



THE VOICE

COALITION OF MOBILEHOME OWNERS
GSMOL SUPPLEMENT ISSUE

Information CoMO-CAL has published about GSMOL

This THE VOICE is a summary of all information CoMO-CAL has published about Golden State Manufactured Homeowners League (GSMOL) to date (April 1, 2008). The purpose of CoMO-CAL, as stated in its bylaws is to “promote the general welfare of mobilehome owners.” Our leadership are all members of GSMOL, as are many of our members. Several GSMOL leaders are CoMO-CAL members. In fact we believe THE VOICE is read by all GSMOL leadership.

As members of the largest state wide advocacy group for mobilehome owners, we feel we have a right, even a responsibility, to bring up issues with GSMOL that concern us and should concern other mobilehome owners.

As a member of GSMOL since 2002 (I still am today) and I became a Chapter President of my park in Chatsworth on February 25, 2003. My whole family promoted and supported GSMOL. We built our Chapter up to 95 members strong (in a 200 space park). I attended the 2004 and 2006 GSMOL Conventions as a Delegate from Zone C. I have attended most GSMOL board meetings in Garden Grove between early 2003 and 2006. As a consequence, I know much about the ‘workings’ of GSMOL.

Because of my concerns with the Enforcement Legal Fund, GSMOL help at the Chapter level and membership loss, I formed a committee of eight GSMOL managers. The goal of this committee was to write a “recommendations report”

that could give GSMOL leadership direction to improve image, get more members, and generally “revive” the organization which had gone from over 90,000 members in the early 90’s to less than 20,000. This report was submitted in August 2004 to the GSMOL Board of Directors. Unfortunately it was not received well, and none of our recommendations were implemented.

Today our concerns continue to grow. Although the Enforcement Legal Fund was created in 2002, it has been used in only two cases. This money, approximately \$125,000, is GSMOL members money. And now there are rumors that some of it will be diverted for other expenses in the organization.

Again, this is not sour grapes. This is about transparency. Any member of any organization has a right to question what’s happening. Neither GSMOL nor CoMO-CAL should be immune from examination by their membership. We as leaders of CoMO-CAL welcome questions regarding our finances. We have nothing to hide. In fact we have published information about our finances and will continue to do so. We are proud of our accomplishments, accomplishments because of our sacrifices.

What is the ‘bottom line.’ All GSMOL members need to become active in their organization. They can not and should not blindly follow their leaders. They must start asking questions, perhaps hard questions.

How is CoMO-CAL Different From GSMOL?

We've been asked over and over—"Just what are the differences between CoMO-CAL and GSMOL?" Of course, one difference, we are the new kid on the block. GSMOL has been around 45 years, but that doesn't guarantee they're doing a good job today.

1. CoMO-CAL works in the "trenches," with individual park residents as well as park groups. We do not require a waiting period before we will help someone. In fact we often get calls from mobile home owners in distress who are not members and will chat with them "on the spot.." We know there is a growing need among mobile home owners for help. They have few, if any other resources for help.

2. We are happy to get calls from mobile home owners. Why? Because we know they often need someone to talk to about issues and concerns. We use this experience to gain knowledge we share with our membership.

On the other hand, the GSMOL Garden Grove staff often are not happy when you call for assistance or information. Why? Because the two ladies staffing the office in Garden Grove were hired as office staff to handle membership and accounting. They are not mobile home owners and it is not their job to council GSMOL members who call them. That is the responsibility of the V.P.'s and Managers. Unfortunately half the state has NO V.P.; neither Zone C nor Zone D have an acting Vice President.

3. GSMOL needs a certain number of members just to survive. Right now their membership is approximately 17,000. Anyone can do the math. 17,000 members at \$20.00/year that means GSMOL's income through membership dues is about \$340,000. They also have other sources of income such as advertising, which does bring additional income, so we estimate their income at

about \$400,000 per year.

So where is the problem? GSMOL spends tens of thousands of dollars on three items: office staff (2.5 full time office staff plus the Californian editor), corporate council and lobbyist in Sacramento, and their monthly publication, the Californian. In fact, each category demands about \$100,000 per year. That's right, GSMOL staff is not volunteer, but paid! That leaves essentially nothing to support GSMOL's volunteer network – those mobile home owners dedicated to helping others. GSMOL volunteers usually pay their expenses themselves!

GSMOL is in crisis because it can't cut expenses more than it has without making major changes in it's organizational structure. What would GSMOL be without a lobbyist? Or the office staff to run the organization? Or the Californian?

On the other hand, CoMO-CAL has no lobbyist. CoMO-CAL has no corporate council. We have no office staff and we have only spent a few hundred dollars for help with the newsletter. So right there our budget is about \$200,000 less than that of GSMOL. Our members dues go directly to helping members and building the organization. THE VOICE costs abut \$9.00 to print and mail per year.

That leaves about \$6.00 for other uses and we have done much with that money. We have equipped our "office" with four printers, a top of the line computer, two audio recorders, one camcorder, a file, staplers, membership software, and much more. We have paid various fees to become incorporated. We have retained an attorney (we have had our two attorneys comment on Proposition 90 and other issues – we have also consulted them with members problems) and have a terrific website. In 2006 we mailed over 5,000 fliers around California alerting residents to Proposition

90. We have such as printing and mailing fliers out to parks without CoMO-CAL members.

4. GSMOL is not a transparent organization. Members really know nothing of the organization, and unfortunately the great majority have not taken an active role. GSMOL leaders like it that way. In fact GSMOL has gone out of its way not to give information to the membership. Why? Because GSMOL has been losing members right and left. As a consequence, GSMOL is much less effective in Sacramento. If you attend a GSMOL Board of Directors meeting (and usually only a handful of members do), you are allowed to speak for three minutes. The Directors usually will not talk to you or comment.

CoMO-CAL on the other hand is a transparent organization. We have published our finances. Our membership knows where the money goes.

5. GSMOL must increase their membership to survive. It is a necessity simply because the way the organization is set up.

CoMO-CAL doesn't need more members. We can provide information and help to the members we have today just fine without adding one new member. And just ask our membership how we are doing. In fact, we did just that in the November 2006 THE VOICE (we printed a four page questionnaire and many returned it). And they said we are doing a good/excellent job – a breath of fresh air.

CoMO-CAL wants new members primarily for two reasons. Number One: We want to share THE VOICE, our website, and attorney/staff assistance with ALL mobile home owners across the state. Why? Because if everyone was educated and knowledgeable, the park owners and managers wouldn't be so bold to take advantage of us! And Number Two: we want to grow our membership—to promote UNITY and TEAMWORK among mobile home owners across the state.

6. You know from the last couple newsletters, we expect more of our members. We are constantly asking something from you, right? Fill out a questionnaire, send us information on lawsuits, information about happenings in their individual parks, etc. We need our members for that reason – not just for their \$15.00/year. We have often said “our members are our eyes and ears.”

7. We want you to be informed. We want you to have the information so they can make educated choices. We want you to know about other organizations. On the other hand, GSMOL does not publish information about other advocacy groups and usually feels other groups are “splinter groups” undermining GSMOL's organization.

8. CoMO-CAL makes an effort to alert mobile home owners that we exist. We have an ongoing program to mail fliers into parks without members. Why? Because we want to share with others. GSMOL, on the other hand, does not mail out fliers, although it has been suggested by concerned members many times. The GSMOL leadership always says GSMOL doesn't have the money for such efforts.

We realize writing about another organization is a bit controversial, but you deserve to know the facts. We welcome Tim Sheahan, President of GSMOL, or any other GSMOL leader to respond to any of our articles about GSMOL. Perhaps our members who also belong to GSMOL will take a more active role in both organizations.

This article was first printed in THE VOICE, January 2007 Pages 14 & 15

DEJAVU IN GARDEN GROVE**EDITORIAL By Frank Wodley, CoMO-CAL PRESIDENT**

Milt Burdick has been our GSMOL Zone C Vice President for over 6 years. "Uncle Miltie" was my mentor when I was GSMOL Chapter 159 President and GSMOL San Fernando Valley Associate Manager. He has been a hard working advocate for mobile home owners for many years. In my estimation, Milt was our only real voice on the Board of Directors. He spoke out on several issues, including GSMOL finances and legislation. It is my understanding that the "leadership" of GSMOL had had enough of Milt speaking out. This all came to a head at the June 2006 Board of Directors meeting in Garden Grove. On June 15, 2006 Milt sent me an email with the following letter attached. I publish it now because Milt just recently gave me permission.

GSMOL Zone C Vice President, June 15, 2006

To: GSMOL Board of Directors and GSMOL Members of Zone C

From: Milton Burdick, Vice President of Zone C;

Subject: Resignation

As of this date (June 15, 2006) I hereby resign my position as Vice President of Zone C (Los Angeles, Orange and San Bernardino Counties). In my term I have accomplished many goals, yet accomplished so little on increasing GSMOL membership. Office staff has been of great help to me during my term.

I carry no bitterness against anyone and will continue to support GSMOL and GSMOL goals. GSMOL is larger than all of us. You might say; then why are you resigning?

