



Housing Authority of the City of Bellingham

Notice of Regular Board Meeting
Bellingham Housing Authority Board of Commissioners
June 17, 2025

Location: 321 N. Samish Way, by phone, or by zoom

Time: 1:02pm

AGENDA

- A. ROLL CALL/QUORUM
- B. PUBLIC COMMENT AND RESIDENT INPUT
Public comments are only accepted in writing and must be submitted no later than 5pm on the day prior to the meeting.
- C. REPORTS
 - 1. Executive Director Report (Andrew Calkins, 10 minutes)
 - 2. Development Report (Tony Casale, 30 minutes)
 - 3. Bi-annual IT Report (Chris Longwell, 10 minutes)
- D. DISCUSSION / ACTION
None
- E. CONSENT ITEMS
 - 1. Motion: Approve Cash Disbursements/Vouchers for the month of May 2025
 - 2. Motion: Approve Minutes for the month of May 2025 Regular Board meeting
- F. NEW BUSINESS – COMMISSIONER REPORTS

EXECUTIVE SESSION

RECESS TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

- 1. Pursuant to RCW 42.30.110(1)(b) - To consider the selection of a site or the acquisition of real estate by lease or purchase when public knowledge regarding such consideration would cause a likelihood of increased price;
- 2. Pursuant to RCW 42.30.110(1)(g) – To evaluate the qualifications and performance of a public employee.

CLOSE THE EXECUTIVE SESSION, RECONVENE PUBLIC MEETING

- G. ADJOURNMENT

*The Bellingham Whatcom County Housing Authority Board of Commissioners will meet electronically on Tuesday, June 17, 2025. **Board Members and the public can attend this meeting via zoom or in person at the BWCHA Board Room located at 321 N. Samish Way.***

*Those who wish to provide **public comment** may send direct e-mail to publiccomment@bellinghamhousing.org and must be submitted no later than 5pm on the day prior to the meeting.*

Meeting Information

Webinar ID: 868 2734 6793

[Click Here to Join on Computer, Tablet, or Smart Phone](#) (data rates may apply)

To Join via Phone - (phone service provider rates may apply)

(253) 215-8782 (Tacoma); (206) 337-9723 (Seattle)



Bellingham & Whatcom County Housing Authorities

To: Board of Commissioners
From: Andrew Calkins, Executive Director / CEO
Date: June 17th, 2025
Re: Executive Director's Update

Staffing Updates

The Grounds Tech I role has been filled by Jason Valencia, who brings 6 years of prior landscaping experience. We have also filled both seasonal grounds roles. We are in the final stages of filling both temporary Maintenance Technician - Flooring Installation roles, which will support efforts to replace flooring across BWCHA properties.

Federal Budget

The Trump Administration released the full text of their proposed FY 2026 budget. The text does not provide details on how elements of the proposed State Rental Assistance Block Grant program would be implemented, which would combine reduced funding levels for the Housing Choice Voucher and Public Housing Program. The proposal remains unlikely to become law, however, it will be a challenging budget environment for HUD programs. An analysis of the full proposal from NAHRO is attached.

FUP Voucher Application

HUD recently announced awards from the 2024 Family Unification Program (FUP) NOFA and notified BWCHA that we were not selected. It was a very competitive application; none of the 11 PHAs selected this round were in the Pacific Northwest.

AWHA Conference

I attended the Association of Washington Housing Authorities' (AWHA) spring conference in Walla Walla. We heard an update from the Governor's Housing Policy Advisor and the Director of the local HUD field office. The bulk of time was spent on briefings from a couple of law firms on areas of importance for PHAs, including: public works requirements, public records, employment, ethics, and what actions require board approval.

Over the next couple of Board meetings, we will be bringing forward proposed updates of the housing authorities' bylaws, and a resolution clarifying what actions require board approval.

Community Connections

- The task force providing input on the Whatcom County Office of Healthy Housing study has continued to meet and will conclude in June. Recent conversations have focused on the creation of a potential forum for further conversations between stakeholders over the next



year to discuss and formulate action on specific issue areas, including landlord-tenant issues.

- I participated in the Whatcom County Coalition to End Homelessness' June 5th meeting, which included an update from Ferndale Community Services and breakout discussions on advocacy to support the expansion of supports for people experiencing homelessness.
- The Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee (WCHAC) will meet on June 12th. The discussion will focus on Whatcom County's Draft 5-year Homeless Housing Plan (2026-2030).

Attachments:

- NAHRO Analysis of the Administration's FY 2026 HUD Budget Proposal

NEWS - NAHRO.ORG

NAHRO Releases In-Depth Analysis of the President's FY 2026 Budget Proposal

June 5, 2025 — On May 30, the Trump Administration released its [full fiscal year \(FY\) 2026 budget proposal < https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/appendix_fy2026.pdf>](https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/appendix_fy2026.pdf), adding some detail to the “[skinny budget < https://www.nahro.org/news/fy-2026-budget-proposes-devastating-cuts-to-housing-and-community-development-block-granting-rental-assistance-to-states/>](https://www.nahro.org/news/fy-2026-budget-proposes-devastating-cuts-to-housing-and-community-development-block-granting-rental-assistance-to-states/)” released on May 2. Typically, the President’s proposed budget is a messaging document that is unlikely to become law, and Congress retains the final authority in deciding the contours of the FY 2026 budget. NAHRO’s FY 2026 funding recommendations can be found [here < https://www.nahro.org/advocacy/legislative-regulatory-agenda/nahro-funding-priorities/>](https://www.nahro.org/advocacy/legislative-regulatory-agenda/nahro-funding-priorities/).

The President’s FY26 budget proposes two major changes, among others, to the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD’s) programs: devastating cuts to housing and community development programs and the creation of a State Rental Assistance Block Grant.

