

Next issue  
in 2 weeks –  
Sat., Mar. 18

# The Main Street **WI**RE™

26th Year as Roosevelt Island's Independent Community Newspaper

"Now, no pizza after baseball and sports," said Caitlin Hughes sadly, when asked about the demise of the Capri Pizzeria.

Story below.

Other residents comment on page 6.



Photo: Susheel Kurien

## RIOC Calls Public Meeting to Clarify Its Real-Estate Moves, Then Says It's Mostly Secret

by Dick Lutz

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) invited residents to a meeting two weeks ago (February 16) with a promise of additional information about its recent real-estate offering, a group of five RFIPs (Request for Initial Proposal) for Island properties. But residents who attended expressed disappointment and, in some cases, outright anger that the information provided was little more than the small amount that had been made public at RIOC's last Board of Directors meeting and reported in the October 5 and 22 issues of *The WIRE*.

Residents complained that they were being asked to comment on plans for the five parcels without knowing what plans had been proposed by developers. RIOC representatives said, in effect, that the proposing developers had been promised that their ideas would be kept secret.

The result was a clash between – on the RIOC side – RIOC President Herb Berman, RIOC Board Chair Deborah Boatright, RIOC Board Real Estate Committee Chair Deborah Beck, and RIOC's commissioned real-estate consultant, Paul Mas – and, on the resident side, just about every resident who chose to rise and ask the "clarifying questions" that Boatright and Berman said the meeting was set up to answer.

Berman and Boatright actually defined the meeting two different ways. Initially, she told residents, "You're here to ask clarifying questions." But when residents' questions attempted to probe for additional information RIOC was not willing to dispense, both Boatright and Berman reversed field. Boatright said, "The whole entire purpose of this meeting was to have people share their views as to what they would like to see at the five sites. It would be helpful if you would confine yourself to that purpose."

Immediately afterward, as Rivercross resident Robert Chira, an attorney, attempted to raise a clarifying question to commissioned consultant Mas, Berman cut him off, "Once again, that's not an appropriate question."

Berman deals with the matter in his column in this issue (page 3), as does Chira (letter, page 2), and Residents Association President Steve Marcus (column, page 3).

The five properties in question are:

- The northern three acres of Southpoint Park
- The Tram station area, which RIOC's RFIP suggested might be ideal for "big-box retail."
- A parcel south of Lighthouse Park and east of Coler Hospital
- RIOC's 60% share of Motorgate
- All the Island's retail space except for what's in Southtown.

RIOC has maintained that the RFIPs are simply to test the waters – not to promise developers that the sites would actually be marketed. As real-estate chair Beck put it, "The reason we want input from the market for these sites was to see if there is interest out there to provide additional [income to RIOC]." Nonetheless, RIOC



Photos for this coverage: nnnVicki Feinmel

RIOC President Herb Berman and Deborah Boatright, who has now resigned from the DHCR position that put her in the RIOC Board Chair.

charged developers \$4,000 to \$8,000 to put forth their ideas for the five sites.

Objecting residents expressed fear that RIOC is preparing to allow development in Southpoint Park, gut the Island's retail locations in order to put them under a master tenant (separate report, this page), allow higher rents in Motorgate by privatizing it, increase demands on an already-stressed transportation system by adding residential housing (at Southpoint and the northern site) beyond the six more buildings of Southtown and the Octagon population about to be added, and turn Main Street into an even busier thoroughfare by putting a "big-box destination retail" enterprise at the Tram station site. In the meeting and elsewhere, residents have voiced a fear that the Pataki administration wants to milk Roosevelt Island for every possible reward for political supporters before his administration leaves office.

One observer at the meeting said it seemed that Mas was ready to reveal more detail, frequently looking to Berman and Boatright when residents asked for more information, but then providing only a little more than already known.

As soon as residents started asking questions, Berman started rejecting them as out of bounds:

Matthew Katz, former Residents Association President: "Much of what you've presented this evening has been presented at RIOC Board meetings and reported in *The Main Street WIRE*. I was wondering if you could give us specifics on the 21 proposals."

Berman: "That's not a clarifying question, Matt. That's something that will ultimately be done, but not at this juncture while it's still within the Board's purview for negotiation and contemplation."

### Southpoint Park

Katz went on to raise a question about the offering of space at the northern end of Southpoint Park: "My focus this evening is on what you are calling the 'City Hospital site' and what, for five years, I've called the northernmost three acres

See RIOC, page 8

## Island Merchants, Many Long Without Leases, Are Nervous About RIOC Plans for Future

by Dick Lutz

**Franco Moccia can't figure it out.** His father, Tony Moccia, can't either, says Franco. Why wouldn't RIOC give Capri Pizza a lease?

The lack of a lease, says Franco, is why Tony stopped paying his rent. He says the story goes back some seven years, when a RIOC attorney promised a new lease on the pizzeria space, then promised again, and again, and again, over a period of years. Finally, in an attempt to force RIOC to provide the promised lease, Moccia stopped paying rent on the space – to the tune (he says) of an accumulated \$130,000. So, a month ago, RIOC called in the marshal and padlocked the place.



Franco Moccia

Franco says the family is ready to pay the back rent. "But with no lease, it makes no sense," he says. Why, he asks, would anybody pay \$130,000 back rent when, a month later, RIOC could terminate a month-to-month rental arrangement. "We would need that money to start fresh somewhere else," he says.

**Mr. O, who runs Roosevelt Island Cleaners, can't figure it out.** He wants a lease. He needs to invest in some improvements in his space and his equipment, but investment makes no sense if he could be evicted on the spur of the moment. He's current in his rent – a chronic two weeks late, he admits – but to invest in the future of his store and the future of Roosevelt Island, he needs to know he'll be here next month, and the month after, and next year. With no lease, his situation is just too tenuous. "We don't want to fight with these people, or bicker," he says. "We try to be nice. We just don't want to be ignored. We want to be able to invest and improve." He points out that simply keeping ahead of regulatory requirements for a cleaning establishment is costly and, without a lease, investment beyond the basic necessities is just out of the question.

Mr. O says he has talked to RIOC attorney Paul

Hart. Hart referred him to RIOC President Herbert E. Berman. Berman referred him to RIOC real-estate salesman-consultant Paul Mas. Mas, he says, is hard to reach. Indeed, merchant after merchant and many businesspeople who've tried to reach Mas in an effort to rent Roosevelt Island space get what they universally call "the runaround."

**Don Perrino can't figure it out.** Nor can his nephew, Sal Laplaca. Perrino's been trying, he says, to rent the bakery space since it was shuttered by RIOC – again for non-payment of rent – some three years ago. "I get a runaround," he says. Perrino also says that, in a conversation with Berman or Mas, he was asked if he would be willing to pay the accumulated unpaid back rent of the previous occupant of the space. He was incredulous. "I ain't going to do that," he said.

Perrino has a track record on Roosevelt Island. He remembers better times. He ran La Piccola Mela in the pizzeria space for about five years starting in 1976, when the New York State Urban Development Corporation was the landlord. Residents remember lines to get into the place. "You had to have a reservation!" remembered one old-timer last week. "The food was great!"

Perrino says, "They don't really want to rent it." He says it was obvious that he was shown the bakery space only because he was particularly insistent with Paul Mas. But he says he was told, "We can't rent you the bakery. But we can rent you the pizza place after we evict him."

**Cynthia Ahn, who runs Roosevelt Nails, can't figure it out.** Ahn, too, wants a lease for her space. She spoke in RIOC's meeting about RFIPs (see separate story, this page) two weeks ago. Working in an English language with which she has more skill than many Island merchants, she told Berman, RIOC Board Chair

See Merchants, page 6

### The Island in Transition



Donald Perrino

# Letters

## To RIOC President Herb Berman:

I believe the RIOC-sponsored meeting of February 16 was presented under false pretenses. You invited "the public to attend a presentation given by Jones Lang LaSalle on the responses to the Request For Initial Proposals for Roosevelt Island." What you announced at the meeting was quite different. What you said to the audience of Islanders and representatives of our local officials was that the thrust of the meeting was to solicit the public's preferences for the five sites involved.

