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## BHA MINUTES

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF BREMERTON HOUSING AUTHORITY (BHA) HELD AT 5:30 PM ON OCTOBER 28, 2024.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. **ROLL CALL:**

**Present:**

Chair Ryan Burton  
Vice Chair Jeff Flood  
Commissioner Joan Hanten

Commissioner Diane West  
Commissioner Susie Beil  
Commissioner Victoria Hilt

**BHA Staff Present:**

Carlita Alegria, Acting Executive Director  
Windy Epps, Finance Director  
Wendy Westby, Interim Housing Director  
Paula Kennedy, Human Resources Manager  
Tory Quinn, Director of Development and Acquisitions  
Tim Schanne, Business Solutions Director  
Katie Sharp, Communications Manager  
Junie Folliett, Contracts Manager  
Leif Wagner, Community Connections Manager  
Lorna Camacho, Office Manager/Executive Assistant/Minute Taker

**Also Present:**

Allison Schwartzman, Legal Counsel

3. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.

4. **CHAIR COMMENTS:** None.

5. **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:** Commissioner Hilt would like to extend an invite to Board members to participate in the Resident Advisory Board who meets every second Wednesday of the month via remote. This would allow Board members a good opportunity to meet with residents and build relationships. The Board may want to consider having the Subchair from the Housing/Business Solutions Committee participate. The meeting invite will be shared with Ms. Camacho.

Commissioner West is interested in learning more about the Housing Navigator position and understanding what type of work is being performed and whether they have connected with other housing navigators. Ms. Alegria commented that the Housing Navigator position is currently under the CMS lease up project. Ms. Alegria will present more information at the November Board meeting.

**6. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:** All items listed under the “Consent Agenda” are routine and will be enacted **by one motion** unless a commissioner so requires, in which event the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and considered in its normal sequence on the agenda.

6.1 Approval of Regular Minutes: September 23, 2024

6.1.1 Approval of the Finance/CMS/Personnel Committee Minutes: September 19, 2024

6.2 Approval of Cash Disbursements –  
September, 2024: \$23,282,544.36

6.3 Approval of Write-offs for Multi-Family/Housing Department -Tenant Accounts Receivable –  
September, 2024: \$45,973.82

6.4 Approval of Write-offs for the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program -  
September, 2024: \$2,339.00

6.5 Approval of Write-offs for the Landlord AR Section 8/Housing Choice Voucher Program -  
September, 2024: No Write offs

☞ **Chair Burton called for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Commissioner Hanten moved for approval of motion. Commissioner West seconded the motion. Chair Burton called for question. None opposed. Motion carried.**

## 7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT:

### 7.1 Executive:

7.1.1 Executive Director’s Report: Comments by Ms. Alegria in Ms. Stanton’s absence.

#### 1. Residents and Participants:

We have hired a Housing Director, Anne Conte. Ms. Conte comes to us from Seattle Housing Authority. Ms. Conte’s experience includes policy and programmatic expertise, and her skill set matches leadership, organizational, policy, and customer experience priorities. Ms. Conte will work on a training plan during week one.

Ms. Wendy Westby will continue in her role as the Interim Director of the HCV team where she is already implementing programmatic changes and streamlining our processes. The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) team will be moving to the NDGC building in the next few weeks.

We’re excited to announce our “Friendly Forms” campaign, inspired by a concept shared by Ms. Stanton, aimed at communicating important information to our

clients and residents in a more positive and encouraging way. Recognizing that our standard letters can sometimes cause unnecessary fear, we're committed to transforming our communication to foster a supportive experience. While this is a long-term effort, we believe starting now is essential for enhancing our customers' experience.

2. **Partners and Advocates:**

We have an all-day retreat planned to finalize details and clarify roles and responsibilities for the Evergreen Bright Start program. While we're excited and a bit nervous, we recognize the importance of staying flexible as we learn to operate effectively together.

We've completed the due diligence process for Wheaton Landing, but the purchase will take a few more months. We secured \$1 million in CIAH funding to cover the financing gap and are working to build partnerships for the property, although the previous Superintendent of the Bremerton School District left, creating some challenges. We're now engaging with the Interim Superintendent and discussing potential collaboration with Kitsap Strong. Last week, we held a meeting with Enterprise to assist with partnerships and resident support services, and on October 24, 2024, we conducted an onsite property tour. We are aiming to move tenants by February 2025.

