

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting  
April 20, 2022

**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; Paul A. Lisi, Jr., Advisory Board Member, Mark Bashara, Elected Member and Karen Williams, Elected Member. Participating remotely were; Michael Ovitt, Chairman, Beth Matson Appointed member. A roll call vote was taken to open the meeting. The vote was unanimous.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

- 1.) Members of the public had 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 connected remotely.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- 1.) The Board is asked to approve a 3% COLA for retirees who retired before June 30, 2021. COLA will be effective July 1, 2022. Mark Bashara made a motion to approve a 3% COLA to take effect July 1, 2022, Karen Williams second.

**A roll call vote was taken to approve the COLA. The vote was unanimous.**

- 2.) The Board is asked to approve the letter of engagement for Melanson's 2021 and 2022 financial audits of the Berkshire County Retirement System. Mark Bashara made a motion to approve the letter of engagement from Melanson, Karen Williams second. Mark Bashara asked if they were the only auditors to reply to our request for audit services, and Melanson was the only reply the Board received. Michael Ovitt asked how we solicited proposals for audit services. Sheila LaBarbera indicated that emails were sent to all of the local auditors, staff followed up with phone calls and the director met with Adelson to review services requested for a proposal. Michael Ovitt asked who the local firms contacted Paul Lisi responded there were only three Paul Lisi Scanlon, Adelson and Melanson. Beth Matson asked if the GASB 67/68 were included in the audit and Sheila LaBarbera indicated that it was included.

**A roll call vote was taken to approve the engagement letter from Melanson. The vote was unanimous.**

- 3.) The Board is asked to approve a credit card application with Pittsfield Co-op Bank. Mark Bashara made a motion to approve the application for credit cards from The Pittsfield Cooperative Bank. Karen Williams second. Sheila LaBarbera We have had a Greylock Credit Union business credit card that we have used for conferences and online purchases for computer software subscriptions and computer hardware. This is the first time that the Co-Op has offered a business credit card I would prefer that we move our credit card to the Co-Op, so that we would keep our banking with just one institution. The Greylock credit card has worked okay, but there have been some issues. The credit union is a single person institution, so you have to have a person on that account and that currently is me and I would rather not be that person as I am a director at the credit union. I have to deal with disclosures with the credit union and I would rather not be involved in the credit card account. I feel it is more appropriate to be with the Co-Op. The credit limit for the Co-Op will be \$20,000. The credit limit that we have with Greylock is \$25,000.

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Mark Bashara: Do we need \$20,000 on it? I was just wondering why it needs that limit.

Sheila LaBarbera: We usually just use it for conferences that can run upwards of \$7,000-\$8,000. We only use it for travel and computer software. I would not want to set a limit of \$10,000 because you never really know the total cost of a conference or computer purchase.

Sheila LaBarbera: Mike asked that it come before the board, but it is a requirement in order to complete the application, I have the minutes from the meeting authorizing us to apply for the credit card.

Mark Bashara: And then who would be on the credit card?

Sheila LaBarbera: There is myself, Mike Ovitt and the third card would be Jill Hersey.

Mark Bashara: That will be listed for us to see each month.

Sheila LaBarbera: Yes, absolutely.

Paul Lisi: Is there a credit card policy that is signed when credit cards are issued to individuals?

Sheila LaBarbera: No.

Paul Lisi: We have a credit card policy that I will send to you. Our auditor Scanlon wanted us to do in the town, detail what you can purchase on the card. The card should not be used in place of a vendor that you could place a purchase order.

Sheila LaBarbera: That is perfect. We have used our credit card for travel and for some of the software like GoToMeeting and LogMeIn; they will only do a credit card purchase and renewal. I know that some of the boards were only allowing you to use it for travel. PERAC was not allowing you to use it for any other items.

Beth Matson: If you look at your travel, credit cards were exclusively for travel. They are not to be used for anything unless you amend your supplemental rule on credit cards. There is a paragraph on that, and it should be available online. You should amend that rule because they have been written up in PERAC audits in the last two years.

