

Next issue  
in two weeks:  
Sat., Mar. 5

# The Main Street **WIRE**

25th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper



City Council Speaker Gifford Miller spoke at a ribbon-cutting a year ago after brokering a deal to put the Tramway in the MetroCard system.

## Campaign 2005 Miller Makes It Official: He's Running for Mayor

by Arthur Kimbell-Stanley

There are certain things one learns to do as a serious politician in New York City. Among them are singing the Hatikvah, Israel's national anthem, and La Borinqueña, Puerto Rico's patriotic song. Gifford Miller, Speaker of the City Council and Councilmember for Roosevelt Island and the Upper East side's District 5, learned to sing both over the course of his political career. Now he thinks he's ready to be New York's Mayor, and he's announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination.

The day before Miller publicly declared his run, he was out in Rockaway, Queens visiting residents and meeting with community leaders. *The WIRE* caught up with him as he visited the Young Israel of Baywater Senior League in Far Rockaway, and found him singing Sinatra to a community room full of elderly New Yorkers.

Dressed in a blue, lightly pinstriped suit, his dark hair brushed back immaculately, and standing rigid as the microphone he holds up to his mouth, he smiles and tells the group of septuagenarians and octogenarians in front of him that it's not how old you are that counts.

"I see a lot of young people out here today," he says.

His steady upbeat voice booming over the room's loudspeaker, Miller points to his head and declares, "It doesn't matter how old you feel up here." He then places his hand to his heart. "It's how you feel here that counts."

And then, asking his audience to join in with him, he begins: "Fairy tales can come true/ they can happen to you/ if you're young at heart."

Miller is no crooner, and his singing is neither on key nor terribly animated, but he knows all the words and so does his audience. With a swoop of his arm, Miller has this elderly group belting out a song they all seem to know well, broad smiles on all their faces, clearly enjoying this part of the Speaker's visit above the rest. Miller seems used to this kind of thing and perhaps slightly bored. He doesn't rush through the song, but seems happy to be finished. He shakes hands with a few audience members, wishing them well and telling them that if they need any help to call his offices, and then he's on his way.

Bunny Wilen, one of the elderly women in attendance, is beaming as the Speaker leaves. She says she loves Sinatra. Asked if she thinks Miller will be New York's next Mayor she asks, "Why not?"

"I think he's very personable, and he's very ambitious. I read his name in the papers all the time," Wilen says. "And he's very nice looking. A

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## Briefly...

After nearly a year in the MetroCard system, **Tramway income figures** have been released by the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation. For fiscal 2003-04, income was \$1.194 million. That increased 71% to a projected \$2.04 million for fiscal 2004-05, reflecting the impact of the MetroCard deal, brokered over a year ago by City Council Speaker Gifford Miller, under which RIOOC receives both first-ride and second-ride income from swipes at Tramway turnstiles. RIOOC says its operating costs for the system are \$3.4 million, producing an operating deficit of \$1,393,000.

Want to complain about **escalator outages** at the subway station? Frank Farnace of the RIRA Common Council announced the number at the Council's last meeting. Ask for Herman Hausman at **212-424-4497** or **212-424-4023**.

## City Council Adds 50 Years to Mitchell-Lama Tax Exemptions Impact on Roosevelt Island Housing Uncertain

by Dick Lutz

The New York City Council has granted Mitchell-Lama buildings a 50-year extension of their tax abatements. The Council resolution specifically includes Westview, Island House, Rivercross, and Eastwood.

The move surprised everyone – tenant leaders on and off the Island, housing companies, and the press. At deadline for this issue of *The WIRE*, many questions remain about the possible impact here.

Until the resolution was passed, the Island's Mitchell-Lama buildings faced substantial increases in tax payments – actually PILOTs, or *payments in lieu of taxes* – within the next few years. Now, presumably, they do not – but only so long as their owners keep them in the Mitchell-Lama affordable-housing program.

For tenants hoping for rental circumstances on the Island to remain much as they have been, the action may be a case of the cavalry arriving a little too late.

### What Happened?

The City Council's action took the form of a resolution, introduced by Speaker Gifford Miller, who represents Roosevelt Island. It passed unanimously. The Mayor's approval is not required.

The Council was given the authority to extend the tax exemptions when the State Legislature amended the Private Housing Finance Law (PHFL) in 2003. The amendment says, in part, "the real property... shall be exempt from local and municipal taxes, other than assessments for local improvements... to such extent as may be granted by the local legislative body of [the] municipality... Any project that received a tax exemption under this section may, upon the expiration of the tax exemption period, be granted an additional tax exemption period of up to fifty years, or until such time as the project is no longer operated under the restrictions" of the Mitchell-Lama program. (The full text of the amendment, the City Council's resolution, and related background materials appear with this issue of *The WIRE* on *Website NYC10044* at [nyc10044.com](http://nyc10044.com).)

Thus, the "local legislative body" was given the authority to extend the Mitchell-Lama tax exemption for an additional 50 years – and that's what the City Council did with its February 3 resolution.

Miller commented, "Thanks to programs like Mitchell-Lama, the people vital to our City's future – teachers, firefighters, police officers – have been able to live here despite skyrocketing rents and property values," Speaker Miller said "Unfortunately, many Mitchell-Lama developments are opting-out of the program, which is why passing this legislation is so crucial to maintaining affordable housing."

### What Impact?

Miller aide Jessica Lappin said, "The City Council's action provides owners of Mitchell-Lama buildings with a real incentive to do the right thing."

