



## Advocacy Committee Meeting Minutes February 1, 2021

### **Members Present**

Commissioner Shirley Sharp, Chair  
Commissioner John Griffith, Vice Chair  
Barbara Bechtel  
Maureen Conrad  
Sandra Dotson  
Milwaukee County Supervisor Jason Haas  
Sally Lindner  
Gary Mikolajczyk  
Commissioner Elliot Moeser  
Harold Oemig  
Sherrie Tussler, *Hunger Taskforce*  
Cindy Van Vreede

### **Members Excused**

Bob Haase  
David Hoffman  
Commissioner Richmond Izard  
Debra Jupka  
Alice Pugh

### **Members Excused...Continued**

Gary Sprong  
Judy Troestler

### **Milwaukee County Staff**

Andrew Bethke  
Daniel Idzikowski  
Pam Mathews  
Vonda Nyang

### **Guests**

Melvin Reese  
Christine Carter  
Latonia Lowe  
Cathy Woods  
Melva Darrough  
Kathy Gale  
Darlene Washington  
Matthew Hayes  
Commissioner Janice Wilberg

## **I. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL**

A quorum of Advocacy Committee members convened virtually on Monday, February 1, 2021. Vice-Chair Griffith welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. Vonda Nyang, Division on Aging Executive Assistant, took a roll call.

- II. A MOMENT OF SILENCE:** The Committee took a moment of silence for Longtime member and Advocate for the Advocacy Committee, Bob Haase's wife Jean Haase, who passed away last week. Jean herself was a longtime vociferous advocate.

## **III. APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 11, 2021 ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**MOTION:** To approve the January 11, 2021 Advocacy Committee meeting minutes.

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

## **IV. UPDATE ON ACTION ITEMS**

- Idzikowski reported out on three updates. First, a standard letter to send to newly elected state legislators is pending and not yet completed. Second, a letter including the Advocacy Committee's top budget priorities was sent to the Governor's office on January 8th. Third,

the Advocacy Committee sought to revise its Wisconsin State Budget Policy Priorities and this action will be taken up later in the agenda.

**V. DISCUSSION / ACTION ITEM: RACIAL EQUITY AND ADVOCACY**

Shirly Sharp provided a personal reflection on her experience with the civil rights movement.

**VI. WISCONSIN STATE BUDGET PRIORITIES (DISCUSSION & ACTION)**

**A. Federal Aging Policy Briefing**

**COVID-19 Response Bills:** President Biden's Administration has proposed a new COVID-19 response bill, and the Senate has counter-proposed a smaller package. Both parties are in negotiations to decide the total amount to be disbursed. The Advocacy Committee may consider sending a letter to their representatives in Congress affirming the need to increase funding for the Older American Act programs under Title III C and funding for counties and states, as well as providing additional support for vaccination of older adults. The last relief bill passed in December did not include funding for these priorities.

MOTION: To take a position on the federal relief package

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Mikolajczyk Moved, Sharp Second.)

**B. State Legislative Issues:**

**Legislation pending:** The Assembly convened last week and passed a package of legislation regarding COVID-19 relief and sent to the Senate, AB1. The Senate stripped out some provisions of the Assembly legislation, including providing civil liability protections, directing schools to reopen unless 2/3rds of school boards approve virtual instruction, and preventing local health departments from enforcing mask orders. It also includes a designation of a personal representative to visit a nursing home resident and allows pharmacy students to administer COVID-19 vaccines. Members may wish to contact their state legislators to encourage an agreement for a unified plan.

Emergency Food Share is under threat with any package that lifts the State of Wisconsin's Public Health Emergency orders. Currently, the order has increased senior's food stamp benefit amount from \$16 to \$204 per month. With President Biden's package, he is offering an additional 15% to senior's food benefits, increasing the amount from \$204 to \$234 per month if the emergency orders stay in place. If the orders are lifted, it would just be \$16 per month plus an additional 15%, which would only be \$18.40 per month for seniors.

Advocacy members were encouraged to advocate to keep the Governor's Emergency Order in place. With the rule in place, Wisconsin receives \$50 Million in benefits per month. If the order is revoked, Wisconsin will lose this aid, and the Governor's rule will be overturned, and he will not have the power to place another emergency order. The

total amount of benefits Wisconsin will lose totals \$600 Million in benefits. The Federal Government plans to keep its emergency order in place **until December 2021**.