This article provides an in-depth analysis of the budget proposal and its impact on programs and issues relevant to NAHRO members, including details about the proposed State Rental Assistance Block Grant. Click the links below to jump to each section:

- [State Rental Assistance Block Grant](#)
- [Public Housing](#)
- [Section 8](#)
- [Community Development](#)

Remember: Congress ultimately decides FY 2026 funding — this budget proposal is the beginning of the appropriations process.

Now is the time to contact your members of Congress and share how these harmful cuts would impact your community! Visit the NAHRO [Action Alert Center < https://nahro.quorum.us/advocate_now/>](https://nahro.quorum.us/advocate_now/) to send a pre-written, customizable letter to showcase the vital work of PHAs and community development organizations and to urge Congress to support for affordable housing and community development programs.

NAHRO has also finalized its joint funding recommendations with our partners at PHADA, CLPHA, the MTW Collaborative, and the Local Housing Administrators Coalition (LHAC). You can find our letter [here < https://www.nahro.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/FY26-Public-Housing-Industry-Budget-Request.pdf>](https://www.nahro.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/FY26-Public-Housing-Industry-Budget-Request.pdf).

State Rental Assistance Block Grant

The President’s proposed budget would remove the Tenant-Based Rental Assistance account along with certain other accounts—Public Housing, Project-Based Rental Assistance, Housing for the Elderly (Section 202), and Housing for Persons with Disabilities (Section 811)—and replace them with a State Rental Assistance Program (SRAP). The administration would like to allocate \$36.2 billion dollars for this rental assistance program. The SRAP would provide funding to states and then allow the states to decide how to provide access to “housing choice and better housing opportunities for very low- and extremely low-income families and provide assistance for their most vulnerable populations: the elderly and persons with disabilities.”

Formula: If the President’s proposed budget were passed, the program would distribute funding through this block grant to states by formula. It would require that states:

1. Prioritize rental assistance for people with disabilities and the elderly;
2. Consider currently assisted households; and

3. Incentivize self-sufficiency among program participants who are non-elderly and non-disabled, through the use of two-year time limits and “any other appropriate means.”

The formula may be adjusted in the future to “be more representative of the relative needs of each State, and in accordance with changing needs over time.” The Department may also consider ways to incentivize state contributions and may consider requiring states provide data to HUD on all individuals receiving assistance.

Requirements: The Department would establish program requirements to incentivize self-sufficiency. These requirements include—but are not limited to—two-year time limits (for non-elderly households and households without people with disabilities).

Waiver Authority: The President’s proposed budget requests broad waiver authority to “waive or specify alternative requirements for any provision of any statute or regulation that [HUD] administers in connection with such program, upon a finding by [HUD] that any such waivers or alternative requirements are necessary to facilitate the implementation of [the SRAP].” This language would give HUD the authority to unilaterally rewrite any law or regulation related to a HUD program in order to implement the SRAP.

Possible Permutations: The Department believes that structuring the program in this way will allow “[s]tates . . . to be free to design a program that works best for their local needs.” The Department provides examples of what states may do:

- Continue with a system like the current system;
- Block grant to local governments; or
- Provide direct cash grants to recipients.

Additionally, states could structure their programs to provide shallower subsidies; deeper subsidies; or supplement federal funds with state funds to maintain assistance for families that would lose assistance.

Implementation Support: The Department would offer implementation support to states by providing “tools, templates, and supports to guide [s]tates in designing rental assistance programs that meet their unique local needs. Finally, the Department would provide direct targeted and risk-based assistance to states and would help states to share best practices among other states on “pursuing a transition from existing HUD agreements with affordable housing providers to State or local agreements with these providers.”

[Back to the top](#)

Public Housing

State Rental Assistance Block Grant

This budget creates a new program called the State Rental Assistance Block Grant to replace Tenant-Based Rental Assistance, the Public Housing Operating and Capital Funds, Project-Based Rental Assistance, Housing for the Elderly, and Housing for Persons with Disabilities. This grant would combine funding for those programs, reduce the total amount by roughly \$27billion—or 43%—from current levels to \$36.2 billion, and block grant it to the states. Many of the operational details of how the administration would accomplish this remain unclear. Though states would receive funding from these programs’ repurposed dollars, this analysis treats the block grant as a new program and former accounts as receiving \$0.

Public Housing Fund

The President’s budget does not provide appropriations for the Public Housing Fund. Instead, all funding for these units would come from the State Rental Assistance Block Grant. Eliminating funding for this program would be an \$8.762 billion decrease.

Public Housing Operating Fund: Eliminating the Public Housing Operating Fund program would represent a \$5.47 billion decrease compared to FY 2025 enacted. NAHRO remains concerned about continued inflation and increased tenant account receivables. The State Rental Assistance Block Grant does not address these concerns.

Operating Fund Shortfall Funding: The President's budget proposes eliminating funding for PHAs that experience, or are at risk of, financial shortfalls as determined by HUD. This is a \$25 million decrease from FY 2025 enacted. Current unmet shortfall need likely exceeds \$580 million.

Public Housing Capital Fund: Formula Grants

The budget proposes eliminating the Public Housing Capital Fund. This would be a \$3.2 billion decrease from FY 2025 enacted. NAHRO estimates that the Capital Fund backlog is at well over \$90 billion.

Public Housing Capital Fund: Competitive Grants

With the removal of the Public Housing Program, these grants would no longer be funded – a combined \$110 billion decrease between Emergency Capital Needs, Competitive Lead-Based Paint, and Administrative Receivership grants from FY 2025 enacted.

Self-Sufficiency Programs

Despite self-sufficiency being one of the administration's most discussed goals, this budget would not appropriate any funding for the Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS), Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS), or the Jobs Plus program.

