

# SERREAM

Fall 2019

## *Newsletter*

### **President's Message: Kay Morcomb**

September already! The date for the SERREAM 2019 Fall Legislative and Health Conference is fast approaching. From previous announcements I hope you have saved the date, October 16th. Now you can gather former colleagues and new retirees and register to come to the Rochester International Event Center for a full day of speakers, some social time and lunch, even free flu shots and more. Make copies of the agenda page and invite people who have not joined SERREAM, so they can see what they have been missing. Where the registration form says "unit" put a contact number or address if they do not belong to a local unit.

I appreciate the opportunity to have regular updates from the Executive Director of the Teacher's Retirement Association on the health of our pension fund. We also have the opportunity to learn from the Executive Director of the State Board of Investment about the investments of pension funds.

This year we are tapping the expertise of the Southeast Service Co-operative. The SSC aids schools, cities, and counties by coordinating services that can be better provided by a regional organization. We will hear from the Executive Director and two additional presenters. Change is constant. Coordination is good to meet continuing challenges and new challenges. I'm looking forward to some help with keeping up with the times in education.

Barattos missed the August 21st SERREAM Board meeting to attend a funeral. Before we had the newsletter all together Sharon's brother-in-law passed away unexpectedly and Barattos drove to Chisholm for the funeral. Sharon made sure to take care of several SERREAM duties in spite of all this. Our greatest sympathy and also greatest gratitude for all she does for SERREAM.

**We are asking each unit to please bring a door prize.**

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### **SERREAM Educator Award.**

Although nominations for the 2020 SERREAM Educator Award aren't due until January 31, 2020 you may make your nomination at any time. Just give me the name and contact information (i.e. email, phone number, address etc) and I will contact the person with the information needed on a resume. We request the same information needed for the REAM Award because the committee submits the resumes of SERREAM to REAM. The criteria includes excellence as a teacher, contributions to the community and education, and involvement in teacher and retired teacher organizations. Recipients must be a member of SERREAM. Please submit nomination to Edna Thayer, Chairperson of the committee. 7 Roots Beach Lane, Elysian, MN 56028; 507-267-4588; or email ednathayer@gmail.com.

**Edna Thayer and Phoebe Praxl have been selected for  
REAM Educator Awards.  
Celebrate with them at the Granite Falls REAM conference  
September 30 - October 1**

# SERAM EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING MINUTES

August 21, 2019

President Kay Morcomb called the meeting to order at 9:15 AM at The Homestead in Rochester. Present were Barbara Hunter, Keith Larson, Kathryn Lastine, Kay Morcomb, Lyle Olson, Phoebe Praxl, Sylvia Swede, Edna Thayer, and Don Zwach. The mileage sheet and breakfast envelope were passed around. It was announced that REAM President-Elect Paul Ehrhard and his wife were in a car accident and Paul is in the hospital in St. Paul.

**Secretary's Report (Sylvia Swede).** The May 15 minutes were approved as printed.

**Treasurer's Report (Sharon Baratto)** No report.

**President's Report (Kay Morcomb).** Kay had us look at the Spring Conference Rotating Schedule, 2013-2020. The Rochester unit would be responsible for the 2021 Spring Conference. A new schedule needs to be made. She had also asked units to give their membership figures and dues amount. Dues run from \$5-10. Faribault has the highest membership, 125 members.

## Committee Reports:

**Membership (Ben Baratto).** No report.

**Legislative (Don Leathers).** No report.

**Health (Don Leathers).** No report.

**Newsletter (Open position).** Articles are due August 28. The newsletter will be published Sept. 18.

**Educator Awards (Edna Thayer).** Nominations are due by January 31, 2020.

**REAM (Don Zwach).** REAM has invested in a new software package. Members should visit the website, [mnream.org](http://mnream.org), especially "Pension Issues in the News". Our pension fund is currently 78% funded. This year we have had a 4-5% return on investments. Substantial membership numbers are needed to get the legislature to listen. We can't be content. Members will have an option to get the newsletter via email.

## Continuing Business:

**Fall Legislative/Health Conference (Barbara Hunter).** Planning is pretty well set for the conference on October 16 at the Rochester International Event Center.

**Open Positions and Leadership Needs.** We need a president-elect in 2020 and a newsletter editor.

**Spring Conference.** Faribault will host the conference at the Elks Club on April 22, 2020.

## New Business:

Barbara Hunter will be the representative from SERAM to REAM.

