



# COPRA CHRONICLE

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

January 2024

**MEMBERSHIP IS OUR STRENGTH**

Issue 1

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

President's Message .....	2
New Technology Coming to COPERS .....	2
New Members .....	2
In Remembrance .....	3
This Month in Arizona History.....	3
Another COPRA Holiday Luncheon in the Books.....	4
Did You Know? .....	4
Beware of Charity Scams.....	5
New Retirees (October).....	6
Monthly Social Security and Medicare Seminars .....	6
Your E-mail is Your Entry.....	7
2024 COPRA BOARD .....	7
Meeting Notices.....	8

## 2024 COPRA BOARD

The following candidates were elected to the COPRA Board during the December 9, 2023 General Membership Meeting:

- Tammy Ryan (Incumbent)      • Louis Matamoros (Incumbent)
- Mary Jo Slunder (Incumbent)      • Regina Ficken (New)
- Gail Piceno (Incumbent)

All of these elected Board members will be serving a two-year term to provide support and assistance to the City retiree community. A big thank you to our incumbents for their continued service and welcome back Regina to the Board!

## SOCIAL SECURITY PAY AND TAX CHANGES FOR 2024

For those who get Social Security, your cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) is 3.2 percent for 2024.

This year, earnings limit for workers who are younger than "full" retirement age (see [Full Retirement Age Chart](#)) has increased to \$22,320. (Social Security deducts \$1 from benefits for each \$2 earned over \$22,320.)

The earnings limit for people reaching their "full" retirement age in 2024 has increased to \$59,520. (\$1 deducted from benefits for each \$3 earned over \$59,520 until the month the worker turns "full" retirement age.)

There is no limit on earnings for workers who are "full" retirement age or older for the entire year.

The maximum amount of earnings subject to the Social Security tax (taxable maximum) is now \$168,600.

In some cases, if you work while receiving Social Security retirement or survivor's benefits you may get a higher benefit for you and your family. Social Security reviews the records of all beneficiaries who have wages reported for the previous year. If your latest year of earnings is one of your highest years, Social Security recalculates your benefit and pays you any increase

*(Continued on page 6)*



### *"Membership is our Strength"* **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership for COPRA is \$12 per year or \$50.00 for 5 years, or \$100 for lifetime. 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](mailto:copra.members@gmail.com)

**Mail payments to:**  
COPRA  
PO Box 2464  
Litchfield Park, AZ 85340

**PayPal Payments:**  
You can send in dues via PayPal. Use our email address [phoenixcopra@gmail.com](mailto:phoenixcopra@gmail.com) from your account.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Rob Sweeney

Happy New Year! Welcome to the year 2024!

For me, 2023 had its ups and downs. A lot of happiness and some sorrow. The outlook for 2024 looks brighter each day as I remind myself how blessed I am to be surrounded by great family and friends.

Thank you to all who attended COPRA's Holiday Luncheon and General Membership meeting. I loved seeing all the familiar faces and enjoyed the conversation with fellow COPRA Members. We also voted on and approved a slate of new/returning Board Members, including: Regina Ficken, Louis Matamoros, Gail Piceno, Tammy Ryan and Mary Jo Slunder. Congratulations to you all! The Board will vote on officer positions at its January meeting. The Board

will also plan out its 2024 calendar and identify areas for improvement to benefit you. Like the old saying goes, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

So, what's on your plan for 2024? Not necessarily a list of, 'resolutions,' but a laser focus on what you'd like to experience and/or accomplish over the next 12 months. Yea, I know, you circled April 15<sup>th</sup> to remind yourself to file your taxes. I've circled February 29 to celebrate having an extra day this year! Perhaps the list below may spark a sense of inspiration:

- Many great works of 1928 literature, music and film move into the public domain. Maybe you want to put a new spin on, "*An American In Paris*" without having to pay royalties to Gershwin's heirs.
- Total Solar Eclipse (April 8) and Total Lunar Eclipse (April 25-26) - travel to the Midwest and stay for a few weeks in order to get the best experience.
- Summer Olympics hosted by Paris.
- Election Day is November 5<sup>th</sup> – Please Vote!
- The Year of the Dragon will be upon us.
- Phoenix' 'New' City Hall turns 30!

Having a plan of, 'to dos' and goals should not add stress to one's life. The list could include a simple(?) goal of completing the NY Times Sunday crossword once per month. Or a plan to declutter your life to surround yourself with what is most important to you. Make sure you PLAN to have fun and enjoyment, which is key to your mental health and future happiness. That is what the COPRA Board will be doing: finding ways to improve your experience and enjoyment of COPRA.

May 2024 bring you good health, happiness and success the whole year long – Rob

## NEW TECHNOLOGY COMING TO COPERS CITY OF PHOENIX RETIREMENT OFFICE

The City of Phoenix Employees' Retirement System (COPERS) is implementing a new pension administration system which will allow us to better support our members.

During January and February of 2024, our Benefits Staff will be completing every process in both our current system and the new system to verify that everything is processing perfectly before going live in the new system on March 1, 2024. We ask for your patience during this time. Appointments with our office will be limited during this time. Thank you and we wish everyone a very Happy New Year!

## NEW MEMBERS

Andre Best

Neighborhood Services

Kurt Sjoerdsma

Parks & Recreation

## IN REMEMBRANCE

Name	Date of Death	Department
Yvonne Howell	09/04/2023	
Elvira A. Sallas (L.S.)	10/27/2023	
Sondra Holtz	11/01/2023	Phoenix Police
Craig J. Blair	11/04/2023	Water Services
Benjamin R. Wyman	11/05/2023	Public Works
Valorie K. Leitschuck	11/06/2023	Phoenix Police
Lucy Peru (Paul C.)	11/12/2023	
Carlos J. Sanchez	11/13/2023	Street Transportation
Russell D. Savage	11/19/2023	Aviation
Gilberto Villa	11/19/2023	Aviation
Louis J. Brugioni	11/21/2023	Finance
John L. Waughtal	11/22/2023	Parks & Recreation
Philip R. La Roux	11/26/2023	Planning & Development
Jeanette Neal-Diggs	11/27/2023	Street Transportation
Donald W. Klomp	11/28/2023	Human Resources
Ivory M. Manuel (James)	11/28/2023	
Alice Ruiz (Alfred)	11/29/2023	
Rachel Calderon (Jose L.)	12/01/2023	
Christine A. Cipra	12/01/2023	Information Technology Services
Daniel Paulsen	12/05/2023	Water Services
Janet M. Wise	12/07/2023	Human Services
Larry L. Ely	12/10/2023	Street Transportation
JoAnne Negrelli	12/10/2023	Neighborhood Services
Madeleine Brockman (George)	12/12/2023	
Patricia B. Mulvihill	12/12/2023	Information Technology Services

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

## THIS MONTH IN ARIZONA HISTORY FROM THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

- 1 January 1915** - Women's right to vote became law in Arizona.
- 6 January 1912** - The Montezuma Oil Co., in which Buffalo Bill Cody owned a part interest, began drilling operations in a search for oil near Agua Caliente Springs in Maricopa County. Other companies were also exploring near Fort Huachuca and Vail.
- 9 January 1912** - Tax assessors of Arizona, meeting at Douglas, spent most of the day in a stormy session debating the taxable worth of burros. After considerable argument, a tax of \$5 per head was agreed upon.
- 17 January 1877** - Gov. Anson P.K. Safford signed the bill moving the Territorial capitol from Tucson to Prescott.
- 19 January 1961** - Stewart Udall becomes the U.S. secretary of the Interior and the first Arizonan to serve in a president's cabinet.
- 12 January 1921** - The first serious accident in the history of Bright Angel Trail at the Grand Canyon occurred. Three pack horses loaded with hay, grain, provisions, bedding and 116 pounds of dynamite fell over the wall of the canyon and were killed on the rocks below. The supplies were for a construction camp at the foot of the trail where the National Park Service was building a bridge across the Colorado River.
- 26 January 1878** - The first newspaper in Phoenix — the Salt River Herald — began publication.
- 28 January 1887** - The first train robbery in Arizona history took place when two masked men took \$20,000 from the Southern Pacific passenger train 17 miles (27 kilometers) east of Tucson.

Source: AZCentral.com, January 2022



## ANOTHER COPRA HOLIDAY LUNCHEON IN THE BOOKS

The 2023 Holiday Luncheon and General Membership meeting was held on December 8th. Turnout was good and everyone had a great time visiting and catching up with former co-workers. The Toy Drive for Phoenix Head Start was very successful. Our members filled two tables with bags full of toys for the children. Scott Steventon, Retirement Administrator for the City, attended and answered members questions. Look for information from the Retirement Office early this spring on the new retirement system. Sharko's catered the luncheon again this year and did a great job. We hope they can participate next year too.

A big THANK YOU to all who attended and made the event a success!



