

## Welcome to The Retirement Connection!

# Retiree Open Enrollment Overview

by David Lisenbee & Bessie Olano, coordinators

The 2021 Retiree Open Enrollment, held in November, was like no other. As with most of our experiences in 2020, adaptation and flexibility were instrumental for completing the Retiree Open Enrollment process. For health and safety reasons, the annual Retiree Open Enrollment Health Fair transitioned to the new online format which provided more opportunities for Retirees to interact with our Health Vendors throughout November. Members were able to consult staff and our vendors via online webinars, video conferencing, in addition to phone and/or email. The Benefits Team would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Members for their extra efforts this year in completing the health/dental/vision change forms using both the online formats and traditional mail/fax submission methods. We would also like to thank ORS staff for making the transition of the Retiree Open Enrollment process to the online format, and for their help creating and launching the new ORS Retiree Open Enrollment website. There were close to 500 Retiree Open Enrollment changes processed. We wish our members and staff a safe, healthy, and happy 2021!

## Health Care Enhancement for Local Public Safety (HELPS)

This is a tax deduction that may allow public safety officers, including retired firefighters and police officers, who pay for their City of San Jose Retiree Health insurance, and can save them up to \$750 in taxes. Eligible members should work with their tax preparer, you can find information about the out-of-pocket amount paid for health insurance in your MemberDirect account, using these steps:

1. Login to MemberDirect.
2. Select “Benefit Information” on the left menu, then select “Benefit Payment History.”
3. Select 2020 for “Selected Year.”
4. Select the “December, 2020” direct deposit (this will give you full year amount under YTD)
5. Click “View Receipt.”
6. Direct deposit receipt will be downloaded and can be opened.

## Access your 1099-R online via MemberDirect!

Retirees will have the ability to view, download, and print their 1099-R forms online via MemberDirect in February. Simply log into “MemberDirect” (the Office of Retirement Services’ member portal) at <https://memberdirect.sjretirement.com>. Once logged in, there will be a menu on the left side of the screen. Under “Benefit Information”, click “1099-R”. All available 1099-Rs will be listed, including the 2020 1099-R. Simply click on the desired year to view or download your 1099-R for that year.

## Quarterly Question

**Q:** What can members who plan to retire do to prepare and ensure a smooth application and approval process?

**A:** This is such a great and useful question. The first and most important thing any prospective retiree can do is to recognize that this is a process that takes time! You need to get your application into the Office of Retirement Services *at least three months* ahead of whatever retirement date you pick. This gives us time to make sure you have all the required documents, notifications can be made and eligibility verified, and any snags can be addressed and corrected. While you can choose a retirement date to your liking, ORS usually recommends the end of the pay period. As an active employee, your insurance premiums are deducted from your 1st and 2nd paychecks of each month. If you select a retirement date which will not allow the 2nd insurance premium to be deducted from your active payroll check, you will be billed by HR for the 2nd insurance payment. Please note that payment for active insurances will not be deducted from your retirement check.

We will address related issues in future editions of *The Retirement Connection* and on the website. You can also go to [www.sjretirement.com](http://www.sjretirement.com).

## New Year Message from

# Roberto L. Peña, Chief Executive Officer

Entering a new and hopefully less challenging year, I can report that the Comprehensive Annual Financial Reports (CAFR) for both retirement funds came back with an unqualified, clean opinion from the external auditors at Grant Thornton. This translates to a finding that the ORS financial statements are fairly and appropriately presented and comply with generally accepted accounting principles.

As with everything else in the time of COVID, conducting the audit was possibly as complex as the actual accounting work. The audits were conducted entirely through remote channels, using Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and email. But the process went smoothly and we met all deadlines.

Both the Federated and the Police & Fire Funds net position increased by 3-4 percent investment returns for fiscal year ending June 30, 2020. The Federated System remains steady at 53 percent funded while Police & Fire Fund ratio decreased a bit to 74 percent. *The funding ratio refers to the portion of the Systems' obligations we currently have the assets for to pay over the long-term future.*

Our team here at ORS is especially proud to have received the Government Finance Officers' Association (GFOA) Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 20th consecutive year based on the fiscal

year ending June 30, 2019. We are committed to maintaining that excellence and extending our record wins.

