

Next issue:  
Sat., Feb. 21

# The Main Street **WIRE**

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Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



A woman prepares to use an umbrella, walking up the escalator at Motorgate. Water cascaded down the motorized stairs during Tuesday's heavy rainstorm, turning the atrium into a reflecting pool. A worker using a push-broom to clear the water away said it's a chronic problem.

## Assembly Committee Will Probe RIOC's Operations

**At Grannis Behest, Public Authorities Committee to Examine Finances, as Well as Reasons for Ryan's Suspension and Firing**

by Erik Kriss in Albany

A key opposition Democrat is planning an investigation of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) and the tenure and firing of former RIOC President Robert H. Ryan.

State Assemblymember Richard Brodsky, who has won public attention for his committee's investigations of other New York State authorities and corporations, said he will look at RIOC because he was asked to do so by Assemblyman Alexander B. "Pete" Grannis, a Democrat who represents the Island.

"We will examine carefully and fairly the facts surrounding this matter and the authority," said Brodsky, a Westchester County Democrat who chairs the Assem-

bly Committee on Corporations, Authorities & Commissions, and is eyeing a run for State Attorney General in 2006.

In a January 22 letter to Brodsky, Grannis, a Democrat whose district includes the Island, described Roosevelt Island as a "bucolic community." He continues, "But alas, Good Richard, as we have discussed, all is not well in this small, tightly knit enclave of over 9,000 constituents."

Ryan, who managed Gov. George Pataki's successful 1994 election campaign, served as the \$125,000-a-year president of RIOC until last June.

Three months after his firing there, the Pataki administration gave him a \$110,000-a-year job as Assistant Secretary of State, despite a State hiring freeze. Pataki aides have said the new job involves helping New York City conform to the new State fire code and that it therefore qualifies as a health and safety position exempt from the hiring freeze.

Ryan was suspended from his RIOC job in February, 2003, and escorted out of his office at 591 Main Street by Island Public

Safety Officers.

The RIOC Board charged him with granting unauthorized payments to himself and other RIOC employees for volunteer work following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. But following an aborted investigation by Pataki's hand-picked State Inspector General, Grannis and others speculated additional reasons might also have been behind the firing.

Ryan declined to comment through Department of State spokesman Pete Constantakes. Of Grannis's request and Brodsky's plans, Constantakes said, "This sounds like nothing more than partisan politics."

Grannis said he was primarily motivated to request the Brodsky investigation by the news – first reported in *The WIRE* – that Ryan had landed the six-figure job "in an already top-heavy management at the Department of State, and by the circumstances of his being led from his office and summarily fired – and the RIOC Board's secrecy."

"We couldn't get any answers," Grannis said. "We

See **Probe**, page 6

Full text of the Grannis letter to Brodsky, page 6

## Island Developers' Gifts Fuel State's Political Campaigns

**Sheldrake Being Investigated for Contributions Over Limit; Level of Giving by Some Raises a Question of Quid Pro Quo**

by Erik Kriss in Albany

The State Board of Elections is investigating and threatening to prosecute the Sheldrake Organization, the expected new partner in Island House and Westview, for potentially exceeding State campaign contribution limits.

Sheldrake and its principals have given \$35,130 to the political campaigns of Governor George Pataki and other state politicians since January 1999, according to Board records. State law limits companies to \$5,000 in total contributions annually. Sheldrake campaign contributions totaled \$6,500 in 2000, \$11,800 in 2001, and \$10,080 in 2002. (Figures used in this report are in the period from 1999 through mid-January, 2004.)

"It looks like they gave too much money for three consecutive years," said State Board of Elections press representative Lee Daghlian. "We will be requesting

they get refunds and, if they don't, we're going to prosecute them or send them to a DA (district attorney), which is all we can do."

Daghlian said on Wednesday that Sheldrake has responded to its inquiries, but he would not provide any details, noting the contributions are still part of "an ongoing investigation."

Sheldrake president J. Christopher Daly responded to requests for comment with a written statement. "We do contribute to the electoral efforts of many public officials and have done so for many years," Daly said. "We have been in contact with the State Board of Elections and we are currently working closely with them to ensure that Sheldrake remains in full compliance with the law."

By its own description, Sheldrake specializes in

See **Contributions**, page 7

## Festival Draws Island Muslims Together

by Anusha Shrivastava

The sign-in sheet was missing a "home country" column. But some of the entries would have been Tunisia, Pakistan, Palestine, Morocco, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Sri Lanka, Jordan, Malaysia, France, and the USA. More than twenty families representing these countries gathered last Sunday in the Westview community room to celebrate the festival of Eid Al-Adha, reminding everyone of the panoramic diversity that exists on Roosevelt Island.

The group shares neither a common language nor a common history. Their professions range from teaching to consulting to working for the embassies of their respective countries. Their national dress and food vary – even the delicacies they prepare for Eid are different. While the Palestinians make *mamul*, baked semolina filled with dates and nuts, the Tunisians make *tagin*, a quiche filled with chicken

and potatoes.

What is common to all, however, is that they live on the Island, away from their native lands, and share a desire to teach their children about

their culture and religion.

The festival of Eid is celebrated by Muslims all over the world to mark the end of hajj, the holy pil

See **Festival**, page 10



Celebrating Eid Al-Adha with their parents on Sunday evening at the Westview community room, these kids were entertained by the antics of a clown.

## Monday's Bus Change Already Drawing Fire

by Dick Lutz

RIOC announced another change in the Red Bus route and schedule this week through kiosk postings and a Tuesday e-mail. Like the earlier change that reduced northbound service at the subway station to half-hourly, this new plan is already being criticized.

The new plan calls for buses to run south on the new Main Street, pick up and discharge passengers at 475 Main Street (the first building south of Blackwell House), stop at the Tram station, then continue north on the west service road for a stop at the subway station before continuing north toward Motorgate. In addition, RIOC says the buses will not linger at Motorgate, or at the Tram station unless a cabin is docking.

Frank Farance, a member of the Common Council of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA) Common Council, pointed out at its Wednesday night meeting that, in non-rush periods, the "no lingering" policy could cost residents up to 15 minutes every time they take the bus. "On the old schedule," he said, "when buses left Motorgate on a fixed schedule, a specific number of minutes past the quarter-hour, you knew within a minute or two exactly when to leave your apartment to catch the bus. With an essentially random schedule, to be sure of catching a bus, people will have to allow extra time, leaving their apartments as much as 15 minutes earlier."

He added, "It's not a good trade-off. It looks like it's being done for the

See **Red Bus**, page 6

The RIOC Board will meet Tuesday (February 10) at 4:30 in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Resident questions and comments are invited for a community access "Town Meeting" to be held in a portion of the meeting after the open portion of the formal meeting.

## Briefly...

The Historical Society is planning an April festival of nine films about Roosevelt Island (or Blackwell's Island), or which involved shooting here, and is seeking volunteers to help with a variety of tasks ranging from graphic design and ticket selling through fundraising and ushering. There's a meeting tomorrow; see *ComingUp*, page 3.

*The Editorial Page*

## Best Laid Plans...

They can go awry.

Watching President Herb Berman settle in at RIOC – it's been just over five months now – there is a clear impression that he wants to be seen as trying to work with residents, and no one really wants to doubt the sincerity of his intent. But it is a lesson that comes in a very demanding school of hard knocks here on Roosevelt Island.

Berman and staff had a serious stumble in mid-December. Without much consultation, with no cooperation whatsoever from the weather, RIOC tried a new bus route. It left home-bound Islanders standing, waiting for the subway, for a half-hour or more. Sometimes, as one reader reported in a letter, full buses meant standing for up to an hour. Clearly, that just wasn't going to work.

