, preferring to do the hard work of a volunteer at the Church of the Redeemer in Astoria instead. Today, his ministry is on Roosevelt Island as half-time priest of the ecumenical congregation. Calderhead’s passion for calligraphy and pen-lettering never diminished. As a teenager, he had spent a lot of time helping his father at his advertising agency and, even though he assumed he would have to give up art entirely once he became a priest, Calderhead, 40, says he is now much more of an artist than he ever was. As an elected fellow of the Society of Scribes and Illuminators, a

Bloomberg Killing AVAC in His “Best Case” Budget Scenario

Threat to Shut Down Refuse System Is Real and Immediate

by Robert Laux-Bachand

At a Community Board 8 meeting Thursday night, an aide to Rep. Carolyn Maloney announced that in a conversation with New York City Commissioner of Sanitation John J. Doherty, he agreed to continue City operation of Roosevelt Island’s AVAC system “until the end of June or until the City budget is passed, whichever comes first.”

Maloney’s call to Doherty, made at the suggestion of Jessica Lappin, an aide to City Council Speaker Gifford Miller, came at the end of a week in which the Island’s AVAC system appeared, more than ever before, to be threatened by City budget cutbacks. Earlier, the Department of Sanitation had announced that it would stop operating the garbage collection system on May 16.

Notice of the plan came in Thursday’s mail, in a letter to RIOC Acting President Patrick Siconolfi from Doherty (see page 7), confirming reports that the AVAC system would be one of the casualties in Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg’s proposal to save \$600 million by cutting jobs and services.

Bloomberg’s “best-case” \$44.5 billion budget, released this month, would reduce the City’s workforce of 250,000 by about 4,500 positions, including thousands of layoffs. The Sanitation Department would absorb about 10 percent of the mayor’s overall spending cuts, and would reduce its payroll by more than 270 employees.

To a resident of Brooklyn, Queens, or Staten Island, it translates into a reduction in the number of weekly curbside garbage pickups, from three to two, or two to one. In some parts of Manhattan, there would be fewer collections of recycled material, and perhaps, in some neighborhoods, some lessening of specialized ser-

vices.

And on Roosevelt Island, there would be: Nothing?

That was the blunt assertion in the April 21 letter from Doherty to Siconolfi.

No longer, said Doherty, will the

City provide a crew to operate AVAC, the vacuum system that collects garbage from the residences and school on Roosevelt Island. “The annual cost of operating and maintaining the AVAC

See **AVAC**, page 7

Grannis to Residents: Help in Fight on Rent Law

by Dick Lutz

“Rent regulation is not just a New York City issue. It’s a State-wide issue.”

That was the mantra Tuesday night as Assemblymember Pete Grannis and others urged City residents, including Roosevelt Islanders, to lay siege to Albany on Tuesday, May 13. That’s the date for a “Showdown 2003” rally on the capitol grounds. The Roosevelt Island Residents Association plans to send a bus, funded by City Council Speaker Gifford Miller.

Grannis, who represents Roosevelt Island and was Chair of the Assembly Housing Committee for a decade, told some 300 people who gathered at a Hunter College lecture hall, “We’ve never had a fight like the fight we had last time [1997], and we’ve never had a fight like we’re going to have this year.”

The “fight” is to pass legislation – already approved in the Democrat-controlled Assembly – in the Republican-controlled State Senate, and then get the Governor’s signature on it to make it law. And from the urgency and concern expressed at the Tuesday night town-hall meeting,

See **Housing**, page 8

Grannis to Bloomberg: Don’t Change GDP for Octagon Apartments

Assemblymember Pete Grannis has taken an additional step in his opposition to the Octagon Apartments project, asking Mayor Michael Bloomberg to turn down any request from the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) for an agreement to change Roosevelt Island’s General Development Plan (GDP) to accommodate the project.

In an April 10 letter, Grannis tells Bloomberg that the open-spaces legislation signed by Governor George Pataki in September forbids development at the Octagon site, a position he announced through an aide at RIOC’s December 14 hearing on the Octagon plan. “Even were you to approve this [GDP] amendment,” Grannis tells Bloomberg, “this project cannot go forward under [that] law as well as the doctrine of public trust which protects the open space in this area as public parkland.”

In response to an inquiry from *The WIRE*, the president of the Connecticut architectural firm seeking to build the Octagon project, Bruce Becker, says, “My own reading of the legislation is that it clearly supports our plans.” Becker adds that the project serves several Grannis goals – “affordable housing, sustainable ‘green’ design, and the creation of jobs and public parks.”

Grannis goes on to explain the

“doctrine of public trust,” writing, “The courts in New York have liberally applied a public trust status to formally- and informally-dedicated municipal parkland requiring State legislative approval for alienation or change of use... Actions by the City, State, and Federal governments, as well as RIOC itself... have resulted in reasonable public expectations spanning many years that this land would remain open

See **Octagon**, page 8

Grannis Offers Bill for Election of RIOC Board

Assemblymember Pete Grannis announced Thursday night that he has reintroduced legislation calling for election of the RIOC Board by residents of Roosevelt Island.

The bill is a repeat of his bill last session; the number is A8138.

Grannis made the announcement at PS 217 on the Island, at a meeting of Community Board 8.

In the last legislative session, compromises changed the legislation to provide for residents to hold a majority of the seats on the Board, but as appointees of the Governor. However, a provision was added to the bill to protect open spaces on the Island from being developed as anything other than parks.



London-based organization, Calderhead continues to work as a graphic artist and teach calligraphy

See **Calderhead**, page 10

The Editorial Page

Muscle

If you wanted to compile a list of threats to Roosevelt Island, this would be a good week to do it – a good month, in fact, and a good year.

You can start with the City budget, in which the Mayor has proposed to shut down Engine Company 261 of Queens. It's Roosevelt Island's second-response unit, but given the large population of disabled here, and the hospitals, and Southtown on line soon, loss of that nearby unit could be a serious threat in a worst-case situation of multiple fires or a terrorist attack. We live on an Island, after all, dependent upon bridges, subway, and Tram, and with a power plant as neighbor – all potential terror targets.

Then there's the Mayor's "best-case" budget, which terminates the AVAC system which, for so many years, has kept garbage collection here quiet, sanitary, and vermin-free. The Island is *simply not set up* for ordinary handling of household refuse, and the image of tons of garbage piling up on Main Street is horrendous to contemplate.

And how about threats to affordable housing? Originally, badly-needed affordable housing was the *raison d'être* for turning this Island into a residential community, and the Mitchell-Lama program shaped its character every bit as much as did its special Island nature. The disappearance of affordable housing could alter the Island's character dramatically.

And the Tramway fare being forced up to \$2, keeping it in line with subway and bus fares by virtue of the franchise agreement with the City, is also a threat. It's a threat, of sorts, to the Tramway, as long as there is no way to use MetroCard on the system, with the free transfers MetroCard provides. At a \$2 figure, more and more Islanders will place higher value on that free transfer, and the Tramway could lose as much as it might gain from the increased fare.

All of that is why muscle is important. We mean *political muscle*, of course, and over the past two weeks we've seen a good deal of it being exercised on our behalf – and we can expect to see more.

But we must help.

Pete Grannis, our Assemblymember, is all over page 1 of this issue of *The WIRE* because he is active on our behalf – active on affordable housing, on defending our GDP and parkland, on getting fulfillment of the September, 2002, law calling for a majority of appointed residents on the RIOCI Board, and on the continuing issue of *election* of the RIOCI Board of Directors.

