



1,000 Tenants Call on Council to Respond to Crisis

By Bennett Baumer

As an applauding and occasionally heckling crowd of more than 1,000 tenants filled the auditorium at Washington Irving High School, four of the seven candidates for City Council Speaker answered questions about issues ranging from HIV-AIDS housing to home rule and homelessness. The Nov. 30 forum, hosted by a coalition of organizations working with Housing Here & Now, drew Councilmembers Bill de Blasio, Joel Rivera, Christine Quinn and David Weprin. Leroy Comrie and Melinda Katz of Queens and Lewis Fidler of Brooklyn did not attend.

Considered the second most powerful person in city government, the speaker is chosen by his or her peers within the Council. In the past, this process happened in the corridors and back rooms of City Hall, but responding to the housing crisis, the candidates felt compelled to divulge their positions to advocates.

"I as speaker will stand with you if you stand with me," said Bronx Councilmember Joel Rivera, urging the audience to rise to its feet over the home-rule fight. "The Urstadt law is obsolete. We cannot depend on Albany." Rivera provided the most energetic responses of the night and did not cross the tough tenant crowd.

The four candidates answered questions on code enforcement (the Healthy Homes Act), defense of the Tenant Empowerment Act, slumlords receiving subsidies, tax breaks for luxury housing, Battery Park City revenues, homelessness, and last, home rule over rent regulation.

Tenants held signs on various housing issues and felt free to voice opposition if they felt a candidate wavered. When West Village/Chelsea Councilmember Christine Quinn did not offer clear answers on some issues, tenants shouted "yes or no?" Asked about tax breaks for luxury housing (421-a tax breaks), Quinn balked at creating a blanket rule to peg affordable housing to all 421-a tax breaks.

"A one-size-fits-all won't work—it prevents us from



Despite snow, ice, and a heavy police presence, about 50 people turned out Dec. 4 to protest Mayor Bloomberg's opposition to giving the city home rule on rent control. See story on page 8.

being creative on individual projects," she said.

Her colleague, Brooklyn Councilmember Bill de Blasio, said he favored letting developers raise the floor-to-area ratios in new buildings in order to provide affordable housing. A similar plan is being implemented in Chelsea with input from the Afford Chelsea Coalition. "Where we can, we should allow greater density for more affordable housing," said de Blasio.

On homelessness and

HIV/AIDS housing, all candidates were alarmed by surging shelter populations and Mayor Bloomberg's plan to provide homeless people only 8,100 of the 165,000 affordable units he claims he will build over the next 10 years. Those 8,100 units do not include people living with HIV/AIDS. Under the Koch administration's 10-year housing plan, 10 percent of all housing created went to homeless folks.

While acknowledging former Mayor Koch's housing commitment, Queens Councilmember David Weprin said the 10 percent allotment to housing the homeless would not be sufficient.

"There are 32,000 homeless, including 13,000 children. I'm not sure 10 percent is the number—the problem is when Koch made that number the city owned many vacant lots and houses," said Weprin.

Brooklyn Tenants' Association Gets Cooking with Newly Installed Gas

By Ajeet Singh Matharu

Have you ever wondered what it would be like not to have cooking gas in your home or apartment? Can you imagine not being able to cook? What would be the impact on your finances if you had to eat out several nights a week? For 3 1/2 months, this was daily life for an entire building of over 150 units at 555 Prospect Place in Crown Heights, in the converted Jewish Hospital of Brooklyn.

"Living without gas was just painful," said Yutaka Maki, a resident of the building, "and the pitiful hot plate that our landlord gave us to make up for the lack of a stove would hardly cook anything!"

The management company, Alma Realty, told tenants when they signed their leases that gas would be activated within a couple of weeks after the building's August 1 opening. After they had put up with the situation for weeks, tenants who spoke with management were each given different stories, being told that the gas would be turned on in anywhere from a few days to a few weeks. As the promised date of mid-August slipped into the beginning of September and on into October, residents, with the assistance of the Metropolitan Council on Housing, organized their own tenants' associa-

tion and elected to start an HP action in Housing Court.

With a little bit of cooperation and plenty of legwork, a small group of concerned tenants went door-to-door to hold conversations with their neighbors, collecting contact information and organizing a meeting for later in the week. Dozens of residents turned up, some upset, others simply wanting answers. With the assistance of Met Council organizer Bennett Baumer, the 555 Prospect Place Tenants' Association was formed.

Tenants connected by introducing themselves and sharing stories of their

mistreatment. Diana Gonzalez, one of the organizers of the tenants association, told the group of her attempts to get a straight answer out of the landlords. "I asked the manager so often when we would have gas that he

refused to help me anymore. He even threatened to ban me from the office."

The tenants also found out that at least two of Alma Realty's other build-

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EDITORIAL

Who'll Be the Speaker of the City Council, and Why Should Tenants Care?

By Jenny Laurie

The recent vote by the City Council to override the landmarking of a Williamsburg factory building reveals the reasons why the average New York City resident should care who is elected speaker of the City Council. Need we be reminded that real estate rules the city? Well, we just got that reminder. And a reminder that in order to preserve existing affordable housing, gain more for the tens of thousands who need it, and to preserve rights of tenure and access to housing justice, we need a City Council and a mayor who will counterbalance the power of the real-estate industry.

On Nov. 30, the Housing Here & Now coalition held a forum for candidates for the job of Council Speaker. For the first time in my memory (admittedly, I have only observed the last three speakers) the candidates for the job presented their positions on housing issues before a large audience of regular citizens. Business groups have hosted such forums in the past, but this was a first—candidates revealing their positions to

an audience of tenants, homeless folks, advocates for affordable housing, HIV activists, and others.

