

RETIREE SUPPORT GROUP OF CONTRA COSTA COUNTY
MINUTES
April 6, 2017

1. Opening

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 AM. Bill Cullen led the Pledge of Allegiance. A quorum was present for the meeting. Chair Pat Patterson introduced members attending RSG for the first time.

2. Minutes from the February 2, 2017, meeting -

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes from our last meeting; motion passed unanimously.

3. Treasurer's Report - Terry Mann

Terry reported that all checks received to date have been deposited and all bills have been paid. It was moved and seconded to approve the Treasurer's report; motion passed unanimously.

4. Status Reports -

Pat Patterson for Steve Ojena: He and Steve have met with the professional web designer who will update and modernize our website. They have one more meeting planned.

Mike Sloan: There has been some movement on the CalPERS Long Term Care lawsuit. The actuarial firm used by CalPERS to set rates went to the judge to request a summary judgement on just their part of the lawsuit. On March 8th they settled with the plaintiffs for \$9.75 million. Class members may have already received a notice explaining the settlement. The CalPERS part of the lawsuit continues unchanged. The plaintiffs' attorneys are preparing questions/answers for the class members about the settlement with the actuarial firm, Towers Watson, and what happens next. Next week Mike will be attending a conference. The speaker will be one of the plaintiffs' attorneys so he should have more information at our next meeting.

5. Doug Pipes on changes to the bylaws, dues, and litigation fund -

Doug provided the five reasons the Board wants to make changes to the health care litigation fund: a) It makes no sense to keep a fund for a war that is completed; b) We shouldn't collect money from members for a purpose we don't need; c) There are groups who want to take away benefits we do receive, such as our pensions; d) We need to prepare in advance to be ready to fight to keep our benefits intact; d) We shouldn't collect dues beyond what we need to be adequately prepared.

The RSG Board of Directors has proposed the following seven motions:

- a) To rename the fund as the "RSG Retiree Allowances (Pensions) and Benefits Litigation Fund"
- b) To limit expenditures from the Fund to support litigation and advocacy for retirement allowances and benefits for the members of RSG;
- c) To keep existing dues at \$10 per month with \$8 of that amount going into the Fund until the Fund has reached a balance of \$500,000;
- d) When the Fund has reached a balance of \$500,000 to suspend the \$8 portion of the dues until The Board deems it necessary and by majority vote reinstates the \$8 portion of the dues;
- e) To prohibit using any money in the Fund for partisan or nonpartisan public office including candidates running for election of the CCCERA Board or County Board of Supervisors;
- f) To transfer \$100,000 from the RSG General Fund to the RSG Retiree Allowances and Benefits

Litigation Fund as soon as RSG members approve the three measures presented to RSG members in a special election;

g) To require the RSG Board of Directors to consider moving additional money from the General Fund into the new Fund at the end of each year until the balance of \$500,000 in the new Fund is reached.

No action will be taken to make changes unless the members approve the ballot measures. The ballot measures will be explained in a special “Between Meetings News” that will be out by April 15th. Ballots will be sent out by May 15th with a return date of June 12th. The returned ballots will be counted and certified by the Election Committee by June 17th, and the results will be reported to members on or about July 1st.

Our tax status will not be altered with these changes. We file tax returns annually and will continue to do so. The bylaws change just gives the Board the authority to suspend collection of \$8 per month in dues at the proper time.

Once the money is put into the new litigation fund, it may not be taken out except for its designated purpose. The money can’t be used for political purposes or for funding political candidates. Doug noted that RSG is not a union and the political opinions of individuals in our group may greatly differ; using money for political purposes might have the effect of splitting up the group.

By moving \$100,000 from the general fund into the new litigation fund, the Board hopes to decrease the amount of time it will take before the \$8 in additional dues can be suspended. To redirect any of the money in the future will require a vote of the Board and a vote of the members.

One member asked if the County could change the terms of our health care lawsuit settlement; Doug replied that if they do so they would be in violation of an order made by a Federal Court Judge so that is not likely to happen.

Should the members of RSG want the Board to be able to move money from the new litigation fund back to the general fund, a new ballot would be necessary. When the health care litigation fund was established in 2008, we made no provisions for what to do with the remaining money when the lawsuit ended. Passage of the ballot measures will provide the necessary transition to be made by the healthcare litigation fund and will ensure that we are prepared to defend our pension benefits should attacks make it necessary to do so.

6. Guest Speaker* - Laura Cepoi -

Laura is currently a Program Manager for the Area Agency on Aging for Contra Costa County. Prior to working for Contra Costa she worked with the California Regional Center system for 20-years expanding and creating opportunities in community-based service delivery. She serves as Commissioner for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) committee in Napa and serves on the Board of Meals on Wheels. In her spare time, she serves as a Naturalist for the State of California.

Laura has concerns about the senior citizens in the Bay Area. When they don’t have enough income to remain in the Bay Area, seniors tend to move East and don’t do as well, higher mortality. California has the highest rate of poverty for seniors in the nation. She told us that 45% of seniors don’t have enough money to meet their needs. One out of every two seniors is malnourished. Our over 85 population will be growing by 65% in the next few years. Whether or not they have a mortgage, they will experience the growing costs of living in the Bay Area. Currently, a one-bedroom apartment in Contra Costa is \$1800 per month, and 60% of elder income is spent on housing.

