



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.

Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

Friday, February 20, 2026 | 10:00 a.m. –11:30 a.m.

Microsoft Teams Conference Call

Attendees

Members Present: Dave Denomie, Dave Lowe, Doris Bakker, Bob Best, Tony Omernik

Members Not Present: Valerie Freres, Denise Sweet, Sheila Check-Moe

Others Present: Cookie Lough, Board Vice Chair; Nick Musson, Transportation & Aging Plan Specialist; Janet Zander, Advocacy and Public Policy Coordinator; Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator

Call to Order: 10:02 a.m.

Dave Denomie, Chair

Review and Approval of February 20, 2026 Agenda

Motion by Doris Bakker, seconded by Bob Best, to approve February 20, 2026 agenda. Motion unanimously carried.

Review and Approval of November 14, 2025 Draft Meeting Minutes

Motion by Dave Lowe, seconded by Bob Best, to approve November 14, 2025 draft meeting minutes. Motion unanimously carried.

Public Comment:

None



Comments from Chair

Dave Denomie, Chair

- Welcomed everyone and wished everyone a happy 2026. He thanked everyone that is working diligently to meet the needs of older Americans in Wisconsin.

Executive Director's Report -written report submitted

Nick Musson on behalf of John Schnabl, Executive Director

- Cookie Lough, newly elected Vice Chair of the board and Advisory Council liaison, was welcomed to the meeting.
- GWAAR has produced for the very first time, a year in review document highlighting some of GWAAR's accomplishments for 2025. We'd love to get feedback to incorporate it into next year's report.
- GWAAR is currently hiring for two VA positions. One due to growth and one is replacing someone who moved on.
- GWAAR is also hiring for a part-time HR/Benefits Liaison position. This person would serve as our go-to person for getting HR and benefit questions answered between staff and our professional employment organization
- GWAAR has yet to receive its Older American Act contract from the state, however allocation amounts have been announced.
- The board has voted on a new board member, Sandy Bergeron, of Janesville.
- Mid-March, Janet, John, Bob Best, from the Advisory Council and Rowena Nelson, from the board, will be going to DC for the annual US Aging Federal Policy Briefing. We look forward to hearing about all they learned and experienced.

Advocacy Update

Janet Zander, Advocacy and Public Policy Coordinator

Topics covered:

- February has been an incredibly busy time for the state legislature to introduce many new bills. They are fast forwarding some of the bills that they want to see get passed yet this legislative session. They are holding multiple session days. Last night's assembly meeting started around 1:30 in the afternoon and ran until 9:00 last night. Anything we had hoped to get passed had to be on an assembly agenda either last week or this week. We have until mid-March to get things passed through the Senate. But, they have to have gone through the assembly first or they won't end up on the governor's desk. So this has really been crunch time.
- The Speakers Task Force on Elder Services created by Speaker Voss, purpose was to identify policies and programs that would support people to age in place, stay living at home, recognizing some of the challenges people face, including affordability. This task force introduced 8 bills total. Those bills were introduced first in the Assembly, then in the Senate. The bill numbers and links are in your written package so that you can see where those are at.
- We are very focused on crypto kiosks bills, where people have been scammed out of thousands of dollars. Those ages 60 and older and are living on somewhat of a fixed income can't replace these dollars. They can't decide to work longer if they're already retired. It creates big problems for their health and long-term care needs down the road and what they need to be financially secure.
- Another bill important to us is around the community paramedics and the falls prevention dollars. We heard some wonderful testimony from the community paramedicine program in Wausau and how they're reducing ambulance calls, and they're reducing hospitalizations. This bill would provide the funding both to expand community paramedicine programs into six additional communities and also to expand falls prevention awareness into those same communities and beef up to make sure these programs are available everywhere. They have trained facilitators, so we want to make sure that this funding happens for the Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging.
- We are also focusing on caregiver designation legislation. This was a constituent led piece of legislation. This legislation builds on legislation that was passed last session into law, which allowed people to put an emergency contact in their electronic driving record. Especially important if someone is a caregiver, the person they provide care for would be notified so their life is not put in danger by not receiving their expected care due to their caregiver being in an accident/incapacitated.



- We are also focusing on legislation that will define what a memory care facility actually is across the board and what services and skill level the public can expect to avoid misrepresentation and injuries or loss of life.
- See Janet's written report for additional information and details

GWAAR Council Member Attendance Tracking

Nick Musson, Transportation & Aging Plan Specialist

- This is just a reminder for meeting planning purposes, it's important for Advisory Council members to let us know if you can or cannot make a meeting. We are unable to vote on any issue unless we have a quorum. If we don't have a quorum, we'll have to table the items and reschedule the meeting. So, if you let us know ahead of time that you're not able to make the meeting, and we realize we won't have a quorum, we will reschedule the meeting, and we don't have to waste everybody's time. Thanks everyone for your help with this.

Election of Vice Chair

Nick Musson, Transportation & Aging Plan Specialist

- Doris Bakker said she would step up if no one else wanted the position of Vice Chair. Bob Best seconded the nomination.

Motion by Doris Bakker, seconded by Bob Best, to nominate Doris Bakker as Advisory Council Vice Chair. Motion unanimously carried.

