Vote Tuesday – Special Election for the Island's State Assemblymember

Vol. 27, No. 19

Saturday, June 2, 2007

Next issue in two weeks: Sat., June 16

The Main Street WIRE™

27th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



State Housing Commissioner Deborah VanAmerongen held meetings on methods for choosing residents as RIOC Board members both last week and this week. Clockwise from foreground: Residents Association (RIRA) Chair for Government Relations Margie Smith, RIRA President Matthew Katz, VanAmerongen, David Bauer of the Maple Tree Group, and RIOC President Steve Shane.

VanAmerongen "Optimistic" on Solution for Mitchell-Lamas Here

Sees Affordability to 2068 as a Required Goal, Saying GDP Is the Island's "Ruling Document"

by Dick Lutz

The Governor's Commissioner of Housing says her administration is "interested in preserving the maximum extent of affordability" of the Island's Mitchell-Lama housing – in both the number of units and the period of time they will remain affordable. Deborah VanAmerongen, who chairs the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) in her capacity as chief of the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), says that "given market forces," DHCR and RIOC need to be open to discussion on these issues.

"We are troubled by the characterization of us 'slamming the door on people' or 'pulling the rug out from under people,'" she told *The Main Street WIRE* in an interview late last week.

"If there are some things that can be done to make the deal(s) better – for either the residents in place or for the people who might be coming to the Island in the future – we'd like to have that conversation," she said, speaking in a conference room at DHCR's New York offices.

The DHCR-RIOC position affects three of the Island's original four buildings – Westview, Island House, and Rivercross. The fourth letter in the "WIRE" acronym used to refer to those Northtown buildings, Eastwood, exited Mitchell-Lama under the administration of former Governor George Pataki, apparently leaving the "WIR" buildings to satisfy affordability provisions of the Island's General Development Plan (GDP).

VanAmerongen suggested that the GDP, part of the lease under which the State controls the Island, which is City property, could be used to deny applications to take buildings out of the Mitchell-Lama program. She also cited ground leases as a tool available to RIOC to encourage building owners to cooperate with the DHCR effort to preserve affordability.

(Without extensions of buildings' ground leases well beyond 2028, it is believed, owners will be unable to secure commercial mortgages to replace the State-backed mortgages they have under Mitchell-Lama. But Rivercross has already "privatized" its financing and, among residents at Westview and Island House, there is a concern that a new owner with deep pockets might exit the State's Mitchell-Lama affordable-housing program without a ground-lease extension, then raise rents substantially to make the 2028 ground-lease expiration irrelevant to profitability.)

Resident committees have been seeking to usher their buildings out of Mitchell-Lama and to resident ownership in the case of Westview and Island House, and to full resident control in the case of the Rivercross cooperative, where tenants are the shareholders in the owning corporation. At the two rental buildings, Attorney Charles Lucido (an owner himself) speaks for the owners. He has expressed dismay that a change of administration at DHCR has brought an apparent tightening of the State's grip on any State-controlled housing. For her part, VanAmerongen said DHCR was seeking incentives to help it "make a deal that is workable for everyone [and] in the best interests" of RIOC, tenants, and – "to the extent possible – for the owners, so that they do have an incentive to be cooperative with us."

Members of resident committees at both Island House and Westview have indicated a strong desire to escape the restrictions of Mitchell-Lama, which they see as incompatible with their buildings' need for repair and improvement at age 30. Similarly at Rivercross, a Privatization Committee has been counting on a share of profits from apartment sales as a source of funds to sustain affordability while making needed improvements.

In the case of each building, the question amounts to a dividing of a value pie: Owners want a profit they feel Mitchell-Lama promised them after 20 years; residents want some form of equity unrestricted



by Mitchell-Lama rules; RIOC wants ground-lease income; the City and State are entitled to taxes or tax equivalency payments; DHCR wants a strong affordability component.

"What I can say categorically is that I don't think that the current [Westview] plan is really an affordable-housing plan," VanAmerongen told *The WIRE*. "It protects the current residents [but] how do we get to a point that we do have some assurance that there is preservation going forward?" Later, she added, "The lease goes through 2068. I think we have an obligation to be in compliance with the General Development Plan through that time."

"I am an eternal optimist," VanAmerongen said. "There are a lot of creative minds out there, and people who know real estate who can put together a transaction that will make it work for everyone." She added, "I feel badly for those people who have invested so much time to get to the point that they're at now, and they feel we're pulling the rug out from under them. I appreciate the fact that this is a frustration for them."

She expressed a hope that DHCR's stance will not lead to litigation. In the lead article in the last *WIRE* (on line at nyc10044.com), RIOC President Steve Shane suggested litigation could take seven or eight years (others estimate two to three) and implied that the threat of a delay might create a bargaining incentive for owners.

The WIRE's interview with VanAmerongen is available in full on *Website NYC10044* at nyc10044.com and in this issue, starting on page 10, with only light editing for space reasons in the print edition. It includes questions and answers on RIOC Board nominations and on further construction here.

A Robert Chira commentary appears on page 18.

Briefly...

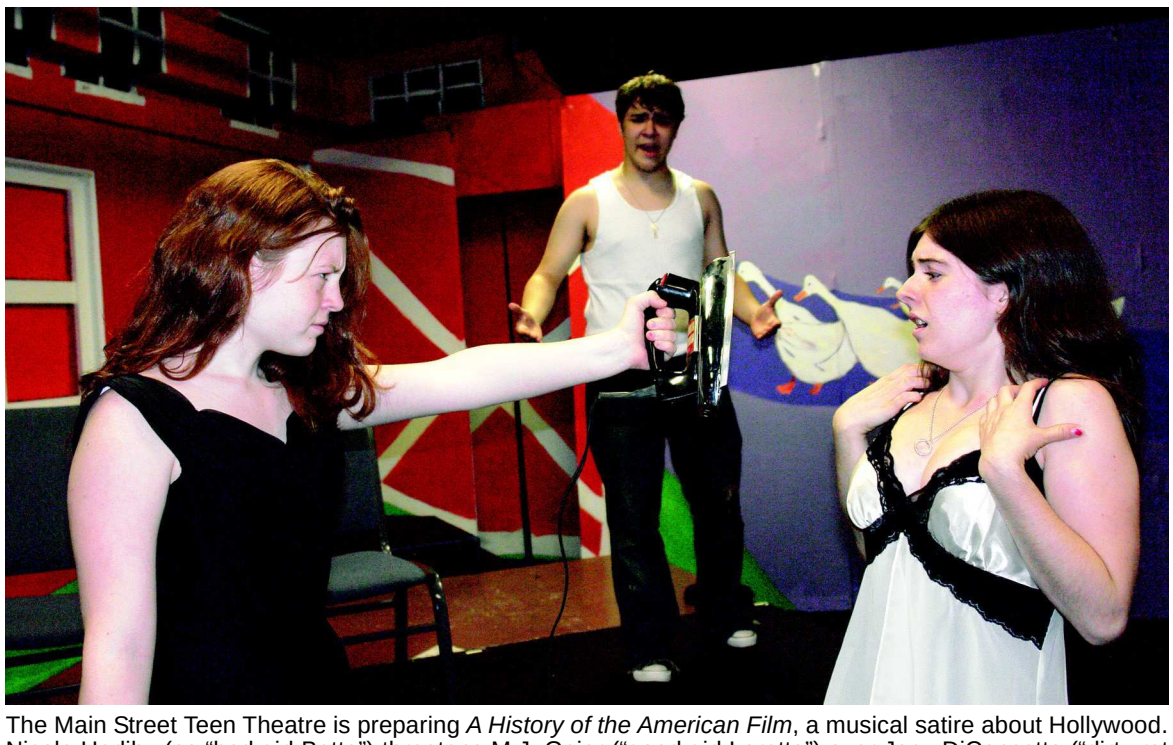
• The Phase I plan for **Southpoint Park** will be described in detail Monday night at 7:00 in the Good Shepherd Community Center, as the Trust for Public Land continues its work on the park. There's a diagram and additional detail on page 21.

• In the center spread of this issue, you'll find a **high-altitude aerial photograph** of Roosevelt Island. It's somewhat outdated by construction since the date it was taken, but we publish it as an interesting view nonetheless.

• The **Roosevelt Island Democratic Club** has elected Deirdre Breslin and Archie Seale as co-presidents. The group will have a table at Roosevelt Island Day next Saturday, and has a meeting scheduled for Tuesday, June 19. Sandra Zwerling and Josephine Barnes are serving as VPs for national and local affairs, respectively. Recording Secretary is Helen Chirivas; Mary Camper-Titsingh is Corresponding Secretary; Gail Dunmore is Treasurer. More information: **212-421-5417**.

• The **emergency plan for Roosevelt Island** was examined recently by representatives of the Island's CERT team and the Residents Association, after they signed a non-disclosure agreement. At last month's RIRA Common Council meeting, they reported satisfaction with the plan in its current state. RIRA President Matthew Katz characterized the plan as "reasonable, as far as it goes," but observed that the plan needs some means of informing the community in emergency conditions.

• The north elevator at Motorgate will get fixed under a deal cut between RIOC President Steve Shane and a representative of Manhattan Park. RIOC will share the cost of the repairs in exchange for not being held to a requirement to repair the escalator at Motorgate, which Shane described as "absolutely unnecessary."



The Main Street Teen Theatre is preparing *A History of the American Film*, a musical satire about Hollywood. Nicole Herlihy (as "bad girl Bette") threatens M.J. Geier ("good girl Loretta") over Joey DiConcetto ("dirty rat Jimmy"). Performance dates are June 14-17. Boxoffice: 212-371-4449.

It's Roosevelt Island Day Next Saturday (June 9)! Join in the Fun!

The Editorial Page

Vote Tuesday
Vote for Kellner

Micah Kellner is so stunningly qualified to represent the 65th Assembly District that it's hard to imagine any possible candidate more ready for the job.

Roosevelt Island was fortunate to have a great friend – Pete Grannis – representing us for so many years. He seemed to be a permanent fixture – likely *always* to be part of our lives. He still is, of course, as a member of Eliot Spitzer's cabinet, and it's that move up that makes it necessary for us to replace him with just the right candidate.

In this special election, Roosevelt Island has special power.

It's important that we use that power to elect Micah Kellner.

Here's why:

• Micah Kellner ***knows*** Roosevelt Island. Working for Carolyn Maloney from June, 2004, through May of 2005, he was a regular presence here – since then, as well – listening at meetings and learning the territory at every opportunity. He was in a position to look behind the curtains of power and understand the particular frustrations Roosevelt Island's resident leaders faced in trying to get sensible government attention to this community's unusual needs and special problems.

• He's connected and liked in all the right places. Kellner's history with Maloney, with U.S. Senator Charles Schumer, and with Assemblymember Jonathan Bing, and his strong ties to Borough President Scott Stringer, City Comptroller William Thompson, City Councilmember Jessica Lappin, and State Senator Jose Serrano – all these strong lines of communication mean that he's ready to ***fit*** – to be nimble in using the system for his constituents.

It's a powerful combination that will work for Roosevelt Island and Roosevelt Islanders.

But it's important beyond imagining that Roosevelt Island turn out every possible vote for Kellner on Tuesday.

• This is a *special* election. Turnout elsewhere could be light. But Republicans would love to snatch this seat that has been Democratic "property" for so long, and there will be a special effort on Tuesday to turn out the district's conservative voters. Because turnout will be light, a child's *handful* of votes could swing the election.

• That light turnout gives Roosevelt Islanders a special power. Whatever happens in the rest of the district, a solid turnout here can determine the outcome.

• Kellner is a young man, likely to serve in this seat for a long time. Now is the time for our representative there to start building experience and power. A solid win now will secure the seat and avoid a future battle to win it back for the Democratic majority in the Assembly.

It's important, then, not to take a pass on this special election.

Mark your calendar, send yourself an e-mail, and ask friends to remind you.

Your vote has a special power on Tuesday. *Use that power.* Vote for Micah Kellner.

DL

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The RIOC Column

Two holiday shortened weeks. Memorial Day should have stopped us all to consider the sacrifices made by those who have served and those who are now serving and express our gratitude.

Matters of interest:

1. Blackwell House: After much pushing, cajoling, and threatening, the work appears actively underway. Hopefully, the good weather will encourage a speedy completion.

2. Sportspark: RIOC has hired an additional person for the facility so that henceforth, the pool will stay open on holiday weekends.

3. Teleconferencing: RIOC's capability for teleconferencing and web broadcasting of all Board of Directors meetings is now set to comply with Governor Spitzer's Executive Order No. 3. As a side benefit, the plaza around the Good Shepherd Chapel has free wireless (wi-fi) capability, and all are welcome to bring their laptops and enjoy the outdoors while doing Roosevelt Island web surfing.

4. Roosevelt Island Day: June 9 promises to be another great day for Islanders to get together and enjoy the benefits of the community. Lots of activities planned and if the weather cooperates, should be a wonderful experience. There will be a blood drive sponsored by RIRA on both June 2 and 9 at the Farmer's Market. Very worthy cause. Come on out!

5. Barbeque grills: The BBQ grills at Lighthouse Park are in operation. The additional BBQ grills west of Octagon have been ordered and will be installed as soon as they arrive. Promised before July 4. Note that BBQ pits 1 & 2 at Lighthouse Park may be reserved by contacting Donna Masly at RIOC. See diagram on page 22.

6. Hybrid Buses: For those interested in green technology and its efficiency, see the *New York Post* of May 21, where the MTA, owner of 600 Orion VII buses (same as RIOC's), was quoted "good for the environment, but really good for mechanics… repeatedly suffered power-generator breakdowns." RIOC experience is the same, with replacement parts for the electric motors becoming increasingly difficult to find and, as a result, more expensive.

7. Lighting: RIOC continues to pursue Con Edison and the wiring bugs in the system. The lights will function.

8. Retail Spaces: A crew has started the process of cleaning out the vacant stores to put them into rentable condition. A most unsavory task. A retail-stores consultant has visited the Island and surveyed the stores and as many of the residents as she could speak to. A plan for the types of stores that will function together for the benefit of the residents in a service-store environment is being prepared. After RFPs for the specific store types, rating and ranking, lease negotiation, Board approval, Public Authorities' approval, and lease signing, there will be stores opening in the now-vacant places.



