



**Commission on Aging - Advocacy Committee
Meeting Minutes
August 2, 2021**

Members Present

Commissioner Shirley Sharp, Chair
Commissioner John Griffith, Vice Chair
Barbara Bechtel
Maureen Conrad
Sopheya Farrell
William Meunier
Gary Mikolajczyk
Elliott Moeser
Cindy Van Vreede
Commissioner Janice Wilberg

Members Excused

Sandra Dotson
Commissioner Jason Haas
Bob Haase
Sally Lindner
Harold Oemig
Sherie Tussler

Daniel Idzikowski
Jon Janowski
Matthew Fortman
Pam Mathews
Carrie Vallejo

Guests

Julie Alexander
Eli Bonds
Christie Carter, MKE LGBT Ctr
Ana Castenada, UCC
Marisol Cervera, UCC
Julie Chapella, Rep. Cabrerra's office
Martha Collins, Feeding America
Elida Elizondo, SSA
Thomas Gossett, Goodwill
Beth Hengst
Jacqueline Jones
Matthew Hayes, LAW
Kent Mayfield, ADRC Bd
Anita Pyant
Kerri Tyler
Cathy Wood, SOA

Milwaukee County Staff

Andrew Bethke

I. CALL TO ORDER & Introductions

Commissioner Griffith called the Advocacy Committee to order on Monday, August 2, 2021 at 1:32 pm. Idzikowski called the roll and a quorum was present.

II. Review of the June 7, 2021 Advocacy Committee Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Approve the June 7, 2021 Advocacy Committee meeting minutes as presented.

ACTION: Approved Unanimously (Moeser, Wilberg seconded).

III. UPDATE ON ACTION ITEMS

Idzikowski noted that the only item for action from last time was to write a letter to the Governor regarding the additional match requirements for federal ARPA funding supplementing the Older Americans Act. Idzikowski noted that the members of the Advocacy committee's time can be valued and used as match under the OAA, so he thanked them for

their time. He also noted that the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging made a request to Congress to remove the match requirement for the additional ARPA funding related to the Older Americans Act. For the 2021 Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Act and the ENACT Act, we still need to draft letters.

MOTION: To write a letter to Milwaukee County's federal delegation supporting n4a's request to remove the OAA match requirement from supplemental appropriations through ARPA. (Moeser, Bechtel, seconded).

ACTION: Passes unanimously.

IV. RACIAL EQUITY AND ADVOCACY

Vice Chair Griffith provides a brief remembrance of Robert F. Kennedy in a speech given during the time of apartheid in South Africa. Reminds us that advocacy has a purpose and we need to cause "good trouble" once in a while to make things better for all of us.

V. LEGISLATIVE & POLICY UPDATES (DISCUSSION & ACTION)

A. Federal Aging Policy

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA): MCDA is still awaiting its additional ARPA OAA funding allocation from the State of Wisconsin. Members can make their voice heard on how to spend this funding by sending comments to MCDA.

2021 Federal Budget Appropriations: Older Americans Act funding, as well as programs affected older adults is substantially increased in the proposed budget reconciliation bill that was recently passed by the House and is pending in the Senate.

Social Security Administration (SSA): SSA offices are still closed. Taking appointments in office only in an emergency. Trying to get additional support to help residents file for disability benefits. Moeser asks whether SSA will help people understand if they are getting all the benefits to which they are entitled. Elizondo notes that "tune-up" ads are related to Medicare, not Social Security. Medicare questions can be directed to a SHIP Counselor through the ADRC.

Medicaid Expansion: The legislature failed to pass Medicaid expansion in the Wisconsin State budget. However, the Medicaid Saves Lives Act has now been introduced in the Senate to offer a federal Medicaid alternative in the 12 states that did not approve Medicaid expansion for residents who would have qualified under expansion. It also provides additional incentives to states to expand. Senator Baldwin is a principal co-sponsor.

MOTION: To support the Medicaid Save Lives Act (S. 2315) to expand Medicaid in Wisconsin to adults up to age 64 who do not now qualify based on income 100 – 138% of federal poverty level.

ACTION: Passes unanimously.

Griffith asks about the “human infrastructure” bill and whether there are caregiver provisions along with Medicaid expansion included in this proposal? Idzikowski notes that no specific legislation has yet been introduced, but this is still in negotiation. Medicare expansion would likely be included in this as well.

B. State Legislative Issues:

Governor’s Committee on Broadband Access. Written recommendations available on the Task Force website.

Wisconsin State Budget 2021-23: The Budget was signed by the Governor with minor modifications. Some favorable action regarding Aging Network:

- Dementia Care Specialist expansion approved (unclear impact in MC).
- Medicaid Rates for Personal Care Workers & CNAs increase
- Inflationary increase in Specialized Transportation

No expansion to Medicaid, no increase in funding for ADRCs or other provisions championed by the Commission on Aging.

Rep. Cabrerra’s office representative available, but no updates.

Medicaid Waiver HCBS Services (Family Care, IRIS, Partnership, PACE) federal match increase under ARPA. DHS plans to use to increase funding for direct care, quality & innovation, tribal service, family & informal caregivers, additional services through HCBS & Assisted Living oversight & quality assurance. Opportunity to still influence DHS on use of this additional funding. MCDA will push for additional funding for transportation.

