



Loud Crowd Disrupts RGB Meeting, but Board Votes Big Rent Increases

By Steven Wishnia

The Rent Guidelines Board's June 27 final vote drew the largest and loudest crowd of tenant protesters in the RGB's last decade—but the board voted the second-highest rent increases in 17 years.

About 500 protesters jammed the Great Hall at Cooper Union before the vote, chanting "Home Rule Now" and waving signs in English, Spanish, and Chinese. They chanted so loudly that they forced RGB chair Marvin Markus to adjourn the meeting for almost three hours.

Markus thought that the protesters would dissipate if they had to wait until 9 p.m.—but as the appointed hour arrived, the room was almost as full as it had been before the recess. "We're Still Here!" they chanted, abetted by the beat of pounding djimbe drums, scraped guiros, and maracas homemade from soda cans taped shut with yellow "Stronger Rent Laws Now" stickers.

With a line of police guarding the stage, the crowd quieted down to hear tenant representative Adriene Holder announce that raising rents during "the worst housing crisis the city has ever seen" would be "a moral disgrace for the city." Then most of the protesters walked out, and the board voted 5-4 to allow increases of 4.25 percent on a one-year lease renewal and 7.25 percent on a two-year lease.

All five public members voted in lockstep for the increases, with the two landlord representatives voting no only after the proposed guidelines had won enough votes to pass. Holder and the other tenant representative, David Pagan, said the chanting had been so loud they couldn't hear how much the increases were, but they voted no anyway, with Pagan noting that while rents were going up, real wages were going down.

The increases were the second highest since 1989, topped only by those of 2003, when the RGB passed

Mayor Bloomberg's property-tax increase onto tenants with guidelines of 4.5 and 7.5 percent. The board also voted a 2 percent increase for single-room-occupancy hotels, by a similar 5-4 pattern.

Public member Betty Phillips Adams acknowledged the city's deep housing-affordability crisis, but voted yes anyway, saying landlords' costs were also up.

As in most years since the 1997 weakening of the state's rent laws, the landlord contingent was small, a group of about 20 holding signs reading "Help Small Landlords" and "Oil Prices Require Higher Rents."

Markus—lambasted by chants of "Marvin Markup, rich and rude, we don't like your attitude"—set the tone for the evening early on, when Holder tried to place a resolution advocating that the city get home rule over its rent laws first on the meeting's agenda.



Tykes Say Spike Mike's Rent Hikes!

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"Motion is rejected," he snapped, provoking a wall of boos. Holder continued, and Markus called for an immediate vote. "No debate is allowed," he said.

Holder was able to make most of the points she wanted to in her speech in-

roducing the resolution, saying that the RGB has passed symbolic resolutions before, and part of its responsibility was to assess how affordable rental housing was in New York

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Tivoli Tenants Stuff Gluck; Building Stays Affordable

By Bennett Baumer

Beleaguered Mitchell-Lama tenants at Tivoli Towers in Brooklyn have beaten back an attempt by their landlord to take their building out of the affordable-housing program—at least for the next 18 years.

Notified in March that the owner, Donald Lentnek, planned to sell the massive 33-story, 320-unit building to Laurence Gluck, tenants feared the worst. The sale was contingent on the towers leaving the Mitchell-Lama program.

In other projects he has taken out of Mitchell-Lama, Gluck downplayed the effects of leaving the program and promised residents federal housing subsidies to stave off giant rent increases. But at the Gluck-owned Independence Plaza in Manhattan, tenants didn't get the

promised vouchers or assistance programs, and many were priced out of their homes when the development left Mitchell-Lama.

"Gluck told us we would get [Section 8] sticky vouchers or enter the Landlord Assistance Program," says Stephanie Fulson, vice president of the Tivoli Towers Tenant Association, said. "He was very arrogant." The Tivoli Towers Tenant Association recently joined Met Council on Housing.

Located at 49 Crown Street in Prospect Heights, a gentrifying neighborhood where the Brooklyn Museum and Botanical Gardens line the eastern edge of Prospect Park, Tivoli Towers is home to a dwindling number of working-class and middle-income residents. It was built in 1974 as part of the

Mitchell-Lama program, with the city granting the developers the land and offering a "long-range tax exemption" explicitly to construct affordable housing for working- and middle-class residents. Lentnek and Gluck argue that they can take Tivoli Towers out of Mitchell-Lama voluntarily, as have the owners of other buildings who prepaid their mortgages or met other requirements.

"Gluck has been snapping these buildings up. He's bought at least fifteen Mitchell-Lamas and is converting them all to rentals outside of the program," says Manhattan Mitchell-Lama activist Sue Susman.

Determined to hold onto their homes, the tenants reached out to politicians and housing groups, who advised them to review the building's records. Many

Mitchell-Lama buildings have "restrictive covenants" in their deeds, tax breaks, or development plans that contain language prohibiting early exits from the program. "We did a lot of paperwork and did the research—we had a restrictive covenant!" says Fulson.

"It seemed clear-cut in the covenant that when the city sold the land [to

the developer] it was intended that the building stay affordable for fifty years," explains Steve Dobkin, lawyer for the Tivoli tenants.

In June the city Department of Housing Preservation and Development ruled in the Tivoli tenants' favor, agreeing with them

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LETTER

Ousted RGB Member Explains His Dismissal

I regret that I was not reappointed to the Rent Guidelines Board this year. I have never been told by either the mayor (who at least had the courtesy to send me a “non-reappointment letter”) or Marvin Markus, who showed a total lack of class by not calling or writing to me, that I was not being reappointed. As emboldened as Markus may be when yelling down tenant advocates, apparently he was not up to the courtesy of a phone call or a note to someone who is determined, was not in lockstep with his thinking.

As a public member of the RGB, and based upon my instructions from the mayor when I first met with him during my interview prior to appointment to the RGB, I was supposed to do my due diligence, look at both sides of the issues, and “vote my conscience.” While I came onto the RGB with a very open mind, I ultimately felt that the research, the proceedings, and the evaluation of comparable hardships imposed on owners and tenants, were all slanted against the tenant. I was proud that, in many instances, I was able to persuade at least five other board members to support positions that Markus opposed. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that Markus feared my influence. Even though he controlled the majority of the board, he did not control me. My “political” in-

experience resulted in my non-reappointment. I guess if I had kowtowed to Markus, I would still be on the board. No thanks!

