

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT COMMISSION

APRIL 16, 2020 MEETING
HELD VIA ZOOM
CONVENED AT 8:59 a.m.

Commission Members Present:

Peter Adomeit, Chairman
Janet Andrews, Trustee
Sandra Fae Brown Brewton, Trustee
Michael Bailey, Trustee
Michael Carey, Trustee
Martha Carlson, Deputy Comptroller, Ex Officio Member
Charles Casella, Trustee
Carl Chisem, Trustee
Robert D. Coffey, Trustee
Laurie Martin, Ex Officio member
Karen Nolen, Trustee
Claude Poulin, Trustee
Mark Sciota, Municipal liaison

Also Present:

Bruce Barth, Robinson & Cole
Natalie Braswell, Retirement Services Division
Cindy Cieslak, General Counsel, Rose Kallor
Colin Newman, Retirement Services Division
John Herrington, Retirement services Division
Colin Newman, Retirement Services Division
Michael Rose, General Counsel, Rose Kallor
Alisha Sullivan, Robinson & Cole

(Proceeding commenced at 8:59 a.m.)

1 MR. ADOMEIT: I will call the meeting to
2 order, and, Cindy, you have something you need to
3 say at the beginning, please.

4 MS. CIESLAK: Good morning, everyone.
5 This is Cindy Cieslak. We're doing this via Zoom
6 again, so I just want to remind everyone that when
7 you speak, please announce yourself. We did contact
8 a court reporter who's going to transcribe these
9 meetings and she will need to know who is speaking,
10 so if you could just try to announce yourself when
11 you are speaking.

12 Also, sometimes we get some
13 background noises. I know my neighbors are doing
14 lawn work, so I'm going to mute myself when I'm not
15 speaking. I think if everyone else does the same,
16 that will be helpful.

17 I would like to take attendance, and
18 I will go through who I can see their names and then
19 we'll have to have the other people on the phone
20 announce themselves.

21 So, I have Bob Coffey.

22 MR. COFFEY: Yes.

23 MS. CIESLAK: Myself. Natalie Braswell.
24 Mike Bailey.

25 MR. BAILEY: Here.

1 MS. CIESLAK: Carl Chisem.
2 MR. CHISEM: Here.
3 MS. CIESLAK: Bruce Barth? Peter?
4 MR. ADOMEIT: Here.
5 MS. CIESLAK: Marti.
6 MR. ADOMEIT: Ms. Carlson: Here. Natalie
7 is here, too. I think she is on mute.
8 MS. CIESLAK: I see her. I definitely see
9 her.
10 Marti Carlson. Mike Rose.
11 Colin Newman.
12 MR. NEWMAN: Here.
13 MS. CIESLAK: Alisha Sullivan.
14 MS. SULLIVAN: Here.
15 MS. CIESLAK: John Herrington.
16 Karen Nolen. I know Charlie Casella is on the
17 phone. I know Claude Poulin is on the phone.
18 Everyone else, please announce
19 yourselves. MR. SCIOTA: Mark Sciota.
20 MS. CIESLAK: Good morning, Mark.
21 MS. ANDREWS: Hello. This is
22 Janet Andrews. I'm also present.
23 MS. CIESLAK: Good morning, Janet.
24 MS. ANDREWS: I just need to announce that
25 I will be signing off after about an hour because

1 apparently, since we're working from home, all I do
2 is Zoom meetings.

3 MS. CIESLAK: Sounds good.

4 MS. BROWN BREWTON: Fae Brown Brewton.

5 MS. CIESLAK: Anybody else on the phone
6 that I haven't announced?

7 MS. BROWN BREWTON: Did you hear me, Cindy?

8 MS. CIESLAK: No, I did not. Good
9 morning, Fae.

10 MS. BROWN BREWTON: Good morning.

11 MR. ADOMEIT: Anyone omitted?

12 MS. CIESLAK: I see Laurie just signed on
13 but she's connecting the audio. Let me just count
14 the number of individuals I see here. Nineteen.
15 Let me see if I have 19 people. I do. So, I have
16 19 people on my list who are in attendance, and Zoom
17 is telling me now that there's 20.

18 MR. CAREY: Hi Cindy. Good morning.
19 This is Mike Carey. I just got in.

20 MS. CIESLAK: Good morning, Mike.

21 MR. ADOMEIT: Good morning.

22 MR. CAREY: Good morning.

23 MR. ADOMEIT: Sal is not here?

24 MS. CIESLAK: As of right now, no.

25 MR. ADOMEIT: Then we'll need some other

1 member of the Commission to make the motions on
2 these various matters. I think last time I called
3 on Charlie to do that. Are you willing to do it
4 again, Charlie?

