

Fourth of July issue
in two weeks:
Sat., July 2

The Main Street WIRE™

25th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



MST Retrospective The “mean kids” show dislike of the nice-girl group, the *Alpha Girls*, in the 2002 musical of the same name. Portions are being restaged this weekend (see *ComingUp*, page 3) in a retrospective of 20 years of children’s and teen shows by The Main Street Theatre.

Housing In the GDP, Westview Tenant Planners See a Possible Bar to Privatization

Attorneys for Westview are citing the Island’s General Development Plan (GDP) in an effort to stave off plans to privatize the building. Specifically, an April letter to a Deputy Commissioner in the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) points out that “by the terms of [the] 99-year agreement between New York City and an arm of New York State, [Westview] must be maintained as housing for middle-income tenants until 2068.” The six-page letter, written by Michael E. Fleiss of Wolf, Haldenstein, Adler, Freeman & Herz, goes on to say that in giving

notice of intent to withdraw from the Mitchell-Lama program, the building’s owner “included no provision or plan of any kind for the preservation of affordable housing at Westview on a going-forward basis – in effect, announcing the imminent... violation of the housing requirements of the [lease].” If the reasoning behind that claim holds, planning for a change of status at Island House and Rivercross – and possibly Eastwood – may be affected. On the other hand, Mayor Michael Bloomberg has agreed to change the General Development

Housing At Island House, Pain and Questions As Conversion Numbers Are Crunching

by Dick Lutz
Looking down the double barrels of a shotgun labeled “privatization,” Island House residents can thank the spirit of youthful wanderlust for Geof Kerr. A chartered accountant trained in his native England, Kerr (it’s pronounced “car”) discovered New York on a world tour he decided to take as a young man faced with career choices. A planet of options before him, he worked for a time in Japan, then landed in New York as Grolier’s Vice President of Planning and Budget, where he retired – with a golden parachute – after serving

as Chief Financial Officer. Eventually, on Roosevelt Island, he came to serve the community as its Scoutmaster, volunteer tax-preparer for seniors, and as auditor of questionable demands upon the Island’s supply-short and demand-heavy market for Main Street parking. Those roles are undiminished, but now, he also serves his fellow tenants as the Island House Tenants Association’s number-cruncher. Actually, he finds he’s not so much a number-cruncher as he is the cruncher of a series of painful educated assumptions. As Island House owners move the building away from the comfortable haven of New York State’s Mitchell-Lama affordable-housing program, Kerr’s educated assumptions have to do with the raw unknowns of several critically important numbers. Each, though only imprecisely known at this point, will inevitably be higher than any resident would like. When taken together in all the conceivable combinations that go into the formulas of Kerr’s spreadsheets, they generate choices that will be difficult for many of Kerr’s fellow tenants.

intimate sessions held in the Island House community room. In the survey, Kerr’s assumptions about what the numbers *could* be are bound to be important guideposts, as necessarily out-of-focus as they must be. There are the educated assumptions about what final figure the Sheldrake Corporation, speaking for the ownership group, might accept as the price of the



Geof Kerr

“We have a little bit of a problem here because residents obviously want numbers,” Kerr says. “But then, we have our lawyer telling us, ‘Don’t give specific numbers. You’ll get sued for it later.’” So every Kerr presentation starts with a disclaimer: “The numbers used in this presentation are estimates only and may change significantly before the final deal with the owner is reached... [etc.]” Later this month, in a process likely to take about a week, Island House residents will be surveyed and asked to express their preferences in response to information energetically pushed out in a May meeting in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, then in a series of more

building in any tenant-ownership plan. There are assumptions about interest rates, about possible tax breaks, cost per square foot, and about the cost of repairs – and, unavoidably, guesstimates about what proportion of tenants will want to become owners and then be able to muster the financial resources to take that step. In those assumptions lies the pain. Like a physician who senses See *Island House*, page 8

The Island in Transition

Plan in the past, altering specifics of the lease under which the State is developing the Island, which remains City property. The documents on which the argument is based, in fact, say the GDP “may be modified from time to time.” The Fleiss letter has been endorsed by five officeholders: Representative Carolyn Maloney, Assembly-member Pete Grannis, State Senator José Serrano, City Council Speaker Gifford Miller, and Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum. Late last month, they forwarded copies to DHCR Commissioner Judith Calogero and City Comptroller William C. Thompson, Jr., with a cover letter identifying them as the “Coalition of Roosevelt Island Elected Officials.” **The Case**
The GDP calls for a specific division of types of housing in Northtown, the area from Eastwood See *Westview*, page 9

