



Next issue in
four weeks:
Saturday, July 31

The Main Street **WIRE**™

30th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper

RIOC Board Fires Steve Shane Group, Mostly Elected by Residents, Asserts Its Power CFO Takes Acting Role for 30 Days While Replacement Being Sought

by Dick Lutz

The RIOC Board fired Steve Shane on Monday night.

In a rescheduled meeting held at the Good Shepherd Center at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, Shane's departure was couched as "a desire to retire," but Shane himself had told *The WIRE* that it was no such thing. Knowing that trouble was brewing, he had made an offer to submit his resignation to the new governor effective December 31, he said, but also told State Housing Commissioner Brian Lawlor that he would "not go quietly."

In the end, he mostly did.

Shortly after the completion of a public-comment session in which a number of Islanders, including merchants and Residents Association

President Frank Farance, praised Shane, Board Chair Brian Lawlor took the Board into executive session "to consider personnel matters." That was at about 6:15 p.m. Shane stayed behind, alone, sitting at the blockish horseshoe of tables that forms the RIOC Board's meeting space, along with a mildly mystified audience. As one attendee observed, during Shane's three-year presidency the RIOC Board hadn't gone into executive session in recent memory.

The chapel, where air conditioning is being replaced, was sweltering. "I'll sweat it out with the folks out there," Shane said in a private conversation, referring to Islanders who had come to the meeting.

An hour later, Lawlor, who chairs the RIOC Board by virtue of his position as Commissioner of the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), returned, touched Shane on the shoulder as though to communicate *The news is not good*, and asked Shane to join him on Good Shepherd's lower level where the executive session continued. Shane was gone only 10 minutes, returning at 7:30. After another 10, he gathered his jacket and other things. He told this reporter, as he left, "You're going to need a filler for my *WIRE* column." A few minutes later, the Board members returned. Lawlor listed items covered in the executive session, ending with this: "We also at executive session were informed by Presi-



RIOC President Steve Shane sat alone Monday night while the corporation's Board met in a closed executive session. After an hour, he was asked to join the meeting. Ten minutes later, he was no longer RIOC President.

dent Steve Shane that he would go on leave, pending a discussion of retirement."

It was personnel doublespeak for *The Board fired Shane* – an announcement of the way Shane had chosen to go, not why.

Shane had told this reporter that he wanted to stay. First seeing his own personal clouds gathering on Wednesday, June 23, Shane met individually with four Board members after hearing from Commissioner Lawlor that they were offended by the contents of a transcript interview published in the June 5 issue of *The WIRE* – specifically, his criticisms of a master-lease plan that the Board has chosen as a way of filling empty retail spaces on Main Street. (See separate report, this issue.) While Shane had said he would faithfully execute the Board's plan, he had told *The WIRE*, and an evening RIRA meeting on that same Wednesday, that he feels it is ill-advised.

Shane's attitude, as he described it to *The WIRE*, is that he owes the State, the Board, and the community his best advice, even if it's a dissent. He pointed out that no master-lease plan has yet been formally adopted. In his mind, the discussion remains open, even as he works – make that *worked* – to implement the Board's intent.

In fact, the master-lease approach starts with a Request for Proposals (RFP), used to attract

bidders interested in leasing all the Island's available and usable retail storefronts and then remarketing the space, store by store, to retail-store operators. Preparing the RFP has been slow-going, Shane has said, because it is dicey writing a plan that straddles the entrepreneurial for-profit motive

and the RIOC mission of serving the Island's population. The real-estate consulting firm Jones Lang Lasalle has been producing and refining drafts of such an RFP (at a total cost that Shane estimates to be around \$150,000).

The current master-lease effort
See **Shane**, page 7

Briefly...

- PS 217 now has 19 kindergartners for a fresh class of **gifted and talented** students, ensuring for now the continuity of the Island's program. Its potential loss was reported in the June 19 *WIRE*, and discussed in an editorial.

- As part of a major hospital shuffle in the City, more than 200 **Goldwater** beds will be moved from the Island to Harlem to a renovated North General Hospital in about 18 months. The State and City plan to build a state-of-the-art nursing facility on the Goldwater campus; that project is about three years away.

She's Headed to Rwanda, Microgrants in Luggage

by David Stone

This month, Sasha Fisher will fly off to Africa to initiate Project Bloom, a program under the auspices of a New York City NGO called Spark MicroGrants that is concerned with pressing social needs in underdeveloped communities, mainly in Africa. (NGO stands for "non-governmental organization," a broad term applied to groups with a charitable mission but no governmental connection.) Its concerns include health, clean water, general sanitation, and other basic needs.



Sasha Fisher

A recent honors graduate of the University of Vermont, Fisher has called Roosevelt Island home since moving here with her mother, a psychoanalyst, when she started middle school. "I love it here," she says, her affection enhanced by our international community and the ease of casually meeting people

See **Microgrants**, page 7

Point of Conflict: Empty Stores & How to Fill Them

by Dick Lutz

Steve Shane elaborated last week on his concerns about a plan to farm out rental of Main Street retail space to a master lessee who would then rent it to merchants.

Shane, the president of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC), made three key points in speaking to a Residents Association meeting held Wednesday night, June 23, as preparation for this past week's Monday-evening meeting of the RIOC Board of Directors.

rectors.

- First, that the space presently available for a master lessee to manage is only about 10,000 square feet (consisting of empty storefronts on Main Street), which may be too little to attract the interest of a qualified master lessee.

- Second, that drafting a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a master leaseholder is complex because the document must

make it clear to a potential winning bidder that his activities will be subject to RIOC's mandate to serve the community, even if that conflicts with his profit motive.

- Third, that he believes a "free-enterprise" approach to leasing out

See **Retail**, page 12

Three weeks ago, *The WIRE* asked members of the RIOC Board to write essays for this issue. They appear on pages 8 and 9. One, by Jonathan Kalkin, discusses the idea of a master lessee for retail spaces. Steve Shane's public expression of his doubts about that approach is one of the factors that led to his being fired. This article, prepared before he was fired, is largely drawn from his appearance Wednesday, June 23, at a RIRA meeting called to consider the retail question.

3/1 out of service
3/8 cabins dismantled

3/24 work on schedule

4/8 crane platform

4/24 still on schedule

5/17 "50-50" chance of
finishing on time –
crane issues

6/5 crane transport
problems for
Manhattan
towers

6/17 a month behind

3/1/10

9/1/10

After 125 days , Tram work remains a month behind; 59 days remain before its originally planned return.



Omelette Democracy

Activist Roosevelt Islanders have long wanted the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) to be more firmly assertive on behalf of residents and their needs. The Island’s political history is deeply stained with years of weak patronage management, sent from Albany essentially to collect bloated salaries and *use* this community for political and economic purposes only marginally compatible with the needs of the people living here. Yearning for some recourse, for some leverage, residents – and this newspaper – demanded more power be placed in residents’ hands.

We got it. We got it carried in the hands of an Eliot Spitzer appointee instructed to run the risk of a RIOC Board whose public members are nominated by the community, though still appointed (as required by law) by the governor. It’s been that way since 2008 – a kind of *let’s see how this will work* approach, not codified in law not yet firmly rooted in custom or tradition.

Steve Shane, as RIOC President, was also far more open than any of his predecessors. A former Marine, he had the courage to put increased power in the hands of the people.

Fair enough... and it was inevitable that, given power, a resident RIOC Board would assert itself.

Wouldn’t it have been nice if its first dramatic exercise of that power hadn’t been to fire the RIOC President who finally satisfied those years of effort toward democracy?

Unfortunately, democracy is messy. Unfortunately, democracy can hurt people – even its friends.

The action against Steve Shane was unfortunate in two ways: First, that it was directed against the man quite properly described as the best we’ve had in a long time. Second, that RIOC Board members did what they did Monday evening in secret: No advance notice, no open discussion, no community involvement, no consultation.

And when it was over, a stone wall of non-explanation – whether imposed from above or adopted within the Board – embraced the fiction that, spontaneously, Steve Shane had decided to retire in the middle of a RIOC Board meeting. This lie might work in private transactions between corporations and terminated employees, or governments and disgraced politicians who “want to spend more time with my family.” It *doesn’t* work when the one clearly understood precipitating cause is the RIOC President’s openness in sharing his views with the community – in Shane’s case, the transcript interview in the June 5 *WIRE* in which he openly doubted the workability of the Board’s master-lease approach to Main Street retail.

If, out of the silence, the takeaway for future RIOC Presidents is that they must keep their expertise to themselves, that’s *not* healthy for a struggling little democracy.

Space doesn’t permit the parting salute that Steve Shane deserves for his invigoration of a RIOC staff once considered a collection of tired losers or his well-organized supervision of many projects. Despite his skill in the job, his most important legacy may be the empowerment of a community-elected Board of Directors – taking the risk of openness and democracy that, in the end, cost him his job as RIOC president.

DL

To the Editor,

In her letter in the June 5 *WIRE*, Anne-Lise Vernier listed only a few of the creatures endangered by the cars speeding along the east-side road running south past Goldwater Hospital, where, radios blaring, cars rocket past as if they were on a drag strip. Not only wildlife and children are threatened. The area has been filled, more than ever this spring, with families, some with baby carriages, with men and women in wheelchairs heading to the river for picnics, with tourists peering ill-advisedly into guidebooks as they walk across and beside the road. Last week, a big, athletically built man was almost knocked off his bike by a sideswiping car. His numbers are likely to multiply, too, as more bikers, runners, and rollerbladers are drawn to that lovely place when the Southpoint park opens.

Ticketing hasn’t worked. Why no speed bumps? I’ve heard that previous administrations of RIOC shrugged off the idea, saying that it would be “too dangerous.” Dangerous for whom? Drivers recklessly ignoring the speed-limit and speed-bump warnings that would be posted along the road? A guy in a wheelchair who can’t make it across to the curb in time? A small child entranced and distracted by a wandering gosling?

Why do the drivers matter more?
Jennifer Dunning

To the Editor:

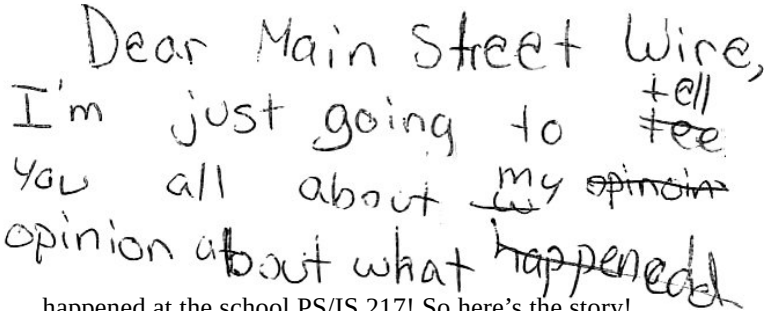
Frankly, I was happy to see that I was not the only one aghast at Steve Shane’s comments (June 5 *WIRE*). Furthermore, it appears that my astonishment isn’t because I live at The Octagon.