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

9. Seawall repair: The responses to the RFP for repair of the seawall where struck by the barge at Lighthouse Point have been received, opened, and evaluated. Background checking of the most responsive bidders now being undertaken and contracts to be awarded soon with work to follow immediately. Railings and gratings have been repaired and replaced in part, with their maintenance regularly scheduled. Please report any areas where there are safety hazards so they can be promptly repaired.

10. RIOC Board of Directors: RIRA's Maple Tree

See **RIOC Column**, page 22

The RIRA Column

Where to begin? The summer season began with a gorgeous Memorial Day weekend and I hope you got to spend some of it outdoors as Sherie and I did. You may have seen us soaking up the rays on the fringe of the Manhattan Park west channel lawn. Both of those lawns are being reseeded and should look spectacular very soon.

You also may have seen me Saturday at the Farmer's Market at our second sign-up-the-blood-donors effort. Volunteers from both RIRA and CERT, the drive sponsors, have been soliciting and will continue to solicit your donations through the Roosevelt Island Day blood collection at the Senior Center.

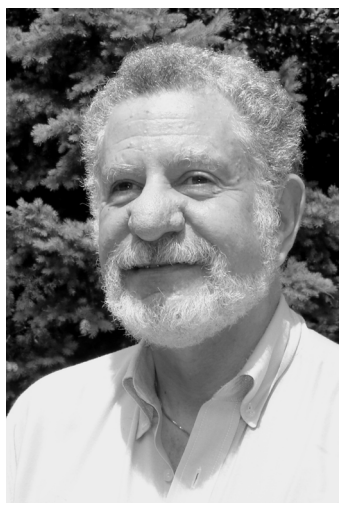
In this issue of *The WIRE* you will find a yellow insert from the New York Blood Center. Before you discard it, please read it. It gives the basic information as to who may donate, where and when you may donate, and how to go about signing up for the June 9 event. We will be at the Farmer's Market from 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. today (Saturday, June 2) to take your pledges and to find a time of day that will get you in and out expeditiously on Roosevelt Island Day. Please, don't leave this duty for others to fulfill. If you've never given blood before, now is a good time to start. If you have concerns about your eligibility, call the number on the flyer or simply sign up and have your questions answered by the professionals when you show up to donate.

Continuing on my summer theme, perhaps you intend to barbecue somewhere on the Island during the good weather. There are grills at Lighthouse Park, at the entrance to Octagon Park on the west channel, and adjacent to the soccer field on the west channel. But clearly, these grills are a scarce resource. In past years, their use was first come, first served. I've been informed that there will be some procedure for reserving the grills this summer, but I don't know what that procedure will be or, for that matter, how it will be enforced. When I know, you'll know.

Several years ago, during the community meetings on Octagon Apartments conducted by developer Bruce Becker of Becker & Becker Associates, we were told that the picnic area in the vicinity of the construction site would be removed, but that BBA would replace it bigger, better, and nicer. Sherie and I walked up that way last Sunday and found the area to be gravel and grass with some new and some old trees, but without picnic facilities.

RIOC President Steve Shane has informed me that RIOC will pick up the slack and that "The BBQ stuff is on order." I assume this will include the grills, picnic tables, and benches, as well as trash cans. The good news is that we may expect delivery and installation by the July 4th holiday. I don't know how the BBA promise became RIOC's to fulfill but I'm glad they've taken responsibility that, again I'm assuming, will include maintenance and cleaning of the area once in place. Thank you, Steve.

Perhaps you've followed the planning for a new Southpoint Park over the last six years. I've been a part of the conceptual planning process since the beginning and have found it to be exciting and gratifying. Imagine; helping to create a park that generations of New Yorkers will use! On Monday, June 4, the Trust for Public Land will present the next step in the process, the design plan, to the community at a Town Meeting in the Chapel at 7:00 P.M. Please make it your business to attend. After all, this may be the last chance we get to influence the process given that "shovels in the ground" may commence as early as next spring. The State, the City, and RIOC have amassed $12.4 million to build Phase I and, we are told, this sum falls short of what is need by some $3 million. I haven't seen the spread sheets but, clearly, this is a big project with an impressive amount of government money behind it. If what you see and hear on Monday doesn't include components that you had expected or hoped to be included (I'm thinking of the Living Library ideas I mentioned in my last column), this would be a good (and possibly the last) time to make a pitch for their inclusion.



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

Next Tuesday, June 5, marks a special election to fill Pete Grannis's Assembly seat. I can't tell you whom to vote for, only that your vote is important. Please read the literature in your mailbox, take note of who visits the Island and his familiarity with our issues, and cast your vote accordingly. Elections are sometimes won or lost based on the apathy of the electorate. Roosevelt Islanders count on the support of our elected officials and we need to be heard at the polls and in force.

Last Sunday's New York Times included an editorial in the City Section entitled, "New York's Powerful Ghosts." It posited that "New York State government has two parts, one public and one carefully

See **Katz**, page 14

COMING UP

– This Weekend –

Final day for **Roosevelt Island Day Blood Drive Signup** at the Farmer's Market, under the ramp at Motorgate, **today (Sat., June 2)**, 10:00-2:00, conducted by RIRA. Or call **212-935-7534**.

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

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

Children's Learn-to-Swim Program, Sat., noon; Tues. and Thur., 5:00 p.m. Information: **212-753-3611**.



Free Show for Children, ***Purple Tigers,*** directed by Islander Irene Clark, **today (Sat**., **June 2)**, 5:00 p.m., The Producers Club, 358 W. 44th St. at Ninth Av. (at the corner, up the stairs). Free. For information: **212-754-4353**. ▷



◁ **Opening Reception** for ***Art from the Heart II*** at Gallery RIVAA, **today (Sat**., **June 2)**, 6:00-9:00 p.m. Visual art by Coler-Goldwater patients and residents, hosted by the Roosevelt Island Visual Art Assocation, 527 Main Street. Gallery hours are Sat.-Sun. 11:00-5:00, Wed. and Fri. 6:00-9:00.

– The Coming Week –



Islander Roy Eaton plays in the Bryant Park 2007 Piano in the Park series, **Mon**., **June 4** through **Fri**., **June 8**, 12 noon-2:00 p.m. (42nd St., behind the library). ▷

Southpoint Park – Public Presentation of Phase I Design, open to the public, conducted by the Trust for Public Land (TPL), **Mon**., **June 4**, 7:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center.

Tennis for Kids 5 to 18: **Mon**.-**Fri**., 3:00-6:00 p.m. for ages 8-18; and **Wed**., 3:30-4:30, for ages 5-7, through June 23, Octagon Park courts.

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). Meetings, open to all, begin with public access period for residents to present matters to the Council. (Future meetings Sept. 5, Oct. 3, Nov. 7, Dec. 5.)

Roosevelt Island Day, **Sat**., **June 9** (final confirmed date).

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**.

– Future Week s –

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

Ask Your Elected Officials Town Hall Meeting with City Councilmember Jessica Lappin, Borough President Scott Stringer, Assemblymember Jonathan Bing, and City Councilmember Daniel Garodnick, **Thur**., **June 14**, 6:30 p.m., Hunter College School of Social Work, 129 East 79th Street (doors open at 6:00).

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. Information and boxoffice hours: **212-371-4449**.

The Main Street WIRE – Next issue, **Sat**., **June 16**. (To receive e-mail bulletins between issues, send an *AddMe* message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Advertising Deadlines:** Ads in the paper, Thur., June 7; decision on circulars/inserts for *The Bag*, Mon., June 11; they are due Thur., June 14. **Additional issues in 2007**: June 30 (the Fourth of July issue); July 28; Aug. 25; Sept. 8, 22; Oct. 6, 20; Nov. 3, 17; Dec. 1, 15. **Issues scheduled in 2008**: Jan. 12, 26; Feb. 9, 23; Mar 15, 29; Apr. 19; May 3, 17, 31; June 14, 28; Aug. 2, 30; Sept. 13, 27; Oct. 11, 25; Nov. 8, 22; Dec. 6, 20. **News phone**, **212-826-9055**; urgent matters, **917-617-0449**. **Phone** for display and classified advertising placement and information, **212-751-8214**.

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.*

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.)

RIOC Board of Directors meeting, **Thur**., **Sept**. **6**, 9:30 a.m., Good Shepherd Community Center. (Future meetings 4:30 Oct. 25, 9:30 Nov. 29.)

Primary Election, **Tue**., **Sept**. **18**.

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

RIOC Board of Directors meeting, **Thur**., **Oct**. **25**, 4:30 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center. An open forum for residents to bring matters before the Board will follow the formal session.

Letters

To the Editor:

I was surprised to learn that the Red Bus now requires strollers to be folded while riding for the "safety of our children."

Please tell me how it is safer for me to hold my infant in one arm, my folded stroller in the other, and any bags or belongings I have with me with that third arm I wish I had, all while standing on a moving bus!?

Let's admit the real reason, which is that the buses are overcrowded and undeniably strollers do take up room. However, there are other things besides strollers that take up room. Just two examples: walkers and grocery carts.

Would it be correct to tell an elderly person they must fold their walker before entering the bus? No. Because the walker is a necessity for that person. And so is a stroller for a mother who has a heavy child or multiple children or must travel a long distance.

Would RIOC receive even more complaints if passengers were told they must remove their belongings from their carts and fold the cart before entering the bus? Yes. Because what is the use of a cart if one must carry their belongings by hand in addition to the folded cart?

I understand that the MTA buses do not allow for open strollers (or wheelchairs, walkers, and grocery carts for that matter). But, up until this point, the Red Bus has. And I, like many others I know, moved to Roosevelt Island assured that we could access the Red Bus with our children in strollers.

Much like anything else that takes up room on the bus, strollers are a necessity. Children are safe in them and should be allowed to remain in them on the Red Bus.

Holly Hancey

To RIOC President Steve Shane:

Welcome to Roosevelt Island. How refreshing to have a public servant dedicated to the interests of the people, after the previous administrations.

A crisis exists in middle-income housing, acknowleged by Mayor Bloomberg, judging from his actions. Mr. Shane is right that every effort should be made to preserve affordable housing now and into the future. Government exists to serve the people and address problems that impact their lives. His efforts will acrue to the benefit of the people.

Alan Levy

To the Editor:

I am wondering what is the difference between:

a) The Hugh L. Carey Battery Park City Authority is a New York State public-benefit corporation whose mission is to plan, create, co-ordinate and maintain a balanced community of commercial, residential, retail, and park space within its designated 92-acre site on the lower west side of Manhattan.

b) RIOC is a public-benefit corporation responsible for the development, operation, security and maintenance of Roosevelt Island (147 acres).

I see that size is different, what else?

The Battery Park City Authority conducts periodic surveys among Battery Park City residents and other constituent users to obtain feedback about facilities, amenities, and quality of life issues on people's minds. The last such survey was conducted in 2004 (see www.batteryparkcity.org/pdf_n/Demographic_Study.pdf).

We cannot choose our representatives to the RIOC Board of Directors, but at least we could say our opinion about quality of life here.

If RIOC is not planning such a survey, how about *The WIRE* – could it be done?

Name Withheld

To the Editor:

Something good at RIOC!

Today (May 19) the Island florist staff was out planting a variety of flowers in the curb side planters on Main Street.

The florist shop has graced Main Street for 17 years. This year, for the first time, RIOC approached this local business to bid on doing the planting, rather than going to other flower places. Now *that* is a positive move that supports all parts of our community.

David J. Bauer

To RIOC President Steve Shane:

One of the many glaring ill effects and legacies of your predecessor, Herb Berman, and his bountiful incompetence is the serious issue of cars speeding, running stop signs, and ignoring yield signs on Main Street. Somehow Mr. Berman saw fit to actually remove critical stop signs on Main Street, even though his PSD officers rarely wrote a ticket for running the stop signs in existence, saving their summonses for the easier, non-moving vehicles, generally residents' parked cars with expired MuniMeter permits. I know this because for years I have observed PSD officers in vehicles literally sit and do nothing as cars just glide by the *enormous* stop sign at the base of the ramp onto the Island, onto Main Street.

Berman made a bad situation worse by removing these stop signs. I routinely walk elderly people across the street now because they are afraid to assert their pedestrian rights by trusting a car to actually come to a full stop at a stop sign and wait for them, as the culture on Roosevelt Island is routinely permissive when it comes to moving violations (oh – except for U-turns).

This has been on my mind for months but I was just now –on Memorial Day – nearly hit by a car when crossing Main Street in front of my building in the crosswalk adorned with the "Yield to Pedestrians, NYS Law" sign. The driver speeded through at roughly 40mph, screeched to a halt some 20 feet past the crosswalk and then yelled out at me, "Why don't you look before you walk out into the road, a**hole!" I pointed back to the "Yield to Pedestrian" sign. Then his car screeched away.

The unenforced 15mph speed limit – a joke at this point –is not enough to maintain the safety of pedestrians. We need stop signs and, more importantly, PSD or NYPD to *enforce* them. Are we going to have to see our citizens literally run down in the street before we see RIOC do something about this?

Damon LaScot

To the Editor:

Concerning the new bus route, it is disappointing to see the new administration at RIOC is falling into the same mistakes we have seen before. When I come out of the subway, I need to make a decision: Wait or walk? And, if it is raining, I generally take comfort in the subway station, where I can sit and stay dry till I see the bus coming.

The new route gives me a new decision: Walk north or east? Since home is toward the north, and east is but a barren bus stop, it's an easy decision I take little pleasure in making.

Neal Weissman

More letters: page 18

Letters deadline for June 16 issue: Tue., June 12
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 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, *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 lobby desk at 531 Main Street; allow extra time for typesetting. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered, if brief. **All letters subject to acceptance and editing for length and clarity.** Recommended maximum length, 300 words; longer letters considered if content merits the space.

