Rent Determination Plays Out For Westview and Island House

News Analysis by Robert Laux-Bachand

The State has made its decision on rent increases for Island House and Westview, and tenants of the 761 apartments will be given 30-day notices of new rates that will most likely take effect on May 1. The decision – whatever it is – may come as a shock to members of the Westview Task Force, who never succeeded in getting the Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR) to engage them directly on the main issues they presumed they would get a chance to meet with DHCR’s “technical staff.”

As the weeks went by, letters and phone calls were exchanged with Ken Keller, the agency’s site representative for Roosevelt Island, and meetings were set up and then postponed by DHCR and architect Arthur Kahane. What Westview really wanted, more than anything else, was some documentation for the housing company’s request for more than $1.3 million for its repairs. See BHCR, page 10

At stake, potentially, is millions of dollars. The Roosevelt Island Housing Management Corporation estimates that for Westview to be the firewall against a rent increase, $1.3 million can be subtracted from the corporation’s deficit, $1.3 million apart in their deficit estimates.) Westview’s strategy started to unravel on February 8, when a DHCR official called the testimony of Paul’s team of experts at the apartment complex’s rent conference. When Paul protested, the task force was given more time to make its case, and its members assumed they would get a chance to meet with DHCR’s “technical staff.”

The increase for those three buildings, $186,461, arrived just as the rent determination conference for Island House and Westview (the State’s other rental property) was expected to take place on March 29 – the date, coincidentally, of the first session of a high-level RIOC housing management committee that has been given a broad mandate to consider all issues related to public safety.

Michael J. LeConte, Chief Financial Officer of Jerome Belson Associates, the parent company of the Roosevelt Island Housing Management Corporation, is chairman of the rent determination committee. He sounded the alarm in a March 9 letter to the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), saying he was “shocked” by the increases for Westview, Island House and Eastwood.

For Westview and Island House, seeking a 27 percent increase in payments for public housing, DHCR’s New York regional office had told RIOC to submit a rent determination conference for May 1. But it appears he was too late to change the State’s final figures.

On Jones, DHCR Deputy Com- missioner of Operations, Belson said this week that Belson’s request had not been granted in the rent orders being prepared for Island House and Westview (the State’s rent determination conference for Eastwood is scheduled for May 5). In a March 9 letter, LeConte said: “We absolutely disagree with the increases implemented by RIOC and will be requesting all documentation with personnel and job function breakdowns to support the increases in security charges.”

Other top officials with the company have assured tenant representatives that they intend to seek higher fees, which, if enacted, would have the effect of cutting down on the money available for other expenses at Island House and public safety.

See RIOC, page 7

Granniss After Ryan Over Island’s Capital Shortage

Assemblymember Pete Granniss is after RIOC again. Once again, it’s over the Island’s capital needs and how they will be met without funding from the State budget.

Granniss says that important maintenance work is going undone, pointing out that RIOC is contractually obligated to care for the Island’s non-residential structures.

“RIOC appears to be doing little more than crossing its corporate fingers and hoping for a windfall from afar to meet its financial obligations,” Granniss writes in his March 15 letter. “What you and the agency should be doing is leaving no stone unturned, including seeking State assistance, to mitigate future costs and avoid future problems by not allowing the work needed today to go unattended.”

Granniss lists a series of projects he considers critical:

• $6.2 million for seawall work, listed as a still-secret Army Corps of Engineers report. About the report, Granniss writes, “It is my understanding that you have resisted accepting the final report presented to you by the Corps,” and asks why, adding “Has Rhode Island any actions taken so far?”

See Granniss, page 6

Briefly:

A hijacking of a mail truck was foiled Wednesday by Island postal workers and officers from Public Safety. The truck was empty, waiting for a load, when a man described as having “an Irish accent,” who had possession of the mail in the area, took on four postal workers, grabbed the vehicle’s keys, and sped off the Island. He was soon captured, after smashing into a forklift, a tree, and a lamp post. He was taken to Elmhurst Hospital to be treated for injuries incurred in the crash. Postal inspectors are investigating, but no list of charges was immediately available. As a result, the city mail was delivered by bus.

Roosevelt Island’s Running Partners Team is looking for a volunteer running coach to work with existing staff. Frank Cherry, who can be reached at 532-2777, describes it as a service opportunity for a runner available some or all of MWF 1:30-3:00. (Related stories, page 10.)

Inside:

A four-page special section on Doryne Isley, Roosevelt Island’s Housing’s Woman Unquestionably in Charge

by Anusha Shrivastava

Make no mistake about who is in command at this office: a morg on Doryne Isley’s desk reads, “She Who Must Be Obeyed.”

The General Manager of Roosevelt Island Housing Management, Isley, 54, is a woman so charged with energy and a sense of mission that one can almost feel it as a physical force in her office. Dressed in a red tennis skirt, she comes to her office straight after a day of running through the door. Residents come with problems when they cannot understand regulations, seniors come with mail they find incomprehensible, and parents come with unruly teenagers to seek advice. “Some days I feel like a social worker rather than a housing manager,” she says.

A Housing Manager is what Isley says she is best cut out to be. She brought her first business in Harlem at the age of nineteen. After a decade and a half of buying, selling and managing property in Harlem, she decided to take her interest in real estate in a different direction. She went back to school and studied Facilities Management at Iona College in New Rochelle.

In the mid-’80’s, she bought two Century 21 franchises in Mount Vernon and New Rochelle. When she decided she had had enough of the seven-day work week, Isley took up the post of Commissioner of the Mount Vernon Housing Authority. “I began supervising hundreds of people and jobs, from day-to-day operations of the public housing units of that city,” says Isley. As Commissioner in Mount Vernon, Isley claims she has successfully privatized all public housing in the city of Mount Vernon.

Her real-estate background and experience in Mount Vernon was crucial to her being appointed by the representatives of the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal, as General Manager of Roosevelt Island Housing Management in 1995. “They were familiar with my accomplishments and ability to run a site,” says Isley.

On the Island, Isley oversees 1,761 units of housing in Eastwood, Island House and Westview. With her staff of 115, Isley is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the buildings and their maintenance, and with ensuring that all rules and regulations of the State of New York are followed. She also has the responsibility of coordinating all communications with all[RIOC and will be requesting all documentation with personnel and job function breakdowns to support the increase in security charges.] Other top officials with the company have assured tenant representatives that they intend to seek higher fees, which, if enacted, would have the effect of cutting down on the money available for other expenses at Island House and public safety.

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RIRA On Track

The RIRA Common Council was at its best last week. Its members found the formula for the delusions of an elected representative body and executed it almost brilliantly.

