



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, February 9, 2024 | 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; Janet Zander, Advocacy and Public Policy Coordinator; Nick Musson, OAA Consultant -Transportation Specialist; Jean Lynch, OAA Consultant Manager; Sky Van Rossum, Special Projects Manager; Kate Schilling, Christine Huberty, Benefit Specialist Supervising Attorney; Neal Minogue, Older Americans Act Program Supervisor, State Office on Aging, (BADR); Sarah Fisher, CLA; Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator*

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:06 a.m. by Beth Esser, Vice-Chair.

Review and Approval of February 9, 2024 Agenda

Motion by Cookie Lough, seconded by Wes Martin, to approve February 9, 2024 agenda. Motion unanimously carried.

Review and Approval of December 8, 2023 Draft Meeting Minutes

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded John Helling, to approve December 8, 2023 draft meeting minutes. Motion carried.

Public Comment **None**



Comments from Chair

Beth Esser, Vice Chair:

- Dave was not able to attend, however via phone he wanted to bring up his concern about Wisconsin Senate Bill 856, a specialized transportation assistance pilot program, and there is some concern over it. Janet indicated that her Advocacy Update Report addressed it and details can be found there.

Directors Report

John Schnabl:

- ARPA funding is coming to an end and we have until September 30th of this year to spend it. I don't think that the money will last that long, and we're getting a full accounting of how much we have leftover. So as a result, we did have three staff people hired, including two attorneys that work with the Elder Benefit Specialists around the state. We did get about \$160,000 from the state to help with this need and we are hoping it continues now that ARPA money is ending. We are cautiously optimistic that that funding will continue each year to help pay for those two additional positions that were originally funded by ARPA back in the summer of 2020.
- Our national organization for Area Agencies on Aging and US Aging is having their advocacy briefing March 12th and 13th in Washington DC. Mark Weisensel from the Advisory Council, Cookie Lough, Janet Zander and I are going to attend. Legislative visits are included in this meeting.
- The Aging and Disability and Independent Living (ADILN) Conference will take place in La Crosse on April 23-25. As soon as I get the Itinerary, I will share it with you all.
- The state also was able to provide us \$20,000 in additional funding for the Guardianship Support Center to help to help offset expenses of that program because it's been the same dollar amount every year since the program's existence, and it's become very difficult to pay for a program attorney, support, travel, fringe, etc. on a yearly allocation of \$100,000. We are grateful for the extra funding, and are aware it's one time funding, but we hope that would be able to continue in the future as well.
- May 8th is our in-person ACE meeting (A Commitment to Excellence) at Stevens Point, where we bring aging directors and supervisors together. To exclusively discuss the development of their upcoming 2025-2027 aging plan.



- On April 22nd at 9:00 o'clock at the Madison office, the state is going to be doing a review of GWAAR's 2023-2025 3-year Aging Plan progress.

Finance Committee Report

[Patrick Metz not able to attend.](#)

[Dave Hoberg:](#)

- The Executive Committee discussed the topic of paying honorariums to board members. After much discussion, they brought forth the recommendation to the board of directors that honorariums should not be paid at this time.

Motion by Cookie Lough, seconded by Wes Martin for the board to accept Executive Committee recommendation of not paying honorariums at this time. Motion unanimously carried.

- Much of the Finance Committee Meeting was spent on discussing the 2022 Audit. Fiscal is fully staffed now so the 2023 Audit should go much smoother. Sarah from CLA is in attendance and give a brief overview of the 2022 GWAAR Audit and its findings.

[Sarah Fisher, CLA:](#)

- Dave did a really good job of summing up the 2022 audit, but I just wanted to be here to provide a high-level overview and then answer any questions. As Dave mentioned, we had a really robust discussion at the Finance Committee level about the audit, the process, the findings, how to move forward with getting some of these things corrected. It was a good discussion at the committee level, but just from the board's perspective, we're done with the audit. I know it's in a draft form, but we're just waiting for the board final approval and then we'll get it issued. We are already starting on the 2023 audit. We understand that what we ask for is a heavy lift for the fiscal team. We ask for 60 audit samples for multiple programs and all the claims, forms, and documentation. We appreciate the fiscal team pushing through to get us what we need to do the audits. What I think is important is that you know management is taking these to heart. The Finance Committee, as you heard from Dave, is really taking these to heart as well and they're really trying to do the best that they can to put policies and procedures in place and make sure that these findings aren't recurring. I really do appreciate the Finance Committee and the fiscal team diving in and taking a look at where things can be improved from a process standpoint. It's an important part of the fiscal oversight of things.