But for Roosevelt Island's original "WIRE" buildings (Westview, Island House, Rivercross, Eastwood), there are substantial uncertainties about the impact of the action. Here's why:

At press time, attorneys for the City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) and the State's Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) had still reached no conclusion about exactly what the action could mean on Roosevelt Island, which is unique in the State's constellation of Mitchell-Lama developments because the Island, while owned by the City, is leased to the State for development (to 2068), and the PILOT payments – which substitute for "real" taxes – go to the State, not the City. A key question: Did the State Legislature, in amending the PHFL, intend to give the City Council the authority to forgive payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTs) to the State? That issue was raised when a *WIRE* question was relayed by Lappin to HPD and DHCR. Lappin said HPD and DHCR would have to be consulted. On Thursday, however, a DHCR spokesman said, "That's really a question for the City Council."

While the Island's PILOT payments would normally be passed through to the City, they are not. That's

because the Urban Development Corporation (UDC) has substantial "credits" with the City by virtue of its original development of the Island. The PILOT income stops in the State's coffers.

In general, those *The WIRE* has questioned about this issue believe that the State Legislature did intend that the law should extend to all Mitchell-Lama developments, including those on Roosevelt Island, though it is unlikely the specific peculiarities of the Roosevelt Island situation were considered when the amendment was written. At this point, the lawyers apparently haven't finished puzzling over whether that is the actual effect of the law.

Presuming that the amended law does cover Roosevelt Island, which seems likely, the change may still have no impact here, because owners of all the Island's Mitchell-Lama buildings have been taking steps toward leaving the Mitchell-Lama program, spurred both by the profit motive and the prospect of PILOT increases, which had been relatively immediate, given the pace at which departures from Mitchell-Lama can proceed.

Despite the removal of the factor of an impending tax increase, the other factors producing an incentive to leave Mitchell-Lama remain, and may be overriding.

### Privatization

Departure from Mitchell-Lama is commonly called "privatization," because the building mortgages are taken out of a State-backed program, Mitchell-Lama, and placed with "private," non-government lenders.

The incentives to leave Mitchell-Lama were never limited to the no-longer-likely increase in tax costs. While under Mitchell-Lama, the State (through DHCR) oversees budgets and controls rent levels – keeping them "affordable" through a biennial process known as "budget rent determination." The Island's tenant leaders have regularly taken the case for keeping rents low to DHCR, which has granted

only limited increases. Also, under DHCR's Mitchell-Lama rules, family composition determines how large an apartment a tenant may occupy, and there are additional steps required if a landlord wants to evict a tenant who has an entitlement to a lease renewal.

For the owners of rental buildings, however, the profit motive is far and away the strongest incentive to remove projects from Mitchell-Lama, as they are now entitled to do.

### Eastwood

At Eastwood, the Belson Organization gave tenants formal notification in October, which triggers a departure process of about a year. Tenants, in turn, recently hired a lawyer and have raised money (over \$8,100 so far, according to an announcement made Tuesday night) to pay legal bills, the object being to get the best possible guarantees for the existing population of tenants. Fund-raising for legal costs continues, including an auction set for Saturday, March 26.

Roosevelt Island Housing Management (RIHMC), the Belson unit that manages Eastwood, has assured existing subsidized tenants that federal Section 8 funds will cover differences between what they pay and the actual market value of their apartments, and have announced a "landlord assistance program" for tenants not entitled to Section 8 vouchers. But the City's volunteer Mitchell-Lama organizations have warned that President George Bush has targeted Section 8 for reductions or elimination, and it's likely the tenant attorney will seek rent-level guarantees independent of federal programs.

Is Belson likely to retreat from privatization plans to take advantage of the 50-year extension of tax abatements? Privatization of Eastwood will open the door to vacancies being re-rented at the highest rates the market will bear, whatever assurances are negotiated for existing tenants. And on Wednesday, the head of RIHMC, Aaron Silberman, responded to a *WIRE* question with an e-mail: "The extension of the current real

See **Mitchell-Lama**, page 2

Islanders who subscribe to *The WIRE*'s free e-mail bulletin service received this news two weeks ago, shortly after the City Council's action. To subscribe, send an **AddMe** message to [bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com](mailto:bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com)

# Letters

## To the Editor:

I guess everyone on the Island has his own little horror story on how poorly Gristede's is serving the Community, but I guess the following story is rated R. Not only because it cumulates two infractions Gristede's has gotten us used to, but also because it concerns child products.

On Saturday, February 5, you actually could find in Gristede's around 100 kids' drinks, priced \$1.50, but charged as \$2.99 at the cashier. A *little* scary. The same bottles were marked as good to

drink before – June 24, 2004. Now that's *frightening*.

When I showed the bottle to the manager, he greeted the news with a "really?" and walked away.

I am fed up with yogurts with green bacteria growing on them, overpriced articles, articles charged at a different price from the tag, untagged articles, leaking bottles of milk, and above all, employees or managers that don't care.

Isn't it the time for us to get a decent grocery store?

**Jerome Coullare**

## To RIOC President Herb Berman:

It's tennis time. I know there are some issues on the table; I just want to play tennis. It's one of the pleasures that my teenager and I enjoy together, and those times are precious to me.

So the question that was put to rest in September is now back: When and where are the tennis courts going up? Will there be new tennis courts as promised?

Can they be ready for March games.

**Alexis Villafane**

## To the Editor:

In recent *WIRE* issues, three people wrote to say they think the FDR Memorial should not be built on Roosevelt Island. I know three is not a lot, but it's worth wondering about their reasons because so few make sense.

