

# VENTURA COUNTY EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT ASSOCIATION

## BOARD OF RETIREMENT

### DISABILITY & BUSINESS MEETING

OCTOBER 23, 2023

#### MINUTES

**TRUSTEES  
PRESENT:**

Mike Sedell, Chair, Public Member  
Arthur E. Goulet, Vice-Chair, Retired Member  
Aaron Grass, Safety Employee Member  
Cecilia Hernandez-Garcia, General Employee Member  
Sue Horgan, Treasurer-Tax Collector  
Kelly Long, Public Member  
Anthony Rainey, Public Member  
Jordan Roberts, General Employee Member  
Robert Ashby, Alternate Safety Employee Member  
Donald Brodt, Alternate Public Member  
Will Hoag, Alternate Retired Member

**TRUSTEES  
ABSENT:**

Tommie E. Joe, Public Member

**STAFF  
PRESENT:**

Rick Santos, Interim Retirement Administrator  
Amy Herron, Chief Operations Officer  
Lori Nemiroff, General Counsel  
Dan Gallagher, Chief Investment Officer  
La Valda Marshall, Chief Financial Officer  
Leah Oliver, Chief Technology Officer  
Josiah Vencel, Retirement Benefits Manager  
Brian Owen, Sr. Information Technology Specialist  
Michael Sanchez, Sr. Information Technology Specialist  
Chris Ayala, Program Assistant

**PLACE:**

Ventura County Employees' Retirement Association  
Second Floor, Boardroom  
1190 S. Victoria Avenue, Suite 200  
Ventura, CA 93003

**TIME:**

9:00 a.m.

**ITEM:**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

A. Roll Call.

Chair Sedell called the Disability & Business Meeting of October 23, 2023, to order at 9:02 a.m.

Roll Call:

Trustees Present: Robert Ashby, Donald Brodt, Aaron Grass, Art Goulet, Cecilia Hernandez-Garcia, Sue Horgan, Kelly Long, Anthony Rainey, Jordan Roberts, Will Hoag, Mike Sedell

Trustees Absent: Tommie Joe

B. Oath of Office to be Administered to Tommie Joe, Anthony Rainey, and Donald Brodt.

The Board Clerk administered the Oath of Office to Anthony Rainey and Donald Brodt.

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

MOTION: Approve.

Moved by Goulet, seconded by Horgan

Vote: Motion carried

Yes: Brodt, Grass, Goulet, Hernandez-Garcia, Horgan, Long, Rainey, Roberts, Sedell

No: -

Absent: Joe

Abstain: -

**III. CONSENT AGENDA**

*Notice: Any item appearing on the Consent Agenda may be moved to the Regular Agenda at the request of any Trustee who would like to propose changes to or have discussion on the item.*

A. Approve Regular and Deferred Retirements and Survivors Continuances for the Month of September 2023.

B. Receive and File Pending Disability Application Status Report.

C. Approve Board Retreat & Business Meeting Minutes of September 25, 2023.

D. Receive and File Interim Retirement Administrator's 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2023 Report.

E. Receive and File Chief Investment Officer's 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2023 Investment Activity Report.

MOTION: Approve.

Moved by Long, seconded by Grass

Vote: Motion carried

Yes: Brodt, Grass, Goulet, Hernandez-Garcia, Horgan, Long, Rainey, Roberts, Sedell

No: -

Absent: Joe

Abstain: -

**IV. APPLICATIONS FOR DISABILITY RETIREMENT**

A. Application for Service-connected Disability Retirement—Barry, Jeffrey; Case No. 18-005. (Old Model)

1. Proposed Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Recommended Decision to Grant the Application for Service-connected Disability Retirement, filed by Hearing Officer Humberto Flores, dated June 9, 2023.
2. County of Ventura-Risk Management's Objections to the Hearing Officer's Report, filed by Stephen Roberson, Attorney for Respondent, dated June 16, 2023.
3. Applicant's Response to Objections, filed by Thomas Wicke, Applicant's Attorney, dated July 5, 2023.
4. Application for Service-connected Disability Retirement, filed by Applicant, dated March 8, 2018.
5. Hearing Notice, dated July 25, 2023.

