

**Volunteer Firefighter and EMT Pension Fund Board Meeting
Wheatland, WY
June 12, 2019**

A meeting of the Volunteer Firefighter and EMT Pension Fund Board was held at 12:00 noon on Wednesday, June 12, 2019 at the Windy Peaks Brewery Restaurant in Wheatland, Wyoming.

Board members participating:

- Mr. Gene Diedtrich (Chair) (Newcastle)
- Mr. Lanny Applegate (Vice-Chair) (Cheyenne)
- Mr. Tracy Brown (Lingle)
- Mr. Kim Lee (Riverton)
- Mr. Jerry Munger (Wheatland)
- Mr. Eric Quinney (Evanston)
- Mr. Alan Sessions (Afton)

Board members absent and excused: none

Wyoming Retirement System (WRS) Staff member participating:

- Ms. Ruth Ryerson, Executive Director
- Mr. David Swindell, Deputy Director
- Mr. Mike Bleakley, Staff Development /Executive Board Administrator
- Ms. Samantha Jacobsen, Internal Audit Manager
- Mr. Adam Waddell, External & Compliance Auditor
- Ms. Renee Winfrey, Employer Relations Supervisor

Others in attendance: Mr. Donny Munger (Newcastle Volunteer Fire Department), Mr. Robert Munger (Newcastle Volunteer Fire Department), Mr. Chris Kocher (Worland Volunteer Fire Department), Mr. Kevin Brown (Wheatland Volunteer Fire Department) and Mr. Rusty Dunham (Laramie County Fire District #2).

Chairman Diedtrich called the meeting to order at 12:00 noon sharp.

1) Board Meeting Minutes from April 5, 2019. The Volunteer Firefighter and EMT Pension Fund minutes from April 5, 2019 were considered.

MOTION 06-12-2019 (#1): Mr. Applegate moved to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Brown seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

2) Review of Financial Reports. The financial statements for February, 2019, March, 2019 and April 2019 were reviewed, noting that plan assets as of April 30, 2019 totaled \$81,804,920.07. Discussion ensued regarding the recent pattern of fire insurance premium tax receipts. Mr. Swindell noted that premium taxes are collected on premium that is written on an annual calendar year basis. Quarters 1, 2 and 3 are all estimated payments,

based on the insurance companies' totals from the previous year. The 4th quarter is when they all true-up on the actual premium amounts that they wrote through the reporting year, and is why it is usually higher. The 4th quarter payments are not due to the insurance commission until March 1 of the following year, and allowing for their processing time, the accurate 4th Qtr transfers are made in May. The taxes will fluctuate normally due to the amount of the estimated and final premium tax payments mentioned above. They also fluctuate from year to year based on the amount of premiums written in Wyoming. Therefore, the best comparison is to go year by year; however it worth noting that the 1st quarter payment of \$801,247.21 is higher than last year's \$662,575.

MOTION 06-12-2019 (#2): Mr. Quinney moved to approve the financial reports as presented. Mr. Sessions seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

3) Review of Membership Reports. The membership reports as of May 31, 2019 contained the following highlights:

Active Contributing Members: 2,337
Retirees: 1,255
Survivor pensions: 261
Monthly pension total: \$527,297.20
Smallest monthly pension: \$44.88
Largest monthly pension: \$731.58

Participating Departments. The Board reviewed the participating department report, noting 118 participating agencies.

Service Purchase reports. The Board reviewed the service purchase reports for the quarter, with one pending service purchase during the March-May timeframe. Discussion ensued regarding the amount of service purchase activity. Mr. Swindell offered that experience shows that there is a fair amount of interest in service purchases, but relatively few members actually complete a transaction. This was true not only in the Volunteer plan, but the other plans administered by WRS.

Newly refunded and retired report. The Board reviewed the refunded accounts and new retirees for the March-May timeframe. There were 15 new retirements, and 11 members refunded their accounts during the period.

Deceased members by plan report. The report shows 6 retirees and survivors who passed.

MOTION 06-12-2019 (#3): Mr. Quinney moved to approve the membership reports. Mr. Munger seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

At 12:20 pm Chairman Diedtrich noted that the meals were ready and he recessed the Board for lunch.

At approximately 12:50 pm, the Board reconvened.

4) Facetime or phone attendance at meetings. Chief Robert Munger of Newcastle discussed issues his department was facing with members attending college or working temporarily out of the community. Members were trained and valuable contributors to his department, but they had difficulty physically attending meetings, particularly in the winter, when travel was difficult or even dangerous. Chief Munger asked if the Board would consider some sort of accommodation to allow attendance via facetime or other electronic means.

Ms. Samantha Jacobsen of WRS stated that from an internal audit perspective, such participation methods could be satisfactory. While it was a decision for the Board, there was nothing in audit standards that would prevent it. It would be helpful if the meeting attendance roster noted those that attended via alternate means, just as our Board minutes do, and that the local Chief approved it.

MOTION 06-12-2019 (#4): Mr. Brown moved to accept facetime or other alternate forms of communication for purposes of meeting attendance. Mr. Quinney seconded. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Applegate stated that Newcastle is an exception, but dealing with legislators is another matter. Legislators may not be impressed that all members have to do is to call in. He suggested some sort of pilot program, noting that the Board had worked too hard to build confidence with the Legislature for us to treat this matter casually.

