


Rent Stabilization Board  
Rent Board Chair

DATE: March 18, 2021

TO: Honorable Members of the Rent Stabilization Board

FROM: Leah Simon-Weisberg, Rent Board Chair  
By: Matt Brown, Acting Executive Director 

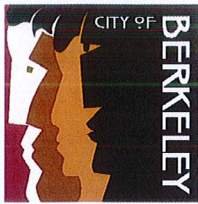
SUBJECT: **Recommendation to Disband the Habitable & Sustainable Housing Committee (HASH)**

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The rules adopted by the Board allow the Chair to disband a standing committee “subject to an affirmative vote of a majority of the Rent Board.” As the attached letter from staff indicates, the duties of the Habitable & Sustainable Housing (HASH) Committee have been largely subsumed by the 4 x 4 Joint Committee on Housing – Rent Board and City Council.

I request that the Board adopt a motion to disband the HASH Committee. It is important to note that we will be able to reestablish the committee should a future need arise.


\*Attachment – March 8, 2018 letter from Matt Brown, Lief Bursell, and Jen Fabish requesting that HASH Committee be disbanded.



Rent Stabilization Board

DATE: March 8, 2021

TO: Rent Stabilization Board Chair Simon-Weisberg

FROM: Matt Brown, Acting Executive Director   
Lief Bursell, Senior Planner  
Jen Fabish, Community Services Specialist

SUBJECT: **Recommendation to Disband the Habitable & Sustainable Housing Committee (HASH)**

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## **BACKGROUND**

### ***Committee History and Context***

The HASH committee was formed in 2017 to subsume two existing committees, the Safe & Sustainable Housing Committee (formed in 2009), and the Habitability Committee (formed in 2015). These committees allowed the Board to consider issues related to safe, sustainable, and habitable housing at a time when the 4x4 Joint Committee on Housing, which endeavors to meet at least once a quarter, was not meeting with that frequency and sometimes not at all. In 2009, the 4x4 Committee met twice. There were no meetings in 2010. In 2011, there were three meetings. In 2012, there was one meeting. In 2013, there were three meetings. In 2014, there were no meetings. And in 2015, there were 3 meetings. The 4x4 committee started to meet more regularly in 2016, and is now on a monthly meeting schedule.

## **NEED FOR ACTION**

### ***The 4x4 Committee is a Better Venue for the Issues HASH Typically Addresses***

Many issues that originated in HASH or its predecessors went on to be addressed by the 4x4 Committee, such as soft story safety, the elevator law, and improvements to the Rental Housing Safety Program. Because these types of issues are outside of the Board's direct jurisdiction, action requires the involvement of other city departments and often Council, making the 4x4 Committee a much more effective venue.<sup>1</sup> It was perhaps in recognition of a reinvigorated 4x4 Committee that the Board elected in 2017 to combine the two existing safety and habitability committees into one. Since then, the 4x4 Committee has only continued to become more active and invested, putting the necessity of HASH in doubt. Staff do not believe that continuing to administer the committee is the best use of time given the many initiatives being considered and implemented by the Board.

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<sup>1</sup>To the extent that there is ever overlap between issues being considered by HASH and the 4x4 Committee, Brown Act violations are always a concern.

### ***The Board's Priorities and HASH's Current Agenda***

The Board and staff are particularly busy. In addition to our ongoing work, staff are in the midst of implementing Measure MM and are moving towards a registration season that will entail a much larger billing effort utilizing two systems, since phase two of the data base solution (for fully covered units) is not projected to be ready in time for FY 2021-22 registration.

Development of phase two, and work on the petitions, mediations, waiver/penalty, and case management components will continue well into 2021, and impact all units of the agency. The website replacement project is another large endeavor that will affect staff in all units once the project ramps up again.<sup>2</sup> The Board approved a modification to the staffing model to add another housing counselor, which will increase capacity in the long run, but decrease it in the short-term due to training and onboarding, which is typically a six-month process that must now, at least initially, be done remotely. The Outreach Committee continues to advocate for a tenant survey this year. Staff are working with the Mayor and other city departments on major revisions to the Relocation and Demolition Ordinances, advising on TOPA, and researching issues related to Council's proposed quadruplex zoning policy. The Board has an agreement in principle with the city to administer the Fair Chance Ordinance pending an agreement on payment. And we continue to analyze and adjust to frequent changes to anti-displacement measures at the local and state levels to ensure we're providing accurate outreach and counseling. Staff are also looking ahead to the Executive Director recruitment, and creating and implementing measures to address issues highlighted by Keren Stashower's survey.

The HASH committee last met in August of 2020, and before that in November of 2019. The items on the committee's agenda were solar cost sharing, rental unit car shares, and the installation of dishwashers in multifamily units. These are worthy issues related to sustainability, but they are somewhat attenuated from the Board's mission of protecting tenants from unwarranted evictions and rent increases, ensuring landlords a fair return on their investment, and helping to advance the city's housing policies with regard to low- and fixed-income persons, minorities, persons with disabilities, elders, and students. Staff believe our focus right now should be on work that is more central to the Board's mission and the agency's operations, especially given that issues broadly related to the city's diverse array of housing policies can be better addressed by the 4x4 Committee when necessary.

### ***HASH is Not Necessary to Address Issues Outside of the 4x4 Committee***

If an issue related to habitable, safe, and sustainable housing arises that the 4x4 Committee does not wish or have the capacity to address, the Board has the option of creating an ad hoc committee. Ad hoc committees are not subject to the Brown Act notice requirements and are of a limited duration for the purpose of focusing on a specific issue or task. This is more efficient than the ongoing time commitment administering a regular committee requires.

### ***Disbanding HASH is Not Permanent***

If the Board finds that disbanding HASH has a negative impact on its work, the committee can be reinstated, or a new committee can be created.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommend that the Chair disband the HASH committee.

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<sup>2</sup>The city approved funding to hire a new project manager since the current project manager has been deployed full time to the EOC. We are not aware of a timeline for the hiring, but we anticipate the project may progress rapidly once a new project manager is in place. We continue to move the project forward slowly at the Rent Board so we're poised to hit the ground running if need be.