

Roosevelt Island Residents Association

Minutes of Common Council Meeting, Wednesday, January 9, 2013 Submitted for March 6, 2013 Meeting

Call to Order

A regular meeting of the RIRA Common Council was held at the Church of the Good Shepherd Community Center on January 9, 2013. The meeting was convened at 8:15 pm. President Ellen Polivy presiding, Barbara Allen - Secretary.

1. Public Session

- **Joseph Bae – Branch Manager, Amalgamated Bank** spoke briefly and introduced himself to the audience. He talked about Amalgamated Bank and what his bank had to offer the community of Roosevelt Island. It is located at 619 Main Street. Hours of operation are Mon, Tue, Wed, & Fri: 9:00 am - 4:00 pm; Thu: 9:00 am - 6:00 pm; and Sat: 9:00 am - 1:00 pm.
- **Lailah Amatullah – Roosevelt Island Women’s Health Organization** Ms. Amatullah is a retired social worker. She briefly spoke about the RIWHO. It is an organization that presents monthly seminars for women 18+ concerning health and healthy living. Their goal is to encourage women to take a more active role in their healthcare. They have two doctors, two holistic practitioners, two trainers, a registered nurse, and others. Their next two seminars are on Wednesday, Jan 23 and Wednesday, Feb 27, 6:30 pm at the Senior Center, 12th Floor.
- **Tad Sudol - Roosevelt Island Visual Art Association** briefly talked about Gallery RIVAA. It opened on Main Street, with space and a grant provided by RIOC. Exhibition space is also provided to RIVAA artists by the gallery located in the Octagon Building and in Lighthouse Park. RIVAA currently has a First Sunday Jazz tradition with 6-7 musicians. The sessions run from 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm with a \$5 donation. There is wine & cheese and dancing. It began eight months ago. It has become so well established that they now offer some form of it every Sunday. The other Sundays are not the same as the first Sundays—just rehearsal. Rehearsal is from 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm. There is no food or dancing, but the public is invited to attend. Any musician both on and outside of the island is invited to join. They want to invite famous musicians, once per month on the third Sunday. They would also like to partner with RIRA to sponsor the musicians.
- **Justin Rush, Secretary for Senator Joseph Addabbo** presented certificates to Roosevelt Island residents who donated/served hot meals to Howard Beach Queens residents in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. The certificates were: “Certificate of Merit” from Senator José M. Serrano for “Service to Your Community;” and "Certificate of Appreciation" from Senator Joseph P Addabbo, Jr.'s office for "Efforts in Assisting Others in the Aftermath of Hurricane Sandy.”

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- The Common Council recipients were

Barbara Allen

Julina Hooks

Romano Reid

Lailah Amatullah

Julia Palermo

Ethel Romm

Juyana Armstrong

Ellen Polivy

Erin Feely-Nahem

Sharon Pope

Thanks to Romano Reid for spear heading this event.

- Anthony Benjamin Alogrosi(?) – Take Back Our Schools** introduced is program to the Council. It is a family coalition of about 30,000 members who are educators, local business people, concerned citizens, etc. He has 34 years of experience in both the public and private school systems. He has been a teacher, assistant principle, principle, testing coordinator, and troubleshooter for the School Board. As a troubleshooter, his job was to go to schools that were failing and attempt to make them successful. According to Mr. Alogrosi(?), 46% of NYC students do not graduate from high school. Those that do graduate are not ready for college. Some of them struggle until the age of 21 or 22. The coalition is concerned that the current chancellor and the last four chancellors are not educators. His presentation (including Q&A) ran longer than the allotted time, and he was invited to return and present to the Social, Cultural, and Educational Committee at a later date. Ellen Polivy will facilitate this.

2. Roll Call

34 members in attendance, 6 members not in attendance. Quorum achieved.

Members not in attendance: Arnold Cohen, Ahmad Darwish, Julina Hooks, Joyce Mincheff, Ethel Romm, and Nicole Walden.

