

## **Rent Leveling Board Meeting – May 6, 2021**

The West Orange Township Rent Leveling Board met virtually due to the Covid 19 pandemic beginning at 5:05 p.m. Peter Smeraldo, Board Administrator, read the following statement:

This is to inform the general public that this meeting is being held in compliance with Section 5 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, Public Law 1975. The meeting notice was emailed to the Star Ledger and filed in the Township Clerk's office on April 15, 2021, and published in the West Orange Chronicle on April 22, 2021.

### **Roll Call –**

Board Members Present - Councilwoman Tammy Williams, Anthony Campagna, Melinda Huerta, Khabirah Myers, Joanne O'Dea, Rodolfo Rodriguez, Dierdre Poe Saunders

Board Members Absent - Joseph Manzella

**Announcements – None**

**Applications – None**

### **Open Discussion –**

Mr. Peter Smeraldo opened the meeting and stated this was the first Rent Leveling Board meeting in many years. Mr. Smeraldo described the Board's role and purpose and the board administrator's role to the members of the Board and the general public.

Mr. Kenneth W. Kayser, Esq. the Assistant Township Attorney, provided a synopsis of Township's Ordinance – Chapter 15 Rent Control. Mr. Kayser discussed vital provisions of the ordinance. He offered his opinion in the manner in which the ordinance should be complied with and administered. Mr. Kayser suggested that the Board determine and identify if residents need assistance and require help from the Township; determine if and when rent increases comply with the ordinance through the Rent Leveling Board. Mr. Kayser suggested the Board should determine if a budget is necessary, perhaps explore staffing options and provide informational awareness to the public about the the purpose of the Rent Leveling Board.

Board Members discussed providing services and assistance to the tenants and landlords of the community. Members of the Board suggested that an analysis of the Rent Leveling Board office be conducted, including but not limited to:

- Mechanisms of compliance with the ordinance;
- Online portals for landlords;
- Access to staff for assistance and filing complaints or grievances;
- Establishing an operating budget line-item;
- Creation of a database of landlords and properties;
- Mechanism of accountability;
- Mechanism of better advertisement;

- Addressing the concerns of language barriers;
- Establishment of complaint forms;
- The eventual end Executive Order #106 moratorium period;
- Create an educational component to the general community;
- Provide training to board members;
- Consider the creation of an arbitration committee within the Rent Leveling Board;
- Determine comparison of other rent leveling boards and ordinances with neighboring communities;
- Analyze Chapter 15 – Rent Control should any revisions be considered and forwarded to the Township Council;
- Determining the number of properties within the Township and property use.

**Public Comment** – none

At 6:28 p.m., on motion made by Councilwoman Williams and seconded by Board member O'Dea.

All members voting "Aye"; the Rent Leveling Board Meeting adjourned.

The Minutes of this meeting are on file in the Office of the Municipal Clerk.

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Karen J. Carnevale, R.M.C.  
Municipal Clerk

*Peter F. Smeraldo, Jr.*

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Peter F. Smeraldo, Jr.  
Board Administrator

Adopted: June, 3, 2021