

THE VOICE

COALITION OF MOBILEHOME OWNERS

MARCH 2007 VOLUME 3 ISSUE 3

(CLEAR LAKE) MOBILE PARK'S RENTS GOING UP BY 40 PER CENT

Rene Morales Lake County Record-Bee 01/31/2007

Westwind Mobile Park homeowners received notice this week that the park they rent space from had been sold. In a three-page letter, Resident Owned Park Inc. (ROP) informed the homeowners that they have entered into a purchase contract and plan to close escrow by mid-February 2007.

According to its Web site, ROP is a California nonprofit housing corporation based in Sacramento. Its main purpose is to purchase and manage mobilehome parks to preserve affordable housing.

So why are residents concerned? According to residents of Westwind, the rent for each space in the park will be \$730. Right now, space rent ranges from \$480 to \$525. The resulting increase is almost 40 percent.

Approximately 12 residents gathered Tuesday, Jan. 23, in front of park resident Betty Martin's home to discuss the rent increase. According to them, approximately one-third of the residents in the park are on fixed incomes and cannot afford the increase.

Residents expressed concern that they may lose their homes. "We feel powerless right now," said Martin. "Where will we go?"

According to the notice, the rental increase is necessary to pay for the "debt service, operation and maintenance of the park." The notice included provisions that entail a 30-year transferable lease option for residents. After the rent increase is set, future increases will be no more than 3 percent per year.

According to the notice, "This restriction and limitation is more beneficial than some mobile home rent control ordinances offered by some cities and counties." If the new owners exercise their rights to implement a 3 percent increase every year for the next five years, space rent will be \$846.27 per month. In 10 years, this amount will increase to \$981.05 per month.

According to Social Security, nearly one-third of the retiree population receives their income from this source. Its Web site states that the average maximum monthly award for this benefit is \$1,007. Beginning in January, Social Security benefits increased 3.3 percent. The government calculates the annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) each year based on inflation in the overall economy. But inflation for seniors has been higher than that for the overall population in recent years, in large part because health care costs account for a bigger portion of seniors' expenses.

"We are at the mercy of the park owners," said Anita Sombs of the local Mobile Home Task Force. "We are barely making ends meet as it is." Rising park rent costs leave homeowners with limited options. According to residents, most of their homes are unsellable. (Continued on Page 3, Clear Lake)

MARCH 2007

We welcome our new members from Novato, Clear Lake, Long Beach, Modesto and other areas around the state. Our family is growing faster than any other advocacy group in the state of California. We now have members in about 350 parks and a growing network of active individuals and groups. Remember, CoMO-CAL is YOUR organization. You are our eyes and ears. Park owners can no longer keep their shenanigans secret.

Several members have called and praised us for the February edition of THE VOICE. We appreciate your support!

This month issues in Clear Lake, located north-east of San Francisco, have gotten our attention. Residents are working to get a rent stabilization / conversion ordinance. Also Resident Owned Parks, Inc. has created quite a stir by purchasing Westwind, a move that has outraged residents. Maurice Priest of ROP, Inc. claims the purchase benefits residents, but the residents are not believing that!

The California Property Owners Protection Act now has a title and summary (see Page 3). Initiative # 06-0039 is even more dangerous than last year's Proposition 90 because it WILL eliminate all rent control through out the state. Please, DO NOT SIGN petitions to get it on the 2008 ballot.

Gene Maddus, writer for the Carson Daily Breeze, continues his series of articles about mobile home issues in Carson. Two parks, Carson Harbor and Colony Cove, are facing condo conversions by park owner Goldstein. Mr. Maddus has published a terrific article "What is a condo-conversion?" and it is reprinted on Page 4-5. Ventura residents are also fighting this new tactic by park owners (Page 7).

A coalition of advocacy groups is working together on new legislation focused on several hot button issues, including condo conversions. Read their proposals on pages 12-13.

Finally we present the following articles: CoMO-CAL "This and That" (Page 14), ROP, Inc. (Page 15), L.A. Mobile Home Park Task Force (Page 16), our members speak out (Page 18) and "Food For Thought" by Donald DeVore (Page 19).

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CoMO-CAL, Inc. is a non-profit organization committed to protecting the rights of mobilehome owners in the state of California. All persons living in a mobilehome are eligible for membership on an equal basis, except management, owners and employees of owners.

THE VOICE is published monthly by the Coalition of Mobilehome Owners—California for the use of its members.
THE VOICE welcomes articles of interest to mobilehome owners.

INITIATIVE WILL ELIMINATE RENT CONTROL

This initiative, called “The California Property Owners Protection Act”, is not new. In fact it was introduced late in 2005, but never had the financial backing to get onto the November 2006 ballot. You’ve already seen articles about this initiative in THE VOICE (January and February). As of January 22, 2007 the Attorney General prepared a title and summary (see below). We have underlined the part of interest to us: **“Prohibits rent control and similar measures.”** At least this time the real purpose of the initiative is out in the open for you to see (unlike the hidden language in Proposition 90).

Please watch out for those signature gatherers at your neighborhood shopping center. **DO NOT SIGN** their petition! This time we should all know better after experiencing the near passage of Proposition 90. Remember, if this petition gets the required number of signatures, it will be on the ballot in 2008.

January 22, 2007 Initiative No. 06-0039

The Attorney General of California has prepared the following title and summary of the chief purpose and points of the proposed measure:

GOVERNMENT ACQUISITION, REGULATION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY. INITIATIVE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. Amends California Constitution to bar state and local governments from condemning or damaging private property for private uses. **Prohibits rent control and similar measures.** Requires government to compensate private property owners for certain land use, housing, consumer, environmental and workplace regulations. Compensation generally not required for regulation undertaken to preserve public health and safety. Defines “just compensation.” Prohibits deference to government in property rights cases. Condemned private property must be offered for resale to prior owner at current fair market value if, within five years, government abandons proposed condemnation’s objective. Summary of estimate by Legislative Analyst and Director of Finance of fiscal impact on state and local governments: Unknown, potentially major annual governmental costs related to damages or takings of private property. (06-0039.)

