NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. | Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation

# RIOC News

*Volume 9, Issue 6: October 2026*

## IN THIS ISSUE


| | |
|---|---|
| **Letter from the President & CEO** | 02 |
| **Employee Spotlight** | 02 |
| **Community Calendar** | 03 |
| **Officer of the Month** | 04 |
| **Updates from RIOC** | 06 |
| **Board Updates** | 12 |

Letter from the President & CEO

# Letter from the President & CEO

Dear Roosevelt Islanders:

As we look ahead to the coming fiscal year, one of our most important priorities is ensuring RIOC can continue to meet the needs of our community while remaining fiscally responsible. As discussed at last week's Audit Committee meeting, we have worked hard to develop a proposed FY2027-28 budget that balances the island's many needs with our fiscal constraints.

It is important to be transparent about our fiscal outlook. While our income covers daily operations, our cash reserves, which fund capital projects, are projected to run out as early as FY2029. This is less about previous spending decisions and more about a structural deficiency that was baked into RIOC's creation. Ground lease revenue and sporadic lump-sum payments from island development were never sufficient to sustain the community in perpetuity, given our long-term maintenance obligations. Even if every prior administration had spent every dollar perfectly, we would still face similar challenges today. Given our significant needs, from addressing the dilapidated steam tunnel to protecting the island from increasingly severe weather, something has to change.

We are committed to tackling this problem now. Following last year's announcement of the 10-year Master Lease extension, we are working to renegotiate ground leases to better support our operations and extend affordability where possible. We are also pursuing new grant funding and working with policymakers to explore financing capital projects through bonding authority, which RIOC does not currently have. The planning study announced with the City could offer another pathway to generate revenue while exploring opportunities for affordable housing and infrastructure investments. We remain hopeful it can launch soon, with robust community engagement at its core.

These steps are about more than money. They are about ensuring RIOC can continue providing the critical services our island needs and deserves.

We are also making progress on projects residents can see firsthand. Repairs at Eleanor's Pier remain on schedule, and we plan to reopen the pier by next summer. Improvements around the ferry landing, including better pedestrian access and a new drainage system to reduce puddling, are expected to be completed by mid-November.

In Blackwell Park, we have transformed the old sandpit into a quiet seating area with benches overlooking the playground. We also upgraded a section of sidewalk to improve drainage and added concrete curbs near the courts. Our recent survey of residents about future park improvements received an overwhelming response, and the feedback will help guide our redesign work.

On Meditation Lawn, our Fall for Arts murals will remain standing for the next couple of weeks before moving to their new home in Motorgate. If you haven't had a chance to see this exceptional work yet, I encourage you to stop by before the murals move. I'm particularly proud to highlight two pieces created by members of our own team: Stephanie Patino of our Public Safety Department, and Chris Alexander of the Maintenance team. They did beautiful work, as did all of the other artists!

Finally, while I unfortunately missed this year's 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony due to a medical emergency, I want to reiterate the importance of honoring those we lost, remembering the sacrifices that were made that day, and recognizing the compassion and resilience that emerged in its aftermath. My special thanks to Chief Kevin Brown, Chief Anthony Amoroso, and Captain Patrick DeCanio, who witnessed the tragedy firsthand. Their service and sacrifice, and the continued bravery of our Public Safety Department must never be forgotten.

# Employee Spotlight

## Employee Spotlight

**Emma Lentchner**

**Assistant Director, Horticulture and Grounds**

**Can you tell us a bit about your background?**

I often say how lucky I am that my hobby naturally evolved into my career. My background is rooted in high-end residential design, which includes five years working hands-on with agricultural and horticultural operations (on dairies, farms, and commercial nurseries), followed by five years as a landscape designer in a design-build architecture firm. Having worked across various regions of the country, from upstate New York and New York City to Pennsylvania and Colorado, I have developed a comprehensive understanding of diverse ecological landscapes, managing environments with both extreme drought and abundant moisture. I am so excited to bring these experiences into this new chapter in park management.

**What brought you to Roosevelt Island?**

I was drawn to Roosevelt Island because of its diverse landscapes, community offerings, and sustainability focus. Managing everything from historic landmarks, public gardens, playgrounds, sports facilities and more, I was incredibly motivated by the breadth of RIOC's responsibilities and the real world, everyday impact it had on the community. I was looking to shift my focus from design toward long-term environmental stewardship and park management; to nurture a single landscape over time rather than constantly building and moving on. Roosevelt Island felt like the ideal place to put those values into practice.

