

Berkshire County Retirement Board Meeting  
October 15, 2021

**The meeting of the Berkshire County Retirement Board was called to order at 9:03 A.M. in the Berkshire County Retirement Office, located at 29 Dunham Mall, Pittsfield, MA. Present at the meeting were Mark Bashara, Elected Member and Paul A. Lisi, Jr., Advisory Board Member. Beth Matson Appointed member participated remotely. Absent were Michael Ovitt, Chairman and Karen Williams, Elected Member.**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1.) The Board will conduct preliminary interviews for the open position in the Berkshire County Retirement office.

Paul: It is now 9:03 AM on Friday, October 15th. The Berkshire County Retirement Board is meeting to interview the two finalists for an empty position at the retirement system. The members present need to call out their name and say here. Paul Lisi, here, Mark: Mark Bashara, here, Beth: Beth Matson, here.

Paul: Absent it for this meeting are Karen Williams and Michael Ovitt. So, Beth, we have Jennifer Vassalino here in the room with us. She is our first candidate that we're interviewing, which was supposed interview starting at nine. We're running just a little behind, but so we are going to each between yourself, me and mark ask one question of ours. We will then let Sheila ask all of her questions because she has some different questions than before, which were kind of pertinent to the job. And then if we have more time, we will go ahead and ask more questions. Welcome Jennifer, thank you for coming in today, this morning. So as you know, we are today interviewing the two finalists for the position here in the retirement system. How the interview will go is we will, each member will ask you a question. You have opportunity to respond to that. Then the executive director, Sheila, will ask you her questions. You have opportunity to respond to those. Then we are happy to take questions that you may have for the board as well. And we'll be happy to answer those. So why don't we go ahead and Beth we'll let you start first.

Beth: Okay, great, good morning. And thank you for coming. I would like to know what interests you about this job and what skills and strengths can you bring to it?

Jennifer: The interests I have for being here with Berkshire Retirement Board is that one, it would be better hours for work life balance with my family at home. I currently stay a little later at my current position to get work done, caught up. I work weekends, and sometimes I have to work home just to get some things caught up. So I'm interested in having a better work life balance. I'm also interested in learning more of the retirement work aspect. What I currently do at Pittsfield Cooperative Bank is I help a lot of customers who have IRA needs where they're transferring them in from another bank or they're rolling them over from their pensions or from their other types of retirement investments. I certainly help them make a decision in whether they wanted put it into a savings IRA or a certificate of deposit IRA where they'll have a term for one to five years on the interest rate given. So interest rates being low at the moment, a lot of people choose to keep them short. And I have the knowledge of withholding those taxes for customers who do take distributions from their IRAs. And then on the bank side, I take those monthly reports from withholdings and have

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to apply them to the IRS or to Mass Tax Connect so that those withholdings get paid for those individuals.

Beth: Very good. So, you file the, the federal and state tax.

Jennifer: I do. I pay the monthly ones for the state. I pay the monthly for the federal, but at the end of the year in January, I have to file a return for the federal. Strictly with all the withholdings.

Beth: That's similar to how we do it as well. Thank you for your answer.

Jennifer: Your welcome

Mark: All right. One question, just kind of two parts: what is your interpretation of integrity?

Jennifer: I certainly feel I am trustworthy on it, on prudent decisions. I always felt, I'm a trustworthy person and I like to be around people who I relate to who also are honest.

Mark: All right. And can you give me an example when you demonstrated that quality?

Jennifer: I certainly have a large following of customers that choose to come see me as opposed to other customer service reps or other managers of the bank. And in particular, there's several times where I've had to help customers maybe calling - I'll give one example. I had one customer who had made a purchase at a retail store and they weren't getting any help with repairs or help with the store manager. So they had come to me, asking me if I would help them. So I made a call to the store manager and told them what had they done. And if that was enough for them to go forth with a refund of their product. And he certainly appreciated me being their banker, helping out one of those customers, but it's things like that, that people put their trust in me that know that I can, they can come to me I'd be happy to help.

Paul: Jennifer, can you tell me about your current job in your most recent role? Was there a time when you had to overcome a significant challenge and how did you do that?

Jennifer: Yeah, in my current position, I'm an assistant manager. I've been the assistant manager at Pittsfield Cooperative Bank for eight years now, been with the bank just over 20, and I've been promoted three times from a teller to customer service rep, and then to assistant manager. I have tried to become the bank manager a couple times and I had not been successful in becoming the bank manager. I roll with it. It's not my time or it's their decision. I know being a bank manager, they certainly like to hire from outside of the bank because it certainly brings in more clientele. There's a lot of following. So Banks's always looking to make new accounts for customers. I certainly enjoy working at the Pittsfield Cooperative Bank and with my customers, with my staff. I train them, I coach them, they have a referral system that's rather new. We've working on it for the last couple years. COVID kind of put a stop to it for a whole year. They come to me for a lot of questions. Sometimes they come to me for personal help. But I made a lot of friends there, a lot of long term relationships with customers. And when it comes to the day to day operations, it's a lot of routine for me and supporting for the tellers, supporting for their needs, the bank's needs, my manager's needs the customers.