Choice Neighborhoods Initiative

Like other similar programs, Choice Neighborhoods would not receive funding under this budget, a \$75 million decrease.

Physical Inspections

This budget proposes removing funding for physical and risk assessments. This change would be a \$50 million decrease from FY 2025 enacted. The budget does not discuss the future of the NSPIRE protocol or what authority would be necessary to discontinue it.

General Provisions

Due to proposed restructuring of federal housing programs and the creation of the State Rental Assistance Block Grant, the budget generally does not modify existing programs through general provisions. This budget is silent on exemption from asset management requirements, the Moving to Work Demonstration, the Rental Assistance Demonstration, and PHA employee compensation.

Correction of Allocation Errors

The budget requests the authority to correct formula errors for any HUD formula program on a prospective basis by offsetting amounts from any previously overpaid grantee award in the current fiscal year and distributing them to grantees that received less formula funding than they would have as a result of the error in the prior fiscal year.

Choice Neighborhoods Initiative

The budget would not provide any funding for the Choice Neighborhoods Initiative, a \$75 million decrease from FY 2025.

[Back to the top](#)

Section 8

State Rental Assistance Block Grant

This budget creates a new program called the State Rental Assistance Block Grant to replace Tenant-Based Rental Assistance, the Public Housing Operating and Capital Funds, Project-Based Rental Assistance, Housing for the Elderly, and Housing for Persons with Disabilities. This grant would combine funding for those programs, reduce the total amount by roughly \$27 billion — or 43% — from current levels to \$36.2 billion, and block grant it to the states. Many of the operational details of how the administration would accomplish this remain unclear. Though states would receive funding from these programs' repurposed dollars, this analysis treats the block grant as a new program and former accounts as receiving \$0.

Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) – Discretionary Spending

Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Housing Assistance Payments (HAP): The President's proposed budget does not include any funding for the HAP renewals account. This would be a cut of \$32.145 billion from FY 2025 enacted levels.

Tenant Protection Vouchers: The President's proposed budget does not include any funding for any new Tenant Protection vouchers. This would be a cut of \$377 million from the FY 2025 enacted levels.

Administrative Fees: The President's proposed budget does not include any funding for administrative fees. This would be a cut of \$2.771 billion from the FY 2025 enacted levels.

Mainstream Vouchers: The President's proposed budget does not include any funding for Mainstream vouchers. This would be a cut of \$743 million from the FY 2025 enacted levels.

HUD-VASH Tribal: The President's proposed budget does not include any funding for HUD-VASH Tribal vouchers. This would be a cut of \$8 million from the FY 2025 enacted levels.

HUD-VASH: The President's proposed budget does not include any funding for new HUD-VASH vouchers.

Family Unification Program: The President's proposed budget does not include any funding for new Family Unification Program vouchers.

Foster Youth to Independence: The President's proposed budget includes \$25 million for noncompetitive grants to states to provide housing assistance on behalf of youth. These youth must meet the following criteria:

1. They are at least 18 years and not more than 24 years of age (i.e., they have not reached their 25th birthday);
2. They have left foster care or will leave foster care within 90 days, in accordance with a transition plan; and
3. They are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless at age 16 or older.

Assistance for these youths may only be provided for a maximum of 36 months.

Project-Based Rental Assistance

The President's proposed budget would eliminate the Project-Based Rental Assistance program. This change would represent a \$16 billion decrease.

[Back to the top](#)

Community Development

Community Development Fund

The President's budget would eliminate the Community Development Fund. This would be a \$3.430 billion decrease from FY 2025 enacted. Programs within the Community Development Fund include the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG),

Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO Housing) program, and the Recovery Housing Program (RHP).

HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME)

The President's budget would eliminate funding for the HOME program. This would be a \$1.250 billion decrease from FY 2025 enacted.

Preservation and Reinvestment Initiative for Community Enhancement (PRICE)

The President's budget would eliminate funding for the program. This would be a \$10 million decrease from FY 2025 enacted.

Self-Help and Assisted Homeownership Opportunity Program (SHOP)

The President's budget would provide \$16 million to the SHOP account, which is \$44 million less than FY 2025 enacted. The full amount would be for capacity building activities for community development and affordable housing (Section 4 Capacity Building program, which funds technical assistance activities through organizations like Enterprise, Habitat for Humanity and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation). The request does not include funding for the Self-Help Homeownership Opportunity Program or for the Rural Capacity Building Program.

Homeless Assistance Grants

The President's budget would provide \$4.024 billion to fund Homeless Assistance through Emergency Solutions Grants. This is \$27 million less for homelessness assistance than FY 2025 enacted. The budget does not request funding for the Continuum of Care, Permanent Supportive Housing, and Youth Homelessness Demonstration programs, nor the National Homeless Data Analysis Project.

Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)

The President's budget would eliminate funding for the HOPWA program. This is a \$505 million decrease from FY 2025 enacted.

Section 202 Housing for the Elderly

The President's budget would eliminate funding for the Section 202 program. This is a reduction of \$931.4 million for the Section 202 Housing for the Elderly program.

Section 811 Housing for Persons with Disabilities

The President's budget would eliminate funding for the Section 811 program. This is a reduction of \$208 million from FY 2025 enacted.

National Housing Trust Fund (HTF)

The President's budget estimates that \$295 million will be provided to the Housing Trust Fund from assessments from Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

Section 108 Community Development Loan Guarantee Program

The President's budget would eliminate funding for the program. This is a \$400 million decrease from FY 2025 enacted.

[Back to the top](#)

Keep Up with the Latest from NAHRO!

To subscribe to NAHRO's members-only Direct News and other NAHRO emails (both members-only and general), please [log in/create an account < https://my.nahro.org/My-Account>](https://my.nahro.org/My-Account) and [update your communications preferences < https://my.nahro.org/My-Account/Communications-and-Interests>](https://my.nahro.org/My-Account/Communications-and-Interests).

