

CHAPTER 424B

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS, CONSOLIDATION, DISSOLUTION

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424B.01 DEFINITIONS.

Subdivision 1. **Generally.** Unless the context of the provision indicates that a different meaning is intended, each of the terms in the following subdivisions has the meaning indicated.

Subd. 2. **Applicable municipality.** "Applicable municipality" means the municipality or municipalities in which a consolidating relief association is located and to which a consolidating relief association is associated by virtue of the presence of at least one municipal official on the relief association board of trustees under section 424A.04.

Subd. 3. **Consolidating relief association.** "Consolidating relief association" means a volunteer firefighters relief association organized under chapter 317A and governed by chapter 424A that has initiated or has completed the process of consolidating with one or more other relief associations under this chapter.

Subd. 4. **Prior relief associations.** "Prior relief associations" means the two or more volunteer firefighters relief associations that have initiated the consolidation process under this chapter by action of the board of trustees of the relief association.

Subd. 5. **Relief association membership.** "Relief association membership" means all active members of the volunteer firefighters relief association, all deferred retirees and other vested inactive members of the volunteer firefighters relief association, and any persons regularly receiving a service pension or other retirement benefit from the volunteer firefighters relief association.

Subd. 6. **Subsequent relief association.** "Subsequent relief association" means the volunteer firefighters relief association that is designated to be the successor relief association in the consolidation initiative resolutions of the board of trustees of the prior relief associations or the volunteer firefighters relief association organized under chapters 317A and 424A for the purpose of operating as the successor relief association after consolidation under this chapter.

History: 2000 c 461 art 16 s 1

424B.02 CONSOLIDATION AUTHORIZED.

Subdivision 1. **Initiation.** (a) With the approval of the governing body of each applicable municipality, two or more relief associations associated with fire departments serving contiguous fire districts may initiate the consolidation of the relief associations into a subsequent relief association.

(b) Initiation of a consolidation action must occur through the proposal of a consolidation resolution to the board of trustees of each volunteer firefighters relief association notification of the relief association membership of the potential consolidation and after conducting a public meeting on the consolidation question.

Subd. 2. Initiative processing; filing. (a) After a consolidation initiative resolution has been filed with the relief association board of trustees by one or more members of the board, the relief association secretary shall provide written notification of the initiative to the relief association membership. After notification of the relief association membership, the board of trustees must hold a public hearing on the initiative. After the hearing, the board of trustees shall act on the consolidation resolution.

(b) If the consolidation resolution is adopted by majority vote of the board of trustees, the secretary shall file a copy of the resolution with the other relief association or associations also considering consolidation.

(c) If two or more volunteer firefighters relief associations adopt a consolidation resolution, those relief associations are consolidated effective the next following January 1.

(d) Within 30 days of the adoption of the consolidation resolution by all prior relief associations, the secretaries of the applicable prior relief associations shall jointly notify in writing the state auditor, the commissioner of revenue, and the secretary of state of the consolidation.

History: 2000 c 461 art 16 s 2

424B.03 SUBSEQUENT RELIEF ASSOCIATION.

Subdivision 1. **New relief association.** If the subsequent relief association is a new volunteer firefighters relief association, the consolidated volunteer firefighters relief association must be incorporated under chapter 317A. The incorporators of the consolidated relief association must include at least one board member of each of the former volunteer firefighters relief associations.

Subd. 2. **Successor relief association.** If the subsequent relief association is one of the prior relief associations, the articles of incorporation and bylaws must be appropriately revised, effective on the consolidation effective date, and a revised board of trustees must be elected before the consolidation effective date.

History: 2000 c 461 art 16 s 3

424B.04 GOVERNANCE OF CONSOLIDATED VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS RELIEF ASSOCIATION.

Subdivision 1. **Board of trustees.** The consolidated volunteer firefighters relief association is governed by a board of trustees as provided in section 424A.04, subdivision 1.

Subd. 2. **Composition of board.** The board must have three officers, including a president, a secretary, and a treasurer. The membership of the consolidated volunteer firefighters relief association must elect the three officers from the board members. A board of trustees member may not hold more than one officer position at the same time.

