

# RI CHAPTER 94 NEWS, DECEMBER 2023

## *Legislative and Executive Board Report By the Chapter 94 Leadership*



### **The Pension Advisory Working Group Meets**

As directed by the General Assembly and required by Rhode Island Law, the state General Treasurer has

convened a Pension Advisory Working Group to assess the impact of the Rhode Island Retirement Security Act of 2011. The Advisory Working Group is scheduled to meet six times over the next four months. The first meeting occurred at the State House on Thursday, November 2, 2023.

This meeting was attended by Executive Board members Russell Marsocci, Ron Pepin, Mary Riley, Delores Bresette, Jamie Reilly, Donna Folcarelli, Linda Folcarelli, and Jose Berto.

On Tuesday, November 7, 2023, Executive Board members Russell Marsocci, Ronald Pepin, and Pearl Smith met with General Treasurer James A. Diossa and Chief of Staff Robert Craven. The Executive Board members discussed the financial hardships faced by the active retirees with Treasurer Diossa.

**The Advisory Working Group will hear public testimony at their meeting scheduled for December 14, 2023, at 4:00 p.m.** The meeting location has yet to be announced. Treasurer Diossa stated that his office was working to secure an alternative site that would be more convenient than the State House. **We strongly encourage you to attend.**

### **Holiday Celebration Slaven Award and Bronstein-Gillis Award Ceremony**

Tuesday, December 12, 2023  
Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet

Cash Bar 12 pm, Lunch 1 pm  
RSVP with payment by December 5  
**No payments accepted at the door**

### **Next Chapter Meeting Tuesday, January 9, 2024 at 1 pm**

RI Council 94, Lower Level  
1179 Charles Street  
North Providence, RI

#### **Special Guest**

James A. Diossa  
RI General Treasurer

#### **Food for Thought**

*Attending the January meeting in person?  
Pre-meeting light lunch and snacks, 12:30 pm*

#### **Questions?**

##### **Russ Marsocci, Muni VP**

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##### **Ron Pepin, State VP**

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#### **Can't attend meetings in person?**

*Join us via Zoom to attend online.  
Email State VP Ron Pepin to receive monthly  
invitations and log-in instructions.*

#### **Save the Dates**

**December 26 - January 31**

ERSRI Retirement Board Election

**February 13, 2024**

Chapter Meeting

**(Leg)** All meetings will be open to the public and live-streamed by Capitol TV. Members may also submit written testimony to [gentreasurer@treasury.ri.gov](mailto:gentreasurer@treasury.ri.gov).

### **State Report, Ron Pepin**

**Retirement Board Election:** I urge members to vote in the upcoming State Retirement Board election. The Retirement Board, composed of 15 members, oversees the state's pension system and administration. Its responsibilities include certifying employer contribution rates, adjudicating disability and service pensions, determining the target investment rate of return, and other assumptions.

Four retired teachers are candidates for two retiree slots: Roger Boudreau, Alan Palazzo, Sandra Pacquette, and Raymond Pouliot. Eligible retirees will receive ballots by mail starting on December 26, and all completed ballots must be postmarked by January 31, 2024. Make your voice count and vote!

**Pension Advisory Working Group:** As discussed in the legislative update, I, along with other members of the Chapter Executive Board, attended the inaugural Pension Advisory Working Group meeting. During the meeting, the actuarial consultant provided a context of the events leading up to the 2011 changes. This recap reminded many of us who were active workers or on the cusp of retirement of how, since 2005, our retirement security has been under attack.

I'll say that although the topic, the creditworthiness of our state, was interesting, the report presented to the Pension Working Group by the credit ratings consultant was mundane. Most attendees stayed the entire two hours.

### **Pension Advisory Working Group Future Meeting Dates**

The current schedule as of now is as follows: **November 30, 2023, December 14, 2023, January 17, 2024, January 31, 2024, and February 21, 2024.** Check with Chapter leadership or the Treasurer's web page to learn if the dates, times or locations have changed.

We encourage members to attend in person or watch via **Capitol TV**. Broadcasts can be found on Cox Communications, channels 15 and 61; i3 Broadband on channel 15; and Verizon, on channel 34. Copies of materials presented at the November 2 meeting of the Pension Advisory Working Group can be found here: <https://treasury.ri.gov/pension-advisory-working-group/meetings>.

**The December 14th Pension Advisory Working Group meeting will focus on retirees,** and testimonies will be heard at the meeting. The venue for the meeting is yet to be determined, with CCRI, the Warwick campus, and Rhode Island College under consideration.

**If you cannot attend the meeting, I urge all members to submit written testimony and tell how the COLA suspensions have affected you and your family.** I know how it impacted me financially and plan to tell my story. Getting our testimony on the record is a step to ensure the Pension Advisory Working Group and our state legislative and executive leadership see the human face of pension reform. We are not just numbers on a spreadsheet.

Members can submit via email to the General Treasurer at [gentreasurer@treasury.ri.gov](mailto:gentreasurer@treasury.ri.gov) or by using an online form available at <https://treasury.ri.gov/pension-advisory-working-group-testimony>.

