



**Austin Fire Fighters Relief and Retirement Fund**  
4101 Parkstone Heights Drive, Suite 270  
Austin, TX 78746  
Telephone: (512) 454-9567

**MINUTES**  
**AUSTIN FIREFIGHTERS RELIEF AND RETIREMENT FUND BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**  
**MONDAY, MARCH 22, 2021 AT 9:00 AM**

**Board Members Present**

Steve Adler, Chair  
Doug Fowler, Vice-Chair  
Belinda Weaver, Treasurer  
Jeremy Burke, Trustee  
John Bass, Trustee  
Bill Stefka, Administrator  
Premal Amin, Asst. Administrator  
Kendall Twomey, Admin. Asst.

**Consultants Present**

Chuck Campbell, JW  
Alyca Garrison, JW  
Michael McGill, COA  
Brad Heinrichs, Foster&Foster  
Lori Messer, LGC

**Community Members Present**

Rene Vallejo  
Keith Johnson  
Jan Wesson  
Eric Pederson  
Becky Brooks  
Donald Lowe  
Unidentified attendees

**Mayor Adler called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM.**

- I. Minutes of the Regular Meeting on February 26, 2021

**After a brief review, motion made by Jeremy Burke to approve the minutes of February 26, 2021. John Bass requested the minutes be amended to state his request that pension staff look into electronic voting and that he welcomed the investment rebalancing recommended by Meketa. After hearing no objections to the amendments, the minutes of the February 26, 2021 meeting passed unanimously.**

- II. Service Retirement Benefits for Two Applicants

**The Board reviewed retirement benefits for two applicants. Doug Fowler made a motion to approve all retirement benefits as presented. Jeremy Burke seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

- III. COLA Discussion with Actuaries

**Next, Mayor Adler introduced the Fund's actuary, Brad Heinrichs with Foster and Foster, who was attending to continue discussing our COLA Policy provisions. They specifically studied what effect adopting a maximum 25-year amortization period, as recommended by the State Pension Review Board, would be and to discuss any other COLA Policy updates. Mr. Heinrichs noted they back-tested data using a 25-year maximum amortization period rather than 30, as used in the past, to determine COLA affordability. Based on those results, a 25-year amortization period would have still passed the affordability test in our COLA Policy for all years beginning with the January 1, 2015 COLA effective date. John Bass suggested the Board should consider using the 25-year threshold going forward. Mr. Heinrichs then presented the impact if the rate of return in future years is less than the assumed rate with a lower amortization period. Based on the actuarial findings, Belinda Weaver made a motion to amend section VIII(3)(A) of the COLA Policy adopting a 25-year amortization instead of 30 year. Jeremy Burke seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

IV. Employee Compensation and Benefits Study Report

Lori Messer with Logic Compensation Group, who conducted the employee compensation and benefits study, reviewed the study parameters and factors considered when identifying the comparator organizations. In the evaluation of all the data, Ms. Messer stated that it is important to analyze pay and benefits separately while also communicating the total compensation package. She noted being competitive in salary is important to attract qualified employees; and a competitive benefits package helps retain those employees. Ms. Messer presented the results of the survey beginning with the salary and pay components. The results show that AFRS lags in the salary base pay ranges, defined benefit plan, vacation leave program, and sick leave carryover. Additionally, AFRS lagged in a wellness program and employee assistance program but Ms. Messer noted that the wellness programs are typical for larger organizations. The survey found that AFRS leads in mandatory defined contribution plan and health/dental/vision insurance premiums. Ms. Messer then presented the overall Employee Compensation (salary and benefits) results. AFRS is lagging the market median in salary base pay by 2.4%, but this is still considered highly competitive. From a total compensation perspective, including the mandatory defined contribution and health benefits components, the AFRS is leading the market median by 2.2%. Based on the results of the study, Ms. Messer recommended that AFRS adopt formal salary ranges, reevaluate vacation accruals/carryover and payout policy, reevaluate sick leave carryover while maintaining the current payout policy, adopt the proposed salary structure and corresponding ranges, allocate jobs into proposed salary structure, develop salary administration guidelines, and adopt the proposed job titles of Fund Administrator, Deputy Fund Administrator, and Benefits Specialist. It was also recommended that salary ranges should be adjusted annually to be competitive and reflective of cost of labor so the salary ranges stay up to date moving forward and a benefit survey be implemented every 3 to 5 years. The Board thanked Ms. Messer for her comprehensive report and insight. No action taken at this time.

V. Texas Open Meetings Act (TOMA) Provisions

Chuck Campbell reviewed the Texas Open Meetings Act and the requirements of an Open Meeting as it pertains to the Board. Mr. Campbell noted that due to the pandemic there have been some exceptions provided. Mr. Campbell presented other meeting requirements that are stated in the Fund's Statute and defined "walking quorums" and avoidance measures to prevent potential TOMA violations, specifically walking quorum communications. Bill Stefka shared some concerns made by members about receiving information from Board Members more frequently. Mr. Campbell reminded the Board that the Governance Policy referencing that communication comes from the Fund and not individual Board members, specifically the method and format of public communication. Mr. Campbell will present ideas to communicate with members in a more timely manner that do not violate Board policies. No motion was necessary.

VI. Trustee Election Service Providers

Bill Stefka presented an overview of election service providers that have been recommended by other retirement systems. Yes Elections, Intelliscan, True Ballot, and others who use various methods to conduct elections such as paper ballots, phone in ballots, and online. Mr. Stefka plans to revisit with other funds for more information. Doug Fowler requested the companies provide a quote for the Board to review. John Bass suggested the Board consider a company that allows multiple forms of voting in order to reach more members. Belinda Weaver suggested an RFP be developed and disbursed to potential election service providers. No action was taken at this time.

VII. Pension Review Board Public Pension Plan Guide

Jeremy Burke requested this item so the Board is aware of the report which includes recommendations that will be made to the State Legislature that could affect pension funds around the state. Bill Stefka added that the PRB website is a good resource for this and other pension information. No motion necessary.

VIII. Financial Statements, Transaction, and Fund Expense Reports

With no questions, comments, and no motion necessary, the Board moved to the next agenda item.

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### IX. Roadmap for Future Meetings

**John Bass noted in addition to information currently on the website he would like to provide an educational piece for the members to provide basic information regarding the Fund. After brief discussion, the fellow trustees agreed with this and would assist whatever way they can. Mayor Adler then requested fund employees update the Board on pension cybersecurity.**

### X. Call for Future Items

**Future agenda items will include addressing recommendations in the employee compensation and benefits report. RFP for trustee election services, RFP for legal services, and a policy regarding RFP solicitations, and timing of contracts.**

**Hearing no objections, Chair Adler adjourned the meeting at 11:30 am.**

### **Board Members**

Mayor Steve Adler, Chair  
Doug Fowler, Vice-Chair  
Belinda Weaver, Treasurer  
Jeremy Burke, Trustee  
John Bass, Trustee