3. **Financial Strength:**

We are set to close our RAD transaction in the first week of December, marking a significant milestone. This will establish our tax credit partnership structure as the ownership entity for six properties, enable the issuance of tax-exempt bond debt, transfer public housing units into the HCV program, and allow construction work to commence. Several key tasks are in progress to ensure everything is completed on schedule.

A special Board meeting will be held on November 14, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. The Board will be asked to pass a resolution approving closing at the November Board meeting and this mid-month special Board meeting will provide details to the board prior to proposing the resolution.

4. **Organizational Capacity:**

This month, we held an all-staff meeting to update everyone on the move to the NDGC, as well as our ongoing and planned development and acquisition projects. We're excited to announce that our year-end employee appreciation celebration, themed as a "red carpet" event chosen by staff, will be held at the Kitsap Golf and Country Club on December 4, 2024, with the leadership and communications teams collaborating to create a memorable experience for everyone, including our Board.

## 5. Other Reports:

Ms. Stanton will be on an extended vacation in Australia from October 28, 2024, to visit her family, and will be away for nearly three weeks. During her absence, Ms. Alegria will serve as acting Executive Director, as she has in the past.

### 7.1.2 Resolution B24-24 Inducement Resolution BHA Bright Start: Comments by Ms. Quinn and Ms. Schwartzman.

The Authority has established Bremerton Bright Start Properties LLLP to facilitate the rehabilitation of several properties, including Casa Del Sol and Shadow Creek. Financing will come from various sources, such as low-income housing tax credits and tax-exempt private activity bonds, which the Authority will issue. This resolution serves as the Authority's official declaration of intent to reimburse pre-issue expenditures from tax-exempt bond proceeds for these properties. Importantly, it does not obligate the Authority to proceed with the bond issuance or finalize terms, as two additional resolutions will be presented at a future meeting to authorize further actions related to financing and property management.

☞ **Chair Burton called for a motion to approve Resolution B24-24 Approving the Inducement Resolution BHA Bright Start as presented. Commissioner Beil moved for approval of motion. Commissioner Hanten seconded the motion. Chair Burton called for question. None opposed. Motion carried.**

**7.2 Finance:** There are no Finance items.

**7.3 Housing Management:** Comments by Ms. Westby and Ms. Epps.

### 7.3.1 Tenant-Based Occupancy Report – Housing Choice Vouchers, SRO Project Based, SHP, and TBRA

Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) expenses have increased by 4.6% this year, with August and September exceeding monthly funding allocations by \$41.6 thousand and \$50.8 thousand, respectively, leading to a year-to-date overage of \$93.3 thousand. The green highlighted items indicate monthly actual HAP expenses, while the black bar represents monthly funding. We are utilizing all the HAP we receive and striving to increase our spending to maximize funding, as our funding is based on our expenditures.

The number of leased Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) units has remained stable, with a net increase of four units since January; we currently have 1,983 vouchers but are utilizing only 1,457. Per unit costs have risen significantly, now at \$1,226.44—an increase of \$50.76 (4.3%) since the start of the year—surpassing the amount BHA receives per voucher through the standard annual HCV HAP

award, excluding set-aside funding. If all 1,983 units were leased at this cost, BHA's monthly HAP expense would total \$2.432 million, or \$29.1 million annually, representing a 40% increase over our current funding of \$20.8 million. There has been a notable increase of 60 vouchers issued but not yet under contract since July, following a period of flat growth, and the Housing team is actively processing applications from the HCV waitlist to further boost these numbers.

Utilization of VASH vouchers have averaged 79, fluctuating between 75 and 81. HAP expenses for VASH have risen by 10.7% since January due to increasing per unit costs, and overall, HAP utilization has also increased.

Port-out activity has been gradually increasing after a significant decline following BHA's request for other housing authorities to absorb vouchers.

