



Advocacy Committee Meeting February 6, 2023

A quorum of **Advocacy Committee** convened virtually on Monday, February 6, 2023, Members and attendees joined the virtual meeting with video conference and or conference call options (computer or telephone).

Members Present:

Commissioner Elliot Moeser, *Chair*
County Supervisor Sequanna Taylor
Commissioner Cindy Van Vreede
Sopheya Farrell
Commissioner John Griffith
Sharon Jackson
Theresa "Trina" Koch
Harold Oemig
Gary Mikolajczyk
Cindy Van Vreede

Milwaukee County Staff:

Michelle Allison, *DHHS*
Andrew Bethke, *DHHS*
Daniel Idzikowski, *DHHS*
Dominique Klett, *DHHS*
Jill Knight, *DHHS*
Ortrialla Paris, *DHHS*
Vonda Nyang, *DHHS*
Carrie Koss Vallejo, *DHHS*

Members Excused:

William "Bill" Meunier, *Vice Chair*
Commissioner Ron Byington
Maureen Fitzgerald
Michael Glabere
Paul Pedersen

Attendees from the Public

Commissioner Paula Penebaker
Matthew Hayes
Kimberly King
Jill K, Interpreter

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Chair Elliot Moeser called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Daniel Idzikowski, Aging Services Director called the roll and a quorum was present.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE January 9, 2023, ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: To approve the January 9, 2023 Advocacy Committee meeting minutes.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Griffith, Koch seconds).

III. RACIAL EQUITY AND ADVOCACY REFLECTION

Commissioner Chair Elliot Moeser asked Paula Penebaker if she was ready to speak on the Racial Equity and Advocacy reflection. She stated she was not.

IV. UPDATE ON ACTION ITEMS

a) **Advocacy & Policy Manager position:**

Director Idzikowski shared that they have reposted the Advocacy & Policy Manager position on the County portal, law school recruiting site, and several sites specific to recruiting professionals of color. Chair Elliot Moeser is invited to serve on the interview panel.

b) **CoA Public Policy Priorities:**

Chair Moeser reported that the Commission on Aging approved all the actions of the Advocacy Committee and accepted the Public Policy Priorities as presented.

c) **Wisconsin Income Tax on Social Security:**

Chair Moeser had raised the issue to investigate whether we should advocate for the exemption of Wisconsin income tax on social security benefits. Upon investigation, it was determined that Wisconsin does not tax Social Security benefits. The federal government does tax on income social security. On a federal level there is a great deal of debate about social security and social benefits and how to shore up the trust funds.

A discussion followed about bills to support Social Security, including a bill introduced by Rep. Gwen Moore. Trina Koch asked the question what she could do to make her voice heard about Social Security act. Gary suggested that she contact her Congressperson.

MOTION: Support H.R. 671 the Social Security Enhancement and Protection Act of 2023.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Griffith moved, Koch second).

d) **Proposed Wisconsin Constitutional Amendment:**

The constitutional Amendment regarding public benefits is not yet advanced in legislation. Therefore, it will not appear on the ballot for the Spring primary.

e) **State Budget Surplus Funding Proposals:**

Governor Evers has noted that he would like to spend a significant amount of funding to shore up Mental Health services for children. The Majority Party is interested in given a substantial amount of the budget surplus back in the form of some type of tax refund or tax credit.

f) On-Demand/Taxi Service:

The Advocacy Committee voted to support the proposal of other advocates in the disability community to ask the Milwaukee County Board to provide funding through the 2023 county budget to support the continuation of what now is the paratransit taxi service in some form. The County Board passed an amendment to the budget that reserved \$300,000 to continue that service in 2023.

Milwaukee County Transit system runs both the fixed route bus system and the paratransit system under the regulation of the Federal Transit Administration. The taxi service is on an demand service, while Transit Plus requires you to book your ride at least 24hrs in advance. Both services provide rides for individuals with disabilities who cannot access the fixed route bus system. The FTA is now requiring the taxi component comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The taxis service did not include any vehicles with wheelchair lifts.

