

COLTA Newsletter

Summer 2011

Vol 1, Issue 6



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. (G.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

Landlord-Tenant Manager: Linda Walker (301) 891-7222 or LindaW@takomagov.org

Rental Housing-Victims of Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault

Effective October 2010, an amendment to Section 8-5A of the state code provides affected persons with selected rights they did not previously have. The new law applies to legal tenants who have obtained a final peace or protective order from the court and provides the following protections:



1. The right to terminate their tenancy with 30 days written notice mailed or hand delivered to their landlord along with a copy of the final peace or protective order. Rent must be paid during the 30 days notice period and lease obligations end at that point;
2. The right to have the landlord change their rental unit locks following written notice to the landlord along with a copy of the final peace or protective order. The lock must be changed by the close of the next business day following the landlord's receipt of the written request. If the landlord fails to meet this timeframe, the new law allows the tenant to have the locks changed by a certified locksmith without securing the landlord's permission. The tenant is required to give the landlord a copy of the new key by the close of the next business day after the lock has been changed.

See the August 2011 Takoma Park Newsletter Housing Mailbox for additional information on this new law.

COLTA Decisions

10-25T, Henson v. Exit Realty Solutions (Smith, Wakelyn, King), Decision for Tenant, (Security Deposit)

10-20T/21T, Scian/Howard v. CSB Associates (Liebreich, Glennon Smith), Decisions for Tenants, (Illegal Rent)

11-2T-Allen/Parrish v. Hillwood Manor Apts. et. al. (Smith, Price, Wakelyn), Decision for Tenant, (Illegal Entry)
Case is being appealed to Circuit Court.

Special points of interest:

- * Rental Housing—State Code Amendment
- * COLTA Decisions
- * Do You Know???
- * From the Chair
- * Utility Transfers
- * A Word From Moses

Do You Know????

- The Landlord-Tenant staff conducts periodic "Your Rights as a Tenant" workshops for city tenants. A workshop attended by fourteen tenants was held on June 15, 2011. The next Tenants Rights workshop is scheduled for September 13, 2011.
- City residents' contributions to the Emergency Assistance Fund (EAF) totaled \$7,745.80 for the period 9/13/10-3/29/11. EAF funds provide assistance to city residents facing emergency situations.
- The very popular Financial Management Classes will return in the fall on 10/19, 11/2, 11/16. Two Credit Management Classes will also be offered on 9/21 and 10/5. Class are free to Takoma Park residents and \$25/class for non-residents. All classes are conducted at the Takoma Park Community Center.
- The Rent Stabilization allowance for the period 7/1/11-6/30/12 is 3.0%.
- Letters to landlords regarding the submission of their rent reports for the period 7/1/10-6/30/11 will be mailed in early August. Deadline date is 9/30/11. Submission of the report must be done on-line.



From the Chair

Commissioners are reminded to promptly respond to Moses regarding availability to serve on hearing panels.

Commissioners are also reminded to promptly provide Moses with any changes to your contact information.

Have safe and enjoyable summer.

Utility Transfer – All Rental Units

Section 6.16.130 requires landlords, who are separately metering their property or want to transfer the cost of a utility to the tenants, average the cost of the utility for the past 24 months and then reduce the rent for each unit by the amount that would be an equitable distribution to the units. The cost for common area utility usage must be deducted from the amounts applied to each apartment.

This process applies to both rent stabilized units and those that are exempt from the rent stabilization program.

Three month notice to the tenants prior to this transfer taking place is required.

COLTA Opinions and Orders are available on the City's Website. Case decisions may be accessed by going to www.takomaparkmd.gov and then click on the landlord-tenant section located on the left side of the page.

COLTA Decisions from 2008 may be reviewed.

A Word From Moses

- Welcome to new Commissioners H. D. (Ed) Edwards (Tenant) and Gehmelle Johnson (Owner).
- Congratulations to reappointed Commissioners Lauren Price, Victoria Sutton and Christopher King.
- Farewell to Commissioners Galyna Husbands and Rob Liebreich who recently resigned their commission appointments.
- Commissioners are requested to provide me with your suggestions for topics to be included in future editions of the COLTA Newsletter.
- Speedy get well wishes to Jean Kerr, Housing Specialist who will return to her duties in the fall.
- Bedbugs identification and treatment options have been added to the landlord certification information notebooks as bedbug infestation has become a common occurrence in apartments.
- Proposed changes to the Landlord-Tenant and COLTA laws and regulations have been submitted for city attorney review and comments.

