



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

639 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

TEL 498-9077

RENT CONTROL BOARD

ROGER MERVIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Robert Healy, City Manager

FROM: Roger Mervis, Executive Director *RM*

RE: Management Report

DATE: March 17, 1983

This memorandum represents the second of a series of management reports to be transmitted to the City Council. This report will update you and the Council on the progress the Rent Control Board is making towards implementation of the recommendations of the Mayor's Commission. In general, we are continuing to make steady (if not spectacular) progress fiscally, administratively and legally. I would be happy to brief any member of the Council in more detail regarding the matters discussed in this memorandum.

I. Personnel

I continue to feel strongly that the "care and feeding" of the Rent Control Board staff is my most important responsibility. As I suggested in my earlier memorandum, the Rent Control Board staff is a group of highly dedicated and competent individuals. It is critical to the future of the Rent Control Board that we avoid the "revolving door" syndrome that has characterized the Board in the past. I believe that the Manager and the Council have given us the fiscal and managerial tools adequate to address this concern. As a result, we have had no resignations since my arrival at the Board on November 1, 1982, and expect none in the foreseeable future. (I particularly commend the Manager for his approval of our proposal to redesignate two existing positions as Senior Hearing Examiner slots which has allowed us to retain two of our most senior and competent hearing examiners.) With the training and orientation of new staff members over the last several months (all vacancies have been filled), the Board has entered a period of continuity and stability which is critical to our efforts to reduce the existing case backlog and to ensure no substantial backlogs in the future. Since backlogs have arisen in the past when the Board implemented general adjustments, the Board's tentative plans for a late summer general adjustment will test our capacity to sustain our current progress.

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CITY MANAGER

II. Legal

With the addition of a full-time General Counsel, the Board is now able to more aggressively pursue the resolution of a variety of complex legal issues. Most of these involve a variety of issues concerning the interpretation of the Removal Permit Ordinance. In addition, the Board has for the first time sought criminal complaints against a non-Cambridge landlord who has claimed an owner-occupied exemption for four different parcels in Cambridge. We are also in the process of clarifying our policies and practices regarding the Removal Permit Ordinance for the public generally and for the Building Department and the Board of Zoning Appeals in particular. In this respect, Building Commissioner Cellucci and his staff have been most helpful to us in coordinating their enforcement efforts with those of this office. As a part of this effort to clarify Board policies and practices, we are engaged in an on-going process of codifying in our regulations existing policy and practice so that the public will be given maximum notice as to its rights and responsibilities under the rent control statute and Removal Permit Ordinance.

III. Budget

The Board approved a new filing fee schedule which was implemented in January. This schedule was based on a comprehensive study of our direct and indirect costs relative to various case types (e.g. evictions, rent adjustments) conducted by our Assistant Director for Administration and Systems, Ed Macioci. The fees reflect our costs per case type. We expect to collect approximately \$35,000 in filing fees in FY83.

We are continuing our efforts, in concert with the Budget Office, to bring fiscal accountability to the Rent Control Board through the adoption of appropriate systems and procedures. We have implemented other cost-saving measures as well. For instance, with the assistance of the Purchasing Department, we have obtained a variety of surplus furniture items at no cost to the Board. We are also in the final stages of renovations which have created four additional offices. Cambridge Rindge and Latin students are providing free labor, and our landlord is providing an additional \$500 worth of electrical work and materials. Finally, we have for the first time put all of our typewriters, tape recorders, and adding machines under maintenance contracts to extend the useful life of this equipment. In this respect, several such items, which had been discarded previously, have been repaired and returned to service.

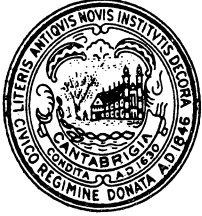
IV. Backlog

Due to a combination of additional personnel and streamlined procedures, we have reduced substantially our backlog of cases and are processing expeditiously most incoming cases. All Hearing Examiner reports ready for typing are typed immediately

and the results scheduled for hearings before the Board with two weeks' notice to all parties. Special teams of Hearing Examiners and Rent Adjustment Specialists are tackling the backlog. We expect that this backlog will have been eliminated by mid-summer.

Following are estimates of the processing time and the backlog for each type of case:

- 1) Evictions and Removal Permits - for routine cases, approximately one month from initial hearing to a final decision by the Board; two months for non-routine cases; many evictions are being mediated; no backlog exists.
- 2) Incoming Regulation 72 and 75 (rent adjustments) approximately 2 - 4 months from filing to a final Board decision; no backlog growing
- 3) Backlogged Regulation 72 and 75
All cases involving units with no prior rent adjustments have been scheduled or heard; the remaining 60 cases should be heard by the Board by June or July
- 4) Regulation 76 (capital adjustments)
By mid-April, approximately 3-4 weeks from filing to notice of decision for incoming cases; backlog (20-1982 cases of which 10 are inactive, 35-1983 cases) to be eliminated by mid-summer
- 5) Tenant Complaints and Special Cases
Incoming cases are being monitored for urgency, triggering priority status; 45 cases in current backlog, to be eliminated by late summer



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
Tel. 498-9011

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

March 21, 1983

To the Honorable, the City Council:

As per your request, enclosed please find copy of an up-dated report on the progress the Rent Control Board is making towards implementing the recommendations of the Mayor's Commission.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mbf
Enc.

5-148

Re: up-dated report on the progress of the
implementation of recommendations of the
Mayor's Commission by the Rent Control
Board.

In City Council,

March 21, 1983

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