



Association of Manufactured Home Owners Fall 2017 Newsletter

President's Message



Greetings **AMHO** members and friends:

Our summer is over and I hope you are all looking forward to a successful and beautiful fall. It has been an exciting time to be your President since our state meeting in July. I have been to Woodland, Kelso, Auburn, and Olympia representing **AMHO**. As you might expect, there are multiple issues and opportunities to help residents of manufactured home parks.

My two major concerns for this year remain: (1) communication, and (2) unity. We must strive to inform residents of protections guaranteed by the Manufactured/mobile Home Landlord Tenant Act (RCW 59.20). We are also continuing to inform members of **AMHO** by newsletter, email, phone, letter and forums. We need to improve our communication to you of our legislative agenda and Board actions. Do you have suggestions? Please send them to me at: sendcarl@comcast.net or call me at 253-334-1433.

In unity there is strength! Have you sent in your yearly membership fee? Please do so soon. I have been working with a committee of **AMHO** & MHOA members of Washington to reach an agreement to merge our two organizations. The committee has requested both groups officially appoint a committee to reach common agreement on merger. We do not have to start from scratch as we have the merger proposal from 2011 to guide us.

I am very hopeful that we will be a united single State organization by the summer of 2018. Thank you for your encouraging thoughts and messages.

In honor of **AMHO's** 10th anniversary, we are offering a special \$10/annum introductory e-membership for new and renewing members until December 31, 2017. A membership form is enclosed with this newsletter, and can also be downloaded from the AMHO website at www.wamho.org. Please share this offer with your friends and neighbors!

Don Carlson, President, **Association of Manufactured Home Owners**

AMHO's 10th Anniversary Celebration and 2017 Annual Meeting

On a sunny July afternoon nearly 100 **AMHO** members, associates, and friends, came together at the Bow Lake Community in SeaTac, WA to celebrate **AMHO's** 10th Anniversary and to conduct the 2017 Annual Meeting.

Keynote speaker, Rep. Mia Gregerson (D. 30th) shared her vision and priorities while guests enjoyed a lovely luncheon catered by Renton Technical College Culinary Arts students. The special program afterward included a stroll through 10 years of **AMHO** highlights and accomplishments, volunteer recognition, and award presentations. Special appreciation was extended to Ishbel Dickens, **AMHO** consultant, for her many years of dedicated service to manufactured homeowners, and to Jan Sylvester and Birte Olsen for their tireless attendance at legislative hearings during the 2017 legislative session.

Residents from the nearby Firs and Puget View manufactured housing communities joined us to share their unfortunate experiences involving park closure, and to thank **AMHO** for the support and assistance given. Their stories further exemplify the need to remain vigilant in our efforts to preserve mobile/manufactured home communities as affordable housing. A legislative update by Ishbel Dickens followed (see update elsewhere in this newsletter).

Silent auctions, raffle drawings, and a special membership appreciation drawing all meant that several lucky winners went home with terrific mementos of the special day. We want to thank all of our donors and event sponsors (Low Income Housing Institute, Columbia Legal Services, Washington State Housing Finance Commission, UCONS, Ishbel Dickens) who helped make this great day possible.

Thanks fall short of adequately expressing our appreciation to the Bow Lake HOA Board for being such gracious, hard-working, and accommodating hosts: Michael Sanford, Mike Thornton, Carey Douglas, Vonda Thompson, and Millie Congdon. A special thank you to Mr. Robert Dent, the best room set-up guru and event coordinator that anyone could hope for! Kudos to Bow Lake ownership/management for a beautifully kept property and clubhouse.

Immediately after the event the **AMHO** Board met in executive session to welcome in 2 new board members, and welcome back 3 others renewing their expired terms. Officers: Don Carlson, President; Randy Chapman, Vice-President; Sharon Bishop, Treasurer; and Ginny Leach, Secretary. Directors: Gary Lunde, Birte Olsen, Ken Squier, Anne Sadler, Jim Fry, and Ted Grimes. Congratulations and best wishes to the new **AMHO** Board, and Thank You for your commitment to leadership service!

