

Housing Authority of the City of Vineland

REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, July 17, 2025
6:04 p.m.

The Regular Meeting of the Housing Authority of the City of Vineland was called to order by Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa on Thursday, July 17, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at the office of the Authority located at 191 W. Chestnut Avenue, Vineland, New Jersey 08360.

The following Commissioners were present:

Commissioner Chris Chapman
Commissioner Brian Asselta
Commissioner Albert Porter
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez
Commissioner Elizabeth Serrano
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa

Also, present were Wendy Hughes - Assistant Executive Director, Ron Miller - Director of Affordable Housing, Alexis Malandro - Esquire – Solicitor, Matthew Robinson - Esquire, Linda Cavallo – Accountant and Gloria Pomales - Executive Assistant.

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa read the Sunshine Law.

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa entertained a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on June 19, 2025. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta and seconded by Commissioner Acosta-Jimenez. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Abstain)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Commissioner Albert Porter	(Abstain)
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez	(Yes)
Commissioner Elizabeth Serrano	(Yes)
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Fee Account's Report:

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for the Financial Report from the Fee Accountant. Linda Cavallo reviewed the Financial Report for the nine months ending June 30, 2025.

Executive Director's Report:

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa requested the Executive Administrative Report. Ron Miller provided report for Mrs. Jones. Mrs. Jones sends her regards.

Ron reported that the community room furniture at Kidston & Olivio is closed out. The furniture has been set up, installed and the tenants are relatively happy.

The Authority received a new A&E proposal for Tarkiln Acre's roof. The proposal was briefly reviewed; the Authority is still considering its option to bid this project on its own or with the architect of record.

Final permits were issued by the City Code Official on the elevators at Olivio Towers. The elevators have been in operation, and the Authority has the permits in hand. The Authority has been in contact with the elevator consultant and professional team as far as the close out for the

project along with ride quality issues at Kidston Towers. Today the Authority was informed that Otis is scheduling an "adjuster" to visit Kidston Towers to hopefully resolve the ride quality issues. The elevator is experiencing what is called a hard stop. The elevators at Kidston Towers are in operation and have remained in operation. On the occasion they do go out of service, downtime is reported to Otis via their call center where a ticket is initiated and then it is responded to.

Regarding the interior plumbing project at Kidston Towers, the pumps were received from Grundfos and they were re-installed. They do not work. Grundfos is scheduling to come on-site. It appears there is an internal part that is broken and a programming issue. The VHA staff and its professionals have been diligently following up to try to get this resolved and closed out.

Update on the Kidston and Olivio Towers fire pump replacement project. The VHA has been notified that the fueling station has shipped from Siemens. The General Contractor is trying to obtain the tracking number from Siemens. As a reminder, the fire pump is in service. The fire marshal is aware that it is in service and there are no problems with it.

The Scattered Site houses that were scheduled to be sold are all sold. The Scattered Site homes that remain are houses the Authority will keep in its inventory. The RAD physical conditions assessment has been completed. The findings have been received. This eTool report provides all the capital needs for the homes for the next 20 years. This report is currently in draft form. It will be reviewed by the Authority's consultants. Ron had a call with the Brooke Group consultants and will be scheduling a meeting to review the report. The RAD conversion on the Scattered Site Project is still scheduled for the 1st quarter of 2026.

As a reminder Building 1 at D'Orazio had a fire in January of 2023. The building is now completely occupied. A punch list walk through is scheduled for July 22nd with the general contractor. There are minimal items on the punch list and anticipate it being resolved relatively easily. The project closeout is underway.

A & E proposals were received for the Community Room project at D'Orazio and remains in a pending status.

Buildings 2 & 4 at D'Orazio that were damaged by a tree that fell on building 4, roof replacements were approved last month. The roof was replaced on building 4, however the fascia and gutters remain to be completed. Building 2 roof has not been replaced yet due to the weather. Fascia and soffit have been installed on building 2. The Authority anticipates the roof will be replaced on building 2 next week.

Building 3 at Asselta Acres consists of 6-bedroom apartments. The intention of the Authority is to convert underutilized 6-bedroom apartments to potentially four 2-bedroom apartments. Proposals were received; however no action has been taken.

The camera system has been fully operational at Kidston and Olivio Towers as reported at the last board meeting. There were a few cameras that were back ordered for system and the elevator cameras had not been installed. As of today, all four elevator cameras are installed and operational. It was verified with the project engineer that approximately four weeks of data is being stored. The more motion the less they record and the less data they store. The four weeks can vary from 3 ½ week or can go up to 6 weeks if there is less motion.

Melrose Court remains 100% occupied and financially sound.

The Vineland Housing Authority occupancy rate as of today is 98.79%, which is essentially about 1% vacancy. The Authority is serving as many people as possible.

