



**ROCHESTER HOUSING AUTHORITY  
DECEMBER 17, 2025  
675 WEST MAIN STREET  
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14611**

*December 17, 2025*

**MEMBERS' PRESENT**

Florine Cummings, Commissioner, Board Chair  
Kabutey Ocansey, Commissioner, Vice Chair  
Robert Davis, Commissioner  
LeRoy Strickland, Commissioner  
Truman Tolefree, Commissioner  
James Waters, Jr., Commissioner  
Patrick Cunningham, Commissioner

**STAFF PRESENT**

Melissa Berrien  
Shawn Burr  
Diana Colon  
Robert Croston  
Natasha Dicks  
Cynthia Herriott  
Joyce Kinsey  
Celestine Langston  
Thomas Levans  
Daniel Long  
Loretha McCullough  
Denisse Ramos  
Mariam Rodriguez-Machuca  
Kara Ryan  
Maria Sharp

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Taville T. Francis, RHA Legal Counsel  
Shannon Munier, Tipping Point Communications

Commissioner Florine Cummings called the, December 17, 2025, Rochester Housing Authority (RHA) Regular Board Meeting at 12:05 pm. It was noted for the record that notice of this meeting was posted, as required by law, and that there was a quorum present.

**1. Open Forum – Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

**2. Resident Commissioner Swearing-In**

Commissioner Cunningham was sworn in.

**3. Approval of Minutes: November 2025, Regular & Special Board Meeting Minutes**

Commissioner Ocansey moved, and Commissioner Tolefree seconded the motion to approve the November 2025 Regular and Special Board Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Strickland, Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Ocansey, and Commissioner Cummings, voted yes. Commissioner Tolefree abstained. The motion passed four to zero.

**4. Director's Report and Board Approval Requests**

a. Executive Director, Shawn Burr, presented his director's report and highlighted as follows:

**CONTINUED**

- Mr. Burr to recognize Staff across the Authority who continue to go above and beyond to ensure our quality services are performed and resident and participant needs are taken care of especially with onboarding and training new employees! They really continue to do a remarkable job day in and day out!
- Mr. Burr continued to recognize the efforts of the HR, Wellness Committee and Diversity & Inclusion Committee teams for their nonstop effort informing, planning, and facilitating staff functions that build morale and bring us all together.
- Mr. Burr shared that on a federal level, the government shutdown has ended, and we are to be funded until 1/30/2026. Fingers crossed that there will be an approved budget in place by then and we will receive adequate funding. We did end the year in a shortfall with Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Housing Assistance Payments (HAP). We were notified by HUD after they returned to work and a short window to apply for shortfall funding. Mr. Burr applied and we were awarded \$1.5 million. This is approximately \$350K short of what was needed, but we may receive additional funding as per the notice.
- This past month, Mr. Burr participated in meetings with various community organizations.
- Mr. Burr recognized the extra efforts of staff involved in various community projects.
- Mr. Burr stated that he'd like to continue to recognize the extra efforts of staff involved in community projects. Partners Ending Homelessness, RMAPI Steering Committee and Housing Working Group which focuses on our community's full housing system, City FEC program, Closing the Gaps Six City Cohort, Jordan Health Community Engagement Committee, Boy Scouts, City FEC Program Initiative, Guardian Ad Litem Program, Private Sector Rental Market Study Working Group, Eviction Response Team, Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning, Innerloop North CAC, AMPED, GFLRPC Comprehensive Climate Action Plan Focus Group and Benefits Cliff Project are a few that are in the works. Mr. Burr expressed his appreciation for

their efforts in representing RHA on critical projects in our community and stated that their extra efforts are commendable.

- Mr. Burr shared that the development projects continue to move forward with Parliament/Fairfield nearing full occupancy. Fernwood planning is well underway with a closing date targeted for Spring 2026 due to a change in the general contractor and RHA's decision to bid the GC services out. Holland TH's is our next RAD project and design teams are fully engaged. Dan will continue to show progress pictures with his report. We are exceeding our MWBE and Section 3 goals nicely in both projects, with exception of WBE which does continue to increase, but not without a lot of effort. Public housing staff continue to meet 1:1 with the residents who are moving back in to sign their lease and address their needs. We continue to meet internally on Fernwood Phase II also working on design concepts. Glenwood is moving along also with a revised concept plan to reduce costs that has been submitted to HCR. Big kudos to the PH team for assisting residents and preparing and training on tax credit compliance, Bob and his team for assisting wherever and with the contractors and Dan for representing RHA in the field. They are truly doing great work!
- Mr. Burr shared a NYSPHADA update.
- Mr. Burr shared that the executive team continues to work with directors on updating our org chart from top to bottom and assessing our civil service class plan. He shared that they continue to work on the revised Class Plan with Civil Service as positions are filled and tests. HR is working with Civil Service to accomplish our goals.
- Mr. Burr shared that our SEMAP score appeal has been submitted to HUD and we are still awaiting a response.
- Mr. Burr shared NAHRO's article: *NAHRO, with Other Industry Groups, Sends Letter to Appropriators on EHV, CoCs, and HCVs*
- Mr. Burr spoke about the following: ***Congress Introduces Home Reform Act of 2025***