But I am pleased that at least for two years, I was able to lead the fight for “0%” rent increases for the SROs and hotels, that I was the only public member [on the Bloomberg RGB] to vote against a rent increase, and that I was one of a few of the board members who fought to move meetings out of Manhattan and into the other boroughs. My biggest disappointment was that the RGB held its last public hearing in the Bronx, which I had pushed for as a resident from the Bronx, and I had not been invited to the party, so to speak.

So thank you for mentioning me twice. It suggests to me that even though I was not as effective as I had hoped, some of you noticed. Who knows, perhaps when a new mayor is elected, and that mayor is more pro-tenant, my services might be asked for again.

—Martin Zelnik, RA/AIA

This letter was written in response to “RGB: Rent Gouging Bastards,” by Met Council organizer Bennett Baumer, in the June 10 issue of The Independent.

Tivoli Tenants

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and Dobkin that the building’s restrictive covenant mandates that the towers stay in Mitchell-Lama until 2024.

As *Tenant/Inquilino* goes to press, Lentnek and Gluck are appealing HPD’s decision, and tenants are gearing up for another legal battle. “We are strapped for cash,” says Maria Vacarcel, treasurer of the tenants association. She said the association has so far spent about \$4,000 on legal fees to keep Tivoli affordable.

Councilmember Leticia James (D-Brooklyn) has supported the tenants’ fight and has promised funds. Tenants are also reaching out to candidates flush with cam-

paign funds in the local state Senate race and the highly contested battle for the Congressional seat being vacated by Rep. Major Owens, a former Met Council board member.

The tenant association is asking all Tivoli tenants to pitch in \$100 each for the legal fees; a small amount considering the rent increases residents would pay if the landlord had been successful.

“You could be paying \$1,700-2,100 for a one-bedroom apartment. That’s Manhattan rents,” notes Monique Lawson, secretary of the tenants association.



BENNETT BAUMER

L-R (bottom) Stephanie Fulson, Maria Vacarcel, (top) Elizabeth Brown and Monique Lawson of the Tivoli Towers Tenant Association.

Visit Met Council’s Website www.metcouncil.net

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EL INQUILINO HISPANO

Multitud ruidosa interrumpe reunión de RGB, sin embargo la junta vota por grandes aumentos de renta

Por Steven Wishnia

Traducido por Lightning Translations

La votación final de la Junta de Regulación de Renta (Rent Guidelines Board, RGB) del pasado 17 de junio, atrajo la más grande y ruidosa multitud de inquilinos inconformados que en toda la última década de la existencia de la RGB. Sin embargo, la junta aprobó los segundos aumentos más altos en los últimos 17 años.

Alrededor de 500 manifestantes atestaron el Gran Salón en Cooper Union antes de la votación, coreando "Autonomía ahora" y ondeando pancartas en inglés, español y chino. Corearon tan fuertemente que el presidente de la RGB, Marvin Markus, se vio obligado a suspender la reunión por casi tres

horas. Markus creyó que los manifestantes se retirarían si tuvieran que esperar hasta las 9 PM, pero al llegar la hora estipulada, el salón estaba casi tan lleno como antes del descanso. "¡Todavía estamos aquí!" corearon, apoyados por el ritmo de tambores djimbe, güiros raspados y maracas hechas en casa de latas de refrescos tapadas con pegatinas que decían, "Leyes de renta más fuertes ahora."

Con una línea de policías protegiendo el templete, la multitud se calló para oír a la representante de inquilinos Adriene Holder declarar que subir las rentas durante "la peor crisis de vivienda jamás vista por la ciudad" sería "una vergüen-

za moral para la ciudad." Entonces la mayoría de los manifestantes salieron y la junta votó 5 a 4 para permitir aumentos de 4.25 por ciento por una renovación de contrato de un año y 7.25 por ciento por una renovación de contrato de dos años.

Cada uno de los cinco miembros públicos votó en filas cerradas por los aumentos. Los dos representantes de caseros votaron "no" solo después de que las pautas propuestas habían ganado suficientes votos para aprobarse. Holder y el otro representante de inquilinos, David Pagan, dijeron que los coros fueron tan ruidosos que no pudieron oír el tamaño de

los aumentos, pero votaron "no" de todos modos, con Pagan señalando que mientras las rentas suben, los salarios reales bajan.

Los aumentos fueron los segundos más altos desde 1989, excedidos sólo por los de 2003, cuando la RGB hizo pasar a los inquilinos el incremento del impuesto sobre la propiedad del alcalde Bloomberg, con pautas de 4.5 y 7.5 por ciento. La junta también aprobó un aumento de 2 por ciento para hoteles con unidades de una sola habitación (SROs) en un patrón similar de 5 a 4.

El miembro público Betty

pasa a la página 4

Los Ajustes de la "Junta de Regulación de Renta" de la Ciudad de Nueva York (Orden No. 37)

Para los contratos de apartamentos de Renta Estabilizada que comienzan el 1ro. de octubre de 2005 hasta el 30 de septiembre de 2006.

Los topes de renta que aparecen en el cuadro son los incrementos máximos que los dueños de edificios pueden cobrar legalmente por los apartamentos de renta estabilizada en la ciudad de Nueva York. Son válidos para todos los contratos que comienzan dentro del período de doce meses a partir del 1ro. de octubre de 2005. Los incrementos de alquiler basados en las pautas para la renovación del contrato de 1 o 2 años pueden cobrarse solamente una vez durante el período cubierto por dichas pautas, y deben ser aplicados a la renta legal estabilizada para el 30 de septiembre de 2005. Las cantidades que aparecen en el cuadro y los incrementos para los apartamentos vacíos no se aplican a los apartamentos que estaban sujetos a renta controlada en aquella fecha. No se permite el recargo también conocido como el «impuesto de pobres.»

Los Contratos para Apartamentos Vacíos o Nuevos En junio de 1997, el gobernador George Pataki, al intentar destruir la regulación de rentas, forzó cambios que les dieron a los caseros un recargo muy grande por los apartamentos vacíos. Una cláusula de la "Reforma al Acta de Regulación de Renta" de 1997 permite que los nuevos alquileres sean incrementados en un porcentaje obligatorio: 20% para un contrato de dos años, y por un contrato de 1 año, 20% de incremento menos la diferencia en el tope de renovación para los contratos de 1 y 2 años. La ley permite también incrementos adicionales para los apartamentos vacíos donde no se habían cobrado incrementos por desocupación por ocho años o más.

