



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, June 13, 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, John Helling; Steve Ahlgren*

Members excused: *Dave Ostness*

Others Present: *John Schnabl, Executive Director; Patrick Metz, Fiscal Manager; Jean Lynch, Program Specialist Manager; Nick Musson, Transportation and Aging Plan Program Specialist; Sky Van Rossum, Special Projects Manager; Janet Zander, Advocacy and Public Policy Coordinator; Laura Langer, Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources; Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator*

Call to Order

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

Review and Approval of June 13, 2025 Agenda

Motion by Bob Borremans, seconded by Rob Wilkinson, to approve June 13, 2025 agenda. Motion carried.

Review and Approval of April 11, 2025 Draft Meeting Minutes

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by Catherine Jones-Ferk, to approve April 11, 2025 draft meeting minutes with correction indicating Catherine Jones-Ferk voted Yes for proposed rewritten bylaws. Motion carried.

Public Comment **None**

Comments from Chair

Beth Esser, Interim Board Chair

- It looks like a big agenda, but we'll go through it efficiently. At this time funding is a concern. We have a lot of ups and downs in Washington and Madison at this time. We may have to look at our budget in the fall. I encourage board members to participate in advocacy because it is so important. Legislators do pay attention.

Executive Director Updates

John Schnabl, Executive Director

- Welcome back John Helling. We are glad to see you well after such a bad accident.
- Lori Hernandez, one of our Nutrition Program Specialist, will be retiring Sept. 5th and we are currently interviewing for her position.
- Rich Lavigne, our Legal Services Manager and Abigail Darwin, EBS Supporting Attorney have both left GWAAR to pursue other interests.
- Sky VanRossum, Special Projects Manager, will be leaving at the end of June.
- We have hired Donna Rosner for Jayne Mullin's previous position as Elder Abuse Program Specialist.
- We are looking at hiring our 8th VA Care Consultant due to the program's growth. [Beth Esser asked if the VA Manager could attend a board meeting and give a presentation of the program.](#)
- GWAAR's staff retreat is October 22nd, and it is being held in the Dells. Board members are welcome to attend. Please contact Rosanna if you are interested.
- We have an ACE meeting taking place July 9, 2025, at UW-Stevens Point. Board members are welcome to attend.
- Aging Advocacy Day went really well. We had about 250 participants. Janet did a great job as usual.



- Our fiscal team has been busy traveling across the state and training county fiscal staff on all things fiscal related.
- GWAAR will be putting out an RFP (with the help of GWAAR's Angie Sullivan) later this fall which is looking to redirect about \$250,000 of Older American's Act legal services money. This RFP will be looking for a legal services entity to provide legal benefit assistance to older adults in our service area. Milwaukee's AAA will be doing one on their own, however we will be coordinating timing with them. Technically it's possible with Milwaukee doing their own, that we could have two different providers. Dane county has decided to join in ours, since they only have about \$18,000, which is below their RFP threshold.
- Polly Shoemaker, our Guardian Support Center attorney, along with Patrick's help on the fiscal end, completed the application to the state to continue the Guardianship Support Center Program for the next five years. That was just submitted yesterday.
- GWAAR has received our 2025 allocations for Older Americans Act Programs. We received our allocations not only for GWAAR but for all the counties and tribes that receive Title III Older Americans Act funds.

Finance Committee Report

Patrick Metz, Fiscal Manager

Dave Hoberg, Treasurer

Dave Hoberg:

- At the last Finance Committee meeting we looked at insurance policies and renewal dates. GWAAR is trying to get all policies to renew at the same time to make things easier.
- There were questions regarding business interruption insurance.
- Patrick is going to be putting out RFPs for auditors and banking to see if anyone would give us a line of credit, which ours currently does not.



