

## An Annual Meeting Like No Other

Despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, GSRA successfully held the 2020 Annual Meeting virtually. Our by-laws require us to have an Annual Business meeting, nominating officers for next year, approving the annual budget and last year's Business meeting minutes, and a recap of the previous year by our President. The Annual Meeting Committee explored a number of options to make that happen, from a statewide Zoom meeting to a Facebook Live Board meeting. Ultimately, the logistics of such an undertaking were extremely challenging. Consequently we decided on a recorded ZOOM meeting of the Board, to be posted to the GSRA website on October 20 and a mechanism to allow members not only to view the video, but also vote on the items submitted for approval, as well as the slate of officers nominated for 2021. From 12 living rooms around the state, we accomplished our required tasks and more.

President Jim Sommerville thanked our membership for their support and patience during these trying times. Secretary Beverly Littlefield presented last year's minutes, Treasurer Harold Grindle presented the annual Treasurer's Report, including the Legal Fund Report, and Jim presented the slate of nominees for next year's Policy and Operations Board. Jim then gave a State of the Association address, summarizing our successes and our frustrations with not accomplishing more, despite our continued best efforts.

The virtual meeting also featured video updates from Jim Potvin and Danielle Templeton from Employees Retirement System, Frank Berry from Department of

Community Health, and Christine Murdock from the Georgia House Budget and Research Office. GSRA thanks them all for their willingness to participate in the virtual Annual Meeting.

Of course, none of this would be possible without some help from our sponsors, in this case our Annual Partners: AMBA, Anthem, APCU and UnitedHealthcare.

The meeting was posted on the GSRA website and Facebook page on October 20, and all members have had a chance to view and vote on the reports and nominees. As of 10/24/20, 1572 members have read the email from GSRA Communications announcing the meeting, and 173 members have watched the video. The video will be available indefinitely, while the voting deadline was October 27<sup>th</sup>. Thanks to all who have viewed the video and voted.

Over the years, the very best part of the Annual Meetings has been the fellowship and connection with former co-workers and longtime friends. We certainly missed that this year. We also missed the opportunity to attend the always informative, interesting and fun workshops. The Annual Meeting committee is actively working to make that happen next year at Lake Blackshear Resort, a unique and beautiful location. Be looking for further details as we finalize plans. And keep your fingers crossed that we can actually get together and greet each other with handshakes and hugs.

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## GSRA Updates Website and Membership Processes

GSRA is pleased to announce that its website and membership processing was converted on October 7<sup>th</sup> to a more robust and advanced technology. The actual

conversion was handled by our contractor MemberClicks and was accomplished generally without problems. The major changes that you will

notice are a new look for the “home” page ([www.mygsra.com](http://www.mygsra.com)) along with other website information and the membership renewal process.

You are encouraged to log-in to the website and view the changes. At minimum, make sure that you view the “home” page and click on the link to view the virtual annual meeting and recent news.

The “renewal” process for members having a valid email address consists of an expiration notice thirty days prior to the membership expiration date. If the renewal is not paid, you will receive notices at the 15<sup>th</sup> day and the 7<sup>th</sup> day before expiration. During the following six months, your membership is considered to be in a “grace period.” Several notices will also be sent during this 6-month period.

Along with the expiration notice, you will receive an invoice. When you choose to pay, “click” on renew, choose the method of payment (credit card or check), “click” on “pay” and if paying by credit card complete your card information and “click”. If, however, you are paying by “check”, print the invoice (write your check) and send to the address on the invoice. When the invoice is “paid” including your check received, you will receive a notice via email.

Members who do not have a “valid” email address will receive a notice via the US mail with the attached invoice. The process is the same as that mentioned above for paying by check, except for the notices. Non-email notices will be mailed before the expiration date with a reminder being mailed in approximately two months if not paid.

**Alternatively, you are encouraged to authorize the monthly deduction of \$1.67 from your retirement benefit (ERS retirees only), as this method is the most convenient for you overall and is GSRA’s preferred method.** This authorization allows you to sign one time and never get another renewal notice. (Note: If you choose to discontinue retirement deductions at some future date, you may do that by notifying GSRA.) If you choose to authorize the deductions from your retirement benefit, [print the “Pension Deductions form”](#), complete the form, be sure to legibly write your email address and your retirement number, and mail the form to GSRA at the address provided on the form.

Over 440 members have an incorrect email address with GSRA. It could be that the member signed up with a different email address or moved to an area where that service provider is not available. If you are not getting newsletters or other notices from GSRA, please log-in to your account and correct your identifying information.



