



BOROUGH OF BERGENFIELD
RENT LEVELING BOARD
jluppino@bergenfieldnj.gov

Meeting Minutes
May 13th, 2026

Chairman, Robert Policano called the meeting to order at 7:05pm, with reading the Open Public Meetings Act Statement.

Roll Call

Present: Robert Policano, Catherine Steinel, Diane Carlson, Andy Lehr, Maureen Sullivan,

Absent: Christopher Arp, Brenda Virtusio

Also Present: Marc Pascual, Councilman; Jaime Luppino, Clerk; Emma Rush, Borough Attorney; Maryam Varela, Turkish Translator

Pledge of Allegiance

Led by Robert Policano.

Old Business - None

New Business

A. Resolutions

2026-04/ Authorization to Enter into Closed Executive Session

Motion by Maureen Sullivan, seconded by Diane Carlson, that Resolution #2026-04 be approved.

| Roll Call | Yes | No | Abstain | Absent | Recuse |
|--------------------------------|-----|----|---------|--------|--------|
| Robert Policano, Chairman | ✓ | | | | |
| Catherine Steinel, Co-Chairman | | | ✓ | | |
| Christopher Arp | | | | ✓ | |
| Diane Carlson | ✓ | | | | |
| Andy Lehr | ✓ | | | | |
| Maureen Sullivan | ✓ | | | | |
| Brenda Virtusio | | | | ✓ | |

B. Non-Compliance with Resolution #2026-02

Resolution 2026-02 was approved and memorialized at the April 1st, 2026 meeting. Tenant, Cagdas Gayretli filed a complaint against landlord, St. James, at 294 S Washington Ave, Bergenfield. St James Apartment was represented by Mr. William Rodriquez, of Griffin Alexander, P.C. Turkish Translator, Maryam Varela was provided by the Board for Mr. Gayretli.

Attorney Emma Rush provided a summary of the complaint, before allowing Mr. Rodriguez to state his position. Mr. Rodriguez requested to speak privately with Mr. Gayretli to reach a settlement, Mr. Gayretli requested to stay before the board. Mr. Rodriguez states that he believes there was misunderstanding that could be cleared up. He claims the representative



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that was sent for the March 11th meeting was unprepared for the hearing, which is why an adjournment was requested. (The adjournment was denied by the board.) Mr. Rodriguez expressed that management is willing to settle and clear up everything, offering a new lease to the tenant, removing the co-signer, in his name only, no further credit requirements or co-signors. He would be responsible for the length of the lease. The rent would be agreed to be \$1,765.17, with hopefully getting the board to retroactive the increase to January, however stating that would probably not be likely to have the tenant or board agree too, so effective June 1st to the end of 2026. This would allow management to get the tenant back on a calendar year. Ms. Rush wants to clarify that it is the legal right of the tenant to not sign a lease.

There was a disagreement between the tenant and the landlord's attorney about the "settlement" that occurred at the eviction case on February 18, 2026. Landlord's attorney stating it was not a settlement, rather a voluntary dismissal and tenant claiming they agreed upon \$1,714.00. The \$1,714.00 was also confirmed at the March 11th hearing. Landlord's attorney claiming the representative at the hearing spoke out of term. Landlord is asking the board to reconsider the decision they made at that hearing. There was counter testimony about the eviction case and what was discussed there, including the payment that was made to bring tenant's account current.

Motion was made by Robert Policano to deny the landlord's request to reconsider the board's decision. Rent will remain at \$1,714.00 until December 2026. Catherine Steinel seconded the motion.

| Roll Call | Yes | No | Abstain | Absent | Recuse |
|--------------------------------|-----|----|---------|--------|--------|
| Robert Policano, Chairman | ✓ | | | | |
| Catherine Steinel, Co-Chairman | ✓ | | | | |
| Christopher Arp | | | | ✓ | |
| Diane Carlson | ✓ | | | | |
| Andy Lehr | ✓ | | | | |
| Maureen Sullivan | ✓ | | | | |
| Brenda Virtusio | | | | ✓ | |

Motion was made by Robert Policano to have a summons issued to St. James Apartment for non-compliance of Resolution 2026-02. Diane Carlson seconded the motion.

