

# Legislation jump-starts a prosecutor's pension

## Union's Romankow receives timely help

BY DUNSTAN McNICHOL  
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

For 22 years, Westfield lawyer Theodore Romankow built up credits in the state retirement system from various part-time legal jobs. But the pension he qualified for wasn't much — a little more than \$1,000 a year.

That was two years ago.

Thanks to some timely help from two Union County lawmakers, Romankow, 63, will become eligible for an annual pension of \$91,500 next year.

Three things helped the Berkeley Heights Democrat's pension skyrocket:

■ Gov. James E. McGreevey

appointed him Union County prosecutor in 2002 with a \$141,000 yearly salary.

■ Ex-Sen. Joseph Suliga (D-Union) and Assemblyman Neil Cohen (D-Union) ushered through legislation that same year that allowed Romankow to qualify for a more lucrative pension plan.

■ Seven years of prior part-time employment with Cohen helped Romankow build up pension credits that will soon qualify him for additional benefits under the bill.

His abrupt change of fortune provides a dramatic illustration of the way the retirement system set

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2002 STAR-LEDGER FILE PHOTO

Romankow qualified for a little more than \$1,000 a year in the old system from various part-time legal jobs over 22 years, named Union County prosecutor in 2002. Next year, he will be eligible for an annual pension of \$91,500.

tried to limit it as much as I could," Suliga said. "He's going to leave private practice, give up private practice and become a prosecutor."

Romankow has long been in-

**"I looked at (Romankow's) situation and said, this doesn't make sense. I tried to limit it as much as I could. He's going to leave private practice, give up private practice and become a prosecutor."**

FORMER SEN. JOSEPH SULIGA  
(D-Union)

involved in Berkeley Heights politics and was a committeeman there in the 1980s. He has served as legal counsel for the Union County Utilities Authority and has performed legal work for Linden city government. In the early 1990s, he successfully represented Linden Mayor John Gregorio, who waged a legal battle to return to the political arena after being indicted, convicted and then pardoned on conspiracy charges stemming from his

st in two Linden go-

The growth of Romankow's public pension has its roots in a piece of legislation adopted in early 2002, which set up special retirement benefits for prosecutors.

Romankow, who was not appointed prosecutor until July 2002, missed by seven months the deadline the law set for being approved for those added benefits. Instead, he would have had to be content with a standard state employee's benefit package, worth tens of thousands less each year.

But in September 2002, Suliga introduced legislation that abolished the earlier deadline and cleared the way for Romankow and six other new appointees to enter the more lucrative retirement plan. Romankow was the clear winner in that group.

The bill passed in the summer of 2003, while lawmakers were considering the state budget. What Suliga's bill did was to allow Romankow to transfer the state pension credits he earned from his part-time work into the more lucrative pension system lawmakers had set up for county prosecutors and about 1,000 other law enforcement officers in the Attorney General's Office and county courthouse.

Under the new pension schedule, prosecutors who reach age 55, as Romankow had when the

bill was adopted, can retire and collect a pension worth at least one-half their final year's pay.

That means that as of last June, Romankow's pension had already jumped to a value of \$70,500 a year. Without Suliga's bill, his pension would have been worth only \$20,000 at the time.

The pension jumps to 65 percent if a prosecutor has put in 25 years of service. A standard state employee who works 25 years is entitled to a pension of 45.5 percent of their final pay.

Thanks to the years of part-time employment in Cohen's office, Romankow will reach the 25-year mark early next year. When he does, the value of his retirement package will jump by another \$21,150 a year.

Every additional year he remains in the prosecutor's job, Romankow's pension will grow to the tune of about \$1,400 per year.

Lawmakers are now considering other bills that would extend the elevated retirement benefits prosecutors now enjoy to at least two other groups of public employees — weights and measures officers and forensic scientists.

Dunstan McNichol covers state government issues. He may be reached at [dmcnichol@starledger.com](mailto:dmcnichol@starledger.com) or (609) 989-0341.

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# UNION COUNTY IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY

## MINUTES

Wednesday, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008

4:00 PM

Call to Order was made by Chairman Anthony Scutari at 4:01 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance was lead by Chairman Scutari.

The Notice of Compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act was read by Executive Director Charlotte DeFilippo.