In fact, Paul Mas of Jones, Lang LaSalle gave a ten-minute presentation that simply reiterated information discussed at a recent RIOC Board of Directors meeting and reported in *The Main Street WIRE*. It's safe to say that the audience was composed of savvy Islanders already familiar with the meager information that Mr. Mas chose to share. What became clear from the comments from residents and Main Street merchants is that we took time from our busy lives to learn the nature of the proposals you had received, but none of this information was forthcoming because the 14 responders (who paid a total of \$80,000 in fees to present a total of 21 projects) had been guaranteed confidentiality. What a farce!

In that case, what were we doing there? How could we offer ideas when the range of what the Board was looking for is a secret? How could we respond to the projects presented when apparently they are on a "need-to-know" basis, as well? Yes, we understand these are just initial proposals but we have decades of experience with bad ideas turning into concrete right before our eyes. Octagon Apartments comes to mind, consuming land that is, incredibly, still listed in our General Development Plan as open space.

Nevertheless, we did our best. How's this for starters: Joyce Mincheff, a professional real-estate agent, suggested that we could support merchants who have stuck it out here for years and decades of lower-than-expected populations by giving them rents determined by a percentage of their profits rather than square footage, a common commercial stragem. We told you that we want a park at Southpoint Park and nothing but a park. Even the three acres that Mr. Mas insisted upon calling the "City Hospital site" and that we know as the northernmost portion of Southpoint Park should be developed as a park, not as a new residential development or a commercial crescent (already repudiated in the Trust for Public Land surveys) or a hog-rendering plant. The \$12 million for Phase I is already in place, so additional funds aren't needed to build Southpoint Park. Additionally, we said we do not want a big-box store (Mr. Mas called it "destination retail" but we knew what he was talking about) where the tennis bubble and steam plant are now situated. Anyone with the slightest sensitivity for Roosevelt Island life knows that our transportation systems simply will not support such a commercial venture and Lillian Shuey Picchione, an Islander and a professional transportation planner, confirmed that.

There's something to be learned here. Several years ago, we endured a presentation by City and State Offices of Emergency Planning at which we learned a great deal about their tables of operation and fire hazards in the Adirondacks, but nothing about emergency planning for Roosevelt Island. As a result of the very vocal objections made in that meeting regarding the wasting of Islanders' time, the current series of Contingency/Emergency Planning meetings evolved and serious planning for our unique situation is ongoing. Learning how to communicate with the residents of this community has been a work in progress for RIOC. We want to know which of the projects offered, most of them residential, might be considered by the RIOC Board and which will be repudiated out-of-hand. Until they are ready to answer that critical question, it might be best not to offer information and then – clam up. I urge you to meet with a responsible group of Island residents (might I suggest the Island Services or Planning Committee of RIRA? As only two of the six resident members of the RIOC Board bothered to show up at the February 16 meeting, they apparently have more important things to do) to distinguish good ideas from the bad ones and then, to present substantive information to the community rather than the unsatisfying showing you and Mr. Mas made on the 16th.

Roosevelt Islanders want a say in their future and we've never been shy about demanding it. And it's within your power, Herb, to accommodate us.

Matthew Katz

## To RIOC:

I am a longtime resident of the Island, and attorney practicing law in Manhattan.

I attended the meeting held on Thursday, February 16, but learned very little about what has been proposed to date from the RFIP process being conducted by Jones LaSalle and Paul Maas.

I offer some comments and suggestions for the RFIP process and future Island Development:

### • Big-box destination retail like IKEA is impractical.

I understand that one proposal is for "destination retail" under the Tram. I assume that means a "big box" store like Ikea.

That is not practical. Deliveries would not be possible except in the dead of night, disturbing the residents of both Southtown and Northtown.

Customers would not come by Tram and subway without their cars to take goods purchased. No parking space is available, and the traffic of cars coming and going to a big-box store would create horrendous adverse environmental impacts.

### • Additional residential housing after Southtown is complete is difficult due to severe existing transportation obstacles.

I understand from the brief comments of Mr. Maas at the meeting that most proposals from the RFIP process, other than one by a non-profit organization for a seven-story building at the north parking lot area of the Island, is to build more residential housing, at the same north end and where the former City Hospital was sited south of the bridge and Tram.

Right now, without any more housing, there is a transportation crisis as Islanders cannot easily get to work during the morning rush hour, say from 8:15 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. weekdays. The subway is packed with Queens residents. There does not seem to be a second track for an additional local "shuttle" that could run from the Island into Manhattan, nor, perhaps, enough "headway" between F trains to run such a shuttle. The Tram is also becoming more congested at that time.

Hence, any additional housing on the Island must face up to the reality that the existing subway and Tram cannot handle the current population and, moreover, there are about six more buildings scheduled for Southtown. Existing subway and Tram congestion will sharply increase and make it difficult to attract new residents.

For now and the immediate future, additional residential housing for the Island beyond the completion of Southtown is not practical.

### • What about a ferry or additional trams?

A ferry or additional trams could be considered to alleviate some of the bottlenecks, but those are both expensive and not very efficient. It may not be understood generally, but the Tram is expensive and inefficient as a means of "mass" transportation. Ferries also leave riders at the edge of midtown, with a further bus ride required. While it may be more practical for Wall Street, a ferry is very expensive to run and may not be practical for the relatively small Island population.

### • The General Development Plan and the Island's diversity are significant factors affecting development plans

This Island was not designed to be like the East or West Sides of Manhattan, a sort of mainly white and high-income enclave, but rather was intended to be a diverse racial and economic community with provision for seniors and the disabled. The GDP reflects that design and goal.

Ignoring the GDP's requirements is in conflict with both RIOC's lease obligation to the City and invites a legal challenge. I urge the RIOC Board to examine all its proposed actions with a view to what the GDP provides.

There are also untested legal issues concerning how the GDP can be amended. Although not challenged legally in the recent Octagon lawsuit, an amendment to the GDP and Lease may require the consent of the City Council rather than just the consent of the Governor and Mayor.

Finally, the RIOC Board should adhere to the vision of this Island as diverse in all senses, with care taken to preserve the low-, moderate-, and middle-income population.

### • Retail stores on the existing Island should be placed under a different structure.

RIOC is not able to manage the retail stores successfully, with some space never rented and other stores failing. I would favor new ideas for the management of the stores, perhaps putting an anchor tenant in charge of leasing out the other stores, or a retail-management firm taking on that responsibility. Trying something new is probably wiser than RIOC trying, after all these years, to do a better job. Managing the retail stores is not something it does well.

### • The Island's self-sufficiency is a goal but not a requirement.

## To RIOC President Herb Berman:

RIOC deserves praise for the maintenance work that has been done over the last ten months. It is noteworthy that within the last month, the patchwork sidewalk replacement has finally been corrected on the west side of Main Street; perhaps the same kind of replacement will, without another year's wait, finally take place around the ConEd grating on the east side of Main Street under the Eastwood Arcade.

Based on the awakening of RIOC maintenance work, is there also the possibility of a more momentous change?

Your January 26 column in *The WIRE* acknowledges the fact that RIOC has not shared much information with Island Residents ("...the financial structure underpinning our Island is often misunderstood or misrepresented by some Island activists.")

Recognizing this to be the way it is is a great first step. Now, what about correcting this problem? Why not use your WIRE column or the occasional RIOC newsletter to set out the facts? Why not go back to the commendable path you started out on – remember the building meetings you convened in the first few weeks of your stay here?

There will be unhappy residents that show up at such meetings – that is the purpose of the meetings, isn't it? You will find out how people feel; people will hear from you some straight facts; all parties will begin to feel that maybe someone is listening to them.

Herb, you have had a life-long career as a public servant. Why not put some of the lessons into practice that you learned in your earlier career work?

David Bauer

Much of the discussion about the future of the Island and its development is based on the assumption that the Island must be self-sufficient and both its capital and operational needs met without government subsidy. However, development of the Island should not be predicated on such an assumption or goal, however laudatory.

Rather, RIOC's Board must consider, first, that this is an Island which, much like Governor's Island, cannot be easily self-sufficient due to its special character which imposes special costs such as a Tram and more costly maintenance and operation.

Thus, some City and State "subsidy" is required for both capital and operational needs, with the goal of self-sufficiency kept in mind as a "goal," but not a "requirement."

User fees and charges can only increase so much in a diverse community that includes low- and moderate-income families and disabled and seniors.

### • Conclusion:

I hope these comments are useful. I would ask that they be included in the official record. I would also encourage the Board to provide more information about proposed development so that residents can comment on it.

Robert Chira

This letter, sent to RFIPcomments@RIOC.com and provided to *The WIRE*, was condensed for publication here.

