Our mission is to deliver innovative support to aging agencies and contracted partners as we work together to promote, protect, and enhance the well-being of older adults, adults with disabilities, and their caregivers.

Board Meeting Minutes

Friday, October 16, 2026| 10:00 a.m.
Microsoft Teams Video Conference Call
And
ADRC of Portage County

Members physically present: *Cookie Lough, Dave Hoberg, John Helling, Steve Ahlgren, Catherine Jones-Ferk*

Members present virtually: *Sabrina Cyrus, Rowena Nelson, Wes Martin*

Members excused:

Others Present: *John Schnabl, Executive Director; Patrick Metz, Fiscal* Manager; *Nick Musson, OAA Consultant; Emily Petersen, Advocacy & Public Policy Director; Megan Olsen, Human Resources & Benefits Liaison; Jean Lynch, Program Specialist Manager; Neal Minogue, OAA Program Supervisor (BADR); Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator*

Call to Order 10:01 a.m.

Cookie Lough, Board Chair

Review and Approval of October 16, 2026 Agenda *(ACTION)*

- Due to Wes needing to leave the meeting early, he asked if the agenda could be amended to have Executive Committee Report moved up so he could vote on the new board member being presented. The request was accommodated.

Motion by Dave Hoberg, seconded by John Helling, to approve October 16, 2026, agenda as amended. Motion carried.

Review and Approval of August 21, 2026 Draft Meeting Minutes *(ACTION)*

- Steve questioned the $185,000 budget surplus amount referred to in the minutes as his notes indicated $295,000. John and Patrick explained that number was two iterations ago of the draft budget. Since then, there have been adjustments and the draft budget is a fluid thing at this point, as time goes on there are many versions and adjustments.

- Steve mentioned he thought the financial statements are too complex and difficult to understand. Things should be simplified.

- Dave mentioned that it would be great if Patrick could put footers with the date to keep track of new versions. The Finance Committee is working on making more graphs for the board.

- John mentioned if there are any questions on fiscal documents, please reach out to him or Patrick for some one-on-one discussion. They would be happy to do it.

Motion by John Helling seconded by Steve Ahlgren to approve August 21, 2026, draft meeting minutes. Motion carried.

Public Comment

- None

New Business

- None

Comments from Chair

Cookie Lough, Board Chair

- Boarding meeting length and how long it takes to drive home for those that come from quite a distance was discussed. In an effort to help those that travel quite a distance, GWAAR will pick up the cost of another night for those who need it, so they can leave the next morning in daylight and rested.

Executive Director Report

John Schnabl, Executive Director

- The state contacted us about the Age Friendly Institute/55 which works with employers to create inclusive, accessible systems. For a fee, they will examine your organization and work with employers to get accreditation for being an age friendly workplace. Many AAAs across the country have participated. John will be calling them to find out more of the details and will report back to the board on his findings.

- GLITC is in a really good place right now and fully staffed and providing us with great reports and are spending their allocations. We are very pleased.

- The state is putting out a new policy for AAAs around contracts and commercial relationships and establishing separate accounting policies and procedures so federal funds and commercial funds are accounted for separately. It is still in draft form, but it looks like if you get into a commercial relationship or a contractual relationship with an outside organization you're going to have to complete a form and get it approved by the Bureau. GWAAR has a good relationship with the state, and they are aware of what we do, so we don't anticipate any issues complying.

Program Specialist Presentation

Jean Lynch, Program Specialist Manager

- Jean gave a PowerPoint presentation that gave an overview of each of the Older American Acts program areas and GWAAR specialists, to include nutrition, transportation, caregiving, elder abuse and health promotion and how they assist in training and technical assistance to the county and tribal aging units in collaboration as well with the state bureau.

Major Gift Contribution Update:

- GWAAR had two more applications. Waupaca and Columbia Counties.

- Waupaca county had a second application. They submitted one back in July and were awarded $15,730 and used it all. They submitted another application and were awarded $17,446 in September.

- $28,631 was requested and awarded to Columbia County.

- Currently, the total awards so far this year, as of October, is $363,000.

Executive Committee Report

Cookie Lough, Chair

Board Application of Racquel Bell:

- The board reviewed and discussed Racquel Bell's application to the board. She brings a wealth of professional knowledge. She currently is the Tribal Aging Disability Resource Specialist, Lac du Flambeau Tribal Aging Department. It was unanimous she would make a great addition to the GWAAR Board.

