



MILWAUKEE COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
& HUMAN SERVICES

**AGING & DISABILITIES
SERVICES**

**COMMISSION ON AGING
MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 28, 2025**

A quorum of **Commission on Aging** (COA) members convened in person at Marcia Coggs Human Services Center, 1220 W. Vliet St., conference Rm 104, with a hybrid option on Friday, March 28, 2025.

Commissioners Present:

Janice Wilberg, Ph.D., *Chair*
Terrence R. Moore, Sr., *Vice-Chair*
Amber Miller, *At Large Member*
Gloria Miller, *Secretary*
George Banda
Mark P. Behar, PA-C
Denise Callaway
Eugene Guskowski
Marni King
Paula Pennebaker
Jacqueline Smith
Crocker Stephenson

Commissioners Absent

Brian Peters, *Legislative Officer*
Supervisor Sequanna Taylor
Cindy Van Vreede

Milwaukee County Staff:

Tina Anderson, *DHHS*
Brandon Her, *IMSD*

Milwaukee County Staff Continued...

Daniel Idzikowski, *DHHS*
Emily Kenney, *DHHS*
Jill Knight, *DHHS*
Carrie Koss Vallejo, *DHHS*
Vonda Nyang, *DHHS*
Claire O'Brien, *DHHS*
Emily Petersen, *DHHS*
Gaylyn Reske, *DHHS*
Ginger Rogers, *DHHS*
Timothy Schabo, *CEO*
Kayla Steinke, *DHHS*
KaiYah Taylor, *DHHS*
Deidra Williams, *DHHS*
Sheila Bauer, *DHHS*

Attendees from the Public

Thomas Gossett
Jill Kenehan-Krey, *ASL Interpreter*
Laura Langer, *DHS*
Veraunica Ruffin
Cathy Wood, *SOA*

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Janice Wilberg called the meeting to order at 9 a.m. Secretary Gloria Miller took the roll call; A quorum of the Commissioners was present.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 24, 2025, AND FEBRUARY 28, 2025, COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: To approve the January 24, 2025, Commission on Aging meeting minutes.

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

MOTION: To approve the February 28, 2025, Commission on Aging meeting minutes.

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

COMMITTEE AND COUNCIL REPORTS

Advocacy Committee, Vice-Chair George Banda discussed the Fiscal Year 2025 budget during a productive meeting. Later in the agenda, the advocacy report was addressed, with advocacy items listed for discussion and action.

Service Delivery Committee, Chair, Amber Miller: The Service Delivery Committee had no updates, but they are planning a follow-up meeting in April.

Advisory Council, Chair, Denise Callaway: Advisory Council has been discussing its efforts to comply with federal regulations, which now prohibit Commissioners from serving on the Council. Chair Denise Callaway is reaffirming the commitment of the current non-Commissioners to continue their service. The Council is dedicated to ensuring diverse representation in terms of culture, age, and geographic location within Milwaukee County, as outlined in both the bylaws and federal regulations.

Additionally, the Council is seeking new members. If you know someone who would be interested in serving, please send their contact information and resume to Commissioner Denise Callaway.

Senior Center Committee, Chair Eugene Guszkowski: Commissioner Guszkowski discussed the progress of various initiatives. The Urban Milwaukee online paper recently featured an article about McGovern Park's efforts, including a feasibility study conducted with Jewish Family Services (JFS) and the potential development of a senior center at the Bucyrus Erie plant in South Milwaukee in partnership with Milwaukee County Housing.

The Committee is currently working on refining its mission statement and goals. They are also examining the Kelly Senior Center to consider possible revisions. Additionally, the Committee is researching attendance numbers at the senior centers. It is essential to select a Vice-Chair, as Commissioner Guszkowski will be taking medical leave.

Nutrition Council, Chair, Cindy Van Vreede: The Nutrition Council did not meet in the interim, so there wasn't a report.