The matter at issue was a resolution, brought by Planning Committee Chair Larry Parmes, proposing to offer the Residents Association’s conditional support for the Octagon Apartment Plan put forward by Becker and Becker.

Parmes had circulated the resolution in advance, and there had been some preliminary discussion, via e-mail, among some Council members. As a result, most arriving at the meeting well-prepared to discuss the issues. That meant the listening was better than ever, because the points being made were in-depth and the statements were to the point.

The core of the proposed apartment wings are outside the scope of the Island’s General Development Plan (GDP), there’s the delicate matter of whether to call for a referendum – perhaps even to litigate to require – a change in the GDP. The GDP is part of the Lease between City and State, and exactly who in City government is currently empowered to assert to proposed changes could become an issue.

If the proposed apartment wings are not built too high, could overwhelm the remaining historic structure? If we are to become an issue.

Many members of the Common Council favor working with Becker and Becker around RIOC, but the GDP Plan proves necessary, to get what’s best for the Island. Other’s are loath to endorse a plan that could set precedents on amending the GDP, which is the Island’s only zoning, and which will surely be of interest to keep Southpoint Parkland from becoming an overly commercialized mistake.

Parmes preparation, a strong hand at the gavel by RIRA President Matthew Katz, and the knowledgeable participation of elected, thoughtful members of the Council discussed the perfect example of the strength of democracy. And, incidentally, quite a contrast to the uninvited RIOC Board of Directors, which has lately taken to conducting more and more of its important sessions in a secret executive session.

It’s just one more indication that the time has come for true representative government on Roosevelt Island.

What Are They Thinking? Or Are They?

What kind of management ignorance a constant 27% price hike for its services without some advance notice to those who will have to pay the bill? (See lead story, page 1.)

What kind of management ignores an ongoing DHCR rent agreement, but when proposed changes are finally necessary, to get what’s best for the Island. Others’ are loath to endorse a plan that could set precedents on amending the GDP, which is the Island’s only zoning, and which will surely be of interest to keep Southpoint Parkland from becoming an overly commercialized mistake.

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Photoeditorial

Quality Control by RIOC

Unretouched photo of sign at subway station.

Letters Policy: The WIRE welcomes letters to the Editor, to the community and to the Island, and will consider publication of all letters, provided they do not contain libelous, obscenity, or threaten the peace; are courteously written; do not defame the writer’s name, address, and phone number must be provided. Letters subject to acceptance. Preferred means of submission: postcard standard 3.5-inch floppy disk left at 531 Main Street in the Long Island City Post Office.

Letters received after deadline will be considered on a space-available basis.

Letters deadline for April 7 issue: April 1
Spring is here, spring is here. Life is skittles and life is beer.” Yes, the vernal equinox is history, as is the interminable winter of 2001. There are buds on the trees and we have every reason to believe that leaves and blooms will follow. Can cut-outs and sun-tan lotion be far behind?

There is much in this issue of The Wire about the Municipal Art Society panel discussion of Roosevelt Island, which took place on March 7. There were two surprises for me in that regard. First, I was invited the day before to be a panelist representing the community, and was happily obliged to oblige. Second, the Roosevelt Island Organization, which had invited me, informed me of a “surprise.” RIOC was in fact considering a tenant representative panel synthesizing input from the community. It was a highly interesting evening, with the best and most pointed questions and comments coming from an audience composed largely of Roosevelt Islanders. If there was any consensus among the panelists, it was that the sociological experiment known as Roosevelt Island was a success, but that the financial commitment of New York State to complete this community planning has been an abject failure. New York City Planning Commissioner Alexander Garvin, was a panelist, and expressed his ongoing interest in the Island. His belief that the present zoning and the parking conundrum, which he believes will be solved, will make an understandable case for a Main Street essentially vehicle-free suggested that his information is not up-to-date, and I have written him with the hope that he, and through him New York City, will continue to monitor this City-owned community.

Your RIRA Common Council met on March 14 and began a discussion on the efficacy and appropriate- ness of the Roosevelt Island Development of Park BBA has presented their ideas to the community through Town Meetings and through the RIRA Common Council, and with some provisos, has been received favorably. The RIOC Board has given initial approval to this project, which includes a restoration of the Octagon landmark, the construction of two wings of fair market housing, the public footpath, and the refurbishment of our picnic area.

The debate was brought by the Planning Commit- tee, which presented a resolution supporting the “con- cept” of the BBA project subject to appropriate amending of the General Development Plan (which Roosevelt Islanders refer to as “the open book”), and an adjustment of the apartment breakdown to include more two- and four-person dwellings, family-essentic-

ments with a percentage of affordable units that is consistent with the GDP. Also, the resolution calls for lower rent for lower than eight stories (probably six, as in the original proposal) so as not to aestheti-
cally overwhelm the unique Octagon structure. The resolution also requests that the RIOC avoid using the Octagon to house non-residential uses and will satisfy the GDP requirement for an arts & crafts space. It has been derelict for scores of years, and its rehabilitation is needed. It is clear that the Octagon must be cited as precedent, if the Mansard would ever be developed.

There is much discussion of the Octagon landmark and its rehabilitation. Our legislative team and the community manager are already working on the Octagon at Southpoint. It is the only protection against the construction of two wings of fair market housing, the public footpath, and the refurbishment of our picnic area.

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What do Mae West, Billie Holiday, Emma Goldman, Nellie Bly, Jerome Kern, Oscar Hammerstein, Boss Tweed, various madams, swindlers and other notable and notorious people have to do with

ROOSEVELT ISLAND?

Come and find out, and see the history of our Island come alive, at the Church of the Good Shepherd, main chapel, Sunday, April 22, at 7:30 PM sharp. One night only.

Note: The slide show, which was originally scheduled for this Sunday, March 25, has been rescheduled to April 22 because of the conflict with Sunday evening’s Academy Awards telecast.

For decades, Vicar Oliver T. Chapin, who served the Island for 35 years as a Coler Hospital Chaplain and priest of the Church of the Good Shepherd, collected stories, facts and historical, never-before-seen pictures of our Island. From Vicar Chapin’s trove of material we have put together a fascinating and fun slide show.

The show will begin at 7:30 PM sharp.
Don't miss a single bit - come early!

NOTE THE NEW DATE - SUNDAY, APRIL 22, 7:30 PM SHARP!

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Thank you!
Grannis from page 1 regarding the eventual funding needs for RIOC:

• Blackwell House. “You were hoping to receive funding... from the different funding sources.”

Grannis writes, “RIOC has not, to my knowledge, ever sought to raise a penny for this critical project...”

