



# REVIEW OF COMPREHENSIVE OUTREACH PLAN AND DISCUSSION ON POSSIBLE REVISIONS TO BUDGET FY 2023-2024

ITEM F-1

Special Meeting of the Richmond Rent Board

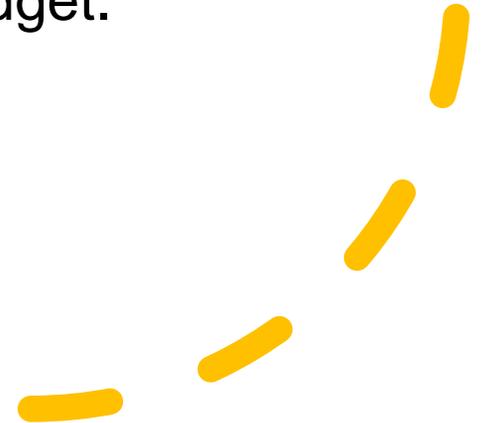
June 12, 2023

Nicolas Traylor, Executive Director

---

# Statement of the Issue

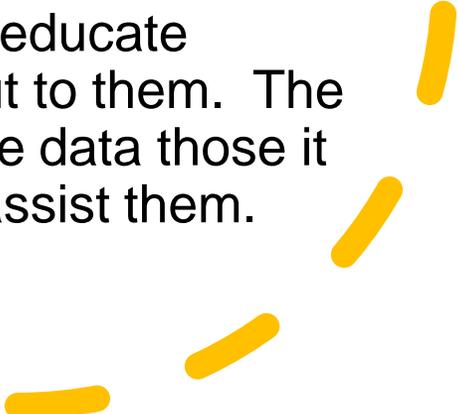
At the May 31, 2023, Special Meeting of the Rent Board, the Board approved budget Option B (with the addition of two interpreters instead of one) and directed staff to present the Rent Program's comprehensive outreach plan. Review of the comprehensive outreach plan and ongoing budget concerns related to posting the entire agenda packet in translated form supports consideration of possible revisions to the Fiscal Year 2023-24 budget.



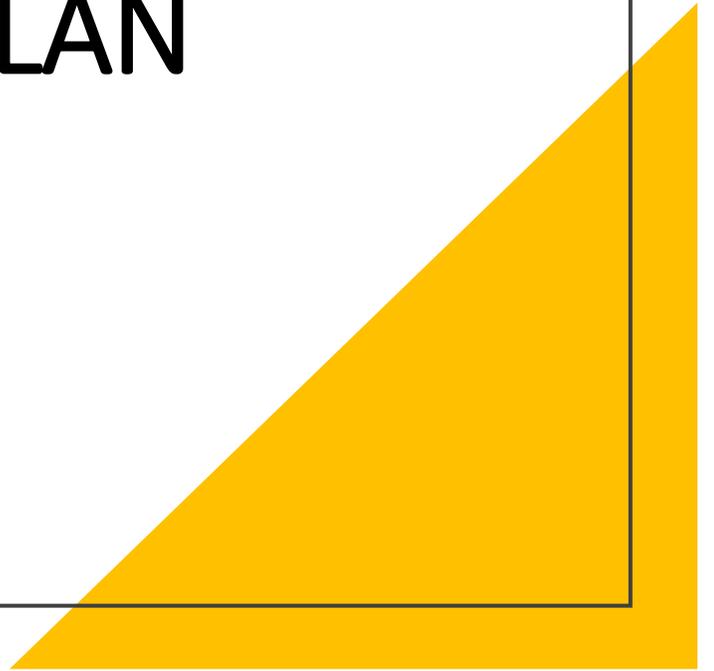
# Discussion and Background

In accordance with Section 11.100.060(g) of the Richmond Fair Rent, Just Cause for Eviction, and Homeowner Protection Ordinance (hereafter “Richmond Rent Ordinance”), the Richmond Rent Program performs community education and outreach so that community members and rental property owners are aware of their rights and responsibilities under the Richmond Rent Ordinance and associated laws.