3. Nominations for two open seats

There were two nominations for open Common Council seats. Julia Palermo was nominated for the open seat in Westview by Susan Marcus. Jeff Prekopa was nominated for the open seat in Octagon by Jeff Escobar. Ms. Palermo and Mr. Prekopa both accepted the nominations and were asked to step outside. While they were gone, Susan Marcus and Jeff Escobar gave brief statements as to why they felt that the two candidates should join the RIRA Common Council. After the statements, The President asked for objections to unanimous approval of the nominations; there were none. Ms. Palermo and Mr. Prekopa were asked to return to the meeting and welcomed to the Common Council.

5. Treasure's Report

The 12 month statement was briefly discussed. (See report.)

4. Approval of Agenda

Motion: Aaron Hamburger moved to approve the agenda. **Discussion:** Frank Farance requested that Item #8 (Selection of Team Leaders for each building complex) be removed from the agenda. The President refused to remove the item from the agenda before the Common Council heard the justification of why she put it on the agenda. There was a brief discussion where several Common Council members expressed concern about whether or not an item could/could not be removed

from the agenda. Aaron Hamburger called a **Point of Order**. The President insisted on giving her report so that Council members could hear her reasoning for the agenda item before voting on whether or not to remove it. Approval of the agenda was postponed and the meeting proceeded with Agenda item #6.

6. President's Report

Ellen Polivy began her report by mentioning that she is interested in bringing more activity to Roosevelt Island. She would like to reach out to residents in their buildings to get a feel for what they want. One way to do this is by setting up team leaders for each building to facilitate the collection of this information. Issues coming up in the near future that would require residents' input are as follows: RIRA nominations to RIOC Board; and community input on the resignation of RIOC President and Vice President. Ellen Polivy discussed her reasons for wanting to keep item #8 on the agenda. She thinks it would be a way to help organize communication in the Districts. She believes it is a more effective way to reach out to people in the buildings and to get feedback from the community.

A 31 minute discussion ensued. Discussion highlights are as follows (Q – question by common council member; A – answer by the President; C – comment by common council member.)

Q: What is the difference between the team leader and the other members of the council?

A: Team leaders would organize the groups and coordinate what happens in the buildings.

Q: Would the team leaders undermine what we were elected to do? Should the Communications Committee do this?

A: It would be great if the Communications Committee could, but there are not enough members on the committee to do this. There are only four members.

C: We should be careful about how much we are asking of the people in buildings. They elected us to represent them.

C: This communication group will not get involved with building issues. They will just deal with island wide issues and not interfere with what happens in the buildings.

Q: We should not create another layer but define what the roles of the council members are. How do we get that input from the residents without this title of Team Leader?

A: Team leader is not a title. It is simply a way to organize the representatives in each building because each building is different. The only reason for the team leader is to make sure that someone calls the meetings in the buildings.

Q: The issues and challenges for the buildings and team leaders are going to be the same as the issues as the challenges for the larger group. What is the underlying problem we are trying to solve by having these team leaders?

Q: Is this going to be an additional meeting to be held monthly for the tenants?

A: No, just for the Common Council members. It is just to figure out how to reach the people in your building. It is not necessary to have a formal meeting. The final goal is to get email addresses of everyone on the island. We want to find out who is disabled on the island and get them help if needed. We want to be able to send out polls and get responses.

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C: Public Safety already has information about who is disabled on RI.

C: They do not have it for everyone.

A: They don't share this information with us.

C: We all have to be advocates for our buildings. Some buildings already have good lines of communications and can get messages to residents in a couple of hours and do not need this.

C: Communications as a whole should be the job of the Communications Committee and not team leaders.

C: Island residents do not want to be bothered and expect the Common Council members to represent them.

C: This is a bad idea. The Communications Committee should be responsible for this.

Call the question on discussion by Susan Marcus. It was ignored and discussion continued.

Trevre Andrews interjected: Everyone has a right to discuss agenda items and decide what should be or not be on the agenda. When we are having a discussion, the President should not respond to each person who makes a comment because it takes too long.

