

Next issue
in 2 weeks:
Sat., Mar. 7

The Main Street WIRE™

29th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



Gearing Up Roosevelt Landings tenants gathered around tables to create a database of their electricity charges on sample bills. The information helped prompt the state to delay its permission to submeter the building.

United Nations School Attracts Many From RI

by Gundula Schmidt-Graute
Florence and Laurent Baeriswyl attend Roosevelt Island's third school. Not PS/IS 217 or the Child School/Legacy High School, but the *third* school – at 23rd Street on the banks of the East River.
They have plenty of company. Zip code 10044 is the address of more than 130 of the nearly 1,600 students at UNIS, the United Nations International School. It draws everyone from kindergarteners to high school seniors. Most are part of New York's and Roosevelt Island's international community.
The school was founded in 1947 by a group of parents affiliated with the U.N. They wanted an international education for their children – one that enabled the children to keep up with their parents' international lifestyle, which can take the children around the world, forcing them to change schools, friends, and languages several times before graduation.
The majority of UNIS students still are children of U.N. employees or diplomats of the permanent missions of the 192 member states. But these days, almost 25% are New Yorkers whose parents prefer an international environment over public school or prep school for their children. UNIS is, in fact, a kind of a prep school, too: tuition for a high school student is \$22,000 a year. For diplomats and the U.N. staff, tuition grants are part of their salaries.
The school's curriculum includes math, science, the humanities, languages, and the arts. For high school students, there's United Nations Studies, a course on the history, structure, and goals of the United Nations. Some high school extracurricular activities are connected with the U.N., such as a model U.N., the annual UNIS-U.N.-students' conference in the General Assembly Hall, and the Human Rights committee. But the ESL program – English as a Second Language – is the most important feature of the school for students whose mother tongue is not English. Within three semesters of enrollment, such students usually advance to native-language level in English and humanities classes.

For 17-year-old Robert Manukyan, language was an issue when he arrived from Armenia 11 years ago. "I spent some time at the local public school, but I didn't speak English; my first language is Armenian and my second is Russian. My father works for the U.N., so he put me into UNIS, where I could learn English more easily."
Even for 10-year-old Kieran Woodsworth, an Anglophone Canadian, an American school wouldn't have been a solution, explains his mother, Pam: "My husband is affiliated with the U.N. Kieran and his elder brother, Graham, were enrolled in the French school system in Africa before we came to New York. At UNIS, they

See **UNIS**, page 6

510-580 Tenants Get Reprieve, Temporarily, on Submetering

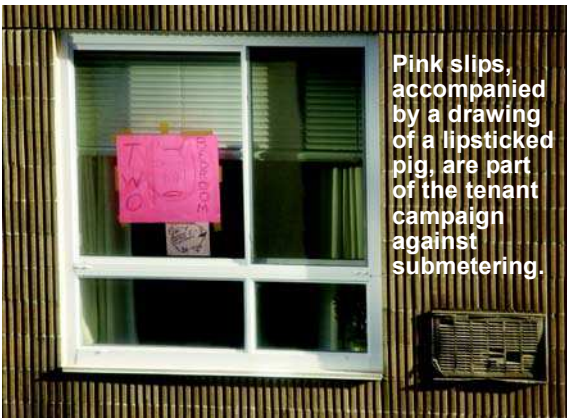
Kellner Wants Permanent Ban, Plans PSC Thrust and New Law
Landlord and Tenant Leaders Far Apart as Claims Conflict

by Dick Lutz
It took about a week, a remarkably short time for New York State government to do anything.
With some determined prodding – no, make that *insistent demanding* – from Roosevelt Island's elected officials, the Public Service Commission (PSC) issued an emergency order last week retreating from its November decision authorizing electric submetering of apartments at 510 to 580 Main Street. The stay, seen as a virtual *stay of execution*, produced a collective sigh of relief among tenants of what used to be called Eastwood; they had received "shadow bills" predicting an out-of-pocket housing expense that, for some Section 8 subsidy recipients, could be a significant multiple of their current monthly housing cost.
Assemblymember Micah Kellner, Rep. Carolyn Maloney, Borough President Scott Stringer, City Councilmember Jessica Lappin, and State Senator Jose Serrano reacted quickly when the sample bills became available. For the subsidy tenants – the majority by far in the building now called Roosevelt Landings – the rent reductions that were prescribed to compensate for a switch to submetering were well under the likely cost of power.
Led by the president of the Roosevelt Landings Residents Association (RLRA), Joyce Mincheff, tenants made the argument that their electric baseboard

The two sides in the battle over submetering 510-580 Main Street could not be further apart.
Joyce Mincheff, president of the Roosevelt Landings Residents Association: "This is not an attempt at energy efficiency. It's a cure that the landlord has come up with to get out from under their huge operating expense."
Douglas Eisenberg, president of Urban American: "I think we can all agree that this is not about creating a profit center for us. This is for conserving energy. We think that if everyone does their part, this is a good thing for everyone."
Mincheff: "The tenants are the people least able to make the necessary changes in the building that are needed. They don't have control of the insulation or the appliances, and submetering without addressing those concerns is simply putting lipstick on a pig."
Doryne Isley of Urban American: "We're not in control of tenant electrical usage. The only way to get control of that is to submeter – to put the responsibility [for conservation] directly on the residents."
The *WIRE* interviewed Mincheff and, separately, Eisenberg and Isley, on Wednesday. They disagree not only on each other's motives but, as might be expected, on their goals and on their assessment of the likely outcome of management's move toward submetering.
Mincheff: "I'd like the Public Service Commission (PSC) to recognize that this building is not currently in a position where the tenants can take on this burden, or should or could take it on. They need to put a permanent halt on submetering until such time as major repairs can be

See **Kellner**, page 2
See **Roosevelt Landings**, page 9

Subscribers to The WIRE's E-mail Bulletins learned of the PSC's action on February 12, the day the stay was issued.
To receive future bulletins, send an *AddMe* e-mail to editor@MainStreetWIRE.com.

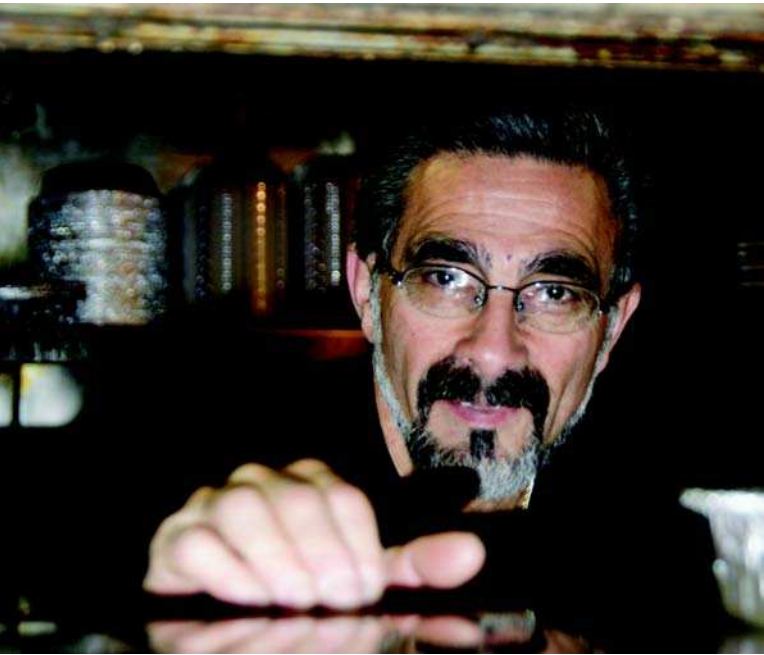


Eleven Years Later, Still an Enthusiam for Trellis

by Jim Baehler
5:30 a.m. Main Street is dark and quiet. A lone figure approaches Trellis, Roosevelt Island's oldest restaurant, and unlocks the door. Kaie Razaghi is beginning another day of serving his customers.
In the kitchen area, he confers with his baker, who has been at work since midnight. After a few minutes of conversation about items to be ordered for preparation of cakes, pies, and pastries, the baker leaves. Kaie prepares the kitchen for the day's activities. Grills and ovens are turned on. Water begins to boil. Oil is heated in the deep fryer.
Soon, the cook arrives and a few minutes are spent establishing the specials that will be added to the menu that day. In a short while, the full kitchen staff will be at work – grillman, broiler man, sauté man, and sandwich man. They will work until 4:00 p.m., when a similar crew will take over until midnight. All are cross-trained so that in an emergency, any one can take over for any other. At 6:00, the doors open, the first customers appear, and another day has begun at Trellis.
Kaie has been following this routine for 16 years.

