

From: Thmoas Lord, Berkeley CA

Date: July 14, 2020

Subject: Deadline this week! Rent board slate selection!

(NOTE: Please share this message with other politically engaged Berkeleyans!)

Please vote in the Tenants Convention rent board slate election!

There are just a few days left before the Saturday deadline!

<https://berkeleytenantsconvention.net/>

(Don't be fooled by the "Under Maintenance" message currently on that web page. The links you need are there.)

Usually, whatever slate the convention chooses is elected en masse in November. Choosing the slate now is likely choosing who will likely be formally elected later.

The primary premise of the Tenants Convention is to elect a slate that will support, rather than undermine, Berkeley's Rent Stabilization Ordinance.

The Rent Board's primary functions are:

- to build, direct, and support a rent board staff (who are primarily concerned with direct public service to tenants and landlords)
- to act as a "quasi-judicial" body, the court of first hearing for certain kinds of disputes between landlords and tenants
- to annually approve the more-or-less mechanically determined rate of increase in the allowable rent ceiling for rent stabilized apartments that are under continuing occupancy by a given tenant

In pursuit of those functions, the Board maintains a set of rules and regulations to implement the Rent Stabilization Ordinance.

Secondarily, though very importantly, the Rent Stabilization Board works with the City Council to give recommendations and consultation on legislation that may impact tenants.

All the information you need to vote can be found by following links on the following web page. Be aware, the page says "UNDER MAINTENANCE" but don't be fooled: the links you need to vote are right there. Voting by electronic ballot is pretty straightforward. We have until Saturday.

<https://berkeleytenantsconvention.net/>

Please consider voting for these candidates as your top two choices in this ranked-choice system:

Dominique Walker, Mari Mendonca

From my perspective, those two women are unmatched as community activists with a sophisticated understanding of present reality. Ms. Walker you may have

heard of because of her co-leadership of the Moms For Housing group that made international news by militantly winning housing for unhoused moms and their children in Oakland and Berkeley. Ms. Mendonca is my treasured colleague on the Berkeley Housing Advisory Commission and is well known and appreciated for her work with Friends of Adeline.

Perhaps what I like about both candidates the most is that while they each have a very clear, sophisticated concept of the issues and urgency of our time, neither of them are caught up in the echo chamber of party politics that seems to dominate Berkeley. We need more candidates like this for every legislative seat in Berkeley.

For your third choice in the ranked choice vote, please consider me, **Thomas Lord**.

Some of the issues that inspire me to run:

- The current rent board is suddenly spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to investigate issues relating to a staff complaint around the recently resigned chief executive of the rent stabilization staff. From my in-the-trenches experience in the corporate and academic worlds, I infer that the current board's relationship to the staff it hires is inadequate. I believe in principles such as "management by walking around" - respectfully approaching and listening to as many employees as possible, in their spaces, all the time, as a matter of regular practice, to understand how the operation is functioning, and how it is not. The first job of the employer is to listen to and understand the employees who are doing the real work. This is the board's job and I don't think they are doing it well enough.
- The rent board just prior to this current board, with most of the same people, for the first time in decades managed to weaken the ordinance at the ballot. As a result of their botched reaction to the possibility of Costa-Hawkins repeal, fewer units are protected than were previously, and new construction is exempt from possible rent stabilization for an absurdly long 20 year period. The rent board should instead be concentrating how to expand rent stabilization in ways that work.
- I believe that social housing, by which I mean publicly owned, democratically managed housing for middle and low income households, is the best strategy for expanding rent stabilization, building community stability, and maximizing the housing available to people of low or even no income. For too long we have relied on perpetually dwindling federal HUD programs. Today we know how to build fiscally strong and sensible social housing problems without that reliance on HUD. The rent board, in its capacity as legislative consultants with City Council, is an excellent position from which to advance social housing legislation in Berkeley.

On that last point, I have had some small victories that the Housing Advisory Commission. I have been able to influence key pieces of regulation - the "small

sites purchase program” and the proposed “tenants opportunity to purchase” ordinance - to set the legal foundation for a social housing program. It is meaningless unless we as a City are able to follow through with a full implementation. But I helped to wedge the door open a bit.

Thank you for your consideration,

Thomas Lord

p.s.: On a sour note, the entrenched powers at the rent board ranked me very low in their recommendations. That is OK, they are not doing a very good job with the power they hold. It is the case, however, that some of the comments are not truthful. For example, while in their interview I laid out a detailed strategy for student housing, one ranker (and current board member) said I had no thoughts on the matter. In general, several of those Berkeley luminaries appear to me to be upset that I disagree strongly with some of their positions on issues. Well, my attitude is, too bad for them. I'll make my case as I can, and cast my votes when the time comes.