

**CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
BOARD OF PENSIONS AND RETIREMENT
Meeting of February 25, 2021**

MINUTES

On February 25, 2021, Jacqueline Dunn called the Regular Meeting of the Board of Pensions and Retirement to order at 9:32 AM. The meeting was conducted by Microsoft Teams Conference App due to the State's recommendation to close the City due to the Covid-19 epidemic.

Present: Jacqueline Dunn
 Ronald Stagliano
 Carol Stukes-Baylor
 Rebecca Reinhardt
 Vanessa Garrett-Harley
 Marsha Greene-Jones
 Brian Coughlin
 Veronica Pankey
 Sharolyn Murphy
 Diana Cortes
 Leontyne Freeman

Also Attending: Francis Bielli, Bill Rubin – Board of Pensions
 Ellen Berkowitz, Adam Coleman, Sean McGrath – Law Department
 Christopher DiFusco, James Cousounis – Investment Unit
 Bernard Buckley, Kristyn Bair, Tyrone Jordan – Investment Unit
 Dominique Cherry, Abdel-Aziz Irbrahim – Investment Unit
 Nicole McCormac, Nick Hand, Sarah DeNault – City Controller's Office
 Dave Smith, Kweku Obed – Marquette Associates
 Brad Nyce, Bina Kumar, Jeff Francis – Nationwide
 Tom Ginsberg – PEW Trust
 Will Green – Loop Capital
 Lindsay Saienni – FIN News

Jacqueline Dunn called the meeting to order and stated that the first order of business was the approval of the Virtual Procedures for the Board of Pensions Benefits meeting.

The motion to approve the Virtual Procedures carried unanimously 8-0 on a roll call vote.

CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 25, 2021

The motion to approve the Minutes of February 25, 2021 carried unanimously 8-0 on a roll call vote.

CONSIDERATION OF (108) PENSION APPLICATIONS AND (51) WITHDRAWAL APPLICATIONS

The motion to approve carried unanimously 8-0 on a roll call vote.

APPLICATION FOR SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY BENEFITS

Case of Erick Garnett, Application for Service-Connected Disability Benefits – Plan B

This is an application submitted by Erick Garnett, former Police Officer for Service-Connected Disability benefits under Pension Plan “B”.

According to Mr. Garnett, on January 30, 2019 he sustained an injury while subduing a combative individual. Mr. Garnett states that on December 31, 2002 he was injured while struggling with a resistant male.

The Board voted as follows:

Brian Coughlin – Approve
Vanessa Garrett-Harley – Approve
Marsha Greene-Jones – Approve
Sharolyn Murphy – Approve

Veronica Pankey - Approve
Carol Stukes-Baylor - Approve
Rebecca Reinhardt - Approve
Ronald Stagliano - Approve

The motion to approve carried unanimously 8-0.

Case of Joseph Hansbury, Application for Service-Connected Disability Benefits – Plan B

This is an application submitted by Joseph Hansbury, former Police Officer for Service-Connected Disability benefits under Pension Plan “B”.

According to Mr. Hansbury, on January 4, 2018 he slipped and fell on the ice causing an injury. Mr. Hansbury states that he experiences chronic pain and related symptoms due to the impact of the injury.

The Board voted as follows:

Brian Coughlin – Approve
Vanessa Garrett-Harley – Approve
Marsha Greene-Jones – Approve
Sharolyn Murphy – Approve

Veronica Pankey - Approve
Carol Stukes-Baylor - Approve
Rebecca Reinhardt - Approve
Ronald Stagliano - Approve

The motion to approve carried unanimously 8-0.

Case of Reinaldo V. Peluzzo Jr., Dec'd, Application for Service-Connected Disability Benefits - Plan B

This is an application submitted by Reinaldo Peluzzo, former Police Officer for Service-Connected Disability benefits under Pension Plan "B".

According to Mr. Peluzzo's account, on April 30, 2018 after checking inventory at the Substation of the 15th District he walked out into the unlit parking lot. Mr. Peluzzo states that he missed a step resulting in an injury.

The Board voted as follows:

Brian Coughlin – Abstain
Vanessa Garrett-Harley – Deny
Marsha Greene-Jones – Deny
Sharolyn Murphy – Deny

Veronica Pankey - Abstain
Carol Stukes-Baylor - Abstain
Rebecca Reinhardt - Deny
Ronald Stagliano - Abstain

The motion to approve fails 0-4-4. Motion Denied.

APPLICATION FOR SERVICE-CONNECTED DEATH BENEFITS

Case of Loretta Ann Hill-Gillespie, Dec'd, Application for Service-Connected Death Benefits - Plan Y

This is an application submitted by Frederick Gillespie Jr., spouse of the late Loretta Hill-Gillespie, former Medical Clerk with the Health Department for Service-Connected Death benefits under Pension Plan "Y".

According to Mr. Gillespie, on May 6, 2020 his wife died. Mr. Gillespie states that his wife was deemed an essential worker, placed on the frontline at Health Center 6, where she checked in persons who were being tested for COVID-19. Mr. Gillespie states that his wife was high risk for the virus. According to Mr. Gillespie his wife was never tested for the virus.

Mr. Gillespie states that during the week preceding her death she was out of work because she was feeling sick. Mrs. Hill-Gillespie died two days following her return to work (May 4, 2020).

Ronald Stagliano made a motion to table for 30 days for further information. Veronica Pankey seconded the motion.

The Board voted as follows:

Brian Coughlin – Approve
Vanessa Garrett-Harley – Approve
Marsha Greene-Jones – Approve
Sharolyn Murphy – Approve

Veronica Pankey - Approve
Carol Stukes-Baylor - Approve
Rebecca Reinhardt - Approve
Ronald Stagliano – Approve

The motion to table for 30 days carried unanimously 8-0.

