

OAKS: 'I want things done by the rules'

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While waiting for a copy of the lease agreement she signed only months ago, Jones was asked to return to the McNary Oaks main office to sign another form — a long-term 25-year lease. Jones didn't get a copy of that either, but said it was a short, single-page document.

From the outset, Jones has harbored doubts about what she is paying for, but her situation is not unique. Her kids put some money together and helped her arrange for a cash purchase of the home she and her elderly father reside in at McNary Oaks. They found it on Craigslist and it said all utilities except for electric bills were included in the space rent of \$665.

In fairness to the previous owner, those expenses likely were included in their rent, but a sea change in the industry is placing most utility payments on the shoulders of renters in manufactured home parks. Jones simply had the misfortune of buying into the park while the change is being rolled out. In many manufactured home parks, there are rarely any two residents paying exactly the same amount for their space and it works to the advantage of owners like IPG.

In addition to the unexpected charges to her monthly rent, Jones and her family had to haul off two storage units worth of garbage left in the yard by the previous owner, and at their own expense. According to Oregon law (Chapter 90.730), property owners must keep all vacant and rented spaces free of "debris, filth, rubbish, garbage, rodents and vermin." In short, the accumulated stuff should have been gone before Jones and her father moved in.

If Jones was the only one experiencing such problems, it might be dismissed as an anomaly, but Joann Miller had similar interactions when it came to dealing with property managers at the community.

Despite being told her rent each month would be \$630, the utility bills became her responsibility, too. Oddly, the figures she's paid never amount to the total cost of the utilities themselves. She's been undercharged by a few dollars most months, but there is no rhyme or reason to the figures.

Miller moved into McNary Oaks in 2018 and she has yet to see a copy of her original lease. She recently received what property managers claim is a copy of her lease, but every page is watermarked with the word "SAMPLE" behind the actual text. There are no signatures or initials anywhere on the pages.

Miller also got targeted when it came to signing a 25-year lease. When the Oregon Legislature began talking about possible rent controls earlier this year — the bill eventually passed — the property manager visited Miller and told her that changes were in the wind and that she should lock in her rent with the long-term lease.

"I was scared of what would happen if I didn't sign it. It was like a threat," Miller said.

Keizertimes has reviewed copies of the long-term leases IPG offered at other parks and they offer no additional protection or discounts for residents who sign them. Moreover, the sample lease Miller was given a copy of doesn't mention a 25-year option anywhere, only 5-, 10- and 15-year leases.

Miller feels she and others have been targeted because of their circumstances.

"People that have husbands [in the park], they're not getting so much shuck and jive. It's the single women and the older women who they are targeting, somebody like me," Miller said.

Residents might take some solace if they felt the rent collected was in some way being reinvested in bettering the community facilities, but that isn't the case either.

"The clubhouse and the



KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald



Resident concerns include: A woodburning stove vented into overhanging trees (A); repairs only being made for IPG-owned homes (B); and the lack of ADA-compliant sidewalk crossings (C).

exercise room are all raggedy," Miller said.

Ducks regularly use the community pool, but the biggest complaint among the women who contacted the Keizertimes after reading previous reporting about other IPG properties are the sidewalks and trees.

According to Oregon law, park owners are responsible for "completion" of driveways and sidewalks and maintaining "trees, shrubbery and grass" not planted by current residents.

Concrete pathways and the driveway around Miller's space are riddled with cracks small and large. When she takes her father out of the house in a wheelchair, "he almost flips forward when we hit some of them," she said.

Throughout the park, there are orange cones placed on some of the worst cracks, but there is no indication as to why the cones are in place. An inattentive walker might think some larger project is in the works.

One of the worst patches in a sidewalk led to an injury for resident Beth Anderson last August.

"I was out walking my dog, looking around at neighbors' houses and, the next thing I knew, I was on the ground. I laid out there yelling, 'Help, help,'" Anderson said.

Anderson was able to get the attention of neighbors and asked them to call the property manager. She

wanted him to bring around a golf cart to help her back to her home, but the manager said he would only call an ambulance.

