STATE OF CONNECTICUT

STATE EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT COMMISSION

SEPTEMBER 16, 2021 MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM CONVENED AT 9:05 a.m.

Board Members Present:

Peter Adomeit, Chairman Michael Bailey, Trustee Karen Buffkin, Trustee Michael Carey, Trustee Martha Carlson, Deputy Comptroller, Ex Officio Member Carl Chisem, Trustee Robert D. Coffey, Trustee John Disette, Trustee John Flores, General Counsel Office of the Treasurer, Ex Officio Member Sal Luciano, Trustee Karen Nolen, Trustee Michael O'Brien, Trustee Claude Poulin, Trustee Mark Sciota, Municipal Liaison Timothy Ryor, Trustee

Absent:

Sandra Fae Brown Brewton, Trustee Angel Quiros, Trustee Rebecca Simonsen, Trustee

Also present were:

Bruce Barth, Tax Counsel to the Commission, Robinson & Cole

Cindy Cieslak, General Counsel to the Commission, Rose Kallor

John Herrington, Director, Retirement Services Division

Also present, continued:

Yamuna Menon, General Counsel/Assistant State Comptroller, Office of the State Comptroller

Michael Rose, General Counsel to the Commission, Rose Kallor

Colin Newman, Assistant Director, Retirement Services Division

TRANSCRIPTIONIST: Karin A. Empson

(Proceedings commenced at 9:05 a.m.)

MR. ADOMEIT: Okay. Then I will call the meeting to order. This is the September 16th, 2021 meeting of the State Employees Retirement Commission

8 being held by teleconference, a virtual meeting.

Cindy, could you give us the attendance, please?

MS. CIESLAK: Sure. This is Cindy Cieslak.

Present today, we have Chairman Peter Adomeit; Bruce

Barth, Tax Counsel from Robinson and Cole; Carl Chisem,

Trustee; myself, Cindy Cielak, General Counsel from

Rose Kallor; Claude Poulin, Actuarial Trustee; Colin

Newman, Assistant Director of Retirement Services

Division; John Flores, General Counsel to the Office of

the Treasurer and Ex Officio Member to the Retirement

Commission; John Herrington, Division Director from the

Retirement Services Division; Karen Buffkin, Trustee;

Karen Nolen, Trustee; Mark Sciota, Municipal Liaison;

Martha Carlson, Deputy Comptroller and Ex Officio

Member of the Commission; Michael Carey, Trustee;

Michael O'Brien, Trustee; Michael Rose, General Counsel

from Rose Kallor; Michael Bailey, Trustee; Ya Menon,

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     General Counsel and Assistant Comptroller; Robert
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     Coffey, Trustee; Sal Luciano, Trustee; and Tim Ryor,
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     Actuarial Trustee.
                Is there anybody that I missed? All right.
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     I think that is it.
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                MR. ADOMEIT: All right. We will need a
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     motion to amend the agenda. The Actuarial Subcommittee
     met yesterday.
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                Claude Poulin, would you make the motion,
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     please?
                MR. POULIN: This is Claude Poulin.
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     Chairman, I move to add after Item 16 of the agenda,
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     the following Item 17, request the Commission's
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     acceptance of the State Employees Retirement System,
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     the Judges, Family Support Magistrates and Probate
     Judges and Employees Retirement System Experience
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     Investigation Reports for the four-year period ending
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     on June 30^{th}, 2020.
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                MR. BAILEY: Bailey, second.
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                MR. ADOMEIT: All right. All in favor, say
     aye, or raise your hand.
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                UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Aye.
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                MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed, nay, or raise your
     hand. The ayes have it. Good. Thank you, Claude.
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Okay. Chairman's report, well, I have some

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interesting things to report too. I attended a meeting of the Connecticut Bar Association labor relations group, and in that meeting, someone said that the Connecticut retirees this year for this group, for SERC, is going to be 40 percent, and it was sort of stated as a fact, which we all know is not true. I let it ride. I did - I was not speaking for the Commission, and I did not want to debate the knowledge that we have with them. And so I did not contradict it. I said nothing. But obviously, it is not a good figure, and we all know the reasons why.

