

**Burlington Housing Authority
Minutes from the Regular Board of Commissioner Meeting
August 26, 2025**

Call to Order of Regular Meeting

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners was called to order at 9:00 a.m. on August 26, 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 (Zoom). Also in attendance were Executive Director Steve Murray, Director of Property Management Susan Carp, Director of Human Resources Melissa Farnham (Zoom), Chief Financial Officer Nicholas Hibbard, and Controller Eric DeBlasio.

Decker Towers resident Catherine Foley and potential new Board member Debra Davis 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 and had no comments.

3. Resident Council

There were no resident councils in attendance.

4. Board Actions

a. June 24 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

b. SEMAP Certification

Stephanie Bixby explained that this is the annual internal self-audit, compiled by the Rental Assistance team, and is due on the 29th of August.

Debra Davis joined and was introduced at 9:03 am. She and the Board introduced each other. She has a call on Thursday with the Mayor.

Bill Schrecker found that question 11 was not checked and Stephanie Bixby confirmed it should be answered "yes." This form is filled out online, so this was for viewing and approval purposes only for the Board.

Kirby Dunn made a motion to approve the SEMAP Certification, with the update to question 11. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

5. Executive Director Report

Steve Murray explained a new process that BHA is doing agreeing to pay tenants we are trying to evict \$2K to leave by a certain date to save \$2.5K on eviction costs and 6 months or more on evictions. All 3 potential drug dealers accepted, but one backed out at the last minute. Dani Roy and Susan Carp have been working in Wharf Lane making sure tenants know that if the drug dealers live with them, they will be evicted next.

He stated that Vermont State Housing Authority asked for \$2.3 million from the state to cover all housing authorities' shortfall, and they had little interest. He also reported that the new regional administrator for HUD spoke to all Vermont housing authority E.Ds.

Steve Murray also reported that the two properties on Bright Street we were interested in sold for asking price. BHA is looking into the possibility of selling our two properties (3 units) to the same estate so they can develop the entire block. 666 Riverside may also be on the table if they are interested.

BHA also met with Rick Bove who wants to turn his Cherry Street building into 35 apartments with Murphy beds. He is asking for 35 PBVs, but we will not have any to issue for a couple of years.

Steve Murray gave a shoutout to Crystal Jones for her work with the Resident Advisory Board. The most recent meeting with the 6 groups was very professional and goal-oriented including talking more about engagement and what is and is not working at the properties.

He also reported that the department heads should be done with goal setting with staff. Any goals for him other than the strategic plan should be emailed to him.

Steve Murray invited the Board to the company event on Thursday at Oakledge Park, starting at 11:30 am. Business will not be discussed.

Brian Lowe asked more about the Bright Street properties. Nick Hibbard stated that we wanted to try to develop the block, but when the 2 properties came up for sale, it would cost \$700K in repairs and we found that we would not receive tax credits to build and would have to do it on our own. Kirby Dunn asked if there were any covenants on the two properties we have and there are not. Brian Lowe also asked about where the CHT Co-op was, and it is on the other side of the street.

6. Consent Agenda

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

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

7. Financial Reports – June 2025

Nick Hibbard reported that this is for the end of the fiscal year and there is nothing significantly different from what we saw at the end of May.

Brian Lowe asked what the excess rent was at the Family RAD properties. Nick Hibbard and Stephanie Bixby explained that tenants at those properties pay 30% of their income in rent, up to a ceiling of 120% of the Fair Market Rent. They also explained tax credit units and how there is different layering depending on if you lose subsidy on a unit.

Kirby Dunn asked about the bad debt estimation and how much was written off compared to budget. Eric DeBlasio reported that \$162K was written off compared to the budget of \$228K. Brian Lowe asked if the reduction has to do with more accountability. Steve Murray stated that repayment agreements have helped as well as the accountability for keeping their vouchers by staying current. There are less drug dealers and BHA is trying to curtail damages earlier.

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

8. Security Update – Decker Towers & Other BHA Properties

Nick Hibbard reported that activity at Decker Towers has been stable, and hallways are looking clean and there are not too many problems with common areas. Jane Knodell asked about the current security at Decker and Nick Hibbard reported it is currently at 0, but staff are doing sweeps as well as the Resident Council at night. Jeff Metcalf and Nick Hibbard are talking with a security vendor that contracts with other security companies as well as keeping our relationship with the existing vendors and Sheriff. It was noted that we did budget for winter security.

Catherine Foley agreed with Nick Hibbard's assessment with security. The Resident Council does nightly sweeps and has only had one encounter in the stairwells in the last month. She reported that the same 5 apartments are still the issue and reported that one smelled like chlorine where the fire department could not do anything, so

they reported it to the police. Steve Murray stated that the tenant is the one that backed out of the agreement and will be with Nadine shortly. She also reported that James Matthews is still actively trying to reestablish a drug network in Decker Towers and does think there will be an increase in traffic.

