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Do You Own Some Small, Unbuildable,  
Taxable, Urban Land?

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Aroma Diffusers Could Be Causing Air  
Quality and Nuisance Alarm Issues

**Landlords in  
Profile:  
Erin Zamarro**



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#### LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## RentControlHistory.com

### Our Letter from the Executive Director for January 2024 covers two public records issues, some worthwhile events and the launch of our new website.



I'm looking forward to a 2024 full of growth and improvement for our association. But since it's hard to predict accurately without optimism taking hold of the pen, I will write this letter by looking back to inform you of the actual, concrete progress made last month.

Events-wise, it felt good to have a Worcester event Dec. 6. El Basha West hosted us for a nice evening of baklava and sanitary code. We had 32 in attendance, average in this post-pandemic world but sustainable. Worcester, Waltham and Springfield regions now have regular quarterly events in the works.

We were also proud to introduce members to a connection made through our energy advocacy at the Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships (NEEP). Daikin Europe has an air-to-water heat pump they intend to bring to the U.S. I have come to believe air-to-water is going to be a primary way to retrofit away three-decker emissions. I've spent a lot of time the last two years exploring alternatives. The Daikin solution is novel (in the U.S. market) and badly needed where baseboards or radiators provide heat. Expect more to come on this.

Our annual business meeting concluded and the results are discussed in this edition. Personally, I'm looking forward to working with our new director, Erin Zamarro. She is profiled in this newsletter, as well.

There are a lot of shenanigans going on lately. We describe in this newsletter how the appeals court panel of three justices ruled against our public records case. That surprised me. When I was at the hearing listening to Peter Vickery argue, I thought one – if not two – of the judges really understood what we were saying. We discussed our appeal to the SJC in this newsletter.

I submitted a public records request to the Department of Public Health. Our goal is to understand how they were able to corrupt the state sanitary code into a client intake machine by putting their client intake link into a mandatory form. DPH replied with an astonishing proposed fact: that during the last four and a half years, legal services have emailed back and forth with DPH more than 2 million times, an average of 1,200 times per day. More to come on this story.

Rent control is poised to feature prominently at the State House in the next six months. I wrote an op-ed for the Banker and Tradesman, describing how rent control reduces state aid to surrounding towns.

We also launched RentControlHistory.com. This took the better part of the last three months of writing, plus we raised and spent a significant (for us) sum on web development. In the broader sense, the data collection effort has been years in the making. Additional phases of work are planned, culminating in research-ready databases of rental-control minutes and boarded up properties. If you find this newsletter light on content, RentControlHistory.com is why. We'll be back at full power for the March edition, once team members return from family leave.

Thank you for supporting our mission to create better rental housing. Please join as a member, encourage others to join, become a property rights supporter or increase your level of support. We aim to hire both a full-time educator and policy advocate.

Sincerely,  
Douglas Quattrochi  
Executive Director, MassLandlords, Inc.

Point your camera app here to read more online.





Erin Zamarro. CC BY-SA Erin Zamarro.

# Landlords in Profile: Erin Zamarro

By Eric Weld, MassLandlords, Inc.

**Erin Zamarro, a real estate broker and rental property owner in Worcester, was elected to the MassLandlords Board of Directors in December.**

For Erin Zamarro, real estate is about people. Her tenants in the rentals she owns. Her clients and prospective buyers and sellers she meets as a broker. Other landlords and property owners. One of her favorite aspects of being a landlord is getting to know and learning from people she encounters in her business.

Zamarro, a real estate broker in Worcester for 13 years and a landlord for nearly as long, was recently elected to the MassLandlords Board of Directors. A MassLandlords member since 2017, Zamarro completed Level 2 as a Certified Massachusetts Landlord. She has frequently served as a networking liaison at association live events and as Open Q&A host on zooms.

Zamarro is also a member of the National Association of Realtors, serves on the Worcester Parks Commission and volunteers as chairperson for the Worcester County St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee.

As a businessperson heavily ensconced in Worcester rental real estate, Erin Zamarro believes deeply in the MassLandlords mission of creating better rental housing, she says. She is committed to protecting people's property rights as they juggle the challenges of landlording. "Not all regulations are bad," she says, "but a lot of regulations have unintended consequences."

One example she cites and has experience with is the state's Section 8 approval process, which can become protracted and inefficient. "Landlords and tenants can get very frustrated with it," she notes. "These layers of bureaucracy can be very frustrating."

Another area Zamarro would like to support is an increase in the presence of women property investors. "There's not a ton of real estate investment among women," she says, "it's dominated by men. Real estate brokerage is dominated by women, but I would love to see a little bit of increase in women investing in real estate."

As an active part of her support, Zamarro belongs to a national Facebook group called Lady Landlords.

## THE RENTAL REAL ESTATE BUSINESS

Though Zamarro has cultivated property ownership and real estate business as

major components of her life, she didn't initially intend to build a life as a landlord and broker. After completing an MBA from Clark University, marrying and starting a family, she was laid off from a job when the global and local economies crashed in 2008, "along with half the world," she recalls. "I was pregnant with twins at the time, and job opportunities were limited."

So, she accepted an offer for a job in local real estate from an acquaintance who owned Worcester properties and worked as a broker. She earned her real estate license and broker's license and built her brokerage, A.A. Zamarro Realty. Now, 14 years later, Zamarro and her husband, Anthony, own two properties with eight rental units in Worcester, alongside raising their three kids: twins, aged 14, and their 13-year-old son. Zamarro is now affiliated with Coldwell Banker Realty.

It hasn't always been smooth running a real estate business, Zamarro admits. "There have been points when real estate is challenging," she says, "and I've thought, 'I could get a job in a different industry.' But when the rubber hits the road, I've decided I don't want to sit in an office, I don't want to sit behind a desk."





One of two multifamilies owned by Erin Zamarro and her husband, Anthony, in Worcester.  
Image: cc by-sa Erin Zamarro.



Erin Zamarro and her husband, Anthony, own two Worcester multifamily properties comprising eight rental units.  
Image: cc by-sa Erin Zamarro.

And as always, it's the people she meets that help her appreciate her career decisions. "It's new people, new places every day. I enjoy that, I enjoy being out every day, I love all the different people. You don't get that behind a desk. You don't get that behind a computer monitor."

### ALWAYS ABOUT THE PEOPLE

Real estate investing, after all, is investing in people and community, says Zamarro. "Real estate is an investment you can shape on your own," she says. "When you invest in real estate, you're part of a neighborhood. When you invest in local real estate, you're also investing in your city."

She enjoys the diversity of interactions and personalities she comes across in her business. "You meet a lot of characters in real estate," she says. "You get to see very different perspectives."

One of her multifamilies is home to "mostly college students," she describes. "It's definitely interesting to see their take on things sometimes," relating with them and sharing experiences.

Another of her tenants, an immigrant from Zimbabwe, embraced Worcester's St. Patrick's Day celebrations last year, she remembers. "I love making these kinds of connections," she says. "I will ask him for committee membership next year."

### LONG-TERM INVESTMENTS

While she loves her career in real estate, Zamarro admits it wasn't always easy. She entered the industry in a precarious time, following the global economic crisis of 2008. "It was really hard in the beginning, getting started," she says. "There was a lot to learn about real estate. The value of people's homes had come down, a lot of people were upside down, a lot of multifamilies were going into foreclosure. Properties were not being maintained, people were stuck in these unkept properties, owners were walking away from their properties."

Over the years, she has seen fellow rental property owners sell out and leave the business altogether, or sell part of their holdings due to the difficulty of real estate.



But for Zamarro and her husband, real estate investment is a long-term business, not about immediate return. "I still see this as a great way to build long-term wealth," she says. "When we bought these properties we didn't buy them for income today, we bought them for income tomorrow, whether we eventually sell the assets down the road, or hold them for rental income."

For aspiring real estate investors, Zamarro advises preparedness. "It can be scary to buy property," she says. "It's going to absorb a lot of your time, probably a bunch of your money. There's never going to be a perfect property, or a perfect investment. Pick what fits your lifestyle. You might think you know what's going to happen, but there's always going to be wildcard situations. Once

you've handled a few of those, you can handle more. It's about being ready for it, doing your homework. And being proactive, not reactive."


### INVESTING IN HER COMMUNITY

As a real estate investor and landlord, Zamarro practices what she prescribes. "We live in Worcester, we want to invest here," she says, "where we can take good care of our investments."

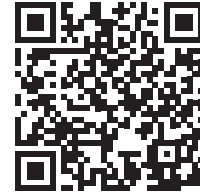
For Zamarro, remaining engaged with her properties and the people who live in them is not only enjoyable. It's also smart business practice, and pays off over time.

"We invest quite a bit in our properties," she says of her and her husband. "I feel that if you have a property that is well-maintained, and you repair stuff

and respond quickly, you will have fewer headaches, you will have better involvement with your tenants. And, I believe you will spend less money in the long run."

MassLandlords, Inc., welcomes Erin Zamarro to its Board of Directors. 

Point your camera app here to read more online.



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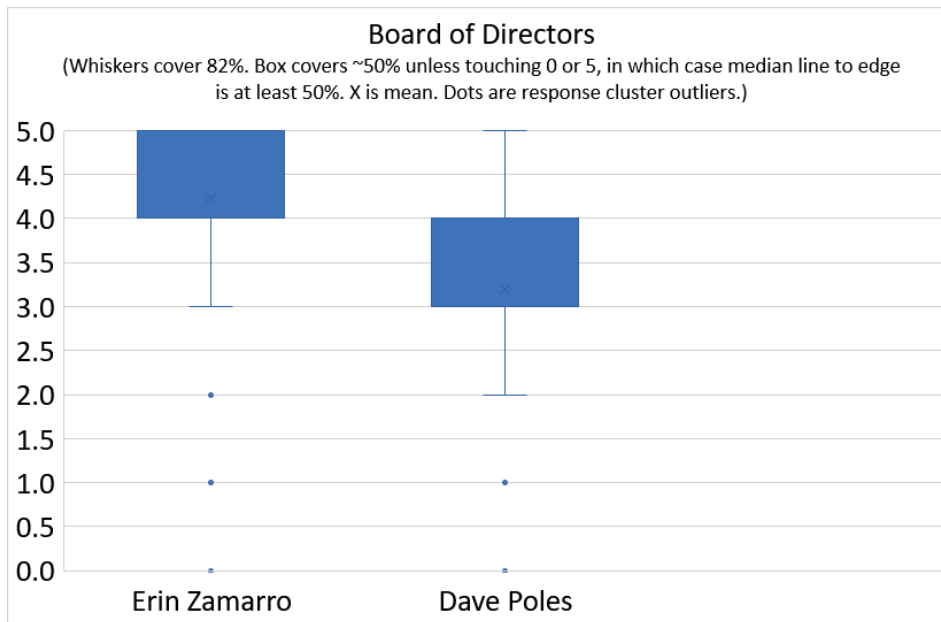
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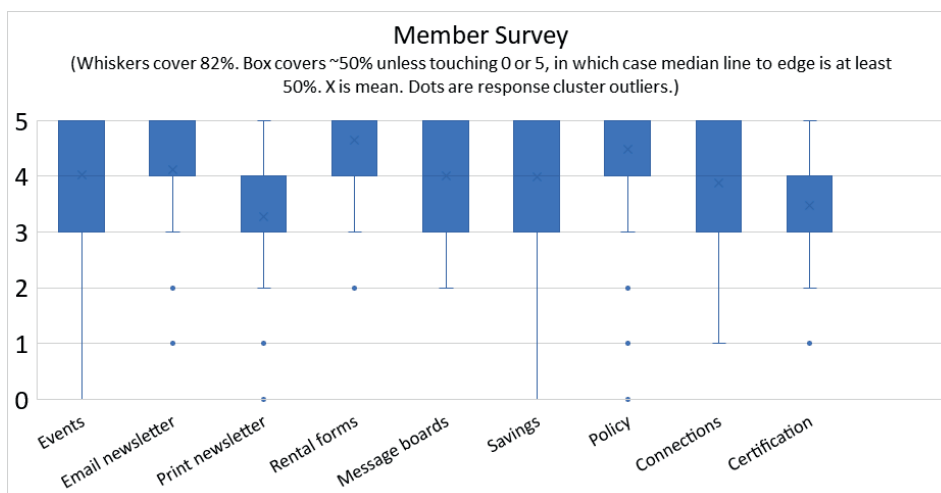
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# MassLandlords Annual Election Results 2023



**Caption:** Dave informed us that due to personal commitments he would not be campaigning. His score still indicates membership support. Erin is well known from event networking and scored best. She is our newest director. Welcome, Erin!



