

Next issue
in 3 weeks:
Sat., Mar. 14

The Main Street WIRE™

28th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper

Community's Nominees For RIOC Board Prepare To Be Vetted By State

by Dick Lutz

With the February 5 election of the community's nominees to the RIOC Board of Directors now 17 days past, those nominees began meeting this week with the Commissioner of the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), Deborah VanAmerongen, in "meet and greet" sessions.

They met earlier in the week with Islanders who had put together the election – indeed, have worked for a decade to bring the community closer to making RIOC answerable at the ballot box. The effort began when a RIOC President appointed by former Governor George Pataki ran afoul of Roosevelt Island activists by shutting down communications with residents, trying to cut back or kill the Tramway, and floating a series of development schemes, the most-opposed of which was a plan for a twin-tower hotel complex on Southpoint Park.

The six nominees – their names are under their photo – are near the start of a series of steps toward nomination by the Governor to seats on the RIOC Board. The first steps were declaring candidacy, campaigning, and besting four others who ran. Another step taken by at least two nominees this week is the "meet and greet" with VanAmerongen. "She wants to know them before she is called upon by the Governor to represent that these are people he ought to nominate," said the President of RIOC, Steve Shane, this week. "She will be asked for a reference, and I would expect that's a reasonable thing to do."

But Shane also said, "Where it's going to land is far from clear." The community's nominees must survive a background check by the State Police and make a full financial disclosure. Finally, the Governor must send their names to the State Senate for confirmation.

The nominees reported finding some confusion in the community over their exact status, even after the election. It wasn't a traditional direct election, because State law

provides that the Governor must select and appoint the members of the boards of State authorities and public-benefit corporations. The community was voting for *nominees* to the Governor. Two names, in fact, will go through the Mayor, under provisions of the lease between the City and State under which the State is developing and managing the City's Roosevelt Island property here in the East River.

RIRA President Matthew Katz said this week that he expects all six of the community's nominees to be seated on the RIOC Board. He lamented the fact that such a process hadn't happened much earlier. "Ten years ago, I'd have said we can do this in a year, and I really wish we had done it within five years, because most of the development of the Island has occurred over the last seven or eight years. Most of the key decisions that a home-grown, home-elected Board would have made have been made." It has been "devastating" to the Island he said, because "the balance of residential housing, open space, and parkland was changed forever. The balance between low-income, middle-income, and fair-market housing was changed forever. One thousand

three apartments in Eastwood are out of Mitchell-Lama; they will go fair-market over time, taking with them all the disabled and senior

housing on Roosevelt Island. This dramatically changes the fundamental premise of this Island. It is a tragedy. And those decisions are made."

Katz has great hopes for a RIOC Board composed of residents who have stood for election. On Main Street storefronts, for example: "We have been told by RIOC that they are powerless to put new shops in the storefronts on Main Street. This is absurd. There needs to be pressure to make these people get off the dime and do the obvious. I find it impossible to believe that the State of New York is likely to put the President of RIOC in jail or take him to court over putting a

See **Nominees**, page 2



Community-elected nominees for the RIOC Board of Directors met Monday night with members of the Maple Tree Group for a briefing on the likely steps in the appointment process, and posed for a group portrait. Left to right: Jonathan Kalkin, Fay Christian, Frank Farance, Erin Feely-Nahem, Howard Polivy, Kathie Grimm. Some had one-on-one meetings this week with Deborah VanAmerongen of DHCR for a get-acquainted session.

Public Safety Chief Pledges Changes In PSD's Relationship to Community

by Joanne Viera Grimm

The new Director of Public Safety says that he is here to stay. "I come here full of energy, ready to do what I can to put my mark, if you will, on public safety here."

Keith Guerra, a native New Yorker, has turned in his police badge after 20 years of service, and taken on a new challenge in law enforcement as the head of Public Safety on Roosevelt Island.

After graduation from Iona College in Westchester County, Guerra's career in law enforcement to date was in police departments in New York State. He worked in the New York City Police Department for five and a half years, spending approximately a year each in precincts in Washington Heights, the Bronx, and the Upper West Side, and teaching at the Police Academy for two years. Guerra says, "I was one of the physical education instructors, which means that I was in charge of teaching defensive tactics, handcuffing, baton, first aid, CPR, water rescue, things of that nature."

While working in the Bronx, Guerra received a job opportunity that enticed him away from the NYPD, though he maintained his ties and connections to New York City, and went to several NYPD-sponsored training classes. "I chose to transfer to the Greenburgh Police Department, where I was able to work in the training unit, and teach at the police academy in Westchester County, and then was promoted to detective." Guerra remained at the Greenburgh Police Department for 14½ years. It was here that he followed through on his passion for helping children and adolescents. His eyes light up as he talks about working with youth. "My most satisfying experience in police work has been the effect that I've had on young teens and juveniles. I actually spearheaded two programs at my old [Greenburgh] police department."

Guerra instituted the Greenburgh Youth Court, part of the New York State program in which youth who commit non-violent crimes or misdemeanors are tried by trained peers. Reminiscing, Guerra excitedly adds, "The recidivism rate was phenomenal. Out of the 94 convictions or so, there were only two individuals who were re-arrested when they got older."

The other program that Guerra spearheaded was the Greenburgh Summer Police Camp. "It was free of charge to the residents [12-15 years old] in the town to go through a mock police academy type of camp." In a *New York Times* article from the summer of 1998, when the camp began, he's quoted as saying, "What I'm trying to do is establish a friendship and relationship, so the kids will carry it over to their dealings

with other police officers. We want them to be comfortable with the police." As Guerra talks about both programs, he relaxes in his chair, smiling. "So, those two things, and programs like that, working with the youth, are really the thing that has been nearest and dearest to my heart, as far as my career is concerned."

