

# SERREAM

## *Newsletter*

Winter 2020

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

Waiting for the virus to run its course and for changes to take place after a too long political campaign and going through many transitions happening in 2020 leaves us unsure of our tomorrows and how to proceed. Lacking the customary markers of the day of the week and the day of the month interrupts our sense of time. The hour, the day, and even the month slips from the mind. But without a doubt, the year 2020 will be a mark in time, remembered by all who experienced it and also remembered in the annals of time. With past plans upset and no certain forecast for the future, it behooves everyone to create anew better tomorrows.

I am very grateful to be retired and not have to be exposed to the virus to do my job. I am content staying at home most of the time. Remembering to put on a mask every time I leave my apartment and washing hands when I return are minor inconveniences. I feel sorry for essential workers for whom the pandemic is an extreme health and economic problem. I wonder about the effects of the long interruption of students' education and impacts on different age groups. How teachers can cope with distance teaching and repeated switching of methods I cannot imagine. For a working parent to try to help a young child who cannot manage technology and scheduling and not knowing when the days a child is home can suddenly change would be extreme stress. When the pandemic is over students will be at all different levels. They will not come with similar knowledge backgrounds. We are in the midst of a transition time in education. Speaking out for education funding and protecting the pension system for the future is critical now. More teachers and more support for teachers will be needed to go through the transition.

Stay healthy through the holiday season. Create new ways to celebrate and communicate with family and friends while social distancing. Find peace, love and joy.

**SERREAM EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING**  
**Minutes – November 18, 2020**

President Kay Morcomb called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM. Present were Kay Morcomb, Barbara Hunter, Lyle Olson, Edna Thayer, Keith Larson, Don Zwach, and Ben and Sharon Baratto. Our thoughts go to Phoebe Praxl as she has some health issues.

**Secretary’s Report:** The last minutes were from our February 5, 2020 board meeting. No corrections were reported, so the minutes stand as printed. The COVID-19 virus cancelled our March planning for the Fall Conference, our Spring Conference that Faribault had planned, our May and August board meetings and the October Fall Conference. Essential business was conducted through emails and phone calls.

**Sylvia Swede**

**Treasurer’s Report: (Sharon Baratto)** We have a total of \$13,300 in checking and saving. Upcoming expenses are for the newsletter, board meeting, and a check to the venue for the Fall Conference.

**President’s Report: (Kay Morcomb)** Many thanks to Barb Hunter for setting up a Zoom meeting for the board. Seeing all the board members again was the next best thing to gathering together for a meeting. She was not able to come to this zoom meeting, but Donna Widenhoefer will be our contact person for Albert Lea.

**Committee Reports:**

**a. Membership: (Ben Baratto)** Currently we have 554 members.

**b. Legislative:** No report at this time.

**c. Health:** TBD

**d. Newsletter: (Open Position)** Send articles to:  
kmor.nkamp2@gmail.com

<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Articles Due</u>	<u>Newsletter Published</u>
February 17, 2021	February 24, 2021	March 10, 2021
May 19, 2021	May 26, 2021	June 16, 2021
August 18, 2021	August 25, 2021	September 15, 2021

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**e. Educator Awards: (Edna Thayer)** Send your nominations for educator award as soon as possible. Look for criteria in this newsletter. The 2020 and 2021 awards will be given at the April Annual Meeting. The deadline for nominations is January 31st, but doing sooner helps in getting awards ready.

**f. REAM Division Director: ( Barb Hunter)** See newsletter report.

**Continuing Business:** The main discussion was how to grow our membership at all levels, and to even maintain membership as most local units are not able to meet and collect memberships. Thank you to those who have renewed. There is also great need for volunteers to serve on boards to keep local units and SEREAM and REAM healthy.

**New Business:** Due to the pandemic it is with uncertainty we look forward to having Faribault host the 2021 Spring conference and Annual Meeting on April 21st. Decisions will need to be made at our February board meeting.

**Announcements:** The next board meeting will be Wednesday, February 17, 2021 via Zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 AM.

## Health Article

In concern for your personal health you must consider environmental health. We must work together to protect our environment perhaps in ways you never considered. Factory farms pollute the air with noxious fumes that are toxic in concentrations. Factory farms produce copious amounts of manure. Manure spills get into streams killing fish and contaminating sources of drinking water. Urge legislators to put limits on the number of animals for cleaner air and water and healthier food supply.

Canada is considering a ban on the production of plastic bags, straws, eating utensils, plates and cups. Urge our congress to do the same. Legislators cannot pass laws that would help our environmental health if their only support comes from the oil industry. Knowing they can no longer depend on their monopoly in fueling transportation, oil companies are turning to plastic production as a big source of revenue. Taking subsidies from oil and giving to the production of other sources of energy will provide new jobs and will reduce a huge amount of air, water and soil pollution caused by the oil industry. Also, everyone should be working to shut down pipelines instead of building more. We have more than enough oil for our needs, extra is being exported. The extra oil is produced by fracking. Fracking uses large amounts of fresh water, mixes in chemicals, injects the mix deep into the ground fracturing the rocks to release oil. Fracking causes shifts in the earth (earthquakes). The contaminated water from fracking has been used to irrigate our food crops (some orange groves). I read literature from the Environmental Defense Fund, Clean Water Action, Food and Water Watch, and the Nature Conservancy. The computer and media can be good sources of information, but also have information from the profiteers of pollution. Become knowledgeable to refute inaccurate or disinformation.