Grannis goes on, “...it would appear that you and the [RIOC] board are under the impression that some- how sufficient money can be found through private and non-governmental sources. The problem with this approach is that if you are wrong, these facilities will continue to deteriorate.

Subsidies for both the Island’s capital needs nor its operating ex- penses have not been in the State budget for several years, and while the Governor has not spoken pub- licly on the issue, he is known to feel the Island is, or should be, self- sufficient.

By deadline, Ryan had not re- ceived the letter from Grannis. A copy was supplied by The WIRE, but Ryan said he didn’t feel he could comment before receiving the letter from Grannis.

The full text of the Grannis let- ter is reprinted below.

March 15, 2001

Mr. Robert H. Ryan
President and Chief Operating Officer
Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation
591 Main Street
Roosevelt Island, NY 10044

Re: RIOC’s Capital Budget

Dear Mr. Ryan:

I am writing to inquire about RIOC’s progress in securing funding for capital projects on Roosevelt Island, including repairs to the seawall, Blackwell House and the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

This issue is of paramount concern to me and the Island’s residents since, for the last few years you have not even requested or stated in any manner that the administration would provide, any financial support for RIOC’s activities in his proposed state budget for FY 2001-02. Compounding my uneasiness are your comments regarding the current Southtown development in Dennis Hevesi’s col- umn in The New York Times on Sunday January 14, 2001 (An Island With a History of Change As Its Latest Transformation). “The feeling of this administration of RIOC is that the developer knows best and government should take a back seat.”

While this statement was offered in relation to the Southtown project, it appears to me to be a harbinger of the general belief by management and at least some of RIOC’s board members that the private sector and free market forces have all the answers and that government assistance is not needed for meeting any of the Island’s capital needs. The status of funding for the three capital projects listed above points up my concern with this approach.

According to the draft report released by the Army Corps of Engineers in February 2000, the approximate cost for the work needed on the sea- wall is $6.2 million. It is my understanding that you have resisted ac- cepting the final report presented to you by the Corps. What are your reasons for this?

Are you questioning the Corps’ cost projections, the Southtown development, or the need for any repair work on the seawall?

With regard to the repairs needed in Blackwell House, you told me in our meeting last October that you were hoping to receive funding for this particular project from the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. What is the status of this request? If this agency does not fund the project, what are your alternative funding plans?

Not allowing the work needed today to go unattended. The agency should be doing is leaving no stone unturned, including seeking a windfall from afar to meet its financial obligations. What you and the board of directors need to understand is that if you continue to do nothing, the women will have to do something.

There has never been an effort to do one another in preparing breakfast. However, Susanna Lenzis has always cooked, served and decorated fascinating tables when it was her turn to host the meeting. When the book was The Endurance, by Caroline Alexander, about Sir Ernest Shackleton’s ex- pedition to Antarc- tica, she represented the ice pack with clear glassware, clear plates, white plastic cutlery, white linen table cloth and napkins, and several groups of tiny penguins scattered across the center of the table. The books that are selected for discussion are wide- ranging – novels, the classics, plays, poetry, biog- raphies and short stories. The authors are from around the world.

The book club is celebrating its 20th anniversary this month. While some residents don’t know there is such a group, its members eagerly look forward to each monthly meeting.

Original members Meredith Gandy, Carole Kleinkncht, Ann O’Grady and Barrie Swanson held the first meeting in March, 1981, at Ann O’Grady’s home. The book on that occasion was Daniel Martin by John Fowles.

The initial discussion set up a few rules. The fre- quency (once a month), the day (9:30 to 12 noon). The reason for the time was that the women had school-age children. They were free for these few hours to do things that were important to them – to read and to socialize. As time went by, new members joined, others moved off the Island, the children went to school full day and some

broader discussion, and everyone learns from one another’s age perspective.

July and August are treated differently from the rest of the year. They represent a more relaxing time. One month is for vacation and the alternate month for something light or amusing to read; for refresh- ments, there might be a pot-luck breakfast on the Rivercross lawn.

This month’s book is A Clearing in the Distance by Witiol Rybczynski, an informative biography of Frederick Law Olmsted, the landscape architect who lived from 1822 to 1894 and designed Central Park (1858-1876). He also designed several college cam- puses and the U.S. Capitol grounds (1875).

Present members of the Book Club are Libby Duffy, Lorraine Lasker, Meredith Gandy, Susanna Lenzis, Linda Grafty-Troia, Joan Pape. Over the years, meeting monthly, the group has read and discussed some 230 books. (The list accompanies this report on Website NYC10044 www.nyc10044.com)

The club originally used paperbacks because they were cheaper than hard cover, but now that the Island Library is part of the New York Public Library sys- tem, reserving and borrowing books has become much easier and less expensive. Members are grateful for the inter-branch system for reserving books.

Most book clubs have leaders who guide the mem- bers through the book’s major questions. The Island club chose not to do that. Its discussions are free-flowing and everyone participates. Sometimes there are heated differences of opinion, or Parker laughs about humorous descriptions, or are horrified at violent happenings, or at such questions. They never hesitate to tell the person who recommended the book what they think about it, good or bad.

In recent years the new members have included older women whose children were grown and out of the house. The difference in the age spread made for a

Progress on Central Nurses Residence

A demolition worker lowered a tool to a co- worker Tuesday during the brick-by-brick demolition of the building, preparing the way for Southtown. Built in 1939, the CNR had about 600 single rooms housing nurses. Central School of Nursing, a training school, moved out of Goldwater Hospital, and Metropolitan Hospital School of Nursing, a branch of the college, also left Southtown. The building was closed in 1975, and has been abandoned and unused since that date. When Southtown is complete, Main Street will be extended through the present site of the building to the Tramway station.
Mitchell Hammer, manager of the Rivercross co-op, said that he, too, was billed for a 27 percent increase.

"We received an invoice, period," he said. "We never got a cover letter, an explanation, a reason or a rationale." To pay a bill demanding "thousands of dollars more than usual" without raising questions would not be good business, he said, noting that he had received "no written explanation or backup."

Hammer said RIOC did give him an informal answer — that costs had gone up and that they contractually are able to do this. "We nearly three weeks after getting the invoice, he is still waiting for documentation.

The Rivercross manager declined to break out the co-op's dollar figures, citing the need to consult with his co-op board, but it is obvious from the RIOC financial statement that Rivercross pays the same amount for Public Safety as does Island House, its fraternal twin in terms of the Island's construction history. Because of the differing number of apartments, however, the proportional cost of Public Safety services is different: approximately $544 per year for Rivercross residents under the new scheme; $513 per apartment for Island House.

