



Tenant Inquilino

Housing for people, not profit

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Metropolitan Council on Housing
339 Lafayette St.
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PERIODICAL



“Reluctant” Judge Voids Law Protecting Mitchell-Lama, Section 8 Tenants

By Steven Wishnia

A State Supreme Court judge has struck down the city’s law intended to protect tenants in Mitchell-Lama and project-based Section 8 buildings.

The key provision of Local Law 79, the Tenant Empowerment Act of 2005, was that if owners want to leave rental-housing assistance programs, they have to warn the tenants and give them the right of first refusal to buy the building. But in two rulings handed down April 11, Justice Marilyn Shafer said that conflicted with the federal and state laws that enable landlords to leave the programs.

Justice Shafer also held that another provision in the law, requiring landlords who take their buildings out of Mitchell-Lama to let tenants stay there at the same rent for six months or until their lease expires, violated the state’s Urstadt Law, which bans the city from enacting rent restrictions stronger than the state’s.

The rulings came in two cases, one a landlord group’s challenge to Local Law 79 and the other involving a group of Section 8 tenants’ effort to buy their building under the law.

The judge wrote that she made the decision “reluctantly,” citing the familiar litany of facts and figures about the city’s housing crisis: that a quarter of tenants pay more than half their income for rent; that there are 36,000 homeless people in city shelters and more on the streets; and that the city had lost 44,000 Mitchell-Lama apartments already, and will likely lose 110,000 more. But she said that the state legislature’s intent was clear when it reduced the time that owners had to stay in the program before they could opt out from 35 years to 20.

“Despite the critical importance of maintaining available housing to low- and moderate-income New York

City residents, the State Legislature has given the city only limited authority to legislate and regulate in the area,” Justice Shafer wrote. By failing to protect Mitchell-Lama tenants, and by not permitting the city to do so, she added, “the State Legislature has failed the residents of the City of New York. The recent sales and proposed sales of major assisted rental housing complexes in this city and the likely devastating effect of those sales on low- and moderate-income residents of New York may and should function as a wake-up call for the need for immediate action by the state.”

Local Law 79 was passed in 2005 over Mayor Michael



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Bloomberg’s veto as part of an effort to stall the wave of owners buying their way out of the Mitchell-Lama program. The program, begun in the late 1950s, gave landlords various in-

centives for building low-cost housing and keeping it affordable, but as the real-estate market and gentrification heated up,

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RGB Proposes 7.5% Increase

By Jenny Laurie

On May 7, the city Rent Guidelines Board voted preliminary rent-increase guidelines of 2 to 4.5 percent for a one-year lease and 4 to 7.5 percent for a two-year lease. Public member Jonathan L. Kimmel made the proposal, and the vote followed the pattern of previous years: 5-4, with the public members in favor and the tenant and landlord representatives dissenting.

The board followed the practice established by chair Marvin Markus in 2003, when it first issued the preliminary guidelines as a range of possible increases. Using a range allows the board to avoid serious criticism from elected officials, tenants, affordable-housing advocates, and landlords, by providing a vague and moving target. But the final guidelines are usually

near the high end of the range.

The landlord representatives opened the bidding with a proposal to allow increases of 5.5 and 9 percent, along with a “longevity allowance,” an additional 6 percent on apartments renting for \$600 or less where the tenant has lived there for 10 years or more. It lost 7-2.

Tenant representative Adriene Holder followed by proposing increases of zero percent, which would continue “until the board has a serious discussion” about three provisos to the annual guidelines. One would be that landlords don’t need increases on rent-stabilized apartments if they own many deregulated apartments. A second would be that owners with numerous violations should not get rent increases, as they

should not be rewarded for failing to maintain their buildings. And the third was that landlords should not get rent increases if they haven’t registered the apartment’s rent with the state housing agency, as required by law. Landlord representative Magda Cruz responded that not allowing rent increases would be illegal, as it would be an “unfair taking” of landlords’ property. The proposal also lost 7-2.

The board proposed similar guidelines for lofts—2 to 4 percent for a one-year lease and 4 to 7 percent for a two-year lease.

The RGB originally scheduled the meeting for midday, but moved it back to its traditional 5:30 p.m. time after protests from tenant groups. Still, it was sparsely attended. The board will set the final guidelines on June 26,

at 5:30 p.m. at Cooper Union.

Before the Vote

The heavily scripted vote was not surprising to those who had been attending the RGB public meetings, where the public members made comments that showed their lack of con-

cern for the rising affordability crisis in the city. The recent RGB report on tenant income and affordability downplayed the serious housing conditions in the city. A recent Coalition for the Homeless report used the city’s own

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Spitzer Proposes Raising Rent-Decontrol Threshold

By Jenny Laurie

Governor Eliot Spitzer has proposed raising the rent threshold for high-rent vacancy and high-income decontrol from the current \$2,000 a month limit to \$2,800. This raise is long overdue, as the threshold has not been raised once in the 14 years these two kinds of rent decontrol have been in effect. Indeed, the governor's memo in support of the bill explains that if the threshold were set by using Rent Guidelines Board increases since 1993, it would now be over \$3,000.

These decontrol regulations were enacted, over strenuous tenant objections, by the state legislature in 1993, and later expanded in 1997. High-rent vacancy decontrol means that when a rent-stabilized apartment reaches \$2,000, it's unregulated for the next new tenant. In occupied apartments, the landlord can send a notice to the tenants every year asking if the household income is over

\$175,000. If it is for two years in a row—or if the tenant doesn't respond to the notice—the apartment can be deregulated, and the tenants will be subject to market rents when their lease expires.

Though tenants have been advocating for the repeal of vacancy decontrol and the Urstadt Law (to restore New York City's home rule over rent laws), we have to go back decades to find a bill from a governor that is as pro-tenant and pro-rent regulation as the current Spitzer proposal, modest as it is.

State Senator Liz Krueger (who represents the East Side of Manhattan, an area that has been decimated by the \$2,000 decontrol level) said that Spitzer's proposal "is a reflection of his administration's growing commitment to the preservation and expansion of affordable housing in New York City." In the future, she said, she thinks "we will see the Governor backing even more of the hous-

ing experts' recommendations for how to deal with the problems facing rent-regulated tenants, and I am hopeful that he will also come to support repeal of the Urstadt Law."