Lately I have been accused of being one of the causes of Divisiveness within and not being a

"Team Player" To me this means giving up my right to free speech and compromise my feelings and opinions on issues that I feel the membership is entitled to hear about and make their own decisions.

I am the type of person who does not fit the "Team" mold. I have taken on park managers and park owners and stand up for Homeowners when I feel park owners are wrong and continuously violating state and federal laws. I have and will continue to express my feelings on legislative issues which is one of the areas I have been accused of not being a "Team Player" When a law is not (my opinion) in the best interest of Mobilehome Owners---I intend on speaking out, not be part of a team and remain silent.

As I said above I will take on park managers and park owners when I feel they are wrong, this is the same way I feel about GSMOL leadership, when I feel they are going in the wrong direction, I will state my opinions and not remain silent just to be a team player. Present Board members know I have express my feelings in the past.

This resignation will be effected on my replacement or on September 1, 2006 which ever comes first. I will continue to assist office staff when requested to do so.

Signed: **Milt Burdick**

So who is George Smith and what does this have to do with Milt Burdick?

In **February 1999**, GSMOL Vice President George Smith filed a lawsuit against GSMOL. One complaint was as follows: (6) Contrary to the bylaws of the Corporation, the Corporation, through the acts of

the majority of the Board of Directors, continuously punish and remove officers and directors that dissent or otherwise oppose or refuse to support the policies of the majority directors. The means used to punish and remove dissenting directors are acts of humiliation, censure, withholding of expense reimbursements, the denial of corporate information, the refusal to allow dissenting directors an opportunity to present agenda items for consideration at directors meetings, the suspension of directors' and/or officers' powers and the termination of their membership in the Corporation. Once dissenting directors and/or officers are removed, the majority on the Board then appoints replacement directors and/or officers supportive of the policies and acts of the majority on the Board. In addition, the board deliberately withholds information from the members by censoring and removing all minority views from corporate publications and member communications. By these acts, the majority of the Board perpetuate themselves and their policies and undermine the rights of the members to elect their own representatives as provided in the Corporation's bylaws.

Mr. Smith's lawsuit was settled. As part of the settlement, it had to be printed in the Californian. Essentially GSMOL was required to follow their own bylaws, and let Corporate officers perform their duties, get them reimbursements, and freely express themselves. Also GSMOL had to conduct meetings in accordance with the Bylaws and Robert's Rules of Order, and could not deny renewal of membership to qualified members

So are these two issues related? I believe they are. GSMOL has and continues to shun those directors, managers and members who question the "leadership." George Smith and Milt Burdick are only the tip of the iceberg. Others include Rosemary Tomai, Jerry Lenhard, Don Hunter, John Sisker,

Ralph Weber, Tom Lockhart, myself, and many others. And more and more members are not renewing, more and more chapters are folding.

History

During the 40 some years GSMOL has been around, thousands of mobilehome owners have put their trust in it. And many of us have actively supported GSMOL without question, blindly following our leaders. Why? Because we trusted they were doing a good job for us and had our best interests at heart. After all, their own Bylaws state their purpose is "to promote the general welfare of mobile home owners."

In the early 90's GSMOL had over 90,000 members and a budget close to \$1.5 million. As Donald DeVore put it in his book "Mobile Home Wars," "GSMOL was so powerful that they were like a 500-pound gorilla looking for a fight." Mr. DeVore continues "In these past few years, their strength has dwindled and they have lost most, of not all of their power."

The purpose of GSMOL (as stated in their Bylaws) is "to promote the general welfare of mobile home owners." To me, this means helping us deal with issues such as interference of sales, rent control, retaliatory or unlawful evictions, out of control managers, and other serious issues experienced by mobile home owners, not just trying to get new laws. And what about enforcement of the laws we already have?

In my opinion, GSMOL has played a big part in allowing the serious issues we face today in our parks to manifest. Since GSMOL has essentially refused to help "in the trenches," has refused to draw a line in the sand, and has refused to stand up to the WMA and other park owner organizations, mobile home owners today are more vulnerable than ever before. And mobile home owners are now reluctant to join

any organization for fear they will not be receptive to their needs.

What has happened to GSMOL?

Many of us, including myself, have continued to support GSMOL in spite of it's issues. Many had hoped that GSMOL's new president, Tim Sheahan, former Zone D Vice President and member of the Board of Directors for several years, would lead GSMOL in a new direction.

Unfortunately this hope has not materialized. The Californian, GSMOL's monthly newsletter, has not been published the last three months. The website has not been updated. Certainly it would have been easy enough to put something on the website explaining the situation to GSMOL members. And there are many other issues—too numerous to report here. And GSMOL is short two of its four Vice Presidents.

One Common Thread?

Over the years there has been a common thread in GSMOL, their Lobbyist and Corporate Counsel Maurice Priest. He has been with GSMOL over 25 years. Mr. Priest is an attorney and receives a salary from GSMOL for each position. He also runs Resident Owned Parks, Inc. (ROP). Although leaders have come and gone, Mr. Priest has remained. Some believe Mr. Priest has gained so much power that he is the "puppet master," i.e. he runs the show in Garden Grove. Perhaps there is some truth to this. After all he does sit at every Board of Directors meeting, although he is not on the Board, but simply an employee of GSMOL. Why else would GSMOL continue to focus the majority of its resources on new legislation—a direction where in Mr. Priest directly benefits? If GSMOL started looking at the total picture, i.e. problems we are having in our parks with numerous issues, then there would be no need for groups such as CoMO-CAL.

Have there been any efforts to change GSMOL's focus?

Yes, in mid-2004, eight GSMOL managers wrote a "Recommendation Report" asking GSMOL leadership to focus more resources to directly help GSMOL members in their parks. In fact I chaired that committee and worked two months writing the report. Every managers input was used. Every manager signed off on the final report which was submitted to the GSMOL Board of Directors in August 2004.

What Happened to the Recommendation Report?

It was swept under the rug by the Board and no recommendations were implemented. So much for input from GSMOL managers. So much for any change of direction in GSMOL.

The Bottom Line. You Must Be Active.

Today, mobile home owners can not blindly follow any one person or any one organization. GSMOL has become what it is today partly because it's members have not been active or cared to investigate what GSMOL was doing for them. Mobilehome owners must wake up and be active. They must unite and work together toward common goals. CoMO-CAL can be an organization by it's members, for it's members only if you are active. We have a chance to make a difference. Please be a part of this opportunity.

BE ACTIVE LET'S MAKE A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

This article first printed in THE VOICE, February 2007 Pages 15, 16, & 17.

GSMOL DEVELOPMENTS by Frank Wodley

This has been an interesting year for GSMOL. In the latest CALIFORNIAN, Tim Sheahan, GSMOL State President, writes of 2006 as a year of ups and downs. Tim has had to take over the duties of editor of the CALIFORNIAN now that Justin Pecot has left.

GSMOL continues to lose members and must cut services because of low membership. The most recent CALIFORNIAN covers a three month period from January to March 2007. "Without greater membership or increasing the amount of advertising, we cannot publish a full CALIFORNIAN every month." There is no indication when the next CALIFORNIAN will be coming out.

Tim continues: "(GSMOL) waged a successful defeat of Proposition 90."

GSMOL has a very short paragraph on the new initiative being proposed: "The Howard Jarvis Taxpayer Association has reportedly filed an initiative with the California Secretary of State..."

GSMOL's ELF fund is finally being used, after five years, to help a GSMOL member whose small claims win was appealed by the park owner in superior court.

Finally Tim appeals to GSMOL members to become part of the GSMOL Team. 25

NOW FOR THE FACTS

In fact, the battle to defeat Proposition 90 was waged by hundreds of organizations. CoMO-CAL was one of the first organizations to join the "No on 90 people," who raised over eleven million dollars. Yet Proposition 90 was only defeated by a narrow 5% margin.

If you remember, late February 2006, CoMO-CAL President Frank Wodley alerted GSMOL leaders after learning on February 24, 2006 that California Senator Tom McClintock was going to start gathering signatures to put an initiative on

the ballot ...that will outlaw rent control.

CoMO-CAL continued to write about Proposition 90 a full eight months and mailed over 5,000 fliers into mobilehome parks alerting residents to vote NO on Proposition 90.

Regarding the "California Property Owners Protection Act," there have been three different proposals, the latest 07-0003 is waiting for a "Title and Summary" (Due 4/20/07) from the California Attorney General. The League of California cities has their own "eminent domain" initiative "Homeowners and Private Property Protection Act" which does not attack rent control.

Regarding GSMOL's Enforcement Legal Fund, it was initiated January 2002. GSMOL asked members to contribute \$10 per year for coverage. I've always been against the ELF fund, primarily for two reasons. First, the goal of \$250,000 to begin use of the fund was simply unrealistic. It would have taken over 10 years to reach such a goal, all the while not helping one member. Secondly, GSMOL never gave members a simple plan how the funds would be used and who would qualify. In fact when first introduced, the ELF fund would only be available if you had over 75% of all park residents in a chapter—a goal again out of reach!

