

## FITCHBURG CITY CLERK

Nov 20 2023 11:01 am

July 25, 2023 10:03 a.m.

A public meeting of the Fitchburg Retirement Board was held in the North Meeting Room located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Fitchburg City Hall at 718 Main Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420.

Fitchburg Retirement Board members present: Thomas Dateo Jr. (Chair), John Brown, Mary Cringan, Jacquelyn Cronin and Anna Farrell

Staff present: Tina Schneider, Retirement Administrator and Steffani Santiago, Administrator Assistant

Mr. Dateo Jr., asked Anna Farrell to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Review and Approval of Warrant and Meeting Minutes:**

The Board reviewed the July 2023 Warrant, the June 27, 2023 meeting minutes. Mr. Dateo Jr., asked Ms. Santiago to review the Cash Disbursement Warrant and provide an overview of the accounts payables for the month of July 2023. On a motion made by Mary Cringan and seconded by Anna Farrell, to approve the July 2023 Warrant, the June 27, 2023 meeting minutes. Voted unanimous (5-0).

**Review and Approval of Bank Statement and Accounting:**

The Board reviewed the March 2023 and April 2023 Bank Statements. On a motion made by Anna Farrell and seconded by John Brown, to approve and accept the March 2023 and April 2023 Bank Statements. Voted unanimous (5-0).

The Board reviewed the January 2023, February 2023, March 2023 and April 2023 accounting. On a motion made by Mary Cringan and seconded by John Brown, to approve and accept the January 2023, February 2023, March 2023 and April 2023 accounting. Voted unanimous (5-0).

**Douglas Carpenter, Fitchburg Housing Authority, Medical Panel Review:**

Douglas Carpenter and his counsel, Attorney Christine Narcisse joined the meeting at 10:09 a.m. Mr. Dateo Jr. welcomed Mr. Carpenter and Attorney Narcisse and stated that the Board had reviewed the doctor's notes and panel submissions. Mr. Dateo Jr., stated that the medical panels provided indicate that his injuries were a result of his industrial accident and that his injuries will permanently prevent him from performing the duties and responsibilities of his job with FHA.

On a motion made by John Brown and seconded by Mary Cringan, to grant an accidental disability retirement to Douglas Carpenter. Voted unanimous (5-0).

John Brown advised Mr. Carpenter, once their vote was submitted to PERAC for review, PERAC had a month to issue a determination. Mr. Brown informed Mr. Carpenter of the cap on post-retirement earnings and thanked Mr. Carpenter for his service. Attorney Narcisse thanked the Board for their efficiency in reviewing and approving Mr. Carpenter's ADR application so quickly. Board Administrator, Tina Schneider advised Mr. Carpenter that she would contact him once PERAC issued their determination so they could discuss his retirement option and complete all the necessary paperwork to begin receiving his retirement benefit. For reference, Ms. Schneider briefly explained how an ADR retirement benefit was calculated. Mr. Carpenter

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July 25, 2023 (cont'd)

thanked the Board. The Board wished Mr. Carpenter well. Mr. Carpenter and Attorney Narcisse left the meeting at 10:15 a.m.

**Review and Approval of Retirement Applications and Calculations:**

**Cynthia A. Hachey**, School Dept., FHS Secretary, Superannuation Retirement Allowance, Option A, effective July 14, 2023. On a motion made by Anna Farrell and seconded by John Brown, to approve Cynthia A. Hachey's Option A. Superannuation Retirement effective July 14, 2023. Voted unanimous (5-0).

**Notification of Member(s) Passing:**

- o Carol L. Bressette, Public Library, Option A., Retirement Date: 11/01/96, DOD: 06/27/23.

**Review and Approval of New Members:**

<u>NAME</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>START DATE</u>
Amanda Baker	DPW/Recreation	Recreation Assistant	07/10/2023
Joseph J. Bosley	DPW/Water	Secondary Operator	07/13/2023
Jose Mello	DPW/Streets	LMEO	07/24/2023
Brendan Byrne	Fire	Firefighter	07/24/2023
Francis LeBlanc	Fire	Firefighter	07/24/2023
William Deja	School	Paraprofessional	04/16/2023

On a motion made by Anna Farrell and seconded by Mary Cringan, to admit to membership the new members listed for July, 2023. Voted unanimous (5-0).

