



# PENSION PRESS

The Newsletter of the Houston Municipal Employees Pension System



## Update From the Chairman

Sherry Mose  
Chairman

Dear Participants,

Fall is finally here. As temperatures begin dropping and the threat of hurricane season recedes, I am looking forward with hope and anticipation for the holiday season and beyond.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its effects have challenged us all. Throughout, the men and women who work as City of Houston employees, often on the front lines, have kept Houston moving forward, and I salute them. I am also immensely grateful for HMEPS' Board of Trustees and staff, who have continued to work tirelessly on behalf of our participants.

I am pleased to report that the HMEPS investment portfolio returned 38.7% in Fiscal Year 2021. This represents the highest fiscal year investment performance in the System's history. HMEPS' performance placed in the top 1% of all public pension systems as reported by a widely recognized public fund database. The Board recognizes that investment performance is a key component in providing a secure retirement income for the System's members. The Board monitors the fund's investment performance on a regular basis and continually seeks high-quality investment managers for inclusion in its portfolio.

Also, I want to acknowledge HMEPS' excellent benefit counselors, who work effectively with the City of Houston and our participants to timely complete the retirement process and ensure payment to our retirees and beneficiaries.

You may be aware the U.S. Postal Service recently announced that beginning in October 2021, mail delivery may be slower going forward (see page 3.)

*(Cont. on Page 2)*

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## Retirement Congratulations

We would like to congratulate Steve Waas and Arleen DeCastro on their retirements. Steve and Arleen were long-time employees and important contributors to the continued success of HMEPS. For more, see page 6.



Steve Waas



Arleen DeCastro

HMEPS NEEDS YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS TO KEEP YOU UPDATED ON PENSION MATTERS

VISIT [WWW.HMEPS.ORG](http://WWW.HMEPS.ORG)  
TO SIGN UP

# Update From the **Chairman** cont.

*(Cont. from Page 1)*

Given this change, I want to urge all participants who have not done so to sign up for direct deposit to receive their benefit payments.

At HMEPS, we maintain accountability, integrity and openness by applying rigorous controls within the System. I am pleased to report our efforts were once again recognized by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) of the United States and Canada, which for the 27th consecutive year awarded HMEPS a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting.

Finally, a highlight of my service as Chairman has been offering our Financial Retirement Educational Event (F.R.E.E.) to our participants each year, and more recently twice a year. The COVID-19 pandemic has unfortunately precluded us from offering the event in the last year. It is my sincere hope that we will be able to resume the F.R.E.E. event in 2022!

As always, it is an honor and privilege to serve as your Chairman. I wish you health and happiness moving forward.

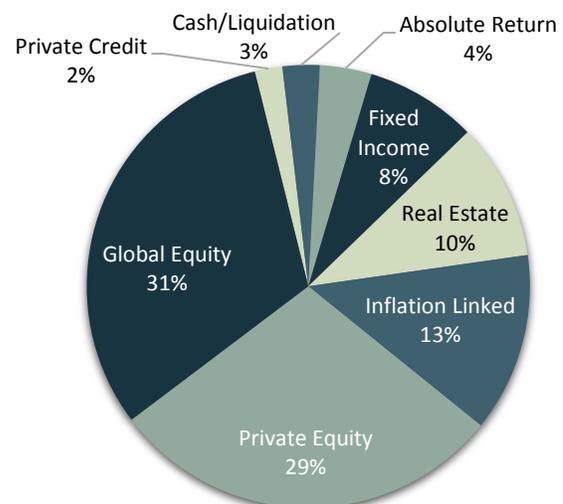
Your Chairman,  
Sherry Mose

## HMEPS Investment Update

### Market Value by Asset Class

	June 30, 2021	June 30, 2020
Global Equity	\$ 1,204,074,695	\$ 907,715,447
Fixed Income	312,752,349	330,022,493
Private Credit	97,343,726	79,672,623
Real Estate	382,618,188	322,754,789
Inflation Linked	501,077,425	323,622,498
Private Equity	1,107,589,362	760,693,281
Absolute Return	144,211,936	132,354,265
Cash	104,180,977	13,653,079
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 3,853,848,658</b>	<b>\$ 2,870,488,475</b>

### Asset Allocation as of June 30, 2021



# U.S. Postal Service **Delivery Change** – October 1, 2021



Effective October 1, 2021, the United States Postal Service (USPS) revised its service standards for certain First-Class Mail items, resulting in a delivery window of up to five days instead of the previous 1-3 day service. This may delay your receipt of mail from us and our receipt of mail from you (including mailed payments). For more information, visit [usps.com](https://usps.com).