City Council Speaker Gifford Miller and his aide, Jessica Lappin, are working for us, too – playing a crucial role in shaping the City budget, hopefully so that the AVAC system remains part of the City's refuse-collection commitment to the Island.

And on Thursday, Rep. Carolyn Maloney worked with Miller's office on the AVAC problem – making a critically important call to the Commissioner of Sanitation.

But the real muscle of Roosevelt Island depends on you and an active involvement on your part. You may be called upon to help fight for the AVAC system, as you are being asked to fight for Engine 261 (see Sunday listing, page 3, *ComingUp*).

But note that on page 1 Pete Grannis is calling for you to take a Tuesday off work and help him, in Albany, by swelling the numbers of people demanding extension and strengthening of affordable-housing law. The more muscle we exhibit on our own behalf, the more we'll amplify the power of our helpful politicians. You can get on the Island's bus to Albany (funded by Speaker Miller, incidentally), by calling **1-212-935-7534**.

Add your muscle to the effort. We'll keep you posted on just how you can do that as the catalog of threats changes and develops.

DL



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Governor George E. Pataki
The Executive Chamber
Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Pataki:

I am writing to urge you to fulfill your commitment to the residents of Roosevelt Island to appoint four Island residents to the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation Board of Directors as required by Chapter 493 of the Laws of 2002. This would create, for the first time, a Board with a majority of Island residents, an important step in fulfilling the residents' goal of self-governance.

The recent resignation of Dr. Joan Dawson and the upcoming expiration of Leo Kayser's term in June provide you with the opportunity to appoint two new resident directors. With these appointments, the Board's composition will be in compliance with the legislation you signed into law last year.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Alexander B. Grannis
Member of Assembly

To the Editor:

My husband and I live in Westview, directly above our PS/IS 217's schoolyard. I am writing this because of a response I just received after having made my second call to the school office to ask them to please discontinue the use of the bullhorn, which they allow their assistants in the yard to use when "speaking" to the kids.

I had called a while ago, from Manhattan, and could not hear my husband but could hear loud and clear the kids and the person on the bullhorn in the schoolyard. I immediately called the school after we hung up and was told they'd stop the use of the bullhorn. My husband also has called because they did not discontinue use of the bullhorn. (Keep in mind that this is happening when our windows have been closed against the cold.)

Today I called when the bullhorn was again in use and was told that we were to call Doryne Isley of RIHMC! Dumbfounded, I asked what she could do about this noise problem that clearly emanates from their property. The person I spoke with didn't know the answer to that. I have spoken with Ms. Isley and she has promised to hear the level of noise for herself from an apartment window and to intercede on our behalf.

It seems to me that short of putting up much thicker glass windows in our apartment and all of the apartments that abut the schoolyard, RIHMC has absolutely no way of dealing with this problem and definitely no jurisdiction over the school. Only the school can resolve this problem.

In the Spring and Fall when our windows are often open in the nice weather, we know that we will have a certain amount of volume from the kids for set periods of time.

Letters deadline for May 17 issue: May 12
After deadline, letters 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 (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.

To Mayor Michael Bloomberg:

I understand that the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOCI) is engaged in discussion with staff at the Department of Housing Preservation and Development regarding the development of a 500-unit apartment complex known as the Octagon Apartments Project on land that is designated as Octagon Park in the Roosevelt Island General Development Plan (GDP). In order for this project to proceed, it is clear that the City must first approve an amendment to the GDP. For the reasons set out below, I believe that, even were you to approve this amendment, which I call on you not to do at this time, this project cannot go forward under current State law as well as the doctrine of public trust which protects the open space in this area as public parkland.

Chapter 493 of the Laws of 2002, signed by Governor Pataki on September 6, 2002, was enacted specifically to protect the limited open spaces on Roosevelt Island set out in the current GDP from development. As I have advised RIOCI officials, both the letter and the intent of this statute preclude the alienation of open space within Octagon Park. Rather than reiterating my argument on this point, I ask that you review the attached statement which I presented at RIOCI's December 12, 2002, public hearing on this project.

Even without the prohibition in Chapter 493, however, I believe that the dedicated open space in Octagon Park falls under the protection of the public trust doctrine and cannot be alienated without the approval of the Legislature. The courts in New York have liberally applied a public trust status to formally and informally dedicated municipal parkland requiring State legislative approval for alienation or change of use. The open space in question merits protection under the public trust doctrine as the result of actions by the City, State, and Federal governments, as well as RIOCI itself, which have resulted in reasonable public expectations spanning many years that this land would remain open and available for public use and enjoyment in some park-like manner.

From the initial stages of the development of this acclaimed planned community by the State Urban Development Corporation and its visionary chairman Ed Logue in the late 1960s, the area surrounding the landmarked Octagon Tower has been referenced in the GDP as open space/parkland.

By their repeated actions, the State and RIOCI have also treated this site as parkland. Over the years, RIOCI has sought and been awarded a series of grants for designing and developing the area surrounding the Octagon Tower as open parkland and for stabilizing and restoring its sole structure, the Tower itself, which have furthered the public's expectations for the completion of the long-standing plan for the creation of Octagon Park. Among these are grants in 1987, 1989, and 1990 from the Environmental Quality Bond Act awarded by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). The \$1 million 1990 grant is particularly in point as it was from the 1986 EQBA's Municipal Parks Program. In addition to these grants, the National Endowment for the Arts joined forces with the state OPRHP in funding a request by RIOCI for a grant for a conceptual design for stabilizing the Octagon Tower as parkland. This well thought out plan, in which there was significant input and participation by Island residents, was hailed as "Roosevelt Island's Central Park" in the January 1991 edition of *Landscape Architecture* (see attached).

More recently, the City's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), under a Memorandum of Understanding with RIOCI dated July 29, 1994, committed to fund contracts of approximately \$3.4 million for restoration of Octagon Park as an open public recreation area following disruptions from work by the agency in conjunction with construction of the Third Water Tunnel.

Given the statutory protections governing the Island's open spaces, as well as the long-held public expectation that the open spaces in Octagon Park would continue as areas of recreation, relaxation, and enjoyment, I respectfully ask that you not approve any amendment to the Roosevelt Island General Development Plan that seeks to alienate delineated open space for the Octagon Apartments or any other project on this site.

Thank you for your attention to this request. If I can provide additional information, or if you or your staff wish to discuss this matter, please feel free to call me.

Alexander B. Grannis
Member of Assembly
[copies to RIRA, RIOCI, and others]

However, we believe that the more you raise the volume on one end with the bullhorns, the louder the kids become to override that volume, and so on and so on. In essence, everyone out there becomes desensitized to the higher and

higher volume levels. Those who are in control are responsible for the decibel level and it appears that Ms. Gregory and her staff refuse to take control of a situation that is creating, unnecessarily, very angry neighbors. This community has a good relationship with the school, but common courtesy needs to work both ways.

For Westview and Manhattan Park tenants whose windows face the schoolyard, I would strongly urge you to call Ms. Gregory – **1-212-980-0294**. The buck stops at her desk.

