

City of Clearwater

*Main Library - Council Chambers
100 N. Osceola Avenue
Clearwater, FL 33755*



Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

1:30 PM

Special Meeting

777 Maple Street, Clearwater, FL 33755

Pension Advisory Committee

Roll Call

Present 6 - Chair Nathan Hightower, Vice Chair David Sowers, Committee Member Ryan Cotton, Committee Member Juliet Marvenko, Committee Member Chris Smaha, and Committee Member Corey Lenczden

Also Present – David Margolis – City Attorney, Tiffany Makras - Human Resources Director, and Nicole Sprague – Deputy City Clerk

1. Call To Order

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes

- 2.1 Approve minutes of January 9, 2025 Pension Advisory Committee meeting as submitted in written summation.

Member Sowers moved to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2025 Pension Advisory Committee meeting as submitted in written summation. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

3. Citizens to be Heard Regarding Items Not on the Agenda: None.**4. New Business Items**

- 4.1 Recommend approval of the new hires for acceptance into the Pension Plan as listed.

Name	Job Classification	Department	Pension Eligibility Date
Tyler McKenna	Utilities Mechanic	Public Utilities	12/30/2024
Petra Lara	Staff Assistant I	General Services	01/11/2025
Jay Albis	Police Officer	Police Department	01/13/2025
Joe Bay	Budget Analyst II	Finance Department	01/13/2025
Aly'ssa Brown	Police Officer	Police Department	01/13/2025
Daniel Copeland	Police Officer	Police Department	01/13/2025
Carlos Estrella	Police Officer	Police Department	01/13/2025
Benjamin Floyd	Solid Waste Equipment Oper	Solid Waste & Recycling	01/13/2025
Michael Gainer	Wastewater Treatment Plant Oper A	Public Utilities	01/13/2025
Edward Graham	Police Cadet	Police Department	01/13/2025
Daniel Hurd	Police Officer	Police Department	01/13/2025
Daniel Irwin	Police Officer	Police Department	01/13/2025
Kelsy Johnson	Recreation Specialist	Parks & Recreation	01/13/2025
Amanda Levicki	Police Service Tech	Police Department	01/13/2025
Megan McLaughlin	Executive Assistant	City Council	01/13/2025

Matthew Mulligan	Police Cadet	Police Department	01/13/2025
Justin Paulson	Police Cadet	Police Department	01/13/2025
Marissa Polencheck	Police Cadet	Police Department	01/13/2025
Patricio Tovar	Public Utilities Assistant Manager	Public Utilities	01/13/2025
Tommy Wright	Fleet Mechanic	General Services	01/13/2025
Daniel Zagone	Police Cadet	Police Department	01/13/2025
Devonte Hinton	Water Distribution Operator Trainee	Public Utilities	01/27/2025
Sheldon Kautz	Wastewater Treatment Plant Oper C	Public Utilities	01/27/2025
Marcus Mayfield	Solid Waste Worker I	Solid Waste & Recycling	01/27/2025
Ruben Rivera-Garcia	Solid Waste Worker I	Solid Waste & Recycling	01/27/2025
Aaron Shaw	Gas Technician I	Gas Department	01/27/2025
Jared Staudinger	Water Distribution Operator Trainee	Public Utilities	01/27/2025
Sarah Straker	Recreation Specialist	Parks & Recreation	01/27/2025
Daniel Terrell	Solid Waste Worker I	Solid Waste & Recycling	01/27/2025
Garret Chrissley	Human Resources Analyst I	Human Resources	02/10/2025
Dylan Dasopatis	Solid Waste Equipment Operator	Solid Waste & Recycling	02/10/2025
Welton Thomas	Solid Waste Service Supervisor II	Solid Waste & Recycling	02/10/2025
Brian Ulbricht	CRA Specialist	Community Redevelopment Agency	02/10/2025

Member Sowers moved to recommend approval of the new hires for acceptance into the Pension Plan as listed. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

- 4.2** Recommend approval of the following request of employees David Melton, Public Works Department and Kyle Vaughan, Public Works Department to vest their pension as provided by Section 2.419 of the Employees' Pension Plan.

David Melton, Stormwater/Heavy Equipment Operator, Public Works Department, was employed by the City on March 6, 2008, and his pension service credit is effective on that date. Mr. Melton terminated from City employment on December 22, 2024.

Kyle Vaughan, Engineering Specialist II, Public Works Department, was employed by the City on September 3, 2011, and his pension service credit is effective on January 16, 2012. Mr. Vaughan terminated from City employment on January 17, 2025.

