

MINUTES... REGULAR MEETING... NOVEMBER 10, 2025

The members of the Bethlehem Housing Authority met in a regular session on November 10, 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
Mr. J. Marc Rittle

ABSENT

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 September 8, 2025, were presented and approved. Mr. Rittle made a motion to accept the minutes of September 8, 2025. Mrs. Linares seconded the motion.

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

Chairperson Clifton presented the Treasurer's report for September and October.

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the treasurer's report for September and October 2025. Mrs. Linares seconded the motion.

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

Under the Financial report, Mr. Snyder reported that the Income and Expense Report shows that income is slightly lower than usual, primarily due to changes in Management Fees. HUD has begun treating certain funds differently, especially within the Capital Fund. Previously, we were allowed to draw down certain portions in full, but recent changes have made it uncomfortable to draw funds in advance. As a result, funds are now being drawn only as expenses occur, which is why income appears lower. Expenses are also down for now, although utility costs will rise as we move into the winter months. Overall, we remain in good financial shape, and cash flow is stable. We are financially stable with sufficient cash on hand and have no immediate concerns.

On the Section 8 Utilization Report, our utilization rate for November is 76%. We have available funds and are actively leasing units with a goal of reaching 400. Currently, we are at approximately 391-392 units. For December, HUD has released funding, so HAP payments to landlords will not be an issue. However, January may be problematic because there is no federal appropriation at this time. Regarding public housing funding, HUD has released appropriations only through November. We have drawn funds through that month, and although December funding is not yet available, we have enough cash to operate into 2026 with no issues. The larger concern is funding beyond 2026. We have applied for subsidy, but nothing has been released yet, and we anticipate receiving about \$400,000 less than last year, while expenses continue to increase.

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Section 8 administrative funding also remains a challenge because it comes from a shared pool across all PHAs. As agencies lease more units, the pool shrinks, reducing each agency's share. Earlier this year, proration was in the 90% range; it is now 88.513%, which means we continue to receive less funding. This unpredictability is another reason we aim to increase leasing. In addition, a new Cost Allocation Plan is required under rules issued by the Office of Management and Budget in 2024. Each program must fully support itself, and all costs must be documented in detail. Central Office must now charge rent to departments using its space, and shared costs—such as the phone bill—must be allocated across all programs. This will not increase expenses overall, but it will redistribute them differently. We expect to have the new plan fully implemented by January 1st. It will essentially function as a detailed manual documenting all operational costs for auditors and federal reviewers.

Lastly, the new budget format required by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board will look noticeably different. It will show rental income, all expenses, and then the amount of governmental funding received, highlighting the agency's reliance on federal support. I will keep the presentation as consistent as possible, but the layout will change.

Chairperson Clifton asked a follow-up question regarding the new protocol for distributing administrative costs across the various programs and properties. She noted that the Authority already struggles with some AMPs being more expensive than others, and this change does not seem likely to improve that situation. Mr. Snyder explained that on the AMP side, funds can be transferred between AMPs, which provides some flexibility. However, among the five AMPs, the high rises receive the fourth-lowest grant despite having some of the highest expenses due to costs such as elevator maintenance. The larger issue, he clarified, is that funds cannot be moved from the AMPs to the Central Office or to Section 8. Those programs are therefore the primary concern. Chairperson Clifton acknowledged the clarification.

Mrs. Linares made a motion to approve the financial report for Sept/Oct 2025.

Mr. Rittle seconded the motion.

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

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

Under Old Business, Parkridge lease, Attorney Matz distributed a copy of the lease to all board members. Chairperson Clifton asked whether the lease presented was for review or approval. Attorney Matz explained that it follows the same format as the Lynfield Lease, with only minor differences related to the parties involved, the portion of the property being used, and the intended once-a-week, month-to-month arrangement. He confirmed that the organization has met all preliminary requirements, including proper insurance and 501(c)(3) status. Chairperson Clifton noted that the Authority should not approve the lease without receiving the certificate of insurance, naming the Authority as an insured. Mr. Ritter stated that he expects to receive the certificate on Wednesday. Chairperson Clifton recommended holding the lease under Old Business until next month, giving Board members time to review the digital copy that will be sent out.

Mr. Rittle requested that future agenda packets include a brief explanation of the lease purpose for context, noting that the document itself does not reference Parkridge by name.

Chairperson Clifton clarified that the lease is for a faith-based organization using the Parkridge space once a week for worship services and community programs. Mrs. Linares asked who pays for the insurance, and Mr. Ritter and Attorney Matz confirmed that the organization is responsible.

Commissioner Rogelio Ortiz joined the meeting.

Under Chairperson's report, Mrs. Clifton reported that Mr. William Heller from the Teamsters Union reached out with a question regarding the Board's role in ongoing discussions involving certain union members. She explained that, consistent with prior Board conversations, she directed him to the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), which outlines the proper procedures for handling conversations, grievances, or issues with the Housing Authority. She noted that the CBA does not assign the Board a role in this process, and the union was advised to follow the established steps with Housing Authority staff. Chairperson Clifton shared this to ensure the Board was aware of the inquiry and how it was addressed. Mr. Ritter added that grievance hearings have already been scheduled.