Exceso de Cobro Los inquilinos deben estar al tanto de que muchos caseros van a aprovecharse de la complejidad de estas regulaciones y subvenciones, así como del poco conocimiento de los inquilinos del historial de renta de sus apartamentos, para cobrar un alquiler ilegal. Una vez que el inquilino haya tomado posesión

del apartamento, puede escoger entre llenar un formulario de queja de exceso de cobro de renta con la oficina de la División de Vivienda y Renovación Comunal (DHCR), o disputar la cantidad de la renta en la corte de vivienda de la ciudad para que se determine cuál es el alquiler legal.

Si un posible inquilino da muestras de conocer sus derechos, lo más probable es que el casero no firmará ningún contrato con tal inquilino. Los caseros evitan contratar con inquilinos que les pueden dar problemas. El exceso de cobro de alquiler es muy común. Todos los inquilinos deben luchar contra posibles excesos de cobro. Obtenga y llene un formulario *Form RA-89* con la oficina de DHCR para determinar el alquiler correcto en los archivos oficiales. Llame a la DHCR a (718) 739-6400 para obtener un formulario, o búsquelo en el sitio www.dhcr.state.ny.us.

La Apelación de la Renta de Mercado Justa Otro tipo de exceso de cobro sucede frecuentemente cuando se vacía un apartamento que previamente estaba sujeto a renta controlada y se alquila con renta estabilizada.

La Junta de Regulación de Renta (RGB) establece anualmente lo que ellos llaman el "Tope Especial de la Renta de Mercado Justa," el cual es empleado por la DHCR para bajar las rentas de mercado injustas de los inquilinos que llenan el formulario llamado "Apelación a la Renta Justa de Mercado" (FMRA). Según la Orden 37, es la Renta de Mercado Justa de HUD o un 50% sobre la renta base máxima. Ningún inquilino de un apartamento de renta estabilizada que fue descontrolado el 1ro de abril de 1984 o después debe dejar de poner a prueba la llamada "Renta Legal Inicial Regulada" (renta de mercado) que los caseros cobran cuando hay descontrol del apartamento. Use el formulario de DHCR *Form RA-89*. Indique claramente que su queja es tanto una queja de "Apelación a la Renta Justa de Mercado" como de "exceso de cobro." La corte de vivienda no puede tomar decisión sobre una Apelación de Renta de Mercado. Apartamentos vacíos que antes estaban controlados en edificios que se han convertido en cooperativas o condominios no se vuelven estabilizados y no satisfacen los requisitos para la Apela-

ción de la Renta Justa de Mercado.

Exención de Incrementos para las Personas de Mayor Edad: Las personas de 62 años o más que viven en apartamentos estabilizados y cuyos ingresos familiares anuales son de \$26,000 o menos, y que pagan (o enfrentan un incremento de alquiler que los forzaría a pagar) una renta de un tercio o más de sus ingresos, pueden tener derecho al programa de Exención de Incrementos para las Personas de Mayor Edad (SCRIE, por sus siglas en inglés), si aplican al Departamento de la Ciudad de Nueva York Sobre las Personas de Mayor Edad, cuya dirección es: SCRIE Unit, 2 Lafayette Street, NY, NY 10007. Si el alquiler actual de un inquilino que tiene derecho a este programa sobrepasa un tercio del ingreso, no se lo puede reducir, pero es posible evitar incrementos de alquiler en el futuro. Para más información sobre SCRIE o el programa equivalente para los minusválidos (DRIE), llame al 311 (vea la página 4).

Unidades de Desván (Lofts) Los incrementos legales sobre la renta base para las unidades de

desván son de un 2.25 por ciento por un contrato de un año y un 4.5 por ciento por un contrato de dos años. No se permite incrementos para las unidades de desván vacías.

Hoteles y Apartamentos de una Sola Habitación

No habrá ningún aumento de la renta este año para los apartamentos de hotel de Clase A, casas de habitaciones, hoteles de clase B (de 30 habitaciones o más), hoteles de una sola habitación, y las casas de habitaciones (Clase B, 6-29 cuartos). No se permite incrementos para apartamentos vacíos.

La Desregulación de Rentas Altas y Altos Ingresos (1) Los apartamentos que legalmente se alquilan por \$2,000 o más por mes y que se desocuparon entre el 7 de julio de 1993 y el 1ro. de octubre de 1993, o en o desde del 1ro de abril de 1994 son sujetos a la desregulación. (2) La misma desregulación se les aplica, para el mismo período establecido en (1), a los apartamentos que legalmente pagan \$2,000 o más mensualmente aunque no se desocupen, si el ingreso total de la familia es más de \$175,000 en los dos años consecutivos previos. Para cumplir los requisitos de esta segunda forma de desregulación, el casero tiene que enviarle un formulario de certificación de ingreso al inquilino entre el 1ro de enero y el 1ro de mayo, así como someter dicho formulario al DHCR y conseguir su aprobación.

Para pautas previas, llame a la RGB al 212-385-2934 o busque el sitio www.housingnyc.com.

Tipo de Contrato	Renta Legal Actual	Contrato de 1 Año	Contrato de 2 Años
Renovación del Contrato	Si el dueño paga la calefacción	2.75%	5.5%
	Si el inquilino paga la calefacción	2.5%	4.5%
Contratos para Apartamentos Vacíos	Más de \$500	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	17.25%
		Incrementos por desocupación no cobrados en los últimos 8 años	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, más el 17.25%
	Menos de \$300	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	17.25% + \$100
		Incrementos por desocupación no cobrados en los últimos 8 años	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, + 17.25% + \$100
	Renta de \$300 a \$500	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	17.25% o \$100, lo que sea mayor
		Incrementos por desocupación no cobrados en los últimos 8 años	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, mas 17.25%, o \$100, lo que sea mayor
		0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, más el 20%	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, más el 20%
		20% + \$100	20% + \$100
		0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, + 20% + \$100	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, + 20% + \$100
		20% o \$100, lo que sea mayor	20% o \$100, lo que sea mayor
		0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, mas 20%, o \$100, lo que sea mayor	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, mas 20%, o \$100, lo que sea mayor



votación de la RGB

viene de la página 3

Phillips Adams reconoció la crisis profunda de vivienda asequible en la ciudad, pero votó "sí" de todos modos, diciendo que los costos de los caseros también habían subido.

Como en la mayoría de los años desde 1997, con el debilitamiento de las leyes de renta estatales, el contingente de caseros fue pequeño, un grupo de más o menos 20 sosteniendo pancartas que decían, "Ayuden a los pequeños propietarios" y "Los precios de petróleo hacen necesarias rentas más altas."