After a few minutes of similar discussion, **Motion**: Lynne Shinozaki moved to vote on approval of the agenda "as is." In favor - 22 Opposed - 5 Abstain - 3 Total votes: 30 Motion passes.

7. Committee Reports

- **Planning – Chair: Frank Farance** – did not meet.
- **Social, Cultural, & Educational – Chair: Lynne Shinozaki**
SC&E did not meet. Lynne Shinozaki asked that anyone wanting to work on the Cherry Blossom Festival contact her. She will start getting the committee together before the Cherry Blossom festival. She would like to schedule the SC&E meetings for the 2nd Tuesday of every month.
- **Public Safety – Chair: Erin Feely-Nahem**
Public Safety met; there were five members in attendance. Items discussed were vertical patrols of WIRE buildings and patrols of Motorgate; traffic control, parking enforcement; and women's safety. They sent a letter to RIOC in reference to the investigation of the Neil Stuben arrest. Next meeting is on Wednesday, February 16 at 7:30 pm. They hope to have Deputy Inspector Stephen Cirabis in attendance. One of the goals of the committee is to create a study group to explore the viability of replacing the Public Safety Department with off duty NYC police officers. (See report and letter.)
- **Island Services: Chair, Aaron Hamburger**
Island Services met on Monday, Feb 4 and did not have time to send out their report before the Common Council meeting. There were 18 members in attendance. Items discussed were proposed changes in Red Bus stops and operations; new public library; parks & playgrounds;

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Motorgate; full service pharmacy; Q-102 Bus; use of rat poison on RI; and nomination of Susan Marcus and Elisabeth Stapen as co-chairs of the Main Street Sub-committee. (See report.) **Motion:** Aaron Hamburger moved to approve Susan Marcus and Elisabeth Stapen as co-chairs of the MSRAC Sub-committee.

In favor - 27 Opposed – 0 Abstain – 1 Total votes: 28 Motion passes.

- **Public Purpose Fund Sub-Committee: Chair: Dave Evans**

Public Purpose Fund Sub-committee has not formed. Dave Evans would like to keep the committee size to not more than seven. In order to be a member of the committee, persons cannot have a conflict of interest. He has made initial contact with RIOC. The PPF applications are due January 11 by 5:00 pm. RIOC will review the applicants and get them to RIRA as soon as feasible. Dave Evans will reach out to all applicants and set up a time for them to present to the committee. The committee will meet and report back to the Common Council at the March meeting.

The president explained to the new members the importance of the Public Purpose Fund Sub Committee and asked for volunteers to join.

Members

Allen, Barbara	Manhattan Park
Amatullah, Lailah	Roosevelt Island
Bosbach, Eva	Southtown
Feely-Nahem, Erin	Westview
Farance, Frank	Island House
Shinozaki, Lynne	Manhattan Park
Williams, Lorraine	Roosevelt Landings

- **Housing Committee - Chair: Joyce Mincheff** – not present at the Common Council meeting and did not submit a report.
- **Government Relations – Chair Michael Churchill**
Government Relations met last night and did not have time to get report to Common Council before the meeting. Seven members were present at the meeting. Some items discussed were: long term goals; upcoming shifts in city/state offices; networking scheme; and list of RI specialists. (Did not submit report. Report to follow.)
- **Communications – Co-chairs: Mark Lyon/Nicole Walden**
Communications did not formally meet as a whole committee. The chairs met with Ellen Polivy to transfer control. Mark Lyons is working on the website and communication list. He updated the Council email list and is working on getting committee list for committee chairs. He asked that committee chairs see him to get names of members on their committee. There is an opportunity for anyone who wants to work with the calendar. It will take a couple of hours each week. (See Report.)

8. Selection of Team Leaders for each building complex

A 17 minute discussion of Teams Leaders continues at this time. Discussion highlights:

Q: What would team leaders do and what role do they have in the Common Council? If there is going to be a meeting each month, will this be a regular agenda item at RIRA meetings?

