

**Worcester Regional Retirement Board Meeting
March 30, 2021**

The meeting was called to order at 8:11 a.m. Due to COVID 19 regulations, social distancing considerations and Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Executive Order permitting remote participation for public meetings, the meeting took place by Zoom Conferencing. Present at the meeting were Chairman Kevin Blanchette, Board Members Gene Durgin, Joanne Savignac, Michael Donoghue and Pauline Lajoie. Also present were Michael Sacco, Chief Executive Officer, Colleen Canty, Rosemary Shaughnessy and Durriyyah Leonard.

APPROVAL - MEETING MINUTES: February 23, 2021.

MOTION: *made by Mr. Donoghue and seconded by Ms. Lajoie. All were in favor.*

MONTHLY WARRANTS:

Accounts Payable: Warrant #15 \$19,162.52

MOTION: *made by Mr. Donoghue and seconded by Mr. Durgin. All in favor.*

Staff Salaries: Warrant #18 \$52,764.48

MOTION: *made by Ms. Lajoie and seconded by Ms. Savignac. All in favor.*

Board Compensation: Warrant #19 \$2,500.00

MOTION: *made by Mr. Donoghue and seconded by Ms. Savignac. All in favor.*

Option B – Annuity Payouts: Warrant #21 \$5,198.82

MOTION: *made by Ms. Lajoie and seconded by Mr. Durgin. All in favor.*

3(8)c's Warrant #22 \$428,266.93

MOTION: *made by Ms. Savignac and seconded by Mr. Donoghue. All in favor.*

Pension Vouchers: \$7,885,636.00

MOTION: *made by Ms. Lajoie and seconded by Mr. Durgin. All in favor.*

Prior to and during the meeting, the following items were available for the Board's review: monthly financial statements, current investment statements, invoices, member and retiree files related to items on the agenda.

The Board reviewed the Cash Balance and Operating Expenses.

Refunds & Transfers Warrant #20 \$1,171,346.56

MOTION: *made by Ms. Lajoie and seconded by Mr. Durgin. All in favor.*

NEW MEMBER APPLICATIONS: (14)

MOTION: *made by Ms. Savignac and seconded by Mr. Donoghue. All in favor*

RETIREMENT APPROVALS: (18)

MOTION: *made by Mr. Donoghue and seconded by Ms. Lajoie. All in favor.*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT:

Legal Update

The CEO gave his monthly report to the Board. With respect to legal matters, the CEO informed the Board that PERAC has decided to appeal the Superior Court's decision in the Vernava case to the Appeals Court, and we have also filed an appeal of the decision with respect to Count II of the complaint, in which we sought a court ruling that where such as here in matters involving purely legal questions and/or the interpretation of an appellate decision the parties should be able to proceed directly to court and bypass the lengthy administrative appeal process. The CEO has conferred with the Assistant Attorney General handling the case on PERAC's behalf, and we agreed that this case would be appropriate for direct appellate review before the Supreme Judicial Court since the SJC issued the Vernava decision.

There has also been much interest in the proposed COVID-19 ERI legislation that has been filed in both the House and Senate, and while we generally do not take a position on pending legislation, we continue to monitor it.

PRIM / PRIT Update

The System assets broke the \$900 million mark as of February 28th – March's returns were flat but if the market continues to trend upward the WRRS could be a billion-dollar pension fund by year's end. No changes in the PRIT asset allocation or investment strategy. Quarterly results have been provided.

The CEO also informed the Board that the project he was assigned with respect to looking at other retirement systems that are similarly funded is near completion. The CEO expects to present his findings and recommendations at the April 2021 meeting.

Investment Actuarial Update

The staff has received a few requests from member units who may want to pay more than the annual appropriation to reduce future appropriations. We have been communicating with KMS to determine how that would be done actuarially, and we will be responding to all the member unit treasurers on the issue once we have more information.

Staff Activities

The CEO informed the Board that Leslie has returned part-time from her medical leave and welcomed Leslie back to the office. The CEO also commended staff for taking on Leslie's responsibilities in her absence. The CEO also informed the Board that as part of his continued outreach program, he has created additional working groups comprised of Town Administrators, Police Chiefs and Fire Chiefs. Each working group will have their own dedicated tab on the WRRS website, and the CEO will communicate directly with each group regarding issues of interest. The CEO has been requested to appear at both the annual Fire and Police Chiefs meetings, with the first meeting taking place on May 18th with the Fire Chiefs at their Sterling training facility. The CEO will also be speaking in August at the Police Chiefs meeting.

The CEO informed the Board that the staff has been training on PTG and the plan is to go "live" with PTG on May 1st.

The CEO along with System Administrator Colleen Canty virtually attended a MACRS-sponsored Cyber Security seminar which was very informative. The CEO has reached out to Tech Pro Services, our computer

consultant, to discuss possible additional to our cyber security network and we are awaiting a recommendation and cost proposal.

The CEO and staff have been working with Webster Five so that our member units' annual appropriation payments can be transferred electronically, and once that process has been secured, we will be communicating that to the unit treasurers.

The CEO has also started another initiative to obtain all active and retired members email addresses so that we can communicate more directly and effectively with our membership. We are also beginning to revamp our website, with the intent of driving inquiries to the website where appropriate, and developing our own forms for membership, refunds, beneficiary designation, etc. We have also contracted with a recycling company which has provided us with large containers for paper recycling, and it is a secure recycling such that it will not be necessary to shred confidential documents anymore. The CEO and System Administrator are working on the budget, and a preliminary budget will be submitted to the Board in April, with a more detailed submission and discussion anticipated for the May meeting and a vote to approve. The CEO discussed with the Board going back to in-person meetings starting with the May meetings, and we have secured the Auburn Elks for the May, June and July 2021 meetings so that we can maintain social distancing. Finally, the CEO informed the Board that the office remains closed to the public, and as more people are vaccinated and as CDC and state restrictions ease he will consider opening the office at some point in the future. The CEO told the Board that despite the office closing, there have been no complaints and staff has done a tremendous job on the telephone and via email communicating with the membership to provide them with the information they need.

Chairman Blanchette requested to add an agenda item to discuss the CEO's Contract Negotiations at the April 28th Board meeting. The discussion will be held in Executive Session. All votes will be held in Open Session.

At 8:30 a.m. in accordance with Section 21(a)(1) of Chapter 30A of the General Laws, a motion was made to recess the open meeting and go into Executive Session to discuss and conduct two (2) Evidentiary Hearings and two (2) Medical Panel Reviews for the disability cases. Motion made by Ms. Lajoie, seconded by Mr. Donoghue. All affirmed they were alone during this session due to being remote. The motion carried by a roll call vote with, Mr. Donoghue, yes; Mr. Durgin, yes; Ms. Lajoie, yes; Ms. Savignac, yes; and Chairman, Blanchette, yes.

At 9:43 a.m. the Board reconvened in open session for the purpose of adjournment

ADJOURN MOTION: *Motion was made by Mr. Donoghue and seconded by Ms. Lajoie at 9:43 a.m. to close the Executive Session and then close meeting and adjourn. Non-debatable motion. All in favor. The motion carried by a roll call vote with Mr. Donoghue, yes; Ms. Lajoie; yes, Ms. Savignac; yes, and Chairman Blanchette, yes*