Spitzer made a commitment in the summer of 2006, while he was running for governor, to raise the decontrol threshold and to do more for code-enforcement efforts statewide. Many advocates think that this proposal coming this early in his term bodes well for future moves to preserve affordable housing in the city.

One group of tenants who will be helped enormously by this measure is those whose rents are above \$2,000 but whose incomes are lower than \$175,000. It has been estimated that hundreds,

if not thousands, of households who make less than that have been deregulated simply because they failed to respond to their landlords' queries every year. One caller to Met Council's hotline with this problem explained that he had not responded because he was so far under the income limit that he thought he could wait until he'd filed his tax return (the forms require reference to the state income tax filing).

Although the work of getting the bill past the Republican state senate will be a major battle, tenants can see this as an important first step in gaining the legislative and code changes critical in the fight to preserve New York City's affordable housing.

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- ✓ how to get repairs
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EL INQUILINO HISPANO

Jueza “reacia” anula la ley que protege a inquilinos en edificios Mitchell-Lama y de Sección 8

Por Steven Wishnia

Traducido por Lightning Translations

Una jueza de la Corte Suprema Estatal ha anulado la ley municipal destinada a proteger a los inquilinos en edificios Mitchell-Lama y de Sección 8 basada en proyectos de vivienda.

La disposición clave de la Ley Local 79, la Ley de Otorgar Poder a los Inquilinos de 2005 (Tenant Empowerment Act of 2005) estipuló que si los propietarios quieren salir de programas de asistencia de rentas, tienen que dar aviso a los inquilinos y también darles el derecho de primer rechazo para comprar el edificio. Sin embargo, en dos fallos emitidos el 11 de abril, la jueza Marilyn Shafer dijo que esto contradice las leyes federales y estatales que permiten a los caseros salir de los programas.

La jueza Shafer también sostuvo que otra disposición en la ley, que requiere a los caseros que sacan sus edificios de Mitchell-Lama dejar a los inquilinos quedarse con la misma renta por seis meses o hasta que venzan sus contratos, infringe en la Ley Urstadt del estado, que prohíbe a la ciudad promulgar re-

stricciones en rentas más fuertes que las del estado.

Los fallos vinieron en dos casos: uno, la impugnación de un grupo de caseros en torno a la Ley Local 79 y el otro teniendo que ver con el intento de un grupo de inquilinos de Sección 8 de comprar su edificio bajo la ley.

La jueza escribió que falló así “con reticencia”, señalando la lejanía conocida de datos y cifras en torno a la crisis de vivienda asequible en la ciudad: una cuarta parte de los inquilinos pagan más de la mitad de sus ingresos en renta; hay más de 36,000 personas sin techo en los albergues municipales y otros más en las calles; la ciudad ya había perdido 44,000 apartamentos Mitchell-Lama y probablemente perderá otros 110,000. De todos modos, dijo, el propósito de la legislación estatal fue claro cuando redujo de 35 años a 20 el período durante el cual los propietarios tenían que quedarse en el programa antes de poder salir.

“A pesar de la importancia crítica

de mantener vivienda asequible para residentes de Nueva York con ingresos bajos y moderados, la Legislatura Estatal ha dado a la ciudad solamente una autoridad limitada para legislar y regular en el área”, escribió la jueza Shafer. Al no proteger a los inquilinos en edificios Mitchell-Lama ni permitir que la ciudad lo haga, añadió, “la Legislatura Estatal ha fallado a los residentes de la Ciudad de Nueva York. Las ventas recientes y propuestas de venta de importantes complejos de vivienda de asistencia de renta en esta ciudad y el efecto probablemente devastador de estas ventas para los residentes de Nueva York con ingresos bajos y moderados puede y debe funcionar como una llamada de alerta en torno a la necesidad de acción inmediata por parte del estado”.

La Ley Local 79 fue aprobada en 2005 por encima del veto del alcalde Michael Bloomberg como parte de un esfuerzo para detener la ola de propietarios comprando la salida del programa Mitchell-Lama. El programa, iniciado a

finis de los años 50, otorgaba a los caseros diversos incentivos para construir viviendas de bajo costo y mantenerlas asequibles, pero al acalorarse el mercado de bienes raíces y la burguesificación, una creciente cantidad de caseros decidieron liquidar sus hipotecas, salir del programa y elevar las rentas. La Junta de Bienes Raíces (Real Estate Board) de Nueva York impugnó la ley con el apoyo del gobierno de Bloomberg.

El segundo caso tuvo que ver con inquilinos de los Mother Zion-McMurray Apartments, un edificio en Harlem de Sección 8 basada en un proyecto de vivienda, quienes habían intentado comprar el edificio bajo la Ley Local 79 después que el propietario hizo saber que tenía planeado salir del programa. El Departamento de Conservación y Desarrollo de Vivienda (Housing Preservation and Development, HPD) municipal no valoró el edificio para fijar su precio y los in-

pasa a la página 4

Los Ajustes de la “Junta de Regulación de Renta” de la Ciudad de Nueva York (Orden No. 38)

Para los contratos de apartamentos de Renta Estabilizada que comienzan el 1ro. de octubre de 2006 hasta el 30 de septiembre de 2007.

Contratos de Renovación Los caseros tienen que ofrecer a los inquilinos de renta estabilizada un contrato de renovación dentro de 90 a 120 días antes de que venza su contrato actual. El contrato de renovación tiene que conservar los mismos términos y condiciones que el contrato que vencerá, excepto cuando refleje un cambio en la ley. Una vez que se haya recibido el ofrecimiento de renovación, los inquilinos tienen 60 días para aceptarlo y escoger si van a renovar el contrato por uno o dos años. El propietario tiene que devolver la copia firmada y fechada al inquilino dentro de 30 días. La nueva renta no entrará en vigencia hasta que empiece el nuevo contrato, o cuando el propietario devuelva la copia firmada (lo que suceda después). Ofrecimientos retrasados: si el casero ofrece la renovación tarde (menos de 90 días antes de que venza el contrato actual), el contrato puede empezar, a la opción del inquilino, o en la fecha que hubiera empezado si se hubiera hecho un ofrecimiento a tiempo, o en el primer pago de renta fechada 90 días después de la fecha del ofrecimiento del contrato. Las pautas de renta usadas para la renovación no pueden ser mayores que los incrementos de la RGB vigentes en la fecha en que el contrato debiera empezar (si se lo hubiera ofrecido a tiempo). El inquilino no tiene que pagar el nuevo aumento de renta hasta 90 días después de que se haya hecho el ofrecimiento.

