



City of Santa Barbara

RENTAL HOUSING MEDIATION BOARD

MINUTES

May 13, 2021

5:30 P.M.

This Meeting was Conducted Electronically

BOARD MEMBERS:

Leesa Beck, *Chair*
Michelle Roberson, *Vice Chair*
Janet Eastman, *Secretary*
Natalia Alarcon
Richard Axilrod
Cory Baker
Jeana Dressel
Justin Dullum
Rigoberto Gutierrez
Daniel Herlinger
Marilyn Loperfido
David McDermott
Bruce Wollenberg

CITY COUNCIL LIAISON: Alejandra Gutierrez

STAFF:

Andrea Bifano, Senior Rental Housing Mediation Specialist
Alba Marshall, Rental Housing Mediation Specialist

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Beck called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL / ATTENDANCE

Members present: Chair Beck, Vice Chair Roberson, Secretary Eastman, Board Members; Dullum, Gutierrez, Herlinger, Loperfido, McDermott, Wollenberg

Members absent: Board Members; Alarcon, Axilrod, Baker and Dressel

Staff present: Bifano and Marshall

GENERAL BUSINESS

A. Public Comment:

No public comment

B. Approval of Minutes:

Motion: Approve the minutes of the Rental Housing Mediation Board (RHMB) meeting of **March 11, 2021**, as submitted.

Action: Herlinger, Roberson 9/0/4. (Board Members (Board Members Alarcon, Axilrod, Baker, and Dressel, absent.) Motion carried.

C. Semiannual Recruitment for City Council Advisory Group

1. Application Period Closed: May 7, 2021, at 5:00 p.m.

- Interviews to be conducted by City Council on:

- Tuesday, May 25, 2021, at 4:00 p.m. (Estimated Time)
- Tuesday, June 8, 2021, at 4:00 p.m. (Estimated Time)
- Tuesday, June 15, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.

2. Board Vacancies: 2 (1 Landlord and 1 Tenant)

- Board Mediator Members may be City or Non-City residents, and must meet the definitions of a specific category.
 - (1) One Landlord Mediator member: Must be a landlord who is a City or non-City resident and owns or manages residential properties for consideration or compensation, whether single or multiple or multiple units;
 - (1) One Tenant Mediator member: Must rent or lease a dwelling with no ownership of residential properties.
 - Non-City residents must reside in a jurisdiction which contracts with the Rental Housing Mediation Program for services.

3. Appointments: Date to be determined.

1. **COVID-19 RENTAL RELIEF ACT OF 2021: SENATE BILL 91 UPDATE**

Ted Teyber, J.D., Housing Programs Specialist, Sr. County of Santa Barbara

Chair Beck welcomed back Mr. Teyber, who presented a 15 minute PowerPoint Presentation, that provided an update to Board Mediator Members on Senate Bill 91. This Bill provides critically needed rental assistance funding related to Covid-19 rental distress that is available to the residents within our Community and Santa Barbara County. He shared that Santa Barbara County received a total of \$13.2 million from federal funds. Following Mr. Teyber's presentation he offered a Question and Answer session for all Board Mediator Members and attendees.

2. **CASELOAD REPORT & MEDIATION TRAINING (1 hour)**

Staff reviewed the Third Quarter and Year-to-date Statistical Report, which reflected that there was an approximate 12% increase in services from last year's Year-To-Date Totals.

- A. Statistical Third Quarter and Year-to-Date Reports for FY 2020-2021
- B. Mediator Training (per California Dispute Resolutions Programs Act)
 - Ms. Bifano presented a training on Mediator Skills Building.

3. **HUMAN SERVICES/COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT FUNDING**

Approval by City Council of Human Services Grant Funding Award for 021-2022

The funding recommendation from the Community Development Human Service Committee to City Council, was an award in the amount of \$21, 430 for the Rental Housing Mediation Program. The Committee's recommendation for all grantees was held on March 23, 2021 at the City Council Meeting. Chair Beck spoke on behalf of the Board and the Program during

Public Comment, in support of the recommended funding award, and gave a brief description of the Board and the Program, including the importance and impact it has on the Community. She also thanked both the Committee and City Council for their continued support.

