

# COAERS CONNECT

WINTER 2020 | WWW.COAERS.ORG



City of Austin Employees' Retirement System



## Vote Now in the 2020 Board of Trustees Elections

The 2020 COAERS Board of Trustees elections are underway, and the voting period is now open for the Active Member Place 6 special election and the Retired Member Place 10 election! From now until December 1st at 5 pm, active City of Austin employees and retiree members can cast their votes.

### Candidate Statements

This year, eleven members declared their candidacy for the two open Board positions. The Retired Member Place 10 Election has five candidates, while the Active Member Place 6 Special Election has six candidates on the ballot. You can learn about all the candidates in this election by reading their candidate statements. Candidate statements contain information about each candidate, their experiences and qualifications, and their reason for wanting to serve on the COAERS Board of Trustees. Candidate statements can be found in three places: 1) with your paper ballot, 2) linked on the online voting website, and 3) on the COAERS website at [bit.ly/coaerselection2020](http://bit.ly/coaerselection2020) (available in English and Spanish).

### How to Vote

In this election, COAERS members have two options for how to cast their vote – through the mail-in paper ballot or by voting online. Retired members can vote for one candidate running for the Retired Member Place 10 position and active City of Austin employees can vote for one candidate running for the Active Member Place 6 position. Please note that safeguards are also in place to ensure that members cannot vote more than once or use more than one method to vote.

### Mailed Ballots

On October 19th, paper ballots were mailed to all eligible COAERS members. Each ballot contains unique voting credentials assigned to each COAERS member. On the paper ballot, members should select only one candidate from the slate. Once you've filled out your ballot, use the business reply envelope to return your completed paper ballot in the mail. No postage is necessary to mail your ballot.

### Online Voting

As an alternative to the paper ballot, COAERS members will also have the added benefit of voting online. COAERS has partnered with YesElection this year to make online voting possible. Online voting information is located on the paper ballot, along with each COAERS members' unique election code and pin. Members who have an email on file with COAERS were also sent election information via email from YesElections with their unique voter identification code and pin. To vote online, visit the [vote.yeselections.com/COAERS](http://vote.yeselections.com/COAERS) website, enter your identification information and follow the instructions to cast your vote.

Please be aware that the postal service may be experiencing operational impacts as a result of COVID-19, which may delay delivery of mail. **To ensure that your vote is cast in a timely way, we encourage members to vote online or return ballots WELL before the election deadline on December 1, 2020 at 5 pm CST.** If you need assistance with your election materials or have any questions about the election, please contact [member.services@coaers.org](mailto:member.services@coaers.org) or (512) 458-2551.

## IN THIS ISSUE

Vote Now in the 2020 Board Elections ... 1

MemberDirect is Now Available ... 2

COAERS Operations Update ... 2

COAERS, Austin Consider Plan Sustainability Pathways ... 3

Service Purchase Deadlines Are Approaching... 3

Sign Up for Direct Deposit... 3

Important Dates... 4

## COAERS HOURS OF REMOTE OPERATION

COAERS offices remain closed to the public while we continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic. However, our staff is standing by remotely to help via telephone, email, or virtual visits.

Monday - Friday  
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
Tel: (512) 458-2551  
Fax: (512) 458-5650  
[www.coaers.org](http://www.coaers.org)  
[member.services@coaers.org](mailto:member.services@coaers.org)

## COAERS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Eyna Canales-Zarate - Chair  
Ed Van Eenoo - Vice Chair  
Stephanie Beach  
Mike Benson  
Amy Hunter  
Yuejiao Liu  
Frank Merriman  
Chris Noak  
Leslie Pool  
Anthony B. Ross, Sr.  
Randy Spencer