Subd. 3. **Board administration.** The board of trustees must administer the affairs of the relief association consistent with this chapter and the applicable provisions of chapters 69, 356A, and 424A.

History: 2000 c 461 art 16 s 4

424B.05 SPECIAL AND GENERAL FUNDS.

The consolidated volunteer firefighters relief association must establish and maintain a special fund and a general fund. The special fund must be established and maintained as provided in section 424A.05. The general fund must be established and maintained as provided in section 424A.06.

History: 2000 c 461 art 16 s 5

424B.06 TRANSFERS.

Subdivision 1. **Generally.** On the effective date of consolidation, the records, assets, and liabilities of the prior volunteer firefighters relief associations are transferred to the consolidated volunteer firefighters relief association. On the effective date of consolidation, the prior volunteer firefighters relief associations cease to exist as legal entities, except for the purposes of winding up association affairs as provided by this chapter.

Subd. 2. **Transfer of administration.** On the effective date of consolidation, the administration of the prior relief associations is transferred to the board of trustees of the subsequent volunteer firefighters relief association.

Subd. 3. **Transfer of records.** On the effective date of consolidation, the secretary and the treasurer of the prior volunteer firefighters relief associations shall transfer all records and documents relating to the prior relief associations to the secretary and treasurer of the subsequent volunteer firefighters relief association.

Subd. 4. **Transfer of special fund assets and liabilities.** (a) On the effective date of consolidation, the secretary and the treasurer of a prior volunteer firefighters relief association shall transfer the assets of the special fund of the applicable relief association to the special fund of the subsequent relief association. Unless the appropriate secretary and treasurer decide otherwise, the assets may be transferred as investment securities rather than cash. The transfer must include any accounts receivable. The appropriate secretary must settle any accounts payable from the special fund of the relief association before the effective date of consolidation.

(b) Upon the transfer of the assets of the special fund of a prior relief association, the pension liabilities of that special fund become the obligation of the special fund of the subsequent volunteer firefighters relief association.

(c) Upon the transfer of the prior relief association special fund assets, the board of trustees of the subsequent volunteer firefighters relief association has legal title to and management responsibility for the transferred assets as trustees for persons having a beneficial interest in those assets arising out of the benefit coverage provided by the prior relief association.

(d) The subsequent volunteer firefighters relief association is the successor in interest in all claims for and against the special funds of the prior volunteer firefighters relief associations or the applicable municipalities with respect to the special funds of the prior relief associations. The status of successor in interest does not apply to any claim against a prior relief association, the municipality in which that relief association is located, or any person connected with the prior relief association or the municipality, based on any act or acts that were not done in good faith and that constituted a breach of fiduciary responsibility under common law or chapter 356A.

History: 2000 c 461 art 16 s 6

424B.07 DISSOLUTION OF PRIOR GENERAL FUND BALANCES.

Before the effective date of consolidation, the secretaries of the volunteer firefighters relief associations shall settle any accounts payable from the respective general fund or any other relief association fund in addition to the relief association special fund. Investments held by a fund of the prior relief associations in addition to the special fund must be liquidated before the effective date of consolidation as the bylaws of the relief association provide. Before the effective date of consolidation, the respective relief associations must pay all applicable general fund expenses from their respective general funds. Any balance remaining in the general fund or in a fund other than the relief association special fund as of the effective date of consolidation must be paid to the new general fund of the subsequent volunteer firefighters relief association.

History: 2000 c 461 art 16 s 7

424B.08 TERMINATION OF PRIOR RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS.

Following the transfer of administration, records, special fund assets, and special fund liabilities from the prior relief associations to the subsequent volunteer firefighters relief association, the prior volunteer firefighters relief associations cease to exist as legal entities for any purpose. The subsequent relief association secretary shall notify the following governmental officials of the termination of the respective volunteer firefighters relief associations and of the establishment of the subsequent volunteer firefighters relief association:

- (1) Minnesota secretary of state;
- (2) Minnesota state auditor;
- (3) Minnesota commissioner of revenue; and
- (4) commissioner of the federal Internal Revenue Service.

