



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, August 8, 2025 | 10:00 a.m.

ADRC of Portage County and
Microsoft Teams Video Conference Call

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

Members excused: *Dave Ostness, Catherine Jones-Ferk, Rowena Nelson*

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

Beth Esser, Board Chair

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Beth Esser, Chair.

Review and Approval of August 8, 2025 Agenda

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by Rob Wilkinson, to approve August 8, 2025 agenda. Motion carried.

Review and Approval of June 13, 2025 Draft Meeting Minutes

- Wes Martin asked that an amendment to minutes be made indicating broadband agenda item be postponed indefinitely until further notice.

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by Dave Hoberg, to approve June 13, 2025 draft meeting minutes. Motion carried.



Public Comment None

Comments from Chair

Beth Esser, Interim Board Chair

- Reminder to not record minutes with AI due to privacy concerns.
- Myself, Rob and Janet attended a “Reframing Aging” meeting and interactive workshop put on by the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network in Stevens Point. Their purpose was to change the way our society thinks and talks about aging and disabilities.
- Rob mentioned that everyone is aging, and we have to keep educating society to help with this issue.
- Janet’s comment was that the training was based on evidence-based research that has shown we can be more effective in our advocacy work depending on how we frame messages and the words we use. So, when we talk a lot about the silver tsunami and the catastrophe it is, we create a scenario where we make policymakers feel like the problem is too big, it's unsolvable. They shouldn't even bother tackling it. Through this research they have come up with improved ways to talk about issues that need to be addressed, that feel like they're solvable, manageable, and people can have hope. A lot of what I took away from the training is ways that we can redo our issue briefs and reframe our messaging so that legislators feel like we're part of the solution and there is a solution. So just wanted to add my two cents here.

Executive Director Report

John Schnabl, Executive Director

- The legal services RFP (request for proposal) went out recently looking for a legal services provider. A small panel of people will review the entries and make a recommendation to the board. At an upcoming board meeting, the winning entity will provide a presentation and answer questions.
- Steve Ahlgren would appreciate an update on disability benefit specialists and if they will have to assist those under 60 as well in the near future. [John Schnabl will check into this and report back at the next board meeting.](#)



Senior Medicare Patrol Report

Ingrid Kunding, Fraud & Abuse Programs Manager

- Ingrid discussed what the Senior Medicare Patrol is, what they do, how they are funded, current projects and what their goals are.
- GWAAR was awarded the Senior Medicare Patrol Program in 2018, which is on a five-year grant cycle. We are now on the second five year grant cycle. SMP is part of a federal or a national network and there are certain requirements from a consistency standpoint. We all have the same mission. We talk about Medicare related fraud and scams in a similar way; however, they allow us the flexibility to implement the program in way that seems most appropriate for each state. There's a senior Medicare Patrol Program in all 50 states across the United States, as well as the four US territories.
- SMP is a program that empowers older adults and provides them with information so that they are aware that unfortunately Medicare fraud is an issue. We provide them with tools so that they can protect themselves in hopes of preventing any sort of Medicare fraud from impacting them in the first place. We've done a lot of work to make sure that people in the aging network know who we are, what we do and how we can help them be involved. The SMP Program is here to empower and assist people who are on Medicare as well as their advocates. So that would include caregivers, family members, and other professionals that might be involved in helping them with their overall care or with their health care.
- We also do a lot of education. We speak at different health and wellness fairs and expos across the state. We're always looking for those opportunities to set up our information and talk one-on-one with people. We schedule presentations pretty much anywhere that someone will listen to us. We go to a lot of meal sites and libraries. We've spoken at conferences that have to do with caregiving or other older adult issues. We speak at senior centers and Aging and Disability Resource Center programs. We've co-presented with Elder Benefits Specialists in the past. We work closely with the Elder Benefit Specialist because they're able to help with enrollment issues related to Medicare and then we tag team with the fraud and that messaging so we are a united front. We want to make sure that we're supporting folks in the most appropriate way.