And the other interesting piece I got from that same meeting, and I did not write down the citation, but the gentleman who was giving the presentation, a highly respected management lawyer, basically said that the legislature has, in the Implementer, called for a study of the number of retirees from SERC. I had not heard that before. I don't know whether - the Implementer is only 900 pages, so - but I just - I wanted to pass that on for what it's worth.

MS. NOLEN: Peter?

MR. ADOMEIT: Yeah.

MS. NOLEN: This is Karen Nolen. After yesterday's Subcommittee meeting, I sent an email to

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everyone. I have - it's Public Act 21-2, the June
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     Special Session, Section 89. I copied that section and
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     I sent it to members of the Subcommittee. And I think
     I sent it to you also. Yeah, you're listed on the
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     email. So it did pass.
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                MR. ADOMEIT: Thank you. All right.
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                MS. CIESLAK: For the recorded - sorry,
     Peter. This is Cindy Cieslak.
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               MR. ADOMETT: Sure.
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               MS. CIESLAK: For the recording, that was
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     Karen Nolen.
                MR. ADOMEIT: Yeah, Peter Adomeit here.
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     sorry.
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                Okay. The Division Director's report.
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                MR. HERRINGTON: Thank you, Peter. So I sent
     along the report. I would say basically where we are
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     as a division right now is largely we are attempting to
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     clear the decks as much as possible so that we are
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     certainly in a position come January to turn in earnest
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     to preparations for the 2022 retirements.
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                I would say, if someone's estimating, you
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     know, what the kind of take-rate would be for eligible
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     retirees, I like 40 percent more than I like 77
     percent, which is what was listed in that (inaudible)
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     report. What that number ultimately will be, I'm not
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certain. You will see that, you know, throughout this year, there has been a certain uptick in the number of retirements. We're at a position right now whereas, you know, as we've had the consolidation with the pod, our work gets to us a little bit later in the process than it did before. So I don't know exactly - I really don't have a good frame of reference for estimating what the October number would be, but I'm aware of at least, you know, 300 or so applications that are in the pipeline.

So we would expect that October is going to be considerably higher than a normal October, and October tends to be one of our heaviest months. It could be, you know, maybe upwards of 400. And I think that this October is going to be somewhat unique in the sense that, you know, there's just the personnel issues that are kind of converging with that same date in terms of mandates for employees to return to work at a greater proportion of their telework schedule. Some may be forced to come back as much as 50 percent of the time. There's also the pending requirement for the mandatory vaccination. So those two issues can converge, and there may be people that otherwise might not have retired, but that might be an impetus.

So we certainly anticipate that October is

going to be a heavy month. And I actually – I would take a 40-percent rate. We have about 12,000 that are eligible. We can certainly handle 5,000 between now and July $1^{\rm st}$.

In terms of some other issues, as I said, we're clearing the decks. So as you can see, I mean, we continue to make considerable progress with our elimination of the disability backlog. Two years ago, it was 2,000 cases. We're down to 426. The goal is to completely eliminate that by the end of this year.

Once we achieve that goal, we should be in a position, I would hope, from 2022 on, where we no longer pay interest on any finalizations. Historically, we would finalize cases years after people have left. We've resolved that for the regular audits. Hopefully, we'll resolve that for disability, and that won't be an issue going forward. And hopefully, we will realize some savings, and in the funds, just by us kind of improving our efficiencies.

In terms of some other issues, we are having a meeting later on this morning with members from the judicial branch to go through some issues coordinating benefits between the judges system and the State Employees Retirement System. Bruce will be in on that meeting, and this may present some issues that we'll

circulate them up through the Legal and Personnel Subcommittee at some point in the future. And we are also processing our MERS enrollment surveys. So we've experienced, in the past, situations where MERS entities switched their collective bargaining agreements or arrangements where they no longer enroll new employees in the plan.