Please take this change into account when mailing items to HMEPS via USPS. If you have not signed up for direct deposit of your pension payment, now is the time to have your benefit payment electronically deposited to your account at a bank or financial institution so that you can avoid possible mail-related delays in receiving your payment.

Direct deposit is a simple, safe, and smart way to receive money because HMEPS benefit payments are electronically transferred to your checking or savings account, without the need for paper checks. As long as an individual has a bank account, direct deposit can be an excellent financial planning tool as well as a safe, private, convenient way to receive payments.

If you don't have an account, consider opening one and signing up for direct deposit at that time. Most banks, savings and loans and credit unions offer a variety of accounts, some with little or no fees. Some financial institutions offer low-cost Electronic Transfer Accounts (ETA) that feature a minimal cost per month. Look for one that meets your needs.

In addition, benefit payments made by direct deposit should be available to you on the date of the deposit. If a pay date falls on a holiday or other dates when HMEPS is closed, your benefit payment will be available the day before.

Contact HMEPS for a Direct Deposit form to start receiving the benefits of direct deposit.

## 2021 - 2022 Pension Payment Schedule: **November - February**

Direct Deposits (ACH) will be deposited on the last business day of each month. If you receive a pension check by mail, it is typically mailed 3-4 days before the last business day of the month. However, postal delays may lengthen the period of time before check delivery. Call HMEPS for information on signing up for direct deposit of your benefit.

November							December							January							February						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7			1	2	3	4	5							1			1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
29	30						27	28	29	30	31			23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28					
														30	31												

# HOW TO PREPARE FOR RETIREMENT

AN EASY-TO-FOLLOW GUIDE TO WHAT YOU SHOULD BE DOING AND WHEN YOU SHOULD BE DOING IT

## THROUGHOUT YOUR CAREER

### **Review your HMEPS annual statements for accuracy.**

The annual statement and other information regarding your pension participation are available on the AccessHMEPS member-only webpage at [www.hmeps.org](http://www.hmeps.org). You must register to access the webpage.

**Decide whether to purchase credited service that you are eligible to buy**, such as repaying a refund or a lump sum payment you received for previous city service, plus interest. Contact HMEPS for other types of available service that may be purchased.

**Evaluate your personal finances** regularly including assets, liabilities, insurance, and investments.

**Remain informed.** Read and periodically review your HMEPS Benefits Handbook. The handbook is revised from time to time, so make sure you have the latest edition. Also, read the HMEPS newsletters. These documents are available on our website at [www.hmeps.org](http://www.hmeps.org).

## CONSIDER DROP OPTIONS NOW

If you are a Group A or B member who is eligible for and would like to participate in the Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP), you must submit a request for an application to participate in the DROP (Form DRPO34). You should notify HMEPS that you intend to make a DROP Election no earlier than sixty (60) calendar days prior to the date you are eligible to participate in DROP.

## THREE YEARS BEFORE RETIREMENT

**Project your estimated pension benefit.** You can project your estimated benefit on our website. The benefit calculator allows you to enter different dates for retirement and participation in the DROP, salaries and credited service totals.

**Locate proof of your age.** No benefits can be paid without proof of your birth date. The most common documents provided are:

- ★ Birth Certificate
- ★ Current Passport
- ★ Naturalization Certificate

Contact HMEPS if you do not have any of the above documents. Also, if you have changed your name since birth, HMEPS must have official records establishing the name change(s).

## ONE TO TWO YEARS BEFORE RETIREMENT

**Evaluate other income sources.** Research where you may have other retirement benefits waiting for you. You may find benefits with previous employers, or other investments you may have made. Most common:

- ★ Empower Retirement (457 Deferred Compensation Plan)
  - 713-426-5588
  - [www.empower-retirement.com](http://www.empower-retirement.com)
- ★ Social Security Administration:
  - [www.ssa.gov/myaccount/](http://www.ssa.gov/myaccount/)
  - 1-800-772-1213



## **TWO MONTHS BEFORE RETIREMENT**

Submit a Retirement Request To HMEPS. This form can be found on the AccessHMEPS webpage, or by contacting your HMEPS Benefit Counselor. You will then complete the application packet and provide the following:

- ★ Application
- ★ Certificate of Separation
- ★ W4-P
- ★ Direct Deposit Form (optional)
- ★ Proof of name and birth date
- ★ Social Security card
- ★ Driver's license or state-issued ID card
- ★ Other documents upon request
- ★ Optional Annuity (if in Group A/B and unmarried, or in Group D)

For timely processing, all forms should be submitted to HMEPS 45 days prior to your planned retirement date.