**A roll call vote was taken to approve the credit card application with the Pittsfield Cooperative Bank. The vote was unanimous.**

4.) The Board is asked to approve extended warranty quote for two computer servers.

Mark Bashara made a motion to approve the extended warranty for servers. Karen Williams second.

Sheila LaBarbera: We have two servers in the computer room and they are at the end of their warranty life. I have reviewed these with Joel who works with our computers and software; he suggested that we extend the warranty right until the end of March 13, 2024. One of the things that I just want you to be aware of, is when you get to the end of the warranty, it means it is at the end of its useful life. I had an email to Joel and we are going to look at some other options between now and 2024. Maybe less expensive servers or find, some other off-site option we will look into seeing what other kinds of opportunities we have for storage that might be less expensive.

Mark Bashara: So if I understand correctly, we get this working, which covers everything?

Sheila LaBarbera: It covers everything and most importantly, it is 24-hour service. It includes the parts and service.

Mark Bashara: So what you are saying is that in the interim when we renew the warranty you are going to work with Joel to find an alternative to go with when the warranty is over?

Sheila LaBarbera: Absolutely.

Beth Matson: What exactly is being backed up on our servers?

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Sheila LaBarbera: We backup every day, so everything that we use, from spreadsheets, to letters.

Beth Matson: PTG and Web base, all of your hard data is backed up in PTG. So the only thing that the server is really holding, if I understand correctly, would be your Microsoft product?

Sheila LaBarbera: Yes Microsoft products, we also have two systems that we access through our servers. There is a sunset system that is one that I do not use very often but we still have access to it. The TACS system may be stored in the server also.

Beth Matson: This Sunset system has data the PTG does not?

Sheila LaBarbera: Yes, it was a DOS system. I have to go in because of the old County members there are still people in there with buybacks, and creditable service issues. The County went out of business in 2000, so, you are talking at least 22 years, and it would be members that were prior to 2000 who worked in the court personnel and were transferred to the state.

Beth Matson: And there is no hard files on them?

Sheila LaBarbera: We printed out deduction histories and some print screens copies were placed in their folders.

Paul Lisi: Just so I understand the server is kind of like the server that we have in our town, it covers units and basically each desk machine in the office and backs up all that data. You would never be able to completely get rid of a server because you will always need that back up daily.

Beth Matson: That is not true. I know many boards that stopped using servers when our software went web based. So that all of our data is backed up nightly in three different spots around the country through PTG. So the only thing you are saving is your Microsoft letters and things of that sort. Most of the boards that I know are using the Cloud or Google Drive for a backup, which is a fraction of the cost. I have not seen a server since the early two thousand in an office.

Sheila LaBarbera: I will talk to Joel because he is the computer expert so we have two years on our warranty to figure out something that might be better or less expensive.

Mark Bashara: In the end, it comes down to cost effectiveness. If you are paying a substantial amount for a handful of things that could either be transferred to something else, or somehow or another, you know, figure it out. I would hate for us to be paying a lot for just a handful of things.

Sheila LaBarbera: I have never gotten any bad advice from Joel, so I will check with him.

Mark Bashara: What is the warranty costing?

Sheila LaBarbera: About \$1,800 for the next two years.

Michael Ovitt: It makes sense, to try to archive our system once you get what we need for information. 90% of what we do is PTG, and its web based. So I think it is minimal what we are backing up on a server.

**A roll call vote was taken to approve the cost for the extended warranty. The vote was unanimous.**

6.) LEGAL UPDATE: There was no legal update in the month of April.

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- 7.) The Board will discuss the process of performance evaluations and staff compensation. Mark Bashara: Made a motion to move it forward for discussion.  
Karen Williams: Second.

