MINUTES . . . REGULAR MEETING . . . MAY 11, 2026

The members of the Bethlehem Housing Authority met in a regular session on May 11, at 4:00 P.M. (IN PERSON MEETING). Those present and absent were as follows

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

Chairperson Rittle presented the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 13, 2026, were presented and approve. Mrs. Leon made a motion to accept the minutes of April 13, 2026. Mrs. Linares seconded the motion.

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

Chairperson Rittle presented the Treasurer's report for April 2026.

Mrs. Leon made a motion to approve the treasurer's report for April 2026.
Mrs. Linares seconded the motion.

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

Chairperson Rittle presented the financial report and Section 8 Utilization report.

Mr. Snyder reported that cash flow remained strong through the end of March and that the Authority was in a favorable financial position. He reviewed the Section 8 Report, noting that 392 vouchers were leased for the month of May, a decrease of two vouchers from the previous month. He explained that voucher utilization fluctuates regularly due to participant moves, terminations, and new admissions. The total Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) expense for the month was approximately $381,000. Mr. Snyder further reported that ten vouchers were currently issued and available for use.

Mr. Snyder stated that the fiscal year-end figures were substantially complete, with only minor adjustments anticipated between accounts that would not significantly impact the overall totals. He reported that the Authority's final deficit was approximately $761,000, considerably better than his earlier projection of a $2 million deficit. He explained that HUD required any subsidy funds drawn beginning in January that were not expended through accounts payable, payroll, or other eligible expenses to be classified as unearned revenue. As a result, approximately three-quarters of the funds drawn during the first three months of the year had to be reclassified as unearned revenue, although those funds would eventually be available once properly utilized. He also noted that the deficit was impacted by lower-than-anticipated interest income. While interest revenue had been projected at $400,000, actual interest income totaled approximately $32,000 due primarily to the requirement to return approximately $450,000 to HUD. He stated that those funds would be remitted to HUD once the audit was completed.

Mr. Rittle inquired about the difference between the available vouchers and the number currently leased shown in the Section 8 Report. Mr. Snyder explained that the Authority is authorized for approximately 400 vouchers and is currently leasing about 392, while maintaining approximately 505 vouchers in circulation. He noted that the high level of voucher issuance reflects efforts to serve applicants from the lengthy waiting list while remaining mindful of budget limitations. Mr. Snyder added that HUD had made it clear that no shortfall funding would be available and, therefore, the Authority was proceeding cautiously to avoid overspending.

Mrs. Leon asked when additional information regarding the HUD repayment would be available. Mr. Snyder clarified that the repayment would occur after completion of the audit. He stated that approximately $450,000 was currently owed to HUD and that auditors could potentially identify additional amounts due. He further explained that certain funds included in the Authority's accounts, such as Bayard-related funds, debt service reserves, and scholarship funds, represented restricted assets that were already accounted for as liabilities and designated for specific purposes.

Mrs. Linares made a motion to approve the financial and Section 8 report.
Mrs. Leon seconded the motion.

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

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

Under Old Business, nothing reported.

Under the Chairperson's Report, Mr. Rittle reported that he had no formal Chairman's Report to present. He noted, however, that he visits the Authority approximately twice each month to sign checks, which provides an opportunity to stay informed on Authority operations. During those visits, he regularly receives updates from Executive Director John Ritter and Deputy Executive Director Laurie Rivera regarding ongoing activities and organizational matters. He stated that these meetings serve as an informal means of remaining engaged with the Authority's operations.

Under the Executive Director's report, Mr. Ritter provided an update regarding recent activities involving Gorman and Choice Neighborhoods. He reported that on May 4th, Brian Swanton and Ted Matkom, Vice President of Gorman, visited the Authority. A brief site tour was conducted, followed by a meeting in the conference room. On May 5th, representatives from the Authority, the City, and Gorman met for breakfast to discuss the status and direction of the Choice Neighborhoods initiative. Mr. Ritter indicated that discussions were positive and that the project appears to be moving back on track, with a renewed focus on the planning phase.

Mr. Rittle requested clarification on the current status of the Choice Neighborhoods process. Mr. Ritter confirmed that the project has returned to the planning stage and that it will likely be several months before significant progress resumes. Mr. Rittle further asked whether an implementation grant application had been submitted. Mr. Ritter confirmed that an application had been submitted but had not yet been awarded, and the process remains incomplete. He added that, in the meantime, background planning work continues to be updated.

Ms. Linares commented that the new park area is nearly complete. Ms. Leon agreed, noting that the park is visually appealing and has significantly improved the area. Mr. Ritter added that the park development came together quickly and is now open and well-designed, featuring open green space, seating areas, and recreational game tables such as chess. Ms. Linares also remarked positively on the improvements.

Mr. Ritter reported that an NSPIRE inspection is scheduled for May 14th for Fairmount, Pfeifle, and Pembroke properties, and another inspection will take place on May 29th for the Bayard units. He noted that all Bayard units, totaling approximately twenty, will be inspected. He also provided an update on ongoing radon testing, stating that the Authority is in its third week of testing, during which test canisters are placed in units and later collected for analysis.

Additionally, Mr. Ritter further reported on a temporary initiative involving the collection of donated clothing beginning in February, coordinated by Marketing and Events Coordinator Mia. The items are being gathered for use in a pop-up thrift-style resource event to be held in the former First Tee building, which is currently unused and has been cleaned for this purpose. Ms. Rivera clarified that the initiative is intended primarily as a resource for residents and community members in need, and that it is not intended to establish a permanent thrift store. She noted that the ultimate future use of the First Tee building has not yet been determined. Mr. Ritter added that similar efforts were successful the previous year and have continued due to positive community response.

