



**MILWAUKEE COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING
Advocacy Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 13, 2021**

Members Present

Commissioner John Griffith, Vice Chair
Milwaukee County Supervisor Jason Haas
Commissioner Elliot Moeser
Commissioner Janice Wilberg
Barbara Bechtel
Sopheya Farrell
William "Bill" Meunier
Gary Mikolajczyk
Harold Oemig
Cindy Van Vreede

Members Excused

Commissioner Shirley Sharp
Maureen Conrad
Sandra Dotson
Bob Haase
Sally Lindner
Gary Sprong

Sherrie Tussler, *Hunger Taskforce*

Milwaukee County Staff

Andrew Bethke, MCDA
Alena DeGrado, MCDA
Daniel Idzikowski, MCDA
Pam Mathews, DOA
Vonda Nyang, MCDA
Carrie Vallejo, MCDA

Guests

Eli Bonds
Martha Collins, Feeding America
Pat Dunn
Kathy Gale, ERAS Senior Network
Vanessa Llanas, Senator Tammy Baldwin's Office
Kent Mayfield, ADRC Board
Amanda Weiler, United Way of Greater MKE
Cathy Wood, Serving Older Adults

I. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

A quorum of Advocacy Committee members convened virtually on Monday, September 13, 2021. Vice Chair Griffith called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. Dan Idzikowski, Division on Aging Program and Policy Coordinator, welcomed everyone and took a roll call. Vice-Chair Griffith chaired today's meeting in Commissioner Sharp's absence.

Vice-Chair Griffith informed the Advocacy Committee members that he would like each member to consider specializing in either federal, state, or local advocacy. Each group would take responsibility to research and identify issues to discuss at each upcoming Advocacy Committee meeting. In this way, the Committee will take more responsibility over the topics and content of the Advocacy meetings. Commissioner Griffith asked Idzikowski to poll each member to find out which workgroup they would like to participate in over the upcoming month.

II. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE AUGUST 2, 2021 ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MINUTES

One revision requested for the August 2, 2021 minutes: To include in the motion to send a letter to Senator Baldwin in support of the Medicare Saves Lives Act Senate bill 2315 that the Advocacy Committee made at that meeting.

MOTION: To amend the minutes from the August 2, 2021 Advocacy Committee meeting.

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

MOTION: To approve the amended August 2, 2021 Advocacy Committee meeting minutes

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Moser Moved, Meunier Second).

III. UPDATE ON ACTION ITEMS

1. ARPA Funding:

The Commission will send a letter to the federal delegation requesting support for dropping the local match requirement for Older American Act funds allocated under ARPA so Milwaukee County would not have to come up with additional federal funding.

2. County Budget Priorities:

Idzikowski provided a status update on the County Budget priorities. The County budget office informed DHHS that it will have a flat County levy target for next year's budget. MCDA's budget is part of the DHHS budget which has been submitted to the County Executive. The County Executive is reviewing all of the requested Departmental budgets and it is likely DHHS's budget will go through the approval process without revisions. The County Executive will have budget hearing sessions for the public, and then sometime in October, the 2022 budget will be released to the full County Board for review and final approval.

Meunier notes that the ADRC Board learned of and was interested in additional funding that was provided for additional Community Intervention Team (CIT) policing and Crisis Assessment Response Teams (CART).

3. Area Aging Plan Goals:

Idzikowski informed the Advocacy Committee that the 2022-2024 Advocacy Committee Area Aging Plan goals had been incorporated into the proposed overall goals. He reviewed the goals and informed the Advocacy Committee of the process of reviewing, revising, and finalizing the goals before the Commission on Aging's November meeting. The County Board will then review and approve the final Area Plan. Mikolajczyk offers to make his union aware of the plan hearing process.

IV. RACIAL EQUITY AND ADVOCACY REFLECTION, CINDY VAN VREEDE

Cindy Van Vreede reflected on her experiences growing up in a white family and learning to overcome societal prejudice through personal experience and interaction with neighbors and co-workers of diverse backgrounds and cultures.

V. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY UPDATES (DISCUSSION & ACTION)

A. Federal Aging Policy Briefing

Brief updates were provided on the following federal legislative initiatives:

- **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Infrastructure and Federal Budget Older American's Act (OAA)**
- **Expanding Medicare Coverage and Vaccinations**
- **John Lewis Voting Rights Act (H.R. 3)**
- **Federal Regs and EO's**

Senator Tammy Baldwin's Office (Vanessa Llanas, representative) encourages personal letters to Congressional offices to support these initiatives. Individual letters are the most effective way to influence policy, so encourage your networks to do so.

MOTION: To send a letter of support to congregational and senatorial representatives on the issues addressed in Coordinator's Idzikowski's report.

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

Griffith notes that we have consistent representation from Senator Baldwin's office and Congresswoman Moore's office, but the other Senator and Representatives should be admonished for not attending.

