

**MINUTES... REGULAR MEETING... MARCH 9, 2026**

The members of the Bethlehem Housing Authority met in a regular session on March 9, 2026 at 4:00 P.M. (IN PERSON MEETING). Those present and absent were as follows

**PRESENT**

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

**ABSENT**

Mr. J. Marc Rittle, Chairperson

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, absent.

Vice Chairperson Ortiz presented the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 12, 2026, were presented and approve. Mrs. Linares made a motion to accept the minutes of January 12, 2026. Mrs. Leon seconded the motion.

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

Vice Chairperson Ortiz presented the Treasurer's report for January and February 2026.

Mrs. Clifton made a motion to approve the treasurer's report for January and February 2026. Mrs. Leon seconded the motion.

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

Vice Chairperson Ortiz presented the financial report and Section 8 Utilization report.

Mr. Snyder reported that general funds are slightly low, but cash accounts remain strong. The Section 8 utility utilization report is currently under review, and it is anticipated that the numbers will increase. However, HUD has imposed certain restrictions, advising caution. While the Authority maintains a reasonable reserve, there is no guarantee that funding will be available to cover any potential shortfall. As a result, HUD has recommended scaling back; however, the Authority is attempting to gradually increase participation without overextending, to maintain stable program numbers.

Regarding expenses, Mr. Snyder stated that overall costs continue to look favorable but noted an important exception. The agreement with UGI Energy Services, which supplies electric and gas services, expired at the end of December. Although the lapse was identified, it was not addressed in time, resulting in higher-than-desired rates. He explained that the previous local representative is now based in Western Pennsylvania, but a new local representative has been secured. A new agreement was signed on Friday, effective April 1, which will significantly reduce electric and gas costs. Prior to December, the Authority was paying approximately \$6.92 per unit of measurement, which has now been reduced to approximately \$4.90. A six-month agreement was executed for gas services to allow for monitoring of market rates and the opportunity to secure more favorable pricing if rates decline further. Electric rates were set at approximately 10.8 kW for an 18-month term, which is expected to stabilize costs moving forward, particularly in the next year, and provide meaningful financial relief.

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**Mrs. Clifton made a motion to approve the financial and Section 8 report.**

**Mrs. Leon seconded the motion.**

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

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

**Under Old Business, regarding the Parkridge Lease, Mr. Ritter stated that the matter will be deferred until the next board meeting.**

**Under the Chairperson's Report, Vice Chairperson Ortiz presented a statement from Chairperson Rittle. "On February 23, last month, the full board of commissioners held an executive session meeting. Our topic was the budget. I personally, having reviewed the budget and after hearing directly from executive director John Ritter, feel confident about the year ahead. If I were able to be here in person I would vote in favor of this budget".**

**Under the Executive Director's report, a new Family Development Office manager, Celinette Severino, began employment on March 16. Mr. Ritter noted that she has prior experience in public housing, a strong track record, and is expected to be a great addition to the team. Vice Chairperson Ortiz inquired whether she had worked in Pennsylvania, and Mr. Ritter confirmed that she previously worked at the Rooney Building on the South Side and is familiar with Bethlehem. Mrs. Linares asked about her responsibilities, and Mr. Ritter explained that she will manage the FDO office, filling the position vacated by Miriam following her retirement.**

**Second, he reported that BHA Field Day, now renamed Carnival Day, will be held at the Northeast Community Center on August 15, with a rain date of August 16. He noted that there will be a variety of vendors, more events than in previous years, and increased participation from community partners, making it a well-rounded event.**

**Third, an NSPIRE inspection for Pembroke, Fairmount, and Pfeifle is scheduled for April 6. He explained that inspectors will review all units and properties. He noted that, as Pembroke has aged and certain maintenance efforts were reduced due to the Choice Neighborhood initiative, the Authority is currently working to catch up; however, he stated that they should be in good shape for the inspection. Finally, he announced that a drug and criminal activity meeting will be held on Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. in the Monocacy conference room.**

**Under Deputy Executive Director report – nothing reported.**

**Under Committee Reports Resident Advisory Board, Mr. Ortiz, reported that baseball will begin this Saturday, and preparations are underway to start various programs. He noted that several projects are planned at the center, and the gardening club will be starting soon. Additionally, a meet-and-greet will be held for parents and children in the community to encourage greater involvement at the center. Mr. Ortiz also stated that the food bank continues to operate. In conclusion the next Resident Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 12, 2026, at 1:00 PM at the Monocacy Tower Community Room.**

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Resident Council - Nothing to report.

