



# THE NEWS

Colorado School and Public Employees  
Retirement Association

November 2020



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Randy Ross  
CSPERA Board President

Thanks to those who attended the September Board Meeting. There were reports from CSPERA officers, our Operating Officer (Marlis Hamm), Associate Member Benefits Advisors (AMBA), standing committees, division chairs, ad hoc committees, and some lively Questions/Answers/Discussion from members. Please go to <https://www.cspere.org> for minutes.

Our committees are doing important work, but in some cases are a committee of one. Please pick something of interest to you and volunteer. Special thanks to past president Mary Lynn Jones, who did that. She volunteered to facilitate the Bernadine Mack Scholarship Foundation (BMSF). BMSF is our scholarship program that gives a \$1000 scholarship in each geographic division to help active public school employees continue their education. Consider donating to this worthy cause. Make checks payable to BMSF. Our goal is \$1/member from each local unit.

The Executive Board is in the process of hiring a Membership Outreach Manager. Besides working on some aspects of the office, this person will work on increasing our membership. Marlis is presently handling everything by herself.

The Issues Forum was fun and informative. Karen Wick, our lobbyist with Secure PERA, was the first speaker and was followed by CO PERA Executive Director Ron Baker. Then we heard from 17 candidates for state and federal offices from around the state. Candidates do not often address PERA. Having our own forum, we were able to ask candidates to give their views on defined benefits/defined contributions, elected vs appointed trustees, social security set offs for pension earners, and the level of relief they would support for state and local governments. (Our state budget affects our pension). You can view the forum at [CSPERA.org](https://www.cspere.org). Click on the news section and you will see the video listed. By the time you get this newsletter, you will have received your ballot. I urge you to research candidates and ballot issues in your district and vote the entire ballot. Be an active citizen. Check out SecurePERA at <https://www.securepera.org/>, join the action network at <https://actionnetwork.org/forms/join-the-ccrs-action-team>, and learn about the National Public Pension Coalition at <http://protectpensions.org/>.

Hope you and yours are safe and well. Adjusting to more home activities during the pandemic is burdensome, especially for active Coloradans, but we persevere. Try webinars like those by Jane Barton, Cardinal LLC. She has posted reflections on various aspects of caregiving and aging for AARP Colorado and does a monthly Lunch and Learn Webinar. To find out about her next program, contact Jane at [CardinalLife@msn.com](mailto:CardinalLife@msn.com) or 303.489.3903. Or take a break from webinars and go on a virtual tour of a museum at <https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours>.

Be well,  
Randy Ross



## OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS

BY

Bev Green, Community  
Service Chair

This year, in spite of COVID-19, our CSPERA members turned in 37,970 volunteer hours from across the state. At \$25.43 an hour, these volunteer hours amount to \$1,016,437.10 in value to our communities. We know this amount is really much higher because many of our members don't turn in their hours to CSPERA or turn them into other organizations that also track member volunteer hours. We sincerely thank all our members for what they are doing to make their home towns better places for us all. Research confirms what most of us know: Volunteering and helping others doesn't just help the people you're giving your time and energy to; it can help you feel better, too. Volunteering can decrease feelings of depression, increase life satisfaction, and improve overall well-being.

Volunteering in the time of the pandemic is complicated and needs to keep everyone safe. Our older populations are especially vulnerable during this time. Seniors are facing mental health challenges due to loneliness and isolation. Many local churches and civic organizations are making calls to seniors to offer help or just a listening ear. Volunteers can help through food banks, area agencies on aging, or the National Council on Aging. If you are able, local opportunities to deliver food to those who need it are available through your local food bank or Meals on Wheels. Offer to help your parents, grandparents, or seniors stay connected through technology. Talk them through downloading a podcast or audiobook or writing down instructions on how to connect to the digital books at their local library. Teach someone how to FaceTime or video conference. The pandemic has caused blood donations to fall dramatically. If you can, contact the Red Cross to find a donation location in your area. If you are financially secure, you can find many worthwhile places to donate funds. To find out more about an individual nonprofit, visit Charity Navigator to see how much of your donation actually goes to the people who need it.

Bev Green 970-339-3942



## JUST LIKE CAROL RANKIN FROM TRINIDAD

Carol Rankin is a CSPERA member from Trinidad. We asked her to give us her information about her outstanding volunteer work. Below is what Carol told us about her volunteer activities. We thank Carol for her outstanding work in her community.