GSMOL members MUST take an active roll in their organization. How many GSMOL members know that their Board of Directors decided a member would get NO CREDIT for ELF contributions in excess of \$10 over the last five years? And I'm sure many gave \$10 per year for a total of \$50. If I were GSMOL leadership, I would have at least given members an option—more coverage, or make anything over \$10 a donation to GSMOL or get their money back. Please, do not just sit back, participate in your organization or suffer the consequences! That applies to CoMO-CAL also! **Question/Question/Question!**

Article from The VOICE May/June 2007 Page 10

ONE STEP BACK - May 2004 Article by Frank Wodley, GSMOL Associate Member

Editor's Note: This article was submitted to be published in the June 2004 Californian by then GSMOL Associate Manager, Frank Wodley. It was not published, even in edited form. We print it now as it shows the philosophy of CoMO-CAL - to have an "open" organization, one where members can actively participate, be heard and contribute.

It is our hope that GSMOL will become an open organization before it is too late. Be open to ideas and suggestions from members, publish BOD meetings in the CALIFORNIAN, and have VP's conduct open meetings with members. Loosen your iron grip and allow "new blood" on the Board of Directors. Above all, do not shun those with "counter views" - perhaps GSMOL wouldn't be in the mess it is today if George Smith and Milt Burdick had stayed!

Often we see articles in the Californian that focus on the denial and apathy of mobilehome owners. Do mobilehome owners realize the Devil's at the doorstep? Do they even care? Those of us who volunteer for GSMOL know this Devil is REAL. We know our neighbors need us, if not today, then perhaps tomorrow. However, sometimes our neighbors say they don't even want us! Are they too afraid or intimidated? More often than not park owners will try to get away with something, especially knowing tenants are weak and afraid. That's why GSMOL volunteers give so much of time, energy and often money. Each local chapter is fighting their private battle. Often times alone! Unless there are "failure to maintain" issues, local chapters usually go it alone.

GSMOL wants all mobilehome owners to support us (GSMOL); perhaps even "save us (GSMOL)". Often times we (GSMOL) blame others for our short-comings. However, is our focus in the right place? Perhaps we should try to **save ourselves!** Perhaps our focus (GSMOL) should be on US, not THEM. Perhaps every GSMOL member, every local board, every manager, and especially our President and Executive Board should take a **STEP BACK** and take a hard look at the GSMOL of today. Is there a secret plan to improve GSMOL that we don't know about? Our leaders certainly are doing something - or are they? As a manager and chapter President I can see that many members and local chapters do not feel supported by GSMOL. Yes, we have representation in Sacramento and we all appre-

ciate the legislation that helps us. But we need more than that and deserve more than that. The park owners tell people GSMOL can't do anything for residents, why bother joining? In a way the park owners are right! Isn't it about time GSMOL started winning these battles?

Getting our neighbors to join GSMOL would seem a "slam-dunk." After all GSMOL provides lots of important information and lobbies for new legislation to protect the investments of mobilehome owners. We've been told at the 2004 GSMOL Convention that mobilehome owners in California are protected by more laws than any other state! GSMOL has representatives throughout the State of California giving important support to mobilehome owners. Just the 12 copies of the Californian justify the \$20.00/year. So why on earth is it so difficult to get members? Don't mobilehome owners know there is a definite "strength in numbers". Maybe it's the name GSMOL. Maybe it is the history of GSMOL. Maybe management and park owners have waged a better campaign to discourage our neighbors from joining. Whatever the problem, **we need to quickly identify** it and find a viable solution.

We have a wealth of talent among our membership. The more our members are involved, the healthier our organization will be. Let's ask for their opinions, their observations, and their assistance. Let's all be more open to them. Let's set aside our egos and ask them to come to a GSMOL Executive Board meeting. Let's listen to them and value their participation! Chapter Presidents should poll their members. Vice Presidents should poll their managers. And we all should write and email. But does our Board have the time? If no one else will step forward, I will. Send me your opinions, observations, ideas, complaints, etc. Send them to Frank Wodley at fawodley@yahoo.com or 21500 Lassen St. Space #31, Chatsworth, 91311. I'll read them all and you will be heard at future Executive Board meetings in Garden Grove and elsewhere.

Let's face it, the time has come for GSMOL to do something about its image and effectiveness. Let's face it, GSMOL is struggling. More importantly mobilehome owners thru out the State of California are struggling and need our help. Isn't enough that they must battle management and park owners. Why must they also battle GSMOL? (Article from May 2007 page 11)

GSMOL / CMRAA Conference in GSMOL Region 8 by Frank Wodley

On Saturday September 22nd I attended a conference in Los Osos for GSMOL Region 8 as a GSMOL member. Speakers were Tim Sheahan, Jim Burr, Tom Lockhart and hostess Marie Pounders for GSMOL; Gus Colgain and Bruce Stanton for CMRAA.

The meeting was attended by about 80 mobilehome owners, mainly from the Santa Maria / Los Osos / San Luis Obispo areas.

So you might ask, why is the CoMO-CAL president attending a GSMOL/CMRAA meeting. Well I felt this was an opportunity to gain some information about their partnership and perhaps chat with Tim Sheahan and Gus Colgain about ways our three advocacy groups can work together.

GSMOL and CMRAA, in November 2006, agreed to an alliance in support of mobilehome owner related legislation in Sacramento. CMRAA has been working with the Legislative Action Team (LAT) of GSMOL since that time. CoMO-CAL has not officially supported any legislation to date, but we have been working hard getting signature petitions to the governor. Of course you know we have kept our membership up to date on happenings in Sacramento and elsewhere.

CoMO-CAL membership includes members of GSMOL and CMRAA. Why not? Every mobilehome owner can benefit from the services we offer. Every mobilehome owner needs to be informed and The VOICE is a terrific vehicle for information.

The following are some of the key points of the meeting on September 22nd:

Gus Colgain talked about the importance of ONE VOICE. ““They” may have the money, but WE have the Power of one voice.”

Tom Lockart is working on a database of lawsuits and other action that can be a source for mobilehome owners who have a specific problem and want information on what to do.

Bruce Stanton, Corporate attorney for CMRAA, talked about the three E's: Education, Enforcement and Engagement. At CoMO-CAL, the focus of education is directed towards mobilehome owners; however Mr. Stanton was discussing the education of legislators, judges, park owners and managers. An interesting concept which we will have to pursue.

Mr. Stanton also mentioned that engagement starts with one person and one issue. We have a multitude of laws that were written to protect us, but without that one person engaging a manager or park owner, without that one person going to court, there is no engagement.

The “conference” was four hours long. I will report more of the key points in the November VOICE. I hope everyone was as motivated to action as I was.

Thanks again to the conference hostess, Marie Pounders. And thanks to Tim Sheahan, the President of GSMOL and CMRAA President Gus Colgain and the other speakers and participants. This was a worthwhile experience and I hope it will motivate our three groups to work together for the good of mobilehome owners in the near future and beyond.

This article first printed in THE VOICE October 2007 Page 1.

BOB HITES and his experiences with **GSMOL & CoMOCAL**

My name is Robert Hites and I live Marysville, Yuba County, 40 miles north of Sacramento. My single wide is located in a twelve space mobile home park. The space rent is \$350.00 per month and there are no amenities. Residences are seniors although we have a family here that has lived here seventeen years and they have two twin girls. It has been a pleasure watching them grow.

Recently the park was purchased by a new out of town park owner. The rent was increased and the amenities were taken away. It became an overnight nightmare. The owners representatives were very business like: however we soon found out that they were also very critical of seniors and acted as though they were better than us as we lived in trailers and not manufactured homes. Most of the homes are over 25 years of age. Well it wasn't long before things needed to be fixed. Telephone calls to the property manager were not being returned and letters were sent but not answered and it was telephone tag at the highest levels of humanity's stupidity.

So, where do I turn? Join **GSMOL**, right? I was told they can help you. So I rounded up all the residents and asked them to join **GSMOL** as they would. guide us through the storm. Well words and letters were being used like **MRL**, conversion ordinance, rent control, rent stabilization and items that this old country boy had never heard of. So, I call **GSMOL**, main office. Very politely was informed to contact a field Representative. I did and he responded when he could as he was experiencing health problems with his wife and I can understand that. I also understand that these folks are all volunteers.

Well my e-mails were not being returned in a timely manner, My telephone calls were not being returned. So, I go back to **GSMOL** and inform them I want to be a Chapter. Fine, they will send me the information and they would put my name before a Board of Directors. Great, lets get something done as people were looking for answers and were not getting any. So, finally they called and said you need to become an association, okay how do I start that, simple, you need a **PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT, SECRETARY, TREASURER** AND NOTIFY your landlord or owner. We did that, we created bylaws on our own, we created all documents for our letterhead and **MEMO** forms as this is the way that the park owners communicate with you. Nothing is signed, everything is generic so that one form fits all and you read what they expect you to do. It takes time.

You learn to ask questions of strangers like Senator Correa, Administrative Aide, extremely helpful, you call county supervisors and you invite them to your homeowners Association meeting and you bring in the big guys that are against rent control and tell you straight up not in our county, which is Yuba. Of course the people in the manufactured homes are shocked and wonder why this could happen to them. Well, it is a five letter word **GREED**. We are business people and cannot be bothered with those Seniors that can barley walk, cant see and some are fortunate that family, most do not for one reason or another. But you get to see just how poorly the seniors are treated. Men, women, veterans, retired from all walks of life and on pension that could not feed a large crow. It is sad.

