

**VERMONT STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY
PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JULY 14, 2021**

Public Hearing

1. Roll Call

The Public Hearing of the Board of Commissioners of the Vermont State Housing Authority, held via ZOOM, was called to order at 11:00 a.m. by Chair Caprice Hover; and upon roll call, the following Commissioners answered present: Mary Miller, Vice Chair; Caryn Feinberg, Alex Farrell, and Cory Richardson.

Jo Ann Troiano was absent.

Staff personnel present: Kathleen Berk, Executive Director/Secretary; Kelly Pembroke, Director of Finance and Information Systems; Diane May, Director of Human Resources and Administration; Susan Kuegel, Director of Property and Asset Management; Daniel Blankenship, CoC Program Administrator; and Morgan Ledo, Chair of the Vermont State Housing Authority Staff Federation of the Vermont State Employees Association.

Jonathan Bond, Executive Director, The Housing Foundation, was also in attendance.

2. Comments and Discussion: VSHA's Section 8 Annual Plan and Administrative Plan Amendments

There was no public participation.

The Public Hearing is held to hear comments and discussion on the VSHA's Section 8 Annual Plan and Administrative Plan Amendments. The Public Hearing was left open through the discussion under agenda item number 6.

Berk states that the other business added to the agenda is that the Board will be asked to consider a Resolution that extends Richard Williams Authority to continue to sign on behalf of HFI. There will also be a discussion about the Commissioner search. Lastly, there will be a discussion in regard to changes to the Open Meeting Law.

Board Meeting

3. Minutes: May 26, 2021 – Regular Meeting

Miller made a motion to approve the Meeting Minutes. Richardson seconded. Farrell mentioned the possibility of Hover's name being spelled wrong. All voted in favor approving minutes, with corrections made to Hover's name, as necessary. The minutes are approved.

4. Secretary's Report – July 2021

Berk went over the Secretary's Report and other updates in addition to those in the report.

The S79, the Rental Registry and Inspection Program bill that was passed by the House and the Senate, was vetoed by the Governor.

July 15, 2021, the eviction moratorium in the State of Vermont ends, unless extended. There has been a movement by Vermont Legal Aid to petition the Vermont Supreme Court to have the eviction moratorium extended. In response to the information given by Vermont Legal Aid to Vermont Supreme Court, VSHA issued to the Court a letter with information about the Vermont Emergency Rental Assistance Program. The VERAP program has paid out for rental assistance and rent arrearage, or is obligated to pay out, \$6 million within the next couple of months. Weekly payments are on-average \$1.2 million, with the projected amount by August 1st to be \$3 million.

Berk continues to participate in the National NAHRO (National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Organizations), as well as the Section 8 subcommittee of National NAHRO. Berks adds they are currently working on proposing Legislation for Universal Housing Vouchers. Vouchers would be funded based on the need in the communities. The voucher budget is currently funded with discretionary money. The proposal is that the voucher budget be funded with mandatory spending. It would also fund administrative fees at 100% and would include providing funds for security

deposits and other related expenses. This would also allow VSHA to lease families in units up to 130% of the fair market rent (current authority is to lease up to 110% of the fair market rent), so it provides housing authorities with more tools to lease families and housing markets that are tight. It would also extend the project basing authority from what is currently 30% of total allocations, to 50% allocation.

With no further questions or comments, Hover called for a motion to approve the Secretary's Report. Farrell moved. Feinberg seconded. All voted in favor. The motion carries.

5. Finance and Information Systems

Pembroke went over the June 2021 financial report.

The Administrative fees are \$441 thousand over budget, including \$732 thousand in one-time fees, received from the Rental Housing Stabilization Program (RHSP). HUD prorations were projected at 83.832% but has since been reduced to 82%. Salaries are showing at \$104 thousand over budget. The RHSP and VERAP temporary staff have contributed to this overage. There have also been some long-term employees leave, with some accrued leave payouts.

The Administrative line is under budget. Travel, postage, and printing all continue to be under budget. General expenses are over budget, mostly due to the RHSP program, including recently prepared data reports. Monthly funds for VHFA have gone up based on the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding).

The plan to do some renovations at the One Prospect St. Montpelier office is now being pushed to year 2022. It was projected to be at a \$370 thousand gain but is showing an \$802 gain - \$732 thousand is one-time RHSP money.

