

**Burlington Housing Authority
Minutes from the Regular Board of Commissioner Meeting
December 16, 2025**

Call to Order of Regular Meeting

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners was called to order at 11:59 a.m. on December 16, 2025, via Zoom and in person at 65 Main Street, Burlington, Vermont by Vice Chair Bill Schrecker. The following commissioners were present: Kirby Dunn and Brian Lowe. Also in attendance were Executive Director Steve Murray, Director of Rental Assistance Stephanie Bixby, Director of Operations Jeff Metcalf, Director of Housing Retention Crystal Jones (Zoom), Director of Property Management Susan Carp, Chief Financial Officer Nicholas Hibbard, and Controller Eric DeBlasio.

Catherine Foley was also in attendance.

1. Changes to the Agenda

Kirby Dunn would like to go over the Consent Agenda in detail.

2. Forum: Resident of BHA Properties/General Public

Catherine Foley appreciates the new bulletin board which looks great and is a big improvement. She stated that they are starting to see more homeless people come into the building on a regular basis, but not in large numbers. They can turn most of them away but have had to call Burlington Police a couple times. She also reported that the Sheriff comes through on an irregular basis. Will Heinz is working hard on the issue and BHA is aware of what is happening. She brought up concern about the two tenants that BHA is currently evicting because they are becoming more problematic thinking they are being evicted because of other residents at Decker. There was also discussion on the poor service availability for security, but BHA will take what we can get.

Nick Hibbard and Susan Carp discussed security issues at Dettman Place and most of them are nice about leaving. BHA staff looks to have them leave a little before 9 a.m. because that is when other services open. Jeff Metcalf is working on changing the lock location.

Brian Lowe asked about internal issues and if BHA is aware of them and we are.

3. Resident Council

There were no resident councils in attendance.

4. Board Actions

a. November 18 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes

Kirby Dunn made a motion to approve the minutes, with a change of the date on the first page from February 14 to February 17. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

5. Executive Director Report

Steve asked everyone to keep French Brandon in their thoughts and prayers, who passed away and was found during a welfare check on Friday. Thanks were extended to Susan Carp and Jeff Metcalf for staying late with the medical examiner so hourly staff could go home. French Brandon was formerly homeless, had served as a commissioner, and contributed significantly to the community.

Two recent town halls were discussed. The Wharf town hall was considered a success, with eight attendees and a more engaging, conversational format than previous meetings. The community room is being redesigned. Challenges remain with resident councils at Family RAD due to scattered buildings, past drug activity, and limited engagement. At Franklin Square, three interpreters were present. Residents raised concerns, staff responded promptly, and residents were encouraged to share information with neighbors. Kudos were given to Susan Carp and staff for securing interpreters. The goal is continued improvement in resident engagement.

The Mayor sent an email Tuesday evening calling for attendance at a Wednesday 4:30 PM town hall, which Steve Murray could not attend due to short notice. There was uncertainty about the emergency nature of the meeting. While committed to supporting community partners, there is concern about mission creep. Through Section 8, the organization already houses many formerly homeless individuals. Board members were asked to provide ideas on how to engage further without overextending the mission.

Ian Gardner was arrested for multiple convenience store robberies; stolen goods were recovered. He is currently incarcerated and facing four or more years in jail. This incident is rare given Crystal Jones and her team's strong track record.

Spectrum is considering converting a building into studio units; PBVs cannot be supported for this use. Undisabled youth are not a high priority for Section 8 vouchers. Kirby Dunn asked about property ownership. Spectrum owns 31 Elmwood. BHA owns 37 Elmwood, leased to the Howard Center. Spectrum is not currently considering purchasing them; this was their first conversation about becoming a landlord.

Steve Murray and Stephanie Bixby met with VSHA about using administrative fee reserves to restore lost vouchers; the issue is complex and carries risk. Approximately 179 vouchers have been lost since January 2025. BHA would be requesting \$1.5 million from the state, but timing and long-term risk are concerns.

The Governor is unlikely to approve an emergency request; legislative action would be required. A detailed plan or executive summary is needed before moving forward. Brian Lowe appreciates that BHA is trying to find a way to be a good partner. Eric DeBlasio and Nick Hibbard spoke to a national consultant and stated that no one is trying to spend UNP on this and does not know a mechanism to use it. The consultant also stated that housing authorities want to have their UNP always be as high as possible. Steve requested a vote on how to respond to VSHA.

Kirby Dunn made a motion to not support VSHA's request for funding from the State of Vermont related to getting funding back to January 1, 2025, leasing levels, at this time absent a detailed plan and feedback on the proposal and having a report from consultant to see if it is feasible. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

*Steve Murray asked the Board if they would be supportive of advising a consultant ourselves. Bill Schrecker said that would be a staff level decision. BHA will look into this.