**What does a typical day look like for you?**

The best part of my job is that every day is different! My time is mostly spent in the field, rather than tied to a desk and my primary responsibility is supporting Tommy in leading the Grounds team to make the island as clean and beautiful as possible. On any given day, that might involve jumping in to water plants, hauling away debris, setting up for community events, or helping to conceptualize a new planting space for the island.

**What challenges do you face in your role?**

One unique challenge we navigate is balancing a wide array of competing stakeholder interests. It is wonderful that our community is so deeply invested in the island, but that high level of engagement naturally brings diverse priorities. The key is harmonizing those various perspectives while ensuring our core principles of safety, cleanliness, and horticultural beauty always remain at the forefront.

**And finally, what's your favorite part about working on Roosevelt Island?**

My favorite part of the day starts right at the beginning: walking across the Astoria Bridge every morning to work and watching the sunrise. It always puts into perspective how lucky I am to work outside, in a wonderfully diverse park, on an island, in the middle of NYC. Beyond the setting, it is a privilege to work alongside an organization and community so deeply committed to ecology and preservation, and to see firsthand the tangible difference we make every day in keeping the island beautiful.

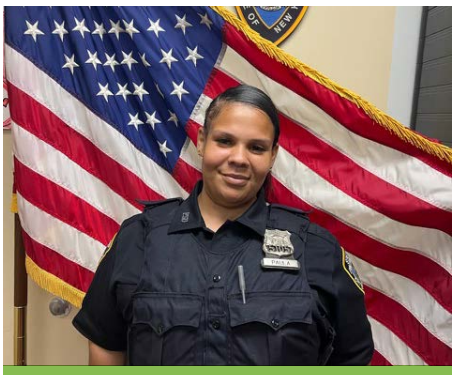
## Community Calendar

**Friday, December 4th**

'Tis the season to gather and ignite the holiday spirit! RIOC invites you to the Roosevelt Island Tree Lighting Ceremony on December 4th at 6:00PM on Meditation Lawn. We'll illuminate the night sky with a tree adorned with shimmering lights, and there will be music, performances, festive treats, and more!

# Officer of the Month

We're excited to highlight the Officer of the Month from the last few months. The Officer of the Month award recognizes officers who show outstanding dedication and impactful service to the community.



## Officer Paula

## June Officer of the Month

Officer Paula was nominated for the Officer of the Month Award in recognition of her exemplary service, professionalism, and unwavering dedication to the Roosevelt Island community. Although she had been with the department for only a year, she quickly distinguished herself as a hardworking and dependable officer who consistently demonstrated initiative, exceptional situational awareness, and a strong commitment to public safety.

A prime example of her outstanding performance came when a local store manager approached her about a suspected shoplifting incident. Officer Paula immediately investigated, confirmed the concealed, unpaid merchandise with the manager, and issued the individual a trespass notice, thoroughly explaining its conditions before escorting her from the area without further incident. Throughout the encounter, she demonstrated professionalism, sound judgment, and effective conflict resolution.

Through her quick response and proactive intervention, the theft was prevented and all merchandise was recovered, sparing the business a financial loss. Officer Paula's dedication to duty and commitment to safeguarding both residents and local businesses made her an invaluable asset to the Public Safety Department and reflected great credit upon the department.

## Officer Cohen

## July Officer of the Month

Officer Cohen was nominated for the Officer of the Month Award in recognition of his outstanding service, unwavering professionalism, and exceptional dedication to the Roosevelt Island community. Over 36 years with the Roosevelt Island Public Safety Department, his commitment never diminished, and he continued to perform his duties with the same vigilance, integrity, and dedication as on his first day. His consistent work ethic and calm demeanor made him a highly respected and invaluable member of the department.

This summer, Officer Cohen responded to a disruptive incident at Public Safety headquarters involving an individual who refused repeated requests to leave. He handled the situation with composure and sound judgment, safely resolving the incident without unnecessary escalation or injury. His ability to remain calm under pressure reflected his decades of experience and enduring commitment to public safety.

Officer Cohen's exemplary service sets an outstanding example for fellow officers and embodies the highest standards of professionalism, integrity, and dedication to the Roosevelt Island community.

# August Officer of the Month

Officer David Greene was recommended for Officer of the Month in recognition of his initiative, professionalism, and dedication to duty. His supervisor highlighted his proactive approach to patrol, consistent enforcement, and attentiveness to calls for service.

Officer Greene demonstrated these qualities in his handling of recent incidents, taking appropriate action, assisting those involved, gathering information, and completing necessary documentation.

