

The DEMOCRATIC Voice of NJ HOA Owners

by the **CIHC**, Common Interest Homeowners Coalition of NJ

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HOW to CONTACT the CIHC:

Call Ellen Vastola
(Current President) at
732-873-3446,
preferably mornings
after 8:30 am.

CIHC History in brief:

The CIHC began as a group of owners who were brought together by the NJ Assembly Task Force investigating the issues/problems that were affecting owners in their communities. 1997.

These owners created an organization with a Mission and By-Laws, in order to effectively communicate with Legislators, owners and others concerned with community living issues. 1998

Over the years, the CIHC has spoken to many Legislators to help create Bills that could be passed into law protecting community owners. To this date, no new Bills have been passed that would help or hurt owners. Many aggrieved owners have come to the CIHC for help when they encountered problems in their communities and have nowhere else to go. Now 15 years after its inception, owners still reach out for help **and the CIHC is still here for them.**

Message from the **CIHC** President, *Ellen Vastola 2013:*

Welcome to the Spring 2013 issue of the **CIHC** newsletter.

Winter is almost over and warmer weather is on the way. With that, most of us look forward to spending more time outside and enjoying the amenities of our communities in New Jersey.

Spring might reveal some issues in community living:

- Lawn care
- Outdoor facilities
- Dog feces
- Recreational activities
- And recovery from Hurricane Sandy

Do you know what **your By-Laws** say about the above? Have you inspected the contracts of the contractors who are charged with performing duties around the above? Exercise your right of inspection.

BE the VOICE of responsible ownership and hold the appropriate parties ACCOUNTABLE for their actions or inaction. This is what community living and grass roots government is all about.

Let's join together as a powerful VOICE for DEMOCRACY in our HOAs!

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Current **PROPOSED** Legislation in NJ 2012-2013!

NJ Assembly:

- A 140 – E. Peterson (developer post bond w/ DCA)
- A 689 – S. Kean (prohibits conflict of interest in HOAs)
- A 1730 – J. Green & S. Turner (companion Senate Bill S1132; membership & mgmt of HOAs)
- A 2246 – Prieto (Owner's rights & obligations)

NJ Senate:

- S 935 – Van Drew (elections)
- S 1132 - (companion Assembly Bill A 1730; see above)

Do you know any of these legislators?

Contact them with **your** HOA issues and get their support!



This space is for a continuing multi-part series on **Lois & Sam Pratt**, founding members of the **CIHC** & authors of the *Homeowners Bill of Rights*.

In 1968, **Dr. Lois Pratt** was appointed Professor of Sociology at **Jersey City State College** where she taught and published numerous scholarly works in the sociology of health, death, and gerontology. In her 44-year career, she also held professional positions at **Central Michigan University, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Cornell University Medical College, and Columbia University**.

After retirement, **Lois**, together with her late husband, **Sam**, continued to pursue research and writing focusing on the governance of non-profit organizations.

Lois & Sam Pratt were founding members of the **Common-Interest Homeowners Coalition (CIHC)**.

- Lois** served as President of this organization for the last two years of her life. In that capacity, **Dr. Pratt** worked tirelessly to advance the rights of homeowners living in condominiums and planned unit developments in New Jersey.
- Homeowners Bill of Rights**. (below & to be continued in future issues)

A BILL OF RIGHTS FOR HOMEOWNERS IN RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

Lois Pratt, Ph.D. and Samuel Pratt, Ph.D.

"A bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular, and what no just government should refuse." (Thomas Jefferson, 1787)

This is an exploration of the fundamental and the particular rights that accrue to homeowners in residential community associations (RCA). This is not a legal document. It is a document based on the traditions of American democracy as they apply to the RCA form of housing.

(to be continued next issue)

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MORE References to increase your knowledge of HOA issues:

- **NJ Condo Act.** NJS 46:8B-1
- *"The Good, Bad and Ugly"*; New home construction in NJ, 2005.
- **NJ Planned Real Estate Development Full Disclosure Act (PREDFDA).** NJS 45:22A-21
- **YOUR Association's BY-LAWS!** Read them, know them, USE them!

Did you know that you can (should) find your governing docs (Master Deed & By-Laws, or POS = Public Offering Statement) in your County Clerk's office? It is a good way to check if your Board properly documents new resolutions, or for you get a copy if you cannot get one. Also, some Property Mgmt companies have the governing docs on CD which they can copy and give to owners at no cost! YOU NEED THIS!



