

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

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 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 Debra Davis (Zoom, joined at 9:10 a.m.). 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, Director of Human Resources Melissa Farnham (Zoom), Chief Financial Officer Nicholas Hibbard, and Controller Eric DeBlasio.

Catherine Foley was also in attendance.

1. Changes to the Agenda

The 669 and 711 Riverside Avenue Boiler Replacement Budget Approval Request was added to the Board Actions section.

2. Forum: Resident of BHA Properties/General Public

Catherine Foley stated that since the drug dealer in unit 307 abandoned their unit with some help, there is no organization or leader in the building for drug dealing. There are still some homeless people entering the building, but there has been a remarkable change in the last month.

3. Resident Council

There were no resident councils in attendance.

4. Board Actions

a. October 28 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

b. CY2026 Board Meeting Calendar

Nick Hibbard stated that the consideration for the calendar was parking and easily available technology. Brian Lowe suggested moving the February 24 meeting to February 17.

Kirby Dunn made a motion to approve the CY2026 Board Meeting Calendar changing the February 24 meeting to February 17. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

c. Retirement Committee Indemnification

Jane Knodell requested a higher level of indemnification for board members given their role to approve investments within the employee retirement program. She thanked Steve for putting it together for the Board. The Board will individually sign the indemnification, and the committee will have an hourly employee added who will also sign the indemnification.

Kirby Dunn asked whether it covered other activities the Board does, and it does not. Steve stated the Board can always vote to indemnify, but preferably before an incident occurs. There is also a \$2 million directors insurance policy.

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

*The Retirement Committee meeting will be pushed to January.

Debra Davis joined the meeting at 9:10 a.m.

d. 669 and 711 Riverside Avenue Boiler Replacement Budget Approval Request

Jeff Metcalf stated he is seeking formal approval for the 669 and 711 Riverside Avenue Boiler Replacement Budget. The request is for up to \$20K for 711 Riverside Avenue and up to \$100K for 669 Riverside Avenue from replacement reserves.

Kirby Dunn made a motion to approve the 669 and 711 Riverside Avenue Boiler Replacement Budget Approval Request, as presented. Bill Schrecker seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

Kirby Dunn asked for update on the progress of the boiler replacements. Jeff Metcalf reported that 711 will start tomorrow and the contract for 669 will come in by the end of the week. Tenants still have heat, and the boilers take less than 6 hours to replace, so they will only be without heat for a short period of time during replacement.

5. Executive Director Report

Steve Murray provided a link to Kathleen Berk's testimony in which BHA agreed to seek money for shortfall. She requested \$10 million from the state which they were not interested in funding. Even if BHA was awarded this money, it could only be used as HAP money with permission from HUD, otherwise, it would be

unauthorized spending authority. BHA is also getting hints that we will be receiving shortfall money for the Mainstream program, and it might just show up in the bank without any notice from HUD.

Steve Murray also reported that he approved the 4% pay increase for the beginning of 2026. He would like to talk to the Finance Committee about tying the Wage Adjustment to an index or something concrete. He appreciated Eric DeBlasio's idea about tying it to the New England CPI. He wants to make sure that we pay enough so morale does not go down, but also not pay too much and be irresponsible.

He is also reaching out to some law firms about sending prior tenant past due balances to collections. He knows that there are mixed impressions of this but wants to hold people accountable for their actions. With the amount that turnovers cost, it could be helpful to collect on that with a second judgment after an eviction or a tenant leaves. BHA customarily adds tenant charges as receivables but writes them off as bad debt because it is unlikely to collect. Steve Murray understands that Social Security income cannot be garnished but is just planting a seed to be more aggressive in collecting our receivables and making tenants accountable, especially if they want federal housing within the next 10 years.

Steve Murray mentioned that he does a bi-annual walkthrough with the Property Management team of the properties and one of those walkthroughs is coming up if any of the Board would like to join. Debra Davis and Brian Lowe were interested in joining.

