



MITCHELL-LAMA RESIDENTS COALITION

Vol. 15, Issue 1
March 2010

WEBSITE: www.mitchell-lama.org

CU4ML Reports:

More co-ops resisting withdrawal

By Jeanne S. Poindexter

A general membership meeting of Cooperators United for Mitchell-Lama (cu4ml) was held at Community Service Society in Manhattan on Feb. 6, 2010. The meeting was part of cu4ml's continuing effort to remedy the need for shareholder awareness of the roles and rules of the supervising agencies. Its purpose was to provide progress reports of the organization's first year of activities, as well as an opportunity for members to listen and talk to representatives of HPD and DHCR, the agencies responsible for supervising many aspects of the operation of M-L co-ops.

Despite the threat of heavy snow, the meeting room overflowed with cu4ml members and friends. Only one of the four invited speakers was kept away by the snow, and several elected officials including State Senator Bill Perkins, State Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal, and City Councilmember Gail Brewer attended and delivered impromptu statements.

* * *

CU4ML's major achievement in its first year has been raising awareness that, within the cooperatives, there is significant resistance to withdrawal from M-L. The best resistance to withdrawal has been evident in those co-ops

that haven't even considered taking the windfall-profit-maybe bait called privatization. On the other hand, a few co-ops have become ensnared in "The Process" that will consume several years and hundreds of thousands of dollars of their corporate funds – to the neglect of their developments. However, there is one good sign:

While three coops voted themselves out of affordability in 2007 and two more did so in 2008, and although at least four are currently mired along the slippery slope of "The Process," *not one cooperative voted itself out of the Mitchell-Lama Program in 2009.*

During its first year of formal existence, cu4ml's major activities have given voice to this resistance. In 2009, cu4ml delegations appeared and testified at several public hearing venues – before supervisory agencies regarding proposed revisions of M-L regulations, before NY State senate and assembly committees regarding proposed bills directly affecting the M-L co-ops, and before the NYC Council's housing committee regarding oversight of HPD.

At the meeting, individual mem-

bers and delegations also conferred with elected officials of the state and the city, and participated actively in the Borough Presidents' M-L task forces.

Bernie Cylich (Co-Op City, membership committee) reported that in the first year, cu4ml membership grew from 75 to 162 members. Membership now includes shareholders from 32 (36%) of the City's 89 M-L co-ops; the 32 co-ops contain 42,248 (66%) of the City's 63,612 M-L co-op apartments.

Joan Meyler (Cadman Towers, Legislative committee) described two principal bills cu4ml is supporting in the State legislature: a bill to prevent withdrawals of M-L co-ops until their real estate tax abatement expires (more than 40 years in the future), and a bill to prohibit the use of proxy voting in the co-ops on all issues. Mike Altman (Southbridge Towers, Education committee) invited attendees to pick up a copy of "A Guide for Saving Mitchell-Lama Cooperative Housing" prepared by Christine Fowley (Cadman Towers). He also recommended that

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**Strengthen MLRC
Join today (use form on page 2)**

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
SATURDAY, March 27, 2010

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

(Refreshments at 10:00 a.m.)

Pick-a-Prize fundraising auction will take place at end of meeting.
Tickets: \$3, \$5, and \$10. Prizes and surprises! Come join the fun!

PLACE: Musicians Union Local 802
322 West 48th Street (near 8th Avenue) Ground Floor, "Club Room"

TRAINS: No. 1, train to 50th St. and 7th Ave.; Q,W trains to 49th St. and Broadway; E train to 50th St. and 8th Ave.

Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition
P.O. Box 20414
Park West Station
New York, New York 10025

CU4ML reports:

More co-ops resisting withdrawal

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troubled co-ops invite speakers from cu4ml to visit their developments and explain the process and consequences of privatization, or to provide comments on offering plans for conversion to market-rate, privatized housing. Dan DeSloover (UHAB) and Claire Fontaine (Village East Towers) demonstrated the new web site at www.cu4ml.org, where a pdf file of the "Guide" is available at the Resources page.

Representatives of HPD--Douglas Apple, First Deputy Commissioner, and Gary Sloman, Housing Supervision--insisted that the agency is determined to preserve the M-L co-ops, although not to develop any new ones. HPD plans to provide additional an incentive for the co-ops to stay in Mitchell-Lama, and cu4ml was invited to comment on HPD's planned incentives.