And we have, in the past, attempted to identify potential situations by, you know, analyzing some of the data. But in August, we sent out surveys eliciting actual responses from entities to really kind of narrow in on potential problems. We sent that out to 203 entities. We have just about half of those responses back. We're probably in a position where we're going to have to send out second requests to some individuals.

We're dealing with any number of MERS municipalities. There are different levels of sophistication and size. So there have been some mailing issues with Covid-related telework issues, so the process has been a bit slower than we would have hoped. But we certainly should be in a position to get that up much closer to 100 percent by next month, and then start dealing with any of the issues that arise based on some of those responses. Thus far, we haven't

received any problematic responses of the approximately

4 that we've received.

MR. ADOMEIT: Thank you, John.

Congratulations on the disability.

Marty, do you have anything to add?

MS. CARLSON: Yeah, just as a follow-up to the expected retirements. Just to keep you posted on a month-to-month basis, we have a team that we meet biweekly. We call it the 2022 Ramp-up Team. We've developed a preliminary project schedule because we're basically treating it as a campaign to get to and through 2022. We will have a rapid response team. Yesterday, John and I began discussing the crossdivisional training for other employees in the agency who are not in the retirement division to be able to help.

My opinion is, all hands are on deck. So for those of you on the labor side, you know, come March, April, May, when you get a complaint that someone has not received their tuition reimbursement, it's probably because the person responding to that tuition reimbursement application is probably scanning thousands or hundreds of applications in. So we ask, particularly on the labor side, for patience. We'll keep Danny Livingston because he's central, up-to-speed

on where we are.

The only other thing I would say, John, that we talked about is we have a finite number of eligible retirees that we know are eligible in 2022. And the higher we can get every month to chip that away, the better off we're going to be. The other thing we're talking about doing is sending out a communication to those people asking them, if they intend to retire, just let us know so we can clean up their data. We're not asking them to submit their application. We just ask them, are you going to retire sometime between now and June of 2022? And that will help John's staff in cleaning up their data, so that when they do retire, we can basically hit the pension calculator and send them the check.

So I don't know if you have any questions.

We'll keep you up to date on where we are, but we have a very robust and smart group of staff members looking at this and planning.

John, do you have anything to add to that?

MR. HERRINGTON: No. I think that you

covered quite a bit of it. One other thing that's

interesting is, you know, necessity is the mother of

all invention. And so each month, we continue to

perfect our processes, and we're constantly attempting

to find efficiencies, I would say, and this is something that is permeated not just with the Retirement Services Division, but also with the payroll and health insurance.

And so I think this is going to be, you know, kind of a test. And I think right now, I'm fairly confident that we will be able to process all of the applications that come here. One of the things that we need to really kind of work through is how the paperwork is actually going to get to us from the individual members. That's something that we continue to perfect, but that's something where additional resources will be used. But I think that absolutely, a year from now, the retirement process itself will be, you know, tremendously more efficient than it is now.

MS. CARLSON: And the more efficient we can get on our side, the more capability we have to help the pod. And I just will say, for those of you who know the brilliant Mark Fasone (phonetic), he was able to actually evaluate and analyze how many retirements at maximum capacity for his current staff, with no overtime, and that's 1,200 per month. So he's already looking at ways to improve that efficiency.

And, John, I think you might have said already, we have a little list, a growing list of

TWR's, retirees that are interested in coming back and helping us. So we'll be processing those through OPM over the course of the fall.

MR. ADOMEIT: Okay.

MS. CARLSON: That's it.

MR. ADOMEIT: Thank you, Marty.

Moving on then. Are there comments on this?

MR. CHISEM: Mr. Chairman, Carl Chisem.

MR. ADOMEIT: Yeah. Hi, Carl.

MR. CHISEM: I just have a question for you,
Marty or Mr. Herrington. So an employee has a question
on retirement. Are you saying that you're training
personnel within agencies to be able to answer that, or
are they going straight to the pod?

MS. CARLSON: John, I'm going to take that because (inaudible). Thank you. It is a really hot topic with us.

MR. CHISEM: Yes.

