

Retired Public Employees of Alaska
Southeast Chapter
Minutes of April 8, 2021

Chapter chair, Brenda Knapp, brought the meeting to order at 10:00 AM. All board members were present and also Wendy Woolf, the chair of the Southcentral Region Chapter of Alaska RPEA. Ms. Knapp gave a short Chair Report before introducing our speaker. The elections for positions on the Executive Board will be conducted online. Ballots will be emailed in May. In the Southeast Chapter, only the four incumbents are running to retain their positions, so there will be no elections. Brenda Knapp will remain as Chapter Chair, Kim Metcalfe will remain as Vice-chair, Mike Notar will remain as Treasurer, and Alan Davis will remain as Secretary. We will have our annual summer picnic. Brenda has reserved newer picnic shelter at Sandy Beach from 10:00 to 2:00 on July 16th. She also wanted to get the word out that tax filing assistance sponsored by AARP will be available this season online. Call 907-723-1783 for information and details.

Our speaker for the meeting is Sam Trivette, who will talk about the history of RPEA in Alaska. He joined RPEA in 1999 and has been a member ever since, and has held several E-Board offices in the organization as well as. He has also gotten information from people who have been members since the founding of RPEA and has reviewed the documents in the files from the early days of RPEA. Since its founding, the organization has been affiliated with the Alaska Public Employees Association, the American Federation of Teachers, and AFL/CIO. We are incorporated as a 501(c)(4) organization with the State of Alaska and with the IRS.

According to Article Two of the By-Laws of RPEA, the objectives of the organization are to educate and assist retired and retiring public employees about their retirement benefits and to support the main objectives of the APEA/AFT. Those objectives are: to advance the best interests of retired public employees; stay informed of current issues that impact the welfare of retired employees, such as any reduction of medical or pension benefits; keeping members informed of these issues; obtaining input from members about their concerns; and maintaining regular communication between RPEA and appropriate agencies and boards.

Our affiliations have been very important to RPEA. AFT allowed us to affiliate, which gave us a connection to 1.7 million members nationwide. They also contributed funding to our first lawsuit against the State in 2003. APEA has provided us with office space and allowed us to use their staff and office equipment at no charge. APEA was also one of the major funders of the 2003 lawsuit. Without that funding support we would not have been able to bring the lawsuit and prevail against the State.

Both organizations have provided advice and expertise that has been invaluable. The retiree division of AFT has provided training for board members and has allowed us to participate in resolutions at the national level on defined benefits and Social Security. Sam also mentioned the Alaska Public Pension Coalition, with which we participated in writing a white paper that set forth the impact of having retirees remain in Alaska and having a defined benefit retirement plan. Another organization we have benefitted from is the Employees Political Information Committee, which is non-partisan, but endorses and contributes to political candidates, which we cannot do.

Sam served as vice-chair of the Alaska Retirement Management Board for over a decade. The Board and its trustees made a resolution supporting the \$3 billion appropriation into the Retirement Trust Fund in 2013-2014, which was vital to the health of the retirement system.

We also have worked with the Central Labor Council here in Juneau for several decades.

Sam also praised the Division of Retirement and Benefits. The ARM Board worked closely with DRB on issues related to retirees and was often able to influence DRB decisions behind the scenes.

Another important component of RPEA is the Medical Information Committee, which monitors proposed changes to the State's retiree insurance plans and also pursues issues and problems reported by our members. That has given us a good political presence in working with the Legislative process for decades, which has been very valuable. We used to have good communications with our membership – emails reporting E-Board deliberations and actions – but that has fallen off in recent years. Sam would prioritize getting back to regular communications of what the E-Board is doing, rather than just reporting on the lawsuit.

After his presentation, Sam welcomed questions and comments. Mike Notar commented that, just recently, Kim's brother, Peter Metcalfe, successfully sued the state to establish that prior employees who were eligible under a prior tier program could come back to state service and re-establish that eligibility under the prior benefit tier at any time. Before that decision, there had been a cutoff date in 2010, after which this was not possible. Wendy Woolf reported that Jesse Kiehl had made a presentation to the Southcentral Chapter about his bill to give State employees the choice of going to a defined benefits plan. That video is available on the Southcentral Chapter page on the RPEA website for anyone to view. Mike Notar noted that a prior employee merely had to go back to work for a PERS employer; they would not have to work for the State of Alaska. Wendy asked if Sam could provide a copy of the

white paper he mentioned. She would like to read it and post it on the RPEA website. Sam said he would try to find it in electronic form and send it to her.

Brenda then went on to the approval of the minutes of the meeting of March 11. Sam moved, and Nancy seconded, a motion to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed.

Mike reported that we have \$2033.73 in the checking account at this time. The only expense was the reservation for the picnic shelter. Sam moved to accept the Treasurer's report. Nancy seconded, and the motion was approved.

Cindy Spanyers gave the report from the Legislative Committee. The House Finance Committee took testimony regarding the budget. They added back in money for the DMV offices that had been removed. They also added back in money for Behavioral Health. Senator Wielechowski has introduced SJR 12, which urges Congress to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision of the Social Security Act, which greatly reduces the Social Security Benefit due because the retiree is eligible for a pension from public service.

There was no further business, so the meeting was adjourned at 11:12 AM.

Respectfully submitted by
Alan Davis, Secretary