**UNDER RESOLUTIONS - APPROVING OF THE OPERATING BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR ENDING MARCH 31, 2027.**

Mrs. Linares made a motion to approve the operating budget for fiscal year ending March 31, 2027. Mrs. Leon seconded the motion.

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

**APPROVING OF THE CONTRACT FOR REPLACING REFRIGERATORS AND OVEN RANGE OUTLETS AT ALL BHA PROPERTIES.**

Mrs. Leon asked why the lowest bid wasn't selected, noting that she was supportive either way but wanted clarification on the reasoning. Mrs. Clifton explained that the lower bidder was likely deemed ineligible for failing to include a required bid bond, pending confirmation. Mr. Speshok confirmed that, while some contracts may allow a 10% certified check from a bank, this project does not. He added that the bidder submitted an insurance policy rather than a proper bid bond, and after consulting with Attorney Matz, it was determined that only a bid bond is acceptable. Mrs. Linares noted the importance of this requirement, especially for an electrical project. Mrs. Leon thanked board.

Mrs. Leon made a motion to approve the contract for replacing refrigerators and oven outlets at all BHA properties. Mrs. Linares seconded the motion.

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

**APPROVING OF THE CONTRACT FOR THE RENOVATION OF 20 UNITS AT PARKRIDGE.**

Mrs. Linares asked if residents would need to move out during renovations. Mr. Ritter confirmed they would, but tenants can return to their original units once the work is complete. Mrs. Clifton asked about financial and logistical assistance, and Mr. Ritter confirmed that move-in costs will be covered. Vice Chairperson Ortiz asked who the contractor would be, and Mr. Speshok replied Narissa Construction, Wilmington, Delaware. Mrs. Clifton asked about temporary relocation, and Mr. Ritter explained that vacant units at Parkridge will be used to stage residents during renovations to ensure no one is left without housing.

Mrs. Linares made a motion to approve the renovation of 20 units at Parkridge. Mrs. Leon seconded the motion.

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

**APPROVING OF THE CONTRACT FOR RADON TESTING AT BHA PROPERTIES.**

Mrs. Leon asked about lead testing in relation to renovations, noting curiosity about whether lead-based paint might still be present in units. Mr. Speshok explained that HUD regulations require lead testing every five years for approximately 50% of units. He added that most lead-based paint has either been encapsulated or dated, and any remaining issues are addressed during renovations, such as at Pembroke. Mr. Ritter noted that Parkridge falls outside the period when lead-based paint was commonly used.

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Mrs. Leon made a motion to approve the radon testing at BHA properties.  
Mrs. Clifton seconded the motion.

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

**APPROVING OF THE REVISION OF THE APPENDIX “A” PERSONNEL POLICY EMPLOYEE MINIMUM SALARIES.**

Mrs. Leon made a motion to approve the Appendix “A” personnel policy employee minimum salaries. Mrs. Linares seconded the motion.

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

Under New Business – Nothing reported.

Under Miscellaneous Reports and Other Reports from Board Members, Solicitor and Staff. Mrs. Linares reported on the Scholarship Program, stating that two PAHRA applications were received and will be submitted by March 15. In addition, the Bethlehem Housing Commissioners’ Scholarship applications were mailed to eighth grade and senior students, with a return deadline at the end of May. Mrs. Linares also noted that the Superintendent Jack Silva of the Bethlehem Area School District will be retiring July 1, 2026.

Mrs. Clifton asked for a status update on the voucher RFP process from the January meeting. Ms. Rivera explained that consultant Ann Boynton prepared a complete RFP, and only the dates need to be updated before it can be advertised. The RFP will run for 30 days in the newspaper before the end of the month. Mrs. Clifton clarified that the RFP is to select a provider to help create the framework for the voucher program, which Ms. Rivera confirmed.

Under Public Comments – Nothing reported.

Vice Chairperson Ortiz noted that the next regular board meeting will be held on Monday, April 13, 2026 at 4:00 P.M., in the community room at Monocacy Tower. There being no further business to transact, Vice Chairperson Ortiz declared the meeting adjourned.

John Ritter  
Executive Director