



600 Park Avenue
Bremerton WA 98337
(p) 360-616-7241
(f) 360-616-2811
www.bremertonhousing.org

BHA HOUSING/BUSINESS SOLUTIONS COMMITTEE MINUTES

THE HOUSING/BUSINESS SOLUTIONS HYBRID COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE BREMERTON HOUSING AUTHORITY (BHA) HELD 4:00 PM AT 600 PARK AVENUE AND/OR REMOTELY ON JANUARY 23, 2025.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present:

Subchair Diane West
Commissioner Susie Beil

Commissioner Victoria Hilt
Vice Chair Jeff Flood

Absent:

Commissioner Joan Hanten

BHA Staff Present:

Jill Stanton	Executive Director
Wendy Westby	Interim Housing Director
Anne Conte	Housing Director
Tim Schanne	Business Solutions Director
Windy Epps	Finance Director
Tory Quinn	Director of Development & Acquisitions
Lorna Camacho	Office Manager/Executive Assistant/Minute Taker

3. SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR COMMENTS: Subchair welcomed attendees and thanked them for joining us today.

4. HOUSING REPORTING: Comments by Ms. Conte and Ms. Westby.

Ms. Conte and Ms. Westby, who are both relatively new in their positions, led the conversation. Ms. Westby has primarily focused on the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, while Ms. Conte has been working on the department as a whole. They acknowledged the need for a cultural shift within the department to better align with organizational objectives. The conversation emphasized improving operational processes with a priority on client, vendors, and partners service and success. A plan was made to create a shared structure that fosters staff engagement and addresses gaps in the current workflow. Staff will play an active role in taking ownership of the process and contributing to its development, ensuring that the changes are both practical and sustainable. Both have made several observations and recommendations, one of which was to discuss reopening services to our current clients, which will be a key focus for today's meeting.

Improving customer experience for clients, vendors, and partners. Ms. Conte and Ms. Westby emphasized the importance of enhancing service and engagement across all interactions. They plan to ask staff to return to the office effective March 1, 2025, to improve in-person service and collaboration. The approach will include Back-to-Basic training for staff, with ongoing retraining and adjustments as needed to improve service delivery. They also requested the hiring of two additional front desk staff, recognizing that having only one person currently in this role is inadequate for optimal customer service. Both staff members will be expected to be knowledgeable and trained to assist clients with Rent Café, ensuring that clients have the support they need. This is seen as an opportunity to provide enhanced support and streamline services to better serve the community. The plan will be to open the Housing Services Office (HSO) to service BHA clients and applicants on July 1, 2025. This will enhance accessibility and streamline services for our BHA clients.

Subchair West expressed herself being very pleased to hear about the progress and plans discussed. She shared that she is impressed with the work the team is doing at BHA. She voiced concern for residents who do not live near the Summit, particularly regarding the renewal process and potential challenges they may face. Despite this concern, Subchair West emphasized how pleased she is with the direction BHA is moving forward, and the positive changes being made. She concluded by stating that hearing about these advancements makes her very proud to be a part of the BHA Board.

Ms. Stanton confirmed that staff are being asked to return to the office, noting that it is essential for fully utilizing the knowledge and skills the team has invested in. She highlighted that by utilizing available vouchers, BHA will be able to afford to hire additional front desk staff. Ms. Stanton also shared with staff that comparisons should not be made between different organizations or programs, as each operates with distinct funding and resources. She concluded by emphasizing that this approach is what is necessary for the housing department at this time to ensure progress and effectiveness.

Subchair West expressed concern that calls are not being answered or returned in a timely manner, noting that this has become a significant issue. She pointed out that the word in the community is not favorable, with this being one of the biggest complaints from clients. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that calls are answered and returned promptly to improve customer service and maintain positive relationships with the community.

Commissioner Beil inquired about how staff are feeling regarding the upcoming request to return to the office. Commissioner Beil also noted that on July 1, 2025, the Housing Services Office (HSO) will open to our clients at the Norm Dicks Government Center location. However, the office will primarily serve BHA applicants as a housing resource with no expansion of services planned at this time. She emphasized that the office would open on July 1, 2025, and the specific hours of operation will be shared with the public. Commissioner Beil highlighted that a key focus moving forward will be improving the way work is done, particularly by relying on the front desk. She stressed the need to get procedures and processes in place by July 1, 2025, to ensure smooth operations when the office opens.

