



**MILWAUKEE COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING  
Advocacy Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
October 4, 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  
Martha Collins  
Maureen Conrad  
Sandra Dotson  
Bob Haase  
Sally Lindner  
Gary Sprong  
Sherrie Tussler, *Hunger Taskforce*

**Milwaukee County Staff**

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

**Guests**

Sen. Timothy Carpenter, Wis Senate  
Pat Dunn  
Elida Elizondo, Social Security Administration  
Judith Free  
Sen. Johnson, Wis Senate  
Shannon McCoy  
Jessica Marie Laughlin  
Vanessa Llanas, Senator Tammy Baldwin's Office  
Amy Mlot  
Cathy Wood, Serving Older Adults

**I. CALL TO ORDER & ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE CHAIR**

The Advocacy Committee members convened virtually on Monday, October 4, 2021. 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. A quorum was not present. Commissioner Griffith chaired today's meeting after being appointed after the resignation of Commissioner Sharp. Mikolajczyk enters late and a quorum is present.

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 OF THE SEPTEMBER 13, 2021 ADVOCACY COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**MOTION:** To approve the September 14, 2021 Advocacy Committee meeting minutes

**ACTION:** Motion prevailed by unanimous consent (Mikolajczyk moved, Wilberg second).

## **III. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR**

Wilberg nominates William Meunier. No other nominations made.

**MOTION:** Close nominations for Vice Chair of the Advocacy Committee

**ACTION:** Passes unanimously (Moeser, Mikolajczyk).

**MOTION:** Elect William Meunier as Vice Chair of the Advocacy Committee

**ACTION:** Passes unanimously.

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

### **1. Medicare Expansion**

### **2. 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. Baldwin and Stihl replied that they would look into this issue.

### **3. FMAP – Transportation Carve Out for HCBS Long Term Care Programs**

No letter has yet been sent. Waiting for a WAAN position.

### **4. Dementia Care Specialist Expansion Funding**

State legislature passed a budget provision to expand the Dementia Care Specialist program statewide. Not clear that Milwaukee would receive any funding since we already have a state-funded DCS. However, DHS interpreted this to provide at least a ½ time DCS to each county and with the rest of the funding, applied a new equitable formula that will result in an annual increase of \$135,000 in DCS funding to Milwaukee.

### **5. 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 AAA Plan goals. The next step is holding public hearings. Commissioner Wilberg encourages members to get the word out regarding the public hearings and encourages support for the goals. Then the full plan will come before the Commission on Aging at its November meeting.

### **6. National Disability Voter Registration Week**

Idzikowski encourages members to visit the Disability Vote Coalition website to learn about ongoing efforts to improve access to voting and encourage participation.

## V. RACIAL EQUITY AND ADVOCACY REFLECTION, William Meunier

Meunier indicates that equity means that everyone should have an equal playing field and this is not the case. Policies and laws have to reflect real equity. For example, FHA and VA did not extend loans to housing developers unless they had a “whites only” clause in their contracts. This practice persisted from the 1940s through the 1960s and resulted in widespread segregation, depriving non-white residents of the opportunity to own homes and accumulate wealth. This caused the perpetuation of great disparity in wealth and widespread segregation that continues and has caused great resentment on both sides. Most whites don’t understand that they have benefited from these policies at the exclusion of blacks and think that black people are getting “handouts” when in fact, it is actually whites who have received the great majority of social policy benefits.

## VI. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY UPDATES (DISCUSSION & ACTION)

### A. Federal Aging Policy Briefing

Brief updates were provided on the following federal legislative initiatives:

- **Infrastructure and Federal Budget Older American’s Act (OAA)**
- **Expanding Medicare Coverage, Dental & Medical Nutrition Therapy Act of 2021 (S. 1536/H.R. 3108)**
- **Better Care Better Jobs Act (for HCBS Medicaid)**
- **Federal Regs & EO’s / RAISE (Caregiver) Task Force Report released**

### B. State Legislative Issues

- **Legislation pending & Autumn Session Priorities** – not much legislation pending nor is there much appetite to legislate this fall. Potential WAAN strategy to advocate that ARPA funding be used to fill in some budget gaps such as ARDC funding increases.
- **Wisconsin Redistricting** proceeding. Maps will be proposed by the legislature and sent to the Governor for consideration. Link to state redistricting site sent to Advocacy Committee members.
- **Administrative Rules/ Gov’s Task Forces/ NEMT** First change in the statewide Non-Emergency Medical Transportation broker in a decade. MTM to Veyo.
- **DHS COVID-19 Pfizer Vaccine Booster Doses** Make a decision on preparing for older adults to receive COVID-19 booster shots.

