



MILWAUKEE COUNTY  
Department on Aging

## Senior Center Select Committee Meeting Minutes June 22, 2021

### **Members Present**

Chair Gloria Pitchford-Nicholas  
Vice Chair, Dain Maddox  
County Supervisor Jason Haas  
Patricia Delmenhorst  
Sharron Fitak  
John Griffith  
Jason Haas  
Victoria Jensen  
Debra Jupka  
Dain Maddox  
M. Kent Mayfield  
Jim Piontek  
Howard Synder  
Cathy Wood

### **Members Excused**

Ruth Bevenue  
Leon Davis  
Gene Guskowski  
Deborah Lewis  
Sally Lindner  
Jean Sobon

### **Milwaukee County Staff**

Alice Steuck-Konkel  
Daniel Idzikowski, *DHHS*  
Jon Janowski, *DHHS*  
James Mathy, *DHHS*  
Vonda Nyang, *DHHS*  
Schinika Fitch, *DHHS*  
Carrie Vallejo, *DHHS*

### **Guests**

Ana Castenda, UCC  
Maureen Conrad,  
Laz Jackson, SOA  
James Kimble, Advisory Council  
Lois Redic  
Barbara Wyatt Sibley, Advisory Council  
Shirley Sharp, Commissioner  
Amera Schaefer, ERAS RSVP

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

Chair Pitchford-Nicholas called the Select Committee on Senior Centers to order on Tuesday, June 22, 2021, at 1:33 p.m. Program and Policy Coordinator Dan Idzikowski took roll. A quorum was present.

## **II. WELCOME AND REVIEW OF CHARGE**

Chair Pitchford-Nicholas welcomed everyone to the meeting. She reviewed the Committee's charge and the agenda for today's meeting with members. After the discussion, the Committee will break into three break-out groups: Post-Pandemic Promotion/Programming, New Models for Senior Centers, and Community Partnerships, based upon the three divisions of the *Envisioning* report.

### **III. UPDATE ON POST-COVID-19 SENIOR CENTER PROGRAMMING**

- a. Cathy Wood, CEO and Laz Jackson, Director of Senior Centers, for Serving Older Adults of Southeastern Wisconsin (SOA) provided an update on the programming now occurring at the Milwaukee County-owned senior centers. Wood discussed how COVID-19 had negatively impacted senior health both mentally and physically. The senior center participants relied heavily on SOA staff for wellness calls, resources, and referrals. SOA learned the importance of technology during the pandemic and realized that most seniors were not tech-savvy nor have the technology to interact with loved ones, attend virtual meetings and programs, church, doctor visits, and or other programming.

Laz Jackson discussed SOA's post-pandemic indoor and outdoor program offerings. He explained why and how the centers had to take pre-registration for classes via phone only. The senior centers have about 40 programs offered through all five centers, and each program runs about 45 minutes. A few of the indoor programs highlighted were fitness, weightlifting, art studio, and lapidary. SOA had conducted a survey asking their clients if they had access to technology (computers/smartphones), and over 70% of seniors didn't have any technology. SOA decided to write grants to find funding for technology for their participants. They received assistance from the County and the Federal government to purchase iPads and tablets to lend to participants. SOA also created a technology class for seniors to bring in their own technological devices to learn how to use their devices more effectively.

- b. Other Municipal Senior Centers:**

Idzikowski reported on South Milwaukee's Grobschmidt Senior Center. He discussed how they operated during the pandemic. The Senior Center staff didn't provide virtual learning, nor did they make any significant changes to their programming post and pre-pandemic. Currently, they are not planning on having any large gatherings until possibly wintertime. See attached reopening letter for more information.

### **IV. James Mathy, Director, Milwaukee County DHHS Housing Division:**

Idzikowski provided a synopsis on the work of the DHHS Housing Division and James Mathy's accomplishments since working with the Housing Division. The Housing Division provides affordable and accessible housing for seniors, veterans, and low-income families in the community. Since Director Mathy has been with the Housing Division, he has assisted with lowering homelessness in Milwaukee and building new housing. Milwaukee County's homelessness rate is at the lowest ever recorded. Director Mathy briefly discussed the division's current projects and partnerships. Just recently, the Housing Division, in partnership with Horizon in Wauwatosa, developed 100 affordable housing units (87-Senior units and 13-Town homes for families). The Housing Division also offers section 8 vouchers, rent assistance, to name a few of their services.