The speaker has near-absolute power over legislation and other Council business. Most bills that come up for a vote are passed by a unanimous vote among the Democratic majority; often, the only no votes come from the small handful of Republicans, who vote against a bill when the mayor opposes it. Most bills are negotiated by the speaker, who appoints committee chairs, makes all committee assignments, and decides what bills will be put forward for hearings and votes. Chairmanships of important committees are almost always decided by deals between prospective speakers and the powerful county Democratic leaders, given in exchange for the county delegation's vote in the speaker race. Under the current speaker, Gifford Miller, the chairs of the land use committee, the finance committee, and the housing committee were all put in place as trades for votes. Miller, who will leave the Council

at the end of the year, was for the most part great for tenants (although not without some serious prodding). He supported and passed, over the mayor's veto and intense landlord pressure, both the lead-poisoning prevention bill and the Tenant Empowerment Act (which would aid in the preservation of Mitchell-Lama and Section 8 housing, by allowing tenants to take over their buildings when the private owner wants to sell out).

However, the Council's recent vote to revoke the landmark status of the Austin Nichols Warehouse in Brooklyn is a perfect example of the real-estate industry's pervading influence over Council business. The Williamsburg low-rise warehouse neighborhood is currently under intense development pressure, and the warehouse was landmarked to preserve its exterior, especially the windows. But the local Councilmember, David Yassky, supported reversing the Landmarks Preservation Com-

mission's designation, to satisfy the building's owner/developer, who wants to build a luxury condominium on the site. The 1915 building was designed by noted architect Cass Gilbert in the rare Egyptian Revival style, but Yassky told the *New York Times* it was "a nondescript white box." "This is a piece of trash," echoed Simcha Felder, another Brooklyn Councilmember, according to the *Gotham Gazette*. "We should knock it down and put something nice." The developer has been a regular contributor to Council campaigns (including Yassky's), and is represented by Ken Fisher, a former Councilmember who was tenants' nemesis when Peter Vallone was Speaker.

Although the Council is much better today, under Gifford Miller's leadership, than it was under Vallone's, tons of money still flows into members' pockets from developers and landlords. Lobbyists for the industry can still be seen traveling up and down the back stairs, completely at home at City Hall. What tenants need is a City Council that is not beholden to real-estate and development interests—and a Speaker who is independent of those forces.



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www.metcouncil.net

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

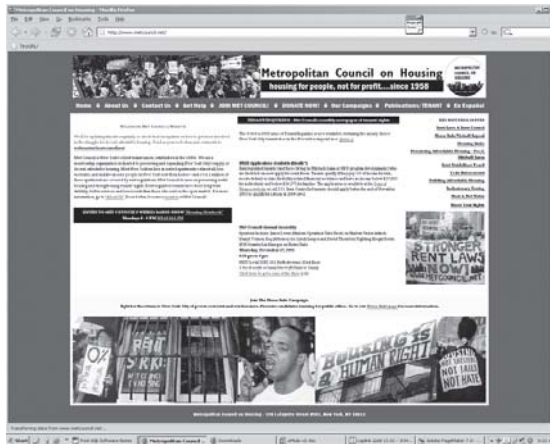
Also call 311 to reach the Department of Buildings and other city agencies.

Visit Met Council's Website www.metcouncil.net

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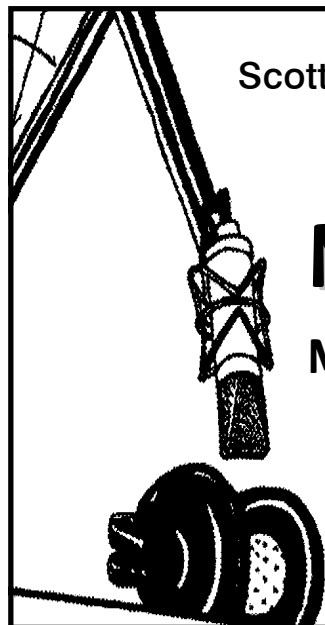
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EL INQUILINO HISPANO

EDITORIAL

¿Quién será el presidente del Concejo Municipal y por qué importa a los inquilinos?

Por Jenny Laurie

Traducido por Lightning Translations

El voto reciente del Concejo Municipal a anular la protección de un edificio industrial en Williamsburg por su estado de lugar histórico ilumina la razón por la cual los residentes comunes de Nueva York debemos preocuparnos por la cuestión de quién será elegido presidente del Concejo Municipal. ¿Hace falta recordarnos que quien manda en esta ciudad es la industria de bienes raíces? Pues acabamos de recibir esta notificación. Este voto es también un aviso que para conservar

la vivienda asequible existente, ganar más para las decenas de miles de personas que la necesitan y conservar los derechos de tenencia y acceso a la justicia en torno a la vivienda, necesitamos un alcalde y un Concejo Municipal que constituyan un contrapeso al poder de la industria de bienes raíces.

La coalición Housing Here and Now (Vivienda Aquí y Ahora) celebró un foro para los postulantes al puesto de presidente del Concejo el 30 de noviembre. Por la pri-

mera vez desde que tengo memoria (admito que sólo he observado a los últimos tres presidentes) los candidatos presentaron sus posiciones sobre cuestiones de vivienda ante un gran público de ciudadanos comunes. En el pasado, grupos comerciales han patrocinado tales foros, pero esto fue algo inédito: los postulantes revelaron sus posiciones ante un público de inquilinos, personas sin techo, defensores de vivienda asequible, activistas de SIDA y otros.