**Lilian Suarez ~ Buyback of Refunded Service from State Board of Retirement:**

Administrator Assistant, Steffani Santiago advised the Board, Ms. Suarez had reached out to the Retirement Office requesting an estimate to purchase previously refunded creditable service from prior public service. Ms. Santiago explained, that the office had reached out multiple times to the State Board of Retirement to verify Ms. Suarez's membership as she was not certain which system she was a member of and when the office contacted Ms. Suarez's former employer, they indicated that they were not certain she was ever a member of the retirement system. The office was finally able to reach the State Board of Retirement who advised that they were not allowed to give out membership information without the approval of the member. This was a new policy as it is common for Boards to contact one another to verify membership for transfers of service and/or refund information. After sending multiple request letters to the State Board of Retirement, they finally provided the refund information which allowed us to prepare an estimate for buyback. As a result of the State Board of Retirements delay in providing the refund information, Ms. Santiago asked the Board's for their consideration to extend the time period for Ms. Suarez to purchase the service at half interest.

On a motion made by John Brown and seconded by Mary Cringan, to waive the excess interest charge due to the State's delay in providing the refund breakdown and to allow Ms. Suarez the option to purchase the refunded service at half interest for one (1) year from July 25, 2023. Voted unanimous (5-0).

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**Attorney Gibson's Opinion Regarding State Tax Processing:**

Ms. Schneider reviewed Mr. Gibson's opinion dated July 20, 2023. Ms. Santiago advised that the office had sent notification letters to the eight (8) effected members, pursuant to the Board's instructions from their June 27, 2023 meeting notifying them effective December 31, 2023 the Fitchburg Retirement Office will cease the collection and remittance of State Taxes from member's retirement benefits. Ms. Santiago went on to inform the Board that she had spoken with the City Treasurer, Anne Cervantes, and advised her of the Board's decision to discontinue the practice of collecting State Taxes deductions from a member's retirement benefit and requested her office continue to remit the State Taxes for the current eight members who participate, until December 31, 2023. Ms. Cervantes agreed to have her office continue to remit payment through the end of the year.

**Retiree Insurance Premiums and Employer's Premium Reporting to City:**

Ms. Schneider advised the Board that Ms. Cronin had requested the premium reporting data and brought the reporting up-to-date. Ms. Cronin stated that the Retirement Office will provide monthly back-up data and an Excel summary sheet to the Auditor's Office who will process the premium reporting for now until such time that a Treasurer Staff member could be trained.

**Retirement Office Space:**

As a follow-up to the Board's discussion during their June 27, 2023 meeting, Mr. Dateo Jr., looked into the former Veteran's Office located on the first floor of City Hall. Mr. Dateo Jr., informed the Board that he spoke with the City's Facilities Manager, Russell Karlstad who advised him that the former Veteran's Office space is slightly smaller than the current Retirement Office space and suggested that the Retirement Board considering absorbing the former State Representative Office on the third floor adjacent to their current office. Mr. Dateo, Jr., informed the Board, that he had spoken with Mayor DiNatale regarding expanding the current Retirement Office Space to include the adjacent office, and that Mayor DiNatale was in favor, provided the Retirement Board covered the cost of the expansion. Mr. Dateo Jr., advised that the distance from the City Hall parking lot to the Veteran's Office and the current Retirement Office space was approximately the same as the side entrance is only accessible to employees. Mr. Brown inquired as to whether the space would continue to serve the needs of the Retirement Board in the future and if not, whether it was wise to spend the money to expand for a temporary space.

The Board toured the space and Mr. Dateo Jr., went over the expansion ideas Mr. Karlstad explained. Mr. Dateo Jr., provided the Board with the estimate for the expansion which was provided by Mr. Karlstad. The Board noted the quote specifically noted the exclusions of "dumpster, wood trim, carpet materials, electrical work, paint, baseboard" and inquired as to what the additional cost would be. Ms. Santiago stated that Mr. Karlstad had advised the City's dumpster would be utilized and that Mr. Karlstad had indicated that he had excess wood trim, carpet materials, paint and baseboard from the City Hall renovations. With respect to the electrical work, Mr. Karlstad had indicated that he would utilize the City's on-call electrical company.

On a motion made by Anna Farrell and seconded by Mary Cringan, to table the discussion regarding expanding the retirement office space, pending receipt of a quote for the full scope of the project. Voted unanimous (5-0).

