

DRAFT – 2/27/2024 – SUBJECT TO BOARD REVIEW, AMENDMENT AND APPROVAL

**Burlington Housing Authority
Minutes from the Regular Board of Commissioner Meeting
February 27, 2024**

Call to Order of Regular Meeting

The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners was called to order at 9:14 a.m. on February 27, 2024, via Zoom and in person at 65 Main Street, Burlington, Vermont by Board Chair Jane Knodell. The following commissioners were present: Bill Schrecker, Brian Lowe, Kirby Dunn, and Tony Lewis. Also in attendance were Executive Director Steven Murray, Director of Asset Management Jeffrey Metcalf, Director of Human Resources Melissa Farnham, Director of Building Operations Lisa McGonagle, Director of Property Management Susan Carp, Director of Rental Assistance Stephanie Bixby, Director of Housing Retention Crystal Jones, and Chief Financial Officer Nick Hibbard.

1. Changes to the Agenda

Steve Murray asked to remove the time allotted for his report and add the time to the Decker Towers discussion and also add an executive session to discuss legal issues related to security and liabilities with security at Decker Towers.

2. Forum: Resident of BHA Properties/General Public

In attendance were a member of NBC5, Derek Brouwer from SevenDays, Habib Sabet from VTDigger, Karen Paul, Catherine Foley, attorney Whit Smith, Property Manager Maya Boucher, and Senior Staff Accountant Eric DeBlasio.

There were staff introductions.

3. Board Action

a. January 30 2024 Regular Meeting Minutes

Tony Lewis made a motion to approved the minutes, as presented. The motion was seconded by Bill Schrecker. Jane Knodell, Bill Schrecker, and Tony Lewis voted to approve the motion. Kirby Dunn and Brian Lowe abstained.

b. 10 N. Champlain Fire Alarm System Replacement

Jeff Metcalf explained the bid process that was conducted, including pricing. He noted potential reasons for the contract bids being larger than the budget.

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Kirby Dunn asked if there is a level at which a contract would come to the Board. Jeff Metcalf responded that there was and this was coming to the Board because it exceeded the budget. He is recommending contracting with The Royal Group, and seeking a project budget of up to \$240,000 which would cover other expenditures that may arise. Brian Lowe noted the context was helpful. Elderly RAD reserves will be funding the project.

Kirby Dunn made a motion to approve the fire alarm system project in an amount up to \$240,000, as presented. Tony Lewis seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval of the motion.

c. Personnel Policy Update – Sick Time Frontload

Melissa Farnham explained the policy update and how the change would affect members of staff. Steve Murray noted that there had been discussion about borrowing time and how that was not preferable.

Brian Lowe made a motion to approve the change to the personnel policy, as presented. Kirby Dunn seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval of the motion.

4. Consent Agenda

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

Kirby Dunn made a motion to accept the reports. Tony Lewis seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval of the motion.

5. Financial Report – January 2024

Nick Hibbard noted there were current challenges with leasing, costs at Decker Towers, and that BHA is awaiting HUD funding notices for Rental Assistance for CY2024.

Kirby Dunn would like a full board meeting to discuss the budget process and get new Board members up to date.

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6. Decker Towers Security Discussion

Jane Knodell outlined the current issues around security concerns at Decker Towers, including collaboration with the City of Burlington. There is agreement on having a security presence at the door and security patrols in the building. There are also ideas around how to use the callbox system and other security measures. Brian Lowe reiterated the shared goals and noted that this could be an iterative process.

Steve Murray stood behind the initial proposal to the City for two 24-hour security guard positions for up to \$614,000 annually. BHA is also in discussions with the Chittenden County Sheriff for patrols at the building. Brian Lowe noted the physical infrastructure changes mention in previous memos. Steve Murray added that coat tailing (tailgating) is one of the largest concerns for unauthorized entry. There was discussion about guest management at the building. Kirby Dunn felt that people will go for the path of least resistance into the building. The original proposal had a guard at the front door and a guard doing rounds within the building. Brian Lowe thought a two-month timeframe for review of the effectiveness of changes would be useful. He read a number of potential changes that BHA is already discussing. Stephanie Bixby noted the potential issues with accommodations to residents with mobility issues related to turning off the DoorKing remote system functionality. Kirby Dunn asked about the potential of turning it back on for residents with a needs. This was discussed and tabled for the immediate discussion. BHA would propose the two security positions, procedure changes, work with the City around trespass laws, security sweep increases for the property, and closure of the north side entry. There was discussion about scaling up security services. Tony Lewis noted that as the outside weather changes, more people may not be seeking shelter in the building. Bill Schrecker is looking toward next Fall even if we have short term success and acknowledging staff scaling issues for contractors. There was discussion about how the sweeps are conducted. There was discussion about a security space for a guard to work with guests at the front entry. There was discussion about a risk assessment and technical assistance around physical security. Jeff Metcalf explained many of the prior updates that were already done. Staff will work on a design and estimating the cost of a security booth. Kirby Dunn mentioned that she would be open to helping with philanthropic measures, such as BSHI and donations. Stephanie Bixby also noted that the Board should support legislative changes that are necessary to curb these issues

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and behaviors that are being discussed. There was discussion about guest entry. Steve Murray noted his concerns around guests and tenant rights to guests.

The action steps related to this topic were:

Step 1:

- Enter into an agreement for 4 patrols during weeknights with the Sheriff (Complete).
- Continuing working with Censor Security on 3 additional nightly patrols (Censor is still hiring for coverage but is providing 3 patrols at present)
- Staff will work on a design and cost estimate of a security area at the main entry ("security booth").
- Staff will work to engage security professionals and other organizations for technical assistance. Including those who have implemented a guest check-in procedure.

Step 2:

- Work with the City of Burlington on a funding proposal to offset direct security costs or future capital costs that would free up resources.
- Work with the City around legal and technical assistance around guest, trespass, and eviction procedures.
- Evaluate the possibility of up to two 24-hour guard positions. Current estimate if approved would be 3-4 weeks to find coverage.

Deferred Topics:

- DoorKing Remote Release. It was discussed to table this as the primary focus to have on-site resources to deter unauthorized entry, reduce residents from letting in random individuals out of peer pressure, and promote resident accountability for those that are let in.

Kirby Dunn made a motion to enter Executive Session at 10:44 a.m. to discuss legal issues related to security and liabilities with security at Decker Towers. Bill Schrecker seconded the motion. The following staff were invited into the session: Steve Murray, Jeff Metcalf, Susan Carp, Melissa Farnham, Stephanie Bixby, Crystal Jones, and Nick Hibbard. The motion was unanimously approved.

7. Executive Session

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At 11:07 a.m. Kirby Dunn made a motion to exit Executive Session. Tony Lewis seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval.

8. Other Business

There was discussion about the next meeting date. It was agree to have an additional meeting on March 12th at 12 p.m. for the purpose of discussing Decker Security Updates and the Budget process. There will also be a planned Executive Session.

There being no other business, Kirby Dunn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:15 a.m. The motion was seconded by Tony Lewis. There was unanimous approval.

DocuSigned by:

Steven Murray
Secretary

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