

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT COMMISSION

OCTOBER 15, 2020 MEETING
HELD VIA ZOOM
CONVENED AT 9:04 a.m.

Commission Members Present:

Peter Adomeit, Chairman
Sandra Fae Brown-Brewton, Trustee
Karen Buffkin, Trustee
Michael Carey, Trustee
Martha Carlson, Deputy Comptroller, Ex Officio Member
John Flores, General Counsel, Office of the Treasurer,
Ex Officio Member
Paul Fortier, Trustee
Sal Luciano, Trustee
Karen Nolan, Trustee
Claude Poulin, Trustee
Angel Quiros, Trustee
Timothy Ryor, Trustee
Mark Sciota, Municipal Liaison

Commission Members Absent:

Janet Andrews, Trustee
Michael Bailey, Trustee
Carl Chisem, Trustee
Robert Coffey, Trustee

Also Present:

Bruce Barth and Alisha Sullivan, tax counsel to the
Commission,
Robinson & Cole
Natalie Braswell, general counsel, Office of the State
Comptroller
Cindy Cieslak and Michael Rose, general counsel to the
Commission, Rose Kallor
John Herrington, Director, Retirement Services Division
Colin Newman, Assistant Director, Retirement Services
Director

1 (Proceedings commenced at 9:04 a.m.)

2 MR. ADOMEIT: I call the meeting to order.

3 Good morning. This is the meeting of the
4 Connecticut State Employees Retirement Commission
5 for October 15, 2020, being held remotely via Zoom.

6 Cindy, do you have the people who are
7 in attendance on your notes, please?

8 MS. CIESLAK: Sure. As a reminder, for
9 the record, please announce your name when you
10 speak.

11 In attendance, we have
12 Alisha Sullivan, tax counsel from Robinson & Cole,
13 Angel Quiros, trustee to the Retirement Commission.
14 Bruce Barth, tax counsel from Robinson & Cole.
15 Cindy Cieslak from Rose Kallor, Claude Poulin,
16 actuarial trustee, Colin Newman, Assistant Director
17 for the Retirement Division, John Flores, general
18 counsel to the Office the Treasurer, ex officio
19 member of the Commission.

20 John Herrington, Division Director
21 for the Retirement Services Division.
22 Karen Buffkin, trustee to the Commission,
23 Karen Nolan, trustee to the Commission, Mark Sciota,
24 municipal liaison, Martha Carlson, deputy
25 comptroller, ex officio member of the Retirement

1 Commission, Michael Carey, trustee to the
2 Commission, Michael Rose, counsel to the Commission
3 from Rose Kallor, Natalie Braswell, general counsel
4 and assistant comptroller, Paul Fortier, trustee to
5 the Retirement Commission.

6 Peter Adomeit, Chairman of the
7 Retirement Commission, Sal Luciano, trustee to the
8 Retirement Commission, Sandra Fae Brown-Brewton,
9 trustee to the Retirement Commission, Tim Ryor,
10 actuarial trustee.

11 Did I miss anyone? All right. I
12 think that is the attendance, Peter.

13 MR. ADOMEIT: All right. Thank you.

14 The Chairman's report is going to be
15 just a repetition that we're continuing to function
16 smoothly and effectively. The work is being done.
17 It has many moving parts of which I cannot see; but,
18 I know they're there, and so congratulations to all
19 the folks that helped make this possible: Marti,
20 John and all the rest.

21 I'm going to turn it over for the
22 Division Director's report.

23 MR. HERRINGTON: Good morning, everyone.
24 I've sent along the Director's report. As you can
25 see, we continue to make significant progress in

1 terms of reducing the time and the backlog
2 associated with placing members before the MEB. So,
3 our goal is that in no instance any individual who
4 has applied for a disability retirement and has
5 provided the medical record, at no point would that
6 individual need to wait as long as six months. In
7 many cases we're reducing that time where the cases
8 are going before the Board perhaps in as little to
9 two or three months.

