



Sudden Change

RIOC Will Now Charge MST&DA For Use of the Cultural Center

News analysis by Dick Lutz

The Main Street Theatre & Dance Alliance is about to become a paying tenant in space it “owned” for three decades. Fees imposed by RIOC are likely to require a reduction in the organization’s programs.

But MST&DA, one of the Island’s truly venerable institutions, is determined to survive the unexpected change. Fundraising will become a critically necessary part of its efforts if fees are to be covered without reductions in scholarships.

Background

Years ago, when New York State put itself in the community-building business by leasing Roosevelt Island from New York City for 99 years, a variety of temptations were devised to bring residents to the newly-named Roosevelt Island. The State even built a Tramway when it was clear that subway service would be delayed for years. The temptations were needed: People, after all, would be the agents of community-building in a place that felt isolated to many.

And it worked, slowly at first, with just a few

thousand people who arrived determined to pull together to form a community. Meetings were held. A Residents Association was invented. A PTA supported the school. There were softball teams, a tennis club, and more.



Jenine Olson is President of the MST&DA Board

One of the outstanding organizations to arise in that early brew of Island life was The Main Street Theatre & Dance Alliance. The State authorities eagerly granted use of some marginal space in the basement of the building then known as Eastwood, and volunteers turned it into a passable theater and a workable dance studio. The space was marginal, but the programs that emerged were outstanding.

Over a period of three decades, thousands of Island children went through the kind of programs at MST&DA that turned them into confident youngsters, then teens, who could stand before an audience and play roles, deliver lines, and entertain. Roosevelt Island children, despite the small size of this community, experienced advantages in sports, learning, and theatre that were unavailable

See **MST&DA**, page 12

Trellis Return Delayed in Snafu, And Other Retail MisAdventures

by Briana Warsing

In a January 29 meeting, the Real Estate Advisory Committee of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation’s (RIOC) Board of Directors asked Arianna Sachs-Rosenberg of Hudson/Related (H/R) some hard questions about the status of Trellis, the Cards & Gifts store, empty storefronts, and more.

On a key question being asked by scores of Islanders – *When will Trellis be back?* – Rosenberg said, “Trellis has every intention of re-opening.” She stated that they are current on their lease, but they have run into a building snafu. “Apparently, they didn’t do a probe into a

wall they thought they could take down. Ultimately, they realized it was a structural wall.”

Alex Razaghi, the new owner with his father, Kaie Razaghi, told *The WIRE*, “We had a large problem taking down a load-bearing wall. It was unknown to all parties that the load-bearing wall was in fact there. We discovered it during the demolition process. We hired a structural engineer to draw up plans for taking it down.



“However, once we handed in those plans, we were informed that we would have to pay for a structural engineer of Hudson/Related’s choosing to draw up separate plans. Once that was finished, we would have to pay for a structural engineer for the building to draw up separate plans as well. Once all these plans were finished, we would have to study all the plans to see what everyone was more comfortable with. Once this process was completed, we would have to go to RIOC for a final approval.

“This process would not only take too long, but would also cost too much. It already [has] derailed construction for more than a month. With no end in sight, we revised the original plans of the store, changing the layout drastically.

“With the new layout, we will not be altering the load-bearing wall. The new architectural plan was ready as of yesterday [Monday]. We are ready and eager to proceed with construction again, and

are currently waiting on Hudson/Related’s approval to start again.”

Asked to speculate on when the restaurant might re-open, Razaghi declined, but indicated that it’s probable that April would be the earliest possible date under the best of circumstances.

Background

In August 2011, RIOC made Hudson/Related (the partnership responsible for construction of Southtown) the master leaseholder of all the Island’s storefront

See **Retail**, page 11

RIOC to Spend \$37 Million On Capital Improvements

by Briana Warsing

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) expects to spend \$37 million on capital projects in the fiscal year starting April 1. The amount, double last year’s figure, is part of an overall budget of \$66.2 million, already approved by the RIOC Board of Directors.

“The \$37 million budget is indeed more than has been budgeted for capital projects in recent times,” RIOC’s Anna Rankin told *The WIRE*. “RIOC currently owes a debt to the NYS Urban Development Corporation (UDC) for its initial investment in Roosevelt Island’s infrastructure. RIOC is able to apply this money to needed infrastructure improvements and defer repayment of this debt. If this money is not allocated to capital projects, we may be obligated to send this money to the UDC.” Rankin, RIOC’s Communications and Events Coordinator, spoke in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, Frances Walton.

“Our focus is mainly on improving the Island’s aging infrastructure and addressing existing repair needs,” said Rankin. Among the projects:

- Renovation of the Blackwell House interior, including mechanical systems
- Repairs to the Blackwell House porches
- Addition of an ADA-compliant entrance to Blackwell House
- Improvements to the fountains east of Blackwell House, including replacement of pavers
- Repairs to the helix (the ramp to/from the Roosevelt Island bridge)
- Lighting upgrades at Capobianco Field
- Work on the exterior of the lighthouse
- Replacement elevators at the Manhattan Tram station
- Seawall repairs and improvements
- Sports park repairs
- Construction of the Eastern Pier (next to the east tower of the Queensboro Bridge) for ferry service. Mayor Bill di Blasio’s plan for ferries includes Roosevelt Island, but there are doubts that the pier in question can be adequate. In a Monday meeting of RIOC’s Operations Advisory Committee, President Charlene Indelicato commented that nothing has been heard from the City about the ferry plan, and she raised the question of funding availability for the dock.

In addition, RIOC is in discussions with the City Health and Hospitals See **Capital**, page 6

Transit

Mayor Plans Ferries At MetroCard Rates But Will RI Have a Dock by 2017?

Mayor Bill di Blasio enthusiastically announced a plan for five-borough ferry service at the cost of a subway or bus ride in his State of the City address, and Roosevelt Island is included in the maps made available by his staff, showing a route connecting the Island to Astoria, Long Island City, and East 34th Street and Wall Street in Manhattan.

As of Monday, though, when the matter came up at a RIOC committee meeting, no one had addressed the question of costs to provide a ferry dock on Roosevelt Island. The map appears to show a landing point at or just south of the Queensboro Bridge.



Selma

Were you at Selma 50 years ago? An Islander who was on the March is writing about the experience for *The WIRE*, and would like to be in touch with other residents who were there.

Email JJJDunning@gmail.com or call *The WIRE* at 212-826-9056.

The Editorial Page

Guest Editorial:

Who’s Got Our Back?

Mayor Bill DeBlasio’s State of the City address last week was an impressive wish list, highlighting his campaign promise to increase the city’s stock of affordable housing by 200,000 units in the next 10 years. Did this suggest that he has the backs of *all* New Yorkers, including us? During a campaign meet-n’-greet at Riverwalk in 2013, we pressed him on his commitment to this community, which is, after all, a part of Manhattan. He suggested much, but promised nothing – not surprising, given that our housing is under State, not City, jurisdiction. In fact, the chair of the RIOC Board is the State Commissioner of Housing. Still, why do we pay City taxes if the City doesn’t have our back?

The Mayor also promised a resurgence of ferry service, at subway and bus MetroCard rates. This is far more reasonable than the fares discussed in the past. There was no mention of Roosevelt Island, but we’ve since learned that Roosevelt Island has been included in the plan. However, Roosevelt Island currently boasts not a single working dock that could accommodate ferries. I’ve heard figures as high as \$10 million to build such a facility. Where will that money come from? Who will build this dock? *Who’s got our back?*

We have watched New York State and the current State administration walk back many of the hard-won advances that Islanders have built and fought for over the past decade and a half:

- The Island-wide elections that nominated six residents for the RIOC Board of Directors have been ignored by Governor Andrew Cuomo.
- Annual support of Island organizations through \$100,000 in Public Purpose Funding is in jeopardy.
- The Main Street Theatre & Dance Alliance, having patiently waited two and a half years for their home at 548 Main Street to be renovated after Hurricane Sandy damage, as well as internally caused damage, is now facing onerous monthly rental charges never before required. Further, some of their space will be usurped for RIOC offices and storage. All this is on short notice – never mentioned while they waited, and waited, and waited for repairs to be completed. These are existential threats to an organization that has served this community for decades without having to cough up thousands every month. Does anyone in the RIOC office or on the RIOC Board of Directors have their back?

The State of New York only notices us when RIOC officers are corrupt, as some previous administrations have been. A Westchester Assemblymember, Richard Brodsky, initiated the Public Authorities Accountability Act, which may have sorted out public authorities like the MTA, but damn-near crippled this one. At a time when he was considering a run for governor, he held one hearing here investigating a RIOC president (who had been out of office for three years), promised more, issued a preliminary report, and then dropped the whole thing when his campaign for governor fizzled. He sure as hell doesn’t have our back.

Once upon a time, the State financially supported the Island through supplements to the RIOC budget. That ended 20 years ago. Today, not a dime of the State taxes we pay contributes to RIOC’s operating budget. Every dollar that RIOC spends is generated on-Island, and almost every one comes out of a resident’s pocket. And yet, the State administers us without the benefit of an elected local government – and does it poorly.

