



TOWN OF BROOKLINE **UNFUNDED LIABILITIES POLICY**

Defined as “the actuarial calculation of the value of future benefits payable less the net assets of the fund at a given balance date”, unfunded liabilities represent a significant financial obligation for all levels of government across the country. In Brookline and other Massachusetts municipalities, the two primary unfunded liabilities are for Pensions and Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB’s).

- Pensions – the Contributory Retirement System is a defined benefit program that is governed by Massachusetts General Laws, Ch. 32 and is regulated by the Public Employee Retirement Administration Commission (PERAC), a State entity responsible for the oversight, guidance, monitoring, and regulation of Massachusetts’ 105 public pension systems. Funding for this system covers the costs of employees who are part of the Town’s retirement system, which does not include teachers, as their pensions are funded by the State.

In accordance with State law, PERAC regulations and government accounting standards, the Town contracts for an actuarial valuation of the retirement system to quantify the unfunded liability on a biennial basis. Under current State law, the Town then establishes a funding schedule to fully-fund this liability by 2040. The Town shall continue to fund this liability in the most fiscally prudent manner, recognizing the fact that the adoption of a funding schedule is, by law, the responsibility of the local retirement board.

- OPEB’s – these consist primarily of the costs associated with providing health insurance for retirees and their spouses. The Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) issued Statements No. 43 and No. 45 in 2004 to address the OPEB issue. GASB 43 required the accrual of liabilities of OPEB generally over the working career of plan members rather than the recognition of pay-as-you-go contributions, while GASB 45 required the accrual of the OPEB expense over the same period of time. The reporting requirements of GASB 43 and 45 include disclosures and schedules providing actuarially determined values related to the funded status of the OPEB. This requires that the accrued liabilities be determined by a qualified actuary using acceptable actuarial methods.

While there is currently no legal requirement to fund OPEB’s, the Town shall continue to follow its plan to move toward fully-funding the Annual Required Contribution (ARC), ultimately developing a funding schedule that fully-funds OPEB’s according to a schedule similar to the pension funding schedule. This plan should continue to include annual increases in the portion of the appropriation supported by General Fund revenues. It should also include using the “run-off” from the pension system once that system is fully-funded. In order to determine the funding schedule, the Town shall continue its current practice of having an independent actuary prepare biennial valuations, which is in compliance with GASB’s requirement.