# COAERS to Continue Remote Operations through 2020

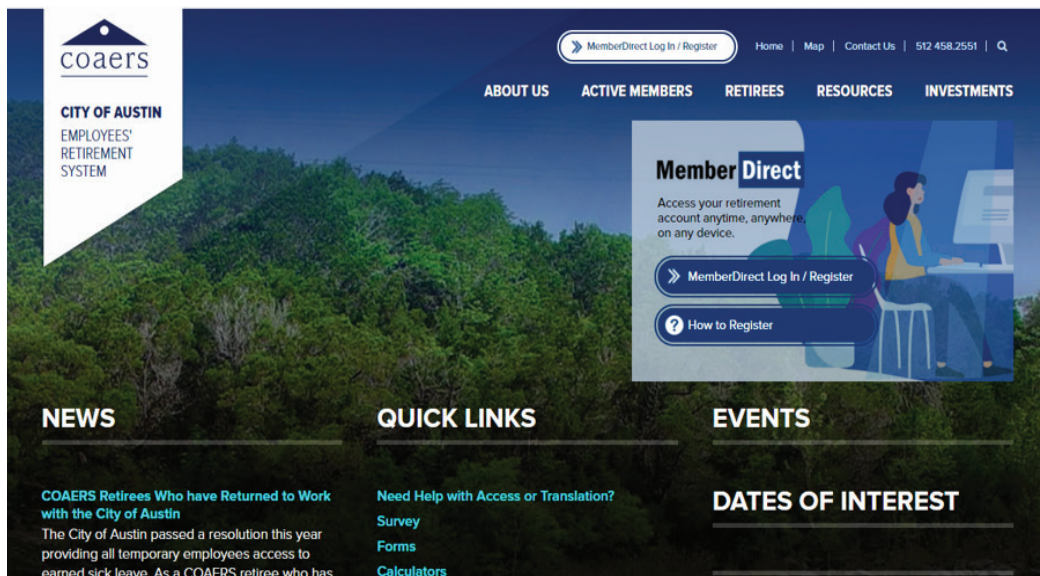
Since the onset of the pandemic in March, COAERS has continued to closely monitor the evolving situation surrounding COVID-19. Following recommendations by the CDC and local government authorities, COAERS took critical steps to protect the health and wellbeing of our valued members, our dedicated staff, and trustees. Over the past eight months, COAERS quickly adapted to the ever-changing conditions of this public health crisis, swiftly transforming business operations for the virtual environment to ensure the seamless continuity of our service to members and to deliver benefits on time and without interruption.

As we head into the final stretch of 2020, COAERS will continue operating remotely as part of our business readiness plan and risk management strategy while regularly assessing the latest information from government and public health officials to inform future business operations decisions. We will update COAERS members when in-person operations will resume. In the meantime, there are many ways that you can reach us:

- Our Member Services team is available to assist you Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Contact us at (512) 458-2551 or [member.services@coaers.org](mailto:member.services@coaers.org) and our team will help with questions, process requests and provide retirement information.
- Members can also access our new virtual tools including MemberDirect and schedule virtual counseling appointments.

We will continue to communicate updates and changes on our website at [www.coaers.org/covid19](http://www.coaers.org/covid19), and you can sign up at [news@coaers.org](mailto:news@coaers.org) to receive our email updates.

—  
**COAERS IS  
HERE FOR  
YOU**  
—



## MemberDirect is Now Live! Explore Your Benefits with MemberDirect

COAERS is excited to announce that MemberDirect is now available to members at [www.coaers.org](http://www.coaers.org)! On October 30, COAERS launched its new online self-service and information portal called MemberDirect, making it easy for members to access benefit information, manage retirement accounts, proactively plan for retirement, and conduct business with COAERS safely, securely, and reliably. Members can now visit the COAERS website at [www.coaers.org](http://www.coaers.org) to see videos about MemberDirect and register online for access to their account.

### What can you do on MemberDirect?

Through MemberDirect, COAERS members have access to benefit information at their fingertips. Use MemberDirect from anywhere, anytime, and on any device.