If Landlords and Tenants are on the same page about the law, it is more likely that the law will be followed and enforced. Community education and outreach activities are funded in a variety of ways, with most costs associated with staffing and with lesser costs for supplies, translation, interpretation, and technology. Community outreach and community education work hand in hand: to educate community members you first must reach out to them. The Rent Program, therefore, must have accurate data those it serves: Tenants, Landlords, and those that assist them.



# THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



# Successful Outreach and Education Starts with Securing Accurate Data on Richmond Landlords and Tenants

- Richmond Rent Board regulations compel Richmond Landlords to enroll and to register rental properties fully subject to the Richmond Rent Ordinance.
- Public Information and Enrollment Staff (“PIE”) conduct research to identify rental properties in the City of Richmond by the following methods:
  - Property Enrollment Forms
    - Tenancy Registration Forms
    - Property Data Subscriptions
    - City and County Records
    - Online Rental Listings
    - Available Real-Estate Data
    - Information Gathering through Housing Counseling Sessions
- The collection of data by staff is utilized through our various outreach methods, which include education campaigns, targeted and mass outreach.
  - Enrollment Packet Mailing to Landlords
  - Courtesy Compliance Letters to Landlords and Tenants
  - Rental Housing Fee Invoice to Landlords
- To fund outreach and education, the Rent Board has budgeted **\$369,140** for Public Information and Enrollment staff. **Approximately 25-30%** of staff time is devoted to outreach and education related activities.

# Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Outreach Plan and Activities

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted staff's ability to implement some outreach and education activities, especially those that required in-person engagement.

Expanding to key stakeholders in the community, including local businesses, and organizations.

In 2020, Rent Program staff translated and conducted all community workshops in English and Spanish. **More than 10% of counseling sessions are conducted in Spanish.**

# Rent Program Outreach Plan and Priorities

The Rent Program's outreach plan and activities are tailored and oriented around Richmond's diverse population through education that helps effectuate the purpose of the Rent Ordinance and enforcement of its requirements.

Over 40% of the population speaks Spanish

Over 20% of the rental housing stock is affordable housing.

About 57% of the rental housing stock is partially covered by the Richmond Rent Ordinance (primarily single-family dwellings and condominiums in which only Just Cause eviction protections apply)

43% of rental units are rent controlled

About 90% of Richmond Landlords own 5 or less rental units

Although having approximately the same number of residents as Berkeley, Richmond has about 5,700 Landlords, compared to Berkeley's approximately 3,000 landlords.

# Outreach and Education Associated with Property Enrollment and Payment of the Rental Housing Fee

## Billing Outreach and Education

Large number of Richmond Landlords and high turnover of Rental Units requires more staff resources devoted to Landlord outreach and education