Patrick Metz:

- Patrick went over a few details on income and balance sheets.
- The Fiscal Specialist Position we were going to hire for, is being put on hold until we have a better feel for what our funding will look like.
- We did see small reductions in our Title 3 funding for 2025. For some of them, Title 3B was a drop of about 1 1/2 percentage points. But what it did result in is essentially a negative, in loss of funds, except for Title 3 E, which is a National Family Caregiver funds, but a loss in funds for all, nearly all 70 counties and 11 tribes. We normally get a final adjustment towards the end of summer, probably August. Hopefully there will be no further reductions at that point. We will have to wait and see how that all plays out. The reduction also affected our admin dollars as well. It looks like we will receive about a 1.3% reduction in our general GWAAR admin funds, which is about \$18,000.
- There are a few things that are different than previous years under license fees. We only show roughly \$3600 in license fees, generally this time of year it's about \$700,000. This is because the state stopped using WellSky data management software and went to PeerPlace software. The state ran that software through GWAAR, so we are no longer passing that through. PeerPlace replacement cost of that will be about \$135,000.
- We have a VA collection expense and revenue, of about \$1400. The VA paid us something they shouldn't have paid us. They made a mistake and so we wanted to make sure it was really clear in our system.
- If you'll notice under unallowable expenses, our DOJ programming with the Elder Abuse Hotline and Later in Life programs, the state only reimburses state rates for mileage and for various other expenses. GWAAR pays the federal rate. The difference of those are covered with our administrative dollars. It's only \$186 in the first quarter, so it's not a huge amount, but it just keeps people all consistent for employees in the agency.
- The VA program is growing by leaps and bounds. My last payment to Aris, which is a third-party company that provides all the payroll support and does all the claims for that program, was about \$744,000 for one month. It's actually grown quite substantially over the years and it's going to continue to grow as the program does

expand. It's a really great program and I'm thrilled to have it, and truthfully, that's the only reason why can really have the reserve that we have.

- Steve Ahlgren asked if there is a limit on what GWAAR can do with reserve funds or if there is maximum cap. Beth Esser said that is a good question and one that should be discussed at the Finance Committee Meeting.
- Regarding the balance sheet, the main conversation that occurred here was the clearing. Specifically, the \$1.68 million of clearing that should be zeroed out. It was the question of how to best do that. We worked with our auditors, and we actually have come up with the method to properly fix that. We will be implementing it, probably next week. This will accomplish what the Finance Committee had asked us to do. Clearing out the clearing and then showing all of the OAA programs at zero equity because they are a pass through, so they should be. It will be a cleaner picture of our financial health within the balance sheet, which is what the balance sheet is about. But otherwise again, the balance sheet reflects that we do have a very healthy financially.

Motion by John Helling, seconded by Bob Borremans, to place financial statements as presented on file. Motion carried.

- Regarding the GWAAR lease: Our current lease ends mid-November. The question of what to do with this lease was taken up by the Finance Committee meeting during their meeting on Monday. Ultimately, where the committee landed and the recommendation from the committee was to accept the three-year term on just Suite A. So no longer renewing the lease or signing a new lease on Suite 306, getting rid of that entirely and just using Suite A as a result of a lot fewer people utilizing our office space. By eliminating the third floor, it would save us \$40,000 to \$42,000 a year.

Motion by Steve Ahlgren, seconded by Catherine Jones-Ferk, to accept the 3-year lease option from our landlord for Suite A.

Yay: 8.

Nay: 1

Motion carried.

- Audit Update: It is still in the process. We've provided them everything and more than what they've asked for. We are waiting on the Auditor's response to all we've given them.

Executive Committee Report

Beth Esser, Interim Board Chair

New Organizational Chart:

- The proposed new organizational chart was reviewed, and John went over it in detail. The goal was to get rid of one layer of management. The special projects area has been deleted, and the VA program will report to me. Staff roles were not affected dramatically. No legal services manager will be needed. Two more people will be reporting to John than is currently the case. Eventually the Guardianship Support Center attorney will be moved over with the other attorneys, once the EBS program gains more stability. The main goal was not to have a position whose sole job was to supervise. The Fraud and Abuse Program manager will have a slightly increased role, incorporating Elder Abuse positions. Overall, only two positions will have job description changes.
- Rob Wilkinson asked if someone would be designated to be secondary in command in case of health or unforeseen circumstances.
- Steve would like to see data from the programs that show the effectiveness of programs. John said he will start to bring in program managers to talk to the board about what their programs do in detail.

Motion by Dave Hoberg, seconded by Steve Ahlgren, to approve proposed new organizational chart. Motion carried.

