

Spring 2010

Vol 1, Issue 4



# COLTA Newsletter

The Commission on Landlord-Tenant Affairs, 7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park, Maryland  
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). Staff Contacts:

Landlord-Tenant Relations: Moses A. Wilds, Jr. (301) 891-7215 or MosesW@takomagov.org .

Rent Stabilization: Jean Kerr (301) 891-7216 or JeanK@takomagov.org

## COLTA CODE CHANGES

City Ordinance 2010-16 effective 4/12/10 amended Sec. 6.24.080 of the city code regarding the Commission's subpoena power by clarifying that the City may initiate a Circuit Court equity action to enforce compliance with a Commission subpoena. The Ordinance also amended Sec 6.24.090 of the city code by adding specific remedies for violations of Sec. 6.16.140(Entry), of the Landlord-Tenant Law, that the Commission may impose for improper entry into a rental unit by a landlord and for unreasonable refusal of entry by a tenant. A copy of the new ordinance was sent to Commissioners in April.



### Special points of interest:

- \* COLTA Code Changes
- \* COLTA Decisions
- \* Do You Know???
- \* From the Chair
- \* A Word From Moses

## COLTA Decisions

09-19-21T, Linson et al v. Hillwood Manor/CSB Associates, (Wakelyn, F-Doyle, Liebreich) Decision for Tenants at the combined complaints hearing. Decision appeal pending. (Illegal Increase in Rent)

2010-1T, Harper-Gonzalez v. Hillwood Manor/CSB Associates, (Wakelyn., Price, Munger) Decision for Tenant. Decision appeal pending. (Illegal Increase in Rent)

2010-5T, Gordon v. Simms, (Clennon, F-Doyle, Smith) Decision for Tenant. (Retaliatory Notice to Vacate)

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](http://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 have already been put on the site. Plans for adding 2007 case decisions will be completed by the summer.

## Do You Know????

- The Landlord-Tenant staff conducts periodic "Your Rights as a Tenant" workshops for city tenants. A workshop was held on April 13, 2010. Landlord-Tenant Staff conducted tenant outreach at 7777 and 7667 Maple Avenue in April and May.
- The Landlord-Tenant staff participates in monthly Landlord Certification Seminars which landlords have to attend every three years.
- The Landlord-Tenant staff will conduct training for landlords on electronic submission of rent reports in the late summer/early fall of 2010.
- City residents seeking emergency financial assistance should contact Ministries United Silver Spring Takoma Park (MUSST) by calling 301-495-4669.
- Landlords subject to rent stabilization were notified in April that the Rent Stabilization Allowance will be 2.3% effective July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011.

## From the Chair

As the city considers ways to address its current budget crisis, recognition that employing new approaches is critical.

- Have long running city housing programs outlived their effectiveness?
- Would citizens be amenable to increased property taxes to maintain the current level of city services?
- Will reductions in selected city staff time result in increased utilization of contractors which could be more costly?

- Should city landlords be granted some form of tax assessment relief as part of the discussion regarding maintaining or doing away with Rent Stabilization?
- Is the use of volunteers a truly viable option for performing selected city program activities?

Commissioners thoughts regarding these and other city budget questions will be appreciated.

Please email your thoughts/suggestions to: [Jarrett.Smith@gmail.com](mailto:Jarrett.Smith@gmail.com).



Section 6.16.130 (Utilities Transfer) of the City's Landlord-Tenant law requires that tenants be provided three (3) months advance written notice prior to the effective date of the transfer. The landlord is required to certify in writing to the city's housing department the date and to whom the notice was mailed./delivered along with the names and apartment numbers of each tenant. The landlord is also required to provide copies of the actual transfer notices to the department.. Two (2) weeks prior to the effective transfer date the landlord must also notify each tenant of the effective transfer date and provide the tenant(s) with information regarding establishing an individual utility account.

## A Word From Moses

- Commissioners whose current terms will expire on June 30, 2010 have been sent their reappointment applications which are to be returned to the City Clerk.
- Commissioners are again requested to provide me with your suggestions for topics to be included in future editions of the COLTA Newsletter.
- COLTA Hearings will be held in available meeting rooms at the Takoma Park Community Center, 7500 Maple Avenue.
- An article in the monthly city newsletter entitled "Housing Mailbox" answers tenant and landlord questions based on selected sections of the City's L and T and COLTA codes.
- The hours of the Landlord-Tenant Mediation Specialist will be reduced by 50% effective July 1, 2010 as part of the proposed FY 2011 city budget.

Have a safe and enjoyable summer!