Because Richmond McCurnin, Assistant Commissioner, was unable to get through the snow, Sheldon Melnitsky, Principal Attorney, alone represented DHCR. Questions, comments and responses were similar to the exchanges regarding HPD's roles and responsibilities, and DHCR is apparently now revising its rules on dissolution to better monitor and regulate the process.

Both cu4ml and its guests from the agencies indicated strong interest in continuing this dialogue, and additional meetings of agency personnel and cu4ml delegations have been planned, as well as further meetings with legislators.

In a meeting in mid-February, cu4ml was asked whether its resistance to priva-

tization is representative of the attitude of a significant proportion of M-L cooperators. Rather than offer mushy impressions, cu4ml consulted HDC to learn the response of cooperatives to the HDC Preservation Program established in 2004. The program offers mortgage restructuring and/or major repair loans to HPD-supervised M-L developments [and may be extended to DHCR co-ops], and requires commitment of the development (co-op or rental) to remain in M-L for 10, 15 or 20 years, depending on the terms of the financial assistance provided. Although not all co-ops have needed refinancing or major repairs, 24 of the 65 co-ops (containing 40% of the eligible apartments) eligible in 2004 have accepted assistance and committed to remain in M-L through the program, and a 25th through another type of refinancing. Together, these 25 co-ops contain 40 percent of the eligible apartments. In contrast, only three of those 65 co-ops (with less than 2% of the eligible apartments) have ended their commitment and withdrawn from M-L.

These simple, unadorned numbers indicate that a substantial financial incentive such as HDC's program will effectively preserve co-ops, and that a large constituency of cooperators strongly prefers the M-L Program over conversion of their homes to market-rate, privatized co-ops unaffordable for them and for the thousands of New Yorkers on the M-L waiting lists. It indicates further that, in its opposition to privatization, cu4ml provides a valid, representative voice for NYC's M-L cooperators.

UPCOMING EVENTS

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP

Saturday
March 27, 2010
 10:00 a.m. - Noon
 Musicians Union Local 802
 322 West 48th Street
 NYC

EXECUTIVE BOARD Meetings, 2010*

March 13
April 10
May 8
June 12

10:00 a.m. - Noon

*Executive Board Meetings are held at RNA House, 150-160 West 96th Street (between Columbus and Amsterdam).
 All dates are subject to revision. Please call the voice mail to confirm (212) 465-2619.

Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition, Inc.

Co-chairs: Jackie Peters
 Ed Rosner
 Margo Tunstall

MLRC NEWSLETTER STAFF

Editor: Judy Montanez

Assistant editors: Katy Bordanaro
 Bernice Lorde
 Margo Tunstall

Layout & copy: Nathan Weber

Advertising Manager:
 Bernice Lorde

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 Fax (212)864-8165
 Voice Mail: (212) 465-2619
cptachairs@gmail.com

JOIN THE MITCHELL-LAMA RESIDENTS COALITION 2010

INDIVIDUAL \$15.00 per year and DEVELOPMENT 25 cents per apartment (\$30 Minimum; \$125 Maximum)

Name _____

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Evening Phone _____ Day Phone _____

Fax _____ E-mail _____

Current ML: Co-op _____ Rental _____

Former ML: Co-op _____ Rental _____

Development _____ Renewal _____ New Member _____

President's Name: _____

Donations in addition to dues are welcome.

NOTE: Checks are deposited once a month.

Mail to: MLRC, PO Box 20414, Park West Finance Station, New York, N.Y. 10025

MLRC fights for you and your right to affordable housing!

Tenant Fair Chance Act: correcting the tenant blacklist

The Tenants Fair Chance Act, a bill authored by Councilmember Daniel Garodnick, informed MLRC that the Act was passed unanimously by the new City Council. It was signed by Mayor Bloomberg on March 2, and will take effect July 1. Following is a brief synopsis of the Act provided by Mr. Garodnick.

This bill, which is now Local Law 1 of 2010, will assist renters in ensuring that their tenant history is accurately reflected in reports that landlords use to screen tenants. These screening reports are one of the most powerful tools working against tenants--yet in most cases, prospec-

tive renters have no idea what they are up against.

Today, any tenant who appears in Housing Court is likely to be listed in screening reports compiled by private companies and sold to brokers and management companies looking to vet prospective renters. But because these reports often lack any meaningful detail, tenants who went to court to assert their rights may find themselves named alongside others with bad credit or a history of non-payment--and that's if a tenant even knows that a screening report is being used in the first place.

What Can You Do?