The optional back-of-ballot survey asks members to provide feedback on our core services. All services show broad support. We recognize that the Certified Massachusetts Landlord is most impactful as a self-assessment only, and not much more than that at the moment. We are working to make this distinction meaningful in the marketplace.

**The 2023 election resulted in Erin Zamarro becoming director, bylaws changes being adopted and Director Sullivan being removed. This article covers who won the 2023 election, who ran, and how you can get involved for next time.**

In December, MassLandlords members voted in our annual business meeting on the next director to succeed Alec Bewsee on our five-member volunteer board. We met our quorum target of 511 responses, with 730 members participating online including abstentions.

## WHO RAN IN THE 2023 ELECTION?

The nominees were David Poles and Erin Zamarro, both long-time members and supporters.

Please join us in thanking David for his willingness to serve. In an organization of over 2,400 members, every bit of public spirit and volunteering adds up to an increasingly impressive state-wide organization, and a positive force for the creation of better rental housing in Massachusetts.

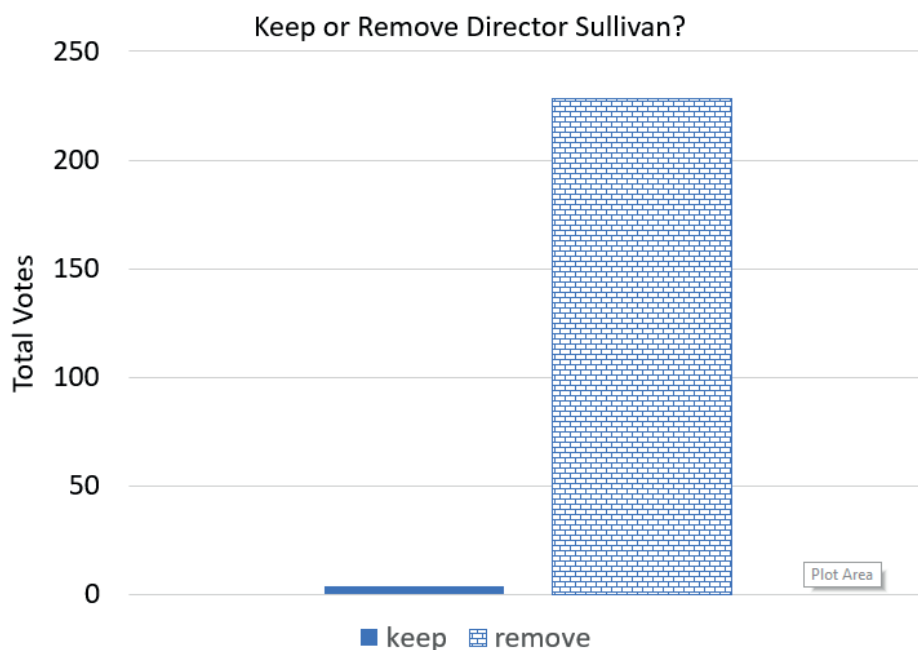
## HOW WAS THE 2023 ELECTION CARRIED OUT?

Voting was electronic and in-person at the Worcester event on Dec. 6. Members were asked to rate candidates on a score of 0 to 5 using a score voting ballot.

Erin Zamarro's total score was 1187, average 4.2. David Pole's total score was 810, average 3.2. Both results show support from the membership.



The simple way for landlords & tenants to handle  
security deposits & assess damage  
to their units over time.



Most members viewing the question abstained. The final vote was 228 to 4 in favor of removal. Director Sullivan was removed effective Dec. 20.

## WHO WON THE 2023 ELECTION FOR DIRECTOR?

Erin Zamarro has been elected to the board. This is based on receiving the highest total score out of all scores assigned.

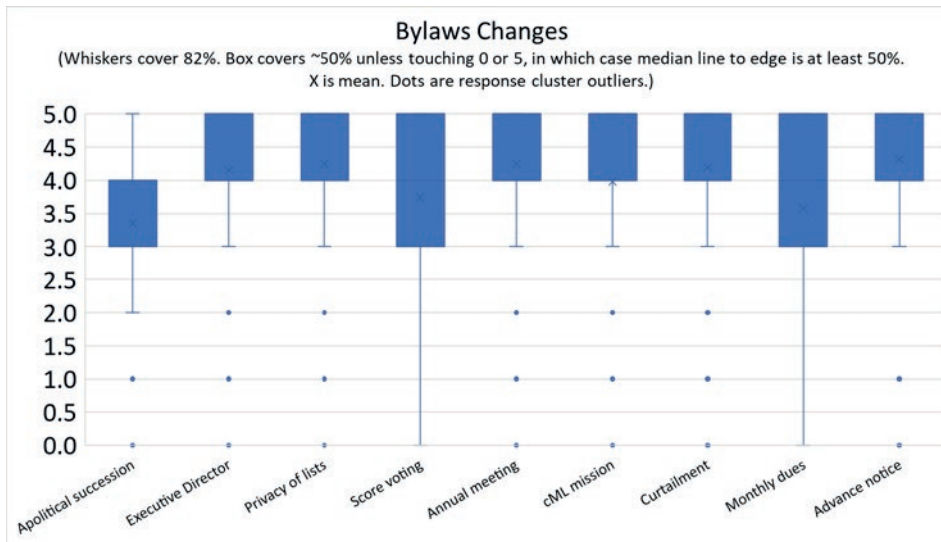
## WHAT WAS THE RESULT OF THE BYLAWS CHANGES?

All nine bylaws changes were approved by the membership.

Apolitical succession of officers was the least well received. Conversations with members indicate that we'd like board volunteer positions to be available even if someone would rather not be President, Treasurer or Secretary, which are named offices requiring specific skillsets. The new bylaws will allow someone in line for office to pass, provided someone else is willing.

The option for a monthly dues payment schedule was supported, but not as well as some other changes





All nine bylaws changes show more membership support than not. The change with the least average support is apolitical succession of directors. We know from member feedback that not everyone would like to do every job, so presumably the "no" votes here are to allow directors discretion in taking officer roles. The most controversial changes are score voting and monthly dues. We recognize drawbacks with each and will work to improve particularly the proposal for monthly dues to prevent form-hopping.

(e.g., our expanded mission). We will work to come up with a dues schedule that does not allow our rental forms to be downloaded for the cost of a single month's pro-rated payment ("form hopping" or "hop on, hop off"). We will keep you posted.

#### WHAT OF THE QUESTION TO REMOVE DIRECTOR SULLIVAN?

Director Sullivan has been removed from the Board of Directors. He was to remain a member in good standing, but on Dec. 20 he asked that his membership be canceled. We have canceled it.

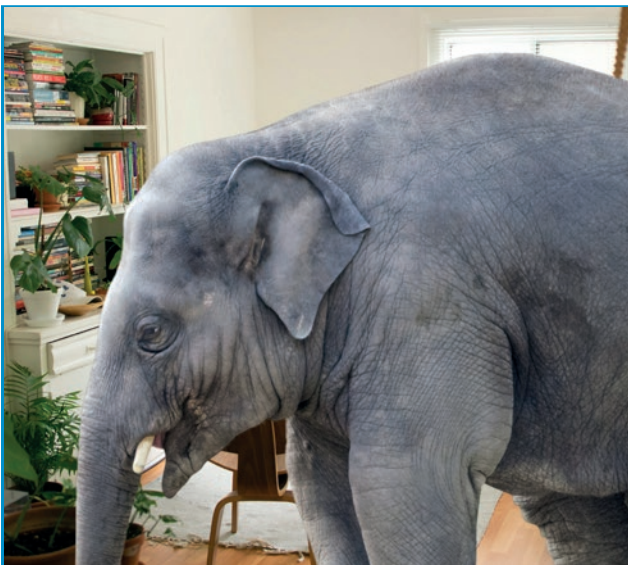
#### HOW DID THE OPTIONAL SURVEY GO?

It looks like participants value all of our services. The least valued services are the print newsletter and certification. We are working hard to make certification a meaningful distinction in the market and policy space. We plan to continue to let the print newsletter ride; few print subscriptions succeed nowadays but we are happy to continue delivering these at cost for members who prefer print.

#### HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED IN 2024?

There are volunteer roles at the state and local level available at [MassLandlords.net/volunteer](https://MassLandlords.net/volunteer). Nominations for 2024 will open next summer at [MassLandlords.net/nominate](https://MassLandlords.net/nominate). 

Point your camera app here to read more online.



#### ARTICLE YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

### How to Soundproof a Triple-Decker Rental Home

If you own a multi-floor rental property, like one of the triple-deckers that Massachusetts is well-known for, you've probably learned that sound can really travel between units, especially in older buildings. Fortunately, there are ways to soundproof a triple-decker that will certainly dull the noise.

Point your camera app here to read more online.



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# Do You Own Some Small, Unbuildable, Taxable, Urban Land?

By Eric Weld, MassLandlords, Inc.

**Imagine a piece of your idle, unbuildable land becoming a thriving mid-city forest providing clean air, greenery and improved aesthetic for an urban community.**

If you own a tract of unbuildable land within city limits of a Massachusetts community and would like to lower your property taxes on that parcel, we have a proposition for you: donate a portion of your idle land for the purpose of creating an urban forest. In exchange, you could

save hundreds or thousands off your annual tax bill.

To explain: We at MassLandlords are aspiring to apply for a grant, called the Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Grant, administered by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). These grants support local and regional projects that build communities' trees, nature and forest capacities.

