

Purpose

To include the payment of the initial application fee and monthly dues by the City of Dalton as an added benefit for the Georgia Firefighters' Pension Fund (GFPF) for all full time certified firefighters with Dalton Fire Department.

History

The Georgia Firefighters' Pension Fund serves as a supplemental retirement plan for certified firefighters in the state of Georgia. In the late 1930's, a group of fire chiefs, led primarily by Howard Schaefer of Marietta and Joe Whitley of Atlanta, began an effort to start a pension fund for the firemen of Georgia. They approached the Georgia Firemen's Association, then a loosely formed group of fire officers, at the time un-incorporated but organized and dues paying, at their annual convention and garnered their support for the initial legislation. The first draft of the Firemen's Relief Act introduced in 1939 failed as did many versions thereafter. But each successive bill brought a better benefit, improving and refining the plan, until in 1954, a bill was put forth that passed both houses, and in 1955, was signed into law by Governor Marvin Griffin.

Membership is limited to Georgia Certified Firefighters who are employed by the State of Georgia or any of its political subdivisions: whether by election or appointment, who devote their full time to such employment.

Plan Benefits

The GFPF includes two separate benefits to members, a retirement pension and a death payment. Details of the two benefits are listed below.

Retirement Pension (current full benefit \$940 monthly)

The Retirement benefit is provided to all members who have met the fund requirements for retirement. A member is eligible (vested) after a minimum of 15 years of qualified service. In order for a member to receive full retirement benefit, the firefighter has to have a minimum 25 years of service and reach the age of 55 years. A member is entitled to an increase in the maximum monthly benefit in effect at the time of retirement equal to 2 percent of the monthly retirement benefit in excess of 25 years. A member is eligible for early retirement after reaching the age of 50. If a member chooses retirement prior to reaching 50 years of age they may freeze their benefit until reaching 55 years, or 50 years should they choose early retirement. The factor for calculating the penalty for early retirement is shown below;

Age	Factor
50	.70
51	.76
52	.82
53	.88
54	.94

Death Payment

The death benefit is provided to the member's beneficiary. A beneficiary can be anyone the member chooses and can be changed at any time by completing and returning the Change of Beneficiary form.

The amount provided to the beneficiary is determined by the stage of membership at the time of death.

Retiree Death Benefit Breakdown

Active member who has less than 15 years of service with the Fund \$5,000.00

The beneficiary of a retired member who chooses the "Regular Retirement" option will be due:

- The final payment at the end of the month during which the retiree died payable to the beneficiary; and
- Should the retiree die prior to receiving a total of \$5,000 in retirement benefits, the beneficiary shall receive the balance of \$5,000, less the benefits paid-to-date to the retiree.

Cost

The GPF requires an initial \$25 (first month dues) for each member and dues of \$25 per month. The following details the current status of the Dalton Fire Department certified firefighters in relation to GPF status and costs associated with meeting the proposal for the remainder of FY 2020:

Current GPF members – 93

Amount to cover monthly dues for 93 current members for 4 months (@ \$25/month) = \$9,300

Total cost for the remainder of FY 2020 – \$9,300

The projections of budget costs going forward past FY 2020 are as follows:

We are currently only short one firefighter. Below outlines assumptions of current personnel that have opted out of GPF joining, and hiring one firefighter to fill the current vacancy.

93 Current Members @ \$25 per month for 12 months = \$27,900

3 Non-members joining @ \$25 per month for 12 months = \$900

1 New firefighter @ \$25 per month for 12 months = \$300

Total requested budgeted amount for subsequent years assuming a total of 96 certified firefighter positions would be \$ 29,100 per year.

Conclusion

With an absence of a defined benefit retirement plan for the City of Dalton Firefighters, the GFPF can serve as a supplemental retirement option for those employees. Should the City of Dalton choose to pay the employees initial monthly contribution into the plan, it would give the department an additional positive attribute to use in recruiting top firefighter candidates.