

Next issue
in 2 weeks:
Sat., May 16

The Main Street **WIRE**™

29th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



Just Imagine RIOC has placed art by resident Tony Vita on the island's light poles. He sells prints and can be reached via TonyVita@earthlink.com.

Polivy Clears Senate Panel; Expected to Join RIOC Board

Rivercross resident Howard Polivy this week took one near-final step toward becoming the fourth resident to be seated on the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) as a result of nomination by his fellow residents.

Polivy was one of six nominated by residents. The others were Dr. Kathie Grimm, Jonathan Kalkin, and Fay Christian (who now serve on the Board), and Erin Feely-Nahem and Frank Farance (who were passed over in the governor's and mayor's selections from the nominated group).

Another election to nominate residents to the board will be held Tuesday, May 19. Candidates may register until 6:00 p.m., Sunday, May 10. So far, only

Margie Smith and Michael Shinozaki have declared their candidacies. Shinozaki is a current Board member whose term has expired. (Polivy will get his seat.)

Polivy appeared before the state Senate Committee on Corporations and Authorities. "I'm very pleased to have spent the time with the senators considering island concerns, including transportation and housing," Polivy said on Wednesday. "We discussed the retail spaces at some length, and the difficulties presented by the Public Authorities Accountability Act. I asked if they could help us, perhaps by providing a set of guidelines that would address the situation Roosevelt Island shares with several other entities around the state that are in similar straits."

Tidal Power Project at a Milestone; Now, 30-Turbine Build-Out Is Planned

Verdant Power press release

Since 2002, the Roosevelt Island Tidal Energy (RITE) Project has been operated by Verdant Power in the east channel of the East River, just north of the Roosevelt Island Bridge. In three phases, the project seeks to develop, demonstrate, and commercially deliver electricity

generated from East River tides using Verdant Power's Free Flow System, which is composed of three-bladed, horizontal-axis turbines installed under water to generate clean, renewable energy from tidal, river, and ocean currents. The project has received key support from the New York State Energy Research and De-

velopment Authority (NYSERDA), as well as the city Economic Development Corporation.

In November, 2008, Verdant achieved a major milestone by successfully completing the RITE Project's Phase 2 demonstration, which began in 2006 with the installation of the company's first full-scale turbine, with a 5-meter rotor. Over this period, the company operated an array of six full-scale turbines, demonstrating an efficient source of renewable energy with the following outcomes:

- Excellent hydrodynamic, mechanical, and electrical performance;

See RITE, page 2

Two Years In, Steve Shane Finds RIOC Presidency Is Still an Interesting Challenge, Often Satisfying

Steve Shane has now served as president of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) for two years. Last week, *The WIRE* met with him for a review of those two years, and a look at how he sees the island's future.

The WIRE: Let's go over the last two years, then look ahead, and then I have some questions from residents.

RIOC President Steve Shane: Well, I have enjoyed the last two years. It has been action-packed. Time has flitted by. It's been quite enjoyable, in retrospect. It is a lot of personal involvement. You get caught up in the job, you care a lot. The successes are quite rewarding. The things that don't go as smoothly as you would like, or get accomplished when you would like, are frustrating, but that's part of the assignment.

WIRE: How different is it from what you expected?

Shane: Not very different, except that I think that the development of the personal relationships with the people on the island, as well as involvement in the minutiae of what goes on here, is probably more intense than I originally anticipated. It's been more than just an administrative function, and you get very involved.

By comparison with other intense things that I've undertaken in my life, it is not as challenging in depth. It is, however, in its breadth. The scope and personal involvement are really quite challenging, which is what makes it so interesting. It is much better than practicing law, and much more rewarding on a personal level because you see, in the classic sense, the faces on the problems. It's not pieces of paper. It's not closing zillion-dollar deals but, at the same time, it is accomplishing, step-by-step, the things that matter to people. So, there's a great deal of personal satisfaction, especially at this stage in my life. I'm 71, and much more interested in the flowers and the people than I am in another pile of paper and another large fee for another large transaction.

WIRE: My impression is that you're very process-oriented – that you like to find your way through things a step at a time rather than swallowing them whole.

Shane: Well, that's what you get trained to do as a lawyer – take a problem and break it down into its component parts until you identify the things that are on the critical path that will influence other things,

and try to process it in a logical way. Otherwise, you get swamped in the details, you lose sight of the forest for the trees. This was part of my original training as a chemistry major before I ever entered law school – to get ahold of the critical facts that are involved, identify the problems that can be resolved by addressing them, and proceed along those lines, and try to do away with the chaff – the noise, the static – and focus on the critical path.

WIRE: So let's talk about what you've accomplished over the last two years.

Shane: Well, the first thing that I really tried to do was focus on getting a sense of responsible organization into RIOC. It's not that I found people who were not trying to do their job or weren't doing it, but it was a different job. I have tried to bring to it a sense of responsibility, a sense of personal involvement, that it's not just a job, but that it is our obligation as public servants to serve the people. What we're trying to do is the very best we can, and then some. So I have tried to encourage the sense of real integrity to the mission, the sense of understanding what it means to be a public servant – the sense of trying to bring to your job not only the talents that you have, but the talents that you should have – to get training where necessary, to be disciplined in what you do, to recognize that there are other persons looking over your shoulder, and appropriately so, because we need to be open and transparent in the jobs that we do.

When we deliver, it is something we can be proud of and it's *never* "us against them." And part of that pervasive spirit that was here, the "bunker mentality," as I refer to it, is entirely inappropriate. We are here to serve. If we do that, and do it appropriately, the people that we're here to serve, the people of this island, and the people of the state and city of New York, will

come to appreciate that and it will break down some of that barrier that had been raised, and break down the hostility and suspicion that had grown about the motivation of RIOC as some kind of occupying force on the island. That absolutely is not the case, and that's been part of my goal and I think we've made substantial inroads on all of that.

I think part of that is by pushing for a high level of competence, for a high level of transparency. Part of it is to bring into the tent the people who were critics on the outside, to let them see how the wheels are

See **Shane**, page 2



MEET the CANDIDATES

Tuesday, May 12, 7:00 p.m.
Good Shepherd Center

ELECT RIOC

5.19.09

Nominations Open

8 More Days

to 6:00 p.m. Sun., May 10

RIDA Knocks FDR Park Plan

The board of Roosevelt Island Disabled Association (RIDA) has issued a statement criticizing a "glaring deficit" in the Kahn plan for an FDR Memorial at Southpoint, calling the lack of any portrayal of President Roosevelt as disabled as "an injustice to us all."

"A statue of President Roosevelt sitting in a wheelchair or standing with the help of his crutches would be most appropriate here on an island where many disabled people reside," and "an inspiration for the multitude of disabled visitors, especially our wheelchair-bound war veterans returning from Iraq."



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Shane from page 1

turning, so that they can understand the decision-making process – that we’re not making decisions on an irrational basis or for our own good. We’re making them for what we perceive as the people’s good. Now, you can disagree on what that may be, but that is certainly the consideration when we’re doing things.

People have to understand that it is not to feather our own nests in any way, and we’re still not getting the big bucks here – that we’re working for the government, that we’re working within the government salary structure, within the entire process of government where we have to clear appointments and positions and head count and frozen salaries and benefits and everything else with the governor’s appointments office. That’s the way it is. We work for the government, and part of what you accept as the quid pro quo of working for the government is that in your compensation is the satisfaction of doing good things, of being part of that process. You also get security because, when you work for the government, you’re not subject to the same whimsies as you are in the private sector. But that’s what we’re here for, and that’s what we’re doing. And I am pleased that, after two years, I think we’ve made huge strides in that direction. I think that our core, our cadre of employees, is much more professional. We have much more in the way of process in place to make people accountable. We’ve done a lot more training. We’ve emphasized not only their professionalism but their ethical responsibility, their public responsibility, and we have organized along departmental lines so that people understand clearly their responsibilities and their reporting lines, and how they are not only to deliver up those lines, but how they will be held accountable and judged on how they perform within their recognized, delineated function. That’s an important part of what we’ve done.

WIRE: Is the bunker mentality all gone?
Shane: No, it is absolutely not gone completely, because there are still people here on the island who believe that some portion of what we do is counterproductive to their vision of what the island should be or ought to be or must be.

WIRE: When you mentioned the bunker mentality, I thought you were referring to the staff, but I see you were thinking of residents as well.

Shane: Well, our staff felt like it was a bunker because the people on the island in many ways believed that no matter what came out of RIOC, it was counterproductive to their vision of the island. It was inevitably [seen as] *against* them, as opposed to being *for* them. That difference – whether it comes out of a cooperative spirit or out of a process of involvement... I have tried very hard to invite the community into the process starting from that first day and at the first board meeting where I opened up the whole subject of the Board of Directors. That has been quite salutary. I think that my relationship – I’ve tried to involve the heads of RIRA [Roosevelt Island Residents Association] and their committees in what we do – to understand our process and the substance of our decision-making, and to get their advice, both good and bad, and have them see what we do – to try to dispel the notion that we are here to “get” them. We’re not. We’re here to serve them.

WIRE: So, internally, you think that the bunker mentality is wiped away?

Shane: Internally, I don’t stand for it. There are still people who are partially scarred by their experiences of the past and believe that the community still doesn’t have any respect for them. On the outside, there is still some feeling – and you get that in letters [to *The WIRE*] – that the “clowns” of RIOC are still doing their thing. I think the truth is inevitably somewhere in between, but the fact is we are working very hard to eliminate as much of that as possible. We need to be accountable, we need to be responsible, and we need to deliver the goods.

WIRE: So far, we’ve been talking about people. What about the island, physically, in terms of what has been accomplished over the last two years?

Shane: We’ve undertaken some significant projects. Obviously, first and foremost, number one on the hit parade for everybody, was the tram project, which is not a simple thing at all, and the opposition to doing the tram ultimately had to be overcome. We try to do it by persuasion, by education, by turning a light on the process. There were naysayers and there are still plenty of naysayers, I’m sure, but it is going forward and we have tried to get the best and the brightest to work on this project to get it delivered on time within budget. As things stand today, that’s going to happen. It doesn’t mean that I’m not very apprehensive about

See **Shane**, page 10

Editor’s note:
This issue of *The WIRE* was intended to have a good deal more: Pictures from the PTA International Dinner, some synchronized swimmers working out at Sportspark... Alas, the bulk of the production week went down the drain in a serious computer crash. Some of the missing material will be held over in case there’s space next issue.