(Clear Lake, from Page 1) Most potential buyers are deterred by the homes' age and rising park costs.

The cost to move mobile homes can be as much as \$30,000-\$40,000 per unit. The home's age can actually prevent it from being allowed into another park. Because the home was already in the park before new laws were passed, it may remain there due to it being grandfathered in.

Even if the home could be moved, it is likely that the structure would not fare well in the move.

A Mobile Home Task Force meeting is scheduled for 10 a.m. today, Wednesday, Jan. 31, at the Clearlake Senior/Community Center. For more information, please call Anita Sombs at 263-8736.

Contact Rene Morales at rmorales@record-bee.com.

MORE ON CONDO CONVERSIONS

Condo conversions have become a hot button issue. This month we present several articles (pages 4-9) on this subject. First off, we feel Gene Maddus, Staff Writer for the Carson Daily Breeze, has done a terrific job describing this new tactic used by park owners to get around rent control. Remember, you may feel safe today if you live in a rent control area, but the park owners are always looking for new ways to circumvent the protections you now enjoy. We applaud those Ventura residents who came out on February 6th to support their county supervisors bid to stop condo conversions. And thanks for the efforts of Merle Pitman and his organization Mobile Home Owners Coalition (MHOC). Let's see activity like this in other areas! We need help from our representatives in Sacramento.

JUST WHAT IS A 'CONDO CONVERSION'?

Gene Maddaus, Staff Writer, Carson Daily Breeze

Question. What does it mean to "condo-convert" a mobile home park?

Answer. First, what it doesn't mean: it does not mean razing a mobile home park and building condominiums in its place. Condo conversion is a process whereby a park is subdivided and the spaces are sold off to park residents.

Q. Why do many residents oppose condo-conversion?

A. In many cities, including Carson, space rents are strictly controlled by a city rent control board. Many park residents are on fixed incomes and rely on rent control as they plan their financial futures. When a conversion takes place, city rent control no longer applies.

Q. Can a park owner raise rents as high as he pleases once city rent control is eliminated?

A. No. State law restricts the amount of allowable rent increases after a condo-conversion takes effect. For low income tenants, the owner can raise rents each year by an amount equal to the average of the last four allowed increases or the Consumer Price Index, whichever is lower. For moderate income tenants, the park owner is allowed to increase the rent to market rate in increments over four years. After the four years, there are no controls on rent for moderate-income tenants.

Q. Define low income.

A. A single person who earns less than \$38,800 per year, a couple earning less than \$44,350 per year or a family of three earning less than \$49,900 per year.

Q. What is the difference between rent-controlled rates and market rental rates?

A. Residents of Carson Harbor Village and Colony Cove, which are subject to Carson's rent control ordinance, pay about \$500 and \$400 per month, respectively, in space rent. Residents of Dominguez Hills

Estates in nearby unincorporated Rancho Dominguez, where there is no rent control, pay \$750 to \$800 per month.

Q. That's a big difference.

A. It is, but tenants of rent-controlled parks say it evens out, because they pay a premium up front when they buy a mobile home subject to rent control. Homes at Colony Cove can sell for as much as \$100,000, much more than homes at parks not subject to rent control.

Q. When a conversion takes place, do tenants have to buy their spaces?

A. No. But many residents may decide that it makes more sense to seek financing to buy the space than to wait around for rents to increase sharply. They also will have to pay homeowners' dues to finance maintenance and improvements to common areas.

Q. If they don't like it, why don't they drive their homes away?

A. Most of these homes are mobile in name only. They are large, sometimes with three bedrooms, and most have not been moved since they were installed 30 years ago. It would be economically prohibitive, if not physically impossible, to move them. That's why the mobile home industry is rebranding itself with the term "manufactured homes."

Q. How much does a mobile home space cost?

A. Figures have not been released for Carson Harbor Village or Colony Cove, but residents estimate spaces will cost in excess of \$120,000.

Q. How can a senior citizen whose only property asset is an old mobile home finance a \$120,000 loan?

A. The state and the city are expected to assist with financing, but many seniors do not want to saddle their heirs with debt when they die. Many are likely to move rather than buy.

Q. Who benefits from a condo-conversion?

A. The park owner benefits most directly. Colony Cove residents estimate that the park owner will sell lots at a price as much as three times what he paid for them. On many of the lots that do not sell, he will be allowed to increase rents much more than he would under the city rent control ordinance. Those tenants who choose to buy their lots may benefit from appreciation in the value of their land, but that is speculative.

Q. Can anything be done to stop a condo conversion?

A. Not really. An appellate court ruling severely limited the restrictions that cities can impose on park owners during a conversion. Many residents are lobbying their cities to fight conversions in court, but cities have been reluctant to take on what they see as a losing proposition. The likeliest avenue for relief is a change in state law.

