

VERMONT STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
January 22, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER & QUORUM

The Regular Meeting of the Vermont State Housing Authority was held at One Prospect Street, Montpelier, Vermont, allowing both in-person and remote attendance via Microsoft Teams. The hearing was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by Alex Farrell, Chairperson; and upon roll call, the following Commissioners answered present: Cory Richardson, Vice-Chairperson; Jo Ann Troiano; Mary Houghton; Linda Joy Sullivan; and Bryan Plant II. Absent: Aaron Jones.

Staff present: Kathleen Berk, Executive Director/Secretary; Kelly Pembroke, Chief Financial Officer; Liz Bacon, Managing Director of Housing Program Administration; Susan Kuegel, Managing Director of Property and Asset Management; Ellen Danahy Liptak, Director of HR & Administration; and Robert Abbott, Office Services Coordinator.

Guests and Members of the Public present: Dan Coppock, VSHASF/VSEA Representative; Robin Barnett, Kittell, Branagan & Sargent (KBS) (arrived at 11:01 am); Mike Smith, Gallagher Flynn & Co. (arrived at 11:30am).

2. MEETING AGENDA

The agenda was modified to reflect guest presenters and maintain a quorum for any Board actions.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

4. SECRETARY'S REPORT

Berk called out concerns over the federal fiscal budget. The current Continuing Resolution is set to run out in mid-March. At that time, she is hoping for a new spending bill. More likely is another resolution to continue current spending or even a possible government shutdown. She reminded the Board that with inflating prices of housing costs and assistance payments, a continuation of current funding is a funding decrease.

Berk's report included links to two news articles posted in VT Digger and Seven Days about Burlington Housing Authority suspending vouchers to approximately 70 families due to funding shortfalls. In contrast, Berk's position is to refrain from panicking and wait until mid-March to act. She and Bacon have gone over plans to take in accordance with the

Insufficient Funding policy. The Board appreciated Berk's stance on the unpredictable situation.

To highlight the impact that 97.5% funding could have on the voucher program, Berk stated the drop would equate to 700 Vermont families losing assistance over the course of the year. A further reduction would have a larger impact. She reminded Commissioners that funding is determined based on the previous year's spending. So, if VSHA provides less vouchers in 2025, the budget allocation in 2026 would also be less.

Additionally, Berk added that VHFA had reached out to her about picking up the contract administration for 12 properties. She agreed, and this action will take effect on 01 February.

Berk shared that today starts the Point-in-Time Homeless Count in Vermont. The report will likely become available in April or May of this year.

Berk updated the Board on the work the Community Development team has been doing with the Mobile Home Unit Task Team (MHU-TT). She publicly praised Tyler Maas for the incredible work he has been doing on the Rapid Response Mobile Home Infill Program (MHIP) jointly with MHU-TT. To date, VSHA has acquired 46 new homes, six are under contract, and one is being closed on in the following week.

- Richardson motioned to accept the Secretary's Report. The motion was seconded by Plant. The motion passed unanimously.

5. FINANCES

Barnett briefed the Board on the findings of the audit. KBS issued an unmodified opinion; not having any findings. Significant VSHA activity included mobile homes swapped from HFI to VSHA and back to HFI, increases to HUD contributions, and VERAP payouts.

- Richardson moved to accept the audit findings, which was seconded by Troiano. The Board passed the motion unanimously.

Barnett left the meeting at 11:22am.

6. HOUSING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Bacon reminded the Board of the comments that Berk made earlier, as it set the stage for her presentation. She provided statistics of how many families VSHA currently helps through the voucher program. She noted that two families were able to move into homeownership in 2024, which is quite an accomplishment. She then explained how budget reductions would affect these families. At a 98.6% proration and increases to housing costs, she estimates VSHA would only be able to serve about 83% of current voucher holders. To get to that number, she would have to lose 20 vouchers per month. Since there are already about

35 families that lose a voucher currently under natural attrition, this would be easy to obtain. On a worst-case scenario, if only 88.7% of the current budget is awarded to VSHA, Bacon's team would only be able to support 75% of current voucher holders. To get to that number, about 75 families per month would have to come off the program. This would include the 35 due to natural attrition plus an additional 40 families. Bacon provided a list of practices and policies that could be changed to affect cost savings. If there is a future need to remove families from the program, Bacon recommends on targeting those that have been on the program the longest, excluding elderly, disabled, or those with children to be the first removed. Bacon asked the Board to approve the updated Insufficient Funding Policy.

