

COMMENT

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"WE KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE, LADY—WE'VE GOT YOUR AZALEAS SURROUNDED!...
GIVE UP THE WATER SPRINKLER AND NOBODY GETS HURT!"

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rent board no longer reflects the community

THE RENT-CONTROL controversy in East Palo Alto is extremely complex and there are many things going on behind closed doors that in time will come to light. But the crux of the matter is *affordable housing* and what form and direction the shelter issue will take with new Rent Board at the helm.

I would like to correct some discrepancies and answer a remark or two. The former Rent Board voted on the 1988-1989 operating budget in March 1988, well before any of this "expired term" and "vacant seat" business started. The new City Council was inaugurated on April 19. We had worked on that budget for many months prior to March. Vice Mayor Warnell Coats said, "Some of these people make a living off of rent control..." That could not be

further from the truth as far as former Rent Board officers are concerned. We were paid a \$25 stipend, designed to cover expenses for each meeting we attended regardless of how long those meetings were. When the city's fiscal crisis hit, we voted to waive stipend payments, as we felt it was inappropriate to receive money as long as the city itself was running in the red. Some former board members never claimed their stipend payments.

There have been some suggestions that the former rent board was somehow "leftist" or "pro-tenant." My experience dictates otherwise. We had two very articulate and very forceful landlord members on the Rent Board, and these two gentlemen presented the landlord view admirably. The former

board also was composed of people who were more reflective of the diverse community it serves.

Recently a police officer was killed in the line of duty in East Palo Alto; this incident overshadows all that I have mentioned in this letter. Our City Council must face our community's serious problems. To spin our wheels against a rent control program that has been in place and working for several years is to cloud the real issues: drugs, crime, a low tax base, a reduced police force. It is going to take time and hard work, and I do not think the City Council can afford to alienate the tenant community at this early stage in the process.

Brian D. Sylvia
Former member,
Rent Stabilization Board

EAST PALO ALTO