

Next issue:
Saturday,
February 26

The Main Street WIRE™

31st year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



The RIRA Common Council met in the gymnasium at The Child School last week, while Good Shepherd Community Center is having work done in its lower-level meeting space.

Solutions Tough Economy Can Be Hard on Island Pets, Too

by Jennifer Dunning

Roosevelt Islanders love their pets. It's not unusual, for instance, for Octagoners to know their fellow tenants by their dogs. *The Wilsons? Who are they?* But adorable little Gilda, her red Chihuahua fur glistening and spirits unfailingly high? *Oh, yes, we know her. That couple on the ninth floor belongs to her.* "Is Regis sick?" one Westview resident asks worriedly of another as a large tabby cat is hauled off to the vet, glowering from his carrier, on the Red Bus.

With a difficult economy, however, many are finding it increasingly hard to hold on to their cherished pets. More and more animals are being surrendered, throughout the City. Animal-care resources are being drained, from small groups like Island Cats on Roosevelt Island to Animal Care and Control of New York City, the City pound and depository of last resort, which takes in more than 40,000 animals each year.

Cats were once routinely dumped on Roosevelt Island, before it became a residential area. It is now illegal to abandon pets in New York State, with penalties of a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or imprisonment for up to a year, and cameras and patrols have been set up on the Island.

But imaginative, wide-ranging help is available from Pets for Life NYC.

Its motto is *We can help you solve your problem so you can keep your pet!* A program of The Humane Society of the United States, Pets for Life has a hotline staffed by some 65 volunteers who can cut through the often-bewildering forest of the City's animal groups to offer advice and access to free and low-cost pet services throughout the City.

Need information about affordable spay-neutering and microchipping? Call **917-468-2938** and speak to a Pets for Life volunteer. Advice is also available there about reduced-cost vet care, the most popular subject of calls, and allergies, shedding, and behavioral problems. Foster homes and reduced-cost pet boarding during crises may also be available. Donations of pet food and supplies may be provided to those on limited incomes. And advice is also offered on pet-related issues with landlords and tenants.

"We really believe that many of the problems are solvable," says Jenny Olsen, co-director, with Joyce Friedman, of Pets for Life. "Clients have to want to solve them." Sometimes, the help is simple. Cats and dogs are not the most common reason for a sudden allergic response, a caller may be told, with suggestions about other possible causes. And has that adorable pup or kitten, so irresistible in its shelter cage, turned into an unfathomable little monster on relocation to its new home? Who ya gonna call? Pets for Life, of course.

Pets for Life also makes followup adoption calls for the City's Animal Care and Control, where the program, formerly known as Safety Net, was initiated. "Who did I adopt here?" worried callers may ask. "Don't give up," they are told, in most cases, "because that behavior is normal and temporary, and here is what to do." In short: Just hold on, let Pets for Life help, and you'll remember why you fell in love with Gilda and Regis.

Briefly...

• **AVAC:** The New York State Energy Research and Development Administration (NYSERDA) has awarded \$50,000 to CUNY New York to devise ways to enhance the Island's garbage-collection system to handle recycling and the disposal of commercial waste.

• **Lawlor continues to serve:** A *WIRE* e-mail bulletin issued January 20 announcing the departure of State Housing Commissioner Brian Lawlor was incorrect; he continues to serve. Reliable sources had confirmed that he would be leaving. Either they were wrong or Cuomo administration plans changed shortly after his trip to Albany to tender his resignation.

Residents Association Council Wrestles With Openness Issues

by Dick Lutz

In the end, nothing changed. But a failed motion at last week's meeting of the Common Council of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA) showed a representative community organization attempting to cope with issues of openness, discretion, and privacy: *When and how should information be released to the press and public? When should it be withheld? What's the process?*

At issue was a resolution passed last month at a meeting of the Council, which is composed of representatives of the tenants of the Island's residential buildings, all of whom were elected or re-elected last November. That motion, put forward by Roosevelt Landings representative Joyce Mincheff and passed 17-12, came in response to publication, on a blog, of a pair of committee reports that some councilors found objectionable. (See the January 15 issue of *The WIRE*, on line at nyc10044.com/z/Op.)

Mincheff's resolution provided that, prior to a Common Council meeting, RIRA committees' minutes, proposed resolutions, and reports are to be distributed only to members of the Council – not to the press or blogs – unless two-thirds of the committee's members vote to release them.

Former RIRA President Frank Farance, now a council representative from Island House (as he was before his two-year presidency of the organization), called this "censorship."



