

**ORDINANCE NO. 2023-03-007**

**AN ORDINANCE RELATING TO NOTICE OF RENT INCREASE, AMENDING BELLINGHAM MUNICIPAL CODE (BMC) TITLE 6.**

**WHEREAS**, in 2018, City Council adopted Ordinance No. 2018-02-004 which established rental agreement requirements, stating “any rental agreement or renewal of a rental agreement for a residential rental unit in the city of Bellingham entered into after the effective date of this chapter shall include or shall be deemed to include a provision requiring a minimum of 60 days’ prior written notice whenever the periodic or monthly housing costs to be charged a tenant are to increase by 10 percent or more over the periodic or monthly rental rate charged the same tenant for the same housing unit and same services for any period or month during the preceding 12-month period.”

**WHEREAS**, rental housing prices continue to grow in Bellingham and the broader region, making it difficult for individuals to find rental units that are affordable, and limiting their ability to move between rental units; and

**WHEREAS**, rental vacancy rates have continued to be below what is widely considered a healthy market of five to seven percent and continue to remain around two percent; and

**WHEREAS**, wages have not kept pace with housing costs, from 2000 to 2020, the median family income in Bellingham increased by 20% while the median home value increased by nearly 80% (adjusted for inflation); and

**WHEREAS**, Bellingham continues to see the number of cost burdened and severely cost burdened households increase; and

**WHEREAS**, movement between rental units can often require a significant amount of money in order to afford rental deposits, security deposits, pet deposits, moving expenses, utility fees, etc. By requiring notice of 120 days prior to any rental increase, the renter would be afforded an opportunity to save the necessary funds needed for the relocation efforts, and

**WHEREAS**, displacement from a rental unit can increase the potential for individuals experiencing homelessness, and

**WHEREAS**, the Bellingham City Council, on January 23, 2023, directed staff modify the existing code provisions;

**NOW THEREFORE, THE CITY OF BELLINGHAM DOES ORDAIN:**

**Section 1.** BMC 6.12.020 is amended as shown.

Any rental agreement or renewal of a rental agreement for a residential rental unit in the city of Bellingham entered into after the effective date of this chapter shall include or shall be deemed to include a provision requiring a minimum of ~~((60))~~ 120 days' prior written notice whenever the periodic or monthly housing costs to be charged a tenant are to increase ~~((by 10 percent or more over the periodic or monthly rental rate charged the same tenant for the same housing unit and same services for any period or month during the preceding 12-month period))~~.

**PASSED** by the Council this 13<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2023

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Council President

**APPROVED** by me this 15<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2023

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

**ATTEST:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Finance Director

**APPROVED AS TO FORM:**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Office of the City Attorney

**Published:**

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