MINUTES . . . REGULAR MEETING . . .. OCTOBER 12, 2026

The members of the Bethlehem Housing Authority met in a regular session on October 12, 2026 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
Mr. Lindsey Clifton	Mrs. Iris Linares
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 September 14, 2026, were presented and approve. Mrs. Rachel Leon made a motion to accept the minutes of September 14, 2026. Mrs. Clifton seconded the motion.

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

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

Mrs. Rachel Leon made a motion to approve the treasurer's report for September 2026.
Mrs. Lindsey Clifton seconded the motion.

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

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

Mr. Snyder reported that cash and investment remained stable and that the Authority continued to have sufficient funds to meet its financial obligations. Regarding the Income and Expense Report, Richard advised that he had discussed the accounting treatment of the operating subsidy with a representative of the Authority's auditing firm. Based on that discussion, the auditor recommended that the Authority not defer the operating subsidy. This adjustment will be reflected in the current audit and is expected to place the Authority in a more favorable financial position. He explained that the current accounting treatment had resulted in an unfavorable variance of approximately $163,000 after reviewing expenses. He further explained that the proposed deferral approach was not consistent with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), and therefore the auditor recommended against deferring the subsidy.

Additionally, Mr. Snyder presented the Section 8 Utilization Report, noting that, as of the beginning of October, the Authority had leased 397 units, representing approximately 76% utilization. He explained that an additional line had been added to the report to reflect funding utilization, which currently stands at 96.9%. He explained that the Authority did not meet the SEMAP utilization standard because its funding utilization fell slightly below the required 95% threshold during the reporting period. He noted that spending had increased from approximately $370,000 at the beginning of the year to approximately $384,000 per month, having reached nearly $387,000.

In response to Chairperson Rittle's question regarding the recommended utilization level, Mr. Snyder explained that HUD encourages housing authorities to maintain approximately 98% funding utilization. However, he expressed concern that operating too close to 100% could create financial risks if funding were reduced or unexpected circumstances arose. He emphasized that the Authority must maintain at least 95% utilization by the end of the year to meet the requirement. He further explained that the Authority previously leased approximately 480 units but had gradually reduced its leasing activity over the past 13 to 14 years due to funding reductions.

Mrs. Leon asked whether falling below the 95% funding utilization threshold was what resulted in the unfavorable SEMAP outcome. Mr. Snyder confirmed that the Authority had been slightly below the required threshold, at approximately 94%, which was sufficient to result in a failure.

Mr. Snyder also discussed factors that could affect funding utilization, including tenants losing employment and portability requests. He explained that when a participant receiving assistance through the Authority moves to another jurisdiction with a higher rental subsidy, the Authority may remain financially responsible if the receiving housing authority does not agree to absorb the participant. He provided an example of a tenant whose current subsidy is approximately $1,000 per month moving to an area where the subsidy could increase to $2,500 or $3,000 per month. Multiple portability requests of this nature could significantly affect the Authority's available funding.

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

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

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

Under Old Business, Mr. Ritter provided an update on the Choice Neighborhoods initiative, reporting that Gorman's scheduled October 15 visit was canceled due to a scheduling conflict. A Zoom meeting will be held to discuss the Authority's four high-rise buildings and the potential RAD conversion. An additional update will be provided following that meeting.

Additionally, he reported that a meeting was held with Kelly from Pennrose on September 30 regarding the Gateway project. Pennrose provided an update on the project's capital stack and identified an estimated $3 million development funding gap. The Authority continues to evaluate the impact of the October 13 Fair Market Rent increase on HUD's process and the Project-Based Voucher (PBV) commitment. Mr. Ritter noted that addressing the funding gap remains the immediate priority and that further discussions with Pennrose will take place following Kelly's return.

Commissioner Lindsey requested clarification regarding the separate projects involving Gorman and Pennrose. Mr. Ritter explained that Gorman is involved in the Choice Neighborhoods initiative in Pembroke and has also expressed interest in renovating the Authority's four high-rise buildings through a potential RAD conversion, beginning with Monocacy.

Pennrose is separately involved in discussions regarding the Gateway project at 4th Street and Belcher Street. Mr. Ritter confirmed that discussions remain ongoing and that no agreements have been finalized.

