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**Housing Court Rules:  
“Hold Fees” Unlawful  
in Massachusetts**

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**Judge to Order Boston to  
Show Rent Control Committee  
Origins**

**Eviction Sealing  
Effective May 2025  
– What Landlords  
Need to Know**



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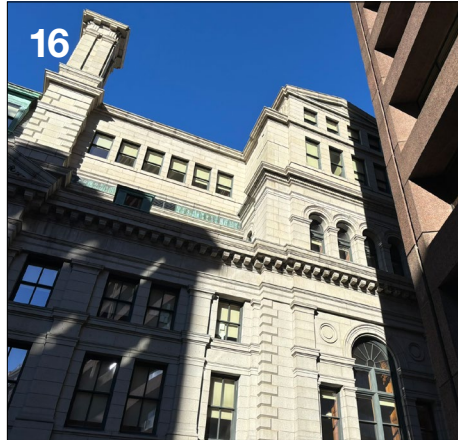
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Published by MassLandlords, 14th Floor, One Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02142.

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# A Judge Agreed

## Our Letter from the Executive Director for December 2024 reviews our videos, new office hours, inflation and our movement toward monthly dues.



In November we worked hard to keep our organization current. In this letter, we'll review our new and improving training videos, office hours, the impact of inflation (and our response) and a big success in court.

As discussed previously, **events are changing**. We all expect to find our information online nowadays. This is why we have been recording and publishing our PowerPoint repertoire into a set of videos. Each new video is improved from the last. We have always had videos, but we have to conclude that this new format is working better. In a typical week this spring, we logged approximately 25 views across all our video content. Now a typical week is getting 100 views. **Eviction sealing** has had 42 views per week. **Deleading** has had 29 views per week. **Security deposits** has had 33 views per week. And unlike Zooms, which are one-and-done, this content library remains up for you to watch when you need it.

Live help is still available with our office hours. We have Peter Shapiro on the second Wednesday, Attorney Greenman on the third Wednesday, and I am available on the first Friday of each month.

We launched "**price per unit**" in late 2021, since which time inflation has been 16% total. We've been forthright in giving inflation adjustments to the team, taking into account individual merit as well as foreign exchange rate. We adjusted our dues prices per inflation for new members. Existing members on automatic renewal will not be adjusted as long as autorenew works.

In order to better align dues collection with landlord revenue, we will be releasing an option to pay dues monthly. I've seen the first implementation on our test server. I expect it will be available sometime this winter.

In this edition we share our **press release about Nov. 15**, which was a really thrilling court day for us. We've been in litigation for years with Boston over the origins of the rent stabilization advisory committee (RSAC). Now we've reached the judge, and he agreed that we should be able to see the documents we've requested. This case is of strategic importance for us in leveling the playing field by reducing the influence of money in politics. Good policy needs a lot of diverse and disagreeing voices at the table. The RSAC was not this, and we'll prove it yet.

Thank you for supporting our mission to create better rental housing. We've got your back only because you've got ours. 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.

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# Eviction Sealing Effective May 2025 – What Landlords Need to Know

By Kimberly Rau, MassLandlords, Inc.

## Eviction sealing passed into law in August 2024, effective mid-2025. Nearly all eviction cases may be sealed under the right circumstances.

Gov. Maura Healey signed [193 H.4977](#), also known as the Housing Bond Bill, into law on Aug. 1, 2024. The bill included eviction sealing, effective in May 2025. Here's what you need to know.

Eviction sealing appeared in the House's version of the Housing Bond Bill as H.4356, and was passed into law with very few changes made during conference committee. It appears as Section 52 of [Chapter 150 of the Acts of 2024](#) and has its permanent location in [Chapter 239](#).

As we did when H.4356 was introduced, we have prepared a [line-by-line explainer](#) of this law. The eviction sealing law stands to harm housing providers and good renters, and will place excessive burden on the courts. This article provides an overview of the law's talking points.

In almost all cases, renters seeking to have their eviction sealed must notify the landlord, who has seven days to object to the process, at which point a hearing would be held. How the landlord must be notified is unclear.

## NO CAUSE STATED EVICTIONS SEALED IMMEDIATELY

No-cause-stated evictions, also called no-fault evictions by renter advocates, are typically conducted when the landlord needs to deliver the property vacant for a sale, needs to use the unit themselves, or if the landlord is not able to provide enough evidence to make a for-cause eviction stick.

Under eviction sealing, a tenant can request this record be sealed as soon as the eviction process (including any appeals) is concluded.

This sounds fine until you realize that there are cases in which a no-fault eviction is the only way to get problematic tenants out, particularly if other tenants do not testify. We use [Gwendolyn Property Management v. Goodwin](#) as a prime example. The landlord had witnesses to the fact that the tenants were smoking in and around a non-smoking unit, but the judge threw it out as hearsay. A second eviction not for cause was the only way to remove the tenants. Is this a tenant you'd want renting from you?

## NONPAYMENT EVICTION SEALED IN 4 YEARS

If a renter is evicted for nonpayment, they too may request that record be sealed. They just have to wait for four years from

the conclusion of the case and appeal (if any). As long as they have not been filed against for nonpayment in that time, and they state that the reason for nonpayment was due to economic hardship, their record may be sealed.

The tenant must prove that hardship to the courts, though the law is murky about what constitutes "hardship." Electric rates have risen sharply this year; will a higher utility bill count if the tenant says they paid Eversource and shorted the landlord to do so?

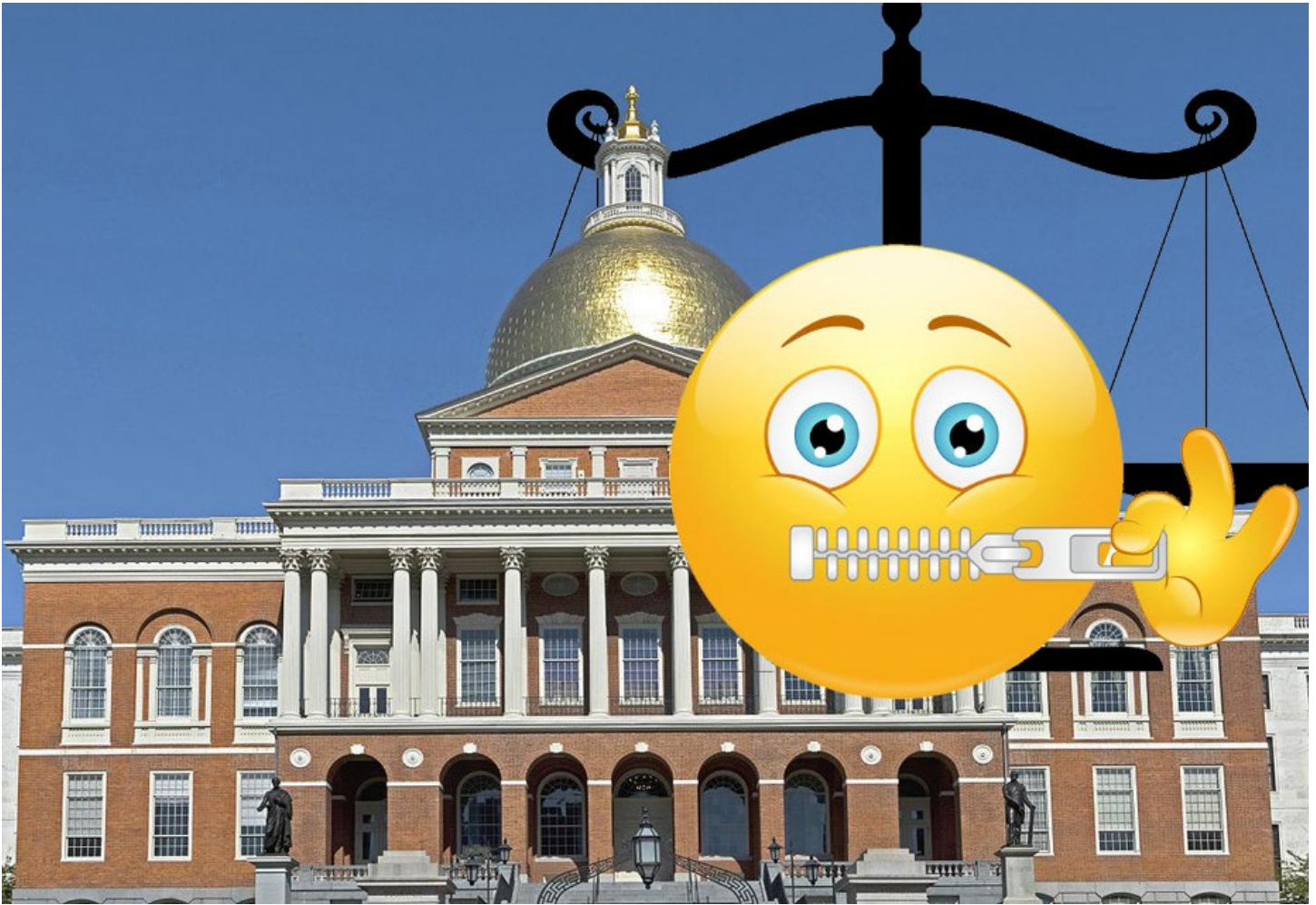
The landlord may object, and if they do, a hearing will be held. In other words, the court is going to have to listen to the eviction saga all over again before sealing the record (or not).

