

# SERREAM

## *Newsletter*

Winter 2021

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

I realize that there are many volunteer opportunities when you retire. Please consider volunteering to serve on the SERREAM Board. I have served extra terms as president and need to step aside.

Membership is scattered across southeast Minnesota. Local units send at least one representative in addition to officers. The board has about twelve members. Rochester is a central location for board meetings. As past president I would still be on the board and could arrange a meeting place. We have been having breakfast meetings at the apartment building where I live in NW Rochester.

Because members are spread out willing volunteers may be out there that I have no way of contacting. Don't be shy. Volunteer by contacting me at kmor.nkamp2@gmail.com or phone 507-535-2176.

#### **Here's what I do as president:**

The board meets in May, August, November and February. I email meeting reminders 2 weeks before the meeting followed soon with an agenda and request a reply for a number count for breakfast and possible agenda changes. (Previous agenda forms are available for a guide.) Members can copy the agenda. I bring a few printed copies. We have been meeting 3rd Wednesdays at 8:45 am. This is the latest that the kitchen is open to take orders. Possibly the day of the week could be changed.

At the beginning of the meeting the treasurer passes the financial report and other papers for financial business. We do not make copies of the minutes as those were in the newsletter.

I conduct the meeting via the agenda somewhat following Robert's rules of Order. We often have discussions before a formal motion. A motion by a committee chair does not need a second, other motions do. All money concerns need a formal motion. A motion on dues is needed each year even if no change is made. This puts the dues in the minutes for every year.

Notice of when newsletter articles are due is made orally and printed on the agenda and is also done with Announcements such as next meeting, dates of upcoming REAM and SERREAM conferences.

I would be happy to pass along the historical gavel for opening and adjourning the meeting. I am not a precise timekeeper. The room is reserved for two hours.

In the week after the meeting a President's Message needs to be sent to the newsletter editor.

As president I help with planning and conducting SERREAM's fall conference held in October. I conduct a brief business meeting at the spring conference held in April.

## **SERREAM Executive Board Meeting November 17, 2021**

The SERREAM Board met at the Homestead at 8:45 AM. Present were Ben and Sharon Baratto, Gayle Goetzman Stolpa, Keith Larson, Kathryn Lastine, Kay Morcomb, Lyle Olson, Sylvia Swede, and Edna Thayer. The mileage sheet and breakfast envelope were passed around.

**Secretary's Report.** The minutes of the last meeting were approved as printed.

**Treasurer's Report.** Sharon Baratto handed out the SERREAM financial report and the financial report for the fall Health and Legislative Conference held on October 20. The balance in the checking account, as of November 15, was \$3307.49.

**President's Report.** Kay Morcomb reminded us that there is an election for officers in 2022. We need candidates for the following positions: president, vice-president, newsletter editor, secretary, and historian.

**Membership.** Ben Baratto reported that there are currently 556 members. 370 have paid for 2022.

**Educator Award.** It was m/s/c that SERREAM follow the REAM guidelines for the Educator Award.

**Newsletter.** The next issue will be mailed in December.

**REAM Conference.** 114 attended the September conference in Walker, MN.

**SERREAM Conference.** 45 attended. There was an excellent speaker on mental health, flu shots were available, there was an update on our pensions, and the meeting ended with a humorist, Al Batt. Because of rising expenses, we need more attendees, or we may need to raise the registration fee.

**Spring Conference and Annual Meeting.** This will be held in Faribault. Information and registration will be in the March newsletter.

**Planning for the Fall Conference.** The Board will meet at the Homestead on March 16 at 8:45 AM.

The next Board meeting is Wednesday, February 16, 2022.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50.

**Sylvia Swede, Secretary**

## **TRA/PERA Had an Excellent Return on Investments This Past Fiscal Year!**

See TRA Investment Report on REAM's website at: [MNREAM.ORG](http://MNREAM.ORG)

Jay Stoffel, Executive Director of TRA, gave an excellent power point presentation at the Annual REAM Conference in September on the TRA Trends and Comparisons. Below are high lights of his presentation. You can view the 20 Power Point slides by going to REAM's website at: [MNREAM.ORG](http://MNREAM.ORG). Click "Resources"; Then General Pension News; Then TRA Trends and Comparisons Sept 21, 2021; Then TRA Trends and Comparisons

Jay gave us great news as the asset value of TRA/PERA investments went up an unbelievable 30% (Slide 18) in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021! TRA went from underfunded liabilities needed for our future active and retired teachers' pensions at only 75.5% to 91.5% in just one year (Slide 20)!

**Slide 7.** EE stands for employee and ER for employer. TRA pays out about \$2 Billion in benefits each year to 68,000 retirees! This is a real stimulus to our State's economy!

**Slide 13.** Investment Return Future Assumptions for TRA/PERA - was set at 8.5% prior to 2018. Our Actuaries and Wall Streeters recommended reducing it to 7.5% in 2018; now they are recommending around 7% or less going forward. This reduction will be a Legislative issue in the 2022 Session. Lowering the return assumptions, increases our long term pension liabilities. REAM will be your "voice" at the table when the new assumption is debated.

**Slide 18.** Estimating 2021 Valuation Results. NOTE the first statement: 30% investment return in Fiscal Year 2021! This return also applies to PERA. This is a significant investment return engineered by the MN State Board of Investment!

