

THE ALLIANCE



An Organization of Minnesota's Manufactured Home Park Residents

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>State Capitol Update</i>	2
<i>Relocation Compensation</i>	3
<i>Park Closing</i>	3
<i>Water Metering Lawsuits</i>	4
<i>Latino Parks Targeted</i>	4
<i>Park Closing Ordinances</i>	5
<i>New APAC Staff</i>	5

UPCOMING EVENTS:

APAC will participate in the Housing Minnesota rally and lobby day at the State Capitol on March 10, 10:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The state's first Manufactured Home Park Preservation Summit will be held March 8, 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

APAC's board of directors meetings are generally the 3rd Tuesday of each month.

APAC has formed a Legislative Policy Task Force that meets monthly.

You can support APAC by becoming a member or giving in the workplace through Community Solutions Fund.

Contact us at 651-644-5525 or apac@mtn.org, for more information.

MINNESOTA'S FIRST RESIDENT-OWNED MANUFACTURED HOME PARK CO-OP LAUNCHED

CANNON FALLS, MN – A project launched by All Parks Alliance for Change with the Northcountry Cooperative Development Fund resulted in Minnesota's first resident-owned manufactured home park cooperative. Sunrise Villa, a 47-unit park 40 miles south of the Twin Cities in Cannon Falls, had its official launch on October 24.

Now, instead of an outside corporation or a mom-and-pop landlord, an elected board of residents calls the shots – from writing bylaws to crafting the budget to controlling the rent. In a park co-op, each member owns a share in the cooperative corporation and are able to homestead.

The residents, most of whom have low or moderate incomes, can now rest easy at night. Before they faced the threat of their park being sold or closed, needed park improvements not being made, unfair or inconsistently applied park rules, profit-driven rent increases, and an inability to accumulate equity.

Debbi Howden, newly-elected president, explained why she took an early interest in conversion to a co-op. "I supported conversion to a cooperative so that we can have more control over what happens in the park and greater control over our lot rents."

APAC has long sought to convert parks to resident ownership and launched the Manufactured Home Community Preservation Project two years ago with this in mind. "We view the cooperative conversion of Sunrise Villa as a landmark victory for our members," said Dave

Anderson, APAC executive director. "It ensures that providing affordable housing for its residents is the overriding goal of the park. We hope to see this model duplicated state-wide." A second park, Paul Revere, in Lexington is nearing a final purchase agreement.

About 800 to 1,000 of the 55,000 parks in the United States are owned by residents through cooperatives. Florida, California, Vermont and New Hampshire – all states that give residents first dibs on buying the land when it goes up for sale – lead the nation in such co-ops. Minnesota offers residents that right only if the parks are being sold for closure within a year.

"This is exactly the kind of win-win project that we want to be involved in," said Margaret Lund, NCDF executive director. "The community gets a stable base of engaged property owners who are committed to working together. Co-op residents enjoy security in and control over their housing that other manufactured home park residents can only dream of."

The park co-op works similar to a grocery co-op in which members pay a joining fee – in this case, \$500, which many residents accomplished by using their returned rental deposits. To pay off the loan, each household chips in \$260 a month, equal to its former lot rent. The co-op has hired a management company to handle day-to-day affairs.

"With the stroke of a pen, the residents of Sunrise Villa have become property owners and permanent members of the community," said Cannon Falls Mayor, Glenn Weibel.

STATE CAPITOL UPDATE: APAC'S 2005 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

APAC Board of Directors

Edward Landrum, President

Pat Therrien, Vice Present

Doug Boldt, Treasurer

Betty Bailey, Secretary

Judy Bartels, 2nd Vice
President

Ann Mielke

Dorien Shurson

Donald Pierson

Professional Staff

Dave Anderson
Executive Director

Ned Moore
Lead Community Organizer

Daren Nyquist
Community Organizer

Rodrigo Sanchez-Chavarria
Administrative Assistant /
Membership Coordinator

Minnesota Justice
Foundation, Legal Interns:

- Myrrhia Resneck
- Shannon Cox
- Samuel Edmunds
- Barbara McDonald

Cheryl Sundley
KDV, Contract Accountant

ST. PAUL, MN – All Parks Alliance for Change serves as a watchdog for the interests of 180,000 residents of Minnesota's 950 manufactured home parks at the State Capitol. Formed in 1980, APAC first worked to eliminate no-cause eviction and to create new storm shelter standards. These efforts eventually lead to a special section of state law for parks (MN Statute 327C), providing numerous other resident rights and protections.

