

Bloomfield Township Rent Leveling Board

Meeting Minutes – May 7, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM by Chairman Doug Grant.

Open Public Meetings Act Compliance

Chairman Doug Grant read the Open Public Meetings Act notice, stating that notice of the time, date, method of access, and agenda for this meeting was provided at least 48 hours prior to commencement. Notice was published in the Independent Press and posted on the Bloomfield Township website and bulletin board on May 5, 2025. Chairman Grant apologized for the disorderly April 2, 2025, meeting, citing frequent interruptions and emotional exchanges, and implemented guidelines per Robert’s Rules of Order: one speaker at a time, hand-raising or virtual features for recognition, and muting for disruptions to ensure a respectful and productive environment.

Roll Call

Present:

- Doug Grant (Chairman)
- Satenik Margaryan (Vice Chair)
- Kevin Lindahl
- Kathleen DeMarino
- Desantila “Tila” Gjata

Also in Attendance:

- John W. Ferraro, Esq. (Board Attorney)
- Sarah Cruz (Council Liaison)
- Jared Lesbader (Witness, Glen Gardens Apartments Manager)
- Renee Good (Witness, Troy Towers Tenant)
- Andrew Naideck, Esq. (Witness, Troy Towers Representative)

New Business

A. Vacancy Decontrol Applications

- **Vacancy Decontrol Application – 11-15 Henry Street, Apartment 6A:**
Jared Lesbader, property manager, testified that the unit vacated voluntarily mid-February 2025, with the tenant signing a certification and providing an email address for notice (sent but not attended). Member Kevin Lindahl moved to approve, Member Satenik Margaryan seconded. Vote: All present (DeMarino, Lindahl, Grant, Margaryan, Gjata) voted aye. Motion passed.

B. Tenant Complaint Settlement Review – Troy Towers Apartment 404B

- Members Kevin Lindahl and Desantila Gjata recused themselves due to tenancy at Troy Towers, muting their microphones during discussion (per Attorney Ferraro’s advice for impartiality). Andrew Naideck, Esq., represented Troy Towers, and Renee Good appeared to review a complaint involving a 2011 rent increase. The parties agreed to freeze rent increases for four years from the settlement date. Chairman Grant requested a copy of the agreement, which Naideck agreed to email. No vote was taken; the matter was deferred pending agreement review. Good and Naideck exchanged praise, noting a positive resolution.

Public Comments

No members of the public attended for comment.

Communication Reports and Administrative Matters

A. Review of Rent Board Rules and Regulations

- Chairman Grant presented a compiled document of 15 rules adopted since May 29, 2024, enhancing transparency (e.g., minutes online within 24 hours, updated forms, communication restrictions) and compliance with Chapter 435. Member Kevin Lindahl moved to approve, Member Satenik Margaryan seconded. Vote: Lindahl, Margaryan, and Grant voted aye; DeMarino and Gjata voted opposed. Motion passed 3-2. Attorney Ferraro will email the administration to request posting on the Rent Leveling Board website.

B. Electronic Filing and Review of Annual Registration Forms

- Chairman Grant reviewed the April 2, 2025, rule requiring electronic rent roll

submissions by July 31, 2025, and annually thereafter, citing § 435-2B(1) (filed by July 1, 2016), § 435-2B(2) (updates post-property changes), and § 435-6 (fines up to \$500 for non-compliance, referred to township). He asserted the board's authority to proactively review rent rolls, rebutting privacy concerns as baseless given internal use and security, aligned with West Orange and Hoboken practices.

- Attorney Ferraro relayed the township's position that the board, as a quasi-judicial body, should not proactively flag violations due to impartiality concerns (separation of powers analogy to zoning officials), suggesting Human Services handle rent roll review. The board expressed concern over access for active complaints (e.g., Ms. Good's case lacked rent rolls, 29:04-29:32) and past violations. Chairman Grant disagreed, arguing § 435-2B mandates automatic rent roll access, not requiring a rule (30:43-31:11). No vote was taken on this debate, pending further action.

C. Historical Oversight and Rent Roll Access (2016-2024)

- Member Kevin Lindahl questioned who monitored rent roll compliance from July 1, 2016, to 2024, noting tenant vulnerability if unaware of rights. Attorney Ferraro cited Bonnie Flynn (until 2021-2022) and Human Services, but lacked records. A debate on Ms. Good's 2011 rent increase (pre-2016 ordinance) remained unresolved due to unknown tenancy date. The board requested a paper trail of compliance reviews, an action item assigned to members.

D. Proposed Tenant Advocate

- Attorney Ferraro proposed a township-hired tenant advocate to assist with complaints, not represent landlords. Chairman Grant opposed, viewing it as duplicating the board's role. Member Satenik Margaryan requested a timeline, an action item for Council Liaison Sarah Cruz.

E. Operational Challenges

- The board noted the secretary's absence, a failed summons of the township administrator (oversight by Ferraro, 38:27-38:59), and a year-long delay in issuing a Rice Notice for employee discussions (50:09). Action items include:
 - Letter to council addressing operational issues (assigned to Doug).
 - Rice Notice to Secretary Cruz for the next meeting (assigned to Doug).

- Request for administrator at the next meeting for an informal conversation (assigned to Ferraro).
- Compiled questions for Human Services (assigned to Doug, to Ferraro).
- Cruz acknowledged an email oversight but agreed to follow up (54:54-58:07).

Approval of April 2, 2025, Meeting Minutes

- Chairman Grant requested correcting the effective date from July 1 to July 31. Member Kevin Lindahl moved to approve, Member Satenik Margaryan seconded. All voted aye. Motion passed.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for June 11, 2025, at 7:00 PM.

Motion to Adjourn

Member Kevin Lindahl moved to adjourn, Member Satenik Margaryan seconded. All voted aye. Meeting adjourned at 8:03 PM.

Approved June 11,2025