No one expects Roosevelt Island to become Tribeca, but is that any kind of reason for not being as attractive, pleasant, and functional in retail services as we can be?

My understanding from long-time residents is that the position Mr. Shane occupies seems to be typically occupied by someone at the end of their career. We have a complicated situation, being under the control of RIOC, but surely there must be a way to move toward having our local leader more motivated to improve the Island. In fact, why isn’t there a requirement that the person occupying this position live on the Island, at least during the work week? That would certainly change an attitude!

Denise Shull

Letters



...happened at the school PS/IS 217! So here’s the story!

One of the best teachers at the school got “excessed.” That teacher was Mr. Klaw the art teacher. The kids at PS/IS 217 really need art because Mr. Klaw is a really loving and caring teacher. The kids adore him! He lets the kids express feelings in our drawings. At PS/IS 217, the kids there really need art because every single time I walk past that magical room, I see kids of all grades laughing! Also my friends Kenny, Ingrid, Madeline, Weim, Ammar, and Richard are always talking and talking about how Mr. Klaw is a great teacher!

Thanks for reading this and I hope you understand why something wrong was done at our school!

Sophia DeMeo

To the Editor:

I’m writing with respect to Main Street retail. I was recently trying to find a food co-op close to Roosevelt Island, and found that there are only four in the five boroughs (Park Slope, Flatbush, South Bronx, and the East Village).

For readers unfamiliar with food co-ops, they are community-owned grocery stores where co-op members work and/or pay a membership fee and are involved with the operations of the store. Non-members can typically shop at food co-ops, but don’t have the benefit of discounted prices. The South Bronx food co-op (sbxfc.org) is a good example.

I think a food co-op would be a good addition to Main Street for a couple of reasons. First, there has been much discussion in *The WIRE* regarding shopping alternatives to Gristedes. A food co-op could not only provide low-cost, healthy, and sustainable products, but the products would be democratically selected by all of the co-op members, and therefore would reflect the needs and preferences of our community. Furthermore, due to scarcity of food co-ops in New York City and a growing interest in healthy and sustainable products, a food co-op here may even attract people from Queens or Manhattan (or at least from North and South of the Main Street retail area).

I would like to know if other residents believe a food co-op would be a feasible proposal for the Main Street retail. I can be reached by e-mail at Rlfoodcoop@gmail.com.

Liz Pirraglia

To the Editor:

The Roosevelt Island Residents Association 10th annual Roosevelt Island Day Blood Drive is history. Here’s how we did: Over four consecutive Saturdays signing up potential donors at the Farmer’s Market, we amassed 85 pledges, which resulted in 45 blood donations. In past years, we’ve collected two pints for every three sign-ups, but a varying number are turned away each time for a variety of medical reasons – an unknown variable. Still, five-and-a half gallons of blood is nothing to sneeze at, and the New York Blood Center is always most grateful.

I was curious to see how the pledges broke down by residential development. Forty-three came from the *WIRE* buildings, eleven from Manhattan Park, 10 from Southtown/Riverwalk, 10 from Octagon Apartments and, surprisingly, 11 from off-Islanders. This suggests that the Saturday Farmer’s Market is truly a nexus for visitors as well as Islanders, and that folks in the disparate developments see themselves as Roosevelt Islanders, ready to participate in Island events. Very gratifying for those of us in RIRA who have labored for years to make this so.

I must thank the troopers from the RIRA Common Council who staffed the tables each Saturday to request (cajole? demand? beg?) your donations of the red stuff. Asking for someone’s blood is unlike any other donation scenario I know. Thanks to those on the the professional and courteous staff at the New York Blood Center who, for years now, have guided me through the months of preparation culminating in the Roosevelt Island Day blood drive. And last, but certainly not least, thank you to all you bleeders (and I mean that in the nicest way) who fulfill a crucial summertime need and make New York City just that much safer.

Matthew Katz, Chair
RIRA Planning Committee
Blood Drive Captain

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters of local interest to the community, and to/from officials. Requests for a *Name Withheld* signature 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*. Submit letters by e-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com or on a disk left at the desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. If you e-mail, expect a confirming response and, if you receive none, 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 are subject to acceptance and editing for length and clarity. Recommended maximum length, 350 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space.

Letters deadline for July 31 issue
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COMING UP

— This Weekend —

Independence Day, Sun Jul 4; fireworks are on the Hudson this year.

— Continuing —

Ping Pong Outdoors, Sat, 8:30am-2:30pm, handball courts at Capobianco Field. All ages; free. (Ad, page 16.)

Choices, RIVAA members’ exhibition at The Octagon Gallery, 888 Main St., daily 9am-9pm, thru Aug 22.

Open-Rec Basketball, Sat, 10am-6pm, Sportspark. All ages; free. (Ad, page 20.)

The Island of Art exhibition, Gallery RIVAA, thru Aug 22. **Sat-Sun, 11am-5pm, Wed & Fri, 6-9pm.**

Red Tide NYC Masters Swim Program practice, **Sun, 12-2pm,** Sportspark. Competitive swimming for ages 18-up. First session free; membership \$40/year; swim passes additional. Info at RedTideNYC.org.

Open Swim at Sportspark, **Mon-Fri, 6-11am** (all ages). Adults, \$5; children, \$3; seniors 60 and over, and children 4 and under, free. For fees, adult-swim hours, and additional times and classes, with age restrictions, see ad, page 20.

Night Watch, photographs by Islander Richard Bachmann, **Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm (Wed to 6pm),** thru Aug 11, Weill Cornell Medical Associates East Side Gallery, 211 E 80th St. Info from Richard@BachmannStudio.com.

Knitting & Crochet for Adults, Tue, 10am, Library.

Ping Pong: Open Play, Tue & Fri, 6-9pm, Sportspark. **Class, Wed, 6-9pm,** Sportspark. All ages; free. (Ad, page 20.)

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

Science-Fiction Discussion Group, first Tue of month (except July; resumes in August), 6:30pm, Library.

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

Nintendo Wii Play (kids), **Wed, 3pm,** Library.

Robots for Kids, Thu, 6-8pm, Youth Program, 506 Main St. Pizza for the kids. Information: **917-751-2900.**

— Coming Week & Next Weekend —

RooseveltL!VE event: First Annual Albert Ayler Festival, Sat Jul 10, 2-10pm, Riverwalk Commons. Record vendors and musicians celebrate the influential tenor jazz saxophonist 40 years after his death. (Ad, page 11.)

RIOC’s Outdoor Movie Series, Zoolander, Sat Jul 10, starting at dusk (about 8:30), Firefighters Field.

— Future Weeks —

Book Discussion, August, Osage County by Tracy Letts, **Thu Jul 15, 6:30pm,** Library. Copies available at the local branch.

Opening Reception for 3 Points of View, Plein Air Landscapes exhibition by Islander Georgette Sinclair and two other artists, **Sun Jul 18, 11am-3pm,** Water Mill Museum, 41 Old Mill Rd., Water Mill NY 11976. Exhibition runs **Jul 15-Aug 8.** Open **Mon, Thu-Sat, 11am-5pm, Sun, 1-5pm.**

HiveMind Display starts **Sun July 18,** Riverwalk Commons. (See Jul 24-25.) Runs thru Aug 14. (Ad, page 15.)

Roosevelt L!VE event: Gamelatron in the HiveMind, Sat-Sun Jul 24-25, all day, by sound artist Ximil7; robotic Indonesian Gamelan orchestra, Riverwalk Commons.

RIOC’s Outdoor Movie Series, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Sat Jul 24, starting at dusk (about 8:30), Firefighters Field.

The Main Street WIRE – Next issue **Sat Jul 31. Advertising Deadlines:** Display ads, Wed Jul 21; decision date for circulars/inserts, Mon Jul 26; 6,000 copies due Thu Jul 29. **Additional issues in 2010:** Aug 28; Sep 11, 25; Oct 9, 23; Nov 6, 20; Dec 11 (**December schedule revised**). **2011:** Jan 15, 29; Feb 12, 26; Mar 12, 26; Apr 9, 23; May 7, 21; Jun 4, 18; Jul 2; Aug 27; Sep 10, 24; Oct 8, 22; Nov 5, 19; Dec 12, 26.

10. News phone, 212-826-9056; urgent matters, **917-617-0449. Advertising,** display and classified: **917-587-3278.**

RooseveltL!VE event: Conscious Cycle 451 artist collective invites everybody to evolve a work over the weekend, **Sat-Sun Jul 31-Aug 1, 12noon-5pm,** Riverwalk Commons. DJ music and time-lapse film of the progression of the painting. (Ad, page 15.)

RIOC’s Outdoor Movie Series, Conspiracy Theory, Sat Aug 7, starting at dusk (about 8:30), Firefighters Field.

Book Discussion, The White Tiger by Adiga Aravind, **Thu Aug 19, 6:30pm,** Library. Copies available at the local branch.

RIOC’s Outdoor Movie Series, Nighthawks, Sat Aug 21, starting at dusk (about 8:30), Firefighters Field.

School opens, Wed Sep 8. (Note: Sep 9 & 10 are holidays.)

RooseveltL!VE event: Yelp’s So Long, Summer! BBQ, Sun Sep 12, 4-6pm, Riverwalk Commons. Sliders, dogs, & dip for those who RSVP to nyc10044.com/z/5. (Ad, page 15.)

Primary Election Day, Tue Sep 14.

Roosevelt Island Residents Association Common Council meets, **Wed Sep 15, 8pm,** Good Shepherd Community Center. Meetings begin with a public session for resident comments/announcements.

Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation Board of Directors meeting, **Thu Sep 16, 5:30pm,** Good Shepherd Community Center. Public-comment period precedes formal session.

Run for Congo Women, Sat Sep 25. Info: nyc10044.com/z/2.

Fall for Arts Festival, Sat Oct 2, 11am-4pm, Good Shepherd Plaza and nearby areas.

Roosevelt Island Residents Association Common Council meets, **Wed Oct 6, 8pm,** Good Shepherd Community Center. Meetings begin with a public session for resident comments/announcements.

Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation Board of Directors meeting, **Thu Oct 21, 5:30pm,** Good Shepherd Community Center. Public-comment period precedes formal session.

1. RIRA Blood Drive a huge success. Thank you to all who participated. This year was our best effort ever. Thanks to Matt Katz for organizing this; vampires would have been proud.

2. Roosevelt Island Day was wonderful! This is such a great community day. Thank you to Doryne Isley, Charlie DeFino, the managing companies, RIOC, and others who supported, helped, and participated. RIRA served hundreds of free bagels, coffee, and orange juice to residents — thanks to Trellis for the wide assortment of bagels. My children and I enjoyed the rides, the ponies, the little train ride, and the children’s ID event. The Motown review band was excellent, including watching PSD Deputy Director René Bryan work up the crowd. Mr. Bryan, you were having so much fun, you should have been in the band.

