

The Park West Tenant

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The Newsletter of the Park West Village Tenants' Association

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PWVTA MEMBERSHIP MEETING PACKS-IN TENANTS, CONDO OWNERS, NEIGHBORS

On Tuesday, November 15, the PWVTA membership meeting was held at P.S. 163. About 400 Park West Village residents and other members of the community attended. The auditorium was filled to capacity. Assemblymember Danny O'Donnell, Manhattan Borough President-elect Scott Stringer, representatives of Councilmember-elect Melissa Mark-Viverito and Community Board 7 were scheduled to speak.

Art Goldstein opened the meeting and proposed dues of \$40 for 2006, which was approved by vote of the members. He introduced President Vivian Dee who thanked Florence Wagener (784), Evelyn Poole (392) and Art Goldstein (788) for organizing the meeting. She reported on the highlights of activities for 2005 (see THE YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS column right).

O'DONNELL & STRINGER ADDRESS NEIGHBORHOOD'S FUTURE

The end of the president's report marked the beginning of the meat of the evening's discussion: what type of development is being planned in our community?

Vice President Francine Brewer introduced the featured speakers, beginning with our Assemblymember Daniel O'Donnell. He began by stating, "We have a lot of work to do!"

As soon as O'Donnell learned that all of the businesses on Columbus and Amsterdam between 97th and 100th Streets had been served with eviction notices he did two things. He began a petition campaign to keep our local businesses open (these petitions are still available for signing in the Central Park Café and the Indian restaurant). His office will be presenting the

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AN APPRECIATION OF PARK WEST VILLAGE

Our red brick towers with their cantilevered balconies are elegant examples of the International Style. Built in the mid-20th century, they are sisters in spirit and quality to the Seagram Building, Lever House and the United Nations, all acclaimed buildings in midtown.

The seven towers form a horseshoe that reaches its arms across Columbus Avenue all the way to Central Park. Indeed Park West Village, with its open spaces and plantings, feels like a part of the Park ~ an optimistic and unique arrangement of architecture and land that should be cherished. That it exists at all in an increasingly cramped Manhattan is a wonder.

THE YEAR'S HIGHLIGHTS

President Dee said the 4th Annual Flea Market was a great success. Over 400 tenants in the Columbus Avenue buildings received rebate checks as a result of the \$100,000 paid to PWVTA by PWV Acquisition as part of a settlement of appeals for the windows MCI and decrease in services complaints filed with DHCR.

PWVTA attorneys submitted to DHCR our response to the latest MCI application filed by the owners for the elevators, roofs, water tanks and boilers in the Columbus Avenue buildings. The response included a report from engineers hired by the Association to evaluate the work done, as well as the result of the tenant questionnaire.

For the past five years, the PWVTA has been helping tenants – who moved into renovated apartments – file rent overcharge complaints. More than 25 cases have been resolved. Those tenants had their rents rolled back, many received treble damages, and their apartments were returned to rent-stabilization. There are still a dozen cases pending, and the PWVTA is actively helping more tenants file rent overcharge complaints.

The president pointed out one especially remarkable thing: even though Park West Village has been losing rent-stabilized apartments in both the rental and condo buildings, current PWVTA membership exceeds that of last year. This means many new tenants are supporting the work of the PWVTA. In addition, many long-term tenants have joined for the first time.

Dear Neighbors,

On November 19, 2005, our neighbor Piedad ("Alicia") Andermarch and her son Josh were burned out of their apartment at 788 Columbus Ave. while they were out. The Andermarches have lost everything.

During this season of gratitude for our lives and families, we are asking for monetary contributions for our neighbor. This accident could happen to any of us. We hope you can make a contribution. Checks should be payable to Piedad Andermarch. You can bring or mail your contribution to Lois Hoffmann (10-A), Carol Stanczak (5-N) or Vivian Dee (8-0), 788 Columbus Ave.

Alicia and Josh appreciate your generosity, and wish to thank all the wonderful neighbors who have already contributed.

