

## **MAYOR'S COLUMN**

In last week's column I discussed the energy audit available through New York State's Energy (NYSERDA) program. One of our cooperative buildings, River House, under the leadership of President John Stephens and a very capable Board, availed themselves of the service and made great strides in energy reduction, translating into real cost savings. Prior to using NYSERDA, the Board decided to change all hallway lighting to CFL bulbs. Since this lighting is in an "on position" 24/7, it was ideal for savings. Once done, a full month of usage showed a \$500 reduction in the power billing.

This small \$2,000 project incited the Board to survey the entire River House building at a cost of \$10,000, \$5,000 of which was paid by River House residents. This was recouped as an offset for work ultimately performed. All monthly savings very prudently goes into a reserve fund for future projects, and repayment of the boiler loan.

Residents of River House also opted to double pane the windows in their lobby and add a very energy efficient boiler to replace a 1957 oil-fired 5,000 gallon steam boiler. Like most of its generation, this boiler operated year round to provide the domestic hot water for the building. The new boiler is only 500 gallons.

In a very forward thinking move, they also tapped into a Con Edison gas line out in front of their property and now use fuel oil or gas to operate their boiler and a new hot water heater. At the time of choosing this additional energy option, #2 fuel oil cost about \$20 per million BTU's vs. natural gas at \$4.70 for the same quantity so the financial savings was immediate. Also, by adding an electronic mixer valve, the hot water now requires a lower level of energy to heat, further adding savings. The hot water system has ample storage to utilize all by-product domestic hot water produced while the boiler is producing steam heat.

River House staff also put insulation tubes on every exposed hot water or steam pipe in the building.

Residents also looked at the plantings on their property and trimmed all the trees away from their building reducing the pent up moisture that was leaking into the building and increasing energy use.

Not only was the 1957 boiler replaced with an Energy Star model, reaping automatic savings, the Board opted to add controls by Heat Timer so that now the building super can see how often the boiler fires, see the fuel burning under any condition and adjust the boiler accordingly. This information is stored on the Internet 24/7. To receive the label of an Energy Star, a product must meet or exceed energy efficiency and quality guidelines as determined by the U.S. Department of Energy.

Unfortunately, like most older buildings, the radiators in individual apartments did not have an adjustable on/off so the only solution for a too hot apartment was to open windows in the middle of winter further draining energy and producing added costs. The solution will be to retrofit as needed variable valving.

River House also made certain their roof vents were operating most efficiently. State law requires a healthy air exchange in large buildings to pull stale air out. Inefficient vents allow heat to build up in often windowless hallways greatly increasing the cost of air conditioning in particular.

The Co-op Board also authorized funding for energy efficient sleeves for air conditioning units in individual apartments under the wise theory that in a cooperative setting, the cost is ultimately borne by all of the residents in common charges.

As an added benefit, some of the costs of the improvements were paid with a low interest loan subsidized through NYSERDA.

When time came for new elevators this year, they opted for the best, most efficient lift systems. By replacing the complete unit, less power is used and the unit is much quieter in operation. A very knowledgeable consultant guided the Board through this project. This resulted in American made equipment which is highly dependable, readily serviceable with an off the shelf availability of parts.

Not only did the residents of River House opt for many energy efficient changes to their building, they continue to be proactive. For example, they place a priority on training their custodial staff so they have the skills to monitor the more efficient equipment and further refine the energy usage. And on Christmas, the Board's gift to the tenants was an energy efficient CFL light bulb!

River House's forward thinking is a strong example of model environment stewardship. Their efforts created a more healthy environment, that also translated into significant financial savings for all the residents.

To learn more about energy saving initiatives available through NYSERDA for single family residences and businesses, as well as co-ops, view their website at [www.NYSERDA.org](http://www.NYSERDA.org) or call 1-866-NYSERDA.