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The City of Lincoln Nebraska

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# **Police and Fire Pension System**

## **Plan A**

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Deferred Retirement Option Plan - DROP

Administered by the

City - County Human Resources Department

Lincoln, Nebraska 68508

Telephone Number (402) 441-8749

# **Police & Fire**

## **Pension Plan**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

This brochure has been prepared to assist you in understanding the provisions of the City of Lincoln Nebraska Police and Fire Pension **Deferred Retirement Option Plan**, or **DROP**, and if DROP participation might be beneficial for you. In the event the information contained in this brochure conflicts with the DROP Ordinance or federal law, the language in the DROP Ordinance and the federal law shall be the final authority.

The DROP will allow members to have their monthly retirement benefits deposited to their DROP account, earning interest, while simultaneously continuing to work (but not earning additional credit for retirement). The member would choose how to invest the money in his or her DROP account. At the end of five years, or anytime before five years, the member must "retire-in-fact." When the member retires-in-fact, his or her monthly pension benefit will be paid directly to the member (not the member's DROP account) and the member will have access to the money in his or her DROP account.

The purpose of this program is to provide a way for members to accumulate additional savings while continuing employment. Similar programs have been implemented by other state and local governments. Originally popular with Police and Fire Plans, DROPs now exist for teachers and general public employees as well.

There is no rigid structure that must be followed for DROP programs. The design of DROP programs varies greatly and they are usually crafted to meet the needs of each group of employees and their employer. A DROP program is simply another distribution option within a traditional defined benefit pension plan. It is not a separate qualified retirement plan.

The DROP became effective for Police and Fire Pension Members on October 1, 2001 following passage by the City Council and approval from the Internal Revenue Service.

DROP programs are not formally reflected in federal pension laws and regulations. As a consequence, the pension applied for a favorable determination letter to the Internal Revenue Service - to review the proposed DROP program and render an assessment as to whether the program complies with federal regulations and therefore would not adversely impact the qualified status of the pension plan.

## II. ELIGIBILITY

All Members of the Police and Fire Pension are eligible to participate in the DROP when they become eligible for normal age and service retirement. For members in Plan A, normal age and service retirement requires the member to attain both age 50 and 25 years of service. Plan A members can enter the DROP anytime after becoming eligible.

## III. DROP ENROLLMENT

Any eligible member may enroll in DROP by completing the necessary forms obtained from Pension Administration.

The member chooses a pension payment option; Straight Life, 100% Survivor or 50% Survivor, and designates a pension beneficiary if a survivorship option was chosen.

The member's pension benefit is determined at the time of DROP enrollment and will not be increased due to salary raises, promotions, increased years of service or pension enhancements.

The member designates a beneficiary(s) to receive the full amount of his or her accumulated pension contributions and interest, if the member passes away during the DROP period. The member signs an acknowledgment form stating they understand the DROP and agree to "Retire-in-fact" within the next five years. The member chooses how to invest their DROP assets and designates primary and contingent beneficiary(s) for his or her DROP account.

A member who desires to participate in DROP must complete forms at least one week prior to the member's starting date of participation in DROP.

- A. Election Form: The Member must select a DROP Entry Date, and pension payment type. If applicable, the member can designate a Pension Monthly Payment Beneficiary and Pension Contributions and Interest Beneficiary. The Member can not change his or her Pension Monthly Payment Beneficiary after monthly payments have started, but can change his or her Pension Contributions and Earnings- Beneficiary at any time.
  - Pension Monthly Payment Beneficiary: The person chosen by the member to receive survivor benefits payable from the Pension. The member has three choices regarding Pension Payment Types: Straight Life, 100% Survivor and 50% Survivor. If the member chooses the 100% survivor or 50% survivor payment type he or she must choose a Pension Monthly Payment Beneficiary. The beneficiary must be a living person with an insurable interest. After the member's death, if the Pension Monthly Payment Beneficiary is still living, they will receive survivor benefits payable from the Pension for the remainder of their lifetime.
  - Pension Contributions and Earnings Beneficiary: The Person(s) chosen by the member to receive the member's accumulated contributions and interest (as of his or her DROP entry date) if the member passes away while participating in DROP.
- B. Acknowledgement Form: Statements regarding the DROP plan are listed. By signing this form the member states he or she understands DROP and agrees to participate.
- C. DROP Account Investment Selection Form: This form lists the DROP account investment alternatives. The Member will use this form to instruct the pension regarding the initial

investment of his or her DROP deposits. The member will select the investment alternative(s) he or she wishes to use and the percentage of his or her DROP payment to be deposited into each selected investment alternative.

D. DROP Account Beneficiary Designation Form: The member can designate Primary Beneficiary(s) and Contingent Beneficiary(s) to receive his or her DROP account assets. The Member can change this designation at any time by filing a new DROP Account Beneficiary Designation Form with the Pension's administrative office.

