



# THE AMHO NEWS

The News Publication of The Association of Manufactured Home Owners

Vol. 1 Issue 2 February 2008

## **AMHO FORGES AHEAD** **ORGANIZING ACTIVATING** Establishing Mission Goals & Vision

AMHO, The Association of Manufactured Home Owners is now fast developing to become the key statewide organization for manufactured homeowners. AMHO is to be the strong unified statewide voice for manufactured homeowners. The vision is for AMHO to help manufactured homeowners throughout Washington organize themselves into homeowners' associations, advocate for the preservation of manufactured housing communities and help manufactured homeowners with an array of services and information that will promote their lifestyle choice.

AMHO is the result of meetings between members of Manufactured Home Owners of America (MHOA), SOS Homes, and Mobile Home Tenants' Association (MTA)

According to Frank Cheeney, leading figure in SOS and currently AMHO Board Member: "We are pleased to announce the consolidation of SOS Homes and MTA (Mobile Tenants Association) into the Association of Manufactured Home Owners (AMHO)."

In recent meetings AMHO has created a Board of Directors: 3 board members from SOS Homes, 3 board members from the Mobile Home Tenant's Association (MTA) and 3 members of Manufactured/Mobile Home Owners of America (MHOA).

AMHO's Board includes: James Dean, President (formerly MHOA and MTA) Jerry Huffman, Vice President (formerly SOS Homes) Judith White, Secretary (MHOA) Frank Cheeney, Treasurer (formerly SOS Homes) John Landis, Chair of the Legislative Committee (MHOA) Kylin Parks, Chair of the Organizing Committee (formerly SOS Homes) Bob Case, Director at Large (formerly MTA) Helen Runyan, Director at Large (formerly MTA) Richard Bishop, Director at Large (formerly MTA) Gordon Blaze, Director at Large (formerly MTA)

The current board will serve until formal elections occur at the annual meeting scheduled for February 14 in Olympia during the Housing Day event.

AMHO Board members are already actively involved in efforts to preserve their communities and are willing to share their experience with other manufactured homeowners' associations throughout the state. The Board members are active too on the political front working with elected officials on manufactured housing preservation issues and working to raise awareness of more elected officials to the issues facing manufactured housing residents.

"AMHO is new but it is also vibrant!" Said Cheeney.

The AMHO board has established the following shared mission and vision:

- Enforcement of protections that already exist.
- Becoming a politically powerful, unification of homeowner's voices.
- Park community preservation and protection.
- Improved quality of life for mobile/manufactured homeowners.
- Achieving a non-adversarial relationship with community owners.
- Legislative respect for the crises mobile/manufactured homeowners are facing.
- Easy access for homeowners to information, technical assistance and referrals.
- More resident ownership of communities.
- Development of new high quality manufactured housing communities.
- A strong statewide membership based organization with longevity.
- Rent stability/dependability for homeowners, with long notice periods for rent increases. Respect for manufactured housing communities as a solution to

*Continued page 2 AMHO Forges*

*AMHO Forges*

the long-term care crisis for aging people in Washington as an alternative to nursing homes. Respect for manufactured housing communities as a solution for affordable housing for seniors and low income families in Washington.

Partnering with other agencies and organizations (because we cannot do it alone) such as housing authorities, senior services, Washington Low Income Housing Alliance, etc. Dedicated ample funding for preservation of manufactured/mobile home communities, the formation of homeowners' associations, and technical assistance.

The importance and necessity of AMHO is clear. More and better-unified organization is necessary. It took 5 years to get the Dispute Resolution bill passed. We do not have that much time to get the Preservation Bill passed so we need to concentrate our efforts and ensure the strongest possible advocacy, presenting a united front to the Legislature, and being credible enough with decision makers at all levels of government to show that we mean business.

The current AMHO board and also MHOA understands that time is of the essence and that only by building and developing strong and on-going leadership will manufactured homeowner's in Washington have the professionalism and credibility they need to match the park owners and their paid professional staffs and attorneys.

Said The Board Members: "We encourage all members to attend and help determine the direction of this exciting new organization!"

AMHO is in the process of creating a website and a newsletter. If you would like more information about AMHO please feel free to contact any board member.

**State Wide Manufactured Communities Week Proposed:**

AMHO's *Kylin Parks*, has contacted Lee Marchiso who is one of the Governor's aides to ask about having the Governor declare a Manufactured Housing Week, sometime later this year. Response is pending.

**HOUSING DAY SET FOR FEB. 14**

**IN OLYMPIA**

February 14 will be Housing and Homelessness Advocacy Day in Olympia! The event is sponsored and organized by the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance (WLIHA). The event's theme is "Home is at the heart of it all". The day long event promises to be an inspiring one!

Special Keynote Guest Speaker will be Governor Christine Gregoire who will address attendees at 9:10 am at the United Churches of Olympia.

