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**NEW YORK STATE HOMES AND
COMMUNITY RENEWAL - BOARD
MEETING**

Westchester RGB Public Hearing

Held Via Teleconference

Wednesday, June 3, 2020

7:02 p.m.

1 [START RECORDING]

2 MR. PETER STECKER: So good evening, everybody. My
3 name is Peter Stecker. It's 7:02 p.m. This is the
4 Westchester County Rent Guidelines Board Public Hearing
5 for June 3rd, 2020.

6 Preliminarily, I'm going to read a note that was
7 starting the public notice for this public hearing. It
8 goes:

9 "In response to the Governor's directive to take
10 every effort to keep New Yorkers safe and
11 mitigate the spread of Covid-19, and pursuant to
12 Executive Order 202-1, which allows for the
13 suspension of the Public Officers Law, the
14 Westchester County Rent Guidelines Board will be
15 conducting public hearings to set guideline
16 rates of rent adjustments for housing
17 accommodations within its jurisdiction subject
18 to the Emergency Tenant Protection Act of 1974
19 for leases commenced between October 1st, 2020,
20 and September 30th, 2021, via teleconference.
21 Instructions for members of the public to
22 simultaneously view or listen to the meetings
23 will be posted to the HCR's website, to the
24 Office of Rent Administration under the public
25 hearing section prior to the meetings. The

1 hearings will also later be transcribed, and the
2 public will have the ability to view the
3 transcripts."

4 So at this point, I will pass it over to Chair Elsa
5 Rubin to call the roll.

6 MS. ELSA RUBIN: Good evening. My name is Elsa
7 Rubin, Chair of the Westchester Rent Guidelines. I
8 welcome you to this virtual meeting made possible by the
9 extremely extraordinary efforts of the staff of the
10 Division of Housing and Community Renewal. They have
11 worked so hard to keep us going and running with us
12 presentation and with these meetings, and I want to thank
13 each and every one of them by name: our counsel, Peter
14 Stecker; Deputy Commissioner, Woody Pascal; Cherell
15 Beddard, you saw her recent; and Toyce Francis, he was
16 there on the screen; as well as Michael Guttentag; James
17 Ferrara; and April Gray-Huertas.

18 Peter, have I forgotten anyone?

19 MR. STECKER: Well, now I hope I don't forget
20 anyone, but that sounds like the team. It's been a
21 collaborative effort and, you know, thankfully, it seems
22 like it's going well so far. So we'll see how it goes
23 throughout the evening. So --

24 MS. RUBIN: Yes.

25 MR. STECKER: -- I guess at this point if you want

1 to call the roll, you know, we'd --

2 MS. RUBIN: Yes. Before I do that, I want to also
3 thank the members of the Board who have been very -- who
4 have cooperated and have been very flexible during all
5 this challenging period. I also want to -- I think that
6 I speak on behalf of all the members of the Board, to
7 thank all the staff with the hospitals and the essential
8 workers who have made it possible for us to have food and
9 to have all necessities and for the staff of hospitals in
10 other places that have care for the needy. Our gratitude
11 is immense.

12 This is the first public meeting of the Westchester
13 Rent Guidelines Board in a series of meetings and public
14 hearings to determine guidelines, rents -- rates of rent
15 adjustments for leases commencing or being renewed
16 between October 1st, 2020, and September 30, 2021.

17 I will now call the roll, and please respond if you
18 are present.

19 Velene Acquah, public member?

20 MS. VELENE ACQUAH: Present.

21 MS. RUBIN: LaMont Badru, public member? LaMont?

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He's muted.

23 MR. LAMONT BADRU: Sorry about that. Here.

24 MS. RUBIN: Muted. Are you present?

25 MR. BADRU: I'm here. Can you hear me?

1 MS. RUBIN: Okay. Good. Yes. Now we can hear you.
2 Eddie Mae Barnes, public member?

3 MS. EDDIE MAE BARNES: Present.

4 MS. RUBIN: Eliot Cherson, owner representative?

5 MR. ELIOT CHERSON: Present.

6 MS. RUBIN: Kenneth Finger, owner representative?

7 MR. KENNETH FINGER: I'm here.

8 MS. RUBIN: Evelyn Santiago, public member?

9 MS. EVELYN SANTIAGO: Present.

10 MS. RUBIN: Tamara Stewart, tenant representative?

11 MS. TAMARA STEWART: Present.

12 MS. RUBIN: And I'm Elsa Rubin, public member. Let
13 the record show that we have quorum.

14 And now I will pass it onto you, Peter, in case you
15 have any announcements.

16 MR. STECKER: Okay. First, I'm going to pass it
17 over to Cherell Beddard, who's an attorney with the HCR,
18 who is going to make some comments.

19 MS. CHERELL BEDDARD: Good evening, everyone. My
20 name is Cherell Beddard, Counsel at the Office of Rent
21 Administration; and on behalf of the Deputy Commissioner,
22 Woody Pascal, and ORA, I would like to thank you all for
23 assisting with the Governor's initiative to stop the
24 spread. This year all of our meetings will be held via
25 Zoom and can be viewed on YouTube through our livestream

1 channel for the Westchester County Rent Guidelines Board.
2 You may access the channel by going to ORA's page at
3 hcr.ny.gov/rgb-hearings.

4 Thank you, Peter. You can continue.

5 MR. STECKER: Okay. Thank you, Cherell.

6 So the only announcement that I really have is I'd
7 like to just go through and remind everyone what our
8 meeting schedule is, which is in the public notice that
9 was issued a few weeks ago.

