



## ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING JUNE 7, 2024

The Milwaukee County Aging Advocacy Committee convened in person at Washington Park Senior center and virtually on Friday, June 7, 2024. Members and attendees joined the meeting in person and virtually. .

### **Members Present:**

Commissioner Brian Peters, *Chair*  
Harold Oemig, *Vice-Chair*  
Commissioner George Banda  
Maureen Conrad  
Sopheya Farrell  
Gary Mikolajczyk  
Commissioner Janice Wilberg, Ph.D.  
County Supervisor Sequanna Taylor

### **Members Excused:**

John Griffith  
Trina Koch  
William Meunier

### **Milwaukee County Staff**

Mike Bonk, *DHHS*

### **Milwaukee County Staff Continued...**

Cleopatra Castaneda, *DHHS*  
Claire Enders, *DHHS*  
Daniel Idzikowski, *DHHS*  
Vonda Nyang, *DHHS*  
Claire O'Brien, *DHHS*  
Migdalia Pacheco, *DHHS*

### **Attendees from the Public**

Crocket Stephenson, *Commissioner*  
Debra Lewis  
Paulette Maclin  
Katrina Mosley  
Rene Smith  
Tom Suchecki, *Wellness Committee*  
Gorra Barash, *ASL Interpreter*  
Donna Reiter Brandwein, *ASL Interpreter*

## MINUTES

### I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Brian Peters called the meeting to order at 9:09 a.m. Daniel Idzikowski, AAA Director, took the roll call. A quorum was present.

### II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 24, 2024, and MAY 3, 2024, ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: To approve the April 24, 2024, Advocacy Committee meeting minutes

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

MOTION: To approve the May 3, 2024, Advocacy Committee meeting minutes

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

### III. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

- **In-District Aging Advocacy Day:** On Monday, June 17, 2024, there will be an in-district Aging Advocacy Day at Wilson Park Senior Center. Milwaukee County supervisors, and state and federal legislative representatives will be there to meet the public. Chair Peters encouraged the Committee to attend and invite their representatives to the event. This event is for the older adult community, so he encouraged the Committee to invite their friends, family, and neighbors to the event.

### IV. UPDATE ON ACTION ITEMS

- a) **Communication to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services regarding changes to the Emergency Food Assistance Program:** Wisconsin is proposing changes to the qualifications for distributing emergency food stocks to pantries and stock boxes. The Hunger Taskforce and food pantries are concerned that the new proposed changes would result in inequitable distribution, as the new qualifications would allow people who do not fully qualify to receive food/stock boxes to receive a box and could take unlimited quantities, leaving nothing for those who fully qualify which would cause a shortage of food for those who need it the most.

Director Idzikowski informed the Advocacy Committee that they agreed to the premise. Today's packet includes a drafted letter by Ms. Petersen on the committee's behalf. Janice Wilberg, Chair of the Commission on Aging, mentioned that the Advocacy Committee had addressed this issue with the Commission. The Commission had discussed this matter and found that the State was involved in discussing possible compromises. Chair Peters of the Advocacy Committee and the Commission decided to wait to see what happens at the state level before acting.

Vice-Chair of the Advocacy Committee Harold Oemig discussed the inflation factor of food prices going up and the markup process in the food industry (Grocery stores), which is hurting the older adult community. He mentioned a letter from the USDA stating that they want to lower the cost of food by giving more food from the USDA to older adults to drive food prices down. However, there is pushback from the Hunger Taskforce as they limit food distribution.

MOTION: To table this item until further information is provided.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Mikolajczyk Moved, Oemig Second)

**Communication regarding support for Wisconsin State Park, Forest, Recreations Area Lifetime Admission Passes for Older Adults, AAA**  
**Director Daniel Idzikowski:** Director Idzikowski explained that the Milwaukee County Board passed a resolution asking the State legislature to establish a program for older adults with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to

allow them to buy lifetime passes for Wisconsin's State parks and trails. The Advocacy Committee agreed that it was a great idea and asked Ms. Petersen to draft a letter to support this decision on behalf of the Advocacy Committee. However, the legislature is no longer in session, so the legislature wouldn't be able to act now. However, it could be under consideration in the future with the DNR. So, the committee could approve the letter and forward it to the Commission for approval.

Another committee member said they thought Ms. Petersen already sent the letter. Idzikowski concluded that Ms. Petersen must have included the letter for informational purposes.

## V. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICE UPDATES

### A. Federal Aging Policy

#### I. Federal Budget and Issues

- a. **Long-Term Care Workforce Support Act:** There is a proposal to address the workforce crisis for people with disabilities and older adults. Senator Bob Casey drafted legislation titled "the New Long-Term Care Workforce Support Act bill." Senator Baldwin is a co-sponsor of this legislation. When the Advocacy Committee discussed this legislation, it was just a press release, and the complete draft of the bill was not available for review. The Advocacy Committee requested to have this item returned to the agenda when more information was available for review.