AFTER BATTLING RENT HIKES FOR YEARS, CARSON MOBILE HOME RESIDENTS FEAR THEY'LL BE FORCED TO BUY OR MOVE OUT

.By Gene Maddaus Staff Writer

Although long, this is a terrific article about the condo-conversion taking place at Colony Cove in Carson. Unfortunately we don't have space to present the full article here (anyone wanting a copy please contact CoMO-CAL). Some key points are as follows:

- Park owners have found a technique to break rent control, namely condo conversions.
- Lawsuits between cities and park owners over rent control have been costly to both
- Lawsuits have been hard on park residents, causing stress, fear, etc.
- Condo conversion is a scheme by park owners to "harvest land value."
- A condo conversion allows park owners to get their money out of the park - the land is far more valuable if vacant than if it was a mobile home park
- The state provides rent protections in condo conversions only for the lowest income group. Others who decide not to purchase will see rent increases to "market rent."
- About 30 condo conversions are now under way (I assume in the state of California).
- The first condo conversion by park owner Goldstein freed up enough capital to allow him to purchase Colony Cove Estates (which is now in the condo conversion process) - it's snowballing!
- The City of Carson will lobby Sacramento for a change in the conversion law to require greater resident support or better protection.
 - Park owner groups will fight anything that gives their clients less control over their investments

Dyches Boddiford Slated to Speak at **Mobile Home Millions 5 Investment Conference** on March 2-4th in San Diego, California

The 5th annual Mobile Home Millions conference will bring together the leading experts, investors and mobile home industry professionals from all over the country. Over the course of three days, attendees of the event will have a rare opportunity to learn the techniques used to **make tremendous profits in Mobile Homes and Mobile Home Parks** from some of the foremost experts in the business.

The Mobile Home Millions conference was designed to provide present and future real estate investors with unparalleled educational and networking opportunities in **one of the most profitable real estate asset types, Mobile Homes and Mobile Home Parks**. Now in its fifth year, the event has established a powerful legacy of helping new investors get started in the business and existing investors increase the profitability of their investments.

www.MobileHomeUniversity.com is the leading online website for investing information about the Mobile Home and Mobile Home Park business. It provides practical and step-by-step instructions for real estate investors looking to profit from an often overlooked, yet **highly lucrative asset** class, Mobile Homes and Mobile Home Parks.

COUNTY BACKS CHANGE IN RENT-CONTROL LAW

By Kathleen Wilson, Ventura County Star February 7, 2007

Supervisors vote 3-1, with Foy dissenting, to ask legislators to protect mobile home park residents

Hundreds of seniors turned out Tuesday to support a county supervisor's bid to have the Legislature close what he called a loophole threatening rent control in mobile home parks. In a letter to park residents, Supervisor Steve Bennett said local rent control law becomes "null and void" for all residents once a single lot is sold in park conversions. Most parks rent space to mobile home owners, but growing numbers are seeking to sell the land beneath the coaches as well. Bennett blamed the combination of state law and an appellate court opinion for the unintended result, calling for the Legislature to solve the problem.

Tenants making above the county's low-income threshold could see their rents go up to market rate within four years once a lot is sold, he said. Low-income residents also lose out because their rents will now be controlled under state law rather than local ordinance, he said. **Bennett said the conversions — sometimes call "condo-izing" — may be on the verge of taking hold. "This is really starting to sweep the state," Bennett said.**

In Ventura County, 22 mobile home parks with almost 1,300 coaches lie in unincorporated county territory. Bennett said all are under rent control. Many other parks lie within city limits. Seniors overflowed the Board of Supervisors hearing room in Ventura as Bennett won the board's support. Voting 3-1, the board passed a resolution urging the Legislature to act. Supervisors also directed county lawyers and lobbyists to work for a solution. "The challenge is getting tougher in this county whether you rent or own," county Supervisor Kathy Long said. "New parks are not being built."

In Ventura County, residents of the Ojai Oaks Village mobile home park were recently notified that the owner intends to seek permission to subdivide the park. Park management declined comment Tuesday, but Long said she is concerned the a similar effort is under way at a park in Santa Paula. "Once the word is out there is this loophole, I think you'll see more of this up and down the state," she said. Long said she is looking for a solution that would remove the possibility of losing rent control protections with the sale of just one lot.

Representatives of the mobile home industry asked for calm and a delay. But Supervisors Long and Linda Parks supported Bennett. Supervisor John Flynn was absent and Supervisor Peter Foy dissented. Foy said he was not convinced the move was needed with only 300 parks applying to subdivide out of thousands in the state. He also was concerned about protecting the rights of property owners, he said. "Many probably don't want to sell," he said. "It may not be that much of a deal for the owner."

The move by the board is unusual if not unique in the state, said Henry Herrman, a Santa Monica attorney who works for a law firm representing several park owners. "We have not seen where boards of supervisors or city councils have passed resolutions such as this one encouraging local governments to get with state officials and try to change the legislation," he said.

Tenants of the park applauded Bennett's effort, saying they could not afford to buy or pay market rents. "We're on a limited income," said Connie Johnson, 86, who lives in Ojai Oaks Village with her husband Clifford, 91. "We're happy the way we are."

COALITION TARGETS MOBILE HOME PARKS

By TIM MORAN BEE STAFF WRITER Posted on 01/26/07

A coalition of mobile home owners groups and other organizations is lobbying state legislators to stiffen laws governing mobile home parks. The group includes Neighborhood Friends, the Golden State Manufactured Home Owners League and the California Mobilehome Resource and Action Association. The California NAACP also is involved, according to its legislative advocate, James Sweeney.

Across the state, some mobile home park owners have increased rents rapidly, forcing residents on fixed incomes to sell or walk away from their homes. The group is advocating a range of legislation that includes:

- Prosecuting financial swindles or scams against senior citizens under criminal law rather than civil law. Forcing seniors from their mobile homes with unreasonable rent increases would fall under the proposal.
- Designating manufactured homes as affordable housing under Regional Housing Needs Assessment laws. The designation would preserve the housing for 30 years and make residents eligible for tax credits and housing subsidies, according to Glenn Bell of Sylmar-based Neighborhood Friends.
- Criminally prosecuting businesses that repeatedly violate the California Business and Professions Code. Businesses would be rated from A to F, and those with more than five complaints of damage or injury in a 30-day period or 40 complaints in a year would be subject to prosecution.
- Protecting cities and counties from lawsuits stemming from actions such as rent control ordinances.
- **Allowing mobile home park residents to opt out of forced condominium conversions.**
- Making it more difficult for seniors-only parks to convert to all-age parks.

