

Next issue:  
Sat., Aug. 28  
(Summer schedule)

# The Main Street **WIRE**™

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Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



**Show Biz** The Tramway took a starring role this month in a *Fear Factor* episode set to air in November. After a stunt that involved hanging from a net below the cabin, a contestant swung on a safety line. Additional photo, page 3.

## Dys·func·tion·al *adj.* 1. Not performing its function properly 2. Total mess 3. Albany

by Erik Kriss in Albany

By Thursday, New York State government will have a new milestone to symbolize the futility of the 2004 legislative session: the latest State budget ever.

In a session marked by few noteworthy achievements, the failure to adopt a budget more than four months after the fiscal year began April 1 is likely to stand out – especially because it's the 20th year in a row the State has been unable to pass a budget on time.

The word "dysfunctional" has become synonymous with Albany, to the point where pollsters have moved beyond asking voters about the issues to querying them on whether they think their government is broken.

And the voters' answer? Yes, in two thirds of cases, according to a recent survey by Quinnipiac University – prompted by a year-long study of the State Legislature by New York University's Brennan Center for Justice that endeavored to show why.

"Neither the U.S. Congress nor any other state legislature so systematically limits the roles played

by rank-and-file legislators and members of the public in the legislative process," maintained the 56-page report, released earlier this month.

Its authors, as well as government reformers representing the ideological spectrum, plan to use the document to promote debate about Albany's dysfunction in this election year for all 212 State legislators, and to try to force those lawmakers to take positions on changing the rules that make the system so leader-driven.

Government watchdog groups also cite other fundamental reasons for Albany's paralysis.

As sessions drag on without resolution of issues, special interests continue contributing campaign cash to protect their positions and continue breaking records in

spending on lobbying.

Lawmakers schedule Albany fund-raisers until nearly the end of the regular annual session, which runs from January through June.

"You can see what their priorities are," said Blair Horner, legislative director for the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG).

In election years, lawmakers are normally eager to dispense with the budget, and the session, to hit the campaign trail.

In fact, while lawmakers set the old August 4 record for late budgets in the non-election years of 1997 and 1999, the latest the State had ever gone in a legislative election year was July 13, in 1996.

What's different this year?

In an acronym, CFE.

See *Albany*, page 7

## PSD Takes Repeated Hits at Eastwood Rent Hearing

What's the best reason the State should deny a rent increase requested for Eastwood?

It's deficient service by RIOC's Public Safety Department (PSD), according to officials and residents who spoke earlier this month at a rent determination hearing conducted at the Chapel of the Good Shepherd by the Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR).

The biennial hearing was the first ever conducted on Roosevelt Island, and though it was held on a Tuesday during work hours, residents took advantage of proximity to appear and list reasons why rents should not increase. A majority cited the operations of PSD.

"Public Safety is a disaster. I could write a book on them," said Joan Christianson, a longtime Eastwood resident and former Vice President of the Residents Association.

Doryne Isley, General Manager of Roosevelt Island Housing Management, took pains to point out that she has no control over PSD: "Most of you here know that, unfortunately, the Public Safety De-

partment is not under our supervision. The PSD works for RIOC. I know the concerns. Those of you that I work very closely with know how I do battle to make sure that we get as much as we can from Public Safety, but Public Safety is not under our supervision. I think that this Board is hearing very clearly what you are saying, and I think there are a lot of decisions to be made."

Residents cited a variety of other reasons for denying a requested rent hike – personal hardship, an unclean environment, vandalism – but, as one put it, "Public Safety seems to be the buzzword of the whole conversation here." No representatives of PSD or RIOC attended the hearing.

Some of the comments:

• Jessica Lappin, aide to City Council Speaker Gifford Miller: "It wouldn't be a meeting here if we didn't bring up the Public Safety issue, as we did at the Island House and Westview [rent determination] hearings. The [Eastwood] budget includes \$382,000 for Public Safety... The tenants in this room

See *PSD*, page 6

## Its Earliest Goal for Deposits Never Met, Montauk Credit Union Leaves the Island

by Dick Lutz

Montauk Credit Union is leaving Roosevelt Island. Seven years into an attempt to establish a viable branch office here, the institution has given up, unable to meet even the initial goals set forth in its original business plan.

"This is the last thing I wanted to do," Montauk Treasurer Lou Jimenez told *The WIRE* shortly after Montauk mailed out June account statements with a letter telling members the Island branch would be closed by October 1, with reduced days of service each month until then. He said a survey showed that working Islanders "do their banking in the City right next to their offices," adding, "That's something we didn't anticipate seven-plus years ago."

Among Islanders with credit-union accounts, Montauk also faces competition from other credit unions. "A lot of United Nations people use their own credit union, and the municipal credit union has the hospital workers out there," Jimenez said.

Jimenez said Montauk's original business plan had projected Island-branch deposits of \$5 million after 18 months, and \$15 million to \$20 million after five years. But after seven years, deposits still have not reached the \$5 million level. There are 1,000 Island members, but Island deposits total only \$4.3 million.

"Based on the demographics I was given by RIOC [seven years ago], our goals were attainable, if people didn't do their banking where they worked," Jimenez said, in fact, that the 1000-member mark is satisfactory. "We fell short in the deposit base, not the member base."

