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FROM THE DESK OF
JACK R. NOEL

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HOUSING COMMISSION

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Ann Arbor Housing Commission
404 N. Ashley, Ann Arbor MI 48103

October 1, 2014
Ms. Jennifer Hall
Executive Director
Ann Arbor Housing Commission
727 Miller Ave.
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Dear Ms. Hall,

This is in response to your letter of September 22 in regard to the AAHC smoking ban which applies to tenants who smoke in their apartments. It's of necessity also about a visit I received from Baker Commons Residence Manager, Beth Yaroch at around 4PM yesterday, Sept. 30.

First in response to your statement about the 'survey' conducted by AAHC during Nov. 2012 in which you say "67% of the AAHC tenants stated a preference for a smoke free living environment."

I remember the Nov. 2012 document. I don't want to seem in any way sarcastic but I must point out that the subject document was not a "survey" in the formal sense but an opinion poll solicited by AAHC with a promise of \$5 payment included.

I have to be blunt: such a poll is invalid on a number of points. Opinions are worthless because, on this issue, majority opinions are always AGAINST a "smoky environment." As I said during my comments to you all, I am against "a smoky environment" too. Heeding "preferences" and collecting undefined terms and possibly uninformed or casual opinions is not the basis for sound policy making. And what "smoky environ-

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ment” has to do with one tenant smoking inside their own apartment when the “environment” referred to is actually in another apartment which may be next door or down the hall fifty feet away - no one can say. No one. Only because it’s needed, I must remind you that apartments are not “community shared spaces.” I must also remind you: “detection” cannot be by any but recognized means, “the sensitive noses of staff” don’t qualify

Additionally, I’m forced to bring up (again) that it’s possible for smokers to drastically reduce the toxic components of cigarette smoke (cigarette “emissions” have two main components: smoke particles which are harmful and volatiles which produce the detectable odor). In other words: the “smell” can linger and be “detected” but otherwise produces no harmful medical effects. During Ms. Yaroch’s visit yesterday, she said she could smell cigarette smoke. It took me by surprise but I later realized she’d smelled either cigarette butts which I collect in aluminum foil when I smoke outdoors as a litter-management method OR she’d smelled the accumulated residue in my apartment from the PREVIOUS 16 years.

I wasn’t “guilty” of anything during those 16 years. I’ve been a responsible tenant throughout my tenancy at Baker Commons. But suddenly, I’m classified as some kind of violator of “opinions” of people whom I’ve never harmed and never would harm. I deny that I present any danger to anyone -period.

Next: Informing us over a year in advance of the “impending policy change” means little. When I became aware of that notice, I naturally believed any new policy would be based

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on sound management methods and on provable facts. This AAHC policy doesn't meet that standard.

Next: "We understand that quitting smoking is not easily done." - Stipulation: It is KNOWN to be impossible for at least 60% of smokers. This is proven by several sources, including the new book published by Scientific American Magazine about couple months ago. That book features a number of progress reports on "cures for addictions." The summary is: there are as yet no cures for addicts because of changes in the brains of addicts initiated by the addictive substances. Further stipulating: I have used every available treatment and still consult with doctors and administrators of "quit" programs since 2008. I've yet to find a cure for myself and know that applies to a substantial number of smokers. The "you can quit" propaganda is meant to motivate but it's actually not true. "You can choose not to BEGIN." is the truthful and far more useful advice and I strongly support it. This is why bans and arbitrary prohibitions don't work. The United States is fourth in drug consumption in the world. The Commission needs to keep this in mind. The Commission is bound to equal enforcement: that means catching and evicting every alcoholic, heroine addict, etc. who lives in AAHC housing. Your success will be an historic achievement.

Next: "In the past year, AAHC has provided smoking cessation support..." 1. Have you checked the attendance rate for those brief meetings? I was the only person (among several smoking residents) who signed in for that session at Baker Commons. 2. See preceding paragraph - what was provided was a single session which lasted a bit over an hour. Have you checked to see how many smokers quit and remain "smoke free" as a result of that meeting?? What was the real reason these "sessions" were offered?

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Next: Your letter says that outdoor smoking facilities are being provided (as funds allow). Response: 1. Primarily, this fails to take into account the massive disruption of routine and necessary "daily life tasks" created by AAHC's demand that smoking can only take place outdoors. Have you checked to determine the amount of time required to go from the "average distance" of apartments in any of your residence buildings to the "outdoor facilities"? I can give you a rough idea: from my 5th floor apartment, I can reach "outdoors" in as little as 5 minutes but if the route is from my apartment to the ground floor "outdoors" it's at least double that time. Round trip: about 15 minutes. RATE OF USE: One "smoking trip" per hour, a minimum of 16 times a day, every day of the week. Bluntly: this "feature" of AAHC policy is unworkable. 2. Removing one theoretical hazard and creating new, provable, hazards just doesn't make sense and is unjust. Going outdoors to smoke: during winter exposes those people to (a) a cold weather hazard and (b) for those smokers with respiratory diseases - like me - creates the danger of respiratory infection and negative reaction to inhaled cold air. (c) a lone person outside in the dark or even in daylight outside of their relatively secure home is more vulnerable to criminal activities of several kinds.

Excuse the length of this letter. I write it (at 4:47 AM) not only in my own defense and proper self interest, I write it on behalf of all resident smokers who may not have the time or otherwise be able to adequately put forth the above points. I intend to widely distribute this letter. I ask that you do the same and that, when the Commission has had time, to re-work this policy to useable and properly just condition.

For our mutual benefit,


Jack R. Noel