El presidente tiene un poder

casi absoluto sobre legislación y otros asuntos del Concejo. La mayoría de los proyectos de ley que se plantean son aprobados unánimemente por la mayoría demócrata; a menudo los únicos votos en contra vienen del pequeño grupo de republicanos, que vota "No" a los proyectos de ley opuestos por el alcalde. La mayoría de los proyectos de ley son negociados por el presidente, quien nombra a los presidentes de

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 toques 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 aparta-

mentos, 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 fre-

cuientemente 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 Apelación 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 \$25,000 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 equivalentepara los minusválidos (DRIE), llame al 311.

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 17.25%, 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

Concejo Municipal

viene de la página 3

los comités del Concejo, determina quienes serán los miembros de estos y decide cuales proyectos de ley se presentarán en audiencias y para ser votados. Las presidencias de los comités importantes casi siempre se deciden en arreglos entre los posibles presidentes y los líderes poderosos de condados demócratas; son otorgadas a cambio de los votos de la delegación en la elección del presidente. Bajo el presidente actual, Gifford Miller, todos los presidentes de los comités de utilización de tierras, finanza y vivienda fueron instalados a cambio de votos.

Miller, quien saldrá del Concejo al fin del año, la mayoría de las veces fue maravilloso para los inquilinos (aunque no sin ser presionado fuertemente). Apoyó e hizo aprobarse por encima del veto del alcalde y presiones extremas por parte de los caseros tanto la ley de prevención de envenenamiento por pintura de plomo como la Tenant Empowerment Act (ley para dar poder a los inquilinos, que

ayudaría a conservar la vivienda Mitchell-Lama y de Sección 8 cuando los propietarios privados quisieran salir del programa).

Sin embargo, el reciente voto para revocar el estado protegido como lugar histórico del Almacén Austin Nichols en Brooklyn es un perfecto ejemplo de la influencia penetrante que la industria de bienes raíces ejerce sobre el trabajo del Concejo. El vecindario Williamsburg de almacenes de poca altura se encuentra bajo presiones intensas de desarrollo y el almacén fue designado un lugar histórico para conservar su exterior, especialmente las ventanas. Sin embargo, el miembro local del Concejo, David Yassky, apoyó la revocación de la designación hecha por la Landmarks Preservation Commission (Comisión de Preservación de Lugares Históricos), para complacer al dueño y especulador del edificio, quien quiere construir condominios de lujo en el sitio. El edificio de 1915 fue diseñado por el célebre arquitecto Cass Gilbert en el raro estilo Renacentista Egipcio, pero Yassky dijo al New

York Times que era “una caja blanca mediocre.” Simcha Felder, otro concejal de Brooklyn, le hizo eco al decir, según la Gotham Gazette, “Esto es un pedazo de basura. Debemos derribarlo y poner algo bonito.” El especulador ha sido un contribuyente habitual a las campañas del Concejo (incluida la de Yassky) y su representante es Ken Fisher, antiguo concejal que amargó la vida a los inquilinos cuando Peter Vallone era presidente del Concejo Municipal.

Aunque el Concejo es mucho mejor hoy en día bajo el liderazgo

de Gifford Miller que bajo el de Vallone, montones de dinero todavía fluyen desde los especuladores y caseros hacia los bolsillos de los concejales. Se puede ver aún a los cabilderos de la industria de bienes raíces subiendo y bajando las escaleras de atrás, totalmente en casa en el ayuntamiento. Lo que necesitamos los inquilinos es un Concejo que no se sienta obligado a los intereses de bienes raíces y desarrollo y un presidente del Concejo independiente de estas fuerzas.

Los Oradores en la Asamblea Anual

Darryl Vernon

Darryl Vernon, abogado de la cantante Cyndi Lauper y el esposo de esta, David Thornton, ganó una victoria importante para los inquilinos en junio, cuando la Corte de Apelaciones estatal falló que los inquilinos pueden impugnar cobros excesivos ilegales que tienen más de cuatro años, revocando una ley estatal promulgada como parte del debilitamiento de las regulaciones de renta en 1997. Vernon trazó la historia del caso, detallando como el casero de la pareja había inflado las rentas en su edificio del Lado Superior Oeste tras una sarta de inquilinos falsos y estafas de subarrendamiento.

James Fishman y Louise Seeley

Uno de los acontecimientos más escalofriantes para inquilinos en los últimos años ha sido la aparición de compañías que recopilan listas negras de inquilinos—bases de datos de inquilinos que han estado en la Corte de Vivienda alguna vez durante los últimos siete años. El abogado James Fishman, quien impugnó a estas compañías en

una demanda, y Louise Seeley, directora de la City-Wide Task Force on Housing Court, hablaron sobre esto. Desafortunadamente, dijeron, los registros son documentos públicos, así que los vende la Office of Court Administration (oficina de administración de las cortes) estatal. Los registros frecuentemente no indican cómo se resolvió el caso, pero esto no tiene importancia para los caseros, que opinan que un inquilino demandado por no pagar la renta a lo mejor es un gorrón, mientras uno que rehusó pagar la renta para conseguir calefacción o reparaciones es un verdadero agitador. Una posible solución es no permitir que se difundan los registros de la corte a menos que el inquilino fuera realmente desalojado.

