ASSOCIATION OF MONTANA RETIRED PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

Board Minutes

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

and Conference Call

September 15, 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, Connie Welsh, Cathy Kendall, Jan Brown, Dale Boespflug, Jim Lewis and Kim Hoxie (staff) were present, Leo Hudetz, Patty Mott, and James Driggers present by conference call.

GUESTS

Brian Thompson, AMRPE Lobbyist by conference call

Dore Schwinden, Executive Director, MPERA

Mike O’Connor

Tim and Julie Reardon by conference call

MINUTES

Cathy Kendall made a motion to approve the July minutes, Jan Brown seconded the motion, and the July minutes were approved unanimously.

MPERA UPDATE

Dore Schwinden stated that the Montana Public Employee Retirement Administration’s (MPERA) front office is being remodeled to add a waiting room, consultation room, and reconfigure the front desk so the staff are given additional safety in regards to contact with the public.

The Legislative Finance Committee is meeting today and reviewing some recommendations from the sub-committee on pensions. The subcommittee is recommending more oversight of the State Administration and Veterans’ Affairs (SAVA) and the potential hiring of an actuary for the legislative finance office.

Dore Schwinden stated that the annual actuary evaluation event will be in a couple of weeks.

Dore Schwinden commented that the member portal on the MPERA website is about ready for testing. James Driggers and Cathy Kendall volunteered to help test the member portal.

Legislative Finance Committee

Brian Thompson stated that he will be listening to the Legislative Finance Committee meeting today. The sub-committee was not swayed by MPERA’s presentation and are recommending hiring their own actuary. Brian stated that there is some discussion on how the legislative session will look in January. There are ongoing discussions about a virtual session or even delaying the session a couple of months. He predicts the focus of the session will be on public health, COVID-19 and the forecasted deficit. There are several bill draft requests on pension matters but he has not seen any details.

REPORTS

**Treasurer’s Report**

James Driggers presented the financial report and commented that revenue is staying ahead of expenses. He also noted that there has not been a lot of activity. Additional revenue will come from the new membership drive.

Patty Mott made a motion to approve the September financial statement, Dale Boespflug seconded the motion, and the September financial statement was approved unanimously.

**Membership**

Patty Mott stated that a handful of renewals are coming in each month. Currently 91% of the renewals have been returned. The breakdown of renewals is as follows: Lifetime, 19 (2%); 1 year, 611 (78%); 2 year, 114 (15%); 3 year, 38 (5%). Patty Mott stated the new membership mailing will be completed during the next week.

OLD BUSINESS

**Correspondence with Rep. Hamilton (Pew and Reason Foundation)**

Lyle Manley reported last January Representative Hamilton gave him some graphs with data from Pew and Reason Foundation indicating how the retirement system has been doing over the last eight years. After multiple requests to review specific data used to make the graphs, Representative Hamilton has not sent the information. Mike O’Connor has volunteered to use the Combined Annual Financial Report (CAFR) to develop graphs reporting how the retirement system has been doing over time.

**Letter agreement with BKBH**

Connie Welsh commented that she has sent the letter of understanding for lobbying services to Brian Thompson of Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry and Hoven, P.C. (BKBH) and they are reviewing the letter and will get back to her.

**Join forces with Teachers Retirement System (TRS)**

Connie Welsh stated that she and Cathy have a meeting with the Shawn Graham, Executive Director, Teachers’ Retirement System (TRS), on Monday to discuss ways TRS and AMRPE can work together to increase awareness about the economic impact State and Teacher retirees make in the State. One in ten Montanans receive their retirement benefits from Teachers’ Retirement System (TRS) or the Public Retirement System (PRS). This idea is not to impede the representation of Teachers (TRS) by Labor but to try to communicate the same message.

**Opinion -Editorial Letter**

Connie Welsh stated she is working on another article on the benefits of the state pension and a call to action by the public retirees to talk to political candidates to see where they stand on the state pension.

She mentioned it is important for Montanans to understand State employees have put 8% of their paychecks into the pension with matching funds from their employer just like in the private sector.

Connie will be asking for board members to help create and edit the article and help plan when the article will be distributed to the newspapers.

**What can we do to encourage members who live outside Helena to apply for Board positions or other volunteer activities?**

Cathy Kendall will schedule a committee meeting after October 15, 2020, to discuss some ideas. Committee members are Jan Brown, Leo Hudetz, Dale Boespflug.

New Business

**MPERA Presentations to New Retirees**

Dale Boespflug reported that he is waiting to hear from Joel Thompson, Education Specialist, MPERA, on the next steps regarding the retirement seminars. At that time, he will talk to board members about what information he should present to the groups.

Jim Lewis moved to adjourn. Connie Welsh seconded. Motion to adjourn the September 15, 2020, board meeting carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 11:33 a.m.

The next meeting will be held on October 20, 2020, 9:30 a.m. at 100 North Park – PERA Office, 2nd Floor Conference Room.