

# Landlords Of Linn County

## Newsletter

MAY 2010

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Upcoming Meetings
- Changes to Chapter 29 Housing Code
- Evening "Networking Meetings"
- New member packages explaining membership benefits and training

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## Upcoming Monthly Meetings

**MAY 13, 2010**

**"My Problem and How I solved it" panel discussion of members, vendors.**

Location:  
Clarion Convention Center  
525 33rd Avenue SW  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

6:00 Social Hour; 7:00 Program.

**JUNE 10, 2010**

Joe Kelly state lobbyist will talk about past and future legislation affecting landlords and property owners in Iowa

Location:  
Clarion Convention Center  
525 33rd Avenue SW  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

6:00 Social Hour; 7:00 Program.

**JULY 8, 2010**

Presentation will be about lead paint and disclosures in rentals.

Location:  
Clarion Convention Center  
525 33rd Avenue SW  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404



## Changes to Chapter 29 Housing Code

The new proposed Chapter 29 changes Chapter 29 from a Housing Inspection Code to a Licensed Rental Registration of Residential Housing Code. There are three main changes in the new code.

A. It requires all landlords to have a rental License before they can rent a property in Cedar Rapids. Denial, suspension revocation or non renewal of a landlord's license is the ultimate enforcement tool for the landlords who do not

comply with the rental licensing standards. This is part of the Crime Free Rental Housing initiative to keep illegal activity off rental property.



There are three main changes in the new code.

B. It requires all landlords to submit a new rental registration application and pay a one time \$50.00 licensing registration fee.

C. It changes the main funding for the Housing Inspection Department from inspection fees to licensing fee.

In addition to the LOLC March program meeting with members of the Housing Inspection Department,

## Chapter 29 continued....

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members of the Board of Directors have spoken at two City Council meetings and sent several emails to the City Council advocating some changes to the proposed code. The following is a summation of the items from an email to the City Council stating changes that Landlords of Linn County would like to see made.

The main purpose of having a new Chapter 29 Rental Licensing requirement in Cedar Rapids is to keep as much illegal activity out of rental properties as possible. The CRPD and the Housing Inspection Department need to focus their efforts towards

Most important is not adding unnecessary costly operating procedures to the new code.

Some ways to keep the operating cost low are to:

1. Have the housing inspection fees paid once every five years not annually. Paying the fees annually will not cause the bad landlords to change their current rental practices.

2. Have the Rental Licenses be for five years and running concurrently with the Certificates of

good for only one year will not cause the bad landlords to change their current rental practices.

3. Require housing inspectors to inspect around 1400 units per year per inspector. The new database software system will free up the inspectors to spend more time in the field doing inspections. The Council needs to inform housing inspection department this is a specific goal to accomplish.

4. Retain the 5-year billing term system and include the 50% discount per unit incentive system for landlords whose inspected properties do not have any housing inspection violations. This incentive discount encourages landlords to do "pre-inspection" inspections. It also saves the city money by not requiring a follow up inspection, thus allowing the inspector to use that time to inspect other properties.

5. Keep the present fees for this year. The Department is going to receive a large, one time rental licenses registration income increase of about \$200,000. After a year

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getting the approximate 25 problem landlords to change their rental practices or for them to get out of the rental business and to accomplish this in the most cost effective manner possible.

Compliance rather than for one year and renewed annual. Remembering that the license of either time duration is subject to revocation for cause. Having the Rental Licenses

# Evening Monthly “Networking Meetings”

Thanks to everyone who has attended our evening meetings in 2010. Our attendance and feedback has been great!

This is probably one of the biggest changes for our organization but for good reason. We looked around the state of Iowa and talked to other landlord organizations and the most successful monthly meetings were in the evenings. We've had a number members ask for evening meetings because they work during the day.

We also feel rushed at our noon

meetings as people need to get back to work or their properties.

The new schedule is:

6pm drinks/social hour

7pm dinner

7:15-8pm presentation

There will be a short Vendor Spotlight at each monthly meeting

Again we want to create more of a monthly social gathering so our members can get to know each other more, ask questions and discuss landlord topics.