Markus, quien fue burlado por coros de "Marvin Markup (Marvin el Sobrecargador), rico y grosero, no nos gusta tu actitud," fijó temprano el tono de la noche cuando Holder trató de poner primero en el programa de la reunión una resolución promoviendo que la ciudad consiga autonomía en torno a sus leyes de renta. "La moción está rechazada," espetó Markus, provocando una ola de abucheos. Holder continuó y Markus exigió un voto inmediato. "No se permi-

te ningún debate," dijo.

Holder logró hacer la mayoría de los puntos que quería hacer en su discurso introduciendo la resolución, diciendo que la RGB ha aprobado resoluciones simbólicas antes y que parte de su responsabilidad era calcular qué tan asequible está la vivienda de arriendo en la Ciudad de Nueva York. "No hay ninguna razón práctica ni de principios para oponer la autonomía en torno a nuestras leyes de renta," concluyó. "Ya es hora."

La junta rechazó su moción por 7 a 2, con solamente Holder y Pagan a favor de poner la cuestión de autonomía en el programa, y la multitud estalló en un coro de "Autonomía ahora." Markus, con la cara enrojecida, decretó un descanso de 15 minutos. Al continuar los coros cuando la junta regresó, extendió el descanso por dos y media horas más.

"Ya hemos fijado el orden de lo que tenemos que hacer. Hay cosas que estamos obligados a hacer antes del 1º de julio. Esto es nuestra prioridad," dijo el nuevo miembro público Jonathan L. Kimmel, quien dijo que se opuso a la resolución de autonomía "por el programa, no por los méritos." "No voté en contra de ponerla en el programa, voté en contra de cambiar el orden," dijo Leslie Wright, el otro nuevo miembro público. "No es el asunto de la noche."

La interrupción y salida fueron planeadas, ya que los grupos de inquilinos están cada



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vez más hartos de la falta de democracia en el proceso de las pautas de renta, desde la jurisdicción estatal sobre las leyes de renta en conjunto hasta el papel de los miembros públicos de la RGB de aprobación maquinal para los aumentos de renta, lo que fue subrayado por la destitución de Martin Zelnik, el único miembro público que apoyó una congelación de rentas el año pasado, por parte del alcalde Bloomberg anteriormente en este año.

"Todos los años han aumentado las rentas. ¿Cuándo va a ser a favor de los inquilinos?" preguntó James Staton, uno de alrededor de 50 personas en un contingente vestido de camisas color dorado de la Coalición de Comunidad y Clérigos del Noroeste del Bronx (Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition). "El salario mínimo ha sido lo mismo por tanto tiempo. Los caseros han recibido grandes privilegios fiscales."

"Los inquilinos de Chinatown viven en algunas de las peores viviendas de la ciudad. Muchos inquilinos piden reparaciones y los

caseros se niegan a hacerlas," dijo Helena Wong de la Union de Inquilinos de Chinatown (Chinatown Tenants Union). "Por eso estamos pidiendo un incremento de cero por ciento." Dan Peckham de Chelsea dijo que él es el único inquilino que queda en su edificio, que el casero ha estado tratando de vaciar para una "demolición y renovación interior."

"Si no entienden lo que sufrimos, no deben estar en esta junta," dijo Elizabeth Thompson de Kingsbridge, otro miembro del grupo del noroeste del Bronx.

Thompson, una trabajadora social de clínica, recitó una letanía de quejas sobre su edificio, propiedad de Morris Piller, quien según ella es el segundo peor casero en el Bronx. Los inquilinos pagan desde \$600 hasta \$1,000 al mes por la renta allá, dijo, pero "la electricidad es mala. Los bomberos dijeron, 'Si hay un incendio, se van a morir ustedes.' Tenemos seis pisos y el ascensor no funciona."

"Alguien debe decir, 'ya basta.' He estado aquí toda mi vida. ¿Qué es lo que se supone que hagamos?"

Hay solicitudes disponibles para la DRIE (Exención de Incrementos de Renta para Minusválidos)

Los inquilinos minusválidos de renta regulada (y quienes viven en edificios Mitchell-Lama o en programas del HPD que llenen los requisitos) pueden solicitar ahora la congelación de su renta. Los inquilinos llenan los requisitos si pagan 1/3 de sus ingresos en renta, reciben ayuda financiera federal o estatal relacionada con invalidez y tienen ingresos de menos de \$17,005 para individuos y menos de \$24,373 para familias.

La solicitud está disponible (en inglés) en el sitio Web del Departamento de Finanzas (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/pdf/05pdf/drie.pdf>), o se puede contactar la Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (Agencia del Alcalde para las Personas Minusválidas) en:

100 Gold St., 2nd Floor, New York NY 10038
Teléfono: 212-788-2830; facsímil: 212-341-9843; TTY: 212-788-2838

Para la SCRIE (Exención de Incrementos de Renta para las Personas de Mayor Edad), el inquilino (jefe de familia) debe tener 62 o más años, pagar 1/3 de sus ingresos o más en renta, vivir en un apartamento de renta controlada o estabilizada, Mitchell-Lama o cooperativa de dividendos limitados y tener ingresos de \$25,000 o menos después de pagar impuestos.

La solicitud de SCRIE está disponible en el sitio Web del Departamento por las Personas Mayores (http://www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/bqc_jump.html#spanish) o al llamar a la agencia al 311. La mayoría de los centros para personas de mayor edad también tienen solicitudes.

Los medios de comunicación hacen caso omiso de la cuestión de autonomía

A pesar de los cientos de inquilinos coreando "Autonomía ahora" durante la votación final de la Junta de Regulación de Renta (Rent Guidelines Board, RGB) el pasado 27 de junio, la cobertura que hizo la prensa de la reunión se saltó esta cuestión.

Entre los diarios de la ciudad, el *Daily News* notó los coros y mencionó la promoción de "control local sobre las leyes de vivienda" por parte de la representante de inquilinos Adriene Holder, pero no entró más en la materia. La edición neoyorquina del *Newsday* y el *New York Sun* la pasaron por alto completamente. En el *New York Post* hubo una frase sobre inquilinos exigiendo "una resolución que pidió a Albany regresar el poder para regular las rentas al Concejo Municipal."

El *New York Times* formuló la cuestión así: "Organizadores de inquilinos sostienen que los legis-

ladores en Albany son insensibles a los intereses de los inquilinos de Nueva York y están obligados a los intereses de los caseros," añadiendo que los inquilinos protestaron la erosión de las protecciones de rentas después de que "el estado empezara a tomar más control durante los años 70." Sólo mencionó la ley Urstadt en un artículo siguiente, publicado el 29 de junio.