Paul Lisi: Ok, discussion regarding the compensation and the staff performance. So, Mike, I got the stuff you have sent. Thank you for sending that. I looked at this stuff and I am comfortable with the standard performance evaluation for the employees that are supervised by the Executive Director. With a couple of changes, obviously, to change it to the title of executive director. I was comfortable with that one. I do not even think I am even close to discussing how this relates to compensation yet. I was comfortable with these with if we could ask possibly Tom to send them to us in a word version. So we could change the seals and some basic little edits. I would like to hear what everyone else thought?

Mark Bashara: I looked them over and if you recall before, I said that no matter what we do, it has to be fluid because until we actually do use it and do the review, something may stand out and we may notice that we need to change something a little more, but I think it is perfect. There is no need to reinvent the wheel and we do not need to overthink it. It seems to have the basis of what we need. We have to just edit them to have the same seal, but otherwise as long as we keep an open mind to any changes that may come up.

Karen Williams: I do not recall. Did Tom mention who does the review for the executive? I think he did say the Board, but I think as we discussed in the past, we are not here all of the time to see exactly what is happening. So I did not know if there were any other way other boards do them.

Paul Lisi: All he wrote was in Middlesex County, the Chief Administrative Officer, evaluates staff and then presents those evaluations to the board. So I guess we have to clarify that. But personally, I am all right with being one fifth of those who participate in this, but I think there should be one sixth. And I will tell you why I think that. I think Tom should also participate in this because he is the person that works with this position on a daily basis and he probably has a reputation with John Parsons, which is good. And he will be able to get some feedback on how Sheila does with communications with PERAC. So I would be comfortable with being one sixth. Being one fifth, I am not so comfortable with it because I do not know that much about it.

Mark Bashara: I think we should get input from several sources with those that you interact with. That is something that we have to figure out what will work best. Because as it was said, we are not here every day. To do a fair evaluation, we at least need to talk to people that have more regular interactions with you, so we know better.

Sheila LaBarbera: Hopefully once you decide on who that is, I think I need to know who that is and what the criteria is, and what the measurable goals are and what I am going to be evaluated on.

Paul Lisi: Correct me if I am wrong, but looking at this performance appraisal for the employee, there are clearly places in there at the end where you can set goals. I think the first year; you cannot really evaluate a person on the goals, because you have not set them yet. I think even though it was done for the employees this year, I think fairly, the employee should see this before we roll it out and they should see what they are being appraised on. I agree with Mark and Karen that we should give this to them blank and see if there is anything they want to add to here that they feel should be part of the evaluation. There might be something that we totally missed and the same for Sheila. She should be able to see this and amend it to reflect what is really done here. I think the employee should be able to see it, and then after the first year, after having a process in place, we can set goals for the following year. I am

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not relating this yet to staff compensation, because I am not ready. I got these from Mike a while ago, but I am still trying to sort through that part. Karen, you are coming from the public sector, it is very hard to relate performance evaluations to merit increases. I mean, there are few towns that do that. I actually do not know any. So I have a hard time with that. In regard to the Executive Director, when I think you should be able to see this as well, again, back to your question, or your concern with who are the people who are going to be involved with my performance appraisal? I think you should know that as well. Just as I think, any employee should know. And how will we get to this factor and what does that mean? I think basically, our homework today, and maybe I am wrong. Is to come up with a generalized document that we could work on. Which I think we have. Mike, what do you think?

Michael Ovitt: Yes, I think going forward, we had talked about bringing it up at the May meeting because of the timing of this meeting. Let us bring our draft forward with any edits to the next meeting.

Mark Bashara: And as it was mentioned, before it is finalized, let the staff look at it, and you look at it. Because why take the time to get it all edited and then you look at it and say that we do not even need this whole section.

Paul Lisi: Yes, I agree. So why don't we distribute it now. And then in the May meeting when we are then talking about this on the agenda, everybody at that time has their own drafts ideas. And I just want to make this clear, and I do not know if you all will agree, I do not know I will want to talk about composition yet. I am not comfortable with that, because we have not finished this one step.