Who’s got our back?

No one, I fear.

Matthew Katz

Matthew Katz is a former four-term president of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association and a current member of the board of the Roosevelt Island Community Coalition.

To the Editor,

Prior to the removal of the glass at 625 and 595 Main Street, the building numbers and name were displayed so that visitors could easily find the building. When Hudson/Related removed the windows, they never replaced the building numbers and name.

There are quite a few tenants in these buildings who rely on Access-A-Ride to transport them to and from medical appointments. Access-A-Ride has been telling tenants that they are unable to locate the buildings, resulting in tenants being picked up late or not at all, so that they miss appointments.

RIOC claims that it’s building management’s responsibility.

The management for Westview, as reported in previous letters to *The WIRE*, doesn’t seem to have the time or courtesy to reply to letters or emails. The tenants are in a Catch-22.

R. Dringus

Letters deadline

for February 28 issue:
Tuesday, February 24, 5:00 p.m.

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters of local interest to the community, and to/from officials. Requests for a Name Withheld signature will be considered, but the writer’s name, address, and phone number must be provided for verification and for our records; letters submitted anonymously will not be published. Submit letters by 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; allow extra time for typesetting. 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

To the Editor

The WIRE’s grumpy editorial of January 17 unfairly insinuates that RIOC President Charlene Indelicato is an ineffectual political hack.

Ms. Indelicato may have been very strongly recommended to the RIOC board by Larry Schwartz, secretary to Governor Andrew Cuomo, but we can’t fault her for that. The RIOC Board couldn’t have found someone better if they had done their own search. In fact, after I dealt with her for a while, I had a passing thought to call Mr. Schwartz and praise him for his wisdom. I didn’t. It passed. Our Island needs smart leaders like Ms. Indelicato who know the decision-makers and can explain our needs to them.

Ms. Indelicato has been an excellent President. She came into a troubled RIOC that was missing the President and a VP of operations, with the Islanders at odds with the Public Safety Department, at the tail end of a major City land use review procedure (ULURP) with Cornell, the community begging for RIOC to step up and start negotiating with Cornell, a State Inspector General investigating RIOC, and a public safety audit ordered by the RIOC Board. She guided RIOC through staffing multiple top RIOC positions. She decided to perform the jobs of VP of operations herself to learn the processes. She found excellent leadership in the Public Safety Department. She introduced permitting for construction that not only brings in more money for RIOC, it also gives RIOC more oversight of all construction projects on the Island.

As for the Cornell negotiations, as is public knowledge, Charlene Indelicato incontrovertibly succeeded past any expectations. The Community Coalition passed her our term sheet and notes, and she seamlessly grabbed them and slam-dunked an agreement with Cornell and the State that brought millions of additional dollars to the RIOC coffers from State funds on behalf of Cornell. The permitting brings in additional money. She holds weekly construction coordination meetings with Cornell where she and participating RIOC Board members are coordinating the demolition and construction very carefully.

This degree of scrutiny is far tighter than we had with other Presidents on the Island where construction projects have had little or no RIOC oversight. In times gone by, some construction fences were left open to children and trespassers, and buildings were built taller than the plans.

Ms. Indelicato is accessible, and she listens carefully and makes well-considered decisions and explains them. They may not always be to our liking, but at least we understand the reasoning. She meets with the RIRA President and committee chairs and with the Board of the Community Coalition to talk about Cornell.

In summary. I think our Island is being run pretty well right now. I, for one, hope that the personnel changes in Albany will have no ripple effect here.

Ellen Polivy

Editor’s response: The writer, a former president of the Residents Association (and present delegate), whose husband is a member of the RIOC Board, ignores the editorial’s repeated exemption of the current RIOC president from the comments about the disservices of the patronage system to the Roosevelt Island community. The problems visited upon the Island are systemic, not embodied in any one individual, though there is also the problem of short tenure: About the time that a new president, good or bad, catches on and gets traction, the patronage system gives us a new one – almost always chosen for reasons unrelated to skills or experience in community management. In any case, the overriding problem in current times is the governor’s failure to heed Islanders’ wishes as expressed at the ballot box – the utter absence of local democracy in Island governance.

Comment on WIRE stories, letters, and editorials online at MainStreetWIRE.com

After listening to Arianna Rosenberg of Hudson/Related (H/R) at the January 29 meeting of the RIOC Real Estate Advisory Committee, it appears to me that H/R is oriented to a distant future of the “Miracle of the Coming of Cornell” at the expense of the 14,000 present-day residents.

We all need stores now – hardware, a newsstand, a bakery, more choices in food and dining – the things that make a neighborhood.

Winick, the broker, has supposedly been attempting for two years to rent our stores. There are market reasons why they’ve had limited success. Attempts to land new merchants must consider today’s Roosevelt Island, not the community we will be a decade in the future.

Empty stores should be made presentable. I have personally contacted NoLongerEmpty.org (three times) to get them together with H/R to develop exhibits for empty stores. The Roosevelt Island Visual Art Association is another possibility that should appeal to that organization as well as H/R. Both have made contact with no results.

The Trellis construction shed is an eyesore that would not be tolerated by a landlord in other neighborhoods and should be painted.

Abandoned goods should be removed from the

hardware store window. The bleak bowling-alley look of the sidewalk outside Roosevelt Landings can be more appealing.

Signs must go up at the Tram and subway stations – even if temporary while we wait for the magic makeover – that tell visitors there is a retail center north of the Riverwalk complex. This subject was touched on, but



there is a question of who pays for the signage and locations. There is another side to the coin – community support. Main Street Sweets and the RIHS Visitor Center kiosk (operated by the Historical Society, of which I’m president) offer hot chocolate and coffee. Residents who make an automatic stop at Starbucks might consider these alternatives. Want more and better retail? Make our existing merchants happy. Give them your business. Also, it’s in the merchants’ interest to talk up the Island, to speed along the process of drafting new retailers.

Finally, as a means of sprucing up empty stores, I offer historical images from the Historical Society collection.

–Judith Berdy

island observer

COMING UP

– This Weekend –

Valentine’s Day, Sat Feb 14.

Bike New York survey continues at tinyurl.com/BNYsurvey.

Islander Roy Eaton performs at the piano in a Black History Month Concert, **Sat Feb 14** 2pm, Mount Vernon Public Library, 28 S. 1st Av., Mount Vernon, NY. Free; donations welcome. Info: 914-668-1840.

Memorial Service for Islander **Armand Schwab**, who died January 9, **Sun Feb 15** 12noon, Manhattan Park Community Center, 8 River Rd.

– Regularly Scheduled Meetings and Events –

See separate listing, page 10.

– The Next Two Weeks –

Presidents’ Day, Mon Feb 16.

Dr. Jordan Wolff, Chiropractor, Mon Feb 16 4pm, Senior Center, 546 Main St.

Learn to Ride (adults) presented by BikeNY, **Tue Feb 17** 10am-12noon, 1pm-3pm, Sportspark. Free. Register at bike.nyc/education/classes

Movie Night at the Library: *The Great Escape*, Tue Feb 17 6pm, Library. Adults.

***How the Monkey Tricked the Crocodile and Other Trickster Tales*, Wed Feb 18**, 3pm, Library. With performer Regina Ress. Ages 5-12.

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

Lunar New Year Craft, Fri Feb 20 3-4pm, Library. Ages 3-12. Space limited; first-come, first served.

Learn to Ride (kids) presented by BikeNY, **Sun Feb 22** 10am-12noon, Sportspark. Free. Register at bike.nyc/education/classes

Inauguration Ceremony for Assemblymember Rebecca Seawright, Sun Feb 22 2pm, Julia Richman Education Complex, 317 E. 67th St (First/Second Av.) Musical performances by Talent Unlimited High School and Marilyn Maye. Reception to follow. RSVP to 212-288-4607 or SeawrightInauguration2015@gmail.com.

Movie Night at the Library: *Blade*, Tue Feb 24 6pm, Library. Adults.

RIOC Board meets, Thu Feb 26 5:30pm, Manhattan Park Community Center, 8 River Rd.

Main Street Theatre & Dance Alliance *Grand Reopening Celebration – A Night to Remember*, honoring Owen Johnston II and Nina Wintringham, **Fri Feb 27** 7:30pm, Cultural Center. \$75 (\$100 at the door). Info and reservations: mstda.org/gala or email gala@mstda.org.

The Main Street WIRE – Sat Feb 28. Advertising deadlines: Display, Wed Feb 18 (advertising accepted after deadline on a space-available basis); decision date for circulars/inserts, Tue Feb 10; 6,000 copies due Thu Feb 26. **Future issues:** Mar 14, 28; Apr 11, 25; May 9, 23; Jun 6, 20; July issue to be announced; Aug 1, 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.

– Future Weeks –

Cornell Community & Construction Task Force meeting, Mon Mar 2 6-8pm, 546 Main St., 12th floor conference room.

