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Retired Public Employees Council Chapter 21 – Tri-Cities Area

Robin Rego, President: (253) 370-9899, rarego1213@gmail.com

Meeting Date: Tuesday, May 7th, 2024

Meeting Time: Meeting: 12:30 PM

Meeting Place: Clover Island Inn – Riverside Room (4th Floor)

Meeting Address: 435 North Clover Island Dr, Kennewick, WA 99336

Dear fellow Chapter 21 members,

At our April 2nd chapter meeting, our guest speaker was Senator Matt Boehnke, 8th Legislative District. Matt has a pleasant way of communicating with people while keeping them engaged in digesting the words of wisdom flowing from his lips. We appreciated the comments on the recent legislative session, and he consistently took the high road in addressing the positives.

It was illuminating to know that over a thousand bills were brought up in this short session and that there were quite a few “wins” for those presented by you and your colleagues. His comments were couched under the umbrella of seeking to preserve the importance of family, discipline, responsibility, respect, and integrity. These values are paramount in life and often found missing in society these days. We also thank him for addressing issues related to cybersecurity and community safety, along with the Fentanyl problem.

This meeting was held at the Clover Island Inn, 435 North Clover Island Drive, Plaza Room, Fourth Floor, Kennewick, WA 99336. Members started arriving around 11:00 AM so they could buy lunch and enjoy the eat, meet, and greet with our guest speaker before the business meeting at 12:30 PM. At the end of the meeting, there was a drawing for a \$25 gift card and the lucky person was pleasantly surprised. Your dues give you an opportunity to attend this monthly event, meet your fellow members, learn how RPEC is diligently protecting your interests, and perhaps even win the \$25 drawing.

Our guest speaker for the May 7th meeting will be Chris Haughee, Donor Development Manager for Mirror Ministries. He will speak on “Sex Trafficking: Here in our Community.” We will learn about the problem as it presents itself locally, the “faces” of traffickers, and how to identify and help victims. Each attendee will be given practical “next steps” in how to respond so that together we can end the evil of exploitation and trafficking in our midst.

Please take the time to read the Executive Director, Laurie Weidner's report in this newsletter. You can well see how your RPEC dues are working to protect what is “near and dear” to you.

Get updated from the comfort of your home computer through many virtual meetings as shown on the “Upcoming Events” calendar at the end of the newsletter. We are strong in our numbers, but we need to increase our membership to protect our interests. You can pay your annual RPEC dues with a check of \$84 from RPEC as an attractive incentive for recruiting two new members.

RPEC is the only organization in the state that represents retirees on the Select Committee on Pension Policy (SCPP), the Washington State Investment Board (WSIB), the Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB), the Health Care Is A Human Right Coalition, and at the federal level, with lobbyists working to protect Social Security and Medicare.

If you have comments or suggestions, please contact me at 253-370-9899 or rarego1213@gmail.com.

Robin Rego, RPEC Chapter 21 President

Guest Speakers: Chris Haughee



Chris is a native of the Pacific Northwest and has over thirty years in ministry from camp counseling and parish ministry to very specialized trauma-informed ministry settings. He served as chaplain in a Montana-based residential facility for severely emotionally disturbed children from 2012-2020, during which time he graduated from Multnomah Biblical Seminary (Portland, Oregon) with a Doctor of Ministry in Trauma-Informed Ministry. He served part-time in interim pastoral roles and development work during a relocation to Washington in the midst of the pandemic, settling in Prosser, Washington, his wife's childhood hometown.

In 2023, he moved into a Donor Development Manager role at Mirror Ministries, continuing his focus on raising support and compassionate advocacy for societies most marginalized: this time the minor victims of domestic sex trafficking. He also continues to serve a small church in Richland, Washington, as a part-time pastor. An adoptive father to two, Chris is an advocate for greater inclusion of foster and adoptive families in the life and ministry of local congregations. He is passionate about helping people find their God-given purpose and connecting them to a life worth living and a legacy worth leaving.

RPEC Chapter 21 Meeting Minutes – April 2nd, 2024

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 PM by President Robin Rego.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Robin Rego.

After self-introductions, Robin introduced Senator Matt Boehnke. Matt stated that there were about 25 people (Senators and Representatives) that would be moving on after this year is over. Matt serves on many committees. More of Matt's comments are addressed in the President's message in the newsletter.

Election Judge Duane Davidson was introduced, and he went over the rules for election of officers. As the following were called on, they all stated that yes, they were willing to serve on the board. The people listed:

Robin Rego-President

Susan Leschinski-Vice President

Carol Travis-Secretary

Steve Gamble-Treasurer

Dave Hanson, Dave Hopper, John Lawson-Trustees

This list was nominated as a slate by Michele Brown and seconded by Cheryl Whalen. Slate was elected by acclamation.

Election Judge Davidson then swore in the officers.

The March minutes were moved and seconded to approve as presented in the newsletter.

Presidents Report- Robin reminded everybody about the NewsFlash from RPEC, which refers to how the COLA for PERS/TRS 1 has passed and will take effect in July. HB 2481 Month of Death Public Employees Board Benefit-the bill waives the payment of healthcare premiums for plans managed by PEBB during a retiree's month of death.

The State Convention is in Wenatchee this September and our Chapter 21 is allowed 15 delegates. So far there are 7 or 8 people who said they would like to attend. Please hurry and inform Robin if you plan to attend. Our chapter will cover registration, hotel, mileage, and some meals.

