

AGENDA ITEM REQUEST FORM

Department: Rent Program

Department Head: Nicolas Traylor

Phone: 620-6564

Meeting Date: October 19, 2022

Final Decision Date Deadline: October 19, 2022

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE: The Richmond Rent Program has received a check for \$10,000 for participating in the creation and development of Richmond's rent assistance program. At the meeting on August 17, 2022, the Richmond Rent Board directed staff to return to propose options utilizing the Rent Assistance Partner Grant. Rent Program Staff propose three (3) options: (1) Mediation training for Public Information Unit Staff, (2) Mass Mailing Outreach Campaign to inform the Richmond Landlords and Tenants about Rent Program services, eviction protections and rent assistance resources, or to (3) Use grant to fund general operating purposes.

INDICATE APPROPRIATE BODY

- | | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> City Council | <input type="checkbox"/> Redevelopment Agency | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing Authority | <input type="checkbox"/> Surplus Property Authority | <input type="checkbox"/> Joint Powers Financing Authority |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finance Standing Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Safety Public Services Standing Committee | <input type="checkbox"/> Local Reuse Authority | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: <u>Rent Board</u> | |

ITEM

- Presentation/Proclamation/Commendation (3-Minute Time Limit)
- Public Hearing Regulation Other:
- Contract/Agreement Rent Board As Whole
- Grant Application/Acceptance Claims Filed Against City of Richmond
- Resolution Video/PowerPoint Presentation (contact KCRT @ 620.6759)

RECOMMENDED ACTION: RECEIVE proposed options for utilizing the \$10,000 Rent Assistance Partner Grant and APPROVE and AUTHORIZE one of the three proposed options to spend the funds.

AGENDA ITEM NO:

G-2.

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AGENDA REPORT

DATE: October 19, 2022
TO: Chair Finlay and Members of the Rent Board
FROM: Nicolas Traylor, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Proposed Options for Utilizing \$10,000 Rent Assistance Partner Grant

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:

The Richmond Rent Program has received a check for \$10,000 for participating in the creation and development of Richmond's rent assistance program. At the meeting on August 17, 2022, the Richmond Rent Board directed staff to return to propose options utilizing the Rent Assistance Partner Grant. Rent Program Staff propose three (3) options: (1) Mediation training for Public Information Unit Staff, (2) Mass Mailing Outreach Campaign to inform the Richmond Landlords and Tenants about Rent Program services, eviction protections and rent assistance resources, or to (3) Use grant to fund general operating purposes.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

RECEIVE proposed options for utilizing the \$10,000 Rent Assistance Partner Grant and APPROVE and AUTHORIZE one of the three proposed options to spend the funds.

FISCAL IMPACT:

A separate special fund (within the Rent Program fund) has been established to hold the \$10,000 Rent Assistance Partner Grant.

DISCUSSION:

Background

On August 3, 2022, the Richmond Rent Program received an email from Jessica Travenia, Program Coordinator for the Richmond Rapid Response Rent Relief Committee, informing the Rent Program that it had been awarded a \$10,000 grant to support development of Richmond's rent assistance program.

History of the Rent Relief Committee

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2018 and 2019, the Rent Program's Executive Director organized a series of meetings with the City of Richmond, past Richmond Rent Board members and Richmond City Council members to discuss the creation of a rent assistance program dedicated to Richmond Tenants and Landlords.

Based on the high percentage of housing counseling cases that revolved around non-payment of rent evictions in Richmond, it was clear that there was an on-going demand for rent assistance. At the time rent assistance resources were not only scarce, but spread out among many local organizations, each competing for rent assistance funds. These preliminary meetings spurred discussions on the need for a permanent rent assistance program. Initial ideas included modeling a program for Richmond on Oakland's "Keep Oakland Housed" program, a collaboration between the City of Oakland, corporations, foundations, local non-profits, and philanthropic organizations. When the COVID-19 pandemic began in the Spring of 2020, the urgency to create a Richmond rent assistance program escalated, and in response, the Rent Program spearheaded efforts to create a permanent rent assistance program.

In the Spring of 2020, the Executive Director and Deputy Director of the Rent Program organized a meeting with the City of Richmond's Community Development Department to urgently address the anticipated increase in demand for rent assistance services in Richmond and began the process of developing a permanent rent assistance program. Rent Program Staff and Community Development Staff realized that it would make sense to invite local non-profits that administer existing rent assistance services to the meeting in order to learn from their expertise and to include them in the effort to develop a permanent rent assistance program. Those local non-profits included Seasons of Sharing, SparkPoint, Shelter Inc., the West Contra Costa County EdFund, Richmond Community Foundation, and Catholic Charities. Eventually the coalition of non-profits grew to include the Richmond Neighborhood Housing Services (RNHS), the Office of Mayor Tom Butt, Richmond Land (Trust), and the Community Housing Development Corporation (CDHC). Meeting weekly to strategize efforts, the coalition known as the Rent Relief Committee, has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars, integrated itself into the Richmond Rapid Response Fund (R3F), and disbursed over \$385,000 in rent assistance to 77 Richmond renters and landlords.

After initially forming and leading the Rent Relief Committee since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Rent Program passed leadership on to the West Contra Costa County EdFund. In May 2021, Jasmine Jones, the Executive Director of the West Contra Costa EdFund began overseeing the R3F Rent Relief Committee. This transition made sense because the West Contra Costa EdFund was overseeing the Richmond Rapid Response Fund, a City sponsored program that provides financial relief to Richmond residents impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In July of 2021, the West Contra Costa County EdFund hired Jessica Travenia, Program Officer, to organize the rent assistance program's governing structure, Memorandums of Agreement between the Richmond Rapid Response Fund and the local agencies that administer rent assistance programs,

and to continue the program's development and efforts to seek additional funding. Efforts are underway develop a permanent standalone City sponsored rent assistance program separate from the Richmond Rapid Response Fund.