From Carol:

My husband and I retired in 2008 from Trinidad State Junior College. We both worked part time in 2009. After really retiring I felt the need to "give back". I knew about the local soup kitchen (Fishers Peak Soup Kitchen) our church (Holy Trinity Catholic Church) sponsored. I decided I would see if they needed help. They did! I started going twice a week then three times a week. I found that I usually got more out of the experience than our clients. Sometimes they just needed someone to talk to. I work there about 12 to 15 hours a week.

Before Covid we served a full lunch in our Holy Family Hall. Now we prepare sack lunches and give them out for curbside pickup. We also give out curbside bread, dairy, fruits, and vegetables donated by local food stores. The Pandemic has really increased the need. If we all tried to help people instead of judging them, this world would be a better place.





**FROM**  
**NANCY CARLSON**  
CSPERA IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

During the Board Meeting of September 22, 2020, the following goals were presented by the CSPERA Executive Board. These goals are a progression of the strategy to increase and retain membership while providing PERA information and member benefits to the members.

1. The Association – meet member needs and increase membership, fill vacancies on Board, hire a Membership Outreach Manager
2. Legislative – Work with Karen Wick, Secure PERA and the Coalition to keep our members informed of legislative actions
3. Communication to increase our Social Media presence and improve the timeliness of the newsletters and communication
4. PERA – continue a working relationship

Over the past 5 months CSPERA has:

- Designed and funded a new position in the CSPERA office – Membership Outreach Manager, and are we are currently interviewing for that position.
- Currently we are reviewing and contacting Local units about their Good Standing status. Please send Marlis Hamm your officer roster changes or e-mail her and tell her there are no changes. The December local membership check date in Dec. is fast approaching, there will not be checks issued to locals who are not in Good Standing.
- Randy Ross worked with Karen Wick at Secure PERA to provide a webinar about the impacts of the Legislative funding or lack of funding for PERA, and we have worked with her with our Issues Forum and other methods to obtain information about candidates that will be supportive to CSPERA and PERA.
- Obtained a \$3,000 grant that was used to strengthen the partnership with AARP and provide better Social Media. Please follow us on Facebook and check out the CSPERA website. <https://www.facebook.com/coloradoschoolandpublicemployeesretirementassoc/>) and Website access ([cspera.org](https://cspera.org)).
- Marlis Hamm is working with PERA to try to develop more electronic ways of joining, using dues deduct and how PERA sends the office reports.

Please look over the Openings on the CSPERA Board. The Executive Board is working diligently to make the Board a governing board vs a working board, as evidenced by the new Membership Outreach position and other strategies.



# **The CSPERA Board needs your voice of support!!!**

## **Please Consider these Board Openings and commitments**

### **CSPERA Board President-Elect – V. Standing Rules**

- Assume the presidency when an opening occurs.
- Preside at all meetings in the absence of the president.
- Assume the duties of the president whenever the president is unable to act.
- Assist the president in the execution of the duties of the presidency.
- Chair the Birnadine Mack Board of Directors.
- Perform other duties as may be delegated by the president.

### **Outreach/Membership – Eastern Slope VI. Standing Rules**

- Develop and implement an outreach/membership plan.
- Provide leadership and guidance to CSPERA and local units on how to increase membership.
- Work closely with division directors to increase membership at both the local and state levels.
- Work closely with the CSPERA membership coordinator to follow up with members who have not renewed their membership by electronic means, mail, or phone.
- Maintain a current membership brochure in both print and electronic formats.

### **Legislative – VI. Standing Rules (Issues Forum Chair)**

- Develop and implement a legislative action plan.
- Establish a working relationship with Colorado legislators.
- Gather and disseminate information on a regular basis to CSPERA membership through direct communication and in the recognized CSPERA communication vehicles regarding legislation affecting PERA benefits, the welfare of the retirees, and education.
- Serve as a PERA Ambassador and represent the organization with other PERA advocacy groups such as Friends of PERA and Colorado Coalition for Retirement Security (SecurePERA).
- Plan and present the annual CSPERA legislative forum in corporation with the president.
- Work with and support local unit legislative committees.

# METRO DIVISION

By Mike Clem—Chairman

Back in February of 2019 our Denver Unit President and mentor, John MacPherson stepped aside from his position as our Local Unit President to tend to his health. Today we learned that his health issues finally have a diagnosis of [Corticobasal Ganglionic Degeneration](#), *considered to be a form of Parkinson's disease* and that his health is declining.

It was John, who through his participation in [Secure PERA](#) and [CSPERA](#), saw the need for the DPS Division of [PERA](#) to have unit representation in [CSPERA](#). He gathered a few of his DPS former colleagues and friends and taught us about the necessity to advocate for our [PERA](#) defined benefits and the benefits of future retirees. In 2016, he helped to establish the DPSPera local unit, now DMPera, and was elected as its Pioneer President. It took us another year to write and develop our by-laws, but with John's leadership, we were accepted in 2018 as a local unit in good standing with [CSPERA](#).