Jan Sylvester, former **AMHO** Board member and Annual Meeting venue coordinator

(Editor's note – we cannot thank Jan enough for all she has done and continues to do for AMHO – what an amazing person with endless energy, a huge heart, and an abundant desire to help everyone! Thank you, Jan)

AMHO Board Members Attend I'm Home Conference and NMHOA Convention



AMHO Board member Anne Sadler and I were honored and privileged to represent AMHO at the I'm Home Conference and National Manufactured Home Owners' Association (NMHOA) Convention in Providence, Rhode Island earlier this month.

We first toured two resident-owned communities, Oak Hills Mobile Home Park and Colonial Estates, where the homeowners were very happy to now own them as cooperatives. We also attended numerous presentations and workshops on a variety of topics, including financing of manufactured homes and communities, innovation in lending and the challenges facing manufactured homeowners.

We heard about opportunities for opening new communities and the possible support homeowners could receive from Habitat for Humanity, local housing finance agencies and others.

We heard from staff at Fannie and Freddie about their financing tools for manufactured homeowners and then learned of ways to advance positive images of manufactured homeownership – a session moderated by our own, Ishbel Dickens, moderator.

The keynote speaker at luncheon was Esther Sullivan PHD, Professor of Sociology at the University of Colorado. Her doctoral dissertation was on the Impact of displacement on communities when the land is sold and mass evictions occur.

We also learned how to craft effective messages to get our points across to donors, funders, policymakers, zoning boards and the general public. We talked about what works and what backfires when crafting effective messages. The final workshop that I attended discussed "making policy changes" where we learned skills for effective state and local advocacy to ensure the best possible protections for manufactured home owners.

The NMHOA conference has homeowners from all across the country in attendance. It was good to hear that our struggles are not unique – it seems everyone suffers from ever-increasing rents, ridiculous rules, and lack of infrastructure maintenance and repairs.

All in all, it was a great opportunity to learn more and to meet with other homeowners. Many of them are certainly interested in the fact that WA has the Alternative Dispute Resolution Program since many states do not have an agency specifically identified to enforce their Manufactured/Mobile Home Landlord Tenant Act.

Gary Lunde, AMHO Board Member

Legislative Agenda

The Legislative Planning Group (LPG) consisting of **AMHO** and MHOA members met on September 11 to discuss our joint legislative agenda for the 2018 session. Given that this is the second year of the biennium, we all agreed to continue to work on our 2017 top two priorities:

1. Opportunity to Purchase (HB 1798) – this bill encourages, but does not require, community owners who plan to sell their communities to sell to a non-profit housing agency. If the community owner chooses this route then they are exempt from paying the real estate excise tax on the sale – a win-win for everyone – the community is purchased by a non-profit that will maintain the community and keep rents affordable and the landlord gets a fair price for the land and does not pay tax on the profit. **Representative Joan McBride (48th. District)** is sponsoring this bill. HB 1798 was heard in House Judiciary but was not brought up for a vote in Executive Session. We will continue to give this bill our full support.
2. Longer Notice of Closure (HB 1514)– current law requires a community owner to give a 12 months’ notice of closure whenever they intend to change the use of the land but this is not nearly enough time for homeowners who need to consider where/if they can move their homes, as well as their families. Also, a home loses all its equity when the land under it is sold. We think that homeowners should be guaranteed at least three (3) years permanency in a manufactured housing community so that they get, at least, some return on their investment. Alternatively, if the community owner does not want to wait for three years, then they can opt for a shorter time period provided they fully compensate all the homeowners in the community for the actual value of their homes prior to the closure notice being issued. **Representative June Robinson (38th. District)** is sponsoring this bill. In Committee, this bill was amended to give homeowners 18 months’ notice prior to the community closing. SHB 1514 passed out of the House with all the Democrats and 4 Republicans voting Yea. We will continue to work to move this bill forward and push strongly for it to be heard in the Senate.