Suggestion: Dave Evans suggested that the President, in the WIRE RIRA President's Column reach out to the community and ask them to seek out their RIRA representatives.

Recommendation: Lynne Shinozaki: recommended that each apartment complex should have a photo of its RIRA representatives in the buildings with contact information so residents can get in touch with their representatives.

C: There is nothing about team leaders in the by-laws. While it might be a good idea, we would have to amend the by-laws in order to have this position.

C: Each Rep should be responsible for his/her own building and should post things in the buildings.

The President asked that a RIOC Board member who was present at the meeting speak about what RIOC is looking for as feedback from RI residents. Margie Smith was asked to speak. She briefly stated that when RIOC is thinking about doing things or making decisions, they always wonder what the consensus is with the residents of RI. She thinks it would be good to have a way to get to the buildings and get the actual feedback from the residents. RIOC is not so interested in what a few members of RIRA thinks, but would much prefer to hear back from a lot of RI residents.

Motion: Trevre Andrews moved that we table the discussion to the Communications Committee. The President asked for objections to unanimous approval; there were none. Motion passes.

The President stated that at the very first RIRA meeting in November 2012, she had requested someone from every building join the Communications Committee. This would solve the problem of needing team leaders. The president asked directly that more Common Council members join the Communications Committee. No additional members volunteered to be on the committee. There are no representatives from Southtown, Roosevelt Landings, Island House, or Westview on the Communications Committee.

9. Old/New Business

- **Motion:** Susan Marcus moved to "get rid of Robert's Rules" and replace it some sort of civility. She believes that Robert's Rules is holding us up and keeping us from getting things done. **Point of Order** by Aaron Hamburger. We would have to revise the by-laws. Susan Marcus stated that we could do that with a 2/3 majority vote.
- **Motion:** Michael Churchill moved to table discussion. The President will put it on the agenda for the February meeting. No vote taken.

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- **Black History Exhibition at Gallery RIVAA:** February is Black History month. Lorraine Williams is one of the Curators for the Black History Exhibition at Gallery RIVAA. The exhibition will run from Feb 2 through Feb 24. A reception will be held on Feb 2 from 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm.
- **More Ethnic Foods & Books on RI** - : Lynne Shinozaki stated that SE&C is working to get ethnic foods at the Farmer's Market and more ethnic books at the RI Branch of the Public Library. They would like to reach out to residents to see what specific foods or books they would like to see in the library.
- **Skateboarding Problems on RI** - Some residents have reached out to Dave Evans in reference to skateboarding on RI. Concerns are in the area of subway station and to the west of building 455. There have been frequent disturbances of the peace and quiet. He would like to turn this issue over to the proper RIRA committee. What are the laws governing this and what is the enforcement? Aaron Hamburger thought that the board of Southtown should look into this issue because it concerns Southtown. Dave Evans feels that it is a broader issue than just Southtown. Erin Feely- Nahem stated that a lot of complaints have come to the Public Safety committee as to how Public Safety Officers have been dealing with skateboarders. For example skateboarders by the church were told to move to the Island House courtyard. When they moved to the other location, one of the skateboards was confiscated and they had to get their parents involved to get the skateboard back. Public safety will look into the skateboard issue. **Suggestion:** Joseph Strong suggested that parents of skateboarders organize and form a group to advocate for a park space for skateboarders. They can apply for Public Purpose Funds to facilitate this.
- **Ellen Polivy** - mentioned that there was a poll in the WIRE. RI residents can take the poll online or by completing the form in the WIRE and submitting it to the Public Safety Office or to the front desk in their building. She asked that each Common Council member take a manila envelope that she provided and bring it to the front desk in his/her building. Residents could complete the poll and put it in the envelopes. Several council members took envelopes.

10. Adjourn

- The President adjourned the meeting at 10:30 pm.

Submitted by: Barbara Allen
March 1, 2013