3. Roosevelt Island Reunion. Last weekend, we had a reunion of original residents circa 1976 to 1986. About 200 returned to picnic, swap stories, show off their children, and play music. I was in the last category, a keyboard player. In our younger days, we musicians would haul equipment on spring Saturday mornings to the water’s steps at Motorgate and jam for a couple of hours. (Or, as one derisively put it, a loud tuning of guitars for four hours.) Over six hours of playing, we covered Jeff Beck’s *Freeway Jam*, Tom Petty’s *American Girl*, Credence Clearwater Revival’s *Born on the Bayou*, Wild Cherry’s *Play That Funky Music*, James Brown’s *Papa’s Got a Brand New Bag*, Allman Brother’s *Statesboro Blues*, Jimi Hendrix’s *Fire*, and ended with Blind Faith’s *Can’t Find My Way Home*. Thanks to residents Dana Doyle, Olya Turcihin, and Brian Dorfmann for organizing the event. Thanks to RIOC staff Donna Masly, Carol Rubino, Mike Smith, and Fernando Martinez for their excellent help. Thanks to Public Safety for providing security, who received many compliments from us old-timers.

4. RIRA Informational meeting on Main Street storefronts. We had our meeting, but, unfortunately, no one from the RIOC Board’s Real Estate Advisory Committee attended. The whole idea was to be informed about the process and to hear the multiple sides. RIOC President Steve Shane explained that we could have a 90-day process for renting storefronts. Cynthia Ahn, who runs a nail salon, and Julie Palermo, of the RI Chamber of Commerce, expressed concerns and dissatisfaction over the potential master-lease process. Merchants are worried that when their leases expire, they might be pushed out. Here are some of the main problems with the present master-lease process:

- Premise: The big developers (Southtown and Octagon) are willing to invest millions in this because it will help with their rentals and sales. Response: This is baloney. If spending a million dollars would help their rentals/sales, they’d spend the money now. But we have already learned that they won’t spend money; for all the chatter from developers about getting a ferry while the tram is out, when it came to these developers putting up money, they balked. So, we learned that the developer’s sob story about rental/sales is not true. The same applies here; they are piggybacking on residents’ frustration with a plausible but phony story about a loss of rentals/sales. Yes, developers might be interested in the storefronts, but not because of loss of rentals/sales.

- Some RIOC Board members claim that only “free-market” economics works, and government can do no good. Recent U.S. economic history tells us that “free-market” doesn’t always work. Not only will it not work here, we are *not* getting “free-market” economics with the master-lease plan. According to RIOC Board member Jonathan Kalkin, developers would allow the stores to run at a loss. So, if RIOC allows their stores to run at a loss, it’s bad government; but if a private enterprise does it, it’s “free

The RIRA Column

market.” Furthermore, the deals that brought Duane Reade and Starbucks to the Island were not stand-alone profit operations, they were trades (as described by RIOC’s real-estate advisor Jones Lange Lasalle), where the developer would allow the merchant some prime location *off* Roosevelt Island, but in exchange, the merchant had to put a store on Roosevelt Island. These kinds of arrangements aren’t “free-market” economics. They are merely choosing between two kinds of artificial/non-market economies: one is chosen by a government entity (RIOC, on which we have some influence), and one is chosen by a private entity (master lessee, on whom we have no influence).

- Roosevelt Island is intended to be an economically diverse community. This is very different from most other communities. As Mr. Shane pointed out, we have a nail salon in Southtown whose rent is \$45/sq.ft., and a nail salon in Roosevelt Landings whose rent is \$15/sq.ft., with clienteles for each. In the master-lease process, it might easily be economically viable to replace the \$15/sq.ft. nail salon with another service at \$22/sq.ft., which is unaffordable by the nail salon. The outcome is that businesses and services lost for a lower economic segment are replaced by businesses and services for a higher economic segment. This is what normal “free-market” economics do and, normally, some kind of out-of-market entity (e.g., government) is necessary to reduce this imbalance. Essentially, this is the argument that our current merchants are making.

- The storefronts could be rented right now with leases subject to the master lease, which is how it is done in shopping malls, but the RIOC Board does not want to do that. They say that will reduce the value of any master-lease RFP process. This makes no sense: either your investment horizon is short-term, in which case you only care about the available 10,000 square feet, which is so small that it is of little interest, or you care about the long-term, i.e., when big spaces like Gristedes are available in 2032, in which case the tenants rentable within 90 days are not your investment concern.

- What happens when the master lease doesn’t work? For example, what if residents are really, really unhappy with the outcome? The only way to unwind the deal is litigation or concessions, which will cost the Island (and a future RIOC Board). This is an all-lose situation, and the RIOC Board has not said how they will handle this.

The RIOC Board is unwilling to permit a hybrid: lease storefronts now (could be done in 90 days) with leases that will be subject to the master lease; meanwhile, work through community concerns. As RIRA’s Vice President Ellen Polivy said regarding the 2008 Island referendum question on a master lease, “I don’t think we literally meant that [it had to be a master lease]. What we wanted was the storefronts rented right away.” About two months ago, RIOC Board Member Jonathan Kalkin said that merchants would be able to rent as soon as June. June has come and gone. It appears that Mr. Shane’s predictions were more accurate. After all, he is a real-estate attorney who has worked with many commercial properties over the years.

I think experience is important. For example, When RIOC Board member Mike Shinozaki talks about operations, it is clear that his background brings vital experience to RIOC’s efforts. For the Real Estate Committee, there is nothing inherently wrong with an insurance agent, a grade-school teacher, and a pe-

See **RIRA** , page 13



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

There is no charge to list Island events here. E-mail information to editor@MainStreetWIRE.com or leave it at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*.



The WIRE

Senior Center

Monday (except July 5)
9:30 **Ballroom Dancing**
11:00 **Tai Chi**
6:00 **Yoga with Nurit**

Tuesday
9:30 **Chinese Massage**
10:20 **Shoppers’ Bus**
10:30 **Ping Pong**
11:00 **Blood Pressure**
2:00 **Paint & Sculpt**
7:30 **Games** (RISA)

Wednesday
9:30 **Yoga with Irene** (not Jul 7)
10:20 **Shoppers’ Bus**
10:30 **Spanish** (not Jul 7)
10:30 **Computers**

Thursday
9:30 **Stronger Bones**
10:30 **Arabic**
10:45 **Ping Pong**
12:30 **Movie**

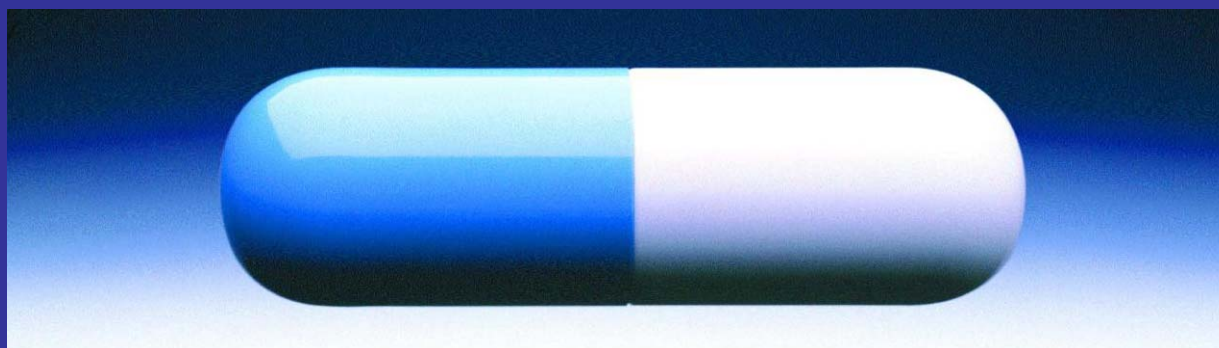
Friday
9:30 **Yoga with Irene** (not Jul 9)
10:30 **Ballroom Dancing**
10:30 **English as 2nd Language**
1:30 **Korean Games**
7:00 **Games** (RISA)

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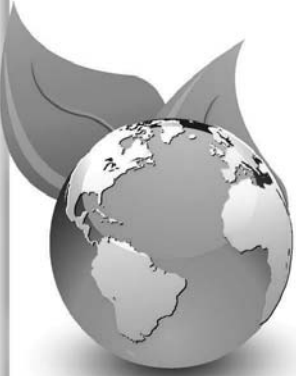
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Shane from page 1

is the work of Board member Jonathan Kalkin, who proposed it in a *WIRE* article published June 16, 2007 (on line at nyc10044.com/z/7). Kalkin discusses it further in an article written for this issue (published along with personal commentaries by other resident RIOCI Board members, requested two weeks ago by *The WIRE*), suggesting that a commercial operation will be able to fill vacated spaces far more rapidly than RIOCI can, given the governmental red tape that binds RIOCI. Shane’s view, among other concerns, is that no competent bidder is likely to emerge for a starting situation limited to about 10,000 square feet of retail space (out of Northtown’s 107,000 square feet).

Silent Storm

Quiet rumors started to circulate well over a week before Monday’s meeting, but the resident Board members contacted by *The WIRE* declined to confirm, deny, or comment on the plans they were making. Jon Kalkin and Margie Smith were told that their silence would be taken as confirmation that a move against Shane was in the works, but Smith responded by saying that the silence should be taken as nothing more than silence.

The rumor persisted that Shane would be fired or that a vote of no-confidence would be proposed.

Board members had expressed dissatisfaction with Shane’s handling of a number of matters. Several who are Rivercross residents grumbled that they felt privatization was stalled. Former DHCR Commissioner Deborah VanAmerongen had given Shane the job of coordinating the various interests involved in clearing the way for privatization of Island House, Westview, and Rivercross. Shane, a former Marine, once characterized attempts to engage and move the bureaucracies as being very much like trying to turn a battleship.

But feelings were voiced that he was deliberately dragging the process out – perhaps even encouraging the governmental entities involved to demand too much from a deal. Shane repeatedly denied this to *The WIRE*, once saying completion of the assignment given him by VanAmerongen as something that would cap his career. (He is 72.)

(Lawlor said Tuesday afternoon that he feels any impediments to privatization can be cleared “pretty quickly.”)

Shane has tangled with various



After the RIOCI Board’s action Monday night, Steve Shane spoke with RIOCI executives before leaving. Left to right: Steve Chironis, Rosina Abramson, Fernando Martinez. Chironis is temporary Acting President.

Island interests. Even this reporter, in his role as editor and publisher of *The WIRE*, has had loud disagreements with him over reporting of, for example, certain Public Safety actions. Such conflicts have been heated, but professional – even gentlemanly, despite the volume.

But Shane is outspoken and, on occasion, blunt in stating his view of things. And while he seemed to create cohesion and forward thrust in a RIOCI staff once considered listless losers, members of the Board have grown impatient with the pace of progress in some areas.

The most recent, and triggering, offense was certainly the transcript interview published June 5. It covered at length Shane’s philosophical and practical misgivings about the Board’s plan to seek a master lessee for Main Street’s Northtown retail spaces. He was open in saying that he saw the master-lease plan as ill-advised, even while saying that he would faithfully follow the Board’s instructions.

