



## NEWS

**Mobile Home Residents Hold Their Own in Fight**

The occupants were given eviction notices all the way back in 2007.

By **Mary Ellen Walsh** 7:00am

Barbara Pedote is in it for the long haul. Having lived in the Syosset Mobile Home Park (SMHP) since 2006, the 64-year-old has spent most of that time fighting to keep her home.

As president of the Home Owners Protecting Equity (HOPE) Association, she and 45 residents refuse to leave and have been battling in various courts for three years. SMHP residents were slapped with eviction notices back in fall 2007 after a new landlord bought the land (which residents didn't own) and began procedures to push them out.

The SMHP is located on the south side of Jericho Turnpike, just west of Underhill Boulevard in Syosset. It is the only mobile home park in Nassau County and one of the few parks nationwide tucked in the heart of an affluent town. Some of the mobile homes are no longer mobile due to age. In April 2007, STP Associates, LLC, bought the four-acre prime real estate along with two adjacent commercial-zoned acres for a reported \$9.4 million.

Larry J. Rush, principal partner of STP Associates, then announced plans to develop 75 condominiums, including 10,000 square feet of retail space with 28 rental apartments on the site.

"As far as we know, there are no applications or permits submitted for development at this time," says Nelson Hess, resident of SMHP and secretary of the HOPE Association. "After surviving all their variety of tactics to entice us to move out, we are more determined to fight to win."

STP Associates agreed to compromise on its previous lawsuit for 12 months of back rent—STP says residents withheld payments, while HOPE Association says STP Associates refused payments. According to Frederick Kelly, Esq., who represents 25–30 residents of SMHP including HOPE Association members, all but one of the remaining residents are in good standing, some having declared Chapter 13, a form of bankruptcy, to redistribute and pay down their debt primarily owed to STP Associates.

In September 2009, STP Associates issued new eviction notices concerning the change of the use of the land that calls for residents to move out by March 31, 2010.

SMHP residents filed a \$10 million lawsuit against STP Associates in the Supreme Court of Nassau County, hoping to declare those eviction notices null and void. They are suing for harassment and breach of the covenant of quiet enjoyment. Kelly, based in Monroe, N.Y., says, "STP Associates is using Real Property Law Section 233 as a pretext to harass homeowners in the Syosset Mobile Home Park, which is the opposite use of the remedial statute meant to shield park residents from abusive landlords."

SMHP residents continue to pay between \$525-\$600 per month to STP Associates for water, sanitation pickup, sewers and taxes. The remaining residents say they are proud of their park and maintain it as best they can, since they claim the maintenance and upkeep provided has lagged.

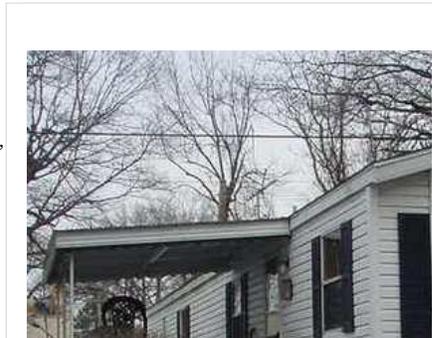
Pedote adds that prior to STP Associates buying the land, there were 77 mobile homes thriving in a family-oriented, cloistered community where neighbors took care of one another, often barbecuing as children played together. Now, Pedote says that the stress of fighting to save their homes has created many health issues. Pedote has developed fibromyalgia but remains steadfast that it hasn't diminished her faith.

"The general consensus of the people left in the Syosset Mobile Home Park is that we are here to stay. I've said this all along, this is our home and if anything, we've strengthened our bond between the remaining members of the HOPE Association and are not leaving," says Pedote.

According to a spokesperson for STP Associates, "There is nothing new to report at this time."

The goal of the HOPE Association is to turn the park into a sustainable "green" community, growing fresh fruits and vegetables.

"We are confident that once this case is heard before this judge that the Syosset Mobile Home Park residents will remain in the park," says Kelly.



## COMMENTS (2)

**M.B.**

8:48am on Thursday, February 25, 2010

Interesting local story, I had no idea there was a mobile home park in Nassau. This is the classic struggle between low-rent (often long time) residents and developers seeking to capitalize and gentrify. Of course there are more than two sides to a story like this and no way to please everyone.

**AG**

12:48pm on Thursday, February 25, 2010

Curious to see the judge's ruling on this case, especially with the financial pressures mounting on all sides.