

# COLTA Newsletter

Winter 2014-15

Vol. 2 Issue 2



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:

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Rent Stabilization: Jean Kerr (301) 891-7216 or JeanK@takomaparkmd.gov

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

## Change to Security Deposit Interest Rate

Effective January 1, 2015 the annual rate of interest payable on residential security deposits rate will be 1.5% or determined by the U. S. Treasury Yield Curve Rate, as of the first business day of each year, whichever is greater.



The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) will post a link on their website homepage which will provide a calculator for landlords and tenants to determine the amount of interest payable on the security deposits. All references to specific interest rates should be removed from residential leases. If a lease specifies an interest rate different from the 1.5%, landlords will have to send an addendum to tenants to document the change effective January 1, 2015.

## COLTA Cases Filed

During 2014 a total of eleven (11) COLTA cases were filed. Of these cases six (6) were complaints regarding security deposit refunds and five were settled with the refunds being returned to the tenants. A December hearing is scheduled for one (1) Security Deposit Refund complaint. The remaining cases included two (2) complaints regarding Notices To Vacate which were withdrawn by the landlords, one (1) Defective Tenancy complaint which is currently being investigated one (1) Illegal Rent complaint which is also currently being investigated, and one Fair Return Petition which received a Preliminary Decision resulting in the landlord being approved for a rent increase of \$111.61 per unit.

**To read an entire COLTA decision, you may go to the city's website [www.takomaparkmd.gov](http://www.takomaparkmd.gov), click on "Landlord-Tenant" and scroll down to "COLTA Case Summaries".**

## Special points of interest:

- \* Change To Security Deposit Interest Rate
- \* COLTA Cases Filed
- \* Do You Know???
- \* From the Chair
- \* A Word From Moses

- Public access to rent report information submitted by landlords will soon be available on the city's website.
- A Tenants Rights Class was held on October 15, 2014. The next tenant Rights Classes will be held on March 19, and June 11, 2015.
- Takoma Park residents donated \$6,400 to the city's Emergency Assistance Fund from January 2014 December 2014. All donations are tax deductible.
- Landlords have the option of attending a class or successfully passing a written exam every three years to secure their landlord certification as part of the city's licensing procedures.
- The Rent Stabilization Allowance for the period 7/1/14-6/30/15 is 1.6%. Notice was sent to all landlords in April and landlords are required to submit their annual rent reports by September of each year.
- Takoma Park residents received over \$32,500 from the Emergency Assistance Fund from January to November to assist in meeting housing, prescription drugs and food needs.



## From the Chair

Chairperson Price expresses her appreciation to all Commissioners as she ends three terms as Chairperson. Ms. Price will continue to serve as a tenant member of the Commission.

A new Chairperson and Vice-Chair will be selected at the December 2014 Business Meeting.

## Essex House/Parkview Towers Renovations

Two high rise apartment buildings located on Maple Avenue (7667 Maple Ave. and 7777 Maple Ave.) are completing major renovations to their buildings. Much of the renovations were done to improve major systems, however improvements to rental units were also included in the projects. During the extensive renovations at these two apartment complexes, formal agreements were worked out between the owners and the tenant associations which included selected rent concessions because of the extreme inconvenience that tenants experienced during the renovation process. At the Essex House, the tenant association was also able to convince the owners that relocation to another unit instead of in-place renovation would be more accommodating to the tenants. The formal agreements meant that the tenant associations did not have to file COLTA complaints to reach the compromises. The Department's Community Organizers (Rozanne Look and Mario Cristaldo), helped the tenants organize through the Tenant Capacity Building Program and assisted the tenants throughout the negotiation.

## A Word From Moses

- Commissioners whose terms expire on June 30, 2015 (Clennon, Myers, Forrest-Doyle), are reminded to contact the City Clerk regarding their reappointment. (301.891.7267).
- The Commission lost the services of two Commissioners Catherine Wakelyn and Christopher King during 2014.
- Please report any change in your contact information as soon as you know it, especially preferred e-mail addresses as that is often the primary form of communication.
- The Department has published a new "Landlord-Tenant Handbook" which includes all the recent changes in the Housing Code.

For extra copies of this document, please contact me.

- COLTA has three vacancies, so if you know anyone who is a tenant or a landlord, please let them know about this opportunity to serve the community. Interested person can contact me.