Commissioner Hilt asked for clarification regarding the messaging on who will be served by the Housing Services Office. Specifically, she inquired whether the focus will be on applicants on the waitlist or current customers who are already being worked with. It was clarified that the focus will be on current customers the agency is already serving. The office will be open to the public, but priority will be given to individuals already being served.

Ms. Stanton mentioned that Ms. Westby's position will be made permanent moving forward. Ms. Stanton emphasized the importance of paying attention to these changes, noting that the necessary adjustments have been made, but there is a need to ensure those changes are fully implemented and maintained. She pointed out that if the structure is fully utilized, it will support itself, ensuring sustainability and effectiveness in operations. Ms. Stanton reflected on the past practice of outsourcing the Property Management role before Ms. Stanton's tenure, and how the decision was made to bring the Property Management function back in-house.

Subchair West gently reminded the group that, as a housing authority, BHA should keep its focus on addressing the housing needs of the public. She noted that the public's primary concern is housing, and it's important for BHA to stay aligned with that core mission.

5. BUSINESS SOLUTIONS REPORTING: Comments by Mr. Schanne.

This summary covers the main points discussed during the Housing/Business Solutions Committee meeting, emphasizing the ongoing efforts and future initiatives around cyber security.

Information technology is an integral component of all operations at Bremerton Housing Authority (BHA). As a result, BHA is committed to ensuring the highest level of security around its IT infrastructure. The agency placed a strong emphasis on cyber security to maintain a safe and secure environment for all employees and residents.

- BHA experienced zero critical security incidents in 2024, thanks to:
 - Preventative systems in place
 - Dedicated IT staff focused on cyber security
 - Continuous monitoring and quick response to potential threats
- Penetration Testing:
 - Engaged two third-party vendors for comprehensive internal and external penetration tests.
 - Both tests indicated that BHA maintains a strong cyber security posture.
- Employee and Board Training
 - BHA rolled out specialized security awareness training for all staff and board commissioners using the *Knowbe4* platform.
 - The training was offered as a three-part on-demand program, which board commissioners completed in the fall of 2024.
 - An email phishing campaign was executed across the organization, testing staff's response to phishing attempts. The results showed 100% excellent adherence to security protocols, as no employees fell for the phishing emails, clicked malicious links, or exposed sensitive information.
- What's Next. Upcoming Cyber Security Training.
 - A new round of *Knowbe4* on-demand cyber security training was launched.
 - All staff and board commissioners are encouraged to complete the training within 3 weeks of assignment.
- Digital Equity Initiative

- BHA is working to bring digital equity to its residents. Conversations have already begun between BHA's Digital Equity Planning Team and the Resident Advisory Board (RAB).
- Instead of presenting a pre-determined plan to residents, both teams will co-create a plan that is tailored to the specific needs of the community, ensuring that services and resources align with residents' circumstances.

Commissioner Hilt shared that the recent conversation with the Resident Advisory Board (RAB) was a positive and productive one. As a resident, she felt heard and valued during the discussion. She mentioned that additional equity considerations have come to mind during the process, and raised the question: if BHA implements one equity initiative, will the agency ensure that all aspects of equity are addressed? Commissioner Hilt also expressed appreciation for the way BHA sees residents as individuals and genuinely wants to support them. She emphasized that the agency is on a positive and promising path moving forward.

BHA continues to make significant strides in strengthening its cyber security infrastructure. With a focus on proactive measures, training, and collaboration, the agency aims to maintain its secure IT environment and extend digital equity to all residents.

6. FUTURE HOUSING/BUSINESS SOLUTIONS COMMITTEE MEETING:

The next Housing/Business Solutions Committee Meeting - Thursday, April 24, 2025.

7. ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business meeting adjourned at 4:34 p.m.

Jill Stanton

Executive Secretary

Ryan Burton

Chair of the Board

SEAL