For active members, MemberDirect allows you to view your benefit contributions balance. Need help planning for retirement? MemberDirect's estimate tools let you to calculate your future retirement benefit and service purchases. Use MemberDirect to see if you're eligible to retire, see service credits, view how deductions and insurance will affect retirement take-home pay, or download and complete forms. Members can also register for informational seminars on the portal. COAERS retiree members can view payment history and receipts, tax withholdings and other deductions, update direct deposit information and access 1099-R forms. Retirees who return to work can also track their total hours worked through MemberDirect.

The portal also allows all members to review nominated beneficiaries, update contact information, sign up to receive communications, account alerts and notifications to stay up to date with the latest information from COAERS.

### Commitment to Cybersecurity

As part of our continuing commitment to cybersecurity, COAERS has incorporated several online safety measures to ensure that we're assisting the real you. COAERS takes the safety and security of our members accounts and information very seriously and has worked diligently to protect all the information entrusted to us and will continue to do so. As a reminder, members should always be cybersecure and regularly keep an eye on your online accounts and credit reports for suspicious activity, update passwords frequently, and keep your anti-virus and security software up to date. You can always contact us if you have any concerns.

### Ready to use MemberDirect? Register Now

See what MemberDirect can do for you. To register for your account, visit the COAERS website at [www.coaers.org](http://www.coaers.org), click register and follow the steps to enroll in your MemberDirect account today. If you need any assistance with MemberDirect or have any questions, contact us at (512) 458-2551 or [member.services@coaers.org](mailto:member.services@coaers.org).





To subscribe to COAERS news and updates, email [news@coaers.org](mailto:news@coaers.org), and be sure to add 'news@coaers.org' to your safe senders/ contact list so our emails will land in your inbox.

## COAERS, City of Austin Consider Pathways for Improved Retirement System Plan Sustainability

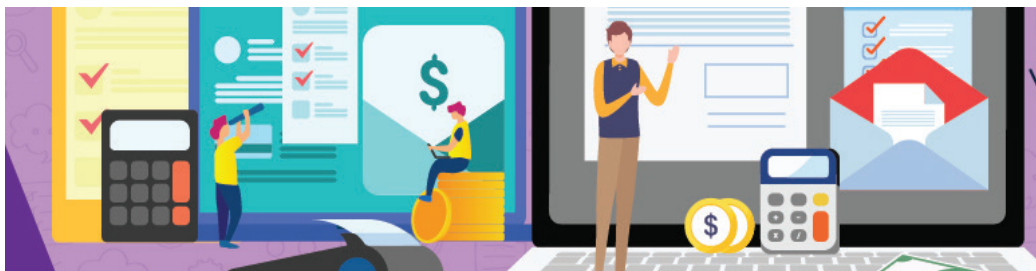
During the September 22 meeting of the COAERS Board of Trustees, the Board discussed its ongoing work to proactively develop solutions to improve the retirement system's long-term financial health and sustainability. It is important to note that the retirement system is not in crisis and remains in good financial standing to continue delivering benefits for decades to come. However, as fiduciaries, the COAERS Board takes its responsibility seriously to ensure that every past, present, and future City employee receives the benefits promised.

Since June, COAERS has been collaborating with the City to evaluate solutions to ensure the retirement system remains financially sustainable in the future. As part of its proposal to the Board, the City of Austin and COAERS working group developed the following proposal:

1. Establish the 88th Legislative Session (beginning January 2023) as the goal for comprehensive pension reform legislation.
2. Increase the City's contribution during the period leading up to the 88th Legislative Session to bring immediate short-term relief to COAERS funding needs contingent on the agreement between the City and COAERS to engage in a productive, meaningful, and collaborative effort to develop a long-term solution which encompasses possible reforms to contribution, benefit, and governance policies.

The COAERS Board of Trustees unanimously voted to support the proposal and will continue to engage the City of Austin to develop the comprehensive solutions to strengthen the long-term sustainability of the retirement system. As a result of the adopted proposal, the City of Austin will increase the City's contributions to COAERS by one percent (from 18% to 19%) effective January 1, 2021. The contribution increase by the City is intended to serve as a temporary bridge until a long-term solution is adopted in 2023. This will NOT increase the contribution that individual employees will make to COAERS. It will remain at its current level of 8% of base pay.

