MINUTES . . . REGULAR MEETING . . . MAY 12, 2025

The members of the Bethlehem Housing Authority met in a regular session on May 12, 2025 at 4:00 P.M. (IN PERSON MEETING). Those present and absent were as follows

PRESENT	**ABSENT**
Mr. Rogelio Ortiz, Vice Chairperson	**Mrs. Lindsey A. Clifton, Chairperson**
Mrs. Iris Linares	
Mr. J. Marc Rittle	
Mrs. Rachel Leon	

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.

The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 14, 2025, were presented and approve. Mr. Rittle made a motion to accept the minutes of April 14, 2025. Mrs. Leon seconded the motion.

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

Chairperson Clifton presented the Treasurer's report.

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the treasure's report for the April listing 2025.
Mrs. Linares seconded the motion.

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

Under the Financial report Mr. Snyder reported that cash levels are currently up slightly, while investments have decreased. This fluctuation is due in part to the maturity of several certificates of deposit (CDs) at the end of March. Although new CDs are being purchased, they will not be recorded until April, resulting in a temporary increased cash balance in the Operating Fund. Regarding the Income and Expense report, many entries for March have already been recorded using the accrual-based system, which has made the process more efficient. Some year-end entries are still being finalized, and although a small loss is anticipated, it is expected to be manageable. At present, the financials show a favorable variance of approximately $130,000, though that may change as final adjustments are made. Unexpected contract expenses, including heating issues and required 24-hour fire watch coverage due to system problems, have led to increased overtime costs for Monocacy over the past two months.

Under the Section 8 report, Snyder noted that 391 units were leased in May, compared to 389 in April, indicating stable leasing activity. However, HUD funding was reduced in May because of reserve levels, as HUD often recaptures funds when reserves exceed their threshold. Currently, there is an excess of approximately $112,000 in HUD-held funds over BHA-held funds. Additionally, vouchers are active in the market, with eight currently being issued.

Mrs. Linares made a motion to approve the Financial Report for March 2025.
Mrs. Leon seconded the motion.

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

Under Courtesy of the Floor, Agenda Items Only. Nothing reported.

Under Old Business, Parkridge Lease, Attorney Matz addressed the board regarding the request from Mrs. McLendon to use the BHA facility. He indicated that a rental relationship with her appears necessary and that questions raised at the previous meeting—concerning non-profit status, religious use, and related legal considerations—are being reviewed. Attorney Matz recommended the development of a formal policy and application process for such facility rentals, followed by the creation of a lease agreement specific to each use. He noted that Chairperson Clifton had circulated related legal concerns via email, and he expects to provide draft policy recommendations to the board by the next meeting. He is also reviewing template policies from other housing authorities, such as Philadelphia's, for reference.

Mr. Rittle clarified that this policy would apply to current BHA residents and would not require amendments to residential leases. Attorney Matz confirmed that the policy would guide the application and approval process without implying BHA sponsorship or support for any religious or organizational activities, thereby ensuring compliance with free speech and non-discrimination principles. The board has agreed to carry this item over as Old Business for the next meeting on June 9th. In the meantime, Mr. Ritter will notify Mrs. McLendon to ensure her insurance and documentation are in order. Attorney Matz concluded that he anticipates having a draft ready for board review and discussion at the upcoming meeting.

Under the Chairman's Report, nothing was reported.

Under the Executive Director's Report, Mr. Ritter informed the Board that he will be attending the PHADA Leadership and Ethics training from May 13th through May 17th. The Drug & Criminal (D&C) meeting is scheduled for May 14th at 10:00 AM. Attorney Matz will not be in attendance; all other participants are expected.

Mr. Ritter reported that interviews were conducted earlier that day for the Capital Fund Manager position. The selected candidate, Scott Speshok, currently serves as the Assistant Maintenance Superintendent and is an internal applicant. Although the position was posted externally on two separate occasions for 21 and 14 days respectively, no external applications were received. Additionally, five candidates were interviewed for the Housing Inspector position. The selection has been narrowed down to two finalists, with a hiring decision expected within the next week.

The Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP) and internal forms are actively being updated to reflect current standards as outlined by Nan McKay. The most recent Steering Committee meeting was held at the Bethlehem Public Library with Gorman & Company in attendance. Mr. Ritter noted a good turnout and a productive meeting. The agreement with Gorman & Company is in progress and expected to be finalized in the coming days. He also announced a Choice Neighborhoods Initiative bus trip to Philadelphia, scheduled for June 25th; details on departure time will be shared once finalized.

Lastly, Mr. Ritter shared that a Family Festival will be held at Lincoln Elementary on May 23rd, in collaboration with Gorman & Company and the City. The event will include surveys, food, and community engagement activities.

Under the Deputy Executive Director's report, Ms. Rivera reported that a new Tenant Selection Clerk Typist II has been hired and is scheduled to begin on May 19th. Regarding Section 8, there are currently 392 vouchers leased, with an additional eight vouchers issued and awaiting housing.