Griffith indicates that he received some encouraging words from some state legislators regarding the possibility of adding a sales tax increase proposal for Milwaukee County. Encourages members of the Committee to advocate for this provision, particularly with out-state legislators if members have any contacts.

Griffith comments again on the need to have action taken to mandate nursing home evacuation plans in the event of an emergency and to plan specifically for the special needs of those residents. Also notes that nursing homes received an increase in state funding, but no increase for nursing home ombuds or oversight.

**C. Milwaukee County Legislative Issues**

- **Milwaukee County Budget / ARPA distribution** – ARPA OAA funding still not released by DHS to Milwaukee County AAA. This funding is just over \$4 million dollars, the majority of which is for nutrition programming. County has its own pot of ARPA funding directly allocated and is holding a series of public hearings.
- **Milwaukee County Redistricting**
- **items of interest – Vaccination Policy** County Executive issued order that all County employees and vendors who work in close proximity with residents be vaccinated against COVID-19 unless they receive an approved exemption.
- **Milwaukee County Budget:**

Supervisor Haas provided a brief report. The DHHS budget presented by the County Executive is a flat budget with no levy cuts proposed. Haas explains budget process.

The County Executive begins the budget process by requesting all Departments to submit budgets the CEX Budget office. The CEX then proposes a County budget at the start of October. On October 11<sup>th</sup> the County Finance Committee begins budget hearings. Department directors present to the Committee. Following these hearings, supervisors have the opportunity to introduce budget amendments.

On October 18<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. is an online public hearing on the budget. 25-27<sup>th</sup> budget hearing with amendments.

On Monday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, 6-8 pm is a full County Board meeting on the budget.

November 8<sup>th</sup> is the annual budget adoption meeting by the County Board. Forwarded to the County Executive for vetoes. If there are any vetoes, it comes back to the County Board for consideration. Otherwise enacted into law.

Moeser asks about redistricting. Haas states he can't comment on the state process but can explain the County process. The County Board of Supervisors passed a resolution to appoint an independent panel of retired judges to redraw the districts. This panel contracted with the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission to draw new maps. Haas comments that these SEWRPC maps straightened out the districts, but they have issues such as sharing of 53206 in Milwaukee and Shorewood in one district, and one district that has twenty some parks in one district. The Board asked the commission to address this issue. Moeser asked about equitable representation of seniors among the districts. Do supervisors without large senior populations pay attention to senior interests?

Griffith asks that SEWRPC provide data. Idzikowski brings up maps and provides information on the County redistricting committee meetings. Meunier asks about Hispanic representation. Haas responds that there are two proposed majority Hispanic districts.

Moeser asks if there are any hot button issues on the budget this year? Haas responds that there are no major cuts to the budget. However, this is primarily because catastrophic cuts to transit and human services were avoided by utilizing the CARES Act and ARPA funding.

When this money goes away any programs built up with this funding will have to be paid for with general tax levy funds and the structural deficit will return. In the long run, we will need a sales tax or other revenue increase in order to address long term deficits.

Moeser comments that if the state legislature does not recognize the need for Milwaukee County to raise additional levels of funding, the County will be in great fiscal difficulty. He notes that this makes state redistricting even more important.

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.

## **VII. ADVOCACY DURING THE PANDEMIC: BEYOND SENIOR STATESMAN**

Meunier states that he thinks we should come up with a new name for the program because "stateman" is sexist. Maybe "senior advocates". Concurred by Wilberg & Moeser.

Griffith suggests adding computer skills and e-advocacy to the program. Meunier would include how to use cell phones for this purpose. Add a technology component.

## **VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES**

**i. ASPEN Malnutrition Awareness Week™ on October 4-8, 2021.**

**ii. Medicare 101 Series during Open Enrollment until December 7, 2021**

## **IX. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND MEETING DATES**

Idzikowski inquires whether the Committee wishes to make any changes to the Committee schedule moving forward into 2022. Griffith notes that there is traditionally not a meeting in December. Moeser affirms the idea of continuing to meet on the first Monday of the month with the exception of December. No other changes suggested

Griffith proposes that the ADRC provide a presentation on all services provided at the January 2022 Advocacy Committee meeting.

Moeser suggests clarifying what a quorum is in regard to this Committee, particularly in regard to the status of former Chair Sharp. Idzikowski notes that Commission on Aging Chair Rodgers

has spoken with Commissioner Sharp and it is her understanding that Ms. Sharp has not resigned, just stepped down as chair.

Meunier suggests that Idzikowski investigate whether or not we can change the name of the senior statesman program. This might be raised at the next Commission on Aging meeting.

**X. ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at **3:03 p.m.**

**MOTION:** To adjourn the meeting.

**ACTION:** Passes Unanimously (Mikolajczyk, Meunier seconds).

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

Respectfully Submitted by:

Daniel Idzikowski, Program and Policy Coordinator