

Burlington Housing Authority
Minutes from the Regular Board of Commissioner Meeting
November 26, 2024

Call to Order of Regular Meeting

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners was called to order at 9:01 a.m. on November 26, 2024, via Zoom and in person at 65 Main Street, Burlington, Vermont by Board Chair Jane Knodell. The following commissioners were present: Bill Schrecker, Kirby Dunn, Brian Lowe, and Tony Lewis. Also in attendance were Executive Director Steve Murray, Director of Operations Jeff Metcalf, Director of Housing Retention Crystal Jones, Director of Rental Assistance Stephanie Bixby, Controller Eric DeBlasio, Chief Financial Officer Nicholas Hibbard, Supportive Programs and Services Manager Marissa Darling, and ERAP Housing Retention Specialist Langley Smurthwaite.

1. Changes to the Agenda

No changes were made to the agenda.

2. Executive Session – Employment Contract Discussion

Steve Murray and Pietro Lynn were invited into the Executive Session to have an employment contract discussion.

Kirby Dunn made a motion to enter into the Executive Session at 9:02 a.m. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

Kirby Dunn made a motion to exit the Executive Session at 9:56 a.m. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

The Board voted unanimously to approve the contract for Steven Murray, executive director, as discussed for the period starting January 1st, 2025 through June 30th, 2028.

3. Forum: Resident of BHA Properties/General Public

Catherine Foley, Bob Collins, and Abbie Wolff were in attendance and did not have any comments.

4. Resident Council

Catherine Foley updated the Board on security concerns at Decker Towers which included stolen goods at one apartment, five apartments with drug activity, the Council's nightly sweeps finding no one in the stairwells possibly due to break ins at downtown businesses, and drug paraphernalia found in the second-floor trash room.

5. Board Actions

a. October 29 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

Brian Lowe made a motion to approve the minutes, as presented. Bill Schrecker seconded the motion. Kirby Dunn abstained as the rest approved.

6. Executive Director Report

Steve Murray discussed having consultants look at our job postings and DEI program to have more impact. He also wants to tighten transfers and moves for tenants due to turnover costs and vacancy losses.

*Transfers and moves will be on the December agenda within the TSP.

Steve Murray updated the Board about walking the properties with all the Property Managers. There was discussion about giving the Property Managers more power for the upkeep of their buildings to help make it look better. There was discussion about how Jeff Metcalf is now head of the merged Asset Management and Building Operations which will help streamline budget and need requests.

There was discussion about Derek Brouwer doing a follow up article about Decker Towers. Sean Thomas from HUD will be holding a town hall meeting at Decker next month.

There was discussion about security issues at Bishop place. Peyton Cernak will represent BHA and the DOC grant. The appraisal came in for Cherry Street.

*Discussion about the appraisal will be added to the Executive Session in December.

CEDO has agreed to provide funding to Decker Towers in support of security needs through February 2025.

There was discussion about Bright Street and the possibility of tearing it down or future development.

*Discussion about Bright Street and Varney House will be added to the Executive Session in December.

7. Consent Agenda

a. Asset Management

- b. Housing Retention**
- c. Property Management**
- d. Rental Assistance**
- e. Human Resources**

The Board appreciates the new presentation from Housing Retention.

Kirby Dunn made a motion to accept the Consent Agenda, as presented. Tony Lewis seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

8. Financial Report – October 2024

There was discussion about an upcoming increase in spending on turnovers, leasing, the possibility of lower HAP funding for CY25, administrative fee rates, OCAF adjustments, and monitoring spending for vouchers and payment standard increases. There was also discussion about property insurance, but BHA is within the normal increase.

Brian Lowe made a motion to accept the Financial Report, as presented. Bill Schrecker seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

9. Security Update – Decker Towers & Other BHA Properties

There was discussion about court dates with certain evictions, improvement in trash rooms, and a better desk for the guard in the lobby. The Sheriffs are starting their sweeps on December 15 and going through February. There was discussion about cameras being added at Decker and Bishop place. Finally, there was discussion about Censor not being able to provide all the services we are looking for.

10. Strategic Planning Discussion for Gathering Feedback from Stakeholders

There was a discussion about the timeline of Strategic Plan.

*Leadership will present the internal Strategic Plan at the January Board meeting.

There was discussion about the external Strategic Plan that the Board is working on. The Board will work with consultants and Nick Hibbard will work on contracts with them. There was discussion about the stakeholders that should be part of the surveys, and this could potentially help with building or repair relationships with BHA. These surveys and interviews could help update the Talking Point memo.

*Nick Hibbard will share the Talking Point memo with the Board.

There was discussion on how to get representation from tenants and a written survey would serve the best which can be delivered to tenants by staff. There was discussion about interpretation for these surveys for the LEPs.

11. Other Business

a. CY2025 Calendar

The schedule presented would take July off, be at 9am on the 4th Tuesday of each month, other than December, and stay at 65 Main Street.

The Board would like to add Bobbin, Decker, and Riverside as locations for three of the meetings. There will also be a property walk in the Spring.

b. Subcommittee Assignments & Meetings

i. Finance & Capital

Jane Knodell and Bill Schrecker will be meeting in spring before the budget cycle.

ii. Strategic Planning

Jane Knodell and Kirby Dunn will have meetings as needed.

iii. Retirement Plan

Jane Knodell and Bill Schrecker have a meeting next Wednesday.

Tony Lewis' seat is still available to be filled. Bill Schrecker's term expires at the beginning of 2025 and he would like to stay on the Board. There will be discussion and suggestions with the Mayor's office regarding those two seats.

There was discussion about moving the April meeting to Tuesday, April 29 to discuss the Strategic Plan. This meeting would begin at 9am and go on until 1 p.m., lunch included. This will be confirmed at the next Board meeting.

There was also discussion about accountability and the Executive Director Review.

*The discussion about tenant/participant accountability will be added to the agenda in December.

There being no other business, Kirby Dunn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:09 a.m. Bill Schrecker seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

Secretary