The Continuum of Care program is currently underutilized, with BHA recently awarded \$438,000, equating to \$36,500 per month. Currently, we are serving eight participants, but with a per unit cost of \$1,469.50, we have the potential to serve up to 25 participants. If participation does not increase, BHA is projected to forfeit an estimated \$292,000 in funding by the end of the grant year, as any unused funds will be lost. The reasons for the underutilization remain unclear.

HAP expenses for the Single Room Occupancy (SRO) program increased by 24% in FY 24 due to a rise in leased units. BHA was awarded \$228,000 in SRO funding but has only utilized \$166,000, indicating that the funding is not being fully maximized.

Housing has signed two Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) with partnering agencies to enhance the use of TBRA funding, which is restricted to Mason County. BHA ended the year with seven units leased and received \$115,000 in funding, utilizing \$70,000 in FY 24. With current per unit costs, BHA could support approximately 14 participants, but with not many units available, we would like to see us maximize this funding to its full potential.

The board members expressed their appreciation for the updates. Commissioner Hanten emphasized the importance of keeping the board informed about program utilization. Members showed interest in gaining more information on VASH to better understand its impact, with Ms. Epps planning to collaborate closely with Ms. Westby ahead of the next Board meeting. Commissioner Beil requested insights into recent trends and a longer trend line analysis to understand how long these issues have been occurring.

#### 7.3.2 Property Vacancy Report

Due to the repositioning project, some units remain vacant for an extended period.

7.3.3 Resolution B24-22 Approving Revisions to the Pre-HOMTA and Post-HOTMA Administrative Plans

Changes to the language will impact the VASH program. An FHEO complaint has heightened our awareness regarding requests for reasonable accommodation.

The Bremerton Housing Authority is updating its Administrative Plan (Admin Plan) to reflect changes in BHA policy and revised HUD language.

This resolution seeks approval for the amendments to the Admin Plan and for submission to HUD.

- ☞ **Chair Burton called for a motion to approve Resolution B24-22 Approving Revisions to the Pre-HOTMA and Post-HOTMA Administrative Plans as presented. Vice Chair Flood moved for approval of motion. Commissioner West seconded the motion. Chair Burton called for question. None opposed. Motion carried.**

7.3.4 Resolution B24-23 Approval of Revision to ACOP

The Bremerton Housing Authority is updating its Public Housing Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP) to clarify the language in Chapter 2.

This resolution seeks approval for the amendments to the ACOP.

- ☞ **Chair Burton called for a motion to approve Resolution B24-23 Approval of Revision to ACOP as presented. Vice Chair Flood moved for approval of motion. Commissioner West seconded the motion. Chair Burton called for question. None opposed. Motion carried.**

7.4 **Human Resources:** There are no HR items.

7.5 **Contract Management Services:** There are no CMS items.

7.6 **Business Solutions Reporting:** Comments by Mr. Schanne and Ms. Sharp.

7.6.1 Digital Equity Grant Presentation

Vice Chair Flood had expressed his desire for the board to learn more about the amazing efforts our team is implementing for residents, highlighting the importance of digital equity in fostering inclusion and empowerment. He suggested discussing these initiatives at the next board meeting to raise awareness and support our ongoing work in this vital area.

Our Business Solutions team presented our Connect Homes USA designation and the digital equity initiatives we are pursuing. These efforts are vital for our residents and low-income households across Bremerton and Kitsap County. This initiative

represents a collaborative partnership that has the potential to become an invaluable resource, promoting digital equity throughout the region.

Mr. Schanne and Ms. Sharp provided a comprehensive overview of digital equity to the board, drawing from discussions at the recent NAHRO conference in Orlando, FL. Ms. Sharp highlighted a session she attended on the Seattle Housing Authority's efforts to enhance digital literacy for their residents. She also discussed our local initiatives to improve digital access and mentioned that we have applied for a grant to support these efforts, with Mr. Wagner and Mr. Schanne actively involved in the project.

What is Digital Equity at State, HUD and Federal level. Digital equity refers to fair access to technology and the internet for all individuals, ensuring that everyone can participate in the digital world. It involves meeting residents and participants at their current level of access and providing the resources they need, such as affordable high-speed internet, low-cost computing devices, and digital literacy training. This training equips families to effectively use online services and seize opportunities, ultimately fostering greater inclusion and empowerment in the digital landscape.