Director Mathy would like to get ideas and concepts from the Senior Center Select Committee on “What types of amenities and services would seniors like to see in housing facilities?” and to discuss the community benefits that possibly could be included with housing facilities. He discussed how new housing developments could incorporate senior or community centers and the types of funding that could possibly be used for these types of projects, such as federal funding and stimulus money. Milwaukee County’s federal HUD funding is confined to suburban municipalities and cannot be used in the city of Milwaukee.

Chair Pitchford-Nicholas has asked Mathy if he would like to attend the Senior Center committee meetings to discuss his ideas with the New Models subgroup and possibly be a member. Mathy said he would attend the meetings.

**V. SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT OUT AND DISCUSSIONS:**

Each of the three subcommittees provided a report on the May 18, 2021, Senior Center Select Subcommittee meeting.

- a. **Post Pandemic Promotion & Programming:** Pat Delmenhorst reported that their group had created an Action list on the items they felt needed immediate work. Listed below are most of their action items.

- Local Outreach
  - Create a speaker’s bureau to promote senior centers
    - At community meetings
    - Booths at local events
    - Presentations (Library’s, soup kitchens, hospitals, and senior living complexes)
  - Post signs
    - In front of Senior Centers to promote activities, events, and meal programs
  - Ask other organizations to assist with promotion (AARP/Volunteers and members)
  - Invite a New Member Day
  - Advertising campaigns (PSA Announcements: T.V., radio, event calendars on cable. Place advertisements on the bus, billboards, inserts in utility bills, grocery stores, clinics, nursing homes, churches; sponsorships (Brewers, Bucks, etc.)
- Improve access to the senior centers (parking, valet parking) and programming (offer weekend courses and expand hours)
- Develop a social media presence

- b. **New Models for Senior Centers:** Chairwoman Pitchford-Nicholas provided a report on behalf of Gene Guskowski, who could not attend today’s meeting. Their group’s charge was to modernize, improve, and

reimagine the center's programming and to think about facility design and locations for the senior centers. See report for more information.

**c. Building Community Partnerships**

Cathy Wood and Debra Jupka provided a brief report out from their last meeting. This group discussed potential partnerships with private and public entities such as: AARP, the City of Milwaukee, and Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). They also discussed how important it is to have shared decision-making and input from potential funders.

They noticed a need for more committee members and have contacted potential committee members. As a guide, they utilize the Senior Center report to refer to their charge to stay on task. A few ideas are to contract a project manager (pay for professional help), and ensure that when planning the idea, they need to have a proven track record, and there needs to be viable data, a solid plan to support the idea's feasibility.

**VI. SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The Committee decided to have a 15-minute break-out meeting of the subcommittees to discuss topics and come back to the central meeting to discuss the agenda.

**VII. FUTURE OF SENIOR CENTERS SHAREPOINT**

Idzikowski reviewed the SharePoint sites instructional page with the Senior Center Select Committee, explaining how they can access all the Future of Milwaukee County Senior Centers site information collected, create an account, and that there is a video tutorial if they need assistance.

**VIII. CALENDAR, RESOURCES, AND ANNOUNCEMENT**

Idzikowski reviewed and informed the committee that he had emailed the 2021 Senior Center Select Committee and subcommittee schedule.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 3 p.m.**

The next Senior Center Select Committee meeting will be held virtually on Wednesday, July 21, 2021 at 1:00 pm.

**Note:** All reference Materials and Reports are Located on the Milwaukee County Division on Aging Webpage: "Envisioning Our Senior Centers":  
<https://county.milwaukee.gov/EN/Department-on-Aging/Senior-Centers-Dining/Envisioning-Our-Senior-Centers>