There is also a cost to the County. More seniors will be relying on long-term Medi-Cal. There will be more cases of Alzheimer's than we are prepared for. We don't have the infrastructure to support the services they will need.

The State Legislature has shown little interest in aging issues and this is not high on the Governor's priority. In the last year and for the first time there have been more reports of elder abuse than child abuse. Often elders are living alone, isolated, and most of the time they are cared for by family members. Risk factors go up because of isolation, and the factors are similar to those that cause child abuse.

Since we as a population are aging better, we now consider those over the age of 85 the "elderly." People ages 64-74 are considered early retirees and 74-84 as mature retirees. In Napa and Marin, there are more people over the age of 60 than younger than 18. In Contra Costa, much of the workforce is over 50. We may need to entice older people back into the workforce.

In January, the Board of Supervisors approved supporting more resource growth for the aging population, including supports to keep people in the community. The supports include activities to enrich the lives of the elderly.

Meals make a difference. The cost of meals for a year is equal to one night in a hospital. The Older Americans act funds \$2.4 million for Meals on Wheels. An additional \$1.3 million comes from donations. CDBG funding assists congregate meals and meal delivery for an additional \$70,000.

The Department of Labor funds a grant for the employment of seniors who have been homeless. One person went from living in a skilled nursing facility to a job. Half of homeless seniors need work. Some are working with not enough money to keep them from being homeless.

About \$1 million will be cut from the CDBG in the proposed budget. All of the County's programs for the elderly are federally funded.

One of the first skills to go away when a person has Alzheimer's is math skills. This makes it easier for seniors to be susceptible to financial abuse and scams. Many seniors cannot understand all the factors when considering a reverse mortgage and can lose their homes.

Younger caretakers who work with isolated seniors living alone represent a large fraction of financial losses. \$88,000 is the estimated average loss in money and assets to victims. We want to be able to give people as much freedom as they need, but it is hard to tell when someone is just beginning to lose mental capacity and when it is a "choice" to provide a stranger or acquaintance gifts especially when there is no other support person or family member in that person's life.

There currently is funding for caregiver education that is contracted through various agencies in the County. For information about these programs, call the Area Agency on Aging. They believe that 90% of all caregiving is done by family members. The classes are available at no cost.

For more information from the Area Agency on Aging, call them at 1-800-510-2020. There are committee opportunities available, and volunteers are welcome. Questions for Laura may be sent to her email: lcepoi@ehsd.cccounty.us.

Chair Pat Patterson told Laura that in lieu of an honorarium, a check for \$100 would be sent to her favorite charity. RSG will send a check in her honor to Meals on Wheels.

7. Clawback issues - Doug Pipes for Jack Funk

Clawback issues began when CCCERA sent a group of physicians, dentists, and hazmat workers notices that their pensions would be cut because CCCERA was disallowing some of the pay that was originally included in their pension computations. They are now down to a few people. After they have made their decisions on the last situations, CCCERA is closing the books on

clawback so no other retirees will be affected by it.

8. Group Information Sharing -

Peggy Anderson: Peggy shared information about a wonderful organization she attends. The Cancer Support Community provides support groups and many activities for individuals with cancer and their families and caregivers. Their amazing activities include nutrition, meditation, Tai Chi, and Yoga. Peggy said they have a chef who cooks nutritious meals in front of the participants for them to sample. They are in Walnut Creek on the Pleasant Hill border near the Pleasant Hill Library. They will soon be moving to a space near the Lafayette Reservoir. One of the great things about this organization is that they provide small groups in which people can be supported while going through a difficult time.

One other member said that the Cancer Support Community is a great organization. They helped him help his children deal with cancer in his home.

Thelma Wheeler: Thelma reported that in February she took the leftover food from our barbecue luncheon to the Loaves and Fishes dining room in Martinez. The donation was very much appreciated.

Sue: Sue participates in a taxpayer's organization in Contra Costa County. They worry about the solvency of the County. They're concerned about the amount small pensions are being taxed. You can go to www.cocotax.org to give them suggestions about where they can look at unnecessary taxation. Sue said they are not out to get the public retirees, they want to make sure no one is over-taxed.

Janet: Janet works at a small museum in the County. She suggests that we support local museums because funding for the arts is being cut.

Will Emes: Will sets up the coffee pot for our meetings (Thank you, Will!). He said he will also be putting out green tea because of its health benefits.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:47 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Elaine Grothmann,
Secretary

*The Board of Directors of the Retiree Support Group of Contra Costa County invites guest speakers to our bi-monthly meetings to provide stimulating and current information about subjects that we believe will be of interest to our members. The Board's presentation of these guest speakers does not constitute an endorsement of the opinions and views expressed by these guest speakers. The opinions and expressions of our guest speakers are their own and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of the Board of Directors or of the Retiree Support Group.