Westgate rent hike resisted

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Sometimes an elephant is just an elephant. MIT's decision to increase rent by 40 percent for next year, however, has some people reacting as if it were a "mooch." It said MIT will not try to test the legality in court because, as real estate lawyer E. John Cacioppo said, "MIT may move against residents who don't pay the increase, he added, by refusing to allow them to register, or withholding their deposits.

Residents, however, may have some legal support to fall back upon. Several said that lawyers have advised members of the WCA that the "licensed agreement" residents sign in lieu of a lease may be illegal. The lawyers said the agreement may in fact be a lease and thus subject to lease law, which does not allow rents to be raised within a lease's duration.

Residents expressed concern at the meeting that the rent strike would impede the "working relationship" they presently have with MIT administrators. "We can talk to MIT people to hear what we want to answer our questions," Heala said. "Some residents feared we wouldn't be able to do this if we withheld the rent increase.

"But the residents decided," he continued, "that we have to show MIT how strongly we feel, how much the rent increase hurts us, and how determined we are to have the housing system problem solved.

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