



MILWAUKEE COUNTY
Department on Aging

**Milwaukee County Commission on Aging
Advocacy Committee Meeting
September 21, 2020**

The Advocacy Committee held its monthly meeting on Monday, September 21, 2020, by video & teleconference. Attendance was taken by roll call.

Members Present:

Commissioner Shirley Sharp, Chair
Commissioner George Pumphrey, Vice Chair
Commissioner Sharon Abston-Coleman
Maureen Conrad
John Griffith
David Hoffman
Gary Mikolajczyk
Elliot Moeser
Judy Troestler
Cindy Van Vreede

Staff Present:

Daniel Idzikowski, MCDA Program & Policy
Coordinator
Alec Knutson, MC Legislative Liaison

Guests Present:

Christie Carter, Milwaukee LGBT Center
Patricia Dunn
Sally Lindner
Diane Robinson, SDC
Stephanie Sue Stein, LPS
Cathy Wood, SOA

21 total participants online.

MINUTES

I. Call to Order & Introductions

Chair Shirley Sharp called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m. The meeting was held by teleconference and recorded.

II. Review/Approval of August 3, 2020 Advocacy Committee minutes

MOTION: Approve the August 3, 2020 Advocacy Committee minutes as written.

ACTION: Unanimously approved (Pumphrey, Troestler).

III. Updates on Action Items

National Party Platform Response

Idzikowski notes the updates in response to the last meeting. A letter containing MC Commission on Aging federal policy priorities was sent to the Democratic and Republican Wisconsin State and National Committees for consideration in their 2020 party platforms. Response was received by the Wisconsin Democratic Committee.

Older Voting Policy Recommendations

Idzikowski included a copy of the Older Adult Voting policy recommendations as amended. These policy recommendations were forwarded to the Wisconsin Election Commission by WAAN. Idzikowski will forward to the Milwaukee state legislative delegation.

IV. Voting and Voter Access Issues

Idzikowski notes that a number of voter assistance materials were included in the meeting packet, including flyers from the Milwaukee County Clerk's office listing all of the early voting sites in Milwaukee County. Free transportation will be provided to older adults to the DMV to obtain a voter ID, early voting sites, and the polls on election day. Call the Aging Resource Center to schedule a ride. Idzikowski asks for the Committee's help in distributing this information as well as to find additional ways to assist seniors to exercise their right to vote.

Griffith encouraged distribution of these material with senior housing sites. A question was posed as to whether ballots would be collected at the Milwaukee County senior centers during the times listed on the MCEC flyer. A question was also posed about the necessity of returning the absentee ballot in the municipality where voters were resident. Idzikowski will inquire and reply.

Robinson notes that the Social Development Commission could mail this information to VITA tax program and Senior Grandparent participants.

V. Legislative & Policy Updates

- ***Federal Aging Policy Briefing***

Idzikowski directed the Committee's attention to the N4a Policy Action Alert included in the materials and explained that a new Coronavirus relief had stalled and that advocacy was needed by the aging community to ensure that programs that benefited older adults, such as the Older Americans Act, Home and Community Based Long Term Care Medicaid funding, and funding for Aging and Disability Resources Centers was included in any future aid package. Idzikowski also noted the particular need of Milwaukee County for operational relief and the National Association of Counties Organization call for direct support of counties in any future aid package.

Pumphrey encouraged members to act on this information and to advocate on their constituent's behalf with their federal senators and representatives.

Idzikowski also noted that negotiations on the President's proposed Order for prescription drug pricing relief have stalled and no order has been forthcoming.

State Legislative Issues

Idzikowski notes that there is no new state legislation pending. Discusses state budget below.

Local Issues

The budget is now in the hands of the County Executive, who will submit a budget proposal to the County Board by October 1, 2020. Haas encouraged members to contact his office with any questions.

VI. Milwaukee County and Wisconsin Budgets

Idzikowski notes that the Wisconsin biennial and annual County budget processes are now underway. The Governor has asked Wisconsin departments to submit their budgets to him for consideration in the Executive Budget and has ordered state agencies to prepare their budgets with no discretionary increases and with a 5% cut to their budgets. Notes the Wisconsin budget process and that Commissioners have testified on the State budget in past years. Includes the Governor's Major Budget Policies for 2021-23. Idzikowski points out the \$1.5 billion non-discretionary projected spending increase in the Medicaid program, a large share of which is attributable to HCBS long term care programs.

Idzikowski reviews WAAN's proposed 2021-23 budget priorities for older adults including doubling funding for Direct Care workforce support, the Elder Benefit Specialist program (stagnant for 20+ years), support expansion of Dementia Care Specialists, caregiver funding, Healthy Aging grants, support for safe, affordable and accessible housing, public transportation, and support for voting rights and access. Notes that Medicaid expansion is NOT included in these recommendations, even though the Governor will again propose such expansion with a potential positive net savings of \$500 million in the Medicaid program.

Moeser comments that he is disappointed that WAAN did not take a position to support Medicaid expansion, because without such an expansion Milwaukee County's needs will continue to be unmet. Pumphrey asks how Medicaid funding is shared between the federal and state governments. Idzikowski explains Medicaid match and potential increase in coverage and match rate if accepting Medicaid expansion. Griffith concurs that accepting expansion would not only provide for more coverage, it would allow spending on other priorities through the surplus.

Pumphrey asks about increasing use of the "compassionate release" provision. Idzikowski responds that he included this particular provision in the housing issue brief.

