

RECOM

Retired Employees City of Mesa

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RECOMAZ.org

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RECOM Executive Board

Board of Directors Election Results

According to the bylaws, elections for Board of Directors were held during the April meeting. All but one Board member, Barbara Seperich, stood for reelection.

Bill Petrie, who has worked in the Planning Department and retired from Building Services, ran for that position. Since there was only one candidate for each vacant position, there were no ballots. Election was by acclamation.

The Board would like to thank John Smoyer for serving as Nominations Chair. The Board members that will serve RECOM during 2008/09 are:

John Gendron	– President (re-elected)
Kathy Barrett	– Vice President (re-elected)
Lin Adams	– Secretary (re-elected)
Chuck Wennerlund	– Treasurer (re-elected)
Bill Petrie	– Director-at-Large (new)
Jo Ferguson	– Director-at-Large (1 yr term)
Frank Mizner	– Director-at-Large (serving second of two-year term)

Bill will assume his position on the Board on July 1, 2008. He will attend Board meetings during May and June as a way of becoming familiar with Board procedures and issues.

Guest Speaker

We don't like to think about them. We hope we won't ever be faced with needing them, but most of us will indeed need them for one reason or another at some point in our lives: assistance devices in our homes. You know – grab-bars in the shower, large handled- faucets with low-flow aerators, elevated toilet seats etc. Luckily some manufacturers have thought about these things and have made it fairly easy to buy them and install them.

At our April membership meeting, **Robert Brandow, Master Plumbing Specialist, from Home Depot** spoke to our group about these very things. Originally, John Bemish was to have given us a basic survival course in plumbing, but he preferred to schedule back surgery instead! Really, we're not that tough an audience. Seriously, we wish John well and hope that he is recovering nicely.

Robert graciously and ably filled in for John and brought examples of the above mentioned assistance items as well as low-flow, hand-held shower heads, bath tub safety bars for the side of the tub, bathtub chairs, scald guard valves for the shower head as well as a great deal of knowledge about how to install them. Well, we'll get to that installing part a little later.



You can find most of these items in the plumbing aisle at your neighborhood Home Depot store. But should there be an item you need that's not carried in the brick-and-mortar store, Home-Depot is also online, and carries hundreds of items not stocked on the shelves in the stores. They'll deliver them right to your house, or to the Home Depot store nearest you. If that fails, the knowledgeable staff will even refer you to a company that does carry them.



Here comes the part about installing. For example, if your fix-it man (whether he's related to you or not) says he can put a grab bar in the wall with a toggle bolt – show him the door and bolt it!!

Robert says that to serve the purpose for which you're installing the bar, it has to be anchored to a 2x4 in the wall. Use a stud finder (borrow your neighbor's, try to find the one you bought last year, or just go buy a new one), to locate the 2x4 in the wall, and anchor the grab bar to the stud.

And be sure you buy a bar large enough and heavy enough to support the weight of the person who will use it. If it's a really long bar, you may have to find two studs and install the bar at an angle.

Robert also had a caveat about those easy-to install hand-held showers. They are easy to install. They do work well for their intended purpose -- to help folks who can't stand easily in the shower and use the shower seats. **However, they are not grab-bars (see above). So, please don't grab them for support!** Well I know **you** don't think they're grab-bars – but you just know someone has thought so with very unhappy results.

Robert's presentation must have struck a chord, because there were quite a few questions asked, but the one this writer found most useful was: "I haven't installed a faucet in thirty years. Is it really easy?" The answer was "yes", but did you know that there is a master plumber and master electrician in every Home Depot store? You can ask for that person and they'll give you expert advice --- even if you don't know what questions to ask. Hmmm –the writer will send her husband, and then let's see how good these guys really are!

Robert answered several questions including some on hot water tanks, tankless hot water heaters, re-circulating pumps and water softeners. It's a shame we ran out of time because there were more questions the writer thought she would have asked for the benefit of her husband.

For all those of us inspired to go out and look for inspiration for home improvement projects, Robert gave out free tickets to the Maricopa County Home and Garden Show on April 25, 26, and 27.



Reports

Benefits Task Force

Trust Fund and Premiums

Since the February and March meetings of the Task Force were cancelled, the April one had lots of info. So hang onto your hat and here goes.

Donna Salemi reiterated the statement from January that the Trust Fund is in good condition, at approximately \$16 million dollars, and for that reason **no increases in premiums** from members or contributions from the city will be necessary during 2008/09.

Three years ago, when the current budget was drafted, management thought that some additional funds from members and the city might be required to keep the fund healthy. Hence they planned a \$4.3 million infusion.

