

DRAFT – 3/25/2025 – SUBJECT TO BOARD REVIEW, AMENDMENT AND APPROVAL

**Burlington Housing Authority
Minutes from the Regular Board of Commissioner Meeting
March 25, 2025**

Call to Order of Regular Meeting

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners was called to order at 9:02 a.m. on March 25, 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, and Brian Lowe. Also in attendance were Executive Director Steve Murray, Director of Rental Assistance Stephanie Bixby, 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, ERAP Housing Retention Specialist Langley Smurthwaite, and Controller Eric DeBlasio.

Catherine Foley and an iPhone user were also in attendance.

1. Changes to the Agenda

No changes were made to the agenda.

2. Forum: Resident of BHA Properties/General Public

Catherine Foley was present. She reported on the court case with CVOEO and how the ruling was unacceptable. Drugs effect more than just Decker Towers.

Steve Murray stated that BHA is back at square one with someone dealing drugs with evidence.

Catherine Foley also communicated that the new guards are fantastic. They are very thorough and do not allow coat tailing and they are not letting people in.

There was a round of applause for this great effort.

3. Resident Council

There were no resident councils present.

4. Board Actions

a. February 18 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes

Kirby Dunn made a motion to approve the minutes, as presented. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

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b. 5-Year PHA Plan & FY2026 PHA Annual Plan

Nick Hibbard and Stephanie Bixby explained that there was an annual plan and a 5-year plan. The revised annual plan was the third item.

Jane Knodell asked if the federal government is going after efficiency, why not go after this. Nick Hibbard explained it is a good process on the surface.

Bill Schrecker confirmed the dates for the plans.

Bill Schrecker made a motion to approve the 5-Year PHA Plan & FY2026 PHA Annual Plan, as presented. Kirby Dunn seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

c. FY2025 Revised PHA Annual Plan

Brian Lowe made a motion to approve the FY2025 Revised PHA Annual Plan, as presented. Kirby Dunn seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

5. Executive Director Report

Steve Murray said thank you to Brian Lowe for setting up a meeting with the State Treasurer. He also is trying to find a time to meet with the new police chief.

He congratulated Stephanie Bixby, Sarah Couture, and Kristen Brownlow for the renewal of the \$178K for the FSS Grant. One of his favorite moments of the job is signing checks when people graduate the program.

Steve Murray gave Crystal Jone kudos for receiving approval for an \$83K grant from DCF. He had some questions on how funding will impact and if BHA will have to hire more FTEs. Crystal Jones explained it is designed to help 28 participants from coordinated entry while they are eligible for Medicaid.

Steve Murray also reported that insurance went up 20% again. BHA is in a situation where there is only one insurer that meets everything we need and want, and they did drop BHA's managed properties. Water claims are hurting BHA the most. BHA is looking at attaining additional sensors to help stop water leaks early. Indemnification was also kept to a limit of \$1 million.

Steve Murray reported HUD layoffs are going to affect us dramatically. The field office is most likely closing and there is a plan to consolidate a New England office in New Hampshire. Up to 50% of the HUD staff might be let go. We have 3 people that we work with for Rental Assistance, Finance, and Multi-Family. BHA has not seen any impact of layoffs yet.

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Brian Lowe appreciates hearing about the grants. He asked if there is anything that needs to be done with hearings. Steve Murray reported that the evidence is not consistent and there is a meeting with Paul Dettman to go over correct documentation which will also help when going to our lawyer, Nadine Scibek.

Brian Lowe is also curious how the meeting with CVOEO will go. Steve Murray requested Susan Carp and Stephanie Bixby to join. It was explained that CVOEO has been paying back rent for drug dealers which hurts the cases and makes BHA start the process over. BHA is going to try to figure out when and why CVOEO pays for those and if Legal Aid is part of the problem.