Kaie's grandfather emigrated from Greece to Russia in the late 19th century and established a business empire. During the 1917 revolution, he was murdered by his servants, who had adopted the Bolshevik credo, "Kill all the rich people." Kaie's grandmother and two children escaped to Iran, and the family later moved to France. Kaie and his parents came to America in 1958, when he was eleven, and settled in Brooklyn. Seizing the opportunity provided by America, Kaie graduated from Queens College with plans to attend law school. Lack of money thwarted that ambition, and he began working in restaurants. With a partner, he bought a fast-food restaurant at Seventh Avenue and 40th Street. He improved its appearance, and made it more efficient and customer-friendly. He sold it at a profit and bought a larger restaurant. Kaie repeated that process until 1998, when he bought Andy's Place, as the restaurant was then known, from its owner.
Some History
This first Main Street restaurant was originally known as the Green Kitchen, and it came with a checkered past. Unbeknownst to most of its patrons, the owner was conducting a retail drug business to supplement his income. Eventually, the drug trade became so visible that the police moved into action. The owner was arrested and sent to prison to contemplate the error of his ways. The place was then acquired by Andy Mihalopolous, who had once worked at the Green Kitchen. He renamed it for himself. The drug trade was gone, but Andy's Place acquired a different sort of notoriety. It became the preferred location for Astoria businessmen who needed a trysting place to entertain their *inamoratas*, free from the prying eyes of friends and neighbors. Today, most of that clientele has

See **Trellis**, page 8



Kaie Razaghi looks out from the Trellis kitchen. His attentions start there but range over the entirety of the eatery's operation.

The Editorial Page

Submetering

It’s easy to sympathize with any Roosevelt Landings resident who now fears that his/her cost of housing will climb beyond reach.

In their interview with *The WIRE* Doryne Isley and Doug Eisenberg of Urban American made efforts to send reassuring signals. The full interview is on *Website NYC10044* and they are heavily quoted in this issue’s lead article. For editorial purposes, however, here’s a paraphrase:

Nobody should worry. Everybody should do the responsible thing with their use of electricity, and all will be well. Tenants’ electric power add-on to their rent ultimately should be within “shouting distance” of the amount of the HUD-DHCR allowance. We’re conserving heat, and therefore electricity, with a \$5 million window replacement and some other measures. And now, tenants must do their part.

This position is not likely to reassure a Section 8 tenant paying 30% of his/her low income toward housing costs, when sample bills project a cost-over-allowance add-on that could triple the monthly bite to 90% of income, at least in the hardest months of a cold winter.

To a resident feeling the threat, it matters little whether tenant leadership is right in assertions that submetering is, as things have turned out, just a lipstick-effort to shed a ma-

jor cost factor in operating 510-580 Main Street, or management is right in tagging this a must-do conservation measure mandated by the good sense of planetary priorities. To that resident, this is *shelter*, the costliest component in the food-clothing-shelter triad that tops everyone’s basic needs.

And spoken reassurances don’t lift the creeping sense of panic. No wonder, then, that tenants cheer when Assemblymember Micah Kellner talks about new law, or the need to find a combination of causes that will make the Public Service Commission withdraw forever their November greenlighting of submetering.

We hope that, while Urban American faces the threat of restrictive law or a permanent stay, and while tenants face the possibility of losing their case, the parties to this emergency will come together and create some signed-sealed-and-delivered reassurance that tenants will not bleed financially or lose their homes if they make a determined effort to reduce electric usage. To count, it will have to be a workable compromise in writing, in simple language, and enforceable without high legal expense.

Moving in that direction *now* will save everybody a serious dose of worry and grief.

DL

Kellner from page 1

heating is inefficient, hard or impossible to control, and frequently inadequate to the task of keeping up with leaks that pass warm air out of apartments, and cold air in. At a meeting February 7, Mincheff urged tenants to display giant-size “pink slips” in their windows – a kind of symbolic firing of building management. Several are visible from Main Street.

The PSC stay, signed by Commission Chair Garry A. Brown, said the commission had been unaware of the electric heating. “The Commission was not informed of the tenants’ concerns regarding the submetering plan, the fact that Roosevelt Landings utilized electric heating, and the other concerns regarding the poor energy efficiency of the building, prior to its issuance of the submetering order. Combined, these concerns could jeopardize the ability of vulnerable tenants to maintain housing in the middle of winter.”

The PSC order continues, “The petition of rehearing raises concerns regarding a rider to the tenant leases which appears to provide that electric bills will be treated as rent, subjecting tenants to potential eviction if they fail to pay their electric bills. In the submetering

order, the Commission notes that the owner stated in its petition that in no event will electric service be terminated for non-payment of electric charges. However, this language and tenant protections in the submetering order could be vitiated by the lease rider... The tenant could still be subjected to eviction.”

Goal: Permanent Ban

The tenants, politicians, and tenant leaders would like to get a permanent ban of submetering. The necessary steps in that direction involve gathering data on tenants whose cost of housing would increase substantially, an activity that will continue today (Saturday, February 21) in a 2:00 p.m. meeting at the Good Shepherd Community Center.

The proposed increase presented the possibility that some Section 8 tenants could spend all or most of their income on housing. A tenant receiving \$1,200 in disability or Social Security benefits who has no other income would pay 30% of that amount, or \$360, toward rent, with the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) picking up the balance under its Section 8 program. A switch to submetering would trigger a rent reduction of \$100-

200, depending on apartment size, for a two-bedroom unit, producing a base out-of-pocket rent cost of \$160 to \$260. But an electric charge of \$700, added to the tenant’s share of rent, would effectively triple the out-of-pocket cost of a dwelling unit.

The disruptive effect in the 1,003 apartments, over 700 of which are occupied by subsidized tenants, would be considerable.

Assemblymember Micah Z. Kellner, who took the lead in the politicians’ drive to get the PSC’s stay order, told *The WIRE* this week that he’s taking a two-front approach to making the stay effectively permanent: “This has revealed some flaws in the PSC process,” he said, citing a lack of opportunity for tenants or their representatives to file comments. “We’re looking at outright prohibiting some things, and opening up the process to allow tenants to be more proactive.

“One bill we’re proposing will prohibit submetering in electrically heated buildings. We’re also looking at prohibiting submetering depending on the number of subsidized tenants.” At a minimum, Kellner said, there will be further delay on the grounds that tenants were not informed fully that they had the ability to comment before issuance of the PSC order authorizing submetering.

“One way or another,” Kellner said, “we’re going to stop submetering in Eastwood [now renamed Roosevelt Landings].”

Kellner said his ultimate goal “is to bring [the building] back into some sort of affordability program.” (The building was removed from the Mitchell-Lama affordable-housing program during the Pataki administration.) “DHCR has reached out to Urban American about tax forgiveness if they bring it back into an affordable program. But if they continue as they are, the buildings are going to continue to deteriorate because they obviously don’t have the money to keep them up. There needs to be an incentive to return to an affordability program.”

Kellner also voiced an objection to Urban American’s making submetered electricity charges part of tenant rent, which could lead, he thinks, to actions to evict

Letters

To the Editor:

I am in support of the letter from *Name Withheld* in the February 7 *WIRE*, related to the Youth Center situation. The Youth Center is a vital and necessary program, especially for Roosevelt Island, which is isolated yet offers little to nothing for our underage youth in the form of regular activities and entertainment. Many children here are unable to travel unaccompanied to outer areas for bowling, movies, or other attractions of which this Island is devoid, and parents become less available in a stressful and depressed economy.

The Beacon Program is fine, but is targeted more toward younger children, who need more structure and supervision. It is also overseen by Board of Education staff, being located within the PS/IS 217 building, making rules and regulations restrictive of what the programs can offer and accomplish. This is not beneficial to the adolescent and teen group, who need somewhere to socialize with their friends and express themselves in a less restrictive environment, and sometimes to just have some plain ol’ *fun*. Remember, this is really the target group we are trying to reach, to decrease the numbers loitering on the street and in the buildings.