We are in the early stages of the process and taking steps to gauge interest within our association. We have not yet communicated with DCR about our proposal.

The Urban and Community Forestry Challenge grants are 50-50 matching grants. However, the match is 75-25 for grant-approved projects in environmental justice (EJ) communities.

EJ communities are pockets, frequently in urban areas, with high populations of minority and underrepresented people in which there is more concentrated poverty in comparison with other areas of the city or state. Typically, EJ neighborhoods are exposed to relatively unhealthy environmental conditions, such as poorer air quality and higher levels of pollutants. These conditions often lead to higher rates of health issues such as asthma, respiratory diseases and certain cancers. Other components of EJ areas include higher population density, lack of access to quality food and water, fewer trees, greenspaces and natural vegetation, closer proximity to environmental waste dumps and pollution-emitting facilities, higher concentration of concrete and built structures and lower exposure to sunlight.

More than 100 studies have shown that planting trees in EJ neighborhoods improves the region in surprising ways. Access to trees and greenspaces are associated with better health, lower crime, reduced average temperatures, increased investments and resulting economic opportunities.

## TURNING LOSS INTO GAIN

Meanwhile, some investors – and some of our members, we think – own parcels of land within EJ regions that may be partially or wholly unbuildable or have limited utility. Every city contains such plots, certainly including Worcester, Boston and Springfield. They might be



Do you own a vacant lot in a Massachusetts city? We want to transform an unbuildable, vacant lot into an urban, fast-growing forest supported by a DCR Urban Community and Forestry Challenge Grant. CC BY-SA Mass DEP wikimedia commons.

unbuildable because they're too small for local building codes. Maybe they are oddly shaped corner lots left over from larger building developments. Or they might be parts of flood plains, lack utilities access or be situated on slopes or land unsuitable for building.

Owners of such land are often left paying high urbanized tax rates while getting zero return on that portion of their investment. It's a net loss year after year.

While such lots are useless for commercial or residential development, they might be ideal for supporting a small forest with native trees and plants. The DCR grants are designed with these types of lots in mind; small parcels of land that are of little use to the owners, difficult to sell, expensive to own, but that would bring incalculable benefit to the neighborhood when turned into greenspace.

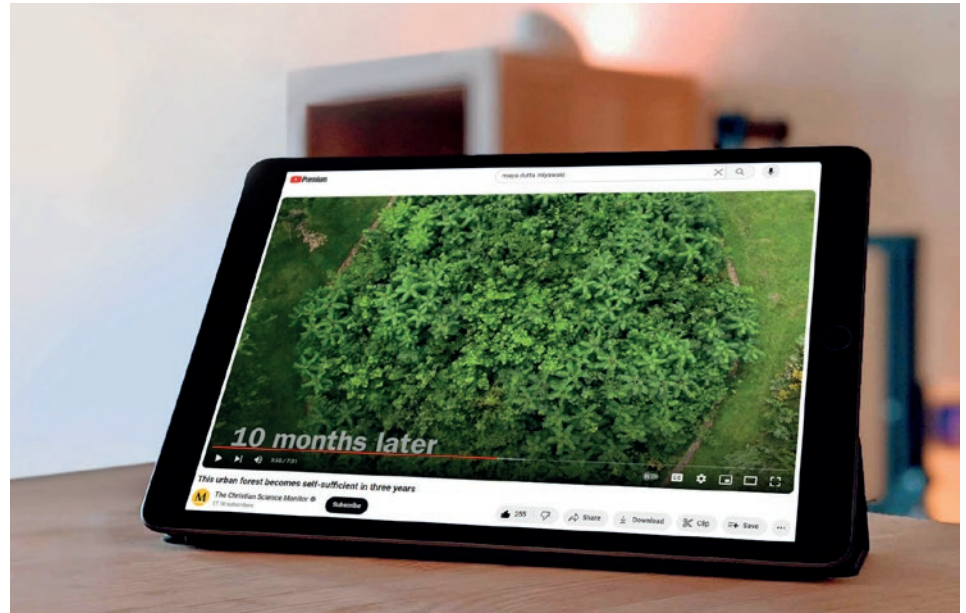
We are seeking MassLandlords members, or other urban landowners, who might seek an escape from that onerous property tax bill by donating a chunk of land in an EJ neighborhood.

### HOW WOULD IT WORK?

Specifically, we hope to find a landowner – or landowners – willing to donate a small parcel of land. An urban forest could be created on a piece of land as small as 20 square feet. For the intent of this project, we would prefer a parcel of at least a quarter acre. The parcel would ideally be a partially or wholly unbuildable lot, with open exposure to sunlight for hours each day.

We would assist with a donation of this land to a local or regionally based land conservation trust. The trust (to be decided at the time of donation) would take ownership of the parcel and oversee the creation of the forestry project, perhaps by enlisting a team of local students and volunteers who would benefit from it. The team would build the forest over three years, planting a diverse mix of fast-growing plants and trees. After that, the conservation trust would oversee maintenance of the forest.

We at MassLandlords, as grant recipients, would partner with the trust in managing the project. We would seek the assistance of plant and forestry experts



The Christian Science Monitor profiled the Cambridge Miyawaki forest in Oct. 2023. The full video can be watched at <https://youtu.be/CKcy0YAzeYU?si=PvSu6TiLai9EXvwK> Editorial Use Video, Licensed 123rf Frame.

for design and planting; as well as local horticulturists and silviculturists to advise on the removal of invasive vegetation and the planting of friendly, native forest species. We would also work with the assessor's office in the city or town where the donation takes place to ensure that the land gift reduces the landlord's real estate tax obligation. We would also ensure that a reduction in lot area will not adversely impact your right to own, operate or build on any associated land you choose to keep.

The grant would pay for land clearing and preparation, purchase of plants and trees, gardening tools and supplies and related costs for the portion you donate.

We see this exchange as a win-win. Donating landlords alleviate their tax burdens while providing a resource of long-term benefit to the local community.

### THE MIYAWAKI FOREST METHOD

We propose to create a Miyawaki forest because it's an effective method for growing a rich, diverse forest efficiently and in a short time span.

Akira Miyawaki (1928 - 2021) was a Japanese botanist, ecologist and educator who became world-renowned for his expertise in restoring natural vegetation on degraded land. The Miyawaki method first prepares the intended forest space by removing invasive roots and growths

from the soil to create an optimal growth environment for new plantings. The signature of the Miyawaki method is the identification of 20 - 30 diverse plant species that are native to the land in which they are planted. Such native plants are more resilient to potential land devastation and more likely to mature.

Miyawaki forests start with a dense initial planting of complementary species that allow and assist collective growth rather than competition.

Today there are more than 2,000 Miyawaki forests in existence. Some are in urban neighborhoods, some bordering industrial facilities. Many are several decades old. Miyawaki forests have been proven to grow and mature at a rate ten times faster than a natural forest – in as little as 30 years, as opposed to the 300 or more years conventional forests may take to develop.

A Miyawaki forest was recently planted in Cambridge, at 99 Sherman Street. The project was led by Maya Dutta, assistant director of regenerative projects at the Cambridge nonprofit Biodiversity for a Livable Climate. [View a video](#) of the project.

There are other types of urban forests, but we consider the Miyawaki forest method to be the fastest, most efficient approach to bringing aesthetic, health



and economic improvements to the urban landscape.

The Miyawaki method would likely be more prevalent worldwide were it not for the steep upfront costs for numerous plantings and trees, and thorough soil preparation. The DCR grant, coupled with a land donation, would give us the opportunity to pursue this high-quality land use.

#### DCR URBAN FORESTRY CHALLENGE GRANT TIMELINE

We are beginning now to gauge and build interest, and assess resources for this project. Depending on interest and resources, we may select several small plots (likely between one and 10) for forest planting.

Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Grant proposals for next year are due Nov. 1, 2024. Grant approvals take four to six months after the application deadline. Changes to the property deed would take place no sooner than 2025.

The DCR grant is funded through the USDA Forestry Program with earmarked funds from the Inflation Reduction Act. The USDA allotted more than \$1 billion to all 50 states to support programs promoting planting and increasing access to trees in urban areas. In 2022, 385 projects received grant funding from the national program.

#### WHY DOES MASSLANDLORDS WANT TO PLANT TREES?

MassLandlords is about creating better housing for all in Massachusetts. Remember our tagline reads, "Better Communities. Better Policy. Better Lives." We're pleased to have an opportunity to work on the "Better Communities" and "Better Lives" parts.

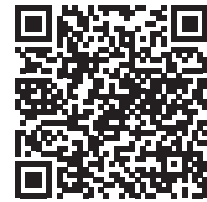
Housing is about more than just houses. It's about quality of life, access to education, healthy food, clean air and water and connection to nature and local ecology. Even if you are inclined to be cynical, you can still participate and think of this as

good public relations for landlords (while possibly saving money in the deal).

Applying for a grant to fund contained forestry projects in environmental justice neighborhoods answers all our goals. This grant would be a natural continuation of our ongoing mission.

If you or someone you know owns a parcel of partially or wholly unbuildable land in an urban area, and would like to be included in our planning, please contact us via email to [hello@masslandlords.com](mailto:hello@masslandlords.com), [dquattrochi@masslandlords.com](mailto:dquattrochi@masslandlords.com), or [eweld@masslandlords.com](mailto:eweld@masslandlords.com).

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# Supreme Judicial Court asked to Hear Public Records Case

By Kimberly Rau, MassLandlords, Inc.

**In MassLandlords vs. EOHLC we are attempting to understand how tens of thousands of applications for rental assistance were timed out. We intend to shore up the safety net for current and future applicants.**

On Monday, Dec. 18, MassLandlords Legislative Affairs Counsel Peter Vickery asked the Supreme Judicial Court to consider our request to see rental assistance records. In legal terms, this action was “an application for further appellate review (FAR).” We are in litigation against the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. The application for FAR follows our loss of appeal in late November. A panel of three justices decided we couldn’t see the records.

At issue is whether the commonwealth or any department can spend \$800 million without telling anyone where it was spent. More importantly, we want to know where it was not spent: where applications were “timed out” or denied. MassLandlords has requested a spreadsheet showing application date, address and status (whether approved, denied or “timed out”) for all pandemic rental assistance.

Anecdotally, we know of hundreds of cases in which landlords and renters submitted all required information but had their applications “timed out” because the state lost the attachments. Additional cases were timed out for failure to submit what was perceived by applicants as unnecessary information.

