

Asked to respond to some of Charlie DeFino's interview comments, RIOC Board member (and former Residents Association president) David Kraut wrote the following:

In a message dated 1/11/06 9:27:48 AM Eastern Standard Time, editor@MainStreetWIRE.com writes:

1. "I was the only one who knew that [resident RIOC Board member] David Kraut presided over the meeting that gave away the first Youth Center and now makes believe... He has a letter that Jean Lerman gave that said we [would] get the building, and sits there at a [RIOC Board] meeting and acts like he doesn't know what's going on..."

I served on the Youth Center Board of Directors that selected Charlie to his job, and in my view he has done a great, great job for the youth of this island. But that was with help from a number of agencies, including RIOC. I note that over the past few years as chair of the Public Purpose Funds Advisory Committee I bent every effort to see to it that as RIOC directed over a quarter of a million dollars in Public Purpose Funds to his agency in the form of matching grants and Summer Youth Worker programs. And I have continued to defend him despite his tendency to shoot his mouth off in all directions. As an example, I remember a RIOC board meeting a year or two ago in which I led the charge to approve over \$60,000 in RIOC funds as an administrative grant essentially to pay Charlie's salary for the year, after which Charlie got upset over the space issue, said something insulting to us who had just approved his salary, and stalked out.

Charlie's framework around the Lerman letter is correct in terms of the higher truth, but his facts are wrong. Jean Lerman did in fact promise him the Blackwell School building if he would accept the Eastwood Space in the interim. I certainly supported this move, as one of my greatest concerns was that the Youth Center get out of its basement environment at the time. But I did not preside over the meeting. And I have not kept the existence of the Lerman letter a secret. In fact I mentioned it at a RIOC Board meeting a few years ago and made clear my belief that RIOC had in fact promised that space to Charlie. At that time, then-president Rob Ryan asked me who had written that letter and I replied Jean Lerman. Ryan at that time pooh-poohed the letter with a sniff and a comment, effectively repudiating the agency's promise. So that part of Charlie's statement is the bunk.

2. "You can't beat RIOC. You're never going to beat RIOC. It's an institution that... It's like talking to someone who's dumb. Dumb. Low IQ. They'll never really totally get it... When the Island clamored for years to get control of the [RIOC] Board and they have control of the Board [now]... But do they really have control of the Board? What are the Island residents [who constitute a majority of the RIOC Board] doing for the Island residents?"

RIOC's role and effectiveness is certainly debatable and always on the table for criticism. But to say that we are dumb or low IQ is the kind of gratuitous insult that we prefer to hear from Island residents and perhaps some elected officials. For an off-island employee to show up around here and say stuff like this is just kind of trashy and worse, ignorant. Charlie's vision of himself was that he was some kind of savior for the community, but he tended to have blinders on in terms of his own constituency and never really saw the Island as a whole. Those of us who live in these buildings and greet each other in the hallways and sleep here at night and exchange informations in the laundry rooms and so forth have a much bigger picture of this place than Charlie ever got. Short version: he worked here but he wasn't from here.

In any case I'll miss him because he did his basic job extremely well, and I'll even promise here to write him a recommendation sometime even though I -- who hired him, supported his agency financially, and even paid his actual salary -- have been called dumb by him. And I wish the Youth Center all the best as they begin their search for a replacement.

David