Berk added that once VSHA has more clarity on what the federal housing funding will be, she would share VSHA's intentions with the public.

- Troiano motioned to accept the updated policy. The motion was seconded by Plant. The Board unanimously approved the policy.

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Farrell read the following resolution aloud:

"I invite a motion that the Board adopt the following resolution:

"WHEREAS, the Board needs to discuss contractual relationships and legal matters;

and **WHEREAS**, premature general public knowledge would clearly put the Authority at a substantial disadvantage;

NOW THEREFORE, the Board shall discuss the contractual relationships and legal matters at issue in executive session."

- Plant made a motion to go into Executive Session. Seconded by Troiano. All voted in favor. The Board went into Executive Session at 11:36am.
- The Board came out of Executive Session at 11:48am on a motion by Richardson, seconded by Troiano, and unanimously voted in favor.

Smith left the meeting at 11:49am.

- Plant motioned to support the Gallagher Flynn proposal with Berk as the point of contact for that relationship. Seconded by Troiano. The Board voted to support Gallagher & Flynn.

Houghton left the meeting at 11:50am.

8. FINANCIALS

Pembroke presented the financial statements to the Board. Speaking of Information Technology, she also informed the Board of the need for two new servers to replace the one that failed on 11 December 2024. The cost of the new servers was approximately \$40,000. She noted the addition of the VOIP telephones has been great and employees liked having them.

- Richardson moved to approve the financials, which was seconded by Plant. The Board approved the financials.

9. MINUTES

The minutes for the November 20, 2024, Regular Meeting were presented for approval. No changes were recommended.

- Troiano moved to accept the minutes without change. Seconded by Richardson and voted unanimously.

Farrell left the meeting at 11:59am. Richardson assumed duties of the Chairperson.

10. SECRETARY'S REPORT

Berk mentioned the HFI Secretary's Report, which was provided to them for informational purposes. She took the opportunity to speak of the work VSHA staff were performing for HFI. There are several initiatives being offered within the state, to include Healthy Homes.

11. PROPERTY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

Kuegel presented the Board with an updated format to the Vacancy and Collection Reports. The new format garnered positive feedback from the Commissioners. Discussion followed surrounding reasons for the vacancies or collections. Kuegel stated she is seeing an increase in mental health issues and drug addiction.

12. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Berk reminded the Board of the programs that are under the Community Development umbrella. These programs include the Mobile Home Infill Program (MHIP), Landlord Relief Program (LRP), Rental Arrears, as part of the LRP, and the Manufactured Home Improvement and Repair Program (MHIRP). The LRP has funds available through 2026. Rental Arrears was funded with \$2.5 million in general funds during the 2024 legislative

session, and on the current trajectory will need refunding in June 2025. Berk will advocate for continued funding. MHIRP is expected to run out of funds in June 2025.

13. OTHER BUSINESS

Berk touched on progress to the Strategic Plan. She added that the work VSHA will begin with Gallagher Flynn could impact Strategic Plan goals/strategies.

Berk spoke on the retirement of Cheryl Goodell, Field Representative, after 38 years of outstanding service to VSHA. Richardson read the following resolution:

“WHEREAS Cheryl Goodell has served as a staff member of the Vermont State Housing Authority since July 25, 1986;

WHEREAS Cheryl Goodell served the Vermont State Housing Authority as an Occupancy Aide, Occupancy Technician, and Field Representative during her tenure;

WHEREAS Cheryl Goodell retired from the Vermont State Housing Authority on December 31, 2024;

WHEREAS Cheryl Goodell has been an invaluable mentor to other Field Representatives and Vermont State Housing Authority employees;

WHEREAS over a tenure of 38 years, Cheryl Goodell distinguished herself with her deep knowledge and abilities related to housing;

WHEREAS the members of the Board of Commissioners wish to thank Cheryl Goodell for her many contributions to the Vermont State Housing Authority; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners hereby expresses its gratitude to Cheryl Goodell for her service and all that she has contributed to the Vermont State Housing Authority; and

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners wishes Cheryl Goodell continued success in all her endeavors and expresses our hope for her continued health, happiness, and prosperity.

Signed on this 22 day of January 2025”

- Troiano motioned to adopt the resolution. Plant seconded. The Board voted to adopt the resolution commemorating Goodell’s retirement.

14. EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board did not enter Executive Session.

15. ADJOURN

Richardson accepted motions to adjourn the meeting.

- Troiano motioned and was seconded by Plant. The Board voted to adjourn at 12:18pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Berk
Executive Director/Secretary

/RTA