



MILWAUKEE COUNTY
Department on Aging

**Advocacy Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 2, 2020**

Members Present

Shirley Sharp, Chair
Sharon Abston-Coleman
Maureen Conrad
Sandra Dotson
Commissioner John Griffith
David Hoffman
Commissioner Izard
Gary Mikolajczyk
Commissioner Elliot Moeser
Cindy Van Vreede

Milwaukee County Staff

Daniel Idzikowski, *MCDA Prog. & Policy Coord.*
Shakita LaGrant, *DHHS Director*
Schinika Fitch, *County Executive's Office*
Isaac Rowlett, *County Executive's Office*
Pam Mathews
Claire O'Brien
Sandra Wilson
Jon Janowski, *MCDA Interim Executive Director*
Mary Proctor Brown
Carrie Vallejo

Members Excused

Jason Haas, *Milwaukee County Supervisor*
Barbara Bechtel
Maureen Fitzgerald
Casper Green
Bob Haase
Harold OEMIG
Alice Pugh
George Pumphrey
Gary Sprong
Judith Troestler

Guests

Commissioner Gloria Miller
Commissioner Amber Miller
Pat Dunn
Beth Hengst

I. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

A quorum of Advocacy Committee members convened virtually on Monday, November 2, 2020. Chair Sharp welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Dan Idzikowski took roll call.

II. APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 5, 2020, ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: To approve the October 5, 2020, Advocacy Committee meeting minutes.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Mikolajczyk Moved, Abston-Coleman Second.)

III. UPDATE ON ACTION ITEMS:

Dan Idzikowski, Program and Policy Coordinator, gave an update on actions taken in response to the Advocacy Committee's previous motions. A letter was sent to Milwaukee County's Congressional delegation encouraging them to pass a new COVID-19 relief package including increased funding for the Older Americans Act, Home and Community-Based Services through Medicaid, aid to State and local governments, and additional funding for testing and PPE

necessary for keeping older adults safe along with other aging concerns. The Chair received two replies, one from Representative Moore's office, who has passed on the Advocacy concerns to the House Speaker Pelosi. The second reply came from Representative Steil. Unfortunately, Congress didn't reach an agreement on a new COVID-19 relief package.

IV. RACIAL EQUITY AND ADVOCACY DISCUSSION/ACTION:

Idzikowski informed the Advocacy Committee that the County's strategic direction addresses racial equities with a goal to make Milwaukee County the healthiest county in Wisconsin. He encouraged the Advocacy Committee to consider ways to advocate addressing racial equities and policy biases and asked if the item should become a standing agenda item to continue this discussion at their monthly meetings as it is essential to keep this in mind. There was no feedback or comments from members. Chair Sharp agreed to keep this as a standing item.

V. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY UPDATES:

A. Federal Aging Policy Briefing

1. COVID-19 Response Bills: Congress didn't reach an agreement on a COVID-19 relief package.

2. Social Security/Medicare Updates

Wisconsin SeniorCare/Amendment Proposal/Medicare Part D Program

The Wisconsin Senior Care program was created to address the critical need for prescription drug coverage for Wisconsin seniors. The state of Wisconsin received a 10-year waiver/extension to continue this stand-alone program. The State has now requested an amendment from CMS to expand coverage under the SeniorCare program to allow coverage of vaccinations, specifically to include and encompass all COVID-19 vaccinations or treatments for patients. Currently, there is no coverage available for COVID-19 medicines/vaccines for emergency purposes in the current policy, and the same thing is happening at the Medicare level. The COVID-19 treatments/vaccines are considered to be experimental; therefore, they are not covered.

Mr. Idzikowski informed the Advocacy Committee that they could petition CMS on either item if they wished.

B. State Legislative Issues

1. Legislation pending: There was no legislative activity occurring due to presidential elections.
2. Administrative Rules / Governor's Task Force

WI Department of Health Services/COVID-19 Vaccination, Planning & Action: The Wisconsin Department of Health Services Medicaid Advisory Council is developing an ethical framework for distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and therapies. The plan encompasses vaccine availability, administration, priority populations, delivery, safety, supply, and storage. Currently, there are a few experimental vaccines in the pipeline. The Department of Health Services (DHS) released its population priorities, which provides information on the vaccine disbursement given in Phases. Phase 1 of their

plan is distribution and administering the vaccine to healthcare professionals and seniors in skilled nursing and assisted living facilities. Frontline workers would most likely be the first to receive vaccinations. Wisconsin is planning to partner with the federal pharmacy program. They plan on providing onsite vaccination to residents who reside in residential facilities and local and tribal healthcare departments. There was an Executive Summary included with more information.