Government Action Timeline.

Here's a summary of the key developments in Washington state's broadband and digital equity initiatives:

- **2019:** Washington state established a broadband office aimed at increasing internet access statewide.
- **2020:** The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift of public services to digital platforms.
- **2021:** The federal government passed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, allocating \$5 billion for the Digital Equity Act and the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program.
- **2022:** Washington state signed its own Digital Equity Act, initially funded by federal BEAD resources.
- **2023:** HUD opened applications for a new cohort of ConnectHomeUSA participants.
- **2024:** HUD announced 97 new ConnectHomeUSA participants, while the federal government launched a digital equity grant program.

Alignment with BHA Strategy. Digital equity aligns with our strategic focus areas by ensuring that all community members have access to essential technology and resources.

1. **Access to Services:** By promoting affordable internet and devices, we enhance access to vital services for low-income households.

2. **Community Empowerment:** Digital literacy training empowers residents to utilize online resources, improving their ability to navigate job opportunities, education, and health services.
3. **Economic Development:** Ensuring digital access supports local economies by enabling businesses and residents to thrive in a digital-first world.
4. **Collaboration:** Our digital equity initiatives foster partnerships with community organizations, enhancing resource sharing and collective impact.
5. **Inclusion:** By addressing the digital divide, we create a more inclusive community where all individuals can participate fully in civic and social life.

Overall, advancing digital equity supports our commitment to creating a stronger, more connected, and equitable community.

Looking back, we offered computer labs and free technology classes at properties, facilitated waitlist applications through RentCafé, provided website resources, and implemented the Homes4Good Resident Notification app.

Looking ahead with, we are excited to provide free internet for every household at Evergreen Bright Start, transition to a paperless system through the RentCafé resident portal and participate in ConnectHomeUSA. Additionally, we aim to be the primary applicant for a digital equity grant, further enhancing our commitment to bridging the digital divide for our residents.

The ConnectHomeUSA (CHUSA) timeline for the digital equity grant includes several key milestones we must meet:

- **First Report:** Due March 2025
- **Baseline Resident Survey:** (what resident need from us) Due July 2025
- **Initial Action Plan:** (need to design our own action plan) Due July 2027

These milestones are essential for tracking our progress and ensuring we effectively implement our digital equity initiatives.

The NTIA Digital Equity Grant is a groundbreaking initiative that makes digital equity funding available nationwide, with a minimum grant amount of \$5 million. Our application involves 17 partners and aims to serve over 11,000 plus residents in Kitsap County over the next five years. Awards for this grant will be announced in April 2025, marking a significant step forward in promoting digital equity in our community.

The Business Solutions team owes a great deal of gratitude to Ms. Stanton, Greg Verini, the IT team, Ms. Sharp, and Mr. Wagner for their invaluable support. They have generously shared their resources and expertise to guide us in our efforts.



We are committed to following this plan, confident that we have what it takes to succeed. There is palpable excitement surrounding this initiative!

Mr. Schanne emphasized the importance of communicating with the Kitsap community about our initiatives if we receive funding. He suggested that once awarded, we should present the news to the community and explain what it means for them.

Commissioner Beil expressed appreciation for how this initiative aligns with our core values and mission. She applauds staff for bringing this information to us and raised a question about user testing, specifically regarding those who may be resistant to using devices. She asked how we can effectively navigate surveys and engage the community, noting Mr. Wagner's active involvement in this area.

Mr. Wagner shared that he is currently identifying needs within the community and exploring ways to expand our offerings, including classes for residents on a larger scale.

Commissioner Hilt concluded with a thank you for the insights shared.

**8. EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

**9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

9.1 Evaluation of Executive Director

Chair Burton reported that he and Vice Chair Flood met with Ms. Stanton and are very pleased with her progress as Executive Director. They look forward to her continuing in this role.

**10. NEW BUSINESS:** None.

**11. FUTURE 2024 REGULAR MEETINGS:** November 25, 2024 (No December Board meeting)

Special Board Meeting, November 14, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.

Finance/CMS/Personnel Committee Meeting, November 21, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.

**12. ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:46 p.m.



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Executive Secretary



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Chair of the Board

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