There is help and that is in the form of legal aid, super people, kind, considerate and informative. Even County Supervisor agree that something has to be done, but there are just not enough hours in the day. So we ramble along and we talk to attorneys, we find common ground with other Seniors.

Then we found an organization called **CoMO-CAL**. That stands for Coalition of Mobile Home Owners of California. The president is Frank Wodley and he has become the best source of information bar none on this planet for mobile home owners and residents. Within the last 30 days he has given us more support and more valid information that was sound and definitely needed.

His candor and determination is beyond of what any one would expect. I have never met the man but we have e-mailed and spoke over the telephone several times. I call him Kemo Sabi, that means friend in Indian and he calls me Tonto. That is okay. A friendship has resulted and a trust that is hard to beat.

So I encourage each of you that reads the VOICE to join our band of determined Seniors to take back the streets and stand tall and make the owners and management corporations obey the MRL (Mobile Residency Laws). They were written for a purpose and not be discarded.

Currently I am working on organizing seniors in other parks throughout Northern California. I know it can be done and if each of you stand a little taller and holds some of these greedy, better than thou attitudes and make your leaders be accountable we shall win the peace of mind we all have worked for.

BE PROUD OF WHO YOU ARE, DONT LET ANYONE OR ANYBODY OR ANYTHING THINK THAT THERE TIME AND THERE WAY IS THE ONLY WAY. IT IS NOT. There are two sides to every coin.

Bob Hites

Northern California

CoMO-CAL Representative

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Presidents Note:

We welcome Bob to our growing team of representatives across the state. I am impressed by Bob's down to earth style, his real interest in others, his dedication, and determination to make a difference.

Bob has a terrific sense of humor. We all need it when dealing with the serious problems found in many mobilehome parks. Bob is a 24 year military veteran who served us in Viet Nam. He speaks four languages plus English.

Along with Bob comes Theresa Spradley. Theresa is not a mobile home owner. In fact Theresa brought her mom from Chicago to live near her. Thinking a mobile home would be the ideal place, she recommended her mom move into Alpine Mobile Home Park only to find that a mobile home park is full of fear, intimidation and harassment. Now Theresa is part of our team. She will not sit back and allow this to happen! Theresa is determined to make a difference and CoMO-CAL welcomes her help and expertise!

From THE VOICE June 2007 Pages 18 & 19

ETHICS AND ADVOCACY

by Frank Wodley, CoMO-CAL President

Perhaps I'm naïve. But it seems to me the bottom line, the ultimate goal of advocacy groups should be "helping mobilehome owners." That means **YOUR WELFARE is their GOAL, not their organization or leadership!** Perhaps there are different ways to help, right? Of course. This could and should be a team effort. One group does one thing well, another something else.

CoMO-CAL is the only group that shares information with all groups. Our membership includes GSMOL members, GSMOL chapter presidents and GSMOL managers. Merle Pitman, the leader of Mobile Home Owner's Coalition (MHOC) in Ojai, and Glen Bell, President of Neighborhood Friends, have been members for more than a year. CMRAA, their president and other leaders, have received THE VOICE and other information about us. We have met and given literature to Hank Hoysak, Chairman of the Central Coast Mobile/Manufactured Home Owners Alliance, and his board in Santa Maria.

I think you would agree THE VOICE is the most informative newsletter in the state, something that would benefit every mobilehome owner. Why then are the leaders of these organizations the only ones who subscribe? Don't they want their membership to be informed also? Shouldn't they be writing about CoMO-CAL's THE VOICE in their newsletter or at their meetings? Or are these groups simply about ego, money and power?

Our philosophy is be informed. Today CMRAA and GSMOL put out quarterly newsletters, perhaps 8-12 pages. MHOF and Neighborhood Friends do not have a newsletter. Our philosophy is go ahead and belong to another advocacy

group, but know about the group before you join. If you do not join CoMO-CAL, at least subscribe to THE VOICE. We will work out some kind of deal with you. We have provided a copy of THE VOICE to a large GSMOL chapter here in Los Angeles, and they printed it for their members. Cost: \$5/member/year. Certainly a bargain to be informed.

Almost to a person, leaders of other advocacy groups **do not communicate** with CoMO-CAL. This includes the leadership of CMRAA, GSMOL, Neighborhood Friends, the Central Coast Alliance, MHOC and others.

We have reached out to other groups numerous times to brainstorm how we can work together, yet we are ignored. Alas, politics seems to be the rule among advocacy groups. Their goal: shield their members from information at any cost. Why? To maintain their little kingdoms and to keep their members for themselves. But at what cost? The cost of members being informed!

CoMO-CAL is the only advocacy group that writes about other groups. We ask mobilehome owners to take an active role in the organization they support, and not be blinded by the rhetoric or what the organization says it is doing. Do your homework!

I happen to have a lot of information about GSMOL because I did my homework over several years. I attended GSMOL board meetings, was a Convention Delegate in 2004 and 2006, a chapter president and Associate Manager.

I feel it imperative that GSMOL members take a hard look at their organization and question their

leaders. **Why is ROP, Inc.**, led by GSMOL lobbyist and corporate counsel Maurice Priest, once again buying a park against the wishes of the residents and without their knowledge? (See article on page 10) Why, after almost six years, has the Enforcement Legal Fund not had one positive result? Why won't GSMOL leaders explain their support of ROP? After all, there are techniques for residents to purchase their park that are much more beneficial—why wouldn't GSMOL share that information with their membership? Is this about “helping mobilehome owners” or about helping one person or a small group of people? Please think about it! And don't just take my word on this, call others around the state like Rosemary Tomai, Jerry Lenhard, Don Hunter, the Clearlake people, Donald DeVore, and scores of others.

And remember, CoMO-CAL isn't only about THE VOICE. Now THE WHISPER will reach thousands of mobilehome owners. They too will be informed about important issues and know they can join our growing family. Also we receive many calls from members and non-members alike asking for advice, attorney referrals, or other information. We turn NO ONE away. (We can thank you, our membership, for that.)

CoMO-CAL is also about brainstorming, thinking outside the box. We are about NEW IDEAS. Recently we published a letter to the editor by Ray Newman suggesting that cities might use their power of eminent domain to “take” mobilehome parks for affordable housing. The city has several options at that point—help residents purchase their park, or be a “moral” landlord.

“Helping mobilehome owners” is more than new legislation. We have more laws on the books to

protect us here in California, but in my estimation these laws DO NOT protect us! Many park owners and managers BREAK THE LAW on a daily basis. Why? Because they know they can get away with it. The Mobilehome Residency Law (MRL) does not protect us, simple as that. And park owners like it that way. We owners are forced to retain an attorney and endure a lawsuit in order to **try** to protect our rights. Often the outcome does not reflect justice, but who has the most power and money.

Finally, it is about respect. Our goal is to give you factual, truthful information about ALL ISSUES that affect your lives today. We are family, and we fight for each other. Your dues allow us to help others who are out there alone, without anyone else to turn to. We have a growing list of good attorneys that are available. Please fill out the following survey—we want your input! Thanks!

This article from THE VOICE July 2007 Pages 2 & 14.

Not All Advocacy Groups Are Created Equal

QUESTION, QUESTION, QUESTION by Frank Wodley (Feb 2008 Page 4)

In America, every citizen has guaranteed rights. One is the right “to question.” Today, across this country, voters are questioning candidates running for the office of President. Voters are asking candidates about their past record, their accomplishments, their goals.... Many are active in this process. A process which culminates on election day in November 2008 when we go to the polls and vote.

As members of GSMOL, we have a right to question our leaders. We have the right to ask questions about their record, their accomplishments, their goals... We have a right to bring up concerns and to make suggestions... After all GSMOL would be nothing without it's members.

This Convention happens every two years. What better forum or time to ask questions.

I have been active in the organization as a five year member, a Chapter President, an Associate Manager, and a Delegate at the last two Conventions. I've attended most of the board meetings between 2004 and 2006 and chaired a committee of eight managers who spent two months writing a “Recommendations Report” which was submitted to the GSMOL Board in August 2004.

As a GSMOL member in good standing, I would like to ask the following questions:

Regarding the Enforcement Legal Fund

ELF was started in 2002. Many members contributed \$10 each year since 2002. Some gave as much as \$50 to ELF between 2002 and 2005. Yet only \$10 of their contribution was credited to them. GSMOL just took the balance (any contribution over \$10). Members were not given an option to get a refund, or additional coverage. Why not? Shouldn't members have had a say in this decision? After all it was their money. By

the way, where did that money go?

And what about the plan for ELF? Members contributed over the years based on a plan published in the February and March 2002 Californian. What happened to that plan?

GSMOL touts ELF as a way to gain our rights. Has it really accomplished that goal? Why haven't more members been helped? How much money is in the ELF fund today?

Regarding Elections in January 2008

The Bylaws call for a specific process when electing board members. In 2004 those running for office were listed in the Californian, along with their qualifications, etc. “Nominations from the floor” is not part of the process, so an election based on nominations at the Convention are not legal.

