

The COOPERATOR

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Legal Legends

True Stories from New York City's Co-ops & Condos

By Keith Loria

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They say there are eight million stories in the naked city, and when you're an attorney working for a co-op or condo in New York, you may find that some of the best of them are happening to you.

While some may think that handling the legal issues of the Big Apple's co-ops, condos and HOA communities means just being bogged down with boring paperwork dealing with bylaws, rules and regulations, truth is the job can often resemble something out of a Judd Apatow movie. Attorneys see and litigate it all—from the dotty neighbor lady, who starts rearing goats in her backyard to the suspected mobster who may or may not be running a house of ill repute out of his condo apartment...



Nightmare Neighbors

Attorney **Adam Leitman Bailey** of **Adam Leitman Bailey, PC** has seen his share of problems associated with neighbors acting, well, not-so neighborly.

“One owner spent his life trying to ruin my clients—his neighbors,” **Bailey** says. “He left dead animals outside their door, and would terrorize the neighbors with noises, and a number of other horrible things.” Bad as it was to live with, this unbalanced individual's antics also hurt when other owners in the building attempted to sell, as buyers would often pull out when they heard about the issue in the minutes of meetings.

On another occasion, **Bailey** was successful in evicting a longtime resident, who had been creating a nuisance for his neighbors for over 40 years thanks to his unseemly housekeeping practices. The man's apartment looked like something out of the Hoarders TV series, with piles of clothing and debris everywhere and vermin hiding throughout.

Between the horrible odor and hundreds of roaches escaping into neighboring units and common areas, the other residents wanted him gone. The problem was that the messy man was also a seasoned attorney, and the housing court system does tend to favor long-term tenants. Ultimately the man was evicted, but **Bailey** says it was an uphill battle all the way.

In a less distasteful—but certainly no less unusual—situation, a landlord represented by **Bailey's** firm began an eviction case against a delinquent tenant. When he won, the landlord received a money judgment in the amount of rent owed.

Problem was, the tenant had no discoverable assets—that is, until the firm discovered that the tenant owned the suit worn by Beatle musician John Lennon on the cover of the famous Abbey Road album, and planned to sell it. **Bailey** took action to recover funds from the sale in order to pay the tenant's debt to the landlord...

To Be Continued

Every day, the city's finest co-op and condo lawyers are faced with unusual and unique challenges that make working with a condo or co-op more than just your average lawyering experience.

Keith Loria is a freelance writer and a frequent contributor to The Cooperator.