10 We will be shifting our focus from
11 November on, back on our reduction of the disability
12 finalized cases. So that was something that we were
13 really gearing up for when we went out for COVID
14 that kind of took a back seat; but, now we've kind
15 of, you know, revamped our focus and we should be
16 able to pick up those efforts again this month with
17 the goal of reducing that disability backlog to zero
18 at some point in 2021.

19 In terms of the normal retirement
20 audits, we had a particularly high month. There
21 were 219 retirements. October typically is a high
22 month; but, as we've discussed in previous meetings,
23 it does appear that, you know, the COVID and the
24 return to work may have kind of changed some of the
25 norms where we are seeing an uptick in retirements

1 in each month and there may be a correlation for
2 individuals who are supported or requested to come
3 back to their respective offices, and that might be
4 the tipping point for some individuals.

5 What that does mean for us? Our
6 focus is on July of 2022, and positioning the
7 Division to be able to address what appears to be a
8 potential influx of retirements. The good news is
9 each high month that we have now reduces that
10 population of potential retirees in 2022. Ideally,
11 if I had my choice, I would process 300 retirements,
12 you know, from now until 2022, as opposed to 4,000
13 retirements in July of 2022.

14 In terms of some of our other
15 efforts, we continue to release our self-service
16 estimator or to populations throughout the state.
17 We are starting the self-service core agencies that
18 are consolidated under the DAS pod. So far we've
19 released that tool to 2,000 individuals. All of
20 these are individuals in those executive branch
21 agencies that are eligible to retire prior to 2022.

22 We are, at this point, releasing that
23 tool in stages. Every two weeks we release it to
24 somewhere in the neighborhood of 500 individuals.
25 What that does is that that's provides, you know,

1 more information to this larger population. Our
2 goal is to get all of that information to those
3 individuals, you know, long in advance of the 2022
4 date, and also, our process for releasing the
5 self-service is that we're performing something a
6 little bit deeper than a cursory check, but not a
7 full audit of the records. What that means is that
8 we're identifying any issues in the underlying
9 records in the first instance with the hope that,
10 you know, there are going to be more of those cases
11 or issues resolved before 2022, so there will be
12 more easy cases when we have that influx in 2022.

13 This is going to be the first month.
14 November 1st would be the first month that the DAS
15 pod is actually processing retirements for the
16 various agencies. That's a big change to those
17 populations, so we're very mindful of, you know,
18 potential pitfalls, and that's why we're working
19 very closely with DAS.

20 We do have the anticipation that this
21 is going to be a work in progress and that we will
22 improve that process in future months; but, we will
23 be working very closely this month to get those
24 completed.

25 Another piece of good news, and

1 perhaps John Flores or Marti Carlson might have more
2 to say on this; but, with respect to the budget
3 reserve fund, there is a provision that states that
4 the budget reserve fund can't be more than
5 15 percent of the general fund appropriation for a
6 given year. This year, we actually exceeded that
7 amount, and the treasurer's office made a decision
8 to deposit that additional overage into the SERS
9 plan, so there's going to be approximately
10 \$64 million transferred to the SERS fund, and based
11 on some consultations with the actuaries, that's
12 actually going to reduce the ADEC over the 25
13 amortization -- 25-year amortization period of
14 approximately 136 million. So that was welcome
15 news. I'm not certain if Marti or John had anything
16 more to say about that.

17 If not, that's --

18 MR. FLORES: Yes. The treasurer, under
19 the statute, had to transfer to either the State
20 Employees Fund or the Teachers Fund. We tried to
21 see if there was any discretion that he could parcel
22 it out; but, the statute was pretty clear and he had
23 to do one or the other. So the State employees are
24 happy, and can't comment about the others.

25 MR. ADOMEIT: Thank you. Marti?

1 MR. FLORES: You're on mute, Marti. Can't
2 hear you.

3 MS. CIESLAK: I think Marti is signaling
4 that she's going to call in, or she's putting on her
5 headset, so we'll just give her a minute.

