

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
May 28, 2025

The meeting of the Berkshire County Retirement Board was called to order at 9:00am, in the Berkshire County Retirement Office, located at 29 Dunham Mall, Pittsfield, MA. Present at the meeting were Michael Ovitt, Chairman, Mark Bashara, Elected Member, Timothy Sorrell, Elected Member. Beth Matson, Appointed member participated remotely. Ericka Oleson, Advisory Board member was absent.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- 1.) Members of the public have the opportunity to address the Retirement Board.

2.) CONSENT AGENDA DETAIL

MINUTES:

- a.) The Board minutes of the regular meeting held April 30, 2025 were signed and approved. *Minutes provided as an attachment to email*

INVESTMENTS:

- b.) The Board received from PRIT a statement of performance for April 2025. The PRIT Fund returned 0.41% for the month of April.

BANK STATEMENTS:

- c.) The Board received the bank statements for April 2025 and the budget for May 2025. *Cash Books for April were sent to Board by email.*

MONTHLY WARRANTS:

- d.) The Board approved payment vouchers:

05-01-2025	\$ 144,010.82
05-02-2025	\$ 131,655.67
05-03-2025	\$ 24,684.97
05-04-2025	\$ 37,293.02
05-05-2025	\$ 1,703,239.91

REQUESTS FOR RETIREMENT:

- e.) The Board approved the application for superannuation retirement from Jodi Alpert, CBRSD, Paraprofessional. The retirement will be effective 9/5/2025.

The Board approved the application for superannuation retirement from Joyce Gallup, Cheshire, Admin. The retirement will be effective 6/6/2025.

The Board approved the application for superannuation retirement from Nina Weiler, Becket, Asst Tax Collector. The retirement will be effective 7/1/2025.

The Board approved the application for superannuation retirement from Ross Vivori, Gt Barrington, Assessor. The retirement will be effective 7/15/2025.

MEMBER TRANSFERS OUT OF SYSTEM:

- f.) The Board approved notice of transfer of the account of Brenda J Church, a member in Clarksburg to the Hampden County Retirement Board. The Berkshire County Retirement

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
May 28, 2025

Board will accept 7 years and 7 months of creditable service. The amount of the transfer is \$72,790.28.

The Board approved the notice of transfer of the account of Darcie J Lampiasi, a member in Williamstown to the State Retirement Board. The Berkshire County Retirement Board will accept 8 months of creditable service. The amount of the transfer is \$1,957.89.

The Board approved the notice of transfer of the account of Jessica A Otero, a member in MGRSD to the Adams Retirement Board. The Berkshire County Retirement Board will accept 5 months of creditable service. The amount of the transfer is \$1,310.11.

The Board approved the notice of transfer of the account of Christopher S Perry, a member in Hinsdale to the Pittsfield Retirement Board. The Berkshire County Retirement Board will accept 1 year and 7 months of creditable service. The amount of the transfer is \$5,688.50.

The Board approved the notice of transfer of the account of Sandra P Tinker, a member in SBRSD to the State Retirement Board. The Berkshire County Retirement Board will accept 6 years and 7 months of creditable service. The amount of the transfer is \$12,546.89.

The Board approved the notice of transfer of the account of Betlenn S Young-Taft, a member in BHRSD to the MTRS Board. The Berkshire County Retirement Board will accept 6 years and 8 months of creditable service. The amount of the transfer is \$13,124.21.

The Board approved the notice of transfer of the account of Elizabeth I Zipp, a member in Hinsdale to the North Adams Retirement Board. The Berkshire County Retirement Board will accept 5 years of creditable service. The amount of the transfer is \$24,237.79.

REQUEST FOR SERVICE BUYBACK:

g.) There were no requests for service buybacks in the month of May.

REQUESTS FOR REFUNDS:

h.) The Board approved the applications for refunds from the following members: (Pending approval from Dept. of Revenue- child support division)

Burnel Smith	CBRSB	\$1,981.89 (Death Refund)
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Carol Baer	CBRSB	\$3,341.52
Anita Bailey	Lee	\$24,813.78
Myriam Begin	BHRSD	\$2,914.29
Stephen Boutin	MGRSD	\$10,772.17
Yamil Canales	BCRHA	\$1,432.67
Ryon Clemons	BCRHA	\$1,962.66
Maya Copeland	Lee	\$104.18
Brandon Coppola	CBRSB	\$999.05
Jessica Cote	Lenox	\$15,232.37
Joseph Coughlin	Lee	\$21,280.75
Jerome Edgerton	BCRHA	\$12,688.71
Lillian Kegler	FRRSD	\$555.92

