

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT COMMISSION

NOVEMBER 19, 2020 MEETING
HELD VIA ZOOM
CONVENED AT 9:00 a.m.

Commission Members Present:

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

Commission Members Absent:

Janet Andrews, Trustee
Angel Quiros 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

Court Reporter: Karen Vibert

1 Proceedings commenced at 9:00 a.m.)

2 MR. ADOMEIT: Welcome, everyone. Welcome
3 to our November 19, 2020 meeting of the State
4 Employees Retirement Commission, being held
5 remotely.

6 Cindy, do you have the folks who are
7 in attendance, please?

8 MS. CIESLAK: Yes. In attendance we have
9 Alisha Sullivan, tax counsel from Robinson & Cole,
10 Bruce Barth, tax counsel from Robinson & Cole,
11 Carl Chisem, trustee, Cindy Cieslak, counsel from
12 Rose Kallor, Claude Poulin, actuarial trustee,
13 Colin Newman, assistant director from the Retirement
14 Services Division, John Flores, general counsel to
15 the office of the treasurer, ex officio member of
16 the Commission, John Herrington, division director,
17 Retirement Services Division, Karen Buffkin,
18 trustee, Karen Nolan, trustee, Mark Sciota,
19 municipal liaison, Martha Carlson, deputy
20 comptroller and ex officio member of the Commission,
21 Michael Carey, trustee, Michael Rose, general
22 counsel, Rose Kallor, Michael Bailey, trustee,
23 Natalie Braswell, general counsel and assistant
24 comptroller, Paul Fortier, trustee, Peter Adomeit
25 chairman of the Retirement Commission,

1 Robert Coffey, trustee, Sal Luciano, trustee,
2 Sandra Fae Brown-Brewton, trustee, and Tim Ryor,
3 actuarial trustee.

4 If I did not say your name, please
5 let me know you are here.

6 Thank you, Peter.

7 MR. ADOMEIT: Okay. Thank you, Cindy.

8 The Chairman's report. As you know,
9 the untimely passing of Charlie Casella created an
10 opening not only in the Commission itself, but the
11 subcommittees, and I have appointed Commissioner
12 Chisem to be on the Investment Subcommittee in place
13 of Charlie.

14 I contacted Commissioner Luciano to
15 make contact with Charlie's union, and they are
16 working on an appointment for a new commissioner.

17 Okay. That concludes my report. We
18 have a division director's report coming up. Please
19 proceed.

20 MR. HERRINGTON: Good morning, everyone.
21 As you know see from the Director's report, the
22 normal audits for November were relatively light.
23 That does not mean, however, that we had a light
24 month. What this did do, however, is it did free up
25 some capacity for us to focus attention on some of

1 our ongoing initiatives. The first initiative that
2 we're working through is the release of our
3 self-service tool to the population that will be
4 eligible to retire on or before July 1st of 2022.
5 Our plan has been to roll that tool out to that
6 entire population, you know, over the course of 2021.
7 There are some agencies that are easier than others.
8 The difficulties are that in a number of these cases
9 we need to what we call screen the data, identify
10 some data deficiencies and correct those so that the
11 tool would provide meaningful results to the
12 membership.

13 That has helped us in a number of
14 ways because this, in a way, allows us to kind of
15 front-load the work. To the extent that there is a
16 surge of retirements in 2022, we will have already
17 screened and corrected a number of deficiencies.

18 Something else that has occurred, and
19 there's a confluence of changes that has created not
20 necessarily a problem, but an issue that needs to be
21 addressed, and that is that effective with the
22 November 1st retirements, the DAS pod took control
23 of the retirement process for all of the DAS
24 executive branch agencies. So, that's a new change.
25 This continues to be a work in progress, but that

1 change in work-flow process has kind of disrupted
2 the normal flow from the employees' perspective and
3 that has put pressure on the Division to step up our
4 efforts in terms of releasing the self-service tool
5 to the population, with a particular emphasis on the
6 hazardous-duty population. Within that population
7 is the Department of Corrections population as well,
8 so what our goal is is to get that tool released to
9 all DOC hazardous-duty members that are eligible to
10 retire on or before April 1st of next year and we
11 hope to have that work all done hopefully by
12 February of next year.

13 There's one large Department Of
14 Corrections class where there are people that,
15 barring any leave of absence without pay would be
16 first eligible, January 1st of 2021. That is our
17 emphasis. We're working on that population first,
18 then working back. The idea is that the information
19 that tends to be crucial for this population is
20 whether or not they will have satisfied the 20
21 years, so we're focusing on those that are closest
22 to that cusp first. Then we'll get to the ones that
23 perhaps have somewhat of a cushion beyond that.

