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Merc Meeting Transcription
6/18/2026

1 MEGAN PIWONSKI: Good afternoon,
2 everyone. The recording is now active. This is
3 a meeting of the Municipal Employees Retirement
4 Commission. I am Megan Piwonski from the
5 retirement services division. The time is 1:06,
6 and the meeting has been called to order. Mr.
7 Chairman, would you like me to call attendance?

8 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Yes, please. Thank
9 you.

10 MEGAN PIWONSKI: So present for the
11 commission today, we have Chairman Brian Vahey;
12 Vice-Chairman Jeffrey Tomchik; Trustee Jeffrey
13 Arn; Trustee Michelle Boyles; Trustee Carl
14 Chisholm; Ex-Oficio Member Deputy Comptroller
15 Tara Downes; Trustee Michael Freda; Trustee David
16 Glidden; Trustee Karen McDonough; Trustee Kurt
17 Miller; from the Office of the State Comptroller
18 Retirement Services Division, Division Director
19 John Herrington; Assistant Division Director and
20 General Counsel to the Municipal Employees
21 Retirement Commission, Robert Helfand; Assistant
22 Division Director Donald Wilkerson; also from
23 retire --

24 ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ROBERT HELFAND: I
25 don't think Donald is here today. Oh, he is.

1 I'm sorry.

2 MEGAN PIWONSKI: Yes.

3 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: He is.

4 MEGAN PIWONSKI: Also from the
5 retirement services division, Cari Pennoyer,
6 Brianna Nelson, and myself, Megan Piwonski.

7 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Thank you. So I
8 would point it out for those who joined a little
9 bit late, we will vote for the consent agenda,
10 but I'm going to modify that we postpone the
11 approval of the May 2026 agenda until our next
12 meeting, as it was not -- it was inadvertently
13 the April one in the packet. So can I get a
14 motion to approve the consent agenda with that
15 caveat?

16 TRUSTEE KURT MILLER: So moved, Kurt.

17 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Thank you, Kurt.

18 TRUSTEE CARL CHISHOLM: Seconded.

19 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: I saw Carl, too.

20 All right, all in favor? Aye?

21 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: Aye.

22 TRUSTEE DAVID GLIDDEN: Aye.

23 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Any opposed?
24 Abstentions? Hearing none, so moved. Thank you,
25 everyone. We don't have any policy-setting

1 events this month, but we do have, which are --
2 they are the correct month in the -- in your
3 packet, the approvals for retirements, both the
4 normal retroactive and disability. So can we get
5 a motion to approve?

6 TRUSTEE KURT MILLER: So moved, Kurt.

7 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Thank you, Kurt.
8 Second?

9 TRUSTEE MICHAEL FREDA: Second, Mike.

10 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Thank you, Mike.

11 Any discussion? All right, all in favor?

12 TRUSTEE KURT MILLER: Aye.

13 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: Aye.

14 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Any opposed?

15 Abstentions? Hearing none, so moved. Thank you.

16 Wow, my eyes are going in a handbag here. All
17 right, that takes us, John, it's -- the floor is
18 yours.

19 DIRECTOR JOHN HERRINGTON: All right,
20 thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. I don't
21 have a lot to report this month in terms of the
22 director's report. What I can do is to give you
23 an update on where we are on some of our projects
24 and give some foreshadowing in terms of some
25 issues that we likely will bring to the

1 commission, either next month or the following
2 month. But in each of these months, we discuss
3 our preparations for Merge 2.0.

4 We have engaged in a number of
5 discussion with some outside vendors for some
6 possible changes to the system so that we can
7 collect data in a more efficient manner, as the
8 entire process is going to be far more
9 complicated when we have to distinguish between
10 the different types of compensations. One of
11 those outfits is Tyler Tech. We actually just
12 yesterday received an initial statement of work
13 that we need to kind of review, but what we hope
14 to move forward as we go through that process is
15 to be in a position where Tyler Tech can provide
16 some type of a presentation to this body in terms
17 of where we're going and how they can assist us
18 with that.

