

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting
February 22, 2023

The meeting of the Berkshire County Retirement Board was called to order at 9:00A.M. in the Berkshire County Retirement Office, located at 29 Dunham Mall, Pittsfield, MA. Present at the meeting were Mark Bashara, Elected Member, Karen Williams, Elected Member, Sue Funk, Advisory Board member and Beth Matson Appointed member participated remotely. Michael Ovitt, Chairman, was absent.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

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

NEW BUSINESS:

- 2.) **Legal Update:** There was no legal update presented in the month of February.

- 3.) The Board is asked to review the methodology of annual assessments.

Sheila LaBarbera: I gave you the history; I do not believe any of you were here back in 2013, when we actually went through the exercise. It gave you an opportunity to see what the board had done in the past. In my discussion with John Boorack, he indicated that he would rather have the Board review what they did in 2013, because the methodology would be the same. As we saw in 2013, some cities and towns that have Group4's will go up a bit and school districts may go down a bit. John Boorack would be happy to change this methodology, but he would require that the Board take an affirmative vote to change this methodology because it is a lot of work for him and for the staff in this office. In 2013, two communities were outliers. They had many retirees and several accidental disabilities they had a significant increase in their appropriation so the Board decided against the change. Jim Lorenzo required that the Board vote to repeal their decision. John Boorack prepared much of the work, he cannot commit the time for all of the work for the Board to say maybe.

Karen Williams: My question was that they brought up Worcester and phasing into it?

Sheila LaBarbera: Yes. Jim Lorenzo had suggested that you could do a phase in. I know the Board was looking into maybe doing three years and I am sure that John Boorack would be amenable to that, too.

Karen Williams: That might be something to look at.

Mark Bashara: Yeah, I agree.

Sheila LaBarbera: We do know that some communities are going to have increases in their appropriation that you may want to phase it in. So that they are not hit all at once.

Karen Williams: But, but in your opinion, do you think you would see the increase that you saw back in 2013?

Sheila LaBarbera: I do not know. The ones that we thought were going to take the hit really did not. It was really just two towns.

Mark Bashara: We have a window of opportunity that we could lose today and two weeks from now and the taxes increase. Right now might be the time to do it. I wouldn't want to see one particular community really far offset, but if we do it when it's somewhat of a level field, at least it would hold some communities to do their due diligence a little better and be a little more cautious, which in the end I think it better for the whole retirement system. That is why I think now is a good time. I think it would end up being level as far as cost is concerned.

Karen Williams: And from what I understand from what I read. It takes a while anyway, I mean, when you are looking at like FY 25.

Sheila LaBarbera: I think that is the way it was when we did it in 2013. If we started it around the beginning of the year, the valuation data was for December. It gives us time to get

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out and meet with the town managers. I always mention that the Board has been thinking about making changes in the future.

Beth Matson: Those Group 4's that came on. Were they included in the previous analysis?

Sheila LaBarbera: Yes, they were, but they have hired a lot more. The fire department was supplemented with volunteers, we were really only looking at day shift. Now I know they have full staff 24/7.

Beth Matson: I am thinking that might mitigate the cost I think the majority of units are going to go down, and the bigger ones are the ones that will be going up. You have to go out and meet with the towns so they do not get sticker shock.

Mark Bashara: as Karen mentioned, when the final decision comes, we may do a 2-year phase in as long as it is not too much at once.

Karen Williams: It looked like it was a hybrid payroll and the actuarial for the first phase in.

Sheila LaBarbera: Yes it was.

Mark Bashara: So, is this something that we should table until the next meeting? That way Mike can get his questions out there and then we can take a vote on it.

Sheila LaBarbera: Would you like me to have John Boorack attend net month's meeting?

Mark Bashara: I think it would be good for him to be there just in case we have questions, and we can have time to ask him.

Sheila LaBarbera: I can ask him to attend the March meeting by Zoom.

Mark Bashara: That should give us enough time.

Karen Williams: I am not here in March. I don't want to change the meeting because of me.

Sheila LaBarbera: I can ask John to attend the March meeting.

Karen Williams: Okay and then will you just get back to me if it is going to be the same methodology?