Asignación de Subarrendamiento Los caseros podrán cobrar un aumento de 10 por ciento durante el término de subarrendamiento que comience durante este período de las pautas.

Tipo de Contrato	Renta Legal Actual	Contrato de 1 Año	Contrato de 2 Años	
Renovación del Contrato	Si el dueño paga la calefacción	4.25%	7.25%	
	Si el inquilino paga la calefacción	3.75%	6.75%	
Contratos para Apartamentos Vacíos	Más de \$500	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	17%	
	Menos de \$300	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	17% + \$100	20%
		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%	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, más el 20%
	Renta de \$300 a \$500	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	17% + \$100	20% + \$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, + 175% + \$100	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, + 20% + \$100
		Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	17% o \$100, lo que sea mayor	20% 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%, 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	

Programa de Exención de Incrementos de Renta para las Personas de Mayor Edad Las personas de mayor edad con renta estabilizada (y los que viven en apartamentos de renta controlada, Mitchell-Lama y cooperativas de dividendos limitados), con 62 años o más, y cuyos ingresos familiares disponibles al año sean de \$26,000 o menos (del año de impuestos previo) y que paguen (o enfrenten un aumento de renta que les haría pagar) un tercio o más de aquel ingreso en renta pueden ser elegibles para un congelamiento de renta. Solicite a: NYC Dept of the Aging, SCRIE Unit, 2 Lafayette St., NY, NY 10007 o llame al 311 o visite su sitio Web, nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/scrrie_sp/scrrie_sp.shtml.

Programa de Exención de Incrementos de Renta para Minusválidos Inquilinos

con renta regulada que reciben ayuda económica elegible relacionada con discapacidad, que tengan ingresos de \$17,580 o menos para individuales y \$25,212 o menos para una pareja y enfrenten rentas iguales o más de un tercio de sus ingresos pueden ser elegibles para un congelamiento de renta. Solicite a: NYC Dept. of Finance, DRIE Exemptions, 59 Maiden Lane - 20th floor, New York, NY 10038. Llame al 311 para una solicitud o vaya al sitio Web en www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/property/property_tax_reduc_drie.shtml

Las unidades desvanes Los aumentos legalizados de unidades de desván son un 3.75 por ciento por un contrato de un año y 4.5 por ciento por dos años. No se permiten incrementos para las unidades de desván vacías.

Hoteles y SROs El aumento es un 2 por ciento para los apartamentos de hotel de clase A, casas de alojamiento, hoteles de clase B (30 o más habitaciones), hoteles de una sola habitación y pensiones (clase B, 6-29 habitaciones). Los caseros no pueden cobrar un aumento sobre la renta cobrada el 1o de octubre de 2006 si se alquilan un 20 por ciento o más de las unidades a inquilinos que no tienen renta regulada. No se permiten incrementos para apartamentos vacíos.

Exceso de cobro Los inquilinos deben estar al tanto de que muchos caseros se aprovecharán de las complejidades de estas pautas y concesiones adicionales, además del poco conocimiento de los inquilinos del historial de renta de sus apartamentos, para cobrar una renta ilegal. Los inquilinos pueden impugnar los aumentos sin autorización de renta en las cortes o al presentar una impugnación con la agencia estatal de vivienda, la División de Vivienda y Renovación Comunitaria (Division of Housing and Community Renewal, DHCR). El primer paso en el proceso es ponerse en contacto con la DHCR para ver el registro oficial del historial de renta. Vaya a www.dhcr.state.ny.us o llame al 718-739-6400 y pida un historial de renta detallado. Luego, hable con un abogado o defensor experto antes de seguir.

Para las pautas previas, llame a la RGB al 212-385-2934 o vaya al www.housingnyc.com



Edificios Mitchell-Lama vendidos por \$940 millones

Por Steven Wishnia

Traducido por Lightning Translations

En lo que una compañía de investigaciones llamó la segunda venta más grande de edificios residenciales jamás ocurrida en Manhattan, un grupo de antiguos edificios Mitchell-Lama ha sido comprado por \$940 millones, informó el *New York Observer* el 1º de mayo.

Los siete edificios vendidos, cuatro de ellos en East Harlem y uno en Harlem, uno en West Harlem y uno en Roosevelt Island, contienen casi 4,000 apartamentos. Incluyen seis edificios antiguamente poseídos en común por Jerome Belson Associates: Eastwood en Roosevelt Island, con 1,003 apartamentos; Schomburg Plaza en la Quinta avenida y la calle 110, con 600; Metro North en la Primera avenida y la calle 101, con 761; UPACA 1 y 2 en la avenida Lexington, con 405; y 3333 Broadway, un edificio de 35 pisos y 1,190 unidades sacado

de Mitchell-Lama después de que la universidad Columbia anunció sus planes de extenderse en el vecindario de West Harlem al norte de la calle 125. Fue comprado por \$277 millones. El séptimo edificio fue 455 este de la calle 102.

Según el *Observer*, los compradores son Urban American Management, de West New York, New Jersey, y su socio financiero, City Investment Fund. El periódico también citó a la compañía de investigaciones Real Capital Analytics, que dijo que la venta tomó segundo lugar solamente a la venta en \$5.4 mil millones de Stuyvesant Town y Peter Cooper Village el año pasado.

El *Observer* describió al vendedor, Ruby Schron, como un "casero muy silencioso y activo". El co-propietario de Schron, Jerome Belson Associates, dijo a los inquilinos de los edificios en 2004 que

tenía planeado sacarlos del programa. Ya que todos los edificios se construyeron después de 1973, los inquilinos de ellos no son protegidos por las regulaciones de rentas; muchos ya han perdido sus hogares.

Belson fue nombrado "Hombre del Año" en noviembre pasado por los Constructores y Propietarios Asociados de Gran Nueva York (Associated Builders and Owners of Greater New York), un grupo que encabeza. El grupo también rindió homenaje a Laurence Gluck de Stellar Management, otro casero de mala fama por sacar edificios de Mitchell-Lama, como "Especulador del Año". Inquilinos manifestantes fuera del evento otorgaron a Gluck su propio premio como "Destructor de Comunidades del Año", por "poner fuera de alcance los edificios asequibles".

ley anulada

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quilinos demandaron tanto a HPD como al casero.