Among the many events being organized are a rally at the State Capital and advocacy meetings with State Legislators throughout the day. The rally and meetings are aimed at raising the awareness of state elected officials to the many housing issues facing residents of our state, including homelessness, the state's housing budget, affordable housing, low income and senior housing, rising property taxes, and not least the continuing threat to manufactured housing residents due to the continuing tide of community closures across the state. Event registration begins at 8:30 am Tuesday February 14, at the United Churches of Olympia, 110 Eleventh Ave SE, Olympia WA 98501. Or attendees may register online at [www.regonline.com/63331\\_171748N](http://www.regonline.com/63331_171748N).

AMHO members may attend for free. To do so they must contact *Kylin Parks* at; [kylinparks@yahoo.com](mailto:kylinparks@yahoo.com) before February 8<sup>th</sup> and they do not need to register online.

**Special Event: First Annual Meeting of AMHO**

During Housing Day, February 14 in Olympia, AMHO-Association of Manufactured Home Owners, will be holding it's first Annual Meeting. The meeting will be held in Hearing Room #1 of the John Cherberg Building on the Capitol Campus. Time will be 12:00 Noon to 1:00 P.M. for the purpose of formally electing a Board of Directors for AMHO. Members and prospective members are urged to attend.

The prime sponsors of our manufactured housing bills, Sens. Kastama and Eide, and Reps. Rolfes and Lias have been invited to attend AMHO's annual meeting.

## **MONTANA MANUFACTURED HOUSING ACTIVIST ARRESTED FOR MERELY PROVIDING INFORMATION TO RESIDENTS!**

Billings, Montana: Manufactured housing community leader Tammy Hoth, has been arrested and charged with Criminal Trespass to Property by the City of Billings for simply passing out fliers informing manufactured housing residents of their rights.

Hoth, 45, who grew up in and lives in manufactured housing, is a single mother who works as a filing clerk. She has been the president of her homeowners association for a little over a year and has been a key resident leader in Montana. She has been volunteering her time to help other manufactured home park residents become aware of their rights, and of opportunities to own not only their homes, but the land as well. She has led workshops to educate over 175 residents of manufactured home parks. Hoth, has been working with her neighbors in Red Lodge, Montana to purchase her own park and to form the state's first manufactured housing cooperative.

Clearly, Hoth is being targeted by park owners and the City for simply passing out information – An act clearly protected by her First Amendment rights!

The unfortunate message from the City of Billings is clear – if you live in a manufactured home park, it is a crime to contact your neighbors!

If convicted at the trial, Hoth potentially faces a fine of \$500 and six months in jail.

Should Hoth be convicted, the abilities of Montanan residents to get together to learn about their rights are endangered.

Hoth has pled not guilty to the charges on the grounds of First Amendment rights.

## **Governor Proposes 57 Million For Affordable Housing!**

Governor Christine Gregoire and Speaker of the House Frank Chopp and Senate Majority Leader Lisa Brown, have announced a proposed a \$57.5 million package to help end homelessness, build more affordable housing, and put a stop to the mortgage lending fiasco.

The Governor's press conference was held at King County Housing Authority's Greenbridge development. Governor Gregoire committed to:

- Increasing the Housing Trust Fund by \$50 million this legislative session;
- Putting \$6 million into the Washington Families Fund;
- Raising the Housing Finance Commission debt limit by \$2 billion; and
- Providing almost \$2 million in mortgage counseling and loan dollars.

The event was also attended by a number of other legislators, and members of the funding community, including William Gates, Sr. of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Following the press conference, Governor Gregoire spoke with a family who had been helped by the Washington Families Fund, a family victimized by a foreclosure scam, and a woman who makes her home at Greenbridge.

This announcement and commitment by the Governor is a signal that she is continuing forward with her campaign commitments to solve our state's homelessness and affordable housing issues. This announcement further signals a commitment to the affordable housing, manufactured housing community preservation and the policies we support. Many of our agenda items are reflected in this package, proving this truly is a monumental time for the affordable housing community.

Everyone is encouraged to write or call or e-mail Governor Gregoire and thank her.

## **THE OLYMPIA BEAT:**

### **LEGISLATURE CONVENES FOR 2008 SESSION, Housing and Manufactured Housing Preservation Issues On Agenda**

The 2008 legislature is now in session! Again in this year's session The House of Representatives will be hearing HB 1621, the Manufactured Housing Preservation Bill, which will probably have the number (P2SHB1621) (Proposed Second Substitute). The Senate Ways & Means Committee has heard SSB 5780 – a weaker version of the House bill but we want to keep both moving forward.

HB 1621/SB5780 will propose incentives aimed at preservation such as: 1. allow non-profit developers or organized tenants' associations the opportunity to purchase their park if the park owner is selling the community and chooses to sell it to them, and 2) exempt the community owner from having to pay Real Estate Excise Tax if the park owner decides to sell to a non-profit developer or the homeowners' association.

