

## **RAB COMMENTS ON THE PUBLIC HOUSING DWELLING LEASE**

**1. Language of the Lease:** HACM was encouraged to simplify the language in both the lease and the handbook, considering that the primary audience for these documents is residents, not lawyers. It was felt the lease especially was written in too legal a language. RAB members also mentioned that there are specialists that can help to make documents easier for residents with cognitive issues to understand. One specific place that was mentioned as difficult to understand is in the area of rent payment methods and rent due dates.

**HACM Response:** While this lease is very similar to most standard landlord/tenant leases in the State of Wisconsin, HACM will collaborate with the City Attorney's Office to see where or if simplifications can be made on these legal documents to enhance reading comprehension.

**2. What does the lease mean in Section 1B "The term shall be one year and shall renew automatically for another year, unless terminated as provided by this lease"?**

**HACM Response:** In the private market, a landlord can decide not to renew a lease. This provision is required under public housing and it means that HACM cannot just decline to renew the lease unless HACM goes through termination process as described by the lease. Residents do sign a renewed lease during the recertification process, however recertification meetings to sign the lease do not always happen right at the time of lease renewal.

**3. Are all residents limited to the rent payment methods mentioned here?**

**HACM Response:** No, only public housing residents are subject to this specific lease language, including the rent payment methods listed here. RAD/PBV developments may have different methods of paying rent.

**4. Why are there additional fees for air conditioning, refrigerators and freezers?**

**HACM Response:** In public housing, some developments have utilities included (for example, many of the senior/disabled highrises and Hillside Terrace development) and others may receive a utility allowance to pay estimated utility costs. These additional fees are excess utility fees to cover the extra utility costs resulting from the resident using a major additional appliance in developments where the housing authority pays the utility expenses.

**5. What is the \$10 nonrefundable pet fee is for?**

**HACM Response:** For family public housing developments (general occupancy developments), only residents in single-family Scattered Site Public Housing are allowed to have pets. Thus, this fee only applies to those residents. This fee is intended to cover the reasonable operating

costs to the project relating to the presence of pets. Reasonable operating costs to the project relating to the presence of pets include, but are not limited to:

Landscaping costs

Pest control costs

Insurance costs

Clean-up costs

**6. Unauthorized Dogs:** Several RAB members mentioned that there is a problem with how many residents in family developments have dogs, including pitbulls and rottweilers which are not allowed by the City. They know that some residents are provided dogs as assistance animals, but do not know who is allowed to have a dog and who is not. Can the resident leaders be provided a list of those residents that are approved for assistance animals? RAB members also recommended a letter be sent to residents reminding them of the policies over pets/animals.

**HACM Response:** Having an unauthorized pet is a lease violation that could lead to eviction if the owner doesn't remove the pet. However, HACM also has to be careful with the confidential and sensitive information such as a list of names of residents who have requested and been approved for a reasonable accommodation for a disability.

HACM encourages residents to report addresses to the management office who they believe have a dog and HACM will review to see if there is an unauthorized animal in the unit. For resident safety, it is best to let HACM deal with the issue rather than trying to confront the other resident directly. We will look into the legal possibility of sharing addresses of those units approved for animals with resident leadership.

HACM agrees with the RAB that a separate mailing to all residents regarding rules over pets/animals is a good idea and will work to coordinate such a mailing.

**7. Where in the lease does it describe the consequences for criminal and drug activity?**

**HACM Response:** In Section 5 (Q) of the lease , it states that residents shall not engage in drug-related or violent criminal activity, among other activities. The consequences for such activity is lease termination. Residents with any knowledge of drug houses and/or criminal activity should report it to both Public Safety and the police's non-emergency number.

## **RAB COMMENTS ON THE PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENT HANDBOOK**

**1. Will the Public Housing Resident Handbook be available in every management office in public housing?**

**HACM Response:** Yes. Once a final version is approved, it will be printed and bound and available for distribution at developments.

**2. Will any other resident comments sent to HACM during the public comment period be shared with the RAB?**

**HACM Response:** Yes, HACM will share any comments received prior to the next RAB meeting at that meeting and will share any additional comments in the future.

**3. Will the bedbug flyer previously developed be passed out independently of the resident handbook?**

**HACM Response:** Yes, it is an independent document.

**4. What happens when HACM does not make repairs in a timely manner? For some work orders, it has taken months for the work orders to be addressed. Also, HACM does not always provide residents with copies of work orders that they submit, so residents are unable to prove when work orders are requested.**

**HACM Response:** HACM's maintenance department responds to work orders using a priority classification system. Emergency work orders are the highest priority and should be resolved or addressed within 24 hours or less per HUD guidelines. Lower priority items may take longer to address. HACM's maintenance staff have been short-staffed, but HACM is attempting to get caught up on the backlog of regular work orders.

