

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY
OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE
MAY 19, 2025

The Commissioners of the Housing Authority of the City of Seattle (“Seattle Housing Authority” or “SHA”) met in Regular Session on May 19, 2025, at the Upton Flats apartment building, as well as via teleconference. Board Commissioner Sally Clark called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m. Kimberly Garrett then performed a roll call for Board Commissioners currently in attendance. Commissioners present and absent were as follows:

Present: Robert Crutchfield, Vice-Chair
 Sally Clark, Chair
 Paul Purcell
 Rita Howard

Absent: Gerald Smiley
 Twyla Minor
 Dr. Paula Houston

Introduction

SHA Senior Property Manager, Karen Morla, provided an overview of the larger High Point development in which Upton Flats resides.

Public Comment

No public comments were made.

Consent Agenda

Commissioner Clark presented the Consent Agenda, which included approval of minutes for the Regular Board Meeting of April 21, 2025; approval of minutes for the Regular Board Briefing of May 12, 2025; and approval of the Expenditure Certification Report (Authorization to Pay Outstanding Obligations of Salaries and Claims for the Period of April 1 to April 30, 2025).

Commissioner Purcell moved to approve the Consent Agenda.

Commissioner Howard noted that the term “PSA” should be corrected to reflect the definition that was provided by Rachel Steward during the meeting recorded in the May 12th, 2025 briefing minutes. To be specific, “PSA” as it was used in the May 12th presentation did not mean “permanent supportive housing” but rather “pathways to supportive housing.” The Commissioner added that she would like an additional sentence added to the minutes which would state, “Commissioner Howard wants to hear more and engage in a discussion about SHA’s role, mission, and vision in a changing housing landscape.” Commissioner Purcell withdrew his motion to approve the Consent Agenda and was seconded by Commissioner Howard. Commissioner Purcell then motioned to remove the regular board briefing minutes of May 12th, 2025 from the Consent Agenda with unanimous consent. Approval of all other items on the Consent Agenda was moved by Commissioner Purcell and seconded by Commissioner Howard. The amended regular board briefing minutes of May 12th, 2025 will be brought before the Board again at the next regular meeting.

Hearing no further comments, the revised Consent Agenda was approved by the majority of the members of the Board present at that time (4 yes; 0 no; 0 abstentions).

Regular Agenda

Legislative Response Team (LRT) Updates

Intergovernmental Relations Director Lisa Wolters provided an overview of the Legislative Response Team’s (LRT) guiding criteria and efforts. Commissioner Howard asked Ms. Wolters to define an “executive sponsor.” Ms. Wolters explained that it is either a member of SHA’s Cabinet or a department Deputy Director who is responsible for convening and bringing together subject matter experts to make recommendations to the Executive Director. Commissioner Purcell asked about how many mixed-status households we have who may be impacted by new citizenship rules from HUD. Ms. Wolters stated that the LRT is keeping watch on that and added information about other issues of which the LRT also keeps abreast.

Ms. Wolters dug into detail on one portion of the White House budget proposal, which is the creation of a State Rental Assistance Block Grant. SHA leadership is of the opinion that a block grant would lead to a reduction in funding of over 43% to housing assistance programs, 12% to homeless assistance programs, and the elimination of self-sufficiency programs. When Ms. Wolters and Executive Director Rod Brandon met with appropriations staff in D.C. it sounded as if bipartisan support for housing is growing, and that this proposal for a block grant is unpopular. Ms. Wolters stated that there will be information added to SHA's external website for the community and SHA residents to stay up to date on some of the LRT's research.

Commissioner Howard asked if the LRT does any forecasting of how the agency would respond to potential future situations. Ms. Wolters replied that the groups led by executive sponsors are doing that work. Commissioner Crutchfield asked if SHA has received any questions regarding federal changes. Ms. Wolters stated that they had, and that on Thursday, Mr. Brandon will be attending a town hall at the Ravenna School along with Commissioner Howard. The LRT has also put some things in *The Voice* publication for residents and are looking to other organizations such as UW which have had a very good communications response. Ms. Wolters offered to have one-on-one discussions with any commissioners interested in learning more about the appropriation versus reconciliation pathways.

Commissioner Howard asked what has been communicated to SHA staff regarding the agency's current position on DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) given the climate around the country and the agency's strategic plan. Mr. Brandon replied that the agency probably will not implement the strategic plan as it was conceived one year ago, and the strategic planning chair is set to meet with others about this. The agency may even need to get page-by-page okay given what the HUD secretary has said about DEI and will also need to reconcile changes with our core values of SHA. The agency will continue its commitment to inclusivity. Commissioner Howard asked if it would simply mean changing language. Mr. Brandon replied that in some cases it may be that, and in others, it may be a reiteration of our values in an articulated, inclusive way. Commissioner Clark signaled her agreement with Commissioner Howard.

