



Advocacy Committee March 19, 2024

Advocacy Committee members convened virtually and in-person on March 19, 2024. Members and attendees joined the virtual meeting by video conference and conference call. The in-person location was held at West Allis Senior Center.

Members Present:

Chair Brian Peters, *Commissioner*
Harold Oemig, *Vice Chair*
George Banda, *Commissioner*
Gary Mikolajczyk
Maureen Conrad
Trina Koch
William (Bill) Meunier

Members Excused:

Sopheya Farrell
Maureen Fitzgerald
John Griffith
Sequanna Taylor
Janice Wilberg

Staff Present:

Michelle Allison-DHHS
Clare O'Brien-DHHS
Vonda Nyang-DHHS
Migdalia Pacheco-DHHS
Ortrialla Paris-DHHS
Emily Petersen-DHHS
Carrie Koss Vallejo-DHHS
Nina Yang-DHHS

Attendees from the Public

Derrick Cainion, ASL Interpreter
Jill Kenehan-Krey, ASL Interpreter
Rene Smith

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Brian Peters called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Emily Petersen, Advocacy and Policy Manager, DHHS, ADS, Aging Unit called the roll. A quorum was not present at the time the roll was called but appeared shortly thereafter.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 20, 2024, ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Vice-Chair Oemig asked that corrections be made to the minutes to fix Scrivener's errors. Ms. Petersen stated that the noted corrections would be made to the February 20, 2024, meeting minutes before the next Commission on Aging meeting. The motion was made to approve the minutes with the noted corrections made.

MOTION: To approve the February 20, 2024, Advocacy Committee meeting minutes with the agreed upon revisions.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Koch moved, Banda Second).

III. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES (INFORMATION/DISCUSSION)

A. Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) State Aging Advocacy Day -Save the Date! Chair Peters encouraged the committee to attend the WAAN event on May 14, 2024. Petersen added that she has sent out the WAAN registration, as well as the transportation survey to Committee members. Transportation from Milwaukee County to Madison will be provided if needed.

The committee discussed the accessibility of the event, including the use of wheelchairs and mobility devices. Chair Peters informed the committee that the Capitol building has one accessible door, the rest room doors are very heavy, and there are no ADA-compliant doors. However, WAAN will have staff and volunteers to assist anyone with mobility issues. In addition, the arranged transportation for Milwaukee County advocates will be accessible to all and assistance will be provided for those needing help navigating through the building.

The Committee convenes at the hotel in the morning for policy briefings and lunch, followed by a brief walk to the Capitol building.

B. 2025-2027 Area Aging Plan Public Hearings. Chair Peters discussed the importance of the Committee participating in the public hearings on the area aging plan. Chair Peters plans to attend the first listed hearing on April 4th and is recommending having representation from one or more of the committee members at all other dates. Chair Peters stated that it is also important to network with County representatives in attendance. Ms. Petersen stated that the flyer for the hearings was sent out to all the committees and councils. Petersen stated these public hearings are intended to be spread throughout the county to accommodate people's preferences. If unable to attend a public hearing, attendees can attend a focus group or survey.

Vice-Chair Oemig stated that there are no hearings on the west side of Milwaukee County. Oemig requested that the Area Agency on Aging plan to hold a public hearing at a location on the County's west side during the 2025-2027 Area Aging Plan outreach process.

Chair Peters proposed moving the April 16th Advocacy Committee meeting to a different date because it overlaps with the area plan hearing at the same time. The committee decided to proceed with holding the Advocacy Committee meeting on the same date and time.

C. 2024 USAging Policy Briefing Report: Ms. Petersen and representatives from other Wisconsin AAAs attended the USAging Policy Briefing in Washington, D.C. in March to learn about the upcoming reauthorization of the Older Americans Act. Congresswoman Moore and Senator Baldwin's offices were very receptive to our policy priorities and stated that they were interested in prioritizing caregiving in the upcoming reauthorization.

IV. UPDATE ON ACTION ITEMS (INFORMATION/DISCUSSION)

Ms. Petersen gave an update on both the Credit for Caring Act and the Affordable Connectivity Program extension. While in D.C., Petersen received positive responses from both Senator Johnson and Senator Baldwin's offices. There was no formal letter drafted to the delegation because Petersen discussed the items with the legislators in-person. However, if the Committee wishes to send a written communication, that can still be done. Commissioner Banda stated that a written communication as a follow-up would be a good idea. Ms. Petersen stated she would work on getting that written communication out and would report back for the next meeting.