Senior Center

Monday
10:30, **English as 2nd Language**
10:30, **Blood Pressure**
12:30, **"Oldies" Movies**
1:00, **Computers**
5:45, **Yoga**

Tuesday
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

Senior Day, Sun., June 3, 1:00
Sleeping Beauty ballet, Wed., June 6 (contact RISA)
RISA Election of Officers, Mon., June 11, 9 a.m.-7 p.m.
Atlantic City trip, Wed., June 13
Latin Festival, Sat., June 16
Live-It-Up Luncheon, Thur., June 21 (time to be announced)
Flea Market, Sat., June 23
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SPECIAL ELECTION • TUESDAY, JUNE 5TH

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Micah Keller is Endorsed by: Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, Councilwoman Jessica Lappin, Borough President Scott Stringer, Comptroller William Thompson and NYS Senator Jose Serrano

I am running to succeed Pete Grannis as the Assemblyman representing Roosevelt Island. As Pete begins his new job in Governor Spitzer's administration, it is important that the working families of Roosevelt Island continue to have a progressive member of the Assembly fighting for them in Albany to:

- *Preserve the affordable housing and character of Roosevelt Island.*
- *Work for increased accountability and transparency of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation.*
- *Ensure that South Point Park becomes a reality.*

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MICAH KELLNER

DEMOCRAT FOR ASSEMBLY

For more information, or to volunteer, please email kellnerforassembly@gmail.com

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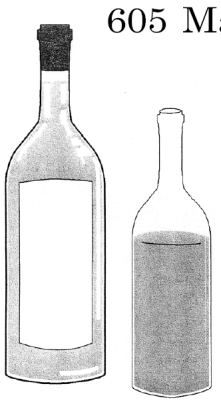
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12pm – 3pm	**GAMES AND RIDES**
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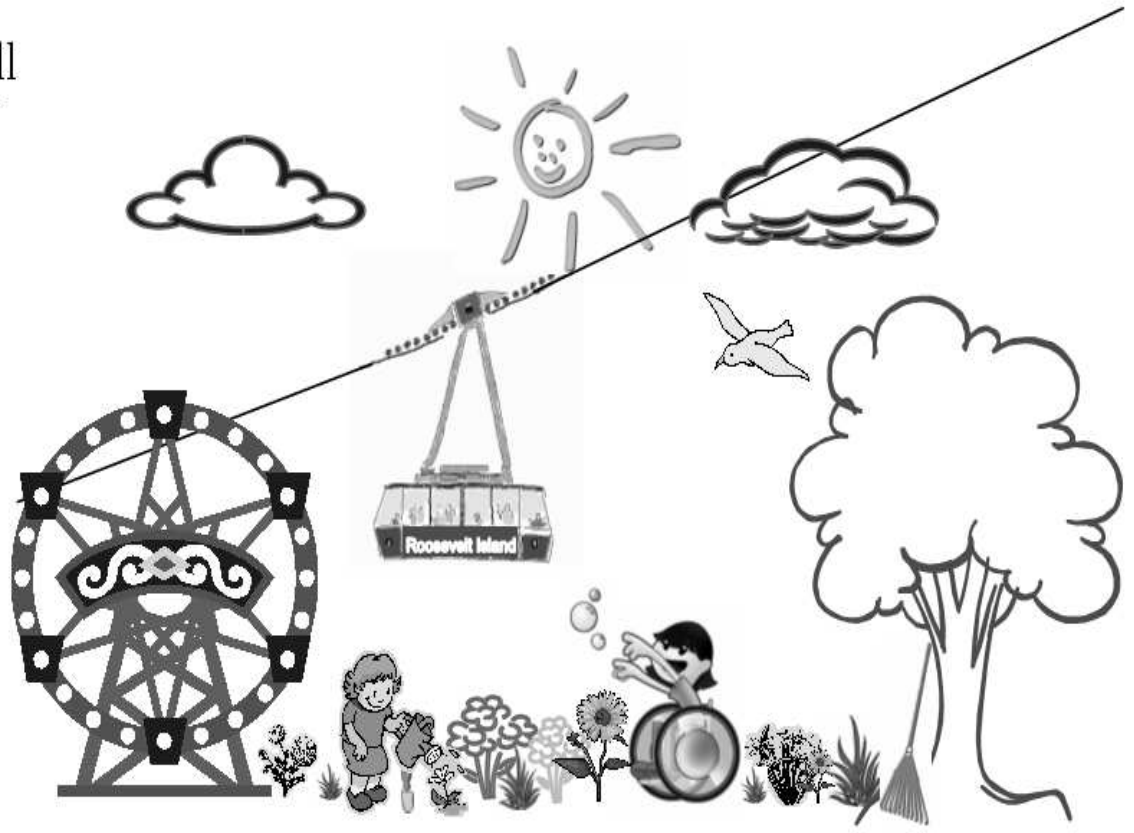
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Statements by Assembly Candidates in Tuesday's Election

Micah Kellner



Roosevelt Islanders know their home is a special, unique place. And they know – because the Island is governed to a large extent by a New York State agency, the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) – they will need an elected representative in the Assembly who understands the issues and concerns facing them as the Island moves forward into the 21st century, and an Assemblyman who will be ready to hit the ground running fighting for them and their homes.

I've spent several years working with and serving public officials whom Roosevelt Islanders trust, like Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney and City Councilwoman Jessica Lappin. That is why I am so gratified to have earned their endorsements and the support of so many Roosevelt Island community leaders in the Special Election to represent Roosevelt Island in the Assembly that is taking place on Tuesday, June 5. And it is one of the reasons that I ask all Roosevelt Islanders for their support and their votes on Tuesday.

This is a critical crossroads in Roosevelt Island's history, and an important election for the Island. As Islanders know, it was developed as a planned community to provide affordable homes for middle-class New Yorkers. Operated by RIOC, a State public benefit corporation, Roosevelt Island has a Master Lease and a General Development Plan (GDP) stipulating that a certain percentage of housing in the Island's Northtown and Southtown sections must be affordable. Only the Mayor and the RIOC Board together can amend the Master Lease and GDP.

Unfortunately, Republican mismanagement in Albany over the previous 12 years perverted RIOC's purpose. Former Governor Pataki turned RIOC into a dumping ground for political cronies, with one GOP RIOC presidential appointee ultimately suspended and removed from his position of public trust under a cloud. During that dark time in Roosevelt Island's history, the GDP's original spirit was basically invalidated through repeated Master Lease amendments.

Republican policies, until recently guiding RIOC, jeopardized Roosevelt Island's affordable housing stock. In Pataki's last two years, homes in original Northtown developments like Eastwood left the Mitchell-Lama program to become so-called "market-rate" housing. This may have violated Master Lease provisions intended to preserve affordability – but the Republican administration ignored the festering crisis and allowed these ill-conceived plans to proceed.

As the Assemblyman for Roosevelt Island, I will never stop fighting to ensure Roosevelt Island is maintained as an affordable home for the working New Yorkers who built it. First, we must obtain a greater measure of self-rule for Roosevelt Islanders. That's why I will work to make sure that the RIOC Board's direct election by vote of Island residents goes forward successfully.

We also must ensure a greater degree of accountability and transparency in the Island's governance. To facilitate this, I will work with Governor Spitzer and his appointees Deborah Van Amerongen and Steve Shane, the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal Commissioner and RIOC President, respectively, to convene a comprehensive policy summit to determine RIOC's role and relevance in the Island's future. All relevant parties with a financial or communal stake or regulatory role in the future of Roosevelt Island should be invited to participate. Preserving affordable-housing stock and maintaining the best possible quality of life for residents must drive policy solutions for Roosevelt Island's future.

I am the candidate for Assembly who knows the issues confronting Roosevelt Island best, and I will be an Assemblyman who will offer Roosevelt Islanders a powerful and effective voice as a member of the Democratic majority in the Legislature. That's why on Tuesday, I ask all Roosevelt Islanders to vote in the Special Election for New York State Assembly.

Greg Camp



Dear Roosevelt Island Neighbors–

Assemblyman Pete Grannis has ably represented Roosevelt Island in the New York State Assembly for 33 years. His office services to constituents have been among the best in the State. We wish him well in his important new role as New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner and thank him for his extraordinary devotion to the people of this district.

Next Tuesday, June 5th, there will be a special election on Roosevelt Island to select Mr. Grannis's successor. I am a candidate for that office, and I ask for your support.

I am running for this seat because public service is my calling. If elected, I promise to expand on Assemblyman Grannis's legacy of responsive constituent services on this Island, particularly for senior citizens and those with special needs. Constituent services will be my office's number one priority and I will hold weekly office hours on the Island for anyone in need of help with tenant, transportation, prescription drug, or other service issues.

A little background on me: I am 45-years-old and I am raising my two children, Christopher and Catherine, here in the district. I grew up in a rent stabilized apartment in Stuyvesant Town, where my parents have lived for 50 years, so I understand the critical necessity of tenant protections for families in this city, and I will fight for them in Albany every day with all my heart and legal skills.

I had the opportunity to receive three degrees from Yale University (BA, MBA, and JD), and I have an extensive background in finance and criminal justice.

Eight years ago, after an eleven-year career in the banking world, I joined Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau's office, where, for seven years, I was a top prosecutor of organized crime, domestic violence cases, and other serious felonies. Most recently, I served as Deputy Director of Criminal Justice for New York State, where I oversaw the prosecution of tax fraud statewide.

I am pro-choice, and a strong advocate of stem cell research. I believe that New York City should become the world leader in this important medical research. My father suffers from Parkinson's-related symptoms and I want to see a cure for it – and for so many other devastating afflictions.

I support gay marriage, and I oppose the death penalty.

In the Assembly, I will fight to simplify New York's arcane and unnecessarily complex tax code, which I believe has chased away business, costing the people of this State tens of thousands of jobs over the past two decades. In this increasingly competitive global economy, New York must maintain its competitive edge so that it can continue to provide necessary services to New Yorkers in need.

Like most New Yorkers, I am tired of watching excessive partisanship in Albany stand in the way of progress. I believe in common sense, nonpartisan government solutions, and I will work with legislators of either party to achieve them. I supported Mike Bloomberg for mayor and Eliot Spitzer for governor.

My independence, I am proud to report, just earned me the endorsement of the nonpartisan Citizens Union, New York City's oldest, largest, and most influential good-government organization. I wear that endorsement as a badge of honor.

I believe that my background has prepared me exceptionally well to serve you, and all the people of Roosevelt Island, in the New York State Assembly. My expertise in finance and the law will be invaluable tools in fighting for this district's fair share of services. My experience growing up in a rent-regulated apartment, where my parents still live, has prepared me to fight passionately for key tenant protections. My time prosecuting domestic violence in the District Attorney's office taught me just how important human interaction is – we are people, not numbers, in a government ledger. And my experience as a father of two children has taught me, more than anything else, just how important education and safety are. Without them, we have nothing.

Roosevelt Island is a truly special place – a sanctuary for almost 10,000 New Yorkers. It would be a privilege and an honor to represent the Island in the New York State Assembly.

I ask for your support in the special election next Tuesday, June 5th. I will work every day that I am in office to earn it.

Thank you.

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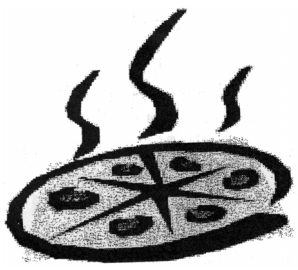
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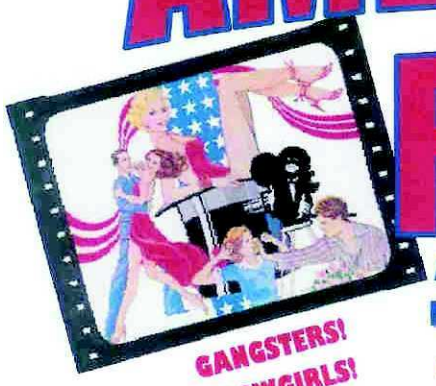


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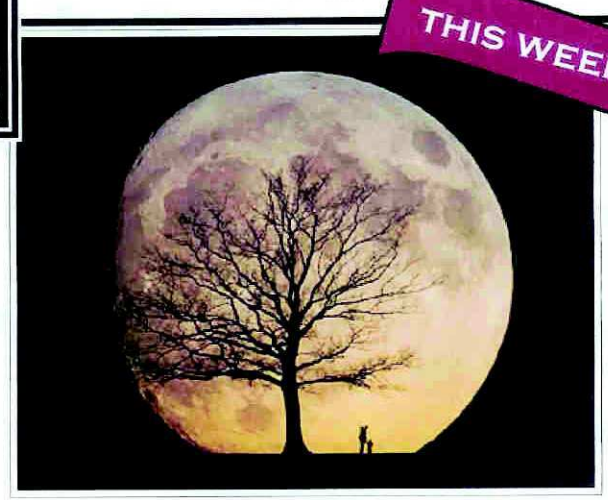
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DHCR Chief Affirms Goal of Keeping Island's Mitchell-Lama

***The WIRE* interviewed Deborah VanAmerongen (story, page 1) on Thursday, May 24, at the Manhattan office of the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal. *WIRE* Managing Editor Dick Lutz asked the questions.**

The Main Street WIRE: You probably have guessed that the main thing that people are talking about now on Roosevelt Island is the latest position on housing, and on affordable housing, which is, of course, of tremendously great interest. Have you had a chance to read the [lead article in] the last issue of *The WIRE*?

Deborah VanAmerongen: I sure have.

Q: I just wanted to confirm that [RIOC President] Steve Shane and you are on the same page in terms of [the] overall position [on affordable housing].

A: That is our administration's overall position – that we're going to do – not just on Roosevelt Island, but anywhere in the State – whatever we can to protect affordable housing. It is an invaluable resource and we're going to work with people to try to keep units in whatever program they're in, to do preservation. It's a big focus for us.

Q: What is the incentive for an owner who may have been anticipating leaving Mitchell-Lama and going to market-rate rents or at least increasing rents over time? How do you incentivize that?

A: Well, it's really going to vary by building. I mean, I can talk specifics – if you only want me to address the Roosevelt Island buildings, I can focus just on those. But I mean... The situation is different in many areas of the State. We have areas where there are buildings which have 30-40% vacancies in upstate New York. There are areas here in New York City where it's a co-op and they need some assistance in doing a revitalization of the project. So really, it's going to vary.