Steve Murray also reported that City Hall voted to close City Hall Park from midnight to 6 am. BHA needs to make sure people do not think Decker will be a place to go. It might be wise to go back to sweeps after it closes.

Kirby Dunn appreciated the email from Decker resident about all the good things done.

Steve Murray also reported that transit will remove the bus stop. BHA is looking at putting a gazebo on the side to replace the bus stop smoking area by the visitor parking. The corner of Maple and St. Paul will be the closest bus stop. They are reducing their services across the county.

9. CY2025 Housing Choice Voucher Funding Update

It was reported that we have reached a point of stability in the HCV program. Mainstream is still in shortfall, and we have applied for shortfall funding. It will come at the end of the year if we receive it.

Jane Knodell asked if it was issuing vouchers is frozen indefinitely. The budget for next year is still looking like level funding. We are not changing our plan at all at this point because we do not know what next year's budget will be like. We are still bringing people on to the HCV program through PBVs approved by BHA. The HCV program has many different voucher types that need to be managed, where we cannot lease above the allocated amount. We can move people in the PBV units because HUD requires us to fulfill PBVs before other vouchers. Steve Murray clarified that these PBV units have been approved for a while before shortfall might be an issue. BHA will continue to accept PBV requests, up to 147, but likely will not accept them for a while.

Brian Lowe gave lots of credit to the BHA team for managing the situation. He asked why we are not projecting shortfall now. It was reported that rent increases were not as we projected, and we were able to get the reduction we needed after a few months. Stephanie reported that many of the EOPs have occurred due to nonpayment of rent.

Nick Hibbard explained that there are very minor UNP reserves for Mainstream of \$42K. We would take the shortfall money first, then we do not know if we can use HCV for Mainstream and will have to ask HUD, and the state money which likely will not come through. If we do not receive shortfall, we are going to ask HUD if we can use our Strategic Reserves. Whatever we do this year, telegraphs next year. Depending on what we see, it would not be viable next year to start leasing again.

Jane Knodell asked about less attrition in Mainstream than HCV. It is smaller and has less attrition due to its different population. Someone in the household must be over 18 and under 65 and have a disability.

10. Strategic Plan – Engagement and Communications

Jane Knodell gave the background and stated that stakeholder interviews have started with Diane.

Kirby Dunn reported that they have narrowed their focus on who to talk to, mainly to the main contact we have at an organization. She also reported that people have been interested in talking with her.

**Follow up the October Board Meeting with a report and possibly zoom with Diane.

Brian Lowe asked if it was possible to add someone from a school district and see how BHA impacts families. It was discussed and it was decided that the King Street Youth Organization would be good to add to learning more about families with BHA.

Kirby Dunn also stated BHA is a hard organization to explain because of how much it has changed from starting to where we are today.

Jane Knodell suggested that BHA could create a FAQ sheet to explain what is happening with Section 8 vouchers in order to have consistent messaging going out.

Brian Lowe also said that there have been 2 incredibly positive outcomes at BHA in the last 12 months with Decker and other properties, as well as how we reacted compared to other housing authorities. It would be good to get the information out there and could help with recruitment and engagement. He suggested possibly adding a position to handle communications. Nick Hibbard believed it could be better to hire a contracted position. We would just need to make sure they know what we do. It is hard to hire in-house talent because we cannot train them. Kirby Dunn suggested a simple quarterly report for City Council and the Mayor. Steve Murray stated he has the bandwidth to add this to his work but does not have the skillset. He will look to do training. It would be good to have a professional for a shorter period to help with how to do everything. Amping up communications could be very valuable. The shareholder interviews can guide us where we want to go with it.

**September theme will be Ownership and Accountability

**October theme will be Evaluation of Properties

Jane Knodell thinks Ownership and Accountability can be about our properties and how it applies to them. What are the responsibilities of property management. Steve Murray and Susan Carp will come up with document to show the Board. Nick discussed the possibility of it showing how every department will be involved in a property.

Jane Knodell also asked if the organization structure would be part of this? Steve Murray believes it is because multiple directors have a piece of each property. It is hard to have 4 departments having to agree on one thing. It would be helpful to look at the organizational chart.

11. Other Business

The meeting will continue at 666 Riverside.

The meeting recessed at 10:33 am by Jane Knodell.

12. Site Visit to Riverside Apartments

The meeting was reconvened at 666 Riverside 11:47 am by Jane Knodell

There being no other business, Kirby Dunn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:48 am. Bill Schrecker seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

DocuSigned by:

Steven Murray

Secretary

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