

COLTA Newsletter

Winter 2012

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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. (6.24.02D TP Code). Staff Contacts:

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

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

FAIR RETURN RENT INCREASE PETITION PROCESS & TRAINING

Landlords who are experiencing a reduction in their net operating income for their rental property may investigate filing a fair return rent increase petition with COLTA. The petition is a request to COLTA that the landlord be allowed to increase rents above the rent stabilization



allowance, which is currently 3%. COLTA's Rents Analyst reviews the financial documents that are a requirement of the petition and issues a decision. If the decision is challenged by the landlord or tenants, a hearing before the Commission may follow.

The Fair Return Increase Petition Training is designed to advise landlords about the process. Two trainings were held by HCD staff on 12/8/11 and 1/25/12. A training session for tenants residing in two properties where fair return rent increase petitions have recently been filed were held on 12/12/11 and 1/30/12.

Special points of interest:

- * Fair Return Rent Increase Petition Process & Training
- * COLTA Decisions
- * Do You Know???
- * From the Chair
- * Rental Property Inspections

COLTA Decisions

11-3T, Brown-Thomas v. Vista Mgm't. (Wakelyn, Munger, King), Decision for Tenant, (Illegal Entry)

11-8T, Radman v. Allen/Dupraw, ((King, Sutton, Edwards), Decision for Tenant, (Security Deposit)

11-10T, Gordon v. Simms, (Sutton, Clennon, Price), Case Dismissed, (Security Deposit)

11-9T, HTTA v Tenacity Group, et al. (Smith, Wakelyn, Munger), Decision for Landlord, (Illegal Entry)

Do You Know????

- The Landlord-Tenant staff conducts periodic "Your Rights as a Tenant" workshops for Takoma Park tenants. The next workshop is scheduled for March 14, 2012, from 7pm-8:30pm. Pre-register by calling 301-891-7215.
- City residents' contributions to the Emergency Assistance Fund (EAF) totaled \$7,029.00 for the period 1/3/11-12/27/11. EAF funds provide financial assistance to city residents facing emergency situations.
- The City of Takoma Park will be sponsoring a "First Time Home Buyer" class on Saturday, April 14 from 8:30am-1:30pm. The class, which is given by a HUD-approved non-profit agency twice a year, is very popular and requires registration by calling 301-891-7222. A certificate of completion is awarded to attendees. The certificate can be used to obtain low interest loans offered by Montgomery County and state of Maryland.
- Tenants who have repairs in their units that are not being addressed by their landlords may call the county's Customer Service number at 240-777-0311 to schedule an appointment with a code enforcement inspector who will document the code violations and give the landlord a deadline to abate the problem. This is a "Complaint Inspection".



From the Chair

Greetings from new COLTA Chairperson Lauren Price who was elected at the December 2011 Annual Business Meeting.

Lauren joined the Commission in 2009 as a tenant representative and had previously served as Commission Vice-Chairperson.

Lauren has worked for 31 years in the federal sector and has been a Takoma Park resident since 2009.

RENTAL PROPERTY INSPECTIONS

Licensed city rental properties are regularly inspected by Montgomery County housing inspectors and must meet certain standards to comply with codes regarding habitability, safety and living space. For instance, inspections will ensure that smoke detectors are working so that tenants will be alerted in case of a fire.

These inspections also address quality of life concerns to ensure that air conditioning/heating units function properly, all appliances are in working order and there is adequate living space for the number of occupants.

Inspections are also beneficial for landlords as they identify whether the tenant is maintaining a clean rental unit and helps to identify small issues, that if neglected, may grow into major problems.

COLTA Opinions and Orders are available on the City's Website:

www.takomaparkmd.gov

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

- Commissioners whose terms end 6/30/12 will shortly be receiving reappointment information.
- Congratulations to Lauren Price and Peter Munger who were elected Commission Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson respectively.
- Welcome back to Jean Kerr,
- Housing Specialist who returned to work in October 2011.
- Commissioners are requested to provide me with your suggestions for topics to be included in future editions of the COLTA Newsletter.
- Please report any change in your contact information as soon as you know it, especially preferred e-mail addresses.
- Tenant and landlord questions about city housing laws are answered in the monthly Takoma Park Newsletter Housing Mailbox.
- Proposed changes to the Landlord-Tenant and COLTA laws and regulations are awaiting review to the city attorney prior to their submission to the Council.