Community Outreach in July was limited due to staff availability. The employee who runs the Community Outreach program is also the VHA's lease enforcement employee. There has been a lot of lease enforcement activity during the last month. A back-to-school event is scheduled for August. The Authority got permission from the City of Vineland to use the football field for the event and there is a lot planned. The Board will be updated on the event at the August board meeting.

Our management team meets on a monthly basis holds a lease enforcement meeting. The lease enforcement meeting is held with key personnel including the VHA's Operations Manager, Site Managers from other managed Housing Authorities, Public Housing Manager, Compliance Manager, Director of Affordable Housing, and the Executive Director is also invited to the meeting.

The Authority's lease enforcement tracking ranges from 40 -82 instances by which the VHA is tracking at any given time over the last 6 months. In the month of June 2025, the VHA was tracking 82 lease violations actively throughout its properties. This represents more than 10% of the VHA's units that the Authority is tracking lease violations on. These violations range from smoking, unauthorized guests, unauthorized pets, disturbances, damages, behavior, unable to access units, refusal of pest control treatments, and other related lease enforcement issues. If they are not able to be resolved there is a process the Authority goes through. Later tonight Counsel is going to address some of our landlord/tenant processes in new business to make the board aware of how the VHA's legal process works for landlord/tenant matters. Be assured that the VHA takes lease enforcement very seriously. There is a full-time employee assigned to lease enforcement and the VHA has many obstacles and challenges in its way. Counsel will elaborate more of what the VHA is up against.

Ron stated this is something the Authority does not frequently address with the Board but wants to bring this to the board as a refresher on what happens when units become vacant. When a unit becomes vacant the make ready maintenance team refurbishes the unit working off a general list. The units are prepared in a safe, sanitary and clean way. The units are fully photo documented throughout the entire process including before and after pictures. When a tenant moves into the unit it is inspected by the operations manager and assistant maintenance supervisor to ensure that everything has been thoroughly completed and ready to be occupied. The City of Vineland has a code requirement that requires an occupancy permit during changes of tenancy for every unit at every tenancy change. The VHA notifies City Licenses and Inspections when the vacant unit is ready, they then come out and inspect the unit to issue an occupancy permit. The unit is photo documented again during this process. When the tenant moves into the unit they receive a move-in inspection form and they acknowledge the condition of the unit at move-in including but not limited to that it is clean, habitable, that everything works and in good order.

The VHA is responsible for ordinary wear and tear items such as faucet leaks, toilet leaks, etc. If the tenant breaks their door or tenant smokes in the unit and damage is caused, the VHA is not responsible for it. The VHA will invoice the tenant for those types of damages. Although the damages will be addressed and repairs will be made, these damages are not ordinary maintenance, the tenant will be charged for them. Tenant generated work orders are generated by the tenant calling requesting a work order. The general tenant generated work order turnover time is usually less than one day. The VHA's residents have been reminded on how to submit work order requests.

If a resident has a complaint, the VHA has two live receptionists at the front desk everyday Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to answer their calls live. All complaints are to be submitted on a complaint request form either by mail, email, fax or in person. The complaint forms are then assigned to a manager depending on the complaint. The Authority cannot guarantee the resolution of a complaint if it does not receive the complaint. If the Authority does

not know about it, the Authority cannot address the complaint. The Housing Authority recently became aware of meetings being held between the Authority residents, members of City Council and one Board Member of the Vineland Housing Authority. These meetings were held without the knowledge of the Vineland Housing Authority or its Administration. The Authority has reached out to the City of Vineland in attempt to schedule a meeting to better understand the nature of the resident meetings.

Committee Report: None.

Old Business: None.

Chairman Ruiz-Mesa changed the order of the Agenda and move to the Resolutions.

Resolution #2025-39
Resolution to Approve Monthly Expenses

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa stated the bills have been reviewed and are recommended for payment in the sum of \$1,187,919.98. A motion was made by Commissioner Porter; seconded by Commissioner Asselta. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes) — abstain on Brown & Connery invoices.
Commissioner Albert Porter	(Yes)
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez	(Yes) — abstain on Brown & Connery invoices.
Commissioner Elizabeth Serrano	(Yes)
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2025-40
Approving Change Order #4 for Modernization of Elevators at Kidston & Olivio Towers

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2025-40. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. Ron Miller provided explanation of resolution. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Commissioner Albert Porter	(Yes)
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez	(Yes)
Commissioner Elizabeth Serrano	(Yes)
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2025-41
Transition Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) to Housing Choice Voucher (HCV)

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2025-41. A motion was made by Commissioner Porter; seconded by Commissioner Asselta. Ron Miller provided an explanation of resolution. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Commissioner Albert Porter	(Yes)
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez	(Yes)
Commissioner Elizabeth Serrano	(Yes)
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2025-42
Appointing Ron Miller As Purchasing Agent

