



Our mission is to deliver innovative support to lead aging agencies as we work together to promote, protect, and enhance the well-being of older people in Wisconsin.

Board Meeting Minutes

Friday, December 8, 2023 | 10:00 a.m.

Microsoft Teams Video Conference Call

Members present: *Beth Esser, Bob Borremans, Cookie Lough, Rob Wilkinson, John Helling, Wes Martin, Dave Hoberg,*

Members excused: *Dave Ostness*

Others Present: *John Schnabl, Executive Director; Patrick Metz, Fiscal Manager; Nick Musson, OAA Consultant -Transportation Specialist; Jean Lynch, OAA Consultant Manager; Sky Van Rossum, Special Projects Manager; Kate Schilling, Legal Services Manager; Sara Koenig, Elder Nutrition Program Manager, Program and Policy Analyst-Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources, DHS; Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator*

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m. by Beth Esser, Vice-Chair.

Review and Approval of December 8, 2023 Agenda

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by Rob Wilkinson, to approve December 8, 2023 agenda. Motion unanimously carried.

Review and Approval of October 13, 2023 Draft Meeting Minutes

Motion by Cookie Lough, seconded John Helling, to approve October 13, 2023 draft meeting minutes. Motion carried; abstention from Dave Hoberg due not being present at Oct. 13, 2023, board meeting.



Public Comment **None**

Comments from Chair

Beth Esser, Vice Chair:

- The last finance and executive board meeting were quite lengthy; lots to discuss for 2024.

Directors Report

John Schnabl:

- Mary Wolf resigned from the board effective October 17, 2023. We thank her for her time and commitment to the GWAAR board. We are in the process of actively recruiting for at least one new board member because we can have up to 11 board members if we choose.
- There will be a Statewide Aging, Disability, and Independent Living Network Conference April 23-25 at the LaCrosse Conference Center. If there are any board members that would like to attend, please let me know and I will get you the registration information.
- I highly encourage you to read the staff reports. They are broken out by department, and programs within each department. I know they can be a little lengthy, but they really give a good summary of what's happening at GWAAR.
- A report from the Great Lakes Intertribal Council which serves the 11 tribes in Wisconsin, was also included in your email of materials to review. Kassy, who is our point of contact there, did a great job in creating a year in review document on how they have been helping and serving the tribes.
- We do have the 2024 preliminary allocation numbers for the counties and tribes. Allocations will be using the 2022 numbers because the federal budget has not been passed. It will be nice to get those contracts out from our end soon at this time of year, because in the previous couple of years, there have been issues around that.

- On February 22, 2024, the state will be doing an in-person site review of GWAAR, and the main emphasis is reviewing the progress of our three-year aging plan. It will take place at 9:30 a.m. at the Madison office. Neal Minogue, Sara Koenig, Jean Lynch, Nick Musson, and I will be at this meeting. The results of this review will be shared with the Advisory Council. If any board member would like to attend, please send me an email. I will make sure to pass on any correspondence we get following that site review.

Finance Committee Report

Dave Hoberg:

- Honorariums: The Finance Committee decided it needed to devote an entire meeting to the topic of honorariums. That meeting will take place January 8th. Please forward on your comments and thoughts regarding honorariums to John or me. Since Wes Martin called for the motion, a Teams Meeting invite to this meeting will be sent to him. *(No Action needed at this time)*
- For 2024, we're showing a deficit budget. There is a proposed 2% increase in the payroll; with ARPA funds running out, we decided to be conservative.

Patrick Metz:

Budget:

- A couple of things driving the deficit is the Title 5 program, which is the Senior Employment Program, which we've had for some time. But annually, the cost of supporting it has stepped up significantly over the last couple years. For 2024, we're looking at a negative impact of nearly \$77,000. This strain will not be something that will carry forward into the 2025 budget because the board has agreed to not renew the contract for 2024-2025.
- We have cut the Sustainable Kitchens budget from about \$7600 a month down to \$4200 a month because we will not be doing a county/tribal specific project this year.
- The closing of the Brookfield office has helped save GWAAR money.

- ARPA funds for GWAAR will most likely run out way before September 2024.
- Another piece of funding that's up in the air are the two new attorneys within the Elder Law Center that were funded with ARPA funding.
There is conversation with the state regarding some ADRC funds to possibly fill that gap.
- As John mentioned earlier, the Title III administration allocation along with all the other Title III allocations are based on 2022 numbers which are fairly low. It is uncertain to as to what kind of number we will end up with in 2024 and will be based on the passage of a final budget for the federal government. That's why we are being very conservative now and very understandably so.