Sherie Helstien
Copies: Doryne Isley,
Sherry Gregory

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

Exponent of Isadora Duncan at *First-Sunday* Session



A dancer-teacher-artist who has devoted her life to transmitting the dance legacy of Isadora Duncan will be featured next weekend at the *Roosevelt Islanders Reminisce* session at the RIVAA Gallery. The event is set for 5:00 p.m. Sunday, May 4. Pictured at left as she danced in 1945, Julia Levien-Golden will be assisted in the dance-art-sculpture presentation by her sister, Ruth Jucovy, and by dancer Adrienne Ramm. Pianist Roy Eaton will accompany. Levien-Golden is considered the leading authority on Duncan's dance technique and choreography. She is a former president of the Duncan Dance Teacher's Guild and one of Duncan's original touring dancers.



Spring on Roosevelt Island is a gift from the gods and reason enough to live here. This year's slip-sliding run-up to better weather has been tentative and stumbling, but it seems that Nature finally has agreed to stop teasing us and the cherry blossoms have responded in kind. Last issue I mentioned the joys of baseball, but it seems that only the Yankees were paying attention. If my column jinxed the Mets (baseball is my one superstition) I will try to make amends by appropriate fasting and burnt offerings. Couldn't hurt. Speaking of my last column, I mentioned that Southpoint was being prepared for general use rather than only for the once-a-year Fourth of July fireworks.

I'm happy to report that, effective last Wednesday, Southpoint is open for business! We now have the privilege of enjoying perhaps the most spectacular Big Apple vista (not including that from our Tram) whenever free time and weather conspire. RIOC Acting President Pat Siconolfi informs me that Southpoint Park will be open every day from 8:00 a.m. until one-half hour before dusk and that there is Port-a-Potty service on site. He asked that you avoid the flock of geese, long-time Island residents, that are nesting there.

If you have an hour or two this weekend, why don't you amble down past Goldwater Hospital and all those gorgeous cherry trees and check it out? And thank you, RIOC!

Roosevelt Island has been beset by more than its share of municipal crises during its tenure as a residential community, which have required us to be more civic-minded, perhaps, than our neighbors in the five boroughs. During my time on the Residents Association, we have dealt with questions of governance, development, policing and crime, transportation, and quality of life. I'd like to address the division of responsibility for these questions, as I see them:

There are some issues that the RIRA President is best able to consider, by virtue of whatever clout the title provides and by virtue of the time and effort a RIRA president can give to the job. For example, I've been working for over a year on the question of applying the MetroCard to the Tram. On Tuesday I again presented our case to New York City Transit Authority President Lawrence Reuter, who was, again, supportive and encouraging. I'll continue the effort until we win or until the powers that be make it clear the issue is dead.

Some work can best be done by your building representatives on the Common Council. We can represent your views on the major questions of the day through Council resolutions and motions and present them to our elected officials. Also, we are able to organize important and enjoyable community events. Over the last 2½ years we have put on fund-raising parties, dances, and auctions, as well as blood drives, breakfasts on Roosevelt Island Day, Thanksgiving dinners for the Special Ops firefighters, as well as responses to Island emergencies and tragedies.

But some issues must be addressed by all of us to make a difference. When the Tram hours were threatened, it was your signatures and letters that turned the tide and saved the third shift from elimination.

We came to you two weeks ago to support the effort to save Engine Company 261. Barely a half-dozen Islanders responded with their presence at the April 13 rally. Granted, the notice of the rally and free bus transportation was disseminated Island-wide only 48 hours prior to a Palm Sunday rally. However, 450 of our Queens neighbors, also impacted should this firehouse close, managed to show up and make the rally a success. Response time for fire and medical emergencies will increase and will threaten lives

should this facility close. We have a responsibility to speak up for ourselves; no one else will. The effort to save the firehouses continues this Sunday, April 27, at 1:00 p.m. on the steps of Boro Hall in downtown Brooklyn. This is a one-F-train trip to Jay Street and is a trip you should make. For further information, call the Firefighters Appreciation Committee at **1-718-369-8242** or **1-718-398-7960**.

In seventeen days, on May 13, tenants from all over New York will converge on Albany to urge the passing of Senate bill S2954. This statute will, among other things, include Mitchell-Lama buildings occupied after 1974 (in other words, us) in the protection of the rent-stabilization laws when the owners buy out of the system and if tenants aren't offered the option of ownership. Gifford Miller will provide a bus free of charge if at least 20 Roosevelt Islanders sign up to go. I understand that this is a Tuesday, a working day, but that is when the State Legislature is in session and when our elected officials receive constituents.

Tuesday evening, I attended a Tenants Town Hall, sponsored by State Senator Liz Krueger and by Assemblymembers Pete Grannis and Jonathan Bing. The organizers of the May 13 effort, dubbed *Showdown 2003*, presented their reasons why this legislation is so critical and stated that any rally that produced fewer than 10,000 marchers on Albany would be seen as a failure. Many of your neighbors have arranged to take the day off. If you are concerned about your future in Roosevelt Island housing, this is something you can do to protect that future. Your RIRA Common Council can sometimes act on your behalf, but sometimes only the numbers count and you must act on your own behalf. This is one of those times. If we don't speak out in significant numbers we surely won't be heard. You know, many of the issues that I've addressed during my time on RIRA have had a low probability of success. But if we don't make the effort, then we are guaranteed to fail. The more of us who make the effort, the better our odds become. Make the effort!

Earlier this week we learned from Speaker Miller's office that our AVAC garbage removal system is again on the chopping block. However, this year AVAC is not merely a bargaining chip in the City budget negotiations but has been scheduled to cease operations on May 16. Roosevelt Island was designed as a residential community with AVAC as an endemic and systemic component of this planned community. There is no way to retrieve garbage from the AVAC system so that it can be bagged and left for pick-up by truck. There is no place to store this garbage even if we could retrieve it, especially in buildings like those in Manhattan Park that have no basements. I have an image of every apartment on Roosevelt Island being obliged to bag its own refuse, with thousands of garbage bags collecting in lobbies and outside during the hot summer months, waiting for garbage pick-ups curtailed by "doomsday" budgets. This crisis is being addressed on many levels but, again, your participation is critical to being heard and to making a difference.

Call the City's Quality of Life hotline, **311**, call often, and tell your friends and neighbors to call. AVAC has served this community for over twenty-five years and our buildings are unlikely to be retrofitted for the kind of refuse removal provided by the Sanitation Department in the rest of the City. Our daily lives will change and change drastically if this essential service is removed. The squeaky wheel gets the grease, they say, so squeak like hell!

The RIRA Column



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

COMING UP

– This Weekend –

Rally to Save Firehouses (including Roosevelt Island's second-response unit, Engine Company 261), Sunday, Apr. 27, 1:00 p.m., Brooklyn Borough Hall (F train to Jay Street exit), followed by a march over the Brooklyn Bridge, ending at City Hall. Information: **1-718-369-8242**.

– The Coming Week –

Exhibit of Paintings by Islander Mercedes Leyba, Mon.-Fri., 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., through May 2, at the Consulate of Argentina, 12 West 56th Street at Fifth Avenue.

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.

Roosevelt Island Committee of Community Board 8 meeting, Island House community room, **Tue., Apr. 29**, 7:30 p.m. Topics will include air quality, and public safety and policing.

Trees of Roosevelt Island display, throughout May, Rivercross windows on Main Street.

Community Board 8 Parks Committee meeting, **Thur., May 1**, 7:00 p.m., New York Hospital, 525 East 68th Street, Whitney Room 117. Items on the agenda include a discussion of the proposed design of Tramway Park (Manhattan).