He also gave a shoutout to the FSS team for the success stories of participants. Stephanie Bixby gave background information on how the program works. As the participants' income increases, whatever their rent increase is will go into an escrow account. If they complete all their goals within 5 years, they receive that money.

Steve Murray stated that the Governor's Office reached out about public safety and having a discussion with the Agency of Human Services.

Brian Lowe asked about having a policy for collections and to find out what other agencies are doing. Steve Murray stated Nick Hibbard is working on flagging who has sources of income other than Social Security.

Kirby Dunn asked how much more it would cost for the second judgment. Steve Murray said it will just be some lawyer fees, but BHA would get 40% from the collection's agency.

*Steve Murray will provide an analysis of the cost and revenue of the second judgment and collection agencies for next meeting.

*Susan Carp will send information about the bi-annual property walk throughs.

6. Consent Agenda

a. Housing Retention

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

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

7. Financial Reports – October 2025

Nick Hibbard pointed out a couple of items that have not made it on the financials, yet which include shredding a backlog of 15 years of files which totaled \$6K and the transition from Google to Microsoft coming in higher due to the conversion from Google Vault to Purview. He stated that some things you must keep forever and not know contents of everyone's emails causes BHA to have to keep all emails. He also reported that the transition to a Teams meeting for the Board Meetings will likely start in February which the web-based version can be used. BHA will continue having overlap until there is confidence that everything is transitioned correctly. The email addresses will also remain the same.

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

8. Security Update – Decker Towers & Other BHA Properties

Jeff Metcalf stated he is in receipt of a new contract with the Sheriff's Department who will supply one deputy starting around December 1. He is unsure of how many sweeps but thinks it will likely be like what was done before with 3 happening in the middle of the night and it will run for 3 months.

Nick Hibbard stated that when he goes over to Decker on Fridays, it looks good. There is not much activity at other buildings either. He also gave an update on insurance for the security companies and stated the clause in the policy prohibits them from working with Public Housing Authorities. Steve Murray stated that he will be sending an email to Senator Hinsdale about the discrimination against PHAs. Brian Lowe suggested adding the Department of Financial Regulation and Stephanie Bixby suggested sending it to the Congressional Delegation.

Steve Murray also reported that he asked the police about overtime to help patrol Decker and they said no.

Jane Knodell asked if the new shelter near Pearl Street and Bishop Place is causing any issues and it was reported that there is not much activity.

9. CY2025 Housing Choice Voucher Funding Update

Nick Hibbard stated that there have been no changes since last month and BHA is waiting for confirmation for shortfall from HUD.

Jane Knodell asked about funding and the Continuing Resolution that was passed. Stephanie Bixby reported that BHA is funded through the end of January. She also stated that we do not anticipate adding any vouchers until we know our funding for the year, which will likely be in May. HUD has made it extremely clear that funding will be tight and there will likely not be any shortfall money next year. Our best case scenario would be level funding.

Debra Davis asked why PBV's get priority over other vouchers. Stephanie Bixby stated that it is because HUD funds housing authorities on PBVs first because there is a contract. Tenant based vouchers only get funded after PBVs.

Steve Murray reminded the Board that we have 40 new PBVs coming online at the beginning of 2026, which will make our reserves go much lower for HCV and Mainstream will not have any reserves going into next year.

Stephanie Bixby also reported that the COCC that is being renewed will likely take a cut. The application is January 14 for the City of Burlington. BHA administers Rental Assistance for the grant. This program is for the hardest to house. This also sends signals that the government does not want to spend a lot of money on housing.

Nick Hibbard stated that BHA will continue to provide projections but will not have good numbers until the funding is finalized probably in May. HUD will continue to front load us until they give us notice. We might receive some preparation memos in December or January for our projections.

Jane Knodell was asking about communication with CHT and other entities. Stephanie Bixby reported that she provides weekly or bi-weekly updates at the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance meetings. These are verbal communications and are in the meeting notes.

