

The RIRA Presidents

As RIRA Approaches a Critical Election, Former President Looks Back

by Briana Warsing

“Each Common Council – and I’ve been at this since 1997 – is dramatically different from the previous one,” says former Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA) President Matthew Katz in his sonorous voice. “What is a given is that, in an organization of 30-35 people, there will always be 6-8 people who get everything done. It’s the way these things work.” He should know. He served as RIRA President four times. Sitting on his living room couch overlooking the Westview courtyard, Katz explains, “I had twice as many terms of office as anyone else in the history of the organization.” As a result, he says, “I don’t go to Common Council meetings anymore because I promised myself that, when I left RIRA, I would not be a backseat driver.” Speaking of his wife, Katz added, “Sherie [Helstein] and I first joined to fill vacancies in the Manhattan Park delegation. We were silent for the first six months. We had been living here for eight years. We joined at the behest of then president Patrick Stewart to fill vacancies.” Their silence didn’t last long.

Katz says he first became politicized when Dr. Jerome Blue was appointed by Governor George Pataki as president of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC). “Blue had been described as the bag man for Senator Alphonse D’Amato. One of the first things Blue did when he got here was to take the New York State budget items for RIOC – \$1.6 million in operating funds and pretty much an open checkbook for capital improvements – and reduce both to zero. At that point, I thought, *We are a colony of the State of New York. George Pataki is King George III. We have no say in elected politics. We are being denied democracy with a small d.*”



Four-term RIRA President
Matthew Katz

Becoming President

Katz recalls the first time he ran for President. “It was 2000, and I had been on the Common Council for three years. I had started to gain confidence, and I thought Patrick Stewart was too complacent. I thought there were things that RIRA could do if it could put a couple of bucks in its treasury and be more innovative.”

Beating Patrick Stewart was another story. Stewart had name and face recognition, he says. “I started campaigning six weeks before he did. I had to. I spoke in every build-

ing on Roosevelt Island. I had my material on every kiosk on the Island. When it got torn down, I put up more. I had palm cards, and I was out at the Farmer’s Market every Saturday, handing them out to whoever would take one. I said, *There are things wrong on this Island that need to be addressed.* Apparently it resonated, because I got elected.

“All of my elections were contested. For every election, we had a debate. I looked forward to them. You get to identify why you are different from the other candidate. You get to say, *Look at my record.* You get to make promises, some of which you even keep.” (He smiles.) “Then you have this obligation to go out there and campaign, talk to people in their buildings, put together meetings.”

In his first debate, Katz was asked how much time he would be able to devote to RIRA. Katz remembers answering, “As much time as it takes,” which he says turned out to be the right answer. “I wasn’t doing anything else; I only did RIRA. I went to every committee meeting. In the summer, I would put on a meeting of all of the committee chairs and

See **Katz**, page 12



This photo of roses at Riverwalk is being considered for *The Main Street WIRE’s* 2015 *Roosevelt Island Calendar*, a limited-edition fundraiser to go on sale in October. Have you taken a great photo of an Island subject? Send your landscape (horizontal) photographs of Island subjects to MainStreetWIRE@usa.net in full size and full resolution, uncropped and unretouched, as email attachments. Include your name, address, and phone number. Submission deadline – Sunday, September 28. Questions? Call 212-826-9056.



Saturday
September 13
2014
35:01

The Main Street
WIRE

As summer passes from the calendar and the activity of fall changes the rhythm of life on the Island, Eleanor’s Pier (ad, page 14) will hang on for one more weekend.

A Different Island

The WIRE Begins Its 35th Year – Both Observer and Agent of Change

by Briana Warsing

This is the first issue of *The Main Street WIRE’s* 35th year.

Roosevelt Island internist Dr. Jack Resnick started this paper back in the early 1980s because of a lengthy Tram outage that was insufficiently covered by other New York City media. Residents were having difficulty traveling on and off the Island in those pre-subway days, and were seeking specific transit information but couldn’t get it. Resnick founded the paper, serving as publisher and managing

editor for *The WIRE’s* first 12 years or so, to provide local news and to advocate for the Roosevelt Island community.

Reminiscing in his office on Main Street, he recalls, “A scheduled four-month shutdown and [then the Tram] didn’t come back. A bunch of people were over for dinner one night, saying, *God, I wish we had a newspaper, no one knows what’s going on. You can’t find out what’s going on,* and I said, *I used to do this. I edited my college paper and high school paper. I always did journalism. Let’s do one.* By coincidence, a lot of our friends were writers of one sort or another, including Clare Walker, a Brit, who had been a managing editor in a real London paper. I said, *Look, let’s set up a group of people to do this.* We hung up some signs, and 20 or 30 people showed up for a meeting. After, I said, *This really looks good, but, you know, we need to make sure we’re going to have people for the long haul, so let’s have another meeting – and more people showed up for the next one. We said, All right, let’s do it.*”

Resnick says, “Through the years, we impacted a lot. There wouldn’t be a Tram today. Several times through those first 20 years, the Tram would be gone. It speaks



Founder Jack Resnick

to the shortsightedness of bureaucracy. It would have been such an economic mistake. Any city planner would say, *You’re planning to take this thing down? You’re planning to triple the population but you want to get rid of the Tram?* It was a big fight. We played a big role in mobilizing the community. There are a lot of pieces of this community that wouldn’t have happened in quite the same way [without the paper]. That there’s a functioning RIRA – we had a big part to play in that.”

See **WIRE**, page 16

Democratic Primary

How We Voted

Governor	RI Votes	RI Percent	Percent (all votes)
Andrew Cuomo	233	49.8	62.2
Zephyr Teachout	211	45.1	34.3
Randy Credico	24	5.1	3.6
Lt. Governor			
Kathy Hochul	202	46.4	59.9
Timothy Wu	233	53.6	40.1
Assembly			
Rebecca Seawright	211	46.3	~45
Gus Christensen	124	27.2	~38
Ed Hartzog	69	15.1	
David Menegon	52	11.4	

Votes shown here are as registered at PS/IS 217.

At Coler Hospital, where The Octagon voted, the chief poll worker barred *The WIRE’s* reporter from viewing and recording results.

The Editorial Page

Larry Schwartz,
You’re Not Off the Hook,
Nor Is Your Boss

In 2012, Larry Schwartz, the top aide to Governor Andrew Cuomo, met with Roosevelt Islanders twice. In October, at the RIOC Board meeting, he promised a Town Meeting to give residents a chance to present their concerns. In December, meeting with a small number of Island advocates for the two recent RIOC Board elections, he acknowledged that there were significant problems with Island management, and that the problems needed serious attention.

Schwartz knew of the investigations by the New York State Inspector General, and seemed to be acknowledging that residents should have a greater voice in the way Roosevelt Island is governed. RIOC has always been headed by a non-resident, and it’s rare that top management at 591 Main Street has had a meaningful grasp of residents’ needs.

The promised Town Meeting hasn’t happened yet. It’s been two years.

Schwartz’s boss has just won a primary election in a bid for re-election, and this Island is likely to support him, being heavily Democratic in registration.

But it’s notable that, while Cuomo scored over 60% of the State-wide primary vote, on Roosevelt Island he didn’t quite make 50%. That deficit happened without any particular campaigning, and without any editorializing by *The WIRE*. There’s a reason for it.

So: Larry Schwartz, we remember your promise, and you are not off the hook.

Rescuing RIRA

Roosevelt Island, governed as strangely as it is with the State running a community within a city, needs a strong Residents Association – RIRA. And RIRA’s Common Council, which has fallen prey lately to internal dissension, needs new blood and new energy.

Much change is coming to this place that we call home, and it deserves active involvement by thoughtful, community-minded citizens who want to keep it as great as it is, and to make it even better.

RIRA Common Councilors are the guardians of residents’ rights, and the voice of their needs. Without RIRA’s history, this would be a very different – and much worse – place.

Consider running to represent your building. (See *The RIRA Column*, next page.) It’s a couple of hours a month for the meetings, plus whatever time you can give to committee work. And you’ll make a difference for yourself and your neighbors.

DL



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Krystyn Donnelley and students of Legacy High School;
Kim Massey and students from the PS/IS 217 Beacon Program

Letters

To the Editor:

Did you ever spend half a morning dialing an 800 number to ask for help? The representative either is not informed or tells you to download the information.

This is not the case when you ask for help at our library. Nicole Nelson, Library Manager, chose her staff well. I have interacted many times with Diane Chin, Information Assistant, Yolanda Boggan, Office Associate I, and Brandon King, Office Aide III. They are friendly, patient, and knowledgeable.

When I approach Brandon with a half-title of a book, or not the full author’s name, he fingers his computer and finds what I want. He is computer-savvy. I am not. When my daughter sent me a Kindle Fire, I asked Diane to help me feel comfortable with it. She helped me more than once to download e-books from the free source in the library. Yolanda did the same. She even came around her desk to sit with me and help. (I am from the typewriter era.)

Two years ago, when Rivercross had its 35th anniversary party, I was asked to “baby sit” the children and grandchildren of the residents. I didn’t even know the age group, but I guessed it would be from three years to 10 years. I went to Diane for help. She pulled books from the shelf, but I was hoping for more. Because I had time, she e-mailed me twice during the month with books that she had found, and told me to come and pick them up. Do I have to tell you about the attention span of young children? Thanks anyway, Diane.

May I suggest that you shut off TV sets and read? The library has current books and more. The staff is there to be helpful, and they are.

Marlene Flom

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 email text to MainStreetWIRE@usa.net, or on a disk left at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to The WIRE. If you email, 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, in the judgment of the editors, merits the required space.

Letters Deadline for
Sept. 27 issue –
Tue., Sept. 23, 5:00 pm

Why has RIRA left it to Eva Bosbach, head of the Roosevelt Island Parents Network, to deal with RIOC to get affordable swimming classes for young kids? Where was RIRA to help her? Oh, wait, they are too busy fighting about the nonsense of whether a proper notice or vote was issued to change a meeting date, rather than help the residents who elected them.

Most of the residents on this wonderful rock don’t care if your meeting is September 3 or 10. We care about RIRA doing what we elected it to do, no matter which date you meet, and that’s to represent us! Stop acting like a bunch of schoolyard kids!

Raye Schwartz

To the Editor:

It is with interest and thought that I read Briana Warsing’s article in the August 30 issue [available online at MainStreetWIRE.com] concerning the assault on the Island that you characterized as harming the “Island’s reputation as a bastion of diversity.”

It seems that many residents share this view. It is clear that they feel that diversity is a good thing, that having the many different cultures, ideas, and viewpoints that diversity brings enriches all our lives. However, all those who subscribe to this make a tacit assumption. They assume that with diversity there is tolerance. In reality, they are very distinct. Diversity of culture, religion, belief, or whatever does not guarantee tolerance. In fact, very often those with one “diverse” belief have very little in common with, understanding of, respect for, or tolerance of, others with differing “diverse” beliefs. Diversity in and of itself does not guarantee tolerance. In fact, when people with differing, and strongly held, and narrow views end up in close proximity to each other for any extended period of time, the result is more likely to be great friction, lack of respect, and substantial intolerance, not to mention acts of violence and brutality.

Certainly the teens who attacked Mr. Batra had a different or “diverse” view of him and what they believed he stood for than most. It is just that they did not respect or have any tolerance for his “diversity.” So, you might say that the attack reinforces our reputation as a bastion of diversity. It is just that it harms our “reputation as a bastion of respect and tolerance.”

