



**Commission on Aging
Senior Center Select Committee Meeting
March 22, 2022**

The **Senior Center Select Committee** convened virtually on Tuesday, March 22, 2022, at 1:02 p.m.

Members Present:

Chair Gloria Pitchford-Nicholas
Vice-Chair Gene Guskowski
Sandra Dotson
Commissioner John Griffith
County Supervisor Jason Haas
Debra Jupka
Deborah Lewis
Kent Mayfield
Howard Snyder
Cathy Wood

Members Excused:

Leon Davis
Patricia Delmenhorst
Sharron Fitak
Alice Steuck Konkel
Sally Lindner
Commissioner Kelsie Lyons
Commissioner Cherie Swenson

Milwaukee County Staff:

Andrew Bethke, DHHS
Alena DeGrado, DHHS
Vincenza Doyne, DHHS
Daniel Idzikowski, DHHS
Pam Matthews, DAS
David Muhammed, DHHS
Peter Nilles, DAS
Vonda Nyang, DHHS
Gaylyn Reske, DHHS
Carrie Vallejo, DHHS
Darryl White, DAS

Attendees from the Public:

Laz Jackson, SOA
Brian Litzsey, MKE REC
Willie Mitchell, MKE REC
Stacy Witters, MKE REC

MINUTES

I. WELCOME AND REVIEW OF MEETING PURPOSE

Chair Pitchford-Nicholas called the meeting to order at 1:00p.m. and reviewed the charge of the Senior Center Select Committee as listed below:

1. Evaluate suggestions presented in the "Envisioning report
2. Categorize suggestions as long or short term
3. Review programming and infrastructure needs at each Milwaukee County Senior Center
4. Develop and monitor short and long-term plans for senior centers and senior center programming.
5. Ascertain resources necessary to carry out these plans.
6. Report findings and recommendations to the Advisory Council.

II. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Program and Policy Coordinator Dan Idzikowski called the roll and stated a quorum was present.

III. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE SENIOR CENTER SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES FEBRUARY 22, 2022

MOTION: To approve the February 22, 2022, Select Committee on Senior Centers meeting minutes.

ACTION: Motion prevailed unanimously (Mayfield moved, Jupka second).

IV. MILWAUKEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS RECREATION DEPARTMENT – O.A.S.I.S. SENIOR CENTER & SENIOR PROGRAMMING & COLLABORATION

Chairwoman Pitchford-Nicholas provided a brief narrative of today's presentation, which is for the MPS Recreation Department to provide an overview of the senior center they operate on Mitchell Street in the City of Milwaukee, other older adult programming they offer, and ways we can partner together in the future.

Brian Litzsey, Assistant Director of the MKE Recreation Department, introduced Willie Mitchell, the Senior Center Supervisor, and Stacy Witters, Manager of Active Older Adult programming for MKE REC.

Mitchell provided a synopsis of some of the changes made to MKE REC programming to better accommodate older adults and changes made during COVID-19. Mitchell mentioned infrastructure changes:

- 1) Moving the program listing for older adult services to the "Adult" section of the MKE REC Programming Guide because people who are "active" older adults don't tend to identify with this categorization and might feel this programming is not for them, and it gave the programs more general visibility. For MKE REC 50+ is an older adult.
- 2) Participants no longer come to the O.A.S.I.S senior center and stay all day. Most come just for specific programs and go home, so try to program at least two like programs together to maximize participation.
- 3) Increased programs for mental health and partner with Milwaukee County with Evidence Based Prevention Programming (OAA Title IIID).

O.A.S.I.S. is the senior center run by MKE REC on 24th & Mitchell Street. Beulah Britton in Bay View is considered a community center and not exclusive to older adults. However, Beulah Britton was a Milwaukee County Older Adult meal site when meals were offered in a congregate setting and did also operate a Meals on

Wheels program. Beulah Britton did NOT convert to a take-out meal site during the pandemic. The only older adult programming at BB now our volleyball league. In terms of non-center specific programming, MKE REC offers softball, pickleball, and volleyball leagues for adults that attract a lot of older adults. In addition many programs offered through the senior centers are open to younger adults as well.

Witters mentions that structural changes were made to O.A.S.I.S. to make it more accessible for people with disabilities under the ADA, including entryway, bathrooms, and first floor programming space. In terms of vision and strategy, the OASIS building has historically been a place for older adults to socialize in the neighborhood, but over the years, the community has changed and we have found younger adults participating in programming, so moved to a more structured programming environment to provide flexibility for participants to come and leave the center as they wished, rather than an all day place to socialize. Looking at demographics of the population in the City of Milwaukee, younger population, and wanted to ask what older adults want today from MKE REC programs. Many people don't know OASIS exists. Looking at turning to more of a "community" center and open programming to youth and intergenerational offerings. Haven't offered intergenerational tutoring for a long time.

Guszkowski asks how wide of a geographic area does the OASIS Senior Center draw from? Witters replies that it depends on the programming offered. Some fitness classes will draw from the suburbs, meal and social programs are much more neighborhood based. Largely south-side clientele.

