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June 17, 1979

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City Council
City of Cambridge

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

A few people in the city are making a lot of money throwing long-term residents out of their homes. The developers call it "condominium conversion". One thing which has slowed the developers down has been a rent control requirement that only an apartment's buyers can evict the residents. A proposal submitted by city council reformers could change things for the worse. It was submitted at the June 11 meeting, aimed at a fall vote.

Under the proposal developers will be able, solely at the option of the developer, to get a ruling from the rent control board before filing condominium conversion papers. The buyer would still have to file for the eviction, but the earlier hearing could decide almost all issues, making the actual eviction proceeding a mere formality. It would be much easier to sell an apartment if the rent board has already ruled. The tenants, on the other hand, would not be able to ask the rent board for a hearing before sale if they think the landlord had a weak case, and thus cannot get the board to say that they cannot be evicted. Quite the contrary, since the early hearing is solely at the option of the landlord, if the landlord has a weak case, she will do exactly what she would do now: scare the tenants into moving out and have the buyer go for all legal findings and for eviction after sale. This proposal is thus stacked against residents living in city apartments. It should not be passed as it presently stands.

In any case, why don't we stop diddling around with the rent law every time a city election comes up? The biggest problem with our state level rent control statute is that it is much more specific than is Brookline's. Why not initiate a home rule amendment which will change the state level statute to make it as general as Brookline's while protecting against a lapse and permitting continuance of the present rate basis? Then we can have local regulation which is effective without fighting local battles in the state legislature. We also won't have to go through legal maneuverings such as the latest proposal. Complicated maneuvering can backfire, just as this one will if permitted to go through unamended.

Sincerely,



Robert J. La Tremouille

S-391

16.

Comm. from Robert J. LaTremouille opposing
a proposal submitted June 11, 1979 re: con-
dominium conversion.

In City Council,

June 25, 1979

6/25/79

-Placed on File-