BOALTC Ombudsman: Griffith notes that in the budget no additional funding was appropriated to the BOALTC ombudsman to support additional oversight of the Assisted Living Facilities.

C. Milwaukee County Legislative Issues: No new issues.

VI. 2022 MILWAUKEE COUNTY BUDGET

Matt Fortman, the Milwaukee County DHHS Budget Director, provided the Advocacy Committee with an overview of the County Budget process and the Aging Division budget. Fortman noted that the tax levy target this year is neutral, which means much more modest reductions only due to inflation. The County budget does not include any of the ARPA funding, which will be the subject of future discussions. The Aging Division budget will be incorporated as a unit into the DHHS Budget. All department level budgets are due to the County Executive’s office by July 15th. The County Executive then refines the overall County budget and submits to the County Board of Supervisors in October, with a vote on the final budget in November. The Aging Division receives very little tax levy funding, which is used to support match for federal OAA funding, to support the Elder Abuse program, and Senior Center programming and maintenance. All units are also required to submit a racial equity analysis

with their budget request. Other than ARPA funding issues, the Division does not expect major changes in its budget from 2021.

Discussion follows regarding the process for allocating ARPA funding. The County has received a direct allocation from the federal government but is still awaiting clarifying guidance from Treasury on how to spend these funds. The County is still in the idea generation phase. The AAA will also receive an allocation from the State of enhanced OAA funding, but we have not yet received this funding or guidance from the State. Ideas are welcome for how to maximize the value for older adults in Milwaukee County.

Idzikowski pointed out that the additional OAA allocation through ARPA came with the same match requirements as the usual OAA funds. In Milwaukee County, MCDA has largely used County levy and state shared revenues to meet the OAA match requirements. In some instances, it has passed along this match requirement to its vendors, but for most contracts it has not. This means that in order to draw down the additional ARPA funds, the County will have to find additional sources of match. The legislature is keen on restricting the funds coming to counties – especially Milwaukee County – and they don't seem to understand that we can't use all of this additional federal money unless there is also some increase in state or local revenues available for the match.

VII. 2022-24 Aging Plan – Advocacy Goals

Commission Wilberg explained that the Aging Advisory Councils leadership in advancing the 2022-24 Area Aging Plan. She noted that the Advisory Council is using population demographics, survey data, and listening session input for formulate the plan. The Council is looking to the Advocacy Committee for its best thinking on advocacy goal activities.

Idzikowski provided overview of the plan goal instructions as well as summarizing the Older Americans Act language and current 3- year goals in the area of advocacy:

- Senior Statesman engagement in advocacy
- Quarterly public policy information sessions
- Partner with other community providers to host a reception for public officials.

Discussion followed. Mikolajcek suggested having all of the County Supervisors nominate someone for membership on the Advocacy Committee. Wilberg suggests three goals:

- 1) Build a network of grassroots advocates, using the senior centers as a base.
- 2) Influence at least 2 public policies in the federal, state, and local arenas.
- 3) Collaborate with other organizations in the community to promote at least one issue area affecting older adults

Moeser thinks the 3rd goal from 2019-21 was a good one and thinks we should repeat it in 2021-22 – host a reception for County Supervisors or Milwaukee County area state legislators. Conrad suggests a goal around nutrition, providing access to fresh fruits and vegetables in the congregate meal program by partners with Hunger Task Force or others. Griffith suggests a goal relating to preventing consumer and Medicare scams. Meunier wonders what it would take to organize the senior statesmen – perhaps an annual gathering with presentation on current issues and providing them with action items. Same think at senior centers. Then need these senior statement and senior center participants to spread the work to their friends and neighbors. We need to have a more ambitious goals for activating local advocates beyond this committee. Griffith notes that maybe we can bring in someone to help us build the network.

Judith agrees with Muenier, was a Senior Ambassador through Interfaith and would like to do so again. Anita Pyant, a social worker and caregiver, suggests transportation consistency and quality in transportation. Have better oversight and quality assurance for programs. Also suggests combining young people with older adults in an intergenerational advocacy effort. Muenier suggest having collaboration with union members and with other groups. Mikolajczyk asks if we have a Commissioner who represents labor on the Commission on Aging? Griffith replies that we do not. Griffith notes that at the State Aging Commission, DHS was very complimentary of Milwaukee County in creating its survey and getting over 1000 responses. Griffith thanks Commissioner Wliberg on behalf of the Advisory Council for their good work.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS & ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES:

Griffith notes that WAAN is trying to expand opportunity to participate at a state level by local advocates and will keep the committee apprised of those efforts. Idzikowski notes that the next Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network meeting will be on August 5th at 9:30 a.m.

IX. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS & MEETING DATES

Conrad asks about group grocery trips resuming in September. Idzikowski states he does not know yet but will be meeting with the provider this week. Griffith would like to have more restaurants available in the FoodShare program.

X. ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

MOTION: Adjourn.

ACTION: Passes unanimously (Mikolaczyk, Conrad seconds).