

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
July 28, 2021

The meeting of the Berkshire County Retirement Board was called to order at 9:00 A.M. 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, Karen Williams, Elected Member, Beth Matson Appointed member and Paul A. Lisi, Jr., Advisory Board Member.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Members of the public had an opportunity to address the Retirement Board as the remote link to the meeting was posted with the agenda. No members of the public attending the meeting or were connected remotely.

NEW BUSINESS:

1.) Review of an employment offer for the open position in the retirement office. Michael Ovitt noted that there was a recommendation from the Board meeting of April 21, 2021, before the Board to offer the open position to Jill Hersey. The Board reviewed the employment offer of prorated time for September 1, 2021 thru December 31, 2021 of 3.5 days of vacation time and 4.5 days of PTO time. On January 1, 2022, the employee would receive 2 weeks (10 days) of vacation time and 105 hours (15 days) of PTO time. The starting salary would be \$55,000.00.

Paul Lisi made a motion to offer the job to Jill Hersey second by Beth Matson.

Michael Ovitt noted that Jill Hersey and Melanie Medon were asked different questions.

Paul Lisi noted that all of the candidates were asked the same questions during the interviews, since Melanie Medon declined the final interview, she was able to answer some questions that would have been asked in the final interview. Beth Matson noted that both Jill and Melanie were only asked what changed from the original interview? Michael Ovitt stated he wanted to go with a united front, but thought Ashlee Shaw would have made a good employee, but he liked Jill Hersey's experience. The Board members noted that all three candidates did well and could be considered if future opportunities arise. The Board deferred to Sheila LaBarbera and she noted that all three candidates did well they each bring different strengths but she was in agreement with the Board on recommendation to hire Jill Hersey.

A roll call vote to offer the job to Jill Hersey, and the vote was unanimous.

2.) The Board is asked to consider the purchase and installation of the Deduction Posting system from PTG. Paul Lisi noted that the deduction posting program offered by PTG has been discussed several times over the last four years. Paul Lisi stated he believed with a new employee starting soon that this was the perfect opportunity to install the PTG program. The payroll posting program will ensure items such as regular and recurring compensation is consistent, as we are currently unable to identify variations in regular compensation. In discussions with PTG in the past they are willing to train treasurers and provide the tools necessary for a successful conversion to the new deduction posting system. Karen Williams was concerned that in the past not all payroll programs were supported by PTG. Michael Ovitt asked about the last date of discussions with PTG. Sheila LaBarbera noted that she was scheduled to travel to Middlesex County just before the pandemic closure, so the last proposal from PTG would be about December of 2019. Sheila LaBarbera noted that we are having difficulty identifying variations in the regular compensation and it has led to having very difficult conversations with retirees as a retirement allowance may be reduced because of ineligible wages. It is happening more frequently and the current process does not provide

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the proper analytics to ensure the proper posting of eligible deductions. The PTG program provide parameters for identifying these issues so we are able to deal with them before retirement. Beth Matson noted she used the system in Northbridge with MUNIS and agreed that the posting will show warnings. Research has to be done on the warnings which will take time to resolve. She noted North Adams Retirement was not able to connect the PTG to the city payroll system. Sheila LaBarbera discussed some of the issues the other counties had converting all of their units into the deduction posting program and noted the program we are discussing was created specifically for counties systems. It will save time with data entry but it will also help to prevent the oversights in allowing non-pensionable wages to be included in monthly deductions. It is a tool that will help us get the information we need in a more uniform manner from all of our units. She noted the process to convert will take about 6-8 months from inception. Beth Matson asked about the cost which is estimated to be about \$20,000 per year but an updated proposal will be requested from PTG. Training and conversion were estimated at \$10,000, Sheila LaBarbera will work with PTG representative to get the best negotiated price for the module. Mark Bashara asked the previous employee how much time it took to do the data entry and she indicated it did not take long to enter the data. Mark Bashara was hung up on the cost for the program as it is expensive and the cost will only increase over time. Mark Bashara wanted the new employee to learn the deduction posting process manually then review whether or not the program was necessary. Beth Matson noted the former employee could enter data quickly and the new employee may be better served by training on the manual system for 6 months to get acquainted with member names, learn the process, then when the new posting program is in place the employees time is well spent on the analytical tasks like identifying and correcting the inaccurate deduction information. Beth Matson made the point that the salary savings would pay for the new posting program and the employee time is better spent on analytics than on data entry. Sheila LaBarbera agreed that the process we use now is flawed as the errors are analyzed when member's retirement calculations are being processed. Karen Williams asked where the errors occur? Is it the data submitted? Or the posting of the data? Sheila LaBarbera noted that the new system we set up will have parameters so that any errors would be noted when the data is not conforming and the most important step is setting up the allowable deductions codes. Bill Flynn noted the difficulty of some posting is the months that have an additional pay period. With a monthly posting system, as used by counties, it is difficult to easily identify errors or problems. Sheila LaBarbera noted that her conversations with several County Administrators they are very happy with the posting program and it has improved their systems greatly especially by limiting employee turnover. Michael Ovitt asked about the controls for deduction codes and it was noted that the retirement system controls the codes when they are set up in the system. Paul Lisi noted that the deduction or pay codes are audited every year by our own auditors so treasurers should be aware of the codes used by their town payroll system. Paul Lisi noted he did not ever want to be the individual calling a retiree to notify them their pension would be less than expected. Mark Bashara asked about the time used for the analytics? Does the new employee know her time will be spent doing the analytics to prevent these errors because if so, he could justify the money spent to purchase the PTG program. Mark Bashara asked about the negotiation for the annual cost? Sheila LaBarbera said she would work with PTG to get the lowest price possible. Karen Williams asked how the errors would be flagged by the new system, either by an ineligible deduction code or the amount posted. Karen Williams asked about the meeting with Middlesex County, while Sheila was never able to actually get there, she has spoken several

