



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, April 11, 2025 | 10:00 a.m.

ADRC of Portage County and
Microsoft Teams Video Conference Call

Members present: *Beth Esser, David Hoberg, Bob Borremans, Wes Martin, Rowena Nelson, Cookie Lough, Rob Wilkinson, Catherine Jones-Ferk*

Members excused: *Dave Ostness, John Helling*

Others Present: *John Schnabl, Executive Director; Patrick Metz, Fiscal Manager; Jean Lynch, Program Specialist Manager; Nick Musson, OAA Consultant, Rich Lavigne, Legal Services Manager; Sky Van Rossum, Special Projects Manager; Janet Zander, Advocacy and Public Policy Coordinator; Steve Ahlgren, Board Member Applicant; Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator*

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Rob Wilkinson, Interim Vice-Chair since Beth was attending remotely.

Review and Approval of April 11, 2025 Agenda

- *Wes Martin would like to add broadband telehealth to next agenda.*

Motion by Bob Borremans, seconded by Wes Martin, to approve April 11, 2025 agenda. Motion carried.

Review and Approval of February 14, 2025 Draft Meeting Minutes

Motion by Cookie Lough, seconded by Wes Martin to approve February 14, 2025 draft meeting minutes. Motion carried.



Public Comment None

Comments from Chair

Beth Esser, Interim Board Chair

- We're all aware of the changes coming and potential for loss of funding for our programs and what GWAAR supports. We have to look to our mission statement during these challenging times to direct us and keep our focus as some hard decisions may have to be made in the future. We have to ask ourselves how are we promoting, protecting and enhancing the wellbeing of the elderly in our state. We have an outstanding staff. We may need to have their input as we look for innovative ideas for accomplishing our mission statement in the future. I appreciate everybody who has offered to share their time and talents to assist the board.
- As we look at the newly proposed bylaws today, it's important to recognize how important they are for the structure, administration and direction for the organization and how it functions. I'd like to compliment the members of the ad-hoc committee for all their time and input. There were a lot of meetings with healthy discussion, input and researching statutes. We wanted our bylaws to be done correctly and the right way. It was reviewed by an attorney for compliance. And thank you Rob Wilkinson for chairing the meeting for me today.
- [Rob Wilkinson](#): I just want to add one thing. The work that was done by Bob and by Beth was just unbelievable. It was fantastic. The whole ad-hoc committee did an unbelievable job. I really appreciate their efforts.

Executive Director Updates

John Schnabl, Executive Director

- Termination of federal funding unfortunately has affected some of our grant funding, which has caused us to terminate our CHW positions. It's very unfortunate, but there is such volatility going on.
- Jane Mullins retired in mid-April. We are in the midst of hiring a placement for her position (Elder Abuse Program Specialist). We are in the final stages of the interview process.
- On Wednesday, we had our virtual ACE meeting, which stands for A Commitment to Excellence. It's targeted at the directors of aging programs and services. The main

speaker was our own Janet Zander, who did a great presentation on what's going on at the federal and state level and what some advocacy positions are around some of the various issues, such as transportation, Medicaid, and Older Americans Act etc. The Bureau had their updates, we had our own updates from each of our department managers. The next ACE Meeting will be an in-person meeting, July 9th in Stevens Point.

- Cookie Lough, Janet Zander, Dave Denomie and I were in Washington DC for a couple of days, catching the glimpses of the cherry blossoms, and participating in the annual USAging Policy Briefing. The first day was spent learning about the issues. The second day was spent visiting legislative offices.
- I don't know if it will change or not, but as of right now, we're still working through the assumption that we will need to change the way GWAAR provides support to the Elder Benefit Specialist. The federal money we received for the Older Americans Act, if this continues for 2026, will no longer be allowed to be used for our attorneys and their work with the Elder Benefit Specialists. We, as well as Dane and Milwaukee are going to have to take that legal services Older Americans Act money, and we are each going to have to create RFPs that will go out to legal service entities that will offer legal services to the public. There is talk of perhaps collaborating with Dane and Milwaukee on the RFP. The secondary piece, which is after we do our RFP, what is GWAAR's role going to be in continuing to work with the Elder Benefit Specialist in each county, in providing guidance, training and technical assistance. We have to come up with a way to fill the budget gap for 2026.

