

# No title, no eviction; Milwaukee man wins eviction fight

Cary Spivak, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Published 4:14 p.m. CT April 3, 2017 | Updated 6:39 p.m. CT April 3, 2017



(Photo: Image from Milwaukee Common Council video)

An eviction notice turned into a big win for [Jesse White](/story/news/investigations/2017/03/03/no-title-no-worry-llc-no-longer-owns-house-files-evict-milwaukee-family/98550996/) (</story/news/investigations/2017/03/03/no-title-no-worry-llc-no-longer-owns-house-files-evict-milwaukee-family/98550996/>), the Milwaukee man who received the notice from a company that didn't own his house.

Milwaukee County Circuit Court Judge Ellen Brostrom on Monday approved Kaja Holdings 2 LLC's request to drop its [eviction action against White](/story/news/local/milwaukee/2017/03/16/firm-admits-cant-evict-milwaukee-man-home-doesnt-own/99235008/) (</story/news/local/milwaukee/2017/03/16/firm-admits-cant-evict-milwaukee-man-home-doesnt-own/99235008/>), and the firm agreed to pay White's legal fees of \$2,940.

"I don't know if (the eviction) was due to sloppiness or malice," said Amanda Adrian, White's Legal Aid Society of Milwaukee attorney. "Either way, the damage to Mr. White is the same; it really doesn't matter."

Kaja agreed to Adrian's demand to pay her fee prior to the hearing. Kaja may have felt it had little choice but to drop the eviction and pay the fees as it was bombarded with criticism after it was disclosed the company had tried to evict White, 79, and his two teenage sons from a home it did not even own.

"That kind of carelessness is commonplace when the defendant is a poor person" who cannot afford an attorney, Adrian said.

Thomas Cassady, Kaja's Chicago attorney, declined to comment when asked whether Kaja's agreement to pay \$2,940 in legal fees indicated the firm had done something wrong in the White case. "I have no comment at all," Cassady said.

Brostrom also agreed to remove White's name from the summary of the case that is posted on the Wisconsin online court records system known as CCAP. Tenants and housing officials say central city landlords often will not rent to people with a recent eviction on their CCAP record, even if the eviction action was dismissed.

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Kaja Holdings 2 is a limited liability company that is linked to Vision Property Management, a South Carolina company that manages about 5,500 properties nationwide. The company often gives renters the option to buy the properties they rent.

Those deals, however, generally require the tenants to pay all costs of repairing and maintaining the homes they are renting. The Vision entities may evict the tenant if rent payments are missed, resulting in the tenant losing all the money they had spent on repairing the property and company being able to rent it to somebody else.

Vision has been the target of [critical media stories](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/22/business/dealbook/rent-to-own-homes-a-win-win-for-landlords-a-risk-for-struggling-tenants.html?_r=0) ([https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/22/business/dealbook/rent-to-own-homes-a-win-win-for-landlords-a-risk-for-struggling-tenants.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/22/business/dealbook/rent-to-own-homes-a-win-win-for-landlords-a-risk-for-struggling-tenants.html?_r=0)) and has been [chastised by U.S. Rep. Elijah Cummings](https://democrats-oversight.house.gov/news/press-releases/cummings-seeks-information-from-vision-property-management-and-fannie-mae-about) (<https://democrats-oversight.house.gov/news/press-releases/cummings-seeks-information-from-vision-property-management-and-fannie-mae-about>) (D-Md.), the leading Democrat on the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. The company is being investigated by the Wisconsin Department of Justice and Adrian said she is reviewing White's lease with Kaja to determine whether additional legal action is warranted.

In White's case, the retired man has said that he's spent about \$20,000 to make repairs to the three bedroom house that he started renting two years ago. White's rent-to-own agreement called for him to pay Kaja \$570 a month, with about \$41 of that going toward the \$40,000 purchase price for the house that was bought at a sheriff's sale for about \$8,000.

City records show the house still needs about \$40,000 work.

While living in and repairing the home, White did not realize that Kaja was not paying the home's property taxes even though the bills were addressed to Kaja and sent to Vision's office in South Carolina, records show.

The city seized the property from Kaja last October because the property owed three years of taxes totaling \$8,199.

Two other Kaja Holdings 2 properties are headed toward tax foreclosure because Kaja owes a total of \$59,475 in back taxes on those. All told, three Milwaukee companies linked to Vision Property Management owe the city about \$123,882 in delinquent taxes, a review of city records shows.

Despite losing title to the house, Kaja filed an eviction action against White in February and then asked the city for permission to pay the back taxes and other fees in order to regain title. The request infuriated aldermen who rejected it

Ald. Robert Bauman said that instead, the city should work with White so he could purchase the house from the city for about \$5,000 to \$10,000.



**A house in the 4100 block of N. 26th St. in Milwaukee is the center of an eviction lawsuit by a business entity that no longer owns the property. (Photo: Mike De Sisti, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel)**

Adrian said a "good Samaritan who asked to remain anonymous" has contacted her agency and would like to provide White with funds to help him buy the house.

*Kevin Crowe of the Journal Sentinel staff contributed to this report.*

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