

Next issue
in two weeks:
Sat., May 5

The Main Street WIRE™

27th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



Shortly before the RIOC Board voted to hire Steve Shane as the Corporation's new President, he responded to questions from residents. A partial transcript of the Q&A is on page 6; full transcript on *Website NYC10044* at nyc10044.com.

CB8 Backs Plea for Feasibility Study on Direct Access to Bridge

Community Board 8 met on Roosevelt Island Wednesday night, and voted unanimously to support a Residents Association request for a study of stairway and elevator access to the Queensboro Bridge via a stairway and elevator.

The idea has already been rejected by the City's Department of Transportation (DOT) as incompatible with its post-9/11 security planning, but the Islanders promoting the idea see it as a solution to emergency needs rather than a threat likely to produce an emergency. The rationale is a perceived need for more means of emergency egress from the Island.

Ellen Polivy presented the idea to CB8's transportation committee last week, and that committee passed it along on Wednesday night in the form of a resolution calling for the feasibility study. But the committee expanded the original resolution as sought by Polivy to include a general look at the Island's transportation situation.

Polivy relayed a resolution approved at a Residents Association Common Council meeting calling for direct ground-to-bridge access, saying, "We need another escape route off our Island." She added that even in calm times, the Island's transportation facilities are overloaded. "We need a reliable way to get on and off the Island," she said. "The walkway would give Manhattan's East Side residents a new destination park in easy walking distance."

Polivy reported the DOT "heightened security measures" response to a letter from City Councilmember Jessica Lappin, calling that reason "a discussion-stopper," and spoke of the difficulties the disabled have in using the Tram and subway. "We have been told that there is an emergency evacuation plan, but we can't be told what it is because it is secret," she said.

Others from Roosevelt Island
See **CB8**, page 12

Special Election – And Other Briefs...

- Governor Eliot Spitzer has set a **special election for Tuesday, June 5**, for voters to choose a replacement for Pete Grannis, who resigned his 65th District Assembly seat to become Commissioner of the State Department of Environmental Conservation. The Democratic candidate, Micah Kellner, has already been campaigning (see ad, page 5) in the heavily Democratic district. Republicans have not yet named their contender.
- The New York City **Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)** is taking applications from City residents ages 14 to 21 for summer jobs, at www.nyc.gov/dycd. The deadline is May 18.
- PS/IS 217 is looking for speakers for its 13th annual **Career Day** on Friday, June 8. Speakers in all fields are encouraged to volunteer to make short speeches telling seventh- and eighth-graders about what they do (or did) for a living. For information, call Susan Cohen, the Guidance Counselor, at **212-980-0294**, ext. 3230.
- The Beacon Program is running a free **GED Course** (see ad, page 13).
- **The Main Street Theatre** and the Cultural Center were flooded last weekend when drains backed up during the nor'easter. Nina Wintringham and Roberta Hershey spent a good part of the weekend bailing it out and drying it out.

Shane Says Residents Should Vote on RIOC Board Candidates

DHCR's VanAmerongen Concurs on Indirect Process

by Dick Lutz

As expected, Steve Shane was confirmed to the RIOC Presidency when the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) met last week. The vote was unanimous.

Both before and after confirmation, Shane fielded questions from residents, including Board members. He suggested, in two sets of answers, that residents might devise a mechanism under which they elect residents to be potential appointees to RIOC Board seats. Deborah VanAmerongen, Commissioner of the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) and chair of the RIOC Board, also spoke encouragingly of that possibility.

"Steve and I have certainly talked about how to ensure that the community is involved in proposing names for Board membership," VanAmerongen said. "Obviously, we need and want to have people who are members of the community as members of the Board, and we're open to talking with you about how we get names to suggest and what sort of process that might be." VanAmerongen was responding to a question from Residents Association (RIRA) President Matthew Katz, and added, "I'm sure that through your election process and the way you go about getting participation from all the buildings on the Island, you have some ideas you can share with us about that."

"There are seven non-statutory positions on the [RIOC] Board of Directors," Shane said moments later. "Those seven non-statutory positions can be filled and should be filled, in my view, from Island people." He seemed to suggest, however, that direct election of Board members might be a later goal. "We cannot change the statute because we'd like to, but we certainly can arrange – sort of memorandum-of-understanding-arrange with RIRA that you, through your democratic process, making sure that there's representation from the various constituencies on the Island... So look at the constituency of the Board, with terms, and how you would arrange for staggered terms and elections under the auspices of RIRA where you could forward the candidates without having to change the statute. We could then push them to the Governor's office for confirmation by the Senate... Democracy would be served, you would have a representative group... You wouldn't need to be concerned about a Board of Directors who wasn't listening to the Island residents." After an additional com-



Before leaving last week's RIOC Board meeting, outgoing President Herb Berman spoke warmly of his replacement, then joked that, newly retired, he had to get home to prepare dinner.

ment from Katz, he added, "So puzzle it out if you can, among your constituency, and among your [RIRA] Board, to see if we can come up with a workable plan, because I think all of our hearts are in the same place in terms of representative government."

When resident Nurit Marcus recalled that Governor Eliot Spitzer said, when he appeared here as a candidate in October, that "a member" of the RIOC Board might be elected by the community, Shane responded, "I'm suggesting to you that we can go farther than that."

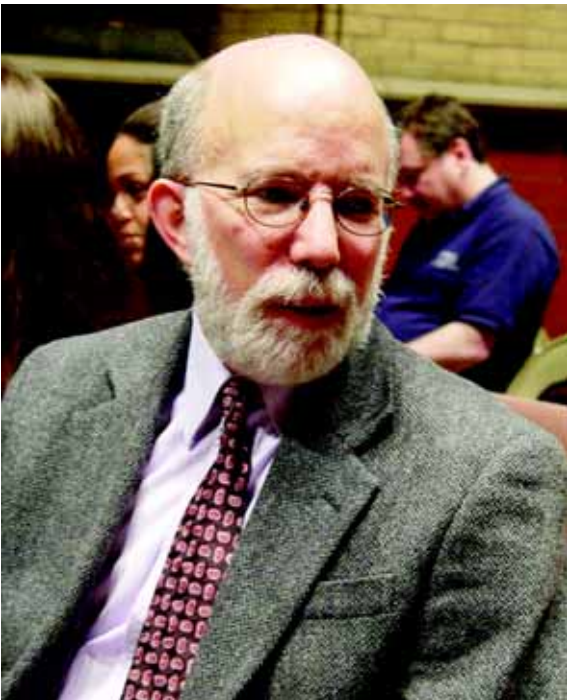
Informal Contact

Later in the meeting, responding to questions from new Community Board 8 member Ellen Polivy and RIRA Secretary Sherie Helstien, Shane expressed concern about abiding by the terms of the Public Authorities Accountability Act and the law establishing RIOC, when residents wish to meet with RIOC Board members, even informally. "The open meetings requirements of the Public Authorities Law are a pain because they are quite often counterproductive," Shane said. "We cannot have, as I understand it, a quorum – and out of nine members of the Board that would be five – assemble in any one spot where they might do business." When Helstien insisted a way should be found to change the law, Shane added, "This is a purely legislative matter. It is a law that is written and codified. So, in order to be able to change it... you have to go back to the Legislature and change it. And that requires a considerable effort through a whole host of steps, as you might guess, in order to change it only for Roosevelt Island."

After a comment from RIOC Attorney Kenneth Leitner, Shane later observed that, because the RIOC Board is now down to eight members, four members would constitute a quorum. That means, he said, that the limit of Board members who can assemble in one place is three.

That didn't end the discussion, which is available in transcript form, with the rest of the two Q&A sessions with Shane, with this issue of *The WIRE* on *Website NYC10044* at nyc10044.com.

Before the unanimous Board vote that officially hired Shane as President of RIOC, he responded to several questions from Board members and the residents in the audience, on the suggestion of resident Board member Michael Shinozaki, who expressed concern about residents having an opportunity to question Shane. "Is Mr. Shane what you guys want for the President of your community?" he asked rhetorically. "We catch a lot of grief about not obtaining input from the community at all before the Board makes decisions. [I want the chair] to give you an
See **RIOC**, page 10



Another Goodbye – of Sorts Tony Morenzi got a standing round of applause here Wednesday night at the Community Board 8 meeting when he made his final appearance as the manager of the 65th Assembly District constituent services office. Morenzi will continue to work for former Assemblymember Pete Grannis in Grannis's new role as Commissioner of the State Department of Environmental Protection. He'll be based in Queens and expects to continue to work, now exclusively on environmental issues, with groups in the CB8 area, including Roosevelt Island.

The Editorial Page

Watershed

Living on Roosevelt Island, you learn to be cautious about hoping for too much.

But the change of administrations in Albany, and the resulting changes here on Roosevelt Island, provide reason for a revival of long-dormant hope.

Islanders who really care about this place probably fall roughly into three categories. There are those who've been around so long that they've had hopes crushed and have disengaged, unwilling to fight for something only to fail again. There are those who have been around long enough to get upset, yet still have a goal or wish a wish, but have been disappointed by the decay and the difficulty in perceiving the wherefore of much of what government chooses to do here. And there are relative newcomers – the folks who haven't yet figured the place out, but would like to, and still have the energy to shake off the disappointment or the cues to disengage.

After a while, though, it's hard to rally the interested for yet another try at something.

Last week's RIOC Board meeting, in which Board members hired Governor Eliot Spitzer's choice for the Presidency of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, seemed to be something of a turning point. Perhaps, as yet, not enough of a turning point to cure all cynicism. But certainly a start.

In the transcript you'll find in this issue (page 6, and in a word-for-word version on Website NYC10044 at nyc10044.com), there's cause for optimism. At the Board meeting, chairing for the first time, Deborah VanAmerongen (Commissioner of the Division of Housing and Community Renewal, or DHCR) spoke of something better in the way of representative government. And the new RIOC President, Steve Shane, frosted that cake by inviting Residents Association (RIRA) President Matthew Katz to "look at the constituency of the Board and how you would arrange for staggered terms and elections where RIRA could forward candidates." Shane observed that changing the law is difficult, but cooperation on finding new members for the RIOC Board is certainly possible.

It's not direct election, which we would prefer. But it's a big step in the right direction, especially if all seven of the RIOC Board's "non-statutory" members (that is, those not on the Board by virtue of the law's requirements) are eventually Island residents chosen for their love of this place and their willingness to dig in and serve the greater good for the greater community.

A watershed? We may certainly hope so.

The To-Do List

Steve Shane says he keeps one, so here's an item we hope he'll add: The Steam Plant.

Energy costs are only going up, and the Steam Plant, with its potential for co-generation, could be a port to the sea for Roosevelt Island. Past RIOC Presidents have feigned interest, then have quietly dropped the idea.

There are powerful possibilities there that could mean much to the future of affordable living here.