Members of the Board, presumably including Lawlor, were said to be unhappy with Shane’s continued advocacy of his point of view that RIOCI could go forward with leases to merchants waiting in line for space.

Monday’s Action

Resident Board members present and voting on Monday were Fay Christian, Kathie Grimm, Jonathan Kalkin, David Kraut, Howard Polivy, and Margie Smith. Michael Shinozaki was en route to Afghanistan on a civilian assignment related to government work. (He is employed by Microsoft.) All but Kraut have been nominated to the

Board in recent community elections. The longest-serving member, Kraut was appointed by Governor Mario Cuomo as a then-reluctant response to Kraut’s being elected President of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association. Over the years, he has worked with a half-dozen RIOCI Presidents.

With Lawlor, Monday night’s decision to cut Shane loose involved seven with the power to vote. In addition to Shinozaki, the voting representative of the State Office of the Budget was also absent, but the person in that seat invariably votes with the DHCR Commissioner. No vote was taken in the executive session, but Lawlor returned to the resumed public meeting with what was later characterized, by a participant who asked his name not be used, as “a sense of the room.”

Shane came to RIOCI after a career that spanned the Marine Corps, assignments with private law firms, a role with the State at DHCR, and in-house lawyering for real-estate developers. He holds degrees from the University of Michigan.

Asked for comments after the Board’s action, David Kraut told *The WIRE*, “No comment. It’s a personnel matter.” Margie Smith e-mailed a similar refusal to explain what the Board had done. Fay Christian e-mailed, “No comment.”

Interviewed by telephone late Tuesday, DHCR Commissioner Lawlor would say only, “The outcome and the decision was Steve Shane’s decision and he made a decision to go on leave, to resign as

President, and to pursue the early retirement. He informed the Board of that, and we accepted his decision. It’s a personnel matter, and private.” Lawlor steadfastly refused to admit what was apparent – that the Board had terminated Shane. “He was not fired. He offered his resignation and we accepted it,” Lawlor said.

(Lawlor said that the governor’s Appointments Office already has several candidates for the RIOCI Presidency, and that they would be presented to the RIOCI Board soon – this less than 24 hours after Shane’s abrupt “resignation.” Lawlor said that there is not yet a date for public interviews of replacement candidates, but said, “Pencil in 30 days from last night,” referring to the fact that Chief Financial Officer Steve Chironis had agreed to serve as Acting President of RIOCI for 30 days.)

Shane’s View

Shane himself was not reticent. While the Board was meeting in executive session without him, he reiterated earlier comments to *The WIRE* that he considered it his fiduciary duty to give the best advice he could muster from his years of real-estate practice and government employment, and to inform the community. Indeed, Shane has been more open in his communications through *The WIRE* than any of his recent predecessors.

Ironically, Shane had a hand in shaping the Board that forced him out. When publicly interviewed in April of 2007 by those then serving on the RIOCI Board, he endorsed the idea of community elections to nominate residents to serve

on the body. “There are seven non-statutory positions on [this] Board of Directors,” he said. “Those seven non-statutory positions can be filled, and should be filled, in my view, from Island people.” The then-President of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association, Matthew Katz, almost immediately began working with members of the Maple Tree Group, longtime advocates for Island self-governance, to take steps toward implementing an Island-wide election to nominate residents to the Board. That election was set for February 5, 2008, and it resulted in Fay Christian, Kathie Grimm, Jonathan Kalkin, and Howard Polivy being appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate. In the May 19, 2009 election, Margie Smith and Michael Shinozaki won nominations. They serve now, along with Kraut. Whatever backing Shane may have had from these resident Board members, it was not enough to save his job when the Board went into executive session Monday night.

“I find it truly strange that the very group that I worked hard to get into a position of being on the Board, from the community, would find it so objectionable that I would be open and transparent in discussions with the community,” Shane told *The WIRE* the morning after his ouster.

He also said, “I am saddened by this turn of events. I invested a lot of myself into the affairs of Roosevelt Island over the last three-plus years, and I think that there have been a lot of good results. A lot of things have been accomplished and are being accomplished, and are in the planning stage to be accomplished. I am unhappy that the various projects that are midstream are not going to be seen to conclusion by me, but I have a lot of confidence that the staff will be able to complete them successfully.” In an aside, he added, “One of the interesting things about RIOCI is the fascinating diversity of the many, many moving parts of its diverse businesses. It’s really a collection of a lot of little and big businesses.”

In a mood to conclude things, Shane said, “I wish everybody well, and thank you for the privilege and honor of serving these last three and a half years.”

Pressed for further comment, he said, “The reach of this particular group of Board members may offend some and may be counterproductive. Or it may be the path to the future.”

Microgrants from page 1

from nearly anywhere on Earth.

Fisher’s interest in social justice and “human insecurity,” which she made into a self-designed college major, started early. “When I was old enough, I was allowed to watch the news with my father.” Her father, Craig Fisher, is an abstract artist.

Together, they watched Peter Jennings on ABC, and her socially conscious father helped shape her opinions. “I love NPR and Jim Lehrer, also,” Sasha says.

“I saw how they rebuilt Europe after World War II, and I thought, why aren’t we doing the same things in other places?”

“Human insecurity,” as Fisher sees it, means “the basic lack of available and healthy foods, clean water, health care, and education.” She has developed an original formulation about how these factors produce effects across broad populations and the value of improving on them.

Fisher is vivacious and laughs easily, belying the impression one might assume for an individual committed to serious and monumental challenges. “I enjoy old soul music,” she says, “like James Brown and Otis Redding. Oh, and Aretha Franklin. I like hip hop, too.”

Attending public school in New York City, for her, meant “a lot of political conversations.” These sharpened her ideas and expanded her perspectives. “I worked in the Model United Nations and, also, the City Abroad program.”

During her time at the University of Vermont, she participated in academic field work in South Sudan. There, she focused on improving education for the next generation of women leaders and, in the townships of South Africa, on

designing and supporting health and youth programs. She expects that field experience to be of great use in launching Project Bloom.

To understand her initiative, it’s necessary first to get an idea of how Spark MicroGrants operates. The organization was founded by Teddy Savoriness and Neal Lesh when their work on social and community issues in Africa led both to an interest in increasing the efficiency of NGOs. “Most of the NGOs are so inefficient,” Fisher notes in an aside. According to their Mission Statement, “MicroGrants aims to capitalize on the potential of local innovators by hosting contests in which community members propose their own solutions to social problems.”

MicroGrants works with locally established NGOs by running contests to get local community members to compete for small grants intended to fund pilot projects of their creation. MicroGrants believes strongly in spurring local involvement, with the conviction that their uniquely invented solutions will be more appropriate for the communities. In a current initiative, for example, the people of Nebar Ketema, Ethiopia, are using a microgrant to bring safe water to their people.

“I have friends acquainted with Neal Lesh,” Fisher recalls, and their meeting led to her active involvement with MicroGrants as the organizer of Project Bloom. “After my experiences in Africa, I found I agreed with their approach of local empowerment completely.”

“The first thing I’ll work on is arranging to give out a

grant for developing a way to tackle the problems faced by street children in Kigali,” Rwanda’s capital. “Getting the community involved is important. Most of the NGOs just go in and do everything for them, but we think this is a better approach. The community owns the solution, and we just help with funding pilots we are convinced will work. Most NGOs approach solutions by injecting their own leadership and ideas.” After finishing the process in Rwanda, she will develop a microgrant for the purpose of supporting rural women’s issues in Uganda.

While awarding money she believes will be put to good use is invigorating, Fisher has also learned the importance of fundraising, without which programs like Project Bloom can’t complete their missions. Along with more direct fundraising, working inside *Facebook* she has established *MicroGrants Bloom* as a *Cause* that people interested in her project can join and support through the social networking site.

“I’m happy for any help we can get, like donations, but also people who are willing to work on the organizational details that can free us to spend more time on our mission.”

Interested parties can discover more about this special organization by visiting the website, microgrants.supportlocalsolutions.org. The organization is a very young one, just launching its first projects, and Sasha Fisher will gain a year of creating and learning as she grants awards for Project Bloom’s two initial pilots.

She’ll return home to Roosevelt Island in June of 2011.

Resident Members of the RIOC Board Consider...

David Kraut

Jonathan Kalkin

Kathie Grimm

As someone who has lived here for 31 years, I recall perfectly well that Roosevelt Island was founded as a social experiment, and I hope to see it continue to run this course. The question originally proposed was whether the middle class could find a way to live close to or “in” Manhattan, rather than continue to flee to the suburbs, as was the pattern in the 1960s.

In my view, the question has yet to be answered. We are going through a time of momentous change, and change is always painful. But we have seen change before. The first, and actually biggest, change in the history of the Island came when Manhattan Park (Northtown Phase II) was built. The Mitchell-Lama program that had financed the first four buildings (Northtown Phase I) had expired, and the only public funds available were federal Section 8 funds. And, so, Manhattan Park was built with a strong Section 8 component, and existing management companies were quick to jump on the Section 8 bandwagon. The Island’s demographic profile changed. The Southtown project started well, but needs to be completed. The Octagon project has been successful, although it is much more of a private development than either Northtown or Southtown. Now the people living in Rivercross, Westview, and Island House are facing buy-out programs of one kind or another, as their buildings are eligible to leave the old Mitchell-Lama program.

So, change is upon us, and more change, and it is hard to see the future.

My own wish for the future is simple: I hope for ... absolutely nothing. I don’t mean that in a nihilist or uninterested way. Rather – as I have said before repeatedly in *The WIRE* and elsewhere – I hope for Southtown to be built out, for housing construction here to end, for Southpoint and the Roosevelt Memorial to be completed as a magnificent new addition to New York’s park structure ... and then I hope that we can all just, umm, live here, with our infrastructure well-made and our services well-endowed by the rents we pay. I look for nothing momentous, nothing gigantic, nothing too ambitious: just middle-class New Yorkers enjoying what the City has to offer while returning to a nearby haven of peacefulness and solitude. That was the original dream ... the aim of the original experiment ... and I should tell you it’s why we moved here in 1979. My wife and I raised two children on this Island, in peace and safety and with a fine public school. My wife passed, and her funeral was conducted in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Thus things pass.

But we made a good life here, a sound, middle-class life. That’s all that Roosevelt Island ever promised us, and it was all we wanted. I see nothing wrong with that promise, that vision. I believe that’s what most Roosevelt Islanders want for themselves and for their families. And I believe that the purpose of RIOC and its Board of Directors is nothing more than to ensure this vision ... and nothing less.



I believe in the hope of Roosevelt Island. I believe in the experiment. However, experiments need changes from time to time to *get it right*. More importantly, experiments need catalysts.

I believe in the hope of owning your own home, no matter who you are. For too long, people in this community have been paying for affordable housing that they can’t call their own. It is a treadmill of never-ending rent, or uncertainty without any equity and security. Today, tenants do not know if a rent hike, or a landlord’s electricity scheme, or a market-rate privatization deal, will cause them to lose their homes. They also don’t have the financial security to sell and give the next person the opportunity to buy an affordable place. This cycle puts their fate in someone else’s hands. This is a statement that if you need affordable housing, you will never achieve the American Dream to say it’s yours.

