



RENTAL REGISTRATION/INSPECTION ORDINANCE

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: WHAT IS THE RENTAL REGISTRATION/INSPECTION ORDINANCE?

A: The ordinance was passed by the City Council of Pittsburgh in December 2007, but was not implemented immediately due to rollout problems the City encountered post-passage. The deadline to register all rental units (apartments, single-family homes, duplexes, etc.) had been set for April 1, 2009 by the City Council, but is now postponed until September 1, 2009. As of late-July 2009, the registration has been postponed again until December 1, 2009. Each property owner/manager of a rental unit was to “register” the unit, paying a \$12 fee for each unit. They also had to fill out a form that turned over contact information for the property owner, property manager, and each tenant living with the rental unit. Multi-unit buildings were subject to even higher costs due to per-building inspection fees. All units were subject to inspections conducted by the Bureau of Building and Inspection, and had to pass in order to be granted a “rental permit license” by the City of Pittsburgh. Additionally, owners of houses/duplexes that were being rented had to apply for an occupancy permit (following inspection by the City of Pittsburgh) at a \$65 cost. If the rental property did not meet the zoning code, there was also the possibility that the property owner would have to apply for a variance, with the non-refundable fee for a variance hearing with the Zoning Department starting at \$775 per property.

Q: WHAT WAS RAMP'S ROLE IN ALL OF THIS?

A: Back in February 2007, RAMP's Government Affairs Department, along with members of the Government Affairs Committee, began meeting with members of the City Council and representatives from the Mayor's office, to express the deep concerns our members had with the proposed ordinance. RAMP pro-actively offered numerous suggestions and recommendations on how the City could achieve its publicly stated goals, while not financially punishing property owners, managers, and tenants, nor infringing upon the constitutional rights of property owners or tenants. RAMP testified at several public hearings on the matter, again submitting suggestions on how to amend the draft ordinance, and warned the City that this ordinance, if passed as written, would not stand up in court. Despite RAMP's best collective efforts, City Council did pass the ordinance in December 2007. RAMP has been working behind the scenes since then to encourage revisions to the ordinance, and pass an amended version. With the April 1, 2009, deadline looming, RAMP's Board of Directors chose to become party to a lawsuit filed on behalf of our members, in conjunction with three other associations whose members were being adversely affected by this ordinance. Over the past two weeks, RAMP's Government Affairs Department worked closely with legal counsel representing us in this lawsuit to file a motion for injunctive relief. Numerous negotiations ensued during that short

time between all parties (the assorted plaintiffs, Judge James, City Law Department, Mayor's Office, and City Council), which resulted in all sides agreeing to sign a Consent Decree that postponed the ordinance until September 1, 2009.

Q: IF I HAVE RENTAL PROPERTIES IN THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH, WHAT DO I DO NOW?

A: As of late-July 2009, the registration has been postponed again until December 1, 2009. Our Legal Counsel continues to advise that property owners and property managers affected by this ordinance wait to file any rental registration applications until revisions are made to the ordinance and the form of the application. If you have already filed any applications, the City will be continuing to process the applications under the present application form and requirements, which will result in those having already filed having to deal with occupancy permit and zoning compliance issue which have come up. Keep in mind that zoning requirements are what they are, and current undetected violations are still violations, and if discovered by the City are actionable without the rental registration at all.