DL



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To the Editor:

Your last issue of *The WIRE*, brimful of news, facts, and theories about the woeful status of Roosevelt Island, proves without a shadow of doubt that the *domino theory*, to which our nearsighted management has subscribed since at last the late '90s, has taken over lock, stock, and barrel, ad infinitum, in the endless Cold War between the still behind-the-scenes powers-that-be and our poor, suffering, Lilliputian public.

Most recently, and seemingly without warning, overnight capitulation of the totally defenseless Fresh Fish Store was the last (to date!) in the domino series of falling Little Retailers on Main Street. The poor owners probably didn't even know at first what was hitting them, for the Brobdingnags forgot to bring along interpreters. Now we're all forced to fish elsewhere.

Before that domino fell, it was the friendly Pizza Parlor, with its quaint old wicker chairs, and once convenient, adjacent space where one could get a great pasta carbonara, not to mention sizzling hot-dogs and pizza when on the run, that was struck down. And some time before that cruel day of the domino, there befell the demise of the Little Bakery, which once offered an amazing array of fresh-baked breads, cakes, flans, and auxiliary coffees and sweets when Trellis was too busy to pour, or didn't care. Maybe they needed a Don Quixote referee? (Note the possible ethnic overtones in each of these topplings.)

Years ago, when I first landed on this historic Island, there was even a tiny Shoe Repair store to smell up the street. (Was it the first domino to fall?) So we were deprived of that convenient nook and now have to voyage to Queens or the Lower East Side for that lowly service. More recently, there was the scare over the card shop (still another ethnicity?). By some miracle, it has so far escaped the deluge, but will it be next? Or will that honor go to the quaint hardware/video potpourri emporium across the street, where one – with a little guidance and patience, to be sure – can find almost anything. Questioned about a possible pending debacle there, too, the poor Korean mistress of that pyramidal space could not hide her anxiety.

So one wonders. Why were these small, feisty enterprises denied occasional supportive loans or little subsidies when they were so needed, but that Gulliver-sized monster, Gristede's, was granted two years' tax abatement? For, as our Cassandra-voiced Ellen Polivy has pointed out in your worthy gazette, "the residents of this Island are captives to the Decision Makers."

One could go on and explore the domino theory in reverse as it applies to the incremental rise of one new construction site after another, gobbling up ball fields, tennis courts, children's playgrounds, heavenly greenery, and surreptitious squirrel refuges: selfish enterprises granted scandalous bargain deals to erect huge, demonic dominos – octagons, hexagons, and flagrant trapezoids which, once filled, will so overpopulate this poor little Island that we'll have to swim to Manhattan.

But I leave that all to the prescient spirit of Jonathan Swift. Consult his *Tale of a Tub*.

Maurice Edwards
a/k/a Dr. Samuel Johnson
& Mr. Houyhnhnm

Letters

To the Editor:

Walking down the broken Roosevelt Island subway station escalator this weekend, I observed an elderly woman just starting up the second of the six flights of stairs between the mezzanine level and the street, hunched over, slowly pulling herself up one step at a time with both hands on the handrail. I called to her to go back down and take the elevator because *all* of the escalators were out of service. Grateful for the heads-up, she started back down slowly, one step at a time.

For decades I have taken the escalator up to the office where I bank – amazingly, not once has it been out of service. Other than upgrades, do you remember the escalators ever being broken in Macy's? Bloomingdale's? One of the joys of visiting the Marriott Marquis Hotel is taking either the glass elevators or the escalators up to the main reception area on the seventh floor. Of all the times that I have done this, I have never had to walk. Even the escalators at LaGuardia and JFK Airports always work.

As I continued walking down the steps, I was thinking what an aberration all those other escalators were – because the fact that the escalators on Roosevelt Island were *not* working is the *norm*, not an exception, to the point that now I am only surprised when they are working.

Joseph H. Cruickshank

To Community Board 8:

I personally would like to thank the Community Board 8 Transportation Committee for recognizing that we on Roosevelt Island are citizens of New York City and have the simple need, in case of emergency when all our facilities are shut down, to be able to leave the Island other than by swimming across the river.

I have lived on the Island for 30 years and for well over 45 years had businesses on the north side 59th Street, also on First Avenue and 62nd, and again on 63rd and Second Ave. I am thoroughly familiar with this wonderful island and the concerns of Community Board 8.

I am sure you know that, for many years, there was a car elevator and staircase to the island – the only access other than a small ferry at the north end. This elevator did not interfere with the flow of the traffic lanes, and definitely would not interfere with it now, as it would exit onto the side roadway, which is rarely used for car traffic, and could easily convert to a pedestrian walkway and a bicycle path.

I know from experience that Board 8 gets things accomplished, so a great big "Bravo."

I'm looking forward to your assistance to us on Roosevelt Island.

Naomi Gale Silverman

To the Editor:

As President of the Roosevelt Island Disabled Community, and a resident of Eastwood apartments, I have been made aware that the new owners of Eastwood are not keeping apartments that, for the last 30 years, have been set aside for disabled people. It seems that, as a disabled person either dies or leaves an apartment, the apartment is no longer rented specifically to a disabled person. The apartment undergoes a change to a regular apartment and is rented as a fair market apartment.

I was one of the disabled people who gave insight to the former owners as to what changes had to be made for a apartment to be made accessible. I was one of the disabled persons given a specifically adapted apartment and finally left the dreary hospital ward for my very own apartment. This has given me independence and joy and made me feel accepted by the Roosevelt Island community.

The new owners need to leave the apartments designed for the handicapped, and continue to make them available to disabled tenants.

Virginia Granata

To the Editor:

I oppose the building of the proposed stairway to Roosevelt Island from the Queensboro Bridge. While it may sound like a good idea, in reality it would be impractical, inefficient, and absurdly costly. My main reasons for opposition are:

- It provides little emergency egress. At best, it might handle 100-150 people an hour for a community of 12,000-20,000 – assuming no one has a heart attack while climbing 15 flights of stairs.
- Judging by the timing and capacity of the subway elevator, the inclusion of an elevator would move only 24-36 wheelchairs an hour, out of a population of hundreds. That means 20-30 hours of evacuation, assuming no breakdowns.
- Such an evacuation would likely result in a mob scene that blocks street traffic.

- It is unlikely to reduce subway crowding because few people are fit enough or inclined to use stairs. If they were, they'd be using the stairs in their high-rise homes instead of the elevator. Even athletes wouldn't save time on their commute.

I welcome amenities for Roosevelt Island. But this is an expensive one that could possibly divert State and City funds from more worthwhile projects.

Instead, I make the following practical recommendations:

- *Prior to a hurricane*, contract with the Circle Line for emergency evacuation. It could move 100-300 people per hour. It's would be similar to the Office of Emergency Management's contract with Bay Crane for emergency crane service. Jessica Lappin is interested in improving the docks for a water taxi; that funding could address the docking of larger boats.
- Hire a competent transit planner. See **Letters**, page 12

Letters deadline for May 5 issue: Tue., May 1
After deadline, letters considered on a space-available basis.

This is my first column as RIOC President, and I want to repeat how delighted I am to be writing it. Having been welcomed to my office by the delightful public meeting chaired by the new Commissioner of Housing, Deborah VanAmerongen, the Board of Directors, and the town hall that followed, then ushered in by a storm of historical proportions, let me

now report on my first week from my to-do list:

1. The northeaster that inundated the metropolitan area over the weekend did relatively little damage on the Island, with some minor flooding problems handled by

the combined pumping efforts of management and RIOC staff. We were forewarned, and escaped pretty much unscathed.

2. The wheelchair lift on the Manhattan side of the Tram is operational, and were the contractor not underwater in Elmsford, it would be open this week. We are expecting it to be available next week. Note that the lift is a standby for the elevator, and it requires summoning the attendant, so is only to be used in the event of handicap access unavailability using the elevator.

3. The RFP for the seawall repair following the runaway barge incident has been published, responses due in May, contracts to be let and work commencement scheduled for June, and completion in September.

4. There will be a Health & Fitness Day on April 28, separate publicity elsewhere. Planning is underway for the July 4 fireworks and summer concert series.

5. RIOC is changing its web page to carry a current status of the Tram (normal, or if service interruption, why and expected duration).

6. The transfer of partnership interests in Eastwood closed on April 17, 2007. Be advised that the great majority of the interests are in strong institutional hands, including the New York City Retirement System, the New York State Retirement System, the State of Michigan Retirement System, Federal National Mortgage Association, etc.

7. In accordance with Governor Spitzer's Executive Order No. 3, by not later than July 1, 2007, all

Board of Directors meetings will be available on line by contemporaneous netcast, with a link through the RIOC website.

8. In order to facilitate committee meetings of the Board of Directors, because members are quite often traveling or otherwise unavailable on the Island, RIOC will have video-conferencing capability in the conference room to comply with the requirements of the Open Meetings Law.

9. RIOC has ordered a sign for the office at 591 Main Street.

10. For information, on investigation, the emblem on the cabins of the Tram was changed to be consistent with MTA and other public transportation agencies so that, in emergencies, calls would go to the right place. Last April, the fire and police departments tried first to be in touch with the MTA, and only after non-responsiveness, turned to RIOC. "The Tram" will be included at the next painting.

11. Last but not least (!) for this report, the

streetlights under RIOC's control (must exclude the passageway lights, Manhattan Park, the hospitals and Octagon lighting) there are 35 poles at various locations which are out. Approximately half are by the Tram, Sportspark and the subway, waiting for Con Edison to show up and hook them up. Another 10 poles behind Manhattan Park are wired through Manhattan Park's panel and as they

are contractually RIOC's responsibility, need to have a new circuit connection into RIOC's system. **RIOC is aware of and working on these issues!**

As I have more to report, I will include the information in subsequent columns. My office and the RIOC staff are open and available to the residents of the Island. Please bring your issues and suggestions to our attention.



Steve Shane, President
Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation
e-mail: SShane@RIOC.com

I'm writing this on the Tuesday evening prior to this issue's appearance, and I feel as if the world is suspended between the old and the new. Certainly the weather bears out my ennui. We've just emerged from an unseasonable nor'easter (April showers, indeed!) and, by the time you read this, balmy temperatures and sunny skies are forecast. Could a Roosevelt Island spring, replete with hot-and-cold running cherry blossoms, be in the offing?

Many of the governmental organizations that impact our lives have met since I last addressed you here. In my most recent column, I mentioned that the Community Board 8 Transportation Committee would address

the RIRA resolution to investigate the feasibility of access from the Island's surface to the Queensboro Bridge pedestrian walkway and they have done so. As a matter of fact, they understood that this was part of a larger question: How will residents and workers move on and off the Island as our growing population overwhelms our modes of mass transit, primarily the subway and the Tram? The Committee voted unanimously to endorse our resolution and to bring it to the full Board. I expect that that meeting, held here on Roosevelt Island this past Wednesday, will be reported on elsewhere in these pages.

