

University Senate Retirees Rights and Benefits Committee
Minutes for Meeting, November 12, 2019

Attending: Ed Martinko, Susan Gronbeck-Tedesco, Jo Cink, Cal Cink, Peggy Robinson, Sandy Patchen, and Paul Laird

Our second meeting of the 2019-2020 academic year took place in Alcove E at the Kansas Union. Paul Laird reported that he had obtained the retirees list for the Chancellor's Christmas Party from Debra Bia, **and he will share it with Jo Cink and Dave Mannering.** Laird also reported on the meeting that he had met with Madi Vannaman, when she described the retirement packet that HR gives to every KU employee considering the possibility and the individualized follow-up that the office does with each future retiree. She is open to discussing any further steps that this committee might want to suggest, but she believes that the individualized consultations that the office already performs are the most helpful things that they can do for prospective retirees.

Laird reported on a phone call that he had on 5 November with Monte Soukup of the KUEA concerning retiree living at Sprague Apartments. The Sprague Apartments have had little updating and operate on a thin margin so that they can keep the rent at \$750 for a two-bedroom apartment with all utilities (except cable TV) included. They have modernized the heating and air conditioning, but nobody seems to complain about other aspects of the age of the units, perhaps because they want to keep the price as low as possible. There are 16 on the waiting list and one empty unit, but nobody is ready to take it because of pets or they aren't yet ready to move. The units were built in 1960 and originally planned to be in an L-shaped building, but the other wing never appeared. Soukup recently went to the property committee for permission to open up the facility to faculty and staff over the age of 55, but this has not yet been announced. Retirees would still have first priority. Three of the apartments are occupied by residents over 90, so there will be some vacancies coming up and they must find new tenants.

Ed Martinko offered to provide "the other side" concerning the Sprague Apartments. He noted that some retirees who would like to live in Sprague aren't able to move into the units because there are so few units, causing uncertainty as to when they might be able to rent there, so they make other arrangements for their retirement living and get tied into a lease at another place. He thinks that the facilities will have to be upgraded at some point and wonders if perhaps those plans should be made. There is, for example, a distinguished professor in architecture who works with students in building and renovating homes. Perhaps this could be a project that they work on? Later he wondered what the original footprint might have been for Sprague and whether or not this planned addition could be done at some point. Perhaps there are KU retirees who might be willing to donate to such as project.

Ed Martinko and Jo Cink looked into what KU's peer institutions provide in terms of housing for retirees. At this meeting, we only discussed their findings broadly, but their reports will be made part of the larger inventory of benefits provided to retirees at peer institutions on which the committee will be embarking. In general, Ed Martinko reported

that he had a great deal of information, including schools that provide transportation for retirees in addition to living facilities. Jo Cink that several of the schools that she looked at did not make it very clear on web sites what kind of living facilities might be available and noted that some facilities were also associated with various develops independent of that university. In other cases, the housing was also for visiting professors.

The discussion turned to how we should be approaching the question of suggesting additional benefits that KU might make available for its retirees. Ed Martinko stated that we need a strong proposal and provide good reasons why. Peggy Robinson suggested that a good place to start was asking for the return of benefits that retirees recently lost, such as half-price tickets at the Lied Center and more generous availability of free parking permits. Susan Gronbeck-Tedesco and others spoke on KU IT's proposal to query retirees about their use of their university email accounts with the hope of canceling those that are not being used. The committee agreed that any such plan should include asking the retirees more than once and not only through the email account that they might cancel. Jo Cink wondered how much an individual email account actually costs the university. **Paul Laird noted that Chris Brown has been our resource on this question and that he will ask him these questions.**

The major questions facing the committee for the next semester include updating the retirees' handbook and surveying information about benefits at peer institutions. Paul Laird reported briefly on the progress made by the committee previous year on surveying retiree benefits at KU's official peer institutions, noting that things had been started and what was there provided a template as to how we might proceed on this question. The committee agreed that **Paul Laird should make assignments to committee members on which institutions they should survey for the next meeting and also make available at some central place online the list of matters in the handbook that should be updated so that committee members could choose a certain number to look into.**

We concluded the meeting by scheduling the next one for Monday, 3 February 2020 at 3:00 in the Kansas Union. The room will be announced at a future date.

Respectfully submitted by:

Paul Laird
Chair, FY 2019 Retirees Rights and Benefits Committee