

Next issue
in two weeks:
Sat., Apr. 7

The Main Street WIRE™

27th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper

Spitzer Names Stephen Shane RIOC President



In Cuomo Years, He Chaired RIOC Board for DHCR

by Jami Bernard

Appointment of RIOC's new President and Chief Executive Officer, Stephen Shane, was announced late last week by the office of Governor Eliot Spitzer. The RIOC Board of Directors has final say on Shane's appointment, but has traditionally accepted whomever the Governor has recommended.

As RIOC's top man, Shane will have a substantial effect on Islanders' daily lives by overseeing the many administrative and operational decisions that go into running the community and the services provided by RIOC (Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation). He will also be in a position to influence RIOC Board options and decisions on the fate of Mitchell-Lama buildings and new construction, and will be largely responsible for conducting Roosevelt Island's official relationships with the DHCR (the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal) and other governmental entities – the State as a whole, the City, and the various corporations and authorities that provide services to Islanders, such as the MTA.

Shane sat down for a lengthy and wide-ranging WIRE interview this week – possibly a sign that, under him, RIOC will be more accessible, transparent, and open to community interaction than it has been under past presidents. (He also met with a group from the Roosevelt Island Residents Association on Wednesday.) He is clearly aware of the unrest of Islanders and the history of mistrust between them and RIOC, and does not seem to underestimate the delicate balancing act he has ahead of him in carrying out the mandate of his boss, the Governor, while responding to various factions among residents. He was also commendably up-to-date on Island controversies: he admitted to reading all past issues of *The WIRE* online, and demonstrated that in his grasp of current issues, saying he'd made a list of up to 28 that

need immediate attention. He knew about the fish store closing a few weeks ago. He knew about Jessica Lappin's new baby.

Shane, 69, is no stranger to Roosevelt Island – or to RIOC. A real-estate attorney with a keen interest and background in affordable housing, Shane chaired the RIOC Board from 1988-1995 in his capacity as Special Assistant to then-Commissioner of Housing Rick Higgins, who in turn had been appointed by then-Governor Mario Cuomo. With the end of the Cuomo era came the end of Shane's career at DHCR. Since then, he has been practicing law, most recently as General Counsel to Sparrow Construction, based in The Bronx.

The interview covered a swath of Island concerns. Among other topics, Shane discussed his views on the role of RIOC and Islanders in shaping decisions; the "two hats" he wears as a lawyer who has helped buildings exit the Mitchell-Lama program and a servant of the affordable-housing-friendly Governor Spitzer; his leadership style and sense of RIOC's mission; the merchant crisis on Main Street; the Mitchell-Lama exit strategies of Westview, Island House, and Rivercross; and the problem of keeping Roosevelt Island self-sufficient while still ranking high enough on the Albany radar to merit attention.

The WIRE found Shane prepared, pleasant, and quite intelligent. He and his wife took the Tram during the recent snowstorm to take an icy stroll up Main Street as far as the firehouse to see firsthand how things have changed since his last visit in 1995. He seemed to have a firm grasp of such current problems as the Red Bus schedule and the crisis in merchant services along Main Street.

What follows are direct-quote excerpts from *The WIRE*'s interview. More of the interview is available on Website NYC10044 at www.nyc10044.com.

Spitzer Says Shane Will Be "Inclusive in Decisions"

by Erik Kriss

WIRE Albany Correspondent
Governor Eliot Spitzer described Steve Shane as a man of good judgment who will be inclusive in decision-making.

Shane, the Governor said, is "somebody who has experience in the issues relating to Roosevelt Island, who is a great lawyer, practitioner, (who) will bring really sound judgment, dedication to detail to the issues, and from our reconnaissance on the issue, he is somebody who will deal very well with all the interested parties."

Asked if he has any specific goals in mind for Shane, Spitzer said, "[To] bring some soundness of judgment and also some inclusiveness in the way decisions are made, [and to] make sure that the community feels that it is being properly listened to and heard in decisions that are made. But he has a track record of making smart judgments at both a management level and a legal level, so I have great confidence that he will serve extraordinarily well."

Spitzer's aides would not say if other candidates were under consideration for the job, which does not require confirmation by the

State Senate.

The Island's State Senator said he didn't really know Shane and said he would have liked to have learned more about him before Spitzer's decision. "We weren't really kept abreast," said Sen. Jose Serrano. "We heard about it after it happened. I'm not upset, but I would have liked to be at least a little bit in the process or in the know about how the process worked, how they selected someone."

Still, Serrano expressed optimism about Shane. "Nothing could be worse than what we had before," Serrano said. "I'm not dissing Herb Berman," the outgoing RIOC president appointed by ex-Governor George Pataki. "Pataki just did not make Roosevelt Island a priority."

Serrano said he is seeking a meeting with Shane at which he intends to underscore the need for affordable housing, a more democratic Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation Board, and improved public safety, including the possibility of getting a "real police substation on the Island."

Serrano said he also wants to discuss legislation he and Assemblyman Alexander "Pete" Grannis have pushed to have five of the nine RIOC Board members elected by Island residents and prohibit non-park development of open space, and require financial audits and engineering studies of infrastructure.

"I would like a chance to go out See Spitzer, page 6

Subscribers to *The WIRE's E-mail Bulletin* service received this news last week, a day before the Governor's office announced it. If you did not receive this bulletin, but subscribed within the last 3-4 months, *please resubscribe*, as your address may have been lost in a technical glitch. To subscribe, send an AddMe message to editor@MainStreetWIRE.com.

The Call

When Governor Spitzer was elected, his transition team put out a general appeal to the public for anyone who was interested in working for the Spitzer team and the government. I thought, "What the heck," so I submitted my resume. In my cover letter, I said that I would be interested in a position and that back when I was at DHCR [Division of Housing and Community Renewal] I did the following things. I had also sat as the Commissioner's designated member of the Boards of HFA [Hous-

ing Finance Agency], SONYMA, [State of New York Mortgage Agency], and the AHC [Affordable Housing Corporation], which were the other private corporations on whose boards the Commissioner sits, ex officio. I said I had acted as the Commissioner's designee to the RIOC Board and that I had put together the RFP [Request for Proposals] for the development of Southtown.

I got a call from the appointments secretary asking if I'd be interested in Roosevelt Island. I talked to my friends from the old

days at DHCR and HFA, because I assumed they might be solicited for opinions. If someone had asked me to become Commissioner of Housing or head of HFA, those would have been jobs of interest, too, but that didn't happen. Then, one day, about three weeks or a month ago, I got a call asking if I would be interested in President of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation. So here I am.

The New Job

I know that I'm going to dive into it. I know that I'm quite en- See Shane, page 6



Steve Shane met Wednesday with five members of the Residents Association Common Council. Clockwise: President Matthew Katz, Betty Walker (Octagon Park Apartments), Vice President Mark Chipman, Margie Smith (Rivercross), Secretary Sherie Helstien (Westview).

Days since the
RIOC Board has
met:

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The Editorial Page

Clean Slate, Running Start

No new RIOC President ever starts work here with a completely clean slate. Each inherits an assemblage of seemingly intractable problems and roiling controversies, as well as a status quo ratcheted to some point of no return by the last CEO.

It's not all that surprising, therefore, that some residents have greeted last week's news of the Governor's appointment of Steve Shane, a 69-year-old real-estate attorney, with a mix of hope and skepticism, flavored with just a dash of wait-and-see.

But we think Steve Shane has started out right. In the past week, he has declared his intent to be transparent, available, and communicative, and he's met with Island leaders and has granted an extended interview to *The Main Street WIRE* – an interview that dominates the content of this issue.

More important, he has demonstrated a grasp of Island issues that is broad, deep, and open-minded. It's an understanding that comes with a background of past involvement with Roosevelt Island that clearly infected him with the dream – and with a realistic understanding of how the dream must be played out in a practical world of finance and politics.

By beginning his new relationship with Roosevelt Island by meeting with resident groups – even before being introduced to RIOC Board members – Shane has shown that he shares Governor Eliot Spitzer's orientation to the constituency. Be reading ten years of past *WIRES* on line (nyc10044.com), he's shown a commendable hunger for data and the pulse of this place.

The WIRE continues to believe that a RIOC Board made up mostly of elected residents – a Board empowered to hire and fire the President of RIOC – presents the best path for making RIOC a better manager of our Island home. But that is a matter for legislation.

In the meantime, we must work with what we have – and what Governor Eliot Spitzer has sent us is a highly intelligent, eager, open-minded – perhaps even open-hearted – administrator for whom Roosevelt Island isn't just a job. For Steve Shane, it's a kind of return home.

We think he's started out right. We hope he stays on this path. We believe he will but, as always we watch with an open mind and a ready pen – ready to report the successes we hope for, as well as the failures we dread.

Welcome, Steve Shane.

The Punch List

Resident leaders have advised Shane to get immediate traction with the community by addressing a handful of problems immediately – and, added to that, we would suggest addressing them with the aid, advice, and consent of those same resident leaders.

He might start with street lights, the Red Bus routing and schedule (including finding the budget to drop the bus fare in favor of speedier service), the Motorgate mess, and immediate progress on resident plans for Island House, Westview, and Rivercross.

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Managing Editor – Dick Lutz
Reporters – Jami Bernard, Mary Camper-Titsingh, Bret Senft
Albany Correspondent – Erik Kriss
Photographers – Maria Casotti, Vicki Feinmel, Paul Katz, Ghila Krajzman
Chief Proofreader – Linda Heimer
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Trouble in a Touchy Housing Environment

Commentary by Robert Chira

Recent developments in City-wide housing could spell real trouble for owners and tenants of the Island's WIRE buildings – Westview, Island House, Rivercross, and Eastwood. They've been negotiating to leave Mitchell-Lama regulation on favorable terms, which would include long-term ground leases.

The leases expire in just 20 years. That makes mortgages problematic and prevents units from being sold at high prices. And existing residents need tax concessions to keep rent or monthly maintenance charges affordable.

