

**Burlington Housing Authority**  
**Minutes from the Regular Board of Commissioner Meeting**  
**March 31, 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 March 31, 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, Brian Lowe, and Debra Davis (Zoom). 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.

Burlington Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak (Zoom), CEDO Director Kara Alnasrawi (Zoom), Catherine Foley from Decker (Zoom), and a student Maddie Haydock (Zoom) were also in attendance.

**1. Changes to the Agenda**

Jane Knodell noted that the discussion with Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak would begin when she logged on. Kirby Dunn requested to go into more detail on the Consent Agenda with Rental Assistance and Property Management.

**2. Discussion with Burlington Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak**

Burlington Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak and CEDO Director Kara Alnasrawi joined the meeting at 9:04 a.m.

Jane Knodell asked what topics she would like to cover and those included how BHA is being impacted by the changes at HUD, any issues at properties, especially Decker and Wharf and the Decker elevators, and resident engagement with BHA and seeing if they feel like they are being heard.

Stephanie Bixby started by addressing how BHA has been affected by the changes at HUD. HUD staff has been reduced by 40% and it has been troubling to get ahold of people to draw down funds and get the OCAF for rent increases. BHA was also directed by HUD not to lease and if you were deemed in shortfall last year, you are still in shortfall this year until you are released. BHA did the necessary steps last year in the HCV program to not be in shortfall. With that, the preliminary numbers for the HCV program look like we might get a 7% inflation factor which equates to about a \$2 million increase in funding, but we are weary to start leasing up until we get our final funding notice with this administration. Leasing up in the future might be difficult though because it takes so much time, but we are honoring our PBVs and AHAPs to get those units filled. Participants are starting to not accept affordable units, and it is harder to find qualified tenants to go into those units. Waiting lists for

3+ bedroom units are less than 100 families long which is not very many because you do not get a good response rate. Some participants won't respond or will reject the unit because it is too small, not in the right neighborhood, or not in the right school district. Also, new buildings are starting to take tenants away from older units.

The Mayor asked if this has happened anywhere else. Stephanie Bixby said it is something she can investigate, but VSHA is also struggling with it. She also believes that people do not understand how much they can make and still qualify for affordable housing and BHA is looking at getting this information out to the public.

The Mayor also asked if there is anything that the City can do for education since accelerating housing is one of the main goals for the City and if there are any units that BHA is having trouble filling. Decker is very hard to fill because it has an image problem. BHA needs better press about Decker because it has really turned around within the last couple of years. The Resident Council has done a great job.

The Mayor requested a timeline for funding and on what year the program was funded. The voucher program is funded on a calendar year. BHA reported that if the law is followed, we should get the funding notice no later than next week. It will be difficult to utilize all the dollars by the end of the year and will utilize creative strategies to use as much as possible.

The next update was about Resident Councils and where does BHA have active councils. Currently, there are two active at Decker and Wharf. There used to be one at 10 North and had to sever it because of behavior of the president almost two years ago. There are talks about adding one at South Square, but they need to do it on their own. Steve Murray has also had meetings with Emily at Franklin Square about starting one there.

Steve Murray also reported that engagement is at an all-time high with town hall meetings at major properties quarterly which are extremely helpful. They are very calm and people bring suggestions and we react to them. Crystal Jones added that BHA has RAB Board meetings with updates, challenges, and successes and leaves those meetings with action steps and follow up. She also reported that the Wharf Lane Council is working on their community room and is very pleased with it. BHA has increased trust with residents, hears what is going on, and improves quality of life. Kirby Dunn and Jane Knodell are working on adding a date to meet with them. Also start elevator committee.

Steve Murray and Jeff Metcalf updated the Mayor about the elevator issues at Decker Towers. Until recently, we have not had an issue with both elevators being down at the same time, but they are old elevators. Currently, the big elevator has been working for two weeks without a problem. BHA has met with our lawyers to see what we are legally responsible for, and we are working on what we should do ethically and morally. Bob Collins invited CVOEO to meet with the residents after the town hall meeting to go over what rights the tenants have. BHA talked with the

residents about what we are intending to do and created an elevator committee. The elevator committee has had some great ideas from residents and to our surprise, they do not want to leave the building and go into a hotel if the elevators go down. We are looking at possibly positioning cots and supplies. The longest stretch that both elevators were down was between 12 and 24 hours. BHA is taking their suggestions and trying to codify an elevator plan to understand responsibilities.

Jeff Metcalf has been dealing with Otis Elevator since late last fall, with one of the elevators being down since then. There was a lack of communication from them, but that person was let go or left. There is a new service manager that has been more responsive, and correspondence has increased over the last couple of weeks. They are uncovering numerous different problems with the elevators and we are pushing them to give a longer plan for modernization for all our properties to get the project up and running.

