

# RSA Reporter

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## Rent Guidelines Board Vote Provided Increases & Showed Aggressive Tactics By Opposition

Though far less than what's needed to maintain aging buildings, and an unfortunate continuation of government-forced disinvestment in affordable housing, New York City's Rent Guidelines Board (RGB) voted for increases in one and two-year stabilized leases that still accounted for some of the data and personal stories that RSA membership submitted for consideration.

As you know, the RGB voted for 2.75% increases on one-year leases and 5.25% on two-year leases for leases commencing on October 1st of 2024. The previous issue of the *RSA Reporter* shared the information we submitted to the RGB which we believe contributed to the deliberations – however flawed they always are – that resulted in upward adjustments. The four Public Members and the RGB Chairman voted for these increases.

Professional tenant activists and their colleagues in public office chose a very troubling and very different path than their activities in last year's RGB process, and in fact different than any other RGB process in recent memory. Rather than fully participating in deliberations, they instead protested the validity of the RGB itself and picketed the final vote, blocking entrance to Hunter College (where the final vote was held) and forced several arrests.

Tenant Representatives on the RGB had walked out of earlier meetings, leading to widespread confusion at the Board itself, and at City Hall, as to whether they had resigned from the RGB altogether or simply stormed out from just one meeting...(they returned for future meetings and the final vote).

By emptying the auditorium of tenant voices, as disruptive as they usually are with noisemakers and shouts and curses, professional

tenant activists and aligned politicians were aiming to get more press coverage than their usual soundbites from within the auditorium. They wanted to shift the media focus away from “competing voices expressed themselves and here's where the decision landed...” and towards “tenants are angry at a system they insist is fixed and arrests were made as they protested the final vote...” This theatrical tactic is sadly consistent with their approach to what could – and should – be a more thoughtful approach to policymaking and democracy.

RGB Owner Representatives Christina Smyth and Rob Ehrlich are to be commended for their steady and reasonable approach centered on the economic reality of maintaining stabilized buildings. Their advocacy within RGB deliberations, and their proposals grounded in clear-eyed data, set important markers for both the preliminary ranges and the final vote. They too had concerns about the overall process, particularly the vitriol and attacks directed towards them – and owners generally – that were a part of the tenants' new approach. Owner Representatives also took issue with elected officials weighing in so forcefully against RGB deliberations, clearly crossing a line from voicing an opinion on behalf of constituents to intimidating appointed members of a city board.

Yet, despite their concerns, Smyth and Ehrlich didn't walk out of meetings. They didn't coordinate intentional arrests at a CUNY college. They didn't throw themselves into political theatre. Instead, they wrote a letter and made a statement outlining their concerns and their preference for a process that more fully includes economics and owner voices.

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## Rent Guidelines Board Vote Provided Increases... (Continued From Cover...)

Remember – last year it was the Tenant Representatives on the RGB who voted with the Chairman and two Public Members for increases in order to prevent what they (the Tenant Reps) believed would have been even higher increases. This year the Tenant Representatives abandoned their responsibilities for crowd-pleasing protests.

As a regular reader of the *RSA Reporter*, you know that our trade association believes that nothing is ever just about one thing. This year's RGB deliberations were no exception. While the calendar insists we're in the summer months of 2024, the political calendar is already well into positioning and posturing for the 2025 citywide election for Mayor and other offices. The radical and reckless wing of the Democratic Party are using the RGB – which is supposed to be a data driven deliberative body – to attack Mayor Eric Adams.

*“Eric Adams Oversees a Rent Hike—Again”* was one headline. *“Tenants brace for yet more rent hikes under Mayor Adams”* was another. *“Eric Adams’ Rent Guidelines Board made the wrong move by approving steep rent hikes”* tweeted a Councilmember representing wealthy neighborhoods in Brownstone Brooklyn.

*“So many people will have to choose between food and rent or a doctor and rent because of Eric Adams”* said a far-left activist.

While we submitted testimony based on economic and market data, on the lived experience of diverse owners throughout the city, and on rational descriptions of how state and city policies and mandates are impacting building finances, others were playing politics. While you shared how desperately you need upward adjustments in building income – rent – to meet escalating costs, others were focused on generating ideologically tinted headlines for future campaign commercials.

Through all this – the politics, the protests, the posturing – RSA made a strong case for the needs of our membership and, ultimately, for the overall health of affordable housing in New York City and for the city's budget. We were again leaders in this process, acknowledging it's an imperfect system but never abandoning our responsibilities just to make a point. The stakes are too high and the consequences too severe to indulge in rhetoric that fades away and fails to make a mark. Governing requires more than that and we were proud to speak up – this year, in past years, and always – on your behalf. ■



## HURRY! IT'S NOT TOO LATE!

### USE RSA'S 2024 RENT REGISTRATION SERVICE TO COMPLY WITH THE LAW AND AVOID LARGE FINES!

**NEW LAW IN EFFECT:** Failure to promptly register rent stabilized apartments will incur significant penalties. Owners face a fine of \$500 per unregistered unit for each month the registration is delinquent.

Every rent stabilized and newly deregulated apartment must be registered with the NYS DHCR between **April 1 and July 31** of each year. Protect yourself and register your buildings today through **RSA's Rent Registration Service.**

To use the **RSA Rent Registration Service**, simply visit **[www.rsanyc.org](http://www.rsanyc.org)** today!