



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 13, 2026 | 10:00 a.m.

Microsoft Teams Video Conference Call

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

Members excused:

Others Present: John Schnabl, Executive Director; Patrick Metz, Fiscal Manager; Jean Lynch, Program Specialist Manager; Nick Musson, OAA Consultant; Janet Zander, Advocacy & Public Policy Coordinator; Neal Minogue, Older Americans Act Program Supervisor, State Office on Aging (BADR); Sara Koenig, BADR; Doris Bakker, Advisory Council Member; Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator; Heather Vanoss, Kenosha Count; Dawn Klaeser, MITW

Call to Order

Rob Wilkinson, Board Chair

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

Review and Approval of February 13, 2026 Agenda *(ACTION)*

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by Dave Hoberg, to approve February 13, 2026 agenda. Motion carried.

Review and Approval of December 12, 2025 Draft Meeting Minutes *(ACTION)*

Motion by Cookie Lough, seconded by Steve Ahlgren, to approve December 12, 2025 draft meeting minutes. Motion carried.



Public Comment **None**

Comments from Chair

Rob Wilkinson, Board Chair

- I'm not much for speaking, so if any other board members have something they'd like to discuss, I yield this item of the agenda to them. Just let me know via email, and I will ensure we bring that topic up at this time.
- I also think it's really important board members try to get involved with other GWAAR committees. Your ideas, knowledge and leadership are valuable, so I encourage you all to do this.
- I think that we as an organization need to do something to honor the past members who have been part of history, guidance, and contributions to GWAAR. It's something I would hope we can add to our website, and I've just listed it as something called Spirit of GWAAR. It would be two parts. One part would be for listing names and their specialty or agency. They would be listed in something like a Hall of Honor. Some examples would be Bob Kellerman, Beth Esser, and Bob Borremans; people who have been providing their time and service for an extended amount of time. The second part would be something like a GWAAR Star. Someone who has been doing an outstanding job and gets recommended as such. Some examples would be anyone who is affiliated with us, staff and volunteers. We would list their name and the reason for nomination in a short statement. Over a period of time they would be placed on a list and a new person would be nominated.

Executive Director Report

John Schnabl, Executive Director

- All of you on the board should have received the first legal services report that Legal Action of Wisconsin submitted to us regarding January's services. They are doing it statewide because Milwaukee also granted it to them and then we do the other 71 counties and 11 tribes. So now it's just them providing this service for our 71 counties and 11 tribes.
- We will begin the RFP process to look for a Professional Employment Organization (PEO) in April and any changes to the PEO will begin January 1, 2027 to ensure a clean start. It is our hope to provide the board with a recommendation at the June

board meeting. At the time RFP's are being reviewed, we can also include what the cost would be to bring HR completely in house within GWAAR.

The RFP process will look for benefits coordination, human resources, technical assistance and payroll processing.

- We also sent the board our first ever GWAAR 2025 Year in Review which focused on some of GWAAR's highlights for 2025. We'd love your feedback so we can incorporate that into the 2026 version.
- Recently GWAAR Fiscal received the 2026 allocations. During our review of the 2026 Older Americans Act allocations and comparing them with the 2025 allocations, it was realized that there were significant fluctuations across all programs but mainly with the congregate program. GWAAR Fiscal contacted the Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources (BADR) for more information and was informed it was because of the end of the hold harmless provision. This was outlined in the last two state aging plans.
- In the morning of March 18th, our GWAAR nutrition team is putting together a virtual event, and it is going to be an educational advocacy event, much like a lunch and learn. They will be inviting participants of meal programs across the state virtually. Our hope is that nutrition programs across the state will have participants of their meal programs take part in this event. The main speaker will be Bob Blancato, who is an advocate for nutrition and has been for probably 30 to 35 years, if not more. He's a national figure when it comes to nutrition programs and advocacy. He runs a non-profit around that. Once GWAAR's event is over, we hope nutrition programs across the state will follow up with some of their own local speakers to complete the day.

Finance Committee Report

Dave Hoberg, Treasurer

Patrick Metz, Fiscal Manager

Dave Hoberg:

- The topic of meeting stipends was discussed at length. It's not a simple topic. Who is included and how much they should be can get complicated. There was discussion of optics outside the organization, however, on the other hand it illustrates that important work and valuable time is being spent on meetings in the guidance of GWAAR. At the end of the meeting the finance committee agreed to make a

recommendation to the board to implement stipends for those on the board, executive committee, finance committee and advisory council, with a suggested starting point of \$125.00 per meeting to get a discussion started and to come to a consensus of what a reasonable amount would be.

- Other topics discussed were fiscal trainings taking place, state OAA allocations with significant swings for 2026 and the foundation gift of \$1.5 million for home delivered meals.

