

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
October 21, 2020

The meeting of the Berkshire County Retirement Board was called to order at 8:58 A.M. in the Retirement Office, located at 29 Dunham Mall, Pittsfield, MA. Present at the meeting were, Michael Ovitt, Chairman, Karen Williams, Elected Member, and Mark Bashara, Elected Member. Paul A. Lisi, Jr., Advisory Board Member participated by video conference. Roll call vote to open the meeting. Unanimous.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Members of the public have an opportunity to address the Retirement Board as the remote link to the meeting was posted with the agenda. There were no members of the public attending the meeting or connecting remotely.

NEW BUSINESS:

1.) The Board interviewed applicants for the 5th position appointed member for the Berkshire County Retirement Board. Interviews will be scheduled for 30 minutes.

The interview with Beth Matson began @ 9am.

Michael Ovitt welcomed Beth to the interview and asked the other Board members to introduce themselves.

Michael Ovitt indicated that the Board had reviewed her resume and asked Beth to tell the Board about herself. Beth provided details regarding 20+ years of experience as Executive Director in both Northbridge and the North Adams Retirement Boards and 2+ years as a Board member with the Adams Retirement Board. Beth indicated that she was interested in the opportunity to work with a County system that was much larger than the systems she is currently working with and felt her knowledge and experience would be beneficial to the Berkshire Board.

Michael Ovitt asked how she learned about the position? Beth -PERAC website.

Karen Williams asked about experience with PTG software? Beth very familiar has used over 10 years and 2 successful conversions to PTG. She currently uses the core system accounting ESS module and the document scan module.

Karen Williams asked about her style as a board member in Adams? Beth- impartial and fair, being new to Berkshire County she does not know a lot of people so she lacks the bias that others from the area may have.

Mark Bashara asked about separating the duties of each Board and maintaining focus? Beth focuses on the matters individually for each Board.

Paul Lisi asked what she may bring to the board that we may not be aware of from her resume? As a Board member in Adams she helped move all of the funds to PRIT, she helped restructure the accounts and reconcile the accounting, she has the ability to pick out all of the good parts and share that knowledge with other Board members.

Sheila LaBarbera asked how she managed COVID in North Adams? Does she use payroll and deduction modules for PTG? Beth was able to work remotely so always available to the membership. She has both PTG modules in North Adams.

Michael Ovitt asked about the size of the system in North Adams? Beth 325 actives and 250 retired.

Michael Ovitt asked who she felt she represented as a Board member? Beth – she felt she represented the membership as a board member and that if a member was entitled to a benefit within the guidelines of Ch. 32 the decisions were clear.

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
October 21, 2020

Michael Ovitt asked about the time commitment? has her employer allowed her time for Board service? Beth – her board has allowed her time for this pursuit if she is appointed. *Mark Bashara* asked since this is a larger system would she have time for all three systems? Beth felt she had a firm understanding of the time involved for each system.

In conclusion, Michael Ovitt detailed the educational requirements for PERAC and the monthly Board meeting schedule. He also asked if Beth would provide references and she said she would email them to the Executive Director.

Interview concluded @ 9:25am.

The interview with Karen Lancto began @ 9:30am.

Michael Ovitt welcomed Karen to the interview and asked the other Board members to introduce themselves.

Michael Ovitt indicated that the Board had reviewed her resume and asked Karen to tell the Board about herself. Karen- has worked 20+ years as director of the Pittsfield Retirement Board worked her way up to Director has been with Pittsfield for 23 years.

Michael Ovitt asked about the structure of the office? There are only two employees at one time they had three but now only have two.

Michael Ovitt asked how did she heard about the position? What is her interest? Karen -knew Gerry Doyle and that with his passing the position would be posted to PERAC website, as Director in Pittsfield she brings knowledge of Ch. 32 and PERAC promotes staff applying to open Board seats.

Michael Ovitt asked about the challenges of working in a county system with 45 units compared to a city system? Karen indicated they have 3 additional units so she is familiar with multiple units in Pittsfield. Pittsfield has about 1150 active members and 825 retired members so it is similar in size to the County.

Mark Bashara asked about her ability to keep the systems differentiated since there may be overlap in membership from Pittsfield to the County? Karen- she would wear two different hats, experience brings the ability to look at each situation differently. She has experienced Board members who were unable to separate situations and she learned from that experience.

Karen Williams asked her to describe her style or approach as a board member? Karen- she will take each situation as it comes she will listen take in the facts then make her own decision based on the facts.

