

August has been a hot and smoky one in Fresno County. Perhaps- one of the only highlights this month has been the incredible sunrises and sunsets that were provided compliments of the unhealthy air quality. I hope those of you who work graveyards and swings had the opportunity to enjoy some of the fiery red beginnings and endings to each day. Unfortunately, criminals have taken no break and crime is continuing to rise. Calls for service are steady and the levels of crime no longer seem impacted by the ongoing pandemic.

### **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

Covid-19 continues to linger in Fresno County and statewide. Although there isn't a complete quarantine/shutdown like we experienced in the spring – there is still enough to cause concern about what this will amount to in 6-12 months when the numbers are revealed in municipal and state budgets. Since this is a presidential election year, we aren't really hearing too much in the way of complete doom. The markets are moving up in a direction of pre-pandemic numbers. Although travel is still curbed with international borders being off-limits- much of the air industry has been grounded which has had a ripple effect on the oil and energy industries as well. The term ripple effect is key when looking at actually what this shutdown is going to mean for us in the upcoming months and year.

This pandemic and lingering after effects raises concern for us, when engaging in contract negotiations with the County of Fresno. We resumed talks in July, as if we never skipped a beat for a new contract starting July 13 through November 1. During these discussions, many different scenarios were discussed by both sides. After three meetings, the County of Fresno offered no changes to our current contract, but agreed to add additional money for our health insurance starting December 14 through the entire calendar year. This offer followed talks of potential furloughs and taking a hard look at contract takeaways that would not have benefitted our members. After discussion with FDSA Board of Directors- it was unanimous that FDSA move forward with securing this offer for our members. Our legal counsel has also agreed based on the current climate and unusual circumstances- this is a fair extension for members since we are not giving up any pay or benefits. There is no loss of pay/benefits/working conditions, and in addition, we will be receiving additional funds to help off-set health insurance or any increases that may be coming with renewal. FDSA Board of Directors authorized the further extension of our contract taking effect from November 1, 2020 through October 31, 2021.

The benefits and securities that come with this contract provide stability for the time being. FDSA will now go through two budget hearings, with a secure contract intact. This means, we are off the table, as other groups are continuing to be out of contract or still at the negotiating table. Everything in our contract remains the same, nothing is frozen, nothing gets removed and health benefits contributions actually increase for all of us. If you go to the FDSA website, at [www.fresnodsa.org](http://www.fresnodsa.org) you will find the Labor link that will take you to our MOU.

We will be sending out another survey after the first of the year to test what the members are looking for with a new labor contract moving forward in 2021.

## **Retirement Board**

Deputy John Robinson was elected to his second term on the Fresno County Retirement Employees Association (FCERA). This was made possible by all of you who placed your ballot in the mail or turned it in at the election's office. This election was John's re-election term for the next three years.

John has been a great addition to the FCERA board since his arrival in late 2017. Below are some of John's accomplishments and decisions made since he has been there.

- I have been privileged to serve on the FCERA Board for one full term and have worked hard to make sure the decisions we make are done with the best interest of pension and its recipients in mind.
- I have assisted newly retired safety members to get their first check even though their paper work wasn't turned in on time. My goal is to not allow a lapse in your paycheck from active to retirement.
- I was able to explain and elaborate on a few medical retirements which I believe helped clear up some questions the FCERA board had. I believe this helped get those safety members their well-deserved medical retirements.
- I participated in the asset allocation where we as a board decided to adopt a more aggressive portfolio. This should increase the funds in the retirement system more quickly. As of January 2020, the system had 4.5 billion. As of July 2020, the pension fund is up to 4.9 billion.
- I helped start the process for writing a policy regarding the follow up on medical retirements. This would check up on people that receive a medical retirement and make sure they don't get a similar job then what they retired from or get a job performing duties that they are restricted from doing.
- I have answered several questions regarding the retirement system and how it works. So many of you have reached out over the last three years for questions regarding the pension and how the benefits work.
- I have advised FDSA Board on several issues regarding the retirement system. For example, the status of the retirement system, the percentage of funding, when we expect to be fully funded, and our inflation rate to name a few.
- Based on the chart below, effective July 1, 2020 most safety members will see a reduction in their payroll deductions for pensions and benefits.

○ Safety Tier 1	(-0.78)	13.31%	12.53%
○ Safety Tier 2	(-0.24)	11.64%	11.40%
○ Safety Tier 4	(+0.14)	10.08%	10.22%
○ Safety Tier 5	(+0.04)	11.92%	11.96%

- Based on the above table, you are seeing a reduction in your rate, or a very minimal increase.

One reason, is based on the movement of our investment accounts. These accounts have been stagnant for many years. I, along with your FCERA Trustees, have made decisions that will allow returns on our money to flourish. One example during the last six months of 2019, after moving investments around, FCERA made over \$370 million dollars ending the year with an over \$5 billion dollar pension fund. This equates to the pension being over 82% funded.

- I have proudly served all of you in 2018, 2019 and during these unprecedented times in 2020. I look forward to continuing as your safety trustee on the Fresno County Employees Retirement Association.

*Thank you!*

*I appreciate your continuing trust in representing you as safety members on FCERA. I am here for all of you. Please do not hesitate to contact me for any questions you made have in regards to retirement.*

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### **Prayers needed for Deputy Patrick Gee**

We have a deputy sheriff, Patrick Gee, who is in a fierce fight for his life right now- currently in the hospital. We've been told Patrick needs plasma for a chance to recover and survive. Anyone can donate who has either recovered from COVID-19 or has a blood type of O positive or negative. Also, universal blood donors with AB positive or negative can also donate. If you fall into any of these categories, please consider helping him to get well. If you do not meet the criteria, prayers are another way to help this family during this very difficult time. Patrick is a fighter – and we are thinking of him daily.

Truly,

Eric