Roosevelt Island is a particular circumstance because of the underlying ground lease and because of the General Development Plan (GDP). So there are layers of complications and, perhaps, things that work to the advantage of those who are trying to keep buildings in the affordable housing program that don't impact other buildings in our Mitchell-Lama portfolio – or other affordable housing buildings in general. Mitchell-Lama is not the only portfolio of buildings we're focused on. There are other affordable housing resources that we are trying to protect as well.

So, at Roosevelt Island, because of the General Development Plan, and because of the ground lease and the issue about a possible ground-lease extension, we have some other tools that we might be able to bring to bear in addition to...

I want to make one thing very clear: We want to have a positive, productive conversation with both the owners and the tenants of these buildings. I do not want it to be that the State is sitting back and taking a position saying it's not going to happen and we're laying down the law. This is, you know, it's a private sector venture and we're the government. And we regulate this building and we have a relationship with all the buildings in our portfolio.

We want to figure out what we can do to create those incentives and to make a deal that is workable for everyone – in the best interests of both the Operating Corporation (RIOC), the tenants of the building, and – to the extent possible – for the owners so that they do have an incentive to go along and to be cooperative with us.

Q: That's a kind of "stick" side in a sense.

A: No, I think it's a "carrot" side, really.

Q: Are there more carrots?

A: There may be. Y'know we have been talking with – and I think it is mentioned in Steve's commentary as well – with the State Housing Finance Agency and they are willing to be part of that conversation as well. And [on] whether there are any financing alternatives that would work to put together a package of incentives – a re-financing package that would address the rehabilitation needs of the buildings.

I think there are a number of things that we can to do. I don't want it to be that we're the long-arm-of-the-law kind of thing and we're just going to say "no" to everything without trying to get to a positive conversation. I'm trying to get it to a positive conversation.

Ground Lease and GDP

Q: Do you feel you are in a position to say "no" – for example, to an owner who has said, "I'm leaving Mitchell-Lama and I'm going to increase my rents substantially?" Does the ground-lease situation give you enough of a stick, as it were, to make the carrots more attractive?

A: I would say that there are a couple of different things: The ground lease – the need for extension of the ground lease – puts us in a position where I think we have the ability to negotiate... and the ability to offer a more favorable reaction to the extension of the ground lease based upon a particular plan versus another plan that we're really uncomfortable with. The thing that I think creates a difficulty for this owner or any owner in taking those buildings out of Mitchell-Lama is really the General Development Plan – though I will admit that, being still new to the job, I'm still getting up to speed on this and learning everything about what that General Development Plan says and how it impacts upon the ability of the owner to take those buildings out of Mitchell-Lama. But you may be aware that there are instances where in the City of New York, and even outside the City of New York, there were Mitchell-Lamas that wanted to buy out and because of underlying restrictions on the land – such as an urban renewal plan, and there was a pretty big case over in Brooklyn with a building called Tivoli Towers – and I'm not suggesting that the two are analogous, I'm just giving you an example of the kind of thing that we're thinking about – where ultimately, the court said, "You can't buy out." And I don't know that a court would say that here, and I'm hoping we don't get to the point where there's litigation, but I think we need to look at those things.

We have another building that we're working on in Staten Island right now where there are HUD restrictions on the pre-payment of the mortgage. And we have said to the owner of that building, until you resolve those issues with HUD, we're not going to approve the buy-out. So there are other things... other buildings where we can look to and say... And again, this is not about me. I'm not trying to threaten anyone. I really want to get to an amicable resolution with both the tenants and the owners of these buildings, and do whatever we can to preserve affordability going forward. But I think that there are things in the General Development Plan that raise questions about the owner's ability to buy out. And that's what we're really looking at right now.

Q: It's your position that they knew coming in that there was a GDP and that there were percentages of housing dedicated to affordability; and that, based on that, they have been on notice for all this time, that there was a possibility that they would be asked to do something specific to depart Mitchell-Lama?

A: It's difficult for me... Obviously, people knew of the existence of the GDP. That's never been a secret. Anybody who thought about doing development on Roosevelt Island... It's difficult for me to speak to what their thoughts were or what they were cognizant of at the time they were developing these buildings. And, did anybody have any idea what Roosevelt Island was going to end up looking like? Or what the real-estate market in the City of New York was going to look like? I don't want to say that I understand what their thoughts were 30 years ago or however long ago it was when they were first developing the buildings. I can only speak to where we are right now and the fact that we view the General Development Plan as the governing document for the Island.



You understand that I'm in a somewhat difficult situation because I am the Commissioner of DHCR and I'm also the Chair of the Board of RIOC. So I come at this from two different perspectives. As DHCR Commissioner, I have to oversee all of the Mitchell-Lama portfolio in the State of New York, all of the ones that are State-regulated – obviously there are City-regulated ones that I don't get involved in – and ensure compliance with the Mitchell-Lama rules and program requirements. But then as the Chair of the Board of RIOC, I've got to look at what the General Development Plan says and what our needs are for the Island. So, I have to kind of always try to keep two perspectives on things.

Westview

Q: The tenants have been working, as you know, on [privatization] plans in all three of the remaining Mitchell-Lama buildings. Eastwood [is] gone already, effectively. But they've been working on plans, and effectively, the plans – at least, as a negotiating position – seem to be shot down at this point based on what Steve Shane said; but I wonder if you can talk about each of those in some detail. For example, let's start, for the sake of discussion, with the Westview plan, which is the primary one we talked about in the issue of *The WIRE*?

A: I wouldn't say that any of the plans that are on the table have been "shot down." What I would say is that I think there is still some work to do. We are concerned that the plan that's on the table right now does not do enough to preserve affordability on a going-forward basis; and that, to some extent, the payment that would be made to the owner and the owner's partners, and the number of units that would be left under the control of the owner to be sold in whatever way, shape, or fashion that they desire – that some of that is driving, then, how much affordability can be preserved. So I think there are some things that we would like to re-open the discussion about. I am not suggesting that anybody wants to scrap the plan entirely. I think that there are some things that can be done to make the plans better, and to preserve more affordability and more long-term viability for all these buildings as affordable housing.

Defining Affordability

Q: You mentioned "affordability" on an ongoing basis or "going forward." Let's try to define what that means. For example, I'm wondering, on the spectrum of "affordability," you can go all the way from a plan under which residents own their apartments but are only allowed to sell to people who meet certain income guidelines. You could go all the way to something like an 80/20 plan that goes out 20 years with 20% of the apartments being rented at what we would agree were "affordable" rates. How do you define "affordability" for the long term? I'm going to ask you what your bottom-line negotiating position is...

A: I obviously don't have a bottom-line negotiating position and I don't really want to pre-judge the question. What I can tell you is that we're not comfortable that the current plan truly protects affordability and preserves the buildings as affordable housing going forward. I think that there are a number of models we could look at for examples of the kind of thing that we might be more supportive of, and I hesitate to name a specific sort of construct because then people will say, "Oh, that's what they're demanding that we do." I'm open to discussion about any number of different things.

I don't think that... What I can say categorically is that I don't think that the current plan is really an affordable-housing plan. It protects the current residents, which is absolutely a valuable goal and something that we would want to have as a part of any plan no matter what else is on the table. But I think we need to look at the rest of that plan: Aside from the protection for the current residents, what else is on the table? And how do we get to a point that we do have some assurance that there is preservation going forward?

Q: Let me ask you some very specific questions then: Does 80/20 work? If an apartment building proposes to keep 20% of their apartments affordable and...?

A: I don't think that that would be... My take on it, off the top of my head, is [that] I don't think that's in compliance with the General Development Plan. I don't think 80/20 is.

Q: Okay. So, are you looking at a situation where you don't want – I guess probably this is strong, but – even a single apartment to...

A: No, that's not how I would characterize it. I'll give you a for-instance with the caveat that this is not to be characterized as me saying, "This is what I am demanding at these buildings."

Q: I understand.

A: We worked on – DHCR, before I got here, worked on some transactions up in the Bronx known as the Lafayette transactions – Lafayette-Boynton and Lafayette-Morrison were those buildings. What we were able to put together there was, in fact, a requirement that purchasers going forward be income-qualified, and they reconstituted themselves as what's known an Article 11. You know the Mitchell-Lama buildings are under Article 2 of the Private Housing Finance Law. Article 11 is another article, another provision of the Private Housing Finance Law. So they had those buildings go in and reconstitute themselves as Article 11s, which meant that there were income restrictions; but they carved out a certain number of units for the former owner, just like [Charles] Lucido is proposing on these buildings, that he has control over a certain number of units. It was a significantly smaller portion of the units that were under his direct control in those buildings than what Lucido is proposing here. So, that's an example of the kind of thing that we might look at. I'm open to other ideas. There are people who spend a lot more of their time thinking about how to construct a real-estate transaction to be beneficial to themselves than I do, so I don't want to prejudge it and say that this is the only way that it will work. I think that there are any number of ways that these things can work. I would ask that everybody be open to further discussions and be willing to really go into it with the overarching goal in mind of not only protecting the interests of the current residents, not only ensuring that the owner gets out of it with as much money as they can, but really looking at long-term

Apartments Affordable Through the End of City-State Lease

affordability for the buildings.

Q: When you say "long-term," you're talking about until the end of the lease?

A: Yes, I mean the lease goes through 2068. I think we have an obligation to be in compliance with the General Development Plan through that time. And you have to keep in mind – something else that I think that people forget – is that it's not just RIOC or even just DHCR that's involved in these discussions. What used to be UDC [the Urban Development Corporation], and is now ESDC [Empire State Development Corporation], has to be satisfied with what we're doing. And ultimately the City has to be satisfied. There is a flow-through of payments to those other organizations that are supposed to come out of any arrangement that we reach. So I think that there is a necessity for us to be able to say to those others – to ESDC and to the City of New York – that we're comfortable that this is in compliance with the GDP and any amount of payment that is going to flow to them under the arrangements that there are between RIOC and those other entities – we can absolutely feel comfortable saying, "Yes, we are doing what we should be doing here."

Island House and Rivercross

Q: You responded specifically to the Westview plan. I would be killed when I go back to Roosevelt Island if I don't ask you about your comfort level with the existing Island House plan.

A: I have not spent as much time on Island House as I have on Westview because it seemed that the Westview folks had been further along; and they, frankly, have been – and I hate to say this because I don't want to mischaracterize the Island House people either – the Westview people have been more, I guess, "forward" in approaching us and being aggressive. They felt themselves that they were further along. I also get the *impression* that the Island House folks... I don't know if they feel more comfortable with preserving affordability on a going-forward basis, but I get the impression that they do. That there is perhaps more flexibility. The reaction to the position that we're taking, in my estimation – just from what I've seen from folks – the reaction has been more visceral from the Westview people. It seems that the Island House people are perhaps a little bit more willing to continue discussion and are willing to engage in this further conversation with us to a point that we are comfortable with the affordability protections.

Q: Okay. Then I have to ask you about Rivercross because...

A: I haven't had any conversation with Rivercross. I just haven't got there yet.

Q: Are you familiar with the plans?

A: I'm not.

Amending the GDP

Q: OK. I guess you're probably aware that the prior administrations – all the administrations at RIOC and DHCR under former Governor George Pataki – were quite willing to amend the General Development Plan pretty much whenever it suited whatever purpose they had in mind. What's your feeling on that?

A: No one has asked me for any amendments to the General Development Plan, so I haven't had to look at any particular proposal. I think if there were an amendment necessary in order to advance the well-being of the residents of the Island – to promote and protect affordability, for instance – or if there was some things in the General Development Plan that were standing in the way of some other positive development on the Island, I'd certainly be open to discussion about it. I don't think that we would want to do it to just facilitate a real-estate transaction that we're not comfortable with. And I don't know if any amendment of the General Development Plan has even been talked about in the context of these transactions. It's not something I've heard.

Q: Not in the context of these transactions specifically, but there has been a history of amending the plan for various purposes, which I suppose have seemed to residents many times that they primarily served the needs of developers rather than serving the needs of residents. And, with that in mind, many have now said, "OK, it's gotta be our turn – the Democrats are in control."

A: Well, I'm looking to take a fair and balanced approach. For me, it's not residents vs. developers. It's about what's in the best interest... How can we... I mean, we are, at our core, regulatory bodies. We have responsibility to be as responsive and as fair and principled in our approach to issues as we possibly can be, and that's what I'm trying to do. So I am not anti-developer. I'm obviously not anti-tenant. I am *pro* whatever is going to work to do the maximum preservation of affordable housing that we can. I don't think for a moment that we are going to be able to save every affordable unit everywhere in the universe of what DHCR is involved with. I'd love to think that this is possible, but I'm cognizant of the fact that it's not. It's a very hot real-estate market and I know that there are times that we're going to have to reach accommodations with developers that I would like to think we are doing in exchange for ongoing affordability to the extent possible.

The Real-Estate Market

Q: Do you think that the fact that the real-estate market is hot now has any bearing on what you need to do, or would your position be the same either way?

A: Of course it is, because you know that you have a danger of losing units. If there were a very soft market, you would think probably, "Well, they don't have a lot of other alternatives or a lot of things that might happen here."

But I'll give you an example of the kind of approach that I worked on a lot. You know I worked at HUD for a number of years. HUD came up with a program to deal with a hot real-estate markets. It's called the "Up-to-Market Program." You could have a secured contract, but you could get paid market-level rents. It is a relatively revolutionary concept, but what they said was, "Otherwise, owners have an incentive to opt out." And we released them from their cap on distributions, which is part of the Section 8 program. So there are ways that government can look at it and say, "We want these people to be our partners, we want them to stay in our program." We want them to continue the use of this building as affordable housing, so we are going to give them these incentives because we realize that otherwise we don't have the ability..." The "stick" approach isn't always going to work, and sometimes you don't even have a stick to use. So, we want to figure out – and that is what I'd like the conversation to get to: What is the reasonable accommodation that we can reach that will give the owners and the tenants and everybody else that is interested in the welfare of the Island comfort that we're doing the right thing – we are protecting affordability to the extent possible, but we're also doing it in such a way that people are willing to engage with us. We can't just sit back and say "No." This is something that needs to be dealt with.

