



**DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE  
PENSION OFFICE**

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# The Retirement Process

## Defined Benefit “Old Plan” Retirees

### Most Commonly Asked Questions

Retirement application packets are available online at <https://www.fultoncountyga.gov/for-employees/employee-benefits>. A check list of **required** documents is provided. The application must be notarized. The application packet contains: pension application, beneficiary form, deduction authorization form, direct deposit form, federal and state tax forms, retiree contact form, and benefit enrollment forms.

This Q&A document should respond to most questions about the application approval process, timeline for the initial check, benefit premium payments, and retiree payroll deductions. If you still have questions that are not addressed in this document about the retirement process, you may make an appointment with Brenda Fout by email at [brenda.fout@fultoncountyga.gov](mailto:brenda.fout@fultoncountyga.gov) or by phone at (404) 612-2836 OR Pension Administrator Wendy Brown [wendy.brown@fultoncountyga.gov](mailto:wendy.brown@fultoncountyga.gov) or call (404) 612-7672. If you reach voicemail, please leave a message and your call will be returned.

#### **1. Do I need to make an appointment with staff to determine my retirement eligibility?**

If you are contemplating retiring, you may have questions, but you may not need to make an appointment. Where you are in the process will impact how you will be assisted, as well as who will assist you.

- If you have not requested or received a retirement estimate within the past year, visit <https://www.fultoncountyga.gov/for-employees/employee-benefits> for an

estimate request form or email [pensionunit@fultoncountyga.gov](mailto:pensionunit@fultoncountyga.gov) .Completed estimate forms should be emailed to [pensionunit@fultoncountyga.gov](mailto:pensionunit@fultoncountyga.gov). Estimate requests will be responded to in the order received, and may take up to ten (10) business days.

- Requests for estimates should be submitted 30 days before the estimate is needed.

Once you have received the estimate, if you have questions about it or your benefit amount(s), contact Brenda Fout in the Pension Office for discussion or appointment by email at [brenda.fout@fultoncountyga.gov](mailto:brenda.fout@fultoncountyga.gov) or by phone at (404) 612-2836.

## **2. I have received my retirement estimate. Are the numbers final?**

The numbers on a retirement estimate are **NOT** final and the estimate should be plainly marked as “unaudited”. Any changes to the data such as creditable service, leave balances, final average earning amounts, etc. would change the estimate numbers. Your retirement benefit cannot be finalized until after your final paycheck and is subject to Pension Board approval.

## **3. The estimate reflects the best effort on my “gross” retirement benefit. How can I estimate what my retirement net pay will likely be in order to make comparisons to my active take-home pay?**

Many of the deductions in your active paycheck will not be applied to your retirement check; most notably your contribution for the retirement benefit, the social security/FICA deduction, and any optional or voluntary benefits or active-employment deduction such as parking, MARTA, flexible spending, etc. The basic deductions for retiree checks (as elected) are:

- **Federal taxes**, if you elect to have federal income tax deducted
- **State taxes**, if you elect to have state income tax deducted
- **Deductions for Benefits**
  - Medical Plan premiums are based on your year of retirement.
  - Medicare eligible retirees/beneficiaries enrolled in the County’s medical plan, who provide proof of their enrollment in Medicare Part B, are eligible to receive a County paid subsidy of 50% of the standard Medicare Part B rate as established by Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The County requires completion of the

Medicare Part B affidavit form and copy of Medicare card showing Part B enrollment annually. Fulton County pays a percentage of retirees' medical premium cost based on their retirement year; to view the 2021 retiree premium rates for medical, dental and vision; and the Medicare Part B Affidavit form, visit <https://fultoncountyga.gov/for-retirees/retiree-benefits/for-retirees-open-enrollment>

- Retirees pay 100% of the Dental Plan premium cost.
  - Fulton County pays 58% of retirees' vision premium cost.
  - Fulton County pays 100% of retirees' basic life insurance and AD&D premium cost. (Retirees can elect to pay dependent life coverage for eligible dependents).
- **Credit Union Deduction** for the following (if elected): Associated Federal Credit Union, Credit Union of Atlanta, and Excel Federal Credit Union. No other credit unions can be set up to be applied to your retirement check.

#### **4. After I decide to retire, when should I give notice to my department?**

Once you decide to retire, you should notify your department immediately. The recommendation is to notify your department AND Pension/Retiree Benefits at least 30 days in advance. This will help facilitate a smooth transition from active employment to retirement.