The Youth Center could be an oasis for our children, especially those from less affluent families. It needs the support of this community to expand and flourish. It has been a mainstay for families on Roosevelt Island for many years, even offering occasional usage benefits for adults!

The bickering over funding and property is deplorable. Personal and political issues between the director of the Youth Center and the management at RIOC have overshadowed availability of space, equipment, and programs that the young and teen population here so desperately need. I urge the “powers that be” to recognize their shameful behavior for what it is, and work together to create a noteworthy, state-of-the-art Youth Program for the betterment of not only the deserving youngsters, but the community as a whole. This is the vision that Mr. DeFino, Youth Center Director, has always projected and worked toward.

I hope the entire community gets behind this. There is power in numbers. We are so busy worrying about political issues that our children are being neglected. Let’s not set ourselves up for a rude awakening.

Gail Montague

Letters deadline for March 7 issue: Tuesday, March 3

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 way to submit: 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 **212-826-9056** 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.

To the Editor:

The Roosevelt Island Chamber of Commerce would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone for their generous donations for the holiday lights.

The list is below.

Julia Palermo
Executive Director

RIOC	\$1,100
RY Management	1,100
Urban American	1,100
Main Street Theatre	275
New York National Bank	275
RIRA	275
Rivercross	275
Trellis	200
Island Cats	100
NY Junior Tennis League	100
China 1	50
Dr. Kathie Grimm	50
M&D Deli	50
Dr. Jack Resnick	50
RI Newsstand	50
RI Cleaners	50
RI Seniors Association	50
RIVAA	50

Senior Center

Monday	Thursday
9:30, Hawaiian Hula	9:30, Get Stronger Bones
10:30, English as 2nd Language	10:30, Creative Arts
11:00, Tai Chi	12:30, Movie
12:30, “Oldies” Movies	Friday
6:00, Yoga	9:30, Yoga
Tuesday	10:30, French Class
9:30, Get Stronger Bones	1:00, Bridge
10:30, Blood Pressure	7:00, Games (RISA)
10:30, Shoppers’ Bus	Saturday
2:00, Bingo	7:30, Bingo (RISA)
2:00, Paint & Sculpt	
7:30, Games (RISA)	
Wednesday	
9:30, Yoga	
10:30, Computers	
10:30, Shoppers’ Bus	
10:30, Spanish Class	
7:00, Pokeno (RISA)	

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

if tenants refused to pay the charges for power. In any case, Kellner sees a contradiction – that under the law a landlord must provide heat, but under

submetering the tenant is paying for the heat. By defining electric charges as part of rent, Urban American attempted to detour around the law, says Kellner.



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COMING UP

— This Weekend —

East & West Art Exhibition, works of Islander Toshiko Kitano Groner, **today** (Sat Feb 21) through Mar 29, Octagon Gallery.



— Continuing —

New York Junior Tennis League winter program continues every Saturday through March, 6-9am, Roosevelt Island Racquet Club (just south of tram). Ages 7-18; graduates of PeeWee programs may attend at age 6. Free.

Bogdan Borgovan: Emergence continues at Gallery RIVAA, Sat-Sun 11am-5pm, Wed & Fri 6-9pm, through Mar 1.

Open Swim Hours, Sat 12-3pm & 4-7pm, Mon-Fri 6-9am, Tue & Thu 6-9pm, Sportspark. Adults \$5, children \$3, seniors & infants free.

Knitting for Adults, Tue noon, Library.

Crafts for Children (ages 4-12), Tue 3:30pm, Library.

Poetry Hour (adults), last Tue of month, 6pm, Library.

Picture Book Hour (age 4 and under), Wed 11am, Library.

Game Night (ages 9-18), Wed 5pm, Library.

Book Bingo (ages 5-12), Thu 4:30pm, Library.

— The Coming Week & Weekend —

Teen Advisory Group, Mon Feb 23, 4pm, Library.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon Feb 23, 8pm. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577**.

Insider Tips on Job-Seeking, Tue Feb 24, 7-8pm, Library, with Dr. Harriet Katz. Free. Session on letters, resumes, and phone calls.

Angelfood ordering for March delivery starts **Sat Feb 28**, 10am-1pm, Senior Center. Also on **Wed-Fri-Sat** from **Mar 4 through Mar 14**, 10am-1pm, plus **Thu Mar 5**, 6-8pm. Also, 4 River Rd community room, **Thu Mar 12**, 6-9pm. Information **212-731-2547**.

Black History Month Celebration, **Sat Feb 28**, 2-4pm, Manhattan Park Theater Club, 8 River Road. Live musical performances, arts and crafts, food, and activities for the kids. Free. (Ad, page 7.)

Three Bearded Bards Guitar Concert with Chris Fuller, Matthew Katz, and Howie Leifer, **Sat Feb 28**, 5-7pm, Library. Free. (See page 8.)

— Future Weeks —

Residents Association Common Council meeting, **Wed Mar 4**, 8pm, Good Shepherd Community Center (lower level); meetings are open to all, and begin with an opportunity for residents to address the Council.

The Main Street WIRE—Next issue **Sat Mar 7**. (To receive *The WIRE*'s e-mail bulletins between issues, send an *AddMe* message to Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com.) **Advertising Deadlines:** Ads in the paper, Wed Feb 25, decision date on circulars/inserts, Tue Mar 3; they are due Thu Mar 5. **Additional issues in 2009:** Mar 21; Apr 4, 18; May 2, 16, 30; June 13, 27 (Fouth of July issue); July 25; Aug 29, Sep 12, 26; Oct 10, 24; Nov 7, 21; Dec 12. **2010:** First issue Jan 16; thereafter, every two weeks. **News phone**, **212-826-9056**; urgent matters, **917-617-0449**. **Advertising**, display and classified: **917-587-3278**.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, **Mon Mar 9**, 8pm. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577**.

Women's History Month celebration, **Sun Mar 15**, 2pm, Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main St. Film & lecture series on four women who shaped cities and nations. Free. Refreshments, First of four events.

Book Discussion — *The Tortilla Curtain* by T.C. Boyle, **Thu Mar 19**, 6:30pm, New York Public Library Roosevelt Island branch. Books available at the branch here.

Women's History Month celebration, **Sat Mar 21**, 2pm, Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main St. Film & lecture series on four women who shaped cities and nations. Free. Refreshments, Second of four events.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, **Mon Mar 23**, 8pm. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577**.

RIOC Board Meeting, **Thu Mar 26**, 9:30am, Good Shepherd Community Center.

Women's History Month celebration, **Sat Mar 28**, 2pm, Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main St. Film & lecture series on four women who shaped cities and nations. Free. Refreshments, Third of four events.

Women's History Month celebration, **Sun Mar 29**, 2pm, Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main St. Film & lecture series on four women who shaped cities and nations. Free. Refreshments, Last of four events.

Residents Association Common Council meeting, **Wed Apr 1**, 8pm, 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 Apr 13**, 8pm. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577**.

Book Discussion — *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy, **Thu Apr 16**, 6:30pm, New York Public Library Roosevelt Island branch. Books available at the branch here.

Free mammograms, **Sat Apr 18**, 8am-5pm, in the mobile unit parked on Main Street at Good Shepherd Plaza, sponsored by RIOC and the American Italian Cancer Foundation.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, **Mon Apr 27**, 8pm. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577**.

Residents Association Common Council meeting, **Wed May 6**, 8pm, 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 May 11**, 8pm. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577**.

RIOC Board Meeting, **Thu May 14**, 4:30pm, Good Shepherd Community Center. Town-hall meeting, at end of formal session, for resident comments and questions.

