



Milwaukee County Department on Aging Advocacy Committee February 5, 2018

The Milwaukee County Commission on Aging Advocacy Committee held its monthly meeting on February 5, 2018 at the Marcia Coggs Building, 1220 West Vliet Street, Room 104, Milwaukee, WI 53212 in Room 104.

Commissioners Present

Fred Kneuppel

Commissioners Excused

Gwen Jackson – Commissioner Emeritus
Bettie Rodgers

Advocacy Members Present

Tom Frazier
Bob Haase
David Hoffman
Dr. Elliott Moeser

Advocacy Members Excused:

Barbara Bechtel
Casper Green
Tim Harrington
Dain Maddox
Judith Troestler

Milwaukee County Staff Present

Andy Bethke
Holly Davis
Jon Janowski
Jill Klecha
Ayame Metzger
Carmen Pangilinan
Steve Peterson
Bekki Schmitt

Guests Present

Martha Collins- Hunger Task Force
F. Patricia Dunn- State Advisory Council
Margo Ford- Advocate
John Griffith – Milwaukee LGBT Community Center
Mike Helbick- Office of Senator Tammy Baldwin
Tammy Keen- Hunger Task Force
Brittany Schoenick- Legal Action
Stephanie Stein – League of Progressive Seniors

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bob Haase called the meeting to order at 1:30 PM.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES FROM MONDAY, JANUARY 8, 2018

Mr. Haase asked the group for any corrections, additions, or deletions. There were none requested. The minutes will stand as written.

III. INFORMATIONAL AND ACTION ITEM- UPDATE ON SENIOR CENTER ASSESSMENT PROJECT, HOLLY DAVIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MCDA

Ms. Davis explained that MCDA is currently focusing on the process and how information will be gathered moving forward. Information will be gathered from seniors currently using the senior centers, those who are not currently using senior centers and future seniors as well. MCDA is focused on figuring out what the process is going to be. Ms. Davis stated that possibly by the next Advocacy Meeting there will be a better sense of the direction that MCDA is going with the project. This is a performance management benchmark, so consultation with the County Executive's Office will be necessary as well. Once the process has been determined it will be the time to talk to individuals and have input sessions and put out surveys.

Ms. Davis went on to address the letter that was received from the Advocacy Committee and provided answers to the questions contained in the letter.

- **What programming and staff cuts have occurred as a result of the funding cuts?**

Unison eliminated eight positions in total: one Senior Center Manager, two Program Coordinators, one Part-Time Custodian, one Meal Coordinator, and three Dining Site Supervisors. Other changes that have occurred include: Stacey Vojvodich, Director of Senior Centers and Morgan Morgan, Assistant Director of Senior Centers were relocated from the Central Office into Wilson Park Senior Center. One Senior Center Manager is being shared between Kelly and Wilson Senior Centers. There were no changes to Clinton Rose or Washington

Park. The Wellness Coordinator position went from full-time wellness to half-time wellness and half-time dining.

- **How have these cuts impacted programs and services in Senior Center?**

Ms. Davis explained that MCDA has been receiving feedback from Unison. The centers are still open 5 days a week, no programming has been cut thus far. Staff changes have occurred of course. Attendance has been down, as this is a cold month. Ms. Davis indicated MCDA is having very open dialogue with Unison and remain hopeful we will hear as soon as anything is impacted.

- **How are decisions made in respect with where the cuts are taking place?**

Ms. Davis explained that was up to Unison. She also indicated they have been very good about keeping MCDA updated as to the staff cuts and communicating with MCDA.

- **When will changes be implemented?**

The changes were implemented as of December 2017.

- **What results/consequences do you anticipate long-term?**

MCDA met with Unison on January 29 and did a report to Health and Human Needs Committee of the County Board. MCDA will be in regular contact with the Health and Human Needs Committee with updates and there will be a lot of eyes on this issue to evaluate whether or not there will be a negative impact.

Questions and comments were taken from the Committee and the public:

Ms. Stein noted this was the first time she heard about the Wellness Coordinator being cut to half-time and inquired about what impact this may have. Ms. Davis offered to follow-up and find out more about how it may impact one-on-one counseling and orientation sessions with participants, but noted the staff member should still be covering the orientations to the fitness centers as before.

