

**ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING  
QUARTERLY MEETING**

**February 21, 2024**

**Location:**

Alaska Office Building  
350 Main Street, Room 115  
Juneau, Alaska

**Commission Members:**

Bob Sivertsen, Chair  
Paula Pawlowski  
Bob Pawlowski  
Nona Safra - Zoom  
Janet Engan  
Darlene Supplee - Zoom  
Pam Samash - excused  
Director Anthony Newman, ex officio  
Lisa Von Bargaen, ex officio – Zoom

**Guests:**

Kelda Barstad, AMHTA  
Nicole Wery-Tagaban, SDS  
Kristin Cox, SDS  
Rita Gray, DVR/MASST  
Jim McCall, AHFC  
Karen Eddy, Fairbanks Native Association  
Kaylee, Fairbanks Native Association  
Brenda Shelden, Mat-Su Council on Aging  
Director Duane Mayes, DVR  
Lesley Thompson

**Staff**

Jon Haghayeghi, Executive Director  
Martin Lange, Program Coordinator II  
Larry Johnson, MASST Trainee

Minutes Prepared by: Paula DiPaolo, Peninsula Reporting

**Wednesday, February 21, 2024**

**CALL TO ORDER – 9:00 a.m.**

**ROLL CALL**

**WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR**

Chair Sivertsen welcomed Commissioners and guests to the meeting.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Paula Pawlowski read aloud Pam Samash’s written excused absence.

Chair Sivertsen announced that the Commission is looking for representation from different parts of Alaska. Any guests interested in serving should apply through Boards and Commissions.

**ETHICS DISCLOSURES**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

**INTRODUCTIONS**

Guests were introduced.

**REVIEW MISSION STATEMENT**

Chair Sivertsen read the mission statement for the Alaska Commission on Aging.

**ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

Chair Sivertsen honored a request by Bob Pawlowski to have time on the agenda for a presentation on the Alaska Pioneer Homes under the public testimony timeslot.

Paula Pawlowski **MOVED** to approve the agenda as amended, **SECONDED** by Janet Engan. Jon Haghayeghi reviewed the contents of the agenda. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

**APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES**

Paula Pawlowski **MOVED** to approve the minutes from the December 5, 2023 meeting, **SECONDED** by Bob Pawlowski.

Having only recently received the minutes, Paula Pawlowski questioned whether or not follow up happened on activities they said they would do. In particular she highlighted the 2024 Advocacy Priority Discussion on packet page 008, "...draft will be amended to correct typographical errors and include a statement about volunteers," which was related to the Medicaid Information Office. She wondered if that actually happened.

Other items brought forward by Paula Pawlowski included:

- A request that the Outcome Measures discussed starting at packet page 011 be brought forward to the next meeting agenda for further discussion.
- Typographical error on packet page 011.

- On packet page 017 under Statutory Revisions and Implications, Paula took responsibility for being unable to meet with Jan Engan prior to this board meeting to do the comparison of the previous statutes to the changes in time for this meeting. She stated that they will do that before the spring meeting.

Paula Pawlowski stated that at the next contract review, she would like to ensure that the contract for minute preparation states that the Commission receive their minutes no more than six weeks after the meeting.

Chair Sivertsen commented that as they go through their meeting, they should note action items. Bob Pawlowski agreed and noted that the Pioneer Home Advisory Board staff create an action item list.

Jan Engan felt that they also need clarification on what the implementation of the items related to the State Plan will be. She asked if it will start when they start following the funding formula, or if they are starting in October when the State Plan is actually in place. She believes the funding formula committee needs to meet periodically to see how the funding formula is actually working.

Director Newman asked if they have someone on contract to prepare the minutes and if they were present at this meeting. Marty Lange stated that as soon as the meetings conclude, he packages the materials and sends them to the contractor to prepare minutes.

As this portion of the meeting is only approval of the previous meeting minutes, Lisa Von Bargen feels it would be valuable to address staff reporting on action items and how that communication happens under next steps toward the end of the meeting.