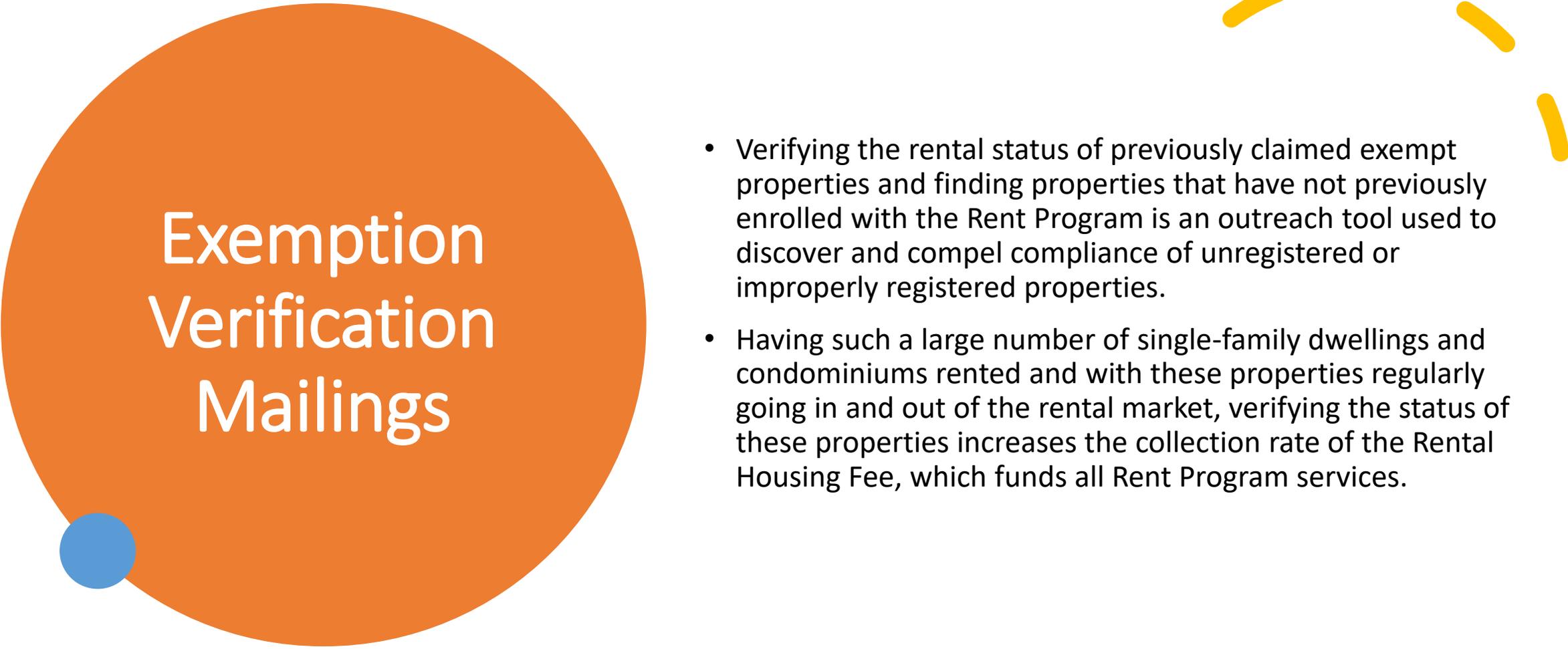
As a result, staff have prioritized: (1) in-person outreach and education through robust counseling and monthly workshops, (2) targeted outreach to new owners, and (3) billing, enrollment and exemption verification outreach and education

Addressing the High Turnover of Rental Units through the New Owner Outreach Project



# New Owner Outreach Project

- Since February of 2020, the New Owner Outreach project focuses on reaching out to new owners of rental property in Richmond.
- The high number of single-family homes and condominiums rented in Richmond and the frequent sale of those properties requires targeted outreach and education focused on new owners.
- Staff review monthly residential property sales and cross examine those newly sold properties with the properties in the Rent Program database.
- Newly identified owners receive an informational packet, informing them of the requirements under the Rent Ordinance
- This project helps ensure that new owners know their rights and obligations under the Rent Ordinance
- Helps maintain accurate records regarding which rental property owners to invoice and where to focus programmatic services. This project is an ongoing effort.

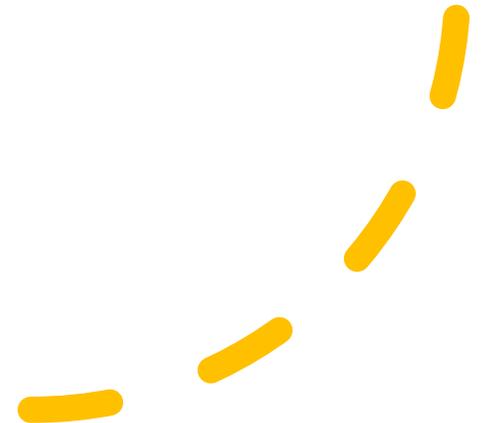


# Exemption Verification Mailings

- Verifying the rental status of previously claimed exempt properties and finding properties that have not previously enrolled with the Rent Program is an outreach tool used to discover and compel compliance of unregistered or improperly registered properties.
- Having such a large number of single-family dwellings and condominiums rented and with these properties regularly going in and out of the rental market, verifying the status of these properties increases the collection rate of the Rental Housing Fee, which funds all Rent Program services.