Options for Use of \$10,000 Rent Relief Partner Grant

The \$10,000 Rent Relief Partner Grant may be used for general operating costs of any other activity related to the Rent Program, except for lobbying. Rent Program staff have three proposed options for using the grant monies.

Option 1: Mediation Training for Rent Program Staff

One option for use of the \$10,000 Rent Relief Partner Grant is mediation training for Rent Program staff. In fiscal year 2018-19, the Rent Program enrolled three Rent Program Services Analysts (housing counselors) and the Rent Program's Hearing Examiner in mediation training. The Rent Program utilized Steve Rosenberg Mediation Training program, one of the most well established and highly rated mediation training programs in the San Francisco Bay Area.

One of the main purposes of the Richmond Rent Ordinance is to protect Tenants again unwarranted and arbitrary evictions. To enforce those eviction protections, Rent Program staff help resolve eviction disputes, not only by educating Landlords and Tenants on their rights and recourse, but also by engaging in mediation. The most common eviction related issues brought to the Rent Program are non-payment of rent disputes. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in non-payment of rent and rental debt disputes. Non-payment of rent and rental debt disputes can often be resolved through mediation, saving both the Landlord and Tenant from an unnecessary litigation, and reducing displacement. Mediations that deal with nonpayment of rent often require the negotiating of repayment plans. Mediations also allow Tenants and Landlords to resolve other issues related to the tenancy, such as nuisance, habitability complaints, lease violations, among others. The ability to conduct effective mediations around disputes that often have multiple, intersecting concerns, requires a keen understanding and expertise in mediation practices.

To date, the Rent Program has performed over a hundred mediations on issues such as breach of lease disputes, security deposits, rent overcharges, habitability issues, non-payment of rent and rental debt, nuisance, relocation assistance, and other issues.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Rent Program has had almost a complete turnover of its public information staff. There is only one staff member with the Rent Program that completed the 2019 mediation training. There are currently 6 Rent Program staff who may perform mediations and would benefit from mediation training: two Rent Program Services Analysts, one supervising Analyst, the Program's Deputy Director, the Staff Attorney that supports Public Information staff, and the Rent Program's Hearing Examiner. The total cost to train for 6 employees is \$9,750 or \$1,625 per staff.

ITEM G-2

(Attachment 1) Staff recommend using Steve Rosenberg's Mediation Training program, based on feedback from staff who attended the last training.

OPTION 2: Outreach Campaign to Promote Rent Assistance Resources

Another proposed option is to spend the \$10,000 grant on outreach and community education related to evictions and rent assistance resources. Rent Program staff recommend utilizing a mass outreach approach, such as:

Billboard Ad in Richmond: \$10,000 would pay for a billboard on a major intersection of Richmond for approximately 3-6 months depending on location. The billboard would inform Richmond residents about the Rent Program, eviction protections and rent relief.

Mass Mailing: \$10,000 would pay for a mass mailing (postcard) that would reach all Richmond Landlords and Tenants (Attachment 2-example quote). The postcard would inform Tenants and Landlords about the Rent Program's services (e.g., mediation, etc.), eviction protections and rent relief resources.

OPTION 3: Use the \$10,000 Grant for General Operating Purposes

The \$10,000 grant may be used for general operating purposes or could be set aside for reserves.

Proposed Timeline

If the Rent Board directs staff to spend the \$10,000 grant on Option 1: Mediation Training or Option 2: A Mass Outreach Project, Rent Program staff will present a project timeline and update the Rent Board of the project's progress during "Reports of Officers."

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

Attachment 1 – Steven Rosenberg Mediation Training Cost and Overview of Training

Attachment 2 - Example quote for mass mailing project



Steven Rosenberg 40-Hour Mediation Training

\$1,625.00

An interactive, 40 hour professional training program utilizing simulations, coaching, lectures and demonstrations. Dates Presented: A Live Webinar: October 19-11 & 26-28, 2022

Wednesdays 1:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m., Thursdays and Fridays 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Categories: [Mediation Training](#), [Online Training](#)



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> Description

Live Webinar: October 19-21 & 26-28, 2022

An interactive, 40 hour professional training program utilizing simulations, coaching, lectures and demonstrations.

Time: Wednesdays 1:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Thursdays and Fridays 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Location: Live Webinar (Zoom)

Tuition Includes:

- > Course Materials
- > Comprehensive Resource Manual

This training is designed for:

- > Attorneys
- > Judges
- > Business Professionals
- > Mental Health Professionals
- > Administrators *

In this training you will

- > Develop and refine mediation techniques
- > Enhance constructive communication and negotiation skills
- > Explore the nature of conflict
- > Discover ways to handle emotions and interpersonal dynamics that can impede resolution
- > Develop effective skills for advocacy in mediation
- > Learn ways to establish and market a mediation practice
- > The material covered in the course will allow you to confidently serve as a mediator.

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**ITEM G-2
ATTACHMENT 2**

Aug. 26, 2021

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EDDM Mailing postcard 1st mailing
Size 6 x 11" finished
Color 4/4 w/ overall Aqueous coating
Stock 100# Silk cover
Finishing; re-design of postcard from 5x 7 " to 6 x 11 to meet EDDM mail standards;
Print, trim, mail processing, and drop at the US Post office using the Greenerprinter
EDDM permit

Mailing area by zip code
94801; 94805 ;94806 ;94804

Total qty 31,914

Print /mail cost: \$3,257.02

Postage total \$ 5,967.92 **Postage payment must be received prior to mail drop at USPS

Total Price \$ 9,224.94

Thank you,

Jeff Cox
jeff@greenerprinter.com

Phone 510-647-2511

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