Hearing no objections nor discussion, the motion **PASSED**, and the minutes were approved as amended.

#### **CHAIR'S REPORT**

Chair Sivertsen reported that it has been a busy time finishing up the Senior Plan and going through the audit. The audit was a very good process, and he thanked the Legislative Audit staff for their efforts to justify the activities of the Commission. The audit results were very good with the only issue being the annual report, which has been corrected.

Chair Sivertsen stated that the Commission had an opportunity to meet with Senator Murkowski's staff on February 20<sup>th</sup>, and they discussed the Older Americans Act (OAA) appropriations of concern. The OAA should be reauthorized in 2025, so it was a good opportunity to provide comment. They will work through Senator Murkowski's office in regards to filing for amendments. Bob Pawlowski remarked that they heard from Sen. Murkowski's staff the difficulty between what they can accomplish in statutes and what they have to overcome in regulations that preclude HUD from working with other organizations. Housing and workforce development are huge issues in the state of Alaska, and those issues are priorities of the Senator. ACoA offered any help they can provide.

Chair Sivertsen stated that Marty Lange has engaged in site visits and has been working on the podcast. Chair Sivertsen looks forward to rolling out the podcasts to rural Alaska to provide outreach and receive public feedback.

Chair Sivertsen reported that the Commission is still working to hire a rural outreach coordinator. The funding for that position will be sunsetting in 2025.

### **VICE-CHAIR REPORT**

Paula Pawlowski reported that the last quarter was very busy. She is very thankful for their MASST employee in the office for all his efforts on the legislative visits.

She stated that they also did a lot of follow up on activities, and she continues to work on process. She and Jan Engan will continue to work on statutes and bylaws in preparation for the spring meeting.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE**

Jon Haghayeghi provided Commissioners with a review of recent activity as follows:

- Navigated the State Plan and the audit. The implementation of the State Plan will happen at the start of the fiscal year.
- Exciting to dig into the legislative work. Legislative packets came together nicely as advocacy materials.
- Drafting of the first annual report. Need feedback from the Commission on what should be included in it moving forward.
- Improve and enhance advocacy efforts.

### **Other Updates:**

- Provided a letter of support for the Medicaid Information Office.
- Worked with the Department of Labor on proposed revisions to ACOA statutes for a Labor seat.
- Approved budget transfer: \$34,000 reallocated, with \$19,300 to travel and \$14,700 to contractual services.
- Collaborated with advocacy partners AGENet and AARP to prioritize focus areas.
- Submitted an advocacy letter to the Governor for the 2024 legislative session.
- Created and distributed a pocket folder with advocacy materials for Capitol and partner use.
- Re-recruited for the rural outreach position. Conducted four interviews of highly qualified applicants. Two final interviews will be conducted this week.
- Estimated future cost expenditures for the second half of FY'24.
- Requested a meeting with the Governor to discuss statutory changes for the next session.
- Attended AGENet meeting; provided updated population statistics for senior services funding advocacy priorities.
- Compiled the Senior Snapshot.
- Produced an annual report for the first time in five years.
- Developed the FY'24 priority handout with updated statistics and figures.
- Presented to the Alaska Mental Health Trust.
- Sent a letter of support to the Trust regarding charter revisions.

- Incorporated feedback from AARP and AGENet into ACoA's final priorities.
- Furnished updated data and statistics to AGENet and Fairbanks senior group.
- Distributed the publication of the sunset audit to the Commissioners when it was made public.
- Worked with SDS to get the MASST volunteer access to DOH network. Larry has been a tremendous asset in the office.
- Wrote letters of support on Senate Bill 189 and provided weekly legislative updates on senior-related bills.
- Arranged a meeting with Senator Murkowski's staff to discuss Older American Act funding for Alaska.
- Ordered additional magnets for legislator packets.
- Prepared for Q1 2024 meeting of the Alaska Commission on Aging.

Jon Haghayeghi is excited for the ability to focus on priorities of the Commission this year as the audit and the creation of the State Plan have been accomplished, and they will be able to focus on the priorities within the State Plan as well as legislative advocacy.