Most WIRE-building residents want to stay on the Island, but need to tap the value of their units – some for mortgages so they can buy, as in the case of Westview and Island House – and some for needed improvements, as in the case of the Rivercross. But free-market sales and rentals will inevitably lead to higher-income occupants, as is happening already at Eastwood, where vacated apartments are being upgraded and rented at market prices.

The Mayor and the Governor are key players – the Mayor because his administration will influence decisions about tax abatements, and the Governor because his Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) is likely to call the shots on the ground leases RIOC gives the buildings. Neither official will make this decision in a vacuum, and the numbers tell the tale of the City's housing environment today:

- Only 3,300 rent-regulated units were built in the City last year.
- The City plans 5,000 more units on the Long Island City waterfront opposite the U.N., but observers call that woefully inadequate to meet the need.
- Last year alone, 14,000 units left the rent-stabilization system.
- Some 37,000 apartments have left stabilized status, since 1994, by conversion to condominium or co-operative ownership.
- In that period, another 20,000 left when tax exemptions expired.
- 4,000 units have left Mitchell-Lama since 1994.
- Another 750 units filed notices to leave Mitchell-Lama last year.
- Last year, 3,000 units were deregulated when



Bob Chira, a long-time Island resident, is an attorney who practices law in Manhattan.

monthly rents exceeded \$2,000 for tenants whose household income exceeded \$175,000 for two years.

- Departure or death led to deregulation of 50,000 units from 1994 to 2006 (9,000 last year) in situations where landlords made improvements that pushed rent over the \$2,000 threshold.
- Housing is notoriously expensive. In 2004, coops on the Upper East Side went for \$700 per square foot. Today, it's over \$1,000. Prices are up 30% to 40%. In Manhattan's better neighborhoods, one-room studios now routinely rent at over \$2,000 a month, with one-bedroom apartments over \$3,000. Good locations in Queens and Brooklyn are costing more, too.
- Media coverage adds pressure to housing's political climate, as well. A planned sale of over 5,000 units at Starrett City, Brooklyn, was rejected when politicians got on a bandwagon following a media focus on the plight of low- and middle-income tenants. But the complex is still for sale, and the pressure still on.
- At Peter Cooper Village and Stuyvesant Town in Manhattan, an ownership change has led to nearly a

third of units going to market rate as the landlord looks for reasons to deregulate individual apartments.

- At Manhattan House on the Upper East Side, new owners have begun a condominium conversion offering while aggressively trying to end some tenants' regulatory protections.

On Roosevelt Island, you can see the impact in purchase-price escalation at Southtown and high rents at Octagon Park.

This climate complicates matters for residents and owners of the Island's WIRE buildings. Both the Governor and Mayor may hesitate to grant any concessions to the three WIRE buildings that remain, for now, in Mitchell-Lama. To leave Mitchell-Lama on favorable terms, the buildings will have to come up with proposals that persuade the key politicians and their bureaucracies that action for deregulation is better – for the Island, its residents, *and* for their political capital – than inaction to avoid deregulation.

Robert Chira, a longtime Island resident, practices law in Manhattan.

Letters

To the Editor:

The best news I've heard since I moved to the Island seven years ago! Now Berman can go to Washington and take a job with the Bush administration where incompetence is the rule (and rewarded). I can hear it now: "Heckuva job, Bernie!"

Stuart Chenkin

To the Editor:

Any hope the Q train will return to Roosevelt Island to help reduce congestion on the F is officially gone. The MTA announced that the Q, along with the newly minted T train, will run on the Second Avenue subway line from 125th Street down to 57th Street.

What will it take for the MTA to take note of our subway congestion? Maybe we should start filming movies and putting them on YouTube to prove our point, or enlisting the aid of a local TV news crew? Once the fourth Riverwalk building is opened, if the Tram is offline, we are doomed.

Eric Schwartzman

To the Editor:

It was interesting to learn about the work that RIOC is finally doing to repair the damage to historic Blackwell House, which we have been sadly watching fall into serious disrepair for years. It would obviously have been a lot less costly had the house been maintained by RIOC.

However, since I have restored and maintained a period house in Connecticut, I was shocked by the price tag cited for this contract of \$1.18 million. When I asked for more details from RIOC about the incredibly high cost, I was told that repairs using original materials and workmanship, like replacement of hand-hewn oak beams in the attic, would not be undertaken because it would be "prohibitively expensive."

The cost of restoring an old house is always high, but even the most meticulous museum restorations do not cost anywhere close to what the State of New York is paying on this contract for a job that will not in fact be truly authentic, according to RIOC. One does wonder just where the money is going, if not for a proper restoration, and why it is several times more costly than a comparable or better job would be elsewhere. These are public funds, and there should be accountability for what appears to be vastly over-pricing the job and then cutting corners by using modern materials.

M.E.Kimball

To the Editor:

After reading about the red trash cans in the last *WIRE*, I decided to take a look for myself. To my surprise, the lids aren't locked, as they appear. Every one is easily removed, plus there's no hinge attaching the lids to the base, as you'd expect – just a couple of metal pins to keep them seated.

Why doesn't RIOC just take all the lids off and put them into storage somewhere, so people can put bags of trash in the cans, resulting in less litter blowing around the Island, especially after weekend picnics?

With that problem solved, perhaps we can get on with other important issues, like the Red Bus service.

Kurt Wittman

Letters continue on page 11

Letters deadline for Apr. 7 issue: Tue., Apr. 3
After deadline, letters considered on a space-available basis.

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters of local interest, to the community, and to/from officials. Requests for *Name Withheld* publication 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 CD left at the desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. If you e-mail a letter, expect a confirming response and, if you don't receive one, *resend* and call 212-826-9055 to alert us that it's been sent. **Alternatives:** Typed copy left at the desk at 531 Main Street, but allow extra time before deadline for typesetting. 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 editing for length and clarity.** Recommended maximum length, 300 words; longer letters considered if content merits the space.

Once again, we are undergoing a transition in RIOC leadership that will alter how business is done and how the community is addressed, now and into the future. The leadership of RIRA is cautiously optimistic.

As we awaited DHCR Commissioner Deborah VanAmerongen’s convening of her first RIOC Board of Directors meeting (she is *ex officio* Chair of the Board) we learned that Governor Spitzer has appointed the new RIOC President and CEO. Stephen Shane comes to us from the private sector but has considerable Roosevelt Island experience under his belt (see the *Main Street WIRE* interview in this issue) and so it seems that we won’t have to reinvent the wheel for the umpteenth time. He is a real-estate

The RIRA Column

He chaired the RIOC Board during the Cuomo years, representing then-DHCR Commissioner Higgins.

Several RIRA officers, including Vice President Mark Chipman, Secretary Sherie Helstien, Government Relations Committee Chair Margie Smith, and Island Services Chair Betty Walker, recently sat down with Steve Shane to make initial introductions and to touch, superficially at this point, upon the many issues that have plagued us in recent years. However, prior to discussing our chat, I would like to mention some concerns as to how Mr. Shane’s appointment is being handled.

The RIOC Bylaws (Article IV, Section 2, if you’re keeping score) state: “Except as otherwise provided in the Act, the officers shall be elected by resolution at a regular meeting of the [RIOC] Board. Each officer shall hold office, unless removed, until his or her successor shall have been elected. Except as otherwise provided in the Act, a vacancy in any office shall be filled by the Board.” Now, does this mean that the RIOC Board is responsible for hiring the president or for just rubber-stamping the governor’s choice? Not clear, it seems to me. I do know that the Board members have yet to meet Mr. Shane, much less have anything to do with hiring him. Further, I understand that an “emergency meeting” of the Board will be convened to ratify the new president when, clearly, this function is to be conducted at a “regular” Board meeting.

This process is nothing new, of course. Governor Pataki functioned outside the parameters of the RIOC Bylaws with impunity for twelve years. I had hoped (and still hope) that the functions of this public-benefit corporation would be regularized in the Spitzer administration, and perhaps the new RIOC leaders will make that so. You would think that the nine members of the RIOC Board surely would be tired of being marginalized in this critical perquisite of office. However, they never complained about three presidential appointments during the Pataki years and, it seems, they aren’t complaining now. Pity.

Unlike his predecessors, Steve Shane will hit the ground running when his appointment is confirmed. He has a depth of experience, both on the Island and in housing matters in general, that will make unnecessary the long “honeymoon” periods that several Pataki appointees demanded. Also, he impressed us, saying that he has read several years worth of this newspaper on-line, and is conversant with our concerns.

We agreed that getting ground-lease extensions for Island House and Westview, and then for Rivercross, are of paramount concern. We agreed that filling the Main Street commercial strip with community-responsive shops providing goods and services necessary for our survival is not rocket science and should be

expedited. RIRA made the case that franchises representing national fast-food chains were not what we had in mind and that mom-and-pop stores providing essentials for families, similar to the ones we’ve lost over the last few years, are what we need, and we agreed that we should have at least one first-rate restaurant. We agreed that New York’s crying need for affordable housing should be ameliorated, if only in part, through the remaining buildings in Southtown. We agreed that incorporating Island residents in decision-making and in the planning of Island development and events, and prior to their becoming graven in stone, is a goal to strive for. Another goal is to provide incentives for off-Islanders to visit here and then to adequately and professionally publicize those attractions. We agreed that having the vast experience and expertise of so many Islanders was an unintended consequence (and benefit) of administering a planned community with a stable, long-standing, and knowledgeable population. And we agreed that realizing a state-of-the art park at Southpoint would be the greatest thing since sliced bread!

Of course, there are issues where we don’t agree and where Shane has come to no hard-and-fast conclusions. The Public Authorities Act, passed last April, requires public-benefit corporations like RIOC to “maximize revenues” while, at the same time, benefiting the public. When these often contradictory requirements are in conflict, precedent must be set by a RIOC with the courage to do so. There are no precedents for this new statute to be applied on behalf of a planned community like Roosevelt Island (assuming there are any like Roosevelt Island), and Steve’s legal background may work on our behalf in setting those precedents.