Matthew Katz writes that the Island is "a designated 'Tree City,'" and "needs to protect and enhance the things that make it special: historical landmarks, ancient trees, wild places in the heart of the City, indigenous flora and fauna."

There are no trees now south of the Smallpox Hospital ruin where the Memorial would be built. There would be many beautiful trees if it were built. Not even the land is ancient; it is decades-old landfill. The ruin, a landmark, would remain. And the Trust for Public Land's (TPL) analysis of the site says the "majority of the vegetation is marginal, invasive and non-desirable plant species that do not promote long term sustainable habitats."

Mr. Katz writes the Island recently "lost two areas designated as open space, Blackwell Park and Octagon Park." Building the Memorial guarantees the southern tip remains open space.

Mr. Katz writes, "I know this project to be an idea roundly rejected by both park users and Island residents alike" in the TPL survey. As the *WIRE* article on the Memorial pointed out, only a few people registered negative comments, and that was before the Cooper Union exhibit allowed people to understand the large, grass, tree-lined field and the peaceful open granite room at the tip.

Mr. Katz writes it is "a stone and concrete mausoleum that robs us of the amenities and river views." He's got to know it's not concrete, because he went to the exhibit. And anything you can do now at Southpoint, you can do after the Memorial is built, like viewing fireworks, films and playing Frisbee. It's hard to believe that he's complaining about trees blocking views (we're a Tree City, after all) so Mr. Katz must be suggesting the granite room blocks views. A second letter mentioned this, too. True, if you stand just north of the room you can't see south. (If you stand just north of the ruin you can't see south, either.) But you can see in all other directions and from everywhere else there are incredible views.

That covers everything Mr. Katz said he didn't like about it. I hope he reconsiders, in light of the facts.

The third resident writes the Memorial would "eat up all our precious space at the south we need so badly for activities associated with other than the Roosevelts." Actually there are another ten acres of land, more than triple the area of the Memorial, still available at Southpoint for a Wild Gardens plan. "The Mount"; the boat dock, storage and workshop; the sledding hill, the overlook, the Gatehouse, and shoreline access can all still be accomplished.

Why would anyone not want this beautiful, meaningful park to be built?

**Mel Tarr**

## Mitchell-Lama from page 1

property tax exemption for Mitchell-Lama buildings upon mortgage expiration does not impact Eastwood's plan to prepay the mortgage and maintain the affordability of rents while investing millions of dollars in capital improvements and security enhancements."

But Tuesday night, at a meeting to re-elect a leadership slate for the Eastwood Building Committee, Byron Gaspard said this question would be put to RIHMC: "Why not stay in the Mitchell-Lama system and keep Eastwood housing affordable?"

### Island House, Westview

The new partner in Island House and Westview, the Sheldrake Organization, has announced it will take the buildings out of Mitchell-Lama, and has taken initial steps in that direction in each building. Tenants have organized with a primary orientation to resident ownership in some form. Legal help has been acquired, and talks have begun.

It seems unlikely that the extension of tax abatements will produce a serious incentive for the owner to remain in the program. Tenants hope that Sheldrake has the political connections to keep taxes low even after privatization.

One question is whether some legal formula can be found that might give the owners an incentive to move toward resident ownership while still under Mitchell-Lama – the same process that turned Rivercross into a cooperative over 20 years ago. That incentive would presumably have to be a profit that competes, either in size or immediacy, with the considerable profit owners can realize from privatizing first, then selling apartments at prices not controlled by the State, to their occupants. It's not clear whether or how such a profit could be realized under Mitchell-Lama. And the prices of condo apartments at Riverwalk, now going up in Southtown, present the temptation of serious profits.

In response to a *WIRE* question, Sheldrake's public relations counsel provided a statement reading, in part, "Sheldrake is open to any options as we continue our discussions with Westview and Island House, including privatization under Mitchell-Lama. The reality is that Mitchell-Lama regulations would likely reduce the incentive for home ownership. A key attraction to home ownership is investing in a property that will appreciate in value and then realizing that appreciation upon resale of the unit, which is limited under Mitchell-Lama. Sheldrake's intent has always been to reach an agreement that would benefit everyone."

Whatever the owners decide to do, tenant leaders may prefer to go forward in a program that removes the buildings from State control. Privatization means ownership of apartments without clamps on resale prices (and a potential windfall for those who buy at "insider" prices), removes family composition as a fac-

tor in apartment size, and allows apartments to be left to heirs.

Tenant groups at Island House and Westview are working independently toward some form of negotiated deal with Sheldrake, but at press time leaders had not responded to a *WIRE* request for comment on the tax-relief extension and what its impact might be on their negotiating strategy, if any.

### Rivercross

For years, Rivercross has had a committee looking at privatization issues, with greater pressure in the recent past because of the expected increases in PILOT payments that had been expected to occur in 2007. Privatization had been cited by those working on the plans as one way of mitigating the effect of the tax increases because the increased value of apartments could be leveraged by their owners in reverse mortgages, and/or "flip taxes" (which are actually not taxes at all, but are fees taken by the cooperative corporation from resale profits) could be used to reduce the impact of increased taxes and higher ground rent.

The City Council action apparently removes the 2007 deadline for making a decision about leaving Mitchell-Lama. But there are other reasons why Rivercross might pursue privatization: the need to cover large repair bills is one.