- We also have a toll-free help line where we provide one-on-one counseling to people, although we are not investigators at our level. We just put together cases and submit to the Office of Inspector General.
- We report all of our statistics to the Senior Medicare patrol program at the federal level under the Administration for Community Living. We are required to use the data system that's provided for the Senior Medicare Patrol Program. All of our help line calls are entered into that system. All of our outreach and education events are entered as well and then all of that data rolls up into a national report where the national team of Senior Medicare Patrol staff then take that report to Congress to say this is the work that this program is doing. This is why it's important that you continue to fund this program. This information also goes to the Office of Inspector General and they issue a report as well.
- The board would be interested in getting data specific to Wisconsin.

Finance Committee Report

Patrick Metz, Fiscal Manager

Dave Hoberg, Treasurer

Dave Hoberg:

- RFPs for a new auditing firm will be going out shortly.
- Looking for a new bank has been tabled for now.
- Regarding the GWAAR lease, our recommendation to the board is to accept the new five-year, with the option to get out after three.

Motion by Dave Hoberg, seconded by John Helling, to approve recommendation to approve five-year lease with option to get out after three. Motion carried.

Patrick Metz:



- GWAAR has turned over all requested documents to the auditor, so the 2024 audit should be coming to a close shortly.
- GWAAR is doing good financially and has a healthy balance sheet,
- RFQs for finding a new auditor will be going out shortly. Once they are received back, the Finance Committee will review and come up with a recommendation for the board for the October meeting.
- Steve Ahlgren asked if excess funds could be used to help people or the ADRC's. Patrick responded that those funds are VA Program funds, so there is some latitude, but caution needs to be taken. GWAAR needs to have some kind of funds available in checking to withstand delays in funding. Six months of reserves is a good business standard. *Steve Ahlgren asked to see the VA contract and would appreciate Lisa Drouin attend a board meeting to explain the VA Program and answer questions and delve into the possibility of extra funds being used to help the ADRCs and tribes.*

Motion by Steve Ahlgren, seconded by Rob Wilkinson, to place financial statements as presented on file. Motion carried.

Executive Committee Report

Beth Esser, Interim Board Chair

- John's job description was sent to Vensure.
- A previous evaluation form was sent to Vensure to review for appropriateness and legality and once that is done, the evaluation form will be distributed to Executive Committee and a copy to John as well.
- A review of the Vensure contract will take place at the next Executive Committee meeting along with the possibility of sending out an RFP for an new HR vendor. *Cookie asked that the Vensure contract be sent to all board members.*
- John and the managers will meet with Venture to go over the GWAAR Handbook changes and provide the board with a timeline to complete the project.
- A restatement of the Articles of Incorporation will be filed once the bylaws are revised slightly to coincide with the restatement. *Approval for the bylaw's amendments will most likely be an agenda item for the October meeting.*

- GLITC has been struggling to keep employees for quite some time now and GWAAR is thinking about possibly bringing the tribal technical assistance positions in-house, especially when their funds end up not being spent. It's GWAAR's duty to make sure the tribes get the technical assistance and services they need, and make sure their money is getting spent. Wes Martin will check with his contacts to see what their thoughts are. John will wait and see how GLITC interviews go. John will bring an update and or suggestions to the next board meeting.

Removal of Board Member

Beth Esser, Board Chair

- Due to health issues, Dave Ostness has not attended board meetings and was not able to complete his term, which created quorum issues. Per the bylaws, a 10-day notice was sent certified mail letting him know that due to his health issues/incapacitation, and inability to attend meetings, he will be removed from the board. A thank you card and certificate of service will be created and mailed to him.

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by Dave Hoberg, that per GWAAR bylaws, Dave Ostness be removed from the board due to his inability to serve. Motion carried.