## Leo Margolin

Leo Margolin, a longtime Roosevelt Island and Rivercross resident, died February 15. He is survived by his wife, Shirley Margolin, and by their daughter, Ilene Margolin, son-in-law Robert Norris, and granddaughter Caroline Norris.

He was born April 24, 1919, in Jamaica, New York. Shirley was his high school sweetheart, and they were married 64 years. He was a graduate of New York University, worked as an accountant, and served in a variety of senior financial positions in jewelry and other industries.

Leo Margolin had a life-long passion for baseball – first as a Dodger fan, then as a Mets fan. Sports played a key role in his life; he often took nephews and Fresh Meadows neighborhood children to their first ballgame. To them, he was "Uncle Leo."

The Margolins moved to Roosevelt Island in 1988, in love with the Island's sense of community.

Leo often took part in the many demonstrations against nuclear testing and the Vietnam War, supporting Shirley's involvement with the peace movement in the 50's and 60's.



**The WIRE**  
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 A publication of the Main Street WIRE, Inc.  
 ©2006 Unisource2000™ Inc.  
 531 Main St. #413, NYC10044

News 212-826-9055  
 Urgent news 917-617-0449  
 Advertising 212-751-8214  
 Circulation 212-935-7534  
 e-mail editor@MainStreetWIRE.com  
 in association with  
 Website NYC10044 – nyc10044.com

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# COMING UP

## — This Weekend —

**Vernissage 5 show, Opening Reception, tonight** (Sat., Mar. 4), 6-9 p.m., Gallery RIVAA, featuring the works of two dozen artists. General gallery hours Wed. & Fri., 6-9 p.m.; Sat.-Sun., 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Exhibition continues to April 16.

**Game Night, tonight** (Sat., Mar. 4), 7:00 p.m., Senior Center (546 Main Street), a fundraising event sponsored by the Eastwood Building Committee. Entrance donation, \$5. (See ad, page 8.)

## — The Coming Week —

**Roosevelt Island Day Nursery Open House, Wed., Mar. 8,** 9:15-10:15 a.m., 4 River Road (see ad, page 4).

**Author Reading, *Jadwiga's Crossing*** by Aloysius A. Lutz and Island resident Richard J. Lutz, **Thur., Mar. 9,** 6:00 p.m., at the Library. (See ad, page 8.)

**CERT Training, Session 1** (of 11), **Thur., Mar. 9,** 6:30 p.m., Sportspark (west side entrance). Bring ID (for background check). Information: **212-832-4540**, ext. 352.

**Roosevelt Island Day Nursery Open House, Fri., Mar. 10,** 9:15-10:15 a.m., 4 River Road (see ad, page 4).

**The Famine Report** by Islander Deirdre McNamara, an adaptation of eyewitness accounts of the Irish famines, presented by the Irish-American Theatre Company, **Sat.-Sun., Mar. 11-12,** 2:00 p.m., St. Malachy's Actors' Chapel, 239 W. 39th St. Admission: \$20 (seniors, \$8).

## — Future Events —

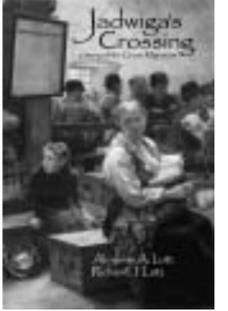
**Toastmasters** public speaking group, **Mon., Mar. 13,** 8:00 p.m. Visitors welcome. Information: **212-751-9577**.

**The Main Street WIRE** – Next issue, **Sat., Mar. 18, 2006.** (To receive e-mail bulletins between issues, send an *AddMe* message to [Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com](mailto:Bulletins@MainStreetWIRE.com).)

**Advertising Deadline:** Ads in the paper, Thursday, Mar. 9; decision on circulars/inserts for *The Bag*, Mon., Mar. 13; they are due Thur., Mar. 16. **Future issues:** Apr. 8 and 22, May 6 and 20, June 3 and 17, July 1, July 29, Aug. 26, Sept. 9 and 23, Oct. 7 and 21, Nov. 4 and 18, Dec. 2 and 16. **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 information at the lobby desk at 531 Main Street, addressed to *The WIRE*. Please provide a phone number for possible follow-up.



Clearly, the two most pressing issues in this community right now are the ownership status of Island House and Westview, and the prospect of implementing five miserable land proposals crafted by RIOC's real-estate agent and outlined in my last column (and repeated below). The RIOC Board can reject these proposals with simple *no* votes. They can also play a very substantial role in the building privatization process by refusing to grant lease extensions unless tenants are protected from being forced out of their homes due to excessive rent increases or unaffordable private "insider" offers.

We have a very unique situation on this Island. For the first time in history, this RIOC Board is comprised of a major-

## The RIRA Column

ity of *Roosevelt Island residents*. These residents are your neighbors, and they hold the controlling votes on whether residents or landlords will benefit from ground-lease extensions, and whether the Island will be planned along rational principles, or simply sold off

in parcels to the most politically powerful bidder. I urge you to ask your resident RIOC Board members what their views are on offering ground-lease extensions to building owners who want to privatize, and why they would possibly vote for any land proposals to sell off Island resources.

These RIOC members are Michael Shinozaki in Manhattan Park, Alberteen Anderson in Westview, Patrick Stewart in Island House, David Kraut in Eastwood, and Deborah Beck and Mark Ponton, both in Rivercross. Ask them how they're going to vote on these issues, and why.

The ownership status issues are different in each building, and can best be explained by the building task forces, but the land deals affect us all. During the three weeks since the last *WIRE* publication, Island residents were treated to a unique exercise in consensus building as RIOC held a public meeting to discuss its five initiatives to sell off the Island to various business interests.

I use the word "public" loosely because of the lack of publicity surrounding this meeting. When RIOC wants the community to know something, like the fact that there is a swimming program at Sportspark or that we can buy tickets for fireworks, for example, they put up signs all over the place. But when they want to do something minor, like inform the public about plans to knock down Sportspark and the tennis bubble for a Walmart or Target, to sell the parking garage to the same companies that charge people \$7000 or more a year to park in Manhattan, and to sell a third of Southpoint Park to the highest Pataki contributor, we get only cursory notification.

In this sad little meeting, RIOC President Berman and his flack, Paul Mas of the private real-estate company, Jones Lang Lasalle (or maybe Berman is the flack to Mas – it's hard to tell the pecking order without a scorecard), and real-estate committee appointee Deborah Beck explained that these proposals are just an innocent little fishing expedition to see

if there is any interest in cheap property on Roosevelt Island. Although the bidding has been closed for several months, this was a meeting where no one said a word about the details of bids, just a bunch of pablum about how "they are testing the waters." What a great scam – RIOC received 21 proposals from 14 potential suitors, each with a \$4,000 to \$8,000 check attached. So, having received \$80,000 from these eager developers, how can anyone believe that RIOC will look at the proposals and say to them, "Sorry, just kidding."

One of the fine plans RIOC is floating it to sell off all the commercial property to a private concern. This explains why the merchants are being given month-to-month occupancy. Many of these folks who we all know, such as the owners of M&D Deli, the Stationery Store, and the Grog Shop, attended this meeting in an effort to find out if RIOC intends to let them continue to pursue their livelihood. The response from RIOC? Call Paul Mas.



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

At the end of the meeting RIOC passed out forms and asked people to comment up until March 17. Since we don't know what's being proposed, it's difficult at best to comment on the actual plans, but I encourage you to comment on the process, Island development in general, or whatever scraps of information have been disseminated to us.

E-mail comments can be sent to [RFIPcomments@rioc.com](mailto:RFIPcomments@rioc.com). Or mail your comments to: **Roosevelt Island Operating Corp** **591 Main Street** **Roosevelt Island, NY 10044**

Although this meeting was a total waste of time, where attendees were not offered even a shred of substantive information and where the real-estate agency of Jones Lang and Lasalle couldn't possibly care about the legitimate concerns of residents, since they only make money from RIOC if they sell off Island property, you can bet that it will be categorized in the future as "one of many community outreach" meetings. This is what passes as good government in the waning months of the Pataki administration.

Although I believe that your e-mailed comments will never be considered in a serious deliberation on the future of Roosevelt Island, or even made part of a public record, we have to do whatever we can to safeguard our ability to remain in this community and to keep it a desirable place to live. So, do your bit, and talk to our RIOC representatives as well.