1. Temporary relief for Roosevelt Landings (Eastwood) residents on submetering. Two weeks ago, Roosevelt Landings residents filled the RIRA Common Council meeting and asked RIRA to take action. I thank Assemblymember Kellner and his staff, RIRA Housing Committee Co-Chairs Lynne Strong-Shinozaki and Joyce Mincheff, Roosevelt Landings (RL), Residents Association Chair Joyce Mincheff, and fellow RL Common Councilers Helen Chirivas and Russell Fields. On Friday, February 6, Lynne and I visited Urban American offices to deliver a clear message: (1) the issue isn't submetering per se, but raising housing costs; (2) a typical two-bedroom apartment uses approximately \$500 in energy costs, yet the subsidy is only \$100-\$200, which makes this, effectively, an increase in housing costs; (3) Rand Engineering did a study at Island House (similar construction as RL) and estimated only 10% energy reduction for submetering, (4) heaters need to have thermostats (who would manually adjust your heat for energy efficiency while you sleep?); and, most importantly, (5) the residents of Roosevelt Island, not just RL, will not stand for these unconscionable increases. Hopefully, the temporary stay ordered by the Public Service Commission will evolve into a permanent solution.

2. RIOC Budget Analysis Committee. The committee includes Matthew Katz (former RIRA president), Steve Marcus (former RIRA president), Geof Kerr (RIRA auditor), Margie Smith (chair of RIRA Government Relations committee) and is co-chaired by Russell Fields (RIRA treasurer) and me. As a reminder, RIOC doesn't want to do financial planning for more than five years, their spending is large (\$72

The RIRA Column



Frank Farance, President
Roosevelt Island Residents Association
e-mail: rira-president@rira-council.org

million in capital improvements over the next five years), and their cash balance will be low (in relative terms) for supporting the maintenance of the Island through 2068 — we might run out of money in 10 to 20 years. We have met twice with RIOC. We have not yet received the financial information we requested, such as Excel spreadsheets (to explore the basis for decision-making), database dump, and other supporting documents. I've attached e-mail correspondence. RIOC President Steve Shane says: (1) RIOC expects to spend about \$5-8 million annually on capital improvements: (2) Island maintenance averages about \$3-4 million a year and there is no need for more details because we can't predict when a piece of infrastructure will break; and (3) if there is some extraordinary confluence of maintenance costs, we'll ask the city and state for financial help. Honestly, that's not a financial plan—that's flying by the seat of your pants and wishful thinking for city and state funding. It is clear that we won't have the \$72 million to spend next time it is needed in the next 10, 15, or 25 years. It is possible to plan better, but RIOC **chooses** not to. (RIOC Board member Michael Shinozaki agrees.) If you look at all the financial disasters in our present economy and their causes, such as Optimistic Planning for Sunny Days and Short-Range See **RIRA Column**, page 10

February 18, 2009

1. Board of Directors: Regular meeting February 19. Draft budget for fiscal year 2009-10 was presented at the January meeting. The draft has been posted on the RIOC website for everyone's review. Some changes will be reported at the Board meeting to reflect current events, both pluses and minuses, such as the time effect of delay in completion of Southtown buildings 5 and 6 (now anticipated in late April and May), potential savings in expenses for insurance and fuel, etc. Nothing major. After discussion and such modifications as may be suggested and adopted, the final budget should be ready for adoption at the March board meeting. We met with RIRA to discuss assumptions and projections. Basically, future operating income and expenses will be roughly equal. Major budget events revolve around the completion of buildings 7, 8, and 9 in Southtown. Not only are the prospective development fees significant, but the future ground rent and other fees are the basis for a projection of an operating surplus from which future capital needs beyond the capital assets now foreseeable can be met from RIOC's resources, rather than relying on the usual political sources of state or city appropriation (see tram or city support for parks, library, etc.). The business cycle of real-estate values in New York will determine when and if the development proceeds, as may be seen from the impact the present decline is having on buildings 5 and 6. Agenda will include approval and ratification of several items, including bids for Sportspark façade, improvements of Public Safety (PSD) headquarters, etc. The matter of the Octagon Field resurfacing has been withdrawn until the city standard for artificial surfaces is settled.

2. Southpoint:

(A) **Renwick Ruin:** Work continues with a completion date projected for early spring.

(B) **Green Rooms/Wild Gardens:** A request for proposals has been published for the work, to be accomplished in phases. Preliminary site work will get started in April with rough grading, paths, and stone walls. Phase 2 will be the finish grading and capping of the site, utilities, fencing, and planting. To be noted are the large number of contractors who attended the bidders meeting.

(C) **FDR Memorial:** FERl plans to make a presentation to the Board at this week's meeting as to its phasing plan and the logic for it. A copy of the materials is posted on the RIOC web site. The Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute is working on engineering and permitting with the state Department of Environmental Conservation, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Coast Guard, etc.

3. Tram: Work is under way on design and fabrication. We have had meetings coordinated by the

The RIOC Column

mayor's office with various NYC departments. On schedule for July 6 shutdown and December reopening. The \$15 million state appropriation has been deposited in RIOC's account. Based on most recent NYC DOT requests, the substitute red bus service during non rush hours will likely stop on the west side of Second Avenue between 58th and 59th Streets, to loop back on 58th Street either directly or via 57th Street.

4. Projects almost completed include the bus transportation yard, AVAC-caused street repair, and the roof of 504 Main. Other projects in the design and bidding pipeline include upgrading of the lighting at Motorgate, the exterior of the AVAC building, replacement chambers for AVAC, and improvements to PSD. Interestingly, there were 19 bidders on the PSD project, when usually there would be fewer than five. Work is slowing for contractors. With spring's return, we can tackle the outdoor projects.

5. Red Bus: Waiting for the GPS shakedown period to be finished so a decision can be made for the bus routes other than the Octagon Express.

6. Public Purpose Fund: As part of the budgeting cycle, RIOC has received applications from several entities applying for public purpose funding. As last year, there is \$100,000 in the proposed budget for Island activities, plus the direct contribution to the Youth Center. We reviewed for completeness and forwarded to the Residents Association. RIOC conducted an audit (both financial and functional) on the recipients of last year's awards, to be presented to both the Board and RIRA's review committee. The RIRA recommendations should be back to be acted upon by the Board at the March meeting before the April start of fiscal year 2009-10.

7. Sportspark Swimming: In response to requests, we are planning to extend the weekday morning adult hours to 10:00 a.m. to accommodate those with child care responsibility. Watch for an announcement on RIOC's website as soon as lifeguards can be arranged. We hope for ever greater participation.

8. New York National Bank: RIOC has received a notice from NYNB that it intends to close its branch at 615 Main Street on June 6, saying that the business does not justify maintaining its operation. Too bad. Banking is a very useful amenity. I hope another institution will find this event to be an opportunity. RIOC will do what it can to promote the possibility.



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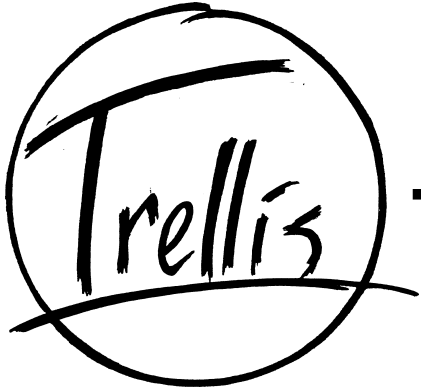
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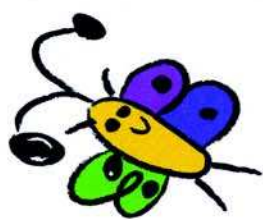
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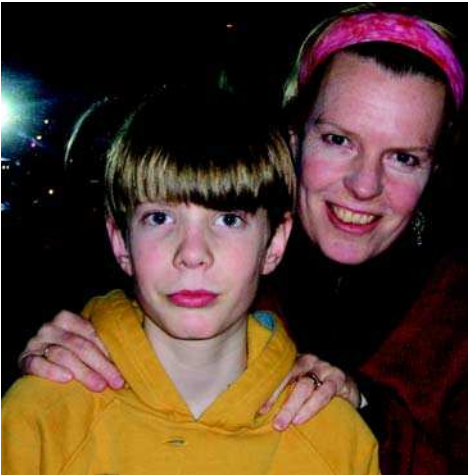
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UNIS from page 1

had a smooth adjustment to the American system.” And René Erdin from Switzerland adds: “Our children, Florence and Laurent, 10 and 13 years old, are bilingual French and German. In Brussels, they attended the German School, but here we were looking for a more international environment – not merely German, French, or American.”