Bell said the proposals are designed to prevent large corporations owning mobile home parks from ignoring state laws and using lawsuits to intimidate municipalities that pass rent control ordinances.

Stanislaus, cities consider rent control

Stanislaus County's city and county officials are considering a rent control ordinance for mobile home parks, including a cost-sharing formula to defend against such lawsuits. Bell said other municipalities have rescinded rent control measures after expensive litigation — not because they were losing, but because they no longer could afford to defend endless appeals. The coalition has met with state Sen. Alex Padilla, D-Pacoima, and Assemblywoman Sally Lieber, D-San Jose.

Bill Maybee, chief of staff for Padilla, said the senator's office is preparing a bill to address some concerns the coalition raised. "Our remedy may not be the exact remedy they are pursuing," he added. The Padilla bill would address the kinds of costs mobile park owners can pass along to residents, Maybee said. Details of the bill are being worked out, he said. (Continued on Page 9, Condo Conversion)

Condo-conversion legislation planned

Lieber said she would be supporting a bill to establish minimum standards for converting mobile home parks to a condominium format. The tactic lifts rent control laws and is threatening to mobile home residents, she said.

"It really terrifies senior home owners in particular," Lieber said. "It's nearly impossible to relocate to another mobile home park. They experience a loss of equity in their home, and for a lot of seniors, that's the sum total of their life savings."

On the other proposals, Lieber commented, "They raise some good issues. We have to settle on just a few priorities." Mobile home park owners have contended that the problems stem from a couple of large corporations, and that most park owners maintain reasonable rents. Rent control and other laws aimed at the few problem companies punish the entire industry, they argue.

"We are just becoming aware of this new group," said R. Douglas Johnson, regional representative for government and public affairs for the Western Manufactured Housing Communities Association. "If ultimately they develop legislation harmful to our industry, the WMA will vigorously defend against it," Johnson said.

Sweeney, the California NAACP's legislative advocate, said the civil rights group hasn't endorsed any legislation because specific bills have not been written. "Are we interested? Yes. Are we attending the meetings? Yes. Do we think there is abuse? Yes," Sweeney said. "People on fixed income, the frail, the elderly, people of color, inhabit mobile homes. We want to make sure people are treated fairly and within the law."

AARP keeping an eye on issue The California branch of AARP also is watching the coalition, said Charles Mason, associate state director for advocacy. "We are very interested in the issue — more than half of mobile home owners are over 50," Mason said. "We are interested in seeing some kind of reforms," he said, but added that AARP is not endorsing the coalition's proposals. "We will most likely be a part of the coalition if they come up with something we can support," Mason said. "We want to make sure we look at the proposals thoroughly."

Bell said some legislative staffers have told him they are unaware of the issue, despite numerous newspaper articles about mobile home park problems. Bell urged mobile home residents to write local legislators to make them aware of the problems.

Bee staff writer Tim Moran can be reached at 578-2349 or tmoran@modbee.com.

IF YOU HAVE A COMPUTER AND EMAIL

Don't forget, CoMO-CAL has a website: comocal.org. On this site, we have all previous newsletters in an archive, available to all members. Also a message board—take advantage of it. You can get answers to your questions—many members are taking advantage of it.

If you want to be informed, use "Google Alerts." Just enter a topic and Google will send you newspaper articles and other information on the topic. A great way to keep informed.

HOT TOPIC: MOBILE HOME PARK RENT CONTROL—MODESTO

January 30, 2007, February 13, 2007

Stanislaus needs rent control now by RENE PACE Modesto

I purchased a used mobile home in Westgate Village in August 2005, and my space rent was \$385. In April, my space rent went to \$424, and this coming April my space rent will be \$459. If rent increases this much every year, we as mobile home owners will not be able to live here. We won't be able to sell either. Either way, we lose.

Stanislaus supervisors: Please put in now a rent control law. Just another bit of information. I moved here from Solano County and we had rent control there. The rents increased less than \$5 per year, thanks to the supervisors there. It was for increases in water and garbage hikes, so it can be done.

Pace of reform is much too slow by B.J. ELLIOTT Modesto

I recently received a lease from Equity LifeStyle that, if I sign, will not benefit me because they can still raise my rent if they find a reason. If I don't sign, they can raise my rent another 100 percent since I'll be on a month-to-month agreement.

I would like to do some repairs, but I can't because just paying the rent, monthly bills, and utilities takes up all my money. We wait and wait, but nothing happens. While I understand it takes time to do things, we continue to lose people and homes. I may have to look at walking away from my investment, but where do I go? There are no alternatives.

I commend our city and county for looking into this and trying to do something. However, we can't continue at a snail's pace.

Help keep seniors in mobile homes by PAULA BELL Modesto

I do not live in a mobile home park. But I am aware of the hard work certain citizens have been doing the past year to maintain them as low-income housing, especially for senior citizens.

Modesto has very little low-income housing. If the mobile home parks do not keep their rents controlled, it will cost all of us taxpayers when seniors lose their independence and have to go to nursing homes or assisted living facilities at taxpayer expense. This is happening now.

Stanislaus County Mobilehome Owners Advocates have tried to make the Modesto City Council and county supervisors aware of the urgent need for rent control. Rents are being increased and these residents are being forced from their homes.

The public needs to step up and let our City Council members and supervisors know that this cannot be ignored; they need to act on behalf of low-income residents.

