

Next issue
in two weeks:
Sat., Feb. 19

The Main Street WIRE

25th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



Kiosk Arrives An antique kiosk, once used to sell tokens for travelers going across the Queensboro Bridge by trolley, arrived on the Island at 2:00 a.m. recently. Earlier (right), it was removed from the entrance to the Brooklyn Children's Museum. Once in place near the Tram station, it will be used as a welcome center. For now, it's stored on Southtown grounds.



After Eight Years, Julie Gives Up the Sports Bar

by Dick Lutz

Julie's Bar has closed. The closing of the pub, run by Julie Palermo since 1996, marks the demise of another store and calls fresh attention to the plight of Island merchants.

"We've been negotiating with RIOC a full year for a lease renewal," Julie told *The WIRE* Monday night at Capri Pizza, with her husband, Joe Palermo, at her side. "I've been getting stressed out about it, and I can't afford to get sick over it," she said.

Joe added, "It's been a big problem, getting a new lease. We have only two years left on the current lease, but they wanted all the back rent due before giving us a new lease." He said that investing in renovations and improvements is hard to justify with only two years to go on the current lease. Julie added, "It's the kind of business where you have to put money in to make it work. I felt I didn't have enough money to upgrade the store. I couldn't get any leeway on back rent. I offered RIOC a certain amount of money and they didn't want to take it. Business got very low. It was just time for me to give up."

Asked about policies on Tuesday, RIOC President Herb Berman told See **Julie's**, page 13

Sheldrake Takes New Step In Westview Privatization

The owner of Westview has taken another step toward removing the building from the Mitchell-Lama program. The Westview Task Force is denouncing the move as intimidation.

In a press release issued Tuesday, the Sheldrake Organization says it has filed a "Notice of Intent to Dissolve" with the State. The release reads:

"In May, 2004, the tenants of Westview received permission from the State Attorney General to discuss the purchase of the building with the goal of creating tenant ownership. Since that time, Sheldrake has worked closely with the Westview negotiating committee to investigate the possibility and facilitate the goal of tenant ownership of the property.

"Sheldrake has worked in earnest to negotiate this opportunity and has presented a highly attractive offer to the negotiating committee. Unfortunately, within the past few months, the Westview

negotiating committee has not maintained communication with Sheldrake and negotiations have stalled.

"Consequently, as Sheldrake has not received any communication from Westview regarding further efforts to continue negotiations, the owner has filed a "Notice of Intent to Dissolve" with the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR). This standard procedure informs the State that the owner intends to remove the property from the Mitchell-Lama program.

"Sheldrake remains committed to working with the Westview tenants to achieve their goal of home ownership, and Sheldrake is still willing to resume discussions with the Westview negotiating committee. The owner has filed papers with DHCR as a contingency in case the Westview tenant representatives break negotiations completely, but Sheldrake remains hopeful that See **Westview**, page 11

To Pay for Octagon Litigation, Labate Suggests Red Bus Hike

Threat Voiced as RIOC Goes on a PR Offensive Against RIRA Suit

by Dick Lutz

Members of the RIOC Board of Directors went on a public-relations offensive last week in a Wednesday morning meeting, scolding the Residents Association (RIRA) for suing to stop an apartment development at Octagon Park while lavishly praising both RIOC and its Public Safety Department (PSD) and chiding residents who complain too often about PSD and RIOC performance.

Board Chair Mary Beth Labate suggested dire consequences might arise from RIOC budget adjustments to allow for a legal defense fund. "I think we have to look at everything on the table – all the services that we provide. I, for one, would be interested in taking a look at even an increase in the [Red] Bus fare to pay for the cost of this litigation."

Labate's comment followed a discussion of RIOC's financial state. "We just got through talking about the [monetary] reserves that we have on hand and that we need to start implementing our capital plan," she said. "I think it's very important that those funds be used to the benefit of the people on the Island, and I just think it would be a crime if a lot of it needed to be spent on our defense of this [Octagon] litigation by RIRA... I, for one, do not want to see it coming out of our reserves, 'cause that's one less dollar that's going to re-pave the roads, it's one less dollar that's

going to maintain our parks, it's one less dollar for any capital needs of the Island." After raising the possibility of a hike in the Red Bus fare, she added, "It's unfortunate. The defense fund has to come from somewhere. In suing Roosevelt Island you are in fact suing the people of Roosevelt Island."

Labate's statement was presumably not meant to suggest that Island residents are actually being sued, which they are not; rather, she was warning that RIOC budget adjustments necessary to defend the Article 78 suit could have an impact on services residents have come to expect, or on capital im-

Subscribers to *The WIRE's* e-mail bulletin service got this story, and the transcript of the RIOC Board meeting, ten days ago. To subscribe, send an AddMe message to bulletins@nyc10044.com.

provements that would benefit residents.

There was no executive session associated with this Board meeting, which is highly unusual. Actual corporation business taken up in the session was all of a mundane nature that might easily have been delayed to its scheduled March meeting. The number of times Herb See **RIOC**, page 6



On the Boards this Weekend The Main Street Theatre is offering *The Musical Comedy Fanatic's Awards Show*, Sunday at 3:00 and Monday at 7:30. Above, a rehearsal for *Pick-a-Little/Good Night Ladies* from *The Music Man*. Tickets at 212-371-4449.

Housing

Eastwood Tenants Organizing to Seek Security in a Non-Mitchell-Lama Future

Worries Over Bush's Efforts to Cut Federal Funds for Section 8

by Arthur Kimball-Stanley

Fair-market Eastwood tenants gathered last week to discuss how they'll organize in reaction to impending removal of their building from the State-regulated Mitchell-Lama system. About 50 residents from the 132 apartments ineligible for Section 8 subsidies attended to hear experts talk about what's ahead.

"I am here to give you a wake-up call," said Marisa Redanty, president of the Manhattan Plaza Tenants Association, at the Tuesday night meeting. "You are a family, whether you like it or not. You have to be on board and you have to be united. You have to take this as seriously as getting fired from your job."

Redanty recounted the experience at Manhattan See **Eastwood/Kimball**, page 11



Larry Parnes

Snow! Two weekends back, between Westview and Island House, kids learned that gravity is a friend.

by Dick Lutz

"You can't, if you live in this kind of housing, sit on your haunches and expect somebody else to take care of it." That was Victor Bach, a Housing Policy Analyst with the Community Service Society, speaking at a second Eastwood meeting last week, advising tenants to unite and get organized.

"I don't know of anything that Eastwood tenants need to do that's more important than coming together around what you need to know to deal with everything that's going to be happening," Bach said. "Everyone has to be prepared for this – not just for the buyout, but a sea change in federal policy."

The owner of the Eastwood complex is in the process of preparing such a buy-out – "privatization" of the building's mortgage, removing it from the State Mitchell-Lama system, eliminating State control of the buildings. In an October meeting, management sought to assure tenants that all current residents will be provided for, either through "sticky" vouchers in the federal "Section 8" program, or through rent-increase limits for tenants not eligible for the subsidies.

The Eastwood Building Committee's meeting, in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, featured speakers with experience in housing conversions.

"This body should speak as one," said Louise Sanchez-Roberts, president of the Mitchell-Lama Coalition. "If you're not united, don't even bother fighting. You won't win." She warned Eastwood residents that the Federal Section 8 program is subject to change, and that President George W. Bush has targeted the program for reductions, then added, "If you don't understand that this is *all* political and requires the in-

See **Eastwood/Lutz**, page 11

The Editorial Page

Miscalculations

Roosevelt Island has entered upon a period in which miscalculations are both a genuine possibility and rather dangerous.

The contents of the RIOC Board meeting last week suggest strongly that Board Chair Mary Beth Labate miscalculated when she suggested that a Red Bus fare increase be considered as a way to cover RIOC expenses in the lawsuit against the Octagon project brought by the Residents Association after a near-unanimous vote. Did Labate expect residents to respond by rising up against their elected representatives on the RIRA Common Council? (Why else would she throw out that red herring?) Responses to a *WIRE* e-mail bulletin referencing her full-text remarks on the website (nyc10044.com/wire/2511/rioctran.html) were universally negative, critical, or indignant.

The product of Labate’s miscalculation could have been predicted by any resident – but, of course, she’s *not* a resident. She may even be unfamiliar with the fact that, in November’s election, 83% of residents who expressed themselves on the matter in an advisory referendum answered *No* when asked if the State Legislature should amend the Roosevelt Island Open Spaces Law to remove any ambiguity about the legality of the development.

The RIRA Common Council responded by taking the only course of action remaining available – an Article 78 suit, which will bring to a court’s attention their concern that, contrary to RIOC claims, truly useable parkland will actually be diminished by the development – whatever the merits of the design, the restoration of the Octagon landmark, or the housing being built.

It was a miscalculation to think that a threat to raise Red Bus fares would convert opponents of the project – presumably supporters of the RIRA litigation – to opponents of the RIRA Council’s action.

But this is a period when there is a danger of other serious miscalculations.

- In this issue, we see the Sheldrake Organization and the Westview Task Force going head to head on just how to proceed in that building’s privatization and possible moves toward resident ownership (report, page 1).
- We see Eastwood residents struggling toward unity and commonality of purpose, fighting the danger that some tenants may miscalculate the need to back the efforts of resident leaders both financially and with the moral support of unity (reports, page 1).
- We see Joe and Julie Palermo, having strived to give the community a social gathering place, giving up the effort and recognizing they miscalculated the level of community response to the idea *and* the sweep of eight years of history, in which RIOC management changed twice and the City made smoking in bars a no-no (report, page 1).
- And the Palermo’s story confirms that, long ago, those who planned this community miscalculated the vibrancy of its microeconomy. It also pumps up a concern that RIOC, in being tough on merchants who fall behind in their rent, may be miscalculating both the viability of businesses on the Island, and underestimating their importance to residents.
- We have to hope, as well, that merchants who read of RIOC President Herb Berman’s policy of zero tolerance on rent arrears do not miscalculate in judging his determination.

To avoid miscalculations that could be lethal to the viability of this community, you have to *know* Roosevelt Island. Do you have to live here? Not necessarily. But it would help to listen carefully to those who do.