Our transportation problems are acute and will get worse as the Island’s population expands. The Tram, now that it operates within the MetroCard system, operates at capacity during rush periods and, unlike most public transportation systems, is close to paying for itself. RIOC must lead the way in working with its sister public authority, the Metropolitan Transit Authority, to plan for the expanded off-Island transportation that we need now and that will become critical as new Southtown residential buildings are constructed and occupied.

And then, there is the question of political philosophy: Should a State corporation take the place of elected local government, effectively disenfranchising an entire population? I don’t expect Steve Shane to address this perennial bugaboo; it’s the State Legislature’s provenance, after all, but nevertheless, it’s important that RIOC leadership be sensitive to our concern that we Islanders have no control through the ballot box over our own futures here.

We left the meeting with two immediate goals: First, to ensure that communication between RIOC and the various Island constituencies and organizations, especially RIRA, is a priority. Second, we urged Steve to find an issue that would respond to immediate attention – the Red Bus route snafu and the many darkened street lights were mentioned – that he could resolve, that RIOC could take credit for, and that would help to create a new dynamic between RIOC and us. I found it reassuring when he noted that, despite how RIOC Board members are appointed, we residents are

See **Katz**, page 11



Matthew Katz, President
Roosevelt Island Residents Association
e-mail: MatthewKatz@verizon.net

COMING UP

– This Weekend –

PTA Book Fair ends today (Sat., Mar. 24), PS/IS 217.
PTA Used Bike Sale, rescheduled to **today (Sat., Mar. 24)**, 9:00-2:00, Motorgate Plaza.
Weight Watchers, Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. (weigh-in at 9:30), Good Shepherd Community Center.
George Saru: *The Labyrinth, Adagio & The Universe*, continuing at Gallery RIVAA. Show runs through tomorrow (Mar. 25), 11-5.
Sunday Concert by Soprano Sherie Helstien, Sun., Mar. 25, 3:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center, with pianist Joan Krueger. Works of Handel, Scarlatti, Schubert, Faure, Wolf, Shostakovich, and American composers. \$15; seniors and children, \$5. ▷
Tram service terminates at 10:00 p.m., **Sun., Mar. 25**, for maintenance; reopens 6:00 a.m. Monday.



– The Coming Week –

Pre-K and Kindergarten Registration for Fall 2007 at PS/IS 217, for children born in 2002 and 2003, **Mon.-Tue., Mar. 26-27**, during school hours. Bring child’s birth certificate and family’s proof of residency (letter from housing company).
Advanced Children’s Swimming classes, Mon.-Wed.-Fri., 5:30; Sat., 9:30, Sportspark pool. Information: **212-753-3611**.
Children’s Learn-to-Swim Program, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5:00 p.m.; Sat., noon; Westview Pool. Information: **212-753-3611**.
Adult Swimming Classes, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 7:00 p.m., Westview Pool. Information: **212-753-3611**.
Free Ballroom Dancing Class, Mon., Mar. 26, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Main Street Theatre & Dance Alliance. Information: **212-371-4449**.
Toastmasters public speaking group, **Mon., Mar. 26**, 8:00 p.m. Open to public. Call **212-751-9577** for location and other information.
Roosevelt Island Democratic Club organizational meeting, **Tue., Mar. 27**, 7:30 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center, lower level.
Roosevelt Island Tidal Energy (RITE) Project Scoping Meeting, Wed., Mar. 28, 7:00 p.m., Manhattan Park Theatre Club, 8 River Road. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) will receive public comment on the plan in this session.
Roosevelt Island Tidal Energy (RITE) Project Scoping Meeting, Thur., Mar. 29, 10:00 a.m., Manhattan Park Theatre Club, 8 River Road. In this session, FERC will receive comment from governmental agencies.
Readings from *Jadwiga’s Crossing*, the novel, in the De Lamar Mansion Salon of Arts & Ideas, **Thur., Mar. 29**, 8:00 p.m., Consulate General of Poland, 233 Madison Avenue (at 37th), by Island author Richard J. Lutz. Free. Reception follows. Open to public; photo ID required. ▷
Opening Reception for *Vernissage 6*, Gallery RIVAA Sixth Anniversary Exhibition of members’ works, **Sat., Mar. 31**, 6-9 p.m. Gallery hours Sat.-Sun. 11-5; Wed. and Fri. 6-9.
Island Pianist Roy Eaton and others perform jazz and classical music in ***Music for Peace*, Sat., Mar. 31**, 7:30 p.m., Friends Meeting House, 15 Rutherford Place (15th St. between 2nd & 3rd). Free.



– Future Events –

The Main Street WIRE – Next issue, **Sat., Apr. 7**. (To receive e-mail bulletins between issues, send an *AddMe* message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Advertising Deadlines:** Ads in the paper, **Thur., Mar. 29**; decision on circulars/inserts for *The Bag*, **Mon., Apr. 2**; they are due **Thur., Apr. 5**. **Additional issues in 2007:** Apr. 21; May 5, 19; June 2, 16, 30; July 28; Aug. 25; Sept. 8, 22; Oct. 6, 20; Nov. 3, 17; Dec. 1, 15. **News phone, 212-826-9055**; urgent matters, **917-617-0449**. **Phone** for display and classified advertising placement and information, **212-751-8214**.
Toastmasters public speaking group, **Mon., Apr. 9**, 8:00 p.m. Call **212-751-9577** for location and other information.
Residents Association Common Council meeting, Wed., Apr. 11, 8:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center (lower level). Meetings, open to all, begin with public access period for residents to present matters to the Council.
Book Discussion Group: *Blessings* by Anna Quindlen, **Thur., Apr. 19**, 6:30 p.m. Group meets monthly, third Thursday, at the NYPL Roosevelt Island branch.
Toastmasters public speaking group, **Mon., Apr. 23**, 8:00 p.m. Call **212-751-9577** for location and other information.
Residents Association Common Council meeting, Wed., May. 9, 8:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center (lower level). Meetings, open to all, begin with public access period for residents to present matters to the Council.
Toastmasters public speaking group, **Mon., May 14**, 8:00 p.m. Call **212-751-9577** for location and other information.
Book Discussion Group: *John Henry Days* by Colson Whitehead, **Thur., May 17**, 6:30 p.m. Group meets monthly, third Thursday, at the NYPL Roosevelt Island branch.
Toastmasters public speaking group, **Mon., May 28**, 8:00 p.m. Call **212-751-9577** for location and other information.
Residents Association Common Council meeting, Wed., June 6, 8:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center (lower level). Meetings, open to all, begin with public access period for residents to present matters to the Council.
Roosevelt Island Day, Sat., June 9.
Toastmasters public speaking group, **Mon., June 11**, 8:00 p.m. Call **212-751-9577** for location and other information.
Book Discussion Group: *House of Splendid Isolation* by Edna O’Brien, **Thur., June 21**, 6:30 p.m.

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.

RIOC has not supplied a *RIOC Column* for this issue of *The WIRE*

Senior Center

Monday
10:30-11:30, **English as Second Language**
10:30, **Blood Pressure**
12:30, **“Oldies” Movies**
1:00, **Computers**
5:45, **Yoga**
Tuesday
9:00-1:00, **Taxes for Seniors**, first-come, first-served (to Apr. 10).
9:30, **Get Stronger Bones**
10:30, **Shoppers’ Bus**
2:00, **Bingo**
2:00, **Paint & Sculpt**
7:30, **Games (RISA)**

Wednesday
9:30, **Yoga**
10:30, **Computers**
10:30, **Shoppers’ Bus**
7:00, **Pokeno (RISA)**
Thursday
9:30, **Get Stronger Bones**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
11:00, **Tai Chi**
12:30, **Movie**
2:00, **Lotto**

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

Special Events
Champagne Brunch, Sun., Mar. 25, 2:00 p.m.
General Meeting, Tue., Apr. 10, 7:00 p.m.
Last day of tax assistance, Tue., Apr. 10
Atlantic City trip, Wed., Apr. 18

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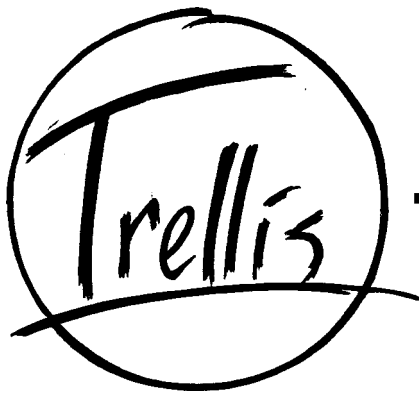
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COMMUNITY MEETING

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) invites you to attend a community meeting regarding the Roosevelt Island Tidal Energy (RITE) Project.

*For convenience, both evening and daytime
meeting times have been scheduled:*

**Wednesday
March 28, 2007
7:00 p.m.**

Manhattan Park Theatre Club
8 River Road
Roosevelt Island

– OR –

**Thursday,
March 29, 2007
10:00 a.m.**

Manhattan Park Theatre Club
8 River Road
Roosevelt Island

The RITE Project is a renewable energy initiative proposed by Verdant Power for implementation in the East River. The purpose of this community meeting is to provide local residents the opportunity to learn more about the RITE project and share their input.

Shane: “I am going to be transparent. I’m going to be outspoken...

thused about it. I know that I’ve got a high level of energy about it. There are many things that have to be addressed. In reading through back issues of *The WIRE*, I made a list of 25 or 28 things that need attention, like the Red Bus scheduling, with the express buses from the Octagon leap-frogging ahead. There, it sounds like a traffic manager is what is needed.

I had an interesting conversation with Karen Brown from the office of the Director of the Budget. When I asked her about Roosevelt Island and the next fiscal year, she said, “Well, I haven’t given it much attention. Now that RIOC is relatively financially independent and doesn’t ask for anything, it’s no longer on the State’s radar or in their budget.” I said, okay, that means that a budget needs to be adopted for the fiscal year and we need to pay some attention to that, but the State’s interest [in the Island] has clearly gone down a little, in terms of the relative requirements of the residents on the Island.

