

**MINUTES . . . REGULAR MEETING . . . JANUARY 13, 2025**

The members of the Bethlehem Housing Authority met in a regular session on January 13, 2025 at 4:00 P.M. (IN PERSON MEETING). Those present and absent were as follows

**PRESENT**

Mrs. Lindsey A. Clifton, Chairperson  
Mr. Rogelio Ortiz, Vice Chairperson  
Mrs. Iris Linares  
Mrs. Rachel Leon

**ABSENT**

Mr. J. Marc Rittle

Also present were: John Ritter, Secretary-Treasurer; Diana Moreno, Assistant Secretary; Staff Members and members of the general public. William W. Matz, Jr., Esq., Solicitor.

**Reorganization of the Board**

The election of officers was turned over to Attorney Matz.

Solicitor Matz first reiterated the format for the election of board officers for the year 2025. The election process is consistent with the bylaws and Robert's rules based on the constitution. He stated that all nominations would be from the floor; each nomination shall be processed separately beginning with the chairperson followed by the vice chairperson; no second would be required although one may be made as a form of endorsement; nominations are closed when no further nominations are made.

Nominations for Chairperson and Vice Chairperson for the BHA Board of Commissioners for the ensuing year January 13 to December 31, 2025, were opened.

**Attorney Matz called for nominations for Chairperson of the Board.**

Mr. Ortiz made a motion to nominate Commissioner Marc Rittle for Chairperson.

Mrs. Linares made a motion to nominate Commissioner Lindsey A. Clifton for Chairperson.

Chairperson Clifton stated that while she did not have strong feelings on the matter, she was willing to offer a remark if a brief discussion was appropriate. Attorney Matz acknowledged this. Chairperson Clifton then noted that she had initially hoped Mr. Rittle might be open to taking on the role of Chairperson, as his own workload had significantly increased. However, after a one-on-one conversation, she learned that Mr. Rittle's responsibilities were even greater. As a result, Chairperson Clifton expressed her comfort in accepting the nomination, while Mr. Rittle, due to personal and family matters, would not be comfortable accepting. Since he was not present to speak for himself, Chairperson Clifton conveyed their latest discussion.

Attorney Matz then addressed Mr. Ortiz's question regarding whether a nomination that had been made could be withdrawn, confirming that it could. Mr. Ortiz subsequently nominated Chairperson Clifton. Attorney Matz formally acknowledged that the nomination for Mr. Rittle had been withdrawn in favor of Mrs. Clifton and asked if there were any additional nominations. Chairperson Clifton added that, if elected, this would be her second term.

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She reminded the group that the current bylaws prohibit serving more than two consecutive terms, meaning she could fulfill the obligation for the coming year but would not be eligible for a third term unless the bylaws were amended. And emphasized the importance of keeping this in mind when considering leadership for 2026. Attorney Matz affirmed that the bylaws currently limit the Chairmanship to two consecutive one-year terms.

There being no further nominations for Chairman, Chairperson Lindsey A. Clifton by majority ballot now holds the position of Chairperson.

**Attorney Matz opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chairperson of the Board.**

Chairperson Lindsey made a motion to nominate Commissioner Rogelio Ortiz for Vice Chairperson.

There being no further nominations for Vice Chairperson, Commissioner Rogelio Ortiz by majority ballot now holds the position of Vice Chairperson.

Atty. Matz stated that the election of new officers for year 2025 is now closed and approved.

The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 9, 2024, were presented and approve. Mrs. Linares made a motion to accept the minutes of December 9, 2024. Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes - Ortiz/Linares/Leon/Clifton; Nays - None

The check register was presented and approved with no comments.