DL



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Letters

Editor’s note: Several of the letters received for this issue react to a *WIRE* e-mail bulletin issued January 27 reporting that, at a RIOC Board meeting, Board Chair Mary Beth Labate suggested that an increase in Red Bus fares be considered as a means of paying expenses in the current Residents Association suit against the Octagon Park development. The bulletin referenced a transcript of a portion of the meeting, which is available with this issue of *The WIRE* on *Website NYC10044* at nyc10044.com/wire/2511/rioctran.html. To sign up for the bulletins, which are free, send an “AddMe” message to bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.

To the Editor:

This is in response to the January 26 RIOC Board meeting transcript regarding Ms. Labate’s shocking statements, “In suing Roosevelt Island you are, in fact, suing the people of Roosevelt Island.... I would be interested in taking a look at an increase in the bus fare to pay for the cost of this litigation,” and “...there will always be a handful of people on the Island who choose to look at the negative.”

How dare you imply RIRA is suing the residents and threaten to hike the Red Bus fare to pay for RIOC’s litigation? You are a disgrace. A “handful of people?” Obviously, you didn’t view the November, 2004, Residents Association election results. I guess when you’re a political appointee it disinterests you in the democratic process. When asked, *Are you satisfied with RIOC’s maintenance of RI?*, 70.6% – a “handful” of people – voted *No*. When asked, *Should the Open Spaces law be amended for Octagon Apartments to be built?*, 82.7% – another “handful,” voted *No*. When asked *Are you satisfied with the services of PSD?*, 73.1% – again a “handful,” voted *No*.

Getting the picture here, Ms. Labate? It may be only a *handful* of us who write letters but surely it’s clear even to the RIOC Board members – albeit through the haze and clatter of their own rhetoric and back-patting – that the vast majority of residents are fed up with RIOC, PSD, and the performance of both. In fact, the reality is that there are just a *handful* of people who buy into RIOC’s self-serving propaganda.

The negative criticism you speak of is actually from *elected* leaders from our community, which you are not. *Elected* leaders represent the interests of the constituency who elected them. *Appointed* leaders represent the interests of those who appointed them. Now do you get it? We are not suing ourselves; we are suing you, the State, and the Governor whom you represent, for ripping us off yet again. We’re tired of you, whom we didn’t elect, making policy for us, *period*. We want our *elected* leaders doing so and will not rest until the system reflects that.

Don’t you think RIOC’s done enough damage to Roosevelt Island?

Damon LaScot
Roosevelt Island Safety Kommittee (RISK)

To the Editor:

What, now we can’t even complain without getting penalized? That’s un-American! (Or maybe not...)

Patricia Duarte

To the Editor:

Sounds as if the “best defense is a good offense,” and Labate has other unrevealed challenges in store for residents of Roosevelt Island. Her charge that in suing RIOC we are suing ourselves would have merit if, indeed, RIOC represented us. The petty threat to raise bus fares suggests punishment for free speech.

Even though I’m often a lone dissenter or in a tiny minority vis-a-vis Island projects, I support my fellow citizens’ right to express themselves. A legal challenge is the last resort for the disenfranchised.

Labate’s insidious challenge to our Constitutional guarantee of free speech indicates that she is not fit to “represent” us, even in the neo-colonial/commie scenario that is Roosevelt Island. Her criticism of the critics of Public Safety and RIOC are further examples of latent despotism. We have been denied professional police service for too long. Alexander Grannis’ assertion that Roosevelt Island is a “safe place” in which to live only proves the massive, decades-long cover-up that has ultimately damaged the unique community in the East River.

Deirdre McNamara

To RIOC Board member David Kraut:

I was amused, in an incensed sort of way, by your recent comments at the January 26 RIOC Board meeting [as published on *Website NYC10044* in connection with a *WIRE* between-issues bulletin]:

“... There is a constant and steady undertow of criticism and negative comment about the Public Safety Department and I’m at a loss to understand where it comes from, frankly. We see it over and over, in fact, there’s an assumption made by certain individuals in this community who I believe should get their facts straight before they speak, that there’s something wrong or negative or a major problem with Public Safety. Now, no organization’s perfect, there’s room for improvement, and this has to be recognized in any case, but it must be recognized that we have a bunch of dedicated, professional people who show up for work...”

Just because George Bush gets away with invoking weepy patriotism, when it comes to the incompetents, thugs and miscreants in his government, doesn’t mean that you parochial yay-hoos on this Island and in this State are going to get the same pass.

See **Letters**, page 10

To the Editor:

“... *it would be a crime if a lot of it* (capital reserve fund) *needed to be spent on our defense of this litigation by RIRA...we have to look at everything on the table...I, for one, would be interested in taking a look at even an increase in the bus fare to pay for the cost of this litigation...* The (RIOC) defense fund has to come from somewhere. *In suing Roosevelt Island you are in fact suing the people of Roosevelt Island.*”

These comments, made by DHCR Assistant Commissioner and RIOC Board Chair MaryBeth Labate, were taken from a transcript of the recent RIOC Board Meeting. She alludes to the Article 78 lawsuit brought against RIOC and partners by the Residents Association on behalf of the community, over the development of parkland for the Octagon apartments.

We cannot possibly sue ourselves, but we can and have sued the State and the developers for violating State law. Mary Beth is threatening to punish us for our having the temerity to seek, the last time I looked, our legal *right to a redress of grievances in a court of law*.

MaryBeth, the residents *are* Roosevelt Island. RIOC is *not*. The Board is an undemocratic agency foisted upon us. Doesn’t it make you wonder that, with our troops in Iraq helping Iraqis achieve their right to elect their own representative government, we can’t seem to get that same right for ourselves, right here in an American community? Perhaps we need to be invaded and occupied by the U.S. Army to get what’s rightfully ours.

Sherie Helstien
Secretary, RIRA Common Council

To the Editor:

The bulletin about RIOC considering an increase in the Red Bus fares to pay to defend against the “Octagon suit” raises the following questions:

- Would the legal cost of getting a project approved by all concerned not be the expense of the developer?
- If somehow exposed under the suit by the disenfranchised tenants, would RIOC’s defense costs not be covered by the corporation’s insurance arrangements (as opposed to cost for getting the latest project modifications fully cleared)?
- Presently buses are frequently full by the time they reach Main Street on their way to the Tram and don’t even stop.
- If the Octagon development proceeds, what are RIOC’s plans for satisfying the additional demand for Red Bus service?
- We all favor further responsible and beneficial development of Roosevelt Island, *but* RIOC did not anticipate the demand for bus service during early morning hours when both commuters and school children want to get to the subway or Tram station. Will they/the developer handle the “Octagon” demand differently?

The idea of expecting people to pay an odd fare without being able to get change will cause additional delays and play further havoc with the current erratic bus “schedule” during rush hours.

Mogens Petersen

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; *letters submitted anonymously will not be published*. **Preferred method of submission:** Please e-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com (plaintext e-mail format preferred, or attach a file), or on a PC-standard 3.5" disk left at the desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. **Alternatives:** Typed copy left at 531 Main Street. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered if brief, but we are not able to take telephone dictation of letters. **All letters subject to acceptance and to editing for length and clarity.** Recommended maximum length, 300 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space.

**Letters deadline for February 19 issue:
Tuesday, February 15**

After deadline, letters are considered on a space-available basis.

Like the rest of New York City, we are now completely dug out, sanded, shoveled and de-iced from the recent blizzard. Let's hope it's the only one we have in 2005. Once again, RIOC crews worked hard to make Main Street and the sidewalks passable as soon as possible. And once again, people on the Island responded to the snow emergency conditions.

The RIOC Column

But there were some car owners who – it seems, unthinkingly – parked their cars on the side alleyways between Main Street and the East River. Besides causing inconvenience for the work crews, parking in these side alleyways would have hampered any emergency response vehicles. Thankfully, there were no incidents this time, but in the future, please tell your neighbors that parking in the side alleyways in a snow emergency places us all in danger.

Roosevelt Island has been in the news of late, as I'm sure many of you read about the Octagon in *The New York Times* Real Estate section on January 23, by Christopher Gray, detailing the history of this left-be-

hind fragment of the old New York Lunatic Asylum. This was in addition to the earlier arts piece in the *Times* on January 9 about the famed Louis Kahn design for an FDR memorial at Southpoint. I'm sure we will be reading more about this project in the years to come.



Herbert E. Berman, President
Roosevelt Island Operating Corp.
e-mail: HBerman@rioc.com

Finally, in some Hollywood news, my daughter, Shari Springer Berman, who's in the business, ran into well-known movie director Walter Salles, who told her that Roosevelt Island is his favorite place to film. I'm sure many of you remember last summer's shoot of *Dark Water*, Salles' remake of a Japanese thriller starring Jennifer Connelly, which comes out this summer.



On the Website –

Supplements to this issue of *The WIRE* appear on *Website NYC10044*. They include a transcript of a large portion of last week's RIOC meeting, the full text of RIOC's response to RIRA's Octagon suit, the *Public Safety Blotter* for the last half of January, and (possibly) the Westview Tenants Association proposal for resident ownership. It's at nyc10044.com, along with an archive of the last eight years of issues.

I have to admit that I'm less aggravated than perhaps I ought to be about the baiting of residents that went on at last week's RIOC Board meeting. You can read the gory details on the *WIRE* website and, doubtless, elsewhere in this issue. The sum and substance is that RIOC Chairperson Mary Beth Labate wants to consider increasing Red Bus fares because some residents and RIRA are suing to stop the destruction of Octagon Park. This comment is ludicrous and offensive for so many reasons. I haven't seen the latest audited statements, but I think that the Red Bus grosses about \$300,000 a year in fares. So in order to

The RIRA Column

recoup the \$3 Million legal contingency, Ms. Labate ought to raise the fares ten-fold to \$2.50. If RIOC wins the lawsuit, that will go down well with the new tenants at Octagon.

While Ms. Labate is cogitating on ways to save money, perhaps she may want to consider these:

- 1) Use New York State's liability insurance instead of paying \$900,000 per year.
- 2) Fire our "Public Information" officer who rakes in \$95,000 a year plus benefits. Anybody know his name? Anybody ever get any "Public Information" from this guy?
- 3) Cut another 10 percent out of the RIOC administration budget, which has ballooned from \$1,095,350 in 1997 to \$1,940,648 in 2003. That's a 77% increase. Obviously, "belt tightening" seems to be the order of the day for everything on this Island except for RIOC office workers.
- 4) Get creative with parking fines – Public Safety gives out the tickets, why do we give the fines to the City?
- 5) Rent the commercial spaces. The old bakery has been vacant for more than two years; so has the former Lilie's School.

