Burlington Housing Authority
Minutes from the Regular Board of Commissioner Meeting
May 26, 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 May 26, 2026, via Zoom and in person at 245 Pine 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 Operations Jeff Metcalf, Director of Housing Retention Crystal Jones, Director of Property Management Susan Carp, Director of Human Resources Melissa Farnham, Chief Financial Officer Nicholas Hibbard, and Controller Eric DeBlasio (Zoom).

Decker Towers Resident Council Secretary Catherine Foley (Zoom) and Marie Davis were also in attendance.

1. **Changes to the Agenda**

   No changes were made to the Agenda.

2. **Forum: Residents of BHA Properties/General Public**

   There were no comments from Residents.

3. **Resident Council**

   Catherine Foley stated that she has rejoined the Board of the Decker Resident Council as Secretary filling in for Anne Marie. She stated that security-wise, things are good. After the security meeting, she came back to Decker and told residents about it and noticed a significant drop-off in activity after people were notified. Jane Knodell thanked Catherine Foley for her continued service on the Board.

4. **Board Actions**
   a. **April 28 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. **FY2027 Operating Budget**

      Jane Knodell noted that she and Bill Schrecker had 2 recent Finance Committee sessions with Nick Hibbard, Eric DeBlasio, and Jeff Metcalf.

      Nick Hibbard noted that everything of significance and most questions should be answered in the memo. He mentioned that we always hope to be able to make more contributions to the Capital budget. The biggest areas for improvement for this budget are reducing vacancy losses to increase revenue, reducing maintenance costs for turnovers, and reducing utility costs. Utility costs have increased significantly, especially with water, so we are trying to curb consumption where we can as well as fill vacancies to reduce vacant billings. Water is expected to increase over 80% in the next 5 years. Nick Hibbard also noted that staffing costs did decrease from the prior year's budget mainly due to benefits due to a reduction in positions.

Jane Knodell noted that from the Finance Committee meetings, the key takeaways were to reduce vacancies and maintenance costs.

Steve Murrary noted that BHA received a large inflation factor for HAP. HAP is not in the budget directly, but it will show up through more leasing with administrative fees. The issue with this is that it will be hard to lease up practically and responsibly, so we are aiming to increase our leasing numbers by about 100. We will be doing this starting by leasing in place, then by putting vouchers on the street, but these vouchers will be limited by voucher types, NEDs and FUPs. Steve Murray also noted that the proration factor was the main reason why we waited to start leasing.

Brian Lowe asked about our projected 88.7% leasing target for HCV. This is the budget for administrative fees. HAP goes to the landlord, utilities, and FSS Escrow primarily and is a pass through.

Brian Lowe made a motion to approve the FY2027 Operating Budget, as presented. Bill Schrecker seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

c. FY2027-2028 Capital Improvement Plan

Jeff Metcalf noted that the memo explains how the projects arrived. He explained that the properties in green are in good standing, the properties in yellow are under the $2K per unit threshold, and the properties in red are in the negative. If they are in the red, we will utilize Strategic Reserves to fund them. The sales of 48 and 56 Bright Street could also fill the budget holes.

Crystal Jones, Jeff Metcalf, and Jeff Edwin continue to apply for Congressional Directive funding. Jeff Metcalf also noted that we are signing a contract with Burlington Lead Program at Peterson. The lead money helps because the 5-year money aligns with the Voucher program and the Lead Program supervises the work being done. He also reported that we are starting the Sound Mitigation project at 103 East Allen. These projects will both help offset costs with the capital plan. Kirby Dunn asked if there were any issues with displacement, and Jeff Metcalf reported that Burlington Lead has a place, but does not expect to use it.

Kirby Dunn also asked about the timing of the $2K per unit and if that is wanted at the end of each year. Nick Hibbard stated that it is, but it has not been adjusted, so some properties might work, but other larger properties might not.

This is a 2-year approval that allows for flexibility and efficiency with projects.

Jane Knodell asked for the properties that are in the red if we will be drawing down from Strategic Reserves and the answer was yes.

Kirby Dunn made a motion to approve the FY2027-2028 Capital Improvement Plan, as presented. Bill Schrecker seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

5. **Executive Director Report**

Steve Murray reported that we worked with Jamaica White and AALV to find alternative sources of funding for the families that did not have status and did not find any. BHA agreed to take these as a vacancy loss for one year, which will cost around $26K and will not extend it. One family lost their FSS money.

He also reported a record short vacancy at Decker Tower spanning 3 weeks. This tenant had over 30 visitors a day. Derek from Retention as well as Property Management had a conversation with this tenant and gave a 48-hour notice and paid her to leave.

There have been issues with people picking up after their dogs at multiple properties. Property Management installed 2 dog cleanup stations at Decker Towers, and this helped tremendously, so they ordered 8 more to be installed at other properties where issues are being reported.

Marie Davis joined the meeting.

