City of Santa Barbara

RENTAL HOUSING MEDIATION BOARD MINUTES
APRIL 9, 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, Rental Housing Mediation Supervisor
Raymond Rengo, Rental Housing Mediation Specialist
Diana Santiago, Rental Housing Mediation Specialist

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Smith called the meeting to order at 5:40 p.m.

ROLL CALL / ATTENDANCE

Members present:	Chair Smith, Vice Chair Gutierrez, Board Members; Broder, Dullum, Herlinger, Loperfido, MacPherson, McCann, and Weber
Members absent:	Secretary Murillo, Board Members; Barash and Beck
Staff present:	Bifano and Rengo

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: Stanley Tzankov.

B. Approval of the minutes of the Rental Housing Mediation Board meeting of February 12, 2026.

Motion: Approve the minutes of the Rental Housing Mediation Board (RHMB) regular meeting of **February 12, 2026,** as submitted.

Action: Gutierrez, Dullum, 7/0/2. (Murillo, Barash, and Beck absent. Herlinger and McCann abstain.) Motion carried.

C. City Council Advisory Group Fall Recruitment

Chair Smith reported that there are three vacancies on the RHMB in the Landlord category. She reported that the application deadline is Friday, April 3, 2026, at 5:00 pm; interviews will be held on Tuesday, May 5, 2026; and appointments will be made on Tuesday, June 9, 2026.

For more information visit the City of Santa Barbara's Board and Commission Application and Vacancies page.

D. Announcements and future agenda items.

None.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. STAFF AND BOARD COMMUNICATION

Barbara Andersen, Senior Assistant to the City Administrator, provided an update on the direction given to Staff by the Santa Barbara City Council at the April 7, 2026, meeting regarding the Rent Stabilization Program Work Plan. Ms. Andersen reported that she presented to City Council a program status update, community focus group outcomes, and key policy components for City Council Direction. Questions from Board members were addressed and discussion ensued.

2. BOARD COMMUNICATION TO CITY COUNCIL AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE

Chair Smith reported that members of the *Board Communication to City Council Ad Hoc Subcommittee*, (Chair Smith, Secretary Murillo, and Board Members Beck, Dullum, and Barash) participated in a two-hour Rent Stabilization Focus Group meeting held on March 9, 2026. The meeting provided an opportunity for participants to share perspectives and engage in discussion regarding potential components of a Rent Stabilization Program with an emphasis on Administration, the impact on the community, and the Rental Housing Mediation Program/Board.

3. CASELOAD REPORT AND MEDIATOR TRAINING

(.75 hours of Training Provided Per State of California Dispute Resolution Programs Act – Regulations Section 3622)

A. Caseload Discussion:

Staff shared the highlights of successful settlement outcomes of recent mediations.

B. Mediation Training:

Ms. Bifano provided the mediation training. She shared that the foundation of the Mediators' training comes from the requirements from the California Dispute Resolutions Programs Act. Mediators receive a certificate signed by Mayor Rowse and Ms. Bifano verifying their training; certificates are given once 25 hours (initial training) and 40 hours are completed. This can

be achieved at RHMB meetings, participation and observation of mediations, written materials, outreach and public speaking. The training also covered confidentiality requirements applicable to mediations, and how information regarding mediations and program statistics is reported at RHMB meetings and shared with the public. It was emphasized that the names, addresses, and any other identifying information concerning mediation participants and rental properties remain strictly confidential per the California Evidence Code.

4. APRIL 2026 NATIONAL FAIR HOUSING MONTH

Chair Smith shared that in celebration of National Fair Housing Month, the Rental Housing Mediation Program staff would receive Proclamations from the City Council of the City of Carpinteria on April 13, 2026, from the City Council of the City of Goleta on April 21, 2026, and from the City Council of the City of Santa Barbara on April 28, 2026. Mediators were invited to attend and participate.

5. OUTREACH

Chair Smith shared that Ms. Santiago participated in an outreach held at the swap meet at Santa Barbara High School on March 21, 2026.

6. NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

Next scheduled meeting May 14, 2026.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Smith adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m.