Seems like it's OK for RIOC to waste money on some projects for their "friends" but not for the residents. Ms. Labate is no friend of the Youth Center and has seen to it that it doesn't get a lease for permanent space. Accordingly, the Island's children will lose the \$1.6 million in funds available to them for a permanent facility that RIOC could certainly grant to them. Do you think anybody at RIOC will give a damn when we lose this grant? This will be a real loss, not a bogus "escrow" operation. Is Ms. Labate going to raise bus fares then to cover that loss?

The RIOC board evidently feels they have plenty of bucks for kids, just not local kids. The Child School was granted a huge amount of space, plus an Eastwood courtyard, for about \$4 per square foot, which is almost one-ninth of the \$35 they claim to charge others.

Our esteemed former RIOC president Rob Ryan was escorted out of his offices under a cloud of suspicions that involved the improper payment of hundreds of hours of overtime (with Ryan getting the most hours). RIOC spent plenty on a "private investiga-

tion" that they have kept private, and then doled out six months of pay so that Ryan could sit at home while the "investigation" proceeded.

My favorite is the \$4.5 million that RIOC blew for "infrastructure expenses" at Southtown. This was another giveaway to the developers, who in return pay RIOC almost nothing in ground rents.

Residents, along with our elected politicians, argued vociferously against the Octagon project, and voted 4 to 1 to keep it as open space. The minute we take our legitimate legal grievances to court, Ms. Labate becomes alarmed. We are not the problem, Ms. Labate; you and your Board are. Why not teach us a real lesson and let us pick our own people to make decisions for us? We really aren't worthy of your benevolent leadership. Is it too much to ask for the same freedom that our troops are fighting for Iraqis to have?

On a slightly more conciliatory note, I, as has RIOC President Herb Berman, want to also thank the four outdoor crew members for a fine job of plowing and sanding during the recent snowstorm. The fact that



Steve Marcus, President
Roosevelt Island Residents Assn.
e-mail: SteveAtRIRA@verizon.net

there are only four people to do outside work, when RIOC has so many office workers, seems noteworthy, but this is a big job for so few people. I called Mr. Berman to request that they make another pass at the sidewalks across the street from Blackwell House and between the Tram and the Subway. I think we've all seen enough of our neighbors fall and hurt themselves on slippery pavements on the Island. I hope that, when readers see unsafe conditions, they quickly notify Mr. Berman and send me a note as well.

Finally, if you were at Cooper Union to see the Louis Kahn exhibition, please drop me a line and let me know what you thought. Regardless of the merits of the project, the exhibits were very impressive and give an excellent idea of what is proposed. I hope we can get the video simulation and the model to Roosevelt Island; the Cooper Union exhibit ends today.

To close, I'd like to share something that Robert Kaplan wrote in the *Atlantic Monthly* – "History, I have learned, is often driven not by the smartest people, but by the most committed. And those that are the most committed are often not entirely rational, but what they lack in rationality they make up for in passion." Perhaps if we fight for what is best on this little Island with commitment and passion, we too, can dictate some history.

COMING UP

– This Weekend –

Louis I. Kahn exhibition, including his plan for a memorial to FDR at Southpoint Park, **ending today, Sat., Feb. 5**, Cooper Union, 7th Street at Third Avenue. Open 12-5. Free.

The Musical Comedy Fanatic's Awards Show – Memorable Moments in Musical Comedy, presented by the Main Street Theatre & Dance Alliance's Musical Theatre Workshop, **Sun., Feb. 6**, 3:00 p.m. (Also Monday, 7:30 p.m.) Tickets \$5. Call **212-371-4449** for reservations.

– The Coming Week –

La Leche League meeting for breastfeeding and pregnant women, **Mon., Feb. 7**, 1:00 p.m., 20 River Road #5P. Information: **212-832-1188**.

Musical Comedy Moments (see weekend listing above), **Mon., Feb. 7**, 7:30 p.m. \$5.00. Call **212-371-4449**.

Free Tax Help for middle- and low-income taxpayers, with special attention for those 60 and over, every **Tuesday**, 9:30-1:00, starting **Tue., Feb. 8**, Senior Center; or call **212-751-9241**.

Art Show Opening – Island Schools of Art, Sat., Feb. 12, 3:00-6:00 p.m., Gallery RIVAA. Art of the children of Roosevelt Island's schools – PS/IS 217, the Roosevelt Island Day Nursery, The Child School, and Legacy High School. Exhibition continues through March 6. (See samples, page 8.)

Valentine's Day Concert featuring **Tim Love, Sat., Feb. 12**, 8:00 p.m., PS/IS 217 auditorium, sponsored by the Roosevelt Island Youth Program. Free.



– Future Events –

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Feb. 14, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Additional information: **212-751-9577**.

Book Discussion Group at the Library, **Thur., Feb. 17**, 6:30 p.m., *Who's Irish*, by Gish Jen. Copies available at the branch.

The Main Street WIRE – Next issue, **Sat., Feb. 19**. (To receive e-mail bulletins between issues, send an "Add Me" message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Advertising Deadline:** Ads in the paper, Friday, Feb. 11; decision on fliers for *The Bag*, Mon., Feb. 14; inserts due Thur., Feb. 17. **Future issues:** Mar. 5, 19; Apr. 2, 16, 30; May 14; June 4, 18; July 2, 30; Aug. 27; Sept. 10, 24; Oct. 8, 22; Nov. 5, 19; Dec. 3, 17. **News phone, 212-826-9055**; urgent matters **917-617-0449**. **Phone** for display and classified advertising placement and information, **212-751-8214**. **To list your organization's Island-related event in this column**, e-mail information to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com, or leave it, addressed to *The WIRE*, at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street; provide a telephone number for follow-up questions. There is no charge for such listings.

Oldies-But-Goodies Dance with Lingerie Show, Sat., Feb. 19, 8:00-1:00, Manhattan Park Theater, 8 River Road. Ticket, in advance, at \$25, includes food by Julie; music by DJ Mario. Tickets: **212-826-5646** or **646-331-3445**.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Feb. 28, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Additional information: **212-751-9577**.

Residents Association Common Council Meeting, Wed., Mar. 2, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd (lower level). Open to all; an opportunity to address the Council is included near the start of each meeting.

La Leche League meeting for breastfeeding and pregnant women, **Mon., Mar. 7**, 1:00 p.m., 20 River Road #5P. Information: **212-832-1188**.

RIOC Board of Directors Meeting, Thur., Mar. 10, 4:30 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. The Board's afternoon meetings usually conclude with an opportunity for public comment, specific time uncertain.

Vernissage IV Opening Reception, Sat., Mar. 12, 6-9 p.m., Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main Street.

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*. Please provide a phone number for possible follow-up.

Senior Center

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10:00, **Computers for Beginners**
10-11, **Latchhook Class**
10-11:30, **English as 2nd Language**
10:30, **Blood Pressure Screening**
12:30, **"Oldies" Movies**
1:00, **Tai Chi**
7:00, **Dance Class** (Beginners)

Tuesday
10:00, **Chinese massage**
2:00, **Bingo**
6:00, **Yoga Class**
7:30, **Games** (RISA)

Wednesday
9:15, **Stay Well**
10:00, **Computers**
10:00, **Spanish Class**
10:30, **Shoppers' Bus**
12-2, **Painting & Sculpting**
7:00, **Pokeno** (RISA)

Thursday
9:30, **Chinese Massage**
10:30, **Creative Arts**

12:30, **Movie**
7:00, **Dance**

Friday
9:30, **Yoga**
10:30, **Computers**
1:00, **Bridge**
7:00, **Games** (RISA)

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

Special Events

Tue., Feb. 8, 7:00, General meeting
Sat., Feb. 12, 6:00, Chinese New Year party
Mon., Feb. 14, 6:00, Valentine's Day Party
Wed., Feb. 16, Atlantic City trip
Sat., Feb. 19, 6:00, Korean New Year party
Mon., Feb. 21, closed (Presidents Day)
Sat., Feb. 26, 10-5, Black History Month celebration

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The **Public Safety Blotter** for the last half of January is now available on *Website NYC10044* at nyc10044.com/wire/2511/blot2511.html.



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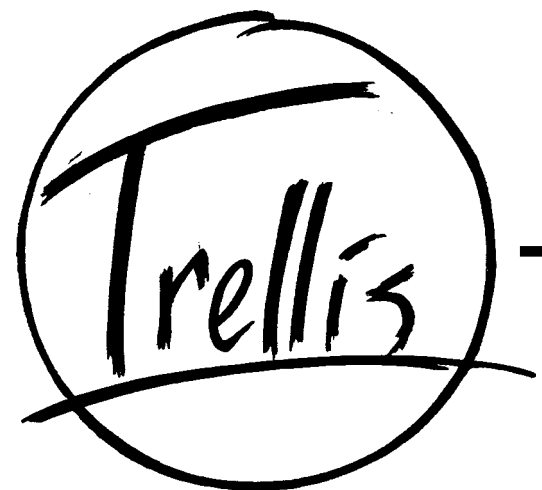


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In a RIOC Board Session, a Strong Public Relations Offensive on RIRA’s Octagon Suit, for Public Safety, and for RIOC Itself

RIOC from page 1

Berman’s President’s Report was interrupted for comments, and the amount of praise Board members heaped upon the corporation and upon PSD, while warning of budgetary peril arising from RIOC’s need to defend the Octagon suit, made the meeting appear to be one called primarily so that RIOC could mount the P.R. offensive.

Board member Deborah Beck, in fact, urged extensive *WIRE* coverage during the meeting.

The Octagon controversy and the Article 78 suit arose because a near-unanimous majority of the RIRA Common Council believes that a 2002 law (text at nyc10044.com/wire/2223/bill.html) prohibits the taking of designated Octagon parkland for the apartment development. In its response (see related story, page 1), RIOC says residents have no “standing,” or right, to use the court system to oppose the development, and takes the view that the law provides specifically for the development. Construction is already under way on land which, last summer, contained barbecue pits, picnic tables, a set of swings, and many large trees that were removed as the first step toward construction. After the apartment wings are built adjacent to the Octagon tower, which is being restored in the plan, the former picnic-and-play area will be essentially enclosed as a courtyard for the building, a bit like the courtyards of Island House and Westview. RIRA President Steve Marcus and others have expressed doubt that barbecuing will be allowed, and doubt that picnickers will want to eat and play in view of several hundred apartments.