10 So the first public hearing is tonight, and it's
11 June 3rd at 7 o'clock. The next public hearing will be
12 on Tuesday, June 9th, 2020, at 7. Then there's a
13 research and analysis presentation meeting Thursday, June
14 11th, at 7 o'clock. There will be no public comments for
15 that meeting. Then there's a third public hearing on
16 Monday, June 15th, at 7 o'clock. Then there's a
17 presentation meeting by the tenant and owner
18 representatives currently scheduled for Tuesday, June
19 16th, 2020, and finally, there's a rebuttal meeting and a
20 vote meeting for the rebuttal presentation of the tenant
21 and owner representatives and for a vote on the
22 guidelines currently scheduled for Tuesday, June 23rd.
23 As Cherell mentioned, all of these meetings will be via
24 Zoom, and the public hearings will proceed as, as this
25 public hearing proceeded, with the sign-ups beforehand to

1 Westchester County RGB at nyshcr.org. Again, all the
2 information can be found in the HCR website.

3 So Elsa, that's really the only announcement that I
4 had to make.

5 MS. RUBIN: Okay. Now at this moment, I would like
6 to call all the people who have signed up to speak. I
7 will call these speakers in the order in which they
8 were -- I think the order they were signed up for the
9 meetings. The speakers addressing the Board will have
10 three minutes for individuals and five minutes for a
11 person representing entities or organizations.

12 I also would like to mention that, due to the fact
13 that we only have three persons presenting testimony, I
14 want to encourage anybody who's watching on YouTube
15 to -- if they want to address the Board, to please send
16 an email to our counsel, Peter Stecker, and if possible,
17 we will try to accommodate you. His email address is
18 peter.stecker@nyshcr.org. I'll repeat: Peter, P-E-T-E-R
19 dot S-T-E-C-K-E-R at nyshcr.org. So if anybody is
20 interested in participating at this point, they can send
21 him an email. He will be checking his emails, and we
22 will try to put you in.

23 I'm going to at this point call in Eileen Guzzo
24 representing landlords. She will have three minutes, and
25 I guess, Peter, you will be keeping track of the time.

1 MR. STECKER: Yes, I'll keep track of the time.

2 However, Ms. Guzzo has not signed into the Zoom as of
3 yet. So I don't know if you want to --

4 MS. RUBIN: In that case, I will call Alan Zaretsky.

5 MR. ALAN ZARETSKY: Listening. Madam --

6 MS. RUBIN: Zaretsky, representing the landlords.

7 MR. STECKER: Yes. So Mr. Zaretsky is -- Mr.

8 Zaretsky is here. So what I will do is I will promote
9 him to a panel list for his time period so that he can
10 address the Board.

11 MR. ZARETSKY: Hello. Can you hear me?

12 MS. RUBIN: Yes.

13 MR. FINGER: We can hear you. We can't see you.

14 Yes.

15 MR. ZARETSKY: You can see my name.

16 MR. FINGER: True.

17 MS. RUBIN: Yeah, we can see your name --

18 MR. ZARETSKY: Okay.

19 MS. RUBIN: -- but not your -- and we can hear you,
20 but we can't see --

21 MR. ZARETSKY: You can hear me. That's probably
22 better. I've been staying home, and I'm a little laid up
23 here. So I just tore my ACL this morning. So perhaps
24 it's better you don't see my face.

25 May I start, even though you can't see my face?

1 MS. RUBIN: Sure. Go ahead.

2 MR. ZARETSKY: First of all, I'd like to thank the
3 Rent Guidelines Board for taking the perspectives of
4 property owners into account in a very difficult and
5 trying year for everybody.

6 My name is Alan Zaretsky. I'm a second-generation
7 owner, and both of my adult sons work with me in managing
8 our portfolio of properties located in White Plains and
9 Yonkers. As my father built each of the properties we
10 own and operate, we take great pride in their maintenance
11 and know the vast majority of our approximately 1,000
12 residential tenants by first name.

13 Our main office is located in Yonkers in one of the
14 buildings we own, and as such, we are constantly in touch
15 with our residents, as well as the conditions of all of
16 our properties. We employ numerous union employees on
17 site and a complete staff of office and maintenance
18 personnel in order to maintain and service our residents
19 and maintain our properties.

20 Our site personnel have done an unbelievable job
21 during the pandemic in providing the additional care and
22 maintenance required due to the extenuating
23 circumstances. As responsible owners, we have provided
24 all of the necessary masks, gloves, cleaning materials,
25 and coverage so that our staff can provide the best

1 safety to our residents, as well as assist them when
2 necessary, inclusive of personal shopping, laundry, and
3 other individual needs. Our many long-employed staff did
4 not have to be asked twice to step up to the plate during
5 this crisis. Local 32BJ, the union representing these
6 employees, is requesting additional pay, called essential
7 pay, for this work performed by union employees, which
8 has not been publicized to very much a great extent.
9 These additional costs, which are necessary for the
10 safety of all, currently are borne solely by the
11 landlords providing these services. These additional
12 costs, coming on top of the HSTPA legislation, only adds
13 salt to the wound of reduced income in an ever-increasing
14 cost market.

15 The cost of fuel, always volatile, has been
16 drastically affected by the requirement to use either
17 number 2 oil, which has been fluctuating recently all
18 over the place with a 20- to 25-cent swing on any given
19 day, which is more expensive than number 4 or 6, or to
20 switch to gas where it's available from Con Edison. In
21 our case, after spending large sums of money switching to
22 the government preferred gas, again where available, we
23 are at the mercy of Con Edison who has a monopoly on the
24 transportation of the gas costs regardless of where it is
25 purchased. Con Ed has increased the transportation

1 charges by up to three times prior costs in the last year
2 and a half.

3 Additionally, the loss of the IMCI increases, the
4 current regulation allowance is de minimis in nature,
5 drastically affects long-term owners like us --

6 MR. STECKER: Three minutes.

7 MR. ZARETSKY: -- who have many long-standing
8 tenants paying well below market rent. When these
9 tenants move out on their own volition, we are often
10 stuck with large expenditures to renovate these
11 apartments with no realistic payback of the capital
12 expenditures regardless of cost, size of the apartment,
13 conditions of the apartment, damages, et cetera. The
14 result is families not being able to move into newly
15 renovated apartments which, in most cases under the old
16 law, would still be below market rents. Instead, they
17 may find a cheap apartment with old appliances, cabinets,
18 countertops, bathroom fixtures, lights, hardware, et
19 cetera. This also adds to the decline of -- especially
20 of older buildings which require more maintenance and
21 care as similar changes were made to the MCI improvements
22 as well.