In a related communication by CIO Prabhu Palani, readers will see that our Boards' nimbleness during 2020 led our plans to top decile investment performance among all public pension plans > \$1billion for Current Year 2020, a year in which the market experienced significant volatility due to Covid-19's impact on the global economy.

Finally, I want to give a grateful shout-out to both Boards and staff who have worked so hard throughout the challenging 2020 year to adapt and continue to manage the business of the retirement systems. It is amazing the work that staff has been able to accomplish despite the hurdles. I am thankful for the patience and flexibility of our members as we continue to find new tools and strategies to serve them despite the limitations of a pandemic.

As 2021 begins, I look forward to possible good news in my next message: the hope that we will be emerging from the worst of the COVID crisis following the rollout of the vaccine and a return to a new normal. We are excited to announce plans for our new website which should be available on line early this year to serve all of you better.

## San José Retirement Funds Top Earners Amid COVID Economy

By Prabhu Palani, Chief Investment Officer

The Federated and Police & Fire Funds entered the fourth quarter reaping the reward for our Boards' patient, cautious investment strategies, ascending to the top decile ranking of returns among California's public pension plans peer group of comparison includes over 80 public pension systems.

Our conservative investment strategy has ensured stability and positioned us to seize opportunities when crisis strikes. This year, as the economy sagged and a bear market set in, we were able to quickly change course to have stellar performance.

Every retirement system must choose a strategic path to suit their unique circumstances, vision and goals. San Jose's two Boards continuously reassess their strategies with the long-term in mind, prioritizing stability, and flexibility to act quickly, just as they have over the months since COVID upended the market as well as peoples' lives.

As the Covid-19 pandemic continued to keep the Office of Retirement Services' doors closed from March onward of 2020, both Retirement Boards and staff learned innovative ways to continue business-not-quite-as-usual,



and most importantly, to attend to the business and needs of our members. Zoom technology has allowed regular Board and

Committee meetings beginning in April, as seen in this photo, with full agendas and members able to watch and provide input. Zoom and Microsoft Teams have also allowed staff to interact and do their work, and to speak with members when needed to address issues. This is just one of many ways ORS has adapted in this crisis, and the technology is sure to be a part of the "new normal" whenever we emerge from the crisis – hopefully, soon!

## Staff Updates

Congratulations to **David Lisenbee** who has been promoted to Senior Benefits Analyst, **Jay Kwon** promoted to Senior Investment Officer and **David Aung** promoted to Investment Officer.

## Welcome To ORS!

Please join us and welcome our new Senior Auditor, **Houman Boussina!**

# PROFILE: ORS Senior Accounting Team

## Benjie Chua-Foy, Accounting Division Manager



**Q:** Tell us about your journey to ORS and your position here.

**A:** Prior to working at ORS, I was an audit manager with a regional public accounting firm for more than 10 years. But with two young children, I wanted to work closer to home and spend less time commuting through Bay Area traffic. That was seven years ago, when I found the opportunity with ORS. As Accounting Division Manager, I supervise a staff of five accountants.

**Q:** What is the most satisfying part of the job?

**A:** I like knowing that we make sure retirees get paid the benefit they've earned. Right now, our staff is cleaning up old, outstanding checks to make sure they get to retirees who never received them, usually because we have an outdated address on file. Getting retirees those checks is particularly gratifying especially during this difficult time. It's like they won the lottery!

**Q:** Who is Benjie off duty? What is your background, family situation, and how do you spend down time?

**A:** I was born in the Philippines and moved to Santa Clara County as a young child and have lived here ever since. I have a wonderful husband and together, we love watching our son play baseball and our daughter dance at competitions and performances. We travel as a family to give the kids new experiences and memories.