Mr. Sessions agreed, suggesting that the issue be related to asking for a larger percentage of the fire insurance premium tax.

Mr. Quinney stated that we certainly want our members to physically attend if possible. But there are circumstances where that is impractical. Our Chiefs will enforce appropriate standards.

Mr. Donny Munger asked if a distance requirement or a limit as to the percentage of meetings where this would be allowed would address some of the concerns.

Mr. Robert Munger offered that it would be feasible to limit alternate participation methods to a percentage, where there was a requirement that a certain portion of attendance be physical.

Chairman Diedtrich stated that it was certainly an issue. He had heard some unfavorable remarks from legislators in the past, questioning the professionalism of some.

Chief Kocher stated that while we want physical presence, some situations do arise. We need substantial documentation and by laws in place. College or out of community situations yes, but not acceptable if physical presence is reasonably possible.

Mr. Brown withdrew his motion. He then offered a new motion:

MOTION 06-12-2019 (#5): Mr. Brown moved that the Board adopt a pilot program authorizing alternate methods of attendance through December of 2020. Mr. Quinney seconded. Discussion ensued.

Mr. Munger stated that we have to have some guidance in the program. There have to be some sideboards on this, else it will be all over the place.

Chairman Diedtrich suggested that the Board go with what Mr. Robert Munger had said, limiting it to situations of college or working out of the community.

Mr. Quinney suggested that we already have an appeal process with the Board whereby attendance could be considered in various temporary situations, such as surgery, not just college students.

Mr. Lee offered that the Board should not make a big deal of this, noting that the auditor had stated that she could accept it. Let it go at that.

Ms. Jacobsen stated that yes, she could accept it but she needed to test against what the Board decides. For her, it was OK but it wasn't her place to make such a decision. She just wanted to make sure that the Board understood that there wasn't anything in audit standards to prevent alternate attendance.

Mr. Quinney offered that the Board should have faith in our fire chiefs to administer such provisions appropriately. We trust them in life-threatening situations.

Mr. Lee stated that we also have had military deployments that required accommodation on attendance.

Chairman Diedtrich asked if there was any more discussion. Hearing none, he called for the question on the motion to institute a pilot program.

Voting Aye: Mr. Brown, Mr. Applegate and Mr. Diedtrich

Voting No: Mr. Lee, Mr. Quinney, Mr. Sessions and Mr. Munger

The motion was defeated.

Mr. Quinney then offered another motion:

MOTION 06-12-2019 (#6): Mr. Quinney moved to allow facetime or other alternate forms of communication as viable methods of meeting participation subject to local fire chief approval. Mr. Lee seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

5) Review and Discussion regarding new rules pertaining to new Search & Rescue members. Mr. Bleakley noted that the formal board rules would need to be updated to include Search & Rescue members. He noted that WRS General Counsel Ben Brandes had requested that the Board authorize WRS to pursue such rule changes; the actual rule language would be presented to the Board at a later meeting.

MOTION 06-12-2019 (#7): Mr. Brown moved to authorize WRS staff to prepare rule changes associated with adding Search & Rescue volunteers. Mr. Applegate seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

6) Presentation of Meeting Attendance Audit Findings. Ms. Jacobsen introduced Mr. Adam Waddell who presented information related to audits of meeting attendance. Mr. Waddell noted that the audit was performed to confirm contributors to the pension plan attended no less than 50% of the scheduled monthly department meetings to maintain membership in the pension plan.

Mr. Waddell introduced Ms. Renee Winfrey, the Employer Relations Supervisor at WRS. Ms. Ryerson noted that Renee and her staff were the key contacts at WRS for the volunteer agencies and Renee is retiring this summer. This would be her last meeting. The Board thanked Renee for her service and noted how difficult it will be to replace her.

Mr. Waddell noted that the following departments had been audited and determined to be in compliance with monitoring attendance without exception: Glenrock, Wamsutter, Laramie Co. #4, Veteran, Jackson Hole, Ten Sleep, Tongue River, Powell, Laramie Co. #10, and Sundance.

16 members in 7 agencies were determined to be short of the meeting attendance requirement for 2018. Mr. Waddell requested that the Board take action to adjust the service credit for these members accordingly.

MOTION 06-12-2019 (#8): Mr. Brown moved to suspend service credit for the members on the report. Mr. Quinney seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

7) Discussion regarding additional fire insurance premium tax. Mr. Lee stated that he had discussions with area legislators regarding the possibility of increasing the pension plan share of the fire premium tax from the current 80% to 100%. He noted that there was good support in the legislature for volunteer firefighters and pointed out what a good value volunteers were. He discussed the situation in Mills, where the paid professional fire department was in trouble because of the costs involved. Still, the state budget situation will be difficult so success in obtaining a larger share was uncertain. Ms. Ryerson distributed a report from the actuary firm (GRS) showing the estimated effects on funding status for various percentages of the tax.

8) Date and Location of Next Meeting. Chairman Diedtrich led a discussion resulting in a proposal for the next meeting to be on Monday, September 9, 2019 at 12:00 noon in Afton,

Wyoming at Heggs Grill Restaurant, 825 S. Washington St, Afton, WY. The rest of the Board agreed.

9) Adjournment. There being no further business, Chairman Diedtrich asked for a motion to adjourn.

MOTION 06-12-2019 (#9): Mr. Brown moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Sessions seconded. The motion carried unanimously and the Board adjourned at 1:50 pm.