She made it back to her home with some assistance, but her ankle was soon swollen to grotesque proportions. When IPG sent someone out to ask about the incident, he tried to get Anderson to admit she was on her cell phone when she took the spill. She leaves her phone at home while walking the dog.

"If I had my cell phone, I wouldn't have been laying on the ground calling for help," she said.

Anderson went through physical therapy and enlisted the help of a lawyer to get the bills paid. It resulted in a settlement and promises to fix the situation.

Two weeks ago, Jones stumbled and fell over the exact same spot walking her dog.

"There was crab grass grown over it. I stepped on it and my foot went sideways. I fell forward and my glasses went flying. My hands were all scraped up," Jones said.

Jones didn't file a report at the time and regrets it now. The crab grass has since been trimmed, but the crack remains.

Aside from the sidewalks, there are no aprons where the driveways meet the streets and even small lips pose a potential hazard for those using motorized scooters,

walkers and wheelchairs. The few spaces that appear ADA-compliant are in the vicinity of the community's main office.

Curbs where residents would cross from one side of the street to another do not have ramps, but are marked with yellow paint in some, not all, instances.

IPG doesn't even list the McNary Oaks among the dozens of properties on its website. The only mention of the community is on the "Homes for Sale Page" with a listing for a new home. The only places where recent

repairs have been made to walkways, driveways and paths are spaces where IPG has placed new homes they are trying to sell.

"They're only taking care of their investments, and not taking care of the rest of the park. Everything's crazy," said Anderson.

The trees are also a source of concern, Miller has one hanging over her home that she's wary of, Anderson's carport has arbor vitae that stand well over the seven-foot limit in the parks rules and regulations, but they are most concerned about a neighbor with a wood-burning stove.

The vent extends out of the roof and right into the foliage of two nearby trees.

Jones, Miller and Anderson are trying to organize with other residents to create a stronger voice. They made a recent trip to Oregon's Manufactured Communities Resource Center to find out how to do it in a way that can't be fought, but they just want IPG and the park manager to take some ownership of the problems.

"I want things done by the rules," said Anderson. "They sell you these things on the basis of what they say the community is and we should get what we are paying for."

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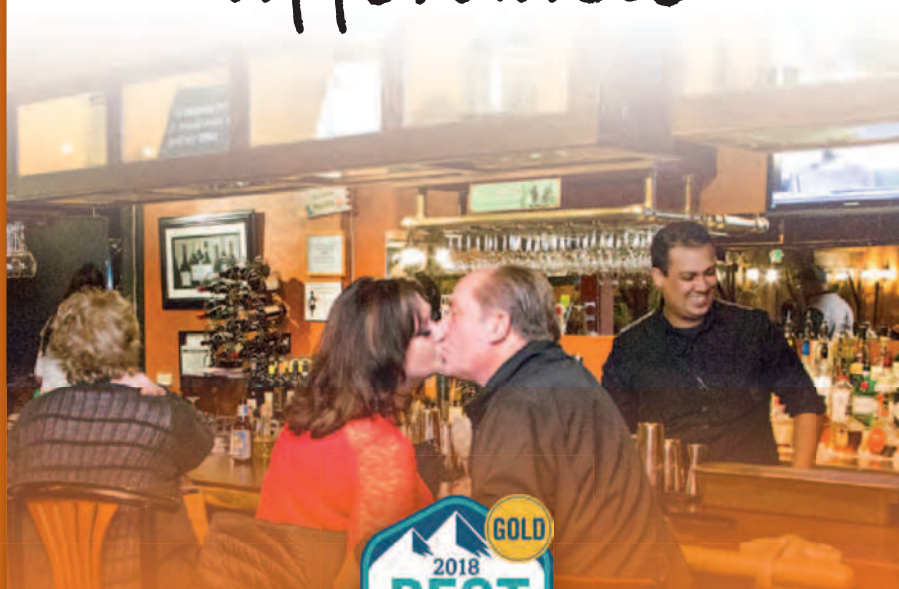
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