



*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, October 10, 2025 | 10:00 a.m.*

ADRC of Portage County and  
Microsoft Teams Video Conference Call

**Members present:** *Beth Esser, Rob Wilkinson, Dave Hoberg, Wes Martin, Rowena Nelson, Cookie Lough, John Helling, Steve Ahlgren, Catherine Jones-Ferk*

**Members excused:**

**Others Present:** *John Schnabl, Executive Director; Patrick Metz, Fiscal Manager; Jean Lynch, Program Specialist Manager; Nick Musson, OAA Consultant, Angie Sullivan, Health Promotion Program Specialist; Janet Zander, Advocacy and Public Policy Coordinator; Neal Minogue, Older Americans Act Program Supervisor, State Office on Aging (BADR); Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator*

### **Call to Order**

---

*Beth Esser, Board Chair*

The meeting was called to order at 10:01 a.m. by Beth Esser, Chair.

### **Review and Approval of October 10, 2025 Agenda**

---

- Wes Martin had a family emergency that requires him to leave at noon. Board members agreed to rearrange agenda order so that he can be present on all agenda topics that require a board vote.

*Motion by Dave Hoberg, seconded by Cookie Lough, to amend the agenda so Wes Martin can be present on agenda items that require board member vote. Motion carried.*



## **Review and Approval of August 8, 2025 Draft Meeting Minutes**

---

*Motion by Rob Wilkinson, seconded by Wes Martin, to approve August 8, draft meeting minutes. Motion carried.*

**Public Comment**      **None**

---

## **Comments from Chair**

---

*Beth Esser, Interim Board Chair*

- I'd like to stress board education on the Older Americans Act, and GWAAR bylaws. I hope to get copies of the OAA documents out to Rosanna so she can forward them to the board. Those documents should be studied and be our guidepost. With time things change and we should be open to changing GWAAR bylaws in a thoughtful way that is congruent with the Older Americans Act. We need to make sure we are meeting the needs of the aging units and older Americans in the state of Wisconsin in these uncertain times.

## **Executive Director Report**

---

*John Schnabl, Executive Director*

- In 2026, GWAAR will be redirecting a considerable amount of Older Americans Act money that typically had gone to pay for our attorneys who support the Elder Benefit Specialists in our service area. That money will be redirected to a new legal benefit assistance program. We have been meeting with the state about getting more financial support to help support that program and continue that program starting in 2026 when these changes are going to occur. The state did agree to provide us the financial support not only to support the existing four attorneys but will also provide enough funding to add a fifth attorney.
- Our VA Self Directed services program continues to grow as we are adding another VA Consultant to handle the Madison VA adding 12 more slots. We're looking for someone in the south, south central area if we can because of where clients are located and where we have existing care consultants.

- Given the government shut down at this point in time, the state does not have permission to approve program transfers which is affecting county programs. The state is looking for ways to help alleviate this in some way, so they are trying to work with the secretary's office to come up with a plan to help a little bit with this. Once the transfers are approved the funds will be available in a pretty timely manner. The allocations are there, just not in the right place.
- The Inclusa Foundation contacted GWAAR regarding possibly giving us a grant to help our home delivered nutrition program in our AAA service area. Jean Lynch is pulling together data and a PowerPoint presentation to give Inclusa. If we are given the grant, the funds would be released in the first part of December.

### **Finance Committee Report**

---

*Dave Hoberg, Treasurer*

*Patrick Metz, Fiscal Manager*

- 2024 Audit: 2024 audit is complete. Overview of findings presented. There were three findings, none of which were egregious, which are being addressed and monitored by the Finance Committee. Patrick has written up a corrective action plan.

*Motion by Dave Hoberg, seconded by Rob Wilkinson, to accept audit report. Motion carried.*

- Audit firm RFP: After six years with our current audit firm, it was time to put out an RFP for a new one. We received three back and a comparison sheet has been given to the board. The Finance Committee's recommendation is SVA, a local firm with an office in the Madison area.

*Motion by Steve Ahlgren, seconded by Dave Hoberg, to accept SVA as new audit firm. Motion carried.*

- Review of financial statements: Financial statements were reviewed. Cash reserves are just under 3 million. The VA Program is the main reason for reserves, which is very needed. Six months' worth of expenses is typically considered healthy, and needed if there were ever a delay in government reimbursement.