Healthy Aging Coalition Presentation

Tony Omernik, Advisory Council Member

- Tony gave a presentation/handout regarding his volunteering efforts on the Healthy Aging Coalition of Marathon County and what this coalition does and accomplishes. The older adults of Wisconsin face many challenges getting their needs met, and this coalition made of many county agencies, helps them by coming together and engaging in various zoom meetings throughout the year, to share and document information on what each agency is doing regarding how and where older adults can get help. An example of their achievement is the development of a senior independent living support services information card. It's a card that they utilize and disperse throughout the community that has all the services offered in Marathon

County that are related to supporting independent living by our homebound older adults, and disabled people. It has everything from meals availability to transportation services to lifeline services to getting food from the food pantries delivered to your home. And it lists free or low-cost services that support people being able to live independently in their own homes. The first year we completed it, it went in the bulletins of 15 churches in Marathon County. It also has been given to people that are getting home delivered meals. It's a very useful tool to make sure people know about services and programs that help them live independently. As you can see, developing coalitions can be very a powerful way of accomplishing goals and much needed information in a community. Please see Tony's handout for more details and information.

GWAAR 2025 2027 Aging Plan Goal Update

Nick Musson, Transportation & Aging Plan Specialist

- Nick wanted to make sure that based on going over goals and the overall plan at the last meeting, there were no additional questions or concerns. If there are any questions, it's certainly possible for various consultants to attend the next meeting to answer questions or go over goals more in depth.
- Also, program consultants will be going over all the aging unit's plans and goals as well, to see how progress has been made on goals, or if some fine tuning is needed. It's referred to as their annual review.
- At the end of this year, we will be preparing for the 2028-2030 plan. More information will come as the year progresses.

Volunteer Driver Insurance Update

Nick Musson, Transportation & Aging Plan Specialist

- We've been working hard on the volunteer driver insurance issue of having volunteer driver's insurance policy's raised by surcharges, making their insurance unaffordable. Unfortunately, the legislation attempt failed. In the end, Senator James decided not to introduce that legislation. The number one reason why, is that the Office of Commissioner Insurance conducted a survey of all the insurance companies asking who would be willing to cover volunteer drivers when it comes to insurance. They released those results and Senator James thought that was enough to protect those volunteer drivers. The list that they released contains not only insurance companies that will cover volunteer drivers under their personal auto

policy, but also could include a surcharge like a business surcharge on their policy, meaning that they essentially would be moved into a commercial policy. All those insurance agencies were lumped together, which is not very useful list when it comes to a volunteer driver, because now this volunteer driver is expected to go out and search for an insurance company that will cover them under their personal auto policy. There were some 150 different insurance companies on that list, and they're expecting volunteer drivers to go through the list of insurance companies and find an insurance company that would cover them. What we did in response to that is we submitted a public records request to OCI on January 20th. The point of that request was to ask that they publish which insurance companies will cover volunteer drivers on their personal policy vs. which ones would apply surcharges or move them to a commercial policy. The response was disappointing and they cited a number of law cases as a reason why they don't have to share those. So now we have to figure out what to do next. One thought is we create our own list of insurance companies that won't assess surcharges for volunteers and continue to build the coalition to continue the legislative process. We would like the Advisory Council to give us their thoughts.

- Some Advisory Council members thought getting the AARP involved might be an idea and they supported the idea of GWAAR/ the coalition creating its own list as it would turn this list into a good marketing tool to run by insurance companies.

OAA Allocation Amounts 2025 to 2026

Nick Musson, Transportation & Aging Plan Specialist

- 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. GWAAR Fiscal contacted the Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources (BADR) Fiscal for an explanation. The following statement has been given:

Wisconsin's funding allocation formulas were updated in 2022 and at that time it was recognized that there could be dramatic funding changes for Aging Units. Therefore, the Bureau implemented a "hold harmless" strategy to soften the immediate impact on Aging Units. As detailed in the 2022-25 and 2026-2028 State Aging Plans, the hold harmless safeguards were removed for the 2026 allocations. Combined with fluctuations in federal Older Americans Act funding over the same period, the removal of these protective measures results in significant changes to many Aging Units' allocation amounts in 2026 compared to 2025. The 2026 adjustments bring Wisconsin



into compliance with the federally approved state financial plan, so future allocations are likely to be relatively consistent for Aging Units as long as the Congressional appropriations for the Older Americans Act remain stable.

- The biggest impact came with C1 congregate. The impact on aging units, especially in the area of congregate programs, is substantial. More advance notice from the state would have been helpful for everyone involved, to aid in planning.
- Nick will relay the Advisory Council concerns over this matter to John Schnabl, Executive Director, who will in turn express them to the state.

Future Meeting Topics

Nick Musson, Transportation & Aging Plan Specialist

- The Advisory Council was told to please feel free to call or email Nick Musson at any time with ideas or topics to discuss.

Member Sharing

All

- The floor was opened up for sharing, however no comments at this time.

Adjournment Time: 11: a.m.

Next Meeting Date: May 15, 2026

Future 2026 Meeting Dates:

May 15, 2026

July 17, 2026

September 18, 2026

November 13, 2026

Recorder: Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator