MINUTES . . . REGULAR MEETING . . . SEPTEMBER 8, 2025

The members of the Bethlehem Housing Authority met in a regular session on August 11, 2025 at 4:00 P.M. (IN PERSON MEETING). Those present and absent were as follows

PRESENT	**ABSENT**
Mrs. Lindsey A. Clifton, Chairperson	
Mr. Rogelio Ortiz, Vice 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 July 14, 2025, were presented and approve. Mr. Rittle made a motion to accept the minutes of July 14, 2025. Mrs. Leon seconded the motion.

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

The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 11, 2025, were presented and approve. Mr. Rittle made a motion to accept the minutes of August 11, 2025. Mrs. Leon seconded the motion.

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

Chairperson Clifton presented the Treasurer's report.

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

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

Mr. Rittle made a motion to approve the treasure's report for August 2025.
Mrs. Leon seconded the motion.

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

Mrs. Leon made a motion to approve the financial report for June 2025.
Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

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

Under the Financial report for July 2025, Mr. Snyder reported that our overall cash position remains strong and stable. He reviewed the Income and Expense Statement, noting an adjustment related to HUD interest earnings. Because of ongoing discussion about whether interest earned on CD's, certificates of deposit must be returned to HUD, Mr. Snyder applied a conservative approach by removing the interest income from the financial projections to align with expected HUD guidance.

He explained that he had spoken with the auditors, who confirmed that this matter would not affect the current audit but may impact the current fiscal year. He also contacted BDO Finance, a leading CPA firm that specializes in HUD compliance. BDO indicated they are still reviewing the new ruling and plan to issue additional direction through upcoming webinars and seminars.

Mr. Snyder also discussed recent clarification from HUD regarding subsidy drawdowns. The guidance reaffirms regulations originally issued in 2008, stating that agencies may only draw down funds when there is a demonstrated need, rather than drawing one-twelfth of the subsidy each month. In practice, this means that all available funds for a particular AMP must be spent before new funds can be drawn. To prepare for this change, we have begun running checks on an accelerated schedule and adjusting drawdowns accordingly. At present, approximately $2 million remains in the rent account, reducing the immediate need for subsidy draws. He explained that the Yardi ledger system will document fund balances and verify when an AMP shows a negative balance, thereby justifying any future drawdowns. He acknowledged that this new process will be challenging and could temporarily impact cash flow since drawdowns must be supported by proof of need.

In closing, Mr. Snyder further stated that there have been no updates from HUD regarding the federal budget, though staff remain attentive to developments. As of September, the Section 8 program has leased 3,524 units and maintains a reserve of approximately $184,000 held by BHA, reflecting a healthy surplus. Chairperson Clifton commented on the complexity of the compliance changes and the importance of preparation for the new HUD requirements.

Mrs. Leon made a motion to approve the financial report for July 2025.
Mr. Ortiz seconded the motion.

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

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

Under Old Business, Parkridge lease, Attorney Matz reported that the application is complete, and all required materials are in place. He stated that the application will be circulated to the board electronically for review prior to the next meeting, with formal approval planned at that time.

Secondly, Under Old Business, Chairperson Clifton introduced Mr. Adam Rosa from Collabo Planning, who presented an update on the Choice Neighborhood Plan for the Pembroke community, developed in partnership with the Bethlehem Housing Authority (BHA) and the City of Bethlehem. Mr. Rosa reported that the plan is nearing completion and will be submitted to HUD by the end of the week. He summarized the plan's vision of creating a welcoming, connected, and mixed-income community emphasizing health, safety, recreation, and opportunity.

The proposed redevelopment would replace the existing 196 apartments at Pembroke Village with approximately 456 total units, including townhomes, walk-up apartments, and elevator buildings. Phase One would begin with fifty-six off-site units near the Boys and Girls Club to allow flexibility for resident relocation during construction. Phase two would be onsite at Pembroke Village site incorporating new street connections and green spaces. Phase three would be on Pembroke Road with a total of eighty-four units. Phase four would be the two larger apartment buildings, right adjacent to Pembroke Road and then phase five would be the area around Marvine and Pembroke. Early action funding will support improvements to Dutko Park, and the site design prioritizes pedestrian safety and traffic calming measures.

Mr. Ortiz asked about the measures of street safety. Mr. Rosa confirmed that the plan includes speed humps, narrowed roadways, and safety features to address concerns about speeding and pedestrian safety.

Mrs. Leon asked about transportation improvements, specifically whether there had been any discussion about enhancing public transit options such as additional LANTA stops or improved bus shelters rather than simple poles. Mr. Rosa responded that this had indeed been discussed. As part of the early action activities for the improvements to Dutko Park, two new high-tech bus shelters will be installed—one near Stefko and one near Pembroke. These shelters will feature real-time bus tracking, comfortable seating, and an attractive design. He also noted that the broader plan supports additional transit improvements throughout the surrounding neighborhood.

Next, Mrs. Leon asked about the People Plan and asked whether there had been discussion about including public restrooms or water fountains throughout the development to improve community access and comfort. Mr. Rosa replied that while those details had not yet been fully explored, the community center will include restrooms and may feature outdoor water fountains as well. He explained that the space will be a collaborative effort among the Northeast Community Center, the Bethlehem Housing Authority, and potentially other partners who could help run programs there. The design is still in its initial stages, and further discussions will determine the final layout and amenities.

Additionally, Mrs. Leon raised questions about neighborhood revitalization along Pembroke Road, noting the number of vacant or rundown businesses. She asked whether there would be outreach to those property owners to engage them in the Choice Neighborhoods initiative and make them aware of redevelopment opportunities. Mr. Rosa confirmed that this outreach has been underway for some time. The city has already identified several underutilized and undervalued properties, and concept drawings have been developed to show potential redevelopment scenarios. He added that the city is taking the lead in engaging property owners, though some have been more responsive than others. The plan also recommends considering rezoning certain areas to encourage more desirable business uses and to gradually transition away from less appropriate ones.

As a follow-up, Mrs. Leon asked whether any incentives—such as tax abatements—had been discussed to encourage investment in the area. Mr. Rosa responded that while tax abatements had not been a primary focus, the Neighborhood Partnership Program is being explored as a funding mechanism to support targeted public and private improvements. He emphasized that the team is open to considering other tools or incentives that could help achieve the redevelopment vision and encouraged Mrs. Leon to share any specific ideas or suggestions that could be incorporated into the final plan.

Mrs. Leon then asked about the design of the development, particularly why the taller buildings are positioned along Pembroke Road rather than toward the rear of the site near the former manufacturing area. She expressed concern that this arrangement might create a "wall-like" appearance from the road. Mr. Rosa explained that the design intentionally places the four-story buildings along Pembroke to create a strong, welcoming presence for the development and to frame the main green space, creating a sense of enclosure similar to an outdoor room. He added that the grade difference plays a key role—Pembroke Road sits about ten feet higher than the interior of the site—allowing the taller buildings to be partially built into the slope with parking on the lower level. As a result, from the street, the buildings will appear to be only three stories tall, maintaining a comfortable scale along Pembroke Road. Mrs. Leon acknowledged that the grade difference would help minimize the visual impact.

A final question was raised regarding how the relocation and move-in process will be managed once redevelopment begins, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that current public housing residents do not lose their homes. Mr. Rosa responded that this concern is a key priority. The plan is to begin construction on currently vacant land near the Boys and Girls Club, allowing existing residents to move into new units before redevelopment begins on their current sites. Each household will meet individually with the Bethlehem Housing Authority to develop a relocation plan that best fits their needs. He also noted that while the full relocation details will be finalized later in the process, the commitment is to maintain open communication and ensure that all residents understand their options as the development moves forward.

Mrs. Clifton added a reminder that on Wednesday, September 10th at 6:30 p.m., the city will be hosting its next *Opening Doors Housing Plan* meeting at the Fowler Center. She mentioned that the Choice Neighborhoods initiative will be a key focus of that meeting. Additionally, she encouraged board members to attend, noting that it will provide another opportunity to view materials more closely, ask questions directly to partners, and gain a better understanding of the project.

Mr. Rittle commended the quality of the planning process and raised questions regarding the social services and governance structure of the proposed community center. As a member of the Steering Committee from the beginning, he stated that watching the process unfold has been very impressive and that the work completed so far is commendable. He added that he hopes funding continues to grow so the plans can be fully implemented.

He continued with questions about the social services component of the project. Focusing on the community center design, referring to the new centralized community hub rather than the Northeast Community Center, he asked what factors had informed the design of that space.

Mr. Rosa responded that the design was influenced by discussions among the project partners, including the Bethlehem Housing Authority, Gorman, and representatives from the community center. The focus was on determining potential space requirements and creating a flexible, adaptable facility that could support multiple uses over time. He emphasized that the design is intended to evolve as programming needs change, providing a solid foundation for a multipurpose community facility.

Mr. Rittle followed up by expressing some concern about ensuring that the use of the space aligns with community needs identified in prior surveys. He noted that many of the required social services were raised by residents during community input sessions and should be incorporated into the final plan. He added that while he is pleased to see multiple partners involved—particularly the Bethlehem Housing Authority and the Northeast Community Center, he is curious about who will serve as the point person or managing entity responsible for overseeing the community center's operations. Mr. Rosa explained that the design is preliminary and will evolve through further collaboration among BHA, the Northeast Community Center, Gorman & Company, and other partners.

Mrs. Satullo, Deputy Director of Community Development and Choice Project Manager, confirmed that additional visioning and planning for the new center will occur, and that the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley has recently been designated as the lead partner for the *People Plan* component of the project. United Way will help coordinate resident services, manage partner relationships, and potentially lead applications for the Neighborhood Partnership Program (NPP).