- Dave Hoberg asked Sarah if copies of the final audit report could be copied and sent to the board. Sarah said she would get that done.

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by Dave Hoberg to accept results of 2022 Audit Report. Motion unanimously carried.

- GWAAR's Audit Correction Plan was discussed. Beth Esser commented that she was used to seeing more specific action plans.
- Sarah from CLA mentioned that due to time constraints the current one could be submitted and then revised to a more specific one later. The board discussed, and decided the current action plan would be approved with the understanding that a more specific one would be developed and presented to the board.
- *It was noted that Bob Borremans would like to see the corrective action plan as a continued agenda item for discussion for the Finance Committee.*

Motion by Bob Borremans, seconded by Wes Martin to approve the current 2022 correction action plan as presented today with the understanding that we will review it in more detail and revise it as necessary. Motion unanimously carried.

- Financial Statements were reviewed and accepted as presented.

Motion by Dave Hoberg, seconded by Cookie Lough to accept financial statements as presented and placed on file. Motion unanimously carried.

Executive Committee Update

- The Executive Committee interviewed board applicant Rowena Nelson and recommended her as an addition to the GWAAR board.
- Rowen Nelson's board application was discussed by the board and approved.

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by Beth Esser, to approve Rowena Nelson as a new board member. Motion unanimously carried.

- The Executive Committee met with QTI/Tandem Representatives and asked them to go to the marketplace and see if there are any other economical health insurance options for GWAAR employees, since open enrollment will take place this fall. There was a lot of good discussion. Perhaps QTI/Tandem can do more educating to help employees make decisions about their deductibles, and what type of coverage they need. Sometimes employees make decisions based on not necessarily what's in their best interest but what they're used to getting in the past.
- There was a discussion of the Wrap Plan Document that needs to be voted on and signed by a board member. Beth Esser will sign this document. This document is a requirement of GWAAR's flexible spending plan that is used to pay for deductible expenses for health insurance costs. This document is a summary of the benefits.

Motion by Dave Hoberg, seconded by Rob Wilkinson, to approve the Wrap Plan document as presented. Motion unanimously carried.

Advisory Council Update

[Nick Musson:](#)

- The next Advisory Council meeting will be held on Friday, February 16th and will kick off the 2025-2027 Aging Plan process. That means that a week from today I'm going to be introducing the community engagement process to the Advisory Council. They play a very important role in helping us collect feedback from the aging units. They are going to help us do aging unit director interviews as they've done with the previous plans. GWAAR has developed a script to make the interviews easy for them. We also are looking at doing some surveys. The surveys are going to be geared more towards outside organizations and will ask their input on we provide services. Lastly aging unit director forums will also take place and will give them an opportunity to tell us about what we do well and things we could improve on. GWAAR will then develop goals to put in a draft plan which eventually be brought to the board for approval. The final plan will be sent to the state in January.
- We also have a new Advisory Council member applicant, Denise Sweet, and we will be voting on her appointment at the next meeting.

Manager's Reports

Jean Lynch:

- We kicked off our meal prioritization pilot on February 1st. Not long ago, we were excited to announce that 17 nutrition programs in the GWAAR service area are taking part in this pilot. We have a nice combination of small, medium and large programs. Why did we do this pilot? Currently some Wisconsin nutrition programs do not have the capacity to serve all older adults in our home delivered meals programs. It's usually geographic issues with volunteers, or in most cases it's fiscal related. This challenge is going to grow as we move forward since there is no longer any ARPA money and we're just back to our regular allocations. So that is really the "why" of why we're doing this. We're going to create this for the entire network starting in July. We want to create a consistent and streamlined approach.
- The Alzheimer's conference is May 6th and GWAAR is once again a gold sponsor.
- On February 6, ACL, the Administration for Community Living, released the final rule update to the regulations for the Older Americans Act Program. This has not been done since 1988, so we were excited to see this happening because we worked on giving input to ACL this summer. The rule will take effect on March 15th, 2024, and entities will have until October 1, 2025 to comply.

Christine Huberty filling in for Kate Schilling:

- All GWAAR attorneys attended the Wisconsin NAELA Conference in January. It's a statewide conference learning about different policy updates and changes. The conference is attended by many private elder law private practice practitioners.
- We are down to the last 3 1/2 months of Medicaid unwinding. That means the people who were under protections under the Medicaid program have about 3 1/2 months now to continue or to do renewals to see if they're going to stay with that program or not.
- We continue to have problems with Social Security, so we continue to try to escalate those problems to a higher-level systematic change.