Rents below which market rates? By WENDELL MARTIN Denair

At a recent meeting regarding rent control on mobile home parks (["County moving on rent controls,"](#) Jan. 18, Page B-1), R. Douglas Johnson of the Western Manufactured (Continued on Page 11, middle)

NIGHTMARE IN PALMDALE

Janel Corey's life in Boulders I, a mobile home park owned by the City of Palmdale north of Los Angeles, has been a nightmare. Remember in 2005, Jim Ledford, Palmdale's mayor came to a CoMO-CAL recruitment meeting seemingly to disrupt it. The City of Palmdale hired Pacific Newport Management, part of the WMA group, to manage their parks. Needless to say management in Bolders I is typical—harassment, intimidation, etc.

Janel moved into Boulders I in 2003. She was given a 10 year lease by the City of Palmdale. Her rent was fixed for 10 years at \$285.00! Such a deal, right? Well recently Newport Pacific Management has been bombarding Janel with seven day notices, for everything from non-existing weeds to disturbing the neighbors at 2am in the morning. Management even sent out the Palmdale Sheriff.

We speculate that the park wants Janel out because of her terrific lease. Other residents have gotten similar treatment and have left, but not Janel. She contacted the Housing Rights Center in Los Angeles (1-800-477-5977), whose mission is to “actively support and promote freedom of residence through education, advocacy, and litigation, to the end that all persons have the opportunity to secure the housing they desire and can afford, without regard to their race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, familial status, marital status, disability, ancestry, age, source of income or other characteristics protected by law.”

Now that the Housing Rights Center is involved, it appears as if Newport Pacific is backing off. This story is ongoing and we will update it next month. What is the bottom line? Don't give up. Call CoMO-CAL and we can assist. We have other resources. Don't let the park win!

(continued from Page 10, Hot Topic) Housing Communities Association said most of the county parks charge below-market rates. Was he referring to Bay Area markets? He also said that a rent ordinance would force these people to raise rents to market rates. I would like for him to please explain this publicly. Geri Nave of Pacific Diversified said she would have to stop subsidizing some widows if rent controls take place. However, if her rents are reasonable, rent controls should not affect her prices.

If I thought it would be legally possible, I would urge the county to place a \$100-a-month rent limit on Equity LifeStyle Properties and possibly a little higher for a few others who have been charging unreasonable rents, in order to put them in the position similar to where they've put their renters — forced to sell at a very low price or give away their mobile parks. If some were forced to give away their parks, I would like to see ownership go to the renters. However, those who have been charging reasonable rents should have reasonable controls.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Senior Legal Helpline: Free legal advice for seniors over 60. M_F 9-12, 1-4 1-800-222-1753

Housing Rights Center (Los Angeles) 1-800-477-5977

CoMO-CAL: 1-800-929-6061

L.A. Housing Department Handy-Worker Program: 818-407-9944

MHC VS THE LILLIPTIONS

The following has been **fabricated** (it's fiction) for your amusement by the website "MHC vs THE LILLIPTIONS. Remember the Lilliputions (they stood 6" high) from Johnathan Swift's book "Gulliver's Travels." MHC, now ELS, is run by the infamous Sam Zell (billionaire real estate mogul). Zell is the one who increased rents at a mobile home park in Santa Cruz by \$5,000 a month (the city fought it as long as they could, eventually allowing the increase to take effect when homes were sold).

We publish this for two reasons: 1) Some of this "fiction" is very close to the truth and 2) It is happening all over the country. Enjoy!

Dismantle Clubhouse in any way possible. This is a high priority item. Clubhouses pose a serious threat in that they provide the residents with a place to gang up.

Variations include but are not limited to:

- 1. Remove gathering spots like fireplaces.**
- 2. Remove furniture.**
- 3. Remodel kitchen area. Never finish the job.**
- 4. Charge astronomical fees for use of Clubhouse. Call them insurance fees.**
- 5. Require a permit for any alcohol consumption on premises. Blame local ordinances.**
- 6. Lock all previously unlocked doors and require asking for a key from management.**
- 7. Do not allow residents space for clubhouse table.**
- 8. Turn heat down or off altogether. If they want to get warm they can wear more clothes.**
- 9. If Clubhouse "accidentally" burns down, do not replace it.**

If park is age restricted, change that. Allow anyone and everyone to move in to park.

If community is gated or guarded in any way, take it down. We are not in the business of private security.

Raise all fees possible including but not limited to water, garbage, sewer, and septic.

Introduce Draconian leases full of " legalese". These should be at least 40 pages long.

Conduct regular inspections of home-sites. Liberally distribute citations for lease violations. Threaten with eviction.

Suggest in lease that neighbors rat on each other about possible lease violations. Follow up on all tips. Threaten with eviction.

Arrange for regular reassessments of fair market rents. Wear a suit when conducting the survey. Carry a briefcase. Wear sunglasses. Remain aloof and non-communicative.

Increase rents at least but not limited to annually. Insure that rents are higher than anyplace else in town. (Remember they have nowhere else to go and those pesky state laws do not limit the frequency or amount of increases anymore.)

Delay road maintenance whenever possible. Potholes are good for keeping walkers off the streets.

Trim trees and shrubs only when residents demand action. Claim to have an annual maintenance program.

Fire all existing management. Give no reason. Give 48 hours to leave.

Fire local management annually. Give no reason. Allow 48 hours to leave.

If homeowners want something, go out of your way to make sure they do not get it.

Undermine ability to sell homes by undercutting prices and insisting on astronomical rents upon any new sales.