Mark Bashara: What we could do too is if he is going to be in March, maybe you could submit some questions and these meetings are recorded so you can see the recording of the meeting so when we all come back in April we can have a discussion.

Sue Funk: Sheila, if it were phased in instead of just being all in one shot, where does that work lie?

Sheila LaBarbera: So even if you phase it in all of the work will be done up front. I honestly do not think this time is going to be as bad as 2013, because with the \$5000 rule, I have a lot of people that do not contribute anymore. You used to have members working in several different towns I think it is going to be much easier.

Karen Williams: I will make a motion to table the review of annual assessment methodology until the March meeting. Sue Funk: I will second.

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

4.) The Board is asked to review and approve the 2022 Annual Statement for the Berkshire County Retirement System

Mark Bashara: The Board has asked to review and approve the 2022 Annual Statement for the Berkshire County Retirement System.

Sheila LaBarbera: The annual statement is complete. Highlights, we lost a little bit of money, but the good news is that we earned some of it back in January of this year. I just want to commend Jill and Brian. They have done a fantastic job, and this past year, we were way ahead of the curve, balanced and ready to go. We had to wait for our units to actually catch up with us so that we could finish all of this. We attended a webinar the other day with PERAC, changed the whole process. We will submit our annual statement in March using

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Prosper. There was a little bit of debate about the annual statement and whether you needed a hard copy and whether it needed to be signed by the board, our institutions ask us for a copy of our annual statement every year. So even though the submission process is now electronic I will continue to create the annual statement to keep here in the office and ask the board to sign a copy. Big thank you to Brian and Jill, most of our balancing was done in December so we ended up just kind of having to wait for our units to get us their information. It was a great team effort. I hope that next year, our numbers will be a little bit better. We ended the year at \$308 million; we started the year at \$340 million.

Karen Williams: I will make a motion to approve the 2022 Annual Statement for the Berkshire County Retirement System. Sue Funk: I will second.

A roll call vote was taken to approve 2022 Annual Financial Statement, the vote was unanimous.

5.) The Board is asked to review a proposal from Adams Community Bank for financial services.

Sheila LaBarbera: Karen had asked about Positive Pay couple of months ago and I called around to some of the different banks in Berkshire County. Adams Community was one of the only banks to offer Positive pay. The Pittsfield Co-op does not offer positive pay right now but is looking into it in the future; they said that nobody is using it, so they discontinued offering the product. We all know that the retirement system is up against fraud. We did try to implement a system with the Co-Op to replace Positive Pay but they did not follow through. The interest rate that we are receiving from the Co-Op is just .75 and with Adams Community Bank, it is 2%. Adams Community has four Municipal Officers and the Co-Op has none. The branch manager has done a great job and I do not have any complaints about the services that we have received from the Co-op but we had an instance where a retiree died, and she was depositing her checks into a trust and so I cannot recoup. I have to wait and hope for the family to give us the money back. I have to talk to Tom about developing a letter to the trustee asking them to send us the money back that she is not entitled to receive. When I called over to the Co-op, they told me that I have to call Wells Fargo and discuss that with them. So the final bit of information came through a refund that a member that was having a tough time getting all of her paperwork to us at retirement, I had been in communication with people from Adams Community Bank they were extremely helpful. I casually asked what their interest rate was and she told me it was 2%. So, I asked for more information to look over. The thing that I am most impressed about with Adams Community is that 23/28 of our units are already dealing with Adams Community Bank and I know that Sue and Karen deal with them.

Sue Funk: I love them.

Mark Bashara: Have you checked with other local banks?

Sheila LaBarbera: I have, and Adams Community Bank is the only one that has Positive Pay, unless I go outside of Berkshire County.

Mark Bashara: What about Lee Bank?

Karen Williams: You really have to look at banks that are dealing with government entities.

Sue Funk: I will tell you; these two women are aggressive and nicely aggressive.

Karen Williams: I would say assertive, not aggressive. I was texting them yesterday because I have a stabilization account with ARPA funds, and I did my first transfer in and out. I have subaccounts within my stabilization account, and I did not know how to report to them,

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which sub account it was going from and into. Within a few minutes, Chris got back to me with the form and within the hour, it was all set. They are very responsive.

