



MILWAUKEE COUNTY  
**Department on Aging**

**Milwaukee County Commission on Aging  
Advocacy Committee Meeting  
February 3, 2020**

The Advocacy Committee held its regular meeting on Monday, February 3, 2020, at the Marcia Coggs Center, Room 104, 1220 W. Vliet St., Milwaukee, WI 53205.

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

**Members Present:**

Commissioner Sharon Abston-Coleman, Ph.D.  
Commissioner John Griffith  
Commissioner George Pumphrey, Ph.D.  
Commissioner Shirley Sharp  
Barbara Bechtel  
Casper Green  
Supervisor Jason Haas  
Bob Haase  
David Hoffman  
Gary Mikolajczyk  
Elliot Moeser  
Judy Troestler

**Commissioners Present:**

Commissioner Richmond Izard

Commissioner Cesar Pabon

**Staff Present:**

Daniel Idzikowski, MCDA Program & Policy Coord.  
Rick Flowers, MC Director of Veterans Services  
Pam Matthews, MC DOA, Budget & Policy Analyst  
Kerri Tyler, MCDA I&A Specialist

**Attendees from the Public**

Martha Collins, Hunger Task Force  
Christie Carter, MKE LGBT Center  
Maureen Conrad, Senior Statesman  
Tom Garrett, Goodwill  
Harold Oemig, Senior Statesman  
Walt Wochos, Commissioner-elect

## **MINUTES**

### **I. Call to Order**

In the absence of a Chair of the Advocacy Committee, Fred Knueppel having termed off the Commission, Commission Chair Richmond Izard called the Advocacy Committee to order at 1:35 p.m. and introduced himself. Izard described efforts to nominate members to serve on the Advocacy Committee and noted that appointments of non-Commission members have to be confirmed by the full Commission on Aging. Izard lists nominated members to serve on the Advocacy Committee. Asks Commissioner Sharp to serve as chair. Recognizes Commissioner Griffith on his election as Secretary of the Commission on Aging.

### **II. Approval of January 6, 2020 Advocacy Committee Meeting Minutes (Discussion / Action)**

Green asks about status of Milwaukee County Department on Aging in merging with Milwaukee County DHHS. Idzikowski notes that the Advocacy Committee passed a local priority to oppose combining the Milwaukee County Department of Aging with any other Department in the County. There is no such effort to combine the Department of Aging with DHHS or any other department. However, Mary Jo Meyers is the Interim Director of MCDA and also serves as Director of DHHS. Director Meyers has asked both departments to consider ways that we better communicate and increase efficiencies between

departments so that we look at all of our services from the perspective of the consumer they appear to be seamless and as easy as possible to access and experience.

Commissioner Haas notes that on page 2 in second action item, correct name from Haase to Haas.

**MOTION:** Approve minutes of the January 6, 2020 Advocacy Committee meeting as amended.

**ACTION:** Passes unanimously. (Moeser, second Haase).

### III. Public Comment

Moeser asks the role of Jon Janowski in the Department of Aging? Idzikowski replies that Janowski serves as the Director of Administration.

Walt Wochos introduces himself.

Bechtel states that sometimes it is far harder to work in a large agency than in a smaller agency. It might be more economical to work in a larger agency, but you have to think of the client. Bechtel thinks clients are well served by the Department on Aging in its current form.

Izard states that it is important that this committee represent a cross-section of the population and would like the public always to be heard. Izard suggests that MCDA acquire a mobile wireless microphone/speaker so that when meetings are held in off site locations, everyone can be heard.

### IV. Legislative & Policy Updates (Information/Action)

- Federal Aging Policy Briefing
  - o OAA reauthorization & funding

Idzikowski notes that federal legislation has been stalled during the impeachment proceedings. Announcement in the Senate on a compromise on the reauthorization of the Older Americans Act. Different versions between the Senate and the House will have to be worked out in conference committee. Idzikowski points to information on this compromise included in your packet.

Griffith strongly suggests that this information be posted on the MCDA website.

Green asks that Idzikowski provide Committee members with a sample letter to use to advocate for final passage of this legislation. Idzikowski states that he will pass along any action alerts or advocacy materials received from n4a, the national organization of Area Agencies on Aging, regarding this matter.

Izard asks about the policy of MCDA for posting materials and resources online. Idzikowski responds that the Community Programs Coordinator Rebecca Schmitt is in charge of the MCDA website. Idzikowski notes that MCDA's policy in this regard has been not to post materials that are of a transient or limited nature, because it is too difficult to maintain the currency of these materials and we wanted a cleaner look that was easier to navigate. Idzikowski will ask Schmitt whether we could have some place on the site to deposit advocacy information, but that has not been our policy to date. We do try to post alerts on FaceBook and are working on a contact management system that will help in sending out action alerts.

Griffith suggests a meeting between the Executive Committee and MCDA to determine what the policy is to disseminate this kind of information, because the role of the Commission and this Committee is to get this information out to the general public, not just to distribute it internally.

Bechtel notes that Schmitt is an excellent person to have in the Community Programs position. Idzikowski concurs.

