



25¢

Tenant Inquilino

Housing for people, not profit

Vol 30, No. 11
December 2000

Metropolitan Council on Housing
64 Fulton Street
New York, NY 10038

PERIODICAL

Dec. 19 City Hall Rally to Demand RGB Changes

By Kenny Schaeffer

Met Council will rally in front of City Hall on December 19, calling on the City Council to pass legislation to reform the New York City Rent Guidelines Board.

The nine-member RGB, which sets rent increases for the over 2 million New Yorkers living in 1,000,000 rent-stabilized apartments, is appointed solely by the Mayor. Although there are supposed to be five "public" members, along with two tenant representatives and two owner representatives, the "public" members appointed by Rudolph Giuliani are from the business and finance world and do not represent or even understand the struggle of low, moderate and middle-income tenants in New York City in the face of the ever-worsening housing-affordability crisis. Giuliani's RGB consists of nine prosperous men, with no women and only two people of color (both Latinos).

Giuliani's RGB has imposed unjustified rent increases year after year. This year it imposed the highest increases in five years, although landlords' profits rose 11% after rising 11% the year before, their average profit per apartment rose from \$250 a month to almost \$300 (that does not include profit from apartments which have been deregulated upon reaching \$2,000 a month rent), and average tenant household income has declined slightly in real dollars over the past 20 years.

The RGB also once again included the "poor tax," an additional \$15 a month charge on apartments renting below \$500. The "poor tax" has two horrendous effects: It imposes a special burden on the tenants who can least afford it, as the people living in lower-rent apartments are predominantly low-income, mostly people of color, and include many on SSI or other fixed incomes; and it has contributed to the loss of more than

half of all apartments renting for under \$500 since 1993, from 417,000 in 1993 to under 200,000 now. This is a permanent loss of affordable housing.

Met Council is calling for the City Council to amend section 26-510 of the city administrative code, which governs the Rent Guidelines Board, by adding a provision giving the Council approval power over RGB appointments. The bill is expected to be introduced at the December 19 Council meeting, cosponsored by Stanley Michels, Chris Quinn, Bill Perkins, Phil Reed and Guillermo Linares of Manhattan, Helen Marshall of Queens, and Steve DiBrienza of Brooklyn, with additional sponsors expected.

"For too long, the Rent Guidelines Board has neglected the concerns of low and middle-income tenants. By giving the City Council a voice in determining who sits on the



STEVEN WISHNIA

Willia McKeiver of the Northwest Bronx Community Clergy Coalition speaks at Met Council's Annual Assembly, held at Brecht Forum in Manhattan Dec. 5. The Bronx tenant organizer has been campaigning to get the city to improve housing-code enforcement. At left is Met Council organizer Dave Powell. (More photos on Page 5)

RGB, this important piece of legislation will ensure that the board is more representative of the tenants of this city," DiBrienza told *Tenant/Inquilino*. "Permitting members of the not-for-

profit community to sit on the RGB will create a more diversified board, helping to ensure that the interests of all New Yorkers are heard."

continued on page 8

RAT POPULATION EXPLODES Critics Say Budget Cuts Crippled City's 'Model' Control Program

By Jenny Laurie

"The rats are so bad in our building that we can't use the laundry room at night—you can see them coming out of the cracks in the walls."

—Tenant in HUD building in the Bronx

In response to a worsening rat problem in New York City, Councilmember Bill Perkins held a "Rat Summit" on Nov. 29. Co-sponsored by the *Daily News* and Columbia University, where it was held, the conference brought together city, state and federal officials, scientists and community activists, to discuss the extent of the city's rat problem and the best ways to reduce the rat population.

From testimony by rat experts from the city Department of Health to the

loud complaints from members of the audience, the evidence is clear: The rat population in the city's buildings, parks, and vacant lots is exploding. According to Les Goodstein, president and chief operating officer of the *Daily News*, rats now outnumber people in the city 12 to 1.

Goodstein concluded his remarks, which consisted mostly of reading horrifying letters from his readers about rats in their buildings, by saying that the *News* would play a major part in the cam-

paign to reduce the rat population in the city. He promised to support any legislation that would help, including one bill that would require that trash be stored and put on the streets in metal or heavy plastic cans. The collection of experts from academia and government seemed to be in complete agreement about the solution: New York City needs to stop feeding the rats and stop practices that give them comfortable places to live.

The most compelling message of the conference came from keynote speaker Dr. Bruce Colvin, a self-described "rat guy," who asked the audience to

understand the lifestyle of the rat. The Norway rat, our particular pest species, was brought to these shores 200 years ago with the European colonists and has been breeding every since. Rats, not surprisingly, like to eat and

reproduce. They will eat any food that is left out for them, and they will chew through almost anything to get to the food.

According to Colvin, the way that restaurants and

continued on page 7

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Tenant Briefs* pg. 2
- El Inquilino Hispano* pg. 3
- Annual Assembly* pg. 5
- Urstadt Law* pg. 6
- Houston St. Tower* pg. 7

Williamsburg Factory Goes Luxury Rental; \$3,500 Studios To Come

By Jonathan Bowles

So much for community vision. Two years ago, Williamsburg residents drew up a plan that asked city officials to maintain the mixed-use and mixed-income character of their neighborhood, preserving the blend of small manufacturers, artists and immigrant families that has kept the district diverse. The document they submitted to the city's planning department even went so far as to carve out "industrial sanctuaries" to protect local manufacturers from the residential conversions that are now rampant on the Brooklyn waterfront, driving out local employers and replacing them with studios, lofts and luxury apartments.