Mr. Ritter further explained that the future development approach for Pembroke, whether project-based housing or traditional public housing, remains under consideration and will depend on available funding.

Under the Chairman's Report, Mr. Rittle reported that an executive session was held on Wednesday, September 30, with all members of the Board of Commissioners, Executive Director Mr. Ritter, and Attorney Matz in attendance.

Under the Executive Director', Mr. Ritter reported that the grass-cutting contract will be advertised through PennBid in January or February in accordance with the Authority's procurement policy. The contract will be awarded to the lowest responsible bidder. Also, the Trophies and televisions were removed due to safety concerns, particularly for children using the community center. He advised that appropriate trophies may be displayed provided they are safely positioned.

Second, on the Dover Lane Sinkhole, Mr. Ritter reported that the Authority revised its Five-Year Plan to include the funding necessary to proceed with stabilization of the Dover Lane sinkhole. Once approved, the Authority will move forward with the foundation stabilization work.

Third, Mr. Ritter reported that Ms. Sharon Peoples was relocated from 1162 Dover Lane to 1220 Fritz Drive due to the sinkhole. The Authority, along with community partners, provided assistance to the affected families, including food, clothing, toiletries, and outreach services. All eight affected families received assistance. Five of the eight units are completely vacant, while three still contain some belongings. Residents have been instructed to stay away from the affected units until the necessary work is completed.

In response to Commissioner Lindsey's question regarding the connection between the sinkhole and an NSPIRE inspection, Mr. Ritter confirmed that the inspection had to be moved to another location due to the condition of the affected unit. He explained that an independent contractor will evaluate the property and ensure it is safe as the foundation work progresses.

Additionally, Mr. Ritter reported that the Authority continues to address pest control concerns at Monocacy and Bartholomew House. Multiple treatments have been conducted at Monocacy, and a technician continues to address the various pest issues. He noted that the situation appears to be improving at both locations.

Commissioner Lindsey inquired whether the Authority had received feedback from Pembroke residents following recent incidents involving a shooting and stabbing and whether resources were available to support affected residents.

Mr. Ritter stated that he had not received direct feedback from residents but acknowledged the incidents. He noted that the police substation is located across from the area and that the FDO office and staff are available to assist residents. He advised that the Authority would coordinate a meeting at the Fink Building to provide residents with an opportunity to express concerns and receive guidance and support.

Chairperson Rittle requested that future community safety incidents and related resident concerns be included in the Executive Director's Report. Attorney Matz asked about the reduction in police coverage at BHA developments.

Mr. Ritter explained that the Authority previously had five police officers assigned and currently has two due to staffing shortages within the police department. Attorney Matz clarified that the reduction in coverage was related to police department staffing limitations rather than the Authority's budget. He noted that the Authority pays above-baseline service fees for police coverage and that the existing contract provides for up to five officers. Ritter confirmed that the department's current staffing limitations have resulted in only two officers being available to serve the Authority

Mrs. Leon asked whether crime statistics for BHA properties are tracked separately from the City's overall statistics. Mr. Ritter explained that BHA officers primarily focus on Authority properties, although they may respond to other calls as needed.

Under Committee Reports, Mrs. Flores presented the quarterly report and provided an update on the upcoming "Blessings Giveaway Yard Event," scheduled for October 20, from 12:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. The event is intended to provide BHA residents with free clothing and other household items needed through the Authority's planned free thrift shop initiative. The event location was changed to the Fritz Building at the Family Development Office (FDO) to provide better accessibility and accommodate seniors, particularly those using walkers and wheelchairs. The event will include participation from several community agencies providing information and networking services. The schedule will prioritize seniors during the first two hours, followed by families for the remaining hour and a half. The city has also been invited, and Board members were encouraged to attend and bring information to distribute.

Mrs. Flores also reported that the four high-rise tenant councils are working together, with the Litzenberger Tenant Council assisting in mentoring and training newer councils. She noted that the councils are making progress and maintaining communication with the Family Development Office to ensure compliance with Authority policies.

Mrs. Leon expressed appreciation for receiving the report and asked whether it was the first time it had been provided. Mrs. Flores clarified that it was the third quarterly report and explained that quarterly reporting is more practical than monthly reporting due to fewer changes from month to month. Mrs. Leon also asked whether donations were still being accepted for the October 20 event. Mrs. Flores confirmed that additional donations were welcome.