Wellness Committee, Chair, Jacqueline Smith: Commissioner Smith discussed the Blood Pressure program and the evidence-based initiative "Healthy Brain, Healthy Heart." They reviewed the upcoming blood pressure screening program and emphasized the importance of maintaining regular check-ups with healthcare providers. The group also addressed the need for evidence-based programs and the potential for integrating brain health initiatives into senior centers. They are working on

the "Healthy Brain and Healthy Heart" program and the blood pressure monitoring initiative. They also talked about the various locations where these evidence-based programs are offered.

Community Engagement Ad Hoc Committee, Chair Janice Wilberg: Chair Wilberg is leading the committee and will discuss the committee's items later in the agenda.

III. **CONSENT AGENDA**

The Consent Agenda consists of the following meeting minutes:

- a) Executive Committee meeting minutes (February 14, 2025)
- b) Advocacy Committee meeting minutes (February 7, 2025)
- c) Wellness Committee meeting minutes (January 15, 2025)

MOTION: To approve the consent agenda minutes listed above.

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

IV. **ACTION/INFORMATIONAL/DISCUSSION ITEMS**

A. Action Item, Advocacy Items, Commissioner, Vice Chair of Advocacy Committee, George Banda: Vice Chair Banda updated the Commission on three Advocacy Committee items: one action item, one informational item, and one for discussion. The first item is a letter opposing cuts to Social Security funding and programs. The second is the Speak-Out campaign with Independence First, showcasing how Medicaid affects people with disabilities. The third item involves testimony for the Joint Finance Committee hearing on the Wisconsin State Budget.

MOTION: To approve sending a letter to the federal congressional delegation in opposition to cuts to Social Security funding and programs.

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

- 1) To approve sending a letter to the federal congressional delegation in opposition to cuts to Social Security funding and programs: Chair Wilberg highlighted the problems from recent Social Security changes. These changes require in-person appearances to apply for or change benefits, complicating the process of maintaining benefits. Additionally, closed offices have made it difficult for seniors to get assistance, as they must now schedule appointments before visiting. Chair Wilberg and Commissioner Callaway will work on getting the letter shortened and to media outlets.
- 2) Speak-out Campaign with Independence First: Chair Wilberg, Commissioners Callaway, and Banda summarized the meeting focused on the potential impact of Medicaid cuts on long-term care and support for individuals

with disabilities and older adults. Several elected officials attended and heard personal stories emphasizing Medicaid's importance. Although noted the absence of Senator Johnson's representatives, the event was successful.

- 3) Prepare for COA Testimony for the Joint Finance Committee Hearing: The next Joint Finance Committee hearing on the Wisconsin State Budget is set for Friday, April 4, 2025, at Wisconsin State Fair Park, with some Advocacy and Senior Center Committee members planning to attend. Chair Wilberg encouraged Commissioners to attend. Prepared draft testimony was provided to attendees to use at the hearing.

B. Informational/Discussion Item, Select Committee on Community Engagement, Commission on Aging Chair, Janice Wilberg: The Committee discussed creating a report on the status of older adults in Milwaukee County. This report will utilize available data from the Area Agency on Aging's plan and survey results, in which the Committee will present its report at an event for community leaders. Additionally, the Committee proposed hosting an event at the Press Club to engage with the media. The Commission agreed to compile a clear statement and argument to attract media attention.

MOTION: To approve the recommendation of the Select Committee on Community Engagement to compile a state of older adults in Milwaukee County and hold an event for its presentation.

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

C. Informational/Discussion Item, Final report on the 2022-2024 Area Aging Plan and Dissemination of the 2025-2027 Area Aging Plan, Commissioner Denise Callaway, and AAA Director Daniel Idzikowski: The report summary highlighted the accomplishments of the 2022-2024 Area Aging Plan, noting successes in diversifying services and increasing accessibility while recognizing challenges from the COVID-19 crisis. Director Idzikowski stressed the need for policy changes to address inequities and expand wellness beyond evidence-based health programs to include preventive disease services. It was suggested to engage the community through quarterly updates on the current plan's progress in coordination with the new council or commission.

