

APPLICATION FOR AMENDMENT OF EXISTING RENTAL LICENSE

217 EAST SPRING STREET

This application seeks to correct the city not properly Grandfathering in the use of one of the apartments as a three-bedroom unit. For at least the last eighty years, or farther back than anyone can remember the building has been a four-plex offering three one-bedroom apartments and one three bed room. However, the license says it is only good for 4 one-bedroom units. There are no health and safety issues. The property has been inspected and approved as up to code every three years since 2004, that's seven times, most recently in February of 2025 and the inspector said he didn't see any reason it couldn't be occupied.

The building was originally built in 1881, less than twenty years after the Lincoln hangings during the Dakota War. That's one hundred and forty-four years ago. It is a very well built, perhaps historically significant, as there are two courses of brick under the stucco surrounding the wood frame. Over the course of time the building has been many things. Initially built as a 'trading post' and then at some point a dentist had his dental practice in apartment B and raised a family of six children using all three stories of the building (apartment A and C). There are still interior stairwells leading to all three floors. From looking at the workmanship and the materials used in the build-out of the third floor it looks like it is from around the nineteen forties. In fact, looking at the exterior, note how the front and back porches are built over the previously existing window details. These facts establish we didn't build out and convert the third floor to habitable space, it has been that way for a long, long, long time. Do you believe after the building was 120 years old, we would be the first to think to use the 3rd floor. There's also a defunct toilet and a shower in the basement . . . go figure.

My brothers and I bought the property in 2000, twenty-five years ago, from a couple that had owned it since 1971, so it's only had two owners in the last 54 years. The rental licensing inspection program was initiated in 1998. The city had yet to inspect the property prior to when we bought it. It was in such a shambles the city wouldn't have known where to start. We bought it on a contract-for-deed. Given its condition we could not get a bank loan against it. We brought it back from the scrap heap, we should be given some credit. Over the years we managed to renovate each unit as they turned over with new fixtures, appliances and floor coverings.

Prior to when we bought it, and throughout our ownership it has always been rented and occupied as a three bedroom and the city has never mentioned anything about the newly instituted license not recognizing it. We were not even aware of the issue, until we came under the terms of a purchase agreement. The appraiser believes the Buyer may not be able to rely on the income from the three-bedroom, which thus impacts the value of the property.

The first time the city inspected it was when they came to inspected it and mentioned it 2001 and then again in 2004 when they were more insistent on replacing the existing window on the third floor with an egress window. Which we happily complied with – as this change was mandated by the city, it was assumed that was the permit, just a few hundred-dollar job using the existing window opening. There were no structural changes. We made sure it was up to code, which was the whole purported purpose of the licensing program in the first place.

We were totally unaware the city was not recognizing the three bedroom. Once the window was replaced it was never mentioned the third floor could not be inhabited, and thus presumably could not be rented as a three bedroom. It was only mentioned on the initial inspection order mandating the window, with which we complied.

The city may argue we signed off on 4 one-bedroom units, when we signed off on accomplishing the required corrections. But we argue the city signed off on the three-bedroom unit by inspecting it seven times and passing it each time. All we wanted was a rental license. We didn't realize we were being evidently duped out of bedrooms just to get our rental license. We were not aware anything we were signing had anything to do with the licensing of bedrooms. However, the city has never impeded our use, so what was there to argue about? The last thing we want is a fight with the city!

To this day we don't know where to find the information on how many bedrooms we are licensed for. We own other properties in Mankato and none of them mention the number of bedrooms a property is licensed for. While this entire time we have been taxed by the county as having six bedrooms, so we have been paying for it as though it is a three bedroom – odd the county should know, but not the city.

With all this being said, it is a great space – it's really quiet and then one wakes to birds chirping, tolling church bells and the rumbling of trains. It's super snuggly and cozy and it provides affordable housing. The current rent is \$1500 a month including all utilities.

In reality, nothing really changes by the city finally properly Grandfathering in the three-bedroom unit. Who is harmed by doing right and recognizing it has been a three bedroom for generations? Things will continue as they are now. And you should celebrate the improvements made to 217 East Spring Street – it's been made a beautiful property – look at the list of improvements we did – its housing stock the city can now be proud of.

We appreciate your contributions to the community. Thanks for volunteering your precious time to try to make things better. If you have any questions, or need more information, please let us know.

Thank you!