



Boston City Council
ED FLYNN
Councilor - District 2

Kenzie Bok, Administrator
Boston Housing Authority
52 Chauncy Street
Boston, MA, 02111

December 8, 2025

Dear Administrator Bok,

Your December 3 letter to the Architectural Access Board distorts the events that unfolded at 19 Monsignor Reynolds Way. It minimizes the suffering of elderly and disabled residents, compresses a crisis spanning three different days into a single afternoon, omits crucial facts, contradicts documented evidence, and then has the audacity to insinuate that the people who stepped in to help—residents, advocates, and myself—are in some way responsible for the chaos caused entirely by the Boston Housing Authority.

Let me be clear about what actually occurred. Documented evidence indicates an elevator outage on Tuesday, on Wednesday, and Thursday. There was a fire alarm on Tuesday around 6:30 p.m. at 19 Monsignor Reynolds Way. There was no fire alarm at 19 Monsignor Reynolds Way on Wednesday, as you reported to the AAB. The fire department did respond to a medical emergency at 47 Harrison Archway on Wednesday (not a fire alarm), where a resident could not breathe because the BHA-controlled heat was on too high in her apartment and she required medical attention. On each of those days, your agency failed to send a single alert, provide a single update, or issue a single communication to the vulnerable residents who depend on the elevator for every essential aspect of daily life. To reduce all of this to a misunderstanding “on Thanksgiving morning” is not merely inaccurate, it is dismissive of the lived experience of the people your agency is obligated to serve.

You are required by the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board to post and follow an emergency elevator protocol. Every floor displays it. It promises residents that they will be notified when the elevator is out of service and again when it is restored. Yet across the outage days, your agency did neither. No alerts were sent on Tuesday. None on Wednesday. And none on Thursday morning, not even after the elevator was restored shortly after 9:00 AM. Residents did not receive communication until 12:01 PM, hours after the crisis was over. In the absence of communication, the residents’ lived reality was that the outage continued, because nothing from the BHA suggested otherwise. They woke up in frustration, confusion, and physical isolation because you gave them no information at all.

Your letter also omits facts that contradict the narrative you presented. While you claim you became aware of the outage after 8:27 AM Thursday, that is a communication lapse on the BHA team. A time-stamped resident narrative and a photograph shows the elevator technician was already on site by 8:30 AM. The technician then waited approximately 20-30 minutes before meeting staff who allowed



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entry to the building. When a member of your staff eventually arrived, the elevator took less than one minute to reset. The delay was caused entirely by the absence of BHA personnel, not confusion by residents, not a failure by advocates, and certainly not any lack of effort on my part.

Even more troubling is that you communicated that a fire alarm “probably” caused the outage, but nowhere in your letter do you mention this plausible explanation to the AAB or to the residents who were living through it. Instead, the letter strains to paint the residents as mistaken, the situation as unclear, and the timeline as ambiguous, when in fact your communication shows you had already formed an operational hypothesis that was inconsistent across your narratives.

But perhaps the most astonishing portion of your letter is the suggestion that Ms. Oates and I should have personally knocked on every resident’s door on Thanksgiving morning to inform them of the outage, as though the responsibility for emergency communication somehow shifts to residents and elected officials when the BHA does not fulfill its legal obligations. You write that because we were physically present, we could have updated the tenants ourselves. This expectation is shocking. It is the legal responsibility of the BHA to notify residents of an elevator outage, to follow the posted protocol, and to communicate promptly when the issue is resolved. We reasonably assumed that once your agency finally dispatched service, you would immediately notify residents through the alert system you are required to use. That is your responsibility. Attempting to place it on us is indefensible.

Your letter does not acknowledge the most basic truth: residents did absolutely everything right. Outages were reported to BHA multiple times: the alarm panel company notified BHA key holders on Tuesday after the fire department responded to a fire alarm. On Wednesday morning and Wednesday afternoon, at least two residents called the work order line. Residents waited for updates that never came. One resident checked the elevator for service every hour on the hour from 8:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday because he was trapped in the building on his Thanksgiving travel day and desperate to get out. Residents endured entrapment and uncertainty because your staff failed to communicate, failed to escalate, failed to document, failed to coordinate between shifts, failed to follow protocol, and failed to appear on site in time to let the technician do his job. Instead of taking ownership of these failures, your letter spends more energy criticizing the people who showed up and also performed a “thorough investigation” when your agency did not.

You also accuse me of focusing on “lining up press cameras,” an accusation that is both false and beneath the seriousness of the situation. I was invited at the request of media by Dawn Oates, whom you well know from past reporting on BHA elevators is a community organizer with deep media relationships that have been instrumental in raising awareness of this issue that helped bring millions of dollars of city funds to the elevator repair budget you told media you didn’t have two years ago. That she has now been forced into dual roles of advocate and steadfast watchdog for persistent BHA failures should come as no surprise after two years of this.



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I met Dawn on Thanksgiving Day because residents reached out during days of silence from the BHA. I arrived before the media and recorded the time-stamped video when the elevator was still out of service. I did this on the Washington Street side of the building, as you can plainly see from the video you referenced. I posted it after meeting with residents, then the media. I was active on site until after your email came in. On the opposite side of the building, the press arrived because the residents' circumstances WERE newsworthy, a direct result of your agency's inaction. Documenting a government failure that leaves disabled and elderly tenants trapped in their homes is not opportunism. It is accountability.

Across your own admissions—alerts not sent, contractors not responding, no overnight continuity, no shift handoff, no communication, no presence on site when needed—you describe a system entirely unprepared to protect the people who depend on it. These are not isolated lapses. They are structural failures. And when those failures harm residents, transparency is not optional.

You write that “it is no one else’s job to serve as a backstop for the BHA’s elevator response.” On that point, we agree completely. It is the BHA’s job to respond to outages, issue alerts, follow the MAAB protocol, and ensure accessibility for elderly and disabled tenants. When the BHA fails to meet these responsibilities—repeatedly, publicly, and with tangible harm to residents—criticism is not unfair. It is necessary.

I will continue to answer residents’ calls, continue to show up, continue to document conditions truthfully, and continue to advocate for the safety and dignity of the people who live in BHA buildings. They deserve far more than what they received during this crisis, and far more than what your letter attempts to portray. They deserve dignity and respect!

Sincerely,

Ed Flynn
Boston City Councilor, District 2