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**Mt. Vernon United Tenants, Inc.**

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## **EARLY JULY 2013 NEWS & UPDATE**

### **LOTS OF NEWS TO REPORT SINCE OUR LAST MAILING:**

#### **Westchester Rent Guidelines Board (WRGB)**

The WRGB passed its annual rent adjustments for the upcoming guideline year (10/1/13 - 9/30/14) - 3% for a one (1) year renewal and 4% for a two (2) year renewal. The Board additionally passed "minimum increases" of \$ 15 & \$ 20 for low-rent tenants. We're enclosing a copy of the June 27, 2013 *Journal News* article which describes this. The article states that one (1) tenant representative was absent. That was Genevieve Roche who missed all of the three (3) Public Hearings and the Public Meeting prior to the vote as a result of a medical problem. The tenants were at a serious disadvantage, only having one (1) of our two (2) representatives and votes available. Still as opposed to the New York City guidelines - 4% for a one (1) year renewal and 7.75% for a two (2) year renewal, we didn't do that badly.

#### **Source of Income Non-Discrimination Ordinance**

On Monday June 17 the *Westchester County Board of Legislators* (W-BOL) again passed a County law making it illegal to discriminate in renting based upon a prospective tenant's "source of income", e.g. Section 8, Disability, Public Assistance, etc. (See copy of the June 18, 2013 *Journal News* article "Legislators Approve Rent Income Law"). Remember in 2010 the W-BOL passed a similar ordinance but the County Executive vetoed it. However, this time with threats of financial penalties against the County and personal contempt charges against himself, the County Executive agreed to sign the legislation. He did so on June 28. *MVUT* had initiated and led the campaign to pass this law almost ten (10) years ago, so the passage by the W-BOL and the signing by the County Executive of this law is a huge victory for *MVUT* and for all prospective tenants who utilize government benefits.

#### **Westchester's Federal Fair Housing Settlement**

The threats mentioned above, re: financial penalties and contempt citations, all have to do with the ongoing *Federal Fair Housing Settlement*. *MVUT* has been working with the *Westchester Non-Profit Housing Coalition* and individual member groups in trying to push Westchester to comply with its obligations under the settlement. We're enclosing two (2)

(See Over)

pieces (back to back) that ran recently in *The Journal News*:

1)

A "Community View" in the June 3, 2013 edition written by New Rochelle Mayor and Democratic candidate for County Executive, Noam Branson "Reason Needed On Housing Issue".

2)

A June 14, 2013 "Opinion" Exec. *Fights HUD With Half-Truths*.

### **Real Rent Reform (R3) Campaign**

MVUT participated in the R3's recently completed (over six months) *Strategic Planning Committee* (SPC) effort to prepare a two (2) year plan for the renewal and strengthening of the state rent laws which are set to expire on June 15, 2015. The R3-SPC was ably assisted in our effort by *Karant and Associates* of Boston. We'll be reaching out to Westchester tenants and supporters in the upcoming months over what role they can and should play in the campaign. Stay tuned!

### **Jeannette Petteway**

We told you in the last mailing of the death of long-time MVUT Board Member and activist, Jeannette Petteway and that we would be hosting a memorial service for her in our office. We'll probably hold off on that until the Fall. In the interim, there is going to be a *Tribute* to Jeanette on Thursday July 18 at 11:00 am at the *Mt. Vernon Firehouse* on West Third Street between South 6th and South 7th Avenue. This is where Jeannette had established and nurtured a garden for years. This was indicative of Jeanette's tenacious and unending commitment to better the community of Mt. Vernon.

\* We're also enclosing two (2) pieces from the *New York Times* (on the reverse side of the WRGB and "Source of Income" stories) which highlight some of the issues that low-income people continue to confront:

1)

"From the Mouths of Babes" an Op Ed by Paul Krugman in the May 31, 2013 issue regarding the *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program* (SNAP), i.e. Food Stamps.

2)

Michael Powell's July 2, 2013 *Gotham* piece "Making \$ 7.75 an Hour, and Figuring There's Little To Lose By Speaking Out" which focuses on the difficulties families and individuals face in the low-wage economy.

**Support Tenants' Rights!**

**Support Economic Justice !!**

**Support MVUT!!!**