Liz Krueger

La senadora estatal Liz Krueger dijo que hay esperanzas de que se pueda convencer a la Legislatura para dar autonomía en torno a la regulación de rentas a la Ciudad de Nueva York en 2006. Con las cifras de las encuestas de George

pasa a la página 5

No se quede helado: ¡ORGANIZESE!

La ley requiere que su casero proporcione calefacción y agua caliente a las temperaturas siguientes, desde el 1ro de octubre hasta el 31 de mayo:

Desde las 6 a.m. hasta las 10 p.m.: Si la temperatura afuera es de menos de 55 grados, la temperatura adentro debe ser al menos de 68 grados en todo el apartamento.

Desde las 10 p.m. hasta las 6 a.m.: Si la temperatura afuera es de menos de 40 grados, la temperatura adentro debe ser al menos de 55 grados en todo el apartamento.

Se tiene que proporcionar agua caliente a un mínimo de 120 grados en el grifo las 24 horas del día, todo el año.

Si su casero no mantiene estas temperaturas mínimas, usted debe:

- * Comenzar una “Acción HP” (HP Action) en la Corte de Vivienda. Pida una inspección por orden de la corte y una Orden de Corrección (Order to Correct)
- * Llamar al Buro Central de Quejas (Central Control Bureau) de la ciudad de Nueva York al 311 inmediatamente, para documentar la violación del casero. Llame repetidamente. Se supone que un inspector vendrá eventualmente, aunque a veces no lo haga.
- * Exhortar a los otros inquilinos en el edificio a llamar al Central Complaint. Todos deben llamar repetidamente, al menos una vez al día, todos los días en que tengan problemas con la calefacción.
- * Comprar un buen termómetro para afuera y adentro, para documentar las fechas exactas, las horas, y las temperaturas, tanto afuera como adentro, mientras tenga problemas con la calefacción. Esta documentación es su evidencia
- * Llamar a la División de Vivienda y Renovación Comunal del Estado de Nueva York (DHCR, por sus siglas en inglés) al (718) 739-6400, y pedir que le envíen el formulario de Queja de Calefacción y Agua Caliente. Llene el formulario y consigne la



participación de todos los inquilinos en su edificio que pueden firmarlo. Reclame una orden para restaurar la calefacción y el agua caliente, y que se reduzcan y congelen (¡disculpe lo de “congelen!”) todas las rentas.

- * Necesitarán una fuerte asociación de inquilinos para obligar al casero a proporcionar calefacción y agua caliente. Escriban y llamen al casero para demandar reparaciones y aceite. Prepárense para una huelga de renta (sobre todo con asesoría legal)—de relámpago si es necesario.

Las leyes sobre la calefacción establecen también:

- * Que el Departamento de Reparaciones de Emergencia de la ciudad le proporcione la calefacción si el casero no lo hace. (No se siente en un bloque de hielo—otra vez, ¡disculpe!—mientras espere que lo haga.)
- * Una multa de \$250 to \$500 al casero por cada día que se produzca la violación. (Pero la verdad es que la Corte de Vivienda raras veces impone las multas, y menos aun las cobra).
- * Una multa de \$1,000 al casero si algún aparato de control automático se instala en la caldera para mantener la temperatura por debajo del mínimo legal.
- * Si el tanque de combustible de la caldera está vacío, los inquilinos tienen el derecho de comprar su propio combustible después de haber pasado 24 horas sin calefacción y también sin obtener ninguna respuesta del casero. Esto no se aplica si la caldera está rota y necesita tanto reparación como combustible.

¡Cuidado! ¡proteja su dinero! Si los inquilinos deciden comprar el combustible, hay que seguir los procedimientos legales cuidadosamente. Consiga la ayuda y el consejo de un organizador de inquilinos. La existencia de leyes de calefacción y agua caliente vigentes no garantiza que el gobierno las implemente. No se quede helado por esperar que la ciudad o el estado actúe. ¡Organícese!

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; facsimile: 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.

Annual Assembly Speakers

Darryl Vernon

Darryl Vernon, lawyer for singer Cyndi Lauper and her husband, David Thornton, won a significant victory for tenants in June when the state Court of Appeals ruled that tenants could challenge illegal overcharges that are more than four years old, countermanding a state law enacted as part of the 1997 weakening of rent regula-



Darryl Vernon

tions. Vernon outlined the history of the case, detailing how the couple's landlord had inflated rents in their Upper West Side building through a string of phony tenants and subletting scams.

James Fishman and Louise Seeley

One of the most chilling developments for tenants in the last few years has been the emergence of companies that

compile tenant blacklists—databases of renters who have been in Housing Court at any time in the last seven years. Lawyer James Fishman, who challenged those companies in a lawsuit, and Louise Seeley, director of the City-Wide Task Force on Housing Court, spoke on this. Unfortunately, they said, the records are public documents, so the state Office of Court Administration sells them. The records often don't indicate how the case was resolved, but that doesn't matter to landlords—whose attitude is that a tenant who got sued for nonpayment is likely a deadbeat, and one who withheld rent to get heat or repairs is a real troublemaker. One possible solution is to allow the release of court records only if the tenant was actually evicted.



James Fishman and Louise Seeley

New York City home rule on rent control in 2006. With George Bush's poll numbers sinking to near-Nixonian depths, she said, Republicans in the Senate are scared they'll lose their majority next November and are willing to compromise on some issues, as they did last year on raising the minimum wage. If you want the Senate to do something on an issue, she told the assembly, "get 25 people in Nick Spano's district to write letters about it. Spano, a Westchester Republican, retained his seat in 2004 by only 18 votes.