## FOR-CAUSE EVICTIONS SEALED AFTER 7 YEARS

A renter who is evicted for cause may petition to have their eviction record sealed as long as they avoid another no-cause-stated eviction case for seven years from the date of their case's conclusion, and any appeals if applicable.

However, the law does not specifically state that other types of evictions count against the renter's timeline. For example, if Ronald Renter has a for-cause eviction in 2025, and gets a nonpayment eviction filed against him in 2027, this does not interrupt the seven-year clock for sealing





Eviction sealing is in effect May 2025. Nearly all types of evictions will be eligible for sealing. (Image: Derivative 123rf; public domain)

his for-cause eviction. And in fact, none of the timelines for any type of eviction specify that other types of eviction will interrupt the timeline toward getting the first case sealed.

If a renter is evicted for violating the “common nuisance law” (Chapter 139), they too may petition to have the eviction sealed after seven years. The courts will need to determine if they have had any violations in that timeframe. The common nuisance law includes charges such as prostitution, lewdness, gambling, alcohol served to minors, bootlegging, threat of violence, drugs, firearms and other illegal weapons, and explosives.

**CASES WHERE RENTER PREVAILS IMMEDIATELY SEALED**

In any eviction case where the renter wins, they may petition the court to have that record sealed as soon as the case/

appeal is concluded.

To do so, the renter must return to the court where the case was held, but in this instance, the landlord does not need to be notified, presumably because the renter won the case.

**LANDLORDS: TELL COURT WHEN JUDGMENT HAS BEEN SATISFIED...OR ELSE**

A judgment for nonpayment is good for 20 years in Massachusetts. If a tenant pays off that money owed, it should be recorded as a satisfaction of judgment with the courts. Not every satisfied judgment was recorded, though; this was a problem eviction sealing advocates were trying to solve.

The eviction sealing law now requires landlords to inform the courts when a judgment has been satisfied, and requires them to do the same for agreements.

Again, the wording is unclear. Sometimes agreements are satisfied on a continuing basis, such as a ruling that all rent must be paid by the 5th of the month. Does the landlord need to notify the court monthly?

Regardless, if the landlord does not notify the court that the judgment or agreement has been satisfied, the renter has the option to petition the court to declare the judgment or agreement satisfied.

The landlord must be notified if the renter petitions the court. If the landlord objects, then the court must hold a hearing and determine whether the judgment was actually satisfied.

But if there is no objection from the landlord, the courts must mark the judgment as satisfied. If the renter is prepared to lie in court, the landlord is left to prove a negative (“they did not pay

me the owed money”). Proving a negative is very difficult. If the renter is prepared to commit perjury, this is a workaround to the 20-year judgment timeline.

Evictions with satisfied judgments can be immediately sealed if the renter petitions.

### WHO CAN SEE SEALED EVICTION RECORDS?

The law does allow for some instances where sealed records may be accessed. Law enforcement can access them for the purposes of criminal investigation or criminal trials where the sealed eviction is relevant and/or part of evidence.

Journalists, researchers and law enforcement must petition for access to sealed court records. The court has this discretion as long as the request is for “public safety, scholarly, educational, journalistic or governmental purposes only.”

This means it’s up to the court to determine whether the requesting party is asking for the right reasons. Records may never be used for “commercial purposes.” Will the courts consider a media outlet commercial, if the outlet sells ad time or copies of its publication? Another gray area.

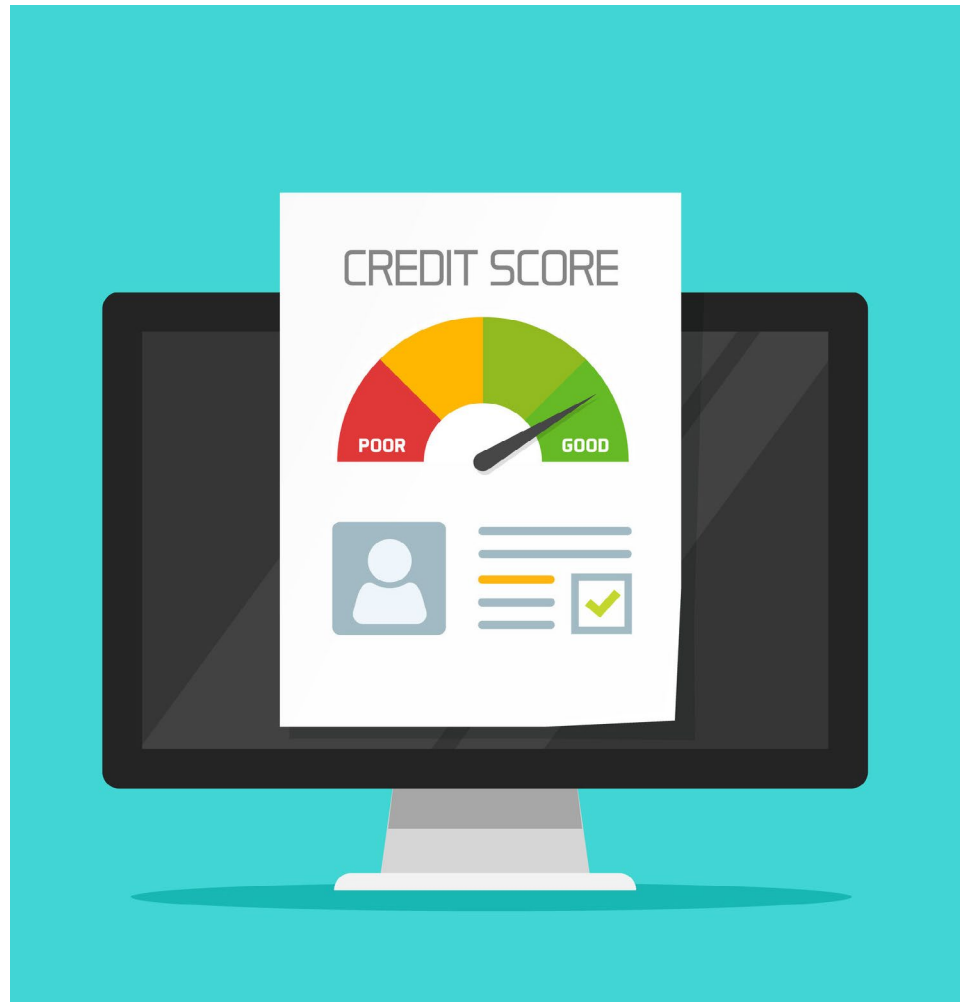
If you are a party to the case (landlord or tenant), you may petition to access your own record. Either you or your legal representation can request this.