RITE from page 1

- Grid-connected power with no power-quality problems;
- Fully bidirectional operation – passive yawing with high efficiency on both ebb and flood tides;
- No fouling or debris damage;
- Automatic control and continuous, unattended operation;
- 80 megawatt-hours of energy delivered to two end users;
- 9,000 turbine-hours operation.

The demonstration is the world’s first grid-connected array of tidal turbines.

To assess environmental impacts, Verdant conducted unprecedented environmental monitoring activities, including a system of fixed underwater hydroacoustic sensors, as well as on-vessel mobile fish monitoring. The monitoring shows no evidence of increased fish mortality or injury, and no irregular bird activity. The data demonstrate that fish avoid zones of impact and populate inshore areas. Verdant will continue monitoring during phase 3 build-out in order to analyze any impacts of a larger array.

Key operational records were also compiled, including lessons learned regarding the turbine rotor, which failed in early stages. Redesigned rotors were tested at the U.S. National Renewable Energy Laboratory in Golden, Colorado, and retrofit to existing turbines and operated without further issues.

Having successfully demonstrated the system, Verdant has now begun to commercialize the technology for broader implementation in North America. For the turbine, this will entail a parts reduction to facilitate manufacturing and minimize operating and maintenance costs. Enhanced means of installing the turbines are also being developed, as well as updated technologies for anchoring them to the waterway floor. Their first implementation will come in 2009-10 through Verdant’s Cornwall, Ontario, River Energy (CORE) Project in the St. Lawrence River.

The company also plans to install the next-generation system as part of a phase 3 pilot at Roosevelt Island. Toward this end, Verdant submitted an application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in November. This license would authorize build-out to 30 turbines and sale of energy from the field into the New York City grid – a major milestone for the company and the U.S. marine renewable energy industry. Plans are also under way to expand project development into the west channel of the East River.

The RITE Project has been captured in two documentaries currently airing on major television outlets. The National Geographic Channel’s *Man Made* (US) and *Megastructures* (international) series featured the project in episodes entitled *Aqua Power* and *Electric Ocean*. Also, a recently-produced documentary entitled *Innovate: Engineering Change*, which focuses on the Roosevelt Island project, is being released to PBS affiliates nationwide.

[Verdant is arranging for a showing of these video materials on the island in the near future.]

More information on Verdant Power is at www.verdantpower.com.

Letters

E-mail problem: For a period ending April 23, and for another April 27-28, mail to editor@MainStreetWIRE.com was not getting through. E-mailed letters are always acknowledged. If you receive none, your e-mail did not reach *The WIRE*. In that event, please resend *and* call **212-826-9056** for a temporary alternate address.

To the Editor:
I support Elizabeth Bolden and Vicki Garavuso in their letters regarding the unrelenting mind-controlling noise pollution coming from talking escalators in the Roosevelt Island subway station. When Elizabeth asked for a silent escalator, I was surprised to hear the MTA’s response was that people need instructions on how to ride the escalator. How did they come to this conclusion? I suppose that would be possible, but only if the survey subjects were MTA employees. Does the MTA plan to teach classes in the art and science of escalator riding?

Of course, the instructions of the talking escalator are a little challenging. On the one hand, the voice tells you to keep away from the sides of the escalator, then it tells you to hold the hand rail. This is starting to sound like a fancy yoga move to me. And if you think about it, is that really the best advice? I’m sure it’s there to prevent them from getting sued, but it’s not really in my best interest. I mean, you don’t know how clean that rail is, and how many hundreds of germ-infested people have touched it before you. I don’t want to play Russian roulette, I just want to escape the subway as quickly as possible. And when I am trapped on that platform, the only way to escape the subway experience is to read a book, but I can’t do that if those damned escalators are talking.

We all need to make ourselves heard. We need to all tell the person in the booth to stop the noise pollution, call the station 718 694-3025, and call 311 and complain about the noise.

Neal Weissman

Editor’s response: *The WIRE* has established an e-mail address, MTAyammer@gmail.com, to receive residents’ comments on the escalators. When a significant number of complaints have been received there, we’ll send the address and password to the MTA powers-that-be and see if they respond.

To the Editor:
This past week, I have been in email contact with RIOC President Steve Shane with regard to the poster that has recently appeared in the subway station advising us of reduced subway service during rush hour. This schedule change happens to exactly coincide with the time the tram will be down. I was shocked and outraged by Mr. Shane’s comment that “Summer months won’t be so terrible. September-December will be difficult, but will pass.”

Yes, it will pass, but there are six months that will be a nightmare and worse. However, this situation offers Mr. Shane great leverage – he could really turn this for good. He could re-open the conversations with MTA for some alternative solutions. One that I suggested to him is to extend the Q train a few stops to the turn-around in Queens – even if it is on a temporary or trial basis.

Rather than being stuck in a “this too will pass” mentality, why not try negotiating again? With the leverage he now has, why doesn’t he take advantage of the situation and accomplish something that will benefit the island?

Name Withheld

To the Editor:
You got it wrong! There were a lot of untrue facts in your *Pioneers* article (*The WIRE*, April 18). Selwyn lived in 510 Eastwood, not Rivercross, at the time of the first blackout. It was Eastwood’s “frivolous feel” in the hallways. Mort Pavane was not a professional photographer, just a member of the Photographic Society of Roosevelt Island (PSRI).

PSRI meetings were held in the Westview community room, not Rivercross. We had a storefront window in Rivercross where we displayed the winning photos of our competitions.

My advice to *The WIRE* is to let the people in the article *read* it first before printing it. Get it right. Now I know how the media can distort the facts.

Jan Fund

Editor’s response: As a matter of journalistic ethics and standard practice, the subjects of articles are not given an opportunity to edit them (and advance reading leads inevitably to demands for changes, not just in facts but in content, language, and emphasis). When we get something wrong, we’re happy to acknowledge the error(s). In the case of the three cited, none, other than promoting Mort Pavane to “professional” and possibly sully the 1970s reputation of Rivercross by transplanting the hallway pot-smoking there, amount to a serious “distortion” (distortions are usually assumed to be a deliberate attempt to mislead readers). But we accept the criticism and, as always, we’ll try to do better.

To the Editor:
During the presentation by Columbia University students, they said that the passenger capacity of the red buses was rarely exceeded, even during rush hours. Buses are “full” from The Octagon and Manhattan Park before they come to Main Street because passengers don’t move to the back. RIOC should take note and revert to the fare-free olden days, allowing passengers to board at the rear door as well as the front door. If such a reversal were implemented, it would:

- shorten the times spent loading passengers
- increase utilization of the rear part of the buses
- reduce congestion on Main Street, and
- reduce the present “bunching” of buses due to the slow loading and congestion.

M. J. Petersen

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.

COMING UP

— This Weekend —

High school community service on the Island, today (Sat May 2), 10am, Orphans International, 559 Main St.

Cherry Blossom Walk, today (Sat May 2), 11am, starting from the Visitor Center Kiosk in Tramway Plaza, on the island, presented by the Roosevelt Island Historical Society. \$5 donation. Reservations: **212-688-4836**.

MotherLode Trio in Concert, Sun May 3, 2:30pm, Good Shepherd Community Center, presented by the Church of the Good Shepherd. Blues, country, and roots music. Free; donations support the food program. (Ad, page 8.)

Opening Reception for RIVAA Reflected, a members' exhibition at The Octagon Gallery, **today** (Sat May 2), 6-8pm; works will remain on display through June 21.



— Continuing —

Art from the Heart III, Gallery RIVAA. Exhibit of the work of Coler-Goldwater patients, through May 17. Gallery hours Sat-Sun 11am-5pm, Wed & Fri 6-9pm.

Open Swim Hours, Sat 12-3pm & 4-7pm, Mon-Fri 6-11am, Tue & Thu 6-9pm, Sportspark. Adults \$5, children \$3, seniors & infants free.

Baseball and Ping Pong Tournament Signup for the May 16 Health and Fitness Day continues through April 30, 9am-5pm; call Othneil at **212-832-4540** or visit rioc.com. (See ad, page 9.)

Day Nursery Registration continues. Information: **212-593-0750**.

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.

Book Bingo (ages 5-12), Thu 4:00pm, Library.

— The Coming Week & Next Weekend —

Preserving Roosevelt Island, Tue May 5, 6:30pm, Library, 524 Main St., with Historical Society President Judith Berdy. Second in a series presented by the Roosevelt Island Historical Society.

Using Salesforce.com for Database Work, Tue May 5, 7pm, Orphans International, 559 Main Street.

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.

— Future Weeks —

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon May 11, 8pm. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577**.

Meet the Candidates for RIOC Board, Tue May 12, 7pm, Good Shepherd Community Center.

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.

R&R Concert, Duce+Allen, Fri May 15, 8pm, Good Shepherd Center. Violinist/violist Ralph Allen and pianist Geoffrey Duce play works of Bach, Mozart, and Brahms. Free; contributions to R&R Concerts welcome. (Ad, page 11.)

The Main Street WIRE – Next issue **Sat May 16**. **Advertising Deadlines:** Ads in the paper, Wed May 6, decision date on circulars/inserts, Tue May 12; they are due Thu May 14. **Additional issues in 2009:** May 30; June 13, 27 (Fourth of July issue); July 25; Aug 29, Sep 12, 26; Oct 10, 24; Nov 7, 21; Dec 12 (holiday issue). **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**.

Health & Fitness Day Basketball Tournament, Sat May 16, 10am, Capobianco Field. (Ad, page 8.)

Third Annual Health & Fitness Day, Sat May 16, 11am-4pm, Capobianco Field, including a ping-pong tournament. First 100 attendees receive a free recyclable grocery tote bag. (Ads, pages 5, 8, 9.)

Special Election to nominate residents to the RIOC Board of Directors, **Tue May 19**, 6am-9pm. (Ad, page 7.)

Book Discussion – Dreams From My Father by **Barack Obama**, **Thu May 21**, 6:30pm, New York Public Library Roosevelt Island branch. Books available at the branch here.

Run for Children's Rights, Sat May 23, 10am. \$20. Information at tinyurl.com/run4children.

The Queensboro Bridge at 100 show at Gallery RIVAA, **Sat May 23** through June 28, co-sponsored by RIVAA and the Historical Society. Gallery hours Sat-Sun 11am-5pm, Wed & Fri 6-9pm.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon May 25, 8pm. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577**.

Preserving Randall's Island, Thu May 28, 6:30pm, Library, 524 Main St., with Prof. Julie Miller of Hunter College. Third in a series presented by the Historical Society. Free.

