

From: Steve Welter [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, August 17, 2023 9:18 AM
To: Rental Housing Committee <RHC@mountainview.gov>; van Deursen, Anky <Anky.vanDeursen@mountainview.gov>
Subject: Comments regarding discussion of RUBS as it relates to the CSFRA

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Good day,

My name is Steve Welter and my family has provided housing to the city of Mt View for over 40 years. Currently we have two properties in Mt Vie with close to 200 units(prior to CSFRA implementation it was four properties with over 350 units).

I have voiced my comments on this subject in the past and have been part of many focus/stakeholder meetings but given the new RHC members, it is appropriate to do so again.

This topic was brought up to the RHC in the past due to “fluctuating” bills and potentially unscrupulous billing. Just as with any type of “review” of a product, restaurant, hotel, apartment, etc, it should be appreciated that for ever “bad” review, there are 10s, 100s, 1000s of satisfactory (or better) reviews that go un-mentioned. You need to keep this in mind while discussing how you address RUBS in Mt View. Do you make your decisions based on input from a few and assume this represents the majority or do you solicit data/input from a majority and allow for a more accurate analysis. I have heard the complaints from tenants and heard comments in the focus groups regarding some RUBS billing situation. I do not discount these complaints, but I can say that the specifics of these complaints that I have heard are not in line with the ~200 units our service partner (Conservice) bills monthly. I have provided data to the focus groups in the past (and will continue to make this available when requested) and these fluctuations that have been discussed are non-existent in my properties. Are there housing providers that do their own RUBS billing and unfairly implement this, sure but your focus should be to address these housing providers and NOT try to implement more/new procedures that negatively impact ALL housing providers.

The RUBS program is the only way to attempt to hold the vast majority of the resource users accountable to do their part and not waste or abuse these resources. Not to mention it's the tenants using these resources and they should pay for what they use. I have had tenants heat their apartments by running their hot water, I have continued to add and pay for more garbage dumpsters because tenants do not break down their boxes, use the recycling containers, dump their mattresses, etc. The RUBS program, when implemented appropriately and fairly (as I argue the majority of housing providers do) is the only tool a housing provider has to hold tenants accountable for how they use the resources. The City & state have implemented fines for excessive water use but 85%+ of that usage is out of the housing providers control, yet it is the housing provider that will be fined.

As is the case with a lot of the CSFRA, the discussion of whether or not RUBS payments made to our service provider (and NOT to the landlord) is considered “rent” is open to selective interpretation by all so I will not delve into that issue. What I will say is that the RUBS payments made by the tenants (in my 200 units) are made directly to Conservice and Conservice directly pays down the utility bills with these payments and the landlord makes up the difference. It is hard to call this rent received by the landlord.

Excluding the unscrupulous situations, when you are looking at fluctuations, how are you analyzing this, how are you comparing the bills to determine if there are fluctuations? The natural use of water, and thus sewer, varies month to month based on many things. Is it hot out, is it cold, is it vacation season, is it the holiday season, are there leaks not being reported, etc. So my question is, are you looking at fluctuations compared to the previous month? If so, this is not a valid approach. Comparing fluctuations annually may be appropriate but tenants move in and out throughout the year, so how would you do this. I fall back to the fact that data provided by our 200 units does not show large (>~2.5% +/-) fluctuations. Fluctuations are also, in part, due to the City of Mt View increasing the rates charged to the housing providers. Is the RHC considering implementing the same options to the City of Mt View as they are for the housing providers as it relates to water, sewer & trash? Will the RHC tell the city they must follow the same "options" suggested in the staff report?

This is a dog chasing its tail scenario. You are NEVER going to legislate, clarify, regulate, etc your way to clarity on this subject. The CSFRA has provisions for filing appeals & petitions for claimed "unfair situations" for both the landlord and the tenants. Yet for all the tenant complaints I have herd of (ad petitions have been filed), there have been NO petitions herd by the RHC. Use the tools available to you, address the unscrupulous or uneducated housing providers and do not give another reason for honest fair housing providers like myself to sell and leave the city of Mt View. Mt View would lose another 200 units covered under the CSFRA and that would only add to the "lost" housing in the city. How many CSFRA units were there when Mt View implemented the CSFRA and how many are there now.

Thanks for taking the time to read my comments. I look forward to continuing to provide housing to the City of Mt View, but it is becoming harder and harder for me to have the desire to do so.

Regards,
Steve Welter
CBW Properties, Inc

Sent from my iPad