MS. CARLSON: The pod - the people who work at the pod are very smart, and they're very diligent and dedicated state employees. I've said from the beginning, the pod is under-resourced, and I know they're hiring more people. So the pod, you know, the pod is the pod, and we will supplement them, you know, to get through this.

We remain concerned that no one is left at the agency to answer a simple question. And it's not just about 2022. So, you know, somebody is planning their kid's college, and they want to figure out, you know, what they should do and what their timing is, and it has nothing to do with 2022; those questions are pretty much not getting answered. Again, not by any state employee's fault; it's just the nature of the thing.

What we're also trying to do to help with that is we're creating a series of webinars. We have one ready to launch imminently, I believe. And that is that that webinar is specifically going to talk to the 150 people that can retire within the next, like, month. And we're going to roll those out one at a time with basic questions. John's also looking at the best way to utilize our call center to answer those personal questions because, as you know, Carl, you know, it's not all in the application if somebody has a question.

MR. CHISEM: Right.

MS. CARLSON: We've also brought in resources, particularly around the quirky stuff of purchasing. That, we brought in from - we brought back from Core-CT an employee that is brilliant at processing purchasing, and we hope to be able to - what

we're - I think - John, correct me if I'm wrong, but
we're looking into the system for anyone who does have
purchasing opportunity who may not have done it yet,
and contacting them now so that it's not - we're
running that crazy stuff.

But you're right. You know, I'm trying to,

you know - I'm not trying to be diplomatic about it.

We've been saying from day one, we have concerns about,

you know, the resourcing of the pod, not the quality of
employee.

MR. CHISEM: Right.

MS. CARLSON: So we're working with them. We meet with them on a regular basis. We will supplement where they need to get supplemented. But also, remember, after this surge, you know, it's probably going to work just fine because—

MR. CHISEM: Oh, I'm sure of it.

MS. CARLSON: You know, so we just need to get through the surge, and they're working hard and we're working hard, you know, alongside each other.

John, do you want to add to that?

MR. HERRINGTON: Right. So I think a lot of what you raised there, Marty, is helpful and instructive to this question. I think I would encourage anyone who has any question to contact our

call center. And I would say our call center should be able to either answer a question regarding retirement in general; our counseling unit can answer a question in particular. The problem that we had is where does the retirement process end and the HR process begin.

that's very interesting. So we can identify in our division periods of time that someone was out on a leave of absence without pay. In some instances, we would have records to support that it was a medical leave of absence without pay. We don't necessarily have that information in every situation, and that's more of an HR payroll function that we can't really deal with. And something that we're never in a position to deal with is if someone says that there's a problem with those attendance records and that it's not marked as medical, but it should have been.

And so those are the types of questions that are purely kind of HR and should be dealt with — an HR professional. And so that's where we need to really kind of navigate. But I would say, you know, of the calls that we get, there's probably a small portion that fall into that kind of category. So, you know, if I were you and advising your individuals, I would have them, you know, contact our call center.

MR. CHISEM: Okay, that's great. Now, is this the call center - because I know we try to direct them to do that. The questions that our staff here get for retirement or such, we direct them to the call center. I think that's something that maybe ought to be memoed out to the agencies because they try - some of them try to answer them and they can't, and they try to get back to the members. And I know there's been several members that haven't heard anything back. And I says, well, why don't they just say, you know, call 1-800, you know, whatever, you know? Because there's certain questions that they can answer and questions that they can't, you know, which would be very helpful.

And just like you said, Marty, after this surge is over, you won't hear anything. But of course, people get nervous and, you know, might have questions, and, you know, I understand that. Some of them don't, but, you know, that's-

MS. CARLSON: Carl, also remind them that it would be really helpful if they - if they're getting nervous because they want to retire, you know, for July 1 or-

MR. CHISEM: Right.

