

THE MHA UPDATE

created by our neighbors, for our neighbors

Welcome to our new MHA newsletter!

Spotlight On...Dave Powell, MHA Executive Director

MHA Executive Director Dave Powell is a skilled organizer and negotiator with a long track record in advocacy. A lifelong New Yorker, Dave has been an organizer for the Metropolitan Council on Housing, the NY State Tenants & Neighbors Coalition and the Southern Bronx River Watershed Alliance. Before joining the MHA staff, he was Director of Organizing and Advocacy at the Fifth Avenue Committee in Brooklyn.

I served on the committee to find our new Executive Director and was thrilled when we offered Dave the position and he accepted. So you can imagine my delight when, after watching him in action, I discovered that Dave possessed a rare talent not to be found on a resume: he is a wonderful listener - a crucial quality in a leader and a virtue that allows for fair decision-making.

Since joining us last March, Dave has acted quickly to address our deepest concerns, including keeping our maintenance fees as low as possible and completing long overdue building repairs. Dave and the board are also reaching out to shareholders, inviting them to join committees to which they can bring their skills and to play a role in revitalizing the MHA.

Dave came to us with an intimate understanding of our community's high-octane political activism. Amazingly, though not totally a co-incidence, he was previously involved with the stunning documentary, *"It Took 50 Years—Frances Goldin And the Struggle for Cooper Square,"* the story of our MHA history (www.ittook50.com)

In his own words, "My neighborhood history includes involvement with ABC No Rio arts center on Rivington Street (1990 to present) and working in coalition with local housing organizations. I also had the privilege of knowing Armando Perez and spending time at CHARAS/El Bohio in the 1990s; I am hopeful about de Blasio's recent promise to restore this important resource to our community."

As you can see, Dave, a pragmatist, is also an optimist. I am so pleased that for this next, exciting chapter in our history, we have made such a great choice for our future.

~By Barry Keating

MHA BUILDING UPDATES

Major Capital Repairs – Our Maintenance Dollars at Work

We completed the following items between December 2017 and March 2018:

- Scraped, primed and painted the fire escapes of 63 and 65 East 4th Street, 13 Stanton Street, and 83 2nd Avenue.
- Installed a railing on a section of the roof at 71 East 4th Street as a safety measure.
- Repaired the basement at 57 East 4th Street to shore up collapsing walls and ceilings.
- Saved a significant amount of money by installing silicone coatings on the roofs of 89 East 3rd Street and 13 Stanton Street, deferring the cost of replacing the roofs entirely.
- While replacing the roof of 83 2nd Avenue, we found and removed patches of asbestos. All traces of the material have been removed and the roof is complete.



Photo by Derek Berg

Did You Know?

FREEZE YOUR MAINTENANCE OR RENT

If you or someone in your household is a senior or disabled, you may qualify for a maintenance fee or rent FREEZE.

Contact the Cooper Square Committee for details:

(212) 228-8210



AVOID EVICTION:

NO Airbnb!

Under certain conditions, MHA residents may sublet their apartments. However, subletting without permission -- or renting out your apartment through websites like Airbnb -- is grounds for eviction.

Don't risk it.

For more information about MHA sublet rules, contact Joel Hernandez, Director of Operations, at (212) 477-5340 or jhernandez@cmha.org

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD ~ TRAGIC FIRE LEADS TO LABOR REFORM

This month we take a moment to remember the 146 garment workers who perished in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, the deadliest industrial fire in New York City's history. The date: March 25th, 1911 at the Asch Building in Greenwich Village.

Many were Jewish and Italian immigrants who came to this country looking to lead better lives during a time when sweatshops on the Lower East Side supplied garments for the United States. Most lived in nearby slum tenements. Forty-three-year-old Providenza Panno was the oldest among the 123 women and 23 men who died; 14-year-old Kate Leone and Rosaria Maltese were the youngest.

These workers didn't die in vain. Their families, friends, neighbors and fellow workers raised their voices in protest. From their struggles arose greater worker protections and stronger fire safety codes. They birthed a spirit of protest in our neighborhood that kept on empowering activists, such as MHA co-founder Frances Goldin, a longtime advocate for affordable housing.

~ By Adrian Savage and Mia Vox



Int'l Ladies' Garment Workers' Union Archives, Cornell Univ.

OUR MHA HISTORY ~ HOME SWEET HOVEL

I was wiping the chimney soot and brick dust from my face when there was a knock at the door. Just a few months before in the fall of 1979, I had moved into a Dostoevsky-esque garret at 13 East 3rd Street. All hovels in tenement buildings back then had annoying hidden features, revealed shortly after moving in, like leaky windows, cranky radiators or impromptu visits of crepuscular toxic dust clouds caused by vintage debris cascading down decrepit chimneys onto rodent-chewed floors. "Oh, look. A fireplace," I said when I first saw my new-home-for-now. "Does it work?"

The knock, a very gentle one, had almost unhinged the door, a sheet of plywood that didn't align with the doorsill. The doorsill didn't align with the hallway, the hallway with the stairwell, the stairwell with the one above or below.

"Can we talk to you about home ownership," a man's voice said. I opened the door. "Sure, where?" I asked. "Here." "It's fine to talk here," I said. "But where's this home you're talking about?" There were two or three friendly faces, including one who looked like he'd been born holding a clipboard. "I've never met a man named Valery before." "It's Valerio," he said. (We now know him as Valerio Orselli, our former longtime MHA executive director.)

He said he once worked for something called ACORN and now at something called the Cooper Square Committee and would I sign the petition on his clipboard? He explained that with enough signatures we the people could get the City to turn the buildings over to us the people. As I signed – my first petition! –, I felt a little sheepish. I really wasn't one of the people. I'd be gone in a year or two. Yes, the rent was only \$55 a month but something big was going to happen for me because I was young!

It did. Because of all those signatures and the years of the MHA staff and board's hard work, I've lived for decades in a beautifully renovated apartment, free of dust clouds and almost all mice, and pay a maintenance that only amounts to about \$55 in 1979 dollars.

~ By Donna Brodie

RESOURCES FOR MHA RESIDENTS

Community Swim and Fitness at University Settlement/ Chinatown YMCA (212) 475-5008

273 Bowery (south of East Houston Street, next to Whole Foods) ~ Neighborhood residents can use the YMCA's facilities without paying the monthly membership fee. Instead, affordable per-visit payment options are available. Includes classes and access to the pool, locker rooms, and all gym equipment.

New York Public Library

Ottendorfer Branch (212) 674-0947

135 2nd Avenue (between St. Marks Place and East 9th Street) ~ Our local library branch offers many entertainment and educational opportunities. These include movie screenings on Tuesday nights, story time for babies and toddlers, a book club, resume and job search training, a conversation group for English language learners, open mic nights and more.

IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS

CSMHA: During Business Hours (212) 477-5340 / For After Hours Emergencies: (212) 396-8927

Cooper Square Committee: (212) 228-8210

Public Assistance, SNAP Benefits, Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP): 311

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