

SERREAM

Newsletter

Winter 2017

President's Message: Kay Morcomb

Starting a new school year was always a busy time. That has not changed in retirement. Activities that took a break in the summer start up again. For RARE, our local unit, monthly meetings with a meal and speaker begin, although we did have a social potluck meeting in August.

September 25 and 26 the annual conference of REAM was held at Grand Casino Hinckley. Seeing a negative side to gambling I have not attended meetings in a casino before. I must admit that while the less expensive hotel and meals suits me, this also was a pleasant place to meet. We had a spacious smoke-free meeting area away from the gambling. Passing the gambling area was necessary, but scooting by the corner was easy. Our hotel room was quiet clean and pleasant. Meals were good and quickly served. Having everything under one roof is convenient. Our SERREAM Educator Award winners, Keith Burmeister and Donna Crowl were also REAM Educator Award winners along with Paul Ehrhard and May Bottke. Receiving the John Moriarity Government Involvement Award were Robert Powell and John Bellingham. John Bellingham, chair of the Minnesota Board of Teaching, spoke at our 2016 SERREAM fall conference. His passion for maintaining high teaching standards as we face a crisis in finding teachers impressed me. This was the first year of a shortened conference. Meetings were interesting and our leaders were well prepared so all business could be accomplished in the shortened time. The evening music entertainment was enjoyable. One less hotel night and a couple meals also saves money. (Some may think me cheap, I say frugal.) The 2018 REAM conference will be held September 24 & 25 at Jackpot Junction near Morton. Now my expectations are higher. Let's all put these dates on our calendar and check it out.

Keeping up the busy schedule SERREAM's Fall Legislative and Health Conference was October 11th at the Rochester International Event Center. Another jam packed day of interesting speakers. The best laid planswell you know. I came with projector and laptop for the speakers but for reasons unknown my equipment was not compatible with theirs. Thanks to the flexibility of everyone, attendees, speakers, and fellow board members we managed to juggle the order of the schedule and not miss any of the interesting and informative presentations.

It is Waseca's turn to host the SERREAM Spring Conference and Annual Meeting. The Rochester International Event Center is so accomodating and convenient that Waseca has planned a conference to be held there. See agenda and registration in the next newsletter.

Save this date

Wednesday, April 18, 2018

SERREAM Spring Conference and Annual Meeting

**Hosted by Waseca at the Rochester International Event Center
(near the airport)**

SERIAM EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING November 15, 2017

President Kay Morcomb called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM. Present were Ben and Sharon Baratto, Steve Jensen, Keith Larson, Don Leathers, Carol Lozon, Ed Mikulich, Kay Morcomb, Lyle Olson, Phoebe Praxi, Sylvia Swede, Edna Thayer, and Don Zwach.

Secretary's Report: (Sylvia Swede) Minutes were approved as printed.

Treasurer's Report: (Sharon Baratto) Our total assets are \$7738.24. From that we will need to pay stipends and the cost of newsletters.

President's Report: (Kay Morcomb) Kay commended REAM for a very clear TRA proposal. There are many good talking points for members to use as they speak to legislators.

Committee Reports:

a. Membership (Ben Baratto) There are 703 members.

b. Legislative (Don Leathers) The legislature may not act on any pension proposals till 2019. The next election will help us or harm us depending on who becomes governor and what the composition of the legislature is. It is extremely important that members speak to their legislators and that they vote for candidates who will be favorable regarding pensions.

c. Health (Don Leathers) Watch for "Ways to Keep Your Sanity"

d. Newsletter (Kay Morcomb) Newsletter articles are due November 22 for December 13 publishing.

e. Educator Awards (Edna Thayer) Nominations are due by the end of January.

f. REAM (Don Zwach) The REAM report to TRA should be made available to all members. Members are encouraged to take advantage of the Minnesota Political Contribution Refund Program. 110 attended the REAM conference in September. The next two day convention will be held next September at Jackpot Junction, Morton. The website is being worked on, so it is more current and friendly. There is also work on an email tree to keep members informed. An outreach committee will give presentations on legislation to any local who requests this service.

