



Hampden County Regional Board of Retirement

Karl J. Schmaelzle
Chairman/Treasurer

Karen Martin
Executive Director
Email: kmartin@hcrb.org

July 29, 2022

Dear Retirees and Survivors:

There have been many changes and updates recently at Hampden County Regional Retirement Board. The following illustrates some of the advancements that we have been in the process of and are currently implementing and appreciate your patience during this period.

COLA

The Hampden County Regional Retirement Board is pleased to announce that at its regular monthly meeting held on April 6, 2022, the Board voted to grant a 3% Cost of Living increase on the first \$18,000.00 of retirement income. This will become effective July 1, 2022, for those retirees and beneficiaries of the System who retired on or before June 30, 2021. The maximum increase for any retiree/beneficiary who receives \$18,000.00 per year or more will be \$540.00 per year. The additional amount will be \$45.00 per month. This increase will be reflected in the retirement allowance payment issued on July 29, 2022. Mr. Taylor made the motion and was seconded by Mr. O’Neil; Mr. Taylor, Mr. O’Neil, Ms. Hill, and Chairman Schmaelzle voted yes, 4-0. We only had four members on the Board at this time.

Affidavits

Every year you receive a letter from the Hampden County Regional Board in August for your Affidavit of Retired Members and Beneficiaries. This letter cost the Retirement System approximately \$2,800.00 last year. In the past, affidavits needed be notarized. I realize that this is a hardship for some of our elders and have investigated the laws about sending out our affidavits. *According to 840 CMR Section 15.01 states: No less frequency than once every two years, each retirement board shall require each member or beneficiary who receives a pension, retirement allowance, or survivor’s allowance to file with the retirement board an affidavit under the penalties of perjury.* Since we can send out this affidavit once every two years, the Board will be voting at our August 3, 2022, meeting to skip this year’s mailing and return sending them out in 2023. I feel that this is a win for all of us involved. We will post this letter on our website along with any other new news.

Board and Staff

Since January 1, 2022, The Retirement Board welcomed 4 new staff positions being filled. The Board hired a new Executive Director, Karen Martin, and a new Assistant Executive Director, Erica Lecours. Both started their new positions on January 1, 2022. Stephanie Langley was hired on January 4, 2022, for an open position as Associate Administrative Assistant and Melissa Melendez who was hired for an open position as Senior Administrative Assistant, came to us from the Holyoke retirement system on February 14, 2022. The Board also added new legal representation which had been procured through a competitive process.

The board itself also had major changes since January 1, 2022, with the addition of three new elected board members.

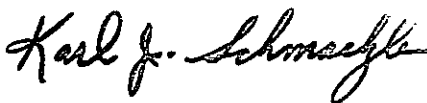
- *Michelle Hill*, who is the Southwick Town Treasurer/ Collector is our new Advisory chair position person on the board. Michelle was elected by the Member Unit Treasurers to this position.
- *Robert Taylor*, a retired Longmeadow Firefighter, was elected by the members of the retirement system on January 11, 2022.
- *Thomas Sullivan*, a retired Assistant Town Administrator for Budget, and Finance in Wilbraham and the Town's Collector and Town Treasurer was also elected by the members of the retirement system on May 4, 2022.
- *Patrick O'Neil*, in Financial Business and was appointed to the board, as the 5th member of our system.
- *Karl Schmaelzle*, who is an elected member of the retirement system since 2001, was voted in and appointed by the Board to the vacant position of Chairman/Treasurer starting January 1, 2022. Mr. Schmaelzle is a retired Firefighter from the Town of Agawam. He is also an Executive Board Member of the Mass. Assoc. of Contributory Retirement Systems and Mass. Retirees Vice President, Western District.

Technology Upgrades

The Board recently discussed and voted to hire a new software company to update our data processing. The staff is working diligently on the major software change which entailed an enormous amount of time entering all the data to upgrade our system. This new technology will improve efficiency, provide more accountability, and more transparency. It will facilitate sharing information with PERAC, auditor and other retirement Boards. The Board recently purchased a new phone system with a new company, as our old system was outdated and needed a serious update. This system provides critical new features that we need and a \$300.00 monthly savings over the old system. New policies governing travel, overtime, and other functions have been put in place, and additional changes are in the process of being implemented.

In 2022, the board voted to upgrade the HCRRB website in and make it more user friendly. We are now able to maintain and stay up to date on our new website www.hcrb.org. There are now ways to contact us, ask us questions, and find out more about our retirement system.

Sincerely,



Karl Schmaelzle
Chairman/Treasurer
Hampden County Regional Retirement Board