RIOC: No More Saturday Night Concerts at Good Shepherd

In a concession to the Island’s Catholic Parish, the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) has revised its policy on the Good Shepherd Community Center to make it unavailable for Saturday events. The just-issued policy would have precluded last Saturday evening’s Carnegie Hall Neighborhood Concert by classical guitarist Eliot Fisk, scheduled by River Music as part of Roosevelt Island Day. RIOC President Herbert E. Berman explained in an e-mail to *The WIRE*: “The church celebrates an afternoon/evening Mass on Saturday, and an early-morning Sunday Mass, hence any usage that goes into the night and intrudes upon the services would render the facility difficult to use. Accordingly, the policy is out of respect to the Church and their schedule to celebrate Mass... It is otherwise available six days a week.” Asked how a Saturday night concert, scheduled after the Saturday Mass, would “intrude,” Berman relayed an explanation drafted by his second in command, Catherine Johnson: “The difficulty comes in when events take place on Saturday evening and run until quite late and Mass is scheduled to be celebrated at 8:00 a.m. People using the facility do not always return the space to its original condition immediately upon conclusion of an event and consequently, it is not ready for 8:00 Mass, causing a significant inconvenience. As this is a multi-purpose facility, accommodation has to be made by all parties to meet the needs of the Roosevelt Island community. Hopefully, by providing the policy, event organizers will know about availability in advance and schedule accordingly, allowing maximum use of the facility while at the same time accommodating its long-standing use as a place of worship for Island residents.” When videographers showed up last Saturday night to record the Fisk concert for use on the Carnegie Hall web site, there was an exchange with Fr. Peter Miqueli, they later reported, in which he said he did not know of the plans for the concert, though it had been scheduled (by Roosevelt Island Housing Management) with the parish secretary some two weeks in advance. In the past, Fr. Miqueli has complained that organizations have occasionally left the Chapel unready for morning services. The new policy also prohibits “parties or dances open to the general public,” use by “commercial groups for sales or promotion,” and “political fund-raising events.” It requires users to carry liability insurance indemnifying RIOC and DHCR. A copy of the policy is posted on *Website NYC10044*, with this issue of *The WIRE*, at nyc10044.com.



Tennis Courts Open With officers of RITA, the Roosevelt Island Tennis Association, and officials from the New York Junior Tennis League in attendance, Herb Berman (in suit and tie) prepared to cut a ribbon Wednesday to reopen the refurbished Octagon Park tennis courts. NYJTL kids are in the foreground; the north-south wing of the Octagon Apartments are in construction in the background. Bruce Becker of Becker and Becker, the project architects, later received a plaque from NYJTL, thanking him for providing court time at the Racquet Club while the outdoor courts were being renovated. An additional photo is on page 10.

The Editorial Page

When Church, State, and Community Cohabit

Last Saturday night's classical guitar concert by Eliot Fisk at the Good Shepherd Community Center could be the last Saturday night concert you'll ever attend there.

That's because, in a concession to the Catholic Parish – specifically, Fr. Peter Miqueli – RIOC has revised its policy for community use of the Chapel to rule out Saturday events, including such Saturday night concerts, altogether.

It's a wrongheaded approach to the problem of shared uses of Good Shepherd Community Center, a/k/a the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, founded as a Protestant Church in 1889 and in use since the residential founding of Roosevelt Island as both a community center and a place of worship.

RIOC's reason for prohibiting use of the facility for events on Saturday nights – a prime night for cultural events – is that an organization might leave the facility unready for a Sunday morning Catholic Mass. It appears to be a concession to Fr. Miqueli, who has found the community church in occasional mild disarray on Sunday morning.

But RIOC's policy change is an inappropriate way to handle the possibility that somebody might leave a Coke can on the floor or move the altar to clear the background for a performance. It's the wrong solution – one that is likely to deny the community the opportunity to enjoy a number of fine cultural events each year. (Manhattan Park Theater Club and the PS/IS 217 auditorium are acoustically impossible for all but the kind of raucous music that makes its own acoustics.)

The appropriate solution is a mechanism for seeing that the Community Center is left, after any Saturday night event, in good shape for its Sunday morning role as a Chapel. There are several possible ways to implement such a multi-use policy, such as requiring a clean-up deposit so that, if it's required, a RIOC staffer, on duty for the purpose, can put the facility in order between the end of a Saturday night event and the Sunday morning services. Running a community is not a 9-to-5 commitment.

Some of this misbegotten management of the Good Shepherd facility stems from days when RIOC bureaucrats made a habit of giving an automatic “no” whenever a community group wanted to schedule use of the facility. Enterprising residents quickly discovered they could circumvent RIOC by scheduling the facility through Sr. Regina Palamara, who was community-minded and did an admirably diplomatic job of accommodating all comers while making sure both Protestant and Catholic parishes had what they needed.

But she has been gone for a while now, and it's no longer appropriate for the Catholic Parish to be burdened with the scheduling of the facility. It's proper that RIOC should issue a policy and take full charge of the building. But it's not proper that it become unavailable for a key night of prime time on the chance that our community priest will be displeased with how it looks on Sunday morning. RIOC should find a way to make sure that doesn't happen, and manage the facility more sensibly.

DL

The **Public Safety Blotter** for the first half of June, when ready, will be posted at nyc10044.com/wire/2520/blast2520.html.



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Letters

To RIOC President Herb Berman:

We had a terrible situation last weekend. The one elevator which is supposed to be working was out of service. Sunday, I went to the garage around 5:20 p.m. My car is on level 6 and I'm asthmatic so, given the heat wave, there was no way I could hike up the stairs. There was also an elderly woman and a neighbor with a heart condition, and a very pregnant woman.

