

My name is Diana Johnstun. My husband, Jesse, and I own 4 business rentals in St. Helens. Their square footages are 1776, 1696, 465, and 339 square feet. These are small commercial rentals.

I understand that the City of St. Helens is in a financial bind and looking for resources to increase the revenue. But having the fee increase by 380% takes my breath away.

I have paid \$200/year for the commercial rentals and this year it is now \$960. The fee makes no allowances to the size of the rental, the gross income or other factors. This means (if I understand correctly) that Walmart and Safeway have one unit price, to \$20 per month, while our spaces of far less square footage and commercial value all together, four units, increase to \$80 per month. This is an amount that comes directly out of our pocket because it is proportionally too large for us to pass on. In effect this is one more nail in the coffin of local business.

In addition, this targets apartment complexes in the same way. Assuming that this added cost is passed on to renters, which it must be, you have raised the rates of every renter in St. Helens by \$20 per month at the same time you have made significant investment in subsidized housing.

We are a retired couple and do not gouge our renters with high monthly rates.

In doing some local checking:

- Estacada's commercial business license fee is \$85,
- Hillsboro's fee is \$105 (which covers the 1st 3 units), + \$5 (each additional unit)
- Rainier-\$45 (1st unit), + \$5 (each additional unit)
- Beaverton \$100
- Scappoose \$70 for 1<sup>st</sup> rental, + additional \$5 for each additional rental

Is it true that Broadleaf Arbor does not pay any license fees and property taxes and that many police responses are to Broadleaf Arbor? If that is correct, this small town which does not have a lot of commerce to help is tasked with shouldering financial responsibilities it is not equipped to provide.

I was told by a City of St Helens employee that there is no oversight in knowing who pays and who doesn't pay the license fees. And so, my husband and I are penalized for being honest citizens.

We request that this matter be reevaluated. Please consider not increasing fees by more than 25% per year. Please consider the commercial value or at least square footage in your calculations. Please consider the impact of this added drag on business. This will affect business and property values in our town.

Thank you,



Diana Johnstun  
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