We will continue to keep COAERS members well informed of our progress on plan sustainability and work with the City of Austin on potential legislative proposals related to COAERS.



## 2020 Service Purchase Deadlines Are Approaching

Beginning January 1, 2021, COAERS expects the costs for supplementary, non-contributory, and military service purchases to increase as a result of the recently adopted new actuarial assumptions.

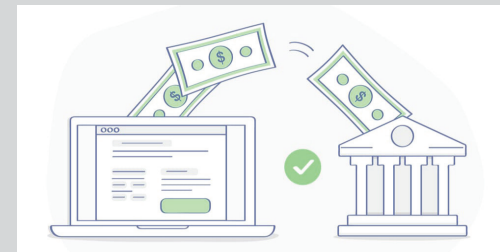
Members wishing to make these service purchases before the cost increases should contact Member Services. Below are the remaining monthly deadlines in 2020 to make these purchases before January 2021:

- November 25, 2020
- December 11, 2020

## Go Paperless: Sign Up for Email Updates from COAERS

Interested in receiving important updates, news and announcements from COAERS in your email inbox? Go paperless and subscribe to our email updates today by emailing [news@coaers.org](mailto:news@coaers.org).

Already a subscriber? Make sure our emails get delivered to your inbox by adding "[news@coaers.org](mailto:news@coaers.org)" to your contacts list or safe senders lists. Doing this helps protect against spam filters.



## Notice to Retirees Receiving Paper Checks: Sign Up for Direct Deposit

As the United States Postal Service deals with impacts of COVID-19, timely receipt of mail and paper retirement checks may be affected.

Direct deposit is the fastest and most secure way to receive your benefit payment. Direct deposit is efficient, reliable, safe, and eliminates the possibility of delayed payments or lost checks. While COAERS strives to provide timely monthly benefits to members, COAERS is not responsible for possible postal service or other delays or loss once your check is mailed.

If you currently receive your monthly benefit payment by mail as a paper check and would like to sign up for direct deposit, please contact us today at (512) 458-2551 or email [member.services@coaers.org](mailto:member.services@coaers.org).

## CONNECT WITH US



(512) 458-2551

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

[member.services@coaers.org](mailto:member.services@coaers.org)



[facebook.com/coaers](https://facebook.com/coaers)



[instagram.com/coaers1](https://instagram.com/coaers1)

## IMPORTANT 2020 DATES

### NOVEMBER

11/11 Veterans Day (Office Closed)  
11/13 Retirement Application Deadline  
11/25 Service Purchase Deadline  
11/26 & 11/27 Thanksgiving Holiday  
(Office Closed)  
11/30 Retiree Annuity Issue Date

### DECEMBER

12/11 Service Purchase Deadline  
12/15 Retirement Application Deadline  
12/24 Christmas Holiday  
(Office Closed)  
12/25 Christmas Holiday  
(Office Closed)  
12/31 Retiree Annuity Issue Date

### JANUARY 2021

1/1 New Year's Day (Office Closed)  
1/15 Retirement Application Deadline  
1/31 Retiree Annuity Issue Date



On behalf of the entire COAERS staff,  
we wish you and your families a very  
happy holiday season ahead.

We are incredibly thankful for the work  
City employees, past and present, do  
for our community.



*City of Austin Employees' Retirement System*

6836 Austin Center Blvd, Suite 190  
Austin, TX 78731

#### DISCLAIMER:

The COAERS Connect newsletter is a publication of the City of Austin Employees' Retirement System and is distributed as a courtesy to Active, Vested, and Retired Members and their beneficiaries. While COAERS has made every attempt to provide correct information, it does not guarantee the accuracy of the information contained or referenced herein.

## CITY OF AUSTIN EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM

WINTER  
NEWSLETTER