Many Rivercross residents are also attracted by the profit incentive – the ability to "cash out" and use the increased equity in their apartments that privatization would bring. (Possible uses range from sale and relocation through home improvement projects financed through home-equity loans.) Older fixed-income residents already pinched by increasing maintenance charges may look to "reverse mortgages" to pro-

duce additional income, both to pay increased monthly charges and for other purposes. Many like the prospect of being able to leave their apartments to heirs. Some want increased flexibility in subleasing their units. And some want freedom to purchase larger or smaller units without being bound by DHCR rules on family composition.

Within Rivercross, however, there are competing factors and philosophies that may be given a boost by the 50-year extension of tax abatements.

Philosophically, some shareholders believe that the opportunity they had to live in an attractive building as the result of a State program should survive and be made available to others – including other Roosevelt Islanders whose names may be on the waiting list for apartments in the building.

Much depends on the specific plan devised for a Rivercross privatization, which will ultimately require a two-thirds vote of approval to go forward. Factors include the interest cost of a new mortgage for the cooperative corporation, the size of the "flip taxes," a possible reapportionment of shares assigned to each size apartment (some in smaller apartments maintain their assigned shares mean they pay a disproportionately high part of the building's overall budget), and the "fear factor" – a general concern about the uncertainties in changing from a system that has seemed to work well for over two decades.

### Outcomes

The City Council's 50-year extension of tax relief for Mitchell-Lama buildings is momentous, as was the State's 2003 action in giving it that authority, as seen in retrospect.

How much it will mean to Roosevelt Island remains to be seen.



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## To the Editor:

Whoa, Nellie, the wheels are comin' off the wagon! The RIOC Board thinks it can, through an irresponsible threat of a bus-fare increase (*WIRE*, February 5), blackmail Roosevelt Island residents into giving up their right to legal redress. The entire outfit should collectively count themselves lucky that we residents don't rise up en masse and sue the State, Big Time, for never having given us true democracy on the Island. Before the Supreme Court, the Roosevelt Island master lease would be snapped in two like the dried-out twig it is. Only then would we have true democracy.

RIOC freeloaders would find themselves out on their underworked and overpaid posteriors; we could thereafter operate in the black, out from under the jackboot of Pataki to under the benevolent umbrella of the City of New York, where we have rightfully always belonged. In the remaining 60-some years left on the State's lease, we will never be right until we come home, however many heads of RIOC the State throws at us – those who busy themselves trying to cure the cancer of decay with cosmetic band-aids. Instead of government of the people, by the people, for the people, it's been of the State, by the State, for the State.

But the State is simply no good as a landlord/overseer.

The State has packed the RIOC Board to perpetuate its own interests. Why, to cite one example, does a RIOC Board member, Patrick Stewart, an actual Island resident, preponderantly sympathize and side with the State, first disavowing its responsibility in the Great Blackout scandal, then saying residents struggling to walk home in the dark need the exercise; now proposing that RIOC sue his own Residents Association? Why does Stewart constantly go along with the State on most issues, some against the wishes and welfare of the community?

We would do better to have our own Community Board. But, until we do, we have no recourse except the courts.

**Barbara Potts**

## To the Editor:

If RIOC is so desperate for money, they might start having the bus drivers actually collect the fares. Then they wouldn't need to raise them.

Since I am handicapped, I need to sit in the front of the bus, so I can see just how many people get on the bus without paying. It is a considerable number.

**Name Withheld**

## 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 will not be published*.

**Preferred method of submission:** E-mail to [Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com](mailto:Letters@MainStreetWIRE.com) (plaintext e-mail format preferred, or attach a file), 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. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered if brief, but we are not able to take telephone dictation of letters. **All letters 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.

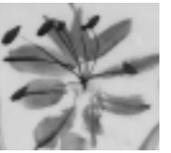
**Letters deadline for March 5 issue: Tuesday, March 1**

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

# COMING UP

## — This Weekend —

**Island Schools of Art** continues at Gallery RIVAA through March 6, featuring art of the children of Roosevelt Island's schools – PS/IS 217, the Roosevelt Island Day Nursery, The Child School, and Legacy High School. 11-5 Saturdays and Sundays, 6-9 Wednesdays and Fridays.



**Oldies-But-Goodies Dance with Lingerie Show, tonight (Sat., Feb. 19), 8:00-1:00, Manhattan Park Theater, 8 River Road. Presented by Islander Bernard Dove (left). Tickets, \$25, including food by Julie; music by DJ Mario. Tickets at the door.**

## — The Coming Week —

**Free Tax Help** continues for middle- and low-income taxpayers, with special attention for those 60 and over, **Tuesdays, 9:30-1:00, Senior Center; or call 212-751-9241.**

**Candidates' Forum** for Democratic candidates for mayor, public advocate, and comptroller, **Thur., Feb. 24, 7:00 p.m., Brown Gardens community room, 225 East 93rd Street.** Candidates for mayor scheduled to appear: Gifford Miller, Charles Barron, Freddy Ferrer, C. Virginia Fields, Anthony Weiner. Conversation and cookies after the session.

## — Future Events —

**Reception for Eva Moskowitz,** candidate for Borough President, **Mon., Feb. 28, 6:30-8:30, Island House community room.**

**Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Feb. 28, 8:00 p.m.** Visitors welcome. Additional information: **212-751-9577.**

**Works of Portrait Artist Dianne Robbins,** starting **Tue., Mar. 1** and through the month, in the Rivercross window gallery, presented by the Mother Earth Committee.

**Residents Association (RIRA) Common Council Meeting, Wed., Mar. 2, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd (lower level).** Open to all; an opportunity to address the Council is included near the start of each meeting.

