

Trash Chutes

Recently we had our trash chutes cleaned from top to bottom by an outside vendor. We try to do this twice a year to keep unpleasant odors to a minimum. The chutes were an issue on our recent insurance underwriter inspection because some doors opened too easily and did not fully close automatically. We contend that this was caused by the way they were designed in the 1920s, not the result of age or misuse. Nevertheless, the insurance inspections demanded that they be self-closing for fire and smoke purposes, even though they have never been air tight.

Superintendent Catalin Chirelescu and Board Member Ed Lewis worked together to strategize how to make this so. Catalin removed the 19th floor chute door and took it to the workshop in the basement where he tried a number of scenarios to make it close fully. He identified a "spring loading" solution that worked beautifully, reinstalled the chute door, added some gasketing material and, viola, we have a reasonably priced solution to an issue that was initially quite vexing.

Orphaned Bicycles to be Removed

There is a very reasonable annual fee for bike storage in our basement. Superintendent Catalin Chirelescu has logged the bicycles stored in the basement as of October 1 and a total of 11 are being stored without their fees being paid. If you have a bicycle in the basement and you want to keep it there, you must pay the fee immediately. In December we will remove any orphaned bikes and donate them to Housing Works.

Our Vertical Neighborhood

Over the course of this past year several of our neighbors have been in need of different types of assistance and many members of our 201 community have unfailingly and repeatedly stepped forward to help. These acts of neighborliness have been as varied as opening a stubborn jar of Jam, sourcing and replacing an air conditioner unit, and helping with errands or just a walk around the neighborhood. In what can sometimes be a harsh city, the kind and caring acts of our neighbors for our neighbors have been impressive and heartwarming. Without being specific because there are so many examples, we hope you all know who you are and that your neighbors and friends are grateful.

NE Corner Facade

Work continues apace to rebuild the entire NE corner of the building from the PH level down to the 16th floor window tops. As readers of 201 News will know, this effort will hopefully, once and for all (or for the foreseeable future), stop the water penetrations in this part of the building. Numerous attempts have been made to stanch the penetrations over the last 25 years, but none have kept the moisture out for more than three or so years. This time we are removing brick and terracotta completely and waterproofing the whole area in one swath rather than in smaller sections.

We had originally intended this work to be part of last year's facade project, but when we opened the wall we found a much more complicated waterproofing task than we had time to engineer, price, and build. We bricked it back up and set a plan to do it this year. We very much appreciate the patience for any noise intrusions in nearby apartments and common spaces. The noisy part should be done by mid-October and the job completed by December 1.

Retail

Our north retail space has been demolished, eliminating traces of the old retail build out. Low ceilings and hanging pipes and wires have been removed. The space now appears much larger and more open. It is our hope and the hope of our professional real estate advisors that this step will make the space more appealing to many tenants who can now see its full potential. As part of this demolition process, we had the utilities re-engineered so that the two retail spaces are now separately metered.

We still generally show the space to potential renters several times each month. We had one verbal agreement that fell through but otherwise there have been no takers. We hope the demolition of the dated build out in the space will enhance our chances to secure a tenant.

Old Files

One of the many things that happened during the transition from 30 years of management of our building by Tudor Realty Service Corp to First Service Residential was the transfer of our paper files, which are now stored in our small meeting room in the basement. They fill about 20 large boxes. Board President Ed Lewis has gone through them, discarding any that are no longer needed in accordance with guidance from the coop's attorneys at Swartz Sladkus and Reich. Now they will be loaded into our file cabinets and any that we need to keep for a while or forever will be digitized and indexed.

Math Doodles

One of the interesting documents that Ed stumbled across while sorting old files was the first full year budget for our coop from 1986. The total operational budget was \$1,095,000. Ed, who knows firsthand the many steps that the board of directors has taken to keep maintenance increases to a minimum while keeping the physical plant in great condition, thought it might be interesting to translate that total into 2023 dollars. Based on a Google search, it turns out that \$1,095,000 in 1986 represents \$3,067,459 in 2023 dollars. What's our budget in 2023? \$3,010,579. In 38 years, the real dollar annual maintenance cost for the building has actually decreased by about \$50,000, despite the rapacious increases in real estate taxes.

Not so encouraging, when we applied the same magic of Google to the NYC real estate taxes we paid in 1986 (\$194,456), our tax bill in 2023 should be \$544,735. What are our real estate taxes this year? \$1.9 million dollars!

The Most Inspected Facades in the Nation, Perhaps the World

Many of you know from earlier facade discussions here in 201 News, NYC regulations require us to have our facade extensively (and expensively) inspected every five years. These inspections are now very "up close and personal." We have to rent a super high lift boom truck, engage a skilled operator, and apply for permits from the city for lane and sidewalk closures. The inspection reports, called FISP (Facade Inspection and Safety Program), rate every facade of the building as "Safe," "Safe with an Engineered Maintenance and Repair Program" or "Unsafe." From this report flows our regular 201 facade maintenance and restoration programs.

The Building Department of the City of New York has now implemented an additional regulation on the facades, totally unfunded of course, requiring that the parapets of a building be inspected every year. For those unfamiliar with the term "parapet," it is defined as "part of a facade that extends upwards from the roof or decking." (Nerdy side note: the word parapet is derived from the Italian word parapetto, a combination of parare [to cover/defend] and petto [chest/breast].) This inspection requirement applies to every building and brownstone, not just those exceeding five stories as the FISP program dictates.

A quick check of regulations from several other large cities indicates that the NYC parapet inspection routine is among the most stringent in the world. Dade County Florida requires inspections every 20-40 years, Chicago every 8-12, Paris every 10 and Jersey City every five.