



MILWAUKEE COUNTY
Department on Aging

**Milwaukee County Commission on Aging
Advocacy Committee Meeting
May 4, 2020**

The Advocacy Committee held its monthly meeting on Monday, May 4, 2020, by video & teleconference. Attendance was taken verbally.

Members Present:

Commissioner Shirley Sharp, Chair
Commissioner George Pumphrey, Vice Chair
Commissioner Sharon Abston-Coleman
Barbara Bechtel
Maureen Conrad
Commissioner John Griffith
David Hoffman
Gary Mikolajczyk
Elliot Moeser
Commissioner Cesar Pabon
Judy Troestler

Richmond Izard, Commission Chair

Staff Present:

Daniel Idzikowski, MCDA Program & Policy
Coordinator
Andy Bethke, MCDA Outreach Social Worker
Aleta Hutcherson, MC IMSD
Pam Mathews, MC Budget Analyst

Guests Present:

Vanessa Llanas, Sen. Baldwin
Anna Mercer, Rep. Moore
Jacqueline
Darrin Wasniewski

31 total participants online.

MINUTES

I. Call to Order & Introductions

Vice Chair George Pumphrey called the meeting to order at 1:48 p.m. The meeting was held by teleconference and recorded.

II. Review/Approval of March 2, 2020 Advocacy Committee minutes

MOTION: Approve the March 2, 2020 & April 6, 2020 Advocacy Committee minutes as written.

ACTION: Unanimously approved (Moeser, Bechtel).

III. Updates on Action Items

Idzikowski notes the updates in response to the last two meetings. Letter supporting Gov. Evers suspension of the Spring election attached, but it was not forwarded because unable to obtain signature of the Commission Chair prior to Wisconsin Supreme Court order mooting the point.

Also notes inclusion of the Democratic and Republican party platform statements related to aging. Due to COVID-19, probably no live convention in Milwaukee at which the Commission could take action, but might want to consider a statement to the parties in the future.

Mikolajczyk states that he thinks the DNC may still occur, just not until the fall.

MOTION: Table issue of party platform response until the June meeting.

ACTION: Approve unanimously. (Mikolaczek, Abston-Coleman)

Izard indicates that, in the future, if the Commission Chair is not available, the Committee may proceed to send approved letters by utilizing his signature on file with the Department on Aging.

Moeser comments that the letter regarding the spring election was well written.

IV. COVID-19 Response and Safer at Home Campaign

Idzikowski notes that the measures he reported on during last month's meeting regarding the Department's response to COVID-19 were still in place. Since that time, a transportation service for individuals with or exposed to COVID-19 was added. Federal funding from the CARES Act will allow increased services for nutrition programs and some social service programming. The Department put out a survey to ask for public input on the 2020 budget.

Conrad notes that there is very short notice and concerned that survey is only going out electronically. Asks if we have access to PSA's or public media. Idzikowski responds that MCDA has struggled to get message out on mainstream media. However, more than 7000 calls have been made to individuals and could add the question on the questions.

Griffith & Mikolajczyk – send the survey out with the meal delivery.

Troestler asks how much funding was provided to MCDA through the CARES Act? Idzikowski replies that about \$1.3 million has been received.

Griffith concerned about mental health issues, particularly for individuals who are increasingly isolated. How do we reach those folks?

Idzikowski responds that MCDA established a telehealth mental health counseling service for older adults through Jewish Family Services. In addition, the Behavioral Health Division is sponsoring a series on Spectrum Cable on mental health challenges during COVID-19 including a session specific to older adults.

Griffith asks about a press release from the Commission on Aging, in lieu of protesting your isolation, contact an isolated senior and get them the help they need.

V. Legislative & Policy Updates

- ***Federal Aging Policy Briefing***

Idzikowski reports that there have thus far been four federal COVID-19 related bills including a recent supplemental bill that added some additional funding for hospitals and testing.

MCDA has engaged in advocacy with the Wisconsin AG's office regarding the sequestering or garnishment of stimulus checks by creditors and financial institutions. Unfortunately, the federal government did not add protections and the stimulus payments could be attached by creditors.

Vanessa Llanas from Senator Baldwin's office notes that for those that receive SSI and have children, if they did not file a federal tax return in 2017 or 2018, they MUST sign up for the

supplemental \$500 child payment online by TOMORROW. Notes that the Senate is back in session, and the public can still contact Senator Baldwin's office by phone or e-mail.

Griffith asks whether, if someone in the household is an undocumented alien, the household will not receive a stimulus payment. Llanas states yes, the Administration included that provision.

Griffith also suggests removing cap on income for payroll tax rather than suspending payroll tax deduction. Idzikowski thanks Griffith for his remarks and notes that if the payroll tax is suspended, neither Social Security nor Medicare will be adequately funding, thus hurting the very programs that older adults rely upon, particularly for stable income and health coverage.