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
May 28, 2025

Samara Klein	Gt. Barrington	\$5,874.28
Amanda Koch	Stockbridge Housing	\$11,589.65
Olivia Martin	Gt. Barrington	\$5,481.64
Kellie Mosca	Lee	\$616.18
Melissa Pabon	BCRHA	\$3,901.00
Stephanie Sadlow	MGRSD	\$832.61
Corbin Saunders	Williamstown	\$3,489.40
Elliot Seward	Richmond	\$1,047.45
Taquoya Whitfield	BCRHA	\$10,709.15
Stephen Wood	Gt. Barrington	\$1,309.35

INJURY REPORTS:

i.) There were no injuries reported for the month of May.

NEW MEMBER APPLICATIONS:

j.) The Board approved for membership in the Berkshire County Retirement System the following members:

8119	Abby L. Winters	Sheffield	4/15/2025	Administrative Asst.	1
8120	Jeffrey Dias	Williamstown Fire	5/5/2025	Fire Chief	4
8121	Corrine Bradley	Lanesborough	5/5/2025	Administrative Asst.	1
8122	Daniel Rose-Levine	Great Barrington	5/3/2025	Specialist	1
8123	Natalie Ellis	Lenox	5/5/2025	Paraprofessional	1
8124	Nicholas Kelly	Savoy	4/23/2025	Highway Department Operator	1

RETIREMENT ALLOWANCE APPROVALS:

k.) The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to Rebecca Herzog, Cheshire, as of 3/4/2025. Annual pension amount is \$43,078.68.

The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to Deborah Santolin, Lee, as of 3/13/2025. Annual pension amount is \$14,311.92.

The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to Craig Pedercini, Williamstown FD, as of 3/31/2025. Annual pension amount is \$52,545.60.

3(8)c REIMBURSEMENTS:

l.) There were no Sec 3(8)(c) reimbursements for the month of May.

PERAC CORRESPONDENCE:

m.) The Board received no PERAC memorandums in May:

Note: Copies of memorandums and letters given to each Board member

TRAVEL & EDUCATION APPROVALS:

n.) There were no travel expense requests for the month of May.

Michael Ovitt: The consent agenda, any questions or clarifications on that?

Sheila LaBarbera: The only item that I did not include on here if I have time on June 11, 2025, there is an open house at PERAC in the afternoon. I did not know if anyone wanted to

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
May 28, 2025

go. If the Board will approve the travel, I may go. I do not know if I have enough time or if it is worth to travel to go down and come back.

Michael Ovitt: What is the Board's thought?

Timothy Sorrell: I am willing to approve the travel. Keep her in contact with PERAC.

Sheila LaBarbera: I mean I don't know if I'll go because I don't know if I'll have the time, but at least if it's available, that would be nice. They have a brand-new office in Medford. They moved out of their office in Somerville and they are going to have an open house. All of the PERAC staff will be there.

Michael Ovitt: But certainly not necessary, and that is probably a five- to six-hour commute back and forth. When will you know whether you would have enough time?

Sheila LaBarbera: That week. I do not know what I have got going on that week.

Michael Ovitt: Any other discussion regarding that? Sheila, potentially it is just you going?

Sheila LaBarbera: It would only be me.

Michael Ovitt: We would have to cover the office and what not.

Beth Matson: I guess if the office is not closed, I do not have a problem with it. I can second that.

Michael Ovitt: Both Tim and Beth. Do we need to vote on that to add it to the consent agenda?

Sheila LaBarbera: Yes to approve the travel.

Michael Ovitt: We have motion and second to add the travel to the PERAC open house on June 11, 2025. All in favor.

A roll call vote was taken to approve the travel to PERAC on June 11, 2025, the vote was unanimous.

MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE:

- o.) - MIIA FY26 Renewal Terms and Conditions letter
- Adams Community Bank Credit card letter

A roll call vote was taken to approve the consent agenda as presented, the vote was unanimous.

NEW BUSINESS:

- 2.) Legal Update: Presented by Board Counsel Thomas Gibson

Board Bylaws:

Michael Ovitt: Tom was not able to be there. It looked like there was only the board bylaws on there, and I am not aware of any other critical updates.

Sheila LaBarbera: I did speak to Gerry McDonough. He did tell me that they have just received the decision on the Mandel case, and she prevailed. They have not had the chance to read it and to rather dissect where they think they could have honestly approved it, but they did and he said they would have that for next month.

Timothy Sorrell: Mike, can I ask you a question?

Michael Ovitt: Sure.