Closing the Island branch will save "several hundred thousand dollars" a year, according to Jimenez. He pointed out that Montauk is a small institution with just eight employees supported by a \$57 million member base. "We're regulated, and when the regulators

come in and ask, 'What is your plan here,' and we explain what we've done..." He said the credit union's Board finally had to face the fact that the branch was not viable.

Jimenez said that maintaining a branch office puts a special burden on the institution in terms of technology – interconnecting the offices – and handling member transactions when the link goes down. "If we have someone on vacation, and someone out sick, that's a quarter of our staff." He said that when computer connections aren't working, adding the need to have a main-office employee holding a telephone, handling computer entries, represented a difficult burden.

The national economic situation was among factors forcing Montauk to face the music. "With interest rates being so low," said Jimenez, "spreads and margins are tight. It got more and more difficult to sustain [the Island branch office]. Rates are at a 46-year low. That certainly didn't help, but it wasn't solely a function of interest rates that led us to this decision. It's also a volume thing."

Jimenez said many Roosevelt Island members have indicated they will continue their Montauk memberships, handling their accounts on line and by mail, and with ATM cards. He said that in the course of considering branch closure, he put out feelers in Montauk's trade association to see if another credit union might take over the branch. "They came back negative." He said the United Nations and municipal credit unions also declined an offer that they take over the branch.

Montauk's departure leaves the Island with only one financial institution, New York National Bank, which took over a Chase branch when Chase got regulator's permission to close here. NYNB expected to retain a majority of Chase's depositors at the time, but NYNB President Serafin Mariel did not respond to repeated *WIRE* messages this week seeking information on the success of that effort. Like Montauk, NYNB's lease with RIOC is month-to-month.

During August, Montauk's Island branch will be open only Monday and Thursday, 8:30-4:00. In September, the office will be open only on Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00, and it will be closed permanently as of October 1. Schedule updates may be posted on at montauk-cu.com, Montauk's website. Montauk's main office (and its only one after the Island branch closes) is at 111 West 26th Street.

### Briefly...

**Jessica Lappin**, expected to run for Gifford Miller's City Council seat next year (when Miller is expected to campaign for the Mayor's office), has raised over \$70,000 for her campaign.

**Joan Matula**, among the earliest residents of Eastwood and long an Island activist, has died. See page 7.

A **Ten-Day Tram Shutdown** is in the offing for August, for general maintenance, tentatively set to start August 9.



**Free Storage?** This silver Toyota has been parked in front of PS217, unticketed and untowed, for several weeks. A resident who asked a Public Safety Officer about the car, when it was parked long-term near the post office, was reportedly told, "Mind your own business." The car remained unticketed in front of the school after another resident pointed it out to an officer. By press time, RIOC had not responded to a request for information on arrangements under which the car goes unticketed.

**The Editorial Page**

# Just Two (of Too Many) Enforcement Failures at Public Safety

Roosevelt Island drivers – not just those who live here, but those who visit – are being trained to ignore stop signs. It's a dangerous situation. The burden of blame falls on the Public Safety Department, but also on RIOC.

In the new section of Main Street, between the new buildings and the Tram station, there are four stop signs (two each direction of travel) that have no purpose whatsoever. There are no pedestrian crossings, no cross traffic, no hazards. Drivers recognize this, and accelerate right through the area, perhaps after a quick check in the rear-view mirror just in case an official vehicle might be following.

Those signs, one or two of which might be useful when construction resumes at Southtown, should be shrouded until they have a reason to be enforced. If they remain in view and continue to be ignored, it's likely they'll still be ignored when they are really necessary.

Meantime, drivers are being trained to ignore stop signs on Roosevelt Island.

On any day of the week, in fact, you can see drivers doing "kiss-the-brake stops" at stop signs in the Island's busiest residential area. On Friday and Saturday nights, you can often see cars actually speed up while going through the crosswalks supposedly controlled by the signs. (As it happens, they are usually the ones also pumping out music at an ear-splitting volume.)

Enforcement is essentially non-existent or, at best, rare and random. Until Public Safety starts doing its job on traffic enforcement, we can live, day to day, expecting a serious accident in a crosswalk.

Less threatening but far more annoying is Public Safety's unpredictable enforcement of parking regulations, and that goes beyond the silver-colored Toyota parked permanently in front of PS 217, unticketed, untowed, and rarely moved in what appears to be a storage situation. When parking-permit machines work only sporadically, and when PSD rarely, but selectively, hands out \$115 parking-violation tickets, parking rules are going to be abused. That forces lots of drivers, who have a need for the parking spaces tied up by violators, to double-park. That turns a parking violation into a traffic hazard. It also means that simple necessity is training drivers to ignore another set of signs – the ones that read *No Double Parking*.

We can't be sure why that silver Toyota is semi-permanently stored in front of PS217 without jeopardy of a ticket or tow, while others shell out \$115 for their transgressions. What we can be sure of is that Public Safety just isn't doing its job out there on Main Street – not on stop-sign enforcement, and not on parking enforcement.

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# Letters

**To the Editor:**

I want to thank the RIOC board for working to bring hybrid buses to Roosevelt Island. It's going to be a *huge* improvement – beautiful new buses with lower air and noise pollution on Main Street! No more loud, moaning roar of huge deisel engines barreling down the street! No more exhaust fumes. Hello to the purr of electric power. Thank you! Its going to be great! Maybe even the brakes won't screech!

Hey, why not complete the deal and limit the City bus to Motorgate only, extend the minibuses to the hospitals, and poof, the City bus traffic is gone too! Wouldn't that be something?