5 MR. CASELLA: I am, but if you have
6 somebody that's doing this visually, maybe it might
7 be easier. That way I won't have to announce myself
8 before everyone. If not, I'm happy to do it.

9 MR. ADOMEIT: I think because we're
10 recording, and we'll be transcribed because of the
11 open meeting rules, that we should all announce who
12 we are when we start speaking, so that should not be
13 an impediment, Charlie.

14 MR. CASELLA: Okay.

15 MR. ADOMEIT: Okay?

16 MR. CASELLA: Sure.

17 MR. ADOMEIT: Chairman's report. It's
18 obviously an extraordinary time in our lives that
19 we're dealing with here, and I'd like to recognize
20 Marti and John for all the work they have done and
21 all the other people as well, to put -- to place
22 these pieces of paper in front of us. It has been
23 an extraordinary thing, and the work of the Division
24 continues to operate. I would like to thank you
25 all.

1 Having said that, I will turn it over
2 to the division director.

3 MS. CARLSON: John Herrington, can I speak
4 for a minute. I'd like to go ahead of you.

5 MR. HERRINGTON. Yes. No problem.

6 Nice to see or hear from all of you.
7 I hope all of you are staying safe and healthy. I
8 want to reiterate what Peter has said about the
9 colossal work on the part of the Retirement
10 Division. I would also like to recognize the whole
11 agency. We have 270 of 275 people working from
12 home. We have successfully produced our third
13 statewide active employee payroll. We've
14 successfully produced the April 1st retirement
15 payments. We continue to pay regular vendor
16 payments on time, and I've been working personally
17 with Beth Macha, who is the director of our accounts
18 payable division and DAS in processing some very
19 rapid and sometimes very unique financial
20 transactions for PPE.

21 So, I just want to assure all of you
22 that we are nearly at, you know, 85 percent
23 production. We do have a small handful of folks
24 that go in every day because there are emergency
25 checks that need to be cut. And we also have -- in

1 order for all of our 270 people to be able to work,
2 all of the mail coming in has to get scanned into
3 our central database, the customer service database,
4 and we have two folks that come in Monday, Wednesday
5 and Friday to scan all of that. And our mail and
6 printer folks in the basement are alternating days
7 in.

8 We have had one positive COVID.
9 We're lucky that we got out on telework as quickly
10 as we could. Thanks to the efforts of Kevin and the
11 executive staff to quickly mobilize all of our
12 technology with some -- with obviously some
13 significant help from Angelo Romano to get everyone
14 up on secure access, which, as you can imagine, is
15 important with all that we do. We need secure
16 access to all of our data that contains, you know,
17 sensitive Social Security numbers and tax numbers.

18 So, that's really all I have to say.
19 We're all kind of getting tired of it, you know. As
20 you all know who are working from home, it is far
21 greater a job to work from home than it is to work
22 at work, I think. Our staff has -- each cubicle has
23 two monitors, I think two 24-inch monitors, so we
24 have very quick production in being able to flip
25 back and forth. Now they are out on laptops with,

1 you know, one small screen and they're still
2 producing all of our mission-critical work, plus
3 other projects that we're working on.

4 So, I just want to recognize the
5 whole agency, but in particular to this meeting, the
6 leadership of John Herrington to get his staff up
7 and running, particularly when we went out sort of
8 in the middle of the throes of a significant number
9 of April 1st retirements.

10 So, that's it for me. I won't have
11 to say anything more. Thank you, everybody.

12 MR. ADOMEIT: Thank you, Marti.

13 John, in reference to the significant
14 number of retirees, I'll ask you for your report,
15 please.

16 MR. HERRINGTON: Just to kind of pick up
17 where Marti left off, at our March meeting, that was
18 when we were just starting to get everyone out of
19 the office as soon as possible. This month has
20 certainly been challenging and there have been a
21 number of competing concerns. You know, the primary
22 concern was, you know, the safety of all of our
23 staff. So, you know, whenever possible, we were,
24 you know, allowing as many people to work remotely
25 as possible as soon as possible. So what that meant

1 is that, you know, sometimes we were a little bit
2 ahead of the curve in terms of someone having full
3 capacity remotely, and we had to kind of -- the
4 immediate concern that we needed to deal with was
5 the fact that, as Peter alluded to, April is, as in
6 most years, the highest volume month for
7 retirements. This year was no exception. It was
8 also the concern in terms of, you know, how the
9 present set of events would impact that number,
10 whether there would be people that would be enticed
11 to retire because of the situation or, you know, if
12 a spouse may have a lost job, whether that would
13 cause a deferral. But we did wind up, on that
14 director's report on the bottom right-hand corner,
15 we had 268 retirements. So that's challenging in
16 any set of circumstances, but much more in terms of
17 this past month, where we were changing our process
18 to work remotely.

