

Voices of Experience

Newsletter for OEA-Retired

Omaha Education Association–Retired is an affiliate of NSEA-Retired and NEA-Retired
Roger Rea, Editor – email: rea68154@yahoo.com www.OEAretired.org October 2020

Oct. 8 meeting topics: OSERS update & transfer to Lincoln; elections

The pandemic has cancelled most in-person meetings, and OEA-Retired is no exception. The Oct. 8 meeting of OEA-Retired will be held virtually, via Zoom. OEA-Retired members for whom we have a valid email address will receive a link to the Zoom meeting. If you received emails from the OEA-Retired webmaster in September about the live-stream hearing for the Legislative Retirement Committee on LR 318, then OEA-Retired has a valid email address for you and will use that email address to invite you to the Oct. 8 Zoom meeting. If you did not receive that email, you can send your email address to Scott McGinty, OEA-Retired Webmaster, at webmaster@oearetired.org to receive the emailed link to the meeting.

The Zoom meeting will start at 10 a.m. The email invitation to the meeting will have a “clickable link” that will take you to the meeting itself. Clicking on the link will put guests into a “virtual waiting room” until the meeting host is ready to begin the meeting. The host will admit guests from this “virtual waiting room” when the speakers are ready to start.

The Oct. 8 meeting will feature two speakers: Cecelia Carter, OSERS Director, will give an update on the status of OSERS; and Linda Richards, Better Together Coalition Facilitator, will give an update on the status of the transition of the OSERS office to Lincoln that the OPS Board of Education supports. More information about that matter can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

OEA-Retired elections that were to be held in May for the offices of Secretary and At-Large Board of Directors members will also be held at the Oct. 8

How to Join a Zoom meeting

*If you have used Zoom for other meetings, you do not need to download additional software to join the Oct. 8 meeting. If this will be the first time you have used Zoom, it is best to download the software before the meeting starts. Go to www.zoom.us, enter your email address, and sign up for a **free account**. That way you will be ready for the Oct. 8 meeting. You can also download Zoom onto your smartphone or mobile device by going to the appropriate app store (Google Play or Apple Store) and downloading the Zoom app (it is available for both Android and Apple phones and mobile devices).*

Click on the link for the Oct. 8 meeting in the email to join the meeting. You can join with or without video. You do need speakers to hear the meeting, but you do not need a microphone – if you want to ask a question, just enter your questions into the “chat box.”

To find tutorial videos about how to use Zoom, type “Joining a Zoom meeting” into the Google search box of your browser. “Just Google it!”

meeting.

Mark Oct. 8 at 10 a.m. on your calendar now and plan to attend the Zoom meeting. If you have never joined a Zoom meeting, instructions on how to do that can be found in this newsletter.

LB 31 calls for closing OSERS office, and moving operations to Lincoln

On September 18, the Legislative Retirement Committee received a report authorized by LB 31, which called for a study on merging the governance and management of the Omaha School Employees’ Retirement System, OSERS, with the state retirement systems, NPERS. The study had two parts: one was completed by Linea Solutions, Inc., and dealt with the technical requirements for such a merger; the second was completed by the NPERS office and dealt with the personnel requirements to accomplish such a merger. Both reports are posted on the OEA-Retired web

page, www.OEAretired.org. The reports outlined the costs and challenges of making the merger, but it did not recommend that the merger go forward. A new legislative bill would need to be introduced in a future Legislative session to address details of any proposed merger.

The OPS Board of Education testified in favor of moving forward with the proposed merger. At a recent OPS Board meeting, the board approved this position statement as part of their Legislative Package: *We encourage the introduction and passage of*

legislation which would transfer management of OSERS to the Public Employees Retirement Board as contemplated in the LB 31 reports.

At the September 4 meeting of the OSERS Board, the trustees adopted a position statement in opposition to a proposed merger. The OSERS trustees cited the \$4 to \$6 million upfront costs for any merger, a nearly three-year time frame to complete the merger, the significant loss of member services that a merger would cause, and the fact that a merger does nothing to address the funding issues facing OSERS. It is important to note that OPS has no role in the management of the day-to-day operations of OSERS, and is prevented from having a role by state law.

Walta Sue Dodd, OEA-Retired President, testified at the hearing. She pointed out that there were many issues raised in the LB 31 reports that need to be resolved before any merger can go forward. Transferring the OSERS administration to NPERS does nothing to help OSERS or to help OPS, but it does afford significantly fewer services for OSERS members and does not appear to save any money. She noted that OSERS has worked well providing retirement benefits to OPS employees for more than 100 years with just one office in Omaha. She suggested leaving things as they are, saying, "... follow the rule for household repairs: If it ain't broke, don't fix it!"

