

SERREAM

Newsletter

Spring 2018

President's Message: Kay Morcomb

Important Conference – April 18th

Clean water, essential for **all** life, is a precious resource. Pollutants, many and varied, present an often non-visible danger. At the conference John Barten, a Director of Natural Resources will address the topic of protecting our water resources.

Many of us can remember our first salary. What if it had never increased. Unthinkable! What if our pensions never increase. Better think about it! Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) are not guaranteed and even our Defined Benefit retirement system is threatened. Curt Hutchens past REAM and TRA President will reveal anti-pension groups. The people trying to take away our money have far more money than we do. Be informed and be involved.

These are only two of the speakers for the conference. REAM and TRA leaders will give pension fund and legislative updates. See the full agenda on page 6 and the registration form on page 7.

Bare Facts

The cost of renting The Rochester International Center is the same whether attendance is great or small. More attendees is less cost per person. Invite other educators. SERREAM membership is not necessary. Moreover, the SERREAM board hopes that non-members find the information we offer is of importance and that they will join us in efforts to protect our pension system for us, for future generations of educators and for the state of Minnesota.

Present board members and their area units:

Ben & Sharon Baratto and Gayle Goetzman, Winona
Steve Jenson, Owatonna
Keith Larson, Lyle Olson, and Edna Thayer, Faribault
Kathryn Lastine, Lake City
Don Leathers, Austin
Carol Lozon, Kenyon – Wanamingo
Ed Mikulich, Albert Lea
Kay Morcomb and Sylvia Swede, Rochester
Don Zwach and Phoebe Praxl, Waseca

SERREAM members are welcome to attend board meetings. The board is meeting Wednesday, March 28th to plan our Fall Conference and Wednesday, May 16th for a regular meeting. Contact your board representative for details.

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)**

SERAM EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING MINUTES

February 21, 2018

President Kay Morcomb called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM. Present were Ben and Sharon Baratto, Kay Lastine, Ed Mikulich, Kay Morcomb, Sylvia Swede, Edna Thayer, and Gayle Goetzman. A mileage sheet and breakfast envelope were passed around.

Secretary's Report: (Sylvia Swede) The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as printed.

Treasurer's Report: (Sharon Baratto) Our total assets are \$11,320. 73. It was moved, seconded, and carried that we recommend that dues remain the same for the next year (\$10).

Committee Reports:

a. Membership (Ben Baratto) We presently have 652 members. More than 100 were taken off the membership rolls for non-payment of dues. Sharon Baratto will send a list of names to the units so there can be personal contact re membership.

b. Newsletter Articles for the next newsletter are due to Kay Morcomb (kmor.nkamp2@gmail.com) by Feb. 28. The newsletter will be published by March 21.

c. Educator Awards (Edna Thayer) Kay Morcomb will be the recipient of the award this year.

d. Pensions Don Zwach emailed some important information re pensions. The current defined benefit system is under attack by well-funded outside organizations bankrolled by certain well-to-do individuals who made their fortunes in the investments business and want access to the \$64 million protected investment funds in the Minnesota pension fund by converting the defined benefit plan to an individually managed private 401 K type system. Switching to a 401 K type system would cost the state \$3 billion. The 2018 election will be critical to the sustainability of our pensions. The Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement (LCPR) heard testimony on a state public pension stress-testing analysis from researchers at the Pew Charitable Trusts. This project has received funding from the anti-pension Laura and John Arnold Foundation. LCPR chair Sen. Julie Rosen has laid out a timeline for upcoming meetings, Feb. 27-March 20.

Continuing Business

a. Spring Conference Plans Waseca is hosting the SERAM Spring Conference at the Rochester International Event Center on Wednesday, April 18. Registration forms will be in the March newsletter.

b. Leadership Needs We need a president-elect.

Announcements

There will be a meeting at Homestead at 8:45 AM on March 28 to plan the fall conference. The next board meeting is May 16 at Homestead.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 AM.