Finally, Mr. Ritter announced that Anti-Harassment training will be conducted by Heather Roth within the next week or two. He also reported that the Drug and Criminal meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June10th at 10:00 a.m. in the upstairs conference room.

Mrs. Leon inquired about where donations should be brought for the ongoing collection effort. Ms. Rivera responded that donations may be dropped off at the Authority's main office and added that staff may also be able to arrange pick-up of items if needed. Ms. Leon confirmed that the donations would include clothing and similar items. Ms. Rivera clarified that household items would also be accepted. Mr. Ritter added that shoes, clothing, and other usable items are being collected, noting that the Authority is utilizing available space for community resource purposes.

Under Deputy Executive Director report, Ms. Rivera nothing to report at this time.

Under Committee Reports, Scholarship Committee, Mrs. Linares reported that the Authority received one application for the 8th grade scholarship and one application for the high school scholarship. She explained that, since more than one high school scholarship is available, she would like to extend an opportunity for an additional student who recently expressed interest to submit an application by Friday. Mr. Rittle inquired whether the student had applied after the deadline, and Mrs. Linares confirmed that this was the case. When asked whether a formal board vote would be required, Mrs. Linares stated that no vote was necessary and that the Scholarship Committee would proceed accordingly. She added that scholarship winners will be presented at the next Board meeting.

Mrs. Linares also provided an update on a past scholarship recipient, noting that Kayla Medina, the Authority's 8th grade scholarship winner in 2021 who received a $5,000 scholarship, has been awarded third place in the 2026 Paul G. Pecharko Memorial Scholarship for continuing education through the Pennsylvania Association of Housing and Redevelopment Agencies. The award includes a $1,000 scholarship. Mrs. Linares stated that the recipient is doing well. Mr. Rittle commented that it is always positive to receive updates on former scholarship recipients.

Resident Council – Nothing to report.

Ms. Rivera indicated Ms. Gwendolyn was unable to provide a verbal update at that time.

Mr. Rittle then proceeded with the Bodder House Resident Council update, noting that there are currently four active resident councils. He reported that for Bodder House, nominations were completed in March 2026 and elections were completed in April 2026. He further noted that board trainings are scheduled to begin in May 2026, with newly elected officials expected to begin community activity involvement in June 2026. Mr. Rittle congratulated the group on the progress and acknowledged the importance of establishing an active resident council, noting prior challenges in maintaining consistent participation.

Mrs. Flores made a comment. Mr. Rittle responded that this was the specific council that had been actively worked on and thanked those involved for their efforts. Ms. Linares noted that Lynfield was closed. Mr. Rittle stated that in the absence of a formal resident council at Lynfield, Mr. Rogelio provides ongoing informal feedback and updates regarding resident concerns. He clarified that Mr. Rogelio was not present to confirm the details. Mr. Matz added that there are operational difficulties at that location. Mr. Rittle acknowledged the comment and noted that while resident councils follow a formal structure, community engagement can sometimes function in a less formal way depending on circumstances. He clarified that this was his interpretation.

<u>UNDER RESOLUTIONS</u> – Nothing to report

Under New Business, Mr. Rittle presented a request to rescind a previously approved resolution related to the 2026 grass cutting contract. He explained that, based on a recommendation and a letter from the Executive Director, the prior award needed to be revisited due to issues with the original scope of work, which was described as confusing and difficult to administer due to overlapping property assignments. He noted that, given the timing, it was no longer feasible to rebid the contract without causing delays of approximately six to ten weeks. As a result, Administration recommended moving forward with Mason Landscaping, the Authority's current contractor, who has provided grass cutting services for approximately six years and agreed to maintain last year's pricing in order to ensure continuity and compliance.

Mrs. Leon stated that she was supportive of the recommendation but raised concerns regarding litter and debris in mowing areas, particularly plastic items that are often broken into small fragments during mowing. She suggested that residents or community members be notified in advance of mowing schedules so they can assist in removing debris beforehand. Mr. Ritter responded that the Authority could send advance notices to tenants and added that contractors typically attempt to remove visible debris prior to mowing when possible. He further noted that a written notice to residents would be issued. Mrs. Leon agreed that advance notice would be helpful and indicated she was willing to assist with cleanup efforts when possible.

Attorney Matz inquired whether there were designated receptacles in common areas for trash disposal. Mr. Ritter responded that receptacles are currently located primarily near playground areas and not throughout general common spaces. Mrs. Leon highly encourages trash receptacles wherever possible.

Mr. Rittle read the resolution language for the Board, stating that the Board would rescind the prior award of the 2026 grass cutting contract, reject all bids received under the original solicitation, and authorize a rebid while approving Mason Landscaping under the revised contract terms and rates.

Mrs. Leon made a motion to approve the contract with Mason Landscaping.
Mrs. Linares seconded the motion.

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

Under Miscellaneous Reports and Other Reports from Board Members, Solicitor and Staff - Nothing reported.

Under Public Comments, nothing reported.

Chairperson Rittle noted that the next regular board meeting will be held on Monday, June 8, 2026, 2026 at 4:00 P.M., in the community room at Monocacy Tower. There being no further business to transact, Chairperson Rittle declared the meeting adjourned.

John Ritter
Executive Director