## The WIRE seeks reporters and feature writers. Call Dick Lutz at 212 826-9055.

There has been concern among some residents about a process called a Request for Initial Proposals (RFIP) that sought ideas from a variety of sources for the future of five sites on Roosevelt Island, and I would like to address and hopefully allay those concerns.

The heart of the concern, as best we can tell, stems from misconceptions that apparently have been disseminated by some leaders of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association that the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation Board is acting secretly to prepare contracts for development of some or all of the five sites. Let me be as blunt as possible. That is not so.

The RFIP process was exactly as stated, both to residents and to those who submitted ideas for how the sites could look in the future. The confidentiality promised to those who responded to the RFIP was done to respect their proprietary business interests in the very competitive field of development, whether that development is residential, retail, not-for-profit or otherwise. Should the Board decide to move towards a formal Request for Final Proposal (RFP) process to develop one of more or the sites, then, as was done in the RFIP process, there will be strict adherence to the rules governing such an offering thereby ensuring a great degree of transparency.

Note I said "Should the Board decide," not "When the Board decides." That is because no decision has been made. We are in a discussion phase, and the February 16<sup>th</sup> public hearing was designed for us to hear the ideas of residents about what they would want to see on those sites in the future.

We set up a special e-mail account for comments on the RFIP process and many of the responses made clear that the distinction between a preliminary seeking of ideas for the sites and any final process towards an RFP was widely missed.

There were some excellent suggestions among the comments, focused on how additional housing could impact future transportation needs and how the Island's retail stores should be overseen. But many of the comments expressed the belief that the Board was somehow secretly involved in selling off the Island's remaining assets. Again, that is flat out wrong.

Organized support or opposition to one point of view or another is not only appropriate, it can play an essential and constructive role as this process moves forward. But those organized efforts undercut their ability to be heard as clearly as possible when they are based on misleading or wrong premises.



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

Several respondents questioned why RIOC is so intent on maintaining the fiscal self-sufficiency we have achieved in the years since State subsidies were cut off. The reason is obvious – we must be self-sufficient to be able to meet our financial obligations and to maintain and upgrade the Island. This is not a choice. This is a legal and ethical mandate that we cannot and will not compromise.

Change always poses challenges for all of us. As we continue to discuss the future of our Island, let us reiterate our commitment to respecting and adhering to Roosevelt Island's unique status as a model mixed-income community in the middle of the greatest City in the world.

That's who we are. That's who we will stay.

## The RIOC Column

The RFIP process was exactly as stated, both to residents and to those who submitted ideas for how the sites could look in the future. The confidentiality promised to

## Senior Center

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>
9:30, <b>Yoga</b>	10:00, <b>Get Stronger Bones</b>
10:30-11:30, <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>Computers</b>	<b>Friday</b>
1:00, <b>Tai Chi</b>	9:30, <b>Yoga</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>	10:30, <b>Computers</b>
9:30-1:00, <b>Free Tax Help</b>	1:00, <b>Bridge</b>
10:00, <b>Get Stronger Bones</b>	7:00, <b>Games (RISA)</b>
10:30, <b>Shoppers' Bus</b>	<b>Saturday</b>
2:00, <b>Bingo</b>	7:30, <b>Bingo (RISA)</b>
2:00, <b>Painting &amp; Sculpting</b>	<b>Special Events</b>
6:00, <b>Ballroom Dancing</b>	<b>Mon., Mar. 6,</b> 10:30, MetroCard bus
7:30, <b>Games (RISA)</b>	<b>Wed., Mar. 15,</b> Atlantic City trip
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Sat., Mar. 18,</b> 6:00, St. Patrick's Day Party
9:15, <b>Stay Well</b>	
10:30, <b>Computers</b>	
10:30, <b>Shoppers' Bus</b>	
5:00, <b>Healthy Body &amp; Mind</b>	
7:00, <b>Pokeno (RISA)</b>	

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## Letters Policy

*The WIRE* welcomes letters to the editor, to the community, and to/from officials. *Name Withheld* publication 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, but allow extra time before deadline for typesetting. Clearly handwritten letters will be considered, if brief, but we are not able to take telephone dictation of letters. **All letters are subject to acceptance and to editing for length and clarity.** Recommended maximum length, 300 words; longer letters will be considered if their content merits the required space.

**Letters deadline for Mar. 18 issue: Tues., Mar. 14**  
Letters received after deadline considered on a space-available basis.

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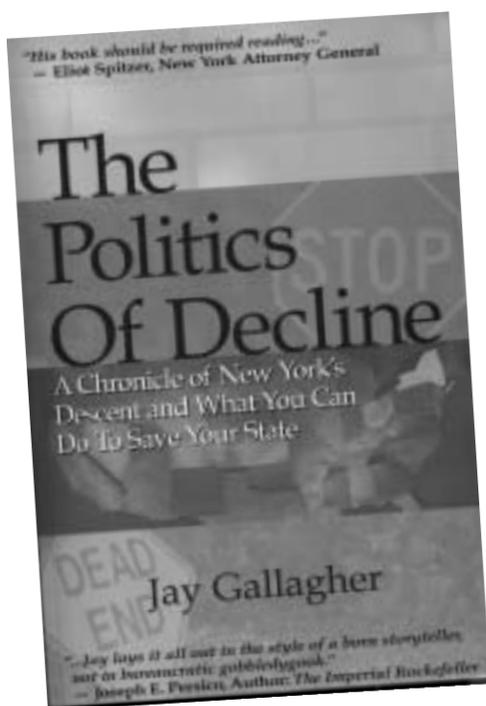
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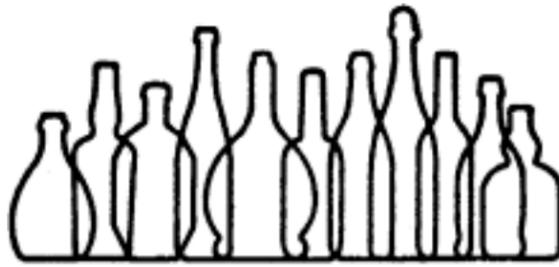
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As always, *Thank you* for shopping with us every Saturday.

### To my valued Roosevelt Island customers:

Mark Elis, a friendly guy with a ready smile, is one of my many patrons taking advantage of our outdoor Farmers Market under the bridge every Saturday morning. Last Saturday morning, Mark had a suggestion for me: “Why not sell shopping carts?” So I told him, “Very good idea, I would do that.”

If you like garden-fresh vegetables, herbs, and many wonderful fruits, check us out every Saturday morning. We make the trip from beautiful Union County, Pennsylvania.

In the future, watch for his writing in *The WIRE*. I will keep you up to date on the many different fruits and vegetables coming into season, from our farm, and the many other small farms in the neighboring communities.

We love to bring our farm-fresh fruits and vegetables to Roosevelt Island, so stop by and... at least smell the herbs!

**Israel Wengerd  
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**Merchants** from page 1

Deborah Boatright, and Mas: "It makes very nervous for the merchants, and some of the stores who want to renovate to spend the money to improve the space or business, but without the lease, they don't know how much they can invest or what the future. Roosevelt Island is a very small community, very unique, and very much [a part of] family life, We developed [our business over] the last 15-20 years. If, in the future, want to attract more business, they have to see we [existing merchants] are doing well, then they can invest. If we all fail, then they will hesitate to invest. So my suggestion is [that] RIOC should protect the merchants, so that we are not neglected and have a lease."

Berman interrupted Ahn at this point: "Please wrap up." He didn't respond to Ahn's concern, nor did Boatright or Mas.

**Archie Seale, who runs The Grog Shop, can't figure it out.** His name appears at the top of a list of merchants on an ad running in this week's WIRE (page 7). Seale, too, spoke at RIOC's February 16 session: "Many of these merchants – most of them here – have no leases now." It seems that the RIOC Board is uninterested, he added. "We used to meet with [the Board] regularly. Now, we can't seem to get meetings with RIOC to talk to them about our plight, to at least go over the facts – to at least talk about the leases – to have words. They completely ignore us. That's what we're talking about, and that's not fair. What we need is a little bit of cooperation, and we would appreciate that." Turning to Paul Mas, he added, "And I would appreciate that from you, also."

**The man who runs M&D Deli can't figure it out.** He'd like a lease, too, he said at the February 16 meeting, after apologizing for his poor English.