Mr. Frazier referenced Mr. Mikolajczyk's comment at the January Commission on Aging meeting that you just don't eliminate eight positions and not expect an impact. There's a difference between having the centers and nutrition sites open versus the quality of the programs that are being offered. Unison didn't have that large a staff to start with – 20 some positions. It could be as much as a one third of their staff lost. It's not possible to operate at the same level, quantity or quality, when you receive that much of a cut. Mr. Frazier suggested it would be good for someone to go out to the Senior Centers and visit them and ask how things are going. Ms. Klecha, contract monitor for the senior centers, noted that she visited the centers in early January and planned to visit again. Mr. Frazier also inquired about the Department report due to the County Board in March to make recommendations about the feasibility of the County running the Centers rather than Unison. Ms. Davis noted the report would be completed and submitted within the next week and a half and preliminary cost-analysis indicates that is more cost-effective for MCDA to contract out the management of senior centers. Mr. Frazier followed up by asking if Ms. Davis anticipated bidding out the senior center contract to which Ms. Davis answered no.

Mr. Knueppel noted that as a member of the Service Delivery Committee he wanted to point out that there is not really any other vendor other than Interfaith/SET (Unison) that has expressed interest in the senior center contract.

Mr. Hoffman wanted to further discuss the Wellness Coordinator position at Unison which was changed to half-time. He noted that as Chairman of the Wellness Committee this was the first he heard of this change, and that in his opinion the Wellness Coordinator position is one of the most important aspects of the senior centers. He inquired if there was specific language in the senior center contracts which relates to wellness programming. Ms. Davis reiterated that these decisions were made by Unison and she was not aware that people were hearing this news for the first time today.

Mr. Griffith noted concern about the long-term life of the centers and asked about outreach plan to different groups including senior housing, minority groups, etc. Ms. Davis noted that part of this process will be reaching those we don't normally reach and it is a challenge to cast as wide a net as possible. This is why the process is really important.

Ms. Dunn noted as an actual member of the Senior Centers, not an outsider, she feels MCDA is very fortunate to have a group of people that are dedicated to making this program work. She sees people going without lunches because they don't have a quarter to spare. The group is much smaller now than she has seen in her ten years attending senior centers. Participants find a way to get to the Senior Center, but transportation is not as reliable as it once was.

Ms. Davis noted that in her conversations with Ms. Lambach of Unison, she was informed that there may be part-time seasonal staff brought in to supplement current senior center staffing and programming.

Mr. Frazier noted that in the absence of Committee member Dain Maddox, he was asked to share a memo with the group that was written by Mr. Maddox to Mr. Janowski requesting monthly updates to the Committee regarding the status of the senior center project. There was not a quorum so no formal action was taken, however, Ms. Davis indicated it is her intention to keep the Committee up to date on a monthly basis and it will be a recurring agenda item. In keeping in line with the Committee's approved policy priority of opposing cuts to senior centers, Mr. Frazier shared dates of upcoming County Board meetings and encouraged people to attend and testify in person or writing:

- **Health and Human Needs Committee, March 14, 9:00 am, Courthouse Room 201 B**
- **Finance and Audit Committee, March 15, 9:00am, Courthouse Room 203 B**

Mr. Hoffman reminded the group that the Advisory Council also has a responsibility to advise the Department on decisions regarding seniors in Milwaukee County. Ms. Pangilinan reminded the group that the Advisory Council meets on Thursday, February 8 at 1:30pm and all are welcome.

IV. INFORMATIONAL AND ACTION ITEM- VIDEO REPORT FROM ERIC PETERSON, OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE, "FEDERAL AND STATE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE"

Mr. Peterson was not present and did not provide the Committee a video report for the meeting.

V. INFORMATIONAL AND ACTION ITEM- PRESENTATION BY MARTHA COLLINS, HUNGER TASK FORCE, “PHOTO IDENTIFICATION ON FOODSHARE CARDS”

Ms. Collins discussed the ten bills that were introduced as a part of Governor Walker’s Welfare Reform package. There are five bills that are hunger related, one of which proposes a photo ID on every Foodshare Card/EBT card. There has been a lot of pushback on EBT photo ID due to the \$10 million cost associated with this proposal. Many people would prefer to see this money spent helping this program. Many times a caregiver goes to the store with this card and those who are disabled send their card with a caregiver to purchase groceries. A few states have already implemented this measure and it was not successful. It’s being introduced to reduce fraud and it’s not been found effective to reduce fraud in other states. Ms. Collins encouraged the group to take action by contacting their state senators first and foremost, but also their state representatives. There is a \$90 million fiscal note associated with this package of bills.

Another bill in the welfare reform package relates to asset testing for Foodshare. The bill requires a person have less than \$20,000 in assets and a vehicle worth less than a \$20,000 in order to be eligible. Seniors are supposedly exempt from this requirement, but it’s going to be very confusing to people. These bills are creating so many barriers for individuals to get access to food. In Pennsylvania – 110,000 people were cut off not because of assets but because the paper work required. It was proposed the committee write a letter to state representatives about this issue, but without a quorum it was decided that instead the Committee contact Milwaukee legislators to reiterate the previously taken position of opposing any access to Foodshare.