**The Main Street WIRE** – Next issue, **Sat., Mar. 5.** (To receive e-mail bulletins between issues, send an "Add Me" message to [Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com](mailto:Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com).) **Advertising Deadline:** Ads in the paper, Friday, Feb. 25; decision on fliers for *The Bag*, Mon., Feb. 28; inserts due Thur., Mar. 3. **Future issues:** Mar. 19; Apr. 2, 16, 30; May 14; June 4, 18; July 2, 30; Aug. 27; Sept. 10, 24; Oct. 8, 22; Nov. 5, 19; Dec. 3, 17. **News phone, 212-826-9055; urgent matters 917-617-0449.** **Phone** for display and classified advertising placement and information, **212-751-8214.** **To list your organization's Island-related event in this column,** e-mail information to [ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com](mailto:ComingUp@MainStreetWIRE.com), or leave it, addressed to *The WIRE*, at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street; provide a telephone number for follow-up questions. There is no charge for such listings.

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 a phone number for possible follow-up.

**La Leche League** meeting for breastfeeding and pregnant women, **Mon., Mar. 7, 1:00 p.m., 20 River Road #5P.** Information: **212-832-1188.**

**RIOC Board of Directors Meeting, Thur., Mar. 10, 4:30 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd.** The Board's afternoon meetings usually conclude with an opportunity for public comment, specific time uncertain.

**River Music's Annual Irish Night, Fri., Mar. 11, 8:00 p.m., Chapel of the Good Shepherd.**

**Vernissage IV Opening Reception, Sat., Mar. 12, 6-9 p.m., Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main Street.**

**Toastmasters Public Speaking Group, Mon., Mar. 14, 8:00 p.m.** Visitors welcome. Additional information: **212-751-9577.**

**Book Discussion Group** at the Library, **Thur., Mar. 17, 6:30 p.m., At Home With the Glynnys,** by Eric Kraft. Copies available at the branch.

**Eastwood Building Committee Auction, Sat., Mar. 26, 7:00 p.m., Senior Center, 546 Main Street.** Donations being accepted now. See ad, page 4.

Winter, as I'm sure all have noticed, is not kind to our Z-brick streets. In fact, it is downright rude. But road repair has to wait for more clement weather.

Potholes can be dangerous for auto and pedestrian alike, but their repair is dependent on assured temperatures above freezing. Otherwise, if repaired during winter, the potholes are subjected to freeze-and-thaw cycles that cause heaves in the pavement, ultimately defeating the repair job completely. In other words, during the winter months we have to watch where we drive and where we walk when in the street.

The RIOC Board, as many of you have no doubt heard by now, decided that the Island should have an additional senior shopping bus for excursions to Long Island City. So in addition to the regular Wednesday trip, there is a Tuesday trip at well. Both buses now leave each Tuesday and Wednesday from in front of the Roosevelt Island Senior Center on Main Street at 10:30 a.m. and return at 12:15 p.m. from 21st Street and Broadway in Long Island City.

Even though we are in the season of cold and wet, RIOC staff has begun planning for the annual viewing at Southpoint of the July 4 fireworks display in the East River. Each year RIOC tries to improve on the

year before. This year we are looking to add efficiencies to the event so that the crowd can move more freely and expeditiously through the line to enter Southpoint. Obviously, since September 11, 2001, and given Southpoint's extremely sensitive location, crowd safety is paramount and security must come first. RIOC is exploring better ways to accomplish this, including perhaps contracting out the entire event with the exception of ticket sales.

Finally, DHCR is lending one of its executives to RIOC several days a week to lend a hand in Island operations. She is Catherine Johnson who has been a right hand to RIOC Board Chair Mary Beth LaBate. Johnson is a longtime Albany functionary with years of experience and on occasion has been enlisted to act as Secretary to the RIOC Board. Her presence is most welcome.

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

One of our arguments is that this entire area is and always was a park, and as such, is protected from this sort of destruction. They may have fenced off a portion of the park since the last fire, but that doesn't mean this hasn't always been useable open space. We have a number of people who have stepped forward with pictures and memories of the times they have spent at the park, but we'd like more. So, if you have a view from Manhattan Park that will be harmed



**Steve Marcus, President** Roosevelt Island Residents Assn. e-mail: [Steve@RIRA@verizon.net](mailto:Steve@RIRA@verizon.net)

by these towers, or if you have pictures and/or memories of the park, please drop me a line during this President's Day weekend. On a different note, please mark Saturday night, March 19, on your calendars for Roosevelt Island's fundraiser at Manhattan Park for the orphans in Sumatra. Many more details will follow in the next column.

I just saw a news magazine from Drachten, a Dutch town of 50,000. The streets are paved with beautiful red brick. Would that our little town of 10,000 in the richest city in the world could figure out how to keep the filthy red bricks around our church plaza from crumbling, and to keep the bricks from behind Blackwell house from disappearing.

## The RIOC Column

## The RIRA Column

After several weeks "under the radar" I'm happy to recap where RIRA stands with the Octagon lawsuit. As reported in the last *WIRE*, the attorneys for RIOC have attempted to deny us our day in court on two counts – that, as an association we must be represented by an attorney and that we lack "standing" to pursue a lawsuit.

On the first count, Dan Quart has very graciously agreed to represent RIRA and the residents. Many of you know Dan for his activities in Community Board 8, his frequent presence on the Island and great interest in the needs of our residents. **He has volunteered his legal services to help Eastwood tenants.**

Dan is also running for the City Council seat to be vacated in November by Gifford Miller. Dan has spent much of the week immersing himself in the details of this case and in talking with the attorneys that have helped us over the last few months.

