



SEPTEMBER MEETING

Tuesday, Sep. 16, 2014

RAA working with Neighborhood Associations

A discussion with representatives of neighborhood groups on developing a working relationship.

Meeting Location

RAAR

6776 East State Street
Rockford, IL 61108

Tues - Sep. 16th at 7pm

Cost: FREE for members, \$15. non-members

Networking 6:30 P.M.

General Meeting 7:00 P.M.

September has arrived and RAA begins our season of meetings for 2014-2015. I hope all our members had an enjoyable summer. It went by fast.

Our first meeting for this fall will be a discussion with representatives of neighborhood associations. Our goal is to look for ways to work with these groups to help support the neighborhoods where RAA members have invested. Both groups have a financial incentive to increase property values and the residents of the neighborhoods where we have invested have their quality of life at stake. The RAA partnering with neighborhood associations would benefit both groups' members.

One example of how we might work together is in targeting the investments of our members into neighborhoods who would welcome our effort. At any given time there are a significant number of RAA members who are actively buying and rehabbing property, or have the potential to do so. Consider the effect if we were to target our investments into a small enough area so that we completely change the character of a neighborhood. If we find the right area, rundown neighborhoods with property that is low value could be transformed into a desirable neighborhood that attracts quality tenants.

I realize that implementing this idea would be a significant task and take time to develop the plan, but it is possible. Perhaps we can help educate members of these neighborhood associations on how to do what we do so that they can also invest in the communities where they live. In order to determine if our effort would be welcome must begin with establishing lines of communication.

The perspective of all RAA members will be important to this conversation. I hope you can attend our meeting this month and participate.

—Paul Arena, RAA President

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A one-year membership is \$99.

To join or e-mail RAA, go to

www.rockfordapartmentassociation.org

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What does it take to be a winner?

by RAA member Jerri Cole

(reprinted from February 2012 issue)

There are those of us who go to the RAA meetings every chance we get. We go for many reasons, of course, and when the night ends, we go home with a good feeling knowing that we have had a very productive night and acquired some more knowledge that greatly helps on our path of being better landlords. On our journey, let us pause and give thanks to some of the great leaders of this organization who give their time and knowledge unselfishly so that we can all be better landlords. We see them at meetings and we know they are doing a really great job, but what kind of person are they really? What makes them special. Let's see if we can answer some of our questions.

One outstanding leader is **Tim Hoffman**. You may know him as the Radio Guy. Tim has been married to Libby for 22 years and has two children, Samantha, aged 18, and Alex, aged 16. He has lived in Rockford all his life. I asked Tim to describe himself. He said,

It is hard to describe myself, but I believe I can do anything I put my mind to. I am not afraid to give my opinion when asked (and sometimes when I am not asked). I like to stay home most nights and spend it with my family. We have some friends who like to play cards and we like to get together on weekends and do just that. I am very involved with my kids and all their activities (cross country running, bowling, basketball, football, scouts, etc. I like to camp, fish, and go mountain biking. I usually take myself and others way too seriously and my wife has to keep me in check. I was an accountant by schooling and worked my way up to controller of a small company before I bought my first house.

When asked what else he would like people to know about him, he replied,

I have a strong faith in God and TRY to live a life that my mother, wife, and children can be proud of.

One of the best part of being a landlord is having the freedom to set you own schedule and not being restricted to a certain number of vacation days by an employer. One of the worst part is dealing with the government and the endless bureaucracy that believes we have endless financial reserves and we are "bad" because of the profession we have chosen.

When asked for a funny or strange story, Tim shared this with us.

Shortly after quitting my accounting job, I went to work on a vacant unit only to discover the body of a local, missing teen. He had been taken into the basement of my house and shot over a dispute that somehow revolved around drugs. My house was "unfortunately" convenient. Also, several of my house purchases revolve around unique stories, but there is no time to get into that here. That is what makes this an interesting business to be in. All the stories we could tell-----!!!!!!

Pet peeve? "Tenants who play the system and system that lets them!!!!!!" What Rockford needs to do to help landlords?

Get out of the way and let us do our job. Hold the tenants accountable for things they have done. Reduce the tax burden. After mortgage payments, taxes are the largest expense we have and every dollar the city takes is one less dollar we don't have to reinvesti into our properties."

