

Remote Rent Board Meeting (Special) Minutes - Held Via Zoom

Wednesday, August 16, 2023

II. Roll Call

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

Staff present:

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

III. Approval of Minutes - 00:01:56

There are no minutes to be approved.

IV. Communications - 00:02:01

A. Written Public Comment

The written public comment received was directly related to the first item on the agenda. There was no discussion on this item.

VI. Unfinished Business - 00:02:21

A. Rent Increase Application - Public Comment

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

00:03:13 - Matt Walker is a current tenant at this address, therefore, he is going to voluntarily recuse himself on this item due to a conflict of interest

00:15:26 - Ethan Strempling and Matt Walker who represent the Trelawny Tenants Union (TTU) who speak on behalf of the application as an objector (current tenants of the property)

No public comment was received

00:42:37 - Board moves into questions for the applicant

01:06:24 - Benjamin Plante, Esq., Counsel for the Rent Board, addressed previous involvement with Corporation Counsel on this property regarding the utilities.. He also discussed jurisdiction with the Board. Frame work was provided to the Board on how to proceed with the application

01:22:55 - Zachary Lenhert, with the Housing Safety Office (HSO), provided the Board with a timeline for this property as it pertains to the rent increase request with utilities.

01:43:02 - Barbara Vestal makes a motion that for purposes of reaching the substantive issues, that the Board determine that they do have jurisdiction because they are treating this as a request for approval of a rent increase. To also table further deliberation about whether this constitutes rent until the September meeting and would require that prior to that meeting the Landlord shall submit all Unitil bills for the period that there has been a single meter for the building.

Seconded by Patricia Washburn. Vote: 5-0 (Elliott Simpson was absent, and Matt Walker was recused)

B. Rent Increase Application - Public Comment - 01:47:57

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

01:48:40 - The Acting Chair, Philip Mathieu, makes a motion that Matt Walker be recused from consideration of this and the preceding Port Property applications on the basis of having previously made public comment about the applicants that could be received as having bias. Seconded by Barbara Vestal. Vote: 5-0 (Elliott Simpson was absent, and Matt Walker did not vote)

No tenants spoke as objectors

01:52:49 through 01:56:09 - Public comment was received from Matt Walker

02:06:27 - Barbara Vestal makes a motion that the Board approve the request for 13 Montreal Street for an increase of \$62.14 per month based on increased housing service costs. Seconded by Patricia Washburn. Vote: 2-3-1 (Washburn, Keefer, and Mills voted NO. Simpson is absent, and Walker was recused). The motion did not pass.

02:10:48 - Patricia Washburn provides her reason for justification on voting against the motion previously made. A new motion was made to reject the application on the basis of lack of a compelling case. Seconded by Antwane Mills.

02:37:40 - Vote occurred on previously mentioned motion: 3-2-1 (Mathieu and Vestal voted NO. Simpson is absent, and Walker was recused). The motion did not pass.

C. Rent Increase Application - Public Comment - 02:50:49

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

No tenants spoke as objectors

02:53:30 through 02:55:21 opened for public comment, in which one was received from Matt Walker

03:22:29 - Barbara Vestal makes a motion that the Board approve the application for 19 Montreal Street for an increase of \$112.30 per month. Seconded by the Acting Chair. Vote: 3-2-1 (Washburn and Keefer voted NO. Simpson is absent, and Walker was recused). The motion did not pass.

03:30:45 through 03:40:21 - the Board takes a short recess from the meeting

03:45:25 - A workshop has been suggested to be added to the agenda for the beginning of the next meeting

03:54:38 - Patricia Washburn makes a motion to table the rest of the agenda until the September meeting. Seconded by the Acting Chair. Vote: 4-0 (Keefer and Simpson are absent, and Walker is recused).

D. 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

See agenda item C - timestamp 03:54:38

E. 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

See agenda item C - timestamp 03:54:38

F. 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

See agenda item C - timestamp 03:54:38

G. 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

See agenda item C - timestamp 03:54:38

H. 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

See agenda item C - timestamp 03:54:38

VII. New Business

A. MNOI Discussion

There was no discussion on this item

VIII. Adjourn

04:07:20 - Barbara Vestal made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Patricia Washburn.

Vote: 5-0 (Keefer and Simpson are absent)