Preview of 2026 SHA Budget Process

Chief Financial Officer Jared Cummer stated that SHA received its 2025 allocation for the HCV (Housing Choice Voucher) Program, and it was about five and a half million dollars higher than the budget. In other words, the agency received \$233,000,000 when it had budgeted just over \$227,000,000. That means that for 2025 we are doing slightly better than budgeted, which is good news. With regard to assumptions for the 2026 budget, we are not anticipating higher funding than in previous years. As a result, we already paused growth in agency staff numbers and implemented a review of all vacancies before they are filled, limited travel and training excepting core functions and regulatory training, limited overtime where able, and implemented greater adherence to budget line items. We are anticipating a reduction in federal spending in 2026 as well as to the HUD budget, more specifically, and reductions in programs our residents rely on such as TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), Medicaid, etc. HUD reductions will likely focus on public housing and capital, and inflation pressure will continue even while interest rates may reduce slightly.

With all this in mind, the 2026 budget focus is on pausing growth and identifying savings. This includes restrictions on adding employees and increasing budgets, limiting inflationary increases in the operating budget, and reviewing Opportunity Initiatives (OIs). Commissioner Purcell asked if some Opportunity Initiatives had already been paused, and Mr. Brandon replied that there has not yet been a pause, but we are looking at evaluating that for the future. Mr. Cummer added that updates to our HR Information System and our accounting system are the only OIs that have been taken off the list of consideration as they are simply too important to the overall function of the agency. Mr. Brandon offered to bring a review of the OIs to the Board in July so that they have time to learn more before needing to take a vote in September or October. Commissioner Clark added that she and the others would also be interested in learning more about the pros and cons of the repositioning proposition, such as what is happening with the Red Brick site or with the cost of parking at the Northgate site? Commissioner Purcell stated that we have to look at what we need to do to maintain services versus our goal of serving more people, and that may be its own session of the Board.

Commissioner Howard asked that if there will not be any new OIs in 2026, does the agency still have some way of capturing what those opportunities might be for the future? She added that there is a certain amount of creativity that seems to be damped or dumbed down simply because staff won't see that they have the money to be creative. Can the agency at least plan to note down various ideas in this time of famine so that they can take advantage of them once funds become available again? Mr. Brandon signaled his understanding, adding that big, good ideas tend to stick around for a few years. Commissioner Howard also asked how the agency will avoid staff reductions if the agency plans to avoid filling vacant roles. Mr. Cummer and Mr. Brandon replied that the goal is not to avoid refilling roles, but rather to ensure that it makes sense to fill each role as it opens.

Mr. Cummer reviewed the schedule for budget review, stating that the 2026 budget will first begin to come before the Board in July with the request for a final vote in September or October. Commissioner Clark requested that there be formal check-ins with the Board throughout the budget process. Commissioner Purcell mentioned that we have to look at the agency's mission, which is to find housing for 36,000 people, and we have 900 employees. In his line of work, Commissioner Purcell has had to make hard decisions. Mr. Brandon replied that we probably have a couple of years for the kind of review Commissioner Purcell is talking about. Mr. Cummer offered to speak one-on-one with any commissioner who may have questions.

Executive Director Report

Mr. Brandon brought up that regarding the last meeting's discussion about Aging In Place (AIP), the agency has hired a consultant to help think through the different paths that some residents can take when they are moving out of SHA housing. That consulting contract was recently signed, and the work will be started sometime this summer and likely will not be part of the 2026 budget given the timing and thought required.

Recently there have been concerns about safety at New Holly, Rainier Vista, High Point, and Red Cedar. Community youth and adult residents, SHA staff, and police have participated in conversations around violence that have been positive. Additionally,

SHA staff have followed up on concerns mentioned by residents of Sunset Gardens at the last regular Board Meeting.

In other agency updates, the search for a new Communications Director continues with interviews planned in the next couple weeks. We continue to talk with community partners and the city regarding emergency housing vouchers, as well.

Commissioner Clark asked for an update on the Northgate site. Mr. Brandon replied that there are currently nine households still at Northgate needing to be relocated. The agency will need to evaluate when the best time is for SHA to begin development versus potential private partners. Jackson Park Village will continue without changes on its way to redevelopment.

Commissioner Clark asked if there was a reason for the 42% increase in incident reporting of the same time last year. Housing Operations Director Dave Wellings stated that staff have been much better trained in how and when to submit a report, which is the likely reason for the increase. Commissioner Purcell offered his complements to Housing Operations for their 96.8% collection rate. Mr. Wellings replied that this issue continues to be very complicated and that he is planning to come back to the Board to report on his team's progress.

Commissioner Clark thanked agency staff for hosting the Board meeting at one of the apartment properties. Commissioner Howard stated that we ought to make a particular effort to invite the community so they can see how the community is governed.

Hearing no further comments, Commissioner Clark called for adjournment of the Meeting. It was moved by Commissioner Purcell and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Howard. The May 19, 2025, Regular Session of the Board was then adjourned at 6:49 p.m. as agreed among the members of the Board present at the time

(4 yes, 0 no; 0 abstentions.)

Secretary-Treasurer