

LIVE OUT LOUD
PRESENTS THE 17TH ANNUAL

Young Trailblazers Gala

June 11th
The Times Center
New York City

Young Leaders Start Here.
Give back and Advocate.

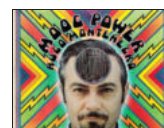
For more information
please visit our website at
www.liveoutloud.info

[Home](#) | [Calendar](#) | [Contests & Sweepstakes](#) | [Our Staff](#) | [In Print](#) | [Get updates](#) | [Ad Info](#)
[Classified Advertising](#) | [Jobs](#)

Search in site...

The People That
You Meet When
You're Walking
Down the Street —
Or Avenue

Chelseanow



The Good, the Bad
and the Groovy:
Rediscovering the
Music of Hugo
Montenegro

[HOME](#) | [NEWS](#) | [EDITORIAL](#) | [HEALTH](#) | [WHY PINK?](#) | [ARTS](#) | [SPECIAL SECTIONS](#) | [JOBS](#) | [ADVERTISE](#)

[Calendar](#) | [Contests & Sweepstakes](#) | [Our Staff](#) | [In Print](#) | [Get updates](#) | [Ad Info](#) | [Classified Advertising](#) | [Jobs](#)

Wednesday, May 30, 2018

Knowledgeable Tenants Challenge Lack of Utilities, Shady Landlord Tactics

Added by **Scott Stiffler** on April 19, 2017.

Saved under **News**

Share This Post



Tweet



L to R: Kelly Maurer and Alison Moore are among a new breed of tenants with the savvy to document and challenge falsely filed DOB permit applications. Photo by Caleb Caldwell.

BY WINNIE McCROY | As rents continue to skyrocket in the Chelsea area, some landlords are going to extreme lengths to ditch existing tenants, spruce up their units, and rent them at much higher rates as “luxury apartments.” But tenants who want to remain in their homes are becoming increasingly savvy, reaching out to the NYC Department of Buildings (DOB) and their elected officials at the first sign of violations.

For Kelly Maurer and Jordan Lage, longtime residents at 311 W. 21st St., the last straw came earlier this month, when their 12-year-old daughter was hit in the head during softball practice. After taking her to the emergency room, they returned to a home that had no gas to cook her dinner, no hot water for her to take a bath, and no heat.

Socialize

DreamJobs NYC

**CLICK HERE
FOR CALENDAR!**

Sponsored Content

DTV Installations LLC
SMART HOME FOR SMART PEOPLE
Since 2007

Kick off Pride Month at the
2018 Community Leadership Awards & Gala!
June 14th 6:30–11:30 pm
26 Bridge St., Brooklyn NY
Dinner, Drinks & Dancing!
Get Tickets Now!

All proceeds directly support activities at
 brooklyn
COMMUNITY PRIDE CENTER
igotbrooklyn.org

Artwork by
1981 & 1982

Need Solutions

BURNER
LAW GROUP, P.C.

"That was when I said to myself, 'Enough!' We have lived in this building for 18 years and it's our home," said Maurer. "But all of the renters who were not regulated have been pushed out, our gas has been off for over a year, no maintenance is being done except trash removal, and we often have no heat or hot water."

FROM OUR SISTER NEWSPAPERS

THE VILLAGER

Following a gas leak, Con Edison cut off the gas in February 2016. The building's gas system is the Rubell, secured permits from the DOB on May 23, 2016 for construction on the fifth floor. It rained on their parade, but they danced on.

City Management Corporation

We got the ball rolling; How Pr. 40 fight brought us Hudson River Park

From splintered piers to fancy park of today, we've come a long way

Keeping cool on the West Side, 1940s style

Fish, forests and fields coming to Tribeca pier



DOWNTOWN EXPRESS

Police Blotter: Week of May 24

Cacophony of colors brings harmony at Governors Island Holi Hai celebration

Wave vs. glacier: Slow pace of resiliency plans will leave Downtown at risk for many years to come

Once upon a moral panic...

All booked up: CB1 worries zoning change will push more hotels into crowded Downtown



A Stop Work Order on the door of 311 W. 21st St. Photo by Caleb Caldwell.

renovations to make the building nicer for everyone. But over time, that didn't seem to be the case.

"As it turns out, they were being disingenuous," said Lage. "They didn't come out and say they were trying to get as many people as possible out of the building so they could renovate these into luxury duplexes and jack up the rent, but that's what has become clear to the tenants that still remain."

Other tenants told him that the landlord sent workers to their apartments, ostensibly to replace the gas lines. But they were disconcerted when workers who didn't appear to be from the gas company arrived to measure their *entire* apartment with 3D-imaging scanning machines.

Lage said they later discovered those workers were from the property management firm Archidata. Tenants were advised by the DOB that if the landlord insisted the measurements were necessary, they should instruct him to "get it in writing from the DOB, then you come down to us and verify it."

