

RECOM

Retired Employees City of Mesa

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RECOMAZ.org

Look for a photo of the
new Board in the next
issue of the Newsletter.

RECOM Executive Board

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MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Results of HB 2171

By means of the June newsletter, a presentation at the June 17th membership meeting and through several e-mail blasts, RECOM members were alerted that the State legislature was proposing a strike-all amendment to HB 2171.

Thank you to all of you who contacted your legislators, we believe it helped to hold this legislation at bay this year.

This bill proposed to repeal the State's 2009-10 and 2010-11 funding for the Science Foundation Arizona (SFaz), and authorize the ASRS Board and Director to invest up to one-tenth of one percent (0.1% of ASRS retirement assets in this non-profit foundation.

The Board identified several, of many, concerns with this proposal:

1. This would be a precedent for the State legislature to get involved in the investment of our retirement fund monies.
2. The State budget should not be balanced with our retirement funds.
3. Although the legislation calls this an investment, the very nature of non-profit

corporations is to not make a profit. This would be more of a gift.

4. While the legislation language describes a possible 15% return on the investment, the Board feels a return would be unlikely.

If the State believes an "investment" such as this is a profit making investment, the State should continue to fund this organization and reap the profits as well. That would leave our retirement funds intact and keep the legislature out of our pockets.

HB2171 was passed by a 5-2 vote by the House Committee on Commerce on June 10th. ***In the minutes of that meeting, Representative Antenori, the bill's sponsor, explained that a trust fund format would be implemented through the Treasurer's Office to take SFaz funding out of the General Fund and use the retirement pension funds to provide a permanent source of revenue to SFaz.***

The bill was then forwarded on to the House Committee of the Whole (COW) where it was "Retained on Calendar" at the June 22nd meeting. The House of Representatives never voted on the bill and therefore the bill died.

However, a new senate bill, SB1035, titled (budget reconciliation; general government), which included the portion of HB2171 that repealed the \$25,000,000 appropriation to SFaz for **2009-10** was transmitted to the Governor as a part of the budget package that was subsequently vetoed.

The RECOM Board contacted an ASRS representative regarding SB1035, and was told that the authorization for ASRS to invest in the Fund has been stripped out of the bill, and that ASRS believes that, at this time, the retirement fund investment provision is a dead issue. This representative again reiterated that ASRS could invest in SFaz now, if it were to meet criteria for ASRS investment. However, ASRS has not been approached by SFaz regarding any such investment.

As the Governor vetoed the bulk of the legislative budget, the State Legislators were called back for a special session. Four new bills addressing educational funding and violation of federal stimulus funding requirements have already been sent to the Governor.

Recognizing that the Legislators will continue to seek additional sources of revenue for the current and future budgets, and may still attempt to “invest” our retirement funds, the Board will continue to monitor the budget bills transmitted to the Governor as this information becomes available.

If RECOM members receive any updates from their Representatives, please forward this information to the RECOM Board.

Speakers - June



For our membership meeting on June 17 our speaker was Robert Brinton from the Mesa Convention and Visitors Bureau – our local expert on the Cactus League and all things baseball in the Valley.

And boy, did he bring up some famous names we may not have heard in a while.

How It All Started -

Dwight Patterson, a local rancher, coached baseball in the early 1950s before he became a very, very successful rancher. He wanted to bring professional baseball to the Valley as a way of raising funds for youth sports.

Some teams were already coming to the Valley for spring training, the New York Yankees, the Oakland A's, the Red Sox and the Orioles among them. That was around the time that a builder named Del Web was building Sun City. He was also part owner of the NY Yankees and brought Joe DiMaggio, and a kid named Mickey Mantle.

In the early 1950s Dwight Patterson went to the Chamber of Commerce and asked for \$30,000 worth of improvements to Rendezvous Park for spring training– and they said “no”. Suffice it to say that each member of the HoHokams wrote a personal IOU to cover the loan if the spring games didn't cover the \$30,000. The Cubs came down and made the third team of the Cactus league, and the games were on! And that was the beginning of the relationship between Mesa and the Chicago Cubs.

Trouble Brews -



Fast forward to the 1970/80s. There were now 8 teams playing in the Cactus league and in 1986/87 Florida and Texas and Las Vegas saw this

as a wonderful opportunity for their coffers.

Happily, the latter two weren't all that successful. Arizona baseball supporters went to the legislature to get legislation for visitors' taxes and matching funds from cities to build stadiums. And the rest is – baseball in AZ. There are now 14 teams playing spring training games. Last year – with a down economy, spring training brought in \$350 million to the AZ economy.

Last March, Hohokam Stadium alone brought \$7.5 million to the Mesa economy. “Course that’s ‘cause we have the Cubbies. They’re number one for any figures in spring training you want to name: number of over-all fans, number of out of state fans, length of time they stay, stuff they sell....

Challenges –



You knew there’d be some. Hohokam Stadium was last renovated 14 years ago – and it’s time to do it again, and money is tight – but look at the return on investment, says Robert Brinton. Well it gets more complicated than that what with Prop 302, and folks in the West Valley wanting to build new stadiums – there’s just not enough money to go around.

