



COPRA CHRONICLE

FEB 2026 | ISSUE 2

Issued by and for:
**City of Phoenix
Retirees Association,**
your advocate in pension
and insurance matters.

MEMBERSHIP IS OUR STRENGTH

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SAVE THE DATE



Spring General Membership Meeting
Thursday March 12, 2026 | 10am- noon
More details coming soon!

MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues for COPRA:

\$12 per year or \$50 for 5 years or
\$100 for lifetime

If you have changed your address
or phone number, or have any
questions about membership due
payments, please contact Anna
Dragonetti at 602-992-0362 or
copra.members@gmail.com

Mail payments to:

COPRA
PO Box 2464
Litchfield Park, Az 85340

Or PayPal to:

phoenixcopra@gmail.com



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Board meetings are held monthly on the 2nd Thursday of the month, except June, July and August.

President's Message

By Rob Sweeney

Thank you, COPRA Members and Board, for entrusting me as your President of the Board for another year. I am humbled.

The Board met in January to vote on executive and administrative positions. Thank you to all on the Board for their volunteering and making COPRA a great organization. As I stated at December's Holiday Party: thank you, Mary Jo Slunder, for your tireless dedication to COPRA for so many years! She filled many roles (Membership Chair, Chronicle Chair, Secretary, etc.) and served with one thought in mind: excellence! Mary Jo attended the January Board meeting to seamlessly transition her duties. Thank You!

I am excited about our Spring General Membership Meeting on March 12, 10am at the Washington Activity Center. The meeting will be filled with great information from the City Manager, Retirement Office, Nationwide, and, hopefully, the Social Security Administration. This slate of presenters will fill our minds with information necessary to thrive in 2026 and beyond. The term, 'Life-long Learner' is not lost on the COPRA Board.

The mechanics of marketing is to tell the story multiple times to ensure the consumer will buy your product. At COPRA, we want to have our partners tell their story multiple times for you to internalize the knowledge to stay sharp in your retirement years. And to be clear, we are not selling anything but your ability to be completely informed.

Each of us is unique. A cookie-cutter retirement plan may not work for everyone. Perhaps you are supporting grandchildren, or you have a parent which needs financial assistance. The online 'gurus' cannot contemplate your unique circumstance when providing general guidance.

It is important to stay informed related to tax law changes, opportunities, and reminders as we live in retirement. Our plan from 20 years ago may no longer be exactly your plan. A pivot, shift, nudge may be appropriate. However, taking advice from a cold call 'expert' or online chat room may not be appropriate.

I hope you will join us in March to hear from smart individuals who have YOUR best interests at heart. The goal is to provide you with accurate information for you to make the best decision for your situation. COPRA does get something out of meetings like the one in March: a smile and sense of resolve that we are helping our fellow retirees.

May this February not be a Groundhog's Day of doing the same thing. Make a plan to be better informed. And if you are not comfortable with all the financial details, find a family member or other individual who will put your financial interests first. Just like all of us on the COPRA Board, we are a fiduciary agent on behalf of all retirees.

Everything we do has your best interest in mind.

Happy Arizona Statehood Day! May you celebrate with a loved one on February 14!

XXOO - Rob



Important Information for Retirees Receiving a Spouse's Pension Benefit

By Donna May

Some City of Phoenix retirees may also have a spouse or partner who is a current or former City employee. If you are designated as a beneficiary of their pension, it's important to understand how MERP and pension payments are processed.

How MERP and Pension Payments Are Issued

General City retirees who receive a beneficiary MERP benefit will see their spouse's basic MERP amount added to their own MERP payment and issued as **one combined MERP check**. However, the **pension benefit** from your spouse is issued as a **separate pension check**.

Limitations in eChris

When accessing eChris, retirees should be aware that **beneficiary pension checks cannot be modified independently**. This means:

- Deposit account changes cannot be applied separately to the beneficiary check.
- W-4 tax withholding changes cannot be applied separately.
- Any updates you make to your own pension account—such as tax withholding or direct deposit—will automatically apply to both your pension check and the beneficiary check.