New Business:

a. Feedback on October 11 SERIAM conference. There were many excellent comments on the program.

b. Spring 2018 conference. Waseca is the host unit. Don Zwach presented a proposed plan for the April 18, 2018 conference at the Rochester International Event Center. There will be presentations on environmental challenges and special interest groups against public employee pensions and public education included. One more speaker needs to be selected. It was moved, seconded and carried to provide \$300 downpayment for this meeting.

c. A president-elect is needed by the April annual meeting.

Announcements:

The next board meeting is Wednesday, February 21, 2018 at 8:45 AM.

A planning meeting for the fall conference is March 28, 2018 also at The Homestead.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 AM.

SERIAM Legislative Article Winter 2017

---Don Leathers
SERIAM Legislative Chair

As is typical for this time of year, with the legislature not in session, not much has happened concerning PERA and TRA pensions. The Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement [LCPR] has met once, but no additional meetings are on the radar for 2017. The TRA Board convened on Wednesday, November 15, but little progress was made on crafting a pension package for the 2018 session. They will be meeting again in December and January.

One item that could cripple any legislation next year is the impasse between Governor Dayton and legislative Republicans over vetoes he made to their budget bills. Accusations are flying wildly between each side, both of whom are partially correct in their position. However, if the issue isn't resolved before February 26, it could have serious ramifications for the legislative process going forward and for the well-being of the state and all Minnesotans. As Senate Minority Leader Tom Bakk stated, if the situation isn't resolved, 2018 will be the biggest "do-nothing session" in state history.

On a positive note, over the past several months members of the REAM Executive and Legislative Committees have been working diligently to draft a pension proposal to be considered by the TRA Board as they craft their 2018 pension package. The two-page document is well written and contains four bulletpoints for TRA Board consideration. Further, it provides rationale for each proposal and summarizes the document with a strong conclusion. Readers can access the proposal on the REAM website. What follows is a thumbnail overview of the committee's points of emphasis.

Cost of living adjustments: COLAs should be reduced to from 2% to 1% on a temporary basis. They would be adjusted upward as indicated by data from an Experience Study conducted within three years.

Legislative Report Cont:

Assumption Rate (% at which funds are expected to grow): current rate is 8.5%. REAM proposes a 7.5% rate going forward, which is close to the national average. The rate would be adjusted upward or downward based on Experience Study data which occurs, again, every three years.

Contributions to the TRA Fund: currently, active teachers contribute 7.5% of pay to the fund, the same percentage as school districts. REAM proposes no change to those rates, but would like the state to return to the past practice of making direct payment of employer (school district) dollars to TRA. This shift would make sound financial sense and would help to insure that TRA's fund balance remains strong.

Pensionomics 101: REAM's position continues to be that public pensions are good for Minnesota's economic well-being. Further, strong public pensions help to keep that state's bond rating at AAA. Finally, a well-funded defined-benefit (db) pension attracts new teachers, encourages active teachers to stay in the profession and allows retirees to live their later years with security and in dignity.

The chance of something positive and impactful happening to our pensions during the 2018 legislative session is doubtful. If the legislature couldn't act on pensions last session with a 1.6 billion dollar surplus, what will their appetite for pension reform be in a non-budgetary year? We can only hope for *some* movement.

As SEREAM members, I believe our best strategy is to focus on the House and Governor races in the 2018 election. We can do our part by staying informed about pension issues, accessing the TRA and REAM websites for pertinent data and asking candidates in our districts tough questions about their position on public pensions. Please stay involved as the election season approaches and, most importantly, vote for pro-pension candidates.

Health Report

SERREAM December 2017

... Don Leathers

Who is the elephant in the room these days? Who is driving progressives and 70% of the electorate crazy? Who has orange hair, Tweets constantly and believes that Russia is really cool? I think you know who I am talking about, but I will clarify: Donald J Trump (affectionately? known by me as Donnie J).