The shattered syntax and simple business methods of Roosevelt Island's merchants are emblematic of a cultural gulf between their "mom and pop store" nature and RIOC, a State-of-New-York superGoliath to their platoon of miniDavids. The Moccias, for example, realize now that they probably should have put their back rent into escrow while trying to crowbar a lease out of RIOC. Instead, they put it aside in private accounts – but not all of it – and now, they've mortgaged a family property in order to have the ready cash to pay their back rent. That legal state of affairs gave RIOC pause: Would they ever pay the back rent? But the Moccias won't, in fact, unless RIOC gives them a lease. They point out that, now that RIOC has evicted them, there's no point – and

they need the cash to start up elsewhere, since Roosevelt Island has, in their view, become mom-and-pop hostile. (Even so, they want a lease, and they want to pay up.)

What RIOC has done, in fact, is turn over its real-estate operations, pretty much lock, stock, and barrel, to Paul Mas of Jones Lang Lasalle. Mas, who is a "consultant," is also a commissioned salesman. He advises RIOC on how to handle its real-estate assets and then, if the advice is taken and he can implement it, he'll get a commission. With the properties involved – for example, he's empowered to renegotiate terms for Southtown buildings and will be commissioned on whatever "extra" payoff he can wrestle



Archie Seale

out of the developer – he stands to do very well as a result of the consulting advice he gives and implements.

With regard to retail space, Mas's advice has RIOC searching – through a RFIP process (see separate story, page 1) – for a master

**WIRE Editor Has Novel**



*Main Street WIRE* editor Dick Lutz (writing as Richard J. Lutz) has a new novel out. Co-written with his late father, Aloysius A. Lutz, *Jadwiga's Crossing* is the story of a year in the life of two Polish immigrants, from meeting through marriage to the start of a new life in America.

Lutz will read from the novel Thursday at 6:00 at the Island Library. Copies of the book are available on-line at [JadwigasCrossing.com](http://JadwigasCrossing.com), Amazon.com, or BarnesAndNoble.com. It's a trade paperback, published at \$19.95.

tenant who will take over and manage all of Roosevelt Island's retail spaces (except for those in the Southtown buildings). Mas told the February 16 meeting that such a tenant will have the expertise RIOC lacks. But an RFIP process run by a State agency under State rules is not an overnight affair – the "request for initial proposals" went out in October and the results, just in, have not yet been put into the hands of the members of the RIOC Board of Directors. (Well, briefly, they were, but the report was taken back with no opportunity yet for study or contemplation, according to one Board member.)

But Islanders familiar with the long history of RIOC's relationship with its retail tenants think that RIOC is refusing leases to existing Island merchants because they want to clear the spaces out – or be able to on a moment's notice – to give a clean slate – "an empty box," one has called it – to such a master tenant.

Whatever RIOC's purpose, and whatever Paul Mas's advice and intent, the Island's merchants are uneasy. Trellis proprietor Kaie Razaghi – who actually has a lease and feels reasonably secure – says,

"You have to wake up when you see businesses failing around you."

The failing businesses have left residents without valued services. The credit union left. The bakery closed. Julie's Sports Bar gave up. The shoe repair shop went away. Bigelow Pharmacy shut down after RIOC allowed Gristede's to start selling health and beauty aids, which had been Bigelow's mainstay. You can no longer buy an ice-cream cone in a hot Island summer. Ali Khan gave up at the newstand (though it's now operated by another owner). As much as residents complained about Island businesses in the past, they readily lament their passing.

And now, there's a "pizza gap." That's serious, says some residents. One explained: "A lot of Island parents work. Some can't get home in time to cook for their kids. They give them money. They say, 'Go get a slice if you get hungry.' Now, they can't get a slice."

At the February 16 real-estate meeting, Historical Society President Judy Berdy pleaded with RIOC. About the RFIP for a master tenant to manage the Island's retail spaces, she said, "If you look at

the commercial proposal you've received and you see that it's really not so great, why don't you give our merchants leases and let them get on with their lives? I can't get pizza, I can't go to a sports bar... I mean, there's less and less and less services I can get on this Island. If the commercial proposal is not wonderful, please, give our merchants leases, let them run their businesses."

Merchants who have been reluctant to speak with *The WIRE* in the past, wanting to protect their relationship with RIOC, are now speaking out – still not necessarily with *The WIRE*. And they still seem unable to unify. They have a Chamber of Commerce, but its focus is currently on a long-term retail beautification project, and merchants don't attend meetings, feeling that there's little point in beautification if you can't get a lease to know you'll be present for the long term.

The lack of unity is also a cultural matter, in part. "RIOC divides and conquers," says one. He means that once a merchant gets a lease, he's no longer interested in the lease problem that afflicts his fellow merchants. But there's also the language barrier. Many of the merchants are immigrants from a variety of countries, and some appear to know little more than the English they need to do business day to day. With limited English the only common language, and a variety of mercantile backgrounds that don't always match up with the American way of doing business, let alone the RIOC way of doing business, they have trouble working together.

Their advertisement on page 7, in fact, is one of their first overt efforts suggesting anything like a united front.

Mas is apparently going to meet with Island merchants to discuss their situations with them. At this writing, no date has been set. In the February meeting, asked if he would be available to meet with one particular merchant, he said, "Sure. Call me up." Told that he fails to respond to phone messages or return calls, he said, "I try to return calls." Repeatedly, anxious merchants and potential renters say he simply does not.

MiniDavid merchants vs. SuperGoliath New York State/RIOC. You don't even need a ticket. The drama is playing out there on Main Street.

(RIOC President Herb Berman did not respond to a WIRE e-mail asking that he answer questions for this article. Real-estate chair Deborah Beck said she would but, in preparing for an overseas trip, was apparently unable to complete her responses to e-mailed questions before press time.)

**Comments on the "Pizza Gap"**



**Maya:** First the baker, now the pizza store. How does this benefit the community? It was a nice and convenient place to pick up a snack and now there's no alternative.



**Bridget:** It's sad that this store has closed. There are very few places on this Island and now there's even one less. There's hardly any options or alternatives here. We used to order a pizza a week from them. And its really difficult getting an off-Island company to deliver.



**Charles:** We miss it and I'm really upset that it's gone. This really limits the availability of inexpensive food alternatives for the kids and for all of us. I hope that they understand the importance of this for the community.

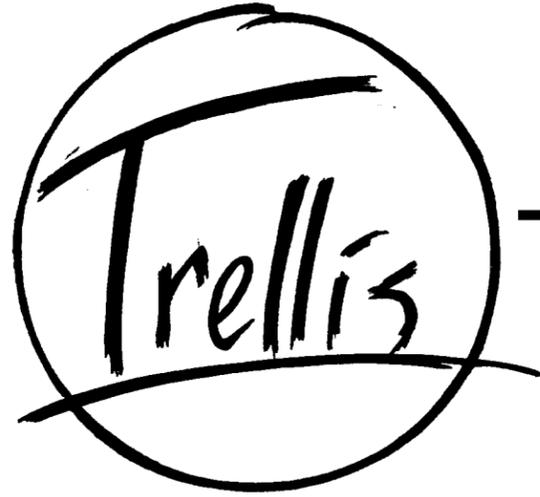
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## March

*February is over. Is that the best thing we can say about March? Some years, that seems to be the case, and perhaps 2006 is one such year. Here's another way to look at it: March brings the hope of April, and April of May, and the progression of months a hope and sense of renewal. Whatever your attitude about this time of year, you'll find a neighbor to share it at Trellis, where all things Roosevelt Island eventually meet.*

*See you at Trellis. Bring a neighbor.*

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*At the heart of the community,  
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**Trellis: 6:00 a.m. to midnight,  
7 days every week. We also deliver.**

## Dear Neighbors,

We the merchants of Roosevelt Island kindly ask you, our patrons, for support in our collective and sincere appeal to RIOC for a fair, equitable, and timely resolution on issue pertaining to our futures, as well as that of the Island.

As longtime tenants of the Island in good standing, we wish to continue our business association with the current, and any future management concern of the Island, in a cordial and mutually beneficial manner. Each of us provide you with essential services that are central to maintaining the fabric of this community, and it is our mission to continue to serve our neighbors for as long as you desire the services we provide. However, we can only remain viable with continued support from you, the community, as well as from RIOC. In contemplating the possible changes being considered for the Island, we understand it is in the interest of RIOC to maintain certain flexibility in structuring the Island's commercial future. We only request that these terms be fair to those that have built and supported the Island in the past and present, so that any future can be built on a strong foundation.