A section-by-section description of the Long-Term Care Workforce Support Act bill was included for the Committee's consideration. Idzikowski walked the Committee through these provisions. The bill encourages the development and professionalization of the personal care workforce for individuals with disabilities and older adults. Currently, the bill is in the Senate. Chair Peter encouraged everyone to contact Senator Baldwin's and Senator Johnson's offices. The Committee decided to wait to see if the bill was introduced in the House, and if so, the Committee may choose to send a letter of support at that time.

**Reauthorization of Older Americans Act:** Every three to four years, Congress enacts legislation to reauthorize programs. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pension Committee is reauthorizing the "Older American Act" (OAA) in 2025. Currently, the Senate is holding hearings on the Reauthorization of the OAA. Director Idzikowski informed the Advocacy Committee that if they wish to provide comments on this reauthorization, it is due soon, and it is in the Commission on Aging's best interest for them to support the

reauthorization act itself even if there is nothing else to add to or comment on with the reauthorization. It is the most critical piece of legislation as it authorizes all funding for the programs that the Commission enforces.

**MOTION:** To approve the reauthorization of the “Older American Act” (OAA)

**ACTION:** Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Banda Moved, Mikolajczyk Second)

## II. Federal Regulations and Executive Orders

- a. Long-Term Care Medicaid Waiver 1915C:** Medicaid does not ordinarily pay for home and community based long-term care services. However, under the Section 1915C Waiver, the State can pay Medicaid for long-term care homes and community-based services. The waiver allows the State to fund Medicaid to pay for those services instead of nursing homes or other institutional care. Most states have established programs to enable home and community-based services and long-term care for their residents. However, Wisconsin has a comprehensive program that covers older adults, people with physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities, and people with traumatic brain injury.

The State must reapply for a new waiver because waivers are granted only for a specific time before expiration. Currently, it is out for comment. The Area Agency on Aging (AAA) does not have an analysis yet of the provisions to provide to the Advocacy Committee for review; however, Idzikowski asked the Committee to authorize comments on the reauthorization waiver. Idzikowski also advocated bundling transportation services with residential services under this waiver.

Director Idzikowski requested the Advocacy Committee to recommend to the Commission on Aging that the AAA prepare comments for the Commission to consider submitting the 1915C Waiver for long-term care programs.

**MOTION:** To have the AAA staff provide an analysis of the Waiver 1915C proposal to the Advocacy Committee

**ACTION:** Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Banda Moved, Mikolajczyk Second)

## B. State Legislative Issues

- a) State and Budget Legislation:** Currently, there are no updates on the State and Budget Legislation.

- b) **Administrative Rules and Governor's Task Forces Issue:** Chair Peters asked the Advocacy Committee and Director Idzikowski if anyone had attended the Governor's Task Force on Healthcare Workforce meeting on June 6, 2024. To their knowledge, no one had participated in it.

### C. Milwaukee County Legislative Issues

- I. **Milwaukee County Budget and Legislation:** No ordinance legislation is currently being considered. Presently, departments are developing their budgets for submission to the County Executive.
- II. **Aging Items of Interest:** Currently, there are no aging items of interest to discuss.

## VI. POTENTIAL ACTION ITEMS

- a) **Older Americans Act (OAA) Reauthorization priorities:** Currently, there are no OAA Reauthorization priorities to discuss.
- b) **2025 County Budget priorities:** All the OAA ARPA (Older Americans Act) funding will expire at the end of September 2024. Milwaukee County will continue to experience an increase in the number of older adults driving a need for additional funding, to maintain programs and services. Last year, the AAA received \$274,000 in additional tax levy in the 2024 County Budget as a one-time request. The AAA and Commission on Aging want to maintain that tax levy amount on an annual basis by submitting a request for \$274,000 for the 2025 County budget.

The Advocacy Committee discussed the funding needed to sustain services at the current level and in future years for Specialized Transportation, Evidence-based programs, Caregiving, and Nutritional programs and services. They voted to request an ongoing increase in tax levy request for Aging Services to **\$283,000 in accordance with the handout which was provided**. The Advocacy Committee will pass their recommendations to the Commission on Aging.

MOTION: To request a tax levy increase of \$274,000.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Conrad Moved, Mikolajczyk Second)

MOTION: To amend the \$274,000 increase request to \$283,000 to cover the costs of the programs and services presented

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Conrad Moved, Mikolajczyk Second)

MOTION: To submit the Advocacy Committee's request recommendations to the Commission on Aging.

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

**VI. ADJOURNMENT: MEETING ADJOURNED AT 10: a.m.**

MOTION: To adjourn

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

The next Advocacy Committee meeting will be at 9 a.m. on Friday, August 2, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Vonda Nyang  
Executive Assistant

Final