Keith Guerra officially retired on January 30 from his 20 years in police departments. Though he and his wife considered moving their family (including an 8-year-old and a 10-year-old) to Florida, they decided against it. "New York, to me, is the best place to live – *in the world*," Guerra says emphatically, stretching back in his chair with his arms in the air imitating the globe. So, on January 31 he became the

new Director of Public Safety, and was formally introduced to the Island community at the RIOC Board of Directors meeting that day.

When asked about his view of Public Safety's role, he sits a bit taller. "I firmly believe that the residents and employees of the Island benefit greatly from having their own department of public safety." He explains that the only police presence on Roosevelt Island is a patrol car from the 114th Precinct

in Queens, and therefore it is important for this small community to have a constant law enforcement presence that is able to respond quickly to emergencies.

As for his vision of his own position, he eagerly says, "I want to put forth community policing strategies. I want the officers here to have a better and interactive relationship with the residents." Guerra

See **Guerra**, page 8



Public Safety Director Keith Guerra



Members of the Maple Tree Group core working group met early this week with the winners of the February 5 election to select the community's RIOC Board nominees. Kim Lengle (at left) recorded the proceedings for a video report on PressHD.com.

Briefly...

- Black History Month will be celebrated today at the Senior Center (see *ComingUp*, page 3).
- Bonnie Sherk of *A Living Library*, the project that has worked with PS/IS 217 on a courtyard garden, has an exhibit at PS 1 (see *RIRA Column*, page 2).

Nominees from page 1

pizza parlor on Main Street. I don't think anybody's going to notice or care and, if they do, I think the reaction will be to thank him for finding a way around an absurd law." [In his interview with *The WIRE*, Shane said RIOC is working on the problem.]

Shane suggested that the community's campaign to see its nominees through to confirmation "has been pretty obvious... newspaper articles, getting all the political leaders to address the Governor's office..." (Letter, page 8.) He said it "may at some point get to be counterproductive because, you know, you push the Governor around, and sometimes the Governor begins to push back a little bit."

But Assemblymember Micah Kellner, who has pushed the nominations with the Governor's office, told *The WIRE* that "the Governor's office has been only positive. They've been excited by the turnout, and I've only gotten an extremely positive response. They understand how important this is to me and to the Roosevelt Island community. At the end of the day, I think this is going to be a very positive experience for us all."

The Maple Tree Group (MTG), a RIRA subcommittee that mounted a "Drive for Democracy" years ago and then managed the February 5 election, went so far as to hire a lobbyist to smooth the way in Albany. "The lobbyist idea came late on," said MTG Convener David Bauer. "It was suggested that it would be helpful to have someone in Albany who knew the paths to success." He pointed out that MTG got a very low-cost deal with a lobbyist and paid for it with funds MTG has raised in the community over the years.

Asked what MTG might do if success isn't complete, Bauer said,

"We would look carefully to see if we did anything wrong. We would have to reconnoiter." But, he added, speaking of the idea of community self-governance, "Is the idea right? If the idea is right, it seems to me that you should continue."

Shane said new Board members will have a learning curve to contend with. "RIOC is a Corporation with a \$20-million-a-year operating budget, with a zillion moving parts... We run a bus service, we run a Tram, we mow the grass, we collect the garbage." He said the RIOC Board has an oversight responsibility rather than a hands-on responsibility. "When the paid employees of the Corporation... do their stuff and they report to them [the Board], that is pretty much the answer unless they see something philosophical going awry, or they have some particular mission they want to see fulfilled... The Board is not here to run the buses... or mow the grass... I don't need them to give me their input on a specific design [for the Tram]. I will let them know how it's coming and make them aware, but they're not part of the design team."

Shane saw some uncertainty in the implementation of Board appointments because "it's precedential" for other State authorities and Boards. If this process is successful, he said, "the Battery Park City folks will be right behind us at the door to the Governor's office. And right after that would come the Adirondack Preservation Corporation. I'm hypothesizing... To the extent that it would have precedential value, it would vitiate his prerogative. Would that in some way become part of some equal-protection argument?" He said he wouldn't speculate on how it might all play out, but cautioned that the Governor must take all the possibilities into account.



Pulling up to discharge passengers, a Q102 bus nudged a non-support pillar into the Eastwood walkway last week. Nobody was hurt.

The WIRE
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Managing Editor – Dick Lutz
Reporters – Jami Bernard, Mary Camper-Titsingh, Rachel Durfee
Photographers – Maria Casotti, Misha Cohen, Vicki Feinmel, Paul Katz
Chief Proofreader – Linda Heimer
Proofreaders – Ashton Barfield, Dick FitzPatrick, Lillian Shaman
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Mid-February, 2008

1. RIRA-RIOC nominations for the Board of Directors: The six successful candidates are in the process of meeting with the Commissioner of Housing as part of the process before being forwarded to the Governor's Appointments Secretary for vetting.

2. Great excitement when a City Q102 bus ran into a column in front of the hardware store in Eastwood. Happily, no one was seriously injured and the column was not structural.

3. Next RIOC Board of Directors meeting is scheduled for February 28 at 4:30 p.m. in Good Shepherd Community Center, with a town-hall meeting to follow.

4. Personnel: RIOC is pleased to announce the following senior appointments:

(a) CFO: Mr. Steven Chironis has been offered and accepted the position of VP and CFO, and will be introduced at the Board meeting on February 28 and, as a senior officer of RIOC, will require the adoption of a resolution by the Board. Mr. Chironis is a CPA, a graduate of SUNY at Plattsburgh with a BS in Accounting, and resides in Greenlawn, New York.