Mr. Rittle emphasized the importance of developing a more detailed social services strategy to ensure that resident needs are met and that service coordination is established before construction begins. Mr. Rosa and Mrs. Satullo acknowledged this and confirmed that deeper planning will occur during the implementation phase, including one-on-one discussions with residents regarding relocation and continuity of housing. Mr. Ritter added that the new community center will be at least twice the size of the current 4,000-square-foot facility, all on one level, to better accommodate programs and services.

Under Chairperson's report, Chairperson Clifton reminded all board members that if an employee contacts a board member directly with a question, concern or grievance, the proper channel is through the internal process outlined in the personnel manual, or for union employees, the applicable collective bargaining procedures. The Executive Director, Mr. John Ritter, will involve the board if necessary. Maintaining this structure ensures that all concerns are managed efficiently, fairly, and in accordance with policy. Finally, Chairperson Clifton noted that she will be away on a professional commitment during the October board meeting. In her absence, Mr. Ortiz will preside and assume leadership responsibilities for that meeting.

Under the Executive Director's Report, Ritter reported that the Drug and Criminal (D&C) meeting was held on September 10, 2025. Additionally, two Clerk-Typist II positions were filled in the Northeast Office, Marie Rivera, and Elizabeth Dicker. Mrs. Dicker previously worked for the Authority but resigned due to family matters and has now returned. Mr. Ritter noted that the Authority received a SEMAP (Section 8 Management Assessment Program) score of 92, qualifying as a high performer once again. He also attended the PHADA Executive Director Training Course in Washington, D.C., on September 5–6, completing his final two classes on *Public Relations and Communications* and *The Future of Affordable Housing.* He stated that the latter course was particularly eye-opening. Mr. Ritter added that the Section 8 program is evolving, with increasing emphasis on transitioning to the RAD (Rental Assistance Demonstration) program.

Under the Deputy Executive Director's, Ms. Rivera reported that the high-rise resident meetings have begun, with the first held at Litzenberger on September 4th. A strong turnout of residents attended to discuss their issues and concerns. Meetings for the remaining three high-rise buildings are scheduled for September 17, 18, and 25. She also noted that the First Tee visit with the board is scheduled for September 16 at 10:00 AM.

Under Committee Reports, Resident Advisory Board, Mr. Ortiz, reported that a financial workshop will begin on September 24. The program will provide practical financial education not typically taught in schools. A grant has been secured to cover participation costs—$125 per adult and $75 per child (18 and under)—for the eight-week program. The sessions will begin on September 24, with a welcome dinner to be held at the center for all interested residents.

He also reported that the community food banks continue to operate successfully. Additionally, the Southside Sluggers youth baseball teams achieved runner-up positions in both the sixteen and eighteen and under divisions. Football season also began over the past weekend. He concluded by thanking Grace Church, Mr. Ritter, and his wife Kim for visiting the center last Thursday and distributing fruits and vegetables from their farm, including peaches, cucumbers, squash, and tomatoes. He noted that residents were incredibly grateful for their generosity.

Mrs. Gwendolyn Flores reported that the Litzenberger Resident Council added two new members who have been coordinating food donations for residents. They have arranged for a freezer to store overflow items, such as meat, and plan to expand the program to other high-rises. The other two resident councils are also operating effectively. Ms. Flores confirmed that food is typically distributed the same day it is received and that all applicable food pantry requirements through Second Harvest will be followed.

Mr. Rittle commended the Litzenberger Resident Council's food donation initiative and reminded staff to ensure compliance with food pantry requirements, including start and end thresholds. Ms. Flores confirmed that donations are coming through Second Harvest and noted that the council initially received vegetables but is now incorporating a wider variety of food. Staff will assist the council in following proper procedures.

Chairperson Clifton added that the Second Harvest pantry at Lynfield operates through the Lynfield Community Center, a separate nonprofit, not directly through the Authority. She expressed appreciation that staff monitoring agreements and keeping residents informed. Mr. Rittle noted that the council's progress is commendable.

UNDER RESOLUTIONS - APPROVING OF THE EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE RENEWAL FOR THE PERIOD OF 10/1/2025 – 9/30/2026.

Mr. Ortiz made a motion to approve the employee health insurance renewal for the period of 10/1/2025 – 9/30/2026. Mrs. Linares seconded the motion.

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

APPROVING OF THE ELEVATOR MAINTENANCE EXTENSION CONTRACT WITH CAP ELEVATORS.

**Mrs. Leon made a motion to approve the elevator maintenance extension with CAP Elevators.
Mr. Rittle seconded the motion.**

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

Under New Business, nothing to report.

Under Miscellaneous Reports and Other Business Board Member, Mr. Rittle reported that he will not be attending the October boarding meeting. Public Comments. Nothing to report.

Chairperson Clifton noted that the next regular board meeting will be held on Monday, October 13, 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