Officials at RIOC — some describing the pace of business at their office in recent days and nights as "hectic" and even "chaotic" — did not respond directly to questions regarding Public Safety finances. And Public Safety Director James Belson, who is more typically responsive to press inquiries than his colleagues on the west side of Main Street, also deflected questions on this issue, saying merely, "I make my needs known to RIOC, and RIOC does what it does."

But RIOC's audited financial statement for 2000 does provide at least a warning of a financial squeeze, and might have served as a tip-off of impending cost increases if the accounts on the other side of the fence had taken it at face value.

The statement for the year ended March 31, 2000, shows that the Public Safety Department, which has about 40 employees, spent $1,746,611, an increase of $300,000 from 1999. Payroll accounted for more than 94 percent of PSD's total expenditures in 2000, making the average compensation more than $41,000. Meanwhile, the contributions of Belson and Rivercross were not changed in the two-year period, but the RIOC operating revenue specifically allocated to Public Safety from Manhattan Park's $2.9 million year 2000 ground-rent payment to RIOC actually declined by about $8,000.

According to the auditors, McGladrey & Pullen LLP, "reimbursements from four housing companies and Manhattan Park for not less than 50 percent of the cost of maintaining a public safety department are included in housing company reimbursements" for the Island's police services. Thus, in the 2000 budget, the housing company reimbursements to Public Safety (Rivercross and the three Belson buildings) is roughly half of Public Safety's expenses. And Manhattan Park chipped in $165,298, bringing total Public Safety revenue to more than $1 million.

But Manhattan Park's contribution is not limited to this amount. The massive infusion of ground rent from the 1,107-unit complex, which is increasing $100,000 per year through 2007, serves to cover the deficit for Public Safety, the Tramway, and many other Island expenses.

It's impossible, without any guidance from RIOC personnel, to determine whether the Public Safety bill represents a cost-driven expense (for a new municipal union contract, for example), or is a reallocation of contributions, or is, in fact, an anomaly — a one-time monthly bump.

On one level, at least — simple arithmetic — it appears that the bill is merely an attempt to balance the books, since the increase closely matches the department's increased deficit compared with its revenue for 2000. On the other hand, if it does not represent Public Safety costs, it appears that the department's spending for 2001 will be $2,159,916, an increase of more than $400,000. As, and several officials pointed out, that amount does not include major State-sponsored budget items such as patrol vehicles and the cost of office rent.

But nobody is talking about the actual budget for 2001, and as RIOC's silence deepens, critics of the Public Safety Department can be counted on to question the cost-benefit understanding that underlies the concept of an independent Roosevelt Island security force, which is already under fire at Eastern State Penitentiary for its deployment practices regarding inside vs. outside policing.

Ron Schuppert, a Rivercross board member and former law enforcement officer who has long followed Public Safety issues, said that Public Safety has many good people who are capable of doing a very good job under proper supervision. But he contends that RIOC may have made a mistake in its latest billing maneuver by pressing the issue of the very existence of Public Safety.

"The alternative is getting rid of Public Safety and requesting the NYPD down here to patrol the streets and, if the buildings want added security, they can hire security firms like every other building in the city," he said.

Basic questions of this type motivated the RIOC directors to create a Public Safety Advisory Committee on January 25, "to consider all issues related to public safety." The committee will be chaired by RIOC Board member Dr. Joan Dawson, who is the Project Director of the NYU Center for Urban Education's Equity Assistance Center.

Resident members of the RIOC board will serve on the committee, along with the RIOC President and Public Safety Director, and representatives of the Island's housing management companies — some of the same people who have had to deal with the latest cost increase.

Board member Leo Kayser, Gov. George Pataki's chief representative on the RIOC board, said that the committee "should examine the role of the Public Safety Department now and in the future, should the Island be integrated back into the City of New York," while ensuring that "there is no reduction in the services provided to the community," according to the Jan. 25 RIOC board minutes.

Another RIOC board member, David Kraut, who will be called upon to take part in the new committee as an Island resident, was asked to comment on the question of whether residents should view the Public Safety increases as a matter of RIOC's due diligence, or whether it could be taken as a sign of financial deterioration. Here is Kraut's response: "As I have stated repeatedly, in public and in The WIRE, has RIOC administration and its predecessor are under firm pressure from Governor Pataki to "operate, develop and manage" Roosevelt Island without any financial assistance from the State of New York. The Cuomo administration helped us out to the tune of $6 million per year in capital expenditures, and more than $1 million per year in operating expenditures. That money is simply no longer available to us. These are the conditions under which the current RIOC board and administration are operating.

"All recent actions and decisions, from the Octagon project to the Motorgate rate increase, can be interpreted in light of this situation, so one might possibly assume that the Public Safety increases are also of this kind, although no one has explained this to me specifically. So I am personally troubled that the State has put us in this position, but I am confident that the RIOC administration is doing the best it can under the circumstances."
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Island’s Tennis Season Is Due to Start in April

The 2001 tennis season is scheduled to get under way April 1 on the six outdoor hard courts adjacent to Octagon Park. At deadline, however, RIOC had not announced a fee structure or opening day.

In addition, the Roosevelt Island Tennis Association (RITA), a not-for-profit community tennis association, or- ganizes a number of tennis events throughout the season. At least 18 years old and interested in joining or in finding out more about RITA, a member, send him an e-mail at ggatto@nyc.rr.com.

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York and Department of Housing and Urban Development are complied with in terms of new applications and current residents. “Doryne is totally devoted to bringing the best possible services to her residents,” says Marilyn Engsler, the Director of Community Affairs, who works closely with Doryne.

Two new features of the club for 2001 are the Roosevelt Island Day, modeled on a national event, and the hosting of a dinner for the Roosevelt Island chapter of the International Toastmasters club. The dinner was held at the Island’s Battery Park Club.

The desire to get to know the residents of the buildings she manages has led Doryne to hold floor meetings in Island House and Westview recently. Eastwood meetings are scheduled for April. “Normally I don’t get to meet the popula- tion I serve unless they have a problem. I see them at their worst, when we have thoroughly dissatisfied them in some way, shape, form or fashion.”

Her petite frame all set to take on new challenges, Doryne asserts that she is a motivator who prefers to have things done her way. “I am not bull-headed about it and I would be the first to say that it doesn’t work, so I think I am fair. When it comes to my staff, I have been in this business for a lot longer than many are old.”

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Four in Running Partners Program Complete 5K Race

Early Sunday morning, March 4, as the city prepared for the blastard-that-failed-to-show, Riad Vetter, Philip Santos, Emilio Estevez, and Nicole Neal were seen huddled on a breezy Roosevelt Island, and they were about to participate in their first-ever road race, up Ft. Washington Avenue to the Clusters and back.