(b) Comptroller: After an extensive search, RIOC has hired Mr. Muneshwar "Joe" Jagdharry, starting February 19. He was most recently employed as the Comptroller of a health services provider, and has much experience in the administration of government-supervised programs.

5. Renwick Ruins: After the north wall collapsed December 26, officials from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (SHIPO), New York City Landmarks, the Conservancy, and representatives of all the elected officials have been here and examined the ruin together with the engineers and construction folks. The plan for stabilizing is finalized and will proceed quickly, as RIOC has made a finding of emergency to get the

The RIOC Column

The post-election euphoria continues, but tempered with a sense of how much work remains for the members of the Working Group. We've met with the winners to congratulate them, and to familiarize them with fundamental political and legal structures by providing some basic Island documents such as the General Development Plan and the RIOC By-Laws. They mentioned that a certain amount of misinformation still obtains as to what they have been elected to do, even after 10 months of our attempting to explain it, and suggested that we try to be plainer. So here goes:

What just happened was an election to present the community's choices to fill six expired or vacant seats on the RIOC Board of Directors. At the present time, State statutes prevent us from directly electing these folks. And so, through a variety of conduits, we have presented the names and *bona fides* of the winning nominees to the Governor, who makes all the appointments to the Board. Our hope and expectation is that he will recognize the success of the election and the excellence of the candidates, and will recommend their appointment to the State Senate, which must ratify his choices. Clear?

I've read over my last column, a pitiful effort that I attempted to excuse by virtue of exhaustion and too much Champagne. I thanked some of the people who labored on this project but neglected many who are worthy of praise. I believe that others of the Working Group may have letters in this issue of *The WIRE* attempting to cover my gaffe, and I appreciate it. This was a labor of love and conviction, as well as devotion to fundamental democratic values, on the part of many people, Islanders and *auslanders* alike. There is nothing that focuses one's mind on basic principles so dramatically as having them denied!

So what now? Many if not all of the winning candidates have met this week with the DHCR Commissioner and RIOC Board Chair, Deborah VanAmerongen, for a "meet and greet." She assures me that her purpose is not to "cherry-pick" her choices from among our winning six and, in fact, DHCR has never been a part of the appointments process. Over the next few months, if the process plays out as it has in the past, our choices will meet with the Governor's Appointments Office for more formal interviews, and possibly also with the Mayor's Appointments Office, as His Honor gets to recommend up to two candidates to the Governor. They will complete voluminous paperwork and stand for a State Police investigation. (Earlier this week I suggested to the six that, if any of them had a serial murder conviction on their records, perhaps they should reveal it now!) The Gov-

The RIRA Column

work under way as quickly as possible to avoid further collapse. The structure has deteriorated to the point where the safety of any work to be done is quite problematic. Contracts should be executed by the end of the month. Stay tuned.

6. I have met with the Operations Analysis, Rail Service Planning, and Community Relations persons from the MTA, occasioned by the MTA's desire to get in on the Verdant Power exercise. Using the opportunity, I discussed the F train scheduling, both as to morning rush hour crowding and weekend outages, especially in light of the pending Tram outage in 2009. I was promised a schedule of weekend interruptions to meet the work plan and the projected completion. I asked for and was promised a work schedule for the escalators and elevators, so at least we'd have some idea of the program and timeline. I discussed the Tram outage schedule and the need for coordination. We discussed the possibility of interim ferry service and they said they'd be cooperative (bus lines at 34th Street) but, given the issues with the Coast Guard and the lack of useful landing sites on the Manhattan shore, thought it unlikely to be very fruitful as an alternative to the subway. I told them of RIOC's plan to run the Red Bus over to Queens Plaza during the Tram outage. Finally, they wanted to assure RIOC of their awareness of and greater cooperation for the Fourth of July event. All in all, a good meeting and, hopefully, productive. I will publish their information as soon as I receive it.



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

ernor may expedite the process in order to fill terms that have long-since expired, but I think it's likely that it may take some considerable time. That's okay: these neighbors will be controlling a \$30 million operating budget and our futures, so let's get it right.

Affordable Housing Revisited

In my last column, I mentioned a letter to Commissioner VanAmerongen written by Assemblymember Micah Kellner and endorsed by our local elected representatives, that expressed concern about the nature and quantity of affordable housing available now or in the future within the Southtown complex of residential buildings. Hudson Companies spokesperson David Kramer responded to Kellner and I found his comments interesting. He correctly quoted the General Development Plan (the GDP is a part of the Master Lease between the City and the State that sets specific ratios of affordable units within both Northtown and Southtown), which states, "Bedroom distributions in both the North Town Area and the South Town Area will offer accommodations for a substantial number of families with one or more children and for hospital employees." I seriously doubt whether anyone is enforcing requirements for families with children, but much of the affordable housing obligation apparently has been satisfied through leases to medical and academic institutions. He goes on to state, "...I will point out how difficult it is to work within the budgetary confines of any of the City or State's affordable housing programs..." and I suspect that is true.

However, that response doesn't solve New York City's affordable-housing crisis, which involves many people unfiliated with hospital or teaching facilities who can no longer afford to live within the five boroughs. We ask police officers and other City workers to live in the City, but where are they (and we) to go if the affordable stock is dramatically less than what is needed and if, as Mr. Kramer says, City and State incentives to build low-cost housing have dried up?

