City of Santa Barbara

RENTAL HOUSING MEDIATION BOARD MINUTES
JANUARY 8, 2026

5:30 P.M.
David Gebhard Public Meeting Room
630 Garden Street
SantaBarbaraCA.gov

BOARD MEMBERS:
Heather Smith, *Chair*
Rigoberto Gutierrez, *Vice Chair*
Cathy Murillo, *Secretary*
Scott Barash
Leesa Beck
Danielle Broder
Justin Dullum
Daniel Herlinger
Marilyn Loperfido
Allison MacPherson
Cindy McCann
Kari Weber

MEDIATOR EMERITUS:
Bruce Wollenberg

CITY COUNCIL LIAISON:
Meagan Harmon, Primary
Wendy Santamaria, Alternate

STAFF:
Andrea Bifano, Sr. Rental Housing Mediation Specialist
Raymond Rengo, Rental Housing Mediation Specialist
Diana Santiago, Rental Housing Mediation Specialist

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Heather called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

ROLL CALL / ATTENDANCE

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Rigoberto, Secretary Murillo, Board Members; Barash, Beck, Broder, Dullum, Herlinger, Loperfido, MacPherson, McCann, Weber

Members absent:	Barash, Dullum, Loperfido, MacPherson
Staff present:	Bifano, Rengo and Santiago

GENERAL BUSINESS

A. Public Comment.

Any member of the public may address the Board for up to two minutes on any subject within its jurisdiction that is not scheduled on this agenda for a public discussion. Member of the Public: Ana Arce.

B. Approval of the minutes of the Rental Housing Mediation Board meeting of December 11, 2025.

Motion: Approve the minutes of the Rental Housing Mediation Board (RHMB) regular meeting of **December 11, 2025,** as submitted.

Action: Herlinger, Beck, 8/0/0. (Barash, Dullum, Loperfido, MacPherson absent.) Motion carried.

C. City Council Advisory Group Fall Recruitment

Chair Smith welcomed December 2, 2025, City Council appointed Board members, Weber, and Herlinger, and MacPherson was excused. Board member Weber introduced herself, sharing her professional background, and what inspired her to apply to the RHMB. Board member Herlinger (reappointed) shared that he was in his 21st year of service to the Board and still very much enjoying it. Staff and the rest of the Board members introduced themselves as well.

D. Announcements and future agenda items.

Chair Smith shared that Ms. Bifano emailed Board Members the current version of the Advisory Group Guidelines, Resolution NO. 25-096, adopted on September 9, 2025, along with the Acknowledgment of Receipt of Guidelines form. Staff made available printed copies of the guidelines and the form for Board members who were unable to sign electronically.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. STAFF AND BOARD COMMUNICATION

Barbara Andersen, Senior Assistant to the City Administrator and currently serving a dual role as Acting Housing and Human Services Manager, provided an update on the direction given to Staff by the City Council at the December 16, 2025, meeting regarding the Rent Stabilization Program Work Plan. Ms. Andersen shared the RHMP, may experience an increase in inquiries and disputes. She also provided the Board with copies of the City of Council Agenda report for January 13, 2026, meeting. In addition, Ms. Anderson shared Caroline Paine has been hired as the Housing and Homelessness Services Manager and will start on Monday, January 12, 2026.

2. BOARD COMMUNICATION TO CITY COUNCIL AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE

The Ad Hoc Subcommittee is comprised of Chair Smith, Secretary Murillo, Board Members Justin Dullum, Leesa Beck and Scott Barash. Chair Smith reported the following:

Chair Smith reported that on December 11, 2025, she sent a letter to the Santa Barbara City Council on behalf of the RHMB. The letter described the effective work that the Program does for the community and its neutral role in resolving Tenant and Landlord disputes successfully out of court. Two attachments were included, a Rental Housing Mediation Program Fact Sheet and Mediation Preparations and Guidelines. Additionally, Chair Smith shared that she spoke during Public Comment at the December 16, 2025, City Council meeting. Focus Groups were discussed at the Council meeting and are included as part of the Rent Stabilization Program Work Plan. Ms. Anderson advised the RHMB to designate up to 5 representatives to participate in a focus group. She further stated that if the entire Board would like to participate, public notice would be required pursuant to the Brown Act. Discussion ensued.

Motion: The Board designated a focus group consisting of 5 representatives from the Rental Housing Mediation Board: Chair Smith, Secretary Murillo, Board Members Beck, Barash and Dullum. If either Barash or Dullum, or both, are unable to participate in the focus group, then Board member, Herlinger and Vice Chair, Gutierrez will be designated as replacements in that order.

Action: Secretary Murillo, Herlinger, 8/0/0. (Barash, Dullum, Loperfido, MacPherson absent.) Motion carried.

3. OFFICER CERTIFICATES 2025 (Deferred to next month)

Due to time constraints, RHMB Officer certificates for service from January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025, was deferred until the next RHMB meeting.

4. NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

Next scheduled meeting February 12, 2026.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Smith adjourned the meeting at 6:45 p.m.