Residents Association Common Council meeting, **Wed June 3**, 8pm, Good Shepherd Community Center (lower level); meetings are open to all, and begin with an opportunity for residents to address the Council.

Roosevelt Island Day, Sat Jun 6.

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

Democratic candidates for Public Advocate at Roosevelt Island Democratic Club, **Tue Jun 9**, time and place to be announced.

Book Discussion – In Cold Blood by **Truman Capote**, **Thu June 18**, 6:30pm, New York Public Library Roosevelt Island branch. Books available at the branch here.

Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon June 22, 8pm. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577**.

April 30, 2009

1. **Board of Directors:** Special meeting was held April 22. Public Purpose Fund allocation recommended by RIRA, after reconsideration, was approved. Next meeting scheduled for May 14 at 4:30 p.m., with a town hall meeting to follow. Howard Polivy's appointment by the governor and Senate confirmation is scheduled for this week. He will occupy the seat that has been held by Michael Shinozaki. Charlee Miller has announced her intention to retire from the board at the end of her appointed term in June. Our thanks to both Mike and Charlee for their service to the Roosevelt Island community.

2. **Southpoint:**

(A) **Renwick Ruin:** Stabilization work nearing completion. The entrances to the building will be boarded up to secure the interior and prevent trespassing.

(B) **Green Rooms/Wild Gardens:** The contractor, Coppola Paving & Landscaping, has started with mobilization, rough grading, paths, and stone walls. Phase 2 will be the finish grading and capping of the site, utilities, fencing, and planting.

(C) **FDR Memorial:** The Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute (FERI) is working on engineering and permitting with the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Army Corps of Engineers, Coast Guard, etc. FERI has delivered its environmental analysis to RIOC as lead agency, and our consultants are checking as part of the environmental review process. The state budget's \$4 million capital appropriation to RIOC, conditioned on a matching \$4 million from the city and at least \$8 million from FERI as necessary to complete phase 1, seems to complete the financing hurdle when finally committed. Even after permitting process, much remains to be worked out, including coordination of funding and supervision among the State Parks Department, NYC

The RIOC Column



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

Parks Department, RIOC, and FERI before bringing the project back to the board for further consideration.

3. **Tram:** Work is under way on design and fabrication. Spools of cable are to be shipped from Europe by early May. Scheduling of tower reinforcing and top replacement, cable pulling, street and park closures, crane locations, etc., with permitting for everything, is ongoing. Met with Community Board 8 on April 7. On schedule for July 6 shutdown and December reopening. Thornton-Tomasetti has undertaken architectural work in addition to its previous structural engineering engagement. As soon as designs and sketches are available, will make available to the community. Studies of present day code requirements (disabled, fire, electrical, lighting, access and egress, communications, security, HVAC and sprinklers for sub-grade rooms, wind, rain and snow barriers, etc.), as they apply to both stations, are in the works. Likely to reorient the approach to the Manhattan station to Second Avenue. The last tram emergency evacuation drill for this equipment took place April 26. We are coordinating with NYPD and NYFD to develop familiarity with, and establish protocols for, the new system.

4. **Red Bus, Tram and Subway:** By running the tram and a connecting red bus all night, the late-night 36th Avenue bridge closures passed without incident. Hopefully, the last scheduled closures in late June will be similarly painless. Coordination with emergency
See **RIOC Column**, page 14

1. **RIRA Blood Drive on June 6, Roosevelt Island Day.** Matt Katz is doing his wonderful-as-usual job organizing this. RIRA volunteers will be at the green market on Saturdays, so please sign up!

2. **RIOC's Finances.** Received detailed data from RIOC CFO Steve Chironis. RIRA will review soon.

3. **RIOC approves Public Purpose Grants.** RIOC approved the PPG grants on April 22, as recommended by the RIRA Common Council. Thanks, RIOC, the island residents appreciate your help.

4. **Robots Have Arrived.** Mike Acevedo and I are the coaches for this PS/IS 217 Beacon Program effort. We need a team of 10-12 kids, ages 7-14. The kids will build Lego robots to go on "missions" – an obstacle course. This is a team effort, so a range of skills is necessary. We meet at the Roosevelt Island Youth Program (504 Main Street), Tuesdays 3:30-4:30 and Thursdays 6:30-7:30. Tuesday, May 5, is the kick-off meeting. See <http://FirstLegoLeague.org>.

5. **Adult Softball:** Planning meeting at Trellis at 5:00 p.m. tomorrow (Sunday, May 3), to sort out teams and schedules. So far, it looks like it will be a single co-ed league.

6. **Columbia Presentation on Transportation.** Really poor quality is my three-word summary. Many who attended the April 16 presentation described it as awful, out-of-touch, and not useful. RIRA Common Council member Jim Bates noted there were no disabled people in any of Columbia's images of Roosevelt Island. Others wondered if the needs of the disabled were considered.

• Columbia Professor Lapp demonstrated how not

The RIRA Column

to listen to residents. (a) According to Lapp (and thus they are the "facts" and no one else has "facts"), no one waits in the morning for a second or third F train – regardless of residents' first-hand accounts. (b) Flawed Thinking: During the tram's construction, its 550 passengers per hour can easily be redirected into the F train because it's only 2.9% additional capacity, regardless of whether the subway is operating at over-capacity. (c) Disconnect with Residents and CB8: One cannot build on top of the subway tunnels here or build onto the Queensboro Bridge (a landmark), so their Cultural Center made no sense.

• Don't Know Much About Numbers. (d) They said 40-foot-wide streets are necessary for improvements, but Main Street is only 25 feet wide and, thus, their suggestions wouldn't work. Didn't Check Facts: Main Street is actually 38 feet wide with 12-foot sidewalks at its narrowest point. (e) Red Bus Capacity and Loading: Numbers were based on averages rather than peak hours when residents experience problems.

• Don't Know Much About Statistics, queuing theory, or any other modeling methods for validating their ideas. How can one get a degree in urban plan-
See **RIRA Column**, page 6



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

Senior Center

Monday
9:30, **Hawaiian Hula**
10:30, **English as 2nd Language**
11:00, **Tai Chi**
12:30, **"Oldies" Movies**
6:00, **Yoga**

Tuesday
9:30, **Get Stronger Bones**
10:30, **Blood Pressure**
10:20, **Shoppers' Bus**
11:00, **Arabic**
2:00, **Bingo**
2:00, **Paint & Sculpt**
7:30, **Games (RISA)**

Wednesday
9:30, **Yoga**
10:30, **Computers**
10:20, **Shoppers' Bus**
10:30, **Spanish Class**
7:00, **Pokeno (RISA)**
Thursday
9:30, **Get Stronger Bones**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
11:00, **Arabic**
12:30, **Movie**

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

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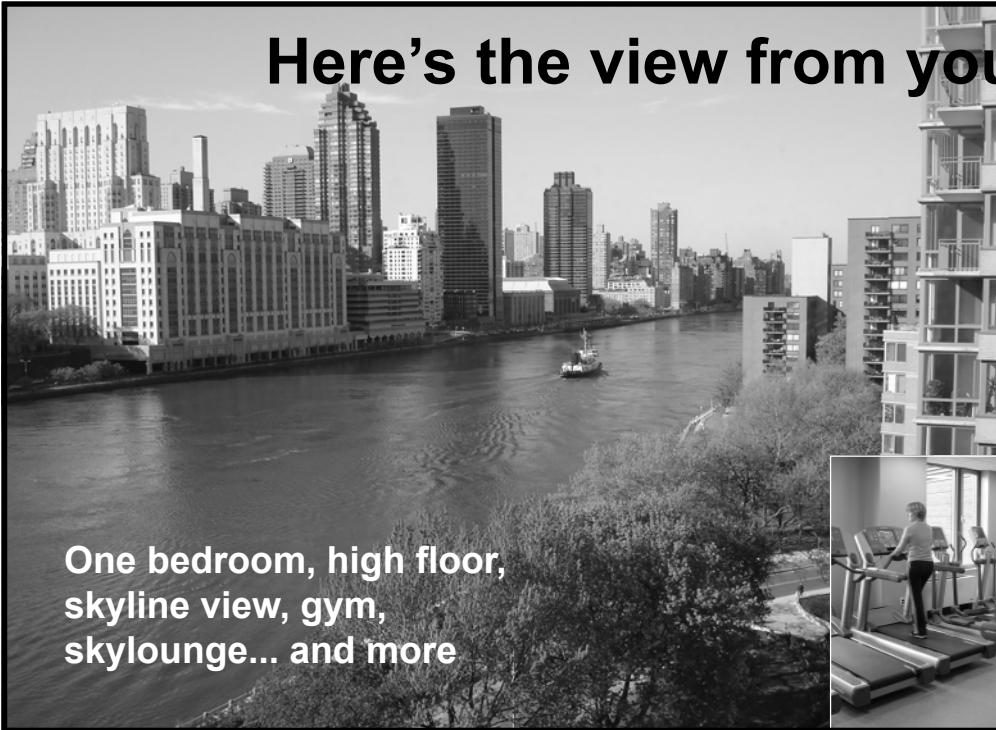
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Islander Issues Album – His Own Compositions for, um, *Shakuhachi*?



Gerald Starlight lives on Roosevelt Island. The shakuhachi is a Japanese bamboo flute. They come together in 10 of Starlight’s own compositions for the instrument, on an album titled *Under the Sky*. On the release, which is available at We Are One at 599 Main



Street, Starlight plays about 15 instruments via multitrack recording, on titles like *Echoes of Wild Geese*, *With Changing Clouds*, and *The Night Wind Remembers*. The album cover describes his compositional style as “based on improvisations of themes and variants” with “a wide range of portomento

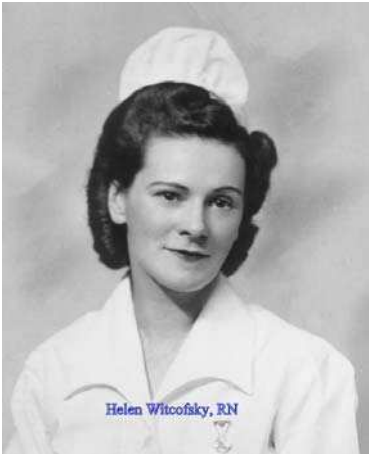


ornamentation [and] microtonal effects produced by various degrees of note bending and sliding.” It adds that Starlight studied for eight years with one of Japan’s most respected masters of the instrument.