The Transportation Committee understood that whatever emergency and evacuation plans have been formulated by the City OEM (Office of Emergency Management) and RIOC have never been disseminated within this community. They resolved to address this question in tandem with the CB8 Public Safety Committee.

This segues into another meeting I attended that same day. The RIOC Emergency Planning Committee has met sporadically ever since the 2003 Blackout, specifically to bring leaders and organizations together to plan for the unforeseen and the unpleasant. This has been useful in that contacts have been made and emergency materiel, primarily from housing managements and RISAR (Roosevelt Island Search and Rescue), have been inventoried. However, we've never produced a cohesive plan that can be shared with the residents. While it is impossible to fashion a plan that will anticipate every eventual-ity, I believe that a method must be found to get es-

sential information to us. I can just imagine another blackout, with 12,000 Islanders telephoning Public Safety all at the same time! I suggested that the local radio station that once operated here be used to play a continuous tape loop containing important instructions.

We would widely circulate the frequency of the emergency broadcast channel to the community, and this would free public Safety officers to do more than just answer their phones. Now we'll need to find out how practical this idea is, and how much it would cost to carry it out.

CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) Captain Howard Polivy also is included in this RIOC Committee. Two dozen of your neighbors completed

eleven weeks of training to become certified team members and to perform as secondary responders in time of emergency. I understand that René Bryan, Deputy Public Safety Chief, will meet with the CERT team at their next meeting to determine how the two groups might meet, train, and respond together. This is truly an idea whose time has come!



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

The RIRA Common Council met the following evening, and we learned that the Island Arts Music School, founded by the late Robin Russell, is planning several benefit concerts on and off the Island. The Council voted to support this effort, and there will be more on this endeavor anon. Our next meeting will be held on the evening of May 9, and you're all invited.

The RIOC Board of Directors met the next afternoon (did you know that so many important meetings could be packed into one week?), and addressed the questions I mentioned in my last column with the anticipated results. I was glad to see a good turn-out of residents, who offered some pointed questions during the Town Meeting portion of the exercise. The

See **Katz**, page 12

COMING UP

— This Weekend —

Weight Watchers, Saturdays, 10:00 a.m. (weigh-in at 9:30), Good Shepherd Community Center.

Vernissage 6, members' show, continues at Gallery RIVAA through May 20. Gallery hours are Sat.-Sun. 11-5; Wed. and Fri. 6-9. ▸

Children's Learn-to-Swim Program, Saturday, noon; Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5:00 p.m. Information: **212-753-3611**.

Café Society, presented by the Main Street Theatre and Dance Alliance, **tonight (Sat., Apr. 21)**, 8:00-midnight. Adults only. \$12; \$20 per couple. RSVP to **212-371-4449**.

451st Birthday Celebration for William Shakespeare, Sun., Apr. 22, 2:00-3:30 p.m., in Good Shepherd Plaza (in case of rain, at Main Street Theatre). Free. Elizabethan games; royal cake cutting at 3:00 sharp. ▸

— The Coming Week —

Advanced Children's Swimming Classes, Mon.-Wed.-Fri., 5:30; Sat., 9:30, Sportspark pool. Information: **212-753-3611**.

Toastmasters public speaking group, **Mon., Apr. 23**, 8:00 p.m. Call **212-751-9577** for location and other information.

State of the Borough Address by Borough President Scott Stringer, **Tue., Apr. 24**, 6:00 p.m., TimeWarner channel 34 or RCN channel 83.

Roosevelt Island Democratic Club meeting, **Tue., Apr. 24**, 7:30, Good Shepherd Community Center. Guest: Assembly candidate Micah Kellner.

Adult Swimming Classes, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 7:00 p.m., Westview Pool. Information: **212-753-3611**.

Free GED Course starts at the PS/IS 217 Beacon, **Thur., Apr. 26**, for General Equivalency Diploma. For information, call **212-517-2505**.

Arbor Day, Fri., Apr. 27.

Roosevelt Island Health and Fitness Day, Sat., Apr. 28, 11:00-4:00. More information at www.RIOC.com; to volunteer or to provide sports instruction, e-mail AskErica@rioc.com.

— Future Events —

Major League Baseball Pitch, Hit, and Run Competition, Sun., Apr. 29, noon, Capobianco Field. Open to all boys and girls 6-14; proof of age required. More information: PHRonRI@yahoo.com.

Island Pioneers Reminisce – The Island at the Beginning, Sun., Apr. 29, 5:00 p.m., Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main Street.

Getting to the Island – From Rowboat to RIOC, Mon., Apr. 30, 7:00 p.m., Gallery RIVAA, illustrated presentation by Judith Berdy of the Roosevelt Island Historical Society.

The Main Street WIRE – Next issue, **Sat., May 5**. (To receive e-mail bulletins between issues, send an *AddMe* message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Advertising Deadlines:** Ads in the paper, **Thur., Apr. 26**; decision on circulars/inserts for *The Bag*, **Mon., Apr. 30**; they are due **Thur., May 3**.

Additional issues in 2007: May 19; June 2, 16, 30; July 28; Aug. 25; Sept. 8, 22; Oct. 6, 20; Nov. 3, 17; Dec. 1, 15; then resuming fortnightly schedule in January, 2008. **News phone**, 212-826-9055; urgent matters, 917-617-0449. **Phone** for display and classified advertising placement and information, **212-751-8214**.

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. (Future meetings June 6, Sept. 5, Oct. 3, Nov. 7, Dec. 5.)

Toastmasters public speaking group, **Mon., May 14**, 8:00 p.m. Call **212-751-9577** for location and other information.

RIOC Board of Directors meeting, **Thur., May 17**, 9:30 a.m., Good Shepherd Community Center. (Future meetings 4:30 June 28, 9:30 Sept. 5, 4:30 Oct. 25, 9:30 Nov. 29.)

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.

More **COMING UP** Future Events on page 12



The RIOC Column

The RIRA Column

NEWLY CONSTRUCTED
APARTMENTS
FOR RENT

Riverwalk Landing #4 is pleased to announce that applications are now being accepted for 25 affordable housing rental apartments now under construction at **Riverwalk Landing #4** on **Roosevelt Island**. This building is being constructed through the Inclusionary Affordable Housing Program of the City of New York's Department of Housing Preservation and Development. The size, rent and targeted income distribution for the 25 apartments are as follows:

# Apts. Available	Apartment Size	Household Size	Monthly * Rent	Total Annual ** Income Range	
				Minimum	Maximum
3	Studio	1	\$887	\$37,223 – \$39,680	
14	1 Bedroom	2	\$949	\$37,960 – \$45,360	
8	2 Bedroom	3	\$1,142	\$47,858 – \$51,040	
		4		\$47,858 – \$56,720	

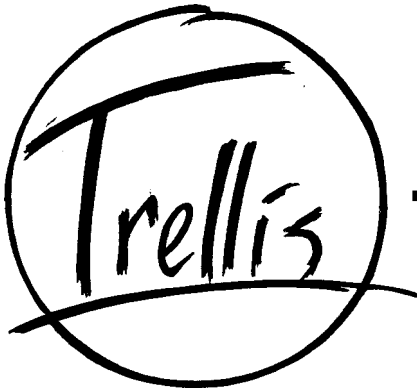
* Includes gas for heat and cooking
** Income guidelines subject to change

Qualified applicants will be required to meet income guidelines and additional selection criteria. Applications may be requested by **regular mail only from the following address: Riverwalk Application Requests, 328 Eighth Avenue, Box 235, New York, NY 10001. Completed applications must be returned by regular letter sized mail only (no priority, certified, registered, express, or overnight mail will be accepted) to a post office box number, or its equivalent, that will be listed with the application, and must be postmarked by May 20, 2007.** Applications postmarked after May 20, 2007 will be set aside for possible future consideration. Applications will be selected by lottery; applicants who submit more than one application will be disqualified. Duplicated applications will not be accepted. Preference will be given to New York City residents. Current and eligible residents of Manhattan Community Board #8 will receive preference for 50% of the units. Eligible households that include persons with mobility impairments will receive preference for 5% of the units; eligible households that include persons with visual and/or hearing impairments will receive preference for 2% of the units; and eligible City of New York Municipal Employees will receive a 5% preference.

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The City of New York
Department of Housing Preservation and Development
SHAUN DONOVAN, Commissioner
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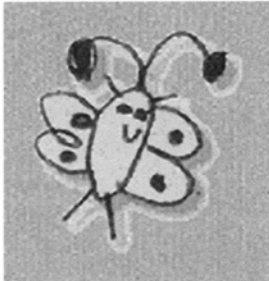


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Displaying a Depth of Knowledge of Roosevelt Island Matters...

At last week’s RIOC Board meeting, both before and after the vote accepting him as RIOC’s new President, Steve Shane answered questions put by residents. The full transcript of both portions of the session is available on *Website NYC10044* (nyc10044.com). This is a greatly condensed version.

DHCR Commissioner Deborah VanAmerongen (chairing): The proposed resolution, which is agenda item number one, is to introduce Steve Shane to the Board. I want to make clear that this is a resolution that we’re proposing be adopted by the Board. The appointment is clearly the Board’s jurisdiction. I think that we are really, truly blessed to have a public servant of Steve’s caliber presented to the Board as a candidate for the Presidency... In 1988-1995, Steve was the Commissioner’s designee to the RIOC Board. When the Governor’s office saw that on his résumé, they said, where else could we possibly find someone so uniquely qualified to be the new President of the Corporation?

Resident Board Member Michael Shinozaki: I think it would be nice if he could take a couple of questions about himself from the community and Board.

Outgoing RIOC President Herbert E. Berman: I would like the members of the Board to know that over the last several weeks, I have had an opportunity to spend much time with Steve. I believe he is a brilliant attorney uniquely qualified. Everybody is very fortunate to have him as a nominee. I would urge his approval.

Shane: I’m 69 years old. I live in White Plains. I’ve been practicing law in this State since 1962. I graduated Columbia Law School. I had the pleasure of serving as the Commissioner’s designee to the RIOC [as] Special Assistant to the Commissioner. I was also tasked to put together the redevelopment plan for Southtown, which I did. Unfortunately, during my tenure, [it] could not go forward because of economic circumstances.

I spent a lot of time on this Island. I care for it a lot. I know a lot about it. I’m more than pleased to tell you that on my inspections now, after my meetings with the staff, I am pleasantly surprised to find the professionalism of the staff and to find an Operating Corporation that has a very bright future ahead of it. This is most simply demonstrated by the fact that twelve years ago, RIOC was dependent upon the State budget for about \$7 million in annual appropriations. Today, RIOC is running a surplus. I am looking at the prospect of Southpoint Park. It’s going to be a wonderful thing... I’m looking forward to this with great enthusiasm. Thank you very much for this opportunity.

Shinozaki: How do you see our requirements for low- and middle-income housing?