MS. CARLSON: --that it would be helpful if they sent an email even to the call center saying, I'm

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going to retire on July 1; I have a question. This is
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     the business of clearing up the - cleaning up the data-
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               MR. CHISEM: Right.
               MS. CARLSON: --that John was speaking about.
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               MR. CHISEM: Okay. All right. Thank you
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     both.
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               MR. HERRINGTON: Okay. Thank you.
               MR. ADOMEIT: Okay. Thank you, Carl.
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     you, Marty. Thank you, John.
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               Moving on to new matters.
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               MS. CIESLAK: Peter?
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               MR. ADOMEIT: Yes.
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               MS. CIESLAK: This is Cindy Cieslak. I just
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     wanted to note for the record that John Disette has
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     joined us.
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               MR. ADOMEIT: Oh, thank you. Yes.
               MR. LUCIANO: Sal Luciano. Motion to approve
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     the minutes.
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               MR. BAILEY: Bailey, second.
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               MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? Hearing none,
     all in favor, say aye.
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                UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Aye.
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               MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed, nay.
               MR. LUCIANO: I'm going to abstain.
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               MR. ADOMEIT: The ayes have it.
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               MR. LUCIANO: Okay. Motion to approve the
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     Chairman's per diem.
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                MR. BAILEY: Bailey, second.
               MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? Hearing none,
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     all in favor, say aye, or raise your hand.
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                UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Aye.
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               MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed, nay, or raise your
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     hand. The ayes have it.
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                MR. LUCIANO: Motion to approve the Union
     Trustee with Claude abstaining.
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                MR. BAILEY: Bailey, second.
                MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? Hearing none,
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     all in favor, say aye, or raise your hand.
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                UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Aye.
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               MR. POULIN: I abstain.
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               MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed, nay, or raise your
     hand. The ayes have it.
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                MR. LUCIANO: Item 4, motion to approve the
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     Management Trustee's per diem with Tim abstaining.
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                MR. BAILEY: Bailey, second.
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                MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? Hearing none,
     all in favor, say aye, or raise your hand.
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                UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Aye.
               MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed, nay, or raise your
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     hand. The ayes have it.
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MR. LUCIANO: Items 5 and 6, motion to accept
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     the invoices from Robinson & Cole and Rose Kallor.
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                MR. BAILEY: Bailey, second.
               MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? Hearing none,
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     all in favor, say aye, or raise your hand.
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                UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Aye.
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               MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed, nay, or raise your
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     hand. The ayes have it.
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               MR. LUCIANO: Motion to approve Items 7 and
     8.
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               MR. BAILEY: Bailey, second.
                MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? Hearing none,
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     all in favor, say aye, or raise your hand.
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                UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Aye.
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                MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed, nay, or raise your
     hand. The ayes have it.
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               MR. LUCIANO: Item 9, motion to approve
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     disability retirements.
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                MR. BAILEY: Bailey, second.
               MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? Hearing none,
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     all in favor, say aye, or raise your hand.
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                UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Aye.
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               MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed, nay, or raise your
     hand. The ayes have it.
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                MR. LUCIANO: Item 10, motion to approve for
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     municipal retirements.
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               MR. BAILEY: Bailey, second.
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               MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? Hearing none,
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     all in favor, say aye, or raise your hand.
                UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Aye.
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               MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed, nay, or raise your
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     hand. The ayes have it.
                MR. LUCIANO: Item 11, motion to approve
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     municipal disability retirements.
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               MR. BAILEY: Bailey, second.
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                MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? Hearing none,
     all in favor, say aye, or raise your hand.
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                UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Aye.
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               MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed, nay, or raise your
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     hand. The ayes have it.
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               MR. LUCIANO: Item 12, approval for municipal
     disability retirement denials.
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                MR. BAILEY: Bailey, second.
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                MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? Hearing none,
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     all in favor, say aye, or raise your hand.
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                UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Aye.
                MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed, nay, or raise your
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     hand. The ayes have it.
                MR. LUCIANO: Motion to accept Items 13 and
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     14, the recommendations of the Medical Examining Board.
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                MR. BAILEY: Bailey, second.
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                MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? Hearing none,
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     all in favor, say aye, or raise your hand.
                UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: (No audible response)
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                MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed, nay, or raise your
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     hand.
            The ayes have it.
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                MR. LUCIANO: Item 15, approval of the
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     Connecticut Probate Judges and Employees Retirement
     System.
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                MR. BAILEY: Bailey, second.
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                MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? Hearing none,
     all in favor, say aye, or raise your hand.
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                UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Aye.
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                MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed, nay, or raise your
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     hand. The ayes have it.
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                MR. LUCIANO: Motion to approve the Probate
     Judges and Employees Retirement Fund expenses, Item 16.
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                MR. BAILEY: Bailey, second.
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                MR. ADOMEIT: Any discussion? Hearing none,
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     all in favor, say aye.
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                UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Aye.
                MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed, nay. The ayes have
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     it.
                MR. LUCIANO: There's an Item 17. I'm going
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     to let Claude make that motion.
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MR. POULIN: I move to accept the recommendation of the actuary with respect to the State Employees Retirement System, the Judges, Family Support Magistrates and Probate Judges and Employees Retirement System Experience Investigation Reports for the four-year period ending on June 30th, 2020.