Finance Committee Report

Patrick Metz, Fiscal Manager

Dave Hoberg, Treasurer

Dave Hoberg:

- The Finance Committee is in the process of looking at budget versus actual.
- The 2024 audit is coming up.
- Fiscal is also looking at hiring an additional employee.
- There was a discussion surrounding the financial statements whereby the change in the net assets or the equity did not equal the amount on the income statement and

that is something that should always happen. So Patrick and his team are going to be taking a look at that to see why there's that difference.

Patrick Metz:

- I just sent a document out to the Finance Committee that explains why the net assets from 2023 to 2024 are different. It's mainly because the auditors place things differently than we do. They just have to document/account for it in a way that makes sense to them so they, like Dave said, move it into equity. And so that's what they've done. Each year they take 1.68 million, move it into equity on our books. It stays in clearing because we've been trying to figure out a way to clear it up without blowing up the entire system basically. That's what we've been working at and now we've decided the only way to take clearing to zero is to move it to equity. But it's not just moving the 1.68 million, it's moving other amounts that are larger and smaller, that in the end equal the 1.68 million. So the equity is going to look very different when we make this move. We will inform the board and will show you the result before we actually do it, so that you're aware of it and understand it.
- Wes asked Patrick to please email tribal allocations to him.

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by Dave Hoberg, to place updated April 11th financial statements as presented on file. Motion carried.

Executive Committee Report

Beth Esser, Interim Board Chair

- Steve Ahlgren's board member application was reviewed and discussed at the last Executive Committee meeting, and the consensus was to recommend his application to board. He has an incredible amount of relevant professional experience, and the board approved his application and welcomed him.

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by Dave Hoberg, to approve Steve Ahlgren's board application to become a board member. Motion carried.

- John presented a sample travel policy provided by Vensure, as a starting point to put together a GWAAR travel policy. John would like the board to call or email any suggestions/comments to him. Using board input, he will provide a proposed travel policy at the next executive meeting.



By-laws Ad-hoc Committee Report

Beth Esser, Interim Board Chair

Beth: Thank you to Bob, Cookie, and Rob for all their hard work and participation, and time. A lot of researching the statutes went into the rewriting of the bylaws and now our bylaws are much more detailed on how GWAAR should operate as an organization. Please note that these can always be amended in the future. The ad-hoc subcommittee can now be dissolved, *however I strongly recommend also that the Articles of Incorporation be updated as well and forming an ad-hoc committee for this project be placed as an agenda item at the June meeting.*

Bob: When we got into this project, we realized that we were not following our bylaws, that there were elements of the existing bylaws that had not been adhered to specifically. As an example, we moved the election of board members off of the annual meeting in December to the June meeting. We tried to address those things that were inconsistent with the way the organization operates and what was stated in writing in the official copy of the bylaws. GWAAR's attorney has reviewed them and responded in writing that they are in compliance with all of the necessary legal entities that we need to comply with.

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by Dave Hoberg, to approve amended, rewritten proposed GWAAR bylaws. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote:

Beth Esser: Yes

Dave Hoberg: Yes

Bob Borremans: Yes

Wes Martin: Yes

Rowena Nelson: Yes

Cookie Lough: Yes

Rob Wilkinson: Yes

Catherine Jones-Ferk: Yes



Advisory Council Report

Nick Musson, OAA Consultant-Transportation

- The GWAAR Advisory Council held their last meeting virtually on February 21st. At that meeting, the Advisory Council welcomed a new member, Valerie Freres, and approved a new council member application, Shiela Check-Moe. She is from the Stevens Point Area and she has 27 plus years' experience in the social work field. Sheila currently works as a social worker for Compassus Home Care, and she is also an adjunct professor with UMass Global University and Upper Iowa University. She finds herself working in 7-8 counties in the central Wisconsin area. She provides them with a resource that has all of the connections that an older adult would need in the area and works very closely with all the ADRC's in the area. She has a fantastic relationship there and we're excited to work with her moving forward. We now have eight Advisory Council members, which is over our minimum of seven, which is fantastic. We're making progress. The next GWAAR Advisory Council meeting is set for Friday, July 19th. We will be reviewing another new member application, plus we'll be talking about GWAAR's efforts in communication/social media to inform the aging network. Lucia Mennen, our Communications Director, will be our guest speaker.