Roosevelt Island was supposed to be a haven for a financially diverse population to co-exist and, indeed, was so for the first 30 years of its existence. That



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

COMING UP

— This Weekend —

Black History Month Observance, today (Sat., Feb. 23), 2:00 p.m., Senior Center, 546 Main St. Musical performances, readings, group singing. Free. *Visage*, a **Gallery RIVAA** exhibit, continues through March 2. Gallery hours: **Sat.-Sun.**, 11:00-5:00; **Wed. & Fri.**, 6:00-9:00. ▷



— The Coming Week —

East Side Sustainability Summit, Mon., Feb. 25, 6:00 p.m., Hunter College, 129 E. 79th St. (Park/Lex), on simple ways to improve the environment. Moderated by City Councilmember Jessica Lappin, with a panel of activists and environmental specialists; co-sponsored by Community Boards 6 & 8, others.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Feb. 25, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. For location and information, call **212-751-9577**.

Constituent Service Hours for Assemblymember Micah Kellner, **Thur., Feb. 28** (and every Thursday), 3:00-7:00 p.m., RIOC office, 591 Main Street.

RIOC Board Meeting, Thur., Feb. 28, 4:30 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center. Town-hall meeting, at end of formal session, for resident comments and questions.

PTA Meeting at PS/IS 217, **Thur., Feb. 28**, 6:00 p.m., school library. Pizza and babysitting provided.

Preparatory Meeting and Lecture for *A Necessary Music*, a musical film about Roosevelt Island (see story, page 8), **Fri., Feb. 29**, 7:00 p.m., Gallery RIVAA.

Luv, a reading of the Murray Schisgal comedy of the 1960s, **Thur., Feb. 28**, 7:30 p.m., Main Street Theatre. \$5. **212-371-4449**. Enter behind hardware/video store.

— Future Weeks —

Roosevelt Island Open Swim Championship, Sat., Mar. 1, 9:30-11:30 a.m., Sportspark, sponsored by the Marlins Swim Team. Ages 4 to 100; awards for each age group. \$10 to participate, \$5 to watch. Information: marlinswim@yahoo.com or **917-518-9004**.

Constituent Service Hours for State Sen. José Serrano, **Tue., Mar. 4**, 3:00-7:00 p.m., RIOC office, 591 Main St. Info: **212-828-5829**.

Residents Association Common Council meeting, **Wed., Mar. 5**, 8:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center (lower level); meetings are open to all, and begin with an opportunity for residents to address the Council.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Mar. 10, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. For location and information, call **212-751-9577**.

The Main Street WIRE – Next issue, **Sat., Mar. 15**. (To receive e-mail bulletins between issues, send an *AddMe* message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Advertising Deadlines:** Ads in the paper, **Thur., Mar. 6**; decision on circulars/inserts for *The Bag*, **Mon., Mar. 10**; they are due **Thur., Mar. 13**. **Additional issues in 2008:** Mar. 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; then every two weeks starting Jan. 17, 2009. **News phone, 212-826-9055**; urgent matters, **917-617-0449**. **Advertising**, display and classified: **212-751-8214**.

Smokey Joe's Cafe "Light" at the Main Street Theatre & Dance Alliance, featuring performances of music from the show by students of MST's Musical Theatre Workshop, **Sat., Mar. 15**, 7:30 p.m., and **Sun., Mar. 16**, 3:00 p.m., Howe Theatre, MST&DA, 548 Main St. (enter behind the hardware/video store). \$8.00. **212-371-4449**.

Book Discussion – *Dubliners* by James Joyce, **Thur., Mar. 20**, 6:30 p.m., New York Public Library Roosevelt Island branch. Books available at library.

Free Mammograms, Sat., Mar. 22, beginning at 9:00 a.m.; in van at 591 Main St. Appointment required; call Erica at **212-832-4540**. Sponsored by RIOC, the Women's Outreach Network, and the American-Italian Cancer Foundation.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Mar. 24, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. For location and information, call **212-751-9577**.

Constituent Service Hours for State Sen. José Serrano, **Tue., Apr. 1**, 3:00-7:00 p.m., RIOC office, 591 Main St. Information: **212-828-5829**.

Residents Association Common Council meeting, **Wed., Apr. 2**, 8:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Community Center (lower level).

Senior Center

Monday
9:30, **Hawaiian Hula**
10:30, **English as 2nd Language**
12:30, **"Oldies" Movies**
6:00, **Yoga**

Tuesday
9:00-1:00, **Tax Help**
9:30, **Get Stronger Bones**
10:30, **Blood Pressure**
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**

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

Special Events
Museum of Natural History
Trip, Mon., Feb. 25, 12 noon

Home-delivered meals 212-744-5022, ext. 1203

Letters

To the Editor:

According to a February 9 article in *The WIRE*, a resident RIOC Board member was advised that current Board members did not have to run in the recent Board-nominee election in order to retain their seats on the Board. If this is the policy, and it continues, it eliminates any real value of this new nomination process.

Normally, voters retain incumbents or vote them out of office based largely on the voters' opinion of the job they're doing. If Roosevelt Islanders have the opportunity to vote two years from now on a slate of candidates that includes incumbents and challengers, then voters can hold Board members accountable for their positions and votes on issues. That accountability is what Roosevelt Islanders are really after. But if, as is now rumored, the community's input is not sought on whether incumbents continue as Board members, then the voices of the Island's residents can be ignored by RIOC Board members without consequence, as has always been the case.

From the community's point of view, this should not be the policy. Incumbents should serve additional terms at the community's, not the Governor's, discretion.

If that is or becomes the Governor's policy, there is a way for the community to circumvent it. Resident Board members, including those who are about to join and any continuing from before, can pledge that, if they are not planning to resign from the Board at the end of their term, they will participate in the next election.

