

Next scheduled issue:
Saturday, September 7

The Main Street **WIRE**TM

Roosevelt Island's Community Newspaper

News updates on **Website NYC10044** www.nyc10044.com

Website NYC10044 www.nyc10044.com

A Time to Dance Kenya Brown was among the kids groovin' to the sounds of Owen Plant and Kumina Wednesday evening in the second-to-last Summer Sounds concert, sponsored by RIOC and others, on the pier near the subway station. One more concert is slated this coming Wednesday night.

As the Fall Season Starts, an Old Question

RIRA and Its Common Council – Will It Ever Have Real Power?

News Analysis by Dick Lutz
Whither RIRA?

The Common Council of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association will hold its next meeting Wednesday night, September 4. Some 20 to 30 delegates will gather in the usual meeting place, the basement of the Chapel of the Good Shepherd, in the closest thing Islanders have to local representative government.

But unlike the Common Councils of thousands of small towns across America, which also will gather in September to make decisions about governance of their localities – how to spend money, which roads to improve – this Common Council is essentially powerless. That's because

the only power of governance and administrative decision-making on Roosevelt Island rests in the hands of RIOC, the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, and its Board of Directors, appointed by the Governor of the State of New York.

That's a matter of history, of course: In the '70s, New York State leased Roosevelt Island from the City of New York to create this community. Promising to subsidize Island services until the population grew to more than double its current level, the State took over the Island and started development. Over time, the responsible State entity evolved to the present-day RIOC with its appointed Board members and a political appointee as its president. The subsidy evolved, too – to zero under Governor George Pataki – on a claim that the Island had reached budgetary self-sufficiency.

While the State Department of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) long ago recognized the Residents Association as the legitimate representative of those living

here, there is no requirement anywhere that RIOC, which holds the power, abide by any decision made by the residents' organization or its Common Council.

That leaves RIRA utterly without any real power.

For RIRA to be anything more than a kind of high-school-student government for adults, it has only two instruments at its disposal.

Volunteer Power

One of those instruments is the raw power of volunteerism among residents here. That has been legendary. Both under RIRA's banner and independently, small groups of dedicated residents have done much – and have *tried* to do much – for the Island. Among other good works, just recently:

- A task force led by Common Councilor Vicki Feinmel put together the September 11 memorial, and a ceremony to dedicate it, behind Good Shepherd Plaza.

- An alternate, Margie Smith, put together Thanksgiving dinner for Island firefighters.

See RIRA, page 6

WIRE Seeking Writers and Other Help

The WIRE has staff and volunteer openings, and all Islanders are invited to join in the production and distribution of Roosevelt Island's 22-year-old community newspaper. The openings include:

Reporters

Under a quiet surface, Roosevelt Island bubbles with activity, and stories that should be checked out and passed on to the community at large. There are events to report, too. You'd never do this for what *The WIRE* can pay you, but doing it is a great source of personal and professional satisfaction. Call Dick Lutz at **826-9055**.

Feature Writers

It's a chance to get to know your Island neighbors and organizations better than ever, and write the profiles that will bring your knowledge to your fellow residents. Meager pay, eager readers, and a great way to build a file of clippings – or to exercise your long-dormant verbal muscle. Call Dick Lutz at **826-9055**.

Photographers

Have a good digital camera and a good sense of composition and know how to tell a story with a photo? *The WIRE* needs alert shutterbugs to capture Island events, both scheduled and unscheduled. Be part of *The WIRE*. Call Dick Lutz at **826-9055**.

Stuffing

Every other week on Friday, a dedicated volunteer group assembles to "stuff" that weekend's issue of *The WIRE* with the advertising flyers that help make the paper possible. Roughly 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Lunch is provided. You bring the stories and jokes. Call Teri Sheridan at **319-7408**, or Joyce Speziale at **371-3481**.

Distribution

The WIRE depends on a core group of volunteers to distribute each issue door-to-door in the Island's residential buildings. Openings and standby positions in all buildings; usually about an hour every two weeks. Call Sherie Helstien at **935-7534**.

Distribution Manager

Paid/volunteer position, 8:00 a.m. to about 3:00 p.m. each *WIRE* Friday (every two weeks). Requires physical strength and ability to organize. You'll be trained and will have experienced advisors. Call Dick Lutz at **826-9055**.

Off-Island Ad Sales

Commissioned. Ideal for a smart, outgoing, and determined retiree or anybody who wants to earn extra money on a flexible schedule. Call Dick Lutz at **826-9055**.

Islanders

By Radio, Print, and Force of Personality – Goldwater's Go-Go Guy

by Anusha Shrivastava

No grouching allowed.

This simple motto, the one he lives by, is displayed on a plaque in his room. "If I were to die tomorrow," says Sunderam Srinivasan, 56, "I would die a happy man."

Part philosopher, part poet, and part public-relations man, "Srini" – as he is fondly called – zips along the corridors of the southern campus of Coler-Goldwater Hospital on his motorized wheelchair. He says he has accomplished what he set out to do many years ago: serve people through improved communication.

Earlier this year, Srinivasan, president of the Resident's Council at the hospital, helped set up one of the few patient-run radio stations in a facility like Coler-Goldwater. To hear broadcasts, residents can tune into WCGH 88.1 FM. "Srini is an ideas man and the radio station is one of his best ideas," said Myron Michels, vice-president of the Goldwater Memorial Hospital Auxiliary, a fund-raising body, of which Srinivasan is the president.

Not only did the Auxiliary provide a grant to run the station, it also gave away 800 radios to patients as gifts so that they could hear the broadcasts. Srinivasan was instrumental in organizing all of this. "Srini is a 70-pound dynamo of energy who works like a truck-driver to complete his projects," Michels said. "He sleeps for six to eight hours at night with a respirator so he can work like a demon during the day."

A childhood fascination with the media led Srinivasan to study mass communication and public relations at a college in Bombay in the late 1960s. Having worked as a journalist for a few years in the mid-1970s in his native India, Srinivasan says he is familiar with the power of the press. "Radio is a powerful medium and we want to use it as a tool to help patients network," says Srinivasan, breathing with some effort as he lowers himself into a gray chair in a conference room at the hospital. "A majority of the residents at the hospital do not have the opportunity to go out so they may not get church services or healthcare information. We try to

provide all that and, also, some entertainment."

Patients can call the station with requests for songs or participate in his musical quiz program, *The Srini-Jeannie Show*, which he DJs with an employee volunteer at the hospital. "Searchlight" is what Srinivasan calls his daily panel-based program. In it, he discusses topics like patient nutrition, substance abuse, and the latest healthcare developments – topics very dear to him ever since he was a child.