Advocacy and Public Policy

Janet Zander, Advocacy and Public Policy Coordinator

Topics covered:

- Aging Advocacy Day is May 13th. Registration opened on March 10th. Approximately 161 people have registered. I have not sorted that between volunteers and participants so I would guess a dozen or more of those are just volunteers. Registration will stay open till April 26th.
- The Alzheimer's Family and Caregiver Support Program, Senate Bill 152 would change the statutes or the law around what we call the AFCSP program to make sure that we remove any income eligibility requirements for people who are applying. That amount has not been updated regularly since the program came into place back in 1985, or whenever it first started. It was only raised once, and it's really no longer targeted to the caregivers as it was intended to be. Then it went to \$48,000. But this is a pot of money that is really targeting those middle-income caregivers as well, who are both reducing work hours and increasing their expenses related to

caregiving and need some help. They can't afford everything that needs to be done. So for a long time now, we've been talking about lifting that income cap.

- The other bill I wanted to mention, which I didn't include in your report because it just came out this week, is Assembly Bill 163. This bill would require Medicaid eligibility to be redetermined every six months instead of once a year. Requalifying is an arduous process, so having to do it twice a year is asking a lot. If you don't prove your eligibility, it's cancelled. It definitely increases agencies' loads trying to assist people trying to comply, which costs more money to get the work force to cope with this. I registered online that we oppose the assembly bill.
- The Federal Department of Health and Human Services is looking at a reduction of about 20,000 people, 10,000 who voluntarily took one option, the other 10,000 are being laid off, reassigned, or moved around. The restructuring, as many of you know, eliminated the Administration for Community Living altogether. Along with that was the leadership from the Administration for Community Living, including the leadership and all of the regional offices for the administration where all of our questions would go and the state's questions in particular would go for clarification. Issues ACL dealt with are now being moved into new divisions with the Department of Government Health and Human Services. Things that have to do with Medicare are being moved over to the CMS, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Other programs are likely to go to the Department of Children and Family Services.
- Please see Janet Zander's written report for more details.

Bureau Report

Sarah Koenig, Elder Nutrition Program Manager, (BADR)

- I'm going to expand a little bit on the things we're hearing at the federal level. Health and Human Services is restructuring, which means the Administration for Community Living was essentially eliminated/reorganized. Aging and disability programs may be located at the Administration for Children and Families. Another branch of ACL that does a lot of data collection and evaluation is going to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation. Janet mentioned that a lot of the regional staff had been let go. Just the program managers at ACL have been retained at this point. Our regional staff that we communicate with was let go at the beginning of the week, last week, and by Friday was asked to come back. That is good news because we needed her to review our state aging plan. It's good to know that our draft plan will be reviewed in the coming weeks. And we've heard that

they'll be on board until June to help with the transition. At least that's what we're hearing right now. Or until they get a new job. Back to our programs going to the Administration for Children and Families; at first, we were a little puzzled by that, but if you think about it, older adults and people with disabilities are part of our families, so this could be a good place for us eventually. But the good news is that we are still getting our funding and these reorganizations don't mean anything in the grand scheme of funding. We do, however, have concerns with the Older Americans Act getting reauthorized and what's going on with the federal budget.

- There's been some grants that have been abruptly ended at the federal level. There weren't any necessarily that directly impacted our bureau, but the Division of Public health as a division has been quite affected by this. DHS is engaged in a lawsuit. About \$225 million worth of grants that went to DHS were cut at the federal level, and that also meant that 29 people had to be let go pretty abruptly from their positions. But that lawsuit has resulted in a temporary restraining order on the federal government. And they were ordered to give that funding back. On Tuesday of this week, the division received a lot of that funding back, but part of the challenge with this, and John alluded to that earlier in the meeting, is what's going to happen next. You have to proceed with caution. You don't want to bring folks back and then have to terminate them again later, so it just makes for a lot of chaos and unpredictability. Generally speaking, the division, just as a result of all these cuts that have been coming through, we're being very cautious. Generally speaking, the division, as a result of all these cuts that have been coming through, we're being very cautious, trying to think up contingency plans. Currently we are restricting out of state travel and there is a hiring freeze.
- Thank you to Janet and the board for all of your advocacy and for your engagement with all of this. It helps to know that we have folks in our communities who are on top of all of these things and supportive. We so appreciate it.

Adjournment:

Next Meeting Date: June 13, 2025 – ADRC of Portage County

Meeting Dates for 2025

June 13, 2025

August 8, 2025

October 10, 2025

December 12, 2025

Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator; Recorder