# Bilingual Educational Workshops and Counseling

- Since 2021, Rent Program staff have held a Spanish educational workshop for each workshop held in English. All workshop presentations are translated into Spanish as well. Workshops occur monthly.
- 40% of Richmond's population speaks Spanish and 10% of counseling sessions in Spanish
- Richmond's large Spanish speaking population has also made it important to have enough bilingual staff to handle the demand for bilingual counseling (almost 50% of staff are bilingual Spanish speakers).

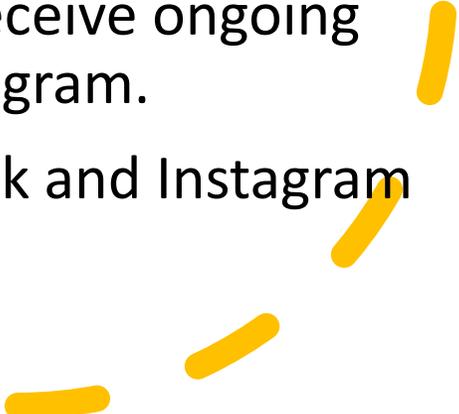




# Affordable Housing Outreach

- Affordable Housing is exempt from the Rent Control provisions of the Rent Ordinance, so most outreach and education is focused on eviction issues and mediating disputes.
- Affordable Housing properties have onsite management, and who must adhere to state and federal guidelines regarding lawful state approved rent levels and habitability standards
- To ensure that affordable housing tenants and management are aware of eviction protections and mediation to resolve disputes, staff have built and maintained relationships with on-site management and conducted onsite educational workshops
- Conflicts between management and Tenants is addressed through Rent Program mediation. To help prevent unnecessary evictions and address habitability issues, staff have mediated repayment plans and helped negotiate rent reductions and repair agreements to address habitability issues
- Staff hold an interdepartmental meeting monthly with Police Fire, Community Development and the Housing Authority discuss issues at affordable housing sites- which allows staff to focus outreach and education resources accordingly.
- Staff refer affordable tenants to legal assistance with one of the contracted legal service providers

# Online Outreach and Education

- A robust website is vital outreach and education tool. The Rent Program's website ([www.richmondrent.org](http://www.richmondrent.org)) allows:
    - Access to all the pertinent laws and regulations related to rent control, eviction protections, the Relocation Ordinance, and other intersecting laws.
    - Landlords and Tenants to access all Rent Program services
    - Receive email updates from the Rent Program through the Rent Program's Listserv. There are over 1,600 members of the public who receive ongoing Listserv messages from the Rent Program.
    - Links to the Rent Program's Facebook and Instagram page and posts
- 



## Outreach and Education at Community Events

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, staff attended community events, such as Cinco de Mayo, Juneteenth, National Night Out, neighborhood festivals, neighborhood community Council meetings, and many other community events. Staff intend to begin attending community events again in the upcoming fiscal year.

# Targeted Outreach to Community Stakeholders

- One of the newest outreach activities that was initiated just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic was identifying, reaching out to, and educating key stakeholders in the community.
- Visiting local barber shops, food markets, bike shops, and other community gathering spots, and handing out business cards, putting up posters and having conversations with community members, proved to be a very effective way of integrating the Rent Program into the community.
- Building relationships with key stakeholders increases “word of mouth” referrals to the Rent Program and its services.

# Tenancy Registration Outreach and Education

- Landlords of rent controlled units must register each tenancy, to allow for the tracking of the lawful rent levels.
- The Rent Program plans to send Tenants and Landlords (rent-controlled units only) a notice informing them of the apparent lawful rent ceiling.
- Receiving a notice of the apparent lawful rent or rent ceiling, helps keep Landlords and Tenants on the same page as to what the lawful rent is (helping avoid rent overcharges), and triggers follow up calls regarding other Landlord/Tenant issues.
- In 2019-20, the Rent Program planned to initiate tenancy registration outreach, but due to the pandemic and the need to secure a new database the project was delayed and not fully implemented. Staff intend to continue development and implementation of tenancy registration outreach in the upcoming fiscal year.
- The City of Richmond is currently evaluating vendors support to all departments within the City of Richmond, including the Rent Program. Implementation of the new database is planned for this upcoming fiscal year.
- A 2012 Study, conducted by the City of Los Angeles, revealed that rent control jurisdictions utilizing tenancy registration had higher levels of compliance.

