

Letters

To the Editor:

To say that Westview is sinking fast into a purple haze of marijuana smoking might not be news to many of its residents, and certainly not to the pushers whom you can see around its perimeters (river promenade, stairwell exits) during almost any week. What might come as a surprise to most *WIRE* readers, however, is the response of Westview management and of Public Safety to what is an annoying, harmful, and (yes, still) illegal practice of a few irresponsible residents. After repeated requests to both entities over two years – most recently to PSD on May 13, and in a letter to Sheila Redula of RY Management on May 14, and no response yet again – I take this matter to the public forum.

First, some facts:

- According to research currently conducted at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons and the New York State Psychiatric Institute, the marijuana being produced, sold, and consumed nowadays is six times (2% to 12%) more potent – and addictive – that what we knew during the 1960s. That's 600% the amount of the psychoactive (mind-altering) chemical delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). At the dispensaries in California and Colorado, it's 15% to 30% of content, or up to 1500% more potent (Paul Hong, *Breaking Through, Columbia Magazine*, Spring 2014).

- The effects of marijuana on other drug use (the gateway effect) may still be debatable, but the effects of continued smoking on individuals is becoming clear to researchers. Those effects include hindered cognitive abilities, addiction, and growing paranoia.

- Here's a quote from the U.S. Government website (drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/marijuana): "Marijuana also affects brain development, and when it is used heavily by young people, its effects on thinking and memory may last a long time or even be permanent. A recent study of marijuana users who began using in adolescence revealed substantially reduced connectivity among brain areas responsible for learning and memory. And a large long-term study in New Zealand showed that people who began smoking marijuana heavily in their teens lost an average of 8 points in IQ between age 13 and age 38. Importantly, the lost

cognitive abilities were not fully restored in those who quit smoking marijuana as adults. Those who started smoking marijuana in adulthood did not show significant IQ declines." (As another song says, "It can't get no worse.")

- Side effects include the usual physical damage to the smoker's system that cigarette smoking produces: cancer, respiratory disease, heart ailments, impaired immune systems.

- Then there's the second-hand smoke (clearly illegal both in public places in NYC and when such smoke disturbs a neighbor). Second-hand marijuana smoke with this strength and this proximity can intensify the headaches, respiratory discomfort, and nausea that many feel in the presence of tobacco smoke.

- For infants and young children, the effects of second-hand cigarette smoke are intensified. Imagine the effects of marijuana.

But pick up the phone any day of the week, or approach a Public Safety officer in person to complain about the growing purple haze, and the response is almost always the same: *We have no authority to enter an apartment, the perpetrators will not answer the door, it's not that much of a problem* (this with eye-rolls and little smiles). Contact Westview (RY) Management and the response is always the same: *Send us a written complaint, making a specific accusation against a certain apartment and its residents. Stop just short of taking the law into your own hands in the potentially dangerous process of identifying the offending apartments. "Politely" ask neighbors high on pot to stop.* But RY Management and PSD effectively refuse to do anything.

Let's put all this into broader context:

- It's now the 21st century. Many of us work at home, all day long. Yes, for money and pleasure; yes, with our spouses and children around us. We live here on Roosevelt Island because we enjoy our neighbors, peace and quiet, fresh air, the views, and good architecture. We mind our own business in our apartments, and we do not inconvenience anyone by doing that. We pay money for that right. But, in fact, our presence adds to the community, its economic vibrance and the "eyes on the street" benefit of 24-hour community. We do not like to close our windows, get headaches and coughing fits, or otherwise diminish our lives for the convenience of a small bunch of potheads.

- We've all heard the arguments that pot will soon be legal, that alcohol causes far more problems, that folks are entitled to do what they want in their own apartments: live and let live, don't get uptight.

- But I'm no Libertarian, and neither are most *WIRE* readers, I suspect. Potheads have problems, they *cause* social problems, and we should care about them. But they should care about us, too. And so should the police and the Westview management office.

- Much of the pot smoking that affects us goes on within yards of two school buildings. To the north, PS/IS 217, with kids ranging anywhere from K to 8 and special ed. To the south, the Child School. Please, let's not pretend that the kids aren't aware of the reek, and that many of our school students might not be tempted to sample, especially with the free range given the dealers and users by PSD and RY Management. Does anyone care to claim that this is OK with teachers and parents?

- It shouldn't come as a shock to PSD or RY Management that many of our neighbors have children – pre-teens and teens, young adults still living at home – whom they do not want smoking pot. How many of them do you think are innocent of what's going on all around them? Of the pot smoke and the dealing? Walk down the West Promenade behind Island House or Westview on a late night, winter or summer, and first smell the pot, then see the roach-huddles of guys with their cellphones always busy.