Mark Bashara: They have a little branch in Lanesborough.

Sue Funk: They are opening a branch in Great Barrington too.

Sheila LaBarbera: And one on Merrill Road in Pittsfield. We are the ones having to deal with them. I do not know how many times things come across my desk that I am responsible for, fraud, security, banking and investments. I received the application from MIIA for the cybersecurity and it says who is responsible and I have to sign. Not having Positive Pay bothers me and I want you to realize that not only will we have Positive Pay for the checks, but also we will have it with ACH, we would be getting that protection on both sides.

Karen Williams: I have a question about, so, I create my bank reconciliation from Softright our accounting software. So, what, what do you use?

Sheila LaBarbera: I have the ability in PTG to create a positive paid file. Beth, do you use PTG payroll?

Beth Matson: Yeah, he does it in PTG.

Sheila LaBarbera: I have never had it so I do not do the Positive Pay in my pension payroll. I only do ACH; we only have three pension payroll end checks.

Karen Williams: When we issue a refund Checks?

Jill Hersey: It will be on the checks and the ACH, they are very responsive. They said that we need to have something in by 11 am that morning and they will send us the file to let us know what is clearing. If we do not approve them by 11 am then they will automatically deny them.

Karen Williams: Are you submitting a file then? When have you run checks, the refund checks?

Sheila LaBarbera: Yes, we will submit a file.

Karen Williams: I have it through UniBank and Softright, so there is an exception presented, they will email and then you can go in and approve it or not. If the payee does not match up to the original check number, they will send you an email and you have to go in and accept it or deny it. People are intercepting checks and changing the payee line.

Sheila LaBarbera: I like the people at the Co-Op but they are not providing us with the service we are looking for. Adams Community Bank has 23 communities and I told them that if we decided to make this change, then I would need a partner in this because we just set up all of our treasurers to do the PTG upload files and ACH or wiring the money. They said they were happy to help.

Sue Funk: As Karen said, they are just so on it and responsive.

Beth Matson: I think it sounds great and it sounds like it is going to meet all your needs. I just have a little reservation about getting the three quotes for best practice here if you are switching banks.

Sheila LaBarbera: It's tough because I don't even think we have three in Berkshire County that have the services we are looking for and have brick and mortar in Berkshire County. I think it is important to do business with banks here in Berkshire County.

Sue Funk: You can eliminate the banks around here so fast, that you would not even end up with three. I think Karen and I are experienced with them, and they have been phenomenal. You guys will be dealing with them and will have to deal with them every day.

Sheila LaBarbera: I was impressed that 23 out of our units are with Adams Community Bank.

Sue Funk: I can honestly they would have been my first recommendation.

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Mark Bashara: The other thing is too; you are talking that we keep on average about a million to a million and a half? You are talking 2% and I am doing quick math, but you are talking about twenty thousand. That is a substantial difference than getting less than three quarters of a percent.

Sue Funk: My experience is too that both of them will just call me and tell me the latest promotions if I have new money and they increase the percentage. If I happen to have money and wire it to them, they always communicate that they receive it right away.

Sheila LaBarbera: So, we just need a motion to approve.

Karen Williams: Beth, do you have anything?

Beth Matson: No, I am fine. Thank you.

Sue Funk: Sure, I would make a motion to accept the proposal from Adam's Community Bank. Karen Williams: I will second.

A roll call vote was taken to approve the proposal from Adams Community Bank to provide financial services to the Berkshire County Retirement System, the vote was unanimous.

6.) Directors update PTG - Valuation data

PTG the only update I have is Brian is one of the most patient people because we were all hoping that we would be at 100% this month, and everyone would be uploaded, but PTG has done something to the QA site. We have not been able to move several Towns over because they are in the QA site and they have errors. When they try to fix it, everyone is knocked out. We are already into February and we were still doing some of these towns manually.

Karen Williams: How many units are in the QA site that cannot continue?

Brian: four or five.