RIOC is there to function to make the place work – to meet the needs of the people, and to execute the plans for full development and for operation of the Island. That’s what RIOC is there for. And I think that’s my view of what my job is. My job is to keep the citizenry from having “tea parties” [In the ’90s, residents poured tea into the East River in a protest against the Pataki administration’s management of Roosevelt Island]... They were going to put banners across the buildings so that everybody on the East River Drive could read them. My job is to keep that from happening, to keep that from happening to my boss – and my boss is actually the Governor, as you know. And I want to make people happy so that this is an example of good government, and that this is how things can be done.

A Role for Islanders

I see residents being in a position of being able to participate, to suggest. We’ve got, what, 11,000-12,000 on the Island? That’s a lot of interested people out there, and because of the demographics of the Island, there is a very high level of capability. They have a lot of suggestions, and those suggestions should be accepted, they should be filtered, they should be reviewed, they should be bounced back, they should be thought about. Good ideas ought to be implemented. We’re all in this together. It’s not the function of RIOC to do anything other than for the good of the people on the Island and the people of the State of New York – especially now that RIOC is relatively financially independent.

Spitzer from page 1

to the Island and sit in his (Shane’s) office and pick his brain,” Serrano said.

Grannis, who also represents the Island, echoed Serrano in saying he knew little about Shane and had never met him. “I haven’t really had any dealings with him,” said Grannis, D-Manhattan, who is awaiting Senate confirmation to become Spitzer’s new Commissioner of Environmental Conservation, a job that will require him to resign from the Assembly and would open up the seat that represents the Island.

Jennifer Givner, a spokeswoman for Spitzer, said Shane shouldn’t have much of a learning curve in his new job.

“He knows every pothole on Roosevelt Island,” said Givner, who said Shane’s familiarity with “every project on Roosevelt Island” grew out of his role as the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal’s representative to the RIOC Board.

Shane graduated from the University of Michigan with a B.S. in Chemistry in 1958 and from Columbia University School of Law with an LLB in 1961.

Mr. Shane said “I am eager to return to public service and especially to Roosevelt Island to help in the completion of the goals of this wonderful planned community and the residents of the Island.”

These details were included in the press release issued last week by the Governor’s office:

Stephen H. Shane served as Special Assistant to the Commissioner of the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal, where he was designated by the Commissioner as his representative to the Board of Directors of Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation from 1988 to 1995. He was a partner at Lowenthal, Landau, Fisher & Bring from 1985 to 1987; at Tishman Spayer Properties from 1981 to 1984; Carro, Spanbock, Fass, Geller, Kaster & Cuiffo in 1981; and Demov, Morris, Levin & Shein from 1964 to 1980.

As Chief Executive Officer of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation of the State of New York, Mr. Shane’s annual salary will be \$143,000.

From what I can gather, there was a certain amount of “bunker mentality” that came upon people who were in RIOC. They felt estranged from the people on the Island. Some of them tried to do their best, which might have been perceived as not sufficient; nonetheless, they tried to do their best. And they felt underappreciated. People are people, and it’s very clear that you will never be able to satisfy all the people on Roosevelt Island all the time.

I hope to get across that particular piece of water. I know that there are a variety of constituencies on the Island. I know from my time out there trying to get my Southtown redevelopment plan put together and accepted by the community how much resistance there was to almost anything you might do. There was a group of tree-huggers; they didn’t want any tree on the Island cut down. There were the people who were in love with the soccer



field in front of the Nurses’ Residence; their children had played soccer there, and that was like hallowed ground as far as they were concerned; the soccer field couldn’t be moved. About the need for re-development – they didn’t care. They were perfectly willing to pull up the drawbridge over the moat. They had theirs. They had a lovely little Island and they didn’t care about the rest of the development.

It’s a difficult problem to coalesce people to a public purpose on Roosevelt Island. I believe in the function of government to serve a public purpose, to make these things happen. The government is there to serve the people. People on Roosevelt Island are part of a noble experiment. It is a planned community. And it’s not an experiment that is repeated in very many places in this country. And it is one to which a lot of people have pointed over a long time as being one of the rare successes of a mixed-income community.

His History on the Island

I was hired by the State of New York in October, 1988, as Special Assistant to the Commissioner of Housing, who was then Rick Higgins – just freshly appointed by Governor Cuomo. He was quite anxious to get somebody on board who was a real-estate lawyer, who knew something about development. The Division of Housing had gone into the development business again with the opening of the Trust Fund, and the old Division of Housing that had built most of the Mitchell-Lamas around the State had really gone into hibernation. A lot of those people had disappeared, so they needed expertise in development. I was contacted and met Rick and he offered me the job.

I took it as a challenge, and I went to work for the Division of Housing.

One of the first things Rick did was to designate me his representative to sit as chair of the RIOC Board. The next task he gave me was to pull together the Southtown RFP. Rosina Abramson was then president of RIOC. She and I worked together. The EIS [Environmental Impact Statement] was out there being done, and we had a big struggle with that. Finally, I wrote the RFP and published it. I had a big meeting of prospective developers out on the Island. There’s a videotape of it somewhere in the RIOC files; I know Jerry Blue tried to study it [when he was President of RIOC].

We had a big meeting and the day came for bids ... *and nobody came*. The real-estate market in Manhattan had collapsed. All of our projections involved what kind of rents we were going to be able to get on the market-rate units, which were effectively going to cross-subsidize the affordable units, which was a necessary part of the plan at that time.

One of the things I was able to do thereafter – and it was a great disappointment that nothing ever came of it – is that I went to Washington and saw the undersecretary of HUD who was in charge of public-housing programs. He was

willing to waive for me the entire HUD handbook, because there was a big restriction on public-housing authority sites at that time, that the housing authorities could not pay for sites that were more than a very low market value. Effectively, then, you couldn’t site public housing anywhere in the New York metropolitan area. But he was willing to waive that for the opportunity to get some public housing onto Roosevelt Island to satisfy the affordable, lower-income component. He was willing to write a check for \$50 million out of their development funds, which would have solved my whole problem of getting Southtown going, the problem of how to fund the necessary infrastructure. I had developers at the time who were willing to go forward with the buildings as long as the infrastructure was there. But infrastructure costs – water, sewage, streets, lights, that sort of thing – were going to be \$10-15 million as a front-end load even before they knew what the market might be

I also tried to persuade the State Senate to go along with a bond issue. HFA would issue it and we could front the infrastructure costs and recapture them from the developers as they went along. It was just another infrastructure risk that we would take at the State level. I could not persuade them as a political matter – “political” with a small “p” – to allow a further bond issue. I mean, having the State incur debt at that time was a difficult intellectual exercise.

So all of that failed, sadly, and I continued. Obviously,

the critical mass of Roosevelt Island needed Southtown to be developed, whether you’re talking about the budget for RIOC to run and provide necessary community services, whether you’re talking about a population which would allow merchants on Main Street and others like them to be economically successful. You needed a population base and the demographics had to be there. It just didn’t happen at that time because of the status of the real-estate market.

I continued to be involved in Roosevelt Island to try to push this way and that way to see what would happen. At the end of ’94, Mr. Pataki got elected. Mr. Cuomo got booted out. And in March of ’95, my career at the State Division of Housing was terminated abruptly. It’s a long story but, in any event, I was out of government and out of Roosevelt Island.

Since Then...

For a while, I followed what was happening on Roosevelt Island from afar, but my career took me elsewhere. I went back into the conventional practice of law at a couple of big law firms. I was at Thatcher Proffitt and my office was on the 40th floor of Two World Trade Center. We got blown out of there on 9/11. I had been standing in front of the building. I was there for a closing at 9:00 in the morning,

At a Glance: The New RIOC President

Name: Stephen H. Shane

His Age: 69

Place of residence: White Plains

Family: Wife is Jane Silver, 66. She is a real-estate agent in the Sotheby office in Scarsdale. Together they have a “blended” family from previous marriages: Seven adult children (ages 37-45), six sons- and daughters-in-law, 19 grandchildren (8 months to 20 years old).

His experience: Real-estate lawyer who chaired RIOC meetings from 1988-1995.

His salary as President and CEO of RIOC: \$143,000.

Good news: He sees an end to new construction on the Island within his tenure.

Bad news: He sees the Mitchell-Lama exits “are going unhappily.”

and I watched the planes hit the buildings.

A year after that, the real-estate department of Thatcher Proffitt broke up because no one wanted to work downtown again, or to go above the 13th floor again, it had been such a traumatic event. The real-estate department broke up and I was looking at perhaps retiring.

But I wound up here at Sparrow Construction, a construction firm that has a long history of doing affordable housing. Starrett, the developer of one of the components out on Roosevelt Island, was the parent of the predecessor to Sparrow Construction. Graphic Construction was run by the late Sidney Silverstein, who was Randy Silverstein’s father. Randy used to work for Sidney, and Sidney was a partner of Starett Housing a long time ago. For this job, I answered an ad in a newspaper – *a construction company is looking for a general counsel* – and here I am. I have been here five years. I live in White Plains, so it’s an easy commute. And it’s a relatively easy job. My wife and I have enjoyed traveling around the world and playing with our grandchildren over the past five years. And then I got the summons for this job.

Past RIOC Presidents

I was gone by the time Jerry Blue became president. He had been over at FHA, and we had been talking about

... I will be delighted to engage in an exchange with anybody...

the prospect of my coming back as, in effect, his right-hand man, to help run the Island because he didn't know anything about it. I was looking to extend my State employment tenure. I wanted to stay involved. In fact, I thought at the time that he was going to offer me the position, but he couldn't deliver on it, as it turned out. The job didn't materialize.

I was reading in *The WIRE* that there was a lot of upset during that period. Jerry was a very strange person. I knew of his relationship with Senator Al D'Amato, because I'd done a lot of FHA work. That whole relationship was reasonably well understood within the profession.

By the time [Robert H.] Ryan was appointed, my interest had waned a bit. I was no longer following what was going on, on Roosevelt Island. I now know, because I've read all the issues of *The WIRE* back to as far as you've posted them on the website [nyc10044.com]. So I see what happened with Ryan, who came in riding on his horse as the Man of the People and who then arrogated to himself all kinds of perks and emoluments of his office. He got tossed, I guess.

