

# Sea Isle Reins in Noisy Landlords

By JOE HART

SEA ISLE CITY — In a four-hour special hearing Monday night, city officials, with no commissioners present, addressed the problem of public nuisance landlords to a crowd of over 30 community members.

Seven property owners, whose rental licenses were involved in two or more noise violations or other arrests followed by convictions last summer, were summoned to appear.

There was one no-show, one was postponed due to illness, two cases were dismissed because the city

did not meet its burden of proof, and three landlords were required to post bonds.

None were local. They were from Philadelphia, Marlton and Wilmington, with bonds of \$5,000 for four years; \$2,500 for two years; and, \$1,500 for two years, respectively.

According to the hearing officer Michael Donohue, a Stone Harbor attorney, ordinances like the city's are referred to as "Animal House" laws because they are meant to keep landlords from allowing rental properties to become party places as in the National

Lampoon movie.

City Solicitor Paul Baldini called on Chief of Police William Kennedy to provide information from arrest reports regarding the incidents.

Landlords were able to retain attorneys for the hearing, but most did not.

Neighbors within 200 feet of the offending property were able to speak, and many did, particularly about properties with ongoing noise complaints.

They told stories of loud parties every weekend into the wee hours of the morning filled with underage drinking and public urination.

"If I were a 19-year-old looking to spend the summer in Sea Isle, that's where I'd stay," one neighbor remarked describing one of the rental properties with a long history of partying.

It was not a courtroom and the rules of evidence did not apply, according to Donohue, who acted in the role of a judge and jury for the proceedings.

"We understand Sea Isle is a resort vacation community and noise complaints are bound to happen, but we expect landlords to be proactive in addressing the problems," Donohue said.

He stuck to this guideline, setting smaller bond amounts for landlords who communicated with their neighbors, sought input from the police and kept on top of their tenants.

"Residents of Sea Isle deserve to have a summer free of the type of problems we have heard about here tonight. Absentee landlords that allow their tenants to act like animals will not be tolerated," Baldini said.

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