So, the question becomes: Do those who ignorantly conflate diversity and tolerance really wish to see diversity at the expense of tolerance? And are those (out of their culture, beliefs, religion, or whatever) who spew, foment, and practice intolerance to be tolerated in the name of diversity? If they are, then what of tolerance? If they are not, then how are they to be dealt with? Where is the line drawn between tolerating intolerant diversity and not? It is an interesting question, which Europe is discovering as a substantial and very difficult one with regard to a large part of their Muslim population.

Lee Edelman

To the Editor:

We would like to thank RIOC for its rapid response by providing Red Bus service to and from Manhattan on August 1 and 2 when both the Tram elevator and the lift were out of service. We also thank RIOC for its commitment to provide the Red Bus shuttle in the future, if both units go out of service simultaneously again. The shuttle is very valuable to certain members of the Island’s population – seniors, the disabled, and caregivers with children in strollers – in order to be able to leave the Island or come home easily, especially now that the street-level elevator at the 63rd/ Lex subway station is out of service until February 2015. Thank you, RIOC!

Eva Bosbach
Aaron Hamburger
Susana del Campo Perea
Kaja Maede
RI Parents’ Network
RIRA Island Services Committee
Tram Advocacy Group

Additional letter on page 18

As September is National Preparedness Month, I would like to encourage all residents to sign up for the RIOC Advisories email alert system. RIOC and the Roosevelt Island Public Safety Department issue frequent advisories that keep subscribers up to date on issues that affect the community, such as traffic disruptions, public meetings, emergency situations, Tram service changes, and other important events and situations. Sign up at rioc.ny.gov/advisorybody.htm. We're constantly working to improve our alert system, and welcome your feedback as we implement changes. Keep an eye out for improvements to the system in the coming months.

Fall for Arts

The annual Roosevelt Island Fall for Arts Festival will take place on Saturday, October 11. RIOC is seeking artists and groups to paint their own outdoor murals during the event. These murals will remain on public display for several weeks, and may be selected for the annual Motorgate Gallery exhibit at the Motorgate

Garage. We invite you to submit a sketch of your design or any inquiries to Anna.Rankin@rioc.ny.gov, along with a title and short description. Sketches should be sized according to a 6-by-8 ratio. The submission deadline is September 26, 2014. Participation in this event is free; paints, brushes, and a primed surface are provided. All participating artists will also receive a free Festival t-shirt. If you have not yet seen the murals that were painted last year, I encourage you to take a trip to the Motorgate Gallery (628 Main St.) to view the artwork currently on display.

RIOC is also seeking volunteers to hand out materials and assist with art activities during the Festival. Volunteers are eligible to receive community service hours and will also receive a Festival t-shirt. Please email Anna.Rankin@rioc.ny.gov for more information.

Cultural Center

Contractors at the Cultural Center continue to work with RIOC's Engineering Department to renovate and restore the community facility. The installation of sheetrock and concrete board on all interior walls has been completed. Workers are currently installing door frames at the site and will move forward during the coming weeks. While repairing the damage done by Hurricane Sandy, we have taken advantage of the opportunity to improve the space. The new theater area

will have increased seating capacity for performances, and a new mezzanine level will be created above the dance studio. Once work is completed, we look forward to opening a new and improved Cultural Center for community use.

504 Main Street

At 504 Main Street, the fabrication and installation of new windows is under way. Now that the windows have been manufactured to specifications, installation has begun. Installation work is currently scheduled to be completed in November.

Sportspark Heating

Work on the design for Sportspark's permanent heating system is in progress, and currently under review by the NYC Department of Buildings. Once the review process is complete, RIOC will issue a Request for Proposals to solicit bids from qualified vendors to perform the actual installation of the new system. In preparation for a possible shutdown of the Steam Plant, RIOC has already installed a temporary heating system at the facility. The temporary system is ready to be turned on at short notice as necessary.



Charlene Indelicato, President
Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation
charlene.indelicato@rioc.ny.gov

Sportspark Classes

If you're looking for a cost-effective way to stay active, low-cost and free fitness classes are available at the Sportspark Pool and gymnasium. Swim classes available at the pool include a popular Mommy & Me water-safety class, which teaches children six months to three years basic swimming skills and introduces them to moving around in the water. Twice-weekly Master Swim classes focus on more advanced swimming skills, including a variety of strokes and techniques. The pool is also open for Open Swim twice a day, seven days a week. Zumba and yoga classes, as well as free ping pong play, are available throughout the week in the gymnasium. For more information on these classes or to see a calendar of what Sportspark offers, visit our website at rioc.recdesk.com or email Eddie.Perez@rioc.ny.gov.

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

As Residents Association President Jeff Escobar has said in previous columns, it's that time again! The biennial Common Council elections, which I am currently heading, will be held on Tuesday, November 4, at the same time as our State and Federal elections. This year, all residents (except Octagon) will vote at PS/IS 217. Octagon residents will vote in The Octagon in the RIRA election, but at Coler Hospital in the City, State and national elections. Southtown residents, who no longer have Goldwater Hospital as their main polling place, will now join us at PS/IS 217 – in the cafeteria for City, State, and national polling, and at a dedicated table for the RIRA voting.

RIRA Common Council

Why run for a seat on the RIRA Common Council? Why vote, for that matter? For 37 years, RIRA has been the voice of the Roosevelt Island residential community. No government entity represents just Roosevelt Island through elections – only RIRA. (RIOC presidents and Board members are appointed by the governor.)

RIRA got the MetroCard for the Tram, resulting in financial break-even for the first time. RIRA got the Roosevelt Island Bridge renovation moved up six years to deal with the failing lift-bridge. RIRA led the community to demand that a Public Safety Director be removed when he abused his mandate to protect with courtesy and respect. RIRA advocated for better Red Bus routes and schedules, and produced a successful Apartment Renters' Insurance Fair to educate Islanders about their apartment insurance responsibilities. RIRA continues to provide free breakfasts and a Blood Drive annually on Roosevelt Island Day. The Roosevelt Island Parents' Network and RIRA's Island Services Committee have successfully lobbied RIOC for the Mommy & Me babies and toddlers swim program at Sportspark, for Tram personnel help with the gate during the morning rush, for the Red Bus shuttle when both Tram elevators are out of service, and for

the improvements to the Blackwell Park playground. RIRA has produced some of the best social events, including our Sock Hop party, dances on the pier in the summer, an adventure in indoor "ice skating" at The Child School, the wonderful Easter Day event, and of course, the two Cherry Blossom Festivals, for starters. These initiatives happen only when residents step up to the plate to work to make them happen. Every two years, the Council takes on a new face as some



Sherie Helstien, VP
Roosevelt Island Residents Association
helkatz@verizon.net

old members leave and new members bring fresh energy and ideas. What an opportunity to make a difference! What does a Council member do? Our Constitution requires only that you not miss three consecutive monthly meetings and join at least one committee. (That's how the bulk of our work gets done.) But, as volunteers with work and families, the sky's the limit as to how much influence you can bring to bear and how much your ideas will be implemented. When RIRA members work together, we earn the respect of our local officials, both elected and appointed, and when we work together to "maintain and improve our quality of life," as defined in our constitution, RIRA has shown what its members can accomplish. Worthy goals requiring vision, energy and, oh, yeah, work!

Running for Office

Anyone of voting age (18) who lives on Roosevelt Island may run for the Common Council from their building. The number of nominees from any building is unlimited. But each building has a specific number of representatives, which you will see when

See **RIRA Column**, page 18

COMING UP

— This Weekend —

NikosKids Performance, music for the whole family, **Sun Sep 14** 4pm, Four Freedoms Park. Free. Info: tinyurl.com/NikosKids Rain date **Sun Sep 21**. (Ad, page 9.)

Flea Market Sale at Trellis, **Sun Sep 14** 8am-4pm. (Ad, page 7.)

Closing Reception for Octagon art exhibit by **Lynn Baik & Kate Oh Tra-bulsi**, **Sun Sep 14** 5-9pm, Octagon Gallery 888 Main St.



— Regularly Scheduled Meetings and Events —

See separate listing, page 8.

— The Next Two Weeks —

Treasures of New York: Four Freedoms Park, **Tue Sep 16** 2:30am, Channel 13. Also **Wed Sep 17** 5am

Book Discussion, *Spies of Mississippi* by Rick Bowers, **Thu Sep 18** 6:30pm, Library.

Four Freedoms Democratic Club public meeting, **Thu Sep 18** 6:30pm, Good Shepherd Center. Democratic candidate for State Assembly and State Senator José M. Serrano. Info: fourfreedomsnyc.org.

Women's Movie Group shows *Anita Hill: Speaking Truth to Power*, **Thu Sep 18** 7pm, Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main St. \$7. RSVP to riwomenmovie@gmail.com.

Opening reception for *Approach to the Portrait*, a members exhibit, **Sat Sep 20** 6-9pm, Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main St. Through Oct 19. Gallery hours Sat-Sun 11am-5pm, Tue & Thu 1-5pm, Wed & Fri 6-9pm.

Opening of mini-version of the RIVAA exhibit, *Camera, Brush, and Chisel*, **Sat Sep 20** Octagon Gallery, 888 Main St. Gallery hours 8am-8pm.

Treasures of New York: Four Freedoms Park, **Tue Sep 23** 11:30pm, Channel 21. Also **9/24** 7pm, **9/27** 6pm, **9/28** 9am & 11pm, plus **Oct** dates.

Women's Health Organization (RIWHO) meets – CPR training, **Wed Sep 24** 6:30pm, 12th floor, 546 Main St.

Finding Carlton, Islander Susheel Kurien's film about the story of jazz in India, **Fri Sep 26** 7pm, Prithvi Theater, Mumbai, India.

The Main Street WIRE – **Sat Sep 27**. **Advertising deadlines:** Display ads, **Wed Sep 17**; decision date for circulars/inserts, **Tue Sep 23**; 5,500 copies due **Thu Sep 25**. **Future issues:** Oct 11, 25; Nov 8, 22; Dec 13. **2015:** Jan 10, 24; Feb 7, 21; Mar 7, 21; Apr 4, 18; May 2, 16, 30; Jun 13, 27; Aug 1; Sep 1, 15, 29; Sep 12, 26; Oct 10, 24; Nov 7, 21; Dec 12. **News phone, 212-826-9056**; urgent matters, **917-617-0449**. Email press releases and feature-story suggestions to MainStreetWIRE@usa.net. **Advertising** (display & classified): **917-587-3278** or msWIREads@gmail.com.

Rescheduled: The Uni Project, outdoor reading, originally scheduled for Sat Sep 27 & Sun Sep 28 11am-4pm, Four Freedoms Park, now rescheduled to spring. (Ad, page 7.)

There is no charge to list Island-related events in ComingUp. Email information to MainStreetWIRE@usa.net or leave it at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to The WIRE.

Senior Center listings are on page 18

— Future Weeks —

Guided tour of the City College of New York campus, **Tue Sep 30** 10:30am, sponsored by Roosevelt Island Historical Society. \$35 for non-members, \$25 for members. To register, email RooseveltIslandHistory@gmail.com. Info: 212-688-4836.

Four Freedoms Park hours change to 9am-5pm, **Wed Oct 1**.

Registration for RIRA Common Council nominations, **Wed Oct 1-Fri Oct 24** 9pm. Forms available at the library (524 Main St.) or Public Safety (550 Main St.); completed forms due at Public Safety **Fri Oct 24** 9pm.