6. Consent Agenda

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

Brian Lowe asked Stephanie Bixby about the number of people being terminated with nonpayment in their files. Stephanie Bixby reported that almost all of the terminations that come across her desk have nonpayment as part of it. The nonpayment epidemic is only getting worse and there needs to be research done to figure out why, which could include addressing drug use and mental health on a major scale.

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

7. Financial Reports – February 2025

Nick Hibbard reported on the increase in insurance, the purchase of new vehicles in Building Operations, consolidating systems in Building Operations, security quotes with Royal Group, upcoming administrative fee decreases due to less leasing, vacancies being higher than normal due to people saying no, evictions, and having a more thorough search to get better tenants, grants that are ending soon, and maintenance and how we are going to be changing the way we report work orders from an allocation to actual work orders to each property. This new reporting will be in the budget proposal.

Kirby Dunn made a motion to accept the Financial Reports – February 2025, as presented. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

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8. Security Update – Decker Towers & Other BHA Properties

Jeff Metcalf reported that Censor is doing 3 sweeps a day and the new security company, FSC Security is doing the overnight guard position from 8 p.m. to 4 a.m. everyday. There is a little friction between the two companies even though Censor could not staff the position.

It was reported that there were 4 incidents in 1 week at South Square mostly at the side door. These were handled very well by Jeff Metcalf and Susan Carp. There have not been any incidents since those. The plan is to keep common areas locked during the evening but have access through keycards.

There have been some overflow incidents at 10 north from the warming shelter. Staff are seeing drugs and needles on the property, but not inside. BHA is cleaning up the needles.

Wharf Lane has one unit that is causing problems and there was a conversation with residents and changes have been seen.

The keycard plan for Decker is in the final stages for orderings. It will take a few months after the readers are put in to cycle through the cards. New keycards need to be issued to the tenants, caregivers, EMS, police, staff, etc.

There was an update on the large camera project at Decker. The initial quote to add all cameras and servers would be \$120k. BHA is looking to phase in as we see hotspots instead. It could take a couple months to get the camera installed.

Deckers front main doors will be replaced soon with sliding doors. This does not change security as it is on the inside doors.

Catherine Foley asked about camera coverage near the awning and Jeff Metcalf will meet with William Heinz to go over what is needed.

9. CY2025 Housing Choice Voucher Funding Update

Nick Hibbard, Stephanie Bixby, and Eric DeBlasio reported that there has not been a change in our plan, but there is a possibility that we receive 100% proration and there was a small increase in the inflation factor of 0.11%. Even with 100% proration, it would be a cut because it is based on the 2023 spending due to the funding coming from a Continuing Resolution. At 100% proration, BHA would still need to cut 11 families per month from HCV. BHA has not seen enough savings because of rent increases, so we are at risk of shortfall and have been in contact with the shortfall team.

It was also reported that the cut could come again in 2026. Budgets are never passed on time, so it is hard to know what funding will look like.

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BHA still does not have our budget authority yet, and do not know what the offset will be.

Kirby Dunn asked if the shortfall team is helpful or a penalty. Stephanie Bixby reported that they are helpful. BHA just needs to make sure we are doing cost savings measures.

10. Other Business (Moved from Item 11 to 10)

The next meeting will be the long meeting at Bobbin Mill to discuss Strategic Planning. The Board will get materials from Steve Murray by the end of the week. There was discussion about who to invite and make known it is an open meeting.

The Finance Committee will meet again on April 22 at 10 a.m. Finance will receive information back from staff by the 17th and will be incorporating the staff's budget with theirs for a draft to present to the Committee. The draft budget will be presented in the May Board Meeting and will need to be finalized in the June meeting at the latest.

Kirby Dunn made a motion to enter the Executive Session to discuss the Executive Director Evaluation at 10:21 a.m. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

11. Executive Session – Executive Director Evaluation

Kirby Dunn made a motion to exit the Executive Session at 10:46 a.m. Bill Schrecker seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

There being no other business, Brian Lowe made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:47 a.m. Bill Schrecker seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

DocuSigned by:

Steven Murray

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Secretary