Best advice for new landlords? "Treat this like a business, grow slow and steady, keep adequate financial reserves and have fun. "

Now we know what it takes to be a winner!!!!

We're All in this Together

I seem to be hearing the phrase, *We're all in this together*, more and more frequently. Perhaps that's due to the Transform Rockford initiative, or events raising concerns about the future of the environment, the economy, health or safety, but whatever the reason, many people seem to be thinking more about their connectedness. What do these words mean to us as citizens of Rockford, members of a community, neighbors living in close proximity to others?

This is a challenging question, especially at a time in which there seems to be a growing division between homeowners and renters. As a natural consequence of that division, landlords often get pulled into the breach. We saw a perfect example of this conflict recently in Winnebago County when approval was sought for private multi-family housing units in a rural area of Machesney Park. A very large number of residents (homeowners) from the area turned out to protest that plan at a hearing in early August. Whatever their reasons, those protesters appeared to be fearful and resistant to what they perceived as a threat.

More than forty neighborhood groups exist in all sorts of neighborhoods in Rockford and Winnebago County, most of which are generally open to all residents and business owners within the boundaries defined by each group. These groups are organized primarily to improve neighborhoods and the quality of life for those living or doing business within them. Participation in these groups tends to be higher among homeowners, for many reasons. Perhaps the greatest reason is that many landlords have not been responsive to invitations, or proactive in seeking out neighborhood associations in which they own property. Discussion at neighborhood meetings often includes comments about "irresponsible or absentee landlords." Sometimes these epithets appear to be warranted, and sometimes not. I'm presuming that every landlord reading this considers him or herself to be a responsible landlord, and I may be preaching to the choir, but let's continue.

How might landlords and neighborhood groups join forces to be more effective in improving neighborhoods? How might communication and relationship between members of neighborhood associations and landlords be improved? Some neighborhoods may not even have this on their radar screen as a problem, having little rental property within their boundaries, while others with a higher concentration of rental properties, particularly in lower income areas, consider it a con-

stant source of concern. Regardless of the neighborhood, a few simple efforts by landlords would help improve conditions for everyone:

- Attend and participate, at least occasionally, neighborhood meetings in neighborhoods in which you hold rental property (especially if you live there as well)
- If attendance at meetings is not possible, contact the neighborhood association representatives (via Neighborhood Network if needed) to share contact information and learn about the group's concerns
- Invite representatives of neighborhood groups to meetings of the apartment association for shared communication, from time to time
- Maintain a high standard of responsibility as a landlord

-Take the time to meet neighbors around your rental property and provide them with your contact information

-Expect tenants to be responsible neighbors and let them know what that means

-Keep neighbors informed about vacant property and check on it and keep it up while unoccupied

-Be responsive to conditions impacting neighboring properties—trees, fences, driveways, sidewalks

Participants in neighborhood groups can be the primary force in improving neighborhoods, and neighborhood improvement benefits everyone -- renters, landlords, homeowners, businesses --everyone. Neighborhood groups are often the first ones called on to take part in clean-ups, beautification projects, and crime-fighting efforts. Most of them are registered voters who actually go to the polls regularly and are not afraid to hold elected officials, government employees, and others accountable. I would encourage you to get to know some of them; you might be glad you did. Neighborhood groups and landlords could forge powerful alliances and just might become a force to be reckoned with.

*Submitted by Cathy Johnson
co-chair, Northwest United Neighbors
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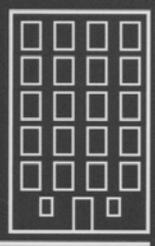
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Siamese twins walk into a bar in Canada and park themselves on a bar stool.

One of them says to the bartender, "Don't mind us; we're joined at the hip. I'm John, he's Jim. Two Molson Canadian beers, draft please."

The bartender, feeling slightly awkward, tries to make polite conversation while pouring the beers. "Been on holiday yet, lads?"

"Off to England next month," says John. "We go to England every year, rent a car and drive for miles. Don't we, Jim?" Jim agrees.

"Ah, England !" says the bartender. "Wonderful country... the history, the beer, the culture..."