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times and will reschedule a visit when allowed by the pandemic. Karen Williams asked about the training for the treasurers? Essex provided a lot of great information regarding the training and the transition to new system. Trainings would be grouped by payroll systems so easier for the treasurers to network with each other. Michael Ovitt wanted more information regarding the cost of the module, the specifics of how it works and how it will improve the deduction process for our system going forward. Paul Lisi made a motion to table the item until August meeting. Sheila LaBarbera was asked to bring back to the board cost estimates, additional specifics on how the program work for the other counties, the analytics and treasurer trainings. Second by Karen Williams.

A roll call vote to table until August, and the vote was unanimous.

3.) The Board is asked to consider a one-time stipend payable to two retirement staff for the extra work they have taken on while the Board is searching to fill the vacated Retirement Coordinator position. Paul Lisi stated that the current employees have been completing the work previously performed by a full time employee, he feels that the current employees should be compensated for all of the extra hours spent ensuring all of the business of the retirement system is completed satisfactorily, and the Board should consider paying them for the extra hours. Beth Matson asked Paul Lisi if he had an amount to be considered by the Board? He indicated that looking at the total amount that would have been paid out between January and August would be \$47,500, so he suggested \$5000 of a non-pensionable stipend. It breaks down to \$625 per month and at 17 hrs. per week equals \$9.12 per hour which is not even close to their current hourly rate. Both employees have worked beyond their normal hours including early mornings, late afternoons and weekends. Beth Matson did not have a problem with proposal, she said it's been a long time without the additional employee. Bill Flynn noted that if he had to do it again he would have asked for overtime for the extra hours that have been worked. Beth Matson stated the overtime that would have been paid for the extra hours would not even come close to \$5000 stipend. Karen Williams asked if there was a record of the extra hours since this is the first time she is hearing of the extra time spent, she did appreciate the extra work done during this period of time. Bill Flynn noted the week that Sheila LaBarbera was on vacation he started at 7am never took a lunch and never left before 5pm. The same situation occurred when Bill Flynn was on vacation as Sheila LaBarbera spent many extra hours in the office. Bill Flynn stated it has been extremely difficult to take time off because work just piles up and it is waiting when you return. So extra hours are spent to catch up, a vacation is not really very relaxing. Karen Williams stated she had several situations working extra hours and she never got paid extra although it was never for 8 months, her personal experience is she never asked for anything so she never got anything. Bill Flynn noted it's been difficult keeping up and that both Bill and Sheila have gone above and beyond just to keep things afloat and provide an expected level of service to our membership. Karen Williams asked if there was any way to estimate the additional number of hour worked? Paul Lisi noted that the other employee was full time working 35 hours per week and that Bill and Sheila have picked up the work of that full time employee to get the job done. Paul Lisi made it clear that the employees have not asked him for the additional money, this was something he thought the board should do to compensate the staff for taking on the additional duties. Sheila LaBarbera stated that they have attempted to maintain a level of service for all of the members, the treasurers and retirees. Mark Bashara stated he believed that Bill and Sheila have gone above and beyond, but people who work here are well compensated and should be responsible to pick up extra work for seven