History: 2000 c 461 art 16 s 8

424B.09 ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.

The payment of authorized administrative expenses of the subsequent volunteer firefighters relief association must be from the special fund of the subsequent volunteer firefighters relief association in accordance with section 424A.05, subdivision 3b, and as provided for in the bylaws of the subsequent volunteer firefighters relief association and approved by the board of trustees of the subsequent volunteer firefighters relief association. The payment of any other expenses of the subsequent volunteer firefighters relief association must be from the general fund of the subsequent volunteer firefighters relief association in accordance with section 424A.05, subdivision 3b, and as provided for in the bylaws of the subsequent volunteer firefighters relief association and approved by the board of trustees of the subsequent volunteer firefighters relief association.

History: 2000 c 461 art 16 s 9; 1Sp2019 c 6 art 22 s 28

424B.10 CONSOLIDATION; BENEFITS; FUNDING.

Subdivision 1. [Repealed, 2009 c 169 art 10 s 58]

Subd. 1a. **Applicability.** This section applies when all of the volunteer firefighters' relief associations involved in the consolidation are defined benefit relief associations as defined in section 424A.001, subdivision 1b.

Subd. 1b. **Benefits.** (a) The successor relief association following the consolidation of two or more defined benefit relief associations must be a defined benefit relief association.

(b) Notwithstanding any provision of section 424A.02, subdivision 3, to the contrary, the initial service pension amount of the subsequent defined benefit relief association as of the effective date of consolidation is either the service pension amount specified in clause (1) or the service pension amounts specified in clause (2), as provided for in the consolidated relief association's articles of incorporation or bylaws:

(1) the highest dollar amount service pension amount of any prior volunteer firefighters relief association in effect immediately before the consolidation initiation if the pension amount was implemented consistent with section 424A.02; or

(2) for service rendered by each individual volunteer firefighter before consolidation, the service pension amount under the consolidating volunteer firefighters relief association that the firefighter belonged to immediately before the consolidation if the pension amount was implemented consistent with section 424A.02 and for service rendered after the effective date of the consolidation, the highest dollar amount service pension of any of the consolidating volunteer firefighters relief associations in effect immediately before the consolidation if the pension amount was implemented consistent with section 424A.02.

(c) Any increase in the service pension amount beyond the amount implemented under paragraph (a) must conform with the requirements and limitations of section 424A.02 and sections 424A.091 to 424A.095.

Subd. 2. **Funding.** (a) Unless the applicable municipalities agree in writing to allocate the minimum municipal obligation in a different manner, the minimum municipal obligation under section 424A.092 or 424A.093, whichever applies, must be allocated between the applicable municipalities in proportion to their fire state aid.

(b) If any applicable municipality fails to meet its portion of the minimum municipal obligation to the subsequent relief association, all other applicable municipalities are jointly obligated to provide the required funding upon certification by the relief association secretary. An applicable municipality that pays the minimum municipal obligation amount for another applicable municipality, the municipality may collect that payment amount, plus a 25 percent surcharge, from the responsible applicable municipality by any available means, including a deduction from any state aid or payment amount payable to the responsible municipality upon certification of the necessary information to the commissioner of management and budget.

History: 2000 c 461 art 16 s 10; 1Sp2005 c 8 art 9 s 15; 2009 c 101 art 2 s 109; 2009 c 169 art 10 s 51-53; 2013 c 111 art 5 s 80

424B.11 CONSOLIDATING DEFINED CONTRIBUTION RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS; INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTS; FUNDING.

Subdivision 1. **Applicability.** This section applies when all of the volunteer firefighters relief associations involved in the consolidation are defined contribution relief associations as defined in section 424A.001, subdivision 1c.

Subd. 2. **Individual accounts.** The successor relief association following the consolidation of two or more defined contribution relief associations must be a defined contribution relief association and the successor relief association board shall establish individual accounts for every active member, inactive member, deferred member, or retired member receiving installment payments with that status as of the consolidation date. To each individual account the successor relief association must credit the amount to the credit of each person by a predecessor relief association as of the date of consolidation plus a proportional share, based on account value, of any subsequent net revenue during the consolidation process.