Bike New York class – Adults Learn-to-Ride, **Sat Oct 5** 10am-12noon, Capobiano Field. Bikes, helmets, instructors provided. To register, visit tinyurl.com/adultLTR.

Fall for Arts Festival, **Sat Oct 11** 11am-4pm, Southpoint Park and Rivercross lawn. To exhibit, contact Anna.Rankin@rioc.ny.gov by Sep 26.

The Big Red One at **Library Movie Night** (adults), **Tue Oct 14** 6pm, Library. **Let's Talk About The WIRE** session, **Tue Oct 14** 7:30-9:00pm, Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main St. Discuss the newspaper, MainStreetWIRE.com, and to recruit reporters, writers, proofreaders, website wranglers, videographers, video editors, artists, editorial cartoonists, photographers, deliverers, stuffers, and myriad other volunteer/paid jobs (like an editorial cartoonist and other possibilities). (Ad, page 6.) For further information, call **212-826-9056** or email MainStreetWIRE@usa.net.

Book Discussion, *I Am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai, **Thu Oct 16** 6:30pm, Library.

Senior Day, **Sun Oct 19**. Details to come.

Live and Let Die at **Library Movie Night** (adults), **Tue Oct 21** 6pm, Library. **Submit RIRA Council nomination forms** by **Fri Oct 24** 9pm, at Public Safety (550 Main St.).

Cornell Construction & Community Task Force quarterly meeting, **Mon Oct 27**, 6-8pm, 12th floor meeting room, 546 Main St. Open to public.

Women's Health Organization (RIWHO) meets – Domestic Violence, **Wed Oct 29** 6:30, 12th floor, 546 Main St.

General Election and Residents Association Election, **Tue Nov 4**, polls open 6am-9pm. Octagon votes at Coler Hospital; all others at PS/IS 217.

Jaws at **Library Movie Night** (adults), **Tue Nov 11** 6pm, Library.

Women's Health Organization (RIWHO) meets, **Wed Nov 19** 6:30, 12th floor, 546 Main St.

Book Discussion, *My Beloved World* by Sonia Sotomayor, **Thu Nov 20** 6:30pm, Library.

The Cotton Club at **Library Movie Night** (adults), **Tue Nov 25** 6pm, Library.

Cornell NYC Tech Town Hall Meeting, **Mon Dec 8** 6-8pm, Manhattan Park Community Center, 8 River Rd. Open to public.

Coffy at **Library Movie Night** (adults), **Tue Dec 9** 6pm, Library.

See **Events**, page 8

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Architect Who Helped Make the Island Happen Revisits His Work

by Jim Baehler

There is an old saying that doctors bury their mistakes but architects have to live with theirs. The reverse of that is that doctors frequently save lives, and architects occasionally produce a masterwork. That is certainly true of Roosevelt Island, which, by any measure, is an exemplar of urban planning and architectural distinction. It’s not surprising that the co-designer of Island House and Rivercross would want to revisit his creations.

Ashok Bhavnani recently conducted a walking tour of Roosevelt Island. Apparently, the Island is now considered historic, because the tour was sponsored by the Historic Districts Council, which describes itself as the advocate for New York City’s historic neighborhoods. Advanced age is the usual qualifier, but residential development of Roosevelt Island is less than 40 years old. What makes our Island historic is that it was planned as a “new town” that would embrace all races and all faiths, and incomes from low to moderately high.

Such aspirations are well and good, but delivering on them is not easy. Brazilia, and a host of empty new cities in China, demonstrate the downside. What made Roosevelt Island different?

Bhavnani was asked about the past life of the Island – the period just before it began its march to what we have today, when it was a jumble of falling-down hospitals, an abandoned insane asylum, and other decaying structures. “The Island belongs to the City of New York, and in 1969 it was leased to the [New York State] Urban Development Corporation for a period of 99 years.

“Governor Nelson Rockefeller asked Ed Logue to lead the new State agency. Logue had headed up two large city projects in Boston, and was extremely capable and energetic. He was not a man to take *no* for an answer, and saw Welfare Island (soon renamed Franklin D. Roosevelt Island in honor of the late President) as a place to put his ideas into action. He hired Philip Johnson to draw up the overall plan of development.

“Phil was a renowned architect, who designed the Seagram Building in Manhattan and many other famous buildings. At that time, I was a partner in the architectural firm of John Johansen Associates. I was born in India, where my father was a film producer. I studied architecture for two years in college and then came to the United States, where I attended Princeton University to obtain my degree in architecture. I was hired by John Johansen in 1965 to join his firm in New Canaan, Connecticut. Three years later, I was made partner, and the firm moved to Manhattan. In 1972, the firm’s name was changed to Johansen & Bhavnani.”

The firm was one of four selected to design the first apartment buildings here. Their plans made Island House the first to open, in 1975. In 1976, the Tram was opened as a temporary means of moving Island residents to Manhattan. It was intended to be taken down when subway service came to the Island.

While Bhavani’s firm was working on the Island House design, the firm originally selected to design Rivercross dropped out, and they also took on that assignment.

The guiding principle in designing the four original buildings was to create a “European atmosphere.” As Bhavnani describes the mandate, “Ed Logue wanted something different, and insisted that the Island have a European look and feel. That is why Eastwood (now Roosevelt Landings) and Westview both have an arcade running the length of the building. In keeping with the effort to appear European, the Island was intended to be vehicle-free, with no cars on Main Street. This proved impractical, if for no other reason than that fire trucks need access to Main Street and retailers need deliveries. While the original plan for the Island specified that no new building should be more than 10 stories high, the developers showed how that was not financially feasible, and some of the European look was lost as the new buildings went up to 19 stories.”

Island House was designed with the retail spaces fronting on Main Street, artfully blended into the structure with the restaurant at the southeast corner. It was called the Green Kitchen until it was closed after a 1987 drug raid. It then became Andy’s Place, and finally Trellis under the present owner, Trellis, which is undergoing a major renovation.

Bhavnani says, “While completing work on the Island House design, we began to plan the Rivercross project. One of the first problems was a smaller Lutheran church that stood between Good Shepherd Chapel and the Rivercross site. It had been abandoned for many years and was in deplorable shape. It was removed, and space was cleared for an extension of the plaza. We also had to contend with a considerable amount of medical waste uncovered during excavation of the site. Apparently, the hospital workers of the 1800s did not give much thought to its proper disposal, and just dumped it wherever they could.

“Another problem was a ravine where the east face of the building was to be. It was approximately 100 feet long, 50 feet wide, and 12 feet deep. It took many, many cubic yards of concrete to fill it in. We also had problems with water seeping into the foundation. The Island is made up of schist, a porous rock, and water infiltration was a constant problem.”

During the tour, Bhavnani was asked how it happened that Rivercross was designed with far more public space than was customary for a New York City apartment building. “We

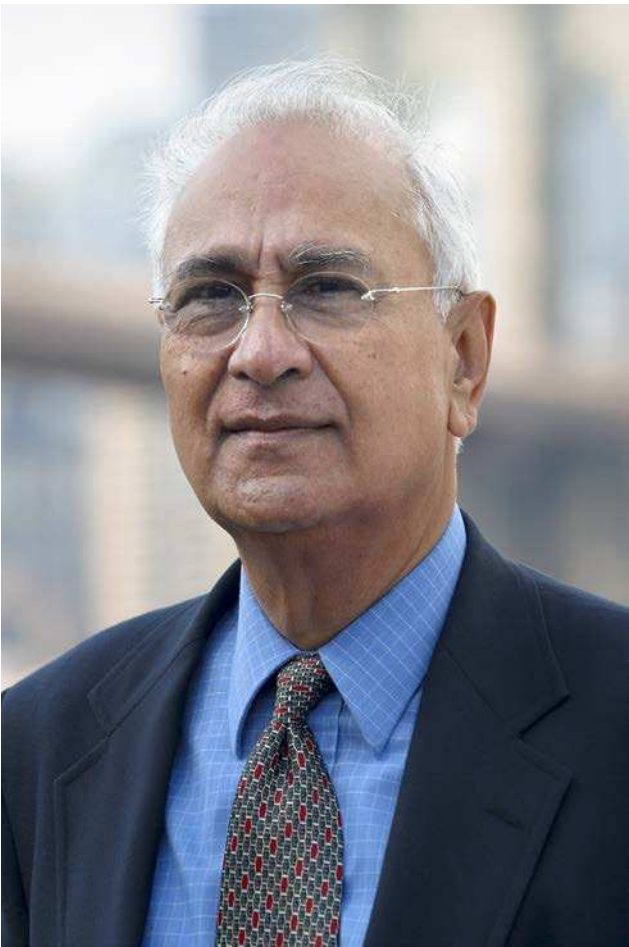
were given a 25% increase in the budget, and decided to use it for the common areas of the building. The two-story foyers outside almost all of the elevator entrances have windows 20 feet high, providing light and an open floor expanse that was intended as play areas for children. The developer questioned the inclusion of so much open space in the building, but Ed Logue cracked the whip and the complaints stopped.”

Both Island House and Rivercross have an unusual exterior. Instead of brick or glass, they are covered with Corspan, a panel material made in Belgium. “The use of Corspan allowed Island House and Rivercross to be constructed without any scaffolding. The panels clip together and are erected from the inside of the structure, along with the windows that are fitted into the spaces provided. This resulted in a considerable cost savings that was used, in part, to fund the open spaces in Rivercross. As it was, the bids came in under budget and we were all proud of that.”

Meditation Steps and the Rivercross lawn were both part of Bhavnani and Johansen’s original plan. “We wanted to provide a place of quiet reflection, so instead of using the area south of Rivercross for another building, we decided to create a small park. We carefully preserved the trees that border the lawn. Ed Logue loved trees, and every time we had to take one down, he asked why. The steps face the river, and it is gratifying to see how many people use them every day. In the early days, I used to see children swimming in the river off the promenade that circles the Island.”

Bhavnani goes on to say, “We had a difficult decision to make in ventilating the basement at Rivercross. The basement contained two laundry rooms, and all the heating, electrical equipment, and air conditioning systems and the AVAC rooms. A great deal of heat was going to be produced that needed to be vented. We finally decided to vent the basement with large, curved ventilators and paint them bright colors, rather than trying to disguise them.”

After the Island House opening in 1975, the next year saw the opening of Rivercross, Westview, and Eastwood. The apartments were slow to fill up at first, and old-timers in Rivercross report that they were given three months’ free rent back in 1976 if they took an apartment. Also, their lease contained a provision that allowed them a five-year period to back out of the contract and get their money back. It wasn’t long, however, before the Island’s appeal began to take hold. Soon, there was a waiting list at each of the four original buildings.



It was difficult for Ashok Bhavnani to keep a smile from his face as he led the tour of his buildings. It had taken a rare combination of political foresight and determination, combined with exceptional architectural talent, to produce the truly livable “new town” we have today.

When the tour ended, participants were effusive in their praise of the work of John Johansen and Ashok Bhavnani, and expressed the thanks of all of us who enjoy the benefits of their vision for Island House, Rivercross, and our Island.

Let’s Talk About *The Main Street WIRE*

(an unapologetic quest to
bring *your* talents to the
community’s newspaper,
website, and other activities)

Tuesday, October 14
7:30 p.m.
Gallery RIVAA



We congratulate **The Main Street WIRE** on 35 years of serving the Roosevelt Island Community.



MST&DA and The WIRE practically grew up together. Some of the people who started and ran The WIRE were also part of the first theatrical productions of MST&DA. The WIRE has played an important role in how MST&DA has communicated with our theatre community in articles, coverage of our shows, and advertisements.