Arbor Day Tree Planting, sponsored by the Roosevelt Island Tree Board, in the park south of Rivercross, **Fri., May 2**, 10:00 a.m.

Community Party for Ali of the Card Shop to thank him for his years of service to the Island, **Sat., May 3**, 6:30-10:00 p.m., Westview Community Room. Open to all.

– Future Events –

Roosevelt Islanders Reminisce – Julia Levien-Golden on her work transmitting the dance legacy of Isadora Duncan, the "Mother of Modern Dance," **Sun., May 4**, 5:00 p.m., RIVAA Gallery. Free.

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

Rescheduled: RIOC Board Meeting, moved from May 8 to **Thursday, May 15**.

Murder at the Music Hall – A Dance Mystery, the fourth annual dance project of The Main Street Theatre and Dance Alliance, **Fri.-Sun., May 9-11**; performances Friday and Saturday, 7:30 p.m., Sunday, 2:00 and 7:00 p.m. Chair seating, \$10; mats for children 4-10, \$5. Reservations: **1-212-371-4449**.

Bus Trip to Housing Rally in Albany, organized by the Residents Association. **Tues., May 13**, early-morning departure from the Island. For reservation and information, call **1-212-935-7534**.

RIOC Board Meeting, **Thur., May 15**, 5:30 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

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

The Main Street WIRE – next scheduled issue, **Sat., May 17**. **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., May 9; decision on fliers for *The Bag*, Tue., May 13; fliers due Thur., May 15. **Future issues:** May 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.

Spring Tree Walk, sponsored by the Roosevelt Island Tree Board, **Sat., May 17**, 10:00 a.m., conducted by Forester Bob Bealin. Meet at the bell in Good Shepherd Plaza.

Religion on Blackwell's and Welfare Island, visual presentation on the Island's historic houses of worship through the 1950's, presented by Judy Berdy of the Roosevelt Island Historical Society. Location to be announced, **Mon., May 19**, 7:30 p.m.

There is no charge to list Island events here. E-mail information to MainStreetWIRE@rcn.com or leave copy at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. Please 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
10-11, **Dance & Relax**
10-11, **Latchhook Class**
6:30, **Yoga Class**
7:30, **Games** (RISA)
Wednesday
9:15, **Stay Well**
7:00, **Pokeno** (RISA)
Thursday
10:00, **Tai Chi**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
12:30, **Movie**
3:00, **Computer Class** (advance registration required)
7:00, **Dance Class** (Advanced)

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

Special Events

Sat., Apr. 26, 6:30, **Seder**
Mon., May 12, 11-12:30, **MetroCard Bus**
Sat., May 17, 7:00, **Senior Day**
Black & White Ball, Manhattan Park Theater Club
June 2-5, **Wildwood Trip**. For information, call **1-212-750-3952**.

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Ali

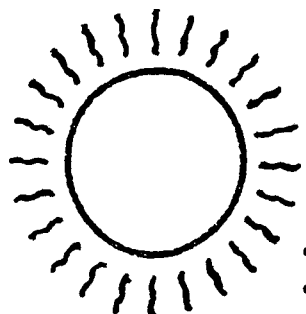
(Stationery Store)
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Westview Lower Community Room
625 Main Street
6:30 p.m.

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When you need the best, call us. We are proud to serve Roosevelt Island. ***When it really counts, you can count on us.***

Thank you,
John Agosta
President

When it really counts, count on Olympic!

Look for your personal discount card, enclosed in this issue of *The WIRE*.

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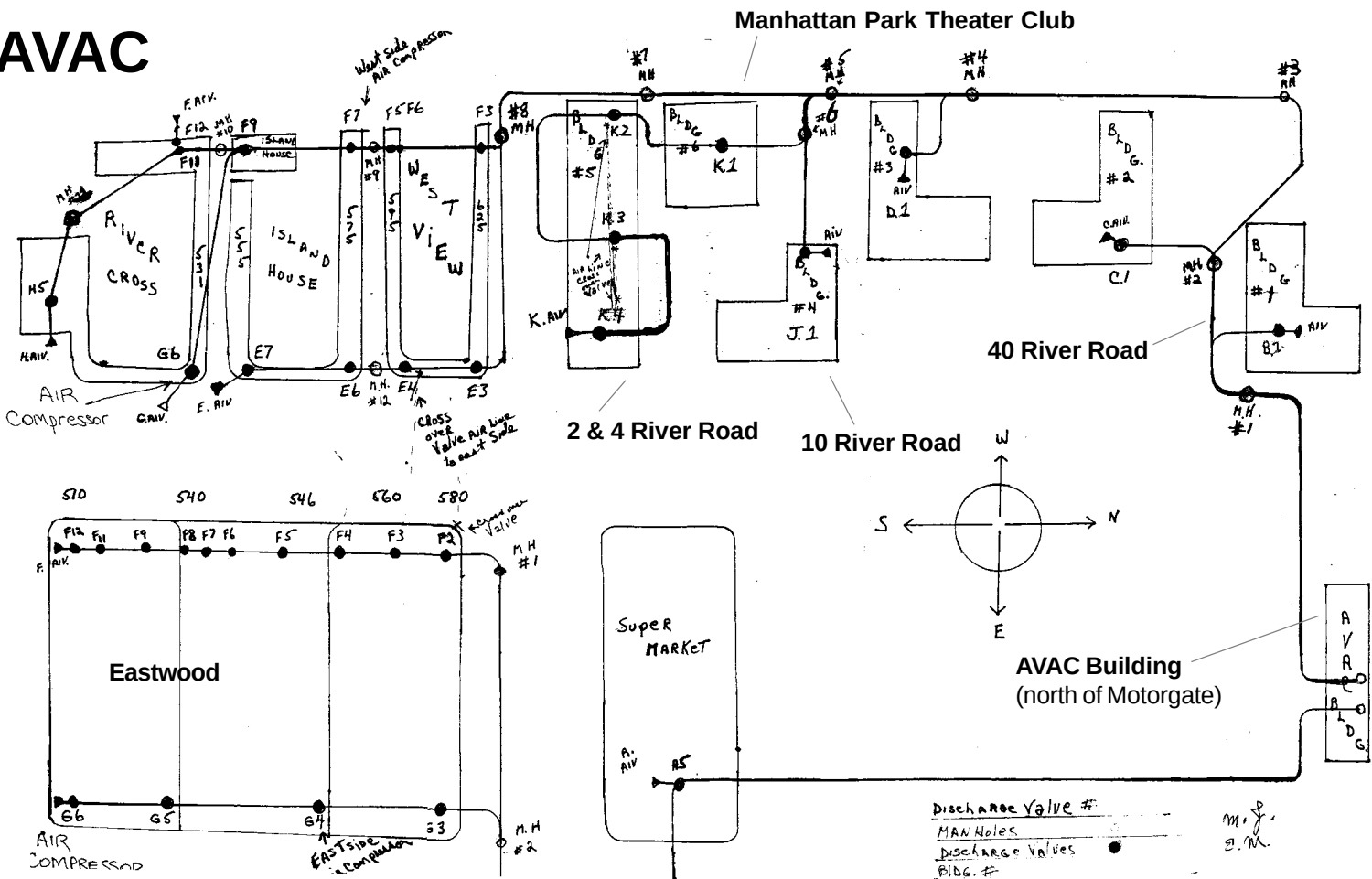
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How Does the AVAC System Work, Anyway?