Josiah Vencel was present on behalf of VCERA. Stephen Roberson, Attorney at Law, and Catherine Laveau were present on behalf of the County of Ventura-Risk Management. Thomas Wicke, Attorney at Law, was present on behalf of the applicant, Jeffrey Barry, who was also present.

Mr. Vencel provided a brief summary statement.

Mr. Roberson provided a brief summary statement.

Mr. Wicke provided a brief summary statement.

MOTION: Approve the Hearing Officer's Recommendation to Grant the Service-connected Disability Retirement, Effective June 16, 2018.

Moved by Grass, seconded by Roberts

Vote: Motion carried

Yes: Grass, Hernandez-Garcia, Horgan, Long, Rainey, Roberts, Sedell

No: Goulet

Absent: Joe

Abstain: Brodt

B. Application for Service-connected Disability Retirement—Watson, Douglas; Case No. 18-007. (Old Model) (Fire)

1. Employer's Statement of Position, submitted by County of Ventura-Risk Management, in support of the Application for Service-connected Disability Retirement, dated August 16, 2023.

2. Addendum to Employer's Statement of Position, dated September 1, 2023.
3. Staff's Response to Statement of Position, dated August 28, 2023.
4. Supporting Documentation for Employer's Statement of Position.
5. Application for Service-connected Disability Retirement, filed by Thomas Wicke, Attorney for Applicant, dated March 21, 2018.
6. Hearing Notice, dated September 27, 2023.

Josiah Vencel was present on behalf of VCERA. Catherine Laveau and Carol Kempner, Attorney at Law, were present on behalf of the County of Ventura-Risk Management. Thomas Wicke, Attorney at Law, was present on behalf of the applicant, Douglas Watson.

Mr. Vencel provided a brief summary statement.

Mr. Kempner provided a brief summary statement.

Mr. Wicke provided a brief summary statement.

MOTION: Grant the Service-connected Disability Retirement, Effective March 30, 2018.

Moved by Ashby, seconded by Long

Vote: Motion carried

Yes: Ashby, Brodt, Goulet, Hernandez-Garcia, Horgan, Long, Rainey, Roberts, Sedell

No: -

Absent: Joe

Abstain: -

Note: A clerical error was made during the live meeting, in which the motion typed on the screen showed effective date March 29 instead of March 30. The correct date is March 30, 2018.

C. Application for Service-connected Disability Retirement—Solace, Stephanie; Case No. 20-021. (New Model)

1. Staff Memo Regarding Suspended Hearing and Final Recommendation, dated October 23, 2023.
2. Revised Staff Recommendation to Grant the Application for Service-connected Disability Retirement, dated October 2, 2023.
3. Supporting Documentation for Staff Recommendation.
4. Employer's Medical Evaluation Report, Dr. William Bolling, dated August 9, 2023.
5. County of Ventura-Risk Management's Objection to Staff's Preliminary Recommendation, dated April 14, 2022.
6. Application for Service-connected Disability Retirement, filed by Applicant, dated October 20, 2020.

7. Hearing Notice, dated September 28, 2023.

Josiah Vencel and Vivian Shultz were present on behalf of VCERA. Stephen Roberson, Attorney at Law, and Catherine Laveau were present on behalf of the County of Ventura-Risk Management. The applicant, Stephanie Solace, was also present.

Mr. Vencel provided a brief summary statement.

Mr. Roberson provided a brief summary statement.

Ms. Solace declined to make a statement.

MOTION: Approve Staff's Recommendation to Grant the Service-connected Disability Retirement, Effective March 9, 2019.