The Employees' Pension Plan provides that should an employee cease to be an employee of the City of Clearwater or change status from full-time to part-time after completing five or more years (non-hazardous duty) and ten or more years (hazardous duty) of creditable service (pension participation), such employee shall acquire a vested interest in the retirement benefits. Vested pension payments commence on the first of the month following the month in which the employee normally would have been eligible for retirement. Section 2.416 provides for normal retirement eligibility for non-hazardous duty employees hired prior to the effective date of this reinstatement (1/1/13), a

member shall be eligible for retirement following the earlier of the date on which a participant has reached the age of fifty-five (55) years and completed twenty (20) years of credited service; the date on which a participant has reached age sixty-five (65) years and completed ten (5) years of credited service; or the date on which a member has completed thirty (30) years of service regardless of age. For non-hazardous duty employees hired on or after the effective date of this restatement, a member shall be eligible for retirement following the earlier of the date on which a participant has reached the age of sixty (60) years and completed twenty-five (25) years of credited service; or the date on which a participant has reached the age of sixty-five (65) years and completed ten (5) years of credited service. Mr. Melton will meet the non-hazardous duty criteria and begin collecting a pension in February of 2028. Mr. Vaughan will meet the non-hazardous duty criteria and begin collecting a pension in January of 2041.

Section 2.416 provides for normal retirement eligibility for hazardous duty employees, a member shall be eligible for retirement following the earlier of the date on which the participant has completed twenty (20) years of credited service regardless of age, or the date on which the participant has reached fifty-five (55) years and completed ten (10) years of credited service.

Member Teixeira moved to recommend approval of the following request of employees David Melton, Public Works Department and Kyle Vaughan, Public Works Department to vest their pension as provided by Section 2.419 of the Employees' Pension Plan. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

- 4.3** Recommend approval of the following request of Perry Conzen, General Services Department, Nilda Espinosa, Planning & Development Department, Robert Orner, General Services Department, Maria Pita, Police Department, and Christian Zarra, Police Department, for a regular pension as provided by Sections 2.416 and 2.424 of the Employees' Pension Plan.

Perry Conzen, Fleet Division Manager, General Services Department, was employed by the City on January 12, 2004, and his pension service credit is effective on that date. His pension will be effective April 1, 2025. Based on an average salary of approximately \$97,060.42 over the past five years, the formula for computing regular pensions and Mr. Conzen's selection of the 100% Joint and Survivor Annuity, this pension benefit will be approximately \$44,639.28 annually.

Nilda Espinosa, Code Inspector I, Planning & Development Department, was employed by the City on May 8, 2000, and her pension service credit is effective on that date. Her pension will be effective February 1, 2025. Based on an average salary of approximately \$55,602.10 over the past five years, the formula for computing regular pensions and Ms. Espinosa's selection of the 10 Year Certain and Life Annuity, this pension benefit will be

approximately \$34,734.36 annually.

Robert Orner, Fleet Mechanic Supervisor, General Services Department, was employed by the City on September 24, 2012, and his pension service credit is effective on that date. His pension will be effective May 1, 2025. Based on an average salary of approximately \$63,846.74 over the past five years, the formula for computing regular pensions and Mr. Orner's selection of the 50% Joint and Survivor Annuity, this pension benefit will be approximately \$17,997.48 annually.

Maria Pita, Police Officer, Police Department, was employed by the City on October 25, 2010, and her pension service credit is effective on that date. Her pension will be effective February 1, 2025. Based on an average salary of approximately \$92,885.74 over the past five years, the formula for computing early retirement pensions and Ms. Pita's selection of the 50% Joint and Survivor Annuity, this pension benefit will be approximately \$28,579.92 annually.

Christian Zarra, Police Sergeant, Police Department, was employed by the City on July 21, 1997, and his pension service credit is effective on that date. His pension will be effective February 1, 2025. Based on an average salary of approximately \$147,006.17 over the past five years, the formula for computing regular pensions and Mr. Zarra's selection of the Joint and Survivor Annuity with the 30% partial lump sum, this pension benefit will be approximately \$78,380.52 annually.