Last month, however, the local community board voted overwhelmingly to allow a developer to convert the neighborhood's largest remaining industrial building into 184 Soho-priced studio apartments.

If the conversion plan for 184 Kent Avenue goes through, it would displace a handful of industrial companies that employ roughly 90 workers, and permanently erase a huge chunk of industrial space at a time when manufacturers are facing a major space crunch. The building's owner, Louis Kestenbaum, says he cannot find enough industrial tenants to fill the property, but local advocates say that he has intentionally kept half the building vacant in the hope of getting the variance that will allow him to convert it into big studios that will rent for \$1,800 to \$3,500 a unit.

Critics of the conversion worry that local jobs are drying up in this rapidly gentrifying neighborhood. "While restaurants and bars are booming, they do not provide

the kind of full-time, skilled jobs needed in the neighborhood," said Julie Lawrence, Community Board 1's waterfront chair, who spoke against the variance.

Thanks to Williamsburg's status as the city's hippest nightspot, dozens of buildings have already been converted—either legally or illegally—into apartments. After all, landlords can get much more rent from NYU students than from cabinet-makers.

But several community residents say that the conversion of this Kent Avenue building is especially worrisome, since the building particularly well-suited for manufacturing. The 400,000-square-foot building is located on a truck route, has large floor plates and high ceilings, and is one of the rare industrial properties throughout the city that has several off-street loading docks. In addition, they say, it's not a good place for people to live: While the building is on the East River, it is surrounded on the other three sides by a cement plant, a Con Ed fuel depot and a paper-recycling plant.

"It not only threatens viable manufacturing businesses, but contributes to the loss of affordable housing in Williamsburg," said Peter Gillespie, a longtime community resident and the lead organizer for Neighbors Against Garbage, an environmental-justice organization. "We've drawn a line in the sand on this particular variance because there's nothing

good about it." This month, the variance will go before the city's Board of Standards and Appeals, which is expected to approve it.

Reprinted with permission from City Limits Weekly.

Tenant-ive Changes

By Kathleen McGowan

In a move to make the city's program for tax-delinquent buildings more tenant-friendly, Harlem City Councilmember Bill Perkins introduced a new bill last month that would make it easier for tenants to take over their own buildings and run them as low-income co-ops.

The changes, if passed by the Council, would modify the city's third-party transfer program, which conveys run-down, seriously tax-delinquent private properties into the hands of specially chosen responsible owners. (Since the law was passed in 1996, only a handful of buildings have gone through the process, but hundreds more are in the pipeline.) Perkins' bill would make it so that if 60% of the tenants were interested in taking over their home, they could do so, with the help of a nonprofit.

"Essentially, we're trying to provide qualified and willing tenants the opportunity to own their own homes, as is the case with other [city Department of Housing Preservation and Development] programs," said Perkins. "The concept of tenant ownership is over

30 years old, and we've seen that it is successful time and time again." Perkins said that although he did not have the explicit support of Council Speaker Peter Vallone, who controls the progress of most Council legislation, he has heard "what I consider to be positive signals."

"That change is good. It should have been in the first law," said Susie Britton, president of the tenant association in a Central Harlem building that had serious repair problems before the tenants began managing it. Britton said that she and the other tenants are more than ready to officially take over the property, currently slated for the third-party transfer program.


Along with the changes, Perkins also introduced a two-year freeze on the transfer program, a move that he admits is part negotiating tool. "We want to meet with HPD, and perhaps a moratorium will help."

Reprinted with permission from City Limits Weekly.

BECOME A WRITING TENANT

Met Council wants to profile you and your neighbors' struggle to obtain affordable quality housing. We want you to write for *Tenant/Inquilino*.

For more information call
Met Council
212-693-0553



Scott Sommer hosts Met Council's

HOUSING NOTEBOOK

Mondays at 7:00 p.m. on
WBAI 99.5 FM

Listen on the Internet
www.wbaifree.org/index.html

SUPPORT LISTENER SUPPORTED WBAI PUBLIC RADIO

TenantNet™ Online Resource for Residential Tenants

New York Tenants
on the World Wide Web

<http://tenant.net>
email: tenant@tenant.net

- Met Council's Tenant/Inquilino newspaper posted monthly
- News from other NY tenant groups
- Fact Sheets & complete Housing Laws
- Bulletin Board & e-mail mailing list
- Rent Control/Rent Stabilization/DHCR information
- Weekly Housing Court Decision summaries



is published monthly except August by Metropolitan Council on Housing (Met Council, Inc.), 64 Fulton Street, NY, NY 10038 (212) 693-0550; metcouncil@aol.com

Tenant/Inquilino is distributed to members and to affiliated organizations of Met Council as part of their membership. Subscriptions are \$2.50 per year for members, \$5 for institutions per year.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Ella Matthews, Seth Miller,
William Rowen, Kenny Schaeffer

EDITOR

Steven Wishnia

PRODUCTION/DESIGN

John M. Miller

PHOTOGRAPHERS

Martin Levine, William Rowen,
Marietta Hawkes

STAFF

Joe Anderson, Florence Daniels,
Vajra Kilgour, Maria Maher, Anne Moy,
Joyce Rodewald, Gloria Sukenick

Articles, letters, artwork and photographs are welcome. Text furnished on Microsoft Word for Macintosh is preferred. 3.5" MACINTOSH OR IBM FORMATTED DISKETTES ARE PREFERRED.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY
Postmaster: Send address changes to:
TENANT/INQUILINO
64 Fulton St., Room 401
New York, NY 10038

Metropolitan Council on Housing, founded in 1958, is incorporated as Met Council, Inc., a membership organization dedicated to decent, affordable, integrated housing.