And if Board members pledge to step down if they don't receive enough community votes to retain their seat – even if the Governor wishes to keep them on the Board – then the community can trump some of the Governor's role, and get some needed accountability.

Marc Diamond

To the Editor:

I was walking along Main Street when I noticed a cab stopped in the road, nose-to-nose with a Public Safety car. I asked the driver what he had done. He told me he had made a U-turn.

A Public Safety Officer came up behind me, pulled me away, and asked me what I had just said to the taxi driver. When I told him, he said that it was none of my business. I told him that, as a long-time resident of Roosevelt Island, everything that happens here is my business. He said that he was going to give me a summons for interfering with a Peace Officer.

When I tried to get back onto the sidewalk, he told his fellow officer to hold onto me. I shook him off and tried to take out my ID. He said, "Don't reach!" as if I were a street punk and continued to manhandle me (totally unnecessary). I continued to pull myself out of his grasp – all this, in broad daylight, with people watching. I was humiliated.

The first Peace Officer than said, "Now you're getting a summons for disorderly conduct." What for? A female officer said, "Flailing your arms about is definitely disorderly conduct." It felt as if I were in a Mack Sennett "Keystone Cops" comedy... but this was not funny. I went with them to their office, was given two summonses (Failure to Comply & Disorderly Conduct). I have to appear in Criminal Court, 9:00 a.m., on April 11.

What is going on here?

I am 75 yrs. old, retired with the rank of Captain after 39 years with the FDNY. During my long career I had to appear *many* times, in Criminal Court, as a witness, in arson and arson murder cases. This will be the first time in my life that I will be appearing as a defendant. Go figure...

John Connelly

To the Newly-Elected RIOC Board*:

After attending your meeting on Saturday, February 2, I was very upset that you keep talking against Eastwood. What gives you guys the right to knock our building? None of you live here!

Some of your remarks (the Eastwood Building Committee) you accused us of sneaking out of the Mitchell-Lama contract. The EBC committee with management and two sets of lawyers met for over a year discussing the best way to get out of the program. Not to hurt anyone.

Why not discuss the evictions you keep mentioning with the committee? People got evicted for non-payment of rent, undesirable behavior. Before you go on accusing Jerome Belson of doing an illegal act, why not discuss it with our lawyer?

Fay Vass

Eastwood Building Committee

***Editor's note:** The February 2 meeting referenced was an appearance of candidates for community nomination to the RIOC Board. Although six were nominated by the community in the February 5 balloting, none has yet been appointed to the RIOC Board.

Additional letter on page 10

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*. Recommended method of submission: E-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com or submit 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 531 Main Street; allow extra time for typesetting. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered, if brief. We are not able to take telephone dictation of letters. All letters subject to acceptance and editing for length and clarity. Recommended maximum length, 350 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space.

Letters deadline for Mar. 15 issue: Tuesday, Mar. 11.
After deadline, letters considered on a space-available basis.

To the Editor:

For most Americans, the term "Super Tuesday" (2/5/08) referred to Presidential Primaries that took place in many states. Well, on Roosevelt Island we participated in "Super-*Duper* Tuesday" by including ourselves in the election process in a very wonderful and local way. The RIRA/Maple Tree Group (MTG) nine-member "Core Working Group" pulled off a most astonishing event! Now that we've had some time to rest and recuperate, as the appointed PR point-person, I must thank many individuals for their help and support through our grand publicity storm.

Linda Heimer, one among our small group of MTG members, helped with the posting of the posters you saw in various store windows, as did David Bauer and his vertically-advantaged son. All these posters were produced in short-order, and gratis, by Tad Sudol, President of RIVAA. They were colorful and said what needed to be said to get you into the voting booth. And they did!

Erica Wilder, RIOC's community liaison, answered every phone call and every e-mail, no matter how many times I called and e-mailed to confirm, reconfirm, and then just one more time to confirm again, whatever the question or issue. She responded cheerfully and unflinchingly to every e-mail. One of the best surprises was when Steve Shane told Erica that we could put "stuff" *on the Tram*, as we were "comin' round the bend" to the momentous date! Now, that's a coup! Later, when the banner cable was torn off the Eastwood wall late in the day during extremely high winds, Erica and I had a Dr. Spock moment where our minds melded and both of us said "Capobianco Fence!"

My thanks to Steve Shane, and especially to Erica and her great, good humor (and for understanding about my eyebrows). Oh, yes, don't let me leave out Kenny Basdeo, who works in RIOC's Facilities Department. He drove around with me, before we received the banners, to seek out possible hanging locations. He was very helpful and worked with me hanging them. By the way, Kenny has reached a sort of "stardom" as he appears in the first set of Kim Lengle's videos of the banner hanging in that cantankerous basket truck! Kim's election video clips can and should be viewed at PressHD.com.

I must also thank Doryne Isley, Manager at Eastwood, and Jennifer Jones at RY Management, both of whom made copies or took mine and distributed them twice over, to all their respective tenants – 1,700 apartments!

Thanks also to Ricardo Vasquez, a former Island resident now working for Hard Copy Printers. He worked patiently with me, producing banners hung at the subway and over Main Street. He also produced the wonderful heavy-duty paper banners you saw at the top of the kiosks on Main Street, and with massive copying of reminders of the candidate events and voting that were stuffed in *The WIRE* for buildings that don't allow door drops.

And to Roosevelt Island Residents: Thank you for turning out and making our Election Day  a triumph.

Sherie Helstien
Secretary, RIRA
Member, Maple Tree Group

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Shirley Gatling

Our beloved friend and longtime Island House resident, Shirley Gatling, made her transition on Sunday, February 10, 2008. The wake was held on Thursday, February 14, with funeral services on Friday, February 15.