Mark Bashara: To me when this is finalized, it does not mean that a year from now it cannot be changed or whatever. But once these are set, Sheila has given her input, we have added or deleted things, we are comfortable at that point, and we are like, OK, this is going to be the format we use. We are making good headway and we are keeping our word. I think we are in good shape.

Michael Ovitt: Sheila, can you touch base with Tom and see if he has an editable document?

Sheila LaBarbera: Yes, absolutely.

Paul Lisi: I do not think there needs to be a vote on this, but back to what Mike said, I will make a move to table Item 7 until the May meeting where everybody will come back with their versions of the document, and we will discuss the major changes.

Sheila LaBarbera: If we can edit it with our logo, I will send it out to everybody and you can all highlight it.

Mark Bashara: Once we figure this part out, we can focus on compensation because I know that is an important part.

Karen Williams: Well, maybe we will not even connect it to compensation though.

Mark Bashara: Right, okay. At least by May we will be able to have this part nailed down and then can have that conversation and by June, we will have a final version that everyone knows what they are being reviewed on.

Karen Williams: Mike and Beth, how do you feel about adding Tom to the evaluation process?

Mark Bashara: Sorry, I don't mean to interrupt but are you talking about the voting process?

Karen Williams: No, just in the process.

Mark Bashara: Okay because it is the Board that makes the final decision.

Karen Williams: No, I am talking about the evaluation itself.

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Paul Lisi: If we are asking people to input on this, granted the Board makes the decision, but if we are asking for input on this, we should value this input not just determined that the Board makes the decision.

Karen Williams: Well, I guess we would have to decide on what that would look like. If that would be part of our discussion, or if he was going to submit something in writing.

Paul Lisi: I would think that he just would fill something out like we would put it all together, get the average of what all the numbers are and then that process would be the number that goes on. And that would be fair. And as long as you value that person's number.

Mark Bashara: I think when the time comes, we will need to discuss and establish who we are going to speak to and then let Sheila know. That is for a later discussion. I think we should look at someone that she deals with regularly and not someone that she deals with once a year. And once we know, we can discuss that as a group and have a list put together and then come back and discuss that.

Paul Lisi: I think that Mike's idea is a good one. To take this information and make our edits and then we can reconvene in May.

Mark Bashara: And then we would have to talk about compensation.

Paul Lisi: I mean that is part of the process and that is what we agreed to, and we are starting on it. So I made the motion. Do I need a second on it?

Sheila LaBarbera: Well, I am just going to ask Tom for copies that are editable then we will all edit and then we are going to distribute them.

Paul Lisi: Okay, so motion to the table. Michael Ovitt second.

**A roll call vote was taken to table. The vote was unanimous.**

8.) PTG Software update - PTG online training scheduled for May 3 @10am, May 4 @1pm and May 5 @10am.

Sheila LaBarbera: Hopefully, within the next week or so, our test site will be done.

Training on these three days is about 45 minutes to an hour, and we're going to ask our treasurer, the payroll clerk, and whoever's processing payroll to attend. You can go to one or you can go to all three. I do recognize that there are people that may not be able to attend any of these. We will take that into consideration later in the month. We have a recorded training and I am going to see if we can embed it in our website. So that people can log on and see it. We are excited to begin this process. This will be the beginning of May and we are going to keep our fingers crossed that by the end of the month; we've got at least 1 or 2 files that are uploaded and maybe even ready to go. So I know

Williamstown is excited and they have done all their updates and everything in MINIS.

You need a test site to be able to put the demos in there to tell whether the files are good.

Mark Bashara: I like that you have several days too. That way people cannot say "I can't go."

Sheila LaBarbera: I will work on adding later dates.

Karen Williams: The middle of the month would be better.

Michael Ovitt: Sheila just to clarify. There is going to be an interactive training, and then there is going to be a pre-recorded training?

Sheila LaBarbera: There is a pre-recorded training. I have a PowerPoint presentation that I will send out to everybody, and this training is already prerecorded, so I am going to try to get that either embedded into our website or distributed through email.