History Years Ago, Same East River Island, But a Very Different Lifestyle Here

by Janet Falk

What was life like for the people who lived and worked on Welfare Island? Judith Berdy, president of the Roosevelt Island Historical Society, offers a behind-the-scenes view on Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. She’ll present *Preserving New York City’s Smallest Islands: Roosevelt Island* at the local branch of the New York Public Library. This is the second in a series of four events, focusing on Hart, Roosevelt, Randall’s, and Ellis Islands. Many people worked in the hospitals and other institutions of Welfare Island over the years. Some administrators, like the Efflers, whose photos were exhibited in January, lived here with their families. There was a considerably larger, somewhat transient population of student nurses who studied, trained, and lived here. All the nursing students were high school graduates. Dedicated young women, they earned very modest salaries and needed the security of housing provided by the city. The Registered Nursing (RN) program consisted of three years of classes and a lot of bedside experience at either City Hospital, just south of the current Goldwater Hospital, or Metropolitan Hospital, the former Lunatic Asylum building where The Octagon now stands. Both nursing schools, Met and City Hospital, had dormitories nearby for their students. These were used from about 1900 to the late 1950’s. Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) training was a one-year program. It was based at Goldwater Hospital



from 1947 to 1970. Those students lived in the Central Nurses Residence, a 600-room yellow brick building that was later demolished as part of the preparations for construction of Southtown. Many of the LPN graduates went on to become RNs, and some still work here in the administration of Coler and Goldwater Hospitals. Most nurses and administrators lived on the island, leaving on the weekends and when off duty. They headed to the city for shopping, family visits, or entertainment. Staff members paid less than a dollar a day for their meals. For nursing students, meals were free. There were dining rooms in the dormitory or residence halls. There were many recreational facilities here: tennis, croquet, and ball-playing areas. The nursing schools had camera clubs, and classes in drama, sewing, and art for the off hours. Stories abound about river swimming. Because the students and nurses were here all week long, they shopped in the commissaries at the almshouse. Everyone could buy cigarettes, candy, and necessities there, and some merchandise was available in the residences. Telephone service for nurses was limited. A call came to the switchboard, and then was transferred to the appropriate floor, where the nurse was called to a phone for a hallway conversation conducted without privacy. All the sessions in the *Preserving New York City’s Islands*, including Tuesday’s, are free.

RIRA Column from page 3

ning without knowing how to count people, how to process the data, and how to present the data? (f) BigSuggestion for Improving Red Bus: *Should have a schedule*. Duh! They can’t explain why the buses bunch, they don’t understand variance, and they can’t explain why their own improvements would work. • Don’t Know Much About Economy. (g) Their theory: If it is cheaper to park in Motorgate, then all the street parking will migrate to the parking garage. Suggested increasing street parking rates. They hadn’t considered that people park on the street for non-economic reasons (need to drop off groceries, packages, kids). The students maintain that someone would rather feed the parking meter every 40 minutes 24 hours a day for several days than park in Motorgate. Residents said this was ridiculous. Their revised theory: Well, it’s easy for merchants to run out from their stores every 40 minutes. Lack of research: Merchants already pay a much lower rate at Motorgate (\$61-81/month), so the whole economic argument fails. (h) They thought a car-free island a good idea, but resident Raye Schwartz counters, *Why in the world would I want to shop in Manhattan and pay those [overinflated] prices, when I can drive the 3.1 miles to Key Flood in Greenpoint or 2.9 miles to Stop ‘n’ Shop on Northern Boulevard in Long Island City?* The students like economic models except when someone comes up with a better one that invalidates

their proposal. • Columbia students can’t keep on point. (i) In January, residents complained about the lack of stop signs and traffic issues. Topic morphed into *What about a traffic light at the bottom of the Motorgate ramp?* Topic morphed again: *Discussions of Coler-Goldwater hospital shift changes, and then discussions of 1982 arbitration on hospital parking*. They completely lost track of the residents’ issues and focused on something else. Finally, Professor Lapp is at fault: He didn’t contact island residents for early feedback, and resisted residents giving feedback. Lapp says he’s been doing his way for 45 years and it works for him. He recommends reading *The Power of Positive Thinking*. Do we want science or spirituality as the foundation for red bus scheduling? RIOCI Board Member Jonathan Kalkin supports this non-communication with residents: “I have never finished or turned in a term paper two weeks in advance, have you?” Really, would you take your team’s just-completed presentation to the Big Boss without review? Of course not. Thus, the Columbia proposal and presentation flopped when it could have been significantly better. Really annoying part: RIOCI has stalled listening to residents with the promise of a great report from Professor Lapp and Columbia. Now we can safely ignore the Columbia presentation, and maybe RIOCI can listen to residents about transportation issues.

Linda Pickett

Longtime resident Linda Pickett died March 24. She was the daughter of Jamaican immigrants Passmore and Agnes Lindsay. Born in 1926 in Manhattan, she was raised in the Bronx with her siblings Edsel, John, Lloyd, and Martha.



She married Alfred Pickett in 1947, and became a Harlem resident while working and raising her son. She held several jobs before beginning a 20-year career with the W.T. Grant Foundation, which was highlighted by her position as Program Vice President. Linda and Al became Roosevelt Island pioneers in 1975. They were involved in a variety of activities. They also began their worldwide travels together. Beginning in 1990, Linda spent her retirement years as a frequent world traveler, an active volunteer for many organizations, an avid reader and book club member, a loyal arts supporter, and a generous philanthropist, while expanding her numerous personal relationships and enjoying her Roosevelt Island home.

Linda passed away peacefully, in her Rivercross home, after a courageous and hard-fought battle with pancreatic cancer. She is survived by her sister Martha Dunlap, brothers Edsel and Lloyd Lindsay, and son Steve, along with many nieces, nephews, godchildren, dear friends, associates, and neighbors. Please join the family in celebrating Linda’s almost 83 years of vibrant, loving, and benevolent life. Please take a moment, or many moments, to remember her smile and spirit.

Ad Hoc Cleanup Effort Organized Via E-Mail

by Mary Camper-Titsingh
“I’ve been walking around Roosevelt Island to admire the gorgeous display of spring blossoms,” said Teri Gendron, a relatively new resident at Riverwalk Place. “I’m so upset about all the trash everywhere.” Her e-mail message went on to ask if anyone would join a community project she was organizing to clean up the island. “But doesn’t RIOCI have maintenance crews to do that?” she was asked. “Maybe so,” she replied, “but they need some help, and there is a lot of satisfaction in keeping our green spaces green, clean, and beautiful. President Obama has called on Americans to give a day of service to their communities over the next four years. ‘Everybody is going to have to pitch in. People have huge potential,’ the president said in his election day address.” Four women showed up on April 18, a sunny Saturday, armed with blue surgical gloves and large plastic bags. They rolled up their

sleeves and picked up trash along the cherry blossom-covered sidewalk lining the East River on the south campus of Coler-Goldwater Hospital. There were hundreds of cigarette butts, lots of empty plastic soda and beer bottles, a comb and a worn sock, among other debris, but few garbage cans with lids. The RIOCI maintenance crew working there reported that several garbage cans had been tossed into the river by vandals. But worse was the condition of eight of the benches – one with a splintered seat, others with missing seats and back rests. As the morning warmed up, many off-island visitors came to see and photograph the magnificent clouds of white cherry blossoms. A Japanese family, enjoying a picnic on the grass, assured the volunteers that they would pick up after themselves and would not leave any trash behind. Two French-speaking couples congratulated the clean-up crew on their work. “C’est magnifique!” they said, smiling.

The Island on the Web

Compiled by Rick O’Conor
rooseveltislander.blogspot.com

Roosevelt Islander – RIDA Knocks FDR Park Design – tinyurl.com/crbytb
Roosevelt Island 360 – Pictures: Tram Rescue Drills – tinyurl.com/czp7bz
Curbed – Roosevelt Island Tram Cabin Designs – tinyurl.com/dfrbuj
Curbed – Foul Eruption On Roosevelt Island – tinyurl.com/cq864r
Orangeadnan – 360 Degree View of Subway Pier – tinyurl.com/cejgfv
NY State Comptroller – RIOCI Recycling Compliance – tinyurl.com/d5l7r2
Hot & Cool Guide – Highlights Roosevelt Island – tinyurl.com/dfpwk2
Five Boro Sports – Wheelchair Basketball on RI – tinyurl.com/cdphx8
NY Social Diary – FERI Fetes FDR Park Supporters – tinyurl.com/dgftpt
Daily News – Electricity Submetering Snafus – tinyurl.com/cmsvlp
NBC New York – Profiles Bar Adjacent To Tram – tinyurl.com/caqczt
Historic District Council – Preserving RI – tinyurl.com/da9etx
Susanna’s Sketchbook – Tram Harmonica Player – tinyurl.com/cd2z3r
NY Taxi Photo – Nighttime on Roosevelt Island – tinyurl.com/das2rr
Improv Everywhere – MP3 Experiment on RI – tinyurl.com/cbansn
Urban Adventures – Biking to Roosevelt Island – tinyurl.com/dmghhm
Taking Shots – Riding Atop The Tram – tinyurl.com/d285zt
Daily Photo Stream – Otterness Sculptures at RI – tinyurl.com/cj9mdw
You Tube – A Trip To Roosevelt Island – tinyurl.com/cfwcco
You Tube – Urban Mountain Biking on RI – tinyurl.com/c94n3o
You Tube – Charger RT Hangs On Roosevelt Island – tinyurl.com/c9jh2g
You Tube – 360 Degree of Winter Octagon Dock – tinyurl.com/d998dn

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Good Shepherd
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When I met many of them on my 2007 bike ride, I saw the best hope for a peaceful future – West Bank and Gazan Palestinian Arabs, Jordanians, and Israeli Jews who recognized that they share the same small piece of the earth and have to work together to solve its problems.

Arava is my favorite charity, and I hope my fellow Islanders can help me help it grow. Connect to this *YouTube* video to see some Arava grads on CNN – tinyurl.com/helparava – or contact me via JackResnick@gmail.com or at **212-832-2310**.

Jack Resnick, M.D.