Chairman Scutari asked for roll call. Roll call showed Chairman Tony Scutari, Vice Chairman Joseph Miskiewicz, Secretary John Salerno, Treasurer Cherron Rountree, Commissioner Sebastian D'Elia, and Commissioner Vollero in the affirmative. Commissioner Walter Boright Commissioner Samuel McGhee, and Commissioner Linda Hines were absent.

Chairman Scutari asked for a motion for approval of Minutes for the February 28, 2008 meeting. On a motion made by Vice Chairman Miskiewicz and seconded by Commissioner Vollero. Roll call showed Chairman Tony Scutari, Vice Chairman Joseph Miskiewicz, Secretary John Salerno, Treasurer Cherron Rountree, Commissioner Sebastian D'Elia, and Commissioner Vollero in the affirmative. Commissioner Walter Boright Commissioner Samuel McGhee, and Commissioner Linda Hines were absent.

## RESOLUTIONS

### RESO 57-2008

**RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY CONCERNING REVIEW OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LOCAL FINANCE BOARD MADE AT A MEETING OF SAID BOARD ON DECEMBER 12, 2007 IN ACCORDANCE WITH N.J.S.A. 40A:5A-7 IN CONNECTION WITH THE AFRICAN AMERICAN FUND OF NEW JERSEY -- PLAINFIELD PROJECT**

Chairman Scutari asked for a motion for approval of Resolution 57-2008. On a motion made by Vice Chairman Miskiewicz and seconded by Commissioner Vollero. Roll call showed Chairman Tony Scutari, Vice Chairman Joseph Miskiewicz, Secretary John Salerno, Treasurer Cherron Rountree, Commissioner Sebastian D'Elia, and Commissioner Vollero in the affirmative. Commissioner Walter Boright Commissioner Samuel McGhee, and Commissioner Linda Hines were absent.

#### **RESO 58-2008**

#### **RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY APPROVING CONSTRUCTION CHANGE ORDERS 122 THROUGH 130 TO THE CONTRACT WITH TERMINAL CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION FOR CONSTRUCTION SERVICES IN CONNECTION WITH THE UNION COUNTY COLLEGE ELIZABETH CAMPUS EXPANSION PROJECT**

Chairman Scutari asked for a motion for approval of Resolution 58-2008. On a motion made by Vice Chairman Miskiewicz and seconded by Commissioner Vollero. Roll call showed Chairman Tony Scutari, Vice Chairman Joseph Miskiewicz, Secretary John Salerno, Treasurer Cherron Rountree, Commissioner Sebastian D'Elia, and Commissioner Vollero in the affirmative. Commissioner Walter Boright Commissioner Samuel McGhee, and Commissioner Linda Hines were absent.

#### **RESO 59-2008**

#### **RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY AUTHORIZING AN AMENDMENT TO THE AGREEMENT WITH JOSEPH JINGOLI & SON, INC FOR CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT SERVICES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER**

Chairman Scutari asked for a motion for approval of Resolution 59-2008. On a motion made by Vice Chairman Miskiewicz and seconded by Commissioner Vollero. Roll call showed Chairman Tony Scutari, Vice Chairman Joseph Miskiewicz, Secretary John Salerno, Treasurer Cherron Rountree, Commissioner Sebastian D'Elia, and Commissioner Vollero in the affirmative. Commissioner Walter Boright Commissioner Samuel McGhee, and Commissioner Linda Hines were absent.

#### **RESO 59A-2008**

#### **RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE UNION COUNTY IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Vice Chairman Miskiewicz made a motion to go into Executive Session, at 4:30 p.m. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Vollero. Roll call showed Chairman Tony Scutari, Vice Chairman Joseph Miskiewicz, Secretary John Salerno, Treasurer Cherron

Rountree, Commissioner Sebastian D'Elia, and Commissioner Vollero in the affirmative. Commissioner Walter Boright Commissioner Samuel McGhee, and Commissioner Linda Hines were absent.

Vice Chairman Miskiewicz asked for a motion to return from Executive Session at 4:45 p.m. and was seconded by Commissioner Vollero. Roll call showed Chairman Tony Scutari, Vice Chairman Joseph Miskiewicz, Secretary John Salerno, Treasurer Cherron Rountree, Commissioner Sebastian D'Elia, and Commissioner Vollero in the affirmative. Commissioner Walter Boright Commissioner Samuel McGhee, and Commissioner Linda Hines were absent.