Los inquilinos sostuvieron que si el edificio saliera de la Sección 8, ellos se verían forzados a mudarse y les resultaría difícil conseguir otras viviendas. Sin embargo, la jueza Shafer estuvo de acuerdo con HPD, quien dijo que la Ley de Conservación de Vivienda de Bajos Ingresos y Titularidad de Hogares por Residentes (Low Income Housing Preservation and Resident Homeownership Act), la ley de 1990 que gobierna la Sección 8, específicamente prohibía a los estados promulgar leyes que no permitieran a los caseros pagar sus hipotecas por adelantado y salir del programa. Aunque una ley de 1996 removió esta específica prohibición, escribió la jueza, el Congreso todavía permitía a los caseros salir del programa, así que los estados y gobiernos locales no pueden interferir con ello.

Gluck busca aumentos de "circunstancias únicas o peculiares" para 11 edificios

Por Sue Susman

Traducido por Lightning Translations

El propietario Larry Gluck acaba de entablar un trámite judicial "Artículo 78" en un intento de forzar a la División de Vivienda y Renovación Comunitaria (Division of Housing and Community Renewal, DHCR) estatal a permitirle aumentar los alquileres de renta estabilizada en 11 antiguos edificios Mitchell-Lama, a la tasa del

mercado. Busca los aumentos bajo el resquicio legal de "circunstancias únicas o peculiares" en la Ley estatal de Protección de Emergencia para Inquilinos (Emergency Tenant Protection Act, ETPA).

Gluck sostiene que la DHCR ha dejado de actuar en torno a sus peticiones para los aumentos (cierto) y que un fallo judicial en el caso de los KSLM-Columbus Apartments (Westgate) requiere a la agencia de vivienda permitirle aumentar las rentas a la tasa del mercado (falso). La ETPA, promulgada en 1974 para aliviar los efectos desastrosos de eliminar controles de renta en apartamentos desocupados, permite tanto a inquilinos como a caseros sostener que, en el caso de un apartamento que entra en el sistema de estabi-

lización de rentas, "circunstancias únicas o peculiares" les da derecho a una renta más alta o más baja de lo que se pide por un apartamento que efectivamente ha estado fuera del sistema, como el apartamento del conserje. Gluck ha perseguido esto agresivamente, afirmando que simplemente sacar los edificios del programa Mitchell-Lama es bastante "único y peculiar" para conseguirle aumentos masivos de renta.

Como aparente respuesta a la demanda, la DHCR está acelerando la formulación de su política en torno al asunto: la comisionada Deborah Van Amerongen asevera que la agencia tiene la autoridad de definir las "circunstancias únicas o peculiares" y está esperando la decisión final del gobernador Eliot Spitzer confirmando cómo lo definirán. Una vez que se fije la política (y presumiblemente una vez que se hayan establecido las regulaciones para llegar a las determinaciones), la DHCR decidirá en torno a las peticiones

de Gluck para aumentos en los 11 edificios.

Los 11 edificios, esparcidos tras tres condados, contienen más de 2,100 apartamentos. Ellos son: Boulevard Towers I, Bruckner Towers, Dancia House (1889 avenida Sedgwick), Highbridge House, Janel Towers y Undercliff House en el Bronx; Central Park Gardens, Columbus Manor, Town House West Apartments y Westwood House en Manhattan; y Prospect Towers en Brooklyn.

Gluck busca aumentar las rentas de \$496 al mes a \$3,017, por ejemplo, en uno de los edificios. Si se sale con la suya, los edificios se vaciarán. Los inquilinos no pueden pagar un aumento de un 500 por ciento. Entonces Gluck renovará los apartamentos vacíos, arrastrándolos fuera de la estabilización de rentas y poniendo patas arriba el propósito de la ETPA.

El caso está fijado para el 13 de junio en la Corte Suprema Estatal en Manhattan.



Inquilinos de mayor edad y minusválidos

Las personas mayores de 62 años o más, en vivienda de renta regulada, Mitchell-Lama y algunos otros programas, con ingresos disponibles anuales de familia de \$26,000 o menos (para 2005) y quienes pagan (o enfrentan un aumento de renta que les obligaría a pagar) un tercio o más de estos ingresos en renta pueden llenar los requisitos para una Exención de Incrementos de Renta para las Personas de Mayor Edad (Senior Citizen Rent Exemption, SCRIE). Solicítela a:

The NYC Dept. of the Aging
SCRIE Unit
2 Lafayette Street, NY, NY 10007

Los inquilinos minusválidos que reciben ayuda financiera relacionada con invalidez y tienen ingresos de \$17,580 o menos para individuos y \$25,323 o menos para una pareja y quienes enfrentan rentas iguales a o más de un tercio de sus ingresos pueden llenar los requisitos para la Exención de Incrementos de Renta para Minusválidos (Disability Rent Increase Exemption, DRIE). Solicítela a:

NYC Dept. of Finance
DRIE Exemptions
59 Maiden Lane – 20th Floor
New York, NY 10038

La información sobre DRIE y SCRIE está disponible en el sitio Web de la ciudad, www.nyc.gov, o llame a 311.

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.

Missed an issue of TENANT?

Check us out on the Web:

www.metcouncil.net

Council Introduces “Safe Housing Act”

By Jillian Jonas

With the introduction of the Safe Housing Act before the City Council on April 12, many housing advocates see the city Department of Housing Preservation and Development shoring up its commitment to code enforcement.

The Safe Housing Act—which mandates that 200 buildings with the worst violations be identified every year for intensive attention and inspections—is an expansion of the goals and spirit of 2005’s Targeted Cyclical Enforcement Program, or T-CEP, an initiative which also began in the Council to provide a “comprehensive cellar-to-roof” inspection process of buildings identified by local community groups and area Councilmembers as problematic.

Up to 400 housing units in 30 buildings could be inspected, with HPD rotating districts every two months. T-CEP was a departure from HPD’s normal protocol, which was based on individual tenants’ complaints.

The new bill builds on T-CEP and has the support of diverse interests including the New York Immigration Coalition and the Urban Justice Center, as well as the Rent Stabilization Association, representing landlords.