Shane: The charter of Roosevelt Island is the Master Lease with the City and the General Development Plan (GDP), and it has an affordability component. RIOC is charged with the legal responsibility of carrying out its obligations under those documents as they are incorporated into the various leases for development of various enterprises. The issue of affordability falls within the ambit of the Division of Housing... My job would be to deal on behalf of RIOC with the agreements that it has. I’m not here to enforce the affordable component. I’m here to see that the plan gets carried out in accordance with the contractual agreements that exist. I think that the GDP requires that there be an affordable component to the housing going forward. That’s my official position. My personal predilection on the subject of affordable housing is that I have always been involved in delivering affordable housing, and I personally believe that affordable housing is an essential component of our society. I certainly personally will do everything that I can to see that it is enhanced within the constraints of the contractual obligations of the corporation.

Mary Camper-Titsingh: I’m just kind of concerned that he lives in White Plains...

Shane: I live 35-40 minutes away. I am looking forward to spending a lot of time on this Island. I have never been a 9-to-5 person; and I think that I am very familiar with most of the issues as they exist on the Island, and to the extent that there are any issues that I am not familiar with, that have not been brought to my attention, I want to hear about them. My modus operandi is that I have a yellow pad and I list all the things that are in front of me and I cross them off as they get done. I’m here for you. RIOC is here for you. Our offices are open. We are not going to be a foreign occupier on Roosevelt Island. We are here to serve the community. That is our job. We are employees of a public agency of the State whose function is to serve the people of Roosevelt Island, and that’s what I’m here for.

Ellen Polivy: I would like you to summarize what you think the top five priorities of the residents are.

Shane: Having read the last several years of *The WIRE*, my view of the top five priorities are:

- (1) Probably to get the streetlights working.
- (2) To do the best we can with the truly iconic transportation system, the Tram, with the bus system, so that people are not entirely dependent upon the subway, which is a physically difficult thing to access if you have any handicap at all, and is quite often inaccessible. So, Tram maintenance, subway coordination with the MTA, and bus coordination with all of that. Transportation is an important issue.
- (3) The stores on Main Street. Obviously, to the people who live on the Island, those stores are critical. You need the local services that every small community wants to have, and we should do our best to make sure that they are there and available to service people on the Island.
- (4) The appearance of the Island. It has an aging infrastructure. We have the resources to address those problems, and address them we shall. And to try to make sure that this continues to be the bright and shining Island in the middle of the East River that it was envisioned to be, and in many ways, is uniquely so in the entire United States. There is no other mixed-income community like this. It is successful. You should all be very proud of what you have. I can appreciate your unhappiness about your wish list of how things might be better. On balance, you need to appreciate the wonderful stuff that you do have. And we will always try to make it better.

We [also] need to address the issues of affordability and ownership of the people who are presently here on the Island in a way that makes sense for everybody, not only the people who are presently in those buildings, but [also] for the public purpose of the Island – to maintain an affordable mix [for] various income levels.

Linda Heimer: Do you understand that people in the Mitchell-Lama housing right now need to privatize in order to stay here? The only way they can stay under Mitchell-Lama is to raise rents. How do you feel about it?

Shane: If there is anything I know, it’s Article 2 of the Private Housing Finance Law. I do understand the impact upon the people who live in those buildings – the continuous rent increases, for example. So I understand the need, the urge, to privatize, and that we need to do so in the context of maintaining the affordability for the population on the Island. There has to be some combination of those elements. I will do whatever I can to try and encourage the stability of those populations on the Island.

The following Q&A took place in a Town Hall session after adjournment of the RIOC Board meeting.

VanAmerongen: On a semi-regular basis, I’d like to have the opportunity to really meet with people and talk. If other members of the Board wanted to, they’d be more than welcome to attend.

Betty Walker: My name is Betty A. Walker. I am Chair of the RIRA Island Services Committee. We had a good meeting with Mr. Shane. He said communication is high on his list.

As a psychologist, I draw upon my training and experience to understand how communication can thwart or enhance the effectiveness of organizations. We have a tremendous amount of strength and vision in both RIRA and RIOC, but the past – and it’s past, we want it to be past – difficulties between us have hindered our ability to imagine and to act. We must work to diminish the negativity and dismay that has strained our relationship, and find the positive and optimistic energy and resources uniting us in achieving goals that will offer us pride and satisfaction at what we can accomplish together. RIOC’s responsibility and responsiveness to the community is of utmost importance to us, and from the meeting today, I think [it is] to you, also. We have to believe that the public’s need and right to know must be an integral part of communication. Our principle is that we will cooperate with you in this effort, and we will be firm and fair in our dealing. Today represents a positive beginning in open and respectful communication. We look forward to the matching of your words with your actions. And I think it’s fair for you to expect that from us.

The Island Services Committee has met and we have come up with five areas.

The first is the communication between RIRA and RIOC. I think we’re together on that. The RIOC Board members would be addressed by Matthew Katz, President of RIRA, our *elected* President of RIRA.

Mr. Shane did mention the lighting problems; the Red Bus; the retail shops; Island safety issues.

Residents Association President Matthew Katz: In preparing for tonight’s meeting, I noticed that John Mannix is still listed as a member of this Board. He resigned and has not attended a meeting here in seven months. I’m won-



Residents Association President Matthew Katz questioned Shane about replacement of RIOC Board member John Mannix, who has left the Board.

dering what [the plan is] for replacement and whether the community will be involved in that process.

VanAmerongen: I hope you appreciate the fact that it’s a brand new [State] administration, and there are an unbelievable number of agencies that have vacancies. We haven’t gotten through all of it. Steve and I have certainly talked about how to ensure that the community is involved in proposing names for Board membership. We need and want to have community people as members of the Board. We’re open to talking with you about how we get names to suggest and what process that might be. I’m sure you have some ideas you can share with us about that.

Shane: Matt, on this subject, you and I talked. There are seven non-statutory positions on the Board. Those can and should be filled, in my view, from Island people. We cannot change the [RIOC] statute, but we can certainly arrange with RIRA that you [are able to propose candidates]. So, look at the constituency of the Board and how you would arrange for staggered terms and elections where RIRA could forward candidates. We could then push them to the Governor’s office for confirmation by the Senate. Democracy would be served, you would have a much more representative government. You wouldn’t need to be concerned about a Board not listening to residents.

So puzzle it out among your constituency to see if we can come up with a workable plan. I think all of our hearts are in the same place in terms of representative government.

Nurit Marcus: Regarding the budget, I do not remember the allocation for Southpoint Park. Is it in this budget?

Shane: \$12 million has been aggregated for the first stage of Southpoint. They are hiring and they’re doing planning and engineering development. I met with the FDR Memorial people and urged them to immediately interface with the Trust [for Public Land] because, if they want to do their thing on a coordinated basis, they must do it now.

Marcus: It is quite controversial. More than 50% really just want to see an open, beautiful park.

Shane: I understand it is controversial. I just remind you that, in the original dedication of the Island, the FDR Memorial was part of the planning. To the extent that they want to go forward and they raise the funds for it, we’re going to have to... The people on the Island are going to have to demonstrate very convincingly that it would be a



Nurit Marcus had questions for Shane on Southpoint Park, the empty storefronts on Main Street, and direct walking access to the Queensboro Bridge.

bad thing. A memorial to Franklin Delano Roosevelt would be a tasteful part of Southpoint Park. It should be a sensational thing for Roosevelt Island and for the City and State.

Marcus: Our commercial strip on the Island – three stores closed on us, active stores that we needed. The bakery, the pizza, then the fish store closed down. Those really needed to survive. We really are a small place that is missing lots of services. So, I want to ask, what do you see happening? When?

Shane: As soon as possible. I would hope that appropriate service establishments will be back in business on Main

...RIOC’s New Boss Took Questions from Residents Last Week

Street. You need them. They are appropriate for the community. And vacant stores are not a good thing for anybody. Not to mention, of course, that the revenue stream that would be produced from that is a plus, obviously. I would hope to attract people who will come here and give you back those kinds of establishments – whether it’s a tablecloth restaurant, maybe, whether it’s a bakery, whether it’s a fish store – whatever it is. I understand: It’d be nice to get a pizza, to have an ice cream store here again. Those are the kind of things that make for a nice Main Street, where you can go for a stroll and do your business. I would hope that the economics of it will support that kind of retail life on Main Street. You have an evolving community, you have people up in Octagon who may not ever stop to shop on Main Street. We have people from Southtown who may or may not come north to shop, and obviously the developers of Southtown have some of their own retail establishments that they’re putting in there. It’s going to be an evolving thing. We are mindful of the problem, and we’ll pay attention to it and try and do our best, with the advice and help of the community, and with the people who are involved on the Board, to address it.

Marcus: I would hope that you would take into consideration that this is a very unique place and that these establishments are supposed to be fitting our atmosphere, our ‘quaintness,’ as I would say, and we’re not going to consider big, major stores and chains, because it is a unique place.

[Question posed with regard to halting development in Southtown.]

Shane: Well, remember that Southtown was developed and was done in terms of its economic relationship with RIOC at a time when new development was critical to the mass of population needed on the Island for the stores, and Tram, and other activities on the Island. So we got a lot of benefits – not necessarily immediate monetary benefits, but a lot of benefits of having the Southtown development go forward. The rest of that deal has already been negotiated, as well.

Marcus: There is so much into it, but I would like to tell you that this is also very controversial. But if you could make a miracle happen and save the rest of the green spaces in Southtown...

Shane: Southtown buildings 5 through 9 are deals that are going forward. We don’t have any right to keep Related and Hudson from going forward and building those. It was part of the overall deal. And it’s a done deal.

Cynthia Ahn: Good evening. Welcome to Roosevelt Island... I run the Roosevelt Nails Salon on Main Street. I have lived here for 20 years. I am very appreciative for your concern about Main Street merchants. North end residents are leaving [early] in the morning and coming back very late. Southtown residents also leave early in the morning, and [return] late in the evening. They do not have much time to consume at the Main Street merchants. Therefore, we have been struggling. There is less traffic and not enough business for the last 20 years. We’ve been working hard to build up and to maintain our small businesses. So, for the last few years, many of us didn’t have a lease extended or renewed, which really makes us nervous about our life and our business and our community. We have found it difficult to renovate because of no lease. Please give us leases and respect that we have been working hard for a difficult period [to] build up business.

For the last two years, an outside developer was trying to handle the Main Street merchants. It seems like they do not really understand community need[s] or they do not really care. I don’t know what the reason [is]. Hopefully, this time RIOC will care. RIOC management knows about the Island and cares about the community. Handle this, please, directly. Thank you for your time and I’m looking forward to your support.

Shane: Thank you.

Sharon Bermon: I’m sure that you already know, Roosevelt Island doesn’t have a lot to do now because our stores and restaurants are mostly closed. So, we have a popular local game. It’s called “Throw Rocks at RIOC Staff.” [PAUSE] You were supposed to laugh when I said that.

Shane: Oh, okay. We have a very agile staff. They dodge.