19 We also are engaging with a -- where --
20 we have a meeting with another potential vendor
21 that can kind of assess on a larger scale a long-
22 term process in terms of whether there would be
23 the benefit of more substantial changes to the
24 underlying system. Along with that, we're kind
25 of assessing exactly where we stand with the

1 different issues that we deal with, different
2 municipalities, in the sense that we receive all
3 of this information in different formats, and the
4 idea would be it would be far easier for us if we
5 could just require electronic deposits and
6 electronic transfer of the underlying data files
7 in connection with kind of the kind of research
8 and potential solutions that we're working
9 through.

10 We are going to provide you with a
11 fuller picture of exactly what it is that we're
12 dealing with right now and consider whether this
13 body might want to adopt some rules in terms of
14 some dictates or requirements for towns
15 participating going forward. But that's
16 basically where I am this month. We don't have
17 anything to officially report, but we hope to
18 have -- we'll be in a position to provide at
19 least a report next month on where we are, but
20 hopefully, some type of presentation as well.

21 And then just to follow up on the
22 discussion that we had, beginning or just prior
23 to this meeting to the extent that there are
24 trustees who attended the past NCPERS conference,
25 it would be helpful to us if you could submit any

1 receipts in the outstanding documents for
2 reimbursement. My hope would be that we would
3 receive all of those by the end of next week, and
4 I could submit them for reimbursement at that
5 time.

6 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Thank you, John.

7 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: John, can you
8 just elaborate on that? Because I'm confused.
9 Is -- I know we had to fill out some forms, like
10 --

11 DIRECTOR JOHN HERRINGTON: Right, the
12 vendor form and the tax form would be one thing,
13 and then the largest would be any transportation
14 receipts. The meals we can go by default. The
15 mail receipts would be helpful, but we can do
16 without them, but we absolutely would need any
17 airline receipts or any transportation to and
18 from the airport.

19 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: Okay, so
20 that's what I'm confused about. How do we do
21 that?

22 DIRECTOR JOHN HERRINGTON: If you could
23 just send us any receipts that you have regarding
24 that. So the airline tickets, I think, should be
25 --

1 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: I mean, there
2 isn't like a form to do that? There just --

3 DIRECTOR JOHN HERRINGTON: Oh, no, no,
4 right, right, right. Yeah, yeah, just --

5 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: Okay, that's
6 what I was waiting for.

7 DIRECTOR JOHN HERRINGTON: Okay, okay.
8 Yeah, yeah, yeah.

9 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: I thought
10 that once I submitted those --

11 DIRECTOR JOHN HERRINGTON: Okay.

12 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: --
13 (indiscernible) the form and the tax form --

14 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: I just -- yeah, I -
15 -

16 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: -- that I
17 would get something back so that I could put the
18 submission in, but you're just looking for the
19 receipts?

20 DIRECTOR JOHN HERRINGTON: Correct, and
21 then, I'll put in a global submission for
22 everyone, correct.

23 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: Okay, thanks
24 for clarifying.

25 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Yeah, I scanned

1 them and tried to indicate what each one was.

2 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: Okay.

3 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: And then, so I just
4 had one comment on the -- I recognized the name
5 of that firm, because I think that the first one
6 you mentioned, John, they do other things for the
7 state.

8 DIRECTOR JOHN HERRINGTON: Yep. Yep.

9 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: And we've talked
10 even off -- out of this forum I've asked some
11 technology questions, because yeah, I guess I'll
12 save it for these firms, but I think, as I talk
13 to some other tech folks, I think some sort of an
14 API interface that goes to you guys, so either
15 they have a system that can -- it can talk to
16 yours, which is easy to design, or they -- if
17 they're so old school they're Excel spreadsheet,
18 then that also can be uploaded into the portal to
19 make your lives -- granted, accuracy of the data
20 and stuff sort of -- whatever, you'll have to
21 have some sort of spot, check your stuff, but I
22 think that would, I would hope that'd make your
23 life a lot -- your staff a lot easier.

24 DIRECTOR JOHN HERRINGTON: Right, yeah,
25 what I would say, one of the benefits that we've

1 seen so far with Tyler Tech is also they have an
2 existing contract with the state, so that's
3 helpful. That makes thing easier, but they also
4 have relationships with a number of Connecticut
5 municipalities through the MUNIs program, so they
6 are in a good position to help on both sides of
7 the transaction. And even if it doesn't apply to
8 each and every entity, there would be some
9 uniformity that would apply across the board for
10 a large group and then we can kind of feel it
11 from there. That's our thinking.