Catherine Foley said that there has been a big turnaround at Decker. It has been a combination of BHA executive staff, the commissioners, the City, the Resident Council, and BPD working together. BHA has had a big change in culture responding to residents quickly, highlighted most recently with the elevator issues. The negative press comes from the engrained neglect from the few people who cannot overcome their dissatisfaction from the past. Catherine Foley invited the Mayor to come look for herself to see the huge changes. She also reported that there are only 3 or 4 problem residents and BHA has taken steps to evict them or get them to change. She believes in 6 months, Decker will be even better.

Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanank praised the BHA team, Steve Murray, and the Board.

Steve Murray reported that Crystal Jones and Jeff Metcalf applied for Congressional funds through Representative Balint's office, and it was granted. Jeff Metcalf confirmed that it was granted and will be funneled through HUD but will help get the elevators where they need to be.

Jane Knodell circled back to federal government's impact on enforcing immigration laws. She wanted to report to the Mayor what we have done. Stephanie Bixby stated that HUD put out directive in February about immigration which provided a new list on classification. We have them categorized as one thing and they have them as another. BHA had to go through the mismatches, we had 99, and we cleared everyone except for 3 or 4 households. Many became citizens. We did uncover some mistakes on housing authority's end because we do not have immigration training. We are not required to rerun immigration. We also uncovered 2 households that did not have the correct status. Statistically, this is not a problem. Our Boston representative made it very clear that this administration is not above punitive damages if we do not come in line and we cannot risk if we do not. Crystal Jone's team helped and provided support rather than fear to make sure they get their documentation in line. The two households are still housed. BHA will have to

go through termination for those two households. The Mayor asked what the status was that did not make them eligible? It was a pending application of any kind.

Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak thanks BHA for the time and wants to be continued partners. Her office door and phone lines are always open.

### **3. Forum: Resident of BHA Properties/General Public**

Catherine Foley said she had a follow-up meeting to the town hall, and it was a good two-way discussion. They were satisfied with the meeting with BHA and the outline that they gave us and agreed to meet again before April 15. She also mentioned security and seeing things get worse. There are needles in stairways and laundry rooms. There was also a security issue last night related to the blue BHA building behind Decker, and it spilled over into Decker parking lot.

Debra Davis joined at 9:03 a.m.

### **4. Resident Council**

No Resident Councils were present.

### **5. Board Actions**

#### **a. February 17 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes**

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

#### **b. February 2026 Annual Meeting Minutes**

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

#### **c. FY2025 Audit Report**

Brian Lowe said it was a great audit and thank you for the work that goes into it. He asked why the Restricted Net Position went up 10x. It was because the Replacement Reserves were moved into Restricted Net Position. He also asked why the last line on page 16 said increased, but it should say decreased. This should be corrected and it has been reported to the auditor for correction. Nick Hibbard also explained that the UNP for Section 8 increased, and UNP would have increased overall if the reclassification of Replacement Reserves did not occur.

Nick Hibbard said there were no material changes. There were some slight adjustments, but nothing material from the end of year financials that were provided previously.

Brian Lowe made a motion to accept the FY2025 Audit Report, as presented. Bill Schrecker seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

**d. FY2027 Annual Plan**

Kirby Dunn made a motion to accept and authorize the chair to sign and approve the FY2027 Annual Plan. Bill Schrecker seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

Nick Hibbard stated that this is our FY2027 Annual Plan, but it is HUD's FY2026 Annual Plan for us because they do it at the start of the year. Stephanie Bixby met with the CEDO Director about it since it is her first year doing it. Brian Lowe thanks staff for posting it and bringing it through the RAB Board.

**6. Executive Director Report**

Steve Murray reported that there was deescalation training on February 26 and burnout training on March 10. There were mixed reviews on the burnout training, but the staff have gone through a lot of stress with expectations and concerns from participants. He believes the staff might not be getting enough time to recover from it and might be burning out. Also, the lobby has been locked down twice in the past month.

He also reported that Acrisure conducted a confidential survey. Of the 58 employees, 41 answered. Leadership does not intend on having a presentation like last time, but Jane Knodell would like to have a copy of the survey. He also reported that staff still question if the survey is anonymous. Nick Hibbard stated that in the narrative portion of the survey, if you write something in the way you have spoken and written before, it could lead to figuring out who said it.

Mike Monte of CHT asked Steve Murray for a meeting and he was worried about what he might say. Mike just wanted to tell him BHA is doing a wonderful job.