As my first act as chair of the RIOC Board’s Real Estate committee, with the help of my tireless fellow Board members and our great Assemblymember Micah Kellner, I have set out to break that cycle for the first time. Too many plans had come before and were never acknowledged by the RIOC Board. So, I had it put on the agenda, and we approved the DHCR affordability plans for Rivercross, Island House, and (when the tenants approve one) Westview. It seemed inefficient that all the State and City agencies had never met together in one room, and so I asked the Assemblymember to help set up a meeting at City Hall, and he delivered. As a result, things have started to come together and movement is at hand. It may seem that the RIOC Board doesn’t believe in you, in the hope of owning your own home. This is not true. Your fight is our fight. Your hope is our hope.

I believe in the hope of choice and opportunity and prosperity in owning your own business, and the joy that brings in providing a service and employment for others. For too long, nine, three, or worse – one person – has decided what stores go on the Island. Government thinks it can plan what you want and need. It destroys the entrepreneurial spirit by putting it through a complex and expensive legal and government bidding process that makes it impossible to achieve another American Dream – owning a business. This robs the hope of employment for people on the Island in a time of economic uncertainty. Finally, government says that people of this Island don’t deserve the rich panoply of shops and opportunities of other areas because we are a mixed-income and affordable community.

When I came to this Island, I examined this process and wrote an article in *The WIRE* outlining a solution – a master lease where the choice of what businesses exist here, and the dreams of the entrepreneurial spirit, are taken from us on the Board and given rightfully back to you. It was approved by the RIRA Common Council, endorsed in a RIRA election referendum, recommended by Senator Jose Serrano’s Hunter College study and even by a consultant study commissioned by RIOC – and then approved by the New York State Attorney General. It has been a long fight, but we are not giving up until a person who wants to open a shop here on Tuesday, and has the means and acumen, is allowed to sign the lease on Wednesday. That business owner will then employ people, provide services for you, and, because there are businesses everywhere on Main Street, not take the customer for granted. At the same time, that healthy competition will allow our present and future businesses to prosper because, for the first time, there will be a reason to walk down Main Street and patronize the stores.

More importantly, if that business doesn’t survive, it can be replaced immediately. Currently, we have a race to the



In early 2008, several of us who are now on the RIOC Board ran in the first election. Several platform meetings were held, and all of the candidates had similar concerns and goals. Those goals have not changed, although the ability to put all of them into effect involves forces outside the Board. Here are some of the goals:

- Affordable housing for the working poor, seniors, and the disabled
- A vibrant Main Street with stores that meet the needs of Islanders
- A beautiful, well-maintained Island with plenty of green spaces
- Recreational fields and facilities that are available to Island residents at very affordable prices
- A safe Island

Of these goals, the most difficult to achieve is affordable housing, given present market forces and the conversion of Eastwood to market-rate as Roosevelt Landings. Nevertheless, the Board will continue to advocate on behalf of this cause.

All of the other goals are achievable, and one can see some progress. The Board clearly needs the input of all Islanders as it relates to these goals and other suggested goals. Unfortunately, the usual political practice is for only a handful of residents to speak up, and their opinions may not represent the majority opinion of the Island. It is for this reason that Board meetings are now scheduled for the evenings, with ample opportunity for the community-at-large to speak.



Letters from page 2

ible merchandise turnover – has a sale on anything I use, I am there with my big tote to shlep home the bargains. But I am also still at Gristedes, as I was the other day, getting iceberg lettuce and grape tomatoes for 99¢ for as long as it lasts. There are some prices on Mr. Gordon’s list that were indeed eye-popping, like mayonnaise and cereal and aluminum foil, and not because they are at Gristedes. I try to buy house brands if they are cheaper.

Every one of us must be a comparison shopper. We should let Mr. Catsimatidis and his managers (no matter how long they stay) know what’s on sale everywhere, and stay on them to keep the store clean, well-stocked and well-operated. Mr. Gordon deserves our praise for starting this process again. I hope he will re-visit Associated & Trade Fair, and perhaps add a trip to Stop and

Shop on Northern Blvd., Best Yet way over on Ditmars, and to my own Met Foods in Manhattan. Even a CS column comparing what’s in the circulars is not a bad idea.

So thank you again, Mr. Gordon – I look forward to your next column.

Nina Lublin

To the Editor:

I agree with the letters regarding comments made by RIOC President Steve Shane. I was very disappointed by his lack of thinking outside the box, and his lack of motivation and vision for the community. I moved to Roosevelt Island in November from a town of 9,000 in Kansas. Back home, I was self-employed in the retail industry for the past 10 years. The winter here was difficult for me because there is *no* retail. I thought I was going to go crazy, and wanted to move

ASAP. If a poverty town in Kansas with a smaller population can have four times the retail, none fancy, why can’t Roosevelt Island do the same?

I don’t think anyone wants or expects it to be a haute-retail area; we just want options. Currently, I go to Queens to grocery-shop, Manhattan for pedicures (\$15 and it lasts for a *month!*), the City for my weekly McDonalds splurge, etc. I don’t spend any money on the Island except for the fruit stand, because there is nothing here I want, or am willing to pay the extra-high prices for. What I

wouldn’t give for a fast-food restaurant or two (Long John Silver’s, anyone?) and a WalMart on Roosevelt Island! Those are the things I miss the most from back home. In addition, WalMart creates hundreds of jobs, gives affordable shopping for people on limited incomes, as we have here, and would bring people to the Island!

Brenda Fazio

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bottom. We are so afraid of anyone leaving that we allow any business to operate or open, whether or not they fulfill your needs. The current government-approval process is long and, therefore, we are desperate to keep or accept anyone who is interested under any circumstances, simply because we know the current bidding process requires months.

This process can’t be done piecemeal. We want a long-term solution. Also, no one wants to be the first business to invest if they are surrounded by an empty block of stores. The process that will exist will be simple. We give someone the opportunity if they can prove they deserve it; the business then survives if they prove to their customers that they can and will perform. If they perform, they are able to pay to stay in their location. If they can’t, someone else is immediately given the opportunity. It’s a contract that exists between the consumer and business owner, and it’s your right to be in control of it.

I believe that we can be a place of innovation. Our Island started with the idea that we would be a modern community with new technology and ideas. I have been proud to commission studies from Columbia and Cornell regarding transportation, technology, and our parks that have brought new life to this experiment. Ideas like GPS time-clocks for buses are installed. Next up is fiber-optic wi-fi internet in our parks, an Island 311-type information/complaint system with help from Frank Farance, efficient LED lighting, GPS time-clock signs, and bike sharing. I have spoken to companies about installing chargers for electric cars like the new Chevy Volt in Motorgate, powered by solar or tidal energy. These ideas are becoming a reality because the Board and residents believe this Island deserves better.

Finally, I believe in a true and diverse democracy – an Island of diverse incomes where people work together for a better life with true political representation. We are not Tribeca or Brooklyn Heights; we are better, we are diverse, we are special, we are an experiment worth fighting for.

We are the American Dream.

To the Editor:

I wish to thank Andrew Gordon for reviving the *Comparison Shopper* (June 19 issue).

The table showing his findings (*The WIRE*, June 19) clearly demonstrates the price gaps to Gristede’s new manager, Mr. Ardie Ferrell. We appreciate the visible improvements in lighting and cleanliness at Gristedes, but the money we can save, as Roosevelt Island residents, by taking or sharing a ride to/from Trade Fair, more than offsets the slight inconvenience.

Mogens Petersen

To the Editor:

I spoke out regarding filling Main Street storefronts during the public session of the RIOC Board meeting on Monday.

The reality of seven years of empty storefronts on Main Street has caused much frustrated feeling for the residents and existing merchants – including new building owners.

On the whole, we wish to see the stores filled in a way the community needs, with shops such as a bakery with ice cream store, fish shop, flower shop, wine and liquor shop, and a well-provided See **Letters**, next page

...Their Duties, The Future, Their Hopes, Their Concerns

Howard Polivy

Fay Christian

Margie Smith

Like most residents on Roosevelt Island, I have developed an appreciation for the history of this little village in the midst of the great city. This is an ongoing experiment in urban planning and development. With the approach of completion of the housing development envisioned under the current General Development Plan, we can say that our community is soon to reach its maximum population.

As Ellen and I discovered soon after moving here, because of its size, location, and history, the mechanisms of governance are very visible and the levers of control are close at hand, although often slippery and hard to grasp. As in a small town, any motivated individual can instantly become one of the activists and push to direct the mechanisms of change.

Action is largely directed toward RIOC, which is the de facto village government. It maintains the infrastructure, collects the trash, runs local transportation, and provides public safety. It is an honor to be a Director of the corporation. Special thanks must go to all those who finally, after concerted effort, managed to secure a voice for residents’ preferences in Director appointments. Thanks go to our State representatives, Assemblymember Micah Kellner and Senator Jose Serrano, for their continued efforts. That we need to rely on their efforts, and those of City Councilmember Jessica Lappin, highlights a central fact of our existence. Physically, we are in the middle of a river in the middle of a city. Politically, we are a semi-autonomous village rented to the State from the City, under a Master Lease, which incorporates a General Development Plan.

The mixed lines of authority and fiscal concern complicate everything. A RIOC Board member soon grows to appreciate the tangled web, which must be either unraveled or bypassed to create any substantial project or even cure common difficulties. Even something as simple as getting the streetlights fixed can become a vexing project. Questions may be asked, researched, and debated, while immediate, pressing matters await what seems to be obvious action. What is simple and direct elsewhere is here complex and difficult.

Improving the Main Street retail corridor and helping ensure sustainable housing solutions for buildings exiting the Mitchell-Lama program – Rivercross, Island House, and Westview – command our focused attention. Several years ago, when RIOC felt that they could not take action to rent out stores, a strategy of setting up a Master Lease was developed. When DHCR was presented with a satisfactory framework for a reworked middle-income affordable housing solution, and wrote a declaration supporting those plans, the RIOC Board voted a resolution accepting that finding as a premise for future action.

I don’t want to dwell on the retail and housing issues in this little article, and I won’t give them the full discussion they merit. Instead, I want to point out that they, and other issues, come before the Board of Directors, not just at scheduled Board and committee meetings, but at any time. We rely on RIOC staff to give us complete and timely information for our considerations. We local residents are amateurs. Most of us work at full-time jobs, so our time for research and debate is strictly limited. Our role is to set the strategic direction for the corporation, and monitor staff as they devise their tactics in support of that direction. There are many areas of concern, as RIOC’s mandate extends to virtually anything one might experience on Roosevelt Island.

