

24 September 2020

Burlington City Council
149 Church Street
Burlington, VT 05401

Dear Burlington City Council Members:

I wanted to take a few minutes to express my concerns about the recent charter change proposal related to the elimination of no cause eviction. In my opinion, this charter change would be taking away the rights of one group (landlords) under the guise of protecting another group (tenants).

I currently own 3 rental properties in Burlington and manage several others. While I do agree that there is room for some change, regarding rental evictions and termination of leases. I do not agree with the extreme step that is being proposed. I am a person with as many rights as a renter. I am amazed that anyone would think its ok to tell a private citizen, who they can and cannot renew a lease with. I have spent over 10 years working very hard to build the business I have. I take great pride in being a proactive and responsive landlord. Over the years, I have worked with hundreds of renters, I find that 98% of the time, I end up with terrific tenants who are responsible and reasonable. The other 2% of the time, I get someone who in my opinion, is not a good person, a jerk. Someone who I simply don't get along with, or, other residents in the building don't get along with, or are afraid of. It is not the job of a governing body, to try and protect the feelings of disgruntled tenants. The state and federal government have implemented justified laws regarding discrimination. These laws protect the rights of tenants to receive a fair shot at finding and keeping residential housing. Once that tenant has entered into a lease agreement with the property owner. They in essence doing business with each other. The tenant is providing monetary compensation for a service, housing. If those two parties are not getting along, it is the property owners right to discontinue providing that service, upon completion of their rental agreement. This is no different than almost all business in the State. Private property rights are crucial to our way of life. Some recent examples about tenants that I have nonrenewed their lease.

One tenant worked nights and slept during the day, he would harass the 3 young ladies in the neighboring apartment, for walking around on the wood floors. These are some of the most respectful tenants I have had over the years, they tried very hard to modify their lives to accommodate his sleeping schedule, something they should not have need to do. He would harass the business (hair salon) owner on the first floor, who rented the commercial space. Telling her that her employees were being too loud when they walked around. Telling her they needed to wear different shoes. He went so far as to create fake reviews about that business. He would send me angry emails about how terrible I was. Just one of dozens of examples would be: Accusing me of not fixing the heat, saying it was too cold in his apartment. I spent days (time and money) trying to figure it out, all the while being told how terrible I was. Come to

discover, he had left the window open behind a sheet he had hanging. When I told him about it, he responded by telling me he like to keep the window open when he sleeps. But guess what, the emails stopped, and the problem was magically resolved. The ladies next door were literally afraid of him. After renewing his lease and trying to make things work, I could no longer take the constant barrage I was getting from him. When his next lease renewal was coming up, I very graciously gave him a 75 day notice to not renew his lease.

Another tenant about 6 years ago would harass the neighbors (still tenants with me), throwing tennis balls against the wall and screaming at them. The wife was terrified of this woman, so much so that it was impacting her quality of life. I did not renew her lease.

Another couple 2 years ago had turned a fully renovated apartment into one of the most disgusting places I have ever seen. I was receiving complaints from other tenants, regarding the smell of filth that was permeating from their apartment and coming down the hall. I repeatedly told these tenants that they needed to clean up. They did not see any issue, because they thought the way they were living was normal. I chose not to rent to them anymore, I did not renew their lease.

These are just a few examples. As I stated in the beginning, while there is certainly room for improvement, changing the city charter to eliminate no cause eviction/termination, would be a drastic overreach. Property owners have as many rights as tenants, just because there are a few bad apples in the bunch, does not mean that all of us should be punished for this behavior. And that's what's happening here. Taking away the rights of one group, under the premise that they are protecting the rights of another.

I could continue this letter for many more pages, regarding why I disagree with the proposal, but I simply do not have the time to dedicate to this fight. I just want to be left FREE to operate my business and go about my life. I shouldn't even have to write this letter, the proposal is so far beyond reasonable, its outrageous to think that private property owners are going to be told who they can and cannot rent to, beyond the existing fair housing practices as outlined in VT Title 9, ch 139.

I would like to add, I find it inflammatory to call not renewing a lease, "eviction". We are not "evicting" someone, simply choosing to no long do business with them. If a lease is for a 12-month period and we choose not to renew it, we are not evicting someone. It is a contractual agreement that has come to an end.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

William G. Forsyth

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802-598-3916

overlandproperties@gmail.com