



Fall/Winter 2023

Brett Besselman
Chairman of the Board



Investing for Firefighters and Their Families®

Rumors and Myths

As I, fellow Trustees, and our staff meet with fellow firefighters and retirees around Houston, we hear all sorts of rumors and myths that many believe to be factual. Our member services staff often handle numerous calls from HFD active and retired members of the Fund with questions based on gossip and tall tales. We would like to take a moment to try to put some of these falsehoods to rest and hopefully reduce some of the unnecessary anxiety about our pension fund that comes from these stories being passed around. Before we jump into that, please know that HFRRF is one of, if not the best run and well-funded pension funds in the country. We have a long history of growing our investments, even when other pensions have struggled. Your pension will be here when you need it and if we continue this tradition of building a strong and well-governed pension fund, it will be here for firefighters and their families long into the future. Here are the top three:

Rumor/Myth #1: My spouse's pension is going to be reduced/eliminated because of my pension; or the other way around.

FACT: Your HFRRF retirement benefits are calculated based upon set statutory formulas. This means your (or your eligible spouse's) HFRRF retirement benefits will not be reduced because of any other retirement benefits you or your spouse receive from another source. Conversely, and as a general rule, any benefits you or your spouse are entitled to receive from another retirement fund, other than federal social security benefits, should not be reduced as a result of your participation in HFRRF.

Rumor/Myth #2: Over 300 people retiring in the next month (recurring rumor that pops up periodically).

FACT: We do not expect any exponential surge in retirements. HFRRF is well positioned with respect to its finances, staffing, and other necessary resources to handle any sort of increase in retirement applications.

Rumor/Myth #3: Members must withdraw ALL their money from their DROP Account when it is time for their Required Minimum Distribution (RMD).

FACT: While the federal government has set the RMD for specific ages and amounts, rarely would it require a complete cash-out of your DROP account. Before you jump to any conclusions about your DROP accounts, please call member services who can walk you through your options and the timing of taking distributions that makes most sense to you and follows the law.

There are many more frequently asked questions, myths, and rumors we hear every day, and we have tried to address many of these starting on page eight (8). If you have any questions or heard other things about our pension, please feel free to visit our website at www.hfrrf.org or call our member services team who can help set the record straight.

Brett Besselman
Chairman

Houston Firefighters' Relief and Retirement Fund



News from the Board

HFRRF BOARD OF TRUSTEES ELECTION

In accordance with the HFRRF Policies and Procedures, candidates for the current HFRRF Board of Trustee election were announced as follows:

Edward A. Llewellyn
Position III



Jia Wen "Pete" Ng
Incumbent Position IV



Both candidates will be sworn in at the January 2024 board meeting. The new 3-year term will begin on January 1, 2024, and will end December 31, 2026.

Stephen Whitehead has retired! His last meeting with The HFRRF Board of Trustees was October 17, 2023.

His last day with The Houston Fire Department was October 27, 2023. *Congratulations!*



Memorial Benches - \$3,500

If you are interested in purchasing a bench in the Memorial Garden at HFRRF to honor a Houston firefighter, this may be your last chance. The application is available online at www.hfrf.org under HFRRF Memorial on the home page. Take the completed form and full payment to the pension office. Guidelines are on page 2 of the application. Please email any questions to benches@hfrf.org

Memorial Pavers - \$100

If you would like to purchase a paver in the Memorial Garden, the order form is available on www.hfrf.org under HFRRF Memorial on the home page.



31st Annual Retiree Holiday Luncheon



December 7, 2023

11am – 1pm

HFRRF Greer & Lowdermilk Conference Center

Retirees - There is an Invitation that will be mailed to everyone's address that we have on file. The invitation will have a QR code for you to RSVP. We will also send out an email invitation (through Constant Contact) that will have a RSVP link at the bottom.

Retiree BBQ

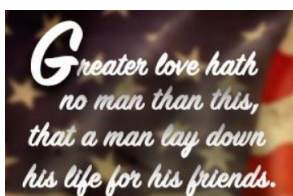


May 2, 2024

11am – 1pm

HFRRF Greer & Lowdermilk Conference Center

HFD Annual Memorial Ceremony



October 19, 2024

11am – 1pm

HFRRF Memorial Garden

Key Dates

NOVEMBER 2023

		1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10
12	13	Board Meeting	15	16	17
19	20	21	22	23	24
26	27	28	29	30	

DECEMBER 2023

				1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8
10	11	Board Meeting	13	14	15
17	18	19	20	21	22
24	25	26	27	28	29
31					

January 2024

	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	Board Meeting	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

FEBRUARY 2024

				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	Board Meeting	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

MARCH 2024

					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	Board Meeting	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