The 2025-2027 DHHS strategic plan will feature metrics and strategies for a "no wrong door" approach.

D. Informational Item. 2025-2027 DHHS Strategic Plan, Opening Doors to Thriving Communities, Age Friendly Communities Initiative and Move to the New Marcia Coggs Human Services Building, DHHS Strategic Initiative and Transformation, Director Emily Kenney: Director Kenney addressed the challenges the 25,000 individuals working in the county encountered, highlighting the importance of administrative support and infrastructure. She also mentioned the recent request from the State Assembly's accountability task

force, which called for a comprehensive list of all grant agreements, contracts, training protocols, and policies referencing diversity, equity, and inclusion. Concerns were raised about the burden this request places on the workforce and the necessity of continuing to advocate for equity and inclusion.

The completion of the new Coggs building will be in May and the first meeting of the Age-Friendly Communities Group is on April 8, 2025.

V. AGING SERVICES DIRECTOR'S REPORT, DANIEL IDZIKOWSKI, AAA DIRECTOR

Director Idzikowski deferred his report to share concerning news. Yesterday he was notified by the state that many of their public health grants, particularly those that are related to COVID-19, were defunded by the federal government. The AAA had one grant that was expected to continue through June that was terminated. Also, the new Department Secretary of the Department of Health and Services Kennedy Jr. is restructuring and laying off/firing 25,000, or one-fourth, of their workforce by end of May. They are going down from 15 agencies to eight. Lastly, he reported that the Government Operations, Accountability and Transparency (GOAT) Committee has asked all Counties, except for Milwaukee, to list all their grant agreements, contracts, training protocols, and policies that mention diversity, equity, inclusion or belonging. Milwaukee County is expecting to receive the same request, so County Administration is preparing for this request. Director Idzikowski also discussed the possible restructuring of the DHHS, including the dismantling of the Administration for Community Living.

VI. COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Deputy Chief of Staff Tim Schabo informed the Commission that the County Executive's Office is aware of the recent federal budget cuts affecting Milwaukee County and its partners. He highlighted the County Executive's State of the County address, which focused on the importance of partnerships and equity.

The discussion also addressed projected budget deficits and the need for continued advocacy on local priorities. Schabo noted that efforts are underway to fill the last vacancy within the Commission.

Chair Wilberg commended the County Executive's State of the County speech for mentioning the Commission. For additional information, please refer to the attached report from Deputy Tim Schabo.

VII. STATE OFFICE ON AGING REPORT

Laura Langer from the State Office on Aging reported the following: This week, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) terminated several federal contracts affecting Wisconsin's public health programs. Due to this change, the State Office on Aging will lose the vaccine outreach program and community grants, though details remain unclear.

The Milwaukee County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) will continue operating its state-funded Senior Companion Program, unaffected by these federal changes. State funding for the Senior Companion, Retired Senior Volunteer, and Foster Grandparent programs has been stable for over six years, although the federal AmeriCorps portion may be impacted.

The draft of the State Aging Plan will be submitted to the Administration for Community Living (ACL) on Monday for public comment. Once available, we will share the link for review. For more information, please refer to the attached report.

VIII. COUNTY SUPERVISORS REPORT

No report.

IX. COMMISSION ON AGING CHAIR REPORT

Chair Wilberg reported that the County Executive's Office has nominated Juan Miguel Martinez to fill the vacant seat for a County Supervisor on the Commission on Aging. The Commission is focused on strategies for engaging with legislators, which include attending town halls and making phone calls instead of sending letters to ensure legislators hear voices. They also emphasize the importance of partnering with other organizations to enhance their impact on issues affecting older adults. The Chair is actively working to represent the Commission on Aging at various events.

X. COMMISSION ON AGING ANNOUNCEMENTS REGARDING UPCOMING EVENTS, ACTIVITIES, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SENIORS

No announcements from the public.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn meeting.

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

Meeting Adjourned 11:06 A.M. The next Commission on Aging Meeting will be Friday, April 25, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,

Vonda Nyang,
Executive Assistant