I've talked to [current RIOC president] Herb Berman on the phone. I'm going to be on the Island [March 21] and meet with him.

Meeting with Spitzer

It's the first time [Wednesday, March 14] I've seen Eliot Spitzer since he was three, because I did some legal work for his father a long time ago. He's taller now.

He's a very skillful guy on his feet. I was quite impressed with him. When I walked in, I congratulated him on his election. He congratulated me on my appointment.

His interest was, first – how's the affordability going on the Island? I mean, that was a very specific question. I pointed out to him what I thought was the inherent conflict issue between the Public Authorities Law and its requirement to dispose of property at fair value, and the desire to maintain affordability on the Island, which is a tension that has to be balanced. And he said, "Very interesting intellectual question – and good luck. Let me know how it comes out."

He's very interested in the Island. He brought up the fact that he was there on the Island last October. He enjoyed the meeting. He said it's obviously very contentious [there]. I said it's very much like the West Side of Manhattan, and he agreed with that.

Mitchell-Lama Exits

I had lunch with Paul Mas, the real-estate consultant [who has been representing RIOC in the deals at Island House and Westview]. I learned from him where he was with all this stuff. I have also been asked by the Commissioner to get involved with the Eastwood sale, which is now very, very imminent. The papers have been presented for the approval of the Board of RIOC. And I've been looking at them to try and familiarize myself with them. I am a real-estate lawyer – I mean, that's what I am. And most of my career I spent doing Mitchell-Lama housing, so I am very familiar with all of that stuff. I've known Jerry Belson a very, very long time. He was a prospective managing agent for the very first Mitchell-Lama that I got involved with, which was Lindsay Park out in Brooklyn.

These exits from Mitchell-Lama are going unhappily. I mean, I have two hats: As a lawyer, I represented developers and I absolutely assured them that after the [required] time [under Mitchell-Lama regulation] was up, they would have the right to exit the Mitchell-Lama program and go forward. During the time of the Mitchell-Lama regime, they had to maintain the property as affordable. Their profit was limited. They were going to be subject to regulation. Their tenancy was going to be subject to the limitations in Article II of the Private Housing Finance Law. And that was going to be their life. If they wanted to be in the program, that was what it was going to be, and they should accept it, not chafe under it. And when the end of that time came, I wrote opinions that they had the absolute right to get out. And as a matter of constitutional law, they had a right to get out, which the

State could not impinge upon.

As a result of that, the governments tried, in a variety of ways, to try to maintain the affordable housing stock – whether it was the Federal government with their LIHPRHA [Low-Income Housing Preservation and Resident Homeownership Act] of 1990, or the State government with their slowdown in the Mitchell-Lama processing, or the City, before they'd let people out, they made all kinds of demands.

As a housing professional and as a policy matter and as a personal matter, I believe [affordable housing] is absolutely critical, because it's irreplaceable. There is no way to get this affordable housing stock back. This stuff was built at \$2,500 to \$3,000 a room, but now it's ten times that. It's not affordable anymore. There is no way to accommodate the affordable housing population in the City of New York. So, it's a valuable public asset that is being lost.

At the same time, as a citizen and lawyer, I believe that the law made it pretty clear. And I knew the people who were the architects of the Mitchell-Lama Law – Al Lama

but it's certainly the most upscale of upscale Mitchell-Lama co-ops. But for Island House and Westview, I don't know. Again, I have my job and I have my personal views.

Main Street Stores

Maybe, up until now, RIOC has been unable – whether institutionally or because of the governance issues with the Board of Directors or whatever – unable to have an effective retail operation in those stores. You will always have the philosophical question to deal with, when you're dealing with service stores: Do I try and bring in the kind of stores that are important to the people who live here as a public service or do I try to maximize income? In that particular tension or conflict, we have a problem, and it is exacerbated by the Public Authorities Law, because, as you know, a retail store is disposable property.

I tend to think that those stores are essential for the well-being of the Island and you need to have a variety of service stores, whether it's a shoemaker or a fish store or a pizza parlor. We need the people to service the people, and we need the stores to serve the people.

Here's a hypothesis. Imagine if you had a third nail salon

– and I see that there are two – and they pay a sufficiency of rent and they are highly in demand, if they are willing to pay \$28 a square foot in rent – or whatever the number is and I have no idea – but the fish market can only afford \$15 a square foot in rent to be able to survive, because that's the mark-up in the fish-mongering business, then you have to ask yourself, "What happened to that other \$13?" and, "Is it better for the people of Roosevelt Island to have a fish market at \$15 a square foot or another nail place at \$28 a square foot?" I think that's a question that the people of Roosevelt Island have to come to understand – that they need the service and that the economics and the politics of it require that has to happen.

Personally, I think you need the service... There are only so many nails [that need polishing]. But if you're one of those people who lined up to get their nails done and you can't get into the store, you're yelling and screaming for another nail place.

I know that, in the beginning, [RIOC] tried to micro-manage the retail-store distribution and service products – hence all the non-compete clauses. As if it were a mall and you do those things as part of your negotiations. It doesn't surprise me – and I didn't have anything to do with this – that in the Pataki philosophical era they stopped trying to do that and they just let the chips fall where they may. That's part of, in my view, the Republican – with a capital R – approach to life – that it's unfortunate if there are a few bodies lying around, but government shouldn't get involved.

I think government has a function in some of these things to avoid the pain. It would be nice if the services that people wanted on the Island were delivered to them within the context of rational economics.

Let me also tell you that in looking at and in reading the paper and in looking at some back financial statements for RIOC and from my own experience back in the early '90s, when you're dealing with small merchants and the economics of collecting rent from them is miserable because they quite often can't pay, to get them out of their space, if they choose to be recalcitrant, is almost impossible. You then run a deficit operation

for a long time. You spend a lot of effort and legal fees and build up a lot of ill will. [Main Street] is not a big enough operation to support one person [on staff at RIOC to handle it]. It's not a big enough job. It's not a big enough deal, and yet you need that expertise to deal with the people you do have because it is an important part of life on the Island. Again, it's a critical-mass kind of issue.

One of the reasons for Mas's suggestion [to have one mall-type operator rent out all the spaces] is to just avoid all that. Deal with a big-time person who is experienced in that. RIOC is really not – I mean, they have a lawyer on their staff, or two sometimes, but not one of them is really equipped to go to civil court to deal with these issues on a current basis and in any way with real expertise, and it be-
See **Shane**, page 10

As a public policy person, I believe that the intent of the GDP was to maintain affordability on the Island as a planned community forever – not just for the limit of the Mitchell-Lama period. At the same time, there are issues of the contracts under Mitchell-Lama... But it's not clear to me which way it should go... I don't know, and it's up in the air.

and Mac [MacNeil] Mitchell. That's what they intended, and nobody thought about what was going to happen after 20 or 30 years. Nobody thought about it.

RIOC's Ground-Lease Power

Again, I have to come at you with my two hats. The philosophy as to what our society ought to be or might be or what the law might be or ought to be is one thing. What it [actually] is, is a separate thing. Maybe it's a function of having been a lawyer for a long time that you can maintain that dichotomy. I don't know. But I don't think it's intellectually dishonest to fulfill the law as it is determined to be, as long as I don't consider it to be immoral – and on the other hand, to have a view that I wish it might be otherwise.

As a public policy person, I believe that the intent of the GDP [General Development Plan] was to maintain affordability on the Island as a planned community forever – not just for the limit of the Mitchell-Lama period. And if it is to be an idealized community, it ought to be that way.

At the same time, there are the issues of the contracts



under Mitchell-Lama and whether that gives an out from that particular affordability issue and the conflict between the "requirements." Whether it's a constitutional document or only a plan is a subject of considerable debate, which the Courts are reluctant to poke their fingers into if RIOC makes an administrative determination. But it's not clear to me which way it should go.

As a housing citizen, I have one view. As a lawyer and as a prospective President of RIOC, I don't know. And that's the answer. I don't know and it's up in the air. Obviously, they're moving down the road toward buying out of the program. And I know that DHCR is trying to impose affordability requirements, whatever they may be. Rivercross has never been what I would consider a really affordable co-op. I mean, it's been a Mitchell-Lama co-op,

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The Roosevelt Island Day Nursery is fully licensed. All head teachers have Master’s degrees and are certified in Early Childhood Education. Member of ERB and ISAAGNY. Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

RIVAA Readies Organization’s Sixth Annual “Vernissage”



Harry Small

by Bonnie Goodman
Gallery RIVAA and the Roosevelt Island Visual Arts Association (RIVAA) are celebrating their Sixth Anniversary with Vernissage 6, an exhibition of members’ work. The opening reception is next Saturday (March 31), 6-9 p.m.
Six years ago, the former Bigelow Pharmacy site was transformed by members of the Roosevelt Island Visual Arts Association into the present gallery. Since then, the name “Vernissage” has been adopted for every Gallery RIVAA Anniversary exhibit. Literally, it means “varnishing,” in French, and by extension, the ceremonial start of an art exhibition.
Gallery RIVAA has held some 50 member and guest exhibitions. The opening receptions provide an opportunity to have one-on-one discussions with the artists about their work. At the gallery, RIVAA has also hosted the work of patient artists from the Island’s Coler- Goldwater Hospital, an exhibition of the Louis I. Kahn plan for a Southpoint Park monument to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and an international ideas competition for the renovation of the Renwick Ruin at Southpoint spearheaded by the Emerging New York Architects Committee (ENYA) and the AIA (American Institute of Architects).
Gallery RIVAA, which is manned by members of the organization, is open Saturday and Sunday, 11-5, plus Wednesday and Friday, 6-9. Additional information is available at www.RIVAA.com.
Vernissage 6 will continue through May 20.



Esther Piaskowski Cohen



Izumi Tokuno



Bonnie Goodman



Bonnie Goodman

RIVAA arranged for this group art “happening” as part of the 2006 Fall for Arts event. A variety of Islanders and visitors added their work to multiple billboards that started out blank.



ISLAND KIDS, Inc.