Timothy Sorrell: Actually, it is going back to the bylaws. I reviewed them, and I noticed on the last page, the salary is wrong for us. I do not know if we want to amend that. It says board members are entitled to receive a stipend of 4500. Shall we modify that to our 3600? That is what we get. I have read it, and that is the only issue I find flawed in it.

Mark Bashara: How did that number get in there?

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
May 28, 2025

Sheila LaBarbera: That is the maximum that the Board can be paid. It is just a template.

Michael Ovitt: I know when we started considering the bylaws, it was kind of centered on the remote participation, so I am not sure that we need any of these bylaws, and I would consider possibly tabling it until we have a greater need for them.

Timothy Sorrell: My point with that though is I think the issue was to get a vice chair, so in your absence we have somebody who is going to run the meeting.

Michael Ovitt: That was regarding the remote participation that did not allow for it.

Beth Matson: The Board's that I have been on I have not seen bylaws in, and if you are concerned about a vice chair, the Board could vote to appoint somebody as vice chair.

Mark Bashara: I will make a motion then to table the bylaws.

Timothy Sorrell: I will second that motion.

A roll call vote was taken to table the Board Bylaws, the vote was unanimous.

3.) Directors update: veteran's buyback update

Sheila LaBarbera: The Board asked last month about the veteran's buyback and where we were in the process of making sure that veterans that needed to make payments by August 8, 2025, the veterans have been notified or started payments. I have provided a worksheet. We have contacted them by mail and by phone. Those that have already started are good. Some veterans have not responded. We have made sure that they are aware. If they do not have a payment plan started by August 8, 2025 of this year, they are going to lose the opportunity, and the opportunity probably will not come back up again. We have done the best that we can to make sure that those people are all notified and we are documenting it.

Mark Bashara: I think the important part is you have some kind of documentation.

Sheila LaBarbera: We are making sure that we are doing all of that.

Michael Ovitt: Sheila, my question is, have they applied and done a calculation or just not started the payment plan?

Sheila LaBarbera: I am pretty sure everybody is past the calculation and approval process. I think these are all people who have not started the plan.

Michael Ovitt: they have been given the opportunity, they have opted in for it, but they just have not engaged the repayment then?

Sheila LaBarbera: That is correct.

Michael Ovitt: So, these are all active employees, and we have contact info for them, so it is not like they have been inactive or anything like that. Do we need to reach out to the employers in any manner or is it just an individual thing?

Sheila LaBarbera: We have reached out to the individuals. They have to opt in. They have to opt into this. Like I said, we have sent them certified letters, we have made phone calls, and we have done everything that we can. Anybody that is on that list has been contacted numerous times.

Mark Bashara: The certified letter in itself is perfect. Is it on the website as well?

Sheila LaBarbera: I do not know if it is on the website.

Mark Bashara: Can you maybe put it on there? Just – it shows that we have done every imaginable thing, you know.

Timothy Sorrell: Well, I saw your spreadsheet. I think the ones that Mike and I were asked about previously have all been interacted with.

Sheila LaBarbera: The ones that were eager are already in and some have already paid.

Timothy Sorrell: Right.

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
May 28, 2025

Michael Ovitt: I will follow up to see if there is any that, I am aware of. Tim, you can certainly look at the spreadsheet.

Timothy Sorrell: I looked at the spreadsheet, Mike, and we talked about the people down South County. They are all hooked up with it, as well as the few in Lanesborough I know of, so we are good.

Michael Ovitt: The calculation but possibly not the start of the repayment.

Timothy Sorrell: No, they are on the sheet and starting the plan.

Michael Ovitt: Well, all right. Sounds good.

Remote work Brian Shepard

Sheila LaBarbera: I have one other issue that I need to bring up it came up the other day, so I did not have the chance to put it on the agenda. Brian is stuck this summer for some daycare. They do not have a daycare provider for their oldest son so she works remote a couple of days a week. What he has asked for is that one day a week he will work remotely to cover the day that he does not have daycare. I do not have an issue with the one-day remote. It probably works out to about 8 days total because he has vacation and some holidays. It would be about 8 days total between the end of June through Labor Day. He certainly can post deductions and work from home.

Michael Ovitt: What does that have to do with vacation?

Sheila LaBarbera: Well, it is about 8 weeks total over the summer months. He has vacation during the summer, so it is not a full 10 or 12 weeks of one-day-a-week because there are some weeks that he is off work.

Michael Ovitt: He will be absent in addition to the daycare then? So, he is going to utilize his vacation to cover other—.

Sheila LaBarbera: Right, it is about 8 days total between now and Labor Day, so I just wanted to make sure that the Board is aware and if you would like to approve it.