With the Mayor's signature on the bill (as of March 2, 2010), landlords (or brokers and managing agents) will be required to disclose whether they are using a screening report, which report they are using, and how a tenant can correct the record.

This disclosure must be posted on a sign in the leasing office and on the actual application for the apartment. If these requirements are not followed, applicants should report it by calling 311.

'Tivoli: A Place We Call Home' exhibition at Brooklyn Historical Society

The Brooklyn Historical Society, "Tivoli: A Place We Call Home," is a multi-media exhibition of photographs, words and video documenting the people of Tivoli Towers, a 35-year-old Mitchell-Lama rental development in Crown Heights, Brooklyn. The exhibition will remain open through August 2010.

Tivoli is located in a neighborhood that once suffered harshly from lack of investment and the crack epidemic. Today, the neighborhood is rapidly changing and experiencing the effects of gentrification. Tivoli Towers is one of the few buildings

in the neighborhood that has not seen a major increase in rent because of its City-sponsored M-L affordable housing program.

When the landlord recently tried to sell the building and remove it from Mitchell-Lama, the tenants sued, and won. Alice Mitchell, the president of the building's tenant association, is a long-time member of the MLRC executive board.

In May 2009, tenants were informed that the landlord was appealing the case. If he wins, Tivoli Towers will no longer provide affordable housing for this diverse

community of people. "Tivoli: A Place We Call Home" puts a face on the development's tenants at the onset of gentrification and will help answer questions as : Who lives there? Where do they come from? How do they use this space that they call home? What does gentrification mean to them?

Tivoli curators will moderate the discussion "Surviving the Affordable Housing Struggle in Brooklyn" on April 17 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201. Phone 718-222-4111.

Bed bugs and tenant rights

For tenants in New York, the right to a bedbug-free environment derives from the city's housing and maintenance code, which specifically names bedbugs, along with a number of other unpleasant pests. The landlord has an obligation to eradicate the infestation and to keep the units from getting re-infested. If your landlord refuses to take the necessary steps, you can file a complaint with the City's department of Housing Preservation and Development (call 311),

or take the owner to Housing Court in an HP action.

Obviously, multiple dwellings offer bedbugs the perfect environment, since the bugs can hide in the walls while one unit is cleaned, and then appear in another wall, or return to re-infest the original room or apartment. Hotels traditionally have had difficulty removing bedbugs, because bedding is often carried from one room to another, and while one infested unit might be cleaned, it's rare for the

entire hotel to be shut down so all the rooms can be fumigated.

As with any problem you have concerning repairs or services, it is important to notify the landlord of the condition in writing (send by certified mail, return receipt requested, and save a copy), and to let the owner and manager know what steps you expect them to take.

SOURCE: Adapted from Metropolitan Council on Housing

Abatement applications for co-op/condo owners

Although the February 15th deadline has passed, the NYC Department of Finance will accept abatement applications throughout the year. The start date for tax reduction benefits, however, varies according to when you apply.

If your application was received by the Department of Finance after this date, benefits will begin on July 1st of the following year.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Your Federal adjusted gross income may be reduced

by un-reimbursed medical and prescription drug expenses, and medical insurance premiums (from Exemption & Abatement Application for owners at www.nyc.gov/finance).

Evergreen tenants demand results--and get them!

By Lillian Bannister, President

Evergreen Garden Tenants Association, Bronx

Corroded play equipment in the park. Elevators that break down every month. Washing machines that stay broken week after week. Sinks in the laundry room with no proper running water. No bathrooms in the laundry room for tenants. The absence of a safe play area for children.

These are some of the problems faced by the Evergreen Tenants Association, which recently voted into office a group of new officers. Among their efforts have been meetings with management and our HPD representative.

Although management has addressed some of our issues, the problems with the children's park have continuously been ignored. The park renovation has been a serious concern to the residents of this development because the play equipment has been there since the building was built and has no rubber matting and proper fencing.

Other issues needing attention are elevators that break down every month, laundry contractor not repairing machines in a timely fashion, and sinks in the laundry room not having proper running water.

Also, there are no bathrooms for tenants' use. The tenants entertained the idea of starting a petition to demand that these issues be addressed.

Just recently, our Executive Officers wrote a letter to the Senior Property Manager, Grenadier Realty, Mr. Kevin Williams. We emphasized our desire to strengthen our partnership with management and looked forward to improving the quality of life for our residents in Evergreen Gardens.