MOTION: To send a letter to State senators requesting to keep the Governor's emergency order in place and as is.

ACTION: Motion prevailed unanimously (Moeser Moved, Mikolajczyk Second).

### C. Milwaukee County Legislative Issues:

**Aging Items of Interest:** Supervisor Haas reported on possible hygienic and sanitary upgrades for all five County-owned Senior Centers during the closure. Supervisor Haas met with Milwaukee County's facilities department and the Division on Aging to discuss those upgrades. The upgrades identified are as follows: Automatic primary and secondary entrance doors, hand sanitizers in the main foyer and wall-mounted, automatic hand dryers, touchless faucets, touchless soap, and paper towel dispensers; social distancing signs. Facilities did a walk-through of all five senior centers to determine which ones would need the upgrades. They are working on outlining a plan to make the replacements. They plan on replacing the manual fixtures with the touchless fixtures in the restrooms first.

## VII. WISCONSIN STATE BUDGET PRIORITIES

Idzikowski reviewed the additional provisions the Advocacy Committee agreed upon at the last Advocacy Committee meeting to include in its State Budget Priorities. The Advocacy Committee is requesting to double the state shared revenue distributed to local public health departments. The Advocacy Committee proposes that the State ensure funding for personal protective equipment, testing, contact tracing, and vaccination. See the document titled "2021-2023 State Budget Priorities" for more information on the priorities and additions.

MOTION: To add a Public Health and Pandemic Response priority to the Advocacy Committee's State Budget Policy Priorities.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Mikolajczyk Moved, Griffith Second)

The Advocacy Committee discussed the discrimination that occurs to the minority and disadvantaged populations in the healthcare delivery systems and asked: "What can we do to overcome this?" The Advocacy Committee wants to ask the State for money to conduct a study to determine how this is happening and what they can do to stop it.

MOTION: To add sufficient funding to direct the Department of Health Services to study the effect of racial and disadvantaged disparities in our healthcare delivery system in Wisconsin and to propose solutions to the same.

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Griffith Moved, Dotson Second.)

Idzikowski called for a motion to accept all changes to the "2021-2022 Wisconsin State Budget Priorities".

MOTION: To accept all additions made to the “2021-2023 State Budget Priorities”.

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

## **VIII. COMMISSION ON AGING PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES**

Discussed the three major local public priorities that need addressing this year from last year’s priorities: Long Term Caregiver Crisis, increase access to affordable and accessible local transportation, and advance the Fair Deal initiative and increase State revenue sharing.

Should include Expansion of Medicaid to the public policy priorities. The Advocacy Committee discussed moving this item to the number one priority.

MOTION: To move “Expansion of Medicaid” to Number one on the “Public Policy Priorities” list.

ACTION: (Moeser, Moved, Mikolajczyk Second.)

## **IX. ADVOCACY GOALS FOR 2022-2024 Area Plan (Discussion)**

Dan Idzikowski informed the Advocacy Committee that the Division on Aging must develop their 2022-2024 Area Plan; this is a requirement by the State. The plan consists of Demographic analysis, needs analysis, and plan goals. The State provides a template for the aging unites to follow to ensure all areas meet the needs of seniors in the County. Idzikowski asks the Advocacy Committee to think about what projects and priorities they think they should work on for the 2022-2024 Area plan, particularly in light of the ongoing pandemic.

## **X. ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES:**

**The Governor’s budget address, Alzheimer’s Association Advocacy Days**, will be virtual this year in half-hour blocks. )! You can register today by visiting: <http://bit.ly/Advocacy2021>. WAAN is working on a virtual Advocacy Day as well.

**Future Items:** The Advocacy Committee Chair and Vice-Chair will discuss the Advocacy Committee’s meeting dates and times. If they decide to change the dates and times of the meetings, they will notify members asap, but the schedule has not changed.

**Senior Stock Boxes:** Seniors are discarding certain items from their stock boxes that they think are unhealthy. Someone from the Hunger Taskforce to provide a presentation on Stock boxes. Mr. Idzikowski will forward this to Gaylyn Reske, the Nutrition Coordinator for the Division on Aging, to address this concern.

## **XI. ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at **3:04 p.m.**

The next Advocacy Committee meeting will be held virtually at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, February 1, 2021.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Vonda Nyang, Executive Assistant