Hijack park newsletter. Allow no unflattering articles regarding park management or maintenance

Finally respond to all requests and inquiries with " *If you don't like it here MOVE!*"

A mouse story

From Bob Lupo, GSMOL 571 President, Huntington Shorecliffs MHP,
Huntington Beach <http://gsmol571.com/>

A mouse looked through the crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife open a package. "What food might this contain?" The mouse wondered - he was devastated to discover it was a mousetrap. Retreating to the farmyard, the mouse proclaimed the warning. "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!" The chicken clucked and scratched, raised her head and said, "Mr. Mouse, I can tell this is a grave concern to you but it is of no consequence to me. I cannot be bothered by it." The mouse turned to the pig and told him, "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!" The pig sympathized, but said, "I am so very sorry, Mr. Mouse, but there is nothing I can do about it but pray. Be assured you are in my prayers." The mouse turned to the cow and said, "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!" The cow said, "Wow, Mr. Mouse. I'm sorry for you, but it's no skin off my nose." So, the mouse returned to the house, head down and dejected, to face the farmer's mousetrap-- alone. That very night a sound was heard throughout the house -- like the sound of a mousetrap catching its prey. The farmer's wife rushed to see what was caught. In the darkness, she did not see it was a venomous snake whose tail the trap had caught. The snake bit the farmer's wife. The farmer rushed her to the hospital and she returned home with a fever. Everyone knows you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard for the soup's main ingredient. But his wife's sickness continued, so friends and neighbors came to sit with her around the clock. To feed them, the farmer butchered the pig. The farmer's wife did not get well; she died. So many people came for her funeral, the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide enough meat for all of them. The mouse looked upon it all from his crack in the wall with great sadness. **So, the next time you hear someone is facing a problem and think it doesn't concern you, remember -- when one of us is threatened, we are all at risk. We are all involved in this journey called life. We must keep an eye out for one another and make an extra effort to encourage one another.**

CoMO-CAL THIS AND THAT

OFFICE STAFF: Please note as of this date, we DO NOT have office staff. This task falls onto Frank Wodley, our President. Tasks such as printing the newsletter, sorting for the post office, keeping records of members and renewals, etc. are now all being done by one person. This is a daunting task. Frank needs your help. So please volunteer some of your time, especially if you live close to Chatsworth.

RENEWALS. This month we are sending renewal notices to everyone whose membership expires prior to April 1, 2007. In some cases you will receive a notice when you have already renewed. Please let us know by calling or emailing. We will correct our records.

RENEWAL DATE: Please check your mailing label—top right corner. This has your renewal information. You can save us lots of time and expense if you renew prior to the expiration date. And save yourself some money (saves us time also) by renewing for three years for \$40.

MEMBERSHIP CARDS: Some members have received membership cards, some have not. We will be sending ALL MEMBERS new cards within a couple months.

LENGTH OF “THE VOICE”: Although the majority welcome 20 pages of information a month, a few feel THE VOICE is too long. If things are happening that affect you as a mobile home owner, CoMO-CAL feels you should know about it. It may be happening to you one day. We have tried shortening the newsletter, without success. We understand you can not possibly read and digest all the information we provide in one sitting, so we suggest you take your time—remember we publish only once a month.

REPRESENTATIVES: Most of you have been with us almost two years and know what we’re about. We’re about communication, networking, and working together. To that end, we seek representatives in areas across our golden state. Volunteering won’t take much of your time, and what better way to give to your friends and neighbors. There is definitely a need for ALL to be informed. Volunteering is simple, just call us at 1-800-929-6061. And thank you!

OAKRIDGE (SYLMAR): We thank our friend Herb Jensen for his support over the last two years. He has helped us distribute THE VOICE in Oakridge, has set up at least four meetings in his park, and has attended many of our meetings in Chatsworth. Unfortunately his health does not allow him to continue. Please, if you are a resident of Sylmar, volunteer to distribute THE VOICE in Herb’s park, Oakridge. It takes only about half an hour a month and CoMO-CAL will be grateful for your efforts.

NEW MEMBERS & THE VOICE: When we receive a new member application and check, we do not have the facilities to send off a welcome letter and membership card. Not yet anyway. Please be patient. THE VOICE is mailed around the middle of each month. Unfortunately if we receive your application after we mail, then you will not receive anything from us for about 45 days. Sorry for the delay.

PASSING OF A FRIEND: We are sad to learn that a friend has passed away. We met Ben Renshaw the summer of 2005. Ben, although blind, stepped up and became part of the active CoMO-CAL group in Lancaster. We have often consulted Ben for advice. We all have lost a good friend in Ben.

WHAT IS ROP, INC?

The following was taken directly from the Resident Owned Parks (ROP, Inc.) website: Their "motto" is "We help people keep housing affordable." (Maurice Priest is the President and a Director of ROP. He is also a paid lobbyist for GSMOL and the corporate counsel for GSMOL.)

HOW DO WE (ROP) GET STARTED?

If you are a mobilehome owner living in a rental park, you should first determine the level of interest among other homeowners to purchase the park. If there is a serious interest among homeowners in your park for a park purchase, then contact ROP by telephone, e-mail or phone for further information. ROP will contact the park owner to advise him of your interest in acquiring the park. ROP representatives can personally meet with your park owner to determine his interest in selling the park, and if so, at what price.

ROP will then determine the cost of available financing and determine the monthly cost to each homeowner if a park purchase was to occur at the park owner's asking price. The ROP approach to park acquisition includes a commitment to communicate with the homeowners in your park, and to answer their questions and address their concerns. If a park purchase occurs, it should be based on clear and open communication between ROP and the homeowners, and not on secrecy and hidden costs.

ROP's presentation and discussion of costs with homeowners, will be realistic. ROP understands that homeowners must be able to rely upon the acquisition costs, as well as the park operation and maintenance costs, as presented by ROP. We will not "low ball" the numbers in order to gain homeowner support for the project.

HOW DO HOMEOWNERS BENEFIT IF THEY USE ROP FOR PARK PURCHASE

1 The monthly space rents they pay to ROP will be applied to the homeowners' purchase of the park. After the 30 year park purchase bonds are paid off, ROP will transfer ownership of the park to the homeowners association, which prior to the transfer shall have obtained its own tax-exempt status...

2 Homeowners are not required to come up with large down payments, or to obtain personal loans in order to purchase the park...