19 I'm sure all of you have worked
20 through these types of issues. It was actually
21 pretty interesting that early on in the month, we
22 had very few people that had remote access
23 capabilities and so the system was working, you
24 know, quite well for those people, but, you know, as
25 we brought more people online and other agencies

1 throughout the state brought more people online,
2 there were kind of some hiccups in terms of capacity
3 issues. It seems as though now we have worked
4 through that, both as a division and as a state,
5 where we're in a much better position now than we
6 were two weeks ago. So we have a couple of
7 connectivity issues here and there, but by and
8 large, you know, all of our staff that have the
9 ability to work remotely are working remotely and
10 are being as productive as possible.

11 Marti touched on some of the issues
12 in terms of people working from laptops versus their
13 desktop. One thing that I find is frustrating for
14 me is a task as simple as opening an email. Where
15 it was instantaneous at my desk, now it takes
16 five seconds for that to load and those five seconds
17 on any number of transactions add up over the course
18 of a day.

19 What I would say is in terms of our
20 embrace of technology, we continue to learn lessons
21 each day. This is, you know, kind of a baptism by
22 fire in terms of fully embracing the available
23 technologies out there. There are some of our units
24 that are further ahead than others and we made a
25 number of strides.

1 In terms of MERS, typically we
2 receive all of those MERS monthly deposits by paper
3 check. Obviously, that presents us some issues in
4 this environment in terms of how quickly we could
5 receive those checks, whether the various
6 municipalities are in a position to generate checks
7 and how long, whether there would be delays in
8 depositing those into the fund.

9 So, very early on, we identified that
10 as an issue and started working with the treasurer's
11 office to arrange for electronic transfers of those
12 deposits, and it was very helpful that we did so
13 because we have had at least one entity that
14 announced to us that they no longer had the ability
15 to process those payments by monthly check and that
16 we needed to speed up that process. So, that's one
17 of the examples of working through the technology.
18 But we are now in a position where we're as stable
19 as I think we likely will be. We're just trying to
20 improve.

21 So, our primary focus over the past
22 two and a half, three weeks was just to make sure
23 that we properly accounted for all of the retirement
24 paperwork for the April retirements to get through
25 those audits and to get those individuals on the

1 payroll.

2 There are the technology challenges,
3 but there are also challenges with respect to the
4 individual situations with paperwork there. It's
5 difficult for certain individuals to provide all the
6 required forms, documents and signatures. I was
7 actually kind of pleasantly surprised that we wound
8 up with about a dozen cases, so just about 12 out of
9 that 268, where we didn't receive what we would term
10 a perfect retirement package, and we had to work
11 through those. That required us to do quite a bit
12 more research and I was able to work with Fae and
13 Dan to get approval for some of the handful of cases
14 that kind of fell outside of the norm.

15 So, we were able to work through all
16 of those issues and we're in a situation where there
17 are people whose packages are not perfect, but we
18 had enough independent verification, be it
19 statements from members, statements from agencies,
20 independent verification of a date of birth or
21 marital status, where we are placing those
22 individuals on the payroll immediately and we will
23 follow up, you know, within 90 days to perfect the
24 retirement package.

25 What I will say is that I don't know

1 how we would have done this if we were not on Core.
2 I mean, we would have had to -- you know, I guess we
3 would have had to make a tough call, and the last
4 couple of days that we were in the office in March,
5 you know, print out reams and reams and reams of
6 documents and send individuals home with, you know,
7 people's personal life identified, information in,
8 you know, bankers boxes, which would not have been
9 ideal. I think that fully embracing Core, this is
10 probably the best example of the value of that
11 investment.

12 MS. CARLSON: I'd just like to add to that,
13 John, that the comparable here in a much smaller way,
14 but is enormous, what's happening at DOL. You know,
15 that poor agency has been in the middle of an
16 implementation, which we had done many years ago, and
17 they got caught up in this, and it's a nightmare for
18 people. It's a nightmare for the workers, it's a
19 nightmare for the 340,000 people who are unemployed,
20 although hopefully all of you saw that Beth was able
21 to do a fix to that system, and they should be able
22 to process that backlog by tomorrow. So, that's
23 working well.