Schematic diagram of the AVAC system shows building AVAC chutes and “valves” as dots along lines representing underground piping.

By remote control from the AVAC building, the valves are opened in sequence, one at a time, giving trash from each chute the full force of the exhausters fans (see photos below) to suck it up-island through the pipes.

Southtown buildings are not shown in this diagram, though the system has been extended to serve the new buildings.



by Robert Laux-Bachand

The mightiest wind on Roosevelt Island rushes deep underground. It carries trash from the apartment buildings and school at 60 mph through 20-inch pipes that connect to two bright red hoppers in the AVAC building just north of Motorgate.

A dozen times a day – and more often on weekends – the system switches on and all the garbage that has accumulated in the previous hour or so is sucked through two-foot chutes into the hopper. (That schedule is not being reduced, apparently.) Heavy material, visible from a porthole, falls directly into a boxcar-like trash container that fits inside a huge compactor.

AVAC is a pneumatic gravity system. The technology for an enclosed vacuum system for waste collection was introduced in Sweden in 1961. Here on the Island one could think of it as a dual-exhaust hot rod. One pipe, from the east side of the Island, fills a 45-cubic-yard compacted container every five days. The west side of Main Street fills a container every two days. This is just residential and school waste; the Gristede’s supermarket and the restaurants, for example, rely on conventional garbage pickups.

The men who operate the AVAC system said that five to six of the big compacted containers are picked up each week, and that the total is about 14 containers per week, including pickups for recycled material and bulky waste such as discarded appliances and furniture. Altogether, they estimate, the Island is producing 600 tons to 700 tons of refuse per week, the equivalent of adding 30 to 35 garbage trucks to the Island’s traffic.

The system was built by Centralsug of Solna, Sweden, and has been in operation since the Island’s first apartments opened in 1975. The same company, basically, under a different name, Envac, headquartered in Stockholm, is still in charge of making major repairs and extending the pipes to new buildings, such as Southtown and Octagon.

Envac, which has a decentralized structure, is owned by

Ratos, a publicly-traded company in Sweden, and a British investment firm, the 3i Group PLC. In North America, it operates as AVAC Systems Inc., based in Fort Myers, Florida. The company has ten installations on the continent, most prominently Disney World, where some of the piping is stainless steel.

Ulf E. Nordling, AVAC System’s vice president for sales, noted that the rationale for installing the system on Roosevelt Island was that Main Street, a narrow corridor, was unsuited to traditional garbage collection. As the company says in its current promotional materials, “The system’s advantages are that it is space-saving and environmentally correct. In addition, the waste can be source-collected, foul-smelling rubbish trucks will disappear, and the work environment of waste collection personnel will improve considerably.”

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation pays for supplies and maintenance, while the City, through the City Department of Sanitation’s Auxiliary Field Force, collects the containers. The staff of eight – four stationary engineers, three firemen and an oiler – are city employees.

Ron Marli, a stationary engineer and shop steward of Local 30 of the International Union of Operating Engineers, said that under the original blueprint, the system would have picked up the Coler and Goldwater hospitals. But AVAC’s only connection with the hospitals now is its heating system; it is on the same steam line that runs north from the power plant near the Tram to the Coler campus.

Although the system is Swedish-designed, many of its components – the industrial controls, computers, and mechanisms – are U.S.-made, by Ingersoll-Rand and Allen-Bradley, for example. The heart of the system is a bank of six motors that power six “exhausters,” or vacuum pumps, in the basement of the structure. Three exhausters work the east side, three the west side. These machines are maintained by an oiler, and a deafening racket ensues whenever the suction cycle is set in motion. Enormous fans are set up on either side to dissipate the heat. All six motors are never run all at once; the two sides alternate.

As the trash hurtles into the hopper, dust is drawn off and collected separately before being piped into the container

with the rest of the garbage. The system is designed to assure that particles do not clog filters and impede the rush of air, which flows out a stack on the north side of the building.

Each apartment building has a compressor and related equipment, all of which require periodic maintenance by Sanitation Department and AVAC personnel. All the original compressors are still in operation. In fact, the system, overall, has been amazingly durable, with the exception of piping from Manhattan Park, which had to be replaced after about four years, according to AVAC and the workers. The Manhattan Park installation was said to have been awarded to a low bidder, and this long-ago problem – akin to the Island’s subway escalator situation – still appears to be a sore point with the system’s operators.

Of course, the whole system is getting old. A section of the west hopper has been repeatedly patched, and there is a

hole in it. A larger, more permanent patch or reconstruction may be needed. And over the next ten years, Nordling said, certain pipe bends will have to be replaced. But he said he has had to accept the fact that RIOC’s budget is limited. (The proposed budget for the coming years calls for \$20,000 in AVAC repairs.)

Recurrent problems arise, such as jamming in the pipes, which the City crew can usually fix itself, gaining access

through manholes. But sometimes a pipe will spring a leak, and then it’s time to “call in the Swedes.” A hole in an underground pipe will let in water. In those cases, a technician will be flown in from Sweden. He will work as a spelunker, donning a headlamp and descending into the pipe, rolling on a little trolley to detect the source of the leak, and then welding it shut.

As one of the above-ground AVAC engineers said, it’s not a job for someone who is claustrophobic.



Ron Marli



Many centrifugal fans (left) inside each of six exhausters (above) create the suction that creates a 60 mph wind to pull residential refuse through underground pipes to the AVAC building.

It is powered through a funnel...



...that sits atop a collection chamber dropping waste into a storage container.



City Sanitation Tells RIOC: No More City Support for AVAC

AVAC from page 1

system, exclusive of the department’s cost of collecting and disposing of the compacted refuse stored in 45-cubic-yard containers, is now approximately \$500,000,” Doherty wrote. “This type and level of service exceeds that provided to other residential areas of the City and goes far beyond the City’s lease obligation ‘not to discriminate against residents of the Leased Premises with respect to the provision of sanitation services.’”

In other words, the Department of Sanitation now considers that its responsibility on the Island stops at the loading dock of the AVAC facility, and however the trash gets to that point is somebody else’s problem. It is the equivalent of a cessation of garbage pickup in Chelsea: *All right, folks, we’ll see you on the Hudson.*

Islanders who have been through previous budget battles during the Giuliani administration say that logic, politics, and economics have thwarted earlier attempts to shut down AVAC. Patrick Stewart, a member of the RIOC board, said that Councilmember Gifford Miller, now the City Council Speaker, supplied the political muscle in the earlier budget fights, and that the Residents Association was able to prove that AVAC was cost-effective.

Leo Kayser, another board member, told *The WIRE* that there was no practical alternative to the system. The question, he said, was not whether to keep it open, but how to do it.

But new elements have been added to the mix this year: A well-documented competition between the City and State for Federal antiterrorism dollars; an economic downturn prolonged by the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001; and rivalries that have put Roosevelt Island at the center of New York’s electoral politics, making this a contest between the City’s top Republican and Democratic officeholders, the mayor and Miller, who represents the Island and who has put forward alternative budget proposals.

Previous administrations have retained the system. But not until this year has the City backed up its budget-cutting with formal notices to the eight AVAC employees that they will be reassigned. Ron Marli, the shop steward and one of AVAC’s four stationary engineers, said the department had told him that as of May 17, “I’ll finish the 3-11 shift and have no idea who is taking over for us.”

