

MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF
THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
STATE EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF ILLINOIS
February 6, 2014

A meeting of the Executive Committee of the State Employees' Retirement System of Illinois was held on Thursday, February 6, 2014 at 8:30 a.m. in the System's Springfield office at 2101 S. Veterans Parkway.

Committee Members Present:

Loren Iglarsh, Chairperson
Lori Laidlaw, Vice Chairperson
Timothy Blair, Executive Secretary

Others Present:

Steve Bochenek, Attorney
Kathy Yemm, Manager, Claims Division
Don Williams, Supervisor, Disability Section
Kerry Walker, Assistant Supervisor, Disability Section
Michael Noblet, Supervisor, Pension and Death Section
Joseph Maggio, Manager, Service & Refunds Division
Alice Short, Claimant
Steven W. Berg, Attorney for Ms. Short
Peggy J. Henry, Co-worker of Ms. Short
Anna Galarza, Claimant
Rosie Tejeda, sister of Anna Galarza
Patricia Belk, SERS Chicago Office
Jennifer Staley, Recording Secretary

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the January 8, 2014 meeting of the Executive Committee were presented by Chairman Iglarsh for approval. Copies of the minutes were previously mailed to Committee members for review. There being no additions or corrections, on motion by Vice Chairperson Laidlaw, seconded by Secretary Blair and by unanimous vote, the minutes were approved as submitted.

Routine Claims & Denial Report

The Routine Claims and Denials Report for the month of January, 2014 were presented. Following review and discussion, the Routine Claims and Denials Report for the period of January, 2014, as prepared by staff, was received by the Executive Committee.

New Business

Alice Short – Occupational Disability

Alice Short is requesting a personal hearing, represented by her attorney, Steven W. Berg, to appeal the denial of Occupational Disability benefits.

Alice Short works as an Administrative Assistant II for the Governor's Office of Management & Budget. She alleges disability due to injuries she sustained when falling down a flight of stairs at work during a fire drill. Based on her job duty descriptions, our medical examiner did not find Ms. Short to be disabled from performing the duties of her job. Ms. Short claims the Job Duty Statement was not completed accurately and her co-worker Peggy J. Henry, who was present at the meeting, agreed.

After some discussion and review of all evidence in file, it was decided that SRS will request a new job duty statement from Ms. Short's supervisor and set up another evaluation with our medical doctor using the new job duty description. Ms. Short's appeal has been deferred.

Anna Galarza – Nonoccupational Half Time Ceased

Anna Galarza, accompanied by her sister Rosie Tejada, is requesting a personal hearing to appeal the termination/overpayment of her nonoccupational disability being paid past the termination date of her benefit. Anna Galarza had been told, and her statements reflected, that her termination date was October, 2016. Our office later informed her the correct half time ceasing date should have been February, 2013, resulting in an overpayment of disability benefits (and insurance coverage). She is asking to continue benefits until a decision is made on her case, as her husband has medical problems and they need the insurance. Chairman Iglarsh made a motion, seconded by Executive Secretary Blair, to temporarily reinstate benefits until the end of March, 2014 and referred the case to the System's attorney, Steve Bochenek, for recommendation.

Eleanora Oleghe – Nonoccupational Disability

Eleanora Oleghe is requesting a waiver of the 90 day filing period for nonoccupational disability benefits. Ms. Oleghe stopped working on June 30, 2013 and began a medical leave of absence on August 1, 2013. Her agency notified SERS of her disability on September 23, 2013 and a disability packet was mailed to her on September 25, 2013. Since her application was not received within the 90 day filing period, her benefit was not effective until December 27, 2013, the date her application was received.

