

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
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PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT
MICHAEL P. GARDNER
Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Robert W. Healy
City Manager

FROM: Michael P. Gardner 
Personnel Director

DATE: January 29, 1996

RE: Council Order #046, dated Dec. 11, 1995, Re: Update on Phaseout of the Rent Control Board

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Monthly meetings have been held with the Rent Control union (Local 2528, NOLSW, UAW), and department management since last July to assess work load and staffing. Work load has declined since last July, with a temporary increase in activity in late 1995, based upon the changes in the law affecting both landlords and tenants which took effect January 1, 1996, and the related comprehensive mailing sent to tenants and landlords in late November, 1995. The most labor intensive work that remains is the review of department records for discard and archiving.

Six rent control employees have been successful in obtaining other employment with the City (permanent or temporary). Although there have been a number of voluntary and involuntary lay offs this fiscal year, many of those employees have obtained employment elsewhere. Currently only three employees are receiving unemployment compensation benefits as a result of voluntary or involuntary layoff. Seven more employees are scheduled for layoff within the next month. When those lay offs are completed the staff will be reduced from 25 budgeted at the beginning of the fiscal year to eight. It is anticipated that the bulk of those employees will leave their rent control positions (voluntarily or by layoff) by mid April with the remainder leaving at the end of the fiscal year.

Attached is the report from the Rent Control Department summarizing their activities.



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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BUDGET PERSONNEL
DEPARTMENT
JAN 22 2 28 PM '96

RENT CONTROL BOARD

TERRENCE P. MORRIS,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MEMORANDUM

To: Michael Gardner
Personnel Director

From: Terrence Morris

Re: Response to Council Order

Date: January 19, 1996

In response to the recent Council Order regarding the phaseout of rent control, I am submitting to you the attached narrative which summarizes the Board's activities nad staffing levels during the transition period occasioned by the enactment of Chapter 282 of the Acts of 1994.

RENT CONTROL

RECAP OF ACTIVITIES

At the beginning of the 1995, we were overwhelmed by telephone calls and visitors to our offices, clamoring for Protective Status and for Public Assistance. We spent our days explaining the ins and outs of Chapter 282 to the public. Chapter 282 was intended to provide for a transition period rather than the abrupt end to Rent Control which Question 9 provided.

The primary tasks being dealt with by the Rent Control staff during the second half of fiscal 95 were the following:

1. Providing Public Assistance, both in person and via telephone to tenants and landlords from 8:30 A.M. until 5:00 P.M. weekdays, as well as on Wednesday evening until 9:00 P.M.
2. Conducting interviews with tenants to determine which tenants qualify for Protected Status and processing their applications. Although the majority of these are done at our offices, we do conduct home visits for elderly and/or disabled tenants who are unable to visit our offices.
3. Calculating the 5%/30% rent increases mandated by Chapter 282 and continuing to set maximum rents for all covered units.
4. Under the City's Transitional Assistance Program (TAP), providing services and training to landlords, tenants, and various community groups and City agencies. Other services provided by Rent Control staff under TAP include: Housing Counseling, Mediation Screening and Referral, and general information about the New Act and state landlord/tenant law.
5. Determining eligibility for Certificates of Decontrol.
6. Conducting administrative review of Determinations of Protected Status and Decontrol, upon request of landlord or tenant.
7. Conducting fact-finding hearings to review Determinations of Protected Status and Decontrol.
8. Representing the Rent Control Board on Appellate Review of Board Decisions.

In addition, four separate informational mailings were prepared and sent to all Cambridge Rent Control tenants and landlords during the December through February time frame, in an attempt to keep them abreast of the various changes in status quo. Three emergency hot-lines were installed on Election Day and continued to be staffed full-time through the end of the fiscal 95.

A DEPARTMENT IN TRANSITION

Commencing with Fiscal 96 our program staff provided the following services from July 1, 1995, until January 31, 1996:

1. Continuing to conduct interviews with tenants to determine which tenants qualify for Protected Status and processing their applications.
2. Determining eligibility for Certificates of Decontrol.
3. Conducting administrative review of Determinations of Protected Status and Decontrol, upon request of landlord or tenant.
4. Conducting fact-finding hearings to review Determinations of Protected Status and Decontrol.
5. Representing the Rent Control Board on Appellate Review of Board Decisions.
6. Processing Special Cases/Tenant Complaints to determine the status of particular units.
7. Mediation, Screening and Referral.
8. Re-calculating of the 5%/30% increase mandated by Chapter 282 and establishing maximum rents.
9. Continuing to provide Public Assistance weekdays from 8:45 A.M. until 4:45 P.M.
10. Processing Rent Adjustment applications.

More specifically, a concerted effort was made to resolve all outstanding DPS cases, Requests for Review, and all other cases which were not moot. A joint effort with Community Development involved culling non-confidential data from DPS files.

The annual 5% rent adjustment was done at the end of November. This correlated in scope to what had previously been called the General Adjustment. Our offices have been extremely busy since November, due to this project. Also, a mailing from the Office of the City Manager to all tenants and landlords of tenants who were potentially losing their Protected Status as of 12/31/95, generated a flurry of calls from mid-December through mid-January.

In addition, a work plan is currently being implemented to accomplish the archival schedule which was developed in conjunction with David Best of the Commonwealth's Archives Division, as well as other city departments. This work is underway at this time.

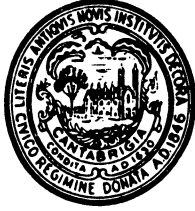
STAFFING LEVELS

At this time last year (1995) we had with 25 full time employees and 8 part time employees. Due to a combination of attrition and layoffs, we currently have 9 full time employees and 5 part time employees. In addition, two of our employees have advised us that they will be leaving us soon, which will leave us with 8 full time and 4 part time.

DATE	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES
1/31/95	33
4/1/95	27
7/1/95	21
9/1/95	18
10/1/95	17
1/1/96	14

CESSATION OF OPERATION

Current plans call for the Department of Rent Control to close its doors for the last time on June 30, 1996. Rent Control is not scheduled to be operational in Fiscal 97.



EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL. 349-4300
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February 5, 1996

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 7, regarding an update on the phaseout of the Rent Control Board, received from Personnel Director Michael P. Gardner and Terrence Morris, Executive Director of the Rent Control Board.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
attachment

Consent Agenda #17

S-34

Relative to Awaiting Report Item
Number Seven, regarding an update
on the phaseout of the Rent Control
Board.

In City Council February 5, 1996

Placed on File