Board member Patrick Stewart, himself a former president of the Residents Association, added a suggestion to Labate’s comments: “As a member of the Board and also a responsible citizen, I would like to suggest to all of us, and you, Mr. [Kenneth] Leitner [RIOC Counsel], that at the appropriate time, the Board might consider a countersuit.”

Labate then asked Leitner, “Ken, can you tell me if there would need to be Board action for a temporary revenue-generation measure such as an increase in the bus fare?” Their subsequent discussion was inaudible in *The WIRE*’s



The RIOC Board’s newest resident member, Alberteene Anderson, exchanged a hug with RIOC President Herb Berman after last week’s session. It was Anderson’s first RIOC Board meeting. Behind Berman, Board Chair Mary Beth Labate prepared to leave.

recording as they spoke while turned away from microphones or failed to turn microphones on.

Beck added this comment on the litigation: “The fact of the matter is that certain capital improvements that might have been planned for the next fiscal year will have to be put on hold because of the money in escrow now due to the litigation. Three million dollars [must be] set aside [as a litigation escrow] ’til the litigation issue is resolved and, I don’t think – having attended the meeting of RIRA to speak, but unfortunately not knowing the protocol, missed my opportunity, to explain to the RIRA group assembled what the consequences of such litigation would be in terms of delays and making necessary capital improvements to the community – I don’t think that issue was really discussed in any detail at the time of the discussion at RIRA of this. It was a sort of foregone conclusion that they were going to do this. I think the community as a whole, and I hope that *The WIRE* will fully describe this discussion, and particularly Chairman Labate’s comments, I think that the community as a whole has to understand that, when litigation like this is put forward, particularly given the precedent of failed litigation on the very same issue related to Southtown, that the community as a whole is suffering.”

Beck was referring to a losing 2000-2001 suit by Roosevelt Islanders for Responsible Southtown Development (RIRSD) that attempted to preserve a six-acre park buffer between Northtown and the planned buildings of Southtown. She continued, “So I’d be careful about increasing their suffering vis-a-vis the bus-fare-increase proposal. On the other hand, I think it’s important that we figure out a way to protect the community’s interest through a reserve for litigation, since this seems to be a pattern of behavior on the part

of certain individuals who are resident on the Island. So I think that it would be helpful if there was a full explanation of this in *The WIRE*, because they’re so capable in *The WIRE* of explaining things in great detail, and I mention particularly the issue just past that had a rather extensive and, I thought, very thoughtful, exploration of the Louis Kahn plan for Southpoint Park, which is now on display. So I think, I hope that this will be fully explored, this particular issue, in *The WIRE*, so that the community as a whole understands it. I don’t think they’re aware of it.”

Board members also congratulated RIOC staff for snow clearance the weekend of January 22, and themselves and the RIOC executive staff for RIOC’s improved financial condition.

“I’d like to make note that seven, perhaps eight, years ago, this corporation was flat broke,” Stewart said. “In fact, if the truth be known, we were probably in the red. I think that the conduct of the business of the corporation has clearly vastly been better since then, and I want to thank President Berman for that, and also Mr. [Robert] Ryan [former RIOC President, whom the Board suspended, then fired, in 2003], that even when the State was supporting this Island, we did not have that much money, and so I am, quite frankly, impressed with what you all have done. I think it bodes well for the future of the Island.”

Board member John Mannix then said, “It is good news that the corporation has some cash reserves. On the other hand, I suggest that the list of capital improvements still exceed the cash reserves and those cash reserves be prioritized. It’s good news the money’s there, but it’ll be spent easily.”

A word-for-word transcript of relevant parts of the RIOC Board’s discussion is posted on *Website NYC10044* with this issue of *The WIRE*, at nyc10044.com/wire/2511/rioctran.html.

Resident Board member David Kraut joined in the congratulating after hearing PSD Deputy Chief René Bryan tell of the apprehension of a former resident for his 12th Motorgate burglary. “In case anybody has forgotten, the Public Safety Director was questioned on the issue at a previous Board meeting, and said words to the effect that, ‘We’re working on it; we can’t discuss it with you now because it’s private,’ and we see now that that promise has been delivered on in very specific and direct terms.”

Later, Kraut added, “We’re in a situation here where we have a dedicated professional public service, [the] Public Safety organization on this Island, which shows up despite blizzards, leaving their own family, to come here, that does stake-out operations, that catches perpetrators in serious felony ways that might take them off the Island for a while, that knows pretty much what families are assaulting each other, and yet, there is a constant and steady undertow of criticism and negative comment about the Public Safety Department and I’m at a loss to understand where it comes from, frankly. We see it over and over, in fact, there’s an assumption made by certain individuals in this community who I believe should get their facts straight before they speak, that there’s something wrong or negative or a major problem with Public Safety.

“Now, no organization’s perfect, there’s room for improvement, and this has to be recognized in any case, but it must be recognized that we have a bunch of dedicated, professional people who show up for work and do an exemplary job, and yet there is this public notion that there is something wrong. The comments that somehow the money that is spent for Public Safety should be withheld, that we have to throw them off the Island in the hopes of some other organization coming here that would not be here full-time, and frankly I’m at a loss to understand it, don’t see where it comes from. I don’t want you to think this is an unreserved compliment to Public Safety. There’s room for improvement, and we work toward it. I’m just at a loss to understand the basis of this constant undercurrent about the Public Safety Department when, clearly, by every measurement, they’re doing a pretty damn good job.” Perhaps realizing he had been speaking quite forcefully, Kraut

then added, “Aside from that, I have no strong feelings on the issue.”

[Late last week, Berman repeated an earlier denial that there is any substance to rumors, circulating over the previous two weeks, that Public Safety Director James Fry is about to leave his post. “He’s not a young man, and he has been under the weather for a while, but I have not spoken with him about any plans to leave,” Berman said in a telephone conversation.]

In the RIOC Board session, Berman then interjected comments about an arrest for which Public Safety had been criticized at a meeting of the Residents Association Common Council.

“May I add something to what David said? One of the complaints was the arrest of somebody by Public Safety who was taking pictures. We did an extensive investigation into that arrest... We found out that Public Safety had received a phone call from The Child School concerned, deeply concerned,

and to some degree terrified, over the fact that an unknown person was taking pictures of the building and the roof. Public Safety then went to inquire of the person, and he refused to identify himself. They did absolutely the right thing – they arrested him, brought him down, and subsequently, he then identified himself as a person who was taking pictures for *The WIRE*. If Public Safety had not done their job, they would have been subject to appropriate criticism. They did their job in a post-September 11 mentality and in an environment where we’re terrified on a daily basis of what might take place, in an instance where we’re particularly terrified about what might happen at the schools, for a person to not identify himself and to refuse to identify himself, just begged to be arrested, and that’s an example now, where I read in the paper that that’s being cited as a reason that we should do away with Public Safety. They did their job, and they should be proud of what they did.”

[Editor’s note: Photographers taking pictures for *The WIRE* are under instructions to identify themselves at the request of uniformed officers and others who inquire. Dr. Ron Musto, who said he was “taking pictures for *The WIRE*,” was not on assignment for the newspaper, but was taking photographs to accompany a letter to the editor about noise from an air-conditioning unit mounted on the roof of a Child School building under his apartment. (See nyc10044.com/wire/2501/wire2501.pdf.) He had filed a noise complaint against the school for the a/c unit, for which the school subsequently paid a fine. Musto claims that the Public Safety Officers who arrested him made no effort to ascertain the reason for the complaint about his photography by employees of The Child School, and it is unclear whether RIOC’s intensive investigation of the arrest uncovered this dimension of the case. It is also unknown whether Child School employees may have been familiar with Musto and his noise complaint when they confronted him during his picture-taking and when they called Public Safety to complain. Musto told *The WIRE* early this week that he had not been contacted for information during the extensive investigation Berman mentioned.]

Stewart, Mannix, Berman, and Kraut then spoke at length on this matter and on resident criticism of RIOC.

Stewart: “There was a time seven or eight years ago when See **RIOC**, next page



RIOC President Herb Berman



Resident RIOC Board member David Kraut talked with Public Safety Deputy Chief René Bryan after last week’s meeting. Resident Board member Deborah Beck prepared to leave the Chapel.

RIOC from previous page

everyone on this Island was against RIOC. In my humble opinion, we had a good reason to be against RIOC, and times have changed substantially since then. In those days, anything RIOC, anyone connected with RIOC, anything that had to do with RIOC, was automatically suspect. Unfortunately, I sense that that spirit, if you will, that kind of dumb spirit, has carried forward to now, so that, in an attempt to do whatever, RIOC is being criticized for whatever it does. We've got 13 million bucks in the bank, we've got a good Public Safety Department, we've got development on the Island going on. I think the future of Roosevelt Island is quite good. I think the people who are here, and are concerned about their future with regard to rents and so on, are secure. It seems to me that it's time to stop criticizing and start joining up.

"Nothing wrong with pointing out things that are wrong. That's the democratic way. On the other hand, I think that when there is a need for cooperation, not just a need for cooperation [but] a desire to have cooperation, there's really no need – in fact, there's a negative effect from finding difficulties, from finding wrong when there is no wrong. And as a person who has been a resident of this Island, who has been a president of the Resident's Association, and has been involved in RIOC-bashing, I have to say that, at this point, it's kind of out of date to do that, and it disturbs me greatly as a citizen to see that stuff going on."

Mannix: "Herb, you and I did chat about the incident of the photographer being arrested, and I just, having listened to that, and having seen some of the follow-through, I mean, what parent, if you had received a call that an unidentified person was photographing your child at their school, wouldn't want that person arrested? Particularly disabled children. I find it to be absolutely... First of all, it can't be true, because anyone who has a child who would get that call would say, *'Whoever that is, get him off the street, and find out what he is doing.'*"

Berman responded, "All he had to do was identify himself, and he refused to identify himself, which caused the arrest to take place."

