

Minutes submitted by Kim Hachiya, board secretary

Submitted to and approved by the Association Board of Directors, April 13, 2023

UNL Emeriti and Retirees Association Membership meeting

March 16, 2023

Nebraska East Union

A luncheon meeting of the UNL Emeriti and Retirees Association convened at 11:45 a.m. March 16, 2023, at the Nebraska East Union. Approximately 65 members and guests RVSPed for the meeting, which also was live-streamed.

President Linda Major called the meeting to order. She recognized the following during Memory Moments:

James Blackburn, Accounting

Lambert Bright, Information Technology

Jim Cook, Institutional Research and Planning

Harold DeGraw, Conservation and Survey Division, School of Natural Resources

Milan Frey, University Housing

A donation honoring university emeriti and retirees who passed away during the past year is made to the ERA Scholarship Fund in recognition of their service.

Earl Hawkey reported the financials are in good shape.

Alice Henneman, reporting for the Publications Committee, said an online survey will be sent to get information about how the newsletter is used and how we can improve it. An anonymous donor will match \$1 per each returned survey, up to 150, as a gift to the scholarship fund and an incentive to participate. She noted the survey will be anonymous and no identifying data will be collected.

Nancy Mitchell announced a “backstage at Lied Center” tour will occur at 2 p.m. May 16th. This will include a promotion for the upcoming 2023-24 season.

Jane Zatechka announced a coffee meet-up at 9:30 a.m. March 28 at the Scarlet Hotel.

President-elect Larry Dlugosh introduced Charlyne Berens, journalism professor emerita, who delivered an informative talk about the Nebraska Unicameral.

Highlights included: (All comments are attributed to Charlyne and are her own opinions and observations.)

1. Nebraska is unique in having a one-house legislature.
2. While the idea is attributed to George Norris, U.S. Senator from Nebraska, it grew out of populist sentiments of the era (1930s) advocating for a non-elite “house of the people.”
3. It was at the time deemed “progressive,” based on the idea that government should improve the lives of people, be open to public scrutiny, parties should take a back seat. The goal was there be no party/conference committees who can exert control and influence

over party members and leadership positions not locked in via seniority. This is reflected today in coalitions that hinge mostly on rural/urban, business interests, geography, special interests like environmental, education, etc.

4. A hearing is required on EVERY bill. Staff expertise is embraced.

5. Biggest threat was the enactment of Term Limits by a vote amending the state constitution in 2000. Term limits began in 2006, and Charlyne said, they have resulted in loss of institutional memory and experience, and given more power to lobbyists and special interest groups. She would like to see term limits removed, or at least move to three consecutive terms rather than two.

6. There's a nascent movement to enact a two-house legislature, but Charlyne said a 2017 survey indicated 41 percent of Nebraskans oppose that.

7. She argues that despite pitfalls, the one-house model still works and is worth preserving.

8. What she called a "miserably low salary" (\$12,000 annually) means that the legislature leans toward wealthy retirees, or self-employed individuals. She feels this is to the detriment of the group as it's exclusionary.

9. The contraction in the news industry, and disappearance of journalists covering the statehouse also has damaging effects, she said.

10. "Contacting your representative is the most democratic thing you can do outside of voting," she said.

At the close of Charlyne's talk, Linda and Larry noted an honorarium will be given to the ERA Scholarship fund.

The next meeting will be April 18 at the Willa Cather Dining Complex on city campus. Speaker is Heath Mello, NU vice president for external affairs.

The meeting adjourned.