There was a Spring event at Spare Time last Friday which was a lot of fun.

There was an ED meeting for all of Vermont. BHA still does not feel comfortable with what is going on with the funding. We asked for the white paper and never got it. It is significantly different from what was presented. Frank Kochman, who is 82 and retired, did the legal opinion. BHA has spoken to HUD directly and they do not understand how this program will work. The money is in the State budget. DCF will be managing the disbursement of the money.

Maddie Haydock (student) joined the meeting.

Jane Knodell would like to add discussion about funding to the Executive Session.

## **7. Elevator Update – Decker Towers & South Square**

Brian Lowe is grateful for the amount of time people have spent on the elevators. Jeff Metcalf stated that there are a few punch list items left at South Square, but the project should be completed tomorrow. He also wants Otis to provide Decker's elevators' needs and once we get those, we will be able to implement how to spend and utilize the money from Congress. We will receive a letter with language on how to spend it in a few weeks. We also need to make sure that the other elevator is reliable while one elevator is being refurbished. Nick also noted that all the elevators are different.

## **8. Consent Agenda**

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

Kirby Dunn asked about issues between the vouchers and vacancies in Property Management. Stephanie Bixby Stated that she does not have vacancies, but she has openings in the PBVs that need to be leased. RAD is the biggest share between the two programs. If they are vacant, we do not get the rental income, and we are not utilizing funding. Downsizing units also hurts this because we must hold a unit and turnover a unit unnaturally. CHT is also cannibalizing from other PBV units by transferring people from one to another.

Jane Knodell asked about how the voucher leasing train has stopped and how to get it moving again. Stephanie Bixby stated that it stopped because we are not issuing vouchers and it is hard to get it moving again because of the lease up process. We need to hit the waitlist, get paperwork back, and wait for lease ups. This process can take months, and the success rate can be very low. BHA will look at HOME vouchers and try to local preference them and try to partner with COTS. PBVs are also the first to receive HCV vouchers. We would also look to increase NEDs and Family Unification since those were hit the hardest during terminations last year.

Brian Lowe asked about the waitlist and if it could change the equilibrium at a property. This was what the Board voted on a couple years ago with the Tenant Selection Policy for Decker and 10 North for our units. This might not apply for other units outside our organization.

Kirby Dunn thinks that this could also be tough to message since we do not have vouchers to move around, but vouchers that stick with the units. Jane Knodell asked if it is easier to fill an HCV unit over any other unit. For an HCV unit, the tenant needs to go and find a place themselves, and the landlord needs to accept them. You do not need to look for a unit if there is a subsidy attached to it.

- c. Property Management**

Jane Knodell asked if the turnover of the Property Manager was the Decker position and it was not. It was the multi-family position.

Jane asked about turnover of the PM position at Decker. No, it was the multifamily position.

- d. Asset Management**
- e. Building Operations**
- f. Human Resources**

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

## **9. February 2026 Financials**

Nick Hibbard noted that maintenance costs continue to be a nightmare with turnovers being extremely expensive. Jeff Metcalf is doing some things with flooring changes at Franklin, which is extremely expensive, but should last a lot longer. Jane Knodell noted that we might need to adjust the maintenance and staffing for the next budget. Nick Hibbard also noted that right sizing units is unnaturally causing more turnover costs. We are also evaluating more funding from the state for turnovers.

Brian Lowe made a motion to accept the February 2026 Financials, as presented. Kirby Dunn seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

The Finance Committee will meet on April 16 at 1 p.m. for the FY2027 Budget.

## **10. Security Update – Decker Towers & Other BHA Properties**

We are hoping the current issues are not a new trend at Decker. Nick Hibbard said it looks pretty good on Fridays but trusts what other people are saying. The Sheriff's office was supposed to end their sweeps at the end of this month, but we will continue with them because they are able to for the next month. They are also continuing at Wharf. We are offering people cash to leave, and it is working.

## **11. CY2026 Housing Choice Voucher Funding Update**

It was noted that we are waiting on the funding notice and will have projections once received.

## **12. Executive Session – Legal Matters 1 V.S.A § 313(a)(1) (E)&(F)**

At 10:32 a.m. Bill Schrecker made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss legal matters, real estate, employee issues, and the state funding issue, inviting

Nick Hibbard, Stephanie Bixby, Susan Carp, Jeff Metcalf, and Steve Murray. Kirby Dunn seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

At 11:06 a.m. Kirby Dunn made a motion to exit the Executive Session. Debra Davis seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

### 13. Other Business

There being no other business, Brian Lowe made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:07 a.m. Bill Schrecker seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

DocuSigned by:

*Steven Murray*

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Secretary