In recent years, APAC worked with Sens. Linda Higgins, Ellen Anderson, Dennis Fredrickson, Michael Jungbauer, and John Marty and Reps. Chris Gerlach, Andy Westerberg, and Connie Bernardy to protect older homes from discrimination. In 2005, APAC will work to:

Protect Residents from Unfair Utility Charges. During the 2003 and 2004 (H.F. 2227 and S.F. 2268) legislative sessions, the Minnesota Manufactured Housing Association, the park owners' association, sought changes in state law to allow park owners to break leases with residents in order to install submeters and separately charge, over and above lot rent, for water and sewer. APAC is working with Jobs, Energy & Community Development chair, Sen. Ellen Anderson, as well as the Legal Services Advocacy Project, and Minnesota Trial Lawyers Association to oppose such legislation in 2005.

Give Residents the Right to Buy their Parks. Minnesota has a law that permits residents the right of first refusal when a park owner is selling his property, but only if the park will be closed and only within a 45-day period. APAC is working with the Minnesota Association of Cooperatives, Northcountry Cooperative Development Fund, and others to require that park owners give written notice to residents and a state public agency that an offer for sale or transfer has been made, and to provide residents with the right to match that offer. The proposal has bi-partisan support in the Senate (S.F. 1177) with au-

thors Michael Jungbauer, Sandy Pappas, Brian LeClair, David Tomassoni, and Satveer Chaudhary, and in the House (H.F. 758) with Tim Mahoney, Patti Fritz, Frank Moe, Connie Bernardy, Michael Nelson, Barbara Goodwin, and Karen Clark.

Protect Residents' Rights During Park Closings. Minnesota law requires that nine months prior to a park closing, the owner must provide a closure statement to the local government and the residents. Park owners are licensed by the state to operate manufactured home parks. Park owners should therefore also be required to provide a copy of the closure statement to a state public agency. This would help to ensure that residents' rights are protected by allowing the involvement of organizations that provide information on residents rights and seeking relocation compensation, as well as organizations that advise and finance resident park cooperative purchases.

Provide Funds for Manufactured Home Park Redevelopment. Minnesota law does not allow manufactured home mortgage financing. Rep. Andy Westerberg is proposing a one-time appropriation (H.F. 553) to provide down payment assistance, not to \$10,000 per home, to households with annual incomes at or below 80 percent of median income, forgivable after 5 years residency.

Manufactured Home Park Summit scheduled March 2005

ST. PAUL, MN – In March, the Manufactured Home Park Summit will convene a broad-based group of residents, funders, housing advocates, and public officials to discuss the issues surrounding housing preservation. The program is organized by APAC, Housing Preservation Project, Minnesota Housing Partnership, and Northcountry Cooperative Development Fund, with Family Housing Fund, Greater Minnesota Housing Fund, and Northwest Area Foundation.

APAC advocacy gains park closing relocation funds for Hermantown park residents

HERMANTON, MN – Residents of Rainbow Mobile Home Park received an average \$4,900 in relocation funds for each of their 38 households, as a result of advocacy on the part of APAC and Duluth's Churches United in Ministry and the formation of a legally recognized residents' association. The park was sold to developer, Oppidan Inc., that will lease it for a new Gander Mountain, a Bloomington-based sporting goods store.

In June park residents were told that the park was being sold. Park residents were contacted by the Duluth-based realtor offering to pay residents what they called reasonable compensation for relocation costs of \$400-\$800. However, local movers estimated the cost at between \$1,500 and \$5,000. The offer also required that residents move out or abandon their homes by September 30. State law gave residents nine months' notice, or until April 1, 2005.

Residents also faced the reality that most of their homes would not be accepted in other parks because parks often don't accept homes older than 10 years. In addition, availability and affordability was also a problem. At \$245 per month, Rainbow was a great deal.

About 70 residents, friends and family members spoke to the Mayor and City Council at a public hearing asking them decide what would be fair compensation. Resident Russ Cataldo told the council that before the park closure, everyone was a winner. "The owners were paid rent, the city was paid taxes, and the residents had a place to live," he said. "Now the buyer is going to get their share, the seller, the city, the county and state will all get paid; the only one not getting a fair shake is us," he said. "The homeowners, we'll lose everything."

"These people have sustained Rainbow Park all these years," said Ned Moore, APAC lead organizer. "They are a big part of the equation; they deserve to be fairly compensated for the hardship of the park closing," he said. "We are just asking the City Council to look at the bigger picture and consider the devastating impact the park's closing will have on their lives. Fair compensation for the residents would be only a fraction of the money changing hands in the deal."

In the end, the city council chose not to act. The new relocation offer came from the developer. Of 38 homes, 12 moved to new parks or private land and 26 were sold to Birchwood Terrace in Hoyt Lakes, leaving the owners to find new housing.

