

TOWNSHIP OF LOPATCONG
RENT LEVELING BOARD
REORGANIZATION AND REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
PUBLIC SESSION 7PM

January 18, 2024

Chairman Palitto called the meeting to order welcoming the public to the Reorganization Meeting of the Rent Leveling Board for this January 18, 2024

A prayer was offered followed by the Oath of Allegiance.

Chairman Palitto stated “adequate notice of this meeting has been provided indicating the time and place of the meeting in accordance with Chapter 231 of the Public Laws of 1975 by advertising a Notice in The Star Ledger and The Express-Times and by posting a copy on the bulletin board in the Municipal Building.”

Roll Call

Present: Chairman James Palitto, Member Richard McQuade.

Absent: Vice-Chair Louis Belcaro

Organization of the Board:

1. Elections of Officers- Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary

Chairman Palitto opens nominations for the positions.

Member McQuade nominates James Palitto for Chairperson. Seconded by, Chairman Palitto.

Member McQuade nominates Louis Belcaro for Vice-Chair. Seconded by, Chairman Palitto.

Member McQuade nominates Kayla Marconi for Secretary. Seconded by, Chairman Palitto.

ROLL CALL

AYES: Member McQuade, Chairman Palitto.

NAYS: None

2. Resolution No. 24-01 – Meeting Calendar and Official Newspapers for Year 2024
3. Resolution No. 24-02 – Robert’s Rules of Order

Motion to approve both resolutions by Member McQuade. Seconded by Chairman Palitto.

AYES: Member McQuade, Chairman Palitto.

NAYS: None

Old Business:

1. Approval of November 16, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve by, Member McQuade. Seconded by, Chairman Palitto.

AYES: Member McQuade, Chairman Palitto.

NAYS: None

2. Hardship Complaint - Brakeley Gardens, Apartment I-2

Chairman Palitto states that a letter has been sent by the board's attorney and have yet to receive a response from Harbor Management's legal representation. Chairman Palitto says that he believes a follow up is in order. Attorney Bykov agrees that he will prepare a follow up letter and keep the board and secretary updated on any response from Harbor Management Group. Member McQuade states for the record, a response was received on December 19, 2023. Attorney Bykov clarifies that Tecia Walker did respond to the letter regarding the I-2 complaint and the letter regarding the water and sewer charges was received January 2, 2024.

Chairman Palitto proposes a motion for the board to authorize the attorney to send a follow up letter to Harbor Management Group regarding the complaints received.

Motion made by Chairman Palitto. Seconded by Member McQuade.

AYES: Member McQuade, Chairman Palitto.

NAYS: None

3. Hardship Complaint - Brakeley Gardens, Water and Sewer Charges

Chairman Palitto states that the board's attorney sent a letter addressing the complaints of the additional charges. Chairman says that the board's attorney was informed that the complaint had been forwarded to Harbor's legal representation, but has yet to receive a response on this matter as well.

Chairman Palitto proposes a motion for the board to authorize the attorney to send a follow up letter to Harbor Management Group regarding the complaints received.

Motion made by Chairman Palitto. Seconded by Member McQuade.

AYES: Member McQuade, Chairman Palitto.

NAYS: None

New Business:

1. Hardship Complaint - Brakeley Gardens, Apartment Q-8

Chairman Palitto addresses the complaint regarding the increase in pet fees. He says that Harbor Management has increased the pet fee from \$40.00 dollars to \$60.00 dollars. Attorney Bykov clarifies that the fee was originally \$25.00. Chairman asked if we know when the fee increased to \$40.00 dollars?

Christina Allatines Q-8 - When Salem Management owned the complex it was \$25.00. When Harbor Management took over, they required an online pet assessment that charges you and also raised the fee to \$40.00.

Member McQuade asks when that was.

Ms. Allatines estimates 2-3 years ago, whenever Harbor Management took over. She mentions they have sent out a notice that the pet fees will be increasing to \$60.00 dollars. She says that they have already raised her rent the allowable 3% for the year and they are now raising the pet fee additionally. Ms. Allatines says that the registration is online only and also charges you an additional \$25.00 fee to register every year.

Secretary Marconi mentions that the board's attorney had addressed this matter to Harbor Management last year when it had come to the board's attention that they had raised the fees to \$40.00 dollars.

Christina says that the fees get totaled into her total rent amount.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Tenant Brakeley Gardens Q-6 - Complains that there have been heating issues in the buildings. She mentions that has been an on-going issue since October and the fixes that are done, do not last. She mentions that the heat goes on and off and that maintenance does not respond. She expresses her concerns for children and elderly tenants living in the complex. She also states that Elizabethtown Gas is supposed to be on site today to make repairs.

Chairman Palitto explains that as soon as the Township was notified of this issue all proper sources were notified and addressing the issue immediately. He explains that the Township had sent out a Township inspector, notified the Warren County Health Department and the DCA assuring the tenant the issue is being addressed.

Secretary Marconi states that a Township Official was at Blakeley Gardens on January 10th, the day of notification to assess the situation and had followed up today January 18th. She also explains that the Township Official stated he was informed that the issue was due to a fix needed by the gas company and that they anticipate a permanent fix on the issue.

Secretary Marconi mentions that she had contacted the Health Department and the Health Department contacted the State DCA.

John Betz, Brakeley Gardens - Agrees to complaints about the heat in the buildings. Mr. Betz asks the board's attorney for clarification on the heat requirements in the Rent Leveling Ordinance.

Chairman Palitto asks the audience if there are any other comments. Seeing none, hearing none.

Motion to Adjourn:

Motion by: Chairman Palitto

Seconded by: Member McQuade

All in favor

Respectfully submitted,
Kayla Marconi
Board Secretary