But RIOC left the mistake in place for nearly a month, and formed a committee that included some residents. The options were discussed, though the developers of Southtown reportedly appeared to be exercising some sort of veto, insisting on wrong-way service at the under-occupied new buildings there. Meanwhile, as the photo on page 6 shows, residents of the buildings were not terribly interested in boarding northbound buses. Instead, they taught everybody once again that the shortest distance between two points is a line as straight as you can make it.

RIOC's committee talked through a plan, and at least some resident members expected to be called for another meeting to go over something next-to-final. But RIOC took the final step on its own, announcing *Plan B*. It starts Monday (report, page 1).

But the new plan appears likely to show another serious glitch. As Residents Association Common Councilor Frank Farance reasoned, RIOC's plan to keep buses rolling, with no regular departure time at the Tram or Motorgate could easily destroy any semblance of regularity in service at the bus stops. Where once a resident could count on catching a bus by arriving at a stop with a three- or four-minute window, a less regularized schedule could require a 15-minute window in non-rush periods.

Oops.

That's a serious matter because for busy New Yorkers hurrying off to work in the morning, stopwatch-close timing is the rule. Out the door at 10:04, in the lobby by 10:06, at the bus stop by 10:08, and there's the bus at 10:09 or 10:10. If instead the bus might come at 9:58 or 10:05 or 10:06, the punctual rider must cast a wider time net to be sure of catching a bus.

The time cost to each resident could be vexing. Summing all the carefully-timed trips in which thousands of residents catch a Red Bus as the first leg of a trip to work, or the doctor, or a lunch date, the time cost is enormous and way beyond vexing.

Farance points out that carrying subway-bound passengers south on the new Main Street, then waiting at the Tram, isn't workable, because those subway riders are not going to want to wait as minutes crawl by.

Back to the drawing board.

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**The WIRE seeks resident volunteers for many tasks, ranging from delivery of the paper through reporting, writing, and photography. For more information call 212-826-9055 or e-mail the editor at:**

[editor@MainStreetWIRE.com](mailto:editor@MainStreetWIRE.com).

A good friend told me this week about an experience in the communications business. As part of a management team a decade or two ago, he said, he was told to make a contribution to a political action committee (PAC) responsible for pursuing industry goals with the Federal government. "It was understood," he said, "that whatever we contributed could 'find its way' into our expense accounts under one guise or another."

This was a way of circumventing limits on corporate contributions to political causes.

A major story this issue from *The WIRE's* Albany correspondent, Erik Kriss, lists the political contribu-

## island observer

tions of corporations with a financial interest in Roosevelt Island. Few owners or developers would want to be quoted saying it's "pay to play," as one government-watcher puts it in Erik's report. For publication and attribution, most would say the opposite.

But the numbers invite us to connect the dots.

It goes beyond corporate contributions, of course. Like my friend, employees can be nudged into generosity that is ultimately cost-free for them.

And owners of development corporations have no difficulty finding the side of the bread with the high-priced spread. Without the encumbrances of their corporate entities to restrict their personal contributions, they can wink, smile, wheel, and deal.

On the other side of an economic exchange, politicians can also see who butters the bread, then deal, wheel, smile, and wink back.

Not *all* politicians.

Not *all* developers.

But it stretches the bounds of common sense to suggest that there is never a quid pro quo.

And common sense, therefore, suggests that the funding of our political system needs real reform. Not token actions with Peterbilt-size holes, but *real* reform.

This is not a new plea. But in the era of Halliburton, there is a new urgency to find workable ways to disconnect government contracts and awards from political giving, and to cut the tempting financial ties between public servants and their past or future corporate employers.

A way must be found. The future of popular democracy (as opposed to corporate democracy) may depend on it.

# Letters

**To the Editor:**

I am a medical radiology researcher from China and very interested in having one-on-one English conversation with a volunteer partner, especially retired professor, housewife, or young people who are interested in different cultures and willing to patiently correct my English (and perhaps we can become friends).

For those who are interested, please call **212-758-6018** (weekends) or just e-mail me: [wang6@mskcc.org](mailto:wang6@mskcc.org).

Thank you.

Liang Wang, MD

**To Herb Berman, RIOC:**

Yesterday I took a day off from my work at the Goldwater Memorial Hospital, and walked from Queens to Manhattan on the Queensboro Bridge. It was very pleasant, and the path was well maintained and cleared of ice. It struck me that it should be possible for residents and people who work on Roosevelt Island to use the bridge to walk to the City. I know that an elevator connected the bridge to the Island up until the 1950s when a trolley was in service.

Now that the population of the Island is growing, I think there would be much support for resumption of access from Roosevelt Island to the Queensboro Bridge footpath, especially since the walk would take less than ten minutes, making it faster than either the Tram or the subway.

I hope you will take this subject up with the appropriate State and City authorities.

Elizabeth Yew, MD

**To the Editor:**

I have been a resident of Westview for the past three years. My former roommate was the leaseholder of the apartment. Before he moved to Syracuse last year, we both went to the Roosevelt Island Housing Management Corporation in August, 2003, and filled out the necessary paperwork to transfer the lease over to me. I was under the assumption that everything was taken care of.

I then found another roommate for the apartment and turned her paperwork in to the housing office so that she could be added to the apartment, and that went well also. Due to the fact that I needed a copy of my lease for the parking garage, I called the office on Monday, January 26, but they told me that, although my former roommate and I filed our paperwork for the lease transfer, they never sent me a copy of the lease to sign, which she agreed was their fault, so this morning I went in to sign it. I signed a copy of the lease with my name on it and then the woman took it to the manager to sign. After about 15-20 minutes, the manager called me into his office and stated that they must kick me out of the apartment due to the fact that the leaseholder moved out. After stating that no one told us this in August when we transferred the lease over to me, he simply stated that they made a mistake and that it makes no difference. Both my roommate and myself must move out after receiving court orders in a month per Mr. Fishman, the manager.

I am outraged and I was wondering if you would want to print my story in *The Main Street WIRE*.

Rob Miller

**Editor's note:** The State Division of Housing and Community Renewal sets the rules by which roommates may succeed as prime tenants of Mitchell-Lama apartments. The rules require a credible familial relationship and define various ways of establishing that, ranging from traditional blood or marital relationships through "emotional and financial commitment and interdependence between such person [i.e., the roommate] and the tenant." Longevity is a factor. Residents facing questions of this kind may wish to consult the non-profit Eviction Intervention Services at **212-308-2210** or [eisny@aol.com](mailto:eisny@aol.com).

**To the Editor:**

We applaud and support the Eastwood Building Committee (EBC).

On January 15, EBC convened a meeting in the Senior Center. Byron Gaspard, Nellie Velez, Margaret Gaspard, and Harry DeVine, the leaders of the committee, chaired a strong meeting with 40-50 residents. The main focus was on Public Safety and the inability of residents to control a service that we are paying for; it is always a major part of our rent and rent-increase applications.

This leadership is working diligently and intelligently on behalf of all the residents of Eastwood, giving generously of their time and skills to keep Eastwood a safe and affordable place to live.

We did this unappreciated job for many years and know how thankless you feel doing this wonderful thing for your neighbors. They deserve support and thanks from all of Eastwood.

Fay and Ron Vass

**Letters deadline for Feb. 21 issue: Feb. 17**

After deadline, letters are considered on a space-available basis.

