

PRESS ADVISORY:

Residents of Grant Manor Apartments and community activists are holding a press conference and rally on March 13 at 1pm, right outside 1850 Washington Street. This is in response to years of neglect, unsanitary living conditions, a tenant board which has violated its own bylaws to remain in office for over a decade, and a proposed 108-148% increase in the contract rents for the apartment units.

This rent increase comes as part of the 'Mark-Up-to-Market' option for renewing Grant Manor's HAP contract with the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The vast majority of residents first learned the proposal was sent to HUD in September of last year, even though this had been in the works for a few years. We were never consulted about any of it.

Wingate (the property manager) together with the Grant Manor Housing Association (GMHA) board, the Planning Office for Urban Affairs (POUA), Inc. and some city officials insist that this mark-up-to-market option and its rent increase are in residents' interests. They tell us the increased rental revenue will allow GMHA to get a \$20 million loan for making needed repairs after decades of deterioration and their own neglect. But over the last 20 years our rental revenue has gone to line the pockets of Wingate and the security company, while the building fell into disrepair. So, we can't help but suspect that the increased rental revenue will also be mismanaged, and that the main beneficiaries will be the POUA (which will become an owner of Grant Manor as part of this mark-up-to-market renewal), the management company Wingate, and the corrupt GMHA board if they remain in place.

The GMHA president signed off on this rent increase supposedly in the name of the residents. But the GMHA board does not represent the residents. They actively retaliate against us when we speak up against their abuses. They have fabricated lease violations in order to threaten outspoken residents with eviction. They haven't held elections or had open meetings in many years. In fact, they hadn't even filed the proper paperwork for the non-profit with the state for years. It was only recently, after we pointed this out and challenged the president's authority to sign off on the rent increase on our behalf, that the proper paperwork was filed. And the board is in direct violation of their own bylaws, specifically Section 3.6 which states that "no director shall serve more than two consecutive two-year terms, after which such director shall be required to take a two-year absence from the Board of Directors before again serving on the Board of Directors". The current board has been in place since the early 2000s. Not only have they exceeded their term limits, but with the daughter of the president seated as GMHA vice-president, the board blatantly engages in nepotism as well.

What's more, we have repeatedly had our requests for basic documentation about the rent increase denied by this board and the management company, despite the fact that they promised us at a public meeting in October that residents would be able to see this documentation if requested. Residents who persisted in requesting this information were threatened by the vice-president.

Since the rent increase was first announced, residents have come together to fight back against the proposal and against the corrupt, repressive GMHA board that approved it. We demanded that the current board step down, and 90 households signed a petition calling for a new interim board composed of the resident organizers. We have called for elections, which Wingate and the Board initially agreed to hold in January. However, the current board is now using COVID as an excuse to delay elections, despite the fact that the pandemic has not prevented the regular functioning of other democratic elections throughout the city and the country.

We invite you to attend our rally and press conference **on March 13 at 1pm**. Residents and allied organizers will speak out about the injustices at Grant Manor and expose the nefarious maneuvers of the GMHA board and others who are pushing this rent increase and preventing us from exercising our democratic rights to fair and open elections.

Sincerely,

Grant Manor Organizers

For media inquiries, please email grantmanororganizers@gmail.com, or call Alonso Espinosa at 4697443542.