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June 7, 2018

STATEMENT FROM RIOC REGARDING ISLAND CAT SANCTUARY WATER AVAILABILITY

We applaud the volunteer work that the non-profit Wildlife Freedom Foundation (WFF) is doing on Roosevelt Island to help promote compassion and provide protection for wildlife, stray animals and more specifically the feral cat population on the Island.

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) has a long history – more than seven years - of supporting the Foundation's efforts by building several cat sanctuaries, providing locked storage facilities, installing car speed bumps near the cat colonies and just today, awarding the first half of a \$5,000 public purpose grant to help subsidize WFF's program and administrative costs.

But now RIOC - in trying to find a compromise over a water use dispute with WFF - is slandered as an animal cruelty corporation by a few who've only heard one-half of the story.

When we learned, more than a month ago, that the Southpoint Park irrigation system tap - of which WFF was using as a water source for drinking and cleaning at its Southpoint Cat Sanctuary - was causing pressure-related problems, we contacted WFF several times via email, telephone and in person to discuss potential solutions.

These alternatives included: installing a new water tap at the Southpoint Park comfort station (with the free use of a push cart) at no cost to WFF; installing a rainwater collection tank with a pressure pump, at no cost to WFF; or building a water line directly to the cat sanctuary, at their expense since this requires us tearing up the pavement, excavation, installing the pipe and then repaving. None of these were acceptable to WFF.

There are two other cat sanctuaries RIOC built on the Island; one near the rear of the NYC Health + Hospitals/Coler parking lot and the other at Pony Field just south of Octagon Park. RIOC does not supply water taps there, but the cats all had an abundance of fresh water in their bowls when we went to check this Thursday afternoon.

And in the six months of the year that the Southpoint irrigation system is not on and no tap is available to WFF (usually in the late fall and winter), none of cats at the Southpoint sanctuary go thirsty. WFF delivers water, by cart or by car, to keep all the felines hydrated.

And there's one last point we should make. Irrigation system water, like the one WFF was using, is not potable; that means the water is not suitable for drinking by humans or animals since it's contaminated by fertilizer, pesticides, feces and other contaminants.

Nobody wants the cats ingesting those types of pollutants. Let's find a solution for the Southpoint Cat Sanctuary that makes healthy sense for everyone.

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