The PEBB Board will be meeting April 11 and discussing the new RX policy.

Treasurer's Report- Steve Gamble reported that at the end of March there was a balance of \$14,215.90 a deposit of \$306.42 a payment of \$144.00 for ending balance of \$14,378.32. It was moved and seconded to accept the report. Motion carried.

Committee Reports- John Lawson stated that Sen. Boehnke's report pretty much made up what he would be reporting. Steve Gamble did not have anything to add. Susan Leschinski is formally supporting the UMP Classic Medicare plan since she now serves on various RPEC State Committees. Federal 5779 Fiscal Commission, if passed, will put Social Security and Medicare at risk.

Healthcare Workgroup- Will be looking at Federal Fiscal Commission, at drug coverages and will try to find a way to reduce costs for non-PEBB members.

The RPEC State Political Action Committee (PAC) is considering endorsements and contributions. Several candidates will be interviewed between now and May 20.

There is a Special Task Force to research proposed changes to our fiscal and organizational structures to increase member engagement.

Old Business: None

New Business: None

Good of the Order: None

The winner of the \$25.00 drawing was Steve Gamble.

Next meeting will be May 7, 2024, with Guest Speaker Chris Haughee, Donor Development Manager, Mirror Ministries.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Travis, Secretary

April 2024 Executive Director's Report

Convention 2024, Sept. 24-26, Wenatchee Convention Center

Are you interested in serving as a chapter delegate to RPEC's biennial Convention? You do not need to be an officer or chapter committee leader to attend. Any member in good standing is eligible to serve as delegate. If you are interested in being considered for your chapter's delegation to Convention, contact your chapter president. Delegates are chosen by election at a chapter meeting. If you are selected to represent your chapter, your Convention registration fee and lodging will be covered by your chapter. Guests may also attend at their own expense. The registration fee is \$150, which covers the Convention packet and all meals. The Convention hotel is the Coast Wenatchee. The RPEC rate is \$116.00 per night before taxes and fees. Visit www.rpecwa.org for more details or contact your chapter president.

Federal Advocacy

Call to action on The Fiscal Commission Act of 2023: If you have not already done so, please join your fellow RPEC members and AFSCME Retiree chapters nationwide in urging Congress to oppose The Fiscal Commission Act of 2023 (H.R. 5779). If this legislation is approved, your federal benefits will be at risk. [The Fiscal Commission Act of 2023 \(H.R. 5779\)](https://www.congress.gov/bills/117/5779) will create a 16-member fiscal commission to search for ways to reduce the national deficit and balance the national budget. Funding for Social Security and Medicare will be targeted for cuts. **Call 844-331-0441 today! Tell Congress to vote NO on this bill and similar proposals calling for fiscal commissions that aim to reduce your hard-earned retirement benefits.** A detailed [position paper](https://retiredamericans.org) about the proposed debt commission is available at <https://retiredamericans.org>.

Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) To Vote on Potential New Pharmacy Benefit, April 11

On April 11, the PEB Board will act on a resolution that will change the pharmacy benefit for Uniform Medical Plan (UMP) Classic Medicare. RPEC's Legislative Committee supports this change, as it will lower monthly premiums for most plan subscribers. The medical benefits in the plan will remain unchanged. The new pharmacy benefit will continue to be administered by Moda to provide continuity of service and care for retirees. By making this plan more affordable, the new benefit, if adopted at the April PEB Board meeting, will help to ensure that an employer-managed plan remains in the mix of healthcare plan options available to public sector retirees. Currently, all but two plans are privatized. Preserving traditional Medicare continues to be a key federal priority for RPEC, in addition to preserving these options for the public sector retirees in Washington. Members are encouraged to attend the April 11 meeting and offer comments during the Public Comment period. Visit www.hca.wa.gov for more details.

State Advocacy

Beginning this month, the Legislative Update Calls will be held monthly, the first Friday of each month. Please join us on April 5 from 2-3 p.m. Details are available at www.rpecwa.org.

Council Welcomes New Team Member

Jane Hewitt joined RPEC in mid-March as our new Finance and Operations Specialist. Jane brings more than 40 years of relevant work experience to RPEC. She is married with grandchildren, originally hails from Great Britain, and is an animal lover with three rescue pets. Jane can be reached at jane.hewitt@rpecwa.org. Please give her a warm welcome to RPEC!

Upcoming Events

Visit www.rpecwa.org for a full calendar of Council Office and chapter meetings.

- April 25 Membership Committee (10 a.m.)
- April 25 Healthcare Workgroup (3:30 p.m.)
- April 26 Council Office Closed, Team Retreat (9:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.)
- May 3 Legislative Update Call (2:00 p.m.)
- May 6 Executive Board Meeting (9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.)
- May 7 Executive Board, Strategic Planning (9:00-12:30 p.m.)
- May 8 Public Service Recognition Week (at Heritage Park, Olympia)
- May 9 Public Employees Benefits Board (9 a.m.-4 p.m.)
- May 9 Healthcare Workgroup (3:30 p.m.)
- May 17 Leadership Training Registration Deadline
- May 20 Political Action Committee (10:00 a.m.)
- May 21 Select Committee on Pension Policy (10:00 a.m.)
- May 23 Healthcare Workgroup (3:30 p.m.)
- May 27 Council Office Closed, Memorial Day