I called Public Safety from my cell phone. First, the officer on duty told me to call Motorgate, but I said that wouldn't help and asked if they could send a car to help us get upstairs. He hung up. I called back and asked for his supervisor; he gave me a runaround. Then he told me that everyone was busy either with a stickball game or towing. He still wouldn't put a supervisor on. Some of the others got the same runaround.

I've lived here for 25 years and, in the past, anyone could call Public Safety if there was a problem getting to the garage, whether a woman who needs to get there at night and is afraid to go in alone, or if there is a problem with an elevator. The attitude of these officers is disgraceful. When there is a situation such as this, PSD needs to be more responsive to resident needs. It is outrageous that dealing with a stickball game or acting like overpriced meter maids seems to be a higher priority for Public Safety officers than helping us in an emergency situation.

As for the elevator situation, the fact that there is no contingency plan in place or provision for access when the elevators are out is indicative of a total disregard for our safety. The platitudinous RIOC notices and the web site's "thank you for your patience" just don't cut it!

There are four elevators and two escalators at Motorgate. When will an elevator be working?

Raye Schwartz

Follow-up e-mail: Herb,

I understand that you have taken steps to make sure that Public Safety and Motorgate are in communication about when the elevators are out. I also heard that you have taken steps to ensure that the people in Public Safety know that they must assist people who may need to get to their cars when the elevator is out of service.

I want to let you know how much I appreciate your quick response to ensure that Sunday's incident is not repeated. Thanks so much for your help.

Raye Schwartz

To the Editor:

As always, Roosevelt Island Day was a pleasure again this year. RIRA offered our bagel breakfast to the volunteers and then we planted flowers and spruced up the Island for the rest of the morning. The kid's activities and concerts rounded out a perfect day that even the evening storms couldn't dampen.

I was pleased to see RIOC's Michael Moreo on hand with State Emergency Management Office representative, Ted Fisch, to answer questions.

But I wonder every year why the RIOC leadership is never represented on our special days and at our special events? Once again, RIOC President Herb Berman didn't join us, nor did his new number two, Catherine Johnson. Of course, RIOC Public Information Officer John Melia (our own "no show" but well paid \$95,000-man) neither knows, interacts with, nor informs the public. RIOC misses no opportunity to alienate itself from the community it purports to administer. Always unfortunate.

Equally unfortunate were the conditions under which the superb guitar concert performed by Eliot Fisk were held. The Chapel of the Good Shepherd was a fiery cauldron as hundreds of Islanders filed in last Saturday; it seems that Fr. Miqueli asked RIOC to do whatever was required by their engineers last week so that the air conditioning could be turned on as needed. RIOC failed to do so, and the Chapel must have reached a temperature of at least 100 degrees. Exacerbating the discomfort were the lights necessary for the video recording done for the Carnegie Hall website. The Carnegie Hall/Citigroup Neighborhood Concert Series sponsored the concert as the first in a series of proposed musical events to be offered by Robin Russell's River Music. If this is how Herb Berman goes about inviting the public to Roosevelt Island, and making this a "destination," as he has called it, this sure ain't the way to welcome visitors.

Since Fr. Luke McKann left, it seems that Father Peter Miqueli has placed many impediments in the way of River Music, which has graced us with world-class music for many years. It is useful to remember that the Chapel is owned by the City and leased to the State under provisions of the Master Lease. The religious congregations, along with the community's civic organizations, use the space at RIOC's pleasure.

For some reason, the church office has been charged with scheduling use by various groups requiring space for their programs. However, the present discrimination against the River Music offerings, not to mention RIRA's failed attempt to use the space for a Saturday evening Orphans International fundraising concert, is inexplicable; Mr. Russell's concerts have invariably been first-class operations not likely to interfere with church functions, damage the furniture, or scare the horses. Why then, these arbitrary judgments on the usage of the Chapel? Concerts all over the world are held on Saturday evenings.

We heard that the air conditioning also was not on in time for Mass last Sunday. Shame on RIOC, again.

Sherie Helstien, Secretary
Roosevelt Island Residents Association

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: 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.

See **Letters**, page 8

Letters deadline for July 2 issue: Monday, June 27

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

Summer is a busy time of year and a wonderful time to be outdoors and enjoy the beauty of Roosevelt Island.

I hope Island residents will join in the Fourth of July celebration at Southpoint. RIOC has a great day planned and – with Mother Nature’s cooperation – you won’t want to miss out. Gates open this year at 5:00 p.m. with musical entertainment, face-painting, roving entertainers and delicious food! Enjoy the sunset over Manhattan and the fireworks in the East River – the best viewing location in New York – right here on Roosevelt Island. Go to www.rioc.com for information and to purchase tickets.

The barbecues will be relocated for this summer to an area adjacent to the Blackwell Tot Park and to areas along the east and west seawalls near Goldwater Hospital. I would like to remind residents that RIOC has a dog control policy in place that requires all dogs to be leashed, vaccinated and licensed. Owners are responsible for cleaning up after their dogs as well. This policy is enforced so that all residents may enjoy a clean, healthy outdoor experience.

With the Octagon lawsuit behind us, we can now

devote necessary funds to some maintenance needs on the Island. This summer, we have hired a crew of experienced carpenters, masons and others to address some of these needs. Blackwell Park, the Meditation



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

Steps, Lighthouse Park, Northtown Park and other areas of the Island will undergo repair and upgrading. New outdoor game tables have been ordered for Northtown Park as well. We ask the cooperation of all Islanders in helping to maintain the beauty of the Island. If you see vandalism, please report it to Public Safety.