His dependability, sound judgment, and commitment to public safety reflect positively on the department and his service to the Roosevelt Island community.

Officer Greene

# September Officer of the Month

Officer Sharese Samuel was nominated for Officer of the Month in recognition of her professionalism, strong work ethic, reliability, and continued dedication to Roosevelt Island and the Public Safety Department. Throughout September, she handled a variety of assignments with good judgment and a strong commitment to her duties, and her sergeant noted that she worked well with fellow officers and supervisors, followed through on assignments, and remained a dependable member of the tour.

Two incidents in particular demonstrated her dedication and professionalism. During a disorderly conduct incident, Officer Samuel assisted with the investigation, gathered information, and worked with responding personnel to bring the matter to an appropriate conclusion, with both parties issued summonses. Later that month, she also assisted in locating two young children who had briefly become separated from their family. She canvassed her assigned sector and helped reunite the children with their parents once they were found.

These incidents demonstrated Officer Samuel's dependability, teamwork, initiative, and commitment to public safety. She showed she could effectively handle both enforcement situations and those requiring an immediate, coordinated response to protect the community, making her well deserving of recognition as Officer of the Month.

Officer Samuel

# Updates from RIOC

## DSNY Host Leadership Conference on Roosevelt Island

RIOC was pleased to welcome the NYC Department of Sanitation (DSNY) to Roosevelt Island for its recent leadership team retreat, where RIOC President and CEO B.J. Jones spoke about our island's unique Automated Vacuum Collection (AVAC) system and the maintenance operations that help keep the island clean and green. The event included a team gathering at Cornell Tech and a tour of the island's infrastructure.

Thank you to DSNY Commissioner Greg Anderson for bringing the retreat to Roosevelt Island and for his kind words. We're also grateful to the entire DSNY team for their continued partnership in managing our specialized waste collection system and maintaining essential waste removal services for our community.

## McManus Green Roof, AVAC Included in GreenNY Tour of Roosevelt Island

On October 20, members of the GreenNY Council visited Roosevelt Island as part of a tour dedicated to exploring different green infrastructure initiatives designed to help reduce carbon output and improve sustainability. Council members visited McManus Field where they met with RIOC President and CEO B.J. Jones to discuss the green roof on the field's comfort station, and later toured the AVAC plant. GreenNY is a New York State government initiative and council dedicated to reducing the environmental footprint of state operations and driving sustainable practices.

## Assembly Member Seawright Procures 200K Grant for AVAC System Modernization

Roosevelt Island's State Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright has worked to procure $200,000 in discretionary funding for the Roosevelt Island AVAC system, funding that will support critical upgrades to the system, which has exceeded its original operational lifespan. The money will fund the replacement of deteriorated piping and aging plant rails used to transport waste containers inside the AVAC plant.

*"On behalf of the Roosevelt Island community, I'd like to thank Assembly Member Seawright for working hard to procure this $200,000 state grant, which will help fund critical infrastructure upgrades for the island's AVAC system,"* **said RIOC President and CEO B.J. Jones.** *"This unique system helps maintain the island's cleanliness, while reducing truck traffic and congestion. Keeping Roosevelt Island clean and green is a top priority for RIOC, and we deeply appreciate Assembly Member Seawright's partnership and continued support in helping us achieve that goal."*

*"Roosevelt Island's innovative AVAC system has served this community for more than 50 years, and we must ensure it continues to serve residents safely and reliably for generations to come,"* **said Assembly Member Rebecca A. Seawright.** *"I am proud to secure $200,000 to help modernize this essential infrastructure, prevent costly disruptions, and protect the health and quality of life of Roosevelt Islanders. I thank RIOC for its continued partnership in strengthening our community."*

## State Senator Krueger & Assembly Member Seawright Host Free Community Shredding

RIOC thanks the offices of NYS Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright and State Senator Liz Krueger, along with the NYC Department of Sanitation (DSNY), for organizing a free community shredding event on October 23 at the Motorgate turnaround. The event provided Roosevelt Island residents with a convenient, no-cost opportunity to securely dispose of sensitive documents. We appreciate our elected officials' annual efforts to bring this valuable service to the island!