"That had nothing to do with replacing the gas lines," said Lage angrily. "It all points to one thing, which is that they want to get as many people out as they legally can. They want to attract people of higher socioeconomic strata that Kelly and I."

Elder Law, Estate Planning,
Guardianships, Trusts & Estates
(212) 867-3520
burnerlaw.com

GAY CITY NEWS

Sheltering Homeless Youth 21-24 Gets \$1MM in New City Budget

Connie Kurtz, Lesbian Activist, Artist, Dies at 82

Albany LGBTQI Advocacy Day Draws 250

Band of Brothers

HOP: Nabe Complaints Led to New Parade Route

after the contractor on permit withdrew

EAST VILLAGER NEWS

led on March 9, 2017,

after the o Among powerful friends, Chin enters her second term

contractor to supersede the Top cop says special unit, outreach can cut thefts

original pe Muscle-headed gym keeps flouting regs with illegal signage

int, Judge says city broke the law by approving N.Y.U. superblocks plan

residents l De Blasio seems on same page with evicted news vendor

g ge into the building after

marrying her high school

heart, Dwight, who has

here since 1994. She

e was struck by its

on, but made the best

of it by purchasing an electric

skillet, kettle, rice cooker, and

Reading to try and find out

our ability to cook for

ourselves.

HOUSING CALENDAR CONTESTS & SWEEPSTAKES OUR STAFF IN PRINT GET UPDATES ABOUT CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING JOBS RSS

↑ CHELSEANOW.COM

chelseanow.com | NYC Community Media, Inc.

©Chelseanow.com (Copyright 2017). Unauthorized use and/or duplication of this material without express and written permission from this site's author and/or owner is strictly prohibited. Excerpts and links may be used, provided that full and clear credit is given to Chelseanow.com with appropriate and specific direction to the original content.

RESIDENTS' OPTIMISM

WANES | Lage, who called while on business in China just to share his story, said that initially, representatives from NYC Management Corp. assured him that they wanted to come in and do



With no gas for the stove, Alison Moore and her husband, Dwight, had to purchase an electric skillet, kettle, rice cooker, and Keurig to “try and round out our ability to cook for ourselves.” Photo by Caleb Caldwell.

Moore recalls allowing these so-called “gas inspectors” into her apartment, saying, “A woman in high heels and a fur coat showed up with a team of three very young workers, and wanted to walk through my whole apartment with their 3D device. I tend to be very trusting that people are abiding by the law, but I’d never seen this scale of rampant deception and lying. It turns out they came to measure our spaces. They weren’t gas repair people, and no gas line repairs were ever made.”

By then, Lage and his wife had spoken with folks at City Hall, the DOB, and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) about the lack of gas, but were advised to either take their new landlord to Housing Court over the lack of services or ask for a rent reduction.

A spokesperson at HPD told Chelsea Now, “HPD is aware of maintenance concerns in this building and continues to closely monitor the situation. HPD issued violations for lack of heat and hot water, which were subsequently remedied by the owner and verified by HPD as resolved. HPD has a pending lawsuit against the owner seeking to compel the owner to resolve all other violations, including the outstanding problems with the lack of cooking gas.”

PATTERN OF HARASSMENT? | Although no real construction has begun at 311 W. 21st St., tenants say they are already experiencing some of the early stages of what has become known as “construction as harassment” (as noted by Chelsea Now in April 2016).

Maurer said that neighbors have become accustomed to calling 311 every week to complain about random shutdowns of the building’s heat and hot water. Moore said her husband had gotten used to taking cold showers every morning. Health issues prevent her from doing the same, so bathing has been confined to the times when there is hot water available.

“Every time they do it, we call 311 and complain, and they jump through hoops to file a report and fix it,” said Moore. “The building turns it on long enough for the complaint to go away, but the next day they turn it off again.”

Moore said the apartments are often freezing during the night, compelling her and Dwight to each sleep wearing hoodies and two pairs of socks. Several tenants reported getting sick from the lack of heat.

“But the most difficult thing is that we no longer have a front door buzzer,” said Moore. “There’s no way to communicate with people at the door. We can hear them buzz, but we often have to run down five flights to let them in.”

Residents later discovered that the landlord had applied for a permit with the DOB, claiming the building was unoccupied with no rent-stabilized or rent-controlled tenants, and no need for tenant protection. That’s when they knew it was time to take things to the next level.



Kelly Maurer with a message from her family to NYC Management Corp. "We have lived in this building for 18 years," she said, "and it's our home." Photo by Caleb Caldwell.

DOB REJECTS LANDLORD'S PERMIT | At their wit's end, tenants finally reached out to Councilmember Corey Johnson's office and described the situation. Maurer said she was stunned to receive a return call in 15 minutes. Johnson's office worked to get the original owners' name off the permit. But soon after, NYC Management had their names put on the same permit. Maurer went back to Johnson's office, and they got the DOB to revoke that particular permit.