Of course some will prefer Noon meetings but we need to commit to this change and not switch back/forth and confuse the group!



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## LinnForRent.com and yard signs

All landlords members who have paid their 2010 membership are eligible to receive LinnForRent.com yard signs for free!

If you paid your 2010 membership and you have not received your signs be sure and attend our next meeting and you can pick up your signs there.

There are large yard signs as well as 1/2 size directional signs.



Both signs have space for you to put your phone number and it gives the tenants a website to view your listing online.

If you haven't reviewed our online site yet go to <http://LinnAreaRentals.com>

**For Rent yard signs will drive tenants to our website to learn more about the property for rent.**

## New Member Packages

ALL current paid members will receive a New Member Package after January 2010 for no additional cost!

New members after Jan 1, 2010 will pay a \$25 processing fee to receive the package.

The processing fee pays for the “New Member Package” and the package will include:

One/two 24”x36” coroplast “For Rent” sign and post

Two 8” x 36” coroplast “For Rent” directional signs and posts

CD containing most recent copy of Iowa landlord forms

Tri-fold brochures explaining our organization

Crime fee/drug free stickers for

your properties

(Additional signs can be purchased)

Attend the next meeting to receive your new member package.

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Member of Landlords of Linn County  
<http://LinnAreaRentals.com>

# Letter from the President

FEBRUARY 2010

Hello Members,  
Since undertaking the Presidency in January, I have attended many meetings and will be

regarding any questions you may have with regards to landlording or contact me if you feel there is an important issue within Linn County or the State of Iowa that Landlords of Linn County needs to be involved in.

As President, I hope to provide the membership with knowledge and information by using transparency within our organization. All information that affects the membership needs to be shared with the membership. Please watch your emails for information updates.

I am looking forward to serving you for 2010. I'm hoping to make our organization bigger and better for our members. I may be contacted at 319-329-5378 (cell) or 319-362-1020 (office). My email is


[President@LandlordsofLinnCounty.org](mailto:President@LandlordsofLinnCounty.org).

Regards,

Stephanie Feuss

President

Landlords of Linn County



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providing and sharing valuable information with our members. As President, please feel free to contact me

## Chapter 29 continued...

with the new database operating system, the Department will have updated and accurate information, and should be

able to be better manage and significantly improve its productivity and annual revenues. The fee amounts under the proposed Option 3 rental registration rates billed on a five year cycle will cover 73 plus% of the overall cost. We feel it is reasonable that the other 37% of the cost be paid from property tax revenues, as multifamily property owners pay twice as much in property taxes

(per assessed value) as do residential owners and residential owners will benefit from better code enforcement.

Dick Rehman

Board Member

Landlords of Linn County



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# Maximizing Your Applicant Pool

With an ever-changing applicant pool, you must make strategic adjustments to your screening criteria to ensure that you are renting to as many qualified applicants as possible. As 2010's rental season begins to take off, it's a good time for landlords to review their current acceptance criteria. First, you want to ensure that your screening criteria and goals for 2010 are aligned, and that the former doesn't interfere with the latter. Next, you want to evaluate your existing screening criteria in the context of your current and future applicant pool.

Based on a study of ScreeningWorks clients, application volume has increased by 4% through the first few months of 2010, when compared with the same time period in 2009. At the same time, the number of rejected applicants has increased by 1%. Looking forward, properties will begin to see more and more applications as the "busy season" arrives, while also seeing the credit worthiness of their applicant pool continue to decline as those most impacted by the economic downturn begin to return to the rental market. Properly evaluating the risk of this growing population of "borderline" applicants will dictate a property's



level of success in 2010 and beyond.

Based on current rental conditions and real-life success stories

of our clients, ScreeningWorks recommends these key screening process adjustments for 2010:

## Examine Security Deposit Amounts

We recommend that you examine your security deposits levels to determine whether or not yours are in line with local competition. In today's economy, qualified applicants can be won over with a more attractive deposit, such as surety bonds or monthly rental supplement programs.

