

A Message from Lyle Manley, AMRPE President

January 2019 started with the Legislature meeting in Helena. As a service to our members AMRPE engaged the law firm of Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry, & Hoven P.C. to help keep an eye on legislation and present AMRPE's position to the Legislature. In the end, thankfully, there were no bills enacted that would adversely impact your public employee retirement. All of us, however, must remain vigilant about any actions that could cause such impacts, especially with the 2020 elections in November. Again, we urge you to stay knowledgeable about the positions your local legislative candidates have taken regarding your pension. Please be proactive and contact your legislators by letter, email and telephone, as the most effective lobbying is often from a knowledgeable constituent.

AMRPE's former President, Mike O'Connor, has agreed to continue to keep track of legislation and other matters, such as the MPERA's positions that can impact the solvency of our retirement funds. For instance, interim legislative committees convened in Helena recently, and one of the issues they are looking at is the financing of state pensions. Mike attended hearings and met with legislators to learn what they have in mind. The Board and Mike will continue to monitor this situation. If any of the committees develop legislation regarding our interests, the Board will let you know and be ready to present your interests at next year's Legislature.

There have not been any changes to the AMRPE Board since last year. Cathy Kendall remains as Vice President, and James Driggers and Jan Brown remain as Treasurer and Secretary respectively.

Again, the Board wants to thank you for being members of AMRPE.

Meeting minutes are posted on www.AMRPE.org and will help to keep you informed of Association activities. If you have any questions, comments or ideas, don't hesitate to contact us. It is a pleasure to serve all our AMRPE members. Your all-volunteer Board will continue to work for you on matters that are of concern to retirees. ■

(Photo Courtesy of Susan Brueggeman-Foster)

MPERA Petitions the Montana Supreme Court

AMRPE Board reports on announcement of PureView Health Center plan to split from Lewis and Clark County.

Recently PureView Health Center (PureView) announced it is separating from Lewis and Clark County. Among other things, this means PureView's staff will no longer be county employees, and, therefore, neither the County nor the employees will contribute to the Montana Public Employee Retirement System (MPERS).

This will create a serious shortfall in the County's funding obligations for accrued pension benefits that have been earned by PureView employees. Early estimates show the County could owe MPERS over \$5,000,000.

Retirement system funding and financial reporting is complicated. It may be helpful to think of it this way. Because PureView employees are not being replaced by new workers in the system, the retirement fund will not receive the necessary contributions to pay off the PureView liability, which would happen if

those employees remained as County staff. Those employees, even after they leave county employment, are still vested in the MPERS. One day, when they do retire, they will be legally entitled to the full vested rights accrued while County employees. Without making some adjustment, an unfunded liability is created.

(Photo Courtesy of Steve Barry)



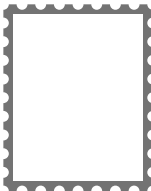
Dore Schwinden, Executive Director of the Montana Public Retired Employee Administration (MPERA), notified Lewis and Clark County of their funding obligations under Montana's Constitution and state law. It is important to note that

if the full actuarial costs are not paid by the county, the funding shortfall will need to be paid for by all remaining state, county, and local governmental entities participating in MPERS.

On January 29, 2020, the Montana Public Employees' Retirement Board (MPERB) petitioned the Montana Supreme Court to rule on whether MPERB has the authority to determine the amount of unfunded pension liabilities and collect payment when a component unit (e.g. PureView) of a participating employer (e.g. Lewis and Clark County) has terminated its participation in MPERS.

AMRPE has decided to file an Amicus brief in support of MPERA's action and will keep you updated through our website on whether the Supreme Court agrees to hear the case. ■

AMRPE
Association of Montana Retired Public Employees
PO Box 603, Helena, MT 59624
www.AMRPE.org



(Photo Courtesy of Tara Comfort)

- A Message from AMRPE President, Lyle Manley, &
- AMRPE Board article on PureView and Lewis & Clark County split,
- Updates on 2020 Legislature,
- And other membership updates...

Association of Montana Retired Public Employees 2020 Newsletter

Hello Member,

AMRPE
To enhance and protect
pensions and other benefits
for retired Montana Public
Employees

2020 Legislative Interim Committee Update

by Brian Thompson, AMRPE Lobbyist

Thompson provides insight on current Interim Legislative Finance Committee discussions related to retirement pensions.

While I am certain many of you are aware that the Montana Legislature only meets for about four (4) months in a 24-month cycle, you may not be aware that legislative committees continue to meet and conduct legislative business outside of the legislative session in a period known as the "interim." During the interim, legislative committees study various topics and typically propose draft legislation as a result.

