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After Freeze, Guidelines Board Will Allow Rent Increases Again

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Tenants rally at the Rent Guidelines Board

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After a two-year freeze, the Rent Guidelines Board on Tuesday voted to allow rent increases on rent-stabilized apartments.

The board said landlords could raise rents by 1.25 percent on one-year leases, and 2 percent on two-year leases. (The board also allowed an increase on two-year leases last year). There are about a million rent-stabilized apartments in New York City, and the decision applies to leases starting on or after October 1.

Tenants who packed the auditorium at Baruch College booed loudly, drowning out board members as they made statements. Lucia Muniz from Brooklyn cleans houses and babysits for a living. She said she had hoped for another rent freeze. "I have a big family and I cannot move," she said. "I don't want to take my kids to a shelter so I'll have to sacrifice."

Mayor Bill de Blasio, who appoints board members, has touted the rent freeze among his affordable housing accomplishments. But Harvey Epstein, one of the members who represents tenants, said this was the best deal available. "The rent rollback is what we need, but that's not what we're going to get," he said.

A preliminary vote in April called for allowing increases of as much as 3 percent for one-year leases, and 4 percent for two-year leases.

Queue

Landlords were also unhappy. Jack Freund is executive director of the Rent Stabilization Association, which represents owners. He said the vote was step in the right direction, but only a "tiny step." His group had advocated steeper increases, and said landlords still won't be able to cover buildings' basic operating costs. "These tenants are now going to be living in deteriorating housing," he said.

The vote was 7-2, with the two representatives for the owners voting against the proposal.