Credit reporting agencies may not report on information contained in sealed records. Since evictions may be sealed at many different points following the conclusion of a case, such agencies would need to continually scour court reports to see what evictions have been sealed and remove them. This likely means credit reporting agencies will stop reporting for-cause evictions after 7 years, nonpayment after 4 years, or no-cause-stated evictions at all, regardless of whether they have been sealed.

Credit reporting agencies may still report publicly available information.

### THE FALLOUT OF EVICTION SEALING

At time of writing, eviction sealing does not take effect until May 2025, but we can predict some of the negative outcomes.



Think a credit report will show owed judgments? Probably not anymore, as credit reporting agencies will have to monitor for sealed evictions constantly. (Image: Licensed 123rf)

First, as landlords lose money on unpaid rent and property damage that they could have otherwise foreseen, rents will increase. We see this when rental units are renovated or retrofitted, and the same will apply here.

The 96% of renters who previously relied on a clean eviction history to bolster their application may find it harder to get approved for rentals. Conversely, the 4% of bad renters, such as professional tenants like the Callahans, will be protected as long as they manage to go four years without an eviction for nonpayment. All they need to do to make that happen is move over the state line and cause havoc elsewhere for a little while.

The new requirements on the court, including researching criminal histories

and essentially re-conducting eviction hearings, will bog down an already over-burdened system. This is the last thing anyone needs.

We will continue to update this article as eviction sealing progresses. [ML](#)

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### ARTICLE YOU MAY HAVE MISSED

#### **Ballot Question 1: MassLandlords Recommends Vote “Yes” to Hold the Legislature Accountable via Audit**

There are four statewide ballot initiatives on the November 2024 ballot. MassLandlords strongly supports a “yes” vote on Question 1: Should the auditor oversee the Legislature? Voting yes would require the Massachusetts legislature to give the state auditor access to its inner workings, thereby correcting one of the many ways the legislature holds itself above the law and accountability.

Point your camera app here to read more online.



# Housing Court Rules: “Hold Fees” Unlawful in Massachusetts

By Kimberly Rau, MassLandlords, Inc.

**Only collect the fees the state allows, and if the tenant changes their mind before lease signing, refund them. Deposits to hold an apartment, aka “hold fees,” are not lawful.**

The Eastern Housing Court reinforced state law when it informed a property management company that retaining a “hold fee,” when a potential tenant decided not to sign the lease, was

unlawful. The only fees a landlord may collect under state law are a security deposit, first and last month’s rent, and a lock-changing fee.

This story centers around a large property management company and landlord, and a tenant who had to sue to get her first month’s rent back. The court decided in her favor and told the property owners and managers in strong language that they should have known better. The court awarded the tenant triple damages plus fees.

## TENANT CHANGES MIND, PROPERTY MANAGERS RETAIN \$3,400 “HOLD FEE”

In May 2020, Yerkaterina Merkulova was looking for a place to rent. She saw a listing for an apartment at 80 The Fenway in Boston, which is owned by LDJ Development and managed by Premier Property Solutions (PPS). She told her rental agent she was interested in applying.

Merkulova’s agent submitted her application, a \$60 application fee and \$3,400, which was equivalent to one month of the advertised rent. Several days later, an agent from PPS confirmed receipt of the application fee and \$3,400. PPS called this a “hold fee” that was reportedly “necessary to reserve the unit.” The parties negotiated the lease terms and the \$3,400 was sent to the property owners, but no lease had been signed. The notation on the check that PPS wrote read “80 The Fenway #41 – First Month Rent.”

Approximately a week after, Merkulova told her agent she would not be going through with the lease, and requested the \$3,400 be returned to her. PPS reportedly said the hold deposit had already been released to the owner and would not be returned, as the rental application terms allowed it to be retained as damages.

Merkulova filed a civil action to recover her money. In response, PPS and LDJ filed for a summary judgment, claiming they had a right to the hold fee under contract law and stating they took the apartment off the market anticipating Merkulova would be signing the lease. Further, they stated, they had been unable to re-rent the apartment at the initial



80 The Fenway, where one prospective renter found herself out \$3,400 when she decided not to sign the lease after all. The courts decided otherwise. (Image: [Google Earth](#))





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advertised rate, and were not able to get an occupant in the apartment until Sept. 1 of that year, for \$3,000 a month.

LDJ claimed its damages amounted to \$11,600, including the “lost” rent from June, July and August, plus the “lost” \$400 a month from having to lower the rent to get a tenant in place at all.

### DEFENDANTS CITE 19TH CENTURY BRITISH CASE LAW; COURT DENIES DAMAGES

The court ruled in favor of Merkulova, stating that the laws that govern money exchanges pre-tenancy between landlords and tenants are summed up in MGL Chapter 186, Section 15b. This law states landlords may collect only four amounts: first and last month’s rent, a security deposit that may not exceed the first month’s rent, and the costs to re-key the apartment.

These laws, the court stated, supersede any claims to contract law from the defendants.

“In this Court’s view, any pre-rental contract between a lessor (or its agent) and any prospective tenant which purports to alter or waive the application of G.L. c. 186 15b is void as a matter of law,” the court’s finding reads.

Further, court documents state, the rental application that Merkulova filled out and submitted does not mention a hold deposit. It does have a clause that states the first month’s rent may be retained as damages. The defendants argued that only applicants who intend to lease a unit should fill out an application, and cited an English Court of Appeals case from 1879 to further back up their claim.

“This Court need not point out that the British Court of Appeals in 1879 was not construing a circa 2022 Massachusetts statue [sic] intended to offer very particular protections to Massachusetts landlords and tenants,” the court’s finding continues. (We assume they meant a “circa 2022 court case,” not “statute,” as

Chapter 186 Section 15b goes back much further than that.)

The court stated that since the “hold fee” would have been applied as the first month’s rent when the tenancy commenced, it should be returned since no tenancy began.

Regarding the breach of contract claims, the court determined that there could not be a breach if no contract had been signed.

### PLAINTIFF RECEIVES TRIPLE DAMAGES PLUS ATTORNEY’S FEES, DEFENDANTS DRESSED DOWN

The court awarded Merkulova \$10,200, three times the amount of the initial \$3,400, in accordance with the state’s consumer protection laws. It further ordered the defendants cover her attorney fees and costs. And, in its decision, the court did not mince words.