Paul Lisi asked how she would deal with legal ethical or moral obligations as they arise in situations that conflict with issues previously dealt with in the Pittsfield system? Would you participate or recuse yourself from those decisions? Karen- she was not sure it would depend on the situation, she felt she could separate if necessary but doesn't feel she would have always recuse herself.

Paul Lisi asked what id members had previous cases with Pittsfield and now had a case with Berkshire County? Karen- if she felt she needed to recuse herself she would.

Michael Ovitt asked Paul Lisi for clarification on the legal aspect of Karen recusing herself from potential conflicts.

Paul Lisi indicated he had requested a legal opinion from Tom Gibson. The other Board members were not aware Paul sought out an opinion from legal counsel on this issue. Paul Lisi indicated that all of Karen's answers were in agreement with the response he had received from Tom Gibson.

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
October 21, 2020

Sheila LaBarbera asked what measures they took to provide member services through the Covid emergency in the spring? Karen- The Pittsfield office was closed so they worked remotely when the office was reopened they used the same protocols as City Hall.

What PTG modules are used in Pittsfield? Core module, payroll module and scan module.

Michael Ovitt asked who do you feel you represent the Towns, the Board or the membership? Karen- Each case is different she will look at the evidence of each case and if a member is entitled to a benefit then it should be approved, she has no leaning one way or another it will be based on evidence.

In conclusion, Michael Ovitt detailed the educational requirements for PERAC and the monthly Board meeting schedule. He also asked if Karen would provide references and she said she would email them to the Executive Director.

Interview concluded @ 10:00am.

The interview with John Hager began @ 10:05am.

Michael Ovitt welcomed John to the interview and asked the other Board members to introduce themselves.

Michael Ovitt indicated that the Board had reviewed his resume and asked John to tell the Board about himself.

John detailed his experience as a board member with the Berkshire Federal Credit Union for many years. John was with Berkshire Health Systems over 24 years working mostly in finance, investments, audit and actuary.

Michael Ovitt outlined the monthly duties and responsibilities of Board meetings and the time commitment involved. Michael Ovitt asked about ability to attend meetings hearings and the educational requirements from PERAC? John- indicated he had flexibility within his current job to meet all of his obligations if selected for the Board.

Mark Bashara asked John if he understood the job responsibilities as a board member and how many units we serve? John- indicated he had reviewed the posting but understood there would be a learning curve for Ch. 32, he was not sure how many towns participated.

Michael Ovitt detailed the services retirement board provides to the towns, districts and membership, he asked John to describe his experience with worker's comp? John- detailed his managing worker's comp claims for over 3000 employees of BHS in the state of MA.

Paul Lisi asked about his experience with BHS and Cohen & Kinne and asked John to elaborate on the IT security component? John- Berkshire Health care he had responsibility for HR components as they applied to payroll, at Cohen & Kinne he has a smaller role but oversees the immediate personnel issues. IT experience at Cohen & Kinne very important to ensure the security of all data in the law offices and they use Synergex a local IT security firm in Pittsfield. He also has considerable experience with security of scanned documents at BHS, the nature of health privacy demanded the protection and security of health records.

Karen Williams asked about approach to working with others on the Board? John- spoke of a laid back style, he learned from experience to develop positive relationships it helps to get work done. He stated negative or difficult interactions do not accomplish much.

Michael Ovitt asked if John had any prior public service? John- stated early in his career he was an auditor with Adleson & Co. and performed many audits on local Towns and districts in Berkshire County. Michael Ovitt detailed the difference between the MA public pension system and social security.

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
October 21, 2020

Michael Ovitt asked about his ability to participate in monthly meeting and the educational requirements for PERAC? John- indicated his employer was very supportive of joining public boards and would allow him the time needed to participate in the community. He also understood the learning curve for Ch. 32 and felt he had the time to dedicate to educating himself.

Paul Lisi detailed the information available for educating new board members on the PERAC Website, and asked what skill he brought to the Board that would be most helpful? John- indicated he held as many as seven different jobs at the health systems so he was experienced at educating himself quickly. He said finance would be his greatest strength and then asked us about our financial cycle, PRIT investments and audits.

Mark Bashara asked if he had the opportunity to check out our investments with PRIT? John-said he had checked out the PRIT website but was unable to get our financials from the PERAC website but would look them up.

Paul Lisi noted that our outside audits are done by Melanson and that we have had no findings over the last 3 years.

Michael Ovitt asked about the issue of confidentiality with the law firm, would he recuse himself if there was conflict with a case represented by Cohen & Kinne? John – clarified the law office regularly checks to ensure there are no conflicts of interest, but if one arose he would recuse himself.

Michael Ovitt asked if John would provide references and he said he would email them to the Executive Director.

Interview concluded @ 10:35am.

Michael Ovitt asked about the appointment date of October 28, 2020, it was noted that PERAC requires an appointment within 30 days of the vacancy, since more than 30 days had passed the appointment should be made at the next regularly scheduled board meeting.

Karen Williams asked about the appointment process and it was explained there would be a nomination of a candidate then just a simple majority vote of the four current board members.

Paul Lisi asked that we get reference questions from legal counsel so questions asked to the references are legally allowed. We will ask Tom Gibson for a list of legal reference questions.

Mark Bashara suggested once the questions were obtained from legal counsel that the Chairman and executive director make the calls and report back to the board on October 28, 2020. The Board members agreed to complete this process in time to appoint the 5th member at the October 28, 2020, board meeting.

Mark Bashara had a question for Paul Lisi regarding his request to legal counsel Tom Gibson for clarification on conflict of interest questions. Mark Bashara noted he and the other board members were not aware of the request and wanted to know what the policy was regarding the requests made to legal counsel?

Paul Lisi indicated he had questions regarding the conflict of interest law and wanted to be prepared for the interviews.

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
October 21, 2020

Mark Bashara asked that in the future if questions arise that the questions be sent to executive director to be forwarded to legal counsel. All of the board members should be made aware of the requests in case they have additional questions for counsel. The board does not want to incur additional costs by asking counsel the same question multiple times.

Paul Lisi agreed that in the future he will notify the board before pursuing opinions on his own. Paul Lisi also asked that Board members who communicate with retirement staff, retirees and active members share that information with all board members.


Michael Ovitt noted that PERAC was also a resource for legal questions.

Mark Bashara asked if Tom Gibson had a separate fee for phone questions rather than written opinions? The Executive Director will ask counsel about phone questions.

The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 28, 2020 at 9:00am.

Voted to adjourn at 10:50 am.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:



Sheila LaBarbera, Executive Director

APPROVED BY:



Michael Ovitt, Chairman



Mark Bashara, Elected Member



Karen Williams, Elected Member

Paul A. Lisi, Jr., Advisory Council Member

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
October 28, 2020

The meeting of the Berkshire County Retirement Board was called to order at 9:00 A.M. in the Retirement Office, located at 29 Dunham Mall, Pittsfield, MA. Present at the meeting were, Michael Ovitt, Chairman, Karen Williams, Elected Member, and Mark Bashara, Elected Member. Paul A. Lisi, Jr., Advisory Board Member participated by video conference. A roll call vote was taken to open the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Members of the public have an opportunity to address the Retirement Board as the remote link to the meeting was posted with the agenda. There were no members of the public attending the meeting or connecting remotely.

MINUTES:

1.) The Board minutes of the meeting held September 30, 2020, were signed and approved. **A roll call vote to approve the minutes.**

NEW BUSINESS:

2.) The Board appointed a new Board member for the 5th position of the Berkshire County Retirement Board. The appointment of Beth Matson will fill the unexpired term of Gerald Doyle who was appointed to serve from July 1, 2020 thru June 30, 2025. Mike Ovitt presented the results of reference checks for the candidates interviewed and all candidates received exemplary reviews from their references. Paul Lisi, Jr. stated his preference for John Hager and detailed his extensive background in Human Resources, Information Technologies, and Finance. Paul Lisi, Jr. also noted that he believed it would be an opportunity for the Board to select a candidate not associated with a retirement system. Paul felt the candidate would give the Board a different perspective on issues. Karen Williams stated her preference for Beth Matson and detailed her Board experience and preparedness for the interview. Mark Bashara stated his preference for Karen Lancto. Mike asked if any of the board members wanted to make a motion so that the Board could debate the motion. Karen Williams made a motion to appoint Beth Matson, seconded by Mark Bashara. Paul Lisi, Jr. stated he felt strongly that it was important to use the appointed position to bring a different skill set and perspective to the Board so he could not vote favorably for either retirement system administrator while at the same time praising them of their abilities. On the motion to appoint Beth Matson three in favor - Paul Lisi, Jr. opposed.

A roll call vote to appoint Beth Matson to the 5th member appointed position.

3.) The Board reviewed and approved the 2019 Annual Financial Statements prepared by Melanson Heath. There were no audit findings for 2019. The audit will be made available to member units and a copy forwarded to PERAC.