The results couldn’t have been better: Riad finished in 28:07 with Philip just two seconds behind, earning them third and fourth places among the 33 students from other Running Partners Teams around the City. First up is the Running Partners Invitational, a track meet to be held in Central Park on Friday, April 6 at 4:30 p.m.

Parents of middle-schoolers may contact Ms. Kaye Kerr at the school for more information on how their children can become a part of this program.

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placeemment reserve account over two years – an amount equal to about 10 percent of the complex’s current total rent.

Tish reported she was proud she had gotten some points across better face to face, but the facts are pretty much what they are – this is a gross understating of the reserve fund,” said Leon Lowder, a Westview resident and account-ant who worked on the Task Force.

Before this meeting, the DHCR lowered the boom, telling the task force it had to abide by a March 12 deadline to submit its final comments. This does not mean the DHCR’s position or cooperation for any meeting scheduled with DHCR’s technical staff,” Miller told Paul in a letter.

The Westview team, which thought it had until the end of the month, accused Elliot Ashrey, the DHCR Assistant Director, of breaking the promise he made at the rent hearing. But the Task Force quickly put together its final documents and delivered them to the DHCR office in downtown Manhattan, promised over, that “We were not given the opportunity to address the core issues.”

One week later, the orders were ready. Otis Jones, Deputy Commissioner, said the division followed its standard procedure in determining rents for Mitchell-Lama middle-income housing. After taking into account the information presented by the company, tenants, and their own accounting staff, and reviewing comments from the hearings, a DHCR management committee met “to make sure it’s all done according to statute, and to come up with a final number.”

The decision is submitted to Commissioner Joseph Lynch for his approval, and Jones signs the final order. The agency does not disallow its decision until tenants are notified.

Jones said the agency had factored the rising cost of energy into its calculations, but did not accept the company’s last-minute request for a budget additon based on the rising cost of Public Safety services on Roosevelt Island. As for the Westview complaint that its engineers were stymied at the start, DHCR said the tenants themselves were instrumental in getting the company’s estimate for a $300,000, that he said was “scribed down on one piece of paper.”

In retrospect, the Westview group, which tried to tackle all the facts and figures head-on, may have collided with a process that operates according to a less-literal set of rules. Jeff Resnick, the accountant for both the Island House and Westview task forces, and alluded to the “rituals” of the Budget Rent Determination in a meeting with the Island House Task Force before the Fall meeting, suggesting that the outcome would be determined more by the skills of the ba- zaar than by those of accountancy. And Ashrey himself reminded the tenants on Feb- ruary 8 that DHCR had to be attuned to market conditions, not just revenue-expense analysis, in adjusting rents.

Audrey Berman, President of the Island House Task Force, has said she has grown more accustomed to this process through several rounds of rent negotiations. Island House’s focus has been to seek greater financial accountability for the housing company’s use of outside contractors, and to insist on “more competent human resource in the building –” goals she said the group has been achieving largely through its direct dealings with management. She also said that the idea of trying to qualify for co-op mortgages for some other part of town is starting to look mighty appealing.

Parents of middle-schoolers may contact Ms. Kaye Kerr at the school for more information on how their children can become a part of this program.

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**BASKETBALL.** There were no upsets this year in the Roosevelt Island Youth Program’s Basketball Championship Tournament as the Mavericks in the Senior Division and the NY Heat in the Junior Division, the first-place teams in their respective seasons, continued their success and captured the championship in games played on March 9 and 10.

In the **Senior Division** championship game, the Mavericks defeated Da Kingz in overtime 97-92 in a game that truly worthy of any “Final Four” tournament. In what will be remembered as one of the finest basketball games ever played in an Island Youth Program tournament, two evenly-matched teams played an exciting game marked by great individual efforts from Charles McCoy (36 points) and Kendrick Gibson (19 points) of the Mavericks and Alex Sheppard (41 points) and Wayne Neal (31 points) of Da Kingz, as well as solid team play by both teams. The game opened with Da Kingz grabbing an early 14-3 lead behind 8 points by Alex Sheppard and 6 points by Wayne Neal; however, Kendrick Gibson and Charles McCoy each hit two three-point baskets in a run by the Mavericks that tied the score at 26-all midway through the first half. For the rest of the first half, neither team led by more than 4 points and Da Kingz had the halftime lead 48-46. For the first ten seconds of the second half, the teams kept trading the lead with no team ahead by more than three points. Then the Mavericks, behind by two three-point baskets by Jonathan Tavares and two rebound baskets by Marcus Harrison, opened a seven-point lead. However, during the last five minutes of the second half, Da Kingz wrested the lead back as Mark Comrie, Herman Kouadio and Jay Colon each hit big shots for Da Kingz. As the game reached the final seconds, Da Kingz had the lead by three points and the Mavericks had the ball; and in the defining moment of the game, Kendrick Gibson hit a three-point shot from the corner to tie the game at 88-88 and send it into overtime. In the overtime, the shots would no longer fall for Da Kingz, and they were outscored by the Mavericks 9-4.

Members of the champion Mavericks were Alhassan Camara, Rakeem Cummings, Cyriel Dikourme, Kendrick Gibson, Marcus Harrison, Charles McCoy, Jonathan Tavares, Robert Tavares, and James Williams, and the team was coached by Steve Marcus.

In the **Junior Division** championship game, the NY Heat completed a magical, undefeated season by knocking off the Terminators 60-53. For most of the first half, it looked as though this was going to be the day that the NY Heat lost, as the Terminators controlled the play in the first half and led 23-19 at halftime. However, the NY Heat coaches woke up their team at halftime and the NY Heat began the second half with greater defensive intensity, which led to an increased number of Terminator turnovers and some easy fast-break baskets. By midway through the second half, the NY Heat had opened a 43-31 lead, the largest of the game. The Terminators, however, refused to quit and fought back to cut the deficit to 43-40, but that was as close as they got in the second half. Down the stretch, Tyrell Anderson, showing great agility for a big man, finished off two fast breaks on assists from Sika Franco to seal the win. Paul Brown was the leading scorer for the NY Heat with 22 points, while Sika Franco (16 points) and Fode Bah (6 points) were the big men off the boards, and Fabian Williams (6 points) ran the offense from the point guard position. For the Terminators, Lamar Barrows and Deshawn Pearson, the leading scorers for the Terminators during the regular season, each finished with 14 points, while Keith Summers (14 points) and Pedro Valerio (12 points) were dominating under the boards.

The players on the undefeated NY Heat were Dax Armenakis, Remy Armenakis, Alpha Bah, Eric Miranda, Tyrell Anderson, Fode Bah, Paul Brown, Sika Franco, and Fabian Williams, and the team was coached by Jim Armenakis and Sterling Thomas.

