

# HOUSING HEADLINES

A NEWSLETTER FOR RESIDENTS AND FRIENDS OF THE BETHLEHEM HOUSING AUTHORITY

IN THE  
FALL 2021  
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BHA is now on Facebook.  
Look for us and like us!

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**1939** – The Bethlehem Housing Authority opened its doors at Broad and Main Street. Mr. Robert Nuemeyer, the first Executive Director of BHA could look back, just a few years prior, 1918–1920, on the devastation and path of pain and heartache caused by the pandemic known as the Spanish Flu. One-third of the world had been infected, with 50 million deaths, 675,000 of those precious souls being lost right here in the United States of America. Although WW II loomed on the horizon, did he ever envision the next worldwide pandemic of 2020, the infamous COVID-19 virus? We don't know! His focus was on serving the housing needs of the community, and for the next 80 plus years the mission here at BHA is the same: to provide safe, affordable housing for members of our community located in the beautiful City of Bethlehem.



*BHA's original headquarters was in the building seen center right in this picture from the early 1950's.*

**On March 16, 2020**, at 8 a.m., the Housing Authority closed its doors to the public for the first time in over eighty years, and as of the date of this writing, we are only now planning a safe and measured way to re-open our doors to the public who have exercised patience during this crisis never before confronted by current staff and our residents alike. I would like to briefly outline two key things in the next paragraphs: 1) what has HUD done to assist our PHA to continue remote operations and at the same time care for resident needs? 2) What changes have been needed by BHA staff to continue ALL operations under extremely unusual circumstances?

**HUD** – With wise foresight, Housing and Urban Developments provided waivers, that when applied assisted all our residents to make much needed income changes, complete annual re-examinations, with minimal reporting requirements, and delayed property inspections as widespread infections compounded the challenges. Additionally, HUD funded the Authority as well as all PHA's with additional dollars to care for the increased costs being incurred by PHA's as a result of pandemic conditions. These funds were termed CARES Act Relief, standing for Corona-Virus Aide, Relief, and Economic Security, and the Bethlehem Housing Authority received approximately three-quarter million dollars, all earmarked to assist with COVID-19 expenses. These dollars were exhausted by March of 2021.

**BHA** – Our staff was determined through this crisis to provide services without interruption and tasked with doing so in a safe environment. Among the many adaptations credited to our staff are: continuing with Maintenance emergencies, mailing/phone re-examinations of income, virtual meetings/hearings on video platforms, alternating staff, and construction modifications at our Monocacy Main Office & FDO satellite office areas that will serve to accommodate all residents in a safe manner. The challenge of change is never easy; however BHA has a new vision as many procedures were streamlined out of necessity. The goal is that this will continue into the indefinite future having implemented many positive changes, in the best interest of our residents.

*Jay Schuster*

## HIGHRISE HIGHLIGHTS

Effective June 17, 2017, BHA adopted a non-smoking policy for all BHA properties. When you signed your lease, you agreed to abide by the following:

1. Smoking is prohibited inside any BHA buildings including, but not limited to, individual apartment or housing units, balconies and patios attached to those units, all common areas including entry ways, hallways, rest rooms, laundry rooms, and all openings to the building including window and door openings.
2. Smoking is prohibited at recreational/playground areas and within 25 feet of any openings to any building on BHA property (e.g. windows, doors, exterior walls).
3. Violations of the smoking policy include these progressive steps: 1) Verbal Warning, 2) Written Warning, 3) Notice of lease termination and eviction.
4. If you witness a lease violation or any criminal activity, call the BHA Community Police officers right away at **610-865-7222**. You can also call the Bethlehem Police Non-Emergency number at **610-865-7000**. If there is an emergency, be sure to call 911.



The new 4th floor entrance to the offices at Monocacy Tower Building and the new reception and waiting area for the public.

## TECH TALK

### ■ Shawn Horn

As the Coronavirus pandemic spread throughout the world the Bethlehem Housing Authority took precautions by closing its offices to the public on March 16, 2020. This unprecedented action was under the guidance of PHA's in the Commonwealth, HUD guidelines, as well as directives from both the Governor of PA and our President. Closing BHA's offices created a need for employees to continue to perform their daily duties remotely. Over the following days of the initial closure we laid out a plan to distribute laptops and other devices to our managers and other essential staff.

With the transition to working remotely, tenant applications were now completed online instead of on paper. Phone calls were routed from the office to BHA issued cell phones. All meetings were now virtual using Zoom where co-workers could collaborate on work previously done in person. Zoom also helped BHA host its monthly Board Meetings, allowing the Board Members and public to safely attend online.

Technology has played a vast role in keeping BHA running during this pandemic. We will continue to research and embrace new technologies in a quest to perform our duties as best as we possibly can.

## CONGRATULATIONS SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

BHA would like to congratulate the following students on receiving the 2021 BHA Commissioner's Scholarship Award:

**Jiovanny Figueroa** – A Senior at Bethlehem Area Vocational Technical School who is accepted to Northampton Community College and would like to pursue studies in film directing. Jiovanny also received a scholarship from the Pennsylvania Association of Housing and Redevelopment Agencies (PAHRA).