C. Milwaukee County Legislative Issues

1. Milwaukee County Board

2. Aging items of interest: See budget items below.

VI. VOTING ADVOCACY UPDATE

The Milwaukee County Department on Aging had partnered with the Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition to advocate for seniors to exercise their right to vote. It has been a very active and successful partnership. Included in today's meeting packet is a memo from the federal Center for Medicaid and Medicaid Services (CMS) reaffirming that long term care facility residents, nursing home residents, and homebound seniors have the right to vote by mail-in or absentee voting. These facilities must have a plan in place to ensure seniors can exercise their right to vote if they cannot vote in person. Wisconsin's Special Voting Deputy program that assisted seniors with voting on the facilities' premises was suspended due to COVID-19. MCDA made major efforts to increase voting accessibility this year, including training of Aging Resource Center staff to answer questions, mailings to encourage absentee ballot participation, opening of senior centers as polling sites, and providing rides to the DMV for voter IDs and polling sites.

VII. MILWAUKEE COUNTY AND WISCONSIN BUDGET

WISCONSIN BUDGET: The State of Wisconsin is in the process of formulating the State Budget. State agencies have now submitted their proposed budgets to the Governor for consideration. The Governor is holding virtual public listening sessions on various topics related to the budget. The Wisconsin Aging Action Network is meeting with the Governor's Office to discuss their Aging Network priorities. One of the priority areas is housing which Idzikowski was tasked with briefing. Other priority areas included transportation, Medicaid resources for long-term care, and increased funding for Elder Benefits Specialist program. Included in today's packet was a draft of issues that the Advocacy Committee had identified at a past meeting that they would like to have listed as priorities. Idzikowski asked the Committee about their concerns or ideas for housing or any other areas they think the State should consider as priority areas in the State budget.

CoA Chairman Izard asked if there was any feedback regarding Assembly Bill 521, "Fair Deal." Idzikowski reported that the bill died and that there was no present legislation regarding this issue. The Committee requested that Assembly Bill 521 and Medicaid Expansion be added to the state budget priorities list as they both are critical for the state and senior citizens. The Advocacy Committee needs to advocate for both items.

MOTION: The Advocacy Committee will send a letter to the Governor indicating support for the "Medicaid Expansion" and the "Fair Deal" as presented earlier in this year's priorities.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Moeser Moved, Izard Second.)

COUNTY BUDGET:

Chairman Izard provided a brief report on the Commission on Aging special meeting, which met before today's Advocacy meeting. Chairman Izard reminded the Committee that on October 5, 2020, the Advocacy Committee passed a resolution opposing the MCDA / DHHS merger. Similarly, the Advisory Council voted on October 26, 2020 to oppose the merger of MCDA and DHHS for one year. However, at the special Commission on Aging meeting, the Commission voted to approve MCDA's merger into DHHS, with certain proviso's regarding working with the Commission and evaluation of the benefits to the aging population.

A committee member asked if the Commission had violated a law by voting to support the integration plan before receiving an amendment to the Area Plan. The State's directive to AAA was to provide an amendment to the Area Plan and have it submitted to the State by December 21st. Five people are supposed to sign off on this Amendment: County Executive, County Board Chair, MCDA Executive Director, COA Chair, and Advisory Council Chair.

A member stated that the Area Plan process is convoluted. There were some legitimate questions raised regarding the proposed merger process. The Committee discussed if they should try to get feedback from the senior community and proceed. One of the Commissioners discussed that some Commission members had attempted to advocate for senior input on the merger before moving forward to vote, but this motion didn't carry. A Committee member advised those who have any questions or concerns regarding these items to reach out to the Commission on Aging Chair and Corporation Counsel to discuss them.

VIII. ADVOCACY TRAINING AND TOOLS

Idzikowski provided a brief description of the Senior Statesman Program that MCDA offers every year. The Senior Statesman program educates seniors on becoming an advanced advocate for seniors by teaching them about governmental bodies, legislative processes, policy issues, and governmental decision-making processes. This year MCDA canceled the program due to COVID-19. Idzikowski asked the Advocacy Committee for possible options for the department to offer this training next year in a virtual platform, including whether they thought senior would participate in virtual training. There was a lengthy discussion, and the committee agreed that the previous courses were the best platform as it offered both in-person and on-site experiences that a virtual platform can't replicate.

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES"

- Medicaid Waiver Proposal: If you are interested you can take an online survey to vote in favor of the Medicaid Waiver proposal. Please contact Idzikowski for more information.

- The County Board of Supervisors must ratify a decision to integrate the departments (MCDA and DHHS). There is still time for the Advocacy Committee to voice their opinion to the County Board of Supervisors. You must contact the County Board and inform them that you would like to speak at one of their scheduled meetings this month. You can find the session dates listed on the County's website.

X. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND MEETING DATES:

- **Future agenda item:** A discussion and presentation on the Commission on Aging Area Agency on Aging. Would like to discuss the Commission on Aging separating from the County to become a non-profit independent Area Agency on Aging.
- **Next Advocacy Committee Meeting, December 7, 2020:** The Advocacy Committee decided to convene in December.

XI. ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 3:37 p.m.

The next Advocacy Committee meeting is at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, December 7, 2020.

Respectfully Submitted,

Vonda Nyang