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Richard Kahan

Program host Richard Kahan, former head of the Urban Development Corporation (UDC), is deeply knowledgeable about the Roosevelt Island Assembly, an international not-for-profit organization dedicated to making cities more livable by fostering growing growth that is socially responsible, ecologically sustainable, politically participatory, and economically productive. He is the former Thomas Jefferson Award recipient for the American Institute of Architects.

It’s About Values

No person has ever or will ever affect my career or my values or what we’ve done in this world more than Ed Logue did. And the reason for that is that he taught all of those of us who were privileged to work with him that urban development was about lots more than bricks and mortar. It’s about values. There is nothing neutral about urban development. It’s about values. When is a thing weighed with values, and Ed had a very strong, distinct set of values which he conveyed with tremendous power and enthusiasm. One of them, for example, is affirmative action. If he saw me introducing an all-white male panel, there would be hell to pay. But Ed Logue was absolutely right.

Roosevelt Island played a very important role in that set of values. Ed thought it mattered tremendously what the project was designed like, what the public spaces were like, what the public environment was like. He brought a new standard and a new way of thinking about large-scale development on to the scene. If you think back to those days, the paradigm then was Coop City, Lefrak City, Trump Village... Nobody had thought to infuse public development with that kind of quality and architectural distinction.

There were other values. The affirmative action – I made light of it, but there was no question that Ed brought the issue of affirmative action you see in the final plan. In a world that was white, and I believe ever had in government, that I knew of, and set a standard for a long period of time. Ed was a visionary. He saw the inter-relationship between economic integration, racial integration – no UDC project moved to the drawing board without that being the program. The architectural program came second.

The Great Experiment

Now, Roosevelt Island is particularly important in this context because, in the end, this is where it all came together. It was on a project that Ed Logue was involved in, and he was one of the original architects of the idea. He was there from the very beginning. And I think that that soft edge at the tip would also be best for Roosevelt Island.

In 1966, during an age of great government activism, Mayor John Lindsay announced that government would dis- continue plans for a small housing area called Welfare Island. In 1968 he appointed a 22-member Welfare Island Planning and Development Committee, chaired by Benno Schmidt. The following year the committee released a 141-page report which soon served as the basis for a master plan by Philip Johnson and John Burgee. That master plan was first shown to the public as a Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition entitled “The Island Nobody Knows.” The project was subsequently fleshed out by a team of architects hired by the UDC. A first phase of development was begun in 1971. Work on that phase was sub- stantially complete by 1974 and the first tenants moved in the next year. Since that time, there has been further develop- ment on the Island, and amendments have been made to the Master Plan. As we have seen and heard today, there are several proposals on the board that may rad- ically change the way that the Island is developed.

Historical Perspective

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Questions for the Future

In light of dramatic shifts in the nation’s political and economic climate, I am asking the question of how relevant and how sustainable is Ed Logue’s vision today, and [ask], “Where do we go from here?” [and] “Is Ed Logue’s vision sustainable – and urban planning with high social ide- als, particularly the realization of a paradigmatic, mixed-income community.”

At UDC, Theodore Liebman was one of the original ar- chitects, with his present-day partner, Alan Melting, work- ing on Roosevelt Island. He was in the audience of the panel discussion and is present in this conversation on the future on Roosevelt Island. There are certainly those who are arguing that that’s not about to be the case, and those who argue that it is. I think that Ed’s power reaches beyond the grave, what he was, at least what his attitude was not so long ago which was a letter to Bredorsen, Sexton, who was then President of the Municipal Art Soci-

Alexander Garvin

Alexander Garvin is currently a commissioner on the New York City Planning Commission, and is also the Director of Planning for NYC2012, New York City’s bid for the 2012 Olympics. Mr. Garvin is the author of the award-winning The American City: What Works, What Doesn’t, and a new book, Roosevelt Island in Future Focus: A day-long workshop on the future of Roosevelt Island.

I always had strong feelings about Ed Logue. He’s that kind of person. He’s the kind of person who makes things happen. There are very few people in government whose work is as highly visible as Ed Logue’s. Even when you are trying to get things to happen, you have successes and fail- ures, and my view is that Ed Logue always had successes and failures.

Successes

There are clearly things that Ed Logue tried to do at Roosevelt Island that were successful: Income mix, access for the disabled, a remarkable accessibility... Trouble was, the subway opened 13 years late, so there had to be a Tram, and I still remember working at the Planning Commission and saying, “A Tram? We should invest $2.4 million to build a Tram so that they can’t close it.” It was a huge social and economic experiment. It’s a large and luxurious free island. But it’s not 100% auto-mobile-free. It could never be. Nevertheless, as an experi- ment in a less automobile-intensive environment, it was a huge success.

I say its major success was in demonstrating that you could provide public services outside the City of New York and its bureaucracy very successfully. Of course, it took more than a million dollars before the City of New York in subsidies because the Island was never fin- ished, and that’s very significant. Had the Island been fin- ished, I believe you had more of these services. Maybe not the debt ser- vice on the structure, but I think you would have been possible. The trouble was that housing was not marketable with- out subsidies lasting.

Failures

I’d like to talk a little about the fail- ures of which I think there were two. The first is, they didn’t implement the original plan. Philip Johnson planned a town cen- ter on top of the subway. The original plan that Johnson prepared, which had the town center... [at the sub- way station]. Nobody imagined the Tram at that point, and what he had [at the sub- way station] was in fact an air-conditioned shopping mall. I don’t really care whether you took the architectural form that he proposed or not, but I do believe that if you’re going to have viable retail space, you’re going to have to base it on some of the reasons I think one should be thinking in terms of the next stage, using the fact that there’s a Tram and it was never

Tom Mellins

Moderator Thomas Mellins is an architectural historian, co-founder of the League of New York Architects, and former board member of the American Institute of Architects.

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thought it was going to be there forever. The Island developed and you can't start from scratch anymore. Without 5,000 units of housing there you do not have enough support economically to do anything but take care of themselves. The other reason to be on the Island except to live there. This is a residential enclave. It is not part of New York. And to that degree I think it is a problem, because it cannot be repurposed and it had no spillover into the rest of the communities of New York.

In order to be successful you need a critical mass. When it opened in 1975-76 they had 2,100 units; they now have 3,200 units. That's not enough to support active retail. It never was, never could be. And 5,000 would work, if there were not two towns, a Southtown and a Northtown. Once you've got a Southtown and a Northtown you do not have enough customers in any one of the two of them to support the kind of life it would have been over the subway, and it would have made sense, had the original plan been implemented.