24 We continue to work closely with the
25 DAS pod to improve the delivery of information to

1 that population, and I expect that there will be,
2 you know, some changes and improvements to our
3 coordination in the delivery of services over the
4 next two or three months.

5 What we have also done is that we
6 have released a hazardous duty counseling video
7 that's available on our website that provides, you
8 know, the same information that we provided in our
9 in-person group counseling sessions, and that's
10 available on the website now and we're developing
11 those same tools for the other tools. Hopefully,
12 all of that will be completed prior to next month's
13 meeting.

14 Beyond the release of self-service
15 and the coordination with the DAS pod, our next
16 initiative is to focus on our disability population.
17 As you'll see from the Director's report, over this
18 past year we made tremendous strides in terms of the
19 processing of disability retirement applications. A
20 year ago, the number of pending applications was
21 302. At this point, it currently stands at 83. So
22 we are steadily moving towards a new reality where
23 employees that applied for disability and are able
24 to complete a complete medical record would go
25 before the Medical Examining Board in a number of

1 months, and that we will have eliminated the
2 unnecessary wait. So that is absolutely an
3 achievement that I'm quite proud of and we continue
4 to make improvements there.

5 Going forward, however, our next
6 initiative is to work through the disability
7 backlog. This is an effort that was kind of put on
8 hold during the COVID time and we are re-focusing
9 our efforts and we expect to see a very large number
10 in terms of reducing that backlog next month, with
11 again, the goal of reducing or completely
12 eliminating that disability backlog over the course
13 of 2021.

14 That's my report.

15 MR. ADOMEIT: Thank you, John.

16 Marti, do you have anything to add?

17 MS. CARLSON: Yes. Can you hear me okay?

18 MR. ADOMEIT: I can, yes.

19 MS. CARLSON: I have one question for
20 John, then I just want to give you head's up on
21 something else.

22 John, do you have a sense -- I'm
23 scanning through the document because I was just
24 able to print it out. What the wait time is now?
25 From moment of application, it was months and months

1 and months, even if it was a full medical record.
2 Do you have a sense of what the turn-around time is
3 now? I say this because people -- members who apply
4 for disability retirement are sick. They may not be
5 permanently totally disabled to get the benefit, but
6 they definitely feel that they are -- they
7 definitely are ill. So I'm just wondering what that
8 timeline has improved to.

9 MR. HERRINGTON: So the timeline is
10 different, right? So I caveat this with individuals
11 who have completed -- who have submitted a completed
12 medical record.

13 MS. CARLSON: Right.

14 MR. HERRINGTON: If there's an individual
15 that's completed a medical record, it's just a
16 question of reviewing that record and the back and
17 forth. So there are some people that that back and
18 forth may extend it, but if someone submits on
19 day one, a full retirement application that we
20 review and is in order, it should be heard between
21 two and three months.

22 Colin, do you have an adjustment to
23 that?

24 MR. NEWMAN: That's correct. You know,
25 because we've noticed that, you know, obviously, our

1 goal at the beginning of this, like you were talking
2 about last year, was to get people before the Board,
3 you know, within six months of their date of
4 retirement. We're finding that, you know, when we
5 do receive some of these applications that they are
6 coming in with poor records, and basically those
7 individuals are being put before the Board, like
8 60 days, within 60 days of their retirement date.
9 So, yeah, with the -- you know, with your caveat
10 that, you know, depending on how full the record is,
11 I mean, that determines, you know, when we're able
12 to put them before the Board, but we've been
13 pushing -- we've been -- you know, like I said, we
14 haven't been sitting on these applications and we're
15 finding that most of these people, you know, are
16 providing the records and, you know, allowing us to
17 get them before the Board within a reasonable period
18 of time.

19 MS. CARLSON: Thanks. I just asked the
20 question to demonstrate the progress. For those of
21 you who have been on this Commission for a long
22 time, it was months and months and months before we
23 could get people on that agenda.

24 The other thing, I just want to give
25 you the head's up. Some of you may know that the

1 administration has hired BCG Consulting to help
2 analyze the end state of what the executive agencies
3 as a whole will look like after June 1st of 2022.
4 They are -- they have a very short timeline.
5 They're required, under the contract, to give a full
6 list of recommendations to the administration, I
7 think in early January, in preparation for a
8 legislative session. The analysis includes salary
9 compression, combining agencies, Workers'
10 Compensation, just sort of everything that they're
11 looking at. I just wanted to let you know that
12 that's happening, and, also, that I've insinuated
13 myself into the process of meeting with them every
14 week, because whatever they do could have very
15 significant impact not only on the Retirement
16 Division's business processes, but it could also
17 impact, as a whole, Core-CT, particularly in
18 consolidating agencies.