At this time, we do not know exactly which issues the community owners will want, but if they too bring the bills they wanted last session, then we will continue to challenge their “no cause” eviction bill and may look for ways to work with the community owners on an expanded relocation assistance program and a bill that would allow new communities to be built provided there are built-in guarantees that homeowners be given long-term security of tenure and fair rents.

Ishbel Dickens, Consultant

Golden Rose HOA wins! Community owner must maintain carports and sheds!

As an HOA - Yes We Can Get Things Done! Approximately five years ago when I moved into Golden Rose Mobile Park, a 55+ community, the mood was mostly happy and it was a beautiful park (for the most part, it still is). Cal-Am Properties, the owner of Golden Rose, was receptive to resident requests for minor changes or fixes that the then Tenants Association requested. However the main concerns were the decaying storage sheds and carport roofs – two items Cal-Am was not interested in discussing with the homeowners.

During my first 2 years at Golden Rose, the manager stated the carports and sheds were our problem and expense to fix. As time went on management started having new homeowners sign an addition to their leases agreeing to be responsible for carports and sheds.

We homeowners were not willing to accept this, and so with guidance and help from **AMHO**, we formed our homeowners' association (HOA) and requested a meeting with upper management. In May 2016 our Board had its first meeting with the regional manager where we shared the following concerns:

- Our clubhouse needed repairs
- We wanted more flexibility in the use and decorating of the club house
- Electric repairs were needed, and
- We needed Cal Am to maintain and repair the sheds and carports.

The HOA Board gave copies of RCW 59.20 (Act) to management and their response was that they would respond in a month. We scheduled a second meeting in June 2016 where management agreed to some of our concerns. They also stated that there would be no retaliation as a result of us raising these concerns with them (which is just as well, since retaliation is prohibited under the Act). However, Cal Am remained firm that the sheds and carports were our problem. A third meeting was scheduled, but it never happened, so the Board continued discussion with Management. We have sent three registered letters to their corporate office, but to date have had no response.

So, in June 2017, we gave all the homeowners a form to list out their issues related to their carports and sheds. We got about 85% response from homeowners and we gave these to management who then, much to our surprise and delight, agreed to fix the sheds and carports while not admitting fault!

I am pleased to report that as of today, they have done minimal repairs to 15 units, It is a start, and hopefully they will continue to repair the others, since RCW 59.20.135(2) clearly states that landlords are responsible for the maintenance and repair of permanent structures (including carports and sheds).

Unfortunately, on Oct 6, 2017, we were notified of a rent increase coming in January 2018. In 2016 and 2017 the increase was \$19.00/month. In 2018 the increase will be

\$34.00/month. Most homeowners are on fixed income and do not have an extra \$34.00/month for increased rent payments. They will have to choose food, medicine or rent. Tough choices indeed!

Gary Lunde, **AMHO** Board Member

Eastern Washington Report

I was invited by the Sonary Crest Home Owners Association to take part in their quarterly membership meeting in Clarkston, WA on Wednesday October 11.

The meeting was primarily organized to invite the two State Representatives of the 9th district, Representative Joe Schmick and Representative Mary Dye to hear from seniors about rising rents and poor treatment of manufactured home owners in their district. Joe Schmick has been invited before but Mary Dye is new to this as a freshman legislator and believe you me they received an ear full from the almost 100 in attendance.

Gerry Trepard presented his rent justification power point program and it was a real eye opener for everyone to see and hear his remarks about home ownership and what happens to your investment every time the rent goes up.

I was invited to give an overview of **AMHO** and what we have been doing the past ten years and what we have accomplished on the legislative front. I took 25 sets of **AMHO** applications and they were all gone after the meeting. I told three or four folks after the meeting that I would be happy to come back to Clarkston to present the First Steps program on forming a HOA (Home Owners Association).

The good folks at Sonary Crest are to be commended for their efforts to put this program together. I believe there were five or six communities represented at this meeting. Let's hope some bridges were built and future meetings and discussions will be made available to more home owners across the state.