**Chris Enock**

**To the Editor:**

I would like to thank Roosevelt Island Housing Management, and especially Doryne Isley, for prompt action in getting the sidewalk in front of 580 Main Street repaired. I had written a letter on behalf of the Disabled Association on Friday, explaining how dangerous the area was for both the disabled in wheelchairs and the able-bodied who are walking. The letter was received Monday and the repair made on Wednesday. Thank you, Ms. Isley! You have made life so much easier for many of us who for a long time had trouble maneuvering our wheelchairs over that rise in the sidewalk. It's a job well done and we thank you.

**Nancy Brown**

**To the Editor:**

Many thanks to Dr. Katherine Grimm for a late-night telephone consultation on June 26. On a Saturday night when even the medical answering services sounded bored and uninterested in hearing about a child's condition, Dr. Grimm actually called me back and took the time to discuss and give advice regarding my daughter's acute illness. She even offered a solution for the following day, should the symptoms persist. Fortunately, it was not the case.

Again, thank you.

**Mirela Menglide**

**An additional letter appears on page 7**

Did you enjoy the Fourth? I'm a sucker for fireworks and the Grucci Family's are the best. However, I'm partial to Fireworks Night at Shea Stadium (held on July 16 this year) where the light and sound ratchets around the enclosed space and is amplified by it. Talk about the "rockets red glare!" If only someone would light some pyrotechnics under the Mets, I'd be a happy camper.

Despite summer breezes the work goes on. At long last, the first meeting to discuss Roosevelt Island contingency planning was held on July 9. Held under the auspices of RIOC, the State Emergency Management Office and the City Office of Emergency Management, these meetings will afford us the opportunity to

put into practice the lessons we learned from last August's blackout. The meeting was presented as a quarterly community meeting, but RIOC President, Herb Berman, has indicated his intention to make the discussions monthly with a different emphasis at each get-together.

The first meeting concentrated on the Roosevelt Island/36th Avenue Bridge, and the New York City Department of Transportation, which operates and maintains the bridge, was represented by Russell Holcomb and George Kern. They made two very significant points: Should there be a power outage while the bridge is raised, an operator could still return the bridge to roadway level using the mechanical brakes. Also, emergency vehicles would still have access to Roosevelt Island even in the event of a problem at the Keyspan power plant. My concern was that a toxic fire would prevent the use of the bridge. Without a single working dock on the Island, we would be cut off from police, fire or emergency medical services. Further, Pubic Safety's Rene Bryant made the point that the FDNY, NYPD and EMS are present for all bridge testing such as occurred last Thursday.

Future meetings will include representatives from the fire department, Con Ed, Keyspan, and the police department. I hope the end result will be a real plan that can be shared with all of us so as to make the best choices in the event of some unforeseen incident. One last point: at the end of this first meeting I asked the RIOC representative, Operations Vice President Sari Dickson, what the status of the red buses would be should the subway and Tram be out of service. I was informed that Islanders would be obliged to walk across the Queensboro Bridge and could then catch the Q102 bus at Queensboro Plaza. Ever since last summer's controversy about the off-Island use of our buses, it has seemed to me that any use of our rolling stock to assist residents in getting home is justified. I e-mailed Herb Berman (who was unable to attend

the July 9 meeting) of my concerns and he said that off-Island bus use was "not off the table." He reminded me that four new hybrid buses have been ordered with an expected delivery time of eighteen to twenty-four months. While this is good news indeed, during the interim I would hope that a decision regarding the appropriate use of the red buses, on- and off-Island, could be established and the results shared with all of us. We Islanders are blessed with resources unavailable to other New Yorkers, including the staff of a public benefit corporation, a quasi-private public safety force and a fleet of old but functional buses. We must create the methodology to incorporate all our resources in dealing with the unknown and I hope that this series of contingency planning meetings will do just that. Stay tuned.

My conversation with President Berman was wide-ranging, covering other Island issues that are on the front burner. Our buses also are used to take members of the Senior Association on shopping trips to Queens once a week. Senior Association members help to defray the cost by paying a modest fee. There used to be two trips each week but these were cut back. This has resulted in a limit to the number of riders on these popular trips that afford an opportunity for our seniors to shop in less expensive venues. Herb stated that this was



**Matthew Katz**, President  
Roosevelt Island Residents Assn.  
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necessary because of the feeble condition of our buses.

He noted that RIOC is closing on the negotiations with the Hudson and Related Companies for the Southtown III and IV buildings with groundbreaking soon to follow. The first of these buildings will include 12,000 sq. ft. of commercial space that could result in as many as six new merchants on the Island. Now that Becker and Becker Associates have arranged for their financing, work on the Octagon Apartments also can begin, Berman informs me, with short-term tennis courts to be provided while the underground parking garage that will temporarily destroy the current courts is being constructed.

We discussed the negotiations currently under way involving the ownership of Island House and Westview. While Herb has recused himself from these discussions, he assured me that the RIOC Board would protect the interests of the residents of these two Mitchell-Lama buildings. Board members Deborah  
**See Katz, page 3**

## Letters deadline for Aug. 28 issue: Tuesday, Aug. 24

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

## At press time, the Public Safety Blotter

for the last half of July had not yet been received.