APAC board, members and staff would like to thank the following organizations for their support in 2004:

F.R. Bigelow Foundation

Otto Bremer Foundation

Carolyn Foundation

Central Minnesota Community Foundation / Antioch Company

Christian Sharing Fund

Claretian Societal Development Fund

Community Solutions Fund

Initiative Foundation

McKnight Foundation

Minneapolis Foundation / Emma B. Howe

Minnesota Housing Partnership / Corporation for National & Community Service

Minnesota Justice Foundation

Minnesota State Bar Foundation

Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation

St. Paul Travelers

Unitarian Universalist Funding Program

** Some support was received in 2003 for use, in part, in 2004.*

Washington County HRA announces closing of Oakdale park

OAKDALE, MN – The Washington County Housing and Redevelopment Authority announced its redevelopment plan for Whispering Oaks, which it purchased in 1993, at a meeting with residents in December.

For the past two years, the HRA has met with park residents and APAC staff. Ed Landrum, APAC's board president and a 28-year resident, said it appears inevitable the park will be redeveloped in the next couple of years.

Park residents had previously attempted to purchase the property from the HRA. "What it does is it gives people the opportunity to own a part of a co-op and continues to keep affordable housing going," he said. The HRA, however, was not willing to sell. "The HRA said they wanted to use the area for more than just manufactured homes," said Landrum. "They said they needed to get more use out of the park."

Even if affordable housing units are included in the plan, Landrum said he is not sure if he could afford to stay.

Since 1980, APAC has been working to improve the quality of life in park neighborhoods through grassroots organizing, and to protect the rights of park residents, with a philosophy of helping people to help themselves.

The only organization of its kind in Minnesota, APAC offers several unique programs to residents:

- Tenant Hotline
- Resident Handbook
 - Workshops
- Neighborhood Organizing
- Leadership Development
- Resident Associations
- Park Closings / Relocation Compensation
- Park Closing Ordinances
- Park Co-op Conversions
 - Latino Outreach / Translating & Interpreting
- Statewide Policy Advocacy

Residents win lawsuit over water metering in Lake Elmo, settle in Apple Valley and Lexington

LAKE ELMO, MN – The owners of Cimarron Manufactured Home Park violated the leases the park had with residents when it began charging them for water and sewer service two years ago and must now pay them almost \$289,000, a jury in Washington County District Court decided in October. The verdict against the park is the latest loss for its operator, Chateau Communities. It and other park operators have recently lost several suits in Minnesota, including suits in East Bethel, Apple Valley, Spring Lake Terrace, Rosemount, Lexington and Fridley.

For years, water and sewer charges at Cimarron were included in rent. The dispute began when Cimarron installed water meters in 2001 and then began billing residents at the start of the next year. As a result, residents found themselves paying more than they would have under the old system – with average bills of \$30 per month.

APAC has been working in partnership with the law firm Lommen, Nelson, Cole & Stageberg to oppose this substantial modification to resident leases. Metering for water has become “an industry-wide phenomenon,” said Barry O’Neil, an attorney with Lommen Nelson and has created “a significant expense for residents.”

The battle isn’t over. Some of the cases are on appeal and residents at one park failed to persuade a court to stop the owner from raising rents after it lost the lawsuit. Resident Dennis Hallen said residents “are pretty happy” with the decision, but some aren’t sure whether the company will respond to this loss by raising rents.

The park owners’ group Minnesota Manufactured Housing Association has been pushing state legislation to allow metering, which died in the 2003 and 2004 sessions. “We see this as the clearest admission on the part of the park owners that they know what they are doing is illegal,” said Dave Anderson, APAC executive director.

Authorities lay siege to Southern Minnesota Mobile Home Parks, Latino residents organize to demand respect

FARIBAULT & NORTHFIELD, MN — Imagine waking up one morning to find hundreds of armed police storming through your park, breaking down doors and grabbing people out of their cars with no warning. This is what park residents in Rice County experienced September 29 when their parks fell under the scope of the largest drug raid in county history.

The raids were characterized by an overwhelming and frightening show of force involving over 200 law enforcement officers from local, state, and federal agencies. Over 41 were arrested on drug or weapons charges, while 9 were arrested on immigration charges. The raids culminated a yearlong investigation into gang and drug activity.

According to Attorney Susanna De

Leon, the presence of immigration police during the raid “sends a clear message to law-abiding immigrant families that if they report criminal activity to the police, then immigration agents may show up in their communities and arrest neighbors, family members, etc...”