Q: Isn't it kind of tragic that the State of New York didn't over these last many years keep a rolling program of affordable housing going? I mean, the Mitchell-Lama program, for example? There are some, I know...

A: The State of New York has consistently over the years financed affordable housing. It is, in the New York City area in particular, very difficult to do affordable housing because the amount of subsidy that is required to meet the high land cost and high construction costs and high operating costs of a building makes it very difficult. But even with that, in close conjunction with the City of New York we have done a lot of affordable housing development. *Is there ever going to be enough?* is really the question. I know that this administration is committed to maximizing our resources and doing as much as we possibly can. I mean, we can share with you our information about the numbers of units produced over the past ten years or twenty years or whatever you want to look at. We just celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Low-Income-Housing Tax-Credit Program, which is a very successful program – one of the most valuable tools that we have in our arsenal to create new affordable housing and to preserve it.

Am I satisfied that we have done enough? No. I mean, it's certainly something that this administration wants to focus on – doing more in this area.

Promises or Not?

Q: Let me give you an example I am familiar with of a resident on the Island who has been there for I think 25 years, 27 years – something like that – who came to Roosevelt Island thinking that there was a promise from New York State that ultimately if he invested his, I think it was $30K or so in an apartment in Rivercross or if he became – an alternate example would be someone who looked forward to resident ownership in a building like Island House or Westwood – that if he had... that after some period of time to be defined by Mitchell-Lama, he would have an equity ownership in his apartment and be in a position, for example, to renovate it, should that be required after 20-25 years, or to use the proceeds of an equity or market sale as a nest egg. So he made a choice, let's say, between putting his $30K in the stock market where it would have doubled two or three times by now or using that $30K to secure an apartment in Rivercross or the equity value or the interest value to rent an apartment in Island House or Westview, and now finds that the game has changed rather substantially – that is, it's moved from a situation where he had a hope after the expiration of the Mitchell-Lama period of becoming an owner and being able to use the equity in the apartment either to fix it up or to have a nest egg for retirement, and now finds out that's just not going to work out if, in fact, affordability for the long pull is required. The sale will not net the amount that was originally envisioned as being possible after a quarter century. Or, in the case of someone who has been paying rent for all these years, hoping to become a homeowner, or hoping to have equity that could then be used as a tool for mortgage or a home-ownership loan, to fix up an apartment, now finds that all has changed.

First of all, is that true? And secondly, how do you react to such a situation?

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Island House Is Optimistic

by Dorothy Davis, Chair
Island House Tenants Association

We remain optimistic about a deal because, at the end of the day, both sides understand that a timely transfer to affordable tenant ownership is the only viable option. An affordable transfer to the tenants allows the State to demonstrate real results for its policy objectives and provides Mr. Lucido the opportunity to realize a return on his investment without years of protracted struggle.

First and foremost, we take Mr. Shane at his word when he says that transferring Island House to affordable tenant ownership is a top priority for him, DHCR, and the Spitzer administration. We applaud his leadership. Mr. Shane understands better than anyone that his tenure on Roosevelt Island will be measured by his success in getting these deals done and that the timeline for that success is measured in months, not years.

Mr. Shane is fully aware that the residents of Island House, through their elected representatives, have worked long and hard for a fair, equitable and affordable deal that recognizes the needs of the current middle-income tenants of Island House while providing opportunities for future affordability for new residents. He knows that, at the end of the day, the residents of Island House will not accept a situation where their futures are held hostage to a broader State agenda that might take years to resolve. Mr. Shane is an experienced lawyer and savvy politician who knows that the residents of Island House, our sister buildings, and the Island in general are a powerful and effective political force who have a track record of successful activism when their interests are disregarded by the appointed leadership at RIOC.

Mr. Lucido knows that his options in terms of reselling the building are limited and the State has said it will excecise all its options to protect the tenants. It's important to point out that Mr. Lucido, to his great credit, has been enormously supportive of tenant ownership, which leads us to believe that both sides ultimately recognize the need and value of reaching agreement on terms of transfer.

We believe that the price differences separating Shane and Lucido on Island House, while significant, are bridgeable and that there is enough flexibility and, hopefully, good will on both sides to make this happen.

While we continue to urge both sides to reach an agreement on sale price, our role is clear – making sure we are ready to move ahead, fast, when the State and Lucido agree to terms. That's why, since March, we have been developing and refining a comprehensive, detailed proposal that we believe is flexible enough to accommodate the terms agreed between Lucido and the State and the core interests of the tenancy.

Working closely with our real estate consultants, CPC (Community Preservation Corporation) – whose expertise is recognized by every party at the table – and in consultation with DHCR, we have developed a number of very sophisticated models/projections that allow us to meet all these goals. We are actively working with a very supportive senior team at DHCR to refine the details and attain their endorsement.

The State has made it clear that any plan must include provisions for future middle-income renters and/or buyers to be able to afford to live in Island House. We couldn't agree more with this worthy goal, and our financial models show that we can make it compatible with ensuring that current residents who choose to rent are protected and those who choose to buy (thus providing the financing and cashflow for affordability) have the ability to build equity over time.

Westview Disturbed

by Westview Taskforce, Inc.

Westview tenants are still shocked and disturbed by RIOC's sudden decision to block ground-lease extension. We believe such decision is completely misguided. Westview tenants and owners have negotiated an agreement that provides the most affordable conversion in the history of New York City affordable housing. Indeed, 80% of tenants are expected to become first-time homeowners and be able to stay based on their current incomes. Rents will be protected for life. Conversion will generate the $15 million so badly needed for building rehabilitation. And RIOC will be paid more than the amount it had received from Eastwood and Octagon.

If the current impasse continues, this win/win/win/win situation, achieved after years of struggle, will quickly turn into an unprecedented catastrophe. Westview's 140 low-income tenants will be forced out in 2-3 years, as they won't be able to pay the forthcoming rent hikes mandated to maintain the building. All others will be displaced as soon as the building leaves the Mitchell-Lama program and becomes market rental.

RIOC was created to develop this Island, not to destroy its community. There is not a single reason why the ground lease should not extended now. We urgently call upon Commissioner VanAmerongen and Mr. Shane to immediately schedule semiweekly meetings with tenants and owners in the same room, without pre-conditions, so that a resolution could be found.





From page 11

On "Election" of Residents to the RIOC Board of Directors

At bottom, the question is: Was there a promise from the State of New York; and if there was, is it being broken if people are not allowed to use their equity?

A: I have no idea about whether there was ever a promise from the State of New York that, based upon you choosing to live... and I do think that there is a basic difference between a rental building and a cooperative building. But in either case, if there was ever a promise by the State of New York that if you choose to live on Roosevelt Island and, in the case of a cooperative, you know, pay this amount, buy your shares, or you're going to pay rent in these buildings for a number of years, that they would have the expectation, or the right to an expectation of some return on their investment. I'm not suggesting that there isn't, but I've never heard that there was. I don't know... I don't know how to react to that, given the fact that I don't know... I certainly wasn't around for the past 20 or 30 years to hear every conversation, or to hear every representation made by the State of New York. I think there is always a balance of equities in these kinds of situations and I think people look at DHCR and look at RIOC and say [that] the owners of these buildings have benefited from participation in this program and the residents who have lived in these buildings have benefited by living there – versus what they would have been paying, really, practically any place else in the City of New York. And the State and the City have made certain sacrifices themselves in order to facilitate that moderate-income housing. They have made investments or have had less revenue than they would have had elsewhere or otherwise if it were not an affordable-housing resource that the City and State have, so whether an individual resident – and particularly in a rental building... I don't know: I find it hard to believe that someone suggested to someone moving onto Roosevelt Island 20 years ago, "Move in now and pay rent for the next 25 years and you'll get something out of it." I think what they got out of it was a great, affordable-housing building to live in for a very long period of time because of the investments that the State and the City were making into those buildings. So, I'm not clear about what the expectation would be.

And again, I am not a pessimist. I am an eternal optimist and I think that it is very early in my administration and in this administration's oversight of Roosevelt Island. I am absolutely not throwing in the towel. I think that there are a lot of things that we can do. There are a lot of creative minds out there and people who know real estate and who can put together a transaction that will make it work for everyone. I've seen it happen any number of times in situations that were, frankly, much more dire than this. I've worked on buildings that were going into foreclosures; and literally, the day before foreclosure was going to happen, something comes along and saves it. So I'm an eternal optimist and I'm sure that we can find a reasonable accommodation.

I feel badly for those people who have invested so much time to get to the point that they're at now and they feel that we're pulling the rug out from under them. I appreciate the fact that this is a frustration for them, I think in all fairness to us, though, we are a new team and we do have a responsibility to ensure that whatever is being done with these buildings going forward is, in our opinion, appropriate, both for the interests of the residents who are currently there and for the long-term affordability of housing on the Island. So, we are absolutely not trying to say to them... you know, we're not slamming the door on them or saying, "Too bad – we're not playing with you."

We want to engage in productive conversation. I'd really like to get past some of the level of discourse at this point so that we're at more productive conversations. For example, I'll give you a for-instance, and it's something that I'd really love to have highlighted in *The WIRE*.

Appraisals

My understanding of the conversations going back to the time that the Sheldrake transactions were on the table, and currently, as well – and again, I've not been a part of every meeting – but it is my understanding that it has been presented that RIOC would be willing to look at a true appraisal of the buildings and the value of the owner's interest in those buildings, and take that as a discussion – as a place to move the discussion forward. It is unclear to us how the price that the owner is demanding for these properties was arrived at. And, like I said, my understanding – and I was not involved at the time – my understanding is that this was something that came up during the Sheldrake transactions, that they were asked to provide a fair-market appraisal of the buildings and of the remaining time on the lease and that sort of thing; and I think that's a reasonable thing for RIOC to ask be a part of this transaction – that we have an understanding of – where did the purchase price come from? And, as I said, the purchase price is a part of what is driving the inability to preserve affordability going forward. If the purchase price were something less – and I'm not saying I know what the appraisal is going to come out at, but I'm thinking it might be less. If the purchase price were something less, they could do more for affordability without it impacting... the tenants can still become owners of the building. I think that is a laudable goal and that would certainly be something that I would support. I think that we need to take a look at the market realities – and Steve made this point as well: We are governed by the Public Authorities Law. And, as I've said, we've got ESDC and the City who we have to talk to [about] whatever deal is arrived at, at the end of the day, whatever RIOC is signing off on, and how that impacts what payments are going to go to ESDC or the City on a going-forward basis. We also have the Public Authorities Accountability Control Law overlooking us and saying, "What are you doing here?"

We need to be in a defensible position. I think that an appraisal of the buildings would be of great value to us in putting us in a defensible position. I can't, right now, explain to anybody how the purchase price was arrived at.

Q: Talk about appraisals for a moment: When you speak of appraisals in this context, there are two possible ways to appraise. One is saying "as things now stand with the ground lease, as far as it goes."

A: Right.

Q: Another way to appraise it is to say, "On the assumption that a ground lease will be extended." There is going to be a difference in value between those two things.

A: Sure, there will be.

Q: And is that the difference in value that you find that would be subject to the PACB (Public Authorities Control Board), taking a look at that would be a subject of negotiations in terms of what RIOC would derive from a transaction?

A: I think the only thing that can be appraised right now is the time left on the existing lease. I don't know how you can... I mean, just talking about reality, the market reality, when you look at the real-estate world or anywhere else in the world. If you have a ground lease anywhere in the City of New York or anywhere in the State of New York, and then you ask someone to do an appraisal, they'll only look at the time remaining on your lease, unless you're able to negotiate an extension prior to going for the appraisal. I don't know how an appraiser would look at it based upon an assumption of what's going to happen going forward.

Q: I'm trying to get at a piece of this – the difference between the value long-term, with a renewed ground lease out to 2068 – and the value without that extension. Let's presume, for the sake of discussion, that it's in multiple tens of millions of dollars – probably based on the rents that could be derived were the building out of Mitchell-Lama, etc. For instance, let's take Island House: If it were to leave Mitchell-Lama and have a ground-lease extension, it would be far more valuable than if you count only the period of the existing ground lease.

A: Well, what I'm saying is, I don't know appraisers who do appraisals based on hypotheticals. They look at what the reality is of the value of the building as it is currently. And, if you can find an appraiser who would do it, I would imagine then that you'd have to do it based on any number of hypotheticals.

Q: There is one hypothetical which is quite concrete, and that is 2068.

A: Correct.

Q: That's saying that if we got an extension of the ground lease based on some specific level of ground rent and with a certain level of tax abatement, however that would be set, you can then work out the net present value of that situation. And that is, in some sense, the only hypothetical – and a fairly concrete one – that an appraiser would have to consider.

A: Well, I think the other hypothetical that comes into it is, "Is there going to be any preservation of affordability at the buildings, or not?" because that does affect the value. And I think that they are all intricately tied to each other. To me, the extension of the ground lease is tied to the level of affordability – or what the terms of an extension are going to be going forward. It comes down to what the level of affordability is going to be on a going-forward basis.

Resident Equity?

Q: I want to go back for a moment to what I implied before – what people reasonably anticipated might happen. Eleven years ago, when I first took over *The Main Street WIRE*, one of the first stories that I did was with a man at Island House who had spent the previous five years working on a plan for resident ownership. And we looked at the decay in the building and the problems that were being faced in finding a mortgage and getting a ground-lease extension and all of that; and there was no question at that time that people were anticipating an equity participation.

Also, I can tell you, because I live in Rivercross, that there is a very large contingent in Rivercross that were expecting to have their equity available to them, specifically for things like renovation and fixing up their apartments. So there is that concern, and one of the hard questions that people are likely to ask you, and I might just as well ask this now: If that is no longer available to people...

A: I'm not suggesting that it's not.

Q: How does it become available?

A: I think that this deal that has been arrived at is not the only way that they can get to a position where the residents would end up in Island House and Westview or Rivercross maintaining their ownership of the properties. There are many, many ways to cut the cake. And I think that if we are open to a discussion about how... Again, I mean, really – in my mind, the purchase price is what is driving this discussion...

Q: In terms of the Westview deal?

A: Yes.

Q: And theoretically in terms of the Island House deal as well?