Introducing Met Council's New Board Members

At its annual meeting on November 20, Met Council elected four new members to its Board of Directors.

Anyone active in housing and tenant issues will recognize **Hilda Chavis** from her masterful speaking and MC-ing at Housing Here & Now events—the November City Council Speakers Forum and the huge February 2005 rally at City Hall. Hilda started her housing-activism life in 1988, when she became involved with the Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition. The NWBCCC is a coalition of neighborhood organizations and churches that work on housing development, organizing and code enforcement, and other community issues. Formed in the mid-1970s as a bulwark in the fight against abandonment in the north Bronx, the Coalition continues to be one of the city's most important sources of community rebuilding and citizen involvement. Hilda recently returned to housing work after a four-year hiatus because of illness. She now serves as co-chair of the NWBCCC housing committee and focuses her activism on Housing Here & Now and NY VOTE.

A little over a year ago **David Shuffler** joined the staff of the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development as the Director of Organizing Training-INCO. Prior to ANHD, David was the Membership Coordinator at the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance, and before that he was a Campaign Director for Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice in the Bronx. In addition to the Met Council he sits on the board of directors for numerous other community based organizations. He has many years experience as an organizing trainer, campaign leader, and community activist.

Linda Daniels was the president of her tenant association when she came to Met Council for help. Since then she has moved twice (fulfilling leadership positions in her next two homes) and worked for a couple of years as a tenant and community organizer for the Abyssinian Development Corporation. ADC, an outgrowth of the Abyssinian Baptist Church under the leadership of Rev. Calvin Butts,

was formed in the mid-1980s because of congregants' concern about the lack of affordable housing in Central Harlem and the need to rebuild the neighborhood. Linda now lives in a building owned by ADC and works for the city as a caseworker helping disabled tenants. Her work occasionally brings her into Housing Court, continuing her education in the ways of bad landlords.

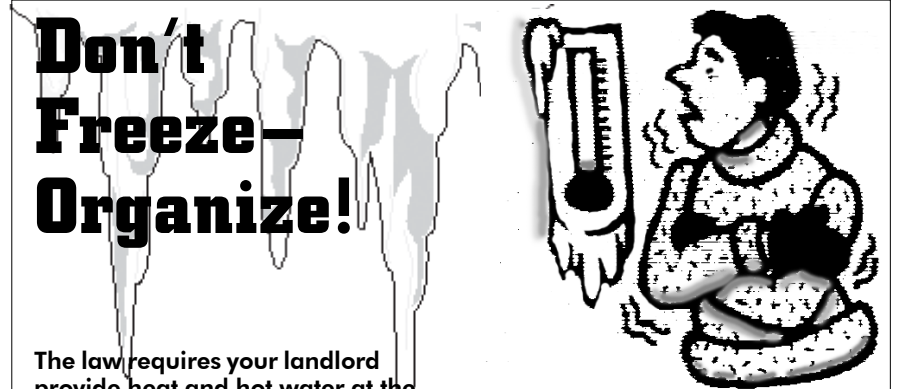
Stuart Lawrence has been involved with Met Council since 2002, when he joined us as a volunteer tenant counselor on the hotline. At that time, Stuart was finishing his undergraduate studies at Hunter College, and he and Dave Powell organized a tenants' rights information and advocacy group there. Stuart is now pursuing a law degree at New York University. He has spent the past two summers as a legal intern working on behalf of low-income tenants, first at South Brooklyn Legal Services and later at the Legal Aid Society's Civil Appeals and Law Reform Unit. Now in his final year of law school, Stuart is participating in the Civil Legal Services Clinic at NYU, representing a tenant family in Housing Court.

After law school, Stuart plans to continue to work as a legal-services provider and advocate for tenants, especially those affected by cutbacks and restructuring of subsidized housing programs. Stuart has contributed to Met Council's Web site and hopes to help us develop strategies for using the Internet as an effective organizing tool.

Asamblea Anual

viene de la página 4

Bush cayendo casi tan bajo como las de Nixon, dijo, los republicanos en el Senado tienen miedo de perder su mayoría el próximo noviembre y por eso están dispuestos a llegar a arreglos en torno a algunas cuestiones, como hicieron el año pasado al aumentar el salario mínimo. Si quieres que el Senado haga algo sobre alguna cuestión, dijo a la asamblea, "Haz que 25 personas en el distrito de Nick Spano le escriban cartas sobre el tema." Spano, republicano de Westchester, se quedó con su escaño por solamente 18 votos.



The law requires your landlord provide heat and hot water at the following levels from October 1 through May 31:

From 6 am to 10 pm: If the outside temperature falls below 55 degrees, the inside temperature must be at least 68 degrees everywhere in your apartment.

From 10 pm to 6 am: If the outside temperature falls below 40 degrees, the inside temperature must be at least 55 degrees everywhere in your apartment.

Hot water at a minimum 120 degrees at the tap must be provided 24 hours a day, year round.

If your landlord does not maintain those minimum temperatures, you should:

- * Start an "HP action" in Housing Court. Ask for a court-ordered inspection and an Order to Correct.
- * Call the New York City Central Complaints Bureau at 311 immediately to record the landlord's violation. Call repeatedly. An inspector should eventually come, although sometimes they don't.
- * Get other tenants in your building to call Central Complaint. Everybody should call repeatedly, at least once every day the condition is not corrected.
- * Buy a good indoor/outdoor thermometer and keep a chart of the exact dates, times, and temperature readings, inside and out, so long as the condition is not corrected. The chart is your evidence.
- * Call the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal at (718) 739-6400 and

ask them to send you their Heat and Hot Water complaint form. Get as many other apartments as possible in your building to sign on, demanding an order restoring heat and hot water, and a reduction and freeze (pardon the expression!) in all the rents.