## Better Understand Your Cancellations

As application fees have fallen, and in some cases disappeared entirely, cancellation rates have increased significantly. Historically, 10-15% of applicants who applied and were accepted would cancel prior to move in. In recent years, this number has doubled to an average near 30%. For every 100 accepted applicants that your company is able to attract, nearly 30 of

them are choosing to take residence elsewhere. By monitoring and studying this applicant group, you can better understand why this is happening and ultimately reduce your number of cancellations.

Although we don't have control over our current economy, landlords can take proper cautions to lessen the blow. By honing in on maximizing each property's applicant pool, landlords can keep vacancy issues at bay during this tough economic time.

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Geni Benenson is the Marketing Specialist for ScreeningWorks, A Service of RentGrow, Inc. the resident screening experts ([www.ScreeningWorks.com](http://www.ScreeningWorks.com)). She can be reached at [screeningworks@rentgrow.com](mailto:screeningworks@rentgrow.com) or by calling 888-401-7999. Association members receive 10% off with promotion code IA888save77.

## NEW RULES FOR SERVICE OF EVICTIONS

### A. SERVING NOTICES

1. These notices include:
  - a. 3-day notice of nonpayment of rent § 562A.27(2)
  - b. 3-day notice to quit § 648.3
  - c. 3-day clear and present danger § 562A.27A(1)
  - d. 7-day notice of noncompliance § 562A.27(1)
  - e. 7-day notice of termination of tenancy § 562A.27(1)
2. These notices can be served on the tenant as follows: § 562A.29A(1)
  - a. **Acknowledgement** of receipt of the notice § 562A.29A(1)(a)  
§ 648.3(2)(a)
    - ▶ Signed and dated by the tenant or someone over the age of 18 who resides in the unit
    - ▶ All occupants are deemed served by one notice
  - b. Personal service pursuant to I.R.Civ.P. 1.305 § 562A.29A(1)(b)  
§ 648.3(2)(b)
    - ▶ Service under this section must be by **private process server** or **sheriff** I.R.Civ.P. 1.302(4)
  - c. Mailing by both regular and certified mail **and** by posting the notice to the rental unit § 562A.29A(1)(c)  
§ 648.3(2)(c)
    - ▶ Must be posted to the **primary entrance door** of the rental unit
    - ▶ Must state the **date of posting**
    - ▶ Service of notice by mail is deemed completed **four days** after the notice is post-marked for delivery § 562A.29A(2)  
§ 648.3(3)
3. All notices may be given by the landlord or agents, except for personal service pursuant to I.R.Civ.P.

### B. CERTIFIED MAIL

- ▶ **Certified mail** is defined as any mail where the post office provides a receipt to prove mailing § 618.15(1)
1. There is **no requirement** that the tenant sign for the mail
  2. Service of notice by mail is deemed completed **four days** after the notice is post-marked for delivery § 562A.8(2)  
§ 562A.29A(2)

Ross F. Barnett  
Joseph F. Wallace

- 1 -

3/8/2010



Andy Cruickshank  
Director of Market &  
Product Development

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www.rentgrow.com

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### C. HEARING DATE

1. The F.E.D. may not be filed until the expiration of the three-day quit period
2. There must be **three full days** between the date of service of the F.E.D. and the eviction hearing § 648.5
3. The Clerk of Court must set the eviction hearing no later than **eight days** from the date of filing § 648.5(1)
4. The Clerk of Court may set the eviction hearing up to **fifteen days** from the date of filing, upon the request or consent of the Plaintiff § 648.5(1)