## 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: *anonymous letters are not considered for publication*. Preferred methods of submission: E-mail to [Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com](mailto:Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com) (E-mail format preferred, or use any wordprocessing software) to put a file on a PC-standard 3.5" floppy disk left at 531 Main Street addressed to *The WIRE*. Alternatives: Typed copy left at 531 Main Street or faxed to 212-755-2540 (call ahead to 212-826-9055). Clearly-handwritten letters will be considered if brief, but we are not able to take telephone dictation of letters. **All letters are subject to acceptance, and to editing for length and clarity.** Recommended maximum length, 300 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space.

**Website NYC10044's Island History TimeLine has been updated!** New entries from the 1800's through January, 2004  
<http://nyc10044.com/timeln/timeline.html>

Weeks of sub-freezing weather have reinforced my hatred of urban winter with its drifts of dirty, frozen snow, slush at the street corners and layers of clothing that make us all look like Michelin Tire Men or Pillsbury Doughboys. Punxsutawney Phil, the groundhog, says there will be six more weeks of winter. Super Bowl XXXVIII is over and New York's winter sports teams, frankly, stink. There isn't even a nice, juicy Winter Olympics to break Pluto's spell. That we perceive the current spate of temperatures in the upper-thirties as a heat wave indicates how low our expectations have become.

Friends, there is hope. RIRA has heard your cries and has responded. Dig out your poodle skirts and dust off your saddle shoes, 'cause we're gonna rock around the clock on Saturday, March 6. The RIRA Sock Hop, held at the Manhattan Park Theater Club, will be the event of the season. Brush up your Lindy Hop and oil up your joints for the hula-hoop contest. In the coming weeks, keep your eyes on this newspaper and on the Main Street kiosks for advance ticket information. Where did I put my PF Flyers, my madras shirt, and my Wildroot Creme Oil, Charlie?

This February marks the second anniversary of my efforts to obtain MetroCard service for our Tram. Two years ago, almost to the day, I made a pitch to Transit Authority President Lawrence Reuter at a Transit Riders' Forum that started the present round of negotiations. I wish I could claim that the original idea was mine, but in fact, Island activists have been pushing for the inclusion of the Tram in the MetroCard system ever since its inception.

When I suggested to Mr. Reuter that the MetroCard slogan, "One City, One Fare," was a sham without the inclusion of our aerial commuter link to Manhattan, he enthusiastically endorsed the idea. And when I took his heartfelt support to the RIOC Board of Directors, they asked me to set up the series of meetings that have brought us to today.

I wish I could tell you that it's a done deal, but it's not. Many Tram riders have told me that there appears to be preliminary work in progress at the two Tram stations that would lead to the installation of magnetic card readers. Neither RIOC nor the NYC Transit Authority will acknowledge that any agreements have been reached and our elected reps have suggested that I keep my fingers crossed. Two years of crossed fingers and toes have become rather painful, but we do appear to be close. When (no longer if) this "idea whose time has come" happens, rest assured that I will shout it from the rooftops. Stay tuned.

The new Red Bus routes, installed last December, have proved to be a disaster. With temperatures pushing zero, few among us have been willing to walk home from the subway and have endured half-hour waits for what used to be a 15-minute bus schedule you could set your watch by. I've participated in several RIOC meetings seeking to address the problem and I think we have a solution that will satisfy everyone. When I spoke to RIOC Chief Engineer Vincent Kopicki earlier this week, he said that implementation was imminent, and today's e-mail advisory from RIOC (are you signed up to receive them?) gives a Monday start-up date. With a clockwise route around Southtown, the Tram and the subway, we have a solution that requires no construction of new bus shelters, that will oblige no one to cross trafficked streets to go to or from the Tram or subway, and that will allow our new Southtown neighbors to wait for buses in the

## The RIRA Column

warmth and security of their lobbies. All we need now is easily understandable kiosk signage, which, along with coverage of the story in this newspaper, will inform the public of this improvement. With such a cruel winter upon us, sooner is better than later.

Your Residents Association has been busy setting its house in order. We have obtained an EIN number and have applied for 501(c)4 status, steps that will allow us more freedom to operate as a non-profit organization. In addition, we have obtained a post office box at the Roosevelt Island branch so that you can communicate more easily with your representatives. You're welcome to still send notes to my Westview address or use the e-mail address listed under my picture on this page, but this new P.O. box should serve RIRA's future interests. You may write to: **Roosevelt Island Residents Association, P.O. Box 341, Roosevelt Island Station, New York, NY 10044.** We represent you better when you share your concerns with us and when you raise your voice with ours to demand service and redress of grievances. Together, we can (sometimes) make a difference.

The RIOC Board of Directors has yet to meet in the new year and will rectify that omission on February 10 at 4:30 p.m. This evening meeting will include a Town Meeting portion following the adjournment of the business agenda, in which the community may converse with the Island's decision-makers, and I urge you to attend and to bring your concerns to the Board.

This opportunity arises only after every other Board meeting, with no opportunity to address them at their bi-monthly morning meetings. In fact, we've not had this option since their November 6 meeting. One impediment to resident participation has been the intrusion of a private Executive Session, imposed between the RIOC agenda and the Town Meeting, which has left interested Islanders cooling their heels for several hours waiting for the Directors to return. I've asked the Board Chair, Commissioner Mary Beth Labate, to schedule the Executive Session following the Town Meeting as a courtesy to Island residents and she has agreed. If you've been frustrated in the past, please come back and get involved.



**Matthew Katz**, President  
Roosevelt Island Residents Assn.  
e-mail: [matthewkatz@rcn.com](mailto:matthewkatz@rcn.com)

The bottom line here is that community participation in Island governance can only encourage RIOC and its Board to be more sensitive to our concerns and more inclusive in its communication. If you don't care, dear neighbor, why should they?

The Westview pool is back! After yet another hiatus, this time of two weeks, the health club has been reopened under new management. The Fitness Company has operated the Rivercross health facility for many years, competently and successfully by all accounts, and they now have the opportunity to show their stuff in Westview. Members can extend their expiration dates by two weeks simply by bringing their cards to the Housing Management office. If you're tired of arctic winds why not try the warm waters and soothing saunas of the Westview Health Club? Things are definitely looking up!

**The Public Safety Blotter for the last half of January is now on line at <http://nyc10044.com/wire/2410/blot2410.html>**

Since last summer's Blackout many residents have inquired about an Emergency Preparedness Plan for the Island. I'm pleased to report that this month there will be an intra-agency meeting to review RIOC's draft plan and our role in any emergency. Included will be RIOC's responsibilities and those of Public Safety. Generally the New York State Emergency Management Office (NYSEMO) and the New York

City Office of Emergency Management (OEM) defines emergencies as blackouts, hurricanes, flooding, and, significantly, terrorist attack.

The object of the meeting will be to make sure the agencies have an emergency preparedness plan that includes Roosevelt Island. This meeting will lead to what is referred to as a "hazard assessment" for the Island and will define the roles of all involved. Participating agencies besides NYSEMO and OEM include the MTA, the Department of Transportation, the NYPD, and the FDNY. Those agencies are the ones most likely to be involved any time there is an emergency.

Out of this meeting RIOC will complete a detailed emergency-preparedness plan, in coordination with the other agencies, and will spell out clearly defined responsibilities in case of emergency.

Obviously, last August's Blackout pointed a need for such a plan to be prepared in detail and that is what we are now working to complete. One thing we did learn from the Black-

out and in talks with intra-agency planners is that the question of taking the Red Buses off the Island during an emergency is something that interests these external agencies. There has been opposition to the plan to take them off Island expressed in preliminary conversations. I look forward to being able to reach a mutually acceptable decision on this matter.

I also look forward to sharing the plan with Island residents once it is completed.