It is expected soon, and will be posted on

**Website NYC10044 at**

[nyc10044.com/wire/2421/blot2421.html](http://nyc10044.com/wire/2421/blot2421.html)

## 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; *letters submitted anonymously are not considered for publication.*

**Preferred form of submission:** E-mail to [Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com](mailto:Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com) (plaintext e-mail format preferred, or attach a file created using any common wordprocessing software, but no MSWord files containing macros), or on a PC-standard 3.5" disk left at the desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. **Alternatives:** Typed copy left at 531 Main Street or faxed to 212-755-2540. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered if brief, but we are not able to take telephone dictation of letters. **Letters are subject to acceptance and to possible editing for length and clarity.** Recommended maximum length, 300 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space.

I want to start by thanking everybody for their good wishes while I was ill. I hope that the second stay in the hospital will be the last one! After what I went through, I do have some advice, though. Drink lots of water and make sure that you have a balanced diet. To say that kidney stones are painful is an understatement.

A lot has happened since the last President's column, and most of it is good news. The first piece of good news is that the deal with Hudson-Related for the start of the third building of Southtown was completed last week and construction will start soon. I look forward to welcoming new residents to the Island, and anticipate that there will also be a completed deal with Becker and Becker for the Octagon site in the near future.

We have also been in contact with the Trust for Public Land about Southpoint. They anticipate that there will be a public meeting to show the plans in the early fall. Some of the proposals that I am hearing are very exciting. They may not all make it into the final plan, but they certainly deserve consideration. Examples include a stone gatehouse, an open-air performance space, a restaurant, a sculpture area, a bird-watching area, and accessible gardens.

There will also be a park developed around the Tram plaza in Manhattan. While we are not involved in the planning of that area, the Parks Department recently informed us that construction will begin in September or October. The concrete work on the Manhattan Tram station will be complete by that time, and we will make every effort to work with the Parks Department to make sure that Tram riders are not too inconvenienced. From what we are hearing, the park will be beautiful and will be worth the wait.

I am sure that many of you saw *Fear Factor* filming on the Tram. It was an exciting project for them, and will be part of their 100th episode to be aired in November. While

## The RIOC Column



**Katz** from page 2

Beck and David Mannix have been given the responsibility of devising the extensions to the buildings' ground leases and I hope they will offer the Island House and Westview Task Force leadership an opportunity to meet with them before any decisions become graven in stone.

The work on the RIRA constitution and bylaws goes on. With five opinions on every article and section, it is excruciatingly hard to arrive at consensus, but First Vice President Steve Marcus is doing his level best to create rules of operation which will serve the interests of those who use them, the Common Council, as well as the RIRA membership in general. My thanks to Raye Schwartz and Marc Diamond, residents who have offered their time and services to this effort. We shall persevere.

Thanks to my lovely spouse who brought the New York Straphangers "State of the Subways Report Card" to my attention. Our F train ranks twelfth out of twenty-one subway lines or about mid-level in the system. The report card finds that the F train is scheduled to come more often than most subway lines but, in fact, arrives with regularity slightly less often. During rush hours, the F should run every four minutes and, in fact, arrives every 5:35 minutes during the morning rush and every 5:55 minutes during the evening. Here's a surprise: the survey states that F line riders have a better-than-average chance of getting a seat (46% compared to a system average of 44%). I guess Gene Russianoff, the Straphangers spokesman, hasn't tried to get to Manhattan from Roosevelt Island at 8:30 A.M. The profile also finds that the F train breaks down more often than average and is below average in cleanliness. You can check out the profile at <http://www.straphangers.org/statesub04/F.pdf> or access the full report at <http://www.straphangers.org>. You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader to view these reports.

Did you know that there was a robbery at 552 Main Street on July 21? Deputy Inspector David Barrere, commander

of the majority of the funds received, \$20,000, will go into the general fund, a portion has been earmarked for new garbage cans to match the new planters that are being ordered from the funds received from *Dark Water*.

Within the next several weeks we will be expending a great deal of money on upkeep of the Tram. In excess of \$80,000 will be spent on annual general maintenance. The funds will be used on various Tram systems, and will necessitate the closing of the Tram for approximately ten days. Maintenance is a vital part of continued good Tram operations. The final details have not been worked out yet, but it is anticipated that the shutdown will start the week of August 9. For the latest information, please remember to call the RIOC hotline at 212-308-6608.



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

The RIOC hotline provides information about all different types of transportation, including the Tram, the bridge, and the buses. As we have reported, new hybrid electric buses are being ordered within the next few weeks. As soon as all of the details of the deal are finalized, the buses will be ordered. Delivery will take place within 18 to 24 months after they are ordered. When they are delivered, we will be able to revisit the question of taking the Red Buses off the Island. As many of you know, the buses have been experiencing mechanical difficulties, including on one of the senior shopping trips into Queens. We look forward to the day when this is no longer an issue.

Taking the buses off the Island was one of the issues discussed at the quarterly Offices of Emergency Management planning meeting held in July. Matt Katz, president of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association, was present as the representative of the Island residents. The topic of this quarter's meeting was the Roosevelt Island bridge. The operation of the bridge was detailed for all present. It was stated that the bridge is never raised without Department of Transportation personnel on site. They have the ability and the capacity to lower the bridge if there ever is a mechanical difficulty. It was also pointed out that the DOT notifies the police department, the fire department, emergency medical services and Public Safety before any action is taken. Appropriate personnel are deployed to the Island before the bridge goes into operation.