**b. Board Action Requests**

- i. 2026 Workers' Compensation Carrier (Berkshire) – Authorize the Executive Director to award a contract Redwood Fire and Casualty Insurance Co. (Berkshire Hathaway) for Workers' Compensation Insurance, in the sum of \$197,890 – Human Resources

Commissioner Tolefree moved, and Commissioner Waters seconded the motion to approve the action item. Commissioner Strickland, Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Waters, Commissioner Ocansey, Commissioner Tolefree and Commissioner Cummings, voted yes. Commissioner Cunningham abstained. The motion passed six to zero.

ii. General Counsel – Legal Services Contract (4<sup>th</sup> Renewal) – Authorize the Executive Director to award the 4<sup>th</sup> and final renewal of General Legal Counsel Service to Harris Beach Murtha PLLC in the amount of \$150,000 for the 2026 calendar year – Compliance

Commissioner Ocansey moved, and Commissioner Tolefree seconded the motion to approve the action item. Commissioner Strickland, Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Waters, Commissioner Ocansey, Commissioner Tolefree and Commissioner Cummings, voted yes. Commissioner Cunningham abstained. The motion passed six to zero.

iii. General Labor – Legal Services Contract (Harris Beach, PLLC) – Authorize the Executive Director to award the first of four renewals for General Labor to Harris Beach Murtha PLLC in the amount of \$100,000 – Compliance

Commissioner Strickland moved, and Commissioner Davis seconded the motion to approve the action item. Commissioner Strickland, Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Waters, Commissioner Ocansey, Commissioner Tolefree and Commissioner Cummings, voted yes. Commissioner Cunningham abstained. The motion passed six to zero.

iv. Landlord Tenant Matters – Legal Services Contract (John Nacca, Esq.) – Authorize the Executive Director to award the first of four renewals to John Nacca Esq. in the amount of \$100,000.00 – Compliance

Commissioner Strickland moved, and Commissioner Davis seconded the motion to approve the action item. Commissioner Strickland, Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Waters, Commissioner Ocansey, Commissioner Tolefree and Commissioner Cummings, voted yes. Commissioner Cunningham abstained. The motion passed six to zero.

v. CVR Consulting Services – Authorize the Executive Director to exercise a six month agreement with CVR Associates, Inc. for consulting services as listed above for a not to exceed amount of \$200,000. – Public Housing

Commissioner Tolefree moved, and Commissioner Strickland seconded the motion to approve the action item. Commissioner Strickland, Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Waters, Commissioner Ocansey, Commissioner Tolefree and Commissioner Cummings, voted yes. Commissioner Cunningham abstained. The motion passed six to zero.

vi. a. Renewal of Auto Insurance Policy – Authorize the Executive Director to purchase the issuance to cover the renewal of auto insurance policy for the period of 1/1/26 – 1/1/27 in the not to exceed amount of \$92,740 – Finance

Commissioner Ocansey moved, and Commissioner Davis seconded the motion to approve the action item. Commissioner Strickland, Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Waters, Commissioner Ocansey, Commissioner Tolefree and

Commissioner Cummings, voted yes. Commissioner Cunningham abstained. The motion passed six to zero.

**b. Renewal of Umbrella Insurance Policy - Authorize the Executive Director to purchase the issuance to cover the renewal of umbrella insurance policy for the period of 1/1/26 – 1/1/27 in the not to exceed amount of \$33,125 – Finance**

Commissioner Tolefree moved, and Commissioner Strickland seconded the motion to approve the action item. Commissioner Strickland, Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Waters, Commissioner Ocansey, Commissioner Tolefree and Commissioner Cummings, voted yes. Commissioner Cunningham abstained. The motion passed six to zero.

vii. **Resolution – Executive Director Search – Executive**

Commissioner Ocansey moved, and Commissioner Strickland seconded the motion to approve the action item. Commissioner Strickland, Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Waters, Commissioner Ocansey, Commissioner Tolefree and Commissioner Cummings, voted yes. Commissioner Cunningham abstained. The motion passed six to zero.