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2025-42. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. Ron Miller provided an explanation of resolution. The following vote was taken:

The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Commissioner Albert Porter	(Yes)
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez	(Yes)
Commissioner Elizabeth Serrano	(Yes)
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

Resolution #2025-43
Granting Official Leave of Absence Extension (Medical)

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa called for a motion to approve Resolution #2025-43. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. Ron Miller provided an explanation of resolution. The following vote was taken:

Commissioner Chris Chapman	(Yes)
Commissioner Brian Asselta	(Yes)
Commissioner Albert Porter	(Yes)
Commissioner Iris Acosta-Jimenez	(Yes)
Commissioner Elizabeth Serrano	(Yes)
Chairperson Mario Ruiz-Mesa	(Yes)

There is no need for an Executive Session.

New Business: Chairman Ruiz-Mesa stated the Authority's Landlord/Tenant attorney, Matthew Robinson will present to the Board. Mr. Robinson introduced himself and provided a brief overview role. He would like to provide information to the board related to tenant landlord law and the process for lease enforcement as well as how we continue to grow collaboratively with the administrative staff at the VHA and answer any questions the Board may have on the process.

Mr. Robinson stated landlord tenant law is derived from the NJ State Statute for Antieviiction Act. However, there is an interplay that takes place for public housing authorities because an overlay of federal law is needed which has its considerations under the code of federal regulations (CFR) and the state law. It can get complicated, burdensome, time-consuming, and it really takes a great effort by staff and the whole team to take any instance to court. State statute actually has different causes of action that address instances overlaying with the federal law and there is a process that the housing authority staff would have to take to enforce whatever the allegation is. Most notably in the State of NJ 90% the allegation is failure to pay rent. In order to promote a healthy and safe environment for our residents, tenants and staff it is important we capture the other 10% which would be enforcing causes of action the State affords landlords for violating the

lease for a number of reasons mentioned earlier or other causes of actions such as damage to the unit, threats or assault of conduct. Certainly, in any public housing authority the Federal One-Strike law applies to drug activity. There are many instances, behaviors, conduct that the housing authority is empowered direct their attention to and pursue against a tenant in the superior court action. Vineland Housing Authority is heard before the Cumberland County Superior Court in Bridgeton. There is a dedicated civil judge that hears 90% of the landlord tenant cases in the County. Mr. Robinson works with the staff continually to develop good smooth process for when we observe conduct or receive a complaint as to conduct so it can be pursued as best as it possibly can. Depending on the conduct, a landlord especially a public housing authority, is required to issue an initial notice to the tenant saying what they have been doing that violates the lease. State statute calls for adverse action notices to the tenants. The tenants receive a notice to cease indicating the violation with a 30-day period to stop the conduct. Since we are a housing authority, any adverse action letter that goes to a tenant affords them an opportunity to have a grievance hearing. This is a collaborative process that the Authority has with its tenants to afford them the right for communication. If the conduct is substantiated and/or does not stop after the 30 days or they do have this hearing and lose the law requires a second notice. A second notice stating they failed to cease the violation and now their lease will be terminated effective on a specified date and if they are not out of the unit by that date then legal action will be pursued which is to file an eviction. The Board should know that you are hearing the words notice and 30 days as well as another notice and additional 30 days, New Jersey has elected to put together a legislative agenda that is statutory landscape that requires minimum of two months if not more for other causes of action before you can even file anything with the court system. Once filed, Cumberland County runs on approximately a 2-month lead time cycle. So in actuality it is 4 months from the date conduct occurred until the date your standing in front of a judge in court room at the absolute best. Mr. Robinson stated it can be very frustrating as a board member, tenant, or outsider to observe this conduct taking place and why this person is still there. This is a difficult process that takes a lot of time to get into a court room. The law is meant to protect people from being dispossessed of their houses. Nevertheless, this is the process that has to be followed and get in front of a judge. Once in front of the judge, the burden of proof is 100% on the landlord to prove the conduct and this can be hard to do. A lot of it has to be put together by way of teamwork. The housing authority has a particularly challenging job of what action to take, this is accomplished through utilization of good strategy, utilizing good and smart resources to get to where it needs to be in front of the judge. Even if everything goes perfectly and you get in front of the judge that judge still sits in a courtroom with the authority to act in equity. Right or wrong, the judge will often allow a tenant to remain in housing even if the conduct warrants eviction. The judge may not find that it rises to a level warranting a judgement for possession to move forward with eviction. The judge can still stay no and that they do not want someone to be dispossessed or homeless etc. The housing authority has been making great strides to put together a solid process of template notices that meet the requirements of the federal and state statutes which afford tenants their due process rights. These templates can be shared by staff throughout the office and ultimately put in front of a judge for them to read to make sure it is in compliance with statutory requirements. This is a thoughtful, deliberate, and long process to enforce in a public housing authority setting. The process has become more streamlined with staff. Lease enforcement issues are being pursued more diligently than ever, at a higher success rate than ever, more efficiently than ever and a lower cost to the housing authority as things are systemized. Mr. Robinson wanted to provide the Board an opportunity if there is any questions about this process. He wants the Board to feel that lease enforcement is being addressed seriously and every effort and tool is being utilized.