Sheila LaBarbera: One of them is Lee and it is the town and the school. The others are Hancock but they are all set and should be live soon. We are going to see Department of Veteran Services and the Great Barrington Fire District on the 28th. They are both going to be manual so is Otis for a short time they are changing payroll systems. I was hoping to say we were at 100% but it is close.

Valuation data - the data is all complete. Valuation data is reviewed by PERAC first come, first serve. We are not the first, but hopefully we will get that back soon.

Seminars - We are going to be out presenting seminars. We are going to Sheffield on the February 28th and Great Barrington on March 17th. We have retired so many members over the last three year there are many new employees, it will be nice to just get out there and see people and make sure they understand what they signed up for with their retirement. We have the Treasurers Association meeting on March 23rd, and we will be making a retirement presentation for their spring meeting.

Jill Hersey: I think it is just 8:30 to 12.

Sue Funk: I think it is only 8:30 to 12pm, when I talked to Kelly that is what it was. She has not sent anything out yet.

Sheila LaBarbera: That presentation is going to go to the treasurers. Sue Kelley called and we are actually happy to have that opportunity to present to the treasurers.

Karen Williams: We also talked about a mentoring program to get some of the treasures that have been around a while helping.

Sheila LaBarbera: Well, I will going to try.

Sue Funk: Those are great.

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Sheila LaBarbera: We have all of our audio and video equipment now and we have GoTo. I can send out the link and people can join. I know a lot of them have questions. Especially as we process through the change for the deductions.

Sue Funk: I bet if you could get one of those before the 23rd, you might get more people to attend the 23rd.

Sheila LaBarbera: Okay, I can do it. I will try to do one the first week of March and that will give everyone a two-week notice. I sent out a link.

Sue Funk: I will reach out to Kelly. Maybe she is having issues with Constant Contact.

Mark Bashara: Any other questions for Sheila regarding this? Sheila, I am going to backtrack one thing. When we are officially online with Adams Community Bank, can you please send the Board members an email, so we know?

Sheila LaBarbera: In the Directors report, I will just give you an update.

Mark Bashara: Great. Just so, we know it is done, and we are fully on board.

Sheila LaBarbera: We do have to time it properly but yes, I can keep you all updated.

Mark Bashara: Just one quick thing that I had. Where do we stand on changing the base?

Sheila LaBarbera: That information will come with the valuation. John Boorack is going to do 15 and 17. we are waiting for that.

Karen Williams: Is it 15 and 17 or is it 16 and 18?

Sheila LaBarbera: Michael wanted 15 so we did 15 and 17 because you can figure out 16 and 18 from that.

Mark Bashara: I am guessing if we did 16, it would be less than 17 and if we did 18, it would be more than 17. It gives us a good idea.

Mark Bashara: We are moving on to the Consent Agenda. Is there anything anyone wants to move or discuss before we vote on the consent agenda?

Karen Williams: There is no refund amounts listed?

Sheila LaBarbera: we can give them to you.

Karen Williams: So many buybacks. Is there a reason for that?

Brian: There are many re-calculations. PTG had a training on how to get it into the system, so we used the wrong interest rate for 4-5 of them so we had to recalculate them.

Sheila LaBarbera: Beth, did you want them? Most of the refunds are under \$10,000.

Jill Hersey: A lot of them are 9 and 10 years inactives. We did really well at getting in contact with them. I think three or four of them are long-term inactives, so it was nice.

Consent Agenda Detail:

MINUTES:

a.) The Board minutes of the regular session and Executive Session meeting held January 25, 2023, to be signed and approved.

Minutes provided as an attachment to email

INVESTMENTS:

b.) The Board received from PRIT a statement of performance for January 2023. The PRIT Fund returned 4.12% for the month of January.

BANK STATEMENTS:

c.) The Board received the bank statements for Jan 2023 and the budget for Feb 2023.

Cash Books for January were sent to Board by email.

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MONTHLY WARRANTS:

d.) The Board approved payment vouchers:

| | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|
| 12-06-22 | \$332.24 (Corrected) |
| 01-03-23 | \$1,634,453.81 (Jan Pension Payroll) |
| 02-01-23 | \$34,847.08 |
| 02-02-23 | \$13,911.82 |
| 02-03-23 | \$19,246.82 |
| 02-04-23 | \$445,551.11 |

REQUESTS FOR RETIREMENT:

e.) The Board approved the application for superannuation retirement from Donald Humeston, Lee, DPW Truck Driver. The retirement will be effective 4/28/2023.