ISSN-0400-3083 ©2000

EL INQUILINO HISPANO

Proliferación de ratas, peor que nunca Los críticos: El programa de control municipal “modelo” fue paralizado por cortes al presupuesto

Por Jenny Laurie

Traducido por Lightning Translations

“Hay tantas ratas en nuestro edificio que no podemos usar la lavandería por la noche—puedes verlas saliendo de los agujeros en las paredes.” — Inquilino de un edificio HUD en el Bronx

Como respuesta a un problema de proliferación de ratas cada vez peor en la Ciudad de Nueva York, el concejal Bill Perkins celebró una “cumbre sobre las ratas” el 29 de noviembre.

También patrocinada por el *Daily News* y Columbia University donde tuvo lugar, la conferencia reunió a funcionarios municipales, estatales y federales, científicos y activistas de la comunidad, que cambiaron opiniones sobre la envergadura del problema de ratas que padece la ciudad, y los mejores métodos para reducir la población de ratas.

Entre los testimonios de

expertos sobre ratas del Departamento de Salud municipal y las quejas a gritos de miembros del público, los hechos son claros: La población de ratas en los edificios, parques y baldíos está proliferando como nunca. Según Les Goodstein, presidente del *Daily News*, las ratas exceden en número a las personas, en una proporción de 12 a 1.

Goodstein concluyó sus

comentarios—que consistieron casi totalmente en leer cartas espeluznantes escritas por sus lectores—al decir que el *News* hará un papel importante en la campaña para reducir la población de ratas en la ciudad. Prometió apoyar cualquier proyecto de ley que ayude en esto, incluyendo uno que requerirá que la basura se deposite y se ponga en la calle en botes de metal o de plásti-

co grueso. El conjunto de expertos de la academia y del gobierno parecían estar en acuerdo total en torno a la solución: La Ciudad de Nueva York tiene que dejar de alimentar a las ratas y poner fin a las prácticas que les den lugares convenientes para vivir.

El mensaje más impresionante de la conferencia lo dio el orador principal

pasa a la página 4

Los Ajustes de la “Junta de Regulación de Renta” de la Ciudad de Nueva York (Orden No. 32)

Para los contratos de apartamentos de Renta Estabilizada que comienzan el 1ro. de octubre de 2000 hasta el 30 de septiembre de 2001, incluyendo las concesiones de Pataki adoptadas por la Legislatura Estatal el 19 de junio de 1997

Los topes de renta que aparecen en el cuadro son los incrementos máximos que los dueños de edificios pueden cobrar legalmente por los apartamentos de renta estabilizada en la ciudad de Nueva York. Son válidos para todos los contratos que comienzan dentro del período de doce meses a partir del 1ro. de octubre de 2000. 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 2000. 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.

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 una sobrepaga 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 nueva ley permite también incrementos adicionales para los apartamentos vacíos donde no se habían cobrado incrementos por desocupación por ocho años o más.

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

inquilino haya tomado posesión del apartamento, puede escoger entre llenar un formulario de queja de sobrecargo 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 sobrecargo de alquiler es muy común. Todos los inquilinos deben luchar contra posibles sobrecargos. 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.

La Apelación de la Renta de Mercado Justa Otro tipo de sobrecargo ocurre frecuentemente cuando se vacía un apartamento que previamente estaba sujeto a renta controlada y se alquila con renta estabilizada. La Junta de Regulación de Renta (RGB) es-

tablece 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 32, es la Renta de Mercado Justa de HUD o un 150% 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 “sobrecargo.” 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 \$20,000 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. Obtenga el formulario de SCRIE por llamar al (212) 442-1000.

Unidades de Desván (Lofts) Los incrementos legales sobre la renta base para las unidades de desván son de un 3 por ciento por un contrato de un año y un 5 por ciento por un contrato de dos años. No se permiten in-

crementos para las unidades de desván vacías.

Hoteles y Apartamentos de una Sola Habitación Lo establecido es un 2% 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), sobre la renta legal que se pagaba el 30 de septiembre de 2000. No se permiten incrementos para apartamentos vacíos. Lo incremento estipulado no se puede cobrar a menos que un 70 por ciento de las unidades en el edificio sean ocupadas por inquilinos permanentes de renta estabilizada o controlada, pagando rentas reguladas legales. Además, no se permiten incrementos si el casero ha omitido de darle al nuevo ocupante una copia de los Derechos y Responsabilidades de los Dueños e Inquilinos de Hoteles.

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.



