

Warwick Firefighters Retirees Association



**Monday 7 PM
September 12th**

**Monday 7 PM
October 3rd**

**Monday 7 PM
November 7th**

Christmas Party

**CHECK OUR WEB
SITE @ WARCIC-
FIREMENSASSOCI
ATION.COM for up
to date events.**

New Constitution and By-Laws to be Voted On

August 15, 2011 – Providence Journal – **Judge rules unions can't present retired city worker.** In a reversal of two arbitrators' rulings, one fire fighter, and one teacher, Superior Judge Bennett R. Gallo the public-employee unions can't go to bat for retired workers if they have a dispute with a municipality. An appeal by the Teachers Union is expected.

With alarming regularity municipal unions and public retiree's are coming under constant action. In view of these facts, the executive board has drawn up a new constitution and by-laws which will better position ourselves to take legal action to protect our interest.

The new constitution will allow the creation of a "three person legislative committee" which will review any and all legal matters that may infringe upon the rights our members. The second major change is the addition of a "legal fund" used defends our legal rights. This fund will be funded by donations by our membership and cannot be used without the consent of the legislative committee, executive committee and 51% of the votes at a regularly scheduled meeting.

The new Constitution and By-laws will be posted on our website for review. There will be two (2) votes taken for final approval. The first vote, if approved at the September meeting will allow us to post this on our website. If, any member is not able to attend this meeting may either write and e-mail us and your suggestions will be voted on at the October meeting.

In the meantime, we strongly encourage, as never before, to give whatever donations you can afford to support this fund. Hopefully, these funds will grow and not be used, but we must be prepared for any eventuality.

New Page Added to Website

Thanks go out to Skip Heroux for the new page added to our website. Due to the ever increasing flow of newspaper articles relating to our pension, this page will allow our members to keep abreast of the latest news. The first posting is the entire First Circuit Court of Appeals which gives the City license to limit medical payments police and fire fighters on disability.

Give me my full pension, or I may sue

ROBERT R. BARBER

I am a retired law-enforcement officer. I retired with a conventional pension. This is my perspective in response to the comments of the mayors of the three largest cities in Rhode Island about the pensions ("3 R.I. mayors say retirees must be part of pension solution," news, July 15).

All three mayors — Angel Taveras of Providence, Allan Fung of Cranston and Scott Avedisian of Warwick — agree that the retirees should be part of the solution to the financial mess that we are in.

Mayor Fung states: "The retirees have to be part of the fix."

Isn't it interesting that their ideas for fixing this issue are at the expense of others who have served honorably and are also taxpayers? How fair is it for others to sacrifice what they have worked for their entire careers?

The mayors say everyone needs to sacrifice. What are the mayors sacrificing? Are the mayors taking a cut in their salaries? The mayors need to feel the pain also, don't they? I feel that example is always more efficacious than precept.

Mayor Fung states, "The retirees have to be impacted. It's a fundamental fairness question." He calls these pension benefits overly generous. I am insulted for being portrayed as unfair, greedy and undeserving of a pension and contract that was negotiated in good faith and agreed to by all.

It was elected officials either through maladroitness, corruption or just indifference that took my 27 years of contributing to that pension and put it in the general fund and spent it. Where was the fundamental fairness then?

In 1972, the issue of depositing the contributions in the general

fund was taken to federal court. The judge agreed what the city was doing was wrong but no one had been aggrieved because the retirees had been getting their pensions. The courts do not decide on what might happen. However, the first time a retiree did not get what was contractually agreed to, the pensioner then would have a lawsuit.

The mayors are asking me to sacrifice for the unfairness and unaccountability of past elected officials. It's being implied that I am receiving overly generous benefits. It's being implied that I do not deserve my pension. It's being implied that I am milking the taxpayer and it vilifies my 27 years of service.

The mayors are asking the people who sacrificed their bodies, families and health for the service of the community to sacrifice more. Statistically, law-enforcement officers die 10 years earlier than the general population. The mayors are asking me to sacrifice my source of income. I will not collect Social Security because I did not pay into it. In a few short years I will be forced to enroll in Medicare. For 27 years, I was called away from family functions, vacations and holidays, 24/7 to fulfill my contract. I did so proudly and gladly. When the economy was booming, I went without a raise for four years and worked without a contract. At my age, how will I make up the difference the mayors want me to give up?

The City of Cranston entered into a contract with me. The agreement was that I would serve my community and risk my life so that, at the end of my career, if I reached it, I would be able to live the rest of my life with some dignity. I'm a taxpayer and like most people I live paycheck to paycheck. I have held up my end of the contract and now the

mayors are trying to make me the bad guy. My question is: Will they live up to the contracts?

If I enter a contract with a mortgage company and I don't pay because of hard times it will foreclose and I will be on the street. I don't think I could call upon them for fundamental fairness and tell them they need to be part of the solution and part of the fix.

Pay attention, active law-enforcement officers and firefighters. If it is me today it will be you tomorrow. I am considering filing an individual lawsuit if any changes occur to my contract. I am opposed to class-action lawsuits. I have earned what I get at a very high price and I will not let the mayors belittle that fact.