We thank the editors and volunteers who have made The WIRE a reality; for always being there with timely articles and dependable coverage of community events. Dick Lutz, the current editor, can be proud of the quality of the journalism. Under his watch, The WIRE has never failed to put out an issue. We hope it will remain a strong part of our community for many years to come.



The **MST&DA Fall Session**
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Congratulations to the Main Street Wire for keeping the public well informed and focused for 35 years. Thank you!

Tai Chi continues through the end of September. Wednesdays at 4pm

Musical performance by NikosKids on Sunday, September 14, at 4pm



Visit us in the fall. Seasonal hours as of
October 1st: 9am - 5pm.

(The Uni Project, originally scheduled for September 27-28, will be rescheduled for the spring)



For details and the full events calendar, please visit www.fdrfourfreedomspark.org/events.

The Park is free and open to the public. Open 6 days a week, closed Tuesdays.

Free public tours are offered at 11am on Saturdays and Sundays.



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COMING UP

— Continuing Events & Activities —

A listing of **repeating** meetings & events

(A listing of other events scheduled for this weekend and in coming weeks starts on page 3.)

ART EXHIBITS

Camera, Brush, Chisel exhibition of painting and sculpture by RIVAA member artists, Gallery RIVAA. **Sat-Sun** 11am-5pm, **Wed & Fri** 6-8pm. Extended through Sep 14.

Bonnie Sherk’s ***A Living Library*** on Roosevelt Island exhibits in *Vegetation as a Political Agent*, *Parco Arte Viviente*, *Centro Arte Contemporanea*, Turin, Italy. Through November 2. Info: alivinglibrary.org.

PARKS

Southpoint Park open **daily** 6am-10pm.

Lighthouse Park open **daily** 7am-9pm.

FDR Four Freedoms Park open **daily** 9am-7pm (9am-5pm after Oct 1). **Closed Tue.**

CLASSES

Art, taught by members of the Roosevelt Island Visual Art Association (RIVAA), **Sat** 11am-2pm, Sportspark. Free

MUSIC (listed Sat-Fri)

First Sunday Jazz Salon, 1st Sun (except Jul-Aug) 5-7pm, Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main St. \$5 donation.

Drum lessons for 5th-9th-graders, **Tue & Thu** 3:30-5:30pm, Youth Center, 506 Main St. Info: Call **212-527-2505** or email info@RooseveltIslandYouthProgram.com.

Piano lessons for 5th-9th-graders, **Wed & Fri** 3:30-5:30pm, Youth Center, 506 Main St. Info: Call **212-527-2505** or email info@RooseveltIslandYouthProgram.com.

EXERCISE & SPORTS (alphabetical)

Basketball (all ages), **Sat** 2-5pm, Sportspark. Free.

Basketball (adults), **Mon-Thu** 8-10pm, PS/IS 217. Free.

Bike New York Pop-up Bike Shop, Sat 10am-2pm, under helix, through September.

Pilates with Karen, Tue & Thu 7:15pm; **Wed** 8:45am, 10am; **Fri** 9am, 10am; **Sat** 10am. Info 212-750-6223.

Tai Chi classes, every **Wed** in **Sep** 4pm, Four Freedoms Park. Grand Master Jean Philippe Cisse teaches Tai-chung Chuan (Korean Tai Chi). Ages 15-up. Free. Info: tinyurl.com/KoreanTCfdr. (Ad, page 7.)

Pilates, Wed & Fri 6:30-7:30pm, PS/IS217. Free.

Ping Pong (all ages), **Tue Wed Fri** 6-9pm, Sportspark. Free.

RI Moms on the Move walk and exercise program, **Fri** 11am, Visitor Kiosk in Tramway Plaza. Free. To confirm time: Eva.Bosbach@gmail.com.

Sportspark extended hours (ages 16-25), **Fri-Sat** 9pm-midnight. Weight-lifting and basketball. Free. **Note:** *ID and proof of Island residency are now required.*

Swimming* (all ages; no instructor)—**Sat-Sun** 12-3pm, **Mon-Fri** 6-10am, **Mon Wed Thu Fri** 7:30-10:30pm, Sportspark.

Swimming* (18 yrs+) — **Sat-Sun** 4-7pm, **Tue** 7:30-10:30pm, Sportspark.

Swimming* — Water Aerobics, **Sun** 12-1pm, **Wed & Fri** 9-10am, Sportspark.

Swimming* — Master class, **Mon & Fri** 7:30-8:30pm, Sportspark. Through Sep 29.

(*All **Sportspark swimming** \$5; free for disabled, seniors 60+, and ages 0-3.)

Yoga (Hatha/Vinyasa), **Mon** 10am, Four Freedoms Park.** Lauren Blankstein / Keren Messer.

Yoga (open-level), **Mon & Thu** 6:15-7:15pm, **Sat** 11:15am-12:15pm, Sportspark. \$5. Mats available.

Yoga with Keren Messer, **Mon & Tue** 8-9pm. \$17; multi-session rates. Location and other info: KerenMsr@gmail.com or 212-614-9181.

Yoga with Jax Schott, **Wed** 7:30-8:40pm, Island Kids, 536 Main St. \$15.

Yoga (Prana Vinyasa Flow) for kids, **Thu** 5pm, Four Freedom Park.** Jax Schott.

Yoga (open-level) with Lauren Blankstein, **Thu** 7:30-8:30pm, PS/IS 217 Beacon. Free.

Yoga, Fri 6pm, Four Freedoms Park.** Keren Messer / Lauren Blankstein.

Yoga, Sat 9:45am, Four Freedoms Park.** Jax Schott.

Zumba, Mon 6:30-7:30 and 7:30-8:30pm, **Thu** 8:30-9:30pm, **Sat** 10-11am, Sportspark. \$5.

Zumba/Dance/Cardio, Mon & Wed 6:30-7:30pm, PS/IS 217. Free. (Replaced with Pilates until new instructor is found.)

BIRTH THROUGH TODDLER (listed Sat-Fri)

Mommy & Me Swim Classes (0-3yrs), **Sun** 11-11:30am through Sep 21, **Wed** 10:30-11am, through Sep 17.

Baby Story Time (0-18 mo), **Mon** 10:30am, Library. Advance registration required.

Baby Playtime (0-18 mo), **Mon** 11am, Library.

Story Time with Olya (pre-school ages), **Tue & Thu** 9am, Main Street Sweets, 559 Main St. Free.

Toddler Story Time (18-36 mo), **Wed** 11am, Library. Registration required. Free.

Toddler Play Time (18-36 mo), **Wed** 11:30am, Library.

Island Kids Baby Group (0-14 mo), **Thu** 10:30-11:30am, 536 Main St. Info: IslandKidsRI@gmail.com.

Bi-Ligual Birdies: Mandarin (0-5 years), **Thu** 11am, Library.

Read Aloud (3-6 yrs), **Fri** 3:30pm, Library.

OLDER KIDS (Sat-Fri)

Swimming classes (age 3-up), **Sat** 3-4pm, Sportspark. \$15 or \$100/10 weeks. Questions/registration, ryansher-rill84@gmail.com or 917-261-2771.

Art for Kids with Connie Tanner (ages 3-8), last **Sun**, 10-11:30am, Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main St. \$10 suggested donation; materials supplied. No reservation required.

Tennis — New York Junior Tennis League (ages 5-18), **Sat-Sun** 6-8am, Racquet Club. Free.

Tennis — Junior Tennis, Sat & Mon-Fri after school, Racquet Club. Info 212-935-0250.

Teen Time (ages 13-18), **Mon-Fri** 3pm, Library.

Beacon After-School Program for grades 1-8, **Mon-Fri** 3-6pm, PS/IS 217. Free. Info: 212-527-2505 or tinyurl.com/RIyouth

Open Gym for high school students, **Mon & Wed** 6-8pm, PS/IS 217.

Board Games (5-12 yrs), **Tue** 4pm, Library. Free.

Teen Game Night, Wed 6pm, Main Street Sweets, 559 Main St.

Crafts, Thu 11am & 3pm, Library

Reading Aloud (children), **Fri** 3:30pm, Library.

Girl Scouts (6-13 yrs), **Fri** 6-8pm, PS/IS 217. Info: 212-527-2505.

SENIORS (also see page 16)

Lunch, Mon-Fri noon, Senior Center, 546 Main St. \$1.50. Menus outside social worker office.

Computer Basics for Seniors, Fri 10:30am, Library

REGULAR MEETINGS (Sat-Fri)

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

Sci-Fi Discussion Group, 1st Tue 6:30pm, Library.

114th Precinct Community Meeting, 4th Tue 7pm, Riccardo’s by the Bridge, 2101 24th Av., Astoria.

RIRA Common Council meeting 1st Wed (except Jul-Aug) 8pm, Good Shepherd Center.

Book Discussion, 3rd Thu 6:30-8pm, Library.

OFFICE HOURS

RIOC’s Community Office Hours, Mon 3-5pm, 591 Main St.

Constituent Service Hours for State Senator Jose Serrano and/or staff, **Tue**, alternating between Senior Center, 11:30am-2:30pm, and Library, 3-6pm, beginning Jun 24 at the Library. Info: 212-828-5829.

Conversations with Cornell Tech Staff at Gallery RIVAA, **Wed & Fri** 10am-12noon & 1-4pm, 527 Main St.

Constituent Service Hours for City Councilmember Ben Kallos, **1st Wed** 4-7pm, Senior Center, 546 Main St.

OTHER

Clinic on Housing Law, 1st & 3rd Mon 3-6pm, district office of City Councilmember Ben Kallos, 244 E. 93rd St. RSVP and questions to 212-860-1950 or RSVP@BenKallos.com.

Knitting & Crocheting Circle (adults), **Thu** 11:30am, Library. Info: nypl.org.

Food Box Orders for Helping Families Help Themselves, ordering period **1st-11th of month**. Menu online at jolinfoodbox.com. Info 347-985-7540; pickup period at 546 Main St. **15th of month**.

Recalling the Wonder of This Island Community

by Margaret Mullins

After 37 years, my parents are leaving Roosevelt Island. I never thought this day would come. When we first moved to the Island, my mother wrote an article for the *Rockland County Journal News* describing our transition from the suburbs to New York City, and the naiveté and awkwardness we faced adjusting to our new life. So I thought it apropos to write about my experiences growing up as a first-generation Roosevelt Islander, and about what Roosevelt Island gave me, as I say a final good-bye.

I never lamented my parents’ decision to move to Roosevelt Island. At age nine, I saw Roosevelt Island as one big playground. My childhood memories are full of carefree days spent exploring the ruins, skateboarding down ramps, riding bikes and roller-skating along the promenade, ringing doorbells and running, and playing kickball in the courtyard, “killer” on the tennis courts at Northtown, and Manhunt all over the Island with the chapel serving as the jail. There were always so many kids to play with, and the best part was that you didn’t need a parent to drive you to their house or other places to have fun. On Roosevelt Island, it was all readily accessible.

My friends were black, white, Asian, Hispanic, Jewish, Catholic, poor, rich, middle-class, from single-parent homes, children of divorce. There was no discrimination. We viewed all 5,000 residents as one big family. You could get on the Tram and have only two degrees of separation from the other riders.

Another unique aspect of growing up on Roosevelt Island was the presence of the disabled. I can still remember the first time I saw a person without legs wheeling himself down Main Street in a wheelchair. I realized that being disabled doesn’t mean you’re confined to a hospital room for the rest of your life, and that the disabled can live very fulfilling lives.

