



## MINUTES

**Claims Panel Meeting  
of the Board of Trustees of the  
State Universities Retirement System  
Tuesday, November 30, 2021, 8:30 a.m.  
Via remote access only due to ongoing COVID-19 concerns statewide**

**This public meeting was held virtually via Zoom rather than in person due to ongoing health and safety concerns caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The chair of the SURS Board of Trustees determined that it was not practical to hold in-person meetings at this time while the Governor's disaster proclamation is still in effect and while public health and safety concerns continue to exist.**

The meeting of the Claims Panel of the Board of Trustees of the State Universities Retirement System convened on November 30, 2021, at 8:30 a.m., via Zoom (video conference) based on the Executive Order allowing for remote public meetings to be conducted via phone or video conference.

The following Claims Panel members were present: Mr. Daniel Gaumer, Hearing Officer; Ms. Suzanne Mayer, Interim Executive Director; and Mr. Richard Figueroa, SURS Board of Trustee member.

Others present: Ms. Bianca Green, General Counsel; Mr. Albert Lee, Associate General Counsel; Ms. Heather Kimmons, Associate General Counsel; Ms. April Rudicil, PREP Team Manager; Ms. Karen Nyi and Ms. Annette Ackerman, Executive Assistants; Ms. Janet Cummings, Area Wide Reporting; Ms. Carolyn Clifford of the law firm of Ottosen, DiNolfo, Hasenbalg & Castaldo; Ms. Valencia Stiffic, Claimant; Ms. Bobette Stott, Claimant; Mauro Sardela, Claimant; and Brian Schertz, Claimant.

Claims Panel roll call attendance was taken. Hearing Officer Daniel Gaumer, present; Interim Executive Director Suzanne Mayer, present; and Trustee Richard Figueroa, present.

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Gaumer presented the open minutes from the Claims Panel Hearing of September 27, 2021.

Ms. Mayer made the following motion:

- That the open minutes from the September 27, 2021 Claims Panel Hearing be approved as presented.

Trustee Figueroa seconded the motion which passed via the roll call vote referenced below:

Mr. Gaumer - aye  
Ms. Mayer - aye  
Trustee Figueroa - aye

Mr. Gaumer presented the closed minutes from the Claims Panel Hearing of September 27, 2021, for approval.

Trustee Figueroa made the following motion:

- That the closed minutes from the September 27, 2021 Claims Panel Hearing be approved as presented and remain closed.

Ms. Mayer seconded the motion which passed via the roll call vote referenced below:

Mr. Gaumer - aye  
Ms. Mayer - aye  
Trustee Figueroa - aye

#### **PRESENTATION OF CLAIM - VALENCIA STIFFIC**

Ms. Stiffic was sworn in by Ms. Cummings, the court reporter from Area Wide Reporting. The documentary evidence was admitted into the record and consisted of 64 pages. The record includes the staff brief in response to the Statement of Claim submitted by SURS legal counsel. Ms. Bianca Green provided a verbal summary of the issues to be addressed by the Claims Panel and all parties agreed with that summary. The claimant presented her case and SURS' cross-examination followed..

Upon the conclusion of the claim presentation, Hearing Officer Dan Gaumer closed the proof of evidence. The Claims Panel members decided to hear all of the claims scheduled for this date in open session and then move into closed session to deliberate about all of them.

#### **PRESENTATION OF CLAIM - BOBETTE STOTT**

Ms. Stott was sworn in by Ms. Cummings, the court reporter from Area Wide Reporting. The documentary evidence was admitted into the record and consisted of 60 pages. The record includes the staff brief in response to the Statement of Claim submitted by SURS legal counsel. Ms. Heather Kimmons provided a verbal summary of the issues to be addressed by the Claims Panel and all parties agreed with that summary. The claimant presented her case and SURS' cross-examination followed.

Upon the conclusion of the claim presentation, Hearing Officer Dan Gaumer closed the proof of evidence. The Claims Panel members decided to hear all of the claims scheduled for this date in open session and then move into closed session to deliberate about all of them.

