

Retired Public Employees of Alaska
Southeast Chapter
Minutes of January 14, 2021

President Benda Knapp called the meeting to order at about 10:10 on a Zoom conference session. The agenda was approved as presented.

Ms. Knapp gave the Chair report:

She will be serving on a committee of the Executive Board to review and propose changes to the RPEA By-laws.

There was no Executive Board meeting since our last meeting, but she had attended a meeting of the Medical Information Committee. That meeting featured Dr. Bruce Chandler, who is the Medical Director for the Anchorage Health Dept. He gave an update on the COVID-19 crisis and the immunization progress in the state. The data clearly shows that vaccine immunity starts taking effect about twelve days after the first shot.

There was a question about the change to the reimbursement arrangement for tax-advantaged Health Reimbursement Accounts. The State has switched to a new bank, Optum Bank, to handle reimbursements and users will have to enroll at the new bank to continue in the program. Questions should be directed to the Division of Retirement and Benefits.

The minutes of the November meeting need to be corrected, and will be posted to the RPEA website and considered for approval at the next meeting.

Treasurer Mike Notar reported that the checking account has a balance of \$2,138.47.

Cindy Spanyers reported on news from the Legislative Committee. The makeup of the Legislature has changed significantly. Several incumbents were defeated and there are eleven new House members. In many cases fiscal conservatives have replaced more moderate members. It appears there will be 13 Republicans and 7 Democrats in the Senate, and the House will have 20 Republicans and a mix of 20 Democrats and Independents. Neither chamber has announced an organization at this time.

The budget continues to shrink. It was \$7.8 billion in 2013 and the current budget is \$4.5 billion. The Budgetary Reserve Account has been depleted and has only about \$900 million left. Paying the statutory PFD would cost about \$2 billion.

There are several pre-filed bills of interest to retirees. SB6 from Scott Kawasaki would institute an early retirement program for employees. Under SB30 from Tom Begich, colorectal screening exams would be covered in the medical insurance benefits. SB37 from Jesse Kiehl would allow PERS and TRS employees to choose to move to a defined-benefits retirement system instead of the current defined-contribution system.

Ms. Knapp noted that there was no old business or new business to be considered. Sam Trivette noted that we have lost all funding from APEA and AFT, which helped support RPEA in the past. We have no representation in those organizations and no meaningful alliances to exchange information and assistance. RPEA doesn't seem to stress recruiting new retirees to the organization. Ms. Knapp noted that we would have a meeting in May, take three months off, and, hopefully, return to in-person meetings in September.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25

Respectfully submitted by
Alan Davis, Secretary