# Eviction Noticing Requirement Outreach and Education

- Landlords of Controlled Rental Units are required to submit a copy to the Rent Program of any notice of termination of tenancy served on a tenant, within two business days of having served the tenant.
- With this information, the Rent Program monitors eviction trends, and conducts special outreach to Tenants and Landlords engaged in the eviction process. After the Rent Program receives a notice of termination of tenancy, staff send both the Tenant and the Landlord, an informational letter outlining eviction protections and requirements, as well as legal assistance resources.
- Tenants and Landlords who receive the eviction related informational letters usually contact the Rent Program, which leads to important discussions that can help prevent unnecessary or unlawful evictions and costly mistakes for not knowing the law. After contacting the Rent Program, landlords and tenants may avail themselves to other Rent Program services: eviction defense legal assistance, the Rent Adjustment Petition Process, mediation and self-help resources available on our website (workshops, videos, and other forms of media). This is an ongoing project.

## Outreach and Education through Courtesy Compliance Letters

If a Tenant contacts the Rent Program after receiving an unlawful eviction or rent increase notice staff sends a Courtesy Compliance Letter to the Landlord informing them, they may be in violation of the law and to contact the Rent Program for assistance. This is an ongoing project.

## Outreach and Education related to “No-Fault” Just Cause Evictions

Tenants and Landlords who are going through the owner-move in eviction process and Withdraw from the Rental Market eviction process, receive a special informational packet on their rights and obligations, including the right to receive, or obligation to provide, permanent relocation payments. This is an ongoing project.

## Rent Increase Related Outreach- Education

Each year, the Rent Program announces the Annual General Adjustment (annual allowable rent increase percentage), which since the passage of Measure P in 2021, is calculated at 60% of the Consumer Price Index (inflationary rate) or 3%, whichever is less. To get the word out about how much the rent can be raised, Rent Program staff send out a Listserv message, update the Program's website, and sends a mailing Richmond Landlords and Tenants in Controlled Rental Units. This is an annual project.

## Important Update Postcards and Fact-Sheets

During the COVID-19 pandemic, to protect public health, various emergency laws were passed in California to protect housing stability, prevent displacement, and provide rent assistance resources. To ensure the community was aware of these new laws, all Richmond residents were mailed an informational postcard and a comprehensive Fact Sheet detailing these new laws. Projects such as these occur on a situational basis.

# Program Messaging Outreach: Annual Reports, Videos and Infographic Videos

The Rent Ordinance requires that the Rent Program provide an annual report to the City Council at least once a year. At that presentation, the Executive Director, or his/her designee, provides the City Council and community with statistics and information about rents and evictions in Richmond and the services provided by the Rent Program.

The Rent Program Annual Report acts as a central “messaging” tool for explaining how the Program effectuates the purpose of the Rent Ordinance and the role it plays in protecting and preserving public health. Rent Program staff have produced both comprehensive written Annual Reports, as well Annual Reports in the form of infographic/informational videos.

The Rent Program also made a video that explains its impact on the community and why rent control and eviction protections are necessary in Richmond

## Rent Board Ambassador Program (Newly Proposed)

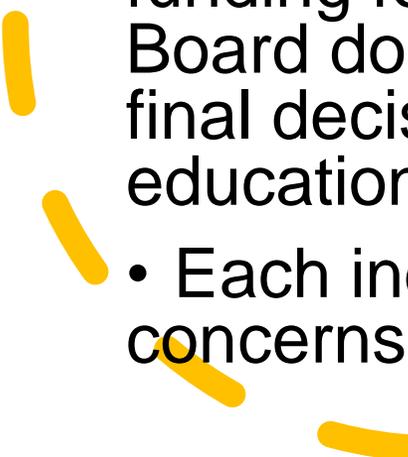
An expansion of the target outreach to community stakeholders, the Ambassador Program would task Rent Program staff to meet with key stakeholders including both private, public, and nonprofit business and agencies that serve the community to educate those stakeholders on key aspects of the Rent Ordinance and Rent Program services; and listen to concerns that intersect with the Rent Program's mission.