### **PROGRAM COORDINATOR UPDATE**

Marty Lange reported as follows:

#### Rural Outreach

- Continues to do the work of rural outreach and program coordinator positions, which has been challenging. Looking forward to having the rural outreach coordinator position filled.
- Has learned that the duties of this position have not been fulfilled according to the position description from the Trust. One of the focus areas for the new coordinator will be to ensure they are fulfilling the responsibilities given to them by the Trust.
- Developed a worksheet of 11 observations to gather during community outreach.
- It will be very important for the rural outreach coordinator to build relationships with people out in the communities and respond to concerns.

#### Podcast

- Limited ability to be able to focus on the podcast.
- A podcast has been recorded and is half edited.
- Spoke to folks at the Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC) and would like that to be one of the first content episodes they do because they receive many calls for ADRC services at the ACoA office. Would also like an episode to be on the Medicare Information Office.
- Intend to launch the podcast in May for Older Americans Month.
- Looking forward to focusing more on the podcast once rural outreach coordinator has been hired.

#### Day-to-Day Activities

- The office receives approximately one call per day from someone who is desperate for help with things such as heating oil assistance or food. Referrals

are made to other organizations. Receiving these phone calls is a stark reminder of the purpose of the Commission, to help the seniors of Alaska.

- Very thankful for Larry's assistance in the office. He brought a lot of history with him as he had previously worked at ACoA.
- Printed the State Plan for distribution during legislative visits.
- Reprinted magnets, which are always appreciated by legislators.
- They plan to take time once a month to review one of the priorities in the Senior Plan and track their progress.

Director Newman stated that SDS is happy to work with Marty and Jon to ensure the Senior Snapshot is posted on the website and receives updates. Marty stated that he has been working with the Public Information Team and noted that while the website is still under construction, he can offer digital copies of the Senior Snapshot.

Director Newman remarked that the rural outreach coordinator position is a Trust-funded project, and this has been a position that has had trouble getting traction. He noted that it is a non-perm position through the Trust, and if proven worthwhile, it will be folded into ACoA's regular operations. He asked Marty to ensure the new employee is aware that the project may be reaching the end of its Trust-funded lifespan at the end of FY'25.

Director Newman asked if they were able to learn any more about the status of the legislation regarding the Medicare Information Office (MIO) when they visited with Sen. Murkowski's staff. He would like an update as to where the legislation stands. Marty remarked that nothing about the MIO was mentioned during the meeting.

### **DISCUSSION OF SENIOR-RELATED BILLS**

Jon Haghayeghi stated that this is the second year of the two-year legislative session. ACoA has three bills they are primarily focused on:

#### **SB 130 – Nursing: Licensure; Multistate Compact**

This bill addresses the licensure of nursing professionals and establishes a multistate nurse licensure compact. It was in the Senate Labor and Commerce Committee status as of May 3, 2023, sponsored by Olson. There hasn't been any movement on the bill this year. This is a tremendously important bill as approximately 25 to 50 percent of the nursing workforce is vacant in Alaska. This legislation would bridge that gap.

**Summary and State Benefits:** The Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) will allow out-of-state nurses reciprocity from the 39 other states helping to relieve the workforce crisis in Alaska. Alaska already does and will continue to need to recruit the majority of nurses from other states. Alaska's educational programs produce just 324 graduates to fill the need for 1,500 nurse openings annually, which will grow to more than 5,000 by 2030 as the population and healthcare workforce ages. The NLC significantly increases Alaska's ability to find and hire out-of-state nurses to fill vacancies. The nursing shortage negatively impacts healthcare access, drives up healthcare costs, and threatens the health of the growing senior population. This risks the health of Alaska's elders and adds unnecessary stress for family caregivers.

Bob Pawlowski noted that the Pioneer Homes Advisory Board will be sending a letter of support related to the Nurse Licensure Compact.

