

**NORTH JERSEY MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEE BENEFITS FUND
OPEN MINUTES
OCTOBER 26, 2023
RANDOLPH MUNICIPAL HALL- 9:30 AM**

Meeting of Fund Commissioners called to order by Scott Heck, Chair. Open Public Meetings notice read into record.

ROLL CALL OF 2023 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND FUND COMMISSIONERS

2023 Executive Committee		
Scott Heck, Chair	Borough of Ringwood	Present
Tom Russo, Secretary	Town of Newton	Present
Barbara Russo	Township of Berkeley Heights	Absent
Dina Valente - Stoel	Borough of Lincoln Park	Absent
Tammy Smith	Knowlton BOE	Absent
Silvio Esposito	Township of Hanover	Present
Carinne Piccolo- Kaufer	Township of Hardyston	Present
Executive Committee Alternates:		
Cathy Shanahan	Township of West Milford	Present
Adam Brewer	Township of Pequannock	Present
Greg Poff	Borough of Randolph*	Present

Fund Commissioners		
Mike Sondermeyer	Borough of Bloomingdale	Present
Michael Restel	Township of Wantage	Present
Grant Rome	Township of Sparta	Absent
Diana Francisco	Andover Township*	Absent
Ralph Blakeslee	Borough of Netcong*	Absent
Keith Kazmark	Borough of Woodland Park	Absent
Rey Julve	Township of Dover	Absent
Andrew Fiore	Borough of Harding	Absent
Katie Yanke	Borough of Montville*	Absent
Joe Sabatini	Township of Byram*	Absent
James Burnett	Borough of Madison*	Absent
Open	Township of Prospect Park*	Absent
John Shepherd	Township of Roxbury*	Absent
Debra Millikin	Township of Jefferson*	Absent
Open	Kinnelon	Absent

Gabby Evangelista	Borough of Wharton	Absent
Fund Commissioner Alternates		
Ashleigh Frueholz	Township of Byram*	Absent
Jennifer Dodd	Town of Newton	Absent
Lisa Spring	Township of Roxbury*	Absent
Joseph Kovalcik	Borough of Wharton	Absent
Perry Mayers	Borough of Lincoln Park	Absent
Jasmin Azcona	Township of Bloomingdale	Absent
Michele Lantau	Township of Sparta	Present
Open	Borough of Netcong*	Absent
Victoria Dobrusin	Township of Dover	Absent
Sandra Emmerich	Borough of Madison*	Absent
Nancy VanHorn	Township of Wantage	Absent
Deborah Bonanno	Mountain Lakes	Absent
William Egan	Township of Jefferson	Absent
Dana Vitz	Township of Hardyston	Absent
	Town of Boonton	Absent
	Madison Housing Authority	Absent

APPOINTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Executive Director	PERMA Risk Management Services	Brandon Lodics Emily Koval
Program Manager	Vozza Agency	David Vozza Randi Gerber Brittany Vozza
Attorney	Dorsey & Semrau	Edward Pasternak Fred Semrau
Claims Administrator	Aetna	Jason Silverstein
Dental Administrator	Delta Dental	Luhra Ebarle
Prescription Administrator	Express Scripts	Charles Yuk
Treasurer	Michael Soccio	Present
Auditor	Nisivoccia	Absent
Actuary	John Vataha	Absent
Wellness Coordinator	Civitas	Absent

PRESENT FUND PROFESSIONALS:

Cindy Bronco, Skylands Risk Management

Staci Grant, Henry O Baker
Charles Yuk, Express Scripts
Frank Covelli, World Insurance

FLAG SALUTE

CORRESPONDENCE – None

APPROVAL OF OPEN SEPTEMBER 21, 2023 MINUTES:

MOTION TO APPROVE OPEN MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 21, 2023, AS AMENDED:

MOTION:	Commissioner T. Russo
SECOND:	Commissioner Esposito
VOTE:	9 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Abstention

REPORTS:

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

PRO FORMA REPORTS

Fast Track Financial Report – Associate Executive Director Koval reviewed the Financial Fast Track through August 2023. She stated that August showed 8 high cost claimants that his in the month which shows a slight loss. Mrs. Koval stated it is not a concern as they are seeing this State wide. She stated that Mr. Vozza will touch on the trends the fund is seeing.

2024 NJHIF BUDGET – ADOPTION

Mrs. Koval stated that there is no change to the budget since introduction. Mrs. Koval stated that the rates that were sent out are now final and please contact Emily is there are any questions.