Our Grounds staff has been augmented for the summer to ensure that our outdoor areas are groomed and maintained. My thanks go to all RIOC staff for their commitment to Roosevelt Island.

Supplementary materials for this issue of *The WIRE* are available at nyc10044.com, including RIOC’s new policy on use of the Good Shepherd Community Center. Also Island history, and back issues of *The WIRE*.

Photographs from Roosevelt Island Day will shortly be available for on-line ordering from a third-party print service. For album access, send your name and e-mail address to editor@MainStreetWIRE.com



Now on the Website

nyc10044.com

I hope you all enjoyed Roosevelt Island Day as much as I did. I really appreciated shmoozing with friends and neighbors and the many politicians that came to meet ’n greet. Warmest thanks to Charles DeFino of the Roosevelt Island Youth Center, and Doryne Isley and Carol DaSilva of Roosevelt Island Housing Management, and their hard-working staffs, for sponsoring, managing, and organizing this wonderful event. It takes a lot of time, effort, and money

The RIRA Column

to put this together, and these folks do it with warmth and affection for us residents. Thanks also to the Youth Center for hosting performances by the Marvettes. The crowd had a lot of fun singing and dancing to the oldies. Also a special thanks to renowned classical guitarist Eliot Fisk for honoring us to cap off the day’s events, and to Robin Russell for organizing this extraordinary performance. The Chapel was packed, but because RIOC neglected to get the air conditioning turned on, Mr. Fisk and approximately 200 attendees sweltered in heat that may have very well reached triple digits. Nonetheless, Eliot Fisk seemed to play flawlessly, graciously explained the background of the pieces he was playing, and came out for three encores, all the while hot lights were focused on him, because his performance was being filmed. Mr. Fisk provided a wonderful show that many more could have enjoyed had they not been forced away by the oppressive heat.

To set the record straight, the church is maintained by RIOC, which just spent a significant sum of our money to refurbish the air-conditioning system. It is meant to support community activities, including Episcopal and Catholic services. However, RIOC staff was nowhere to be found when time came to turn on the a/c for this event. We also pay Public Safety two million dollars a year to handle community issues – they are already responsible for opening the Church, and they turn on and off sprinklers and field lights when the automatic features malfunction. I’d hope that they could write down the basic procedure for turning the a/c and heat on and off, so that they can be called upon the next time this will be necessary.

I have gotten numerous complaints (three in one day!) about the total breakdown of elevator service in Motorgate. The pair of elevators on the North end haven’t worked at all for about two years. The two on the South side were out for at least three days last week. The escalators don’t work either. Those hearty enough to take the steps up to 5th through 8th floors had to do it in stairwells that still stink of urine, and those that weren’t were just screwed. I know of one unfortunate group of folks that tried in vain for over an hour to get Public Safety or anyone else to help

them to their cars. My wife saw people pushing a baby carriage and carts down the spiral ramp! On Monday, one elevator was fixed, and RIOC decided to authorize Public Safety to help those needing assistance. Now that we are down to only one operable elevator, I hope that RIOC will be particularly careful to monitor its health, and to get it fixed quickly, even if it breaks down on the weekend. However, if you need a lift to or from the Motorgate upper floors, Public Safety should now be able to provide it. Call **212-832-4545** or go to their storefront.

On last report, RIOC did manage to partially restore lights behind Manhattan Park south of a broken light pole, but not north of it, and not anywhere else on either promenade above Gristede’s. One resident told me on Sunday that she counted eight lights out on Main Street between Gristede’s and the church, and I know that there are at least four or five out between the church and the Tram. RIOC put up one “demo light” in front of Trellis restaurant a few months ago. It doesn’t appear to put out as much light as the regular and much higher street lights that we currently have, but it is better than nothing.



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

Frank Farance, for setting this up.

I think this corporation has at least an \$11 million annual budget. I am working off of 27-month-old figures, because the audited RIOC statements for fiscal 2004 and 2005 are now overdue by 15 and 3 months respectively. Yet nobody cares about fixing the lights or keeping a single Motorgate elevator working, or a single escalator, or moving the picnic benches in our now-ruined Octagon area, or fixing the ramp or the street or finding a permanent home for our Youth Center. Maybe it’s time for patronage appointees to step aside and let elected residents hire a professional management organization. The current operation is a disgrace and an embarrassment. Seventeen months until the next election for New York State Governor. Until then, carry a flashlight and work out on your Stairmasters.

COMING UP

– This Weekend –

Cabrini Flea Market, continuing **Sat., June 18**, 10-4, Good Shepherd Plaza.

Art from the Heart, an exhibition of works by Coler-Goldwater patients and residents, continuing at Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main Street, **through tomorrow** (June 19); **Saturdays and Sundays**, 11:00-5:00. Gallery hours also on **Wednesdays and Fridays**, 6:00-9:00 p.m.

The Main Street Children’s Theatre presents **Getting to Know You**, a retrospective of 20 years of children’s and teen shows, **Sat., June 18**, 2:00 and 8:00., **Sun., June 19**, 2:00 and 7:30. Call **212-371-4449** to reserve seats.