HB 715 passed during the 2019 Legislative Session and called for an interim study of the State's finances including pensions and the impact of pensions on the state general fund. Specifically, a subcommittee of the interim finance committee has been tasked with studying pensions. While a specified direction or area of study has not yet been determined, pensions and changes to pensions will be in the interim discussions for the next 14 months.

The potential problem is that defined benefit systems depend upon new employees and their employers paying into the system as retired employees stop paying and begin to receive their benefit. Terminating the defined benefit pension system and making all new employees go to a defined contribution system would result in no new money coming into the defined benefit system. This would result in no money coming into the plan to pay the guaranteed pension benefits.

I would like to remind you about the importance of making efforts to know your local legislators and candidates for legislature. Some candidates for state office do not see value in the pension system or in protecting the pensions promised to state employees.

This continues to be an important issue and demonstrates the importance of your engagement in AMRPE and your local legislative campaigns. ▣

Introducing AMRPE's New Lobbyist, Brian Thompson

Dave Galt & Brian Thompson were our lobbying team from Browning, Kaleczyc, Berry & Hoven, P.C. for the 2019 legislative session. With Mr. Galt retiring, Mr. Thompson is now managing AMRPE's lobbying efforts. Knowing that Mr. Thompson has previous experience working with us, we are confident this Anaconda, MT native will help in AMRPE's efforts to protect our member's retirement benefits. ▣



(Photo Courtesy of Dan Nichols)

Your Membership Matters!

by Patty Mott, AMRPE Board & Membership Committee Member



Learn how AMRPE has been working for you and how you can help in the efforts to protect your retirement.

Does it seem like everyone wants a piece of your coveted retirement benefit? Be assured that the dues you pay to the Association of Montana Retired Public Employees (AMRPE) are funds well spent. Membership dues and donations are used for communications, postage, web site maintenance and for a lobbyist to defend our retirement benefits before the legislature.

For instance, HB 715 (for information on HB 715 go to www.AMRPE.org) was passed in the last legislative session to study among other things, retirement systems. AMRPE continues to monitor and communicate the activities of the Interim Study Committee on Pension Sustainability to assure future legislation does not degrade your retirement benefits.

As referenced in more detail in this newsletter (See the 'MPERA Petitions the Montana Supreme Court'

article) AMRPE is supporting the Montana Public Employee Retirement Administration (MPERA) in their appeal to the Montana Supreme Court on the matter of Lewis and Clark County's unfunded liability obligation to the state retirement system. If the unfunded liability obligation goes unpaid, there will be a several million-dollar shortfall in the account that pays your retirement benefits.

Our work does not cease in a non-legislative year. It is vital to our association to have a strong membership. Remember, AMRPE is the ONLY organization dedicated 100% to advocating for retiree benefits.

Each September we solicit new retirees to join our association. You can assist in the endeavor to increase AMRPE's membership by sharing information with friends, neighbors or family regarding the vital work AMRPE does for Public Employee Retirement System retirees. ▣

Notice to Current Members: You may refer to the address label on this newsletter for your current renewal year status (Lifetime members do not require renewal, but donations are welcome). If you have questions about your membership status or renewal due date, please call our membership administrators at (406) 442-4934 or email at Inquiry@AMRPE.org.

(Photo Courtesy of Christopher Mumme)

Refer a Fellow Retiree to Join Today!

Do you have a friend or family member who recently retired from a public entity?

You can help them by sharing information, like this newsletter or our website (AMRPE.org), to inform them of what AMRPE does for retirees. With your help we can continue a strong membership and remain vigilant of your retirement benefits. ▣

New Membership Form ▶▶▶▶

Submission Instructions: Cut out the section to the right on the dotted line and send your new membership form to:
AMRPE, PO Box 603, Helena, MT 59624.

If you have questions please call or email:
(406) 442-4934
Inquiry@AMRPE.org

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

- ☐ 1 year for \$15
- ☐ 2 years for \$29
- ☐ 3 years for \$43

Additional donation enclosed \$ _____

LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP

- ☐ \$250 if under age 60
- ☐ \$200 if 60-69 years of age
- ☐ \$150 if 70 or older

Member Information (please print)

FIRST NAME		MI	LAST NAME	
ADDRESS		CITY	STATE	ZIP
TELEPHONE		EMAIL		
YEAR BORN	YEAR RETIRED	RETIRED FROM		

If you have questions about renewal or submission details please call: (406) 442-4934.