- o Prescription drug cost reduction proposals

Idzikowski continues:

- No movement on any legislation regarding prescription drug cost reduction.
- Troubling policies coming out of the Trump Administration, including proposals by CMS to allow states to submit waivers to block grant Medicaid. This is an administrative matter causing a lot of concern in the aging and disability advocacy communities.
- Medicare Rights Center notes the Beneficiary Enrollment and Eligibility Notice Simplification Act, would ease enrollment in Medicare, eliminate penalties for late enrollment.
- Protecting Patients Transportation to Care Act (HR 3935). Non Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) is a required benefit of Medicaid. It funds Medicaid eligible participants transportation to medical appointments, including older adults enrolled in publicly funded long-term care. There was an Administration proposal to eliminate NEMT as a mandatory benefit of Medicaid and this legislation would protect NEMT as a mandatory benefit.
- Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act, lowers standard of review for age discrimination cases, reversing a recent United States Supreme Court ruling.
- State Legislative Issues
  - Legislation pending Griffith, Haase (unanimous)

Idzikowski notes there is flurry of activity in state legislature, but not many items that affect older adults. AB786 is a bill to require standard training for guardians of adults prior to accepting appointment by the courts, including funding for the Guardianship Support Center and DHS to conduct this training. The Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network is supporting this legislation.

**MOTION:** That the Committee send a letter of support in favor of AB786 to our legislators.

**ACTION:** Unanimous (Griffith, Moeser seconds).

Idzikowski notes a few bills in the Wisconsin Senate SB602 Coordinating a Response to Alzheimer's, SB427 penalties for financial exploitation of older adults, and a bill to consider aging friendly provisions in workforce development are still under consideration.

Izard notes that there is a lot of legislation and we are here to learn and champion it. Izard asks about how do we get this information out to the public? Public members suggest using FaceBook and other social media to post advocacy alerts so that people can like and forward this information. Do you have protocol to post advocacy alerts on the Facebook? Is MCDA on other platforms, Instagram etc.?

Griffith thinks this is a great idea to talk about, but we first need to speak with the staff working on this. Suggests this is a matter that could be taken up by the Commission working with the Department.

Conrad notes that the Office for Persons on Disabilities posts information regarding pending legislation on their app and that could be linked.

Izard suggests action alerts. Bechtel suggests newsletters in each community/municipality because not everyone is on Twitter/Facebook. Pumphrey recommends to getting out information to churches perhaps through bulletins. Conrad notes she tries to post information to residents in the various senior housing complexes.

- Milwaukee County Legislative Issues
  - Fair Deal & AB521 (Ways and Means) / SB471(Finance & Agriculture)

Alec Knutson, the County Executive's government affairs liaison thanks Committee members for continued engagement on this issue. Knutson relates that the County is meeting with Rep. Macco to try to secure a hearing date before the end of the last floor session in March. Once we get a hearing secured, we will alert the Committee as to next steps to take. We are now reaching out to business leaders to try to secure a hearing. This has been a huge lift, it is good that we are where we are at. Thank you for your support.

Commissioner Izard asks about support and opposition. Knutson responds that the largest barriers to passage is that this is a Milwaukee County only proposal and it is a tax increase, so many legislators end the conversation there.

Green compliments current County Executive for working on both sides of the aisle. Green wrote his representative and received a reply that he is very much opposed to this bill, mostly because of Milwaukee County's status as a sanctuary jurisdiction. Asks how we get other Republicans interested in supporting this if we can't even get Republicans in Milwaukee County to support. Knutson responds that the argument is that Milwaukee is the economic engine of the state and allowing Milwaukee to be successful, the entire state will benefit economically.

Griffith asks whether this could be broadened to include all counties in the state. Knutson states that this is a point of strategic leverage, however current Republican legislative leadership does not want this to be a statewide proposal. So stay with the "Milwaukee as economic engine" argument.

Moeser references Senator Craig's response and notes that his response that Senator Craig stated that Milwaukee receives a disproportionate share of shared revenue. Is this true? Knutson responds that while it is true that some shared revenues do favor Milwaukee County proportionally, the overall point is that the state receives far more tax dollars from Milwaukee County than come back to the County.

Moeser asks whether the Milwaukee business community is truly supportive and if they have concerns? Knutson notes that the Greater Milwaukee Committee, the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce have endorsed the proposal and are actively working to advance it through [www.MoveForwardMKE.com](http://www.MoveForwardMKE.com).

Commissioner Pumphrey asks about the use of TV to promote. Knutson replies there is no TV ad.

Idzikowski encourages people to vote in the upcoming primary election on February 18<sup>th</sup>.

Hoffman states that the LPV forum for County Executive candidates, all the candidates stated their support for the Fair Deal proposal.

#### **V. Mental Health Services (Information/Discuss)**

Idzikowski introduces the issue of mental health crisis redesign and its importance to older adults, particularly people struggling with dementia. Dialogue between MCDA and the Behavioral Health Division on this issue. Notes that BHD has opened community crisis centers on both the north and south side as well as co-locating mental health staff within community health centers.