Under the Executive Director's Report, Mr. Ritter reported that the Five-Year Plan will be on the December agenda and must be approved by the Mayor and the RAB before submission to HUD. The staff is working on securing 25 Project-Based Vouchers for early 2026, specifically for new construction. Due to the federal shutdown, there has been no activity on Choice Neighborhood or Gorman. He announced a major change to the First Tee project: instead of rehabilitating the existing structure, HUD has determined it is more cost-effective to demolish the building and construct a new 12-unit building on the same footprint. Chairperson Clifton asked about the budget and timeline; Mr. Ritter confirmed the revised plan remains within budget but will delay the project, with architects and engineers needing to revise plans. Mr. Ritter and Mr. Speshok explained that the original building's concrete-filled block construction made rehab impractical, and HUD approved a waiver after determining the project exceeded TDC limits.

Mr. Rittle asked, procedurally, whether the Board has any jurisdiction regarding the First Tee building. He questioned whether the Board would need to approve a revised design or if this update is simply for notification purposes and the process remains strictly between staff and HUD. He clarified that he was asking to better understand the required steps. Mr. Speshok stated that the redesign will proceed as a revision to the existing contract, and it is not yet clear whether Board approval will be required for updated plans. Chairperson Clifton noted the significant role of consultant Mr. Kichline, and Mr. Ritter confirmed his contract runs through December, but he remains available to assist. Mr. Speshok explained that the consultant has agreed to remain available and is only a phone call or text message away. He noted that they are still in the early stages, and once the updated revisions are submitted, they will move forward with the blueprints and the next steps.

Regarding property acquisition from the Boys & Girls Club, Mr. Ritter and Mr. Speshok stated that negotiations have not yet begun, and the timing will depend on confirming allowable funding sources. Staff are seeking HUD clarification on whether Capital Funds may be used for acquisition. Mr. Ritter also announced that Miriam Maldonado, Property Manager of the Family Development Office, will retire in December after 27 years of service, and succession planning discussions have begun.

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Under the Deputy Executive Director's Report, Ms. Rivera reported that the Authority will begin using ADP services to streamline payroll and timekeeping, reducing reliance on spreadsheets and improving efficiency. She also announced the hiring of Ms. Mia Reyes, who will support marketing, event coordination, and social engagement efforts.

She highlighted several current initiatives, including the BHA Holiday Clothing Drive, which has been successful over the past two weeks thanks to employee participation. Donations will be shared with the Boys and Girls Club, Northeast Community Center, the high-rises, and, if possible, New Bethany for adult items.

She added that for the holidays, BHA has arranged transportation for residents to attend a Liberty High School concert for senior citizens, planned trips to "Lights on the Parkway," and is working on supporting emergency meal efforts at the shelter. Ms. Rivera emphasized that these activities, along with Mia's work, are part of BHA's broader goal to increase community involvement and visibility.

Under Committee Reports, Resident Advisory Board, Mr. Ortiz, reported that on November 19th, East Hills student government will serve over 100 meals to Lynfield residents, including desserts, and distribute turkeys. Fifty turkeys were donated by Dr. Gupta from Lehigh Valley Hospital, along with trimmings for Freemansburg families, and an additional 40 turkeys were donated by a community supporter named James. Mr. Ortiz thanked Mr. Ritter and his wife for having Grace Church adopt Lynfield residents for Christmas gifts, and Ms. Cathy Herrington and the Chambers of Commerce for supporting families with gifts. He also acknowledged a \$75 donation from Mark Iampietro, a former BHA employee, for the food pantry.

Mr. Ortiz noted ongoing partnerships with Whole Foods and Redner's Supermarket to provide food to the community every Thursday, with the food bank serving families every two weeks through an order-ahead program. He also reported that a six-week financial workshop is being offered via Zoom and occasionally in person, helping participants understand financial literacy. Additionally, Mr. Ortiz highlighted ongoing support for the Boys and Girls Club on Fritz Drive, providing dairy, bread, meats, snacks, and other items weekly, which has helped build a strong relationship with the organization.

Under resident council update, Mrs. Flores reported that there are currently three active resident councils in the high-rises. The councils are focusing on conflict resolution, and board members are receiving training to better support community members. They are also coordinating CPR training with the Health Bureau.

Regarding food donations, the councils have taken previous guidance seriously. The Litzenberger council has reached out to Second Harvest for additional training, including education on topics such as understanding expiration dates.

Additionally, BHA is collaborating with the councils on a new initiative for next year called *Walk for Life*, designed to encourage seniors and adults with disabilities to engage in physical activity and support their mental health.

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UNDER RESOLUTIONS - APPROVING OF THE LEASE REVISIONS OF 2025.

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the lease revisions of 2025.

Mrs. Linares seconded the motion.

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

Ms. Rivera stated that although many items are still evolving, the primary updates reflected in the lease relate to HOTMA and VAWA requirements. In response to Mr. Rittle's question regarding the utility change, Chairperson Clifton and Ms. Rivera clarified that it is simply a utility allowance rate change.