“This Court finds the failure of PPS and LDJ to return Merkulova’s \$3,400 deposit to be an unfair and deceptive

practice, proscribed by the Massachusetts Consumer Protection Statute,” Associate Justice Irene Bagdoian wrote in the decision.

“These defendants purport to be in the real estate business; PPS purports to be in the real estate **rental** business [emphasis original to the court document]. These defendants knew or should have known there is no provision for a non-refundable “hold deposit” under Massachusetts law...[and] that the payment obligation of a tenant commences at the inception of a tenancy – and not beforehand.”

**AVOIDING TRIPLE DAMAGES FOR HOLD DEPOSITS IS EASY: DON'T COLLECT THEM**

Fortunately for you, the ruling the housing providers here received is easy to avoid: Don't assess extra, unlawful fees. Call what you are collecting the right thing (first month's rent, last month's rent, and/or security deposit), make it

refundable, and never take your unit off the market until the agreement is signed. It's really that simple. The defendants lost their “hold fee” because there's no such thing as a lawful hold deposit in Massachusetts.

The fact that this company couldn't re-rent the apartment at the original rate of \$3,400 a month tells us the rent was probably too high. In such a competitive housing market, if your unit is in good shape and your pricing is at market rate, you shouldn't have much trouble renting to a qualified tenant. If you are, take a closer look at how you are running your business. Do you need to perform renovations? Lower the rent?

**PROTECT YOURSELF: WAIT FOR PAYMENT TO CLEAR BEFORE SIGNING THE LEASE**

Once you have an approved application, you can collect your move-in monies from that tenant. You should do so before

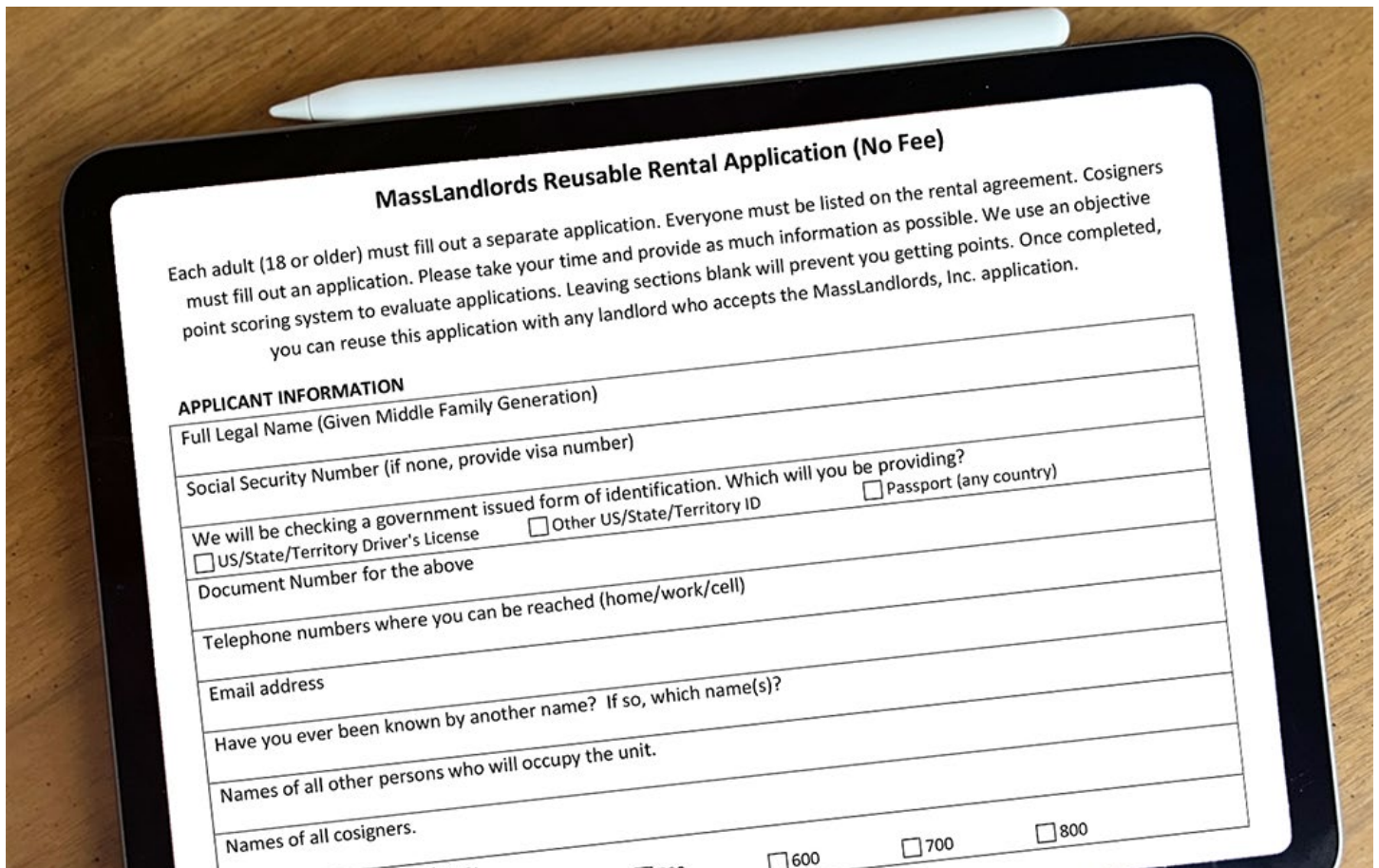
the lease is signed.

When you collect money from your tenant, wait for payment to clear before sitting down and signing the lease. A bank check or money order will clear faster than a personal check, which may be subject to a hold if it is in a large amount. No matter what method of payment is used, issue your renter a receipt when you collect those move-in amounts from them.

Once payment clears, you can confidently sign the lease and take your unit off the market. If your renter changes their mind before lease signing, refund them (but wait for payment to clear before doing so).

**SECURITY DEPOSITS AND LAST MONTH'S RENT**

You can collect both a security deposit and last month's rent for a new tenancy, but you should be well-informed before making that decision.



An approved application is not a binding contract. All move-in monies are refundable until the lease is signed. (Image: CC-BY-SA Jennifer Rau MassLandlords)





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Security deposit law in Massachusetts is complicated (see [our explainer](#) for a plain-English version) and can cost you triple damages plus fees if you make an error. There are very specific ways to handle every aspect of it, from placing the deposit in the proper bank account to the conditions statement and proper withholding. It's a lot, and it's easy to miss a step. We do have a [security deposit checklist](#) that can help you step-by-step.

How to handle last month's rent can also be tricky, especially if you renew the lease and increase the rent. The last month's rent may not lawfully exceed the first month's rent. If you don't want to offer the last month at a discount to the new higher rent, you will need to credit it in the last month of the previous agreement and collect a new last month's rent that reflects the new rate when you sign the new agreement. Make sure you

document any and all communications surrounding this move-in payment.

We don't necessarily recommend you collect both amounts. For instance, if you are not very organized, it may be smarter for you to forgo collecting a security deposit. We do suggest you collect one or the other and speak with an attorney about which is best for you.

As an alternative, the Housing Bond Bill passed in August 2024 [includes the provision](#) that landlords may collect a [monthly fee](#) in lieu of a formal security deposit. What this will look like in practice remains to be seen, but we will keep you updated as things progress.

#### CONCLUSION

This court case shows that even large, professional housing providers and their management companies can mess up. It's important to stay current

with landlord-tenant legislation and court cases and only operate within the scope of the law.

