



MILWAUKEE COUNTY
Department on Aging

**Commission on Aging
Meeting Minutes
October 23, 2020**

Commissioners

Richmond Izard, *Chair*
Sharon Abston-Coleman, Ph.D., *Vice Chair*
John Griffith, *Secretary*
Ronald Byington
Amber Miller
Elliot Moeser, Ph.D.
Gloria Pitchford-Nicholas, Ph.D.
Bettie Rodgers, J.D.
Shirley Sharp

Commissioners Excused

Jason Haas, *Milwaukee County Supervisor*
Gloria Miller
Rev. George Pumphrey, Ph.D., *Legislative Officer*

Milwaukee County Staff

County Executive David Crowley
MaryJo Meyers, *County Executive's Office*
Shakita LaGrant, *DHHS Director*
David Muhammad, *DHHS Deputy Director*
Schinika Fitch, *County Executive's Office*
Isaac Rowlett, *County Executive's Office*

Milwaukee County Staff Continued...

Jon Janowski, *MCDA Interim Executive Director*
Samta Bhatnagar
Margaret Daun, *Corporation Counsel*
David Farwell, *Corporation Counsel*
Rachel Kaehny-Frank
Jill Lintonen
Marietta Luster
Pam Mathews
Vonda Nyang
Dan Idzikowski
Mary Proctor Brown
Carrie Vallejo

Guests

Neal Minogue, *State of WI, DHS*
Gary Mikolajczyk
Pat Bruce, *ADRC Governing Board*
Jan Wilberg
Debra Jupka, *ADRC Governing Board*
Barbara Wyatt Sibley
Barbara Bechtel
David Hoffman
Pat Dunn

I. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

A quorum of Commission on Aging (COA) members convened virtually on Friday, October 23, 2020. Chairman Richmond Izard welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Secretary Griffith took roll call.

II. APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 25, 2020, COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING MINUTES

MOTION: To approve the September 25, 2020, Commission on Aging meeting minutes.

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

III. CONSENT AGENDA COMMITTEE OR COUNCIL REPORTS

- A. Executive Committee meeting minutes for September 14, 2020, and the Advocacy Committee meeting minutes for September 21, 2020, were distributed for review. There also was a motion for Commissioner Pumphrey's legislative report to be adopted as an office record of the Commission.

MOTION: To approve the Consent Agenda.

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

IV. COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS FROM COA ORGANIZATIONS AND THE COMMISSION:

There was testimony by the public from Jan Wilberg, Gary Mikolajczyk, Pat Dunn, David Hoffman, and Barbara Bechtel. Commissioner Griffith shared information with the County Executive about the various Committees and Councils, and officer positions that the Commission oversees. The committees and Councils attend various ethnic festivals to provide outreach to the community. Commissioner Griffith likes the concept of the “No Wrong Door”, but if it is a challenge for seniors reaching out when they need services, they will not walk through the door. Another concern is only one-quarter of the LGBT senior community tends to become homebound when they become seniors because of the prejudice and discrimination they experience when seeking services. They also become victims of abuse and experience more violence. The ombudsman program needs significant improvement, and more mobility services are necessary for seniors.

V. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS

A. County Executive’s discussion of the 2021 DHHS/Aging integration plan as it impacts Milwaukee County Seniors:

County Executive David Crowley thanked the Commission for everything they do for empowering seniors and their community. He understands that everyone doesn’t always agree to organizational changes, but everyone must recognize their shared commitment to the community. County Executive Crowley assured the Commission that in moving forward in partnership, he and his staff will ensure that the Commission will be present and involved with decisions.

The County Executive explained why he decided to integrate the Milwaukee County Department on Aging (MCDA) and Department on Health and Human Services (DHHS). A few of the highlights provided were that the integration will provide seamless direct access to services and professionals, and it will provide access to a wealth of vendors. The reorganization will protect senior programming from future tax levy reduction targets, and it will allow the County to redirect funding from duplicate administrative positions to create a front line of Human Service Worker positions in the Aging Resource Center.

The County Executive thanked the Commission for the opportunity to address their concerns. He looks forward to the ongoing partnership as they continue to strengthen and uplift the seniors of Milwaukee County and make Milwaukee County the healthiest County by achieving racial equity.

There was a question and answer session that followed the County Executive’s presentation. There were various questions asked by the Commission and the public:

Q: “Will there be a director position in the Department on Aging, and if so, who will they report to?”

CEX Answer: Yes, there will be a director position in the department on Aging, and they will report to the Director of DHHS.

Q: “Was there any input from the Senior community in developing the integration plan?”

CEX Answer: Yes, we received feedback from the League of Progressive Seniors, Chair of the Commission on Aging, Chair of the ADRC Governing Board, and past Commission on Aging chairs.

Q: “Will there be a new physical location that will include Aging and be accessible to seniors?”

CEX Answer: Yes, we are looking into making those improvements through capital projects in the 2021 budget.

Q: “Is there an evaluation process in place to measure progress on the integration plan?”

Q: “Is there a timeline in place to evaluate if the plan has been successful?”

Q: “What are the Adult Protective Services and Elder Abuse Unit pilot project’s outcome?”

CEX Answer: They compare stats from 2019 to the current pilot if seniors are being connected to their services and resources faster. The pilot started on June 1, 2020 and will end on December 31, 2020.

