



COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING MINUTES MAY 23, 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, May 23, 2025.

Commissioners Present:

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

Commissioners Excused:

Eugene Guskowski, M.Arch

Milwaukee County Staff:

Tina Anderson, *DHHS*
Daniel Idzikowski, *DHHS*
Jill Knight, *DHHS*
Carrie Koss Vallejo, *DHHS*
Shakita LaGrant-McClain, *DHHS*

Milwaukee County Staff Continued...

Davidah Mohammad, *DHHS*
Vonda Nyang, *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
Jill Kennehan-Krey, *ACL Interpreter*
Laura Langer, *WI-DHS*
Vera Ford, *Senior Leadership*
Maxine May, *Senior Leadership*
Vincent McClelland, *Senior Leadership*
Bennett Rucka, *Senior Leadership*
Veraunica Ruffin, *ERAS Senior Network*
Rolland Dittus-Plath, *Senior Leadership*
J.O. Haselhof, *Senior Leadership*
Rita Richardson, *Senior Leadership*
Cathy Wood, *SOA*
Stephanie Zito, *ACL 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, confirming that a quorum of the Commissioners was present.

Chair Wilberg welcomed County Supervisor Juan Miguel Martinez as a new Commissioner, who then shared a few words.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 25, 2024, COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: To approve the April 25, 2024 Commission on Aging meeting minutes.

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

III. COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL REPORTS BY CHAIRS

Chair Wilberg invited the Commissioners to reflect on older adults as part of the theme "Flipping the Script" during Older Americans Month. They discussed shifting negative perceptions of aging to focus on celebrating the valuable contributions of older adults to their communities. The importance of combating loneliness and respecting the wisdom of elders, particularly in Indigenous communities, was emphasized.

Advocacy Committee: Commissioner Brian Peters, Chair of the Advocacy Committee, reported on recent activities, including attendance at the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Day in Madison. Committee members engaged in meetings with legislative staff along with representatives from the ADRC and the AAA, on vital issues such as falls prevention and caregiver funding. The next meeting is on June 6, 2025.

Service Delivery Committee: Commissioner Amber Miller, Chair of the Service Delivery Committee, shared an update on a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a new vendor to provide services to older adult refugees. Ms. Koss Vallejo will circulate the RFP link. The next meeting is set for June 23, 2025, to discuss RFPs and contract language.

Advisory Council: Commissioner Denise Callaway, Chair of the Advisory Council, discussed the Council's recruitment efforts. She plans to review appointments in June and hold an orientation for new members in July. The current Council is ensuring that the appointments align with the criteria outlined in the Older Americans Act.

Nutrition Council: Commissioner Cindy Van Vreede, Chair of the Nutrition Council. Ad Hoc Committee will be meeting on June 5, 2025, to discuss complaints about food allergies. Commissioner Mark Behar is providing a presentation on "Spicing things Up" to bring spices to the congregate meal site tables. This meeting will be on June 30, 2025. The next Nutrition Council meeting is July 22, 2025.

Senior Center Committee: Commissioner Crocker Stephenson, Co-Chair, reported that renovations at the Clinton Rose senior center are progressing well. Last week, the Senior Center Committee discussed the Kelly senior center and the potential for a new senior center as part of the Bucyrus Eire redevelopment. The next meeting is scheduled for the first week of June. Commissioner Stephenson, who is visually

impaired, requested to be contacted via text or personal email, as he can replay messages.

Wellness Committee: Commissioner Jacqueline Smith announced the appointment of Naryan Leazer to the committee, which will be presented to the Executive Committee for approval.

The Select Committee on Community Engagement: Chaired by Commissioner Janice Wilberg, has developed a user-friendly summary of issues affecting older adults in Milwaukee. They aim to partner with PBS or a local NPR station to engage the community in discussions about their report findings. Their next meeting is on June 25, 2025, at 2:30 p.m., and other Commissioners are welcome to attend.