(*State*) Email me if you want to share your story with the leadership of Chapter 94 or if you need help putting your thoughts in writing. *RP*

### **Muni Report, Russ Marsocci**

I want to welcome **Peter Brousseau**, a retiree from the West Warwick police department, to the Chapter 94 Executive Board. I have known Peter for a long time, and I am excited to work with him as the Chapter faces old and new challenges.

As mentioned in the Legislative Update, Chapter 94 was well represented at the first meeting of the Pension Advisory Working Group. Although no testimony was given by retirees, we heard reports from three consultants: the actuary, an investment strategist, and a bond rating advisor. Of the three reports, I found the actuary presented the most relevant information because it outlined

### **A Note from Jamie Reilly Chapter 94 Executive Board**

December ushers in many celebrations and observances, so on behalf of the Officers and Executive Board members of Chapter 94, I wish **Happy Holidays** to you and your loved ones!

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Diwali, Solstice, Eid, or any other festive occasion, may this season be filled with joy, warmth, and togetherness. May the coming year bring you prosperity and fulfillment.

Let's embrace the diversity that makes our state and our region so rich and come together in the spirit of peace, unity and understanding.

Here's to a wonderful holiday season and a bright and better 2024!

### **Meetings Protocol**

When you come to Chapter monthly meetings, please note that the doors "open" at 12:15 pm. This allows the Executive Board to finish its business with minimal interruptions and gives members time to settle in, grab a snack, a coffee, and socialize before our meeting formally convenes.

### **Smart Hearing**

Next month, watch your mailbox for information on Smart Hearing, our new hearing aid provider.

### **VSP is now DeltaVision**

The return address on the envelope reads Delta Dental, but the information inside describes Delta Vision, our new vision care program which Delta Dental now handles. Check your mail to learn how to continue or enroll in our vision care benefit. Contact the office if you did not receive an application. Sign up soon. DeltaVision coverage starts on January 1, 2024.

the progression of legislative and policy changes that eroded pension benefits.

Ron and I plan to attend each Working Group meeting. Check the General Treasurer's website, <https://treasury.ri.gov/>, for updated information not found in the newsletter.

We await confirmation of a **potential settlement** in the Newport Schools buyback lawsuit, and we hope to receive the information before Christmas. Meanwhile, our planned legal actions against West Warwick Schools and the West Warwick police are ongoing. I will provide further updates about these proceedings in future newsletters. As for Coventry, the status quo remains.

I look forward to joining members and their guests at the annual **Holiday Celebration and Awards Ceremonies on Tuesday, December 12 at Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet**. The doors and cash bar open at noon, with lunch at 1 pm. I hope

**(Muni)** you are excited about our changes to the menu. And don't forget our raffles.

**Volunteers** are needed to take photos at the Holiday. Email me if interested.

While the newsletter is the best way to keep members informed, we are **creating a website**, which we expect to launch in January 2024. And members can look forward to a revitalized Facebook page early next year. **RM**

### **Dolores Tackles Today's Values!**

I took my jewelry, given to me by my late husband, to a store for cleaning, but when I got home, I found that my chocolate diamond was missing. I contacted the store. The staff was kind enough to check around but could not find the missing piece.

I returned to the store and saw the manager rummaging through the cleaning machine, the counter pads, and the vacuum cleaner. However, the diamond was nowhere to be found. The manager assured me they would speak to the clerk who assisted me.

The next day, the manager agreed to share the footage captured by security cameras. While watching the video, I realized that it wasn't as clear as it is often depicted on TV crime dramas, and it was impossible to zoom in and concentrate on a suspect. I felt hopeless, leaving in tears, with no clue where my ring could be.

I was thrilled when the store employee called six days later to say that a customer had found my lost ring and would return it the following day. The manager sent a picture of the returned item, which wasn't mine. Two days later, the manager sent me a picture of a different ring, which was also not mine.

This back and forth with the jewelry store continued for several weeks. "Is this your ring,

### **Message from Donna and Linda Folcarelli Chapter 94 Board Members Community Toy Drives**

Operation Stand Down, a non-profit organization based in Johnston, Rhode Island, is collecting new toys for Christmas to give to the children of veterans. If you'd like to donate, please drop off your toys by Monday, December 18th, at 1010 Hartford Avenue in Johnston.

The Johnston Police Department is also collecting donations of toys or gift cards for teenagers in need. You can drop off your donations until December 14th at the foyer of the Johnston Police Department, located at 1651 Atwood Avenue, Johnston, RI.

Thank you for helping to make the holidays a little brighter for many. We appreciate your support.

Ms. Bresette?" "No," I replied, living in a very Groundhog Day experience, accompanied by my growing frustration.

After two months, I received a call from the corporate office. They informed me that they had footage showing I had dropped the ring. Furthermore, the video captured a waiting customer picking it up and hiding it away.

The detective assigned to my case contacted the customer regarding my missing ring. Naturally, the customer denied having it. However, there was video evidence, so the detective promised to return with an arrest warrant. The next day, a man arrived at the jewelry store with my chocolate diamond, claiming to have found it. The detective suspected the dishonest customer had sent someone else to return the ring to avoid criminal charges. It was too convenient for it to have been a coincidence.

If I had "found" an expensive jewelry item that someone had dropped, I would try to return it or take it to the local authorities. What would you have done? **DB**