Moved by Grass, seconded by Roberts

Vote: Motion carried

Yes: Brodt, Grass, Goulet, Hernandez-Garcia, Horgan, Long, Rainey, Roberts, Sedell

No: -

Absent: Joe

Abstain: -

- D. Application for Nonservice-connected and Service-connected Disability Retirement—  
Nunez, Deanna; Case No. 21-024. (New Model)

1. Staff Recommendation to Grant the Application for Nonservice-connected Disability Retirement, dated October 2, 2023.
2. Applicant's Response to Staff Recommendation, filed by Diana Sparagna, Applicant's Attorney, dated August 23, 2023.
3. Supporting Documentation for Staff Recommendation.
4. Application for Nonservice-connected and Service-connected Disability Retirement, filed by Applicant's Attorney, Diana Sparagna, dated August 11, 2021.
5. Hearing Notice, dated October 10, 2023.

Josiah Vencel was present on behalf of VCERA. Diana Sparagna, Attorney at Law, was present on behalf of the applicant, Deanna Nunez, who was also present.

Mr. Vencel provided a brief summary statement.

Ms. Sparagna provided a brief statement.

MOTION: Approve Staff's Recommendation to Grant Ms. Nunez's Application for a Nonservice-connected Disability Retirement, Effective 6/12/2021, and to Direct her Application for a Service-connected Disability Retirement to an Evidentiary Hearing.

Moved by Goulet, seconded by Roberts

Vote: Motion carried

Yes: Brodt, Grass, Goulet, Hernandez-Garcia, Horgan, Long, Rainey, Roberts, Sedell

No: -

Absent: Joe

Abstain: -

E. Application for Service-connected Disability Retirement—Ratner, Connie; Case No. 21-034. (New Model)

1. Staff Recommendation to Grant the Application for Service-connected Disability Retirement, dated October 9, 2023.
2. Supporting Documentation for Staff Recommendation.
3. Application for Service-connected Disability Retirement, filed by Applicant, dated October 20, 2021.
4. Hearing Notice, dated October 10, 2023.

Josiah Vencel was present on behalf of VCERA. The applicant, Connie Ratner, was also present.

Mr. Vencel provided a brief summary statement.

MOTION: Approve Staff's Recommendation to Grant the Service-connected Disability Retirement, Effective March 16, 2018.

Moved by Roberts, seconded by Goulet

Vote: Motion carried

Yes: Brodt, Grass, Goulet, Hernandez-Garcia, Horgan, Long, Rainey, Roberts, Sedell

No: -

Absent: Joe

Abstain: -

**V. INVESTMENT MANAGER PRESENTATIONS**

A. Receive Annual Investment Presentation from Abbott Capital Management, Young Lee, Matthew Smith, and Arianna Merrill.

Young Lee, Matthew Smith, and Arianna Merrill reported Abbott Capital Management's organizational changes and discussed the firm's investment outlook, portfolio strategy, composition, and investment portfolio performance, and then responded to trustee questions.

B. Receive Annual Investment Presentation from Reams Asset Management, Clark W. Holland.

Clark W. Holland reported Reams Asset Management's organizational changes and discussed the firm's investment outlook, portfolio strategy, composition, and investment portfolio performance, and then responded to trustee questions.

C. Receive Annual Investment Presentation from Western Asset Management, Kevin P. Gore and Julien Scholnick.

Kevin P. Gore and Julien Scholnick reported Western Asset Management's organizational changes and discussed the firm's investment outlook, portfolio strategy, composition, and investment portfolio performance, and then responded to trustee questions.

**VI. INVESTMENT INFORMATION**

VCERA – Dan Gallagher, Chief Investment Officer.

NEPC – Allan Martin and Rose Dean.

Abbott – Young Lee, Matthew Smith, and Arianna Merrill.

A. Annual Presentation by Abbott Capital Management and NEPC of CA Govt. Code Section 7514.7 Annual Report.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Receive and File.**

Mr. Gallagher noted that the item was a report to satisfy the California Government Code Section, 7514.7, for annual mandatory disclosure at a public meeting. Abbott Capital Management would be covering the Private Equity portion of the presentation, followed by NEPC, who would cover the Private Credit, Real Estate, Real Assets, and Infrastructure.