#### **5. What documents will I need for the retirement application?**

Copies of the following documents are required:

- Birth certificate for you and any spouse or children to be covered by benefits;
- Social security card and marriage certificate for any spouse to be covered by benefits;
- Medicare card for you and any spouse (if age 65 or over/Medicare Eligible) if you and the spouse are to be covered by benefits.

#### **6. What steps are required to submit my retirement application?**

A notarized application plus supporting documents are required to submit the application packet for processing. You will be notified by staff if any forms or information is missing or incomplete.

**7. When should I submit my retirement application packet to the Finance Pension Office?**

Your application packet can be submitted as soon as you have finalized your decision to retire and know the last date of active employment. It is recommended that you submit your application 4 weeks in advance. The Pension Office is unable to finalize your application until after your leave payout (bust-out) check has been paid, which is approximately one month after your last day worked. Please be mindful however, that date ***will*** be impacted if you need to find and submit additional documents that would delay your application from being presented to the Pension Board for approval.

**8. How should I submit my retirement documents?**

You are highly encouraged to submit payroll and benefits requests electronically for response and processing to avoid delays. Email to [pensionunit@fultoncountyga.gov](mailto:pensionunit@fultoncountyga.gov) or fax (404) 612-1312. You can also mail to:

Fulton County Pension Office  
141 Pryor Street S.W. Suite 7001  
Atlanta GA 30303

**9. When will my retirement benefit numbers be finalized?**

Your last payroll check for actively working will be the pay period of your last employment date. The leave payout (bust-out) check will be the following pay period. The final leave amounts are a part of your benefit formula, and your retirement benefit numbers will be finalized after the bust-out check is in the payroll system and is subject to Pension Board approval. *You can use the calendar displayed in Exhibit I as a guide.*

**10. What deductions will be included in my leave payout (bust-out) paycheck?**

It depends on the time period in the month for your last check. Note: Your last paycheck is normally a paper check, however due to COVID-19 final payments are direct deposited temporarily. The following deduction will be applied:

### **First Pay Date of the Month – Bust-Out Check (Leave Payout)/Last Check**

The standard deductions as applicable for federal taxes; state taxes; Medicare; FICA; Pension Defined Benefit; statutory deductions: child support, bankruptcy, student loan, IRS Levy and state garnishments; Purchasing Power and 457(b) loan payments will be deducted from your pay.

Deductions will not be removed for medical, dental, vision, or life insurance. Deductions for voluntary benefits will also NOT be removed. This is because the premium deductions for each month are deducted from the two bi-weekly payrolls for the month for the current month's coverage eligibility and you will only have 1 bi-weekly payroll.

### **Second Pay Date of the Month – Bust-Out Check (Leave Payout)/Last Check**

If your bust out check falls on the second pay date of the month, deductions for medical, dental, vision, and life and all voluntary benefit deductions will be taken from your bust-out payment. The standard deductions as applicable for federal taxes; state taxes; Medicare; FICA; Defined Benefit; statutory deductions: child support, bankruptcy, student loan, IRS Levy and state garnishments; Purchasing Power and 457(b) loan payments will be deducted from your pay.

### **Third Pay Date of the Month-Bust-Out Check (Leave Payout)/Last Check**

If your bust out check falls on a third pay date of the month, deductions will not be removed for your medical, dental, life, vision and other voluntary benefits will not be deducted from your bust out check. Only the standard deductions as applicable for federal taxes; state taxes; Medicare; FICA; Pension Defined Benefit; 401(a) Retirement; statutory deductions: child support, bankruptcy, student loan, IRS Levy and state garnishments; purchasing power and 457(b) loan payments will be deducted from your pay.

## **11.Can I elect to rollover/defer any portion of my final bust-out/leave-payout check?**

You may elect to defer any amount of your leave payout check up to the IRS limit based on your age or other eligible status as determined by the plan administrator to a Deferred Compensation (457b) account. The IRS limits for 2020 and 2021 are below. Mass Mutual is the current plan administrator. If you don't already have one, an

account can be opened for this purpose. A salary deferral form will need to be completed and submitted with the retirement application packet specifying the amount you wish to defer. That amount is deducted on a pre-tax basis from your pay. Questions about rolling over or deferring bust-out pay should be referred to Tomekia Mance by email or phone at [Tomekia.Mance@fultoncountyga.gov](mailto:Tomekia.Mance@fultoncountyga.gov) or (404) 612-7668 or Latanya Adams (404) 612-7677 or email [Latanya.Adams@fultoncountyga.gov](mailto:Latanya.Adams@fultoncountyga.gov) in Payroll.