Paul: So now I'm going to pass the questions over to Sheila. Sheila had four questions. I think they're all really relevant to this position.

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Sheila: After reviewing the job description and I assume that you've taken a look at the job description that we posted. Can you identify or describe skills that you have that would be transferable to what is in the job description for the retirement coordinator's position?

Jennifer: That's funny. I look more on the accounting side. I have had to make a couple W2s in my time at the bank with IRAs for if there were errors done and they needed to be corrected the W2s. I certainly reconcile customer's bank statements for them. I have actually asked to volunteer at the Berkshire County Elder Services for the money management program. That's when you volunteer an hour or two a month to help an elder with their bank reconciliation or also budget. I've certainly done monthly IRA rollovers transfers to from two other retirement systems, other brokers I've done the taxes, the year ends the federal, the state payments, monthly. With 20 years of banking, I have a lot of this experience. I have financial degree of deposits and withdrawals, IRAs, things like that. Specifically, when it comes to learning a retirement system, it would be newer.

Sheila: I was looking more, there isn't a lot of what we do here within the municipal retirement, there's only a couple retirement systems in the county anyways. So there really isn't a lot of the, those that have experience are working in them right now. So that kind of experience isn't really it would've been nice, but it's, it's not a lot out there looking more for compliance issues, things of compliance because we are just, as I'm sure the bank is governed by FDIC and we just do Mass General Laws Chapter 32. So it's kind of the same thing compliance that way. You said you'd been with the bank for 20 plus years. What do you attribute to your longevity in your current position?

Jennifer: Good management. I've had good leaders who have helped me learn a lot from them. The bank has a wonderful benefits plan, pension plan, great 401k. They allowed me to be promoted three times and I appreciate all that.

Sheila: This is a job that's going to require you to work with many people. Can you give us an example of a time when you had to get along with someone who was different than you? Those examples can be work, school, or personal.

Jennifer: You just for work alone, having a new manager after trying for that position as well, and not getting that position. I felt bummed at the beginning. However, when I got to know Scott, my manager, he's terrific. He's very mirror image of me. He's a little heavier on customer interaction. To a little bit where I would say I want the customer to not depend on me, but to you know, be able to know that I'm there when they need me. I don't want to do everything for them. I want them to be able to understand that they have the tools that I've given them to do their job. And Scott, had lifted a lot of weight off of my shoulders, from my former manager and we get along great. He's wonderful for allowing me to take care of my home life when I need to. He's all about work life balance.

Sheila: In this position, we are going to require that someone is able to interpret numbers, utilize computers efficient and effectively. And we have very specific software program that we use here. But can you tell us about your experience working with numbers and describe some of the software programs that you may have utilized at the bank?

Jennifer: We use Excel, Microsoft Word, have used those documents. We use Excel daily on a spreadsheet for balancing the bank and all that is formatted. So, when plugging in figures, you confirm that you've got matches from your reports to what you've inputted, all that is audited. So you sign off on it. You certainly make sure you've done the work. And we have

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accounting who will let us know if transposition, you go back in and correct our mistakes. If we've got mistakes to be corrected, but certainly when you sign off on it, you make sure that you don't have a mistake. Otherwise, it's just extra work for you. Not to mention, a little embarrassing.

Sheila: Then the last question, do you type?

Jennifer: Do you, do I know how many words per minute I type?

Sheila: I was just wondering if you know. Like I'm a hunt and Peck, you know.

Jennifer: I can type. I'm certainly a speed typist. I've seen the people who can take very fast. Like my boss types very fast.

Sheila: No, I'm just wondering, it's not a skill that's common because people are on computers. So, it's not necessarily the same.

Paul: So, Jennifer, we have now one question from our chairman. Mark, if you want to take one question from Karen. So the next question that I have for you is tell us what you have recently learned or discovered about this job. How did you acquire or research this?

Jennifer: How I have acquired this information, certainly working with Jill. When I heard she left felt a little envious of her, I thought, wow, what a great job goes to, especially from being in the banking world. And so, I said, well, let me know if you hear of any other positions that come up. So that would be really something I would like to aspire, try to do. And she informed me when the position came available. She sent me over the job description, and she said, you should apply for it. So I have done that. What was the other question?

Paul: No, you've pretty much you've answered how you discovered the job, how you researched this. My other question to you, have you also done any research in regards just to reading the basics about chapter 32b?

Jennifer: Yeah, I did read on the chapter 32. Quite long. I do find it very interesting. I like the fact that you guys don't pay into a social security system, didn't pay into, you know, what you're required is required. Employees, employer, employee contributions, and what role they play in it. I had to look up Chapter 32 in a nutshell, it's quite in depth.

