

ST. LUCIE COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT FIREFIGHTERS' RETIREMENT FUND



Special Meeting: May 20, 2021

1. Chair Anthony Napolitano called a meeting of the Board to order at 2:30 PM. Mr. Baur called roll. Those persons present included:

TRUSTEES

Tony Napolitano, Chair
Jeff Lee, Secretary
Serge Green
Ryan Sapp
Chief Nate Spera

OTHERS

Scott Baur & Albert Lovingood, Administrator (Resource Centers)
Bonni Jensen, Attorney (Klausner Kaufman Jensen & Levinson)
Member Chris Karns

2. EXTRAORDINARY (EXIGENT) CIRCUMSTANCES FOR TRUSTEES JOINING ELECTRONICALLY

The Board had no Trustees joining the meeting electronically.

3. DISABILITY HEARING: CHRIS KARNS

Ms. Jensen noted that the Board had all Trustees present for the disability hearing. She explained that the Board gathered all the medical records for Mr. Karns and completed an Independent Medical Exam (IME). The plan document states that a member is totally disabled if unable to render the substantial and gainful duties of a firefighter/paramedic. Dr. Martinez completed the IME and thoroughly reviewed the medical records. He concluded that Chris Karns meets the criteria of the DSM-5 for PTSD based on cumulative exposure to trauma in the performance of his duties.

The Board allowed Mr. Karns to address the Trustees. Chair Napolitano asked about the amount of time he served before the onset of the PTSD. Chief Spera also asked about brain mapping for the PTSD, not reported in the medical records. Mr. Karns stated that he sought medical assistance through both workers comp and the medical benefits offered through the Fire District. Jeff Lee asked about treatment programs that Mr. Karns appeared not to complete. Mr. Karns stated that he paid out of pocket for treatment after reaching his benefit limits until he ran out of money.

Chief Spera advised that workers comp case is still pending litigation, although the standards for workers compensation differ from the plan standards. Workers comp benefits may offset for pension benefits that Mr. Karns receives. All physicians that examined Mr. Karns related his diagnosis to his duties as a firefighter. Furthermore, Mr. Karns meets the DSM-5 criteria for PTSD. The Board considered whether Mr. Karns reached maximum medical improvement and determined that Mr. Karns was permanently disabled.

Based on the Independent Medical Evaluation completed by Dr. Martinez finding that Chris Karns is totally and permanently disabled to perform the substantial and gainful duties of a firefighter engineer resulting from the performance of his duties, Jeff Lee made a motion to grant Mr. Karns a duty disability pension as of May 20, 2021. The motion received a second from Serge Greene, approved by the Trustees 5-0.

4. OTHER BUSINESS

The Board had no other business for discussion.

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5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No members of the public had any comment.

6. NEXT MEETING

The Board previously scheduled the next regular meeting for Thursday, July 15, 2021 at 2:30 PM.

7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Lee, Secretary