Committees

Why are there no committees on Membership, Finances, Public Relations, etc.

Focus of GSMOL

In spite of the “Recommendations Report” by eight managers, many of whom still serve today, the focus of GSMOL has not changed. Is the purpose of GSMOL “To promote the general welfare of mobile-home owners” really being accomplished today? What about helping members by listing attorneys versed in the MRL, by writing letters to managers and owners, by focusing more on problems in parks?

Resident Owned Parks, Inc. (ROP, Inc.)

At the request of GSMOL, ROP, Inc. was formed in 2001. Maurice Priest, lobbyist and corporate attorney for GSMOL, runs ROP, Inc. Now ex-GSMOL President Steve Gullage serves on the Board of ROP.

GSMOL only promotes ROP, although there are numerous organizations helping mobilehome owners purchase their parks. Isn't this "self serving?"

How do GSMOL members benefit from this relationship? Wouldn't GSMOL be serving it's members better if it gave them several options, rather than just ROP?

Other Advocacy Groups & Attorneys

Why doesn't GSMOL write more about other organi-

zations and attorneys that help mobilehome owners. Wouldn't that benefit GSMOL members?

Finances

GSMOL has published a summary of finances in past years. Why isn't that done today?

Board Meeting Minutes

They were published in past years. Why not today?

The 2008 GSMOL Convention by Frank Wodley (Feb 2008 Page 5)

Mr. Bob Hites and I attended the 2008 GSMOL Convention in Sacramento to represent CoMO-CAL. Bob and I are members of GSMOL, CMRAA, and CARA. We went to observe and report back to CoMO-CAL members.

In fact, I've attended the last three GSMOL Conventions and all three were very similar. Each had one day of lectures (HCD, ELTH, Q & A, etc), and half a day devoted to voting on bylaw amendments, elections, and GSMOL Business.

For Bob Hites, the Convention was a success as he was able to meet many mobilehome owners leaders he had emailed, but never met. And GSMOL did provide information - their action manual on DVD, a folder on ELTH, info on voter registration, etc.

For me, the Convention showed the declining state of GSMOL. Although GSMOL membership is now about 17,000, fewer than 80 attended the seminars, half of those were delegates. I counted about 22 delegates for Zone A (Northern California), 15 for Zone B (Central California), 4 for Zone C (Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Orange Counties), and none from Zone B (South of Los Angeles). GSMOL members simply were not represented!

The Saturday session seemed to offer a chance to brainstorm and network. I personally would have liked to have those attending split up into smaller groups to dis-

cuss issues in their own parks and brainstorm solutions. Unfortunately this did not happen.

As usual, the business session on Monday was too short to complete the agenda. I'm very disappointed that GSMOL Leaders did not present a financial report or allow time for observers to speak "for the good of the order" comments.

Another disturbing outcome, the 17,000 members now have NO control over assets of the corporation. Delegates went along with the board and approved a bylaw amendment that gives the Board of Directors full control over real estate—buying, selling and encumbering. Members—Beware!

Another amendment would have provided delegates important financial information—salaries of employees, expenses, income, etc. Bob Lupo, GSMOL Treasurer, argued it would cost too much and this is already available in Garden Grove.

I must disagree. Monthly reports and a year end summary are routinely done. This information could easily be summarized, in probably less than four pages. The cost would be a few dollars.

In fact, I tried to see this information 4 years ago in Garden Grove. After two requests, they would not release any employee salaries, i.e. I did not see it! In years past, GSMOL put financial information directly in the Californian for all members to see.

The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly (Feb. 2008 Pages 6-9)

We feel it important that you know the “players.” Which ones are working for your best interests, and which ones are not. We ask you to support “the good.”

Who Are The Good?

You Are.

Why are **YOU** “the good?” Because you want to know what’s happening and how it will impact you personally. You don’t just leave it up to someone else or pretend nothing is happening. You take the time to join an advocacy group and to read THE VOICE. You are part of the solution, not part of the problem. Thank You!

If you just join and do nothing else, that is terrific. You know you can call us when you need help with an issue, a notice, etc. If we do nothing else, CoMO-CAL wants all mobilehome owners to know they can call us for information and support. We may not always have a solution to your problem, but we are there for you when you call or email us.

If you join and promote CoMO-CAL, you are helping yourself also. It is a fact, there are about 150 times more mobilehome owners than park owners. Remember SIN: Strength in Numbers. If even 10% of mobilehome owners joined us, we wouldn’t have nearly the problems we all experience today in many of our parks. Time is running. We need your help - get the word out to join our efforts!

Volunteer advocates.

Many MHOs up and down the state work hard to help others, whether it be a few of their neighbors, all residents in their park, in their city or even the

whole state of California. Most advocacy groups have hard working volunteers, and MHO’s should be grateful. These people sacrifice for all of us and we commend them for their work, especially those who work, not for themselves or their ego’s, but to really help others.

CoMO-CAL.

Some might say, here they go again, promoting themselves. But here are the facts. Not all advocacy groups are created equal. We communicate more than any other advocacy group, hands down. Even GSMOL leaders admit THE VOICE is superior to THE CALIFORNIAN. And it is published monthly, not quarterly. If you want to know what’s happening, it is there to read.

Why do we deserve high marks? We publish a list of attorneys versed in Mobilehome Residency Law. No other group does that, including GSMOL in their 40+ year history. We publish information on all advocacy groups. Why do we do this? Mobilehome owners need to know the truth. We often suggest you question, question, question. Whether it be your park manager, the advocacy group you have joined, your local politician, etc. Learn who really has your best interest at heart.

Although we are just three years old, we continuously work to provide more services to communicate, education and unify. We now have a message board at www.://groups.yahoo.com/group/comocal/. Any mobilehome owner can join for free. All issues of THE VOICE can be accessed on the message board, questions can be asked and answers found. If you have internet, please take advantage of this service.

Our network of volunteers is “the good.” We depend on their expertise and support. Without them there would not be a CoMO-CAL.

CoMO-CAL has retained attorney Bruce Stanton for legal questions. We will publish articles written by Mr. Stanton and he is our “go to guy” regarding the MRL and Title 25.

Issues are complex and many. Solutions can not be just new legislation. They have to encompass all efforts—legislation, enforcement, education, and unity. We need to be more offensive, and less defensive. Most issues have gone unresolved for many years and it will take time to find solutions.

Above all, CoMO-CAL is for its membership. We serve you, not the other way around. THE VOICE is your voice. We do not censor. And we welcome your suggestions, criticisms and comments and often publish your letters in THE VOICE.

Other Advocacy Groups.

We consider any group that is working for mobile-home owners and not themselves - as “the good.” We are impressed with CARA. They initiate and support legislation for us. They offer leadership training. And they are 800,000 strong! In fact you, as a CoMO-CAL member belong to CARA.

The Bad

Uninformed Residents

The “bad” are those residents who put their heads in the sand, who don’t want to know and don’t care. They are part of our problem, certainly not part of the solution. Who can deny the many issues in rental parks? We need their participation!

Most mobilehome owners are not active, nor do they know what’s happening around the state. In fact, there are about 650,000 spaces statewide. At

2.0 per space, there are about 1.5 million of us. Of course those who are seeking help and want to join a group - these are not “the bad.” We are making efforts to reach these residents - like Operation Reach Out - “OReO.” Last year we sent out almost 10,000 to residents that are not CoMO-CAL members. This year we would like to send out 50,000 informational fliers (THE WHISPER).

Uninformed advocates

Many support an organization without really knowing anything it. And they would rather “die” than hear the truth about their organization. Unfortunately these well intentioned residents are part of the problem. We suggest they question their leaders, rather than follow them blindly.

Advocates, not for us, but for themselves and their egos

We know of many advocates who do some good, yet they could do much more. Their goal is run their little dynasties and keep others (like CoMO-CAL) out. Perhaps they publish an article in a local paper or hold an occasional meeting. However they are not open to anyone with an offer to unite or network. In fact they work hard to keep the status quo. In our opinion, they are doing a disservice to those they pretend to serve.

Uninformed and Untrained Managers

Many managers lack the education and qualities to manage. Many have NO people skills. Many make no attempt to improve themselves, or study the laws (MRL and Title 25) to become better park managers. They are part of the problem as well as the park owners who employ them in the first place!

The MRL

Many would have you believe the MRL really pro-

fects us. The MRL, in our opinion, is “bad.” And this opinion is shared by others, such as Donald DeVore who wrote “Mobilehome Wars.” Why? Because enforcement of these laws is extremely difficult and park owners know it. How many mobilehome owners know when their rights are being violated? How many have the money or the inclination to face a court battle? I’d say very few.

The laws are violated daily. How can this be? Because there must be enforcement. We hear over and over, a law is not a law unless it is enforced. When a law in the MRL is continually violated by park owners, without a challenge by mobilehome owners, pretty soon it is violated without regard to the law.

Loopholes in the MRL

In fact there are many loopholes in the MRL. For example, a park employee does not have to abide by park rules and regulations while “working for the park.” Yet residents do. This is a loophole.

Parks under rent control only offer long term leases to buyers coming off the street—another loophole in the law.