Paul: Mark is going to ask a question from one of our board members, Karen Williams, who is unfortunately under the weather, not able to make it today.

Mark: Her first couple questions kind of answered, what is your ideal work environment? Do you like working on teams. You kind of explained it, you're looking for a work life balance and stuff. One of her other questions is how would your boss and coworkers describe you?

Jennifer: I get nickname mama, Jen. I would say they trust me to come to me with questions, concerns, whether it's personal life, or bank life. In regard to working, my knowledge of the bank is in very in-depth. I've been there for 20 years. So I've learned two systems, one of the old and one that we're currently in, we have been in probably the last 17 years. My manager who's been there just over two years, relies on need to help them with IRAs when it comes to posting them on our bank system, that to make sure you've got the correct IRA codes for whether it's distribution, contributions or closing. And I would say that they see me as somebody with a vast amount of knowledge when it comes to the bank

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and life skills in general. I'm a gardener. I like the garden. I like the quilt, one of my coworkers would like me to make her pillow cushions. And I share some of my seedlings.  
Mark: All right. Very good.

Paul: So, you brought up something that I think actually Sheila was trying to get out of you and I don't think you got the whole question, but because when you were talking to Mark, you brought up something about working through two systems. So Sheila, one of her questions to you was we need someone who is able to interpret numbers and utilize computers and effectively specifically software programs. Tell us about your experience working with numbers and describe some of the software programs you have utilized. So, you said Excel and Word, but you've also clearly just stated to Mark that you've worked in other programs. So, you've gone through conversions like that?

Jennifer: It was a conversion 17 years ago. We've been at this system for that long. Other systems that I use or the IRS federal EFT system, the Mass Tax Connect system, in regard to posting those payments out to them and our banking system.

Paul: So, the system here will be going through a conversion. The board has just authorized a new deduction posting system. I'm not sure what the technical name of it's called, so it will be a learning curve for everybody at the same time. So, you're all comfortable with that kind of stuff?

Jennifer: Yeah, I'm comfortable with conversion.

Mark: We got about five minutes. I don't know if you want to ask more or leave couple minutes for her to ask question?

Paul: So, do you have any questions for us? Feel free to ask any?

Jennifer: I wanted to ask what does a typical day look like?

Paul: I'm going to defer that to Sheila.

Sheila: A typical day and a lot of what we do in this, in the office is transactional. People do refunds, rollovers, transfers, deduction posting. We do payroll for our pensioners. All of that stuff is cyclical in a month. So, every day it somewhat is the same, but is a little bit different because the transactional tasks are different. What has a little bit more variance to it is the customer service that we provide to our membership. So, on a daily basis, you get phone calls from members, whether they're active members or retired members, inquiring about different things regarding their benefit plan. Looking for advice for things like, I lost my job or I'm thinking of transferring to a new job. What does that mean for me as my account? When people are retired, they're kind of at that stage where their pension is their pension, but we deal more at with the retirees on insurance issues and how those insurance issues. Or How their pension interacts with social security because there's offsets on social security for your pension. So, a daily the transactional things that we do in this office are cyclical. Everything kind of runs to the end of the month because the board meets on the last Wednesday of the month. So usually as we get down to that last week of the month, all of those transactions come to an end and then they're prepared for the board. Which the board then has to approve, we have a posted monthly meeting, and the board has to look over and approve a lot of those transactions. Then they deal with the new business too. We

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have different requests from different groups, whether they're individuals or a group of people, for different things that they would like the retirement board to consider. I don't know if there's a typical day, but that's kind of it in a nutshell and it's similar to probably what you do in banking. I don't know if you do a calendar or a fiscal year. We do a calendar year here, so we're starting to get into year end. And so, we'll have a yearend close on December 31st and that kind of stuff.

Jennifer: My next question, what are the current goals of the company? How does the team work to support those and to hitting those goals?

Paul: I'll take part of this. I'll let Mark do some and I'll let Sheila do some. Let me just reiterate the question. What are the goals of the company and what does the team do to reach those goals? I think on the board side, the goal of we're not necessarily let's clarify this. We're not a company we're not, we don't make profit. There's no profit to be made here. I mean, we're not a company. The goal of the retirement board is to really provide exceptional customer service to our active and retired members, provide support, proper staffing, and resources to our employees. how we get that kind of information to the individuals is through feedback that we receive from retirees and active members, as well as employees. I will let mark talk on that some more if he wants, and then I'll let Sheila talk on that. And I think she'll be able to tell you how we get to that goal, because I think the board is very supportive of the team.

Mark: The board has oversight of the retirement, to make sure everything's going well and oversight of the employees to make sure they have the resources and everything's going well. The important thing is I think what's different here is, you have most of your members when they retire are older. So, you had mentioned you like to kind of teach at the bank, but here, I think you're going to find a lot of the members aren't up for teaching. They may want you to hold their hand, depending on the situation. It's a different thing because they're ready to retire. They spent 20, 30, 40 years working and now this is a big jump for anyone who retires. They may need a little special handling in the sense of being assured what is next for them as far as the retirement part? Do you have anything you want to add into this?