HPD’s efforts are “better today than in 10 years,” said Irene Baldwin, executive director of the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development. “There’s been more of a commitment from this administration than from the previous administration” regarding code enforcement, she said, “and for the first time, [HPD] has started being proactive.”

Brooklyn Councilmember Letitia James, a cosponsor of the bill, said that with it, “hundreds of buildings each year will be repaired by the city when landlords ignore city laws... Like with T-CEP, problem buildings will be addressed as a whole, not piecemeal.... Boilers and roofs will be replaced, rodents and insects will be exterminated, and other dangerous conditions will be abated in a timely way.”

HPD is charged with overseeing the safety and habitability of the city’s privately owned housing stock. A lack of basic necessities such as heat and hot water is designated a class C violation, which is most serious and is supposed to be corrected within 24 hours. Class B violations must be remedied within 20 days, and landlords have 90 days to correct the least serious violations, Class A.

The Safe Housing bill mandates HPD to intervene in situations where a given building has a history of emergency repairs while also carrying at least 27 current dangerous violations. If an owner doesn’t correct the violations within four months after notification, HPD will make the necessary repairs, charging the cost to the landlord. The agency will also monitor the building for a year, according to Council Speaker Christine Quinn, who is also a cosponsor.

The Bushwick community group Make The Road by Walking has been at the forefront of the campaign to put pressure on the city to improve housing conditions, because the Bushwick area “has had more housing code violations

per unit” than any other district in New York City, according to codirector Andrew Friedman. Much of their work was the basis for what ultimately became the T-CEP pilot program.

The full version of this article appeared in City Limits Weekly, www.citylimits.org. Reprinted with permission.

Tenants Rally Against Lower East Side Eviction

About 300 people jammed both sides of East Third Street on April 14 for a rally supporting the tenants of 47 East Third St., whose landlords are trying to evict them all so they can use the building as a mansion for their family—or maybe convert it to luxury housing. In February, a state appeals court ruled that the owners could proceed with the eviction attempts, as there was no legal limit on the number of apartments they could claim for personal use.

Speakers included Lower East Side Councilmember Rosie Mendez, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, State Senator Liz Krueger, and tenants from buildings in the neighborhood that are facing eviction attempts through harassment, similar owner-use claims, and phony demolitions.

Meanwhile, the landlords, Alistair and Catherine Economakis, had someone tape flyers reading “BE INFORMED!” to lampposts on the block. The flyers claimed that

the couple are not “corporate landlords” and that this is the only building they own. It is the only building they own as a couple—but Catherine Economakis and her father own or co-own more than 35 buildings in Manhattan and Brooklyn.



Councilmember Rosie Mendez with 47 E. 3rd St. tenants.

DHCR Charges Shaloms with Harassment in Three Buildings

In March 2006, 29 tenants from 13 buildings owned by various members of the Shalom family filed harassment complaints as a group with the state Division of Housing and Community Renewal.

The DHCR has decided to prosecute Daniel Shalom/Keystone for harassment, based upon the complaints filed by tenants at 190 East 3rd St., 331 East 14th St., and 338 East 61st St. The complaint charges that the owners “deliberately and systematically pursued various illegal courses of conduct intended and designed to force the subject rent-stabilized tenants to vacate their apartments.” Tenants in the three buildings reported bogus eviction attempts, threats to break into their apartments, failure to make repairs, and going for up to six weeks without heat and four months without gas. The judge is currently holding conference hearings in an attempt to settle the case without a trial.

Tenants are pushing for a trial.

The Shalom Tenants Alliance urges all tenants who have been harassed by Shalom landlords to file harassment complaints with the DHCR: “It takes more than one tenant’s complaint to establish the Shalom pattern in an individual Shalom landlord’s buildings.” Although tenants of 416 East 73rd St. wrote 50 letters to landlord David Shalom/Big Apple, filed 200 complaints with government authorities, endured eight court actions, and paid \$24,000 in legal fees; and even though the super changed ten times, it apparently was not bad enough to qualify as “harassment”: The DHCR has decided to discontinue the case against David Shalom/Big Apple. “This is why we need MULTIPLE tenants from MULTIPLE Big Apple buildings to file harassment complaints,” the Shalom Tenants Alliance’s newsletter said.

Meanwhile, Nader Shalom/Gatsby Enterprises purchased 201 Sullivan St. in the West Village in March; tenants were notified on March 26. Two weeks later, on April 11, tenants reported that gas had been shut off. The landlord refused to restore gas service until apartments had been inspected, which

took several days to complete and consisted of turning stoves on and off after the gas was turned on. Following this exercise, Con Ed shut off the gas, heat, and hot water, and posted a notice about “tampering with gas.” The city Department of Housing Preserva-

tion and Development has served violations, but tenants remained without gas service as of May 5.

Excerpted from the Shalom Tenants Status Report e-mail newsletter and DHCR documents.

L.A. Slumlord Faces Jail

Los Angeles slumlord Darren Stern, who pleaded no contest on May 1 to more than 30 code violations in three of his buildings, will serve up to five months in jail, city prosecutors told the *Los Angeles Times*.

Prosecutors and local activists had charged that the violations—which included cockroach infestations and leaking sewage—were part of a campaign by Stern to harass tenants out of his buildings so he could collect higher rents. Los Angeles rent control generally limits rent increases to 4 percent a year.

“If there were ever a slumlord that more richly deserved to spend time in jail, I do not know of him,” Tai Glenn, directing attorney for the Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, told the *Times*.

“Darren Stern,” according to the Shalom Tenants Alliance in New York, is an alias for Henry Ohebshalom, also known as Henry Shalom—a member of the Ohebshalom/Shalom family of landlords, who are notorious for harassing tenants.

A civil suit against Stern is pending. The judge in that case has prohibited his company, Landmark Equity Management, from buying other buildings in Los Angeles until it is resolved.



Chorus of Doubt Greets City's New Plan to House the Homeless

By Adam F. Hutton

A comprehensive program designed to get homeless families out of New York City shelters and living on their own through rental assistance, job training, financial planning—and ultimately work and saving money—was officially unveiled by the city's Department of Homeless Services (DHS) late last month.