We stated that the resident's children needed a safe area to play in and that the security of tenants must be addressed. We need to have flood lights installed, automatic fencing in the parking lots and functioning intercoms in all apartments. Residents also need renovated laundry rooms to accommodate the number of families that reside in the building. These problems have been ignored for many years and the tenants were not going to accept these substandard conditions any longer. We requested a timely response to our letter.

To our surprise, we received a

prompt reply stating that we have a new laundry vendor and new equipment will be installed by April 1. The intercom service was restored on February 23, and additional lighting has been installed in the parking lot areas as well as in front of the buildings. As to enclosing the parking lot with gates, we should receive word shortly on the status of proposals.

We were told that the funding is not available at this time for the park renovation; however, the matting will be replaced in early spring.

It has been a long process but one thing is for sure: we have learned that the power of the pen speaks louder than words. Tenants associations must document everything in writing, and follow up diligently if they want issues to be addressed. When writing to your management agency you should send copies of your correspondence to your supervising agency and the HUD regional staff. If all else fails, seek help from outside resources such as the MLRC and Tenants and Neighbors.

Bottom line – if your goal is realistic, it is attainable!

Urge residents to send in forms on April 1, Census Day

Census day, April 1, will soon be here. Use this day as a reference date to send in your questionnaires.

The 2010 Census questionnaire is an easy "short form" that takes approximately ten minutes to answer and return. The census collects only basic information, including your age, sex, race, Hispanic or Latino origin, household relationships, whether your home is owned or rented, and whether you are a citizen or non-citizen. It is a count of everyone living in the United States every ten years and is mandated by the U.S. Constitution. Federal law protects the personal information you share during the census.

Your participation in the census is required by law. It is very important for everyone to be counted. Census data affect funding and political representation for your community. They are used to determine each state's Congressional seats, and make decisions about the provision of community services. The data inform the US President how your community is changing.

They are also used to distribute federal funds in the amount of \$300 billion to local, state and tribal governments each year.

The Census Bureau will mail or deliver questionnaires to your house in March 2010. They will mail a second form to households that do not respond. If you still do not respond by completing the form, you will be called or visited by a Census worker.

For more information, and copies of the questionnaire, go to <http://www.census.state.md.us/>.

NOTE: Open your doors only to Census workers who can be identified by a census badge and bag. Ask for ID.

Dues-Paid Developments

MLRC strength comes from you, the membership. Support the Coalition's educational, advocacy and outreach programs with your membership dollars.

Individual Membership: \$15
Development - 15 cents per apt. (\$30 minimum;
\$125 maximum)

Donations above the membership dues are welcome.

These developments are dues-paid members of the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition as of Dec. 31, 2009

Bethune Towers	Promenade Apartments
Castleton Park	RNA House
Central Park Gardens	Riverbend Housing
Clayton Apartments.	River Terrace
Coalition to Save Affordable Housing of Co-op City	River View Towers
Dennis Lane Apartments	Ryerson Towers
1199 Housing	Concerned Tenants of Sea Park East
Esplanade Gardens	Starrett City Tenants Association
Jefferson Towers	St. James Towers
Lincoln Amsterdam House	Tivoli Towers
Masaryk Towers Tenant Association	Tower West
Meadow Manor	Village East Towers
Michangelo Apartments	Washington Park SE Apartments
109th St. Senior Citizen Plaza	West View Neighbors Association
Parkside Development	West Village Houses
Pratt Towers	Woodstock Terrance Mutual Housing

If your development has not received an invoice, please call the MLRC Voice Mail: (212) 465-2619. Leave the name and address of the President of your Tenants Association, Board of Directors, or Treasurer and an invoice will be mailed.

SCRIE and DRIE: rent-assistance programs for elderly and disabled

If you are a low-income Mitchell-Lama senior or a disabled tenant who does not receive Section 8 subsidy, you may be eligible for the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) or a Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE). If HUD has approved the landlord's request for a rent increase, and you meet the eligibility criteria listed below, tell management you want to file a SCRIE or DRIE application.

SCRIE eligibility criteria*

You are eligible for an exemption if you met the following conditions *on the effective date of the rent/carrying charge increase*:

- 1) You (or your spouse) lived in the apartment; are the head of the household; are 62 years of age or older.
- 2) The total household income does not exceed \$28,000 for the applicable year (2009 figures).*
- 3) Your annual basic rent charge was more than or equal to one-third of your total annual household income. Any portion of your rent that is for utility costs or other fees or charges is *not* considered part of your base rent charge.
- 4) You are not on any other rent charge assisted program such as Section 8.