Learn to Ride (adults) presented by BikeNY, **Tue Mar 3** 10am-12noon, 1pm-3pm, Sportspark. Free. Register at bike.nyc/education/classes

See **ComingUp**, page 14

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Krystyn Donnelley and students of Legacy High School;
Kim Massey and students from the PS/IS 217 Beacon Program,
Juniors and Cadettes of Girl Scout Troop 3324



The WIRE

As our last column was being written, the city was bracing for the forecast of the worst snowfall in recent history. Predictions of up to 3 feet led to long lines at grocery stores and gas stations throughout the city, with empty shelves and kale shortages headlining the news. As Roosevelt Islanders, we calmly prepared ourselves, stocking up on necessities and grabbing last-minute, just-in-case items. The lines at our Gristedes, though longer than usual, were nowhere near the hysteria seen on the local news, with the only shortages being the staples for making cookies, milk to wash them down, and hot chocolate mix. With anticipation buzzing throughout the community, Roosevelt Islanders took the reportedly impending doom and gloom in stride, planning not for “snowmageddon” but for an extended “snowcation” with family, friends, and neighbors. While the rest of the city lamented that the storm didn’t live up to its hype, Island children and parents gleefully took the opportunity to make snowmen, and sled down hills of untouched snow. Many residents trudged through snow to see neighbors and friends, or simply enjoyed an unexpected but welcome day off.

Families, friends, and neighbors – that is who comprises Roosevelt Island, and what this community is about. When the waters surrounding our little ship floating in the East River become rough, threatening the stability of our friends and neighbors, we are called to come together to help right the ship.

MST&DA

During our last Common Council session on February 4, the Main Street Theatre & Dance Alliance (MST&DA) was a friend and neighbor who came to

The RIRA Column

ask for help. For generations of Island children and families, as well as our artists and arts supporters, MST&DA has provided theatrical and dance training and performance opportunities. From the Music Together program’s introduction to music for our newborns and toddlers, to ballet, tap, and jazz for children, staged musicals and plays for children and teens, and professionally-staged performances and physical fitness programs for adults, MST&DA provides programs for every stage of an Islander’s life, whether as a performer or as a member of the audience.

When MST&DA’s home at the Roosevelt Island Cultural Center at 548 Main Street was flooded a few years ago, and then flooded even more severely during Hurricane Sandy, the continued existence of MST&DA was never in doubt. Temporarily housed in the Good Shepherd Center while RIOC was repairing the Cultural Center, MST&DA quietly anticipated a return to its original home.

But when MST&DA appeared before the Common Council on February 4, a long shadow of doubt had been cast over whether it would be able to leave the Good Shepherd Center and return to its home – or even continue its operations. Questions about RIOC’s proposed rent rate and MST&DA’s ability to operate See **RIRA Column**, page 14



Jeffrey Escobar, President
Roosevelt Island Residents Association
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The WIRE publishes these columns, exclusively, as a service to the community and to the entities invited to provide them, and does not control or censor their content.

The forecasts called for three feet of snow. Islanders left work early to stock up on food and water. But what about the 66 cats living outdoors on the Island, some of them old, frail, or recently abandoned without winter fur growth? Enter Island Cats. Volunteers shoveled paths around feeding stations, made sure the cats had one unfrozen meal per day and access to fresh water, and checked daily for snow drifting near the four cat colonies scattered about the Island.

For many years, Roosevelt Island was an area of concern to city animal rescue activists. Hospitals and a prison were home for “inconvenient” humans into the 20th century, before the Island became a dumping ground for unwanted pets. In the 1970s, residents Marjorie Marcallino, Pat Lyons, Linda Egan, and Ann Hallowell began looking after the cats. To feed them, the women crawled through rubble and sneaked into the empty buildings that offered shelter to the cats. But the sprawling, fearful population reproduced at an alarming rate. A more formal approach was needed, with more people to help.

Island Cats was founded in 2005 by me, Hallowell, and fellow resident Rossana Ceruzzi. As always, the main object was to care for the outdoor cats. Today, we maintain the existing colonies, provide food and medical attention, and try to find homes for adoptable animals. Daily meals of wet and dry food are provided to all four colonies and the cats who prefer to live on their own, at an expense of about \$1,250 per month. Medical attention ranges from spay-neutering to treatment for serious emergency conditions.

The group’s first major project was to spay and neuter cats throughout the Island, working with the ASPCA and the Toby Project. Geof Kerr offered the facilities of Boy Scout Troop 59 as holding space for the cats. RIOC and Public Safety gave their blessing to a week-long process that included trapping, surgery, and the return of each cat to its colony.

Approximately 70 cats were fixed over the first three years, with two or three craftily resisting. Guided by Neighborhood Cats and the Mayor’s Alliance for NYC’s Animals, two City groups that care for abandoned and feral animals, Island Cats joined the nationwide Trap-Neuter-Return program (TNR), in which the cats live out their natural lives in carefully maintained colonies.

TNR has helped gradually reduce the Island cat

population, though animal abandonment, punishable in New York State by fines and/or imprisonment, continues. Island Cats tries to find homes for the newly discarded and still adoptable cats, but the economy has made it more difficult. Sadly, this is now a national trend, despite a rising interest in animal rescue work. Now, most cats left on the Island must remain outdoors. Volunteers try to give them extra attention until the terrified animals adapt or disappear.

Holly Staver of City Critters once teasingly observed that the outdoor cats of Roosevelt Island are treated like “little celebrities.” That has not changed. The 21 volunteers, who range from a retired podiatrist and Island school secretary to the toddler who accompanies his dad at feeding time, get to know and care about these appreciative cats with the devotion they feel for their own pets or the ones they would like to have. Some of the original volunteers remain, like Amy Richmond, who, with her daughter Lucia, was the group’s first volunteer feeder and is now an Island Cats board member. The intrepid Marcallino, one of those first feeders in the 1970s, provides history and context as a board member “emeritus.” The group’s president, Jennifer Schuppert, is helping to shape a newer history.

Island Cats reaches out to humans, too. Our 2009 children’s cat drawing competition was one of the most successful outreach projects. (The drawing here was created by Amanda, a student of Camille Mouquinho, art teacher at The Child School.) Today, Joan Ogden, a certified pet therapist and longtime Island Cats member, visits homebound seniors and disabled residents for interaction with her trained therapy cats, Tiger and Sam, both eager cuddlers.

You get as much as you give, whether it’s a peaceful hour outdoors, coming to know and be known by an increasingly friendly cat, or simply belonging to a community of animal-loving Islanders. Island Cats welcomes new volunteers and tax-deductible donations to help continue and expand this rewarding work. For more information, go to www.islandcats.org or email us at contact@islandcats.org.

–Jennifer Dunning



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ROSE ASSOCIATES

Dominic Sciallo

Islanders

Holding Bronze Star and Other Medals, Sciallo Still Says, “I’m No WW2 Hero.”

by Anri Wheeler

Walking the halls of the Roosevelt Island Senior Center, Dominic Sciallo is completely at ease. “This is more like my second home. At my age now, I have no other place to go,” the 87-year-old says, after entering the room that is normally home to an English as a Second Language class, sculpting and latch hook. Seated on one of the blue plastic chairs that are scattered throughout the center, Dominic’s head is just level with a row of watercolor portraits done by some of the seniors. He is one of the many faces of the place, his solid gaze and shy smile fitting right in with those on the wall behind him.

When asked about his time in World War II, Dominic produces a crinkled envelope from his back pocket and removes a faded piece of paper. On it, in bold typewriter lettering, are the details of his service, for which he was recently decorated. “I have quite a few medals. I gave them all to my son to take home. The only one I’m missing is the Bronze which probably was given to me after I left the hospital – I don’t know.” He speaks slowly and deliberately, clasping his large hands in front of his mouth.

Dominic was born in East Harlem and voluntarily joined the U.S. Army in 1940. He was placed in the

first infantry division and shipped first to Fort Wadsworth in Staten Island before he was sent overseas. “We were an amphibious force...we had a lot of experience going through England and Scotland training for different invasions, the first one was the invasion of [North] Africa. After that, north Sicily,” he says. After Sicily, Dominic was sent back to England

for further training and – under the control of the British Army – he landed on Omaha beach on D-Day. “We were trained to get off the boat and get off the beach. I just happened to be a lucky one, the bullet wasn’t meant for me. I happened to see a hole and I dove in the hole right at the end of the beach and I watched all the activity... We couldn’t move cause



Dominic Sciallo died Wednesday. A formal obituary has not been received, but we reprint here a portion of a profile prepared for *The WIRE* in January 2005.

they had us trapped, they had machine guns and what-not, a whole artillery there. We were unfortunate that, at that time, a German regiment was running maneuvers in that area so we got the brunt of them.”

Dominic does not know how

long he was on the shore, but the experience left an indelible impression on him. “There was quite a bit of activity, all the kids on the beach. From what I understand, they had to have the bulldozers get the bodies off the beach.” Amid the chaos of the beach, Dominic and his company had a group of engineers working with them to build a path through to safety. Dominic was fortunate in that they eventually prevailed and were able to find a route around the rear of the German forces. He and the rest of his company escaped to Belgium.