Mrs. Linares inquired about the status of the First Tee project, which had been approved by HUD. Mr. Ritter confirmed the project had HUD approval but noted that no work has commenced. Mr. Kichline explained that although the city had no issues with the project drawings, the engineering department determined a sewer capacity study is required before permits can be issued. Originally expected to be a minor step for the twelve First Tee units, it was discovered that a broader capacity study is needed for the entire Marvine, Pembroke, Bayard, and Pfeifle housing areas, none of which had been previously analyzed under the city's sewage tracking system. This has delayed progress and now involves the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP). Mr. Kichline is closely monitoring the process with the engineering department.

Mr. Ortiz extended appreciation and congratulations to Mr. Kichline on his upcoming retirement, thanking him for his many years of outstanding service. The board joined in applause. Mr. Ritter noted that Mr. Kichline is not retiring until the end of June.

Under Committee Reports, Mrs. Linares reported that applications for the high school senior scholarships were mailed out, and the submission deadline was May 9th and the Eighth-grade scholarship applications with a deadline of May 16th. So far, one application has been received.

Under Resident Council, Mr. Ortiz reported that the center's summer program will run from June 16 to August 14. A key component this year is an 8-week wellness and cooking program called Kultured Kitchen, led by Mya Taylor. The program, funded through a grant, will operate four hours per day. Mya will be compensated at $25/hour. Furthermore, they have two educational outings planned to Hawk Mountain, with thirty children and five adults, including a scenic lunch at the summit and the National Museum of Industrial History on Third Street.

Mr. Ortiz extended thanks to Ana Smith and Jennifer Labrador for facilitating a recent community meeting attended by local police. Discussions focused on neighborhood safety, with efforts underway to involve a Department of Transportation Supervisor to explore the installation of speed bumps and improvements to street lighting to enhance child pedestrian safety. Lastly, despite early rainouts, the Southside Sluggers baseball season is ongoing and will continue through the first week of November. Recruitment efforts are currently taking place at Freemansburg Elementary School for students in 3rd to 5th grade.

<u>RESOLUTION NO. 2613</u> - APPROVING THE BUDGET AMENDMENT FOR THE PURCHASE OF AN INSPECTOR VEHICLE.

Mrs. Leon made a motion to approve the budget amendment for the purchase of an inspector vehicle. Mrs. Linares seconded.

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

Mr. Ritter explained that the agency has not had an Inspector for the past nine years, and therefore no vehicle currently exists for the role. With new hiring underway for both Section 8 and Public Housing, the position will require significant travel, making the purchase necessary.

Mrs. Linares inquired about the last time a vehicle was purchased. Mr. Ritter responded that the most recent vehicle was acquired for Ms. Riveta approximately four months ago.

<u>RESOLUTION NO. 2614</u> - APPROVING THE CONTRACT FOR JANITORIAL AND PAINT SERVICES.

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the contract for janitorial and painting services. Mrs. Linares seconded.

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

Mrs. Linares asked if the painting service contract was new. Mr. Ritter confirmed that it is a new contract intended for cleaning and painting vacant units. He noted that the agency had a long-standing service contractor, Nick Koufalis, who worked under the name Crystal Clear. Vice Chairperson clarified that the selected service includes both cleaning and painting. Mr. Ritter mentioned that while some units are cleaned by the contractor, others are serviced by Ricky Martinez.

Under New Business, nothing reported.

Under Miscellaneous Reports and Other Business, Vice Chairperson Ortiz inquired about a scheduled water inspection, noting that it was supposed to take place the previous week. He mentioned receiving a letter in the mail but stated that no one ever came to conduct the inspection, leaving him unsure about the purpose of the notice. Mr. Jablonski explained that when a unit's water usage exceeds a certain dollar amount, a review is triggered to investigate the cause of the high bill. He emphasized that the inspection is not related to water quality testing, but rather to understand elevated water consumption.

Mr. Ortiz thanked Mr. Jablonski for the explanation and noted that he initially thought the purpose of the visit was to test water issues. Mr. Jablonski reassured him that he was not the only resident affected, approximately sixty people had received similar letters. He clarified that the goal was simply to determine the reason for high usage. Vice Chairperson Ortiz summarized his understanding, stating that if a unit is using more water than expected for its size, it might raise concerns. Mr. Jablonski confirmed this, adding that in developments like his, any bill over $100 typically prompts an inspection. He also mentioned that some bills had been significantly higher, even reaching a couple of thousand.

Mr. Ritter added that unusually high-water bills could result from issues such as leaks or malfunctioning water meters. He explained that their team is the first line of response, conducting initial checks for leaks. If necessary, the city would then follow up to inspect the water meters. He concluded by noting that this process has been in place for many years.

Under Public Comments, nothing reported.

Vice Chairperson Ortiz noted that the next regular board meeting will be held on Monday, June 9, 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