Finally, Governor Pataki has asked me to remind any Island resident who is a State employee and has been called to active duty in the military that they can now, under the new State Patriot Plan, suspend any payments on any loan they might have with the State Retirement System. Under the Patriot Plan, any State employee on active duty from July 1, 2003, through June 30, 2004, can elect to defer their loan payments. If a member chooses to defer payment, the Patriot Plan protects them from default while on active duty. Interest will continue to accrue but the maximum five-year repayment period will be extended by the length of time a person served on active duty.



**Herbert E. Berman**, President  
Roosevelt Island Operating Corp.  
e-mail: [HBerman@rioc.com](mailto:HBerman@rioc.com)

# COMING UP

## — This Weekend —

Planning meeting for **Roosevelt Island Film Festival** (Historical Society event) for volunteers, **tomorrow, Sun., Feb. 8**, 11:00 a.m., 575 Main Street, apt. 1301. Send e-mail in advance to Judy Berdy: [JBird134@aol.com](mailto:JBird134@aol.com).

## — The Coming Week —

**Toastmasters Public Speaking Group Demonstration Meeting, Mon., Feb. 9**, 8:00 p.m., Gallery RIVAA. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577 / 212-935-1254**. (See ad, page 5.)

**Free Tax Clinic** for seniors and low-income taxpayers, **Tue., Feb. 10** and every Tuesday through Apr. 13, 10:00-1:30, offered by Eviction Intervention Services, at EIS offices, 150 East 62nd St. (between Lexington and Third) in Lexington United Methodist Church. No appointment required. Additional information: **212-308-2210**, ext. 207, or [eisny@aol.com](mailto:eisny@aol.com).

**RIOC Board of Directors Meeting, Tue., Feb. 10**, 4:30 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Closed executive session rescheduled to follow a public-access "Town Meeting," which will follow the open meeting of the Board.

## — Future Events —

**PTA International Dinner, Thur., Feb. 12**, 6:00 p.m. (open to PS/IS 217 parents), with **Silent Auction** of donated goods and services (viewing of items starts 5:30 p.m.).

**Book Discussion** — *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* by J.W. Johnson, **Thur., Feb. 19**, 6:30 p.m., Library. Free. Books available at the Library.

**The Main Street WIRE** — next issue **Sat., Feb. 21**. (To receive e-mail bulletins in the meantime, send an "Add Me" message to [Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com](mailto:Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com).) **Deadlines:** Advertising in the paper, Fri., Feb. 13; decision on fliers for *The Bag*, Mon., Feb. 16; fliers due Thur., Feb. 19. **Future issues:** Mar. 6, 20; Apr. 3, 17;

May 1, 15, 29; June 12; July 3 (Fourth of July issue), 31; Aug. 28; Sept. 11, 25; Oct. 16, 30 (pre-election issue); Nov. 6 (post-election issue), 20 (Thanksgiving issue); Dec. 4, 18 (holiday issues), then twice a month starting in January, 2005. (Schedule subject to adjustment.) **Phone/fax** for news, **212-826-9055/755-2540**; urgent matters **917-617-0449**. phone/fax for display and classified advertising placement and information, **212-751-8214/755-2540**. **To list your organization's Island event in this column**, e-mail information to [ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com](mailto:ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com), or leave it, addressed to *The WIRE*, at the desk at 531 Main Street; provide a telephone number for follow-up questions; there is no charge.

**Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Feb. 23**, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577 / 212-935-1254**.

**Residents Association Common Council meeting, Wed., Mar. 3**, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Public access near beginning of session.

**Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Mar. 8**, 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577 / 212-935-1254**.

**Forum on Women and Housing Discrimination**, presented by Community Board 8 Housing Committee, **Thur., Mar. 11**, 7:00 p.m., Einhorn Auditorium, Lenox Hill Hospital, 131 East 76th Street.

There is no charge to list Island events here. E-mail information to [ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com](mailto:ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com) or leave copy at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. Please provide telephone numbers for possible follow-up.

## The RIOC Column

# Senior Center

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Monday</b>                             | 12:30, <b>Movie</b>   |
| 10-11, <b>Latchhook Class</b>             | 7:00, <b>Dance</b>  |
| 10-11:30, <b>English as 2nd Language</b>  | <b>Friday</b>   |
| 10:30, <b>Blood Pressure Screen</b>       | 6:00, <b>Dance &amp; Relax</b>                              |
| 12:30, <b>"Oldies" Movies</b>             | 9:30, <b>Yoga Stretch</b>                                   |
| 1:00, <b>Tai Chi</b>                      | 7:00, <b>Games (RISA)</b>                                   |
| 7:00, <b>Dance Class (Beginners)</b>      | <b>Saturday</b>   |
| <b>Tuesday</b>                            | 7:30, <b>Bingo (RISA)</b>                                   |
| 9-1, <b>Tax Help for Seniors</b>          | <b>Special Events</b>                                       |
| 10:00, <b>Computers</b>                   | <b>Today, Sat., Feb. 7</b> , 6:00, Korean New Year          |
| 10-11, <b>Dance &amp; Relax</b>           | <b>Thur., Feb. 12</b> , 10:30, How to Develop a Will        |
| 1:00, <b>Bingo</b>                        | <b>Sat., Feb. 14</b> , 7:00, Valentine's Day Celebration    |
| 6:00, <b>Yoga Class</b> (resumes Feb. 10) | <b>Wed., Feb. 18</b> , Atlantic City trip                   |
| 7:30, <b>Games (RISA)</b>                 | <b>Mon., Feb. 23</b> , 10:30, Dr. Spencer lecture           |
| <b>Wednesday</b>                          | <b>Fri., Feb. 27</b> , 12:30, Birthday celebration          |
| 9:15, <b>Stay Well</b>                    | <b>Sat., Feb. 28</b> , 9-5, Black History Month Celebration |
| 10:00, <b>Spanish Class</b>               |   |
| 10:30, <b>Shoppers' Bus</b>               |   |
| 12:30, <b>Sculpting</b>                   |   |
| 7:00, <b>Pokeno (RISA)</b>                |   |
| <b>Thursday</b>                           |   |
| 10:00, <b>Tai Chi</b>                     |   |
| 10:30, <b>Creative Arts</b>               |   |

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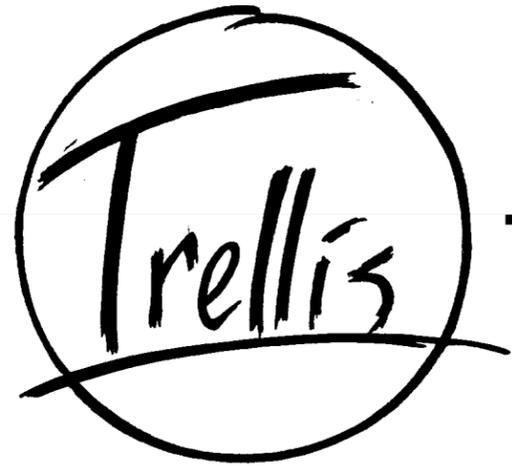


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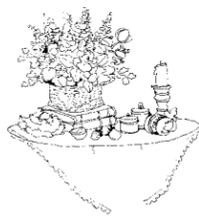
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The Island Arts Music Center was founded by Director of RIVER MUSIC, Robin Russell, trained at Juilliard and Harvard (B.A. in Music). With over 20 years teaching experience with private students, he has been on the faculty of the Turtle Bay Music School, and the Diller-Quaile School of Music.

**Probe** from page 1

couldn't get any of the information, and I thought, this is right up Richard's alley."

Grannis compared Ryan's career track with that of Ryan's predecessor as RIOC president, Dr. Jerome Blue.

A protégé of Pataki's political mentor, former U.S. Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, Blue stirred controversy at RIOC, then as commissioner of the State Division of Human Rights, then as Vice President of Construction at Battery Park City Authority, and finally at the New York City College of Technology, where he served as interim vice president for research, governmental and corporate affairs.