6 MS. CARLSON: Can you hear me now?

7 MR. ADOMEIT: Yes, we sure can.

8 MS. CARLSON: Sorry. Technology.

9 Just to add to that, I would like to
10 say that there is a basis, and a very important one,
11 for our ability to put that extra money into the
12 retirement fund, and that was several years ago the
13 comptroller presented a volatility tax plan to the
14 legislature and the governor and they passed it.
15 It's basically if there is -- if there is taxes
16 coming in, particularly in the -- you know, the
17 estimated and final payments that is greater than
18 they budgeted for, that excess, immediately that
19 month, gets captured and sent to the rainy day fund.
20 So we've had a couple of really good years and it
21 was a really wise decision on the part of the
22 legislature to do this, because God only knows we
23 needed the excess of \$2 billion in that rainy day
24 fund to help us with our budget this year and next.

25 I just wanted to -- for those of you

1 who did not follow the background of that, it was
2 seeded with a policy proposal by the comptroller a
3 few years ago and supported by the legislature.

4 Just to add to John's report, we
5 have -- the comptroller's office in general for the
6 agency, we have developed a reopening or a
7 repopulating plan that includes how we would, you
8 know, look in the next six months, or at 50 percent
9 or a hundred percent. We did a productivity
10 analysis of the entire agency -- not by person
11 because we do that on our supervisor capacity -- but
12 by job function. I am happy to tell you that our
13 agency as a whole, even with 250 out of 275 working
14 full-time remote is at a 98 percent capacity for
15 productivity.

16 That is across the board and we
17 have -- you know, we have issues here for those of
18 you who are in the new building. Despite my arguing
19 for three years with DAS that we needed higher
20 cubicles, we only have 48-inch-high cubicles, which
21 prevents us from bringing people back in safely at
22 the six-foot distancing. So, we've ordered 311
23 cubicles' worth of 32-inch Plexiglas that will
24 basically enclose each cubicle, so when we are ready
25 to go back in, employees will be able to go back

1 into what I call their personal real estate, which
2 was what they were assigned in January in the new
3 building before we went out two months later.

4 We have a plan for 50 percent
5 repopulation and a 100 percent repopulation, pending
6 either by an order by the governor or BPH says it's
7 safe and we have the appropriate measures in place.
8 But I will say for the time-being, and I can
9 probably confidently say until probably January, we
10 are going to be in a steady state at almost full
11 remote. There's no reason to bring anyone in
12 unsafely when we are at 98 percent production.

13 So, if you have any questions, I'm
14 more than happy to answer them. I know other
15 agencies, they're in a couple days of a week.
16 They've made decisions around safety that are
17 appropriate and under -- they've been approved by --
18 I believe by OPM and BPH to go back in. We do not
19 have a safe environment to go back in right now at
20 even at 50 percent, so we're going to stay remote
21 until we are safe.

22 MR. ADOMEIT: Thank you, Marti. Any
23 questions?

24 MR. FLORES: John, that 4,000-person
25 figure, was that eligible in July or the estimate of

1 people leaving in July '22?

2 MR. HERRINGTON: That was just my
3 estimation of what we would expect. I mean, the
4 last time that we ran the numbers there were a total
5 of 14,000 that were eligible; however, since we ran
6 that number, there have been approximately 1,800
7 retirements, and so that continues to reduce that
8 number.

9 MR. FLORES: Thank you.

10 MR. ADOMEIT: Thank you, John.

11 Sal, let's move on to new matters.

12 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to approve item 1,
13 the minutes. MR. QUIROS: Second.

14 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
15 favor say aye. Opposed nay. They ayes have it.

16 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to approve the State
17 Employees Retirement Commission chairmen per diem
18 expenses.

19 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

20 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
21 favor say aye. Opposed nay. They ayes have it.

22 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to move item 3 with
23 Claude Poulin abstaining.

24 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

25 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in

1 favor say aye. Opposed nay. The ayes have it.

2 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to move item 4 with
3 Tim Ryor not voting.

4 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

5 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
6 favor say aye. Opposed nay? The ayes have it.

7 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to accept item 5.

8 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

9 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
10 favor say aye. Opposed nay? The ayes have it.

11 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to move items 6 and
12 7.

13 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

14 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
15 favor say aye. Opposed nay. The ayes have it.