Motion by Wes Martin, seconded by John Helling to approve Racquel Bell as a new board member. Motion carried

Safe Routes for Seniors Program Grant Application

Nick Musson, Transportation & Aging Plan Specialist

- To give you some background on this particular proposal is that the Wisconsin Department of Transportation Division of State Patrol Bureau of Transportation Safety, or BOTS, administers federal highway safety funding for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, known as NHTSA. These grants support law enforcement agencies and nonprofit organizations working to improve highway safety, including pedestrian and bicycle safety education and outreach. I've been having meetings with BOTS over the years and the Wisconsin Bike Fed, and we've been exploring how we can help older adults walk and bicycle more safely while staying active, independent, and connected to their communities. Those conversations led to this proposal for the Safe Routes for Seniors Program that you received. BOTS supported the concept and included the Safe Routes for Seniors in the Wisconsin Proposed Triennial Highway Safety Plan. This is their three-year plan that they put together, and they included this project in their plan. This plan established the state's highway safety priorities, performance targets, and strategies for the next three years. I am seeking your authorization for GWAAR to be able to apply for this grant, which would be $90,000 in the first year of funding for this proposed three-year initiative. We don't know how much we could potentially get in year two or three. That hasn't been determined, but our hope is that we could get even more funding. The proposed three-year initiative would be a pilot with three aging units or ADRCs. The goal would be to identify three aging units/ADRCs throughout the state that would participate in this project. There would be safety

classes, local audits, driver education and a curriculum/online resource developed for future use. All of this would be developed in coordination with the three aging units/ADRCs. GWAAR is in charge of fiscal and my participation as well. As for expected outcomes, we hope that older adults build safety, knowledge, and confidence to get out there and to walk and bicycle. We also hope to educate drivers, so they understand sharing the road better and identify community hazards through local audits. Local audits are going to be part of this. They're called walking audits, and we would go out through the community with older adults and identify any kind of barriers that we could recommend that could be changed or modified just to make the environment safer.

Motion by Catherine Jones-Ferk, seconded by Wes Martin to authorize GWAAR to apply for Safe Route for Seniors grant. Motion carried

Finance Committee Report

Patrick Metz, Fiscal Manager
Dave Hoberg, Treasurer

Dave Hoberg:

- Budget was discussed was discussed and reviewed. Patrick will date budget versions going forward to avoid confusion.

- Reserve needs additional discussion. If we're going to have a reserve policy, we need to determine how we're going to calculate what our reserves should be.

Reserve Policy Review:

- There was much discussion about what the reserve policy should look like and how it should be calculated. After much discussion, consensus was:

The reserve policy should state it should be four months of budgeted expenses. Patrick will update the abbreviated fiscal policy document, date it and send it to the board so that it is ready for vote at the annual meeting in December.

Financial Statements:

- Financial statements were reviewed and GWAAR is in good financial standing.

Motion by Dave Hoberg, seconded by John Helling to accept financial statements as presented and placed on file. Motion carried

Executive Committee Report

Cookie Lough, Chair

RFP for PEO Services:
Megan Olsen, Human Resources & Benefits Liaison

- Megan provided a final selection/recommendation for PEO and the recommendation was Sustainable HR out of Madison, WI. They provide a more cost-effective administrative fee structure, received glowing reference comments, and also provide a benefit plan that is cost effective and meets the provider needs of our staff. If the board approves recommendation the start date would be January 1, 2027.

Motion by Dave Hoberg, seconded by John Helling to accept recommendation of Sustainable HR as GWAAR's new PEO effective January 1, 2027. Motion carried

Motion by Dave Hoberg, seconded by John Helling to continue 90/10 PPO cost sharing. Motion carried

Motion by Catherine Jones-Ferk, seconded by Steve Ahlgren to discontinue HRA due to low deductibles. Motion carried

Ad Hoc Bylaws Committee

Cookie Lough, Chair

- Cookie thanked Steve Ahlgren for drafting up the suggested bylaws verbiage to separate the secretary and treasurer positions to allow for more people on the Executive Committee. The verbiage was discussed and approved.

Motion by John Helling, seconded by Catherine Jones-Ferk to adopt suggested bylaws verbiage to separate treasurer and secretary into two positions. Motion carried

Bureau Report

Neal Minogue, Older Americans Act Program Supervisor (BADR)

- We just wrapped up the Aging and Disability Independent Living Network conference last month. Some 350 individuals from around the state came together to share their experience and knowledge related to aging and disability issues. And it was held at the Kalahari over three days. It was a successful conference, and we appreciated all the staff, including GWAAR staff, that took the time to come to the conference.

- We have a new grant manager, Britney Medina, for one of our large grants called *Bold Grant*, building our largest dementia infrastructure grant.

- We've hired a new APS Data Analyst, and one might ask, why would you need a Data Analyst for Adult Proactive Services? Well, of elder adults at risk and adults at risk related to APS were 15,217 in 2024 and 16,942 incidents in the next year. If that gives you any idea of the problem, and the breadth and depth of this issue. I was shocked by that number of incidents that are happening throughout the state. But this is a nationwide issue. Hiring our data analysts will help us get our heads around the data that we collect through our database. Hopefully we'll be able to begin to make some improvements on where we can intercede to provide better support and services.

- We're looking for state Aging Advisory Council members. We have a council that advises us on our state plan and issues related to the needs of older adults throughout the state.