If you are divorced and your ex-spouse was awarded a portion of your benefit, provide HMEPS with a qualified domestic relations order (QDRO). For more information on QDROs, please consult with your attorney.

## **DURING YOUR LAST PAY PERIOD**

Contact the City Human Resources Department regarding the City's separation of employment process.

Contact the City Health Benefits Department to make any retiree benefit and insurance arrangements.

COMMITTED TO HELPING  
PREPARE FOR A  
SECURE RETIREMENT

## **HOW DOES THE RETIREMENT PROCESS WORK?**

HMEPS will calculate your benefit and submit the information to the HMEPS Board of Trustees. After your benefit is approved, you will receive a letter notifying you of the amount of your first and regular payments.

If you selected direct deposit, your first check will be mailed to your home. Every month thereafter, your benefit will be deposited into your bank account on the last business day of each month.

### **OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

- ★ Currently, your first cost of living adjustment (COLA) increase will begin in February if you are on the retiree payroll in January of that year.
- ★ **You must notify HMEPS immediately if you are reemployed by the City in an HMEPS-covered position. Your pension benefit will be suspended during the period in which you are reemployed.**
- ★ Contact HMEPS if you need to sign a power of attorney to appoint another person to handle your affairs. HMEPS will accept only a power of attorney that meets certain statutory requirements. See the HMEPS brochure: "Understanding a Power of Attorney."

Please note that many pension processes have a specific deadline for completion, and that you must initiate your request sufficiently in advance of the deadline in order to ensure that all necessary documents, information and/or payments are completed by the deadline.

This guide can be very helpful, but it is not a complete statement of what you need to do to prepare for retirement. If you have questions that are not addressed in the HMEPS Benefits Handbook or on our website, please contact HMEPS directly.

*Nothing contained herein may be construed to convey any right or privilege not otherwise provided by the pension law. In the event of any conflict, the pension law takes precedence.*

## Director of Finance and Operations Steve Waas Retires

Steve Waas retired from HMEPS at the end of 2020. Steve worked as the Financial Counselor for HMEPS from 2008 to 2018, and finished his career with the pension system as the Director of Finance and Operations. In his role as Financial Counselor, Steve worked one-on-one with countless city employees and retirees -- getting to know them and the issues important to them. He was a frequent speaker at the twice yearly Financial Retirement Educational Event, where he provided valuable information and answered participants' questions about the pension plan.

As the Director of Finance and Operations, Steve managed the Accounting, Records and Information Technology teams. In that role, Steve "wore many hats" – for example, he would help put together HMEPS financial reports one day, deal with an information technology issue the next, and talk to legislators or pension regulators in Austin the day after that.

When asked what he enjoyed about HMEPS, Steve said, "helping members one-on-one has always been a very satisfying part of the job for me. I know that those individual members are what it's all about, and that makes everything else I'm involved in all the more satisfying." Please join us in thanking Steve for his years of great service to HMEPS and wishing him the best in retirement.



## Long-Time Senior Accountant Arleen DeCastro Retires

Senior Accountant Arleen DeCastro retired from HMEPS in April 2021. During her 18 years at HMEPS, Arleen worked tirelessly to provide the highest quality work and to train others in the rigorous area of pension plan accounting. Arleen's exceptional knowledge, skill and attention to detail helped ensure the timeliness and accuracy of the critical accounting operations of HMEPS, including retirements and benefit transactions, annual financial statements, investment and banking processes and much more. Her keen eye, operational awareness and understanding of the pension system made Arleen an invaluable employee and information resource.

Arleen is also an excellent cook and we always looked forward to the treats she served at HMEPS gatherings. While we certainly will miss Arleen, we congratulate her on a well-earned retirement and thank her for her great service to HMEPS and our participants.



# Retirements:

## 2020 Third & Fourth Quarters - 2021 First & Second Quarters

### Admin & Regulatory Affairs

Juan Olguin  
Williette Jennings  
Patricia Vasquez  
Roy Rodriguez

### Aviation

Antonio Austin  
Jose Campos  
Daphne Dias-Campbell  
Arturo Gouldburn  
Casilda Hernandez  
Vanessa Herndon  
Connie Johnston  
Stanley Mcneil  
Makod Meas  
Violeta Medina Camacho  
Jesus Saenz  
Jesus Salazar  
Hean Sao  
Jimmie Walker  
Ronald Whitehead  
Rickey Williams