Frank Farance

Last week, he sought to have the resolution declared null and void on grounds that it violates provisions of the RIRA constitution by restricting the distribution of materials originated in open meetings.

"When we're not in [a closed] executive session," Farance later explained, "we're in a public meeting, which means that anyone can attend and anyone can report and share the information." By allowing suppression of information about a public meeting, he said, Mincheff's resolution implied a change in the organization's constitution, which would require a formal amending process involving two-thirds approval by the Common Council.

In last week's meeting, Mincheff fought off Farance's "null and void" resolution by arguing that "the word censorship is a bit of sensationalism... The resolution was not to stop the release of information. It was to make sure that information released is well-considered by the Council. It is our responsibility to make that consideration, because many of the things that we deal with are sensitive. If it's not sensitive and the committee [agrees it's not], they can release it with a two-thirds vote."

"But if the committee feels the information is sensitive and wants the collective reasoning of the Common Council before the information is released, then definitely the Common Council has the right and the responsibility to consider what it says, before it says it."

But Farance argued that such restrictions make his job of representing his building and informing his constituents difficult or impossible. "It means I cannot share documents with my neighbors to help them become involved and informed for an upcoming meeting of the Common Council. I would have to say, *Gee, you really should be at this meeting, but I can't tell you why.* If we get another dopey committee report, all [Mincheff's] resolution will do is prevent us from telling our neighbors about it." He said it would restrict him from communications that might help residents understand why they should attend a meeting.

Farance argued further that, because committee reports would be discussed at Council meetings, which are public, information of them would become public anyway. As a result, he said, the present operating rules "only serve to withhold publication of them prior to the Council meetings, not withhold them permanently."

Octagon representative Bill Long argued against Farance's motion, citing a provision of the RIRA constitution that requires the RIRA Common Council to "supervise" its committees. "The resolution that this body passed [in January] falls totally within the Council's responsibilities to supervise committees," he said. "If a committee chair can put anything into a committee report, no matter how inflammatory, or no matter how damaging to the relationship that the Common Council has with other organizations on the Island, and that committee report can be released without any review, then this Council is not adhering to its responsibilities, and it is failing in a way that is much more important than [suggested by] Mr. Farance's resolution."

In the period between the January Council meeting



Joyce Mincheff

and last week's session, RIRA President Matthew Katz, who had voted for Mincheff's January resolution and had indicated he would vote against Farance's move to declare it void, had an exchange of views with Rivercross resident David Bauer, an open-government advocate and founder of the Maple Tree Group, which has worked to get residents a greater voice in the affairs of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation.

Responding to a Bauer letter in the January 29 *WIRE* (on line in the archives at nyc10044.com), Katz wrote, "I take exception to your claim that everything we do, everything we say, 'must be open for all the residents to see.' [At the] January 5 Council meeting, [the organization was] trying to find its way through the competing goals of openness and tact, transparency and accuracy. We are not government employees, merely unpaid volunteers, and unfettered reporting of our conversations [is] likely to stifle the free expression of Island leaders who are trying out ideas, offering 'blue-sky' solutions, and engaging in dialogue that will eventually produce reportable conclusions... We [must] reserve the right to get our ducks in order, to come to consensus within committees or at the Common Council before having (possibly half-baked) thoughts trumpeted as final decisions."

Bauer wrote, "Public service must be undertaken with the word *public* in the front of the mind of all involved," and "Your enumeration of some of [the] sensibilities is spot on; unfortunately, the blanket to hide public business is always stretched bigger and bigger," and "People who accept a public position must understand that they become responsible for the gaffes or poor judgment of which they become a part. It is my duty as a voter to get to know the output of the people for whom I voted, to determine whether or not their actions and expressions are representing me as I would hope they might."

At last week's Common Council meeting, Manhattan Park representative Lynne Shinozaki eventually suggested that Farance's resolution be tabled and included in an ad hoc committee's general constitutional review already under way. In the end, Farance agreed. In the meantime, January's decision to control release of committee working papers remains in effect.