To be notified every time we post a new article on the NAHRO website, please use the Get Updates button below. Please note that non-members will not be able to view member-only content.

To unsubscribe, please follow the directions in the news emails you receive from us.

GET UPDATES

Related News

[HUD Secretary Turner Testifies at House THUD Subcommittee Hearing Today, Senate Tomorrow < https://www.nahro.org/news/hud-secretary-turner-testifies-at-house-thud-subcommittee-hearing-today-senate-tomorrow/>](https://www.nahro.org/news/hud-secretary-turner-testifies-at-house-thud-subcommittee-hearing-today-senate-tomorrow/)

[2025 FSS Annual Report Survey Due by June 13 < https://www.nahro.org/news/2025-fss-annual-report-survey-due-by-june-13/>](https://www.nahro.org/news/2025-fss-annual-report-survey-due-by-june-13/)

Want more information?

Sylvia Gimenez
Director of Communications

☎ [202-289-3500](tel:202-289-3500)

✉ [Send Sylvia an email](#)

**Housing Authority of the City of Bellingham and
Whatcom County Housing Authority
Development Report
June 2025**

New Construction

Closeout

None

Underway

None

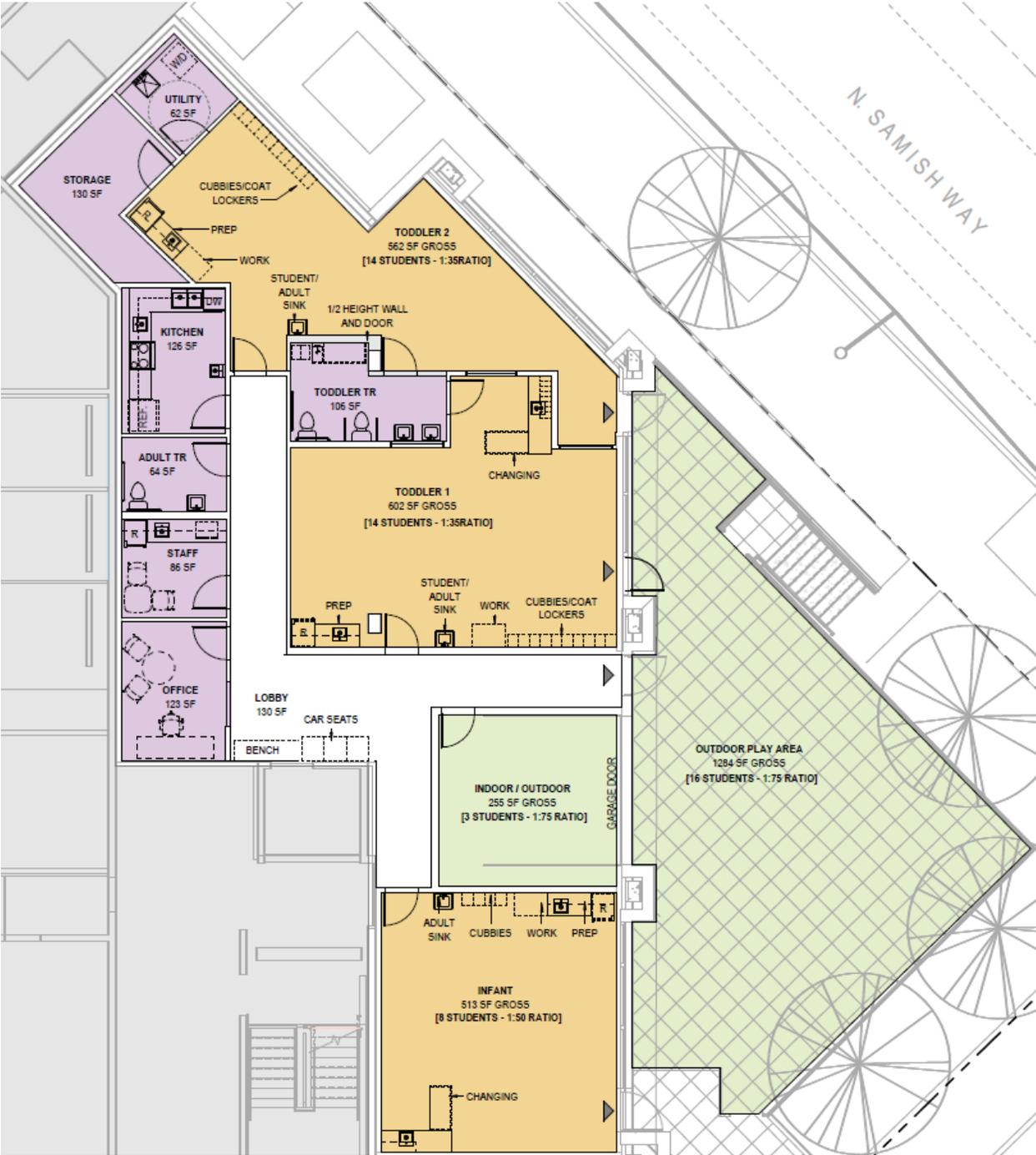
Seeking Funding

Samish Commons Early Learning Center – 40 childcare slots in Bellingham

Estimated project cost: ~~\$1,093,637~~ \$1,800,000

The Samish Commons Early Learning Center was awarded \$1,093,637 from the Whatcom County Community Priorities Fund, and BWCHA plans to partner with Mountain View Early Learning Center for its operations. Design development was completed in May, and unfortunately the estimated project cost increased significantly. Details have been reviewed with the design team and no specific cost drivers were identified, it is merely the complexity of improvements that are required for a three-classroom facility combined with ongoing volatility in the construction market. The team is continuing to collaborate with stakeholders and working to identify supplemental sources. Timing for this project is unknown and contingent upon funding availability.