6. **Consent Agenda**
   a. **Housing Retention**
   b. **Rental Assistance**
   c. **Property Management**
   d. **Asset Management**
   e. **Building Operations**
   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. **April 2026 Financials**

Nick Hibbard stated that maintenance and utilities continue to be a problem, especially at the RAD properties. Building Operations and Property Management are making good progress with long term turnovers that have been sitting for a long time with only having 3 or 4 that are not spoken for that are over 30 days. Lowering the rents for the 3-bedrooms at Duggan's has helped with this. Turnover costs, with rents being so low on some of the properties, will take years to breakeven on them, but it is reported that the turnovers look stunning.

Jane Knodell noted that we are still expecting a surplus before depreciation and a deficit after depreciation. She asked what we do with the funds. Nick Hibbard stated that the funds stay with the property depending on the rules of the property or the equity gets transferred to the Central Office to cover deficits.

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

8. Elevator Update – Decker Towers & South Square

Jeff Metcalf noted that at Decker Towers, both elevators are running and he is waiting on Otis for the modernization plan. The drive that was ordered worked to keep the elevators running. We will make plans appropriately to make them fully modernized, no matter the funding, followed by 10 North and Wharf Lane. At South Square, they made a final adjustment, and the modernization has been finalized.

Brian Lowe asked if Jeff Metcalf is happier with the new project manager. He is not super happy with the level of service as it is not at the level he wants to see it. He is concerned with changing companies and does not want to burn the bridge with Otis.

9. Security Update – Decker Towers & Other BHA Properties

Jeff Metcalf said he does not have much to add for the report at Decker. The report from Charles Bishop still has activity. This is the last week for Sheriff and there is no intention of extending it through June. Everything as Catherine Foley stated earlier. Jeff Metcalf stated that Wharf still has the same with activity. Steve Murray said that the DOC program is going to pull someone from the building from their field checks. Crystal Jones said that there was some money that was left over from the DOC Grant and that money can be used for security cameras in Dettman.

10. CY2026 Housing Choice Voucher Funding Update

Nick Hibbard said that we have great funding, but we cannot use all the funds. We will likely have about $1.5 million recaptured as we will only be able to keep 4% of our funding in our reserves. Stephanie Bixby is looking at the easy lease ups first. There are no regular vouchers or VASHs, there are only NEDs and FUPs. PBVs work too, but we have waiting lists. Those would be easy wins. Steve Murray said we have started issuing vouchers. Per our Admin Plan, only 50% of our vouchers can be local preferences. We might have to come to the Board for an update for a quicker way.

Brian Lowe asked how many vouchers we decide to put on the street. It is a combo of staffing and how the market looks. For each one you put out, your staff will have to look at. The success rate will depend on the bucket. The batch will extend over 90 days on top of regular work. Brian Lowe said there is likely an advantage to local preference with vacancies being very low in Burlington. This is something the Board might want to look at for the Admin Plan. We also do not want to flood the market with vouchers and have participants fall to the bottom of the waitlist if they do not find something.

Kirby Dunn asked about the Mainstream Voucher program being absorbed into the HCV program. It is just a subcategory now. The biggest change is that it is now at Rate B, which leads to less administrative fee revenue. This is effective for January 1, and we found out in May. We are required to spend whatever remains on the old program and whatever new funding comes in is HCV. We did confirm that we are not in shortfall anymore and can lease up Mainstream vouchers.

11. Strategic Plan

See the video of meeting for the rich discussion of each theme. In all areas, especially accountability, evaluation of properties, and funding/revenue and efficiency, it is clear that the departments are collaborating and communicating at a higher level. The Board was impressed with how much the department heads are in the same canoe, pulling in the same direction.

The following just records the action steps for the next year under each of them.

<u>Communications</u>

We will launch the newsletter project. Kirby Dunn and Jane Knodell will draft a scope of work and send it to Steve Murray, who will move the contract forward.

<u>Accountability</u>

Keep working on tenant accountability measures.

Keep working on measures that give property managers a sense of ownership and accountability in resolving issues at the property level, working with senior leadership in terms of funding and priority-setting.

<u>Property Evaluation</u>

Create space on a Fall Board agenda for a staff presentation of our property portfolio. "3 buckets" approach.

<u>Funding and Efficiency</u>

Keep grinding away to lease up vacant units and meet the high demand on maintenance while working more effectively and productively using IT and other tools.

12. Other Business

There was no Other Business discussed.

13. Executive Session – Personnel Matter

Jane Knodell invited Steve Murrary and Nick Hibbard to join for one out of the two Personnel Matters to be discussed.

At 10:57 a.m. Brian Lowe made a motion to enter the Executive Session to discuss two separate Personnel Matters. Kirby Dunn seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

At 11:36 a.m. Kirby Dunn made a motion to exit the Executive Session. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

There being no other business, Kirby Dunn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:36 a.m. Brian Lowe seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

Steven Murray

Secretary