Idzikowski notes that the National Coalition of Counties is advocating for a fifth relief package focused on state and county governments which have been severely impacted by both loss of funding as well as additional expenses, noting that about 400 county workers have been furloughed.

MOTION: Commission on Aging to send letter supporting funding for state and local governments in any additional COVID-19 federal relief packages.

ACTION: Passes Unanimously (Mikolajczyk, Griffith).

- **State Legislative Issues**

Idzikowski notes that the Wisconsin Association of Area Agencies on Aging, including the Milwaukee County Department on Aging, joined a coalition of 20+ national and state organizations an *amicus* brief to the Wisconsin Supreme Court supporting the extension of the DHS Secretary's "Safer at Home" order.

Griffith asks whether the CNA educational training requirement was implemented? Idzikowski indicates that the CNA training reduction was included in the legislation authorizing DHS to submit a Medicaid waiver so they could obtain COVID-19 flexibilities and additional Medicaid funding for hospitals to meet the public health crisis. Governor had no real choice but to sign.

Griffith states that this result should be more widely publicized. Pumphrey asks how much the training was reduced. Idzikowski replies that the training was reduced from 125 to the federal minimum of 75 hours. Pumphrey notes that the State approves the clinicals.

Mikolajczyk asks if the CNAs are unionized? Are locals involved in publicizing this issue? Pumphrey notes that it is difficult to get nurses to unionize.

Conrad notes that she worked as a CNA for many years and since LPNs would train CNAs, she thinks that RNs and LPNs would be concerned by this as well.

Abston Coleman notes this is way to pay the CNAs even less and could affect their ability to pass their boards.

Griffith suggests this could be a campaign issue in the fall for the majority party that included this provision in the legislation.

Izard cautions about pointing to a particular political party, rather than keeping the discussion bipartisan and focused on the issue.

Bechtel states that this is another loss of professionalization for the nursing profession.

MOTION: Send a letter of disapproval to the legislature regarding the reduction of training hours required for CNA's.

ACTION: Motion carries unanimously (Griffith, Conrad).

- **Local Issues**

Idzikowski notes that since the last meeting the spring election was held and the Milwaukee County Board has been reorganized with new members and a new chair. A new County Executive, David Crowley, was also elected. He is the first African American to hold this office.

Mikolajczyk suggests forwarding the information packet provided to new Commissioners to all the new Supervisors. Pumphrey requests that the Commission review the packet prior sending out to the County Supervisors. Asks Idzikowski to forward the packet to the Commission for review. Griffith suggests that when the Commission meets again in person, the new County Executive and new Supervisors be invited to a reception.

Bechtel notes that this has been done in the past but need to find a better location. Suggests Alzheimer's Association as an example.

Anna Mercer from Rep. Moore's office on Friday, May 8th, Rep. Moore will be hosting a virtual town hall with Barbara Johnson from taxpayer advocates regarding the COVID-19 stimulus checks and fraud. Welcome any contacts by leaving message at (414) 297-1140. Pumphrey encourages attendance from Rep. Moore's office at future Advocacy Committee meetings.

VI. Promotion of the 2020 Census

Idzikowski notes last week was Census promotion week. Wisconsin has fallen behind from 2nd to 4th most responsive state. The time frames have been moved back by two to three months to allow more people to respond during the COVID-19 crisis. Recommends that Committee continue to promote the census through and review the Census2020.gov site. Continue to stress that a full count is necessary for Milwaukee County to receive a fair share of federal resources.

VII. Voting and Voter Access Issues

Idzikowski notes there is another election in May for the 7th Congressional District in May and people will face some of the same issues as during the spring primary. The same barriers remain and voters will still be under the Safer at Home order.

Griffith notes that the City of Milwaukee will mail absentee ballot request forms to all registered voters. Encourages members to contact their local municipalities to do the same. Also petitions are being circulated for candidates right now. Mikolajczyk concurs.

MOTION: Communicate to eighteen other municipalities other than City of Milwaukee in Milwaukee County to encourage them to send absentee ballot requests to their registered voters.

ACTION: Passes unanimously. (Griffith, Mikolajczyk).

VIII. Public Comment

No public comment.

IX. Announcements & Advocacy Opportunities

- *WAAN (Thursday, May 7th – online)*
- *Aging Advocacy Day was cancelled.*

Izard asks whether 2020 Senior Statesman candidates could be invited to participate in next Advocacy meeting? Idzikowski notes that these candidates already receive notice of these meetings. A future session could be held.

X. Future agenda items & meeting dates

Honoring Tom Frazier.

XI. Adjourn

MOTION: Adjourn the meeting.

ACTION: Unanimous (Griffith, Bechtel).

The Advocacy Committee meeting adjourned at 4:18 PM. The next Advocacy Committee meeting will be June 1, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,
Daniel Idzikowski
Program and Policy Coordinator