John is a Vietnam Veteran, a retired Denver Public Schools administrator/educator, and also worked in the DPS Retirees Office until the merger with [PERA](#).

John's wife, Beth, has given us permission to share the letter below and the link to [John's Caring Bridge webpage](#).

We know that some of you will want to communicate with John, and feel free to do so via his webpage or by email.

We ask that you keep John in your thoughts. We only hope that we can live up to the amazing example he has set for all of us through his service to country, service to us all in our retirement, and his service to his former students and staffs. He continues to be an inspiration as he manages this time with the assistance of his loving wife, Beth.

Here's a link to a CaringBridge page that was started to provide updates on John, <https://www.caringbridge.org/public/johnmacpherson>.



From Beth-

*Dear Friends,*

*So many of you have cared and prayed for us these past few years as we've searched for answers to John's ongoing health issues. This past week we received a diagnosis of a relatively rare (and hard to diagnose!) condition, Corticobasal Ganglionic Degeneration, considered to be a form of Parkinson's disease. Our focus now is to try to manage some of the symptoms, primarily agitation that can interfere with sleep, and problems with walking/stability. Our goal now is to keep John safe at home, so we can keep him at home.*

*John has been so strong, brave and kind through this journey and I admire him so much. I know that many of you do as well. Feel free to reply to this email to remind John of your love and respect for him.*

*It's been a long and winding road to get to this point and I don't regret any of the routes we've pursued in seeking answers. It's an honor and a blessing to care for this man that so many of us love so much. And now I just want to do my best to provide him with what he wants and needs in the time ahead.*

Since receiving that diagnosis, John has started receiving services through Denver Hospice at home. I am incredibly thankful for the skills and expertise of their staff in supporting me as I care for John. I'm also incredibly thankful for John's devoted caregiver, Daniel, who has been on this journey with us for over a year now.

I hope to fill in details and provide brief updates via this site in the weeks and months ahead. I haven't been my usual self about replying to emails lately, so I'm hoping that posting here will alleviate my guilt about not acknowledging your kind messages as I'd like. It's a season of JOMO (Joy Of Missing Out!) for me as I aim to focus on John's care and my self-care and I'm thankful for your support as I strive to do that.

We do welcome your visits although John tends to sleep on and off during the day so then I just have to figure out if I benefit more from enjoying your company myself or taking advantage of the time to slip away for a brief walk with the dog.

Thanks for your love, support and understanding as we navigate the precious days ahead.

Beth



# CSPERA Board of Directors Pass a Revised 20-21 Budget

The creation of the new position of Membership Outreach Manager necessitated a budget revision of the 20-21 budget in order to pay the new salary and benefits. You will a significant amount of monies were moved from the Issues Forum to Salaries and Benefits since the Issues Forum was held virtually. Below please see the Approved Revised Budget. Should you have questions please contact Treasurer Sandy Patton at [pattosl@comcast.net](mailto:pattosl@comcast.net).

## Colorado School & Public Employees Retirement Assc

### **Budget Overview: Budget 2020-2021 - FY21 P&L**

**Revised 09.08.2020**

**September 2020 - August 2021**

	<u>Total</u>
<b>Revenue</b>	
<b>4000 Income</b>	
4310 Membership Dues	\$ 60,000
4320 Membership Dues-PERA	150,000
4325 AMBA-Membership	11,800
4330 Membership Dues to Locals	(48,000)
<b>Total 4000 Income</b>	<b>\$ 173,800</b>
<b>4410 Issues Forum/Membership</b>	
4411 Registration & Fee Income	0
<b>Total 4410 Issues Forum/Membership</b>	<b>\$ 0</b>
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 173,800</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>\$ 173,800</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>	
<b>5250 BOD, Executive Board &amp; Committees</b>	
5251 Transportation	6,500
5252 Meals	4,500
5256 Lodging	14,000
5258 Other Expense	600
<b>Total 5250 BOD, Executive Board &amp; Committees</b>	<b>\$ 25,600</b>
<b>5400 Outreach Committee</b>	
5412 Postage	100
5414 Transportation	1,000
5415 Lodging	400
5416 Meals	500
5418 Other Expenses	1,500
<b>Total 5400 Outreach Committee</b>	<b>\$ 3,500</b>
<b>5600 Legislative &amp; Coalition Committee</b>	
5612 Transportation	150
5614 Meals	150
5616 Lodging	150
5618 Other Expenses	100
<b>Total 5600 Legislative &amp; Coalition Committee</b>	<b>\$ 550</b>