### DID YOU KNOW?

- **Over 50 tons of trash are left in Times Square after New Year's Eve celebrations.** About 3,000 pounds of that is confetti.
- **The confetti dropped in Times Square is holding secret messages.** The confetti in Times Square has thousands of people's wishes written on them. In 2015 "wishfetti" became a part of the tradition.
- **Many Brazilians welcome the New Year at the beach.** It is considered good luck to make seven wishes while jumping seven waves.
- **If you hear plates breaking in Denmark on New Year's Eve, it's considered good luck.** The Danes hold a tradition of throwing plates at the front door of family and friends' homes to welcome good fortune for the new year.

## BEWARE OF CHARITY SCAMS

Charities use a wide variety of methods to solicit charitable donations. Many legitimate charities are able to use email, social media, and Internet fundraising pages to lower costs and access donors. However, these technologies also make it easier for fraudsters to pose as legitimate charities and exploit the generosity of donors. To make sure you are donating to a legitimate charity:

- 1. Never give on impulse.** Never give in to high-pressure requests for contributions or donations. Legitimate charities will not pressure you for an immediate donation and are happy to provide information about their charity for you to review and share with neighbors, friends and family.
- 2. Do your research.** Always obtain written information (including annual reports) about the charity before you donate. Always make sure you know how your donation is distributed. Always know how much of your donation will actually go to the charity itself (versus administrative costs).
- 3. Know who is asking.** Always ask the fundraiser if they are a volunteer or a paid fundraiser. Always ask for information in writing of how much the fundraiser will keep of the donations collected and how much will actually go to the charity. Be wary of words like "majority, large, most of, large percent, administrative costs, processing fees, handling, etc."
- 4. Avoid paying cash.** Pay charities by credit card payment or by check that is payable to the fund, not to an individual, and donate directly to the organization either in person (at an event sponsored by the charity) or through the United States Postal Service. Never give a donation to a charity that (a) offers to take your donation directly from your account, such as an automatic debit; (b) encourages you to send a donation by courier/overnight express; or (c) asks you to wire your donation.
- 5. Avoid copycats.** Watch out for charities with names that sound similar to well-known organizations or charities. Sometimes these sound-alike names are simply intended to confuse donors. Also be cautious of "look-alike" websites. These fraudulent websites will often ask for personal financial information or may download harmful malware into your computer.
- 6. Check with the charity.** If you receive an email or text message asking for a donation, confirm that the request is from the charity, and not an impostor, by contacting the charity or visiting its website. Likewise, don't assume that charity recommendations on Facebook, blogs, or other social media have already been vetted. Research the charity yourself.
- 7. Keep personal information private.** Never give out personal information, such as your birth date, social security number, credit card number, checking account number or any financial information to a solicitor either by telephone, mail or door-to-door.
- 8. Know the difference between "tax deductible" and "tax exempt."** Tax deductible means you can deduct your donation on your federal income tax return. Tax exempt means the charity does not have to pay taxes. Even if a charity is tax exempt, your donation may not be tax deductible. If you would like a tax deduction, ask the charity for a receipt showing the amount of the contribution and stating that your donation is tax deductible. For more tax information regarding charitable contributions visit <http://www.irs.gov/Charities-&-Non-Profits/Contributors>.

Use the following links to learn more about charities and fundraising, or to research a charity online:

Federal Trade Commission at:

[www.ftc.gov/charityfraud](http://www.ftc.gov/charityfraud) or [www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0074-giving-charity](http://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0074-giving-charity)

Better Business Bureau at:

<https://www.bbb.org/us/az/phoenix/category/charity-local/accredited>

Source: Arizona Attorney General. <https://www.azag.gov/consumer/topics/charity-scams>.  
Accessed: 3 December 2023.