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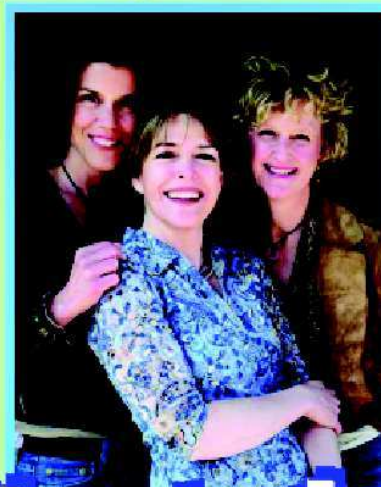
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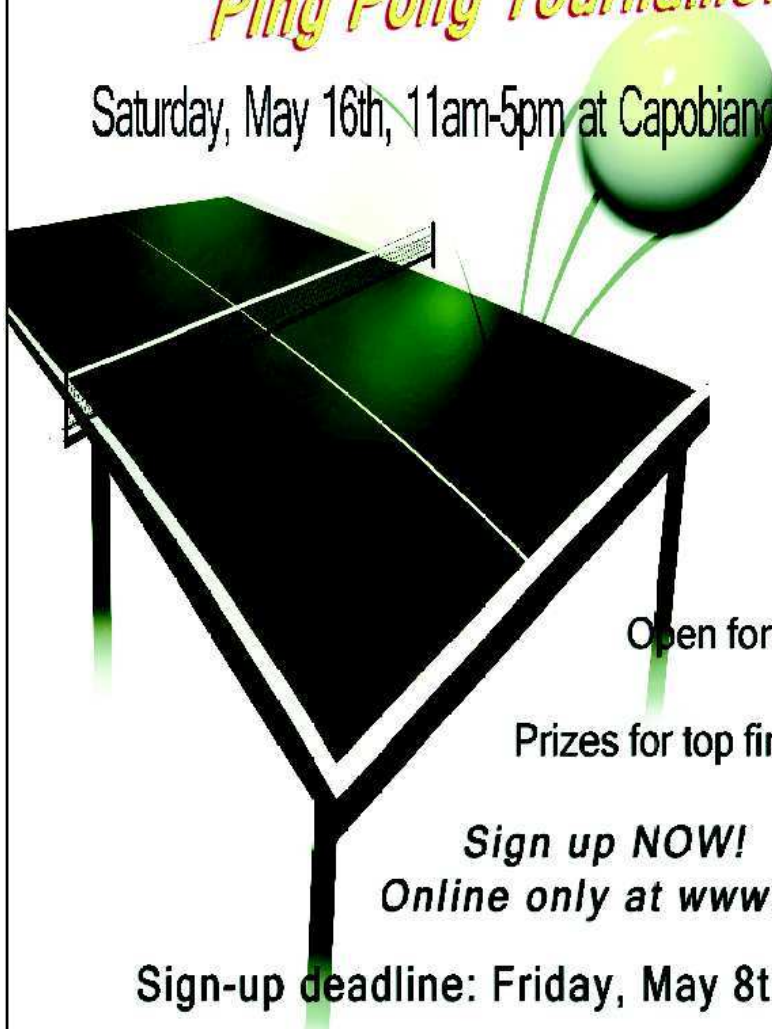
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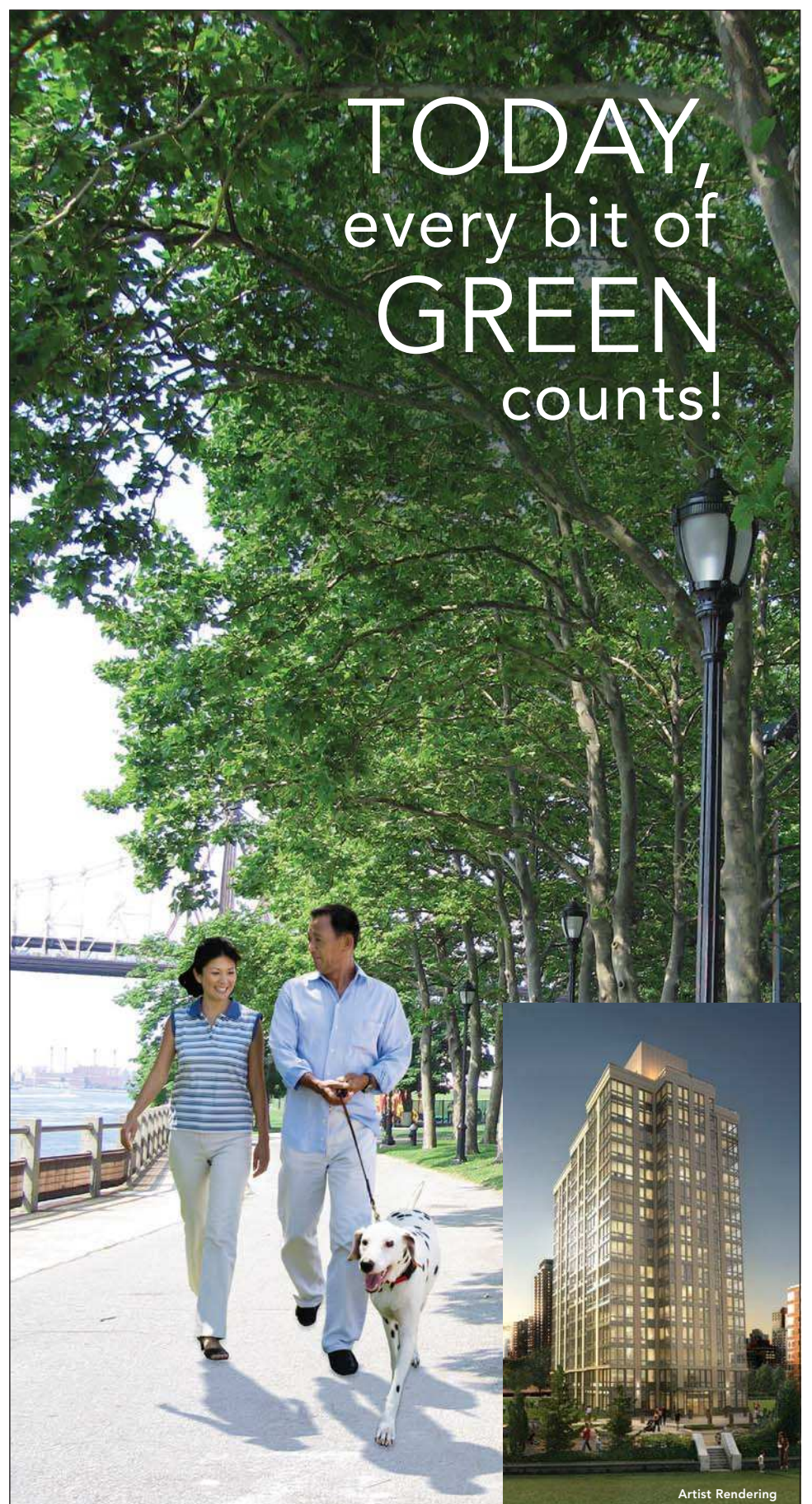
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Shane from page 2; starts on page 1

it, because it is a big responsibility, and it’s something that I’ve promised to deliver on time and within budget, and, to the very best of my ability, am taking as many steps as possible to make sure that happens.

WIRE: So far, so good?

Shane: So far, so good.

WIRE: How about other things?

Shane: Around the island, everywhere you look, you should be seeing signs of things that have been accomplished – little things and some bigger things – as well as projects that are on the tracks going down the ways, as it were, whether you want to talk about Southpoint and the Green Rooms / Wild Gardens project, which is now bid out and contracted for and being laid out as we speak, with the actual moving of dirt and the building of the walls and the roads, which will happen within the next week or two. The layout stuff is under way. The permitting, in order to move any dirt, because of the environmental sensitivity of the site, is a pain, but we’re getting it done, and the city doesn’t let you just do anything, and the Department of Environmental Conservation does not let you do anything, without having an environmental engineer standing around following the protocol... It’s not a simple matter.

WIRE: On Southpoint, I’ve sometimes gotten the feeling that you, personally, have been picking the project up and moving an inch forward one day, then another inch the next day – that it’s been extraordinarily difficult working against or with or through all the bureaucracies, all the permissions, all the steps.

Shane: Inevitably, when you do projects in the city in which you have multiple layers of government oversight, not only city but the state, too, you’ve got the issues – the environmental issues, the coastal issues, the preservation issues, all that stuff – it has to be done in a complicated, coordinated way, and there is no simple way to do it. Part of the frustration of dealing with multilayered projects is that you do have to pick them up and move them an inch at a time, and occasionally get two inches, and sometimes you lose an inch, but the fact is that it’s an incremental process and an aggravating process. But it’s part of what you do – try to advance the ball some every day, and then, one day, Sisyphus-like, you get it pushed over the top and actually it starts to roll on its own, and you don’t have to be there pushing every day.

WIRE: Do you feel like it’s moving on its own?

Shane: No, but it’s got some momentum. Is it to the point where I can go away and never look at it again and know it’s going to happen? No. It doesn’t mean there are not other people who would pick up the cudgel to make it happen, but am I done with my responsibility for pushing it? No.

WIRE: Let’s move on to the FDR Park.

Shane: Okay let’s talk about FERI [the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute].

FERI and this project have been kicking around for 38 years. It is a project that has a favorable wind in its sails. It’s no mystery that the governor’s office is in favor of this project, that the City of New York is in favor of it, and that the elected politicians – our City Council person our state Assemblyman, our state Senator, our Borough President, and our Congresswoman, are in favor of this project. They’ve all said so publicly. [Among some, there is a] notion, which I find not acceptable personally, that the people of Roosevelt Island are or should be in sole control of this project. I don’t accept that. One can disagree or agree with that as a proposition, but this is a state enterprise on this island, the people who live here are transitory, they are not the be-all and end-all of the public voice, and this project has much greater ramifications and legs – much longer-lasting legs – than those who live here for the moment on the island, of whom a few hundred voice their opinions on the project. I don’t consider that to be significant, long-term, on a massive public project.

WIRE: What else?

Shane: We have gotten done lots of things. We have bolstered – fixed up – Sportspark. We have fixed up Good Shepherd. We have finally gotten the project to fix Public Safety headquarters. We have gotten a playground installed near Blackwell House and have involved Island Kids and playground experts collegially and cooperatively to design and get it installed. We’ve gotten Blackwell House itself done – which one may discuss as to whether it’s an appropriate use of public funds or not – but there it is, done for the moment on the exterior. Whether or not we ever do the interior in any sensible way depends upon city funding, the will of people to get it done, and what uses to which it might be put. It is, in this time, a difficult issue.

We’ve gotten the preservation of the Renwick Ruin done. We’ve gotten much more work done than was hoped for, originally, within the budget. And it’s in much better shape than we originally anticipated it could be, given the limit of our budget. So, that’s done.