Bermon: I would like to say something about the possible stairway [to the Queensboro Bridge]. Some of us think that having stairs would be a really good idea, and not just for emergencies. Last summer, when the subway was frequently not really working on weekends, and the Tram wasn’t running, for those of us who wanted to do recreational things, it was almost impossible. If we had a stairway, some people would go up the stairs, and if there was an elevator, it would be even better. An elevator would be an alternative way for people with mobility problems to get off the Island, [and] not just in an emergency...

Shane: Unfortunately, DOT, which controls the bridge, is not about to give up any space on the bridge from traffic, which is overwhelming already, for an elevator. If you run an elevator structure up to the bridge, you need a landing area and all that kind of stuff.

Bermon: I don’t want to get into the details right now. I just want to remind you that for years – for years – we kept saying that we wanted to get the Tram on the MetroCard, and it didn’t happen. And then, somehow, Matt Katz and some other people made it happen. And now, we’re on the



As DHCR Commissioner Deborah VanAmerongen chaired last week’s RIOC Board meeting, Herb Berman and Steve Shane conferred. Shane repaid Berman’s tribute by thanking Berman for all his help in getting up to speed. Resident Board member David Kraut observed that in the many years he’s served on the Board, this is the only time an outgoing President appeared at a meeting as his replacement took over.

MetroCard, and it’s fantastic. So, I’m just saying – look, there are always negative things we can think about, but this is a new administration. Let’s try to be positive and think about all these wonderful things

Shane: We are. We have talked to the DOT, and they’re not terribly receptive to the idea. But we continue to dialog and see what other alternatives [there may be]. A ramp up 200 ft. with switchbacks is a daunting engineering prospect. And any structure that’s built, which has to comply with ADA issues, is also a problem. So...

Bermon: I would like to bring up one more thing. We have almost no place to eat now on the Island. We can take food out from the Chinese restaurant. In previous Chinese restaurants there, there is a door on the left which leads into a room [that] used to be a dining room. Now, if there is any way that you can use your influence to persuade them to put the front half back into a dining space where people could actually sit – it wouldn’t have to be a fine dining experience, but it would be something more appealing than the [two] tables that are there now.

Shane: There’s nothing that permits [RIOC] to give out such direction. I suggest that you go in there and try and persuade them that this could be a great money-making venture. To whatever extent they would need RIOC’s co-operation from an engineering or changing storefronts or whatever, I mean, we’ll be glad to cooperate if, in fact, they wanted to do that kind of thing.

Shinozaki: As to the bridge, you can’t just put in a stairway. It has to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. And how do you protect it when somebody comes back at night, and they’re riding the elevator, and they get raped?

Stewart: The 59th Street Bridge is a landmark, so you have to get the Landmarks Commission’s permission to do it. You also need Bridge and Tunnel, Department of Transportation, Homeland Security, the United States Coast Guard, and so on, and so it’s a lengthy and laborious proposition.

Bermon: Well, all of those are complications; but I can only say something idiotic like, *If we can send people to the moon, we should be able to find a way to get them to the top of the bridge.*

Judith Berdy: May I add – the N and the R train [are there]. There is no way that the MTA is going to let you build anything going north of the bridge, because it is a subway tunnel. You cannot build anything over a subway tunnel that will require a foundation.

Bermon: Last year, when candidate Spitzer was here in August, I asked him if he would he authorize having the Tram repainted back to what it used to be. Now everybody who was here that night will tell you that the question brought up a lot of issues and a lot of anger at RIOC. I think you ought to repaint the sides or the ends of the Tram cars. They used to say “The Tram,” right? Now they say “RIOC.” And you know what, the Tram does not belong to RIOC, it’s “The Tram.” A lot of people feel that way. If you want me to stand on Main Street and have people sign petitions, I bet you that I could get you 5,000 names in a couple of days. There is a huge, huge, huge feeling that this is something that needs to be done. It would be a really good signal.

Ellen Polivy: I noticed in the budget presentation that 5% of the budget is actually from retail space. That’s not

very much. Perhaps we could just do what we did for Southtown, which is give them some incentives, so that we can get stores in there fast for the community?

Handicapped people are not represented here tonight because they couldn’t show up because it was raining. They can’t make it in the elevators, they can’t go off-Island because the elevators don’t level at the train [and] the Tram doesn’t have the right size elevator for the scooters. They’re really stuck here. If we don’t have stores for them to shop in, they can’t go shopping. They were stuck. Maybe they had a hard time making it down to the grocery.

I think that when we close a store we have to be really careful about the impact on the community, and I personally would like to see free rent for all the stores for at least a year so they can upgrade their stores and make it a real nice place to shop.

Do you have any answers?

Shane: No, there are no answers. As a public authority, we can’t give away the space. We have legal constraints. On the other hand, we can certainly deal with space that serves community needs at a subsidized rent. We can try and encourage retail tenants of diversity in order to try to

meet the needs of people, which certainly include the handicapped. These are problems that we will address. We are mindful of them. And we will address them. I don’t know that there are any easy solutions, but we will try and certainly address them. And we will involve the community in addressing them, because we welcome your idea...To the extent that we have to get less than “market rents” from a particular kind of store if it’s a needed service establishment, then that’s the kind of thing that we’re prepared to do.

Shinozaki: Quite a number of people on the Island know that there have been a variety of vendors who have approached RIOC representatives to try and rent a place here, and they’ve gotten no



Resident Board member Michael Shinozaki started the initial dialog between Shane and residents at last week’s meeting.

response at all.

Shane: No. That’s not appropriate.

Shinozaki: Those bids never even came before the Board. They were rejected out of hand. So I think that what we need to be doing is to make sure that our agents do not overreach their authority by “voting” on behalf of the Board with a “no” answer before those bids reach the Board for a vote. That is, prior to your coming, part of a big discussion that I had with Mas and [I explained to him] that by you not responding, you are saying “No” on behalf of the Board and that is our right to say yes or no... I want to see it.

Ellen Polivy: We had tried to get the constituents of our RIOC Board members, the Community Board members... We tried to get them together to talk to them. And they weren’t allowed, we learned, to meet as a group so we could express our needs to our community members that would be representing us, because there’s some rule about that. So I’d like to find out whether they can meet with us as a group so we can get them together and express our needs in small groups over coffee. We can all sit together in Trellis and have a casual meal and express our needs so that they can actually represent us.

Sherie Helstien: In RIRA, we have – of the groups of people, one of the committees or a sub-committee was trying to put together RIRA members – four or five RIRA members who will meet on a regular basis with our RIOC, our See **Transcript**, page 10

At a Glance: RIOC Budgeting for Fiscal 2007-2008

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation presented a budget for Fiscal 2007-08 at its Board of Directors meeting last week.

The revenue figures presented do not include an expected \$5.4 million transaction fee from approval of the sale of Eastwood, which was voted at the meeting. Some other potential income figures are omitted, as well, including ground-lease increases that may be realized if Island House, Westview, and/or Rivercross are given ground-lease extensions.