Unable to walk until the age of seven because he had contracted polio as a toddler, Srinivasan vowed early on that he would not let his disability cripple him. One of ten children, he says he clung to his dream of becoming a writer and wrote poetry and prose, often dreaming he would live "in a shack by the sea, with a typewriter and a couple of bottles of beer" to inspire him. "I don't live by the sea, but the river inspires me," he says. He first came to New York's Hospital for Special Surgery in 1983, for medical treatment.

See Srini, page 10



Get Smart on Tram Ads

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation appears intent on continuing an ill-conceived effort to sell advertising on the Tram – both in and on the stations, and in and (worst of all) on the cabins. The latter is known as “shrink-wrapping,” and it is similar to the fully ad-wrapped buses you see all too often on the streets of New York.

The WIRE abhors the idea of Tramway cabins covered in advertising. New York’s advertising community doesn’t seem all that interested, either: RIOC reported at its last meeting that no viable proposal had been received to use the Tram for such a purpose. But the Board resolved to pursue the idea of a Tramway festooned with advertising messages. The excuse, of course, is that the Tramway is not fully self-supporting out of fare collections.

The WIRE’s position on that matter is that the Tramway, like every other mass-transit system in New York State, *should* not be expected to pay its own costs fully. Why? There are specific societal benefits from mass transit, which improves the life of the entire community. The benefits extend well beyond mass transit’s immediate users. Such benefits should be purchased with tax monies. So the Tramway, by any reasoned measure, should be supported with tax dollars. But alone among mass-transit facilities in New York State, the Tramway is expected to pay its own way out of the farebox. *No fair!* (The Staten Island Ferry, as one reader pointed out in a note this week, is heavily subsidized with our tax dollars.) The RIOC Board should actively seek State budget funding for the Tram – not offer up the Island’s trademark icon for desecration with garish advertising.

But *The WIRE* is more than willing to see advertising in the stations.

In fact, our feeling is that RIOC should fulfill its neglected obligations to Island merchants by creating an advertising campaign for them, using both the Manhattan-side station and the Island-side station to bring them business. Why has RIOC never thought to make an attempt to promote business for the Island’s mercantile community by posting ads on the Manhattan side?

Not only that, but every tourist boarding the Tram for a quick ride to and fro should also receive a colorful brochure touting the Island’s virtues – its parks, promenade and views, dining opportunities. In short, RIOC should be taking steps to keep tourists on the Island once they have made the Tram trip over. But RIOC hasn’t even thought to promote its own summer-Wednesday evening concerts to Tram-riding tourists.

So RIOC should find its thinking cap and use the advertising space available at the Manhattan-side and Island-side stations to promote the Island as a place to linger after a Tramway ride. It should advertise for Island merchants free.

In any case, RIOC should drop the idea of plastering ads over the outside of the Tram cabins. It was never a good idea, and now that the advertising community has confirmed the idea’s lack of merit through its indifference, RIOC should read the handwriting in the sky and focus on a more important mission:

Keep the Tram attractive for visitors, and mine the possibilities that those visitors might remain here for recreation and, perhaps, spend some money at the Island’s merchants.

DL

The WIRETM

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Letters

To Senator Olga Mendez and Assemblymember Pete Grannis:

On behalf of my family and the many folks on Roosevelt Island that I have spoken to, I’d like to thank each of you for passing the Open Spaces bill in the last session. We appreciate your efforts and we’ll continue to work with you toward the self-governance legislation that has been our ultimate goal over the last several years.

While this bill is a good start, we look forward to the day when we can democratically elect our RIOC board members. With your continued support we’re confident that day will come soon.

Nurit Marcus

To the Editor:

As a 25-year resident, I feel the need to make some very important points with regard to the state of the retail establishments on Roosevelt Island. After reading Rebecca Segall’s fluff piece in *The Village Voice* and, for a while now, reading about the hardships of the Island merchants from the merchant’s point of view in *The WIRE*, I felt the need to put pen to paper. I’d like to share some of my experiences so that maybe the merchants can understand a little more clearly why they aren’t getting “the volume” they think they should be getting.

First off, I should say that I was very upset to hear that Mr. Kahn had to sell his store. In his case, I see him as a victim of bad decisions made by a governing body that obviously has no connection to the community. Who made the decision to move the bus stop and why?

See Schwartz, page 9

To the Editor:

I’d like to respond to the editorial in the June 29 issue of *The WIRE*. It says that the new Open Spaces legislation isn’t even half a loaf. It’s obvious that *The WIRE* thinks the residents deserve more. I agree. However, I think our governmental team deserves a round of applause for their efforts in this last session. Senator Mendez, Assemblymember Grannis, and Governor Pataki all know our main goal is a locally-elected RIOC Board. They all agree that the residents should be allowed to elect their own representatives.

They devoted hours and hours of time this past year trying to work out a bill that would be acceptable to the State and the residents. We’re getting closer, but the wheels of government grind slowly.

As Senator Mendez stated in her last newsletter, the Open Spaces legislation is by no means the end of the road for us. Our politicians know it’s a stepping-stone toward our ultimate objective. *The WIRE* says we didn’t get even half a loaf. Maybe not, but we’re working hard, one slice at a time, until we eventually get it all. I, for one, applaud the efforts of our politicians for taking seriously our last two landslide votes in favor of self-governance and for working hard toward that end. I thank them for their help so far and look forward to working with them in the next legislative session.

Ethel Romm

To the Editor:

I just wanted to drop a note and tell you how meaningful it was to me to log on and read *The WIRE*’s coverage of the September 11 events.

I had lived in New York for nearly 20 years when I left four years ago, and it was an odd feeling to be so far away when these terrible events occurred. I don’t know why it took some time for me to think to check in on the NYC10044 site (www.nyc10044.com) afterwards, but when I did it seemed to provide better insight as to what the events meant to me and provide some sense of closure – if there can ever really be closure on something like this – that all the thinking, reading, obsessing, TV view-

See Letters, page 9

Letters Policy

The WIRE welcomes letters to the Editor, to the community, and to/from officials. Publication on a *Name Withheld* basis will be considered, but the writer’s name, address, and phone number must be provided for verification and for our records. **Preferred methods of submission:** By e-mail to Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com (ASCII text preferred or use any wordprocessing software, but no MSWord files with macros), or PC-standard 3.5-inch floppy disk left at 531 Main Street for *The WIRE*. **Alternatives:** Typed, double-spaced copy left at 531 Main Street or faxed to (212) 755-2540. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered if brief, but we cannot take telephone dictation of letters. **All letters are subject to acceptance and to editing for length and clarity.** We recommend observing a maximum length of 300 words, but will consider longer letters if their content merits the required space.

