

Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Verona Township Rent Control Board on Wednesday, September 21, 2021 beginning at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom webinar.

Call to Order:

The notice requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act have been satisfied with respect to this meeting of the Rent Control Board which is being held via Zoom video conferencing due to restrictions on indoor public gatherings resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the time and date were included in the public meeting notice. This information, along with the public internet link and telephone call-in information was posted in the Municipal Building, and sent the official newspapers of the Township, the Verona-Cedar Grove Times at least 48 hours preceding the start time of this meeting. The agenda and public handouts for this meeting can be viewed online at <https://www.veronanj.org/rentcontrol>. A public comment period will be held in the order it is listed on the meeting agenda and instructions on how to comment will be provided at the appropriate time.

Roll Call:

Willola Ashley, Sean Byrnes, Patrick Hanley, Rent Control Board Attorney Alex Graziano, Esq., and Board Administrator & Secretary Kristine Gould are also present.

The Pledge of Allegiance.

Recognition of Board Administrator & Secretary, Kristine Gould and Board Members Pat Hanley, Patrick Burns, Wilolla Ashley.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion to approve the April 7, 2021 minutes is made by Ms. Ashley; seconded by Mr. Byrnes.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: Ashley, Byrnes, Hanley

NAYS:

Unfinished/New Business:

Mrs. Gould thanks her predecessors, Jennifer Kiernan for her work on the board and design of Rent Board forms and to Township Manager, Matthew Cavallo for the wealth of information he placed on the webpage for both Landlords and Tenants. Mrs. Gould details her report dated September 15<sup>th</sup> whereby thirty-seven (37) vacancy decontrol requests were processed and 4 tenancy changes accepted. Rent rolls were submitted for a second time this year due to new Ordinance. Thirteen (13) violation notices were sent for failure to submit Rent Rolls and compliance was achieved for receipt of all properties. There are two outstanding checks yet to be received for compliance with the Ordinance. Mrs. Gould noted that there is a learning curve involved. Mr. Burns questioned 39 Lakeview Place on the Rent Roll Chart #4 where it appeared that information was missing. Mrs. Gould explained the check for 39 Lakeview was received and recorded with 40 Verona Place. Mr. Burns questioned procedure on Vacancy Decontrol procedures. Mrs. Gould explains that requests are received, numbered, evaluated for compliance (vacancy decontrol statement, and allowable percentages) and approval letters are sent to the property owners or managers.

Mrs. Gould announces that the case received by the Board involving John McLeod has been closed. This current meeting had been scheduled to hear Mr. McLeod's complaint. Mr. McLeod was properly notified. Mr. McLeod called the Rent Control Office to cancel his hearing. A formal letter of closure was

sent to Mr. McLeod. Board Attorney, Alex Graziano confirms that is sufficient. He notes that under the old Ordinance, enforcement of cases such as this would be resolved by the Board, but the authority to resolve now lies with Rent Control Administrator. The Board serves to resolve any discrepancies or complaints against the Rent Control Administrator.

Mrs. Gould asks Board Attorney, Alex Graziano to explain why the Board does not need to schedule upcoming meeting dates. Mr. Graziano informs the Board that a vast majority of problems are handled at the local level. The Board will convene when and if there are cases to hear. Mr. Hanley objects and states that there have been complaints against the Board for a lack of regularly scheduled meetings. He expressed that it would appear that the Rent Board does not exist. Mrs. Gould states that regularly schedule meetings are not necessary according to the new ordinance but may be an option. Mr. Handley explains that previous meetings were held despite the need to discuss any specifics. Mr. Hanley suggests an organizational meeting be held yearly. Mrs. Ashley states a yearly meeting would suffice. A date for such was suggested for late January where the quarterly reports will be discussed. Mr. Graziano suggested to hold meeting in September after Rent Rolls are received. Mrs. Gould clarifies that September would work based upon the experience that it takes a few months to reconcile Rent Rolls with the Landlords. It was agreed that the Board will meet during the month of September.

Mr. Burns questions the number of vacancies on the Board. Mrs. Gould states that there are two open positions. Anyone interested can send a letter of interest to the Township Manager. There is also a link on the webpage to contact Rent Control. Mr. Hanley states if one person cannot make the meeting, we do not have a quorum.

Mrs. Gould notes that an amendment to the Rent Control Ordinance was approved by the council at last night's meeting (September 20, 2021). Changes to the Ordinance are for seniors at least 62 yrs. old or residents that are disabled. The percentage difference between the consumer price index three months prior to the expiration or termination of the lease and three months prior to the commencement of the lease **whichever is less. The Ordinance takes effect 20 days after approval.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT (None)**

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn is made by Ms. Ashley and seconded by Mr. Burns at 6:30 p.m.;

Vote: 3-0

The next meeting will be scheduled according to need and a planned September 2022 meeting will be announced and published according to law.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kristine Gould*

Kristine Gould  
Rent Control Administrator &  
Rent Control Board Secretary

APPROVED: 2022-11-17