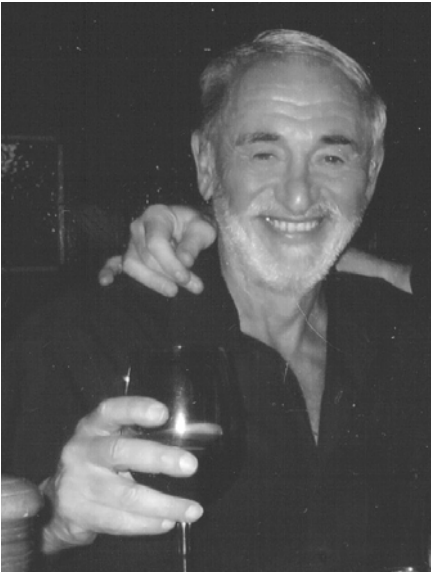
Bill Long

Robert Liss

Robert Liss, who died Thursday, February 3, following a stroke, was one of the original pioneers of Roosevelt Island. Moving here in March of 1977 with his wife, Rochelle, and their 18-month-old son, Michael, Bob immediately became active in helping to grow and shape life in the Island community.

He became involved in the Youth Soccer League and Little League, and coached the Roosevelt Island traveling soccer team called “The Strikers” for several years. He was a public advocate for many Roosevelt Island causes and, most recently, was attempting to implement “cogeneration” technology as an energy-efficient means to help lower utility bills for Island residents.

Affectionately called “the Mayor” of Roosevelt Island by his family, over his 33 years on the Island Bob got to know many residents, and to develop many wonderful relationships with the kids he coached as they grew into adulthood.



He enjoyed jogging or taking brisk morning walks around the Island, as well as stopping off at the Back Page and, more recently, the Riverwalk Bar and Grill to catch up with many of his Island friends after work.

Over the years, Bob also dedicated time to volunteer work, which included sleeping over at a homeless shelter on Roosevelt Island once a month, and teaching a class to seventh-grade students at IS 217 for the Salvidori Center, to help promote math and science skills through construction of a mock suspension bridge.

Bob remained an extremely active person who loved to travel and experience new adventures. He had returned only recently from a bike trip through Vietnam and Cambodia.

He was a devoted husband and father and a great neighbor who will be missed by all who knew him. He is survived by his wife Rochelle, son Michael, and daughter-in-law Anita.

SPORTSWIRE

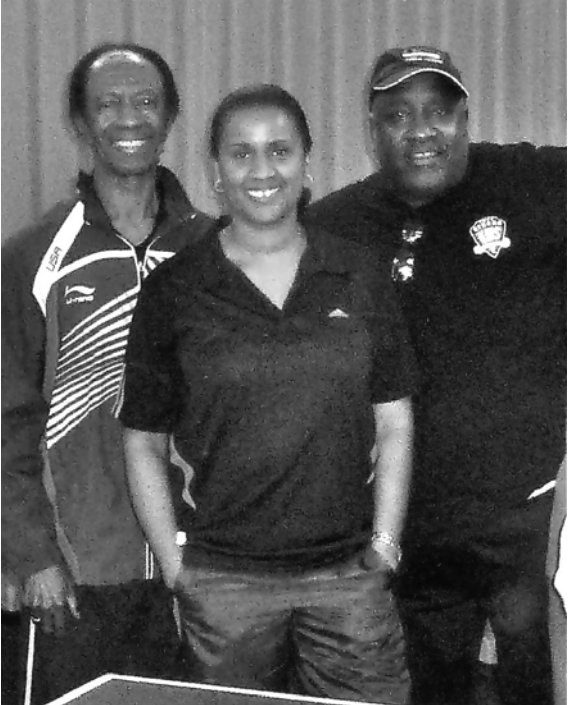
Three dozen ping pong players qualified last weekend in a Sportspark tournament to compete on the Island’s Health and Fitness Day, May 14. The weekend’s matches brought out 54 participants in beginning, intermediate, and advanced categories from Queens, Manhattan, Brooklyn, Long Island, and Roosevelt Island.

The intermediate division produced the most competition, with 28 players in the running for 16 starting spots on May 14. Several players were unbeaten – Rustem Vinnitsky of the Island Table Tennis Club, Cahan Ali of the Freeport Table Tennis Club, Aly Elsharidy of the United Nations, and Philippe Dassanval of Manhattan.

Other players who had good match records include: Val Tkachenko, Oygul Mirzalieva, Mauricio Montiel, and Vitalie Vizitiu, all of Roosevelt Island Table Tennis; Vibert (Cardo) Williams, Brooklyn; Gregory Allen, Eddy Vera, Jose Cirineo, Sr., and Jose Cirineo, Jr., of 12Towns YMCA Table Tennis; Rozario Thomas, Manhattan; Victor Fischer, Freeport Table Tennis Club; Dean Vlahakis and Alvin Lu, Manhattan; and Mohamed Elsharidy, Long Island.

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) has been offering a coaching and training program from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. It produced many of the participants.