FAMILY CENTER

New Mothers Group ★ Creative Play for Babies and Toddlers ★ Music with James
Cooking ★ Eco-circle Science for Toddlers and Preschoolers
Tumbling ★ Seminars and Support for Parents
Creative Play: A Pre-School Alternative ★ Origami for Kids ★ Japanese Tea Ceremony
and more

Featured Class

The Baby Group – a/k/a Mothers' Group

Free of charge.

Make friends, share stories, have fun!

Coffee and tea served.

Babies: Newborn through 14 months (big brothers/sisters invited)

New Day: Friday

New Time: 11:30

536 Main Street Community Room (east wide of Main Street down walkway)
Call Island Kids at **212-317-0216** for more information.

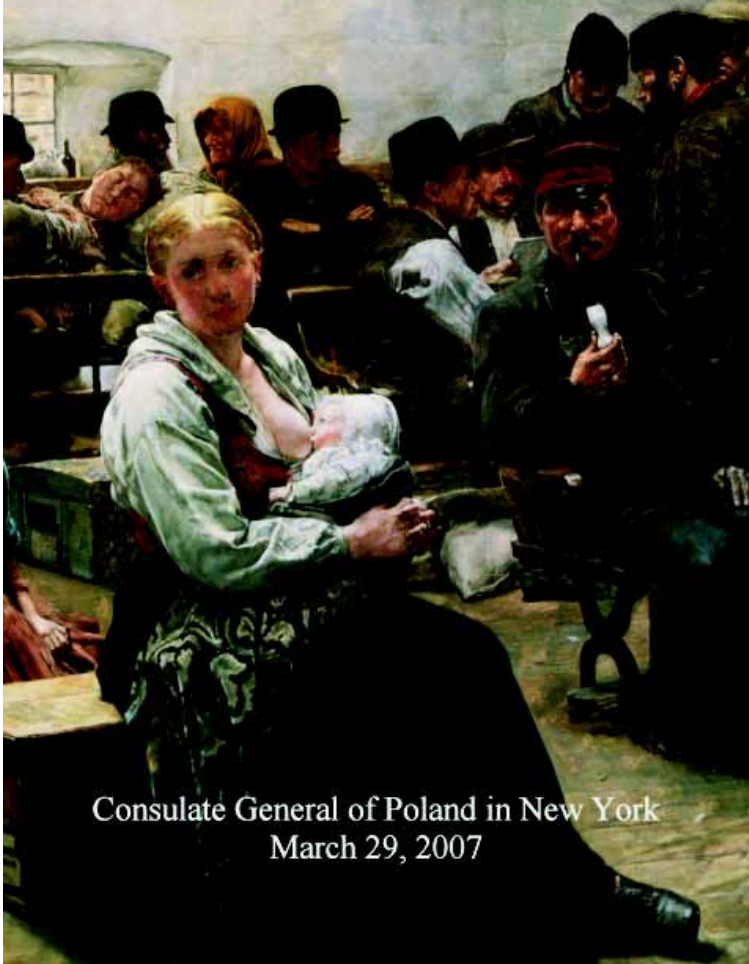
Classes for the Whole Family

On-Going Registration

Registration forms available
in building lobbies and at Starbucks.

Call **212-317-0216** for more information.

De Lamar Mansion Salon of Arts & Ideas



Consulate General of Poland in New York
March 29, 2007

*You are cordially invited to visit
New York's historic De Lamar Mansion
Thursday, March 29, at 8:00 p.m. for
Readings from the historical novel
Jadwiga's Crossing
by Roosevelt Island author Richard J. Lutz,
presented by the Consulate General of Poland.
233 Madison Avenue (at 37th)*

For security reasons, photo ID is required for admittance to the Consulate

*Come for the colors...
Take home real nutrition*

The Farmers Market

every Saturday morning,
under the ramp at Motorgate



We will feed and lovingly care for
your cat while you are away.
We will make sure your pet is safe
and happy in his or her own home.
Will also help with mail, plants, etc.
Excellent references. Call us at
212-751-8214.

Shane: “Excited about participation in the end-part of the dream...”

Shane, from page 7
comes a problem. That’s why one of the bases for Mas’s suggestion was to master-lease it and let somebody who knows what they’re doing do it, which is an interesting proposition. It needs to be thought about and talked about. It certainly would simplify life for RIOC. Whether it simplifies or makes better the life for residents is something else again; and that needs to be thought about and talked about.

Island Development

I understand that there are five more buildings to come as part of Southtown. I don’t see anything in the plan that provides for further residential development.

I was surprised, frankly, to see Octagon go forward as a residential development, because that wasn’t part of the plan that I was involved in. But it’s done, and I’m thrilled that the Octagon tower has been restored. I mean, that was a great historical treasure, and the fire just gutted it, which was terrible. The restored tower is terrific. There are 500 units of market-rate housing up there. That’s a very good thing for the economics of RIOC and for the Island ultimately. I don’t see more residential development [coming]. I think the requirements of the Master Plan will have been fulfilled with the completion of Southtown.

I am absolutely ecstatic about the development of Southpoint as a park. I think that having the necessary revenues and the capital to do that park is an amazing thing. When I

was involved with Roosevelt Island, we were running at a \$7 million per year deficit or more. We were wholly dependent on the State, and the ability to raise the capital funds to do Southpoint was so far off in the distance it was beyond being a mirage.

We were talking about the FDR Memorial. We had the Louis Kahn plans. Jimmy Roosevelt and Congressman vanden Heuvel would appear every so often to talk about their love and affection for FDR and all we needed to do. But materializing the money that was necessary to get it done was a near impossibility. The infrastructure investment to get water and sewage lines down to Southpoint was huge, but with no economic return at any foreseeable time other than having a park. Now it’s been done. It has effectively been put together. That the construction is going to start in our immediately foreseeable future is an amazing thing; it’s going to be a beautiful thing. It’s very exciting as well. Coming back to the Island and to this now, and to see these things actually coming to fruition, is a very exciting prospect.

Live on the Island?

Well, people have asked me, you know, would I live on the Island. And the answer to that is that it would probably not be a great idea because of the broad constituency and the issues that come up. I would get no peace on the Island.

But I am going to be available. I am going to be accessible. I am going to be transparent. I’m going to be outspoken. I will be delighted to engage in an exchange with anybody on any point of view. I’m certainly not going to be reclusive – it’s not my style. I certainly would not intend under any circumstances that RIOC would continue to be uncommunicative or secretive. It’s a public-purpose agency.

Subway Overcrowding

Mass transportation for the Island was designed to be the subway. The Tram was only a stop-gap until the subway was opened up – with great fanfare in 1989. I remember when it opened. There was a ribbon-cutting. It was a big event. And it was supposed to solve all the mass transportation problems for the Island.

It did, then. And, in fact, the Tram had become such an icon by then, but it was supplemental. It has continued to be fully utilized because people love it, I think. But it is a money-loser, no matter what you do [but all mass transit] is a money-loser. It costs more to run the Tram than you take in as revenues, no matter what you do.

[Subway crowding] is a planning problem for the MTA, and it requires political will if anything can be done about it. I have no connection with the MTA. Anybody who tries to move the MTA to get anything done knows that you’re pushing a very big rock up a very big hill. It’s not that they

don’t want to respond, but they get a lot of demands. And they are slow to respond. It’s who is making the most noise at a particular moment that gets the most attention.

Roosevelt Island’s Visibility

In the early days, we promoted the Tram with King Kong hanging off it and that sort of stuff to increase the visibility of the Island, not to mention getting revenue from the moviemakers. One of the amusement parks down in Orlando had a Tram, and we got license fees from that. There used to be a map of the Island that we gave out. It had all the walking paths and the points of interest and all that stuff.

The kiosk is sitting there [at the Tram landing on the Island], obviously not yet developed or restored or rehabilitated or refurbished, and when it is, it should make a difference. That’s one of the items that needs to appear on the agenda, because the special-purpose funds that have been recommended for refurbishing the kiosk have to be approved by the Board.

When Southpoint Park is finished, it’s going to be a gorgeous attraction. It’s certainly to be hoped by the park promoters that it will attract all who want to use the park; that’s what parks are for. The tennis bubble is obviously an Island attraction, mostly for Manhattanites. The sports fields are used by some of the private schools. The whole promenade, the walk around the Island is a very pleasurable thing.

[I’d like to see] a destination restaurant somewhere on Main Street, which would require somebody having a lot of

10,000-12,000 people, including maybe 6,000 voters – it would be nice to believe they could influence legislators who would pay attention. I know that your City Councilperson [Jessica Lappin] is very interested in the Island. She is a good representative for her constituency – and she’s got a cute baby, whose picture I saw in *The WIRE*. That’s part of being in a democratic society, democratic with a small *d*. Our job – my job, because this is a State public-benefit corporation – is to have good governance. That’s what we’re there for. So, to the extent that you don’t get the attention from the total legislature in Albany, which really wouldn’t surprise me, it’s my job to do the best I can in context of the available resources.

Confirmation Schedule

I know that there is some debate going on as to whether confirmation is required by the Senate. Certainly, confirmation by the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation is necessary; and, as I’ve said, the Commissioner knows that she needs to call a meeting of the Board for that, among other things. There are a whole bunch of things on the agenda which need some attention.

Southtown

I was delighted to see it go forward. I know what it means to the economics of the Island and fulfilling the plan, allowing the original capital investment of the State to be utilized better. I’m not an architect and I can’t comment on the way the buildings are situated, their fenestration, or a variety of things. I mean, they are what they are. I assume the plan was adopted with the usual amount of debate about the aesthetics. It’s a nice development. I’m glad to see that the prices are going up in the market-rate thing. It’s a good indicator of its acceptance.

Chain of Command

I report directly to the Commissioner of Housing, who is the chair of the Board of RIOC. It’s really her position. RIOC comes within

her fiefdom, however you define that, and she, of course, reports to the Governor.

