

# Retirement News Update



City of Austin Employees' Retirement System

3rd Quarter 2004 Volume 2 Issue 3

A Quarterly Newsletter for Members of the City of Austin Employees' Retirement System

## Creditable Service Purchase Application



There continues to be a lot of interest in various types of service purchases. To better serve you, the City of Austin

Employees' Retirement System has implemented an application process. This Creditable Service Purchase Application provides COA ERS staff with the information required to calculate the cost of service purchases quickly while also maximizing the quality of the purchase process.

COA ERS staff will only prepare a creditable service purchase calculation with a current (received by the Retirement Office within the last 90 days) Creditable Service Purchase Application. Also, please note that COA ERS staff will no longer prepare creditable service purchase calculations more than 90 days from the date of the application.

This application process requires a two to three week turnaround, but is ultimately for the benefit of all our Members and the integrity of your retirement funds.

For a copy of the Creditable Service Purchase Application, please call the Retirement Office at 458-2551 or visit our website at [www.coaers.org](http://www.coaers.org).

## Members Called to Active Military Duty

As many members of the Reserve Forces and the National Guard are being called to active duty, COA ERS offers the following reminder about how military leave relates to retirement benefits.

According to the Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and the Military Relief Act, any person who leaves employment for active duty in the uniformed services shall be treated as being on military leave of absence during that period of service. The COA ERS Member may use any amount or combination of annual, paid or compensatory leave. If the employee is on paid leave during the absence, both the employee and employer contributions will be made by the City of Austin based on a 40 hour work week.

If the COA ERS Member is on leave without pay, he/she may continue to make ongoing contributions to COA ERS by sending in personal payment for the amount of his/her regular COA ERS contribution. These ongoing contributions will be matched by the City of Austin. This arrangement MUST be made in advance by contacting the Retirement Office at 458-2551.

Alternatively, Members who are on military leave without pay may also establish creditable service for the leave of absence by making a Creditable Service Purchase if they return to City of Austin employment within 90 days of discharge. This Creditable Service Purchase must occur within 5 years after return to City of Austin employment.

## COA ERS Annual Members' Meeting

Please join us for the  
2004 COA ERS Annual Members' Meeting:

Wednesday October 20, 2004  
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

at

The Retirement Office  
418 E. Highland Mall Blvd.  
Austin, Texas

# Active Members' News & Notes

## Know Your Retirement Benefits: Disability Retirement

Employees who are Members of the COA ERS should be aware that disability retirement benefits are available under certain circumstances. A COA ERS Member is eligible to apply for disability retirement benefits if the individual is mentally or physically incapacitated for the performance of any type of employment duties, and the incapacity is likely to be permanent. Members with less than five years creditable service may apply for disability retirement only if the disability is a result of an on-the-job accident or injury. Members with five or more years of creditable service may apply for disability re-

irement even if the disability is not job related. Members who are already eligible to retire may not apply for disability retirement.

A Member is considered to be in the same membership category (Active - Contributory or Inactive - Contributory) in effect on the date he or she terminated employment with the City for a period of 90 days following termination. This fact enables COA ERS Members to apply for disability retirement benefits for up to 90 days following their termination for inability to perform all employment duties.

Applications for disability retirement benefits are available at the Retirement Office. The Board of Trustees has final authority in granting disability retirement benefits. Individuals who have retired through this program are required to periodically provide proof of continued disability. In addition, they are required to provide income verification annually to the Board / Disability Committee.

If you need further information about disability retirement or need an application to apply for disability retirement, please call the Retirement Office at 458-2551.

### Retirement Strategies Presentations

*Presented by the City of Austin  
Employees' Retirement System*



#### Find Out:

When can I retire?

How can I purchase service credit?

How much permissive time can I buy?

What is "proportionate retirement"?

Do I qualify for the DROP?

Our informal question and answer sessions will help you plan for retirement.

To request a presentation for your department, please call the Retirement Office at 458-2551.

### Retirement Annuity and Creditable Service Calculations On the Web

Please visit our website at [www.coaers.org](http://www.coaers.org) to calculate the amount of your Retirement Annuity or Creditable Service Purchase. Note: These calculations are provided for **estimates only**. Final calculations will be provided by the COA ERS Staff. Please contact the Retirement Office at 458-2551 for additional information.

*With Deepest  
Sympathy*

We extend our condolences to the family and friends of those Members of COA ERS who were active City of Austin employees who passed away between April 1, 2004 and June 30, 2004:

Gladys Robinson  
Ismael Rodriguez

# Retired Members' News & Notes

## Annual Affidavits

Once each year, affidavits are mailed to all Retirees and Beneficiaries receiving annuity payments from COA ERS. By signing and returning the affidavit, annuitants confirm that they are still living and eligible to receive their monthly annuity. The affidavit process is used by many retirement systems to prevent fraudulent payments to people who are not eligible to receive an annuity. Board policy requires that all affidavits be notarized.

Affidavits were mailed June 1, 2004 to be returned by July 1, 2004. To date, we have received over 2,500 of the 3,000+ affidavits that were mailed. Final notices were mailed July 7, 2004 to be returned by August 1, 2004. If we do not receive your affidavit by the August 1st deadline, the Board of Trustees may suspend your retirement annuity beginning in September 2004.

We are aware that returning affidavits during the summer months can be difficult for some retirees. Therefore, beginning in 2005, COA ERS will begin mailing affidavits in March to be returned in April. We hope that this change in schedule will better accommodate our retirees.