Paul: Beth, do you have anything?

Beth: I think from my perspective, the main goal of this retirement system is to smoothly, accurately and make it the best transition for our employees to go through the retirement process. That certainly is my goal. That it's a comfortable, pleasant experience and that it's extremely accurate. And that that's where my thoughts are.

Sheila: Here I think that's one of the things for our membership, whether they're active or retired, what I kind of go by is the answer's always yes unless chapter 32 says, no, we can't. I think that's one of the things that we do here very well is to make sure that our membership has the information that they need to make the decisions. Because ultimately, people come in and there's different questions that people will ask like they're getting ready to retire. Well, which option is the best? Well, I can't really tell you which one is the best, but I can tell you that you should base it on a financial decision. So, when you're looking at what you want, when you retire financially, do you need an Option A with no beneficiary? Do we need an Option B with a lump sum, possibly lump sum payment? Or do you have a dependent spouse, or do you have a dependent child or somebody that may need an

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allowance if you're no longer here to provide it? So, we approach it that way. Even with our members, we're dealing with one right now, who's thinking about, they're taking a different job. It's a different retirement system, but what's really affected for them the most is their benefits, their health insurance benefits. So, between Jill and I, I think we've, talked to her every day for about three weeks, multiple times a week. And just trying to point out what the options are, and we go over it. But ultimately it does come down to, we've provided them with the information that they need to make an informed decision, but whatever their decision is, is theirs. I think that we like to look at, there's nothing in here that we do transactional that you can't ask a question about. We try to find the most efficient, effective ways to provide that service and those transactions effectively. And make sure the biggest thing is, from the staff standpoint and the board is that we are in compliance, that we're doing things correctly because nobody wants any audit findings.

Paul: I will have to say, thank you. I appreciate you coming in this morning. I believe that you'll be hearing something by next week.

Sheila: Well, the board meeting is October 27th. So hopefully we will have something on the agenda for that day.

Paul: Hopefully you hear something week of the 27th. I would like to get that done sooner if we could schedule a meeting because I mean, coming up year end and stuff that to you for October 27th, doesn't possibly mean that a person could start maybe until December 1st.

Sheila: We'll have to look and see.

Paul: Do you want to see if we can possibly do a special meeting to Zoom earlier?

Sheila: Sure we can. We'll talk about that one more.

Paul: You will possibly hear you hear by the 20th.

Sheila: Thank you so much.

Jennifer: Thank you. Nice to meet you all have a good one.

<Jennifer leaves the room>

Paul: The important question I have to ask you; I think waiting until the 27<sup>th</sup>. Mark, what's your opinion on this? That then puts you to possibly somebody having to give a month's notice. So, you're now talking about the end of November, beginning of December when somebody starts. I don't have to be here in person in the next meeting. We can be this by zoom. Talk about the potential hire?

Mark: I don't want to cause a disaster on your hands by doing that, but I prefer to wait because it seems we're having a tough time getting to us all together anyway. Then have another meeting. Which I don't mind participating, zoom wise, we can all talk, but I think Wednesday everybody has. This is every month; people will be here. We can discuss it. And then I'm sure at that point we can fast track it, whoever we pick, to help you expedite.

Sheila: Today's Friday. We could probably even talk about it on Monday. 48 hours to post a meeting and maybe we could look at something. Maybe if we are so inclined, we can look at something at the end of next week? You just have the one item on the agenda, so hopefully it wouldn't take long.

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Paul: Beth, what's your opinion on that?

Beth: My opinion on that is I have absolutely no problem meeting whenever you want to meet. My only concern would be if Karen and Michael had the opportunity to listen to the tape of this prior to so that they could participate.

Sheila: Absolutely. I'm recording it. And then what I'm going to do is share the link I'll send it out to everybody. You can if you want to review it yourself again. Sometimes you miss things, and you get to sit and listen. And so not a problem. I can send the link out. I'll try to get out Monday morning.

Beth: That's perfect. I have no issues meeting Monday.

Paul: For that decision, we all need all five of us.

Sheila: Yep, absolutely.

<Brian enters>

Paul: How you doing?

Brian: Good. Thank you.

Sheila: Hi, Brian. How are you? Nice to meet you, I'm Sheila.

Brian: Nice to meet you.

Paul: Hey Brian, I'm Paul.

Beth: And I'm Beth.

Sheila: Beth Matson is one of our board members. She is participating remotely. Right. This meeting is being recorded for transcription purposes and stuff like that. Just so that you know.

Brian: Alright.