**Ja'Najah Thomas** – A Senior at Liberty High School who is accepted to Penn State Lehigh Valley with an undecided academic major, but is interested in pursuing studies in business.

**Kayla Medina** – An Eighth Grade student at Northeast Middle School who would like to become a Child Advocate Attorney. Kayla is eligible to receive scholarship benefits until her senior year of high school if her grades are kept above a C+.

Keep up the good work!



Jiovanny Figueroa

# RECREATION NEWS

■ Robbie Robinson

## ROBBIE ROBINSON COMMUNITY BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT – JUNE 25, 2021



## MAINTENANCE MEMOS

■ Chip Jablonski

I would like to thank all tenants who are taking pride in the development where they live, for pitching in and helping with cleaning up the trash around their apartment. More participation is greatly needed. If you have large trash items, please call maintenance at **610-865-8319** and let us know you have items that need to be picked up.

If you see anyone “dumping” trash, take a picture of the vehicle license plate. Send it to your Development Manager and they can send it to maintenance to have it investigated.

Thank you again and keep up the good work keeping our properties clean and neat.

Residents are requested to abide by the following guidelines for leaf collection:

- Remove cars from scheduled streets whenever possible – leaves under vehicles will not be removed.
- Have leaves ready in the gutter before the City gets to your street. We cannot make special accommodations for those who place leaves in the street after the trucks have passed.
- DO NOT mix branches, grass or garbage with the leaves.
- Branches may be taken to the Compost Center.
- If it rains, the sections will be done on the next possible day.
- Leaves in paper earth bags will be collected – please call (610) 865-7053. NO Plastic bags Please!
- Leaves must be placed in the street in the front of your property. Leaves in alleys will not be collected.

## ARE YOU INTERESTED IN BECOMING A RESIDENT ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER?

Bethlehem Housing Authority is looking for tenants who are interested in representing their community as part of the Resident Advisory Board. Members of the Resident Advisory Board assist BHA during the development of the Public Housing Agency Yearly Plan by making recommendations that will enhance the lives of the residents in BHA. The

Resident Advisory Board meets three times a year in March, August, and November. BHA is looking for tenants who are active in their BHA community and are in good standing with BHA. If you are interested in becoming a Resident Advisory Board member, please contact your Development Manager for more information.

## CLEAN-UP DAY IN MARVINE AND PEMBROKE – JUNE 18, 2021

BHA would like to thank everyone who participated in Clean-Up Day and helped to make the developments a cleaner, safer place to live.



## RESIDENTS' REMINDERS

■ *Zulma Rodriguez*

### MONTHLY RENT

In order to prevent Eviction, you are still required to pay rent and follow all the terms of your lease. Rent is DUE and PAYABLE on the FIRST DAY of each month and shall be considered DELINQUENT after the FIFTH calendar day of the month as stated on your lease. You will receive a rent statement in the mail, along with a yellow envelope. If the mailman fails to deliver it to your address, please call our management office immediately by the 1st of each month to obtain a rent receipt and envelope. The Authority will not accept cash, only check or money orders written out to "Bethlehem Housing Authority," not BHA! Rent and other charges can only be paid by mailing to: Bethlehem Housing Authority, P.O. Box 25089, Lehigh Valley, PA 18002-5089. Avoid losing your subsidized housing unit and some hefty and wasteful charges on Magistrate Fees concerning Landlord and Tenant Complaints.

### RETURNED CHECKS

When we get notified of a returned check that means you also have been informed by your

bank and are to contact us immediately in order to clear the matter with a good check or money order. The additional charges that you are responsible for are \$20.00 late charge, then the \$16.50 for the first occurrence of a returned check, or \$25.00 for subsequent occurrences within the same year.

### DOGS AND CATS

Dogs and cats are permitted but must be in accordance with the revised Pet Policy and the Assistance and Service Animal Policy. Please don't risk eviction. Also you must pick-up the waste with a plastic bag and dispose of it properly. NO EXCEPTION!

### FIRE SAFETY

During this past year, we have had several fire incidents that were a direct result of tenant negligence. Be advised that in accordance with your lease, you can be charged up to \$2000 for any fire, smoke, and/or water damage caused by the negligence of yourself, your family members or your guests.



## THANK YOU!

Bethlehem Housing Authority would like to thank the Bethlehem Health Bureau for hosting COVID-19 vaccine clinics at BHA's four high rise buildings and the Northeast Community Center. In total, about 140 high rise residents and 70 family development residents received vaccinations.

## CONSTRUCTION CHECKLIST

### ■ Curt Kichline

The planning and construction department has completed numerous projects over the past couple of years. To provide additional parking in Pembroke, we constructed three new parking lots. Phases 3 and 4 of the Lynfield renovations have been completed. Phase 5 is currently under way and the contract for Phase 6, which is the final phase, was just awarded. The elevators at Litzenberger have been modernized, which included all new controls, motors and car finishes. We have completed the replacement of light fixtures in all of the family development units. We installed cameras in Litzenberger about two years ago and recently finished installing them in Bodder, Bartholomew and Monocacy, so now all four high rises have surveillance cameras.