Tipo de Contrato	Renta Legal Actual	Contrato de 1 Año	Contrato de 2 Años	
Renovación del Contrato	Más de \$500	4%	6%	
	\$500 o menos (Alquileres de \$215 o menos se alzan a \$215 después de aplicarse los aumentos)	4% + \$15	6% + \$15	
Contratos para Apartamentos Vacíos	Más de \$500	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	18%	20%
		Incrementos por desocupación no cobrados en los últimos 8 años	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, más el 18%	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, más el 20%
	Menos de \$300	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	18% + \$100	20% + \$100
		Incrementos por desocupación no cobrados en los últimos 8 años	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, + 18% + \$100	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, + 20% + \$100
	Renta de \$300 a \$500	Incrementos por desocupación cobrados en los últimos 8 años	18% o \$100, lo que sea mayor	20% o \$100, lo que sea mayor
		Incrementos por desocupación no cobrados en los últimos 8 años	0.6% por el número de años desde el último incremento por estar vacío, mas 18%, 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

Ratas

vienen de la página 3

Dr. Bruce Colvin, un auto-denominado "Señor ratas," quien instó al público a comprender el modo de vivir de las ratas. La rata Noruega, la especie particular nuestra, llegó a estas tierras con los colonizadores hace 200 años y se ha propagado desde entonces. A las ratas, para sorpresa de nadie, les gusta comer y reproducirse. Devoran cualquier comestible que se les ofrezca, y roen casi cualquier cosa para conseguir la comida.

Según Colvin, la colocación de la basura en la calle por parte de los dueños de restaurantes y edificios—en bolsas de plástico—es lo que se podría llamar celebrar un banquete para las ratas en la ciudad todas las noches. Hizo hincapié en que las campañas a corto plazo para envenenar a las ratas no funcionan—de hecho, el envenenamiento masivo de ratas solamente reduce la población temporalmente, eliminando la competencia y estimulando los ciclos de reproduc-

ción de las ratas. Seis meses después, sostuvo, el número de ratas será más grande de lo que fue antes de la campaña de envenenamiento. La manera eficaz de reducir la población de ratas, aseguró a la conferencia, son los ya probados métodos de eliminación de sus alimentos, agua y nidos.

Los participantes señalaron varias veces que el resurgimiento de las ratas se produjo hace relativamente poco tiempo, después de los cortes al presupuesto y la eliminación de normas en los últimos 25 años. Muchos de ellos señalaron que durante los años setenta la Ciudad de Nueva York contaba con el mejor programa de control de ratas en todo el país. De hecho, desde la Segunda Guerra Mundial hasta el principio de los años ochenta, el gobierno federal tenía una oficina especial dependiente de los Centros de Control de Enfermedades (Centers for Disease Control) para promover los programas municipales contra ratas—y el de Nueva York fue el patrón para todo el país. Se les requería a los dueños de restaurantes y edificios que ti-

raran la basura de una manera adecuada y que mantuvieran las aceras y los sótanos en buenas condiciones (sin agujeros)—y si no, se les multó. La población de ratas estaba bien controlada. Pero en 1981, el Presidente Ronald Reagan cortó la ayuda federal para las ciudades, y los alcaldes desde Edward Koch hasta Rudolph Giuliani redujeron la asignación de fondos al Departamento de Salud, de \$18 millones en los años setenta hasta \$5 millones en el año fiscal 1999. (En el año pasado, un aumento llevó el presupuesto a \$13 millones.)

Randy Dupree, el encargado durante 25 años del programa de la ciudad nacionalmente exitoso, dice que hace años no se proporcionan los fondos suficientes para ello. La consecuencia, añade, es que las ratas han escapado de las áreas de "límites definidos," donde se les permitió vivir (el Sur del Bronx, Central Brooklyn y otras áreas pobres con alta población de minorías), creando la agitación política que conducirá a la expansión de los programas de control. Mientras el Alcalde Adjunto Joseph Lhota, el zar municipal de ratas, y el Defensor Público Mark Green debatieron el nivel de intervención gubernamental que será necesario, los participantes en la conferencia fueron unánimes en reconocer la necesidad de tener un programa fuerte y consolidado, con el poder de perseguir a quienes violen la ley y de imponer multas.

Los participantes también subrayaron la necesidad de resucitar los botes de metal, con bolsas de plástico adentro para detener la propagación de malos olores y basura suelta y hacer más fácil su recolección. (¿Qué neoyorquino puede olvidar la antigua sinfonía

de las 4:00 de la madrugada?—los botes de metal arrastrados sobre la acera al camión, arrojados en el camión, golpeados contra el lado del camión y después rebotados en la acera.)

Brilló por su ausencia de la conferencia la representación de los caseros y los administradores. Como bien saben los lectores de *Tenant/Inquilino*, la oposición del grupo de propietarios y especuladores es un obstáculo serio. Actualmente, tres proyectos de ley que tratan del problema están en trámite en el Consejo Municipal: Intro 677, que requeriría que los solares contratados por particulares se mantengan limpios, y con trampas o cebados con veneno de ratas; Intro 823, que requeriría que la basura se deposite y se coloque para la recolección en bolsas y después en botes de metal o en recipientes gruesos a prueba de ratas; y Resolución 1496, que llamaría al Departamento de Salud a empezar a hacer pruebas y mantenerse al corriente de las enfermedades que portan las ratas.

Para más información sobre cómo arreglar un problema de proliferación de ratas, o cómo manejar la basura, llame a los siguientes números:

Para información sobre "control integral de plagas," llame al West Harlem Environmental Action (WEACT) al (212) 961-1000. Ellos otorgan folletos de datos informativos y fáciles de entender, sobre los riesgos de las ratas y de los venenos de ratas, con sugerencias de cómo controlar las plagas sin dañar a los niños o las mascotas.

Para registrar alguna queja general sobre observaciones de ratas, llame al Departamento de Salud al (212) 442-9666.