Paul: Okay. Sorry, we got started a little bit late. Welcome today we have The Berkshire County Retirement Board, along with the Executive Director of our interviewing the two finalists for the position in the retirement office this morning. How this process works is the board has five members, there are currently two absent. The members that we have here today are Sheila, me, Mark Bashara, and Beth Matson. The two members that are not present are Karen Williams and our chairman, Michael Ovitt. We're going to start by asking you one question each. Then we will pass the questions on to the Executive Director. And we'll come back to the board members who time allows asks you a few more questions and then we'll give you the opportunity to ask questions. I will let Mark start by asking you the first.

Mark: It's a two-part question. What is your interpretation of integrity? And if you can give me an example when you demonstrated that quality.

Brian: Integrity to me would be making sure that things are done right. And by the book, both cases, from your perspective and in whoever you're working with. While I was with Equitable, I was obviously a financial advisor. So, there's a lot of trust that goes in that



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you're managing people's funds and advising in the right ways. So, I feel every day when I went in there to meet with my clients, giving them, the best advice possible that not only benefiting the company, but also benefiting the client, without any bias is really how I showed my integrity and my trust with my clients. As well as my knowledge, obviously.

Beth: Thank you again for coming. So, my question is what interests you about this job and what skills and strengths will you bring to it?

Brian: The major interest comes from I've been dealing with the school faculty and actually the towns faculty for the last couple years, with their retirements. My main role with Equitable was going into the school and educating not only the faculty that in the Berkshire County Retirement system, but also the MTRs system. Educating them on their benefits as well as their 403b. And our side of things was we were setting them up with 403b, making sure they're contributing. So, when I saw this job, that's kind of what I felt that drove me to apply, was that I already had some knowledge of how the system works, the Berkshire County Retirement system as well as buybacks and, and the way the grid is laid out. So that was really my interest in that. And I feel that some of those same clients are obviously members of the Berkshire County Retirement system. So I feel that I've already gained some of that trust with them. And obviously my communication with my clients. One of my strengths, I've never had a complaint filed against me, as far as communication goes on the federal sec regulations. I know this is a different set of regulations, but I feel that some of those same the advice and the knowledge base I can bring here with this team.

Beth: Excellent. Thank you.

Paul: Brian can you tell me about your current job in your most recent role? Was there a time when you had to overcome a significant challenge? And if so, how did you do that?

Brian: The major challenge is that you're always looking to build your business and build your practice. Obviously with COVID, a big portion of my business came from meeting with clients in person and not only younger clients, but older clients as well, which aren't as tech savvy. So, with COVID protocols and whatnot, we couldn't go out and meet with our clients. So, we had to kind of branch out and one become very good with zoom meetings and whatnot, and also very good speaking with clients over the phone as well. To educate them and advise them and update them on their accounts. That was the biggest obstacle that I've had overcome in my career with Equitable. Once again, the communication between clients not being able to sit in front of somebody and lay out their financial portfolio and say, these are the changes we need to make. This is how we need to be done, kind of having them walking through each step as we were meeting and still trying to build that practice during that time and gain new clients and new accounts.

Paul: So that was pretty much all your job. Cool. Thank you. I'm going to turn the questions over to Sheila.

Sheila: After reviewing the job description and I assume that you've taken a look at it. Can you identify or describe skills that you have that you think would be transferable to the retirement coordinator's position?

Brian: Obviously making sure I adhere to all the regulations, obviously in the financial advising world, you're adhering to not only state regulations, but federal regulations. As well as SCC regulations. And I've always been very organized, very in control of not only paperwork, but task and whatnot. So, I feel that I can bring to the table. I know there's

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different regulations with the pension system and adhering to those different laws. But also, my communication, as I've stated before I've dealt with a lot of these clients. I know how to communicate and educate them. Whether they're worried, happy, upset, whatever it might be. I've had seven years of experience in communicating with these same people. And there's a lot of different tasks that go with this, from my understanding. I can very well at multitasking through my past job experiences. And back in college, I was working in construction as well as going to school, as well as studying for my series seven. I was able to get everything done in an efficient manner. I feel that's also a strong point, as far as one that just descriptions in the job.

Sheila: Now you mentioned that you've been with your company for seven years. What do you attribute your longevity to in your current position?

Brian: Loyalty. I'm a very loyal person. So with the company that I'm with I've been there since I've gotten my licenses in the financial industry. I obviously have a lot of clients that I've built up that more than anything I'm loyal to them. I like to say the job that I'm in now, I've been thinking about leaving for some time, but my clients have held it up. I don't want to leave them high and dry. I want to be able give them as much advice as much essentially warning as I can before getting up and leaving and letting somebody else manage their accounts. Because once again, with financials, just like the pension system, it's a very fine line. People can be very agitated if they get a call from somebody else the next day saying, Hey, I'm managing your accounts. Now they have no idea who that person is. So it's really loyalty. That's made me stay and obviously knowledge of the industry, knowledge of these different systems, the different pension systems, the different advising systems. That's really made me stay where I have been for the last seven years.