More meetings, on various topics, will be held quarterly. Summaries of the meetings will appear in this column. I am sure there will also be reports to RIRA from Matt.

I hope that everyone continues to have a great summer with lots of sunny days. It looked as if July 4 was going to be one of the rainiest days this summer, but at the last minute the forecast and the weather cleared. The rainy forecast did dampen some ticket sales, but they increased dramatically at the end. Late vendor bills are still coming in, but it appears that there will be an approximately \$5,000 net. It was a great event and I hope to see all of you there next year! Remember – drink lots of water!

of the 114 Pct., left me a phone message that evening, saying that his officers were canvassing the area. I've tried to contact the Inspector and the precinct many times since then, but have yet to get an expanded description of the crime. I will share the information with you when I receive it and will expect to see an account of the incident in the next Public Safety Blotter.

As you know, there are plans afoot to build a permanent park on the thirteen acres we know as Southpoint. The first Southpoint Park advisory committee was held on June 17 and addressed the site analysis and community interviews that preceded the meeting. The committee includes representatives of the community as well as a distinguished group of off-Islanders with significant experience in park planning and operations, including Project Director Charles McKinney, Andy Stone of the Trust for Public Land, landscape architect Mark Morrison, Peg Breen of the Landmarks Conservancy, Ray Gastil of the Van Alen Institute, Betsy Barlow Rogers, founder of the Central Park Conservancy, City Planning Commissioner Alex Garvin, and Bonnie Sher of Life Frames, Inc.

RIOC has commissioned TPL to come up with three conceptual plans that will be presented and reviewed at a meeting of the advisory committee on August 10. These plans will be posted the following week and presented to the public the week after that. The schedule provides for a final determination of the preferred plan early in September with a public presentation to follow. You've heard me say it before; there is the potential for something wonderful here. I'm very excited to be a part of this act of creation. What a legacy to leave! Parkland is precious, especially in a vast urban environment like New York. I have the following quote posted by my computer desk in 48-point type:

*Parkland is forever. If you lose that land, you can never get it back.*

—Henry Stern, former NYC Parks Commissioner

## COMING UP

— This Weekend —

**Gallery RIVAA Show of Roosevelt Island Artists**, now through August 29, at Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main Street. Open Sat.-Sun., 11-5; Wed. and Fri., 6-9.

— The Coming Week —

**Living Library Garden Program**, at PS/IS 217 courtyard, Thursdays, 10-12, through the summer; all welcome.

**Revised hours begin** at Montauk Credit Union as it nears the October 1 date to close its Island branch. Through August, open only Monday and Thursday, 8:30-4:00. (See story, page 1.)

**International Film Series**, outdoors at Socrates Sculpture Park, **Wednesday evenings, 7:00 p.m. Wed., Aug. 4**, Federico Fellini's *La Strada* (1954), with a 12-minute short, *This and That, and Other Minor Misunderstandings*, by New York video pioneer Edin Velez. Updated information available at [www.SocratesSculpturePark.org](http://www.SocratesSculpturePark.org).

— Future Events —

**International Film Series**, outdoors at Socrates Sculpture Park, **Wed., Aug. 11, 7:00 p.m.**, *Maximum Penalty* (Colombia, 2000), with *Evil*, a short on the idea of "evil" using footage of the Manhattan skyline shot from boats.

**International Film Series**, outdoors at Socrates Sculpture Park, **Wed., Aug. 18, 7:00 p.m.**, *Wild Style* (USA, 1983), by D.A. Pennebaker, Chris Hegedus, and David Dawkins, chronicling New York's emergence of graffiti art, break-dancing, and rap music; with *Shake! Otis at Monterey*, featuring Otis Redding at the 1967 Monterey Pop Festival.

**Book Discussion** — *A Fine Balance* by Rohinton Mistry, **Thur., Aug. 19, 6:30 p.m.**, Library. Free. Books available at the Library.

**International Film Series**, outdoors at Socrates Sculpture Park, **Wed., Aug. 25, 7:00 p.m.**, *Anything Can Happen* (India, 2003, by Shashanka Ghosh; with *Bataille*, a 7-minute short based on a samurai fight scene from *Rashomon*. (Rain date: Sept. 1.)

**The Main Street WIRE** — next issue **Sat., Aug. 28**, when fortnightly schedule resumes. (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., Aug. 20; decision on inserts for *The Bag*, Mon., Aug. 23; inserts due Thur., Aug. 26. **Future issues:** Sept. 11, 25; Oct. 16, 30 (pre-election issue); Nov. 6 (post-election issue), 20 (Thanksgiving issue); Dec. 4, 18 (two December 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 for such listings.