In a dramatic shift, the new plan, called Work Advantage, reduces the length of time the city will subsidize rent for a homeless person or family to two years, down from five. It relies on a city-matched savings account and homelessness prevention services after the subsidies run out to keep people from moving out of the shelters, into “permanent housing,” then back to the shelter again.

Work Advantage will replace Housing Stability Plus (HSP), the agency's two-year-old homeless housing assistance program, DHS Commissioner Robert Hess announced in April—when there were more than 35,100 people living in New York City shelters, including more than 14,400 children from a record high number of 9,240 families.

Advocates for the homeless, who have been sharply critical of HSP, wasted no time in faulting the new plan as well.

“Both programs are built on a faulty assumption the Bloomberg administration has about homelessness,” said Patrick Markee, senior policy analyst for the Coalition for the Homeless. “The core of the misguided thinking is that this is a welfare problem and not a housing problem. These families are not homeless because they don't work enough or they're not willing to work, it's because there is a lack of affordable housing.”

Markee said the emphasis DHS is putting on self-sufficiency through job training, work and savings under the Work Advantage program shows a stronger commitment by the administration to the faulty logic that what homeless families need are greater incentives to work and save, not affordable housing.

Criticism of HSP peaked earlier this year as homeless organizations released various studies and reports that included harsh judgments about how poorly the program was being run. Work Advantage was

created in response to those critiques and is an effort to eliminate the “unintended consequences” of Housing Stability Plus, Hess said. For example, some families were forced off the program when they started earning too much money and some landlords left the program after the first year because they weren't being paid.

Work Advantage has been offered to about 2,000 individuals and families thus far, including many who were not eligible for the old program; another 6,000 currently receiving HSP benefits also can switch to the new plan. Hess said Work Advantage would probably be slightly more expensive than Housing Stability Plus in the first few years, but will be cheaper in the long run since it cuts off after two years instead of five.

But Hess said the new program wasn't designed to be cheaper, just more effective. “The people who are benefiting from HSP need a leg up, not a hand-out,” Hess said, pointing out that HSP doesn't provide job training, financial planning, and assistance or aftercare—which are all components of Work Advantage aimed at keeping DHS clients from returning to the shelters.

Work Advantage will provide a rent subsidy, ranging from up to \$849 a month for a single person to as much as \$1,304 for a family of seven or eight, for up to two years, and recipients will be required to work, save money and pay \$50 a month out of their own pockets toward rent. Unlike HSP, the new program does not require participants to receive public assistance to be eligible.

The program “rewards clients for working and saving money rather than penalizing them by taking away their rental assistance for working,” Hess said in a statement issued April 25. “Work Advantage also focuses on self-reliance by providing clients with the tools and resources that are critical to their success, something that has not been done before.”

“This program is consistent with our focus on work as a critical path out of poverty,” HRA Commissioner Robert Doar said in the DHS press release. “HRA is committed to being a full partner in providing the supports and tools necessary to get and retain employment and housing.”

But critics of the plan, echoing Markee, say all the job training and financial planning in the world won't help homeless families transition into permanent housing within two years when the labor market isn't producing jobs that will sustain a family who isn't getting rent subsidies while the housing market continues to drive rents up.

“There is no evidence that the labor market will create the kind of jobs needed to move these low-

income working families out of poverty within one to two years to a point where they would be able to afford an apartment in a tight housing market without continued rental assistance,” said Annette Bernhardt, deputy director of the Poverty Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University. “These time limits fly in the face of reality and will merely push the problem off for the next administration.”

Heidi Siegfried, a super-

vising attorney at the Partnership for the Homeless who participated in an advocates' advisory committee to DHS, said recipients will have to find jobs paying \$15 to \$20 per hour in order to live on their own once the subsidy runs out. At a time when some junior attorneys at nonprofits are making around \$20 per hour, Siegfried says, it's not clear how formerly homeless people will achieve that earning power.

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NYC Rent Guidelines Board Adjustments (Order No. 38)

for Rent Stabilized Leases commencing Oct. 1, 2006 through Sept. 30, 2007

Lease Type	Current Legal Rent	One-year Lease	Two-year Lease	
Renewal Leases	Landlord pays heat	4.25%	7.25%	
	Tenant pays heat	3.75%	6.75%	
Vacancy Leases	More than \$500	Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	17%	20%
		No vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 17%	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20%
	Less than \$300	Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	17% 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% 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% 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%, or \$100, whichever is greater	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20%, or \$100, whichever is greater

Renewal Leases Landlords must offer rent-stabilized tenants a renewal lease 90 to 120 days before the expiration of their current lease. The renewal lease must keep the same terms and conditions as the expiring lease, except when reflecting a change in the law. Once the renewal offer is received, tenants have 60 days to accept it and choose whether to renew the lease for one or two years. The owner must return the signed and dated copy to the tenant in 30 days. The new rent does not go into effect until the start of the new lease term, or when the owner returns the signed copy (whichever is later). Late offers: If the owner offers the renewal late (fewer than 90 days before the expiration of the current lease), the lease term can begin, at the tenant's option, either on the date it would have begun had a timely offer been made, or on the first rent payment date 90 days after the date of the lease offer. The rent guidelines used for the renewal can be no greater than the RGB increases in effect on the date the lease should have begun (if timely offered). The tenant does not have to pay the new rent increase until 90 days after the offer was made.

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

Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption Program Rent-stabilized seniors (and those living in rent-controlled, Mitchell-Lama, and limited equity coop apartments), 62 or older, whose disposable annual household income is \$26,000 or less (for the previous tax year) 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 rent freeze. Apply to: NYC Dept. for the Aging, SCRIE Unit, 2 Lafayette St., NY, NY 10007 or call 311 or visit their Web site, www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/scrie/scrie.shtml.

Disability Rent Increase Exemption Program Rent-regulated tenants receiving eligible disability-related financial assistance who have incomes of \$17,580 or less for individuals and \$25,212 or less for a couple and are facing rents equal to more than one-third of their income may be eligible for a rent freeze. Apply to: NYC Dept. of Finance, DRIE Exemptions, 59 Maiden Lane, 20th floor, New York, NY 10038. Call 311 for an application or go to the Web site at www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/property/property_tax_reduc_drie.shtml.

