

SONOMA COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED EMPLOYEES (SCARE)  
P.O. BOX 5513, SANTA ROSA, CA 95402 [www.sonomacountyretirees.com](http://www.sonomacountyretirees.com)

Minutes of SCARE Board Meeting of Wednesday, May 5, 2021  
ZOOM Meeting – 1 p.m.

**Board Members in Attendance:** Carol Bauer, Chris Bauer, Ed Clites, Shaun DuFosee, Cora Guy, Patty Hamley, John Pels, Bill Robotka, Alix Shor, and Kathy Young

**Absent:** Phyris Tobler and Lou Maricle

The Zoom Meeting was called to order by President Alix Shor.

**1. Minutes:** It was moved by Kathy, seconded by John, and agreed by all that the Minutes of the February 23<sup>rd</sup> Membership Meeting and March 3<sup>rd</sup> Board Meeting are approved.

**2. Treasurer's Report:** Bill reported he left the money in the Money Market account for now as interest rates are very low at this time.

**3. Update on Filing 2020 IRS Taxes:** After completing our tax returns, Phyris learned they have to be electronically filed. She has filed for an extension and will complete this process when she returns from vacation.

**4. Speaker for May 25<sup>th</sup> Membership Zoom Meeting:** Cora has scheduled Attorney Tate Birnie of the Birnie Law Firm in Sebastopol to speak at our May 25<sup>th</sup> on the topic of Estate Planning. Alix will send Tate the zoom link for the meeting.

**5. Membership Meeting Places:** Patty reported Finley Center, Steele Lane Community Center, and the Vets Memorial Building are still closed due to the sheltering-in-place order. She was told that the Finley and Steele Lane will be opening soon. She was given the name of the person to call at Finley Center and left him a message to call her. (Our members have complained about the parking situation at Steele Lane, so Finley would be preferable.)

**6. Membership Survey Results Continued:** We received comments about using technology and recording meetings so they may be viewed later. We are working on the details to use technology to accommodate those outside Sonoma County and those unable to attend meetings. Shaun DuFosee will be working on this project.

**7. JLMBC:** Bill reported he and Phyris lobbied that the County use some of the County Health Plan (CHP) fund balance to decrease the cost. The County agreed and premiums went down 1% instead of up by 2.5%. Savings of \$46 a month for those under 65 and \$25 for those on Medicare.

The County announced that Western Health Advantage (WHA) was willing to offer a Medicare Advantage Plan and had proposed a very competitive rate. It is a bit more expensive than Kaiser Senior Advantage and the AARP/United Healthcare plans but has some advantages over them. Not too many people actually switched to WHA.

Still hoping that Sutter will offer a Medicare plan, maybe next year. It is preferable for retirees who have Sutter when they are under 65 to be able to stay with their same plan and doctors when they hit 65.

At the last meeting JLMBC, discussed an RFP for managing the CHP pharmacy benefit. This will be something that carries out over the next year. Also discussed medical and dental RFPs, and are strongly leaning against either of these in the near future.

Lastly, a class action lawsuit settlement with Blue Cross was discussed. Not clear how much, if at all, it will apply to our members, but Segal will be monitoring and let us know if so.

**8. SCCLC:** Bill reported the County unions are moving slowly forward with the County/Labor Retirement Benefit Committee and are still working on ground rules. Good news is that the labor groups did good work preparing for these meetings and showed great solidarity in the initial meetings. They challenged a change the County proposed – allowing for individual/independent recommendations to the Board of Supervisors/CAO – and insisted on all recommendations coming from the committee be agreed to by all to move forward. This is a long-term project and will carry into next year.

**9. ICPC:** Bill reported one of the Independent Citizens Pension Committee’s main tasks is to review and comment on the County’s annual “State of the Retirement System” report to the Board of Supervisors (BOS). Bill and one of the “Taxpayer’s Association” members were assigned this task this year. Both reviewed the draft report individually, then had a three-hour phone discussion to share their observations and comments. Surprisingly, they agreed on almost all the items they had issue with, and then provided them in writing to the CAO staff, Nikolas Klein, and SCERA Director Julie Wyne. They then had a telephone conversation with Nikolas and went over all the points of concern they had. The County made some changes to this year’s report and committed to looking at changes for next year’s report based on our comments. There are still issues Bill has: Reporting reimbursed employee contributions as an “expense” while not showing the contribution amounts; lumping “pre-Legacy” (3% at 50/60) retirees into one group when describing benefits and demographics; and not showing the gains earned from pension bonds (that was the prime selling point of the bonds), showing only the “cost” of the pension bond obligations. The report will be presented to the BOS on May 11<sup>th</sup> (around 11 a.m.) and will be worth sitting in for.

**10. Pension Protection (North Bay Labor Council):** Bill reported in March we received a request from the North Bay CLC for a donation to support the production of three research-based issue briefs by the UC Berkeley Labor Center, addressing the cost and value of pension benefits. The focus of these briefs will be Marin County, but there is significant applicability for Sonoma County as well (both have 1937 Act pension systems). Bill made a motion to donate \$1,000 to

the North Bay CLC to support this project. It was seconded by Ed Clites and unanimously approved.

**11. CRCEA Membership Meeting:**

Carol reported Michael Bidart gave an update of the Long-Term Care lawsuit against the State's retirement system. Things are moving along. There may be an insurance company willing to step in as the provider of the LTC program offered by PERS. PERS is looking at another rate increase. A suggestion being looked at includes opting for lower benefit levels instead of or as an alternative to the increase.

There was discussion about affiliates. At one point there were 15, and now there are four. Only two of the current four have paid their dues, which are \$400 a year. To increase the number, businesses want to see a positive impact from affiliating with us, which is not always easy to show.

The next conference is scheduled for November. They will be making a final decision in early September. They are looking at a survey as to how many counties will be sending a rep. The Spring 2023 conference will be entirely virtual.

(Chris and Carol will be in Alaska June – August.)

**12. Adjourn:** There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,  
Patty Hamley, Secretary

**2021 Schedule:**

- May 25 – Membership Meeting 1 p.m.
- June 9 – Luncheon (canceled)
- July 7 – Board Meeting 1 p.m.
- August 24 – Membership Meeting 1 p.m.
- September 1 – Board Meeting 1 p.m.
- September 8 – Luncheon
- November 3 – Board Meeting 1 p.m.
- November 16 – Membership Meeting
- December 8 -- Luncheon