No se quede helado: ¡ORGANÍZSE!



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 dentro 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 dentro 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 (212) 824-4328 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 tenga 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 consigue 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 la calefacción y el agua caliente. Escriban y llamen al casero para demandar las 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 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 mucho menos 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. ¡Organízese!

Si Usted tiene un problema con su caso de reparaciones (HP), por favor llene este formulario y devuélvalo a una de estas dos oficinas: o al Met Council, 64 Fulton Street, New York NY 10038, o directamente a la Jueza Fern Fischer-Brandveen.

Jueza Fischer-Brandveen
Civil Court of the City of New York
111 Centre Street, New York, NY 10013

Estimada Jueza Fischer-Brandveen,

(Fecha)

Por experiencia propia, he tenido los siguientes problemas con mi acción de HP:

- Intenté a iniciar una acción de HP durante un día cuando la corte del HP estaba cerrada y esto ocasionó graves problemas o demoras.
- No se me permitió iniciar una acción de HP durante un día cuando la corte del HP estaba cerrada.
- Cuando inicié mi acción de HP por causa de la existencia de condiciones de emergencia (calefacción, agua caliente, falta de gas, etc.), no me ofrecieron una fecha cercana para regresar a la corte para corregir estas condiciones.
- Inicié mi acción de HP el _____ (Fecha) y tuve que esperar hasta el _____ (Fecha) para regresar a la corte.
- Llegué a la corte a las 9:30 A.M. y habían tantos casos que no pude hablar con un licenciado de HPD hasta las _____ AM/PM.
- Llegué a la corte a las 9:30 A.M. y quería hablar con el juez, y tuve que esperar hasta las _____ AM/PM; o _____ (indique) no pude hablar con el juez.
- Otros problemas que he tenido incluyen: _____

Me siento frustrado por mi experiencia en iniciar una acción de HP. Me sería difícil recurrir a este proceso otra vez o recomendarlo a otros inquilinos que necesitan reparaciones.

Sinceramente,

Firma

Imprenta Su Nombre, Dirección, Teléfono

Por favor envíe esta carta a la dirección indicada arriba.

Met Council's Annual Assembly

RGB, Code Enforcement, DHCR's Proposed Changes to Be Main Issues for 2001

Photos by Steven Wishnia



Met Council board chair Scott Sommer.



Alex Staber of Brooklyn makes a point.



Returning board member Deborah Schutt.



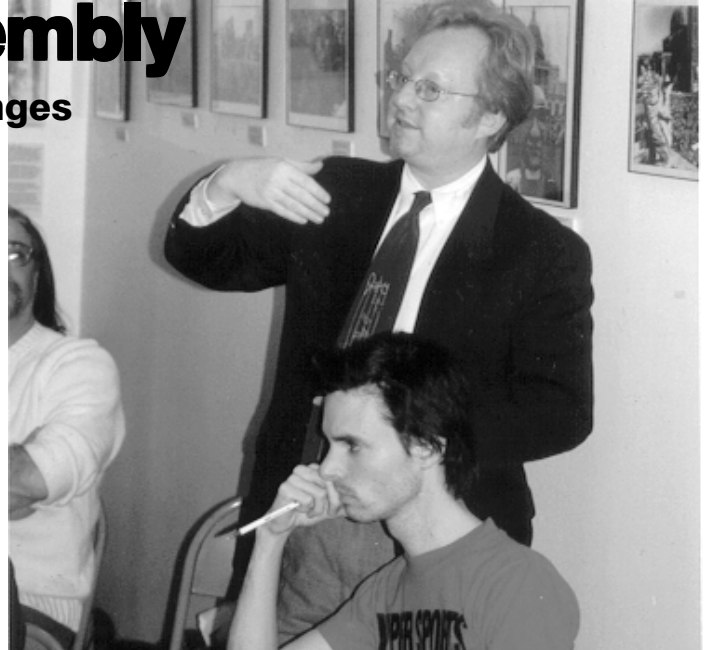
Board member Gloria Sukenick tables.



Patrick Markee of the Coalition for the Homeless says that New York needs 400,000 more low-rent apartments. At right is Adrian Di Lollo of the Association for Neighborhood Housing Development.



New board member Marilyn Bowie.



Tenant lawyer Seth Miller. Below is organizer Craig Willfe of the West Side SRO Project.



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 (212) 824-4328 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 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!

Tenants Demand: End Rocky's Horror, Repeal Urstadt Law



A young Nelson Rockefeller. The evil he was yet to do lives on after him.

Tenants and organizations around the city are increasing the demand for a repeal of the 1971 Rockefeller "Urstadt Law," which deprives New York City of home rule over rent regulation. The law prohibits local governments from enacting more "stringent or restrictive" rent regulations than those contained in state law, or from placing apartments currently exempt from regulation under control.

Named after Charles Urstadt, Gov. Nelson Rockefeller's housing commissioner, the "Urstadt Law" is chapter 372 of the Laws of 1971. Chapter 371 was Rockefeller's vacancy-decontrol provision, which led to the deregulation of over 400,000 apartments in three years until it was repealed by the Emergency Tenant Protection Act in 1974.

For the next 20 years, under Democratic govern-

nors Hugh Carey and Mario Cuomo, rent regulations were subject to steady erosion and underenforcement, as the housing crisis got worse and worse. But it was not until the inauguration of George Pataki in 1995 that the specter of complete decontrol again reared its ugly head—in the person of none other than Pataki's transition aide Charles Urstadt, still a major player in the New York real-estate industry.