3 By written contract with the homeowners association prior to close of escrow, homeowners will know, in advance, what space rents they will be paying to ROP, and how any rental increases will be calculated...

4 After the payment of the purchase bond each month, and the cost of park operation and maintenance, no longer will excess profits leave the park to benefit a "for profit" park owner, but will be deposited in the Reserve and Maintenance Accounts to be applied to the proper maintenance of park common areas, and where necessary to replace park infrastructure that may have been neglected by the previous park owner...

5 Homeowners will be able to designate homeowner representatives on the park management committee to determine how the park maintenance accounts will be spent, and to prioritize the maintenance projects to be performed in the park; and...

6 Annual financial accountings will be provided to the homeowners

LOS ANGELES MOBILE HOME PARK TASK FORCE by Frank Wodley

I attended the recent MHPTF meeting held in Van Nuys on January 31, 2007. It was clear that the park owner representatives were doing their job as they invited several individuals to come and speak before the Task Force, including Peter Underhill of Equity Life Styles (Sam Zell's group), and an attorney for Palisades Bowl in Pacific Palisades.

Task Force members can introduce agenda items prior to a meeting. I introduced a list of seven items, two of which are as follows:

1. One issue in mobile home parks, that I've suggested for an agenda item, has been continually passed over. That issue is the **parks interference at time of sale**. This has several forms. The park may not accept a qualified buyer. The park may ask a resident to move an older mobile home. The park may ask the resident to upgrade his mobile home before sale. The park may allow the resident to sell his mobile home, but require the buyer to move it. There are more.

2. Valle Verde Courtyard in Chatsworth recently was notified of a request by the park owner of a pass through. The owner has one year to submit and prepare his claim. Residents have only 10 days to organize, research and provide LAHD with a "rebuttal." When Valle Verde residents asked LAHD for information, such as details on any of the items claimed (invoices, areas of the roads asphalted, etc), they were told nothing could be given out until after LAHD had made a decision. The park already is charging residents the full amount of the pass through – about \$20.00 – before any decision was made! The only recourse then is a hearing after a decision has been made. Let's discuss this process.

Unfortunately the issue of "interference of sales" was not really discussed, again. The WMA representatives and park owners were not about to discuss something like this, let alone admit that it does happen. Those "representing" mobile home owners simply said these are "civil matters" to be litigated in court. So much for what their own GUIDE says "the MHPTF is established to provide a forum which allows full discussion of issues in mobilehome parks."

The MHPTF did NOT know an important point about pass throughs. When the \$55 cap is exceeded, the Guide states "then the surcharge period of six years may be extended until the allowable capital improvement expenses are recovered." We have printed this before in THE VOICE: in the case of Indian Hills, Chatsworth, Star Management has been talking with residents about the pending utility upgrade. If the cost for this project were \$2 million, the residents of Indian Hills could be paying \$55 a month for about 11 years plus one to two years for the "surcharge!"

We have been concerned about another issue. Namely, a park forcing a long term lease onto a prospective purchaser. This is another tactic by parks to circumvent rent control. We now learn this issue HAS been addressed in the RSO of several cities which allows a "**prospective purchaser to refuse an exempt lease**." Those cities, located in northern California, were American Canyon, Calistoga, Concord, Contra Costa County, Cotati, Fremont, Petaluma, Rohnert Park, San Mateo Co., (Continued on Page 17, bottom) (MHPTF, Continued from Page 16) Sebastopol, Sonoma County, Union City and Watsonville. The source of this information was "Space Number Information from HCD." (continued on Page 17 MHPTF)

COMMENTARY by Frank Wodley: WHAT IS ROP UP TO?

Isn't ROP supposed to be helping residents in mobile home parks? The residents of Westwind Mobile Home Park in Lower Lake (Clear Lake) don't think so. In late September 2006, a well meaning resident invited ROP to come to Westwind and speak about resident ownership. After the meeting, residents heard nothing from ROP until late January 2007 when ROP, Inc. sent residents a letter explaining that ROP was purchasing their park and rents would increase \$230 a month! All without consulting residents!

Take a look what ROP says: (our) approach to park acquisition includes a commitment to **communicate with the homeowners in your park**, and to answer their questions and address their concerns. If a park purchase occurs, **it should be based on clear and open communication between ROP and the homeowners**, and not on secrecy and hidden costs.

Residents of 41 of the 42 spaces in Westwind are strongly opposed to a purchase by ROP. In recent meetings, residents tried unsuccessfully to find out information about the source of purchase funds and the title company handling the transaction. And they are very concerned that they have NO say in the running of the park.

This is not the first time CoMO-CAL has heard complaints from residents concerning the dealings of ROP. In fact we have heard from residents in parks such as Summit MHP in west San Fernando Valley, Forest Springs in Grass Valley, and a park purchased by ROP in Los Osos (Sunny Oaks Mobile Park 1701 Los Osos Valley Road).

We understand GSMOL is circulating a DVD which promotes ROP. Many GSMOL members and others have wondered why GSMOL promotes ROP and what GSMOL gets from this relationship. And when Maurice Priest is the lobbyist and corporate counsel for GSMOL, doesn't his work in ROP take valuable time away from his duties in GSMOL?

CoMO-CAL suggests you contact us if you are interested in purchasing your park. We can give you several options, all which will ultimately give residents control of their park at the close of escrow, not thirty years in the future.

(continued from Page 16, MHPTF) CoMO-CAL will research this issue with southern California cities.

I feel you need to understand how the MHPTF really works, especially if you are a resident in the City of Los Angeles. They keep NO RECORDS, and NO MINUTES. In my estimation, those sitting as your representatives only lend a legitimacy to this essentially DO NOTHING group. Although their Guide states that your reps are "subject matter experts," this is NOT THE CASE. On the other hand, the three representatives from the WMA ARE subject matter experts. They probably are very highly paid to represent park owners. Do you think this is fair? Let CoMO-CAL know how you feel about the MHPTF! I am torn between staying and leaving. We need to change the MHPTF, but such an effort takes a group of people. Get on board, let's see what we can do!