I’ve managed to get a restroom facility installed at Light-house Park, answering the people who were yelling about public restroom facilities. It’s at least a start. We’ve got at least one on an experimental basis. We now know that we can get modular restroom facilities ordered that will serve and that they are not horrible looking, and that they function, and that we can put exterior treatment on them to make them look even better, and that is part of the Southpoint Park plan. Where other such facilities might go, in Capobianco Field or in Firefighters Field, we’ll see. It’s also a budget matter. But that’s a matter of public benefit

Dis Subway Service

As usual, all information is subject to change.

Su	M	Tu	W	Th	1	2	May
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Grey: No service to Manhattan 12:01am to 5:00am
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23*	
24*	25*	26	27	28	29	30*	June
31*	1	2	3	4	5	6	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Darker: No service from Manhattan 12:01am to 5:00am
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	
28	29	30	1	2	3	4	
July							

*No daytime service these weekend days.

and considerable interest.

WIRE: You mentioned earlier a restroom at Southpoint in Green Rooms / Wild Gardens. Is that still in the works?

Shane: Oh, absolutely. There will probably be a six or eight-gang installation down there.

I’ve managed to get flowers installed in the pots. You know, little stuff: Make sure that the streets are swept; make sure that we get an extra pickup of the garbage at the parks on the weekends during the summer so that it’s not overflowing.

We worked out cordial relations with the hospital, and we’ve had discussions with the hospital administration about their staff and how they use the streets on Roosevelt Island. Is it perfect? Absolutely not. We are dealing with a whole group of people who are not immediately responsible, but we try.

I think we have done yeoman service with respect to our Public Safety Department, which is under much, much more professional supervision in administration and training. And now that we’ve embarked on a program to fix up the Public Safety headquarters, the morale over there is much higher because that condition there was truly dreadful. You see the Public Safety people zipping up and down Main Street on their Segways now that the milder weather is here. They’re proud of themselves and proud of uniforms that they wear, and they are much more responsive to their function as Public Safety officers and to serve the public. I see that relationship with the community as important. They are here 24/7. They are the face of RIOC in many ways. And the people who live here should understand that they are not the New York City Police Department, but they are a deterrent force, they are the force for public general welfare, and they allow life out here to be pretty comfortable. They’re here to assist, and if you look at the daily log of things they assist with, [you see that] they pick up a lot of little old ladies or old men who trip on the curb or fall off gurneys or out of their wheelchairs; or people who leave their food on the stove, or who are worried that they forgot where they live, or they leave their cell phone on the bus, and all that kind of stuff that is just part of general welfare.

We have it much better out here on the island than in the rest of New York City, because you get a lot of immediate attention. I find one of the complaints people have about their unelected government to be quite bizarre because they have all the same elected [officials] that everybody else has. They have the same City Council person, the same assemblyman and mayor, and senator and president and U.S. senators – they have all of the same, and they have an immediately responsive group in Public Safety and here in this office. And if they want to call me or walk in here or at Public Safety – it’s a hell of a lot better than calling 311, because there’s a face that they can get to immediately and get a response.

WIRE: Does it drive you crazy sometimes?

Shane: It doesn’t drive me crazy. It makes me sad sometimes that they don’t appreciate what they’ve got and this constant overlay that we are an occupying force needs to be continually dissipated.

WIRE: Don’t you think that’s dissipated quite a bit?

Shane: Well, I think it has, a lot, and that’s what I referred to earlier as the [decrease in] bunker mentality, as we deliver services, as it were, and as we expose what we do – our function behind the curtain. We’re not the Wizard of Oz back here, and we do it out in the sunlight, and people see what we do, and how we do it, and why we do it, and there should be more appreciation for the process, I would hope. And I think that there is.

WIRE: My own view is that RIOC has been more transparent in the last two years than in the previous years, for both the press and the public at large.

Shane: We’re trying to make that our motto.

WIRE: Anything else that you’d like to mention about the last two years?

Shane: Well, I’ve learned the limits of my finger snapping ability, but I *finally* have a sign out here that, *finally*, identifies 591 Main Street as the RIOC office.

I know that the street lights are on. I know that was a major, major problem when I first came here.

We have undertaken the repainting of the streets and fixing up the AVAC and the sewer line and the water line and all of those infrastructure problems that are a constant, constant problem. We have moved forward with great strides to document what we have, which was sadly lacking, and integrate that with the city to the end where ultimately we’ll be able to convince them (a) that we exist on the city map and (b) that they should take over their responsibility as part of their municipal service to take care of those things – and that goes to the street lights and the sewers and the water mains and the garbage service, the AVAC, which they’re constantly trying to walk away from, it goes to DEP and the water mains and the water tunnel and it goes to all kinds of stuff like that.

It goes to our relationship with the MTA, and we’ve been able to open those lines of communication to improve government service delivery to the residents of the island, and to try and make clear where the lines of responsibilities fall. I can’t be responsible for delivering water or sewer service to the island. I can try to facilitate the conversation with the city. At some level, we are here to mow the grass, make sure that the garbage runs through the AVAC, and tend to the quality-of-life issues. But the main basic municipal services are still the responsibility of the city of New York.

WIRE: Let’s look at the future now. Where do you see the island going over the next three to five years? What’s the future going to be like in that near term and, if you want, beyond? And what do you want to do in the next two years?

Shane: There are two very different areas. One is the physical plant, and we have continuing issues of the deteriorating physical plant that have to be attended to – the infrastructure. We also have to make some decisions about what we’re going to do with the Sportspark facility. That’s going to be a community decision – whether we want to continue in its present configuration without doing much of anything, and maybe economics of the times will force us to do that, but there is a proposal – the one we have from the Roosevelt Island Racquet Club – which outlines a vision (*The WIRE*, August 2, 2008, online at nyc10044.com/wire/2821/wire2821.html). Were we to go forward and try to execute that vision, we have to do an RFP and the whole development process and all of that, because there’s certainly no assurance that the Roosevelt Island Racquet Club would be the successful developer. But we need to work that out, and that’s going to be a major community issue as we come to grips with that whole complex.

Sportspark itself is falling apart and we’re spending... we have an estimate that says to maintain it and have continued use of it, we’re going to have to spend major bucks on it. Now, do we want to spend major bucks on it if we’re going to do away with it? That catalyzes the argument that we should examine the alternative, and so we’re doing that. We’re looking at that right now, and we’re going to involve the residents and RIRA and the community and the REDAC [Real-Estate Development Advisory Committee], which is now about to be chaired by Jonathan Kalkin because Charlee Miller is resigning from the board at the end of her term in June. She’s just too busy in her professional life to do the job justice, in her words, and she thanks everybody for the opportunity and she’s been pleased to serve and she’s done a very good job.

That leads to the other side of things. We have a lot to do – the parks to build out, to finalize what to do about the FDR Park because that’s still a project in creation down there, and they have to come back to the board with a finite plan that is going to be reacted to by the board, and we’ll see what happens.

We must redo the AVAC, and we’re replacing the compression chambers. We are dealing with the street paving, the zee-bricks are a constant problem and that sort of stuff, and we’re going to take care of the AVAC at the Good Shepherd.

We’re going to come to some conclusion about Main Street retail, which is a continued source of dismay on my part and aggravation on the part of the residents, who don’t appreciate that it’s not a simple problem, no matter what they say. It’s a complicated legal problem. Sooner or later, we may just be prepared to jump, but it’s a hard thing for a lawyer to say *just jump*.

WIRE: Let’s come back to that in a moment.

Shane: The thing that is going to be evolutionary in terms of the island and where we’re going deals with the people and the changing demographics of the island, because the pioneers moved here 27-28 years ago, their time is passing – their time of control of the island institutions is going to pass on. It’s just a natural progression of things, and when it passes, to whom will it pass? We are now building out the original plan so that the market-rate units that were contemplated as part of the original GDP are being put in place, and when buildings 7, 8, and 9 are finally built, whether it’s two years or five years or 10 years from now, sooner or later they’ll get built. Whether one of those buildings might be a senior building or not, who knows?

But those buildings will get built, with 600 or so units, and that’ll be the end. That’s it for development. The long-

Continues next page



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range plans for Goldwater and Coler are so far down the pike that I don't think they're even worth talking about, especially in this budget, because all of the funding for the planning of that stuff has been removed from the [city's] HHC [Health and Hospitals Corporation] budget. That's just not on the table anymore.

But the demographics of the island population and the integration of the people who are coming in – the new residents of the island – and whether they're coming into the new market-rate units or they're rolling over into the present WIRE buildings [Westview, Island House, Rivercross, Roosevelt Landings (formerly Eastwood)] and the established units as the pioneers phase out, you're going to have a new population here, and there's a certain inevitability about that rollover. It will change the politics and the view of the island in many, many ways. Whether or not those people get integrated into the existing structure – the existing society – and how that evolves is a matter of great fascination to me as a person who has an interest in sociology and urban affairs.

How the process of planning a new town – because that's what this was all about originally – may have been flawed in its inception or was wise in its conception, or what were the good things that were done or the bad things that were done – because the original concept was that you were going to achieve this socioeconomic mix that was laid down in the GDP, but nobody contemplated that it was going to take 40 years to accomplish it. The changes have evolved over time. You know, when you reach that result at the end, you have a very different place than the one that was originally contemplated. So, the late arrivals who come to fill up their slots at the market-rate end don't have the island history or in many ways the social-political clout that those who arrived much earlier had by reason of their being on the island for so long.

It's an interesting dynamic. So what I have done – I have challenged the School of Urban Affairs at Columbia and the School of Urban Affairs at the City University of New York to deal with this prospect – to study the evolution of this new town. After all, we are in a very interesting isolated laboratory, so that one can study what has transpired here among the various groups as a laboratory that's probably quite unique, and they are both going to do it. They are both very interested in doing it as a graduate school exercise, for a serious graduate school exercise, for the PhD level students.

I read with horror – absolute horror – the comments that have been posted on the blogs [rooseveltislander.blogspot.com and <http://rooseveltisland360.blogspot.com>] by the residents of

some of the WIRE buildings who are quite racially motivated, quite angry. They are really horrifying, where people were suddenly threatened by the economic tension of submetering – the economic tension of people being threatened in their apartments by the imposition of these full-blown utility charges when they are not eligible under section 8, their sticky vouchers would get them only an allowance – the people who are under the Landlord Assistance Plan [LAP], and this arises mostly in what used to be Eastwood, but there are a lot of people there who are quite threatened.