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by Rob Wilkinson, to approve 2024 budget as presented to include a 2% salary increase for employees. Motion unanimously carried.

- Financial statements are looking good. GWAAR is good shape financially. After payables and receivables, we are averaging about 1.8 million in reserves.
- We are always looking at our financial reporting software and how we can make reports better so financial statements are easy to manipulate and are user friendly.

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by John Helling, to place on file financial statements as presented. Motion unanimously carried.

- Audit: We're developing ways that meet the needs of those corrective action findings. One of the things is that auditors want to see, with a small organization like ours, is that we are ensuring segregation of duties. We've developed a monthly tracking spreadsheet to keep track of duties that need to be signed off on, to make sure everything is taken care of and by who.
- The 2022 audit should be complete soon. Next year should be better now that we are fully staffed in Fiscal. Pre-audit of 2023 will start shortly.
- Policy and Procedure Manual: Jenny, who was working with us at CLA, left so that project had to be placed on hold. We have been working with her replacement and hope to have this project completed first quarter 2024.

- We're also looking at new accounting software. Our current software is good, but there is room for improvement. I presented a new software to the Finance Committee that is more robust and a better fit for us. We will be reviewing this proposal and if we choose to move in that direction or can move in that direction, it would be something implemented in 2025.

Executive Committee Report

Beth Esser & Nick Musson:

- After the RFP process that took place earlier in the year, the board approved staying with QTI/Tandem and requested a contract that outlined the services that we receive as well as additional services we can purchase and the terms and conditions that go along with those. The Executive Committee had about an hour-long meeting where we went over the terms and conditions that outline QTI/Tandem's responsibilities. The responsibilities within this relationship, as well as cost of services are basically going to stay the same as 2023. We did a lot of back and forth and had numerous questions which resulted in us deciding to approve the QTI contract for 2024.
- QTI/Tandem charges an administrative fee of \$95 per full-time covered employee and \$30 per part time covered employee. There's also the \$6 per employee per month EPL fee, which is employment practices liability insurance.

Motion by John Helling, seconded by Wes Martin, to approve the signing of QTI/Tandem's 2024 contract. Motion unanimously carried.

Advisory Council Update

Nick Musson:

- An Advisory Council meeting was held November 3rd and we approved a new member, Robert Best, of Waukesha County, to the council. He is currently working as a manager at a Senior Center in Cudahy, WI. Robert has over 40 years of experience working with older adults in a variety of settings, including skilled nursing facilities, assisted living, independent senior living, and community-based services. Now we are still looking for additional Advisory Council members, so if you know of anyone that might be interested, please have them contact me.

- We discussed kicking off GWAAR's 2025-2027 aging plan. The beginning of the community engagement process will begin in March, which will include interviews, focus groups and surveys. The Advisory Council is instrumental in collecting community engagement information from the aging unit directors to help the planning process.
- The next Advisory Council meeting will be held on February 16th and that meeting will focus on community engagement and interviews.
- The Advisory Council will have an in-person meeting at the Portage County ADRC on July 19th. This will be the first in-person meeting in quite some time, and all are very much looking forward to it.

Manager's Reports

Jean Lynch:

- GWAAR has been working with the Wisconsin Insurance Alliance and Office of the Commissioner of Insurance to draft some volunteer driver legislation to modify the state laws to prohibit an insurer from increasing the rate, denying, nonrenewing or cancelling an insured solely for acting as a volunteer driver. Ultimately in the end, Wisconsin Insurance Alliance decided they will no longer support this bill, and if it advances, they will be neutral at best. GWAAR has decided to move forward with the legislation without Wisconsin Insurance Alliance's support and take it to the Senate and Assembly Committees on Insurance to garner support.
- A group of the consultants, Bryn Ceman, Angie Sullivan, Communications Coordinator Lucia Mennen, and I have been working on a project called the Aging Training curriculum. We've created a welcome letter for all the new aging ADRC and tribal directors and supervisors. And along with this welcome letter, we also created a curriculum of training materials. Each OAA Consultant has created a welcome video introducing themselves and also a short 101 basic video in that subject. These modules are all being housed in GWAAR ED which is our learning module system. We are hoping this will be very helpful to train new staff within the aging network.