When I was a teenager, the Island lost some of its luster for me. The parks and hideouts I loved playing in as a child were now used for more nefarious purposes. Because of the small degree of separation within the community, you couldn’t get away with a lot of normal teenage rebellion without someone knowing. Once, I was hanging out on the pre-school roof with a friend and a security guard spotted us. He took us to the office for a reprimand. Some kid walked by (no memory of who it was), saw us in there, and ran to get my friend’s father. The kid thought he was helping, but it actually made the situation worse!

Regardless of where I was living during my early adulthood, I still referred to Roosevelt Island as my home. But, as the years went by and I started to put down my own roots, my attachment to Roosevelt Island diminished. I still visited because my parents lived on the Island, but the community had changed. It isn’t anything like it was when I was growing up, and I don’t expect it to be. Communities go through transformations, many for the better, and Roosevelt Island is no different.

My parents are moving to be closer to my sister and me and our families, and they need more help with everyday living. It is going to be an emotional day when the moving truck pulls out. Saying goodbye to an Island in the middle of the East River will be bittersweet. But what I’m taking with me is this – growing up on Roosevelt Island gave me:

- A sense of freedom and independence to play and explore that is rarely found within the confines of New York City
 - An acceptance of, and tolerance for, all human beings, regardless of background
 - An empathy for the disabled
 - A safe and secure community where I could play without parental supervision and dabble in teenage rebellion
 - And, always, a home away from home.
- Goodbye, Roosevelt Island!



Events, from page 3

Women’s Health Organization (RIWHO) meets, **Wed Dec 17** 6:30, 12th floor, 546 Main St.

Book Discussion, *Prague Winter* by Madeline Albright, **Thu Dec 18** 6:30pm, Library.

A Christmas Story at **Library Movie Night** (adults), **Tue Dec 25** 6pm, Library.

— 2015 —

Book Discussion, *Duty* by Robert Gates, **Thu Jan 15** 6:30pm, Library.

Cornell Construction & Community Task Force quarterly meeting, **Mon Jan 26**, 6-8pm, 12th floor meeting room, 546 Main St. Open to public.

Book Discussion, *Beautiful Mystery* by Louise Penny, **Thu Feb 19** 6:30pm, Library.

Book Discussion, *Capital in the 21st Century* by Thomas Piketty, **Thu Mar 19** 6:30pm, Library.

Book Discussion, *Vacationland* by Sarah Stonich, **Apr 16** 6:30pm, Library.

Cornell Construction & Community Task Force quarterly meeting, **Mon Apr 27**, 6-8pm, 12th floor meeting room, 546 Main St. Open to public.

Book Discussion, *Black, White & Jewish* by Rebecca Walker, **Thu May 21** 6:30pm, Library.

Book Discussion, *Half A Life* by V.S. Naipul, **Thu Jun 18** 6:30pm, Library.



Join us for the Jewish Holidays ! The Roosevelt Island Jewish Congregation

2014 / 5775 High Holy Day Services

You are invited to worship throughout the year with the **Roosevelt Island Jewish Congregation**, a warm, all-family-friendly, pluralistic Jewish community.

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For more information, please contact
Nina Lublin, 212-688-0003 or
Information@RIJC.org



ROSH HASHANAH SERVICES

Wednesday September 24
Evening Service
7:30 pm

Thursday, September 25
9:15 am
First Day Morning Service *
*Child Care Provided

11:00 am
Children's Service
With Music and Song

1:30 pm (approximately)
Tashlich by the East River

7:30 pm
Evening Service

Friday, September 26
9:15 am
Second Day Morning Service *
*Child Care starting at 9:15am

All High Holiday Services will be held at
The Theatre at Manhattan Park
8 River Road
Child Care & Children's Services at
The RI Day Nursery – 6 River Road

YOM KIPPUR SERVICES

Friday, October 3
Kol Nidre
6:00 pm -Sharp

Saturday, October 4
9:15 am
Morning Service *
*Child Care starting at 9:15am

10:30 am
Children's Service

5:00 pm
Afternoon Service, followed by
Ne'ilah and Havdalah

Registration is open for our RIJC
Hebrew School ! See the RIJC.org
website for details !



Closed for now...

But before we disappear completely for the next couple of months (or a little more), we have this shout-out for *The Main Street WIRE* as it starts its 35th year of service to the Roosevelt Island community:
Way to go, *WIRE*!

See you soon again at Trellis!
212-752-1517

See the new Trellis at trellisdiner.com
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Catch a souvenir!

Watch for our Grand Reopening!

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Katz, from page 1
officers to plan for the fall.”

RIRA and RIOC

It was part of the RIRA constitution at the time for RIRA presidents to ask to be put on the RIOC Board. Part of Katz’s platform was that he would not do that – that there was no way to do adequate justice to both jobs. He says he still thinks that is true.

As to the perfect relationship between RIRA and RIOC, Katz says, “It is to be of a single mind as to what to do, so the RIOC Board of Directors is not the tail wagging the dog, but the dog that determines policy for RIOC.”

How do you finesse that relationship? According to Katz, “You go to every RIOC committee meeting that’s open to the public, as well as every Board meeting that’s open to the public. You speak at every RIOC Board meeting, you have meetings with the President/ CEO and the Chief Operations Manager on a regular basis, and you establish relationships with these people. It pays dividends. That’s how you do it.”

Being President

Katz held an orientation at the beginning of each term. He says, “I would explain how the meetings work and how Robert’s Rules work. I would insist that everyone have a copy of the RIRA constitution and bylaws, and the Island’s General Development Plan (GDP), and read them. Then I’d explain that none of this matters. Those are *tools*. They are the tools to effect the purpose of the organization, to maintain and influence the quality of life on Roosevelt Island.

“What it became in this last year and a half was a fight about procedure, which is irrelevant. If you are not out on the street making life better for your community, then you are not doing what you were elected to do. It’s just that simple.”

Building consensus is a necessary skill for a president, according to Katz. “I ran the Sections Committee meetings at the New York Academy of Sciences for 21 years. I was in a room with department heads, hospital presidents, and Nobel laureates. So if you think these people [on the RIRA Common Council] are bad, the egos in *that* room were amazing. I learned how to build consensus. After 21 years, I got pretty good at it. That is an essential skill to bring to RIRA.”

Another important tool, he says, is being organized. “I know how to organize things. That’s what I did for a living for a very long time, and there’s a certain amount of OCD [obsessive-compulsive disorder] in my nature, which can be very useful when used the right way. That’s where scheduling comes in. The term is two years – 20 meetings. Your window of opportunity is very short. That time goes by very fast. Get committee chairs voted in at the first meeting. By December, everyone should know what they’re doing.”

Nevertheless, Katz says, “I always found putting on Common Council meetings aggravating. I never slept the night before or the night after. I never knew what I was going to find. I set agendas but there are so many opportunities for extraneous things to be brought up. I dealt with that as a leader. Sometimes you have to say, *We’re not going to vote on that, I’m just going to do it and you don’t have to*

like it. Because sometimes you just have to get things done if you’re going to have an organization with relevance. So I did. Sometimes I was right and sometimes I was wrong. Leadership is something you learn.”

Of his tenure, Katz reflects, “I thought I could be both democratic and autocratic at the same time and not ruffle people too much. I took it very seriously, and worked very hard. I never anticipated running for more than two terms, but later I felt I had to because of issues that were coming up. But nothing is ever resolved on Roosevelt Island. In 2012, after four terms, I thought, *It’s enough*. I was scared to death that no one was going to run for the office.”

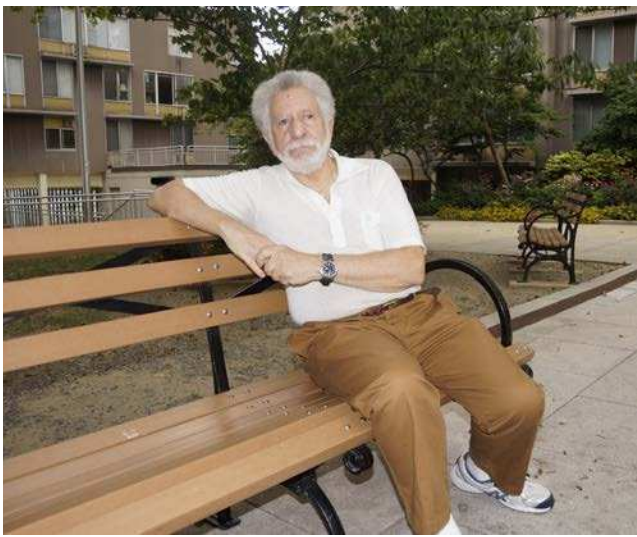
Housing

Maybe the makeup of the Common Councils changed, but the issues did not. According to Katz, “The one thing that was always consistent was housing. Housing is the criterion by which we will be judged in the future. When I moved here, this was a sanctuary for seniors, a sanctuary for the disabled, and a place that welcomed low-, middle-, and high-income people who lived together and worked together on the RIRA Common Council. To their discredit, when Eastwood left the Mitchell-Lama program, although existing residents were protected, there was no provision for the future, so the senior and disabled populations will probably cease to exist within the next five to 10 years. It’s very sad, because there’s nothing like that anywhere else.”

The GDP for Roosevelt Island set out to create a “New Community,” with the goal of making the maximum contribution to the needs of the City as then defined. The GDP is specific when it comes to ratios regarding the mixed-income housing requirement. Says Katz, “The GDP is six pages long, and it is written in plain English by architects, not lawyers. It lists two residential areas on the Island – Northtown and Southtown. We added The Octagon, and we added Manhattan Park. The basic premise was that there would be a ratio of low-income to middle-income to high-income people, and they defined their terms,” Katz explains. “Northtown provided that breakdown. Now that Eastwood is out, and now that all of those apartments that were going to Section 8 people are going fair-market-value, the ratio is being changed. I don’t know if anybody is addressing that. In Southtown, I don’t know if it was ever addressed.

“What they are saying down there is that 475 and 465 are subsidized. Yes, *if* you happen to work at one of two hospitals. How is that affordable housing? How does that comply with the GDP, which is part of the Master Lease? It seems to me that people in City government should be screaming bloody murder. But in this town, the only thing more powerful than politicians is developers.”

This problem is likely to remain, he feels. “We have a mayor [Bill de Blasio] whom I spoke to when he was running for office. He was talking affordable housing – well, how about saving some of it here? We have one building in construction and two to follow. The people that run the City, clean the streets, teach at the schools, where are they going



to live? I grew up in Brooklyn; my home base was Queens, then the Upper East Side. I can’t afford to live in any of the communities where I grew up. I am retired. If Westview goes away [becomes market-rate], where will I live?”

Katz has fought for the GDP. “I’ve been involved with two suits against developers. One was in Southtown, because they were eliminating half of the buffer between Northtown and Southtown; we lost that. The Octagon was supposed to be an ecological center, according to the GDP. When [architects] Becker & Becker came, we tried to make that happen. That’s what we sued them for. Developers, if they know anything in this world, it’s how to finesse law. My hope now is that we can try to preserve the landmarks that exist today and use them.”

The Landmarks

Katz has a special fondness for the Renwick Ruin (Smallpox Hospital). He says, “The premise was to keep that wonderful exterior and build something wonderful inside. Sure enough, several Christmases ago, the north façade collapsed, and they built this [support structure] and it looks like a mouth full of braces; it is ugly as sin. No one has gotten the aesthetic of that place. It is magical. The only people that did – Do you remember the first *Spider-Man* movie? There was a big fight in there, and they understood that it was something from inside a comic book; it’s that dramatic. So, it sits there, and nobody knows what to do with it. They put \$4 million into it to stabilize it. That was in the money that Jessica Lappin got us – \$12 million for Southpoint Park.

