



COPRA CHRONICLE

Issued by and for the City of Phoenix Retirees Association
Your advocate in pension and insurance matters

May 2023

MEMBERSHIP IS OUR STRENGTH

Issue 5

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"Membership is our Strength"
MEMBERSHIP

Membership for COPRA is \$12 per year or \$50.00 for 5 years. If you have changed your address, email address or phone number, or have any questions about dues payments, please contact Mary Jo Slunder.

Mary Jo can be reached by: telephone at 602-206-5515, or by email at copra.members@gmail.com

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM CITY MANAGER JEFF BARTON'S PRESENTATION AT THE SPRING COPRA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

On March 17, 2023, City Manager Jeff Barton addressed the spring meeting of COPRA and discussed his plans for the City of Phoenix as both an employer and a provider of community services.

At the top of his list, Barton discussed bringing back a family attitude and feeling to the City, something he feels has been lost over the years, particularly since the Great Recession. One way to help this along is to pay employees for their important work. The goal is to pay the best of all competing municipalities so the City becomes the employer of choice. A Classification and Compensation study of all positions has been undertaken to help this along.

At this point in the budget process, the City has reached agreements with all five labor groups, a very positive outcome. Maintaining a steady workforce has been an arduous process and at one point there were 650 vacancies, of which half have now been filled. Enrollment is up at the Police Academy and the new contracts should help get ahead of the curve. He feels it is unfortunate younger employees don't realize the value of the City setting aside funds for pensions. This isn't unique to Phoenix, it is a generational shift.

Barton wants to think long-term and hopes to get a \$500 million bond program passed later in 2023. This is a bit smaller than some past programs, but the idea is to secure funding for projects that are necessary and can be achieved in a timely manner so they meet current community needs.

Addressing the homelessness problem is a priority for Barton, and Phoenix has allocated \$5 million to try to tackle this issue. Currently, the City is considering using shipping containers, four anchored together with air-conditioning in the middle, as housing. A similar project was done successfully in cooperation with Maricopa County. Buying old hotels to convert to low-cost housing is also being considered.

City Manager Barton was optimistic about the state of the City, its employees, and its future.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Rob Sweeney

My wife is an elementary school art teacher. Boy, does she have her hands full! She works at four campuses and sees approximately 1,200 kids on a two-week rotation. She is passionate about teaching and more so about instilling the love of art in children.

I have been spending weekends helping her prepare for art shows and the next week's lesson. Rolling out clay. Unloading/loading the kiln. Doing whatever she asks.

A number of her lessons incorporate perspective. One project is to have the kids learn how to add depth to a piece of art by using one-point perspective. This process draws the viewer's eyes into the drawing as if it were three dimensional. I am always impressed with what these young artists can do to demonstrate depth to their work.

I started thinking a lot about perspective and how to incorporate it when I engage with people and view the world. I am currently working on an interim assignment in southeastern Arizona. The wide-open valleys and tall peaks add perspective to one's everyday experience. But it was nightfall that provided me an extraordinary experience in perspective.

One clear evening after work, I sat on the patio at my Airbnb to watch the sunset. I sat there and just kept staring at a moonless night and had planets and stars pop out of the sky as if someone was flipping a switch. Venus! Mars! Orion! I became immersed in the beauty of the night sky.

I am an occasional star gazer. I would walk outside and take in the sights, then go about my evening routine. I have never just sat for an hour and let the world come to me. Of course, I needed to add music to the mix (cue Van Morrison's *Moondance* and David Bowie's *Space Oddity*).

I was in awe of the beauty unfolding before me. I couldn't help but think about the many generations before me who observed the same sky and how they were able make sense of it. I felt small thinking about the entire universe and where I was sitting on Mother Earth. The sense of perspective was as if I was being drawn into the night sky like that of a 5th grader's one-point drawing.

Perspective can be had in many forms. It could be an understanding of what someone else is going through. It can be how one interprets the notes or the lyrics of a song. It can be how the color moves you when looking at a painting. Or understanding why someone may have a strong belief in an issue you may find ridiculous.

We all have a way of seeing the world around us. Having a greater sense of perspective of how we and others view adds to the beauty of our experiences.

