

SQUATTERS

GOOD EVENING, MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION/LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;

MY NAME IS BARBARA BURNS HARRIS AND I AM A RESIDENT OF CHARLES COUNTY. I WAS AWAY FROM MY HOME FOR A COUPLE OF WEEKS THIS PAST JANUARY VISITING FAMILY. I LOOKED ON MY "CAM" AND A STRANGER WAS WALKING AROUND ON MY PROPERTY. HE DIDN'T COME DOWN THE DRIVEWAY, LIKE MOST PEOPLE. THE CAMERA CAUGHT HIM WALKING FROM THE SIDE OF MY HOME, RIGHT ON ACROSS THE GRASS BEFORE HE MOVED ON.

DEFINITION

- What is a squatter? Is it someone who crouches or sit on their knees. NO
- A SQUATTER is a person who has illegally taken over your property, usually residential, whether occupied or unoccupied, a TRESPASSER, and lives there as if he owns it for however long he can, until he can rightfully prove Squatter's Rights based on the state of jurisdiction.

HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN:

- The squatter looks for an unoccupied property, mainly resident. The legal owner could be away on vacation for a few days. When he/she returns, some unknown person/family has moved into the owner's home, usually with a fake contract/lease with the owner's fake signature.
- The owner calls the police. However, in most states, there is no law against squatting. The rightful owner has to go to civil court to get the squatter removed, using landlord/Tenant methods. **If any of you know anything about evicting a tenant from your property, it's not easy and could easily take a year or longer.**
- Because the squatter has a fake lease with your illegal signature, you have to prove in court that the lease was fake, while going through the eviction process – 30 day notice, file for eviction in court, notice by the court to the squatter, if you win the eviction, the squatter is given a certain time period, usually a week, by the court to vacate; If he doesn't vacate, the owner has to obtain the services of the Sheriff/police to help with the eviction.
- In the meantime, the squatter is in your home, using your property, sleeping in your bed, eating your food, possibly wearing your clothes and when he is done, **break and/or sale your property what he doesn't take with him.**

Law and Order:

On the long, running TV show, Law and Order, last week, the owner was shot and killed by a squatter/intruder, who took over the owner's home while he was away. The squatter claimed self-defense for him and his daughter – stating he thought the owner was an intruder.

What We Can Do – MD Laws

For those of you who haven't seen the episode, I won't give away the ending. However, as stated before, the owner was killed. This scenario could be you or your love ones. We as citizens of Charles County and the State of MD, have to advocate and write laws that will **prohibit** this senseless behavior. We have to feel as comfortable away from our homes, as in our homes.

Squatters' Rights

MD Code, Cts & Judicial Procedure, Section 5-103 allows adverse possession, that is, after 20 years of living illegally in someone else's home or property, the squatter can file to own the property (he already has possession). **This is called adverse possession, which is just one of the rights squatters have.**

Laws such as these, may have been good in the 1800s, when property and lands were actually vacant; and while migrating, vacant property was beneficial. This is not the case now. **Criminal Intruders are taking advantage of these antiquated laws, stealing from legal homeowners, causing a financial burden in finding a place to stay while waiting to move back in the home they have to continue paying the mortgage, fixing/repairing/replacing the properties destroyed and/or stolen.**

We need laws like this changed now **starting with this Commission.**

THANK YOU