Zara Hamayan and her younger brother, Hassan, attend PS/IS 217, but their eldest sibling, Faisaan, goes to UNIS. “There is no high school on the Island and, of course, UNIS provides high quality,” explains Naveed Hamayan, a Pakistani officer who works for the U.N. Peacekeeping Department. Tuition grants don’t always cover 100%, so the family opted for the public school for the younger children.



Kieran and Pam Woodsworth

Most students use a school bus that stops at River Road, Main Street, and The Octagon. Their parents pay \$2,400 per school year for the round trip. Some children, like Kieran, like the ride: “The school bus takes about 50 minutes or, when there is a traffic-jam, about an hour. I don’t mind it, though. I play video games. It could even take longer.”

His classmate, Florence, doesn’t like the noise in the bus, but things are getting better for her: “My classmate, Paula, has moved to the Island. Now the bus is OK.” High school students often use the bus only in the morning because of their individual after-transportation in the afternoon after soccer



Florence and Rene

While the decision for schooling at UNIS is one thing, what about the decision to live on Roosevelt Island? Pam Woodsworth recalls, “Roosevelt Island was recommended to us by several people as a good place to live with three boys and a dog. The only inconvenience is that our dog Nelly, a big brown Chesapeake, can’t use public transportation.” René Erdin says, “First, our broker recommended apartments on the Upper East Side, when he learned that the children are enrolled at UNIS and my wife works for the Permanent Mission of Switzerland at the U.N. But then, he advised us to have a look at Roosevelt Island.” At first, René and his wife, Pascale, were not really thrilled by the idea. “When you look at Google Earth for a first idea, the view on Main Street is really ugly and this is not a place for shopping or going out.” But they decided in favor of the Island’s open space, safety, and limited traffic – and now they agree with their daughter, Florence: “I like it here, there is much more green space than elsewhere in Manhattan.” Even for 11th-grader Robert, this is a consideration: “I’m a soccer player. It’s great. My friends and I just go downstairs and we find several soccer fields.”



Robert

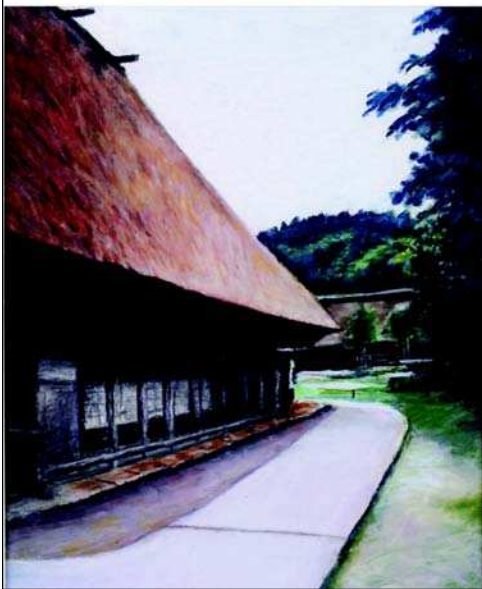
Many of the UNIS students have friends on the Island. Robert plays soccer with his schoolmates here, and in Manhattan at a competitive club. Ambitious, he prefers the club to the recreational soccer program here. Florence and Kieran, who both live in The Octagon, have made friends with some neighbors. “I used to hang around and go skateboarding with two boys who don’t go to UNIS,” declares Kieran. And Florence meets with two girls she knows from one of the parties organized by the building to help people socialize.

Florence, Kieran, and their schoolmates enjoy the Roosevelt Island lifestyle and take advantage of the international school. Even though UNIS is 40 blocks away, you can see it from the tram or from Southpoint: It’s the flat building with the white bubble (one of

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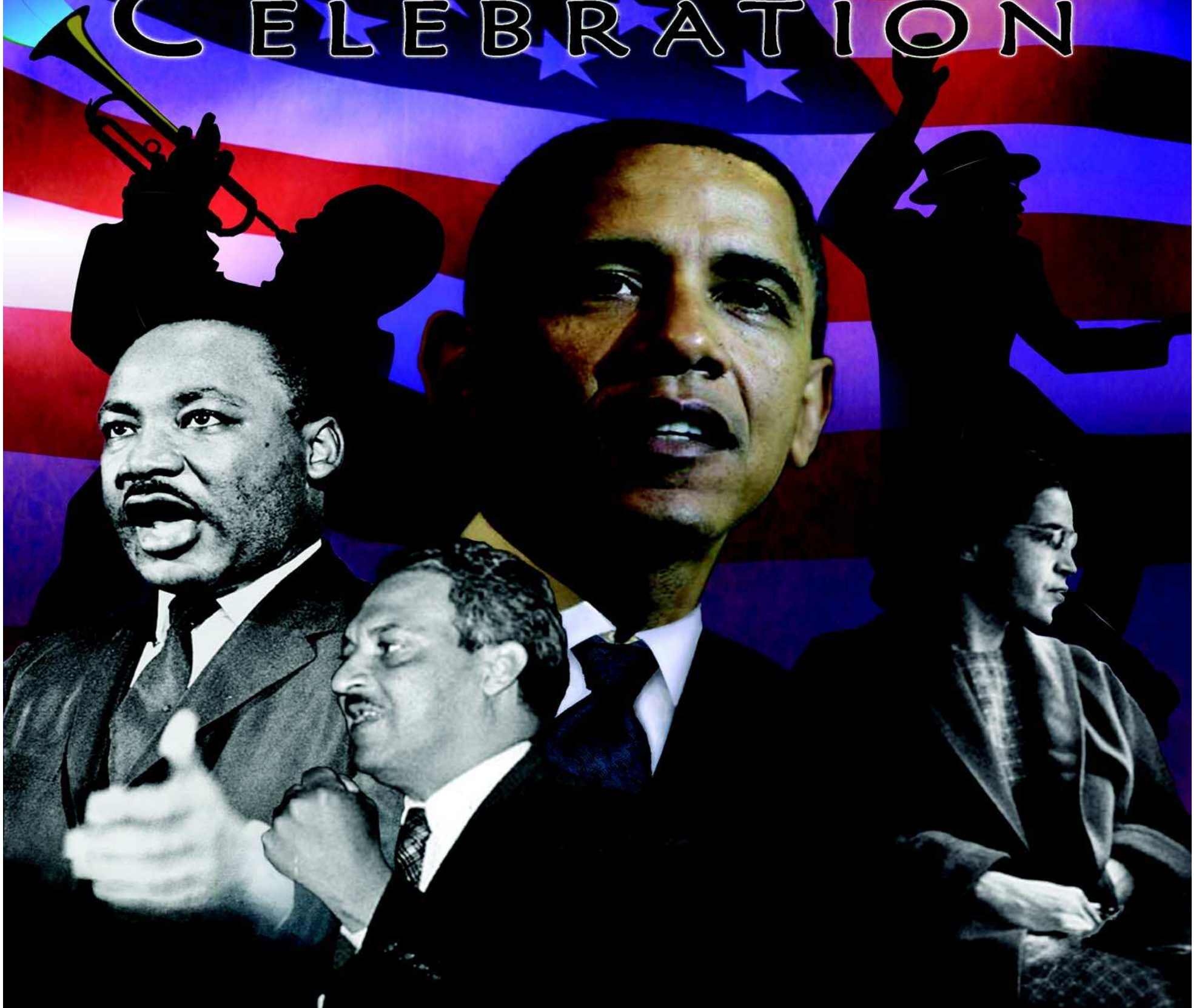
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Roosevelt Islander – Master Leaseholder For Main Street Stores – tinyurl.com/cpuk9c
Roosevelt Island 360 – Touring Roosevelt Island 75 Years Ago – tinyurl.com/cb9xa2
NY Times – Freeze on Eastwood Submetering – tinyurl.com/dcgwap
Gothamist – Comments on Submetering 510-580 Main Street – tinyurl.com/dd77kg
Public Utility Law Project – Freeze on Eastwood Submetering – tinyurl.com/bmq9sc
Micah Kellner – Opposition to Eastwood Submetering – tinyurl.com/amb2t2
Denver Post – Profile: Tram Contractor Poma-Leitner – tinyurl.com/bnw96r
Ropeways – Tram Cable Contract Goes to Fatzer – tinyurl.com/d2lmnr
Epoch Times – Life on Roosevelt Island – tinyurl.com/bmgybf
David Kramer Toothless Alcoholic – Motorgate Sculpture – tinyurl.com/bd9sey
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RIOC – Construction Phasing of Proposed FDR Memorial – tinyurl.com/cooazk
Roosevelt Islander – FDR Memorial Insult to Disabled Community - tinyurl.com/bpkavb
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the school’s gyms) on the roof, between the towers of the Waterside Apartments and the Manhattan Marina and Midtown Skyports.