I wish you a happy and healthy summer - Rob

DESTINATION ARIZONA: MOUNT GRAHAM

Did you know Arizona is home to some of the world's most advanced astronomical observatories? Mount Graham, located in southeastern Arizona, is one of the highest peaks in the state, standing at an elevation of 10,720 feet (3,267 meters) above sea level. Its clear, dark, night skies make it an ideal location for cosmological research.

The mountain is part of the Pinaleno Range, which is known for its unique flora and fauna. It is home to several endemic species, including the Mount Graham red squirrel, which is found only on the mountain and is considered a threatened species. The mountain's diverse ecosystem is also home to black bears, mountain lions, and a variety of bird species.

One of the most notable features of Mount Graham is the Mount Graham International Observatory (MGIO). The MGIO is home to several world-class telescopes, including the Large Binocular

(Continued on page 4)

ALL THINGS ROTH

CHRISTINA LESSARD, CFP, NATIONWIDE®

Roth retirement accounts first came on the scene over 20 years ago with the Tax Relief Act of 1997. The first introduction to Roth came in the form of a Roth IRA. Since its introduction, Roth accounts have evolved. Today, there are two types of Roth Accounts:

- Designated Roth accounts within a retirement plan (AKA: Employer sponsored retirement plans, like the City of Phoenix 457)
- Roth IRAs (retirement accounts that are not employer sponsored retirement plans).

Whether a designated Roth account or a Roth IRA, they have two important features in common, which are the main reasons most people open a Roth account. The first feature is that contributions to a Roth account are made with after tax money and are not deductible. The second feature is that, so long as the account owner takes a “qualified distribution” from the account, the entire amount (including earnings) is distributed free of income tax. A distribution is “qualified” for this income tax exclusion if it occurs more than five years after the initial contribution, or each conversion, to the account and when the participant is age 59½ or older, dies, or becomes disabled.

Although similar, there are some key differences between the two types of Roth Accounts.

One key difference is Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs). For Designated Accounts, RMDs are required once the original account owner reaches their RMD age. For Roth IRAs, RMDs are not required if the original account owner is still living.

Another difference is the distribution order when withdrawn from the Roth account. For Designated Accounts, distributions are pro-rata, meaning the contributions, conversions, and earnings cannot be separated. For a Roth IRA, contributions come out first, then conversions, then earnings. If withdrawing only the contribution or conversion, there are no taxes owed on the distribution. If earnings are withdrawn from a Roth IRA, or Designated account, prior to being a “qualified distribution” taxes and penalties may apply to the earnings.

If you are no longer employed, or earning income, you cannot contribute to a Roth account. However, you can still take advantage of a Roth by transferring existing pre-tax retirement money to a Roth account! This transfer is called a conversion and can be made within a designated Roth account, like your City of Phoenix 457, or to a Roth IRA.

There is no limit on how much you can convert from a pre-tax retirement account to a Roth account. However, the amount that you convert is taxable as ordinary income in the year that the conversion takes place.

It is important to reiterate the information previously mentioned: each conversion has its own 5-year period for the earnings to be considered a “qualified distribution” and tax free.

Finally, if you do a conversion within a designated plan and roll over the designated Roth account to a Roth IRA later, the holding period does not transfer. The holding period of the Roth IRA takes control over the rolled over amount. Therefore, if the Roth IRA is new, the holding period starts over. However, if the Roth IRA is already existing and has a 5+ year holding period, the rolled over amount now has 5+ years holding period.

Even if you are retired, you can take advantage of the tax benefits of a Roth IRA by doing a conversion from your 457 or conventional IRA. Contact your Personal Retirement Consultant today to discuss if a Roth is right for you.

Nationwide is here to help. If you are interested in converting funds from your Nationwide 457 to a Roth IRA, please contact me at Lessac1@nationwide.com.