Ms. Arianna Merrill presented the Private Equity report.

Mr. Martin then presented the reports on Private Credit, Real Estate, Real Assets, and Infrastructure.

MOTION: Receive and File.

Moved by Long, seconded by Roberts

Vote: Motion carried

Yes: Brodt, Goulet, Grass, Hernandez-Garcia, Horgan, Long, Rainey, Roberts, Sedell

No: -

Absent: Joe

Abstain: -

After the vote on the agenda item, the Board took a break at 11:15 a.m.

The Board returned from break at 11:27 a.m.

B. \$25 Million Commitment to PIMCO Aviation Income Partners II.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Approve.**

1. Staff Letter from Chief Investment Officer.
2. Joint Fund Recommendation Report from NEPC.
3. PIMCO Aviation Income Partners II Presentation Deck, Preeyam Gandhi, Sean Hinze, Kevin Gray, Catharine Roddy.

Mr. Gallagher provided a brief overview of PIMCO's Aviation Income Partners II investment opportunity and summarized the joint recommendation by him and NEPC for their proposed investment commitment.

After discussion by the Board, staff, and Investment Consultants, the following motion was made:

MOTION: Approve the Investment Commitment of \$25 Million to PIMCO Aviation Income Partners II; and, Subject to Successful Legal Review, Authorize the Board Chair or the Retirement Administrator, or in the Absence of Both the Chief Investment Officer to Approve and Execute the Required Documentation.

Moved by Long, seconded by Rainey

Vote: Motion carried

Yes: Brodt, Grass, Goulet, Hernandez-Garcia, Horgan, Long, Rainey, Roberts, Sedell

No: -

Absent: Joe

Abstain: -

C. Monthly Performance Report Month Ending September 30, 2023.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Receive and File.**

Ms. Dean presented the Monthly Performance Report for Month Ending September 30, 2023.

MOTION: Receive and File.

Moved by Goulet, seconded by Roberts

Vote: Motion carried

Yes: Brodt, Grass, Goulet, Hernandez-Garcia, Horgan, Long, Rainey, Roberts, Sedell

No: -

Absent: Joe

Abstain: -

## **VII. OLD BUSINESS**

A. Alameda Implementation Status Report.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Receive and File.**

Ms. Herron presented the Alameda Implementation Status Report to the Board.

MOTION: Receive and File.

Moved by Roberts, seconded by Goulet

Vote: Motion carried

Yes: Brodt, Grass, Goulet, Hernandez-Garcia, Horgan, Long, Rainey, Roberts, Sedell

No: -

Absent: Joe

Abstain: -

## **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

A. SACRS Business/Legislative Package Fall 2023.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Support the Proposal Slate.**

1. Staff Letter from Interim Retirement Administrator.



2. SACRS Fall Conference Business Meeting Packet.

Mr. Santos presented the SACRS Business/Legislative Package of Fall 2023.

MOTION: Support the Entire Legislative Proposal Slate to be Presented at the SACRS Business Meeting on Friday, November 10<sup>th</sup>, in Rancho Mirage.

Moved by Long, seconded by Rainey

Vote: Motion carried

Yes: Brodt, Grass, Goulet, Hernandez-Garcia, Horgan, Long, Rainey, Roberts, Sedell

No: -

Absent: Joe

Abstain: -

Chair Sedell said that he would like to have the Board hear agenda item VIII.B., "Presentation of Certificate to General Counsel, Lori Nemiroff for 30 Years of Service", and then advance to items X. Informational, XI. Public Comment, XII. Staff Comment, and XIII. Board Member Comment, before returning to item IX., "Closed Session". Subsequently, they would then adjourn the meeting, subject to any announcements. He also did not expect any action from the closed session meeting.

B. Presentation of Certificate to General Counsel, Lori Nemiroff for 30 Years of Service.

Chair Sedell presented a certificate to General Counsel, Lori Nemiroff for 30 Years of Service.