The pandemic has changed the way many businesses operate, and we are no different. Changes were made at the family development office and the Monocacy Tower office so it will be safer when staff, residents, applicants and visitors have to interact.

## Commissioners' Corner



Joseph Long

### RETIRING COMMISSIONER – JOSEPH LONG

Bethlehem Housing Authority would like to thank Joe Long for his 19 years of service to the BHA Board of Commissioners. Congratulations on your retirement!



Susan Acevedo

### NEW COMMISSIONER – SUSAN ACEVEDO

Susan grew up in Kunkletown, Pennsylvania and attended Pleasant Valley High School before moving to the Lehigh Valley and has been a resident of Bethlehem for more than 30 years. She lives with her two children, a dog, a bird, two ferrets and two mice. She has worked at PPL Electric Utilities for 15+ years as a Project Administrator and when not cooking and spending time with family and friends, she volunteers for various organizations. She was on the Board of Directors for the YWCA of Bethlehem for six years, where she was recognized as one of the Women of the Year in 2019 for her volunteerism and dedication to the community she served. Aside from the YWCA she was an active member for the Freedom High School Booster clubs where she was the President

for the Cheerleading squad. She has also been a team captain for the United Way of the Lehigh Valley's annual campaign for many years and was the President of PPL Women's Business Resource Group for six years. She is excited for this next chapter in her community work and looks forward to serving with the Bethlehem Housing Authority.

## FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY & COMMUNITY SERVICE UPDATE

### ■ Mirella Snow

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the mandated Community Service program has been suspended until March 31, 2022. The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program is not accepting new

participants until further notice. If you'd like to place your name on a waiting list for the FSS program, you can call Norma Rodriguez at **610-865-8323**.

## EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT



### Zulma Rodriguez

Zulma Rodriguez is an example of a former resident and current employee, who has managed to make a success of herself. Zulma moved to Bethlehem at the age of 17 in 1977. As a single mother of four, she found herself living in the old South Terrace which is now remodeled and named Lynfield Development. Faced with the very same hardships any young woman in her situation faces today, she managed to raise her family while starting her professional career. In 1986, she joined the Bethlehem Housing Authority as a clerk. Over the years she applied herself, taking advantage of training programs and job opportunities, and eventually worked her way to Property Manager of the Family

Developments. However, as of May 10, 2021, Zulma has been appointed as the Director of Rent Computation Quality Control for all public housing developments. Along with this responsibility, she has also been assigned as the Property Manager for the four BHA High Rises: Monocacy Tower, Litzenberger, Bodder House, and Bartholomew. According to Zulma, among those thousands of public housing residents, there are sure to be a few young mothers who feel that their dreams will never be fulfilled. To those who feel that there is little hope to attain success, Zulma Rodriguez has only her own philosophy to share with them: "A person is a failure, not because they have fallen, but because they have failed to get up and try again." According to Zulma, the keys to success are determination, perseverance, honesty, and faith!



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 PERMIT #121

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**ADMINISTRATION**

Jay D. Schuster  
*Executive Director*  
 John Ritter  
*Deputy Director*  
 Diana Moreno  
*Executive Secretary*

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Iris Linares  
*Chairperson*  
 Valerie McLendon  
*Vice Chairperson*  
 Roy Ortiz,  
*Resident Commissioner*  
 Greg Solderitch  
 Susan Acevedo



# UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark your  
 calendar so you  
 don't miss out on  
 these meetings  
 and activities!

- NOV. 8**.....BHA Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- NOV. 11**.....**Veteran's Day**, BHA Offices Closed
- NOV. 18**.....BHA Resident Advisory Board Meeting, 1 p.m.
- NOV. 25 & 26**.....**Thanksgiving**, BHA Offices Closed
- DEC. 13**.....BHA Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- DEC. 24-27**.....**Christmas**, BHA Offices Closed
- DEC. 31**.....**New Year's Eve**, BHA Offices Closed
- JAN. 10**.....BHA Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- JAN. 17**.....**Martin Luther King Jr. Day**, BHA Offices Closed
- FEB. 14**.....BHA Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- FEB. 21**.....**President's Day**, BHA Offices Closed
- MAR. 14**.....BHA Board Meeting, 4:30 p.m.
- MAR. 17**.....BHA Resident Advisory Board Meeting, 1 p.m.

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

- Central Office ..... **610-865-8300**
- Central Highrise Operations Office (CHOO) Litzengerger,  
 Bodder, Bartholomew and Monocacy Towers ..... **610-865-8352** OR **610-865-8353**
- Central Family Development Office Pembroke, Marvine,  
 Fairmount, Pfeifle, Lynfield, Parkridge and Bayard Homes..... **610-865-8342** OR **610-865-8343**
- Maintenance ..... **610-865-8319**