## Hybrid Board Meetings (Newly Proposed):

The Board has instructed staff to investigate the possibility of conducting hybrid Board meetings however implementing hybrid Board meetings requires the involvement of the City's IT department and the IT department does not currently have the bandwidth to support hybrid Rent Board meetings. The Rent Program intends to continue discussions with the IT department and the City of Richmond regarding the ability of the City to support the Rent Program holding hybrid Board meetings at some point in the future. At this time however, Hybrid Board meetings cannot be included in the outreach plan for FY 2023-24.



# Fiscal Year 2023-24 Outreach and Education Budget Priorities and Budget Options

- Among the Board's priorities for fiscal year 2023-24 are (1) translation of Rent Board documents/interpretation of Rent Board meetings, (2) conducting hybrid Board meetings and (3) designing creative outreach projects.
  - At their May 31, 2023, Special Meeting of the Richmond Rent Board, the Board approved Option B, which among other things, provides funding for publicly posted translation and interpretation of all Rent Board documents with meetings held every other month. Prior to making final decisions on the budget, it is important to discuss how outreach and education funds can best be utilized.
  - Each individual Board member has been briefed on significant concerns regarding the public posting of translated agenda packets.
- 

# Addressing Some Important Questions....

- Why was Option A presented as an option, if staff recommend against it?
- Why was Option B recommended?
- Why is staff changing their recommendation regarding Option B and now recommending the alternative option that was presented at the May 31, 2023, Special Meeting of the Rent Board?

# Fiscal Year 2023-24 Outreach and Education Budget Priorities and Budget Options

## List of Rent Board/Rent Program documents for translation consideration

### Hearings Unit

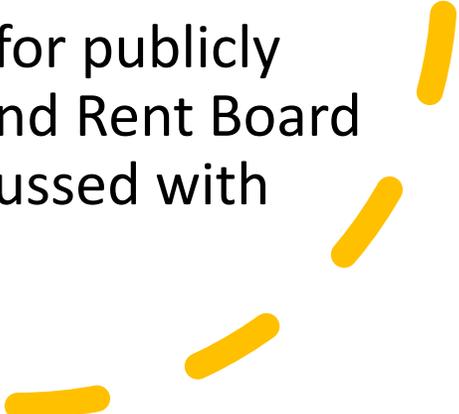
- Petitions
- Appeals
- Digest

### Board and Legal Postings

- Rent Board Agenda
- Rent Board Packet
- Annual Reports
- Ordinance
- Regulations
- Resolutions
- Public Records Act (PRA) Request
- Submissions to the Board
- Emails for PRA and Petitions filed

A large orange circle on the left side of the slide, partially cut off by the edge.

## Additional Reasons to Consider the Alternative Budget Option

1. Publicly posting a translated agenda packet would not necessarily increase participation at Board meetings.
  2. The entire agenda packet can be translated for individual Boardmembers at no addition cost other than staff time. Additionally, an internally translated copy of the entire agenda packet in Spanish could be provided upon request to individual community members as well, with ample notice prior to or after the Board meeting.
  3. The Board can direct staff in FY 2023-24 to investigate/research future options for publicly posting translated agenda packets and Rent Board documents, that avoid the risks discussed with Board members.
- 
- A decorative graphic consisting of several short, thick yellow dashes arranged in a curved, upward-sloping path in the bottom right corner of the slide.



## Recommended Action

- RECIEVE agenda report on the Rent Program's outreach plan and PROVIDE direction related to potential revisions to the proposed Fiscal Year 2023-24 budget, and:
  - Translate only the agenda for public posting, while providing individual Board members with fully translated copies of the agenda packet; and
  - Monthly Board meetings would be added back into the budget.

*Note: The proposed revised budget includes the Board's direction to include two interpreters per Board meeting and would remove the cost of translating each Board packet for public posting.*

*If approved, the proposed Rental Housing Fees would be \$220 for fully-covered rental units and \$125 for partially covered-rental units, with an overall budget of \$3,004,698.*