

COLTA Newsletter

Fall 2010

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The Commission on Landlord-Tenant Affairs, 7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park, Maryland was established by the City of Takoma Park to adjudicate and mediate complaints for violation of the city's Landlord-Tenant Relations law and to rule on petitions for rent increases above the rent stabilization allowance (6.24.020 TP Code).

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Online Landlord Reports

Effective August 2010, all landlords subject to the Rent Stabilization Law are required to submit their annual rent reports online to

www.takomaparkmd.gov. Each affected landlord has been provided a User ID and Password. This year's report covers the period 7/1/09-6/30/10. The online reporting format is designed to promote ease in transmitting annual rent report information and assist staff evaluation of the submitted data. Once completed, rent reports will be available on-line to the public.



Special points of interest:

- * Online landlord reports
- * COLTA Decisions
- * Do You Know???
- * From the Chair
- * A Word From Moses

The City's rental Housing License applications, due in January 2011, will be submitted electronically as well

COLTA Decisions

2010-8T, Lavallee/Pinnell v. Mendez, ((Munger., Liebreich, Sutton) Decision for Tenant, Decision appealed to Circuit Court by Landlord. (Security Deposit)

2010-10T-18T, Allen et al v. CSB Associates (Liebreich, Wakelyn, Price) Decision pending. (Illegal Rent)

COLTA Opinions and Orders are now available to read on the City's website. You may access the case decisions by going to www.takomaparkmd.gov, and then into the Landlord-Tenant section which can be viewed on the left hand side of the page. Decisions dating back to 2008 are available.

Do You Know????

- The Landlord-Tenant staff conducts periodic "Your Rights as a Tenant" workshops for residents. A workshop attended by ten tenants was held on September 22, 2010. Landlord-Tenant staff conducted tenant outreach at 7710 Maple Avenue in June.
- Two new tenant associations have registered with the City: Parkview Towers Tenant Association(7667 Maple Avenue) and Mapleview Residents Improvement Association (7710 Maple Avenue).
- Contributions to the Emergency Assistance Fund (EAF) total \$7,610.00 for the period 1/4/10- 10/13/10. EAF funds provide assistance to residents facing emergency situations.
- Four Financial Management Seminars and two Credit Management Classes sponsored by the City, were offered at the Community Center this summer and fall. They were well received, and will be offered again in the spring.
- The Rent Stabilization allowance for the period 7/1/10-6/30/11 is 2.3%.



From the Chair

As the bedbug issue continues to grow, both locally and nationally, the appropriate response for landlords remains a perplexing question. A recent legal action brought by a Howard County, MD couple seeks \$500,000 from the owners of their apartment complex for actual and emotional damages resulting from bedbug bites.

New York City landlords, for instance, are now required to disclose to prospective tenants if their building and/or particular apartments have had bedbugs.

Does the New York City bedbug disclosure requirement amount to a stigmatizing of a property? (disclosure of the occurrence of prior criminal acts or selected health conditions of prior tenants is not generally permitted).

Commissioner feedback regarding if/how Takoma Park landlords should address the bedbugs disclosure question is solicited.

Please email your thoughts/suggestions to: Jarrett.Smith@gmail.com.

Section 6.16.080 (Leasing Fees) In accordance with Administrative Regulation 03-06 ,the sum of the cost of all leasing fees (application fees, key fees, document preparation fees and credit check fees) shall not exceed \$30.00.

A Word From Moses

- Welcome to new Commissioners Galyna Husbands (Owner) and Christopher King (Tenant).
- Congratulations to reappointed Commissioners Juan Canales and Peter Munger.
- Selected proposed Housing Code Amendments (Title 6) designed to provide clarify and address certain current code inconsistencies have been submitted for Council review. One major change will allow the City of Takoma Park to have standing to file a COLTA complaint or to exercise its right to purchase a rental property under the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase law.
- Commissioners are requested to provide me with your suggestions for topics to be included in future editions of the COLTA Newsletter.
- Future COLTA Hearings will be held in available meeting rooms at the Takoma Park Community Center.
- **COLTA's annual business meeting will be held on December 1, 2010 at 7pm in the Hydrangea Room.**