The 2024 Commission on Aging Policy Priorities were included in the packet and the Commission approved the recommendations of the Advocacy Committee as presented. Ms. Petersen stated that the final document was included in the packet.

V. LEGISLATIVE & POLICY UPDATES (DISCUSSION/POTENTIAL ACTION)

a) Federal Aging Policy

i. Federal Budget & Issues

- 1) **Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Status Updates:** Ms. Petersen discussed recent updates on MIPPA funding, which provides Medicare outreach to low-income beneficiaries. This program was previously unfunded for 2024 and has now been funded at 2023 levels for the 2024 fiscal year. The Federal DHHS bill, which includes the Administration for Community Living, is currently under debate. Included in the first tranche of funding were several earmarks for Milwaukee County related to housing and transportation projects. These projects are not specifically for senior housing or older adult transportation but demonstrate overall investment by legislators in Milwaukee County.
- 2) **H.R. 7513 related to prevention of nursing home staffing minimums:** Ms. Petersen updated the committee on this bill because last year the Committee provided commentary on the proposed nursing home staffing standards in support of increased RN hours. This bill, HR 7513, would restrict the

Secretary of the Department Health and Human Services from implementing, finalizing, or enacting the staffing standards in the rule. The Committee did not take any action related to this item but will monitor to see if it moves forward.

- 3) **Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act:** Ms. Petersen stated that the Older Americans Act needs to be reauthorized by the end of September. Congress will consider any updates to the law, which could include changing, adding, or removing programs and/or altering the funding structure. The current law has requirements for funding allocations, such as a minimum of X percent spent on legal services. The reauthorization process will require active involvement from the committee to get our priorities shared with legislators.

ii **Federal Regulations & Executive Orders:** Item not discussed.

b) State Legislative Issues

- i. **State Budget & Legislation:** Chair Peters mentioned that the State Legislature is out of session until January 2025. Ms. Petersen stated that the Patient Representatives Bill, which we discussed last month, was not acted upon at the end of the session by the Senate due to outreach from advocates. However, legislators are interested in reviving this bill in some form next session and it will be important to prepare for opportunities to advocate.
- ii. **Administrative Rules & Governor's Task Forces:** Ms. Petersen provided an updated on the Governor's Task Force on the Healthcare Workforce, which will discuss policy options to address the workforce shortage and other opportunities to improve the healthcare workforce. The task force will also contemplate the paid and unpaid caregiving workforce. Janet Zander, the advocacy, and policy coordinator for GWAAR, was appointed to the task force and will provide updates through WAAN. The task force has just met once.

c) Milwaukee County Legislative Issues

- i. **Milwaukee County Budget & Legislation:**
 - 1) **24-353. A resolution calling upon the State of Wisconsin to amend its statutes to restore one-time purchase lifetime admission passes for those aged 65 and older to access Wisconsin State Parks, Forests,**

and Recreation Areas. Ms. Petersen stated that the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors' Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs approved a resolution calling for the state to amend its statutes to restore one-time purchase lifetime admissions passes for older adults to access state parks, forests, and recreation areas. The full County Board will take up the resolution at their meeting later this month. The committee contemplated whether they should add this to their platform of policy priorities. Some discussed whether the implementation of this policy would impact the State budget. Others stated that access to recreation and outdoor spaces aligned with the pursuit of health and the dimensions of wellness for older adults. The committee decided to move forward with adding this to its policy platform.

MOTION: To request the State of Wisconsin amend its statutes to restore one-time purchase lifetime admission passes for those aged 65 and older to access Wisconsin State Parks, Forests, and Recreation Areas and that this policy be included in the Commission on Aging annual policy priorities.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Koch Moved, Banda Second, Brian Peters Abstained)

VI. POTENTIAL ACTION ITEMS(DISCUSSION/ACTION)

Chair Peters stated that committee members are expected to attend one of the four public hearings on the aging area plan and complete the survey.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Chair Peters adjourn the Meeting at 10:26 a.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Ortrialla Paris
Clerical Assistant