And then there’s the Location of Hohokam Stadium. Not much space to expand, not enough parking and no shops, or restaurants. Time to look for a new stadium location?

And of course the teams are always playing musical chairs about where they’ll move if they can get a better deal – even Florida is rearing its head again! So, it’s safe to say that Mr. Brinton will have his hands full for the foreseeable future if he wants to keep spring training in Mesa, in the Valley – in AZ!

SPEAKERS - July

Our July speaker didn’t have nearly as entertaining a topic, but she made up for it in relevance to our daily lives. Sandy Stechnij,



Outreach Specialist for the City’s Solid Waste Dept (it has a fancier name, but you know whom we mean – the folks that get to deal with all the stuff we don’t want to

deal with), gave a presentation on what happens to the stuff that goes into the green or blue barrels –and why we should care!

1. It saves the City money – lots of money. For the year 07/08 the City received about \$1.5 million dollars for the recycled paper, plastics and glass and saved about \$900 thousand in landfill costs. You do the ma.. – nah I’ll do the math. That’s about \$2.2 million dollars they didn’t have to collect from the residents. It was a little less for 08/09 (about \$1.7 million) because recyclable materials prices fell.

2. We’re running out of space for our trash. In 1995 the Salt River Landfill opened on 200 acres of land. At the rate of 4.4 million pounds a day being dumped, by 2020 (maybe sooner) – it will be full and we haven’t selected a new place yet. So what happens when it’s full? Not something we want to think about – nobody wants a landfill near their house. So, recycle for all the reasons you don’t want the landfill near your house.



And recycling isn’t just kind to the wallet and the nose, it has much greater, long-term benefits – like say for the grandchildren to have a livable world.

1. A ton of recycled paper saves about 17 trees – trees that clean the air we breathe.
2. Even resources that are renewable, like trees, need awhile to grow – and we’re using them faster than they can “renew”.
3. The less garbage is buried or rots – the less air pollution because rotting garbage not only smells bad, it gives off methane gas, which dissolves the ozone layer. The ozone layer protects us from the sun’s less positive effects. The less stuff (read chemicals and poisons) leaches into the ground from our garbage, the cleaner our drinking water will remain.

OK so, on Saturday morning the City's recycling truck picks up the **blue barrels** in my neighborhood. What can I put in there?



1. Glass – jars and bottles – like for pickles, mayo, mustard, juice and fruit drinks – anything that held food – and hey, in my household that includes wine and beer bottles. Just sayin'. But – if the wind broke your

window – that glass can't go into the recycle bin.

2. Paper – like the pages of the first three drafts of this article, newspapers, telephone books, love letters and old bills (shred them first!) – but not, that pretty wrapping paper, tissue paper, paper towels, Kleenex, paper plates.

3. Paperboard – like cereal boxes (but take the liners out), milk, juice and ice cream cartons, even pizza boxes – but be nice – clean off the excess cheese and pepperoni first.

4. Cans – aluminum and steel – if they held food (like soup, peas,) and drinks like your favorite soda – they're good to go into the blue barrel.

5. Cardboard --- If you do online shopping (or shop at Costco) you might have a bunch of those – just take out the packing materials including the Styrofoam peanuts – or any Styrofoam for that matter. Haven't figured out how to recycle that yet.

6. Plastics – Look for a number somewhere on the container --- numbers 1-5 are OK, and number 7 is OK also, but number six has usually been turned into Styrofoam cups or peanuts. (See above).



Ultimate **No-nos** for the Blue Barrel!

Plastic bags – except clear ones wrapping shredded paper

Car parts – including batteries. Think acid on your skin – just as bad for the environment.

CFL bulbs – while they're green during their long lifetime – they require special handling when they're done. Home Depot will accept used CFL bulbs and nickel cadmium batteries. And the City has "Hazardous Waste Collection" days for other batteries.

And if you're **really green** – there's the **Green Barrel Program** in which you collect your grass clippings, tree and bush clippings, and other discarded plant material (Was I supposed to weed?) in a green barrel. There is a small charge for this – but it won't get buried and create problems – see any paragraph above.

Sandy was very knowledgeable and had lots of good information and statistics about how much we throw away and how much can be recycled, and Lin Adams our secretary, was very complete in taking them down. But your writer missed the meeting and so if she misinterpreted the minutes or skipped something important --- don't blame Lin for the writer's short attention span. Need more info? www.mesarecycles.org.

Meet Your New Board Members:

In July Don Miller and Peggy Haney joined the RECOM Board. Don will assume the position of Treasurer and Peggy will serve as Director at Large for 2 years. We asked them to introduce themselves to the membership in any format they wished. Herewith, their autobiographies.

Donald J. Miller

Like most members of the Retired Employees of the City of Mesa, Donald Miller dedicated his professional life to the City of Mesa. As the City's Assistant Controller, he offered a broad perspective of the City's operations accounting requirements and monitored its daily fiscal responsibility. He retired from the Accounting Department in January 2008 after 32+ years of service.