Section 2.416 provides for normal retirement eligibility for non-hazardous duty employees hired prior to the effective date of this reinstatement (1/1/13), a member shall be eligible for retirement following the earlier of the date on which a participant has reached the age of fifty-five (55) years and completed twenty (20) years of credited service; the date on which a participant has reached age sixty-five (65) years and completed five (5) years of credited service; or the date on which a member has completed thirty (30) years of service regardless of age. For non-hazardous duty employees hired on or after the effective date of this restatement, a member shall be eligible for retirement following the earlier of the date on which a participant has reached the age of sixty (60) years and completed twenty-five (25) years of credited service; or the date on which a participant has reached the age of sixty-five (65) years and completed five (5) years of credited service. Mr. Conzen, Ms. Espinosa, and Mr. Orner have met the non-hazardous duty criteria. Section 2.416 provides for normal retirement eligibility for hazardous duty employees, a member shall be eligible for retirement following the earlier of the date on which the participant has completed twenty (20) years of credited service regardless of age, or the date on which the participant has reached fifty-five (55) years and completed ten (10) years of credited service. Ms. Pita and Mr. Zarra have met the hazardous duty criteria.

Member Sowers moved to recommend approval of the following request of Perry Conzen, General Services Department, Nilda Espinosa, Planning and Development Department, Robert Orner, General Services Department, Maria Pita, Police Department, and Christian Zarra, Police Department for a regular pension as provided in Sections 2.416 and 2.424 of the Employees' Pension Plan. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

4.4 Informal hearing for Andrew Anderson request for job-connected disability pension

The City Attorney reviewed Andrew Anderson's application for a job-connected disability and hearing requirements as detailed by code. He said the applicant is claiming cardiac and psychiatric disability. The applicant was hired as a Clearwater Police Officer in May 2011. The applicant underwent a LifeScan wellness evaluation in September 2023 and was eventually diagnosed with Supra Ventricular Tachycardia. He said Mr. Anderson had been in various states of FMLA and leave from the City and subsequently separated from City employment. Mr. Anderson was seen and evaluated by the Independent Medical Examiner (IME) for both cardiac and psychiatric diagnoses.

Member Teixeira moved to accept into evidence the entire file, inclusive of the application, personnel file interrogatories, medical records, and the Independent Medical Examiner. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

Attorney Tanya Oliver, representing Andrew Anderson, said Mr. Anderson was treated under Worker's Compensation for the abnormal heart rhythm. There is no known cause of the arrhythmia. The pre-employment physical showed no evidence of heart disease.

It was said that the committee is comfortable granting the job-connected disability based on the cardiac portion of the application while recognizing the psychological component as well.

Member Teixeira moved that Andrew Anderson met the requirements for a job-related disability pension as he was disabled by reason of an injury suffered or an illness contracted in the line of duty, such disability is likely to be continuous and permanent from a cause other than those listed as general disability exclusions, and he is unable, by reason of a medically determinable physical or mental impairment, to render useful and efficient service as a police officer or firefighter. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

4.5 Informal hearing for Chad Reed request for job-connected disability pension

The City Attorney reviewed Chad Reed's application for a job-connect disability and hearing requirements as detailed by code. He said the applicant is claiming cardiac disability. The applicant was hired as a Clearwater Police Officer in September 1999 and submitted a disability application in July 2024 after being diagnosed with Supra Ventricular Tachycardia, and he retired in September 2024.

Member Sowers moved to accept into evidence the entire file, inclusive of the application, personnel file interrogatories, medical records, and the Independent Medical Examiner. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

Mr. Reed said he was hired in September 1999 with a clean pre-employment physical screening. In May 2022 he started experiencing heart palpitations, sweating, heart racing and high blood pressure while on duty and was admitted to the hospital. He was diagnosed with Supra Ventricular Tachycardia. Similar episodes sent him back to the hospital in September 2023 and March 2024. He said his symptoms are a liability in this occupation and was placed on FMLA. He said he experiences daily symptoms, and it affects his personal and professional life.

In response to questions, Mr. Reed said there was one medication he refused to take under the advisement of two other cardiologists. He said he is willing to undergo a cardiac ablation procedure and has been scheduled and cancelled twice by the Worker's Compensation doctor. He said some documentation was not provided in the disability notebook because there is still an open Worker's Compensation case.

Member Lenczden moved that Chad Reed met the requirements for a job-related disability pension as he was disabled by reason of an injury suffered or an illness contracted in the line of duty, such disability is likely to be continuous and permanent from a cause other than those listed as general disability exclusions, and he is unable, by reason of a medically determinable physical or mental impairment, to render useful and efficient service as a police officer or firefighter. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

5. Old Business Items: None.

6. Director's Report: None.

7. Board Members to be Heard: None.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:21 p.m.

Chair, Pension Advisory Committee

Attest:

Board Reporter