- Ingrid Kunding, our Senior Medicare Patrol Director, was interviewed by Milwaukee news station about catheter scams and Medicare paying on those scams. It's a really good piece and I will email the link to the board for viewing.
- They're continuing to onboard new volunteers across the state and they're gearing up for a busy April, May, June for outreach and conference presentations.
- The Guardian Support Center has implemented some new software for tracking calls that come into them. This should help with their data collection and help with advocating for more funding. Additionally, Polly is on several task forces related to guardianship and advanced directives.
- Alyssa Kulpa works under the MIPPA grant and she just finished a big training session on February 1st for the SHIP counselors as it relates to tracing outreach events and managing their data in the Well Sky database.

[Sky VanRossum:](#)

- In regard to our Community Health Worker Program, we really are focused on sustaining those positions longer term by looking for organizations to partner with who would be willing to utilize those community health workers and provide for their ongoing employment after the grant is over in August of 2024. We've got some good partnerships coming together with that.
- Lisa Drouin, manager of the on the VA Program, as usual, provided statistics in the staff reports. It's a very successful program and is expanding steadily. They now has a fiscal person and just hired an additional Care Consultant for a total of five now.
- The WISE Program has 64 participants in the program currently between the Madison and the Milwaukee office. We could have as many as 72, but we currently have 64 and we're trying to fill up those other slots. As mentioned before, GWAAR will not be administering the program effective July 1, 2024. I have not seen the request for proposal issued and sent out to other organizations yet. I'm hoping that once that goes out there's interest from other organizations. I'm hoping to partner with them so that we can see if they can utilize equipment, personnel, anything that we have, to facilitate this program going forward.



- Ground Game Health, (which is the social determinants of health assessments that we've been doing since 2018) has been expanding throughout the country. They've asked if we were interested in doing it in Wisconsin. GWAAR does social determinants of health assessments for ground game health. However, no one from GWAAR does the social determinants of health assessments for ground game health. We've partnered with Northeastern Wisconsin Area Health Education Center, out of Manitowoc to do that. They brought on a full-time staff person to facilitate some of these assessments. What they're doing is interesting. They're utilizing students who are pursuing public health degrees and providing them with clinical credits by performing these social determinants of health assessments. We will see if we are successful in onboarding this program.
- We've had a request from the Department of Justice where we have to go back over the course of the last year and provide substantial amount of data, payroll, data, benefits, data expenses, and receipts. This has taken a significant amount of time. Patrick and Denise have gone a long way to try to help bring us forward on that.
- I was asked if I would join the State Department of Health Services Workforce Advisory Group. It looks like it's going to meet on a monthly basis right now and this is really in the capacity of being a voice for older workers.
- I'm pretty excited to see if we get a call back on our nomination for USA Aging Innovation Award. That would be really exciting to be able to send Joanna down to Tampa for her work on the Elder Abuse Hotline

Advocacy and Public Policy

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

- The healthy aging grants, which is the funding that we've been looking for to support the Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging and their Falls Free Center, and other evidence-based health promotion programs that are administered throughout the state, has been passed by both the Assembly and the Senate Committee. We're now waiting for the Joint Finance Committee to take that up, since there is a funding allocation that would go with that as soon as they either meet on that or dip it into the committee and pass it. We will push very hard for this to be put on the calendars for both the Assembly and the Senate try to get it passed this session. As I mentioned, we've been working on it for several legislative sessions in a row now, and it would be nice to get this across the finish line now that we have it so close.