The February 2020 meeting of the board will be February 5, a change from the original schedule.

## Announcements:

The next board meeting will be held at The Homestead on November 20 at 8:45.

The REAM conference is September 30 and October 1 at Prairie's Edge Casino, Granite Falls

The meeting adjourned at 10:45 AM.

Sylvia Swede, Secretary

## SERREAM Fall 2019 Legislative Update

---Don Leathers

The 2018 Pension Law was passed by both chambers of the legislature and signed by Governor Dayton that May. While actives and retirees were generally pleased that the bill was passed into law in order to all but fully fund the plan by June of 2048, many of the law's details were not fully understood by pension participants. I would like to take the time to focus in on some of those items.

The changes put forth in the Pension Law were created so that "TRA is sustainable for future generations of educators." The legislation immediately reduced TRA liabilities by \$2.0 billion dollars, increased the funded ratio from 70% to 75% and put the plan on course to be 92% funded in 30 years. Despite objections from the anti-pension groups in Minnesota, DFL and GOP legislators approved the legislation unanimously.

Changes to the plan that affect retirees deal primarily with Annual Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA). If you'll recall, your COLA decreased to 1.0% on January 2019, and will remain at that rate through 2023. It will rise to 1.1% on January 1, 2024, and gradually rise to 1.5% on January 1, 2028, where it will remain thereafter.

Minnesota TRA recipients made an important sacrifice to keep the plan sustainable. Also, beginning on July 1, 2024, eligibility for receipt of a retiree's first COLA changes to normal retirement age (65 or 66). Exempt from this provision are members who retire under the Rule of 90 or retire at age 62 with 30 years of service credit. Finally, the "trigger" that would have increased the COLA if TRA were at least 90 percent funded for two consecutive years was eliminated.

Two other entities that made sacrifices for plan sustainability were active teachers and school districts. If you'll recall, contribution rates for those two groups were 7.5% of payroll, respectively. Active teacher contribution rates will remain at 7.5% until July 1, 2023, when they will increase to 7.75%.

School districts, on the other hand, saw their rate increase to 7.92% on July 1, 2019. It will gradually rise to 8.75% in July of 2023, which more accurately reflects school district contribution rates around the nation. Importantly, the increased district costs are provided for through a pension adjustment in the school aid formula. Pension reform will not decrease dollars going to classroom in schools around Minnesota.

Other recent news about the impact of the 2018 Pension Law is the report announced on July 24, 2019, that credit rating agencies Standard & Poor's and Fitch announced they are reaffirming Minnesota's AAA credit rating, the highest award by analysts. The accompanying 12-page report devoted one entire page to praising the 2018 Omnibus Pension Act.

Fellow retirees, please take some time and navigate the new TRA website @ [minnesotatra.org](http://minnesotatra.org). The site has tons of useful information and contacts, such as Quick Links directing readers to the "ABCs of Pension Basics" and "\$\$\$Cost-of-Living-Increases/Post-Retirement Increases." Above all, stay informed, stay connected and enjoy your retirement.

You earned it!

## SERAM Fall 2019

### Health Article

---Don Leathers

When I gaze out my kitchen window on a crisp, late-summer morning such as today, my eyes discover the neat line of 20 or so bright, red tomatoes resting on a table in my backyard. Almost baseball sized, the sun brings out the richness of the vegetables' varying hues as they ripen in the cool air. In this edition's report, I would like to share with you my gardening journey, which began in mid-May and culminates around Labor Day, with tomatoes adorning virtually every dish we consume at the dinnertable until they are finally no more.

My quest began with an epiphany and a trip to Bachman's Gardening Center in Richfield. Or, was it the other way around? You see, I had been planting tomatoes for a few decades, and I always went to the local nursery and purchased four rather wimpy-looking plants, scratched the dirt out back and let them settle in for the long, hot summer. But, before making that purchase this spring, I wandered onto some really mature, albeit expensive, tomato plants at Bachman's. I believe the thought that sprung into my mind at that moment was: Now, you're talking my language! I can't be sure of the exact expression, but I knew I was in love. So, I scooped up four of the beauties for the cost of, maybe, ten of those little wimps. Over the summer I could sense I'd made a good choice.

The variety: 'BIG BEEF' [all caps on the little plastic descriptor that goes with each plant]. "Space 36" apart, in full sun. Matures in 73 days from planting. 12 to 16 ounce fruit." A "Beefsteak Tomato," which really explains it all.

