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RENT WARS

Rent Guidelines Board Approves Increases on Stabilized Rents

Friday, June 22, 2012, by [Jessica Dailey](#)

The circus was in town last night. The **Rent Guidelines Board**, a nine member board appointment by the mayor, met at the Cooper Union to vote on rent increases for rent stabilized apartments. Outside, protesters marched and shook their signs; inside they **screamed for a rent freeze**, trying to disrupt the meeting by drowning out Chairman Johnathan Kimmel every time he spoke.



Despite the extremely loud and angry protesters, the RGB **voted 5 to 4** to approve an increase of 2 percent or \$20, whichever is greater, on one-year leases, and a 4 percent or \$40 increase on two-year leases. The owner members had wanted 5 percent and 9 percent, while the tenant members wanted a complete freeze. The increases affect rents renewed or starting in October 2012 for roughly one million rent stabilized tenants.



One tenant, who has been protesting at every RGB meeting since 1994, even **made up a song**. A few verses for you:

Johnny Kimmel, Johnny Kimmel

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*You need to let your conscience be your guide
That's why we're asking for a rent freeze
Pretty please!
East Side, West Side,
Rents are going up around town
While our incomes are going down.
Every year you raise our rents
Above a level that's common sense.*

The only time the crowd quieted was when tenant member Adrienne Holder spoke. She referenced the recently released study that more [New Yorkers spend more than half of their income on rent](#), and talked at length about a [Furman Center study](#) showed that renters have a much **greater tax burden** than home owners. Tenants went bonkers when she proposed the freeze. Whenever owner representative Steven Schleider spoke, protesters screamed, "Shut up and go home!" Over the din, he argued that four out of five tenants are able to share the burden of an increase.



Before proposing the increases that were passed, Kimmel said, "This board does not have the ability to fix the ills of this city." He went on to say, "Clearly there is a cost to being an owner and a cost to being a tenant." One public board member, Betty Philips Adams, argued that the difference between being a tenant and being a landlord were too great for the board to be able to come up with a working solution. **"This mechanism is broken,"** she said again and again. "This requires a different fight."

- [Rent Guidelines Board coverage](#) [Curbed]
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