NOTE: The city has transferred the senior citizen rent increase exemption program (SCRIE) from the Department of Aging to the Department of Finance. Applicants must now go to the Department of Finance's website to download the necessary forms: <http://www.nyc.gov/finance>.

Completed forms must now be sent to SCRIE Exemption Unit, NYC Dept. of Finance, 59 Maiden Lane, 19th Floor, New York, NY 10038.

DRIE eligibility criteria*

To qualify for DRIE, applicants must:

- 1) Be the adult head of household (18 years of age or older) named on the lease or rent order, be the tenant of record, the spouse, or registered domestic partner with a disability;
- 2) Receive eligible state or federal disability-related financial assistance (award letters) from any of the following:
 - Federal Supplementary Security Income (SSI);
 - Federal Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI);
 - US Department of Veterans Affairs disability pension or compensation; or
 - Disability-related Medicaid (if the applicant has received either SSI or SSDI in the past.)
- 3) Meet the program's income eligibility requirements. These include:
 - For a single-person household, the total household income does not exceed \$ 19,284 (2009 figures)*; For a household of two or more members, income must be not Exceed \$27,780**
- 4) You pay more than one-third of your household's total income for rent.

NOTE: Tenants of a NYC rent controlled or rent stabilized apartment should write to the New York City Department of Finance, DRIE Exemptions, 20th Floor, 59 Maiden Lane, New York, NY 10038. For assistance in applying, tenants may contact the Mayor's Office for People With Disabilities, 100 Gold Street, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10038 (212) 788-2830; TTY: (212) 788-2838.

Call 311 to have an application mailed to you.
*Yearly Income (rates) qualification: income changes will be listed in the SCRIE and DRIE applications.

Eyes & Ears conference date changes to April 17, 2010

The Region 2 NY/NJ NAHT and Organizers' Eyes & Ears conference date has been changed from April 24 to April 17, 2010 to accommodate HUD Deputy Assistant Secretary Carol Galante, who has confirmed her attendance.

Key HUD officials in addition to Ms. Galante will be in attendance. The conference (location to be announced) is for all residents who have raised issues and concerns with

their management, supervising agency and HUD that have not been addressed to date. To attend, you must live in a HUD multifamily subsidized development.

If you would like to attend, and wish to be on the mailing list, please RSVP to this announcement ASAP via email to region-2naht@gmail.com, leaving your name, address, telephone number, and name of Development.

2010 co-op/condo expo slated for April at New York Hilton

The NY Cooperator will hold its 2010 Co-Op and Condo EXPO on Tuesday, April 27, 2010, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the New York Hilton, 53rd Street and Avenue of the Americas. Admission is free.

The Expo is designed for board members, building managers, committee members and interested cooperators.

Registration is required, and may be done online at www.coop-expo.com (use VIP code BNNYC for complimentary lunch), or by phone at 212-330-0433.

The Expo will feature over 270 exhibitors. The program will include educational seminars, networking, and approaches to such issues as building management, insurance, security, landscaping, maintenance, energy, plumbing, fuel, and HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning).

Free advice booths covering legal, financial and management issues will also be available.

Websites of Interest

Following are the websites of government housing agencies and elected officials:

US Department of Housing & Urban Development: <http://www.hud.gov>

NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD): <http://www.hpd.gov>

NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR): <http://www.dhcr.state.ny.us>

State legislature (to access bills from both the Assembly and Senate): <http://www.assembly.state.ny.us>; and <http://www.assembly.state.ny.us>

Elected officials: http://www.lwvnyc.org/Try_find.html

Co-op information: <http://cu4ml.org/resources.html>

Working Together to Save Affordable Housing Resources: www.save-ml.org

Affordable housing preservation and protection of tenants

The following testimony was presented on February 26 at the New York Universal Periodic Review, Human Rights Coalition.

By Judy Montanez

Housing is a basic human right. We need to encourage practices that improve and protect the quality of life of all people. People are fighting to have their basic rights enforced. We need to make sure that tenants will be protected no matter what happens, and the best way to do that is to ensure that federal regulations are established with tenants' human rights in mind and not vested interests of specific groups, and to ensure that the business of our government officials is carried out expeditiously with honesty and integrity.

History of Mitchell-Lama

The ML housing stock is at risk of becoming extinct. In 1955 Governor Averill Harriman signed into law a bill sponsored by Senator MacNeill Mitchell and Assemblymen Alfred Lama to encourage the building of moderate income housing (Chapter 407, Laws of 1955). Hence the beginning of the rise HUD multifamily ML subsidized coops and rental developments.