Canceled: Roosevelt Island Free Theater presents **Ross the Mentalist**, **Sat., June 18**, 5:00 p.m., Eastwood Amphitheater. *All performances of the Roosevelt Island Free Theater scheduled for this summer have been canceled by the producer.*

– The Coming Week –



◀Islander **Kay Story** performs at **Operation Smile** benefit at Manahatta, 315 Bowery (at Bleecker), **Tue., June 21**, 8:00 p.m. (door open 7:00). \$30.

PS217 Graduation, **Thur., June 23**, 10:00 a.m., PS217 auditorium.

Book Discussion Group at the Library, **Thur., June 23**, 6:30 p.m., *Seven Guitars*, by August Wilson. Copies of book available at the branch.

Islander **Tex Allen** ▶ brings his sextet, with Janice Dempsey, to Creole’s, 118th and Third, **Fri.-Sun., June 24-26**; shows at 8:00 and 10:00. Information: **212-935-8499**.



– Future Events –

RIOC Board of Directors meeting, **Thur., June 30**, 9:30 a.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

The Main Street WIRE – Next issue, **Sat., July 2** (Fourth of July issue). (To receive e-mail bulletins between issues, send an *AddMe* message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Advertising Deadline:** Ads in the paper, Thursday, June 23; decision on fliers for *The Bag*, Mon., June 27; inserts due Thur., June 30. **Future issues:** July 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 here**, 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.

Fireworks at Southpoint, **Mon., July 4**, evening. \$18. Tickets available on the RIOC website, rioc.com. Gates open at 5:00. No coolers, chairs, backpacks, or alcoholic beverages may be carried onto Southpoint grounds.

Book Discussion Group at the Library, **Thur., July 21**, 6:30 p.m., *Kitchen*, by Banana Yoshimoto. Copies of book available at the branch.

Book Discussion Group at the Library, **Thur., Aug. 18**, 6:30 p.m., *I’m Not Scared*, by Niccolo Ammaniti. Copies of book available at the branch.

RIOC Board of Directors Meeting, **Thur., Sept. 8**, 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.

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

Senior Center

Monday
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**
10:30, **Shoppers’ Bus**
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**

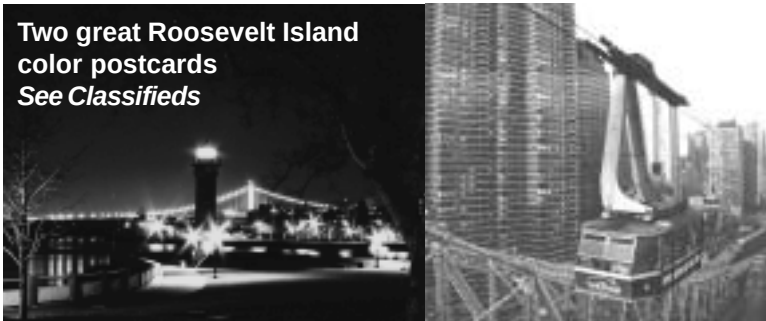
Friday
9:30, **Yoga**
10:30, **Computers**
1:00, **Bridge**
7:00, **Games** (RISA)

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

Special Events

Sat., June 25, 9-5, RISA Flea Market
Thur., June 30, 7:00, Induction of officers
Sun., July 3, time TBA, Fourth of July observance

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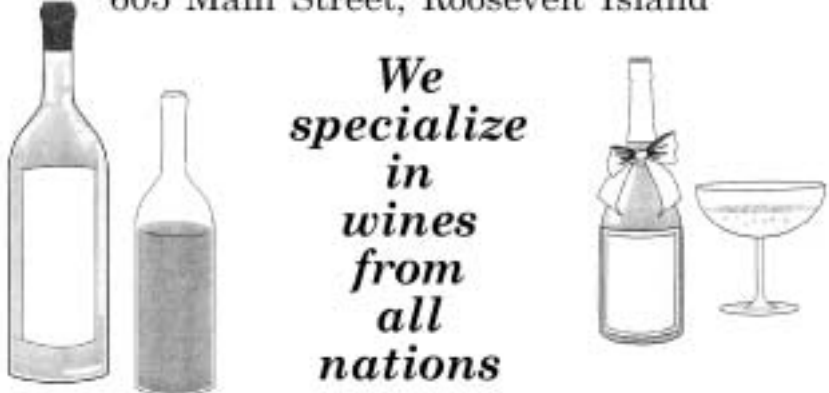
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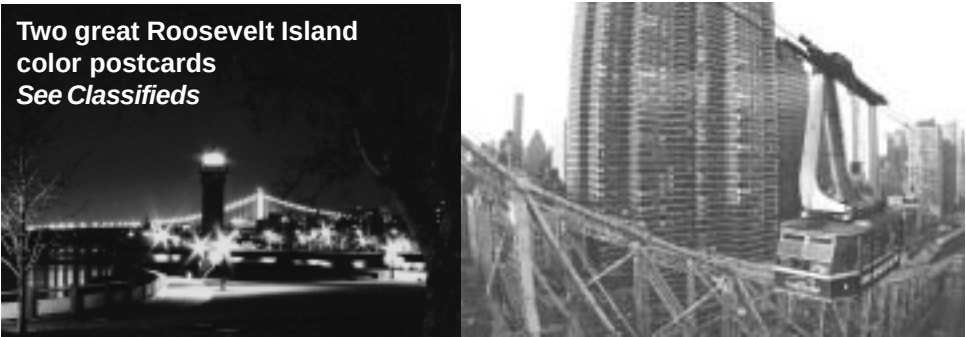
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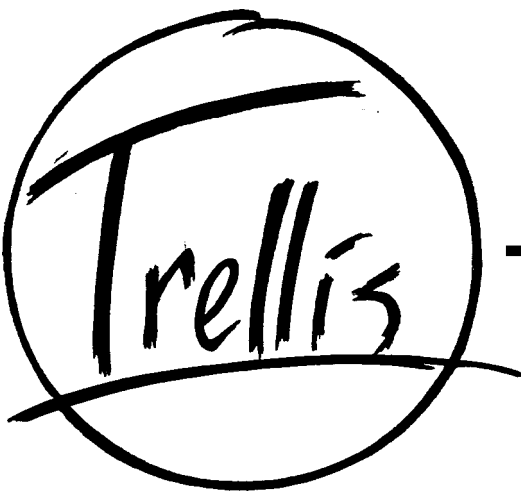
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Island House from page 1

