

**Louisiana School Employees' Retirement System
Personnel Committee Meeting**

**Monday, September 20, 2004
Upon Adjournment of Investment Committee Meeting**

The Personnel Committee appointed by the Chairman of the Board of the Louisiana School Employees Retirement System convened in the Board Room (Room 100) of the Louisiana School Employees Retirement System's Building located at 8660 United Plaza Blvd., Baton Rouge, LA. Ms. Sylvia Myers, Chairman of the Committee, opened the meeting at 12:32 p.m.

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Members Present: Ms. Sylvia Myers - Chairman, Ms. Betty Crain, Mr. Earl Richard, Jr.

Other Members Present: Mr. Joe Seymour, Ms. Betty Jacobs, Mr. Larry Wilmer, Mr. Jeffrey Faulk, Ms. Lori Pierce, Mr. Ty Larkins

Members Absent: Representative Pete Schneider - Chairman, House Retirement Committee, Senator Lambert Boissiere, Jr. - Chairman, Senate Retirement Committee, John Kennedy, State Treasurer, Fox McKeithen - Secretary of State

Staff Present: Mr. Patrick Cospers - Director, Mr. Randall Roche - General Counsel, Mr. Warren Ponder - General Counsel, Ms. Judy Wright - Public Informations Director I, Ms. Jennifer Champagne, Executive Services Assistant

Also Present: Ms. Sharon Schultz, Ms. Kay Cummings

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NEW PERSONNEL

Mr. Cospers informed the committee members that recent legislation passed in the 2004 session mandates that LSERS' Operating Budget be approved by the Board and submitted to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee for final approval in November of each year. In compliance with this mandate and as a directive of the Board, LSERS' staff would be presenting a proposed operating budget for fiscal year 2005-2006 at a special board meeting to be held after the October 11, 2004 Investment Committee meeting.

Mr. Cospers also indicated that any requests for additional personnel not currently budgeted must be submitted to the Personnel Committee, at which time justification for additional positions would be presented. As there was a need for additional personnel in the Retirement Department Mr. Cospers had asked the Department Manager(s) of the Retirement Department to appear before the Personnel Committee to present, along with justification, a request for three new positions in the Retirement Department.

Ms. Sharon Schultz, Department Head, and Ms. Kay Cummings, Supervisor, of the Retirement Department, were asked to provide the committee members with information compiled during studies within the Retirement Department and the problems they were dealing with in their department.

Ms. Schultz went over information that was provided to the committee in the form of a handout. She stressed the need for three additional personnel in her department, which included one clerical position and two retirement analysts' positions. She began with the clerical position, which would serve as a receptionist for the agency and have the primary function of answering phone calls and assisting with visitors. A log of phone calls received indicated that there was an average of one call received every three minutes.

Ms. Schultz indicated that the current receptionist would be used to help out more with typing of correspondence. Over the past ten years the size of the Retirement Department had doubled and their workload had increased due to the addition of programs such as DROP, IBRP, and early retirement. However, there had not been an increase in clerical staff in those ten years. In 1994 there were two clerical positions supporting three employees and those same two clerical positions are now supporting eight employees. Where correspondence used to get out in one to three days it now typically takes as long as two to three weeks. Due to the shortage of clerical staff there was a decrease in the amount of follow-up requests, which causes delays and subsequently increases the number of phone calls that are received from members inquiring about their paperwork.

The two clerical positions not only type and answer the telephones, but also complete service credit verification, retiree return to work, and disability reexaminations. They are also pulled to assist in the file room when personnel are out, which entails pulling staff from other departments to help cover the receptionist desk, thereby disrupting the work flow in other departments.

Ms. Schultz indicated that the Retirement Department was also in need of two retirement analysts. Due to the workload and not having enough analysts to assign files, both of the supervisors in the Retirement Department are having to work files. This prevents the supervisors from their duties, which include, but are not limited to, staff training, developing and maintaining a staff procedure manual, attending meetings with administration and the other departments, looking at interdepartmental procedures, working with the computer department on computer related issues, and, when they do occur, time consuming legal issues such as interrogatories and depositions. She indicated supervisors need to be able to work an analyst's desk when they are out of the office. They also need to review the analyst's work for quality control and be able to spot check the files from time to time for accuracy.

Ms. Schultz indicated that, at the Board's request, the Retirement Department had been meeting with staff to discuss starting payments of estimated benefits in the near future, which would require one analyst position just for estimated benefits. Also, in order to correctly inform members of their eligibility for DROP and retirement, the service credit information in members' files must be accurate. The goal of the department was to obtain up to date service credit verification and keep that information current. However, that is time consuming and cannot even be attempted without additional personnel.

Ms. Schultz reiterated the supervisors need to devote more time to managerial and supervisory functions in the Retirement Department.

Mr. Cospers questioned the budget projections for the three positions requested, specifically about the computer equipment and office furniture included in the totals and whether this was a one-time expense. Ms. Schultz indicated that this would be an initial cost for the initial year.

A discussion was held on the salaries of these three positions and the cost of these positions if hired on December 1, 2004 as opposed to hiring them on July 1, 2005. Mr. Cospers did mention that if the positions were approved and recommended by the personnel committee to be effective December 1, 2004 then the committee would also need to consider requesting to the full board an amendment to the current budget to allow for these positions.

ON MOTION OF MR. RICHARD, SECONDED BY MS. CRAIN AND CARRIED, the Personnel Committee recommended the hiring of three new positions in the Retirement Department and to provide for amending the current budget for adding these positions effective December 1, 2004.

The meeting adjourned at 12:59 a.m.

Patrick Cospers - Director

Sylvia Myers - Chairman