*Jane Knodell requested Stephanie Bixby provide the Board with the meeting minutes from the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance meeting.

Brian Lowe appreciates that BHA has been ahead of the curve and believes it is important to communicate in different levels to different organizations.

Steve Murray stated that he has been trying to contact the Mayor's Office and provides updates regularly but has not heard anything back. Brian Lowe stated he will try to find out who a new contact person would be at the Mayor's Office. He wants to reinforce how things have changed at BHA and how much work BHA has put into those changes.

*Steve Murray and Brian Lowe will work on getting an update on the City Council's Consent Agenda by the end of the year.

*Jane Knodell asked Brian Lowe to ask the Mayor's Office about her seat that expires in January.

10. Strategic Plan – Evaluation of Properties

BHA is advancing a major transition toward a performance-driven Property Management (PM) model. Leadership emphasizes ownership, accountability, and clearer financial visibility across all properties. Stephanie Bixby, Susan Carp, and Nick Hibbard helped make edits to the information provided to include what is currently being done.

Key Priorities & Direction

Ownership Culture

- Steve Murray believes PMs should fully “own” their buildings, make decisions quickly, and understand the financial impact of operations.

NOI Focus:

- Steve Murray also thinks there needs to be a shift from a social-service-oriented PM model to a standard industry model where PMs actively drive profitability and stability.

Operational & Financial Improvements

KPIs & Property Evaluation:

- Debra Davis asked about formal metrics; Nick Hibbard and Eric DeBlasio are building KPIs (vacancies, NOI, receivables, budget-to-actuals).
- Property-level financial separation is now underway to reveal hidden performance issues.

Budget & Revenue Improvements:

- Nick Hibbard and Eric DeBlasio are focusing on accurate rent charges, reducing damage, lowering receivables, and capturing rent increases on time.

Maintenance & Work Order System Modernization

Work Order Process:

- Nick Hibbard and Jeff Metcalf are categorizing work orders and building preventive plans.
- Jeff Metcalf is leading operational changes; the current system lacks real-time visibility for PMs and Finance.
- Some responsibilities may shift from PMs to Finance to reduce workload.

PM–Maintenance Communication:

- Currently, PMs email Julie for work order creation; this highlighted process gaps that need correction.

Resident Engagement & Communication

New Resident Handbooks:

- Catherine Foley reported success with the new Decker handbook.
- Susan Carp led the updates on the Resident Handbooks.
- All handbooks updated and delivered to residents.

Resident Councils:

- Brian Lowe asked about PM engagement with Resident Councils.
- Steve Murray reported strong involvement; Will Heinz, Dani Roy, Susan Carp, and Crystal Jones are active at several sites, with ongoing coordination.

Culture & Change Management

Staff Adaptation:

- Steve Murray noted that maintenance had been unchanged for decades; rapid changes in the past caused 40% turnover.
- Current approach emphasizes slow rollout and balancing workloads.

Staffing Model Discussion:

- Kirby Dunn asked about building-specific staffing; Jeff Metcalf explained current cross-property model.
- Stephanie Bixby noted differences from larger organizations like CHT.

Incentives & Accountability

Performance Bonuses:

- Steve Murray supports future bonus structure tied to measurable PM performance once accurate KPIs exist.
- Welcomes clearer accountability via data-driven evaluations, with noticing good will.

Hiring & Pipeline (Steve):

- Hired Assistant PM positions to improve stability and onboarding.

*The Board requested a 3-month update with goals, what is being worked on, and a timeline.

*The next Strategic Plan Discussion will be in January highlighting BHA's portfolio with an initial high level assessment of BHA's properties.

11. Other Business

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, December 16th, at 12pm. There will also be a short Finance Committee meeting at end to discuss staff compensation. Bill Schrecker has hard stop at 2pm.

There being no other business, Kirby Dunn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:01 a.m. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

DocuSigned by:

Steven Murray
Secretary
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