Board members slip into the direct management role when we act as conduits for residents’ concerns and reports or when we relay observations of physical problems to be fixed or actions to be remedied. We are not supposed to be Directors of RIOC in the sense of being managers of the cor-



As I reflect upon my two years as a RIOC Board member, I have optimism and excitement for the future of our Island. I continue to learn the many responsibilities of my office, and I find this learning process quite engaging and personally fulfilling. To better understand the fiduciary, legal, and ethical responsibilities of RIOC Board membership, I attended a Public Authority Board Governance workshop a few months after my appointment to office, during the fall of 2008. There have since been many changes and additions in the duties and responsibilities of Directors that necessitated a second training this past spring. Continuing education, attention to detail, working well in groups, and being flexible are valuable attributes of the members of our Board of Directors.

Although I am a designated member of the Real Estate Committee, I attend as many other committee meetings as possible. This practice enables me to have more information and detail on all aspects of RIOC activities and governance. Members of our board move fluidly from one committee to another, and function as a whole whenever possible.

We have been working toward privatization of various residential buildings for many years, and many residents are hopeful and looking forward to becoming first-time homeowners. I think RIOC should be the catalyst to expedite residents’ ownership of Island House, Rivercross, and Westview.

I look at the development on Roosevelt Island with mixed eyes. The Island will no longer be the place where we knew every resident by sight, if not by name. I will miss that familiarity and smallness. But I also think it is beneficial that the Island will be able to offer its residents more options. Personally, my son is very happy with the new restaurant options, and frequents them quite often... As a member of the Real Estate committee, I am looking forward to Main Street having vibrant and beautiful storefronts.

So, with the future ahead of us, there is a lot for RIOC’s Board members to address with your input, and I look forward to continued service. And look out for the new FDR Park over the next couple of years.



I’ve been on the RIOC Board now for several months and, as one of the newest members, I thought I’d take this opportunity to say where I think we are right now, and to look toward the future and what I hope we’ll be able to accomplish in the coming year(s).

The current Board is composed primarily of residents elected by each of you. We recognize our responsibility to you and our responsibility to New York State. Those responsibilities, fortunately, are in perfect synchronization. The objectives of this community are still very much the objectives of this Board. We want to continue the original plan for this Island, a community with mixed ethnicities, incomes, and age groups.

We’re working to revitalize Main Street. We’ve put forward a plan to get a Master Leaseholder to take over the storefronts. We believe this will provide a long-term solution to an ongoing problem. While it takes longer up front to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Master Leaseholder than it would to issue an RFP for an individual store, once it’s done, it’s done forever. That means that, in the future, if a store becomes vacant, it can be filled instantly with whatever type of shop or service is needed, without RIOC having to issue an RFP, with its inherent delays, every time that happens. It also means closer management of the storefronts by people who know retail. Personally, I feel this approach will be a plus for the residents as well as the merchants. We appreciate your patience, and completely understand the frustration felt by all of you. We feel it, too, and I want to assure you we’re doing everything in our power to breathe life into Main Street as quickly as we possibly can.

At the same time, we’re putting a high-priority effort on finalizing the affordability plans outlined by the Department of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR). Those plans will ensure that affordable housing will continue for the residents of Island House, Rivercross, and Westview. We’ve been very fortunate to have the expertise of the DHCR staff in developing these plans, and our objective now is to get them implemented as quickly as possible.

Then there’s the Tram. By now, you’ve all read that we’re behind schedule by about a month. We recognize the importance of getting the Tram back as quickly as possible, and we’re doing everything we can to make up the time. You’ve probably seen the after-hours work that’s being done to speed up the job, with safety always being our primary concern. I personally walked from my job on the West Side to the Tram every evening after work rather than going down into the subway. I miss that, and want to get back to doing it while the weather is still nice. I also recognize the huge inconvenience this is to the disabled and senior population who can’t always depend on the subway station’s elevator working. Bottom line, we understand the importance of getting the Tram back in service as fast as is safely possible. We’re trying to do just that.

While there are a myriad of other projects going on right now, we’re also looking well into the future of the Island. Our first concern is to be sure that the Island will be financially stable in the years to come. That will be a challenge, but we believe we’re on the right road to making that happen. As a Board member and Island resident, I want to see Roosevelt Island be in the forefront of innovation. That’s what we’ve always been about. We had the first commuter Tramway in the United States; we have the only Automated Vacuum Collection (AVAC) system serving a residential complex in the United States; we had electric buses back in the ‘70’s. This Board wants the Island to continue to innovate. We’re focusing on the areas of technology, energy, and communications. I’m looking forward to more community involvement in each of these areas, to make the next decade one that’s marked with creativity and progress that will make us all proud.



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restaurant, as soon as possible.

We understand that the RIOC Real Estate Committee members are in favor of creating the master-lease plan. However, it was awarded three years ago under the Public Authorities Act, yet there still remain complications that are not solved. In addition, we have spent \$150,000 per year for outside consulting fees. Furthermore, current inaction is causing the Island to lose even more, owing to contin-

ued non-occupancy.

I do not want to repeat the details of the disadvantages of the master-lease program, because they are well laid out in the interview with RIOC President Shane in *The WIRE* of June 5 [on line at nyc10044.com/z/6].

In conclusion, as a resident of Main Street and as newly elected president of the Roosevelt Island Chamber of Commerce, I strongly suggest to the RIOC Real Estate Committee members not to waste time and money, when the master-lease plan is not suitable for Roosevelt

Island owing to the limited space and narrow street.

In the meantime, at the June 23 RIRA meeting, a majority of townspeople agreed with my view, including the President of RIRA. Please reconsider, out of respect for the residents who have been living in this town for more than 20 years. We do not want more delays, and we do not want to have a layer of middle management that will only add to the burden of bureaucrats and will also be taking a commission, which can only further increase

troubles and rent.

Please give the power to the RIOC President to direct-rent where there are multiple qualified merchants waiting for a lease.

Cynthia Ahn, President
Roosevelt Island
Chamber of Commerce

To the Editor:

As a business owner, I used to pay \$360 annually for an ad on all the Red Buses.

At the new rate of \$16 per ad per bus per month, the cost would be \$1,920 per year. This is more than a 500% increase.

Who would ask for such an increase, especially in an economically depressed area during a worldwide economic depression? In addition, the size of the ads now requested is 11" X 46" – not standard – and the requested size would dramatically increase the cost of my color-printing materials.

The result is that I am not the only one unable to put an ad on the Red Bus. *Nobody* advertises at the new rates; the Red Bus ad spaces have been empty for about a year.

We wish to go back to the original pricing and size, so that many different ads can be accepted. It would be better than the current nothing. Additionally, if RIOC decided to do so, it could promote small business here. That would help the commercial tenants, and provide information to visitors as to what services are available on Roosevelt Island.

I believe it could be a win-win situation.

Cynthia Ahn, Owner
Roosevelt Nails

Roosevelt Island Day 2010 Brings Out the Old Hands and Lots of New



Urban American thanks Roosevelt Island Day co-sponsors **Roosevelt Island Youth Program** and **RIOC**, as well as all the contributors: **Island House**, **Island Kids**, **PS/IS 217**, **Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center**, **Nonno's Focacceria**, **Rivercross**, **RIRA**, **RISA**, **RIVAA**, **Roosevelt Island Day Nursery**, **Roosevelt Island Living Library**, and **Westview**.

Faces, Including Many Born After the First Roosevelt Island Day



Photography:
Paul Katz
Lilian Moreira
Iliana Wong
and others

The WIRE's color coverage of
Roosevelt Island Day 2010
is made possible by funding from
Urban American

The Island’s Retail Space

Tenant	Main St. Address	Square footage				Rate per square ft	Revenue	
		Main	Lower	Upper	Total		Monthly	Annual
Dr. James Flanigan	507	808			808	15	1000	12000
Beauty Salon	523	1294			1294	13	1413	16954
NY Public Library	526	2322			2322	9	1749	20988
RI Hardware/Video	544	2172	710	910	3792	13	3400	40800
Trellis	549	2364	1814		4178	26	5030	60366
Island Newsstand	563	2229	1844		4073	20	3688	44253
Cabrini Chapel	564	914			914	15	1125	13500
RI Cleaners	567	2203	962		3165	36	6578	78931
Roosevelt Nails	570	816	205		1021	15	1000	12000
M & D Deli	579	2090	1058		3148	26	4500	54000
We are One	599	1320			1320	8	850	10200
Accountable Finance	599	1320			1320	8	850	10200
China 1	609	1530	694		2224	27	3394	40732
Amalgamated Bank	619	2974			2974	18	4562	54743
Space Plus	682	448			448	11	400	4800
Gristedes	685	25172			25172	7	15033	180400
U.S. Post Office	694	9680			9680	25	20250	243000
Total Space Rented					67853		74822	897867
Not-for-Profit								
Thrift Shop	520	3835			3835			
Gallery RIVAA	527	1630	816		2446			
Boy Scouts	615	776			776			
Total Space					7057			
Vacant Space								
	503	1978	283		2261			
RIOC Engineering (temp)	513	920			920			
	530	1158			1158			
	532	1050	1144		2194			
	546A	686		1280	1966			
	568	505			505			
	559	568	286		854			
	605	1546	787		2333			
Total Vacant					12191			

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the spaces would not necessarily produce the best results for Island residents.

Shane also recounted the recent history that has kept Main Street’s stores from becoming occupied by merchants who, he said, have expressed interest in the space.

Available Space

Shane ticked off the retail square footage on the Island (see table): “The retail spaces in their entirety total about 107,000 square feet.” But 504 Main Street (the former Lilies Christian School) must be subtracted, he said, because it is being held as a probable new location for the Island branch of the New York Public Library (see separate story, page 13).

Subtracting space held by non-profit organizations – Gallery RIVAA, the Boy Scouts, and the Catholic Church Thrift Shop – further reduces space available for lease to merchants. Shane said, “67,000 square feet is presently occupied by merchants under leases expiring in 2010, 2013, and 2018 [although the Gristedes lease runs to 2032].”

“The total of all of the vacant spaces, even though they jar the senses, is [only] 12,191 square feet.” But space at 503 Main Street (in the Rivercross building) must be subtracted, he said, because it “is completely unbuilt-out and would take a couple of hundred dollars a square foot to fit it out for any tenant – about \$400,000 – which is beyond the capacity of any economic deal on Roosevelt Island today.”

“That would take it down to, essentially, 10,000 square feet.”

Shane said that he has a folder of inquiries from potential retail occupants of the empty Main Street spaces, but reiterated that the RIOC Board has decided to cease direct leasing to merchants by RIOC and to seek a master lessee for them. (See related discussion in RIOC Board member Jonathan Kalkin’s contribution to this issue.)

History

The RIOC Board, now primarily nominated by Island residents in an election process that sends names of residents to the governor, decided to seek a master lessee after a multi-year roller-coaster ride that seemed destructive to the mercantile climate in the Northtown portion of Main Street. For several years, leases had not been renewed, and some merchants withheld their rent payments and postponed improvements, saying they would not invest in spaces they could lose. One, Capri Pizza, withheld rent payments and said that the funds would be needed to establish a business elsewhere if, having no lease here, the restaurant was evicted. (This tactic led to eviction.)

