

ORDINANCE NO. 26-002

TOWN OF CHARLESTOWN, MARYLAND

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE TOWN CODE TO ESTABLISH A COMPREHENSIVE RENTAL PROPERTY REGISTRATION, LICENSING, AND INSPECTION PROGRAM

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Charter of the Town of Charlestown and the Maryland Annotated Code, the Commissioners of Charlestown have the authority to pass ordinances to protect and promote the health, safety, comfort, convenience, and welfare of the residents of the Town; and

WHEREAS, the Commissioners of Charlestown find it necessary to formalize a standardized administrative mechanism to ensure all residential rental units within the municipal limits meet the minimum livability standards set forth under Cecil County and State of Maryland regulations;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ENACTED AND ORDAINED by the Commissioners of Charlestown, Maryland, as follows:

SECTION 1: DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Ordinance, the following terms shall have the meanings ascribed to them:

- **Code Official:** The Town Administrator, Building Inspector, Code Enforcement Officer, or any other individual designated by the Commissioners of Charlestown to enforce this Chapter.
- **Landlord / Owner:** Any person, corporation, partnership, or entity holding legal or equitable title to a residential property, or an authorized agent acting on behalf of the owner.
- **Rental Unit:** Any room, suite, apartment, single-family dwelling, or residential structure leased or rented to one or more tenants for residential occupancy in exchange for compensation.
- **Tenant:** Any individual occupying a rental unit under a written or oral lease agreement.

SECTION 2: RENTAL REGISTRATION AND LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

1. Registration Required: No person or entity shall lease, rent, or operate a residential rental unit within the municipal limits of the Town of Charlestown without first obtaining a valid Rental License from the Town.

2. Application Process: Every owner of a rental unit must submit an annual application on forms provided by the Town of Charlestown Forms & Permits portal. The application shall require:

- The physical street address of the rental property.

- The name, physical address, phone number, and email of the property owner.
- The name and contact information of a local property manager or agent (if the owner resides outside of Cecil County, Maryland).

3. Fees: A non-refundable annual registration fee, as determined by the Commissioners of Charlestown via resolution, must accompany the application.

SECTION 3: INSPECTION AND LIVABILITY STANDARDS

1. Inspection Cycles: All registered rental units are subject to mandatory inspections by the Code Official prior to initial occupancy and periodically every two (2) years thereafter, or upon verified tenant complaint.

2. Minimum Standards: All units must comply with the Cecil County Minimum Livability Standards. Inspections will specifically verify:

- Structural soundness, weather-tight exteriors, and functional insect screens (required from April 1 to December 1).
- Safe plumbing fixtures delivering adequate hot and cold running water.
- Properly functioning mechanical heating capable of maintaining a temperature of 65°F during the day and 60°F at night from October 1 to May 30.
- Compliant electrical systems including functional Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlets.
- Fire safety regulations, including unobstructed secondary egress routes and fully operational smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Indoor use of non-vented emergency power generators or unlisted carbon monoxide-producing equipment is strictly prohibited.

SECTION 4: VIOLATIONS, ENFORCEMENT, AND PENALTIES

1. Notice of Violation: If an inspection reveals non-compliance with livability or registration codes, the Code Official shall issue a written notice to the landlord detailing the infractions and establishing a reasonable cure period (typically 30 days, unless an immediate health or safety emergency exists).

2. Fines: Failure to register a property, operating without a license, or failing to remedy code violations within the prescribed timeline will result in a municipal infraction. Penalties may include fines up to **\$1,000 per violation**, and each day a violation continues may constitute a separate offense.

3. Suspension of License: The Town reserves the right to revoke or suspend a rental license if a property falls into severe disrepair, triggering condemnation procedures under the municipal code.

SECTION 5: APPEALS

Any property owner aggrieved by a decision, fine, or license denial issued by a Code Official under this ordinance has the right to file a written appeal to the Town Board of Appeals within fifteen (15) days of the adverse action.

SECTION 6: SEVERABILITY AND EFFECTIVE DATE

1. Severability: If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this ordinance is for any reason held to be unconstitutional or invalid, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions.

2. Effective Date: This ordinance shall take effect immediately upon its adoption by the Commissioners of Charlestown and legal publication.

PASSED AND ENACTED this 13th day of October, 2026.

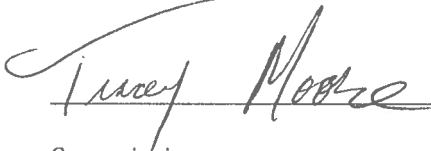
TOWN OF CHARLESTOWN, MARYLAND

BY: 

President, Commissioners of Charlestown



Commissioner:



Commissioner:



Commissioner:

Commissioner:

ATTEST: 

Town Administrator