Current

In Katz’s last Common Council term, Southtown filled all nine of its seats for the first time. According to him, “[Nominations Committee Chair] Aaron Hamburger lives in Southtown, and that helps.”

Regarding RIRA’s current president, Katz says, “I give Jeff Escobar enormous credit for trying to bring organizations together so they can sit in a room together and communicate.”

Continues next page



The RIRA Common Council as it met Wednesday night in the lower-level meeting room of the Good Shepherd Center. There are 35 seats on the Council, proportionally representing the Island’s buildings, but some seats go unfilled for lack of candidates and, near the end of a two-year term, some members have moved away or left the Council for other reasons. Aaron Hamburger, a Southtown (Riverwalk) representative who heads the Nominations Committee for the November election, commented that the volume and sharp tone of recent email exchanges have reduced residents’ interest in running for Council seats.



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Otherwise, Katz has concerns over RIRA's current priorities. "RIRA has become a navel-gazing organization, more concerned with *how* they're doing business than with *what* their business is. It is devastating."

Katz explains, "RIRA elects a new Common Council every two years. Some of the members are new and have to be inculcated with all of the documents that define us – between us and the City of New York, between us and the State of New York – and then determine how they can effect that and how they can make it better. There's nothing easy about that. People come to this organization as volunteers with lives outside of RIRA and the Common Council, and they try to fit RIRA in. Some people get utterly caught up in it, and some don't. At the least, you need people who meet their obligations, and that's been difficult this year."

Katz was unhappy with RIRA participation in the Blood Drive held on Roosevelt Island Day. By way of background, he says, "We've done it 12 years in a row on Roosevelt Island Day. The New York Blood Center is thrilled to come out here because we do all the hard work for them. We are out at the Farmers' Market four Saturdays in a row, signing people up."

This year, RIRA Treasurer Russell Fields was captain. "I gave Russell a sheet of single-spaced notes showing him how I did it. He had an extremely difficult time finding people to fill those 16 two-hour slots," Katz says. "He did a lot of it – he and Helen [Chirivas, RIRA Secretary and Fields' wife]. That's not the way it's supposed to work. RIRA voted to do a Blood Drive. If you voted to do it, then you damn well come out and do the work."

Katz stresses personal contact in getting Common Council members to fulfill their commitments, "Sherie and I would take one two-hour slot, and the remainder was always filled by members of the community and members of the Common Council. The way you do it is that you get on the phone and you twist arms. You say, *You voted to do this. We need you for two hours.* You have to make personal contact. You send out an email, it's easy to ignore. You send around a sign-sheet, it comes back empty. You *call* people and you get them out there to do the job."

MetroCard

Katz took a hand in getting MetroCard on the Tram. He says, "It occurred to me that there were MTA subway-rider and bus-rider meetings where you could go and vent. There was nothing for Tram riders. I went to a subway-riders group and I said, *You don't recognize us. We are the only remaining two-fare zone in the City.* The MTA attended a RIOCI Board meeting that same evening and, eventually, the MetroCard came to the Tram."

Roosevelt Island Bridge

In 2004, the Roosevelt Island Bridge was badly in need of repair. "I started going to New York City Department of Planning meetings, and to the Bridge and Tunnel Authority, to work out the details. Finally, I got somewhere," Katz recalls, shaking his head; "They said, *We have a deal; we will do it in 2012.* I said, *This bridge fails now!*" After some more effort, the work was completed years prior to 2012.

Katz recalls that, in August of 2004, the bridge, the subway, and the Tram all failed on the same day. "We were without any emergency access," Katz recalls. As a result of Katz's urging, now the City has an ambulance on the Island even when they're just testing the bridge, and there's a backup generator on hand as well, so that even when there is a blackout, the bridge won't fail.

Katz gives RIOCI a lot of credit for this. He says, "There was a time when RIOCI was so brain-dead; they didn't understand that we are a community that needs to be included in planning because who knew better than the people who would suffer if these things weren't provided. It took a while. They get it now."

Part of RIOCI's evolution is recent. "I give [RIOCI President] Charlene Indelicato a lot of credit. She's here a lot. She comes to Island events. She brings her dog. I love it. She gets it. And I think that the people around her get it, too.

Whatever mindset the leader gives filters down. I like her. Sherie likes her. You can talk to her."

Under Katz, RIRA elections became more formalized. "I established a relationship with an outfit out in Woodside. They give us the old lever-action voting machines, and we arranged for a technician to be there from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. While the U.S. presidential election was getting bogged down because the computer wasn't working, we were sailing along. Not only that, but when they were using the old lever machines, they came to our technician to help them out. True story. So, we know how to put on elections. We put on really good, really legitimate elections, because we take it really seriously. These are the people who are representing this community by the ballot box, something RIOCI can't claim."

Katz also made sure all Islanders could vote in the RIRA elections, no matter their citizenship status, "One of the things I would do when I was running for president, because so

**“RIRA has become more concerned with
how they're doing business than with
what their business is. It is devastating.”**

many people who live here are not citizens, was to stand outside the school for 15 hours on election day and stop people and ask, *Are you voting today?* If they said, *No, I'm not a citizen,* I'd say, *You can vote in the RIRA election because you live here.* And they'd go in and vote and come out with these big smiles on their faces."

RIOCI Board Elections

"I don't know if you know the story about how the current [RIOCI] Board came about. In 2002, a group of us went to see George Pataki. As it happened, our State Senator at the time was Olga Mendez, who was a Democrat but really good buds with George [Pataki], so she got us the meeting. We came with a pile of data this thick that said, *We are being denied the fundamental democracy that every other municipality in the United States gets.* Pataki turned to Olga and asked, *Olga, what do you want me to do?* She said, *George, this is an idea whose time has come.*"

According to Katz, the result was 2004 legislation, signed by the governor, that required the RIOCI Board to have a majority of Island residents. The next question was where the candidates would come from. Katz reminisces, "Governor Spitzer, bless his heart, gave us the opportunity through the then RIOCI President, Steve Shane, who came to me and said, *Devise some mechanism whereby you can suggest candidates to the governor.* It took us more than six months to invent that election. *It's not an election, it's not a referendum, it's not a plebiscite, what were we doing?* We didn't know. We were making it up. There is no model. What we were doing was creating a mechanism to nominate Board members, whose names will then go the governor for [consideration for] appointment. What the hell is that? But that's what we did."

RIRA Constitution

During his tenure, Katz saw a need to change the RIRA constitution. As he describes it, "It seemed important to me to divide out the procedural from the existential. That was the big change I started, and [former RIRA President] Steve Marcus brought to fruition."

Katz explains, "As each building has come on line, we've had to add its Common Council delegates to the roster of RIRA. One of the things we did when we took bylaws out of the constitution was to create a mechanism whereby we didn't have to change the constitution every single time that happened. Each Council seat equates to 150 apartments. That took three years. Changing the constitution back then required a 2/3 majority in the Common Council, then you had to take it to a quorum of the community, 100 people in a room. As it turned out, we were a few votes short in the community. Frankly, I was very glad to go back to the Council because

they knew the issues. Ultimately, bylaws could be changed by the Common Council, independent of the community. Constitutional bylaws are a tool to get stuff done. They are not an end in and of themselves, which is something that is hard to tell people who have spent an inordinate amount of time on the Common Council thinking about that and not about what they're there to do."

Of the architects of RIRA, Katz says, "A lot of their ideas have been really prescient for the way to run an organization. I give them an awful lot of credit. I understand why they made it so difficult to change the constitution. It's not something you want to do lightly."

Otherwise, there are many more visible ways that Katz has legitimized RIRA. "The difficulty with an all-volunteer organization is how to justify its existence," comments Katz, "There's only one way; do stuff. Talking is not the point. It's what you *do.*"

He says, "We did two dances out on the pier opposite the subway, we've done auctions, and all kinds of [other] stuff so we could put some money in the bank to do other things, and we've been doing these things ever since."

One of the most memorable was a skating rink at The Child School. Katz explains, "We did ice skating on their gym floor. This was a Lynne Shinozaki event. We rented a skating rink and skates, and people skated all day long. At the end of the day, we had to take this jigsaw puzzle of a skating rink apart, wash down all the pieces, and put them in a box. There were about four or five of us who did that, and we were *so* exhausted at the end of the day – but it was great. We'll never do it again because of the cost-benefit, but you learn. You try stuff out. There are all of these wonderful opportunities in a small community like this. The way you get smart people onto an organization like RIRA is to show them what the organization can do."

According to Katz, it can do a lot.

Roosevelt Island

Prior to moving here, Katz lived on the Upper East Side. His then-girlfriend, Sherie Helstein, lived in Brooklyn. They decided to move in together. Katz recalls, "Sherie saw the ad in *The Times* for Manhattan Park just opening. This was 1989. The month that 30 River Road opened, we moved in. A month later, we were involved in a rent strike. We were happy as clams there. We just loved it. We moved into a two-bedroom at 20 River Road. Then came the real estate bubble. They said, *We'll renew your lease, 70% increase.* 70! By that time, I had put in paperwork at Island House and Westview, just as a fallback position. We got an apartment in Westview. We had to move down from a two-bed-two-bath to a one-bed-one-bath. That was hard. The kicker was the pool." Then the Mitchell-Lama rules changed to allow married couples to get two-bedroom apartments. Three months later, we were here. It's the best apartment we've ever had. We love it. We've been here for six years. It's pretty, and we love the view.

RIRA

As far as RIRA goes, Katz sums it up this way: "In my time on RIRA, it became an organization that was expected to put on programs, that was expected to deal with issues as they came up, and that was expected to find a relationship with RIOCI that was functional. That took time to evolve. It depended on the people in RIRA, especially the committee chairs. It depended on the people at RIOCI, who were sometimes more willing and sometimes less willing to work with RIRA."

"The bottom line is, *Who decides?* The community? Or a State agency? RIRA is only as good as the people who step up to the plate. The potential is there to change the quality of life on Roosevelt Island. What direction it will go in is up to us. It's our Island. It doesn't belong to RIOCI. It doesn't belong to the governor. It doesn't belong to Cornell. It's *us.* We either make the effort or we don't."

Say what you will about Matthew Katz, but make the effort, he has.

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John Sheehan is a Roosevelt Island pioneer, a past president of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA) and has lived in Rivercross since 1976. In John’s 30-year career as a real estate broker he has transacted over \$250 million in sales. Jimmy Brett, John's business partner, also has a 30-year career in real estate, successfully marketing, renting, and selling in New York City. Together, John and Jimmy bring more than 60 years of knowledge and experience to every transaction that they are involved in, and are backed by one of the best real estate companies in the city. Contact us for a free private consultation.
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Recruit candidates	Q&A for potential candidates	Volunteer to be election captain for Octagon	Collect election supplies in advance	Setup @ PS/IS 217 on Election eve/day	Posters & flyers: content, design, duplication, delivery, distribution, and follow -up
Encourage other residents to recruit candidates	Orientation for declared RIRA candidates	Recruit RIRA and non-RIRA poll workers	Prep for election – day materials in advance	Setup @ Octagon on Election eve/ day	Flyer door-drops in buildings: before Candidates’ Nights and before Election Day
Drop-box prep and delivery to Public Safety	Candidates’ Nights (Island-wide & Building-specific)	Reserve election site & request table & chair setups			
Copy & distribute RIRA Nomination forms	<u>ACTIVITIES:</u> Reserve sites & Arrange for room setup & microphones	Order voting machines OR set up paper/electronic voting	Prepare ballots	On Election Day: Coordinate volunteer logistics at Octagon & PS/IS217 HELP TALLY VOTES AFTER POLLS CLOSE @ 9PM	Possible Election Day handouts of flyers or WIRE special edition at subway & at Tram
Collect envelopes From drop-box at Public Safety	Q&A for potential candidates	Request building-specific resident lists	Poll-worker orientation session		
Check RIRA nomination forms for completeness	Make sign-in/contact list		Distribute supplies to Octagon		

WIRE, from page 1

Perhaps the biggest impact *The WIRE* had on the community was to legitimize Roosevelt Island as a community. As Resnick charges, “It really gave people an identity. Otherwise, you’re just a bedroom community.”