“It is also interesting that so little drugs appear to have been seized” said De Leon “It (the raid) is particularly concerning that those arrested were predominantly Latino, such that this media operation creates the impression that Latinos are disproportionately involved in the drug trade when national statistics show the exact opposite.”

Centro Campesino, a non-profit organization organizing Latinos in southern Minn., is helping to promote dignity and respect for park residents in the wake of the raids. APAC is supporting these efforts.

APAC works with residents to pass park closing ordinances in Brainerd, Lakeville and Lexington

BRAINERD, LAKEVILLE & LEXINGTON, MN – APAC is working with residents to pass manufactured home park closing ordinances to protect residents from the financial devastation of a closure. When a park is closed, the owner or buyer pays each household the average relocation cost of moving a home within a 25-mile radius. The proposals are modeled after 13 city ordinances passed by APAC.

LEXINGTON — On December —, 2004, the city of Lexington became the 15th to adopt an ordinance; guaranteeing relocation compensation to the 154 households in the Paul Revere park. Park residents are one-third of the city's population.

"We, as residents of Paul Revere, are proud to be citizens of Lexington," said Betty Bailey, park resident and Lexington City Council member. "Even more so when the city took this action to ensure that manufactured home owners are protected from displacement, just the same as the owners of stick-built homes."

BRAINERD — On December 20, residents of the city's seven parks requested

that the city adopt an ordinance to protect 350 households. In January 2005, the city council appointed a committee to look at an ordinance.

Abby Lindberg and Jean Maldonado, residents of the 37-unit East Gate Mobile Home Park which is closing, are spearheading the effort. "What we want to do is get an ordinance passed, a blanket ordinance, so that in the future park owners will have to offer relocation compensation," said Maldonado.

LAKEVILLE — On January 19, the residents of five area parks, representing nearly 2,000 households, requested the city adopt an ordinance in response to increasing development. The parks are the primary source of affordable housing for both low-income and Latino families.

"We'd like to have a fallback. Right now there is no compensation for us if they relocate us," said Ardmor Village resident, Christian Reitz. "I live from paycheck to paycheck. I basically would have no place to live."

APAC welcomes new staff, bids farewell to familiar faces

ST. PAUL, MN—Jim Paist left APAC in August, after serving as executive director since 1998, to direct the Hemophilia Foundation of Minnesota/Dakotas. APAC also saw the departures of Tom Egar, VISTA organizer, and Adrea Shobottom, administrative assistant, in 2004.

Dave Anderson joined APAC as its executive director in 2004. He served as executive director of the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group and associate state director of the Minnesota Senior Federation. For a number of years, he has been involved with neighborhood revitalization efforts. He has also served as a chair, administrative director, organizer, canvasser, and reporter.

Ned Moore, APAC's Lead Community Organizer, has been with the organization for two years. He has and continues

to work with these home owners around resident-defined goals. In addition, he uses his Spanish language skills to communicate with the many Latino residents.

Daren Nyquist, Community Organizer, joined APAC in 2004. He spent the prior year as an AmeriCorps * VISTA organizer with Duluth-based Churches United in Ministry (CHUM), during which he organized residents in a Hermantown park closing. He is enrolled at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey Institute.

Rodrigo Sanchez-Chavarria, Administrative Assistant / Membership Outreach Coordinator, joined APAC in 2005. He held office management, housing, and La Raza Student Cultural Center positions, and was volunteer coordinator for the 2004 Cinco de Mayo program. In addition, he is a native Spanish speaker.

Membership

By becoming an APAC member, you strengthen the manufactured home owner community in your park and throughout Minnesota.

Benefits:

- APAC's staff support and advice, the only such resource in the state.
- The Alliance, APAC's quarterly newsletter.
- Manufactured Home Owners' Handbook.

Join:

- Member
- Associate (non-resident) Member
- Group Member

Membership Dues:

- \$10
- \$20
- \$30
- \$ _____

Or, Volunteer Options:

- Office Work
- Leafleting
- Fundraising

Extra Contribution:

\$ _____

Program Interests:

- Workshop
- Resident Association
- Park Closing Ordinance
- Co-op Conversion

All Parks Alliance for Change

2395 University Avenue West,
Suite 302
St. Paul, MN 55114

Phone: 651-644-5525
Fax: 651-523-0173
Email: apac@mtn.org

We're on the web!
www.allparksallianceforchange.org

*An organization of Minnesota's
manufactured home park
residents.*



The Alliance is the
quarterly newsletter of All
Parks Alliance for Change
(APAC).

**Editor / Production
Manager:**

Dave Anderson

CSF

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage Paid
Permit No. 1703
St. Paul, Minnesota