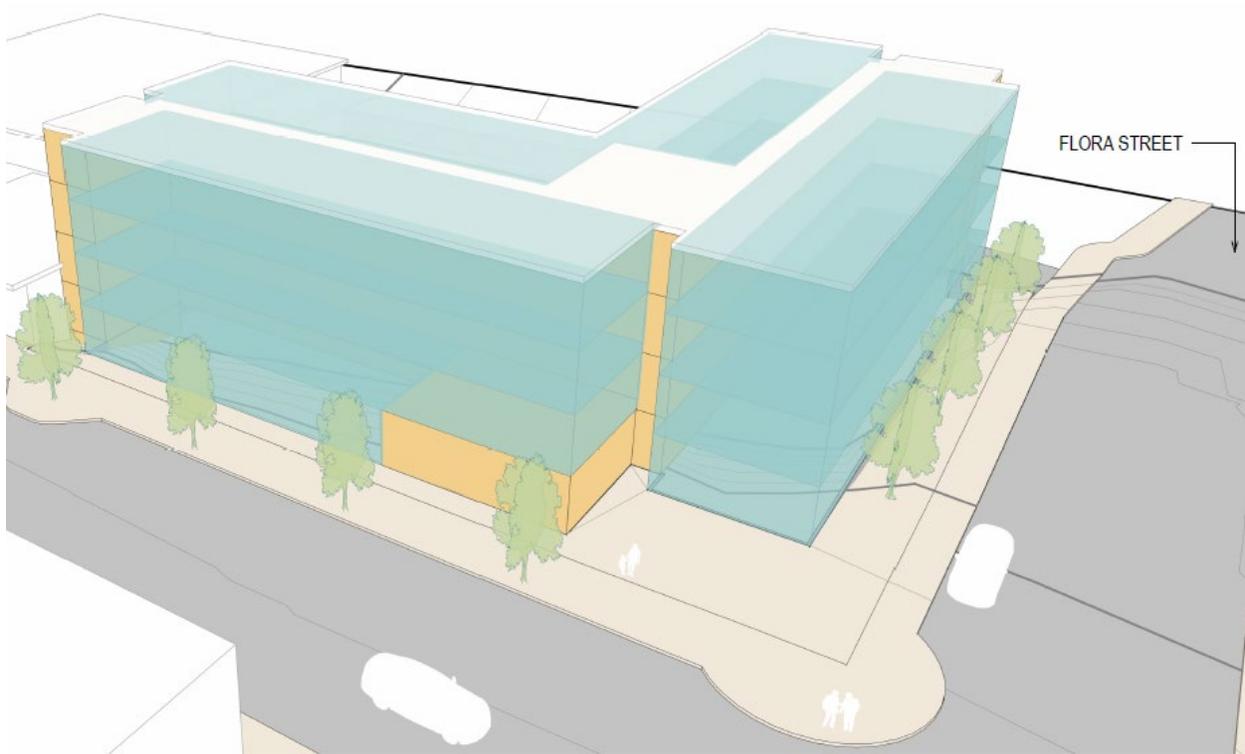
Early Learning Center Floorplan



Unity Street Redevelopment (Ubuntu) – 63 units of rent restricted LIHTC housing in Bellingham
Estimated project cost: \$28,826,106

The redevelopment of BWCHA’s property located at 202 Unity Street will consist of approximately 63 apartments set-aside for households with income ranging between 30-60% of the Area Median Income. The project was recently approved for \$6,148,634 from the City of Bellingham. An application will be submitted to the Whatcom County Economic Development Investment (EDI) Program later this month, followed by an application to the State Housing Trust in October. All competitive funding awards will be announced by January 15, 2026. This project will also be funded through the 4% Low-Income Housing Tax Credit program and tax-exempt bonds. Construction activities will commence in 2026, contingent upon funding availability. A Request for Qualifications for General Contractor Services and a community input survey are currently open.

Unity Street Preliminary Rendering



Feasibility/Scope Development

Village at King Mountain – Approximately 110 units of rent restricted LIHTC housing in Bellingham

Estimated project cost: TBD

In March of 2025 the BWCHA acquired two 1-acre parcels in the King Mountain neighborhood of Bellingham. The Land Acquisition Program administered by the Washington State Housing Finance Commission provided a low interest loan covering 80% of the purchase price. Our

preliminary development concept includes two mixed-income buildings with apartments set-aside for households with income ranging between 30-80% of the Area Median Income. We anticipate predevelopment activities will be initiated later this year, and construction commencing in 2030.

Major Capital Needs/Improvements

Closeout

Baycrest Homes Unit 4678 Modernization – 18 units of Public Housing for families in Blaine
Project cost: \$127,187

A Notice of Completion was submitted on February 06, 2025, but we are still waiting for the Washington State Department of Revenue to approve release of retainage.

Bay Townhouses Roof Replacement – 3 units of Public Housing for families in Blaine
Project cost: \$35,527

A Notice of Completion was submitted on April 07, 2025, but we are still waiting for the Washington State Department of Revenue to approve release of retainage.

Lincoln Square Roof Replacement – 198 units of Public Housing for seniors and persons living with disabilities in Bellingham

Project cost: \$1,065,999.79

A Notice of Completion was submitted on February 12, 2025, but we are still waiting for the Washington State Department of Revenue to approve release of retainage.

Underway

Affordable Housing Capital Needs Assessments (select properties) – 5 properties with rent restricted LIHTC housing in Bellingham

Estimated project cost: TBD

Comprehensive physical and capital needs assessments are being initiated at Laurel Village Apartments, Meadow Wood Townhomes (both phases), and Walton Place Apartments (both phases). A Request for Qualifications was issued in April, and contracts will be executed in June-July. The purpose of these assessments is to develop thorough knowledge of building components and systems that need replacement or modernization. It is anticipated that a refinancing strategy will be developed after establishing a better understanding of capital project costs. Properties that will be included in this initial round of needs assessments consist of 215 combined rent restricted residential units.