On the claim that we lack standing, the law states that this project must cause injury, and that such injury must be greater to Island residents than to the general public. RIOC's lawyers claim that this project is so wonderful that no one suffers injury – that there will be even more open space after this giant three-wing 13-story apartment house with the private pool and garden in the courtyard is constructed – that the "ecological park" on the remaining sliver of land will be a lovely improvement, even though they've already cut down many mature trees to accommodate the private parking lot, and more will be cut down so they can move the tennis courts to the edge of the road.

# Claire Edelstein Friedland

Claire Friedland, a Rivercross resident, died February 9.

She was born July 20, 1915, in New York City, the daughter of an actress, Annie Thomashevsky of the famous New York Yiddish theatre family, and Isidor Edelstein, who owned the theatre. He inherited it from his father, Joseph, a Romanian born in Jassy, the birthplace of Yiddish theatre. Among those in this part of Claire's world who became well known are Molly Picon and Paul Muni. In her late teens or early twenties, Claire was invited to Muni's California residence to be a secretary, using her developing literary skills to help the famous actor in the process of choosing among the many scripts sent to him by hopeful writers. When she returned to New York, she attended Hunter College and Queens College.

Claire began a 25-year career in the male-dominated field of book production in the 1970s, re-entering the job market after a 30-year stint as a housewife and mother of two. She fought for and eventually won the title of production manager of a major corporation.

Her professional activities in publishing were on the technical side, as production manager, and included bringing to market such books as Godel Escher Bach.

Claire joined the National Organization of Women in 1971 to work on the marriage and divorce committee. She was named Woman of the Year by the Women's National Book Association in 1988 for her influence as one of the first women in management in the book production field, for her efforts as WNBA's representative to the Non-Governmental Organizations of the UN, and for her participation in the UN International Conferences on Women in Mexico in 1975 and in Copenhagen in the mid-80s. She was also honored in 1998 for her efforts in organizing the "70 Book Women Who Have Made a Difference" program.

Claire leaves two sons: Peter, who lives in Worcester, Massachusetts, and Michael, who lives in Paris with his wife, Anne Desicy, and Claire's two grandchildren, Thomas and Justine. She is also survived by a brother, Sidney Ellis, a half-brother, Milton Krims, and three nephews.



# Senior Center

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Monday</b><br/>10:00, <b>Computers for Beginners</b><br/>10-11, <b>Latchhook Class</b><br/>10-11:30, <b>English as 2nd Language</b><br/>10:30, <b>Blood Pressure Screening</b><br/>12:30, <b>"Oldies" Movies</b><br/>1:00, <b>Tai Chi</b><br/>7:00, <b>Dance Class (Beginners)</b></p> <p><b>Tuesday</b><br/>10:00, <b>Chinese massage</b><br/>2:00, <b>Bingo</b><br/>6:00, <b>Yoga Class</b><br/>7:30, <b>Games (RISA)</b></p> <p><b>Wednesday</b><br/>9:15, <b>Stay Well</b><br/>10:00, <b>Computers</b><br/>10:00, <b>Spanish Class</b><br/>10:30, <b>Shoppers' Bus</b><br/>12-2, <b>Painting &amp; Sculpting</b><br/>7:00, <b>Pokeno (RISA)</b></p> | <p><b>Thursday</b><br/>9:30, <b>Chinese Massage</b><br/>10:30, <b>Creative Arts</b><br/>12:30, <b>Movie</b><br/>7:00, <b>Dance</b></p> <p><b>Friday</b><br/>9:30, <b>Yoga</b><br/>10:30, <b>Computers</b><br/>1:00, <b>Bridge</b><br/>7:00, <b>Games (RISA)</b></p> <p><b>Saturday</b><br/>7:30, <b>Bingo (RISA)</b></p> <p><b>Special Events</b><br/><b>Sat., Feb. 19, 6:00, Korean New Year party</b><br/><b>Mon., Feb. 21, closed (Presidents Day)</b><br/><b>Sat., Feb. 26, 10-5, Black History Month celebration</b><br/><b>Mon., June 13, five-day motor coach tour to Niagara Falls.</b></p> |
|---|---|

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The **Public Safety Blotter** for the first half of February is now available on [Website NYC10044](http://Website NYC10044) at [nyc10044.com/wire/2512/lot2512.html](http://nyc10044.com/wire/2512/lot2512.html).

### The EASTWOOD BUILDING COMMITTEE

invites all Roosevelt Island residents to participate, contribute, and join us at the

# AUCTION

**Saturday, March 26, 7:00 p.m.**  
Senior Center, 546 Main Street

Eastwood is having an AUCTION to help pay legal fees, so come out and participate in this fundraiser. Meet your neighbors and let's have some fun. **All Island residents are invited.**

**Please help make this AUCTION a success** by donating items (specialty items, objects you no longer treasure, paintings, any type of gift certificate, tickets to a show, art, dinner for 2, etc.) or professional services (tutoring or lessons of any kind, legal advice, etc.). **Donate anything you're good at** - housecleaning, closet organizing, or even shopping. Your participation will help us protect every tenant in our building now and for the future.