- A designated beneficiary will receive the DROP account only if the Member dies before receiving his or her entire DROP account balance. In the event the Member fails to designate a beneficiary, the member's spouse defaults as primary beneficiary, and the member's dependent child(ren) default as contingent beneficiaries. If the Member fails to designate a beneficiary and has no spouse or dependent child(ren) at the time of his or her death, the member's estate will receive the DROP account balance remaining unpaid at the Member's death.

Pension administration changes the member's contribution rate to 0%.

A DROP account is established for the member, to hold the monthly pension benefit deposits and earned interest.

#### IV. DURING DROP PARTICIPATION

The member may change the person(s) designated as beneficiary to receive his or her accumulated pension contributions and earnings at any time during the DROP period.

The member continues actively working and receiving a check every two weeks. The member retains his or her employment rights, privileges and benefits.

The member's pension benefit is deposited into his or her DROP account on the last working day of each month. When eligible to receive a 13<sup>th</sup> Check payment, it is deposited into the member's DROP account. All pension benefits are paid into the member's account on a tax-deferred basis. Also, depending on the investment alternatives selected by the member, his or her DROP account may earn tax-deferred interest, dividends and capital gains.

The Pension Plan has applied for and received a favorable letter of determination from the IRS to ensure the DROP program will not jeopardize the tax-qualified status of the pension plan. Qualification of the plan under 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code assures that DROP participants are not subject to constructive receipt of income under the plan with respect to DROP benefits prior to actual distribution of DROP benefits accrued under the Plan. Pursuant to 401(a), DROP participants, as members of a Qualified Plan, would not be subject to constructive receipt of income prior to actual distribution.

The assets of the DROP are considered Pension assets and are therefore not taxable until the member receives them. The member self-directs how his or her DROP account is invested from a menu of mutual funds advised by D.A. Davidson. The member can change how his or her funds are invested by contacting D.A. Davidson or directly on his or her DROP account website. The recordkeeping and website for DROP accounts are done by Milliman, an actuarial and business consulting firm. The member may change the person(s) designated as primary and contingent beneficiary(s) for his or her DROP account at any time during the DROP period. The DROP assets are safekept by BroadridgeMatrix, a trust company.

There is a charge to DROP participants for these services. The combined annual fee for these services is approximately 0.5% and is reported exactly to participants on each quarterly statement. Participants invested in funds offering revenue sharing are provided a revenue sharing amount. The fee is collected quarterly, after the revenue sharing credit, if any, by selling partial shares from participant accounts pro-rata by fund balance.

A member may stop working (ie. "retire-in-fact"), or the City may terminate the member's employment in the same manner as before DROP participation.

If the member is determined to suffer a duty related death during the DROP period, the member's pension survivor beneficiary (pension beneficiary will take precedence over DROP beneficiary if they are different people) will have the choice of forfeiting the member's DROP account and accepting a duty death pension, or allowing the member's DROP account arrangement and forgoing a duty death pension.

If the member is determined to suffer a non-duty related death during the DROP period, the member's employment will cease as of the date of his or her death. The member's DROP account and pension benefits will be paid according to the member's instructions.

The member may apply for a duty related disability. If the duty disability is granted the member must forfeit his or her DROP account arrangement and accept a duty disability pension.

If the member incurs a non-duty related disability during the DROP period, the member will NOT be allowed to apply for non-duty disability pension benefits. The member's DROP account and pension benefits will be paid according to the member's prior instructions as if the member had 'retired-in-fact' on the date of his or her non-duty disability determination, or last working day.

## V. DROP EXIT ie. "RETIREMENT-IN-FACT"

The member should notify pension administration and his or her department of their intent to "retire-in-fact" two weeks prior to actual retirement.

The member exits DROP by completing the necessary forms obtained from Pension Administration. The pension payment option and amount chosen by the member at the time of DROP enrollment will continue during retirement. The member must re-designate a beneficiary to receive his or her remaining pension contributions and earnings. Please refer to the Return of Account Value section of the Description of Plan "A" Benefits brochure for details on this pension feature.

The member will be asked to complete a W-4P tax withholding form and a direct deposit form. The member will also need to decide if he or she wishes to receive his or her DROP assets upon retirement or withdraw them after retirement.

Pension administration will notify Milliman of the member's retirement, thereby allowing the member access to his or her DROP account assets.

## VI. DURING RETIREMENT

Regarding the member's pension benefit: The member's pension benefit is no longer paid into the member's DROP account. It is direct deposited into his or her bank account.

Regarding the member's DROP account : The member may choose from the following at retirement-in-fact:

- a. Receive a direct payment of their entire DROP account less applicable tax withholding.
- b. Receive a Trustee Transfer of the entire taxable portion of their DROP account to their IRA or other tax qualified account. The non-taxable portion, if any, will be distributed as a direct payment.
- c. Receive a direct payment and a Trustee Transfer totaling their entire DROP account.
- d. No action at this time. At any time following retirement-in-fact the member may use their DROP website to instruct a Trustee transfer payment (mailed to trustee), or a direct payment to themselves. The direct payments may be an adhoc payment or monthly installment payment of at least \$1000. The member may decide to receive direct payments as a check or direct deposit. Required minimum distributions must occur in the calendar a member attains age 70.5)

The member's choice must comply with Internal Revenue Code (IRC) 401 (a)(9). IRC 401 (a)(9) states a member must begin taking money out of a tax deferred retirement account, like an IRA or a DROP, by April 1st of the year following the calendar year in which the member attains age 70 ½ unless the member is still working. If the member is still working and participating in a qualified plan he or she may postpone withdrawals until terminating employment.