4. **FAIR HOUSING MONTH REVIEW**

A. Fair Housing Training

Chair Beck announced that the month of April represented Fair Housing Month Nation Wide and the Fair Housing Act was established in 1968. During the month of April, Ms. Bifano arranged for the Board to participate in a Fair Housing Certificate Training held on April 8, 2021 from Noon to 3pm. In lieu of the Board meeting, the Training was held (via Webinar), and sponsored by the Santa Barbara Rental Property Association. Board Members and staff who participated in the 3-hour training, which covered both Federal and State Fair Housing Laws received a Certificate from the law firm that conducted the training.

B. Proclamation Issued by Mayor Murillo

On April 27, 2021, Mayor Murillo issued a Fair Housing Proclamation at the City Council meeting held at 2:00pm. This Proclamation was received by Ms. Bifano on behalf of the Rental Housing Mediation Board, Program, and the City of Santa Barbara's Fair Housing Office. Chair Beck read Ms. Bifano's acceptance speech to the Board as follows, "During these unprecedented times of the World Pandemic (known as Covid-19) Fair Housing Laws, Practices, Enforcement, and the Rental Housing Mediation Services, including educating, preventing, and settling disputes out of court, has been needed now more than ever. Fair Housing provides protections for everyone who applies for housing, including the right to be treated fairly and equally. Congress enacted the Fair Housing Act of 1968 with the goal of advising landlords, tenants, lenders, sellers and buyers, of anti-discriminatory housing practices. The purpose in creating it was to help limit discriminatory practices in all aspects of housing. Therefore, the act was created on the principle that everyone should have an equal opportunity to seek and obtain a place to live, without being discriminated against due to factors outside of their control."

Ms. Bifano praised the Board and Program and acknowledged the great work that each Board member provides by individually naming each one, and stated that there were not enough words to express the gratitude and appreciation she has for Board Members, who are, City Council appointed volunteer Mediators. Lastly, she stated, "These caring individuals are dedicated to serving our community, and seeking Fair Housing for all."

The following representatives presented Public Comment and stood in support of the Proclamation: Michelle Roberson, Vice Chair, Rental Housing Mediation Board, Alex Entrekin, Attorney, Legal Aid Foundation of Santa Barbara County, and Petra Lowen, Community Housing Advocate, Independent Living Resource Center."

C. Resolution Issued by the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors

Chair Beck shared:

“On April 6, 2021, the Santa Barbara County Santa Board of Supervisors, Adopted a Resolution proclaiming the month of April 2021 as Fair Housing Month in Santa Barbara County.

Dinah Lockhart, Deputy Director, HCD Administrative Division stated that the Fair Housing Resolution acknowledged “Three of the many outstanding organizations championing Fair Housing in Santa Barbara County and were highlighted this year, including the City of Santa Barbara Rental Housing Mediation Task Force, the Legal Aid Foundation of Santa Barbara County, and the Santa Barbara County Property Managers Association.”

An excerpt from the Resolution is as follows, “Whereas, community awareness, dialogue, mediation, and if necessary, enforcement of protections, has been supported by tireless efforts of the City of Santa Barbara Rental Housing Mediation Task Force, the Legal Aid Foundation of Santa Barbara County, the Santa Barbara County Property Managers Association, among other organizations which have provided education, training, mediation, and legal assistance to protect the rights of tenants and landlords, in order to maintain, safe, affordable, clean, and dignified housing.”

5. NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

Chair Beck announced that the next scheduled Board meeting would be held on Thursday, June 10, 2021.

6. RENTAL HOUSING MEDIATION SPECIALIST

Ms. Bifano provided the following update:

Applications for the Rental Housing Mediation Specialist position closed on April 21, 2021, and were currently in the review process at Human Resources.

7. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. Bifano made the following announcement:

Laura Dubbels, Housing and Human Services Manager, would be presenting the Housing and Human Services budget for FY 2022, which includes the Rental Housing Mediation Program, on Wednesday, May 19 2021 at 9:00am before City Council. Staff stated she would provide the web link to Board Mediator Members should they wish to join, or give public comment.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:13pm.