

VERMONT STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY
PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
July 16, 2025

PUBLIC HEARING

1. CALL TO ORDER & QUORUM

The Public Hearing to discuss the Vermont State Housing Authority's Section 8 Annual and 5-Year Plans 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 11:03 a.m. by Mary Houghton and upon roll call, the following Commissioners answered present: Bryan Plant II, Jo Ann Troiano, and Linda Joy Sullivan. Absent: Alex Farrell, Chairperson; Cory Richardson, Vice-Chair; and 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 Portfolio Operations; Ellen Danahy Liptak, Director of Human Resources & Administration; and Robert Abbott, Office Services Coordinator.

Guests and Members of the Public present: Dan Coppock, VSHASF/VSEA Representative.

2. COMMENTS & DISCUSSION

Coppock, the only member of the public present, had questions pertaining to the Spending Reduction Action Plan. As that was not part of the Annual Plan, his comments were reserved for later in the meeting. No other comments from the public were shared.

3. CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

Berk advised Houghton to keep the Public Hearing open until the plans were approved during the Regular Meeting.

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting was called to order at 11:05am. There were no changes to the attendance.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Houghton removed the Weapon-Free Workplace Policy from the Consent Agenda for further discussion.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

➤ Plant motioned to approve the remaining items on the Consent Agenda without discussion. Sullivan seconded the motion. The Board unanimously approved the Minutes from May 21, 2025 Board Meeting, the Secretary's Report, the Financials, the Workplace Lactation Policy, and the Resolution to Amend the Retirement Plans (loans).

After brief discussion, Houghton was satisfied with the Weapon-Free Workplace Policy without change and invited a separate motion to approve the policy.

➤ Plant moved to approve the policy and was seconded by Sullivan. The policy was approved by the Board.

5. REGULAR AGENDA

a. Executive Director

Berk spoke specifically about the HFI Secretary's Report as it mentions many of the projects that are being undertaken by VSHA staff to support HFI. These development initiatives further the missions of both VSHA and HFI.

Berk next briefed the Board on the Resolution to Restructure the Partnership Agreement for Riverbend Apartments, an elderly housing community that VSHA manages for HFI, located in Enosburg Falls, VT. The current Limited Partner in this partnership is Community Bank, and they have expressed a desire to leave the partnership. Berk proposed to replace that Limited Partner with a new Non-Profit made up of the Executive Director of VSHA, the CFO of VSHA, and Jeff Kantor, consultant. The new Non-Profit would be called Vermont Housing Ventures, Inc. and take the place of the Limited Partner in the Riverbend Housing Associates partnership. The Board reviewed the following resolution:

"RESOLVED, that as a result of Community Bank seeking to be removed as a limited partner in River Bend Housing Associates, L.P. ("River Bend"), River Bend, The Housing Foundation, Inc. ("HFI"), which is the general partner of River Bend, and VSHA all desire to have a new limited partner of River Bend. To accomplish the mission of River Bend, HFI and VSHA itself, VSHA hereby authorizes its officers to form a new Vermont non-profit corporation with a structure similar to that of HFI but with only three directors

being the Executive Director of VSHA, the Chief Financial Officer of VSHA and Jeffrey Kantor, a consultant familiar with River Bend's operations, to be named "Vermont Housing Ventures, Inc." with an aim for it to take the place of Community Bank as a limited partner of River Bend and further authorizes VSHA's officers to seek tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service for Vermont Housing Ventures."

➤ Plant motioned to adopt the resolution. Troiano seconded. The Board unanimously approved the creation of the new Non-Profit to take the place of the Limited Partner in the partnership.

b. Finance/IT

Pembroke informed the Board of the administrative fees to be lower than expected, which is due to the lease-up rates. She will be monitoring the situation closely. Management fees are also exceeding the budget at this point. They were based off Rural Development increases that were not known during the budgeting process. She had moved some interest income into a money market which is earning significantly higher interest than previously. The line item denoting Other Income is also exceeding expectations due to the sale of homes through the MHIP Program. VSHA receives a 5% commission on each home sold. Lastly, she added the building renovations which have been budgeted for 2025 will likely be completed in 2026.

c. Housing Program Administration

Bacon highlighted items from Annual Plan. About the Waiting List, there are currently 3,400 families on the list. The Waiting List is currently closed, which means there is likely many more interested families that cannot apply. Of the 3,400 families, almost 90% have extremely low income, meaning they earn less than 30% of the Area Median Income. When these individuals finally receive a voucher, they will need the most financial support from VSHA. This also shows why per-unit costs are going up since VSHA would pay more money to house them than someone earning more. She also mentioned that 60% of those on the Waiting List are single people.

Looking into the Annual Plan, due to the current financial climate, Bacon does not plan an aggressive strategy. She will instead maximize utilization within the funding that is allowed, and work with partners to develop programs that have services connected to them.

On a good note, VSHA was able to house seven youths who were exiting foster care. 55 new families were enrolled into the Family Self-Sufficiency Program last year, bringing the total up to 123. Eleven families graduated from that program with an average escrow of \$11,500.

Bacon did not receive any public comment on the Section 8 Annual Plan. Yet, she did receive the Certificate of Compliance with the PHA Plan.

The Public Hearing was closed at 11:23am.

The Board considered the following resolution:

“NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Vermont State Housing Authority Board of Commissioners accepts the PHA Annual Plan for the period of October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026, including the substantial amendments to the Section 8 Administrative Plan, the PHA Certifications of Compliance with the PHA Plan, Civil Rights, and Related Laws and Regulations, as presented, and authorizes the Board Chair to sign the certifications and approve the submission of the PHA Annual Plan for CY2025.”

➤ Troiano motioned to adopt the resolution which was seconded by Plant. The Board approved the resolution unanimously.

Bacon then continued with the Spending Reduction Plan updates. Since the last Board meeting, Bacon met with HUD’s Shortfall Prevention Team. Another meeting is scheduled for August to check in on progress. Reduction measures have already been implemented, but new measures Bacon is taking include applying for additional funds from HUD, reducing Voucher Payment Standards as of August 1st, and rules changes to require interim recertifications for changes in income starting in October. Under the current rules, Participants report income changes, but the change to their rental portion does not take effect until their next certification. The new rules would make the income change take effect much more quickly.

Coppock requested to hold off on implementing new VPS until September 1st since it could hinder families with a current Request for Tenancy Approval (RTA). Berk explained why this could not be done.

Further reduction measures could affect the number of Participants on the Mainstream Program from 365 down to 175 and the number of families on the Housing Choice Voucher could potentially go from 1,770 to 790 by the end of November. Additional funding could help prevent these cuts, but Bacon plans to speak more seriously at the next Board meeting about the status of the programs. Berk added that she is communicating with members of the State of Vermont about the possibility of receiving general funds to help prevent termination of families.

➤ Plant motioned to support the Spending Reduction Plan. Troiano seconded. The Board voted to support the plan.

d. Portfolio Operations

Kuegel informed the Board that Rural Development (RD) budgets have been submitted for Brightwood House and Green Mountain Apartments.

e. Human Resources & Administration

Liptak thanked the Board for voting on the Lactation Policy and Weapon-Free Workplace Policy.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

The Board discussed changing the date of the September meeting from September 24th to the 17th. Everyone present approved of the change without voting.

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Houghton read the following resolution aloud:

“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 11:40am.

➤ The Board came out of Executive Session at 11:50 am on a motion by Troiano, seconded by Plant, unanimously voted. No action was taken while in executive session.

12. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 11:51 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Berk
Executive Director/Secretary
/RTA