IV. CONSENT AGENDA

The Consent Agenda consists of the following meeting minutes:

- a) Executive Committee meeting minutes (March 14, 2025, and April 15, 2025)
- b) Advocacy Committee meeting minutes (April 11, 2025)
- c) Advisory Council meeting minutes (April 9, 2025)
- d) Community Engagement Ad Hoc Committee meeting minutes (February 20, 2025, and March 20, 2025)

Minutes were accepted upon the correction of the April 9, 2025, Advisory Council meeting minutes to have Kent Mayfield shown as present, as he arrived after roll.

MOTION: To approve the consent agenda items listed above.

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

V. ACTION/INFORMATIONAL/DISCUSSION ITEMS

- a) **Action Item, Appointments to the Commission's Committee and Councils:** Commissioner Brian Peters, Chair of the Advocacy Committee, presented background information on Tom Suchecki and Kathy Scott to the Commission and requested approval for their appointments to the Advocacy Committee.

MOTION: To approve Tom Suchecki and Kathy Scott appointments of to the Advocacy Committee.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Peters Moved, Van Vreede Second).

- b) **Discussion Item, AmeriCorps Senior Companions, Aging and Disability Vaccination Collaborative, and Social Rx Social Isolation and Loneliness project updates:** AAA Director Daniel Idzikowski; Kaisa Kerrigan, Community Health Coordinator: Director Idzikowski discussed the Senior Companions

program, which currently has 15 trained companions providing companionship services to older adults in the community. This program, which is managed directly by the Area Agency on Aging (AAA), has a budget exceeding \$450,000 and plays a vital role in addressing social isolation and loneliness among seniors. Deidra Williams serves as the coordinator for this initiative. The Senior Companions program is part of AmeriCorps. Although AmeriCorps faces potential funding cuts, these threats have not yet impacted this specific program. However, the entire AmeriCorps program remains at risk.

Kaisa Kerrigan presented two grant projects: the Aging and Disability Vaccination Collaborative and Rx Social Connect. The Vaccination Collaborative, funded by USAging and the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, aimed to increase COVID-19 and flu vaccination rates among older adults and individuals with disabilities in communities of color. From June 2024 to March 2025, the project held 221 events and administered a total of 6,109 vaccinations, including 3,200 for COVID-19 and 2,900 for the flu. This was achieved by utilizing various outreach strategies in partnership with local organizations.

Additionally, Ms. Kerrigan discussed Social Rx, a project focused on addressing social isolation and loneliness, emphasizing their health impacts. She described that a screening tool was used in community pharmacies across Milwaukee County to identify individuals experiencing loneliness and connect them to necessary resources. This initiative, also funded by the Department of Health Services (DHS), involved collaboration with the Medical College of Wisconsin, Vital Voices, and community pharmacists to identify lonely older adults and connect them with community resources – a form of social prescribing.

- c) Discussion Item, Federal Changes to Aging Policies and Programs:** The Trump Administration is considering reorganizing the Administration for Community Living (ACL) into two separate agencies – the Administration for Children and Families and the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare, dividing the aging programs and services between them. In response to these proposed changes, several organizations sent a letter expressing their opposition to them.

Currently, Congress is debating changes to Medicaid through the reconciliation bill process, which could result in up to \$750 billion in cuts to the program, which would significantly impact vulnerable populations, including individuals with disabilities and older adults. Additionally, Congress is reviewing individual departmental budgets, such as those for the Older Americans Act within the Department of Health and Human Services.

With many potential changes on the horizon, it is important to contact your representatives and share your thoughts.

- d) Discussion/Informational Item, Livable Communities, Commissioner Paula Penebaker:** Commissioner Amber Miller provided an update on Milwaukee

County's participation in the Americans Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Age-Friendly Network. Ms. Miller discussed plans to gather data through a survey developed by AARP and to conduct walk audits during the summer and fall. These audits will focus on areas within the community that have transportation and pedestrian safety issues, assessing livability and pedestrian safety for all age groups. The surveys will be distributed to individuals aged 45 and older, with distribution expected to occur in the coming months.

VI. AGING UNIT DIRECTOR REPORT, DHHS AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES, AREA AGENCY ON AGING DIRECTOR DANIEL IDZIKOWSKI

Idzikowski invited Commissioners to the grand opening of the new Coggs building, scheduled for June 13, 2025, at 10:30 a.m. He discussed the distribution of the 2025-2027 Area Aging Plan and the release of Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for various programs and invited commissioners to join review panels.