A Real-Life Example

After the passing of my husband in September 2025, I began receiving half of his pension in addition to my own. He had always elected a high federal tax withholding, so I attempted to reduce the amount. Initially, my beneficiary check continued to reflect his higher withholding. The following month, the reduced withholding applied to **both** checks, resulting in very little federal tax being taken out.

Payroll later confirmed that this is expected: **any tax or deposit changes made in eChris apply universally to both checks**. To achieve the correct total withholding, I was instructed by payroll staff to enter only half of the additional tax amount I wanted deducted, knowing it would be applied to each check.

Additional Reminders

If you recently updated dental or vision coverage due to the loss of a spouse or partner, verify that the correct changes were applied. Always review the PDF version of your paycheck each pay period to ensure accuracy and catch any unintended adjustments.

Member Contribution



My job with the City

Contributed by Kathy Brooks Ousley Scott

I started in 1976 with the Phoenix Fire Department. I loved it.

In January, 1996, I was working for the Garbage Department (Public Works, Solid Waste) when Loretta Conchos said she was going to take FREE Clown lessons from Alakazam. She said we could make \$40 an hour. I was interested in an extra job. At the time I was cleaning houses for \$10 an hour, when I wasn't at work for the city. So \$40 an hour sounded terrific. I took the lessons and have been clowning now 30 years. Now I'm 78, I started at 48. I guess you could call it a hobby. It is so much fun.

Can we share your story? Please see back cover for details!

Member Contribution

Black and Blue Bowl

Contributed by Jon Wendt

I began what was to become a 30 career with the City in November 1975, but I almost didn't make the first 30 days. Thanksgiving rolled around and it was time for the annual Black and Blue Bowl game, a "touch" football game between the City Manager's Office and the Mayor's Office. As a member of the City Manager's Office, I volunteered to play and become one of the guys which I thought might help me pass the 6-month probation period. I was assigned to play line, an unskilled position.

The Mayor's Office team featured Vice Mayor Rosie Gutierrez as quarterback. During the course of the game Rosie dropped back to throw a pass. As a lineman I did what I was supposed to do, rush the passer. As I closed the distance between Rosie and me, he suddenly turned right into me to avoid a rush from his other side. There was a tremendous, but unequal collision. I stood 6'2" and weighed 225 lbs., while Rosie was about 5'6" and weighed maybe 150 lbs. soaking wet.

At the point of collision, I heard a loud "poof" of air and I hit the ground which seemed surprisingly soft and spongy. I looked down and there beneath me was Rosie with a face rapidly turning blue. The EMT's arrived and carted him off to the hospital with broken ribs. The remainder of the game and after game party was immediately canceled and the Black and Blue Bowl was never played again to my knowledge.

I went home in a deep depression to tell my wife that I probably didn't make probation and what would we do now? We knew nobody in Phoenix, our families lived in the Midwest, I had received only one paycheck from COP and it wasn't enough to get us back to the Midwest. We spent a very worrisome weekend.

Sure enough, when I went to work on Monday there was a message for me to report to Assistant City Manager Marvin Andrews. I walked into his office fully expecting to hear two words: you're fired". I heard two words all right, but the words were "nice play". Apparently, there was no love lost between the City Manager's Office and the Vice Mayor. The only drawback was that for the next several years whenever I was introduced it was not for my skill as a program analyst or report writing ability, but as the person who put the Vice Mayor in the hospital.

A Message from the COPRA Board

Dear COPRA Member,

The COPRA Board met on January 8, 2026, and reviewed the costs associated with producing the Chronicle. A significant portion of our expenses comes from printing and mailing hard-copy editions to approximately 400 members each month—an issue that has affected our financial position throughout the past year.