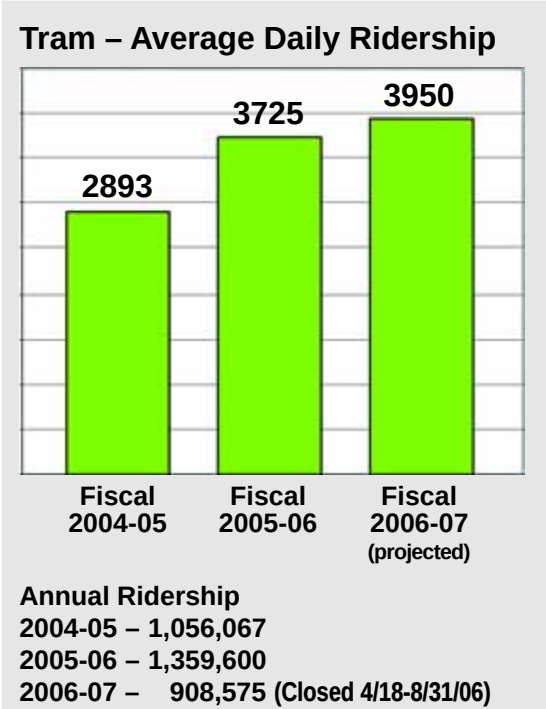
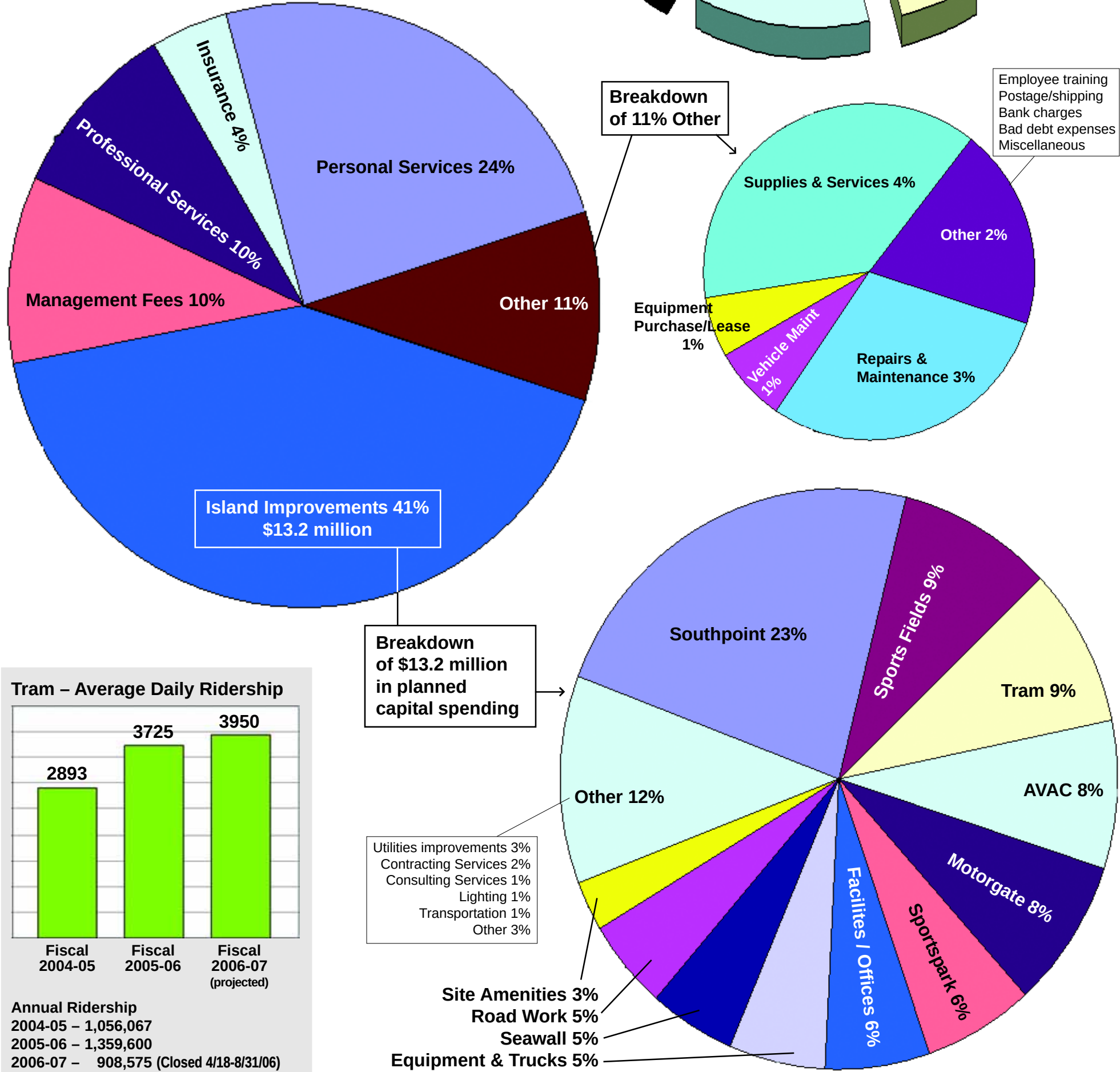
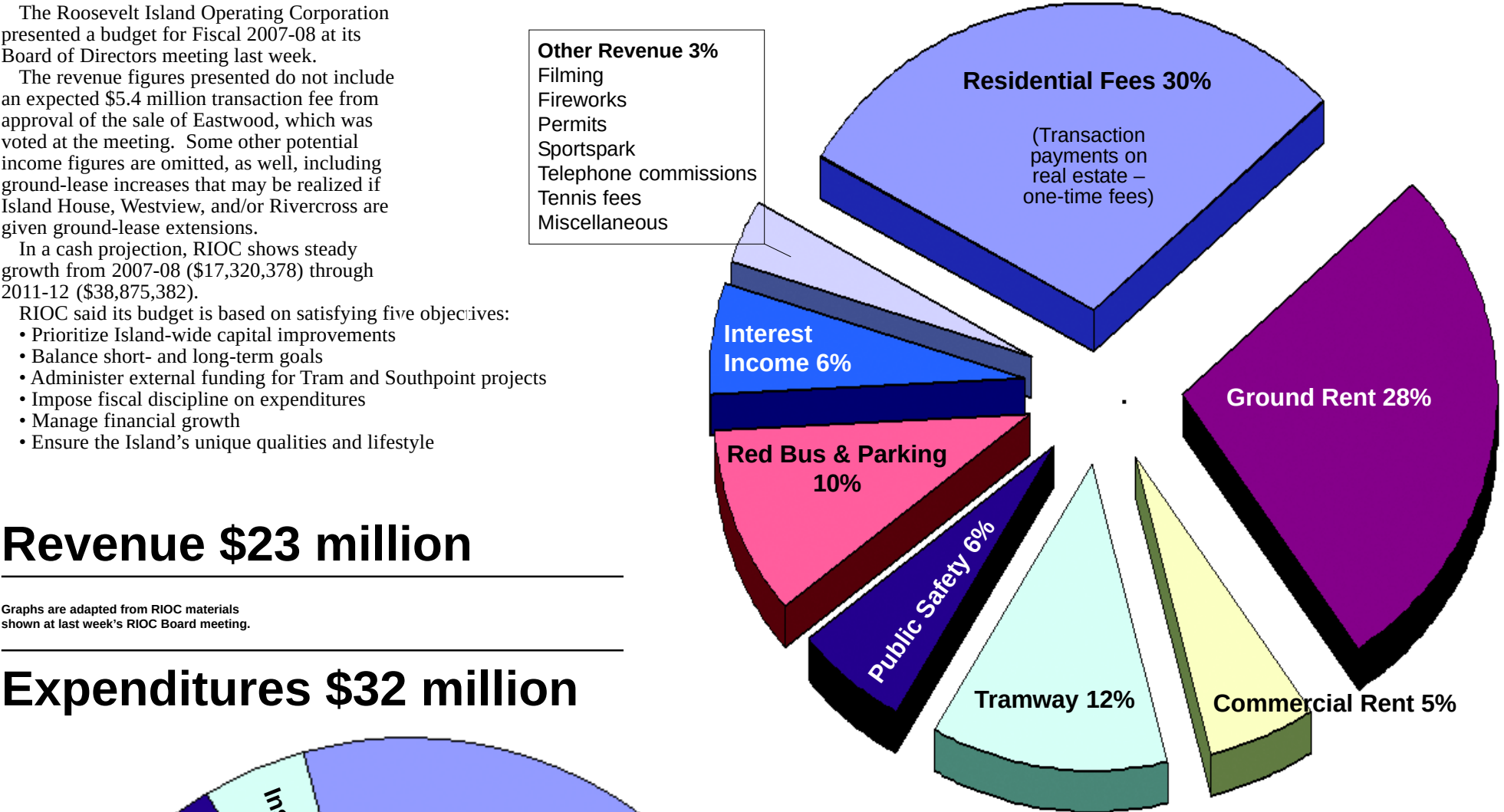
In a cash projection, RIOC shows steady growth from 2007-08 (\$17,320,378) through 2011-12 (\$38,875,382).

- RIOC said its budget is based on satisfying five objectives:
- Prioritize Island-wide capital improvements
 - Balance short- and long-term goals
 - Administer external funding for Tram and Southpoint projects
 - Impose fiscal discipline on expenditures
 - Manage financial growth
 - Ensure the Island’s unique qualities and lifestyle

Revenue \$23 million

Graphs are adapted from RIOC materials shown at last week’s RIOC Board meeting.

Expenditures \$32 million





Monday, April 30th, 7:15 p.m.
College Choices

All the choices to make, to make the right choice!
For parents of high school students, we'll discuss the college search and application process.
Facilitators:
Sandra Pryor has served as Coordinator of the College Now Program and The Honors College at Hunter College. She is a trained and licensed School Guidance Counselor.
Audrey Berman Tannen was the Director of Graduate Admissions at Hunter College and Director of Admissions at New York Institute of Technology. She also served as the Director of Advising and Student Services for the School of Education at Hunter College.

The Baby Group – a/k/a Mothers’ Group
Free of charge. **New Semester Starts April 13.**
Make friends, share stories, have fun! Coffee and tea served.
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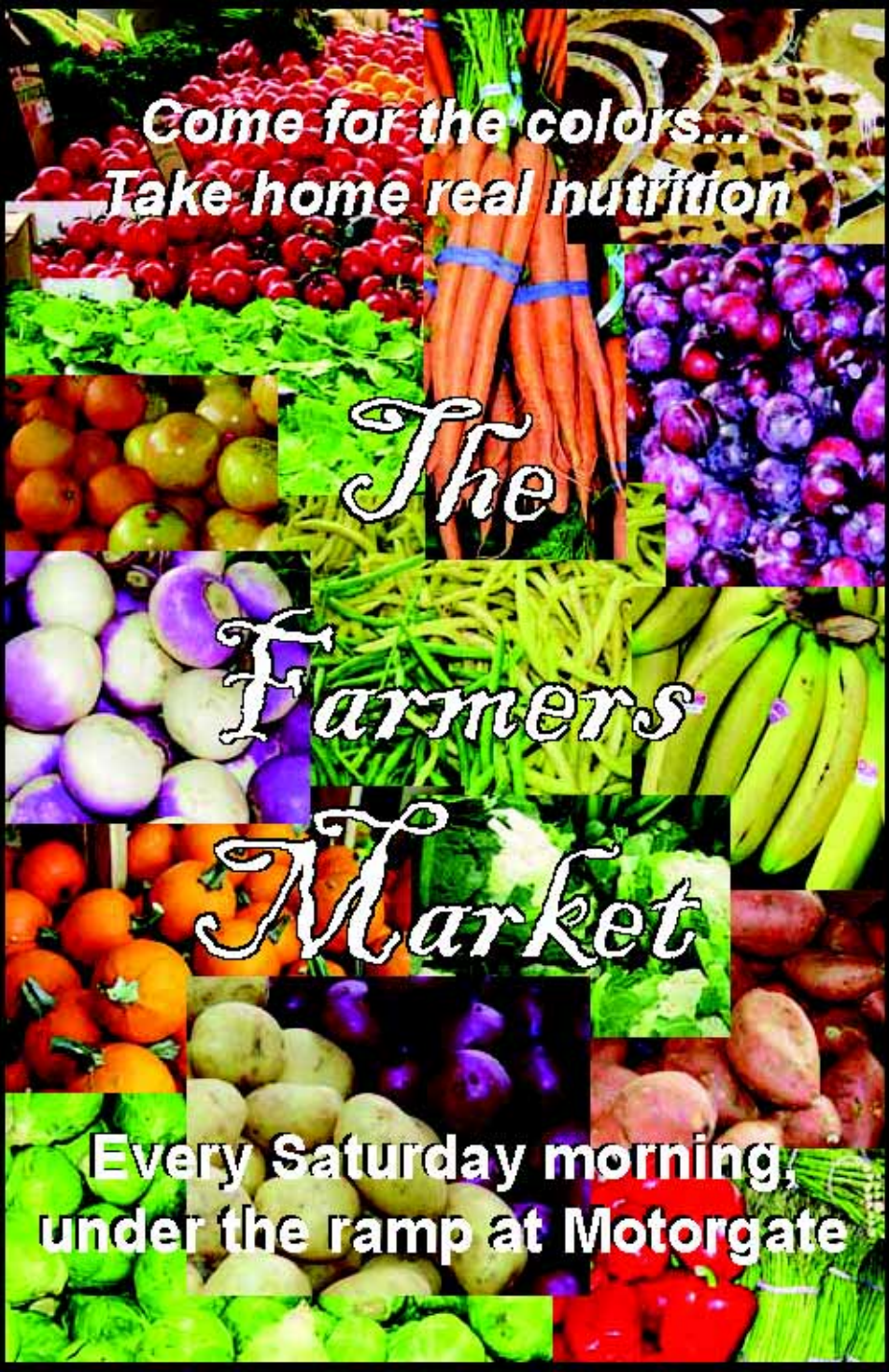
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Transcript from page 7

local, resident RIOC Board members; and what we were told when we tried to organize these meetings is that if there were three or more RIOC Board members in a meeting together, whether it included residents or not, it was considered a Board meeting. They couldn’t do it. Now there’s no vote being taken and if it needs to be public, if it needs to be a public meeting because there are three or more Board members, we’d like to meet with all the Board members altogether as a... you know, with RIRA representatives, who are elected by the community – not appointed. The point was to get some kind of communication going, some line of communication with the people who sit on the Board and who live in the community. And we were stonewalled by this comment that they could not have a meeting of three or more of their members without it becoming a “public” meeting. And to that, I say: Then let it be “public.” Let the public come to a meeting where all of you are sitting without a regular RIOC meeting going on and have a discussion with the people who are here supposedly representing.

Stewart: You will recall that, at the request of RIRA, there were three Board members.