ATTORNEYS! If you live in PWV and have expertise in development, land use and zoning, please volunteer your services. Call the PWVTA hotline: 212-662-2610.

petitions to the landlord – the overwhelming sentiment being, “We don’t want blight on our Avenues!” Then he wrote a letter to PWV Acquisition stating that there had not been an adequate amount of information provided to PWV residents about the owners’ development plans. PWV Acquisition wrote to O’Donnell stating that they planned to build a 350,000 square-foot building on the property. For comparison, each Columbus Avenue building is 257,760 square feet.

O’Donnell encouraged the tenants and condo owners of Park West Village to work together. “On 90% of the issues, you’ll agree. In the long term we want to find out if they are allowed to build. What do they want to build, and where?” He assured everyone at the meeting that he is concerned and that he is working on this issue. “This issue is discussed every day in my office!”

The next speaker was Manhattan Borough President-elect Scott Stringer. “Twenty to thirty years ago this neighborhood was not a place people wanted to move to. Twenty years later we have transformed the neighborhood”.

As a strong advocate of affordable housing, Stringer said that he will work closely with Danny O’Donnell’s office on this issue. There is a land use office in the Borough President’s office that he says will be proactive. “We have experts that know about long-range community planning. They will go to the developers and say, ‘This is what we want for this neighborhood.’ It is important that we negotiate from a position of strength. It is important that we know and understand the zoning and planning in our neighborhoods. It is important to down-zone so that developers can’t put up monstrosities in our neighborhoods.”

Stringer believes that zoning and land-use is the key to maintaining diversity in our city. “Middle income and working people are being pushed out of the city. We need to say to the developers that you can’t build without including the community.”

Cathy Unsino, a resident of 372 CPW, brought greetings and words of support from Councilmember-elect Mellisa Mark-Viverito. Sheldon Fine and Ethel Sheffer, representatives from Community Board 7, reported that the Community Board is forming a task force to analyze conditions in the area from 96th Street to 110th Street, from Central Park West to Riverside Drive.

President Vivian Dee closed the meeting by telling everyone that the PWVTA is forming a coalition group of PWV tenants, condo owners, and other members of the community.

All in all, it was an incredibly rousing evening. It was filled not so much with answers, but posed the questions that need to be asked in the effort to preserve the quality of our neighborhood, and to make sure we have a voice in whatever future plans are being drawn for our community.

PLAYING WITH THE PLAYGROUNDS

Within the next few weeks, the DHCR will invite Management and PWVTA representatives to a settlement/mediation session to resolve tenants’ long-standing complaints about the Columbus Avenue playgrounds. The session was initiated by the PWVTA pursuant to the procedural steps set forth in the Comprehensive Agreement between management and the PWVTA dated October 1, 2004.

To say that these three playgrounds at PWV are not “state of the art” is an understatement. They are in a state of disrepair and, more importantly, are unsafe. They represent an accident waiting to happen to the children who climb the monkey bars, use the swings or ride the see-saws, all bolted onto hard asphalt pavement.



After repeated requests for repairs, management finally made a proposal about the playgrounds. They offered to build a “state of the art” playground at one location that management would choose, provided the tenants give up any rights they may have to the remaining two playground locations. It has been suggested that management’s offer may be connected with possible future development at Park West Village.

The executive board of the PWVTA discussed management’s proposal, unanimously rejected it and initiated the procedures required by the Comprehensive Agreement to bring the matter before the DHCR.

HEATING SEASON

Heat must be supplied to tenants in multiple dwellings from October 1st to May 31st if:

- a) the outdoor temperature falls below 55 degrees between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. Each apartment must be heated to a temperature of at least 68 degrees.
- b) the outdoor temperature falls below 40 degrees between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. Each apartment must be heated to a temperature of at least 55 degrees.



To report a violation of this law, call the City’s central complaint number 311 (24 hours/day).

Produced by the PWVTA Communications Committee.
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Season’s Greetings and a Happy New Year!