MOTION TO OPEN THE PUBLIC HEARING ON THE 2024 BUDGET

MOTION:	Commissioner T. Russo
SECOND:	Commissioner Poff
VOTE:	All in Favor

Discussion of Budget and Assessments -

MOTION TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING

MOTION:	Commissioner Poff
SECOND:	Commissioner Russo
VOTE:	10 Ayes, 0 Nays

MOTION TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 32-23 AND APPROVE THE 2024 NORTH JERSEY MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEE BENEFITS FUND BUDGET IN THE AMOUNT OF \$54,700,093

MOTION:	Commissioner T. Russo
SECOND:	Commissioner Brewer
VOTE:	10 Ayes, 0 Nays

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS/CONTRACTS

Medical TPA RFP – Mrs. Koval stated that the Medical TPA RFP was due on 9/21/2023. The Fund received two responses, from Aetna and UMR, a subsidiary of United Healthcare. Enclosed is a memo that was sent to the Contracts Committee for review and consideration. Mrs. Koval stated that we are only able to award the contract to one carrier. The committee agreed to the recommendation to contract with Aetna at no increase in administrative cost over 2023.

She stated that they are working with the Comptrollers office to go out for Medical TPA next year at the MRHIF level. Mr. Vozza stated that Aetna has a more favorable administration

MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 33-23 AWARDING THE EUS CONTRACT TO AETNA:

MOTION:	Commissioner T. Russo
SECOND:	Commissioner Kaufer
VOTE:	10 Ayes, 0 Nays

Fund Treasurer – the Fund Treasurer RFP has been re-released, as per the decision of the committee last month. The responses are due 11/9/2023. We may either meet later this year to formalize or handle in January at re-org. Mrs. Koval stated that there will be a contracts committee meeting prior to the January meeting.

Mr. Chairman Heck appointed Mr. Poff to join the contacts committee.

INDEMNITY AND TRUST AGREEMENTS

The following member's Fund agreements have expired or are expiring at the end of this year. Please include the Resolution to renew on your next local meeting.

PRORAM MANAGER REPORT - Program Manager reviewed the following items from the report included in the agenda:

2023 OPEN ENROLLMENT

The NJMEBF will be holding open enrollment for the 2023 plan year from 10/30/2023 – 11/10/2023. All changes must be processed online in Benefits Express by 11/17/2023 in order for ID cards to be generated for any members making plan changes and in member's hands by January 1, 2024.

NJMEBF – CLAIMS REVIEW

Please find attached a claims and prescription review covering the period of 1/1/2023 – 8/31/2023 vs the same period for 2022. Mr. Vozza handed out a PowerPoint presentation with the medical trends and reviewed that with the committee.

NEW MEDICAL MEMBER SUBMISSIONS

We have two potential new members that have expressed an interest in becoming a member of the NJMEBF. One member is currently with the SHBP, the other is self-funded with Horizon. Information received is still currently under review. If our review has been completed and the operations committee has had an opportunity to review prior to the meeting, we will forward an additional supplement outlining new members for review and discussion. Resolution 37-23 offers membership to Rockaway Borough.

WELLNESS PROGRAM

Miss Brittany Vozza stated that the Wellness committee met via conference call on October 4th, 2023 to discuss the RFP proposals received and to review program layout ideas for 2024 and 2025.

We received one proposal for each RFP that was issued. All were from the current vendors. The committee recommended moving forward with all contracts at the last meeting for a one-year term. After further review and negotiations, we received a revised proposal from Lifeline screening which locked in the screening type and price through 2025. The committee would recommend committing to two years on this contract.

Other items discussed were the future of the program and how to move forward with a growing population while containing the budget. The committee agreed to start placing a larger focus on the personal growth of the participants and allowing them to use the education and tools they have been provided with along with additional required screenings. We feel this shift will help offset the per participant cost for Towns who have been in the program for over five years.

We discussed the scope of services for a new wellness coordinator RFP and while we have not finalized the new scope yet, the committee has recommended continuing the contract with Civitas NJ through March 31st, 2024, at the current monthly fee. This will allow us time to develop a proper scope of services and also allow the current consultant to assist with the 2024 Program rollout and provide support to the new consultant in understanding the consultant's role and scope of services.