Last session, both of these bills made great forward progress towards passage but both bills died in committees when deadlines passed before they could reach the House and Senate floors for full hearing and vote.

AMHO, resident organizations and advocate elected officials are committed to a renewed redoubled effort to get these measures passed this session.

### **3 Year Notice of Closure Bill to be Before Legislators in 2008 Session**

Manufactured homes offer many of Washington's seniors and lower income residents an affordable home ownership opportunity. But the fact that most homeowners don't own the land their home is located upon puts them at significant risk! State law gives manufactured/mobile homeowners only the right to a 12 month notice when a park owner decides to change the use of the community and close the park. RCW 59.20.080 (1) (e).

Manufactured/Mobile homeowners have bought homes and born the expense of moving the homes into the park or purchased a home already located in a park only to have the owner serve a 12 month closure notice within months of the home owner's move into the park. It is fundamentally unfair for a manufactured/mobile homeowner to spend tens of thousands of dollars to move into a park. New homes cost over \$20,000 to install and setup in a park and the costs of purchasing an already in place park home is about the same. And then be forced to relocate with only a 12 month period of time to do so! A new bill, (HB 3133/SB 6801) proposes to require park owners to give residents a notice three years in advance when a park is to be closed.

This legislation, if passed, will serve to slow the rate of community closures. It would provide adequate time for resident organizations or housing authorities to negotiate purchase. Or at least afford residents sufficient time to find alternative housing for themselves. More broadly, the crisis of the many losses of manufactured/mobile housing communities due to closures has severely depleted the state's relocation fund. The Legislature in 2007 appropriated general fund dollars to the fund so that homeowners forced to relocate or demolish their homes can have some hope of avoiding a total financial disaster. A three year notice of closure requirement would allow for reserves in the State Relocation Assistance Fund to build up. Currently, revenues of approximately

\$40,000 a month are provided to the fund by the transfer of title fees collected when homeowners buy or sell homes located in manufactured/mobile housing communities.

*Continued next page column 1*

...Closure Bill

A three year notice of closure law would offer additional security, protecting families and ensuring seniors a peaceful retirement and reduce the drain of state funds and burden to the taxpayers.

## **Make Your Legislators More Aware of Our Issues**

With the 2008 Legislative session now underway it is time for manufactured housing organizations, homeowners' associations and residents to get into action!

Our regional district representatives and senators must be made aware of the situations of manufactured housing, affordable housing and affordable senior housing.

According to our advocate elected officials who are backing manufactured housing and affordable housing preservation, there is simply *not* enough awareness of these issues.

According to Representative Brian Sullivan, in remarks made last legislative session to a meeting of seniors residing in manufactured housing communities, "Our elected legislators tend to 'specialize' on issues and legislation of interest and importance to them and that which they perceive to be of importance to their constituents. Unless they are contacted by voters about other specific issues and legislation and made aware and educated on specific pieces of legislation, they tend not to pay much attention to those other bills."

Of major most importance will be House Bill 1621 and Senate Bill 5780. These are companion Manufactured Housing Preservation Bills that will again come before the House of Representatives and the Senate this upcoming session.

## **Reaching and Educating Your Legislators**

Your Voter Registration Card will tell you which legislative district you reside in.

You can find the names and addresses of your district's Representatives and Senators on line at [www.aces.wa.gov](http://www.aces.wa.gov) or [www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov). Some phone books have this information too.

Personal letters and e-mails are the most attention getting and the most compelling. Many of our legislators have mentioned that they prefer e-mails over 'snail mail' as in the post 9/11 world e-mails are safe. So e-mails may be more received and read.

A listing of your legislators' e-mail addresses is available at [www.leg.wa.gov](http://www.leg.wa.gov), or, all addresses are last name, . first name, followed by @leg.wa.gov e.g:

doe.jane@leg.wa.gov

During the session, you can call the toll-free Legislative Hotline at 1-800-562-6000 and leave a message for your legislator. All you need to do is tell the hotline staff which legislative district you are in (see your voter registration card) or give them your address.

What legislators need to know about you are that you are a voter living in their district, that you own a home, how many voters live in your manufactured community –if you don't know, estimate. Then tell them you want them to support HB 1621/SB 5780 and HB 3133/SB 6801, and in your own words, as compellingly as possible, tell them, why, you want them to support these bills! Tell them it is the right thing to do! Too many communities have closed and more are closing. As parks close low income residents and seniors have no place to go and are losing their only assets, their own homes and their independence and are subject to fall upon State Assistance rolls. Tell them we need to preserve manufactured housing as an affordable home ownership option.