The Tram did come back after that four-month shutdown – and the paper continued to print. The early years of the paper reflected a small community that was starting to form an identity. There were articles orienting Islanders to where they were in the world, pieces about the Big Allis generating plant and the Pepsi sign. There were building-centric stories, which don’t exist much these days, about Rivercross resales, Eastwood rent increases, and Island House maintenance, for example. There were birth announcements and farewells. And there were stories about Island services and governance.

There were a lot of stories about transportation, which is still the case. From the time *The WIRE* started publishing until the subway came in 1989, there were constant updates about construction, including pictures, and the opening date was always shifting. Islanders had been promised a subway.

According to Resnick, *SportsWIRE* was very popular. He says, “The sports pages had a big influence on the community. Back when Barry Puritz was doing the sports pages, people loved them, especially the men’s softball league. Those guys loved to see their names in print. [*The WIRE*] did a lot for the Little League, and the soccer league too.”

Regarding his vision for the paper, Resnick says, “The physical structure of the newspaper I just stole from my college paper. It took a matter of two months, at the most, between the idea and first issue. After that, it seemed like bi-weekly would be often enough because everyone was a volunteer. Month to month seemed like it would be too long. The energy was amazing, though. We had a bunch of talented people who really wanted to do it. We found a printer. In fact, what I did was go to the printer who printed my college paper. Getting all of the advertising was really Terri’s doing.” [Terri Dancik was Resnick’s wife at the time.] “She set that up. I used a program called Quark Express for layout. PCs were just happening. We may have been cutting and pasting at the beginning. We funded, originally, to get things going. Every now and then for the first few years, I had to put up money to keep it going, but not a lot. It was well worth it. What an amazing thing to have started.”

The first issue of the new paper included a piece called, *The Whys of The WIRE*. It affirmed the need for a strong Island voice to keep Island services intact. It stated as its mission that “*The WIRE* hopes to help unify the Island and focus it on its needs. Providing this focus requires that Island residents have access to all relevant information from a comprehensive and unbiased source.”

That hyperlocal advocacy perspective was also evident in the section about opinions. “Our opinions will be reasoned and will have the survival of the Island as a place to live and raise families as their primary objective. These opinions will not, however, find their way into our news pages.”

Initially, *The WIRE* was divided into six departments – sports, news, feature, photography, graphics, and business. Resnick recalls, “I’d say for three or four years, the group was pretty solid. There were a lot of people working. The people on *The WIRE* were a cross-section, so we knew what was

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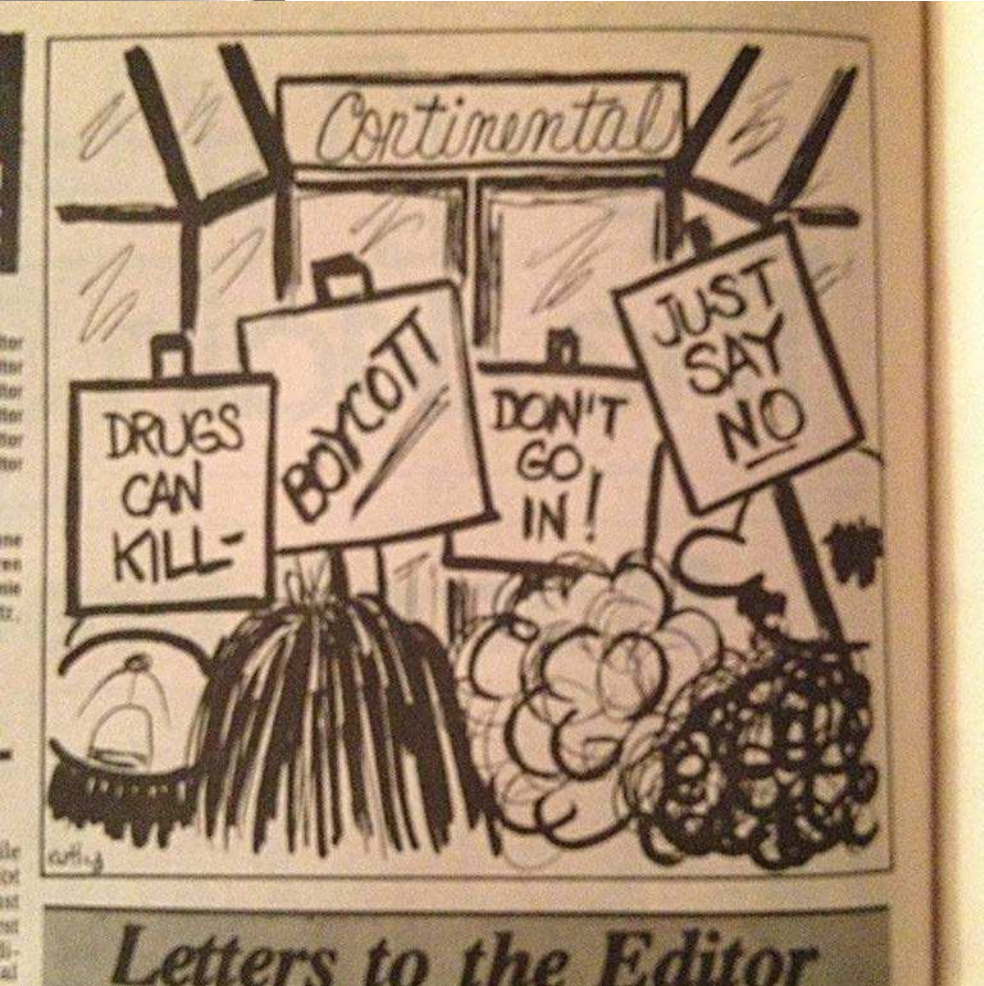
The opening of the Island’s coffee shop, The Continental, was eagerly anticipated. It later became the Green Kitchen. But when its owners turned out to be using it as a base for distribution of illegal drugs, *The WIRE* joined in a community boycott that shut the place down. It became Andy’s Place, then, with another change of ownership, Trellis.

WIRE was chosen the name for the Island’s newspaper. It’s an acronym for the four residential buildings at the time: Westview, Island House, Rivercross, Eastwood (now renamed Roosevelt Landings).



Economic viability is a difficult problem for a small community newspaper (left). Growth in population helps, but the challenge remains. Over the years, its backers have found many ways to keep going, ranging from simple begging to bequests to sale of branded merchandise like tote bags (next page).

Have you placed your order?



going on everywhere. People would stop us on the street and tell us what was going on.”

The acronymic title of the paper represented the four buildings on the Island at the time – Westview, Island House, Rivercross, and Eastwood. Resnick made a conscious effort to recruit residents with varied backgrounds and experience from all four buildings to volunteer.

Family History

The Resnicks moved to Roosevelt Island in 1977 with a three-year old son and another one on the way, and had twin sons arrive in 1984. “I took a job on East 61st Street, and then we had to decide where to live. 1977 represented the depths of the real estate market. The City almost collapsed financially in 1977, led by the UDC [New York State Urban Development Corporation]; the people who built this place went broke. We had a choice in 1977. We could have gotten a single-family house in the village for some tiny number like \$40K or an apartment in Rivercross. [Roosevelt Island] seemed like the ideal place for us. That’s how it happened. I lived here for 20 years before I was even a doctor here.”

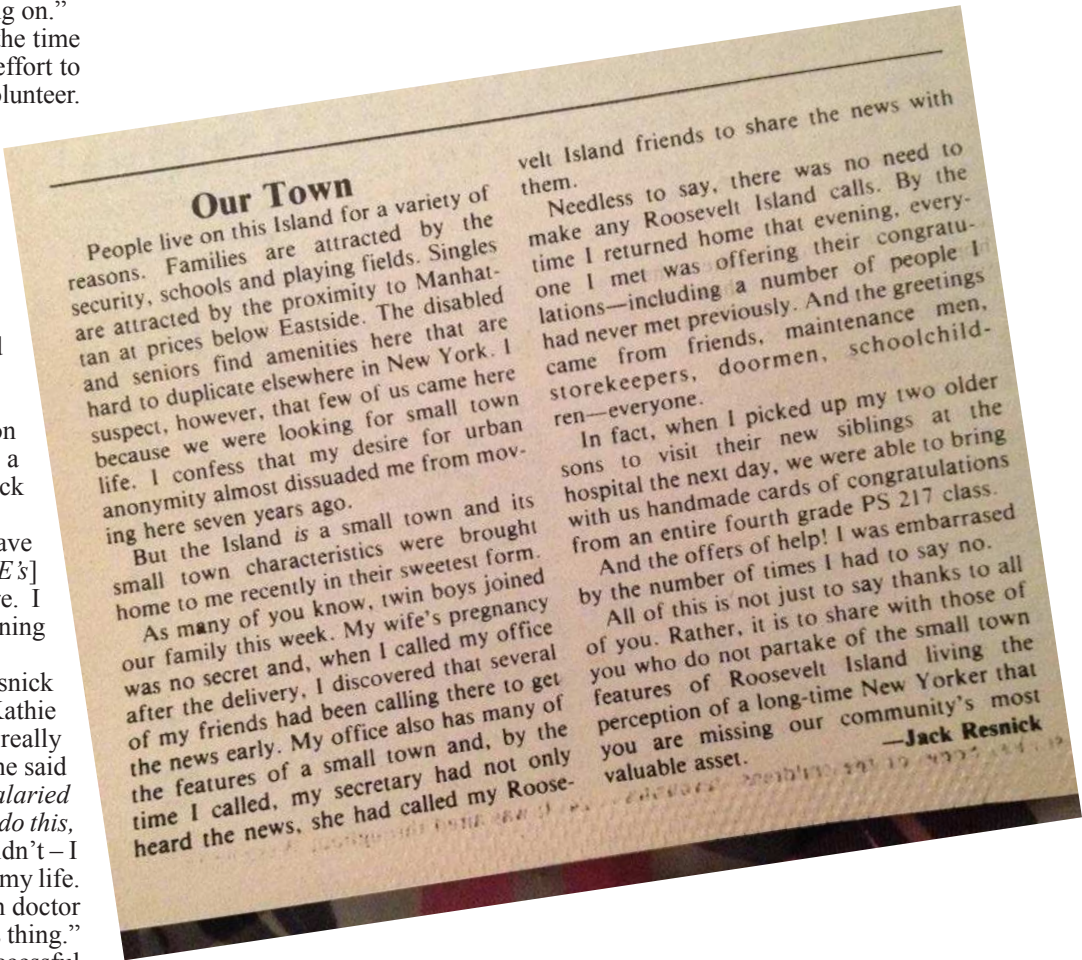
WIRE Transitions

“At the end, it was just me, and I just couldn’t do it anymore,” explains Resnick on why he stopped doing *The WIRE* in the early 1990’s. Jim Bowser, who had been a regular contributor and had newspaper experience, agreed to take it on, but until Dick Lutz came along in 1996, Resnick remained the paper’s publisher.