Michael Ovitt: Is it interactive with the Treasures?

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Sheila LaBarbera: It will be on the third, fourth, and the fifth.

Michael Ovitt: And is that what is going to be recorded for us to view?

Sheila LaBarbera: If I can ask him.

Michael Ovitt: Ok, Thank you.

Karen Williams: The training that you provided, not too long ago, are you going to distribute that?

Sheila LaBarbera: Yes. We are basically going to, we got one more that we would like to do, which is the calculation of the 2%. Then going to actually go out to the towns and districts to provide the training and support on-site for those payroll bridges and uploaded files. The retirement staff and Jean from PTG will be providing direct support and training to each individual treasurer.

Karen Williams: I thought you were going to distribute it?

Sheila LaBarbera: I did for all the people that attended. I will send you one.

Michael Ovitt: Send that to the board, that would be awesome too.

We are going to remove item g to talk about it further and discuss the buyback for the month of April. Is there anything else anyone would like to take out of the consent agenda?

Paul Lisi: I will make a motion to approve the consent agenda. Mark Bashara: I will second the motion as read.

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

**9.) Consent Agenda Detail:**

**MINUTES:**

a.) The Board minutes of the regular and executive session meetings held March 30, 2022, were signed and approved.

*Minutes provided as an attachment to email*

**INVESTMENTS:**

b.) The Board has not yet received the PRIT a statement of performance for March 2022.

**BANK STATEMENTS:**

c.) The Board received the bank statements for March 2022 and the budget for April 2022.

**MONTHLY WARRANTS:**

d.) The Board approved payment vouchers:

|          |              |
|----------|--------------|
| 04-01-22 | \$23,187.95  |
| 04-02-22 | \$1,256.20   |
| 04-03-22 | \$ 68,767.98 |
| 04-04-22 | \$18,539.96  |
| 04-05-22 | \$18,339.21  |

**REQUESTS FOR RETIREMENT:**

e.) The Board approved the application for superannuation retirement from Marsha Pshenishny, New Marlboro, Assessor. The retirement will be effective 05/01/22.

The Board approved the application for superannuation retirement from Lionel Verrier,

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MGRSD, custodian. The retirement will be effective 05/13/22.

The Board approved the application for superannuation retirement from Michael Towler, Lee, Water Supt. the retirement will be effective 07/07/2022.

**MEMBER TRANSFERS OUT OF SYSTEM:**

f.) The Board approved the notice of transfer of the account of David Vickery, a member in MGRSD to Worcester Regional Retirement Board. The Berkshire County Retirement Board will accept liability for 1 year and 8 months of creditable service. The amount of the transfer is \$18,539.96.

**REQUESTS FOR REFUNDS:**

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

|                    |                  |             |
|--------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Boris Basora       | Hinsdale         | \$4,131.61  |
| Sharon Fleck       | New Marlboro     | \$20,986.63 |
| Michele Moore      | Lanesboro        | \$175.95    |
| Shaundra Race      | BHRSD            | \$4,926.07  |
| Christine Gamari   | Clarksburg       | \$1,107.00  |
| Shane Hope         | Dalton Fire Dist | \$10,731.64 |
| Barbara Malinowski | Clarksburg       | \$8,097.60  |
| Danielle Chretien  | Hancock          | \$7,600.97  |
| Steven Paden       | SBRSD            | \$454.16    |
| Jonathan Twing     | Lenox            | \$5,551.91  |

**Deductions taken in error:**

|               |           |            |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| Laurie Hils   | DDVS      | \$1,045.00 |
| Diane Stevens | Lanesboro | \$211.20   |