<b>5700 Other Committees</b>		
5712 Retirement Planning		1,200
5714 Community Service		100
5716 Division Chairs		1,000
5720 Other Committees		1,200
<b>Total 5700 Other Committees</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>3,500</b>
<b>5800 President's Expenses</b>		
5812 Transportation		2,000
5814 Meals		400
5816 Lodging		400
5818 Other Expenses		200
<b>Total 5800 President's Expenses</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>3,000</b>
<b>5900 Office Expenses</b>		
5912 Salaries & Benefits		71,800
5912.11 Payroll Taxes		5,500
5912.12 Workers Comp Insurance		350
5912.13 Unemployment Insurance		120
<b>Total 5912 Salaries &amp; Benefits</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>77,770</b>
5914 Liability & Bonding		2,500
5916 Accounting & Auditing		7,000
5920 Equipment Expenses		2,000
5922 Postage		1,500
5924 Supplies		4,500
5928 Other Expenses		1,500
5933 Memorium/Get Well Gifts		500
<b>Total 5928 Other Expenses</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,000</b>
5980 Contracted Services		11,000
<b>Total 5900 Office Expenses</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>108,270</b>
<b>6000 Communications/PR</b>		
6012 Printing Costs		3,000
6014 Postage		6,500
6015 Social/Electronic Media		500
6018 Other Expenses		1,000
<b>Total 6000 Communications/PR</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>11,000</b>
<b>6110 Contributions</b>		
6112 APS Foundation		3,250
6113 Colorado Coalition		4,000
<b>Total 6110 Contributions</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>7,250</b>
<b>6220 Issues Forum &amp; Membership Meeting</b>		
6222 Travel		0
6224 Meals		0
6226 Lodging		0

6227 Speaker Expenses		0
6228 Other Expenses		2,500
<b>Total 6220 Issues Forum &amp; Membership Meeting</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,500</b>
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>165,170</b>
<b>Net Operating Revenue</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>8,630</b>
<b>Other Revenue</b>		
8000 Interest on Investments		1,000
8001 Unrealized Gain/Loss on Investments		1,000
<b>Total Other Revenue</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>2,000</b>
<b>Other Expenditures</b>		
9500 Contingency Reserves		4,000
<b>Total Other Expenditures</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>4,000</b>
<b>Net Other Revenue</b>	<b>-\$</b>	<b>2,000</b>
<b>Net Budget Surplus</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>6,630</b>



#### CATCH UP WITH WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE CSPERA OFFICE!

By  
Marlis Hamm  
CSPERA Operating Officer

Please welcome Lori Smith to the office. Lori has taken the position vacated by Frances Brown. However, the position title and job description has completely changed. Her title is Membership Outreach Manager.



Not only will Lori be handling the membership database, but she will also be working on outreach and membership growth.

Lori and her husband recently moved to the Denver area from Kansas City, MO. Lori leaves her five year employment as CEO of the Palestine Senior Activity Center in Kansas City. We are very excited to have Lori become part of the CSPERA family.

The other exciting news from the office is we are getting a new database. The new database we are getting is from GrowthZone Software. It has many updated features, and it will be able to be used from home. Since we have not gotten it installed yet, I will update you after we have been able to use it for awhile.

Our office hours are also changing, effective October 26th. Monday through Friday, 8 am to 4 pm. Closed on national holidays.

Please check out the CSPERA FaceBook page and our website at CSPERA.org. You can find so much information about what is happening with CSPERA, The Issues Forum, Breaking News and so much more!

Remember to **Stay Safe!**

## CSPERA Calendar of Meetings

### BOARD MEETINGS

January 26, 2021

May 19, 2021

September 21, 2021

### ISSUES FORUM

September 22, 2021







# Anti-Public-Pension Groups Active at National Level

By Tom Tonoli, CSPERA Coalition

Several new publications and reports have been released during summer and fall by groups that promote the modification of Defined Benefit pension plans toward Defined Contribution plans. Colorado legislators may be the recipients of recent anti-Defined Benefit pension reports.

The Reason Foundation, supported by a \$1 million grant from the John and Laura Arnold Foundation, offers a “Pension Reform Handbook,” described as a “what you need to know” guide to reshape a pension system (NCTR FYI 9/24/20).”

Both the Reason Foundation, and a companion group, the Equable Institute (also supported by a \$1.7 million Arnold Foundation grant) offer publications and pension reform consulting services to legislators in states like Colorado that have Defined Benefit public pension plans.