A roll call vote to approve the 2019 financial statements prepared by Melanson.

4.) The Board reviewed the proposed 2021 annual budget for the Berkshire County Retirement Board. There was a short discussion about the preparation of the budget. The budget was amended to only include one week of vacation buyout for the staff. Mike Ovitt requested more detail for the line items service contracts, PTG breakdown and health insurance. The Board will share the proposed budget with the Advisory Board on 10/29/2020 for their review and input.

A roll call vote to note the record.

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
October 28, 2020

5.) The Board appointed an elections officer for the December 2, 2020 board member election. An election is required as there are three candidates certified for the election. Mark Bashara made a motion to nominate Sheila LaBarbera the election officer for the fall election second by Karen Williams, Unanimous.

A roll call vote to appoint Sheila Labarbera election officer.

INVESTMENTS:

6.) The Board received from PRIT a statement of performance for September 2020. The PRIT Fund returned .65% for the month of September.

A roll call vote to note the record.

BANK STATEMENTS:

7.) The Board received the bank statements for Sept 2020 and the budget for Oct 2020.

Note: copies of cashbooks for September 2020 were emailed to each Board member prior to the meeting.

A roll call vote to note the record.

MONTHLY WARRANTS:

8.) The Board approved payment vouchers:

10-01-20	\$8,151.45
10-02-20	\$113,793.08
10-03-20	\$2,822.54
10-04-20	\$1,456,424.72
10-05-20	\$22,293.44
10-06-20	\$2,416.70

A roll call vote to approve payments as presented.

REQUESTS FOR RETIREMENT:

9.) The Board approved the application for superannuation retirement from Sandra Consolati, Lee, Paraprofessional. The retirement will be effective 10/05/2020.

The Board approved the application for superannuation retirement from Jane Wright, SBRSD, Paraprofessional. The retirement will be effective 10/19/2020.

The Board approved the application for superannuation retirement from Karen T. Williams, Stockbridge, Treasurer/ Collector. The retirement will be effective 12/19/2020.

A roll call vote to approve retirements as presented. * note Karen Williams abstained*

REQUEST FOR SERVICE BUYBACK:

10.) Bruce Cullett, a member in Peru, is eligible to buy back 2 years and 6 months of prior creditable service. If Mr. Cullett pays \$9,302.83 into the annuity savings fund by November 30, 2020, the Board will grant 2 years and 6 months of creditable service.

Ann Martin, a member in MGRSD, is eligible to buy back 3 years and 6 months of prior creditable service. If Ms. Martin pays \$7,866.31 into the annuity savings fund by November 30, 2020, the Board will grant 3 years and 6 months of creditable service. North Adams retirement board will accept liability for 3 years and 6 months of prior creditable service.

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
October 28, 2020

Stephen O'Brien, a member in Lenox, is eligible to buy back 1 year of prior creditable service. If Mr. O'Brien pays \$4,158.09 into the annuity savings fund by November 30, 2020, the Board will grant 1 year of creditable service.

A roll call vote to approve the buybacks as presented.

MEMBER TRANSFERS OUT OF SYSTEM:

11.) The Board approved the notice of transfer of the account of Kyle Appleton, a member in BCRHA to the State Retirement Board. The Berkshire County Retirement Board will accept liability for 4 years and 4 months of creditable service. The amount of the transfer is \$13,173.91.

The Board approved the notice of transfer of the account of Beth Carroll, a member in Lenox to the State Retirement Board. The Berkshire County Retirement Board will accept liability for 12 years and 1 month of creditable service. The amount of the transfer is \$72,994.76.

A roll call vote to approve transfers as presented.

REQUESTS FOR REFUNDS:

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

Rosemary Oliver	MGRSD	\$1,424.65
Micheala Theirling	BHRSD	\$26,199.76
Michael Wigglesworth	Hinsdale	\$2,416.70

A roll call vote to approve refunds as presented.

INJURY REPORTS:

13.) There were injuries reported in Stockbridge, Becket, BHRSD and Lee in the month of October.

A roll call vote to note the record.