## Jim’s View: Annual Meeting, Election Day, 2021

I hope that you have had an opportunity to view GSRA’s virtual annual meeting. I trust you found the meeting to be informative and worth your time to watch. Allan Hill, Chairperson of the Annual Meeting Committee, is already hard at work preparing for next year’s Annual Meeting. Hopefully our 2021 Annual Meeting will be an in-person meeting.

I appreciate your support of my leadership of GSRA by nominating and then electing me to serve a third year as President. I assure you that I am itching to get back in front of members of the Governor’s Office, key legislative

leaders, and the ERS Board of Trustees to lobby for the restoration of the annual cost of living adjustments. The restoration of the cola will be my number one goal in 2021, as it has been since I became President of GSRA.

I also appreciate the willingness of Beverly Littlefield, Harold Grindle, Dan Coffee, Sadie Rogers, and Sam Shepard to serve on the GSRA Board. I look forward to working with them in the upcoming year.

We are just a few days away from Election Day. As I have mentioned before, every state senate and representative seat is up for election. Once the dust settles and we know the outcomes of those races, GSRA’s Legislative Committee,

along with Chuck Clay, will strategize on how best to take advantage of the election results to further our goals and objectives. I urge everyone to make the effort this year to vote. Your vote matters!!

In closing, I want to thank all of our annual meeting speakers and our annual partners. They could have declined to participate in our virtual Annual Meeting format. Instead they stepped up to the plate and took the extra time to prepare quality and informative videos for our meeting. I

think that verifies that GSRA is a respected and valued organization.

So I thank you again for your support of GSRA. The GSRA Board and I will do our best in 2021 to earn your continued support of GSRA.

Be safe and stay healthy.

Jim

## Get to Know Your GSRA Organization Members

In an effort to provide membership more information about the various GSRA Board and Operating Committee members who perform the ongoing work of the organization, we will feature one or more board and/or committee members in the newsletter each month. This month, Lynell W. Hayes, Thomasville local chapter President and representative to the GSRA Board, is featured.



**Lynell W. Hayes**  
**Thomasville Local Chapter**  
**President and Thomasville Local**  
**Chapter President/GSRA Board**  
**Member**

Lynell W. Hayes joined GSRA in May 2008 and organized the Thomasville GSRA chapter, serving as President. She immediately began a recruitment drive for members from the surrounding counties of Thomas, Brooks, Colquitt, Grady, Decatur and Seminole. She was elected to the GSRA Board as an At Large Member, where she served for several years. She serves presently as the Thomasville local chapter President representative to the GSRA Board and as President of the Thomasville local chapter, which has flourished under her leadership and use of innovative and imaginative programming to become one of GSRA's most successful local chapters.

Lynell retired from the Department of Behavioral Health - Southwestern Regional Hospital in February 2000 with 25 years of service. She served as Night Supervisor for Child & Adolescent Services, Admission Nurse on Adult Psych., ending her tenure as Night Supervisor for Dual Diagnosis Services.

Lynell is a resident of Thomas County, a Night Hawk (Thomas College), a Blazer (Valdosta State University), A. M. B. Church Deaconess, and a volunteer with both the American Red Cross and Flint River Girl Scouts.

Lynell's hobbies are reading, bowling, traveling and spending time with her family.

She encourages all Georgia state employees and educators, both active and retired, to join GSRA, "the only association that works for you".

Go to [www.georgia.gov/voting](http://www.georgia.gov/voting) for information





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For help with all things GSRA, call 770-312-2799 or email [help@mygsra.com](mailto:help@mygsra.com).



**Donate to GSRA Legal Fund**

GSRA's Legal Fund was established as a dedicated legal fund in the event that leadership, on behalf of its members, ever has to retain legal counsel. The fund will be used to cover all appropriate legal fees related to ensuring that retiree benefits are not reduced or eliminated.

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APCU partners with Members Wealth Management, a financial services program, to help our members with financial planning, investments, insurance, as well as retirement and estate planning strategies.

APCU has invited Sherril Roman, a Managing Associate with Members Wealth Management, to offer a great workshop, "Money Talk 101", at GSRA. This seminar is designed to facilitate conversations around financial milestones for retirees.

Topics will include:

- ★ The importance of setting financial goals
- ★ Understanding your current financial position
- ★ Preparing for a successful retirement
- ★ Income tax considerations
- ★ What your loved ones need to know



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