➤ John's contact at the IRS provided guidance on surplus funds. He said:

There is no problem with the nonprofit creating a surplus as long as those funds are reinvested into activities that support the organization and its mission. Any profit or surplus cannot be given out specifically to individuals such as board members or staff. The board should be setting guidelines for the management of its surplus funds. It is prudent to have reserves of three to six months in order to cover any shortfall, and it is allowable to put surplus towards any future planning such as new programs, new facilities, etc.

- Steve Ahlgren said it would be nice to get other AAA's bylaws and policies pertaining to surplus funds.

*Motion by Rob Wilkinson, seconded by Dave Hoberg, to place financial statements on file. Motion carried.*

- 2026 draft budget: Draft budget was reviewed, and board members were notified that 2026 draft budget will be voted on at the next board meeting.

### **RFP for Legal Benefit Assistance**

---

*Angie Sullivan, Health Promotion Program Specialist*

- GWAAR sent out an RFP and will be redirecting more than \$260,000 of Older Americans Act funds for legal services for adults over 60 due to a directive by the state. GWAAR had to take the Title III-B Older Americans Act funds that were used to pay for our attorneys, and having them redirected via an RFP process. Dane county has also joined our RFP and will add in their \$19,000 of OAA funds as well. The entries have to be from legal services entities. The deadline for applying was mid-September. There was a small panel of people reviewing and judging the entries. Ultimately Angie Sullivan will be providing oversight of this contract which will entail monthly reports. This will be a new legal services assistance program for 60 and over in Wisconsin. We are assuming it will probably consist of a toll-free call-in number manned by attorneys. Milwaukee county will have their own RFP process and provider. The RFP can be found on GWAAR's website.
- Angie Sullivan, GWAAR's Health Promotion Program Specialist, who was assigned the Legal Benefit Assistance Program RFP process, will also oversee the administration of the program. She gave PowerPoint overview of the RFP process, summary of applicant scoring, notice of award and next steps.



- The proposal due date was September 12th of 2025. We did receive one applicant, Legal Action of Wisconsin, in partnership with Judicare. Service delivery should start in January 2026.

*Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by Rob Wilkinson, to accept contract with Legal Action of Wisconsin. Motion carried.*

## **Executive Committee Report**

---

*Beth Esser, Chair*

- PEO (Vensure) Services: There is concern with quality of service and responsiveness by Venture. The board would like John to look into different possibilities of HR vendors, perhaps even parsing out certain parts of HR services along with the possibility of bringing part of HR in-house to GWAAR.
- Revisions to Articles of Incorporation/By-laws: Dave Hoberg completed a form for restatement of Articles of Incorporation but would like John to have it reviewed by legal counsel. If restatement is approved by attorney, there would need to be some slight bylaw changes as well.
- Employee Handbook Changes: Management continues to work with Vensure on certain GWAAR policy details GWAAR management will review final product and then it will be brought to the board for review and final approval.
- Update on Great Lakes Intertribal Council (GLITC): Two staff people were hired by the Tribal Technical Assistance Center (TTAC) however one has left, so they are down to one person. GWAAR will have to consider the possibility of perhaps bringing that position in-house. Wes Martin did not support the idea of bringing it in house.
- VA Program and GWAAR Mission and Service Area: The board would like John to get legal opinions on how the VA program funds could affect GWAAR's nonprofit status.

*Motion by Steve Ahlgren, seconded by Cookie Lough, to have John get legal opinion on whether VA program funds could affect GWAAR's nonprofit status. Motion carried.*

- Executive Director Evaluation Process: Each executive committee member and John completed an evaluation form to provide feedback/discussion and results were brought before the board in closed session.



## **Advisory Council Report**

---

*Nick Musson, Transportation & Aging Plan Program Specialist*

- The Advisory Council had an in-person meeting on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. New member, Tony Amernik, was welcomed. Tony has over 40 years of non-profit organization experience. He served the youth, older adults, retirees, low-income individuals, persons with disabilities and those affected by disaster events.
- Christy Cooley, our new Nutrition Specialist, was introduced.
- The group had a special presentation from Susan Witrich, director of Tech Connect. She gave a great overview of how Tech Connect helps the older population with technology through classes and education, which helps with social connectedness and independence.
- At the next Advisory Council meetings, we plan on having Lisa Druin, VA Program Manager and Kristi Cooley, Nutrition Specialist, as special guests to give us an overview of their programs and how they help the older population in Wisconsin.