In my research about the President, I have encountered several sources who advise Americans how to stay sane in such a presidency. What follows is a primer on how to keep your wits over the next three years.

1. Watch out for the verbiage. Dana Milbank of the Washington Post recently posted an op-ed piece that claimed Trump and his team have used the word “historic” over 400 hundred times in the past 10 months, as in “We have historic negotiations with China.” Sure. Not historic, hysteric.

2. On his Twitter account, Trump has gone after Jeff Flake, John McCain, Mitch McConnell, Bob Corker and Hillary Clinton. His tweets have been misguided. To stay sane, ignore them.

3. On filing his tax returns. He made no money. Be vigilant.

4. His philandering. No problem, it was “lockerroom talk.” Nail him to the wall.

5. On tax reform (cuts), they will greatly benefit the working (upper) class and corporations. No worry, Trump will not be taxed more. Take a sleeping pill and wake up next week.

You can't make these things up and it should be a time when Americans unite in a common cause to abort things that are serving to destroy the democratic process.

6. What say you?

MEMORIALS:

Roberta Hoffart Bailey, Rochester, MN
From Carl & Rosemary Most

Paul D Styve, Rochester, MN
From Carl & Rosemary Most

SERREAM Educator Award

Now is the time to consider nominating an outstanding member of SERREAM for unusual services to this organization and to people in his/her community.

Many members are deserving of such recognition and the committee would appreciate your nominations by January 31.

Criteria for the SERREAM Educator Award:

1. Personal endeavors as a school educator, including administrative, teaching, secretarial, maintenance, or other support service.
2. Promotion of the causes of education within the community.
3. Services to schools and community as a volunteer..
4. Service to retired educator groups at the local, SERREAM, and/or REAM level.

Specifics you might want to include in the resume are:

1. Name, address, education (place, dates, degree/major)
2. Teaching or school related places, level of work, years.
3. Experience other than school related.
4. Date retired.
5. Honors received. Organizations, offices held, etc.
6. Volunteer work (Church, community, etc.) Be specific.
7. Service to the retired educator groups at the local, SERREAM, and/or REAM levels.

The committee members are Nancy Reynolds from Winona, Jeanette Bergler from Rochester, and Edna Thayer from Faribault.

Please mail your nominations to the chairperson,

Edna Thayer
7 Roots Beach Lane
Elysian, MN 56028

or e-mail to Edna at ednathayer@gmail.com.

Phone, 507-267-4588, if you have any questions.

Reminder, the due date is January 31, 2018.

“Get Busy!” “What to Write?” the words ring in my head as I read the Rochester Post Bulletin while procrastinating on the task of composing a message for the newsletter. Suddenly I was struck by a cartoon showing two work cubicles. One work area had two baskets with neatly stacked papers on a desk, three framed pictures on a mostly blank wall, two closed filing cabinets and nothing on the cabinets or the floor. A well-shorn man in a shirt and tie sat in front of the computer with his arms resting on the chair with a task-completed look.

In the next cubicle a man with a wild pony-tail and beard wearing a baggy top is leaning over a graphic design table busily working on a paper. A light hangs over his work. The floor is covered with crunched papers, overlapping notes cover the wall. An up-side-down wooden crate beside him serves as a resting place for a stuffed penholder and a coffee cup.

From the neat cubicle the man says, “Just a reminder...Deadline is coming up soon.” Response from the other cubicle is “Shut Up..”

A caption below says: How the Left and Right Brain Communicate.

SERREAM Membership Form

Complete this form and mail with \$10.00 per person to:
Ben Baratto, 779 Bluffview Circle, Winona, MN 55987

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail: _____

Phone: _____

Make checks payable to SERREAM.

Membership year: September 1, 2017–August 31, 2018

SOUTHEAST RETIRED
EDUCATORS ASSOC. OF MN
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Winona, MN 55987

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