While we've tried to work with RIOC on a future together, we do not feel the deferment in renewing leases that have lapsed, or are coming due, is necessary to ensure that RIOC maintain its focus to plan a new direction for the Island. In good faith, those of us without current leases, in some cases for over three years, have continued to pay rent to show our commitment to the Island, not knowing if our futures will be here tomorrow. Furthermore, as businesses that have proved to be successful, we wish to work with RIOC to make capital improvements, not only to provide better services to you and increase the overall curb appeal of the Island, but also to showcase to potential tenants that the Island is a viable and thriving community deserving of additional services

that will complement the current roster to build a stronger commercial life on the Island. However, without a lease and RIOC willingness to work with us, we cannot proceed wholeheartedly until our futures are secured.

We the merchants of Roosevelt Island kindly ask you, our neighbors and patrons, to support us in seeking to secure our futures on the Island, so that we can continue to serve you. By continuing your patronage of our establishments, you are not only giving us a vote of confidence, you are showing RIOC that the residents of Roosevelt Island demand a voice in planning for the future of your homes and community. We hope that, with your support, RIOC will begin a dialogue with the merchants, and ignore us no longer.

Together, we can plan for a brighter future for Roosevelt Island, and continue to provide the services you and your families enjoy and depend on. Together, we can continue the tradition of Roosevelt Island as a unique heaven in this great City of ours.

Sincerely,  
The Merchants of Roosevelt Island

The Grog Shop  
Roosevelt Island Cleaners  
Roosevelt Nails  
The Fish Store  
Accountable Financial Management  
The General Store  
Trellis  
China 1  
Island Newstand

**RIOC** from page 1

of Southpoint Park. For five years, I've been part of a process... to come up with a conceptual plan for those 13 acres, not just the southernmost ten acres, but the 13 acres, which includes those three acres encompassing 23 percent of the entire property. [It] was obvious from the get-go [based on surveys done by the Trust for Public Land] that no one wanted a 'commercial crescent,' which was how the potential was presented to the community, on the park. What people wanted was a park. What was presented in this room by Ms. Boatright's predecessor [as RIOC Board Chair], Mary Beth Labate, was a promise that that would be a park and nothing but a park. It was understood by the community that it would encompass all 13 acres." Katz continued by summarizing \$12 million committed for park development (see the January 28 *WIRE* on-line at nyc10044.com). "I'm wondering if you could give us a bit more information about – when you talk about 'the City Hospital site,' specifically what is it that you're envisioning putting there that would not be specifically a park?"

Berman responded: "The RFIP was issued for the purposes of getting responses. It will ultimately be the Board's decision if they choose to issue an RFP [request for proposals] on that site and, if they do, what purposes they may affix to the RFP... No conclusions have been reached as yet."

Katz: "But what I'm hearing is that something is being considered for the 'City Hospital site,' most likely a residential property of some sort, but you can't go into detail."

Mas started to respond, but his voice trailed off. Katz asked, "You couldn't clarify it for us?"

Berman responded, "No. Again, I think we should be respectful of the process, and the Board still has to contemplate the specific proposals..."

But later, responding to a question about the site, Mas seemed to indicate that past promises of "park only" were history. It came up when Cornell professor Tom Templeton said, "I'm curious that you continue to call it 'the footprint of the City Hospital'... [one] rationale is that maybe you thought that because there was something built there before, it's logical that there should be something there in the future. But the overriding consideration is that it should be a park."

Mas responded, "The rationale is that there was a building there. The area of Southpoint, just like the legislation [restricting its use to park purposes], is subject to interpretation."

The second questioner, Historical Society President Judith Berdy, ultimately gave up in frustration:

Berdy: "Did you get any proposals for Blackwell House?"

Mas: "Well, they could only respond to the whole package." (Blackwell House would be part of a master-tenant retail-space arrangement.)

Berdy: "I've lived here 28 years, as you know, and I..."

Mas: "I think I know what you're going to say. I don't mean to cut you off. But let me just explain

as it relates to Matt's question, too. When we put out the RFIPs, as Herb said, they're informational, to begin to understand what options you might have, alright? Now, when we put out the RFIP for the City Hospital site the legislation was attached to that – that, you know, some people say it's clearly this and some people say it's clearly that. But it's just been put out there, that's all, and we're soliciting the market for ideas, and trying to understand what values can be achieved, and what kinds of uses, and what trade-offs there might be in the process of doing this. Now, with respect to the retail, somebody taking over the retail might provide the funds to restore a landmark building. I mean, you know, when we look at these things in terms of what people propose, all right, it may also involve needs that the community has that they can provide."

Berdy: "At this point we need a pizzeria. I've been very frustrated by this entire process in that every single thing, every meeting you've had, everything to do with this

has been secret, in executive session, away from the public, the public not involved, you people vanishing downstairs at meetings, and it makes the community – not the right word, but – suspicious, because we don't know what you're cooking in the oval room of the church and, you know, a public benefit corporation is public, and we're not benefiting. I feel that you went to all the industry..."

Berman (interrupting): "Could you wrap up, Judy?"

Berdy: "I haven't started yet."

Berman: "It's been three minutes."

Berdy: "It's OK."

Berman: "It's not OK. Please wrap up, you have a few more minutes."

Berdy: "Mr. Berman, there's no one else on line. Do you see someone else on line?"

Berman: "There's someone else on line. Please wrap up."

Berdy: "Forget it. It's not worth my time to waste with this."

Berdy's reference to the community's need for a pizzeria referred to RIOC's closure of the Capri Restaurant about a month ago for non-payment of rent (see separate reports, page 1). Her reference to RIOC secrecy in real-estate deal planning was echoed by other questioners speaking later – by the next resident, in fact. Sherie Helstien, secretary of the Residents Association, an edge of anger in her voice, expressed her upset over the minimal publicity RIOC gave the meeting, but particularly over the restricted information dispensed.

Helstien: "We worked very hard to get people to come to this meeting. We were told that you were going to discuss the RFIPs that were put out. There have been pieces in *The WIRE* about these RFIPs – exactly what you've told us so far, so you've told us nothing, and my question is, what is the point of having a two-hour meeting with the community that is very, very concerned about many of these proposals – the commercial space in particular, but even more so, Southpoint Park? Why should we trust this process in any way, shape or form, where all we know is what we already knew. You haven't told us anything about a 'big-box' store in a one-street community. You haven't told us anything about what's being proposed for Southpoint Park, except that you've alarmed a lot of people... You see, the minute you say, 'accepting ideas,' that raises alarm bells..."

Berman: "Could you wrap it up, please?"

Helstien: "Yes.

Clarify for me what exactly are the proposals you've received and why can't we know about them tonight, because how can we possibly make any comments on any of this either by e-mail or tonight? There is no way. What is a two-hour meeting for? We have no idea from these dumb pictures that you've put up here. We know where the [spaces are]. You have to clarify. When you say you're going to clarify, you need to clarify. You need to give us details. You need to tell us what was in those 21 proposals, because the last thing we're going to find out is you've given all of this stuff to your Board, they're going to decide, we're not going to be able to make comments, because how can you make comments on something you can't see and can't know more specifically about – and then we're going to end up with whatever you guys choose for us, and you're going to say, 'We did a meeting, we had a public meeting.' We've got the public here... I'd like to know what kind of square-footage cost you're going to charge for the commercial space. I'd like to know what you're planning for Southpoint Park, which has \$12 million already dedicated to a park. I'd like to know if you did get a proposal for a 'big-box' store on this Island – a Target, a Walmart, a K-mart, whatever. You can tell us that and you should tell us that this evening. If you can't, what is the point of a two-hour meeting? You've wasted all of our time if you can't tell us."

Residents attending the meeting applauded Helstien's comments, but Berman responded by calling on the next questioner. Helstien continued: "So you're not going to respond? Is that correct? You're not go-



Joanne Louise Viera Grimm (daughter of Dr. Katherine Teets Grimm) and her husband Alberto Viera Monteverde celebrated their United States marriage reception on Saturday, February 25, at Manhattan Park Theater Club. Over 100 adults and children attended this joyous event. Joanne met Alberto in Venezuela while she was studying at the university in Merida. They were married in Barquisimeto, Venezuela, on December 11, 2004, and arrived in New York on January 14, 2006. Joanne will teach Spanish in a junior high or high school and Alberto, who is a physician, will pursue medical studies.

ing to respond to this tonight. Is that correct, Mr. Mas?"