UNDER RESOLUTIONS - APPROVING OF THE ADMISSIONS AND CONTINUED OCCUPANCY POLICY (ACOP) AND LEASE PROPOSED CHANGES.

Ms. Rodriguez presented the proposed revisions to the Admissions and Continued Occupancy Policy (ACOP), noting that the changes were highlighted in yellow. She requested Board approval at the meeting due to the upcoming implementation deadline. She explained that HUD issued guidance on May 16 requiring the implementation of HOTMA provisions under Sections 102 and 104, effective January 1, 2027. Since annual recertifications begin in September, the Authority has temporarily placed January recertifications on hold pending approval of the revised policy.

She explained that the revisions primarily address income and asset requirements. Effective January 1, 2027, the asset limitation will be $109,000, subject to annual HUD adjustments. Applicants with assets exceeding the established limit will not be eligible for admission; however, existing residents will be grandfathered under the revised requirements. She noted that HUD made adjustments following feedback from housing authorities, NAHRO, and the public, particularly concerning senior residents with substantial savings.

Ms. Rodriguez further reported that the leases have been updated to reflect the ACOP changes and that notices were sent to residents, providing them 30 days to contact the Authority. She also discussed revisions to the Pet Policy, including updated language addressing assistance animals, emotional support animals, and service animals to ensure compliance with applicable federal, state, and local requirements.

Chairperson Rittle thanked Mrs. Rodriguez for her hard work. Additionally, Mr. Ritter advised that the Section 8 Administrative Plan revisions would be presented at the November 2026 meeting for Board consideration and approval.

Mrs. Leon made a motion to approve the ACOP
Mrs. Lindsey seconded.

Roll Call: Ayes – Rittle/Clifton/Leon/Nays - None

Chairperson Rittle introduced the revised lease and noted that most changes aligned with the ACOP revisions. He questioned the inclusion of bicycle storage violations under Section XIV (Grounds for Lease Termination), expressing concern that residents could face eviction solely for storing bicycles in hallways.

Mrs. Rodriguez explained that the provision was added due to safety concerns involving bicycles stored or operated in common areas, particularly for residents using wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility devices. She noted that management generally follows a warning process before proceeding with eviction and considers the circumstances of each violation.

Mr. Ritter explained that bicycle racks had been ordered for installation outside the buildings and that, until they are available, residents must keep bicycles inside their individual units. Attorney Matz acknowledged the Chairman's concerns and explained that management retains discretion in determining whether an eviction action is appropriate.

Chairperson Rittle requested that bicycle violations be removed from Section XIV while remaining addressed under Section IX. Ms. Rodriguez stated that she would delete the reference and lease section XIV (54) that this would not be a problem since it is mentioned in Section XIV (a. j.)

The discussion also addressed repeated smoking violations and the need to maintain safety requirements while allowing management discretion in enforcing lease provisions. Board members acknowledged the importance of balancing resident concerns with the Authority's responsibility to maintain safe common areas.

Mrs. Leon made a motion to approve the revised lease incorporating the suggested changes requested by Chairperson Rittle. Mrs. Lindsey seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Rittle/Clifton/Leon/Nays - None

UNDER RESOLUTIONS - APPROVING OF THE WRITE-OFF TENANT ACCOUNTS.

Chairman Rittle introduced the review and approval of the write-off of vacated tenant accounts. He indicated that the total amount was approximately $8,000 to $9,000, noting that the amount was relatively low this time. He stated that the average six-month write-off typically ranges between $30,000 and $40,000, while the current write-off is approximately $8,000. He noted that this reflects positively on the longevity of the residents and ties into the discussion held earlier.

Mr. Ritter added that the Authority has also been pursuing outstanding balances more consistently.

Mrs. Leon made a motion to approve the write-off tenant accounts.
Mrs. Lindsey seconded the motion.

Roll Call: Ayes – Rittle/Clifton/Leon/Nays - None

Under New Business; Miscellaneous Reports and Other Reports from Board Members, Solicitor and Staff; and Public Comments, nothing reported.

Chairperson Rittle noted that the next regular board meeting will be held on Monday, November 9, 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