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## Senior Center

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>
10-11, <b>Latchhook Class</b>	10:00, <b>Tai Chi</b>
10-11:30, <b>English as 2nd Language</b>	10:30, <b>Creative Arts</b>
10:30, <b>Blood Pressure Screening</b>	12:30, <b>Movie</b>
12:30, <b>"Oldies" Movies</b>	7:00, <b>Dance</b>
1:00, <b>Tai Chi</b>	<b>Friday</b>
7:00, <b>Dance Class (Beginners)</b>	9:30, <b>Yoga</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>	1:00, <b>Bridge</b>
10:00, <b>Computers</b>	6:00, <b>Dance &amp; Relax</b>
10-11, <b>Dance &amp; Relax</b>	7:00, <b>Games (RISA)</b>
1:00, <b>Bingo</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
6:00, <b>Yoga Class</b>	7:30, <b>Bingo (RISA)</b>
7:30, <b>Games (RISA)</b>	
<b>Wednesday</b>	
9:15, <b>Stay Well</b>	
10:00, <b>Spanish Class</b>	
10:30, <b>Shoppers' Bus</b>	
12:30, <b>Sculpting</b>	
7:00, <b>Pokeno (RISA)</b>	

### Special Events

**Fri., Aug. 6, 11:30**, Farmer's Market trip  
**Mon., Aug. 9**, Port Jervis trip  
**Wed., Aug. 18**, Atlantic City trip  
**Fri., Aug. 27, 12:30**, RISA Birthdays

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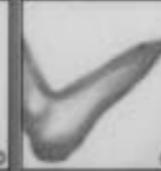
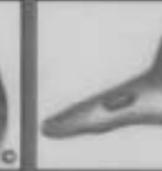
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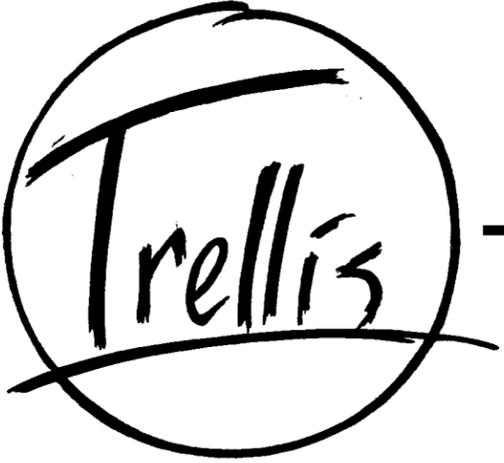
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With Roosevelt Island's Southpoint Park and the Manhattan skyline in the background, a fireboat did pirouettes in the east channel one evening early this month. (In color on Website NYC10044 - <http://nyc10044.com>.)

**PSD** from page 1

are very unhappy, by and large, about the services that are being provided to them.”

• Dan Quart of Community Board 8: “Residents here pay nearly \$2.5 million a year for Public Safety. Fifty percent of this comes from tenant rent payments, nearly half of which come from the tenants in Eastwood, at a rate of \$46 per unit per month. A fundamental issue then becomes, *are the tenants in Eastwood receiving a fair share on their investment?* From my perspective, the answer is no – Eastwood continues to receive an unacceptable level of protection. There are absolutely no vertical patrols in the complex...”

• Byron Gaspard, co-chair of the Eastwood Building Committee (EBC): “There exists little to no vertical patrol services at all, and with no doorstations and very little money invested by the owner, it makes us the least secure development on Roosevelt Island.” Some of the items cited by Gaspard that might be improved with better patrols were drug trafficking, urination and defecation in stairwells, loud music, and loud gatherings of youth.

• Ron Vass, former EBC Chair: “This is the only place in America where the tenants are compelled to pay \$46 per month in their rent [for public safety services], and we don’t even have a contract that describes the work performance or obligation. The tenants in Eastwood are getting nothing out of this contract and they’re constantly burdened with this expense, and I think this should be examined by the Attorney General of the State, while we’re doing everything else.”

• Matthew Katz, President of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA): “Having attended the other rent determination hearings, there are recurrent themes that I can speak to. Clearly, Public Safety is first and foremost among those. Public Safety operates on the Island on the basis of a letter of agreement from 1995 between RIOC and Housing Management

which requires internal vertical patrols. Either we see them sporadically, or not at all. I’ll say that again – not at all. Most communities in New York City are served by the NYPD. What we get from NYPD is lip service. The reason we get – and it’s a vicious circle that goes round and round – is that they don’t need to patrol our streets because we have Public Safety. But Public Safety does not enforce the parking rules on the Island, does not enforce the traffic rules of the Island. You can park where you will, you can ignore the stop signs. Public Safety needs to be held to a series of codified requirements and they need to be required to exercise those requirements, and they also need to justify the \$2.5 million expense that falls on the backs of the people in this room, and the other people of Roosevelt Island. Until they can do that, I would urge you not to grant any increases that involve costs for Public Safety.” Katz’s remarks were applauded, as were the comments of other residents.

• Another resident, whose name was unclear in *The WIRE*’s recording of the meeting: “I have never felt safe, nor have my wife or my kids. I’ll give you an example. Every time I come back home, I see different faces in the hallways that I have never seen before. As soon as they see me, they act like they’re opening a door or something or they disappear. Whenever my wife comes back, I tell her, please call me, from wherever you are, tell me when you are going to be downstairs so I can escort you upstairs, because I can not trust this. I never see any of the public safety agents in the hallways. Sometimes I see them, yes, smoking or talking.”

Katz later told *The WIRE*, “I find it interesting that, even though the meeting was on the Island, both RIOC and PSD were unrepresented – not by staff, not by administration, not by any Board member. Aren’t they interested in this central concern of residents?”



## Martha Helstien

Martha I. Helstien, mother of Westview resident Sherie Helstien, died May 19 in Denver. She was 93.

She was born in Brooklyn as Martha Berger on Nov. 23, 1910. She was a trained concert pianist and designer of a rug-weaving machine. She also worked as a comptometer operator. She married the late Bernard L. Helstien on August 24, 1940; he died in 1975.