Ruth Davidson

Ruth Faye Davidson, born on October 16, 1928, died on February 8. A Memorial Service at the Roosevelt Island Senior Center is being planned. Her husband and a son predeceased her. She leaves behind a daughter, Ellen Rogers, who also lives on Roosevelt Island, and other children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Her granddaughter, Melissa Rogers, said these words about her grandmother, “My Nana, the only grandmother that I ever had; was the one who taught me how to draw and took me to my first ballet and tap dance classes at the age of four. The last picture was of my Nana was taken on November 13, 2014, less than three months ago.

It was my birthday dinner at Riverwalk restaurant on Roosevelt Island.

May my Nana rest in peace and walk with God, and her son, and her husband, my Gumpa. Forever loved. Forever in my heart”

She had a recent heart attack in December, her third. She was a well-known Islander, having lived here for over 30 years. She was very active in the Senior Center and was a sometime staffer of *The Main Street WIRE*.



Kallos Promises Work On Transit Options, Traffic Safety, Education

by Sara Maher

City Council Member Ben Kallos staged a State of the District event on Sunday, February 8, to highlight his accomplishments and present his goals for 2015.

Since his election in November 2013, said Kallos, he has proposed and gotten passed four local laws and two resolutions. With fellow Council Member Jimmy Vaca, he introduced and secured passage of a local law that mandates online publication of all items currently in the City Record. Two other laws “improve transparency, efficiency, and participation in our city;” the fourth will make City laws available online.

Kallos reported that he secured \$35 million of the \$110 million needed to complete the East River Waterfront Esplanade project, which is connecting two miles of public space along the East River.

He is also one of 24 Council Members involved in participatory budgeting, a process that allows community members to decide directly how tax dollars are spent. He allocated \$2.7 million toward selected projects.

Said Kallos of the time remaining in his term, “With two years, 10 months, 19 days, 10 hours, 30 minutes and about 40 seconds left, we’ve got so much more to get done, in precious little time.”

Roosevelt Island

Kallos said he is supporting *Vision Zero*, that “no member of our community should ever lose his or her life in a traffic collision,” by launching a “Livable Streets” initiative to examine the safety of neighborhoods. After a series of traffic and pedestrian collisions, including October’s fatal bike accident on the Island, Kallos asked residents to report the most dangerous intersections and the streets that are most in need of improvements. After polling 60,000 residents, his office released two reports, *Dangerous Intersections* and *Street Improvements*. He asked residents to view them and to report additional dangerous intersections, insufficient bus shelters, desired locations for CityBenches and CityRacks (benches and bike racks placed by the Department of Transportation), and streets in a state of disrepair. (The potholes on the Island-access Helix are noted in *Street Improvements* at benkallos.com/livable-streets.)

Kallos says he is working to improve transportation options on Roosevelt Island and in nearby areas of Manhattan, calling an improved ferry system “another

promise for my platform.” He said that service “will be coming to the East Side and Roosevelt Island by 2018.” He proudly announced that “the Second Avenue Subway is on track for completion on December 31, 2016.”

Schools

Kallos, a graduate of the City public school system, has proposed many projects to improve it. He said his goal is “to support our principals, teachers, parents, and students” by “providing resources and advocacy for what they need.” He is a Campaign Partner of “Lunch 4 Learning,” a campaign to make free meals available to all public school students. His goal is for “all 1.1 million students to have a free salad bar, breakfast after the bell, and lunch,” and reported that he “won free school lunch for middle schools.”

After a constituent brought up the need for more school counselors, Kallos created mobile offices to send additional social workers to schools, including PS/IS 217. To prepare students for higher education and career opportunities, he put \$1 million in discretionary funds into STEM-based programs (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) for public schools, including \$225,000 for updated computers, laptops, smart devices, and document cameras for the Island’s public school.

Kallos has also proposed a student-loan-repayment system for CUNY graduates. If adopted, the city would repay 10% of CUNY graduates’ student loans every year that they remain in the city. He re-emphasized his plans for education by saying, “I am committed to making sure our city’s children grow up healthy from cradle to career, with a fair chance at the American dream.”

Kallos said that citizens are his “eyes and ears” around the city. “This office belongs to you – and is open to you.” He hosts First Friday sessions at his office every month so citizens can bring up important issues. Citizens with good ideas for policy or legislation are invited to Policy Night on the second Tuesday of every month. Kallos also has mobile hours at various locations (including the RIOC offices at 591 Main Street on the first Tuesday of the month). He will also come to constituents’ homes for a “Ben in Your Building” session if a minimum of 10 neighbors attend. His designated contact for questions regarding the Island is long-term resident Joseph Strong (jstrong@benkallos.com).

Capital, from page 1

Corporation about cleaning up Coler Hospital’s east-side parking lot to enhance the land leading to Lighthouse Park.

Budgeting

Much of the increase in capital spending is the result of rolling over funds from the current fiscal year, as less than one-third of the budgeted money was actually spent. Rankin emphasized, “A budget is a planning document – not a mandate. Now that there is sufficient revenue to fund larger projects, our capital projects schedule has become more ambitious. Whether the money in the budget is spent this year or the next, that amount has been set aside and earmarked for the listed projects.”

As a State agency, RIOC must jump through a variety of hoops in the process of spending money. An example was discussed in Monday’s Operations Committee meeting. The elevator at the Manhattan Tram station is to be replaced. Bids were requested, but there were no bidders initially. A bidder was finally located, but only for design, not construction.

Indelicato discussed that elevator situation in a Wednesday press release, writing, “As the elevators themselves are due for an overhaul, the most efficient way to deal with the issues is through a replacement of the current system. After rating and ranking responses to a Request for Proposals (RFP) to design two new, larger, ADA-accessible elevators, RIOC has selected a contractor. The new elevators will replace the current smaller elevator as well as the red accessible lift, improving the station’s accessibility. A kickoff meeting will soon be held, where the elevator designers will present their proposals. The design is scheduled to be completed within 90 days. Once the design is complete, RIOC will seek a qualified contractor to build

the elevators to specifications.”

In Monday’s meeting, it seemed apparent that, with the bidding, reviewing, and permitting required, the first of the new elevators is a year away. Among other requirements, RIOC and the City have to agree on use of land that is now part of Tramway Park.

Financing

The Island is unique in that its “municipal” budget is not financed by residents’ taxes, but through ground rent paid by developers and owners of the housing complexes, who receive rent or maintenance payments from residents. Some outside money comes from permitting of film shoots, Motorgate parking, and tourist use of the Tram, but the Island’s finances are mostly funded by those who live here. Tram revenue and Motorgate income are largely offset by payments for their management.

Capital projects are one part of a three-part budget that also accounts for personal services (staff), for which they have \$18.3 million, and “other than personal services,” or OTPS (such as insurance, office supplies, AVAC repairs, and buses), for which they have \$10.3 million.

“Our operating budget is easier to predict,” explained Rankin in an email exchange with *The WIRE*. “The capital budget is subject to a higher degree of change due to many factors. Project budget lines are based on an estimate of how much the project will cost. During competitive bidding, vendors submit prices that may vary from our estimate for a variety of reasons, so other projects may be postponed or changed in scope due to the level of construction and other activity on the Island.”

Full Budget

RIOC’s fiscal year budget for 2015-16 is available on line at RIOC.com/pdf/15-16ApprovedBudget.pdf.

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Adventures OFF-Island

Compiled by Sara Maher

You’ve dominated your Netflix queue, half-knitted six scarves, and finally finished that Monopoly game you started on Christmas Eve... and *It’s. Still. Cold.* Ready for the great outdoors, as long as it’s not too far out? Throw caution to the (icy, icy) wind with these indoor/outdoor activities.

Beads or Books

Valentine’s Day is really just a made-up holiday. Spend today celebrating Mardi Gras instead. Bryant Park’s Mardi Gras at Le Carrousel lets you swap your chocolate hearts for chocolate coins and your diamonds for plastic beads. Enjoy the tricks of magician R.J. Lewis, music from the Jambalaya Brass Band, and rides on the Park’s famous merry-go-round. If the jazz gets too breezy, go inside NYPL’s Schwarzman Building for free exhibits such as *Public Eye: 175 Years of Sharing Photography and Over Here: WWI and the Fight for the American Mind.*



► F downtown to Bryant Park-42nd Street and follow the jazz. Saturday, February 14, Mardi Gras 1-2pm. Admission free, but carousel rides are \$3 each or 10 for \$15. BryantPark.org/plan-your-visit/hours.html. The library is always free and is open Saturday 10am-6pm. NYPL.org/events/exhibitions

Sparklers and Snacks

There’s nothing to keep you toasty like a crackling fireplace, but we apartment-dwellers will just have to settle for firecrackers instead. The 16th annual *New Year Firecracker*

Ceremony and Cultural Festival is sure to start the Year of the Sheep (or goat, or ram) with a – wait for it – BANG! After the fun, warm your belly with Chinese food from, well, anywhere (for great grab-and-go, get the five-for-\$1 pork chive dumplings at Prosperity Dumpling).

