**Top 10 Things Landlords Need To Know**

1. SCREENING TENANTS  
   References and proof of employment are ways of screening prospective tenants. You can consider requiring prospective tenants who cannot provide references or who do not have a sufficient or steady source of income to have a co-signer on the lease. Employing a tenant screening service and/or a credit reporting agency are other ways to ensure you are renting to reliable tenants.
2. TYPES OF TENANCIES  
   You can offer a tenant a lease, which typically runs for one year, or a verbal or written tenancy-at-will agreement, which runs from month to month. A tenancy-at-will offers more flexibility, but a lease offers more security
3. REGISTRATION & INSPECTIONS  
   Landlords must register their rental units with City’s Inspectional Services Department and post their contact information in the building. Rental units, except for those in 1-to-6 unit owner-occupied dwellings and public property, must be inspected at least one every five years to ensure that they are in compliance with the State Sanitary Code.
4. HEAT AND UTILITIES  
   A tenant may only be required to pay for utilities if there are separate meters for each service charged. If you are holding the tenant responsible to pay for heat and hot water, it is best to put that agreement in writing.
5. MEDIATION  
   If you and your tenant have a dispute that you cannot resolve, consider mediation. Mediation is an informal process in which you and your tenant can try to reach a resolution with the help of an  impartial mediator.
6. BASIC FACILITIES  
   Every rental unit must have a working stove and oven, screens for each window below the fifth floor from April to October and working locks on all windows and entry/exit doors. You are not required to provide refrigerators, blinds, shades or laundry facilities, but if you offer them, you must maintain them.
7. SECURITY DEPOSITS & LAST MONTH’S RENT  
   At the beginning of the tenancy, you may legally require a tenant to pay the last month’s rent in advance and a security deposit in an amount no greater than the equivalent of one month’s rent. If you collect them, you must give proper receipts, pay interest on an annual basis and in the case of the security deposit, put the money in a separate interest-bearing account in a bank located in Massachusetts. It is important that you comply with the strict requirements of the security deposit law.
8. TIMELY RENT PAYMENT  
   There is no “grace period” for payment of rent.  You are entitled to the rent on the day specified by the terms of the tenancy. You may charge a late fee only if there is a written agreement in effect that allows it. This fee cannot be charged unless the rent is at least 30 days late.
9. LEGAL AND ILLEGAL FEES  
   You may legally charge a tenant for first and last  month’s rent, security deposit and lock fee. It is  illegal for you to charge holding or pet fees, or a  broker’s fee (unless you are licensed.)
10. EVICTIONS  
    If you need to evict a tenant, you must terminate with proper written notice and file a summary process action in court. Many landlords hire attorneys to assist them with what can be a lengthy and complicated process.