Shirley was spiritually motivated, an evolved woman who never failed to remind us that “God is in charge” and that the “Universe is in divine order.” She ended most of her encounters with her neighbors and friends with, “Have a Blessed Day.” She would call many of us, daily, and read *Unity's Daily Word* or other inspirational writings, and/or to inspire us to think a good thought and not let opinions of others ruin our day or our lives. Rarely was there an unkind word about anyone, and if she heard something negative about a person, she would pray for them. And, lest we forget, most will remember how she never hesitated to let us know that we were “Magnificent.”

Shirley was truly blessed, and those of us who had the privilege of knowing her knew that we were always in her prayers and she will continue to be in ours. She will be missed.

-Phyllis Thomas

Marieta Oprea

On January 30, Marieta Oprea, whom many people on Roosevelt Island knew simply as Mama Eta, passed away peacefully in her sleep. Although she had not lived on Roosevelt Island for almost three years, she had always considered it her home and had fond thoughts and memories of the members of her community.



Marieta Oprea was born in Galati, Romania on May 3, 1924. She married Nicolae Oprea in 1949 and had two sons, Radu and Dan. She immigrated to the United States with her family in 1986 during the height of communism in Romania. They moved onto Roosevelt Island in 1987, where she was a resident of Eastwood until she suffered a stroke in 2005, forcing her to relocate to a rehabilitation center in Astoria. She is survived by her sons, their wives, Emilia and Andrea, and her granddaughters, Denisa and Stephanie. Radu, Emilia, and Denisa currently live in Rivercross.

Marieta was an extremely generous and selfless person, who would put anybody's wants or needs before her own.

She would gladly give up a meal or take the clothes off of her back for somebody who was less fortunate. She loved children, and would always give them food or treats any time they would ring her doorbell. She was an exceptionally good cook, and loved to sing and recite poetry.

She will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

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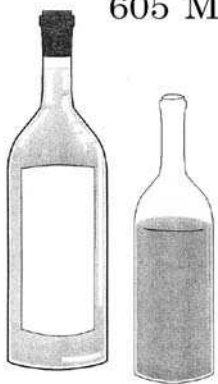
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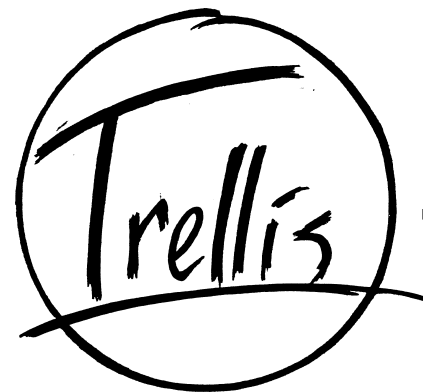
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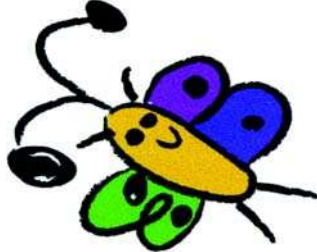
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These children came out to celebrate the Chinese New Year two weeks ago, braving the cold and making a joyful noise on Main Street. They brought their teachers and a parent or two along to help them.

Guerra from page 1

confides that he was informed in his interview about the current climate between the community and the Public Safety officers. “I want to improve the way that my officers are perceived by the residents here on the Island.”

Guerra plans on effecting this improvement by changing the uniform and by having the officers go through training and retraining. “They will be going through a number of different trainings whereby they are going to raise their proficiency in defensive tactics.” Guerra says that they will be specifically trained in “verbal Judo, a martial art of the mind and mouth,” which “consists of being able to interact verbally with the public, whether that’s engaging in a conversation that is very pleasant... all the way up the scale to a conversation that may be confrontational in its nature.” He says that they will also be changing the current baton, “which appears to be a stick or a club,” to an expandable baton, “which is more of a defensive instrument with offensive capabilities. And I think that those types of changes will be able to [improve] that image – if you will, the relationship between the officers and the public.”

In his first three weeks, he has been getting his feet wet. One member of the RIRA Common Council joked at a February 6 meeting that Guerra could never

be found because he had already taken a running start and was too busy to sit at his desk. In the presence of his officers, he seems relaxed and able to joke, though there is an undercurrent of formality. As he kidded with the officers while pictures were being taken for *The WIRE*, they seemed unsure about the extent to which they could be informal in response.

As he settles into his new job, Guerra says that he would love to be greeted by people and to meet people on the Island. “I do like to interact with the public. There are a lot of fascinating people here on the Island.” (He says that he’s easily identifiable because he’s the person at Public Safety who’s always in a suit.) “I do want individuals who have items of concern to bring them to my attention, so that during this getting-to-know-you process I would like there to be some dialogue and some feedback. I do represent my department and I am going to support them. However, I want the job done correctly and I want it done with professionalism, with courtesy.”

He knows that his goal of creating a better relationship between the community and Public Safety is not going to be reached easily, but he says, “What I would like is that we do this together. I am a result-oriented individual. I have goals... and they get done.” Guerra adds, “I know it’s difficult because there was a little bit of a gap in the leadership here. But if they give me a chance and an opportunity, they will definitely see results.”

When a RIOC staff member sees him and jokes that he is surprised Guerra is still here, he laughs, but then says soberly that he’s not going anywhere soon. As he said at the RIRA meeting and again for this interview, “I don’t look at this as a stepping-stone job. I look to be here for a while.”

Every WIRE Friday at 10, a congenial group gathers to stuff and count the newspaper for distribution. Join us!