Self-Governance

I certainly appreciate the desire for home rule in any community, but RIOC is a creature of statute, created by the State of New York. Until something like that is passed in the State legislature, it’s not for me to opine on the policy of the State. I’m there to carry out a statutory mandate, which is to operate the Island. That’s what RIOC is. It’s a public-benefit corporation of the State of New York.

RIOC Staff

Again, you have the governance issue on Roosevelt Island. As a legal matter, the Board of Directors has the corporate authority to do almost anything. As a statutory matter, RIOC is a creature of that statute. It’s a public-benefit corporation, and the members of the Board serve at the pleasure of the Governor for an appointed term of two years or until replaced. The President of RIOC is nominated by the Governor or by the Commissioner of Housing, in effect, obviously subject to approval by the Board of Directors. Directors in any corporation have the right to hire and fire people; however, that’s not exactly true here. And so, you have that tension. Certainly, the Board of Directors is the nominal entity to which any President reports, but this is a public-benefit corporation, so it’s a little different.

Parting Remarks

Roosevelt Island is a very special place. And I’m very excited about the opportunity to participate in the end-part of the dream – that is, bringing it to complete fulfillment. We’re ending the development phase of Roosevelt Island. It’s foreseeable. It’s on a timeline. Five years from now, it’ll be over. Maybe three years from now, maybe four years from now, construction on the Island will have come to an effective end.

My earlier experience with Roosevelt Island was so much devoted to pushing the development end because we needed it so badly. Services on the Island were always at the poor-relations end of things because that’s all we could afford. We were always begging from the State. Now, things are different. So we’re phasing into the more normal community-service kind of government and governance on the Island. It’s a transition time. I look forward to being a part of that.

I understand that there are five more buildings to come as part of Southtown. I don’t see anything in the plan that provides for further residential development.

courage to step in there and make the capital investment required. Maybe that could be done. There are such restaurants in Long Island City that attract Manhattanites, who are typically the people who are willing to spring for that kind of place. It’s a question of promotion and getting somebody who has the vision to do it. We talked about doing that a long time ago at the Octagon. We were going to have ferry service – all kinds of things are possible.

I think that once Southtown has been built up and Southpoint Park has been completed, the need to beat the drums for the public relations of Roosevelt Island is pretty much over. So much of what we did to try and promote tourism and everything else was to try and get the idea of what a wonderful place this is to live and what a wonderful place this is to come and visit, to push the market value up so that we could do the future development. We were in the land speculation business in many ways, and we were from the beginning when UDC (the Urban Development Corporation) first took this on. We were trying to take a hunk of rock out there and turn it into a viable, vibrant community.

Part of what you do is a public-relations selling job, and ultimately it has come to pass – whether it is because of market pressures elsewhere or because, in fact, our dream for Roosevelt Island was meaningful and it’s coming to fruition, the fact is that people see value out there and they’re coming out there. They’re building the buildings that allow the broader government organization to be sustained and to be able to deliver the appropriate services to the people. So I don’t know that we have a big, future job to do in terms of selling Roosevelt Island.

The people who are marketing the buildings that are being built in Southtown right now are doing a pretty good job of beating the drums themselves. And it’s appropriate for them to do that. The people who did the Octagon did the same thing. When Starrett was building Manhattan Park, they did the same thing: “Come live on Roosevelt Island. What a wonderful place it is...” and it was. I remember being out there for the opening of the Little League Baseball season with a march up Main Street. I mean, where else could you live 300 yards from Manhattan and enjoy that kind of small-town, “burbish” kind of thing?

As far as Albany is concerned, I think that the ability of



A publication of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corp.

RIOC NEWS

ISSUE #7

Profile of the Month:
Deborah VanAmerongen,
Commissioner of Department
of Housing and Community
Renewal

Governor Eliot Spitzer recently appointed Deborah VanAmerongen as commissioner of the state of New York's Department of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR). In this role, Commissioner VanAmerongen will oversee the department's efforts to preserve and expand affordable housing, increase home ownership and economic opportunities, and provide equal access to safe, decent and affordable housing for New York State.



The DHCR commissioner serves as the designated chairperson of Roosevelt Island Operating Corp.'s Board of Directors. Commissioner VanAmerongen, who is very familiar with the island, recently visited the community for the first time since assuming her new role. She was briefed on priority concerns affecting island residents.

"Roosevelt Island is a remarkable oasis of smart-growth and sustainability that is unique in the nation," said Commissioner VanAmerongen. "I am honored to have been given the opportunity by Governor Eliot Spitzer to work with island officials and residents alike to preserve Roosevelt Island's singular character."

"It was great to welcome the commissioner and discuss how she can help resolve issues that impact our residents," said Herb Berman, president and chief executive officer of RIOC. "Commissioner VanAmerongen knows Roosevelt Island well and will be a strong advocate for us in Albany. We look forward to working with her to keep Roosevelt Island a strong and thriving community."

Tram Upgrade on the Horizon

The Roosevelt Island Aerial Tramway made its first trip across the Hudson River in May of 1976 and has provided island residents and visitors with a vital transportation link to the island ever since.



Over the years, the Tram has become one of the island's most endearing features. A New York City icon, like the Statue of Liberty and the Staten Island Ferry, our Tram is a bit of a movie star. Spider-Man, Night-hawks, and City Slickers, are among the popular films that feature the Tram.

A workhorse, the Tram operates about 20 hours a day, 365 days a year. Other similar systems, ski lifts for example, may run seven or eight hours a day during a four month ski season. The Tram has operated for 30 years, making approximately 35,000 trips per year.

A valuable transportation option for Islanders, Tram ridership has increased by approximately 45 percent in the past few years. To ensure the Tram will operate for another 30 years, RIOC will begin a major overhaul of the system in 2008.

Many of the service interruptions that have occurred in the past were the result of maintenance procedures that require the Tram to be periodically shut down. RIOC intends to limit this inconvenience in the future, and the focus of the 2008 overhaul is to improve the Tram's efficiency and streamline its maintenance.

Open Season Starts April 1!

The spring season is rapidly approaching, and that means plenty of outdoor activities here on the island. All recreational fields will officially open on April 1, 2007. Tennis permits are now available through the RIOC Web site, as are permits for all soccer and softball fields on Roosevelt Island.

Why not schedule a friendly game for you and your friends this spring? Make your plans to spend some time outside! For more information, please visit www.rioc.com or call Donna Masly at 212.832.4540.



www.RIOC.com

Orphans International Surging With Help of Islanders and World Leaders



Photo: Linda Heimer

Mr. Yuxiang Long, Executive Chair of the China International Culture Communication Center of Beijing, presents a grant to Jim Luce (right), Roosevelt Island resident and founder of Orphans International (OI), at last month's Culture for Peace New Year Celebration at the United Nations, emceed by WCBS anchor Cindy Hsu and co-sponsored by Friends of the United Nations and Mayors for Peace. Frank Liu of World Harmony Foundation looks on.

Mr. Long has since joined the OI Worldwide Advisory Board, chaired by H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco and H.E. Sheikhha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, President of the 61st Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Mets pitcher Pedro Martinez may be the next member to join OI's Global Advisory Board.

Luce reports that, with the help of another Roosevelt Island resident, OI Goodwill Ambassador Ethel Grodzins Romm, Orphans

International America last year raised approximately \$330,000, "and this year our budget is for \$540,000 – most of it pledged in advance." Luce also said that, this year, OI has a Founders' Circle, a President's Circle, and a Board of Directors – each responsible for contributing. Romm, who lives in Rivercross, is paid \$1 per year for her services. Southtown resident Donald W. Hoskins, M.D., chairs the OI America Board of Directors, Westview resident Rosa Suárez serves as secretary, and a Manhattan Park resident, Lynn Chambers, CPA, is Treasurer. Chris Godleski of Southtown heads the organization's International Council, while others such as Bonnie Goodman, Doris Chernik, Marlene Flom, and Dr. Carol Hoskins, R.N., head various committees.

OI currently has an opportunity to fully endow its first project in Sri Lanka in such a way that the interest alone, on the invested principal, will fund the project in per-

petuity.

Luce says this model "will take OI to a new level." He is now working on raising \$90,000 for this purpose, working from his offices in Eastwood. There will be a spring brunch in the penthouse community room of Southtown to discuss this.

"We now have such an incredible group of global volunteers, based here on Roosevelt Island," Luce told *The WIRE*. "We are doing so well, thanks to our neighbors. I urge all Roosevelt Islanders to be part of the solution. I am certain OI Sri Lanka will become our first fully-endowed project, and be a model for all others – and that we will be helping our kids – raising global citizens – for decades to come... for generations to come."

Islanders interested in helping with OI's multinational projects are invited to call Luce at **212-755-7285**, or contact him via e-mail at Jim@oiww.org.

Tram Upgr

The Roosevelt Island Aerial Tramway made its first trip across the Hudson River in May of 1976 and has provided island residents and



The current issue of *RIOC News* has relocated Roosevelt Island to the Hudson River, or the River to our shores – or maybe the Tram to New Jersey – we're not sure which.

Katz from page 3

his and their; it's a small thing but few others in authority (make that nobody else) have recognized that relationship and have said so.

Speaking of communication, have you seen the latest *RIOC News*, the RIOC newsletter that has been (apparently arbitrarily) distributed to some buildings but not to others in recent years? I'm not sure what its purpose is; after all, *this* newspaper is the best source of Roosevelt Island information, and much of what is addressed in the newsletter could be (and should be) discussed in the RIOC column usually found directly adjacent to my *RIRA Column* in these pages. It seems, according to the lead article, that, "The Roosevelt Island Aerial Tramway made its first trip across the Hudson River in May of 1976." It's this kind of crack reporting and fact-checking that makes this two-page glossy publication so essential to keeping this community well-informed! And remember: the newsletter is funded by RIOC, so we're paying for it. Perhaps it's time to retire this irrelevant periodical once and for all.

And finally: Herb Berman came to us just weeks before the Blackout of 2003 tested our emergency planning and preparedness and our patience. Appointed by a governor many of us found to be less than supportive of this community, Herb nevertheless has worked assiduously to improve life here. We haven't always agreed; in fact, we've often been at loggerheads, but he has always been willing to return phone calls, trade e-mails, answer questions, and invite me in to argue and to schmooze. I wish him well and hope that he and Mrs. Berman find pleasure in a healthy and fulfilling retirement. Best of luck, Herb!