Timothy Sorrell: I will make a motion to approve the one-day-a week remote work from home for Brian?

Mark Bashara: And you are saying if he needs more time than that, like an actual time, he will use his vacation time?

Sheila LaBarbera: Yes, vacation if he needs extra time.

Michael Ovitt: Can you possibly —? Oh, go ahead. We have a motion.

Mark Bashara: I will second the motion.

Michael Ovitt: All right. Sheila, can you possibly put that in writing to us?

Sheila LaBarbera: Yes.

Michael Ovitt: What the proposal is and — so, it sounds like there's going to be other time out of the office as well, so if it's going to be 2 days a week, 3 days a week, just give us the best idea you can on that.

Sheila LaBarbera: For Brian, it will be one day a week.

Mark Bashara: Is that a set day? Like every Monday? Or a variable day?

Sheila LaBarbera: I am not sure because his wife has remote, and I am not sure what day she has. I think it might be one specific day.

Michael Ovitt: All right. Well, then, this comes back to — so, what was the question about the vacation then? Was he utilizing vacation in addition?

Sheila LaBarbera: He is out for 2 weeks in the summer, so obviously there would be no remote work. During those weeks, and he does not need to take a day off because he is already out on vacation.

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
May 28, 2025

Michael Ovitt: Okay.

Sheila LaBarbera: That's why he's out about 8 days remote for the summer because even though it's really about 10 or 11 weeks that he's out on vacation 2 weeks, so those days are already covered, so it would only be about 8 days total.

Michael Ovitt: If you could just give me a little outline on that.

Sheila LaBarbera: I will, and if I can give you the specific days too, I will.

Michael Ovitt: Okay, any further discussion? All in favor.

A roll call vote was taken to approve the 8 days of remote work June through August 2025, the vote was unanimous.

Michael Ovitt: When would you be starting this, just to clarify?

Sheila LaBarbera: I will have to check, school is out on 23 June, so it would be after June 23.

Disability applications updates:

Mark Bashara: Last month we talked about the member, we approved disability from the fall in the hallway at school.

Sheila LaBarbera: DeGrenier.

Mark Bashara: Did that meeting take place yet? Remember you were going to advise him of all this rights so there was no question.

Sheila LaBarbera: No. What I did is I provided a list for his attorney to review with his client. Tom Gibson and I actually went over a list of all the items that needed to be covered. His attorney will provide us with signed documents when all of his documents are returned to us. We have waiting on an option selection form and other different forms that the member has to study, review and sign. I went over all of the forms with his attorney.

Mark Bashara: So, you think that will be set by next meeting? I am just curious.

Sheila LaBarbera: Hopefully. The PERAC transmittal has not come back to me yet. We are just kind of waiting right now.

Mark Bashara: If that comes on in between that time period, just if you could send us all an email just saying paperwork signed, we're all set or not, or whatever.

Sheila LaBarbera: Yes

Mark Bashara: Thank you.

OLD BUSINESS:

Executive minutes Michael Ovitt: As far as the executive session minutes, they were on the agenda. Sheila, do they need to be approved during executive session?

Sheila LaBarbera: Do they have to be approved during executive session?

Michael Ovitt: The ADR for DeGrenier?

Sheila LaBarbera: I do not know. We have never gotten into executive session to approve executive session minutes.

Michael Ovitt: Okay.

Beth Matson: I think I remember hearing this at the conference that you are supposed to go into executive session to approve them because if they are out for signature in an open meeting, they are a public document. If anyone were there, they could request that you would have to give that to them.

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
May 28, 2025

Timothy Sorrell: That is what we do at the select board is we go into executive session to approve the minutes.

Sheila LaBarbera: Okay. We will talk with Tom, I can set that up. No problem.

Michael Ovitt: So, they were – are they part of the consent agenda?

Sheila LaBarbera: No. They are not. I only have the regular meeting, and that is on here.

Michael Ovitt: We will hold off until the next meeting to clarify that then.

Sheila LaBarbera: I will check with Tom and make sure, if we have to do executive session to approve those minutes. Next month, I will put them on.

Executive sessions: Michael Ovitt: Okay. All right. there was some communications regarding executive session update. We did not put it on this month's agenda. What we need to do is come up with a date, and we will probably do a Zoom meeting. I have some possible dates, but in addition to that, we also have the fifth member appointment to consider and whether we need to agree upon how we're proceeding with that, whether we're going to have a special meeting to consider or just wait 'til the next meeting which would be the end of June. At the next executive session meeting, I have some dates in June, June 4th, June 5th, June 10th, or the 13th, and then the 16th through 18th. So, do you guys have a preference on when you would like that next update? The executive session?