MEMBER TRANSFERS OUT OF SYSTEM:

f.) The Board approved the notice of transfer of the account of Tyler Cormier, a member in Becket, to the State Retirement Board. The Berkshire County Retirement Board will accept 6 months of creditable service. The amount of the transfer is \$2,533.92.

The Board approved the notice of transfer of the account of Eli Phillips, a member in Williamstown, to the Adams Retirement Board. The Berkshire County Retirement Board will accept 3 years and 3 months of creditable service. The amount of the transfer is \$11,377.90.

REQUEST FOR SERVICE BUYBACK:

g.) Angela Arena, a member in SBRSD, is eligible to buy back 4 months of prior creditable service. If Ms. Arena pays \$881.65 into the annuity savings fund by March 31, 2023, the board will grant 4 months of creditable service. (Recalculated Interest)

Pamela Bachli, a member in CBRSD, is eligible to buy back 1 year and 6 months of prior creditable service. If Ms. Arena pays \$4,712.64 into the annuity savings fund by March 31, 2023, the board will grant 1 year and 6 months of creditable service. (Recalculated Interest)

Carmelo Guarda, a member in Egremont, is eligible to buy back 3 years and 8 months of prior creditable service. If Mr. Guarda pays \$13,166.69 into the annuity savings fund by March 31, 2023, the board will grant 3 years and 8 months of creditable service. (Recalculated Interest)

Mark Brouillette, a member in Becket, is eligible to buy back 2 years and 9 months of military service through Chapter 71 of the Acts of 1996, as amended by Chapter 468 of the Acts of 2002, veteran's buyback. If Mr. Brouillette pays \$14,483.04 into the annuity savings fund, the board will grant 2 years and 9 months of creditable service.

Jeffrey Peck, a member in BCRHA, is eligible to buy back 2 years and 8 months of prior creditable service with Franklin Regional Retirement System. If Mr. Peck pays \$24,372.60 into the annuity savings fund by March 31, 2023, the board will grant 2 years and 8 months of creditable service with liability to Franklin Regional Retirement System.

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Kristina Derouin, a member in Lenox, is eligible to buy back 1 year and 8 months of prior creditable service. If Ms. Derouin pays \$3,983.03 into the annuity savings fund by March 31, 2023, the board will grant 1 year and 8 months of creditable service.

Joshua Bradley, a member in Dalton, is eligible to buy back 1 year and 8 months of prior creditable service. If Mr. Bradley pays \$9,910.14 into the annuity savings fund by March 31, 2023, the board will grant 1 year and 8 months of creditable service.

Michael T Smith, a member in Lenox, is eligible to buy back 1 year and 3 months of prior creditable service. If Mr. Smith pays \$7,749.02 into the annuity savings fund by March 31, 2023, the board will grant 1 year and 3 months of creditable service.

REQUESTS FOR REFUNDS:

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

| | | |
|----------------|--------------|------------|
| Danielle Luchi | Clarksburg | \$2,148.50 |
| Jordan Arnold | Sandisfield | \$4,751.59 |
| Wanda McNary | Florida | \$2,744.10 |
| Kerry Willig | SBRSD | \$2,010.07 |
| Joshua Lang | Lanesborough | \$7,234.39 |
| Lori Mills | Clarksburg | \$1,509.46 |
| Susan Galipeau | MGRSD | \$9,886.57 |