En WABC-TV, canal 7, el noticiero de las 11:00 dijo que los inquilinos protestaron porque querían "mantener sus apartamentos de renta bajo el nivel del mercado." El noticiero dedicó más tiempo a un fatal accidente vehicular con olor a escándalo matrimonial, que había sucedido dos semanas antes, que a los incrementos de renta que afectan a un millón de hogares en la Ciudad de Nueva York.

— Steven Wishnia (traducido por Lightning Translations)

Subsidize Affordable Homes, Not Luxury Development

By Julie Miles

With a name only a policy wonk could love, the 421a property-tax program has implications worthy of attention by those of us who care about affordable housing or pay taxes. Created nearly three decades ago to encourage housing development at a time of fiscal crisis and massive building abandonment, the program today is subsidizing luxury housing in hot and gentrifying neighborhoods throughout the city, at a huge financial cost to the municipal government. A recent study by the Pratt Center for Community Development and Habitat for Humanity found that it costs city taxpayers \$320 million a year in lost revenue.

When it was created in the 1970s, the 421a program gave substantial tax breaks to residential developers for building housing—any housing with more than three units—in the city. In the 1980s, as the housing market rebounded, the program was amended to require a percentage of affordable housing (usually in an 80/20 development, 80 percent market rate with 20 percent low-income units) in exchange for the tax break, either on-site or off-site, but only in a Midtown zone, roughly 14th Street to 96th Street. Today, developers still receive tax breaks for building luxury housing with no affordability requirement in most city neighborhoods, including Soho, Tribeca, DUMBO, Park Slope, and Long Island City, which include some of the hottest real estate in the world.

421a recipients include, for example, the Blue Condominium, a

new development on the Lower East Side designed by a renowned architect and boasting such features as panoramic views, walls of windows, and pebbled bathroom floors. The condo's Web site advertises that the owner of a \$1.2 million one-bedroom apartment will pay only \$42 a month in taxes because of the 421a program. Another beneficiary is 88 Leonard Street in Tribeca, which will cost taxpayers \$16.8 million, through 421a breaks and Liberty Bonds, to support a building with units renting up to \$12,500 a month.

The good news is that a consensus is emerging that the outdated tax program must be repaired. City Comptroller William Thompson issued a report documenting that the 421a program has subsidized some of the most expensive housing in the city and needs significant reform. Mayor Bloomberg has established a task force to discuss how to reform it. However, opinion about the degree to which reform is needed varies greatly. The Real Estate Board of New York was quoted recently saying that they concede that Tribeca may be ready for an affordability requirement, but the financial district is still too soft a market.

The challenge is to win major changes in the program, not a slight tweaking. Led by groups in neighborhoods with lots of 421a development, Housing Here and Now has launched an organizing campaign to demand a significant overhaul of the program, calling for a citywide affordability requirement, more affordable units, and a

preference for the affordable housing to be on-site. Grassroots actions organized by Queens Congregations United for Action, Asian Americans for Equality and others in the Queens for Affordable Housing coalition in Corona; ACORN in downtown Brooklyn, and UNO in Williamsburg have garnered media attention and started to turn up the volume. A series of actions are planned this summer to help draw a line in the sand in advance of a report proposal by the mayor's task force, expected this fall.

The work we do now to ensure far-reaching 421a reform will help

to shape the future of city neighborhoods for years to come.

Julie Miles is executive director of Housing Here and Now. To join the campaign, contact her at (212) 608-5122; julie@housinghereandnow.org. More information is available at www.housinghereandnow.org. Housing Here and Now is a citywide coalition of affordable-housing groups, faith leaders, union officials, and homeless advocates who have joined forces to create and preserve housing for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers.

SCRIE & DRIE

Seniors, 62 or older, in rent-regulated, Mitchell-Lama and some other housing programs whose disposable annual household income is \$25,000 or less (for 2005) and who pay (or face a rent increase that would cause them to pay) one-third or more of that income in rent may be eligible for a Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE). Apply to:
The NYC Dept of the Aging
SCRIE Unit
2 Lafayette Street, NY, NY 10007.

Disabled tenants receiving eligible state or federal disability-related financial assistance with incomes of \$17,580 or less for individuals and \$25,212 or less for a couple facing rents equal to more than one-third of their income may be eligible for the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE). Apply to:
NYC Dept. of Finance
DRIE Exemptions
59 Maiden Lane - 20th floor
New York, NY 10038

DRIE and SCRIE info is available on the city's website, www.nyc.gov, or call 311.

Illegal SRO Conversions Grow

By Tanveer Ali

The lobby of the Dexter House Hotel on West 86th Street has all of the tourist usuals—a front desk, a travel brochure stand and complimentary newspapers—even though Dexter House is a residential building. And while tourists check in and out of what they consider a commercial hotel, tenants who have lived in the building for years are fighting to stay in place.

Dexter House's owner, Jay Wartski, is among a growing group of landlords of nearly 70 known buildings who have been advertising vacant rooms on the Internet to unsuspecting tourists. This is likely illegal, but it means they're able to pull down hundreds per night on some rooms that would normally rent for less than \$500 per month. And according to some tenants, it has led landlords to increase harassment and eviction efforts in order to empty more rooms. In response, a coalition of tenants, politicians, and advocates has formed to turn the tide and punish greedy landlords while preserving the city's ever-dwindling affordable housing stock.

"What's happened is that virtually all of the SROs are no longer renting any rooms to permanent

tenants," says organizer Terry Poe of the West Side SRO Law Project, who has been working on this issue almost exclusively. He and other housing analysts have estimated that the number of SRO residents in Manhattan has declined from 175,000 in the 1970s to fewer than 10,000 now.

The practice of using residential buildings like Dexter House for commercial use goes back to the late 1980s, but has spiked recently with the advent of Internet travel sites. Of the 260 rooms in Dexter House, which have a median monthly rent of around \$450, 83 are vacant and said to be used as nightly rentals. With multiple bunk beds set up in those rooms, the Dexter House Hotel charges \$30 per night per bed.

Vivian Rifflemacher has been a Dexter House resident since the mid-1980s. She says previous owners had used empty units for transients, but when Wartski took over as owner in May 2004 he immediately started a campaign to force residents out through scare tactics, eviction notices, and bribes, while converting the building into a hostel for young international travelers. "It was the only place

that I could find that I can afford with an ordinary middle-class income," Rifflemacher said. "The people who live there aren't welcome to live there anymore."