Subd. 3. **Funding.** Unless the articles of incorporation or bylaws of the successor relief association specify that municipal contributions are wholly voluntary or unless the municipalities associated with the consolidating defined contribution relief associations agree in writing to a different municipal support arrangement, each municipality must continue to provide the same amount of municipal support to the successor relief association as the municipality provided to the applicable predecessor relief association in the calendar year immediately prior to the calendar year in which the consolidation occurs.

History: 2009 c 169 art 10 s 54

424B.12 MIXED CONSOLIDATING RELIEF ASSOCIATIONS; BENEFIT PLAN; FUNDING.

Subdivision 1. **Applicability.** This section applies where one or more of the volunteer firefighters relief associations involved in the consolidation are defined benefit relief associations as defined in section 424A.001, subdivision 1b, and one or more of the volunteer firefighters relief associations involved in the consolidation are defined contribution relief associations as defined in section 424A.001, subdivision 1c.

Subd. 2. **Benefit plan.** The articles of incorporation or bylaws of the successor relief association must specify whether the relief association is a defined benefit relief association or whether the relief association is a defined contribution relief association. If the successor relief association is a defined benefit relief association, the relief association benefits must comply with sections 424A.02 and 424B.10. If the successor relief association is a defined contribution relief association, the relief association must comply with sections 424A.016 and 424B.11, subdivision 2.

Subd. 3. **Funding.** If the successor relief association is a defined benefit relief association, the relief association funding is governed by section 424B.10, subdivision 2. If the successor relief association is a defined contribution relief association, the relief association funding is governed by section 424B.11, subdivision 3.

History: 2009 c 169 art 10 s 55; 2014 c 275 art 2 s 19; 2014 c 296 art 12 s 18

424B.20 DISSOLUTION WITHOUT CONSOLIDATION.

Subdivision 1. **Applicable dissolutions.** This section applies if the fire department associated with a volunteer firefighters relief association is dissolved or eliminated by action of the governing body of the municipality in which the fire department was located or by the independent nonprofit firefighting corporation, whichever applies, and no consolidation with another volunteer firefighters relief association under sections 424B.01 to 424B.10 is sought, or if a volunteer firefighters relief association is dissolved or eliminated with municipal approval, but the fire department associated with the volunteer firefighters relief association is not dissolved or eliminated, and no consolidation with another volunteer firefighters relief association under sections 424B.01 to 424B.10 is applicable.

Subd. 2. **Procedures.** As part of the dissolution process, all legal obligations of the relief association other than service pensions and benefits must be settled under subdivision 3, a benefit trust must be established under subdivision 4, and the affairs of the relief association must be concluded under subdivision 5.

Subd. 3. **Settlement of nonbenefit legal obligations.** (a) Prior to the effective date of the dissolution of the volunteer firefighters relief association established by the relief association board of trustees, the board shall determine the following:

- (1) the fair market value of the assets of the special fund;

(2) the total amount of the accounts payable and other legal obligations of the special fund, excluding the accrued liability of the special fund for service pensions and other benefits; and

(3) the accrued liability of the special fund for service pensions and other benefits payable or accrued under the applicable bylaws of the relief association and chapter 424A.

(b) On or before the effective date of the dissolution of the volunteer firefighters relief association, the board shall liquidate sufficient special fund assets to pay the legal obligations of the special fund and must settle those legal obligations.

(c) On or before the effective date of the dissolution of the volunteer firefighters relief association, the board shall settle the legal obligations of the general fund of the relief association.

Subd. 4. Benefit trust fund establishment. (a) After the settlement of nonbenefit legal obligations of the special fund of the volunteer firefighters relief association under subdivision 3, the board of the relief association shall transfer the remaining assets of the special fund, as securities or in cash, as applicable, to the chief financial official of the municipality in which the associated fire department was located if the fire department was a municipal fire department or to the chief financial official of the municipality with the largest population served by the fire department if the fire department was an independent nonprofit firefighting corporation. If the fire department was a joint powers entity, the remaining assets of the special fund shall be transferred to the chief financial official of the municipality designated as the fiscal agent in the joint powers agreement or, if the agreement does not designate a municipality as the fiscal agent, the remaining assets of the special fund shall be transferred to the chief financial official of the municipality with the largest population served by the joint powers fire department. The board shall also compile a schedule of the relief association members to whom a service pension is or will be owed, any beneficiary to whom a benefit is owed, the amount of the service pension or benefit payable based on the applicable bylaws and state law and the service rendered to the date of the dissolution, and the date on which the pension or benefit would first be payable under the bylaws of the relief association and state law.