OEA-Retired meeting calendar set

OEA-Retired will have four general meetings this year. The meetings will be held either via Zoom or in-person at the OEA office, 4202 South 57th Street, from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. The type of meeting (Zoom or in-person) will be announced in *Voices of Experience* prior to each meeting. The meeting dates and tentative programs as well as NSEA-Retired meetings of note are:

- Oct. 8, Thurs.** – OSERS update and Potential Transfer of OSERS to NPERS; OEA-Retired elections
- Oct. 16, Fri.** NSEA-Retired Fall Conference via Zoom, 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
- Dec. 10, Thurs.** – Tax Tips and Tips on Wills and Estate Planning (Bridget O'Malley),
- Feb. 16, Tues.** – NSEA-Retired Lobby Day in Lincoln, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- March 11, Thurs.** – Visit Omaha (things to do locally)
- April 22, Thurs.** – NSEA-Retired Spring Conference at Lincoln Children's Zoo
- April 23-24, Fri. and Sat.** – NSEA Delegate Assembly (Lincoln)
- May 13, Thurs.** – Pandemic review / Health Updates; OEA-Retired elections (if needed)

If OPS schools are closed or delayed due to inclement weather on the date of our meeting, the OEA-Retired in-person meeting will be canceled. OEA-Retired will not meet in person if OPS schools are closed for health reasons. Notice will be sent out if

the session is re-scheduled for a later date.

OEA-Retired elections in October!

OEA-Retired officers serve for three-year terms, with a maximum of two consecutive terms in any one position. Since the May 2020 meeting of OEA-Retired was canceled, elections for OEA-Retired Secretary and two positions for At-Large Directors for the OEA-Retired Board will be held at the October 8th meeting of OEA-Retired.

Ruby Davis has filed for re-election as Secretary, and Doreen Jankovich has filed for re-election as an At-Large Director. One additional At-Large Director will be elected. If no nominations for the additional At-Large Director have been received by Oct. 6, that position will be declared vacant and will be filled according to the rule for filling vacancies outlined in the OEA-Retired Bylaws.

The OEA-Retired officers for 2019-2020, and their terms of office, are:

President = Walta Sue Dodd (2019-2022)

Vice President = Scott McGinty (2019-2022)

Secretary = Ruby M. Davis (2017-2020)

At-Large Directors = Richard Hood (2017-2020); Doreen Jankovich (2017-2020); Deborah Pauley (2019-2022); Cheryl Richardson (2019-2022)

Bookkeeper and Newsletter = Roger Rea

If you are interested in running for the OEA-Retired Board, please submit your name and the office for which you wish to be a candidate to Walta Sue Dodd, WSDodd@aol.com.

Medicare information webinars scheduled for Nov. and Dec

Due to the pandemic, no in-person seminars on Medicare will be scheduled this year. Instead, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska in cooperation with NSEA-Retired will hold a series of webinars in November and December to discuss not only Medicare eligibility but also details on Educators' Medicare Supplement. The Medicare supplement is

endorsed by NSEA-Retired and underwritten by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska. Educators' Medicare Supplement has both Plan F and Plan G supplements. It is only available to EHA subscribers and/or NSEA-Retired members and their spouses when they turn 65. Educators' Medicare supplement pays for medical costs that Medicare does not cover, and it has an

optional dental plan that is superior to any individual dental plan offered to Medicare subscribers.

Each webinar will last approximately two hours, and all webinars will cover the same material. BCBSNE will mail educational materials to the members in advance of the webinar so that the attendees may follow along during the webinar.

Ten webinars will be held. Five morning webinars will be held from 9 – 11 a.m. on: Nov.6, 13, 20; and Dec. 4, 11. In addition, five afternoon

webinars will be held from 1 – 3 p.m. on Nov. 2, 9 16, 30; and Dec. 7. Registration is required.

To register, go to the NSEA-Retired web page, www.nsea.org/retired, click on the *Fall 2020 Educators' Medicare Supplement Webinars* link, and choose the webinar you wish to attend. You will need a valid email address to register, and you will get a confirmation email when you register. You need to register at least ten days prior to the beginning of the webinar you choose.

Message from the President

By: Walta Sue Dodd, OEA-Retired President

I hope all of you are well and safe. Under normal circumstances, we would be planning to have our general membership meeting in person. COVID-19 has caused us to schedule a virtual meeting using Zoom. Complete details can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

The meeting will be on Thursday, October 8, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. We have scheduled speakers on the Omaha School Employees Retirement System (OSERS) and LB31. LB31 is a study on merging OSERS' management with NPERs, which is the

state's retirement system.

Cheryl Richardson and I attended a Zoom meeting about LB 31 on September 10, 2020 with Legislative Retirement Committee Chair Senator Mark Kolterman, Kate Allen (Retirement Committee Attorney), Senator Brett Lindstrom, and Linda Richards (Better Together Facilitator). The Retirement Committee held a hearing on the results of the LB31 study, and Roger Rea and I attended the hearing to ask questions about the results. You will find additional details on a potential transfer of the retirement system management elsewhere in this newsletter.

Please join us by Zoom on October 8 to learn more about this important issue!