APRIL 2024

	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	Board Meeting	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

HFRRF Board & Committee Meetings

3rd Tuesday of every month
except November and December

Office Closings

- | | |
|------------------|----------------|
| November 10 | Veterans Day |
| November 23 - 24 | Thanksgiving |
| December 22, 25 | Christmas |
| January 1 | New Year's Day |
| January 15 | MLK Day |
| February 19 | Presidents Day |

Office Noon Closures

- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| November 22 | January 12 |
| December 21 | February 16 |
| December 29 | March 29 |

News from Member Services

Service	Amount	Start Date
Cost of Living Adjustment	4%	October 31, 2023
DROP/PROP Interest	5.53%	September 1, 2023
Annual Supplemental Benefit (ASB)		January 12, 2024
Annual Exclusion Letters	\$3,000	January 20, 2024
PROP/DROP Withdrawal		Deadline for 2023: December 15, 2023
Reminder: 1099s are mailed out by Bank of New York (BNY) Mellon, not HFRRF		

DECEMBER 1, 2023 REQUIRED MINIMUM DISTRIBUTION (RMD) FORM OR FORCE

If you are 73 or older and have a DROP and/or PROP account, you are required by the IRS to withdraw a RMD or a 50% tax penalty could be assessed. The required amount is based on your age, spouse's age (if applicable), and your 12/31/2022 DROP/PROP account balance: [RMD Calculator](#) - note this calculator is not accurate if you are 10+ years older than your spouse. Remember, previous withdrawals in 2023 count toward RMD. If member services has not received your DROP or PROP Disbursement Form by December 1, 2023, HFRRF will **force** out your RMD at 10% tax withholding and deposit it to your account on file.

Online DROP/PROP Withdrawals

Did you know that you can make DROP/PROP withdrawals online? Log into [MemberDirect](#) and go to My Account. Choose Forms. For a lump sum withdrawal up to \$50k, use the Disbursement Form. If you want to set up recurring monthly or quarterly withdrawals, submit the Periodic Disbursement Form.

REMINDERS:

- If you recently got married, make sure you submit a marriage license along with your spouse's social security number and date of birth to the pension office, so we can add it to your record.
- If you are a member and have lost a spouse, please contact our office so that your file can be updated.
- If you are a survivor beneficiary and re-marry, move, or change your phone number please update your information with our office so there is no disruption in your pension benefits.
- Keep your contact information updated to help ensure we can connect with you about important information regarding your benefit or account.

Questions Regarding Your Deductions?

COH - HR Benefits Services 832-393-6000 benefits@houstontx.gov houstontx.gov/hr/
 Cigna 800-997-1406, 832-393-6191 cityofhouston-serviceinquiries@cigna.com
 Cigna Dental 800-401-4041 www.cigna.com
 Dearborn National (Life Ins.) 800-348-4512 Claims_Customer_Service@dearbornnational.com
 Dennis Holder Scholarship Fund 281-385-8525 hfdscholarship@gmail.com
 Standard Life 713-223-9166
 HFD Honor Guard, James Wick 346-266-5633 or 832-394-5940
 HFD Pipes and Drums 713-417-8348
 HPFFA Medical Supplemental 713-223-9166 ext 1
 HPFFA Dental/Vision (Humana) 1-800-833-2223
 Houston Fire Museum 713-524-2526
 Relative Assistance/Hosp Fund 713-223-9166 ext 5

MEMBER SUPPORT-HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Kristi Marx, LCSW
Manager of Member Support & Services

Curb the Cravings-Let's face it, being told to think of something else when you're in the grip of a powerful craving (cigarette, alcohol, sweets...) is about as helpful as being told to swim when you're drowning. But there is one way that advice can work. [READ MORE](#)

Silent Grief-Grief is most often associated with death, but our lives are also deeply affected by tragedy, natural disasters, and other events that result in loss. Grief is a universal emotion, but the way we experience it is not. [READ MORE](#)

MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

We are here to help! Regular business hours are Monday – Friday 7:30am – 4:00pm. Administrative staff and member services representatives are available by phone, email, in person, and for virtual appointments. Call member services at 281-372-5100 if you'd like to schedule an individual appointment. A wide range of self-service options are also accessible online 24/7 in [MemberDirect](#). If you need to drop off paperwork after hours, please use the gray drop off box on the front porch.

STAY CONNECTED WITH HFRRF

To Log into MemberDirect:

1. Enter your username and password
2. Answer the challenge question
3. A text message with a code will be sent to the cell phone number on file
4. Enter the 4-digit code
5. Select "trust this device" so no code will be required on that device for 3 months
6. Click continue to access your account

From now on, when you log in, you will not need to answer security questions.