Helstien: The point is, we were told that if three or more Board members came together, it would be considered a “public” Board meeting. Our point is, fine, let it be “public.” Not taking any votes, come together and make an actual meeting with the community where you listen to what is going on and what’s happening. You guys don’t always know everything that’s going on. We’ve understood that. Sometimes we need to tell you when there are problems or issues, and we were told that could not happen and the thing fell apart. That’s the only question. I don’t care which three or five or seven members come together, we wanted to meet with as many as possible...

Shane: The open meetings requirements of the Public Authorities Law are a pain because they are quite often counter-productive. We cannot have, as I understand it, a quorum – and out of the nine members of the Board, that would be five – assemble in any one spot where they might do business.

Helstien: Well, they’re not going to do business. They’re talking to the community...

Shane: I cannot . . .

Helstien: They’re not voting on anything.



RIOC President Shane as he listened to a resident’s question last week.

Shane: But they could, OK? That becomes...

Helstien: Well, then perhaps its up to you, as the head of RIOC, and Ms. VanAmerongen to see, to go back to the people who wrote the law, or to go back to the State, and say we need to have a real decisive indication for a community. That’s another thing. When you’re talking about a Board that runs an entity that is an agency, but is not a community, that’s another kind of thing. This is a community that we’re talking about... We need to meet with the people who sit on this Board.

Shane: I understand how difficult it is. And I understand that the Public Authorities Law is not particularly well-suited to RIOC . . .

Helstien: Can you get that fixed?

Shane: No, I cannot . . .

Helstien: Well, we have an attorney on line. Why doesn’t he look into seeing if there’s a way to...

Shane: Stop. This is a purely legislative matter. It is a law that is written and codified. So, in order to be able to be able to change it, you can’t just have a lawyer change it. You have to back to the Legislature and change it. And that requires a considerable effort through a whole host of steps, as you might guess, in order to change it only for Roosevelt Island.

Helstien: What I would like is that we have elected representatives here. We have an elected State Assembly – well, we don’t have a State Assembly person yet, we’re now

without. But we have a State Senator. We have all of these folks. You guys are in the State. Why can’t you, on our behalf, talk with them about it; and when we do have an Assembly member, do something to try to find a way to make this, to change or to adjust or amend that legislation so that, for a community such as this, those kinds of impediments can be met, can be

Shane: I’m sympathetic with your plight...

Helstien: Then how do we resolve this?

Shane: We can’t resolve it. You must accept the fact that we cannot resolve it. This will require an act of the State Legislature...

Helstien: So we can meet with as many as four RIOC Board members, but not five at a time.

Shane: That is correct.

Helstien: How about if we put four in one room and two in another? Or three in another and we just go room to room?

Shane: We have a bigger problem because we have a vacancy on the Board, so we’re down to eight, so it can’t be more than three at this point until we have a full Board. To the extent that you try and circumvent the meaning of the law...

Helstien: I mean, who’s going to care, really, about Roosevelt Island? If we meet with our Board members, is somebody really going to come after us, Sir?

Shane: It’s the law.

Helstien: It’s the law, but who’s going to come after this community for meeting with the people who make our law, our rules here?

Shane: We are officers of the Court, those of us who practice law

Helstien: What is the worst that can happen to you? You’ll be taken off the Board. That’s a big...

Shane: All of the members of this Board, under the Public Authorities Law, are sworn to uphold the Constitution of the State of New York and the laws duly enacted by the legislature thereof...

Helstien: OK, all I’m asking...

Shane: ...and it will not behoove us, it will not behoove anybody to support activities which suborn those laws. And I am sympathetic with trying to get it amended, but I don’t think anybody is going to support going around the back door.

Helstien: Okay. I thank you.

Shane: All right. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much.

RIOC from page 1

opportunity to ask him questions about his stance before we take our vote.”

Those questions, and the Town Meeting Q&A that followed the formal Board meeting, elicited some views on some of the Island’s long-smoldering issues:

Priorities

Asked to list the “top five priorities of the residents,” Shane said, “Having read the last several years of *The WIRE*, my view of the top five priorities are, probably, to get the streetlights working; to do the best we can with the truly iconic transportation system that is the Tram, as coordinated with the bus system, so that people are not entirely dependent upon the MTA and the subway... Transportation is an important issue.”

Shane also listed “the stores on Main Street... You need to have the kind of available local services that every small community wants to have,” and the Island’s appearance: “It has an aging infrastructure. We are very fortunate now that we have the resources to address those problems, and address them we shall.”

Affordability

After asking how many issues he had named, Shane added a fifth. “We need to address the issues of affordability and ownership of the people who are presently here on the Island in a way that makes sense for everybody, not only the people who are presently in those buildings, but for the public purpose of the Island, which is to maintain an economically affordable mix of various income levels – for a society that is not to become stratified or monolithic in that stratification.”

Shinozaki asked Shane, “How do you see our requirements for low- and middle-income housing

and the commitments made in leases and the recent developments of real estate? How do you see that playing out?”

“The charter of Roosevelt Island is the Master Lease with the City of New York and the General Development Plan, and it has an affordability component. RIOC is charged with the legal responsibility of carrying out its obligations under those documents as they are incorporated into the various leases for development... The issue of affordability, per se... falls within the ambit and supervision of [DHCR]. My job would be to deal on behalf of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, and deal with the agreements that it has. I’m not here to enforce the affordable component. I’m here to see that the plan gets carried out in accordance with the contractual agreements that exist.” Pressed by Shinozaki, Shane continued, “I think the General Development Plan requires that there by an affordable component to the housing going forward. That’s my official position. My personal predilection on the subject of affordable housing is that I have always been involved in delivering affordable housing, and I personally believe that affordable housing is an essential component of our society. I certainly personally will do everything that I can to see that it is enhanced within the constraints of the contractual obligations of the Corporation.”

In a later answer, Shane seemed to straddle the issue of whether apartments in Island House, Westview, and Rivercross must remain “affordable” when the buildings leave the Mitchell-Lama affordable housing program. “I understand the need, the urge, to privatize. And I understand that we

need to do so in the context of maintaining the affordability for the population on the Island. So there has to be some combination of those elements. I will do whatever I can... to try and encourage the stability of those populations on the Island.” (Tenant representatives of those buildings have been pressing the idea that they must leave Mitchell-Lama and, in order to accomplish repairs and building updating, tap the market value of the apartments.)

Southpoint Park

Shane said he has met with representatives of FERI, the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, who seek to use the southern half of Southpoint Park’s length for a Louis Kahn-designed memorial to FDR. “I met with the FDR Memorial people and urged them to immediately interface with the Trust [for Public Land], because the time is now. If they want to get involved – if they want to do their thing on a coordinated basis – they must do it now.” Responding to a question from Nurit Marcus, Shane said, “I understand that [the Kahn design] is controversial in the community. I just remind you that in the original dedication of the Island going way back when, under Governor Rockefeller, that the FDR Memorial was then a twinkle in everyone’s eye and it was actually part of the planning. And to the extent that they want to go forward... and they raise the funds for it, we’re going to have to... The people on the Island are going to have to demonstrate very convincingly that it would be a bad thing... It would be a tasteful part of Southpoint Park. That is what’s proposed... It should be a sensational thing for the people of Roosevelt Island and for the City of New York and the State of New York.”

Main Street Shops

“I would hope that appropriate service establishments will be back in business on Main Street. You need them,” Shane said in responding to a question about the Island’s retail offerings. After mentioning the pizza parlor, the bakery, and the fish store, Shane added, “Vacant stores are not a good thing for anybody. I would hope... to attract people who will come here and give you back those kinds of establishments, whether it’s a tablecloth restaurant... a bakery... a fish store – whatever it is.

“You have an evolving community. You have people up in Octagon who may not ever stop to shop on Main Street. We have people from Southtown who may or may not come north to shop, and obviously the developers of Southtown have some of their own retail establishments that they’re putting in there. It’s going to be an evolving thing. We are mindful of the problem.”

When Ellen Polivy raised the question again later, suggesting the possibility of a subsidy for Main Street merchants, Shane added, “As a public authority, we can’t give away the space. We have legal constraints. On the other hand, we can certainly deal with spaces that service community needs at a subsidized rent. We can try and encourage retail tenants of diversity in order to try to meet the needs of people, which certainly include the handicapped. These are problems that we will address... and we will involve the community in addressing them.”

Bridge Access

Shane was joined by resident Board member Patrick Stewart in responding to questions from Island House tenant Sharon Bermon about direct pedestrian access to

the Queensboro Bridge, which has been advocated by a number of residents recently, backed by resolutions from RIRA and Community Board 8. Stewart pointed out that many agencies would probably have to be consulted. Shane cited issues under the Americans with Disabilities Act, engineering difficulties, and the fact that the City Department of Transportation is cool to the idea. (Bridge access is the subject of another report in this issue.)

Other Board Activity

The RIOC Board approved the planned sale of Eastwood and, in doing so, collected a “transaction fee” of over \$5 million. One Board member, Michael Shinozaki, voted against the transfer of ownership after citing concerns about the handling of the transition from Mitchell-Lama to private ownership.

The Board approved a grant of public-purpose funds to the Roosevelt Island Youth Program.

The Board was also briefed on a RIOC budget for the fiscal year that has now started. The budget is the subject of a separate report on page 8.

Sentiments

In responding to a question before the vote hiring him, Shane spoke of a desire “to make sure that this continues to be the bright and shining Island in the middle of the East River that it was envisioned to be and, in many ways, is uniquely so in the entire United States. There is no other mixed-income community like this. It is successful. You should all be very proud of what you have. I can appreciate your unhappiness about your wish list of how things might be better. But you need to, on balance, appreciate the wonderful stuff that you do have. And we will always try to make it better.”

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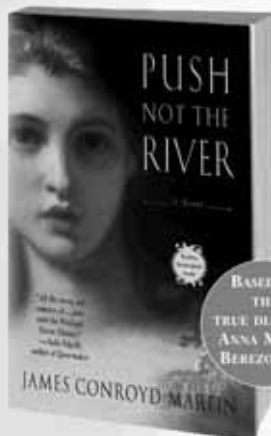
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COMING UP

continued from page 3

Honk!, presented by the Main Street Children’s Theatre, **Fri., May 18**, 7:30 p.m. Additional performances **Sat., May 19**, 2:00 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.; **Sun., May 20**, 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.; and **Mon., May 21**, 7:00 p.m. Information and reservations: **212-371-4449**.

Toastmasters public speaking group, **Mon., May 28**, 8:00 p.m. Call **212-751-9577** for location and other information.

A Midsummer Night’s Dream, presented by the Main Street Teen Theatre, **Fri., June 1**, 7:30 p.m.; **Sat., June 2**, 7:30 p.m.; **Sun., June 3**, 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Information and reservations: **212-371-4449**.

Special Election for State Assembly seat representing Roosevelt Island, **Tue., June 5**.

