



## MINUTES

**Claims Panel Meeting  
of the Board of Trustees of the  
State Universities Retirement System  
Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022, 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 Feb. 17, 2022, 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, 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. Jennifer Bartell, Senior Claims 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. Vera Maynard, Claimant; Ms. Michelle Guider, claimant; Mr. Tariq Abdul-Wahed, claimant; Ms. Karla Wiggin, witness; Mr. Carl Graf Jr. of the Carl Graf Jr. Law Firm; Keevin Schier, executor of the Higgins Estate.

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

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Gaumer presented the open minutes from the November 30, 2021 Claims Panel Hearing.

Ms. Mayer made the following motion:

- That the open minutes from the November 30, 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 November 30, 2021 Claims Panel Hearing for approval.

Ms. Mayer made the following motion:

- That the closed minutes from the November 30, 2021 Claims Panel Hearing be approved as presented and remain closed.

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

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

#### **PRESENTATION OF CLAIM – VERA MAYNARD**

Ms. Maynard was sworn in by Ms. Cummings, the court reporter from Area Wide Reporting. The documentary evidence was admitted into the record and consisted of 103 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.

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.

#### **PRESENTATION OF CLAIM – MICHELLE GUIDER**

Ms. Guider was sworn in by Ms. Cummings, the court reporter from Area Wide Reporting. The documentary evidence was admitted into the record and consisted of 203 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, SURS' cross-examination and direct examination of it's witness 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.

## **PRESENTATION OF CLAIM – ANNIE HIGGINS**

Mr. Tariq Abdul-Wahed was sworn in by Ms. Cummings, the court reporter from Area Wide Reporting. The documentary evidence was admitted into the record and consisted of 462 pages. The record includes the staff brief in response to the Statement of Claim submitted by SURS legal counsel. Mr. Albert Lee 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 then counsel for SURS and counsel for the Estate of Annie Higgins providing clarifying remarks.

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.

## **CLAIMS PANEL DELIBERATIONS**

Ms. Mayer 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. Trustee Figueroa 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 10:15 am.

Ms. Mayer then made the following motion:

- To affirm the staff decision, finding that Vera Maynard has not proven by preponderance of the evidence that she is entitled to the relief sought. 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 Michelle Guider has not proven by a preponderance of the evidence that she is entitled to the relief sought. 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 overturn the original staff decision, finding that Tariq Abdul-Wahed has not proven by a preponderance of the evidence that he is entitled to Portable Plan pre-retirement survivor benefits as an “eligible spouse”. 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

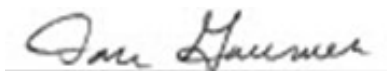
### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no public comment.

There was no further business before the Claims Panel and Trustee Figueroa moved that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Ms. Mayer 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