### D. SERVICE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE F.E.D.

1. The F.E.D. can be served on the tenant as follows:
  - a. **Acknowledgement** of receipt of the notice § 648.5(2)(a)
    - ▶ Signed and dated by the tenant or someone over the age of 18 who resides in the unit
    - ▶ All occupants are deemed served by one notice
  - b. **Personal service** pursuant to I.R.Civ.P. 1.305 § 648.5(2)(b)
  - c. **Posting** § 648.5(2)(c)
    - (1). Supported by affidavit of **two attempts** at personal service
    - (2). Mailed by regular mail
    - (3). Mailed by certified mail
    - (4). Posted on the rental unit
      - ▶ Both attempts can be made on the same day
      - ▶ Must state the **date of posting**
      - ▶ Service of notice by mail is deemed completed **four days** after the notice is post-marked for delivery
      - ▶ **No requirement that the tenant sign for the mail**
2. Service under this section must be by **private process server** or **sheriff** I.R.Civ.P. 1.302(4)

Ross F. Barnett  
Joseph F. Wallace

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# FILL—Flood Impacted Landlords



**Caption describing picture or graphic.**

representing flood impacted landlords. The group, now formally named (FILL - Flood Impacted Landlords), is a continuation of the grass-roots efforts of the CRSBRG in conjunction with Landlords of Linn County in supporting the needs of flood impacted landlords in Cedar Rapids and the surrounding areas.

It is estimated 50 per cent of all flood impacted housing in Cedar Rapids is owned by landlords, yet the needs of

landlords have been largely been ignored during the 16 months. Delays and eligibility requirements associated with current CDBG funding have left many landlords unable to rebuild.

Those interested in additional information, may contact FILL by email - [fill@q.com](mailto:fill@q.com). Interested individuals should include their name and other contact information including mailing address and phone number for periodic updates regarding FILL activities.

Contact: Mari Davis, representative from CRSBRG - FILL ([fill@q.com](mailto:fill@q.com)) RentalSolutions/Home Locators (319)364-8478 or 373-1553

The Cedar Rapids Small Business Recovery Group (CRSBRG) announced Wednesday, October 14, 2009, the expansion of the originally formed subgroup

## City's Section 8 Housing Offers Path to Homeownership

Generally associated with providing rent assistance, the City of Cedar Rapids' Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program also offers eligible families the opportunity to become homeowners. So far in 2009 there have been three (3) families that have transitioned from being a renter to a homeowner. This transition was made possible in part by the City's Section 8 Housing Program. As with all families who become homeowners for the first time, the stories of these three families vary. One of these families was kind enough to share their story:

Diane, a participant in the City's rent assistance program since 1998, had been thinking in recent years of

buying her own home. While renting had filled a need, she wanted to establish a permanent residence. By having such a residence, her family could have greater security and stability. The idea of homeownership also appealed to Diane in terms of having a place she could continue to live in during her retirement years.

In the last two years Diane, with assistance from the Family Self-Sufficiency staff, worked towards her goal of homeownership. Since Diane had maintained a good credit score over the years, her primary focus was to complete the required homeownership classes and continue to save money for the home purchase. On September 1, 2009,

the realization of Diane's goal became a reality. Diane and her family now reside in a home they can call their own, thanks in part to the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership Program.

If you have any questions about this program, please call the Cedar Rapids Housing Services Office at 286-5872.

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## **Landlords of Linn County**

PMB 338  
3315 Williams Blvd SW Ste 2  
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

# We want your ideas and feedback!

Our primary goal is to offer more benefits and tools to both our landlord and vendor members.

By harnessing current technologies we now offer a website for tenants to look for current properties "For Rent", and contact the owners.

Our website has become the place to find a unit for rent! Landlord members pay nothing for this service, only their annual membership!

Vendors have new opportunities to advertise not only to our landlords but to tenants visiting our website!

We are counting on you, our members to get the word out about our new website. We will by distributing attractive yard signs and directional signs to bring more tenants to your properties. Combine that



**Do have an idea where to host a monthly meeting?**

**Do you want to host a monthly meeting?**

with newspaper advertising and our website will be connected to social network sites like Facebook and Twitter!

As always we are open to any other ideas or feedback you might have.

Send your comments/ideas to:  
[Membership@LandLordsOfLinnCounty.com](mailto:Membership@LandLordsOfLinnCounty.com)