19 So, I will keep you posted. There's
20 not much now. They haven't, you know, finalized
21 what their list of recommendations are, but I just
22 wanted to let you know if you hear anything,
23 particularly on the labor side, that Angelo Romano
24 and Tara Downes and I are on it. We're meeting with
25 them every Friday. End of report.

1 MR. ADOMEIT: Thank you, Marti.

2 We can move on now to new matters.

3 Sal?

4 MR. LUCIANO: I would like to make a
5 motion to approve the minutes of October 15th.

6 MR. BAILEY: Second.

7 MR. ADOMEIT: All in favor say aye.

8 Opposed nay. It's unanimous. The ayes have it.

9 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to move item 2 with
10 the Chair abstaining.

11 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

15 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to move item 3 with
16 Claude abstaining.

17 MR. BAILEY: Second.

18 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
19 favor say aye.

20 MR. POULIN: I'll abstain.

21 MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed nay. The ayes have
22 it.

23 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to move item 4 with
24 Tim abstaining.

25 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

4 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to accept items 5
5 and 6.

6 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

10 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to approve item 7.

11 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

15 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to approve item 8,
16 the approval of the Connecticut State Employee
17 Voluntary Pending Retirements for the month of
18 October.

19 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

23 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to approve item 9,
24 State Employees System Disability Retirements for
25 the month of October.

1 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

5 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to move item 10,
6 approval of the Connecticut State Employees System
7 Pre-retirement benefit for the month of October.

8 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

12 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to approve the
13 Connecticut State Retirement System, Municipal
14 Employees Retirements for the month of October.

15 MR. BAILEY: Second.

16 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
17 favor say aye. Opposed nay. The ayes have it.
18 Also unanimous.

19 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to move item 12,
20 Municipal Retirement System Disability Retirements.

21 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

25 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to approve item 13,

1 Probate Judges and Employees Retirement Fund.

2 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

6 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to accept item 14,
7 MERS statement of operations for fiscal year ending
8 June 30th, items A and B.

9 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

13 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to accept item 15,
14 review and acceptance of SERS fund statement with
15 operations, and the review and acceptance of the
16 SERS fund balance, so item 15-A and -B.

17 MR. BAILEY: Second.

18 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
19 favor say aye. Opposed nay, the ayes have it.
20 Unanimous.

21 MR. LUCIANO: Motion to go into executive
22 session for the purpose of summary plan description
23 update. So, everybody needs to leave except for
24 those that we consider material on this discussion.

25 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

3 MS. CIESLAK: Mr. Luciano, for the record,
4 those material include Alisha Sullivan, Bruce Barth,
5 Colin Newman, John Herrington, Michael Rose,
6 Natalie Braswell, and myself, Cindy Cieslak.

7 MR. LUCIANO: Correct.

8 MS. CIESLAK: Thank you.

9 (The Commission was in executive session
10 from 9:23 a.m. until 10:13 a.m.)

11 MR. ADOMEIT: So we're back to regular
12 session now.

13 MS. CIESLAK: Yes, we are back in public
14 session. The recording is on. Please state your
15 name when you are speaking. Thank you.

16 MR. ADOMEIT: We need a motion on the Das
17 case, please.

18 MR. COFFEY: Mr. Chairman, I move that the
19 Commission deny the request of Mr. Das for
20 reconsideration of his matter.

21 MR. CAREY: I second that.

22 MR. ADOMEIT: All right. Is there any
23 further discussion on the matter? Hearing none, all
24 in favor say aye. Opposed nay. The ayes have it.

25 MR. LUCIANO: I'd like to make a motion

1 that the Commission provide Grzeszczyk with a
2 declaratory ruling.

3 MR. BAILEY: Second.

4 MR. ADOMEIT: Is there any discussion?
5 Hearing none, all in favor say aye. Opposed nay.
6 The ayes have it.

7 MR. LUCIANO: I'd like to make a motion to
8 adjourn and wish everybody a very safe and happy
9 Thanksgiving.

10 MR. BAILEY: Second.

11 MR. ADOMEIT: All in favor say aye.
12 Opposed nay. The ayes have it.

13 (Concluded at 10:15 a.m.)

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1 STATE OF CONNECTICUT:
: ss: Bristol
2 COUNTY OF HARTFORD :

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4 I, Karen Vibert, LSR No. 00064, a
5 Notary Public for the State of Connecticut, do hereby
6 certify that the preceding pages are an accurate
7 transcription of the Connecticut State Employees
8 Retirement Commission regular meeting held
9 electronically via Zoom, convening at 9:00 a.m., on
10 November 19, 2020.

11
12 Dated at Bristol, Connecticut,
13 this 2nd of December, 2020.

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Karen Vibert



Karen Vibert, Notary Public
My commission expires: 08/31/2024.

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