Mr. Griffith noted it would be helpful for local legislators to attend the Advocacy Committee meetings to hear firsthand about the impacts of proposed legislation. Mr. Frazier noted that the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) meetings have included inviting one legislator at a time and it’s been very successful. He suggested the Committee might want to consider doing that – extend an invitation to legislators to the meetings.

VI. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEM- PROPOSED PAID PARKING IN COUNTY PARKS

Mr. Haase received two letters related to this issue, one from the League of Women Voters and another from the League of Progressive Seniors. Due to the fact all five Senior Centers are in County Parks this is of importance to the committee. Mr. Hoffman asked how this will be implemented as there is a cost to implementing this. Mr. Knueppel noted that the City of Milwaukee has electronic parking meters, is there a way that seniors can be exempt from this using these meters? The consensus was this would be very difficult to implement. Ms. Stein noted as a member of the League of Progressive Seniors, she thinks it’s rather unusual that the County would limit access to our parks to people that can pay for them. \$1-\$3 per hour is difficult, poor families in this community go to the lakefront and this will be prohibitive. To think that seniors would have to pay to be in a parking lot to go to the Senior Center that they don’t have to pay for doesn’t make much sense. There is a Public Information meeting tomorrow (February 6) – the details are in the packet. Dr. Moeser asked if this would affect any Senior Centers. Ms. Stein responded that it is being proposed to add parking meters specifically to the Washington Park and

Wilson Park parking lots. Mr. Frazier suggested that this be brought to the Commission on Aging at the next COA meeting and the group agreed this should be on the agenda. Mr. Hoffman noted the reason the County is having budget difficulties largely due to the lack of shared revenue Milwaukee County receives from the State. He suggested taking a policy position on shared revenue in the future.

VII. INFORMATIONAL AND ACTION ITEM- FEDERAL UPDATES ON AGING ISSUES

Mr. Mike Helbick noted that we are in the same spot as last month with the continuing resolution for the federal budget. There are negotiations going on and we will have to keep an eye on it.

VIII. MILWAUKEE COUNTY DEPARTMENT ON AGING UPDATES

No updates were provided.

IX. ADVOCACY COMMITTEE ANNOUNCEMENTS REGARDING UPCOMING EVENTS, ACTIVITIES, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SENIORS

- Public Information Meeting regarding pay to park in County Parks- February 6, 2018, 6pm, Mitchell Park Domes Annex
- Public Input Session, MCDA Area Plan, Wednesday, February 28, 2018, 9:00am-10:30am, Washington Park Senior Center
- Alzheimer's Advocacy Day, Tuesday, February 27, 2018, 8:30am-3pm, Best Western Hotel, Madison, WI. To register contact Tim Harrington at 414-479-8800 or tharrington@alz.org
- AARP Livable Communities Presentation, Wednesday, March 7, 2018, 7:30am-9:30am, Italian Community Center, 631 E. Chicago St. To register call toll-free 1-877-926-8300 or online at aarp.cvent.com/livcommbreakfast. RSVP required by February 28.
- Ms. Klecha encouraged the group to nominate people for the Senior Hall of Fame. She also addressed previous concerns expressed about MCDA awarding one award this year versus five in the past. She noted MCDA has developed partnerships with both Davians and Aramark to put on the event this year. Additionally, this is the second year the event will be combined with the Senior Volunteer Recognition Event for the senior meal program. She noted these changes were brought to the Commission and she spoke with the Chair and Vice-Chair. Ms. Klecha noted she was trying to think outside the box and do something different, but it does not mean that there will only be one award each year, there may be more awarded in future years. She noted these changes were fully supported by both Ms. Davis and Mr. Janowski and the event is a priority of the Department and recognition will continue. Ms. Klecha asked for suggestions on how to hold this event at a low cost in the future and again encouraged nominations. Mr. Hoffman indicated he sees this as an advocacy issue because it allows for the County Board to nominate individuals and in turn build relationships with MCDA and by only having one nominee there is less likelihood that these relationships form with decision

makers. Mr. Hoffman noted he did not think serving a meal is essential and he would rather give up eating than reducing the number of people honored.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:48 PM. Motion for adjournment was moved by Frazier and Haase adjourned the meeting. **Next meeting will be held on Monday, March 5 at 1:30pm at 1220 W. Vliet Street, Room 104.**

Respectfully submitted,



**Carmen Pangilinan
Program and Policy Coordinator**