Call Teri Sheridan at 212-319-7408 or e-mail editor@MainStreetWIRE.com. Lunch is provided.

Elected Reps Back Community’s Nominees for RIOC Board in Letter to Governor Eliot Spitzer

Governor Eliot Spitzer
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Spitzer:

We are writing to you as the local elected officials who represent the residents of Roosevelt Island. As you know, Roosevelt Island is governed by the Roosevelt Island Operation Corporation (RIOC), a public benefit corporation whose board members are appointed by you as Governor. For many years now, Roosevelt Islanders have sought a greater role and a more democratic voice in determining the future direction and operation of their island home.

In response to the Islanders’ calls for better representation on the RIOC Board of Directors and in the affairs of running the Island, the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA) held an Island-wide referendum on February 5, 2008 to recommend residents’ choices for filling the six vacant or expired Board seats. Turnout for this historic vote was unprecedented. More people voted for the RIOC Board than for the Presidential primary or in the 2006 elections. Altogether, 1,718 votes were cast.

The top six candidates were Kathie Grimm, Jonathan Kalkin, Frank Farance, Erin Feely-Nahem, Fay Christian, and Howard Polivy. These individuals truly represent the diverse nature of Roosevelt Island and include a pediatrician, lawyer/entrepreneur, systems analyst, social worker (who runs a women’s shelter), teacher, and an actuary. Together they represent hundreds of years of Island residency and activism.

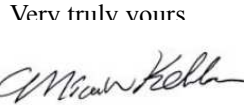
We applaud the results of this recommendation vote as a stunning example of civic activism and democracy in action, and we hope that you share in that sentiment. We hope that your Appointments Committee will soon be providing vetting materials to the Island’s preferred RIOC Board of Directors candidates.

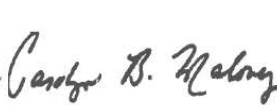
We are very supportive of the process undertaken by our constituents and we request that you appoint the six winning candidates to the RIOC Board of Directors so, as set out by statute, they may be confirmed by the State Senate as swiftly as possible.

Verv truly yours


José M. Serrano
State Senator


Jessica S. Lappin
Council Member


Micah Z. Kellner
Assembly Member


Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

Island and Islanders to Star in a Planned Film

Two doctoral students are planning a musical film about Roosevelt Island. They’re holding a meeting about it Friday evening at Gallery RIVAA (see *ComingUp*, page 3).

A Necessary Music is to be a “musically conceived performance for film” that will “investigate the utopian social community of Roosevelt Island through a series of situation- and event-based compositions developed in collaboration with its inhabitants,” according to a project description provided to *The WIRE* by artist Beatrice Gibson and composer Alex Waterman.

Waterman is a PhD candidate at NYU with a focus on avant-garde and experimental music. Gibson is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Research Architecture in London, and a studio artist in residence at the Whitney Museum of Modern Art in New York.

The film to be produced is described as “using a musical model to examine a political, social, and spatial one, investigating the aural life of the Island by searching for an ‘island music’ in collaboration with its inhabitants.” It will “invite the residents of the Island to participate in an aural and ‘ethnographic’ enquiry that attempts through conversation with its participants to listen to, reveal, and eventually restage the varying and multiple musics that exist on the Island.”



Beatrice Gibson



Alex Waterman

be] reconstructed in sound. In the specific case of Roosevelt Island we will ask how the conspicuous lack of built-in infrastructures of mass entertainment, tourism, and consumer culture encourages or inhibits the production of sound... *A Necessary Music* will stage a series of scripted events developed collaboratively and in response to conversations with the Island’s inhabitants.”

PS/IS 217 Lists Honor Roll

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Silver Level
Uzair Amin, Qwameesha Brown, Kevin Kabadi, Andrew Marzan, Robert Mely, James Mero, Anthony Ramsumare, Jade Rigos, Amy Tarar, Esther Turay.

Bronze Level
Saad Afif, Ramon Guzman, Song Hong, Sahiem Lockwood, Eric Mero, Roy Mosquitta, Robert Ruiz, Arslan Tarar, Ndilimeke Thomas, Esma Williams.

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The Roosevelt Island Chamber of Commerce has provided a list of Island merchants and organizations that contributed toward holiday lighting on Main Street.

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PTA of PS/IS 217	1 pole	275
Roosevelt Island Disabled Association		100
Roosevelt Island Senior Association		100
Trellis		100
Tennis Association		100
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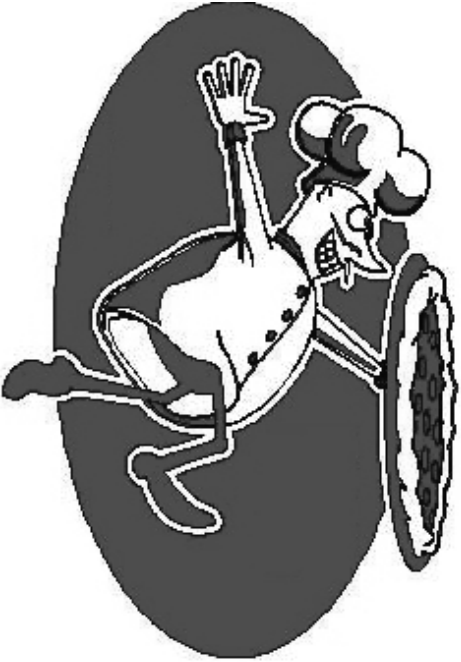
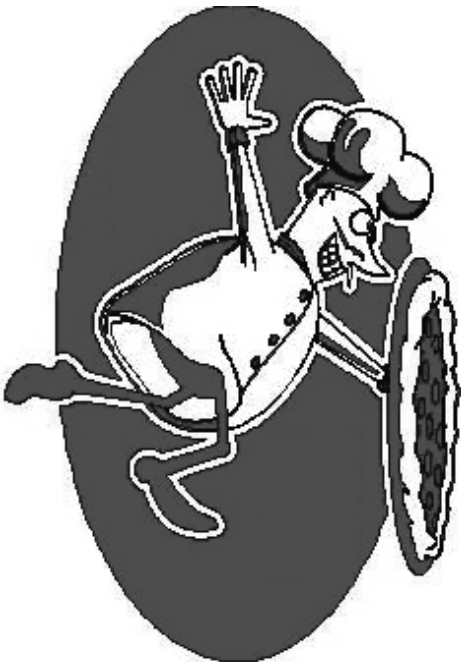
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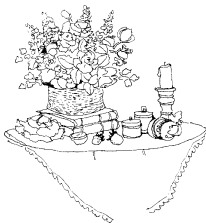
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Deadline for March 15 issue: Tuesday, March 11
Deadline for March 29 issue: Tuesday, March 25

