Update on BPD Retirees Pensions to reflect retroactive pay raises in last Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), as well as any vacation buy-back monies you may be entitled to.

BPD retirees Mark Hayes and George Juliano met with the Executive Director of the Boston Retirement Board, Tim Smythe, and the Deputy Director Christine Weir, at Boston City Hall. This was a very productive meeting. This process is much more complicated than we thought and both Mr. Smythe and Mrs. Weir were quite professional and understanding. **They anticipate finishing *all* the retro calculations for all BPD retirees within the next *6-9 months*.**

The rumors about the Board only having 4-5 employees working on this is not true. They will increase from 8 to 10 employees by hiring two more former employees as contractors to assist in this process. They will now have ten employees working full-time to get this done. The positive news is they started with over 900 BPD cases and that number is down to just below 250 as of this June.

The board processes about 700 active members applying for their retirement benefits yearly. The board is staffed to handle this volume annually. With the PERAC buyback ruling the board needs to do a full recalculation for each person eligible. The police alone are over 900 that need to be calculated by hand the same as they would if you were retiring for the first time. Each retiree must be audited individually. This is a very complicated process and simply takes time to get it right. This is a specialty niche few employees state-wide can do. They do not want to make any mistakes to avoid doing it a second time. An outside accounting firm would not have the capability to do this work.

* There are two calculations that need to take place. The settled collective contract which was settled and the calculations for the buybacks. The Boston retirement board via Mr. Smythe pushed PERAC to define and accept the 8 out of 10 years standard for the buy backs instead of the last 5 years which took time. This is a win for those who are eligible.
* The prudent and efficient thing to do was to conduct one audit and calculation both the raise and the buyback calulations and not have to do it twice. This reduces the time and labor of doing it twice and reduces the chance for calculation errors. To begin this process they had to wait for PERAC to issue guidelines on who was eligible for the vacation-buy-back monies being calculated into their pensions to comply with the new laws passed by the state legislature. This did not occur until February 2024. To be clear they couldn’t start working on this until Feb 2024. So if you retired in 2020 for example, it feels like you have been waiting for 5 yrs but they couldn’t do anything until 2/24. The original ruling was beyond the Boston retirement boards powers and it was only fixed after it was taken to court. Then PERAC needed to define the 8 out 10 years eligibility standard in Feb 2024 when the process began.
* There are numerous other retirees from other city departments that are also waiting for their pensions to be updated, but they are auditing the BPD retirees first, given that we are the largest group.
* Their overtime budget has gone through the roof conducting these audits which they are ok with but just like the police being ordered for months on end their employees are averaging 10 hour days for months which loses its luster over time.
* Each retiree must be audited individually. This is a very complicated process and simply takes time to get it right. This is a specialty niche few employees state-wide can do. They do not want to make any mistakes to avoid doing it a second time.
* Mr. Smythe himself, and his staff, stayed late for many nights trying to do this.

Based on all these facts, which we were unaware of, filing any lawsuit or other litigation, though it is each individual’s right, we believe it would not be prudent. It would be a useless gesture and a waste of money because by the time the court sets a date for a hearing, the issue will be moot, and everyone will have been made whole.

Additionally, sending letters to Mayor Wu or the City Council will also serve no useful purpose at this point.

We raised the point about the lack of communication in this process. Be it unanswered emails or messages left on the voice line. They admit that while their offices were being renovated things were not ideal. There is a list that they try to follow based on from time of retirement but if they hear of a hard ship they do their best to address those needs accordingly.

Over the years Mr. Smythe has made himself personally available to many. He said, he does his best to get back to people but given the volume of inquires it is almost impossible. He has 51,000 city employees that come through the retirement board. It’s like calling the police Commissioner and expecting him to get back to you. We informed him that we wanted to update and inform members who are waiting for info we received at this meeting. We believe this is half the problem for those waiting for answers and his staff getting inundated with inquires. So, we are not speaking for the board but just relaying what we found to be their explanation of this frustrating process for all involved.

To summarize, Mr. Smythe and his staff have been working diligently to complete this process. He has hired additional employees. They are doing the best they can with the resources they have. We simply must be even more patient than we have already been and wait the 6-9 months for it to be completed.