Wartski's attorney Todd Nahins says the building is being used legally as a hostel without putting out long-term tenants. "Mr. Wartski is not trying to displace anyone," Nahins said. "Yes, he's trying to make money." Nahins said the practice of using SROs for tourism does not affect the city's affordable-housing stock, as SROs have historically been used for transients, often with tenants subletting their units.

State Senator Liz Krueger maintains that enforcement remains difficult because government agencies have varying interpretations of the exact meanings of "resident" and "transient." Still, the city's Department of Buildings says its specialized inspectors have adequately addressed illegal occupancy complaints. Since 2004, 44 complaints about illegal conversions, occupancy and renting at Dexter House have been recorded with the DOB, prompting the city's Law Department to bring litigation against Wartski to seek

compliance with code and zoning requirements. "We believe that the laws are sufficiently clear to apprise property owners of their obligations, and to enable us to take enforcement actions when violations are found," said Gabriel Taussig, the Law Department chief attorney.

Anne Cunningham is both a housing specialist for Upper West Side Councilmember Gale Brewer, who has become involved in the hotel issue, and a residential-hotel tenant. She has lived in a two-room apartment in the former Commander residential hotel on West 73rd Street for nearly 30 years. More than one-third of the units in that building are rented out as \$200-a-night hotel rooms at the recently christened Tempo Hotel. Cunningham said she worries about her housing security, but is encouraged that tenants are mobilizing. "What I am worried about for this community is the state of affordable housing," she said. "When I work, I often see homeless people who lived in these same SROs."

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Pratt Report Slams Pataki on Housing

By Steven Wishnia

From gutting New York State's rent regulations to using post-9/11 reconstruction funds for luxury housing built by campaign contributors, George Pataki's 12 years as governor have been marked by "a consistent failure to ensure that New Yorkers have access to decent and reasonably priced housing," says a Pratt Center for Community Development study released last month.

"Instead of focusing on public needs, the Pataki administration has focused on the needs of developers and campaign contributors," accuses the report, titled "Time for a Gut Rehab: How the Next Governor Can Rebuild New York State's Housing Legacy."

With rents rising and wages losing ground to inflation, the study says, the Pataki administration responded by reducing funds for affordable housing, including eliminating state operating assistance for public housing in 1998.

And the state's housing crisis is not confined to New York City: Average rents are actually higher on Long Island; rural areas where housing costs are lower have correspondingly lower wages; and upstate cities such as Albany and Buffalo are experiencing both rising rents and increased abandonment.

"Governor Pataki has done more to eliminate rent regulation and other tenant protections than any other New York governor," the report adds. Aside from the 1997 weakening of the state's rent laws, it cites the way the state Division of Housing and Community Renewal changed its administrative code in 2000 ("150 pages of amendments, all but one of them favoring landlords") and created "bureaucratic hurdles" for tenants complaining of rent overcharges or harassment. In 1996-97, it notes, the DHCR eliminated 40,000 tenant complaints "simply by closing cases on

technicalities." The agency also cut the number of lawyers on its enforcement staff by two-thirds and moved the office where it takes complaints from Manhattan to eastern Queens, a half-mile beyond the last subway stop.

The result, the report says, is that "with minimal state oversight, landlords break the rent laws with impunity." It specifically cites the Pinnacle Group LLC, which has brought 5,000 eviction attempts against tenants and filed an "extremely large" number of applications for major-capital-improvement rent increases, many of which tenants suspect are fraudulent.

And the state's Housing Finance Agency "has largely served to reward political allies." In the last six years, the report says, less than half the 12,700 apartments it helped fund were affordable; most were market-rate developments in Manhattan and Westchester County.

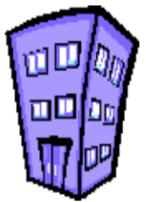
The situation was most egregious with the 2,272 units financed by Liberty Bonds, intended to help Lower Manhattan recover

The Pataki administration has focused on the needs of developers and campaign contributors.

after the 9/11 attacks: Just 119 were "affordable"—with affordability based on a household income of \$94,000 a year. More than three-fourths of the \$800 million in Liberty Bonds went to 11 Pataki campaign contributors: Leonard Litwin, who gave \$133,000 to the governor and another \$600,000 to other Republican and Conservative candidates, got \$238 million, while developer Vincent Albanese, who gave Pataki \$10,500, got \$235 million for a building called the Solaire. "We're sure we're going to

be able to bring the rents down to affordable housing," the governor said when he laid the cornerstone. "Today," the report notes, "a two-bedroom apartment in the Solaire rents for \$6,895 a month."

If the next governor wants to improve on Pataki's record, the report suggests that he or she should dramatically increase money for housing construction and preservation, including setting up an affordable-housing trust fund; develop a concrete plan to deal with homelessness; strengthen the rent laws and administer them fairly; and give cities home rule over their own rent regulations.



NYC Rent Guidelines Board Adjustments (Order No. 37)

for Rent Stabilized Leases commencing Oct. 1, 2005 through Sept. 30, 2006

This rent guidelines table shows the maximum increases landlords in New York City can legally charge for rent-stabilized apartments on all leases commencing in the 12-month period beginning October 1, 2005. Increases in rent based on the one- or two-year renewal guidelines can be charged only once during the period covered by the guidelines, and must be applied to the legal stabilized rent as of September 30, 2005. The above guidelines and vacancy bonuses do not apply to an apartment which was rent controlled on that date. There is no low-rent supplement, a.k.a. poor tax, allowed.

Sublease Allowance

Landlords can charge a 10 percent increase during the term of a sublease that commences during this guideline period.

Vacancy Leases

The pro-landlord Rent Regulation Reform Act of 1997 allows the rents of apartments to rise by a statutory percentage: 20 percent for a two-year lease, and 20 percent minus the difference between the one- and two-year renewal guidelines for one-year leases. See chart for other increases.

Rent Overcharges

Tenants should be aware that many landlords will exploit the complexities of these guidelines and bonuses, and the tenant's unfamiliarity with the apartment's rent history, to charge an illegal rent. The tenant can choose between filing an overcharge complaint with the Division of Housing and Community Renewal or challenging the rent in Housing Court to get a determination of the legal rent. A prospective tenant who expresses knowledge of their rights will probably not be given

Lease Type	Current Legal Rent	One-year Lease	Two-year Lease	
Renewal Leases	Landlord pays heat	2.75%	5.5%	
	Tenant pays heat	2.25%	4.5%	
Vacancy leases	More than \$500	Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	17.25%	20%
		No vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 17.25%	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20%
	Less than \$300	Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	17.25% plus \$100	20% plus \$100
		No vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 17.25% plus \$100	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20% plus \$100
	Rent \$300 to \$500	Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	17.25% or \$100, whichever is greater	20% or \$100, whichever is greater
		No vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 17.25%, or \$100, whichever is greater	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20%, or \$100, whichever is greater

a lease to sign. Landlords avoid renting to tenants who may be troublesome. Overcharging is very common. Every tenant should challenge a possible overcharge. With DHCR, obtain and fill out Form RA-89 to determine the correct rent from official records. Call DHCR at (718) 739-6400 to obtain the form or go to: www.dhcr.state.ny.us.