**Slide 20.** This is a snapshot on July 1, 2021, of the actual Market Value of our TRA's Assets. Note: The Actuarial Accrued Liability is at \$30.8 Billion to pay projected pensions for all active and retired teachers going forward. The Asset value on our investments on July 1, was \$28.2 Billion. Therefore, our funded pension ratio went from 75.5% to 91.5% in the past year.

To TRA/PERA pension stability watchers, SLIDE 20 is VERY important. It means the 2018 Pension Bill plus the Stock Market's excellent return is stabilizing our pension. But some Legislators still want to move all new public employees from our Defined Pension Plan to a Defined Contribution Plan (401K type of pension). We must be alert!

If you have questions, give me a call at 612-718-9121.

**Don Zwach, SEREAM and REAM Board Member**

## Health Report

### Infectious Disease

In 2006 I read the recently published book, The Great Influenza, The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History by John M. Barry. A story worth keeping in mind so I kept the book. One quote from the book, “....up to a few decades before World War I, the practice of medicine remained .....almost unchanged from the time of Hippocrates more than two thousand years earlier. Then, in Europe first, medical science changed and finally the practice of medicine.”

The author writes extensively about researchers who devoted their lives to discovering causes, treatments, and preventives of many diseases including the importance of cleanliness.

The 1918 Influenza Pandemic started in a Kansas Army Camp. In every one of our wars more soldiers died from disease than in combat. The author covers the politics and the science of dealing with influenza. The focus was war. Scientific advice was ignored. The movement of soldiers made an epidemic a pandemic.

Epidemiological research is ongoing. Much more money must be invested in vaccine manufacture and creating surge capacity, improving technology of production, and hopefully developing antiviral drugs and a vaccine to prevent all forms of influenza.

The first step in preparing for a pandemic is surveillance. The World Health Organization has prevented some epidemics from becoming a pandemic, but lacks the resources to look everywhere. Communication is important. Countries and farmers need compensation for the financial losses that telling the truth can bring. A final lesson of 1918 is that those in a position of authority must calm the public. Retain the public trust. Avoid panic by being truthful. Do not minimize the disease.

The April 2006 Minnesota Monthly interviewed Dr. Michael Osterholm, one of the world's foremost infectious disease experts, who had been warning that another pandemic is inevitable and our hospitals had no surge capacity. Businesses function 'on the edge' not maintaining vast inventories. Eighty per cent of the pharmaceutical products in the U.S. are imported. Dr. Osterholm works not in a laboratory, but in offices in the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy (CIDRAP) at the University of Minnesota. He works in communication and surveillance making many good predictions and warnings, but still has naysayers. He calls for our country to unite against pandemic influenza for our health and our national union.

Dr. Fauci is another person who has devoted his life to the treatment and prevention of infectious diseases. The November 2021 issue of National Geographic has excerpts from a National Geographic magazine, Fauci - Expect the Unexpected: Ten Lessons on Truth, Service, and the Way Forward. The book is drawn from interviews for a documentary film now streaming on Disney+.

We can see in real time the effects of politics and science on medicine.

**Kay Morcomb**

Now is the time to consider whom you might nominate for the 2022 SEREAM Educator award. Nominations are due by January 31, 2022. In addition to being a current SEREAM member, the criteria are:

1. Personal endeavors as a school educator (includes administrative, teaching, secretarial, maintenance or other support groups.)
2. Promotion of the causes of education within the community. (Both before and after retirement)
3. Service to schools and the community as a volunteer worker.
4. Service to retired educator groups at the local, SEREAM, and/or REAM levels, and other educator groups.

Nominations may be sent by email to [ednathayer@gmail.com](mailto:ednathayer@gmail.com) or by snail mail to arrive prior to January 31 to:

**Edna Thayer**  
**7 Roots Beach Lane**  
**Elysian, MN, 56028**

For questions, contact Edna or one of the other 2 committee members: Nancy Reynolds from Winona or Jeanette Bergler from Rochester.

What do the Dwarf Trout Lily, the home of the Tilt-o-Whirl, the Woolen Mills and SEREAM all have in common one might wonder? The answer is easy.

All of them can be found in Faribault on April 20, 2022, when the Faribault Area Retired Educators host the Spring SEREAM Conference. (The Dwarf Trout Lily is a bit dependent on the weather.)

FARE will share the conference details and registration information in the next SEREAM newsletter. For now, pull out next year's calendar and mark April 20, 2022, as a trip to Faribault for the SEREAM Spring Conference!

**Deb Scheil - Faribault Area Retired Educators**

**Stay informed on Public Pension Issues and REAM's role  
in supporting our Public Pensions.**

**Check REAM's website often at [MNREAM.ORG](http://MNREAM.ORG)!**

**An informed, active REAM membership can be a powerful  
force and make a difference in legislation that affects your  
TRA/PERA pension.**

## MEMORIALS

**Bill Fessler - from Carl & Rosemary Most**  
**Joyce Rucker - from Kay Morcomb**  
**Betty Buffington - from ALARE**  
**Doris Callahan from - ALARE**

---

Probably you have already joined for the September 1 - August 31, 2022 year. There is always the opportunity to invite new members to be on the mailing list for the spring conference.

**HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES FOR  
SEPTEMBER 1, 2021 THRU AUGUST 31, 2022?**

---

### ***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, 2021–August 31, 2022

**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

PRSRT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE

**PAID**

WINONA, MN 55987  
PERMIT NO. 184