### **PRESENTATION OF CLAIM – MAURO SARDELA**

Mr. Sardela was sworn in by Ms. Cummings, the court reporter from Area Wide Reporting. The documentary evidence was admitted into the record and consisted of 99 pages. The record includes the staff brief in response to the Statement of Claim submitted by SURS legal counsel. Ms. Bianca Green provided a verbal summary of the issues to be addressed by the Claims Panel and all parties agreed with that summary. The claimant presented her case and SURS' cross-examination followed.

Upon the conclusion of the claim presentation, Hearing Officer Dan Gaumer closed the proof of evidence. The Claims Panel members decided to hear all of the claims scheduled for this date in open session and then move into closed session to deliberate about all of them.

### **PRESENTATION OF CLAIM – BRIAN SCHERTZ**

Mr. Schertz was sworn in by Ms. Cummings, the court reporter from Area Wide Reporting. The documentary evidence was admitted into the record and consisted of 110 pages. The record includes the staff brief in response to the Statement of Claim submitted by SURS legal counsel. Ms. Heather Kimmons provided a verbal summary of the issues to be addressed by the Claims Panel and all parties agreed with that summary. The claimant presented his case and SURS' cross-examination followed. Arguments were presented by both parties.

Upon the conclusion of the claim presentation, Hearing Officer Dan Gaumer closed the proof of evidence. The Claims Panel members decided to hear all of the claims scheduled for this date in open session and then move into closed session to deliberate about all of them.

### **CLAIMS PANEL DELIBERATIONS**

Trustee Figueroa made a motion to move into closed session pursuant to §2(c)(4) of the Illinois Open Meetings Act to consider the evidence and testimony presented in all of the cases heard in open session as is authorized by law. Ms. Mayer seconded the motion which passed via the roll call vote referenced below:

Mr. Gaumer	-	aye
Ms. Mayer	-	aye
Trustee Figueroa	-	aye

### **RETURN TO OPEN SESSION**

Upon completion of the deliberations, the Claims Panel returned to open session at approximately 11:35 am.

Ms. Mayer then made the following motion:

- To affirm the staff decision, finding that Valencia Stiffic has not proven by preponderance of the evidence that she is entitled to the relief sought and a written decision of factual findings and conclusion will be drafted by the hearing officer and signed by members of the Claims Panel voting in favor of the motion.

Trustee Figueroa seconded the motion which passed via the following roll call vote:

Mr. Gaumer	-	aye
Ms. Mayer	-	aye
Trustee Figueroa	-	Aye

Ms. Mayer then made the following motion:

- To affirm the staff decision, finding that Bobette Stott has not proven by preponderance of the evidence that she is entitled to the relief sought and a written decision of factual findings and conclusion will be drafted by the hearing officer and signed by members of the Claims Panel voting in favor of the motion.

Trustee Figueroa seconded the motion which passed via the following roll call vote:

Mr. Gaumer	-	aye
Ms. Mayer	-	aye
Trustee Figueroa	-	aye

Ms. Mayer then made the following motion:

- To affirm the staff decision, finding that Mauro Roberto Sardela has not proven by preponderance of the evidence that he is entitled to the relief sought and a written decision of factual findings and conclusion will be drafted by the hearing officer and signed by members of the Claims Panel voting in favor of the motion.

Trustee Figueroa seconded the motion which passed via the following roll call vote:

Mr. Gaumer	-	aye
Ms. Mayer	-	aye
Trustee Figueroa	-	aye

Mr. Gaumer then made the following motion:

- To remand the case of Mr. Schertz back to staff with direction to both staff and Mr. Schertz to reach out to the University of Illinois to obtain information from them as to why they did not certify Mr. Schertz as an employee in the earlier time frame when he worked hours at the University of Illinois in 2007, 2008, and 2009.

Trustee Figueroa seconded the motion which passed via the following roll call vote:

Mr. Gaumer	-	aye
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Ms. Mayer - aye  
Trustee Figueroa - aye

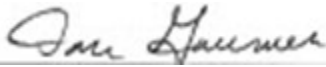
**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

There was no further business before the Claims Panel and Mr. Gaumer moved that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Trustee Figueroa and passed via the roll call vote below:

Mr. Gaumer - aye  
Ms. Mayer - aye  
Trustee Figueroa - aye

Respectfully submitted,



Daniel L. Gaumer  
Hearing Officer

dlg:aa