- Chairman Izard mentioned that the Advocacy Committee had presented the 2020 MCDA Public Policy Positions and Priorities at their January 2020 meeting. The policy paper listed six local priorities, and number six stated that seniors wanted the Department on Aging to remain a separate department. The Advocacy Committee voted to adopt this priority, which passed and was adopted successfully at their January 2020 meeting. Chairman Izard asked Commissioner Sharp to speak on this item.

Chairman Izard and Commissioner Pumphrey represented the Commission when they went to the State to advocate in favor of Assembly Bill 521, a proposal to increase the Milwaukee County sales tax that would enable the County to increase its revenue base.

Q: Chairman Izard asked the question, "After meeting and hearing from the different organizations that you mentioned, how has it impacted your decision making?" Chairman Izard said that he communicated that the Commission was not in favor of the merger and that there were issues with the process due to the Older American's Act requiring seniors' input throughout the planning and implementation process. Chairman Izard added that it would be inappropriate to decide to merge the department before hearing from seniors' and then ask them after the administration made a decision. Chairman Izard asked the County Executive how those perspectives informed his decision making?

CEX Answer: We must continue to have these discussions; if you think about how COVID-19 has hugely impacted the community, we had to look at things differently and think differently. We couldn't continue with the status quo. We have to continue to

have these conversations, and I understand that change is hard. We have some people who are in support and some who are not. We are continuing to move forward in bridging the gap with seniors. The County Executive's cabinet is a new Administration; I'm looking forward to continuing a new dialog.

Q: Commissioner Izard asked a question related to the comments from Director LeGrant and Marietta Luster about the pilot program with Elder Abuse and Adult Protective Services related to the integration plan. The pilot program started in June and will end in December. Again, it may be premature to move forward with the merger because it didn't inform the seniors.

CEX Answer: This is a pilot program to provide a measurement of what the program can do. If we are going to move forward with the "No Wrong Door" concept, it is critical to have the Commission on Aging at the table. If it is approved and continue to move forward, it will give you the ability to be a part of this process.

- **Neil Minogue:** The Administration supports the no wrong Door approach, as does the Department of Health and Human Services at the Federal level. Wisconsin's is one of the leaders in the Country that utilizes the "No Wrong Door" approach. Having the Aging and Disability Resource Center networks is like no other in the nation. More than 55% of Aging offices have integrated services, and since his tenure, no one has stated that they wanted to go back to being separate.

Q: Has Corporation Counsel ever looked at changing the County Laws when it comes to the Commission on Aging?

CEX Answer: We are not changing any laws when it comes to the Commission on Aging.

Q: Is the Milwaukee County Ordinance, Chapter 53, staying the same?

Answer: Correct, nothing changes as far as the governing bodies that have already been in place.

Pat Bruce: Voiced that the "No Wrong Door" was first introduced as an effort to help the intake line (Call Center). When reviewing the "No Wrong Door" concept, it didn't state whether it was open and accessible to everyone regardless of their income and assets. Most of the resources mentioned were in-house services when there is such an extensive network of resources.

Q: Will the new network be able to provide services across the board?

CEX Answer: Want to serve everyone and ensure everyone has access to all services, no matter what their background.

- **Jill Wilberg, Street Angels, President of the Board:** The Commission on Aging's stature and its involvement apparatus are critical to older adults. She looks forward to the service integration, and as a taxpayer, the savings in financial resources that can be placed directly into services.

The County Executive thanked the Commission for the opportunity to address their concerns. He looks forward to the ongoing partnership as they continue to strengthen and uplift the seniors of Milwaukee County in the mission to become the healthiest County and achieve racial equity.

The Commission had a lengthy discussion on whether to vote now to accept the County Executive's integration plan or if they should wait to hear from the Advisory Council. The majority of Commissioners stated they would like to move forward and vote today.

Commissioner Rodgers, Chair of the Advisory Council, informed the Commission that procedurally, the Commission needs the Advisory Council's input as the integration plan will affect the Area Plan, and those changes need a vote at the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council is supposed to come to the full Commission to accept any changes to the Area plan, and by voting today without the Council's input, the Commission would miss a procedural step.

Chairman Izard informed the Commission that if Commission adheres to the current Advisory Council scheduled meeting date, there wouldn't be enough time for the Commission to receive the Advisory Council's input and act if needed before the County Board's Finance Committee convenes next week Monday. Jon Janowski, Interim Executive Director, provided information on the County Board Finance Committee schedule for the following week. The Finance Committee will convene on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of next week. He believes that the Commission has at least two weeks to receive input from the Council and for the Commission to meet to come to a resolution. The Commission discussed possible meeting dates for the Advisory Council to meet the Finance Committee's schedule deadline. There was a suggestion to have the Advisory Council meet on Thursday, October 27, 2020.

The Chair suggested that the Advisory Council should have a joint meeting with the Commission to save time for those who have other commitments. After a lengthy debate, the Commission decided that the Advisory Council Chair will set the meeting date for her meeting, and the Commission will have someone contact the Commissioners to see when they would be able to deliberate after the Advisory Council has met.

VI. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at **11:37 a.m.**

The next Commission on Aging meeting is at 9 a.m. on Friday, November 13, 2020.