**5. Human Resource Report**

**Loretha J. McCullough**

Ms. McCullough reported information about RHA's Strategic Plan, and that HR is focused on key activities such as building organizational capacity through hiring and promotions and creating a positive culture.

Ms. McCullough shared information regarding recruitment, hires, promotions, transfers, and separations. It also reviewed our recruitment strategies and results.

Ms. McCullough's report also discussed employee performance, engagement initiatives and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion activities.

**6. Compliance/Legal Report**

**Cynthia Herriott**

Ms. Herriott reported on the following activities and progress:

- Inclusion Activities
- Compliance Matters
- Department Operations

**7. Finance Report**

**Kara Ryan**

Ms. Ryan did not present a Finance Report due to the closing of FY25.

**8. Information Technology Report**

**Shawn Burr**

Mr. Burr reported on the following:

- IT Operations
- Resident Computer Lab upgrades
- Resident Internet Initiative (NYS ConnectALL program)
- Staff Development & Upgrade Preparation
- New Projects
- System Security

**9. Public Housing Report**

**Celeste Langston**

Ms. Langston presented the following:

- Public Housing Activities:
  - Security Survey currently being conducted to gather residents' feedback on the services they are receiving. We are still in the process of collecting responses. The results will be presented as a discussion item at the upcoming Finance Committee meeting to allow additional time for residents to submit their feedback.
- Training:
  - All PH administration staff attended the HOTMA refresher training, scheduled for November 6, 2025. This training was a reminder about what agencies should be doing and a refresher on what is to come. It provided attendees with a general overview of PIH Notice 2023-27 as it relates to the operational side of the agency. Topics included eligibility and rent calculation, HUD's Verification Hierarchy, and Income Reexaminations.
  - Graduation Ceremony for United Way's Leadership Development Academy class of 2025 is Tuesday, December 9, 2025, at 4:30pm, at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center.
- Public Housing Matters:
  - The Public Housing management team meets frequently to strategize on how to increase the PH occupancy rate. An occupancy plan was developed and submitted to HUD for review.
  - CVR – The following are tasks performed monthly:
    - CVR has 4 part time dedicated associates, and 1 Senior Associate assigned to the project. The following are tasks performed monthly:
      - Packaged and sent out all annual recertifications 90 days before the due date.
      - Processed all incoming US Postal/inner office mail
      - Maintain recertification email distribution and field all incoming phone calls from residents
      - Sent follow-up notices via US Postal Mail to residents
      - Attend weekly meetings with property managers and internal CVR meetings about the project
      - Update and maintain CVR Tracker

- Provide weekly status reports from the tracker to the Executive Director and Director of Public Housing
- Reviewed and processed Annual recertifications received by residents at the following sites: Glenwood Gardens, Scattered Sites, Lexington Court, Lake Tower, Danforth Tower (East and West), Lena Gantt, Kennedy Tower, Hudson Ridge, University Tower, Bronson Court, Bay Zimmer Townhouses, Holland Townhouses, Harriett Tubman Estates, and Seneca Manor.
- Rent Arrears – the rent arrears statistics were presented.
- Application Processing Center: Waiting List Management:
  - Wait List Management
  - Current Department Operation Status
  - Unit Offers
  - Occupancy Rate
  - Current Applications in Screening and Intake Phase
  - Staffing

## **10. Maintenance Report**

**Robert Croston**

Mr. Croston presented monthly updates on the following:

- Vacant Unit Report
- Site Beautification
- Training of New Staff
- Preparing for the Winter Season
- 321 Lake Towers Automatic Door Opener

## **11. Leasing Operations Report (Section 8)**

**Maria Sharp**

Ms. Sharp presented the following:

- Leasing Operations Matters:
  1. **Administrative Plan** – Nelrod has been chosen to assist with a complete review of the Administrative Plan this Fiscal Year. The Professional Services Contract was approved and signed by Shawn on 12/02/2025. The executed contract has been received by Leasing Operations as of 12/03/2025.
  2. **Section Eight Management Assessment Program (SEMAP)**- Leasing Operations completed the SEMAP audit per CFR Part 985. The audit began on October 6, 2025. The PHA completed and submitted the SEMAP Certification (HUD-Form 52648) on November 25, 2025, with a due date of November 29, 2025. RHA scored 105 of a possible 135 points ranking as a Standard Performer.
  3. **The 2024 HCV application process** closed on Friday, June 14, 2024, at 4:00 PM, with 9,909 preapplications received through the extended deadline, of which 4,000 were selected. All applicants were notified of selection on September 12, 2024. The RHA's Housing Choice Voucher (**HCV**) **Waiting List** is currently being processed.

