

**Burlington Housing Authority
Minutes from the Regular Board of Commissioner Meeting
January 27, 2026**

Call to Order of Regular Meeting

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners was called to order at 9:00 a.m. on January 27, 2026, 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 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

No changes were made to the agenda.

2. Forum: Resident of BHA Properties/General Public

Catherine Foley was present, and saved comments for the Resident Council.

3. Resident Council

Catherine Foley was present from the Decker Resident Council. She reported that she sent an email explaining that she has stepped down from the Board for medical reasons and needs to focus on herself. The Council had an election last week and there is a new Board with Bob Collins serving as President. She is confident they will do ok. She also stated that over the weekend, a few people tried to come in, but when they saw the neighborhood watch sitting in the lobby, they turned away.

4. Board Actions

a. December 16 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes

Kirby Dunn made a motion to approve the minutes, as presented. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval with an abstention from Jane Knodell.

b. Recognition of Cathy Foley's Service to Decker Towers Community

Brian Lowe read the resolution for the record. Catherine Foley truly appreciated it.

Brian Lowe made a motion to approve the Recognition of Cathy Foley's Service to Decker Towers Community, as presented. Kirby Dunn seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

5. Executive Director Report

Steve Murray thanked Crystal Jones and her team. Langley Smurthwaite and Carlos Esquivel Cordova assisted at the cold weather shelter over the weekend. BHA is paying them overtime but will be reimbursed. They were looking for people with certain skills rather than just volunteers.

Steve Murray also reached out to Ben Traverse to find out what kind of memo or communication the City Council would want in an update. He has not responded yet.

BHA has hired a new lawyer to go after cases that Nadine does not believe are a sure thing. An example would be the gentleman that came in and threatened to kill staff members and Nadine stated there was not enough to go after him. This lawyer is currently representing Joe Handy on all his evictions, so he takes chances. He could also possibly go after debts after eviction, but only in Vermont.

He also reported that BHA had 4 cases in front of the Human Rights Commission. One case was dismissed, one case might be dismissed because the person cannot be found, and two had adverse rulings. One of the adverse rulings the person lied, and the other was a far stretch of what is a protected class. BHA will sit down and do an after-action report but believe we did not do anything wrong. We are looking at what penalties might be assessed and if they are too egregious, we might take them to court.

Kathleen Burke got \$5 million passed through the Joint Fiscal Committee which will now go through the House. We did vote not to be involved in this. Should she get \$5 million, we will still take part. This will still need to pass both the House and Senate. The Governor does not support it. BHA still wants a white paper on this because we still do not understand what is happening. It is a big stretch to get HUD to agree to this.

Brian Lowe asked about VSHA and where in the legislative process it is. It was passed by the Joint Fiscal Committee, and it goes to the House next. On the Human Rights Commission, Brian Lowe was curious and wanted to understand the adverse rulings. Steve Murray will send them. If they need time after reviewing, they will add an executive session in the future.

6. Consent Agenda

- a. Housing Retention**
- b. Rental Assistance**

Brian Lowe asked about the implications of the Burlington overdose center and the BHA perspective. Stephanie Bixby said this has to do with the Chittenden County Homeless Alliance. BHA is a sub recipient of the PSHA Grant. The new administration is not honoring the two-year renewal and is signaling that they do not support OPCs, in which the City of Burlington will be opening one. The CCHA wants United Way to be the applicant and VSHA is open to taking over the PSHA Grant, which would be more beneficial to the community. Brian Lowe wanted to confirm if VSHA took over, if the assistance would follow the participant and it would. Nick Hibbard also stated we were doing the work for free because we do not track our time the way they want. VSHA can do that.

Kirby Dunn asked where Bay Ridge is and it is near the Automaster in South Burlington and Post Apartments is the old VFW.

Jane Knodell asked for clarification about the word “ended” in the first sentence and it was a typo. It should have said “year ended.”

c. Property Management

Jane Knodell stated vacancies remain stubbornly high. Susan Carp reported BHA has 8 apartments committed and 19 are still under repair with Building Operations. She also reported it is a big struggle with market units and people bringing vouchers in. Three-bedroom units are harder to fill too. Bay Ridge being brand new is more appealing. BHA is also holding apartments because Section 8 is forcing downsizing of families which is mandatory. Kirby Dunn said it used to be the larger units used to be easier to fill. The community misconceives what constitutes bedroom sizes. We need 1 bedroom and 2 bedrooms.

d. Building Operations

e. Asset Management

f. Human Resources

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

7. December 2025 Financials

BHA is still doing well against budget. Preliminary insurance numbers are sub-10 percent increase. We are weighing decisions on deductibles which have a 2-3% swing between deductibles. Steve Murray gave kudos to Melissa Farnham and staff; we are fully staffed right now. We are expecting final administrative fee from last year around April. We are also waiting on the Operating Cost Adjustment Factor for Multifamily and RAD. This should have been released in October, and it has not been released yet. This will affect asking for rent increases going forward. We will reach out to HUD representative and NAHRO. BHA got committed funding through March. There is also a HUD bill that will likely pass. It is a great bill for us, but not

public housing. Security services are budgeted in Elderly RAD in Professional Services. Snow removal at this point is going to be the question mark. Ice seems to add up a lot more to prevent slip and falls.

Kirby Dunn made a motion to accept the December 2025 Financials, as presented. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

8. Security Update – Decker Towers & Other BHA Properties

Jeff Metcalf stated it was quiet over the weekend, which was the main concern with the cold temperatures. We had some infiltration at other properties, particularly Wharf, but it was ok. This is only a recent issue. BHA requested to try to expand coverage with the Sherriff at Decker. Cosmetically everything has held up like graffiti.

9. CY2025 Housing Choice Voucher Funding Update

Nick Hibbard stated there is not much to add for January. We received our get ready letter last month. It stated don't lease up, keep doing what we were doing last year, and maintain or closely monitor where you are at. Without knowing funding, it is good to slim down a little bit. It was made clear that if you were in shortfall this year, you will be lower on the priority list in the second year.

Steve Murray also reported that we are being spammed by HUD about immigration. BHA is not doing anything inappropriate. They are threatening with severe penalties if you are. These are general emails to every PHA.

Updates for next few months will not be much of anything because we cannot compare against anything.

10. Executive Session – Personnel Matter

The next Finance Committee will be in March.

The Board invited Steve Murray for the Executive Session.

Bill Schrecker made a motion to enter the Executive Session at 9:50 a.m. Kirby Dunn seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

Kirby Dunn made a motion to exit the executive session at 10:30 a.m. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

11. Other Business

There was a state-level discussion on the funding of vouchers.

There being no other business, Kirby Dunn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:35 a.m. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

DocuSigned by:

Steven Murray

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Secretary