## Sportspark Veterans Day Yoga Class

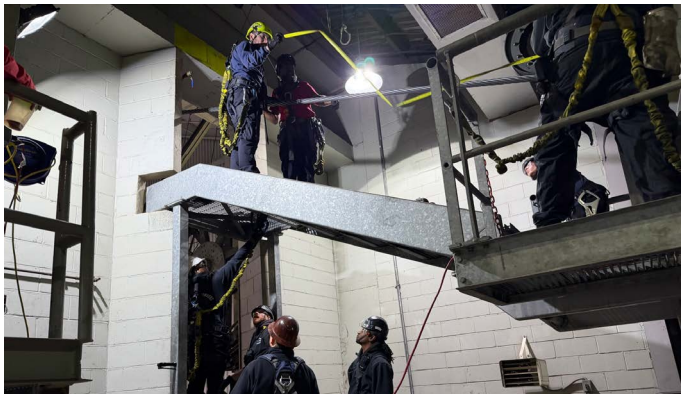
Join Sportspark on Sunday, November 8th, from 10:15 AM to 11:05 AM at Sportspark for a FREE 50-minute yoga class taught by Roosevelt Island resident and United States military veteran Marie-Michelle Strah! This event is a key highlight of Veterans Gratitude Week, an annual fundraiser hosted by the Veterans Yoga Project. Class registration is on a first come, first serve basis and is capped to the first 25 participants. Register here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdQRx-viDOEVeXZEXIOhKFYPrPzzPqTj3pI9lQ1STgdeb8K9A/viewform.

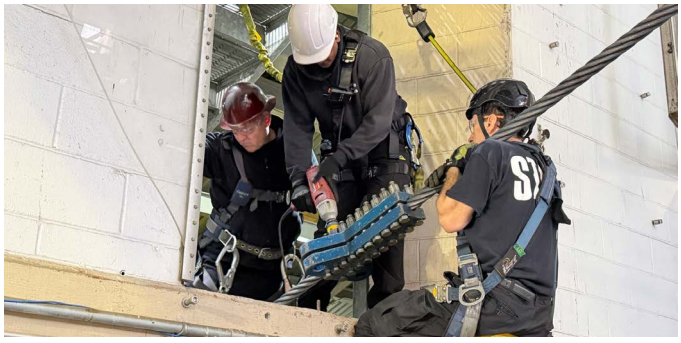
## PSD Makes Major Push on Safe Cycling

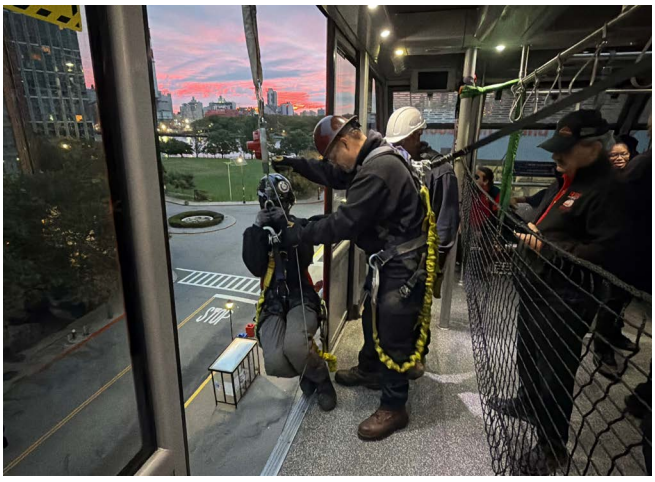
RIOC Public Safety is pushing to make cycling safer for riders and pedestrians on the island. For the past several weeks, PSD officers have been stopping cyclists and commercial delivery riders at stop signs to hand out informational flyers on bicycle safety, while reminding them that they must obey traffic laws while riding. Enforcement will continue, including by summonsing repeat offenders.

## POMA Personnel Take Part in Biannual Preparedness Training

Twice a year, the Roosevelt Island Tram team conducts emergency safety and rescue drills to practice passenger evacuation and rescue procedures, test emergency equipment, and reinforce coordination among operations and maintenance staff. These drills, which most recently took place on October 13, help ensure our team is prepared to respond quickly and safely if an emergency ever occurs.

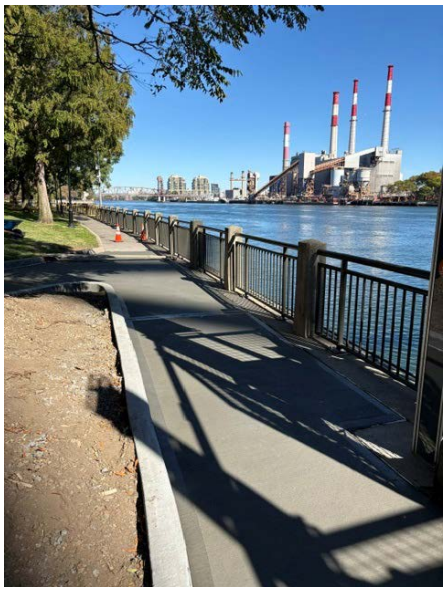






## RIOC Continues Upgrades to Area Near Ferry Landing

As part of the corporation's ongoing commitment to improving pedestrian pathways, the RIOC Maintenance team has been upgrading the sidewalk near the ferry landing to create a more even surface, prevent puddling and soil migration, and provide a more direct path to simplify ferry access for island residents and visitors. The project is expected to be completed by mid-November.

