



COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING MINUTES JULY 25, 2025

A quorum of **Commission on Aging** (COA) members convened in person at Marcia P. Coggs Human Health and Services Center, 1230 W. Cherry St., with a virtual MS Teams and video conference option on Friday, July 25, 2025.

Commissioners Present:

Janice Wilberg, Ph.D., *Chair*
Terrence R. Moore, Sr., *Vice-Chair*
Brian Peters, *Legislative Officer*
Gloria Miller, *Secretary*
Amber Miller, *Exec Comm. at Large*
Supervisor Juan Miguel-Martinez
George Banda
Mark P. Behar, PA-C
Denise Callaway
Eugene Guskowski, M.Arch
Marni King
Jacqueline Smith
Crocker Stephenson
Cindy Van Vreede

Commissioners Excused:

Paula Pennebaker
Shakita LaGrant-McClain, *DHHS*
Tim Schabo, *CEX*
Tina Anderson, *DHHS*
Tamarra Carr, *DHHS*
Claire Enders, *DHHS*
Daniel Idzikowski, *DHHS*

Milwaukee County Staff:

Jill Knight, *DHHS*
Carrie Koss Vallejo, *DHHS*
Lottie Maxwell, *DHHS*
Vonda Nyang, *DHHS*
Bailey Knutson, *DHHS*
Ginger Rodgers, *DHHS*
Migdalia Pacheco, *DHHS*
Emily Petersen, *DHHS*
Gaylyn Reske, *DHHS*
Kayla Steinke, *DHHS*
Deidra Williams, *DHHS*

Attendees from the Public

Thomas Gossett, Goodwill
Sheila Badwan
Megan Newman
Jill Kenehan-Krey, *ACL Interpreter*
Mathew Hayes, *Legal Action of WI*
Naryan Leazer
Neil Minogue, *WI-DHS*
Jill Kenehan-Krey, *ASL Interpreter*
Stephanie Zito, *ASL Interpreter*

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Janice Wilberg called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Secretary Gloria Miller conducted the roll call and confirmed that a quorum of Commissioners was present. Chair Wilberg welcomed County Supervisor Juan Miguel Martinez as the new representative from the County Board of Supervisors on the Commission on Aging, and he shared a few words with the group.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE MAY 23, 2024, COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING MINUTES

On discussion of the motion, the minutes were corrected to indicate that Commissioner Stevenson made the motion to adjourn the May 23, 2024, meeting.

MOTION: To approve the May 23, 2025, Commission on Aging meeting minutes.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Banda Moved, Behar Second).

III. WELCOME TO DEPUTY ADS ADMINISTRATOR JESSICA KOWALSKI

The commission welcomed Jessica Kowalski as the new Deputy Administrator for Aging and Disability Services. Ms. Kowalski introduced herself and shared her background in human resources.

IV. COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE

Deputy Chief of Staff Tim Schabo presented the County Executive Office report, highlighting the new state budget signed by Governor Tony Evers. This budget includes significant funding for Highway Patrol services, the addition of Assistant District Attorney positions, and cost savings for the Department of Health and Human Services through a reduction in the youth corrections rate. Mr. Schabo also voiced concerns regarding federal budget cuts that impact essential programs.

Additionally, Milwaukee County received six Achievement Awards from the National Association of Counties and emphasized the economic impact of the tourism industry, which generated \$4.3 billion in 2024.

He announced that budget town halls will take place in August and invited both commission members and the public to participate. These town halls will feature job and resource fairs, budget presentations, and opportunities for public comment.

Mr. Schabo provided an update on open Commission seats and encouraged anyone with recommendations for potential appointments to contact him via email or phone. Lastly, he announced his upcoming departure for a new role at the Medical Examiner's office and introduced Kyle Ashley, the Director of Community Outreach, as his successor.

For more information on the state and federal budgets, as well as the National Association of Counties Achievement Awards, please refer to the written report submitted by Tim Schabo.

V. COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL REPORTS BY CHAIRS

Advocacy Committee: Commissioner Brian Peters, Chair of the Advocacy Committee, reported on progress on their area aging plan goals and welcomed new members. They are on track to meet their objectives before the deadlines.