They are also threatened by the continuing push of Urban American. That was part of the deal that was made before the current RIO administration ever came on the scene – to convert, to market rate, as many of the units as they can to maximize their investment profit. That will dramatically change the face of that particular population and the people there who are at the lower-income spectrum feel pushed, and they are pushing back. You read the comments that they've written and published, and it's really horrifying that this idyllic island – it's like *The Love Boat*, one would think, but it's not. There's an enormous amount of underlying tension, whether it's economically-based tension or racially-based tension, it's the haves, have-nots, the people who feel pushed out of their present abode without control, or whatever, there's just some really horrifying stuff and it's not pretty.

WIRE: Some of those people feel that this is a management and owner method of imposing a rent increase that will push them out. If you look only at the raw financial picture, you could find it somewhat easy to agree that having people go away is to the owner's advantage when the apartments get improved and go to market rate.

Shane: I see it more benignly than that. It *would* have been to their advantage, but that's not so clear in the present economic environment. Clearly, converting to submetering in a standard building – and what they've got over there is the most asymmetrical, nonstandard building – is something that is in the public favor. It should be part of the energy-conservation program, which is what makes it a more complicated issue, because everywhere people are encouraged to do submetering to make the people who are using the juice aware of what they're doing and to get them to turn off the lights, turn off the air conditioning, to use their energy judiciously because we as a society are up against it in terms of energy consumption.

I think [the owners] stepped into a mess that they didn't appreciate. I think the Public Service Commission let them do it, and they should've known better. It's all stopped now,

and will be until they figure out something to do with these buildings, which may require a great deal of retrofitting. All of it relates back to the original UDC design construct, which was awful. It was at a time when electricity was cheap. It was when UDC was desperate to get these buildings up and to minimize their capital cost. It was much cheaper to [heat electrically] than to put in a central heating plant, and what you've got now is the fruit of that decision-making almost 40 years ago. I don't see a good solution to it, but I don't think that Urban American or any landlord that proposes submetering is quite as malignant in their approach as a lot of people assert. The end result as applied was going to be awful, but it comes under the cover of doing good – bringing conservation, which is a good thing in our society.

WIRE: While we are on the subject of owners and tenants, what about the future of the other WIRE buildings – Westview, Island House, and Rivercross.

Shane: Well, at some point the Commissioner of Housing is going to receive proposals from the owners to preserve long-term affordability, to preserve present affordability, to limit the realization of "profit," and she will then certify to me that here's a plan that's consistent with the GDP [the General Development Plan for Roosevelt Island], and then we're going to have to face the reality of ground leases for each of those buildings and how can they be extended under the Public Authorities Accountability Act so facilely, and what plan are we going to have, and how are they getting around the ESDC [Empire State Development Corporation] and their willingness to continue exemptions from real-estate taxes when they no longer are in a Mitchell-Lama program – if they choose to come out. Is there statutory authority for the ESDC to continue to exempt them? Is there any public policy authority for them to do it? It gets to be a much bigger issue.

WIRE: Bigger than your office, bigger even than the housing commissioner's office.

Shane: Oh, I have nothing to do with that. DHCR will chair the meetings and bring it to the level where it needs to be decided finally, to get it resolved and get the proper people to pay attention to it, if it can be resolved, and I don't know the answer to that at all. It certainly is well above the pay grade out here to get those issues resolved.

WIRE: Do you sense that the gears are meshing?

Shane: I don't know that they're meshing. I know that they're moving. There is an enormous amount of stuff that has to be resolved before anything can happen. Not the least of which are the niceties of the Martin Act and how

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they can even discuss this publicly in terms of conversion to a co-op without having a plan in place, without going through the Attorney General’s office, and there are so many uncertainties in the plan that it’s hard to *have* a plan. There is a body of tenants who believe that their best interests would be served by a conversion. There is a body of tenants who believe their best interests are served by no conversion. I don’t know. I think the owners believe that their best interest would be served by getting out of here and trying to cash in something and get out.

WIRE: It seems like there are so many moving parts that it is a challenge beyond management and yet it’s one that must be done – to make some decision at some point.

Shane: Who has to make some decision?

WIRE: Well, that’s a question...

Shane: That’s a specific issue here on the island. RIOC is the landlord, the sublandlord of subleases to each of these [housing] enterprises. And, at least in theory, RIOC has the right to decide whether or not it’s going to extend the ground lease past 2028, which would make any proposal doable, and without that there is no proposal. That having been said, obviously I’m a creature of the state of New York, and the commissioner of housing is my boss, and she reports to the governor, and if the governor says this is something we are to be doing, and he can make the ESDC come in line, and she says this is something we’ll be doing from an affordable housing preservation point of view – because that is a keen interest of hers both because I believe in it and because I think that the GDP requires it... but when all of those stars and moons and cosmos are aligned, and how they are to be gotten in line and however long they can be held in line with all these moving parts in order to get it done, I don’t know. It is daunting. It’s not easy.

WIRE: Back to the question of where the island goes over the next 25 years, any further thoughts about that?

Shane: Well, I think we are going to make significant progress on the capital projects of this island. We have the money in the capital budget, and I think that there’s no reason to believe that our financial future will be impaired. It’s not to say that it couldn’t happen if we were going into a really deep recession or worse, or one or more of the owners here on the island would default on their obligations. I mean, if you want to get really serious about bad things happening, there is a level beyond which ultimately our finances would get impacted. At the moment, we take in a lot of money from the operation of the tram and I hope that our relationship with the MTA continues. The Metropolitan Transit Authority is an important part of what we do. It allows us to run the tram at breakeven, at the moment. Without that... I know they’re strapped for cash and I know they’re looking around, and I wouldn’t be surprised if they would want us to take a smaller piece of the fare collection. That’s a potential problem.

WIRE: At the moment you’re really evaluating a possible downturn. The downside.

Shane: Absolutely. The upsides are easy to deal with.

WIRE: You’re scaring me now. Go back to the upside.

Shane: Well, the upside is that life will continue out here, we will continue to see the completion of Southtown and we will collect the development fees from Southtown, and those buildings will come online as a supporter of our island-wide municipal services, whether it’s public safety or ground rent or whatever it is that allows us to maintain the flower beds and roadways and the sidewalks and the lights and all that stuff, to do the good things that we like to do... to have a \$100,000 public-purpose appropriation, to have parks in Southtown and Southpoint... you know, all the little things that are a function of having available revenues.

It’s very dependent upon Southtown, as it was, for a long time, dependent upon Manhattan Park and The Octagon and Motorgate – because Motorgate is a huge revenue producer for us. It’s *not* very dependent on the commercial areas. The reason that those stores are not rented has very little if anything to do with the store rents. I’m looking at a resistance by the store owners up and down the street in terms of their ability to pay their rent. It’s a sign of the times. Whether it’s a day or two later in the month that they pay their rent, or a month or two later, you can feel the friction developing in the rent payment scheme because their business is falling. You look around the greater New York area and you see vacant store after vacant store.

WIRE: So you get a situation where you start with a number of vacant stores, and when they go out...

Shane: When they go out, it may not make sense to come back. The flower shop guy was doing it almost out of habit. After the fire, he did a business valuation and decided that he did not want to restart his store. I offered him all kinds of other possibilities, and free rent, and he couldn’t justify it in his own mind.

WIRE: Is there a solution in sight?

Shane: We are coming down to the final days of the consultant study that we contracted for – I mean we’ve had the consultant here and we’ve met with Vicki Feinmel and Margie Smith and that committee to talk about it. We’re toward the end of that study. I hope it is going to be in sufficient depth to understand and examine the real issues. In my mind, there are really two issues or two sets of issues. One is what kind of retail establishments can be supported here in a way that makes anybody doing business here worthwhile? I know that it’s part of a mythology here that we had this wonderful bread store, the wonderful fish store, the wonderful pizza store. Why did they go out of busi-

ness? It wasn’t because they were gold mines. I know why the florist went out of business because I was here when it happened. They went out of business because they never had a business. The fire was just something that triggered their attention and a decision.

WIRE: So you’re saying that basically it’s an economic question. And location?

Shane: Where is a good retail location on this island? What we have is a very awkward retail corridor with a dispersed population, and the people with the greatest buying power are at the polar ends of this retail corridor and with almost no reason to pass through it other than in transit. It’s too far to walk. There’s almost no reason to walk here as a destination. The people from The Octagon on their way to the subway or the tram? It’s not happening. So what you have is the population of the WIRE buildings and some from Manhattan Park who can and will walk the streets to do their shopping. Some are a captive audience and can’t get off the island, so they will do their shopping here. But for those people who can get off the island, they do, whether they bring it home from work or take the bus over to Queens and shop in a more advantageous way. We have had lots and lots of discussions with Gristede’s about improving their store, marketing a better product, making their prices more competitive, and they say they’re not making a living *now*. And that’s part of the problem.

WIRE: Do you see a solution?

Shane: I see some band-aids. I’m interested in the study to see what they have to say. I think the demographics of the island – the economic demographics of the island – make it very problematic. I don’t think of the buying power of the population as it is geographically dispersed, being in any way designed to support the kind of retail establishments you’d like to have. This is not to be Steinway Street or Astoria Boulevard or Broadway.

WIRE: Suppose that the consultant comes back and says that the best bet to make this work is to let merchants have these establishments for free? And let people come to you and bid on free space to do what they’re going to do. Is there anything like that in the realm of possibility within the constraints of the public authorities accountability act?

Shane: As a lawyer, I think no. As finally a demonstration to the state of New York and the state legislature that this is a ridiculous condition that they’ve imposed, we may have to go through the artificiality of doing it. I have secured a fair-market-value appraisal of all the spaces. I think it’s absurd. I think the way that they got the fair market value is by doing comps [comparisons to similar properties] and doing a discount from retail spaces on Broadway, Steinway Street, and Astoria Boulevard, all of which have a virtually unlimited population that would shop there. You walk through there on a weekend afternoon, it’s teeming with people who are shopping. Nothing like that exists here. Now people will say that the reason it’s not teeming with shoppers is that you have no shops. It’s a chicken and egg situation. So when we rent, we have to do an RFP, and people come and either they bid because they’re fooled, and they bid to get \$25 a square foot for a pizza store, my fair market value guy thinks it’s worth \$28-\$34 a square foot, but they bid \$25 a square foot and we go back to the board and we justify \$25 a square foot for public reasons, and I go through the reporting to the Attorney General and to the Controller and the Director of the Budget and the leaders of the Assembly and Senate, and allow the notice period to expire, and finally settle with a guy... Can he make it at \$25 a square foot? Maybe. A pizza guy might be able to, but can others make it at that price?

WIRE: A flower shop?