第十六屆新春炮竹文藝大匯演

F downtown to Second Avenue and walk south through Sara D. Roosevelt Park. Thursday, February 19, 11am. Free. BetterChinatown.com/upcoming-events/ Prosperity Dumpling is just southeast of Sara D. Roosevelt Park at 46 Eldridge St.



Art and... Art?

If the recent dump of wintry weather left you feeling like a robot, you should at least try to be an artsy robot. The Hole is hosting *Remember the Future*, featuring the work of KATSU, who apparently pioneered the use of drones for painting. Spend as much time debating the merits of his *Android Selfies* as you want. At least you’re indoors.



► F downtown to Broadway-Lafayette, then walk northeast to 312 Bowery. Gallery open Wednesday-Sunday 12noon-7pm. Free. Tinyurl.com/mswKatsu

Hot Chocolate. Cold Chocolate. Any Chocolate.

This next show’s outside, sorry, but we’re going to say it’s worth it. Grab a cup of hot cocoa before heading to the *Bank*

of America Special Olympics Showcase, featuring talented local Special Olympics athletes and professional skaters. After the show, you can try out the ice for yourself, or head to Grand Central Terminal to continue your chocolate spree. Grand Central celebrates National Chocolate Lover’s Month by becoming Chocolate Central, with 17 shops offering tastings and special chocolate sales.



► F downtown to Bryant Park-42nd Street and go to The Rink. Tuesday, February 24, 6-7pm. Free. Skating is free, but skate rentals are \$15. WinterVillage.org/visit Grand Central Terminal is directly east of Bryant Park at 42nd St between Vanderbilt and Park Avenues. Chocolate Central is daily through February 28. Check the website for participating stores and discounts – tinyurl.com/GCTchoc

A Walk through History

Central Park is lovely this time of year. After a delightful stroll through the Central Park Zoo, check out *The Migration* at the Arsenal Gallery. In celebration of Black History Month, 22 artists created interpretations of the “Great Migration,” a term used to describe the movement of six million African-Americans from the racially segregated South to northern and western US cities.

► F downtown to Lexington/63rd and walk west to enter the park; the Arsenal is located at 830 Fifth Avenue. Open weekdays through February 24 from 9am-5pm. Free. Tinyurl.com/parksMigrate

COMING UP

Continuing Events & Activities

A listing of **repeating** or **regularly held** meetings & events (a listing of other events scheduled for this weekend and in coming weeks appears on page 3)

ART EXHIBITS

Islander Dan Nistor presents a one-artist show, *Characters at Dusk*, Octagon Gallery. 9am-8pm daily through Feb 28.

PARKS

Southpoint Park open daily 6am-10pm.

Lighthouse Park open daily 7am-9pm.

Four Freedoms Park daily 9am-5pm. **Closed Tue.** Free guided tours **Sat** 11am, 3pm; **Sun** 11am.

CLASSES

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

Hands-Only CPR Training, **1st Wed** 10:45am, Senior Center, 546 Main St.; **2nd Tue** 8pm, 546 Main St 12th-floor conference room; **3rd Thu** 5pm, Child School, 587 Main St.; **4th Sun** 5:45pm, Good Shepherd Center, 543 Main.

We Are New York English conversation groups, Fr 10:30am-12:30pm, through Fri Mar 27.

MUSIC

First Sunday Jazz Salon, **1st Sun** 5-7pm, Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main St. \$10 donation.

EXERCISE & SPORTS (*alphabetical*)

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

Basketball (adults), **Mon-Thu** 7:30-9:30pm, PS/IS 217. Free.

Bike New York classes continue through winter; schedule at BikeNewYork.org.

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

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 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.

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

Yoga (open-level), **Mon & Thu** 6:15-7:15pm, **Sat** 11:15am-12:15pm, Sportspark. \$5. Mats available. **Yoga** (Vinyassa-flow) with Keren Messer, **Mon** 7:45pm, **Fri** 10am, Good Shepherd Center. Info: KerenMsR@gmail.com.

Yoga (Hatha) with Keren Messer, **Tue** 6:30pm, Good Shepherd Center.

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

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

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

BIRTH THROUGH TODDLER (*Sat-Fri*)

Mommy & Me Swim Classes for children 6 months to 3 years. Spots available for drop-ins **Wed** 10:30 and **Sun** 1:30 or 2:00. Info at rioc.ny.gov.

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.

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

OLDER KIDS (*listed Sat-Fri*)

Swimming classes (age 3-up), **Sat** 3-4pm, Sportspark. \$15 or \$100/10 weeks. Questions/registration, ryansherrill84@gmail.com or 917-261-2771.

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/Rlyouth.

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.

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

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

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.

SENIORS

Lunch, **Mon-Fri** noon, Senior Center, 546 Main St. \$1.50. Menus outside social worker’s office. Also see listing below.

REGULAR MEETINGS (*listed 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.

Women’s Health Organization, last **Wed** 6:30pm, 546 Main St, 12th floor conference room.

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, 4-7pm and Library, 3-6pm (Oct 28). 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, **4th 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 from 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.

Senior Center

Monday
10:00 Zumba
11:00 Computers
5:00 Brain & Body Stretch
Tuesday
10:20 Shoppers’ Bus
10:30 Building Strength
11:00 Blood Pressure
1:00 Paint & Sculpt
Wednesday
9:00-1:00 Free Tax Help (open to all)
9:30 Yoga Stretch
10:20 Shoppers’ Bus
10:30 Salsa with Luis
10:45 Spanish
11:00 Social Media for Seniors:
Facebook, Instagram, Photos, more
10:45 Spanish
1:00 Bridge
1:30 Scrabble
6:00-8:00 Computer Lab

Thursday
9:15 Chair Pilates
10:30 Zumba
12:30 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 Tai Chi
12:00 Korean Exercise
2:00 Art with John
2:00 Pokeno
7:00 Games (RISA)

Special Events

Indian Food Shopping & Restaurant, **Wed Feb 25** 9:30am-1:30pm. See Bubu.

Black History Month Observance, **Sat Feb 28** 5pm, Senior Center, 546 Main St. Free. Entertainment and refreshments.

Retail, from page 11
business locations after the RIOC Board decided that RIOC itself was ill-equipped to handle retail leasing. This added the Main Street retail strip to the retail locations in Southtown that H/R was already managing. The action gave H/R 30 years of control over the spaces.

Master Retail Plan
The master retail plan calls for creation of a vital, diverse, and profitable retail environment along the Main Street corridor. It tasks H/R with the attendant marketing plan for the premises, maximizing retail revenue, attracting new tenants, and organizing new retail subleases to create a focal point around Good Shepherd Plaza.

The master lease contains a provision entitled *Upgrade and Maintenance of the Premises* that obligates H/R to perform whatever renovations or improvements are necessary so that the rental premises are at a level similar to those in Riverwalk Commons. This includes new storefronts, exterior signage, exterior lighting, wayfinding signage, and other exterior improvements to enhance the physical attractiveness and accessibility of the spaces.

Hudson/Related pays RIOC \$75,000 monthly plus a 2% raise per year for 100,414 square feet. When the master lease was signed in 2011, 22% of that space was vacant. Back then, the United States Postal Service was spending \$20,250 monthly and Gristedes’ monthly rent was \$15,033. The next highest was the Roosevelt Island Cleaners at \$6,774.91. A close fourth was Trellis. Meanwhile, the hardware store was \$35,800 in arrears.

Recap
Rosenberg started the meeting with a summary of the partnership’s first four years. She described the status of retail at the beginning: “There were 13 vacant storefronts. We had multiple tenants without leases, multiple tenants who were super-behind on paying rent, and some who weren’t paying at all. “There is a lot of activity here,” she said, attributing it to “our renovation, Cornell coming, and our new buildings.” She also said, “Islanders are starting to frequent the shops here. That’s really important.”
There are nine new leases: Wholesome Market, the New York Public Library branch, Subway, Island Wine & Spirits, Coach Scot’s Main Street Sweets, the urgent care facility, Gallery RIVAA, Trellis, and a daycare operation that

leased 568 Main Street. Rosenberg said the daycare is licensed, and is currently operating in an apartment on the Island. It is rumored to be Crèche du Monde, which is located in a Manhattan Park apartment and has another location on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.
Listing other successes, Rosenberg said, “We finally won an eviction for the hardware store space. We are working with RIVAA to put up an installation in the windows in that space.” She included the Gristedes’ renovation as a success. “We’re trying to get more uses to the Island that people really need.”

Delays
Rosenberg said that, although there are still six empty spaces remaining, “We’re working on a lot of deals. We’re talking to a lot of people that the community will be happy with.” Specifically, she mentioned, “Food uses we think the Island will like – restaurant-type – and not-for-profits who are looking to remain in the community.”

“We don’t want to sign a lease with someone who isn’t vetted. We want to make sure the people we invest our time and money in are going to have a great business and be part of the community and do well here.”