You'll need a strong tenant association to force the landlord to provide heat and hot water. Write and call the landlord and demand repairs or fuel.

Prepare to go on rent strike — but get legal advice first.

The heat laws also provide for:

- * The city's Emergency Repair Department to supply your heat if the landlord does not. (Try waiting for this one!)
- * A \$250 to \$500 a day fine to the landlord for every day of violation. (But the Housing Court rarely imposes these fines, let alone collects them.)
- * A \$1,000 fine to the landlord if an automatic control device is put on the boiler to keep the temperature below the lawful minimum.

If your boiler's fuel tank is empty, tenants have the right to buy their own fuel after 24 hours of no heat and no response from the landlord. But this provision does not apply if the boiler is broken and needs both repairs and fuel.

Caution! Protect your money! If you decide to buy fuel, you must follow special lawful procedures very carefully. You should get help and advice from a tenant organizer.

Because the heat and hot water laws are in the law books does not mean they are enforced by government. Don't freeze to death waiting for the city or state to act. Organize!

EDITORIAL

Support NYU Strikers

On November 9, New York University graduate student teaching and research assistants organized with the Graduate Student Organizing Committee (GSOC) Local 2110 went on strike, demanding that the university administration recognize

the striking grad students and extends solidarity to them. Furthermore, we find it repulsive that NYU, a nonprofit institution that enjoys the benefit of substantial tax exemptions, is choosing to try to bust the grad students' union.

NYU President John Sexton could recognize the grad students' desire to bargain collectively and give them a contract. However, he and top NYU administrators hide behind a Bush-inspired ruling by the National Labor Relations Board that reversed the board's Clinton-era decision granting grad students the right to unionize. Graduate assistants are students, no doubt. But they also teach, grade, and perform research, for which they deserve to be compensated like any other worker. Graduate

teaching assistants have become a cheap-labor substitute for tenured professors as universities like

NYU look to cut costs and boost their budgets and endowments.

NYU's recent ultimatum to grad assistants to return to work by Dec. 7 or lose their class assign-

ments and stipends compromises undergraduates' education and tarnishes NYU's reputation. With its anti-union tactics, NYU joins the ranks of Wal-Mart and other corporations

that place the bottom line above any concerns for their workers' rights to make a decent living and have respect and security

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their union and give them another contract. The Metropolitan Council on Housing fully supports

Carmen Rubio, 63, Lower East Side Activist

Carmen Rubio, a tenant organizer for Good Old Lower East Side and a longtime neighborhood activist, died Nov. 24 after a long illness. She was 63.

Born in the Bronx, Rubio moved to the Lower East Side as a child and lived there for the rest of her life, eventually settling in the Umbrella House squat with her partner, musician Alfredo Feliciano. She helped organize tenants in squats, city-owned, and TIL buildings; built community gardens; and was active in the welfare-rights movement. "She was involved in every single aspect of the community," said Wasim Lone, director of organizing at

GOLES, where Rubio worked for the last 12 years.

"She always had a positive attitude and radiated love," said Church of Stop Shopping choir singer Barbara Lee, a onetime neighbor of Rubio's at Umbrella House.

"Among the many gifts she gave to the community on the Lower East Side is the Children's Magical Garden, a once rubble-strewn lot that she and her life partner, Alfredo Feliciano, transformed into a beautiful space for the children of the community," said Eric Goldhagen of the ABC No Rio community center. "Carmen will be remem-

bered fondly by the thousands of people she helped save from eviction, the children who played in the garden, the youth that learned Super-8 movie-making from her at ABC No Rio, and, I imagine, even a few of the landlords that learned, from the opposing side of the table, to respect her spirit and honesty."

"She was just an amazing woman," said Lone. "She was a quintessential Lower East Sider, culturally, politically, and in every way."

A memorial service for Carmen Rubio will be held Dec. 14 at St. Mark's Church, Second Avenue and East Tenth Street.

—Steven Wishnia

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 twelve-month period beginning October 1, 2005. Increases in rent based on the 1- or 2-year renewal guidelines can be charged only once during the period covered by the guidelines, and must be applied to the legal stabilized rent on 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

In June 1997, Governor George Pataki, as a part of his efforts to destroy rent regulation, forced changes that gave landlords large vacancy bonuses. Provisions of his Rent Regulation Reform Act of 1997 allow the rents of apartments to rise by a statutory percentage: 20 percent for a 2-year lease, and 20 percent minus the difference between the 1- and 2-year renewal guidelines for 1-year leases. The law also allows additional vacancy increases for apartments which have had no vacancy allowance in eight or more years.

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

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

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 a lease to sign. Landlords avoid renting to tenants who may be troublesome. Overcharging is very common. Every tenant should challenge 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 re-rented 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 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 Rent Increase Exemption

Rent stabilized seniors, 62 years or older, whose disposable annual household income is \$25,000 or less 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) if they apply to the NYC Dept of the Aging, SCRIE Unit at 2 Lafayette Street, NY, NY 10007. If an otherwise eligible tenant's current rent level is already above one-third of income, it cannot be rolled back, but future rent increases may be avoided.

Obtain the SCRIE application form 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.

DC Eyes Stronger Rent Controls

By Steven Wishnia

Washington, DC, is moving toward strengthening its rent-control laws.

