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March 17, 2010

## News

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### Fair's fair

Linda O'Flanagan  
3/17/2010

#### RAB lays out owners case at contract negotiations ofr city's building service workers

The Realty Advisory Board met with the union today to present the building owners' proposals for a new contract covering residential building workers.

The current contract under which an experienced doorman costs a residential building more than \$68,500 a year in salary and benefits, according to the RAB - expires on April 20.

The Realty Advisory Board on Labor Relations, Inc. (RAB) represents owners and managers, and Local 32BJ of the Service Employees International Union represents more than 30,000 doormen, handymen, porters and some of the superintendents in nearly 3,000 rental and co-op/condominium apartment buildings.

Most of the buildings are in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Queens, with some in Staten Island, Nassau and Suffolk. Bronx buildings are not involved in this round of talks. Today's meeting with the union was held at the law offices of Proskauer Rose.

Howard Rothschild, president of the RAB, told the union that many RAB member-buildings are middle-income co-operatives whose residents have been hit hard by the economy, including sharp decreases in the value of their properties combined with large tax increases and skyrocketing operating expenses.

Rental buildings have the same problems, in addition to monthly rents which have dropped sharply.

"The union says times are tough in New York City for workers. They are also tough for owners of co-ops, condominiums and rental buildings," Rothschild said. "The union has asked for a fair contract for its members. We agree with that, as long as the union remembers that what's fair for them has to be fair for us, too." Rothschild said building owners need to contain costs, and among the proposals the RAB made at the meeting were changes in overtime rules, holidays, personal and sick days, and benefits.

"New York building service employees represented by Local 32BJ and employed by RAB members are the best paid in the country and enjoy substantial benefits, such as fully employer-paid comprehensive family health benefits, a defined benefit pension plan, an annuity/401K plan, liberal sickness and vacation allowances and many other fringe benefits," said Paul Salvatore, general counsel to the RAB.

"In order to keep them in that enviable position, the union has to agree on ways to contain costs at a time when the national, state and New York City economies are all on very shaky grounds."

Local 32BJ is expected to respond and lay out its case over the next seven days.

*Pictured at conclusion of first meeting with 32BJ, RAB President Howard Rothschild, right, shakes hands with Local 32BJ President Mike Fishman. In center is Eric Rudin, co-chair of RAB Negotiating Committee. In background, Seth Popper, RAB Counsel, Rita Chu and James O'Conner, members of the RAB Negotiating Committee*



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