The April 2 news article "Double-digit raises in time of austerity" states that Richard Raspallo (legal counsel, part-time) got a 199.6 percent raise. Stephen Iannazzi (special assistant to Majority Leader Dominick Ruggerio) received 132 percent more than he was making last year and Frank Franco (legislative aide) got an 80 percent raise.

The article also lists 37 names, and the lowest raise was 10 percent. Aren't the legislators also getting a raise? In the June 26 "PolitFact" article, Gary Sasse says Rhode Island spends 52 percent more per capita on human-service programs than the U.S. average. Rhode Island is spending this much more than the rest of the nation on entitlements, mostly for people who don't work, while taking money away from public servants who served honorably for decades.

Once again I am being vilified because I worked hard and planned well.

Robert R. Barber is a retired Cranston police captain. Now 58, he retired at 50.

7-24-11 Providence Sunday Journal

Pondering

Unlike many newsletters published by fire and police retirees association, we have resisted the temptation of filling our newsletters with newspaper clips on articles related to local and state issues, fire departments, and pensions. The reason for this is simple -- Those members lucky enough to live in the sunshine state have access to numerous media sources should they wish to keep abreast of Rhode Island news. Plus, those living in Rhode Island can't get away from all the bad news that comes out every day from TV, radio, and newspapers if wanted to.

There are so many stories of interest that concern retired police and fire fighters, and we would need to add additional pages or publish every two weeks to keep up. That being said, this month, we have added a newspaper article published in the Providence Sunday Journal (7-24-11) written by Robert R. Barber, a retired Cranston police Captain. In a few words, he captures the concerns facing all retired police and fire fighters in Rhode Island.

If you happen to have kept your old newsletter, you will see that we made mention of the looming problems facing the state and cities and towns in Rhode Island about unfunded pensions. Now, Mayor Avedisian has spoken out that any solution to the present pension crises must include retirees' pensions as part of the fix.

This past July, Skip Heroux and myself attended a "Town Hall" meeting given at the Warwick Public Library sponsored by RI General Treasurer Gina Ramondo. A panel of experts went over what course of action should be taken by the General Treasurer in meeting the short fall of both state and municipal pension funds. This three hour meeting was very sobering and some of the comments made by labor leaders' days after the meeting were totally unrealistic and go nowhere in offering ligament solutions to the complex issue. As a retirees association, we must prepare ourselves for any eventuality that may affect the pension benefits of our membership. Other police and fire fighters associations are already in the midst of legal actions or are preparing for such conflicts.

At the upcoming September 15th meeting, the executive board will be presenting the new revised By-Laws which will, if approved, establish a legal defense account (see related article) to be used to defend the rights of our membership which may arise. Rather than support this effort through unpopular assessments, we are asking that donations be made specifically designated for this legal defense fund. Our membership to date has been very generous and funds have grown over the past three years. Additionally, we will be requesting that those uncommitted funds be added to this new account. We are committed to defending our pensions and benefits for both present and future retirees.

&&&

In what started out as a simple request of asking The Warwick Firemen's Relief Association for the names of retirees belonging to the pension fund, along with a copy of their by-laws to be added to the Benefits Book, has morphed into a contentious battle in prying the Relief Association in releasing records to the membership. During the summer recess, two letters were sent by members in good standing asking for a meeting of the Relief Association in accordance with their by-laws. To date, there has been no reply. Unfortunately, this will precipitate a show down at our September 15th meeting at which time the membership will have to confront the aspect of taking legal actions to require the Relief Association to disclose their financial records. It is reported that there are over \$500,000 in funds which it appears have been kept in almost total secrecy.

Another letter was sent in June of this year which was the result of an inquiry by the Retirees Association asking our members to report if their names were listed on the insurance fund roster. To date five (5) retirees, some with pay stubs, showing that they had paid into the insurance fund were not included on this list. In addition, the wife of one deceased fire fighter also was not sure if payment was made upon his death. Since the Relief Association even refuses to admit they are not selling insurance, and thus exempt from Rhode Island business regulations, they are reluctant to answer our inquiries.

The latest comments from the Relief Association, if accurate, are that this benefit for which a member pays is not insurance. George Orwellian double speech, Fairlix Dictionary – *Insurance – a contract whereby, for specified consideration, one party undertakes to compensate the other for a loss related to a particular subject as a result of the occurrence of a designated hazard.*

Time is running out for this blatant disregard to the rule of law. If there is either criminal or statutory failure on the part of the Relief Association, it will be addressed. Three years of stonewalling is near an end. For the sake of all concerned, it is best to address these issues "in house" before we read about it in the Providence Journal.

&&&

If you don't already know by now, the United States First Circuit Court of Appeals has ruled in favor of the City of Warwick in the year's long legation concerning medical payments for those on disabilities that go beyond the cost of the City's health carrier.

In short, the court has upheld the City's refusal to pay disabled fire fighter or police medical expenses related to an on-the-job injury should they exceed the limit set by the City's health carrier. At the present time there are numerous Warwick police and fire fighters who are paying for their medical treatments and drugs which are directly linked to on-the-job injuries. The responsibility for this tragic turn of events is due in large part to a number of miscues made by Local 2748, the Warwick FOP and the Warwick Police and Fire Retiree's Association. Even more tragic is that the City of Warwick's win will be exported to other Rhode Island communities.