Commissioner Porter asked what the success rate is. Mr. Robinson stated he did not know if he could put a number on success rate. For nonpayment of rent we are in the high 90% range in terms of success rate. The Housing Authority has instructed him to utilize a compassionate approach. Nonpayment of rent success is in the high 90% range if not 100% when addressed by way of a settlement of repayment agreement. The other 10% is much more difficult and depends

on the judge. Mr. Robinson, his office, and the VHA team do not pursue cases that are not appropriate and that cannot be won. Housing Authority resources are being managed appropriately.

Vice Chairperson Chapman stated as a senior most member of this Housing Authority he would like to speak of a historical narrative on something Ron Miller spoke to and that Commissioners here at the Authority should be aware of. Historically, there have been times when Commissioners have gone out to interact with people here at the Authority. When this done as an individual that is an individual and not a representation of the entire Board. When it is done as a representative of the Authority the Housing Authority and the Staff should be made aware of it. Generally speaking, in the past, the Authority got into a lot of conflicts because of that. We had Housing Authority Board members who went out to the residents which was perceived as representative of the Board which also can be seen as a voice of the Board, this empowers them to think that they are the Chair. In the past, this created a web of complication for staff and for the administrative process. Vice Chairperson Chapman wants to reference in the past there was a board member who was actively involved in the community and they wanted to have a parade. They wanted the parade represented by the housing authority and the next thing you know marching down Landis Avenue is a banner with Vineland Housing Authority on it. This seems harmless, but it was something that raised concerns as an action of individual representing the Authority and this should come from the Board as an entirety. Mr. Chapman hopes that in the future any Board Member that wants to represent themselves as a member of the Housing Authority to present it to the Board and/or staff, so they are aware of it. Again, Mr. Chapman deflects to the staff end of it because it can complicate things. There was a time at this Authority where Commissioners were coming into the office and directed staff what to do. There were times when the Staff didn't know where the leadership structure was framed, this created chaos. If any Board Members do not know, the State Attorney General walked into this office and took a past Executive Director out in handcuffs. It was complicated. He believes over the last 20 years these issues have been cleaned up. Vice Chairperson Chapman wanted to voice this as a senior member of the Board of Commissioners.

Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa asked for comments from the press, public or any Board Member.

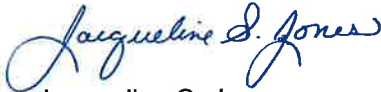
Commissioner Porter stated he was that Commissioner. He stated he is an individual that pays taxes. He was invited by President of City Council, Councilman Vargas and County Commissioner Albrecht. Initially he was not going to be able to attend the meeting. There was tons of concerns and he expressed them to Jackie and others as well. He stated he reached out to Jackie himself and left messages about that particular meeting. He stated he will continue to attend meetings. He is a born person who lived in a housing complex and he is not turning that away. He stated he can go and represent himself, Albert Porter. Whatever he states here is public. He does not dictate policies. He responds to policies. When tenants say to him there is no security at Kidston Towers and he states yes there is because there was a meeting and we talked about security so he will stand up to that because that was public information. From that perspective he agrees with what Vice Chairperson Chapman is saying. He is going to be an advocate for whomever and it could be the Housing Authority. There were people saying they had all these complaints. What Councilman Vargas stated clearly to put the complaints in writing that way is all documented.

Ron Miller asked Commissioner Porter to make sure that when these complaints are being received by our office. Commissioner Porter stated he was not making sure. Councilman Vargas is receiving the complaints. Ron stated if Councilman Vargas has them the Authority cannot respond to them because we do not have them in our possession. Commissioner Porter stated Councilman Vargas would turn them in. He stated there is a lack of communication and the residents deserve to be represented and heard. Councilman Vargas wife came to the Housing Authority to bring a payment for a resident who was in the hospital and our Housing Authority

declined to receive it. Those kinds of things complaints should be submitted and followed up on. Kidston Towers has officers over there and they tell us their concerns.

With no further business to discuss, Chairperson Ruiz-Mesa entertained a motion for adjournment of the Regular Meeting. A motion was made by Commissioner Asselta; seconded by Commissioner Chapman. The Board Members unanimously carried the vote present. The Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners was adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Jacqueline S. Jones
Secretary/Treasurer

Ron Miller

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Ron Miller
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Ron Miller
Director of Affordable Housing