

VERMONT STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
22 March 2023

REGULAR 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 11:01 a.m. by Vice Chair Cory Richardson; and upon roll call, the following Commissioners answered present: Caryn Feinberg, Jo Ann Troiano, Linda Joy Sullivan, Aaron Jones (joined at 11:18 a.m.), Christopher Trombly (joined at 11:38 a.m.). Absent: Alex Farrell; Chair.

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; Barb Beyor, Union Representative (left at 12:07 p.m.); Tyler Maas, Director of Programs & Housing Development (left at 12:07 p.m.); and Robert Abbott, Office Services Coordinator.

2. Meeting Agenda

Kathleen pointed out that Item 6 would only be VSHA financials only, not including the Parks transferred to VSHA as part of the Bond 1 bond expiration as stated on the agenda. Ellen then explained that Item 8b had been inadvertently labeled 8c. "Meadowlane" listed as 8d, should be 8c, with no additional documents.

➤ The changes to the agenda were accepted without a vote.

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 25 January 2023 Regular Meeting. The vote was passed unanimously.

5. Secretary's Report

Berk highlighted the challenges the organization is experiencing with the staff shortage coupled with several employees absent due to medical leaves. There are certain benchmarks that are currently not being met. Despite these issues, the staff has really come together to support the mission of the Authority. Berk believes these issues will pass and the organization will be able to get back on track in the near future.

Berk informed the board that VSHA was awarded 100% of our requested amount of **\$1,674,486**, from HUD, in new funding, which will go towards a rural expansion of our "A Way Home Program" (AWH). This award consists of Continuum of Care funds, Housing Stability Vouchers, and Housing Choice Vouchers targeting persons exiting homelessness.

The Performance-Based Contract Administration Annual Compliance Review has been completed. VSHA received a report of no findings. Berk again pointed out the exceptional work of the staff at administering that contract.

The Board Retreat is currently being planned for Friday, 9 June 2023. Liptak is researching locations, but it is likely to be in Montpelier. Berk asked for Board approval for the agreement of professional services with Youth Catalytics, headed by Melony Goodman, to facilitate the production of a 5-year strategic plan. The initial cost would be \$8,800, with Berk presuming that additional costs may bring the total cost to nearly \$20,000. Berk requested board approval before moving forward with the contract.

- Troiano made the motion to accept this plan. The motion was seconded by Feinberg. The Board voted unanimously in favor of moving forward with Youth Catalytics.

Berk continued with the Secretary's Report sharing her experience providing testimony to the Vermont Senate Committee on Economic Development, Housing, and General Affairs. There was discussion around the language of the proposed Eviction Diversion Bill, which Berk stated that she was not consulted on the language of. She also shared the proposed FY2024 Budget for HUD and USDA Administration, noting it will likely go through numerous revisions before being passed at a later time.

- A motion was made by Feinberg to accept the Secretary's Report. The motion was seconded by Troiano. The Board voted unanimously to accept the report.

6. Finance and Information Systems

Pembroke updated the Board on the status of finances and information technology. She announced the start of a new Senior Accountant, leading her to be fully staffed. She pointed out that the financial statements for the end of January show a net loss. She expects the budget to be tight through the end of the fiscal year but believes there will be a gain by that time. Many expenses for the year were frontloaded causing January to look worse than it really is. Expenses related to equipment and buildings will be on hold until 2024 unless they are emergencies.

Berk shared that the voucher success rate for the Housing Choice Program is around 22%. This can impact the budget, as the way VSHA earns administrative fees is by each

unit that is under contract. Leasing less units will result in less administrative fees being earned. Berk expects this to be a continued challenge throughout the year.

Pembroke is planning to provide the Board with three sets of financial statements starting in May. These will cover VSHA operating costs to include the Section 8 Program, the thirteen mobile home parks acquired from HFI, Brightwood House and Green Mountain Apartments.

Pembroke planned to bring the 2022 audit to the board's attention during this meeting, but it was not ready. This will be postponed until the next meeting.

- The motion to accept the financial report was initiated by Troiano and seconded by Feinberg. The document was unanimously accepted by the Board.

7. Housing Program Administration

Robinson started by mentioning that the majority of vacancies throughout the organization are within her department. Three vacant Client Services Specialists affects roughly 1500 families that are in turn being serviced by existing staff, leading to increased workloads. She highlighted the work being done by her staff to bring the best service possible.

Robinson went on to state that she is actively working on the Annual Planning Process which will incorporate feedback from staff and community partners about how VSHA administers the program to become more efficient. There will be a public comments-public hearing on the annual report at the Board meeting on 26 May 2023 in anticipation of bringing it before the board in July.

Robinson also touched on the voucher utilization of 22% that Berk had mentioned beforehand. She stated the Housing Program Administration is currently serving 4,159 families.

8. Property and Asset Management

Kuegel briefed the new operating budget for the mobile home parks. She highlighted that the thirteen parks currently have zero debt and that combined there is a projected gain by the end of the year. Currently there are three parks with net losses which are being supported by the other ten parks that are productive. Those three parks are Coburns, Mountainview Court, and Charettes. Additionally, Kuegel asked the board to approve the budget and also the lot rent increases for all thirteen parks effective on 01 June.

Berk elaborated on the budget for the thirteen mobile home parks, speaking precisely about the three that aren't currently producing positive returns. She stated that Charettes for example, does not have its own water supply. Around \$40,000 is spent annually shipping water to that location. Berk is working with partners to find a solution to this issue, which could include extending municipal water lines or even a park closure.

- The motion to accept the budget and the rent increases was initiated by Troiano and seconded by Trombley. The motion was unanimously approved by the Board.

Kuegel then warned the board that Meadowlane in Milton will need to be a future discussion. VSHA has been approached by Meadowlane Housing Associates LLC that one of their partners is looking to get out of the partnership. Kuegel expects that action will likely need to be taken in May. Her suggestion is that VSHA be substituted as the limited partner.

Kuegel provided the new format for the Delinquency Collection Chart. She stated that collection at some properties is tough, specifically at those locations where more tenants used the VERAP Program. Repayment agreements have been one measure to attempt to get tenants caught up, but some are not following through with that either. Kuegel states that more serious actions such as collection or eviction may need to take place.

9. Other Business

Berk commented that the Board commissioners have received their new appointments. Feinberg's term ended in February and has agreed to stay on until her replacement is identified.

Liptak spoke of the updated Background Check Policy. The new policy includes the ability to check nationwide due to some potential employees having lived in other states. Other updates to the policy include wording on the Fair Credit Reporting Act that background checks fall under.

- The motion to accept the new Background Check Policy was initiated by Jones and seconded by Trombley. The motion was passed unanimously, and the policy was accepted.

10. Executive Session

Richardson 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 WHEREAS 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.”

- Feinberg made a motion to go into Executive Session; seconded by Jones. All voted in favor and the Board entered Executive Session at 12:06 p.m.

Maas and Beyor left the meeting at 12:07 p.m.

- On a motion by Trombley, seconded by Feinberg, the Board unanimously voted to come out of executive session at 12:14 p.m. with no action taken.

11. Adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Berk
Executive Director/Secretary

/RTA