HB 242/SB 172/SB 170 – Extend Senior Benefits Payment Program

SB 170 has gained the most traction and was sponsored by Sen. Kawasaki with numerous co-sponsors. Similar to HB 242 and SB 172, this bill was in the Senate Rules Committee status as of February 12, 2024. It is scheduled for review on February 21, 2024. SB 170 extends the program to 2032.

Bob Pawlowski believes the extension of SB 170 is until 2034. Marty replied that SB 170 ends in 2032, but SB 172 ends in 2034 and HB 242 is proposing 2034.

SB 189/HB 283 – Extend Alaska Commission on Aging

SB 189 proposed extending the termination date of ACoA. It was in the Senate Finance Committee as of January 16, 2024, sponsored by Sen. Kawasaki. HB 283 aimed to extend the termination date of ACoA. It was in the House Health and Social Services Committee as of January 22, 2024, sponsored by Rep. Dibert.

ACoA and AARP have written letters of support to Sen. Kawasaki. Bob Pawlowski submitted a letter of support from himself personally. Bob believes the extension for ACoA is until 2032.

Jon Haghayeghi stated that all of these bills, except for the extension of ACoA, tie back into their advocacy priority list.

**WORKFORCE AND LABOR**

DVR Director Duane Mayes and Rita Gray presented to the Commission as follows:

Alaska Work Matters Task Force (AWMTF)

Director Mayes directed Commissioners to the AWMTF final report. He stated that this task force was time limited and included multiple entities in its composition, such as beneficiary boards, various State departments, and tribal entities. In September 2022, in collaboration with the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB), the AWMTF held the Living, Playing, and Working Towards Independence Conference, and they used the conference as a platform to talk about the contents of the final report.

Pages 41 and 42 of the final report address senior employment and senior services, and Director Mayes acknowledged Jon Haghayeghi's involvement in the process.

Director Newman enjoys reviewing the AWMTF final report, and he is proud of the things that have been accomplished when there is a nexus with SDS. He referenced a recommendation to explore a certification program for seniors in personal care work. He noted that there is a direct support professional (DSP) certification program that SDS was able to fund through ARPA funding, and the Trust is now partnering with SDS to continue that program after the ARPA money runs out. He suggested they have a dialogue with Lisa Cobble at the Alaska Training Cooperative and see if there is an opportunity for publicity or outreach to increase the involvement of seniors in that program.

Director Newman asked what the next steps are for this final report. How will they keep this document alive in future years? Director Mayes stated that Patrick Reinhart with the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE) has agreed to form an ad hoc committee consisting of the directors from the Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB), SILC, GCDSE, the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA), and AWIB. Director Mayes leads the effort, and during meetings they take stock of what they have accomplished and determine next steps.

#### Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Director Mayes stated that as a part of the WIOA, they have had to reup their combined State Plan, and Chief Mariah Krueger spearheaded the effort for Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to ensure community input was gathered for the combined State Plan.

MASST is part of the combined State Plan for the Department of Labor. Their State Plan shows how critical seniors are, and it also took recommendations from the AWMTF, the Senior Employment Initiative, and ACoA's information so that everyone's vision of how to make Alaska better for seniors is in it. It is 18 pages, but it's all specific to seniors and trying to get them the funding they need for digital literacy, workforce opportunities, and reverse marketing. They have been working for the last 12 months on this, and they have been working on career guides, and they have been working with the prison systems on re-entrants receiving training before release from custody.

If Commissioners are able to see the WIOA State Plan, it dovetails everything the Commission wanted into the plan. They will be submitting it to the federal government in about a month. Initial feedback is that no corrections to the plan are necessary, and the federal government was pleased with the partnerships and the inter-relationships with all the departments and divisions.

#### Homeless Population

Director Mayes shared a story about visiting the homeless shelter at the Sullivan Arena during the pandemic. He learned that approximately 60 percent of the people at the shelter had severe mental illness, and most of them have substance misuse issues on top of that. 20 percent were people with disabilities, and the remaining 20 percent were seniors. About one-third of the individuals housed at the Sullivan Arena were employed, but because of the high cost of living in Alaska, those individuals could no longer afford to pay their rent. He believes that sometimes the perception of the homeless population is due to lack of effort, but the factors are much more complicated.

