

HAILEY BLANKENSHIP
Executive Secretary



Martin Spani
Board Chair

STATE OF WASHINGTON
BOARD FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS & RESERVE OFFICERS
PO Box 114•Olympia WA 98507•(360) 753-7318•FAX (360) 586-1987•Toll Free (877) 753-7318
Website:www.bvff.wa.gov

October 21, 2024

The 245th regular meeting of the Board for Volunteer Firefighters and Reserve Officers was convened at 9:00 A.M. in Suite 206 of the James R. Larson Forum Building by Chair Martin Spani, with Board Member Brian VanCamp, Board Member Miland Walling, Board Member Debora Smith, Board Member Phin Haglin and Executive Secretary Hailey Blankenship. Also present were Kristi Bromley and James Aber of the Washington State Investment Board, TJ Nedrow of Washington State Firefighters Association and via Teams, Michael Harbour and Frank Serra of the Office of the State Actuary.

It was requested that presentations from WSIB and OSA be able to address the Board prior to old business items.

The Board reviewed the July 22, 2024 Board Meeting Minutes. It was moved by Board Member VanCamp seconded by Board Member Haglin and carried to approve the previous meeting minutes with no noted corrections.

FIRST HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

Mr. Nedrow addressed the Board as a pension recipient noting appreciation and thanking them and staff for their efforts toward the benefit increase that went into effect and was received. He expressed his anticipation for future work together and the conversations to come.

OLD BUSINESS

Secretary Blankenship provided an update on the database project. As of August the municipality portal has gone live and Secretary Blankenship along with Linea support are continuing training sessions so the members can be approved access to begin using. The project team continues to work through user acceptance testing for payroll functionality that will be live in January. The project budget is going to be met prior to project completion due to the early delays that were experienced. A supplemental budget was submitted to complete the existing work as well as the change request to that have been established to date and the functionality for municipalities to be able to pay using credit cards. It is anticipated that all work will be completed by biennium end, June of 2025.

As reviewed at the April Board meeting the IRS provided their verification of the VFFRO plan status and positive review allowing BVFF to implement the benefit changes that were passed through legislation in 2020. Staff have completed the manual recalculations of all member benefits and the last batch should receive their increased payments in the October payroll.

Secretary Blankenship updated the Board on the Allan Basso LODD benefit appeal. Mrs. Basso dropped her request to appeal the denial of LODD benefits.

Secretary Blankenship updated on the Board on the tabled appeal for Gregory Laycock and his appeal to not receive long term disability benefits and his decision to not accept the permanent partial disability award that

was approved and offered. Staff has received the documentation and will begin a review of the additional documentation to determine if a change in decision will be made. The AAG will also be requested to review and provide feedback to any questions that may be had.

NEW BUSINESS

James Aber and Kristy Bromley of Washington State Investment Board began the conversation with the Board directing their attention to a graph outline where plan contributions originate. As discussed previously with WSIB there are now two funds; the firefighter/EMT and RLEO. Assets will always vary slightly based on investment timing and withdraws. While both funds are managed same and have the same targets there will continue to be a difference in overall fund size. Every four years there will be a new strategic assets allocation study completed. This study measures fund performance. The VFF/EMT fund continues to be very healthy with a 6.4% return while the RLEO fund that was established in 2023 exceeded benchmarks expected for the first year. It is not anticipated to see major fluctuations in the market impacts over the next year as assumptions are based over a fifteen year period and while inclusive of changes they do not create a direct change impact.

Michael Harbour and Frank Serra with the Office of the State Actuary provided the Board with two separate handouts; the highlights of the 2023 valuation study as well as the highlights from the 2024 VFF relief experience study. They reminded the Board, valuations completed for odd years are done using roll forward data from the prior year but are based on updated assumptions. With the recently completed benefits increase the plans liability increased and it is represented in the provided report. With the separation of VFF and RLEO plans part of the plan liability also transferred to the newly established RLEO plan. While the plans structures do not change and they will continue to use the same metrics the valuations will be completed and presented separately. Their presentation continued in reviewing the Relief Experience Study. Many of the expectations were still accurate minus those related to healthcare expenses. There were many questions about rising cost, relief liabilities, supplemental coverages for large unexpected claims and the risk that is taken on by not prefunding relief benefits. In the coming year OSA expects to complete an economic study that will review the pension plans over three years. While the plans are independent of each other and the RLEO plan will be broken out in future studies the same assumptions will continue to be used for both assuming there are not drastic impacts.

The separation of plans mean that BVFF staff will need to separate the GASB report using for reporting proportional shares of liabilities. In the coming year the administrative factors will be reviewed and adopted through a WAC hearing process. BVFF staff are continuing to work on the updated data format that will be provided through PP+. Michael also discussed the need to review the Boards funding methods. He previously presented on this topic at the July Board meeting. Secretary Blankenship will answer any follow up questions in order for the Board to continue the discussion and be able to move on the topic.