- The second issue in the update that I gave you relates to legislation around surrogate decision making. This is really legislation that was proposed by a legislator whose sister was in the hospital in her 40s, didn't have an advanced directive of any kind and suddenly wasn't capable of making health care decisions for herself and we did not have any regulation that would allow someone else to make those decisions for her. Ultimately, her sister passed away. Being very concerned about that, she introduced this bill that would allow a next of kin person to make those decisions. We met with her yesterday and had some recommendations for her around things that she could do to improve the bill, just to ensure the patient safety, like making sure that there's screening of those next of kin to make sure there isn't somebody who's got a restraining order out against them or has been accused of abuse or neglect. You can't just assume that somebody, spouse, siblings, children are necessarily looking out for that person's best interest. Unfortunately, the bill has also been sort of co-opted by another legislator who has aligned the legislation with what the Hospital Association is looking for, which is a quick way to get people from the hospital to the nursing home. We have even more concerns about that because it bypasses that person's right to due process related to the guardianship and protective placement. We expect this bill to have a hearing next Wednesday. I'll be in Madison to testify on this bill. I'm working very closely with other aging and disability advocates, including the Board on Aging and Long Term care and Disability Rights Wisconsin and the Board for People with Developmental Disabilities, just to ensure that in this whole process of trying to make sure people have a decision maker, we don't bypass people's rights and protections.
- The other bill that I've listed for state is related to the Specialized Transportation Assistance Pilot. I did testify on that bill this week. Nick and I have been working very closely with the legislative office that introduced this bill. Our concerns are related to the fact that coordinated transportation isn't a good thing because it is a great thing and could better serve our populations. But right now, with a non-emergency medical transportation broker doing all of the Medicaid non-emergency rides, we have this separate thing that happens when somebody goes to one of those appointments. They can't also grab groceries on the way or stop at the post office or any of those things. And we've kind of created that by the broker, but now we need to try to unravel that and we certainly support those efforts. However, transportation coordination doesn't happen free, and we certainly have to look at that and right now, the aging and disability resource centers don't have the capacity to take on something new that's already beyond their scope. They already don't have adequate funding to do what they need to do, and so the idea that they could either do this or contract with somebody to do that is a reach. Contracting takes oversight and funding as well. So we have really made it clear to the legislature that in order to properly do a pilot, it would have to be



funded. There are concerns about building that coordinated transportation off of the non-emergency medical transportation system where the average cost of a ride is about \$105.00. So just lifting up some of those concerns. I think it's a piece of legislation we'll see come back next session and we'd like to do everything we can to try to fine tune that before it resurfaces next session.

- I have been asked to be one of the 25 members that the Governor has appointed to his task force on healthcare workforce issues. I am in the process of working with the Wisconsin Ethics Commission to make sure that my participation in that workforce wouldn't in any way conflict with my role as a lobbyist for GWAAR. So just making sure everything is in place before that task force starts to meet and really look at this critical workforce shortage that we're facing. Obviously, our concerns are how that impacts older adults and family caregivers.
- We're well into the fiscal year that started October 1st. Fortunately, they're building their budgets based off of 2022 levels of funding and we don't want budgets reduced. We're anxiously encouraging our members of Congress to get that budget passed and to avoid any further cuts to our programs at this point in time.
- The other thing I put in your report is something about the Affordable Connectivity Program. This is a federally funded program that offered people some subsidies so that they could afford to have internet into their home. We have over 400,400 thousand households here in Wisconsin that are. They have stopped taking enrollments into that program and funding is expected to end by April. So in the absence of anything that happens at the state or federal level, to offer some additional support, my concern is a good share of those households without that \$30.00 a month assistance aren't going to be able to continue to keep their internet subscription. And we know today that that's not a luxury. Many benefit programs require many healthcare systems require you to have some sort of access and you need private access. Let's be realistic, you're not going to have a telehealth visit in the in the library, right? So it's a serious issue. We are advocating for passage of the Affordable Connectivity Program Extension Act, which is federal funding, to be included in one of the bill appropriations or omnibus bills that gets passed to the budget. I would also love to see a state subsidy up to \$30.00 a month based on what most people subscription costs are. But it's probably not enough to help everybody that needs help. So I would love to see a state supplement to that as well.
- The last thing I'm going to mention is the Older Americans Act. Final regulations came out. These were regulations to bring the Older Americans act up to what's actually happening right now and what's in state statute. The current regulations didn't address programs like the National Family Caregiver Support Program that was introduced after



1988, when those regulations were updated. So it's really meant to align those things, and clarify some of the policy expectations. The new regulations take effect March 15th of this year. They were passed on February 6th and we have until October 1st of 2025 to comply.

Bureau on Aging and Disability Resources

Neal Minoque:

- We wanted to thank John and his staff for preparing for the AAA site review that we have coming up on the 22nd. It is a requirement of ACL that state units on aging do oversight of AAA's. We've completed our review of the Dane County AAA. We have the Milwaukee AAA review next week and we will finish up with GWAAR's review on February 22nd. So thanks for coordinating that and thanks for the participation.
- Thank you to Nick Musson, who has been doing a great job of coordinating the aging planning process. Nick and I and Sarah O'Donnell meet every other Friday to talk about the aging planning process and supporting aging units throughout the state as we move forward with the new OAA regulations coming out. We expect that aging plans will be affected across the state, including the state aging plan, AAA's, and county and tribal nation aging units. So we look forward to working toward coming into compliance over the next many months as we read through these new regulations.

Adjournment

Next Meeting Date: April 12, 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