New Member – The Town of Dover has submitted their formal application for the 2024 wellness program. The wellness committee is recommending approval of their application to be effective with the 1/1/24 program year.

MOTION TO ALLOW THE TOWN OF DOVER TO JOIN THE WELLNESS PROGRAM EFFECTIVE 1/1/24

MOTION:	Commissioner T. Russo
SECOND:	Commissioner Poff
VOTE:	All in Favor

Lifeline Screening - The following health risks were identified in total of 134 screened:

Carotid Artery Disease: 1 critical

Peripheral Arterial Disease: 3 abnormal
Osteoporosis: 20 moderate- high risk
A1C: 29 pre-diabetes & diabetes
C-Reactive Protein: 57 average –high risk
Liver Enzymes: 35 abnormal
Testosterone: 9 abnormal low

Reminders:

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. According to www.Breastcancer.org

Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers diagnosed in women (30%). In 2023 an estimated 297,790 new cases are expected to be diagnosed in women and 2,800 in men. The earlier it's detected, the higher the chances of successful treatment. Regular mammograms remain the frontline defense in breast cancer detection. Women aged 40 and over are generally advised to have mammograms every one or two years. However, guidelines may vary, so it's essential to consult with a healthcare provider about individual risk factors and the best screening plan.

**MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 34-23 AWARDING WELLNESS VENDOR
CONTRACT TO HEART SCAN**

MOTION:	Commissioner T. Russo
SECOND:	Commissioner Kaufer
VOTE:	10 Ayes, 0 Nays

**MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 35-23 EXTENDING THE WELLNESS
COORDINATOR CONTRACT**

MOTION:	Commissioner T. Russo
SECOND:	Commissioner KAufer
VOTE:	10 Ayes, 0 Nays, 1 Abstention

MOTION TO ADD RESOLUTION 37-23 TO THE PROGRAM MANAGER REPORT

MOTION:	Commissioner T. Russo
SECOND:	Commissioner Kaufer
VOTE:	All in Favor

**MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 37-23 OFFERING MEMBERSHIP TO ROCKAWAY
BOROUGH**

MOTION:	Commissioner T. Russo
SECOND:	Commissioner Kaufer
VOTE:	10 Ayes, 0 Nays

Mrs. Gerber reviewed the informational portion of the Program Manager Report below:

AETNA

Gag Clause Prohibition Compliance Attestation - Under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 (CAA), group health plans and health insurance issuers are prohibited from entering into agreements with service providers restricting certain information that the plan may make available to another party. Plan sponsors and issuers must make a Gag Clause Prohibition Compliance Attestation (GCPA) annually to confirm their compliance with the prohibition.

What is a gag clause?

For purposes of the GCPA, a “gag clause” is a contractual provision that directly or indirectly restricts a plan or issuer from sharing specific cost and quality information with another party. For example, a provision in an agreement between a third-party administrator (TPA) and a self-funded group health plan that allows access to provider-specific cost and quality of care information only at the TPA’s discretion would constitute a gag clause. However, the guidance clarifies that healthcare providers, networks, TPAs, and other service providers may place reasonable restrictions on public disclosure of information.

The first “Gag Clause” attestation must be submitted before December 31st, 2023, and then annually thereafter. Our office is currently reviewing the requirements of the attestation and will be handling the submission(s) on behalf of the NJMEBF.

Covid and RSV Vaccines

Some Aetna members have recently experienced challenges when attempting to receive the newly approved COVID-19 and RSV vaccines at retail pharmacy locations (i.e. CVS Pharmacy, Walgreens, Walmart, Rite Aid) when **covered under the member’s medical benefit**. This is because it takes pharmacies several days to update their systems to bill health plans for vaccines under the medical benefit.

Background

This is an industry-wide issue and not Aetna/CVS Health specific. Aetna has provided the information needed for our contracted pharmacy chains to bill directly for these vaccines; however, we cannot control the time it takes for pharmacies to update their billing systems.

Aetna’s provider relations team has been in communication with our contracted pharmacies to ensure they are clearly communicating vaccine coverage to members and have the information needed to bill Aetna directly.

Current status

As of September 28, several large pharmacy and grocery chains, including **CVS Pharmacy, Walgreens, Walmart, Albertsons, Giant** and **HEB** have confirmed that their billing systems are now updated to bill Aetna directly under the medical benefit for the new COVID-19 and RSV vaccines.

Other pharmacy and grocery chains are still working to update their systems over the next two weeks.