RIOC Board members were curious as to what Hudson/Related blames for the six still-empty spaces. Rosenberg explained that, for the most part, the spaces themselves are what is to blame. She said, “Many of the spaces were never inhabited. They’re not sub-metered, they don’t have utilities, and they’re not up to code. When a new retailer comes in, they expect a bunch of things. Either they’re installing them or we are. It’s part of our lease negotiation. We work with them to get the utilities they need into their stores.”

“And each space is very different. We are in five different buildings, including Motorgate. Their utilities are different, their sub-metering is different, they look different, and all of the spaces work very differently.”

Moreover, Rosenberg explains that getting people to come to the Island isn’t always easy. She said, “I think the Island was off the beaten path. We have to get people to come here and see how much foot-traffic there is and how many people there are. It takes time to have that buy-in. I think we’ve been extremely successful, especially since our renovation, and I think it helped. Now we are starting to populate the stores with

Listing from the retail master lease shows the status of spaces when Hudson/Related took on the job of attracting retail operations to Main Street. Several have moved, indicated with an M, some are filled (F), and some have been emptied (E), are committed (C), or are expected to move (>).

retailers the community has been looking for.”
Rosenberg denied that rental rates are a factor. “We’re not charging Manhattan rents. We’re not even charging Long Island City rents.”

Islanders’ Concerns
The meeting got heated when various Board members and attending residents queried Rosenberg about the way some of the spaces look.

Board member Margie Smith said, “They [empty spaces] look so awful. They’re not being kept nice. It’s one thing not being able to rent them, but keep them nice. You can see the broken shelves in the hardware store, and it looks awful. Cover it up somehow and not with that brown paper. Get one of those temporary installations.”

Board member David Kraut said, “The thing is, it’s our street. I hate to walk down the street and see crappy stuff. If you can’t rent the spaces, at least keep the windows spruced up so the passersby don’t get depressed just from walking down the street.”

Board member Howard Polivy suggested it would help H/R find tenants faster if the empty spaces were used for performances and kept well-lit, that there would be an increase of foot-traffic as a result. But Rosenberg declined to make any promises about her plans for the empty spaces. She said, “We have so many deals percolating. If they don’t go forward, we can revisit [this idea].”

Historical Society President Judy Berdy made an impassioned plea regarding the state of Island retail. She said, “You walk out of my building [Rivercross] and the eye goes to Trellis, which is covered in raw wood, or the hardware store, with last summer’s bathing trunks hanging in the window. I worry that you people are waiting to serve Cornell and ignoring the 14,000 people who live here now. I need a place to buy a manila envelope. I need a place to buy my *New York Times*. I need a place to buy a lottery ticket. I run the visitor kiosk, and I know how

ADDRESSES OF COMMERCIAL SPACES						
Number		Name	Street	Square Footage		Total
				Bsmnt	2-Floor	
Motorgate						
682		Space Plus/HomeGoods			448	448
686		Gristedes-Supermarket	25,172			25,172
694		US Post Office	9,680			9,680
Subtotal			34,852	0	448	35,300
Westview						
591		RIOC Offices	1,780	888	1,996	4,664
599C		We are One (Clothing)	1,320			1,320
599D	M	Accounting/Finance	1,320			1,320
605	F	Vacant (Formerly Grog Shop)	1,546	787		2,333
609		China 1 - Restaurant	1,530	694		2,224
615	E	Boy Scouts - Store/Office	776			776
619		Amalgamated Bank	2,974			2,974
Subtotal			11,246	2,369	1,996	15,611
Island House						
549		Trellis/Coffee Shop	2,364	1,814		4,178
559	F	Vacant	568	286		854
563		Island Newsstand	2,229	1,844		4,073
567		RI Cleaners	2,203	962		3,165
579		M&D Delicatessen	2,090	1,058		3,148
Subtotal			9,454	5,964	0	15,418
Eastwood						
504	C	Vacant School/Misc	5,000	1,378	5,740	12,118
520	C	Thrift Shop	3,835			3,835
526	>	NY Public Library	2,322			2,322
530		Vacant-Retail/Office	1,158			1,158
532		Vacant-Retail/Office	1,050	1,144		2,194
544	E	RI Hardware/Video	2,172	710	910	3,792
546A		Vacant-Retail/Office	686		1,280	1,966
548		Public Safety-Retail/Office	420			420
550		Public Safety-Retail/Office	480			480
552		Public Safety-Retail/Office	1,803	1,081		2,884
564		Cabrini Chapel	914			914
568		Vacant-Store/Office	505			505
570		RI Nail Salon	816	205		1,021
Subtotal			21,161	4,518	7,930	33,609
Rivercross						
503		Vacant	1,978	300		2,278
507	E	Dr. Flanigan	808			808
513		Vacant-Retail/Office	920			920
521		Vacant	1,887	228		2,115
523		Beauty Salon of RI	1,294			1,294
527		Riva Gallery	1,630	816		2,446
Subtotal			8,517	1,344	0	9,861
Day Spring Church						
Subtotal			4,810	620		5,430
Above Grade Square Footage						100,414
Vacant Above Grade						22,318
Vacancy of Above Grade						22.2%

many people come off the Tram and the subway. Nobody walks south anymore. [Goldwater leaving] was a big blow to Island merchants. There were 2,000 Goldwater employees, and over 1,000 patients and their visitors. You’re pulling everything out from under us. You did make Main Street look better, but it’s way worse because now we see how bleak it is.” (Berdy has an *Island Observer* piece on page 2.)
Another resident, Marianne Russem, mentioned peeling paint, and discussed moving the new Island-shaped benches in the Roosevelt Landings (Eastwood) arcade across the walkway so that, for example, a bench would be against Public

Safety and facing toward Main Street instead of practically in Main Street and facing into Public Safety. She said, “They’re terrible. You sit with the cars whooshing down your back. They’re not under shelter. When it rains, you can’t sit on them.”

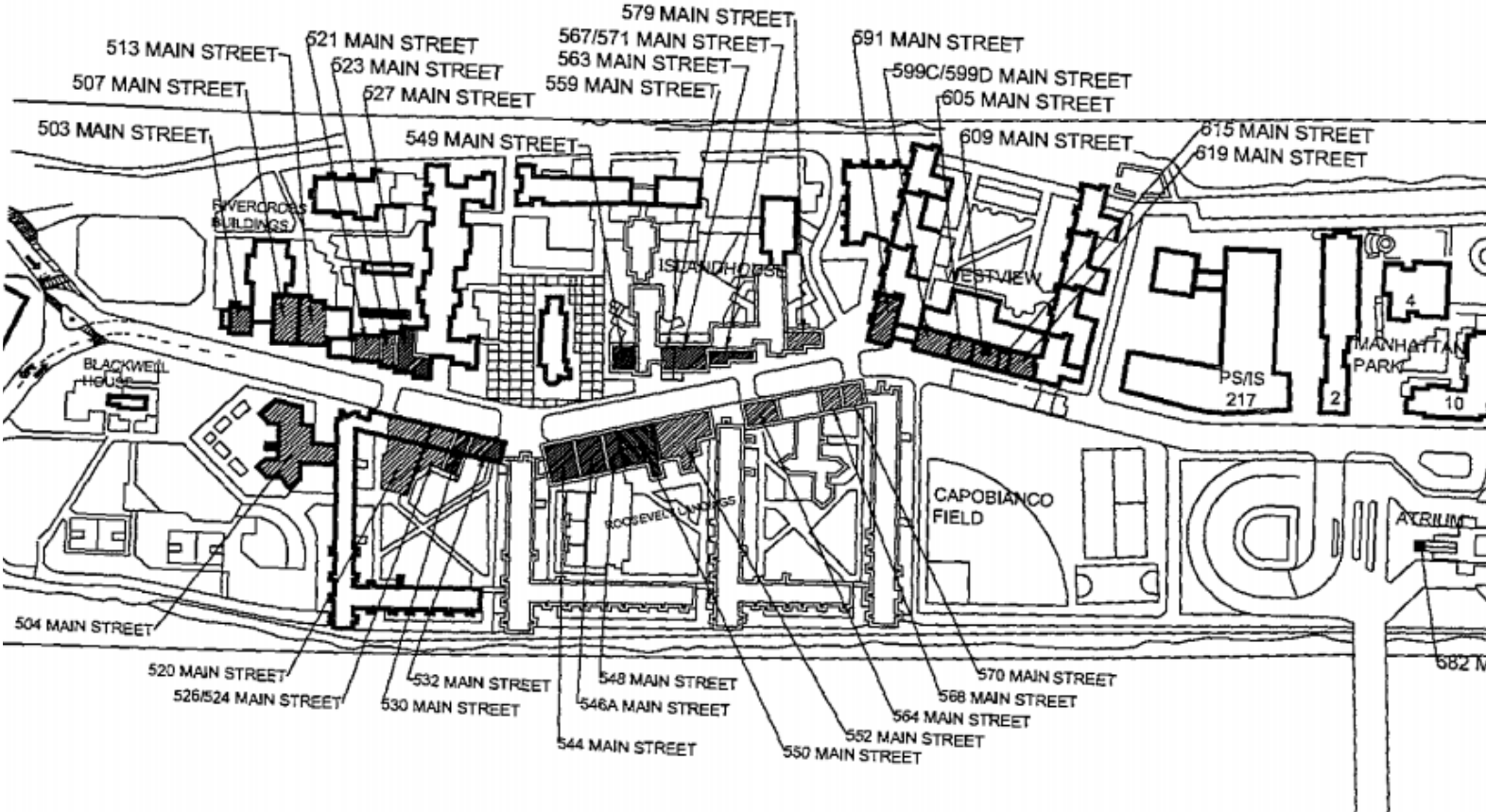
Wayfinding
Under the master lease, wayfinding signage is part of H/R’s responsibility. Four years in, it was pointed out, that’s still on the to-do list.