- We at Westview – like our neighbors in Rivercross and Island House – are in the process of converting our building into a resident-controlled co-op or condo. Is there anybody reading this who seriously thinks clouds of marijuana smoke and dealers hanging out around the building actually add to building resale value? Do you want to buy an apartment next to or above a pothead or a casual dealer?

- But maybe, in their own purple haze, some of our neighbors actually think it's still 1974 and they're still 30. Or maybe PSD and our building managers think they can still turn a blind eye.

Really? It's time to clear away the purple haze.

Ron Musto

To the Editor:

Thanks to Gallery RIVAA for its art participation last weekend with Bike New York. Both kids and adults painted decorative creations on a large white shipping container. It's under the helix near Gristedes.

Thanks to RIVAA for its community involvement. May you always be here.

Jan Fund

COMING UP

– This Weekend –

Subway Diversion: No direct service to Manhattan, **Fri Jun 20** 11:15pm to **Mon Jun 23** 5am. Service from Manhattan to the Island normal; Tram service expected to be normal or extended. Same next weekend (see below).

Roosevelt Island Day, Sat Jun 21 8am-8pm, Good Shepherd Plaza (and other locations where specified):

Yoga classes 8:30am (also 11:30, 1:30pm), Rivercross Lawn
Bagels & Coffee Volunteer Breakfast, 9am
Spruce-up & Flower Planting, 9am-12noon
Children's Art Workshops, 10am-3pm, Blackwell Plaza
Blood Drive, 546 Main St, 10am-4pm, Senior Center, 546 Main St.
Petting Zoo, 11am-1pm
Carnival Games & Rides, 12noon-3pm
NYLife-Masonic ID Screening, 1:30-3pm, plaza at 591 Main St.
MST&DA music and dance presentation, 6pm
Concert, 6:30pm

Blood Drive – drop-ins welcome, **Sat Jun 21** 10am-4pm, Senior Center, 546 Main St.

Make Music New York, Five Minute Guitar Lessons, Sat Jun 21 2-3pm, Library. All ages.

Make Music New York Concerts (five groups), **Sat Jun 21** 12noon-5:15pm, Four Freedoms Park.

12noon-1pm, *Dolunay* – Turkish – on the lawn
1-2pm, *Loalu Senbanjo* – Afrobeat/Soul/Reggae – in the room
2-3pm, *Tom do Brasil* – Brazilian/Latin – on the stairs
3:30-4:30pm, *AK* – Indie/folk-pop – in the room
4:30-5:15pm, *Anastasis Falcon* – Paisley Underground – lawn

Opening reception for Camera, Brush, and Chisel, Sat Jun 21 6-9pm, Gallery RIVAA, 527 Main St. *Photography and sculpture* by RIVAA member artists; exhibit continues through Jul 27. Gallery hours **Sat-Sun** 11am-5pm **Tue & Thu** 1-5pm, **Wed & Fri** 6-9pm.

– Regularly Scheduled Meetings and Events –

See separate listing, page 6.

– The Next Six Weeks –

New Constituent Service Hours for State Senator Jose Serrano and/or staff begins **Tue Jun 24** 3-6pm, Library. (Additional info, page 6).

Vision Zero Forum on street safety, **Tue Jun 24** 6:30pm, Lang Recital Hall, Hunter College, Park Avenue at 69th St., sponsored by State Senator Liz Krueger, City Council members Ben Kallos and Dan Garodnick. Info: 212-860-1950.

RI Women's Health Organization meets, **Wed Jun 25** 6:30pm, 546 Main St. 12th floor community room. Andy Reddick on Chakras. (Last meeting until September.)

Forum on Bike Lanes, **Wed Jun 25** 6:30pm, Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, 331 E. 70th St., with the NYC Dept. of Transportation, sponsored by elected officials representing Manhattan's East Side. RSVP at BenKallos.com/events.

Town Meeting for State Assembly candidates, **Wed Jun 25** 8pm, Good Shepherd Center, sponsored by the Residents Association. (See *RIRA Column* continuation, this page.)

Movies for Toddlers, **Thu Jun 26** 11-11:45am, Library.

Open House at the new district office of State Senator Jose Serrano, **Thu Jun 26** 4-7pm, 1916 Park Av (130th/131st), suite 202. Refreshments.

Subway Diversion: No direct service to Manhattan, **Fri Jun 27** 11:15pm to **Mon Jun 30** 5am. Service from Manhattan to the Island normal; Tram service expected to be normal or extended.