George Braithwaite, the Islander and table tennis star who represented the United States in China years ago, extended thanks to Assistant Coach Luz Maria Brissett, Coach Mark (Macheeste) Jones of the



George Braithwaite, Luz Maria Brissett, Mark Jones

12Towns club, the YMCA Table Tennis of Brooklyn, all the participants, and RIOC. “Wow! What a tournament,” he wrote in a press release provided to *The WIRE*.

Letters

To the Editor:

In my letter about squirrels in China 1 (January 15 *WIRE*), I posed a question about the existence of a clause in the rental contracts for Main Street businesses calling for proper maintenance. I have since been informed that such a clause does exist, and always has. RIOC has simply *never bothered to enforce it*.

OK, take the money and walk away, and the residents be damned. Perhaps that explains how things got so bad that Trellis was closed twice by the Board of Health but apparently there was never any

action by RIOC to rescind the lease due to failure to keep a clean place.

What is wrong here? It is clear that the people who make the decisions about, and manage, our way of life here should bloody well have to live here. And somebody

Letters deadline for Feb. 26 issue: Tues., Feb. 22, 5:00 p.m.

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 MainStreetWIRE@usa.net 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. **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.

The WIRE needs volunteer distribution help in most Island buildings.

Call Sherie at 212-935-7534.

Gina Wexler

A Roosevelt Island pioneer, Gina Wexler died on November 3, 2010, in Sarasota, Florida, at age 74, from complications of diverticulitis.

Born in Brooklyn on December 19, 1935, to Edward Brinkmann and Evelyn Bode, Gina was charismatic from the beginning. A child prodigy, she had an adult conversational vocabulary of 2,500 words (including some German and Italian) at the age of two. She came from a family with a 250-year history in theater. An ancestor, Emanuel Schikaneder, was a friend and collaborator of Mozart’s, and his Viennese theater produced *The Magic Flute*, for which he wrote the libretto and performed as Papagano. Her grandmother Elizabeth Brinkmann, danced with Pavlova and Nijinski as a ballerina with the Metropolitan Opera Company; both her parents danced with the Mordkin Ballet (now American Ballet Theater); and her father, who worked at CBS for decades, was stage manager for *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

A lifelong fan of Rudolph Nureyev, Gina traveled the world to see him perform. But her own training in ballet did not begin until the age of 47, when she moved to Roosevelt Island in the mid-70s with her husband, David Wexler (who died in 2009), and two of their five children. She joined Parsla Vintere’s class *for children* at Sportspark and quickly learned what, for her, came naturally. She trained with other prominent teachers in the City and, by the time she moved to Sarasota in 1996, was proficient enough to teach ballet classes for adult beginners. She continued to teach until a few weeks before her death.



Gina also realized her dream of performing on stage when she joined the Sarasota Ballet, making her professional debut at age 65.

Although she left Roosevelt Island years ago, Gina kept in touch with many residents, who knew her as “Gina Ballerina,” and remember her parties at Octagon Park or on the promenade at Westview – how she was the eternal hostess both here and in Sarasota, and how she was so giving of her time and friendship. Her family cites many letters from students and friends alike that thank her for being an inspiration, a great teacher who made ballet so much fun, and a terrific friend.

On a personal note, I met Gina not long after she was stabbed and almost killed in a subway car one Saturday afternoon on her way back to the Island from a ballet class. When she learned that I had been a subway crime victim around the same time, she encouraged me to advocate for better subway safety. This led to the formation of RISC (Roosevelt Island Safety Coalition), which was ultimately responsible for the installation of cameras and annunciators at the Roosevelt Island and 63rd Street subway stations. She was a wonderful support during the four years it took to complete the project, and a major inspiration for change when she bared her midriff, displaying her multiple scars, for top brass at the initial RISC meeting. She took pride in being outrageous, and it was almost always effective.

A tower of strength, a mentor, a patron of the arts, a lover of life, a friend to all, and impossible to forget, Gina will be missed. She is survived by her children, Richard, Deirdre, Michael, and Steven Wexler and Melanie Severino; her granddaughter, Cara Newman; and her great-grandson, Julius Newman.

For more information or to express condolences, please see Gina’s webpage at the *Sarasota Herald Tribune*, available via nyc10044.com/z/On. –Linda Heimer

Last chance to order *The Mug*. See page 9.

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COMING UP

— This Weekend —

Senior Players production of *Indoor Outdoors*, a play by Kenneth Finkle, produced by the Roosevelt Island Purrple Tigers, **Fri Feb 11**, 7:30pm, Senior Center, 546 Main St. Free.