Tell them the Relocation fund is not the answer, because there are no places to relocate to! Tell them your home is not moveable and if you lose it to redevelopment you will have lost your only real asset and will be subject to significant to severe financial stress and hardship and personal stress and hardship! Personal stories do have a huge impact on our politicians!

*-continued page 6 column 1*

*-from page 5 Reaching your Legislator*

Your communication carries weight! Legislators have said that each letter or e-mail they receive represents to them the views of from 300 to 1000 voters!

### Maintaining The Relationship

You will be surprised at the number of Legislators who will respond to you personally. Believe it or not a great many of them are sincerely dedicated public representatives who sincerely desire to serve and are sensitive to the needs and wants of those they represent. They may ask you for more information. Respond and give it to them! Continue to stay in communication with them, by letter or e-mail. If the legislator will take a call from you, call him or her.

Invite your legislators to meetings in your community, they will come, and, be sure to promote the meeting widely about your community and surrounding and make sure that the meeting is well attended.

At the meeting voice your views and issues and encourage others to speak out too. The legislator will listen.

In these ways our legislators will become aware and educated and more supportive of our issues!

## **Manufactured Housing In Jeopardy In Washington and Nationwide!**

Manufactured home ownership is an affordable lifestyle for many of Washington's Senior Citizens and lower income families. About 8% of Washington residents live in 1800 manufactured housing communities. These citizens are facing a crisis! Across our state as well as across our entire nation mobile parks, manufactured home communities are being closed and the residents displaced! The reason; today's inflated land values are enticing community owners to sell or redevelop their properties. It makes financial business sense to them, and so they are closing parks and redeveloping, in ever increasing numbers! In Washington, since 1989 170 communities have been lost! Including an alarming 35 in 2006-2007! Closures have displaced a frightening number of households, 10,200! At least 15 more communities will go before September 2008! Terribly tragically, the vast majority of these homeowners will lose their *only* worldly asset, their home! Very few will be able to relocate their homes! There are simply no places for them to move to. In Western Washington, reportedly, from Bellingham to Olympia, there are NO spaces at all available for lease! The scene is hardly better anywhere else! What state provided 'Relocation Assistance' is available is really, 'Demolition Assistance', as most displaced residents have no choice but to remove their beloved homes to the dump!

### Preservation Is The Answer

Anyone who lives in manufactured housing will say so! The financial figures support it, strongly. It costs an average of \$75,000 to \$120,000 per space to preserve manufactured communities, with the on-going operating and maintenance costs being rather low. Homes are maintained by their owner. Conversely; it now costs between \$200,000 to \$250,000 to build a single new unit of 'affordable' housing. It is obvious which is better.

Further, for every two manufactured spaces preserved there is the capacity to build one more affordable housing unit for some other household. The cost effectiveness is obvious. Obvious as it is it has not received any real consideration. "People seem to think manufactured housing communities are (property) up for grabs." Says Housing Activist Ishbel Dickens. "Very little thought is given to the homeowners living there, whose homes might be their only asset. When communities close these displaced families end up swelling the ranks of people looking for subsidized rentals because they can't afford anything else." *Continued next page*

### Some Progress Made

Due largely to the efforts of Dickens and many others, advocate activists, civic leaders, elected officials, local county and state organizations, and residents leaders and homeowners' associations, about 10 parks have been preserved! A park in Bainbridge Island was saved with the aid of the City of Winslow and citizens. Several have been saved by King County Housing Authority, at least 2 have been saved by Snohomish County Housing Authority (HASCO). The nonprofit Manufactured Housing Community Preservationists (MHCP) has saved four communities in King County. Many parks have organized or are organizing and are attempting to negotiate purchases with park owners. Much more effort is gravely needed! Residents' organizations and residents statewide must come together and unite! United, we are at least 200,000 strong, with our family and associates that figure expands exponentially! That is enough votes to sway an election! Believe it! Some of our Elected Officials are aware of this, the rest need to be made aware of it by us!

Together we can make a difference! For instance, the passage of HB 1461, the Landlord Tenant Enforcement Act giving park residents recourse to the Attorney General if community owners have violated the Manufactured/mobile Home Landlord Tenant Act has been a huge milestone!

Passage of the Preservation legislation this session is the next milestone to achieve.

### **3 Year Notice of Closure Bill-s Scheduled For Hearings**

The bills proposing to legislate a 3 year notice to tenants prior to a park community closure, House Bill 3313 and Senate Bill 6801, are headed for committee hearings.

HB 3313 will be heard by the House Housing Committee at 10 am Thursday January 31. Chairman is Mark Miloscia of the 30th district.

SB 6801 will be heard by the Senate Consumer Protection and Housing Committee on Thursday February 7th at 8:30 A.M. Chairman is Brian Weinstein 41st district.

Please contact the Legislative Hotline and urge the support of these bills.

HOT LINE IS 1-800-562-6000