Sylvia Swede, secretary

SERAM Legislative Report Spring 2018

---Don Leathers
SERAM Legislative Chair

The 2018 Minnesota Legislative Session has begun in St. Paul. The Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement [LCPR] has conducted a few committee meetings leading up to the convening of this year's session. It will be a shortened version and, since it is a bonding and not a funding year, addressing pension issues will probably be non-monetary in nature. Already the commission has listened to a handful of experts in the field of taking the defined-benefit pension we currently enjoy and converting into a defined-contribution pension, much like a 401-k, for new hires. The appetite for the conversion is strong at the Capitol and gaining momentum. One redeeming aspect of the topic is that the cost of conversion is staggering: over \$3 billion. That is reassuring but remember that last session a \$1.6 billion surplus evaporated by session's end.

In preparation for the 2018 session, the Retired Educators Association of Minnesota [REAM] assigned its Executive Board and Legislative Committee the task of preparing a position paper to the TRA Board outlining its position on pensions in the 2018 session. What follows is a brief overview of the Executive Board's document:

Position: COLA reduction to 1% on a temporary basis, to be raised after conducting a thorough Experience Study within 3 years. Returning to a 2% COLA is the expectation of REAM's membership.

Position: Interest rate assumption. Currently set at 8.5%, REAM proposes lowering the rate to 7.5%. The lower rate would be temporary, inching upward after the Experience Study mentioned above.

Position: REAM proposes that the employee and employer contribution rates should remain at 7.5%. Another proposal would involve returning to the past practice of contributing its **Annual Required Contribution [ARC]/Actuarially Determined Contribution [ADC]**. Also, REAM would further expect that these payments are made directly from the state to TRA.

Position: Regarding Pensionomics, Pension Contributions to Our State Economy

+REAM believes that pensions are good for Minnesota's economic well-being.

+REAM believes that well-funded public pensions help to keep our bond ratings at AAA.

+REAM believes that a well-funded, defined-benefit pension will aid in recruiting and retaining qualified educators.

+REAM believes that a thriving, secure defined-benefit pension allows retirees to live their lives with income security and, further, to live their retirement with dignity.

Legislative Report Cont:

Finally, REAM writes in its position letter that educators and retirees have worked hard to sustain our pensions. Further, they have made sacrifices to fund the defined-benefit pension we currently enjoy. The state treasury is thriving, and REAM steadfastly will work toward a greater commitment at the Capitol to see increased funding for Minnesota's public pensions.

You can read the entire REAM position letter on the organization's website.

SERREAM Health Report Spring 2018

---Don Leathers

Cheese lovers everywhere unite... and rejoice! Often viewed as a food that wreaks havoc on our waistlines (think white bread, cake and chicken nuggets), cheese, when eaten in moderation, can be part of a balanced and healthy diet. So let's get started with a morsel or two of facts about cheese.

A few interesting observations from nutritionist Karen Ansel, R.D.N., co-author of Health in a Hurry: Simple, Wholesome Recipes for Every Meal of the Day have informed this article on healthy living. In her book, Ansel maintains that cheese may help you stay thin, thanks to a little-known substance called "butyrate." Gruyere, blue, Gouda, Parmesan and cheddar all have a high concentration of butyrate in them. Ansel states, "Research suggests that butyrate may help boost metabolism. These cheeses also promote the bacteria in our gut to make even more butyrate, so it's a double win." Sorry about the "butyrate barrage." I promise not to use the word in the rest of this article. Or gut, either.

Cheese has a number of nutritional benefits, as well. Ansel maintains that "protein-packed cheeses" are ideal for building muscle. The author further states that, since cheese is made from milk, it is "packed with calcium to keep bones strong." The calcium in cheese further keeps teeth healthier, longer.

Low-fat cheeses are abundant in virtually every grocery store. So picking up some can be a snap. Ansel points out, "If you're trying to cut fat and reduce calories, there are many cheeses available which meet that demand." She cites feta as being the best choice with 6 grams of fat and 70 calories per ounce. Mozzarella is the next best choice (6 grams of fat/ 85 calories), followed by Swiss (8 grams of fat/106 calories). I don't know about you, but those numbers fit in pretty well with my diet plan.