Grannis said he suspects corporations such as RIOC "are being used as a dumping ground for the governor's political allies."

"Mr. Ryan's job performance as RIOC's president and chief operating officer, a position for which

he had no apparent qualifications other than his years as one of Governor Pataki's political operatives, ended under circumstances that would most certainly not have commended him for further State employment, much less an apparent promotion," Grannis wrote in his letter.

Grannis asked for a sweeping review of RIOC that would include "its operations, its compliance with the terms of the Island's 1969 master lease with New York City, the Island's official owner, and, in particular, the selection and appointment of its senior staff, their qualifications and job responsibilities and performance, and such other matters as you deem appropriate."

Brodsky said it was too soon to elaborate on his plans for the probe. He also said it's too early to say whether he will hold any hearings at a Roosevelt Island location.



**Malik K. Khalil**

November 20, 1939-January 27, 2004

The co-owner of M&D Deli, Malik K. Khalil, died last week. He is survived by his brother and partner, who continues in the Deli operation.

The WIRE seeks a volunteer reporter to cover Youth Program sports and other recreational activities on the Island. Call 212-826-9055 or e-mail editor@MainStreetWIRE.com.

**Bus Change** from page 1

convenience of the relatively small number of people living in the new buildings in Southtown. But even for them, if they are to use the bus, they'll have to leave home allowing an extra 15 minutes to be sure of catching one. Instead, they will continue to use the default path they've worn along the construction-site fence, cutting across the lawn to the west service road. It's an obvious choice."

Farance plans to speak Tuesday evening during the public session of the RIOC Board of Directors meeting. "Here's an obvious example of how, if you don't live here, you don't have a clue as to how people actually use the buses and plan their time." He hopes to enlighten both RIOC staff and the RIOC Board.

Both southbound and northbound, Farance feels, the bus should be on a fixed schedule.

But, he says, adoption of a fixed departure time at the Tramway, tying it to cabin arrivals, is incompatible with RIOC's new route. "Passengers headed for the subway are not going to want to wait for a cabin to arrive," he said, pointing out that the wait could be up to seven minutes at rush-hour, and longer in non-rush periods.

As a result, Farance says he thinks the old routing on the west service road should be restored. Residents of 465 and 475 Main Street would be served by adding a southbound stop opposite Blackwell House, and a northbound stop at the turnaround or just north of Blackwell House. (RIOC has resisted adding a stop at the turnaround, concerned about traffic.)

For the Island as a whole, Farance said, "The trade-off RIOC is making saves 50 to 100 feet for a small number of residents now in the new buildings, while costing both them and 9,000 other residents 15 minutes every time they want to use the Red Bus service. That's adding up to 30

**Grannis Letter Asking for RIOC Probe**

Honorable Richard L. Brodsky  
Chair, Assembly Committee on  
Corporations, Authorities and Commissions  
Legislative Office Building – Room 422  
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Richard:

As you know, the bucolic community of Roosevelt Island lies in the heart of my Assembly District. But alas, Good Richard, as we have discussed, all is not well in this small, tightly knit enclave of over 9,000 constituents. This is so because the fate of this community in many ways rests in the hands of the bureaucrats who run the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC). RIOC is a state public benefit corporation established by Chapter 900 of the Laws of 1984 to take over responsibility from the Urban Development Corporation for managing the completion of the General Development Plan (GDP) and day-to-day operations of the award-winning planned community on Roosevelt Island.

I am writing to request that the Assembly's Committee on Corporations, Authorities and Commissions undertake a review of RIOC's operations, its compliance with the terms of the Island's 1969 master lease with New York City, the Island's official owner, and, in particular, the selection and appointment of its senior staff, their qualifications and job responsibilities and performance, and such other matters as you deem appropriate.

My request is prompted by the startling news of Robert H. Ryan's recent appointment as an assistant secretary of state in New York Secretary of State Randy Daniels already top heavy bureaucracy. As discussed below, Mr. Ryan's job performance as RIOC's president and chief operating officer, a position for which he had no apparent professional qualifications other than his years as one of Governor Pataki's political operatives, ended under circumstances that would most certainly not have commended him for further state employment, much less an apparent promotion.

The reasons for Ryan's dismissal as RIOC's leader after a lack luster three and a half year tenure are shrouded in mystery on which I hope your committee will be able to shed some much needed light.

The facts, such as they are known, are as follows: In early February 2003, Roosevelt Island Public Safety officers unceremoniously escorted Mr. Ryan from his RIOC office. This action was apparently taken at the behest of some outside authority since, only later in the day, was RIOC's board of directors, chaired by DHCR's commissioner and dominated by gubernatorial appointments, called into emergency session. This meeting took place at an off Island location (itself a unique occurrence). At this meeting, the board reportedly voted unanimously to place Ryan on paid administrative leave for sixty days "pending an inquiry" into his activities being conducted by the State Inspector General. This leave was extended twice for a total of 4½ months.

At some point, the IG's office inexplicably terminated its investigation and returned the matter to RIOC's board, concluding that the issues under review were a matter for the corporation itself to handle.

Following the IG's bailout, RIOC's board voted at its June meeting to terminate Ryan's employment, saying only that the action was "in the best interests" of the corporation. Along with the reasons for the IG's involvement, the board's action has been shrouded in secrecy, with no explanation ever provided for Ryan's

abrupt physical removal from his office or its final action ending his position at the corporation. In reaching its decision, however, the board relied on a secret investigative report on RIOC and Ryan prepared (at whose request is unknown) by Michael Hitsman, an attorney with the Elmsford, NY law firm of Hitsman, Hoffman & O'Reilly. RIOC has rebuffed repeated requests for information about the reasons precipitating this review and for release of the Hitsman report.

It is rumored that among the issues under investigation by the IG's office were Ryan's handling of certain corporate business affairs that included the payment of questionable compensation for himself and other RIOC executives and staff, including the payment of special "bonuses" for work he and others did as "volunteers" in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. At this point, however, I still have no confirmation that this was the subject of the IG's investigation or of the subsequent investigation ordered by RIOC's board.

It was not until the publication of the enclosed newspaper articles in September, 2003, focusing on Ryan's fortuitous avoidance of Governor Pataki's hiring freeze that word first leaked out about the IG's determination that the matters in question had to be handled internally by RIOC's board.

This turn of events raises to new levels the many concerns and questions that have been raised over the years, about RIOC's bookkeeping and general operation, by Island residents and their elected representatives. These concerns have been the subject of a series of letters sent to Ryan and his predecessor, Dr. Jerome Blue, who himself had a controversial tenure and untimely departure as RIOC's president. I would be glad to provide you with this correspondence if it will assist your review.

Ryan's move to the Department of State less than three months after his firing by RIOC followed the career path in government service blazed by his predecessor Dr. Blue. Blue, a protégé of former Senator Alfonse D'Amato, came to RIOC from HFA where he reportedly had not inspired confidence in his professional skills. After a less than stellar performance at RIOC, amidst widespread charges of incompetence, the administration moved him to head the state Division of Human Rights. After a turbulent year there, with reports that he himself was the subject of an investigation for misconduct, he surfaced as Vice President of Construction at the Battery Park City Authority. Following a short stint in this position, he was appointed as the Interim Vice President for Research, Governmental and Corporate Affairs of the New York City College of Technology, a position created to house Dr. Blue, according to the attached newspaper article.

Based on the activities I have outlined here, I ask that you and your committee thoroughly review RIOC's operations and the circumstances surrounding the administration's handling of these two senior managers.