Sheila: We're kind of looking for someone who's able to interpret numbers, utilize computers efficiently and effectively and specifically software programs. We use which I'm sure, just like in the financial industry, Equitable has a financial program that you use here. We have a core system that we use specifically for retirement. Tell us about your experience working with numbers and describe some of the software programs that you've utilized.

Brian: Obviously with investments and life insurance, comes numbers. So that's always one of my strong suits. They may have interpreting numbers, whether it's trading certain securities or developing and broadcasting out what somebody's retirement might look like in 10, 15, 30 years from now. That's the numbers, I've essentially been dealing with past seven years. And then as far as the software goes, once again, with financial advising, it branches out into a lot of different things. So, there's actually a lot of different software programs you need to learn rather quickly and if you don't, you'll kind of lag behind. So, I've used things like sales, Salesforce, which that is keeping pretty much sums up all your book of business as play, where you can keep notes on conversations addresses your basic client information accounts, all that, keep it organized in one spot. I've also used some, you might not be more familiar with, but Client Works. It's a brokerage system software that can be confusing at times to most people. But for example, I was working with a partner of mine. That's been with the company for 20 years. She didn't fully know how to work it. I was able to really expand my knowledge on kind of how to learn these different software systems work. So, I can use them to their full functionality. I'm not just using them to put my client's

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name in there and be done with it. I know they're in it's to use it to the full functionality. As far as other software that I've used before for different life insurance quotes and things like that. But the major one was Sales Force, which is kind of the caboodle of the whole advising field as well as Paper Clip, which is an electronic filing cabinet essentially, where you take all your files, and this didn't come out until about two years ago where the company wanted us to transfer all of our file electronically. So, you had to manually upload them, make sure it listed at the right file. Essentially, it's more of a papering thing. But I was one of the first ones in the company to have my full book of business remotely paper clipped in that system. So I am very familiar with how to learn these systems.

Sheila: And this is going to be in kind of what you do right now but require you to work with many different people. Can you give us an example of a time where you had to get along with someone who was different from you and you can use an example from work, school, personal, whatever?

Brian: We're obviously working with a lot of different age groups. So, my age people, older people, very close retirement, people in retirement. And there's been many a times where people have much different views, when they're meeting with me. So for example, one person he wanted to essentially control his accounts and make all his decisions. I learned how to work with him in a way that's positive for both of us where you allow him to have some of the control, but while still giving my advice obviously with this one person, he had much different views than I did. Just on everything in general. I've learned how to converse with people. You don't start that argument or start that conversation where it like leads down to rabbit hole. So, like I said, a lot of different personalities and once again with the finances comes a lot of different attitudes and views. So I think I've done a pretty good job of developing relationships with all my clients, no matter their views, no matter their views on advising politics, whatever it is. If you were to look at my book of business with, I have about 200 different clients. They are all different, nobody's the same. Once again, I've learned how to communicate effectively with a lot of different diversities and viewpoints.

Sheila: Okay. Thank you.

Paul: So now I'm going to ask you a question from our chairman, let Mark ask a question from our absent member and bring it back to you. So, the question from our chairman is, tell us what you had recently learned or discovered about this job and how did you acquire or research this?

Brian: I was actually on Indeed and had popped up and I notice it was Berkshire County Retirement. Once again, I'm familiar with it and I've actually contacted, for the pension before to show the clients and educate them. So, I learned about it from Indeed. I've learned a lot through my time about, about Berkshire County Retirement System. I'm not certain to say that there's a lot of new stuff I've learned about it recently. It's more of my knowledge of essentially how the pension works and I've done those buybacks before with clients, but when they're using the 403b accounts, I've helped them go through the process of buying back the time with Berkshire County Retirement System. So that's essentially how I found out what kind of blew the torch.

Mark: All right. Now this question is from our other member, Karen Williams what is your ideal work environment? Do you like working on teams working alone and what is your work style?

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Brian: I worked both on teams and alone. The first few years I was at Equitable, I was pretty much alone other than with one other person. As I grew in that business, I developed into more of a team mentality where I had a manager, and I had a couple partners where we would meet about clients. We would brainstorm on their different advising techniques, different strategies for the clients. Obviously through school, it was more so by myself, but with the team projects, I've never had a problem with either. My ideal work environment. I do like to be efficient and be organized. I like a, a clean workspace. I like to just go right at, make up my list of tasks and go right at it. I don't like things hanging over my head. I like to just kind of knock things out as you go. And you know, if that means skipping breaks or lunches, that's never been a problem. The way I work, I've always been a hard worker. I developed that through my construction years. I worked for a contractor and I also branched off and did my own business with my brother. I pride myself in my work. I don't want it ever coming back and either a client or anybody saying, 'this isn't done right. This is the way it was supposed to be done'. So, I pride myself in my work ethic. And like I said, I just like to be the most efficient and effective I can throughout the day, just to get tasks done and completed. So that way they're not overhanging for two weeks, three weeks, four weeks just kind of go right at it and, and dive in.