For a time, the problem was the State’s Public Authorities Accountability Act, passed after the Pataki administration tried to sell land along the Erie Canal to a developer friend of the governor’s at a ridiculously low price. The new law said that no State agency could dispose of State property at anything less than full market value. For Roosevelt Island, this seemed to mean that stores could not be leased to merchants without a bidding process or some other means of establishing their market value.

When he took on the RIOC presidency over three years ago, Shane, who has worked as a real-estate lawyer, confronted the problem posed by the law. For existing commercial tenants, “I decided finally that, under the [legal] theory that they had a property right, giving them a [lease] extension would not create any new property right,” and he had RIOC go forward with lease renewals for those existing merchants. But the problem of empty stores remained.

Meanwhile, an evolving RIOC Board of Directors, increasingly consisting of Island residents nominated by Island-wide election, was attempting to cope with the problem of how to fill Main Street retail.

Jonathan Kalkin, who was nominated to the RIOC Board in the February 2008 election, wrote an article for *The Main Street WIRE* in which he advocated the master lessee approach, the idea being that once a private company controlled the retail spaces, it could be light on its feet in seeking merchants to occupy the spaces, and move quickly to get them established – avoiding the cumbersome RFP process that is not only off-putting to potential retail tenants, but is time-consuming: Each lease must come before the RIOC Board, which meets only once a month.

The RIOC Board adopted the Kalkin idea in 2009, after it was endorsed by the Common Council of the Residents Association, by consultant studies, and in an Island-wide referendum put forward as a ballot question in November of 2008.

“A year and a half ago,” Shane said last week, “I was prepared to move forward, and I authorized and commissioned an appraisal of the vacant stores... obviously a first step [under the Public Authorities law].” Shane then explained that there was a delay of about a year for a consultant study favored by the then RIOC Board Chair (and Commissioner of the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal [DHCR]). “(The consultant study was a lead story in *The WIRE*. It is available on line at nyc10044.com/z/8.)

Meanwhile, the State Legislature responded to complaints that the fair-market-value restriction was hogtying some State agencies. Shane explained that at the end of summer 2009, the Public Authorities Reform Act was passed, “and RIOC [was] now permitted to dispose of property – that is, lease stores – as long as [doing so] is consistent with its mission statement... Therefore, it essentially doesn’t matter what the economics of the deal are.

“At that moment, however, several members of the Board decided... to go forward with

Island Muslims Seek Space for Mosque

by Jim Baehler

The seven-month-old Muslim Society of Roosevelt Island has been trying to find a rental space to establish a mosque where they can worship. Their search has been led by Dr. Hassan Ghomrawi, an Instructor in Public Health at Weill Cornell Medical College, and Ahmed Darwish, a computer programmer. Dr. Ghomrawi is president of the Society, and Mr. Darwish is one of six trustees of the non-profit organization created to sign the legal documents required by RIOC or a private landlord. Their efforts to deal with Steve Shane in finding a suitable space to rent were unsuccessful, they told *The WIRE*.

On Monday, they brought their frustration to the RIOC Board.

Dr. Ghomrawi says, “We need approximately 2,000 square feet to accommodate the 50 to 100 people we expect to attend services. We have identified almost 500 Muslim families living on the Island, and we have commitments and forms filled out with personal information on 200 of them.”

Mr. Darwish adds, “A mosque would allow us to become a more active participant in Island affairs. We would want to reach out to the Island community and become a greater part of it. We intend to have Youth Programs, open to all young people. We want to provide a meals program for poor people. We would like to improve services to the 30 to 40 disabled Muslims who live on the Island. In these difficult economic times, we could provide help for those who have lost their jobs.”

“We would want to find a way to provide free medical care for those without medical coverage,” says Dr. Ghomrawi.

As for funding, Dr. Ghomrawi says, “Every Muslim is obligated by his religion to contribute a minimum of 2.5 percent of his income to help the needy. Many who can afford more contribute much more than that.”

They have identified three suitable spaces – the vacant ground floor on the west side of Island House where the old day nursery was located, the empty storefront at the south end of Rivercross on Main Street, and the second floor at the south end of Roosevelt Landings that once housed the Lilies International School.

Dr. Ghomrawi and Mr. Darwish told *The WIRE* that they submitted a formal proposal to RIOC, then a business plan, but got no response.

“After some months, Mr. Shane suddenly began talking about the master lease, saying that there was no possibility of renting space until that issue had been resolved,” says Darwish.

After Monday night’s RIOC Board meeting adjourned, Ghomrawi Darwish talked with Board members Howard Polivy and Kathie Grimm, who promised to bring the society’s petition to the personal attention of Jonathan Kalkin, who chairs the Board’s Real Estate committee.

Dr. Hassan Ghomrawi is a native of Lebanon with an Australian mother and a Lebanese father. He earned a B.A. in biology from the American University in Beirut, and a Master’s and Ph.D. in public health from the University of Minnesota. He is married with two girls, ages three years and 18 months. He and his wife have lived on the Island for two and a half years, and find it a perfect place to raise their children.

Ahmed Darwish is a computer programmer with a degree from LaGuardia Community College. His wife grew up on the Island, and they have lived here for 12 years. They have three children, boys aged nine and 10 and a four-year-old girl; all attend PS 217. Mrs. Darwish is Jewish, and the couple provides religious and historical instruction at home in their two faiths.

Island History on line: nyc10044.com

[Kalkin’s] master lease program, and therefore there was to be no further leasing of space that would interfere in any way with the plan to get a master lessee. Once more, we were frozen in time and nothing has happened in the interim.”

Implementing a master-lessee plan requires preparation of an RFP – a request that would-be master lessees submit proposals to RIOC.

Drafting an RFP

In response to questions, Shane said that RIOC’s real-estate consultant, Paul Mas of Jones Lang Lasalle, has been drafting an RFP to seek a master lessee. He said that, in a continuing process that involves following each draft with review and revision, the consultant is now close to having a workable RFP that considers the public-service mandate under which RIOC works.

But he pointed out that the process only begins with the RFP. It is followed by a period during which proposals are received and evaluated, and a recommendation is prepared for the Board’s consideration. He said that once a choice of master lessee is made, a contract must then be written – Shane said it could easily run 100 pages, “not your standard Real Estate Board boilerplate” – before the actual process of leasing to merchants can begin.

Shane’s Concern

Shane feels that the master-lease concept is not appropriate for Roosevelt Island. There’s not only

the relatively small amount of retail space, but also a philosophical consideration.

“As a personal matter, based on my experience as a real-estate lawyer, I think that [for Roosevelt Island] the concept of a master lease is misguided. I think that the charter of RIOC, which is to be a planned urban community, to manage and operate the various facilities of the Island for the benefit of residents, gives us an obligation to do so, and it is not better for us to turn over discretion for how that space is to be managed to an outside party whose goals would be, presumably, their economic advantage, as in the free-enterprise system. Their goals might well be at variance with the goals of RIOC as the keeper and trustee for this planned urban community, that is, the charter for this planned community of Roosevelt Island. That is my personal belief.

“It is the same belief you see being debated in *The New York Times* between the left-wingers who believe in the goodness of government and the ability to accomplish things in the social system, and the right-wingers who believe that only unfettered capitalism will produce an appropriate result. It is an ongoing debate in our society. I believe that government can and should do as good a job as it possibly can to deliver on its goals. There are those who believe that only free enterprise

See **Retail**, next page

Elena FitzPatrick Wed



Elena Maria Fitzpatrick, the daughter of Verna and Richard FitzPatrick of Roosevelt Island, was married June 19 to Justin Dario Alexander Sifford-Angotti, the son of Belinda Sifford of Berkeley, California, and Thomas Angotti of Brooklyn. Elena, who is 26, is working on a doctorate in art history at CUNY Graduate Center; she's a graduate of Oberlin College. Her husband teaches English at Voyages Preparatory High School in Queens, and is also an Oberlin graduate.

RIRA Column from page 3

diatrician being involved, but if this were any other organization not so close to home, one would say “Gee, given the experience of your committee and the fact that you have a real-estate attorney who’s done commercial properties, I think I’d like to hear his point, too.” And I’ve heard that two independent studies, including one by DHCR, recommended *against* the master-lease approach. So, that’s the point here: the Board seemed to be upset that it was important to hear Mr. Shane’s point of view, and it was important for these and other differing points to be discussed within the community (which the RIOC President chose to do, but the Real Estate committee declined).

Minimally, the RIOC Board needs to interact with the community, and they should start by showing us what the RFP drafts look like. Had present resident Board members not been on the RIOC Board, as outsiders they would have argued, *You should share this with the community*. Although there were some initial bumps in the road, RIOC’s Rosina Abramson’s approach to having RIRA provide a Blackwell Park committee produced the best outcome: (1) it satisfied RIOC’s needs, (2) it satisfied the developer’s needs, and (3) it satisfied the residents’ needs. The

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can manage that, and that government inevitably will screw up and will not do a good job.”

Shane said that, nonetheless, he is pursuing the Board’s master-lease plan diligently.

“Clearly, there has been a problem for a lot of years. Clearly, we have a situation on our hands where we have, essentially, 10,000 square feet of vacant space. We have a number of retail opportunities to fill them up, and I think that we could do so rather rapidly, but it’s not happening, and as I have promised the Board of Directors, I am an officer of the corporation and we are doing an RFP [for a master lease] and we are on the verge of going forward.”

Contrary View

Only one RIOC Board member, Howard Polivy, attended the June 23 session. Although not a member of the Board’s Real Estate Committee, he said, “We are all working toward [the] goal of having a vital retail corridor... It’s true that the Public Authorities Reform Act, which became effective March 1, allows RIOC to circumvent the maximum-income provisions that we had in the Public

RIOC Board should choose the same approach, which will benefit everyone.

5. RIOC Board fires President Steve Shane. [Preface: These are my personal comments. The RIRA Common Council has not met to discuss this, so I don’t know the opinions of the members.] At the Roosevelt Island Reunion on Saturday, the reporter who did a *Newsweek* article about Roosevelt Island 30 years ago was doing a follow-up, and she was looking for juicy dirt to report. In that discussion, I said “I think Steve Shane has been the best RIOC President we’ve had in the past 15 years.” On Monday, I found out that his Board was going to fire him. Considering the number of disagreements I’ve had with Mr. Shane over the years, you’ll probably find it odd that I was strongly supportive of Mr. Shane continuing in his role.

Let me be clear: I think that the RIOC Board made a serious mistake. Mr. Shane had approximately six months left in his term with the present governor. There are many major projects that need to be completed in the next 4-6 months, including the Tram overhaul (which is a month behind schedule), the park work and memorial work at Southpoint, and the privatization efforts for the three remaining Mitchell-Lama buildings. (Disclosure: I am the corporate secretary

Authorities Act... That’s something new and that’s positive no matter how you look at it.

“We hope that a master leaseholder would be able to bring resources and knowledge and experience that we, RIOC, are not really in the business of providing. We run retail, we’ve run retail for a while, and some of us have a lot of retail experience, but we are constrained by the vagaries of change in Albany. We do the best we can. This [master lease] is one way we are trying to get some closure on these issues, and we think it’s worth a full effort, and we’d like to see it go forward.”