The original ML program explicitly prohibited dissolution; there was no stipulation for owners to buy out of the affordable program. In 1957 a provision appeared allowing buyout after 35 years with provisions. In 1959 Governor Rockefeller passed a law which gave no thought to the negative impact on tenants. The law, allowing housing companies to buy out and be free of all ML restrictions after 15 years of occupancy, eliminated the required consent of supervising agencies for the buyout, as well as return of surplus cash or property.

In 1960 the minimum period for buyout was increased to 20 years for projects occupied after May 1959. Then in 1961 all provisions relating to governmentally aided housing in NYS, including Mitchell Lama and similar programs, were consolidated into the Private Housing Finance Law (McKinney's Laws of NY, Book 41). There, the buyout provisions are set forth in three paragraphs in Article 2, Section 35, where they remain unchanged to the present day (MLRC 2004 Reception Booklet).

In NYC, over 44,000 units of Mitchell-Lama (ML) housing in the city have been lost as a result of prepayment of mortgages which allows the owners to opt out of the ML affordable housing program.

Castleton Park Apartments

Castleton Park Apartments, Staten Island, where I live, is a ML HUD multifamily subsidized development. I am the co-chair of the Castleton Park Tenants Association at Staten Island, a 454 family unit that is fight-

ing to stay in affordable housing. I would have been homeless many times over if I did not live in a ML complex. I moved in paying fair market rent in 1975 until 1986. I was laid off in 1986, went on unemployment for six months, which made me eligible for Section 8. When I was re-employed, my rent returned to fair market rate. In 1995 I became disabled, lost my pension and job and was approved for social security benefits. I paid basic market rent until I became eligible for Section 8. Anywhere else, I would have lost my home. That is the beauty of ML Affordable housing program.

Mr. Laurence Gluck, a predatory equity real estate developer who owns and/or manages 17 other buildings in New York City and has purchased several city commercial properties (placing some of these buildings in foreclosure) is trying to purchase Castleton Park where I live. Since 2006, the owner has been trying to prepay the mortgage at Castleton in order to opt out.

Sharon Valentin, the other co-chair, and I researched Castleton's mortgage and to our surprise, found a clause in the mortgage making reference to section 250 of the National Housing Act: Limitation on prepayment of mortgages on multifamily rental housing. This federal statute should have protected Castleton, but instead residents found themselves fighting with HUD and the owners to enforce this statute.

This is unconscionable! To date, we are still waiting for a judge's ruling. Our rights have been violated and the battle in the courts is between a governor's law that should never have been allowed since our mortgage had specific provisions to preserve affordability, and the enforcement of a Federal statute that should take precedent but doesn't. The US Government must ensure their citizens that regulations and federal statutes will not be ignored.

Predatory Equity and Right to Purchase

We need federal legislation on the right to first purchase. There is currently no regulatory provision for buyer and seller converting property. The state and local courts agree that there should be a federal regulation, but it needs to be dealt with in Washington. If there was a Federal Regulation, then the City or HUD would be able to buy property and restrict conversion, allowing a not for profit preservationist developer to buy it and keep it in affordable housing.

Castleton Park has a preservationist developer called POAH, ready and willing to purchase the property since 2007, but has no access to the owner. Messages to him are

left to no avail, while owner negotiations continue with the predatory equity developer Mr. Gluck.

We demand that the US Government create anti-predatory lending legislation. We need the Federal Government to protect our rights, give incentives to owners or buyers to preserve and create permanent--I repeat--permanent affordable housing. We are asking the Government to impose a 1 year (or more) moratorium on the approval of applications for the demolition or disposition of public housing units so that serious conversations can take place to find solutions for the preservation and creation of affordable housing.

We ask that these basic human rights be respected, addressed and enforced. The people of the US no longer trust government to protect their interests. Raquel Rolnik, Special UN rapporteur, states in her report of February 12 2010 on adequate housing (Page 19 line 51) "it is estimated that over 800,000 people are homeless on any given night in the United States." We need change and we need it now, or our homeless figures of 800,000 in the US will more than double or triple within a few years.

Needed Legislation

We need legislation on all levels--city, state and federal. In order to protect tenants from unaffordable rents and displacement, the US Congress, Council members, Senate and Assembly people must make a commitment to work towards a mutual goal to begin passing legislation and changing policy that supports:

1) A federal budget that reflects full funding for all HUD Multifamily Subsidized building programs. Funds should provide new incentives for preservation of multifamily subsidized buildings and the creation of new *permanent* affordable housing. Vacant properties can and should be used to fill the gap in affordable housing.

