

Burlington Housing Authority
Minutes from the Regular Board of Commissioner Meeting
February 17, 2026

Call to Order of Regular Meeting

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners was called to order at 9:11 a.m. on February 17, 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 (Zoom), David Foss, and Bob Collins (Zoom) 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 gave an update on security at Decker Towers. There was a drug bust on Elmwood Avenue that displaced 30-40 people, which could have led to new traffic at Decker Towers but only saw 2. Only one person came into the building. People are turning away from Decker Towers, which is great.

3. Resident Council

Bob Collins was present from the Decker Resident Council. The main issue he brought up was that the elevators going down at Decker. The small elevator has been down for weeks, and the large elevator has been down several times, leading to some people getting trapped. Some tenants are starting to get anxious, uncertain, and angry.

David Foss added that he believes that the communication with BHA, the City, and the Commissioners has been extremely good. The elevator went down yesterday and was fixed in a timely manner, but it is down again today. The response to come fix it is great, but they keep going down. He believe it might be a user issue with the user keeping the door open for extended periods of time.

Nick Hibbard stated that if you are working and you give the elevator up, you might not see it again for 10-15 minutes. He also said if you leave the door open for more than 30 seconds, it goes into a troubled state.

Jeff Metcalf has been trying to get more information on what is causing the elevator to go down. The last piece of information he received was that the door was left open too long, but getting information from Otis has been slow. Tenant education and patience could help prevent this from happening in the future but also looking into more long-term fixes.

David Foss also noted that the elevator does some drops before it opens, especially on the fourth floor. Also, when the door does not open right away, people kick the doors and try to pry them open.

Steve Murray was with Bob Collins when the elevators went down yesterday and it was a feeling of helplessness, but they were able to get them up and running in 2.5 hours. Susan Carp, Nick Hibbard, and Jeff Metcalf are working on a plan on what to do if the elevator is down for a long period of time, but BHA needs to make sure not to take unnecessary legal risks but also need to look at the moral side. We need more time to evaluate before sharing it with the Resident Council and the Board.

Steve Murray also thanked Crystal Jones and Jeff Metcalf for their work in what looks like being approved for \$1 million Representative Balint's office to work on elevators. Crystal Jones has reached out to see next steps on how to use the funds.

Brian Lowe asked if BHA could request the Fire Marshall to make this a high priority risk to make Otis move faster as it could impact their insurance. Steve Murray said we can try to do that. Brian Lowe also asked about the costs for the repairs, and they are much more than the normal contracted service because they are usually at overtime hours.

Jane Knodell suggested educating tenants and adding signage on every floor to not keep the elevator doors open. She said that the Resident Council did a great job with not letting people into the building, she believes they can get great messaging out about the elevator as well. Bob Collins mentioned that some residents might want to hurt BHA so the signage might hurt BHA, but it is worth the risk.

David Foss also mentioned that the tracks in the elevators do not get cleaned as much as they should. Jeff Metcalf stated that Will Heinz has been asked to add that, but that also requires keeping the doors open.

Brian Lowe asked what times of day the elevator had peak usage. David Foss reported that between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. and between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. are the peak times. Also, when the recycling is taking place, the elevators are taken up for an hour or longer.

Suggestions included a small service elevator (no good place to put it), requiring tenants to bring down their recycling (less recycling would happen), and limiting service during a certain time to alleviate pressure.

4. Board Actions

a. January 27 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes

Kirby Dunn made a motion to approve the minutes, with an amendment to the 3rd page, under c. Property Management, removing the sentence “BHA has no interest in filling larger sized PBVs.” Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

b. Building Operations Vehicle Purchase

Kirby Dunn made a motion to approve the Building Operation Vehicle Purchase, as presented. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

5. Executive Director Report

Steve Murray reported on immigration and how Stephanie Bixby handled it. We did not want new American families to think the Trump Administration was trying to remove all immigrants from housing. BHA had 99 individuals we had to verify and only one came back that needed more information.

Jane Knodell asked what was involved in verifying status. Stephanie Bixby explained that we input their information into SAVE and it says if what we provided is sufficient or if more is needed. BHA does not go back and verify to see if you lost your status after you have moved in.

Jane Knodell has been reappointed for another 5-year term and has done an amazing job navigating us through crisis.

Steve Murray sent the Board the human rights decision. We will not go into detail in the meeting, but it has been moved into mediation phase, and we will inform of the outcome. BHA is planning on filing a complaint against the investigator about attacks on our staff.

Steve Murray met with Ben Traverse on February 10 about issues we are facing. We said we were interested in having regular communication, but he did not see a need for it. We will also testify or memo on any concerns the City may have. Down to 50 police officers in the City as an FYI.

Stephanie Bixby, Nick Hibbard, and Steve Murray spoke with Heather Birchall about Section 8. They talked about VSHA’s \$5 million plan that passed the House. No one understands how it will work still, but it might work. Everyone would still need HUD’s permission to use it, which sounds unlikely. Without a clear plan, we will not take the money.

Jane Knodell would like to send a short memo to the City quarterly.

6. Consent Agenda

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

Jane Knodell asked why things were highlighted. Jeff Metcalf stated that it shows what has changed month over month.

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. Security Update – Decker Towers & Other BHA Properties

Nick Hibbard said that Friday was pretty good. Jeff Metcalf's team has done great clean up in stairwells and there is no additional graffiti. The current state of building seems to be maintaining.

Brian Lowe asked about the open question to Sheriff about additional sweeps. Jeff Metcalf stated it is still very fluid, but they have added Wharf Lane to their sweeps and activity has decreased there.

8. CY2026 Housing Choice Voucher Funding Update

Nick Hibbard stated that no additional funding notices have been received. We are being front loaded in the Mainstream program.

Steve Murray said NAHRO said the inflationary factor might be 7%. It will be better than what we got last year. OCAF was around 4%.

HUD spent a lot of the shortfall money last year. We are not sure how much of the money is going to be carved out for shortfall and how much will be for the regular program. HUD is also telegraphing that if you are in shortfall two years in a row, you probably will not receive shortfall again.

Jane Knodell asked within BHA, if an existing voucher opens up, do we fill it. We do not unless it is a PBV. The large program is not in shortfall. We have another 10-20 units coming on in PBV. BHA also has 68 unused PBVs that still need to be filled. BHA should message the income limits and how someone may qualify for affordable housing. Property Management is working on that in their advertising as well.

9. Other Business

The Mayor will be attending the March meeting for first 30 minutes talking about housing strategy.

The next meeting for Finance Committee will be at the end of the March meeting.

The Board will work with Crystal Jones to coordinate meeting with RAB sometime in April.

The Board Retreat will occur in May with the Strategic Plan and will be at Bobbin.

There will be an Executive Session to discuss a Legal Matter in March.

There being no other business, Kirby Dunn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:19 a.m. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

DocuSigned by:

Steven Murray

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Secretary