Legal Services Program:

- The Executive Committee is recommending to the board that we take the funds that we currently contract out with, Legal Action of Wisconsin, for the six counties surrounding Milwaukee, the Elder Benefit Specialists in that area, which is in our service area, and redirect and keep those funds and have GWAAR provide that service starting in 2026. The feeling is, since it's our service area, and we feel that we could do a better job of doing the training in technical assistance. We felt if there was ever an opportunity, now would be the time to do so. GWAAR also did talk with the state about it, not whether or not they thought it was a good idea or bad idea, because there would be no commitment at that level, but they assured GWAAR that it is an allowable thing to do, if we chose to do so.



Motion by Steve Ahlgren, seconded by Bob Borremans to table recommendation. Motion failed.

Motion by Dave Hoberg, seconded by John Helling, to approve John Schnabl's recommendation to take the funds we currently contract out with Legal Action of Wisconsin to support the Elder Benefit Specialist (EBS) in the six counties surrounding Milwaukee, which is in our service area and keep those funds and provide that service with our EBS support attorneys starting in 2026. Motion carried.

GWAAR Handbook Changes:

- Recommended verbiage is highlighted in yellow. Additions would go under the categories of Paid Time Off and Recording Time. These additions represent changes from practice to written policy. Non-exempt employees can take time off in increments of one hour; exempt, increments four hours. The other verbiage addresses non-exempt employees and what constitutes a workday.
- Bob Borremans suggested that the board review the GWAAR Handbook since it has not been revised in some time.

Motion by Catherine Jones-Ferk, seconded by Steve Ahlgren, to accept additions to employee handbook as presented. Motion carried.

Consideration of Dismissal/removal of Board Member:

- Dave Ostness for the last six months, due to illness, has not been able to fulfill his responsibilities to the GWAAR board. Beth Esser was told he is still incapacitated due to his illness and is not expected to get well anytime soon. His term ends in December 2025, however his absence adversely affects a quorum. Based on revised bylaws, it is required that Dave be given ten-day notice (we will do a certified letter) of intended removal. He will officially then be removed due to incapacitation/illness at the August 8, 2025 board meeting.

Motion by Steve Ahlgren, seconded by Cookie Lough, to relieve Dave Ostness as Chair due to his incapacitation and Beth Esser will go from Interim Chair to Chair and Rob Wilkinson from Interim Vice-Chair to Vice-Chair. Motion was rescinded.

Motion by Steve Ahlgren, seconded by Cookie Lough, to send a certified letter to Dave Ostness to inform him of the intention that he will be relieved of his duties as a board member due to his incapacitation at the August 8, 2025 board meeting. Motion carried.

Board Terms Following Bylaw Revisions:

- The bylaws were recently changed to have election of officers take place in December. Board member terms will also coincide with ending in December. The following have terms ending before December 2025.

Beth Esser

Bob Borremans

Rob Wilkinson

Cookie Lough

Wes Martin

John Helling

Motion by Steve Ahlgren, seconded by Wes Martin, that any board member whose term ends between now and December 2025, be extended to the December 2025 until the annual meeting. Motion carried.

Review/Update Articles of Incorporation:

- It was discussed at a recent Executive Committee meeting that GWAAR's Articles of Incorporation should be updated. Beth asked for volunteers, and Dave Hoberg and Steve Ahlgren volunteered to work on them. A meeting was scheduled for June 30th to begin the process.

Broadband in Rural Areas

- Wes asked that his request for this topic be tabled for the time being. Board meeting agenda date to be determined.

Advisory Council Report

Nick Musson, OAA Consultant-Transportation

- GWAAR Advisory Council had their last meeting February 21st. At that meeting, we welcomed new member, Valerie Freres, and approved a new application for a new member, Sheila Check Moe. We are very excited to have two new members, which brings the total to eight.

- GWAAR's next virtual Advisory Council meeting will be July 18th at 10:00 a.m. Bryn Ceman, Caregiver Programs Consultant, and Lucia Mennen, Communications Director, will be speaking at the meeting. They will discuss how they use Facebook, SharePoint, GWAAR's website and the GWAAR Newsletter to reach our audiences.
- The council will also be reviewing information on new applicant, Tony Omernik. He is from Wausau, WI. He has spent 45 years in nonprofit management in human service type programming, in which he had the opportunity to serve both youth, older adults, and retirees. His work over the years in various organizations allowed him the opportunity to develop skills which have led to highly successful programs. Some specific skills include community engagement, public speaking, board development, strategic planning, volunteer management. The Advisory Council has a subcommittee, which reviewed his application and will be recommending that the Advisory Council approve his application. We're very excited about bringing Tony on board. This would bring us to a total of nine Advisory Council members. We're making great progress.
- Rob Wilkinson, Vice Chair, is the liaison to the Advisory Council.