Letters from page 2

To the Editor:

This is a follow-up to my letter that appeared in *The WIRE* on November 18. City Councilmember Jessica Lappin had forwarded my request to New York City Commissioner of the Department of Transportation, Iris Weinshall, in December. Here is the response, dated March 7.

Thank you for your letter to Commissioner Weinshall, on behalf of Mr. Neal Weissman, suggesting the creation of a staircase between Roosevelt Island and the Queensboro Bridge. The Commissioner asked our office on her behalf. Please excuse the delay of this reply.

Please communicate to Mr. Weissman that, owing to heightened security measures following the events of September 11, 2001, the Department of Transportation cannot pursue this suggestion at this time. We are confident that he will understand and appreciate this. Additionally, he can find more information by visiting our website at www.nyc.gov/dot.

Thank you for seeking the assistance of the Department of Transportation in your continued service to the residents of your community.

Margaret Forgione
Manhattan Borough Commissioner

Of course, Jessica did what she could, and the response from the Commissioner is disappointing. We can assume that no one is implying that the terrorists are here on Roosevelt Island looking up at the bridge, thinking evil thoughts. I would think, God forbid, that if someone wanted to do evil things to the bridge,

a car or truck might be an easier way to get there. But I am a simple man, and am inclined to trust our leaders. So if our leaders say, "We have to fight them over there, so we don't have to fight them over here," I would like to give them the benefit of the doubt. However, the same logic that prevents people from climbing the stairs would imply that we should also stop the cars and trucks from crossing the bridge. I'd rather listen to a leader who says, "We have nothing to fear but fear itself."

Perhaps if bad things were to happen in NYC, having an additional way to travel to or from the bridge would be to our collective advantage.

Neil Weissman

To the Editor:

For one who has no trouble speaking off the cuff to tell a thousand stories of her adventures during a long life, I find it hard to find the words to thank the people who made my first play a smash hit on Sunday evening, March 4, in the RIVAA Gallery. The warm reception it was given and the response I elicited from the audience were tantamount to a veritable accolade. I want to direct special thanks to Vicki Feinmel, Margie Smith, and Harry Small for their invaluable assistance, and to Tad Sudol for letting us use the Gallery as our venue. But most of all, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to the members of a most appreciative audience – my neighbors.

Helen Roht

Attention All Roosevelt Islanders

Please come and bring your ideas
to the first meeting of the new

Roosevelt Island Democratic Club

When: Tuesday, March 27, at 7:30 p.m.
Where: Basement of Good Shepherd Community Center

Look forward to seeing and hearing you!

Russell Death Brings End of Music Center

The Island Arts Music Center started by Robin Russell, who died suddenly February 27, is now closed, though teachers to whom he had subcontracted work are continuing to handle lessons with their students on a private basis.

A group of Islanders is considering what might be done to continue Russell’s legacy by continuing some form of music school.

And a concert is being considered as a fundraiser for Matthew Russell, Robin’s son. Rosemarie Russell, Robin’s wife and Matthew’s mother, died in 2002. Matthew is in his freshman year at Bennington College in Vermont.

Rivercross resident Marianne Lau, who is part of the group that has handled Music Center matters in the aftermath of Robin Russell’s death, said, “We want to find a space for the Music Center, including a place where teachers and students can hold lessons, with sound-isolated practice spaces and a small performance space for recitals. It would be a fantastic asset. Making it an integral feature of Roosevelt Island would honor the work Robin invested in this community.” Lau said that Russell had been in touch with State Senator Jose Serrano about such a facility. (IAMC classes had been conducted, in part, in space used by the Main Street Theatre and Dance Alliance.)

Lau said that the group that is sorting matters out had concerns about possible liability for Matthew Russell, in the event of an accident associated with any continuation of the Island Arts Music Center.

Robin Russell’s piano students who wish to continue lessons but have not yet been contacted are encouraged to call Ralph Allen at 212-781-4320. Lau said that an early-April meeting will attempt to resolve questions of monies owed to teachers.

SPORTSWIRE

Little League Baseball is gearing up. Registration forms are available at PS/IS 217, at the front desk. They are due March 30, and play will begin the second week in April.

Coaches are needed, and they are asked to leave name and phone number at PS 217, or to send an e-mail to LScotBobo@yahoo.com.

The GRAPHOPHONE



The most fascinating invention of the age. Always ready to entertain. It requires no skill to operate it and reproduce the music of bands, orchestras, vocalists or instrumental soloists. There is nothing like it for an evening's entertainment at home or in the social gathering. You can sing or talk to it and it will reproduce immediately and as often as desired, your song or words.

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This was the mystery “ad that didn’t belong” in the March 10 issue. The question was, “In what year did the ad appear?” The answer was hidden in the border of a real ad on page 8. Now – can you find this week’s “ad that doesn’t belong?”

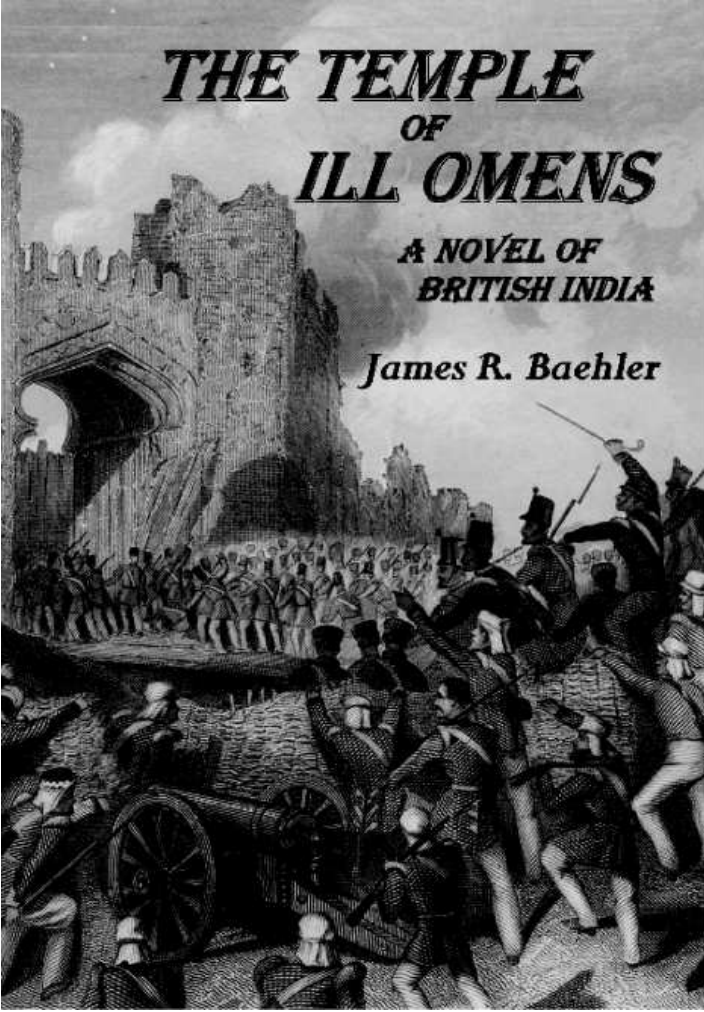
Baehler Pens New Historical Novel of British India in 1800s

Island author Jim Baehler has a new book out this week. *The Temple of Ill Omens* is set in India before, during, and after the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857.

Baehler says that the novel is true to actual events, portraying tumultuous times as seen through the eyes of a family whose members witness pitched battles and political intrigue. A young boy and girl come of age, and there’s a star-crossed love between a man and a woman who can never be together. Says Baehler, “Underlying all is the clash of civilizations and the burning desire of people to throw off the yoke of British occupation and assume responsibility for their own destiny.”

One of the novel’s advance reviewers, Burton Pollock, said, “The author’s ability to paint his characters and settings with a brush so insightful, so rich and vibrant, kept me constantly compelled to keep reading. I felt as though I were there in India for a short time and living among the people. I was overwhelmed by the author’s impeccable descriptions of every facet of British and native life in the India of that time, as well as the very detailed portraits of each character in the book. I loved the complete unpredictability of the story. I never knew where it was taking me.”

Baehler’s novel, published as a trade paperback at \$16.95, is available from the author: James R. Baehler, 531 Main Street #627. He’ll sign all copies purchased.



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No class May 27th

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Price \$260

Grades 3-5

1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Price: \$320

Price includes a lacrosse stick for each child



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Simply Sports in a non-profit organization and offers financial aid

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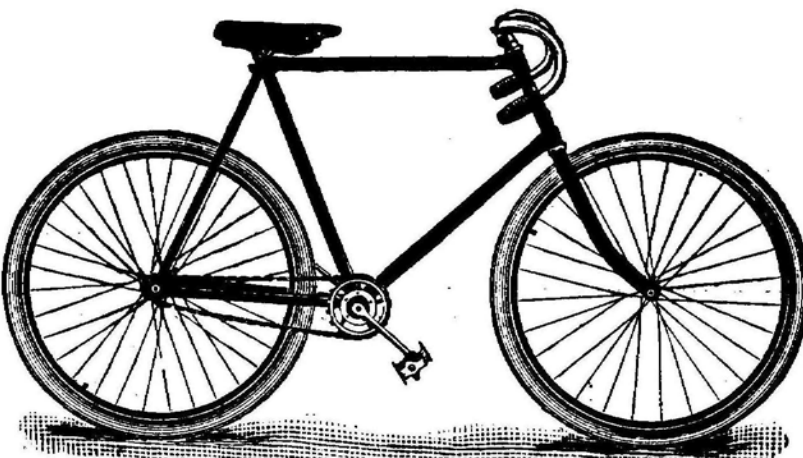


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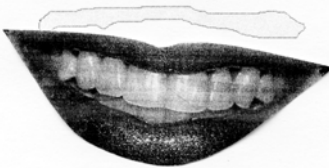
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