Member options

If a member experiences a challenge accessing the COVID-19 or RSV vaccine at their pharmacy, they have several options, subject to their plan benefits:

- Members can access these vaccines from their physician or healthcare provider.
- Members can access these vaccines at one of the pharmacy chains noted above.

- Members can pay out of pocket and submit for reimbursement.

For members who may have already paid out of pocket for the COVID-19 or RSV vaccine, they can request reimbursement by submitting a claim. Any members who have paid out of pocket for their vaccine will be made whole. Our customer service representatives have been informed of the issue and are prepared to respond to member questions.

AETNA MEDICARE ADVANTAGE

Effective January 1, 2024, Aetna Medicare Advantage PPO plans will transition to a new CMS contract. As a result of the transition, retirees will receive new ID cards prior to January 1, 2024. **Aetna ID numbers and the service center information currently listed on retiree ID cards will not change.** The only change to the ID card will be the contract number, located under the ID number. Any retirees moving to the Medicare Advantage plan for December 2023 will receive the new member ID card. Aetna notification letters will be mailed to affected members the first week of December.

UHC MEDICARE ADVANTAGE

Effective January 1, 2024, there is an ID card change that will affect our UHC Medicare Advantage members. This is only an administrative change and will have no impact on the coverage of services provided to the members. This change will allow UHC MA the ability to deploy future pharmacy initiatives to improve the health of our members and overall member pharmacy experience.

Beginning in November or December, members will be receiving new member ID cards along with plan information as part of the standard renewal process. Members should discard their old ID card and begin using the new card as of January 1, 2024.

Communication is being sent to pharmacies, notifying them of the change. If an old ID card is used, the member may be told the ID card presented does not show them as having coverage and the pharmacy should ask the member to present their new ID card. Members should contact customer service at the telephone number provided on the back of their member ID cards if they have any issues filling their prescription. Customer Service is aware of the changes and can assist the member with obtaining a replacement ID card, if necessary or speaking with the pharmacy to ensure the member has access to care.

TREASURER: Mr. Soccio reviewed the bills list for the month of October and the treasurers report.

MOTION TO ADD RESOLUTION 36-23 APPROVING THE OCTOBER BILLS LIST

MOTION:	Commissioner T. Russo
SECOND:	Commissioner
VOTE:	All in Favor

ATTORNEY: Fund Attorney stated that they are working on a pre litigation case on an Out of Network matter. They met with the claims committee to review. Mr. Pasternak was able to come to a settlement of \$69,000 to settle the case. Mr. Semrau requested permission from the claims committee asking for authorization to settle the case.

MOTION TO ADD RESOLUTION 28-23 TO THE AGENDA

MOTION: Commissioner T. Russo
SECOND: Commissioner Esposito
VOTE: All in Favor

MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 28-23 TO ALLOW THE FUND ATTORNEY TO SETTLE THE CASE WITH THE RECCOMENATION OF THE CLAIMS COMMITTEE

MOTION: Commissioner T. Russo
SECOND: Commissioner Brewer
VOTE: 10 Ayes, Nays

AETNA: Mr. Silverstein reviewed the claims report for the months of August 2023, included in the agenda. He stated that there were 8 high-cost claims above the threshold of \$50,000. He reviewed the dashboard report.

EXPRESS SCRIPTS: Mr. Yuk reviewed the August 2023 report included in the agenda. He stated that all costs continue to stay down. Mr. Yuk reviewed the top indication and top medications utilized by the fund.

DELTA DENTAL: No report

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

MOTION: Commissioner T. Russo
SECOND: Commissioner Brewer
VOTE: Unanimous

MEETING ADJOURNED AT: 10:21 am

NEXT MEETING: January 25, 2023, 9:30 am
RANDOLPH MUNICIPAL BUILDING

Jordyn DeLorenzo

For

Tom Russo, Secretary

NJMEBF Finance Committee Meeting

December 15, 2023 – Zoom

Attendees:

Thomas Russo
Adam Brewer
Scott Heck
Mike Soccio
Dave Vozza
Bandon Lodics
Jordyn DeLorenzo

Mr. Lodics reviewed the Dividend illustration that was distributed to the finance committee.