#### **RESO 60-2008**

**RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY  
RECOGNIZING CONDITIONS OF DEFAULT OF THE OBLIGATIONS OF  
MORNING STAR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT URBAN RENEWAL  
CORPORATION, INC., AS THE REDEVELOPER, WITH RESPECT TO THE  
ST. GEORGES AVENUE-PHASE II REDEVELOPMENT AREA, PURSUANT  
TO THE TERMS OF A REDEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT, WITH THE  
AUTHORITY AND THE CITY OF LINDEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH  
PROVISIONS OF THE LOCAL REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING LAW  
(N.J.S.A. 40A:12A-1 ET SEQ.)**

Chairman Scutari asked for a motion for approval of Resolution 60-2008. On a motion made by Vice Chairman Miskiewicz and seconded by Commissioner Vollero. Roll call showed Chairman Tony Scutari, Vice Chairman Joseph Miskiewicz, Secretary John Salerno, Treasurer Cherron Rountree, Commissioner Sebastian D'Elia, and Commissioner Vollero in the affirmative. Commissioner Walter Boright Commissioner Samuel McGhee, and Commissioner Linda Hines were absent.

#### **RESO 61-2008**

**RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY  
AUTHORIZING AND AFFIRMING THE TERMINATION OF THE  
REDEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT BY AND BETWEEN THE VERGE  
PROPERTIES URBAN RENEWAL, LLC, THE CITY OF LINDEN AND THE  
AUTHORITY, DATED AUGUST 15, 2003 FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF  
PROPERTIES LOCATED IN CONNECTION WITH THE SOUTH WOOD  
AVENUE REDEVELOPMENT AREA, LINDEN, NEW JERSEY**

Chairman Scutari asked for a motion for approval of Resolution 61-2008. On a motion made by Vice Chairman Miskiewicz and seconded by Commissioner Vollero. Roll call showed Chairman Tony Scutari, Vice Chairman Joseph Miskiewicz, Secretary John Salerno, Treasurer Cherron Rountree, Commissioner Sebastian D'Elia, and Commissioner

Vollero in the affirmative. Commissioner Walter Boright Commissioner Samuel McGhee, and Commissioner Linda Hines were absent.

### **RESO 62-2008**

#### **RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY APPOINTING PAMI LA BRODOWSKI TO PERFORM APPRAISAL SERVICES IN CONNECTION WITH THE OAKWOOD PLAZA APARTMENTS PROJECT**

Chairman Scutari asked for a motion for approval of Resolution 62-2008. On a motion made by Vice Chairman Miskiewicz and seconded by Commissioner Vollero. Roll call showed Chairman Tony Scutari, Vice Chairman Joseph Miskiewicz, Secretary John Salerno, Treasurer Cherron Rountree, Commissioner Sebastian D'Elia, and Commissioner Vollero in the affirmative. Commissioner Walter Boright Commissioner Samuel McGhee, and Commissioner Linda Hines were absent.

### **Finance and Budget**

Treasurer Rountree made a motion to pay bills appearing on the Finance and Budget Bill Pay List when funds were available to do so, the motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Miskiewicz. Roll call showed Chairman Tony Scutari, Vice Chairman Joseph Miskiewicz, Secretary John Salerno, Treasurer Cherron Rountree, Commissioner Sebastian D'Elia, and Commissioner Vollero in the affirmative. Commissioner Walter Boright Commissioner Samuel McGhee, and Commissioner Linda Hines were absent.

### **New Business**

Executive Director commented on new business asking the Board if they will be attending the League of Municipalities Conference in Atlantic City, NJ on November 18-21, 2008.

### **Adjournment**

Vice Chairman Miskiewicz made a motion adjourn, at 5:15 p.m., the motion was seconded Commissioner Vollero. Roll call showed Chairman Tony Scutari, Vice Chairman Joseph Miskiewicz, Secretary John Salerno, Treasurer Cherron Rountree, Commissioner Sebastian D'Elia, and Commissioner Vollero in the affirmative. Commissioner Walter Boright Commissioner Samuel McGhee, and Commissioner Linda Hines were absent.

**\* Matter to be considered and discussed in executive session as permitted by the exceptions to the Open Public Meetings Act as follows: Contract (C), Litigation (L), Personnel (P).**