23 Furthermore, the new regulations pertaining to
24 nonpayment eviction actions virtually make it impossible
25 to remove nonpaying or disruptive tenants from the

1 premises even before the understandable moratorium
2 currently in effect due to the coronavirus.

3 Additionally, there is no reason for a tenant to
4 respond to mandated renewal notices, despite the legal
5 requirement to do so, as there is no teeth to
6 noncompliance. Currently, we have several cases, which
7 Mr. Finger is aware of, wherein the tenants now claim
8 that, as their lease expired because they did not respond
9 to the notices, that they are now month-to-month tenants
10 with no increase in rent and only they can terminate
11 their lease. While it is possible we may eventually
12 prevail in court, at what additional cost, and the
13 reality is that the tenant will just vacate when it suits
14 them, probably before the case can even be decided,
15 forcing some sort of collection action to commence at yet
16 additional costs with no guarantee of collection.

17 MS. RUBIN: Mr. Zaretsky, I'm sorry but your time
18 expired --

19 MR. ZARETSKY: I have three more -- three more
20 sentences, okay? If I may? Penalize the bad landlord.
21 We're all for that and the bad tenant.

22 Anyone with a sense of fairness can see that to
23 treat one group different than another based on what is
24 often a perceived economics is simply unfair.

25 What has been lost is the fact that landlords and

1 tenants are in this together, and it need not be an
2 adversarial situation. Do not pit us one against the
3 other. Most landlords and tenants are good people who
4 just want to be treated fairly. That is all we are
5 asking, to be treated fairly.

6 Thank you and stay safe.

7 MS. RUBIN: Thank you. Any questions or comments
8 from the Board members?

9 MR. FINGER: I have a question. Mr. Zaretsky, have
10 you been able to renovate apartments when they are
11 vacated?

12 MR. ZARETSKY: Under the new law that came into
13 effect, no. It makes absolutely no economic sense to do
14 so.

15 MR. FINGER: So what happens when you re-rent, the
16 tenant gets the old -- a new tenant gets an old
17 apartment?

18 MR. ZARETSKY: Well, what we do is we paint the
19 apartment. We make sure everything is in working order
20 so it is in livable space, certainly, but it's old
21 appliances. It's older refrigerators that are not as
22 necessarily as economically feasible for the tenant.
23 They have older lights, old fixtures, old bathroom
24 fixtures, and the floors aren't refinished,
25 notwithstanding the fact that they're supposed to put

1 carpeting in. It just is not as a desirable an
2 apartment, and they are older because most of our
3 properties, as I said, my father built them. He built
4 them in the '60s.

5 MR. CHERSON: Can I ask a question?

6 MR. ZARETSKY: Yes, sir.

7 MS. RUBIN: Sure. Go ahead.

8 MR. CHERSON: Mr. Zaretsky, can you explain to the
9 members of the Board -- I think Ken Finger and I
10 understand a lot of the reasoning -- rationale behind it,
11 but if you could explain to the Board why it is not
12 beneficial or reasonable or whatever to renovate the
13 apartment. What is the reason for that?

14 Explain that, please.

15 MR. ZARETSKY: First of all, in many cases, smaller
16 landlords simply don't have the funds to do it. It used
17 to be that you could go to a bank. You could go to get a
18 loan, and with the additional income that you were
19 getting, the banks would lend you this money on short
20 term, and you would break even over the first five, six
21 years or so. Under the current situation, the way that
22 they have changed the payback on it, you really never
23 even get your money back if you factor in the current
24 cost of money, assuming that you have the money to do it
25 in the first place. And again, many of the smaller

1 landlords don't. Does that answer your question?

2 MR. CHERSON: Yeah, I think it does. I think it
3 does. So, I mean, so before they will always ask you if
4 --

5 MR. ZARETSKY: Excuse me. The same thing applies --

6 MR. CHERSON: Alan, before --

7 MR. ZARETSKY: -- the same thing applies to the
8 major capital improvements which, you know, it's a much
9 bigger number, and the banks -- you just can't. They
10 won't lend you the money because there's no way to pay it
11 back under the current economics of the buildings.

12 MR. CHERSON: All right. You were talking about the
13 actual apartments. How does it affect the public areas
14 of the building, the common areas of the building, et
15 cetera?

16 MR. ZARETSKY: Well, by law, we have to paint at
17 certain -- every, you know, certain number of years, but
18 again, unless something needs to be done, it's a hazard
19 or it's a health situation and you have the money, the
20 landlords are just not doing it. They're doing only what
21 they have to do to keep the properties operating properly
22 and safe.