What the **CIHC** is currently doing/update:

- To continue our re-structure from a membership driven to a Board driven organization, we need interested persons w/ varied skill sets to be on the Board. **Do you want to serve on the Board? Please submit your "bio" to E. Vastola for the Board's consideration.**
- The CIHC website is currently undergoing renovation to better serve our and your needs. Look for it soon!
- Please make a contribution to the CIHC! Even a \$20-25 contribution (or MORE) will help us continue to support YOU.



QUOTES of the DAY:

"Democracy is advanced citizenship". Michael Douglas (in *the American President*, 1995 movie)

"It is dangerous to be right in matters on which the established authorities are wrong". Voltaire

*** * For YOUR INFORMATION! * ***

**The Cooperator is holding its annual EXPO in Secaucus,
on May 1, 2013; Wednesday.**

You do need to PRE-register. Registration is FREE.

Go to . . . <http://www.nj-expo.com/>

In 2012, the hall was filled with vendors who service communities (lawn, roofing, pool, legal firms, property management, maintenance, etc). Come EARLY. . . parking fills up fast. Typically there are seminars on useful topics.

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CIHC goes to “Concerned Homeowner meetings” in support of the abused owners:

I have been honored to be invited to attend a number of meetings of abused owners in some HOAs around NJ. My context is to support these owners by bringing references/resources to them and assist in their education as they tackle the daunting task of “taking back” their association(s). As current President, I am continuing the legacy of attending these meetings from a previous President, N. Baker.

I have learned a lot from talking to the many owners referred to me and then by attending their meetings. I have seen courage and perseverance; patience and strength of character. It never fails to inspire me. This is the **American Spirit!**

CASE STUDY #1: I have been invited and have attended several meetings for one community close to where I live. One woman (a senior) in that association is leading the way. She began with just herself and some concerns. She educated herself and started asking questions of the Board and Property Manager. When she did **not** get satisfaction from them, she talked to her neighbors and kept talking. She then started a petition. She arranged for a meeting in a room in a local motel; over 60 people attended. She invited a Real Estate representative, myself and others to speak about community issues. She kept on reaching out and questioning. She was “stalked” in her community as she walked around leaving flyers to gain support. She has learned to get a permit for the flyers and call the Police when she is being followed. (*you go girl!*) Along the way, she has gathered together a *core group of owners* who help her with the “fight for the community”. She is no longer doing it alone. Then she hosted a second meeting at the motel and close to 100 owners showed up and most signed a petition. Also in attendance (by invitation) were her NJ Assemblyman and the Deputy Mayor of the town. At this meeting the Property Manager came with an owner proxy, saying he was there to represent the owner. A Board member came with him. From where I sat, the Property Manager and Board member came to disrupt the meeting, which they almost did, **AND** find out what she/they were doing. Clearly they were agitating some owners with their statements and some owners felt inhibited by their presence. Thanks to the Deputy Mayor, who was invited and attended, the disruption was ended when she called the Chief of Police for assistance to maintain “calm” at the meeting. Now, this woman & her team are looking to bring legal action for some of their grievances.

What did I learn from this woman? That one voice can become many with dedication to a higher purpose. That you should inform your legislators about your community’s issues. That you should think outside the box! That barriers needn’t stop you; find a way around the barriers! That speaking softly and on point can make a difference. Don’t do it alone – you **NEED** help!

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We welcome contributions from NJ residents who share in the goals/mission of the C-IHC. We need funds for: maintenance of our website, postal mailings, flyer production & distribution, expenses for contacting legislators and others, periodic meetings, speakers, etc. IF you share our Mission and Goals, please contribute. We are a NJ 501(c)4 organization.

Please print out this PAGE/form & send your helpful Contribution to:

Common-Interest Homeowners Coalition,
Post Office Box 1511, Hightstown, NJ 08520.

Contributing Categories: (fill in the blank)

- **Premium Contributor:** \$100 or more _____
- **Sustaining Contributor :** \$30 or more _____
- **Regular Contributor:** \$20 _____
- **Interested person:** \$ _____

Please **PRINT CLEARLY!** Enclosed is my check for \$ _____

Name _____

H-phone _____ W or C-phone _____

Email _____

Address _____

Town _____ Zip _____

Name of Assoc. _____

THANK YOU for your (continued) **SUPPORT!**

Your contact information **will be held as CONFIDENTIAL/ CIHC use ONLY.**