Brian encouraged continued engagement through town halls, interpreters, SRO discussions, and Spectrum. If other partners can better utilize SROs, those options should be explored. The Board supports responsibly transitioning away from SROs without damaging partnerships.

6. Consent Agenda

a. Housing Retention

Bill Schrecker appreciates the graphs and charts. Crystal Jones highlighted the consistent increase in referrals. She noted that June is typically the slowest month, followed by an uptick leading to the holidays and a subsequent increase. Referrals are coming in faster than they can be resolved, prompting consideration of how to implement a referral waitlist. There was also discussion about avoiding duplicate services to determine whether an agency accepts a referral, efforts to make referrals automatic for providers, and the importance of understanding seasonal trends.

b. Rental Assistance

Kirby Dunn acknowledges the hard work and award from HUD for being a high performing PHA. Stephanie Bixby says it is all because of the staff and the way they deal with her micromanaging and high-performance standards. They are doing a really good job.

c. Property Management

The group discussed ongoing challenges in property management, particularly vacancies, which were identified as one of the biggest issues. Susan Carp noted

the loss of about 15 applicants to new communities in Shelburne and explained that some vacancies are tied to efforts to right-size over-housed Family RAD households, a process that takes time but is necessary to open units to qualified applicants. Nearly half of housing denials are overturned after second reviews. Nick Hibbard highlighted that right-sizing increases maintenance and turnover costs, while many families resist moving from larger units, often requesting reasonable accommodation. Stephanie Bixby is leading this effort, despite concerns about wasted resources, emphasizing that households were notified in advance and given generous timelines to decide and move, with options to relocate to smaller units or risk subsidy termination. Crystal Jones added that Housing Retention is supporting households through the transition. Additional challenges include difficulty renting three-bedroom units and market units due to narrow eligibility requirements. The discussion concluded with staffing updates, including the hiring of Zak Newman as an administrative assistant, Alyssa Peake's promotion into a property management role, and Phil Hillier's departure, highlighting internal advancement opportunities from Assistant Property Manager to Property Manager.

d. Building Operations

The discussion focused on improving reporting, efficiency, and cost transparency in property operations. Jeff Metcalf explained that the monthly report will continue to evolve with stronger KPIs as more meaningful data becomes available, helping the team better understand drivers of work orders, turnover time, staffing impacts, and overall property costs. With fewer vacancies, staff will be able to focus more on inspections and maintenance, and recent interviews aim to address staffing gaps. Turnovers are increasingly costly due to aging components like flooring, requiring more time and effort, but new processes, such as billing work on a per-work order basis and consolidating turnovers into a single work order, are expected to improve efficiency and clarity around costs and labor hours. Steve Murray noted significant progress and transparency, with the organization ahead of schedule and poised to use upcoming data to inform decisions about property retention. The group also discussed tenant billing practices, noting minimal negative feedback and ongoing annual reviews of charges, as well as operational improvements at Decker, including installing deadbolts during turnovers and adding water sensors at many properties to detect leaks early and potentially reduce insurance and operational costs.

e. Asset Management

Bill Schrecker asked to use colors for differences from month to month in the Asset Management report.

f. Human Resources

Bill Schrecker thanks Melissa Farnham for her update.

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

7. Security Update – Decker Towers & Other BHA Properties

Brian Lowe asked for updates on any legislative action about the exclusion of Section 8 from security firms. Steve Murray has a letter drafted and will add verbiage to it. It has not been sent yet, but it will not be a quick solution.

8. CY2025 Housing Choice Voucher Funding Update

The discussion focused on funding challenges for the Mainstream program. The agency received shortfall funding except for a small amount, which UNP will cover, while HCV funding was sufficient. No guidance has come from HUD regarding future funding, and the agency remains below the threshold for protective reserves, so recapturing will not happen. Historical practices show that shortfall funding is unpredictable, and experience indicates it cannot be relied upon. Mainstream funding remains distinct from HCV, and reserves cannot be shared, meaning the program must continue to be managed conservatively. As PBVs lease up, HAP costs will rise, further straining resources. Comparisons with VSHA showed that they were more aggressive, expecting shortfall funds, whereas BHA has consistently taken a cautious approach due to low trust in predictable funding. Going forward, Mainstream will still require careful, proactive management, and funding uncertainties mean there are no reserves to draw on.

9. Other Business

The next meeting will be on January 27, 2026, at 9 a.m.

There being no other business, Kirby Dunn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 1:23 p.m. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

Secretary