

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, January 18, 2024 1:48 PM
To: Ann Arbor Renter's Commission <RentersCommission@a2gov.org>
Subject: Re: Automatic reply: a real life example of how the ordinance is phasing out & what happens in ann arbor

You don't often get email from [REDACTED]

This message was sent from outside of the City of Ann Arbor. Please do not click links, open attachments, or follow directions unless you recognize the source of this email and know the content is safe.

oops. i meant playing out. not phasing out.
apologize

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, January 18, 2024 1:11 PM
To: Ann Arbor Renter's Commission <RentersCommission@a2gov.org>
Subject: a real life example of how the ordinance is phasing out & what happens in ann arbor

You don't often get email from [REDACTED]

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Please scroll all the way down and read up.

my daughter took the time in november to go speak to Varsity Management in person to discuss 1 bedroom apts for grad school next year. [REDACTED] left Varsity management under the impression her \$150 was getting her on a priority waitlist to apply for a specific 1 BR apt for grad school in Fall 2024 once that apt became available to lease.

I've urged my daughter to not pay any more money prior to official leasing window.

but i wanted to share this real life example with the commission as it sure feels like an example of how local rental /property management companies have found a whole new way to profit /make money off of desperate students who are trying to be proactive as a result of the very ordinance intended to help them - by charging new types of fees and further exploiting their situation. while i did appreciate them responding, let's face it. they can try to gloss it up but this is a racket and they've found a new way to make money off of students feeling desperate. which is upsetting.

this was not money given for an immediate vacancy ... [REDACTED] has a lease that goes into August 2024 and she explained that clearly. she claims the person she met with did not mention anything about an additional \$500 and when that came to light she realized she was unable to move forward. so This \$150

was money down the tube and there was no service offered. She politely requested her \$150 back. They refused. I'm not saying what they did was illegal. And im guessing my daughter should have read the fine print more carefully. but these kids are very busy and don't have time for all this. i'm sharing their exchange simply in the hopes that something beneficial can be gleaned from it by those who do know more.

my daughter is someone who needs to feel like she has all her ducks in a row. She also got burned last year when in an effort to be proactive she organized her roommates and they paid money in october to secure a senior house only to find out in march it would not be available ... that was stressful and it took months for that landlord to reimburse them properly - one reimbursement check did not clear properly because of how it was written and it took weeks to resolve .

Finally we're lucky enough to have all 4 grandparents who were eager to drive 8 hours from st. louis area to attend [REDACTED] upcoming graduation. We've made the hard decision to cancel hotel rooms / politely uninvite them & celebrate instead outside ann arbor. it would've been a \$5000 cluster%%^. i will not miss these two aspects of our michigan experience.

I hope our two real life examples and the email exchange with varsity management below can somehow be used to illuminate and improve local renting practices so that future students are not feeling further stressed /exploited by an already stressful housing situation.
thank you for reading

sincerely

[REDACTED]
mom of a senior
Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: [REDACTED] >
Date: January 18, 2024 at 11:06:44 AM CST
To: [REDACTED] >
Subject: Fwd: Refund Application Fee

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Finance <finance@varsitymanagement.com>
Date: Wed, Jan 17, 2024 at 11:44 AM
Subject: Re: Refund Application Fee
To: [REDACTED] >

Hi [REDACTED]

I'm so sorry that there is some confusion surrounding our rental process. Your impression is correct, we are a reputable landlord! We do our very best to simplify the process and be transparent.

Our application terms are clearly stated within the application that you submitted:

1. Application Fee (non-refundable). A non-refundable application fee of \$150.00 is due upon application for the above stated rental. I understand and agree that if Varsity Management accepts my application and I cancel this application before the lease is signed, I will forfeit the application fee, not to exceed \$150.00 per applicant.
2. Reservation and Lease Signing. I further agree that all reservations and leases will be signed and the reservation fee and security deposit will be paid in full within five (5) days of receiving the reservation and lease. If reservations and leases are not completed, nor reservation fee/ security deposit paid in this time frame Varsity Management will consider this application forfeited unless other arrangements have been made.

...

There is more, which can be seen online, but this is the section pertinent to your inquiry.

Your concern about additional costs is valid and we welcome questions at any stage of the process, even mid-application. I'm curious about whom you may have spoken to when you visited our office (were you on Church St. across from the Garage Bar?), mainly because you specifically mention a "waitlist", which we do not use. We're actually diligent about correcting folks when they use that terminology because that is not what we're offering! I'm wondering if there is a possibility that you've also been looking at apartments at ["The Varsity"](#), which is a different company to which we are not affiliated, and could have gotten their policies and ours confused - it happens sometimes (we've been in business as Varsity Management for a very long time and they're a newer high rise on Washington St.).

Another caveat is that your original inquiry to us on 10/10/23 was on a unit that was vacant and available immediately - which has a different rental process because it does not need to be "reserved"! So the details sent to you by Linda for that unit were not exactly the same for a 24/25 lease. I do not see correspondence between that original inquiry and receipt of your application for 848 Tappan #12 on 11/07/23.

The reservation fee is also not technically a fee but prepaid rent as long as you sign a lease and move in, and it's refundable if the current residents were to renew! Please see the attached document for the specifics.

Obviously, you're more than welcome to seek advice from Student Legal Services, I would suggest that you do reach out to them with our application language - if we're doing something that is not in accordance with the law then we'd want to correct that! And, while we certainly do not want to be smeared on social media groups, you must do what you feel is necessary. I am confident in our transparency and believe that our policies and practices are not only in line with what other Ann Arbor landlords are doing, but less costly and more fair to the student renter!

