

# **BATTLE CREEK HOUSING COMMISSION**

## **MINUTES**

**Regular Meeting January 27, 2026**

*Pending Board Approval*

### **CALL TO ORDER:**

The regular meeting of the Battle Creek Housing Commission (BCHC) was called to order at 2:59 p.m. by President Simmons in the Main Office of Kellogg Manor, 250 Champion Street, Battle Creek, Michigan.

### **ROLL CALL:**

#### **Present:**

Commissioner Simmons, President  
Commissioner Gillette, Vice President  
Commissioner Gray  
Commissioner Guzzo  
Commissioner Torrey

**Also present:** Lee Talmage, Executive Director; John Paternoster, Deputy Director; Abe Alassaf, Deputy Director of Development; Sarah Ritten, Upholding LLC

### **BUSINESS:**

#### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

A motion was made by Commissioner Gray and supported by President Simmons to approve the Meeting Agenda with additions: Discussion on interview questions for the Executive Director position and discussion on the upcoming retirement party.

**Vote:** Ayes – Unanimous

Nays – None

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

A motion was made by Commissioner Gray and supported by Commissioner Torrey to approve the Minutes of the December 16, 2025 Regular Meeting, as well as the minutes for Kellogg Manor, Inc., Parkway Manor, Inc., and Northside Homes, Inc.

**Vote:** Ayes – Unanimous

Nays – None

### **PUBLIC COMMENT & SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS:**

Sarah Ritten of Upholdings presented an update on the Northern Pines LIHTC development project. Ms. Ritten reported that LISC is closing on a pre-development loan, which will help cover pre-development expenses without requiring out-of-pocket payments, though it does not change the organization's financial standing as it is a loan rather than a grant. She noted that the

W.K. Kellogg Foundation fund through LISC is currently non-existent, though LISC has a \$1 million match from MSHDA pending their fundraising campaign, and any funding would likely also come in the form of loans rather than grants.

Ms. Ritten confirmed the project will remain at 56 units and that the construction timeline is to begin in November 2026, with occupancy anticipated in early 2028. Housing Choice Vouchers from BCHC would be needed at that time. She reported that conversations are ongoing with potential syndicators, investors, and lenders, including Ignite Credit Union, Independent Bank, Mercantile Bank, and KeyBank. Deputy Director Allassaf offered that current contacts at CENNAIRE and that Huntington Bank, Fifth Third Bank, and both FHLB Cincinnati members, are existing BCHC banking relationships that may be helpful to financing the project.

Ms. Ritten requested that anyone with knowledge of potential grants or Federal Home Loan Bank member institutions contact her. She will be forwarding updated architectural plans once finalized.

## **BUSINESS:**

### **Executive Director's Report**

Director Talmage reported that BCHC received a letter from HUD confirming a waiver on the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) requirement for SEMAP through March 2030. Commissioner Guzzo recognized this achievement as it has been a longtime struggle. Director Talmage noted that while under the current funding environment FSS HUD grants are only available to PHAs that are renewing their grants, BCHC will monitor the availability of the FSS Grants to new PHAs and submit for the FSS Grant as the opportunity arises.

BCHC received 100% on the FYE 2025 SEMAP score. Director Talmage credited staff for their excellent work on the program.

The Personnel Policy Committee has made significant progress, though some items remain to discuss under the Agenda's Unfinished Business.

Melinda Gordon's last day with BCHC will be February 13, 2026. Three candidates from the voucher program who are property managers in the community have expressed interest in the position. Interviews for the Resident Services Specialist (RSS) position are expected to begin as soon as possible in February.

Regarding Georgetown Estates, Eenhoorn has notified the Georgetown staff that the sales process is beginning. Colliers has not yet listed the property as they are seeking out potential buyers in advance to maximize response. Eenhoorn is continuing to invest residual funds in updating units in anticipation of site inspections by potential buyers, and keeping units occupied. that came back in poor condition to present well to potential buyers. Commissioner Guzzo confirmed Eenhoorn remains comfortable with the timeline delays.

Walt Kiefer has been contacted regarding the computer lab equipment. He requested that Lee West, whom he worked with most frequently, contact him. Director Talmage emphasized the need for Mr. Kiefer to determine ownership of items so BCHC can proceed with clearing the space.

Director Talmage reported receiving a call from Tim Honeycutt of Zero Day regarding renewed interest in the Washington Gardner School project in Albion, Michigan. A new developer is

interested, and CENNAIRE is involved. The developer inquired whether BCHC would still be interested in providing project-based vouchers. Director Talmage expressed strong support for this opportunity, as BCHC needs more vouchers utilized in Albion.

In communications, Director Talmage noted increased focus on fraud prevention in HUD programs, including a new EIV report for citizenship verification. He emphasized this has not historically been a significant issue for BCHC. A letter from Victoria Houser regarding election location consolidation was included in the packet (page 12).

Director Talmage reported he has been asked to serve as head of the Legislative Committee for Michigan NAHRO.

Staff met with Rod Auton on December 17, 2025 to discuss progress with the Healthy Aging Calhoun Program. Also, in regard to ongoing Development improvements, the Board was informed about the progress on installation of the new Common Area Cameras at Parkway, Cherry Hill, and Kellogg Manor. There is still a need to complete the installation in the building elevators. The new Cherry Hill Manor Trash Compactor is now being utilized. Regarding the new Cameras a discussion followed about aggressive insurance salesmen that had been seen going door to door in Cherry Hill Manor. It was suggested that BCHC staff should reach out to the residents and notify them that they should report this kind of activity to the Staff and the Battle Creek Police Department.

Deputy Director Paternoster informed the Board there are currently 18 vouchers searching (12 HUD-VASH, 6 regular). More vouchers have been issued to utilize available funding. Discussion followed regarding HUD-VASH orientations, which are mostly conducted virtually to accommodate the regional nature of the program.

Registration for the NAHRO Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C. is open; interested commissioners should notify Director Talmage.

### **Deputy Director's Report**

Deputy Director Paternoster's report was presented, is attached, and made a part of these minutes.

### **Deputy Director of Development Report**

Deputy Director Alassaf's report on Development was presented, is attached, and made a part of these minutes.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

#### **Personnel Policy Committee See Unfinished Business**

President Simmons announced that progress has continued on the revision of the Personnel Policy review.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

#### **Personnel Policy – Discussion/Debate on Proposed Changes for Final Vote**

The Board discussed the proposed personnel policy changes. Following discussion, the proposed changes were assembled and recorded by Deputy Director Alassaf to be put into a final draft for review and vote at the February meeting.

***Before proceeding with the New Business, Deputy Director Alassaf dismissed himself from the meeting.***

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### **BCHC Strategic Planning – CEO Procurement**

The Commission, Director Talmage, and Deputy Director Paternoster than reviewed the following procurement related items:

- Utilizing MI/NCRC/National NAHRO Website Hyperlinks to the BCHC website for the CEO Job Description.
- Needed Transition Timeline revision in consideration of the importance of full board input and engagement with the interview process.
- Utilizing the Targeted Selection Interview Guide, the Board discussed categories and specific questions for the CEO/Executive Director interview process,
- Regarding Director Talmage's upcoming retirement. A committee of staff and commissioners will be established to work out the details and determine the budget for the event.

## **OTHER BUSINESS:**

### **Public Comments:**

None

### **Commissioner Comments:**

None

## **ADJOURNMENT:**

At 6:04 p.m. President Simmons adjourned the meeting. The next regular meeting of the Commission will be Tuesday, February 24, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lee Talmage  
Secretary