High-rise Standby Generator Replacement – 396 units of Public Housing for seniors and people living with a disability in Bellingham

Estimated project cost: \$167,869

Standby emergency generators at each high-rise building were installed in/around 1985 and are approaching the end of their anticipated life cycle. A contract for the replacement of equipment located at all three properties was awarded to Elite Electrical, and it is anticipated that work will commence in November. The timeline for replacement is based on the equipment delivery schedule.

Sumas Square Flood Repair – 11 units of rent restricted housing for seniors in Sumas

Estimated project cost: TBD

The property incurred significant damage from flooding in 2021 and remains vacant. The Washington State Department of Commerce recently awarded \$2,800,000 in funding from the Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery program (CDBG-DR), and these funds will be combined with FEMA disaster assistance to cover all anticipated expenses. In addition to flood restoration, there are major components needing modernization and the introduction of CDBG-DR funding triggered additional scope requirements related to ADA accessibility and green and resilient building standards. A Request for Qualifications for Architecture and Engineering Services will be issued this summer so that a full scope of work can be developed. To help protect against future flooding the building will be elevated 3-4’.

Whatcom County Playground Modernization – 63 units of Public Housing for families in Bellingham and Blaine

Estimated project cost: \$158,115

The play equipment structures located at both Baycrest Homes and Sea Mist Townhouses are past their useful life and need full replacement. The Birches received a new timber stack play element in 2019, but additional engineered wood fiber and ADA accessibility improvements are also needed at that site. We are working with Buell Recreation for improvements at all three locations and installation will commence in August/September.

Existing Conditions Baycrest



Existing Conditions Sea Mist



*New equipment Baycrest & Sea Mist
[same model different perspectives, color will vary]*





Seeking Funding

None

Feasibility/Scope Development

High-rise Boiler Plant Modernization – 396 units of Public Housing for seniors and people living with a disability in Bellingham

Estimated project cost: \$1,200,000

All three high-rise buildings use boiler systems for hydronic heat and domestic hot water. Components of the current systems are at/near the end of their useful life and because of the specialized nature of the equipment it is becoming increasingly difficult to locate replacement parts. We have engaged SMR Architects to prepare technical specifications, scope of work, and drawings necessary for wholesale replacement of the boiler plants. Procurement will be initiated in July unless there are unforeseen delays related to design.



Bellingham & Whatcom County Housing Authorities

333 N Samish Way
Bellingham, WA 98225

P.O. Box 9701
Bellingham, WA 98227

Phone: (360) 676-6887

Toll Free: (888) 585-3808

Fax: (360) 527-4630

TTY: (800) 833-6384

www.bellinghamhousing.org

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Commissioners

FROM: Chris Longwell, Director of Information Technology

DATE: June 17, 2025

SUBJECT: Technology Updates and Initiatives

Summary

This memo provides an update on recent developments related to technology and access, both within our organization and in the broader community. It also discusses ongoing initiatives and strategies to be further explored in 2025.

Broadband Deployment in Whatcom County

The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) announced significant reforms to the BEAD program on June 6, 2025. These changes aim to remove regulatory burdens, lower costs, and expand the use of all technologies (becoming more "technology-neutral").

The recent NTIA policy changes will require Washington State to adjust its BEAD implementation plans. This includes revising its Initial Proposal and conducting a new round of subgrantee selection under the new, more technology-neutral and less burdensome guidelines. States have a deadline of September 4, 2025 (90 days from June 6th), to re-do their Initial BEAD Proposals. BHA Has no properties that do not have some level of internet access.

Modernizing BWCHA IT Infrastructure – Phase 1 (Complete)

Between May and June 2025, BWCHA successfully switched to a cloud-based file storage network. This change significantly benefits the organization by offering superior scalability, enhanced security, and reduced operational costs compared to on-premise servers. A cloud domain allows BWCHA to easily scale IT resources up or down based on fluctuating needs – without investing in costly physical hardware. Additionally, the shift incorporates robust security measures, automatic backups, and disaster recovery capabilities that often surpass what BWCHA could maintain in-house, ensuring critical data is protected and services remain available even during emergencies. This shift also transforms capital expenditures into predictable operational expenses, freeing up budget and IT staff from the burden of maintaining outdated infrastructure to focus on core mission-driven activities.

Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT)

EFT is operationally vital for BWCHA because it enhances efficiency, security, and timeliness of financial transactions. By eliminating paper checks for housing assistance payments (HAP) to landlords and other disbursements, BWCHA significantly reduces manual processing, printing, and mailing costs, freeing up staff to focus on critical tenant services rather than administrative burdens. BWCHA continues to

encourage EFT, currently used by 25% of landlords. For other vendors, BWCHA continues to engage and use EFT as a form of payment delivery when possible.

Prioritizing Cybersecurity and Data Resilience: This remains the paramount concern for BWCHA. Small governments are increasingly targeted by ransomware and other cyberattacks due to their often limited resources and sensitive data. BWCHA's initiatives include implementing multi-factor authentication (MFA) across all systems, conducting cybersecurity training, ensuring comprehensive data backups with off-site or cloud storage and adopting a "Zero Trust" security model, where no user or device is trusted by default, will also be a key strategic shift.