2) Amending the ETPA of 1974. The post 1974 HUD Multifamily Subsidized buildings are not rent-controlled, giving incentives to predatory equity real estate developers to buy these buildings by prepaying mortgages, which allows them to opt out of the affordable housing programs. The Emergency Tenant Protection Act (ETPA) of 1974 was written and passed to amend the NYC Rent Stabilization Law, and ended the 1971 vacancy decontrol of rent stabilized units. We are currently in another state of emergency and

(Continued on page 8)

Lobbying in the neighborhoods: Speak to your officials now



From left: Margo Tunstall, Co-Chair MLRC; Judy Montanez and Sharon Valentin, Co-Chairs of Castleton Park Tenants Association, Executive board members of MLRC & PIE Campaign. Staten Island Politicians Senator Diane J. Savino, Assemblyman Matthew Titone, and Anthony Reinhart, Director of Operations for Senator Andrew J. Lanza's Office.

It's Never Too Late to start lobbying your political officials. It is extremely important that we each do our share to get the tenant laws changed and passed. Let your legislators know what is good for you and your neighborhood.

Margo, Judy and Sharon met with their elected officials to discuss the MLRC/PIE legislative Agenda for 2010. The politicians were very cooperative and assured

these tenant leaders that they will bring their issues to the table for discussion. Although Senator Lanza is not in these tenants' district, since he is a voting member of the House, he agreed to send his representative to the meeting. It was a productive meeting. Tenants discussed their local concerns and follow up meetings will take place

If you have not yet received the

"informational folders" (lobbying packet) on how to lobby your state elected officials on housing legislation, please contact call MLRC voicemail: 212-465-2619, leave your name, address or email address so we can send you the lobbying packet.

Keep our homes affordable! Talk with your politicians now!

MLRC's Legislative Agenda

Following are the key items in the Mitchell-Lama Residents Coalition legislative agenda. Tell your representatives you want them to support this agenda now.

1) Support passage of a revised Stewart-Cousins//Rosenthal Bill which would place all buildings formerly under Mitchell-Lama, regardless of when built (that is, either before or after January 1, 1974), into

rent stabilization without a "unique or peculiar circumstances" rent increase.

2) Support the Moratorium on privatization of Mitchell-Lama co-ops and buy-outs of Mitchell-Lama rentals through December 31, 2010. (Bill No. S2171/A6706)

3) Support the repeal of vacancy decontrol (Bill No. #A02005)

4) Support the Reform of the Rent

Guidelines Board by changing the composition to three tenant members, three landlord members and three public members, and require local legislative approval of all appointments.

5) Support the repeal of the Urstadt Law, which will allow local legislative bodies like the NYC Council to restore Home Rule by passing local laws on rents and evictions (Bill No. A1688).

Free energy-savings light bulb program

In buildings where managers pay Con Edison bills and agree to pay for an energy savings program, tenants may register to receive free energy-efficient compact fluorescent lighting. According to the Free Lighting Corporation, these bulbs use around 75 percent less energy than the old bulbs, and last five to ten times longer than the old incandescent type

Con Edison began offering the program to Staten Island residences and businesses three years ago. Over 13,000 homes and businesses on Staten Island have taken advantage of it.

After discussing the program with Sharon Valentin and Judy Montanez, Co-Chairs of Castleton Park Apartment Tenants' Association, the company came to the 454 unit complex recently and set up tables for tenants to register for the free energy efficient bulbs.

The program is currently available only in Brooklyn, Manhattan, Staten Island & Westchester. The Con Edison website

listed the following vendors:

For Westchester and Lower Manhattan: Public Energy Solutions: 201-871-8600.

For Staten Island: Free Lighting Corporation: 718-720-2209.

For Westchester, Brooklyn, and Upper Manhattan: 973-0697-9552, or 877-782-5661.

Additional information is available from Con Edison at 800-643-1289.