It was an exciting day for me and I can hardly wait to go back to Clarkston.

Randy Chapman, **AMHO** Vice President

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Meeting with the Attorney General's Alternative Dispute Resolution Program Staff

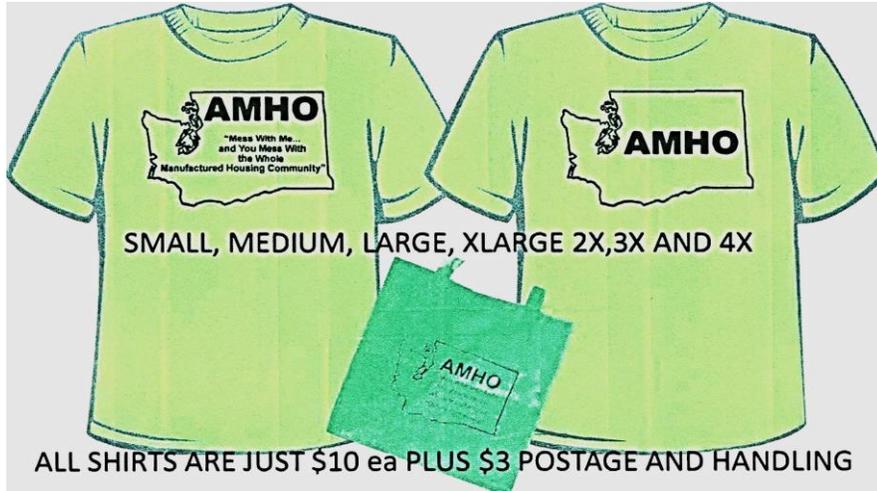
AMHO Board members met with staff of the Manufactured Housing Dispute Resolution Program (MHDRP) at the Office of the Attorney General on Wednesday, June 14th. While only **AMHO** members were available to attend, the meeting had been requested by the Legislative Planning Group (LPG) - a cooperative effort of stakeholders which includes members of both **AMHO** and MHOA.

Jan Sylvester, Anne Sadler, Jim Fry, and Ted and Sheriann Grimes from **AMHO**, and Maureen Roat, Senior Staff Attorney at the Legal Action Center met with MHDRP staff Cynthia Lockridge (facilitator), Leona Hill, Brad Furer, Marc Worthy, and Shannon Smith.

Highlights of the discussion:

- MHDRP Staff are aware of the shortcomings of their program and certain processes have been revised. We will need to stay vigilant to ensure that the revisions meet homeowners' needs.
- Part of this, the refining and improving efficiency of the intake process, began a year ago. It unfortunately did not relieve the bog down in investigations or the highly delayed administrative closure process.
- Staff agreed that there are issues surrounding both the investigative process and the violation prosecution procedures. They are in the process of hiring a new AAG and another position has been added for investigations.
- The MHDRP staff are aware of existing problems and future potential problems related to aging infrastructure as communities age without appropriate maintenance and upkeep on the part of the landlords.
- Staff acknowledges that they have not done a good job outreaching to homeowners. They may remedy this by a mass mailing to homeowners and also multi-community seminars. (There have been several educational meetings scheduled throughout the state in the past month, but these have been very poorly attended – a mass mailing might have helped increase attendance).
- All parties acknowledge the Master Park List available on the Dept. of Commerce website is not a complete master list, but the MHDRP staff state that it is not within their authority. Leona indicates that she has a list that she refers to when disputes come in. Leona is interested in seeing a comparison between what she has and what the homeowners have compiled, and welcomes new/updated information.
- We all presumed that enforcement of collection of the community owner's registration fee was the responsibility of MHDRP staff. Shannon Smith informed us that their attempt to legally enforce resulted in a Judge advising them that the wording within the statute did not grant them sufficient authority!
- MHDRP staff are enthusiastically receptive to hosting any such discussions/meetings between homeowners and community owners. They view it as being part of their responsibility and want to facilitate improved communication between all of us - them included. *The conversation will continue ...*

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