Home Rule Is a Human Right

It is no exaggeration to describe repeal of Urstadt as a human-rights issue.

Far too many New Yorkers live in apartments with hazardous conditions and unaffordable rents. Half of all families of color in New York City pay more than 50% of their income in rent, according to figures released by the Public Advocate Mark Green, and

By **Kenny Schaeffer**

their are 3,000,000 housing-code violations recorded against owners of multiple dwellings in NYC. The prohibition against New York City's elected government dealing with what even the state legislature acknowledges to be a threat to "life, health and safety" (Rent Regulation Reform Act of 1997) is a denial of the basic right of self-government.

Rocky Horrors

While Rockefeller's vacancy decontrol lasted only three years from 1971-1974, it set off an inflationary explosion in rents that has not stopped to this day. If we want to avoid facing it again when rent controls expire in 2003, repeal of the Urstadt Law must be high on the agenda of the tenant movement.

So long as Joe Bruno and his Republican colleagues—whose only con-

nection to the city is the millions of dollars in contributions they take from its landlords—control the State Senate, repeal of the Urstadt Law is a daunting task. This makes defeat of the Republican majority in 2002 a top priority. In the meantime, the issue must be raised because the Bruno majority rests on downstate Republicans from districts with many regulated tenants. Last year, the Assembly passed Brooklyn Democrat Vito Lopez's repeal measure, but Frank Padavan of Queens, the Republican senate sponsor, did nothing to get it taken seriously in that chamber.

Let My People Go

The key arena for the repeal Urstadt campaign at this time is, ironically, the City Council. Numerous Councilmembers, including Steve DiBrienza, Margarita Lopez, Ronnie

Eldridge, Stanley Michels and Bill Perkins have called for the enactment of Resolution 801, which would put the Council on record as calling for repeal of Urstadt by the state legislature and restoration of home rule. Without this "home rule message," it is harder to be taken seriously in Albany. Yet Council Speaker Peter Vallone, and his Housing and Buildings Committee chair, Archie Spigner, have thus far refused to allow Reso. 801 to come to a vote, or even a hearing.

Call Met Council at (212) 693-0553 ext.6 to join efforts to get your Councilmember to work for the repeal of the Urstadt Law.

NYC Rent Guidelines Board Adjustments (Order No. 32)

for Rent Stabilized Leases commencing Oct. 1, 2000 through Sept. 30, 2001, including the Pataki vacancy bonuses adopted by the State Legislature on June 19, 1997

The above 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, 2000. 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, 2000. The above guidelines and vacancy bonuses do not apply to an apartment which was rent controlled on that date.

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 new 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 rent history, to charge an illegal rent. The tenant can choose between filing an overcharge complaint with the Division of

Lease Type	Current Legal Rent	One-year Lease	Two-year Lease	
Renewal Leases	more than \$500	4%	6%	
	\$500 or less (Rents that are \$215 or less brought up to \$215 after increases applied)	4% plus \$15	6% plus \$15	
Vacancy leases	More than \$500	Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	18%	20%
		No vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 18%	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20%
	Less than \$300	Vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	18% plus \$100	20% plus \$100
		No vacancy allowance charged within last 8 years	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 18% 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	18% 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 18%, or \$100, whichever is greater	0.6% times number of years since last vacancy allowance, plus 20%, or \$100, whichever is greater

cent for a one-year lease and 5 percent for two years. No vacancy allowance is permitted on vacant lofts.

Hotels and SROs

The guideline is 2 percent 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), above the legal rent paid on September 30, 2000. No vacancy allowance is permitted. The guideline is not collectible unless 70% or more of the units in the building are occupied by permanent rent stabilized or controlled tenants paying legal regulated rents. Further, no increase is allowed when the landlord has failed to provide the new occupant a copy of the Rights and Duties of Hotel Owners and Tenants.

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.

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.

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 32, it is HUD Fair Market Rent or 150% above the maximum base rent. 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 \$20,000 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 waived. Obtain the SCRIE application form by calling (212) 442-1000.

Loft Units

Legalized loft unit increases above the base rent are 3 per-

L.E.S. Residents Protest Houston St. Tower

By Colin Moynihan

A plan to build a 23-story residential tower on the site of a parking lot on East Houston Street between Essex and Ludlow streets will obscure the skyline and price many residents out of the area, local opponents say.

On July 18, the owner of the lot, Edison Properties, requested a zoning variance for the project. Under current zoning rules, only commercial buildings can be built on the lot, and only at a maximum height of 19 stories.

A spokesman for Edison Properties, Douglas Sarini, defended the proposed tower. "There is a need for housing, and we think the building we want will improve the area," he said.

But many neighborhood residents view the plan differently. At a meeting of the Ludlow Block Association on Nov. 1, opponents complained that the building, which would be the tallest in a zoning district that covers approximately 45 blocks, would mar the skyline and hasten gentrification.

For example, the critics note, the building would have 266 apartments—75% of which would rent for \$45 a square foot [or \$1,125 a month for a 300-square-foot studio—ed.]. "Most of the people who live in this neighborhood won't be able to afford to live there," said Clayton Patterson, a longtime resident active in local affairs. "This building doesn't accommodate the needs of the neighborhood."

