

**Burlington Housing Authority  
Minutes from the Regular Board of Commissioner Meeting  
February 18, 2025**

**Call to Order of Regular Meeting**

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners was called to order at 9:12 a.m. on February 18, 2025, 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 Housing Retention Crystal Jones, Director of Operations Jeff Metcalf, Director of Property Management Susan Carp, Director of Human Resources Melissa Farnham, Chief Financial Officer Nicholas Hibbard, and Controller Eric DeBlasio.

Chris Barrett was also in attendance.

**1. Changes to the Agenda**

No changes were made to the agenda.

**2. Forum: Resident of BHA Properties/General Public**

There were no residents present.

**3. Resident Council**

There were no resident councils present.

**4. Board Actions**

**a. January 28 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes**

Brian Lowe made a motion to approve the minutes, as presented. Tony Lewis seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval with the exception of Bill Schrecker's abstention.

**b. Window Replacement Contract for 65 Main Street**

Kirby Dunn made a motion to approve the window replacement contract for 65 Main Street. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

**5. Executive Director Report**

Steve Murray praised Jeff Metcalf and Danielle Roy for their media handling and efforts at Frankling Square. There was discussion on how to have more positive

articles going forward, which included addressing tenant concerns internally and direct communication with Steve Murray.

He also stated that Jeff Metcalf has a plan for addressing after-hours sewage problems. This will also be helped by hiring the Preventative Maintenance position. Jeff Metcalf also hired an extra building operations technician, replacing the painter within the budget.

\*Jeff Metcalf and Steve Murray will readdress progress with the sewage at Franklin Square in 6 months.

There was discussion about hiring a new legal counsel to replace Whit. There will likely be a decision whether we hire Paul, Frank, and Collins at the next leadership meeting. Stephanie Bixby plans to use them for certain cases and use the template for similar cases.

\*Steve Murray requested an executive session next month to discuss Cherry Street.

There was discussion about how Cherry Street would be sold as is and BHA would not take away affordable housing from the City.

There was discussion about evictions for drug dealing tenants and how it will likely affect the buildings for the better. Steve Murray praised William Heinz and Susan Carp for their efforts.

Steve Murray discussed the staff alert and how it was used effectively by Susan Carp warning about the police standoff. This will be tested quarterly going forward.

He also mentioned that BHA is seeing an uptick of legal aid challenges.

## **6. Consent Agenda**

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

Brian Lowe asked Crystal Jones about CHT and back rent referrals. Crystal discussed how the cases need to go to trial to access the VSHA eviction prevention program. There have also been tweaks made to the eviction tracker to get to the tenant before issues arise. There has been an uptick in medical and mental health cases as well.

Bill Schrecker shouts out Susan Carp for a great win in Property Management.

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

## **7. Security Update – Decker Towers & Other BHA Properties**

Nick Hibbard reported two no trespass orders at Decker and a slight increase in trash. Jeff Metcalf mentioned ongoing activity but expects it to decrease once three units are removed. FSC security is being considered for a 3-month contract (8pm-4am), and Censor security will continue with random sweeps and updates until 8pm and up to 8am.

Susan Carp noted increased challenges this year at Bishop Place, with two resident managers and a police officer effectively monitoring the building at night, mostly dealing with people loitering in entrances and hallways.

Nick Hibbard mentioned occasional issues at Wharf and South Square but not requiring sweeps. Jeff Metcalf made door changes for better security.

Residents are more proactive, engaging city counselors, and may request a courtesy raid, leveraging the political system for their benefit.

## **8. CY2025 Housing Choice Voucher Funding Update**

The program is significantly underfunded, not meeting targets. There will likely be cuts unless a significant funding update comes through. Decisions will be made based on priority lists, with painful and arbitrary cuts expected as funding runs out. Stephanie Bixby will be working on the criteria to update the administrative plan.

Stephanie Bixby reported that lawyers and landlords are waiving back rent, potentially affecting voucher holders. Legal aid is being consulted to prevent this practice. The voucher program is facing funding challenges, and losing vouchers may lead to loss of protections. We continue to keep our waitlists open.

Other funding options, including state involvement and Howard Center using their resources, are being considered. However, most grants are reimbursement-based, and trying to resolve the situation is becoming increasingly difficult. It is noted that BHA could be overfunded in future years, but this is highly unlikely.

It was reported that the timeline for a budget to pass is unknown, but it might likely be later than years past due to turnover at HUD and no budget being passed.

Steve Murray discussed the possibility of a rent freeze with the city council president. Brian Pine suggested pushing rent increases to participants rather than HAP, with participants covering costs above the payment standard, up to 40%, if rent is reasonable. Stephanie Bixby reported that a participant can get unit over the payment standard, they pay more, up to 40%. The program is 30%. You cannot deny contract rent increase if it is rent reasonable.

## **9. Executive Session**

There was no executive session.

## **10. Other Business**

There was discussion on the planning of the strategic plan.

\*Send out the strategic plan with the Board packet in March.

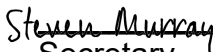
\*Move the April 29 meeting to Bobbin.

The Finance Committee meetings will take place on March 20.

There was discussion about the retirement plan and next steps. Melissa Farnham and Steve Murray will meet to discuss.

There being no other business, Kirby Dunn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:22 a.m. Tony Lewis seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

DocuSigned by:

  
Steven Murray  
Secretary