

Retired Public Employees of Alaska  
Southeast Chapter  
Minutes of May 13, 2021

Chapter chair, Brenda Knapp, brought the meeting to order at 10:00 AM. Fourteen people were connected to the Zoom session, including the four board members and our invited speaker, Lauren Verrelli, Recreation and Public Services Manager for Juneau Parks and Rec.

There were no additions or changes to the agenda, so it was approved as presented. Ms. Knapp gave a short Chair Report before introducing our speaker. This is the last meeting of the season. We hope to resume in-person meetings when we reconvene in September. Mike will check with St. Paul's to see if we can meet in their fellowship hall again. We will check to see if there is wi-fi available there so we can also broadcast using Zoom for those who aren't able to or comfortable attending in person. Mike Notar reported that our caterer, Udder Culture, is under new ownership and not as good. He will look at other options for providing lunch to attendees. The picnic shelter at Sandy Beach has been reserved for July 15<sup>th</sup>. The chapter will provide grilled hot dogs and burgers, plates, cups, tableware, etc. Attendees should bring a salad or side dish to share and their choice of beverage. The picnic will be from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Ms. Knapp reminded us that four seats on the state Executive Board are up for election this month. There will be a candidate forum on May 24<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 PM. There are two local people running: Judi Slajer for Treasurer and Cindy Spanyers, incumbent, for the Legislative Information Director.

The minutes of the April meeting had been posted on the RPEA website. Kim Metcalfe moved to approved the minutes as presented. Nancy Shima seconded the motion and it was approved. Mike Notar reported the chapter checking account had \$2032.82.

Ms. Knapp introduced Lauren Verrelli. COVID interrupted all of the programs Parks and Rec usually offers, both indoors and out, so they have turned to creating do-it-yourself activities. She outlined some of the activities being organized for the summer. There is a DIY activity titled Walk Southeast. Interested persons should register with Parks and Rec. and keep track of their mileage walking, hiking, or running. The aim is to do a virtual walk to another community in Southeast. They had over 400 participants last year, and this year they are including people in Wrangell and Petersburg. If you walk at least 150 miles, you will be entered into a drawing for Alaska Airlines miles. There is also a local drawing with prizes from Alaskan Outfitters and others. There's also a Facebook group you can join for information and connecting with other participants.

The weekly organized hike program has not yet been set up. The water exercise programs -- ai chi, log rolling, and water aerobics -- should be started back up by the middle of June. Other programs will be starting up in the fall.

Ms. Knapp thanked Lauren for her presentation. Then Cindy Spanyers reported on progress in the Legislature. The House has passed the budget and the Senate is taking it up today. Jesse Kiehl put in an amendment that would move \$1Billion into the PERS account, which would have improved the unfunded liability situation in that system, but the amendment was defeated. There was a question about funding the Marine Highway System and reinstating the Prince Rupert stop on the system. The COVID relief money helped the MHS somewhat, but the effect is temporary. There are several issues with the Prince Rupert stop and no change is in the works at this time. House Joint Resolution 12 calls on Congress to repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision and the Government Pension Offset in Social Security law. These provisions dramatically reduces the Social Security benefit for retirees who get pensions from entities that do not pay into Social Security, so Alaska retirees get shortchanged. There are bills in Congress at this time to repeal those provisions.

House Bill 55 would add a new retiree tier for first responders. It passed the house and has been sent to the Senate. Senate Bill 55 would lift the payroll cap on employer contributions to PERS. That bill is still pending.

Nancy Shima reported on the last Medical Information Committee meeting. Our medical plan covers a range of vaccinations. However, flu and pneumonia shots are only covered until the end of the year. The temporary inclusion of TeleDoc services will end at the end of June. This is not the same as telemedicine calls -- consultations with specialists that are not locally available. Those calls will still be covered. The State is looking at some kind of Medicare Advantage plan to cover retirees. RPEA is following those discussions very closely as it may change the coverage we now enjoy. There are no details at this time.

Someone asked if RPEA is a union. This is an interesting question. We are affiliated with a union APEA/AFT (Alaska Public Employees Association/American Federation of Teachers), but we are not an actual union.

Brenda urged us to attend the picnic. There was no further business, so the meeting was adjourned at 11:27 AM.

Respectfully submitted by  
Alan Davis, Secretary