A week after the meeting, [Met Council member] Susan Howard outlined many objections to the plan in a letter to the city Board of Standards and Appeals. Among other things, she said, the tower will mean the loss of more than 100 parking spaces, and its shadow "will darken the children's playground and trees of P.S. 20."

Sarini conceded that parking spaces will be lost, but said the tower will cast shade on the playground only one month a year.

As she leafed through an environmental assessment that had been prepared for Edison Properties, Howard still saw the plan as a bad idea. When hundreds of high-income tenants move into a low-income area, she said, commercial rents, which are unregulated, inevitably rise.

"Developments are supposed to improve the neighborhood," she said. "But they often end up leading to the eviction of small businesses in the community."

This article originally appeared in the New York Times. Reprinted with permission of the author.

There will be a second public hearing at the Board of Standards and Appeals (40 Rector St.) on Dec. 19, starting at 2 p.m. The project will go back before Community Board 3 at their next full board meeting, also scheduled for Dec. 19, at 6:30 p.m., at P.S. 20, Essex and Houston streets.

finer. The rat population was well under control. But in 1981, President Ronald Reagan cut federal aid to cities, and mayors from Edward Koch to Rudolph Giuliani reduced the Department of Health's allocation for pest control from \$18 million in the '70s to \$5 million in fiscal 1999. (Last year, an increase brought the budget to \$13 million.)

Randy Depree, who ran the city's nationally successful pest-control program for 25 years, says it has been underfunded in recent years. The result, he adds, is that rats have now escaped the "defined border" areas where they were permitted to live (the South Bronx, Central Brooklyn and other poor, communities of color), creating the political agitation that will get control programs expanded. While Deputy Mayor Joseph Lhota, the city's rat czar, and Public Advocate Mark Green debated the level of government intervention that was necessary, conference speakers were unanimous on the need for a consolidated, powerful, program with the ability to target violators and collect fines.

Speakers also pushed the need to go back to metal garbage cans, with plastic bags inside them to prevent the spread of bad smells and loose garbage, and make the garbage easier to collect. (What New Yorker can forget the old 4 AM garbage symphony—the metal

Due to an order from the Office of Court administration in September, the "HP Part" of Housing Court, where tenants can start cases against their landlords and get immediate city inspections when there are hazardous conditions such as no heat, rats, lead paint or defective ceilings, floors or windows, has been cut down to 3 days a week in Manhattan and 2 days a week in Queens. Part of the resistance to this denial of due process and equal protection is documenting the impact it has on real families. Please circulate the letter below. Any completed forms can be sent to Met Council, 64 Fulton Street, Room 401, New York NY 10038, or directly to Hon. Fern Fisher Brandveen at the address indicated.

Hon. Justice Fern Fischer-Brandveen
Civil Court of the City of New York
111 Centre Street, New York, NY 10013

Dear Justice Fischer-Brandveen,

(Date)

I experienced the following problems with my HP action:

I tried to start an HP case on a day when the HP Part was closed, and there were serious delays or problems.

I was turned away from starting an HP case on a day when the HP Part was closed.

When I started an HP case for emergency conditions (heat, hot water, no gas, etc.), I was not offered an early return date to court based on these conditions.

I started my HP case on _____ (date) and had to wait for my return date until _____ (date).

I was in court at 9:30am and because there were so many cases, I was unable to speak to an HPD attorney until _____ am/pm.

I was in court at 9:30am and I wanted to speak with the Judge and had to wait until _____ am/pm; or (check) I was not able to speak to the Judge at all.

Other problems I have faced include:

My experience with HP actions has been frustrating. I would have a hard time using this process again, or recommending it to other tenants who have repair problems.

Sincerely,

Sign Name

Print Name, Address, Phone

Please mail this form to the above address.

Rats

continued from page 1

buildings put out trash in plastic bags is nothing short of holding a nightly banquet for the city's rat population. He emphasized repeatedly that short-term poisoning campaigns don't work—in fact, massive rat poisonings simply reduce the population temporarily, eliminating competition and spurring the rats' reproductive cycles. Six months afterwards, he said, the numbers of rats will be higher than before the poisoning campaign. The effective ways to manage the rat population, he told the conference, are the old tried and true methods of eliminating the rats' food, water, and living areas.

Speakers repeatedly noted that the rat resurgence is relatively recent, following the budget cuts of the last 25 years. Many pointed out that in the 1970s New York City had the best rat-control program in the country. In fact, from World War II to the early 1980s, the federal government had a special office within the Centers for Disease Control to promote urban rat programs, and New York's was the model for the country. Restaurant owners and landlords were required to dispose of garbage properly and to keep sidewalks and basements in good repair (no cracks)—or they were

cans scraped over the sidewalk to the truck, thrown into the truck, banged against the side of the truck, and then bounced back onto the sidewalk.)

Noticeably absent from the conference was landlord or management representation. As readers of *Tenant/Inquilino* know, opposition from the owners/developers community on these issues is a serious hurdle. Three pieces of legislation are currently pending in the City Council which would address the problem: Intro 677, which would require privately contracted construction sites to be kept clean and baited with rat poison or traps; Intro 823, which would require that garbage be stored and put out for collection in bags and then in metal or heavy,

rat-proof containers; and Resolution 1496, which would call upon the Department of Health to start testing for and tracking rat-borne diseases.

For more information on how to handle a rat problem, or how to handle garbage, call the following:

West Harlem Environmental Action (WEACT) at (212) 961-1000 has informative, easy-to-understand fact sheets on the dangers of rats and of rat poisons, with suggestions on how to control the pests without harming children and pets.