— Coming Week & Next Weekend —

Valentine's Day Evening of Ballroom & Latin Dance, **Mon Feb 14**, 7-9pm, Main Street Theatre, 548 Main St. \$5 for newcomers. (Ad, page 7.)

Ballet Strength & Stretch, demonstration/trial class, **Tue Feb 15**, 6:30-7:30pm, Main Street Theatre. Free. (Ad, page 7.)

PS/IS 217 PTA School Tour, **Wed Feb 16**, 8:45am. RSVP required to 212-980-0294, ext 1010 or LRademaker@schools.nyc.gov. Additional tours Mar 16, Apr 13, May 18, Jun 1 (all Wed, 8:45am). (Ad, page 10.)

Chi Kung demonstration/trial class, **Wed Feb 16**, 7-8pm, Main Street Theatre. Free. (Ad, page 7.)

The Peanut Prince, children's program about George Washington Carver by Urban Stages, **Thu Feb 17**, 4pm, Library

Book Discussion, *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell, **Thu Feb 17**, 6:30pm, Library.

Gallery RIVAA is closed until March.

— Continuing —

Blue Wave, exhibit of the art of Izumi Tokuno, Octagon Gallery, 888 Main Street, daily 9am-8pm, through Feb 20.

Open-Rec Basketball, **Sat**, 10am-1pm, 2-6pm, Sportspark. All ages; free.

Renaissance painting group, **Sat** pm; oil/acrylic with mentor Art Zamora. Call 917-291-8799 for time, location, and fee information.

Swimming at Sportspark, **Mon-Fri** 6-10am, **Mon Wed Fri** 7:30-10:30pm, **Thu** 6-9pm, **Sat-Sun** 12-3pm. **Adults** (18-up) **Tue** 6-9pm, **Sat-Sun** 4-7pm. Adults \$5, children 4-17 \$3, free for seniors 60+ and infants 3 and under. Schedule of classes and activities at nyc10044.com/z/0j. Ad, page 12.

Infant Lapsit, stories for ages 1-18 months, **Mon**, 10:30am, Library.

UNO for teens, **Mon**, 4pm, Library.

Toastmasters, 2nd and 4th **Mon**, 7:30pm. Info: 212-751-9577.

Knitting & Crochet Group, **Tue**, 10am, Library. Adults.

Living Library After-School Program, **Tue, Wed, Thu**, 3-6pm, PS/IS 217 Beacon. Open to all. Information: 347-724-5529.

Island Office Hours for State Senator Jose Serrano and/or staff, **first Tue** of each month, 4-7pm, RIOC offices, 591 Main St.

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

Sci-Fi Discussion Group, **first Tue** of month, 6:30pm, Library.

Poetry Hour (adults), **last Tue** of month, 6:30pm, Library.

Toddler Story Time (age 4 and under), **Wed**, 11am, Island Kids.

RIOC's Community Office Hours, **Wed**, 3-5pm, 591 Main St.

Island Office Hours for Assemblymember Micah Kellner and/or staff, **every Thu**, 3-7pm, RIOC offices, 591 Main St.

Anime Club for teens, **Thu**, 4pm, Library; Japanese comics/novels.

Robots for Kids ages 6-13, **Thu & Fri**, 6:30-8pm, Youth Program, 506 Main St., 2nd fl. Information: 917-751-2900.

— Future Weeks —

Grandparents' Safety Day, **Tue Feb 22**, 10am-1pm, Senior Center.

Tales for the Teeny Tiny, **Wed Feb 23**, 11am, Library; 1.5 to 3 years.

RIOC Board of Directors meeting, **Wed Feb 23**, 5:30pm; location to be announced. Public comment period, starting at 5:30, precedes formal meeting.

The Main Street WIRE – **Sat Feb 26**. **Advertising deadlines:** Display ads, **Wed Feb 16**; decision date for circulars/inserts, **Tue Feb 22**; 5,500 copies due **Thu Feb 24**. **Additional issues in 2011:** 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 10. **News phone, 212-826-9056; urgent matters, 917-617-0449**. **Advertising** (display and clas-

sified): 917-587-3278.

Black History Month celebration of swing dance, **Sat Feb 26**, 6pm, Good Shepherd Community Center. Refreshments. Free.

Preschool Open House at Roosevelt Island Day Nursery, **Tue Mar 1 & Wed Mar 2**, 9:15-10:15am. (Ad, page 7.)