Thank you for your attention to this request for your committee's intervention. I will gladly provide your staff with whatever information we have available to assist you in this endeavor. Please feel free to contact Tony Morenzi, who runs my District Office, or me, at (212) 860-4906 if you have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,  
s/Pete

**Alexander B. Grannis**  
Member of Assembly



Ignoring the bus route and stop selected for them, Southtown residents have been voting with their feet, using this path to and from the subway station.

minutes a day to the usual commute. Those 30 minutes will sometimes be spent in hot sun or bitter cold, waiting on Main Street or even at the Tram, where people have been accustomed to having a bus standing by." In addition, Farance points out, at the Tram station, "there just isn't enough bus shelter space for a full Tram-load of passengers.

After RIOC's December 18 change in bus routing drew resident fire because riders were left standing for a half-hour or more at the subway station while every second bus traveled north through Southtown instead of going past the subway station on the west service road, RIOC President Herbert E. Berman formed a committee to consider a further change. Residents Association President Matthew Katz, who served on the committee, said he met with the committee once, and once privately with Berman, and expected that a resulting plan would be discussed at an additional meeting of the committee. Instead, RIOC announced the new schedule earlier this week.



A church bus in the Main Street turnaround shows one possible northbound bus stop location that might serve Southtown residents; buses would turn left from here to continue north. Another proposed possibility is the front of Blackwell House. Southbound, buses might stop opposite Blackwell House or in the area immediately to the right of this photograph.

## Contributions from page 1

privatization of public housing, and its representatives have confirmed an interest in Island House and Westview, saying a deal is "close." Privatization of the buildings would remove them from the State's Mitchell-Lama system and eliminate regulation of their rents by DHCR, the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal.

But the Pataki-appointed staff and Board of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation will have considerable say in the ultimate value of privatization of the buildings through its power to negotiate terms for extension of the buildings' ground leases. Higher ground rent would increase costs, which the owner would be free to pass on, through unregulated rent rates, to tenants. Because any privatization starts with an existing population of tenants, substantial increases in ground rent would force greater increases in apartment rents and, presumably, more disruption in the existing base of tenants. Lower ground rent, on the other hand, would presumably provide more room for profit, or for rehabilitating the buildings, or for both.

Sheldrake describes itself, on its website, as the State's largest owner of privatized public housing. Sheldrake would not comment on its relationship with the partnership that currently owns Westview and Island House, or whether it will try to acquire the two buildings outright and ultimately privatize them. "We expect to be meeting with residents and representatives of the community in the near future," was all Sheldrake spokesman David Vermillion would say.

In his prepared statement, Daly told *The WIRE*, "Our history is one of good and responsible property management, providing services and maintaining high standards. We will remain focused on that goal."

Jennifer Farina, a spokeswoman for Pataki's Division of Housing and Community Renewal, said her agency has no record of any problems involving Sheldrake. "They're in good standing with us," Farina said.

Sheldrake's allegedly excessive political contributions included funds given to organizations attempting to influence government action on housing matters, and to officials with the power to make decisions in the housing arena.

- Daly, the Sheldrake owner, contributed \$3,500, including \$2,500 to the Pataki campaign (August 1, 2002) and \$1,000 to Attorney General Eliot Spitzer (January 11, 2001).

- From 1999 through 2003, his company gave \$31,630, including \$1,050 to a committee controlled by Neighborhood Preservation, a New York City landlord group that fights rent regulation.

Records of the State Board of Elections show these contributions by Sheldrake:

- \$6,780 to Assemblymember Earlene Hill, D-Hempstead (\$1,500 on June 19, 2000, \$1,500 on June 19, 2001, \$280 on May 14, 2002, \$3,000 on June 16, 2002, and \$500 on February 24, 2003).

- \$5,300 to the Democratic Assembly Campaign Committee (\$5,000 on June 15, 2000, and \$300 on May 21, 2001).

- \$5,000 to Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, D-Manhattan (\$3,100 to Friends of Silver and \$1,900 to Speaker PAC, both on June 14, 2001).

- \$1,500 to Sen. George Maziarz, R-North Tonawanda (July 26, 2003).

- \$1,000 to Assembly Housing Committee Chairman Vito Lopez, D-Brooklyn (January 24, 2002).

- \$1,000 to Senate Housing Committee Chairman John Bonacic, R-Mount Hope (February 11, 2002).

- \$1,000 to the Senate Republican Campaign Committee (September 12, 2002).

- \$1,000 to Assembly Majority Leader Paul Tokasz, D-Cheektowaga (December 10, 2001).

- \$1,000 to the Republican Assembly Campaign Committee (June 26, 2001).

- \$1,000 to Assemblyman Michael Gianaris, a Queens Democrat who is a 2006 attorney general hopeful (June 28, 2001).

- \$1,000 to Sen. Vincent Leibell, R-Putnam (February 15, 2002).

- \$1,000 to Sen. Stephen Saland, R-Poughkeepsie (February 22, 2002).

- \$1,000 to Sen. William Larkin, R-New Windsor (May 29, 2001).

- \$1,000 to Bill Mulrow, who lost the 2002 Democratic primary for State Comptroller to the eventual general election winner, Alan Hevesi (July 31, 2001).

- \$1,000 to Republican 2002 comptroller candidate and former Assembly Minority Leader John Faso (June 27, 2001).

- \$500 to Assemblyman Ruben Diaz Jr., D-Bronx (May 28, 2003).

- \$350 to Sen. Dean Skelos, R-Rockville Center (September 9, 2002).

- \$150 to Assemblyman Robert Sweeney, D-Lindenhurst (July 9, 1999).

### Belson

Others who are connected with the fate of Westview and Island House have also donated to state politicians.

The owner of Belson Enterprises Inc., which manages the two buildings and the 1003-unit Eastwood and may give Sheldrake competition as a potential owner or co-owner of Westview and Island House, contributed to Democrats.

Jerome Belson gave:

- \$5,000 to Andrew Cuomo, son of former Gov. Mario Cuomo and loser of the 2002 Democratic primary for governor, on June 15, 2001.

- \$2,000 to Spitzer (\$1,000 on August 17, 2001 and \$1,000 on November 13, 2003).

## RIRA Seeking Regular Contact With RIOC Board

The RIRA Common Council wants a better pipeline to the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC).

At Wednesday night's meeting, the Council passed a resolution asking that RIOC's resident Board members meet regularly with a rotating group of delegates from the Residents Association Council. The meetings would take place a few days before meetings of the RIOC Board of Directors.

In other activity at Wednesday night's session, the Council heard from Jessica Lappin, chief of staff to City Council Speaker Gifford Miller. Lappin is expected to run for Miller's seat when Miller runs for Mayor. She responded to questions on a number of issues:

- MetroCard for the Tram. It's coming "soon," said Lappin, but she declined a request that she define "soon."

She told the RIRA Common Council that Miller "has made a very, very generous offer to the MTA to make the Tram part of the MetroCard." She added that she "can't understand the mentality that says the Tram should be self-sufficient" when virtually all other mass transit systems receive State and Federal subsidies.

- Asked about reports that the Sheldrake Organization may become a partner in Island House and Westview and privatize the buildings, Lappin said she had met with Sheldrake owner J. Christopher Daly. "He said they had submitted a proposal for extension of the buildings' ground leases to RIOC, but RIOC is doing an analysis, which will take some time. I told him that he should keep us informed, because otherwise panic and confusion can spread." She then added, "Whatever he tells me, I'm going to tell you."

- \$1,000 to Hevesi on April 3, 1999, when Hevesi was planning his unsuccessful candidacy for mayor.

Belson could not be reached for comment.