Director Mayes suggested inviting economist Dan Robinson to present to the Commission. Director Newman agreed and believes he could shed a lot of insight as to what is happening with seniors in Alaska.

#### Senior Employment Initiative/ Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training (MASST)

The Senior Employment Initiative was reinstated after the pandemic as a standing committee of all the relevant divisions to organize their efforts around increasing employment opportunities for seniors. They are creating a dashboard or senior scorecard, and the Division of Employment and Training is close to finalizing that as a



user-friendly scorecard. The intent of the scorecard is to measure whether or not they are making a difference.

Rita Gray thanked the Commission for their recommendation to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, and it has made a big difference. She also noted that they did get funding for supportive services for transportation, so they are reimbursing people for their mileage or providing Anchor Rides or bus passes for the month.

Commissioners engaged in a discussion with Director Mayes and Rita Gray about the consequences of increasing the pay for seniors in the MASST program thereby possibly reducing their public benefits. Rita noted that the goal for the program is to get seniors training to then be able to enter the job market and get a job that is paid at an even higher rate so they can reduce their reliance on public assistance. She also noted that MASST wages are exempt from housing and SNAP benefits. It is only Adult Public Assistance (APA) and Senior Benefits that the senior has to work around.

Rita Gray also noted that the MASST program has a lifetime limit of four years of participation in the program.

Bob Pawlowski asked about the federal poverty level and if it can be raised from 125 percent to 150 percent to help people not lose their benefits. Rita Gray stated that MASST will remain at a level of 125 percent, but DVR is at 250 percent of the federal poverty level, and DVR can pay for wages for working for profit.

Director Mayes invited a member of the Commission or staff to participate in the Senior Initiative standing committee.

#### Legislation

**HB 219 – Assistive Technology Loan Program**, introduced by Rep. Saddler. In 1995, Alaska received a one-time infusion of \$400,000 to work with finding a bank that would be willing to give out low-interest loans to Alaskans that need some type of technology at home or work. Five years ago, Director Mayes discovered there had only been two loans given through this program. In discussing this with the constituency, it was discovered that people with disabilities and seniors were not interested in taking out a loan through a bank. This legislation would reallocate that funding to Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATLA) for expansion of their loan closet. The GCDSE made this one of their legislative priorities.

Nona Safra stated that she advocated to the legislature on behalf of this legislation, and she demonstrated some adaptive equipment her ward uses that they received from ATLA. She will share the GCDSE/SILC position papers and talking points with ACoA staff. This legislation directly affects seniors, and there is no additional cost to the state. Legislators seemed to be very receptive.

**The Centralized Accommodation Fund (CAF)** is one of the recommendations from the AWMTF. Most of the State divisions and departments have their own fund for employee accommodations, but the CAF would be created in the Department of Administration based on average expenditures going back three years. Each division and department would pay an indirect fee to create that fund. Kelda Barstad added that

the CAF is not in the Trust budget that the Trustees have authority to approve, but it is a recommendation for a General Fund expenditure through the Mental Health bill. Right now that is subject to the legislative process.

**SB 206 – Stay at Work, Return to Work.** This was also a recommendation from the AWMTF. This is a partnership between DVR and the Division of Workers' Compensation. The way the program has typically worked is injured Alaskans who are unable to go back to their previous profession can receive re-employment benefits and be assigned a rehabilitation specialist in the private sector who will work with that individual to develop a plan in another trade or occupation. That system has failed miserably in the state for the last 25 years. Director Mayes stated that SB 206 would create a new system where if the employer is in agreement and the physician will be cooperative and work with the employer and the injured worker, the employee can stay with the employer in the same position with job accommodations, or they can stay with the employer and do a different job. Other states have been doing this and getting good results.