| Roll Call | Yes | No | Abstain | Absent | Recuse |
|--------------------------------|-----|----|---------|--------|--------|
| Robert Policano, Chairman | ✓ | | | | |
| Catherine Steinel, Co-Chairman | ✓ | | | | |
| Christopher Arp | | | | ✓ | |
| Diane Carlson | ✓ | | | | |
| Andy Lehr | ✓ | | | | |
| Maureen Sullivan | ✓ | | | | |
| Brenda Virtusio | | | | ✓ | |



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Complaints- 215 Hickory Ave, Apt. B

Tenant, Lauren Magielnicki was present and sworn in. Landlord Travis Soine was not present for the hearing. Lauren stated that her rent was raised at the end of March, however her anniversary date of her lease is March 1st. She reviewed that she has (in the past) had a year lease, 6 month lease, and then month to month. March 2023 to March 2024 rent was \$1,600.00. Rent was increase to \$1,664.00 for March 2024 to August 2024. Tenant paid her March 2026 rent on February 28, 2026 in the amount of \$1,664.00. When she went on to make the April rent payment, she was locked out of the Apartments.com account. After informing the landlord, it was restored and she was able to access the account on March 26, 2028. At that time the rent was increased to \$1,730.56. She paid that amount on March 27, 2028 to avoid late fees. There was a plumbing repair fee on the account, the charge was \$225.00, however the amount due was \$291.56. When she inquired about the difference, landlord stated that the difference was the March increased rent amount. Tenant informed landlord that the rent increase was not valid because it was issued after the lease anniversary date. Landlord stated the rent increases annually and the delay was due to an oversight. It was confirmed that the issue is not the rent increase, it is the date of the rent increase.

The ordinance can be interrupted in different ways; however NJ State Law requires a 30 day. Our ordinance (240-5) does state that “a landlord seeking an increase in rent shall notify the tenant by certified mail of the calculation involved in computing the increase, including the current rent, the allowable percentage increase, and the allowable rental increase.” While the 4% increase is not in dispute, the tenant was not notified properly. The ordinance is silence in regards to a grace period.

Motion was made by Robert Policano that increase is not valid, due to improperly being notified. Tenant is owed back for the March, April and May overpayment, in the amount of \$199.68. Seconded by Maureen Sullivan.

| Roll Call | Yes | No | Abstain | Absent | Recuse |
|--------------------------------|-----|----|---------|--------|--------|
| Robert Policano, Chairman | ✓ | | | | |
| Catherine Steinel, Co-Chairman | ✓ | | | | |
| Christopher Arp | | | | ✓ | |
| Diane Carlson | ✓ | | | | |
| Andy Lehr | ✓ | | | | |
| Maureen Sullivan | ✓ | | | | |
| Brenda Virtusio | | | | ✓ | |

Motion was made by Maureen Sullivan for the rent to remain at \$1,664.00 until tenant is properly notified, at which point 30 days after notifying tenant, increase will go into effect until February 28th 2027. Seconded by Andy Lehr. All present voting in favor, none opposed.



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- **Monthly Reports- 3 out missing March reports. 215 Hickory is behind multiple months, with no contact. 2 summonses have been issued and returned back. 3rd summons sent out May 12th, 2026. Motion made by Catherine Steinel to accept monthly reports and to recommend that Clerk advises Prosecutor to seek max fine. Seconded by Maureen Sullivan. All present voting in favor, none opposed.**
- **Motion made by Robert Policano to approve Revised March 2026 Meeting Minutes. Seconded by Maureen Sullivan. All present voting in favor, none opposed.**
- **Motion made by Maureen Sullivan to approved April 2026 Meeting Minutes. Seconded by Diane Carlson. All present voting in favor, with one abstention, none opposed.**
- **Motion made by Maureen Sullivan to accept the recommended changes to the Rent Control Ordinance (240). Seconded by Andy Lehr. All present voting in favor, none opposed.**

Public Comments- None

Adjournment-

- **A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Maureen Sullivan. Seconded by Diane Carlson. All present voting in favor, none opposed. Meeting adjourned at 9:41pm.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jaime Luppino

Jaime Luppino, Recording Secretary