Martha Helstien is survived by two daughters, Sherie Helstien, and Judy Hart of Rancho Palos Verdes, California, and by sister Juanita Rutland, seven nieces and nephews, two grandchildren, and a great grandson, as well as two cousins living in New York, Joyce Baum and Bob Baum.



# Classified

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## Joan Matula

Longtime resident Josephine Matula died July 4, 2004. Known as "Joan" to most of her friends, she was employed at Goldwater Memorial Hospital and lived at the Central Nurses Residence before moving to Eastwood in 1975. She worked to establish the Roosevelt Island Senior Association, and was a very active fundraiser in its early years, organizing bake sales and other activities.

At one time, she was known as the "Sunshine Girl," calling upon seniors who were ill, and sending them get-well cards.

She was long a member of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association Common Council, active in the Democratic Party, and a frequent campaigner for many politicians.

Joan loved to dance, and was often called "the life of the party." She became a great-grandmother in May.

### In Recognition of Joan Matula, lifelong community activist and friend of Roosevelt Island. Hon. Carolyn B. Maloney of New York in the House of Representatives

Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge Joan Matula, New York City native and longtime resident and champion of Roosevelt Island. Ms. Matula, who passed away on July 4, 2004, leaves behind an Island of devoted friends, loyal colleagues, and an incredible record of community service. Joan Matula, ever-resourceful and full of energy, worked daily to promote the interests of her community and to improve the lives of Roosevelt Island residents. Roosevelt Island will miss her dearly.

Ms. Matula was the youngest of fourteen children. Sadly, only seven of the youngsters survived; but Joan had proven from an early age that life – every second of it – was to be lived fully. Her parents, immigrants from Italy, moved to Greenwich Village, where she was born and raised. Though quick to tell you that she was "very spoiled," Joan was anything but. Her life was full and rich, but not as an effect of indulgence; its resplendence was the result of the importance she placed on caring for others and leading a conscientious and fruitful life.

It was in her retirement years that Joan showed her true devotion to her community. Just months after leaving Goldwater hospital, at age 65, Joan, Founder and President of the Roosevelt Island Senior Association (RISA), spearheaded the fund-raising efforts that resulted in its first budget in 1977. It is through her efforts that RISA earned the New York City Department of Aging's official certification of the organization.

And that was merely the beginning. Joan Matula, reportedly the first resident of 546 Main Street, committed over 25 years of her life to Roosevelt Island: She was a long-time representative to the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA) Common Council for the Senior Building at 546 Main Street, a committed and active member, and a distinguished and cherished community activist. Even in her public retirement statement at age 91, Joan showed her commitment to her community, writing, "After much debating with myself the pros and cons, I have decided to step down from my position as member of the RIRA Council. Twenty-five years is a long time to be on the RIRA Board. Sorry, as much as I love you all and would like to continue, I would like to take life easy. True, I will miss you all. I am available at all times if I can help you in any way."

Joan Matula helped others until the last of her days. It is not simply what she did for Roosevelt Island that made Joan so special. Many have said of her that she was "sharp-witted," a woman who was "well-informed," with "strong opinions" and "cogent thoughts," "a woman to be reckoned with." It is true that Joan was feisty, but

her feisty nature was tempered with a gentle awareness of people and their needs and complimented by a sense of humor that left all in its wake teary with laughter.

Born of another era, she was hard-working and did not shy away from inspiring others to follow suit. Her energy was truly awe-inspiring. At her 90th birthday, she danced the night away, and at 93 she continued to provide welcome advice and suggestions on the Medicare bill and public-safety initiatives. Joan, "a great lover of life," truly lived life to its fullest.

Mr. Speaker, I request that my colleagues join me in honoring the late Joan Matula, whose lifetime of commitment to Roosevelt Island, ready smile, sharp wit, and joy of life, has touched us all. To Ms. Matula's friends, family members, and colleagues, I offer my respect, admiration, and support.



#### To the Editor:

When my daughter Lauren Kraut was younger, she and Joan Matula were close friends. When I told Lauren of Joan's death, she wrote these lines...

*For Joan Matula*

*There was a lady who gave me arugula and basil from her garden  
And told me I was beautiful when I thought I no longer existed  
In anyone's eyes.  
Time is a lot of things  
But really all it is to me  
Is a system of negatives from a roll of film  
Where you get to pick out the images you like  
Blow them up  
And make them last forever.*

My daughter speaks for me here.

**David Kraut**

### Albany from page 1

The New York City-based Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) won a lawsuit claiming the State's school aid formula short-changed the Big Apple.

The State's highest court, the Court of Appeals, gave Governor George Pataki and the Legislature until yesterday (July 30) to come up with a solution.

Pataki and his fellow Republicans who control the state Senate have blamed Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and his majority Democrats for refusing to deal on the budget until the CFE matter is solved.

Silver, a Manhattan Democrat, accused the Republicans of failing to offer a plan that comes close to meeting the additional aid required by the court's order that all children receive a "sound, basic education."

The result? Gridlock.

The lack of progress prompted Pataki to order lawmakers back to the State Capitol in extraordinary session July 22 to deal with CFE a month after they had finished their regular 2004 session. He sent them a bill aimed at satisfying the court's order. The Assembly's education committee rejected the bill along party lines.

Pataki's Republican Assembly allies accused Silver and the Democrats of violating

the constitutional spirit of the extraordinary session by failing even to allow the governor's bill to be debated on the floor of the house.