NEW MEMBER APPLICATIONS:

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

7131	STEFAN E BILLUPS	LENOX	9/8/2020	THEATER MGR	1
7132	MARY K BRYANT	FLORIDA	9/3/2020	PARA	1
7134	AMY E BOARDMAN	BHRSD	9/8/2020	PARA	1
7135	CHRISTINE OCHELTREE	TYRINGHAM	10/12/2020	CLERK	1
7136	ZACHARY A KELLOGG	CBRS	10/15/2020	CUSTODIAN	1
7138	MATTHEW A DANIELS	FLORIDA	10/1/2020	EDUC SPECIALIST	1
7139	FOX J RIISKA	BHRSD	9/21/2020	CUSTODIAN	1
7140	STEVEN J LeCOMPTE	LEE	9/14/2020	CUSTODIAN	1
7141	MARCELLA A FERRY	LEE	9/21/2020	PARA	1
7142	HEATHER L BRZYKCY	CLARKSBURG	10/5/2020	PARA	1
7143	THOMAS M CASTAGNA	CBRS	10/15/2020	CUSTODIAN	1
7144	MICHAEL F KNAPPE	HINSDALE	9/30/2020	DPW LABORER	1
7145	DANIEL S SADLOWSKI	MGRSD	9/28/2020	PARA	1
7146	JEAN E KIRSCH	MGRSD	10/9/2020	PARA	1
7147	JOSHUA R BELLINGER	WILLIAMSTOWN	9/28/2020	HIGHWAY	1
7148	AUSTIN R GARRETT	SANDISFIELD	10/5/2020	DPW LABORER	1

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
October 28, 2020

7149	DAVID M SOLAK	MGRSD	10/9/2020	PARA	1
7150	MOLLY A BUSSIERE	MGRSD	10/9/2020	PARA	1
7151	AMY C CARIDDI	CLARKSBURG	9/28/2020	ADM ASST	1
7152	LOUISE M KIRCHNER	LEE	9/25/2020	PYRL SPECIALIST	1
7153	KATLYN M BREITENBACH	CLARKSBURG	10/5/2020	PARA	1
7154	MICHAEL F BUONO	MGRSD	9/25/2020	PARA	1
7155	FRANCIS B HAYDEN	MGRSD	10/9/2020	CUSTODIAN	1
7156	JILL DRUMMOND	MGRSD	10/23/2020	PARA	1
7157	TYRA C NURMI	LENOX	9/28/2020	PARA	1

A roll call vote to approve new members as presented.

RETIREMENT ALLOWANCE APPROVALS:

15.) The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to Mark Stannard, Gt Barrington, as of 06/19/2020. Annual pension amount is \$18,972.12.

The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to Leslie Meltzer, Gt Barrington, as of 06/30/2020. Annual pension amount is \$16,548.24.

The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to Geraldine Walter, Becket, as of 07/28/2020. Annual pension amount is \$12,857.76.

The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to David Soules, Gt Barrington, as of 07/10/2020. Annual pension amount is \$24,613.92.

The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to Jill Barnoski, Lenox, as of 07/31/2020. Annual pension amount is \$20,374.20.

The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to Laura Maffuccio, Dalton, as of 08/20/2020. Annual pension amount is \$18,550.32.

The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to Gerald Curtin, BHRSD, as of 08/21/2020. Annual pension amount is \$10,304.16.

The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to Karen Buratto, Lee, as of 08/31/2020. Annual pension amount is \$16,915.32.

A roll call vote to note the record.

3(8)c REIMBURSEMENTS:

16.) There are no 3(8)c reimbursements for the month of October.

PERAC CORRESPONDENCE:

The Board received from PERAC the following memorandums:

#28/2020	Tobacco Company lists
#29/2020	Retirement Board Training 4 th Quarter
#30/2020	Compliance with 2019 91A process
#31/2020	Appropriation Data
#32/2020	Allowable earnings determination – Prosper

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

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
October 28, 2020

TRAVEL & EDUCATION APPROVALS:

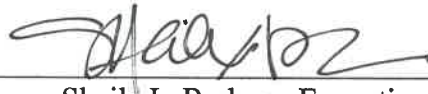
18.) There are no travel requests for the month of October.

MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE:

- a.) Copy of Support Hosting Agreement with PTG scan module
- b.) Copy of the contract for PBI death audit service for 2021
- c.) Copy of Regular Compensation in Additional employment within BCRS
- d.) Email for Supplemental Dependent Allowances
- e.) PERAC notice regarding disinterested parties signing beneficiary forms

The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 24, 2020 at 9:00am.
A roll call vote to adjourn at 10:40 am.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:



Sheila LaBarbera, Executive Director


APPROVED BY:



Michael Ovitt, Chairman



Mark Bashara, Elected Member



Karen Williams, Elected Member

Paul A. Lisi, Jr., Advisory Council Member