THE UGLY

Toadies. Clay Harrison, GSMOL Manager, coined this word referring to residents who are pro-management, not pro-homeowner. They often “prostitute” themselves by accepting “perks” from management. They work for management as spies and keep management informed. They are not our friends. They work against us. They keep residents from uniting. They disrupt meetings and side with management. When there is a

real issue, they say we are crazy or there is no issue or we are the problem.

Managers - who abuse, intimidate, harass

Not only are they usually uninformed and untrained, but they bully. It is their way or the highway. They abuse, intimidate and harass. They can be found in many parks, especially Western Manufactured Communities Association (WMA) parks. This is senior abuse and we should not tolerate it. We all need to focus on ways to stop it.

WMA Code of Ethics

The WMA Code of Ethics is published on the next page from their website at <http://www.wma.org/>. This Code of Ethics is a JOKE, and a bad one at that. On a personal note, I have lived under the fist of a WMA manager for 10 years now. It is my experience they lie, they scheme, they violate the MRL, intimidate, harass, and abuse. They go after those residents who can least defend themselves.

Advocacy Organizations that censor and withhold important information

We have no respect for organizations that “censor” information they provide their membership. They may benefit themselves, but not you, a mobilehome owner. You need correct, complete information to make the best choices for yourselves.

For example, GSMOL only promotes Resident Owned Parks, Inc. (ROP, Inc.), when in fact there are many organizations that help residents purchase their parks. Why do they do this? We feel the reason is because Maurice Priest has become very powerful in the GSMOL organization,

both as Corporate Counsel and as lobbyist in Sacramento. Maurice Priest also heads the ROP organization and he and his family benefit financially when ROP, Inc. purchases a park. So it only makes sense that GSMOL would want GSMOL members to use ROP, Inc.

You, as a mobilehome owner, should have all the information, all the options, so you can make up your own mind as to what would be best for you, based on ‘merit.’

CoMO-CAL realizes this is a serious ‘charge’ against GSMOL, Maurice Priest and ROP, Inc.

We print this not to benefit ourselves, but to show mobilehome owners why they MUST be active and do their homework. Don’t just blindly follow any one person or organization. Mobilehome owners should settle for nothing less than full, correct

information. Not every advocacy group is created equal!

Greedy Park Owners

Parks are cash cows. Park owners make huge returns on their investments, yet many are not happy . Rather than treat their residents with respect, they hire untrained managers to bully. Why? Their bottom line is money! They make more money, especially in a rent control area, when they can get an older home moved out of the park or evict a resident.

Give us your input

We are always anxious to hear from you. If you have a GOOD, a BAD, or an UGLY, let us know and we will share it with other members.

Published February 2008 Pages 6-9 THE VOICE

Letter to CoMO-CAL from ex-GSMOL Chapter President

January 1, 2008

Dear CoMO-CAL

I was previously a member and president of GSMOL in my park, Colonial Estates. One year ago, my neighbor and I filed several small claims actions against our park managers and owners. We could get NO assistance from GSMOL. Short story, the owners came into small claims with an attorney! We lost. Everyone agreed that according to the MRL (Mobilehome Residency Law), we should have won. But judges don't necessarily go by what is in the MRL. As a result of our lack of support from GSMOL, I don't believe that anyone in this park has renewed their membership.

A few months ago, Bob Hites began to mail me THE VOICE. I have had more information from Mr. Hites in the past four months than I had in almost two years from GSMOL. Mr. Hites continued to mail me

THE VOICE even when I had not joined your organization. I have been extremely impressed with your publication. Although GSMOL also had a publication, it was not the caliber of yours. Also, there was not nearly the involvement of the members that I see in your organization. This is evident in the articles published in THE VOICE.

I have now been seduced by your communication and effort to unite mobilehome owners in California and am therefore, enclosing my membership application and fee. Please keep up the good work and do not be afraid to send your publication to those who are not full members. Who knows? They might even read THE VOICE and decide to join also! Like ME!

Yours truly, Linda Lohman
10005 RedCoat Lane
Sacramento, CA 95827 -1933

Everything that Linda says is true!

Everything that Linda says is true! GSMOL came to our park full of bluster to encourage us to join their organization! They pointed out various things that Colonial Estates were doing that were unlawful and encouraged us to fight back with their full support. When we did so, however, we were left hanging.

I sued regarding their overcharging us for water. When they separated out the charge from the rent, in which it was originally included, GSMOL said that was unlawful. I won the first round, but they appealed. When confronted with going to superior court for the second round, I was told to contact Maurice Priest who would assign an attorney to my case. Since this never happened, despite several phone calls and appeals for assistance, I lost my case..

The second go around was regarding the issue of management being required to meet and confer with us when requested in writing which they refused to do.

Again, I lost my case. Colonial Estates always showed up with an attorney, and the judges were influenced by this as we were treated as though we were morons. Linda and I are not stupid people. Our paperwork and arguments were right on. I also produced written petitions signed by several homeowners. However, without GSMOL support, we were out in the cold.

Linda and I lost so much time and money on these issues, that I and most of those involved, remain discouraged. Continued on next page bottom

GSMOL did indeed recognize our chapter. Linda was listed as President and I was Vice President. Lew Parkinson was just a friend who wanted to see how our court cases went as he was considering a similar move in his park.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me. I believe you will find that Linda Lohman is credible, capable and knowledgeable. This Mary

person is not well informed.

Deborah Rogers

Survey Published in THE VOICE, February 2008 Page 13:

Writing about other advocacy groups can be controversial. What do you think?

- Don't write about any other groups
- Don't write about GSMOL
- No, it is selfserving and not politically correct to write about another advocacy group
- Yes, we want to know about other groups. We appreciate the 'no subject is taboo' policy
- Other_____

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CoMO-CAL is a non-profit California Corporation dedicated to serving mobilehome owners in California. Our purpose is to educate, communicate and unite. We are MAKING A DIFFERENCE!



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SERVICES WE PROVIDE OUR MEMBERS

1. 12 issues of THE VOICE. Usually 20 pages long, filled with important information no mobilehome owner should be without. Articles from around the state of California. Tips and Suggestions. Important laws explained so you can understand how you are protected.
2. Website: **comocal.org**. Members have access to all issues of THE VOICE, attorneys who know the MRL, important links to government, advocacy groups, etc.
3. Small Claims Court Assistance: We will pay your fees up to \$30.00 and help with your paperwork. (Some restrictions apply.)
4. Questions / Problems: Our staff is ready to take your call to advise you regarding questions and problems you might have.
5. We have several attorneys to help with litigation or give advice.
6. Above all, a way to UNITE and have a VOICE.

(CLEAR LAKE) MOBILE PARK'S RENTS GOING UP BY 40 PER CENT

Rene Morales Lake County Record-Bee 01/31/2007

Westwind Mobile Park homeowners received notice this week that the park they rent space from had been sold. In a three-page letter, Resident Owned Park Inc. (ROP) informed the homeowners that they have entered into a purchase contract and plan to close escrow by mid-February 2007.

According to its Web site, ROP is a California non-profit housing corporation based in Sacramento. Its main purpose is to purchase and manage mobile-home parks to preserve affordable housing.

So why are residents concerned? According to residents of Westwind, the rent for each space in the park will be \$730. Right now, space rent ranges from \$480 to \$525. The resulting increase is almost 40 percent.

Approximately 12 residents gathered Tuesday, Jan. 23, in front of park resident Betty Martin's home to discuss the rent increase. According to them, approximately one-third of the residents in the park are on fixed incomes and cannot afford the increase.

Residents expressed concern that they may lose their homes. "We feel powerless right now," said Martin. "Where will we go?"

According to the notice, the rental increase is necessary to pay for the "debt service, operation and maintenance of the park." The notice included provisions that entail a 30-year transferable lease option for residents. After the rent increase is set, future increases will be no more than 3 percent per year.

According to the notice, "This restriction and limitation is more beneficial than some mobile home rent control ordinances offered by some cities and counties." If the new owners exercise their rights to implement a 3 percent increase every year for the next five years, space rent will be \$846.27 per

month. In 10 years, this amount will increase to \$981.05 per month.

According to Social Security, nearly one-third of the retiree population receives their income from this source. Its Web site states that the average maximum monthly award for this benefit is \$1,007. Beginning in January, Social Security benefits increased 3.3 percent. The government calculates the annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) each year based on inflation in the overall economy. But inflation for seniors has been higher than that for the overall population in recent years, in large part because health care costs account for a bigger portion of seniors' expenses.

"We are at the mercy of the park owners," said Anita Sombs of the local Mobile Home Task Force. "We are barely making ends meet as it is." Rising park rent costs leave homeowners with limited options. According to residents, most of their homes are unsellable. Most potential buyers are deterred by the homes' age and rising park costs.

The cost to move mobile homes can be as much as \$30,000-\$40,000 per unit. The home's age can actually prevent it from being allowed into another park. Because the home was already in the park before new laws were passed, it may remain there due to it being grandfathered in.

Even if the home could be moved, it is likely that the structure would not fare well in the move.

A Mobile Home Task Force meeting is scheduled for 10 a.m. today, Wednesday, Jan. 31, at the Clearlake Senior/Community Center. For more information, please call Anita Sombs at 263-8736.