and sympathizes with a patient’s pain but must deal with what’s workable in finding a cure, Kerr is able to step back and assess dispassionately what the *worst-case* and *best-case* and *likely-case* numbers will mean.

Amrah Cardozo, one of the co-chairs of the tenant group working on all this, says, “Because there are not yet any firm numbers, people are saying, ‘Well, I want to buy, *but...*’ *But* we have to start with some idea: Do we have about half of the people in the building interested in a tenant-sponsored buy-

out? Do we have an idea if full equity is an option preferred over scaled equity?” This month’s survey of preferences is intended to get at those answers. Cardozo continues: “Some people believe that 100% of the people living here can buy, which is not true. Some believe that only 50% can buy.”

And Kerr says, “The experts tell us that until the final day of the offering period, we won’t know how many *are* going to buy.”

It doesn’t make him happy, but his best educated assumptions lead to much higher cost-of-hous-

ing numbers. In any plan that fits the Sheldrake vision of profit from privatization of Island House, residents will be paying out at least 50% more than what they pay now, but one calculation puts the increase at as much as 134%.

The Possibilities

There are three feasible futures, according to the analysis by Kerr and the Island House tenant group that has been studying them and steering discussions with Sheldrake:

Owner-Sponsored

One possible future is an owner-

sponsored tenant-ownership plan, in which the owner would call the shots: create the offering plan, set the prices, make the sales, and hang around for an indeterminate future of renting to those tenants who opt not to buy. One tenant characterizes that approach as “giving up” and letting the owner handle everything. Residents working on the matter perceive that Sheldrake isn’t interested in that approach because Sheldrake, they believe, wants a quick turnaround and a quick profit.

Of course, “quick” in this case means more than a year. Although it could be “quick” as these things go, it would certainly not be “instant.” Any plan will require State approvals and meticulous navigation of a step-by-step process. But to turn a possible long-term involvement into a shorter-term gain, the Sheldrake Organization, which has the building under contract, is believed to prefer a tenant-sponsored conversion.

More important, the tenants working on this know that at Ruppert-Yorkville, under an owner-sponsored plan, 80 percent of the residents were gone after three years. That’s because many cashed out and took their profit from lower insider prices, while others who had continued as renters left in anticipation of the end of four years of rent protection. That’s a rate of dislocation everybody wants to avoid because, by and large, Island House tenants seem to like living in Island House and in the Roosevelt Island community.

“People want to stay here,” says Mario Naves, the other co-chair of the working group. “There are some who are interested in flipping and perhaps making a killing, but that’s the minority. We’ve heard

mostly from people that they like living here, they like the community, they like the quality of life, and they’d like to stay here.”

Other Choices

For tenants wanting to have some control over their future, these facts lead to two other choices. Each involves *tenant* sponsorship of a conversion.

In one – full market price with payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTs) at full rate – Sheldrake has calculated that total housing cost would rise to as much as 234% of today’s costs. That’s for common charges (often called “maintenance”) plus the cost of a 6.25% mortgage with a very low down-payment or none at all, and it assumes a purchase price of about \$295 per square foot, presented by Sheldrake as a non-negotiable figure early this year. Says Kerr, “It struck me as a peculiar way to start negotiating, because they said, ‘The price is \$295 a square foot, non-negotiable. You want to debate it, we take it off the table.’ So we have never debated the price per foot. We may discuss the price of the building, but not the price per foot. It just struck me as a peculiar way to start discussions.”

The numbers would mean that, in a tenant-sponsored full-equity conversion, in place of every \$1,000 in rent paid in May of 2005, a purchaser could be paying \$2,340. Even if there were an unexpected gift of a tax abatement from government, the monthly outlay would still be more than double today’s costs, according to Kerr’s calculations.

That leads the tenant planners to the second tenant-sponsored approach, called “Affordable Scaled Equity.”