Advisory Council Report

Nick Musson, OAA Consultant-Transportation

- The GWAAR Advisory Council met virtually on July 18th at 10:00 AM. At the meeting, Tony Omernik was approved as a new Advisory Council member. Tony has over 40 years of not-for-profit organization experience. He served youth, older adults, retirees, low-income individuals, people with disabilities and those affected by disaster events. His specific skills include community engagement, public speaking, board development, strategic planning, volunteer management, resource development, budgeting and fiscal oversight. Tony is also a board member on the ADRC Central Wisconsin Board of Directors, and he resides in Wausau. Tony is going to be a fantastic and valued member of the Advisory Council. Our next meeting is scheduled to be October 3rd, an in-person meeting in Stevens Point at 10:00 a.m.

Advocacy and Public Policy

Janet Zander, Advocacy and Public Policy Coordinator

- Please take a look at the summary document that shows how the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network priorities did in the state budget process. It reflects what got passed, what things partially got done and what things got pulled out or not approved in the final budget?
- The second item on your list is the one that is my big news for today. On your written report is the Alzheimer's Family and Caregiver Support Program legislation that removes the income eligibility allowing low to middle income families who are caring for somebody with Alzheimer's or dementia access these support services by getting rid of that income eligibility. This is probably one of the more successful pieces of legislation that we have worked on because of how quickly it went through. The bill was sent to him yesterday and he is doing a bill signing ceremony at the Capitol today. So, members of the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network, the Wisconsin Family and Caregiver Support Alliance, the Alzheimer's Association are all going to be there for his bill signing today.
- Aging Advocacy Day will take place every other year going forward. Off years will be used to help ADRCs/Aging Units with advancing advocacy efforts via in-district meetings and we are going to really focus on that in 2026. We will do some training for them, and we are gathering materials to make it an easier lift for them to do at the local level. You'll notice one of the links in the GWAAR newsletter article is a how to guide for planning and hosting an in-district meeting. This was put together by Carissa Pagel-Smith, who is with the ADRC of La Crosse. She did a very successful meeting and took the time to write out every step that she took. How to invite the legislator, how to put together the agenda, how to notice it, who to invite, every little detail. This can serve as one example of a guide and how it worked for them that others in the network can use.
- The appropriations bill is not looking as bad as the president's budget looked for our programs. In that bill, they level funded most of the Older Americans Act Programs, including the State Health Insurance Program, the SHIP program, and they also added an increase for the Caregiver Support Program.
- Please see Janet Zander's written report for more advocacy details.

Bureau Report

Neal Minogue, Older Americans Act Program Supervisor State Office on Aging (BADR)

- I want to join in the celebration of the signing at the Capitol that is happening as we speak for AFCSP funding. If this funding had not happened, it would have locked out almost \$1,000,000 in funding for caregiver services for people throughout the state. This was a huge win. With that said, thanks to the advocates across the state, including Janet Zander and many other individuals, and thanks to Lynn Gall who drafted on several occasions different legislative language that could be proposed. There were some reiterations of that, I think up to three different times before the final state language was to be signed was actually able to be moved in front of our legislators, we finally had a success today. So, this is great news for all of us.
- Nutrition program grants that are going out are asking counties if they would like to apply for up to twenty \$20,000 for nutrition revitalization programs. Funding must be used to engage in activities that revitalize congregate dining programs with the outcome of increasing participation and access for individuals in social economic need. Wisconsin Aging Network has consistent data illustrating the success of restaurant models and pop-up dining sites. Such models have shown that they can be implemented expeditiously once the partners are identified. Counties and tribes may apply for up to \$20,000, potentially more if we do not have as many applicants, but we're excited about the opportunity to see some of that pop-up meal sites and dining sites potentially expand.
- The Older Americans Act turned 60 this past month, and a colleague of mine who I worked for many years at the Technical College said sometimes good ideas have a power of their own. The Older Americans Act is one of those really great ideas, and it is a program that continues to be funded by the Senate and the House, regardless of what the administration does. There is great desire for people to continue to fund Older American Act programs. Although the funding may be flat funded this year, it is funded and I firmly believe, and others do, it will be funded, because it's a really good idea, and it has been for 60 years.

Adjournment: 2:15 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: October 10, 2025 – ADRC of Portage County

Meeting Dates for 2025

October 10, 2025

December 12, 2025

Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator; Recorder