Paul: Thank you. So, my next question to you would be, Sheila. So, you've covered your questions?

Sheila: Yes, I just have one question that I didn't ask. And that is your typing skills?

Brian: Yeah, those are great. Like I said, there's a lot of inputs with Equitable, obviously through college, you take all the office courses, the Excel courses. Which I still use now and at my former job at Equitable.

Paul: So, I just want to clarify something you said, so did you just say your former job?

Brian: Yeah. I just resigned there on halfway through summer about September 15th, 17th. It was right after I applied for the position.

Paul: Okay. So the next thing I'm going to ask is I think you're you, are you comfortable?  
Beth, are you all, I'm all set?

Beth: Yeah.

Paul: So, do you have any questions for us you'd like to ask?

Brian: I mean; the description is pretty straightforward. Obviously, it's working with the members of the retirement system, and I'm not sure, is it educating them or is it kind of helping them with their questions?

Paul: I'm going to defer that question.

Sheila: Most of what we do in this office is very task oriented. So, it's transactional kind of stuff, whether it's refund, rollovers, transfers, enrollments, retirements. So there's transactional things. And we talk about what goes on in a month, all of those things from all of those items, including a payroll, pension payroll, and that kind of stuff that all happens. The transactional stuff happens every month. The other piece of this, which is there's two, which is the kind of advice, if you will. Every day we have members that call whether they're active members, retired members, inactive members, whatever, calling and asking different questions about their accounts, their benefits, and that kind of stuff. And the third piece is basically Chapter 32 and compliance with what we do here. When you say advice, it's kind of the same thing as you do investments, because you can only give someone a certain

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number of tools. And then they have to make that decision. We talked about that. People will come in and say, well, what do you think is the best retirement option? I can tell you what the options are. And I can tell you the benefits that they provide, but it's basically a financial decision for you. So, there's a lot of that and we deal with a lot, we've had it in the last couple of weeks where accounts have been corrupted and you've got to make sure you change them and it's a lot of identifying who the members are and who's making the changes and all that kind of stuff. So, kind of similar probably to some of the stuff that you do sounds like. That job description itself, that's kind of a general listing of the things that we do in the office. They may or may not be, as we hire and figure out who skills are developed best for certain transactional skills and things like that, we may move things around a little bit. But in the end, what we hope is that every person in this office would be able to at least get us through a month yep. To provide the transactional stuff. So, it is individualized work. And there's an expectation that, this is what you're given to do, and that it will be done in accordance as it's outlined in Chapter 32, but then there's a lot of stuff that's done in the team kind of thing, whether it's seminars and stuff like that. So, there's participation on both levels.

Mark: Just one thing I want to add. You mentioned you dealt with what, like 200 clients?

Brian: In my book of business, I had about 200 clients just in the school system alone between me and my partner. We had about 300 to 350.

Mark: We have what like 800 retirees

Sheila: Approximately closer to 900.

Mark: Now how many actives all together? 1200?

Sheila: About 1200 to 1300 active and about 900.

Mark: We have over 2000 members.

Brian: And it's all Berkshire county, correct?

Sheila: We have everybody in Berkshire County except for Pittsfield, Adams, and North Adams. They have their own system.

Paul: Do you further questions for us?

Brian: No, I think thought about sums it up.

Paul: Thank you very much. Thank you. I'll let you know; the board is now working the logistics of how to meet to go ahead and make the decision. And you will be receiving some kind of notification by at least our board meeting the week of the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Brian: Fantastic.

Sheila: It was nice to meet you. Thank you.

Mark: Thank you.

Paul: My thought Sheila, Mark, correct me if I'm wrong. If we take a few minutes to digest what just happened? So, I will, I'll let Beth, do you want to go first on your opinions or anything in regard to any kind of information?

Beth: I'm going to pass on going first, but I do have some thoughts.

Mark: Well, my view is, because the other members aren't here, I don't want to bias anything by saying something I'd rather wait till they review and hear it. So that we're all at

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the same time. Otherwise, if I make a comment about how I feel about this or that they haven't listened to heard it yet, I don't want to. I'd rather have it be so everybody's on board. Everybody heard it and we can all discuss it at the same time, Beth. Is that how you feel?

Beth: That sounds reasonable. Yeah. I think that's very reasonable because you're right. We could bias their opinions.

Paul: Sheila, what is your opinion on that?

Sheila: I guess I'll defer to the board; however, you'd like to proceed.

Paul: So, I guess at this time, I'll let the meeting go out and make sense, I guess. And then go from there. I just feel you do lose some stuff the day of. So I'll need to watch this again. To get it all over again. You said you're going to send the link?

Sheila: I'm going to send the link.

Paul: Okay. So do you have any do you want to fill out anything in, doesn't have to be regarding a candidate? Do you want to tell us how you feel in regard to what you're looking for, but we might have, do you have anything you want to fill into this?