## Volunteers Needed!!!!



We are gearing up for our Retired Member Place 10 election to be held in December of 2004.

This place is currently held by Sheila (Matthews) Hale. The term of Place 10 will be from January 2005 to December 31, 2008.

All current COA ERS retirees receiving an annuity from the COA ERS will be eligible to run and vote in the Retired Member election. Beneficiaries and alternate payees are not entitled to run and/or vote in this election.

Qualified Members interested in serving on the Board of Trustees must submit an application to the Retirement Office before close of business or postmarked no later than **October 8, 2004**. An application packet will be available at the Retirement Office or on our website at [www.coaers.org](http://www.coaers.org) on August 1st, 2004.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Jesse Ortega, Administrative Supervisor, at 458-2551 ext. 109 or at [jesse.ortega@coaers.org](mailto:jesse.ortega@coaers.org).

## *With Deepest Sympathy*

We regret to inform you that the following retirees have passed away between April 1, 2004 and June 30, 2004:

Albert Acosta  
Annie Caine  
Marie Denison  
Gabriel Guerrero  
Virginia Moore  
Ester Ontiveros  
Lee Ortiz  
Charles Sandel

## **Please Keep Your Beneficiary Information Up To Date!**

If you wish to change your designated beneficiary for your **\$10,000 COA ERS death benefit**, you will need to complete a new COA ERS Beneficiary Designation form. *Please remember that the COA ERS Beneficiary Designation form must be notarized and if you are currently married, your spouse must also sign the COA ERS Beneficiary Designation form.*

If you wish to change your **\$1,000 City of Austin death benefit**, you will need to complete the City of Austin's Beneficiary Designation form.

Both of these Beneficiary designation forms can be mailed to you for completion, or you can stop by the Retirement Office to complete new ones. This is a simple step you can take to ensure your death benefits are paid in accordance with your wishes.

### **Attention Austin Energy Retirees**

#### **2nd Annual Get Together**

**When:**

Last Friday in September  
6:00 P.M. to ???

**Where:**

Manchaca Fire Hall

**For more information contact:**

Jay Gurley - [jayandtracy@eui.net](mailto:jayandtracy@eui.net)  
Wallace Gootman - 263-5535

*This event is not sponsored by COA ERS.*

## Upcoming Dates to Remember

### August

- \* 1st - Final Notice Affidavits Due
- \* 19th - Pre-Retirement Seminar
- \* 24th - COA ERS Board Meeting
- \* 31st - Retiree Pay Day

### September

- \* 6th - COA ERS Office closed in observance of Labor Day
- \* 16th - Pre-Retirement Seminar
- \* 28th - COA ERS Board Meeting
- \* 30th - Retiree Pay Day

### October

- \* 8th - Retired Member Place 10 Candidate Application Deadline
- \* 20th - Annual Members' Meeting
- \* 21st - Pre-Retirement Seminar
- \* 26th - COA ERS Board Meeting
- \* 29th - Retiree Pay Day

## Free Notary Services Available

The Retirement Office offers free notary services to its Members for COA ERS business only. System notaries will not notarize non-COA ERS documents.

## COA ERS Board of Trustees

Cathy Rodgers, Board Chair  
Dennis Waley, Board Vice Chair  
Janet Bartles, Trustee  
Eyna Canales-Zarate, Trustee  
Reagan David, Trustee  
Francine Gertz, Trustee  
Ed Golden, Trustee  
Elizabeth S. Gonzales, Trustee  
Jackie Goodman, Mayor Pro Tem  
Sheila (Matthews) Hale, Trustee  
Mark Monteith, Trustee

## Website Suggestions?



If you have any suggestions regarding information you would like to see on the COA ERS website, please email them to [jesse.ortega@coaers.org](mailto:jesse.ortega@coaers.org).

### Please keep your address up to date!!

**ACTIVE MEMBERS** - Please contact City of Austin Payroll Dept. at 974-3001 to change your address.

**RETIRED & VESTED MEMBERS** - Please submit a change of address in writing to the Retirement Office. Forms are available at [www.coaers.org](http://www.coaers.org) or by calling 458-2551.

For your security, we will only mail financial information to the address that we have on record.

### Need to Discuss Your Retirement Benefits?

COA ERS Member Services Specialists are available to answer your questions by phone, email, or in person Monday through Friday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. If you would like to speak with a Specialist in person, please call our office at 458-2551 to make an appointment. This will ensure you have adequate time to discuss any questions you may have regarding your retirement benefits. Our staff will continue to service walk-in Members as scheduling allows.

## COA ERS Staff

### Executive Director

*Stephen C. Edmonds*

Executive Assistant

*Cheryl Nelson*

Operations Manager

*Rhonda Helm*

### Member Services

Member Services Specialist

*Jobne Behner*

*Laura L. Fugate*

*Zandra Mencer-Jones*

Member Services Coordinators

*Craig Finkelstein*

*Teresa Cantu*

### Operations

Administrative Supervisor

*Jesse Ortega*

IT Coordinator

*Melissa Adams*

Office Coordinator

*Lee DeGangh*

Office Assistant

*Korrie Hoskins*

### Finance

Finance Manager

*Donna Boykin*

Financial Analyst

*Barbara Rangel*

### City of Austin Employees' Retirement System

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[www.coaers.org](http://www.coaers.org)