MR. BAILEY: Bailey, second.

MR. ADOMEIT: Is there any discussion? Long pause.

MR. POULIN: Well, we - this is Claude. We had the meeting yesterday of the Actuarial Subcommittee and the Experience Investigation, and we also had a meeting on September 1st. Of course, the important - the - just in terms of background is that every four or five years, we ask the actuary of the systems to prepare an experience investigation of the demographic assumptions and the investment - the economic assumptions of the retirement systems, so that if there is a need to revise the assumptions with respect to investment return, inflation, retirements, withdrawals, mortality, then we can do so.

This year, of course, the important assumption is the retirement. And there was a consensus after yesterday's meeting that we will be in a better position after October, after we see the

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     number of actual retirements, especially for Tier II
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     and Tier II-A in October, what the retirement
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     assumption should be.
                MR. ADOMEIT: Okay. You just condensed a lot
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     of documents. Thank you, Claude.
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                Is there any further discussion on this?
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     Okay, hearing none, all in favor of the motion to
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     accept, say aye, or raise your hand.
                UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Aye.
                MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed, nay, or raise your
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     hand. The ayes have it.
                MR. LUCIANO: I'd like to make a motion that
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     we go into executive session to discuss Ronald Johnson
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     versus SERC.
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                MR. BAILEY: Bailey, second.
               MR. ADOMEIT: Okay. All in favor, say aye,
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     or raise your hand.
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                UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Aye.
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                MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed, nay, or raise your
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     hand. The ayes have it.
                MR. LUCIANO: That includes the usual
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22
     suspects for executive session.
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               MS. CIESLAK: And Sal - this is Cindy
     Cieslak. I believe that will include Bruce Barth,
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Colin Newman, John Herrington, Michael Rose, Ya Menon,

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and myself, Cindy Cieslak.
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                MR. LUCIANO: Exactly. Thank you, Cindy.
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                MS. CIESLAK: Thank you.
                (The Board was in executive session from 9:33
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     a.m. to 9:39 a.m.)
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                MR. LUCIANO: Is there anything under good
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     and welfare that we want to talk about? Hearing none,
     a motion to adjourn is in order.
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                MR. BAILEY: Bailey, second.
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                MR. ADOMEIT: All in favor, say aye, or raise
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11
     your hand.
                UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: Aye.
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                MR. ADOMEIT: Opposed, nay, or raise your
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     hand. The ayes have it.
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                Thank you all.
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                MR. LUCIANO: Thank you.
                MS. CARLSON: Sal, I'll call - I'm going to
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     call you, Sal.
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                MR. LUCIANO: Okay.
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                (Adjourned at 9:39 a.m.)
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5	I, Karin A. Empson, do hereby
6	certify that the preceding pages are an accurate
7	transcription of the Connecticut State Employees
8	Retirement Commission meeting held electronically via
9	Zoom, conducted at 9:05 a.m. on September 16, 2021.
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16	Karin G. Empson
17	Karin G. Empson Karin A. Empson
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19	10/29/2021
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