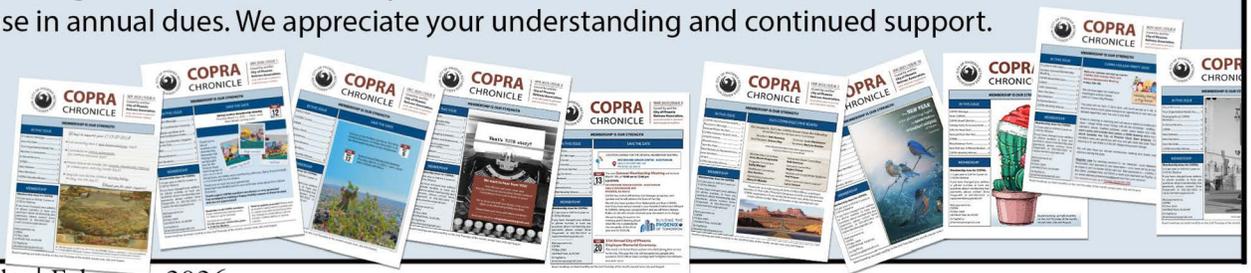
To ensure the long-term financial stability of COPRA, the Board determined that changes to the Chronicle distribution policy are necessary. As a result, the Board has established a sunset date of December 31, 2026, after which printing and mailing hard-copy editions of the Chronicle will be discontinued.

Members currently receiving a printed copy who wish to continue receiving the Chronicle electronically are asked to email copra.members@gmail.com to confirm their email address.

Beginning January 1, 2027, the Chronicle will no longer be mailed in hard-copy form.

Your cooperation during this transition will help ensure that COPRA can continue to serve its members while avoiding an increase in annual dues. We appreciate your understanding and continued support.

Sincerely,
The COPRA Board



SITREP

By Louis Matamoros

Welcome to SITREP, which stands for situation report.

This section of your Chronicle covers various military topics every month. If you have any specific questions or issues you'd like to be explored, please send an email to copratreasurer@yahoo.com.

The docks came alive before sunrise.

Forklifts growled in the cold morning air, steel tines sliding under pallets stacked high with crates of fresh fruit, boxes of vegetables, towers of canned goods, and frozen meat sealed tight in white-lined containers. The ocean wind carried salt, diesel, and the low hum of a base that never truly slept.

That was my battlefield.

I was assigned to the military food storage facility in Cheatham Annex, VA, working the docks where every shipment came through before it ever reached a dining facility or a forward unit. Nothing moved inland without my approval.

I inspected fresh fruits first. I cut open boxes of apples and oranges, checking for mold, bruising, and signs of rot hidden beneath perfect skins. Bananas were checked for temperature abuse, lettuce for slime, and tomatoes for cracks that could invite bacteria.

One bad crate could contaminate an entire load—and an entire unit's supply. Vegetables came next. I broke open cartons of onions, potatoes, and carrots, digging deep past the top layer. I checked lot numbers, country-of-origin labels, and dates. I rejected shipments when the paperwork didn't match the product. No shortcuts. No exceptions.

The canned goods looked invincible from the outside—rows of metal shining under dock lights—but I knew better. I ran my hands along every case, searching for dents along seams, swollen ends, and rust creeping beneath labels. One compromised can could mean botulism. One overlooked flaw could cost lives without a single shot being fired.

Then there was the frozen meat.

The freezer doors opened, and the cold hit like a physical blow. My breath turned to clouds as I stepped inside, boots crunching over ice. I checked core temperatures with a probe, inspected packaging for tears and freezer burn, and verified seals and dates.

Beef, chicken, pork—thousands of pounds of protein

meant to fuel soldiers operating in unforgiving places. If the cold chain was broken, the shipment was done. I didn't care how badly it was needed.

One afternoon, alarms wailed across the facility—incoming rounds somewhere offshore.

The dock crews paused, eyes flicking skyward. Forklifts idled. Pallets stood frozen midlift.

I raised my hand.

"Finish the inspection," I said. "Then move."