Griffith asks for vision of how MKE REC can work together with Milwaukee County senior centers? Mitchell replies that there have been several meetings in the past. It is a process of sitting down together and determining what programs are we offering, and where is there duplication, where is there an opportunity to offer programs in other locations to expand our reach beyond the south side. No weekend programming at the County, but MKE REC does have weekend programming.

Mayfield asks about connection to the national OASIS Institute based in St. Louis. Witters replies that there is no connection.

Snyder asks about the percentage of older adult participating at OASIS and the types of programs offered. 90+% are older adults. Classes include various exercise, enrichment, arts, cooking, as well as an open fitness center and computer lab. Also acts as a stockbox site. Quarterly resource site.

Idzikowski asks about other "community centers" and relation to County meal programs. Witters replies that other community centers are generally MPS high schools, such as Hamilton, Pulaski, Marshall, Vicent, Bryant. Don't offer older

adult enrichment programs through these sites. Doesn't know about reopening of the senior meal site, but partnership was great.

Guszkowski asks about change in ethnicity of participants. Mitchell replies that the neighborhood ethnicity has changed greatly to a mainly Latino constituency. Had to hire bi-lingual staff to accommodate. Doesn't believe there is much overlap between Wilson, UCC and OASIS in terms of participation.

Reske, the Milwaukee County Nutrition Coordinator, notes that senior dining is still open to partnering again with OASIS.

Pitchford-Nicholas asks about funding and location MKE REC is funded through DPI through a segregated tax funding source, not through MPS education funding. Other programs for younger adults and kids offered through schools.

Guszkowski interested in a tour of OASIS. Will contact Willie Mitchell (414) 647-6057. Pitchford-Nicholas asks that the full committee be welcomed to join on the tour. Asks that folks take a look at the MPS Recreation Guide. Also requests Idzikowski send the *Envisioning* report to the MPS REC representatives.

V. MILWAUKEE COUNTY DHHS HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL & ARPA REQUEST

DHHS Deputy Director David Muhammed acknowledges the ARPA proposal put forth by the Commission on Aging and notes that there has been discussion about senior services being provided with intentionality throughout the County, but particularly on the northwest side of Milwaukee County. The Division on Housing is exploring the development of new affordable housing on the north side coupled with a senior center, perhaps adjacent to some of the other services available to seniors, similar to the United Community Center model. This could not be a proposal with the existing Milwaukee County senior centers due to zoning restrictions on placing residential housing in a park. There is still conversation as well about a Cudahy location.

Pitchford-Nicholas asks about the possibility of overturning the zoning restriction in the parks, so that housing/remodeling existing Milwaukee County senior center could happen? Is the idea for completely new construction? Muhammed replies that he does not have an answer on zoning, but his proposal is in the ideation phase and that there are no concrete plans yet, but the proposal is for new construction. The idea is to shore up neighborhood assets, including senior resources on the north side of Milwaukee. References page 17 of the *Envisioning the Future of Milwaukee County Senior Centers* report as inspiration. Not necessarily meant to displace existing senior centers. Conversation proceeds and Muhammed promises to keep the Committee informed of future developments.

Guskowski notes that the opportunities for synergy are great, not only with the County on projects such as the one described, but with other entities and partners in order to bring additional resources to the table that are greatly needed if want to realize our vision. In particular, after hearing from MKE REC, it would be good to hear from other municipal run senior centers in the County, so that we have a more complete picture of all the senior centers available in Milwaukee County. Suggests inviting presentations by these centers at a future meeting.

VI. MILWAUKEE COUNTY SENIOR CENTERS ATTRIBUTES MATRIX

Guszkowski discusses the rich process of meeting with representatives at all of the Milwaukee County senior centers and completing an assessment of the centers. They did a walk-through of each center utilizing the attributes matrix and then had a discussion about how the centers would line up against the matrix. Will begin these presentations at the next meeting of the Select Committee on Senior Centers. SOA staff and center participants were both involved in the process.

Pitchford-Nicholas suggests inviting partners to this meeting to hear what the attributes are and results of the assessment process, including Directors Janowski and Muhammed, a representative from the Parks Department and MKE REC.

VII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayfield announces that St. John's on the Lake is sponsoring a symposium on aging focused on overcoming isolation and loneliness. Guszkowski will introduce a presenter who leads the Senior Center Modernization Program for the National Council on Aging. The symposium will take place April 7-9th. A few spots left.

The Senior Leadership Program: May 10, 2022, May 11, 2022, and May 12, 2022. [Register Here](#). For more information, contact Dan Idzikowski at (414) 639-5751 or daniel.idzikowski@milwaukeecountywi.gov.

Early distribution of monthly *The Connection* put out by Serving Older Adults of SE WI encouraged. Senior Dining sites have been invited to put in place a plan to reopen to in person congregate dining. New OATS Transportation guide available.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

The next Senior Center Select Committee meeting will be virtual on Tuesday, April 12, 2022, at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Vonda Nyang
Executive Assistant