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## Rent Guidelines Board Approves Rent Hikes

By: Grant Greenberg

The city's Rent Guidelines Board voted Thursday night to raise lease renewals on the city's more than one-million rent regulated apartments.

Following a public hearing inside Cooper Union in the East Village, the board approved a 2.25 increase for one-year lease renewals and a 4.5 percent increase on two-year lease renewals.

Tenants who attended the meeting argued for a rent freeze, saying they already pay enough.

"It's the wrong timing because people are losing their jobs, ya know? My granddaughter lost her job, a lot of our family members lost their jobs. So how are they supposed to control the rent like this, if it goes so much higher? They need to eat, you know what I'm saying? It's the wrong timing," said rent-stabilized tenant Josephine Colon.

Meanwhile, landlords say they have no choice but to pass along the rising cost of heating fuel and other expenses. They also point out that many tenants only pay a few hundred dollars a month for rent.

"I think a lot of owners have sympathy for their tenants. They know that a lot of the tenants are hurting. They know that a lot of them are stretched to the limit in terms of rent payments. They know people have lost their jobs. They know people have had hours cut back. It's very, very difficult but what's driving the problem here is property taxes and water and sewer rates," said Rent Stabilization Association Vice President Frank Ricci.

The increases are slated to go into effect October 1st.

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