Kraut: "We've been through this question of identity before, and it became kind of a cause célèbre a number of years ago. The law in New York City and State is that you must, any of us, unquestionably, properly identify yourself to a police officer or a Public Safety Officer, who has that same standing. That's all that's required. There's no such thing as a national identity card in the United States of America; although the Social Security number has become pretty ubiquitous, but in fact you're not required to have an identity card, you're not required to have a driver's license or another ID in your pocket at all times. If the officers don't know you, they will ask you to join them at the station until your identity can be proved. That's why it makes sense to carry some kind of identification on you because the law is very, very clear. Absent all other considerations, if a police officer asks you to identify yourself, you must, under the law. And we've been through this before in this community. People bait Public Safety."

Kraut continued, "It's what happened in this case; it's what happened several years ago down at Southpoint. There's a famous story about a person arrested for refusing to identify, and of course the judge threw it out because it's a minor thing, but still, they made a great cause out of it, but part of that story was never told, is that there were two individuals trespassing, and they were trespassing at the time at Southpoint, and one of the two people identified themselves, and never heard about it again. [He] properly self-identified, and went on his way... The only issue was not the trespass, the only issue was the self-identity, and I don't know why people will look at a Public Safety officer in the face... I have some suspicions as to why a person would look a Public Safety Officer in the face and refuse to identify [but] I shall not voice them here. But it comes to this notion that somehow our Public Safety Officers, people who catch perpetrators, keep the peace of the street, save lives in this community, somehow they're not supposed to have the same respect as human beings always have, should always have for each other on the street, and it's a bad... I'm not a cop-lover; in fact, my dad was a cop many years ago, and the fact that I manage to get along pretty well with the police around here is totally beside the point. I know that there's plenty of

Responding to RIRA's Lawsuit, RIOC Tells Court Residents Have No Standing in Octagon Matter

by Dick Lutz

Attorneys for the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation have responded to the Residents Association's suit aimed at stopping the Octagon Apartments project.

"The area to be developed for residential use is not now, and has never been, parkland," says the petition for dismissal filed by Carter, Ledyard & Milburn. "The site... was fenced and inaccessible to the public, covered in rubble and debris, and overgrown with vegetation. It has never been used for, much less dedicated as, public parkland." The papers go on to point out that the area available for park use will be increased by a third of an acre as a result of the Octagon development.

The Residents Association (RIRA) petition claims alienation of parkland because, although the rubble-strewn area where residential wings will sit has been partly unavailable, it does appear on maps as a designated "ecological park," and barbecue areas that were available until construction started will effectively become part of the courtyard of the new 500-apartment structure.

The RIOC petition filed by outside counsel Stephen L. Kass says that the rehabilitated Octagon Tower will contain "a public gallery and tenant amenities [and will] house displays featuring local artists and documentary themes such as the historic development and importance of the Octagon buildings and the development of Roosevelt Island as a planned community.

"All of the improvements... will be carried out within an area of approximately 2.4 acres that is currently fenced and overgrown and is not today, and since the demolition of the Lunatic Asylum never has been, publicly accessible."

The Kass petition disputes RIRA's interpretation of the 2002 Roosevelt Island Open Spaces Law. With emphasis added, it quotes from the law: "...no further development or construction for other than park purposes shall be permitted on any real property which is identified as open space areas in the general development plan... and such real property shall remain open space areas for the duration of the lease *unless such development or construction includes the reconstruction, restoration, rehabilitation or preservation of the historic landmarks located in such open space areas and furthers the use of the areas surrounding the historic landmarks as open space areas.*"

The RIOC papers dismiss as "frivolous" the RIRA claim that the Doctrine of Public Trust – a public confidence in official statements that the area would one day be a park – was violated in RIOC's assent to the Octagon Apartments project. Finally, it says that RIRA lacks "standing," being unable to claim any special direct harm from the development.

The petition points out that, as a corporation, RIRA must be represented by counsel, and is not. The Residents Association has been seeking pro bono counsel for the case, however, and expects to amend its papers to add an attorney's name.



Becker and Becker Associates, architects of the Octagon Apartments project, released this aerial rendering of the project last week. Bruce Becker said construction is going smoothly, "and if the cold weather lets up, the Octagon restoration work will move even faster." Completion date is projected for the end of 2006, but "the tennis courts are being rebuilt by us and should be back in use by this summer, assuming construction continues without any interruption." He said plans are for the Red Bus to stop in front of the building, adjacent to the courts.

opportunities for the abuse of police power in this country, City, State, and I've kept an eye on them all the time. But the notion that you automatically go in the face of a police officer, automatically confront, and automatically are rude, and then be surprised that the person has a negative reaction to that, just seems... It's like the hangover from some previous period in American history which probably shouldn't have much relevance today. People are living in the past this way. It's confusing."

In a conversation with *The WIRE* after the Board meeting, Deputy Chief Bryan said that arresting Public Safety Officers had not inquired into possible Child School motives for the complaint about Musto, and said he had not been aware that the complaint to Public Safety by Child School personnel was made at a time when Musto was pursuing a noise complaint against the school. That aspect of the case was not mentioned by RIOC Board members, and they were also apparently unaware of it in discussing RIOC's investigation of the matter.

During the meeting, Board Chair Labate added this comment in response to Stewart's criticism of present-day RIOC-bashing, "I'd just like to say, Patrick, on your comment, I accept that there will always be a handful of people on the Island who choose to look at the negative, and it's unfortunate, because there are obviously people who feel passionate, and if they could channel that passion into something productive, I think they could work very well with us. And when everything comes out negative, I have to admit it's

hard to really take a look at what they're saying, and try to be objective and see whether they have a point to it, because it's always so negative. So I would encourage everyone on the Island to notice the good things we're doing, to bring to our attention when we truly have fallen short, and to direct obvious passion and obvious love for this Island into something productive that goes beyond criticism, because everybody can sit back and criticize."

Berman, in his President's report, characterized the January 22-23 snow removal by RIOC employees as "nothing short of miraculous." Mannix asked him about an e-mail exchange with RIRA President Steve Marcus. Berman explained, "Steve called up and complained about the fact that there was some possible wet condition in a particular part of the Island, and I pointed out to him that snow was removed but, you know, you're not going to see pavement when you have 18 inches of snow. It will take a while to get that done. So I just took that as an opportunity to respond to that and tell him it was a remarkable job done by a relatively few people, and they continue to go over the Island and plow and shovel and do what they have to do." After a comment from Mannix, Berman added, "Steve subsequently sent me an e-mail saying that he didn't mean in any way to demean the performance, just, I guess he felt that he thought it could be better. I can't conceive of how it could have been better, particularly amongst those who live in other parts of the City, they still have trouble getting from the house to cars, to the street."

At Gallery RIVAA Next Week, Art From the Island's Schools

Next Saturday, Gallery RIVAA will open a special show, called *Island Schools of Art*, featuring the works of children in the Island's schools – PS/IS 217, the Roosevelt Island Day Nursery, The Child School, and Legacy High School. The exhibition will continue through March 6. Gallery hours are 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays, 6:00-9:00 p.m. Wednesdays and Fridays. Here's a sample of the works that will be on display.



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Letters from page 2

Years after your esteemed colleague, Mr. Stewart, publicly called me “stupid” at a RIOC meeting, and Mr. Berman shouted me down for *dar-ing* to impugn the noble activities of our gallant, fighting Public Safety office and the concerned, diligent work of our civic-minded RIOC with regard to Motorgate, my own automobile was seriously vandalized in Motorgate. Twice. In three months. I called Public Safety immediately; to the credit of the individual officers, they tried their best to be helpful. But all they could do ultimately was to call the NYPD dispatch in Brooklyn. Several hours later, reports would be taken by a “real” officer of the 114th Precinct. Funny, though, I never saw it in the Roosevelt Island crime blotter.

I’m realistic enough to realize that mine is just one more anecdote. I can’t believe that anyone without a serious learning disability would buy an explanation of the sad state of Motorgate, like yours:

“I should also add to that, in case anybody has forgotten, the Public Safety Director was questioned on the issue at a previous Board meeting, and said words to the effect that, *We’re working on it; we can’t discuss it with you now because it’s private*, and we see now that that promise has been delivered on in very specific and direct terms, and I tend not to forget things like that, and I respect that very, very much.”

“Working on it”? What the devil was to “work on,” lo these many years? What, was this Efreim Zimbalist, Jr.’s “FBI”? Your guys got lucky. Your officers... *finally*... happened to arrest “a” suspect; you hardly ended the ongoing crime wave, as you imply, nor did RIOC do a single thing to expedite the long-demanded improvement of physical conditions in that disgusting garage. Publicly crucifying one derelict does little to end the systemic problem of the continued deterioration of Motorgate. Or, for that matter, a never-ending series of petty crimes, which any decent rent-a-cop outfit, on a small Island with one entrance in and out, could have easily nipped in the bud (could someone *please* educate me as to *what else* this “department” could possibly have to do with their busy days that’s worth \$2.7 million a year?)

It seems RIOC meetings are a monthly excuse for your members to get together and blow smoke up each other’s behinds. In the January 26 transcript, published on *Website NYC10044*, I lost count of the self-serving speeches you gave, complimenting each other on how brilliantly and efficiently you run this Island. The words of the immortal if fictional Alan Brady come to mind: “If there were any more snow in here, we could all go skiing!”

Russ DiBello
Residents Association Common Council
Chair, RIRA Governnment Relations Committee
Member, Roosevelt Island Safety Kommittee (RISK)

Dear President Berman:

I’ve read, with dismay, John Melia’s remarks responding to *The Main Street WIRE*’s query on Sari Dickson’s departure, to wit: “none of his business.” I thought we had progressed past the bad old days of “need-to-know” communications between RIOC and this community. You had chosen to make Sari, as vice president of operations, the point person for almost all contact between RIOC and the public, e.g. Roosevelt Island Day, Halloween, and the Christmas-tree-lighting ceremony at Blackwell House, as well as the contingency-planning meetings with the State and City Offices of Emergency Planning, rather than yourself. Surely some press release prior to her leaving would have been appropriate in addition to the *post-facto* paragraph in your column. Why was her departure so abrupt? Who will take her place? If Mr. Melia, whose face, name, and function is a mystery to most Islanders, is to represent RIOC to the press (as he has done in this instance) then let him do it appropriately, adequately, and graciously. I find it hard to believe, given our cordial and open relationship over the past eighteen months, that you participated in or approved of this gratuitous discourtesy to the Island’s newspaper and population.

