

Meeting Minutes:
Highland County Retired Teachers Association
08-07-23

Opening:

On August 7, 2023, at 12:05 PM in the Hillsboro Church of Christ, President Faust called the HCRTA General Meeting to order. In attendance were 23 members and 7 guests.

In his opening remarks, President Faust introduced featured speaker Tim Koehl and explained Mr. Koehl would be speaking during the meal. Mr. Faust then opened the meeting with recitation of the “Pledge of Allegiance,” the singing of “God Bless America,” an invocation and a moment of silence in remembrance of members and friends who have passed. After welcoming guests, President Faust directed members to the buffet line with a meal provided by Donita Everetts and Darlene Mihalik of the Hillsboro Church of Christ. The meal included Parmesan Crusted Chicken, Irish Mashed Potatoes, green beans, beverages, and delicious desserts.

Program:

During the meal, local historian Tim Koehl talked about the recent increased interest in the southern Ohio area by the UNESCO World Heritage Foundation. UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) is a group that encourages the identification, protection, and preservation of cultural and natural heritage sites around the world. Mr. Koehl stated that several southern Ohio Native American sites including Fort Ancient, Great Circle Earthworks, Mound City Group, Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks, Highbanks, and Seip Mound are now under consideration for World Heritage Designation.

Mr. Koehl stated that recent scientific discoveries (including excavation, DNA testing, and LADAR scanning of ancient civilization sites) combined with studies and artifacts including those gathered by Hillsboro native Edwin Davis as far back as the 1800’s, have led to the conclusion that from about 4,000 – 2,000 BC the Scioto and Miami watershed areas were likely the center of ancient American culture and trade. Artifacts linked to this area have been discovered as far away as Yellowstone National Park.

The evidence that points to the importance of the Scioto and Miami Valley Watersheds to ancient American life has led to interest in a UNESCO World Heritage Designation, which Mr. Koehl believes is imminent. Such a designation, stated Koehl, will bring about an increase of tourism in the area and will be an economic boon for southern Ohio.

Following the program President Faust acknowledged Loretta Dean’s upcoming 92 Birthday on August 8th and Susan Parker’s upcoming 91st birthday on August 10th.

Before introducing STRS Deputy Executive Director Christina Elliott, President Faust commented to the membership about the election of Pat Davidson to the STRS Board and the subsequent removal of Wade Steen by Governor DeWine. He mentioned the potential lawsuit over the removal and commented that this is a situation we should continue to watch with diligence.

When called to the podium, Deputy Director Elliott introduced herself, explaining that she joined STRS last December, replacing Gary Russell as Deputy Executive Director of Member Services. She has extensive experience in public pension systems including work at CAL STRS, CAL PERS, and as CEO of Ohio Deferred Compensation Plan. Christina oversees three departments at STRS one of which is Member Services. Initial questions raised from our group included COLA and Performance Based Incentives for STRS Investment staff. Ms. Elliott empathized with the fiscal impact that lack of COLA has presented to retirees, and that by-in-large the individuals at STRS are in favor of COLAs. However, there is still debate over how to get there. She says that STRS is hiring a “Governance Consultant” to advise the board on strategic planning and unifying the board. Ms. Elliott stated that it is common for boards to hire these types of consultants and that cost for such consultants have not yet been set. There was lively discussion about the need for yet another consultant, as well as questions about STRS investment performance and STRS financial transparency. Elliott suggested that members can search for detailed fiscal accounting of STRS spending at <http://ohiocheckbook.gov>. The final areas of discussion were the recent investment losses at the STRS and what can be done to bolster STRS solvency and COLA reinstatement. It was suggested that Ms. Elliott return at a later date to field specific questions. (SIDE NOTE: The executive committee later identified potential dates for Christina Elliott to return. None of the September dates worked, so we agreed to have her return in November in conjunction with Tamla Cole.)

Old Business:**Committee Reports:**

Secretary Kevin Black cited the meeting minutes published in the July newsletter and solicited any amendments or corrections. No corrections were suggested. Lawrence Dukes proposed a motion to approve the May meeting minutes as distributed. Doris Pulse seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Treasurer Leone Bihl reported the following additions to the previously distributed report: receipts of \$35 in donations and expenses of \$252.00 for stamps. Joyce Baker moved to approve the Treasurer's Report. Susan Parker seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Marinona Peters read the Necrology Report on behalf of Joan Winner. The passing of the following individuals was reported:

Myra Pendleton – Blanchester Local Schools

Terry Martin – Princeton City Schools

Charlotte Campbell – Washington Court House Schools, Leesburg Schools, and Okeechobe School System

George Beatty – bus driver at Greenfield Exempted Village Schools

Helen Ford - Hillsboro City Schools and Corinth Middle School

Robert Hodson – Fairfield Local Schools, Clinton County Extension Service, SSCC board member, as well as banker and Highland County Historical Society member.

Mary Jo (May) Stacy – educator and nurse

Loren Elwood Karnes - bus driver at Greenfield Exempted Village Schools

Ann Turner – cook at Butler Springs Christian Camp and Retreat Center and Ohio Valley Schools retiree

Paul Turner – bus driver at Ohio Valley Schools System.

Dr. Lawrence Dukes in his Legislative Report mentioned that the legislature is currently out of session so there was little news Ohio legislative front. As an aside he mentioned that an out of state friend had sent him an article regarding how the state of Minnesota was awarding \$250,000,000 to shore up the actuarial process of the Minnesota retired teachers' system.

Mary Black reported awards of the 2023-24 HCTRA scholarships to Christopher Ford, grandson of Helen Ford, pursuing a degree in music education and Kalei Sanderson, of Lynchburg who will be attending Shawnee State University studying middle school education.

New Business:

Suggestions for future service projects included donations for Kamp Dovetail.

The next executive meeting will be at 9:30 AM on October 2, 2023, at the Hillsboro Frisch's.

The next HCRTA General Meeting will be Monday, November 13, 2023 at the Hillsboro Church of Christ. (We are moving the meeting date from the regular November 6th to November 13th.)

Kathy Levo reminded everyone to vote tomorrow.

Meeting adjourned, 2:10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin E. Black