Future Strategic Initiatives

- **Communications:** Effective communication is the backbone of successful property management and program operations, building strong relationships with tenants and owners, reducing conflicts, and ensuring smooth operations. BHA is working on communication improvements through an interdepartmental work group. Some of the items that IT is working towards include:
 - **Implementing Text Messaging:** Text messages often have unbeatable open rates (as high as 98%) and offer quick delivery and convenience for respondents. Most people prefer texting for quick updates. Implementation of text messaging could address the following situations:
 - Urgent notifications: Water shut-offs, power outages, emergency maintenance.
 - Rent reminders and lease renewal nudges.
 - Maintenance updates: "Technician is on the way," "Repair completed."
 - Showing confirmations and appointment reminders for applicants.
 - Quick questions or confirmations.
 - Receiving photos of maintenance issues from tenants.
 - **Website Improvements:** Websites are vital for Housing Authorities as they serve as the primary digital gateway for connecting with residents and applicants, offering a centralized resource for information on housing programs, eligibility criteria, application processes, and waitlist statuses. These online platforms significantly enhance accessibility by allowing individuals to apply for housing, manage their accounts, pay rent, and access important announcements from any device, streamlining operations and reducing the administrative burden. BWCHA is currently evaluating the effectiveness of our current website and plans to procure a firm to redesign and create a user focused website in 2026.

Conclusion

BWCHA's investment in technology will help it remain effective, efficient, and responsive in our critical mission of providing affordable housing. These investments enable BWCHA to streamline cumbersome administrative processes, from managing applications and waitlists to collecting rent and handling maintenance requests, freeing up staff to focus on direct resident support. Furthermore, modern technology enhances communication and accessibility for residents, offering convenient online portals for information and services, while simultaneously bolstering cybersecurity defenses to protect sensitive personal data. Ultimately, strategic technology adoption allows BWCHA to optimize resource allocation, improve transparency, and deliver higher quality services, directly contributing to better outcomes for our community.



BELLINGHAM/WHATCOM COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITIES

Administrative Offices: 208 Unity Street, Lower Level, Bellingham, WA

Mailing Address: PO Box 9701, Bellingham, WA 98227-9701

Tel: (360) 676-6887 Fax: (360) 527-4646 Tty: (360) 527-4655

SUMMARY OF VOUCHERS AND CASH DISBURSEMENTS FOR BELLINGHAM/WHATCOM COUNTY HOUSING AUTHORITY

Vouchers audited and certified by the auditing officer as required by RCW 42.24.080, and those expense reimbursement claims certified by RCW 42.24.090, have been recorded on a listing which has been made available to the board.

As of this date **06/17/2025** the board, by (unanimous, majority) vote, does approve for payment those vouchers and the cash disbursements for the month **May 2025** described as follows:

Funds	Voucher Numbers	
Payroll 05/03/25:	<u>4778</u> to <u>4829</u>	\$ <u>137,857.19</u>
Payroll 05/17/25:	<u>4841</u> to <u>4892</u>	\$ <u>137,870.76</u>
Payroll 05/31/25:	<u>4901</u> to <u>4954</u>	\$ <u>141,754.21</u>
BHA – Public Housing:	<u>1974</u> to <u>1978</u>	\$ <u>14,998.00</u>
Direct Deposit Checks	<u>1248</u> to <u>1255</u>	\$ <u>427.00</u>
Central Office/Maint. Fund:	<u>31824</u> to <u>31935</u>	\$ <u>324,928.64</u>
Direct Deposit Checks	<u>72</u> to <u>72</u>	\$ <u>72,215.37</u>
Section 8 Vouchers:	<u>128753</u> to <u>129084</u>	\$ <u>1,173,892.93</u>
Direct Deposit Checks	<u>88300</u> to <u>88410</u>	\$ <u>1,127,949.00</u>
BHA/Local Fund:	<u>10388</u> to <u>10396</u>	\$ <u>49,501.55</u>
Direct Deposit Checks	<u>100</u> to <u>101</u>	\$ <u>33,977.49</u>
WCHA – Public Housing:	<u>7682</u> to <u>7686</u>	\$ <u>517.00</u>
Direct Deposit Checks	<u>882</u> to <u>886</u>	\$ <u>562.00</u>
*Misc. ACH & Wire Transfers	<u>JV 24462</u> to <u>JV 24509</u>	\$ <u>-10,064.86</u>

Chair

*Reference attachments are hereto. Supporting documents available upon request.

BELLINGHAM HOUSING AUTHORITY
Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting
May 20, 2025

The Board of Commissioners of Bellingham Housing Authority (“BHA”) held a regular meeting on Tuesday, May 20, 2025 in a hybrid format. The meeting was called to order at 1:06 p.m. by Chair Gockley, followed by roll call. Chair Gockley declared a quorum present and the meeting opened for business.

A. ROLL CALL/QUORUM

Present:

Commissioner Valerie Billmire
Commissioner Terry Bornemann
Commissioner Dave Finet
Commissioner Stephen Gockley
Commissioner Alana Pattermann

Absent & Excused:

None.

BWCHA Staff Presenters:

Lindsay Burmeister, Executive Services/HR Manager
Andrew Calkins, Executive Director
Jana Robbins, Director of Finance

Guest Presenters:

Myriah Train, Indigo Property Management

PUBLIC COMMENT AND RESIDENT INPUT

Bryce Nickel – Requests the Commission to take immediate action to ensure his reasonable accommodation request and transfer are approved without delay; Direct staff to follow federal disability rights guidance; Approve increased voucher until HUD can approve; And consider training Housing Authority personnel in accessibility and disability rights compliance.

Mary Anne Anderson – Lincoln Square – As the resident lead gardener, she is pleased with the new plans for the galvanized raised beds and dirt, though it is concerned about existing planted beds being demolished.

A. REPORTS

1. Executive Director Report: Attached to the Agenda
2. LIHTC Portfolio: Attached to the Agenda
3. BHA Q1 2025 Finance Report: Attached to the Agenda

B. DISCUSSION / ACTION ITEMS

1. Recognition of reappointment of Commissioner Pattermann to a Second Term: Commissioner Pattermann was reappointed to the Bellingham & Whatcom County Housing Authorities Board of Commissioners for the term ending March 18, 2030.