Letters deadline for next scheduled issue: September 3

When my wife Harriet and I take our vacations we try, whenever possible, to ride the mass transit systems of the locales we visit. This summer, being in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, that was difficult. But we did find an aerial tramway that we had to ride.

Teton Village is a glitzy year-round resort town located just outside of Jackson, Wyoming, in the Grand Tetons. Its luxury condominiums, shops, and restaurants are open year-round, but it’s largely a winter skiing center. The Jackson Hole Aerial Tramway serves skiers in the winter and tourists and hikers the rest of the year. It functions much like the Roosevelt Island Tram: the cabins run in opposite directions at the same time and pass each other at the midpoint. Like our Tram, the cabins are painted red. That’s where the similarity ends.

There is a 4,139 foot vertical rise between the tramway’s station at Teton Village and the station on Rendezvous Mountain, at an elevation of 10,450 feet. The tramway was completed in 1966, has a length of over two miles (12,600 feet), a top speed of 23 mph and the trip takes about 9 minutes. Our tram only travels 3100 feet and the trip lasts 4 minutes. The Jackson Hole Aerial Tramway’s cabins have a maximum capacity of 63, compared to our Tramway’s 120.

Riding the Jackson Hole tram is not cheap. The fare is \$15. The ticket seller jokes that it is the one-way fare. She tells us that it’s free to walk down the mountain on one of the many hiking trails, but it will take about 3 hours. The cabin attendant takes our ticket and continues the joke, telling us that if you hike up to the top of the mountain, you don’t need a ticket to ride down. The doors close and the ride begins. The cabin attendant tells us to hold on, especially as we pass over the towers, gives a background talk about the tram, and tells us to look out for wildlife on the snowless ski trails. We spot two moose on the way up.

The view from the tram and at the top of the mountain is spectacular. To the east is the valley of Jackson Hole. To the north are the Grand Tetons, with Grand Teton peak looming over everything at a height of over 13,000 feet. The attendant tells the passengers that at the top you can walk along several trails or snack at a little restaurant. It’s windy and about 20 degrees cooler than at the bottom, and we forgot sweaters. And there are thunderclouds approaching from the west and the attendant has informed us that this tram also does not operate when there is lightning. We choose to take just a few pictures and then take

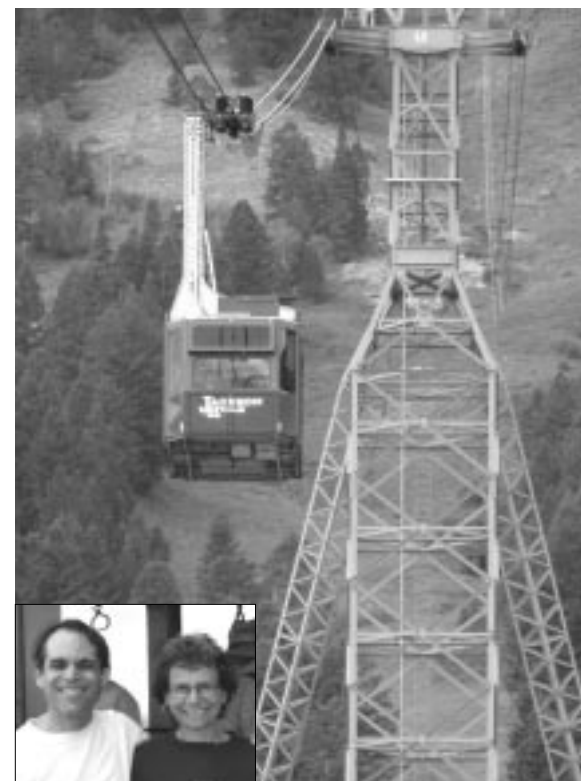
the next trip down. We get on board and ride down admiring the view once again, even though the moose were gone. It was a great ride.

And now we’ve been thinking. Did we learn anything from that tram ride that could benefit Roosevelt Island? The Jackson Hole tram is a great tourist attraction that is widely advertised to tourists visiting the area. So why think about advertising on the

Roosevelt Island Tram? Why not advertising of the tram? For tourists, it’s one of the best-kept secrets in New York. There’s no mention of it the *AAA Tour Book*. The vistas are different from those in Wyoming but are equally spectacular.

And, of course, here it’s only a three-dollar round trip. And maybe our tram “drivers” could give a little spiel about what there is to see on the Island. The Tram runs at a deficit and we’re looking for ways to bring visitors to the Island. If we want people to come to Roosevelt Island, we have to publicize it – and what better place to begin with than the Tram?

Larry Parnes



COMING UP

Compiled by **WIRE** staff – Fax information to 755-2540
e-mail ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com
or click on the e-mail link at www.nyc10044.com

Mon.-Fri., 1:00-4:00 p.m., **New York Junior Tennis League** instruction and play for ages 7-18, Octagon Park courts. Ages 5-7, 2:30-4:00 p.m. Wednesdays. Equipment supplied. Free.

Wed., Aug. 28, 10:30 a.m., **Summer Films for Children**, Library. Free.

Wed., Sept. 4, 8:00 p.m., **RIRA Common Council Meeting**, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Public session for resident comments occurs near the start of the meeting.

Fri., Sept. 6, 7:00 p.m., **NYPD Pipes & Drums Memorial Concert**, Jacob Javits Center, with Island piper David Nisthaus and bands from NYPD, FDNY, Bergen City, Cleveland, Chicago, and Ottawa. \$25. Proceeds benefit Widows and Orphans Fund of the NYPD, FDNY, and PAPD. For tickets, call (212) 319-9840, 1-917-822-9057, or check www.NYDPipesAndDrums.com.

Sat., Sept. 7, next scheduled issue of **The Main Street WIRE**. **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., August 30; decision on staffers for *The Bag*, Mon., Sept. 2; materials due Thur., Sept. 5. **Future issues** every two weeks through December 14, with an extra post-election issue: Sept. 21, Oct. 5 and 19, Nov. 2 (pre-election issue), 9 (post-election), and 23 (Thanksgiving issue), Dec. 14 (holiday issue), then every two weeks starting in January, 2003. **Phone/fax** for news, 826-9055/755-2540; phone/fax for advertising inquiries, 751-8214/755-2540; to list your organization's Island events here (no charge), fax information to 755-2540, or send it by e-mail to ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com.

There is no charge to list Island events here. E-mail information to Editor@MainStreetWIRE.com, fax to 755-2540, or leave copy at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. Provide a telephone number for possible follow-up.

Tue., Sept. 10, all day, **Primary Election**, polls at PS/IS 217.

Wed., Sept. 11, 7:30 p.m., **Candle-Lighting Commemoration** observance honoring those who lost their lives September 11, 2001; to be held at the memorial tree and plaque behind Good Shepherd Plaza.