24 To your point, John, Core-CT has been
25 unbelievably helpful in this.

1 MR. HERRINGTON: Then, what I would like
2 to say is that over this past week, we've been able
3 to kind of focus on our other projects. So it's not
4 just, you know, reacting. Now we're able to kind of
5 revert back to our strategic plan for the year in
6 reducing the backlog. So, you will see that there's
7 not necessarily as much progress on our disability
8 backlogs as we would have hoped, but we continue to
9 reduce that number, even in this trying
10 circumstance.

11 In terms of where we are with the
12 timetable for processing the disability applications
13 in a 24-month review, there's been no disruption to
14 that plan. So we do continue to make progress, and
15 we had a 24-month review meeting scheduled for
16 tomorrow, so that number will continue to drop.

17 MR. ADOMEIT: Okay. Thank you, John.
18 Thank you, Marti. We could move on to new matters.
19 Charlie?

20 MR. CASELLA: Mr. Chairman, I move
21 approval of Item No. 1, the Chairman's per diem
22 expenses.

23 MR. ADOMEIT: Is there a second?

24 MR. BAILEY: Second.

25 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in

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

2 MR. ROSE: I think you wanted to do that
3 for No. 2. No. 1 is the minutes.

4 MR. ADOMEIT: Repeat, please, Mike.

5 MR. ROSE: No. 1 is the minutes, actually.
6 No. 2 is the per diem.

7 MR. ADOMEIT: Thank you.

8 MS. CIESLAK: What happened -- I actually
9 have the old agenda. The agenda that was sent out
10 did not include the minutes on No. 1. That was in
11 the packet.

12 MR. ADOMEIT: Okay. Let's go to the
13 minutes, then, please, Charlie.

14 MR. CASELLA: Move approval of the minutes
15 of the March meeting.

16 MR. BAILEY: Second.

17 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
18 favor say aye. Opposed nay.

19 MS. CARLSON: Mr. Chairman, just a point
20 of order. Does this mean that Charlie's numeral
21 assignments to all of these items are now off by one
22 and and he should maybe not read them as a number?
23 I mean, if he's missing the No. 1 and No. 1 for him
24 was the per diem, then all of the numbers in the
25 agenda are one off for him. Do you see what I'm

1 saying? Cindy or Mike, maybe he should just read
2 the title that he's making the motion on?

3 MS. CIESLAK: I agree. The agenda that
4 was posted had No. 1 being the minutes. The agenda
5 everyone received in their packet was a prior
6 version of the agenda that did not include the
7 minutes as an action item. Everything is off by
8 one. So, Charlie, if you can, just state what the
9 substance of the motion is without the number.

10 MR. CASELLA: Okay. Move approval of
11 Union trustee's per diem expenses.

12 MR. BAILEY: Second.

13 MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? All in
14 favor say aye. Opposed nay.

15 MR. POULIN: Abstain.

16 MR. ADOMEIT: The ayes have it.

17 MR. CASELLA: Move approval of the
18 Robinson & Cole and Rose Kallor invoices.

19 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

22 MR. CASELLA: Move approval of the State
23 Employees Retirement System service retirements,
24 voluntary pending retirements, disability
25 retirements and retroactive retirements for the

1 month of March.

2 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

5 MR. CASELLA: Move approval of Municipal
6 Employees retirement and disability retirements for
7 the month of March.

8 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

12 MR. CASELLA: Move approval of Municipal
13 Retirement Systems payroll denied by the Medical
14 Examining Board.

15 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

18 MR. CASELLA: Move approval of Connecticut
19 Judges and Family Support Magistrates retirements
20 within the month of March.

21 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

24 MR. CASELLA: Move approval of Probate
25 Judges Employees Retirement Fund personnel expenses

1 for the pay period February 14th through March 12,
2 2020.

3 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

6 Are we ready to go into executive
7 session? Did we make a motion on the bills from
8 Rose Kallor?

9 MR. CASELLA: Yes.

10 MR. ADOMEIT: I lost track of my menu here
11 because we changed the numbers.

12 MR. ROSE: I think, just for the record --
13 because Charlie summarized a couple in groups. I
14 think 4, 5 and 6 were summarized as one motion.
15 Might I suggest that you just -- the Commission
16 verify that everything from 2 to whatever the last
17 motion has been approved? That way it would take
18 care of any questions about those ones that weren't
19 identified specifically.

20 MR. ADOMEIT: Nos. 1 through 15. I think
21 that's what we intended, Mike. Are we all set,
22 Michael?

23 MS. CIESLAK: We're all set.

24 MR. ADOMEIT: All right. Move into
25 executive session, Charlie?

1 MR. CASELLA: Move to go into executive
2 session to receive the written legal opinion of
3 virtual meetings.

4 MR. BAILEY: Second.

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

7 (The Commission went into executive session
8 from 9:23 a.m. until 9:43 a.m.)