C. CONSENT ITEMS

1. Commissioner Billmire moved to approve the Consent Agenda as follows:

Motion: Approve Cash Disbursement/Vouchers for the Month of April 2025.
Motion: Approve Minutes for the April 2025 Regular BHA Board meeting.

Commissioner Finet seconded the motion and Chair Gockley called the vote.

AYES: Commissioner Valerie Billmire
Commissioner Terry Bornemann
Commissioner Dave Finet
Commissioner Stephen Gockley
Commissioner Alana Pattermann

NAYES: None

D. COMMISSIONER UPDATES

Commissioner Billmire attended the PHADA conference with Executive Director Calkins in Seattle.

Commissioner Finet and Commissioner Billmire may meet with the Mayor and/or city councils to discuss development happening in the county and encourage the inclusion of Low-Income Housing in these rural areas.

E. ADJOURNMENT

The public meeting was adjourned at 1:49 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Andrew Calkins,
Secretary/Treasurer

ATTEST:

Stephen Gockley,
Chair, Board of Commission

**January 2025 – December 2025 Regular Meeting Schedule of the
Bellingham Whatcom County Housing Authorities Board of Commissioners**

<u>Date and Time</u>	<u>Locations</u>
Tuesday, January 21, 2025 1:00PM	BWCHA Administrative Building 321 N. Samish Way & Hybrid via Zoom
Tuesday, February 18, 2025 1:00PM	BWCHA Administrative Building 321 N. Samish Way & Hybrid via Zoom
Tuesday, March 18, 2025 1:00PM	BWCHA Administrative Building 321 N. Samish Way & Hybrid via Zoom
Tuesday, April 15, 2025 1:00PM	BWCHA Administrative Building 321 N. Samish Way & Hybrid via Zoom
Tuesday, May 20, 2025 1:00PM	BWCHA Administrative Building 321 N. Samish Way & Hybrid via Zoom
Tuesday, June 17, 2025 1:00PM	BWCHA Administrative Building 321 N. Samish Way & Hybrid via Zoom
Tuesday, July 15, 2025 1:00PM	BWCHA Administrative Building 321 N. Samish Way & Hybrid via Zoom
Tuesday, August 19, 2025 1:00PM	BWCHA Administrative Building 321 N. Samish Way & Hybrid via Zoom
Tuesday, September 16, 2025 1:00PM	BWCHA Administrative Building 321 N. Samish Way & Hybrid via Zoom
*Tuesday, October 21, 2025 1:00PM	BWCHA Administrative Building 321 N. Samish Way & Hybrid via Zoom
Tuesday, November 18, 2025 1:00PM	BWCHA Administrative Building 321 N. Samish Way & Hybrid via Zoom
Tuesday, December 16, 2025 1:00PM	BWCHA Administrative Building 321 N. Samish Way & Hybrid via Zoom

**Notice will be provided if there are changes in dates, times or locations
of any of the above noted meetings.**

*Annual Meeting/Elections

To Watch the Meetings

The Board of Commissioners conduct meetings in a hybrid format to allow for remote participation. Members of the public may join by phone, join by zoom, or watch in person at the BWCHA Board Room located at 321 N. Samish Way, Bellingham.

To Join the Meeting (Members of the Public)

Webinar ID: 868 2734 6793

[Click Here to Join on Computer, Tablet, or Smart Phone](#)

(data rates may apply)

To Join via Phone:

(phone service provider rates may apply)

(253) 215-8782 (Tacoma); (206) 337-9723 (Seattle)

(669) 900-6833 (Portland); (971) 247-1195 (Phoenix); (346) 248-7799 (San Jose)

To Submit Public Comment

Those who wish to provide public comment may send direct e-mail to publiccomment@bellinghamhousing.org or by mail at PO Box 9701 Bellingham, WA 98227, no later than 5pm on the Monday prior to the meeting.

Annual Board of Commissioners 2025 Meeting Calendar
Bellingham Housing Authority & Housing Authority of Whatcom County

January	February	March
Reports Quarterly: Operations	Reports Quarterly: LIHTC Portfolio Approve HUD SEMAP Certification	Reports Quarterly: Development
Discussion/Action Bi-Annual: IT Report	Discussion/Action SEMAP Review	Discussion/Action
April	May	June
Reports Quarterly: Operations Quarterly: Q4 Finance Report	Reports Quarterly: LIHTC Portfolio Quarterly: Q1 Finance Report	Reports Quarterly: Development
Discussion/Action New/Renewing Commissioners	Discussion/Action	Discussion/Action ED Annual Performance Evaluation
July	August	September
Reports Quarterly: Operations Bi Annual: IT Report	Reports Quarterly: LIHTC Portfolio Quarterly: Q2 Finance Report Annual HR Report: Safety and Accident Prevention	Reports Quarterly: Development
Discussion/Action	Discussion/Action Review PHA Plan Set Public Hearing Date	Discussion/Action Agency Plan Public Hearing Nominate Officers Preliminary 2024- 2025 Board Schedule FY2023 Audit Exit (Invite SAO)
October	November	December
Reports Quarterly: Operations Quarterly: Finance - Agency Budget	Reports Quarterly: LIHTC Portfolio Quarterly: Q3 Finance Report	Reports Quarterly: Development Bi-Annual: IT Report
Discussion/Action Elect Chair & Vice-Chair Utility Allowance & PH Flat Rent Schedule HCV Payment Standards	Discussion/Action Maintenance Schedule of Charges	Discussion/Action Flexible Spending Budget Variances Agency Salaries, co-premiums, CBA

New and changed items are in blue