Trustee Goulet extended his personal congratulations to Ms. Nemiroff. He had known her for a long time, and she was a pleasure to work with.

After the presentation of the certificate of service to the General Counsel, the Board then advanced to agenda item, X., "Informational".

**IX. CLOSED SESSION**

- A. Existing litigation pursuant to paragraph (1) of subdivision (d) of Section 54956.9: LACERA v. County of Los Angeles et al., Cal. Court of Appeal Second Appellate District Case No. B326977 (consider whether to enter as an amicus curiae).

The Board then took a 5 minute break at 12:43 p.m., before adjourning the Open Session meeting and entering into Closed Session.

**X. INFORMATIONAL**

- A. SACRS Legislative Update – September 2023.
- B. SACRS Legislative Update – October 2023.
- C. Western Asset Management's Invitation to the 135th Rose Parade.
- D. VCERA Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire for Governance Project.

Mr. Santos said that staff had included the *VCERA Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire for Governance Project*, which was being provided to the Board based on their discussion and outside counsel Ashley Dunning's recommendation at the Board Retreat in September. Therefore, staff was requesting that each Board member complete the questionnaire and return it to staff by the next board meeting on November 6<sup>th</sup>, so that staff would have more information to get direction before proceeding to the next phase in the process.

Trustee Goulet stated that they should also ask staff for input. Mr. Santos stated that this would be in the second phase of this exercise.

**XI. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**XII. STAFF COMMENT**

Mr. Gallagher reported that during October 11-13, Trustee Sedell, Trustee Ashby, and he conducted on-site due diligence visits in Chicago with VCERA private equity/ private credit manager Adams Street, and value add real estate manager LaSalle; and in Minneapolis with VCERA overlay manager Parametric.

They met with firm management, portfolio managers, operational personnel including those in information technology, risk management, valuation, acquisitions, dispositions, and more.

The VCERA team found all three visits to be educational and informative; the people were helpful and forthcoming, and answered all of their questions. They found no due diligence concerns.

Mr. Gallagher also reminded the Board that each of the Board Retreat lead-off speakers offered access to their research on their websites or via mailing lists and he offered assistance if anyone needed follow up.

**XIII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENT**

Trustee Hernandez-Garcia welcomed both Trustee Rainey and Trustee Brodt to the Board of Retirement.

Chair Sedell noted that the Ventura County Board of Supervisors had also made a couple of other appointments. They reappointed Trustee Joe to the Board of Retirement. Chair Sedell was not reappointed and would finish out the remainder of the year, and then newly appointed member, Taylor Dacus, will take his seat on the Board.

Trustee Horgan provided a quick update on the VCERA Retirement Administrator recruitment. As of today, VCERA's consultant, Pam Derby would be closing the first resume review date, today. The Recruitment Committee (which was comprised of Chair Sedell, Trustee Ashby, and Trustee Horgan) would be meeting with Ms. Derby on November 3<sup>rd</sup> to discuss the screening interviews they had conducted and the semi-finalist candidates for the Board's interview process.

Trustee Long wanted to thank Trustee Rainey and Trustee Brodt for their willingness to serve. She also thanked Chair Sedell for his service on the Board of Retirement, and she would also like to request that Chair Sedell be involved with the interview process for the new Retirement Administrator.

The Board then returned to agenda item, IX.A., "Existing litigation pursuant to paragraph (1) of subdivision (d) of Section 54956.9: LACERA v. County of Los Angeles et al., Cal. Court of Appeal Second Appellate District Case No. B326977 (consider whether to enter as an amicus curiae)".

**XIV. ADJOURNMENT**

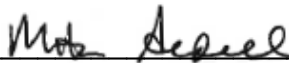
The Chair said the Board would adjourn the meeting at the conclusion of the Closed Session meeting.

Respectfully submitted,



\_\_\_\_\_  
RICK SANTOS, Interim Retirement Administrator

Approved,



\_\_\_\_\_  
MIKE SEDELL, Chair