Roosevelt Island Residents Association Common Council meets, **Wed Mar 2**, 8pm, location to be announced. Public session at beginning for resident comments/announcements.

Book Discussion, *Absurdistan* by Gary Shteyngart, **Thu Mar 17**, 6:30pm, Library.

RIOC Board of Directors meeting, **Wed Apr 6**, 5:30pm; location to be announced. Public comment period, starting at 5:30, precedes formal meeting.

Roosevelt Island Residents Association Common Council meets, **Wed Apr 6**, 8pm, location to be verified. Public session at beginning for resident comments/announcements.

Book Discussion, *Life Is Short But Wide* by J. California Cooper, **Thu Apr 21**, 6:30pm, Library

Roosevelt Island Residents Association Common Council meets, **Wed May 4**, 8pm, Good Shepherd Community Center. Public session at beginning for resident comments/announcements.

RIOC Board of Directors meeting, **Wed May 18**, 5:30pm; location to be announced. Public comment period, starting at 5:30, precedes formal meeting.

Book Discussion, *Tales* by H.P. Lovecraft, **Thu May 19**, 6:30pm, Library

Roosevelt Island Residents Association Common Council meets, **Wed Jun 1**, 8pm, Good Shepherd Community Center. Public session at beginning for resident comments/announcements.

Book Discussion, *Love is a Dog from Hell* by Charles Bukowski, **Thu Jun 16**, 6:30pm, Library.

RIOC Board of Directors meeting, **Wed Jun 29**, 5:30pm; location to be announced.

Happy Lincoln's Birthday, y'all. Does anyone remember when or why we stopped celebrating Abe's birthday and lumped his birthday, along with Washington's, into a generic Presidents' Day? I don't know, it seems disrespectful somehow.

A couple of weeks ago, I found myself alone in the apartment with my wife in town at a voice lesson. I was sitting with my guitars and two cats, playing with both, and staring out my bedroom window. My Westview apartment faces our central courtyard, a forest of old and beautiful trees. They have enchanted us in all seasons, but today they were covered with a mantle of snow with more descending. "How lovely," I thought, and I was thankful for all the exquisite vistas on our Island, both expected and unexpected. And I reflected, "How lucky we Islanders are!" Don't you agree?

Retraction

In my last column, I commented on the departure of DHCR Commissioner and RIOC Chairman of the Board Brian Lawlor. It seems that the reports of his demise were premature. I obtained my information from a *WIRE* bulletin dated January 20, and if you are signed up to receive them (MainStreetWIRE@usa.net), you did as well. It simply stated that Lawlor was leaving his post and that a replacement had not been announced. I don't understand why those in the know who receive the bulletins did not immediately correct the error, but they did not. While pursuing other issues, I learned from several authorities that the bulletin was not accurate. I don't know what the genesis of this misinformation might have been, but I apologize for helping to sustain the story.

What Do You Think?

We have had several weeks to consider the new Red Bus schedules, the location of the new bus stops,

The WIRE publishes The RIOC Column and The RIRA Column as a service to RIOC, RIRA, and the community, and does not control or censor either.

It's been a long, cold winter, and lots of folks are starting to suffer from cabin fever. If you are one of them, or just looking to get out, socialize, and exercise, Sportspark might be just the place for you.

Under the direction of Michael Smith, RIOC's Parks & Recreation Manager, and his team, we have made infrastructure improvements and implemented new, free, or low-cost programming for the community.

Most recently, on February 5, Sportspark hosted round-robin table tennis qualifying matches that will lead to a championship play-off during Health & Fitness Day in May. This tournament was born out of a very successful table tennis program at Sportspark on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday nights by world-famous champion and Island resident George Braithwaite.

Over 40 players, almost all of them regulars from the ping pong program, competed in beginner, intermediate, and advanced categories. Thirty-six winners are advancing to the finals.

We also offer programs for residents interested in basketball or swimming. Our free-play basketball, held on Saturdays from 2:00-6:00 p.m., has quickly become popular, with 40-50 people regularly showing up to play. We also host wheelchair basketball on Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

And if you're interested in learning to swim, taking a water aerobics class, or just swimming, we offer classes and open swim at our newly upgraded pool. The work we've recently completed includes installation of new drains, a new filtration system, the resurfacing of the pool, and repainting of the locker

The RIRA Column



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

and the synchronization between the buses and the Tram. I know that RIOC is carefully considering the impact of these changes, but I thought RIRA might collect some feedback as well. Consequently, RIRA Planning Committee chair Frank Farance has volunteered to receive your comments and to bring the data to our planning meetings with RIOC. You always can register your kudos, your gripes, and your suggestions for improvement directly with RIOC Vice President Fernando Martinez, but please also contact Frank by e-mail at transportationfeedback@riraonline.com (or by calling 1-800-FARANCE). This is a special address created for the sole purpose of receiving your comments.