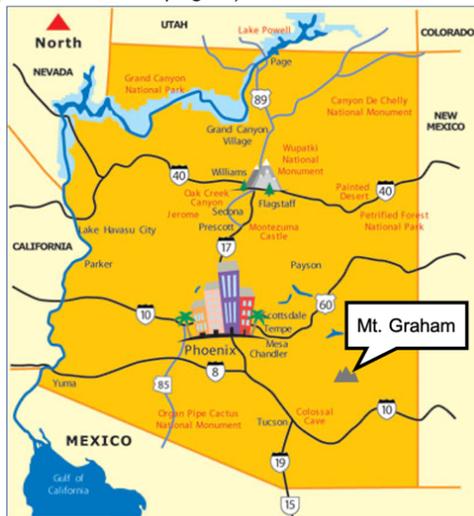
Upcoming Webinars by Nationwide

- [Back to Basics PEHP](#) (active and non-active employees) – June 6, 12 pm - 1 pm MT
- [Myths and Realities](#) (active and non-active employees) – June 20, 12 pm - 1 pm MT
- [Managing Taxes on Retirement Income](#) (active and non-active employees) – June 26, 11:30 am-1 pm MT
- [Asset Allocation](#) (active and non-active employees) – June 27, 12 pm - 1 pm MT

Register for these one-time events at <https://www.phoenixdcp.com/rsc-web-preauth/resource-center/webinars>

DESTINATION ARIZONA: MOUNT GRAHAM (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 2)



Telescope (LBT), which is one of the largest and most powerful telescopes in the world. The LBT is capable of capturing images with ten times the clarity of the Hubble Space Telescope, making it an invaluable tool for astronomers.

In addition to the MGIO, Mount Graham also has several campgrounds, hiking trails, and picnic areas that offer stunning views of the surrounding landscape. The most popular hiking trail on the mountain is the Grant Creek Trail, which offers a challenging, but rewarding, 10-mile hike through lush forests and rocky terrain.

Despite its beauty and scientific significance, Mount Graham has faced controversy in recent years due to the construction of the MGIO. The construction of



Large Binocular Telescope (LBT)

the observatory was met with protests from Native American tribes who consider the mountain to be sacred. The controversy continues to this day, with ongoing debates about the impact of the observatory on the mountain's ecosystem and cultural significance.

Unfortunately, the MGIO has been closed to public since the COVID pandemic. The Pinaleno Mountains, including Mount Graham, however, are still open for recreation. To find out more information about visiting this remote ecological gem, visit the US Forest Service website [here](#).

POSTCARDS FROM THE PAST



This very early picture of Camelback Mountain dates back to 1914. The mountain's unique look (and namesake) is due to two separate rock formations. The back/body is Precambrian granite formed approximately 1.5 billion years ago. The head is predominantly red sedimentary sandstone, which is only about 25 million years old.

A cave discovered on the north side of Camelback Mountain indicates that it was used as a sacred site by the prehistoric Hohokam culture before they abandoned the area in the 14th century.

In January 1879, President Rutherford B. Hayes included Camelback Mountain as part of a one-million-acre reservation for the Salt River Pima and Maricopa tribes. Six months later, the Arizona Territorial Legislature reversed the decision in order to ensure the primacy of the 5,000 non-Indian residents in the area and secure continued access to Salt River water.

As Phoenix grew, Camelback Mountain was the center of battle between those who wanted to leave it undisturbed and those who wanted to develop the land. Efforts to protect Camelback Mountain as a natural preserve began in the early 1910s. However, by the 1960s, nearly all of the land had been sold to private interests. Federal and state authorities attempted to stop development above 1,600 feet failed until Senator Barry Goldwater took up the cause in 1965. The undeveloped parts of Camelback Mountain became part of the Phoenix Mountains Preserve in 1968.

IN REMEMBRANCE

Name	Date of Death	Department
Ruth Conrad (John V.)	12/15/2022	
Jose A. Tafoya	1/10/2023	Water Services
Beverly Quiring	2/17/2023	Human Services
Evelyn Guerra	2/20/2023	Water Services
Kelli Butz	2/22/2023	Neighborhood Services
Lawrence P. Miel	2/24/2023	Planning & Development
June Guidoboni (Thomas)	2/26/2023	
Viola J. Reyes	3/3/2023	
Carol S. Magee	3/5/2023	Police
Manuel Salazar, Jr.	3/6/2023	
Raymond Bissa	3/7/2023	Police
Dolores Clinton	3/7/2023	Police
Mickey M. Thiel	3/7/2023	
Ned Clark	3/8/2023	Police
James Webb	3/8/2023	Management Services
Rosie Scheske (Charles Peters)	3/21/2023	
Charles C. Connett	3/22/2023	Street Transportation
Ruben R. Delgado	3/22/2023	Public Works
Joel K. Roberts	3/22/2023	Human Services
David Deneau	3/28/2023	Equal Opportunity

(Those on the list who are surviving spouses will have the retiree's name in parentheses after the deceased's name.)