In the future, when you need to update contact information, log into MemberDirect, click "Personal Information" on left side, update cell number, address, etc., then click "update" to save.

Houston Fire Department Cadets



HFRRF recently began hosting the cadets towards the end of their training to provide information regarding their pension and retirement. This orientation for the cadets is an opportunity to see the pension office and the memorial garden, as well as speak with trustees, a Dennis W. Holder Scholarship Fund representative, and staff. Cadets Blake Sapp and Brian O'Connor shared their thoughts on visiting the office (as opposed to staff visiting them at the academy): "Coming up here and being able to sit in the room, being able to see all of this stuff, and having them break down where our pension's going, it was nice coming up here," said Sapp. O'Connor added, "Having the Board of Trustees there, and talking to us, we got to actually meet them and have them explain it to us." Captain Michael Brown, who assists in training the cadets, was also at the pension fund along with the cadets. He has been witness to staff presenting to the cadets at the academy versus the cadets visiting HFRRF offices, and thinks the switch has been a great change. "It's a great opportunity to come out here. Just to come here and see the place, you feel family for the fire department. They see it. Showing up to an academy every day that was built in 1969, and it's just more real coming out here. It's incredible." Cadet orientation at HFRRF allows them to meet key people, get important information, see everything the Fund has to offer, and most importantly, get properly enrolled as they start their careers in the HFD. It has definitely been a treat for everyone involved and we hope to continue it well into the future.

HFD MEMORIAL CEREMONY

October 21, 2023



Rumors and Myths (Continued)

Rumor/Myth #4: If a member passes away their spouse does not get 100% of the pension.

FACT: While Section 7 of our governing statute can be confusing to read as there are all sorts of family situations that have been addressed over the years in law, fundamentally our pension has ensured that an eligible spouse receives a survivor benefit of 100% of their spouse's pension, with certain exceptions based on the timing of the marriage. If you have any questions about your specific situation, you can read our [Summary Plan Description](#) (SPD) on our website and/or contact member services via email or phone call.

Rumor/Myth #5: If a surviving widow is remarried the pension stops.

FACT: Section 7(j) of HFRRF's governing statute says, "An eligible spouse is entitled to receive or continue to receive survivor benefits on remarriage, except that a person who is an eligible spouse of more than one member is entitled to receive survivor benefits as the eligible spouse of only the member whose survivor benefits provide the highest benefit to that eligible spouse."

Rumor/Myth #6: It's hard to get an appointment to retire/ there's a line of members waiting for appointments/ there is a three month wait for appointments.

FACT: We have a professional staff who are available to you by phone, email, and personal appointments year-round. Rarely has anyone had to wait more than 48 hours for an appointment. Our team takes appointments to help our members during regular business hours. We are happy to meet with our members whether you are new to HFD, are ready to retire, or already in retirement. You are more than welcome to bring a spouse or trusted family member to help you work through your retirement questions.

Rumor/Myth #7: HFRRF is susceptible to fraud and criminal activities.

FACT: We take the security of your pension very seriously and have put in place numerous measures to ensure your money and your data remains safe and secure. You can log into your online portal ([MemberDirect](#)), with multi-factor authentication, and conduct most of your business with the Fund; and our staff can help with certain changes to your data, but we have several security steps in place to ensure only you can change your vital information and some of that we require in writing. Anytime something changes in your life that may impact your pension, please call our member services staff and we are happy to help you through the process.

Rumor/Myth #8: Do I need a Power of Attorney (POA)?

FACT: According to the American Bar Association, a power of attorney (POA) is an essential component of a complete estate plan. When you execute a power of attorney, it authorizes another person to manage financial matters on your behalf. These financial matters may embrace a broad range of activities, including, but not limited to banking transactions, managing stocks and bonds, real estate transactions, retirement plan transactions, and gift-giving authority. Choosing the right person to serve as attorney-in-fact under the power of attorney is an important decision. The power of attorney may become effective immediately or only if the member is disabled or incapacitated and is unable to manage his or her own affairs. Please consult with legal counsel to be ready for whatever life throws at you.

Rumor/Myth #9: I'm a survivor beneficiary and there are no benefits when I die.

FACT: Indeed, when a survivor beneficiary passes on, the monthly retirement pension also ends; but, if there is money remaining in a DROP/PROP account, that money may be distributed according to HFRRF's governing statute. In some cases, a member's estate may be eligible for a pro-rated benefit and should contact our member services staff soon after a death occurs.

IN MEMORY

Our condolences & heartfelt sympathies are extended to families of our members who recently passed away.

