



MINUTES

**Claims Panel Meeting
of the Board of Trustees of the
State Universities Retirement System
Monday, August 26, 2024, 8:30 am.
State Universities Retirement System
Main Conference Room
1901 Fox Dr., Champaign, IL
(Hearing Officer Clifford)**

The meeting of the Claims Panel of the Board of Trustees of the State Universities Retirement System (SURS) convened on Monday, August 26, 2024, at 8:30 am.

The following Claims Panel members were present: Ms. Carolyn Clifford, Hearing Officer; and Ms. Suzanne Mayer, SURS Executive Director.

Others present: Ms. Bianca Green, General Counsel (*via video conference*); Ms. Heather Kimmons, Senior General Counsel; Mr. Albert Lee, Senior General Counsel; Ms. Jennifer Bartell, Director of Benefits Processing; Ms. Karen Nyi (*via video conference*) and Ms. Annette Ackerman, Executive Assistants; Ms. Ann Parkinson, Area Wide Reporting; Ms. Abigail Walker, claimant (*via video conference*); Mr. James Walker, father of claimant (*via video conference*); Mr. Anthony Gaston, claimant; Ms. Rochelle Brown, friend of claimant; Ms. Barbara Bell, BJ Bell Law, attorney for claimant, Stephen Stillabower; Ms. Gillian Kimmons, member of the public (*via video conference*) and Mr. John Schembari, observing Hearing Officer (*via video conference*).

Claims Panel roll call attendance was taken. Hearing Officer Carolyn Clifford, present; Executive Director Suzanne Mayer, present; Trustee Richard Figueroa, absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Clifford presented the open session minutes from the Claims Panel Hearing of April 4, 2024.

Ms. Mayer made the following motion:

That the open session minutes from the April 4, 2024, Claims Panel Hearing be approved as presented.

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

Mr. Clifford	-	aye
Ms. Mayer	-	aye
Trustee Figueroa	-	absent

Ms. Clifford presented the closed minutes from the Claims Panel Hearing of April 4, 2024, for approval.

Ms. Mayer made the following motion:

That the closed session minutes from the April 4, 2024, Claims Panel Hearing be approved as presented and remain closed.

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

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

PRESENTATION OF CLAIM – ABIGAIL WALKER

The claim of Ms. Abigail Walker was called for hearing. Ms. Carolyn Clifford served as the assigned Hearing Officer. SURS staff was represented by Senior Associate General Counsel Mr. Albert Lee. Ms. Abigail Walker and Mr. James Walker appeared remotely, via Zoom. Ms. Clifford admitted a total of 133 pages of documents into evidence. Mr. Albert Lee provided a verbal summary of the issues to be addressed by the Claims Panel. Ms. Abigail Walker and Mr. James Walker were sworn in by the court reporter. Mr. Walker presented Ms. Walker’s case. Mr. Lee cross examined the Claimant. Ms. Jennifer Bartell was sworn in by the court reporter prior to testifying on behalf of SURS staff.

At the conclusion of the claim presentation, Hearing Officer Carolyn Clifford closed the evidentiary proofs.

PRESENTATION OF CLAIM – YOLANDA NEWMAN (deceased)

The claim of Ms. Yolanda Newman (deceased) was called for hearing. Ms. Carolyn Clifford served as the assigned Hearing Officer. SURS staff was represented by Senior Associate General Counsel Ms. Heather Kimmons. Mr. Anthony Gaston, claimant, and Ms. Rochelle Brown appeared in person. Mr. Anthony Gaston was sworn in by the court reporter. Ms. Clifford admitted 141 pages of documents into evidence. Ms. Heather Kimmons provided a verbal summary of the issues to be addressed by the Claims Panel. Mr. Gaston presented his claim. Ms. Kimmons cross-examined the Claimant. Ms. Jennifer Bartell was then sworn in by the court reporter prior to testifying on behalf of SURS staff.

At the conclusion of the claim presentation, Hearing Officer Carolyn Clifford closed the evidentiary proofs.

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 open session in the claims. Hearing Officer Ms. Carolyn Clifford seconded the motion which passed via the roll call vote referenced below:

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

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

Upon completion of the closed session deliberations, the Claims Panel returned to open session, at approximately 11:10 a.m.

Ms. Clifford then made the following motion for the Abigail Walker Claim:

To affirm the staff decision in regard to the overpayment benefits to Abigail Walker and to direct the staff to work with the Walkers to provide options for a repayment plan that include the offset with Mr. Walkers' increased benefit and to waive the interest applicable to the repayment of the overpayment.

Ms. Mayer seconded the motion, which passed via the following roll call vote:

Mr. Clifford	-	aye
Ms. Mayer	-	aye
Trustee Figueroa	-	absent

Ms. Clifford then made the following motion for the Yolanda Newman Claim:

To remand the matter back to the SURS staff to allow time for Mr. Gaston to provide any additional proof of his entitlement to the benefit and direct staff to engage in additional due diligence in regard to whether Mr. Larry Matthews is entitled to this benefit. All of this must be completed with 60 days of this hearing.

Ms. Mayer seconded the motion, which passed via the following roll call vote:

Mr. Clifford	-	aye
Ms. Mayer	-	aye
Trustee Figueroa	-	absent

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

There was no further business for the Claims Panel and no public comment. Ms. Mayer moved that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Ms. Clifford and passed via the following roll call vote:

Mr. Clifford	-	aye
Ms. Mayer	-	aye
Trustee Figueroa	-	absent

Meeting adjourned at 11:17 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Welch Clifford

Carolyn Welch Clifford
Hearing Officer

CC:aa



MINUTES

**Claims Panel Meeting
of the Board of Trustees of the
State Universities Retirement System
Monday, August 26, 2024, 12:00 pm.
State Universities Retirement System
Main Conference Room
1901 Fox Dr., Champaign, IL
(Hearing Officer Gaumer)**

The meeting of the Claims Panel of the Board of Trustees of the State Universities Retirement System (SURS) convened on Monday, August 26, 2024, at 12:00 pm.