Timothy Sorrell: How is the 16th?

Beth Matson: The 16th. Monday the 16th is okay with me as well.

Michael Ovitt: So, Monday the 16th?

Mark Bashara: You will get back to us with the time? do you know what time already?

Michael Ovitt: I will reach out to Ericka to confirm here availability. I would be available Monday the 16th as well. I think we could probably do a Zoom meeting with all of us, and tentatively, we will go for the Monday the 16th and I will work on the time.

5th MEMBER APPOINTMENT

Michael Ovitt: Whether or not we want to incorporate an in-person meeting to interview candidates, review, and collectively decide on candidates to bring in, or just vet through the applications, what is your pleasure?

Mark Bashara: Well, typically when we look to hire someone, we look through the applications, kind of sit out those that we don't think, you know, would be applicable, so we could look through and if there's some there that we think are good then pick those and then talk with them, and we'll get the information we want.

Timothy Sorrell: Now, is that going to be the purpose of our June 16th executive session Zoom meeting to figure out what we are going to do? Or no?

Michael Ovitt: Negative.

Timothy Sorrell: Okay.

Sheila LaBarbera: I think you can do that in open session.

Timothy Sorrell: Okay, in open session. I agree with Mark that, you know, we can go through the applications and then narrow it down I guess, and if we want to, if we see the need, bring them in.

Mark Bashara: If we all come to agreement that there is five candidates and three of them we all agree would be possibilities, then we interview those three.

Timothy Sorrell: Bring them in for our meeting in June maybe? Would that be easier?

Michael Ovitt: Pardon?

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
May 28, 2025

Timothy Sorrell: I said then we can bring them in for our meeting in June for the interview and make our determination.

Mark Bashara: Because we have to know by, what? July 1st?

Michael Ovitt: Well, we need to do it at our June meeting. Do we want to submit our priorities to Sheila? Any and all and collectively compile that for who is coming in?

Sheila LaBarbera: Well, there is only four. Do you want to do a separate day for the interview versus doing the interview on the 25th and then making a decision that day?

Timothy Sorrell: We are just going to interview two? Two out of the four?

Sheila LaBarbera: Up to you.

Mark Bashara: I mean, from my recollection, two of the four were definitely qualified, but the other two I can't say definitively, but nobody was a standout from what I remember of the other two.

Timothy Sorrell: I would say interview two at our meeting and then we can make our decision that day.

Michael Ovitt: All right. Let us see if the – we will give Sheila the names, and I am going to further review the other two applicants from out of the area there and see if we want to bring them in for an interview as well. And you guys certainly do that as well.

Sheila LaBarbera: So then, the decision is to do the interviews on the 25th?

Michael Ovitt: Yeah.

Sheila LaBarbera: Okay. So, at the very least, I have to let those individuals know that they have to be available on the 25th.

Michael Ovitt: Right, if they are going to be available, yeah.

Sheila LaBarbera: What if someone is not available?

Michael Ovitt: Then we will go on their resume, I guess.

Sheila LaBarbera: Okay.

Timothy Sorrell: That sounds fair.

AccessPlus/ PTG update:

Mark Bashara: How is the computer?

Sheila LaBarbera: it is AccessPlus. That is not us, it seems to be okay.

Mark Bashara: I cannot think off the top of my head the name of our programs there.

Michael Ovitt: PTG?

Mark Bashara: PTG, yes. Are they doing good?

Sheila LaBarbera: They are fine.

Mark Bashara: Keeping their word and making available?

Sheila LaBarbera: Absolutely, I talked to Chris Lodge the other day because they are doing an early adopter program, and I am going to talk to him about maybe doing some things in the late summer of upgrading certain parts of our PTG system.

Mark Bashara: That is all included? That is not an extra charge?

Sheila LaBarbera: Not that I am aware of.

Mark Bashara: Very good.

Michael Ovitt: We will look for a motion to adjourn.

Mark Bashara: I will make a motion to adjourn. Timothy Sorrell: I will second that.

A roll call vote was taken to adjourn, the vote was unanimous.

At 9:25am, the meeting was adjourned.

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
May 28, 2025

The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 25, 2025 at 9:00am.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Sheila LaBarbera, Executive Director

APPROVED BY:

Michael Ovitt, Chairman

Mark Bashara, Elected Member

Timothy Sorrell, Elected Member

Ericka Oleson, Advisory Council Member

Beth Matson, 5th Member Appointed