

IO# 04196

5714 Russett Road #3

Madison WI 53711

September 18, 2007

Common Council Office
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd, Room 417
Madison, WI 53703

To all alders on the Common Council:

My name is Tim Johnson, I own and occupy a 4-unit home at 5714 Russett Road.

I had assistance in buying my home at 5714 through Project NOAH (Neighborhood Owned Affordable Housing), funded through CDBG funds as coordinated by Project HOME and the city of Madison. I have lived in my home since July 2003.

I work with adults with developmental disabilities, and my current tenants either have disabilities or are related to someone who does

I used to own a duplex at 6806-6808 Park Edge Drive, off of Gammon Road, in Madison.

I am speaking in favor of the proposed Chronic Nuisance Premises /Nuisance Abatement ordinance today.

We need the Chronic Nuisance Premises Ordinance to be passed for the following reasons:

1. There are landlords in the city of Madison right now who, either by intention, neglect or ignorance, allow chronic nuisance behavior to continue on their properties

Officer Caleb Bedford, who is the Hammersley area neighborhood officer, in his August 12, 2006 Hammersley Road Neighborhood Newsletter stated:

Our current system for addressing nuisance activity is inefficient because it relies overwhelmingly on voluntary compliance by landlords. One apartment unit in my neighborhood has generated over 50 calls for police service in the last year and a half. A family living in another unit has generated over 90 calls for service since they moved in. I have notified the owners of these properties on numerous occasions about the history of violations. Yet the same tenants remain in those apartments because they continue to pay the rent on time

2. The Chronic Nuisance Premises Ordinance is intended to go after chronic problem landlords who allow chronic problem tenants or their guests to continue to engage in nuisance behaviors

If an address has a 3 or more police calls in a 90-day period, the landlord could be asked to pay for the cost of those police calls. This ordinance is meant to give police some leverage in dealing with owners who are otherwise unresponsive.

In my opinion, most landlords are decent and responsive to when the police notifies them of problems with their tenants or their building, and these decent landlords take action or already have taken action, such as issuing tenants' warning letters or issuing the appropriate 5-day notice for a lease violation.

However, a small minority of landlords continue to engage in bad property management practices, i.e. having no screening, no consistent application procedures or policies in place, little or no lease paperwork, no set rules, and no enforcement of any rules.

Many of the problems with tenants could be resolved if a landlord had minimal application procedures – such as requiring 2 years satisfactory housing history and a positive prior landlord reference, an income guideline that rent shall be no more than 30 percent of income, no evictions in the past 2 years, no serious criminal issues within the past 2 years, etc. If a landlord accepts a tenant, the lease paperwork should include things like Anti-Drug Rules and the Crime Free Lease Addendum. The rules in the lease should apply to the tenant and to the tenant's guests.

Through Project NOAH, I was required to have 18 hours of landlord training through the Madison Landlord Council and the Wisconsin Apartment Association.

My hope is that, if this ordinance passes, the bad landlords will be strongly encouraged to understand what basic good property management practices mean, such as what I just outlined. My hope is that both the Apartment Association of South Central Wisconsin and the Madison Landlord Council will seize this as a marketing opportunity to reach out to these marginal landlords and offer classes and opportunities for bad landlords to understand good property management practices basics.

Let me give you some specific examples of landlords who should have the Chronic Nuisance Premises Ordinance named after them. There are some landlords, who either by intention or neglect, are in league with their tenants' criminal or nuisance behavior:

Let me give you some specific examples –

On Balsam Road, there is an owner who's only screening criteria is that a rental applicant has cash for the security deposit and one month's rent. If they can do that, they are in. This owner does no repairs or basic maintenance on his property – his building is falling apart. He does not know how to turn on a computer, let alone do a basic screening on

CCAP. He manages his property through the revolving door of an eviction court – and his tenants or their guests generate numerous police calls.

Another owner on Russett Road, where I live, was given a heads up by police that police were going to do a drug raid on one of his tenants. This owner tipped off the tenants, and the tenants cleaned up before the police came. Police had to come back a 2nd time with a SWAT team to do their drug raid and arrest the problem tenants. If this owner had 3 police calls in a 90-day period, this owner should have been rightfully charged for the cost of those police calls

In the Park Ridge/Park Edge Drive area, there is an evil landlord, and I don't use the word evil lightly. You need only think of the worst things you can think of for a human being, apply them to this landlord, and that would be an understatement. This landlord has intentionally and deliberately courted the criminal element for tenants. This landlord is rumored to be on the take for his tenant's drug money. This landlord has singlehandedly contributed to the Park Ridge neighborhood's nickname of "Little Allied." If the police were putting pressure on one of his tenants, this landlord has moved that tenant to another one of his properties. Due to this one landlord's abuses, this landlord is the only landlord in the history of City of Madison Section 8 to have had his ability to take Section 8 tenants revoked. Now, his existing tenants are probably only paying rent from their drug money income. If this landlord's tenants are generating multiple police calls, I would hope that this landlord, under Chronic Nuisance, would be charged for the costs of those police calls

The Chronic Premises Nuisance Ordinance is needed in Madison, and I encourage your active support. Thank you.



Tim Johnson