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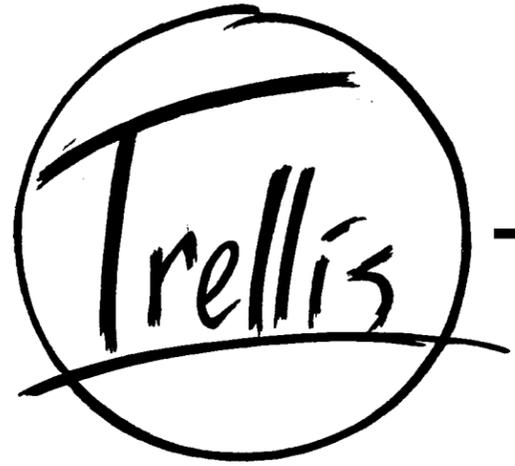
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the dining room may be tight.

BY JOSH OZERSKY

Pizza in New York, like cramped quarters and civic pride, is written in the city's cultural DNA.

A New Yorker who eats only at Pizza Hut is in the position of a Texan who can't stand guns; he can be comfortable, but never truly at home. And coal-oven pizza, such as the type served at Sac's Place, is the essence of what makes New York's pizza great.

The reason is in the volcanic temperature that only coal-fired ovens can achieve. (Forget "brick oven"; it's the fuel that matters.) A pizza's bottom gets brown and crisp in 900-degree heat before the interior of even a thin pie can dry out; as a result, coal pizza has a complex texture that gas-oven pizzas can't even aspire to.

Before getting to the matter of the pizza, though, let's get the rest of the menu out of the way. Everything at Sac's is of high quality, and real care is taken with it.

Owner Anthony Sacramone grows all the oregano, rosemary, basil and anise at his family's house in Pennsylvania. The tomatoes are all San Marzano, the best you can buy. Sacro-



Anthony and Domenico Sacramone of Sac's Place serve pizzas and entrees seasoned with home-grown herbs.

mone buys all the vegetables at the market himself.

The upshot is that, while they don't get the coal-oven treatment, most of the entrees are first-rate, if a little conventional. The tomatoes enliven the sauce on dishes such as chicken Fiorentino, with its compact bundle of tender chicken, cohesive eggplant and fresh mozzarella. Other things to order without fear are Sicilian-style baked ziti, densely laden with eggplant, irresistible under its blanket of fresh mozzarella; delicious roasted peppers; and shrimp in garlic

sauce and mussels in white wine. (These last two, while both good, are neither as big nor as briny as you might hope.)

The main reason to go to Sac's, though, is the pizza, and it is fantastic. The telltale random crust bubbles and tiny black spots on the bottom tell the tale of coal heat, but it isn't until you bite into the slice that you get the coal effect. This isn't the thin, matzo-like crust, so delicate and austere, served at Coney Island's Totunno's or the thick, cake-like confection of Manhattan's Arturo's (to mention two of its coal-

oven cousins). It's just thick enough to support the toppings, to avoid tip sag and to give a pleasing contrast between the crisp crust and the moist, sweet dough in the middle.

The toppings are well proportioned to the pie, and masterfully selected for pizza duty: The fresh mozzarella is partially dried, so it melts right without losing that milky taste; the pepperoni doesn't ooze grease into the cheese; the tomatoes are sweet and vivid; the spinach nicely sauteed; and the meatballs, scattered rather than sliced, are unmistakably homemade.

I would avoid the white pie, whose ricotta load keeps the crust from browning nicely; but don't miss out on the Sicilian slice, cooked in a gas oven rather than the coal one. With its gorgeously oily bottom crust, airy dough and lush tomato taste, this might be the best slice this side of Midwood.

If you get a whole pie to go, reward yourself with a square slice; after all, if you care about pizza — and what New Yorker doesn't? — you've done the right thing by coming here.

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## Eastwood Re-Elects Most Officers

Eastwood residents re-elected most of their tenant leadership Tuesday night in a meeting in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. Byron Gaspard was elected Chair, Fay Vass and Amelia Fontes became Co-Chairs, Harry DeVine was re-elected as Treasurer (a post he has held for a quarter century), Margaret Gaspard was re-elected Secretary, and Ginny Pulos was elected to a Community Relations position; she is in charge of fund-raising for the tenants' current negotiations with the Belson Organization related to privatization of the building's mortgage and its removal from the State Mitchell-Lama system (see related story, page 1). Also elected were Ruth Kolins, Senior Representative, and Dolores Green, Disabled Representative. Former Co-Chair Nellie Velez did not run.

Eastwood is also instituting a Block Watch program (story, page 7).

**Miller** from page 1

handsome young man."

Despite the song, Gifford Miller does not seem very young at heart. Miller won his City Council seat in 1996 when he was just 26 years old. Six years later, in 2002, he became Speaker of the City Council. Now, just 35, he's running for Mayor, and if he wins he'll be the second-youngest in New York's history.

But Miller doesn't like to talk about his age. While he acknowledges he's certainly not the oldest person running for Mayor this year, he says he certainly has as much experience as any of his rivals. "Put my record up against anyone else's," he says. This is not just candidate talk. Miller is not only Speaker of the New York City Council, but because of term limits, he's also the Council's senior member.

Miller is very proud of the work he's done as a Councilman over the last nine years. He says that part of the reason he is running for Mayor is that his term limits are up and he can no longer remain on the City Council. Asked if he'll regret no longer representing Roosevelt Island, Miller states that he's hopeful he'll be able to continue serving the Island as Mayor.

"Roosevelt Island is one of the most special places in New York. I consider it my home base and, hopefully, I'll be able to keep it special as Mayor. If I'm Mayor I'll fight for the Island. A Mayor can affect the outcome of what happens in New York, but this Mayor chooses not to."