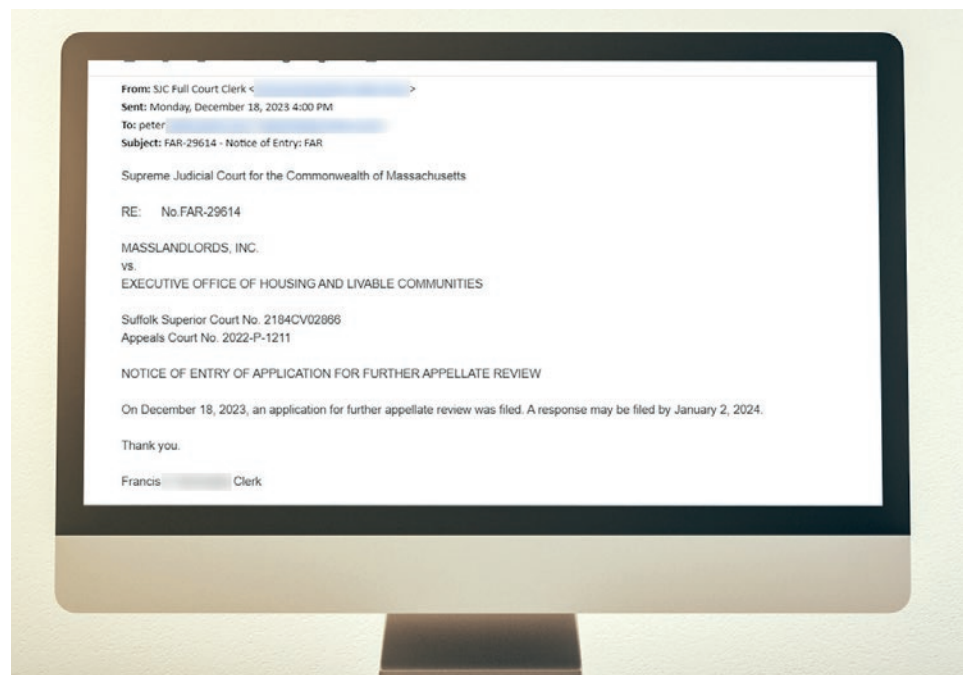
We have been sensitive to the possible privacy implications from the beginning. Our original request specifically did not ask for renters’ names. We provided an affidavit from a Brown University researcher confirming that our intended investigation could be conducted without knowing or discovering the identity of any applicant.

## “FAILURE TO STATE A CLAIM”

The state moved to dismiss the case without a hearing. Their official reason was “failure to state a claim.” The Superior Court granted the motion. The appeals court sustained the dismissal.

In essence, the courts’ positions so far have been akin to saying that there is no conceivable public interest in the requested information.

In moving to dismiss, the state filed an affidavit from Amy Stitely, Chief of Programs. This inadvertently showed that there is enormous public interest: the state had lost to supervision 47,000 of the 151,000 applications for pandemic rental assistance received as of January 2022. These were presumed printed out and sitting in boxes at the regional administering agencies. The cost of finding all of these and notifying application holders was estimated at roughly \$200,000 plus



**We actually don't have a computer this nice looking, but we wanted to show you the email confirming submission and it was boring by itself. The response deadline of January 2 was expected to be extended by state request. Derivative of Licensed 123rf.**

internal labor. (For context, the state hired an antifraud contractor to examine 10% of applications for \$800,000.)

### EVIDENCE OF DISCRIMINATION NOT REQUIRED, BUT PRESENT

In addition to the issue of time outs, MassLandlords had previously presented the court with four examples of prima facie evidence of unlawful discrimination.

First, the applications required listing all children in the premises. This was discrimination on the basis of family status, especially because in early applications this information was not used. (Information about children was used only in later months to help determine eligibility faster.)

Second, early applications required applicants to speak English. Months later, applications still favored English by hiding awkward Google-translated versions behind English-only web pages. (For example, Spanish language

applicants in Andover were unable to find their town in the dropdown menu because it had been translated as “Y más”, meaning, “and over again.” “Chesterfield” became “el sofá,” after the brand.) This was inadvertent discrimination on the basis of national origin.

Third, early applications required essays describing Covid’s impact. This was discrimination on the basis of disability.

Fourth and finally, we provided a City Life/Vida Urbana study conducted using our own MassCourts data showing that evictions, in general, land hardest on people of color. This demonstrates systemic disparate impact on the basis of race.

Applicants unable or fearing themselves unable to pass such limiting applications were unlawfully “timed out” and barred from the help to which they were otherwise entitled. To the extent funds were in limited supply, a lottery would have been more equitable.

The public records law (Chapter 4 Section 7) gives only three instances in which addresses are exempt from scrutiny: state and city employees, their family (e.g., for dependents named in health insurance plans) and firearms holders (presumably to prevent facilitating theft).

### BALANCING TEST REQUIRED

The Supreme Judicial Court established a three-part test for record requests in the 2019 case *Boston Globe Media Partners v. Dept of Public Health*. This test was designed to balance privacy vs. public interest. First, would disclosure embarrass a person of “normal sensibilities?” Second, would the addresses be “intimate details of a highly personal nature?” And third, would similar or more embarrassing information, like eviction records, already be available from other sources?

We believe the balancing ought to have been applied and weighed in our favor.



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Application for further appellate review rounded out year two of this line of litigation.

Improvements in the application process since litigation began do not exempt the state from scrutiny. The widespread use of Google translate, for example, continues to obscure the inaccessibility of rental assistance. It looks like we are accessible, but for applicants who actually need that language to be accurate and end-to-end, the barriers are nearly insurmountable. Large numbers of commonwealth residents and the housing providers who chose to rent to them are thereby excluded.

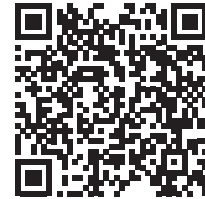
We will keep you updated as the case progresses. [!\[\]\(c3d993ca47bfe2a953c700506ce31fa0\_img.jpg\)](#)

## SEE ALSO

[Landlords Association Files Court Suit Against DHCD to Enforce Public Records Request \(Dec. 20, 2021\)](#)  
[DHCD Lawsuit Update: Half of Applications Rejected, One Third Lost? \(Feb. 21, 2022\)](#)  
[DHCD's Motion to Dismiss Taken Under Advisement \(Jun. 16, 2022\)](#)  
[DHCD Lawsuit Dismissed \(Aug. 1, 2022\)](#)  
[MassLandlords to Appeal Recent Dismissal of Court Petition for DHCD Data \(Aug. 23, 2022\)](#)  
[DHCD Lawsuit Motion to Reconsider \(Oct. 13, 2022\)](#)  
[Three Years After Covid Shutdowns, Same Problems Still Frustrate the Rental Assistance Application Process \(May 30, 2023\)](#)

[MassLandlords Argued Appeal of EOHLC Records Suit, Still No Decision \(Nov. 30, 2023\)](#)

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To join, complete a pink sheet at any MassLandlords event or sign up online at [MassLandlords.net/property](https://MassLandlords.net/property).

# Aroma Diffusers Could Be Causing Air Quality and Nuisance Alarm Issues

By Kimberly Rau, MassLandlords, Inc.

## Aroma diffusers, also called essential oil diffusers, could be causing problems in your rental units.

Fragrance oil or aromatherapy diffusers may be causing nuisance alarms and indoor air quality issues in your rentals. If your tenants are reporting the smoke detector is going off, but they aren't cooking or smoking, read on to learn about why that cheerful little fragrance diffuser might not be as innocuous as you think.

### AROMA DIFFUSERS MAY CAUSE NUISANCE ALARMS

Aromatherapy is big business in America. Aroma diffusers had a market size of nearly \$1.7 billion in 2022 and a projected value of more than \$3.6 billion by 2031. With diffusers being used in homes and offices throughout the country, there's a good chance that a few of them belong to your renters.

There are passive ways to release essential oils into the air, including reed and stone diffusers. But many aroma diffusers are electric; they work by vaporizing or aerosolizing oils and releasing the scent or droplets into the air.

While this is an efficient way to make the most of an aromatic oil, the smoke detectors in your rentals may not be able to differentiate between particulate from a diffuser and actual smoke. This in turn could lead to nuisance alarms.

MassLandlords Executive Director Doug Quattrochi recalled a situation where the smoke alarm was suddenly going off in one of his triple-decker units. The new tenants weren't smokers, and Quattrochi found no reason to doubt them. There was no evidence of any kind of smoking occurring in the unit. The oven was clean, and the renters said they hadn't used it. But the alarm kept going off.

Quattrochi brought his air quality monitor, a device that detects particles,

to the unit. (Note: this is not an affiliate link. We do not receive any commission if you purchase this air quality monitor.) The problem turned out to be an aroma diffuser that, similar to an air humidifier, was spraying droplets into the air. When the unit was not in use, the alarms did not go off.

If your renter has a humidifier-style diffuser that aerosolizes aromatic oils, and they don't want to get rid of it, tell them that they can attempt to run it far from any kind of smoke detector or sprinkler system. But this isn't a sure thing: In Quattrochi's tenants' situation, the diffuser was not near a smoke detector. Yet it filled the room in such a way that even the smoke detector that was farthest away was still detecting particles in the air.

### AROMA DIFFUSERS CAN CREATE POOR INDOOR AIR QUALITY

Aroma diffusers have become incredibly popular, and it's no surprise. Aroma



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oils can make a room smell wonderfully fragrant, and people who use essential oils instead of just fragrance oils also claim relaxation benefits from the scent. But are these diffusers actually good for you?

Any time you release particulates into the air, you are disrupting the air quality in your home. New construction has become more energy efficient, allowing less heated or cooled air to escape from the interior. Unfortunately, that also means more pollutants get trapped inside. If you run an aroma diffuser, those particulates are going to hang around just like cigarette smoke would.

Quattrochi's air quality monitor was able to pick up atmospheric changes from the aroma diffuser, and a 2022 study published by the National Library of medicine corroborates his findings.

"Essential oil products are increasingly used in indoor environments and have been found to negatively contribute to indoor air quality. Moreover, the chemicals and fragrances emitted by those products may affect the central nervous system and cognitive function," the abstract for the study states.

In fact, most of the sources suggesting essential oil diffusers are helpful seem to be websites that are selling essential oils. One goes as far as to suggest "essential oil diffusers can improve indoor air quality by releasing fragrant essential oils into the air." There are people who enjoy the smell of gasoline, too, but we wouldn't suggest you keep an open fuel can in your living room (for a variety of reasons).

### SOME OF THE MOST POPULAR ESSENTIAL OILS MAY LEAD TO HORMONAL IMBALANCES.

Air quality issues aside, certain essential oils have been found to have components that potentially act as endocrine disruptors, including lavender and tea tree oils, according to the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS).

"Lavender oil and tea tree oil could pose potential health exposure concerns and should be researched further, especially because these oils are available

without a written prescription from medical professionals and they're not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration," wrote a lead researcher for the NIEHS study.



**The air quality monitor doesn't lie: Not only was this fragrance diffuser setting off the smoke alarm, but it was also creating hazardous air quality conditions in the home. (License: CC by-sa MassLandlords Quattrochi)**

Keep this in mind if you go to purchase essential oils. Certain companies may try to claim their oils are "pharmaceutical grade," or use other similar terms to imply their oils have met some specific criteria to earn a designation. This is a meaningless designation, as there is no official entity that "grades" essential oils. *Scientific American* has noted that we have no evidence that any essential oils can cure disease, though some may improve symptoms of various ailments.

