

**Burlington Housing Authority
Minutes from the Regular Board of Commissioner Meeting
June 27, 2023**

Call to Order of Regular Meeting

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners was called to order at 9:04 a.m. on June 27, 2023, via Zoom and in person at 10 North Champlain Street, Burlington, Vermont by Board Chair Mike Knauer. The following commissioners were present: Cheryl Fatnassi, Jane Knodell, Bill Schrecker, and Tony Lewis. Also in attendance were Executive Director Steven Murray, Director of Rental Assistance Stephanie Bixby, Director of Asset Management Jeffrey Metcalf, Director of Human Resources Melissa Farnham, Director of Property Management Susan Carp, Director of Building Operations Lisa McGonagle, Senior Staff Accountant Eric DeBlasio, and Supportive Programs and Services Manager Marissa Darling.

1. Changes to the Agenda

There were no changes made to the agenda.

2. Forum: Resident of BHA Properties/General Public

There were no residents or members of the public in attendance.

3. Board Action

- a. May 29, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes

Cheryl Fatnassi made a motion to approve the minutes, as presented. Bill Schrecker seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval of the motion.

4. Executive Director Report

Steven Murray noted that a gentleman wanted to be at the meeting but was not allowed by the attorney. He was given the link to the Zoom meeting. He did not attend.

Steven Murray noted the new credit card and training will be coming out soon which will allow for better reporting and better tracking of spending. Mike Knauer requested to look at credit card purchase trends for FY24 versus FY23 in the future to see if there were any savings related to the change.

Steven Murray noted that staff evaluations have been completed. The process went a lot quicker and smoother than last year. The scores were very realistic. Cheryl Fatnassi suggested looking at the top-level managers that report to the Executive Director with a

commissioner to make sure there is no blindside like in the past as well as looking to development for the managers. Jane Knodell volunteered and requested to view the evaluations of the directors electronically which will be sent on Friday by Melissa Farnham. There was no concern that the bonus should be held back into the next fiscal year. Mike Knauer noted that they would use an executive section at the next meeting for Jane Knodell to report to the other commissioners.

Steven Murray stated that we are in discussions with Winooski Housing Authority since we have not updated our contract with them since 2019. We are significantly underpaying them. If we lose them, it is catastrophic for BHA, and we would have to find another third part organization. We also provide inspections for them, but they are much smaller than us.

Steven Murray shared that HUD's regional Administrator Juana Matis and Shaun Thomas came for a visit. They toured some of the properties. Steven Murray gave a shoutout to Kristen Brownlow and Peyton Obering for their engagement with Ms. Mattis afterword. Kristen and Peyton's program is what the head of HUD wants to see happen. The visit was overall fantastic. Steven Murray shared that Stephanie headed the conversation and stated that we want more regular vouchers to address the homeless crisis in a nimbler way.

Steven Murray noted that Paul Dettman's contract is over this month. He has sent an email to extend his contract as our HUD expert and informal hearings. Jane requested the main elements of the contract such as the monthly fee minimum, per hour rates, and how much we use him. Steven Murray stated that on average, we use 10-15 hours a month.

Cheryl Fatnassi asked about the tenants who are past due on rent and who is going to be evicted. Steven Murray stated that there were no evictions for nonpayment last year and the VERAP money has stopped. He also stated that Property Management and Retention have gotten people on payment plans to help with nonpayment of rent. He also stated that BHA is trying to come up with a set point where to take action to evict for nonpayment. His examples were \$3-4K or 6 months past due. He also stated that no one goes to the lawyer without Property Management and Retention going out there to speak with the tenants. Susan Carp stated that they address tenants once they are 2 months back. Susan Carp will report on how much we are leaving on the table at the next meeting. Crystal Jones explained that the financial assistance from HOP is at most 3 months back rent. She also stated that the state was running out of money for FY23 in late May, so they scaled down to 1 month of back rent until the new Fiscal Year. Stephanie Bixby noted that the HOP grant is going back to normal operations and that many people are not engaging with Retention. BHA will need to focus on saving housing for people and not add to the homeless population. She also shared that the state is more reactionary versus preventative. Mike Knauer asked about the main reason why people fall behind in rent. Crystal responded by saying medical, mental health, and substance use are the main reasons. The issues have been going on for awhile and they were not referred to Retention during the pandemic. Crystal Jones also

stated that we were awarded prevention funds for the first time in many years. She also stated that a lot of agencies provide services for short periods of time rather than longer periods. Marissa Darling noted that Retention and Property Management are working together to better understand tenants' situations and working with them to help as much as possible. They are making sure to reach out to find out why they are falling behind if they have been paying in the past. Mike Knauer wants to make sure we engage with all relevant partners to make sure the issues can be solved, which is bigger than BHA.

5. Consent Agenda

- a. Asset Management
- b. Housing Retention
- c. Human Resources
- d. Property Management
- e. Rental Assistance

Mike Knauer thanks everyone for all the information that is provided as well as success stories.

Mike Knauer moved to accept the consent agenda. Cheryl Fatnassi seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval of the motion.

6. Financial Report – May 2023

Mike Knauer thanks Eric DeBlasio and Nick Hibbard for the detailed report and answering any questions.

Cheryl Fatnassi asked about other rental income and how it will be written off. Steven Murray stated that it is considered revenue, but will not be collected, so it will be written off. Eric DeBlasio noted that it is mainly the tenants who have vacated that will be written off at the end of the year. Cheryl Fatnassi requested the figure of how much will be written off at the end of the year.

Mike Knauer noted that the budget was passed last month. He asked if there were any updates. Crystal Jones is adding two new employees with more Grant Income to cover them. Eric DeBlasio noted that Lake Champlain's rent study was done, and it will increase rental income substantially.

7. Other Business

Melissa Farnham noted that the next meetings are August 29, 2023, at Riverside Avenue and September 26, 2023, at 101 College Street.

Steven Murray noted that we could move back to Main Street if location meetings are no longer needed. Mike Knauer stated that once we go through all the properties, we can possibly start alternating with office and properties for the monthly meetings.

There being no other business, Cheryl Fatnassi made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:04 a.m. The motion was seconded by Tony Lewis. There was unanimous approval of the motion.

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Secretary