Whatever you choose to collect at move-in, make sure you apply your policies evenly to all renters. Don't invent extra fees or deposits, and always consider running any changes to your practices by an attorney before moving forward. [ML](#)

Point your camera app here to read more online





# Two Urban Forests Planned by MassLandlords on Donated Lands

By Eric Weld, MassLandlords, Inc.

This wooded wetland in the Indian Orchard section of Springfield, Mass., has been generously pledged for donation by MassLandlords member An Dinh. The parcel is heavily overgrown with a wetland running through its deepest recesses, and sits amid residential neighborhoods and commercial businesses. If we receive a DCR grant, we will work with Bio4Climate to determine which existing trees are native and non-invasive, and what new tree saplings to plant. The resulting Miyawaki forest would be available as a living woodland laboratory for schools in the region. cc-by-sa MassLandlords

## Two property owners responded to our outreach to donate unbuildable urban lots. We plan to turn the lots into thriving mini-forests.

MassLandlords has applied for a grant from the state Department of Conservation and Recreation, with extensive community and member support, to transform two urban, unbuildable land lots into rich, thriving mini-forests.

In winter 2023-24, we reached out to our members to see if anyone might be interested in reducing their tax burden by donating their small, unbuildable, urban lots. Some of our members own corner lots, for example, left over from

a development project but too small to build on. Others own lots on steep slopes, protected wetlands or other terrain that deems them unsuitable for building and of little use.

Our intention was to transform these unbuildable lots into dense, thriving forests and wetlands as a way to offset damaging effects from climate change and improve urban environments. It was a win-win, we projected, allowing landowners to offload unusable parcels costing them tax dollars for which they were getting no return, while improving urban communities with much-needed green spaces.

We asked. You delivered.

We received two land grant pledges in response to our outreach. One site is a 0.14-acre lot in Randolph, Mass.,

pledged for donation by Don Sanders and the Sudnovsky Family Trust. The lot is a small patch between two residential properties, overgrown with weeds and brush. The other site is nearly three-quarters of an acre in the Indian Orchard section of Springfield, Mass. This lot has been pledged for donation by longtime MassLandlords member An Dinh. The plot is an overgrown wetland in a land depression sitting amid several residential and commercial lots.

We are thankful to Don Sanders' family and to An Dinh for their generous donations.

Both of these lots are in Environmental Justice (EJ) communities. EJ communities are designated urban areas with relatively higher concentrations of poverty, on varying levels. These



communities are typically exposed to poorer environmental conditions, with more pollution, less green space, trees and shade, and worse air quality than more affluent and rural communities. As a result, residents of EJ communities have higher rates of diseases such as asthma, COPD and emphysema. Poorer environmental conditions can also negatively affect academic performance, economy and social vitality.

**MIYAWAKI FORESTS**

With these two land donations in the works, MassLandlords has applied for a state grant to transform the unbuildable lots into dense, thriving, urban forests and wetlands. The state Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) offers an Urban and Community Forests Challenge Grant that awards funds annually to organizations and municipalities proposing projects that will add trees and greenery to Massachusetts cities. Funds for the grant have been designated through the federal Inflation Reduction Act. We applied for the grant on deadline for Nov. 1. Grant awards will be announced sometime in spring 2025.

If we receive the DCR grant, we intend to create fast-growing mini-forests on these parcels using methods developed by Akira Miyawaki (1928-2021). Miyawaki was a Japanese horticulturist who was originally charged with growing fast-developing forests around industrial areas as a way to offset environmental impacts and mitigate storm runoff. His forest-growing innovations have grown internationally and for other purposes, now with more than 200 Miyawaki forests around the globe.

The Miyawaki forest method involves preparing the land by first identifying and removing invasive plants and trees, roots and seeds, and optimizing the soil for new planting. The forests are populated with a list of native, non-invasive tree species, planted as saplings. The species are chosen to be complementary, but planted densely to create competition for sunlight and encourage fast growth. By this method, Miyawaki forests become self-sustaining, requiring no weeding or watering, after only three years. These



**This photo shows a Miyawaki garden forest in India. As shown, Miyawaki forests feature dense planting of trees to encourage competition for sunlight and fast growth. Cc by-sa 4.0 Jatin071178 wikimedia commons.**

forests mature within 30 years, a rate ten times faster than the 300 years it takes conventional forests to mature.

**PROJECT PARTNERSHIPS**

Two such forests were recently planted in Cambridge by Biodiversity for a Livable Climate (Bio4Climate), a nonprofit organization based in that city that seeks to restore ecosystems to reverse or lessen damaging effects from climate change.

We reached out to Bio4Climate and will partner with them on our urban forest project. Their expertise and experience in planting Miyawaki forests, combined with our donated land parcels, presented a symbiotic partnership opportunity.

In applying for the DCR grant, we also created connections with tree wardens and conservation administrators in the respective communities, who enthusiastically support our projects for the benefits they will deliver for surrounding neighborhoods.

Just as importantly, we began relationships with science teachers in schools near the project sites, who are excited for the teaching opportunities around topics like biodiversity, urban ecology, animal behavior, biogeochemical

cycle, impacts of climate change, tree growth and interactions among ecosystem organisms, to name a few. We will also work with teachers to coordinate student volunteers for site preparation, planting, maintenance and forest monitoring throughout and after the projects.

**ONLY THE BEGINNING?**

The idea to seek unbuildable urban land parcels for the purpose of creating city forests and green spaces is unique and holds promise for large-scale health, aesthetic and economic improvements for people living in Massachusetts cities. Large cities in general, and EJ communities in particular, absorb more sunlight in comparison with nonurban areas because of the concentration of concrete, large buildings and lack of trees. As a result, urban areas tend to have higher average temperatures than rural counterparts, less healthy air and higher rates of cardiopulmonary maladies. Average living expenses can run higher in these areas because of increased needs for air conditioning and water, while property values are depressed due to the unfavorable environmental conditions.



In our ideal projection, our model for turning small, unusable urban sites into mini-forests will become an ongoing trend with new, fast-growing green spaces sprouting up in cities across the state. The breadth of improvements that can be realized simply by planting trees in cities is documented in numerous studies.

If you own, or know someone who owns such land, let us know by sending a note to [hello@masslandlords.net](mailto:hello@masslandlords.net).

**WHY IS MASSLANDLORDS INTERESTED IN TREES?**


We take seriously every aspect of the MassLandlords tagline, "Better Communities. Better Policy. Better Lives." We work hard and publicly on better rental housing policy. This urban forest project is about supporting and creating better communities and better lives.

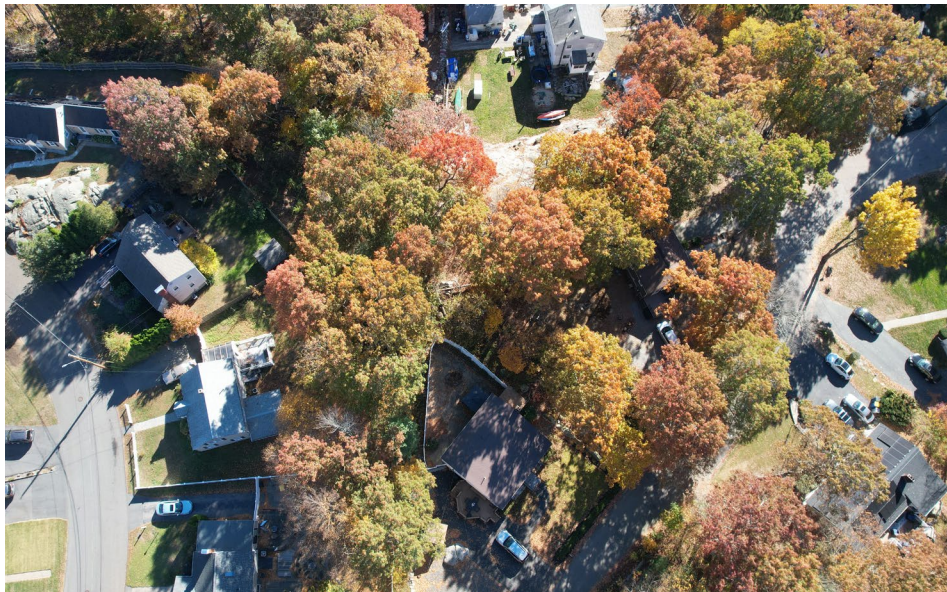
At MassLandlords, we have always taken a holistic approach to our mission of creating better rental housing for all.