A: Yes. Right. If we can get to a point where we're having a reasonable discussion about what the purchase price is – and again, I think it is very fair of us at the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation to say that we want to see an appraisal that justifies that purchase price. We are a public entity subject to scrutiny. As I said, I can't justify the purchase price because I can't say how it was arrived at.

I think that... I am absolutely not giving up on the idea of resident ownership. I support resident ownership. I think it is valuable and I respect and honor the work that people have been putting into these buildings to get to this point. I think what we need to do is open the discussion enough that people... I don't think it's really – well, *fair* is a tough word to use because life isn't fair and we all know that – but I don't know that it is... I find it difficult to accept the fact that we have to take this deal as it has been negotiated

RIRA Column from page 2

tucked out of sight." The first is the governor and Legislature, with the "shadow government" being the public authorities. I bring this up because the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation is a public authority and subject to the Public Authorities Act, passed last year. The editorial goes on to say that the authorities were created to expedite government business but that "they are accountable to almost no one." No one even knows how many public authorities there are! God knows, this horrific state of affairs has impacted the mismanagement of Roosevelt Island over the years.

The editorial continues with a report on legislative reforms that are being considered in Albany, concluding with "Mr. Spitzer, a longtime advocate of reining in the authorities, should be able to work with the Legislature to change the law *this year* [my italics]." RIOC's Steve Shane has charged this misbegotten law with obfuscating the capacity both to fill commercial space on Main Street and to expedite ground lease extensions for Northtown residential buildings.

RIOC should never have been created as a public authority in the first place. The Public Authorities Act, passed last year and often contradicting RIOC's role as a public benefit corporation, has frozen RIOC's ability to act in the best interests of this Island population except, as we saw under the Pataki administration, for sweetheart development deals. The editorial refers to "some very shoddy deals" such as one authority's effort to sell "…the rights to develop miles of shoreline along the Erie Canal for much less than they were worth." That deal was canceled when it came to light; we have to live with ours.

I've been busy reading the bill introduced in Albany as well as the Governor's Memorandum regarding the intended reforms. Whether Roosevelt Island in ten years will resemble the current community, in demographics or in infrastructure, will largely depend on these reforms and how the dichotomy between RIOC's responsibilities as a Public Benefit Corporation and those as a Public Authority are interpreted, possibly by the courts. If you find this worrisome, so do I.

The planning for an election of RIOC Directors continues. A week ago Thursday, we met with Mr. Shane and DHCR Commissioner Deborah VanAmerongen to consider some of her concerns. What to call this process is a question. We are not actually electing the Board members, simply presenting the Island's choices to the Governor for his appointment and the State Senate for their consent. But it's not just a nominating process; without a guarantee that our choices at the polls will be honored (excluding some dire revelation in the vetting process, of course), RIRA's participation cannot continue and we will decline the offer. However, this is a problem in semantics, not in process, and we will certainly find language that satisfies all parties.

Another question raised was "What qualifications must these candidates present for consideration as Board Members?" For the twenty-three years of RIOC's existence, there have been no written qualifications required other than satisfying the Governor that the candidates were competent to hold the position. Should there be qualifications now? I think we came to a meeting of the minds, stipulating that we require the candidates' credentials to be posted prior to the election and then letting you the electorate decide who should be entrusted with the future of a $20 million corporation and, just incidentally, the future of this community. Interesting stuff, no?

And finally, the new Red Bus route has now been in effect for several weeks. I've heard sporadic complaints from both riders and drivers as to long waits at the subway and bus bunching during rush hours. Neighbors, I don't set bus policy, RIOC does. Please address your comments to Steve Shane; he has asked you to do so and he means it. When I convey your comments they are diluted by virtue of coming from just one resident – me. Even as exemplary and true-blue as I am, a critique that reaches the powers that be from multiple sources will have more clout. Remember the squeaky wheel?

VanAmerongen Voices Concerns About Getting Process Right

without having any right or ability to even look into it; and that it's the only option that puts us on the right side as far as people are concerned. And I feel like that's what is being asked of us – that we must accept it as it is written without asking any questions about it; otherwise we are blowing the whole thing up. I think it is appropriate for us to look at it and say, "How did you get to where you are?" and, "Can we possibly re-visit some of the questions here so that we can get comfortable?" And I think that is all we're asking to do.

Q: Looking at it just for a moment from the point of view of, let's say, a Charles Lucido: Thirty years ago or whatever number of years back that a developer decided to put a building on the ground on Roosevelt Island, presumably he would have had a choice: He could have built in Syracuse on land he owned, or he could build on Roosevelt Island on land that he would sub-lease from the State of New York. Did he make a mistake by coming to Roosevelt Island instead of building on land he owned in Syracuse?

A: I don't have Mr. Lucido's financials in front of me, so I have no idea; but I expect that he has gotten some financial gain from his investment in the Island all those years ago. So I would not think it would be a mistake.

Q: Under Mitchell-Lama, what was he allowed to – I don't know the numbers on that – what was he allowed to gain over that period of time?

A: They are known as "limited-profit" or "limited-dividend" companies, and there is a percentage that they are allowed to take in profit. Off the top of my head, I think it's six percent, but I'm not positive that's the right number. So that was the deal that they signed up for. Like I said, I don't have his financials in front of me so I don't know if they have realized all of that profit from their investment in it or not. And we are not saying – to be clear again – we are not saying that they cannot walk away with any money at all, or with any ownership on an ongoing basis. I am open to discussion on both of those points. I think we have to have a way to defend and explain how we arrived at what the price is – what they are walking away with. And I think we have to have some discussion about how many units the owner is going to continue to control and how those will be rented. I think those are all reasonable things to say are on the table and that we want to talk about.



Q: I want to switch to another subject; but before we do, let me just ask if you want to summarize this in any particular way. This will probably be used as a transcript, at least on-line. People will read it avidly multiple times.

A: I'm sure.

Q: So you may want to use it as an opportunity to summarize your position.

Summarizing Privatization

A: What I would say in the case of all three buildings – and again, Rivercross, I have not had the opportunity to get as deeply involved in; Westview is the one that I have spent the most time on and Island House after that – is that, we are asking for an opportunity, as the new team, to engage in a constructive conversation about what is the best outcome for these buildings. We are interested in preserving the maximum extent of affordability as we possibly can, but we're cognizant of the fact that – given market forces and given the possible alternatives, which we would not want to see happen – that we need to be open to discussion on these issues. We are troubled by the characterization of us "slamming the door on people" or "pulling the rug out from under people." I think it's fair – given the fact that we're new – that we have the opportunity to get to a comfort level with what the deal is that's on the table; and if there are some things that can be done to make the deal better – either for the residents in place or for the people who might be coming to the Island in the future – we'd like to have that conversation.

Further Island Development

Q: Let's switch to a couple of other subjects. A lot of people are going to be wondering what your thoughts are about further development on the Island, particularly further construction of buildings. Any thoughts?

A: Well, I have not given any thought to changing what has already been agreed to. I mean, my understanding of the Southtown development is that it is all pretty far along – that there are agreements that have been reached and an expectation for what is going to be done there. Beyond that, I have not had any conversations with anyone about any of the rest of the Island.

Q: Are you open to further development?

A: I haven't honestly given it any thought. I'm being perfectly frank with you. It's not occurred to me. No one has approached me about any possibilities of further development. People have had conversations about capital projects, such as the possibility of doing a ferry service or some things that might entail more construction; but in terms of development – additional residential or anything else – no one has approached me about that and I really haven't gotten there aside from what I know about what has been agreed to already on Southtown.

Q: There are a couple of RFIPs out that anticipated construction: One was on the Coler parking lot; another was in the northern three acres of Southpoint Park or a portion of that; and a couple of other spots. Have you had any conversations...?

A: I have not. I mean, I assume that what happened was that the Board wanted to see what kind of interest was out there, so that they put out... I haven't seen the results from what came in from that. So I really haven't gotten there yet.

An Elected RIOC Board?

Q: Let's switch to the subject that Steve Shane heartened Islanders with when he talked about some system by which residents would be elected to the RIOC Board. Are you comfortable with that?

A: I am slightly uncomfortable with the characterization of it as "election to the Board" because, unless the law is changed, nominations will still have to go through the Governor's office and through criminal background checks and through a Senate confirmation process. We are asking RIRA to participate with us in a process of "nomination." I am meeting with RIRA this afternoon on this to try to make sure that we're all clear about what's being asked. I think [Residents Association President] Matthew Katz, from our conversations, understands those issues and the fact that whatever Steve and I or anybody else associated with DHCR or RIOC would like to see happen, the law reads as the law reads; and people will have to go through that process. We want to have the maximum level of resident participation as we possibly can. People will need to understand, though, that from the point where the residents have reached agreement on who they would like to have on the Board, that other part of the process still has to happen. So that's the one thing that I want to make sure that people understand. I hesitate... I'm concerned about... I'd love to think that the process is all going to play out and it's going to be absolutely fine. I'm concerned about what glitches could come up along the way; and then people say that we're standing in the way of a democratic election. That would be the last thing that I would want people to say about us. We really want to ensure the maximum level of participation, though people do need to understand that the law is what the law is.

The other thing that I want to make clear to RIRA and to folks that are looking at this is: Any candidate, aside from having to pass criminal background checks or get through the Senate, really has to be qualified. Y'know there has been a lot of emphasis... If you read in the articles that have been in the papers lately about Public Authorities and oversight of Public Authorities and new legislation that's going through... that's been proposed right now and is under discussion in Albany, one of the things that they talk about is that members who are appointed to Boards of any organization – this is certainly not RIOC-specific – have to have some experience and the background to be able to participate as Board members and understand the issues that are being presented and make judgments about those issues in such a fashion that they're going to run the corporation in a responsible fashion.

I have been, frankly, very impressed with the level of discourse at the RIOC Board meetings. It is evident to me that those Board members take their responsibilities seriously, study the issues, and because we are fortunate to have at least a couple of members who have particular backgrounds in subjects that we're talking about, can really bring that to the Board meeting. So, I want to ensure that whatever process RIRA goes through in putting together a – I would like for them to call it a *nomination process* as opposed to an *election process* – whatever they go through, that they actually do some vetting themselves ahead of time.

However that is done – and that's really what we're getting to the point of talking about now – that people understand that there is a certain expectation of qualification as well, because we need to have... y'know, you go to every Board meeting, y'know, you need to have some understanding... I mean, I, frankly, am concerned about my ability to understand all the engineering issues entailed in some of the discussions that go on – all those sorts of things. But you need to have some understanding of audit issues, of governance issues, of the finances of the Island – and if you're asked to vote on the budget for the corporation, you need to be able to read that budget and have an understanding of what it says. That's the other thing, aside from my concern about the legal process that is in the statute still has to be complied with, I just want to be sure that the folks that are putting together this nomination process know that they need to look at people's backgrounds as well and ensure that they have the basic level of understanding of the issues that they are going to be asked to vote on.

Q: I think that one of the concerns that has been expressed is the possibility that the best candidates won't come forward unless there is some strong assurance that if they win they will make it all the way through the process. Is that a reasonable concern? Do you think that's going to come up?

A: I don't... I mean, assuming that "the best candidates," as you use that phrase, are ones who are qualified and who have the background that is appropriate for Board service and that they do not have any, y'know, issues in their background or their past that are going to cause them concern in getting through a Senate confirmation process and through the background checking that goes on in the Governor's office – which all of us have had to go through... and it's pretty extensive, I can assure you... If those people are by definition, "the best candidates" – they do have the background that we feel they do need and they don't have any issues in their background that will cause problems, I don't see any reason that they wouldn't be able to get through.

Q: Any downside in the possibility of the Board trying to steer this ship in a way that goes beyond what DHCR is comfortable with?

A: I don't know what the issue would be that would come up. I mean, first of all, as I said, I wear two hats. I have to make a concerted effort at times to separate my roles as Chair of the RIOC Board versus what DHCR has as its responsibility in overseeing affordable housing in the State of New York. Y'know, many, many of the issues that RIOC deals with have absolutely nothing to do with DHCR. There is no reason for me, as Commissioner of DHCR, to be particularly focused on the development of Southpoint Park or on the AVAC system or any of a number of items that go on on the Island; so it's not... I certainly would hope that people who are going to run for nomination are willing to think about the best interests of their neighbors and future residents of the Island, not simply about their own best interests. But other than that, I don't know why anybody would come into it with a position that would cause a problem for the other members of the Board or for DHCR in specific.

Q: Freestyle for a moment: What would you like to say that we haven't covered?

"Absolutely Fascinating"

A: Well, I think, just speaking on a personal level, Roosevelt Island is absolutely fascinating. I had the opportunity to work on some of the issues related to the Island back when I was on the Assembly staff, when I was on Program and Counsel Staff working on the Housing Committee back in the late 80s and early 90s – when I was a child prodigy. I had the opportunity to come to the Island. At that time, the State was still providing a subsidy to the Island, so I was interested in those issues then. I'm very interested now. It's an amazing opportunity to be given the chance to chair the Board and to be directly involved in these issues. I think the people on the Island should be so proud of what they've done. The Island, as I said, at that time was really still dependant on the State subsidy; and the fact that they have gotten to the point now where they are, for the most part, self-sustaining and are realizing the value of the further development of the Octagon Building and of Southtown and are looking at things like the development of Southpoint Park or the possibility of having ferry service... and some of the things... I'm just really pleased to be a part of it and to have the opportunity to engage in these issues. Absolutely fascinating. It really is.

I hope that I have the time going forward to continue to dedicate myself to it. It's a challenge that I continually face. There are pressing housing needs in every area of the State from the Fort Drum area where we've got returning veterans, to the City of Buffalo where they really need to do a huge amount of demolition of abandoned buildings in order just to protect and preserve their neighborhoods..., so it's difficult to find the time that I feel Roosevelt Island deserves. But I'm going to make a concerted effort to do it.