Affordable housing preservation and protection of tenants

(Continued from Page 6)

need to protect tenants by doing the same for post '74 buildings. New York City Department of Housing Preservation should reject and discourage Buyers offering a purchase price that is more than the building is worth

3) Real Rent Reform: Our Rent Guidelines Board process is a pure violation of the basic human right to fair and affordable housing regulations. The legislatures must mandate a number of changes to the Rent Guidelines Board that makes the process fairer for every resident in a rent-stabilized unit. These changes should include denying rent increases for one year for any unit with serious violations; restructuring the board to include three landlord members, three tenant members, and three public members, to ensure real people a greater voice in the process. It would require board members to have some knowledge of affordable housing, and Mayoral appointments to the board would have to be approved by the City Council. Most importantly, it would require the use of both income *and* expense information when determining whether a rent increase is warranted.

4) HUD mandating that management have energy efficient programs HUD to reject sales of buildings to buyers with outstanding code violations.

5) Granting tax relief for any preservation sales or transfers.

6) HUD needs to be more willing to deal with buildings whereby their mortgages have expired and institute the same standard that was used for Starret City.

7) Placing all HUD Multifamily Subsidized buildings that are not rent controlled into rent stabilization when they exit their subsidy programs.

8) Our government taking action to prevent Mitchell Lama rental buyouts and co-op privatization.

9) Repealing the Urstadt law, by reinstating Home Rule. The Urstadt Law is not fair as it takes away the City Council power to decide what is best for New York City and its residents.

10) Repealing high rent vacancy decontrol to preserve affordable housing. In 1993, New York State amended the rent regulation laws to permit landlords to deregulate an apartment, allowing rent increases of \$2000 or more when the apartment is empty. This rent regulation law gives incentives to unscrupulous landlords to use harassment tactics, illegal evictions, and fraud against tenants until the tenants get so frustrated they move out. A vacant apartment offers an opportunity for landlords to raise rent higher to cover the costs of unsubstantiated renovations without the approval of governing agencies such as DHCR.

The right to housing is indeed everyone's basic right, but it matters not if we cannot afford the housing. It is my hope that the government will work on instituting these changes as soon as possible. We cannot afford to wait any longer.

Judy Montanez is an executive board member of NAHT, MLRC, PIE Campaign, and Castleton Park Tenants Association in Staten Island.

Job and career services for public school parents

The following employment information and preparation services have been posted by ParentJobNet. The six-year-old nonprofit organization provides low- and moderate-income public school parents "with the skills and resources needed to obtain jobs, enhance their careers, improve literacy, and achieve greater financial knowledge," according to the group's website.

The aim is to put parents "in a better position to help themselves and their school-age children financially, emotionally, and academically,"

ParentJobNet programs are located in public schools, which "allows parents to become more engaged in school as adult learners and more empowered to become involved in their children's school lives." Public schools in four of Manhattan's school districts house the group's development programs. The districts include schools in zip codes 10023 through 10040.

More information on their employment and career opportunities is available at <http://www.parentjobnet.org/AboutUs.html>.

ParentJobNet employment services P.S. 84

32 West 92nd Street (Between Central Park

West & Columbus Ave.)
New York, NY 10025
Please call for an appointment: 917-546-9104 OR email us: info@parentjobnet.org

Career Networking Event at Cosi

Tuesday, March 23, 2010
6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Cosi
2186 Broadway (between 76th & 77th Streets.)

New York, NY 10024
RSVP Here: <http://www.parentjobnet.org/AccessNetworkingRegForm.html>.

New York City Hires Job Fair

Wednesday, March 24, 2010
11 a.m. - 3 p.m. Radisson Martinique at Broadway
49 West 32nd St., New York, NY 10001
RSVP: <http://nyc.localhires.com/events/MzE2Ng==/>
New+York+Job+Fair+March+24+2010

Computer Training for Job Seekers

(Beginner level) C.S. 133, 2121 Fifth Avenue, NYC, 10037
Fridays, March 19, 26
8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
RSVP: <http://www.parentjobnet.org/ComputerTrainingRegistrationForm.html>

Workplace ESL (Intermediate level)

P.S. 84, 32 West 92nd Street, New York, NY 10025
Ongoing through May 20
Tuesdays and Thursdays
9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
RSVP: <http://www.parentjobnet.org/ESLRegistrationForm.html>

Workplace ESL (Basic level)

P.S. 57, 176 East 115th Street, New York, NY 10029
Tuesdays and Wednesdays
9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
Ongoing through May 19
RSVP: <http://www.parentjobnet.org/ESLRegistrationForm.html>

Strategies for a Successful Job Search

P.S. 84, 32 West 92nd Street, New York, NY 10025
March 22
Monday
9 a.m.-11 a.m.
RSVP: <http://www.parentjobnet.org/JobReadinessRegForm.html>