I believe that creating a plan – and Johnson is in responsible for this as the later planners were – with the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele on top of the subway. I think the concrete columns are totally out of place, I think there are a lot of things that could be. Some of them we got the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele on top of the subway. The completion of the Island, I think, has to be an ongoing thing, and in the year 2050 there should be an interesting time when people actually tried to do something. But of course we all learned after that you couldn't do anything, so forget it, and go on living the way we do now.

National Failures

I think the failures of Roosevelt Island are definitely national failures, not failures of the scheme. And I note in Alex's comment on things like density, if you look at the map that was part of the lease, of course the density was right where Alex said it was. So the point is not what was going to be built but what actually got built. There were no inherent failures... [the builders had] to do with things like energy policies. We were paid, I think it was, $2000 a unit [to] put in electric heat. That was because Ravenswood had nothing to do in the winter. It would provide lots of nice electric heat and we could save a bundle of money off the actual mortgage costs, which were the problem.

I'm very glad Alex says that if you had the full 5,000 units it would have worked. It certainly looked as if it was going to work, and that would have included the debt service on the infrastructure. There were a lot of things you had to do. Yes, you had to keep on having the subsidies, but at that time we expected to have subsidies. It never occurred to us that the United States would entirely give up trying to do anything for the poor. That was something that I dearly, dearly remember Ed saying from his service in Calcutta. Of course we all laughed together in 1969 and 1970 at the idea of people sleeping in the street. That happened in Calcutta. It would never happen in New York. Well, of course, it did happen with a bang in New York when we decided – when the nation decided – that we really wouldn’t take care of the poor and the indigent and the people who could not take care of themselves.

So the 5,000 units would have come with the proper subsidy that we all expected. [But] when Nixon ended the subsidy program, of course, we all went out of business, and that was the beginning of the end for Roosevelt Island and for everybody else.

I think it’s important to remember that Roosevelt Island was the product not just of a single interest in doing good, doing the public good on a very complicated and high level of the notion of the public good. We thought we were going to deliver something and we certainly did try. Whatever happens surely has to reflect the needs of the larger political of the time. Daily life is different now and it’s important to remember what it is. Architecture’s got to be important.

Minischools

The school was made a nuisance for really good reason. It was supposed to be a horrible thing to administer, and the point was that, if you had a thing that was difficult enough and you built it difficult, you would make people to run the school differently.

The Lease and GDP

[The relationship between the City and State under which the State is developing Roosevelt Island is basically a leasehold, and if you do something wrong you've violated the lease. Then the question is, what happens? The other side's got to enforce it. It’s an ordinary private set of relationships between two governmental agencies, with a subsidiary to help out with it. You don’t go straight to jail. Somebody has to go there, you have to have it come out one way or the other. Well, what the General Development Plan was supposed to do, and the choice of the word ["general"] was very careful. It was not... there was a thing that was regarded as the master plan, but this thing was called the General Development Plan, so as a way to give a kind of very general set of directions that would endure, and it’s interesting to see that they seem to have, somewhat. The object of the exercise was to get an envelope and a shape and commitments to parks and commitments to open space. But the remedies are remedies of a private transaction between two governments.

The envelope I’ve seen at least of what’s been proposed seems quaint by architecture today. I hope we can do a little better, because we certainly wanted to, and I think we did produce some interesting stuff along the way.

Tramway

[We] bought [the Tramway] on a letter to von Roll. It’s the world’s most inefficient Tramway because it lifts you up on a loop. It was not very expensive; it was not even necessariy supposed to last, because after all the subway was supposed to come. But it came in a box, essentially, from Switzerland.

Paul Byard

Paul Byard is a principal in the New York-based architecture firm of Paul Byard Dowell and the director of Preservation Programs at the Columbia University School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. As the Associate Counsel to the New York State Urban Development Corporation from 1969 to 1974, he was a key participant in the development of Roosevelt Island with Ed Logue.

What struck me, as a question to ask, is whether this is all history in which, therefore, there are some lessons we could draw from it, or whether it was still a set of live possibilities; and whether we could talk about it as a sense of what we ought to be doing, or whether we ought to think of it as a way of making a new kind of a transport system.

A pre-residential Roosevelt Island

In this photo from about 1970, the north portion of pre-development Roosevelt Island is seen from the air. The pillars just south of the area now referred to as Island City support a road that now descends to Island City. The hospital can be seen at the north end with other buildings that have since been demolished. The Octagon tower can be picked out just south of the hospital. The light colored tower visible just left of and behind the bridge tower is a Fire Department training tower.

Photo courtesy Empire State Development Corporation via the Municipal Art Society.
Matthew Katz

Matthew Katz is President of the Roosevelt Island Residents Association (RIRA). Prior to being elected to this position in December 2000, he served as a member of the RIRA Common Council beginning in 1997, and has served on several of the Association’s committees, including Housing and Government Relations, and as Treasurer of the Legal Action Fund. He has been a Roosevelt Island resident since 1989.

In the [exhibit brochure which some of you may have seen, there’s a quote that says, “Logue’s solutions were often the best in terms of architecture and planning and people’s real lives,” and that struck a note with me. I think that’s true. I think Mr. Logue and his group at UDC built a construct, a Roosevelt Island.

Community

But I would also point out that he did not build a community and, were he here today, I think he would agree with that. The idea that this would be a community was a risk, and 25 years ago people took that risk and they built the community. They built playing fields, and they built an Historical Society to take note of the 250 years of history out on that Island. They built Garden Clubs, moving tons of topsoil themselves... They built a library from scratch, now part of the New York City Public Library. They built a Theatre and Dance Alliance... This was done by people who moved out there, who took chances, and made this what it is today. From the sociological point of view, you must say that it’s a success.

I think if there’s anything that brought people out there, that made it worthwhile to take these chances, it was the physical conditions that they found there. It was the parkland and open space that makes Roosevelt Island a unique community in the middle of New York. If you were dropped down there blindfolded you would say you were in some small town in upstate New York or in some village in the middle of the country, not in the middle of the Big Apple. It is a unique environment.

I grew up in Brooklyn. I’ve lived in Queens. I lived for 14 years on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. If I knew my neighbors, it was to inquire about the weather in the elevator. It’s like a streetcar. Now we’re walking one of our streets on Roosevelt Island, without getting into a half a dozen arguments and discussions with people about the issues of the day. This is not the kind of interaction in a community you expect to find in the middle of New York City. This is an amazing asset that makes the Island unique. But what brought so many of us out there are the parks and the tennis courts and the swimming pools and the playing fields, fields that were built by the sweat equity of the people who live there, and this, I think, is very important.