23 MR. CHERSON: Thank you.

24 MS. RUBIN: Thank you.

25 MR. ZARETSKY: Thank you very much.

1 MS. RUBIN: Any other questions?

2 MR. ZARETSKY: Everybody be safe, well, stay smart,
3 and stay healthy.

4 MS. RUBIN: Thank you very much. Same to you.

5 MR. FINGER: Thank you.

6 MS. RUBIN: Peter, do we have Eileen Guzzo or is
7 she --

8 MR. STECKER: She hasn't come on as of yet.

9 MS. RUBIN: She hasn't -- okay. So I'm going to
10 call Carol Danziger. Is she --

11 MR. STECKER: Yeah, she's waiting.

12 MS. RUBIN: She's waiting.

13 MR. STECKER: I'm (indiscernible) panel list now,
14 yup.

15 MS. RUBIN: Yeah.

16 MR. STECKER: She is -- should be able to hear her
17 now.

18 Ms. Danziger?

19 MR. FINGER: Oh, I see her name. Maybe she's muted?

20 MR. STECKER: I don't know.

21 MR. FINGER: Is she muted, Peter?

22 MR. STECKER: No, she's unmuted. So we should be
23 able to hear her. Let's ask to start the video I --

24 MR. CHERSON: She disappeared.

25 MS. RUBIN: It shows like she's muted.

1 MR. CHERSON: She's not listed anymore.

2 MR. FINGER: Her name --

3 MS. RUBIN: I see --

4 MR. STECKER: Oh, there she is.

5 MR. FINGER: There we go.

6 MS. RUBIN: Hi, Carol.

7 MR. FINGER: She's muted, though.

8 MS. RUBIN: We can't hear you, Carol.

9 MR. CHERSON: She's not muted.

10 MR. STECKER: No, she's good now.

11 MS. RUBIN: Okay. She's --

12 MS. CAROL DANZIGER: Can you hear me?

13 MS. RUBIN: Yes. Yes.

14 MS. DANZIGER: You're good. Oh, good. I'm sorry --

15 I'm sorry, I had to relaunch it.

16 MS. RUBIN: Okay.

17 MS. DANZIGER: My name is Carol Danziger. I am also

18 a second-generation owner. I have an 18-unit building in

19 Mamaroneck. I just want to say first it's nice to see

20 everybody here and healthy and well, and let's all stay

21 that way.

22 MS. RUBIN: Carol?

23 MS. DANZIGER: Yeah.

24 MS. RUBIN: One minute. I just have to say that

25 Carol represents the Apartment Owners Advisory Council;

1 so she has five minutes.

2 MS. DANZIGER: Oh, I don't even think I'll need five
3 minutes, but thank you for that.

4 MS. RUBIN: Yes.

5 MS. DANZIGER: Okay. I just want to say that for --
6 for pretty much decades now, I watched as the State and
7 the Board passed legislation and guidelines that have
8 pretty much stifled the ability of small apartment owners
9 to run their buildings properly while trying to remain
10 cash positive, which is the right of every small business
11 owner.

12 After last year's legislative changes, we honestly
13 don't know if we'll be able to keep our property well
14 into the future, and just when we thought things couldn't
15 get any worse after last year's changes, COVID-19 has now
16 arrived. This year we find ourselves just trying to
17 survive. We now live every day fearful for the health
18 and safety of our families and our loved ones, and after
19 the financial hardships and unimaginable personal losses
20 we have experienced, I still have to come here and ask
21 for your consideration.

22 As an owner of a family-run building, I am here for
23 my tenants if the needs arise, especially if anyone is
24 struggling during COVID-19. We have been very fortunate
25 that most of our tenants did not need any accommodation,

1 but some of them did. We also understand that there are
2 others who have need, and we're asking to please allow
3 the county, state, and federal government to respond to
4 those needs and to the needs -- sorry about that -- and
5 to the needs of the pandemic through the stimulus
6 payments, unemployment payments, grants, and loans that
7 are all potentially available to individuals.

8 We also know that recovery is going to be a process,
9 but as restrictions are lifted and businesses reopen,
10 which has already begun, the immediate need will come to
11 an end; whereas, your decisions now will potentially last
12 up to two years for an apartment owner.

13 Many of us small building owners are unable to get
14 relief under the CARES Act and other programs because we
15 don't have staff. We basically do everything ourselves.
16 Many small business owners have had properties passed
17 down from their parents and do not have mortgages; so we
18 have no relief there. Basically, no one is helping us.
19 Our taxes, our insurance, utilities all need to be paid,
20 and all those expenses just keep going up, not to mention
21 the increased costs some of the owners, as you just
22 heard, have incurred related to the cleaning and
23 disinfecting during COVID-19.

24 Passing guidelines, which seem to be primarily based
25 on testimonies of renters that are having difficulty

1 paying their rent year after year, and especially now
2 during the pandemic, does not -- does not seem to be
3 fair. We are also trying to pay our bills and keep food
4 on our tables. God willing, many of us, including
5 myself, work full-time jobs to support our families that
6 have nothing to do with the properties we own, just like
7 many of our tenants do.

8 We are not corporations. We are people. We are
9 mothers, fathers, grandparents, sons, daughters just like
10 our tenants. Our families are struggling just like
11 everyone else is here tonight.

12 Please don't make it impossible for us to continue
13 to stay in business and provide for our families and our
14 tenants. Please pass reasonable guideline increases to
15 help handle our ever-increasing costs.

16 Thank you.

17 MS. RUBIN: Thank you, Ms. Danziger.

18 Any questions for Ms. Danziger? No?

19 MR. CHERSON: Ken Finger.

20 MS. RUBIN: Go ahead, Ken.

21 MR. FINGER: I'm sorry. I muted myself.

22 Ms. Danziger, thank you for the comments. Do you
23 live in your building?

24 MS. DANZIGER: Yes, I do. I live -- my husband and
25 I live in the building --

1 MR. FINGER: And who --

2 MS. DANZIGER: -- with our tenants. We have for
3 probably the last eight years.

4 MR. FINGER: And who maintains your building?

5 MS. DANZIGER: We do, my siblings and myself. My
6 brother does most of the maintenance. We also have
7 tenants that are able to do repairs that we -- we pay
8 them to do that. We don't actually have a staff.
9 Obviously, like large pump plumbing jobs and electrical
10 jobs, we have to contract out to local contractors to do.

11 MR. FINGER: Have you run into additional expenses
12 because of the pandemic?

13 MS. DANZIGER: Well, I mean, just -- I mean, just
14 some supplies, but not -- you know, nothing significant.
15 It's just the regular year-to-year expenses for us that
16 are what's challenging the most.