### DON'T HUMIDIFIERS RELEASE DROPLETS INTO THE AIR, TOO?

Regular humidifiers can certainly set off dust detectors just like aroma diffusers, but the difference between

the two appliances lies in what they release. Water humidifiers running on distilled water release droplets of water into the air, which can be detected as smoke. However, if you inhale one of those droplets, it's just water, and no different from breathing outside on a foggy morning.

If, however, your humidifier runs on tap water, it likely has dissolved minerals, such as salts, that can end up aerosolized once the water evaporates. Then, what you are inhaling is quite similar to the particles you inhale from aroma diffusers. They are legitimate PM (particulate matter) 2.5 dust particles. Breathing those in high enough concentrations can be as bad for your lungs as smoking.

If you or a renter runs a humidifier for winter comfort, best practice is to pair that with a whole room HEPA filter.

### CONCLUSION

We aren't implying fragrance oil diffusers cause the same problems that come from smoking inside the rental. Aroma diffusers may leave some residue, but are unlikely to stain your walls or cause permanent damage. But there is evidence to suggest that they may cause problems, even minor ones, for you and your tenants.

If this is the case for your rental – that is, if you are responding to multiple nuisance alarms not related to cooking or smoking – request your renters use them farther away from smoke detectors. If this does not solve the issue, and you can't find any other culprits for those unexplained alarms, your renters may need to discontinue using them entirely. [ML](#)

Point your camera app here to read more online.



# HUD Small Area Fair Market Rents Now Represent 45% of Participants

By Kimberly Rau, MassLandlords, Inc.

**The Department of Housing and Urban Development has increased the number of zip codes required to use SAFMRs, allowing 800,000 households greater access to housing choice.**

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) announced that 41 new metropolitan areas across the country will be required to use small area fair market rents (SAFMRs) when calculating the maximum rent that housing choice vouchers (Section 8) will cover.

This expansion means that a total of 65 metropolitan areas in the United

States will now be mandated to follow HUD's SAFMR guidelines, up from just 24 since the program began in 2016. Before, approximately 370,000 households using housing assistance vouchers could access expanded housing choice under the SAFMR calculation; today it is 800,000 households. This represents 45% of all households using housing assistance vouchers.

## WHAT ARE SMALL AREA FAIR MARKET RENTS?

Small area fair market rents (SAFMRs) trace back to the year 2000, when HUD determined that fair market rents that were calculated based on metro region averages were not effective in increasing

availability in what they call "higher opportunity areas."


In other words, the calculated rent amount that would allow someone with a housing choice voucher to live in a particular city would not allow them to live in good neighborhoods or suburbs. These areas are what are known as higher opportunity areas, neighborhoods that, according to HUD, "often have attributes that, based on recent research, seem to have a positive effect on the economic mobility of residents."

HUD increased fair market rents to match median metro rents, but that didn't solve the problem of people essentially being forced to live in high-poverty areas. In 2011, HUD began testing the concept of SAFMRs, calculating rent caps based on zip code instead of median metro rents. The testing was concluded by the end of 2016. HUD stated that 24 metro areas would be required to start using SAFMR calculations by Jan. 1, 2018. Shortly after the presidential administration turned over in 2017, HUD attempted to delay the roll-out, but lost a lawsuit seeking to overturn the delay for most of those 24 areas.

## DOES THE NEW HUD SAFMR MANDATE AFFECT MASSACHUSETTS?

HUD may require certain metropolitan areas to utilize SAFMRs, but it also allows any housing authority to voluntarily adopt SAFMRs for its area. Such is the case in Massachusetts.

As of publication, there are no cities or towns in the state that are mandated by HUD to use SAFMRs. However, the Boston Housing Authority (BHA)



ZIP Code	Efficiency	One-Bedroom	Two-Bedroom	Three-Bedroom	Four-Bedroom
01005	\$1,160	\$1,170	\$1,500	\$1,810	\$2,000
01010	\$850	\$890	\$1,130	\$1,540	\$1,660
01031	\$1,010	\$1,080	\$1,420	\$1,980	\$2,350
01037	\$1,030	\$1,120	\$1,450	\$1,930	\$2,270
01068	\$1,280	\$1,290	\$1,660	\$2,010	\$2,210
01074	\$1,160	\$1,170	\$1,500	\$1,810	\$2,000
01082	\$860	\$1,020	\$1,260	\$1,540	\$1,790
01083	\$930	\$1,000	\$1,310	\$1,820	\$2,170
01092	\$880	\$990	\$1,260	\$1,660	\$1,970
01094	\$1,010	\$1,050	\$1,370	\$1,830	\$2,120
01331	\$1,000	\$1,070	\$1,400	\$1,950	\$2,320
01364	\$870	\$970	\$1,280	\$1,550	\$1,810
01366	\$1,200	\$1,280	\$1,680	\$2,340	\$2,780
01368	\$930	\$990	\$1,300	\$1,810	\$2,150
01420	\$1,010	\$1,170	\$1,490	\$1,940	\$2,230
01430	\$1,610	\$1,850	\$2,370	\$3,080	\$3,550

Though Massachusetts is not obligated to use Small Area Fair Market Rents in any of their metropolitan areas, HUD does provide SAFMR information for all areas. These are some of the ZIP codes in Worcester County, and their associated SAFMRs. [Lic: CC by SA MassLandlords Inc., chart from HUD.]



announced in 2019 that it would be applying SAFMR calculations within the greater Boston area. All 236 zip codes in BHA's housing area were affected by the change, allowing renters in those districts to have greater housing access.

Then, in November 2023, the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) announced that it would be utilizing SAFMRs to calculate its payment standards statewide for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), also known as mobile vouchers. For most communities in Massachusetts, the applicable payment standard will be equal to 110% of that area's SAFMR. Some exceptions exist. For example, the press release states that Lynn will have a payment standard equal to 100% of the area's fair market rent for all its zip codes. Throughout Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard, the payment standard will equal 110% of the area's fair market rent. The changes are projected to begin on March 1, 2024.

If your rental properties are in one of the zip codes covered by the Boston Housing Authority, or you have a tenant with mobile vouchers, you can use HUD's website to determine what your small area fair market rent would be for your units and apply that information accordingly. This data is updated annually. You can also find general fair market rent information through HUD's website.

It will tell you what the maximum rent is that you can charge and still participate in federal or state housing voucher programs.

### HOW DOES HUD DETERMINE WHAT AREAS MUST UTILIZE SAFMRs?

We wondered why Massachusetts has never been required to use SAFMRs when calculating Section 8 and other housing assistance rents. We reached out to HUD and learned that there are specific metrics they use to regulate districts across the country.

Representatives from HUD sent us a copy of the Small Area Fair Market Rent 2016 Final Rule. The rule provides an overview of the concept as well as the criteria for being required to use SAFMRs.

First, there must be at least 2,500 Section 8 units in the region under consideration.

Next, 20% or more of "standard quality rental stock" units must exist in zip codes where the SAFMR would exceed 110% of the area's standard fair market rent (FMR). In other words, they are looking for big disparities.

Finally, HUD calculates the percentage of voucher holders living in low-income areas, relative to all renters living in that metropolitan area. If that calculation exceeds a threshold of 1.55, the area would meet the criteria for a SAFMR mandate. (The criteria for determining


what makes an area "low income" has its own set of calculations, outlined in the HUD final rule document.)

If Massachusetts has not been ordered to utilize small area fair market rents, and is instead allowed to voluntarily opt in, it is because the state's metropolitan areas do not fit HUD's criteria for the mandate. We have not attempted to determine which criterion exempts us.

### CONCLUSION

Everyone deserves access to safe housing. Allowing people to live in areas where their children will receive better educational opportunities and have access to more resources is one way to help break the generational cycle of poverty.

Remember, it is illegal in Massachusetts to deny someone a rental because they receive Section 8 or other forms of housing assistance. And while some landlords are averse to the idea of welcoming tenants who have housing vouchers, there are a lot of upsides to having a renter with subsidized housing vouchers in your unit. If nothing else, you're guaranteed the government's share of rent will be paid. (Government shutdowns delay but do not cancel rent.)

Massachusetts may not be required to participate in SAFMR calculations, but it still has highly segregated housing patterns. Despite serving a great need, there's a lot that our public housing administrators and agencies could be doing better (see our ongoing lawsuit against the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, formerly DHCD). We are glad that at least one housing authority in the state has taken the initiative to utilize SAFMRs for its coverage area and that the state is following suit for MRVP. 

Point your camera app here to read more online.



The cost to rent in one of these Somerville homes could be vastly different than the cost to rent a place in an outlying area. We wondered why Boston's metropolitan area had not been placed under an SAFMR mandate, but HUD has a very specific formula for calculating which areas are compelled to follow SAFMR calculations. CC BY-SA MassLandlords, Paul Mong

# REGIONAL

## MassLandlords Upcoming events

See details under each region

### 2024 JANUARY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> SWCLA 7:-00PM-9:00PM	<b>9</b> MWPOA 5:30PM-8:00PM	<b>10</b> (not so) Summary Process 5:00PM-6:40PM	<b>11</b> Longmeadow: Meet the Hampden County Sheriffs, NWCLA 5:30PM-8:35PM, 7:00PM-9:00PM	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> Virtual Meeting 5:00PM-6:40PM		<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> Short Virtual Meeting 12:00PM-1:00PM	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> Virtual Meeting 5:00PM-6:40PM	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>			

### 2024 FEBRUARY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> SWCLA 7:-00PM-9:00PM	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Waltham Dinner Meeting 5:30PM-8:35PM	<b>8</b> NWCLA 7:00PM-9:00PM	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> MWPOA 5:30PM-8:00PM	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> Virtual Meeting 5:00PM-6:40PM	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> Short Virtual Meeting 12:00PM-1:00PM		



## STATEWIDE

## Statewide Virtual Meeting: (not so) Summary Process: the Changing Landscape of Landlord Tenant disputes in MA

WED  
01/10

This event looks at alternatives to eviction. The legal term for the eviction process in Massachusetts is “summary process.” Historically, the “summary” was meant to recognize that “time is of the essence.” But 95th percentile court duration has climbed to around seven months. So we have to ask: What are the legal alternatives to court?

This event will review the options for dealing with landlord-tenant disputes in Massachusetts. We will cover:

- Last-ditch attempts to stabilize using a payment plan (e.g., RentHelper).
- Community mediation.
- Private “cash for keys” relocation assistance agreements.
- Eviction in court as a “Plan B” in parallel to other options.

Attendees will leave knowing why court takes so long and what we can try instead. You are free to bring concerns with a current dispute, but note that we will not be giving legal advice particular to your situation. Our speaker will not be entering into attorney-client privilege with you at this event.



