

MFPRSI UPDATE

Spring 2024 Volume 60

June Anne Gaeta Retires from MFPRSI Board

June Anne Gaeta is hanging up her “trustee hat” after 22 years on the Municipal Fire and Police Retirement System’s (MFPRSI) Board of Trustees.

Gaeta, who served with the Muscatine Fire Department for 27 years, wrapped up her service on the MFPRSI board – one of its longest-tenured members – this April. In 2002, Gaeta had been looking for a way to serve her colleagues, and the MFPRSI board was a perfect fit.



June Anne Gaeta

Today, Gaeta says she is most proud that the system’s fiscal responsibility – through diversifying its investments and hiring financial consultants – has ensured stability for its members.

Challenges remain, she says, including managing disability appeals. For the past decade, Gaeta has been a staunch advocate for better documentation among firefighters who are not used to documenting in the way that police officers document incidents.

“I’ve been on an education spree for people to document everything,” she said. “When individuals don’t document an incident properly and their claim doesn’t qualify, they have to relive it during an appeal. This is especially true for people with mental injuries. The worst thing we can do is make them relive a traumatic event.”

Gaeta is pleased that the Iowa Legislature passed a bill in 2009 that certain cancers affecting firefighters and police officers are presumed to be contracted while on the job. This ensures a smoother disability claims process. Today, career fire departments and the International Association of Fire Fighters are pushing cancer prevention through guidelines and advocacy, especially as it pertains to bunker gear.

With the increased use of self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBAs), firefighters can be inside burning structures longer – but they may leave with carcinogenic material on their gear. “Firefighters and police officers make physical sacrifices every day, and those can add up over time,” Gaeta said. “It can seem small in the moment to wear dirty gear for two weeks, but that can build to something big – like cancer – years later.”

Continued on page 3

In this Issue

June Anne Gaeta Retires from MFPRSI Board	1	Board Appointments	3
2024 Legislative Update.....	2	Escalation Explained.....	3
		Remaining MFPRSI 2024 Calendar.....	4
		Sign Up for My411!	4

2024 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The Iowa General Assembly passed legislation modifying Iowa Code Chapter 411. The new law makes multiple changes to the disability program, including a change to the active member contribution rate. House File 2680 (HF 2680) was signed into law by the governor on May 3, 2024, and will become effective July 1, 2024. Some of the major changes are outlined below:

- **Member Contribution Rate:** The member's contribution rate increases from 9.4% to 9.55%.
- **Mental Health Evaluations:** Mental health evaluations will be added to the entrance exam process. MFPRSI will modify its existing protocols in the coming months to comply with the new requirements.
- **Member in Good Standing:** While applying for a disability benefit, members will remain in good standing until the member has been terminated and exhausted all appeals available under any applicable collective bargaining agreement or applicable law. If a member is ultimately determined not to be in good standing, the member will have an obligation to return benefits paid in error plus interest.
- **Right to Apply for Accidental Disability Benefit after Ordinary Disability Retirement:** Members retired on ordinary disability will be able to apply for accidental disability up to three years following retirement.
- **Definite Time and Place:** HF 2680 removes the "definite time and place" requirement for accidental disability benefits and accidental death benefits under Iowa Code Chapter 411. So long as the other requirements for eligibility are satisfied, a member will be able to receive accidental disability benefits (and the member's beneficiary can receive accidental death benefits) if the member can connect the disabling injury or disease to the actual performance of duty, even if not at a particular time or times. Cumulative job-related injuries could give rise to an accidental disability benefit (or accidental death benefit) with these changes. (An exception is for mental injuries, which received a new statutory legal causation standard under HF 2680, described in more detail below).
- **Mental Injuries:** To establish a mental injury is eligible for an accidental disability benefit, the member must be able to trace the injury to a readily identifiable work event. Additionally, the work event must be a manifest happening of a sudden traumatic nature from an unexpected cause or unusual strain in the workplace compared to other firefighters and police officers in Iowa. The "definite time and place" and unusual stress requirements continue to apply to mental injuries. Disabling mental injuries not qualifying for an accidental disability benefit will still be eligible for an ordinary disability benefit.
- **Medical Expenses:** HF 2680 disconnects the employing city's obligation to cover medical expenses from the type of benefit the member is receiving from MFPRSI. Cities must cover medical expenses for members injured on the job, regardless of the type of benefit the member is receiving from MFPRSI. Cities cannot cover medical expenses with medical insurance that requires members to pay premiums, co-pays, or deductibles. Cities may process claims concerning cancer, heart, and lung or respiratory

Continued on page 3

Board of Trustees

MFPRSI's Board of Trustees consists of nine voting members and four non-voting members.