The Board discussed the 2025 RLEO and EMSD fees and a motion was made by Board Member VanCamp and seconded by Board Member Haglin to retain the current rates of \$240 for relief and \$140 for pension.

Secretary Blankenship shared the 2024 Performance survey results with the Board. Of two hundred surveys sent only sixty-four were returned. Of those, all responses were at or above average with many providing back positive feedback and excitement for the new portal access.

The Board reviewed the Secretary's leave and pay records

The Board reviewed and approved (Walling moved, VanCamp seconded) the administrative expenditure vouchers numbered #03237 through #03270 and various travel vouchers.

There was a motion by VanCamp seconded by Smith and carried that the retirement pensions and lump-sum settlements listed below be approved effective on the listed dates:

<u>PARTICIPANT</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>EFFECTIVE</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
Michael Arnett	Mukilteo	5/15/2024	322.00 @64
Susan Avery	Mason 13	6/25/2024	350.00
Kathleen Bailie	Benton 1	7/17/2020	3448.86 SURV LUMP
Ray Benoit Jr.	Skagit 2	2/19/2024	175.00 QDRO
Kimberly Benoit		2/19/2024	175.00 QDRO
Robert Bonney Jr.	Long Beach	5/18/2024	299.25 J/S
John Coppersmith	Almira	8/26/2024	350.00
Craig Conrad	Pierce 8	5/23/2023	72.98 J/S
Kevin Curfman	Lewis 6	5/23/2024	350.00
David Darrah	Whatcom 18	7/30/2023	350.00
Robert Demeyer	Whatcom 3	8/24/2023	3824.35 LUMP
Russel Dingman	Hartline	3/3/2023	279.30 J/S
Patricia Ekenes	Okanogan 12	7/15/2024	80.50
Crystal Garrison	Franklin 3	2/4/2022	80.50
Dennis Grisham	Ione	5/25/2024	2839.95 LUMP@60
Kenneth Gustafson	Whatcom 7	1/31/2019	3314.44 LUMP
Paul Haa	S. Pend Oreille FR	8/15/2023	2509.63 LUMP
Dan Hargroves	Yakima 5	5/31/2024	291.90 J/S
Carol Harris	Benton 6	4/16/2024	160.00
Bernard Hilgart	Whatcom 1	3/27/2024	91.00
Demar Holtz Sr.	Mason 16	6/23/2022	91.00
Richard Klein	Almira	8/6/2024	350.00
Brian Klupenger	Central Mason	5/2/2024	61.98 J/S @64
Timothy Latimer	Skamania 1	7/4/2024	350.00
Bradley Martin	S. Pend Oreille	1/1/2023	268.48 J/S
Alan Mehlenbacher	Walla Walla 5	10/4/2021	98.00
Frederick Moore Jr.	Skagit 2	3/17/2024	350.00
Patrick Samuel	Thurston 12	9/10/2023	4892.59 LUMP@61
Harlon Peterson	Selah	8/21/2023	4334.27 LUMP
Scott Simard	Yakima 4	7/16/2024	225.00
David Stroyan	Chewelah	3/17/2024	248.14 J/S @63
Allen Thivierge	Asotin 1	6/29/2024	350.00
John Tufts	Grand Coulee	7/15/2024	350.00
Larry Weber	Northport	3/24/2024	5244.22 LUMP
Cass Whalen	Jefferson 2	1/29/2023	4589.22 LUMP
William Widman	Rosalia	1/3/2016	4331.53 LUMP
Rick Williams	Ellensburg	3/24/2024	4844.18 LUMP
Laurie Wolk	Yacolt	6/27/2024	5099.14 LUMP
Bruce Reeve	Metaline	8/15/2024	201.36 J/S
Kurt Reichert	Cowlitz Lewis 20	9/6/2024	105.00
Michael Rendon	Thurston 8	5/19/2022	167.87 J/S
Gary Schwiesow	Pacific 3	7/8/2024	350.00

The Board discussed and set 2025 meeting dates:

January 27th

April 21st

July 21st

October 20th


GOOD OF THE ORDER

The Board thanked OSA staff for being present through-out and answering questions

SECOND HEARING OF THE PUBLIC

Tj Nedrow addressed the Board with two topics, long term legislation efforts for presumptive coverage and expanding the definition of firefighter. He also posed the questions, what can the Board do to assist in building a toolbox for recruitment and retention. All items will continue to be a discussion point not only at the BVFF board but across the fire service.

There was a motion by VanCamp, seconded by Smith, and carried that the meeting be adjourned at 11:40 am.



Hailey Blankenship, Executive Secretary