Case of Eileen Carey, Application for Service-Connected Disability Benefits – Plan “Y”

This case was denied at the April 27, 2017 Board meeting. A Virtual Hearing was held on February 4, 2021. This is a Sammons case.

The votes are as follows:

Leontyne Freeman:	Approve
Veronica Pankey:	Approve
Ronald Stagliano:	Approve

Case History:

This is an application submitted by Eileen Carey, former parking enforcement officer with the Philadelphia Parking Authority for Service-Connected Disability benefits under Plan Y.

According to Ms. Carey, on February 16, 2015 she was working in Olde City when she tripped on a low-lying marble step. Ms. Carey states the entire pavement was covered with salt and it was difficult to distinguish the step from the pavement. Ms. Carey sustained multiple injuries.

The Board voted as follows:

Brian Coughlin – Approve	Veronica Pankey - Approve
Vanessa Garrett-Harley – Approve	Carol Stukes-Baylor - Approve
Marsha Greene-Jones – Approve	Rebecca Reinhardt - Approve
Sharolyn Murphy – Approve	Ronald Stagliano - Approve

The motion to approve carried unanimously 8-0.

Case of Steven Welch, Application for Service-Connected Disability Benefits – Plan “Y”

This case was **denied** at the February 25, 2021 Board meeting. Mr. Welch appealed to Common Pleas Court and the case was remanded to the Board of Pensions to determine the issue of Appellant’s job responsibilities. A Virtual hearing was held February 4, 2021.

The hearing panel recommendations are as follows:

Leontyne Freeman	Approve
Veronica M. Pankey	Approve
Ronald Stagliano	Deny

Case Summary:

This case was **denied** at the Board meeting held on August 25, 2016. A hearing panel was held on Wednesday, December 13, 2017.

This case was **tabled** at the June 23, 2016 Board meeting for further information. The job descriptions for Accountant and Departmental Accounting Systems Specialist are attached.

This is an application submitted by Steven B. Welch, former accountant with the Streets Department, for Service-Connected Disability benefits under Pension Plan “Y”.

According to Mr. Welch, on February 12, 2014 while entering the snow emergency vehicle he slipped and sustained an injury. Mr. Welch states that corrective surgery was performed on October 7, 2014.

The Board voted as follows:

Brian Coughlin – Deny
Vanessa Garrett-Harley – Deny
Marsha Greene-Jones – Deny
Sharolyn Murphy – Deny

Veronica Pankey - Approve
Carol Stukes-Baylor - Approve
Rebecca Reinhardt - Deny
Ronald Stagliano - Deny

The motion to approve fails 2-6. Motion denied.

PENSION DISQUALIFICATION

Case of James Strohm– Pension Disqualification, Plan B

James Strohm, former Philadelphia Police Officer, was first hired on June 23, 1997 and separated from City employment on May 28, 2019. He is a member of Plan B. At the time of his separation, he had approximately 21 years and 10 months of credited service. His estimated monthly pension benefit would be \$3,103.00 per month. His contributions to the Municipal Retirement System total \$65,901.15.

On July 23, 2019, Mr. Strohm entered a plea of guilty to one count of distribution and attempted distribution of child pornography in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2252(a)(2) and one count of possession of child pornography in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2252(a)(4) arising out of his possession and dissemination of child pornography in February and April 2019 both at home and while undertaking official duties as a police officer. He was sentenced on January 6, 2021. Mr. Strohm uploaded images from the police station’s IP address and kept images on a personal computer stored at the police station. The Inspector General informed the Law Department of the guilty pleas in January 2021.

On February 19, 2021, Sean McGrath, Assistant City Solicitor, opined that Mr. Strohm’s crime triggered the disqualification provisions of the Philadelphia Retirement Code and that through his criminal conduct he had therefore severed his entitlement to his pension.

Mr. McGrath advises the Board must vote on the following:

- Whether Mr. Strohm should be permanently disqualified from pension eligibility

Attached are the following:

1. Opinion from Sean McGrath, Assistant City Solicitor
2. Packet from Inspector General dated January 7, 2021, including the criminal information supporting the guilty plea.

The Board voted as follows:

Brian Coughlin – Approve
Vanessa Garrett-Harley – Approve
Marsha Greene-Jones – Approve
Sharolyn Murphy – Approve

Veronica Pankey - Approve
Carol Stukes-Baylor - Approve
Rebecca Reinhardt - Approve
Ronald Stagliano - Approve

The motion to approve to permanently disqualify James Strohm from pension eligibility carried unanimously 8-0.

NEW BUSINESS

Executive Director's Report – Mr. Bielli thanked the subcommittee on their participation reviewing and evaluating the proposals received in response to the Board's RFP for an Auditor for the pension fund. The three presenters were CLA, SB and Withum. After consideration of the proposals, presentations, and information regarding fees of all three firms, the Subcommittee unanimously recommends the award of the contract to the incumbent CLA.

Subcommittee Report and Recommendation RFP for the Auditor of the Pension Fund 2020-2021

The subcommittee recommends retaining the incumbent CLA.

Ronald Stagliano made a motion to approve. Veronica Pankey seconded the motion.

The motion to approve CLA as the Auditor of the Pension Fund carried unanimously 8-0 on a roll call vote.

Litigation Summary – Ms. Berkowitz stated there are a number of cases in Common Pleas Court as listed on the Litigation summary.

The motion to adjourn carried unanimously at 10:19 AM.