

Peralta Retirees Organization

Meeting Minutes: September 6, 2023

Present: Debby Weintraub, Bruce Jacobs Jerry Herman, Burt Dragin, Ann Elliott, Michael Mills  
Jose Ortiz, Kerry Compton, Greg Marro, Paulina Gonzales-Brito, Sheweeet Yohannes

Agenda item	Discussion	Follow up action
Meeting	Convened at 2:09 p.m; expecting Paulina to Join at 2:30; Sheweeet to join at 3:00	
Minutes	Reviewed and accepted	
Treasurer's Report	<p>Bruce hired outside person to clean up website. Web information is up to date. Between postage, printing and layout of Newsletter the cost is about \$1000 per issue. Always option to publish on-line. Readership is older and adults who prefer to read printed Newsletter. The first issue costs and then it is pennies for next. Alert, we will run out of money.</p> <p>Jerry: Need new revenue sources.</p> <p>Burt: Next Newsletter is Oct-Nov-Dec; nearing deadline. Last issue was late. If we are to stick to quarterly?</p> <p>Deb: May need to insert page in next issue about Newsletter issues and recruit new retiree members. We could issue mail chimp asking for more contributions</p>	
Benefits & Newsletter discussion	<p>Question about how many retirees have lifetime benefits. Numbers going down.</p> <p>Bruce: Directory has a number of deceased listed; must clean up.</p> <p>Jerry: There are still active employees who are entitled to lifetime benefits. We must capture eligible retirees. Calculate how much lifetime benefits are worth. Recalculate membership dues.</p> <p>Deb: Ask to put something in PFT Newsletter to appeal to Actives; using Union outreach.</p> <p>Bruce: Used to do workshop; none since pandemic.</p> <p>Deb: Aim for another workshop with SEIU and PFT.</p> <p>Bruce: Workshop on how Medicare works with Peralta benefits; How to apply for Peralta reimbursement.</p> <p>Kerry: What are other items available thru PRO?</p> <p>Michael: Point out PRO is advocate of lifetime benefits; insure we get those benefits during negotiations. 23% of PFT current employees are eligible for lifetime. When going thru mailing Newsletter, Mike found of number of interesting PRO members. e.g. Rick Greenspan</p>	

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	<p>Deb: Newsletter is only information provided to retirees. We should be proud of our work. District Retiree benefits Newsletter includes reference to PRO. Questions for Paulina; Advise no one in District has been reimbursed to date. There is a form that must be filled out with receipts. Recent letter asking if anyone received reimbursement. District claim to make retirees whole, but no progress over this year. Nicky Yuen and Louis Quinlan trying to effect change; hopefully Jerry: Form asks applicant to become a vendor. No highlighted sections</p>	
<p>Paulina joins group</p>	<p>Introductions: Jose Ortiz, former Chancellor; Kerry Compton, VP College of Alameda; Burt Dragin, Journalism instructor and Editor of Pro Newsletter; Jerry Herman, English Dept Chair and Pro Founder; Michael Mills, 39 years with Peralta, PFT President, Retirement Board Advisor, Ann Elliott, Merritt College, Judy Cohen, Financial Aid Director, Classified Senate President, Greg Marro, Chair SEIU State Retirees;</p> <p>Paulina, son is student at BCC, disabled, 19 yrs old; living in Oakland 10 years; attended community college in Los Angeles and UCLA; ran non-profit, knocking down barriers of generational wealth; very much concerned with college benefits for disabled students; came to Peralta as appointee, still learning; recently read about benefits fiasco.</p> <p>Bruce: District started offering lifetimes from beginning in 1960, per State encouragement. Teachers not paying into Medicare. Retirees would retire with benefits they received on the date of retirement.</p> <p>Certainty about what is received. Peralta faculty lower salary. In the 90's there were many retirees. Expensive for District. Rumors the District would renege and so PRO was created to give unified voice for retirees, OPEB /bond provided funds for benefits.</p> <p>PRO took lead in educating District and getting retirees to join Medicare; all are now on Medicare.</p> <p>Until 1/1/23 District was self-insured by Blue Cross and Kaiser. When District joined CISC, many retirees in both Kaiser and PPO has benefits change dramatically. District promised to reimburse retirees for loss of benefits (Does not affect Actives) Thousands of dollars lost.</p>	