Marli has worked at AVAC since 1982 and would be the first to tell you that it’s hardly an automatic job, as Doherty asserts in his letter. The AVAC crew is on duty from 6:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., in two shifts, though current changes suggest that the City may want to cut staffing to a single shift. Keeping watch in the control room, Marli said, “I know by ear what is wrong with the system” and what to do about it. He said he cannot fathom how the Department of Sanitation could assert that RIOC, given less than a month’s notice, could “obtain the staff necessary to operate and maintain the AVAC system.” He said he doubts that one could walk into a trade school, for example, and find people who could operate the system.

“This was put in originally to be cost efficient to the Department,” he said.

As of Thursday night, it appeared the AVAC crew had been ordered to shut down the system at 5:30 daily – a possible move toward turning it into a one-shift operation, though personnel were still on duty in the evening.

AVAC does not run by itself. It is a complex of computers, consoles, pipes, vacuum motors and compacters, plus conveyor tracks that position those 45-cubic-foot containers for transport off the Island.

One of the issues, which Doherty alluded to in his letter, is the fact that the eight AVAC employees are “stationary engineers/high pressure tenders.” They started in the Department as members of the Sanitation Department’s Bureau of Waste Disposal, which operated incinerators, Marli said. Stationary engineers are certified to operate boilers – but there is no such equipment on Roosevelt Island. As time went on, AVAC was transferred to a different bureau, Building Maintenance, and the workers became “orphans,” Marli said, without an institutional protector.

“It’s upsetting to me because I think we were thrown to



Containers are shuffled into position and onto trucks on a system of rollers. Doors to trucks pulling up outside are located out of frame to the left in this photo.



sanitation

JOHN J. DOHERTY
Commissioner
125 Worth Street, Room 720
New York, New York 10013

April 21, 2003

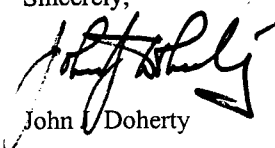
Patrick J. Siconolfi
President and Chief Operating Officer
Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation
591 Main Street
Roosevelt Island
New York, New York 10044

Dear President Siconolfi:

Fiscal constraints have forced the Department of Sanitation ("Department") to cease funding the operation and maintenance of the Roosevelt Island automatic vacuum refuse collection ("AVAC") system effective May 17, 2003.

It is no longer economically feasible for the Department to assume unqualified responsibility for operating and maintaining the AVAC system, and we believe that the Roosevelt Island lease agreement between the City, as Lessor, and the New York State Urban Development Corporation, as Lessee, does not require it. Despite cutbacks in virtually all other service areas, the Department continues to deploy eight stationary engineers/high pressure tenders to operate and maintain the AVAC system at Roosevelt Island. For three decades, the Island's residents have benefitted from the technology without user fees. The annual cost of operating and maintaining the AVAC system, exclusive of the Department's costs of collecting and disposing of the compacted refuse stored in 45-cubic yard containers, is now approximately \$500,000. This type and level of service exceeds that provided to other residential areas of the City, and goes far beyond the City's lease obligation "not to discriminate against residents of the Leased Premises with respect to the provision of ... sanitation ... services."

In recognition of current fiscal realities, and pursuant to my authority under the City Charter and the Administrative Code, I have determined to limit the sanitation service that the Department provides to Roosevelt Island to the collection and disposal of the compacted refuse from the storage containers. In order to give the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation time to obtain the staff necessary to operate and maintain the AVAC system, the Department will continue to staff the system through May 16, 2003.

Sincerely,

John J. Doherty

www.nyc.gov/sanitation

KEEP NYC CLEAN  REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE  DON'T LITTER

 printed on recycled paper

the wolves,” Marli said.

“We’re dedicated to this place, we know we’re providing a service to the people,” he said.

And though he did not wish to advertise the fact, they are, relatively speaking, highly paid compared with other Sanitation Department employees. Ulf E. Nordling, a vice president of AVAC Systems Inc., said in an interview with *The WIRE* this week that labor costs on Roosevelt Island were the company’s highest in North America. Whether this can be considered particularly newsworthy is a matter of perspective. The same could be said, for example, of the members of the Service Employees International Union (including dozens of workers at Manhattan Park), who settled

Wednesday for a 2.8 percent pay raise. But, as Kayser said, if RIOC were to take over the AVAC system, it would have to evaluate the “level of skill issue.”

It would also have to evaluate the varying leases in force with RIOC’s tenants to determine whether fees could be assessed for services, Kayser said.

The potential consequences of an AVAC shutdown are serious.

Jessica Lappin, one of Miller’s top aides, said: “We have communicated to the administration the dire consequences of this.

They are re-examining this and they understand that, whatever they do, they cannot create a situation on the Island of garbage not being picked up.”

Doryne Isley, general manager of the Roosevelt Island Housing Management Corp., said, “It would be a nightmare.” In practical terms, she said, one of the questions would be whether one could operate the system in a truncated fashion, and extricate trash from the housing complexes to accommodate a different type of disposal. In addition, she said, the tight time frame specified by the City would preclude proper bidding procedures by another government unit, RIOC, in securing a contractor to take over operations of the facility.

Isley also questioned the legality of user fees, saying it could constitute double taxation. And she raised the matter of the City’s legal responsibility to collect trash. “I would expect a very detailed plan for how they will pick up the garbage,” she said.

She also noted that the newer housing on the Island, Manhattan Park, has no interior space for trash storage.

Stewart made the point that AVAC was “an integral part of the community” and was one of the prime selling points in the Island’s development from its very beginning.

One of the arguments for the north-to-south staging of the Southtown development, he added, was the expense of extending the AVAC lines; it made more sense, he noted, to connect the first apartment buildings to the existing terminus of the pipes. And the question naturally arises as to the integrity of the Southtown developer’s investment.

Stewart made the argument that Bloomberg, “being a businessman, would not want to jeopardize the economic future of the Island.”

Marli made the same point, if in a different fashion, imagining the narrow Main Street overrun with garbage trucks. “To bring trucks in here will be absolutely terrible, it will be a mess,” he said.

Southpoint Park Now Open (!) Daily Until Near Sunset



Sites at Southpoint Park: Geese nesting, the Renwick ruin, and a spectacular view of the United Nations.

(Parents: Please caution your children... These geese are very protective of their nest and eggs, and can be very aggressive when threatened.)

With Southpoint Park now open for visitors, *The WIRE* asked Laurence Brodsky, an Islander who was once arrested and handcuffed by Public Safety for “trespassing” there, to recall her experience and reflect on the opening of the park.

On a Sunday, not so long ago, but before Sept. 11, 2001, I was riding my bicycle at Southpoint. The gate had been left open for weeks, and my husband had been there a few times already. I met a young British traveler taking pictures of the Big Apple. The spectacular sight of Manhattan in a two-dimensional state that day, with just the outlines of all the familiar iconic buildings of New York City as cut-out black shadows on a pale bluish sky, had both of us gaping blissfully and silently until...

Until we found ourselves arrested, handcuffed, and for me alone, transported to the headquarters of Public Safety on Main Street.

After a lengthy and very threatening questioning, there was a court appearance in New York City Criminal Court for having “trespassed.” With the help of a very good lawyer living on the Island, the charge was dismissed by the Criminal Court judge. My lawyer proved, with photographs he took the day after my arrest, that there was “no visible sign” near the open gate indicating that Southpoint was closed to all but the Island security force.