Contact Rene Morales at rmorales@record-bee.com.

Article from THE VOICE March 2007 front page

COMMENTARY by Frank Wodley: WHAT IS ROP UP TO?

Isn't ROP supposed to be helping residents in mobile home parks? The residents of Westwind Mobile Home Park in Lower Lake (Clear Lake) don't think so. In late September 2006, a well meaning resident invited ROP to come to Westwind and speak about resident ownership. After the meeting, residents heard nothing from ROP until late January 2007 when ROP, Inc. sent residents a letter explaining that ROP was purchasing their park and rents would increase \$230 a month! All without consulting residents!

Take a look what ROP says: (our) approach to park acquisition includes a commitment to **communicate with the homeowners in your park**, and to answer their questions and address their concerns. If a park purchase occurs, **it should be based on clear and open communication between ROP and the homeowners**, and not on secrecy and hidden costs.

Residents of 41 of the 42 spaces in Westwind are strongly opposed to a purchase by ROP. In recent meetings, residents tried unsuccessfully to find out information about the source of purchase funds and the title company handling the transac-

tion. And they are very concerned that they have NO say in the running of the park.

This is not the first time CoMO-CAL has heard complaints from residents concerning the dealings of ROP. In fact we have heard from residents in parks such as Summit MHP in west San Fernando Valley, Forest Springs in Grass Valley, and a park purchased by ROP in Los Osos (Sunny Oaks Mobile Park 1701 Los Osos Valley Road).

We understand GSMOL is circulating a DVD which promotes ROP. Many GSMOL members and others have wondered why GSMOL promotes ROP and what GSMOL gets from this relationship. And when Maurice Priest is the lobbyist and corporate counsel for GSMOL, doesn't his work in ROP take valuable time away from his duties in GSMOL?

CoMO-CAL suggests you contact us if you are interested in purchasing your park. We can give you several options, all which will ultimately give residents control of their park at the close of escrow, not thirty years in the future.

Article from March THE VOICE page 17

PURCHASE OF WESTWIND BY ROP, INC. - UPDATE

We understand the residents of Westwind MHP in Clearlake have prevailed and ROP, Inc. will not be purchasing their park after all. Remember our March 2007 front page article: (Clear Lake) Mobile Park's Rents Going Up By 40 Percent? In fact escrow was to close mid February, but it was extended to mid March.

We have been in contact with a Regional Manager of GSMOL who explained that the GSMOL Board of Directors asked Maurice Priest, president of ROP, Inc.

"to abort the project." Maurice Priest is also GSMOL corporate council and their lobbyist in Sacramento. Apparently the park owners group WMA (Western Manufactured Communities Association) was "bad-mouthing GSMOL in Sacramento.

The residents of Westwind are now in talks to purchase their park through another group. Many groups exist who help residents with the purchase and financing. Please refer to the article by David Loop on Pages 6 & 7. (May/June 2007 Page 5)

Windsor park residents 'in a tizzy' over sale

By CLARK MASON THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

October 2007

The pending sale of Windsor's largest mobile home park is causing anxiety among its senior residents who fear they can't afford the rent increases planned by the buyer.

The purchase of the Windsor Mobile Country Club by a nonprofit housing corporation is billed as a way to keep rents affordable. But rents in the 336-space park could jump significantly at first -- 50 to 65 percent in some cases -- in order for the buyer, Resident Owned Parks of Sacramento, to swing the deal.

"Selling this place has really put us all in a tizzy," said June Moss, an 83-year-old widow. "God knows how high our rent is going to be." Her income, like that of many residents, comes from Social Security. She pays slightly more than \$300 a month but could face an increase to \$500 under the preliminary projections of the new buyers. "You get older, and these things really blow your mind. It upsets you. Everyone's really upset," she said in an interview in the living room of her double-wide mobile home.

Scott Taylor, a neighbor who has lived in the park since 1988, doesn't foresee an exodus of the 55-and-older crowd. He said Windsor Mobile Country Club is a desirable, well-maintained place with some of the cheapest rents around. "It's far less than any other place. Unless you want to pitch a pup tent, where are you going to live on a fixed income?" he said.

Maurice Priest, the president of Resident Owned Parks, the nonprofit corporation buying the park,

said the company will seek rental subsidies from the Town of Windsor and other sources to lessen the sting of the initial rent hikes for low-income residents. "We have never been involved in a project that results in the displacement of homeowners, and this is not going to be one," he said. "We aren't going to be taking an 83-year-old woman and making her rent \$800 to \$1,000 a month." He said he expects rents likely will increase to about \$500 per month on average.

Priest said his company's purpose is to maintain the affordability of mobile homes and preserve them as rental stock for low-income residents. He touts it as a preferable alternative to the controversial statewide trend of parks being converted to condominium-style ownership.

Condo-style ownership allows park owners to subdivide their parks and sell individual lots at prices that can reach up to \$100,000 for the tiny parcels. And once a park is converted, local rent controls no longer apply.

Windsor has a mobile home rent-control ordinance that essentially ties annual rent increases to the consumer price index, currently around 2 to 3 percent annually. But when a park changes hands, the new owner can adjust rents to take into account the cost of the acquisition and other factors.

Priest acknowledged the rents would jump initially to pay for the acquisition of the park by his company, as well as the costs of owning, operating and maintaining the common areas. "We don't add an additional profit margin," he said.

Priest said once the initial rental adjustment is made to finance the acquisition, his company intends to limit future rent increases to no more than 3 percent a year. And after 30 years, when the mortgage is paid off, the title would be turned over to the park homeowners association.

Town Planner Kevin Thompson said the purchase probably will be beneficial for residents. "Ultimately, I do think it's a good deal," said Thompson, who has looked into mobile home park acquisitions by Priest's nonprofit corporation in Arcata and San Luis Obispo County. He noted that Priest, an attorney, was a long-standing lobbyist in Sacramento for mobile home owners and renters.

Windsor officials are examining the ramifications of the park purchase, which residents found out about in late May, after the fact. The purchase is in escrow and expected to close in September. Priest declined to disclose how much his corporation is paying current owner Ron Wollmer. Thompson said the homeowners' association may have some say over the rent jump. "If the homeowners' asso-

It is our goal to inform all mobilehome owners about issues that effect them. We have been writing about ROP, Inc. (Resident Owned Parks) since our September 2006 newsletter where we discussed the attempted purchase of Westwind MHP by ROP, Inc.

ROP, Inc purchased their first park, Niles East, in 2003. The head of ROP, Inc, Mr. Maurice Priest, has been a lobbyist for GSMOL over the last 26 years. He is also the corporate council of GSMOL and sits at GSMOL board meetings.

When you go to the ROP, Inc. website, the first thing you will see is: The only park purchase organization endorsed by Golden State Manufactured-Home Owners League. In fact past president Steve Gullage has recently been added to their board of directors.

This is not our first article concerning the proposed purchase of a mobilehome park by ROP, Inc. and it probably won't be the last.

ciation agrees a one-time rent increase is warranted, that can occur. Or it can go to arbitration," Thompson said. "It's normal for people to be nervous about this kind of transaction. They're kind of complicated," said David Grabill, a Santa Rosa attorney and affordable housing advocate. "When a park owner sells to a nonprofit, there can be very substantial tax savings built into the transaction. It can benefit the seller of the park and if it's done right, it can benefit the residents as well."

Library Researcher Michele Van Hoeck contributed to this report. You can reach Staff Writer Clark Mason at 521-5214 or clark.mason@pressdemocrat.com

If you have been getting THE VOICE, you know there are several other organizations helping residents purchase their parks—among them David Loop and Deane Sargent. Also the Millenium Group.

We ask these simple questions? How can advocate (Maurice Priest) be a 'park owner?' Isn't this a conflict of interest? And why are so many residents (Clear Lake, Grass Valley, Los Osos, Windsor) speaking out against the purchase of their park by ROP? Shouldn't the leadership of GSMOL investigate this issue? What does GSMOL get out of this relationship? Why doesn't GSMOL support other park purchase groups?

Comments by a mobilehome owner about the purchase of their park by ROP, Inc.

I live in Windsor Mobile Country Club, a 336 unit low-income senior mobile home park located in Windsor, California. In May of this year, with two days' notice, we were informed the park was being sold to Resident Owned Parks, a supposed non-profit corporation headed by Maurice Priest. We were given two days' notice of a meeting ROP was calling with the residents, to be held on Memorial Day, 2007. Everyone was in shock as the park had been owned by the same person for over 30 years, and we had always understood that residents would have first right of refusal if he ever sold.

There were more surprises to come, as we soon learned. Our Board had neglected to renew our first right of refusal in several years. Although we are under a rent control ordinance, ROP believes that exceptions are apparently made for non-profits. Our rents were going to increase 45% and 72%, way above the CPI for this year of 3.4%. Our Town Council and the County of Sonoma were both in favor of the sale, as ROP indicated they had financial assistance all set up for those who needed it, and after 30 years they would deed the property to us for \$1.00.

First of all, most of us cannot afford the increase, and secondly, not many of us will be around in 30 years when ROP says they will turn the park over to a resident non-profit. Our ordinance requires a "meet and confer" to exchange pertinent documents, followed by arbitration in a court-like setting if the noticed rent increase exceeds 300% of the CPI, which this did.