Loft Units Legalized loft-unit increases are 3.75 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 increase is 2% for Class A apartment hotels, lodging houses, Class B hotels (30 rooms or more), single room occupancy (SRO) hotels, and rooming houses (Class B, 6-29 rooms). Landlords cannot collect an increase over the rent charged on October 1, 2006 if 20% or more of the units are rented to unregulated tenants. No vacancy allowance is permitted.

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. Tenants can challenge unauthorized rent increases through the courts or by filing a challenge with the state housing agency, the Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR). The first step in the process is to contact the DHCR to see the official record of the rent history. Go to www.dhcr.state.ny.us or call (718) 739-6400 and ask for a detailed rent history. Then speak to a knowledgeable advocate or a lawyer before proceeding.

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

Gluck Seeks “Unique or Peculiar” Increases

By Sue Susman

Owner Larry Gluck has just filed an “Article 78” court proceeding, trying to force the state’s Division of Housing and Community Renewal to let him raise the rent-stabilized rents in 11 former Mitchell-Lama buildings to market rate. He is seeking the increases under the “unique or peculiar circumstances” loophole in the state’s Emergency Tenant Protection Act.

Gluck is claiming both that the DHCR has failed to act on his applications for the increases (true), and that a court decision in the KSLM-Columbus Apartments (Westgate) case requires the housing agency to let him raise the rents to market rate (false). The ETPA, enacted in 1974 to alleviate the disastrous effects of eliminating rent control on vacant apartments, allows either landlords or tenants to claim that, in an apartment that’s entering the

rent-stabilization system, “unique or peculiar circumstances” entitle them to a higher or lower rent than that asked for an apartment that had effectively been out of the system, such as the superintendent’s apartment. Gluck has been aggressive in pursuing that, contending that merely taking buildings out of the Mitchell-Lama program is “unique or peculiar” enough for him to get massive rent increases.

In apparent response to the lawsuit, DHCR is hastening its policy-making on this issue: Commissioner Deborah Van Amerongen asserts that that agency has the authority to define “unique or peculiar circumstances,” and is awaiting final word from Governor Eliot Spitzer confirming how they will define it. Once the policy is set—and presumably once regulations are in place to make the determinations—DHCR will de-

cide on Gluck’s applications for increases in the 11 buildings.

The 11 buildings, spread across three boroughs, contain more than 2,100 apartments. They are: Boulevard Towers I, Bruckner Towers, Dancia House (1889 Sedgwick Ave.), Highbridge House, Janel Towers, and Undercliff House in the Bronx; Central Park Gardens, Columbus Manor, Town House West Apartments, and Westwood House in Manhattan; and Prospect Towers in Brooklyn.

Gluck seeks to raise rents from \$496 a month to \$3,017, for example, in one of the buildings. If he gets his way, the buildings will be emptied: Tenants cannot afford a 500 percent increase. Gluck will then renovate the empty apartments, sweeping them out of rent stabilization—and standing the ETPA’s purpose on its head.

The case is set for June 13 in State Supreme Court in Manhat-

Mitchell-Lama

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an increasing number decided to pay off their mortgages, leave the program, and raise rents. The Real Estate Board of New York challenged the law, and the Bloomberg administration backed them.

The second case involved tenants of the Mother Zion-McMurray Apartments, a project-based Section 8 building in Harlem, who had sought to buy the building under Local Law 79 after the owner announced that it was planning to leave the program. The city Department of Housing Preservation and Development failed to appraise the building to determine a price for it, and the tenants sued both HPD and the landlord.

Tenants argued that if the building was taken out of Section 8, they would be forced to move and would have problems finding other housing. But Justice Shafer agreed with HPD, who said that the Low Income Housing Preservation and Resident Homeownership Act, the 1990 federal law that governs Section 8, specifically prohibited states from enacting laws that restricted owners from prepaying their mortgages and leaving the program. Though a 1996 law removed that specific ban, the judge wrote, Congress still allowed landlords to withdraw from the program, so states and local governments could not interfere with that.

Mitchell-Lama Buildings Sold for \$940 Million

By Steven Wishnia

In what one research firm called the second-largest residential-building sale ever in Manhattan, a group of former Mitchell-Lama buildings have been purchased for \$940 million, the *New York Observer* reported on May 1.

The seven buildings sold, four in East Harlem and one each in Harlem, West Harlem, and Roosevelt Island, contain almost 4,000 apartments. They include six buildings formerly co-owned by Jerome Belson Associates: Eastwood on Roosevelt Island, with 1,003 apartments; Schomburg Plaza at Fifth Avenue and 110th Street, with 600; Metro North on First Avenue and 101st Street, with 761; UPCA 1 and 2 on Lexington Avenue, with 405; and 3333 Broadway,

a 35-story, 1,190-unit building taken out of Mitchell-Lama after Columbia University announced its plans to expand into the West Harlem neighborhood north of 125th Street. It went for \$277 million. The seventh building was 455 East 102nd St.

According to the *Observer*, the buyers are Urban American Management, of West New York, New Jersey, and its financial partner, City Investment Fund. The paper also quoted research firm Real Capital Analytics as saying the sale was second only to last year’s \$5.4 billion sale of Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village.

The *Observer* described the seller, Ruby Schron, as a “very quiet and very active landlord.” Schron’s

co-owner, Jerome Belson Associates, told tenants in the buildings in 2004 that it planned to take them out of the program. As the buildings were all constructed after 1973, tenants in them are not protected by rent regulations.

Belson was named “Man of the Year” last November by the Associated Builders and Owners of Greater New York, a group that he heads. The group also honored Laurence Gluck of Stellar Management, another landlord notorious for taking buildings out of Mitchell-Lama, as “Developer of the Year.” Tenants rallying outside the event gave Gluck their own award as “Community Destroyer of the Year,” for “making affordable buildings unaffordable.”

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.

Homeless Plan

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David Jones, president of the Community Service Society of New York, says he knows what will happen when these families have to start paying the rent out of their own pockets – first they’ll have to make sacrifices they can’t afford to make, then find cheaper places to live and finally go back to a city shelter. His group did a four-year study, released last year, on rent burdens placed on low-income New Yorkers.

“Once rent is paid, (poor families have) an average of \$32 a week per family member to spend on other necessities, like food, clothing, transportation and medical costs,” Jones said. “In that kind of housing market, it is implausible that our poorest families can survive without rental assistance after 12-24 months. These time limits will force families to cut back on vital expenses like food, clothing, and health care, lead them to double or triple up in cramped apartments, or return

to shelter.”