And the reverse perspective is possible, too: The high school students’ lounge and the school’s library have large windows on the East River. The students have a beautiful view of the Queensboro Bridge and the southern end of the Island that they call home.

Black History Month CELEBRATION



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Island House Gets 15% Hike

Island House tenants will be paying more rent starting in March. The state Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) authorized a 14.65% increase starting March 15, good for two years unless the owner identifies circumstances that merit an application for a further increase.

This is the building’s first increase in four years, averaging \$371 per room per month. In a memo to residents, the Island House Tenants Association said it hopes that, within the coming two-year period, it can finalize an ownership plan.

Trellis from page 1

moved on to the new or refurbished restaurants along Vernon Boulevard in Long Island City.

Kaie retained many of the previous employees but, early on, found that he had a number of “silent partners” – servers who provided their friends with free meals; they were not kept on. And he found that, for the others, considerable retraining was necessary to ensure that all the servers were imbued with his concept of complete customer service and satisfaction.

Staffing

As with all restaurants, Kaie’s biggest problem is finding competent help. New employees must have previous experience and the proper attitude in serving customers. The staffing situation is made more difficult by the fact that it is hard to get prospective employees to come to the Island from other parts of the city. Nevertheless, long-time customers of Trellis know that turnover is remarkably low compared with most other restaurants. Kaie attributes this to the respect with which he treats his employees and to the congenial patrons who frequent Trellis. The longest-serving employee is the ever-smiling Ali, who has been there since 1985 and has yet to lose his enthusiasm for his job.

Kaie likes the atmosphere on the Island. Trellis is not a rush business with an emphasis on table turnover. Instead, patrons can take their time. Kaie can get to know them and establish friendships.

The menu at Trellis is entirely Kaie’s creation. He originally prepared each dish personally, then taught the kitchen staff how to make each one to his exacting standards. His business philosophy is simple: “I will serve my customers only what I would want to eat myself.” Toward that end, Kaie is very particular about every aspect of food preparation. For example, unlike virtually every other restaurant in the city, at the Trellis all vegetables are carefully washed before they are cooked. “The customer may not notice the difference, but I would.” For that reason,

Folksong Saturday Next Weekend



Guitar Guys It’s not a beard-growing contest. Matthew Katz, Chris Fuller, and Howie Leifer will strum and sing next Saturday (February 28) at the Island branch of the New York Public Library. Katz traces his folk-music roots to the day he played castanets at camp to accompany the live-and-in-person Pete Seeger. Fuller, who says he writes “a song a week,” has an album called *Sangamon* available at CDBaby.com (and via iTunes). Leifer, best known as a puppeteer, plays ukulele, guitar, harmonica, and concertina. Their concert, at 5:00 p.m., is free.

New York National Bank Leaving

Saying “the current level of deposits does not support its continuation,” New York National Bank has announced to its depositors that it will leave Roosevelt Island at the close of business June 5, 2009. Accounts will be transferred to the bank’s East Harlem branch at 2256 Second Avenue (at 116th Street), where the bank promises “the same great banking products and personal service you have come to expect...”

Comments on the “proposed closing,” described as “an unavoidable business decision,” can be sent to the Director for District Licensing of the Office of the Comptroller for the Currency, 340 Madison Avenue, 5th floor, NYC10017.

NYNB came to Roosevelt Island in 2001 after Chase announced in 2000 that it would close the branch it had acquired here at the time it merged with Manufacturers Hanover.

Montauk Credit Union left the Island in 2004, also saying it had failed to achieve a level of deposits adequate to sustain its branch.

son, Kaie has refused to join the trend toward extensive use of microwave ovens. One of the little secrets in the food service business is ‘portion-controlled’ entrees that arrive pre-cooked and frozen. That’s no secret to those in the business who read *The National Provisioner*, where a May, 2006 article lists reasons why it makes economic sense. It’s essentially airline food, simply reheated in plastic bags. Though it’s quick and efficient, and it may be what airlines serve in first class, it’s still airline food. Kaie will have none of that. His kitchen has one small microwave, used only when someone wants steamed milk or extra hot soup.

Variety

The menu at Trellis has 145 selections for lunch and 135 for dinner. In addition, it lists extensive sandwich and salad items that can be ordered at any time, as can breakfast. The choices are eclectic, with Greek, American, and Italian dishes predominating, and include pastas, seafood, veal, beef, and chicken.

Yet, the kitchen measures only 13 by 40 feet – and that includes the dishwashing area. At busy times, it is a scene of organized chaos, as the kitchen help move swiftly and sometimes frantically about the narrow space. It is a dizzying orchestration of men and materials, performed with speed and efficiency. Food is stored in the basement, where three walk-in refrigerators, one walk-in freezer, and three chest freezers back up the smaller freezer and coolers in the kitchen itself.

For Kaie and his patrons, there is a cloud on the horizon – the increased cost of doing business. His electric costs have risen in the last few years from \$3,000 to \$6,000 per month. Labor costs continue to rise. In addition, a recent lease renewal involved an increase in rent.

Then there are smaller expenses, significant when taken together. Kaie needs to order flatware almost every week because of losses when customers take some home or when some is accidentally thrown out. Salt shakers must be replaced regularly; patients at the two hos-

Amelia Fontes

Amelia Fontes Long, a longtime resident on Roosevelt Island, died on February 7. She was 75 and lived in Eastwood (now Roosevelt Landings).

Known as Amelia Fontes, she was a tireless activist for a wide range of causes and interests, from helping Eastwood residents faced with housing inequities to participating in cultural events of the Cape Verde Islands where her parents were born. Fontes was not the driven, hard-nosed activist of stereotype, but rather a gently determined person whose interest in the arts, religion, and nature led her to action.

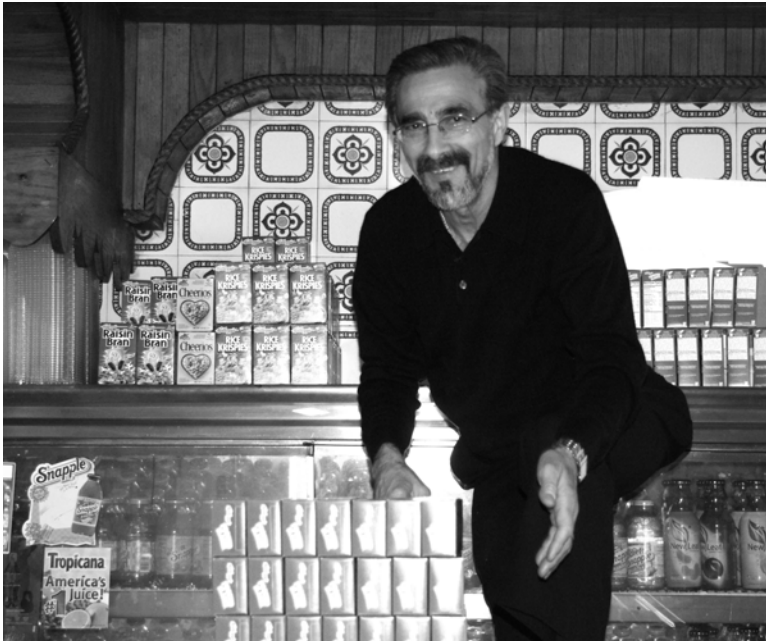
The shows by local artists that she presented in the Rivercross storefront windows over the years, for instance, were described in accompanying signage as having been produced by her Mother Earth Committee. It might take a village to raise a child, but Fontes also believed that it took villagers to raise that town.

She grew up in New Bedford, Mass., attending Queens College and the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn before graduating from Kent State University in Ohio. She worked in graphic arts in the fields of advertising and design in the 1960’s and 70’s, during which time she was active in the feminist movement and became acquainted with icons like Flo Kennedy, the vivid feminist lawyer.