To call in a general complaint about rat sightings, call the Department of Health at (212) 442-9666.

Met Council Volunteer Working Group Help Build Met Council!

Met Council holds open-house volunteer nights twice a month at our Fulton St. office. These meetings are task-oriented, focusing on the political work of Met Council via phone banking, mailings and letter-writing campaigns. At the same time, we hope to provide an informal forum for the exchange of ideas.

This will NOT be a housing clinic. If you have a housing problem and want to get counseled in person, visit the clinics listed on the back of this newspaper.

We meet the **first and third Tuesday of every month** from 6-8:30 p.m. (except January 2).

Met Council is located at: 64 Fulton Street, Room 401, Buzzer #9
For more information call (212) 693-0553 x 6.

RGB Rally

continued from page 1

"The real-estate industry has relied on the mayor's appointment of RGB members who are hostile to the very concept of rent regulations, to avoid the letter and spirit of the law by imposing unjustified increases year after year," declared Met Council director Jenny Laurie. "Instead of keeping rents affordable for New Yorkers, the RGB keeps jacking rents up. This has to stop. A good first step is to take exclusive control away from the mayor and give approval power to the more representative City Council."

Double Talk

Council Speaker Peter Vallone, whose iron-fisted control of the Council will end next year due to term limits, has sent contradictory messages regarding his position on the proposal for a more diverse and representative RGB, as he tries to appeal simultaneously for tenant votes and real-estate campaign contributions for his probable mayoral run. According to Met Council member and longtime activist Clare Dockery, who questioned candidates about housing policy at a November 16 mayoral forum at Community Free Democrats, the largest reform Democratic club on Manhattan's Upper West Side, Vallone claimed to support the measure but expressed an opinion that it is "not in the Council's power." That position is rejected by numerous experts in the field, as the Council clearly has jurisdiction to amend the city administrative code.

Vallone's strategy of trying to please both tenants and landlords does not appear to be bearing fruit. A NY-1 poll released on December 1 showed him running fifth among likely mayoral candidates with only 9% of the prospec-

tive vote, behind Public Advocate Mark Green with 23%, Bronx Borough President Freddy Ferrer with 13%, city Comptroller Alan Hevesi with 12% and social activist the Rev. Al Sharpton with 11%; 31% were unsure.

"Tenants are too intelligent to be fooled by a candidate who pretends to understand and support our problems, yet uses his power to block our proposals," says Jenny Laurie. "If Peter Vallone wants to improve his numbers, he will have to deliver. He cannot avoid responsibility by hiding behind a dubious argument that the Council lacks power to do this. Let the landlords make that argument if they want. As Speaker of the City Council, it is Peter Vallone's responsibility to fight for New Yorkers."

To make sure tenants' voices are heard, Met Council has called a rally at City Hall from 11 a.m. to

2 p.m. on December 19, to coincide with the City Council meeting where the measure is expected to be introduced. This follows an overnight vigil at Gracie Mansion on June 13 prior to the RGB's last vote, and a protest at City Hall on October 1-2 as the current guidelines went into effect.

December 19 rally, call Met Council organizer Dave Powell, (212) 693-0553 ext.6.



For more information on the RGB and the fight to keep rents affordable, and to help build the

Attention All On-line!

If you have an e-mail address, join the **Met Council "ACTIVE! list."** We'll send you alerts about demonstrations, hearings and other activities. Simply send us a message, subject heading "subscribe", to: active@metcouncil.net

New Complaint Numbers

The Department of Housing, Preservation and Development (HPD) has changed its Central Complaints hotline. The new number is:
(212) 824-4328

The Department of Buildings has also condensed its borough phone numbers into one complaints line. The new number is:
(212) 227-7000

City Limits

New York's Urban Affairs News Magazine

Organizing Development Housing Community Action
Insight into the politics of poverty, race and urban economics

10 issues a year \$25 (212)479-3344 120 Wall Street, 20th flr.
Two years for \$35 New York, NY 10005

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

LOWER EAST SIDE

Cooper Square Committee
61 E. 4th St. (btwn. 2nd Ave. & Bowery)
Tuesdays 6:30 pm
Closed August, reopens September 5.

BENSONHURST TENANT COUNCIL
1708 West 10th St., Brooklyn, 718-372-2413
Monday-Thursday 10 am-5 pm
Call for appointment.

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)
525 E. 6th St. (btwn. Aves. A & 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 8:00 pm

LOWER MANHATTAN

LOFT TENANTS
St. Margaret's House, Pearl & Fulton Sts., 212-539-3538
Wednesdays 5 pm-7 pm

VILLAGE INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

26 Perry St. (basement), 212-741-2994
Wednesdays 6 pm-7:30 pm

WEST SIDE TENANTS UNION

200 W. 72nd St. Room 63; 212-595-1274
Tuesday & Thursday 2-5 pm
Tuesday and Wednesday ... 6-7:45 pm



E-mail Met Council
metcouncil@aol.com

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL ON HOUSING

Met Council is a citywide tenant union.

Our phones are open to the public
Mondays and Wednesdays from 1:30 to 5:00 p.m.

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

212-693-0550

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 212-693-0553 for information.

My apartment is 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 _____

Send your check or money order with this form to:
Metropolitan Council on Housing, 64 Fulton St., Rm. 401, NY, NY 10038