- We're also forming an advisory council for people with lived experience with dementia, a person with dementia or mild cognitive impairment, or a caregiver or a care partner. This is also part of the BOALTC grant. Kristen Felton is the contact person for that., and I'm going to drop these names into chat here in just a minute. Kristen Felton, of course, oversees all the good things, all things dementia at the Office on Aging.

- There are several opportunities to attend training on reframing aging in Wisconsin.

- October 1st begins the new federal fiscal year, which means we just closed out all of the reporting that counties and tribes and the AAAs have to do to give that information over to the state so we can report to the federal government. It is an immense job. GWAAR plays a significant role in providing us with information that

we roll up with the other two AAAs, Dane and Milwaukee counties, and put that information together in a report that is required by the federal government. It's required under the Older Americans Act.

- In the next few weeks, we'll be releasing a new chapter in our operations manual. For the first time, we will have a supportive services chapter. In-home chore services, care, transportation services, and the like are part of supportive services within aging programs. There's a lot of money that goes into supportive services. And for a long time, we've lived without any supportive services chapter

- The state is working on a policy related to contracts and commercial relationships. And he did a great job of describing our intent around that, are we are requesting feedback from our AAAs. Again, it is required under the federal law that we have a policy related to contracts and commercial relationships for our AAAs. We have a great relationship with our AAAs and don't anticipate any issue with this.

Advisory Council Update

Nick Musson, Transportation & Aging Plan Program Specialist

- The Advisory Council met September 18th , in person, at the ADRC of Portage County where we meet once a year in person.

- Advisory Council Member, Tony Omernick, gave an overview of the North Central Wisconsin Senior Summit that was held on September 24th. He will report back and give details on how it went at the next Advisory Council meeting.

- Ingrid Kundinger, GWAAR Fraud & Abuse Programs Manger, gave a presentation on the Senior Medicare Patrol Program.

- We discussed the upcoming 2028-2030 Aging Plan process and the aging unit director interview process, addressing questions the Advisory Council Members might have and shared how we might improve it. The information gained in these interviews is the most valuable and a key part in the development of GWAAR's aging plan. Advisory Council Members are an integral part of GWAAR's aging plan process.

Advocacy & Public Policy Update

Emily Petersen, Advocacy & Public Policy Coordinator

Topics Disused:

- The Continuing resolution for federal funding ends December 11th and we will most likely need a short-term continuing resolution to get to January 11th.

- There have been some changes, more on a policy level, related to home care and a state's obligation to provide care at home for individuals with disabilities. It's called the Olmstead Decision. That's a long-standing decision by the Supreme Court that the preference should be that states should provide care for individuals with disabilities in the home setting and in the community rather than in institutions. The Supreme Court rolled back that decision and said that that's not necessarily the preference, and states are no longer required to do a preference for home and community care. It's not written in stone, and it hasn't changed on a legal policy basis, but it could also lead to changes in older adults issues and could change the way that Medicaid long-term waiver programs are administered at the state level

- We've been having issue brief webinars every Tuesday of this month over the lunch hour covering one issue of policy priorities. So far, we've had home delivered meals and falls prevention programs. This coming Tuesday, we'll have Aging and Disability Resource Centers and then finishing up with specialized transportation programs. These are short and sweet webinars that talk about the issue brief for each of those topics and we have an advocate on each of those issues join us and talk about their personal experience with the issue. The idea is to teach/train people how to talk about their personal story and use the issue brief to advocate with legislators.

- Aging Advocacy Day 2027 is Tuesday, May 11th, and will take place at the capital as in previous years. We will meet at the Park Hotel in the morning right on the square. We do have a room block reserved already. If you're planning on traveling from a distance and need a hotel, you can call the hotel and mention our event, and they'll put you in the room block. We do a little bit of training in the morning, and you meet with other people in your legislative district, talk to one another, and plan your visit. Then we walk across the street to the Capitol, take our group picture, and then meet with legislators.

- We conducted outreach to all the state and federal candidates for office this year and asked them to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire had questions about all of our top policy priorities on the state and federal level. I included a link in

your document. You'll have to look at the electronic version that Rosanna sent out and that has all the responses that we received from state and federal candidates. Obviously, not all of them responded, but quite a few state candidates did and a couple federal congressional candidates did as well. You can go on there and see if your legislator responded and read what they said to our questions. Some of them were very interesting. And it was it was great for the ones that responded that they took the time to go through and do it. These are, however, not for public consumption/distribution and only for the aging network, please do not forward on to others.

- For more details, please see Emily Petersen's written report to the board.

Suggested Topics for Next Meeting

- Vote for a board member to fill secretary position along with annual election of officers.

- Perhaps at a future date Wes will try to invite a tribal member who works with from the Alzheimer's Dementia Program, or VA program.

Adjournment: 2:25 p.m.

Next Meeting Date: ***December 11, 2026 – ADRC of Portage County***

Meeting Dates for 2027
February 19, 2027- Virtual
April 16, 2027
June 18, 2027
August 20, 2027
October 15, 2027
December 10, 2027

Rosanna Mazzara, Operations Coordinator; Recorder