HACM's Property management will check into the issue regarding developments not providing the resident a copy of a work order to document it. We agree that the resident can request documentation of the work order request. Of course, some work orders, especially in family developments, are taken over the telephone. In those cases, if requested, a copy can be left with the resident once someone comes out to inspect the issue.

**5. Can HACM look at the carpet section in the "Self-Help" section of the Handbook. RAB members are still concerned about worn, old and/or filthy carpeting in units. Another resident had a concern about cracked flooring (tiles). Additionally, can a section on Hoarding be included in the self-help section?**

**HACM Response:** HACM understands the members' concern about carpeting that was mentioned during the Agency Plan and Capital funds discussions. HACM is attempting to replace carpeting with other types of flooring as units are vacated. HACM will review these

sections of the Handbook and will also include a section on hoarding in the Self-Care section of the Handbook.

**6. Are residents who are licensed to conceal carry a gun do so within HACM buildings?**

**HACM Response:** HACM’s Board approved a policy years ago when the laws changed over concealed carry in Wisconsin. Residents may have a gun in their unit, but the gun must be concealed and carried directly into and out of the building – nobody may linger in common areas with a gun. We will provide a copy of that policy to the RAB and will consider whether any language should be added to the Handbook.

**7. RAB members want clarification on how smoking is prohibited in the housing developments and in apartments.**

**HACM Response:** In addition to this rule appearing in the handbook, it also appears in the smoke-free lease addendum signed by the resident. If HACM finds evidence of in-unit smoking (tobacco, marijuana, or anything else), it could lead to eviction. It can be difficult to know if a unit smells of smoke because someone has smoked inside, or because a person who smoked outdoors has clothes that smell of smoke and thus bring that smell indoors on their clothing. However, we do follow up on complaints and if we find evidence of smoking, we follow the Smoke Free Policy regarding lease violations.

**8. There were questions about carbon monoxide detectors (why are there none at Parklawn) and about smoke detectors (why do some chirp when they are supposedly hard-wired?).**

**HACM Response:** Parklawn has radiant heat and does not have a boiler in the unit. Since there are no natural gas devices, carbon monoxide detectors are not needed at Parklawn.

Regarding smoke detectors, most are wired, with a battery backup for when the electricity goes out. The device chirps when the backup battery dies, and a resident should submit a work order to replace the backup battery.

**9. For the pet deposit on the Table of Standard Sales and Service Charges, RAB members suggested that HACM consider charging seniors and persons with disabilities in “general occupancy” developments a deposit of only \$50, and others in “general occupancy” developments \$100. In that way, seniors and those with disabilities will be treated similar to seniors/disabled individuals in the public housing highrises and will benefit from the lower costs.**

**HACM Response:** HACM will review and consider if it is practical to implement this change in the policy. It would only really impact the single-family scattered sites. If we believe it can be implemented legally and easily, we will make the change in our final draft.

**10. Additionally, the Handbook should be clarified in several areas to clearly state that only single-family scattered sites may have dogs/cats as pets. There should also be greater clarification about what kinds/numbers of pets allowed under the pet policy, such as fish and birds, as well as which types of pets trigger the \$10 non-refundable fee.**

**HACM Response:** HACM will review and consider such changes to the final version of the policy to clarify these items.

**11. Some RAB members had a concern about rent late fees for persons that are on a fixed income. While social security and SSI amounts are deposited typically by the federal government on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the month, HACM only gives residents until the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month to pay their rent. This can create difficulty in turning around that payment so quickly through the mail/etc. and it was wondered if HACM could extend the due date.**

**HACM Response:** It is very common for most tenant/landlord leases that rent is paid on by the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the month or a resident will be charged a late fee. We will continue that provision of the lease. Typically, as long as the payment is mailed and postmarked by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month, it is not considered late. However, one suggestion for residents in this situation is to set up an ACH transfer with their bank to automatically withdraw rent on an appropriate day (such as the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> of the month). Thus, it would happen automatically after the deposit date. Additionally, in the future, HACM intends to add a payment system to accept and scan checks in our public housing developments; this technology is already used in our PBV/RAD developments and will be expanded to public housing within the next year.

**12. Does HACM allow advance rent payments? Some managers have discouraged or prohibited this; others have done this without any problems.**

**HACM Response:** HACM believes that paying rent in advance is allowable. However, we will double check with Wisconsin landlord-tenant law to ensure compliance with any applicable laws. Once we determine that, HACM will ensure that all staff are knowledgeable about our policies and procedures regarding advance rent payments.

**13. Can veteran services be added to the list of Important Telephone Numbers/Resources?**

**HACM Response:** Yes, HACM will include it in the final draft.

**14. Can the RAB have a copy of the revised draft of the Handbook?**

**HACM Response:** HACM will provide it to the RAB prior to the October Board meeting.

#### **RAB COMMENTS ON THE RESIDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

There were no comments on the Grievance Procedure.