



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL 498-9077

RENT CONTROL BOARD

D. Margaret Drury, Executive Director

To: Robert Healy, City Manager
From: Margaret Drury, Executive Director
Date: June 20, 1986
Re: Impact on Rent Control Board Functioning of Continuing
to Process Regulation 72 Rent Adjustments while
Completing General Adjustment.

In December of 1985, the Board requested staff input on administrative considerations in the timing and scope of the next general adjustment. The staff recommended to the Board that a comprehensive general adjustment be implemented in early 1987.

This recommendation was based on the staff's assessment of the time necessary to complete the work associated with a general adjustment while continuing to process all categories of cases expeditiously. In making this recommendation, the staff noted that the backlog of cases aged over 181 and over 301 days drastically increased during the last general adjustment. The staff believed these cases needed immediate ongoing attention and that in designing and implementing the next general adjustment, the planning process should include consideration of how to deal with the backlog buildup that results from a general adjustment.

Shortly thereafter the City Council passed an order requesting the Rent Control Board to emphasize regular general adjustments whenever possible and to initiate a general adjustment for Class D properties as soon as possible. The Board has also been made aware of a pending City Council order, presently tabled, that the Board complete a general adjustment in thirty days.

In response to the concern of the public and the Council that a general adjustment be processed as soon as possible, the Board and staff have attempted to take appropriate steps to implement a general adjustment as soon as possible and more quickly than the schedule originally proposed by the staff, even though that original schedule realistically allocated existing staff resources in a way to keep routine operations functioning normally.

However, it is clear to the staff and the Board that it is not possible to devote the staff resources necessary to complete the general adjustment on a speeded up schedule without taking resources away from case processing. The same staff works on both projects. Therefore, if the staff intends to meet the public concern to get a general adjustment done quickly, individual cases cannot get done as quickly. In attempting to distinguish rationally among the categories of cases that will be slowed down during G.A. time, it is sensible to expect that the available case processing time will go to cases other than Regulation 72, because Regulation 72 cases are adjustments for operating expenses, as is a general adjustment. Also, the rent adjustment staff is primarily responsible for working on the general adjustment. On the other hand, the general adjustment has no relation to rent adjustments for capital improvements, evictions, or special cases, so it is not as sensible to get additional G.A. processing time as the expense of these cases, although all case processing will inevitably suffer to the extent that all staff interrupt normal case work to work on the G.A.

During the last general adjustment the Rent Control Board office continued acceptance of Regulation 72 rent adjustments, although a notice was attached to all petitions which warned the public that the processing time would be extremely delayed. This solution was less than ideal since it raised expectations on the part of people who had done all the work to file a petition and paid the required fee. These expectations could not be and were not satisfied, which led to frustration; misunderstanding, and tension among landlords and tenants. It also created a backlog of old and undone cases at the Rent Control Board.

Thus, the Board has attempted a more straightforward approach to this general adjustment: a temporary suspension of the acceptance and processing of the type of rent adjustment which is most closely related to the general rent adjustment that the Board is now working on. In addition, this approach is reasonable both because the general adjustment and Regulation 72 adjustments are primarily adjustments for changes in operating expenses, and because if the Board does temporarily stop accepting Regulation 72 petitions, it can complete a general adjustment in approximately the time that it would take to complete the Regulation 72 adjustment, so landlords who would be temporarily prevented from filing Regulation 72 adjustments will still get a rent adjustment. It should be noted that landlords may still file individual rent adjustments for capital improvements.

The Board has considered the consequences of the various options outlined above and chosen the one which it believes best serves the needs of the community. Any modification of that decision which shifts resources from the general to individual adjustments will necessarily delay the general adjustment. At the same time, the ongoing work on the general adjustment means that the cases that are accepted will be processed much more slowly, with the resultant tension and dissatisfaction always engendered by backlogs.

MD/dfa



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

June 23, 1986

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Enclosed please find copy of a memo from Margaret Drury, Executive Director of the Rent Control Board, relative to the impact of the Board's functioning of continuing to process Regulation 72 rent adjustments while completing a general adjustment.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", is written over a horizontal line.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mbf
Enc.

Re: enclosed memo from the Executive Director of the Rent Control Board on the impact of the Board's functioning of continuing to process Regulation 72 rent adjustments while completing a general adjustment.

In City Council,

June 23, 1986

*Referred to the
Committee on Rent Control*

*Copy sent to Councilman Walsh,
Chairman, Committee on Rent Control
6/27/86 akh*