In his discussion of the matter in this issue of *The WIRE*, Kalkin points out that once a master lessee is in place, replacing a merchant in a vacated store could be very rapid, whereas the process for each replacement tenant can take longer if it is handled directly by RIOC – a period that Steve Shane put at 90 days.

In last week’s meeting, Shane refused when asked to provide projected dates by which stores might be occupied under the master-lessee plan, saying the multi-step process is too complex for predictions.

Library Could Get Space at 504 Main St.

The Island’s library may move to 504 Main Street, more than doubling its space, with the help of a loan to the City from the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation.

The space, at the southern end of the Roosevelt Landings (Eastwood) building, was last occupied, on a temporary basis, by the Public Safety Department when its space was being renovated, and before that by the Lilies Christian School. It is a former mini-school, used for that purpose before the new PS/IS 217 was built. A consultant study recommended the library use for the space, seeing it as ideally suited between Northtown and Southtown.

The New York Public Library (NYPL) has wanted better space on the Island for some time. Consideration was given to the space now occupied by the Cabrini Thrift Shop, and to new space in Southtown building number 7, which will be located on the east shore across from 475 Main Street and south of Roosevelt Landings.

But “building number 7 is in limbo at the moment,” RIOC President Steve Shane explained at a Residents Association meeting last week. “We don’t know when the Southtown developer is going to go forward... they have until the end of 2012 to exercise their right to go forward with buildings 7, 8, and 9.” This uncertainty and delay

for the tenant association in one of those buildings.) While there might have been other times for the Board to assert itself (such as vetoing the wasteful dual-tram approach that could have saved us \$10 million), this was the wrong time and for the wrong reason.

Given the risk of completing these efforts (including the inevitable litigation/mediation that will come from the Tram delay), it seems foolish to lose the knowledge base of a key executive who was central to all of this. I checked the minutes of the RIOC Board meetings since January 2009, and I can find no actual impropriety or violation of the board’s directives. If the RIOC Board really felt they needed to be clear about their direction, they could have adopted a specific board resolutions, but they chose not to – until then, Mr. Shane had a fiduciary responsibility to report the truth, which he did. It seems that it was all about a personality issue, which is fine for clubs of teenagers, but not for corporate governance of a State public-benefit corporation. The personal (non-business) aspect of this was clear: After the board forced his retirement in executive session, they then asked him to leave the table in the Board meeting because Board members “felt uncomfortable” with him being there. The RIOC Board looked like a bunch of amateurs, not serious executives. After Mr. Shane left, they then had a public beauty contest where the CFO and VP of Operations were treated as children: a face-off, including each describing the other’s strengths and weakness. It was disgusting and non-professional. I, like many others in attendance, thought, *Why couldn’t you have discussed this in private? Why do you force your CFO to explain in public why he himself might not be good for the job of Acting President/CEO?* Amateurs – not a criticism of their lack of real

Ronald Martinez

It is with a heavy heart that I share with you the passing of our good friend and former Islander Ronald Martinez. The Martinez family moved to Roosevelt Island in November of 1976. Ron was a long-time Little League umpire. He was also a member of the Photographic Society, Garden Club, and Senior Center.

Ron helped the community in many ways, as he volunteered to cook breakfasts in the Senior Center, set up tables for flea markets, barbecued for Island celebrations, helped Good Shepherd Church with its functions, and in many other ways.

In August 1994, Ron and his wife, Florence, moved to Bradenton, Florida, where they lived a happy retirement in the company of new good friends and neighbors. Ron often told me how much he and Florence looked forward to receiving the *WIRES* I would collect and mail to them.

Ron is survived by his loving wife, Florence, with whom he shared a happy marriage for 55 years. He is also survived by son Paul and daughter-in-law Alison, sister Alice Hall, brother-in-law Frank Hall, sister-in-law Rose, and her husband Edward Conlon.

makes the 504 Main Street space an attractive possibility, but NYPL is, at present, short of the funds necessary to prepare the space.

“We have talked about doing a plan with the City’s economic folks because we are in a better position to be able to finance the City’s library need,” explained Shane. “We have the cash, on which we’re earning essentially nothing. The City’s cost of borrowing is three percent, and we’re not making any-

thing like that. The City would, in effect, borrow [our] cash by leasing the space; we would invest in that space. They would lease it [and] pay us leasehold rent. That would be a way of accommodating everybody.”

Shane further explained that the 504 Main Street space would give the library 5,000 square feet, which is more than double its present cramped quarters of 2,200 square feet.

pinnacle of our self-governance effort. I have been a strong supporter of self-governance and continue to be. However, if we really want people to respect the Island’s ability to govern, then we cannot be of the mind “everything from Albany is Bad, everything by Island residents is Good.” We have to demonstrate that we have better thinking, honesty, fairness, and transparency about Roosevelt Island. Which means that we need to feel free about being able to criticize our own neighbors on their mistakes – that is what will make us better, not a blind demonstration of power; and not blind support of Board members just because they are our neighbors and we elected them. At the next RIOC Board election, hopefully some of those residents who expressed their unhappiness about the present RIOC Board will become candidates and remind voters that they won’t make the same power grab, will have more executive management experience, and will be more cooperative about interacting with their constituents. Let the public decide.

Goodbye, Mr. Shane. Thank you for reorganizing RIOC to be a much better organization that responded to the Island, for reducing the prior “bunker mentality,” for giving us the experiment of elected resident members to the RIOC board (who just thanked you by firing you), for insisting upon a better Public Safety Department (which has improved substantially), for your many conversations (although we weren’t always in agreement). I still stand by my statement, “You’re the best RIOC President we’ve had in the past 15 years” and it is our loss that you could not finish your term.

6. Upcoming RIRA meetings. The next meeting is on September 15 at 8:00 p.m. in the Good Shepherd Center; future meetings are October 6 and November 3. Have a great summer!



SPORTSWIRE

Towering home runs! Screaming line drives! Diving catches! Blazing fastballs! All this and a storybook ending were a part of this season's RIYP Little League. This season had more teams, more players, and more coaches than we've seen in years, and it paid off for the players and fans. It all came together during the Majors and Minors Championship games.

The Majors were up first with the Blue Rays taking on the Maroon Mustangs – the top two teams in the league. The game was tight during the first couple of innings, and the score was close at 5-4 in the third inning. Then the Rays pulled away and didn't look back. The game ended with the Rays on top, 10-5, and they are this year's RIYP Majors Champs! The Rays received their first-place trophies after the game, and additional trophies were given to Steven Sanchez for Most Valuable Player and Elija Colon for Sportsmanship. The Rays were coached by Ray Pabon. The Mustangs received runner-up trophies after the game, and additional awards were given to John King for Most Valuable Player and Brock Lucas for Sportsmanship. The Mustangs were coached by Head Coach Ed Lucas and assistant coaches Lloyd Woltz and Brian King.

The Majors Green team also received trophies; and their Most Valuable Player award was given to Roy Mosquitta, and Sportsmanship went to Nicole Feliciano. Carolyn Christianson was the coach for Green. The Majors Dark Blue team was also a proud trophy recipient; the team honored Jerry Machacek as their Most Valuable Player and Billy Cusick with the Sportsmanship Award. Dark Blue was coached by Meera Tandon and Kyle Murphy, with Assistant Coach Tim Wong.

The second Championship game of the day was perhaps the season's best story: The Blue Devils, who started the season very slowly with only one win in the first half,



Majors Champs Blue Rays



Minors Runners-up Purple Royals

fought for a right to compete for the championships by stepping up in the playoffs and putting together two straight playoff victories, including beating the league-best Maroon Mustangs. All year, the Devils kept their composure and continued to improve and play their game. It showed at the very beginning in their matchup against the Purple Royals, when they streaked out to a 7-0 lead in the first two innings. The Royals battled back, but were unable to overcome the deficit and the Devils' brilliant defense. The game ended 10-3 when Luke Chavez dropped to his knees to catch a sinking line drive to left field, a play that was typical of the fabulous way the last three games went for the new RIYP Minors Champs, the Blue Devils. The Devils received their first-place trophies after the game; the Most Valuable Player was awarded to Karina Louriero, and the Sportsmanship was awarded to Regis Enama. The Devils' head coach was Brian Dorfman. The Royals received their runner-up trophies, and presented the Most Valuable Player award to Jethro Hurt and the Sportsmanship Award to Noah Parker. The Co-Head Coaches for the Royals were Scot Bobo and Leon Wagner, and assistant coaches were Curtis Parker, Chris Roman, Kevin Wagner, and Claude Hurt.

The Minors' Green Machine, Maroon Mustangs, and Light Blue Knights also received trophies and presented additional awards to the following players: Most Valuable Player Awards were given to Green Machine's Michael Quan, Mustangs' Kenny Holguin, and Knights' Blaise Enama. Sportsmanship Awards were presented to Green Machine's Simon Rickman, Mustangs' Jake Lucas, and Knights' Joshua Carter. Green Machine was coached by James Herlihy, the Mustangs were coached by Ed Lucas, and the Knights were coached by Johan Marfey, who was assisted by Robert Palm and Martin Thomle.

Fundraiser

Residents Association Stages an Afternoon of Music



RIRA presented six artists performing duets and trios from the operatic repertoire last weekend. Left to right, above: Sherie Helstien with Alan Smulen, Lorraine Davidson, Victor Ziccardi, Anastasia Ponomarev; and accompanist Regina Yakubtsiner. Below, a finale with Julie Majchrzyk out front.



Toastmasters is 30!



Present and former officers of the Island branch of Toastmasters International gathered recently to celebrate the start of the 31st year. Meetings are listed in *ComingUp* on page 3.

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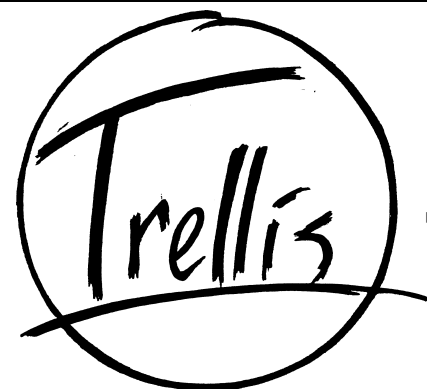
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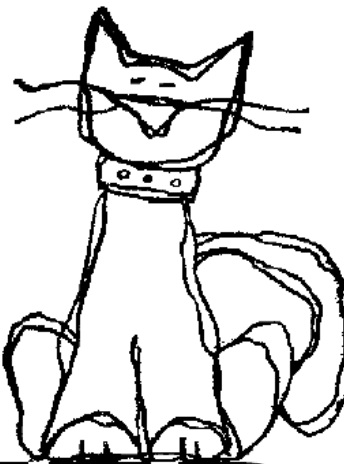
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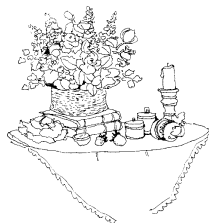
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