Earlier this year, the DC City Council renewed rent control for another five years and enacted legislation to close loopholes in the city's law giving tenants the right of first refusal if their building is put up for sale. In October, it held hearings on five more bills, the main one a measure to limit rent increases on vacant apartments. As the bills are cosponsored by 12 of the city's 13 Councilmembers, they are expected to pass—probably before the mayoral primary in June, says Allen Heymann, a spokesperson for Councilmember Jim Graham, the lead sponsor.

"The support is there," says David Conn of the Tenant Action Network.

Washington's rent control, enacted in 1975, covers landlords who own five or more units in buildings built before then. It is estimated to protect between 80,000 and 100,000 of the city's 140,000 rental units. The Council enacted vacancy decontrol in 1985, but a citywide referendum quickly reversed that. The Council then established a complex "rent ceiling" system—like a much looser version of New York's Maximum Base Rent system—in which landlords can charge whatever they can get up to the legal maximum. Both regular rent increases and vacancy increases—which can be either 12 percent or to the highest comparable apartment the landlord owns—raise the rent ceiling.

Allowable increases for current tenants are determined by the Consumer Price Index for the Washington area—but the increases are based on the rent ceiling, not on the actual rent. Thus, if the CPI is 3 percent and the rent ceiling for a \$700-a-month apartment is \$3,000, the allowable increase would be \$90, not \$21. Rents lower than the legal maximum do not get locked in as the base for future increases.

"That's not really rent control," says Heymann. "The rent ceiling has no relation to reality." It's possible for a studio apartment to have a rent ceiling of more than \$8,000, he adds.

The result is that as in most East Coast cities, Washington rents have been escalating. The median rent went up almost 9 percent from 2003 to 2004, to \$799, according to a study by the DC Fiscal Policy Institute. Between 2000 and 2004, it found, the city lost 7,500 apartments renting for less than \$500 and 15,000 renting for between \$500 and \$1,000—more than 20 percent of the total at those prices—while rent rose past \$1,000 on more than 13,000 apartments. And those trends are accelerating: More than one-third of those changes came in the last year. In a city where 60 percent of the households are tenants, three out of eight now spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent.

The bill now before the Council would limit vacancy increases in the rent ceiling to a specific percentage. One possible formula would set them at either 10 percent or one percentage point for

every year the previous tenant lived in the apartment. "This will be the part the landlords fight the hardest," says Conn. As in New York, he explains, high vacancy increases encourage "churning" by owners, who can double the rent ceiling on an apartment within seven years if they get a new tenant every year.

Another tactic landlords use to get vacancy increases, tenant advocates say, is a city law that lets owners empty out buildings temporarily to do major repairs. According to the *Washington Post*, the city received applications to vacate more than 400 apartments so far this year, well above the rates for the previous two years. Tenants in some of those buildings—in the gentrifying Capitol Hill, Adams-Morgan, and Shaw neighborhoods near downtown—charge that their landlords did not tell them they had the right to move back in at the same rent. In one 46-unit building, the *Post* reported, the landlord claimed he needed to empty the building to remove lead and asbestos, but the inspection report he filed actually came from a building far out in the Virginia suburbs. His tenants told a Council hearing they had received late-night visits from a landlord representative who offered them \$1,000 if they would move out within four months.

Other measures in the package would restrict rent increases to once a year instead of the current six months; specify tenants' rights to organize, such as putting up flyers or meeting in common areas of a building; let tenants look back more than three years if they think they're being illegally overcharged; and require landlords to give tenants information on how the rent ceiling for their apartment was calculated.

The bill to close loopholes in the right-of-first-refusal law, explains Conn, was important because landlords have been "subverting" it by tactics such as "95-5 deals," in which the owner temporarily

retains a 5 percent interest in the building, preventing the tenants from having a chance to buy it. Though many tenants would not be able to buy buildings at current market rates, he says, nonprofit developers have done very well in using the law to set up limited-equity co-ops and similar projects. The law also gives tenants who are 62 or older and make less than \$40,000 a year a right to lifetime tenancy in any building sold. Landlords were "furious about that," he adds.

Washington's renters have one political benefit: They are not at the mercy of state law, unlike New York, where the Urstadt Law denies cities home rule; Massachusetts, where a statewide referendum eliminated rent control in 1994; and Michigan, which outlawed rent control after Detroit voters enacted it in 1987. But they have a similar home-rule problem: All city legislation must be approved by Congress, which can block any local law within 30 working days.

Congress is not likely to intervene, says Conn, but it is always a possibility if the City Council "gets too liberal." In 1998, when local AIDS activists got an initiative to legalize medical marijuana on the ballot, Congress barred the city from even counting the votes. (The initiative won almost 70 percent.) Still, the city has turned back two recent federal attempts to end rent control: one by the Newt Gingrich Congress in 1995, and one after a commission appointed under a Congressional mandate in 1998 recommended its abolition.

Tenants in Washington aren't as well organized as they are in New York or San Francisco, says Conn, but he thinks that after 20 years of rising rents and weaker laws, "the political climate locally is that tenants are turning the tide."



DRIE Applications Available

Rent regulated tenants (and those living in Mitchell-Lama or buildings in qualifying HPD programs) who are disabled can now apply for a rent freeze. Tenants qualify if they pay 1/3 of income for rent, receive federal or state disability-related financial assistance and have an income below \$17,005 for individuals and below \$24,373 for families.