With no further questions or discussions, Hover called for a motion to approve the financial report. Richardson made the motion. Miller seconded. All voted in favor. The motion passes.

Pembroke went over the proposed network and computer system security upgrades.

Some upgrades are needed for the current security system. Pembroke has proposed allocating roughly \$50 thousand for these upgrades, based on quotes received. The firewall that VSHA currently uses is 10 years old. The average life is 5-7 years old.

Richardson asked Pembroke what support VSHA get from experts in the field. Pembroke stated that VSHA works with a third-party vendor, Resilient Networks. Resilient Networks has come to VSHA and given feedback on what needs to be done, prioritizing each change. There are five different high priority categories that need updating, including Network Firewalls; Network Switches; Email Scrubber; Endpoint Anti-virus and Malware Protection, DNS and URL filtering protection; and Endpoint Patching, Monitor and Remote Support Tool. Once those five high priority updates are done, the lower priority updates will be focused on.

Farrell asked Pembroke what the IT department at VSHA currently looks like. Pembroke gave details on what that currently looks like and what her plan is moving forward.

No motion needed.

6. Housing Program Administration

Blankenship went over the plan for deploying 500 HCV's and the use of the Authority's 99 Emergency Housing Vouchers.

99 Emergency Housing Vouchers

In response to COVID-19, HUD offered 99 Emergency Housing Vouchers to serve families who are homeless, fleeing domestic/sexual violence or human trafficking or those who are at risk of homelessness. Both Vermont Continuums of Care, including Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness (VCEH) and Chittenden County Homeless Alliance (CCHA), needed to determine which population would be served with this funding. VSHA recommended that they choose fleeing domestic/sexual violence and human trafficking because there is a lack of dedicated programs to serve those populations and a high need among those populations of people.

VSHA developed an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) with a deadline to be sent to HUD by July 31st. VSHA will develop a contract with the Vermont Network on administering the service fees, being \$3,500 per voucher, equaling about \$325 thousand. These fees include specific housing search activities for those in need of housing. HUD is also providing \$500 per voucher under contract by

October 31st, or \$250 per voucher if they are leased by December 31st. These service fees include \$3,500 per voucher, with a total cost of \$346,500.

500 Housing Choice Voucher Implementation Plan

The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) implementation plan is to serve currently housed families, with the assistance of transition and placement with an HCV through the preference to ensure a timelier lease up and issuance.

In the assessment of available programs and number of households who can be served, there are preferences for the following:

- Domestic violence transitional housing - Families who are already housed with a lease = 25+ households
- Vermont Rental Subsidy Program = 60+ households
- State of Vermont/Agency of Human Services/Emergency Solutions Grant for COVID = 220+ households
- Supportive services for Veteran Families throughout Veterans Affairs. Temporary rental assistance/permanent housing = 11+ households
- Vermont Coalition of Runaway & Homeless Youth Programs/Youth Homeless Demo Program/Coc – Rapid Rehousing Program = 30+ households
- VSHA/Coc – Rapid Rehousing Program = 55+ households
- VSHA/Coc - Permanent Supportive Housing = 65+ households

Revised VSHA Chapter 4 Administrative Plan - Local Preferences – Effective July 1, 2021

The Board was asked to consider and approve a change specific to the Move-Up Preference. The Preference will be changed from "Move-On" to "Move-Up". This change provides more structure to the access and allows all the programs to be in line with the needs of vulnerable Vermonter's to ensure long-term housing stability.

Move-Up Preference: Available to recently/formerly homeless households who meet all the following criteria:

- Households are ready/willing to transition to a non-homeless permanent housing voucher
- Referred by a Vermont Coordinated Entry Provider
- In compliance with referring program
- In good standing with landlord through their lease
- Providers must ensure that on-going housing case management services are provided for a minimum of six months (VSHA may waive this requirement dependent on household needs)
- Households are already residing in one of the programs mentioned in the Housing Choice Voucher Implementation Plan – Time limited and must be in one of the previously mentioned programs for a certain amount of time before households can access the Preference

Amendments to Chapter 4 & Chapter 15 of the Section 8 Administrative Plan

The first change includes the local preferences, specifically the Move-Up Preference, previously reviewed by Blankenship.