Thur., Sept. 12, 5:30 p.m., **RIOC Board of Directors Meeting**, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Public session normally resumes at about 6:30, and is followed by an open forum for residents' comments and questions.

Sat., Sept. 14, 7:00-11:00 p.m., **Blackwell House Benefit** and silent auction, sponsored by the Roosevelt Island Historical Society, RIVAA Gallery, 527 Main Street. "Guests" will include Mae West, Boss Tweed, Nellie Bly, Charles Dickens, Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini. Refreshments. \$25. Reservations: 688-4836 or e-mail jbird134@aol.com.



Blackwell House is the Island's oldest existing building. After a full restoration, followed by years of deterioration, the house is now being adopted by the Historical Society, which plans a benefit September 14.

Sat., Oct. 5, 10:00 a.m., **Fall Tree Walk** sponsored by the Roosevelt Island Tree Board, starting at Blackwell House. Free.

Wed., Oct. 9, 8:00 p.m., **RIRA Common Council Meeting**, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Thur., Oct. 10, 9:30 a.m., **RIOC Board of Directors Meeting**, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Public session normally resumes at about 10:30 a.m.

Tue., Nov. 5, all day, **Election Day** (both general and Residents Association elections); balloting at PS/IS 217.

Wed., Nov. 6, 8:00 p.m., **RIRA Common Council Meeting**, Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Thur., Nov. 14, 5:30 p.m., **RIOC Board of Directors Meeting**, Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Public session normally resumes at about 6:30, and is followed by an open forum for residents' comments and questions.

Senior Center

Computer Classes for Seniors
Call 980-1888 for more information

Monday
10:30, **Blood Pressure Screen**
12:30, "Oldies" Movies
1:00, **Tai Chi**
7:00, **Dance** (Beginners)
Tuesday
1:30, **Games** (RISA)
Wednesday
9:00, **Stay Well** (starts Sept. 4)
10:00, **English as Second Language** (starts Sept. 4)
7:00, **Pokeno** (RISA)
Thursday
10:00, **Tai Chi**
10:30, **Creative Arts**
12:30, **Movie**
7:00, **Dance Class** (Advanced)

Friday
9:00, **Citizenship** (starts Sept. 6)
10:00, **English as Second Language** (starts Sept. 6)
10:15, **Yoga Stretch**
7:30, **Lotto**
Saturday
7:30, **Bingo** (RISA)

Special Events
Mon., Sept. 9, 11-12:30, **MetroCard Bus**
Wed., Sept. 11, 10:30, **Falls Prevention**
Mon., Sept. 16, 10:30, **Health Lecture & Blood Pressure Screening**

Home-delivered meals available: 744-5022, ext. 1203

Why can't the Transit Authority get our subways right? We've been plagued with an alphabet soup of conflicting routes ever since the system opened on Roosevelt Island. We've had repairs upon repairs and the service outages this month and last, with the failures in communicating the changes to this community, have got me baying at the moon.

Two weekends in a row we were without subway service entirely. And for those two weekends, all the backup systems seemed to work as they were intended: the TA ran shuttle buses, RIOC ran the Tram on a 24-hour basis, and there was adequate signage on the Main Street kiosks at least four days in advance.

However, from then on the system seems to have broken down. During the two weekends in which service was only one-way, there were no shuttle buses (my TA

contact informs me that this amenity is not provided when service is curtailed only one-way) and RIOC was not apprised of the service disruption until hours before it began. If you saw a copy of the Transit Authority advisory on a kiosk, chances are that it was one I downloaded from their website and that my wife, Sherie, posted herself. RIOC came through with expanded Tram service, but I expect that the staff members were not pleased with the lateness of the Transit Authority "heads-up."

The NYCTA has been derelict in informing those with the power to react to transit communications. We residents can't be expected to scope out the Transit Authority website for updated advisories every day. My contact says that only our elected officials and Community Board 8 are informed of public transportation disruptions in their jurisdictions, but the word is not trickling down to those of us on Roosevelt Island who can then disseminate the information to those who need it. Dan Quart, chair of the Community Board 8 Transportation Committee, has addressed the problem of correctly directing this crucial information. I know that he and RIOC president Rob Ryan have spoken to the powers that be at the Transit Authority, and I believe they have persuaded our transit providers to inform *someone* on this Island when our links with the rest of the world are threatened.

To "Anonymous Senior Citizen," please address your correspondence to my home address at 625 Main Street, apartment 743. RIRA has an office at 546 Main Street, but does not receive mail there. You commented on my July 27 column in these pages, and included a shopping list of quite legitimate difficulties with neighbors of both the two-legged and four-legged variety including human waste in stairwells, cat odor in hallways, increasing crime, and menacing youths on the streets. I found your complaints reasonable and cogently presented. I do take exception to your last sentence, "I cannot give you my name and address because I'd probably wind up in jail or in court or evicted and I cannot afford that happening or the cost of legal representation." Sir or Madam, your comments were not libelous, scandalous, or in any way actionable. In this

world, the squeaky wheel still gets the grease and turning your concerns over to me does not relieve you of the responsibility of acting on your concerns. If you are interested in improving life on Roosevelt Island, for yourself and your neighbors, you must speak out and urge them to speak out as well. A multitude of raised voices is often the only influence such a small community as ours can bring to bear. You might start by sending (or giving me permission to send) your letter to *The Main Street WIRE* for inclusion in its Letters column. And by all means, include your name with the letter!

Roosevelt Island has again made the news. Did you see the *Village Voice* article on August 6 or the *New York Times* City Section article (August 11) on the changing of the guard at our stationery store? Well

written stories, I thought. And WNET, Channel 13, ran a program, *The Other Islands of New York*, on August 13, that included a long segment on us. Grampa Al Lewis's running commentary supplemented some wonderful movie footage and stills on Island history. Also, *The London Times* magazine section is preparing what I'm told will be a lengthy article on us and we've been

visited by reporters and photographers this summer representing that august periodical. The print date is not set, but I'll let you know ASAP.

Last week I met with the new DHCR Commissioner, Judy Calogero. We discussed many Island issues (transportation, development, parkland, governance, Island merchants) in a cordial hour's exchange. She intends to offer us the opportunity to bring her our concerns at the conclusion of one of RIOC's evening

Board of Directors meetings in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. I'll let you know in these pages when she is expected and I hope you'll avail yourselves of this chance for a give-and-take with the Commish.