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	<p>Deb: people have been filling out forms. New requirements for past receipts. PRO to District; reimbursement process must be in place; claims are being denied. District made agreement with CISC without including retirees- we are collateral damage.</p> <p>Michael: Benefits Office does not have a lead person. Harizon resigned. VC McKinley, Fiscal Administrator leaving at the end of the year. Lack of leadership in Benefits. Paulina: letter sent in March. What should District do right now?</p> <p>Jerry: Make sure Benefits Office is fully staffed with people who are competent and understand the meaning of Benefits.</p> <p>Mike: This was presented as a problem to Dr. McKinley; a submission of invoices with statement called for practice; previously this was covered.</p> <p>Deb: McKinley sent out letter. PRO talked about simplifying the process; not requiring old records and receipts from aging retirees. PRO modified McKinley's letter and form. He said "sure" and then nothing followed. The forms are ridiculous. Let's go back to previous agreement and process, which was manageable. Dr. McKinley needs to put more energy into Benefits Dept. There is no support- no answers- no blaming Harizon who is gone. Request to give answers to questions within 48 hours.</p> <p>Paulina: Does District letter outline simpler process?</p> <p>Bruce: District form requires information that most people will have problems addressing. There is no appeal process.</p> <p>SPD- Booklet has 80 pages that are difficult to search for reference about benefits. It should be sufficient to say "this benefit was covered before" without having to reference SPD.</p> <p>Deb: Welcome Shewett, Trustee representing West Oakland and Emeryville. She gathers there are multiple steps toward reimbursement.</p> <p>Deb: Medicare is primary. Kaiser has Medicare program. First to reimburse. PPO has supplement that covers. Only if supplement does NOT cover is when issue reaches District. Retiree First is there to help navigate forms and process. Shewett; seems unclear which documents are required.</p> <p>Deb: McKinley, head of HR; letter went out and prior to that there was no instructions or process. PRO asked if anyone had been reimbursed; NOT ONE person has received reimbursement. If questions are asked, there is no answer.</p> <p>Kerry: sent claim for acupuncture in June; sent via certified mail; limit to 180 days to respond. Resent in July, and again. Nothing received. Filled out application to</p>	
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	<p>become vendor-nothing. Medicare does not pay for acupuncture. She is owed \$1300 and still needs treatment; costs \$400/month. Concern about 180 days cut off. Submitted in June for services in January-March.</p> <p>Mike; nearing end of calendar year. Trustees-can we consider interim policy until new Administrator and policy in place? Retiree submits form indicating this was paid before and now not reimbursed. Funds for reimbursement come from District and eventually from OPEB.</p> <p>Deb: We don't have to reinvent; just use simplified form. McKinley agreed at end of July. Would make significant difference. Suggestion PRO send form to all Trustees.</p> <p>Shewett; Trustees can respond back to PRO but not as group to each other.</p> <p>Bruce: McKinley's form is on Peralta website in Benefits section. Will send link to Paulina and attach other documents. Can use Peralta.edu address. Invite Trustees to join PRO Facebook.</p> <p>Bruce: Kaiser would not accept anyone who does not reside in California. Very difficult for aged retirees to figure out.</p> <p>Deb; lack of any response. Questions asked are demoralizing. Aging population. No answers. No response. Not enough staff. Something major has to happen.</p> <p>Michael: What to do immediately. An action directive from Trustees to staff HR Benefits Office. Move quickly to enlarge HR.</p> <p>Paulina will raise issue and look for answers. PRO thanks Trustees and hopes this becomes an Agenda item rather than Public comment. Deb will forward problem snippets to Trustees.</p> <p>Shewett has had similar problems as a Veteran. Difficult to get organization to respond. She will look at issues for streamlining.</p> <p>Deb: PRO members feel very attached to Peralta. Most have devoted years to Peralta. This was our Home. We are not out to "pull one over." We like Peralta.</p> <p>Paulina: Thanks for your service. Will try to get answers. Will send Cell number.</p> <p>Bruce: Will send History of Lifetime Benefits. We are lucky. Will give use of history. Trustees leave meeting.</p>	
<p>Newsletter Story</p>	<p>Meeting Trustees. Burt: Ask for Tom Turman drawing? Bruce: Will do piece on reimbursements; put it in one place to understand process.</p> <p>Burt: Need to set deadlines and word length. Had to cut comments from scholarship winners.</p>	

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	<p>Deb: In the next week ask Burt to send deadlines and he will put together a style book; write things in the same way.</p> <p>Michael; Appropriate for Newsletter; article from Mark Greenside, about 200 words.</p> <p>We are in September, no time to get out by October. Deb: Beginning of November? Picnic photos; nice Vibe; must be timely in case District changes information.</p> <p>Burt: Short pieces about useful information (call it The Periscope) ; wait until last minute in order to be timely. Get information from users who have coverage. Is it working for them?</p> <p>Bruce: United American is a supplement which does not have to be taken by provider. Important to distinguish between Secondary and Supplement. So far everything paid by United American. Secondary is insurance company-after Medicare-payment is submitted and reviewed. May pay for non-Medicare provider. Supplement pays for what Medicare does not cover. If service not under Medicare, Supplement won't pay.</p> <p>Deb: How is Retiree First working for people?</p>	
	<p>Decide if there will be membership meeting- Election of Officers.</p> <p>Bruce sent out email about open enrollment in October. He thinks Medicare Advantage horrible. Who is happy with it?</p> <p>Burt: email directing people to site for open enrollment.</p> <p>Deb: Verify that open enrollment is happening. We must do business via email and make decisions about membership meeting; Maybe in December.</p> <p>Bruce: Yes, we should have membership meeting; maybe in restaurant; good for recruitment. We should email about it.</p>	<p>Deb will email about membership meeting.</p> <p>Burt will email deadlines.</p>
	<p>Jose Ortiz: District lacks leadership; unacceptable; we are being ghosted. New Chancellor should understand retirees are an important group.</p>	
	<p>Greg: SEIU 1021 Noted if you select Medicare Advantage, that is final. Is that true for Peralta? In Peralta there are 3 choices; Medicare Advantage, Senior Advantage; PPO. Tell Union Administrators to negotiate enrollment benefits.</p>	
Next Meeting	December 6 <sup>th</sup> , 2023. 1:00-3:00 PM	
Meeting Adjourned	4:11 pm	

Respectfully submitted,  
Judith Cohen