Ideas come to the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation, they are considered, perhaps for years at a time; they are then implemented, or they are dropped. Case in point; the minischools. People have been looking for a use for [the minischools] ever since they were abandoned. For the past two years, RIROC has been considering the plan of one developer. For two years now, this plan has been in front of RIROC. For two years the Island has said that they oppose the idea virtually unanimously. A blue-ribbon commission of Island residents [the Capital Planning and Development Committee] voted unanimously that RIROC on this particular plan. They voted unanimously against it... and yet the RIROC Board voted for it unanimously.

Now, just last month, after two months of looking into this, this idea has been dropped, and now the process must start again from scratch with a new RFP. This is a strange mindset on Roosevelt Island. It’s the only thing approaching zoning that we have, and when this goes, so goes Roosevelt Island.

Local Democracy

[The exhibit brochure says] “Because of Logue’s work, New York Rock and other cities could continue to regard themselves as engines of democracy.” If there’s anything that Roosevelt Island is failing in right now, it is democracy. It may have been that at the beginning of the community and, certainly when RIROC was developed in 1984, the idea of a community that was controlled by some entity seemed to be a necessity, well, it is a necessity and still is a necessity.

Community, after all, is a public-benefit corporation, and should be working in the public interest.

This community, though, has been on Roosevelt Island for 25 years now. We have no local government. It is a very large government that has been, I think, defeated. We have Federal government, we have State government... end of story. The State determines who sits on the RIROC Board, who is the President of RIROC. The Island community has had no impact on the operation of the Island or the development of the Island. When do we get enfranchised?... These are fundamental elements of American democracy that need to be resolved on Roosevelt Island.

This is a group of people, a group of people [the Maple Tree Group] that has been working for three years now to revise the 1984 legislation to provide for an elected Board which, when recently, within the last month, after two months of looking into this, this idea has been dropped, and now the process must start again from scratch with a new RFP. This is a strange mindset on Roosevelt Island. It’s the only thing approaching zoning that we have, and when this goes, so goes Roosevelt Island.

Government’s Role

Just one last thing. The brochure says, “One of the keys to Ed Logue’s success is that he had great patrons, Nelson Rockefeller chief amongst them, who stuck with him. And the right Governor, the right Mayor, and a few others, it could happen again.” God willing.

In 1996, George Pataki became the Governor of the State of New York. One of the first things he did was eliminate both the operating and capital subsidies to Roosevelt Island. We were told, “You are self-sufficient. Go forth and multiply.” For the past five years, Roosevelt Island has been barely making do on its operating costs by cutting back on a great deal of maintenance and repair work on the Island. As for any kind of capital improvements, there is no money.

There is no capital fund. You might see, should you look at the financial statements of the Island, as we have very carefully, an item of $3.4 million. That is the capital fund. The entire fund will be going to pay for the infrastructure of Mr. Wine’s Southtown project, because in the crackerjack negotiations for this project, RIROC has agreed to pay half the infrastructure costs of the project. So there is no money for anything else. We have a seashell. We don’t know where the money to repair that or extend it will ever come from.

The LEED and GDP

The General Development Plan is a 30-year-old document, but I think it is fundamental proviso for affordable housing for families in a small-town context in the middle of New York City as it was valid today as it was 30 years ago. My own wish list would be for sufficient population on Roosevelt Island to sustain our merchants, to make our Tram a viable operation. Our Tram, some of you

may know, is the only commuter aerial Tramway in the United States. It is not subsidized by any government, as most public transportation is in the United States, and it is the only public transportation in the New York region that’s not on the MetroCard... another one of the ways that Roosevelt Island has fallen through the cracks.

My wish list would include maintaining the open spaces, the public lands that we have preserved within the General Development Plan. The General Development was written by architects, not lawyers. You can read it. It gives guidance about how to do it. The General Development Plan is the exhibit brochure says “Because of Logue’s work, New York Rock and other cities could continue to regard themselves as engines of democracy.” If there’s anything that Roosevelt Island is failing in right now, it is democracy. It may have been that at the beginning of the community and, certainly when RIROC was developed in 1984, the idea of a community that was controlled by some entity seemed to be a necessity, well, it is a necessity and still is a necessity.

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I started my career as a multi-family housing representa- tive for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Develop- ment (HUD) as an urban intern. 1976 was a time of great commit- ment by government – the beginning of the Section 8 program. We felt Roosevelt Island to [see] an example of the new-communi- ties program which had been implemented by HUD.

It’s true, if the RFP was issued for a developer to build Southtown, the portion of Roosevelt Island meant to complete the 3,500 units origi- nally envisioned under the General Development Plan. 1985 was a problematic time in real estate – not much interest was expressed by the developers. We were in a recession phase, 2,000-unit project in which the developers would pay all the infrastructure cost. I don’t think any developers re- sponded to that RFP.

Shifting Economics

My next introduction was the next RFP in the mid-80’s. As a company, we saw Roosevelt Island as a part of a greater housing scheme in New York, as it always was. Roosevelt Island was seen as a housing opportunity for various income groups to come together in the same family. We had experience in building all sorts of housing in New York City and had been building: high-rise, low-rise, for-sale housing, rent- ing housing, rental housing.

We embarked upon a series of meetings to really educate ourselves. A representative of the Council Select Committee – the body on this panel has pretty much expressed their commit- ment to economic integration; the spirit of that economic integration was a vision of a community where there was an eco- nomic mix and where there were still the same kind of dollars that there were before. [We have] a unique status as an extraordinary place where many people from the United Nations live.

As a city, we as a whole can enjoy some of the planning the Island is and what Roosevelt Island remains to be for the future.

The Future

The General Development Plan is an excellent document. It’s a document that can be used tomorrow, today, in the morning, and I don’t think that there is a great need to amend it at all largely, but I would be open to amending it. The City has continued to have a sense of it, and it is imperative that, if it is going to be implemented, that it is done in a way that it has infrastructure needs. So I think that [self-sufficiency] as a gauge of success is false.

I don’t think the Governor is committed to what every- body on this panel has pretty much expressed their commit- ment to, which is to consider a plan for the Island as a whole and to work to realize that plan. And that’s reflected in those people who work for him [at RIOC]. The Governor’s recent appointments to the Board have been floating ideas and don’t necessarily advance the development of the Island and it can happen on the Island without the Governor’s say-so in some form, whether it’s him personally or his appointees. My purpose here today is to talk about the need for the government making the type of commitment to affordable housing that you had before, and so it’s how do you work within that context to still realize something that is appro- priate for the vision that was originally there.

The problem is that everybody on this panel doesn’t get to go to the city, doesn’t get to realize the, Gifford Miller this panel who are making the decision, and who are not just sitting down as a community, as elected officials, and as a leader- ship position in that.