Rental housing is about much more than just a dwelling. Creating better rental housing is about community, family, health, environment and other life factors. To us, it would make little sense to focus on improving rental dwellings without any regard for yards, lots, neighborhoods, communities, the air, earth and water and wider contexts of living and making lives in rental housing.

Planting trees and improving environments around rental housing fit neatly into our mission. These projects help create the conditions for happier tenants. Happy tenants, as we all know, make happy landlords.

The Board of Directors have been fully briefed on this grant project and approved the effort.

As we pursue our urban forest-planting projects, we hope to enlist the interest, support and assistance of more of our members. Let us know your thoughts, and if you'd like to be involved, at [hello@masslandlords.net](mailto:hello@masslandlords.net). 



This small lot in Randolph, Mass., pledged for donation by Don Sanders and the Sudnovsky Family Trust, sits in a residential neighborhood amid several houses. It is overgrown with some trees, bushes and brush, and undergirded by large rock on one side. The size of this lot, 0.14 acres, suits well the needs of a Miyawaki forest. cc by-sa MassLandlords.

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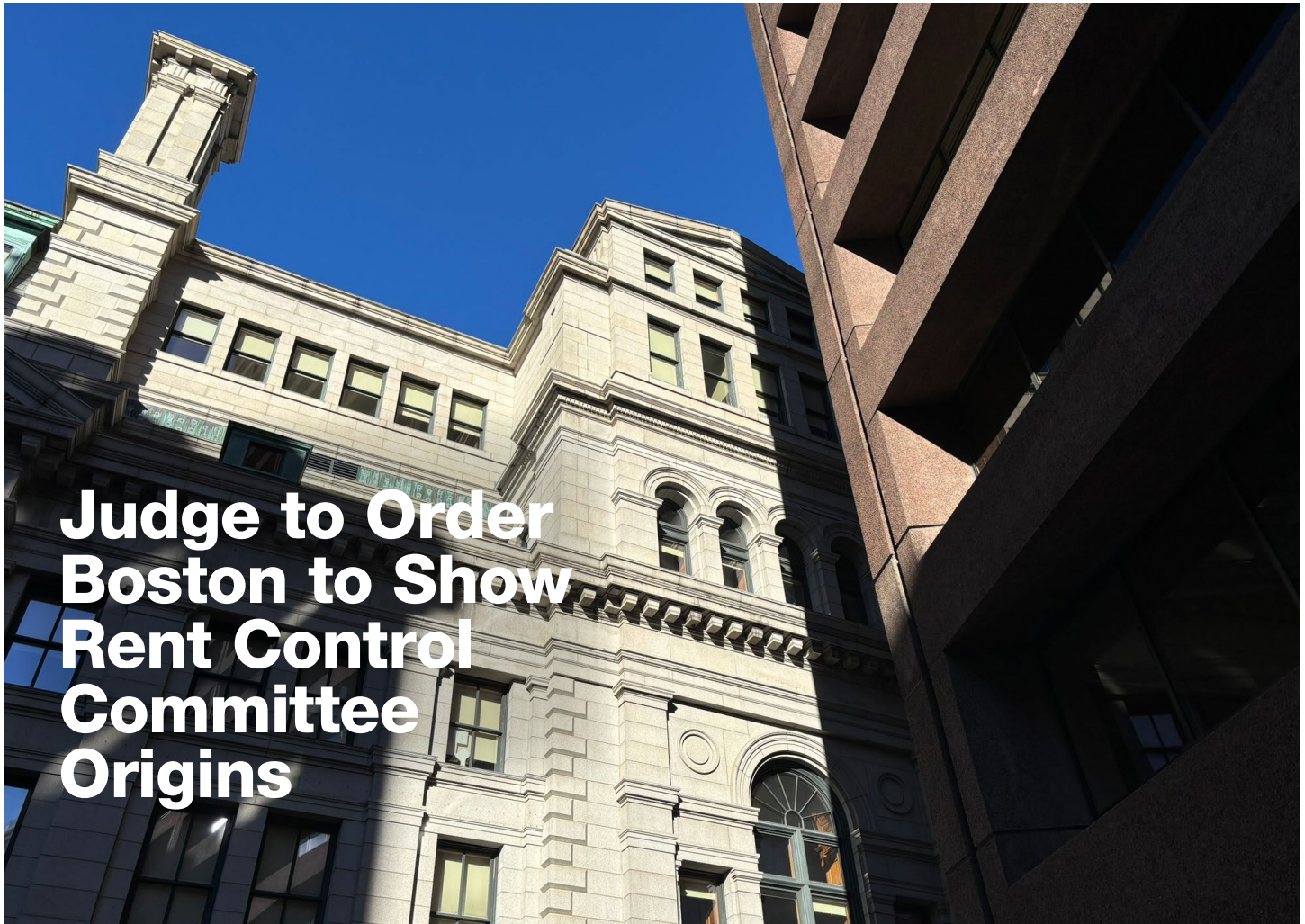
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## Judge to Order Boston to Show Rent Control Committee Origins

The view of the building housing Suffolk Superior Court from where MassLandlords Executive Director Doug Quattrochi parked his bike prior to the hearing. The case was argued by legislative affairs counsel Attorney Peter Vickery. Pictures from inside any court are prohibited.

### [Sweeping order to issue against city in MassLandlords vs. City of Boston over public records from the rent stabilization advisory committee.](#)

BOSTON, MA, November 18, 2024 -- In *MassLandlords v. City of Boston*, Suffolk Superior Court informed the parties late Friday of the court's intent to issue a sweeping order against the city to provide all digital records through March 15, 2022 containing the phrase "rent stabilization advisory committee" and associated acronyms (e.g., RSAC).

This case is building towards the first ever enforcement of the "money in politics" lobbying disclosure laws that took effect in Massachusetts in 2011.

Some for-profit and nonprofit developers on the committee are believed to have engaged in unlawful, unreported lobbying to corrupt public policy towards private interest, in some cases using public funds and tax exemptions.

The committee proposed a return to the rent control boards of the 1970s, repealed by voters in 1994 and near-universally recognized by economists as having contributed to housing scarcity, disparate impact on the basis of race, and price increases in exempt properties. The proposal would have indirectly exempted some committee members' and their organizations' properties.

Such a corrupt regime would have made it difficult or impossible for existing rental housing to operate, forcing a wave of sellouts to RSAC appointee organizations. The RSAC's bill was stopped by the state legislature.

The city has so far resisted public records requests for over two years. It has provided thousands of pages of largely off-topic documents, discouraging MassLandlords' lawful request. MassLandlords seeks to shine a light on how these committee members were picked in order for the public to understand the influence of campaign donors and unreported lobbying.