The reasoning behind an Afford-

Letters from page 2

Maybe it’s time we caused the State to regurgitate that extra 4,000 figure, since we now can grasp the enormity of just how many more buildings it would take to satisfy that amount. We face a potential future overmass situation which we really should not let happen. Can we hold the State’s feet to the fire on the 16,000 originally planned? Certainly the State has rung in Octagon under our noses. Certainly additional buildings will go up at Southtown (all of which should make us more than self-sufficient – a good thing). Certainly the State has its greedy eye on more open spaces, including Southpoint (a bad thing). Certainly with Octagon and Southtown fully loaded we might well surpass 16,000. Zut! We’re overpopped! Can we allow yet more overzealous building, allowing our way of life here to be altered adversely?

Scientists tell us that in mice experiments, an overabundance of rodents in a confined area inevitably leads to a diminution in standard of living. What’s true of mice is true of men. Do we need a lowering of quality of life – is the issue worth a fight? Are we not a segment of people, already oppressed by never having been given the “luxury” of true democracy on this Island – the only enclave to be so deprived in the entire United States? Are our voices never to be heard, always to be overshadowed by one of the most powerful states in the Overhous?

Surely, as Jim Baehler wrote (*The WIRE*, June 4), our land is valuable and, in the State’s eyes, expendable for more and more development. But who is this Cham-

berlain-like appeaser – resident or member of the RIOC gang? Why must we, as he advocates, sit back and casually negotiate away not just our dwindling precious open spaces, but a way of life – a non-stifling way of life? Or would he have us become engulfed in a claustrophobic cloudbank of bipeds? The State, rapaciously hungry for all the money it can possibly wrest from our dead bodies (even post-self-sufficiency), is obviously telling us the hell with our quality of life. Did RIOC “give away” Southtown, etc., in order that we *not* become self-sufficient before much more is built, thereby justifying their open-space grabs? And what of the State’s early-on promise that when the Island became financially independent, we would be given home rule? Another B&S! With the RIOC Board packed with State sympathizers we will not, unfortunately, have true home rule until every square inch on this Island becomes not open, but closed. RIOC, how about putting up more edifices on our existing rooftops? Or did you miss that one?

Perhaps we should solicit a study to be performed by *impartial* experts, not in the pocket of the State, as to how many people we actually can viably sustain. Could Columbia’s School of Urban Planning again come to our aid? Can the Island housing companies be counted on to give us unbiased totals of those living in their buildings? What do we have to do to protect ourselves from being overrun – all lie down in front of the bulldozers during the State’s next open-spaces building offensive, only to face a stint in jail?

Barbara Potts

See **Island House**, next page

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Island House from page 8 (starts on page 1)

able Scaled Equity plan is that if buyers are willing to scale their acquisition of full equity in their apartments over a period of, say, ten years, government is more likely to give a break on ground rent and taxes. (Indeed, Kerr says, “If it proves totally impossible to get any kind of breaks out of RIOC, then it makes no sense to look at a scaled-equity plan.”) Under such a plan, purchase of the building would involve two components in a split—the individual buyers of individual apartments with those mortgages, and separately, the tenant corporation carrying a major mortgage as part of the total package.

In effect, the underlying mortgage on the building as a whole would subsidize an insider price for each apartment, making it lower and within reach for more buyers. All of Kerr’s carefully considered assumptions lead to an insider price of, perhaps, \$160 to \$175 per square foot. “It looks like a 70% increase in housing costs, using ‘outside’ numbers,” Kerr says, “but my goal is to get it down to a 50% increase.”

In exchange for such an arrangement, buyers would accept a “period of restraint” of a decade or so, during which their allowable resale price would rise something like 10% per year until, finally, they would be allowed to sell at a market price.

The appeal of such an approach is in the lower initial cost, the greater possibility of a tax break, and a lower temptation to “cash out” — and, in turn, greater stability, as buying residents gradually increase their stake over the ten-year period of restraint. Residents also might hope that the market value of their apartments would increase more rapidly than their investment in them, providing a kind of on-paper advance in equity that

could only be realized after the ten years ended.

For those who would stay as renters, there would be a ten-year period of rent protection, probably based on (though not subject to) New York City’s rent-stabilization guidelines. There might be help from City programs for seniors and low-income tenants (though little of such support seems to be available, says Kerr). And renters could become purchasers if their economic circumstances changed, as in the case of a significant bequest from the legendary “rich old Aunt Mildred.” (The price they would pay would go up each year, rising in the same annual measure as the equity increases for those already in the purchase program.)

Consequences

As tenants express their preferences for one of these approaches to a privatized future, economic dividing lines could be drawn through the Island House tenancy, separating those whose personal or economic circumstances would lead them to stay as renters from those who would buy; and perhaps separating those whose incomes make tax breaks on mortgages appealing from those whose income is too low to produce any leverage in tax breaks. In addition, some are concerned that the large proportion of international tenants will see things very differently from residents who are U.S. citizens, and possibly skew a preference poll.

Immediate Future

Once a preference poll has been taken in the building, the Tenants Association will produce a memo of understanding to be sent to Sheldrake, “sort of a price and a plan,” as Kerr characterizes it.

