

Minutes from March 6 all-member meeting

ERS President Dave Baine called the hybrid in-person and Zoom meeting to order at 12 p.m.

Guest Speakers: Robby Stern and Ann Watanabe from PSARA.org presented: Level the Playing Field – Make Medicare more fair, equitable and better! In 1965 when Medicare was established, there were no corporate insurers offering private ‘Advantage’ plans. They were introduced in 1982 to lower costs and improve outcomes but they’ve done neither. Medicare Advantage (MA) plans require patients to get prior authorization for treatment and choose providers from a narrow and changing network. Increasingly providers are refusing to accept MA due to delays and denials meaning medical decisions are made by insurance companies. Despite significant disadvantages, private insurers are taking over Medicare largely because Traditional/Original Medicare has a \$1,632 annual deductible for hospitalizations, 20% co-pay for outpatient care and no limit on out-of-pocket costs. This leads most to buy separate Medigap & drug plans making Original Medicare more expensive overall than MA. The average cost to the Medicare Trust Fund is higher for MA plans with 15% of funds going to profits and overhead compared to just 2% overhead for Original Medicare. Ann & Robby shared several stories of patients suffering due to MA delays and denials of coverage. PSARA.org and others are advocating that we “Level the Playing Field” by limiting co-pays and deductibles under Original Medicare and add coverage for hearing, vision and dental care. Visit www.PSARA.org for more information including how you can support this effort and ask your government representatives to support it.

Business: The day’s agenda was approved as submitted.

Secretary’s Report: Jessica Bonebright’s December meeting minutes were approved as published.

President’s Report: Dave reported we’re returning to Hybrid meetings – we have to confirm meeting room availability. March 20th Investment meeting is Zoom only. Steve, Dave & Bob completed their reviewed 2024 financial statements –no problems were identified.

Things are crazy with changes at the federal government level with changes by the new administration. Signup for emails from NRLN.org for email updates on changes effecting retirees.

Katrina Jones was appointed to be our new Insurance chair on the ERS Steering Board. We’re so glad to have her step up!

Pension chair is open – please consider volunteering if you’re interested in Pension issues. Just share any news or information you think ERS members would be interested in. Eg. Companies selling their pension liability to insurance companies - if they go broke, people could lose their pension. Or proposed legislation to require reinsurance in case they go broke.

Treasurer: Bob Ferguson reported ERS account balances at BECU are: Checking - \$3105.92, savings - \$9089.45, money market - \$24,936.32 and three CD’s totaling \$35,537.37 for a grand total of \$72,669.06.

We reported a total of \$68,231.41 at our March meeting. Our annual NRLN dues check for \$1857 is in the mail.

Steering Board Chair: Dwight Rousu reported the board met last week and the newsletter went out and is posted on our website. We still mail 20 paper copies. We have about a 3 week lead-time using the current process.

Our former long-time ERS Secretary Jim Ewing is having some health issues. We're making him an honorary member so he'll continue to get a paper ERS newsletter. He lives in Kent east hill. Dave Baine will visit him and assure he's doing ok.

Committee/Representative Reports

Membership: John Neller reported we have 691 members. Of that total, 400 have paid dues for 2025 another 200 paid thru 2024 and 60 paid for 2022 or 2023. We dropped those who hadn't paid dues since 2021.

Finance: Steve Ellis Thanked Bob Ferguson for keeping great detailed records which made the recent successfully completed 2024 financial review easy

Social: Steve Ellis reported we have a \$1500 budget for a social activity in 2025. It could be used as a deposit for a cruise then we'd sell tickets. Maybe July 4 on Lake Union?

Investment: Dave Watt reported our speaker will be David Thread for our next meeting – speaking about charitable giving and financial strategy. We don't have a speaker yet for our 5/15 hybrid investment meeting.

Program: Dave Watt is still looking for a speaker for our June 5 quarterly hybrid meeting.

Sunshine: Myrv & Joan Johanson reported Leroy D. Mann's wife notified ERS he passed away in 2022. We added an online message that ERS expresses our sympathy. Other member passings include James C Farris Sept 2024 age 87 - we sent a card. James Pagenkopf June 2024 age 77 – we added an online message. Per Bolang May 2024 age 96 - we posted a sympathy msg. & sent a card. Peter Bloonstra Aug. 2023 age 90 - added an online message. Paul Rentner 2022 age 87 added an online message. We also sent a get well card to Steve Ellis.

Travel: John Neller found a special low airfare Seattle to Zurich from June thru Sept. Also specials with the Swiss airline Edelweiss. Boeing travel club's upcoming trips are posted on Facebook and are open to former Boeing employees.

PSARA: Jessica Bonebright reported on PSARA's priorities in the current WA state legislative session including SJM 8002 to Level the Playing Field for Traditional Medicare vs. Medicare Advantage Plans.

Badges: Roger Aisaka reported next meeting, June 5, we expect to have badges for those who are here today.

Insurance: Katrina Jones is learning and ramping up on health care & insurance issues. Some people may benefit from a Measles shot or booster given the current outbreaks. Kent Senior Center and other locations offer “Information for life” Emergency dash & go, a thorough workbook by Comfort Keepers anyone can buy it for \$20 to build your emergency dashboard packet to log health data and use their checklists for things like medical advance directive, your insurance, legal documents and how to access your accounts etc. If you do it in pencil, you can make updates. Maybe they can do a workshop for us?

Refreshments: John Meeker reported ordering pizza for our lunch works better than sandwiches since they offer free delivery.

Communications: Walt Ditlefsen has been trying to keep up with updates to our mailchimp distribution list in coordination with John Neller. Walt also deals with Junk & scam emails coming in. He needs a backup volunteer to help keep up our website and mailchimp. Dave Westman has been our backup but now lives in Hawaii. Nothing on Gov. Docs

Ad Hoc Committees

SPEEA Liaison: Dave Baine works with Carissa at SPEEA front desk trying to make sure this room is available as much as possible for our meetings. The room won’t be available for the next investment meeting which will be zoom only.

L&PA: Dwight Rousu reminded us ERS joined NRLN about 25 Years ago after doing a search for other organizations to work with to advance our legislative interests for retirees. We made an agreement with them & we’ve carried on ever since. We pay \$3000/year \$3/member/yr and we make a request for individual contributions. They’ve started gathering interesting data on senior issues – see their website for more info.

It’s too much to follow everything in the news. It looks like we’ve elected an Administration trying to wipe out services for seniors. We all need to work doing whatever we can to try to preserve a safety net for seniors and future generations. Also if we work in local communities we can make progress together.

NRLN: Steve Ellis reminded us we’re all NRLN members through our ERS memberships. You should receive monthly emails with information on senior issues at the national level. If you’re not receiving their e-mail messages, Steve will help get you on their list.

No reports this meeting for Vice President, Service or Governing Documents.

Good of the Society: John Neller expressed his concern about how tariffs will affect Boeing. He spoke with reporter Dominic Gates about a lack of new Boeing plane orders from China. He thinks its likely they’ll be back to buying from Boeing again in the future. Also Ryan Air is likely to buy more planes from Boeing. Tariffs could also lead to Supply chain issues like buying aluminum. There’s an especially large impact on things that go back and forth across the border with a tariff each time.

Upcoming meetings: Thursday, June 5, at noon is our next quarterly membership meeting. The next ERS steering board meeting is Thursday, May 29. Investment meetings are at noon on the third Thursday of odd months. The next investment meetings are Mar. 20 and May 15.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Minutes by Jessica Bonebright, ERS Secretary