17 MR. FINGER: Good. Thank you.

18 MR. CHERSON: My understanding --

19 MS. RUBIN: Anybody else?

20 MR. CHERSON: Me, Eliot.

21 MS. RUBIN: Yes.

22 MR. CHERSON: I'm muted. All right. Thank you.

23 Ms. Danziger, can you -- have you been affected by
24 the new rent laws that were passed last June, and if so,
25 how?

1 MS. DANZIGER: Well, yeah. I mean, the new rent
2 laws, we have -- we have a lot of long-term tenants. We
3 have a lot of apartments that have rents that are
4 extremely low, and when I mean long-term tenants, we have
5 had tenants that have been there since the '60s. And so
6 the rents are extremely low, and now there's no way to
7 raise those rents once those tenants move on.

8 MR. CHERSON: And how does -- what does that mean
9 it's very --

10 MS. DANZIGER: It's very difficult. Our rents --
11 our rents are very low.

12 MR. CHERSON: So am I correct that, if a tenant has
13 been there since the '60s --

14 MS. DANZIGER: Um-hum.

15 MR. CHERSON: -- I'm just picking a number out of
16 the air -- is paying now \$750 a month, and they move out,
17 vacate, that the new tenant will basically be paying
18 \$750 --

19 MS. DANZIGER: Yeah, I have two units --

20 MR. CHERSON: -- plus a little bit?

21 MS. DANZIGER: -- that are -- I have two units that
22 are at 550 and 603.

23 MR. CHERSON: So the rents for those new tenants
24 will be the same. And how big are those apartments that
25 you're talking about?

1 MS. DANZIGER: A one-bedroom and a two-bedroom.

2 MR. CHERSON: Thank you very much.

3 MS. DANZIGER: It's -- it's hard to look at. It
4 really is. It's -- it's very difficult, especially when
5 your margins are so thin.

6 MS. RUBIN: Anybody else?

7 Thank you, Ms. Danziger.

8 MS. DANZIGER: Thanks.

9 MR. CHERSON: Thank you.

10 MS. DANZIGER: Thank you.

11 MR. FINGER: Is that it, Elsa?

12 MS. RUBIN: Peter, is Eileen Guzzo on?

13 MR. STECKER: She is not on.

14 MS. RUBIN: No. Anybody else -- did you receive any
15 other emails or requests to participate?

16 MR. STECKER: Just give me one more -- one second.

17 No, I didn't receive any other requests. What you can
18 do, if you want, is you can read Ms. Guzzo's, you know,
19 written statements into the record if you'd like; and we
20 also got a statement from a tenant in Mt. Vernon, if
21 you'd like to read those into the record as well. And
22 there is one individual attendee here who I'm not sure
23 who that is exactly.

24 MS. RUBIN: Okay. I'm going to read the statement
25 from Eileen Guzzo:

1 "Hello, Board members. Please respectfully
2 understand that a rollback or a zero increase on
3 rents signifies that you will place poor
4 communities in Yonkers in poorer living
5 conditions. As landlords, we rely on small
6 increases to keep up with break fixes and
7 updating rentals. Without increases, landlords
8 are not able to keep up with the horrific
9 situation impact presented by COVID-19, most of
10 us collecting less than 50 percent rents unable
11 to fulfill monthly obligations.

12 "Rest assured, your Board has a big decision to
13 make that will impact the poor communities very
14 negatively without proper percentage rent
15 increases.

16 "The Board also has to understand about our
17 horror stories and the difficulties we face due
18 to COVID-19. We don't have anyone backing us.
19 Renters are allowed to not pay rent for three
20 months. Meanwhile, landlords are supposed to
21 pay monthly expenses, provide heat, water, et
22 cetera, reek fixes" -- I think she means
23 fixes -- "and mortgages regardless. Please,
24 where does the Board and the government expect
25 landlords to draw funds from?

1 "I would like to please be included in the call
2 hearing June 3rd and pose questions. Thanks."

3 And you said there was somebody else, Peter?

4 MR. STECKER: Yes, I sent it just before the
5 meeting. I don't know if you have a copy of it?

6 MS. RUBIN: No, I don't. Can you read it, please?

7 MR. STECKER: Sure. Let me just pull it up real
8 quick. Okay. This is a message from Yvonne Fay, and it
9 says:

10 "Due to the pandemic and people losing jobs, the
11 rent should not be an issue for people. We have
12 been paying an exorbitant amount of rent in the
13 past and cannot afford an increase at this
14 time."

15 Ms. Fay is a tenant at 30 Park Avenue in Mt. Vernon,
16 New York.

17 MS. RUBIN: Okay. Any questions, anybody?

18 MR. FINGER: Is that it, Madam Chairperson?

19 MS. RUBIN: Yes, sir.

20 MR. FINGER: Well, I move to adjourn, then, until
21 the next hearing.

22 MS. STEWART: I would like to make a motion about
23 changing our schedule prior to adjournment.

24 MS. RUBIN: What is the motion that you want to
25 make, Tamara?

1 MS. STEWART: I would like to make a motion that we
2 change the date of our Monday, June 15th hearing to
3 Thursday, June 18th, and we change the date of our
4 presentations from Tuesday, June 16th, to Monday, June
5 22nd.

6 MR. CHERSON: Ken had the first motion, which I will
7 second.

8 MS. RUBIN: Wait a minute. We have to -- I want to
9 bring this motion of Tamara to the consideration of the
10 Board. Personally, I think that everything has been set.
11 People had all their schedules set already, and it would
12 be very difficult to change, but if the Board wants to
13 consider that motion, we will do it.

14 MR. CHERSON: Can you give me the dates again,
15 please?

16 MS. STEWART: Sure. Changing a public hearing from
17 Monday, June the 15th, to Thursday, June the 18th, to
18 accommodate additional governmental data that will not be
19 available until the 17th, which is a national low-income
20 housing coalition annual report, which should give us
21 some very current data on what's happening with housing.
22 And then the second change is the presentations from
23 Tuesday, June the 16th, to Monday, June the 22nd, and
24 then we would still have our vote on Tuesday, June the
25 23rd.