INJURY REPORTS:

i.) There were no injuries reported in February

NEW MEMBER APPLICATIONS:

j.) The Board is asked to approve for membership in the Berkshire County Retirement System the following members:

| | | | | | |
|------|-------------------|--------------|------------|-------------------------|---|
| 7648 | Abigail Phelps | Savoy | 11/20/2022 | Highway | 1 |
| 7649 | Joseph O'Neill | CBRS | 1/9/2023 | Admin. Assistant | 1 |
| 7650 | James Shea | Savoy | 1/1/2023 | Highway | 1 |
| 7651 | Lynn Wallace | BCRHA | 1/3/2023 | Case coordinator | 1 |
| 7652 | John Tower | BHRSD | 1/23/2023 | Paraprofessional | 1 |
| 7653 | Ivy Goodwin | Lenox | 1/30/2023 | Mental Health Responder | 1 |
| 7654 | Carolyn Hogencamp | Lenox | 1/19/2023 | Admin Asst. | 1 |
| 7655 | Laurie Twing | SBRSD | 1/17/2023 | Cafeteria | 1 |
| 7656 | Timothy Wilson | LenoxHouAuth | 2/6/2023 | Maintenance | 1 |
| 7657 | Carol Baer | CBRS | 1/30/2023 | Title 1 Tutor | 1 |
| 7658 | Raven Krueger | SBRSD | 2/13/2023 | Kitchen Manager | 1 |
| 7659 | Sabrina Wilson | Monterey | 1/1/2023 | Police Officer | 4 |
| 7660 | Santino Messer | Lanesborough | 2/14/2023 | Operator | 1 |

RETIREMENT ALLOWANCE APPROVALS:

k.) The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to William Decelles, Lanesborough, as of 09/25/2022. Annual pension amount is \$58,235.76.

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The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to Susan Cobb, BHRSD, as of 10/17/2022. Annual pension amount is \$10,104.36.

The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to Shanna A Curley-Graham, Hancock, as of 08/18/2021. Annual pension amount is \$3,940.92.

The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to David Shorey, Becket, as of 10/21/2022. Annual pension amount is \$13,884.84.

The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to Curtis Wells, CBRSD, as of 11/01/2022. Annual pension amount is \$10,069.80.

The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to Diane Drosehn, CBRSD, as of 12/06/2022. Annual pension amount is \$42,422.88.

The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to Amy Nowlan, Williamstown, as of 12/29/2022. Annual pension amount is \$4,375.20.

The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to David Colucci, New Marlborough, as of 12/16/2022. Annual pension amount is \$13,276.80.

The Board received approval from PERAC to grant a retirement allowance to Martha Barnum, SBRSD, as of 12/30/2022. Annual pension amount is \$39,199.80.

3(8)c REIMBURSEMENTS:

l.) The Board received a letter from PERAC ordering the Pittsfield Retirement Board through the provisions of MGL Sec 3(8)(c) to reimburse the Berkshire County Retirement Board \$1,537.91 a year toward the retirement allowance of Shanna A Curley-Graham.

The Board received a letter from PERAC ordering the Franklin Regional Retirement Board through the provisions of MGL Sec 3(8)(c) to reimburse the Berkshire County Retirement Board \$6,212.09 a year toward the retirement allowance of Curtis Wells.

The Board received a letter from PERAC ordering the State Retirement Board through the provisions of MGL Sec 3(8)(c) to reimburse the Berkshire County Retirement Board \$9,997.94 a year toward the retirement allowance of Diane Drosehn.

PERAC CORRESPONDENCE:

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

#07/ 2023 2023 Interest Rate set at 0.1%

#08/ 2023 Actuarial Data

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

TRAVEL & EDUCATION APPROVALS:

n.) The Board is asked to approve the travel expense for staff to provide retirement seminars and PTG training to: DDVS, Great Barrington Fire District and Town of Great Barrington Retirement Seminar.

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MISCELLANEOUS CORRESPONDENCE:

o.) PERAC - Valuation Study

Karen Williams: I will make a motion to accept the consent agenda as presented. Sue Funk: I will second.

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

The next regular board meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 29, 2023 at 9:00am.
Karen Williams will be absent.

A motion was made by Karen Williams adjourn the meeting at 9:50am. Sue Funk, second.
A roll call vote was taken to adjourn, the vote was unanimous.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Sheila LaBarbera, Executive Director

APPROVED BY:

Michael Ovitt, Chairman

Mark Bashara, Elected Member

Karen Williams, Elected Member

Sue Funk, Advisory Council Member

Beth Matson, 5th Member Appointed