

BREA Minutes

Meeting Date and Place: Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2015; Berkner Hall, Rm D

Attendees: Elliot Auerbach, Linda Barancik, Mulki R. Bhat, Violet Bezler, Robert M. Brown, Victor Cassella, Anita Cohen, Ronnie Evans, Les Fishbone, Eena-Mai Franz, Sheryl Gerstman, Louise Hanson, Al Mallen, Ken Mohring (by phone), Arnie Moodenbaugh, Mona Rowe, Liz Seubert, Steve Shapiro, John Skalyo, Joan Skelton, Richard Skelton and Elaine Zukowski.

Liz Seubert opened the meeting at 1:07 pm.

The minutes of the Jan. 13, 2015 meeting were accepted as presented.

Steve Shapiro gave the Treasurer's Report. BREA collected approximately \$3500 in dues in 2014. Last year's expenditures amounted to approximately \$500 (for luncheon, printing costs, postage). In addition, BREA has a considerable amount of money set aside. Ken Mohring suggested that he, Steve Shapiro, Dave Cox, plus an unnamed woman serve on a committee that looks into possible ways to use this money. Several ideas were put forward by attendees: for example, to do something for the Lab or BERA; to create a transportable exhibit to take to schools.

Business:

Membership: Ken Mohring reported that Carmen Benkovitz is ill. She apparently has sent membership renewal checks to Steve Shapiro. Steve had not received them by the time of the meeting. She and Sheryl Gerstman still need to meet to transfer BREA files to the new laptop.

Retiree Mailing List/Contacting New Retirees: Mona Rowe and Ken Mohring need to meet together with HR about ways to contact *all* retirees, not just BREA members, with relevant mailings and/or emails. Mona has been trying to address this issue for months. Since privacy issues are a paramount concern, BREA is willing to provide the printed matter or email text to HR and pay for the postage. Then HR could mail or email the correspondence without violating the privacy of individuals, i.e. without divulging the names and addresses of non-members.

Several years ago HR started collecting the email addresses of new retirees, and at the time, it was thought that these addresses would be made available to BREA. This has not happened, although BREA did provide HR with its email list.

How to contact new retirees? HR includes information on BREA in its packet for new retirees. A new retiree receives a free membership in BREA for the first year – however, to receive information from BREA such as email announcements and Newsletters, currently, new retirees must be proactive and provide BREA with contact information – otherwise, BREA has no way of knowing who they are.

Monthly Meeting Announcements: Steve Shapiro would like to see each monthly meeting along with its agenda announced in a mass email sent to all members. Although the meetings are open to all and the dates are listed in the BREA Newsletters as well as on the BREA website, the agendas are currently sent only to those who have attended recent meetings. Several people present asked that when BREA emails are sent out, the subject line be relevant to the text of the email, not just carry the generic default.

DOE M&O (management and operations) contract solicitation for BNL: Nothing new to report.

Changes to Medical Insurance Benefits:

Health Reimbursement Accounts (HRAs): Ken Mohring had been told by Bob Lincoln, the head of HR, that letters will be sent to retirees who still haven't signed up for their HRA. Eena-Mai Franz has also spoken to Bob Lincoln and told him that some people are having trouble with their HRAs. They are experiencing difficulties in setting up their accounts, in providing acceptable documentation for reimbursement, or do not have internet access.

People are still receiving misinformation depending upon which SelectQuote agent they speak to. For instance, they have been told that they can only sign up for an HRA on-line – *this is not true*. There is no deadline for setting up an HRA.

Elliot Auerbach pointed out that denials for reimbursement are not explained. He strongly feels that people should get automatic feedback as to why a reimbursement was denied, without having to call. The amount of \$170 per month per eligible person contributed by the Lab into the HRA is for the year 2015 only. It will be reviewed for 2016 and could remain the same, increase, decrease, or disappear altogether.

A concern was raised about the possibility of hackers interfering with on-line accounts.

Finding Physicians: Mona Rowe has been having difficulty finding physicians in Hawaii willing to accept her new insurance. She was told at this meeting that any physician who accepts Medicare must also accept any authorized supplemental Medicare plan. However, MD's can legally say that their practice is closed, that they are not accepting new patients.

Hearing Aids: Elliot Auerbach asked whether anyone who received a hearing aid through CIGNA at the end of last year has had any billing problems. Apparently not.

"Retirees Helping Retirees": Dave Cox has obtained information on Savannah River's Resource Center, set up to help their retirees with recent changes that have occurred to their medical coverage. He was not present at this meeting so a discussion of his findings was postponed. Steve Shapiro asked whether anyone attending today's meeting knew of a retiree needing help. No one said "yes". Steve then asked that a person who has been helping other retirees sign up for their HRAs be invited to the next meeting.

Annual Luncheon: Lillian Kouchinsky was not present. Information on the luncheon will appear in the March/April Newsletter.

Newsletter: Mona Rowe discussed the upcoming March/April 2015 Newsletter. In addition to an announcement about the June luncheon, this issue will include Ken Mohring's President's message, a piece on health benefits available through the VA, a piece by Anita Cohen about a book of local walks, an announcement of the April showing of Eric Forsyth's sailing video, mention of future planned excursions with as yet no fixed dates (to Plum Island and the Cornell Cooperative Extension Service), a listing of up-coming BERA events, and a listing of deaths. The article on retirees' vacations is on hold.

Anita Cohen handles the death notices, both for the listing in the Newsletter and in a longer format on the BREA website. She urges anyone with information about a recent death of someone who worked at the Lab to contact her at afcohen@optonline.com.

Victor Cassella asked that the Newsletter include a reminder of the health-related screening and compensation programs available to former BNL employees. He also asked whether information about these programs was included in the packet provided to new retirees by HR. Some recent retirees said "yes" and some said "no".

Plum Island Tour: Steve Shapiro has spoken to his contact at Plum Island. BREA is currently 13th on their list which could mean summer or fall. He should have a date by the May/June Newsletter. The tour accommodates about 25 people. Participants must be US citizens and will be subject to a background check. They will need the required information about a month in advance. Anita Cohen asked whether the tour was handicapped accessible.

Sailing video: The date and location for the BREA-sponsored presentation of Eric Forsyth's latest sailing video has changed since the announcement at the Feb. meeting, due to Lab-initiated scheduling conflicts. As of this writing, it will be presented on Tues., April 28, at noon, in the Hamilton Seminar Room (Chemistry Building).

The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 pm.

March 2015 meeting: Tuesday, Mar. 10, 1 pm, Bldg. 400, Rms RSB 1 & 2

April 2015 meeting: Tuesday, Apr. 14, 1 pm, Bldg. 400, Rms RSB 1 & 2

Minutes submitted by Louise Hanson