NEW MEMBERS

Jill Celaya	Phoenix Police Dept	Maria Washchuck	Human Resources
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NEW RETIREES (FEBRUARY)

Christopher Adams	Phoenix Convention Center	Dennis McGroty	Street Transportation Dept
Abdelgadir Ahmed	Phoenix Police Department	Karen Peters	City Manager's Office
James Arbizu	Public Works Department	Janice Pitts	Human Resources Dept
Jill Celaya	Phoenix Police Department	Andrew Ramirez	Phoenix Police Department
Bernie Deltoro	Parks & Recreation Dept	Connie Redford	Phoenix Police Department
Carlos Diaz	Street Transportation Dept	Earon Shepard	Water Services Department
Phillip Harris	Street Transportation Dept	Ronald Tafoya	Water Services Department
Alex Lee Sr	Water Services Department	Frank Traslavina	Public Works Department
Santiago Lopez	Street Transportation Dept	Paul Zelenka	Water Services Department

NEW RETIREES (MARCH)

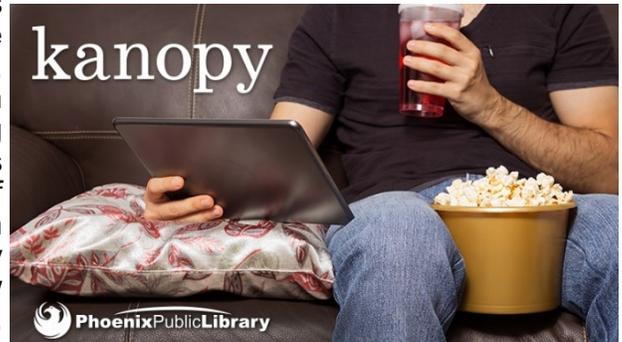
Della Allen	Aviation Department	Jacqueline Kennedy	Human Services Dept
Larry Armas	Planning & Dev. Department	Enedine Lanzo	Phoenix Police Dept
Patricia Bravo	Aviation Department	Jeffrey Mendoza	Planning & Dev. Dept
John Clark	Phoenix Police Department	Bruce Pieper	Water Services Dept
Larry Deltoro	Parks & Rec, Department	Stella Rees	Public Works Department
Kenneth Ehlen	Parks & Rec. Department	Ramil Rivera	Aviation Department
Thomas Ferstl	Municipal Court	Dwone Sanfie	Aviation Department
Matthew Fiedler	Fire Department	Michael Smith	Library Department
Deborah Foedish	Fire Department	Kathleen Sullivan	Library Department
Shawn Galligan	Public Transit Department	Carey Shannon Tolle	Planning & Dev, Dept
Manuel Hernandez	Aviation Department		

KEEP COOL THIS SUMMER WITH FREE SERVICES FROM THE PHOENIX PUBLIC LIBRARY LEE FRANKLIN



Have you tried hoopla on phoenixpubliclibrary.org? Hoopla is a collection of streaming videos (movies and tv shows), music, audiobooks, Ebooks and comics that offers immediate access to content on your phone, tablet, television, browser, etc. As of April 1, Phoenix Public Library customers monthly borrows from hoopla increased from 12 to 15. Grab your Phoenix Public Library card and visit Phoenix Public Library's [eLibrary](#) and find hoopla through eBooks, eAudiobooks, Online Music, or Online Video.

Looking to enjoy critically acclaimed and award-winning movies, foreign films and more? Phoenix Public Library offers Kanopy, one of the largest video streaming platforms in the world featuring The History Channel, PBS,



IFC Films, A&E, Samuel Goldwyn Films and more. In addition to the regularly available 15 monthly viewing credits, starting May 1, Phoenix Public Library customers will be able to enjoy more broad and diverse range of films with newly available World Cinema, Diversity, British Cinema & TV packages. With your Phoenix Public Library card visit at "[Getting Started with Kanopy](#)" and learn how you can have access to over 30,000 international, documentary, independent and classic films.

