

## Doug Fowler

In the fall of 2020, our fund was going through a great deal of stress.

- Alleged wrongdoing by Trustees and subsequent investigation that substantiated certain allegations, other allegations were inconclusive.
- Staff mistakes including missed monthly payments to several members, misapplied DROP disbursements, improper calculation of pension contributions for an entire cadet class, misinformation provided to beneficiaries, and many more.
- Pension software in dire need of upgrading.
- An understaffed office leading to many of the mistakes listed above.
- Distrust amongst trustees.

Since the end of 2020 a great deal of change has occurred. The entire elected board has changed over, the entire office staff has turned over, a new pension software is in the testing and implementation phase, the website has been upgraded, all processes have been documented with sufficient staff oversight to ensure accuracy in transactions, reducing costs by moving targeted investments away from high fee fund managers, and much more.

While a great deal has been accomplished over the last three years, there remains one area I want to see addressed – COLAs (cost of living adjustments). From 1975 through 2002 COLAs were provided each and every year. Since 2003 a COLA was awarded for only seven of those 21 years and four across the board increases totaling \$289 in 2005, 2006, 2013, and 2014. Since 2003 inflation is up 49.54%, however the COLAs awarded totaled 15.8% plus \$289. This situation is intolerable, and a solution is required.

Many of you know AFD firefighters are penalized with Social Security's Windfall Elimination Provision. Therefore, those of us that worked for other employers before, during and after our AFD employment and met the social security threshold of 40 quarters of contributions, we are penalized and cannot depend on social security as a hedge against inflation. COLAs are a MUST!