

GARDEN COURT APARTMENTS
1 - 8 Garden Court
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

Mail: P. O. Box 304
Lexington, Massachusetts 02173

May 5, 1982

Concerning Administration
Cambridge Rent Control Board

Cambridge City Council
c/o Office of the Mayor
Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

Members of the City Council:

It is a great pleasure to be able to communicate to you concerning the least efficient city department I have encountered in Cambridge. Before you dismiss that statement because it is made by a landlord, let me list the specific complaints concerning the administration of this office.

Since my brother, sister, and I in 1975 purchased (from my mother) the buildings erected by my father in 1941, I as Manager, have applied for several rent adjustments. On each occasion, the first official notifications of adjustments from the Board contained errors sufficient to require re-calculation and re-notification of the legal monthly maximum rentals to some or all of the tenants.

The most recent experience will serve as typical. The Board authorized a fuel adjustment. Data for their calculations was submitted in late 1981. On March 26, 1982, I was notified that my rents had been decreased 5% (apparently because I had installed attic insulation and had shifted from oil to gas heat). Almost 1/3 of the original base rents--their own figures!--were incorrect. On March 29, I notified a hearing examiner of this fact in person. On April 23, my tenants were notified that they should deduct a certain sum from the May rent, and an additional sum because of the "overpayment" in April. Of course, I was not notified of this double deduction.

On April 28, the "corrected" notification was finally sent to me. This notice used accurate base rents, but it announced a 4% decrease and also that it supercedes the previous notification. CONFUSION REIGNS. WHAT ARE MY BASE RENTS AND WHEN ARE THEY EFFECTIVE?

In the meantime, my tenants (some of whom are unable to subtract accurately) have naturally acted on the first notice--the incorrect one--that they received. As I write, they have not yet received the corrected notification. The hours and hours of

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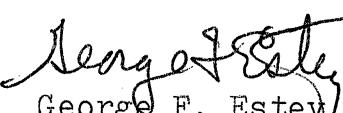
2.

bookkeeping and billing time, while we attempt to clarify and otherwise make correct the actions of the Rent Control Board, to say nothing of the aggravation, extra trips, and phone calls, are a direct result of the inability of the Board and its staff effectively to fulfill its functions. (This inefficiency has gone so far that, in 1980, we were asked to prepare the typescript of a hearing examiner's report since the office staff was "so far behind.")

While you are considering evidence such as that reported above, you might also look into the reasons for what seems to be a fairly rapid rate of staff turnover. I seldom recognize anyone in the office, although I probably visit the Rent Control Offices once every three months or so. Two or three years ago, the staff seemed to be busy but pleasant. These days, I'm not sure how busy they are, but they aren't very pleasant to conduct affairs with. Presumably, these are desirable positions--or perhaps the selection process used by the Board is ineffective in hiring these public servants.

Thank you for the opportunity to bring these rankling matters to your attention. Perhaps you can somehow provide us with an effective group of professionals to deal expeditiously with the details of the Board's own rules and regulations.

Sincerely,


George F. Estey
Owner/Manager

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S-415

Comm. from Paul E. Healy, City Clerk, transmitting comm. from George F. Estey, Mgr., Garden Court Apt.'s regarding the Rent Control Board.

In City Council,

May 10, 1982

5/10/82

Referred to the

City Manager -

copy sent to the City Manager
5/12/82 mh