RISA Flea Market, Sat Jun 28 9:30am-4pm, Good Shepherd Plaza
R&R Concert, Hummel and the Trout – piano quintets of Hummel and Schubert, **Sat Jun 28** 7:30pm, Good Shepherd Center. Ralph Allen, violin; Junah Chung, viola; Iris Jortner, cello; Max Zeugner, bass; Yi-heng Yang, piano. (Ad, page 4.)

Summer Movie Series shows *Frozen*, **Sat Jun 28** 7pm, Southpoint Park.
Eleanor's Pier opens, **Fri Jul 4**, 12noon-9pm, at the pier near the subway stop. "Smorgasburg"-style food court. (Ad, page 12.)

Lively Americana Music performed by The Amigos, **Fri Jul 4** 4-6pm, Four Freedoms Park. Free. (Ad, page 5.)

Closing Fri Jul 4 7pm: Southpoint Park and Four Freedoms Park.

Fourth of July Celebration, Fri Jul 4 7pm, Firefighters Field. Free. Live simulcast of Macy's fireworks. (See *RIOC Column*, previous page.)

Summer Movie Series shows *The Dark World*, **Fri Jul 11** sundown, Southpoint Park.

Summer Movie Series shows *The Avengers*, **Sat Jul 12** sundown, Southpoint Park.

Imagination Playground, Mon July 14 and **Tue Jul 15**, Four Freedoms Park, time to be announced. Child-directed free play. Ad, page 5.

R&R Concert, Beautiful Beethoven, Sat Jul 19 7:30pm, Good Shepherd Center. Ralph Allen, violin; Iris Jortner, cello; Byron Schenkman, piano. (Ad, page 4.)

R&R Concert, Midsummer Night's Music, Sat Jul 26 7:30pm, Good Shepherd Center. Elizabeth Perry, Ralph Allen, violins; Richard Wolfe, viola; Iris Jortner, cello; Francine Kay, piano. (Ad, page 4.)

Summer Movie Series shows *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, **Sat Jul 26** sundown, Southpoint Park.

Cornell Construction & Community Task Force meeting, **Mon Jul 28** 6-8pm, 12th floor meeting room, 546 Main St.

– Future Weeks –

The Main Street WIRE– **Sat Aug 2**. **Advertising deadlines:** Display ads, **Wed Jul 23**; decision date for circulars/inserts, **Tue Jul 29**; 5,500 copies due **Thu Jul 31**. **Future issues:** Aug 30; Sep 13, 27; Oct 11, 25; Nov 8, 22; Dec 13. **2015:** Jan 10, 24; Feb 7, 21; Mar 7, 21; Apr 4, 18; May 2, 16, 30; Jun 13, 27; Aug 1; Sep 1, 15, 29; Sep 12, 26; Oct 10, 24; Nov 7, 21; Dec 12. **News phone,** See **Events**, page 6

The WIRE

Letters deadline

for August 2 issue:
Tuesday, July 29, 5:00 p.m.

(Last chance
before August 30 issue)

RIRA Column, from previous page

each of you to attend a Town Meeting next week, on Wednesday, June 25, at the Good Shepherd Community Center (543 Main Street), from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., to Meet the Candidates for New York State's 76th Assembly District, which includes Roosevelt Island. Hosted by the RIRA Common Council and its Government Relations Committee, this is YOUR opportunity to meet the four individuals vying in the fall elections for the seat to be vacated by Assembly Member Micah Kellner. Come and ask the tough questions of candidates Gus Christensen, Ed Hartzog, David Menegon, and Rebecca Seawright, and find out whether they have what it takes to ensure that the interests of our Island are well represented. The first of many steps in renewing our community is to ensure that the right advocates for our interests are elected to our local government posts.

Lastly, speaking of elections, each and every seat on the Common Council, including those of president and vice president, will be up for grabs come November. Are you interested in serving the interests of your building? Do you have ideas on how the Council can better serve the Island and its residents? Do you have a strong interest in promoting real change for Island life? Then I strongly encourage you to consider running this fall. If you live in The Octagon or Manhattan Park and want to see now what it is like to serve on the Council, prior to running, please contact me at president@riraonline.com. Both buildings have a significant number of seats open at this time, to which you can be appointed, and thereby serve during September and October, up to the date of the election. If you want more information on what it is like to serve on the Council, or you have questions or concerns that you believe the Council should address, please contact me and/or your building's members. The Common Council can only be as effective and engaged as the people it represents, so it is up to each and every one of us, as RIRA members, to ensure that we engage those representatives, and that the organization properly serves the interests of our community.

May the days of your summer be full of fun, family, heat, and happiness. And if you see me around the Island, please be sure to stop and say hello!