## **Advocacy Report**

---

*Janet Zander, Advocacy & Public Policy*

- Nick and Janet have been working on some state legislation regarding volunteer driver insurance. Unfortunately, when insurance companies find out a person is volunteering, they move them to a commercial policy or deny them coverage. Janet and Nick have been working on getting some legislation through that could stop insurance companies from doing this. They met with legislators on September 3<sup>rd</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> the first thing we want to talk to you about is some state legislators from both the Senate and the House to educate and relay stories to help get some draft legislation drafted. Next steps are putting together a coalition and creating a sign on letter. There is support out there and there is hope to build on that and get legislation passed.
- There are several housing bills that have now not only been released but passed either unanimously or nearly unanimously out of committee. So, there has been bipartisan legislation looking at access to affordable housing. Housing has become exceptionally expensive for renters and homeowners and really looking at ways that this bill package could make that a little easier.

- On the elections bill side, we're also starting to see some of those elections bills I talked about being introduced. Two in particular, are bills that were following closely as members of the Disability Vote Coalition. One has to do with election official training specific to the needs of people with disabilities, and the other is polling place accessibility.
- Another bill we are watching has to do with absentee ballots and the certificates that go with them.
- There are now eight members on a new speaker's task force on elder care services. It's very exciting to see a task force focused on the very issues that are impacting this network the most. The members are:
  - Snyder (Chair) Marathon
  - Doyle (Vice Chair) LaCrosse
  - Melotik - Ozaki
  - Gundrum -Washington
  - VanderMeer - Monroe
  - Novak - Iowa
  - McCarville – Dane
  - Taylor – Milwaukee

Eight members, bipartisan chair and vice chair. These two folks apparently work together back in 2018 and were able to produce 14 bills, eleven of which got passed into law. These people know how to work together. They know how to get things done and they will be holding 4 hearings. Part of our job is to turn people out to talk at these hearings so that they can hear directly from constituents on the issues that are making it difficult for them to age in place.

- For more information and details on Advocacy updates, please see Janets written report or subscribe to the GWAAR newsletter.

## **Bureau Report**

---

*Neal Minogue, Older Americans Act Program Supervisor (BADR)*

- I wanted to inform you of several grants that were awarded at the end of September prior to the government shutdown. Wisconsin Department of Health Services

- received notice of an award of \$450,000 from the CDC regarding the BOLD grant, which stands for Building Our Largest Dementia Infrastructure Public Health Program to support people living with dementia and their family caregivers. This grant will allow us to continue our work to develop and enhance health strategies, risk prevention, timely diagnosis, disease management and caregiver support. The grant aims to improve the quality of life for approximately 120,000 Wisconsinites living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementia. The program will partner with organizations such as the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute, the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, and the Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging. This grant will be expended over 2 years and is the third time we've received it. I think it is in large part because we're being recognized in the nation as one of the leaders in supporting people with dementia.
- The STARS grant. The STARS Center assists states and partner organizations to expand data resources capability to facilitate the examination accessibility and affordability of state-based, integrated, coordinated dementia care services, programs and policies. Star's goal is to share evaluation results and best practices across the states nationally. Wisconsin has received notice that they will receive a one year STARS grant which has provided new additional pieces of information. That grant was \$100,000. In addition, we also received notice from STARS staff that we can also expect another \$200,000 for DCS, Dementia Community Services.

### **Executive Director Evaluation**

---

- *Motion to convene into closed session pursuant to Wisconsin statutes 19.85 (c) for the purpose of considering matters related to employment, promotion, compensation or performance data.*

*Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by Dave Hoberg , to convene into closed session.  
Motion carried.*

- *Motion to end closed session.*

### **Approval of Completed Executive Director Evaluation Forms**

---

*Beth Esser, Chair*

*Motion by Steve Ahlgren, seconded by Dave Hoberg, to except completed executive director evaluation forms. Motion carried.*





**Adjournment:**

---

Next Meeting Date: December 12, 2025 – ADRC of Portage County

**Meeting Dates for 2026**

*February 13, 2026 - Virtual*

*April 10, 2026*

*June 12, 2026*

*August 14, 2026*

*October 9, 2026*

*December 11, 2026*

*Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator; Recorder*