## Gina Hall Rios, Senior Accountant



**Q:** How long have you worked at ORS? What led you to come to work for Retirement Services?

**A:** I've worked at ORS for five years. Prior to that, I was an auditor at a private CPA firm. It was experience that gave me the analytical skills as well as the inter-

personal skills to be able to interpret financial data and share that information with others in many forms.

**Q:** Is there a part of the job you find most satisfying?

**A:** I get great satisfaction from producing the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) each year, which presents the value of our pension assets that must fund all members' benefits. It is our chance to be transparent and share the state of their pension funds with retirees and active members. We also produce a pamphlet-sized version called the Popular Annual Financial Report (PAFR), providing the information in a concise, user-friendly short form.

I enjoy compiling the information in easy-to-read charts and graphs, using colors and pictures to liven up otherwise dull information.

**Q:** Who is Gina on a more personal level?

**A:** I grew up right here in San Jose. I have a young son and love spending time with him. Thanks to him, I've learned what Roblox and Minecraft are and I can hold my own in Mario Kart!



## Deborah Sattler, Senior Accountant

**Q:** What is your role as senior accountant?

**A:** My work is centered around making sure the accounting information within the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) is reasonable and accurate. This means ensuring the accounting information provided through bills, investment activities and benefit payments are in line with accounting regulations and comply with the City's many regulations and rules.

**Q:** Tell us a bit about your background and how you came to work at ORS.

**A:** My parents moved often when I was a child, so I come from many places: Mississippi, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, and Wisconsin. I went to college at the University of Massachusetts, and finished with multiple degrees in Accountancy and International Finance at University of Phoenix and went to work for several financial and accounting firms in Boston, Tennessee, and California. I had been working as an accounting manager here in California while continuing my education in both accounting and international finance when I got a call inviting me to fill a short-term, temporary position for ORS. That was almost nine years ago and I have been here ever since.

**Q:** What do you find most satisfying about the work?

**A:** I like things to be organized. I like the processes to work smoothly and the documentation to be done in ways that are more understandable – especially to the non-experts who may need to review it. For example, when I complete the four-month long project to create the CAFR, I am very gratified when it comes back with only a few comments from the auditor.

**Q:** Tell us a bit more about Deborah "off duty."

**A:** I found my soulmate in my journey through many jobs and states of residence, and after all that, he and I settled down in Livermore 23 years ago to provide a stable home in which to raise our (now grown) son and in a community we enjoy. One of my hobbies is painting – mostly for friends and family. I hope to keep painting into retirement.

# The Retirement Connection

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## GO GREEN!

Send ORS an email to [retirement.dept@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:retirement.dept@sanjoseca.gov) if you would like to receive your copy of the newsletter electronically, via email or if you prefer to access the newsletter online at our website [www.sjretirement.com](http://www.sjretirement.com)

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## Upcoming Board Meetings

*COVID-19 virus has had an impact on our operations. Meetings are being held by teleconference. Please check our website for the latest information.*

**Police and Fire Board meetings** are held on the 1st Thursdays of each month except in July. Upcoming meetings will be held on the following dates:

Feb. 4    March 4    April 1    May 6

**Federated Board meetings** are held on the 3rd Thursdays of each month except in July. Upcoming meetings will be held on the following dates:

Feb. 18    March 18    April 15    May 20

### BOARD UPDATES

Congratulations to Trustee Vado, the Police employee representative, on his retirement and his service to the Board! We wish him well! Updates on Trustee recruitments will be posted to our website.

All meetings unless otherwise posted on the Agenda, are at City Hall, 200 E. Santa Clara Street, Wing Rooms 118-120. Meetings are also live-streamed on our website at [www.sjretirement.com](http://www.sjretirement.com).

### Upcoming Office Closures

Martin Luther King Day  
January 18

President's Day  
February 15

Cesar Chavez Day  
March 31

### CONTACT US!

408-794-1000 or 1-800-732-6477

Our staff directory can be found on our website at:

[www.sjretirement.com](http://www.sjretirement.com)

Click on "Contact us" or email us at [retirement.dept@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:retirement.dept@sanjoseca.gov)