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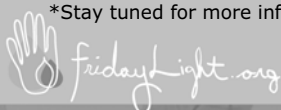
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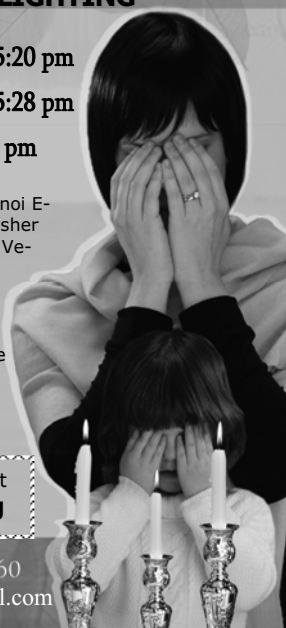


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SHABBAT CANDLE LIGHTING

- Friday, February 22 at 5:20 pm
- Friday, February 29 at 5:28 pm
- Friday, March 7 at 5:36 pm

Blessing: Boruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech Ho-olom A-sher Ki-de-sha-nu Be-mitz-vo-sov Ve-tzi-vo-nu Le-had-lik Ner Shel Sha-bos Ko-desh.
Translation: Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us to kindle the light of the holy Shabbat.
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Letters from page 3

To the Editor:

For FDR Memorial – 4 Freedoms Park, by Louis Kahn, at Southpoint

One day soon, at Southpoint’s Louis Kahn Memorial – 4 Freedoms Park, Time and tide will stop and you and me and us all, Children and adults, scholars and workers, toilers and gawkers, Sitting and reading, singing and playing, Writing and reflecting, walking and chatting, Will become witnesses of history And living recorders of our moment.

Its peaceful, grassy lawn Will let us all forget Our short, tumultuous lives, The endless fight, one’s own Or someone else’s grimmer, harsher plight.

Curled up on benches made Of Island-quarried stone, We’ll count the barges, ships and skiffs Pulling and hauling, moving further North Undeterred by the toll and toil Of human fate, by the endless debates Under the official UN dome.

And we’ll know we’re all A little better off for gazing At the Louis Kahn Memorial illuminated till dawn, As we remember FDR’s words and as we pray.

We’ll hear the laughter of a child Flying a piebald kite, or the sounds of a picnic, Our lively morning stroll enriched By a sense of living history: the haunted Gothic arches of Renwick ruins Where gulls still prowl, amid the Memorial’s rocks and stones Warmed by the sun, as the seasons come and go, As the treetops above their humble pillars bordering the lawn, Change from celadon to copper then to sugary snow And finally to glossy green.

There will always be a welcome for myriad visitors and Island natives, both. What better place than Louis Kahn Memorial – 4 Freedoms Park, Inspired by its design, with modesty and majesty In perfect harmony, to ponder the present and the future, Of our planet, before it’s too late, Since even Rockefeller Center’s Atlas, Has transferred his burden to others, To you and me and us all.

Laurence Lacoste Brodsky

RIRA Column from page 2

promise is evaporating before our eyes, and our newest residential construction is not providing and will not provide a solution. What a pity.

Did You Know?

Did you know that a world-class art installation exists in Long Island City not far from our Roosevelt Island Bridge? PS 1 Contemporary Art Center, an affiliate of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), is hosting “WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution,” an International Traveling Exhibit, already shown in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., that will proceed to Vancouver, B.C., when its current New York run ends May 10.

I mention this because the exhibition includes *Crossroads Community (the Farm)*, a presentation by Bonnie Sherk whose impact on Southpoint Park and on PS/IS 217 has been chronicled in this column. This is a visual recounting of an early (1974) “Life Frame” that “...resulted in the ecological transformation of 7 acres of derelict land adjacent to, and incorporating, a major freeway interchange, into an Urban Farm, Art, Community Environmental Education Center, State PreSchool, and new City Farm Park in San Francisco.”

Bonnie sees this early work as a precursor to her ideas that resulted in the PS/IS 217 schoolyard garden and that, with a Public Purpose grant, may involve the student and senior populations at the school and at Coler-Goldwater Hospital in projects at Southpoint Park and elsewhere on Roosevelt Island.

The museum charges a modest fee and is located at 22-25 Jackson Avenue at 46th Avenue. It is accessible by E, V, and 7 subway lines. Even if feminist art isn’t your cup of tea, I recommend Ms. Sherk’s work to you as an example of what is possible with what she calls a “Life Frame” that can “...transform and add incredible vitality, beauty, and life to a community.” Check it out.

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