And finally, high marks to Judy Berdy and the Historical Society for making Island information available at the Manhattan Tram station. I've made arrangements for her flyers to be distributed by NYC & Company, the City's convention and visitors bureau. You may recall that RIOC has paid for a year's membership for the purpose of encouraging tourists to visit Roosevelt Island and spend a dollar or two here. We are now listed in the official Guide and website. However, after two months of membership, there is still no signage at the Island Tram station to inform visitors

of what is available here besides a breathtaking view. Until RIOC and the Chamber of Commerce decide to advertise what we offer – a sandwich, a drink, an ice cream cone – I fear the membership dues will have been spent in vain. There are still many weeks of good weather to anticipate, and I hope that those who have the most to gain by attracting off-Islanders here will act and act now.

Editor's note: The President of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation has a standing invitation to provide a companion RIOC President's Column for publication in *The WIRE*.

The RIRA Column



Matthew Katz
RIRA President
e-mail: matthewkatz@rcn.com



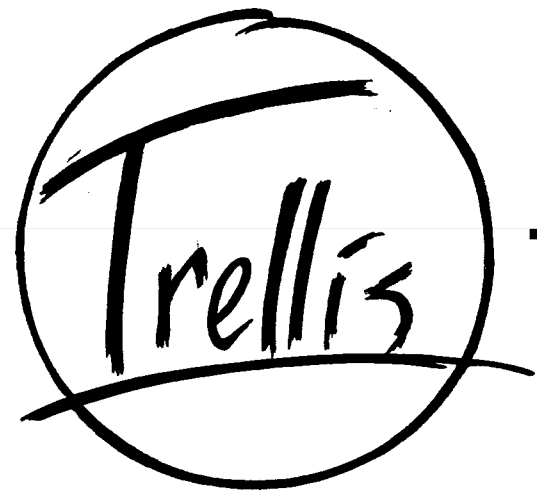
Twins Plus Two Island Kids has a weekly session of games, songs, and practical knowledge going for parents of children under a year old, led by Tracy Kaminski (left). This week, the group included three-year-old Zachary Kaminski (behind his mom); Luke Kaminski; Emilia Farance; her twin brother David Farance, held by his mom, Marguerite Camaio; and twins Ravi and Ari Eaton, held by their parents, Barbara Pittman and Roy Eaton.

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RIRA from page 1

• RIRA President Matthew Katz put together a successful blood drive triggered by the 9/11 events, and he's single-handedly kept the pressure on RIOC and the MTA to bring the Tram into the MetroCard free-transfer system.

• Members of the Maple Tree Group have conducted a five-year fight to change Island governance, and just this year got a bill through the Legislature; when the Governor signs it, it will set wheels in motion that will ultimately put residents in several more seats on the RIOC Board of Directors, though they will still be selected and appointed by the Governor.

• And an independent group raised funds to help the victims of an Eastwood fire, while others mounted (and lost) an expensive battle to force changes in the layout of Southtown.

But those activities, while they were encouraged by endorsements of the RIRA Common Council, could all have been conducted without a formal Residents Association.

Public Opinion

RIRA's second instrument is public opinion. In the past, the organization has been the fulcrum for resident displays of the power of public opinion on Tram cutbacks. All agree: The one thing that will get residents out for a Town Meeting, to make their collective voice heard, is a threat to the Tram.

And some believe that RIOC President Jerome Blue was removed from that post (and replaced by the Governor with the current appointee, Robert H. Ryan) when residents (and *The WIRE*) repeatedly called attention to his shortcomings and bad decisions, making him a minor political liability.

But public opinion is a very indirect handle on the levers of power here. To be mustered and used effectively, many elusive elements are required.

• The cause must be *clear-cut* enough to reach through the small proportion of involved and concerned residents into the ranks of those who will attend a meeting only when, in 25 words or less, they can be convinced something they consider *theirs* is threatened.

• The cause must have near *unanimity* behind it. Muddle the matter with diffused debate and too many alternatives, and attention turns to what the cause *should* be, rather than the fight for it.

• It has to be *big*. The Tram is big because it has taken on the cachet of a national flag for residents here. Tread on the Tram and its hours, and you're treading on deeply-held feelings among long-time residents.

But apart from the Tram, few other causes are as clear-cut or as widely and as deeply felt. They are not *big*.

Even an issue like the arrangement of buildings and roads in Southtown brought out only 40 people to form an organization that ultimately winnowed itself down to a half-dozen who did the work. With concrete and bricks now in place, more are asking, *How could we have let this happen?*, an indication that the issue was not adequately clear-cut or *big* when presented to the resident public.

Limits

So the Residents Association's ability to muster and use the power of public opinion is limited by the complexity of

issues, difficulty in achieving unanimity, and the fact that so many issues are simply not *big* enough to bring residents together.

In major part, it is probably the very indirectness of public opinion as a handle on the levers of power that make it difficult to use. With RIOC and the State holding all the power, there's no guarantee residents will be heard. Without some sense that success can be achieved – that the voice of public opinion will be heeded – any issue must be all the more *big* to bring forth the effort.

Even Islanders' elected State legislators or City Council-member find it near impossible to budge RIOC – to get information, to influence decisions, or to have their views heard. In the face of RIOC's nearly absolute power and the ease with which RIOC can ignore residents and politicians (or stall them to the point of exasperation), even the power of public opinion wilts before it is mustered.

What, then, might make the Residents Association more effective – more *able* to tap the power of public opinion? Leadership is certainly a factor. One can imagine an enormously charismatic figure like Martin Luther King as a force

two decades. But one of his proposed changes would have eliminated the potential for voting by a dozen or more unelected Councilors awarded seats on the Council by the existing constitution. These are entitlements of resident appointees to RIOC (three now, but a half-dozen once the Governor signs current legislation into law), up to five representatives of the nearly defunct Roosevelt Island Council of Organizations (RICO), and any resident serving on School Board 2 or Community Board 8.

One such voting member of the Common Council was (and is) Patrick Stewart, who holds a seat by virtue of his gubernatorial appointment to the RIOC Board of Directors. Though he lost the organization's presidency to Katz and lost a parallel bid to represent his own building (Island House), Stewart may have felt justified in remaining active on the Council on the basis of a claim by some that Katz "stole" the 2000 RIRA election by failing to squelch supporters' efforts on his behalf. Those included some campaign materials that would have exceeded the RIRA's election-spending limits, had Katz controlled the funds.

Quite naturally, those holding such unelected seats on the Common Council were likely to vote against any change that would eliminate their seats. Whatever the merits of that idea, with a two-thirds vote of the Common Council required to advance the revisions to a Town Meeting vote, Katz's effort at constitutional change bogged down and the Common Council grew weary of it.