The second policy change includes revisions to the Home Ownership Policy. This change would require that the applicants first become eligible for a mortgage before coming to apply for the Section 8 Home Ownership Program.

Annual Plan for Fiscal Year 2022 – Updates to 5-Year Plan

- Housing needs and strategy for addressing housing needs
- Waiver authority extended from HUD – continues to be in effect through the end of the year
- VSHA is now open for business and staff have been asked to return to working onsite fulltime with telework available according to the agency's telework guidelines
- Housing needs – Statistical data, including households on the waiting list and program participants
- Financial resources to include resources for Fiscal Year 2021

The following Resolution was presented to the Board for consideration.

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Vermont State Housing Authority Board of Commissioners accepts the PHA Annual Plan for Fiscal Year 2022 (October 1, 2021- September 30, 2022) including the Amendments to Chapters 4 & 15 of the Section 8 Administrative Plan, the PHA

Certifications of compliance with the PHA Plan and related regulations, as presented, and authorizes the Chairman to sign the certifications and approve the submission of the PHA Annual Plan for 2022.

Miller moved to approve the resolution presented above. Farrell seconded. All voted in favor. The motion passed.

There being no public participation, the Public Hearing was closed.

7. Property and Asset Management

Kuegel updated the Board on the Brightwood budget. The budget was submitted to RD by the July 1, 2021, deadline, which included a rent increase of \$22. RD has already planned to approve that budget with the requested increase.

Kuegel updated on the process of Green Mountain Apartments and the sale from HFI to VSHA. The appraiser could not finish the appraisal until the CNA was completed, which was completed in March 2021. The application for the sale did not meet RD's debt to income ratio requirement. VSHA could either substitute the sale of the Green Mountain Apartments to a limited partnership, or HFI would need to use \$35 thousand of their reserve account to pay down the debt of the property. The \$35 thousand transaction does not have to take place before the closing but can be finalized at the closing.

VSHA is awaiting further information from HUD to decide on the renewal and approval of the two new HUD Service Coordinator grants.

The Property and Asset Management department is looking into updating and moving their software programs into a cloud-based version.

8. Human Resources

May states that the Director of Housing and Program Administration position continues to be open. VSHA is in discussions with and considering contracting with an outsourced recruitment firm that specializes in recruiting for Executive level positions. The goal is to have a new Director of Housing and Programs Administration, hired and transitioned into the position by the end of October.

May went over the updated COVID-19 Safety and Health Work Plan. This revised plan utilizes four levels of safety measures – red, orange, yellow and green. This plan will allow for more flexibility for implementing measures that are appropriate to the level of risk that is currently presented. As VSHA operates at the yellow level, staff are no longer required to work from home. Fully vaccinated staff are no longer required to wear masks in the presence of others in the building. Staff and visitors who are not fully vaccinated are still required to wear a mask inside the building at all times in the presence of others. VSHA is also open to the public on a limited appointment only basis for business purposes. As of right now, VSHA is not open for client services, but a plan is being put in place to provide client services onsite by September.

9. Other Business

Berk presented a resolution asking the Board to consider which will extend Richard Williams' signatory authority on behalf of VSHA through September 30, 2021.

Hover asked for a motion to approve the resolution presented above. Miller moved to approve the resolution. Richardson seconded. With no further questions or discussion, a vote was taken. All voted in favor. The motion carries.

Berk initiated a discussion regarding the Commissioner recruitment.

Farrell submitted a candidate to the Governor's team and has been approved.

Hover has been in contact with a prospective candidate from NeighborWorks of Western Vermont who is interested in joining the Board.

Miller stated that she had a candidate who she thinks would make a great Board member.

Berk will forward the candidates to the Governor's Office.

Berk informed the Board that the Open Meeting Law is now in force and effect. Some modifications to this law allow the Board Meetings to continue to be held virtually, given the Board has an in-person option that allows the public to attend the meeting. Berk entertains the idea of having the Board meetings held in a hybrid manor, moving forward, starting with the September meeting. With some

discussion, Berk confirms that moving forward the Board of Commissioners will be given to option to join the meetings either via Zoom or coming into the One Prospect Street, Montpelier office.

Hover asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Miller moved. Feinberg seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathleen R Berk

Kathleen Berk
Executive Director/Secretary