So, when you crank up the outdoor grill for the first time this spring, swap out that hamburger for a juicy cheeseburger with a nice slice of sharp cheddar or Baby Swiss. Spread some Blue Cheese crumbles on your favorite garden salad. Or savor a few cheese cubes on your favorite cracker assortment. The possibilities are endless, so live it up a little with your favorite cheeses.

So, here's the skinny: cheese is good for you. Enjoy some soon with a glass or two of your favorite beverage and your favorite people.

Cheese lovers everywhere rejoice.

SERREAM EDUCATOR AWARD

By Edna Thayer

Congratulations to our SERREAM president, Kay Morcomb, who has been selected as the 2018 SERREAM Educator Award recipient. The official presentation will be made at the spring conference on Wed. April 18th at the Rochester International Event Center. Hope you will be there to offer congratulations. The poem in her honor will be printed in the next newsletter.

As educators we cannot ignore what has happened to public schools. A student told a reporter, "We are the generation of the school shootings." The 'it can't happen here feeling' is gone. School no longer feels like a safe haven. Such fear can only have a negative impact on learning.

Multiple people are responsible for the killings: those who promote and stimulate a fetish for guns; those who gain a monetary profit from the gun culture; those who market guns and ammunition; those who allow access to guns; those who sell military weapons to citizens; and alas receiving the most attention is the one who pulls the trigger. Accomplices are legislators who profit indirectly and corporations receiving discounts. Students are collateral damage in a gun culture.

I applaud the students that in solidarity are taking a mature stand to change the culture. They deserve support and media attention for their good action. Copycatters threaten their school after the media reports of bad actions. May the good overcome the bad!

Kay Morcomb

SERREAM Spring Conference

Wednesday, April 18, 2018

Rochester International Event Center (at the Airport)
7333 Airport View Drive SW, Rochester, MN

Your host, the Waseca Area Retired Educators, invite you to
participate and enjoy!!

Agenda

- 8:30 – 9:00 Registration – Coffee, Juice, and Rolls.
- 9:00 – 9:05 Welcome by Phoebe Praxl, Waseca Area Education Association
And SERREAM President Kay Morcomb.
- 9:05 – 10:00 Jay Stoffel – Executive Director of TRA, “Update on Your Pension Fund and Legislative Challenges Facing TRA & PERA in 2018”
- 10:00 – 10:25 Comments by Lonnie Duberstein, REAM President;
MN Legislative Update by REAM
Legislative Co-Chair John Fischer or Tim Moyniham
- 10:25 – 10:40 **Coffee Break**
- 10:40 – 10:50 Edna Thayer – THAYER-apy!
- 10:40 - 11:30 John Barten – Director of Natural Resources Mgt,
for Parts of 5 Metro Counties.
“Minnesota Environmental Challenges in the
21st Century – The Top 10”
- 11:30 – 12:30 **Lunch**
- 12:30 – 1:20 SERREAM Annual Business Meeting.
President Kay Morcomb, and
Edna Thayer, Award Presentations
- 1:20 – 1:25 Stretch!
- 1:25 – 1:35 Chuck Hellie, REAM Executive Director.
REAM Membership, Travel, etc.
- 1:35 – 2:25 Curt Hutchens – Past REAM and TRA President.
“Special Interest Groups are Highly
Organized and Financed Working against Our Public
Pension in Minnesota and Across the USA”
- 2:25 Wrap-up and Door Prizes

Door Prizes – Each Unit is asked to bring a Door Prize

**Registration for the SEREAM 2018 Spring Conference
Wednesday, April 18, 2018
At the Rochester International Event Center**

Name _____ Unit _____

**Registration includes morning Coffee/pastry and noon lunch
\$20 by April 15, \$25 at the door
Make Checks Payable to WARE
Mail to Don Zwach 2620 8th Street NE Waseca MN 56093
Email: Zwach66@gmail.com with questions.**

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

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