Janet Engan asked how it works for Department of Corrections re-entrants coming into the MASST program with the requirement for a background check. Rita Gray noted that not all of their agencies require a background check, and there are employment opportunities for the re-entrants. Director Mayes remarked that the Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Plan is up for renewal. He chairs the Social Emotional Well-Being of Alaskans Workgroup that deals with employment. The number one issue that comes up at meetings has to do with background checks. Many committee members and the community at large acknowledge the limitations criminal background checks place on people who want to go to work.

Director Newman appreciated the comments on background checks and the barrier that they can be, and he thinks it's particularly true for people with lived experience in working within peer support for behavioral health. They need to figure out a way to recognize the value of hard lived experience while still protecting people.

Chair Sivertsen shared that they heard about this issue being a barrier during a site visit the Commission went on where the provider agency had a very difficult time hiring staff because of the background restrictions. Paula Pawlowski acknowledged this is also an issue in the education system for incarcerated parents who re-enter and want to volunteer at the school.

Lisa Von Barga shared that workforce development is a huge component of the broadband planning that's going on, and they will be ready to present the Broadband Workforce Development Plan that includes a significant component in hiring individuals that are not traditionally part of the workforce in the telecommunications and broadband industry. In addition to inviting Dan Robinson, she asked the Commission to allow the Broadband Office to make a presentation on the aspects related to those underrepresented populations at the next ACoA meeting.

#### Memo In Support of DOL&WD Seat on ACoA

Director Mayes stated that he and Rita Gray formalized the request for a permanent seat on ACoA with Commissioner Catherine Munoz. Commissioner Munoz agreed.

Jan Engan noted that the statute number listed in the memo is incorrect and is the old number.

Chair Sivertsen asked how the process works and what next steps are. Bob Pawlowski stated that the legislative lead for the department would work with Legislative Affairs to craft whether this was a proposal from the Office of the Governor or if it is to be picked up by a legislative member and submitted. He noted that ACoA's sunset is being submitted by a legislative member, not by the Office of the Governor.

Director Newman stated that he and Jon Haghayeghi had a discussion about whether there was any consideration given to adding this element to the sunset bill because the statutes are currently open. He believes the sponsor was not interested in adding this element. Jon Haghayeghi said it was recommended he work with Courtney Enright if the Commission wanted to push this through. Jon further stated that from the initial conversations, it was indicated that the Commission wanted to focus on getting through the sunset legislation, so he has not reached out to Courtney so far this year regarding making any modifications. He has not reached out to Sen. Kawasaki regarding making any modifications to SB 189. Chair Sivertsen stated that given the tenor this year related to Boards and Commissions, piggybacking anything on to this legislation might bring it under greater scrutiny. He believes the first priority is getting the Commission reauthorized. Paula Pawlowski agreed and said they can work to reopen the statute next session and also consider adding a seat for Alaska Housing Finance Corporation.

Jan Engan asked if the sunset is part of the 44.29 statute. Director Newman didn't believe the sunset dates were housed in 44.29, to which Jan agreed. Director Newman found the sunset date at 44.66, which is separate from the statutes the Commission operates from. Jan noted that once the Commission becomes operational under 44.66, they can then look to open 44.29. She also asked if the letter from Commissioner Munoz will remain valid over time, and Commissioners agreed that it would.

Paula Pawlowski summarized that as an action item, she and Jan will create a plan to move forward with what the process will be to amend the statute.

Director Mayes recommended that while the Commission is in Juneau, they should set aside some time to meet with Commissioner Munoz.

Bob Pawlowski thanked Director Mayes for the AWMTF Final Report.

Chair Sivertsen suggested that Director Mayes and Rita Gray participate in a future podcast on senior employment.

#### **TELECONFERENCE ON ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIA (ADRD)**

Jon Haghayeghi stated that the Trust is interested in hearing what is going on with the ADRD community and the challenges faced by communities across the state. This is a particularly important issue in Alaska because of the high proportion of people with ADRD in Alaska as well as the growing older senior population and the geographic complexities of Alaska.

Jon suggested that with having the topic be about ADRD, they will be able to receive some education from an expert in the field, talk about home and community-based services across the state, learn more about what is working and what is not working, and potentially introduce collaboration that could be beneficial to partners or providers across the state.