In the future police and fire fighters injured on the job must insist that the Board of Public Safety include language, if possible, to insure that all medical expenses be paid to the injured party including expenses not covered by medical insurance. My hat is off to all those who worked so hard, including Al Hagenberg, John Rose, and many others for their efforts to protect the rights of both active and retired police and fire fighters

Fred Slaiger

Patience Growing Thin With Relief Association

Twenty (20) members in good standing in the Warwick Firemen's Relief Association signed a certified letter to the Chairman of the Relief Association, Jack Williams to call a special meeting to answer a number of questions regarding the operations of the Association. This is the second certified letter sent to the Warwick Firemen's Relief Association in the past 6 months requesting a meeting. To date there has been reply to either request. The letter dated 6 June, 2011 is as follows:

To: Mr. John Williams, Chairman WRFA

This is the second and final request for the call of a meeting of the Warwick Firemen's Relief Association. The attached names of members in good stand hereby, partition a meeting in accordance with the constitution and by-laws, in particular, Article III Membership in the Association, and Article V- Meeting of the Association. Please do not underestimate our resolve in our quest for answers regarding the operations of the WRFA.

The refusal to adhere to the rule of law will be by the executive board of the WRFA will be addressed at our September 15th meeting.

Letter Sent to WRFA on Missing names of Insurance Participants

The Retirees Association sent a second certified letter to Chairman John William, WFRA at the June meeting requesting why the names are missing of retirees claiming that they are not included on the master list that was finally received after much effort of those who paid into the insurance fund. With over **180** retirees listed as paying members our newsletter requested for our membership to contact the WRFA if their names were missing. A total of five (5) members to date have stated that they paid their dues into the insurance fund but have not seen their names on the master list.

This certified letter was sent to insure that the Relief Association could verify the member's claims. The names of these members are as follows:

Raymond Grevalis
Edward Johnston
David Impalizzo
Joe Porcelli
Thomas Thompson

In addition to these names a widow of a deceased fire fighter reported that she may not have been paid a death benefit from the WFRA.

We encourage our members to check the benefits book and be sure that your name is listed under the WFRA insurance listing if you believe that you are listed.

Chief Kevin Sullivan Announces Retirement

Chief Kevin Sullivan, the ninth Chief of the Warwick Fire Department announced his retirement effective Tuesday, August 28, 2011. Chief Sullivan joined the Warwick Fire Department on June 13, 1981 promoted to Chief of Department on June 18, 2006. Chief Sullivan was instrumental in overseeing the construction of the Headquarters Station 1. We wish Kevin and his family good health and happiness in retirement.

Medical Coverage Seminar This Fall

If you don't already know big changes are due to take place on your Medicare Coverage starting in 2012. We will again hold a seminar sometime after these changes have been made public in early November. This seminar will be conducted by Ms. Linda Knutton, Resource Specialist for the Department of Human Services for the City of Warwick. Since Ms. Knutton is not selling supplemental health care insurance her advice is independent of any insurance sales pitch. This seminar will be held at 750 Warwick Ave. at a date to be announced. Both members and non-members are invited to attend. We must have a minimum attendance of 12. If you are interested please contact Fred Slaiger 783-1023 by no later than October 20, 2011.

Donations: We would like to thank Rick Lytle for his generous donation. Other donations will be listed in the Nov. newsletter.



Warwick Firefighters Retirees Assoc.
750 Warwick Avenue
Warwick, R.I. 02886

Email: fredslaiger@aol.com

WARWICKFIREMENSASSOCIATION.COM

Letter Sent to WRFA on Missing names of Insurance Participants

The Retirees Association sent a second certified letter to Chairman John William, WFRA at the June meeting requesting why the names are missing of retirees claiming that they are not included on the master list that was finally received after much effort of those who paid into the insurance fund. With over **180** retirees listed as paying members our newsletter requested for our membership to contact the WRFA if their names were missing. A total of five (5) members to date have stated that they paid their dues into the insurance fund but have not seen their names on the master list.

This certified letter was sent to insure that the Relief Association could verify the member's claims. The names of these members are as follows:

Raymond Grevalis
Edward Johnston
David Impalizzo
Joe Porcelli
Thomas Thompson

In addition to these names, a widow of a deceased fire fighter reported that she may not have been paid a death benefit from the WFRA.

We encourage our members to review their membership in the insurance fund and review the benefits which can be found in the Benefits Book.

Important Phone Numbers

Warwick City Hall	(401)738-2000
Mayor's Office	ext. 6200
Tax Assessor	ext. 6271
Tax Collector	ext. 6255
Human Services	468-4101
Warwick Fire Dept.	468-4000
Warwick Firemen's Assoc.	467-7888

WARWICK FIREFIGHTERS RETIREESS BOARD OF OFFICERS

Fred Slaiger, President
Joe Evangelista, V. President
Ted Johnston, Secretary
Fred Taute, Treasurer