ASSOCIATION OF MONTANA RETIRED PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

Board Minutes

100 North Park – PERA Office, 2nd Floor Conference Room and Video Conference Call

May 19, 2020

CALL TO ORDER

The board meeting of the Association of Montana Retired Public Employees was called to order by Lyle Manley at 9:30 a.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Lyle Manley and Kim Hoxie(staff) were present. Connie Welsh, Dale Boespflug, Leo Hudetz, Patty Mott, Cathy Kendall, Jan Brown, James Driggers were present by conference call and Jim Lewis was excused.

GUESTS

Brian Thompson, AMRPE Lobbyist

Dore Schwinden, Executive Director, MPERA

Bill Holahan, MPERA

Mike O’Connor

Tim and Julie Reardon

MINUTES

Jan Brown made a motion to approve the February minutes, Connie Welsh seconded the motion, and the February minutes were approved unanimously.

MPERA UPDATE

Dore Schwinden thanked the board for supporting the Montana Public Employees’ Retirement Board with an amicus brief on the lawsuit regarding the separation of PureView from Lewis & Clark county.

He also extended appreciation to the Public Employee Retirement Administration (PERA) staff for successfully distributing benefit checks for the past two months while working remotely. PERA also made some changes to employer reporting which assisted in keeping the payments coming into PERA. Overall, working remotely has been successful.

Bill Holahan stated that the Supreme Court declined to hear the Petition by MPERA regarding the 1947 Contract between MPERA and Lewis & Clark County to participate in the Montana Public Employees’ Retirement System (MPERS), and the Constitution of the State of Montana, Section 15 regarding Public Retirement System Assets.

On May 1, 2020, MPERA filed a petition in District Court regarding the 1947 Contract between MPERA and Lewis & Clark County to participate in the Montana Public Employees’ Retirement System (MPERS), and the Constitution of the State of Montana, Section 15 regarding Public Retirement System Assets. MACo, Lewis and Clark and Cascade Counties also filed a petition regarding MPERA’s breach of contract, breach of implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing, and MPERA’s ability to assess penalties from County’s exceeds the original contract.

PUREVIEW LAWSUIT UPDATE

Brian Thompson confirmed the actions reported by Bill Holahan and suggested that the board consider no action on the District Court case until it deems necessary. He stated that he and the board should continue to monitor the case and consider action when it is prudent.

Brian Thompson stated he continues to participate in the Legislative Interim Finance Committee meetings and has not heard of any proposals for action yet. Several members that serve on the committee are not friendly to state pensions so it yet to be determined if they will pursue any legislative action next year.

REPORTS

**Treasurer’s Report**

James Driggers presented the financial report and the only notable expense is the legal fees due to the amicus brief.

A CD is coming due this summer and he will roll over the CD to one of the other CD accounts.

Connie Welsh made a motion to approve the May financial statement, Cathy Kendall seconded the motion, and the May financial statement was approved unanimously.

James Driggers did mention that AMPRE does not have a letter of understanding with Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry, and Hoven (BKBH) in this current non-legislature year and suggested that a letter be drafted now that Brian will not be working on the MPERA lawsuit. Lyle Manley will contact Brian to formalize the working relationship going forward.

**Membership**

Kim Hoxie on behalf of Patty Mott stated renewal dues are coming in on target and currently 87% of the renewals have been returned. The breakdown of renewals is as follows: Lifetime, 16 (2%); 1 year, 596 (80%); 2 year, 101 (14%); 3 year, 31(4%). (Patty Mott was having microphone issues on the video conference call.) Patty Mott also recommended to the board to wait until September for the next reminder letter due to COVID-19 and the handling of the membership envelopes and checks.

OLD BUSINESS

**Restructure of AMRPE Dues**

Lyle Manley stated that Patty Mott, Cathy Kendall and he have met and discussed the current membership dues pricing and suggest the following pricing for 2021: one year -$20; two year- $40; three year- $60 and Lifetime memberships dues: under 60 years old - $275; 60-70 years old -$225; and 70 years old and above -$175. Lyle Manley also stated he will send more information for the board to review to make a membership dues rate structure determination at the September board meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

**Opinion -Editorial Letter**

Connie Welsh stated that AMPRE purchased a membership to the Montana Newspaper Association that helped to distribute the editorial to newspapers in the state. Unfortunately, the editorial was in the newspapers just about the time COVID-19 really started and so the impact might have been overshadowed with the COVID-19 news. She suggested that AMRPE communicate in a series of two or three articles starting this summer on the benefits of the pension and a call to action by the public retirees to talk to political candidates to see where they stand on state pensions. The board discussed other ideas and Connie Welsh and Cathy Kendall will contact Teachers’ Retirement System to see if there is an opportunity to work jointly.

**Member Involvement**

Dale Boespflug, Connie Welsh, and Leo Hudetz started the process of looking at the areas of high concentration of membership but work is not yet finished due to the COVID-19 crisis. They will continue to develop a plan to increase member communication and involvement in AMRPE.

Lyle Manley adjourned the meeting at 10:45 a.m.

The next meeting will be held on September 15, 2020, 9:30 a.m. at 100 North Park – PERA Office, 2nd Floor Conference Room.