

ONLINE-OFFSHORE: News from Governors Island  
Regional Plan Association/Governors Island Alliance  
July 2005 Issue No. 6

Editor: Richard E. Mooney

A periodic newsletter by and for people who care about metropolitan New York and its “new” (300-year-old) special space. The Governors Island Alliance is an association of 30-plus local, regional and national organizations dedicated to planning, conservation, historic preservation and the environment. To be deleted from the e-mailing list, or to submit letters for publication or ask questions, go to [governorsisland@rpa.org](mailto:governorsisland@rpa.org)

Glossary: GIPEC is the Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation, the stand-and-city agency that owns most of the Island: [www.gipec.org](http://www.gipec.org). NPS is the National Park Service, parent of the Governors Island National Monument (Fort Jay, Castle Williams and land between: [www.governorsislandnationalmonument.org](http://www.governorsislandnationalmonument.org). GIA is us.

#### IN THIS ISSUE

- + Interim President: Paul Kelly
- + Dozens of ideas
- + Harbor 360Y
- + Alliance Criteria
- + Summer Activity
- + Candidate’s Views
- + Island Events
- + Governors Island Swim
- + Open to the Public

#### Paul Kelly Named Interim President

Paul Kelly, assistant general counsel of the city’s Economic Development Corporation, became Interim President of GIPEC in May, while they find a replacement for Jim Lima, the first President. Kelly was the city’s lead attorney in negotiations to recover control of the Island. He has also been involved in the development of Brooklyn Bridge Park, the relocation of the Fulton Fish Market to Hunts Point, and negotiation of the Kennedy and LaGuardia Airport leases with the Port Authority. He holds B.A. and J.D. degrees from Fordham and a Masters degree from the Real Estate Institute of NYU.

#### Dozens of Ideas

GIPEC’s restarted search for a plan for the Island’s future drew more than 90 responses. Ideas came from developers, planners and investors, some commercial and some non-profit. Proposals ranged from treatments of the whole Island to various parts of parts of it – including the northern historic district, the forts and the 80-acre southern half – as well as individual buildings. Plans also surfaced for the Battery Maritime Building, home port of the ferry on the tip of Manhattan. GIPEC announced that it received “substantial proposals in the areas of education, recreation, culture and hospitality.” It is now sifting through the ideas, as well as earlier ideas, and expects to present “the conceptual

framework for the Island in the early fall.” Meanwhile, GIPEC staff are leading tours of the Island for organizations that submitted ideas.

## Harbor 360

The Governors Island Alliance convened eight partners on plans for construction of an educational Harbor 360 at the southern end of the Island, “a place where visitors, students, researchers, scholars and policy makers can come together to learn and exchange knowledge about the physical, biological and social dynamism of the New York Harbor estuary.” The plan visualizes an 80,000 square foot building and a two-acre scale model of the harbor, cutting a small bay into the Buttermilk Channel side of the Island – “an interactive harbor-scape built into the landscape and the building itself.” The total estimated cost at full build-out is \$70 million, and the annual operating cost \$3.3 million. But the partners emphasize the possibilities of immediate programming as well as programs that could be instituted in existing buildings during the first 1-3 years.

The nine “core partners” are: The Aquatic Research and Environmental Assessment Center at Brooklyn College, Cornell University’s New York City Cooperative Extension, The CUNY Urban Coastal Environmental Processes Research Center, Governors Island Alliance, Hudson River Foundation, Liberty Science Center, Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, New York Harbor School and The River Project.

## Governors Island Alliance Criteria

The Alliance has adopted a dozen criteria by which it plans to endorse, support or oppose proposals. It would “support” rather than “endorse” proposals that competed with others of equal merit. Some of the criteria are essentially restatements of the hard-won restrictions in the deed that transferred the Island back to New York – most notably the restriction against permanent residential housing. They are restated as criteria to reinforce them against temptation to seek variances from the deed.

Very briefly, the criteria emphasize parks and other public spaces, preservation of the Island’s historic character, promotion of maritime uses, revitalization of the harbor and prohibition of anything on motorized wheels. Also listed is convenient and affordable ferry access from Brooklyn and New Jersey as well as Manhattan. In broad terms, the Island itself should provide “a unique experience” in a diversity of uses; its development should be “in keeping with the overall vision of... a grand civic space.” Excellent design is another concern – architectural, environmental and visual. And the bottom line: “The mix of uses should help provide for public services and the overall financial health of the Island by attracting and generating sufficient capital and operating dollars.”

## Summer Activity

Literally Alive, an innovative theatre company that produces musicals based on classic children's literature, will stage two shows on the Colonel’s Row green on Saturday, August 6.

12:00 The Ugly Duckling

An interactive 30-minute story time show based on Hans Christian Anderson's classic, this version invites the audience to participate in the fun! An artworkshop will be included to complement the performance. Suggested for children ages 7 and under.

2:00 The Very Hungry Caterpillar

A 20-minute interactive story time based on the beloved picture book that includes a butterfly ballet. Meet the Caterpillar, help retell the story and dance a little too! An art workshop will be included. Suggested for families with children ages 6 and under.

