

Milwaukee County Commission on Aging
Select Committee on Community Engagement
February 20, 2025 Meeting Summary

Attendance: Commissioners G. Miller, Van Vreede, Behar, Stephenson, and Wilberg

Excused: Commissioner Callaway

Call to order: The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Wilberg at 9:30 a.m. via Zoom.

Discussion: Members participated in a wide-ranging discussion focused on the question: What is the problem we are trying to solve?

Commissioner Miller asked what communication vehicles are being used, noting that information doesn't get seen and asked whether we were getting a return on what we were doing with communication. She asked if there was a way to connect with local stations.

Commissioner Van Vreede asked how to get a message out to a divided audience, citing as an example the two groups of people at Washington Park, those who attend for activities and those who attend for meals.

Commissioner Behar noted that communication and volunteerism seem to be ongoing problems for Aging Services, noting that tech phobia may be at the root.

Commissioner Stephenson discussed how communication isn't reaching a lot of people and how that is especially important in light of the growing problem of loneliness and social isolation. He noted that there is not a centralized news sources, that Milwaukee Journal Sentinel no longer has a community calendar. Information is diffuse and because of that 'we will have to do our own thing.

Commissioner Van Vreede offered the example of the LGBT group she leads, noting that the group keeps getting bigger because people feel safe and they create social activities that create a sense of community.

Commissioner Wilberg asked how we find community leaders. Commissioner Behar noted that people don't want to assume responsibility especially if it's a sustained effort, there is also a fear of failure. She asked how can we use community outreach to engage people in issues and activities.

Commissioner Van Vreede noted that all of the TV stations are looking for good news stories. Commissioner Stephenson said we should pitch real news stories, e.g. the head of Social Security is/was the director of Fiserv.

The committee agreed to meet on March 20, 2025, at 9:30 a.m..

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.