Kate Schilling:

- Yesterday was the last day of Medicare Part D Open enrollment, which goes through December 7th and for people to switch and reexamine their advantage plans and Part D plans. Our Elder Benefit Specialists and SHIP Counselors are taking a breath of fresh air today as they say goodbye to one more fall open enrollment being successfully closed.
- We do have an Advantage Plan switch period from January to March, so people who find they don't like their advantage plan can switch or drop it if they want, but that's much less stressful, not quite as busy.
- We are also still in the middle of Medicaid unwinding. During the pandemic, the states were told by the federal government to keep people on the Medicaid roll and not disenroll them to ensure everyone had health coverage. Now that the pandemic is over, the state is going from April 2023 through May of 2024 to do renewals and redetermine if people are eligible or not, going forward. The ADRC's and Elder Benefit Specialists are getting a lot of people who don't understand what happened or they have questions about why they're no longer eligible. It maybe their income changed last year, and they don't understand why that change is just now kicking them off Medicaid. We are seeing an increase in the number of people that EBS are seeing because of the Medicaid unwinding. EBS have to reexamine the case and make sure that the denial was an appropriate one. If it wasn't, and we think there's still eligible, then the attorneys in my office will assist with an appeal.
- We continue to see a lot of issues and problems with Social Security enrollment in Medicare A&B. Janet set up a meeting for us to meet with Senators Tammy Baldwin and Ron Johnson staff last month, to talk about some of the Social Security issues that we were seeing. Some of these are including patient harm because people can't get their insurance, and they can't get their Medicare started because Social Security is in charge of Medicare A&B enrollments. There's been a lot of articles in the paper about how Social Security is underfunded. I know they're under a hiring freeze, which really needs to change, so hopefully things will get better going forward and I know in our Senior Medicare Patrol program, they've been very busy doing a lot of outreach across the across the state.
- We have a couple of new volunteers entering our senior Medicare Patrol Program. The volunteers have really stepped up, helping at conferences and

presentations. They also help spread the word about the program. We have a lot of calls coming into our helpline. We're busier than we ever have been, which is good. People know to call us. They know that they can come to us to get assistance if they have been the victim of Medicare fraud or have questions about that.

- We're seeing an increase in calls on our Guardianship Support Center Helpline and we are working with Janet and hopefully we are going to request some additional funding. It's just more than one person can handle with the number of calls that are coming in. Unfortunately, it's taking over a week, sometimes two, to get back to people. Those are statistics that we think are unacceptable for this program.
- We have some staff funded under MIPPA, which I think Janet will talk about more, but their jobs are at risk if there is not enough MIPPA funding going forward. We have staff who work on training materials under Medicare and also volunteerism across the state. This is a really big thing and it will affect GWAAR employees. I really hope we can do some advocacy around that to make sure MIPPA stays in the budget going forward.

Sky VanRossum:

- The VA program continues to expand. We are looking at hiring yet another coordinator for that program. As you know, the requirements for the VA program have changed this year, so each person who is enrolled in the VA program has to have two visits per quarter. That's a substantial increase in the number of visits that need to take place and we're adding a significant number of veterans to the enrollment. The details are in your report.
- Elder Abuse Later in Life Program is a grant program through the DOJ. Doreen Goetsch, and Erika Deal are a part of that program, along with Joanna, who's the Elder Abuse Hotline Coordinator. The Elder Abuse Later in Life program seeks to bring together authorities in different areas of the state. It makes folks aware of elder abuse resources and the existence of elder abuse. It brings together law enforcement, judges, lawyers, and community organizations. That program continues to expand. Erika Deal started off with Dunn, Polk and LaCrosse Counties and now we have interest from Saint Croix County as well up in that area. Doreen Goetsch is targeting Walworth County, and we have pretty

significant interest from Rock County as well. The elder abuse programs continue to expand.

- Within your report, there's also some details on the WISE program. So just to emphasize, despite the issues that we have with the WISE program, there continues to be demonstrated successes. Individuals who are receiving training, who wouldn't get training elsewhere and continue on to actually find positions that continue to support them beyond the training. Sonya Lindquist who is responsible for Dane County, highlighted a couple of examples of that.
- Every Friday I have a call with the GWAAR Community Health Workers and typically it's a very quick meeting to highlight issues that they're having. I have a positive story to share with for you. Shaleen Scarborough, our Community Health Worker who focuses on Sheboygan County, got a referral from Adult Protective Services for a 76-year-old man and his dog, who was being removed from his house by the Sheriff's Department. She was asked to intercede. She went out and talked to the individual, that due to a series of unfortunate circumstances, lost his home and he was being removed from his home. He had no place to go. She was able to find some temporary housing for him, however he could not keep his dog. He also had a series of chronic conditions that hadn't been addressed. She got him to a primary care provider and addressed his medical issues. The doctor found out that his dog was turned over to the Humane Society, and offered to pay all the adoption fees if the Community Health Worker could board the dog temporarily until the man could find a home that would permit his dog. Shayleen offered to foster the dog for about 6 weeks until the man found housing and could be reunited with his dog. What a great story.