Now, finally, as of April 23, 2003, any citizen from the world over will be free to admire the views of Manhattan and Queens, and discover the last sliver of land around the Big Apple that has not been taken over by an electric company to build another power plant spewing more toxic fumes, or by a real-estate developer to erect a luxurious set of buildings whose views are worth more than a new oil field.

I do feel vindicated, and we Roosevelt Islanders should, too.

Now, Southpoint Park is open to us and people the world over, right at the tip of the United Nations, and the Biggest Apple in the World.

Octagon from page 1

and available for public use and enjoyment in some park-like manner.” Grannis’s letter, which is printed in full on page 2, goes on to cite grants received by RIOC for development of a park at the Octagon site.

Grannis also cites \$3.4 million in City funds provided for restoration of Octagon Park following disruptions from work on City Water Tunnel Number Three by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). *The WIRE* first reported on the alleged diversion of the \$3.4 million in DEP money to fund Southtown infrastructure in a February 5, 2000, article by Joyce Mincheff. That article cited an agreement between DEP and RIOC, subsequently altered, in which DEP agreed to fund work, to be contracted by RIOC, for restoration of the area west of the community gardens used to stage materials and equipment for the Water Tunnel work. The agreement specified “creation of an Octagon Ecological park.” Under a later agreement, the City provided \$3,400,242.84 cash instead, “representing the actual cost of the work performed by RIOC on behalf of the City pursuant to audited invoices.”

On Grannis’s point about the public-trust doctrine, Becker says, “Our attorney feels this doesn’t apply to the fenced-off areas of rubble and debris where our project will be built. We don’t believe this area is or has been a dedicated park, nor has it ever been publicly accessible... The amount of waterfront park area will more than double as a result of our plan being implemented.”

In his letter to Bloomberg, Grannis writes, “Given the statutory protections governing the Island’s open spaces, as well as the long-held public expectation that the open spaces in Octagon Park would continue as areas of recreation, relaxation, and enjoyment, I respectfully ask that you not approve any amendment to the Roosevelt Island General Development Plan that seeks to alienate delineated open space for the Octagon Apartments or any other project on this site.”

In December, the Residents Association (RIRA) passed a resolu-

tion, by a 16 to 6 vote, asking the City Council and/or Mayor to deny any requests for GDP amendments, urging them to call for a review of the existing GDP by “qualified professionals with experience in city planning” before allowing any further development on Roosevelt Is-

land. The RIRA Common Council said the GDP “should be impervious to piecemeal changes to accommodate developers’ plans and short-term financial concerns.”

Grannis aide Tony Morenzi urged Islanders this week to write to the Mayor (City Hall, NYC 10007) ask-

ing him to refuse the GDP changes proposed for the Octagon project.

(In a separate letter also appearing on page 2, Grannis urges Governor George Pataki to fill out resident appointments to the RIOC Board called for in the law he signed in September.)

Housing from page 1

it appears that only an extraordinary effort will produce the result Grannis and affordable-housing advocates want.

Current State rent regulations run out June 15. “June 15 is a real deadline,” said State Senator Liz Krueger, who chaired the meeting.

“There are over a million rent-regulated apartments in New York

fort toward privatization, providing incentives for the buildings’ owner to present a tenant-ownership plan likely to be somewhat more attractive than would otherwise be necessary.

“This is going to be another serious fight,” Grannis said. “George Pataki is getting hammered right now, as you’ve been reading in the press, because of the budget stand-off. The Senate and the Assembly

are trying to resolve the budget without the Governor because he is not participating. The only way we’re going to win this fight on rent regulation is to get the Governor’s attention.” Another speaker told the audience that in 1997 10,000 people showed up for the rally in Albany, and said that this year anything less would not impress the governor or State Senators.

Grannis provided some history: “Governor Pataki set out with [Senate Majority Leader] Senator Joe Bruno six years ago to end rent regulation. He was not successful. The tenants mounted an extraordinary fight, and they kept the pressure on. They kept coming to Albany, they kept the mail coming with postcards and letters saying ‘don’t let this happen.’ It really is very, very important in this critical time – we have six weeks left – to try to get this message to the Governor and to Senator Bruno, that this is important. It really will depend on all of you. I hope that as well as we can, we continue to write, phone, fax, e-mail. After a while, all of this atten-

tion will get through to the Governor that it is very important...”

Grannis and the other speakers at the session offered a blizzard of facts and arguments in support of their contention that the State Senate, dominated by upstate Republicans, should not determine housing policy. Grannis said, “The State gets far more money from us as New Yorkers than they give back to us, in the overall exchange of how taxes are collected and how they are paid back.” Grannis’s colleague in the Assembly, Jonathan Bing, provided these facts: “Manhattan has 8% of the State’s population, but 28% of the State’s jobs are located in Manhattan, and 45% of the wages in New York State are from jobs in Manhattan. Without New York City, the rest of the State doesn’t exist. We have to make sure that

people understand that the health of Manhattan and New York City matters to the entire state.” Bing added, “Fifteen percent of the State’s income is generated south of 14th Street in Manhattan... It’s Manhattan and New York City that generate the income for the rest of the State.” Crucial to that income, Bing said, is the lower-wage work force that makes it possible.

Grannis touched on an issue specific to Roosevelt Island: “There is another very big group of tenants and co-op owners, in Mitchell-Lama projects in the State, who are just as vulnerable as any of the rent-regulated tenants are... The owners who built those buildings many, many years ago and got extraordi-

nary tax benefits, and have written off their investments in those buildings many, many times over, now are able to buy out of the program, get rid of tenants that are there... This bill extends and strengthens rent regulation and changes the rules and regulations on the process to be used on buy-outs. It’s a package. All of these things go together.”

On timing, Grannis said, “As soon as we finish the budget, which will be in the next few weeks, the focus will have to be on getting this legislation through the Senate and on the Governor’s desk.” In response to a question from the audience, Grannis said it is unlikely that Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver will hold the State budget hostage in seeking passage of the rent regulation legislation. Others

pointed out that the Albany rally is on a Tuesday because that’s when the legislators are in Albany. They urged those attending the meeting to urge others to take the day off work to make the trip.

“It’s really going to be a collective effort,” Grannis said. “We need all of you. You’re the army. You’re the army that can make this happen. This is critically important for housing affordability in New York City.”



Assemblymember Pete Grannis, as he spoke Tuesday night to a Housing Town Meeting at Hunter College.



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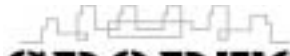
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by Seth Kaufman

SPORTSWIRE

Baseball The Youth Program’s Little League Baseball season opened on April 19 under beautiful blue skies after having been postponed a week because of bad weather. The standings after one week of play are:

Minors		Majors	
Red	1-0	Green	1-0
Royal	1-0	Red	0-0-1
Green	0-1	Royal	0-0-1
Silver	0-1	Silver	0-1

Majors: Red and Royal opened the season with a well-played 2-2 tie. Neal Stueber pitched a complete game for Red, racking up 9 strikeouts. Daniel Folla and Kenny Pizarro scored the runs for Red. Thomas Herlihy started for Royal, pitching four innings with four strikeouts, and helped himself by going 2-3 at the plate. Justin Gonzalez closed the game, pitching the fifth and sixth innings. In the other opening-day game, Green defeated Silver 14-1. Eyosyus Tadesse pitched a complete game for Green, striking out 10 batters. Sean Suarez led the attack for Green with 2 hits and 5 RBIs, while Anass Dorani scored 3 runs.