He opened it up to Commissioners to determine whether or not this would be a suitable topic; and if so, what would they like to do differently. Two teleconferences have already been held, and both have been a learning process. He referred Commissioners to page 131 in their packet that contains a similar roadmap they followed for their previous teleconferences. He asked Commissioners for feedback on what they would like to get out of this teleconference. He would also like to discuss the timing of this teleconference later in the agenda.

Feedback:

- The last two teleconferences have been very informative, but there were too many subjects to cover in the breakout rooms. It should be more about the quality of the discussion rather than the quantity.
- Need to look at the important categories. They want input from experts, providers, and people receiving the service.
- Perhaps have fewer groups. There was too much effort getting information from each specific region.
- Sift through the ideas being brainstormed to figure out what the real priorities are, and that will give the Commission something they can really work on. Narrow down the areas.
- Look at best practices. What are they? Are they being implemented in Alaska? Are “evidence-based” and “best practices” synonymous, and are best practices funded? Bring to the table what is working and share newer trends.
- What are the needs? Are caregiver needs being met?
- This is too important of an issue to rush into a teleconference until they have material developed to explain what the focus points are.
- Vietnam veterans and PTSD and the potential for complex behavior. This is a large senior population that needs to be brought into this subject. Work with Susan Gilroy (ph) and others at the VA to get background information at least several months before they schedule the teleconference.
- Pioneer Home has 53 percent of residents with ADRD, so maybe check with them to see if they have any information ACoA can draw from to prioritize the issues without having to reinvent the wheel. Alzheimer’s Resource of Alaska may also be another resource.
- Health and wellness of the caregiver is also a very important topic, as is the relationship of the caregiver to the individual.
- ACoA said they would do four teleconferences this year and then evaluate whether they should be continued or not. The first two were on housing and Nutrition, Transportation and Support Services (NTS). Part of the reason to host the teleconferences was to address the top needs that have come out of their needs assessment. One of those was transportation. They should discuss what the topics of the remaining teleconferences going to be about, and then they

should schedule them based on what experts they can gather. In addition to transportation and ADRD, they should address the other top needs.

- Top priorities from the State Plan surveys:
  - Access to healthcare
  - Financial security
  - Maintaining physical health (which would fit with ADRD)
  - Fuel costs
  - Transportation.
- The top priorities from the State Plan listening sessions include:
  - Senior housing
  - Cost and availability of assisted living
  - Help with shopping and chores
  - Transportation
  - Availability of healthcare with geriatric training.
- Use the data they have gathered to determine which teleconferences should rise to the top, and recognize which topics they will be able to handle in which order.
- After listening to Sen. Murkowski's staff, access to healthcare would be more important than the specifics of ADRD. There are many issues related to access to healthcare that could lead to a rich teleconference. It's a much broader topic than ADRD because of lack of providers, issues with Medicare and other financial barriers, affordable medications, and use of emergency room because of the lack of access. There is also federal legislation pending on the veteran's side to provide for in-home care.
- Mental health treatment in rural communities.
- Alaska Dementia Action Collaborative does advocacy and discussions specifically on topics related to people who are experiencing ADRDs. There are a number of committees as well as the overall group that anyone is welcome to participate in who would like to learn more or be a part of that work. A contractor manages that collaborative, and the Trust is leading this in partnership with the Division of Public Health.
- Like the idea of looking at the top five concerns.
- ADRD will have a tremendous impact on the healthcare industry. In the Interior there is a 50 percent growth rate of that diagnosis.
- Housing and transportation are huge issues on the Kenai Peninsula. Behind the Mat-Su, the Kenai is the fastest growing borough when it comes to the number of seniors moving in.
- Early onset dementia is affecting people who have had traumatic brain injuries.
- Centers for Independent Living are a tremendous resource in Alaska, and they are the Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) in Alaska.

Commented [MPL1]: Should this just be "as" ?