The city is absolutely continuing to contribute the usual amounts. They are not stopping contributions to the Trust Fund, as might have been surmised from televised council meetings and the newspapers.

However, management left open the option to reevaluate the situation should there be some major expense to the trust fund. Should it be necessary (not likely!) to increase premiums during year 2009, there will be an open enrollment period so that members can change plans should they wish to do so. However – this is not a likely scenario at this time.

Prescription Plan

The good news is that the Trust Fund received about \$181,000 just as a rebate from Medicare because the City carries Medicare retirees on its prescription plan.

This \$181,000 is just for the year 2006. The rebate for 2007 hasn't even been calculated yet.

Some folks are very happy with the company; others have had poor experiences and want to know why Spectera was selected. An employee survey determined that people would rather have reduced benefits than pay more for premiums, and this was the company that provided most of the services for about the same amount in premiums.

Those folks getting their glasses at Costco through Spectera, be aware that the contract has changed as of May 1. **You'll be able to get your optical exam, but not the glasses at Costco.** The city has no control over Spectera because in insurance jargon they are a "fully insured plan" – and the City has no power to ask them to change policies. The City just makes the plan available to us and facilitates collection of premiums.

The City has a one year contract with Spectera, renewable four times (for a total of five years). If you have bouquets or brickbats for Spectera, please let Jody know.

There are a number of requests for proposal going out, but the one that might interest you most is the one for what's called a "wrap-around network". It covers providers in a situation where some of the medical personnel working on you are on Blue Cross/Blue Shield and some are not – such as the anesthesiologist or assisting surgeon. If the City finds one of those networks that is reasonable and workable, we won't have to chase down the anesthesiologist (for example) holding the back of our hospital gown closed with one hand and our insurance card in other to find out if he is a BCBS provider. More on this as bids are returned and evaluated.

Ask the Right Question

If you go to a hospital or an emergency room (in non-life threatening situation), ask **"Are you an in network BCBS provider?"** Apparently if you only ask them **"Do you accept Blue Cross Blue Shield insurance, they will say "Yes"**. But, they will bill you in network co-pays and **charge the city out of network prices.**

These two hospitals are **NOT BCBS** providers:

Gilbert Emergency Hospital
on South Power Rd.

Arizona Joint and Spine
(outpatient surgical center)

These hospitals **are BCBS** providers:

Mountain Vista Hosp.
at Crismon and Southern

Banner Gateway - Gilbert Mercy
at San Tan 202 and Val Vista

This and That

It's OK to get your generic prescription drugs from Fry's etc for \$4.00. But do not submit the \$4.00 bill to Medco. This is your out of pocket expense.

BC/BS pays for semi private rooms, but if you go to an **in network** hospital that has only private rooms, they will charge semi-private rates.

There have been some complaints and questions about the dental plan, specifically why dental implants aren't covered. The crown (tooth) on top of the implant is covered, but not the post. The dental benefits are very expensive and the premiums collected don't even come close to the benefits paid out.

Treasurer

Treasurer, Chuck Wennerlund, reported that RECOM'S treasury is sound. Members wishing to see the annual Treasurer's Report may do so at the membership meeting or make an email request to any one of the Board members and it will be provided promptly.

Membership Committee

Kathy Barrett announced that during May RECOM will begin its membership drive which includes renewals. Membership dues of \$10.00 annually per person will be due in July. To save money, RECOM will try to do more electronic notification and is looking into using PayPal an electronic payment company. More on this next month. But not to worry! We'll take your check or cash too!

A member who attended for the first time was Carol Steele. Carol retired from Tax and Licensing in January 07. Welcome Carol.

Program Committee

Frank Mizner announced that the speaker for **May 21** will be Linda Burns from the Hospice of the Valley, presenting information on end-of-life directives such as healthcare power of attorney, wills etc. and how to file them with the state of Arizona so that they can readily be accessed by doctors and hospitals.

At the membership meeting on **June 18th**, a representative from AAA will speak on traveling in Arizona – keeping in mind that we may want to stay closer to home due the gasoline prices. Membership meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month in the Community Room of the Mesa Fire station at Mesa Drive and 1st Street.

Frank also reported that the planning for the June 4th pre-retirement seminar is going well and that Debbi Dollar, Deputy City Manager, has been very helpful in providing the use of the auditorium of the Conference Center free of charge and the intra-net to contact employees who may wish to attend.

Announcements

You'll all be happy to know that in compliance with our by laws, the Board had to review dues and concluded that we did not need to raise dues! At least one thing that didn't go up this year. And that's a good note on which to close the newsletter!