12 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Yeah, and the way
13 AI is going, Claude can gin something up for you.
14 I can probably jump on --

15 DIRECTOR JOHN HERRINGTON: Yep.

16 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: -- I'd have to work
17 on it a little bit, but -- okay. What's next on
18 our -- I lost my agenda. Here it is. The new
19 business, yep, with the governance committee.
20 Scott, so let's see, the governance committee,
21 it's in the packet. We're -- yep, who's going to
22 lead that without -- here, Megan, you got it?
23 All right.

24 MEGAN PIWONSKI: I do. So as a
25 recommendation from the governance committee, we

1 are looking to formalize our practice of
 2 accepting electronics signatures in lieu of wet
 3 signatures. So this was first seen because --
 4 first authorized by the retirement committee
 5 because of COVID, and this is a formal
 6 documentation of that -- the interpretation of
 7 when this can be used. I did want to kind of
 8 highlight that we do have an exclusions towards
 9 the bottom of this first page, where it will not
 10 be permitted, especially for those forms that
 11 require witnesses, notarize -- notaries as well.
 12 And I just wanted to go ahead and see if there
 13 were any questions.

14 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: And also, does the
 15 governance committee want to say anything
 16 regarding our meeting and our thoughts?

17 Is that you, Karen, or is that -- no,
 18 you're legal. It wouldn't be -- is Kurt on --
 19 not --

20 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: I'm on this
 21 committee, too.

22 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Well, you're on it,
 23 but --

24 TRUSTEE KURT MILLER: Yeah,
 25 (indiscernible) I'm legal.

1 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Actually, so it's -
2 - Steven, he's not on, so -- yeah, we went
3 through this. It's definitely something that
4 seems like it's needed, especially in this, the
5 digital age. We brought up, and it wasn't
6 really, yeah, the other things we talked about
7 was fraud and stuff like that, but that's not, as
8 far as what this is concerned, I don't think we
9 have the big risks here. It's merely codifying
10 how it would all work. And it was copied off of
11 the best practices that already exist, so I -- we
12 gave it a thumbs up. Is that a good summary that
13 everyone else on the committee remembers?

14 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: Right,
15 anyhow.

16 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: And so and we're
17 recommending that it be adopted, correct?

18 MEGAN PIWONSKI: Yes.

19 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Michelle, I see
20 your hand pop up.

21 TRUSTEE MICHELLE BOYLES: Just a
22 question, was consideration given to allowing for
23 online notaries? I believe that is something
24 that is generally available. Was that discussed?
25 Not necessarily advocating for it, just was it

1 considered to extend there?

2 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: I don't --
3 Burt or John did -- last I knew, the state didn't
4 allow that.

5 ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ROBERT HELFAND:
6 Yeah, then I think the discussion went in the
7 direction of what the -- what signature it was
8 actually needed for, and due to those reasons, it
9 wasn't necessary to create any other access
10 points. I think the notary was for -- I think it
11 was -- that was for receiving money, so we didn't
12 -- though there was a lot of conversation about
13 this and the fraud aspect that Brian had
14 mentioned, but I think that what came out of the
15 discussion was that the electronics signatures
16 for the purposes that they're required now were
17 already in place, and again, like Brian was
18 saying, this was simply just codifying it for our
19 purposes.

20 So I get the question. I don't think
21 that the governance committee needs to really
22 rehash that, because I felt that through what we
23 talked about, everything is pretty much in place
24 now. This is just putting it in writing so that
25 there's some documentation of how we conduct

1 business.

2 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Yeah, for our
3 committee, yeah, because it already exists at the
4 state level, so this is a matter of bringing us
5 up to snuff with everybody else. So I -- and if
6 it is or is not allowed, I guess if it becomes
7 allowed or doesn't -- we would expect, I guess,
8 everybody to address e-notary. I didn't know
9 that was a possibility.

10 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: Solved.

11 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: It could be a
12 positive personal basis in the future.