Service Delivery Committee: Commissioner George Banda, Co-Chair of the Service Delivery Committee, shared that the Service Delivery Committee will meet on August 19, 2025, and August 21, 2025, to provide presentations and data reporting on their contracts. They have new members joining and are focused on improving their processes. He informed the Commission that they have two candidates to serve on SDC, which will be discussed at the next COA meeting.

Advisory Council: Commissioner Denise Callaway, Chair of the Advisory Council, provided an update on the transition of Commissioners off the Advisory Council, with new members being oriented and an upcoming election for a new chair and vice chair at their August 13, 2025, meeting.

Nutrition Advisory Council: Commissioner Cindy Van Vreede, Chair of the Nutrition Council, reported that the Nutrition Council was made aware of a potential 2025 Nutrition program budget deficit of \$150,000 as well as declining attendance at the four Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee (HACM) senior dining sites. The Nutrition Advisory Council voted to recommend the closure of these four HACM dining sites: Arlington Place, College Court, Convent Hill, and Lapham Park. The Council is working on a transition plan including transportation for affected individuals.

Nutrition Coordinator Gaylyn Reske noted that the deficit is partly due to the Administration for Community Living (ACL) retaining 5% of the Older Americans Act (OAA) funding allocation for its administration, an increase from the historical 1%. These funding cuts have impacted all Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs).

Nutrition staff are piloting a flavor station at the Washington Park Senior Center, that includes a variety of spices that senior diners can add to their meals.

Senior Center Committee: Commissioner Eugene Guskowski, Chair of the Senior Center, and Vice-Chair Crocker Stephenson reported that the Committee will hold a strategic planning session next week, on Thursday and Friday. This session will focus on programming, development, messaging, and building partnerships. Lunch will be provided for participants, and all commissioners are invited to take part.

VI. CONSENT AGENDA

The Consent Agenda consists of the following meeting minutes:

- a) Executive Committee meeting minutes (May 9, 2025, and June 16, 2025)
- b) Advocacy Committee meeting minutes (May 2, 2025)

- c) Advisory Council meeting minutes (May 14, 2025)
- d) Community Engagement Ad Hoc Committee meeting minutes (May 22, 2025)

MOTION: To approve the consent agenda items listed above.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Stephenson Moved, Behar Second).

VII. ACTION/INFORMATIONAL/DISCUSSION ITEMS

- a) **Action Item, Appointments to the Commission's Committee and Councils, Advisory Council, Wellness Committee, Advocacy Committee, Commission Chair Janice Wilberg:** Emily Petersen, Advocacy and Policy Manager, reviewed the Advisory Council nominees' names and their demographic information with the Commission. These nominees were initially approved by both the Advisory Council and the Advocacy Committee before being reviewed by the Commission. The Commission conducted separate votes on each of the appointments.

MOTION: To confirm the list of appointments to the Advisory Council

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Behar Moved, A. Miller Second)

MOTION: To confirm the appointment of Kimberly King to the Advocacy Committee.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Peters Moved, Stephenson Second)

- b) **Action Item, Approval of Serving Older Asylees and Refugees "SOAR" Program Vendor Selection, Commissioner Amber Miller, Service Delivery Committee (SDC) Chair:** Commissioner Miller informed the Commission that SDC initially received five applications; however, one applicant withdrew their application. She explained the process they followed to select a new vendor for this contract. The vendor chosen by SDC is Hanan Refugees Relief Group, and they are seeking the Commission's approval.

MOTION: To approve Hanan Refugees Relief Group as the vendor for the Serving Older Asylees and Refugees (SOAR) program, providing wrap-around services for older adult refugees and asylees.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (A. Miller Moved, Behar Second)

- c) **Action/Discussion Item, Commissioner Brian Peters, Chair of Advocacy Committee:** Commissioner Peters reported on the federal "Big Beautiful Bill." He highlighted reductions in Medicaid and SNAP benefits. He mentioned that AmeriCorps is at risk of losing its funding for the upcoming year due to President Trump's budget proposal. However, it remains uncertain whether this proposal will pass in Congress's final budget.

Additionally, he noted that the Older Americans Act was introduced in the Senate and successfully passed last year, but unfortunately failed to advance in the House. The Advocacy Committee needs to work diligently to advocate for this bill to ensure it is signed into law later this year.

