

CCREA Meeting Minutes – October 15, 2025

Sam Heaton is working hard to get the health insurance stipend increased for the FY27 budget year, to start October 2026.

Next month's meeting is November 15, and Lynda Paradise will give a presentation on alternative medicines.

December 17 is our catered event for the holidays.

Today's meeting included Q&A with Tressie Bloodworth from Cobb County HR, Stacey Weldon, Pat Cromer, and Kathy Veal from Houze and Associates, and CCREA 1st VP, Ty Mitchell.

Comments from Tressie:

Pre-65 open enrollment handled by Houze – sending packet by 2nd week of November. Two weeks for enrollment. There will be a premium increase - \$5 - \$15. If you have no changes and/or do nothing during open enrollment, you will get the same coverage as last year. Reminder we can also use the Cobb County wellness clinic.

Post-65 retiree open enrollment is October 16 – Dec 7 with Via. No need to do anything unless you want to change benefits. If you are moving, you need to check with Via to see if they still cover your new location. Your stipend has to be administered through Via, and they are your first contact. Only contact Tressie if you can't get in touch with them.

Reach out to Tressie if you have questions about changing over to Medicare. She prefers emails for correspondence. There are 3,400 retirees and she has responsibility for all of us.

Cobbcounty.gov – there is a page for retirees including forms and information. You can type the word “retirees” in the Search bar or go to Directory then to Human Resources to find the information.

There was a comment from a retiree that when there are changes on the Via website it becomes more and more difficult to figure out. Tressie agrees the website changes make it hard for her as well.

If you need to talk to Via, call and make an appointment because there is often a long wait. Don't wait until the last minute to address changes.

Stacy Weldon/Kathy Beal/Pat Cromer with Houze

Pat Cromer and Roswell Story were instrumental in bringing the retiree association to Houze.

Houze changed CCREA dental offering from United Concordia to MetLife last year due to a huge rate increase. No increases this year to dental plan offered through CCREA. EyeMed is vision and handles all claims themselves. If you have a problem with your dentist dropping your coverage, please call Houze so they know what the problem is and to see if they can remedy the issue. There are also Legal and Pet Health plans available.

November 17 – November 28 is Open Enrollment for pre-65 retirees for CCREA dental, vision, legal, pet plans. <https://houze.org/cobbretirees/> is the website.

Do not respond to anyone selling you anything by phone or other method. Your Medicare benefits MUST go through Via to be eligible for your stipend or County assistance with your plan. Via Benefits is the county's representative for your Medicare coverage.

Emails from Employee Navigator and your packet are also available on website. If you don't make a change, what you have currently will roll over to the new year. Anyone going from COBRA coverage to Houze coverage, please give them at least a month's notice.

Ty Mitchell – Medicare changes

If you are on Medicare Advantage, there are plans that are going away. Lots of changes in the prescription drug plans. Significant rate increases for drug plans. Went up to \$615 deductible this past year. Check through Via to see if your rate is changing and check your formulary to see if coverage is the same. If your plan was REMOVED this next year, you can possibly move to Original Medicare and a supplement if you qualify healthwise.

For those approaching 65, Ty is available for County folks to call. 678-897-7600.

Identify yourself as a Cobb retiree.

Plan G is a good option to consider if it is within your budget. If you change plans, there still may be underwriting. Look for larger company with rate stability at the beginning so you won't have to change if possible.

There are few local groups helping with dementia/Alzheimers. Medicaid can help depending on income

You can try Medicare Advantage for a 12-month trial period, but it is a pain to get back to Original Medicare.

If you are caring for a veteran, you can be reimbursed by the government. It is a lengthy process, but it is a good program.

John Reida advised there is currently a cheap natural gas rate available with Georgia Natural Gas. He had to call them to get 49.9 rate.

The raffle winner was Steve Alexander, who chose a One Card.

Minutes submitted by Julie Arnold, CCREA Secretary