Fair Market Rent Appeal

Another type of overcharge frequently occurs at the time that a previously rent controlled apartment becomes vacant and is rerented as a stabilized unit. The Rent Guidelines Board annually sets what they call the "Special Fair Market Rent Guideline" that is used by DHCR to lower unfair market rents for tenants who file the Fair Market Rent Appeal (FMRA). Under Order 37, it is the HUD Fair Market Rent or 50%

above the maximum base rent, whichever is higher. No stabilized tenant of an apartment that was decontrolled on or after April 1, 1984 should fail to challenge the so-called Initial Legal Regulated Rent (market rent) that landlords charge upon decontrol. Use DHCR Form RA-89. Indicate clearly that your complaint is both a complaint of "overcharge" and "Fair Market Rent Appeal." The Housing Court cannot determine a Fair Market Rent Appeal. Formerly controlled vacant apartments in buildings converted to co-ops or condos do not become stabilized and are not eligible for a Fair Market Rent Appeal.

Senior Citizen and Disabled Tenants

Seniors: Rent-stabilized (the program also covers rent-controlled, Mitchell-Lama, and limited

equity coops like Penn South) seniors, 62 or older, whose disposable annual household income is \$25,000 or less (for the year 2005) and who pay (or face a rent increase that would cause them to pay) one-third or more of that income in rent may be eligible for a Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE). Apply to: The NYC Dept of the Aging SCRIE Unit, 2 Lafayette St., NY, NY 10007.

Disabled tenants: Rent-regulated tenants receiving eligible state or federal disability-related financial assistance with incomes of \$17,580 or less for individuals and \$25,212 or less for a couple facing rents equal to more than one-third of their income may be eligible for the Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE). Apply to: NYC Dept. of Finance, DRIE Exemptions, 59 Maiden Lane - 20th floor, New York, NY 10038. DRIE and

SCRIE info is available on the city's Web site, or by calling 311.

Loft Units

Legalized loft unit increases above the base rent are 2.25 percent for a one-year lease and 4.5 percent for two years. No vacancy allowance is permitted on vacant lofts.

Hotels and SROs

The board voted to freeze rents for Class A apartment hotels, lodging houses, Class B hotels (30 rooms or more), single room occupancy (SROs) hotels, and rooming houses (Class B, 6-29 rooms). No vacancy allowance is permitted. Landlords cannot collect an increase over the rent charged on September 30, 2005 between October 1, 2005 and September 30, 2006.

High-rent, High-income Deregulation

(1) Apartments legally renting for \$2,000 or more a month that became vacant from July 7, 1993 through October 1, 1993, or on April 1, 1994 and thereafter are subject to deregulation. (2) The same deregulation applies in the time periods set forth in (1) above to apartments legally renting for \$2,000 or more a month without their becoming vacant if the total household income exceeds \$175,000 in each of the prior two consecutive years. To be eligible for this second form of deregulation, the landlord must send an income certification form to the tenant between January 1 and May 1 and file it with and get the approval of DHCR.

For previous guidelines, call the RGB at 212-385-2934 or go to www.housingnyc.com.

RGB Votes

continued from page 1

City. “There is no principled or practical reason to oppose home rule over our rent laws,” she concluded. “It is time.”

The board rejected her motion 7-2, with only Holder and Pagan wanting to put home rule on the agenda, and the crowd erupted in a “Home Rule Now” chant. A red-faced Markus called a 15-minute recess. The chants continued when the board returned, so he extended the recess another two and a half hours.

“We have the order of business set. We have things that are mandated to get done by July 1. That’s our priority,” said new public member Jonathan L. Kimmel, who said he’d opposed the home-rule resolution “on the agenda, not the merits.” “I didn’t vote against putting it on the agenda, I voted against changing the order,” said Leslie Wright, the other new public member. “It’s not the business of the evening.”

The disruption and walkout were planned as tenant groups have become increasingly disgusted



The Chinatown Tenants Union contingent.



Rent Freeze Now! Met Council member Anita Romm waits for the RGB to reconvene.

with the lack of democracy in the rent-guidelines process, from the state’s jurisdiction over the overall rent laws to the RGB public members’ role as a rubber stamp

for rent increases—underscored by Mayor Bloomberg’s dismissal earlier this year of Martin Zelnik, the only public member to support a rent freeze last year.

“Every year they’ve been increasing rents. When is it going to be for the tenants?” asked James Staton, one of about 50 people in a gold-shirted contingent from the Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition. “Minimum wage has been the same for so long. Landlords have been getting big tax breaks.”

“Chinatown tenants live in some of the worst housing in the city. A lot of tenants ask for repairs and the landlords won’t do them,” said Helena Wong of the Chinatown Tenants Union. “That’s why we’re asking for zero percent.” Dan Peckham of Chelsea said he is the only tenant remaining in his building, which the landlord has been trying to empty for an “interior demolition” renovation.

“If they can’t walk in our shoes, they shouldn’t be on that panel,”

said Elizabeth Thompson of Kingsbridge, another in the Northwest Bronx group.

Thompson, a clinical social worker, rattled off a litany of complaints about her building, which is owned by Morris Piller, whom she calls the second-worst landlord in the Bronx. Tenants pay from \$600 to \$1,000 a month in rent there, she said, but “the electricity is bad. The Fire Department told us, ‘If there’s a fire, you’ll be killed.’ We have six stories and the elevator’s out.

“Somebody needs to say, ‘This is enough.’ I’ve been here all my life. What are we supposed to do?”

Media Miss Home-Rule Issue

Despite the hundreds of tenants shouting “Home Rule Now” at the RGB final vote June 27, press coverage of the meeting almost completely ignored the issue.

Among the city’s daily newspapers, the *Daily News* noted the chants and mentioned tenant representative Adriene Holder’s advocacy of “local control over housing laws,” but did not explore the issue any further. *Newsday’s* New York edition and the *New York Sun* missed it completely. The *New York Post* had one line about tenants demanding “a resolution asking Albany to return the power to regulate rents to the City Council.”