Stationery Store
Since the meeting with the Real Estate Advisory Committee, not much has happened regarding the Cards & Gifts store. Much of its merchandise is marked 50% off, and rumors persist that the store will be closing at the end of the month. But the owner says that discussions are ongoing, and no decision has been made yet about the store’s future.

At the meeting, Rosenberg outlined what she saw as its options. She explained that the owner could renovate and keep his space, or he could move to a smaller vacant space, and she gave 506 and 615 Main Street as examples.

Eleanor’s Pier
According to Rosenberg, food service will not return to the dock near the subway station because “it wasn’t super-successful.”

Map shows the area commonly referred to as the Main Street retail corridor, or commercial strip. There are additional commercial spaces in Motorgate, The Octagon, and at Southtown. Cornell NYC Tech is expected to have some retail operations.



MST&DA, from page 1
elsewhere in New York City at virtually any price.
Roosevelt Island had become a community.

Changes

That seems to have changed now. The encouragements that were so freely given by New York State are being withdrawn.

The space lovingly converted and maintained by MST&DA

was damaged in that 2011 storm called Sandy. It turned the Cultural Center, which includes the worship space used by the Roosevelt Island Jewish Congregation, into a soggy mess. RIOC stepped in and, as things go when a State agency tries to fix something, the needed repairs went through the unholy machine of RFP, design, bids, review, more bids, and – finally, work awarded, contracts signed.

All that, plus the renovations, took two and a half years.

MST&DA had to move its programs elsewhere. The Good Shepherd Center came alive with their activities, albeit with diminished participation: The temporary facility was just not up to MST&DA's needs, and it had to be rented.

Two and a half years on, RIOC has pronounced the renovated space ready for prime time.

Two and a half years on, RIOC has only now told MST&DA that they must start paying rent – fees – to use the space.

A Plan, Outlined

A negotiation has been under way. By late Thursday afternoon, MST&DA Secretary John Dougherty said there is the outline of an agreement. “We can live with it,” he said, expressing hope that a planned reduction in classes offered plus off-Island fundraising will cover RIOC's charges without cutting into scholarship funds.

MST&DA's board, while feeling the pain of the unexpected change, accepts the fact that

RIOC's portfolio of responsibility has evolved – that the priorities of the State administration are now different. Times have changed.

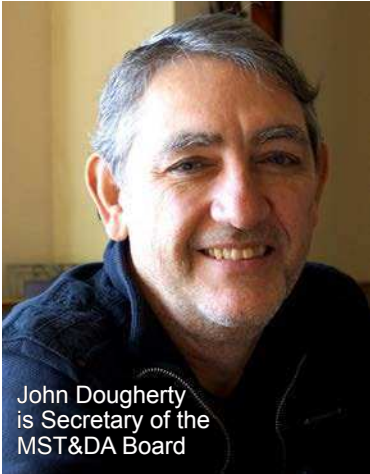
“Our goal and our determination is to continue this program,” says Jenine Olson, who chairs the MST&DA board of directors. “Whatever that takes. Whatever that takes, we have to do.” Not knowing about the requirement to pay fees for their space until now

“pushed us to act quickly,” says Olson. She and her colleagues tried to make the case that MST&DA is unique – that no other organization could claim to have renovated and occupied that space for 30 years – but RIOC has taken the position that other organizations could make their own claims of being “unique,” and that all organizations have to be treated alike.

In negotiations with RIOC, says Olson, “It's become clear that we have to reduce our footprint.” Without trims, the fees originally set forth by RIOC could have reached a total of \$8,000 a month. In some cases, the cuts mean consolidation of two classes into one. Less-popular classes will have to go.

These changes are compounded by the hit in participation from the two-plus years in Good Shepherd. “We are absolutely sure that there are core classes that will be back up to a financially viable status in a short time,” says Olson. But certain age groups for certain kinds of classes will have to be eliminated.

“It's important to understand,” says Dougherty, “that for there to be a cultural offering on Roosevelt Island, it has to be somewhat comprehensive. You can't cherry-pick the classes, because when parents are looking at the program, they have to see that there is enough of an offering that they can commit their kids to a progression through a sequence. If our program is too thin, it doesn't work, so we have



John Dougherty is Secretary of the MST&DA Board



Cast photo: A production of *Urinetown*

constraints in that regard. It has to be rich enough that it's attractive to the parents who are looking at our program for their children.”

MST&DA is tilted toward serving children and teens, thus providing a platform that launches young children into an enhanced level of confidence in school and other childhood activities. It provides the joy of accomplishment and, when there's a public performance, applause to go with it.

Scholarships

Jenine Olson worries that whatever MST&DA money goes to RIOC for rental or facility fees is money that will not be available for the scholarships, which have supported up to a quarter of MST&DA's young students at any given time. When they were paying rent for Good Shepherd space, says Olson, scholarship support had to be reduced.

When new on the Island, Olson herself found the presence of MST&DA transformative. “When I arrived from Queens West, I was not a happy camper,” she relates. “We had been on the waiting list here for 11 years.” Her family moved when their name came up on the Rivercross lottery list. “I didn't know anyone here. It was not what I had left. But, somehow, I discovered this little gem across the street. I took the opportunity to take first one class, then another – ballroom, then tap, then the musical theatre workshop, and the more I got involved, I appreciated the organization, the people taking the classes, and the leadership, and became head of concessions, and then Nina [Wintringham, Dougherty's late wife, who was then board president] asked me to join the board. I wanted to give back to the organization, and I think it has touched thousands of people in the same way.”

Says Dougherty, “I think there is an argument to be made, and RIOC is making that argument, that the kinds of actions that were necessary

when this was a very young community are no longer necessary – that, over time, the level of support has to change. There is much more competition for resources, now that there are more organizations. I do see the point that the reality of the Island is a different reality from what it was 30 years ago, and we have to recognize that. We have to deal with that reality. We can't wish it away.”

Dougherty is eager to see MST&DA programs back in the Cultural Center, which he views as necessary to sustain a quality program. He says many parents have kept their children in the organization's classes at Good Shepherd because, even though that space isn't up to the usual standard, the parents could anticipate an eventual return to the old space, refurbished. “Take that away, and we have a problem. It requires moving back into the Cultural Center to be viable for the long haul.”

Olson agrees. “The only way we can grow the program [back to its vitality of three years ago] is to be in the Cultural Center where parents can see their children progressing.” Dougherty adds, “Parents see the Cultural Center as a safe and welcoming place – a place where their children were safe, where there was

a beehive of activity, good stuff going on. To create that kind of atmosphere, an organization has to go after the whole ambience, the whole feeling. You have to create a sense that there is a Cultural Center functioning at multiple levels.”

Dougherty said he believes that RIOC understands that rent money will have to be raised, and that it can't be raised instantly. He says the organization's board hopes for a period of time to ramp up the effort.

Future

At press time, MST&DA's negotiations with RIOC were continuing. Olson and Dougherty have worried that the ultimate cost structure imposed by RIOC could be unsustainable. But they, along with the rest of the Main Street Theatre & Dance Alliance board, are determined to find a formula that will keep the organization's programs available to the residents of Roosevelt Island – and to see those programs back in their old home.

What wasn't fully clear at press time was whether RIOC is equally determined. RIOC President Charlene Indelicato had not responded to questions and a request for a statement on the matter. (Near press time, RIOC Board member Howard Polivy did respond, in part, to some of the questions, but not to follow-ups.) Indelicato's bi-weekly press release had this paragraph:

“Now that only a few items are left on the punch list, spaces in the newly renovated Community Cultural Center will soon be available by permit. As our community grows, many entities on this Island have grown alongside it and are in need of meeting and activity space. Offering a fair and reasonable booking fee to all local organizations is a matter of ethics and impartiality, and it's important to us to make the space available to as many local groups as possible on an equitable basis.”

Translation from the language of the bureaucracy: *From now on, it's gonna cost 'em.*



Sandy left the Main Street Theatre space soggy.



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Volume 35, Issue 9
January 31, 2015
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In This Issue...