## NEW RETIREES (OCTOBER)

Rebecca Arroyo	Neighborhood Services Dept.	Rosa Lerma	Water Services Dept.
Abraham Arvizu	Aviation Dept.	Myla Marovich	Phoenix Police Dept.
Mai Auwen	Parks & Recreation Dept.	William Maynard	Budget & Research Dept.
Paul Beasley	Water Services Dept.	Lisa Miller	Finance Dept.
Denise Birds	Phoenix Police Dept.	Patricia Morales	Municipal Court
Michael Blea	Parks & Recreation Dept.	Samuel Morales	Parks & Recreation Dept.
John Cannon	Water Services Dept.	Dolly Moreno	Water Services Dept.
Robert Chavez	Public Works Dept.	Luiz Moreno	Street Transportation Dept.
Cindy Costello	Street Transportation Dept.	Daniel Murrietta	Parks & Recreation Dept.
Stuart Dalbey	Water Services Dept.	Steve Noblet	Planning & Development Dept.
Robert Davis	Water Services Dept.	Martin Nordby	Law Dept.
Mary Devereux	Phoenix Police Dept.	David Pabian	Phoenix Police Dept.
Irene Dimas	Municipal Court	Douglas Pritchett	Aviation Dept.
Roy Dimas	Parks & Recreation Dept.	Ronald Ramirez	Neighborhood Services Dept.
Laura Falkenburg	Phoenix Police Dept.	Cynthia Rivera	Law Dept.
Jacqueline Gerald	City Auditor Dept.	Esmeralda Saldana	Finance Dept.
Matthew Gilmore	Public Works Dept.	Arthur Savage	Parks & Recreation Dept.
Esteban Gomez	Law Dept.	Andrew Sblendorio	Public Works Dept.
Frank Gonzales	Street Transportation Dept.	John Schuh	Aviation Dept.
Anette Hall	Human Services Dept.	Michael Schultz	Finance Dept.
Michael Hendrix	Aviation: Human Resources	Jay Severson	Water Services Dept.
Wilfredo Herrera	Parks & Recreation Dept.	Gary Simmons	Aviation Dept.
Michael Hissom	Aviation Dept.	Burton Smith	Water Services Dept.
Crystelle Holder	Street Transportation Dept.	Sonja Spell	Human Services Dept.
Ida Hutchison	Municipal Court	James Spence	Public Works Dept.
Leonard Jackson	Water Services Dept.	Ronald Stidnick JR	Water Services Dept.
Jerry Judie	Parks & Recreation Dept.	Sharon Stolpen	Law Dept.
Lori Juneau	Phoenix Fire Dept.	Paul Sylvia	Aviation Dept.
Susan Keedy	Neighborhood Services Dept.	Jennifer Tash	Water Services Dept.
Carissa Kelsen	Phoenix Fire Dept.	Ruben Trujillo	Public Works Dept.
Timothy Kissling	Water Services Dept.	Richard Vasquez SR	Parks & Recreation Dept.
Kevin Knapp	Phoenix Police Dept.	Ramon Villa JR	Parks & Recreation Dept.
Kini Knudson	Street Transportation Dept.	Kerry Wilcoxon	Street Transportation Dept.

## MONTHLY SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE SEMINARS EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW CITY OF PHOENIX RETIREMENT OFFICE

**Free!** Monthly retirement planning educational series. Learn more about Social Security and Medicare with Jack Burns, Public Affairs Specialist for the Social Security Administration in Arizona.

For more information and to register, please access the link below or call the library at 602-262-4636 for a phone-in option.

[Social Security and Medicare Workshop Schedule and Registration](#)

This workshop and others are provided by the Social Security Administration at no cost to the public in partnership with *The Area Agency on Aging Phoenix* (Arizona's State Health Insurance Assistance Program, or SHIP) and hosted by The Phoenix Public Libraries.

## SOCIAL SECURITY PAY AND TAX CHANGES FOR 2024 (CONTINUED)

*(Continued from page 1)*

you are due. The increase is retroactive to January of the year after you earned the money. For more information on receiving benefits while working, click [here](#).

Source: Social Security Administration. <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/planner/whileworking.html>. Accessed: 3 December 2023.

## 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 September winner is **Paula M. Taylor**.

### CONGRATULATIONS Paula!

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](mailto:copra.members@gmail.com). She can also be reached by phone at 602-206-5515.

**Sign up now!**

COPRA website.....	<a href="http://www.phoenixcopra.com">www.phoenixcopra.com</a>
COPERS website.....	<a href="http://www.phoenix.gov/copers">www.phoenix.gov/copers</a>
COPMEA website.....	<a href="http://www.copmea.com">www.copmea.com</a>
City Retirement Systems (COPERS).....	(602) 534-4400
Human Resources - Benefits Section .....	(602) 262-4777
COPMEA.....	(602) 262-6858

## 2024 COPRA BOARD

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### Chronicle Article Deadline

Please be advised that the deadline for submitting articles for the Chronicle is the **20<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:COPRAnewsletter@gmail.com)

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

"What the New Year brings to you  
Will depend a great deal  
On what you bring  
To the New Year"

— Vern McLellan

### 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.

# JANUARY COPRA CHRONICLE

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Litchfield Park, AZ 85340



## MEMBERSHIP MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

2024 Meetings TBD

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