

VERMONT STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
November 17, 2022

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 11:05 a.m. by Chair Alex Farrell; and upon roll call, the following Commissioners answered present: Cory Richardson, Vice Chair; Caryn Feinberg (left the meeting at 11:47; returned at 12:30), Mary Miller, and Jo Ann Troiano. Absent: Aaron Jones and Christopher Trombly.

Staff present: Kathleen Berk, Executive Director/Secretary; Kelly Pembroke, Director of Finance & Information Systems; Susan Kuegel, Director of Property & Asset Management; Ellen Danahy Liptak, Director of HR & Administration; Kelli Robinson, Director of Housing Program Administration (left at 12:08); Daniel Blankenship, Homeless Services Coordinator and Policy Director (left at 12:08); Barb Beyor, Union Representative (arrived at 11:10; left at 12:08); and Robert Abbott, Office Services Coordinator.

2. Meeting Agenda

The agenda was changed by Farrell to move the Executive Session to the end to ease the burden of some staff having to leave the meeting and then return. Additional agenda items were "board appointments" added to the Executive Session, Agenda Item 9, and "board terms" added to Agenda Item 10, Other.

On a motion by Troiano and seconded by Miller, changes to the agenda were accepted.

3. Public Participation

No members of the public were present.

4. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Troiano, seconded by Feinberg to accept the minutes from the 28 September Public Hearing and Annual Regular Meeting. The vote was passed unanimously.

5. Secretary's Report

Berk briefly discussed the potential to expand the VSHA housing portfolio. The "Owen House" in Fairhaven is reverting back to the ownership of the Boston Regional Airport who then plan to dispose of it. The property is under the management of THM and receives government assistance through USDA. Berk asked for board approval before entering into negotiations to acquire the property. She then touched on the Continuing Resolution for the national spending bill which is set to expire on 16 December 2022. A government shutdown could negatively affect VSHA and the people the Authority helps.

Troiano motioned to accept the report. The motion was seconded by Miller. The Board voted unanimously in favor to accept the report as submitted.

6. Finance and Information Systems

Pembroke updated the Board on the status of finances and information technology. She noted that KBS completed their annual audit last week and reviewed the FY22 budget. Their findings were that VSHA was \$1.7 million over the annual budget largely due to administrative fees for the VERAP program, voucher rates, and increases in workers' compensation and liability insurance claims. Salaries and Benefits came in under budget due to open positions not being filled. Other noticeable findings were the \$75,000 paid out in leave time used and over \$168 million in HAP payments. Of those HAP payments, there was a \$2.1 million increase in Section 8 payments and \$64 million paid out to through the VERAP program.

Regarding information technology, there was a power outage last Friday and Resilient did a

great job of notifying Pembroke even before she was aware of the situation. Farrell agreed the contract with Resilient has been a great addition.

The motion to accept the finance update was initiated by Richardson and seconded by Troiano. The document was unanimously accepted by the board.

7. Housing Program Administration

Robinson briefed the board on the Secretary's report, highlighting the 450 Housing Choice Vouchers that have been issued by her team since 01 October 2022 when the waiting list opened.

Robinson explained the evaluation scores that her team received on the Section Eight Management Assessment Program (SEMAP). Those evaluated were herself; Bethany Lunn, Project-Based Voucher Coordinator; Elizabeth Whitmore, Housing-Choice Voucher Coordinator; and Samantha Green, Director of Field Services. All four scored as high performers this year.

Farrell read: "Whereas, HUD regulation 24 CFR sec 985.101 requires that Public Housing Agencies administering Section 8 tenant-based assistance program submit an annual SEMAP Certification within 60 days after the end of its fiscal year; and

Whereas the information from the PHA concerns the performance of the PHA and provides assurance that there is no evidence of seriously deficient performance; and

Whereas HUD used the information and other data to assess PHA management capabilities and deficiencies, and to assign an overall performance rating to the PHA; and

Whereas, the PHA has completed the annual SEMAP Certification and requires that the VSHA Board of Commissioners accept the SEMAP Certification as presented; and

Whereas it is the desire and intent to the Board of Commissioners to comply with HUD regulations,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Commissioners of the Vermont State Housing Authority hereby accepts the SEMAP Certification as presented and authorizes the Chairperson of the Board to execute the Certification on behalf of the Vermont State Housing Authority on this 17th day of November 2022."

Troiano motioned to accept the SEMAP Certification as presented, and this motion was seconded by Feinberg. The board voted unanimously to accept the evaluation.

8. Property and Asset Management

Kuegel discussed the communication that will be sent to the tenants of the 13 mobile home parks that would be transferred from HFI to VSHA. She wants the residents to feel at ease about the merger and know that their leases would stay in place, they would continue to see the same maintenance personnel, and they would not be evicted barring not paying rent.

Kuegel briefed the expectation for more late rent payments due to VERAP ending She stated that she is seeing an increase in tenants giving notice and leaving our properties since they cannot continue to stay without VERAP assistance. She is predicting an increase in evictions in 2023.

9. Other Business

Liptak presented the board with the updated meeting schedule for 2023.

Liptak discussed ending the partnership with NFP as VSHA's benefits consultant and instead using The Richards Group as of 01 January 2023. Liptak believes The Richards Group would have VSHA's best interest in mind when searching for the best benefits along with providing additional training opportunities for the organization, which is captured in the vision statement for 2023.

Troiano motioned to approve the change in HR partners and was seconded by Feinberg. The board unanimously supported the change in HR partners.

The board discussed terms of current board members along with specifically who would like to continue to serve. Farrell, Richardson, and Troiano said they would all like to remain on the board. Miller has graciously continued to serve on the board even though her term has ended. She stated that she would stay on as long as is needed. The board also discussed the possibility of a newcomer in the near future. Farrell stated that he would like the Governor's office to formally announce the appointments of those continuing on the board including Troiano, whose term ended in 2022.

Farrell brought up the suggestion of hybrid meetings. Currently, meetings are conducted via Zoom due to COVID policies, but as those restrictions are eased, it might make sense to begin having in-person meetings as allowed. And those that were unable to be present in person would still have the option of using Zoom. The board discussed this idea and felt it would prefer either in-person meetings OR Zoom meetings, not a hybrid meeting. It was decided that the January meeting will be held via Zoom.

10. Executive Session

Farrell read the following Resolution to go into Executive Session:

"I move that the Board adopt the following Resolution: WHEREAS the Board needs to review and discuss legal advice and matters of contract and WHEARAS premature general public knowledge would clearly put the Authority at a substantial disadvantage; NOW THEREFORE, the Board shall discuss the matters of contract at issue in Executive Session."

Miller made a motion to go into Executive Session; seconded by Troiano. All voted in favor and the Board entered Executive Session at 12:08 p.m. Note that Robinson, Blankenship, and Beyor left the meeting.

On a motion by Feinberg, seconded by Miller clarifying that no action was taken, the Board unanimously voted to come out of executive session at 12:37p.m.

11. Adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m. following a motion by Troiano, seconded by Feinberg, and unanimously approved by the board.

Respectfully submitted,



Kathleen Berk
Executive Director/Secretary

/RTA