Commissioner Pumphrey turns attention to the proposed budget for the Milwaukee County Department on Aging. Notes that he was charged with looking into whether or not the Executive Director position could be eliminated for budget's sake. Pumphrey notes that Jon Janowski has now been appointed interim Executive Director. He believes that Janowski is more than qualified to assume this position, but questions whether his tenure will be extended beyond the initial 90 day interim appointing authority. Believes that the Advocacy Committee can take up this matter. Pumphrey has prepared a presentation for the Commission on Aging meeting on the authority that the Commission has under state statute and local ordinance. If getting rid of the Executive Director, in effect getting rid of the voice of the Commission. If so, older adults will never be given the attention that they deserve. Will the Commission actually be allowed to exercise its powers?

Griffith states that the Commission should start to exercise its powers and authority. Concerned that the Department is putting together a guide for long term planning for the aging population.

Moeser notes there is a distinction between defunding of the position and the elimination of the position. County should explain the difference. Defunding does not necessarily mean elimination. Pumphrey responds that the County stated there would be a melding of duties, but there still needs to be an Executive Director for the Department on Aging. We represent the aging community and as such representatives we should be advocating that senior's voice be heard. When you defund a position, it may remain on the books, but it has no real function or duties.

Dunn comments that you assume power until you are stopped. Regarding the Executive Director position, when the previous ED left, for whatever period it is vacant, the funding is still allocated. You should still have funding available to fund the position in the future.

Pumphrey refers to Wisconsin Statute 46.82 governing the Commission on Aging and the county unit on aging. Question as to whether Janowski will be allowed be the full-time director, or whether his authority will be subsumed under another person. Will find out on October 1st when the Milwaukee County Executive budget will be presented to the County Board.

Moeser asks which programs should be cut to pay for this funding. Doesn't think that the position is needed, it is an issue that other services may have to be eliminated in order to fund the Executive Director position. Timing of this motion is wrong.

Mikolajczyk states it is so important that we must have an Executive Director and the County needs to find the funding without cutting other programs.

Conrad states her understanding is that at this time the funding was needed to support direct services and that the defunding of the position was a temporary measure to provide that support.

Pumphrey states it is important to state the Commission's concerns with the elimination of the Executive Director position directly to the County Executive. The Commission has some degree of autonomy and authority. If there is ever a time the Commission should be heard it is now.

Abston-Coleman notes that any recommendation should be directed to the full Commission on Aging not directly to the County Executive.

MOTION: Recommend that the Milwaukee County Commission on Aging communicate its support for the appointment and funding of a full time Executive Director for the Department on Aging to the County Executive.

ACTION: Motion carries, Moeser opposes (Mikolajczk, Abston-Coleman).

VII. Racial Equity

MOTION: Carry over the Racial Equity item to the next meeting.

ACTION: Passes unanimously (Pumphrey, Troestler).

VIII. Announcements and Advocacy Opportunities

The Aging and Disability Resource Center Governing Board is conducting a survey of services provided by the ARC/DRC and the Long Term Care system.

A survey can be found online at: <https://county.milwaukee.gov/aging/adrcboardsurvey> or request a paper version by calling (414) 289-6874.

Census 2020 is scheduled to end this month. Please remind all people to participate in the Census.

Milwaukee County Transit Services are moving forward with Transit Next proposals.

- Milwaukee County's Transportation, Public Works, and Transit Committee voted on September 9, 2020 to recommend adoption of the resolution to approve the 2020 MCTS NEXT Recommended System Map.
- The matter will now go before the full County Board on September 24 for their consideration and approval.

- If approved, MCTS would prepare a schedule for making incremental service changes consistent with the plan along with outreach efforts to inform riders, stakeholders, and the public.
- As always, your feedback is important! Please fill out [this contact form](#) or leave a comment directly on our [map](#).

Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission is also putting together revisions for their long-term plan. See: www.sewrpc.org for more information.

Milwaukee Mental Health Task Force 2020 Karen Avery Forum

Housing: Opportunities, Rights and Resources ~Awards Presentation~

Tuesday, October 13, 2020 2:30 – 5 PM

- [View the forum flyer](#) for information on the agenda, speakers, awards, continuing education and how to request disability related accommodations for the forum.
- Register for the forum now at <http://www.milwaukeeemhtf.org/2020/09/07/2020forum/>
- **Housing Forum Survey:** Share your input on the questions you want our speakers to address, or to include in the resource packet for our October 13th forum, Housing: Opportunities, Rights, and Resources. [Take the survey.](#)

IX. Future agenda items & meeting dates

Ms. Elizondo, regional Public Affairs representative from the Social Security Administration noted that SSA offices remained closed for face-to-face service, but local office representatives are available from 9:00am – 4:00pm by phone to answer questions. Many actions can be completed online at <https://www.ssa.gov/onlineservices/>. Call her at 866-504-5014 ext, 35026 for more information or materials.

- **WAAN (Thursday, October 1st at 9:30a.m.)**
- **ADRC Governing Board Listening Session (Wed, October 14th 2:00pm – 3:30pm)**
Host Independence First. Register: bpeters@independencefirst.org or (414) 937-5912.

X. Adjourn

MOTION: Adjourn the meeting.

ACTION: Unanimous (Mikolajczyk, Troestler).

The Advocacy Committee meeting adjourned at 3:11 PM. The next Advocacy Committee meeting will be held by videoconference on Monday, October 5, 2020, at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Idzikowski
Program and Policy Coordinator