DATE	RETIRED MEMBERS	HFD SERVICE
5/24/23	Jon O. Swain	1970-1980
5/30/23	Kenneth Jordan	1979-2007
6/3/23	Louis Rumfolo	1971-2003
6/3/23	Jack Lenny Frost	1982-2003
6/8/23	Raul Martinez	1980-2003
6/16/23	John H. Sassie	1965-1980
6/17/23	Billy G. Armstrong	1955-1977
6/20/23	Roger Dale Curry	1980-2009
6/21/23	Frank Henderson	1973-1999
6/21/23	Donald Aldridge	1981-2001
6/24/23	Randy Lobue	1972-2008
7/2/23	James D. Cox	1964-1988
7/5/23	Louis Moore	1969-2003
7/16/23	Paul Bobbitt	1956-1982
7/16/23	Milton Dodgen	1959-1982
7/19/23	Jessie Harris	1969-2004
7/23/23	Philip Daley	1979-2005
7/27/23	Alan Estes	1963-1995
7/29/23	John D. Harvey	1961-1982
8/2/23	James W. Hudgens II	1972-1994
8/5/23	Robert N. Harris	1959-1980
8/19/23	Joe Miller	1968-2008
8/21/23	Harold L. Coats, Jr.	1970-1982
9/9/23	Bobby Taylor	1955-1977
9/19/23	Michael Sims	1969-1990
9/27/23	Norman Donalson	1967-2003
10/12/23	James M. Griffin	1968-1997
10/12/23	Theldon Mayo	1963-1994
10/28/23	Jesse Arnold	1986-2017



Gone, but not forgotten.

DATE	ACTIVE MEMBER	HFD SERVICE
8/17/23	Chase Fleming	2022-2023

DATE	BENEFICIARY
6/7/23	Dorothy White
6/16/23	Thelma Cooper
7/16/23	Ann Walker
7/20/23	Agnes Halliburton
8/24/23	Wanda Farmer
8/31/23	Gloria Umlang
9/6/23	Laverne Stephens
9/9/23	Sharon Hundl
10/3/23	Shirley Burleson
10/8/23	Thelma P. Campbell

HFRRF Office News



Sharon Johnson

Senior Benefits Specialist

Celebrating 30 years November 10th

Ryan Splawn

Senior Investment Officer

Celebrating 15 years December 31st

Sally McDaniel

Senior Investment Operations Analyst

Celebrating 15 years February 16th



Marsha Fisher started with HFRRF October 18, 2023
as the Part Time Conference Center Events Captain



Harold Mitchell

Part Time Conference
Center Events Captain

Started July 27, 2007

Retiring December 2023

Teresa Matlock

Records Manager

Started July 1, 2003

Retiring January 2024

Congratulations Team!

For the 40th year in a row, the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) has awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to Houston Firefighters' Relief and Retirement Fund for its annual comprehensive financial report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2022. This award is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management. The report has been judged by an impartial panel to meet the high standards of the program, which includes demonstrating a constructive "spirit of full disclosure" to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential users and user groups to read the report. Way to go HFRRF staff!

Investments Update

FY 2023 was the year when the Federal Reserve fought the onset of inflation with the fastest rate of interest rate increases in the last forty years. While it is still not clear if they achieved the intended goals, they did manage to slow down the rate of increase in inflation. This aggressive move resulted in the breakdown of the traditional bonds / equities diversification benefit. HFRRF took a defensive stance, cutting its exposure in public equities and fixed rate bonds and added more to floating rates and private assets. Private Equity underperformed public equities and was the main reason for underperforming the policy benchmark for the fiscal year.

	FY 2023	3 Years	5 Years	10 Years
HFRRF Net of Fees	4.11%	11.61%	8.41%	7.86%
Policy Benchmark	6.28%	7.74%	6.82%	6.84%
<i>HFRRF over Policy Benchmark</i>	<i>-2.17%</i>	<i>3.87%</i>	<i>1.59%</i>	<i>1.02%</i>

HOUSTON FIREFIGHTERS' RELIEF AND RETIREMENT FUND

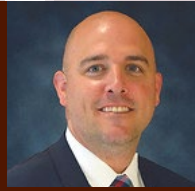
HFRRF's mission is to provide a secure retirement benefit plan for our members through professional administration, prudent management of system assets, sound investment practices, & prompt, courteous delivery of accurate benefits & useful information.



Brett Besselman
Chairman



Lisa Slagle
Secretary



David Riegor
Active Member



Ed Llewellyn
Active Member Elect



Pete Ng
Active Member

HFRRF Board of Trustees



Gerard Daniels
Active member



David Lantrip
Retired Member



Al Mays
Citizen Member



Arif Rasheed
City Treasurer
Designee



Earnest Wotring
Mayor's
Representative

4225 Interwood North Parkway, Houston, TX 77032

281-372-5100 800-666-9737

www.hfrrf.org