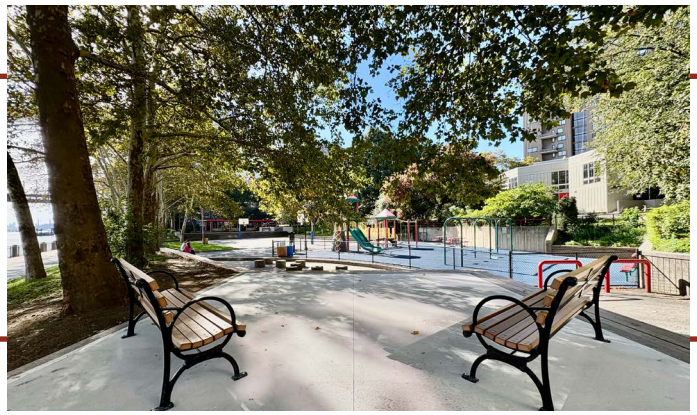


## Repair Work on Eleanor's Pier Continues

Work on Eleanor's Pier is continuing on schedule, with reopening anticipated in summer 2027. In October, divers and workers performed grout work and pile cleaning along the pier's edge, following demolition work that was completed several weeks ago. Divers will begin working on pile encasement next, so keep an eye on the pier as the work progresses!

## Blackwell Park Improvements

Your peaceful new spot to watch the kiddos in Blackwell Playground! RIOC added new seating overlooking Blackwell Park, replacing the rundown sandpit. Enjoy!



# RIOC Hosts 2026 Halloween Extravaganza and Parade

Roosevelt Island was crawling with ghosts, goblins, superheroes and other spooky characters on October 24, as several thousand islanders marched in our annual Halloween Parade before heading to Southpoint Park for an afternoon of festive fun. Families enjoyed a frightfully fun lineup of attractions, activities and Halloween treats. Thank you to everyone who joined us and helped make this year's celebration a spooktacular success!

# Roosevelt Island Youth Center, Beacon Program Host "Lights on After School" Celebration

On October 22, The Roosevelt Island Youth Center and the Beacon program hosted the 4th Annual Lights on After-School Festival at Capobianco Field. The free community celebration highlighted the importance of after-school programs with an afternoon of music, performances, art, family activities, community resources, and giveaways. The event brought island families together to celebrate the programs and opportunities that help our young people learn, grow, and thrive.

## The Gensler Family AAP NYC Center Studio Lab Class located at Cornell Tech Focuses on Roosevelt Island

Recently, RIOC President and CEO B.J. Jones and members of the RIOC staff were invited to speak with architecture students at The Gensler Family AAP NYC Center's Studio Lab Class located at Cornell Tech. This course examines Roosevelt Island, urban development, and interconnectivity. Students are divided into groups to tackle specific island issues and conditions to better discuss solutions and create immersive models. We can't wait to see their creative and inventive ideas!

## RIOC Hosts Fall NYC Parks Meeting

Behind the scenes of every park, there is a dedicated group of individuals who are trusted to maintain the grounds. On October 8th, RIOC hosted the first Fall Park Operations meeting with leadership from many other NYC Parks and green spaces. This meeting was a collaborative effort to discuss best practices, sustainability goals, and managing extreme weather events for city parkland.

# Board Updates

## Board Updates

On Thursday, October 22 the full RIOC Board of Directors met and approved several items, including the renewal of agreements with ADP for payroll processing and human resources services and Blackbaud for financial records retention; contracts for the Real Estate Advisory and Consulting Services Panel; a contract with Arcadis of New York for flood risk assessment services; and a contract with Bridge Philanthropic Consulting LLC to administer RIOC's Public Purpose Fund. The Board also received a presentation of the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2027–28. Just prior to the full board meeting, a meeting of the RIOC Board's Audit Committee was held, where a presentation was given on the proposed 27-28 budget. To learn more about these items and view past meetings, please visit https://www.rioc.ny.gov/about/board-meetings/meetings-notices.