The following Claims Panel members were present: Mr. Daniel Gaumer, Hearing Officer; and Ms. Suzanne Mayer, SURS Executive Director.

Others present: Ms. Bianca Green, General Counsel; Ms. Heather Kimmons, Senior Associate General Counsel; Ms. Jennifer Bartell, Director of Benefits Processing; Ms. Karen Nyi (Zoom) and Ms. Annette Ackerman, Executive Assistants; Ms. Denise Shelton, SURS Medical MSR; Ms. Ann Parkinson, Area Wide Reporting; Mr. Patrick Sullivan of the law firm Featherstun, Gaumer, Stocks, Flynn & Eck LLP; Ms. Lorri Kanauss (Zoom), claimant; Mr. Stephen Stillabower, claimant; Ms. Jill Stillabower, family of claimant; Ms. Connie Tieman, family of claimant; Ms. Barbara Bell claimant attorney with BJ Bell Law and observing Hearing Officer, Ms. Carolyn Clifford.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Gaumer presented the open session minutes from the Claims Panel Hearing of May 6, 2024.

Ms. Mayer made the following motion:

That the open session minutes from the May 6, 2024, Claims Panel Hearing be approved as presented.

Mr. Gaumer seconded the motion which passed via the roll call vote referenced below:

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

Mr. Gaumer presented the closed minutes from the Claims Panel Hearing of May 6, 2024, for approval.

Ms. Mayer made the following motion:

That the closed session minutes from the May 6, 2024, Claims Panel Hearing be approved as presented and remain closed.

Mr. Gaumer seconded the motion which passed via the roll call vote referenced below:

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

PRESENTATION OF CLAIM – LORRI KANAUSS

The claim of Ms. Lorri Kanauss was called for hearing. Mr. Dan Gaumer served as the assigned Hearing Officer. SURS staff was represented by Senior Associate General Counsel Ms. Heather Kimmons. Ms. Lorri Kanauss appeared remotely, via Zoom. Mr. Gaumer admitted a total of 189 pages of documents into evidence. Ms. Heather Kimmons provided a verbal summary of the issues to be addressed by the Claims Panel. Ms. Lorri Kanauss was sworn in by the court reporter and then presented her case. Ms. Kimmons cross examined the Claimant. Ms. Jennifer Bartell was sworn in by the court reporter prior to testifying on behalf of SURS staff.

At the conclusion of the claim presentation, Hearing Officer Dan Gaumer closed the evidentiary proofs.

PRESENTATION OF CLAIM – STEPHEN STILLABOWER

The claim of Mr. Stephen Stillabower was called for hearing. Mr. Dan Gaumer served as the assigned Hearing Officer. SURS staff was represented by General Counsel Ms. Bianca Green. Mr. Stephen Stillabower, Ms. Jill Stillabower and Ms. Connie Tieman appeared in person. Mr. Stephen Stillabower and Ms. Jill Stillabower were sworn in by the court reporter. Ms. Green inquired as to the absence of the signature page of an affidavit for Jill Stillabower that was previously submitted by Ms. Bell and requested this page be submitted to SURS so it could be included in the written record. Ms. Bell emailed the full affidavit to SURS and Mr. Gaumer subsequently admitted 497 pages of documents into evidence. Ms. Bell then requested that the hearing be continued due to having received certain information from Mr. Stillabower's doctor who was unable to attend the hearing. Ms. Green objected explaining that the testimony on that witness would be irrelevant to the underlying legal issues and after a full discussion, Hearing Officer Gaumer denied the request to continue. The hearing proceeded

with Ms. Bianca Green providing a verbal summary of the issues to be addressed by the Claims Panel. Ms. Barbara Bell, attorney for claimant, agreed with the summary and then presented Mr. Stillabower's case through the testimony of Mr. and Mrs. Stillabower. Ms. Green cross-examined the Claimant. Ms. Jennifer Bartell was then sworn in by the court reporter prior to testifying on behalf of SURS staff.

At the conclusion of the claim presentation, Hearing Officer Dan Gaumer closed the evidentiary proofs.

Upon the conclusion of the hearing, Ms. Bell requested the opportunity to submit a post hearing brief. Mr. Gaumer granted the request and set a due date for Claimant's closing argument of September 10, 2024. Ms. Green was granted the opportunity to submit a response to Ms. Bell's post hearing brief which will be due by September 24, 2024. Ms. Bell is allowed to submit a rebuttal to Ms. Green's response by October 1, 2024.

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 open session in the cases. Hearing Officer Mr. Dan Gaumer seconded the motion which passed via the roll call vote referenced below:

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

RETURN TO OPEN SESSION

Upon completion of the closed session deliberations, the Claims Panel returned to open session, at approximately 2:54 pm.

Ms. Mayer then made the following motion for the Lorri Kanauss Claim:

To affirm the staff decision, finding that Lorri Kanauss has not proven by preponderance of the evidence that she is entitled to the relief sought, and that a written decision of factual findings and conclusions be drafted and signed by the Hearing Officer after members of the Claims Panel voting in favor of the motion confirm their agreement with the same.

Mr. Gaumer seconded the motion, which passed via the following roll call vote:

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

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

There was no further business for the Claims Panel and no public comment. Ms. Mayer moved that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gaumer and passed via the following roll call vote:

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

Meeting adjourned at 2:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Daniel L. Gaumer
Hearing Officer

dlg:aa