

**CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA**



Agenda Date:	March 17, 2025
Action Required:	Adopt Amendments to Chapter 19 of the City Code Regarding Public Safety Disability Eligibility
Presenter:	Jason Vandever, City Treasurer
Staff Contacts:	Lisa Burch, Retirement Administrator
Title:	<b>Ordinance Amending and Reordaining Sections 19-91 and 19-94 of Article IV of Chapter 19 of the City Code Regarding Public Safety Disability Eligibility (1 of 2 readings)</b>

**Background**

The City of Charlottesville, Virginia ("City"), offers all employees the choice between a Defined Benefit Pension Plan and a Defined Contribution 401(a) Retirement Plan. As part of the Plan provisions, there is a special disability retirement benefit for public safety employees who meet the definition of disability set forth in the City Code, and can no longer perform their duties as a public safety officer. The City Code defines a "public safety officer" as a "police officer, firefighter, sheriff or sheriff's deputy, or EMS employee." The benefit payment is based on the employee's salary at the time they become disabled and is funded and paid from the City's Pension Plan assets. The contribution rate for these benefits is determined by the Plan's actuary.

**Discussion**

When the City added the Defined Contribution 401(a) Plan in 2001 as a retirement option, it was not made abundantly clear in the City Code that public safety employees participating in the Defined Contribution Plan also had access to disability retirement benefits, since benefits are paid from the Pension Plan. These City Code Amendments state explicitly that all public safety employees are eligible for disability retirement if they meet the stated qualifications, and the Amendments lay out the mechanics of moving a Defined Contribution public safety employee into the Defined Benefit Pension Plan to administer the Disability Retirement Benefit. This will put employees in both Plans on equal footing with the knowledge that , if they were injured in the line of duty and could no longer work, they would still qualify for public safety disability retirement.

**Alignment with City Council's Vision and Strategic Plan**

This change aligns with City Council's stated Strategic Outcome areas of Organizational Excellence and Public Safety.

**Community Engagement**

This proposed Amendment has been reviewed and recommended by the City's Retirement Commission.

### **Budgetary Impact**

The vast majority (over ninety percent (90%)) of public safety employees are in the Defined Benefit Plan and a contribution is already made by the City to fund anticipated disability claims. Adding eligibility for Defined Contribution Plan members will have a very minimal budgetary impact, because so few employees will be impacted by the change.

### **Recommendation**

Approval of the Amendment.

### **Alternatives**

City Council could elect to reject the Amendment, but that would mean that certain public safety employees would not be eligible for disability retirement. This would cause an inequity between the employees in each Plan, lower morale, and create an operational hardship in those Departments.

### **Attachments**

1. Redline - City of Charlottesville 2024 Ordinance - TP edits-305289491-v6 and City of Charlottesville 2024 Ordinance - 128 edit