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# MANUFACTURED HOME & MOBILE HOME PARK NEWSLETTER

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NAI Iowa Realty Commercial

**A Berkshire Hathaway  
Subsidiary**



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## Best Practices for De-Junking

Grayson M, a burgeoning mobile home park investor was wrapping up the latest purchase of a mobile home park when he realized there was time to visit one of his other parks in the vicinity. His blissful day marked by acquiring another park plummeted to a bumper day as he drove the park. Tires, a sofa in the yard, overflowing garbage containers, a boarded-up window (nope, TWO boarded-up windows) left him feeling hopeless and then angry.

Why weren't the rules being followed by the tenants? And why wasn't the manager enforcing the rules? On the plane home later that day, he wrote a do's and don'ts complete with photos of "THIS" and "NOT THAT". Grayson made up his mind – no more junked up mobile homes and lots.

Most mobile home park owners have had a similar experience to Grayson's. It's discouraging. It's unnecessary. It feels like the park manager has gone to a tenant led seminar entitled "Ignore MY Mess". Have the managers even read the lease? Have the tenants?

In this issue, three no nonsense managers offer tips that work for keeping the mobile homes and lots in compliance with the rules.

Rebecca:

Rebecca is a manager of a 200+ site all age community. She shared a few of her tactics for gaining tenant cooperation.

For starters, Rebecca tries to nip the non-compliance in the bud. From managing her community for 10 years, a 'Cardinal Action Plan' is to address the non-compliance items fast. She has a need for speed because the 'biggest battle for owners is preventative' enforcement of the home and lot guidelines. You will never hear the word 'enforcement' from Rebecca, tough. Instead guideline

*This newsletter and its content are not meant as a solicitation of any property or properties that may be listed. This is a creation of Joanne M. Stevens with NAI Iowa Realty Commercial, as a resource for mobile home park/manufactured home community owners.*



enforcement is achieved by establishing “great rapport” with the tenants from the move in and all points of contact in between.

Rebecca drives her park three times a day. Yes, three (that is not a typo). She stops at any home with a compliance need (junk, lumber, damaged skirting, weeds). The first contact is cordial and not written. Or she texts, calls, or emails if the tenant isn’t home. There is a short timetable of 1 day or less for the tenant to comply. Another thing Rebecca’s park does is to recommend vendors to the tenants (lawn care, skirt repair, etc.) for tenants that cannot do the compliance themselves. The park sometimes offers to do the repair or work and charge the tenant back.

Perhaps the most important thing Rebecca does is to acknowledge and reward the tenants with the nice-looking homes and lots. You know who those tenants are in your parks. The ones you have very little proactive communications with because they pay lot rent on time and keep their yards and homes presentable. Rebecca hands out garden accessories, welcome mats, and gift cards to acknowledge these tenants. If you think

Figure 1: Rebecca

these inexpensive gifts transform these tenants into exuberant, goodwill park ambassadors, you guessed right!

#### Park Manager 2:

Another park manager operates one of the cleanest parks you will see anywhere. This manager’s blueprint is that the chief maintenance employee walks the entire park first thing in the morning, every morning. It’s a big park. He takes pictures of anything and everything about the home or lot that is out of compliance, then texts the pictures to the park manager, who prints off and mails a letter to the tenant. The letter states the compliance items, the timeline for completion, and includes the pictures of the home and yard from that day’s walk in the park.

There is a shared theme in these first two stories. DO IT EVERYDAY. Train the tenants that their home and lot will be inspected every day. It doesn’t take long at all for non-compliance to set in and that’s the magic of the daily inspections.

#### Park Owner 3:

This tip comes from a park owner with mostly older homes. These older homes and the lots look attractive and orderly. A number of the homes are rentals. The park owner said that when he senses the manager is stressed from dealing with tenants (who probably give the manager grief about having to comply with the lease said tenants signed), he tells the manager to take the rest of the day off. This

manager inherited a lot of residents from a manager that didn't screen tenants all that well. So now this manager is pushing the ball up hill with compliance. And this manager is winning! His job is tough, though, due to a handful of residents who have grown too accustomed to doing things their (tenants') way. This is grinding on managers. Most park owners, if we are honest about it, have residents, that if we could have a do over, would never lease to. Hindsight is a wonderful thing.

## Why Compliance Matters

It's like *The Tale of Two Cities*. The clean park attracts the right potential residents. Potential residents can tell by driving through even two parks which park insists on home and lot compliance. If the potential resident tends to favor loose standards, or some might say no standards, they will apply to that park. Compliant mobile home parks help attract the compliant prone tenant. And the same is true for retaining current tenants. It's not that a tenant moves due to messy neighbors. But they are more satisfied with the park. If you talk to your tenant, you may find that one of the reasons they moved into your park is because they actually like the compliance rules. Once the park is cleaned up, the manager's job becomes a little easier. The manager isn't battling the "talk to that guy" (about "that" guy's mess) as a way to wiggle out of complying. This is hard on the managers. Solving the same problems day in and day out is stressful and may lead to burnout. Work is more fulfilling (a manager retention tool) if the manager feels like they are moving the ball forward on the park initiatives. Being stuck on never-ending junk compliance is not a good use of company resources.

Just as important as attracting the right tenants, is influence the lawmakers and community influencers. Every time there is new local, or state, legislation being proposed, the clean appearance of parks in a legislator's jurisdiction can't hurt and may help. Recently, a Congressional candidate called me for a campaign contribution. We got to talking about (what else?) mobile home parks. The candidate had no idea that tenants are responsible for maintaining their homes and yards. She was under the impression that the poorly maintained homes were because of the negligent park owners. And while it is annoying to have to explain this to legislators (we think they ought to somehow understand how parks work, the real answer is getting the tenants to comply).

## Websites You Might Like:

### Window Air Conditioners:

*July.com*

*Kapsul.com*

*Windmill.com*

### Window Shades:

*Theshadestore.com*

Go to my website for an excellent Wall Street Journal article on masks:

Please Wear a Face Mask So I Can Shut Up About Wearing Face Masks – WSJ

Return Service Requested:  
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## SAVE THE DATE: Links on Our Website

**2020 IMHA Annual Conference (Virtual Event)**  
**(I will be a speaker)**  
**Fall 2020**

**2020 MHI Annual Meeting**  
**10/4-6/2020**  
Denver, CO

**2020 NCC Fall Forum**  
**11/4-6/2020**  
Chicago, IL

**2021 Congress & Expo**  
**4/6-8/2021**  
Las Vegas, NV

Keep current on mobile home industry events  
and events rescheduled due to COVID-19.

Go to my website; you will find information on  
Past Newsletters, Park Sale Comparables, &  
so much more



Past Newsletters, Park Sale Comparables, & so much more, are available on my website:

[JoanneMStevens.com](http://JoanneMStevens.com)

## WHAT IS YOUR PARK WORTH?

I am always happy to do a FREE, NO OBLIGATION, Real Estate Review for your park(s). You ought to know today's market value of your real estate investments.

If this is something you would like, simply give me a call at 319-378-6786, email me at [joannestevens@iowarealty.com](mailto:joannestevens@iowarealty.com), or visit <http://joannemstevens.com/>

Joanne Stevens is a specialist in listing and selling mobile home parks & manufactured housing communities throughout the U.S. With her 20 plus years of experience in developing, zoning, owning, retailing, managing, turning around and brokering parks, she can maximize your sale price.