Because soldiers would still need food tonight.

By dusk, I had rejected two pallets of produce, quarantined a batch of dented cans, and sent a container of frozen meat back to deep storage for further testing. Paperwork complete. Logs signed. Decisions final.

That night, ships pulled away from the docks carrying supplies bound for bases and units I would never see. Somewhere downrange, a soldier would open a can, bite into an apple, or eat a hot meal built from what passed through my hands.

They wouldn't know about the cold mornings on the docks.

They wouldn't know about the crates I cut open or the shipments I turned away.

They wouldn't know my name.

But they would be fed.

They would stay healthy.

They would stay in the fight.

I wasn't on the front lines.

I stood on the docks—guarding the supply chain, protecting the force, and fighting a quieter war where discipline, detail, and integrity mattered just as much as courage.

**You are
not alone.**

Confidential crisis support
is available 24/7.

 **Veterans
Crisis Line**
DIAL 988 then PRESS 1

Chat: [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/Chat)
Text: 838255

COPRA TREASURER 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Book/Bank Balance	Year ending 12/31/25	YTD
January 01,2025	\$92,500.94	
Receipts		
Member Dues	8,062.00	
PayPal Dues Received <i>Paypal dues paid thru December</i>	3,385.47	
Interest Earned	2,504.94	
Holiday 50/50	125.00	
Holiday Payments Received <i>Via paypal, mail at the door</i>	951.00	
	Total Receipts \$15,028.41	
Disbursements		
Bank Fees <i>Returned Checks, service fees</i>	\$ 75.00	
Chronicle	14,348.27	
Business Expenses <i>Ink, Office Supplies, Computer expenses including laptops, Postage due, Parking,</i>	3,281.51	
Member Support <i>Gift cards, refreshments, holiday party</i>	7,691.29	
Website <i>(paid via PayPal/checking account)</i>	696.00	
	Total Disbursements \$26,092.07	
Book Balance, December 31,2025 \$81,437.28		
Bank Information		
Interest Earned <i>CD (02/26/2026 @ 4 month 3.92%-\$22508.07 beg bal)</i>	\$22,656.08	\$ 889.78
<i>CD (05/17/2026 @ 12 month 3.63%-\$21764.17 beg bal)</i>	22,644.28	880.11
<i>Money Market 3.44%</i>	30,068.69	735.05
<i>Checking</i>	3,671.78	--.--
<i>PayPal</i>	2,396.45	--.--
	Total Interest Earned \$2,504.94	
Bank Balance, December 31,2025 \$81,437.28		

COPERS DECEMBER 2025 RETIREES

Adriana Phillips	Finance Department	Jimmie Adams	Public Works Dept.
Anita Guisinger		Joseph J. Shostak	Water Services Dept.
Brian Glenn		Kenneth L. Brock	Aviation Dept.
Daniel T. Rauscher		Maurice P. Mersch	Public Works Dept.
David A. Plescia	Parks and Recreation Dept.	Miguel R. Terrazas, Jr.	Public Works Dept.
Ellen J. Hemauer	Phoenix Fire Dept.	Raul Aguilar, Jr.	Public Transit Dept.
Francis Milam	Water Services Dept.	Rita T. Marko	Community and Economic Development
Heather A. Grosskopf	Phoenix Police Dept.	Scott A. Leahy	Water Services Dept.
Gertrude Virginia Moreno	Municipal Court	Sherry Lynette Anthony	Human Services Dept.
Ida E. Along	Phoenix Police Dept.	Susan Beitler	Public Transit Dept.
Jack H. Huizar	Aviation Dept.	Susan Adams Boyles	Street Transportation Dept.
James M. Enterline	Planning and Development Dept.	Tomas Castaneda	Housing Services Dept.
Jamie L. Rullo	Water Services Dept.	Viola R. Regalado	Phoenix Fire Dept.
Jatinder S. Saini	Municipal Court	Wonda Ester	Public Works Dept.
Jerardo J. Haro	Municipal Court	Yvonne G. Soto	City Manager's Office
Jesse J. Rubio	Water Services Dept.		