**2021 vs. 2020 457(B) ANNUAL PLAN LIMITS**

Type	2021	2020
Normal Deferral (less than Age 50)	\$19,500	\$19,500
Catch-Up Contributions (Age 50+)	\$ 26,000	\$ 26,000
Special Catch-Up Contributions (Age 50+) <i>(Mass Mutual must confirm eligibility)</i>	\$ 39,000	39,0000

**12. How does the active-to-retiree benefits transition work?**

Your active benefits will automatically expire when the claims administrator receives the post-payroll file that includes your separation date. If you are retiring, you should ignore any automated letter about expiring coverage or applying for COBRA. There will be no gap in your benefit coverage from active to retiree status. All retirees are required to complete the benefit enrollment form and elect/waive coverage for medical, dental and vision and dependent life (as applicable) including any eligible dependent would wish to cover. If you elect to enroll in coverage, you are required to submit any supporting documents needed to process your enrollment with your retirement application packet. To view the retiree plans and premium rates for Pre-65 (Non-Medicare) and Age 65+ (Medicare) Retirees visit, <https://fultoncountyga.gov/for-retirees/retiree-benefits/for-retirees-open-enrollment>

Questions concerning your retiree health benefits should be directed to Akaia Fisher [akaia.fisher@fultoncountyga.gov](mailto:akaia.fisher@fultoncountyga.gov) or Maxine Wright [Maxine.wright@fultoncountyga.gov](mailto:Maxine.wright@fultoncountyga.gov) or call (404) 612-7606.

**13. What is the retirement benefit application approval process and what is the timeline I can expect to receive my first retirement check?**

The pension application is reviewed, processed and approved by the Pension Office staff. It is then reviewed and approved by External Auditors and the Pension Board's Attorney before it is placed on the agenda to be approved by the Pension Board. The Pension Board normally meets once monthly on the second Wednesday. Upon approval by the Pension Board, payments are paid on the first of the following month. If the 1<sup>st</sup> falls on a weekend or County holiday, pension benefits will be paid on the previous business day. Your initial/first retirement payment is estimated to be 2-3 months after your last date of employment, but is retroactive to your retirement effective date. *You can use the calendar displayed in Exhibit I as a guide.*

**14. How are pension contributions in the earlier years that had already been taxed handled for retirees who made after-tax retirement contributions into the Defined Benefit Plan?**

If you are an employee who paid taxes on earlier contributions, your pension check will be based on two different gross pay type amounts in our payroll system – one pre-taxed for the amount that is subject to taxation and one after-taxed amount for the pension contributions that you've already paid taxes on. The formula used to calculate your benefit is based on the total pre-taxed contributions, amount you have already paid on (after-tax contributions) and your age at retirement. That will determine the number of months the pre-tax pay type will be applied to your pension benefit. After those pre-tax months have expired, you will be notified, and your total pension gross check amount will be combined. The entire check amount will be subject to taxation from that period forward.

**15. Am I required to use electronic payment for my monthly pension benefits? Who should I contact if any of my information changes?**

All Fulton County Defined Benefit Plan retirees are required to receive monthly payments electronically, either through direct deposit OR pre-paid debit card. Direct deposit is a convenient, simple, safe, and secure way to get your pension benefit payments to your desired bank. Retirees who fail to enroll in direct deposit will be automatically defaulted to the Cash Pay Debit Paycard that is administered by the US Bank. For questions or additional information email [anthony.glover@fultoncountyga.gov](mailto:anthony.glover@fultoncountyga.gov) or call (404) 612-7714.

**16. Am I required to receive my pay advices electronically?**

New retirees are automatically enrolled on the Retiree Self Service (RSS) secure platform to obtain their pay advices electronically. The RSS website is similar to ESS system that is used by active employees to access pay advices. Retirees are required to furnish a personal email address for registration. For questions on RSS email Chawanis Ash at [chawanis.ash@fultoncountyga.gov](mailto:chawanis.ash@fultoncountyga.gov) or call (404) 612-7675.