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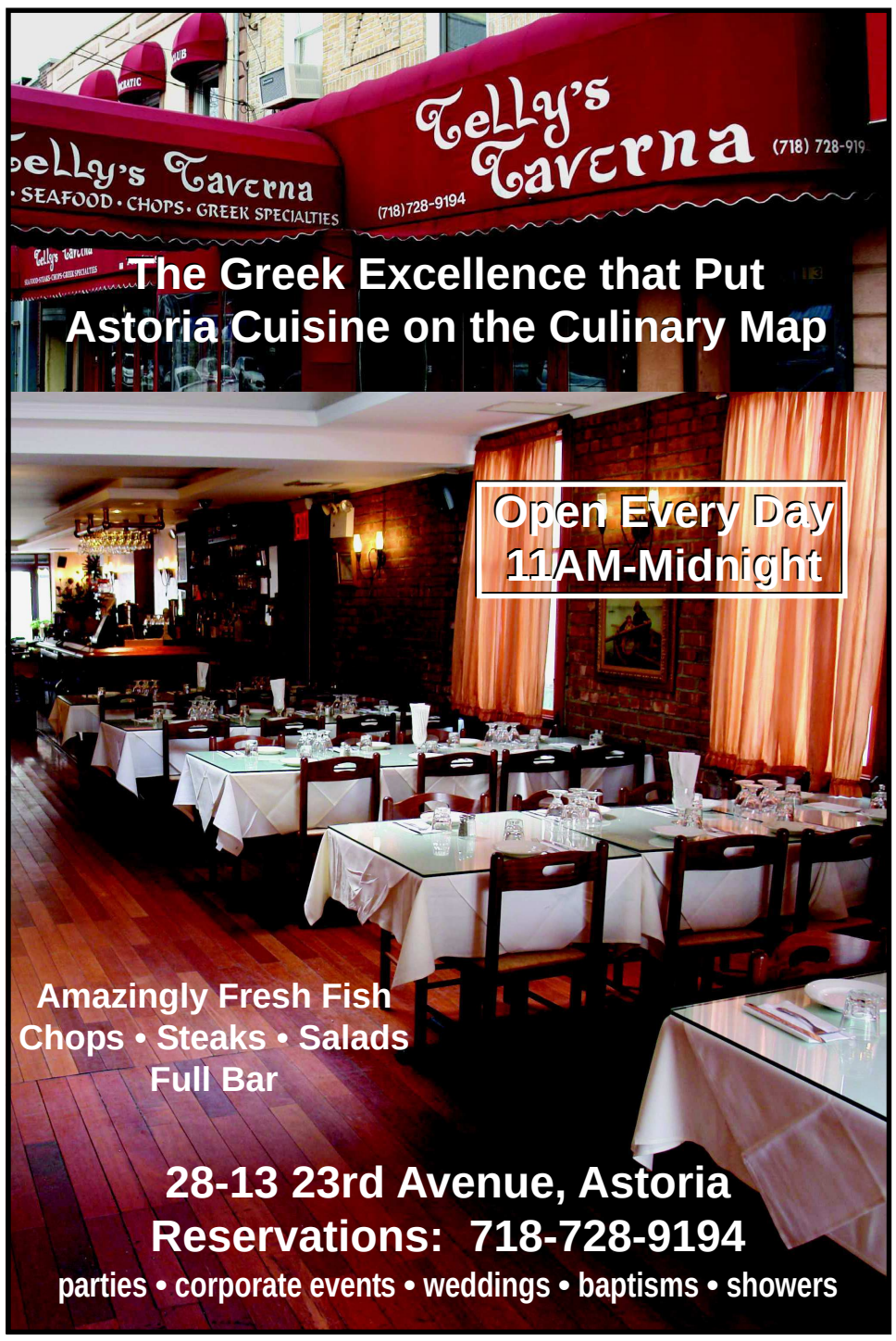


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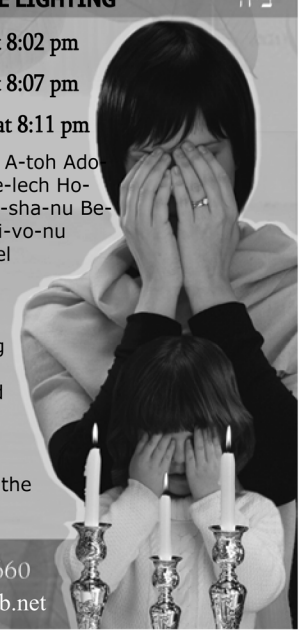
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Letters from page 3

To RIOC President Steve Shane:

Would you please explain to me the thinking behind this new "safety" rule on the bus? How is holding a baby in one arm and a folded stroller in the other (leaving no arms to hold on with) safer than having the baby seated and strapped into a stroller?

In case you have not noticed, there are *lots* of babies on the Island and not one of their mothers thinks that this a good idea. ***Dangerous*** yes, ***unfair*** yes, ***inconvenient*** yes, ***physically impossible*** yes. Good – no!

You can expect to be hearing from many of them.

Also what should one do with the baby while folding the stroller, perhaps lay him or her out on the sidewalk; balance the baby on one's head?

I respectfully ask that RIOC drop this nonsense.

Sasha Odnoralov

Dear Ms. Odnoralov:

The rule will only be applicable during rush hours. Does that ameliorate your concerns? I appreciate your views and we have tried to strike a balance between the safety for the greater number, coupled with the crowding issue, and the needs of those adults who struggle with little ones in strollers.

Steve Shane

Mr. Shane:

Thank you for your quick response. As far as ameliorating my concerns go,

• Can you please let me know what are the defined "rush hours"?

• Please make certain that the bus operators know that this is the policy, as I was refused access to the Red Bus yesterday (Sunday 5/20) at 8:30 p.m.

• It seems to me that, if this is for "rush hours," it pertains more to issues regarding overcrowding on the buses and the Island's inability to handle the increasing volume of public transportation needs. I find it somewhat insulting that this is being packaged as a safety issue! I find little correlation between folding my stroller and increased safety on the bus.

Thanks for your attention in this matter.

Sasha Odnoralov

To RIOC President Steve Shane:

Whoa, where are you coming from? Your first decision to reroute the buses and put them on a non-schedule schedule is a mistake, obvious to anyone living here, but, thankfully, easily remedied. Though imperfect, due to a dearth of buses, the Tram-based schedule has worked for the last 30 years. As my daddy used to say, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. You've got plenty of other things that are.

Like your attitude, Mr. Shane, my daddy would have really liked to fix that. So, your approach to the citizens of this Island is to hold them hostage until you and/or your boss are out of office. To hell with the people living here, let them sue us! It will take 8 years through the courts, and, by then, we will be outta here. That seems to sum up your cynical approach to the matter of privatization. You and your boss will do it your way, no matter the consequences to the community.

What arrogance! If this is the way in which you will govern, it is unacceptable. Furthermore, your approach to privatization is at odds with the realities on the ground. My god, Berman & company were bad enough due to their incompetence and cronyism. But, if your statement holds, you boys are no better. This is not the '70's during a major recession. This is the 21st century and the definition of "middle income," housing costs, etc., have dramatically changed. Not to have a dialogue is unacceptable.

Mr. Shane, as you can tell by our overwhelming Democratic support, most people on this Island have the greatest respect for the present administration. We waited 12 long years for the Pataki reign to end and embraced the Spitzer administration. Were we mistaken? We were keenly aware that privatization was going to be a watershed issue. We were ready to make our case. Therefore, as the Island steward, sit down with those who have plans for the future and give them an honest and open hearing.

There are so many things that need afixin' on this Island. We were hopeful that this administration would commit itself to that task. If you wish to fulfill Governor Cuomo's vision, this could be a new beginning.

Karen Mann

Seeing Shane as an Asset

Commentary by Robert Chira

In order for the three remaining Roosevelt Island Mitchell-Lama buildings to proceed to leave the system and become free-market units, they each need an extension of their ground leases, now set to expire in 2028, to 2068, but last week brought news that RIOC would not go along with that extension if it resulted in the loss of affordable housing units to the free market. This decision, announced by RIOC's president, and articulated in a *WIRE* interview with DHRC's Commissioner Deborah Van Amerongen, was obviously not taken without consultation with the entire Board of Directors of RIOC and the Governor (and perhaps the Mayor), who are under intense political and media pressure to not lose more affordable housing units to the free market. For example, the Governor recently opposed the sale of Starrett City to a private developer and the consequential loss of its affordable units, while the Mayor has promised to build 5,000 affordable units at Queens West to make up for some of the staggering losses of affordable units that have recently occurred. Thus, blaming Shane is not an appropriate response. Indeed, he is just a messenger, but an important one.



Shane is important because, as a real-estate lawyer and professional, he is familiar with administering Roosevelt Island (he was a top assistant to a prior RIOC president in connection with the development of Southtown). And he is able to interpret and negotiate within the Island's complex legal environment. That consists of the following legal documents:

• Master Lease between the State's UDC and the City, with a General Development Plan ("GDP");

• Ground leases made by the State as lessors and the buildings' owners as lessees;

• The Private Housing Finance Law (also known as "Mitchell-Lama"), which gives owners the right to leave the system after 20 years of limited profits and tax abatements and become fully taxable;

• DHCR rules and regulations concerning income eligibility, primary residence, and occupancy composition limits;

• The Act creating RIOC, which assigned the Master Lease from UDC to RIOC but retained UDC's right to collect taxes or their equivalents from the Island's buildings and pass them along to the City; and

• The Public Authorities Law ("PAL"), which has recently been amended to define long-term lease extensions as transfers of property that must return a fair-market value to the State, with certain important exceptions.

In his long career, Shane has negotiated many real-estate deals. Prior RIOC presidents lacked his expertise and experience and, as a result, most discussions and negotiations with them were fruitless.

The key policy and legal conclusion just reached by RIOC resulted from interpreting the mandates of the Master Lease and GDP. According to RIOC, to facilitate free market sales via the grant of an extended ground lease would violate its "core mission" to create and maintain an affordable and diverse Island community for the duration of the 99-year Master Lease. Simply put, RIOC's obligation to the City is to build and maintain affordable housing units for 75% of Northtown and 40% of Southtown with only the balance open to free market sales and rentals. [It is quite clear that the GDP is a legal obligation imposed on RIOC by the Master Lease with the City, not a loose set of principles. For example, one issue resolved in the Southtown lawsuit was whether a six-acre "park" had to separate Southtown from Northtown as mandated by the GDP; although challenged by residents who sued RIOC for not maintaining a six-acre park, the appeals court ruled the GDP six-acre "requirement" was met by the RIOC approved plan.]

Another possible constraint that led to RIOC's decision is the fact that the various ground leases are subject to the Master Lease and GDP. Thus, a question exists as to whether, by granting a lease extension, RIOC would be subverting the Master Lease. In other words, didn't the lessees of the three Mitchell-Lama buildings in Northtown obligate themselves, even after leaving the Mitchell-Lama system, to maintain, for the full term of their ground leases, the parameters of the GDP? Put another way, does their lease obligation present the same legal principle as in those cases in which a "covenant" was determined to "run with the land" and thereby prevent owners from leaving a rent-regulated system because of their prior agreement to maintain the housing stock in accordance with a comprehensive urban development plan akin to the GDP?

Finally, as noted, there is intense political and media pressure on public officials to maintain affordable housing in the face of the many thousands of units that already have been decontrolled and are no longer subject to the protections of the Rent Stabilization and Mitchell-Lama regulated systems. Last year alone, 14,000 rent-regulated units were lost to the free market in the Rent Stabilization program alone. Many more are slated for the free-market system, usually due to a change of ownership and the sky-high real-estate market in Manhattan, including Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village, Starrett City, and Manhattan House. With free-market sale and rental levels reaching all-time highs, the pressure on owners to free units from regulated rents is enormous. That environment only adds to the pressure on RIOC, the City, and the State's other public officials to do what they can to prevent the loss of affordable housing units on Roosevelt Island.

Given the decision not to extend ground leases that would facilitate free-market sales, what can be accomplished by the owners and tenants of the two rental buildings in Northtown (Westview and Island House) and the one remaining Mitchell-Lama co-op at Rivercross? One option is to wait for a new Governor and Mayor who might amend the Master Lease (as was done for Southtown by a 1990 amendment that increased the original 25% to up to 60% of the units that can be sold or rented at market rates). More realistically, in exchange for a lease extension to 2068, the owners of the two rental buildings and Rivercross' tenant shareholders could decide to leave the Mitchell-Lama system but agree to limit rentals and sales to middle- and moderate-income tenants and buyers whose income would otherwise qualify, as though the buildings were still under Mitchell-Lama. If the two rental buildings remain as such, then renewal leases at moderate increases in line with the Rent Stabilization system might also be required to preserve affordability for future tenants. With these income and rental limits in place, the State might be satisfied that it has kept the units "affordable" as well as met its general obligation to adhere to the GDP limiting market rate units to 25% of Northtown. Of course, sales and rentals to a more limited market of buyers and tenants is likely to reduce prices significantly, but that is a trade-off to an extended ground lease that is required to create any substantial value to the units. [Income and rental limits do not solve all aspects of the "affordability" issue, as it still permits those of great wealth (net assets) to qualify despite meeting income limits. But wealth is not a current criterion for remaining in occupancy of affordable housing units.]

While income limits on sales might work to some extent for Rivercross shareholders who already own their units, the rental tenants at Westview and Island House still must first make a deal with the current owners whereby, at a significantly reduced price, they would buy the units. The higher the price sought by the current owners, the more difficult it will be for the tenants to buy units from them and, with limits on sales, the more difficult to generate sufficient revenues to make capital improvements. Thus, any such sale would also have to involve the owner contributing to a reserve fund for capital improvements. Otherwise, the current rental tenants cannot afford to buy their units; moreover, without revenue from free-market sales, the tenants as new owners may not be able to undertake the necessary repairs and improvements. Unless the deal is sweetened for them, it makes little sense for the current tenants to become owners with the right to sell units only to "affordable" buyers. It is, of course, not clear what incentive the current owners have to sell to Westview and Island House tenants at a reduced price plus contribute to a reserve fund, but perhaps they are weary of having regulated Mitchell-Lama units on Roosevelt Island; perhaps they now want to extricate themselves from these investments which that their profits to 6% under the Mitchell-Lama law; or perhaps they have actually invested in these two buildings for tax-loss purposes that may now have little or no further value to them as investors. In any event, untangling the problems facing the current tenants at Westview and Island House is a lot more complicated than solving the "affordability" issue at Rivercross.