The *New York Times* framed the issue as “tenant organizers contend that legislators in Albany are insensitive to the interests of New York City renters and are beholden to landlord interests,” adding that that tenants were protesting the erosion of rent protections after “the state began taking greater control in the 1970s.” It did not mention the Urstadt law until a followup story on June 29.

On WABC-TV, Channel 7, the 11 o’clock news said tenants were protesting because they wanted “to keep their below-market apartments.” The newscast devoted more time to a two-week-old fatal car accident in Westchester County with whiffs of marital scandal than it did to rent increases affecting a million households in New York City.

—Steven Wishnia



From *Make the Road by Walking* in Bushwick, the message was clear.

Complaint Numbers

To reach the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development’s Central Complaints hotline, call 311.

Also call 311 to reach the Department of Buildings and other city agencies.

Nassau Gets Lower Rent Hikes

Nassau County’s renters will face lower rent increases than their city counterparts in the coming year. The Nassau Rent Guidelines Board last month voted guidelines of 2.25 percent for a one-year lease and 4.25 percent for two years, three percentage points less than last year’s rates and the lowest rent increases it’s allowed in the last four years.

Landlords there may sue to have the guidelines overturned, saying the increases are not enough to cover fuel costs. “We are considering our options with our lawyer,” Richard Rush, president of the Nassau County Apartment Owners Council, told *Newsday*.

Tenants in Hempstead will get a near rent freeze: increases of 0.5 percent for one year and 1 percent for two years. The town, which contains almost one-third of the county’s rental apartments, is significantly poorer than others in the area.

City Limits

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Why Home Rule?

Statement of Timothy L. Collins before the New York City Rent Guidelines Board, June 19

There is nothing more important to the tenant community than the issue of home rule. The chairman has asserted that you have no jurisdiction over the matter, and so you have no business in this debate. If the normal mechanisms of democratic representation were operating fairly—even in a rough way—the chairman would be correct. But when it comes to the city's rent and eviction protections, the democratic process is broken. It does not work.

It used to be said that the politics of rent regulation were simple: The landlords have the money and the tenants have the votes. The results were balanced and fair rent laws. That isn't true anymore. The landlords do have the money, and they contribute prodigiously to favored politicians. But the votes that control the city's rent-regulation system do not come from city residents. The votes that control our rent laws come from Rochester, Plattsburgh, Monticello, Binghamton, and scores of other upstate cities and towns. And, frankly, voters in these upstate communities don't give a damn about the city's struggling tenants. And neither do their elected

officials. But those same legislators know that if they don't curry favor with the city's powerful landlord organizations, they will lose massive financial support at elec-

tion time. The result of this seedy alliance is the deliberate dismantling of the city's rent and eviction protections. And the consequence of abandoning tenant protections is the city's deepest housing affordability crisis since the Great Depression. The numbers are clear: the highest rent burdens ever recorded; record homeless levels; severe overcrowding rates; and a massive loss of affordable apartments. On June 1st the chairman suggested that those who want home rule are free to go to Albany on their own and fight for it. But the process in Albany has been funda-

mentally corrupted and the doors are closed. Telling us to go to Albany is like telling the patriots of Boston in 1773 that they should simply petition the King, and not do something messy—like dump tea in Boston harbor. Telling us to go to Albany is like telling Rosa Parks to lobby the governor of Alabama about desegregating public transportation, rather than take a seat at the front of the bus.

Neither the Boston patriots nor Rosa Parks had any real way of influencing the corrupt systems they confronted—except to resist with the limited tools available. In Boston they dumped tea in the harbor. In Montgomery, Alabama, Ms. Parks moved to the front of the bus. In the City of New York, aggrieved tenants have these hearings. This is our Boston harbor. This is our segregated bus. This is our chosen field of battle.

There is a thick and threatening

wall between the citizens of this city and fair housing laws. We are now boxed in and losing battle after battle with forces more powerful than us. This wall was built with massive amounts of real-estate money, and it is guarded by politicians who have no accountability to us.

I ask each of you in the most urgent and respectful terms I know:

Help us tear down that wall.

Timothy L. Collins, now a tenant lawyer, is former executive director of the RGB.



NATASHA WINEGAR





E-mail Met Council
active@metcouncil.net

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>LOWER EAST SIDE BRANCH at Cooper Square Committee
61 E. 4th St. (btwn. 2nd Ave. & Bowery)
Tuesdays 6:30 pm</p> | <p>LOWER MANHATTAN LOFT TENANTS
St. Margaret's House, Pearl & Fulton Sts., 212-539-3538
Wednesdays 6 pm-7 pm</p> |
| <p>CHELSEA COALITION ON HOUSING
Covers 14th St. to 30th St., 5th Ave. to the Hudson River.
322 W. 17th St. (basement), CH3-0544
Thursdays 7:30 pm</p> | <p>VILLAGE INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS
26 Perry St. (basement), 212-741-2994
Wednesdays 6 pm</p> |
| <p>GOLES (Good Old Lower East Side)
17 Ave. B. Lower East Side tenants only, 212-533-2541.</p> | <p>WEST SIDE TENANTS UNION
4 W. 76 St.; 212-595-1274
Tuesday & Wednesday 6-7 pm</p> |
| <p>HOUSING COMMITTEE OF RENA
Covers 135th St. to 165th St. from Riverside Dr. to St. Nicholas Ave., 537 W. 156th St.
Thursdays 8 pm</p> |  |

Hotline Volunteers Needed!

Our phones are ringing off the hook! Met Council is looking for people to counsel tenants on our hotline. We will train you! The hotline runs on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 1:30-5 p.m. If you can give one afternoon a week for this crucial service to the tenant community, call Jenny at (212) 979-6238 x3.

Have a question about your rights?

Our phones are open to the public Mondays, Wednesdays & Fridays from 1:30 to 5 p.m.

We can briefly answer your questions, help you with organizing or refer you to other help.

212-979-0611

Join Met Council

Membership: Individual, \$25 per year; Low-income, \$15 per year; family (voluntary: 2 sharing an apartment), \$30 per year. Supporting, \$40 per year. Sustaining, min. of \$100 per year (indicate amount of pledge). For affiliation of community or tenant organizations, large buildings, trade unions, etc. call 212-979-6238.

My apartment controlled stabilized unregulated other _____
 I am interested in volunteering my time to Met Council. Please call me to schedule times and duties. I can counsel tenants, do office work, lobby public officials, attend rallies/protests.

Name _____
 Address _____ Apt. No. _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Home Phone Number _____ Email _____

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