

SONOMA COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED EMPLOYEES (SCARE)

P.O. BOX 5513, SANTA ROSA, CA 95402 www.sonomacountyretirees.com

Minutes of the SCARE Membership Meeting – ZOOM and In-Person

February 28, 2023, 1 p.m. Meeting

1. **Call to Order:** President Kathy Young called today's in person and Zoom Meeting to order. There were 37 members in attendance at Finley Center and 22 attending via Zoom

2. **Speaker:** Trinette Neuerburg owner of Oakmont Travel gave us an update on various travel issues now that COVID is no longer in emergency status. She noted that most travel agents are now working from home as they had to give up offices during COVID. Check reviews and ask questions to make sure they are legit as there are scammers here too.
 - Everything you need to know regarding travel, visas, passports, etc. can be found at www.travel.state.gov.
 - Travel agents are your advocate, and they rarely charge a fee for arranging travel for you unless you are booking stand-alone air flights.
 - Traveler's checks are a thing of the past. Plan to use your credit card as it is much easier for exchange rates. Some charge a fee in a foreign country so check yours.
 - So many people are traveling now that it can be difficult to get reservations.
 - To save money and have more availability, do not travel during holidays and the summer. May and Sept. are particularly good.
 - Masks are no longer required but she recommends wearing one on airplanes.
 - Hotels and cruise ships are still taking precautions to keep people safe from COVID. If you are going to an Airbnb or VRBO, you should check references carefully as there can be problems with some of them.
 - You can get TSA precheck at STAPLES in Santa Rosa, or global precheck at SFO. First go online to start the process and set up appointments. There is a fee but then it is good for 5 years. Some credit cards cover all or part of the TSA precheck cost so check yours.
 - Consider getting travel insurance and make sure it covers financial default.
 - A member suggested ParkSleepHotels.com to help with airport parking.

If you want more information from Trinette, you can call her at 707 539-0424 or check her website – OakmontTravel.com.

3. **JLMBC Report:** The County responded to our (Bill's and my) urging not to increase the County Health Plan rates since there is a lot of money in the reserve fund. What they ended up deciding was to have a 3-month premium holiday so no one would have to pay premiums from June through August. Then the rates for those under 65 would go up \$7.7% while the premiums for those who are Medicare eligible would remain the same. This is the first time that the premiums have not gone up the same amount for both groups.

4. SCCLO/ICPC/NBLC: Bill has been working with Sonoma County Coalition of Labor Organizations (SCCLO) members advocating for the County to deal with the lack of a SCERA (pension) COLA, for both current retirees and employees (future retirees). The Independent Citizens Pension Committee (ICPC) has been activated after a year long hiatus, due to now having again attained an operating membership. The lack of a COLA was a major point of discussion in the first meeting of this year. The North Bay Central Labor Council (NBCLC) has also been advocating for us on the issue of the lack of a COLA, and has now collaborated with the UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education in issuing a research based report on the Sonoma County pension and it's lack of a COLA. That report can be found on our web site.

5. Drawing: There was a drawing for \$25 gift cards at the end of the meeting. 3 went to members in attendance (Bren Hawthorne, Doreen O'Rourke, and Pam Hayne) and 3 went to people attending on Zoom (Darcy Proctor, Madeline Bemis, and Gail Goring).

Respectfully submitted,
Phyris Tobler, Vice President

SCARE 2023 Calendar

May 3 -- Board Meeting – Manzanita Room
 May 23 -- Membership Meeting – Cypress Room
 July 12 – Board Meeting – Manzanita Room
 August 22 – Membership Meeting – Cypress Room
 September 6 – Board Meeting – Manzanita Room
 November 1 – Board Meeting – Manzanita Room
 November 28 – Membership Meeting -- Cypress