

Disability Committee Meeting – October 6, 2006

Reported by Joe Flynn

The Disability Committee under chairman Bill Sheffler met on Oct. 6, 2006 to consider a number of recommendations on disability cases, a proposed budget increase, proposed information for the SDCERS website and a report which focused on job duties and disability claims.

Board member Mark Sullivan and I were there not as committee members but as interested spectators and were allotted our public comment time on a number of the items. Mike May, retired firefighter with Retired Fire and Police Association was there as well.

The \$90,000 budget increase requested is intended to cover the costs associated with the review and re-exam process of non service eligible disability retirements now underway. Initially it was not possible to project the number of cases that, based on information gleaned from affidavits or other investigation, would be necessary to refer to medical exams or hearings. This outlay would cover the cost those exams and hearings. While these costs are considerable, the potential costs of fraudulent claims on the pension system are far greater. This review process is necessary to comply with the laws governing pension systems, and to protect the pension trust. Staff is making efforts to keep retirees informed on the process and their options.

Information is being prepared for the SDCERS website that will explain the Municipal Code sections, case law, and how the review process is being operated, and the rights of the members involved, including referrals to the Retirement Board or hearings before an outside Adjudicator (usually a retired Judge.)

One area of great difficulty is determining which job performance measures are used to evaluate a disability claim. While most of this discussion to date has centered on police and fire safety job duties, it can apply to a wide range of city job duties requiring strenuous physical activity and high risk. Mark Sullivan and I both testified that this particular area of disability application needs review, amplification, and clarification on the part of the sponsor.

It was a good meeting with wide ranging discussion, and there were plenty of seats available. The Committee meetings start at 10 AM and usually run for about 2 hours, so you are out in time for lunch downtown. Committee meetings are not televised so if you are interested, you have to catch it live.

All of the items discussed here will be reviewed as part of the Disability Chairman's report to the full Board at the October 20, 2006 meeting.

Joe Flynn, Retiree Rep. to the Board