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As Treasurer, Donald will donate his time to monitor the RECOM Board's operational expenses and reporting requirements. He previously served on the Boards of the Mesa Arts Center Foundation, Arizona State University Alumni Association Finance Committee, and currently is on one of the Maricopa Community College District Chancellor's Minority Advisory Committees.

Donald is a native Mesan and graduate of Arizona State University. His immediate family includes his life partner, Paul Czohara, mother, brother, twin brother, and sister – and his passions include travel, gardening, and human rights causes. Oh, and dark **chocolate**...

Peggy Haney



Where were you born? Rochester, PA (outside Pittsburgh, home of the 6-time Super Bowl champs – sorry Cardinals), but I was raised in Fredericksburg, VA a lovely historical town fifty miles south of DC.

When did you move to Mesa? My family moved to Mesa in 1968. I started part-time at the City of Mesa Library in 1969 and went full time two years later – stayed for 36 years! After 25 years as the automation coordinator, I went on to become an assistant director until my retirement in 2005. I am so blessed to have worked with so many committed individuals over my 36 years at the Library.

What keeps you busy in retirement? I spent the first 2 years remodeling and redecorating the home I share with my sister. I also volunteer at the library three hours a week, and I'm a math tutor at Eisenhower Elementary School. Walking the dogs (three collies) – McDuff, Duncan and Shilo (Can you tell I have Scottish ancestors and am an American history buff?) and taking three classes at the YMCA each week helps to keep the blood circulating.

Who are your favorite sports teams? I'm an Avid ASU Sun Devil fan but have been known to root for the UA Wildcats in the NCAA basketball tournament, and of course the D'backs, Cardinals and suns.

What are your favorite books? Mysteries (not the violent kind). I Started a list of favorite authors with their series so please feel free to contact me for a copy.

What are your favorite vacation spots? Williamsburg, VA (As an American history buff, W'burg captured my heart from my first visit at the tender age of 5). Scotland and the Lake District in England are a close second.

What other interests do you have? It's a long list, but crafts, travel, and genealogy are at the top. Thanks to the internet, I have connected with 3 elderly distant cousins who were able to fill in some blanks on earlier generations.

Reports

Employee Benefits Task Force:

These are some red excerpts from the official minutes of the June meeting:

The State of Operations Report for May 2009 shows a total of \$19.9 million in the Benefits Trust Fund. That's the good news. The bad news is that healthcare costs are projected to increase next year by approximately 10% for medical, and 13% for prescription drugs. Medco has estimated an increase of 25% within 2 years if no changes are made to the prescription plans.

Currently, prescriptions cost the City about \$350,000 every two weeks – that's over \$9 million a year! Jody will continue to monitor the Trust Fund throughout the year, but reminds members that they may take advantage of the \$4.00 prescriptions at Walmart, Fry's and other retailers. This will not affect their membership in Medco.

Here's a summary of Health Plan changes for 2010 that have been approved by upper management:

- No premium increases for plan year 2010 (last premium increase was in 2008)
- Increase prescription drug maximum out-of-pocket costs on the **80/20** and the **90/10** Plans from \$50 retail to \$100 and from \$100 to \$200 for mail (90 day supply.)
- Increase formulary brand out-of-pocket costs on the **co-pay** plan from \$30 to \$35 on retail and from \$60 to \$70 for mail.
- Increase non formulary brand out-of-pocket costs on the **co-pay** plan from \$60 to \$65 on retail and from \$120 to \$130 for mail.
- Remove out-of-network out-of-pocket maximums for out-of-network services when services are available in-network.
- Add co-pays for in-patient \$200 and out-patient \$100 hospitalization services on co-pay plan, presently there are no copays for these services
- Implement Health Risk Assessment Program (Active employees only.)

Well Care Benefits will not be increased at this time. Jody informed members the deductible is taken for well child benefits, but no deductible is taken for well adult care.

Also, when charges exceed the maximum benefit (\$400) the doctor is allowed to collect the billed charge from the member.

Ladies, please note: If you take advantage of the mobile mammogram benefit **in the fall, it's not charged against your \$400 wellness benefit.** The entire cost is paid by Blue Cross/Blue Shield.

Open enrollment will take place from Oct 26th to Nov 6th, 2009.

Treasurer

A financial review was conducted as part of the transition to our new treasurer. Any checks received during this period were held until the review was completed and then cashed as soon as possible. Please excuse any delay in checks being cashed in a timely manner.

Meetings

Meetings are held every third Wednesday at 9:00AM in the Community Room of the Fire Station at 1st Street and Mesa Drive.

Next meeting - Wednesday August 19

The speaker will be Scott Taylor from Great West Financial Services, the company the City uses to invest the deferred compensation funds.

September 16 - Speaker to be arranged.

October 21 – one time location change!

Speaker will be Jody Topping with her annual review of plan changes and Q&A period.

Because this meeting always draws an overflow crowd, a larger meeting room has been arranged. Program Committee Chair, Don Miller, has secured the ITD training room in Building 3 of Mesa's South Center Campus at 200 S. Center Street. More information and map forthcoming.