Additionally, he announced the accelerated purchase of three vehicles for older adult transportation services, which federal and local resources will fund. He also promoted Senior Health and Fitness Day on May 28, 2025, at all Milwaukee County Senior Centers and updated commissioners on the Milwaukee HUBS initiative and potential developments at the McGovern Park Senior Center. He encouraged attendance at upcoming presentations to the Milwaukee County Board on June 10, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. and the Committee on Health, Equity, Human Needs, and Strategic Planning on June 12, 2025, at 1 p.m.

He also recognized Emily Peterson for her contributions to the Senior Leadership Program, Carrie Koss Vallejo for her work on RFPs, and Matt Fortman and his team for their efforts in securing funding for the vans, and lastly, Executive Director Shakita LaGrant-McClain for her work with the Milwaukee HUBS initiatives. For more information, please see the attached report titled "2025 AAA Director's Report".

VII. COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE

Deputy Chief of Staff Tim Schabo outlined key initiatives from the County Executive's Office, including Public Service Recognition Week, and expressed concerns about federal funding cuts to programs such as AmeriCorps.

In honor of Mental Health Awareness Month, County Executive David Crowley announced a proclamation recognizing the older adult population in Milwaukee County. This proclamation underscored the county's dedication to supporting older adults, particularly through the redevelopment of the McGovern Senior Center, which will offer affordable housing and community services.

Crowley also declared May Older Americans Month, acknowledging the contributions of older residents and Milwaukee County's designation as Wisconsin's first Age-Friendly Community. For more details, please refer to the attached May report from the

Office of County Executive David Crowley. For more information see the report titled "COA CEX Office Report May 2025".

VIII. WISCONSIN STATE OFFICE ON AGING REPORT, LAURA LANGER

Laura Langer shared updates from the State Office on Aging, including details about the public comment period for the State Aging Plan, which is open until Sunday, May 25, 2025. The plan is to be submitted to the Administration on Aging by June 30, 2025. She also discussed the ongoing funding for the AmeriCorps Senior program, the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, the Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program. However, she noted that the AmeriCorps Student Program, designed for high school and college students, has been eliminated. Additionally, she expressed gratitude to all the participants who took part in Aging Advocacy Day and advocated for aging adults in Wisconsin.

IX. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Representative Sequanna Taylor's departure from the Commission was noted, with appreciation for her advocacy work. Chair Wilberg suggested the Commission send her flowers.

The Commission's efforts in community engagement and advocacy received positive feedback. Last week, Commissioner and COA Vice-Chair Terrence R. Moore, Sr. presented the successful reports on the 2024 accomplishments of the Area Agency on Aging and the Commission on Aging at the Committee on Health, Equity, Human Needs, and Strategic Planning. Chair Wilberg also highlighted the collaboration with AARP on a Social Security listening session as a strong partnership.

The Chair addressed the importance of increasing participation and outreach at senior centers, stressing the need for Commissioners to become more actively involved in senior center activities. She also highlighted the upcoming budget process and emphasized the importance of advocating for the needs of older adults.

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

J.O. Haselhof suggested reaching out to younger people to expand senior center participation.

XI. ADJOURNMENT: MEETING ADJOURNED AT 11:A.M.

MOTION: To adjourn

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Guszkowski Moved, Callaway Second)

The next Commission on Aging meeting will be Friday, June 26, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Vonda Nyang
Executive Assistant

XII. SENIOR LEADERSHIP GRADUATION CEREMONY, TIM SCHABO, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE, AND SHAKITA LAGRANT-MCCLAIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

County Executive David Crowley was unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict, and Deputy Chief of Staff Tim Schabo had to leave early for the same reason. Instead, ADS Administrator Tina Anderson and DHHS Deputy Director David Muhammad represented Executive Director Shakita LaGrant-McClain to present graduation certificates to the Senior Leadership participants.

They congratulated the graduates for completing the program and highlighted their new insights into government systems at various levels. They emphasized the importance of strong advocacy for older adults.

Deputy Muhammad and Administrator Anderson presented the certificates and took photos of the graduates.