I was finally in business. I purchased some fresh, black dirt, a bag of bone meal and a little vegetable fertilizer. Soon the plants were in the ground, taking in the sun and the nutrients in the soil. In June, the plants were staked, a few fertilizer spikes were carefully slid into the ground around each plant and, of course, the watering began in earnest.

By early August, the fruits were ripening into rich shades of yellow, orange and red. I must admit that early on we ate tomatoes daily, but recently have given the vegetables to a wide variety of groups and individuals. It's amazing how so few people actually turn down free tomatoes. And that is one of the joyful aspects of growing.

Now, no discussion of food is complete without a recipe, so I am including one here. I've made it a few times, and it's easy to prepare and delicious to the taste.

Hope that you give the recipe a try and enjoy it.

## Aunt Ina's Tomato Zucchini Pie

### Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups of chopped tomatoes, drained
- 2 cups of chopped zucchini
- ½ cup chopped white or yellow onion
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese (substitutions are allowed)
- ½ cup milk
- ¾ cup baking mix, e.g., Bisquick
- 3 large eggs, beaten
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp ground black pepper
- 1 tsp dried basil

### Baking:

- Pre-heat oven to 400 degrees. Grease a 10-inch pie plate
- Sprinkle tomato, zucchini, cheese on bottom of pie plate
- Beat together remaining ingredients until smooth: 15 sec blender/1 min by hand
- Carefully pour mixture into pie plate on top of the vegetables
- Bake until a knife inserted in center of pie comes out clean—about 30 minutes
- Crust should be firm, yet flaky, and a golden brown
- Enjoy with family and friends

Remember to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables every day to promote a healthy lifestyle for seniors on the go.

**SERREAM**  
**Legislative & Health Conference**  
**Wednesday, October 16, 2019**  
**Rochester International Events Center [at the Airport]**  
**7333 Airport View Drive SW, Rochester, MN**

**Agenda:**

- 8:00 – 8:25 am** Registration—Coffee, Juice & Rolls
- 8:25 – 8:30 am** Welcome by President Kay Morcomb
- 8:30 – 9:15 am** “Health Effects of Marijuana Use Especially on Young People”  
---Kay Morcomb
- 9:15 – 10:10 am** “Future Forward: Teaming Students with Businesses for Success”  
---Sarah Ness/Amy Grover from Southeast Service Cooperative
- 10:10 – 10:25 am** REAM President Jennie Hanson
- 10:25 – 10:30 am** Coffee Break & Time to Stretch and Network
- 10:30 – 10:40 am** Humor THAYER-APY with Edna Thayer  
**Get ready to LAUGH!!!**
- 10:40 – 11:30 am** “Minnesota Public Pension Investment Update”  
Mansco Perry III, Executive Director/CIO State Board of Investment
- 11:30 – 12:30 pm** Lunch. Free flu shots from HyVee Pharmacy.  
Bring Medicare Number
- 12:30 – 1:20 pm** “Teacher Retirement Association [TRA]  
Pension Fund Information”  
Jay Stoffel, TRA Executive Director/John Wicklund, TRA’s CFO
- 1:20 – 1:25 pm** Walk-Around Activity/Yoga Workout in the Parking Lot
- 1:25 – 1:35 pm** Chuck Hellie, REAM Executive Director
- 1:35 – 2:25 pm** “Mental Health Initiatives to Improve Workforce and  
Student Success”  
Steve Sallee, Executive Director, Southeast Service Cooperative
- 2:25 pm** Wrap-up & Door Prizes

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**REGISTRATION FORM**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Unit \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Fee which includes lunch - \$25. Make checks payable to SERREAM.

Mail registration form and check to: Barbara Hunter  
305 14th St NW  
Austin, MN 55912

The Faribault Area Retired Educators (FARE) are excited to announce that the Spring SEREAM Conference will be held on Wednesday, April 22, 2020 at the Elks Lodge in Faribault. A full day of speakers, food, and SEREAM business is being planned. Mark your calendars and spend Earth Day with us! Questions may be directed to FARE Co-President, Mary Osborne at 507-330-1992 or mary.osborne10@gmail.com.

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**MEMORIALS:**

Darleen Pacousky, Austin, MN  
From Shirley & Curt Schroeder

Donna Schneider, Rochester, MN  
From Carl & Rosemary Most

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***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, 2019–August 31, 2020

**The newsletters can be found at [SEREAM.org](http://SEREAM.org).**

SOUTHEAST RETIRED  
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