"My office has met with the tenants at 311 West 21st Street and we have engaged the Department of Buildings and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development on this property," Johnson told Chelsea Now. "Earlier this month, DOB conducted a special audit for falsifying their work permit, which said that this building was unoccupied and did not have rent-regulated tenants living in the building. DOB has disapproved their work permit and we will continue to work with city agencies and the tenants living in this building to ensure they are safe and are able to remain in their homes."

A representative at the DOB said they conducted an audit of 311 W. 21st St. on March 31, and it failed. The landlord was cited for falsification of **PW1** (Plan/Work) occupancy and stabilization, the need for tenant protections on a work permit, and was found in violation of "energy compliance regulations."

They were given a notice to revoke that permit. A few days later, Maurer discovered via the DOB website that NYC Management Corp. had resubmitted an application for another permit, again alleging that the building was unoccupied with no rent-stabilized or rent-controlled tenants, and no need for tenant protections.

The DOB said the permit application was denied on April 7 during the scheduled exam plan, noting that they will continue to closely monitor this property to ensure the safety of the tenants.

As Johnson noted, "Tenants have a right to be safe in their homes, and landlords must abide by the law when filing for work permits. Unfortunately, with real estate prices at record highs and a desire to expedite construction activities, some bad actors will stop at nothing to force tenants out of their rent-regulated units by refusing their tenants the required protection plans."



At least the stove makes a decent countertop: Kelly Maurer has been using a hot plate ever since the building's gas was cut off in Feb. 2016. Photo by Caleb Caldwell.

Maurer admitted that after attending a community meeting hosted by Borough President Gale Brewer's office, she had met many people whose situations were even worse than theirs. But, she said, "Why should we wait for horrible things to happen here? I'm the mother of a 12-year-old, and I don't want to wait until there's lead dust flying through the air. It is very frightening."

In the face of mounting cases like this, elected officials have begun fighting back. City Councilmember Helen Rosenthal's "Intro No. 1523" seeks to create a new office of Tenant Advocate at the DOB. And Attorney General Eric Schneiderman's new legislation, proposed on April 12, would strengthen existing tenant harassment laws, and make it easier to prosecute landlords who force rent-regulated tenants to vacate.

"Look, we understand that the building has been purchased, and they have the right to do construction, but they have to do it legally," said Maurer. "When we're dealing constantly with false work permits, it's hard to believe anything else they say. They are working from the point of view of 'you don't exist, your homes don't exist, and therefore we don't have to protect you.'"

New York City Management Corp. did not respond to Chelsea Now's repeated requests for comment.



A leaky roof caused this water damage. Photo by Caleb Caldwell.

Comments

No Cooking Gas in NYC for Unwanted Tenants

says:

April 27, 2017 at 11:19 am

[...] Williamsburg, residents have been without cooking gas for over a year. So have the residents of a building in Chelsea. One woman interviewed by Gothamist has been without cooking gas for four months in her apartment [...]

20 Months After Shutoff, Tenants Still Getting Burned by Lack of Cooking Gas | chelseanow.com

says:

October 25, 2017 at 6:27 pm

[...] an Apr. 19 article (“Knowledgeable Tenants Challenge Lack of Utilities, Shady Landlord Tactics”), Chelsea Now first reported about an ongoing situation at the five-story apartment building at [...]

Tenacious Tenants Seek Solutions as Gas Outages Go On for Years | chelseanow.com

says:

November 29, 2017 at 2:40 pm

[...] the gas. Lage and his partner, Kelly Maurer have lived in the building for nearly 19 years. But in the spring, when their 12-year-old daughter was injured and they realized they had no gas to cook her dinner, [...]

A Speaker Talks: Corey Johnson on District 3, Chelsea, Future of City | chelseanow.com

says:

January 17, 2018 at 6:13 pm

[...] like those Chelsea Now reported on at 311 W. 21st St., 206 Ninth Ave., and 336 W. 17th St. (see “Knowledgeable Tenants Challenge Lack of Utilities, Shady Landlord Tactics”). Johnson’s office said the increasing number of incidents in individual buildings in Chelsea [...]

A Speaker Talks: Corey Johnson on District 3, Chelsea, Future of City | Chelsea Daily News

says:

January 17, 2018 at 6:36 pm

[...] like those Chelsea Now reported on at 311 W. 21st St., 206 Ninth Ave., and 336 W. 17th St. (see “Knowledgeable Tenants Challenge Lack of Utilities, Shady Landlord Tactics”). Johnson’s office said the increasing number of incidents in individual buildings in Chelsea [...]

0 Comments

Sort by **Newest**



Add a comment...

Facebook Comments Plugin