- Vernon and Chatham's is now included.
 - Past practices are to keep 2.5 months worth of claims
 - October was a good month for surplus growth.
- 1) North Dividend Illustration thru 10/31- good news is we had another revenue generating month for October. Also, based on the bank intel Mike shared, November claims were under budget as well.
- a. Tab 2 of this document is an overview of the Surplus position going back to 2015. This is informational, but a good overview of the happenings over the past few years.

Based on the continued improvement of the Fund and surplus earnings. We would be comfortable with either of the below dividend distributions:

25%	\$1,508,643	\$12,298,318	3.1
33%	\$1,991,409	\$11,815,552	2.9

These would leave the Fund with 3 months of 2024 claims reserve.

We understand the importance of dividend payments being received by EOY. In the chance that the Committee decides to proceed with a dividend, we went ahead and advertised an Executive Committee meeting for Tuesday, 12/19 at 9:30 am. This would be a virtual meeting with this being the only agenda items.

The committee agreed to do with the 33% option.

Meeting Adjourned.

**NORTH JERSEY MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEE BENEFITS FUND
OPEN MINUTES
DECEMBER 19, 2023
ZOOM CONFERENCE CALL- 9:30 AM**

Meeting of Fund Commissioners called to order by Scott Heck, Chair. Open Public Meetings notice read into record.

ROLL CALL OF 2023 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND FUND COMMISSIONERS

2023 Executive Committee		
Scott Heck, Chair	Borough of Ringwood	Present
Tom Russo, Secretary	Town of Newton	Present
Barbara Russo	Township of Berkeley Heights	Present
Dina Valente - Stoel	Borough of Lincoln Park	Absent
Tammy Smith	Knowlton BOE	Present
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Executive Committee Alternates:		
Cathy Shanahan	Township of West Milford	Present
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Joe Sabatini	Township of Byram*	Absent
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	Town of Boonton	Absent
	Madison Housing Authority	Absent

Executive Director	PERMA Risk Management Services	Brandon Lodics Emily Koval
Program Manager	Vozza Agency	David Vozza Randi Gerber Brittany Vozza
Attorney	Dorsey & Semrau	Edward Pasternak Fred Semrau
Claims Administrator	Aetna	Jason Silverstein
Dental Administrator	Delta Dental	Luhra Ebarle
Prescription Administrator	Express Scripts	Charles Yuk
Treasurer	Michael Soccio	Present
Auditor	Nisivoccia	Absent
Actuary	John Vataha	Absent
Wellness Coordinator	Civitas	Absent

CORRESPONDENCE - None

REPORTS:

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

DIVIDEND DISCUSSION - The Finance Committee met on December 15th virtually to discuss the below dividend options. They are recommending the distribution of \$1,991,409. This leaves the Fund in a comfortable surplus position going in to 2024. The Committee reviewed the financials through October as well as got a peak of what November looked like and both showed a slight gain. Mr. Lodics stated that they discussed that around 3 months worth of claims is safer to keep in surplus. The committee agreed on 53% which is 1.9 million.

North Jersey Regional Employee Benefits Fund			
Dividend Options			
Financial Transactions through 10/31/2023			
1) 2024 Monthly Proposed Claims Budget		\$4,023,048	
2) Surplus Target @ 2.5 Months of Budgeted Claims		\$10,057,620	
3) Surplus as of October 31, 2023		\$13,806,961	
Available for Dividend		\$3,749,341	
Available for Dividend Distribution Options			
Distribution %	\$ Amount	Remaining Surplus	# of Months of Claims
53%	\$1,991,409	\$11,815,552	2.9

Tom Russo said they were super conservative in the approach to make sure that the committee was comfortable for the fund. He stated that everyone was collaborative.

Mr. Brewer echoed the appreciation of everyone involved to get this completed before the end of the year.

MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 39-23

MOTION: Commissioner Brewer
SECOND: Commissioner B. Russo
VOTE: 11 Ayes, 0 Nays

OLD BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

MOTION TO ADJOURN:

MOTION: Commissioner Blakeslee
SECOND: Commissioner Esposito
VOTE: Unanimous

APPENDIX II

OATH OF OFFICE

State of New Jersey

County of Morris

I, _____, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the state of New Jersey; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same and to the governments established in the United States and in this state, under the authority of the people and that I will faithfully, impartially, and justly perform all the duties as a member of the Executive Committee of the North Jersey Municipal Employee Benefits Fund according to the best of my ability. (so help me God).

Sworn and subscribed to

before me this (25th day of January 2024)

_____, Esquire

Attorney-at-law of New Jersey