Matthew Katz

To the Editor:

I was very intrigued by the e-mail that was sent out on Friday, January 21, that because of the Snow Emergency all vehicles must be removed from Main Street or they would be towed. I assume that this was just a threat with no teeth. What I noticed on Sunday, January 23, was that the ugly old blue van that is always parked on the west side of Main Street at the Entrance into River Road was “plowed under” and covered in snow. Therefore it was never moved *nor* was it towed. This van should have been hauled away a long time ago. Its tags are expired and tires are flat. I can not believe that Public Safety would allow a van with who-knows-what in it (a bomb, illegal chemicals, drugs, rats) to be parked across the street from a U.S. Post Office, the AVAC, the FDNY Special Operations station, a residential building, and a parking garage!

This is outrageous and disgusting. This van is a violation to the senses and should be removed, as it is a hazard to public safety. It is an abandoned vehicle and should be treated as such.

Also, how come there are *no* postings of the Public Safety phone number that can be seen when you enter the Island via the bridge or near the subway/tram? (Actually it’s not posted anywhere that I have seen on the Island.) During the summer of 2004, we witnessed an accident between an 18-wheeler that was removing medical waste, going down the ramp onto the Island, and a car going up the ramp to get off the Island. You may remember it, at shift change around 11:00 p.m. on a Wednesday night.

Anyway, I dialed 911 and they said *Where are you? Roosevelt Island? Where is that? By what bridge?* Roosevelt Island Bridge... *I do not know where you are, lady.* Turns out this is a normal response from 911. So now the traffic is *stopped* all ways and backing up all over Main Street. I finally found someone who knew the number to Public Safety in one of the many cars standing still. Public Safety had no idea that there was an accident. One of the Public Safety officers said to me that the truck driver should have known to call Public Safety before attempting to go down the ramp, because there is not enough room for an 18-wheeler and a car to pass on the ramp.

Do you not think there should be a *sign* that has this warning and a phone number? It’s common sense, people!

Since 911 does not know where Roosevelt Island is, maybe we should send them a map and the phone number for Public Safety.

Karen L. Martinez

To the Editor:

OK – if we’re facing a fare hike, let’s evaluate the service we’re getting from the Red Buses. A year ago we suffered as they experimented with the bus route. Actually, it was two experiments rolled up into one – one was a really bad idea and the other has potential of being a really good idea. The bad one was circling around Southtown. The potentially good idea was the continuous loop.

Also, in a recent *WIRE*, Mr. Berman said he wanted to see better productivity out of the RIOC employees and systems. It doesn’t take much to notice that the Red Buses are very inefficient and unproductive, and if I’m facing a fare hike, then I would like to see a more efficient system that truly cares for the majority of Islanders.

Without going into deep examination into all the atrocities of the Red Bus system, let me address a few. First of all, how often, during the morning rush, is there a large build-up of passengers waiting at stops? Even though my stop is the farthest away – at 40 River Road, I rarely am willing to wait, so I start the trek to the Tram. More often than I want to count, even during rush hour, I can get to the Tram at the same time or before the bus I would have ridden. And often the first bus I encounter is south of Trellis, followed by another one, with a third and often a fourth close behind. How is that serving the community?

But speaking of productivity, my pet peeve is what goes on off-hours, especially on bright and beautiful weekend days. Let’s say I’m just getting to my stop at 40 River Road. There’s a bus that’s been sitting for a while (maybe 5 minutes, maybe more) in front of Octagon Park. I say to myself – great, I’m going to enjoy a rare treat and ride the bus. I get on, anticipating getting to the train or Tram a bit faster, but no, he sits again for another 6-8 minutes at Motorgate. Couldn’t he have told us he was going to do that? It could have been my deciding factor as to whether to walk or ride. OK, we’re on our way, the bus full to standing-room only, and we are now approaching the Tram, which has just arrived, and its handful of passengers have boarded the other bus, which is turning around for its trek north to do what this one has done. We get off, a bit frustrated that if we hadn’t wasted those 6-8 minutes, we would have made the previous Tram. So now we have to wait the remainder of the 15 minutes before taking off again – I guesstimate another eight minutes or so.

What is the Red Bus doing during that time? Sitting there – eight minutes, plus the 4.5 minutes for the Tram to cross, so they can pick up 2-5 passengers.

So, per trip, we see the red bus wasting +/-26 minutes – enough time to make another trip around the Island. This would serve the community so much better than if they sit unproductively for those 26-ish minutes. More riders who walk because they don’t want to wait could be so much happier if they had the bus option.

The bus schedule needs to be re-evaluated. How can you expect to add riders at the north end of the Island, and the bus doesn’t serve that area because it is beholden to be tied to the Tram schedule? Not that many people riding the Tram at that time of day are going to take the bus, as they’re going to the tennis club or are tourists wanting to walk. Might I recommend getting a transportation consultant in to help the buses space themselves apart better, to implement a continuous route, with an alternative schedule tied to the Tram for late afternoons, evenings, and inclement weather?

This isn’t rocket science, but there is a science to it . May I recommend bringing in a bus traffic consultant – perhaps one that serves the airport or the car rentals – to help properly space the buses and create a workable and more productive system?

Oh yes, another atrocity: How many times have I taken the Tram back to the Island late evening (after 11), tired and eager for a ride, and there is no bus? Or worse yet, how many times (twice for me, and others have experienced this, too) has the bus sat there during heavy rain, and just as the Tram is docking, it pulls away, leaving us stranded in the pouring rain – *why?*

I hope the powers that be take this to heart.

Name Withheld

To the Editor:

It was a shock and sad surprise to hear of the closing of Julie’s Sports Bar.

Rumors abound – what will replace it? Bought out by some evil super-retailer?

Like Trellis, or the deli, or the long-closed bakery, Julie’s was a place you counted on. If you wanted a quick drink or went in to catch a game, it was there. Sure, we can go other places – but it won’t be the same – it won’t be like home.

Karyn Exilus

To the Editor:

I just wanted to tell you how much Julie’s Bar is going to be missed.

Julie is an outstanding individual and has always given 110% of herself, her time, and her dedication to Roosevelt Island and what she does. The Island needs a place that stays open late for the adults – a place where we let our hair down, sit, relax and chit-chat with our neighbors over a football or baseball game, shoot some darts or pool, and relax for a while. There are many other bars in NYC, but none will ever compare to Julie’s Bar.

Julie, your bar will be missed. I can’t begin to express all the wonderful times I had in your bar. Sometimes it would be a great big crowd and other times it was just you, me and maybe a handful of people, but every single time it was a great time had by all. I know you will be awesome at whatever you put your mind to take on next. Take great care of yourself.

Jackie Roldan

To the Editor, New York Times:

I’m responding to Julie Iovine’s article, “An Elegy for a Memorial, And for the Man Who Designed It,” on the proposed Kahn memorial to FDR, designed for Roosevelt Island over thirty years ago. As a participant in the planning for Southpoint Park for several years now, as well as the elected spokesperson of this community from 2000 to 2004, I know this project to be an idea roundly rejected by both park users and Island residents alike during the Trust for Public Land’s meticulous surveying and interviewing process.

The planned community of Roosevelt Island was designed by equally famous architects, Philip Johnson and John Burgee, to include a balance of residential development and parkland. This General Development Plan has been betrayed by rapacious developers and politicians with their own agendas. In the past few years we have lost two areas designated as open space, Blackwell Park and Octagon Park, to fair-market residential housing, leaving only Southpoint Park as an oasis for New Yorkers to find superb views and respite from the City’s hubbub.

The Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, not to mention the State of New York, had thirty years to find the resources to make the Kahn Memorial happen; time and necessity have passed them by. Islanders certainly wish to honor the Roosevelts but not with a stone and concrete mausoleum that robs us of the amenities and river views that spell “park” to us, end-users of the new Southpoint Park. Of the three conceptual plans presented by the TPL advisory council to the community, the “Wild Garden” proposal was the least costly, with a total estimate of \$33 million. Contradicting the numbers in Ms. Iovine’s article, the Kahn Memorial was factored into a second conceptual plan, “Visionary Landscapes,” and was estimated at \$12 million, or one-quarter of the total cost of this version.

Roosevelt Island, a designated “Tree City” for over a decade, needs to protect and enhance the things that make it special: historical landmarks, ancient trees, wild places in the heart of the City, indigenous flora and fauna. This is what makes life special here for this unique, small-town population especially in light of the paucity of shopping, restaurants, entertainment, and transportation alternatives. By all means, honor Louis Kahn by building his grand vision. Just not here.

Matthew M. Katz
Roosevelt Island Residents
Association President, 2000-2004
Member, Trust for Public Land
Advisory Council

To the Editor:

Heartening it is to see revived interest in the dream of our founding father, Rocky, that this Island not only bear the name of Roosevelt, but also honor him at its tip. While a Republican, ashamed nonetheless of Pataki’s harsh treatment of our beloved sliver-in-the-river, I join most Democrats in appreciating fully FDR’s huge contribution to this country during the Great Depression and in World War II. But let’s not, while we’re at it, undervalue Eleanor’s promulgation and pursuit of human rights at the UN and throughout the world. We need, in all good conscience, to honor both.

Expediency, though, seems to be our game name. Do we go with the funded grand-scale Kahn plan, which would eat up all our precious space at the south we need so badly for activities associated with other than the Roosevelts? Or do we go with the non-funded resident-approved plan? We could, of course, develop the land a little here, a little there over the years

See **Letters**, next page

As Island’s Housing Future Changes, Residents Organize

Eastwood/Lutz from page 1

volvement of everybody, and getting out of your apartment and away from your TV screens in order to save your home, you really have no business here. If you’re not going to get involved, it’s an exercise in futility.

“Let us not forget what kind of an administration we have,” she said, then listened as Bach explained the jeopardy his Community Service Society sees in possible changes of Federal policy.

“It’s very unusual for a President to target a specific program for cuts,” Bach said. “You know what he targeted for cuts? Section 8 vouchers. And you know why? Because he doesn’t want HUD to have to keep up with rent levels, particularly in cities like New York... In the Bush budget, which Congress rejected, there were three proposals:

“First, cut Section 8, [with] not enough money even to take care of current grantees.