For Katz, the possibilities of mustering Council opinion had faded, even within the Common Council, let alone any notion of sending Councilors forth to galvanize general public opinion. And, in any case, the current RIOC administration stumbled badly only once, with a proposal to eliminate late-night Tram service. There were few clear-cut issues likely to unite the Council in an effort to bring community opinion to bear.

The end result is that the RIRA Common Council, though officially recognized as the voice of Island residents, remains an organization potentially dominated by unelected residents.

The numbers are these: There are 30 elected seats on the RIRA Common Council, including building representatives and those elected to the presidency and first vice presidency. But Manhattan Park consistently fails to field enough candidates to fill the ten seats that its residents are entitled to, so the number of elected Councilors is usually about two dozen. Of those, as many as eight are often absent for the monthly meetings and, under the RIRA constitution, their votes are then cast by alternates who, though they were runners-up, actually *lost* their bid to vote from those seats.

The Council seats held by unelected residents, serving by virtue of appointment to other organizations, include:

• RIOC, three now (though only Stewart attends RIRA Council meetings), but potentially a half dozen; RICO, as many as five (currently 2 or 3).

• Community Board 8, potentially 3 or more (currently 3, Nneka Pope, Patrick Stewart, and Deirdre Breslin, though Breslin was also elected from Westview, and Stewart's voting right is redundant because of his RIOC directorship).

• School Board 2 (none currently, but potentially perhaps two or three).

Constitutional Change – Could Residents Pre-empt the RIRA Common Council?

Under the RIRA constitution, constitutional change involves an extended process of preparing amendments and presenting them in Common Council meetings, where a two-thirds vote is required to send them on to a Town Meeting. There, a simple majority of at least 100 attendees must vote yes to change the constitution.

But there is a way residents – all of whom are automatically members of the Residents Association – could do an end-run around the Common Council.

That process involves gathering 125 resident signatures in support of a roster of amendments, then presenting that amendment to the Common Council, though not for a vote. That obligates the Council to set a Town Meeting date within 30 days. At the Town Meeting, two-thirds of those voting must approve the changes. They then become part of the constitution without the Common Council ever having voted on them.

in himself behind which the RIRA Common Council might unite. The current RIRA president, Matthew Katz, would not put himself in that category, but he did command a near-60% victory in his 2000 campaign (in a three-candidate race) to unseat his predecessor, Patrick Stewart.

That's a considerable victory in any political contest, and the kind of mandate most politicians would celebrate. Katz won it with a strong campaign promising to fight for "self-governance," which is a catch-all term meaning a RIOC Board elected by residents, and that Board's having the power to hire professional community management. Some observers feel that Stewart actively lost the election, however, with a weak campaign and by opposing self-governance, which had commanded a 92% electoral margin as a 1998 advisory-referendum question.

Whatever Katz's strengths as a leader (and he was seen as a skilled architect of compromise in his earlier service on the Common Council), he has had the devil's own time using those talents over the 20 months of his term.

Constitutional Change

In addition to the self-governance issue, Katz also had campaigned with a promise to attempt reform of the RIRA constitution, which hasn't had a meaningful reworking in

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Schwartz from page 2

That is devastating to a stationery store. Plus having the newspaper vendor outside the subway, he clearly had a difficult time of it here. In addition, there is only so much a stationery store can offer for purchase.

This brings me to a very important point. I want to shop on Roosevelt Island, where I live. It sounds simple enough. However, again and again when I visit Island merchants I'm shocked at what I find.

Several examples:

- I would *love* not to have to drag my dry cleaning back and forth from Manhattan. However, our dry cleaner closes at 6:30 p.m. and I work until 6:00 p.m. I don't think mine is a unique schedule.

- An off-Island friend and I visited the bakery on a Saturday morning and ordered two bagels with scallion cream cheese, onion, and tomato. Sounds simple. The woman behind the counter looked completely confused. Repeated the order. Same reaction. Spoke to another woman. No scallion cream cheese. OK – regular cream cheese, tomato, and onion. No onions. What? Exasperated, we just ordered the bagel, cream cheese, and tomato. Waited *ten minutes*, got our order, and left. When we opened the bag – only one bagel had tomato. My off-Island friend looked at me and said, "I don't know how you deal with that." Well, I don't any more. After that experience I now wait to get into the City to get a bagel.

- The Video Store is a joke. The appearance of the store has been mentioned in letters to this paper in the past and hasn't changed. One half of the store is crammed

with junk and the movie portion is poorly organized, even more poorly lit, with very little selection. I asked for the movie *Halloween* and the man behind the counter replied that they didn't have it. *Halloween?* Apparently they "lost it." And that was the end of that. I was never asked if they could special-order it for me, told if they have already reordered it or, if so, when it might be coming in. No, you can't rent *Halloween* at the Island Video Store, but you can buy a hot-pink feather boa. I've already gotten a membership at a great video store in Manhattan. Problem solved – well, my problem, anyway.

- What happened to the Chinese "Restaurant?" I use quotes because it is no longer a restaurant, but an ugly, uninviting take-out place which was cited in May, 2001, by the New York City Health Department for, among other violations, "food from unapproved or unknown sources."

- Capri also has virtually no real seating and the pizza is slightly above ketchup on white bread. It's nice that Rebecca listed it in *The Voice* as "what may be the lightest, thinnest-crust, nice and saucy slice" in NYC but that is so far from reality that I cut the article out and have it hanging on the refrigerator for a laugh.

- Trellis has been, by far, the most proactive merchant with regard to attempting to attract customers. They've extended their hours, provide entertainment in the summer, and created a new menu. Even with this, I have attempted to order one of their new sandwiches for two weeks now and there is always one reason or another why they don't have it.

I could provide many more examples, but they all have similar hallmarks: the Island merchants seem to have a complete disregard as to who their customers are, what their behaviors are (work schedules, shopping habits), and what their needs are. The Island merchants seem to be obsessed with this fantasy that once the new buildings are here, their problems will be alleviated. This Island has over a doubling in its population since Manhattan Park opened and the customers didn't suddenly materialize, did they? These new buildings won't be any different. Not only did the merchants not make significant changes in order to attract the first new building residents (Manhattan Park), but there has actually been a significant decline in the quality of services since then.

The merchants must stop looking at the Island residents as a captive audience, but rather working people who have full access to NYC on a daily basis. That is what their competition is. Why should I have to contend with the lowest level of service and product when I can plan ahead and get exactly what I need in Manhattan with much less hassle? Is scallion cream cheese really that much of a specialty item? An onion? Come on. Does it take that much thought to take normal office hours into account when making your retail schedule? Forget all that ridiculous junk that you waste precious space on in your video store and concentrate on expanding and upgrading your movie selection, maybe even install some lighting. If you must offer other non-related items for sale, such as hardware, then at least have someone around who actually has some knowledge of it. As of

now, the most simple of questions such as what screw to use for what type of surface is met with a baffled look.

