

**MINUTES**  
**Public Hearing of the College Park City Council**  
**Tuesday, April 13, 2010 - 7:30 p.m.**

**Ordinance 10-O-02**  
**An Ordinance Of The Mayor And Council Of The City Of College Park, Maryland,**  
**Amending City Code, Sections 127-4, “Establishment Of Rent Ceiling” And 127-6,**  
**“Calculation Of Rent Ceiling After Initial Registration Year”, To Alter Prospectively The**  
**Calculation For The Rent Ceiling And The Annual Increase Therein For Single Family**  
**Dwellings, Except In Prince George’s County Tax Assessment District 01.**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Fellows; Councilmembers Nagle, Wojahn, Catlin, Stulich, Cook, Afzali, and Mitchell.

**ABSENT:** Councilmember Perry.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Joe Nagro, City Manager; Suellen Ferguson, City Attorney; Janeen Miller, City Clerk; Bob Ryan, Director of Public Services; Jonathan Sachs, Student Liaison; Becca Lurie, Deputy Student Liaison.

Mayor Fellows called the Public Hearing to order at 7:30 p.m.

Councilmember Catlin gave an overview: When the College Park Rent Stabilization ordinance was adopted in 2005, one of the factors used to establish the rent ceiling for monthly rent was based on a calculation that came from the Maryland property tax assessment. When the ordinance was adopted it was recognized that with the release of the 3-year reassessment, it might be necessary to adjust that factor up or down. In January 2010 property owners in College Park received new assessments from the State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT). The average assessment for single family homes went down by 28%; the range was a 20% to 35% decrease. This ordinance adjusts the monthly factor used to calculate the monthly rent ceiling from 0.6% to 0.8% and would be in place for the new three-year cycle, 2010, 2011 and 2012.

**Comments from the audience:**

**Dave Dorsch, 4607 Calvert Road:** He suggests this ordinance should be withdrawn. It should start with 2010. He disagrees with the .08% and doesn’t know why it wouldn’t be 1%. He thought the landlords could maintain the existing rents they had and doesn’t see it in there. Student housing is cheap especially with all of the new housing coming on line. He would like Council to take it back and rework it to 1%. This is supposed to be helping the neighborhoods, which this does not do.

**John Hawvermale, 1342 Excaliber Lane, Sandy Spring, MD:** He does not support adjusting this to .08. Feels it’s too low. He doesn’t support the ordinance altogether. .08% is not high enough given the still-depressed property values. This was supposed to be a temporary measure until supply caught up with demand.

**James Kane 4206 Knox Road, College Park:** The factor is arbitrary; there is no basis for it. The HUD average rents that this factor is supposed to be applied to takes in an area that is larger than the local market. It does not take into account what is happening in the local market and individual properties. It is without an accurate and believable foundation and he does not believe it should be applied.

**Morgan Gale, 7010 Wake Forest Drive:** He is in favor of the ordinance and asked about the sunset provision. He was told it is 3 years. He thinks that is adequate and thinks it might even be shortened to two years. This sends the right message that neighborhoods are important and we value diversity which includes students. He wants to make sure this does not harm property owners.

Councilmember Catlin explained that the .08% factor proposed here is the same factor that was used when we changed it initially when average property values in the City were about \$285,000 a unit, and that's back to where we are now. He believes it is comparable with what was established before. The assessments allow higher rents. There are still other options, such as the CPI index inflator or the HUD fair market rent. This factor probably doesn't cap many rents; its impact is probably pretty limited.

**Steve Glickman, SGA President, 8204 Baltimore Avenue:** They are seeing a huge increase in appeals by students who apply for financial aid for tuition and then don't get enough to stay in school. There is no financial aid for housing. Student rentals/shared housing is the most affordable housing option. He urges Council to oppose this initiative; it will be tough on students if rents increase. The factor should be reevaluated next summer when new housing opens up.

Councilmember Catlin said that just because the City changes the rent cap does not mean the landlords have to charge higher rents or can get it.

**Jack Gold, 631 D Street, NW, #839, Washington, DC 20004, owner of 7205 Rhode Island Avenue:** While the factor could be a little higher than it is, he believes Council is moving in the right direction and the increase could help several landlords who weren't renting property before the cap was instituted and didn't start with inflated rents. In response to the previous speaker, he said the University or the state should be more concerned with subsidizing student housing.

There being no further testimony, Mayor Fellows adjourned the public hearing at 7:52 p.m. He said that the Council would not act on this Ordinance tonight. Due to a technical mistake in the advertisement for this hearing, there will be another public hearing on April 27 at 7:30 p.m.

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Janeen S. Miller, CMC                      Date Approved  
City Clerk