(b) The municipality receiving the remaining assets of the special fund of a volunteer firefighters relief association that is dissolving under this section shall establish a separate account in the municipal treasury which must function as a trust fund for members of the volunteer firefighters relief association and their beneficiaries to whom the volunteer firefighters relief association owes a service pension or other benefit under the bylaws of the relief association and state law. Upon proper application, on or after the initial date on which the service pension or benefit is payable, the municipal treasurer shall pay the pension or benefit due, based on the schedule prepared under paragraph (a) and the other records of the dissolved relief association. The trust fund under this section must be invested and managed consistent with chapter 356A and section 424A.095. Upon payment of the last service pension or benefit due and owing, any remaining assets in the trust fund cancel to the general fund of the municipality or, if the fire department was a joint powers entity, any remaining assets in the trust fund cancel to the general fund of each municipality that was a contracting party to the joint powers agreement as specified in the joint powers agreement. If the joint powers agreement does not specify how the remaining assets are to be distributed among the contracting parties, each of the contracting parties shall receive a pro rata share of the remaining assets based on the proportion of total operating contributions each contracting municipality made to the joint powers entity over the most recent ten calendar years. If the special fund of the volunteer firefighters relief association had an unfunded actuarial accrued liability upon dissolution, the municipality is liable for that unfunded actuarial accrued liability. If the fire department was a joint powers entity, the contracting municipalities are liable for their share of the unfunded actuarial accrued liability as specified in the joint powers agreement. If the joint powers agreement does not specify liability for any unfunded actuarial accrued liability, the contracting municipalities are liable for their pro rata share of the unfunded actuarial accrued liability based

on the proportion of total operating contributions each contracting municipality made to the joint powers entity over the most recent ten calendar years.

Subd. 4a. **Disposition of surplus assets upon dissolution of certain volunteer firefighters relief associations.** Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary in subdivision 4, if a volunteer firefighters relief association provides a lump-sum service pension equal to \$9,500 or more for each year of service as of June 1, 2018, upon dissolution under this section and payment of the last service pension or benefit due and owing, any remaining assets in the trust fund cancel as follows:

(1) if the municipality was required to make contributions to the relief association under chapter 424A at any time during the ten years preceding June 1, 2018, the remaining assets cancel to the general fund of the municipality; or

(2) if the municipality was not required to make contributions to the relief association under chapter 424A at any time during the ten years preceding June 1, 2018, the remaining assets cancel to the general fund of the state.

Subd. 5. **Relief association affairs wind-up.** Upon dissolution, the board of trustees of the volunteer firefighters relief association shall transfer the records of the relief association to the chief administrative officer of the applicable municipality. The board shall also notify the commissioner of revenue, the state auditor, and the secretary of state of the dissolution within 30 days of the effective date of the dissolution.

History: 2000 c 461 art 16 s 11; 2013 c 111 art 5 s 80; 2018 c 211 art 14 s 24,25

424B.21 ANNUITY PURCHASES UPON DISSOLUTION.

The board of trustees of a volunteer firefighters relief association that is scheduled for dissolution may purchase annuity contracts under section 424A.015, subdivision 3, instead of transferring special fund assets to a municipal trust fund under section 424B.20, subdivision 4. Payment of an annuity for which a contract is purchased may not commence before the retirement age specified in the relief association bylaws and in compliance with section 424A.016, subdivision 2, or 424A.02, subdivision 1. Legal title to the annuity contract transfers to the municipal trust fund under section 424B.20, subdivision 4.

History: 2000 c 461 art 16 s 12; 2009 c 169 art 10 s 56