Mas: "Our recommendation is... When you run an RFP [Request for Proposals] process, especially in public, the process is a lot more robust. What I mean by robust is that people who are proposing things give renderings, they give detailed studies, they analyze whether what they're proposing actually fits in to what the site or asset is. That wasn't this process. This process was not an elimination process. Nothing was being selected. The whole point of the RFIP process was to see what level of interest was out there in the market, and how the market valued it, then to begin to determine whether it made sense to say, 'Maybe we should go to a final RFP and ask people to do that more robust proposal.' That, I would presume, would then be made public."

Helstien: "So it's after the fact, after you've already selected what's to be done."

Mas: "Do you want me to finish? Or do you want to talk?"

Berman: "Well..."

Mas: "The point of an RFP process in the public sector, which is, by the way, now law, I would presume what RIOC would do, what we would recommend they do, is look at the best proposals, no matter what they are. Hopefully, you'll have a lot of them, and hopefully those developers who are now going to spend – or the users or the investors, who you are asking to spend a lot of money and time to present their ideas – would then be presented in the proper format. We have no renderings. All we have are some concepts that people have."

Helstien: "And why can't you tell us what those concepts are?"

Berman then interrupted: "Excuse me," he said. Then, *sotto voce*, "This is ridiculous." But Helstien heard him and responded.

Helstien: "No, it's not ridiculous, Herb. You have a community who has come to a meeting."

Berman: "Miss Helstien, I am not engaging in conversation with you."

Helstien: "I know. You don't."

Berman: "You're right. I won't and I will not. You've now occupied about ten minutes of time..."

Helstien: "Because these people are here waiting for clarification."

Berman: "I'm asking you as a courtesy to the people behind you to please conclude.

I've given you more than enough time..."

Helstien: "I'm waiting for the response, and I think if you ask the people here they'll want a response."

At that point, residents in the audience started to applaud, but stopped when Boatright began to speak. She redefined the purpose of the meeting, giving up the idea of clarifying questions: "I think it is important to know what came in on the RFIP submissions, you know. It was also important that we had this open forum to hear what you had to say in terms of comments about the particular parcels. This was an open forum not to sit and judge the process that we went through, OK? Because it was a process to sort of test the market to see exactly what was of interest on this Island, but this evening was an opportunity for you to come and to share your ideas about what conceivably could be some ideas about submissions coming in, so that your particular interest is to mar the process that we went through. It was not the formal process. The Board has not made a decision as to what's going forward. This is the community's opportunity to either say, 'these are the five or six parcels,' this is what we would like to see here. This is the opportunity to say that."

Helstien: "OK, here's two things. We don't want anything on the park but a park. Do I have some agreement in the community on that? [APPLAUSE] OK, are you taking notes, Mr. Mas, are you taking notes? \$12 million has been dedicated to making the park."

Berman: "Miss Helstien..."

Helstien: "And then the other thing is we need a credit union, we need another financial institution where Montauk used to be. I understand you've discontinued your discussions on that... We don't have another financial institution, which we sorely need."

**"Intent to Traumatize"**

Berman: "Let me just say... Apparently, certain people have come here with the deliberate intent to traumatize this meeting." (That brought laughter from part of the audience, leading Berman to say:) "Why don't you be quiet and let me talk? ...to traumatize this evening and traumatize their neighbors. The whole entire purpose of this meeting was to have people share their views as to what they would like to see at the five sites. It would be helpful if you would confine yourself to that purpose. That was the purpose of this meeting. Thank you."

After several Island merchants stepped to the microphone to ask that they be given leases on their retail properties rather than being forced to operate month to month (separate report, page 1), Residents Association Vice President Margie Smith stepped into the discussion: "We really expected specifics – the kind of stuff we can comment on. You want to know what it is we're looking for? We're looking for the General Development Plan (GDP) to be observed as it was written. None of this [the RFIP offerings] was in the GDP. What people don't want is piecemeal development, which is what we consider this. Now that we know we're [financially] self-sufficient, we know that there's no rush to this. You can sit down with the residents, you can tell us how much money we do need or don't need in order to keep running this Island. I think we have enough money. I don't think we need to give up any more open space. I don't think we need any more big buildings."

Smith continued, "The last thing that I think makes this whole thing a little disingenuous is it was not advertised. Everybody here knows you have swimming at sportspark, everybody knows that there's CERT training, because RIOC put out big fliers, colored things, they were in Motorgate, on the buses, on the kiosks – they were everywhere. Today we got one 8.5 by 11 [poster] on the kiosks, and one thing on the web. If you really, really wanted our input, would you do it that way?" Residents applauded.

Rick O'Connor, who identified himself as a resident of 30 River Road, asked, "Is there a vision or a model that you can point to that you envision Roosevelt Island one day looking like?" He probed, looking for some reference point, but Berman responded in more general terms: "This is not an overnight process. There will be further discussions within the community. It is a Board decision, but I assume and believe that the Board would

See **RIOC**, next page



Berdy



Helstien

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### RIOC from page 8; starts on page 1

want further community input before making a decision."

#### "Simply A Sham"

Somewhat earlier, Joyce Mincheff, a former member of the Residents Association Common Council, who identified herself as a real-estate professional, castigated the process and similar RIOCI exercises of the past. That and other remarks brought a response from RIOCI Board member and real-estate chair Deborah Beck.

Mincheff's remarks: "In taking on the development of this Island, the State of New York committed to [the terms of] the General Development Plan." The State has broken the GDP repeatedly, she said, continuing, "It's the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation trampling on our rights here. We are entitled to the protections of zoning. It is tantamount to the emperor's new clothes. Is there anybody here who doesn't know that what you're doing up here is simply a sham, dismissing our rights as taxpaying citizens for appropriate zoning and planning in this community? I beg that all of you go back to the GDP, and you'll see that you have no right to issue any kind of request for any kind of information or proposals or anything of that sort because you are required by the GDP to develop in Southtown. You blew the chance to support the infrastructure of this community in a sweetheart deal to the developers of Southtown. There isn't anybody in this room who isn't keenly aware of that. And now you're struggling to come up with other ways to provide income for this community so that you don't have to go begging to the State of New York. It's incumbent upon you to think about the nature of this community. We have elderly people... we have children who need parks because *this is it* for them - they can't go two blocks down or three blocks over to play in the park because there is river there.



Mincheff

We need appropriate planning in this community. We can't have a big-box store. We can't be dodging traffic. People who are elderly and disabled cannot be dodging cars coming down Main Street to get to a big-box store, and the nature of what State involvement we really should be having in this community is figuring out a way to lease these spaces so that our community is provided with service that we're entitled to. We'd all like to walk out of here, go across the street to the pizzeria and have a slice of pepperoni, but because of RIOCI's deficiencies in recognizing that you should be providing leases based on a percentage of profit rather than on an idiotic square footage that's not supported by the volume of population on the Island, until you can provide appropriate services... You cannot even do that right and yet you want us all to sit here pretending that you're capable of providing adequate development on Roosevelt Island. Why should we think that you're going to do anything different from what you've done for the last 30 years?"