Another open question is whether the State would require more than the Mitchell-Lama "affordability" income parameters before extending the ground lease. (Independently, Rivercross may want to impose its own criteria on new buyers such as primary residence and owner occupancy, and adopt family composition rules that are more flexible than those now allowed by DHCR.) Some consideration might be given to those on the current waiting list having rights of first refusal to match outside buyers. Also to be negotiated is the amount of ground rent to be charged by the State for any extended lease term. And, most importantly, with the loss of tax exemptions under the Mitchell-Lama program, what level of taxes is to be imposed on non-Mitchell-Lama units, which are restricted to sale to a limited income market rather than a free one? Obviously, if units are to remain "affordable" to present and future residents, then presumably their owners cannot bear the burden of full real-estate taxes or significantly increased ground rents. Hence, a negotiation of these issues that satisfies not just the State's affordability goals, but also the Island residents' means, must be reached. With respect to the tax issue, those negotiations must involve UDC, which retains the right to collect taxes, and the City, which ultimately has the right to collect them from UDC.

As these negotiations proceed, it is apparent that a number of legal and regulatory issues must be resolved. On top of all this, long-term leases and extensions are now subject to an amended PAL, which requires fair-market value to be obtained by the State unless RIOC determines that a less-than-fair-market value furthers the "public health, safety or welfare or an economic-development interest of the State." Those are broad terms and, in exchange for long-term affordability achieved by the State, it may be able to fit itself within that exception.

Given this context, it is beneficial that the Island have Shane in a position to negotiate for RIOC initially and then persuade DHCR, UDC, and the City to agree to a negotiated agreement. At least he understands the complexity involved and, from professional experience, may be able to work creatively with the residents to achieve their goals. Instead of looking at the decision not to allow free-market sales under an extended ground lease as a "rejection" by him, it presents an opportunity to find creative solutions that meet the various parties' diverse needs. Moreover, given the political and media environment, the time for reaching agreement is now.

Robert Chira, a long time Island resident, practices law in Manhattan.

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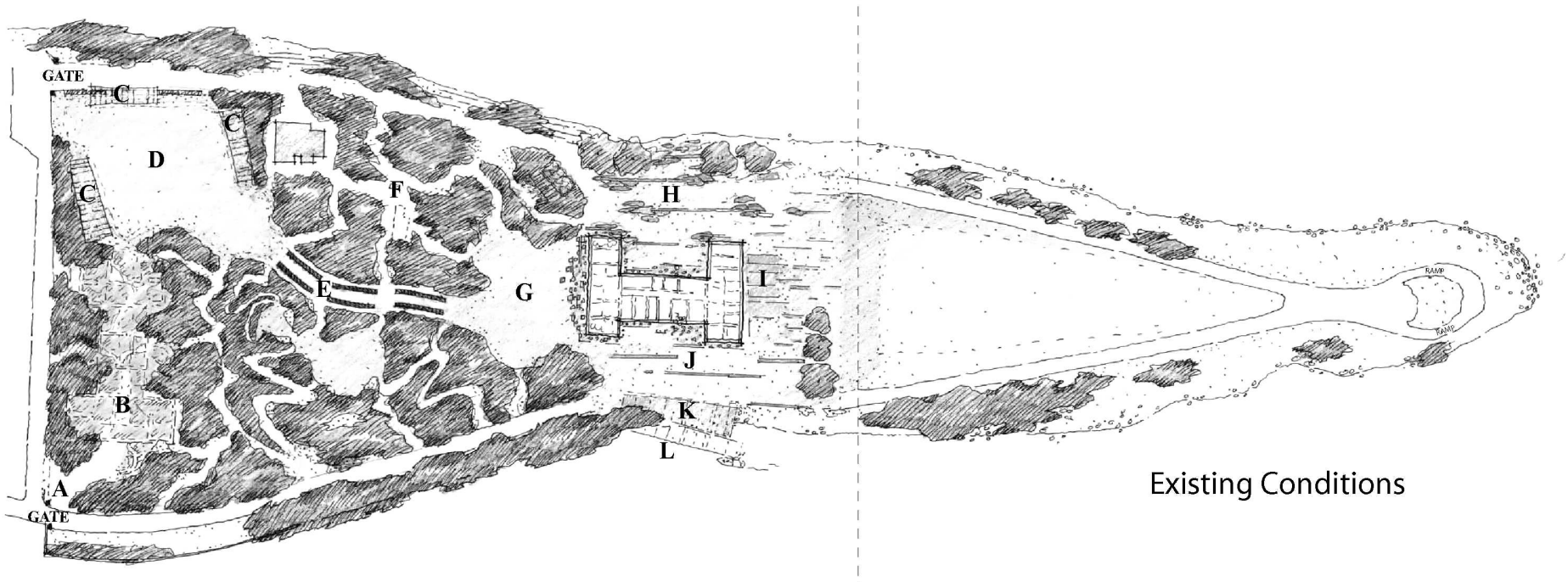
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Planning

Meeting Monday Night Will Show Plan for Southpoint, Phase I



Existing Conditions

Legend

A – Continuously open park entry/hospital garden
B – Raised paths in Sunken Garden
C - Shade Structures
D – Flexible lawn
E – Wild "Channel Garden"
F – Wild Meander Garden
G – Ruin viewing lawn
H – Dining Terrace
I - Stage
J - Viewing Terrace
K - Deck
L - Dock

The Trust for Public Land (TPL) will present the current plan for Phase I of Southpoint Park in a meeting Monday night at 7:00 in the Good Shepherd Community Center. Phase I will develop the eight acres from the south end of the Renwick Ruin to the roadway just below the south campus of Coler-Goldwater Hospital. It will also stabilize the ruin. The design includes performance lawns adjacent to the ruin for performances and special events. The design is by Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC, Landscape Architects, of Philadelphia. The southern half of the park's length, below the ruin, could ultimately become a memorial for Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, under one plan being considered. It depends upon fundraising, however.

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SPORTSWIRE

BASEBALL (May 19 results, week 4; no games May 26)

In Game 1, the Red Falcons beat the Maroon Bombers 13-11 in an exciting game filled with sluggers from both teams. The Bomber's Luca Goldmansour earned the game ball with 2 hits and great fielding at second base. Takeshi, Elijiah and Olivia got 3 hits each, and Andrew Enock had 2 base hits. Elijiah's fielding held 2 runners at their bases, serving as the cut-off man for the outfielders, with Andrew covering homeplate. LaDon Stephany had 3 RBI's with a home run and a triple. For the Red Falcons, the scoring came from Sam Serfaty, who got 4 hits in 4 at bats, hits by Gianluca Yong-Gonzalez and Matthewos Butler, and a grand slam from Jacob Hogan. The outfielders Khalif Cole, Eliva Herrara and Alexander Enoch kept busy keeping the balls in the yard and the Falcons in the game.

In Game 2, There was another slugfest that saw Green beat the Lt. Blue Tigers by a score of 15 –14. For the Tigers, Brock Lucas went 4 for 4 with a double. Adrian Fernandez, BJ Johnson and Luke Kruger-Aimone each went 3 for 4, Adrian with a home run and BJ with a triple. Miguel Aponte and Jordan Johnston both went 2 for 4 with a triple apiece. Luke D'Cruz went 2 for 2, and China Mitchell and Kerwin Barrera each contributed a base hit. Kimberly Dutan batted in the game-tying run in the top of the 6th. The defensive wall of BJ Johnson in right center field and Kerwin Barrera in left center field prevented several extra base hits and kept the game close.

Standings after week 4:

Blue Team:	4 – 0
Red Falcons:	3 – 1
Green Team:	3 – 1
Maroon Team:	2 – 2
Lt Blue Tigers:	0 – 4
Black Mets:	0 – 4

In Game 3, Dark Blue beat the Black Mets by a larger margin, with Sabrina Loureiro's first ever 2-hit game, and another 2 hits by Jonathan Debranche. The power hitting of James Matten and John King provided 4 hits each, while the defense of Coleen Doyle and Gerardo Herrera saved at least 3 runs! Black Mets highlights were provided by Steven Sanchez, who keeps adding to his home run total, and fantastic outfield play and hard hitting by David Franqui.

Playoffs are scheduled for June 9 and June 16 at Capobianco Field. Excitement guaranteed.

Every *WIRE* Friday, a congenial group gathers to "count and stuff," preparing the newspaper for Island-wide delivery. It's a volunteer activity that's a great service and fun, too. Lunch is provided. To join in, call Teri Sheridan at 212-317-7408.

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RIOC Column from page 2

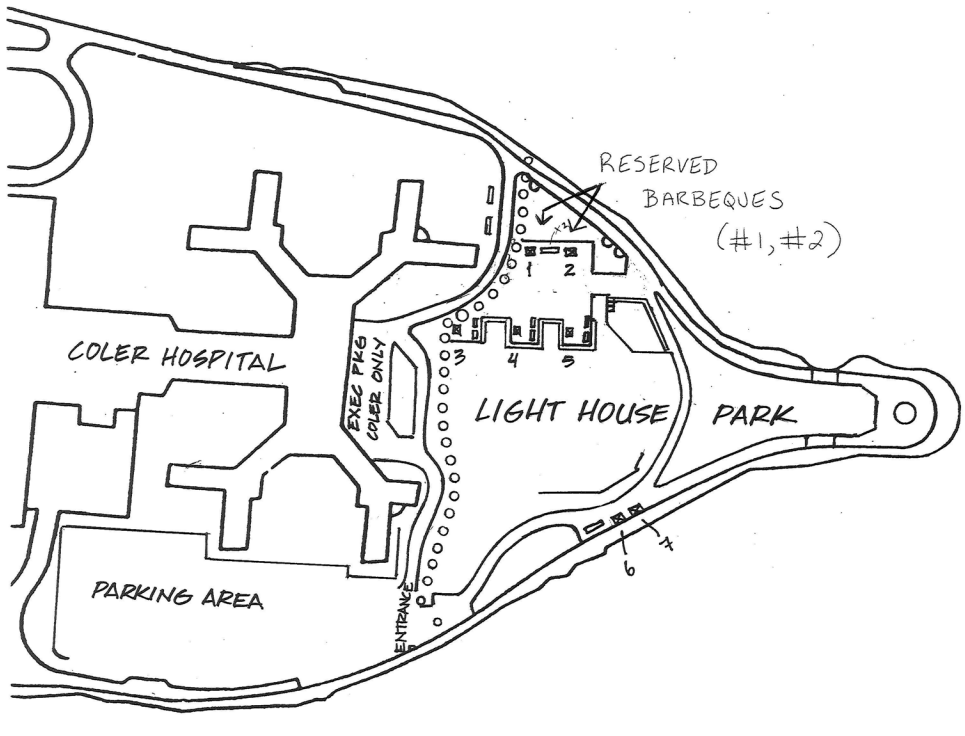
group, working on the democratization of the selection process, met with the Commissioner of Housing, Deborah VanAmerongen, and me to discuss a broad range of issues being worked on by the group, represented by Matthew Katz, Margie Smith, and David Bauer. The issues are complex, as trying to have a representative group of candidates to represent the Island's different constituencies is not simple.

11. Ground-lease extensions and Mitchell Lama buy-outs: The representatives of Island House, Westview, and Rivercross have all continued discussions with DHCR, RIOC, and other governmental agencies to search for a result acceptable to all that would protect existing residents, deal with required capital improvements, provide for affordability for existing and future residents, respect the requirements of the Master Lease and the General Development Plan and, of course, for the rental buildings, at a price the present owners would accept within the limits of the laws under which RIOC operates. Discussions continue.

12. Fourth of July: Planning for the annual celebration of our nation's birth is being done with the aid of an event planner and under the supervision of Erica Wilder and Donna Masly. Promises to be another great event on the Island and, with the cooperation of the weather and the MTA (hopefully extra F-train cars), most enjoyable for all.

13. Roosevelt Island Seniors: Big gathering today (Saturday, June 2). I plan to attend to see if it's true that "Seniors do it best!" Also, Gallery RIVAA is holding an exhibition of *Art from the Heart*, produced by the patients and staff at Coler and Goldwater Hospitals. I've seen some of the works on exhibit and it's well worth the time to look in on the exhibit.

14. Red Bus scheduling: Unhappiness has apparently abated over changes in routing caused by the shutdown of the turnaround loop on commencement of construction of buildings 5 & 6 in Southtown. People have accommodated to the changes. Complaints about the rule requiring strollers to be folded during rush hours have also subsided, as both the user public and the drivers have come to understand that the policy is ***rush hours only***. Sorry for confusion if the time period was misunderstood.



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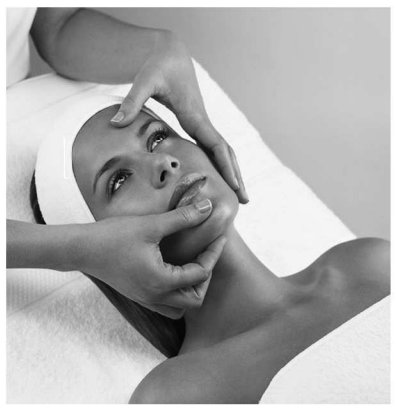
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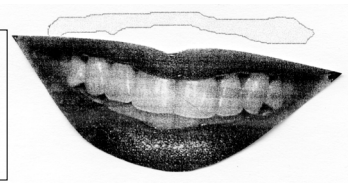
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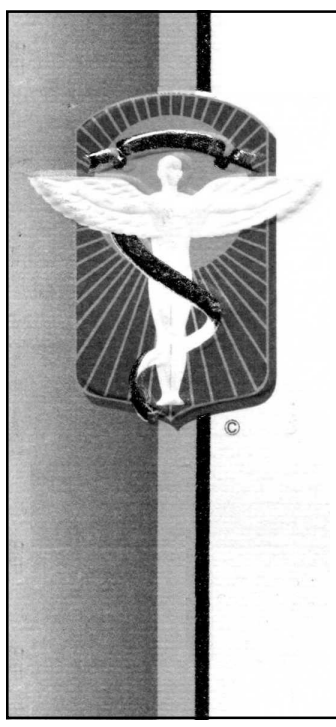
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