Trustee transfers must be paid directly to the custodian of an eligible retirement plan as defined in the Internal Revenue Code. Eligible retirement plans include an individual retirement account (IRA), or other tax qualified account such as a 457 deferred comp account, an individual retirement annuity, a qualified trust; or an annuity plan. If the member passes away, his or her DROP beneficiary will only be eligible to rollover DROP benefits into an individual retirement account or an individual retirement annuity.

If the member authorizes a Trustee transfer to an IRA or qualified retirement plan, there will be no immediate recognition of income for purposes of taxation. The member would pay taxes on these funds only as funds are received from his or her IRA or qualified retirement plan.

However, in the event that the member does not choose a Trustee transfer ,of any portion of his or her DROP account that is an eligible rollover distribution, the payment is taxed in the year the member receives it.

This is our understanding of the current tax issues. We may not be correct. Keep in mind the **tax laws can change**, and they are complex. We **recommend and encourage** you to seek the advice of a tax professional to determine what is best for you and how you will be impacted.

## VII. ADDITIONAL DROP CONSIDERATIONS

### HOW COULD A DIVORCE AFFECT A MEMBER'S DROP ACCOUNT?

DROP assets, like other forms of pension benefits, are considered marital property subject to division in a divorce proceeding. As plan assets, DROP assets are not subject to distribution until a member terminates employment with the City. A court can determine that upon distribution, a certain percentage of the DROP assets be awarded to a former spouse in the same manner as other retirement payments.

A Qualified Domestic Relations Order (QDRO) is a court order issued pursuant to divorce proceedings. A QDRO relates to the provision of child support, alimony payments, or marital property rights to a spouse, child, or other dependent of a member. Governmental plans, like the Police and Fire Pension, are not subject to QDROs. However, the pension plan will try to accommodate the provisions of a QDRO. When constructing a QDRO member's are advised to work with pension administration regarding DROP and pension assets. Divorce laws can be quite complex. Therefore, you may wish to speak to legal counsel to discuss your personal circumstances.

### WHEN SHOULD I ENTER THE DROP?

This is a very personal decision. No one knows better than you when to begin taking retirement benefits. In other words, before entering the DROP, some careful financial planning is in order.

If the Plan benefits change after you DROP, those benefits will not be available to you. If you get a raise or a promotion after you enter the DROP, that salary increase will not count toward your pension. Once you DROP, you are retired under the Pension Plan. Your benefits are fixed and will not change.

### WHAT ARE SOME ADVANTAGES OF DROPS?

A DROP program can be very advantageous to a member who is interested in assembling a nest egg for themselves and their family and providing a jump-start into retirement. This nest egg can offer the member the ability to start a business, purchase a home, travel, etc., upon retirement.

The DROP program allows the member to select an option that would effectively accelerate a portion of the retirement benefits that would otherwise have been received over an extended period of time. If the member has reason to believe that his or her life expectancy will be less than average, the DROP could be viewed as a practical response to this outlook.

Other advantages are:

- Receive pay from active employment and pension at the same time.
- Self directed asset account(s).
- Lump sum distribution.
- Tax deferred earnings.
- Retention of all employment rights, privileges and benefits during DROP period.

## WHAT ARE SOME DISADVANTAGES OF DROPS?

One disadvantage of participating in a DROP plan is that the amount of monthly pension a member receives will be lower than the amount the member would receive under a normal retirement calculation performed at the time of actual retirement.

Another disadvantage is that the decision to enter the DROP is irrevocable. A member could change their mind about actual retirement, but once they have entered the DROP, they are not allowed to reverse the decision to retire. A DROP member experiencing the birth of a child, a new marriage, divorce, or other significant life event, has no choice but to retire at the end of the DROP period.

## ARE ESTIMATES OF DROP ACCOUNT BALANCES AVAILABLE?

Yes. A member who desires additional financial information concerning DROP may:

- Request a non-binding written estimate of his or her regular age and service pension benefit based on estimated years of service and compensation as of the proposed DROP participation date and a non-binding written estimate(s) of his or her DROP account. For the DROP account estimate the member may choose a hypothetical interest rate and DROP duration less than or equal to five years. The non-binding written estimates will be mailed to the member's residence.
- Schedule an appointment with the Pension's administrative office to discuss DROP, during which the non-binding written estimates described above can be reviewed.
- Schedule an appointment with a representative of D.A. Davidson to discuss DROP and investing. If the member wants to discuss any individualized figures, such as those produced in the non-binding estimates, the member will need to bring such data to the appointment.