1 MR. STECKER: So I just have to explain one thing
2 about the June 18th. If we were -- if the Board were to
3 decide to move that meeting from June 15th to June 18th,
4 it does conflict with a Rockland County public hearing.
5 So that meeting would need to be moved to a different
6 platform. It would be moved to WebEx, which, you know,
7 at this point, the problem with the WebEx would be that
8 we don't have the capability at the moment of, you know,
9 the YouTube livestream. So that could present an issue
10 with that. So that's just one thing to keep in mind.

11 MS. BEDDARD: Yes, and I -- I'm sorry, Eliot. I
12 believe Woody has -- the Deputy Commissioner is online.
13 So he has something that he would like to say. So we're
14 going to open up the line for him really quickly.

15 Deputy Commissioner --

16 MR. CHERSON: He's muted. He's muted.

17 MS. BEDDARD: It's muted, right. So we're going to
18 ask him to unmute.

19 MR. FINGER: It's not often that we can mute a
20 Deputy Commissioner.

21 MS. BEDDARD: I know, right? That's power, right?
22 Hey, only for a minute. Let's see. I don't know -- I'm
23 asking him to unmute, so --

24 MR. WOODY PASCAL: Good evening, everyone.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There he is.

1 MR. PASCAL: I think I'm here.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, he is.

3 MR. PASCAL: Good evening, everyone.

4 MS. RUBIN: Good evening, Woody.

5 MR. PASCAL: First, I want to -- hello, everyone. I
6 want to say thank you for all of your work that you will
7 continue to do for us and for the people of Westchester
8 County.

9 As Peter just said, there are some conflicts with
10 changing the dates now because we're kind of locked in,
11 and we want to ensure that the public is involved and
12 engaged as much as we can.

13 Peter, do you have the dates in front of you because
14 I don't have the dates in front of me?

15 MR. STECKER: For Rockland County?

16 MR. PASCAL: Yes.

17 MR. STECKER: I don't have -- Cherell, do you have
18 that information? I don't have --

19 MS. BEDDARD: Yes. So Rockland County is June 18th,
20 June 24th, and 25th.

21 MR. PASCAL: Tamara, do you have any other dates
22 that you're looking at or could potentially propose?

23 MS. STEWART: I was more than willing to go into the
24 later part of the month when we actually had our
25 scheduling meeting back in February, and I believe it was

1 Mr. Finger that said that he had no availability after
2 the 23rd because of other meetings that he had --

3 MR. FINGER: It wasn't me --

4 MS. STEWART: -- which limited us as a result of his
5 saying that he wasn't available after the 23rd, which is
6 why we ended up having to push everything back.

7 MR. FINGER: That --

8 MS. STEWART: I would be happy to extend into the
9 next week and even, you know, right up until the end of
10 the month.

11 MR. FINGER: That is not true. It wasn't me. I had
12 some conflicts. I did have some dates that were
13 available.

14 MR. CHERSON: I also say that, Tamara, I believe, if
15 my memory is correct, you proposed the 22nd, June 22nd,
16 back in February, and I mentioned back then that I have a
17 conflict on the 22nd, and I still do. So that date is
18 unavailable to me, and that's why, I believe, that was --
19 we were trying to accommodate everybody with dates that
20 were acceptable, and that was a date that was not fit.

21 MS. STEWART: Mr. Finger, which dates are you
22 available beyond the 23rd, sir?

23 MR. FINGER: I don't know because I had my calendar
24 set for these dates back in February. I worked
25 everything else around these dates for the rest of the

1 month. I don't have a calendar right here now. I
2 frankly think that we have published these dates, and to
3 have the public participate, I think people do make their
4 calendars, and I think we should honor them. The fact
5 that you don't have a national figure -- I think we all
6 know what's going on nationally.

7 MS. SANTIAGO: I have a question. Have the dates
8 been indeed published to the public for their
9 participation?

10 MS. RUBIN: Yes. They're in the website.

11 MS. SANTIAGO: Thank you.

12 MR. CHERSON: So is it too near or is too late to
13 change it because they've already been published and
14 there's so little time between now and these proposed
15 changes?

16 MR. STECKER: Well, it would take some gymnastics.
17 We would have to republish the notice, but it technically
18 can be done, but, you know, it's something that, if it's
19 going to be done, it needs to -- you know, I need to know
20 soon so that, you know, the public notice can be
21 republished. But it's already been published. We're,
22 you know, taking requests from people to speak at the
23 public hearings, but I'm not aware of any limitation
24 timeline-wise that would stop these particular changes.

25 MR. CHERSON: I do have a point of order. I would

1 like to point out that Ms. Stewart's motion has not been
2 seconded. Without a second, there shouldn't be any
3 discussion.

4 MS. RUBIN: Correct.

5 MR. FINGER: I would also like to point out that we
6 have met with a number of our landlords, at least, I
7 believe, a dozen or so who have already set their
8 calendar to speak on the last hearing date, I think, on
9 the 15th, and it would be extremely unfair to those that
10 have already set their calendar to speak to change the
11 date at this late date.

12 MR. CHERSON: Again, without a second, I don't think
13 we should even be discussing it.

14 MR. BADRU: I'll second it.

15 MS. RUBIN: Well, in --

16 MR. CHERSON: Well, that takes care of that, LaMont.
17 Okay.

18 MS. STEWART: Well, thank you -- thank you, LaMont.

19 MS. RUBIN: Okay. So in this case, since the motion
20 was presented and LaMont seconded it, we are going to
21 submit it for a vote.

22 And Peter, can you please call the vote?

23 MR. STECKER: Just let -- I can, Madam Chair. I
24 just want to confirm what the dates are and just
25 reiterate that.

1 MS. RUBIN: Okay.

2 MR. STECKER: The motion, Tamara, as I understand
3 it, is moving the public hearing from June 15th to June
4 18th, and moving the presentation meeting from June 16th
5 through June 22nd?