We have recently been targeted by a very savvy company called FreshDirect. They've done their research. They realize that this is a community with residents who don't have a reliable retail outlet for groceries. I've ordered from them and know many others have, as well. If the Island merchants don't get their act together, more companies such as FreshDirect will become the point of purchase for Island residents.

Yes, there will soon be new residents living on Roosevelt Island. But why the wait? Make changes now. There are residents who are already here! The glass is already being put in the windows of the new buildings. With all of the constant talk and anticipation from the merchants of the "volume" the new buildings will bring, I would think that I would see a scurry of activity in the Island stores. Painting, new displays, new seating areas being created, some new services, extended hours maybe. I know that Julie, or Julie's Bar, mentioned painting in the last issue. I don't drink so, unfortunately, I haven't been there, but good for her! As for any of the other merchants – nothing.

Southtown will be here before we know it. This is a plea to the Island merchants: Don't sit back and wait for these new residents to patronize your stores. As a last thought, change this sentence from, "the volume Southtown *will* bring" to "the volume Southtown *could* bring."

Good luck to all.

Bonnie Schwartz

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Letters from page 2

ing, and even returning to the City for a few days last year had not. Reading about the experiences of the people I knew while I lived there like Frank Farance and Guy Midkiff, seeing that picture across the bridge from Rivercross and realizing from that what the view would probably have been for me at the start of a normal late-as-usual work-day as I headed for the subway station, and seeing the names and stories of people like Chief Downey, Mr. Beyea, Mr. Fallone (whom I remembered from various RIRA events) was just meaningful in a way I don't quite know how to express.

I wanted to thank you for your work and commitment to the newspaper and tell you how much it means, not just to the people physically there, but also to the people like me who live far away. Even though I've been gone now longer than the time I lived there, part of me will always feel like I live on Roosevelt Island and I will always feel a commitment to her well being and her future. I will always be grateful for the time I spent there and for all the people it was my privilege to meet and get to know.

I am hoping to return to New York for a visit again at Thanksgiving time with my new wife, Jan, and to show her Roosevelt Island for the first time. Maybe they'll even let me take her into Manhattan Park and we can stuff a few WIREs under the doors for old time's sake.

Please give my regards to all the folks at RIRA.

Chip Damsel,
West Palm Beach, FL

To the Editor:

It may have started out as a community newspaper but *The Main Street WIRE* has reached well beyond its home on Roosevelt Island. I wonder what the original owners would think if they knew that, way over on the other side of the continent, up in Western Canada, we are reading about life on your little Island. Since you have been posted on the net (www.nyc10044.com), chances are you

have been noticed anywhere in the world where the tentacles of the Internet reach. It could be a little disconcerting to think people who don't even speak the same language (not us Canadians of course), nor look at the same sky overhead, know what is happening in the world of Roosevelt Island. Then again...

I enjoyed meeting (via your paper) Anthony Vita, and the story of the fireboat and its history was intriguing. I am sure we also have interesting articles to write about in our own town, but it is also fun to find out what goes on in other communities. I hope you remain on the Internet as I have *The Main Street WIRE* bookmarked.

Jeanette Adshead
Richmond, British Columbia

To the Editor:

At a recent meeting of the Concerned Shareholders of Rivercross, Patrick Stewart gave an interesting and informative talk. One of the members asked Stewart why he did not submit such information to *The WIRE*, to which Stewart replied that *The WIRE* wouldn't print anything he submitted. I challenged this, asking Stewart to send something to *The WIRE*, copy to me, and I would see that it was published. Stewart did not respond, so I'm curious. Which of us is right?

Frances Salten

Editor's response: You are, of course. During his last term as President of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association, Stewart terminated his *RIRA President's Column*, fearing, he wrote, that readers would somehow take appearance of his views in these pages as an endorsement of *WIRE* editorial positions, but *The WIRE* has always welcomed his comments. As a member of the RIOC Board, Stewart remains a powerful member of this community with access to a good deal of information residents should also have. *The WIRE*, an avenue through which Stewart could share the information he gains through his special perspective, is confident that readers will be able to tell whose views are whose, and welcomes any information or expression of opinion he cares to provide.

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Srini from page 1

An older brother, who lived on Long Island at the time, financed his trips. Some money also came from what he had earned working as a public-relations man in the Sultanate of Oman in the early 1980s.

Doctors at the hospital thought his lungs would collapse during surgery so they discharged him, advising the family that he should return to Bombay. He did. Two years later, he was back in the United States as his condition deteriorated steadily. He underwent tracheal therapy and lived with his brother.

A fall from his bed in 1989 resulted in a collar-bone fracture, followed by surgery. Going in and out of various hospitals, Srinivasan ended up in the emergency room of Queens General Hospital, where he was in a coma for over two months. "My family was told I would never talk even if I did recover," recalls Srinivasan, gripping the handle of his chair as if the gesture symbol-



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ized his defiance. "I walked and I talked." In the winter of 1990, Srinivasan came by himself to the rehabilitation center at Goldwater Hospital because he did not want to live at his brother's house. "My family was very upset and could not understand why I wanted to live in a facility," Srinivasan says. "I wanted to reflect on everything I had been through and spend my time being useful to others."

Signing up as a volunteer at the school for children confined to the hospital, Srinivasan later went on to put together a program to stop patients from smoking. In 1992, he was elected president of the Resident's Council, a post he currently holds. In that capacity, he has helped raise money for patient activities, acted as liaison between patients and hospital management, and constantly provided an ear to those who want to discuss their greatest concern at the hospital, namely food. "We have an ethnically diverse population at the hospital and we are trying to serve different types of food for them," Srinivasan says. "We keep the café open in the evenings and on holidays, patients can order in special food."

Fellow patients stop him in the corridors and tell him about their problems, knowing full well that he will do his utmost to help. "If we didn't have Srini, this facility would not be the same," said Richard Coleman, a patient. "We cannot replace him and I wish there were more like him."

"He has a heart of gold," said William

Jones, associate director of administration at the hospital. "His greatest problem is that he worries too much about what he cannot do for others."

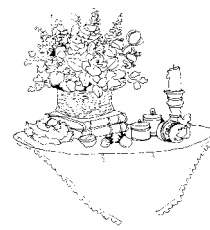
For his efforts, Srinivasan has been recognized through various awards from the hospital, the Department of Volunteers, and the United Hospitals Fund. His greatest awards, however, are not the ones that are

displayed on the walls in his room. With a stated mission of service to his neighbors, Srinivasan says he has been rewarded through invaluable friendships at the hospital. He says he has been a friend to many, a brother to most and a son to some. "You cannot cash a blank check," he says. "You need to serve others so you can get something back."