Rea re-elected, new trustees join OSERS board

By: Roger Rea, OSERS Trustee

Oversight for the Omaha School Employees' Retirement System, OSERS, is provided by a seven-member board of trustees. The composition of the board, as well as the selection of its members, is specified in state law. Four of the trustees who represent member groups are elected by the memberships that they represent. There are two trustees representing active certificated members; one trustee representing active classified members; and one trustee representing annuitant (retired) members. Two members of the business community are appointed by the OPS School Board based on a recommendation of the trustees who are not business

persons. The OPS Superintendent of Schools is an ex-officio, voting member of the OSERS Board.

Member trustees are elected to four-year terms, with one of the four member trustees standing for election each year. This year the annuitant trustee was elected. Roger Rea, the incumbent annuitant trustee, was re-elected by a margin of 67% to 33%. All four member trustees have now gone through the election cycle. The first election (in 2017) for certificated trustee representative was uncontested, so no election was held. The table below summarizes the results of the other three elections.

	Certificated Trustee election in 2018	Classified Trustee election in 2019	Annuitant Trustee election in 2020
Number of ballots distributed	4,572	2,839	4,579
Number of ballots returned	1,231 (26.92%)	560 (19.73%)	2,110 (46.08%)
Returns by US mail / Internet	819 / 412	417 / 143	1,883 / 227
Successful candidate (percent of vote)	Lance Purdy (62.31%)	Matt Placzek (76.96%)	Roger Rea (66.78%)

Current OSERS President, Don Erikson, one of the business trustees, decided to retire at the end of his term (which ended June 30, 2020). OSERS solicited

applications for his replacement and received two applications. The OSERS Board recommended Patrick J. Bourne to replace Mr. Erikson. Mr. Bourne

holds a Bachelor's Degree in Finance from UNO, and a law degree from Creighton University. He served for eight years in the Nebraska Unicameral and was a member of the Education Committee and the Retirement Committee during his tenure as a state senator. He served as Senior Vice President for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska and is currently the Nebraska Market Leader for Medica. His appointment as a business trustee was approved by the OPS Board of Education in June. His term on the OSERS Board began July 1, 2020.

Certificated Member Trustee Lance Purdy retired from OPS at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. State law prohibits him from continuing to serve as an active-member trustee. OSERS solicited applications to fill the remaining unexpired term for this position and received two completed applications. The OSERS Board has the authority to appoint a replacement for this position for the balance of the term. Faith Johnson was appointed to complete the unexpired term at the June 2020 OSERS Board meeting. Ms. Johnson is a teacher at Nathan Hale Middle School Magnet, serves on the OEA Board of Directors, and has been heavily involved in leadership workshops

OEA-Retired

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and positions at NSEA and NEA. She was recommended by the OEA Board of Directors. She began her term as a certificated member trustee on the OSERS Board on July 1, 2020.

OSERS trustees for 2020-21 are: Business representatives: Patrick Bourne, Scott Herchenbach. Active member trustees: DeLayne Havlovic, Faith Johnson, Matthew Placzek. Annuitant trustee: Roger Rea. OPS Superintendent: Dr. Cheryl Logan.

Update on OPS Phase 2 Bond

By: Cheryl Richardson, OEA-Retired Board Member

In spite of the pandemic, progress on the Omaha Public Schools Bonds goes on! The 2014 Bond Program is wrapping up. Some of the bond projects have come in under-budget. OPS and their consultants are developing projects to use the money that was saved (as well as the money earned by investing the bond money before the project money was expended) to create new facilities to make the most efficient use of the bond money. This money must be spent on needs of the 2014 Bond. OPS and the consultants are also working to have the best protection available from warranties on the materials used in the projects.

The 2018 Bond, or Phase 2 Bond, has adopted strict rules for safety during the current pandemic. Workers follow strict rules for social distancing; project managers use cell phones to converse with workers rather than engage in face-to-face meetings; masks are used; and workers stay away from students and staff at all times.

At the present time there are 300-400 workers on

various projects. There are 23 active projects and all of the projects show some level of activity. For example:

- Adams and Blackburn are going into design.
- The High School at 156th and Ida is 18% complete.
- The Elementary School at 10th and Pine is in demolition.
- The Elementary School on Fort Crook Road will be three stories tall, and is 30% complete.
- Ground for the Middle School at 42nd and Y is being graded.
- Highland School students will meet in the Southroads Swing Space until spring.
- Spring Lake School will move to the Southroads Swing Space in the spring.
- New classroom additions are being built for Lewis & Clark, Edison, Conestoga, and Masters Schools.

COVID-19 caused a slowdown in these projects. Most projects are now coming in at approved cost or below, and on time. There is a great video of a drone flyby posted at: district.ops.org. Scroll down to Bond Information and click on a link titled, *Video Fly Through*.

Be sure to pay your OEA-Retired dues when you get the statement or you will be dropped from our mailing list!