July 25, 2023 (cont'd)

**Bay State Pension Solutions Software (Tabled from June 27, 2023 Meeting):** Mr. Brown advised the Board that Middlesex County Retirement System had not yet met with PTG executives regarding concerns surrounding their software. Ms. Schneider informed the Board that the office was still experiencing issues with the software ranging from extreme lag times to opening what appeared to be the correct member file as depicted on the bottom of the screen, only to realize, once changes have been made, that the software had not really loaded the correct member file. Ms. Schneider advised that she had reached out to the administration at PTG to inform them of the issues she had experienced and was told to keep sending emails to PTG informing them whenever the office experienced technical issues. The Board agreed to table the matter until they received additional input from PTG and/or updates regarding other systems utilizing Bay State Pension Solutions. Mr. Brown stated he would try to obtain some updates for the August 2023 meeting.

**Election Update ~ First Elected Board Member Seat:**

Ms. Schneider advised the Board, the only candidate of record thus far, was Anna Farrell and that her nomination papers have been certified.

**Update on Home Rule Petition for Personal Time Buybacks:**

Ms. Farrell advised that the petition went through committee hearings and was under review. Mr. Dateo Jr., inquired as to whether the Board should reach out to the State Representative and State Senator to request a status update and request they continue to lobby support from their colleagues. Ms. Farrell advised that the committee has until February 2024 to make a recommendation. The Board agreed to continue to table the matter until further updates are received.

**PRIM Annual Update:**

Laura Strickland, PRIT Senior Client Services Officer, joined the Board meeting at 11:00 a.m., and informed the Board, that the System's portfolio has been performing as expected. Ms. Strickland reviewed the System's investments and covered the following topics:

- PRIM Board & PRIT Fund Overview
- PRIM's Future Initiative
- Economic Backdrop
- PRIT Fund Asset Allocation Targets
- PRIT Fund Performance
- PRIT Fund Asset Class Detail

Ms. Strickland thanked the Board for their time. The Board thanked Ms. Strickland for coming out to meet with them and providing them an update on the System investment portfolio. Ms. Strickland left the meeting at 11:35 a.m.

July 25, 2023 (cont'd)

**Flex Time Policy (Tabled from June 2023) Meeting:**

Mr. Dateo, Jr., informed the Board that he had spoken with Attorney Gibson regarding flex time/compensatory time for office staff. Mr. Dateo Jr., stated Attorney Gibson informed him that the Board had the ability to establish a compensatory time policy if they wished and that his office was willing to draft a policy for the Board to review. The Board discussed FLSA standards and agreed the FLSA status of each position should be determined before a policy was discussed. The Board requested the Administrator send an email to Attorney Gibson requesting an option relative to the FLSA designation for both staff members. The Board agreed to table the matter until they received Attorney Gibson's opinion.

**Douglas Carpenter, Fitchburg Housing Authority, ADR Application Update:**

Ms. Schneider informed that Board they would need to log into Prosper to submit their votes to PERAC. Ms. Schneider stated she would send out an email reminding them to log-in and submit their vote so PERAC could begin their review.

**William Healey, School Building Maintenance, ADR Application Update:**

Ms. Schneider informed the Board, while beginning the process of uploading the appropriate documentation into PROSPER for Mr. Healey, she realized she did not have the Employer's Statement. As such, she reached out to the School's HR Director, Cari Fabale to request the same. Ms. Schneider stated that she was in receipt of the medicals for Mr. Healey and once she received the Employer's Statement back from Ms. Fabale, she would upload all of the materials to PROSPER.

**New Business:** None.

On a motion made by Mary Cringan and seconded by Anna Farrell, to adjourn the July 25, 2023 meeting of the Fitchburg Contributory Retirement Board. Voted unanimous (5-0).

The next public meeting of the Fitchburg Contributory Retirement Board is scheduled for August 22, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.

Meeting Adjourned 11:56 a.m.

July 25, 2023 (cont'd)

The following payment was approved for the July 2023 warrant:	\$1,859,846.36
Applications for withdrawal of accumulated deductions were:	\$58,293.27
Transfers to other systems were:	\$48,735.16

Respectfully submitted,



Tina M. Schneider  
Board Administrator

The Retirement Board attest to the accuracy of the minutes.