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The Public Safety Blotter

The Public Safety Department's report of incidents on Roosevelt Island is published regularly on *Website NYC10044*, at www.nyc10044.com, as part of the expanded *WIRE*. This selection of incidents in the period from July 16 to August 15 is only part of the two most recent reports. These descriptions are published as reported by Public Safety. *The WIRE* takes no responsibility for their completeness or accuracy.

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July 16-31

Assault

7/26, sidewalk, 560 Main St. Two males were sitting on bench. Three unknown males approached them and perp #1 said that they had "snatched" on his brother, and his probation was violated. Perp #1 then went to other side of bench and "sucker punched" victim #1, causing a large bruise and bleeding from above left eyebrow. PSD officers arrived, perps fled. Victim refused EMS. NYPD at scene, victim refused to ride around Roosevelt Island in their patrol car. Matter referred to 114th Pct.'s Detective Squad.

Robbery

7/22, 4th floor hall, 546 Main St. Female in-house, stated that an unknown female had approached her, told her "Give me money," and had then snatched a plastic bag from her hand, which contained a dark blue purse that had US\$2.00 inside. Female victim was not injured, and refused NYPD/EMS. Sgt. and officers conducted thorough search of Eastwood buildings and entire island with negative results.

Criminal Mischief

7/20, west seawall, 501 Main St. Officer responded to scene and saw outer broken window. Female had seen underage youth throw rock at it and identified him. Ultimately parent and youth arrived and boy said a friend had told him to throw rock at window. Juvenile Report was prepared.

7/23, garden, 750 Main St. Sgt. and officer responded to garden for report of a fire. Upon arrival, a member said fire had been some time the previous night. Officer did see the tree that had been set on fire, another tree's branches were broken and several pots had been broken as well. Garden Club president was notified. The Sgt. made several recommendations about securing Garden.

7/28, street, 400 Main St., Arrest. Officer responded to scene for disorderly male. And observed the cracked front-door glass of MTA bus. Bus driver said that perp was yelling and screaming at location. Perp then hit glass with his fist, causing front door to crack. Officer placed perp under arrest.

August 1-14

Robbery 1, Assault, Resisting Arrest

8/4, west seawall, 531 Main St., Arrest. Two resident perps arrested for above. Male resident in-house, informed desk officer he had been robbed and assaulted (stabbed with a pitch fork). He gave description of two males. Sgt. and all units began a search for perps. Perp #1, the older of the two, was apprehended first. Perp #2 was arrested several hours later. Mother of both perps was notified of the arrest of her two sons, and they spoke with their mother at 19th Pct.

8/14, apt., 510 Main St., Arrest. Female senior citizen resident stated through interpreter that she was entering her apt. when two female youths asked her if they could have some water; and then pushed their way into her apt., took victim's purse (contents: US\$100, bank card) and fled. PSD officers searched interior/exterior of buildings/grounds with negative results. Officers went back to crime scene area, and they heard noise emanating from apt. on same floor. That apt. is the where perp #2 lives. Victim pointed at the apt., officers knocked at apt., someone came to door and locked it. Officers advised Duty Officer of what was occurring at apt. The door was opened by resident female youth (perp #2), who inquired from PSD what they wanted. Sgt. instructed youth to dress and to go with PSD. Sgt. then opened closet door and inside was resident female youth (perp #1.) Both youths were brought to PSD and arrested. Parents notified. Youths were transported to family court, 19th Pct., Spofford Juvenile Detention Center.

Burglary

8/5, apt., 546 Main St. Male resident in-house, stated that at 1:00 pm, Sunday, two heavy-set female youths with short hair knocked on his apt. door, requesting donations for school; when he declined, they

asked to use his bathroom. He admitted them. After using the bathroom, they used the telephone and left. On Sunday morning, the man noticed that his wallet containing US\$30-40 was missing, his senior citizen MetroCard (unknown value), small black bank with US\$2-3 in coins were missing. NYPD was refused. Sgt. searched area with negative results.

Criminal Mischief

8/2, PS 217, parking lot, 645 Main. Officer responded to scene of car windshield being shattered by objects being thrown from 14th floor of 4 River Road. Officers responded, with Manhattan Park Super. and checked two apts. There was no reply. Officer noticed several torn balloons and three tennis balls in parking lot area. No other vehicle was damaged. NYPD responded, prepared report. Super to follow up with Manhattan Park Administration on 8/5.

Petty Larceny

8/2, Thrift Shop, 520 Main St. Female in house, stated she'd left her backpack unattended in thrift shop. Another store customer had seen male going through bag and said to witness he wanted to purchase it. When confronted, he ran out of store. Witness asked if someone had left the bag on counter. Victim checked it and noticed US\$45.00 had been taken. NYPD responded, prepared report.

8/7, Gristede's, 688 Main St. Female informed officer that, while working at Gristede's, she had stepped away from register to set up something. Upon returning, her purse, containing no currency, but two credit cards and her SS card was gone. She refused NYPD, would contact them on her own.

Investigation

8/12, 59th Street Bridge, Adj. 300. Bomb threat off-Island. Tram token-booth clerk at Roosevelt Island was informed by 19th Pct. of a bomb threat on the bridge and requested that Tram service be suspended. PSD responded, evacuated occupants from tennis bubble, Sportspark, and did not allow any vehicular traffic under bridge. High level RIOG personnel at scene. Normal activity did not resume until NYPD gave OK.

RIRA from page 6 (starts on 1)

• The RIRA Treasurer, chosen by the Common Council, also gets a vote.

When all the elected and unelected voting seats are sorted out, there is a clear potential for the unelected members to dominate the Council, especially in a coalition with a few elected members, and particularly if several elected members are absent.

When it comes to bringing public opinion to bear on governmental entities, then, the Island's Residents Association is hampered not only by difficulties in finding ways to generate public interest in issues, but by the fact that *the very entities* residents might like to influence *hold voting seats* on the RIRA Common Council. The organization's meager power to influence government, and with it the power of residents to exercise political influence, is seriously crippled.

Whither RIRA?

RIRA's role as a sounding board, where elected Common Councilors can get together for gripe sessions, remains intact. Its power to encourage and endorse activities like the dances on the pier or the 9/11 Memorial remains intact.

But its power to influence government by speaking with the voice of 9,500 residents (soon many more) will not be meaningful unless the organization finds some way to be truly representative of the electorate here, and attract individuals ready to put in major time and creative effort to energize residents with clear-cut issues, even when they are not necessarily so *big* that they cannot be ignored.

Given the odds, and given RIOG's power to ignore even the strongest of protests, it seems unlikely to happen.

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