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months, he noted that maybe when the office was fully staffed the staff was not maxed out and had it easy and he never entertained reducing their salary because it was easier then. So when times were good no one went after a reduction in salary because that is what the job paid, but unfortunately you have to take the good with the bad. Both employees have done a great job but are well compensated. Michael Ovitt stated there have been multiple increases in pay, increases to PTO and changes in personnel policies to get paid for your unused vacation to put more cash in your pocket. Vacation time was extended for remaining vacation that was not taken in a timely manner through June. The Board talked about bringing in a temp to help with day to day operations, so he was not prepared to grant this request at this time but if you bring forth back up to show all this extra time spent you may persuade the Board. Mark Bashara noted the remote option for working from home during the pandemic, going forward that is an available option. Michael Ovitt noted we were closed to the public during the pandemic for a period of time how did that effect ability to do your work? Sheila LaBarbera stated that the work was done by phone and that the office was staffed during the pandemic. Michael Ovitt would like more information and justification for the request. Paul Lisi made a motion to pay the staff a onetime stipend for of \$5000 to Bill Flynn and Sheila LaBarbera. No second motion fails. Beth Matson made a motion to table the item until August, asking the staff to provide backup regarding the extra hours worked with details and explanations. Second by Paul Lisi. Sheila LaBarbera asked specifically what is the Board looking for back up? Extra hours worked, extra work on top of regular duties, what have you accomplished, times unable to take vacation time. Paul Lisi stated he did not believe the staff needed to justify this because a management audit justifies we do the job and without a third person the management letter will still indicate the job was done and that the staff have gone over and above what is expected. Documentation is not necessary for Paul Lisi but he respects Beth Matson's motion and he believes that there is something due to the employees. Michael Ovitt wants to be sure the \$5000 is an appropriate number. Bill Flynn stated if he was putting in his extra hours as overtime he would have been paid a lot more than \$5000. Taking vacation has not been easy because of the extra workload, 90% of the work will be waiting when you return from vacation. From the stand point of an employee taking a vacation is not enjoyable right now because its more trouble than its worth. If I have to take it or lose is it's just not enjoyable. Bill Flynn stated he spoke with Michael Ovitt while Sheila LaBarbera was on vacation so Michael Ovitt knew that Bill was in early and out late but Bill has not kept a record of all the extra hours he just did what needed to be done. Mark Bashara stated that the employees did a great job but when times were good they took advantage of the good but you also have to take the bad too. As a fiduciary if the board is going to pay out money they need to be able to justify the expense, he would like a general description of the extra work that was done. Mark Bashara asked Paul Lisi how he came up with his numbers? Paul Lisi noted that he asked for the salary that would have been paid January thru August \$47,500 He arrived at \$5000, by estimating \$625 per month then divided by 35 hrs. per week and it was 9.20 per hour. Paul Lisi felt the justification was that the job description of the vacant position and all of those duties have been completed. **A roll call vote to table until August, and the vote was unanimous.**

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Consent Agenda Detail:

MINUTES:

a.) The Board minutes of the executive session held May 26, 2021, and the executive session and regular minutes of the June 30, 2021, were signed and approved.

Minutes provided as an attachment to email

INVESTMENTS:

b.) The Board received from PRIT a statement of performance for June 2021. The PRIT Fund returned 3.01% for the month of June.

Investment report provided as an attachment to email

BANK STATEMENTS:

c.) The Board received the bank statements for June 2021, and the budget for July 2021.

Note: copies of cashbooks for June 2021 were emailed to each Board member prior to the meeting.

MONTHLY WARRANTS:

d.) The Board approved payment vouchers:

07-01-21	\$15,717.15
07-02-21	\$4,497.18
07-03-21	\$127,135.03
07-04-21	\$5,631.14

REQUESTS FOR RETIREMENT:

e.) The Board approved the application for superannuation retirement from Michael Farris, MGRSD, paraprofessional. The retirement will be effective 08/01/2021.

The Board approved the application for superannuation retirement from Lynn Depaoli, Clarksburg, Library. The retirement will be effective 08/13/2021.

The Board approved the application for superannuation retirement from Lisa Becker, FRRSD, paraprofessional. The retirement will be effective 09/25/2021.

The Board approved the application for superannuation retirement from Frances Sorrentino, Lenox, food service. The retirement will be effective 11/01/2021.