Idzikowski explains details of the fare structure which is based on a subsidy of taxi fares. With the current paratransit vans there is not a way to collect fares. MCTS tried to think of ways to change this, but after negotiating with the vendors it was decided to end the taxi service. Persons who are blind disproportionately use this service. The taxi service provided individual on demand rides.

The Milwaukee County Department of Transportation has now requested the Area Agency on Aging to work with MCTS to find an alternative solution for an on-demand service while complying with ADA requirements and minimizing any impacts on Transit Plus or the Older Adult Transportation Service.

Commissioner Moeser asked if any further motion from the Advocacy Committee was necessary. Idzikowski indicated no further action is necessary.

g) Parks and Recreation Access for older adults:

Commissioner Griffith had recommended that the AAA pursue discussion with the Parks Department about making Parks and Trails more accessible. No progress has been made on this issue.

h) Privatization of Family Care (Long Term Care):

Nothing to report, other than to continue advocacy on this item with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

Comments and Questions: Cindy Van Vreede had a comment concerning seating in county parks, she stated the golf course she went to all the benches were removed. Gary commented on taxes and social security, which he stated that when the federal government had budget problems, they decided to tax Social Security.

Commissioner Griffith emphasized how important the Commission on Aging is. Commissions must talk with departments, such as parks and transportation to advocate on behalf of older adults. He would like to emphasize that everyone understands their role in this regard.

Commissioner Moeser makes a comment on the state budget surplus, which is one of our priorities that this committed has identified. We identified that we believe a portion of that money should be used statewide to the assist the Aging community and should all advocate for that.

V. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY UPDATES:

Federal Aging Policy:

a) Federal Budget & Issues:

Dan stated that Congress passed the budget for federal fiscal year 2023 through September 2023. However, there are not enough funds to cover spending already approved by Congress and they will now have to raise the national debt limit.

State Legislative Issues:

a) State Budget & Legislation:

The Governor will be introducing his Executive state budget which will be sent to the Joint Finance Committee. Idzikowski noted that last budget cycle the Joint Finance Committee started from the base budget and disregarded what the Governor had advanced. The Biennial budget 2023-2025 message will be on Wednesday February 15, 2023 at 7p.m. Dan mention that there may be a series of public hearings by the Joint Finance Committee, where the public can comment on the Budget.

b) Administrative Rules/Gov's Task Forces (Broadband Access Commission to End Loneliness, Wisconsin State Dementia Plan) Dan

Nothing to report. The Wisconsin State Dementia Plan is available for public review. Dan forwarded this information to the committee.

Milwaukee County Legislative Issues:

- a) **Milwaukee County Budget & ARPA Allocations-** Supervisor Taylor spoke briefly about her advocacy for older adults. She has visited the senior centers and she would like to see more technology put in place such as laptops, and tablets for seniors to check out and take home with them, as is done in the libraries. She mentions February 28th is County Lobby Day. Director Shakita LaGrant will be there to represent DHHS.

- VI. Commission on Aging Policymakers Gathering & WAAN Aging Advocacy Day:** May 24th at 4:00pm has been selected as the date for the policymakers gathering. Moeser stated that all parties need to attend. Aging Advocacy Day is on May 9th, 2023, in person in Madison. Many issues will be addressed such as APS, Home Delivered meals, transportation, housing, and voting.
- VII. Membership Recruitment:** Moeser will be announcing one person to join the Advocacy meetings. Idzikowski notes that there are needs for Committee members from many legislative districts in the county. Koch sent Moeser a name for the Committee.
- VIII. Announcements & Advocacy Opportunities:** Idzikowski noted that the Disability Vote Coalition will be having a Zoom meeting on February 9th, 2023, at 6:30pm entitled Wisconsin Courts Matter. A link is in the chat and registration is required. The County Executive's State of the County address will take place on February 21st 2023 at 10:00am at University of Wisconsin of Milwaukee Student Union Ballroom. Harold Oemig would like to ask that the Advocacy Committee meeting be moved from 3:00pm to 2:45pm.
- IX. ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at 4:30pm (Koch, Van Vreede seconds)

The next Advocacy Committee meeting will be held virtually at 3:00 p.m. on March 6th, 2023

Respectfully Submitted,
Ortriallya Paris