Attorney Matz noted significant updates to the bifurcation and eviction process, allowing a household member who violates the lease to be removed while permitting the remaining, non-offending household members to retain occupancy. Chairperson Clifton confirmed her understanding of the change. She then asked about the highlighted fifteen-day notice for tenant termination and whether the notice period had changed. Mr. Ritter stated that the fifteen-day requirement remains the same. Attorney Matz clarified that the update pertains to the second and third sentences of Article 5, Section B, specifically relating to the security deposit, not the timeline.

Mr. Rittle questioned how often family income is re-examined, Ms. Rivera stated that re-examinations occur annually, with additional interim re-examinations conducted if a family's income changes.

APPROVING OF THE ACOP REVISIONS OF 2025 (ADMISSIONS AND CONTINUED OCCUPANCY POLICIES.

Mrs. Linares made a motion to approve the ACOP revisions of 2025.

Mr. Rittle seconded the motion.

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

Chairperson Clifton noted that some of the highlighted ACOP updates were related to Fair Housing and VAWA. Ms. Rivera confirmed this, explaining that the policy was reorganized to streamline content, so related sections are consolidated rather than scattered throughout the 642-page document. Mr. Rittle asked about the approval process and whether the ACOP also goes to the Mayor. Chairperson Clifton clarified that only the Five-Year Plan is submitted through the Mayor's office; the ACOP is approved solely by the Board. Mr. Ritter added that the Five-Year Plan will be presented for approval at the December board meeting.

APPROVING OF THE WRITE-OFF OF VACATED TENANT ACCOUNT.

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the write-off of vacant accounts.

Mrs. Linares seconded the motion.

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

APPROVING THE CONTRACT FOR PAINT SUPPLY.

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the contract for paint supply.
Mrs. Linares seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Clifton/Ortiz/Linares/Rittle; – None

APPROVING OF THE AMENDED 2025-2029 CAPITAL FUND 5-YEAR PLAN, WHICH INCLUDES THE ADDITION OF RADON TESTING FOR ALL FOUR HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS AND ALL FAMILY UNITS.

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the amended 2025 capital fund 5-year plan.
Mrs. Linares seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Clifton/Ortiz/Linares/Rittle; – None

Mr. Rittle asked if the main change in the plan involved Radon testing. Mr. Ritter confirmed that it did. Chairperson Clifton clarified that the cost included is for testing only, as remediation costs cannot be determined until testing results are known. Mr. Ritter added that testing could affect one-unit, multiple units, or none.

Chairperson Clifton noted that it has been eight years since the last Radon testing, while recommendations suggest testing every five years, adding urgency to the work. Ms. Linares inquired about who will perform the testing, and Mr. Ritter stated that a bid has not yet been issued. Chairperson Clifton explained that the budget lines are generic, covering testing of units and installation of mitigation systems as required, with un-estimated numbers. Approval of the plan will provide coverage, understanding that revisions may be necessary once bids are received. Mr. Ritter noted that there are currently 20 units at Bayard with Radon pumps, which are the focus of this work.

APPROVING THE NEW APPOINTMENT TO THE RETIREMENT PLAN ADMINISTRATOR COMMITTEE.

Mrs. Linares made a motion to approve the appointment of a new member of the retirement plan administrator committee. Mr. Rittle seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Clifton/Ortiz/Linares/Rittle; – None

Under New Business, nothing to report.

Under Miscellaneous Reports and Other Business Board Member, Mr. Ortiz recognized the efforts of the staff at the community center, specifically Ms. Martha Ortiz and Ms. Tomiko Beaumont. He commended them for their dedication in providing food and resources to the community, noting the increased need and challenges in addressing hunger. Mr. Ortiz also mentioned efforts to partner with a second supermarket, Whole Foods, to help ensure that no one in the community goes hungry.

Under Public Comments, Mr. Kevin Easterling addressed the Board, following up on his participation in the July meeting. He reviewed the federal Section 3 requirement, which mandates that any construction funding over \$200,000 provided to a public housing authority must involve local low-income contractors or Section 8 tenants, either through hiring, training, or workforce participation.

Mr. Easterling stated that, following the July meeting, he discussed Section 3 compliance with Ms. Rivera and Mr. Ritter, who referred him to Mr. Scott Speshok. He noted that the Bethlehem Housing Authority had not responded, so his organization obtained Section 3 reports from 2014–2019 through a Freedom of Information Request. These reports, along with recent Section 3 training materials, were provided to Mr. Ritter and Ms. Rivera to aid their understanding.

Mr. Easterling highlighted that no Section 3 reports have been submitted for 2020–2025. He noted that the Office of Open Records granted Mr. Ritter an additional 30 days to provide these reports. Mr. Easterling emphasized the importance of Section 3 compliance in supporting tenants and local low-income contractors and submitted a single copy of the 2014–2019 reports for the Board’s review. Chairperson Clifton confirmed receipt and instructed that the documents be passed to Ms. Moreno for distribution to the Board.

Chairperson Clifton noted that the next regular board meeting will be held on Monday, December 8, 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