City of Santa Barbara

RENTAL HOUSING MEDIATION BOARD MINUTES
JUNE 11, 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, Board Members; Barash, Beck, Broder, Herlinger, Loperfido, and McCann
Members absent:	Vice Chair Gutierrez, Secretary Murillo, Board Members; Dullum, MacPherson, and Weber
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. There was no public comment.

B. Approval of the minutes of the Rental Housing Mediation Board meeting of April 9, 2026.

Motion: Approve the minutes of the Rental Housing Mediation Board (RHMB) regular meeting of **April 9, 2026,** as submitted.

Action: McCann, Broder, 7/0/0. (Dullum, Gutierrez, MacPherson, Murillo, and Weber absent.) Motion carried.

C. City Council Advisory Group Fall Recruitment

Chair Smith reported that there were three vacancies on the RHMB in the Landlord category. She reported that the Santa Barbara City Council appointed Anthony Dal Bello and Joseph Navarro to the RHMB in the Landlord category on 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.

Chair Smith reported that following the June 9, 2026, Council meeting, there will be a 30-day Public Comment period for the Draft Rent Stabilization Ordinance which has been amended (from the June 9, 2026, version). The comment period provides an opportunity for tenants, property owners, community organizations, housing advocates, and members of the public to review the draft and submit input prior to formal consideration by Council. Written comments may be submitted through July 10, 2026 via email to: RSO@SantaBarbaraCA.gov. The new draft Ordinances are now available for the Public Comment period. They are accessible here: https://santabarbaraca.gov/services/housing-human-services/affordable-housing/rent-stabilization.

AGENDA ITEMS

1. RECOGNITION OF BOARD MEDIATOR MEMBER DAN HERLINGER

Daniel Herlinger, Twenty-One Years of Service

Ms. Bifano recognized Board Mediator Member and Past Chair, Mr. Herlinger, for his twenty-one years of exemplary service to the Rental Housing Mediation Board, since June 2005, and expressed gratitude for his continued commitment to the Board. Mr. Herlinger was bestowed the honorary title of "Master Mediator" in recognition of his outstanding dedication and contributions. Ms. Bifano spoke in praise of Mr. Herlinger's service and presented him with an engraved ceremonial crystal award, along with a congratulatory card from Randy Rowse, recognizing his dedication and exceptional service to the Board and the community.

Mr. Herlinger thanked the RHMB for its recognition and expressed his appreciation for the Board's important role in the community. He spoke about the positive impact the RHMB has on both tenants and landlords, shared his enjoyment of serving on the Board, and reaffirmed his commitment to continuing his service.

2. 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 June 9, 2026, meeting regarding the proposed ordinance for a Rent Stabilization Program. Ms. Andersen reported that she informed City Council that a public review draft of a Rent Stabilization Ordinance and Additional Just Cause and "Ellis Act" Amendments are available on the City of Santa Barbara website for

public review and comment through July 10, 2026. Questions from Board members were addressed and discussion ensued.

Ms. Anderson raised the issue of how the RHMB would like to contribute their comments concerning the public review draft of the Rent Stabilization Ordinance. The Board discussed the issue and decided that the Board Communication to City Council Ad Hoc Subcommittee should be reconstituted to gather the consensus of the Board and communicate their comments to Staff.

Motion: The Board Communication to City Council Ad Hoc Subcommittee shall be reconstituted to gather the consensus of the Board concerning the public review draft of the Rent Stabilization Ordinance and communicate their comments to Staff. The constituency of the Subcommittee shall remain the same (Chair Smith, Secretary Murillo, and Board Members Barash, Beck, and Dullum), and the alternate members shall be Board Member Herlinger, Vice Chair Gutierrez, and Board Member Loperfido.

Action: Herlinger, Beck, 7/0/0. (Dullum, Gutierrez, MacPherson, Murillo, and Weber absent.) Motion carried.

3. CASELOAD REPORT AND MEDIATOR TRAINING

(1 hour of Training Provided Per State of California Dispute Resolution Programs Act – Regulations Section 3622)

A. Statistical Reports & Caseload Discussion:

- Third Quarter and Year-to-Date FY 2026

Staff reported the Third Quarter and Year-to-Date FY 2026 and presented graphics on Trends and Issues related to the Program's statistical reports. The graphics showed spiked and decreased areas. Board input and discussion ensued.

B. Mediation Training:

Mediation "Fishbowl" Role Play:

Ms. Bifano prepared a role play script. Selected members, Board Members Barash and Broder acted as mediators, Board Member McCann as a landlord, and Board Member Beck as a tenant. They demonstrated a Mediation via "Fishbowl" Role Play. The enactment mirrored the details of an actual mediation, including a Mediator Prehearing Conference, Mediator Opening Statements, Parties' Position Statements, Mediation Dialogue, and a Mediator Debriefing Session. Following the enactment, the Role-Players then engaged with the Board and discussed the skills used to reach an agreement in the demonstration and shared their experiences from past mediations as well.

4. APRIL 2026 NATIONAL FAIR HOUSING MONTH

Chair Smith shared that in celebration of National Fair Housing Month, the Rental Housing Mediation Program staff attended the ceremonies and received 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. Ms. Bifano spoke on behalf of the Program at the three ceremonies. Chair Smith also spoke at the City of Goleta and City of Santa Barbara ceremonies.

5. NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

Next scheduled meeting tentatively set for July 9, 2026.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Smith adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.