

Remote Rent Board Meeting Minutes - Held Via Zoom

Wednesday, July 26, 2023

II. Roll Call

Elliott Simpson, Tenant, At-Large - Chair
Barbara Vestal, Landlord, At-Large
Patricia Jane Washburn, Tenant, District 1 (absent at time of roll call)
Matthew Walker, Tenant, District 2
William Keefer, Homeowner, District 3
Antwane Mills, Tenant, District 4 (absent at time of roll call)
Philip Mathieu, Tenant, District 5 - Vice Chair

Staff present:

Zachary Lenhert Licensing & Housing Safety Manager
Benjamin Plante, Esq., Counsel for the Rent Board

III. Executive Session - 00:05:03

Barbara Vestal made a motion that the Board go into Executive Session for the Rent Board to consult with its attorney concerning legal rights and duties with respect to Freedom of Access and Public Meetings Act. Seconded by the Vice Chair. Vote: 5-0 (Washburn and Mills - absent).

00:37:37 - The Board returns from Executive Session.

IV. Approval of Minutes - 00:39:15

A. June 28, 2023 Minutes

The Vice Chair makes a motion to approve the minute as presented. Seconded by Barbara Vestal. Vote: 5-0 (Washburn and Mills - absent).

V. Communications - 00:41:01

There were no items to be discussed.

00:42:01 - Antwane Mills has joined the Rent Board meeting

VI. Unfinished Business - 00:41:52

A. Rent Increase Application - Public Comment

Owner: Eastern Residential Inc

Landlord's Representative: David Bergeron with Port

Property Address: 13 Montreal St, Units 1-8

CBL: 015-B-001-002

Type of Increase: Increased Housing Service Costs

00:46:37 - The Vice Chair made a motion that the Board recuse Matt Walker on the basis of previous comments and perception of bias. Seconded by Barbara Vestal.

00:54:16 - Benjamin Plante, Esq., Counsel for the Rent Board, proposed an amendment to the motion to include that the recusal is only for agenda items A through G. The Vice Chair agrees to the amendment to his original motion. Barbara Vestal seconds the amended motion. Vote: 5-0 (Matt Walker is excluded from the vote and Washburn is absent).

No tenants spoke as objectors.

01:00:18 to 01:04:41 was open for public comment, in which only one was received from Matt Walker.

01:26:23 - After discussion amongst Board members, Caleb with Port Property, and Housing Safety Office (HSO) - the Chair confirms a special meeting to be scheduled for Wednesday, August 16th at 5pm.

01:27:40 - Barbara Vestal makes a motion that the Board table items A through G on the agenda to a date certain, which would be August 16th at 5 o'clock. Seconded by the Chair. Vote: 5-0 (Matt Walker is recused from items A through G and Washburn is absent).

B. Rent Increase Application - Public Comment

Owner: Eastern Residential Inc

Landlord's Representative: David Bergeron with Port Property

Address: 19 Montreal St, Units 1-8 & B

CBL: 015-B-001-002

Type of Increase: Increased Housing Service Costs

Refer to agenda item A - timestamp 01:27:40

C. Rent Increase Application - Public Comment

Owner: Eastern Residential Inc

Landlord's Representative: David Bergeron with Port Property

Address: 25-27 Montreal St, Units 1-8

CBL: 015-B-001-002

Type of Increase: Capital Improvement Costs & Increased Housing Service Costs

Refer to agenda item A - timestamp 01:27:40

D. Rent Increase Application - Public Comment

Owner: Eastern Residential Inc

Landlord's Representative: David Bergeron with Port Property

Address: 304 Eastern Prom, Units 1-8

CBL: 015-B-001-002

Type of Increase: Increased Housing Service Costs

Refer to agenda item A - timestamp 01:27:40

E. Rent Increase Application - Public Comment

Owner: Grant Street Realty Group LLC

Landlord's Representative: David Bergeron with Port Property

Address: 63 Grant St, Units 1-6

CBL: 048-B-016-001

Type of Increase: Increased Housing Service Costs

Refer to agenda item A - timestamp 01:27:40

F. Rent Increase Application - Public Comment

Owner: Grant Street Realty Group LLC

Landlord's Representative: David Bergeron with Port Property

Address: 65 Grant St, Units 1-6

CBL: 048-B-016-001

Type of Increase: Increased Housing Service Costs

Refer to agenda item A - timestamp 01:27:40

G. Rent Increase Application - Public Comment

Owner: Grant Street Realty Group LLC

Landlord's Representative: David Bergeron with Port Property

Address: 69 Grant St, Units 1-6

CBL: 048-B-015-001

Type of Increase: Increased Housing Service Costs

Refer to agenda item A - timestamp 01:27:40

H. Rent Increase Application - Public Comment - 01:29:17

Owner: Joanne Stamplis

Address: 34 Cushman St, all 3 units

CBL: 056-D-005-001

01:40:25 - Benjamin Plante, Esq., Counsel for the Rent Board, requests that the Board receives formal voluntary absentions from William Keefer and Antwane Mills, so that it is clear for the record who is engaging in discussion and voting on the application

Both William Keefer and Antwane Mills voluntarily abstain from this agenda item.

01:45:18 - Board members discuss what they would like to see the owner provide to better process the MNOI application.

01:50:17 - The owner has joined the meeting during the midst of the Board discussing the application

No tenants spoke as objectors.

No public comment was received on the application.

02:46:51 - Patricia J. Washburn has joined the meeting.

02:48:57 - The Chair circled back with the owner to ask if they would be okay with the Board tabling the application for another month or two so that the Board can come up with a method on how to proceed with the application.

The owner did confirm that she is okay with waiting.

02:51:41 - The Vice Chair made a motion to table this application until the implementation of a rule has been approved by the City Council to handle this type of situation. Seconded by Barbara Vestal. Vote: 4-0 (Washburn, Mills, and Keefer abstained from the vote).

I. Rent Increase Application - Public Comment - 02:53:22

Owner: Trelawny 657 LLC

Landlord's Representative: Paul S. Bulger, Esq. with Jewell & Bulger, P.A.

Address: 655 Congress St

CBL: 046-D-021-001

03:02:27 - Matt Walker has voluntarily recused himself from this agenda item due to a conflict of interest being a current tenant at 655 Congress Street

03:04:20 - Patricia J. Washburn suggested that the Board table this application to allow the three new board members time to review the documentation submitted, Mills and Keefer were in agreement.

03:09:27 - Barbara Vestal made a motion to table this application to August 16th or the 23rd, based on a determination of where the applicant would be on the agenda. Seconded by the Chair. Vote: 6-0 (Matt Walker recused).

VII. New Business - 03:10:51

A. Rent Increase Application - Public Comment

Owner: Rudolph Casparius

Agent: Erik Casparius with Casparius Holdings LLC

Address: 105 Woodford St, all 5 units

CBL: 129-E-019-001

03:11:47 - The Chair asks the three new board members (Washburn, Mills, and Keefer) if they also wish to voluntarily abstain from this application due to needing more time to review the application

Confirmation of abstaining was received from all three

No tenants spoke as objectors

No public comments were received

03:35:18 - Barbara Vestal makes a motion to table this application until after the Board has guidance from the City Council on application of the MNOI in the situation where an applicant is unable to provide 2019 information. Seconded by the Vice Chair. 4-0 (Washburn, Mills, and Keefer abstained)

B. Continued Discussion for Annual Report - 03:39:58

Board members continued discussing preparation for the annual report from 03:39:58 to 04:18:20 on the recorded meeting.

VIII. Adjourn

04:18:55 - Patricia Washburn makes a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Barbara Vestal. Vote: 7-0