Fontes moved to Roosevelt Island in the late 1970’s and raised a family here with her husband Bill, from whom she was later divorced. She worked with the Eastwood Building Committee for many years, serving as its vice president and president. She also worked for the St. Frances Cabrini Catholic Church.

In addition to Bill Long, Fontes is survived by her sons Stephen, Niguel, and Kwasi; her grandchildren Bianca, Helena Marie, and Loule, and siblings Elvira Fontes Motley, Isadore J. Fontes, Madelyn Fontes Strain, Edith Fontes Garrett, and Peter C. Fontes.

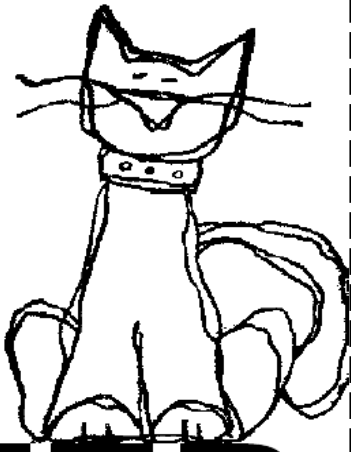
“The head of the Roosevelt Island Koran Society spoke at her wake and told how, although not a Muslim, she was a student of all things spiritual and came to all their meetings,” Gilda Hannah, a longtime Island friend, recalled. “She was a spiritual seeker – searching for enlightenment in all venues.”



Kaie Razaghi does it all at Trellis. Shorthanded one day this week, he schmoozed with customers at the counter, took phone orders, and even moved stock from a high shelf.

Longtime Island resident will feed and lovingly care for your cat while you are away, making sure your pet is safe and happy at home. (Also will help with mail, plants, etc.) Top references.

CAT SITTER



Roosevelt Landings from page 1

done on the building that would enable submetering to become a true conservation measure.”

Isley: “There are other buildings, similar to ours, that have similar heating elements, that also receive subsidy allowances. They have no problem. I see no reason why our building cannot reach the same stage.”

As things stand, the next official move will be a further ruling by the state Public Service Commission (PSC). It could reaffirm its original November order approving Urban American’s submetering plan. Or it could make permanent its stay that temporarily halts the movement toward passing on the cost of submetered electrical consumption to tenants.

Eisenberg and Isley clearly feel they have the tides of history on their side – the pressing need to reduce energy consumption and the resulting pollution. Mincheff and other residents clearly feel they have on their side the simple inability of most Eastwood residents to take on a significant increase in their housing outlay.

Finances

As to management’s motives, Mincheff believes Roosevelt Landings is not financially viable, and that submetering is an effort to make the numbers work in a long-term business plan for Urban American.

Mincheff: “The building, after it came out of Mitchell-Lama in 2005, was sold not just once but twice in a year and a half. It was sold initially for \$300 million and then again for close to a billion. At a time when property values might have risen 15% to 18%, our value magically appreciated 300%. So the problem is that the building is over-leveraged. What we see is a situation of predatory equity, which means that they can’t possibly be paying their debt service, their operating expenses, and certainly not the renovations that were called for and discussed with the state Division of Housing and Urban Development (DHCR) at the time of the dissolution [exit from Mitchell-Lama]. Their way to financial health is to dump what we believe to be 65% of their operating expense – the electricity – on tenants.” The tenant organization has asked for Urban American’s “financials” – the income/expense numbers for the building.

Urban American, as a private company, has refused to provide the financials, and claims there is no over-leveraged financial problem. Eisenberg: “To the question of whether the building is financially viable, it’s financially viable now, and it’s financially viable if we submeter. We’ve done nothing since we bought this property but

invest in it.”

Political Forces

Urban American faces not just a building with many tenants afraid of a bump in their housing outlay, but politicians who side with residents.

“My ultimate goal,” says Assemblymember Micah Kellner, is to bring Eastwood back into some sort of affordability program. DHCR has reached out to Urban American about tax forgiveness if they bring it back into an affordable program. If they continue this, no matter whether they can charge for electricity or not, the buildings are going to continue to deteriorate because they obviously don’t have the money to keep them up. There needs to be an incentive to bring these buildings back into an affordability program, either under Urban American or so that Urban American can recoup a part of its investment.” But, says Kellner, “one way or another, we’re going to stop submetering in Eastwood.”

City Councilmember Jessica Lappin agrees: “This [stay] was exactly the right decision for the Public Service Commission to make. The bills the Eastwood tenants received were outrageous, unreasonable, and unfair. This stay is a great initial victory. But we cannot stop now. I will be continuing to work with the other elected officials for the Island to ensure that this temporary stay becomes permanent.”

Eisenberg and Isley believe, on the other hand, that the PSC will lift its stay. Isley sees the Roosevelt Landings situation as parallel to that of 4 River Road, where tenants pay for their electricity under a submetering program. She feels the PSC will treat 510-580 Main Street as functionally identical to 4 River Road.

Speaking of tenant concerns, Eisenberg says, “The data clearly shows that the average use in studios and ones and twos was within shouting distance of the DHCR [rent-reduction allowance for submetering], and that a lot of residents are below the utility allowance, and some are above. But these [initial] shadow bills reflect periods of time when residents were not responsible for the payment of those bills. Their habits and behavior were the same that they have been since they moved into the property, when the owner was paying the bills.” Isley adds, “We’re not the first development where residents have experienced high bills on the first go-around of sample bills. It’s a learning process. But what I have learned in talking to other managers is that, eventually, everyone comes in line. Eventually, very few exceed their allowance.”

That assessment doesn’t wash with Mincheff. “This is a building

that has electric costs that, for many, exceed 300% of the rent reduction allocation. We don’t believe that the gap can be closed sufficiently by tenants simply being more conscientious. We believe that many of our tenants are conscientious already.” And Mincheff sees a danger: “We also believe that many folks are using their gas stoves for heat and candles for light, and that puts every tenant at risk. We believe that, in trying to become solvent, the landlord is putting tenants in great danger – danger of losing their homes, even if it’s a non-eviction plan, danger of losing their credit [if they fail to pay the electric portion of their rent bills under submetering], and perhaps even danger of losing their lives in a fire.”

Mincheff also argues that Urban American is trying to have it both ways – claiming privacy for a private company when asked to reveal financial information, but acting as though Roosevelt Landings is a regulated building, which might be required to disclose financials, when it comes to applying DHCR allocations.

But DHCR Commissioner Deborah vanAmerongen made her view clear in an interview two weeks ago – that DHCR’s only role, now that the building is out of the state’s Mitchell-Lama affordable housing program, is to administer the local Section 8 program under regulations set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Although Eisenberg said, on Wednesday, that “the people who work at DHCR are incredibly mindful of the residents and they are there to make sure that the residents are taken care of; they’re watching over them, to a certain extent,” DHCR says it has little power to influence the situation directly – that the submetering matter is in the hands of the PSC.

Mincheff believes, on the other hand, that the PSC erred by considering 510-580 to be a rent-stabilized building, and that DHCR therefore is, indeed, watching out for the building’s tenants.

Nitpicking

Both Isley and Eisenberg appear to be distressed by the “counterproductive nitpicking.” Says Isley, “All of the buildings that have been master-metered are under this mandate to do something to conserve energy. We’re attempting to do it the best way we can, given the building that we inherited. But no one gives us credit for spending \$5 million on windows. No one gives us credit for the fact that, annually before now, we have done winterization for our residents. There’s a lot of credit that we’re not given and there is a lot of fine-tuning and nitpicking – you know, ‘Let’s look

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Councilmember Jessica Lappin (lower right) and Assemblymember Micah Kellner promised support two weeks ago to a full house in the community center.

Paul Katz photo

and see what they *didn't* do.’ But no one at all is saying, ‘You know what? They went in there and put in new windows for \$5 million.’”

Says Eisenberg, along the same lines, “We’re not in the business of creating vacancies or raising rents as fast as we can. We’re in the business of making sure those people have a decent place to call home, that they have a building which has an infrastructure that is good and is working, that the elevators are working, and that things get taken care of... And we think that one of the things we can do here is that this building can be run more efficiently – that we can conserve energy, and that’s why we went down this [submetering] path.”