But it was just the latest in a laundry list of major issues, identified by lawmakers themselves and advocates, that failed to make it to the Governor's desk.

Rank-and-file lawmakers failed in open, joint conference committees to negotiate compromises on bills easing the State's 1973 drug laws and modernizing its voting processes following the Florida debacle in the 2000 presidential election.

Mental health insurance parity, new rules for siting power plants, action on automobile insurance laws that expired years ago, bills to reform public authorities, and to better regulate lobbying on State procurement contracts all fell prey to the inability of the two houses and the governor to deal. Environmentalists complained they were shut out.

If the past is a guide, some, or even all, of those issues could be resolved if and when Pataki and the legislative leaders agree on a budget.

Lawmakers are due back in Albany Monday (August 2) for another special session and are likely to pass another six-week emergency spending bill to keep the State run-

ning, in the absence of a budget, until September 12.

It has become standard practice for one party or another to hold out on major issues until all issues are resolved, normally with agreement on the budget.

The theory is none of the leaders wants to surrender what have become bargaining chips in the elaborate negotiations that produce a big, end-of-session, catch-all agreement that NYPIRG's Horner and others have dubbed, "The Big Ugly."

"The problem is nothing gets done until everything gets done," Horner said. "They can't address anything else until they deal with the budget."

Barbara Bartoletti of the League of Women Voters said things have changed. "They used to do the budget and then would do programmatic issues," she said.

If electoral politics has spurred quicker action on the budget and related issues in the past, it is by many observers' reasoning the driving force behind perhaps the most significant piece of legislation passed in Albany so far this year: an increase in New York's minimum wage. In their own special session last week, the Senate and Assembly passed a bill (July 21) to boost the \$5.15 minimum wage to \$7.15 by 2007.

Senate Republicans had long resisted the move, but Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno, (a Republican from Brunswick, near Troy), was said to be aiming to help at least two Republican candidates running in heavily Democratic New York City districts: Assemblymember Stephen Kaufman of the Bronx, and Roosevelt Island's own Senator Olga Mendez, who switched from the Democratic Party after her 2002 re-election. She faces an uphill battle trying to win on the GOP line.

But as the Brennan Center report pointed out, Mendez, Kaufman, and most lawmakers have little ability to shape and steer legislation.

The report called the Legislature's committee system "moribund," documented how many major bills are rushed through after secret deals by the governor and legislative leaders, and found a lack of meaningful open, cross-party debate on virtually all major legislation.

"Top staff are more involved in negotiations of top issues than the rank-and-file members," said Horner, who has observed

the Capitol for two decades. "It's the nature of the beast in New York. Much of the rest of the country doesn't operate like this."

Bruno and Silver dismissed the Brennan Center's report, saying their colleagues are well-informed and very involved in the decisions and action of government.

The Citizens Budget Commission (CBC), a well-regarded, business-funded New York City group that analyzes State finances, became so frustrated with Albany that it recently asked every legislator to demand a three-day review before voting on the State budget.

Such a review is the rule for legislation, but Pataki often uses a "message of necessity" to allow an immediate vote after cutting secret deals with Bruno and Silver.

Only one of every four lawmakers – most of them in the frustrated, powerless minorities – signed the CBC's pledge.

The Brennan Center argued rank-and-file legislators fall prey to the legislative leaders' control over virtually all hiring, the flow of all legislation, even members' ultimate salaries.

Bruno and Silver, along with Pataki, have held their posts for about a decade, the longest the same three people have been in the top leadership positions simultaneously in New York history. By most accounts, the three, particularly Pataki and Silver, have developed a distrust over the years that has hurt their ability to deal in good faith on the budget and other major issues.

Adding to the public cynicism about Albany is the corruption that's bubbled to the fore this year.

Former Senator Guy Velella, a Bronx Republican; former Assemblymember Roger Green, a Brooklyn Democrat; and former Pataki Labor Commissioner James McGowan all pleaded guilty to crimes, which forced Velella and Green from office.

"It's been a uniquely terrible year with regard to government corruption," Horner said. "That is one open sore. They haven't addressed it."

What's the cure?  
"We need more competitive elections," Horner said.

Bartoletti suggested Albany's performance this year should help in that regard.

"I would ask, why should I vote for someone in the State Legislature if I see no accomplishment?" she said. "Why should I send you back?"

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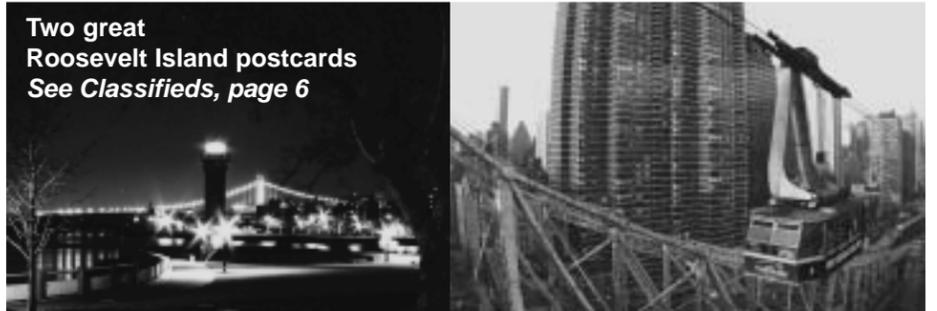
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