16 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to move item 8, the
17 State Employees System disability retirements for
18 September 2020.

19 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

20 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
21 favor say aye. Opposed nay. The ayes have it.

22 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to approve item 9.

23 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

24 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
25 favor say aye. Opposed nay? The ayes have it.

1 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to move item 10.

2 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

3 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
4 favor say aye. Opposed nay. The ayes have it.

5 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to move item 11.

6 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

7 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
8 favor say aye. Opposed nay. The ayes have it.

9 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to move items 12 and
10 13.

11 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

12 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
13 favor a say aye. Opposed nay. The ayes have it.

14 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to move item 14.

15 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

16 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
17 favor say aye. Opposed nay. They ayes have it.

18 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to accept items 15,
19 16-A and -B, and item 17-A and -B.

20 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

21 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion. All in
22 favor say aye. Opposed nay. The ayes have it.

23 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to move item 18A and
24 B.

25 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

1 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
2 favor say aye. Opposed nay. The ayes have it.

3 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to go into executive
4 session regarding the VCP status update.

5 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

6 MR. ADOMEIT: All in favor say aye.
7 Opposed nay. The ayes have it.

8 MS. CIESLAK: For the record, Mr. Luciano,
9 are you inviting in Alisha Sullivan, Bruce Barth,
10 Natalie Braswell, Michael Rose, John Herrington,
11 Colin Newman and Cindy Cieslak?

12 MR. LUCIANO: I am.

13 MS. CIESLAK: Thank you.

14 (The Commission was in executive
15 session from 9:21 a.m. until 9:46 a.m.)

16 MR. LUCIANO: Now we are back on the
17 record.

18 MR. ADOMEIT: We need a motion on the
19 agenda to add the Rose Kallor invoices.

20 MR. LUCIANO: So moved.

21 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

22 MR. ADOMEIT: All in favor say aye.
23 Opposed nay. The ayes have it. We've now amended
24 the agenda.

25 MR. LUCIANO: It requires a two-thirds

1 positive note. There was nobody in the negative?

2 MR. ADOMEIT: That's correct.

3 MR. LUCIANO: So it's a proper motion made
4 and allowed.

5 MR. ADOMEIT: That's correct. We're now
6 out of executive session. We now need a motion to
7 approve the invoices.

8 MR. LUCIANO: So moved.

9 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

10 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
11 favor say aye. Opposed nay? The ayes have it.
12 Thank you, Cindy.

13 MS. CIESLAK: Thank you, Peter.

14 MR. LUCIANO: I would like to make a
15 motion regarding Francine Dew that we approve her
16 request for prior service be added to her SERS
17 Tier II service.

18 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

19 MR. HERRINGTON: Can you clarify that
20 she would do so by paying the full actuarial cost?

21 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Yes.

22 MR. ADOMEIT: Okay. That's part of the
23 motion, then. Any further discussion? Hearing
24 none, all in favor say aye. Opposed nay. The ayes
25 have it.

1 MR. LUCIANO: I'd like to make a motion
2 that we agree to her request for reconsideration,
3 and I know that it can go to a subcommittee; but,
4 it's going to, I think, end up with the full Board
5 anyway. So I would like to for the reconsideration
6 to come to the full board.

7 MR. ADOMEIT: All right.

8 MR. LUCIANO: That would be my motion.

9 MR. ADOMEIT: Makes sense. Is there a
10 second?

11 MR. POULIN: Second.

12 MR. ADOMEIT: Is there any discussion?
13 Hearing none, all in favor say aye. Opposed nay.
14 Unanimous. The eyes have it.

15 MR. LUCIANO: I'd like to make a motion
16 that we vote to not to reconsider Scott Barton's
17 request for reconsideration.

18 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

19 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
20 favor say aye. Opposed nay. The eyes have it.

21 A motion to adjourn is in order. Is
22 there a motion?

23 MR. LUCIANO: So moved.

24 MS. BROWN-BREWTON: Second.

25 MR. ADOMEIT: All in favor say aye.

1 Opposed nay. The ayes have it.

2 (Concluded at 9:49 a.m.)

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