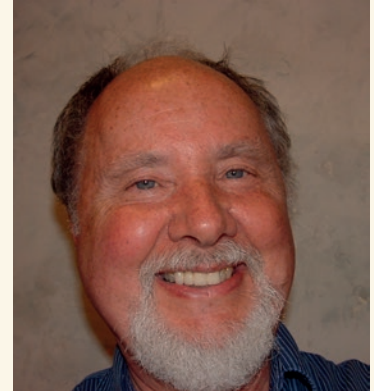
Attorney Jordana Greenman



**Cash for keys is exactly what it sounds like: an agreement in which a landlord pays cash (or other value) to a tenant in exchange for handing over the keys and moving out. (CC BY-SA MassLandlords)**

Part of this presentation will be given by **Attorney Jordana Roubicek Greenman**. She is a real estate lawyer, recipient of the Super Lawyers Rising Star award 2012-2020, and one of Boston Magazine’s Top Lawyers of 2022 and 2023. Her practice - with offices in Boston and Watertown - includes commercial and residential landlord/tenant disputes, condominium association representation, general real estate litigation, and commercial and residential real estate closings. Attorney Greenman has a well-respected reputation for aggressively advocating for her clients’ goals, and ensuring beneficial outcomes at a reasonable cost. She was an instrumental part of the team spearheading legal action opposing the Massachusetts and Boston eviction moratoriums, and is very active within the legal community. Attorney Greenman is a member of the Real Estate Council for the Massachusetts Bar Association and the Real Estate Bar Association, writes columns for the Massachusetts Lawyers Journal and Real Estate Bar Association News, and regularly leads legal seminars for first-time homebuyers and small-property owners.

*“Attorney Greenman is such a great source of common sense and specialized wisdom!” -David*



**Dana Fogg will moderate open Q&A time. You can volunteer for a future event.**

Open Q&A time will be moderated by **Dana Fogg**. Dana started his rental business in 1994 with his first Multifamily in Watertown. Since then, Dana and his wife have purchased and sold rental properties around the Metro West area. They now have 7 Units in Watertown and Marlborough. Dana is the Vice President of the Metro West Property Owners Association.

**Purchase your ticket in just a few clicks!**

### “No Sales Pitch” Guarantee

MassLandlords offers attendees of directly managed events a “No Sales Pitch” guarantee. If a guest speaker offers services, their presentation will not discuss pricing, promotions, or reasons why you should hire them. We do not permit speakers to pay for or sponsor events. Guest speakers are chosen for their expertise and willingness to present helpful educational content. Your purchase of an event ticket sustains our nonprofit model.

### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10TH

#### VIRTUAL MEETING AGENDA

5:00 pm Open Q&A: ask any real estate related question of other attendees or our Q&A host.

5:40 pm Presentation

6:40 pm Virtual Meeting ends

By member survey, the business update has been reimaged as a set of convenient videos viewable anytime online.

**Participation is Easy**

We have two formats of online events:

- **Virtual meetings** include optional audience participation via video, phone, and screenshare and, unless stated otherwise, are not recorded.
- **Webinars** have limited participation options (typed questions only) and, unless stated otherwise, are recorded.

Our **virtual registration desk** is open for all events one hour starting 30 minutes prior to the event start time. Call 774-314-1896 or email [hello@masslandlords.net](mailto:hello@masslandlords.net) for live, real-time help signing in and using your technology.

If joining a virtual meeting, please use the zoom "test audio" feature. You will be allowed to talk to others if your microphone is good and there is no background noise. We reserve the right to mute anyone for any reason. Attendees without a microphone or who don't want to be heard can type questions.

**ACCESSIBILITY**

Automatic closed captions may be activated at any time. Simply turn on this setting from inside the Zoom app.

Questions may be asked over microphone after using the "raise hand" feature of zoom. Questions may also be entered via the Zoom text chat box.

**VIRTUAL MEETING DETAILS (HOSTED BY ZOOM)**

We will share our video, audio, and computer screen and slides.

- Optional: You can share your video with everyone, talk to everyone, and type chat with everyone. Video sharing is not required. Talking is not required.

Password will be emailed and viewable [online](#).

Topic: Not So Summary Process Virtual Meeting January 10, 2024

Time: Jan 10, 2024 05:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86830896585>

Meeting ID: 868 3089 6585

Passcode: Will be emailed and viewable [online](#)

Dial by your location

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)  
+1 646 876 9923 US (New York)  
+1 646 931 3860 US  
+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)  
+1 305 224 1968 US  
+1 309 205 3325 US  
+1 360 209 5623 US  
+1 386 347 5053 US  
+1 408 638 0968 US (San Jose)  
+1 507 473 4847 US  
+1 564 217 2000 US  
+1 669 444 9171 US  
+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)  
+1 689 278 1000 US  
+1 719 359 4580 US  
+1 253 205 0468 US  
+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)  
+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

Meeting ID: 868 3089 6585

Passcode: Will be emailed and viewable [online](#)

Find your local number:  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kcHB9Nc8b>

**PRICING**

Open to the public. Membership is not required!

- Public: \$21
- Members: \$7

Public Registrants: Please note that by registering for this event you will be automatically added to our mailing list. You can always unsubscribe from our mailing list, by clicking on unsubscribe link at the bottom of any email you may receive.

Registration in advance is required.

This event will not be recorded.

Slides and handouts if any will be uploaded to (not so) Summary Process: the Changing Landscape of Landlord Tenant disputes in MA.

**Purchase your ticket in just a few clicks!**

This event is operated by MassLandlords, Inc. staff.

This Virtual Meeting counts for continuing education credit for Certified Massachusetts Landlord Level Three. Beep in. Leave feedback/beep out.

Want to speak at a MassLandlords meeting? Submit a speaker request.

This is part of the Virtual rental real estate networking and training series.

Add our entire event calendar to yours:

Google: add our entire event calendar to Google calendar.

iPhone & iPad: add our entire event calendar to iCal.

Outlook: add our entire event calendar to Outlook.

**NORTHERN WORCESTER COUNTY METROWEST****MetroWest Property Owners Association Marlborough Dinner Meeting: Round Table Discussion**

TUE  
01/09

Join us in January for a Round Table Discussion! In this meeting we will review highlights and lowlights of 2023 experienced by our membership.

MWPOA Members must register for this meeting on the MassLandlords Website at this link: <https://masslandlords.net/spotlight-event/2024-01-09-marlborough/>. Non-MWPOA MassLandlords Members are welcome to also register at this link by purchasing a ticket located in the Public Column.

These are "hybrid" meetings both on Zoom and in person. When registering please click either the Zoom or In-Person orange button based on how you will be attending.

**SPECIAL INCENTIVE THIS MEETING FOR ONE PRE REGISTERED IN PERSON ONLY ATTENDEE: ONE HOME DEPOT \$50.00 GIFT CARD WILL BE DRAWN FOR ONE LUCKY PERSON IN ATTENDANCE**

Please try to register by Monday, January 8th, 2024.

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 9TH****MWPOA DINNER MEETING AGENDA**

5:30pm Networking Starts (In-person group has dinner at this time so Zoom participants have their own networking together)  
6:20pm Business Update  
6:40pm Presentation Starts  
7:45pm Meeting Ends



**LOCATION**

Marlborough Fish and Game  
1 Muddy Ln  
Marlborough, MA 01752

**PRICING**

Open to the public. Membership is not required!

- Public and non-MWPOA members In Person: \$12
- Public and non-MWPOA members Zoom: \$7
- MWPOA members only Zoom: No charge. Registration is required.
- MWPOA members only In Person: No charge. Registration is required.

This event will not be recorded.

Slides and handouts if any will be uploaded to [MWPOA](#).

This event is operated by volunteers at a partner association.

**SOUTHERN WORCESTER COUNTY  
BERKSHIRE COUNTY  
CENTRAL WORCESTER COUNTY  
CHARLES RIVER (GREATER WALTHAM)  
BOSTON, CAMBRIDGE AND  
SOMERVILLE**

## Cambridge Crash Course: The MassLandlords Crash Course in Landlording: The Year You Build Your Business

SUN  
01/21

Learn everything you need to succeed as an owner or manager of residential rental property in Massachusetts.

This fast-paced course is strictly limited to 16 participants to allow for detailed discussion and Q&A. Course tuition includes:

- Small group session with the Executive Director, a trained presenter and experienced landlord, and the attorney.
- A comprehensive agenda, see below.
- Your choice of two books:
  - *Every Landlord's Tax Deduction Guide* by NOLO,
  - *The Good Landlord* by Peter Shapiro,
  - *Getting to Yes* by Roger Fisher, and/or

◦ *The Housing Manual* by H. John Fisher.

- A bound summary of all material presented.
- Breakfast pastries, coffee, tea.
- Lunch sandwiches, sodas, chips, cookies; all dietary requirements satisfied, please notify us when you purchase a ticket.
- A MassLandlords ballpoint pen.
- A MassLandlords certificate of completion and permission to use "MassLandlords Crash Course graduate" on your marketing material.

You will receive a box packed with your personalized signed certificate, your choice of two books, course notes, pen, and half a dozen other pieces of literature.

**Course Graduate Testimonials**

*"I simply wanted to reach out and express just how happy I am to have attended the landlording crash course. The presenta-*

*tion and delivery of the information was flawless and I certainly have walked away with a greater understanding of the intricacies that govern being an above average landlord/manager."* – **Michael Murray**



*"Mr. Quattrochi presented the course in a comprehensive and easy to follow step-by-step format. His PowerPoint*

*presentation was provided to us, in a binder, as part of the course, and I took notes right on the pages. I find this part to be an effective tool because I can refer to it anytime I need to follow procedure. There's more to it, but for a fun day, I personally, recommend this course to anyone in the Real Estate landlording/investing business, beginners in this profession as well as experience professionals."* – **Edwin Rivera**

*"This has really been a great deal. 2 books, 8 hours 'class' time, bound notes/slides -- impressive value!"* – Dawn

*"I found this course extremely useful. It was completely professional and gave me a great new perspective."* – Nicholas

*"I'm glad there was more in depth discussion than just reading off the slides. I appreciate the opportunity for questions and practice."* – Crash Course Graduate

*"If I had done this 20 years ago. Oh my goodness!"* – Crash Course Graduate

*"Great overview of being a landlord in MA"* – Crash Course Graduate

*"Covered a lot of ground concisely, but still enough time for questions and insight. Worth every penny."* – Crash Course Graduate



**MassLandlords Executive Director Doug Quattrochi**



**Attorney Adam Sherwin of The Sherwin Law Firm**

Part of this presentation will be given by **Doug Quattrochi**, Executive Director, MassLandlords, Inc. Doug was

a founding member of MassLandlords in 2013. He became the association's first Executive Director under new bylaws in 2014. Since then, he has scaled the organization from a core of 160 members in Worcester to approximately 2,500 dues paying businesses from Pittsfield to the Cape, and from an all-volunteer team to approximately 20 full and part-time staff plus 50 volunteers. Doug has been instrumental in advancing democratic governance mechanisms, including score voting for policy priorities and a staggered and democratically elected Board of Directors. Doug also oversees the RentHelper spin-off, which is expanding access to electronic banking for those of us who are unbanked or underbanked. Prior to MassLandlords, Doug held leadership roles in various Massachusetts startups, two of which are still operating. Doug holds a Master of Science in Aerospace Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

*"Doug's presentation was excellent. He was very clear and provided detailed explanations."* – Larry

*"Doug always holds very informative classes full of substance and Very organized!"* – Thomas

*"Your answers to member's questions were most helpful."* – Liz

**Part of this presentation will be given by attorney Adam Sherwin.** Adam is an experienced real estate litigator with years of experience representing landlords, property owners, and other real estate professionals. He has extensive experience litigating real

estate disputes before judges and juries and has obtained favorable decisions from the Massachusetts Appeals Court and District Court Appellate Division. He is also a long-time crash course instructor at the Cambridge headquarters and over zoom.

