

Town & Village

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Public documents: How landlords investigate tenants

By Sabina Mollot

With more notices of nonrenewal being sent to community residents suspected of living outside of Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village, many have been wondering how Tishman Speyer is getting its information. On the ST-PCV Tenants Association's online forum, residents have been anonymously swapping theories on the subject, which include paid snitches, unscrupulous employees of the U.S. Postal Service and websites like Intelius.com that offer employee and tenant screening services.

Legally, landlords may investigate tenants through public information like utility account telephone service documents, voter's registration and property records. According to attorney Jamie Heiberger-Jacobsen, who represents landlords, investigations like those being conducted in ST-PCV are not uncommon.

"Often times a new owner will run a full building investigation to ascertain whether the tenant has an alternative address or whether someone else other than the tenant of record has accounts like

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phone or electric set up at the subject premises in their name other than the tenant's," said Heiberger-Jacobsen, of Heiberger & Associates.

She pointed out that certain kinds of documents like tax returns and wills could also be obtained by a landlord's attorney when do-

ing extensive research, but not other kinds of documents, like credit reports, which require the tenants' prior authorization.

"Through discovery a lot can be learned that would enable an owner to proceed, settle or discontinue the action," said Heiberger.