### **17. Will I receive Cost-of-Living (COLA) raises after I retire?**

The Pension Board approves the 3% COLA raise for the following eligible Plan participants (1982, 1991 and 1991 Enhanced Plans) in November or December each year for the following calendar year if the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the specified twelve month period is above zero. If you are a retiree of one of the eligible plans listed above, to be qualified for the 3% COLA for the following year (as determined), your last day of employment must be on or before December 30<sup>th</sup> of the calendar year.

If you participated in any of the following pension plans (General Employees Pension Fund, Judges and Solicitors General Retirement Fund, Public Safety Fund and County Paid Pensioners as applicable), COLA is not automatic and is contingent upon approval of the Board of Commissioners.

### **18. What happens to my retirement benefits and life insurance in the event of my death?**

Typically a spouse or minor children (up to age 18) are eligible beneficiaries under the Plan to receive a portion of your retirement benefit. If you have no eligible beneficiaries and you pass away before you receive the full amount of your contribution to the defined benefit plan, a refund will be issued to your estate. Refunds of participants' contributions bear interest at 4% compounded annually from the date of the contributions. For questions or additional information regarding death benefits, email [anthony.glover@fultoncountyga.gov](mailto:anthony.glover@fultoncountyga.gov) or call (404) 612-7714.

**Other Questions?** Additional questions regarding pension benefit payments should be directed to Pension Administrator, Wendy Brown who may respond or direct you to the appropriate staff person. Wendy can be reached by email at [wendy.brown@fultoncountyga.gov](mailto:wendy.brown@fultoncountyga.gov) or by calling (404) 612-7672.



# EXHIBIT I



## YEAR-END DEFINED BENEFIT NEW RETIREES PAYROLL CALENDAR\*

### BI-WEEKLY PAID ACTIVE EMPLOYEES

LAST DAY OF EMPLOYMENT PERIOD 2020-2021	LAST REGULAR CHECK PAY DATE	BUST-OUT CHECK PAY DATE	*FIRST RETIREMENT PENSION CHECK PAY DATE
OCTOBER 14 - OCTOBER 27	NOVEMBER 6, 2020	NOVEMBER 20, 2020	DECEMBER 31, 2020
OCTOBER 28- NOVEMBER 10	NOVEMBER 20, 2020	DECEMBER 4, 2020	FEBRUARY 1, 2021
NOVEMBER 11- NOVEMBER 24	DECEMBER 4, 2020	DECEMBER 18, 2020	FEBRUARY 1, 2021
NOVEMBER 25 - DECEMBER 08	DECEMBER 18, 2020	DECEMBER 30, 2020	FEBRUARY 1, 2021
DECEMBER 9 - DECEMBER 22	DECEMBER 30, 2020	JANUARY 15, 2021	MARCH 1, 2021
DECEMBER 23 - JANUARY 5	JANUARY 15, 2021	JANUARY 29, 2021	MARCH 1, 2021

### MONTHLY PAID ACTIVE EMPLOYEES

LAST DAY OF EMPLOYMENT PERIOD	LAST REGULAR CHECK PAY DATE	BUST-OUT CHECK PAY DATE	*FIRST RETIREMENT PENSION CHECK PAY DATE
SEPTEMBER 23-OCTOBER 22	OCTOBER 30, 2020	DECEMBER 1, 2020	FEBRUARY 1, 2021
OCTOBER 23-NOVEMBER 22	DECEMBER 1, 2020	DECEMBER 30, 2020	FEBRUARY 1, 2021
NOVEMBER 23-DECEMBER 22	DECEMBER 30, 2020	FEBRUARY 1, 2021	MARCH 1, 2021
DECEMBER 23- JANUARY 22	FEBRUARY 1, 2021	FEBRUARY 26, 2021	APRIL 1, 2021

\*This is an estimate and the above is subject to completeness of documents, final payout and pension board approval.

*This document provides an overview of Fulton County Government Defined Benefit Plan retirement benefits. Actual plan provisions are contained in the official plan provisions are contained in the official plan documents. In the event of any conflict between this document or any other written or verbal summary and the actual terms of the plan document, the terms of the plan document will govern. This document may be changed at any time and do not represent a contractual obligation on the part of Fulton County Government*