Advocacy and Public Policy

[Janet Zander: Please see written report for details](#)

Topics touched on during meeting:

- A successful Care Act press conference was held and the Wisconsin Hospital Association continues to push back on it.

- How the Wisconsin Insurance Alliance impacts unpaid people who are willing to use their private resources for public good.
- Successful advocacy means bring more energy, more voices, more people, more stories, and more data.
- This past Wednesday Governor Evers signed a bill into law that John, Jean Bryn and I were able to participate in. This bill goes back to something that was allowed during the public health emergency for Senior Care members. They now will be able to once again receive a 90-100-day supply of their medications, which means less trips to the pharmacy, less need for transportation, less costs in copays and less dispensing fees for the state. DHS is going to have to request a federal waiver to do this, since we're not doing it for all Medicaid programs, and that's going to delay implementation, but we hope we get a response quickly.
- On the Federal front, the 2024 budget has not been passed. We're in a continuing resolution that will expire February 2nd. We don't see any good signs of a compromise between the House and the Senate. We don't see any bills that are reflecting what the President put in his budget, and we're very concerned we've gone from asking for a doubling of the funding, which is really what's needed to keep pace with the number of people and the need for services across the country, to now our best goal at this point, is to fight to avoid cuts to the programs. I think MIPPA funding wasn't even included in the continuing resolution that was passed. We're discovering that if we don't get something into place, if they just go on with a continuing resolution for the whole year, by the end of August, we lose all of our MIPPA funding, which is about which is over \$700,000 for the state.
- Nick has been working on advocacy for the Volunteer Driver Tax Appreciation Act. Volunteers are key to the success of Older Americans ACT Programs. We could not do what we do without the volunteers. Having public policy that is anti-volunteer, like how the charitable mileage rate disincentivizes people from being able to help. We have a lot of folks in this network who are willing to give us as much time as they can and let us use their vehicles, but they can't afford to do that at 14 cents a mile, which is the charitable mileage rate which hasn't been lifted since 1997. The current federal mileage rate is 65.5 cents a mile. It's ridiculous to think that their vehicles operate at any less of a cost than the rest of us.

Congress needs to fix this. Senator Baldwin and Congressman Van Orden from District 3 have signed on to this legislation. But that means eight members of the Wisconsin delegation to Congress have not, and we need them to.

- USAging is holding the Aging Policy Briefing in DC, and this is our chance to add in a few Wisconsin priorities as well. John and I are planning to attend, and we would love for a board member to join us on March 12th and 13th. Registration and flight planning probably needs to happen quickly so please take a look and let us know as soon as possible.

Bureau on Aging and Disability Resources

[Sarah Koenig:](#)

- We're in the middle of our NAPIS reporting season, which is our federal report that we submit to ACL. So thanks to GWAAR and the other two area agencies who I know are working very hard to get their data to us by the end of next week. We then do our part, to eventually submit to ACL in January. This data is so important for advocacy purposes, as Janet was mentioning, and so we really look forward to reviewing the data when it comes in and certainly appreciate the hard work that everyone's doing to ensure that our data is accurate. It really paints the picture of how services have been provided in the last year.
- We recently had an interview with a contractor of ACL asking us some questions about trends that have been occurring in the services that have been provided all the way from Pre-pandemic 2019 to current. A lot of those were very expected as we were reviewing the data from these reports over the years and some things were surprising yet not surprising. The pandemic home isolation increased the physical and emotional needs of older Americans case management. We've been seeing a lot of increases in that throughout the pandemic. We've been talking with our AAAs about it as well, and we're hoping to share that with the aging units too and encourage them to look at their data and look at those trends and see if they're seeing the same things that we're seeing at the state level.



- The state will be looking at aging plans during the GWAAR on-site review in February. Nick talked about the work that's being done with county and tribal Aging unit plans. Thanks to Nick for all of his work.
- We're very proud of Kassy at GLITC for her 2024 report and all the tribal accomplishments and all the effort put forth serving the needs of the elderly of tribal nations. At no time in our history have we had as many staff committed to supporting tribal communities as we've hired a Tribal Dementia Care Specialist Coordinator, and we have a new Tribal Adult Protective Services Specialist that we are really excited about and hopeful that we can provide the support that so desperately needed in our 11 tribal communities in Wisconsin.

Adjournment

Next Meeting Date: February 9, 2024

Meeting Dates for 2024

February 9, 2024

April 12, 2024

June 14, 2023

August 9, 2024

October 11, 2024

December 6, 2024

Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator; Recorder