Patrick Metz:

- There is concern around not having OAA contracts/funding yet for this year and the major shift in state allocations exacerbates this situation. The state will also have funding controls wrapped around that, so GWAAR will be limited as to what can be distributed. Money will be pretty lean between now and July 1st as far as what can be distributed to counties and tribes.

Board Stipends **(ACTION):**

- Discussion was had regarding meeting stipends, that would include board, executive, finance and advisory council to include virtual as well as in person at \$125 per meeting, for those only officially a member of the committee. It would cost GWAAR approximately \$30,000/year. Some thoughts were that it would attract and keep board members. Others felt they signed up to give back to the community and did not want the stipend or felt \$125 was a bit excessive. Another important point made is that payment for attendance of meetings would make a major impact on the OAA contract requirement to produce match. It can be either cash match or it can be in-kind match. In the history of GWAAR, in-kind match has been a huge part of satisfying this requirement. When GWAAR falls short, we have to get a waiver for the amount we are short from the state. With stipends for meetings, this would have a huge impact on this match requirement. We just want to make you aware of this impact.

Motion by John Helling, seconded by Wes Martin, effective July 1, 2026, to have meeting stipends of \$125 for board, finance, executive, and advisory council, to include both virtual and in person, but for those only officially a member of that committee.

Motion by Steve Ahlgren, seconded by Cathy Jones-Ferk to postpone John Helling's motion for meeting stipends until next meeting.



Roll Call Vote:

Rob Wilkinson: YES
Cookie Lough: NO
Dave Hoberg: NO
Wes Martin: NO
Rowena Nelson: YES
John Helling: NO
Catherine Jones-Ferk: YES
Steve Ahlgren: YES
Sabrina Cyrus: YES

YES: 5 votes
NO: 4 votes

Majority vote established to postpone John Helling's motion for meeting stipends.

Insurance Renewals:

- Insurance renewals occur May 23rd and Patrick will get proposals from various insurance carriers and all be reviewed.

Review and Approval of Financial Statements:

- The Finance Committee wanted to see a side-by-side comparison of income statements which I have done so you can see the trends in in how expenses were happening across the year and I eventually I'll add a budget so both can be compared. GWAAR is fiscally in a good position. The goal is to have 6 million in cash reserves; six months of operating income is ideal. The Finance Committee will be thinking about creating a policy regarding how excess cash reserves over \$6 million could be handled.

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by Cathy Jones-Ferk, to place financial statements on file as presented. Motion carried.

Executive Committee Report

Rob Wilkinson, Chair

Board Member Application: **(ACTION)**



- Sandy Bergeron’s board application was discussed.

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by Cathy Jones-Ferk to approve Sand Bergeron’s board application and accept her onto the board.

Roll Call Vote:

Rob Wilkinson: YES
Cookie Lough: NO
Dave Hoberg: YES
Wes Martin: YES
Rowena Nelson: YES
John Helling: YES
Catherine Jones-Ferk: YES
Steve Ahlgren: NO
Sabrina Cyrus: YES

YES: 7 votes
NO: 2 votes

Majority vote established to approve Sandy’s board application and accept her onto the

HR/Benefit Liaison Position: (ACTION)

- The Executive Committee voted to forward on the request to create a part-time HR/Benefits Liaison position for GWAAR. It would be halftime 20 hours a week position Monday through Friday. This person would have enough knowledge or experience to act as a liaison between GWAAR and its staff and our PEO, retirement plan provider, and health reimbursement account provider. They would work with managers with the on boarding and off boarding of employees and with health insurance and retirement account enrollment and changes in the GWAAR employee handbook. They will also communicate any updates on human resources issues or benefit changes to employees.

Motion by John Helling, seconded by Dave Hoberg, to establish a part-time HR/Benefits Liaison position at GWAAR. Motion carried.



Ad Hoc Bylaws Committee Report

Steve Ahlgren, Dave Hoberg, Cookie Lough

Bylaws Revisions: (ACTION)

- The Executive Committee presented recommended changes to Article 1 through Article 4 of the bylaws. Changes clarify that GWAAR is more than just an Area Agency on Aging. There were changes to director duties and who is in charge if the director is incapacitated, service area, number of board members and age requirements and terms.

Motion by Dave Hoberg, seconded by Cookie Lough, to approve proposed bylaw changes as amended during board meeting. Motion carried.