6 MS. RUBIN: Correct.

7 MS. BARNES: And could you give the reason --

8 MR. FINGER: What days of the week are that?

9 MR. CHERSON: The 15th is a Thursday. The 22nd is a
10 Monday.

11 MS. STEWART: Correct. With regard to the reason
12 that I have made this request, I do understand that we
13 set our calendar four months ago.

14 MS. RUBIN: Um-hum.

15 MS. STEWART: And since that last meeting, our
16 county, state, country, and the world have experienced
17 some monumental changes. More than 1.8 million of our
18 fellow citizens have contracted COVID-19. More than
19 100,000 people have died. More than 40 million people
20 have lost jobs. Classrooms are empty. Tens of millions
21 of people are relying on food banks to feed their
22 families, and worldwide protests against injustice have
23 replaced the coronavirus pandemic in the news headlines.

24 So the environment that we're making this decision
25 in now is a very different environment than the one that

1 we agreed to have some meeting dates back in February,
2 and I do believe that it's important to have as much
3 current data that reflects the current conditions of
4 what's going on. I know anecdotally from what I'm
5 hearing from people all over the county, from tenants
6 about the despair that a lot of people are experiencing,
7 and while anecdotally they can -- they're welcome to come
8 and testify to that.

9 Our decision is supposed to be based on data, and
10 not just the data that we get from the statistician next
11 week, but all available data that is relevant to the
12 decision that we're making. And all I'm trying to do is
13 to have us have a few more days so that relevant, timely
14 data can be provided to this body so that it can better
15 inform the decision that we're embarking upon.

16 MS. RUBIN: Okay. Thank you.

17 MR. CHERSON: One comment. Elsa?

18 MS. RUBIN: Yes.

19 MR. CHERSON: Nobody could dispute, Tamara, that the
20 world has changed. I mean, it's obvious, but we all do
21 have schedules. We have businesses. We have jobs. We
22 have family matters, and the whole purpose of picking
23 these dates in February, which is way in advance of June,
24 is so that -- I'm speaking for myself -- is so I clear my
25 calendar to make sure that I don't put anything on for

1 that date, and I voiced my problem back then with the
2 22nd, for example, and I still have the problem with the
3 22nd. So even though circumstances -- I understand your
4 points. However, there's a practical side to all of
5 this, as Mr. Finger pointed out. And it's not just the
6 eight of us plus Peter and the other people from the
7 Division. These things have been set, and changing it at
8 this last minute, literally two weeks from now or less, I
9 think is a very unfair burden to place on everybody.

10 MS. STEWART: With all due respect, Eliot, there are
11 a lot of circumstances that have been occurring as of
12 late --

13 MR. CHERSON: They --

14 MS. STEWART: -- that have placed a tremendous
15 burden on all of us and --

16 MR. CHERSON: No doubt.

17 MS. STEWART: -- at this time that just is the way
18 things are.

19 MR. FINGER: Yeah, but we have all our speakers set
20 for certain days, and it's -- they've done that. It's --
21 you know, it's just totally unfair to put everybody that
22 set their calendar and said that they're going to speak
23 on that day, and I think Peter may have the list already,
24 or Elsa may have the list. But I was on the Zoom with
25 them this afternoon. There's at least a dozen people, I

1 believe, that have set the date on the 15th, which I
2 think is the third hearing to speak. And if they're
3 denied their right to speak because we changed a date at
4 this last date, I think it's just extremely unfair. It's
5 difficult enough to start with getting people to talk.
6 Anyway, I don't want to repeat myself. Let's call for a
7 vote on it, and let's move on.

8 MS. RUBIN: Peter?

9 MR. STECKER: Chair, do you want me to call the
10 roll?

11 MS. RUBIN: Yes. Yes, please.

12 MR. STECKER: Okay. Ken Finger?

13 MR. FINGER: No.

14 MR. STECKER: Eliot Cherson?

15 MR. CHERSON: No.

16 MR. STECKER: Tamara Stewart?

17 MS. STEWART: Yes.

18 MR. STECKER: Velene Acquah?

19 MS. ACQUAH: Yes.

20 MR. STECKER: LaMont Badru? LaMont?

21 MR. BADRU: Yes.

22 MR. STECKER: Eddie Mae Barnes?

23 MR. BARNES: It's a little difficult. Oh, boy. No.

24 MR. STECKER: Evelyn Santiago?

25 MS. SANTIAGO: No.

1 MR. STECKER: Elsa Rubin?

2 MS. RUBIN: No.

3 MR. STECKER: Okay. So the motion fails: three
4 votes in favor, five votes against.

5 MS. RUBIN: Thank you. I think that concludes our
6 meeting. Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, June 19th,
7 also a virtual meeting --

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 9th -- 9th --

9 MS. STEWART: On June 9th.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 9th, right.

11 MS. RUBIN: 9th. Yes, I'm -- I need my glasses.

12 And in the meantime, I wish everybody be safe and
13 healthy, and please take care of yourselves.

14 MR. FINGER: Be safe, everyone.

15 MS. STEWART: Thank you, everyone. Have a good
16 night.

17 MS. RUBIN: Be safe.

18 [END RECORDING]