Voting Members:

Marty Pottebaum, Chair
Frank Guihan
Mallory Merritt
Duane Pitcher
Laura Schaefer

Nickolas Schaul
Jennifer Sease
Eric Snyder
Jason Zilk

Non-Voting Members:

Sen. Nate Boulton
Sen. Tim Kraayenbrink
Rep. Kenan Judge
Rep. Matthew Rinker

Contact Us

T: (515) 254-9200 or
(888) 254-9200

E: pensions@mfprsi.org

W: www.mfprsi.org

Open M-F, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

2024 Legislation continued.

illnesses through their group health insurance plan as long as the member is not responsible for any cost-sharing. HF 2680 defines “cost-sharing” as any coverage limit, copayment, coinsurance, deductible, or other out-of-pocket cost obligation related to an injury or disease incurred while in the performance of duties. To be eligible for medical expense coverage, the member must notify the city (or the city must have actual knowledge) within 90 days of the occurrence of the injury or disease. A member must take action to have the employing city cover medical expenses before the later of: two years from the date of occurrence of the injury or disease; or, two years from the date the city denies a claim for medical expenses. Cities will not be responsible for a claim for a newly discovered work-related injury if it is filed more than three years from the member’s last date of employment.

Questions related to medical expenses should be directed to the employing City.

- **Retirement Income Exclusion:** HF 2680 clarifies that the retirement income exclusion for tax purposes applies to all surviving spouses of a Chapter 411 member, regardless of the age or disability status of the member or the member’s surviving spouse. This change will apply retroactively to tax years beginning on January 1, 2024, and going forward.

MFPRSI will incorporate all changes into its forms and communications. The new legislation can be reviewed at the Iowa Legislature’s website, www.legis.iowa.gov.

June Anne Gaeta continued.

Throughout her time on the board, Gaeta says remaining neutral by focusing on the retirement system as a whole was crucial to her factual, thoughtful service. Now, she looks ahead to retirement with the knowledge that she has left the board in a good place.

“This is a big responsibility, but we have so many processes in place to ensure the system is strong,” she said. “You sacrifice a lot when you work 24-hour shifts and a third of your life is spent at the fire station. That’s why I thoroughly enjoyed my time of service on the board, to make sure money is there for people who are already retired and for those who will be someday.”



June Anne Gaeta
(second from right)

Board Appointments - Jennifer Sease was reappointed to MFPRSI’s Board of Trustees for an additional four-year term. Sease serves as Administrative Services Director for the City of Ankeny and was chosen by the Iowa League of Cities.

Additionally, Frank Guihan, retired firefighter from Burlington, was appointed to a four-year term starting April 30, 2024. Guihan served on the board previously from 2012 to 2021.



Jennifer Sease



Frank Guihan

With these two appointments, the average tenure for the nine voting trustees stands at ten years as of April 30, 2024.

ESCALATION EXPLAINED - Members and beneficiaries who are retired with either a service or disability benefit from MFPRSI are eligible for an annual readjustment of their pensions, or as we call it, an “escalation” of benefits. Escalation is applied each year to the July payroll. The rate used to determine the annual escalation is established by Iowa Code Chapter 411.6.12. Escalation is determined by multiplying the previous monthly gross benefit of the member or beneficiary by 1.5% plus an additional dollar amount based on these incremental steps:

- \$15 – retired fewer than 5 years
- \$20 – retired at least 5 years, but fewer than 10 years
- \$25 – retired at least 10 years, but fewer than 15 years
- \$30 – retired at least 15 years, but fewer than 20 years
- \$35 – retired at least 20 years

The number of years retired is determined as of July 1 each year. In order to determine the calculation for beneficiaries, the retirement date of the member is transferred to the beneficiary.

REMAINING MFPRSI 2024 CALENDAR

BENEFIT PAYMENT DATES

JUNE 28, JULY 31, AUGUST 30, SEPTEMBER 30,
OCTOBER 31, NOVEMBER 27, DECEMBER 31

BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING DATES

JUNE 20, AUGUST 15, OCTOBER 3, NOVEMBER 14

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

JULY 4, SEPTEMBER 2, NOVEMBER 11,
NOVEMBER 28-29, DECEMBER 24-25

Benefit payments are tentatively dated the final business day of each month. MFPRSI intends to send benefit payments on the referenced dates listed. Each benefit payment constitutes payment for the month concluded. The Board of Trustees meet in formal open session at regularly scheduled meetings throughout the year. All meetings begin at 10:00 a.m. Central Time unless noted otherwise. MFPRSI will be closed on the dates listed under Holiday Schedule.

SIGN UP FOR⁴ MY411!

My411 offers online access to members of MFPRSI! Members can currently sign-up and view a snapshot of their MFPRSI account and access various pension documents. My411 is available to all members. If you have not already signed up, contact us to register your account!

PRST STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Des Moines, IA
Permit No. 4884

MFPRSI
MUNICIPAL FIRE & POLICE
RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF IOWA
7155 Lake Drive, Suite 201
West Des Moines, IA 50266