**Purchase your ticket in just a few clicks!**

**Public attendees can purchase your ticket in just a few clicks!**

#### **"No Sales Pitch" Guarantee**

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#### **SUNDAY, JANUARY 21ST**

#### **CRASH COURSE AGENDA**

#### **IN-PERSON COURSE AGENDA**

- 8:30am - Introduction of MassLandlords and course participants
- 8:45am - Rental markets
  - o Urban, suburban, rural
  - o Luxury, college, professional, working, subsidized, rooming houses
- 9:00am - Property selection
  - o Lead paint (Legal highlight)
  - o Utilities

- o Bones vs surfaces
- o Amenities
- o Repairs and renovations
- o Durable vs beautiful
- o What if I'm stuck with what I've got?

9:40am - Sales and marketing 101 for rental property managers

- o Marketing rentals
- o Sales process
- o Staying organized
- o Branding a small business
- o Getting more or fewer calls
- o Tips and tricks

10:05am - Break for ten minutes

10:15am - Finish sales and marketing

10:35am - Applications and screening

- o Criminal, credit, eviction
- o Discrimination
- o Tenant Screening Workshop

11:30am - Tenancies

- o Lease vs Tenancy at Will
- o iCORI
- o Security deposits
- o Subsidies

11:50am - Break and Lunch, with free form Q&A

12:20pm - Warranties and covenants

- o Late fees
- o Water and electrical submetering
- o Warranty of habitability
- o Inspections

12:40pm - Dispute resolution

- o Eviction notices
- o Eviction process
- o Move-and-store



# PROXIMA

## Eviction Moving & Storage

Helping landlords with tenants who are required by law to be removed from the property

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[www.asapenvironmental.com](http://www.asapenvironmental.com)

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Osterville Brockton Rockland Worcester Lawrence  
508-428-1669 508-580-4800 781-982-8700 508-755-7320 978-686-0003



- o Housing Court vs District Court
- o Rent control

1:40pm - Break for ten minutes

2:50pm - Maintenance, hiring, and operations

- o Keeping the rent roll and expenses
- o Filing taxes
- o To manage or not to manage
- o Tenants as customers
- o Notifying tenants
- o Extermination
- o Monitoring contractors
- o Lease violations and conflict resolution
- o Record keeping

3:40pm - Overview of books and resources for further education

3:45pm - Review of unanswered questions

4:00pm - End Course

Please note that end time may vary based on questions.

## LOCATION

Cambridge Innovation Center  
14th Floor, Charles Conference Room  
One Broadway  
Cambridge, MA 02134

**Please note:** CIC has several buildings in Kendall Square, two of them being adjacent to each other. The correct location for this event is the building with light colored concrete, vertical windows and a Dunkin Donuts on the ground level. You will **NOT** see a CIC sign. Refer to the image below.



## ACCESSING FROM THE T

- Exit the Kendall T stop on Main St.

- Cross to the side of Main St. with the Chipotle and walk up the street towards Broadway, passing the Chipotle on your left.
- You will then round the corner to the left and One Broadway will be across the street diagonally.
- Cross over Third St. and Broadway to arrive at One Broadway.

**For all attendees** Upon entering One Broadway, you will need to check in with the lobby security. You'll just need to show your ID and let them know you're going to the MassLandlords event and which floor.

## PARKING

Accessible by T and highway. Parking available in several garages for weekend rates. See [CIC Directions](#) for details. Pilgrim Parking has affordable rates and is a short walk from the venue, [click here for details](#)



## FOOD

Breakfast:

- o Fresh bagels, large muffins, cinnamon rolls, coffee cake slices and scones with cream cheese, butter, and jam
- o Fresh fruit platter
- o Assorted fruit juices and coffee

Lunch:

- o Assorted gourmet sandwiches
- o Garden salad
- o Pasta salad
- o Assorted pastries
- o Soda, juice, water

\*Please email [hello@masslandlords.net](mailto:hello@masslandlords.net) if you have any dietary restrictions and need a special meal.

\*Dietary restrictions: Purchase a ticket and set your preferences at [My Account](#) **one week prior to**

**the event** or earlier. Once set, preferences remain set for future events.

Masks welcome! Eating and drinking is not required. Please note: as we are unable to monitor the buffet, we are unable to offer a reduced ticket price for attendees who will not be eating.

## PRICING

Open to the public. Membership is not required!

- Public: \$275
- Members: \$250

This event will not be recorded.

Slides and handouts if any will be uploaded to the [password page](#).

**Purchase your ticket in just a few clicks!**

**Public attendees can purchase your ticket in just a few clicks!**

This event is operated by MassLandlords, Inc. staff.

This Crash Course counts for continuing education credit for Certified Massachusetts Landlord Level Three. [Beep in.](#) [Leave feedback/beep out.](#)

Want to speak at a MassLandlords meeting? [Submit a speaker request.](#)

This is part of the [Virtual rental real estate networking and training series](#).

Add our entire event calendar to yours:

Google: [add our entire event calendar to Google calendar.](#)

iPhone & iPad: [add our entire event calendar to iCal.](#)

Outlook: [add our entire event calendar to Outlook.](#)

Add just this event to your calendar:

Google: [add just this event to Google calendar.](#)

## GREATER SPRINGFIELD

### Longmeadow Dinner Meeting: Meet the Hampden County Sheriffs

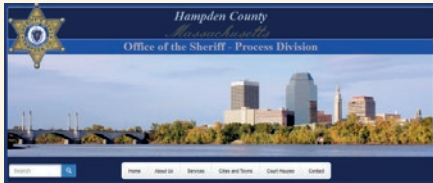
THU  
01/11

Who would you call if you had to give a tenant an eviction notice? One option would be to call the Sheriff. We'll be talking with the Sheriffs about civil

process (meaning, eviction notices) and all that this entails.

We'll hear stories of evictions they've managed, learn why we should hire professionals instead of doing it ourselves, and then learn how to do it ourselves anyway if we want.

Make the acquaintance before you need to hire them. This is a rare opportunity to learn from experienced county officials.



The Office of the Sheriff, Hampden County will be sending a representative to talk about civil process and their field emotional support animal.

**Purchase your ticket in just a few clicks!**

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## **THURSDAY, JANUARY 11TH**

### **DINNER MEETING AGENDA**

5:30pm Check-in and networking.

Mix and mingle but don't be shy! Introduce yourself to someone and you might make a valuable local connection.

Networking draws from Springfield, West Springfield, Holyoke, Chicopee, Ludlow, Wilbraham, East Longmeadow, Longmeadow, Agawam, Southwick, Southampton, Easthampton, Northampton, Westhampton, Hadley, South Hadley, Granby, Amherst, Belchertown, Ware, Palmer, Warren, Monson, and Hampden.

6:15pm Dinner

6:45pm Introductions and short business updates

6:55pm Presentation

7:55pm Presentation ends

8:35pm Doors close

### **LOCATION**

Twin Hills Country Club  
700 Wolf Swamp Rd  
Longmeadow, MA 01106

### **PARKING**

Ample parking. Accessible for drop-off.

### **FOOD**

Twin Hills always sets out an impressive spread:

- Cheese and crackers for networking time.
- Hot buffet dinner with choice of chicken, fish or vegetarian.

- Salad and rolls.
- Cash bar.
- Whisky bread pudding.
- Hot coffee and tea.

\*Dietary restrictions: Purchase a ticket and set your preferences at My Account **one week prior to the event** or earlier. Once set, preferences remain set for future events.

Masks welcome! Eating and drinking is not required. Please note: as we are unable to monitor the buffet, we are unable to offer a reduced ticket price for attendees who will not be eating.

### **PRICING**

Open to the public. Membership is not required!

- Door:
  - o Public: \$92
  - o Members: \$74
- Early-bird, reserve seven days prior by 12pm:
  - o Public: \$82
  - o Members: \$59

This event will not be recorded.

Slides and handouts if any will be uploaded to Sheriffs.

**Purchase your ticket in just a few clicks!**

This event is operated by MassLandlords, Inc. staff.

This Dinner Meeting counts for continuing education credit for Certified Massachusetts Landlord Level Three. Beep in. Leave feedback/beep out.



**Get them out.  
Keep them out.**

**Official Sanitary  
Code Inspections**

**Wildlife Removal**

**Pest Control**

**(617) 975-0440**

**[www.crittercontrol.com](http://www.crittercontrol.com)**





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[witmanproperties.com](http://witmanproperties.com)





# MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS



## RENTAL FORMS

Download a complete set of up-to-date rental forms (applications, leases, notices to quit, and more).



## LEGAL STANDING

Vote in MassLandlords elections, serve on boards, and be represented in policy discussions with local and state officials.



## CERTIFICATION

Become a Certified Massachusetts Landlord™.



## HOME DEPOT SAVINGS

Members save on most items at Home Depot stores and online, including appliances, lighting, lumber, hardware, paint and more.



## SERVICE PROVIDER DIRECTORY

Search for service providers or be listed as one (electricians, managers, realtors, attorneys, plumbers, snow removers, and much, much more).



## VIDEOS, ANALYSIS, & SPREADSHEETS

Watch past events, learn about the laws, and access spreadsheets you can build on like our heat pump vs furnace calculator.



## MESSAGE BOARDS

24/7 access to Massachusetts Landlords for advice and/or to contribute your professional expertise.



## SEARCH EVICTIONS

Search eviction records by address for acquisition due diligence.



## EVENTS

Weekly networking and education at virtual events.



## COLLECT CHECKS ONLINE

Virtual office manager free trial at RentHelper.



## CREDIT SCREENING COUPONS

Save on SmartScreen credit reports.



## ENTITY FORMATION SAVINGS

Create LLC's or Inc's for a low, members-only fixed price via New Leaf Legal.

Want to speak at a MassLandlords meeting? [Submit a speaker request.](#)

This is part of the [Virtual rental real estate networking and training series.](#)

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## Springfield Crash Course: The MassLandlords Crash Course in Landlording: The Year You Build Your Business

SAT  
02/03

Learn everything you need to succeed as an owner or manager of residential rental property in Massachusetts.

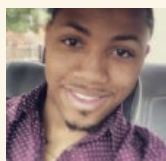
This fast-paced course is strictly limited to 16 participants to allow for detailed discussion and Q&A. Course tuition includes:

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- A comprehensive agenda, see below.
- Your choice of two books:
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  - o *Getting to Yes* by Roger Fisher, and/or
  - o *The Housing Manual* by H. John Fisher.
- A bound summary of all material presented.
- Breakfast pastries, coffee, tea.
- Lunch sandwiches, sodas, chips, cookies; all dietary requirements satisfied, please notify us when you purchase a ticket.
- A MassLandlords ballpoint pen.
- A MassLandlords certificate of completion and permission to use

"MassLandlords Crash Course graduate" on your marketing material.