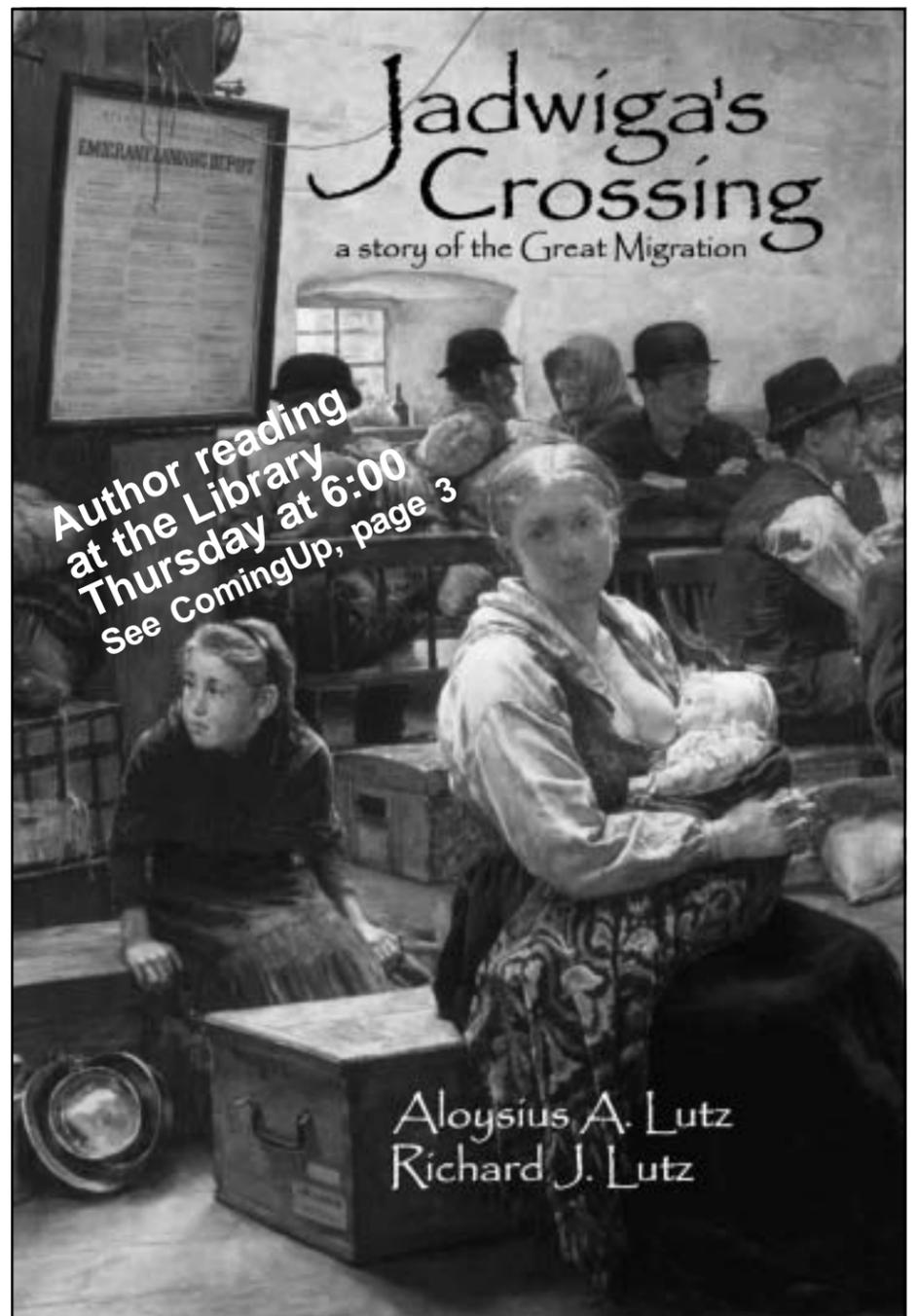
Mincheff's remarks drew sustained applause from the residents attending.

Later, Beck tried to explain the process. Her remarks:

"I feel like I'm jumping into a hornet's nest here. The reason for this exercise is very straightforward. Roosevelt Island's infrastructure - its roads, sidewalks, church plaza, the public buildings - all of those things require maintenance, improvements, and restoration.

"When I became a member of the Board of RIOCI less than two years ago, we faced an enormous deficit. There were things that had happened in the way deals were made on Roosevelt Island that I don't think any of us would like to see again. That does not mean, however, that we are in good shape going forward. What it means going forward is that right now we have money to do certain things, but we don't have money to repair our seawall in the way it needs to be done, not necessarily tomorrow but over the next several decades. We don't have enough money to repair or replace our roads, we don't have enough money to do many of the things

See RIOCI, next page



*No more time for Germans, she said. As though it was for her to determine this for him. So much was happening. He was forgetting his knapsack, which he was entitled to keep. And he was forgetting the other Polish sergeants - the ones he had agreed to go to town with, to the dance. Already she had him fully confused. And hadn't she mentioned America, even? What was it she said about America?*

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**RIOC** from page 8; starts on page 1

we all take for granted, because we live in the City, and the City takes care of it. Roosevelt Island is a public authority of the State of New York. The State of New York does not take care of Roosevelt Island.

"There was a time when Roosevelt Island was very favored and received a great deal of fiscal support. That went away in the late '90's, and we lament that, but that is the sad reality. The problem that we're facing as RIOC and the problem that I face, as chair of the real-estate committee, is how do we determine what kinds of money we need and what our sources will be for those funds. Our sources are inadequate, as of today, projecting on what we have in income-producing properties.



Beck

We will have to do something with our resources to produce additional revenue so that things that were neglected in the last decade can be rectified and we can begin to have an Island that we're all very proud of and can continue to be proud of. That is the dilemma. Where is the money? Is it sufficient now? My understanding is no, that we don't have enough money... The only one that can take care of it is RIOC. RIOC is the beginning and the end of the revenue source. So the reason we want input from the market for these sites is to see if there was interest out there to provide additional funds so that we could restore the Island and maintain it properly. We're having this meeting tonight to hear from all of you.

"And I've taken notes... Frankly, in the real-estate committee, we discuss these things. We don't have all the answers tonight, but we do know that we have to find out, and when we know that answer going forward – how much money we need to maintain this Island going forward – then we'll know what, if anything, we need to do with the three development sites.

"What we also know is that we have not been able, as an organization, to maintain

Motorgate. There isn't the staff expertise to run Motorgate. We know there is a concern about costs for parking. We'll take that into account. This is a resource that is already built. We're looking into it. It has leaks, it has a number of problems. We will look at the responses. Hopefully, someone will come along and say, 'Yes, I will maintain this property. I will restore it to its proper condition, and I will maintain it in a way that the residents can afford parking.

"The same is true of the stores. We have empty stores, we have merchants who have not been able to live up to their ability to pay their rent, and we have merchants who are very concerned about their future because they don't have leases. What we need is professional management of our retail, and we are looking at that issue now. That is a very real concern that we have.

"Someone mentioned the credit union, or a banking institution. Just so you know, historically, when we lost our last banking institution, the banking institution that came up to the plate... said we will come to Roosevelt Island, but we don't expect to make money here, and therefore we don't want any competition for the duration of our lease. That is the nature of the lease with the current bank. There are certain situations on the Island that RIOC is, in effect, stuck with, not because we don't want to do what's best... I mean, *I live here*. I've lived here since 1977. We're not trying to do things that are going to create a situation that makes life worse – I hope, but we are going to try to make a situation where there are the resources available to enhance what we already have, improve it, maintain it properly, and also bring to you all what it is we really need development-wise on the three sites... in order to get that revenue stream we need.

"Why are we going through this exercise? To try to find revenue streams so that Roosevelt Island can do what needs to be done."

Beck was applauded briefly.

Berdy returned to the microphone for the final word: "You're lucky the community kept its cool tonight... We are so blessed with people who give a damn..."

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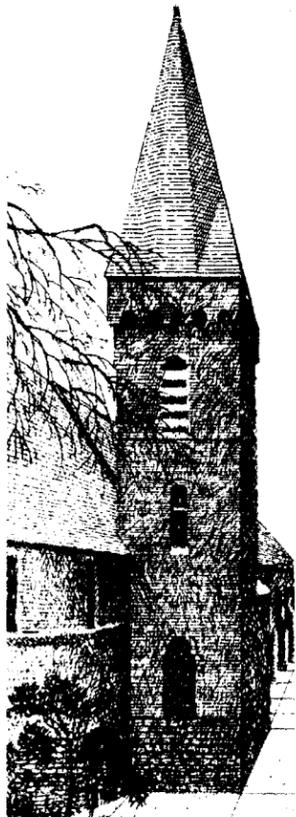
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SV eSWS` V bgT\UdV\fa` e bWMS\ef  
\TsdS` d bS`SWS`d Zg\_ S` dWgdW  
ebWMS\fd SV\_ [ \fdS\fac S` V S` ka` W  
i [fZ.e] [eS` V VjbW\WUWfa eZSdW

DE:A6? 51A2J.:? 8  
G@=F? E66C @AA@CEF? :E:6D  
7@C @=5 6C 25 F =EL

4W\ ` [ Y EWV\TW S` "" f ZW\ [fS`  
b\af bcaYd\_ ei [^TWLd` VgUW S\ ej  
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ef\bwV Xad Sbbaj L S\Wk # Zagde aZ  
i ad WZi WZ

7` c ^ ` cVZ`Wc^ ReZ\_ \a]VRdV^ RZ  
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