For more information, see (<http://www.literallyalive.com/>)

### Candidates' Views

New Yorkers for Parks holds a public forum Tuesday, July 26, for mayoral candidates to say where they stand on the care and development of city parks. They will appear in the New York University Jack H. Skirball Center for the Performing Arts, 566 LaGuardia Place (and Washington Square South). Doors open: 6:30 pm, Forum: 7:00 - 8:30 pm Call 212-838-9410 ext. 233 or go to [www.parks1.org/mayoralforum](http://www.parks1.org/mayoralforum).

**NOTICE: As we go to press, Reservations ARE FILLED!**

If you have not already registered, **there is still a chance...** if you come to the Skirball Center the day of the Mayoral Forum, you will get a stand-by number -- any unclaimed reservation will be reallocated on a first come, first served basis at 6:45. You can call 212-838-9410 x 233 if you have questions.

The GIA will also be interviewing candidates for mayor and the borough presidencies.

### Island Events

There has been a series of weekend events on the Island this summer – and one disappointing cancellation.

“Set & Drift,” a site-specific, historic art exhibition is on display every Saturday through August 13, staged by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. Here is how they describe it: “Picture an island just off the coast of Manhattan, inhabited by empty buildings and historic monuments. What happened there? Who lived there? What goes on now? This former military and Coast Guard base is fertile ground for the imagination. Come see this abandoned island through the eyes of some of New York's most compelling artists – an extended project with art installations, radio transmissions, and video projections set among the Island’s forts, mess halls, and officers’ housing. Come out and explore. Take a walk. Have a picnic. Imagine what was, and what could be.”

The cancelled event was a walking tour of “the Governors Island that could have been,” sponsored by the Center for Urban Pedagogy. It would have visited sites of unrealized plans from the 1930’s to the 1990’s, explaining how they came about and why they didn’t happen. It was cancelled at the last minute for unexplained “extenuating circumstances.”

GIPEC appears to have had reservations about exposing alternative ideas and the slowness of current planning. Included among the could-have-beens were luxury housing, a homeless shelter, a casino and an airport. The tour was tied in with the “Set & Drift” exhibit. It would have given the public a valuable perspective on the history – and difficulty – of Island planning, in flux even now.

These other events did take place: A photo exhibit in June displayed the work of Donna Clovis, who spent her childhood on the Island as a Coast Guard daughter. Her show – “We Were Here” – included oral histories of Island residents. There were also two talks in June: Barry Moreno, an authority on Ellis Island, lectured on same; Diana Wall and Ann-Marie Cantwell, both anthropologists, talked about what’s been found underground in our town and their book “Unearthing Gotham: The Archaeology of New York City.” In July, essayist Philip Lopate traced the circumference of Manhattan in discussing his “Waterfront: A Journey Around Manhattan.”

### Around-the-Island Swim

Mike Rossner, a 40-year-old editor, won the first Around Governors Island Swim. His time over the two miles was 34 minutes and 15 seconds. Kate Duncombe, 24, an account executive, won among the women, finishing fifth overall at 36:55. The 90 swimmers ranged in age from 24 to 74 (Paul Kiell, a Far Hills, N. J., psychiatrist who finished 84<sup>th</sup> in 55:25), from every borough, five nearby states, Ireland and Japan.

They started at 8 a.m. on Saturday, June 25, swimming counter-clockwise from Castle Williams. The water temperature was 69 degrees, and the information supplied to swimmers included the following unnerving advisory: “There can be a substantial amount of chop in the water from wind and tide action. There is shipping traffic and there may be random jetsam and flotsam in the waterways.”

The Manhattan Island Foundation organized the race, with the Hudson River Park Trust and city and state parks organizations.

### Visiting the Island

GIPEC’s website – [www.govisland.org](http://www.govisland.org) – has full details about visits. Here are the basics:

The Island is open to the public in summer every day except Sundays and Mondays through the Saturday after Labor Day. National Park Service rangers conduct tours of the forts and the historic district twice a day on weekdays. On Saturdays the public is free to visit the historic district, the esplanade along the western shore and a good part of the open area.

The ferry docks at from the Battery Maritime Building, just to the east of the Staten Island Ferry terminal in Manhattan at the southern end of the Battery. Several subway lines stop nearby. There is some, limited parking in private lots in lower Manhattan; cars are not allowed on the Island.

Saturday departures from Manhattan are every hour on the hour, from 10 to 3. Departures from the Island are every hour on the half-hour until 5:30. The trip takes 5 or 6 minutes. Weekday tours are offered twice a day, with the ferry leaving Manhattan at 10:00 am or 1:00 pm.

Ferry tickets are required. They are sold every day at New York Water Taxi booths at Pier 11 (at Wall Street and South Street), at the South Street Seaport and in Jersey City, as well as online at [www.nywatertaxis.com](http://www.nywatertaxis.com) or by phone: 212-742-1969.

On Saturday only, there are same-day sales at the ferry slip.

Tickets are \$6 for adults and teen-agers over 12 and \$3 for the 3-12 set. Metro card holders get 10 percent off. There is no additional fee on the Island.