

# AGENDA ITEM REQUEST FORM

Department: Rent Program

Department Head: Nicolas Traylor

Phone: 620-6564

Meeting Date: December 20, 2023

Final Decision Date Deadline: December 20, 2023

**STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:** The minutes of the October 18, 2023, Regular Meeting of the Richmond Rent Board require approval.

## 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

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation/Proclamation/Commendation (3-Minute Time Limit) |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing   | <input type="checkbox"/> Regulation  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: <u>CONSENT CALENDAR</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contract/Agreement   | <input type="checkbox"/> Rent Board As Whole                                     |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grant Application/Acceptance                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Claims Filed Against City of Richmond                   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution   | <input type="checkbox"/> Video/PowerPoint Presentation (contact KCRT @ 620.6759) |  |

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** APPROVE the minutes of the October 18, 2023, Regular Meeting of the Richmond Rent Board – Rent Program (Cynthia Shaw 620-5552).

AGENDA ITEM NO:

**F-1.**

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**RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA, October 18, 2023**

The Regular Meeting of the Richmond Rent Board was called to order at 5:05 P.M.

**PLEDGE TO THE FLAG**

**ROLL CALL**

**Board Members Present:** Dockens, Hite, and Chair Cantor.

**Staff Present:** Executive Director Nicolas Traylor, Deputy Director Fred Tran, and General Counsel Charles Oshinuga.

**Absent:** Board Member Espinoza and Vice Chair Guadalupe.

**STATEMENT OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

None.

**AGENDA REVIEW**

None.

**PUBLIC FORUM**

Elda Fontenot, from Heritage Park Apartments, Tenants Association President, read a letter expressing concerns about how seniors are affected by the upcoming rent increase and that the increase will continue every year. She mentioned that she spoke to the regional director of Heritage Park regarding the rent increase, asking what the purpose of the increase was when residents received one in October 2022. She was told it could increase 5% (maximum cap) annually. She also stated residents paying rent already have difficulty paying the current rate. The upcoming increase hurts because most residents have fixed incomes, such as social security, disability, Section 8, and food vouchers. The increase will force residents to cut down on necessities such as food, utilities, and personal needs. Ms. Fontenot also mentioned Heritage Park Apartments receives tax incentives and relief from the local city, county, and state while other surrounding cities are reducing rents. She feels residents see the rent issue as abusive treatment to seniors at Heritage Park. She also expressed that the service and amenities have been reduced, declined, or illuminated. She stated their private discussions with management have been returned with negative

and racial comments, and residents feel it is offensive. She also said that when she met with the regional director, she was told they were there to support the residents and provide needed services. All that changed and the management's attitude changed. She mentioned the residents had a meeting scheduled with the regional manager on Mondays. She did not attend the meeting on the second Monday of the month. She asked the Board to intervene on their behalf because this abuse must stop.

Susan Singh, a resident of 18 years at Heritage Park, expressed concerns about how the amenities have diminished and how management has taken so many of them away from the residency, especially during COVID-19. She feels it's obvious that they were trying to cut their costs at the residents' expense. Ms. Singh also mentioned that management has become very disrespectful to the Tenants. She said management told them they would discipline them like children. Management used to provide a complete set of everything, which had been taken away to cut costs. She also mentioned that she had an exchange with Ana about the garden and sent copies of the communications to Council Member Melvin Willis and Executive Director Nicolas Traylor. She noted that it was shocking the way Ana was towards her. She stated the residents have been so upset about the lack of management that they organized a Tenants Association in three weeks. Some residents feel the security is a significant issue, but she added that she lived there for 18 years and feels perfectly safe. She feels the biggest problem is the lack of respect from management. She said that the residents deserve respect and to have amenities continually reduced. She also expressed that many residents had to leave due to the massive rent increase years back because they couldn't afford to pay it.

Iiona Clark expressed concerns about contacting staff at the Rent Program regarding the invoice. The response is the same: "Email this address, and we will get back to you." She said it has been months and she emailed several times with no response. She mentioned that paperless billing will save money and assist the budget. She said that it includes more people who communicate via email and not so much snail mail. She asked if the program could get it together for her to get her invoices via email. She also expressed laws have recently changed, and most housing providers can no longer keep up with the costs of inflation, which affects the cost of housing. She mentioned that this body didn't make that law, but the community that the Board serves is affected by it. She said that she has not seen any adjustments or proposals. She gave an example of capital improvement applications

starting with a 20-page form, which is a barrier. She hasn't tried, even though she has made many improvements to the property. She doesn't come to the Rent Program because the process is a barrier. She added that the previous Board asked staff to streamline that process, which has not been discussed or done to her knowledge. She also asked what the Rent Board has done to encourage participation in any process. She noted that they asked for hybrid meetings so people to attend in person or by Zoom. That conversation has died away without a conclusion. She said the meetings were not recorded to her knowledge, and she cannot go back and listen to the meetings. These are basic things that the Board has been asked to find ways to bring to include the community, the Spanish-speaking community, or community members who are not online. There's been minimal effort by people living in Richmond, a diverse group. She asks if the Rent Board would think and work with them outside of the box.

## **RENT BOARD AS A WHOLE**

**F-1.** The matter of receiving a draft design for proclamation options honoring the service of past Board members and providing feedback on the proposed designs, and direct staff to draft the final proclamation design and associated resolution(s) based on the Board's feedback and to receive quote for the 60-name perpetual plaque made of walnut, was presented by Executive Director Nicolas Traylor. The presentation included a statement of the issue, fiscal impact, proclamation sample designs, walnut perpetual plaque design, and the recommended action. Discussion ensued. The following individual gave comments: Ilona Clark.

A motion made by Board Member Hite seconded the motion with a friendly amendment to Board Member Hite's motion by Board Member Dockens to direct staff to draft the final proclamation, using design 2, which includes the City of Richmond logo on top, a golden seal and associated resolution(s) based on the Board's feedback and to include Board Members before April 4, 2023. Board Member Hite accepted Board Member Dockens's friendly amendment. The motion passed by the following vote: **Ayes:** Board Members Dockens, Hite, and Chair Cantor. **Noes:** None. **Abstentions:** None. **Absent:** Board Member Espinoza and Vice Chair Guadalupe.

## **REPORTS OF OFFICERS/SCHEDULING**

Executive Director Nicolas Traylor gave a brief report about the upcoming Special Rent Board meeting scheduled for Wednesday, October 25, 2023, to hear appeals. He also recommended that all Rent

Board Members read the appeal packet materials before the appeal hearing and be prepared to ask any questions about the appeal.

Board Member Hite asked if the Board could ask questions at the appeal hearing if they are confused or need clarification. General Counsel Charles Oshinuga responded that the Board could ask questions, but if they are legal questions, he recommends that the Board contact him directly before the meeting because if a legal question is asked in a public setting, he will likely not be able to answer it. If there are questions to the parties to help clarify potential confusion, you are permitted to ask those questions.

Executive Director Nicolas Traylor acknowledged the Rent Program Administrative Student Intern, Lizeth Cortes, who assisted with the Board meeting and attended for the first time and welcomed her to the team.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:40 P.M.

Cynthia Shaw  
Staff Clerk

(SEAL)

Approved:

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Rent Board Chair