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

1
2 The prior proceedings were transcribed from audio
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<p style="text-align: center;">A</p> <p>ability 3:2 18:8 37:4</p> <p>able 11:14 13:10 16:16,23 18:13 21:7 24:8</p> <p>absolutely 13:13</p> <p>acceptable 29:20</p> <p>access 6:2</p> <p>accommodate 7:17 26:18 29:19</p> <p>accommodation 18:25</p> <p>accommodatio... 2:17</p> <p>account 9:4</p> <p>ACL 8:23</p> <p>Acquah 4:19,20 35:18,19</p> <p>Act 2:18 19:14</p> <p>action 12:15</p> <p>actions 11:24</p> <p>actual 15:13</p> <p>additional 9:21 10:6,9,11 12:12 12:16 14:18 21:11 26:18</p> <p>Additionally 11:3 12:3</p> <p>address 7:15,17 8:10</p> <p>addressing 7:9</p> <p>adds 10:12 11:19</p> <p>adjourn 25:20</p> <p>adjournment 25:23</p> <p>adjustments 2:16 4:15</p> <p>Administration 2:24 5:21</p> <p>adult 9:7</p> <p>advance 33:23</p> <p>adversarial 13:2</p> <p>Advisory 17:25</p> <p>affect 15:13</p> <p>afford 25:13</p>	<p>afternoon 34:25</p> <p>ago 6:9 32:13</p> <p>agreed 33:1</p> <p>ahead 9:1 14:7 20:20</p> <p>air 22:16</p> <p>Alan 8:4,5 9:6 15:6</p> <p>allow 19:2</p> <p>allowance 11:4</p> <p>allowed 24:19</p> <p>allows 2:12</p> <p>amount 25:12</p> <p>analysis 6:13</p> <p>anecdotally 33:4 33:7</p> <p>announcement 6:6 7:3</p> <p>announcements 5:15</p> <p>annual 26:20</p> <p>answer 15:1</p> <p>anybody 7:14,19 21:19 23:6,14 25:17</p> <p>anymore 17:1</p> <p>Anyway 35:6</p> <p>apartment 11:12 11:13,17 13:17 13:19 14:2,13 17:25 18:8 19:12</p> <p>apartments 11:11,15 13:10 15:13 22:3,24</p> <p>appliances 11:17 13:21</p> <p>applies 15:5,7</p> <p>approximately 9:11</p> <p>April 3:17</p> <p>areas 15:13,14</p> <p>arrived 18:16</p> <p>asked 10:4</p> <p>asking 13:5 19:2 27:23</p> <p>assist 10:1</p>	<p>assisting 5:23</p> <p>assuming 14:24</p> <p>assured 24:12</p> <p>attendee 23:22</p> <p>attorney 5:17</p> <p>audio 37:2</p> <p>availability 29:1</p> <p>available 10:20 10:22 19:7 26:19 29:5,13,22 33:11</p> <p>Avenue 25:15</p> <p>aware 12:7 30:23</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">B</p> <p>back 14:23 15:11 28:25 29:6,16,16 29:24 33:1 34:1</p> <p>backing 24:18</p> <p>bad 12:20,21</p> <p>Badru 4:21,23,25 31:14 35:20,21</p> <p>bank 14:17</p> <p>banks 14:19 15:9 32:21</p> <p>Barnes 5:2,3 32:7 35:22,23</p> <p>based 12:23 19:24 33:9</p> <p>basically 19:15 19:18 22:17</p> <p>bathroom 11:18 13:23</p> <p>Beddard 3:15 5:17,19,20 27:11 27:17,21 28:19</p> <p>begun 19:10</p> <p>behalf 4:6 5:21</p> <p>believe 27:12 28:25 29:14,18 31:7 33:2 35:1</p> <p>beneficial 14:12</p> <p>best 9:25 37:3</p> <p>better 8:22,24 33:14</p> <p>beyond 29:22</p> <p>big 22:24 24:12</p>	<p>bigger 15:9</p> <p>bills 20:3</p> <p>bit 22:20</p> <p>blood 37:5</p> <p>Board 1:12 2:4,14 4:3,6,13 6:1 7:9 7:15 8:10 9:3 13:8 14:9,11 18:7 24:1,12,16 24:24 26:10,12 27:2</p> <p>body 33:14</p> <p>borne 10:10</p> <p>boy 35:23</p> <p>break 14:20 24:6</p> <p>bring 26:9</p> <p>brother 21:6</p> <p>building 15:14,14 17:18 18:22 19:13 20:23,25 21:4</p> <p>buildings 9:14 11:20 15:11 18:9</p> <p>built 9:9 14:3,3</p> <p>burden 34:9,15</p> <p>business 18:10 19:16 20:13</p> <p>businesses 19:9 33:21</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <p>C 37:1,1</p> <p>cabinets 11:17</p> <p>calendar 29:23 30:1 31:8,10 32:13 33:25 34:22</p> <p>calendars 30:4</p> <p>call 3:5 4:1,17 7:6 7:7,23 8:4 16:10 25:1 31:22 35:6 35:9</p> <p>called 10:6</p> <p>capability 27:8</p> <p>capital 11:11 15:8</p> <p>care 4:10 9:21</p>	<p>11:21 31:16 36:13</p> <p>CARES 19:14</p> <p>Carol 16:10 17:6 17:8,12,17,22,25</p> <p>carpeting 14:1</p> <p>case 5:14 8:4 10:21 12:14 31:19</p> <p>cases 11:15 12:6 14:15</p> <p>cash 18:10</p> <p>certain 15:17,17 34:20</p> <p>certainly 13:20</p> <p>certify 37:4</p> <p>cetera 11:13,19 15:15 24:22</p> <p>Chair 3:4,7 31:23 35:9</p> <p>Chairperson 25:18</p> <p>challenging 4:5 21:16</p> <p>change 26:2,3,12 26:22 30:13 31:10</p> <p>changed 14:22 33:20 35:3</p> <p>changes 11:21 18:12,15 30:15 30:24 32:17</p> <p>changing 25:23 26:16 28:10 34:7</p> <p>channel 6:1,2</p> <p>charges 11:1</p> <p>cheap 11:17</p> <p>checking 7:21</p> <p>Cherell 3:14 5:17 5:19,20 6:5,23 28:17</p> <p>Cherson 5:4,5 14:5,8 15:2,6,12 15:23 16:24 17:1,9 20:19 21:18,20,22 22:8</p>
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