Public comment about mental health staffing concerns. Pumphrey notes that it is difficult to recruit professions to Milwaukee. Idzikowski notes that there is a statewide shortage of mental health professionals.

#### **VI. Transportation Access (Information/Discuss)**

Idzikowski notes that WAAN will have an issue brief on transportation, which is one of the most requested services by older adults. Increasingly difficult to drive or even access public transit as we age. At the Milwaukee County Combined Community Services Board and ADRC Board issue has been considered. We would like to make this an issue across constituencies. MCDA provides funding to Able Access and few other entities to provide transportation services in Milwaukee County. However, these funding services are not coordinated with other transportation funding streams through MCTS, DSD, or the Veterans Services Office within the County. Would like to convene an interagency transportation coordination council as well as establish a better system for mobility management and navigation.

Izard asks about the necessity of a regional transportation solution. Idzikowski replies that there are regional plans developed through the Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Council, but if counties don't agree to implement the plans, they remain unactualized. Secondly, MCTS has some agreements with border counties, but if those counties refuse to provide funding to MCTS to operate in those counties, MCTS cannot afford to extend its routes. Third, Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) operate in many states, but are prohibited under state law in Wisconsin, primarily because they usually have a taxing authority as a quasi-governmental entity, and the legislature is not interested in establishing other local or regional government entities with taxing authority. So, while critically necessary to gain true access for individuals to choose where to work, live, and recreate, there are many barriers now to regional transit and transportation integration.

Griffith notes that he has attended SEWRPC meetings and encourages other Committee members to do so. Suggests that this Committee convene at MCTS to discuss transit challenges in a future meeting. Also asks the Committee to advocate to establish bus stops at all the Milwaukee County senior centers.

Green suggests speaking with MCTS to address the bus stop issue.

#### **VII. Elder Benefit Specialists (Information/Discussion)**

Idzikowski explains Elder Benefit Specialists and their unique role in Wisconsin. Notes the program has not received and increase in funding in twenty years. WAAN working to educate legislators about the important work EBS's do. Also notes that MCDA contracts with Legal Action of Wisconsin for EBS services and MCDA has just hired its first MCDA EBS to focus on Medicare.

### **VIII. 2020 Census & Voting Access (Information/Discuss)**

Izards notes the importance of the 2020 Census and encourages membership on the Complete Count Committee. Points out there is a training coming up on Thursday. Idzikowski similarly emphasized the importance of the Census in terms of legislative representation and federal funding. Idzikowski also notes the importance of voting and efforts to help people register to vote. Points out the Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition ([www.disabilityvote.org](http://www.disabilityvote.org)) and [www.myvoteWI.gov](http://www.myvoteWI.gov).

Casper asks about high school students serving as poll workers in Minnesota and whether this is possible in Wisconsin. Idzikowski replies that there is a program to have high school workers at the polls.

### **IX. 2:45 p.m. Senior Center Envisioning Process (Information)**

Idzikowski summarizes the process. Izard clarifies that the Commission on Aging received the report from the Advisory Council and tabled consideration of the recommendations until future meetings.

### **X. Announcements & Advocacy Opportunities (Informational)**

- WAAN (February 6th – Dane County ADRC)
- Wisconsin Alzheimer's Assn. Advocacy Day (Feb. 11th)
- 2020 Senior Statesman Program (March 25-27th).
- 2020 Aging Advocacy Day (May 12, 2020).

Commissioner Izard promotes these items, particularly encouraging involvement in the Senior Statesman program and at Aging Advocacy Day.

Commissioner Izard asks for suspension of rules to discuss nomination of Advocacy Committee Chair.

**MOTION:** Suspend the rules to consider nominations as chair and vice chair of the Advocacy Committee.

**ACTION:** Passes unanimously (Abston, Troestler seconds).

Green asks why the chairs can only serve for one year?

Izard replies these are one-year terms per the bylaws, but there are no limits to reappointment. Idzikowski clarifies that under the bylaws the chairs must be Commissioners and commissioners are subject to two consecutive three year terms.

Bechtel nominates Supervisor Haas. Idzikowski points out that we shouldn't have an active legislator as chair of the advocacy committee.

Sharp notes that she is willing to serve, but has time constraints.

Hoffman calls for vote of acclamation for Shirley Sharp as chair. Sharp welcomes opportunity to serve. Izard appoints Sharp as Chair.

Pumphrey nominates self as vice chair. Izard closes nominations.

Izard calls for unanimous acclamation of Pumphrey as vice chair. All in favor. Izard appoints Pumphrey as Vice Chair.

**XI. Future agenda items & meeting dates (Discussion)**

Griffith suggests that we meet in other locations beyond Coggs and the senior centers. Go to other locations such as the VA, MCTS, etc. Confirm next meeting date as March 2, 2020.

**XII. Adjourn**

**MOTION:** To adjourn this Committee until March 2, 2020.

**ACTION:** Passes unanimously (Green, second Abston-Coleman).

Respectfully submitted,  
Dan Idzikowski, Program and Policy Coordinator