Residents Association Common Council meeting, **Wed., June 6**, 8:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center (lower level). (Future meetings Sept. 5, Oct. 3, Nov. 7, Dec. 5.) Meetings, open to all, begin with public access period for residents to present matters to the Council.

Dance Concert, presented by dance students of the Main Street Theatre and Dance Alliance, **Sat., June 9**, 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Information and reservations: **212-371-4449**.

Toastmasters public speaking group, **Mon., June 11**, 8:00 p.m. Call **212-751-9577** for location and other information.

A History of the American Film, presented by Main Street Teen Theatre, **Thur., June 14**, 7:00 p.m.; **Fri.-Sat., June 15-16**, 7:30 p.m.; **Sun., June 17**, 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Roosevelt Island Day, **Sat., June 16** (date changed).

Book Discussion Group: House of Splendid Isolation by Edna O’Brien, **Thur., June 21**, 6:30 p.m. Group meets monthly, third Thursday, at the NYPL Roosevelt Island branch.

RIOC Board of Directors meeting, **Thur., June 28**, 4:30 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center. An open forum for residents to bring matters before the Board will follow the formal session. (Future meetings 9:30 Sept. 6, 4:30 Oct. 25, 9:30 Nov. 29.)

Book Discussion Group: The Secret Agent by Joseph Conrad, **Thur., July 19**, 6:30 p.m. Group meets monthly, third Thursday, at the NYPL Roosevelt Island branch.

Book Discussion Group: Collected Novellas by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, **Thur., Aug. 16**, 6:30 p.m. Group meets monthly, third Thursday, at the NYPL Roosevelt Island branch.

Residents Association Common Council meeting, **Wed., Sept. 5**, 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. (Future meetings Oct. 3, Nov. 7, Dec. 5.)

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Katz from page 3

Board set its schedule for the rest of 2007, and you can access this on the RIOCI website, www.rioc.com. Herb Berman took his leave of the RIOCI presidency, and we all wished him well. Just prior to the Board meeting, several RIRA officers met briefly with DHCR Commissioner Deborah VanAmerongen, President (-to-be) Stephen Shane, and several DHCR bigwigs, and I made a pitch for better community involvement in the RIOCI Board proceedings. This is the same pitch I’ve made with four previous Board Chairs, and Deborah suggested that a forum exclusive of the Board meeting might better serve our needs. If we can schedule this regularly, and do it after the Board agenda has been circulated so that we might comment upon, and even affect, the Board’s business, we might just have a solution to this perennial problem.

To my amazement and delight, the discussion during the Board meeting included the question of how to enhance community involvement in the choice of the seven RIOCI Board Directors who could, potentially, come from the ranks of Island residents. As you may know, two Board members are, *ex officio*, representing DHCR and the Division of the Budget, and the remaining six Members of the current Board are our neighbors. An Island organization, the Maple Tree Group, has for ten years attempted to amend the statute that created RIOCI to include provision for elected Board Directors but without success, even though the community has overwhelmingly endorsed the idea through referendum questions asked as part of the RIRA election process. An unwilling Governor and a State Senate that followed his lead made this effort an exercise in futility. By the time you read this, the first of what I hope will be many meetings to define the parameters of some sea-change in the process will have occurred. Stay tuned.

When the Board adjourned and the Town Meeting petered out, I scurried over to the East Side Democratic Club to hear a presentation on “The First 100 Days of Democratic Power in Albany and Congress.” The featured speakers included Rep. Carolyn Maloney, State Sen. Liz Krueger and (presumptive) Democratic Assembly Candidate Micah Kellner. Carolyn and Liz were, as always, full of information on their activities in their respective houses, and Carolyn was bubbling over about the groundbreaking for the Second Avenue subway. She has been an ardent proponent of the plan for umpteen years, and

has gotten a commitment of \$1.3 billion in Federal transportation funds for Phase I. This quote struck me: “The Second Avenue subway will move more people on Day 1 than any other Federal project in history.”

Micah will face a Republican opponent for Pete Grannis’s Assembly seat in June. He made some of his positions clear, and I’ll share them with you: He called for a full-time State Legislature instead of the part-time legislative houses that now exist, explaining that New York State has the third largest budget in the country (following the U.S. budget and that of California), and deserves and requires full-time attention. He said that he favored non-partisan redistricting of New York election districts, surely a hedge against gerrymandering. He advocated against term limits for City Council Members but favored them for committee chairs. And, finally, he promised a satellite Assembly district office on Roosevelt Island with 5 to 8 P.M. hours.

Friday of that week was the thirteenth, and I hid under my bed all day. Not that I’m superstitious, you understand, just tired.

I’ll end with a bit of housekeeping: Have you noticed that the lighting under the Westview arcade has been somewhat murky of late? We have, and it’s not surprising, given that 19 of the 25 lights are not working. We asked RIOCI’s Erica Walker what gives, and she responded that “there is a circuitry distribution problem in that area and we are currently working on the problem.” I know you join me in appreciating such a timely response and now, let’s keep a weather eye out for a timely resolution of the lighting outage.

For us keepers of the Mitchell-Lama flame in Island House, Westview, and Rivercross, it’s income affidavit time once again. And once again, Jennifer Jones of R-Y Management will hold marathon notarization parties (including your humble correspondent, a certified Notary Public) today (Saturday) from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. in the Westview Upper Community Room, and again on Wednesday, April 25, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. in the Island House Community Room. A word to the wise: New York State law requires Notaries to see picture I.D. (so bring it with you) and to witness the signatures of everyone in your apartment over 18 years of age (so don’t sign ahead of time). The State sets the fee at \$2.00 (what a bargain!) and please bring two bucks; I don’t have a cash register. This is a quick and easy way to expedite this annual chore. See you then, neighbors!

CB8 from page 1

endorsed the proposal.

“There is a transportation crisis on Roosevelt Island,” said David O’Connor. “I do worry what I would do with my family in an emergency.” He said he’d like to see a feasibility study to see if some form of direct access to the Manhattan-to-Queens walkway on the bridge “makes economic sense.”

Another resident, Heather Edwards, said she moved to Roosevelt Island just before the Tramway went out of service for five months. “Instead of having a more convenient life, my life became tragically inconvenient. That experience showed me that the DOT and the MTA have a complete disregard for the needs of Roosevelt Island residents. Not only do we need to examine this bridge option, which I think is a great idea. We need a complete review of the options available for transportation. I don’t think they’re being examined as well as they could be.”

Neil Weissman, a 25-year resident who had asked City Councilmember Jessica Lappin to inquire of DOT about some arrangement for bridge access, referred to a “perfect storm” for

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For and Against Ellen Polivy, the Island’s newest member of Community Board 8, took the proposal for direct access to the Queensboro Bridge to the Board. Frank Farance spoke in opposition; his views appear in a letter in this issue (page 2). Both serve on the Common Council of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA).



Roosevelt Island transportation that occurred August 12, 2001, when the bridge to Queens was stuck in the lifted position, the Tram was under repair, and the subway went down for a time. “I don’t think we need a perfect storm [in transportation] to have problems,” Weissman said. “We could have just the Tram down, or just the subway. You can see the panic in people’s eyes when the subway is down and they go to the Tram and have to wait while a couple [of trains] go by [without them]. We’re going to double in population. It used to be easy to get off the Island. But it’s getting worse and we need options.”

Linda Heimer, a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) member who had raised the “perfect storm” example, said that when contemplating an emergency situation, “We really feel very trapped. We have not been told what the emergency evacuation plan is – only that there is one and we should call 311. But in an emergency, everyone will be calling 311. We’re trying to do what we can to help ourselves as much as we can.”

Nurit Marcus cited advantages in providing walking access for residents of Manhattan and Queens for Southpoint Park. The idea “isn’t easy or perfect,” she said, but it “should be studied.”

But Judith Berdy, another long-time Island resident, said she didn’t think the walkway or an elevator to the bridge walkway would be feasible.

However, members of the CB8 transportation committee sympathized with the residents’ desire for additional transportation options – and for better information about

evacuation planning.

“We should not have to rely on mass transit in an emergency,” said Glenn McAnanama, a community member of the transportation committee. He criticized the lack of firm information about evacuation plans for the Island. “What is this plan? They may not be able to tell us all the details, but they really need to articulate better what exactly the constraints are. And would they really be able to get 20,000 people off the Island in an expeditious manner?” He said the supposed evacuation plan “reminds me of Nixon’s secret plan to end the Vietnam War.”

Patrick Stewart, who represents Roosevelt Island on CB8 and is on the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), said he would have trouble walking up “30 stories” to the bridge walkway, but told Polivy, “You’re on the right track, I do believe.” Stewart pointed out, however, that a number of agencies would have to agree to any plan – DOT, the MTA, and the State and City Offices of Emergency Planning.

Helene Simon, a CB8 member, said, “This is critical. This is dangerous. These people need absolutely ways to get off that Island other than relying on a transportation system, and this needs to be done sooner rather than later.” Another member of the committee, Roy Carlin, added, “We should urge that there be a published emergency plan for Roosevelt Island.”

The transportation committee voted unanimously for the resolution.

Letters from page 2

ner to determine the Island’s options.

- Extend Q service from 57th Street to Queensbridge 21st Street. I have presented this plan to Lappin and she is supportive.

- Increase morning F train service from Queens. The system can accommodate trains every 2-3 minutes, and the MTA already helps Brooklyn riders with more northbound F trains during the morning rush, more southbound in the evening – We and Queens riders should get the same level of service as Brooklyn.

- Investigate hollowing out the ventilation shaft on Roosevelt Island for the N-R 60th Street line. In addition to creating a new station, it could serve as a transfer point for F-Q-N-R-tram customers, a boon to the City.

- Request that the City OEM develop and TEST a solid hurricane evacuation plan.

- Have an independent third party evaluate RIOCI’s secret emergency plan, which the public has never seen. RIOCI should assert in writing that their plan is comprehensive and has been tested; we don’t need a repeat of last year’s Tramway disaster.

- Request that RIOCI and Public Safety coordinate and train with Roosevelt Island’s CERT.

- Ask RIOCI to provide a list of the kinds of emergencies they plan on responding to. For example, the delivery of food and water, while essential in an emergency, is not necessarily on their agenda.

- Investigate the possibility of a reliable “gravity-drop” method of closing the Roosevelt Island Bridge; in the event of a power failure, it would immediately make way for emergency vehicles.

- All analyses of transportation should have metrics, e.g., how many people are expected to be moved per hour, per day, etc. This, to me, seems obvious.

Frank Farance



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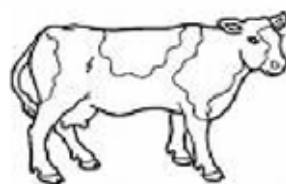
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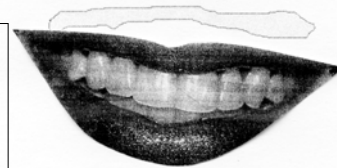
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