Mrs. Leon made a motion to approve the Treasurer's report for the December listing 2024. Mrs. Linares seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes - Ortiz/Linares/Leon/Clifton; Nays - None

Under the Financial report, Mr. Snyder reported on the Income and Expense report, noting that finances were holding steady. However, he anticipated a decline in December and January due to various expenses. He explained that November was used to stay caught up, while December saw significant costs, including furnace repairs and heating expenses. He expected the million-dollar balance to decrease as a result, along with a reduction in cash reserves next month. Additionally, he noted that in December, the organization paid the PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) expense and several insurance premiums, which, while considered assets, resulted in substantial cash outflows. Chairperson Clifton clarified that the PILOT expense referred to payments made in lieu of taxes, to which Mr. Snyder confirmed the amount was over \$500,000. He added that this expense, though significant, was preferable to paying high utility bills.

Additionally, on the Section 8 shortfall, \$376,000 was spent in December, and January's spending stood at \$374,000 unless additional expenses arose. He projected the funding based on the past year's usage, including \$4.6 million in shortfall money. However, he expressed uncertainty about HUD's actions, as they had yet to finalize a budget and continued operating under a resolution.

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Depending on the final budget version, the funding loss could be as little as half a percent or several percent. For now, with expenses at \$374,000, they could potentially allocate \$385,000 per month. He mentioned that there were currently eight vouchers available, and if all were successfully leased, it would begin utilizing the available funds. However, until HUD released further guidance, the program remained in shortfall status. Once funding was confirmed, efforts to lease up would resume. Mr. Snyder added that they were officially transitioning to Yardi while still using Tenmast for the current month. He noted uncertainty about the upcoming reports, as they had yet to see the format under the new system. He cautioned that the transition could present reporting challenges but assured the group they would provide the best report possible.

Ms. Leon made a motion to approve the Financial Report for January 2025.  
Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Ortiz/Linares/Leon/Clifton; Nays - None

Courtesy of the Floor – Nothing reported.

Under Old Business, Chairperson Clifton stated that the board reviewed the updated Five-Year Plan, with changes limited to formatting and minor goal adjustments. An updated memo from Mr. Ritter was provided for discussion and approval. Concerns raised by Mr. Rittle at the last meeting were addressed through reformatting without substantive changes. She also suggested that after approval, the board and staff should discuss practical steps and timelines for implementation. The mayor's office had signed off on the plan. With no further discussion, a motion to approve was requested.

Mrs. Linares made a motion to approve the Five-Year Plan.  
Mrs. Leon seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Ortiz/Linares/Leon/Clifton; Nays - None

Under Chairman's report, Chairperson Clifton expressed gratitude for the collaborative efforts during the RFQ planning process. She attended a meeting with Mr. Ritter and Mr. Kichline, and city partners to review the draft RFQ, noting that the spirit of collaboration was productive and promising. She thanked both groups for including her as a board representative and expressed enthusiasm about the progress and potential of the project.

Under the Executive Director's Report, Mr. Ritter reported that Urban Ventures was contracted to assist with the RFQ process for hiring a developer for the Choice Neighborhood program. Once the RFQ is finalized, it will be reviewed with the city and board members before being released. He described the process as smooth and noted that the company expects to complete the first draft soon. Chairperson Clifton confirmed that Urban Ventures would also assist in screening responses, to which Mr. Ritter agreed.

Additionally, Mr. Ritter stated that the Drug and Criminal meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 15th at 10:00 AM in the Monocacy conference room. He also mentioned that the holiday luncheon was held on December 13th at the Steel Club, which had a great venue and food. Lastly, he recently attended the PHADA Executive Director training in Miami.

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Chairperson Clifton inquired if there were any key points to note. Mr. Ritter responded that the training focused on SEMAP scores and financial matters, with the financial component being particularly challenging. He noted that he still had two remaining sessions, one in Seattle and one in Washington, D.C., before completing his course.

Chairperson Clifton acknowledged that the Deputy Director position had been a recurring topic in previous meetings and was pleased to introduce Ms. Laurie Rivera, who officially started her role today. Mr. Ritter confirmed her appointment. The board congratulated Ms. Rivera on her first day. Ms. Rivera expressed her gratitude and shared her excitement about joining the team. She thanked everyone for their warm welcome and stated her commitment to using her experience to help the housing authority move forward into 2025. She also expressed enthusiasm for contributing to the Housing Choice Program and future development efforts.

