

VERMONT STATE HOUSING AUTHORITY
PUBLIC HEARING & REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 28, 2026

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Meeting of the Vermont State Housing Authority was held at One Prospect Street, Montpelier, Vermont, allowing both in-person and remote attendance via Microsoft Teams. The meeting was called to order at 11:01 a.m. by Alex Farrell, Chairperson; and upon roll call, the following Commissioners answered present: Cory Richardson, Vice-Chairperson; Mary Houghton, Bryan Plant II, Jo Ann Troiano, Aaron Jones and Annik Paul.

Staff present: Kathleen Berk, Executive Director/Secretary; Kelly Pembroke, Chief Financial Officer; Elizabeth 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 Manager.

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

2. MEETING AGENDA

There were no changes to the meeting agenda. However, it was decided that future meetings would remove financials from the Consent Agenda and the Secretary's Report would be added.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

Farrell requested to remove the minutes from the previous meeting for a small correction.

- Houghton moved to approve the finances, the only item in the Consent Agenda. Plant seconded. The Board voted unanimously to approve the Consent Agenda.

Farrell then requested to correct Paul's spelling of her first name on the November 28th minutes.

- Troiano moved to approve the minutes as amended. Plant seconded the motion, and the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes as amended.

5. SECRETARY'S REPORT

Berk reminded the Board that the federal government is still operating under a Continuing Resolution (CR) from 2025. The deadline to pass a spending bill or another CR and have the President sign it, is January 30th or the government will go into another shutdown.

On the state level, Berk has been very busy at the legislature. She has been spearheading H790, titled "The Housing Assistance Fund." If passed, the bill will provide a funding source that could be used by housing authorities to prevent the termination of Housing Choice Vouchers in the event of a funding gap. There are also a number of Tenant-Landlord bills circulating. It is likely that the best parts of each one will be combined into one bill with a greater likelihood of passing.

As noted in the Secretary's Report, VSHA identified their "Legislative Priorities" for this year. Many of the legislative priorities have been supported by the Homeless and Housing Alliance of Vermont (HHAV), which can advocate on VSHA's behalf. This is the first year we have had a Legislative Correspondent – Ron Wild. It has been extremely valuable.

Plant relayed the praise that he has been hearing about Berk's efforts by others around the Statehouse. Farrell added that Berk has built a great platform over the years and her presence in the Statehouse reflects VSHA's raised profile.

- Plant moved to accept the Secretary's Report. Seconded by Houghton. The motion passed unanimously.

6a. FINANCE & INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Pembroke informed the Board that the final audit for VSHA has moved into review with KBS. Due to the nature of the VSHA Board and HFI Board makeup, all HFI information now needs to be included in the VSHA audit.

Pembroke provided an update on the finances of the Mobile Home Infill Program (MHIP). The program started at \$7 million, with \$4 million going to the Agency of Transportation (AOT) for lot improvement, and \$3 million going to VSHA to purchase homes to sell at cost. VSHA had spent their share and then dipped into AOT's share. VSHA has made the first repayment of that loan to AOT. The next payment to AOT is scheduled for June, but she is not sure it will be for the entire remainder of the loan.

Pembroke is moving forward with the purchase of laptops for the staff. Even though she has the money in the budget to fully complete the project, she has decided to be more conservative and purchase a few until it is clear what the funding from the federal government will be.

6b. HOUSING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Bacon started by reviewing the 2-year tool to show the Board her program's current status. Previously, the Board had authorized her to spend up to \$1 million in Unrestricted Net Position (UNP) funds. While the use of these funds left her program in the positive for the year end, they are still considered to be in shortfall. VSHA will not be out of shortfall until they receive their funding allocations for FY26, and HUD has the opportunity to evaluate VSHA's funding against the expenses within the Voucher Program. Berk added that her conversations with HUD revealed there is at least one housing authority in each state that is in shortfall. It is not just a Vermont issue.

Moving on to the changes to the Administrative Plan, Bacon shared the changes she will implement. These changes were up for comment and culminated in a public hearing, but no one reached out to comment or participate in the hearing. The changes are:

- Determine the correct voucher size.
 - Children regardless of age or gender will only be allotted one bedroom per 2 children. Families will have to be creative about where they sleep.
 - Pregnancies will not trigger another bedroom until the baby is born.
 - Family members that are not present at least 50% of the time will not get a separate bedroom allocation.
- Bring back the minimum rent. This was removed about a year ago but will be reinstated to \$50.
- Simplify the process for hardship exemptions.
- Decrease in Voucher Payment Standards. The decrease will be put into effect at the 2nd recertification.

➤ Troiano motioned to approve the changes to the Administrative Plan. Plant seconded the motion. Houghton voiced her concerns and discussion followed surrounding the bedroom allocation for children. The final vote recorded all members approving the changes except Houghton, who abstained from voting.

Bacon also provided a reminder of the Insufficient Funding Policy which was approved by the Board last year. To prepare for the chance of a lack of federal funding, she has submitted a proposal to create a state-funded Bridge program to help fill the void until federal funds are again available. The proposal requests \$3 million per year to help serve around 200 families. She plans to testify this week to talk more about the plan.

Berk discussed building projects that are currently on hold pending federal funding and how it affects those communities as well as people looking for affordable housing. The properties are located in Waterbury, Middlebury, and Newport and were being developed for use with Project-Based Vouchers.

6c. HUMAN RESOURCES & ADMINISTRATION

Liptak informed the Board that Ann Morrill, Senior Accountant, had reached 35 years of service to VSHA. She is the second longest serving employee.

6d. PORTFOLIO OPERATIONS

Kuegel detailed current issues with the operating budget. Northwoods II is struggling, and without the ability to increase payment standards, the current rent is not sustaining the property. VSHA holds the note on the property. On behalf of HFI, Kuegel is asking VSHA to renegotiate the terms of the note. She believes this will allow the property to cash flow for a couple years while she continues to work with John Broderick on more permanent solutions to stabilize the property.

- Richardson motioned to approve the new terms of the note. Houghton seconded and the Board unanimously approved the renegotiated terms.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

Paul shared information on the advocacy work she is doing around Three Acres Mobile Home Park permits which could affect properties in the VSHA portfolio. H362 is a bill introduced by Environmental Conservation which could affect impact fees. H757 has many parts that affect mobile home parks. Berk replied that she is aware and tracking the outcome of those bills.

8. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Farrell invited a motion to enter into executive session to discuss contractual matters, as permitted under Vermont Statute Title 1, Section 313(a)(1A), in that premature public knowledge of the content of such discussions would clearly put VSHA at a substantial disadvantage; and that we reconvene in open session upon completion of this discussion.

- Plant motioned to enter Executive Session. Seconded by Houghton. All voted in favor. The Board went into Executive Session at 12:03pm.
- The Board came out of Executive Session at 12:12pm on a motion by Richardson, seconded by Plant, and unanimously voted. No action was taken.

9. ADJOURNMENT

- The Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 12:13 pm upon a motion by Houghton, seconded by Plant, and passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Kathleen Berk
Executive Director/Secretary

/RTA