Resnick would not have given it over to just anyone, despite how ready he was to have it off his shoulders. Even now, years later, he says, “I am committed to [*The WIRE*’s] continuance. I will do anything I can to make that happen. I am not going anywhere. I think a community newspaper is such an important thing. For me to see it still happening is fabulous, and I won’t let it die.”

Despite passing the responsibilities of *The WIRE* on and moving off the Island, Resnick is still a member of the Island community as our internist. He explains that, “Dr. Kathie Grimm took care of all my kids and kept saying, *This place needs an internist*. I really wanted to do it, but I had this other important stuff I was doing. One day in 1997 she said to me, *Jack, you always say you want to do it, but Mt. Sinai is about to put some salaried full-time employees here to open an office*. So I went to Sinai and said, *You guys can do this, but I am going to open up an office, too, and I’ve been there for 20 years*, and they didn’t – I did. I stopped everything else I was doing and did this. It’s been the best decision of my life. So much happens on this level. You can’t imagine what it’s like to be a small-town doctor these days. It’s like heaven. A lot of sad things happen, but it’s a fabulous, fabulous thing.”

From Resnick’s current vantage point, “Roosevelt Island is one of the only successful models of a community in which the frail and the elderly have successfully been incorporated into the community at large. It was also one of the few successes in mixing people from different economic strata. It’s a shame to lose that. The larger issue about this place is the disabled, these homebound people. This is a very large topic nationally.” It is also one

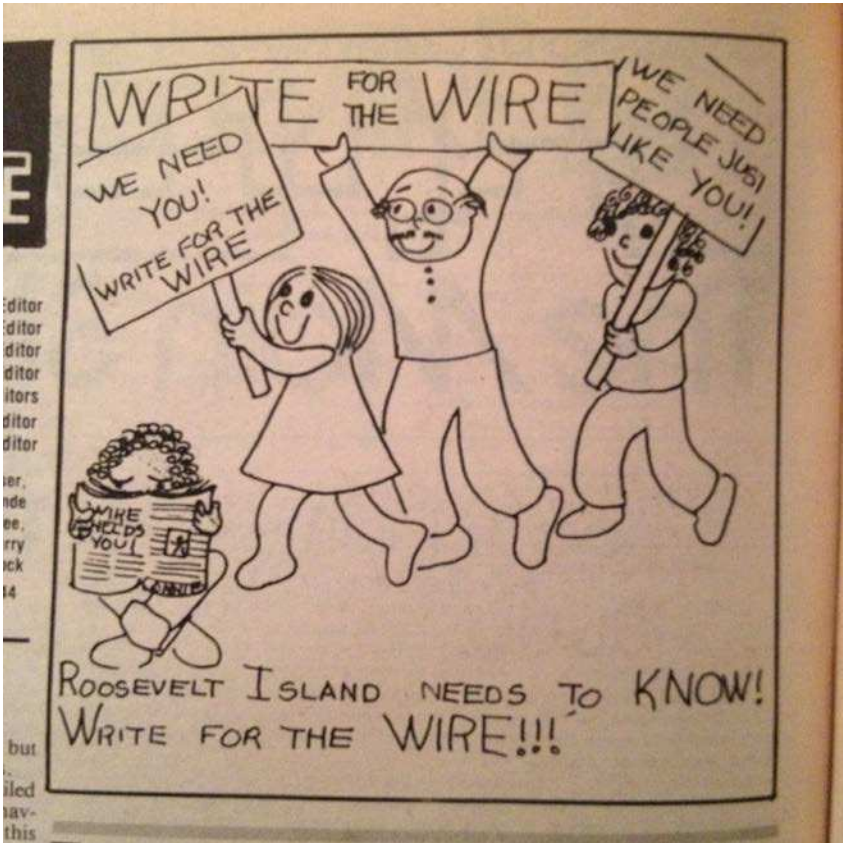


he’s working on at a national level, using Roosevelt Island as a model for delivering health care to the homebound through programs like Fully Integrated Dual Advantage (FIDA) and Independent at Home (IAHNow.com).

He is not one of those Island pioneers who was against Island development beyond the original four buildings, and says, “I am not one of those people that said we should stay small. If anything, more development brought more services. Hey, it’s returned the pizza place. There’s a health clinic that’s coming. It’s going to be a godsend for me. I really prefer taking care of the people that really need me – those who really need my skills. I am happy to have someone else around. The change that most distresses me is the disappearance of the planned community with mixed incomes.”

Resnick concludes, “In my life, I’ve done national stuff, but nothing compares to having started a little town newspaper that’s still going. You make an imprint on the world as a doctor on some level, but it’s relatively small.

“*The WIRE* has changed this town. What’s more important than a newspaper?”



The WIRE has always been a community-wide enterprise, with many volunteers. (See the “credits” box on page 2 for a current list.) Recruiting a high level of involvement is part of the publication process. Such an event is set for Tuesday, October 14. (See the ad on page 6.)



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unClassified deadline for October 11 issue: Tuesday, October 7

Please see *ComingUp*, page 3, for other advertising deadlines

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Wednesday
9:30 Yoga Stretch
10:20 Shoppers' Bus
10:30 Salsa
10:45 CPR Training (1st Wed, monthly)
11:00 Social Media for Seniors: Facebook, Instagram, Photos, more
10:45 Spanish
12:00 Bridge
1:30 Scrabble
6:00-8:00 Computer Lab
Thursday
9:15 Pilates with Ivette
10:30 Zumba
10:45 Ping Pong
12:00 Movie
1:00-2:30 Theatre tickets at discount prices; see Rema or Annie
3:00 Computer Basics (Library)
Friday
9:00 Building Strength
10:30 Computers
10:30 ESL
10:30 Tai Chi
12:00 Korean Exercise
1:00 Korean Games
2:00 Art with John
2:00 Pokeno with Dolores
7:00 Games (RISA)

Special Events
Senior Day, Sun Oct 19 – details to come

RIRA Column, from page 3
you look at the nomination form. To run for RIRA President or Vice President, elected Island-wide, you need to be of voting age and have lived on the Island for at least one year at the time of the election. At the end of Election Day, when the count is final, the candidates who haven't won a seat on the Council become Alternates, in order of votes received, i.e., Alternate #1, #2, #3, and so on. An Alternate will be invited in that order to sit on the Common Council when a regular member is not present or able to participate. A person may run simultaneously for both a Common Council seat and for President or Vice President.

Nomination forms will be available from October 1 until 9:00 p.m. on October 24. The forms can be found at our library (524 Main Street) and at the Public Safety Office (550 Main Street). They should be deposited in the locked metal box in the Public Safety Office.

After nominations close, there will be Candidates' Nights on October 28, 29, and 30, at locations to be announced later.

Anyone planning to run for RIRA President or Vice President needs to provide a prepared statement to *The WIRE* (MainStreetWIRE@usa.net) by October 15. Supply a digital photo head-and-shoulders shot, or call 212-826-9056 to arrange for one to be taken by the newspaper. If you have questions, email MainStreetWIRE@usa.net.

The Election Committee is exploring other voting methods for this year, in an attempt to bring RIRA into the 21st century. There is a good chance that we won't be using the reliable mechanical voting machines of the past, which came with our own dedicated technician, on hand to make whatever fixes might be necessary. I happen to like the clank and ding of these old friends, but they're expensive and we probably do need to move on. Stay tuned.

Helping
As usual, RIRA will need a cadre of volunteers for the election, and we hope that you will decide to join your neighbors and friends in this effort. You'll find a volunteer form on page 15. Just cut it out, fill in your information, and contact Aaron Hamburger at ashamburger33@gmail.com or 212-758-2623 (8:00 a.m.-11:00 p.m.), or me at helkatz@verizon.net or 212-935-7534. If you call either of us, leave a clear, concise message with your contact information (landline, cell, email). Say that you're interested in helping, and we'll take it from there. Also, if you choose to fill out the form, you can leave it, addressed to me, at my building's front desk – 625 Main Street.

You Can Vote If...
Any voting-age resident of Roosevelt Island, regardless of registration or citizenship elsewhere, may vote in our local residential election. (Please make sure all your friends and acquaintances know this.) For some in our community, this will be the only election that they get to participate in, so let's encourage them to come forward and experience this little bit of democratic rule. The only requirement when you come to vote is that you have something with your current Roosevelt Island address (we'll have the tenant lists) and something with a photo. Many poll-workers know their neighbors and may not need this information, but many won't, so be prepared.

Letters

To the Editor:
What's happening to the green spaces of Roosevelt Island? Our parkland and cross-current breezes have been taken over by new development and the Cornell campus under construction. To maintain good air on our Island, every building should have a green roof. The EPA notes that a green roof, or rooftop garden, "is a vegetative layer grown on a rooftop." The New York City Buildings website states that "green roofs have vegetation that absorbs rainwater, provides insulation, and combats the heat-island effect, where urban environments can have higher temperatures than surrounding areas." Building owners and developers would likely get tax incentives for their efforts in implementing these roofs. I'm certain there are additional resources for, and other advantages to, making this happen. Continuous advances in technology make the implementation of green roofs easier and more efficient.

Let's make Roosevelt Island a leader in the effort to help the world become better and healthier.

To the Editor:
We thank RIOC for repairing the baby/toddler swing in the Blackwell Tot Lot that was broken several weeks ago.
The maintenance staff who fixed it were great. Several kids and toddlers were interested in what they were doing, so the men explained it with a smile. It was not just a repair, but also a mini-class in tools and how they work.
Please thank them in the name of RIPN.
Susy del Campo Perea
RI Parents' Network

There's more at
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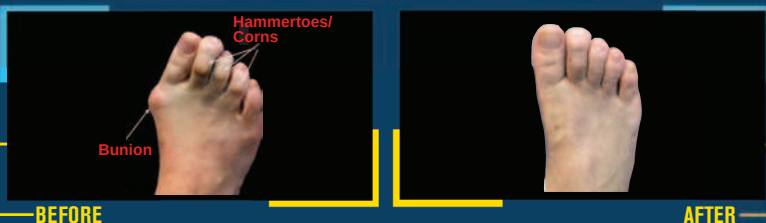
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All programs and prayers will be held at 425 Main Street

Rosh Hashanah, Sept. 24 - 25

7:30pm Maariv, evening prayers

Rosh Hashanah, Sept. 25 - 26

10:00am Shacharis and children's program

11:00am Shofar followed by Kiddush

Yom Kippur eve, Oct. 3

6:15pm Kol Nidrei and evening prayers

Yom Kippur day, Oct. 4

10:00am Shacharis and children's program

6:15pm Neilah

7:13pm Shofar blowing and break fast buffet



SHABBAT & HOLIDAY CANDLE LIGHTING

- Friday, Sept. 12 at 6:52 pm ** Friday, Sept. 19 at 6:40 pm
- Rosh Hashanah, Wednesday, September 24 at 6:32 pm
- Rosh Hashanah, Thursday, September 25 AFTER 7:28 pm
- Friday, September 26 at 6:28 pm
- Yom Kippur, Friday, October 3 at 6:17 pm
- Yom Kippur, Saturday, October 4 fast ends at 7:13 pm

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