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- Audit Exposes Nature of Child School Problems Under Ferrera
- Editorial: Albany, O, Albany
- Questions Remain on Cornell's Commitment On Barging vs Trucking
- Letters
- The RIRA Column
- The Cornell Column
- Characters at Dusk Features RI's Dan Nistor
- City Offers ID Cards With Incentives
- Adventures Off-Island

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Front Pages



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Waterfront Alliance Likes Ferry Plan

Posted in Web Extras

The Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance (MWA) says cheers erupted all over the City last week when the mayor announced his plan for affordable ferry service -- at the price of a MetroCard ride. Roosevelt Island is included. The MWA's take on the developments is [here](#).



Ferry Plans
(Click to enlarge)

Photo of the Day



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Archived photos and views of the Island appear here -- and you can submit yours, too.

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Breaking news when developments warrant your attention

Event listings are kept up-to-date between editions of *The WIRE*.

Two decades of past *WIREs* are available in the archive.



Mayor: Ferries at MetroCard Rate

Roosevelt Island will get ferry service to East 34th Street by 2017-18, if Mayor Bill de Blasio can make good on a plan announced in his State of the City address.

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Islanders

Mary Fitzgerald - Among the Finest

Islander Mary Fitzgerald, who has just reached age 92, was among NYC's earliest "policewomen," and then a Detective.

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To date, all the work on the site south of the Queensboro Bridge has been demolition, with most of the debris removed by barge, but...

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Characters at Dusk Features RI's Dan Nistor

Review: A very few gallery shows make you wish for more. Dan Nistor's show is one of them.



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City Offers ID Cards With Incentives

It's time to turn our attention to an historic initiative that will truly benefit New Yorkers: the launch of IDNYC, a free municipal photo identification card for all City residents as young as 14.

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\$50M to Cornell

Cornell NYC Tech has announced a \$50 million "naming gift" from Verizon.

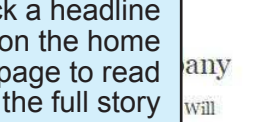
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Coming Up Soon

We Are New York English Conversation Group (Adult Intermediate Level) meets Fridays in February and March 10:30am-12:30pm at the library. [WIAA.org/News](#)

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Mayor Calls for Ferry Service at MetroCard Rates, Also Sees Affordable Housing as Key to Equality

The mayor said, "Today, we announce that we're launching a new citywide ferry service to be open for business in 2017. New ferry rides will be priced the same as a MetroCard fare, so ferries will be as affordable to everyday New Yorkers as our subways and buses. ... so residents of the Rockaways and Red Hook and Soundview will now be closer to the opportunities they need."

"And beyond connecting residents to jobs in Manhattan, our new citywide ferry system will spur the development of new commercial corridors throughout the outer boroughs."

A map issued by the mayor's office showed a route from Laguardia Airport to Roosevelt Island, then to Long Island City, then East 34th Street, with multiple transfer destinations from there, including Wall Street.



The text of de Blasio's address (http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/04/nyregion/mayor-bill-de-blasio-state-of-the-city.html?_r=0) also puts a focus on affordable housing.

Center Mon Feb 16 4pm.
Bike New York offers [Learn to Ride](#) - Adults, Tue Feb 17 10am-12pm and 1pm-3pm,

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ComingUp, from page 3

Science Fiction Book Discussion: *Button, Button: Uncanny Stories* by Richard Matheson, **Tue Mar 3** 6:30pm, Library.

Islander Bonnie Goodman performs in *The Songs of Jule Styne*, **Fri Mar 6** 7pm and **Sat Mar 14** 5pm, Don't Tell Mama NYC, 46th St. Reservations at DontTellMamaNYC.com or 212-757-0788 (after 4pm). \$20 cover plus 2-drink minimum, cash only.

Art, Antiques, and Heirlooms Valuation, **Sat Mar 7** 12noon-5pm, Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main St., presented by the Historical Society. \$20 donation to RIHS for professional evaluation of two items.

Daylight Saving Time begins, Sun Mar 8.

St. Patrick's Day, Tue Mar 17.

Bicycling Basics presented by BikeNY, **Tue Mar 17** 10am-12noon, 1pm-3pm, Sportspark. Free. Register at bike.nyc/education/classes

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

Bicycle Commuting presented by BikeNY, **Wed Mar 25** 7-:30pm, Sportspark. Free.

Islander Gerald Starlight performs a *Spring Concert* on the shakuhachi, **Sat Mar 28** 3pm, Jefferson Market Library, 425 Sixth Av. Free. Info: tinyurl.com/GS032815 or 212-243-4334.

Learn to Ride (adults) presented by BikeNY,

Tue Mar 31 10am-12noon, 1pm-3pm, Sportspark. Free. Register at bike.nyc/education/classes

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

Earth Day, Wed Apr 22.

Cornell Construction & Task Force quarterly meeting, **Mon Apr 27** 6-8pm, Gallery RIVAA. Open to the public.

Mothers' Day, Mon May 10.

Child School/Legacy High School annual Founder's Dinner, **Thu May 21**, 6pm, Terrace on the Park, 52-11 111th St., Flushing NY 11368; ticket price to be announced at a future date.

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

Memorial Day, Mon May 25.

Flag Day, Sun Jun 14.

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

Independence Day, Sat Jul 4.

Cornell Construction & Community Task Force quarterly meeting, **Mon Jul 27** 6-8pm, Gallery RIVAA. Open to the public.

Columbus Day, Mon Oct 12.

Cornell Construction & Community Task Force quarterly meeting, **Mon Oct 26** 6-8pm, 546 Main St. 12th floor.

RIRA Column, from page 3

under such financial obligations, and rumors of RIOC's intended use of space promised to MST&DA, clouded what should have been a natural step in the history of the organization. When MST&DA appeared before the Common Council, it asked RIRA to provide community support should their negotiations with RIOC, and efforts to remain on the Island, continue to be difficult.

As with any storm, breaks in the clouds cast new light and bring calmness to a previously choppy sea. As of the writing of this column, negotiations with RIOC have proceeded frankly and amicably, and the future of MST&DA on the Island is less in doubt. Regardless, it should be known that RIRA and its Common Council support MST&DA, and will continue to provide whatever we can to help it stay on the Island and move into its newly-renovated home. In an age when support for the arts and enrichment of our children's lives is slowly being cut, it is imperative that each of us voice our concern about keeping MST&DA and other arts here. Contact RIOC directly by telephone at 212-832-4540 or by email to Erica.Spencer-El@rioc.ny.gov, and urge RIOC to work with MST&DA to ensure its future on the Island. Also visit the MST&DA website at www.mstda.org to find out about the organization and how you can support it, including through the purchase of tickets to its upcoming gala, A Night to Remember, on February 27. Without MST&DA's rich programmatic offerings, Island life would truly be without song, dance, and movement for so many of us.

Citi Bike

As last reported in this column, with Citi Bike, the City's bike share program, now not planning to include Roosevelt Island as part of either Phase II or Phase III expansion (despite contrary reassurances to myself

and Councilmember Ben Kallos when the program first rolled out), as well as RIOC's opposition to the program on Roosevelt Island, having a station here is in serious doubt. Many of you heeded the call in our last column to go to nycbikeshare.herokuapp.com/place/new to vote for and suggest where the Phase II stations should be, including Roosevelt Island – as a consequence, the Upper East Side and Roosevelt Island have received the most suggestions and votes. Hopefully – whether or not you agree with the presence of an Island bike station – a number of you were able to attend the February 12 Citi Bike Forum to voice your opinion. If you did not, or you would like to further voice your opinion, be sure to log on to nycbikeshare.herokuapp.com/place/new by the end of February, as the NYC Department of Transportation finalizes their recommendations to the Citi Bike program about where the next stations should be located.

Ferry Service

During the Mayor's State of the City address, it was confirmed that, in 2017, the City expects to increase ferry service. The expanded service will include Roosevelt Island. Our route would originate in Astoria at the Hallet's Point project currently being built, continue to Roosevelt Island at its southern end, then on to Long Island City, and then south to 34th Street and Wall Street. Ferry riders will be able to use MetroCards.

Such news is welcomed by so many of us who have fought for ferry service for the Island, and it ensures that, as our population grows, alternative and efficient travel into Manhattan will be available. Roosevelt Island will be the only community that can say its residents come into Manhattan by air, by land, and by sea!



CAT SITTER

Ellen Levy Call 212 751 8214 or 917 587 3278
eglevy123@gmail.com

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deadline for February 28 issue: Tuesday, February 24
deadline for March 14 issue: Tuesday, March 10
Please see ComingUp, page 3, for other advertising deadlines

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Blessing: Boruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu
Me-lech Ho-olom A-sheh Ki-de-sha-nu
Be-mitz-vo-sov Ve-tzi-vo-nu Le-had-lik Ner
Shel Sha-bos Ko-desh.
Translation: Blessed are You, Lord our G-d,
King of the universe, who has sanctified us
with His commandments, and commanded us
to kindle the light of the holy Shabbat.

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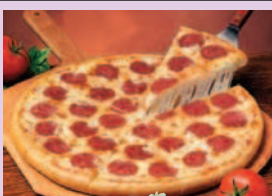


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