

**Worcester Regional Retirement Board Meeting
October 24, 2023**

The meeting was called to order at 8:08 a.m. Present at the meeting were Chairman Kevin Blanchette, Board Members Gene Durgin, Michael Donoghue, Pauline Lajoie, and Rebecca Tuttle. Also present were Board attorneys, Katherine Hesse and Linda Champion, Rachel Grimaldi, Executive Director, Colleen Canty, Board Administrator, and Carol Rocco, Board Secretary. All votes were taken by roll call.

APPROVAL - MEETING MINUTES: September 26, 2023 Open Session
September 26, 2023 Executive Session
September 26, 2023 Advisory Council

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

MONTHLY WARRANTS:

Accounts Payable:	Warrant #61	\$75,671.31
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MOTION: *made by Ms. Tuttle and seconded by Ms. Lajoie. All in favor.*

Staff Salaries:	Warrant #64	\$59,978.48
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MOTION: *made by Mr. Donoghue and seconded by Mr. Durgin. All in favor.*

Board Compensation:	Warrant #65	\$2,500.00
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MOTION: *made by Mr. Donoghue and seconded by Ms. Tuttle. All in favor.*

3(8)(c):	Warrant #67	\$131,175.17
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MOTION: *made by Ms. Lajoie and seconded by Mr. Donoghue. All in favor.*

Pension Vouchers:	\$9,605,869.01
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MOTION: *made by Mr. Donoghue 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 #66	\$936,156.03
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MOTION: *made by Mr. Durgin and seconded by Ms. Lajoie. All in favor.*

NEW MEMBER APPLICATIONS: (204)

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

RETIREMENT APPROVALS: (13)

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

Mr. Blanchette mentioned PERAC's Mandatory Retirement Board Member Training for the 4th quarter of 2023. All members acknowledged that they are aware.

Executive Director's Report:

The Executive Director provided her monthly report as follows:

Legal Update: The Executive Director informed the Board that DALA affirmed our decision in the Cialdea/Purcell case on 9/28/2023. These cases were consolidated, as both members purchased call firefighter service that did not lead to a permanent firefighter position. The petitioners have fifteen (15) days to appeal this decision.

The Executive Director notified the Board that DALA issued its final decision in Paul LaPalme v. Worcester Regional Retirement Board on 10/6/2023. Mr. LaPalme retired from his position at the Town of Auburn on 8/23/2019. Though he became eligible for membership on 9/14/2003, his retirement deductions were inadvertently sent to OBRA until 7/15/2011. Mr. LaPalme subsequently purchased this service and appealed the inclusion of buyback interest on the total cost.

DALA remanded the case to the Board for reconsideration, as the Magistrate concluded that he was erroneously excluded from membership during this period. The Executive Director informed the Board that she and the Chairman concur with DALA's decision and recommend refunding the applicable interest.

MOTION: *made by Ms. Lajoie and seconded by Mr. Donoghue to waive the interest on Paul LaPalme's make-up for deductions that were not collected by the Town of Auburn through no fault of his own. All in favor.*

PRIM/PRIT update: The Executive Director reported that the market performed poorly this month, due to several economic and geopolitical factors. However, the Board's net assets remain over a billion dollars.

Actuarial/Audit Update: The Executive Director informed the Board that Attorney Katherine Hesse provided information requested to the auditors at Clifton, Larson & Allen. The final report will be forthcoming shortly.

Staff Activities: The Executive Director reported the following staff activities:

- Board staff continue to work diligently to process member requests in a timely manner. The Executive Director noted that she is pleased with staff performance.
- Contract negotiations with Bay State Pension Solutions are in the final stages.
- The Board's cybersecurity insurance policy with Coalition Insurance is currently in the renewal process.
- The final Pension Verification Forms were mailed in early October. Retirees were informed that their completed form must be received by 11/15/2023 or the Board will have to stop their November payment, barring extenuating circumstances.
- The retiree newsletter was mailed on 10/17/2023, featuring an article on the additional 2% COLA and a reminder to return completed Pension Verification Forms on or before 11/15/2023.

- The Executive Director designed a new Non-Membership Service Purchase Application to streamline and simplify the process for both the employers and Board staff. So far, feedback has been positive.
- The Executive Director gave a presentation at the Treasurers Conference on 10/18/2023 at Charlie's in Spencer, which included an explanation of the Board's revised Membership Regulation, effective 8/28/2023, and examples of how it is applied. The Executive Director also discussed limits on post-retirement Massachusetts public service earnings and provided examples demonstrating how these amounts are determined. The presentation was well received.
- The Executive Director scheduled another Ready, Set, Retire seminar on 11/30/2023 at the Elks Club in Auburn from 6:00 p.m. -7:00 p.m. She informed the Board Social Security is unlikely to attend. Town Treasurers will be notified on 10/30/2023.
- The Executive Director is planning at least two virtual Ready, Set, Retire seminars in the winter of 2024.

Joanne/John Songy – Hearing

Petitions for Accidental Death Benefits Section 9 and Section 100

Ms. Songy requested that this hearing take place in the Open Session portion of the Board meeting.

Star Curry, Board retained stenographer, entered the room, and set up her equipment. Ms. Songy entered the room accompanied by her attorney, Allison Gurley, and the President of C.O.P.S. New England (Concerns of Police Survivors), Mario Oliveira. Chairman Blanchette opened the hearing with introductions. He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to gather information regarding her claim and the events.

At 8:45 a.m. Ms. Tuttle, the Treasurer for the Town of Rutland where Mr. John Songy was employed, excused herself from the proceeding to avoid any conflict of interest.

Attorney Gurley began by making a statement regarding the applications that have been submitted, the purpose of the hearing and a review of the evidence that has been submitted. Ms. Songy was sworn in by attorney Linda Champion. Ms. Songy read a written statement to the Board and the statement was taken for the record. Attorney Champion and Attorney Gurley questioned Ms. Songy. Ms. Songy answered all the questions that were asked.

Chairman Blanchette explained that a decision on this case would not happen today but would be made at a later meeting. He thanked Ms. Songy for appearing before the Board and she, Attorney Gurley and Mr. Oliveira exited the room. Chairman Blanchette asked the Board attorneys to write a legal analysis for the Board to review before deciding on this case.

A discussion was opened regarding the Bay State Pension contract review and options. Attorney Hesse stated that the Board should take a vote for Ms. Grimaldi to work with Attorney Hesse to finalize the contract details and to sign the contract.

MOTION: *made by Ms. Lajoie and seconded by Mr. Donoghue for Ms. Grimaldi to work with Attorney Hesse to finalize contract details and sign the final contract with Bay State Pension Solutions. All in favor.*

At 10:17 a.m. in accordance with Section 21(a)(1) of Chapter 30A and Section 21(a)(3) of Chapter 30A of the General Laws, Chairman Blanchette requested a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health of members seeking a disability retirement and to discuss strategy with respect to litigation. The motion carried by a roll call vote with Mr. Donoghue, yes; Ms. Lajoie, yes; Mr. Durgin, yes; Ms. Tuttle, yes; and Chairman, Blanchette, yes.

The Board returned to open session at 11:09 a.m.

At 11:10 a.m. the Chairman asked if there was any other business before the Board, and hearing none, the Chairman called for a motion to adjourn.

MOTION: *made by Mr. Durgin and seconded by Ms. Lajoie to close the meeting and adjourn. Non-debatable motion. All in favor. The motion carried by a roll call vote with Mr. Donoghue, yes; Ms. Lajoie, yes; Mr. Durgin, yes; Ms. Tuttle, yes; Chairman Blanchette, yes. Meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.*