Phoenix Public Library cards are available FREE to Maricopa County residents. Sign up for an eCard within minutes at [Phoenix Public Library eCard Registration](#) or visit any [Phoenix Public Library location](#) to get started. Non-Maricopa County residents may purchase a card for \$40. Unfortunately, non-Arizona residents are not eligible for cards, but check for libraries in your area. Summer Reading, hoopla and Kanopy are standard public library offerings.

PLEASE WELCOME DONNA MAY TO THE COPRA BOARD!

At the March 17, 2023 Board meeting, Donna May was appointed to serve a two-year term to fill one of the vacant Board positions.

Donna and her husband Kurt (also a City of Phoenix retiree) moved here from the Chicago suburbs in 1994. She retired in December 2022 after over 24 years of City service where she served on the ASPTEA Board of Directors for 10 years, trained in Interest-Based Negotiation (IBN) and used these skills in the monthly Labor Management Committee where ASPTEA meets with Department Directors to address policy issues. She assisted employees with student loans to take advantage of the Temporary Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program.

Before retiring from the City, Donna worked in the Aviation Department as an Administrative Assistant I in the Design and Construction Services Division, Project Controls Section. She also worked in the City Clerk, Human Services, and Municipal Court departments. She holds Master of Business Administration (MBA), Public Administration Concentration, and Bachelor of Science (BSM) in Management degrees from the University of Phoenix. She also earned her CPM (Certified Public Manager) designation through Arizona State University and Human Resource Management Certificate from University of Phoenix.

During her tenure with the City, Donna was a very active member in COPMEA and ASPTEA. In 2006, she chaired the Citywide CSFD campaign where employees raised \$1.46 million for United Way.

We are excited and honored to have Donna on our Board! Unfortunately, Victoria Correll has resigned from the Board, so we still need of two more members to fill the remaining vacant positions. The vacancies will serve until 12/31/2023. If you would like to "try it on" before you commit to a full two-year term, please contact Mary Jo Slunder at mj.copra@gmail.com.

YOUR E-MAIL IS YOUR ENTRY

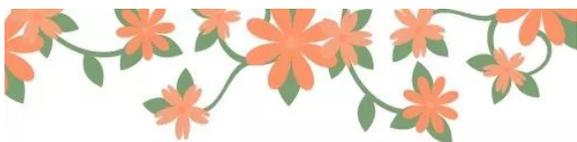
As you all know, receiving the COPRA Chronicle by email significantly defrays the printing and postage costs for COPRA. An added benefit is that if there is any important information that COPRA wants to send you, we have your email address on file and can transmit to you in a timely fashion.

In order to encourage our COPRA members to receive the Chronicle by email, each month we will randomly select one member who receives their Chronicle by email and that member will receive a \$25 gift certificate to a grocery store (Fry's or Safeway).

The March winner is **Bruce McEntire**.
CONGRATULATIONS Bruce!

If we already have your email address, you are automatically entered!
If you do not receive the Chronicle by email, do so NOW! You can provide your email to Mary Jo Slunder at copra.members@gmail.com. She can also be reached by phone at 602-206-5515.

Sign up now!



You are never too old to
set another goal or to
dream a new dream.

C.S. LEWIS



Disclaimer

All articles are for informational purposes and not intended to be a substitute for professional, legal, financial or medical advice. Consult an attorney or other professional what is best for your situation. COPRA expressly disclaims and denies liability for any decisions based on the information presented.

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COPERS website.....	www.phoenix.gov/copers
COPMEA website.....	www.copmea.com
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Human Resources - Benefits Section	(602) 262-4777
COPMEA.....	(602) 262-6858

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Chronicle Article Deadline

Please be advised that the deadline for submitting articles for the Chronicle is the **20th day of the month** before you want the article to appear. Any member may submit material for publication, but the Editor determines what will appear in the final copy based on suitability and available space.

This is your Chronicle. Help us by submitting articles of general interest. Tell us about yourself, your family, a trip you've taken or an interesting hobby you have. Suggestions are always welcomed.

E-mail to: COPRAnewsletter@gmail.com

Or mail to: Mary Dysinger Franklin, 6208 E Desert Cove Ave, Scottsdale, AZ 85254

MAY COPRA CHRONICLE

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MEMBERSHIP MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

Board meetings are held monthly on the 2nd Thursday of the Month
Except for June, July and August.