### Lucido

Charles Lucido, the managing general partner in Island House and Westview, told *The WIRE* he contributes "on a regular basis to political parties and individuals," adding, "and my wife does, on occasion."

Lucido contributed \$1,000 to the Pataki campaign. His wife gave \$1,000 to Attorney General Spitzer's campaign. He noted that he is a Republican, and his wife is a Democrat. "Sometimes we agree and sometimes we disagree," he said. "When you achieve success in the business world," he added, "your obligations grow."

But, said Lucido, "There's no quid pro quo. Spitzer doesn't know me from a hole in the wall. The contributions are made for the benefit of the individual, either to maintain office or to attain higher office."

The Attorney General has the power to grant a waiver of the Martin Act, which forbids collusion between tenants and an owner without a co-op plan first being issued. A waiver, if given, would have allowed tenant organizations in Island House and Westview to work with Lucido and his partners on a co-op plan. Lucido said his lawyer and an attorney representing tenants "acted in concert to get approval from the Attorney General's office in New York City to allow the tenants and the partnership to negotiate jointly for extension of the ground lease. That approval was never forthcoming."

A spokesman for Attorney General Spitzer, Brad Maione, said that a plan submitted to convert one of the buildings to co-ops was "found to be deficient" for lack of information about such things as amenities, unit sizes, and average cost per square foot. He said that, in response, Spitzer's office sent what is known as a "deficiency letter," requesting more information.

### "Pay-to-Play"

One government watchdog doesn't buy the argument that developers contribute without wanting something in return.

"Developers by their nature are into developing," said Blair Horner, legislative director of the New York Public Interest Research Group. "By contributing, they're looking to develop relationships with the decision-makers. They must see it as a pay-to-play system."

### The Related Companies

The giving by Sheldrake, Belson, and Lucido is not new among those with property interests in Roosevelt Island.

Along with its owners, The Related Companies, which (in partnership with The Hudson Companies, Inc.) struck a deal with RIOC for development of Southtown, have been generous political contributors. The Southtown deal reportedly provides RIOC with only minimal income, while costing RIOC several million dollars for site preparation and infrastructure.

Stephen M. Ross, the owner of Related, and Related President David J. Wine, Controller Joanne C. Billera, and Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Michael J. Brenner made contributions totaling \$169,600.

Related Capital Companies, Related Partners Inc., and Related Retail Management Corp., all of which list a 625 Madison Avenue address in Manhattan, donated:

- \$5,000 to the political action committee of the Real Estate Board (March 30, 1999).

- \$600 to Assemblymember Lopez (June 14, 2001).

- \$550 to Assemblyman Alexander Gromack, D-Rockland (\$250 on June 15, 2000 and \$300 on August 31, 2000).

- \$250 to Assemblyman Jeff Klein, D-Bronx, for his 2006 attorney general campaign (December 9, 2003).

- \$50 to the ABO Buildpac Inc. on August 3, 1999.

As an individual, Ross, who lives at 956 Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, gave:

- \$75,000 to the Senate Republican Campaign Committee (\$5,000 on November 8, 2000, \$25,000 on November 15, 2000, \$10,000 on February 13, 2002, \$25,000 on May 8, 2002, and \$10,000 on November 7, 2002).

- \$25,000 to the Pataki campaign on June 13, 2001.

- \$10,000 to Faso (\$5,000 on August 6, 2002, and \$5,000 on

October 7, 2002).

- \$9,800 to Lt. Gov. Mary Donohue (\$4,900 each for her 2002 Conservative primary, on August 27, 2002, and for her Independence Party primary the same day).

- \$8,000 to the political action committee of the Real Estate Board (June 12, 2001).

- \$6,000 to Hevesi (\$5,000 on March 28, 2002 and \$1,000 on June 20, 2003).

- \$5,000 to the Democratic Assembly Campaign Committee (September 23, 2002).

- \$5,000 to Comptroller candidate Mulrow (August 23, 2002).

- \$5,000 to David Cornstein, a Republican who ran for State Comptroller in 2002 (July 27, 2001).

- \$2,000 to Assemblymember Roy McDonald, R-Saratoga, (\$1,000 on February 4, 2002, and \$1,000 on October 14, 2003).

- \$2,000 to Assembly candidate Zach Greenhill (August 23, 2002).

- \$1,000 to H. Carl McCall, the 2002 Democratic candidate for governor (July 20, 2000).

Wine, of 1 Union Square South, gave:

- \$1,750 to Assemblyman Danny O'Donnell, D-Manhattan, (\$1,000 on August 6, 2002, \$250 on October 22, 2002, and \$500 on December 13, 2003).

- \$1,000 to Pataki (November 30, 2001).

- \$1,000 to Greenhill (August 21, 2002).

- \$1,000 to McCall (July 20, 2000).

- \$1,000 to McDonald (Oct. 15, 2003).

Brenner, of 400 E. 84th St., Apt. 9C, gave:

- \$1,000 to Pataki (November 30, 2001).

- \$1,000 to Hevesi (June 8, 2000).

- \$1,000 to Greenhill (August 21, 2002).

Billera, of 189 W. 89th St., Apt. 4Q, gave \$600 to Pataki (October 28, 2002).

Neither Wine nor other Related officials returned calls for comment.

### Hudson

Related's partner in Southtown development, The Hudson Companies, and its principal, also made contributions. They totaled \$8,050.

Hudson Companies Inc., of 155 3rd Street, Brooklyn, gave:

- \$2,000 to Pataki (June 20, 2002).

- \$1,500 to Assemblyman Brooklyn Democrat William Boyland (March 31, 1999).

- Hudson Fulton Associated, LLC, which also lists its address as 155 3rd Street, Brooklyn, gave \$4,000 to Boyland (\$2,500 on March 29, 2003, and \$1,500 on April 1, 2003).

Hudson principal David Kramer, of 316 Elmwood Avenue, Brooklyn, contributed \$550 to Sen. Seymour Lachman, a Brooklyn Democrat (\$250 on May 18, 2000 and \$300 on January 7, 2004).

Kramer told *The WIRE* that, on behalf of Hudson, he attended a fund-raiser for Pataki hosted by New York City realtor Hal Fetner.

"In general, there is no correlation between our giving and what happened at Southtown, because that all happened before the Fetner fund-raiser," said Kramer, who added he and his company had not contributed before then. "We're not very active in the world of political contributions," Kramer said of Hudson. "That's a position we took early in the company's history."

"The reason we give is we support the politicians, we support their policies and we want them to succeed."

### Monadnock

Monadnock Construction of Brooklyn, which built the first two buildings of Southtown, has contributed \$2,250 to the General Building Contractors of New York State PAC, and \$500 to Faso.

Monadnock president Nicholas Lembo gave \$1,000 to Assembly Housing Committee Chairman Lopez on June 17, 1999.

Monadnock officials did not return a call seeking comment.

### Becker and Becker

Becker and Becker, a New Canaan, Connecticut architectural firm that is developing the Octagon Apartments, gave \$5,000 to Pataki June 20, 2002. Principal Bruce Becker did not return a call seeking comment.

# What's Going On Over There? Why, They're Fixing the FDR!

by Cathy Lemp

"Don't tell me they're putting up another building over there. It'll block my view of the Empire State!" This was just one refrain among Roosevelt Islanders when a bevy of barges and cranes appeared on the Manhattan shore of the East River over a year ago. Instead, the activity marked the start of the first construction project of its kind in New York City – a substitute highway running over the East River alongside the FDR Drive between 54th and 63rd Streets.

Dubbed the "Outboard Detour Roadway" by its engineers, the 1,900-foot-long structure will provide a temporary replacement for the dilapidated double-decker section of the FDR located directly opposite Roosevelt Island, and will allow road crews to complete extensive repairs without having to close one of Manhattan's major traffic arteries.

