

# Fitchburg Retirement System

718 Main Street, Suite 310, Fitchburg, MA 01420

Tel: 978-829-1843 • Fax: 978-829-1973 • Email: [retirement@fitchburgma.gov](mailto:retirement@fitchburgma.gov)

Website: [www.fitchburgma.gov/792/retirement](http://www.fitchburgma.gov/792/retirement)

Dear New Member,

Welcome to the Fitchburg Retirement System! Public retirement is State mandated for nearly all full-time public employees and is equivalent to Social Security, offering retirement benefits under a defined benefit plan (401a) as well as limited disability benefits. In lieu of Social Security deductions, on your pay advice, you will see (City) Retirement and Medicare deductions. As stated, membership in the Fitchburg Retirement System is mandatory for employees who are scheduled to work twenty (20) hours or more per week for at least thirty (30) weeks.

Your payroll deductions for retirement will fund an annuity, payable for life upon your retirement. In addition, you will be earning a pension payable to you by the Fitchburg Retirement System. Your eventual benefits will be based on three factors, your age, your cumulative years of creditable service, and an average of your three highest consecutive 36 months of salary (for members who began their public service prior to April 2, 2012) or, your five highest consecutive 60 months of salary (for member whose service began on or after April 2, 2012). Using this formula we will determine the percentage of your retirement benefit, the maximum being 80% of your respective three or five year average salary.

You will be considered vested in the retirement system and eligible for benefits after 10 years of creditable service. In the meantime, you may want to consider supplemental insurance coverage in the event of a disability. If you have any questions regarding insurance coverage, please contact the City's Payroll and Benefits Office at 978-829-1845 or by email to [payroll@fitchburgma.gov](mailto:payroll@fitchburgma.gov).

New members of the retirement system must complete a New Member Enrollment Packet. The packet will be provided to you as part of your onboarding. **The New Member Enrollment Packet must be completed in its entirety, signed and witnessed where indicated, returned to our office with a copy of your birth certificate, and a copy of your DD214 Forms, if you are a veteran.** Please be advised, the Retirement Board will not approve your membership if your completed New Member Enrollment Packet is not completed and returned to the Retirement Office.

The New Member Enrollment Packet consists of the following forms. Below please find a brief explanation of their purpose.

- **New Member Enrollment Form:**

This form establishes your annuity savings account with the retirement system and provides the retirement office with information regarding prior creditable service so a transfer can be requested, if appropriate.

If you have prior creditable service with another public retirement system in the Commonwealth, please make sure to indicate that on your "New Member Enrollment Form". You may be eligible for a transfer of the retirement benefits you have earned. If you received a refund of your retirement deductions from your previous retirement system, you may be eligible to make up payments to regain those benefits.



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- **Beneficiary Selection Form for Refund of Accumulated Deductions (If Member Dies Before Retirement)** (Members must designate at least one beneficiary on this form):

This form requires a member to select a beneficiary or beneficiaries to receive payment of accumulated deductions (the money that you contributed to the retirement system via your biweekly payrolls from the City) and other payments due a member if the member dies before retirement, as described in Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 32, Section 11(2)(c).

Any person or entity may be designated as your Refund of Accumulated Deductions Beneficiary (“Lump-Sum Beneficiary”) under Section 11(2)(c). You may designate multiple beneficiaries and contingent beneficiaries. You must indicate the percentage of the annuity account that you wish each beneficiary to receive. The percentages must total 100%. Your Lump-Sum Beneficiaries can be changed or updated at any time by sending a request in writing to the Retirement Office. Please note, if you elect to exercise the Option D Beneficiary Selection (described below) then the money in your annuity account will not be disbursed to anyone in a one-time lump-sum payment, even if you have designated them on this form.

- **Option D Beneficiary Selection Form (If Member Dies Before Retirement)** (This is an optional benefit and does not have to be exercised):

Option D is an optional benefit under M.G.L. c. 32 §12(2). Option D is only activated in the event the member dies while still employed as an active member of an eligible public-sector retirement system in the Commonwealth. The member must also have at least two (2) years of creditable service to be eligible.

The Option D Benefit provides for a lifetime monthly allowance for the member’s beneficiary. The statute allows for only one (1) person to be named as beneficiary and limits eligible beneficiaries to a spouse, child, parent, sister, brother, or unmarried former spouse. The monthly allowance is equal to the full Option C allowance the member would have received had they retired on the date of their death (if the member was not yet 55 years of age, the allowance will be calculated as if the member were 55 at the time of their death).

As stated above, Option D is an optional benefit. If elected, it will supersede the *Beneficiary Selection Form for Lump-Sum Payment* that was filed with the Retirement Board. Your Option D Beneficiary can be changed or canceled at any time by sending a request in writing to the Board. Once a member retires, the Option D form on file with the Board becomes void and the member will have the option to select their retirement option at that time.

- **Social Security Administration’s SSA-1945 Form (Statement Concerning Your Employment in a Job Not Covered by Social Security).**

Your earnings from this job are not covered under Social Security. When you retire, or if you become disabled, you may receive a pension based on earnings from this job. If you do, and you are also entitled to a benefit from Social Security based on either your own work or the work of your spouse, or former spouse, your pension may affect the amount of the Social Security benefit you receive under the Social Security law’s Windfall Elimination Provision and/or the Government Pension Offset Provisions. Please review the document in its entirety and sign where indicated.

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**It is essential that you keep us informed of any major changes, such as marital status, new dependents, or address.** You can change the beneficiaries of your retirement fund any time by filing a new beneficiary form. It is vital to the well-being of your family to make sure your beneficiary status is kept up-to-date.

You will receive an annual statement of your contributions and interest, usually during the month of February. It's a good idea to look it over, and make sure all of your information is correct. Remember that interest and deductions on this statement are not taxable until you retire or withdraw the funds.

As a member of the Fitchburg Retirement System you will have access to our Member Self-Service portal. The portal grants members the ability to view their pension data on file (i.e., contact information on record, creditable service, annuity savings record, and beneficiary information). Members also have the ability to run two different types of retirement estimates. **Please note, you will have access to the site after you receive your first payroll.** The website to access the portal is: [www.pensiontechnologygroup.com/fitchburg](http://www.pensiontechnologygroup.com/fitchburg). Once you access the portal, please register and provide the requested personal information to access your member profile. Should you have any technical difficulty accessing the site or your profile, please contact our office.

If you leave public service before you retire, you may be eligible for a refund of the deductions you have contributed. Retirement deductions are federally tax-deferred, meaning that the deductions are taken from your check before taxes are calculated. Deductions are taxable at the time you take a refund or retire. Please note, there may be penalties for early withdrawal, or you may choose to rollover your annuity savings to another tax deferred account (i.e.: 401K, IRA) and no taxes will be taken at that time.

Pursuant to M.G.L. c.32, The Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission ("PERAC") oversees and regulates the public pension systems in the Commonwealth of Mass. PERAC published a series of guides to help retirement system members navigate their retirement benefits (<https://www.mass.gov/guides/perac-retirement-guides>). We encourage you to familiarize yourself with the guides and contact our office with any questions. Please note, Public Employee Guides are specific to membership date. Your membership date is the date in which you began your full-time public service employment in the Commonwealth. Please contact our office if you need assistance determining your membership date. For additional resources and information, please review PERAC's website [www.mass.gov/perac](http://www.mass.gov/perac).

Should you have any questions regarding your membership with the Fitchburg Retirement System, please contact our office.

Sincerely,



Tina M. Schneider

Retirement Director

Fitchburg Retirement Board