Seniors: The Senior baseball team, playing in the East River Baseball Association, remained undefeated by defeating the CYO Hurricanes behind the pitching of José Marte and Rahim Drame.

Roosevelt Island Is a Ten-Year Tree City

Roosevelt Island has been named a **Tree City USA** for the tenth year in a row by the National Arbor Day Foundation. Part of the local program, managed by Tree Board Chair Maurice Bleifeld, involves an Arbor Day tree-planting observance, scheduled this year for Friday, May 2, at 10:00 a.m. in the park area just south of Rivercross, as well as a display, *Trees of Roosevelt Island*, in the Main Street windows of Rivercross. The Tree Board also has a *Tree Walk* scheduled for May 17 (see *ComingUp*, page 3).

Calderhead

from page 1

when he gets a chance. Recently, he served as a faculty member at a calligraphy conference in San Francisco. He also works with the St. John’s Bible Committee on Illumination and Text, writing feature articles for the St. John’s Bible newsletter, which encompasses various topics on the making of the one-of-a-kind Bible. “He is among the most respected calligraphers in the world,” says his friend from high school, Robert Coker, a graphic artist himself. “He has always been interested in visual things like stamps and flags.”

The night Calderhead announced to his



rector his decision to get ordained, the rector took him by the shoulder and shook him. There was a glut of Episcopal clergy and Calderhead was doing fine in the role he was already playing, but Calderhead’s mind was made up. This was, after all, the same person who had gotten himself baptized at age 18, while studying Art History at Princeton University. He had, of course, neglected to inform his parents of his decision. “It was a WASP-y family. We never talked about anything,” says Calderhead, chuckling.

He wanted to go to Yale for theological studies but his bishop, he says, “made him go to” Seabury-Western Theological University in Evanston, Illinois. “He thought I was too East Coast,” says Calderhead, who had lived in New York all his life, attending Lycée Français, the Town School, and Collegiate High School in Manhattan before going to Princeton. His only stint outside the country had been the years he spent in London, attending a calligraphy

Party Set for Ali of Card Shop

The Chamber of Commerce is putting together a goodbye party for the former proprietor of the card shop (stationery store), Ali. The event is scheduled for next Saturday (May 3) in the Westview community room.

Ali arranged to sell the shop to its new owner late last year after finding that he could not meet rent payments on the space and after several years of various difficulties, including floods from apartments above that ruined merchandise. Though he tried various strategies, including a line of 99-cent items, he found the shop was unable to support itself.

The new owner has kept the shop open during renovations, now complete.

The party is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on May 3; those arranging it are asking for those attending to call ahead to **1-212-755-4089** so that the need for refreshments and drinks may be properly estimated.

and book-binding course at Roehampton Institute.

The midwest was a bit of a shock. “People there wear their religion on their sleeve,” says Calderhead. It took him some time to get used to what he thought was their somewhat “intrusive” attitude but, at the end, the year he spent working at a chaplaincy in a hospital on the south side of Chicago as part of his clinical pastoral education was the most valuable experience he had. “That’s where the rubber hits the road,” he says. All his training was put to the test, as he had to talk to people who were in pain and in need of advice and guidance. He recalls a meeting with a teenager who had sickle-cell anemia and his feeling of inadequacy in ministering to her. “What should I have asked her? How do you feel? Lousy, of course.” He says the girl’s roommate helped him by asking questions and forcing him to talk. “I learned how to pick up signals from people, talking to them about what they wanted to know.”

His first church job was in Cambridge, England, where he lived for four years. He says he found English reticence “very appealing though very frustrating,” so he decided to return to New York. He missed the City he grew up in and realized he was too much of an urban person to live in a small town in England. “The fact that, in a city, people live on top of each other and develop networks of interconnections, fascinates me,” Calderhead says.

The monetary angle was of some importance, as well, because salaries doled out by the Church of England are very low and the country is comparatively more expensive. Here, he can get by, living in Astoria, being paid a modest salary by the Diocese of New York, and using his artistic and writing skills to supplement his income.

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MAIN STREET THEATRE & DANCE ALLIANCE

Community Board 8

Roosevelt Island Committee Meeting

Tue., Apr. 29, 7:30

Island House Community Room

Agenda:

- Public Safety**
 - Come fashion a resolution, on NYC police protection, to be presented to CB8
 - Come discuss the proposed RISK statement regarding public safety and the community.
- Air Quality** present and future will be discussed by the Keyspan Community Relations Director.

It took him a few months to land the job of a half-time priest at the ecumenical congregation on Roosevelt Island, and Calderhead says he hopes he can stay because he loves the place and the people. He believes the congregation, now comprised of about 60 people, will double once he can get some programs in place.

His first major effort was a five-session *Ask your Pastor* program during Lent, when people could ask him anything about the Bible and their faith. “It was terrific,” said Tracey Kaminski, who attends Sunday morning service regularly with her family. “I’ve never had that sort of explanation before. He spells out everything very carefully, makes it very easy to understand and is very intelligent.” Kaminski says her ten-year old stepdaughter, Samantha, says of Calderhead’s services: “They are not *really* boring.” “Small victory,” says Calderhead, laughing good-naturedly.

He says he was impressed with the quality of questions and, at first, didn’t think the sessions would last beyond the first three, but they did. People, and the questions, kept coming. Fourteen-year-old Emerson Santaio says Calderhead is “very interesting” and makes everyone “want to go to services.”

Westview resident Maureen Santella says Calderhead is “very much a teacher, he embraces the children and is very warm and charismatic.” Emma Felix, a long-time Island resident, says the priest clearly has a calling and is making a huge effort to get the congregation involved in church and with one another. She says he likes to spend time with them socially and is willing to come early on Sunday and stay after service so he can

get to know everyone better.

Among the plans for the congregation are a parade and barbecue picnic for Pentecost in June, a new notice board and afternoon-tea sessions.

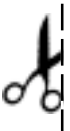
“People here have a real desire to grow and understand they have to give of themselves in order to make that happen,” says Calderhead. In his mind, this desire to work and grow is all-important. So important that, on his own tombstone, the epitaph he foresees is: *Christopher Calderhead: A Work in Progress.*

MetroCard

from page 1

Katz continued, “RIOC is emerging from a real crisis in leadership with a new Acting President totally conversant with the discussions of the past year. He has made the case that the financial burden to the Transit Authority doesn’t amount to ‘a rounding error’ in the scope of your organization’s budget, but is quite significant to RIOC’s \$12 million annual operating budget.” Katz pointed out that the Tram is the only transportation option for many Roosevelt Islanders who are elderly and/or disabled.

Reuter’s response was brief. In full, he said: “Since last year there have been quite a few meetings in an attempt to get RIOC involved, including several with the City, OK, that we think we’ve basically laid out a framework to get RIOC involved. We think we’ve got a structure to deal. We’re close. All we need to do is get some signatures on paper, and some money transferred, and we think we’ll have an agreement to do it.”



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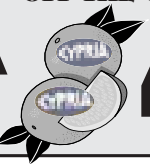
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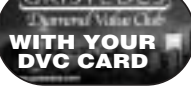
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