Following a review of the file and some discussion, Chairman Iglarsh moved approval of the appeal of Eleanora Oleghe. Vice Chairperson Laidlaw seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Patrice Austin-Geiger – Nonoccupational Disability

Patrice Austin-Geiger is requesting a written appeal of the denial of her nonoccupational disability benefits. Ms. Austin-Geiger went on a medical leave of absence on August 7, 2013 and returned to work on October 1, 2013. She notified SERS of her disability November 7, 2013. A disability packet was mailed to her on November 12, 2013 and her application was received on January 13, 2014. As she did not return her application within 90 days and returned to work prior to her application being received, her disability application was denied. Ms. Austin-Geiger said she was not aware she could file for disability benefits and her agency failed to inform SERS that she had been placed on a leave.

Following a review of the file and some discussion, Chairman Iglarsh moved approval of the appeal of Patrice Austin-Geiger. Vice Chairperson Laidlaw seconded the motion and all were in favor.

Gary Brown – Military Service Purchase

Gary Brown is requesting a written appeal of the denial of his request to purchase military service. Mr. Brown retired from the State of Illinois on July 1, 2013 and had not purchased the service credit before retirement. He was sent a letter on August 26, 2013 and given an option to pay for the service within 30 days; however, Mr. Brown did not do this.

Based upon the facts of this case and after some discussion, Executive Secretary Blair moved approval of the appeal of Gary Brown to allow him to establish military service credit, seconded by Vice Chairperson Laidlaw and all were in favor. The payment is due within 30 days from our billing notice.

John Mitchell – Service Purchase

Rita F. Mitchell, widow of John K. Mitchell, is requesting a written appeal with the Executive Committee. She is asking that she be allowed to establish 93.75 months of creditable service subsequent to the death of her husband so she may be eligible for survivor health insurance through the State of Illinois.

Mr. Mitchell was diagnosed with a brain tumor in June of 2012. He had planned to buy back service time; however, had not done it at the time of his death on May 20, 2013.

After review of the information submitted and some discussion, Vice Chairperson Laidlaw moved approval of the appeal of Rita F. Mitchell, on behalf of her husband John K. Mitchell, to permit the establishment of service credit, seconded by Executive Secretary Blair and all were in favor. The payment is due within 30 days from our billing notice.

Karen Mellow – Reciprocal Retirement

Karen Mellow is requesting the Executive Committee to change her pension from an independent retirement to a reciprocal retirement. Karen Mellow retired from SERS effective August 1, 2013. Ms. Mellow had intended to retire reciprocally and had received a reciprocal estimate; however, neglected to mark the reciprocal choice on her pension application.

After some discussion, Executive Secretary Blair motioned to allow Karen Mellow's pension to be changed to a reciprocal pension; thereby allowing her to get a portion of her pension from the Chicago School Teachers' Pension Fund. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairperson Laidlaw, both were in favor. Chairman Iglarsh was not present when this item was considered.

Old Business

At the January 8, 2014 Executive Committee meeting, Chairman Iglarsh asked about the need for a general disclaimer given the passage of Senate Bill 1 and the uncertainty of the outcome of litigation challenging the constitutionality of the legislative. Executive Secretary Blair agreed that language was needed that could be added to member statements, requested retirement benefit estimates, etc. Steve Bochenek, the System's attorney, stated that he had drafted a disclaimer that could be used for various purposes and had provided it to the System's staff for use in various member correspondences. The language that has been added is as follows:

IMPORTANT NOTICE

All estimates prepared by the State Retirement Systems (SRS) are based on current law. The recently enacted amendments to the Pension Code are not effective until June 1, 2014 (P.A. 98-0599). Those amendments may very well impact this estimate. However, the effective date and the validity of this newly enacted law may eventually be impacted by any legal challenges that are filed. For these reasons, all estimates prepared by SRS are based on current law and do not reflect the impact of the amendments to the Pension Code enacted in December, 2013.

There being no further business to be brought before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

The next meeting of the Executive Committee is scheduled for Thursday, March 6, 2014, in the Springfield office, with video conferencing in Chicago.

Loren Iglarsh
Chairman

Lori Laidlaw
Vice Chairperson

Timothy Blair
Executive Secretary