Currently, **16 families have moving papers and are searching for housing** and an additional **12 submitted Request for Tenancy Approvals (RFTA's)**.

4. **Leasing Operations' voucher and funding utilization** goal is between 95% to 98%. Please see the attached utilization report.
5. The monthly **inspection's** goal has been 780-960 and will be reassessed for the upcoming Fiscal Year. The inspection Unit conducted 759 inspections in November 2025.
6. **Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)** - Utilization report was updated and attached with data as of 11/30/2025.
7. **The Housing Provider Committee** completed the most recent housing provider newsletter.
8. **Community Partnerships** We continue to have a successful partnership with The Housing Council's (THC) NYS Making Moves program. THC continues to table twice per month in the RHA lobby sharing Fair Housing information and enrolling families in the program.

**12. Resident Services Report**

**Melissa Berrien**

Ms. Berrien reported on the following:

- Participant Highlights: 125 participants are currently enrolled in our FSS program.
- Section 3 Updates
- Agency Collaborations
  - Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) offers free financial counseling which focuses on increasing savings, reducing debt, and increasing access to safe and affordable banking products.
  - RMAPI Housing Subcommittee Co-Chair Update
  - Closing the Gaps
  - Project Lighthouse Thanksgiving Event
  - City of Rochester - Rochester Housing Stability Fund Board
  - Eviction Prevention Study
- Homeownership Program Update

**13. Resident Relations Committee Report**

**Melissa Berrien**

Ms. Berrien reported on the following:

- Resident Council Reports
- Commissioner Reports
- Public Housing Report
- Family Activities
- Senior Activities

**14. Capital Projects Report**

**Daniel R. Long**

Mr. Long reported on the following:

- The Planning Committee Meeting follow-up and action items.

- Current Project Status
- MWBE & Section 3 Contracts report
- The status of our current CFP's Budgets: The 501.22 is 100% obligated and 97% expended. The 501.23 grant is at 100% obligation and 84% expended. 501.24 is at 68% obligated and 11% expended.
- A/E status report (no issues were present)
- Project Planning

**\*\*full reports are available upon request\*\***

## **15. Commissioners' Reports**

**Commissioner Strickland: None.**

**Commissioner Davis: None.**

**Commissioner Waters: Wished everyone a happy holiday season.**

**Commissioner Ocansey: Wished everyone a happy holiday season and thanked the Staff.**

**Commissioner Tolefree: Wished everyone a happy holiday season and thanked the Staff for their hard work.**

**Commissioner Cunningham: Thanked everyone and stated that he is looking forward to working with everyone.**

**Commissioner Cummings: Gave kudos to all the Staff who participated in the Senior Holiday Party. She commended Staff for their commitment and hard work. She is looking forward to the 2026 new year with seven commissioners.**

## **16. Executive Session:**

Board Chair Cummings requested a motion to go into Executive Session at 1:20 pm. Commissioner Tolefree moved, and Commissioner Davis seconded the motion to go into Executive Session. Commissioner Strickland, Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Waters, Commissioner Ocansey, Commissioner Tolefree, Commissioner Cunningham, and Commissioner Cummings, voted yes. The motion passed seven to zero.

## **17. End Executive Session:**

Board Chair Cummings requested a motion to end Executive Session at 2:11 pm. Commissioner Ocansey moved, and Commissioner Strickland seconded the motion to end the Executive Session. Commissioner Strickland, Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Waters, Commissioner Ocansey, Commissioner Tolefree, Commissioner Cunningham, and Commissioner Cummings, voted yes. The motion passed seven to zero.

**18. End Regular Board Meeting Session:**

Board Chair Cummings requested a motion to end the Regular Board Meeting at 2:12 pm. Commissioner Strickland moved, and Commissioner Davis seconded. Commissioner Strickland, Commissioner Davis, Commissioner Waters, Commissioner Ocansey, Commissioner Tolefree, Commissioner Cunningham, and Commissioner Cummings, voted yes. The motion passed seven to zero.

**19. January Regular Board Meeting**

The January Regular Board Meeting of the Rochester Housing Authority Board is scheduled for Wednesday, January 28, 2026, at 12:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Shawn Burr,  
Secretary to the RHA Board, Executive Director