Advocacy and Public Policy

Janet Zander, Advocacy and Public Policy Coordinator

- Things have been very, very busy as most of you know at the state and federal level. State legislature has not yet taken up any of the three budgets that mostly pertain to the budget asks that are priorities of the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network. They're all going to be found in the Department of Justice, the Department of Transportation and the Department of Health Services. Transportation and Health Services are typically last. They're the most complicated. The budget ideally is passed by June 30th. That may or may not happen this budget cycle. It's not uncommon for the budget to be delayed, particularly when there's so much uncertainty around funding levels. The fact that the legislative Fiscal Bureau has released not only the Transportation budget papers, but also the Human Service budget papers, that tells me they're getting keyed up to think about how to schedule it, and it gives us time to read through the budget papers, read through the options that have been presented to them, and think about taking a position on any of those budget positions, and then making those action alerts.
- On Aging Advocacy Day, we lifted up our budget priorities this year. We, being the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network, of which GWAAR is a member. The issues were

home delivered meals, transportation, workforce supports and healthy aging grants, particularly in the area of falls prevention. We had over 200 people, so really good turn out this year. To be most effective, we have discussed making AA Day every other year. We've been getting better and better as a network of advocates, that doing in-district meetings, where people are sitting them down with constituents, some of whom will never be able to come to Madison, but can have a voice in their district.

- We're trying really hard to get some other legislation passed in the state legislature. The first is a topic I haven't talked to you about before, and it relates to customer transparency around agencies called assisted living facility referral agencies. Some of you might be familiar with A Place for Mom, which is a national organization that you see ads on TV for. But there's a number operating here in the state as well. Oasis comes to mind because I've heard them speak recently, but there's a number of others. Some communities have more than one. Some don't really have any, but they've started to take on a much larger role in connecting people to long-term care options than they once did and they expect to take on an even larger role, given the aging of the population. We don't know a lot about them in the aging network, and we're sort of learning as we go here, recognizing we need to know more about them for a variety of reasons. The first reason is they're not regulated at all. They provide an important gap service in some cases, but they also provide some services that overlap with the Aging and Disability Resource Centers. Their primary target population are those people who are not on Medicaid or near Medicaid eligibility, which in and of itself isn't a problem. People should have choices and options, but there is much to learn about these organizations. What we're learning by the introduction of a bill, and what's being discussed, is do consumers really know they're getting into when they contact a referral agent. For example, these organizations say their services are free, however they really are not in the end. The list from long-term care organizations is not a full list but only those that they have a contract with, where they get a large commission fee. The fee is 85 to 100% of the first month's cost. And then there is the question of how long can you private pay? We hear this happening a lot where people run out of money because it's expensive overtime and then they have to move and we all know transitions are really hard. Another thing to think about is do we really think those facilities that are paying out \$5000 to \$7000 per referral aren't spreading that cost right back to their consumers living in their facilities. Of course they are. It's part of their marketing and operations budget. Many facilities don't have staff that do that unless they're a big, big, complex, and even then, there it seems to be worth it to them to pay this referral company. Bottomline is there should be transparency for the consumer, so



they are knowledgeable about what they are getting as options and be aware that the referral organization may not have their best interest necessarily.

- For more detailed advocacy information, please see Janet's written report.

Bureau Report

Laura Langer, Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources

- The Wisconsin State Aging Plan has been reviewed internally through the Department of Health Services and should be filed with the new Administration on Aging/Department of Children and Families and Communities, formerly ACL. As you know, it's been almost two years in the making. We began working on this with GWAAR and the two other AAAs to complete their aging plans and utilize that information to influence our state aging plan. We just want to thank GWAAR and especially Nick Musson, the coordinator of GWAAR's plan, and all of you for your work on this project.

Executive Director Evaluation

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by Rob Wilkinson, to adjourn into Closed Session pursuant to Wisconsin Statutes 19.85 (c) for the purpose of considering matters related to employment promotion, compensation or performance.

Adjournment:

Next Meeting Date: August 8, 2025 – ADRC of Portage County

Meeting Dates for 2025

October 10, 2025

December 12, 2025

Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator; Recorder