Roll Call Vote:

Rob Wilkinson: YES
Cookie Lough: YES
Dave Hoberg: YES
Wes Martin: YES
Rowena Nelson: YES
John Helling: YES
Catherine Jones-Ferk: YES
Steve Ahlgren: YES
Sabrina Cyrus: YES

YES: 9 votes

NO: 0 votes

Home Delivered Meal Gift Program Update

Jean Lynch, Program Specialist Manager

- Jean discussed the metrics being used to determine how the \$1.5 million dollar foundation gift for home delivered meals will be allocated and disbursed, once the application is received by the county. GWAAR has been having meetings with the Network for their feedback. The goal is to allocate the funds over a two-year period. Jean stated that she would love to have a board member on the allocation



committee for these funds. One of the metrics being used are those nutrition programs that have a wait list or can't serve 5 days a week.

Advisory Council Update

Nick Musson, Transportation & Aging Plan Program Specialist

- The next Advisory Council meeting will be virtual and is February 20th at 10:00 a.m. Advisory Council member, Tony Omernik, will be giving a presentation on healthy aging coalitions and how many agencies working together can accomplish goals in serving their communities.
- We will also be voting on a new Vice Chair for the Advisory Council.
- We will have more discussion and give an update on the volunteer driver insurance issue and the advocacy around it.
- Janet Zander will give an advocacy update.

Advocacy & Public Policy Update

Janet Zander, Advocacy & Public Policy Coordinator

- Legislatively, there is a lot taking place. By February 19th, anything that we hope to see passed into law has to get through at least the Assembly and then we have roughly another month to get it through the Senate. We are heavily involved with four of the six speaker task force bills. I believe those have all passed through the assembly committees. One of them has gone through the Senate committees, and five of them are up for a vote by the full assembly on Tuesday the 17th. Notably absent is the crypto kiosk bill. If we fail to get full assembly vote on this crypto kiosk bill, it cannot be passed this legislative session.
- There's a lot of other legislation moving the bill that would allow caregivers to identify themselves in their electronic motor vehicle record so that, if something happens to them in an accident and they're hospitalized or worse, we don't have people in need of care waiting at home hours, days, however long, without realizing something has happened. That bill is making progress through the legislature as well.

- Regarding our memory care designation legislation, we had a hearing this week we were able to testify on. This is a bill that's near and dear to many of us who have reached out on behalf of a loved one or people that we serve to help them find memory care only to find out that not everybody who hangs out that memory care shingle actually has their staff trained in how to provide memory care. The inability to provide the right care has led to some really devastating injuries and losses. These are people who often pay thousands of dollars more per month for the care, only to realize that the institution can't deliver the care and have at times had to move people multiple times to different facilities. This legislation would define what memory care means. And if you're going to call yourself a memory care facility, you have to provide training in a series of dementia specific kinds of ways and have the facility to be able to support it as well.
- We are also trying to stop the patient representative bill and that is linked in your document as well. And this is where if we have not chosen who we want to make our healthcare decisions, power of attorney for healthcare as well as a power of attorney for finances, since somebody has to pay for that care, then the hospital would be able to come to whichever family members present themselves at the hospital at the time of hospitalization. If we cannot make those decisions ourselves, they will appoint somebody to do that based on a hierarchy. For some families that will work just fine. For other families where there's not necessarily agreement about where somebody should live and how that should be paid for, it could lead to some pretty scary things. Unfortunately, not everybody has the patient's best interest at heart, and we have been opposing this. We have been advocating for alternative language. At this point, we've had five assembly representatives pull their names off of the bill as co-sponsors. Unfortunately, it is on the assembly agenda for the 17th, and we keep being told not to worry if it passes. They'll tweak it next time or tweak it in three years when it sunsets. But I can tell you people whose apartment leases have been given up, people whose homes have been sold, and people have been placed in a facility. We can't give them back that time or money. Three years is a long time and could negatively impact a lot of people.
- For more advocacy information and details, please see Janet's written report.

Bureau Report

Neal Minogue, Older Americans Act Program Supervisor (BADR)

- We are still waiting for a federal budget. We have an idea of what our monies will be, however, we need the full budget too. So we can get more funding out the door.



We feel the pressure and I hope Congress feels the pressure too from their constituents.

- The Administration for Community Living has now been reaffirmed, but we're not sure where it is going to land.
- Thank you to all the aging units and GWAAR, particularly Carrie Kretz and Patrick Metz for putting together the end of the year program report for our federally required reporting that has to go to the administration on community living. It takes every county to report every service that was provided and all the funding that was provided to align with those services that is fed to GWAAR. The state then takes all three AAA's and rolls them all up to create what is called a NAPIS report. This report is required by the feds at the end of every year. It's a very strenuous task for everybody involved, and of course GWAAR, who put great effort into making this happen. We had some very good data this year. If that wasn't enough, the state implemented a new database system called Peer Place that replaced WellSky. It actually went very well.

Adjournment:

Next Meeting Date: *[April 10, 2026 – ADRC of Portage County](#)*

Meeting Dates for 2026

June 12, 2026

August 14, 2026

October 9, 2026

December 11, 2026

Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator; Recorder