“The second is block granting – the Federal government says to a lower-level government, ‘Here’s the money. Take it; we don’t care what you do with it. It’s flexible.’ And the reason they do that is not that they love local government or the flexibility. They love it because, if they send the money in a block grant, they don’t have to increase it every year.

“The third proposal was about enhanced vouchers, and it was in the presidential budget message. It said enhanced vouchers will be limited to one year... So if you’re lucky enough to get an enhanced voucher, after a year, you would get

a standard voucher, which is not high enough to cover the rent in a building like Eastwood. If you can’t afford [the rent], the standard voucher would be portable. So, terrific – you could get another one-bedroom apartment for \$1100 somewhere else in New York. I don’t know where. People who have vouchers are having a tough time.”

Bach concluded, “I just want you to be clear that the point that Louise is making is that no one is secure, and we are all braced for the President’s next budget. Now, more than ever, we have a president in office who believes he has a mandate – I think there will be another attack on housing and that Section 8 will be the most hurt.”

They urged unity and hard work ranging from fundraising through research for legal support.

“What I urge you to do is to get your act together,” Sanchez-Roberts said. “Your owner owns my building in the Bronx. Your owner took five buildings in Harlem out of the Mitchell-Lama system within the past four months. That’s what your owner did – Jerry Belson. Your owner is going to come to a meeting and tell you not to worry [and say], ‘We’re going to take care of you. If you’re not eligible for a nice enhanced voucher, we’ll fix you up with another program.’ Yeah, sure they will, but you’ve got to make sure you get everything you possibly can get, so that you make sure you get enough to keep you here. So it’s a question of making sure, and I urge you to get your act together. We’re all friends here; we’re



It was standing-room-only last week as Eastwood residents heard experts Victor Bach (left) and Louise Sanchez-Roberts (right) tell them to unite and organize now. Both have been through conversions of apartment buildings to private ownership.

all in the same boat.”

She concluded, “There is something more at stake here. It is your apartment. It is your place to live that’s at stake here, and you’ve got to act to protect it.”

EBC co-chair Byron Gaspard told his fellow residents that the organization would conduct elections sometime soon; no schedule was announced for future meetings.

Westview from page 1

communications will resume and tenant ownership of Westview becomes a reality.”

In response, Opher Pail of the Westview Task Force provided this statement to *The WIRE*:

“We are unpleasantly surprised by the timing of [the owners’] application, as the Task Force has been actively engaged in discussions with [them], DHCR, and RIOCI involving Tenant-Sponsored Privatization. We believed the land-

lord was negotiating in good faith. Evidently this was not the case.

“Let’s be clear – The landlord’s maneuver is at best a bold attempt to intimidate tenants so they are forced to accept [the] landlord’s outrageously unreasonable terms, or worse – just a frivolous mass eviction initiative.

“But we presently prefer to consider this as an opportunity to achieve our objectives. Indeed, on January 31, the Westview Task Force completed its comprehensive due-diligence process. We discovered, for example, that the building requires about \$8 million in immediate repairs, whereas Sheldrake’s engineering survey reported that the building requires almost no investment except \$500,000 for an elevator upgrade. Sheldrake neglected to mention that tenants have already paid \$752,000 for such upgrade.

“By February 12, our attorneys will officially present our

privatization plan pursuant to the mandate received from the Office of the Attorney General.

“Our plan is the only solution that preserves affordable housing at Westview, in accordance with the provisions of the master City/State lease, while paying landlord 50% more than what landlord wanted only a few years ago, and a 4000% return on the landlord’s original investment. At the same time, our plan provides rent stabilization protection to non-buyers, an affordable opportunity for potential buyers, adequate funds to improve once and for all the horrible conditions at Westview, and it sets aside significant funding to be used by RIOCI for Island Development.

“Our plan is a win/win/win/win situation – win for the landlord, win for tenants, win for RIOCI, and a win for the State. We are very confident that our plan will be supported accordingly and materialize this year.”



Island House In a jammed community room Monday night, tenants listened to their leaders discuss planning toward their building’s departure from Mitchell-Lama.

Letters from page 10

through revenues derived from the area – movies, fireworks, ice-skating, concerts, plays, raffles of large TV’s. Sweat equity would offset hiring labor, the bulk of the project’s cost – residents getting out in their old clothes on Saturdays, bossed by an expert, to work on a parcel of land there. Then, too, we may be able to get grant monies.

I feel most Rosie Islanders will concur with Judy Berdy that a simple, fairly small memorial at the Southpoint will adequately show our respect – that we would be happier with slower land development. Especially since we have something all too rare here – resident input. Our own proud achievement, no matter how long it takes. And it will be full-use land, geared to our lifestyles.

Huge memorials belong rightly in large spaces where land is not an issue; they tend to funereally hush the viewer, squelching all exuberance. We are fast becoming overpopulated; public use of our land is shamefully shrunken. Let’s keep this whole thing in proper perspective. Residents, and not the world at large, should be better served.

As for the memorial, how about a modest vertical piece of granite, perhaps facing the UN, inscribed simply to FDR and Eleanor, flanked perhaps by a couple of thin evergreen bushes, with an unassuming fountain completing the small footprint? Low cost and maintenance, taking away neither much land nor view.

Then let’s get to work on parceling the resident-approved plan into yearly manageable work projects, bossed by an expert on each phase. Focus can at first be on revenue-producing aspects, with periphery filled in later. What we don’t complete in one year can be finished in the next. And what is finished can be enjoyed by us right away. A garden of Eden in paradise. Well, sort of.

Barbara Potts

Eastwood/Kimball from page 1

Plaza: A little over a year ago, she and other officers of their association began negotiations with their landlord over what would happen to their rents after the completion of a proposed sale of the building. They worried that market-rate rents would force many of them to move out in search of cheaper housing. Eight months of negotiation led to an agreement that kept tenants from being priced out.

In firm and direct language, Redanty laid out what she believes Eastwood’s tenants must do if they are to have a chance at reaching a similar agreement. “You need each other. You are going to need to pay a lawyer. Without that lawyer, you might as well say, ‘Whatever you want, you got, Mr. Landlord.’” When asked if tenants who qualify for Section 8 and similar programs need to worry, Redanty was equally earnest in her contention that the best plan for Eastwood residents was to stick together.

“You do have a certain comfort in your voucher this year. But we have to grow up. [President George W.] Bush doesn’t like Section 8, it’s obvious. He wants to get rid of Section 8. You have to take it seriously because once it’s done, you don’t have any right to complain. If you don’t get involved and you don’t help whoever is going to be negotiating for you, your leaders, you don’t have any right to complain. I don’t know your landlord, he might be a good guy, but you’re going to have to sit down and negotiate.”

Attorney Serge Joseph also spoke to the group. “We all have the same goal in mind, and that goal should be to protect your homes.” He displayed a *New York Daily News* article headlined “Tenants Shown the Door,” about a Brooklyn Mitchell-Lama whose new owner evicted all the tenants. He said he particularly knew about this story because the tenants approached his firm seeking representation after they had lost their case in State Supreme Court. Joseph’s firm advised the tenants to give up their case, saying that it was too late at that point for them to do much good.

“This is the worst-case scenario,” he said. “I doubt very much that this is going to happen to all of you,

but it happens. And increasingly, it’s happening.”

“This is a public meeting and we don’t want to give our arguments away, [but] you need an attorney to tell you what your legal status is after you come out of the Mitchell-Lama program.” He added that tenants would also need a lawyer after coming out of Mitchell-Lama to negotiate new leases.

“If we go to the landlord begging, it is unlikely that we are going to get much. But if we go to the landlord with a strong case, whatever it is, more likely than not, the landlord will negotiate. So we have to build a case.” He noted that negotiation is less costly than litigation.

City Council candidate Jessica Lappin emphasized the need for legal counsel. “You have to have a lawyer. You have to have that resource on your side in order to put the landlord into a position where they are going to negotiate with you. To that end, you are going to have to raise money, and I know it’s hard and it’s difficult, but a good lawyer is not going to work for free.” She said that City Council Speaker Gifford Miller’s office would apply pressure to push Eastwood’s landlord, the Belson organization, toward negotiation.

Micah Kellner, speaking for Representative Carolyn Maloney, echoed Lappin’s comments: “Our offices are always there to help you, and we’re going to put the pressure on, but we can’t do that if you guys are not prepared with a lawyer.”

Aaron Silberman, President of the Roosevelt Island Housing Management Corporation, the company that manages Eastwood, said that he viewed the hiring of an attorney as common practice. “The retention of an attorney does not change or alter anything. The important issue still remains the affordability of Eastwood,” he said.

The residents’ committee has begun fund-raising efforts. An advertisement on page 4 of this issue of *The WIRE* provides drop-off points for checks, payable to the Eastwood Building Committee. The average required is estimated at at least \$20 per apartment if every apartment in the building contributes.

Library Programs for Kids a Hit; Adult Activities Need More Support

by Mary Camper-Titsingh

A four-year-old girl said, "I like the story hour best." "No, no, Book Bingo is the most fun," a seven-year-old boy insisted. It's clear that the young patrons of the Island branch of the New York Public Library enjoy the fun and games offered just as much as they do the many children's books and the computers.

Despite the very limited space available in the library, Chief Librarian Petra Kolokotronis and the Library Staff provided 112 special programs last year for our community's children. More are being offered this year. Such activity programs must be held before the library opens to the general public, or after closing hours, because of lack of space and the noise level of excited children. Space is limited and parents should sign children up in advance to assure sufficient materials.

Every Wednesday morning at 11, nearly thirty small children, ages 2-5, arrive for the picturebook story hour. Each sits on a mother's or nanny's lap, or on the floor near a friend on carpet squares provided by the library. As Petra Kolokotronis begins, they stop wiggling and listen with rapt attention while she reads the illustrated stories. Often they beg to hear old favorite books like *Boo to a Goose* by Mem Fox.