MOTION: To send a thank you letter to Senator Baldwin's Office

ACTION: Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Meunier Moved, Wilberg Second.)

Griffith asks about federal Equity Act. Idzikowski notes that it has not moved forward.

B. Milwaukee County Legislative Issues:

Idzikowski provides a brief update on Wisconsin legislation of interest, including telehealth under Medicaid. Wisconsin DHS has informed Milwaukee County that we will receive and additional \$264,274 in annual funding for the Dementia Care Specialist program. State applied an equitable funding formula rather than simply distributing the DCS expansion funding to counties that did not already have a Dementia Care Specialist.

Idzikowski explains that Medicaid is a federal / state partnership program. Usually, Wisconsin pays about 40% of the cost of the program, while the federal government picks up 60%. During the federally declared pandemic however, the percentage of federal Medicaid match funding increased to 90%. This created a windfall in additional funding for the state of Wisconsin. Wisconsin DHS has put forward a plan to spend these additional funds primarily to support workforce shortages and to shore up the Medicaid waiver Home and Community Based Support Services for Long Term Care. Idzikowski recommends that the Committee consider responding to the DHS proposal by requesting that additional funding for a transportation be provided in the Long Term Care programs and that a segregated fund for a transportation benefit be established.

Idzikowski also noted that the Governor's Task Force on Broadband Access completed its work and put out a report with a series of recommendations here:

<https://psc.wi.gov/Documents/broadband/2021%20Governors%20Task%20Force%20on%20>

[0Broadband%20Access.pdf](#). Idzikowski notes that subsidies for cell phone and Internet service (www.GetEmergencyBroadband.org and PSC Internet & Phone Helpline: 608-267-3595) are available during the Public Health Emergency.

MOTION: That the Commission on Aging support the establishment of a separate transportation benefit within the Medicaid Waiver Home and Community Based Services programs in Wisconsin (Van Vreede, Bechtel seconds).

ACTION: Motion passes unanimously.

Griffith comments that given the high rate of death in nursing facilities during natural disasters and public health emergencies, Wisconsin should be requiring an evacuation plan and ensure that all skilled nursing facilities should report and remediate lead pipes, radon, and asbestos in their facilities. Farrell adds that these facilities should also be reporting to guardians and caregivers when a facility has a power outage. Griffith will advance this proposal at the next State Aging Council meeting. Idzikowski recommends contacting the Wisconsin DHS Division on Quality Assurance to determine what standards are already in place in this regard. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/dqa/index.htm>

- **Milwaukee County Budget:**

Supervisor Haas provided a brief report. Nothing to report as the County budget won't be submitted from the County Executive to the County Board until October 1, 2021. MCDA has a flat budget for 2022 which is good news because no County levy cuts are proposed. With ARPA funding available it is likely the County budget will be in good shape.

Meunier notes that the CARES ACT and ARPA money is only temporary and asks whether there is any thought on using this funding for support of infrastructure such as senior centers. Haas responds that the current administration is focused on trying to get the state legislature to all a county sales tax increase to provide additional annual revenue to the County. At this point, both the County Board and the County Executive want senior services to continue without cutting them. No further details at this time. Meunier clarifies that he is asking about using the ARPA funding for infrastructure improvements and doesn't think that the sales tax initiative has much of a chance of passing. Haas responds that progress is being made in regard to the sales tax initiative.

Griffith asks Supervisor Haas to respond at the next Advocacy meeting on County capital budget plans for the Coggs building and the senior centers.

VI. ADVOCACY DURING THE PANDEMIC BEYOND SENIOR STATESMAN

No comments were made on this issue and it will be tabled until the next meeting.

VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES

- Milwaukee County Independent Redistricting Committee expects to hold a virtual public hearing scheduled for Wednesday, September 15, 2021, at 7 p.m. The public hearing will

be live streamed on the County's Legislative Information Center (CLIC). Dan will forward information to the Advocacy Committee members.

- Bus Route Changes have become an Issue: See MCTS's TransitNEXT plan: <https://www.ridemcts.com/programs/mcts-next>. Talk to your local County Supervisor about your experiences.
- This Thursday is Seniorfest Day at Summerfest. Free admission from 12 p.m. – 4 p.m.
- National Disability Vote Coalition Week: September 14th Voter Registration Webinar, from 9:00 – 10:00 am via Zoom. September 17th Voter Registration Webinar for Service Providers from 12:00 – 1:00 pm via Zoom. See: <https://disabilityvote.org/2021>
- Milwaukee County Falls Prevention week: Workshops on September 21st at Hart Park Senior Center, September 23rd at Clinton Rose Senior Center.

VIII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND MEETING DATES

IX. ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at **3:05 p.m.**

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting.

ACTION: Passes Unanimously (Bechtel, Mikolajcyk seconds).

The next Advocacy Committee meeting will be held virtually at 1:30 p.m. Monday, October 4, 2021.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Daniel Idzikowski, Program and Policy Coordinator