Disabled tenants in rent controlled apartments who qualify for the new DRIE benefits should get their applications in before the end of November to make sure that their rents are frozen at the 2004 level. The freeze goes into effect in the month following the application, and freezes the rent at the previous year's level. Rent controlled tenants, whose rent increases usually start on January 1st, should apply now for SCRIE or DRIE.

The DRIE application is available at the Dept of Finance website (www.nyc.gov/html/dof/html/property/property_tax_reduc_drie.shtml) or contact the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities at: 100 Gold Street, Second Floor, New York, NY 10038 Telephone: 212-788-2830; fax: 212-341-9843 TTY: 212-788-2838

For SCRIE (the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption), tenants (head of household) must be 62 or older, pay 1/3 of income for rent or more, be in a rent controlled, rent stabilized, Mitchell-Lama or Limited Dividend coop, and have an income of \$25,000 or less.

The SCRIE application is available through the Dept for the Aging website (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dfta/html/scr/scr.html>) or by calling the Aging office at 311. Most senior centers have applications as well.

More Supportive Housing Slated

After years of pressure from local advocates, Mayor Bloomberg and Governor Pataki announced plans on Nov. 7 to build 9,000 units of supportive housing over the next 10 years. The city and state will share expenses for the \$1 billion pact, known as New York/New York III. Two previous New York/New York agreements helped create roughly 5,300 units of homeless housing with onsite services, primarily geared toward single, mentally ill adults. This new initiative will also serve recovering substance abusers, homeless individu-

als with HIV/AIDS, families with a disabled head of household, youth aging out of foster care, and others. "This is just unprecedented," said Connie Tempel, director of the New York office of the Corporation for Supportive Housing, a nonprofit that pushed for the pact. "There's no place else in the country that does anything near this. It really covers the full spectrum of people vulnerable to homelessness."

—Cassi Feldman

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E-mail Met Council
active@metcouncil.net

50 Cold Tenants Demand That Bloomberg Back Home Rule

By Steven Wishnia

Chanting “Mayor Bloomberg, hear our cry, we need home rule, that’s no lie,” about 50 people demonstrated Dec. 4 outside the billionaire mayor’s East 79th Street townhouse, protesting his opposition to home rule for the city on rent control.

“[Home rule] should be brought back to New York. The rents are outricing the people here,” said J.F. Mulligan, 35, of Harlem. “New York is becoming a place for the rich, not people like us.”

The crowd was much smaller than the 500 people who turned out for a similar protest in October, as marchers had to brave snow and bone-threateningly icy sidewalks to attend.

“We need housing,” said a young woman named Vanessa, one of several people from a Bushwick homeless shelter who came out for the rally. “Affordable housing,” her companion chimed in.

The Bloomberg administration, which had police seal off the block during the October protest to pre-

vent people from marching within sight of the mayor’s mansion, relented after the organizers—Met Council, New York State Tenants & Neighbors, and the Coalition for the Homeless—and the New York Civil Liberties Union threatened a civil-rights lawsuit. Still, the police on the block may have outnumbered the demonstrators, and at least three officers were photographing or videotaping the protesters. When the marchers wanted to cross the street to rally on the same side of the block as Bloomberg’s house, police said only 25 could go—far less than the ca-

capacity of the metal protest pen there. They later agreed to let eight more demonstrators go into the pen, but the others had to stay on the far side of the street.

Organizers plan more protests in the future, as long as Bloomberg opposes home rule or fails to campaign for it. The next one may come in March, when the city has to renew its rent regulations.



Brooklyn

continued from page 1

ings had suffered without gas for a period of several months, with one of the buildings lacking hot water during the last winter.

The tenants’ association, represented by nine petitioners on the HP Action, had its day in court on November 1. The case was postponed eight days after an assistant to Alma realty’s attorney claimed that the landlords’ lawyer was unable to appear.

As could almost be expected, on November 8, the day before the rescheduled court date, the gas was turned on for the nine tenants listed on the court case. Over the next week, the remaining residents received gas, except for those on the top floor, which still did not have gas as this story was going to press.

That proved a relief for the tenants, who had lived for three

months without being able even to boil water.

In high spirits from their victory, tenants today are continuing the fight for their rights. They are requesting a rent abatement for the period in which they were denied services. “As more and more tenants have moved in, the positive response has been overwhelming. The reason is simple: People are sick and tired of being bullied and lied to by their landlords and they know that united they stand strong,” said Arun Antonyraj, an early tenant association supporter.

The 555 Prospect Place tenants’ next court date is Wednesday, December 14, in Housing Part B, Room 409 of the Brooklyn Civil Courthouse. Ajeet Singh Matharu is a member of Met Council and a tenant at 555 Prospect Place.

NYU

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on the job.

In the face of NYU’s repression of unionization efforts, faculty, in solidarity with the strikers, have moved over 400 university classes off campus. Undergraduates have also organized large rallies and took over Bobst Library on Nov. 30 and

Dec. 5, demanding that Sexton recognize GSOC. Met Council is currently hosting two NYU classes, and our members have joined graduate students on the picket lines. President John Sexton, negotiate now with the GSOC and give them the contract they deserve!

Complaint Numbers

To reach the Department of Housing, Preservation and Development’s Central Complaints hotline, call 311. This number replaces (212) 824-4328.

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

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.

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL ON HOUSING

Met Council is a citywide tenant union.

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)
17 Ave. B. Lower East Side tenants only, 212-533-2541.

HOUSING COMMITTEE OF RENA
Covers 135th St. to 165th St. from Riverside Dr. to St. Nicholas Ave.,
544 W. 157th St. (basement entrance).
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



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