9 MR. COFFEY: Mr. Chairman, in accordance
10 with the minutes of the Legal and Personnel
11 Subcommittee meeting that are included in the packet,
12 I would move that the Commission grant the request
13 for reconsideration by Ms. Curley.

14 MR. POULIN: Second.

15 MR. ADOMEIT: Is there any further
16 discussion? Hearing none, all in favor say aye.
17 Opposed nay. The ayes have it.

18 MR. COFFEY: MR. POULIN: Mr. Chairman, I
19 would also move that the Retirement Commission
20 decline to grant the request for reconsideration by
21 Ms. Isakson.

22 MR. CASELLA: Second.

23 MR. ADOMEIT: Any further discussion?
24 Hearing none, all in favor say aye. Opposed nay.
25 The ayes have it.

1 MR. COFFEY: Mr. Chairman, in accordance
2 with the minutes of the Legal & Personnel
3 Subcommittee, I would move that the Commission
4 implement Executive Order 7L3 as directed by that
5 executive order, and further, that it direct the
6 Division to discern, through surveys, if any CMERS
7 employees who have exceeded the limitations of
8 Connecticut General Statute Section 7-438(b) based
9 on a return to municipal service as contemplated by
10 the executive order.

11 MR. CASELLA: Second.

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

15 MR. COFFEY: Mr. Chairman, I would move
16 that the Commission grant the request for
17 reconsideration in the Munson matter.

18 MR. CASELLA: Second.

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

21 MR. COFFEY: Mr. Chairman, I move that the
22 Commission approve the request of David Gulick to be
23 able to purchase credit -- non-MERS service credit
24 for the municipality in which he worked.

25 MR. CASELLA: Second.

1 MR. ADOMEIT: Any further discussion? All
2 in favor say aye. Opposed nay. Shall we have a
3 roll call on this one?

4 MS. BROWN BREWTON: I think that's a good
5 idea.

6 MS. CIESLAK: Okay.

7 MR. ADOMEIT: My audio doesn't necessarily
8 register anything.

9 MS. CIESLAK: Mr. Chairman, would you like
10 me to -- I have the attendance -- to do the roll
11 call?

12 MR. ADOMEIT: Yes, please. Thank you.

13 MS. CIESLAK: Is that a yes?

14 MR. ADOMEIT: Yes.

15 MS. CIESLAK: In no particular order, just
16 as I had wrote them down as people came into the
17 meeting. Claude Poulin?

18 MR. POULIN: Aye.

19 MS. CIESLAK: Robert Coffey?

20 MR. COFFEY: Aye.

21 MS. CIESLAK: Carl Chisem?

22 MR. CHISEM: Aye.

23 MS. CIESLAK: Mike Bailey?

24 MR. BAILEY: Aye.

25 MS. CIESLAK: Karen Nolen? Karen, your

1 name is still on the screen. I don't know if you
2 can hear us.

3 Okay. I believe Janet Andrews has
4 left the meeting.

5 Sandra Fae Brown Brewton?

6 MS. BROWN BREWTON: Nay.

7 MS. CIESLAK: Michael Carey?

8 MR. CAREY: Aye.

9 MS. CIESLAK: Mike Carey, I could not hear
10 if that was an aye or a nay.

11 MR. CAREY: It was an aye.

12 MS. CIESLAK: Thank you. So that leaves a
13 five to two vote in favor. Did I miss anyone?

14 MR. CASELLA: Yes. This is
15 Charles Casella.

16 MS. CIESLAK: Oh, I am so sorry.

17 MR. CASELLA: No problem. I vote aye.

18 MS. CIESLAK: Did I miss anyone else?

19 MR. NEWMAN: Cindy, it looks Karen Nolen
20 typed in "nay".

21 MS. CIESLAK: She did. Thank you.

22 I have six -- did I miss anyone else?
23 I don't believe I did. I have six to three in
24 favor.

25 MR. ADOMEIT: Motion carries. Thank you

1 all very much. We are running out of agenda items,
2 folks.

3 MR. CASELLA: Move to adjourn.

4 MR. BAILEY: Second.

5 MR. ADOMEIT: All in favor say aye.

6 Opposed nay. The ayes have it. Thank you all very
7 much, folks.

8 (Concluded at 10:46 a.m.)

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

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 8:59 a.m., on
10 April 16, 2020.

11
12 Dated at Bristol, Connecticut,
13 this 11th day of May, 2020.

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



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