After that, negotiation and more steps will follow.

In fact, Kerr emphasizes the time scale: “One of the things we’ve been at pains to explain is that nothing’s going to happen immediately. The best-case scenario is that it will take [at least] a year, just by virtue of the time frames involved. Assuming we come to an immediate agreement with Sheldrake on price and all the rest of it, then you’ve got to go through the process of making up an offering document, and that includes getting all kinds of consulting reports and so on, and then that has to go to the Attorney General as a red herring, and then he spends four to six months with it, and when you get his final approval, you put out the black book as an offering document. Then you’ve got 120 days to think about it. So it has to take at least a year — more likely, a year and a half, I would think — so people don’t have to worry about being thrown out on the streets right now.”



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Westview from page 1

and Rivercross on the south to Manhattan Park on the north:

- 20% for persons and families eligible for Federally assisted public housing (“Section 8” housing);
- 20% for persons eligible for interest-reduction payments under Section 236 of the National Housing Act;
- 35% for persons and families eligible to occupy Mitchell-Lama housing;
- 25% for market-rate rentals or full-market housing (“conventionally financed” housing).

The Fleiss letter says, “The mandate of the GDP has been executed almost to perfection,” citing these figures for Northtown housing:

- Section 8 and Section 236: 1,090 units (220 at 2-4 River Road and 870 in Eastwood), or just short of 34%.
- Mitchell-Lama: 1,255 units (130 in Eastwood, 364 in Rivercross, 400 in Island House, 361 in Westview), about 39%.
- Market-rate: 880 units at Man-

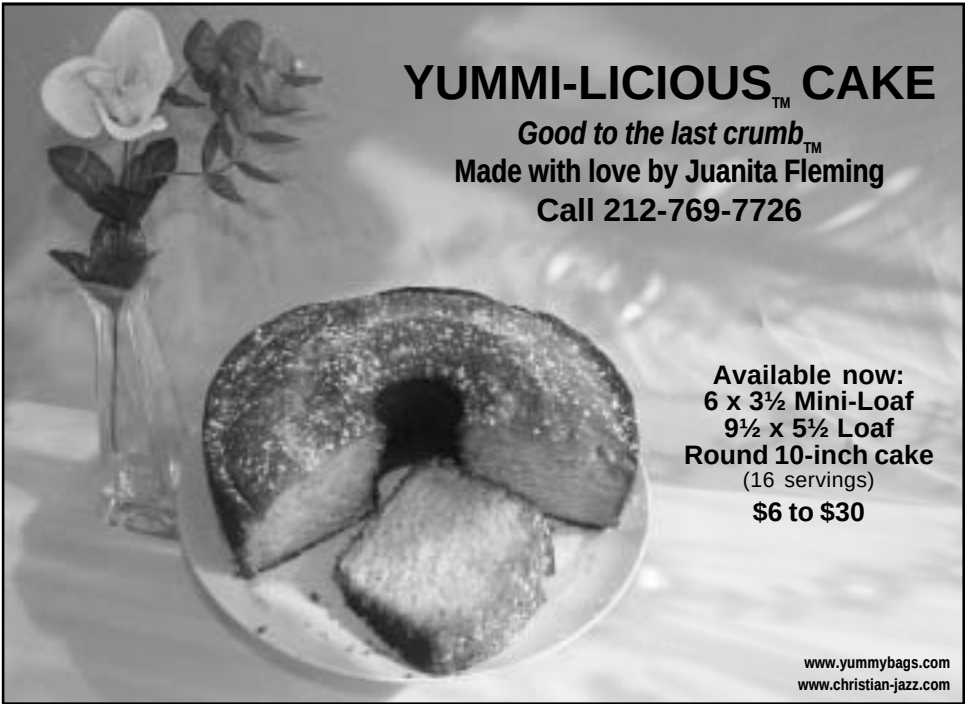
hattan Park, 27%.

Fleiss writes that the planned “drastic changes” in the Northtown breakdown, with units being removed from the subsidized category, would violate the terms of the GDP and the City-State lease, which incorporates the GDP. “The withdrawal of Westview’s 361 Mitchell-Lama housing units alone... would leave 894 units of Mitchell-Lama housing in Northtown, or just 27%... as compared to the 35% mandated” under the GDP. The letter goes on to say that removal of the Eastwood units would further lower the proportion to 23%, and adds that the removal of Island House would take it to just 11%.

In the past, RIOC has successfully treated the GDP as a “loose collection of ideas” that is non-binding. For Manhattan Park and the Octagon Apartments, RIOC secured agreements from the City’s mayor of the time to amend the GDP.

In their letter to Comptroller Thompson, the officeholders point out that he has the authority to monitor the State’s compliance with the terms of the Master Lease. “We know that you share our concern that the City is rapidly losing its stock of irreplaceable affordable housing units as well as our deep commitment to doing everything possible to protect the mix of housing options that have been the hallmark of this acclaimed planned community.” To DHCR Commissioner Calogero, they wrote, “This [housing mix] would appear to be a threshold issue that must be resolved before your agency’s processing of this application [to withdraw Westview from Mitchell-Lama] proceeds another step.”

The full text of the letters is available on line with this issue of *The WIRE* at nyc10044.com.



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