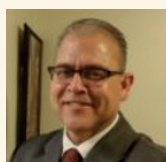
You will receive a box packed with your personalized signed certificate, your choice of two books, course notes, pen, and half a dozen other pieces of literature.

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*tion and delivery of the information was flawless and I certainly have walked away with a greater understanding of the intricacies that govern being an above average landlord/manager."* – **Michael Murray**



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*presentation was provided to us, in a binder, as part of the course, and I took notes right on the pages. I find this part to be an effective tool because I can refer to it anytime I need to follow procedure. There's more to it, but for a fun day, I personally, recommend this course to anyone in the Real Estate landlording/investing business, beginners in this profession as well as experience professionals."* – **Edwin Rivera**

*"This has really been a great deal. 2 books, 8 hours 'class' time, bound notes/slides -- impressive value!"* – **Dawn**

*"I found this course extremely useful. It was completely professional and gave me a great new perspective."* – **Nicholas**

*"I'm glad there was more in depth discussion than just reading off the slides. I appreciate the*

*opportunity for questions and practice."* – **Crash Course Graduate**

*"If I had done this 20 years ago. Oh my goodness!"* – **Crash Course Graduate**

*"Great overview of being a landlord in MA"* – **Crash Course Graduate**

*"Covered a lot of ground concisely, but still enough time for questions and insight. Worth every penny."* – **Crash Course Graduate**



**MassLandlords Executive Director Doug Quattrochi**



**Peter Vickery is an attorney at Bobrowski and Vickery LLC and MassLandlords Legislative Affairs Counsel**

Part of this presentation will be given by **Doug Quattrochi**, Executive Director, MassLandlords, Inc. Doug was a founding member of MassLandlords in 2013. He became the association's first Executive Director under new bylaws in 2014. Since then, he has scaled the organization from a core of 160 members in Worcester to approximately 2,500 dues paying businesses from Pittsfield to the Cape, and from an all-volunteer team to approximately



20 full and part-time staff plus 50 volunteers. Doug has been instrumental in advancing democratic governance mechanisms, including score voting for policy priorities and a staggered and democratically elected Board of Directors. Doug also oversees the RentHelper spin-off, which is expanding access to electronic banking for those of us who are unbanked or underbanked. Prior to MassLandlords, Doug held leadership roles in various Massachusetts startups, two of which are still operating. Doug holds a Master of Science in Aerospace Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

*"Doug's presentation was excellent. He was very clear and provided detailed explanations."* – Larry

*"Doug always holds very informative classes full of substance and Very organized!"* – Thomas

*"Your answers to member's questions were most helpful."* – Liz

Part of this presentation will be given by **Peter Vickery of Bobrowski & Vickery, LLC**. Attorney Vickery practices law in Western Massachusetts where he focuses on landlord-tenant law (representing landlords in Housing Court) and discrimination defense (representing business owners in the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination). He graduated from Oxford University (Jesus College) with a BA in Modern History; obtained his Post-Graduate Diploma in Law from the University of the West of England in Bristol; his JD from Boston University School of Law; and his Masters in Public Policy & Administration from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Attorney Vickery served one term on the Governor's Council (the elected 8-member body that approves or vetoes the governor's choice of judges in Massachusetts) and on the State Ballot Law Commission. As Legislative Affairs Counsel for MassLandlords he drafts bills, bill summaries, and testimony in the area of housing law, and writes amicus briefs in cases that have strategic significance for rental-property owners.

**Purchase your ticket in  
just a few clicks!**

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MassLandlords offers attendees of directly managed events a "No Sales Pitch" guarantee. If a guest speaker offers services, their presentation will not discuss pricing, promotions, or reasons why you should hire them. We do not permit speakers to pay for or sponsor events. Guest speakers are chosen for their expertise and willingness to present helpful educational content. Your purchase of an event ticket sustains our nonprofit model.

### **SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 3RD**

#### **CRASH COURSE AGENDA**

#### **IN-PERSON COURSE AGENDA**

8:30am - Introduction of MassLandlords and course participants

8:45am - Rental markets

- o Urban, suburban, rural
- o Luxury, college, professional, working, subsidized, rooming houses

9:00am - Property selection

- o Lead paint (Legal highlight)
- o Utilities
- o Bones vs surfaces
- o Amenities
- o Repairs and renovations
- o Durable vs beautiful
- o What if I'm stuck with what I've got?

9:40am - Sales and marketing 101 for rental property managers

- o Marketing rentals
- o Sales process
- o Staying organized
- o Branding a small business
- o Getting more or fewer calls
- o Tips and tricks

10:05am - Break for ten minutes

10:15am - Finish sales and marketing

10:35am - Applications and screening

- o Criminal, credit, eviction
- o Discrimination
- o Tenant Screening Workshop

11:30am - Tenancies

- o Lease vs Tenancy at Will
- o iCORI
- o Security deposits
- o Subsidies

11:50am - Break and Lunch, with free form Q&A

12:20pm - Warranties and covenants

- o Late fees
- o Water and electrical submetering
- o Warranty of habitability
- o Inspections

12:40pm - Dispute resolution

- o Eviction notices
- o Eviction process
- o Move-and-store
- o Housing Court vs District Court
- o Rent control

1:40pm - Break for ten minutes

2:50pm - Maintenance, hiring, and operations

- o Keeping the rent roll and expenses
- o Filing taxes
- o To manage or not to manage
- o Tenants as customers
- o Notifying tenants
- o Extermination
- o Monitoring contractors
- o Lease violations and conflict resolution
- o Record keeping

3:40pm - Overview of books and resources for further education

3:45pm - Review of unanswered questions

4:00pm - End Course

Please note that end time may vary based on questions.

### **LOCATION**

Realtor Association of Pioneer Valley  
221 Industry Ave  
Springfield, MA 01104

### **FOOD**

Breakfast:

- o Fresh bagels, large muffins, cinnamon rolls, coffee cake slices and scones with cream cheese, butter, and jam
- o Fresh fruit platter
- o Assorted fruit juices and coffee

Lunch:

- o Assorted gourmet sandwiches
- o Garden salad
- o Pasta salad
- o Assorted pastries
- o Soda, juice, water



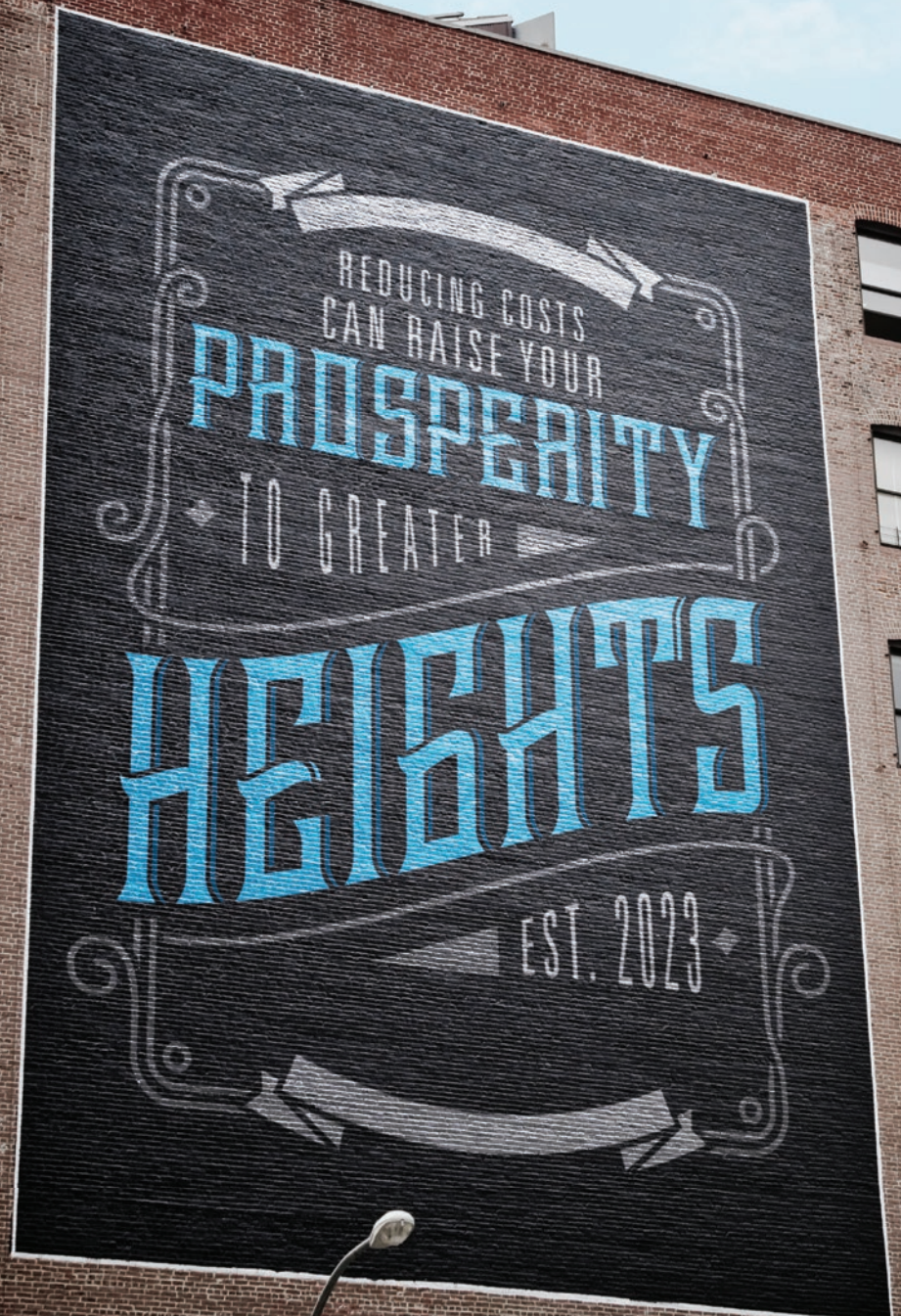
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\*Dietary restrictions: Purchase a ticket and set your preferences at [My Account](#) **one week prior to the event** or earlier. Once set, preferences remain set for future events.

Masks welcome! Eating and drinking is not required. Please note: as we are unable to monitor the buffet, we are unable to offer a reduced ticket price for attendees who will not be eating.

#### PRICING

Open to the public. Membership is not required!

- Public: \$275
- Members: \$250

This event will not be recorded.

Slides and handouts if any will be uploaded to the [password page](#).

#### **Purchase your ticket in just a few clicks!**

Public attendees can purchase your ticket in just a few clicks!

This event is operated by MassLandlords, Inc. staff.

This Crash Course counts for continuing education credit for Certified Massachusetts Landlord Level Three. [Beep in.](#) [Leave feedback/beep out.](#)

Want to speak at a MassLandlords meeting? [Submit a speaker request.](#)

This is part of the [Virtual rental real estate networking and training series.](#)

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