



MILWAUKEE COUNTY
Department on Aging

**Milwaukee County Commission on Aging
Advisory Council Extraordinary Meeting
October 23, 2019**

The Aging Advisory Council held an extraordinary meeting on Wednesday, October 23, 2019, at the Marcia Cogg Human Services Building, Conference Room 104, 1220 W. Vliet St., Milwaukee, WI 53205 for the purpose of considering the first draft of a report based upon public input from the Envisioning the Future of Senior Centers in Milwaukee County community conversation.

Attendance was taken verbally and documented on a sign-in sheet.

Members Present:

Judy Troestler, Vice Chair
David Hoffman
Krystina Kohler
George Liberatore
(Alice Pugh)

Commissioners Present:

John Griffith
Supervisor Jason Haas
Shirley Sharp

Staff Present:

Dan Idzikowski, Program and Policy Coordinator

Attendees from the Public

Dain Maddox
Morgan Morgan, SOA
Stephanie Sue Stein

MINUTES

I. Meeting called to order at 2:30 PM.

II. Overview of Draft Report: “Envisioning the Future of Senior Centers in Milwaukee County”

Idzikowski presents the Council with an initial draft report and summary of comments gathered during the Envisioning the Future of Senior Centers community conversations held from June through October of 2019, including comments received through the online survey tool. Idzikowski also provided the Council with a sample tool to evaluate the various ideas and programming suggestions and a copy of the Plan Goal from the 2019-20 AAA Plan relating to senior centers.

III. Consideration of Draft Report

Chair Troestler opens the discussion by noting that all these recommendations require money and people. Hoffman notes that the two main recommendations should be:

- 1) Advocate for dedicated funding for the senior centers
- 2) Advocate for more dedicated staff.

Idzikowski encourages members of the Council to not only consider the funding aspect, but to consider the recommendations with an eye toward what could be possible.

Troestler asks if any of these recommendations are already in process. Idzikowski notes that there are a number of capital projects that Milwaukee County is moving forward and SOA is attending to some fund-raising and some of the items on the list.

Griffith suggests the Council proceed to consider each section of feedback and then narrow down the recommendations. The Council members proceed to consider each area in turn.

A. Promoting Senior Centers

The Council members note that there is a need to communicate the good things that are happening at the senior centers and a need to do more outreach because lots of folks are unaware of what exists.

The members concur that distribution of flyers to congregations and businesses in the neighborhoods surrounding the senior centers would be a good start, utilizing volunteers who are active senior center participants and making personal connections.

Liberatore asks if the County has a marketing firm that can help design a campaign? Idzikowski replies that he is unaware of engagement with any marketing firm.

SOA representative Morgan noted that all the Milwaukee County senior centers have advisory boards and more than 130 volunteers. The Advisory Board members are distributing about 3000 copies of SOA "Connections" to neighborhoods. This resource is also available through Facebook and will soon be posted on SOA's new website. "Connections" is the monthly publication containing the programming available at each of the 5 senior centers.

Griffith notes that "We want every senior to know and be invested in our senior centers." We need to increase participation from 5 or 10% of older adults.

Griffith asks Supervisor Haas if there is the potential exist for the County to fund an outreach coordinator for the senior centers?

Haas replies through a budget amendment, it might be possible, but it is unlikely there is any funding available. Discussion follows about the nature and need for such a position.

Hoffman notes that in his view, the current County budget does not demonstrate a commitment to older adults and there should be a concerted effort to develop ongoing funding for senior centers.

Pugh suggests placing signage in front of the centers to explain that this is a senior center. Make sure that 211 make referrals and are aware of programming.

Sharp states that her top ideas are: engage former neighborhood outreach coordinators, ask each participant to invite someone else, create a speaker's bureau, and ask participants to deliver flyers and connect with local congregations.

Pugh, notes her top three recommendations would be: signage, 211, outreach coordinator.

Liberatore asks if there are ways to get feedback on what has already been done that would be responsive to these suggestions?

Morgan notes that SOA leafleted the neighborhood but did not receive a good response. Better results when Connections are handed out on stockbox days. They sign people up, but then they don't return.

B. Attractive Programming

Griffith provides the following ideas: Help seniors file taxes, apply for public benefits, and legal counseling – all on a regular basis. Collaborate with the Alzheimer's Association—have a regular structure of programs. Hold Grandparent classes – training on how to be a good grandparent. He also notes that SOA could build some competition between centers to build loyalty among center participants. He also suggests holding rummage sales, which Morgan notes are already occurring at the centers.

Discussion about Pickleball.

Hoffman notes that this is a good discussion about these ideas, but there needs to be an ongoing process. Suggest forming a permanent committee of the Advisory Council dedicated to the Senior Center project, including representatives from each senior center on this committee. Notes that the centers need dedicated funding and a dedicated committee that can make recommendations to the Advisory Council for the three-year plan.

Pugh notes interest in exercising classes that would be more challenging for older adults and mental health counseling.

C. Envisioning New Models

Griffith starts the conversation noting that there is a need to update communication and technology to meet the needs of seniors in the 21st century. Suggests developing a podcast for the senior centers.

Other members suggest addressing existing capital issues first. Introduce Intergenerational programming – sometimes but not always. Have certain hours that are dedicated to such programming.

Interested in idea of developing space in shopping malls. The Council noted the maps included in the report and suggested considering where older people live. There are sections of the county where many seniors live, but they don't have access to any of the senior centers, for example in the southwest and northwest sections of the county.

A related issue is providing transit. Most senior centers, except Kelly, do not have direct bus service. Members wonder if this can be addressed. Recommend addressing the issue of transportation to the senior centers to make them more accessible.

Another important idea is to provide for more wheelchair accessibility and remodeling the bathrooms.

Explanation of Memory Café's. About a dozen exist. Could add them to the senior centers.

D. Funding and Partnerships

Ask municipalities to help fund redevelopment of the centers.

Encourage philanthropic support for the infrastructure of the centers – promote estate gifts.

Bader Foundation, United Way, NML Foundation.

Ask corporations that have a large existing footprint in the underserved area, such as NML in Franklin and Kohl's in Brown Deer to partner in developing new senior centers in those areas.

Discussion about source and use of fundraised dollars. SOA representative states they are using fundraised dollars now to prioritize items identified by the Advisory committees, including cabling and new phone systems.

Liberatore notes that people who give money, love partnerships. The Commission needs to go to these organizations with a plan. A lot of funding sources amenable, but we must have a plan. Need to get more than a few people together who know what they are doing. Get more people involved.

Encourage participants to engage in activities that will help to generate revenue within the centers.

Partner each senior center with a tour bus operator.

Build relationships with the private sector.

Partner with schools that offer technical / professional training programs to provide services at the senior centers, such as cosmetology, legal, dental, health, and culinary arts.

IV. Council Recommendations & Next Steps

Motion: Establish a Senior Center Committee of the Advisory Council with Members of the Advisory Council and representatives from each of the Milwaukee County Senior Centers and other interested parties to consider recommendations to develop a short (2 year) and long term (10 year) plan for the Milwaukee County senior centers. Motion carries unanimously. (Hoffman moves, Liberatore seconds.)

Troestler asks Hoffman to serve as interim chair of this new Senior Center committee.

V. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 4:05 PM.

MOTION to Adjourn passes unanimously (Liberatore moves, Pugh seconds).

The next Advisory Council meeting will be November 14, 2019, at the United Way of Greater Milwaukee JCI Volunteer Center, 200 W. Pleasant St., Milwaukee, WI.

Respectfully submitted,
Daniel Idzikowski
Program and Policy Coordinator