Once completed, the detour will act like a coronary bypass. Northbound lanes that now run on the lower roadway will be diverted at 54th Street and reconnect with the FDR near 63rd Street. Southbound traffic, which now runs on the upper deck, will switch between the two levels, depending on which part of the FDR is being repaired. The exit at 61st Street, which provides critical access to the Queensboro Bridge, will remain open.

Tom Bowers, chief engineer for the New York State Department of Transportation, which is overseeing the project, explained that closing a lane on the FDR, the traditional solution for most roadwork, wasn't an option. "This section of the FDR is already badly congested, and doing the repair work one lane at a time would have made matters worse," he said. Roughly 130,000 vehicles travel the FDR every day.

The detour roadway will also allow repairs to proceed more quickly, shaving several years off the project. Perhaps most important, it will eliminate the need for night work, which might have created unacceptable noise levels in this largely residential area. The project is expected to cost \$139 million and is being funded by a combination of State and Federal money.

Original work on the FDR began in 1937, when its namesake sat in the White House. Part of the New Deal's Works Projects Administration (WPA), created primarily to give work to the unemployed, the highway's construction was impacted by the start of World War II and the resulting steel shortage. As a result, the FDR was constructed primarily of reinforced concrete, with some use of steel in the columns. After 60 years, the concrete is so badly deteriorated that express buses are no longer allowed on the roadway.

"This section of the FDR has taken a real beating over the years," Bowers explained. "Timber and steel are being used to shore up some columns. And there is extensive leakage, so the whole structure is top-heavy and seismically unsound."

As outlined on NYSDOT's website at [www.dot.state.ny.us](http://www.dot.state.ny.us), the project involves five major stages, punctuated by four weekend closures of the Drive, either northbound or southbound. The first stage began in December, 2002, and involves driving 64 caissons, or pilings, into the bedrock bottom of the East River. To keep noise to a minimum, a vibratory drilling method is being used instead of the traditional method of pile-driving using a large hammer.

Once the foundation is in place, a concrete deck will be placed on top of the caissons, and a protective "fendering" system will be attached to prevent any wayward vessels from damaging the detour. The Coast Guard has established an official safety zone to protect work crews and motorists throughout the construction, operation, and disassembly of the temporary roadway.

The fendering system itself is being anchored to the bedrock at the bottom of the river by huge chains, and working in the water has posed a special challenge. "The East River is known for its treacherous currents," Bowers told *The WIRE*. "When the tide is going in or out, the water's sometimes moving up to 6 or 8 knots. It's made the underwater work a lot more difficult."

The second stage will involve preparing for shifting the FDR's southbound traffic onto the northbound lanes in order to repair and reconstruct the southbound lanes. A protective shield will be built over the northbound roadway in order to protect southbound traffic from any possible falling debris.

During the next two stages, workers will construct a new southbound roadway for the FDR Drive and reconstruct the northbound FDR Drive. An acceleration lane will be added to the East 63rd Street entrance, along with new drainage, signage, and lighting systems. The rehab work will also include work on the roof of the southbound roadway; cracks in the concrete roof slab and beams will be repaired. As part of the project, the New York City Parks and Recreation Department is overseeing improvements to three small parks at East 56th, East 57th, and East 58th Streets, which are partially located on the roof deck. Wheelchair ramps will be installed to improve access to the parks, and new plants and curbs will be added.

The entire project is scheduled for completion in 2007, after removal of



Tram riders have had a ringside seat for work on the FDR bypass.



An early step, left – pilings.

Below, capped pilings.



the outboard roadway and its fendering system. Whitestone, NY-based Slattery-Skanska and Cranford, NJ-based Weeks Marine are the general contractors.

Stage	Duration	Work
Stage 1	16 months	Construction of temporary outboard roadway and protective fendering
Stage 2	4 months	Preparation for shifting southbound traffic to northbound lanes.
Stage 3	21 months	Construction of a new southbound roadway
Stage 4	8 months	Reconstruction of a new northbound roadway
Stage 5	7 months	Removal of outboard roadway and fender system

the outboard roadway, repairing the FDR would have taken years longer," Bowers said.

For those with a taste for the bricks-and-mortar details of the Outboard Detour Roadway, *New York Construction* magazine ran an article on the project in August, 2003; the issue is available on-line at [http://newyork.construction.com/features/archive/0308\\_Ftr2.asp](http://newyork.construction.com/features/archive/0308_Ftr2.asp).

The detour roadway is expected to be ready for traffic by late April, 2004, and some traffic impacts are expected as motorists become accustomed to the new route. But it could have been much worse. "Without

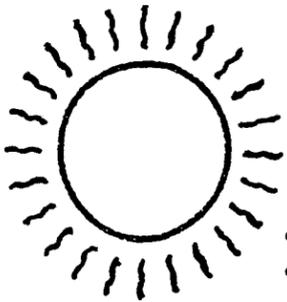
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Website NYC10044 and the Department of Transportation



At left, steel in place, ready for the road deck.



At right, road deck partially in place.



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Ayesha Chaudhry applies henna to a child's hand in a traditional decoration.



## Festival from page 1

grimage made to Mount Arafat, a gentle hill twelve miles southwest of Mecca. Time spent at the Mount is believed to represent the Day of Judgment, when Islam says every person will stand before God and answer for his deeds. Muhammad, Islam's prophet, delivered his last sermon at Mount Arafat in March, 632 A.D., three months before he died. The pilgrimage is a duty that every able-bodied Muslim should perform at least once in a lifetime if he or she can afford it.

The Westview event has been held for the past two years. It is organized by a group of Island residents who contact neighbors and friends and spread their message primarily through word-of-mouth.

"Our kids celebrate Christmas and Hanukkah and we want them to know what Eid is all about, too," said Aisha Ghaus-Pasha, a consultant

working for the U.N., and mother of six-year-old Alina and four-year-old Aamir. "So far, the event has been a success, and more and more people are beginning to attend."

"The children get a sense of belonging when they meet others like themselves," said Tariq Chaudhry, whose wife, Ayesha Chaudhry, was busy applying henna on the hands of little girls, a custom common at such gatherings. "It is a nice way of meeting others, too."

Voluntary contributions fund the meet-and-greet session. This time, to entertain

the children and give the adults time to mingle, a clown was brought in. The children were given treats, too. Most families had brought their favorite dish. The group could feast on biryani, a special dish where rice and chicken or meat are cooked together, pilaf, vegetables, and sweets.

The Westview meetings have become so popular that the organizers are now planning to formalize the event and form an association around it. The group has tentatively been christened the International Ladies' Association. "The aim of the association would be to have get-togethers for such cultural events," said Ghaus-Pasha. "We want to meet more people and celebrate everyone's festivals together."

The group feels that it would be an opportunity lost if Island residents could not celebrate their diversity and gain from it.

"We can teach our children so much through this," Ghaus-Pasha said. "It does not matter what religion you are or which country you are from, you can always get together and learn about each other. Let neighbors meet each other and make more friends."

So much has been said about the mini-UN nature of the Island that it is easy to take it for granted, but an event like this serves as a useful reminder of the unique and special character of this home away from home.



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## Holiday Lights Contributions

Julie Palermo of the Roosevelt Island Chamber of Commerce has provided these additions to the list of holiday lights contributors published in *The WIRE's* January 10 issue:

Roosevelt Island Youth Program .....	\$250
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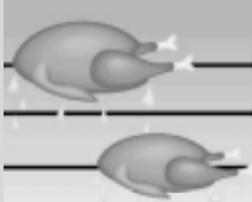
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