



**City of Santa Barbara**  
**RENTAL HOUSING MEDIATION BOARD**  
**MINUTES**  
**September 9, 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  
Raymond Rengo, Rental Housing Mediation Specialist

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**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; Alarcon, Axilrod, Dullum, Gutierrez, Herlinger, Loperfido, McDermott, Wollenberg

Members absent: Board Members; Baker and Dressel

Staff present: Bifano, Marshall and Rengo

**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 **May 10, 2021**, as submitted.

Action: Herlinger, Roberson 11/0/2. (Board Members (Board Members Baker, and Dressel, absent.) Motion carried.

**C.** Annual Recruitment for City Council Advisory Groups Update:

- Notice of Recruitment: September 14, 2021
- Resignation Deadline: September 24, 2021
- Application Deadline: October 8, 2021

- Interviews to be conducted by City Council on:
  - Tuesday, October 26, 2021, at 4:00 p.m. (Estimated Time)
  - Tuesday, November 9, 2021, at 4:00 p.m. (Estimated Time)
  - Tuesday, November 16, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. (Time Certain)
- Appointments: December 7, 2021:
  - Board Vacancies: 5 Total (3 Landlords, 1 Homeowner and 1 Tenant).
- Mediator Terms Set to Expire on December 31, 2021:
  - Three (3) Landlords Vacancies:
    - Jeana L. Dressel, Incumbent and Landlord, has served on the Board since 2013. She will not be reapplying at this time, but looks forward to reapplying in the future.
    - Janet Eastman, Incumbent and Landlord, has served on the Board since 2018.
    - Previous existing landlord vacancy.
  - One (1) Homeowner Vacancy:
    - Daniel Herlinger, Incumbent and Homeowner, has served on the Board since 2005, and will reapply to the Board.
  - One (1) Tenant Vacancy:
    - Previous existing Tenant vacancy.
- Board Mediator Members may be City or Non-City residents, and must meet the definitions of a specific category.
  - Three (3) Landlord Mediator Members: 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.
  - One (1) Homeowner Mediator Member: Must own a residence and may not own any other residential property.
  - One (1) 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.

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

Chair Beck reviewed the COVID-19 Rental Relief Act and provided an update regarding Assembly Bill 832, which extended Senate Bill 91, and shared that the bill provides major benefits to the Community such as:

- A \$5.2 billion rent relief program, making it the largest and most comprehensive COVID-19 rental protection and rent relief program of any state in the nation.
- Assembly Bill 832 expands the pool of eligible renters, and will pay the rental debts for qualified Tenants that may have previously moved out, including pay tenant rental debts directly to Tenants when their Landlords do not apply for rental relief (in these cases, Tenants would be required to sign under penalty of perjury that they will utilize rental relief funds for the payment of rent).

- All rental debt incurred during the Covid-19 period of time will become consumer debt and Tenants cannot be evicted for non-payment of rent thought the protected period.
- Both Landlords and Tenants alike are able to apply for rental relief through the State after local funds were exhausted.
- Landlords may apply to rent relief programs, even if the Tenant has vacated the property.

Ms. Bifano stated that with the Eviction Moratorium scheduled to expire on September 30, 2021, and that as a community, efforts were being made to prepare for what might result in an increase in evictions due to non-payment of rent. The Rental Housing Mediation Program recently hired an additional Rental Housing Mediation Specialist, who will help to address the increase in requests for Program services.

Additionally, the Santa Barbara Alliance for Community Transformation is holding a Housing and Shelter Working Group Virtual Meeting on Monday, September 13, 2021 from 1:00pm – 2:30pm to discuss the Eviction Moratorium Expiration and is expected impacts, and what can possibly be done to help mitigate the circumstances.

## 2. **CASELOAD REPORT & MEDIATION TRAINING**

(1 hour training in compliance with the California Dispute Resolution Program's Act.)

Staff reviewed the Fourth Quarter and Year-to-Date Statistical Report for FY 2020-2021 and group interaction.

### A. Statistical Fourth Quarter and Year-to-Date Reports for FY 2020-2021:

- Approximately 1,100 Unduplicated Clients Served.
  - This number represents an additional 100 units of unduplicated clients served from the previous fiscal year.
- Fifteen (15) Virtual Outreach Presentations were conducted.
- 34% of the clients served addressed termination of tenancy issues.
- 18% of clients served had Covid-19 related issues.

### B. Mediator Training (per California Dispute Resolutions Programs Act).

- Virtual Mediation Discussion and Training.

Ms. Bifano presented a training on, *The Virtual Mediation Process Overview, including Mediator Opening Statements and Skills*. In addition, she shared that from June 8, 2021 to August 31, 2021, Mediators met in four (4) small groups. The purpose for these training sessions were to:

- Gain familiarity with the Virtual Mediation Process through practice breakout room sessions, mock mediation role plays, revised mediator opening statement practices, and shared feedback amongst mediators and staff.
- The four (4) Mediator groups that met consisted of the following members:
  - Group 1: June 8, 2021: Leesa Beck, Justin Dullum, and David McDermott.
  - Group 2: August 18, 2021: Bruce Wollenberg, Justin Dullum, Marilyn Loperfido, and David McDermott.

- Group 3: August 24, 2021: Michelle Roberson, and Natalia Alarcon.
- Group 4: August 31, 2021: Rigoberto Gutierrez, Justin Dullum, and Dan Herlinger.
- On September 2, 2021 a Virtual Multi-Party Mediation was held. The mediation was successful and the Parties signed an Agreement prepared by the RHMP and later all Participants signed an additional Agreement with the Landlord.
  - Mediators discussed and addressed the skills that were used to achieve this successful outcome.

### 3. **HOUSING SANTA BARBARA DAY**

- A. Chair Beck shared that the Fourth Annual Housing Santa Barbara Day 2021, *Advocating For Affordable Housing For All*, free public event was scheduled to be held on October 9, 2021, at the De La Guerra Plaza, and was initiated by the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara. Due to Covid-19, the event will be held outdoors, and appropriate Covid-19 precautions taken.

The purpose of the event is geared for low-income community members to connect with 30+ Local Non-Profit Agencies and Service Providers, and to participate in housing related workshops. Many of these attendees might not otherwise have access to the information provided.

Activities planned include:

- Informative Housing Workshops, including Tenant Landlord Rights and Responsibilities and Resources.
- ADU Resources.
- Workforce Housing information.
- Covid-19 Vaccination Clinic.

- B. Tenant Resources/Rental Housing Mediation Program Workshop

- Michelle Roberson, Vice Chair will provide a workshop on *Tenant Rights*.
- Ms. Bifano will provide a presentation, *Overview of the Rental Housing Mediation Program and Board*.

### 4. **NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING**

Proposed for October 14, 2021: Group discussion ensued. The October Board meeting will be cancelled. The next Board meeting will be held on November 11, 2021.

### 5. **RENTAL HOUSING MEDIATION SPECIALIST POSITION**

Ms. Bifano introduced Raymond Rengo, Rental Housing Mediation Specialist to the Board. He was recently hired as a third full-time Staff member for the Rental Housing Mediation Program.

**6. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Ms. Bifano provided the following announcements:

- The County-Wide Emergency Housing Voucher Program through United Way, started to accept applications.
- Congratulations were bestowed to the following Board Members:
  - Dan Herlinger and his wife Susanne, celebrated 52 years of marriage on June 1, 2021.
  - Bruce Wollenberg and his wife Jean, celebrated 52 years of marriage on August 2, 2021.
  - Richard Axilrod and his wife Joyce, celebrated their 80<sup>th</sup> Birthdays on August 14, 2021.

**7. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Beck adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.