Sheila: Well, I don't know if so, much it's going to, fill it in is that, to the point of, can we make a decision sooner rather than later, can we get together maybe at the end of next week and hash this out and hire somebody rather than put it off because it makes sense. I think to deal with this as one item on the agenda to one topic of discussion, rather than to try to jam it into the board meeting we're going to have enough to deal with at the board meeting this month that I think that it might be more appropriate to do that.

Paul: I can respond, I would say to throw this in a regular scheduled board meeting keeps myself and Karen out of the office for too long. And Beth is, well, I don't know if she's working remotely or if she has to go to the office. But I mean to put this item in a regular board agenda, I do think it keeps us out of the office too long. So, I'm not in favor of that at all.

Beth: Yep. I agree. I can't be out of the office three and four hours. It's just taking too much time. Yep.

Paul: So, I do think that if you can go ahead and work on setting up a zoom meeting for next week even Friday or whatever. To do this, I think to wait till the week of the 27th, this, even if I watched it again, it's, that's still fresh in my mind. I would like it to be fresh. Know what happened? Know what's in front of me. Yep. And if we can go ahead and schedule that meeting for next week unfortunately if five of us can't be here, five of us can't be here, but three, we need to move forward. There's just, we can't keep putting these things off all the time. We need to move forward. Everybody had the ability, I understand people are sick, but everybody had the ability to be at the meeting today. And unfortunately I do feel bad for Karen. She is ill. And I do wish her the best but we do need to move forward. Getting somebody year end is coming. And it's important that we move forward to well.

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Sheila: Seeing that I have three of you now, I mean is Friday morning. I don't have to look and see what we have on our schedule, but it's Friday morning work for everybody next week?

Paul: Friday morning works for me.

Mark: I totally agree. You know, I'm ready to move on this and do what we need to do. Yeah. I know that today's Friday. So I, I would hope over the weekend. The other two members, I don't know though, will this be ready.

Sheila: Yeah, I can share it so that it's over the weekend. I need 48 hours to post a meeting and I know Thursdays are not good for, Paul and they're not good for Karen.

Mark: No, no. What I'm getting at is that if it's possible without, you know overloading, if this could be put out to the other two. Over the weekend. You post it Monday. They reviewed it. We're obviously the three of us are already on board. Yeah. So, to me, any time after that, as long as they did it, whether it was Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, I'm open.

Paul: Yeah. So, Beth, you confirm that Friday works for you, correct?

Beth: Works for me.

Paul: It's definitely a board meeting for next Friday by a zoom.

Sheila: Is early or later better. So, we want to do 8:30?

Paul: I'm going to be working from home. Beth, what works for you?

Beth: The earlier is the better, but if mark can't make it until nine, I can do nine.

Paul: Okay. Nine will be fine. So nine o'clock Friday zoom meeting. I don't think we need to be here in person to hash this out.

Mark: I can do 8:30. It's not putting me way out. I just prefer nine, but because you're the one working, I'm the retired one. So, I'm open.

Beth: You're very considerate.

Mark: More so if 8:30 work for you better, if you work schedule, I'm the, with 8:30

Beth: Yeah, just this one time. It is a little easier for me at 8:30 than it is at 9, but that.

Paul: 8:30 is better for me as well. It starts me closer at the beginning of the day. It doesn't take me away from something.

Mark: Sure. And we can either be in person or remote, right? I'm saying if I want to come in, I'm more likely going to come in.

Sheila: I mean, you come in or remote. I mean, again, remote is fine. I mean, everybody's going to have seen interviews by then.

Mark: See that's what I like is the fact today's Friday. It basically gives a whole week. Yeah. Plenty of time. If you get this out for them to review it over the weekend to run it through their heads. Everybody get together that you got a week to plan. So, I don't see any reason.

Paul: If it is not physically possible to get this together today, but it is first thing Monday morning. Four days of this is sufficient to review. Right?

Mark: Sure. I mean, I'm fine with it going on Monday as well. I mean, we reviewed it in an hour. So, they can take an hour of their day, Monday through Thursday to review as well. So, I mean, if your schedule is already booked for today, don't stress on getting this out. Just send us something, if you could, like, I can't get this out today or I'm sorry, it'll be on Monday. Just, I got some appointments today and so we've got some things going on again.

Paul: It is now 10:06 am Friday, October 15th. Can I have a motion to adjourn.

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Mark: I make a motion to adjourn.

Beth: I second.

Paul: Okay. The motion was made to adjourn the meeting from Mark Bashara. The second was made from Beth Matson who was participating remotely, all those in favor of the adjourning signified by saying your name and an aye.

Mark: Mark Bashara, aye.

Beth: Beth Matson, aye.

Paul: Paul Lisi, aye. Thanks Beth. I think we're good.

Beth: Thank you. Sorry for the delay today. Have a good week guys.

Meeting adjourned at 10:07am

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