"Nah, we don't like that British stuff," says John. "Hamburgers and Molson's beer, that's us, eh Jim? And we can't stand the English - they're so arrogant and rude."

"So why keep going to England ?" asks the bartender.

"It's the only chance Jim gets to drive."

WELCOME new members:

Joe Weber

William Heinisch

Chad Richards

Regina Brenmark-French

Robert & Gloria Govig

Gloria Ohnstad

Carmen Augelli

Daniel Tafolla

Phil & Maureen Herlihey

Networking

✓ One of the benefits of membership in RAA is our email group. By joining the group you can interact with other RAA members on a daily basis. Great information is shared on issues such as management, service providers, and prospects. If you are not currently taking advantage of the RAA email group and would like to see what it has to offer, send an email with the name your membership is under and the email address you want added to the group to arenacnst@charter.net.

✓ Are you on Facebook? Follow the Rockford Apartment Association and Illinois Rental Property Owners Association. Facebook is a great tool to increase awareness of our groups and the issues we are working on.

✓ RAA is a member of the Illinois Rental Property Owners Association (IRPOA). Our membership in IRPOA connects us to other groups like RAA from across Illinois. These groups work together to ensure that regulations imposed by state government are fair. RAA makes a contribution each year to pay for our lobbyist but that only provides a portion of the funds we need. Please go to www.IRPOA.org to subscribe to our web site or just to make a donation to our lobbyist fund. Your contribution is cheap insurance to limit unreasonable and costly regulation.

NEW LAW PROTECTS PROPERTY OWNERS

They say, "You can't fight city hall" but maybe it would be more accurate to say you can't afford to fight city hall. That, however, might no longer be true.

Governor Patrick Quinn just signed Public Act 098-1105 that allows a residential property owner, who has been improperly fined by a city and challenges the fine in circuit court, to recover expenses for the challenge if the fine is proven to be improperly imposed.

The bill was an initiative of The Illinois Rental Property Owners Association, an organization to which RAA belongs.

Prior to this law, a challenge to a municipal fine would have been made at the expense of the property owner. Often, the cost to fight the fine exceeded the fine itself and so property owners chose to pay the fine rather than fight the false charge. Now the deck is no longer stacked against property owners.

RAA expects this to result in cities paying closer attention to ensure that penalties imposed on property owners are fair and proper.

To read the full text of Public Act 098-1105 go to <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=098-1105>

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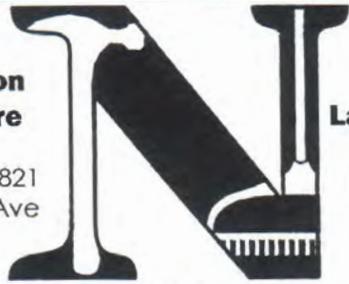
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Rockford Apartment Association Code of Ethics

We, the members of the RAA, recognizing our duty to the public and the intimate nature of the relationship between the apartment resident and the owner, or manager, and being aware of the vastly increasing role of the apartment industry in providing the home of the future, and in order to provide the apartment-residing public with the maximum in quality and service upon the highest standards of honest and integrity, do hereby bind ourselves, with each and every member, together and alone, agreeing that, so long as we remain members of the RAA and so long as nothing contained herein shall be unlawful, we shall:

- Promote, employ and maintain a high standard of integrity in the performance of all rental obligations and services in the operation of our apartment communities.
- Maintain and operate our apartment communities in accordance with fair and honorable standards of competition, ever mindful of the purposes of the Rockford Apartment Association and in compliance with the bylaws thereof.
- Strive continually to promote the education and fraternity of the membership and to promote the progress and dignity of the apartment industry in creating a better image of itself in order that the public may be better served.
- Seek to provide better values, so that an even greater share of the public may enjoy the many benefits of apartment living.
- Establish high ethical standards of conduct within the apartment industry in the business relationship between the owner, managers and suppliers of products and services to the apartment industry.
- Maintain property standards of the appropriate governmental authority.
- Ensure that every qualified individual, regardless of that individual's race, color, religion, gender, disability, familial status or national origin is afforded the same opportunity to rent an apartment and enjoy the benefits of apartment living.

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