VENTURA INVESTMENT AT IT AGAIN

Remember when Valle Verde Courtyard residents received 172 seven day notices from Ventura Investment (186 spaces) late Friday before Memorial Day Weekend in 2006. CoMO-CAL immediately got involved and organized the residents. Notices asked residents to paint and clean up their spaces.

Well Ventura Investment Co. is at it again. They are giving out notices in another park they own—Las Brisas Courtyard in Long Beach. CoMO-CAL had a meeting on February 10th with about 15 residents.. Although residents are trying to comply with notices, Ventura isn't responsive and is continuing eviction actions against several residents, including those who are "trouble makers."

CoMO-CAL has suggested everyone getting notices work together and forward all information to attorney Stuart Parker. Also contact their city counsel and their state representatives. And what better time to start a local "coalition" of residents in parks in and around Long Beach.

Residents should also put Ventura Investment Co. on notice that there are several "failure to maintain" issues in the park, including lack of adequate lighting. And the manager is abusive, intimidating and harasses residents.

OUR MEMBERS SPEAK OUT

Ernest Tamminga, Sherwood MHP, Lancaster

Wednesday November 29, 2006

Hi Frank, et al

Your work is much appreciated. Thanks for all you (et al) do on behalf of the folks in Sherwood Mobile-home Park and others., Most "seniors" I know, including myself, are in the "I-just-want-to-live-in-peace-and-quiet" category so it's a challenge to get them motivated to take any action.

Unfortunately there are those who would disturb the quietude of this category, and somebody has to represent the "category." Rough job, but somebody's gotta do it; and I want to thank you-all on behalf of those who remain quiet for representing the "category."

Have a joy-FULL NOW, in Peace And Love, and have a MERRY CHRSTMAS.

January 9, 2006

Enclosed is a \$25.00 check to be applied to whatever cause has top priority as determined by CoMO-CAL. My philosophy is "live and let live, in Peace and Love." Should I find that I cannot practice said philosophy in my present circumstance I would move. I have a brief "life expectancy" and thus have no desire to commit to any cause because, perhaps selfishly, I feel that I won't be around to be affected by the outcome of any actions, legal or otherwise. However I appreciate the efforts by CoMO-CAL on behalf of all tenants living in "moible home parks"

FOOD FOR THOUGHT By Donald DeVore

According to the 14th. Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, Section 1, all persons born in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of the citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person to any person within its jurisdiction the **equal** protection of the laws.

It is my contention that all states are in conflict with this law **because they do not provide the owners of manufactured housing equal rights and protection under the law** that all other property owners have. Therefore, it is my claim that any Mobile Home Landlord/Tenant Act is illegal. All other persons who own property on leased land are regulated by existing Land-lease or Ground- lease laws. The owners of manufactured housing are not regulated by this law..

FINAL THOUGHTS

by Frank Wodley, CoMO-CAL President

CoMO-CAL is unique. We listen to you and we know the value of COMMUNICATION. Wouldn't you think that all mobile home owners in California could benefit from reading THE VOICE? We do! But alas, it is a hard sell getting mobile home owners to join us. Next month we will ask for your opinions on this issue. Why are mobile home owners so reluctant to join? Let's get to the bottom of this issue!

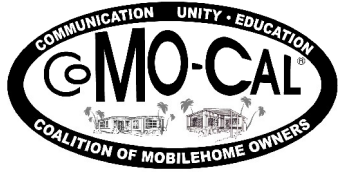
The park owners continue their efforts to maximize their profits, often times at our expense. We have reported that just one scheme—the removal of older mobile homes—is a billion dollar business in California. Park owners benefit several ways when they convince a resident to move their home out of a park. The WMA is hard at work assisting park owners. Managers in parks throughout the state harass and intimidate residents. This has been on going for years.

Will it ever stop? Unfortunately my answer is NO. Our problems in mobile home parks will continue until something out of the ordinary happens. It might be in the form of a new idea, like those of Donald DeVore, taking hold. Perhaps a personality or philanthropist will step forward and help us fight. Until that time, all we have is ourselves!

Of course I understand what Ernest Tamminga (previous page) is saying. "I just want to live out the rest of my life in peace and quiet." Those of us who are younger and healthy need to step up where others are not able. **If even a small percentage of mobilehome owners joined forces and were ACTIVE, they would have a terrific impact.** Let's be on the offensive, rather than on the defense. We have rights, and we should demand respect! Please help me—be active ! Let's get the word around. Lets grow and make CHANGE! Let's do it together! This opportunity comes so seldom. Take advantage of it today!

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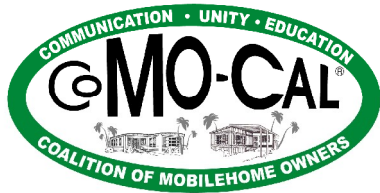


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SERVICES WE PROVIDE OUR MEMBERS

1. 12 issues of THE VOICE. Usually 20 pages long, filled with important information no mobilehome owner should be without. Articles from around the state of California. Tips and Suggestions. Important laws explained so you can understand how you are protected.
2. Website: **comocal.org**. Members have access to all issues of THE VOICE, attorneys who know the MRL, important links to government, advocacy groups, etc.
3. Small Claims Court Assistance: We will pay your fees up to \$30.00 and help with your paperwork. (Some restrictions apply.)
4. Questions / Problems: Our staff is ready to take your call to advise you regarding questions and problems you might have.
5. We have several attorneys to help with litigation or give advice.
6. Above all, a way to UNITE and have a VOICE.

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