

**VERMONT STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY
PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
July 13, 2022**

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 11:03 a.m. by Chair Alex Farrell; and upon roll call, the following Commissioners answered present: Caryn Feinberg, Cory Richardson, Vice Chair; Mary Miller (stayed until 12:11), and Christopher Trombly. Absent: Aaron Jones, Joann Troiano

Staff present: Kathleen Berk, Executive Director/Secretary; Kelly Pembroke, Director of Finance & Information Systems; Susan Kuegel, Director of Property & Asset Management; Ellen Liptak, Director of HR & Administration; and Kelli Robinson, Director of Housing Program Administration.

Guest: Lindsay Mesa; Assistant Director of Pathways Vermont

2. Comments & Discussion

Housing Program Update - Robinson opened by stating “We continue to make good progress in fulfilling our mission “to promote and expand the supply of affordable rental and homeownership opportunities on a statewide basis.” She then emphasized the progress made, stating we were granted an additional 20 vouchers to support Foster Youth to Independence. She also stated the expansion of the Project-Based Housing Program by an additional 68 vouchers throughout the state. As of 26 May, the VERAP program has paid over \$91 million to 12,000 families that are at, or below, 50% AMI. Property & Asset Management has increased housing by 4.46%, which is equivalent to 23 families.

Robinson recommended that the board consider adopting changes as follows:

- o to adopt a preference to serve families with an AMI of 30% or below who are at risk of homelessness or housing instability; and
- o to modify our existing “move-up” preference to serve families with incomes above 30% of AMI up to 50% of AMI who are actively receiving rental assistance benefits through a VSHA-administered rental assistance program who are certified to be in compliance with the benefit program & tenancy requirements.

She continued by outlining how need and priorities are determined and also mentioned that the rising costs in the voucher program is straining the Authority's budget. She also indicated that the Authority received comments from a veteran-specific service. Robinson addressed their concern by highlighting the proposed "housing instability" preference. The service provider also expressed concern regarding the income threshold.

Mesa of Pathways Vermont asked for clarification about certain aspects of programs that she oversees pertaining to preference for veterans and others. .

3. **Closing**

Farrell closed the Public Forum and opened the Regular Board Meeting at 11:15 a.m.

REGULAR BOARD MEETING

1. **Roll Call** - The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Vermont State Housing Authority, held via Zoom was called to order at 11:15 a.m. There were no changes to the board members that were present.

Mesa left the meeting at 11:17.

2. **Meeting Agenda** – Board Chair changed the order of the agenda.
3. **Public Participation** – None. .
4. **Annual Plan for FY23**

On a motion by Miller, and seconded by Feinberg, the Annual Plan for FY23 and amendments to the Section 8 Administrative Plan was unanimously approved.

Berk reminded Farrell that the certificates need to be signed and sent back to her.

5. **Property & Asset Management**

Brightwood Budget - Kuegel pointed out that the increase price of fuel necessitates rent increases to support the property.

Richardson motioned to support the plan, which was seconded by Miller. The Board unanimously approved.

6. **Social Media Policy**

Liptak explained the policy and how the employees would be made aware of it, along with its limiting impact on the employee handbook. Berk commented that acknowledgement of policies will be electronic, once the HR module for PayData is running.

Miller motioned to approve the policy, which was seconded by Feinberg. The policy was unanimously approved.

7. Minutes of Regular Meeting – May 25, 2022

On a motion by Trombly, seconded by Richardson, the minutes of the May 25, 2022, meeting were unanimously approved with no discussion.

8. Secretary's Report

Berk went over her vision for the VSHA if it were to reopen to the public. She indicated that there will be a gradual reopening, starting with "by appointment only" meetings, followed by opening for a set period of time. Berk has held several all-staff meetings and this seems to be the preference of the staff. She also mentioned the resignation of Johnathan Bond last Friday. Miller provided accolades to the newspaper and media coverage of the homelessness issues in the state.

On a motion by Feinberg and seconded by Trombly, the board unanimously accepted the Secretary's Report.

9. Finance & Information Systems

Pembroke updated the board of the rising healthcare costs from Blue Cross/Blue Shield and how it will effect the FY23 Annual Budget. She also noted the upcoming 3.5% raise and \$0.04 increase to mileage for some employees and their impact on the budget.

On a motion by Richardson and seconded by Trombly, the Board unanimously accepted the financial report.

10. Other Business

Berk shared that HFI had formed a hiring committee to find a replacement for their Executive Director. Their current plan is to edit the job description and recruit candidates into an Interim Director role that could someday turn into a permanent director. Allison Bell and Mary Hooten (Chair and Vice Chair of HFI) have reached out and currently have a couple candidates they want to target.

Pembroke stated that PayData is live and everyone will be receiving a paycheck tomorrow. The rollout was not smooth. Resilient, however, is "amazing!" Barracuda is

installed and doing great and catching problems and stopping viruses and potential threats to our IT systems.

Kuegel spoke about the issues currently being faced in regard to rent collection delinquencies. The increase in delinquencies will likely cause increases to evictions and possibly legal cases as well. As VERAP monies decrease, she said we can expect to see an increase in rent collection delinquencies. To attempt to combat this, reminders are sent out well in advance. There currently is not a program next in line to replace VERAP and the feedback from the community is not positive. Berk then explained a process of weaning clients off the VERAP program with scaled decreases. With that action in place, VERAP could last until March. There is talk of a possible extension through HUD after that.

Farrell recommended moving the November meeting to the 17th to avoid conflicts with other engagements. Everyone present agreed.

Berk discussed the next steps to the Strategic Plan for 2023. She asked how the Board wanted to approach this and after discussion, it was decided that VSHA staff will work on this and bring a draft back to the Board in September. Richardson commented that a review of the draft initiatives has to tie into budgeting. Farrell indicated that the Board is looking for a simple “how are we doing” plan.

Berk also mentioned the search for two new Commissioners and that she has some leads on individuals interested. She will share this further with the Board to bring forward a recommendation to the Governor for appointment.

11. Adjourn

Since Miller left the meeting, there was no longer a quorum and the meeting ended at 12:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Berk
Executive Director/Secretary

ra/edl