State of the Borough Address

I attended Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer's 2011 State of the Borough Address last Tuesday evening at the CUNY Graduate Center, a first for me. Scott has been more attentive to Roosevelt Island than any of his predecessors in recent memory, and I'm grateful for his interest. As you know, Roosevelt Island is administered by the State of New York but, politically, we are a part of the City and of Manhattan.

The auditorium was packed with a thousand or more New Yorkers, with more in satellite rooms monitoring the event on video screens. An *a cappella* sing-

See **RIRA Column**, page 10

The RIOC Column



Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation
e-mail: LTorres@RIOC.com

rooms. For information about classes and open swim, call 212-832-4559. [Ad, page 12.]

We are always looking to provide better services to residents. If you have an idea for recreation we can provide at Sportspark, please call Mike Smith at 212-832-4559 or e-mail him at msmith@rioc.com.

The Public Safety Department and SafeKids NYC are co-sponsoring their **Annual Grandparents Day** on Tuesday, February 22, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Senior Center (546 Main Street). Safety tips and goodies will be given out to the seniors. Refreshments will also be served.

In partnership with the Roosevelt Island Senior Association, the annual **Black History Month** event will celebrate the history of swing dancing in America. Performers will demonstrate popular dances from the Swing era, including the Lindy Hop, the Charleston, and the Jitterbug. Guest speakers will provide a brief history of the dances, which evolved at the famous Savoy Ballroom in Harlem. The event will take place on February 26 at 6:00 p.m. in the Good Shepherd Community Center. Refreshments will be served immediately following the event at the Senior Center, 546 Main Street.

I hope you can join us.

Senior Center

Monday
(closed Feb 21)
9:30 Ballroom Dancing
11:00 Tai Chi
1:00 Ballet
3:00 Play Reading
6:00 Yoga with Nurit

Tuesday
9am-1pm Tax Help
9:30 Chinese Massage
10:20 Shoppers' Bus
11:00 Blood Pressure
2:00 Paint & Sculpt
7:30 Games (RISA)

Wednesday
9:30 Yoga with Irene
10:20 Shoppers' Bus
10:30 Computers
10:30 Spanish

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

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

Friday
9:30 Yoga with Irene
10:30 English as 2nd Language
10:30 Ballroom Dancing
1:00 Korean Games
6:00 Ballroom Dancing (last Fri each month)
7:00 Games (RISA)

Special Events

Indoor Outdoors, play (see ComingUp listing), Fri Feb 11, 7:30pm
Office closed Mon Feb 21

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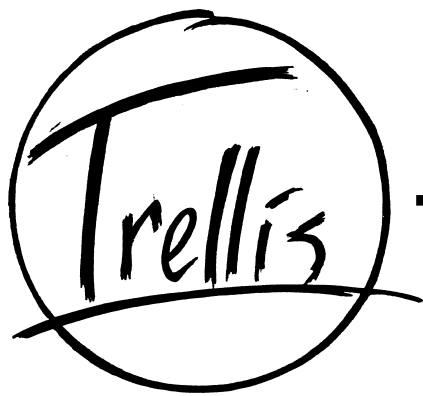
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Deadline for March 12 issue: Tuesday, March 8

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RIRA Column from page 3

ing ensemble composed of teens in tuxedos from the LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts opened for the Borough President with several doo-wop numbers from the ’50s, complete with choreography and finger-snapping. Strange, watching 21st century kids doing my music, but they were undeniably cool. Many pols came to support the BP, including former Mayor David Dinkins, Assemblymember Robert Rodriguez, and Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz. Surprisingly, the hottest chef in Harlem and the City, Marcus Samuelson of the Red Rooster restaurant, was tapped to introduce the Borough President. I guess the Beep likes Danish soul food.

In keeping with his introducer, Stringer’s remarks focused in large part on Harlem, covering the new East Harlem Asthma Center and the expansion of Columbia University into the neighborhood with an emphasis on the jobs that new construction is likely to create. He touched on ideas for improving City schools and the delays in the construction of the Second Avenue subway. Scott explained his role in the controversies around the expansion of the New York University campus into surrounding Greenwich Village. He commented on the moratorium on hydrofracking, a process used to drill for gas in shale deposits that has the potential of polluting our drinking water supply with toxic chemicals. RIRA has supported this moratorium in a resolution and in letters that the Common Council has authorized me to send on their behalf to several involved parties.