Your application is also transferrable, so if the original apartment for which you applied is not the best option, we will transfer your app to another unit, a \$500 reservation fee would be due to secure the unit and a lease signed and security deposit paid. I understand that hard feelings may mean that you do not wish to rent an apartment from us, but you also don't need

to consider that money spent in vain, we can still try to find you an available apartment. Attached is our leasing guide, which is also available as a hard copy in our office.

Warm Regards,
Sarah
Finance Manager

Varsity Management
625 Church St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
P: (734) 668-1100
F: (734) 663-3641
www.varsitymanagement.com

On Mon, Jan 15, 2024 at 8:23 PM [REDACTED] > wrote:
Dear Ms. Poore, Ms. Wolfson, and Linda

Per my email below, I took the time to come visit your office in person, thinking this would result in better communication. I was never made aware before paying the application fee that an additional \$500 reservation fee would be required to have my application even considered. Nor was this requirement mentioned on your website. I was under the impression the \$150 fee itself would save me a place on the waitlist. Instead, I was never placed on a waitlist nor was my application even considered. Instead, I received nothing in exchange for the \$150 payment to Varsity as anticipated. So my hard-earned \$150 was money down the tube. Had I known this, obviously I would not have paid Varsity the \$150 deposit. When I politely pointed this out and requested my deposit be refunded I received the response below.

My parents are suggesting I report this as an unethical practice to the local housing authority along with student legal services and various FB groups.

I was under the impression Varsity was a reputable landlord and I was dealing with you in good faith. I am hoping Varsity will just do the right thing and promptly refund my \$150 for an application that was never considered.

[REDACTED]

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Leasing** <leasing@varsitymanagement.com>
Date: Thu, Jan 11, 2024 at 12:15 PM
Subject: Re: Refund Application Fee
To: [REDACTED]

Hello [REDACTED]

Unfortunately, application fees are not refundable. I see one of our leasing managers texted you back in November and at that time you did not mention this. Here is the text message she sent you. We did not get a response from you after, therefore we cancelled your reservation.

You completed the rental application. Please read the Reservation Instructions email I sent to you and your co-signer on 11/14 with instructions on signing the reservation and paying the reservation fee. Let me know if you have any questions after reading the email or the reservation document in your portal.

Please let me know if you have any other questions.

Linda
Varsity Management
625 Church St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
P: (734) 668-1100
F: (734) 663-3641
www.varsitymanagement.com

On Thu, Jan 11, 2024 at 10:35 AM [REDACTED] > wrote:

Hello,

I came into your office to speak about available one bedroom apartments recently. When I spoke to your employees in the leasing office, they told me there was only an application fee. There was no mention of a reservation agreement deposit and I am not comfortable putting that money down. Understandably, I will not have priority leasing on that apartment, however I would like a refund on my \$150 application fee since it did not mention on the website nor did anyone tell me in person that I would be required to put several hundred more dollars down later on.

Best,

-

[REDACTED]
B.S.E in Biomedical Engineering
University of Michigan, Class of 2024

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]
B.S.E in Biomedical Engineering
University of Michigan, Class of 2024

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]
B.S.E in Biomedical Engineering

University of Michigan, Class of 2024





Varsity Management
leasing@varsitymanagement.com
maintenance@varsitymanagement.com
finance@varsitymanagement.com

P: (734) 668-1100
F: (734) 663-3641
M-F 9:00am-5:00pm
625 Church St. Ann Arbor, MI 48104

www.varsitymanagement.com

[Leasing Guide for 24/25](#)

Ann Arbor City [ordinances](#) do not allow the showing and/or leasing of rental properties until 150 days before the end of the current lease. This is to allow current renters ample time to decide if they want to renew their lease.

- Housing with a May to May lease can be leased/toured beginning December 7, 2023.
 - May to May dates are only relevant for 1120 Oakland and 906 Sylvan.
- Housing with an August to August lease can be leased/toured beginning March 15, 2024.
 - All of our leases are August to August except for 1120 Oakland and 906 Sylvan.

We know that for renters looking to start a new lease, it can be stressful to have to wait so long to secure housing! Since all current Varsity Management residents have until the aforementioned date to renew their lease we will utilize a reservation type system for anyone shopping for apartments now.

We offer a Right of First Refusal (ROFR). If the current tenant does not renew by the deadline the lease will be yours for 24/25!

- ROFR is first come first serve.
- Only one reservation per apartment/house is accepted.
 - If you and roommate(s) make a reservation - no other person(s) can reserve that home.
- Reserve your 24/25 home by submitting an application on our [website](#).
 - Everyone who wishes to live in that home must submit their own application!
- Once all applications are received, reviewed, and approved we will electronically send you a ROFR Reservation Agreement; each applicant and their co-signer must sign.
- Each applicant will pay a \$500 reservation fee.
 - ***This will later be applied as a credit to your first month's rent!***
- Security deposits are due prior to the date we are permitted to countersign the lease
- Varsity will Countersign your August to August lease beginning March 15, 2024. (December 7, 2023 for 1120 Oakland and 906 Sylvan)

Varsity Management cannot guarantee your reserved apartment until we are able to countersign your lease. The reservation fee is not refundable under any circumstances, including, but not limited to, a change in plans by one or more of the Applicants or by the University of Michigan. Pursuant to Ordinance No. ORD-22-15 Section 8:530 and 8:531, the current tenants of the unit have the right to renew their lease until 150 days from the end of their lease. Therefore, notwithstanding the foregoing provisions, if the current tenants opt to renew their lease for the unit for the 2024/2025 lease term on or before 150 days prior to the end of their current lease, applicants may either: a) apply the reservation fee and this agreement to another available Varsity Management unit and transfer any security deposit accordingly or b) receive a refund for the reservation fee, application fee and a return of any security deposit upon which, this agreement is canceled without further obligation by either party. Refunds will be returned in the form of a check to one individual agreed upon by all applicants.