NEW MEMBERS

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IN REMEMBRANCE

Patricia Wagner (Eugene)	11/23/2024	
Susan Lindstrom Everett	11/12/2025	Human Resources Dept.
George Chin Ku	11/23/2025	Parks and Recreation Dept.
Margaret Estrada (Ramon)	11/24/2025	
Patrick Bertram	12/03/2025	Development Services Dept.
Robert Ezydorski	12/04/2025	Library Dept.
Luis Acosta	12/06/2025	Parks and Recreation Dept.
Patrick Murphy (Rosalie)	12/08/2025	
Frank S. Lucero	12/09/2025	Water Services Dept.
Carl R. Edwards	12/11/2025	Planning & Development Dept.
Irma Luque (Anastasio)	12/11/2025	
Richard Casillas	12/16/2025	Parks and Recreation Dept.
Kathleen Jacobsen (James)	12/26/2025	Municipal Court

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



2026 COPRA Board

Board of Directors:

President:

Rob Sweeney | 480-215-2215
coprapresident@gmail.com

Vice President:

Donna May | 602-513-1069
dmay.copra@gmail.com

Treasurer:

Louis Matamoros | 623-734-6624
copratreasurer@yahoo.com

Secretary:

VACANT

Board Members

Chronicle Committee:

Regina Ficken | 623-521-0052
rfcoprachronicle@gmail.com

Retirement Board Committee:

Rob Sweeney | 480-215-2215
coprapresident@gmail.com

Membership Committee:

Anna Marie Dragonetti
602-992-0362
copra.members@gmail.com

Programs Committee:

Kathy Wenger | 602-550-4390
kjh7833@msn.com

Website and Social Media Taskforce:

Gail Piceno | 602-509-1908
Gpiceno0808@gmail.com

Health Care Committee:

Ron Ramirez | 623-640-3934
Jman2345@cox.net

Board Member:

Colleen Ostrander | 602-909-6011
cmaeb1959@gmail.com

Other Communications Support:

VACANT

COPRA website: www.phoenixcopra.com

City Retirement Systems (COPERS):
602-534-4400 | www.phoenix.gov/copers

COPMEA: 602-262-6858 | copmea.com

COP Human Resources – Benefits
602-262-4777

FEBRUARY COPRA CHRONICLE

Annual dues include \$5.00 for the COPRA Chronicle. Dues are \$12.00 per year, \$50 for 5 years, or \$100 for lifetime membership
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PO Box 2464
Litchfield Park, AZ 85340

COPRA Monthly winner	Chronicle Articles Deadline
<p>By receiving the COPRA Chronicle via email significantly defrays the printing and postage costs for your 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 the news to you in a timely fashion.</p> <p>In order to encourage our COPRA members to receive the Chronicle via 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).</p> <p>The February winner is David S. Bruce!</p> <p>CONGRATULATIONS, David! 🎉🎉🎉</p> <p><i>If we already have your email address, you are automatically entered!</i></p> <p>If you do not receive the Chronicle by email, start NOW!</p> <p>Request the change from paper copy to email version by providing your email address to Anna Dragonetti at copra.members@gmail.com</p> <p>She can also be reached by phone at 602-992-0362.</p>	<p>This is YOUR newsletter, and we want to hear from you!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">★ <i>How did you start your career with The City of Phoenix?</i>★ <i>Tell us about yourself, good memories from work, a trip you've taken or an interesting hobby you have.</i>★ <i>Suggest or request a subject that might be of your interest and your fellow retirees.</i> <p>Submission Deadline: 15th day of the month before you want the article to appear.</p> <p>Any member may submit material for publication, the Chronicle Chair and the Editor will determine what will appear in the issue of the month based on suitability and available space.</p> <p>Submissions: coprachronicle@gmail.com</p>

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