



## Senior Center Committee November 1, 2024

Senior Center Committee members convened in-person at Wilson Senior Center 2601 W. Howard Ave. Milwaukee, WI 53221., with members attending via ZOOM on Friday, November 1, 2024.

### **Members Present:**

Commissioner Eugene Guskowski, *Chair*  
Commissioner Mark Behar  
Commissioner Terrence R. Moore Sr.  
Kent Mayfield  
Ted Rehl  
Alice Steuck Konkol

### **Members Excused:**

Commissioner Amber Miller  
Commissioner Crocker Stephenson  
Ramona Dicks-Williams  
Howard Snyder

### **Staff Present:**

Christel Colorado, *DHHS*  
Daniel Idzikowski, *DHHS*  
Jill Knight, *DHHS*

### **Attendees from the Public**

Harold Oemig  
Cheri Swenson  
Regis Welsh, *SOA*  
Cathy Wood, *SOA*

## MINUTES

### **I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Chair Gene Guskowski called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. Christel Colorado, DHHS Executive Assistant took roll; a quorum was present.

### **II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 6, 2024 & SEPTEMBER 13, 2024, & OCTOBER 11, 2024 SENIOR CENTER COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

MOTION: To approve the September 6, 2024 & September 13, 2024 & October 11, 2024 Commission on Aging meeting minutes.

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

### **III. UPDATE ON SENIOR CENTERS INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS**

Chair Eugene Guskowski provided an update on the \$4 million grant approved for improvements at the Clinton Rose Senior Center, as discussed in a meeting in October. The grant is designated for enhancing food service, adding a wellness clinic, creating maker spaces, and other upgrades. The Clinton Rose center is one

of three major senior center buildings (along with Wilson and Washington Park) that were designed for senior services and are around 30,000 square feet each. He emphasized the need for the senior center committee to understand the design process for these improvements and ensure they align with the goals outlined in the MKE Hubs report. The details of the funding, including potential deadlines for its use, are still unclear, and the committee will be kept updated as more information becomes available. Guskowski discussed the McGovern initiative, a project aimed at making improvements to the McGovern site. Recently, an RFQ (Request for Qualifications) was issued, and a walkthrough was conducted with representatives from various county departments. Remarkably, 11 development groups submitted proposals for reimagining the site. The county will need to select a developer quickly, as a grant application for housing is due by the end of November, with funding coming through the city of Milwaukee. Chair Guskowski reflected on the progress made over the past year, noting that the initiative has gained momentum with a completed report, county government support, and two active development opportunities.

Commissioner Behar questioned how the developers will be selected. Chair Guskowski explained there is a five-person committee that has been established by the county for reviewing submissions related to the McGovern initiative. He mentions he is supposed to be part of this committee but has a conflict of interest, as two of the submissions involve an architectural firm on which they sit on the board of directors. Although not actively involved with the firm, this creates a conflict. The goal of the committee is to ensure that the proposed plans align with their objectives, the other committee members include Celia Bennett Benton, Heather Rydell, Jim Matthews, and Connor Gregory, and Emily Kenney each representing different county departments.

Chair Guskowski explained the RFP (Request for Proposals) for the McGovern site initiative came from Aging Services and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), authorized by high-level official Shakita LaGrant. The RFP is actually an RFQ (Request for Qualifications), seeking to understand the capabilities of potential development groups for the project. The key criteria for proposals include replacing the McGovern building with a mixed-use structure that connects to the surrounding park, neighborhood, and public transportation. The RFQ asks development groups to outline their qualifications based on similar projects they have completed, such as mixed-use buildings or historic tax credit projects. The responses are meant to gauge interest and explore how the development community would approach the project. Specific design proposals will not be part of this stage; the goal is to identify developers who can work with DHHS, Parks, and other departments in the future to refine the details, such as the number of housing units and location within the park. The process is still in its early stages, with no final decisions yet made.

Chair Guskowski discussed agenda topic number V., focusing on the next steps for implementing their plan and creating a procedural trail. Item number 5 is both an action and informational item, where they seek approval from the Commission on Aging to move forward with the plan. The goal is to ensure that the various efforts, which are currently being juggled by multiple groups, are better coordinated under one unified approach.

Chair Guskowski briefly spoke on the "Southeast Challenge," discussing the need for improvements to the Kelly building and the upcoming closure of the South Milwaukee Senior Center by the end of the year. Committee Member Alice Konkel has spoken to local stakeholders about opportunities in the area. Notably, the new superintendent of schools, Dr. Michelle Garvin, is considering consolidating or closing schools, including a middle school with low enrollment, which could lead to new community space. The middle school is already being used for recreational activities, including senior programs like water aerobics, and there's interest in further collaboration for senior programming.

Committee Member Alice Steuck Konkel highlighted the potential for senior programming, particularly in aquatics, which is popular in the area. The new superintendent is open to suggestions and is planning a proposal within the next year or two. Additionally, there may be opportunities for housing development on the middle school site, creating further possibilities for the community.

#### **IV. COORDINATION OF SENIOR CENTER NETWORK IN MILWAUKEE COUNTY**

Chair Guskowski addressed agenda item 4, which is the coordination of the senior center network in Milwaukee County. The committee reflected on a previous meeting of the Advisory Council, where it was realized that the senior center network is larger than just five buildings. The proposal is to form a subgroup, led by Commissioner Mark Behar, to explore and understand the full scope of senior centers across the county, beyond the five primary buildings.

The goal is to compile a comprehensive list of senior centers, including meal sites and other organizations, and to better understand their relationship with health and human services. The subgroup will look at who these centers serve, how services are provided, and whether improvements can be made in the connections and services offered. The committee is encouraged to become familiar with the broader senior network, which serves over 195,000 seniors in the county, and explore potential collaborations and improvements.

Chair Guskowski suggested that the group may create a document or booklet summarizing these centers, their services, and their impact. This will be a longer-term task, aimed for completion by 2025. The committee is urged to get more familiarized with the organizations and their roles in serving the senior population.

#### **V. REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MILWAUKEE HUBS REPORT FOR APPROVAL BY THE FULL COMMISSION ON AGING**

Chair Guskowski discussed the next steps following the approval of the senior center report by the Commission on Aging in April 2023. The report includes a set of 11 recommendations for implementation, with one already approved—establishing a Senior Center standing committee. The Senior Center Committee seeks approval from the Commission on Aging for three specific items outlined in the report, listed under Item 5 in the agenda:

- The contents of this report should be presented publicly to select groups to garner strategic support.
- The Milwaukee County Commission on Aging should continue to aggressively pursue long term partnerships with philanthropic organizations, not for profit entities and like-minded service providers who will benefit from the vision of engaged mature

generations of Milwaukee County residents as described in this report.

- A separate non-profit fund-raising entity, modeled on the Friends of the Parks, should be created to build support for Senior Centers as necessary public institutions.

These actions align with the goals for senior centers over the next three years. Guskowski emphasizes that with approval from the Commission, the committee can focus on public outreach, building partnerships, and working toward establishing a nonprofit entity in 2025. The approval will also allow progress on two ongoing development-related initiatives. The committee held a discussion and motion was requested to approve these actions, which, if passed, will be presented to the Executive Committee of the Commission on Aging and included in the November agenda.

MOTION: To approve the three items under item number 5 as an action item to move forward to the Commission on Aging.

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

## **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION: To adjourn

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Steuck Konkel Moved, Behar Second).

Meeting adjourned at 2:31 p.m., The Senior Center Committee meeting will be held on December 6, 2024 location to be determined.

Respectfully submitted,

Christel Colorado  
Executive Assistant