

# BREA Minutes

**Meeting Date and Place:** Tuesday, Dec 11, 2012; Bldg. 400, Rm RSB 2

**Attendees:** Elliot Auerbach, Carmen Benkovitz, Dave Cox, Eena-Mai Franz, Louise Hanson, Les Lawrence, George Oldham, Arnie Peskin, Frances Scheffel, Liz Seubert, Steve Shapiro, and Myron Strongin

Dave Cox opened the meeting at 1:04 pm.

The minutes of the Nov. 13, 2012 meeting were accepted as presented.

Steve Shapiro presented the Treasurer's Report. In the last month, there has been a slight accumulation of interest and the receipt of dues checks (see below).

## **Old Business:**

Membership: Carmen Benkovitz reported that she has received 40+ checks from renewing members in response to the November newsletter. In addition, one new person has joined BREA. George Oldham is actively encouraging his group of Plant Engineering retirees to join and has distributed copies of BREA's membership form to them.

DOE former worker medical screening program: George Oldham is also encouraging his group to participate in the DOE former worker medical screening program.

BREA newsletter: The BREA newsletter is quarterly. The next issue will be sent out in February.

SeniorNet: Dave Cox has not heard anything directly from Ronnie Evans; however, he said that the Yaphank facility is "chugging along" and recently held an open house.

Annual Luncheon: Ken Mohring, who is organizing the event, was not here, so this item was postponed.

Eric Forsyth Sailing Video: Dave Cox has been in contact with Eric Forsyth. Eric will be available in January and March. It was decided at this meeting to aim for the end of January. Dave will firm up a date, book Berkner Hall, send out an "email blast" to members with email, and coordinate with Chris Carter and Joanne Rula on publicizing the event through BNL's on-line calendar and the new on-line "This Week". With the Brookhaven Bulletin now gone, getting word out to retirees has become more difficult.

Changes in retirees' medical/prescription drug benefits for 2013: Retirees should receive their new CIGNA medical and prescription cards by the end of December.

A lively discussion about the changes to retirees' medical benefits – past (2012), current (2013), and potentially in the future - ensued. People expressed their fears concerning future increases in the monthly fees. George Oldham reported that many people in his Plant Engineering group, especially those who retired before 1995, are very upset, not only with the loss last year of their free supplemental medical benefits, but with the additional

50% increase in what they will have to pay to maintain those benefits in 2013. He said that many people will stop their supplemental insurance because they can't afford it.

The situations at two other National Labs – Savannah River and Lawrence Livermore were mentioned. Dave Cox said that Savannah River retirees have contacted one of their US Senators, and he has been responsive. Steve Shapiro distributed an article about Lawrence Livermore retirees (from The Independent, August 9, 2012, p1). Their retirees' organization has declared its independence from the laboratory, citing concerns over their ability to speak out on issues, particularly health care. This led to a discussion of what measures/positions BREA ought to be taking or be prepared to take.

Dave plans to have BREA representatives meet with HR personnel on a more regular basis, starting early next year. He will also send information on the 2013 changes to BNL retirees' supplemental medical/prescription drug benefits to the retirees' organizations at other DOE Labs.

The demise of the Bulletin/emailing of the classified ads: George Oldham reported that the retirees in his group were very upset by the demise of the Bulletin.

Since future classified ads will be available only via on-site Intranet, Carmen Benkovitz is working with Sheryl Gerstman so that the list can be emailed to BREA members. Dave Cox has offered to act as a go-between for non-BREA people who also want to receive the ads. He will forward them to people who responded to a notice he placed in the last, Nov. 30, issue of the Bulletin.

#### **New Business:**

CAC: Arnie Peskin updated BREA on recent CAC meetings. He is BREA's representative to BNL's Community Advisory Council (CAC). There are no big issues or scandals facing the Lab at the moment. Recent topics have included the progress of long-term clean-up efforts, the Pine Barrens fire, and the potential risks of nanotechnology. A briefing on the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy will be given in the near future. Arnie wants BREA to remain active on the CAC. He thinks we play a valuable role because we, BNL's retirees, are seen as honest brokers by both the Lab and the community. We have been a good moderator at times when Lab/community relations have been tense.

Eena-Mai Franz is BREA's alternate representative to CAC. Neither Arnie nor Eena-Mai can attend the January meeting. CAC meets on the second Thursday of the month. Steve Shapiro offered to serve as BREA's second alternate and attend the January meeting.

"Means-Testing" for Social Security and Medicare: Elliot Auerbach distributed a handout describing Social Security benefits and taxable amounts, and Medicare Part B deductibles.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 pm.

January 2013 meeting: Tuesday, Jan. 8, 1pm, Bldg. 400, Rm RSB 1

February 2013 meeting: Tuesday, Feb. 12, 1pm, Berkner Hall, Rm A

Minutes submitted by Louise Hanson