**INJURY REPORTS:**

i.) There were no injuries reported in April

**NEW MEMBER APPLICATIONS:**

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

|      |                       |            |           |                   |   |
|------|-----------------------|------------|-----------|-------------------|---|
| 7437 | Kayla Brazee          | MGRSD      | 3/7/2022  | Para              | 1 |
| 7438 | Alisa McDonald        | Lanesboro  | 3/21/2022 | Police Officer    | 4 |
| 7439 | Jacquelyn Graves Duma | Savoy      | 1/14/2022 | School Nurse      | 1 |
| 7440 | Emilia Howland        | Clarksburg | 3/8/2022  | Teacher's Aide    | 1 |
| 7441 | Melissa Pabon         | BCRHA      | 3/14/2022 | Service Coord     | 1 |
| 7442 | Stephanie Orestil     | BCRHA      | 3/14/2022 | Housing Counselor | 1 |
| 7443 | Jerome Edgerton Jr.   | BCRHA      | 3/14/2022 | Case Manager      | 1 |
| 7444 | Richard Kovacs        | CBRS       | 4/14/2022 | Custodian         | 1 |
| 7445 | Tyler Cormier         | Otis       | 3/7/2022  | Highway Laborer   | 1 |
| 7446 | Michael Gleason       | Florida    | 4/4/2022  | Highway Operator  | 1 |
| 7447 | Daniel McClellan      | Becket     | 2/20/2022 | Police Officer    | 4 |
| 7448 | Morgan McDonough      | Becket     | 2/24/2022 | Paramedic         | 1 |



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7449 Patrick Finnegan

Lee

4/11/2022 DPW Laborer

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**RETIREMENT ALLOWANCE APPROVALS:**

k.) The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to Kurtis Eckman, Becket, as of 01/26/2022. Annual pension amount is \$43,097.28.

**3(8)c REIMBURSEMENTS:**

l.) There are no 3(8)c reimbursements for the month of April.

**PERAC CORRESPONDENCE:**

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

#10/2022 Tobacco Company List

#11/2022 Mandatory Retirement Board Training 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2022

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

**TRAVEL & EDUCATION APPROVALS:**

n.) The Board approved the travel expense for 3 Board members and 3 staff to attend the Spring MACRS Conference in Hyannis June 12, 2022 thru June 15, 2022.

**MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE:**

o.) There was no correspondence for April

***Item g removed from consent agenda:***

**REQUEST FOR SERVICE BUYBACK:**

g.) Timothy Kelly, a member in Lee, is eligible to buy back 7 years and 3 months of prior creditable service. If Mr. Kelly pays \$67,138.24 into the annuity savings fund by May 31, 2022, the Board will grant 7 years and 3 months of creditable service.

\*see notes regarding buyback of a refund when applying for ADR benefits\*

Paul Lisi: Ok, so Item G that we removed from the consent agenda was the service buyback for the month of April and there is only one on there for Timothy Kelly.

Sheila LaBarbera: I wanted to put it on the agenda so that you are aware of it, but I want to limit the comments today because we are not in executive session. This individual does have an application for ADR benefits. We have been aware of, and you saw the PERAC memo that went along with it, I believe that it has to be made before the ADR application is approved. Tom Gibson will get us all of that information and we will have an executive session in May to deal specifically with this issue. I will distribute this information regarding the buyback, and then provide to you Tom's opinion and the process that will have to follow to take care of this. If we could just make a motion to table? This item will be on the agenda as part of the executive session next month.

Paul Lisi: I will make a motion to move to table the service buyback for Timothy Kelly until the May 2022 Board Meeting. Mark Bashara: I will second that.

**A roll call vote was taken to table the item, and the vote was unanimous.**

The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday May 25, 2022 at 9:00am.

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A motion was made by Mark Bashara to adjourn the meeting at 9:47am, Karen Williams, second.

**A roll call vote was taken, and the vote was unanimous.**

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

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Sheila LaBarbera, Executive Director

APPROVED BY:

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Michael Ovitt, Chairman

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Mark Bashara, Elected Member

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Karen Williams, Elected Member

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Paul A. Lisi, Jr., Advisory Council Member

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Beth Matson, 5<sup>th</sup> Member Appointed