Shane: No. A flower shop could not make it paying \$11 a square foot. If people would patronize it, it could pay \$20.

WIRE: I gather that you see no ready answer to the retail problem other than going through a lot of hoops and a lot of people to overcome the constraints of the law and from there to overcome the reluctance of merchants to come here.

Shane: At the rent that they would pay, you would probably have to go into partnership with them or subsidize them, and you are subsidizing them when you give them free space. It’s just not easy, and it’s not subject to facile answer.

But, on the bank, to my pleasure, Amalgamated is about to come in here. They’ll take over the NYNB lease, because that’s the easy way for me. If I had to give a new lease to them, I would be back into my troubles with the public authorities accountability act.

WIRE: One of the things the Columbia people recommended was a schedule for the buses. Are you going to do that?

Shane: Well, we *have* a schedule for the buses. They start on schedule in the morning. They meet the tram, and the tram is on schedule, and that’s a schedule. You’ll never persuade me, as a matter of engineering and otherwise, that the throughput of a bus system is increased by keeping buses idling someplace to keep on schedule rather than running continuously. So, when you reduce the number of buses on the route during non-rush hours, you should be eliminating the “bunching” problem, but the bunching problem really occurs during the rush hour, and it occurs because of the shortness of the route, because there are too many buses on the route, in part, because of the physical distance and the capacity of the street. You need to have a number of buses to take a number of riders, but you have a lot of the inevitable inefficiencies in the system. Every time they stop and it takes people more than 30 seconds to board, the schedule’s out of whack.

It’s only a 12-minute route. So, [you have problems] when you have the kind of population in the schedule where

somebody’s got to roll off on a wheelchair or because somebody’s trying to push a little basket on. People with strollers with children are killers, and people don’t move back in the bus to create space, and you have the congestion issues with the yellow buses, the red buses, the city buses, the delivery trucks, cars parked on Main Street – we have an inherent clogged pipe. Put them on a schedule? It doesn’t advance the ball.

But, ultimately, if that’s what everybody wants, we start on schedule in the morning, and then they run continuously. They run around and around and around.

WIRE: Looking at the Columbia study, will you implement any of those ideas?

Shane: I couldn’t imagine that “naked streets” is going to happen. I couldn’t imagine that soon we’re going to have a garden at Motorgate. There is no way we’re building out the fourth quadrant of Motorgate until it makes economic sense to do that. There’s no way we’re going to discourage cars on Main Street by forcing the employees of the hospitals into Motorgate, which would cost us a fortune, not to mention altering the work habits of the embedded union employees at the hospitals. Those are things that are just not happening. Are we going to have an interstate multimodal transfer station here on Roosevelt Island? No.

Are we going to look at the number of street signs we’ve got and take some down? We’re going to reduce the clutter. Are we going to restripe the streets? We always restripe the streets in the spring. The students looked at the street in winter, so the streets don’t look well-stripped because of the grime. Are we going to have a rental bike program? I don’t know; it would be interesting. But we are going to tag and take away all permanently stored bikes out of the bike racks. That we will do.

WIRE: There’s been some agitation, from time to time, to have the yield signs replaced with stop signs and to have a three-way stop sign at the bottom of the ramp.

Shane: The bottom of the ramp has been studied by transportation experts. The Columbia students did the traffic counts required by the Department of Transportation for traffic lights. It is not happening. The traffic does not warrant it.

WIRE: This is a stop sign question.

Shane: The more you have stop signs, the worse your traffic gets. I mean, we may be lucky that we don’t have a lot of pedestrian incidents, but we don’t have a lot of pedestrian incidents. People move through here at 15 miles an hour. Pedestrians are fortunately agile and able to dodge the traffic.

WIRE: Is there a plan to eliminate two-way traffic at the subway stop?

Shane: It’s one of the things we think about, but we know that residents went crazy last time. It’s a matter of public safety. It should be done because what you’ve got is the people crossing the street from the southbound lane behind the bus. They can’t see what’s coming around the other way. That’s where we had somebody get brushed by the bus. It is a real hazard. But when you try to route the bus traffic down the east seawall and drop people off at the bus stop on the other side or, God forbid, they should wait until the bus comes around, then you have the media screaming about having to walk across the commons in the rain.

WIRE: On April 7, the governor said that he was going to stop the proposed pay increases for non-union and supervisory employees.

Shane: All administrative staff of RIOC have been frozen.

WIRE: So the raises that were approved?

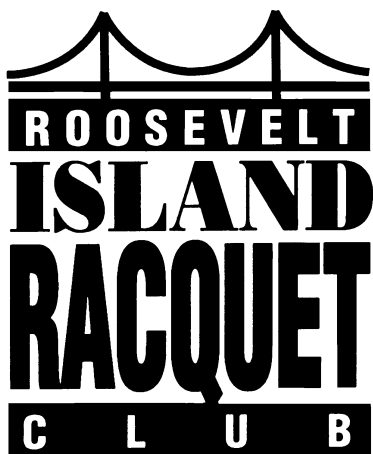
Shane: They were provided for in the budget, but we knew, at the time, that there was a likelihood that they would not be implemented, so they are frozen. And the performance payments – bonuses, call them what you will – are also frozen.

WIRE: There is suggestion that you sometimes deflect criticism because, in your view, the comments come from a small group – that the notion is that a small group of people are intensely interested in everything and come forward with criticism and proposals, and you identify them as coming from a small group, and therefore dismiss them.

Shane: I don’t dismiss them. I weigh their criticisms carefully. I don’t believe that in a democracy decisions should be based on the opinions of less than two percent of the people, no matter how vocal they may be. That’s not the way it works. The reality is that what we have out here is a bedroom community and, in this bedroom community, there may be 100 or 200 people who are participants – who are interested in civic affairs. They all have strong opinions. God bless them. They are what makes their society march, in many ways. They bring issues to the fore and they raise them in public media and all that stuff, so that they get attended to, but their personal opinion is not entirely conclusive on the issue. There’s just not enough weight to them.

WIRE: One final thing: Are you satisfied with the way the [RIOC Board] nominations elections have been going?

Shane: Am I satisfied? I’m watching, having loosed this particular tiger. It’s interesting. The dynamics on the board are clearly evolving and we’ll see how it goes. It’s certainly an interesting experiment. I think that newly elected members of the board are finding out about their responsibility in a way that they probably didn’t predict, which is fine – part of the process. I think that as it evolves there will be more understanding and acceptance of those roles and we’ll see how it goes. I hope that the governor’s office will grow more comfortable with the process. It’s an evolving matter – there’s no question about it.



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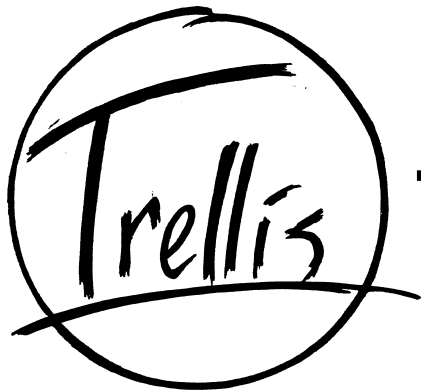
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RIOC Column from page 3

services will be done again. Follow our website and notices from the Department of Transportation for updates. MTA has put out notices that, due to emergency track work, trains will be slowed down, reducing the rush-hour schedule by two trains, increasing the degree of difficulty when the tram will be out of service from July 6 to mid-December. Despite our questioning, there is apparently no good answer to the inconvenience and discomfort.

5. **Projects:** Replace the exterior of the AVAC building, install replacement chambers for AVAC, lighting at Motorgate, repaving portions of Main Street, façade at Sportspark, and start on the improvements to PSD. Public Safety has temporarily relocated to 504 Main Street while the work is being done. Flowers for Main Street are here. The board agenda will include upgrading the fire-safety systems and resurfacing the pool at Sportspark, and replacing the HVAC system for Good Shepherd. Enjoy the spring weather.

6. **Sportspark Swimming:** In response to requests, morning weekday adult swim hours are 6 to 11 a.m., especially to accommodate those with child-care responsibility. We hope for greater participation. The synchronized swimming exhibition sponsored by the Roosevelt Island Seniors was an example for all.

7. **Bank:** NYNB plans to close its branch at 615 Main Street on June 6. We met with Amalgamated Bank to urge it to come to the island, and supplied a letter of support for application to the State Banking Department to allow opening a branch. Let us hope.

8. **Southtown:** Buildings 5 and 6 moving toward completion. Landscaping being done, and interior finishes and fixtures being installed. The roadway in front of the tram is scheduled for paving. The Ground Rent Increase Deferral Agreement is no longer on the table, as the lender would not agree to the terms.

9. Standing room only crowd for the **R&R Concert** April 18. Wonderful.

10. The **Mobile Van for Free Mammograms** was on the Island April 18, but fully booked. There will be a return visit on May 30. To schedule an appointment, call Erica Wilder at **212-832-4540**.

11. **Blackwell Park Playground:** In response to the request of some parents, we have emphasized the purpose of the tot playground by increased Public Safety presence, to discourage inappropriate older people from hanging out at the area.

12. **Bicycles:** To clear what is becoming an increasing problem, the bike rack at the subway station will have notices posted that leaving bikes for more than 24 hours is not permitted. Public Safety will remove what appear to be permanently stored bikes to increase availability for those who utilize the space as intended.

13. **Fourth of July Fireworks:** Apparently, the city has decided to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Henry Hudson's sail by moving the fireworks to the Hudson River. RIOC's annual Fourth of July celebration by fireworks-watching is apparently not going to happen, but suggestions for alternative festivities are welcome.

14. Finally, the **firearms incident** on April 14 was determined by NYPD to have been self-defense. Thankfully, no one was injured.

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•Friday, May 8 at 7:40 pm
•Friday, May 15 at 7:47 pm

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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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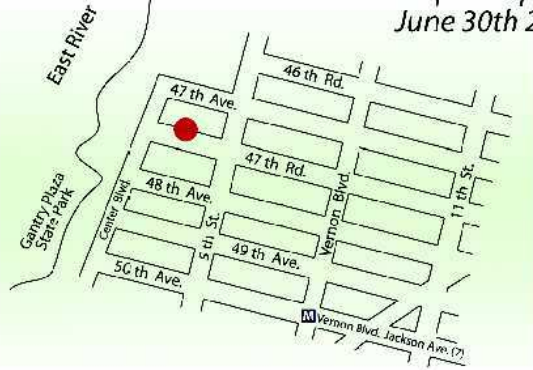
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