Twenty-three of the 25 individuals and organizations named to the RSAC are listed on the state Office of Campaign and



Political Finance as donors to Boston races. Only three RSAC appointees were registered as lobbyists. Lobbyist registration is required by city ordinance and state law of everyone who conducts more than a *de minimis* amount of policy advocacy for compensation.

Not one rental housing organization was named to the RSAC.

Enforcement of the law is expected to protect against future corruption and move us more directly towards housing for all.

February 2023 testimony by city employees in favor of the RSAC recommendations raised questions about the need for rent control boards. Chief of the Office of Housing Stability, Sheila Dillon, said, “the vast majority of landlords in this city are charging, you know, less than five percent [rent increases].” Tim Davis said of the RSAC, “It was intended to be consistent with what developers were looking at... that was another way of addressing all the psychology about developers.”

MassLandlords would ask members of the public in possession of RSAC documents to help us verify compliance with the judge’s order by forwarding all such documents to [hello@masslandlords.net](mailto:hello@masslandlords.net).

The case is 2384CV00483.

Masslandlords, Inc. is a 501(c)6 trade association with a legal purpose to create better rental housing in Massachusetts. MassLandlords operates the sites [MassLandlords.net](http://MassLandlords.net) and [RentControlHistory.com](http://RentControlHistory.com).

Contact information: Executive Director Doug Quattrochi, 857-557-6196, [dquattrochi@masslandlords.net](mailto:dquattrochi@masslandlords.net). 

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# Elections Results 2024: Deferred Seats

**Our 2024 election concluded without election of a director. This seat will be deferred to 2025.**


Following our 2024 election, the Board of Directors made two temporary appointments. Our 2024 election required quorum of 526 participants. A total of 295 participants voted or abstained.

Normally we would start a process we call “quorum hunt” to remind non-voting members to vote until a quorum was obtained.

As discussed in our [Letter from the Executive Director for October 2024](#), we have had two full-time team members dealing with long-term illness the second half of this year. Board of Directors members have been standing by to help. They anticipated the board expending significant volunteer effort to keep the association moving forward. The nominees for the Board of Directors were briefed on this, and quite understandably declined to accept nomination given the demands on their own time. Director Alec Bewsee kindly agreed to run unopposed. We felt it awkward to ask members to vote in an unopposed election. There was no other business to attend to.

Under our bylaws, the failure to reach quorum left us unable to elect any director to the five-year term. Each vacancy was therefore appointed for one year, until the next election with quorum. At a meeting of the Board of Directors on Oct. 30, MassLandlords president Michele Kasabula appointed herself with the Board’s unanimous agreement. Additionally, she appointed Alec Bewsee to another year of the seat vacated by director Patrick Sullivan, also with unanimous agreement. This provides board continuity through the next election and hopefully to a time when the team is operating at 100%.

The 2025 election will have three seats available: a new five-year term, the remaining four years of the term that ought to have been started with this election, and the final year of the vacated seat.

Interested in running? Email us at [hello@masslandlords.net](mailto:hello@masslandlords.net) to ask about forming a local municipal committee to attend town or city meetings. 



Our 2024 election ended with appointments until next year's election.

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## 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.



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



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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.



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24/7 access to Massachusetts Landlords for advice and/or to contribute your professional expertise. Plus, a message board to sell or purchase investment properties.



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# REGIONAL

## MassLandlords Upcoming events

See details under each region

### 2024 DECEMBER

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2 SWCLA 7:00PM-9:00PM	3	4	5	6 First Friday Office Hours 12:00PM-1:00pm	7
8	9	10	11 Second Wednesday Office Hours 4:30PM-5:30pm	12 NWCLA 7:00PM-9:00PM	13	14
15	16	17	18 Third Wednesday Office Hours 4:30PM-5:30pm	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

### 2025 JANUARY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1	2	3 First Friday Office Hours 12:00PM-1:00pm	4
5	6 SWCLA 7:00PM-9:00PM	7	8 Second Wednesday Office Hours 4:30PM-5:30pm	9 NWCLA 7:00PM-9:00PM	10	11
12	13	13	14 MWPOA 5:30PM-8:00PM	15 Third Wednesday Office Hours 4:30PM-5:30pm	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	





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STATEWIDE

**First Friday Office Hours with Executive Director Doug Quattrochi. No Presentation. Open Q&A. 1 pm Zoom.**

FRI 12/6

We'll be having open office hours about **any rental real estate** topics you may care to bring. You can also ask about MassLandlords services or share feedback.

**We will not address questions in private.** We will have a group discussion about topics of interest to attendees. Questions will be answered at Doug's discretion and as time allows.



MassLandlords Executive Director Doug Quattrochi



We'll be having a free-flowing group conversation. Ask us anything related to MassLandlords.

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

**Members register for no charge 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.

**FIRST FRIDAYS WITH EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DOUG QUATTROCHI NEXT ON FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup>**

Except for holidays or where his schedule requires otherwise, Doug will be available to members on the first Friday of every month.

**ZOOM CHAT AGENDA**

- 12:00 pm Start
- 1:00 pm Zoom Chat 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.

**ZOOM CHAT 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](#).

**PRICING**

This event is closed to the public.

- **Members:** No charge. Registration is required.

Registration in advance is required.

This event will not be recorded.

Slides and handouts if any will be uploaded to [open questions and answers](#) .

**Members register for no charge in just a few clicks!**

This event is operated by MassLandlords, Inc. staff.

This Zoom Chat 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.](#)

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

Add just this event to your calendar:

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

**Second Wednesday Office Hours with Peter Shapiro. No Presentation. Open Q&A. 4:30pm - 5:30 pm Zoom.**

We'll be having open office hours about **any rental real estate** legal

topics you may care to bring. This meeting is a great opportunity for members to learn from an experienced non-attorney counselor.

**We will not address questions in private.** We will have a group discussion about legal topics of interest to attendees. Questions will be answered entirely at Peter's discretion and as time allows.

Attendance is capped at ten attendees for depth of discussion. If an office hours is full, check another person's office hours or try again next month.



**Peter Shapiro runs Good Landlord Consulting Services (GLCS) and is a MassLandlords Helpline Counselor**



**We'll be having a free-flowing group conversation. Ask us anything related to landlord-tenant communication or best practices.**

Part of this event will be presented by **Peter Shapiro**. A graduate of MIT's

WED 12/11



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Master's Program in City Planning, Peter founded the Housing and Mediation Services Program at Just A Start Corporation, a nonprofit housing group in Cambridge, MA. Since 1990, Peter and his team have been providing landlord counseling, mediation, training, landlord support groups, and homelessness prevention assistance across metro Boston and statewide. Peter now provides Helpline and Member services for MassLandlords, and also provides landlord counseling and mediation for the City of Boston. Peter is the author of: *The Good Landlord -- A Guide to Making a Profit While Making a Difference.*

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**SECOND WEDNESDAYS WITH PETER SHAPIRO NEXT ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup>**

Except for holidays and where his schedule requires otherwise, non-attorney counselor Peter Shapiro will be available to members on the second Wednesday of every month.

**ZOOM CHAT AGENDA**

- 4:30 pm Start
- 5:30 pm Zoom Chat ends

By member survey, the business update has been reimagined 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.