The Board approved the application for superannuation retirement from David Tatro, Clarksburg, Laborer/ Operator. The retirement will be effective 11/08/2021.

MEMBER TRANSFERS OUT OF SYSTEM:

f.) The Board approved the notice of transfer of the account of Michael Johnson, a member in Monterey to Hampshire County Retirement Board. The Berkshire County Retirement Board will accept liability for 19 years and 5 months of creditable service. The amount of the transfer is \$60,262.77.

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The Board approved the notice of transfer of the account of Emily Rosselli, a member in Clarksburg to Teacher's Retirement Board. The Berkshire County Retirement Board will accept liability for 8 years and 5 months of creditable service. The amount of The transfer is \$10,964.08.

The Board approved the notice of transfer of the account of Peter Skorput, a member in West Stockbridge to Pittsfield Retirement Board. The Berkshire County Retirement Board will accept liability for 9 years and 4 months of creditable service. The amount of the transfer is \$33,295.59.

The Board approved the notice of transfer of the account of Melyssa Weiner, a member in BHRSD to Teacher's Retirement Board. The Berkshire County Retirement Board will accept liability for 4 months of creditable service. The amount of the transfer is \$579.05.

REQUEST FOR SERVICE BUYBACK:

g.) There are no requests for service buybacks in the month of July

REQUESTS FOR REFUNDS:

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

Amanda Evangelisto	MGRSD	\$2,830.50
Austin Garrett	Sandisfield	\$8,953.81
Mona Knoll	BHRSD	\$150.14
Jamie Seward	SBRSD	\$10,099.09

INJURY REPORTS:

i.) There were no injuries reported in the month of July

NEW MEMBER APPLICATIONS:

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

7255 Sarah Kline	Williamstown	6/14/2021	COA outreach	1
7256 jack Sarr	Williamstown	6/1/2021	Library Admin	1
7257 Amy Hardt	Lee	6/14/2021	Tri Town Nurse	1
7258 Glorimar Colon	BCRHA	6/21/2021	TPP services	1
7259 Xinyue Allen	Stockbridge	6/14/2021	Town Accountant	1
7260 Jeffrey Spratt	Sheffield	5/1/2021	Police Officer	4
7261 Scott Levesque	BCRHA	6/14/2021	Case Mgr	1
7262 Jennifer Morse	Cheshire	7/6/2021	Town Admin	1
7263 Melanie Roucoulet	Dalton Fire	5/26/2021	Treasurer	1
7264 Jill Sweet	Lee	6/22/2021	Tri Town Nurse	1
7265 Alyssa Maschino	Dalton	7/15/2021	Admin Asst	1
7266 Linda Sciarappa	Williamstown	7/9/2021	Admin Asst	1
7267 Ryan Wanek	BCRHA	6/2/2021	Case Manager	1
7268 Shawn Squires	CBRSD	7/1/2021	Tech specialist	1
7269 Grant McGregor	Dalton	7/12/2021	Town Planner	1
7270 Chandra Sanchez	BCRHA	7/6/2021	Case Manager	1
7271 Jack Markowitz	Dalton Fire Dist	7/15/2021	Firefighter / emt	4

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7272 Joshua Koch

Dalton Fire Dist

7/16/2021 Firefighter / emt

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RETIREMENT ALLOWANCE APPROVALS:

k.) There are no PERAC approvals for the month of July

3(8)c REIMBURSEMENTS:

l.) The Board received a letter from PERAC ordering the Berkshire County Retirement Board through the provisions of MGL Sec 3(8)(c) to reimburse the State Retirement Board \$1,608.69 a year toward the retirement allowance of Susan McMahon.

PERAC CORRESPONDENCE:

m.) The Board received from PERAC the following memorandums:

#18/2021	Updated beneficiary forms
#19/2021	Mandatory Retirement Board Training 3 rd Qtr.
#20/2021	Tobacco Company List
#21/2021	COLA for dependent allowances
#22/2021	Reinstatement to Service
#23/2021	91A PROSPER Tasks

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

TRAVEL & EDUCATION APPROVALS:

n.) There are no travel or educational reimbursement requests for the month of July.

MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE:

o.) PERAC actuary GASB 67/68 exhibits.

A roll call vote to approve the items as presented in the Consent Agenda, and the vote was unanimous.

The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Monday, August 30, 2021 at 8:00am.

Motion to adjourn at 11:30am was unanimous.

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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

Beth Matson, 5th Member Appointed