“We spent a lot of capital to do this. The goal here is to work with the residents, because I think that a lot of the residents believe in conserving energy; they believe the same things we do. [But] comments fly back and forth and ‘you’re the big bad landlord’ and ‘you’re out to get us.’ It couldn’t be farther from the truth. The people know Doryne at this property, and people know me, and they know that’s not the case. But instead of sitting down at the table and figuring out a solution, it’s ‘Hey, let’s have a press conference and ruffle some feathers and see what we can stir up.’”

As for “sitting down,” Mincheff says, “They have my number. They know where I live.”

Isley adds, “We’ve been talking about submetering for a long time, and we’ve been talking about it with the local politicians and their representatives. This is not something we all-of-a-sudden decided we were going to do. We were talking about this, minimally, for six to nine months in advance. Where were all of their comments then? Where were all of their concerns then? I met with them monthly.”

But Mincheff has told residents that nothing could be done until the initial sample bills were in hand and the likely financial results of

submetering were known.

As for the politicians, Eisenberg says, “Government officials are there to protect the people that live in their districts and they do a very good job. I think it’s their job to make sure that every stone is turned over and every issue is resolved. Maybe some of these issues should have been resolved earlier, and maybe that would’ve made this an easier process. But it is what it is, and we are who we are, and all we’re saying now is that we want to work with the residents and elected officials to figure out the best solution so that, at the end of the day, we have a building that’s conserving energy and we have residents who are happy to live there and have a decent place for them to call home.”

“It’s simple and to make more of that is not necessary.”

Today

Mincheff has called a meeting of Roosevelt Landings residents for today, in the Good Shepherd Community Center. She’s asking that they bring their 311 complaint numbers and their records of any maintenance requests that have not yet had management attention. “And photos,” she added, “And donations,” because the tenants’ association wants to be ready for a legal fight, if necessary.

“Finally,” Mincheff said, “for all the rest of the Roosevelt Island residents, please show some solidarity. Put up yellow piglet posters. What’s happening to Eastwood is the tip of the iceberg – there’s a state legislative mandate to submeter over the next four years, and Eastwood is simply at the front of the fight. We want to ensure that appropriate processes are put into place so tenants will know that when they are submetered, it won’t just be the landlord dumping outlandish expense on the tenant.”

A transcript of the interview with Isley and Eisenberg is available on *Website NYC10044* with this issue of *The WIRE*, at nyc10044.com.

RIRA Column from page 3

Myopia Because The Disaster Will Strike After I’m Gone, you’ll find them right here on Roosevelt Island. What to do? I spoke with Assemblymember Kellner’s office, and they suggested: (1) asking RIOC Board members to insist on a longer perspective before approving the current budget (Directors: you have a fiduciary responsibility!), and (2) contacting the state Comptroller’s office, the Governor’s budget office, and/or the Inspector General.

3. PS/IS 217 Principal to Address RIRA Common Council. Mandana Beckman is planning on addressing the March 4 RIRA Common Council meeting. We look forward to productive collaboration between PS/IS 217 and RIRA.

4. Public Purpose Grants. We received eight grant applications. Steve Marcus is heading the RIRA subcommittee to review the applications. RIRA expects to make

recommendations to RIOC on March 4, and RIOC has this agenda item on its March 26 board meeting.

5. Red bus service still poor. As many of us point out, having a GPS or a bus stop status sign doesn’t make the buses run better. For example, this Tuesday night, the bus arrives at Good Shepherd at 7:43 p.m. (later than what the GPS system reports), which is just enough time to miss the 7:45 tram, which adds another 15 minutes to travel time. When we arrive at the tram, there are three buses (see photo): the 7:45 tram is unloading into the first bus, the second bus will wait another 15 minutes, and our bus will wait 30 minutes. Translated: Two buses are sitting idle, not servicing other riders on the Island, thus we wait a long while for buses. The GPS system doesn’t help; only RIOC management can help (but continues to refuse).



Date: February 2, 2009
From: Frank Farance
Subject: RIOC unwilling to provide long-term budget estimates, RIRA subcommittee to fill the gap
To: RIOC President, RIOC Board
CC: Main Street WIRE, RI Blogs, NY Daily News, NY Times
CC: Council Member Jessica Lappin, Assemblyman Micah Kellner, Senator Jose Serrano

On January 14 RIRA held a Town Hall meeting to discuss the proposed RIOC budget. RIOC CEO Stephen Shane and RIOC CFO Steven Chironis made presentations and answered questions. Residents asked about budget estimates 10, 15, and 20 years into the future, but learned that RIOC was only willing to prepare 5-year budget estimates, as confirmed by Shane and Chironis. Because of RIOC’s significant recent and present spending, residents expressed concern about the long-term financial stability of RIOC. In response to residents’ What If questions concerning future RIOC budget shortfalls, Shane said the ground rents might be raised and/or services significantly curtailed.

A long-term budget outlook and transparency is essential to the financial health of Roosevelt Island. State Assembly Member Micah Kellner has drafted legislation to mandate RIOC’s financial transparency.

RIRA has formed a RIOC Budget Analysis subcommittee under its Planning Committee, chaired by Matthew Katz, to provide analysis and insight to Island residents and RIOC Board members. The RIOC Budget Analysis subcommittee expects to make a report at the March 4, 2009 RIRA meeting for endorsement and forwarding to RIOC in time for its March 26, 2009 RIOC Board Meeting. The RIOC Budget Analysis subcommittee includes Frank Farance (RIRA President), Matthew Katz (a former RIRA President), Steve Marcus (a former RIRA President), Margie Smith (Chair of Government Relations Committee), and Russell Fields (RIRA Treasurer).

Frank Farance

Date: February 2, 2009
From: Stephen Shane
All:
In the realm of “no good deed shall go unpunished”, I believe we have extended ourselves in the Budget process for '09/10 to present it early to the Board and the Island residents early in draft stage to make meaningful a comment period before

final adoption. We have posted the draft budget on our website as well as making the presentation at both the January Board meeting and a RIRA sponsored community meeting the night before. We have carefully separated the Operating Budget from the Capital Budget.
The statement that was made about more than 5 year projections was that the level of uncertainty rises to such an extent that it is virtually worthless to expend the effort. I did indicate that as the provider of essential services, RIOC would have to do whatever it takes to serve the public. No more obvious example of just such an effort is available than the current gyrations of our City, State and Federal governments to meet the present economic condition.
Stephen H. Shane
President & CEO, RIOC

Date: February 4, 2009
From: Frank Farance
Steve-
Certainly, no one has any interest in punishing your Good Deeds.
However, framing your sharing of documents as merely a Good Deed is disingenuous within the context of the current legislative process that will mandate you do so.
Furthermore, no right-minded executive manager would accept your premise: the plan might change in the future, thus we cannot plan. Certainly, plans change but that does not stop us from planning.
By limiting your perspective to a 5-year horizon, many Island residents believe there is a disaster just beyond the horizon. According to your proposed budget (09-10 proposed budget, PDF page 15), RIOC will spend \$41 million this year in capital improvements and another \$31 million over the next 4 years for a total of \$72 million. Your cash balance in FY 13-14 will be \$81 million (PDF page 5), but it might be off by \$40 million if Southtown 7-9 aren’t built.
Putting this into the long term perspective, if RIOC has \$41 million in FY13-14 to spend over 54 years (excludes Southtown 7-9 payments), RIOC should be budgeting about \$2.4 million a year on capital improvements, not \$41 million this year and not \$8 million per year thereafter, as presently budgeted by RIOC.
It appears that RIOC is spending the Roosevelt Island’s Nest Egg and will leave us broke soon. Transparency and sunshine will reveal the true nature and extent of this problem, which is why RIRA is interested in providing its own independent analysis.

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I cannot understand why you are unsupportive of financial transparency, especially considering the severe negative impact this will have on Roosevelt Island, the quality of life here, and the financial attractiveness for new/current owners and renters alike.
Frank Farance
RIRA President

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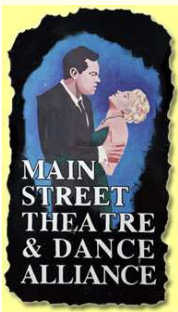
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