At meet and confer, no documents were provided by ROP, and Maurice Priest indicated he had no

intention of submitting them for our perusal. Several arbitration hearings were held, spanning several months. ROP continued to refuse to give us necessary documents, such as the sale agreement, appraisal, management contract (his wife runs the management company without a contract), etc. On November 27th the decision from the arbitrator allowed NO rent increases at this time. ROP had not followed the ordinance dictates and since there was no appraisal submitted, the arbitrator had no factual information that supported the huge rent increases.

We are a small group in this large park fighting this purchase. Some people have not responded to us due to coercion and intimidation on the part of Mr. Priest. At the very outset, he required all residents to sign a document supporting ROP's purchase of the park. If the resident chose not to sign, they were told they would not receive any financial assistance. Approximately 90% of the park did sign this document and ROP therefore claims to have the support of 90% of the residents. This form also included a statement that they agreed with the rent increases.

We feel we have been misled and lied to from the very beginning. As it turns out, there is not nearly enough financial assistance for the residents, although they are still being given erroneous figures as to what they will receive. And now we're told the financial assistance will come out of our rent checks, including those who will receive minimal assistance.

It is our belief that ROP is offering an inflated price for this park, causing all of us to bear the burden of ROP's huge mortgage. Not only do we

pay for the park, we are also paying all closing costs, brokers fees, taxes etc. Where else can you buy a place like this without putting one cent into it? ROP apparently likes to target low-income senior communities like ours where a lot of the residents are easily intimidated. Beware of this organization!

They have now decided to repeat the legal process of arbitration and are starting all over again. Since Mr. Priest is an attorney, he does not bear the expenses it has been necessary for us to expend. He

has said he will now comply with the requirements

of the ordinance (other than the increase). We are attempting to get support wherever we can.

In closing, you might enjoy this hypothetical ad one of our residents wrote, satirizing what ROP and Mr. Priest are doing:

ATTENTION BUSINESSMEN & NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

* We will help you acquire a \$23,000,000 property for nothing and allow you to raise the rent 72%.

* We will also allow you to pay yourself \$120,000 per year to oversee your investment.

* We will make it possible for you to borrow \$1,500,000 from the bank for agreeing to this sale, which you do not have to pay back as we will allow you to make your tenants pay for it by including these payments in a rent increase.

* We will allow you to have all of the tenants pay into a rental assistance fund and you will be

the one, the only one to determine to whom these monies are dispensed.

* We will also allow you to increase their rents each year by 3%.

* You will not have to put up any money yourself.

* We will allow you to totally ignore our Low Income Ordinance.

* **THAT'S RIGHT, ALL OF THESE BENEFITS CAN BE YOURS FOR ZERO DOLLARS DOWN.**

This may sound ridiculous, but this is exactly what is happening.

Article written by Donna Helwig, resident of Windsor Mobile Country Club

From January 2008 THE VOICE, page 31 & 32

[Open Letter To ROP Board Of Directors](#)

Committee of Concerned Residents
Windsor Mobile Country Club
1066 Maple Drive
Windsor, CA 95492

February 12, 2008

Dan Hauser, Director
Steve Gullage, Director
Roy Smart, Director
Steve Clute, Director
Franklin J. Lacusky, Director
Maurice and Diane Priest, Directors
Resident Owned Parks, Inc.
7420 Greenhaven Drive, Suite 125
Sacramento, CA 95831

Re: ROP Attempted Acquisition of Windsor Mobile Country Club

Dear Chairman and Members of the Board:

The Committee of Concerned Residents of Windsor Mobile Country Club was started last summer when residents learned that ROP was seeking to buy the park and increase our rents by 72%. Most of us in this 336-unit senior's park have very low fixed incomes. At least 70 of us are "extremely low income", meaning our incomes are less than 30% of the area median income. ROP has issued a rent increase notice which would raise most rents here from \$301 to \$518 per month on April 1. Many of us will be forced to move if that happens. We are writing to members of ROP's Board of Directors to ask your help. The corporate charter of ROP states its purpose is to "preserve affordable housing". This rent increase will force 335 of us to lose our affordable housing (one unit in the park is occupied by the park manager).

We have already been through one arbitration over the ROP rent increase. The arbitrator ruled in November that there was no evidence to justify such an

increase by ROP. See <http://housingrights.googlepages.com/wmccarbitration>. But ROP is now seeking approval of an even higher rent increase, and a new arbitration commenced January 30. No new evidence has been presented justifying such a huge increase, and we are hopeful that the arbitrator will reject this one also.

For over 30 years, the owner of the park has kept rents low, and has always listened and responded to residents' concerns. His open and respectful approach to us has been one of the big pluses of living in this park. We were initially hopeful that ROP would continue this tradition. But our experience with Mr. and Mrs. Priest since last summer has been extremely unpleasant. We have found them to be hostile, secretive, overbearing and uncompromising. While Mr. Priest has met with residents on several occasions about the increase, he has been evasive about ROP's reasons for requesting a 72% increase. There are discrepancies in the figures which ROP is using to justify the proposed increase which would, at a minimum, reduce the increase by 25%. The inflated interest rate – 5.75% – which ROP wants to pay on the municipal bonds issued to finance its acquisition of our park is more than 25% higher than the 4.45% interest rates paid on similar municipal bonds used by another non-profit to finance its purchase of a nearby mobile home park in November. The higher interest rate applied to the \$25.5 million which ROP will finance translates to over \$70 per month in higher space rents for every resident in the park. Mr. Priest had an appraisal of the Windsor Mobile Country Club done last July which showed a market value of \$16 million, but he claims that because ROP is a non-profit, it is entitled to pay a higher amount for the park and pass this additional cost on to residents of the park in the form of higher rents. We ask you, the Board of Directors of ROP, to tell us how this is "preserving affordable housing".

We have been trying without much success to find out if Mr. and Mrs. Priest stand to receive any personal compensation if the sale of our park to ROP is completed. In addition to the \$23 million purchase price which the current owner will receive, we understand that an additional \$2.5 million in bonds will be sold to cover ROP's expenses incurred in the acquisition of the property. We hope the ROP Board will review carefully what this additional \$2.5 million is to be used for.

Senator Dan Hauser, a member of ROP's Board who formerly represented the residents of this park in the legislature, testified under oath in the current arbitration proceedings that Mr. Priest received compensation from ROP each year since the non-profit was started (2001). But the disclosure forms filed by ROP with the Attorney General (also under penalty of perjury) state that there were no financial transactions between ROP and any officer or director of ROP in 2004. The Attorney General's Registry of Charitable Trusts informed us that as of three weeks ago, ROP had not filed the required disclosure forms for 2005, 2006 or 2007. A copy of the 2004 disclosure form, apparently signed by Mr. Priest, is attached. The ROP tax return for 2006 states that neither Mr. Priest nor Mrs. Priest received any compensation from ROP during that year, and that neither devoted any time on a weekly basis to their positions as officers and directors of the corporation.

Failure to file these forms, accurately completed and in a timely manner, jeopardizes ROP's tax exempt status and exposes the corporation to liability and penalties. Loss of ROP's non-profit status would have very serious consequences for residents in the parks which ROP owns. Bad financial management practices may also put directors (even disinterested directors) at risk of personal liability. The disclosure forms which ROP should have submitted to the Attorney General should also have been submitted to the ROP Board for its review. Apparently this has not been done, which may evidence a lack of proper oversight by the Board.

We are also surprised and concerned by Senator Hauser's testimony that Mr. Priest has been given broad authority by the Board to bind ROP to real estate transactions such as this. Directors of public benefit corporations are required by the State to use great caution when making investment decisions involving corporate funds. Allowing one office or director to make these important decisions without Board review and approval may violate Board members' duty of care to the corporation. See Corporations Code Sec. 5240(b)(1).

In closing, we believe Mr. Priest's actions with respect to the acquisition of Windsor Mobile Country Club violate ROP's intended purpose which is to preserve affordable housing. It appears to our committee that ROP's goals in acquiring this park have nothing to do with "preserving affordable housing". Raising rents to what Mr. and Mrs. Priest claim are "market levels", and generating income for ROP seem to be the primary, and perhaps the ONLY, goals of ROP's acquisition of Windsor Mobile Country Club.

We would request that the ROP Board investigate and correct the reporting deficiencies with respect to disclosures required to be made to the Attorney General, and correct any discrepancies in ROP's federal and state tax returns. More fundamentally, we would request the Board to independently evaluate whether the purchase of Windsor Mobile Country Club is consistent with the stated purpose of the corporation. We think the answer is "no".

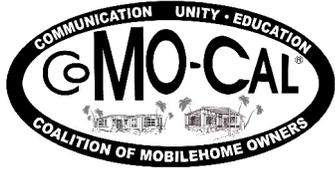
If you have any questions, or if you would like our Committee to provide any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours truly,
Donna M. Helwig, Chair
Committee of Concerned Residents

cc: Debora Fudge, Mayor of Windsor
Ron Wollmer
Maurice Priest, Esq.
David Grabill, Esq.

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