The Reason Foundation and the Equable Institute assert that the “vast majority” of Defined Benefit plans are facing difficulties, and that states “should... convert employees from Defined Benefit plans to self-directed 401(k)-style Defined Contribution plans as much as possible (NCTR FYI 9/2/20).”

The Equable Institute has also asserted that teacher pensions in particular have damaged state governments’ ability to properly fund public education and other public services. But the National Association of State Retirement Administrators comments that the Equable report “presents a misleading characterization of teacher pensions as a hindrance to other public education funding priorities (NCTR FYI 9/2/20).”

Reason Foundation and Equable Institute Directors Anthony Randazzo and Josh McGee both have long histories of involvement with the Arnold Foundation and anti-public-pension efforts. CSPERA believes legislators and all public employees should exercise careful fact checking in Reason Foundation and Equable Institute reports.

— Citations: National Council on Teacher Retirement (NCTR), FYI, 9/2/20; 9/24/20

## UNITS IN GOOD STANDING!

**Yeah!!** We have 100% of Units in Good Standing. All units are working hard to reach out to their members and keep everyone in touch. If you have new information such as a new email address, phone #, etc., please get it to your local.

The payments for membership for the 1st Quarter to the Units In Good Standing, will be going out by November 15th.

The holidays are approaching fast—please be safe!

# **PERA Future ARR Estimation**

By Tom Tonoli, CSPERA Coalition

## **PERA Board Mulls Estimation of Future Investment Returns**

Acting early to ensure the future financial health of your PERA fund is an important aspect of the PERA Board's work, and early action requires accurate long-term prediction of future return on investments, the main source of fund income. That prediction is part of the Board's work this fall.

The PERA Board must estimate what percentage return it can reasonably expect as an annual average over a long term. That estimation is termed PERA's **Assumed Rate of Return (ARR)**. PERA currently has an ARR of 7.25%, a figure that is about average for similar large public pension plans. This fall, after substantial study and review of consultant reports, the Board will decide whether its 7.25% ARR is too optimistic, or too conservative, or still suited to future long-term market returns.

## **How might that ARR decision affect PERA employees and retirees?**

If PERA's study leads the Board to (1) conclude that 7.25% is too optimistic, and to (2) adopt a lower ARR, then the retirement plan will be projected to have less future income and be less well funded. Through the Automatic Adjustment feature that became PERA law in 2018, that lower future income expectation may trigger higher contributions to be paid by employers and employees, and reduced COLAs for retirees.

Similarly, if the PERA Board's study leads to the conclusion that higher than 7.25% returns can reasonably be expected, and the ARR is increased, then the plan will be projected as better funded, contributions might be lowered, and COLAs might increase. A conclusion that the current 7.25% ARR is still suited to long term income expectations would, itself, not impact Automatic Adjustments to future contributions and COLAs.

Other factors do play a part in PERA income, progress toward full funding of the plan, and Automatic Adjustments. Also important are updated information on the number of PERA employees, average salaries of employees, and retiree life expectancy. But investment income remains a major factor.

## **How difficult is PERA's job in estimating an accurate long term ARR?**

Very! Especially given recent high-volatility market years. PERA's return in 2017 was 18.1% and in 2019 was 20.3%, far greater than needed to fulfill the current 7.25% ARR. But 2015's return was 1.5% and 2019 brought a loss of -(3.5%). This year has seen a large COVID-fueled loss in March, followed by an erratic up-and-down trend to the current moment of market value recovery.

Happily, despite the recent volatility, PERA's average annual return for the past ten years has been 9.1%, giving past-history support for PERA's 7.25% ARR. But developments related to COVID-19 and national elections make future projections require assessment of new factors.

The goal of PERA legislation passed in 2018 was to set a course toward full funding of your retirement plan by 2048. Accurate projection of future income is important for early financial adjustments and timely progress toward that goal. The PERA Board has a complex and important policy decision coming along this fall.



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### CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM

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Aurora, CO 80011

**Website:**

[www.cspere.org](http://www.cspere.org)

**Email:**

[cspere@aurorak12.org](mailto:cspere@aurorak12.org)



Do We Have Your Current  
Contact Information?

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print)

New Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

New Phone \_\_\_\_\_

New email address \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print)

### CSPERA OFFICERS AND OFFICE STAFF

Randy Ross, President  
Jeanette Beck, Secretary  
Sandy Patton, Treasurer  
Nancy Carlson, Immediate Past President  
Marlis Hamm, Operating Officer  
Lori Smith, Membership Outreach Manager