### Convention & Entertainment

Brenda Bazan  
Judith Daigle  
David Farkas  
Linda Hash  
Elodia Martinez  
Reginald Randolph  
Gloria Salinas

### Dept. of Neighborhoods

Donna Lambert  
Stephanie Mingo  
Anna Pena  
Dennis Trotter  
Sandra Vaughn

### Finance

Shirley Johnson  
Richard Morris

### Fire

Sam Buser

### Fleet

Raymond Medina  
Ricky Mireles  
Gita Patel  
Anthony Rosignon

### General Services

Glenda Coleman  
Pedro Guzman  
Laconni Mitchell  
Jacquelyn Nisby  
Daniel Torres

### Health & Human Services

Janet Aikins  
Silvia Calvillo  
Tina Edgal  
Daisy James  
Deborah Jones  
Lamar Kimble  
Yvonne Lu  
Randal Maggio  
David Martinez  
Manuel Perez  
Elizabeth Rivera

### Housing & Community Development

Mary Robinson

### Houston Emergency Center

Nelda Adams  
Florda Alexander  
David Cutler  
Valentina De La Rosa  
Barbara Fields  
Thelma Flake  
Josephine Panares

### Human Resources

Lucilla Chen  
Teresa Nevill  
Kathyern Wilson  
Ramona Yancy

### Information Technology

Irving Johnson  
David Tanner

### Legal

Michael Cropper  
Barbara Pierce  
Sandra Robinson  
Millicent Sumuel-Fletcher

### Library

Linda Adams  
Patricia Bustamante  
Joel Draut  
Helen Jackson  
Shirley Singletary

### Municipal Courts

Sandra Cox  
Rupertha Hendrickson  
Susana Leal  
Debra Rohde

### Parks & Recreation

Juan Correa  
Gregory Jones  
Cheryle Ross  
Elizabeth Zaragoza

### Police

Rose Bosworth  
Sharon Brown  
Sheila Duncan  
Dorothea Ford  
Deborah Goldman  
Barbara Hartle  
Dormetra Henry  
Annie Hildreth  
Wylean Hill  
Jose Martinez  
Thomas Mathew  
John Mokarzel Jr  
Araceli Molina  
Etoil Piggue  
Sylvia Renteria  
Lewis Sedberry

### Public Works

Michael Beezley  
Thomas Benbrooks  
Joseph Brown  
Hester Brown

Alma Copeland  
Lenzy Cotton  
Rodney Davis  
Dolee Dirden  
Carlos Escobar  
Jerry Fielder  
Arthur Flaniken  
Myrna Franklin  
David Garcia  
Ruth Gonzales  
Glenn Guillory  
Aijaz Haque  
Thomas Head  
Michelle Hickman  
Jack Hunt  
Elizabeth Jackson Thomas  
Donald Joiner  
Wanda Kegley  
Rickie Leverett  
Herbert McDonald  
Kenneth Miller  
Joseph Mitchell  
Clara Neutton  
Dat Nguyen  
Lawrence Nolan  
Robert Oakes  
Sarah Pena  
Anthony Perry  
Michael Preston  
Alfonso Ramirez  
Robert Redmond  
Charles Richardson  
David Rodriguez  
Donald Schwenke  
Gloria Skinner  
Jesse Springer  
Michel Thelus  
Gregory Tutt  
Thetaus Van  
James Ware  
William Warner  
Junious Williams  
Alfredo Zapata  
Solid Waste  
Simplicio Mendoza

The Retirements section lists names and departments of those retiring participants who have indicated on their retirement applications that they wished to have an announcement of their retirement included.

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## PENSION PRESS

Houston Municipal Employees Pension System



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1-800-858-1450

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

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

#### ELECTED AND APPOINTED TRUSTEES

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Lenard Polk, *Vice Chairman*  
Rhonda Smith, *Secretary*  
Roderick J. Newman  
Roy W. Sanchez  
Lonnie Vara  
Barbara Chelette, *Appointed*

#### CITY APPOINTED TRUSTEES

Denise Castillo-Rhodes  
David Donnelly  
Edward J. Hamb II  
Adrian Patterson

### PENSION PRESS

David L. Long,  
*Executive Director*  
Gabby Zamarripa,  
*Editor*

Thanks to the HMEPS staff for their  
contributions to the ongoing success  
of the *Pension Press*.



# HMEPS

HOUSTON MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES PENSION SYSTEM

### NEWSLETTER CONTENT

The material contained in this newsletter is intended to provide you with important information about your pension participation. The content cannot be taken as the basis of any contractual rights between HMEPS and its participants. If there is a question of interpretation, retirement laws are the final authority.