In his annual report, Stringer discussed

opening up the City’s waterfronts and waterways, an issue dear to my heart. For the past 10 months, I have been involved in Vision 2020, the New York City Department of Planning project to design and implement a Comprehensive Waterfront Plan for the next decade. My goal has been to ensure that Roosevelt Island is included in that plan, especially regarding the potential for ferry transportation and for recreational boating. The final draft of the plan has yet to be released, but I have every expectation that we will be mentioned in those contexts. After all, our Island is nothing but waterfront!

Scott raised the questions of inadequate affordable housing in New York City, another issue that attracts Islanders’ attention, as well as immigrant rights and facilities for seniors. The Borough President has reached out to me, asking to convene a small meeting of Island leaders, to consider some of our problems and long-term issues. I’m working with his staff to expedite that meeting. While it’s true that the State is responsible for much of the decision-making here, our City government, including the Mayor, Borough President, City Council, and Community Board 8 play important roles in our quality of life, and have been critical in, among other things, bringing the MetroCard to the Tram, determining the course of development on the Island, and supporting Island institutions and organizations. We walk a tightrope between the City and State, necessitated by the 99-year Master Lease between the two, and often it is RIRA’s task to make sure we maintain our balance. And that, my friends, is a full-time job.

The Island on the Web

compiled by Rick O’Conor

You Tube – RI Resident’s Short Film On Egypt Revolt – tinyurl.com/4nye8z4
You Tube – Looking Down on Roosevelt Island Snowstorm – tinyurl.com/4pyp2ztRoosevelt
Islander – RIRA “Censorship” Motion – tinyurl.com/49emtyp
Roosevelt Islander – Censored RIRA Committee Reports Leaked – tinyurl.com/4lefhzf
RIRA Online – Residents Association Website Launched – tinyurl.com/4l8tztr
You Tube – RIRA Common Council Discussion – tinyurl.com/4db2snn
Roosevelt Island School G&T Blog – PS/IS 217 February Calendar – tinyurl.com/4sn89gg
WFUV Cityscape – Interview With Tram Operator – tinyurl.com/4jpc4jl
Remontees Mecaniques – Report on Tram – tinyurl.com/4rrwgeg
News LI – NYSERDA Grant for AVAC System – tinyurl.com/4t9zydu
Cambridge Times – Considering Tram System – tinyurl.com/4fatplw
NY Daily News – Table Tennis Tournament – tinyurl.com/4kzblr3
You Tube – Roosevelt Island Table Tennis Tournament – tinyurl.com/4w296jw
You Tube – Roosevelt Island Table Tennis Action – tinyurl.com/4pz9bcp
ABC Local – MTA Considers Tram-like Sliding Doors for Subways – tinyurl.com/4q5ajog
NY Times – Legacy High Student at MOMA Exhibit – tinyurl.com/4fnn4dm
City Hall News – Goldwater Site May Be New Science Center – tinyurl.com/45hdm38
NY Daily News – Aspiring Cooper Union Student Leaves Blood – tinyurl.com/4rfm7uv
Herald Palladium – Day Nursery Teacher Leads Kindie Rock Band – tinyurl.com/4fpu4yp
Apartment Therapy – Bernard’s Island Apartment Tour – tinyurl.com/4oo5r9b
My Travel Guide – Visits Tram – tinyurl.com/6ky2vhr
Glark – Motorgate Atrium Top Picture – tinyurl.com/4nz9ey3
Kuriositas – Amazing World Tramways – tinyurl.com/48lrrf2
DNA Info – Cheap Valentine’s Date on Tram – tinyurl.com/4n6c4z5
Swindle Season – Romantic Valentine’s Day on Tram – tinyurl.com/49fvc4t
Guardian – Obit: *Spider-Man* FX Artist Who Blew Up Tram Station – tinyurl.com/4ukpasj
You Tube – FDR Memorial Groundbreaking Ceremony – tinyurl.com/4ur4gk3

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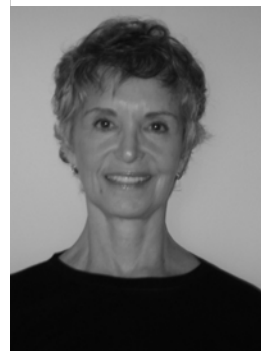
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