Polls have shown that the vast majority of citizens would like gun control. Don't let pat phrases stymie action. "The right to bear arms" must be read in context. The constitution Amendment II begins, "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state . . . . A militia is not any gathering declaring themselves to be so. They must be regulated by the state. The constitution does not give the right to intimidate, threaten, incite violence, or commit murder. Amendment I gives the right to peacefully assemble. People threatening peaceful assemblies should be arrested. Only the military should have military weapons and gear. Pressure congress to take action to prohibit weapons that cause mass shootings, prohibit military gear such as tear gas, prohibit stockpiling of weapons and ammunition and control gun sales.

You can be an active citizen even when confined to home. Also consider our social environment showing our gratitude by politeness and thank yous to all essential workers now and after the pandemic with greater respect than they often garnered before. Also show your appreciation to all historical societies, museums, theatre companies, musicians and music organizations, and cultural organizations who reached out to provide experiences missing from our lives. These organizations need financial support to stay alive.

Give thanks to the people who provide technical support to the above named organizations and to physically isolated individuals so we still have social connections.

## **Greetings Members!**

I hope you are healthy and doing well. These are difficult times for us all.

There doesn't seem to be a lot going on in the legislature at this time. The COVID-19 pandemic will certainly create a deficit in our state's and local school's budget. We do need to be concerned about our state's budget and how a deficit may impact us. The state puts funds into TRA as well as St. Paul and Duluth retired teacher's funds. A deficit could mean there are fewer dollars going into our funds. We need to be in contact with our representatives, senators, and local school board members to prevent funds allocated to our retirement fund being used to balance the state's budget.

**Wishing you a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!**

**Barb Hunter**

**REAM Division Director**

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### **SERREAM EDUCATOR AWARD**

The nominations are due by the end of January, 2021 for the 2021 SERREAM Educator Awards. Think about whom you might like to nominate from your unit. Is there someone who is active in education and other organizations and who should be recognized for his/her service to the community? Many members are deserving of such recognition. The criteria are:

1. Personal endeavors as a school educator (includes administrative, teaching, secretarial, maintenance, or other support services.
2. Promotion of the causes of education within the community.
3. Services to schools and community as a volunteer worker.
4. Service to retired educator groups at the local, SERREAM, and/or REAM levels.
5. Must be a current SERREAM member.

Nominations may be sent any time before January 31 to the committee chairman:

**Edna Thayer**

**Elysian, MN 56028**

**507-267-4588**

**ednathayer@gmail.com**

## Pension News

Don Zwach directed me to MNREAM.org to include some pension news. Under “Pension Issues in the News” are links to Minnesota and National news and opinions on pensions. Examples I found interesting from the November 30th list of sites:

**Forbes:** “Pension Investors Should Celebrate DOL’s New Investment Rule to Restore Fiduciary....” Sounds good when they make the point of protecting the client from managers who steer clients to investments that benefit the manager the most. This is truly important and needs to be done. However, this rule was made so that the investor no longer can choose socially responsible investing. Mutual funds can no longer be limited to companies with ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) considerations, but money must go to weapons, large corporations, or wherever the company not the investor chooses and foreign companies (namely Israel cannot be boycotted).

On the news I heard a senator comment, “Never let a good crisis go to waste.” Puzzling! I was shocked when I heard the comment that it is teachers’ fault that children cannot go to school. I don’t know the origin of the first comment, but I found the origin of the second in the next article.

**American Legislative Exchange Council:** “Most public pensions can be described as following a defined benefit structure...” This is too long to quote but emphasized was the very true fact that this interruption of children’s education is harmful socially and educationally. It finally gets to their point. Parents really want their children in school, but the teachers and their unions are to blame for public schools closing, so parents should send their children to private schools or home school and the money for education should go to the private schools or give some to parents homeschooling. Hope this is not actually happening, but a short video said a couple governors were going to give \$13 or \$19 million to the private schools.

ALEC also grades states on their public schools and public pension systems and commends Michigan’s reforms.

**National Public Pension Coalition:** “Three Reasons Why Public Pensions Are Cheaper than Other Retirement Plans Like 401(K). Wish I could show the excellent graph the article has showing what has happened to Michigan’s pension, but I don’t know how to put on pictures and graphs. Look it up, stunning decline!

Watch out for the word reform. What is the writer’s plan?

## MEMORIALS

**Ed Mikulich**

**from Carolyn Goplen  
Edna Thayer**

**Keith W. Larson**

**from Carl & Rosemary Most**

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**More important now to show our strength in numbers to the  
legislation to protect our pensions.**

**PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP.**

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### ***SERAM 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 SERAM.

Membership year: September 1, 2020–August 31, 2021

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

SOUTHEAST RETIRED  
EDUCATORS ASSOC. OF MN  
Ben Baratto  
779 Bluffview Circle  
Winona, MN 55987

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