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Topic: Second Wednesday Office Hours with Peter Shapiro December 11, 2024

Time: Dec 11, 2024 04:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

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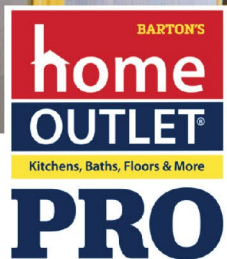
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**Third Wednesday Office Hours with Attorney Greenman. No Presentation. Open Q&A. 4:30 pm - 5:30 pm Zoom.**

WED  
12/18

We'll be having open office hours about **any rental real estate legal topics** you may care to bring. This meeting is a great opportunity for members to learn from an experienced attorney.

**We will not enter attorney-client privilege. We will not address questions in private.** We will have a group discussion about legal topics of interest to attendees. Questions will be answered entirely at Attorney Greenman's discretion and as time allows.



Attorney Jordana Greenman



**We'll be having a free-flowing group conversation. Ask us anything related to landlord-tenant law or closings.**

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*

**Members register for no charge in just a few clicks!**

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**THIRD WEDNESDAYS WITH ATTORNEY GREENMAN NEXT ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18<sup>TH</sup>**

Except for holidays and where her schedule requires otherwise, Attorney Greenman will be available to members on the third Wednesday of every month.

**ZOOM CHAT AGENDA**

- 4:30 pm Start
- 5:30 pm Zoom Chat ends

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- Webinars have limited participation options (typed questions only) and, unless stated otherwise, are recorded.

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**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.

**ZOOM CHAT 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: Third Wednesday Office Hours with Attorney Greenman December 18, 2024

Time: Dec 18, 2024 04:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81931781511>

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Find your local number:

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### PRICING

This event is closed to the public.

Members: No charge.

Registration is required.

Registration in advance is required.

This event will not be recorded.

Slides and handouts if any will be uploaded to [open questions and answers](#) .

**Members register for no charge in just a few clicks!**

This event is operated by MassLandlords, Inc. staff.

This Zoom Chat 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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Add just this event to your calendar:

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### NORTHERN WORCESTER COUNTY

**Northern Worcester County Landlord Association Fitchburg Dinner Meeting, 7 pm: Annual Food & Toy Drive Holiday Social**

THU  
12/12

NWCLA Holiday Social. Come one, come all, have a ball!



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#### MORTGAGE DEFAULT SERVICING

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Our Annual Toys for Tots Drive and Food Pantry Drive where every year we make a food donation to a local food pantry. We also fund a Toy Drive to donate to the Massachusetts State Police Toys for Tots Charity Drive. What a great way to celebrate the Holiday Season by sharing our blessings with others!

At this meeting we will find out who has won the Golden Ticket Award Contest for \$100, the Annual NWCLA Membership Drive for one-year free basic NWCLA membership. Come out for our raffles, great food, and PLENTY of holiday cheer.

For extra raffle tickets, bring non-perishable food for the food pantries, and unwrapped gifts. The more you give – the more you get.

See you at the party! (This meeting is for members only and will not be streamed on Zoom)

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12TH**  
**NWCLA DINNER MEETING AGENDA**  
Visit [nwcla.com](http://nwcla.com) for any last-minute updates or changes.

- 7:00pm Dinner, Networking & Presentations
  - o Networking draws from 25 towns including Fitchburg, Gardner, Leominster, Athol, Holden, Ayer, Orange, Ashburnham, Spencer, Ashby, Lunenburg, Townsend, Westminster, Princeton, Sterling,

Lancaster, Shirley, Groton, Pepperell, Winchedon, Templeton, and Hubbardston.

**LOCATION**  
British American Club  
1 Simonds Road  
Fitchburg, MA 01420

**FOOD**  
• Dinner will be provided.

• **PRICING**  
This event is closed to the public.  
• NWCLA members only: No charge.

This event will not be recorded.  
Slides and handouts if any will be uploaded to <https://www.nwcla.com/members/meeting-recordings/>.  
This event is operated by volunteers at a partner association.

**METROWEST**  
**SOUTHERN WORCESTER COUNTY**

**Southern Worcester County Landlord Association**  
**Southbridge Dinner Meeting, 6 pm: Annual Christmas Party**

SWCLA will be holding their annual Christmas Party!

**MON**  
**12/02**

There will be soda, water and plenty of food for everyone! Heck, Santa might even show up to conduct his annual Yankee Swap type program! Please come and bring your spouse or better half!

Note: This meeting will be In-Person only. There will be no Zoom option.

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 2ND**  
**SWCLA DINNER MEETING AGENDA**  
• 6:00p Event Start

**LOCATION**  
Southbridge Community Center (aka Casaubon Senior Center)  
153 Chestnut St.  
Southbridge, MA 01550

**PRICING**  
Open to SWCLA Members only. Pay annual SWCLA dues then free.

- SWCLA members only: No charge.
- General public, in person meeting is free the first time, then pay \$50/yr for membership.

This event will not be recorded.  
Slides and handouts if any will be uploaded to [SWCLA](http://SWCLA).  
This event is operated by volunteers at a partner association.

## MassLandlords Thanks Our Property Rights Supporters

Property Rights Supporters make monthly contributions earmarked for policy advocacy.

### OWNERS COOPERATIVE

**\$100 and Up.** Arrow Properties, Inc.. Jim Duffy. Fairfield Realty Trust. Haddad Real Estate. Hilltop Group Holdings. Rich Merlino. Stony Hill Real Estate Services.

### OWNERS CLUB

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### WORKING TOGETHER CIRCLE

**Up to \$10.** 1020 Overlook LLC. AAMD MGT. Bernard Welch Realty Inc. Chris Adler. Bob Allen. Lori Amara. Rob Barrientos. Ray Boylan. Broggi R.E. & Property Mgmt Inc. Nigel Brooks. Corofin Properties. Demers Enterprises. Nisha Deo. Liz Dichiaro. Dietschler Properties. Energywise homes, Inc. Deborah Entwistle. Matt Explosion. Cristina Ferla. Margaret Forde. Justin Forkuo. Forge Property Management. Alan Fournier. Ross W. Hackerson. Hancock Holdings LLC. Mike Hempstead. JD Powers Property Management LLC. JMG Realty & Investments. Catherine Jurczyk. Kee 55, Inc. Agency Account C/O Ercolini. John Kubilis. Altagracia Lama. Jo Landers. MassBay Group. Shane McGlone. Ana Monte. Murphy Realty. Michael Ozog. Mary Palazzo. Benjamin Perry. Jesse Pianka. PJM Property Management. Alvan Pope. Tara Pottebaum. Property Realty Group LLC. Douglas Quattrochi. Kathryn Rivet. Lisa Rizza. Cary- Amy Rose. Michael Siciliano. John Siri. Joann Strub. Summit Rentals LLC. Topaz Realty Trust. Vadim Tulchinsky. Snaedis Valsdottir. Mark Waitkevich. Stuart Warner. Westmass Apartments LLC. Carole Winkler Wells. Kim Wu.

One-time and bespoke donations sincerely appreciated, too numerous to list here.

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





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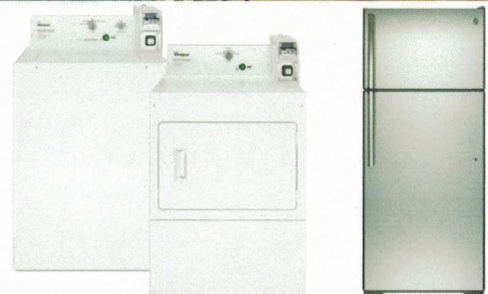
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