Finally, Commissioner Peters discussed Senator Baldwin's introduction of the Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act (POWDA). The Advocacy Committee would like to include this act in its Policy Priorities and raised concerns about the impact of federal budget cuts on various programs. The Advocacy Committee is seeking the Commission's approval on these matters.

MOTION: To approve adding the Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act to the Commission's policy priorities and discussing the impact of federal budget cuts on various programs

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Peters Moved, Stephenson Second)

After the vote, he provided a brief report on the state budget. The Governor and the State Legislature did agree on the state budget on July 2, 2025.

- d) Action/Discussion Item, 2026 AAA Budget Proposal, Lottie Maxwell-Mitchell, Senior Budget Analyst:** Lottie Maxwell Mitchell delivered a presentation on the 2026 AAA budget proposal. The 2026 AAA budget request is for \$13,473,530, including \$11,920,301 in programming and personnel costs. The budget funds the continuation of AAA programming, except for the Household and Outdoor Maintenance Engagement (HOME) program and the potential closure of some senior dining sites. The budget includes the federal AmeriCorps Senior Companions program and state matching funds. Sufficient county and state revenue is included to fully match the draw down of the anticipated federal Older Americans Act funds. For more information, please see the PowerPoint presentation titled "2026 DHHS Requested Budget COA".

MOTION: To approve the 2026 AAA Budget Proposal as presented

ACTION: Motion prevailed (A. Miller Moved, Guskowski Second, Callaway and Stephenson abstained).

Maxwell Mitchell also noted that the County is anticipating a significant structural budget deficit in 2027 and the availability of County Tax levy for discretionary programming may be at risk. Chair Wilberg thanked the County for being forthright in placing the Commission on notice early of potential deficits in 2027.

- e) Discussion/Informational Item, McGovern Senior Center Development, Commissioner Eugene Guskowski, Chair, Senior Center Committee:** Eugene Guskowski highlighted the lessons learned from the McGovern Senior Center redevelopment process, emphasizing the significance of messaging,

community engagement, and collaboration with County Supervisors. The commissioners discussed the topics above.

- f) **Discussion/Informational Item, Livable Communities, Commissioner Paula Pennebaker:** Commissioner Pennebaker was absent from the meeting, so Chair Wilberg provided a brief update. The Livable Communities Steering Committee is reviewing data on various topics and planning neighborhood walk-arounds to understand community issues better.

VIII. WISCONSIN STATE OFFICE ON AGING REPORT, NEAL MINOGUE

Neal Minogue, the Older Americans Act Program Supervisor at the Wisconsin Department of Health Services provided updates on nutrition program grants, changes in federal administration, and the impact on funding for the Older Americans Act. He emphasized the importance of continuing to support older adults.

IX. AGING UNIT DIRECTOR REPORT, AGING SERVICES DIRECTOR DANIEL IDZIKOWSKI

Director Idzikowski emphasized the significance of the Older Americans Act, his appreciation for the dedication of Commission in providing citizen leadership to the Area Agency on Aging, and the necessity to diversify funding sources. He commented on the role of the AAA in advancing community health as a common theme across all funded programs. He also recognized the excellence and professionalism of AAA staff.

X. COUNTY SUPERVISORS REPORT

The Supervisor's report was tabled until next month's meeting.

XI. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Chair Wilberg noted the need to address the technical difficulties experienced throughout the meeting. The Chair had no further updates to report.

XII. COMMISSION ON AGING ANNOUNCEMENTS REGARDING UPCOMING EVENTS, ACTIVITIES, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SENIORS

- Brooke Stanley, Disability Coordinator from the LGBT Community Center asked about the status of the gender-affirming care ban in the federal budget, and Commissioner Peters confirmed it was likely removed.
- Commissioner Eugene Guskowski informed the Commission that Commissioner George Banda was honored with special recognition at the West Allis 4th of July parade.

- On September 6, 2025, Calvary Baptist Church located at 2959 N. Teutonia Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53206, will host its annual healthcare ministry, featuring the Alzheimer's Institute of Wisconsin. Everyone is welcome to attend.
- Flyers for other events are available online and on the back table.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 11 a.m.

MOTION: To adjourn

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent.

The next Commission on Aging meeting will be Friday, August 22, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Vonda Nyang
Executive Assistant