

Mon, 10 Aug 2009 15:50:59 -0400 (EDT)
From: Rachel Rachlin <rachel@metcouncil.net>
Reply-To: rachel@metcouncil.net
Subject: Can Tenants Take The August Heat?

The Latest from Albany

On Thursday, August 6, the New York State Senate convened to pass an extension of mayoral control over the New York City schools - the first so-called "controversial" piece of legislation that the Senate has taken up since the June 8 coup by Pedro Espada and the Senate Republicans. There has been no vote on any of our pro-tenant bills yet, and promises by Senate Democrats to pass these bills this session are still unfulfilled.

Our Senators will return to Albany in September, primarily to vote on reducing state spending by \$2 billion. With budget cuts of this magnitude, social services are sure to take a major hit. Many politicians emphasize new affordable housing construction as a solution to our housing crisis while ignoring the rapid loss of our regulated housing stock owing to vacancy decontrol and other weakening provisions in the rent laws. Apart from the fact that it would be impossible to build our way out of the affordability crisis, new affordable housing construction requires massive subsidies, and our state government does not have such resources available. Strengthening our rent laws is one measure that senators can take to provide relief to struggling New Yorkers at no cost.

When the Senate reconvenes in September, we will be there to pressure our Democratic leaders to follow through with decades-long promises to restore provisions of the rent laws that were weakened under Republican control.

Join the Met Council members who have already pledged to come to Albany in the fall. To let us know that you want to participate in our next lobbying trips, contact Mario at: mario@metcouncil.net

Tenant Rights Upheld In Court

This week, a Manhattan judge ruled that an amendment to New York City's Human Rights Law obligates landlords to accept section 8 housing and other federal subsidies for units that are already rent stabilized and for those tenants who moved in after the law was already enacted. The case was brought on behalf of a group of tenants whose landlords refused to accept their payments when they tried to use Government vouchers to pay their rent.

Update: Governor Signs Tenant Protection Bill

Governor David A. Paterson has signed a bill (S. 3847-A/ A. 6017-A) that would require Housing Court judges to "fully describe" the terms of stipulations to landlords or tenants who do not have a lawyer.

The bill has passed the Assembly numerous times since Assembly Member Richard N. Gottfried first introduced it, but not the State Senate. This year, with the backing of Senator Liz Krueger and the Senate's new Democratic majority, the bill passed both houses.

Tenant-landlord disputes are usually settled with an agreement called a "stipulation," which can be either oral or written. However, often these stipulations are technical and confusing for tenants or landlords who do not have a lawyer. This can leave an unrepresented party without a clear understanding of his or her rights and responsibilities.

Typically, a stipulation may include rent payment schedules, requirements for a landlord to make repairs, requirements for a tenant to correct certain conditions, etc. Violating these terms can result in a court judgment, including eviction of a tenant from his or her home. Stipulations are often spoken quickly, in legal terminology, and with little explanation. A landlord or tenant who is confused, frightened, or angry, or who may have difficulty with English, will not understand his or her rights or obligations and will not understand what he or she must do to comply.

Judges will have to comply with the new law starting Monday, September 28.

Housing Notebook

Scott Sommer and Vajra Kilgour will be hosting a fundraising special on Housing Notebook this Monday from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. Please tune in and give generously to help keep Housing Notebook on the air!

Volunteers are needed in the telephone pledge room, particularly during the evening. To volunteer, please call 212-209-2950.

Housing Notebook, produced by Met Council, normally airs Mondays on WBAI, 99.5 FM, from 8:00 to 9:00 pm in the New York metropolitan area, and on the World Wide Web at www.wbai.org.

Programs are archived for 90 days at www.archive.wbai.org.

News You May Have Missed

Mobile Home Residents Rally to Fight Eviction

Dana Patton doesn't know what to do. She lives at the Tampa Sun Mobile home park with her five kids. But Wednesday management handed out a letter telling everyone here to be out by Friday. "The letter just says sincerely corporate, it's like telling us OK get out."

Court Upholds City's Tenant Protection Act

A justice in State Supreme Court has upheld the legality of New York City's tenant antiharassment law, which for the first time gave renters the right to sue their landlords in Housing Court for using threats or other disruptive tactics to try to force them out.

U.S.: Homeless "Tent City" in Harlem Ends in Arrests

New York City police arrested 10 people who refused to leave a vacant lot in a demonstration for homeless people's rights in East Harlem on Thursday. Early in the day, dozens of homeless people had occupied the lot, which is currently not being used, setting up tents and a makeshift kitchen.

Error Nearly Evicted NYC Public Housing Residents

A rent-calculation error at the New York City Housing Authority has threatened hundreds of families with eviction. Families whose sole income is public assistance were overcharged between \$50 and \$200 a month.

ACTION ALERT!

Wednesday August 12, 7pm: Mitchell-Lama Tenants Protest 93% Rent Increase

On Wednesday, Aug. 12 at 7pm at the Louis H. Pink Senior Citizen Center, 2707 Linden Blvd. between Autumn Ave. & Eldert Lane, **tenants will be rallying to protest a recent 93% rent increase at Linden Plaza**, a pre-1974 Mitchell-Lama rental with 1500 units.

Wednesday August 19, 2pm: Rally For Affordable Housing

Join Habitat for Humanity NYC, the Interfaith Assembly, East Side Congregations for Housing Justice, Housing First!, Housing Here and Now, Tenants and Neighbors, Supportive Housing Network of New York, Pratt Area Community Council, and Others at a **Rally at City Hall on Wednesday, August 19th at 2 p.m. (arrive at 1:45)** calling upon New York State to make a substantial commitment of funds for the preservation and creation of more affordable housing.

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF MET COUNCIL?

Join Met Council today and add your voice to the fight for affordable housing!

With a one year membership pledge, you'll receive a free subscription to our monthly publication Tenant/Inquilino.

Go to: <http://www.metcouncil.net/join.htm> to become a member and learn more about all the important work of Met Council.

MET COUNCIL IN THE PRESS

July 2009 Gotham Gazzett: Unlocking the Apartment 'Warehouse'

TENANT HOTLINE: MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, & FRIDAY

Call Met Council's tenant hotline at 212-979-0611 between 1:30 and 5:00 pm on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for brief answers to questions about your rights as a tenant, help in organizing a tenant association in your building or complex, or referrals to further assistance.

TUESDAY HOUSING CLINIC

The Met Council's Housing Clinic is closed for the month of August.

In Solidarity,

Rachel Rachlin

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