Mrs. Clifton proposed adding a standing Deputy Director's Report to the monthly agenda. She suggested that this would provide an opportunity for open-ended updates and allow the board to ask questions about new developments. Mrs. Rivera agreed with the suggestion, and Chairperson Clifton made a note to implement it moving forward.

Under Committee Reports, Scholarship Committee – Nothing reported.

Under the Resident Advisory Committee report, Mr. Ortiz shared an update about networking with Paulita's Place, a non-profit organization providing mental health and community resources to children, youth, and adults. He explained that Paulita's Place is planning to offer childcare services for children aged 6 weeks to 13 years old, including a free pre-k program. Additionally, the organization plans to hire two young women, offering them the opportunity to become teachers' assistants, with the potential to pursue a teaching career. He highlighted that these women would have their college education paid for, including the possibility of earning a master's degree.

Chairperson Clifton asked Mr. Ortiz for clarification in his statement, seeking to understand whether this initiative was part of the collaboration he was describing. Mr. Ortiz confirmed that the representative from Paulita's Place will attend the next meeting to provide an introduction and finalize paperwork. He explained that they would be merging with the organization, as Paulita's Place has the funding and will employ individuals to work for the Homewood Club and the summer program. These workers will be compensated through a state grant. Chairperson Clifton clarified that this was more of an update on the work of the 501(c)(3) organization rather than the Resident Council itself. Mr. Ortiz agreed, noting that the organization also needed space and planned to use their center. He emphasized that Lynfield residents would have priority access to free childcare and summer programs, but background checks would be required for all hired staff.

Chairperson Clifton pointed out that since Paulita's Place is a separate 501(c)(3), they would need to submit the same space application, insurance info, and other required documentation as any other group using the space. Mr. Ortiz confirmed that insurance for anyone coming into the building would be provided, and he believed the initiative would strengthen the community by offering childcare at no cost to residents.

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Mr. Ortiz also provided updates on the food bank that they're currently preparing for the next order. They continue to serve around 300 individuals in their community through Second Harvest and provide free groceries and produce through Redner's Supermarket. This service operates every Thursday afternoon when the Homework Club is open. Additionally, Mr. Ortiz mentioned that they are preparing for baseball season and will be visiting local schools to recruit kids for their programs.

Under Resident Council, nothing to report.

Mr. Ritter reported that Mason Landscaping has provided services, including snow removal, to BHA for approximately eight to nine years with consistent quality. Chairperson Clifton recalled that in the previous year, a lower bid was initially accepted but later rescinded due to the contractor's inability to meet service needs, leading to the selection of Mason Landscaping. She asked if we typically do one-year contracts.

Mr. Ritter confirmed that contracts are typically issued as one-year agreements with an optional one-year extension. Chairperson Clifton inquired about the feasibility of securing a two-year contract to lock in rates and mitigate potential price increases, especially if it's not a renewal but someone we know and trust. Mr. Ritter explained that the one-year structure serves as a safeguard against underperforming contractors. Mr. Kichline added that fluctuating fuel and maintenance costs make multi-year pricing difficult to stabilize. The board acknowledged these concerns.

**RESOLUTION NO. 2607 - APPROVING THE SECOND YEAR QUOTE FOR GRASS CUTTING SERVICES.**

Mrs. Leon made a motion to approve the second-year quote for grass cutting services.  
Mrs. Linares seconded.

Roll Call: Ayes - Ortiz/Linares/Leon/Clifton; Nays - None

Under Miscellaneous Reports and other business and Public Comments - Nothing reported.

Chairperson Clifton noted that the next regular board meeting will be held on Monday, February 10, 2025, at 4:00 P.M., in the community room at Monocacy Tower. There being no further business to transact, Chairperson Clifton declared the meeting adjourned.

John Ritter  
Executive Director