This trip to Rockaway, Queens is not uncommon for the Councilman from the 5th district.

As Speaker he is responsible for the entire City and he spends a lot of time out of the office traveling the streets. According to his traveling assistant, sometimes he's out visiting different neighborhoods in New York from the early morning until eleven at night.

He rides in a black GMC sport utility vehicle, a driver and security guard up front, guests in the back. On this particular Thursday – the day before Miller will announce officially – the SUV carries the Speaker, Councilman James Sanders, who is escorting Miller around his district, and a traveling assistant with a box of donuts on his lap. The vehicle is littered with copies of *The Daily News*, *The Post*, and *Newsday*. The box of donuts is half empty.

Miller is very proud of the kind of work he's doing today. "I believe government works best when you go meet with people and hear their concerns," he says. "If more officials did this we'd have better government."

Miller says he tries to get out and meet people every day, depending on City business. Asked if he uses the trips as opportunities to campaign, he replies that these trips are just part of his job as Speaker of the City Council. "These trips are about introducing myself and talking about issues that affect New Yorkers," he says.

Why does he think the City needs new leadership? "I think we need a Mayor who has the drive, energy, and ability to go out there and kill himself every morning for his vision of the City," he says. "You just have to go out there and talk about your vision, and it has to be a five-borough vision."

Miller says that Bloomberg, whom he consistently refers to as "this Mayor," won't do that. Miller goes on to attack the incumbent for the cuts he has proposed in the City's budget, especially cuts in education.

"Bloomberg says he wants to run on his education record, but that's where he is making cuts. We could have stronger schools, but to do that we have to fight for our fair share from Albany and Washington."

Asked what the Mayor might do better, Miller is quick to respond:

"This Mayor has to start by trying. He has to provide real leadership and he has to start leveraging New York's assets. He is a

one-man band. He's got good ties but he doesn't use them. He makes trips to Washington and Albany and we receive nothing."

Miller's tone is forceful and earnest. Unlike the singing, he now seems to really feel what he's saying. He talks about his vision of New York, and how things will only change if people are given a stake in the outcome.

Referring to recent cuts in federal money going to cities, the Speaker raises his voice slightly. "The Mayor of New York is the urban leader of the country," Miller says. "We need to leverage our business and our labor assets and fight for what we deserve."

Miller is confident that this is the message that New Yorkers want to hear. He also says he's confident that he'll win the Democratic nomination, and he's planning to raise 25-50 million dollars for his campaign. He has already far outpaced his Democratic rivals with a war chest of just over \$4 million. "I'm confident that I'll have the resources to get out my message. I'm the only democratic candidate who's planning to raise anywhere near that much," Miller says.

Though Miller acknowledges that one of his democratic rivals, Freddy Ferrer, has outpaced him in more recent fundraising, he says that he still looking at the bigger picture. "Every additional million is harder to raise than the last," he says.

The Speaker's next stop is JASA Roy Reuther Senior Center, also in Far Rockaway. This is one more stop in what is a busy day's schedule, and Miller is quick to get out of the car. The event is being held in a large cafeteria, with a stage and podium at the far end of the room. Though surrounded by his entourage as he enters, he separates from them and begins mingling with the audience.

He starts by shaking hands, leaning over but remaining very stiff. The energy and forcefulness that was on display as he discussed his candidacy has disappeared and has been replaced with a gentle and polite demeanor.

"How are you? I'm Gifford Miller," he says as he makes his way through a maze of round tables, each with six or seven seniors seated at them. The difference in age between him and his audience is clear, and the polite way in which he hands out his business card and asks how everyone is feeling makes him look like a grandson home for the holidays. His greetings are canned and he spends no more than a few seconds with each audience member, but with each handshake, he makes eye contact and his smile is open, his face humble. "Here is my card," he says. "Just in case I can ever do anything for you."

As he passes, one elderly woman whispers to another next to her, "Good-looking Councilman."

Another woman, Mildred Farrington, looks up at Miller as she shakes his hand and tells him that it is nice to see him again. As Miller continues on his way she tells *The WIRE*, "He'll make a good Mayor. He's sincere. I've been here a long time and you can always speak to him."

When he is finished with his greetings, he approaches the stage and gets ready to begin his formal remarks. The speech, like his greetings, seems to be a repetition of many earlier speeches. He talks about how important it is for the City to take care of its seniors and how "this Mayor" has not been making that care a priority. He states that these are tough times for the City, but that seniors have to be a priority. He tells his audience that he is out here today because "government works better when people listen to people."

He then starts to repeat himself: "I see a lot of young people in this room today." Bashfully he begins a few bars of Sinatra. And as usual, this young politician gets his best reaction when he starts to sing about how important it is to be young at heart.

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## Eastwood Organizes Block Watch

The Eastwood Building Committee (EBC) has organized a Block Watch within the building, with the cooperation and support of NYPD and the Commander of the 114th Precinct, David Barrere. Barrere described the program to a recent EBC meeting. He said participating tenants get confidential ID numbers that will be recognized when they call in a "crime in progress" or other complaint of lawbreaking.

"We have to train you as to what to look for in your building," Barrere said, "but it's a short program – a half-hour to an hour. When you call, we sign you up with a confidential number. You remain anonymous, but we'll know you're a concerned citizen trying to help us." He added that NYPD will conduct vertical patrols in Eastwood from time to time. "If you see an officer, don't be alarmed. Introduce yourself," he said.

Eastwood tenants can join by contacting Romano Reed at 212-752-5167.



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