Children in the 7-12 age group look forward to monthly craft sessions. Their imaginations are challenged by a large variety of crafts materials supplied by the library. For Thanksgiving last year, the youngsters created amusing turkeys from colorful construction paper and cardboard paper-towel tubes. This week, at 4:00 on Thursday (February 10), the

Library Staff will provide materials and help in making gifts and decorations for Valentine's Day. Pretty mobiles will be fashioned from recycled CD disks decorated with hearts and flowers as well as beads, buttons, and pretty ribbons. On March 10 and 17, the Craft sessions will be held at 6:30, and will be devoted to building Native American dream catchers, which are hung in windows to catch bad dreams before they enter the room.

Bi-monthly, on Friday evenings at 6:30 p.m., Lateshe Lee, Supervising Library Clerk, conducts the lively Book Bingo game that children age 2-12 enjoy so much. The titles of children's books, taken from the currently recommended reading list, appear in the 25 squares drawn on the Bingo mat. Among them are books like *The Snowy Day*, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, and *Papa Please Get the Moon for Me*. Anticipation builds as Lateshe Lee shakes the bag containing slips with the titles of the books. She withdraws one slip from the bag, reads the title and one or more of the children receive markers to place on the square of their Bingo mat that features that title. The first child to have markers on all 25 squares calls out "Bingo" and receives a prize.

The schedule for all special programs at the library is posted on the bulletin board in the entrance at 524 Main Street, between the Fish Store and the Thrift Shop. (*The WIRE* also lists events on page 3 in *ComingUp*.)

The library's programs for adults haven't been well attended. For lack of a conference room, programs for adults must be held either in the morning or evening when the library is not open to the public. Those times are inconvenient for many adults.

A monthly poetry hour, recently introduced by Library Trainee Justin James VanPoelvoorde, meets at noon on the last Friday of every month. The first session attracted only one poet, who lamented, "I was so looking forward to reading my poems to others interested in sharing their own original poetry with me." The next poetry hour is set for the last Friday of the month (February 25) from noon to 1:00.

A book-discussion group is led by Sabrina Jesram on the third Thursday evening of every month. It, too, has suffered from declining attendance. Only three patrons appeared at the last meeting. The schedule and titles of books to be discussed at forthcoming meetings are posted on the front door of the library, and copies of the books are supplied in advance to prospective participants. Recent titles for discussion have included *The Stranger* by Albert Camus and *Hunger* by Lan Samantha Chang. The book scheduled for Thursday, February 17, at 6:30, is *Who's Irish?* by Gish Jen. Copies are available at the branch.

A musical evening featuring a trio of classical musicians was extremely well received last year by an overflow crowd. In fact, there were so many Island residents in attendance that it nearly reached a fire-danger level. There simply is not enough space in the library for many of the activities that the Library would like to offer.

Members of the public are being encouraged to contact RIOC and to join the NYPL letter-writing campaign to urge an increase in Roosevelt Island's library space. Meanwhile the Island branch's hours are Monday and Wednesday, noon to 8:00; Thursday 10-6; Fridays 1-6; Saturdays 10-5. The branch is closed on Tuesdays.



Crossword Solution

Puzzle was published last issue, and is available on line at nyc10044.com/wire/2510/crossword.html.

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Lena Lutz

Lena Lutz died January 20 at Goldwater Hospital, a victim of flu. She was 43 days short of her 93rd birthday, and had been a resident of Rivercross, with her son, Dick, in the late 1990's. After late 2000, she was a patient at Goldwater Hospital.

She was born Lena Sarah Hartlieb on March 3, 1912, in Fredonia, New York, the daughter of Dora Schaich and John Hartlieb, who had independently immigrated from Germany near the end of the 19th Century. She was one of eight children, and is survived by two siblings, Ruth Macri of Cassadaga, New York, and Clarence "Dutch" Hartlieb of Ocala, Florida.

After education in the public schools of Fredonia, she married Aloysius "Al" Lutz of Dunkirk, New York, in July, 1929. Together, they experienced the onset of the Great Depression, and later told stories of tiny paychecks and a house so cold that a goldfish froze in its bowl. By 1938, they felt secure enough to have their only child.

Lena was a devoted mother and, in anticipation of a need for extra income to guarantee a college education for her son, worked selling shoes and, later, managing a shoe store. Many of her longtime customers insisted on dealing only with her; they would leave if they happened to be shopping on her day off, and return another day to be fitted by her.

Her husband died in 1966.

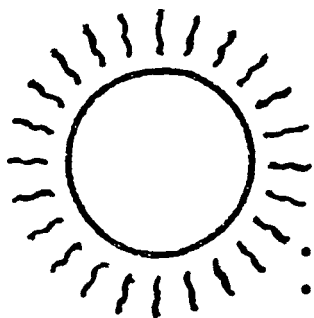
After retirement, Lena moved in 1981 from western New York to Ocala with her late sister, Florence, who died there in 1996; thereafter, she lived with Dick on Roosevelt Island while maintaining a winter-months residence in Florida. In 1998, she made Roosevelt Island her only home.

A memorial concert on Roosevelt Island is planned for spring or summer. In the meantime, her son has asked that memorial contributions be made to Roosevelt Island-based Orphans International, 540 Main Street #418, Roosevelt Island, NY 10044.



Two great Roosevelt Island color postcards
See Classifieds, page 14





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Julie's from page 1

The WIRE, "I have adopted a policy of no tolerance for extraordinary arrears in rent payments, so we'll be taking action against other stores if there's a history of debt or existing significant debt. I don't think it's appropriate to deny the people of Roosevelt Island the opportunity to have the dollars that rent is supposed to supply. I am taking aggressive steps." Speaking of Julie's Bar, he said, "She was given every opportunity, in a judicial setting, to catch up the arrears."

In an interview with *The WIRE*, the Palermos exhibited little anger at RIOC, seeing the bar's failure as a combination of high expenses, the City's no-smoking law, lack of street traffic, the high cost of a liquor license (the license charge is the same as for a large Manhattan bar), a lack of signage at the Tram station directing potential patrons to the business area of the Island, and an inability to attract patrons from the new buildings in Southtown. Both Julie and Joe said that the low monthly rent charged by RIOC was not alone a major factor in the decision to close, but said that off-Island customers getting parking tickets late at night discouraged business. Julie said that her charges for electricity were as high as or higher than the rent.

"But we didn't have enough support from residents," she said. Julie is also president of the Island's Chamber of Commerce. "People just don't go to stores on Roosevelt Island," she said.

"We had a nice little crowd," Joe added, "but not good enough for the hours Julie was putting in. It wasn't getting better. With a new lease coming up, and probably a rent increase, we thought it best just to close up."

Julie said she isn't unhappy about the closing, but lamented the failure to achieve her dream. "At the beginning, we had a really nice bar – jazz every Saturday, a Brazilian night. But after a while the deejays and musicians didn't want to come any more because they had to turn the music down low."

Noise had been a point of complaint by the residents of Rivercross whose apartments are over the bar. Julie talked about difficult times: "It started as soon as I put the key in the door." She recounted 16 visits by "the environmental protection people" and "about eight" visits from the Fire Department. "Public Safety was getting calls 15 to 20 times a night for a while.

Public Safety finally posted a car in front of the bar. [Public Safety Director James] Fry said he was instructed to put a cop there." What the Palermos characterize as "harrassment" finally stopped, they said, after they took their case to the Human Rights Commission. Their case was rejected because the Commission saw no racism in the complaints from Rivercross shareholders or the Board but, Joe Palermo said, the number of complaints dropped after that. Referring to the officer stationed at the bar, Joe added, "That discouraged business."

He said he wanted to correct a mistaken story, told in the community, that Rivercross offered the Palermos \$50,000 "to clear out. What did happen," he said, "is that they went to RIOC and tried to buy our lease. Robert Antonek [at that time RIOC Vice President for Operations] came back to us and told us [about that]."

Steve Kaufman, longtime member of the Rivercross Board and its treasurer, confirms that Rivercross never offered money to the Palermos, but says that, while RIOC and Rivercross discussed the idea of Rivercross taking over as

landlord for the bar space, "RIOC was not interested in pursuing this suggestion and no dollar number was ever proposed."

At the beginning, Julie had high hopes. "When I first bought the place, I was thinking, 'This place is going to buy me a house,'" she said. Joe shook his head in response. "We figured by 2001 there'd be a lot more people on the Island, but we still have just 10,000." He said the bar attracted only about five new regulars from the new Southtown buildings. Because of the City's anti-smoking ordinance, he added, "People started staying home. They buy a six-pack and go home." Julie concurred: "When they go outside to have that one cigarette, you could have sold three or four drinks. And sometimes, after a cigarette, they'd just go home from there."

In the end, the Palermos said, the economics just didn't work. "Almost all the merchants owe money for back rent," Julie said. "The problem here is that there is no street traffic. Manhattan Park people take the bus home and never walk past the bar. Some walk along the river. Our big competition is Manhattan. We're a bedroom community."

About the overall state of retail on the Island, Julie said, "Almost all the merchants are hurting. Most of the merchant leases are up in two to three years. RIOC should lower the rent; some of the rents are elevated according to what the population was supposed to be by now. Some of the merchants came believing this story of 20,000 people that was being told 20 years ago. Merchants can't put money into a place when they can't see the future well enough to plan. You can't put your last dime in. Now, RIOC claims they don't do the real estate any more; you have to go through [RIOC real estate advisor] Paul Maas." Joe added, "He hasn't done anything yet. There has to be a way to make this work so that merchants don't lose everything they have."

Julie continued, "The commercial spaces in the new Southtown buildings could make things worse. Before Mr. [Herb] Berman [President of RIOC], there was a promise that in the new construction they would not duplicate businesses, and that existing merchants would get the right of first refusal on those spaces. At this point, I don't know if that remains, but it's probably out the window."

Merchant casualties in the last decade have included Bigelow Pharmacy, Montauk Credit Union's branch, the Bakery, and now, Julie's Sports Bar. The newsstand changed hands under difficult circumstances, as well.



Joe and Julie Palermo

unClassified

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Deadline for March 5 issue: Tuesday, March 1

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Riverwalk Sales Office Opens



Condo Sales Office Opens The Riverwalk Sales Office opened formally last week. Standing with a model of Southtown are Herb Berman (left), President of RIOC; Darleen Krimez, Riverwalk Place Director of Sales; and David Kramer of the Hudson Companies. Kramer says that 30% of the sales in the condo building now under construction have been to Roosevelt Island residents.



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