Hess defended the 24-month maximum subsidy. “Two years may not be enough for some families to become self-sufficient, but it will be for most,” he said. “Those who need continuing assistance after their Work Advantage subsidy ends will have their savings and can always turn to our homelessness prevention program, to keep them from having to return to the shelters.”

Homeless advocates also point out that DHS has a history of placing the homeless in substandard apartments and paying hundreds of thousands of dollars to the city’s worst landlords to house them.

A recent nine-month study of living conditions by the Coalition for the Homeless, including 2,850 apartments approved by DHS and subsidized by HSP, found that two out of five—more than 1,100 families—were living in apartments with two or three hazardous violations on file with the Department

of Housing Preservation and Development. The city had moved homeless families out of shelters and into apartments with lead paint, leaky ceilings, broken appliances, and no heat or hot water.

In March Hess told the City Council’s General Welfare Committee that DHS would be stepping up apartment inspections for Housing Stability Plus clients. And he promises inspections with higher standards as part of Work Advantage as well.

The HSP subsidy covers all the rent for a year and declines 20 percent a year every year for up to four more years before it cuts off. It also requires that the family or individual stay on public assistance, which causes a set of welfare-related problems the new program is designed to solve.

If an HSP client’s welfare is suspended temporarily, for example, the landlord doesn’t get paid until the tenants get back on public assistance. Naturally,

this discourages landlords from participating. Work Advantage will guarantee payments to landlords, Hess said.

Perhaps worse, if a family starts to earn too much money to qualify for public assistance, they lose the HSP rent subsidy altogether—which discourages recipients from working too much or finding a better-paying job. Under the new program, homeless families are not required to receive welfare benefits to qualify.

Other homeless advocates said they’re upset about the way in which Work Advantage was announced. They thought they would be consulted more thoroughly before the HSP replacement was formalized.

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RGB

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counts to show that 2007 has seen the highest homeless numbers ever—with averages of over 35,000 people sleeping in city shelters every night.

The RGB's report, which is used by board members to weigh the city's economic health, downplayed homelessness and painted a generally rosy view of the city's economy. The report does indicate that the number of non-payment cases reaching the Housing Court calendar rose, revealing that more and more tenants were unable to pay the rent even after the landlord served them with eviction papers.

Also included in the report, but not emphasized, was the 2005 Housing & Vacancy Survey data showing that between 2002 and 2005, tenant incomes declined slightly when adjusted for inflation, while rents increased by 20 percent. The current median income for a rent-stabilized household, considered the most reliable indicator of tenant incomes, is \$32,000 per year, according to that survey.

Tom Waters of the Community Service Society delivered a report that showed the average moderate-income renter family to be under serious pressure—with the share of their income going to rent rising from 34 to 40 percent between 1996 and 2005.

The RGB staff issued two reports on the economic conditions of rent-stabilized buildings: the Price

Index of Operating Costs (PIOC) and the Income and Expense Study. These two reports are given the most serious attention—the PIOC price study, the only one not delivered by the re-

search staff, is always delivered by the board's executive director, and the chair embargoes the numbers until the report is actually handed out. The RGB staff's other reports are distributed to board members and the media the day before their formal release.

This year's reports showed a city-wide median rent of \$747 for 2005, which is lower than the HVS median rent of \$850. The RGB report uses data from income and expense filings made by landlords with the city Department of Finance. Could landlords be overreporting their

expenses and underreporting their incomes? How shocking would that be? The studies report that landlords' costs went up by 5.1 percent over the previous year, which was lower than expected thanks to fuel prices coming down from their 2005-06 peak, while net operating incomes (profit) rose by 1.6%. On average, according to

RGB staff, landlords now spend 65 cents out of every dollar earned on operating and maintenance costs.

In the PIOC study, released on April 24, the staff suggested increases of 4.5 percent for a one-year lease and 8 percent for a two-year lease, in order to compensate owners for cost increases.



JENNY LAURIE

**RENT GUIDELINES BOARD
2007 SCHEDULE**

Tuesday, June 5, 9:30 a.m.–noon

Public Meeting
Department of City Planning, Spector Hall, 22 Reade St., Manhattan

Tuesday, June 12; 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Public Hearing (Public Testimony)
The Great Hall at Cooper Union, 7 East 7th St., Manhattan

Tuesday, June 19, 4–10 p.m.

Public Hearing (Public Testimony)
LaGuardia Performing Arts Center
31-10 Thomson Ave., Long Island City
(Use entrance on Van Dam St., just north of 47th Ave.)

Friday, June 26; 5:30 p.m.– 9:30 p.m.

Public Meeting (FINAL VOTE)
The Great Hall at Cooper Union
7 East 7th St., Manhattan

NOTE: Call the Rent Guidelines Board at (212)385-2934 to register to testify at on of the public hearings. The RGB reserves the right to cancel or reschedule public meetings. See <http://www.housingnyc.com/meetings.html> for updates or call.

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

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

**LOWER EAST SIDE BRANCH at
Cooper Square Committee**
61 E. 4th St. (btwn. 2nd Ave. & Bowery)
Tuesdays 6:30 pm

**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

GOLES (Good Old Lower East Side)
171 Avenue B (between 10 and 11 St.);
and by appointments only except for emer-
gencies. 212-533-2541.

HOUSING COMMITTEE OF RENA
Covers 135th St. to 165th St. from Riverside
Dr. to St. Nicholas Ave.,
537 W. 156th St.
Thursdays 8 pm

**LOWER MANHATTAN
LOFT TENANTS**
St. Margaret's House, Pearl & Fulton Sts.,
212-539-3538
Wednesdays 6 pm-7 pm

**VILLAGE INDEPENDENT
DEMOCRATS**
26 Perry St. (basement), 212-741-2994
Wednesdays 6 pm

WEST SIDE TENANTS UNION
4 W. 76 St.; 212-595-1274
Tuesday & Wednesday 6-7 pm



Senior and Disabled Tenants

Seniors, 62 or older, in rent-regulated, Mitchell-Lama and some other housing programs whose disposable annual household income is \$26,000 or less (for last year) 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 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 or 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.

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 _____

Send your check or money order with this form to:
Metropolitan Council on Housing, 339 Lafayette St., NY, NY 10012