13 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: But that's a
14 good question. My understanding is that in the
15 state of Connecticut, it's not permitted, but it
16 is permitted in other states. So if you have
17 somebody who's applying --

18 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Now in Florida --

19 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: -- for
20 retirement, and they're out of state in a state
21 that permits it, I don't know how at the division
22 are you handling that. Are you allowing
23 electronic notarization and --

24 DIRECTOR JOHN HERRINGTON: Right, so
25 what I would say, my thoughts on this, is so

1 there was an executive order that allowed for the
2 use of electronic notaries during COVID. My
3 understanding, I haven't researched this, but
4 when that last version of that executive order
5 expired, that was the end of the authorization.
6 I don't know that for certain, but I know that
7 there was a time where they were accepted, and I
8 don't think that that was permanent.

9 What I would say is, across the board,
10 what our practice is, is right now is that we
11 don't accept electronic notaries in any instance,
12 even if it's coming from someone that has retired
13 and resides in a state that accepts them. What I
14 would say is that it's possible for us to adopt
15 this version of the policy without us going
16 through those additional steps.

17 I would also say that I'm not aware of
18 many times where there's been an explicit kind of
19 denial of a request for someone who wants to use
20 an electronic notary. It's just not something
21 that we necessarily advertise, but I think it is
22 possible for us to adopt this version of the
23 policy, and then we can address the electronic
24 notaries going forward in perhaps a revised
25 policy if that's what makes sense.

1 ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ROBERT HELFAND: I
2 think --

3 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: Yeah, and I
4 think you're right on the -- where the state of
5 Connecticut is on that.

6 DIRECTOR JOHN HERRINGTON: Yep, yep.

7 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: I think it
8 was only permitted during COVID.

9 DIRECTOR JOHN HERRINGTON: Yep.

10 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: Mm hm.

11 ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ROBERT HELFAND:
12 Yeah, I would throw in a lot of the laws relating
13 to the liberalization of signing official
14 documents such as powers of attorney were
15 necessitated by a sense that maybe financial
16 institutions were making their customers jump
17 through too many hoops to get hold of their
18 money. And when we act strictly on those
19 matters, it's for the opposite reason. It's
20 always out of concern for protecting the members
21 and making sure that their assets are secure.

22 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Any other
23 discussion?

24 If not, I would like a vote to adopt.

25 ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ROBERT HELFAND:

1 You'll need a motion.

2 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Mm hm.

3 TRUSTEE MICHAEL FRED: So moved, Mike
4 Freda.

5 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Thank you, Mike.
6 Second?

7 TRUSTEE KURT MILLER: Seconded, Kurt.

8 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Thanks, Kurt. All
9 in favor?

10 TRUSTEE KURT MILLER: Aye.

11 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: Aye.

12 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Any opposed --

13 TRUSTEE DAVID GLIDDEN: Aye.

14 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: -- or abstentions?
15 Hearing none, so moved. Thank you.

16 For our next items, we will need a
17 motion to go into executive session to address
18 the two items there. So --

19 VICE-CHAIR JEFF TOMCHIK: I'll make a
20 motion.

21 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Yeah, thank you.
22 And anyone can second.

23 TRUSTEE KURT MILLER: Yeah, seconded,
24 and that we invite all appropriate --

25 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Thanks, Kurt.

1 TRUSTEE KURT MILLER: -- that we invite
2 all appropriate staff necessary.

3 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Excellent.

4 ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ROBERT HELEFAND:
5 Yeah, just to be clear, the motion would include
6 for purpose of executive session Tara Downes,
7 Cari Pennoyer, Megan Piwonski, John Herrington,
8 and myself, oh, and Brianna Nelson. Is that
9 correct?

10 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: By my view, it is.
11 Okay, all in favor?

12 TRUSTEE KURT MILLER: Aye.

13 TRUSTEE KAREN MCDONOUGH: Aye.

14 CHAIR BRIAN VAHEY: Any objections? If
15 not, we can pause the recording.

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I, Sonya Ledanski Hyde, certify that the
foregoing transcript is a true and accurate
record of the proceedings.

Sonya M. Ledanski Hyde

Veritext Legal Solutions
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