Chair Sivertsen recommended they form a list of what subjects may be of interest in regards to the teleconferences and have an Executive Committee meeting to set some priorities based on that. He asked staff to look at the data again and give the Executive Committee information they can massage for the next teleconference. They can also schedule a special board meeting to further discuss this.

Jim McCall stated that when they did the breakouts during the housing teleconference, he participated in the Fairbanks breakout and was disappointed to not be able to

participate in the discussion in any of the other breakouts or be able to provide answers to the groups. He recommended consideration of the subject matter experts' ability to participate in the different groups.

Although it is not part of the top five priorities of the Commission, Jim McCall suggested that this group might benefit from conducting a session on the state of the state of senior centers statewide. They could bring senior centers to the table to share what their issues are and what they see on the front lines. He believes it would be a very good use of the Commission's time because senior center directors will bring a very unique perspective to this discussion. Paula Pawlowski suggested that they might get an earful from the senior centers because they are suffering in ways that are not always visible to the public. She agrees that highlighting senior centers on their own would be a good idea. As far as she is aware, there is no place within the state that senior centers have this opportunity to gather and share with each other.

Brenda Shelden agreed with Jim McCall's comments. She noted that she works with the coalition of senior centers in the Mat-Su, and they have very robust conversations. There are many things senior centers can do in support of their communities and seniors. She would be happy to facilitate and do her part to help with that conversation.

Jim McCall referenced Marty Lange's earlier remarks about receiving calls from people desperate for help, and he stated he receives similar calls. He noted that Alaska doesn't have one specific resource they can go to for their issues, although the CILs and ADRCs do fill a vital role.

Chair Sivertsen does like the idea of a senior center summit. Director Newman shared that Kristin Cox at SDS can be a resource for them. He also commented that in the listening sessions he sat in on over the past year for the State Plan development, the senior centers were present for those sessions, so the some of the information ACoA has was informed by representation from senior centers.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

A public comment period was offered, and a full transcript was prepared.

#### **PIONEER HOMES UPDATE**

Bob Pawlowski distributed a letter on the recommendations to the Governor dated February 1, 2024 by the Pioneer Home Advisory Board. This letter was submitted to Marty Lange and Jon Haghayeghi as well as some data sheets. He stated that in order to do the annual recommendations to the Governor, the Advisory Board set up a two-and-a-half hour meeting with the six administrators of the Homes in January to hear their priorities. This is the second or third year they have done this letter, and it has become not only an effective tool to getting better recommendations to the Governor, it's also been a good way to allow the directors to be heard by the Advisory Board.

The Homes have \$29M in deferred maintenance across six homes. What they found, though, was that was not the concern of the administrators; the concern was staffing. The worst situation right now is the Fairbanks Pioneer Home, which is at 50 percent capacity because of lack of healthcare staff and nurses, and staff currently have to do mandatory overtime two days a week. They shared this information with Sen.

Murkowski's staff. Bob Pawlowski plans to meet with each representative or senator that has a Pioneer Home in their district.

Bob stated that they have a problem with the roof at the Veterans and Pioneer Home in Palmer. This has been a recognized problem for eight years. The State has appropriated the match to start it. The VA inspector has yet to release his most recent report. Winter storms in the last few years have jeopardized the safety of the residents inside. Bob understands that there has been a discussion with the State to pay to have the roof done and then ask for reimbursement after.

Another priority is that the State had appropriated \$450,000 to open up and restore the courtyard on the Juneau Pioneer Home. Upon final inspections and bids, it ended up to be a \$1.5 to \$2 million dollar project. Work continues to garner funds for this project, including looking at community in-kind support for some of the work.

In terms of other deferred maintenance:

- Anchorage Pioneer Home is 47 years old
- Alaska State Veterans and Pioneer Home in Palmer is 53 years old
- Fairbanks Pioneer Home is 57 years old
- Juneau Pioneer Home is 36 years old
- Ketchikan Pioneer Home is 48 years old
- Sitka Pioneer Home is 90 years plus.

The Fairbanks Pioneer Home has 14 acres, and discussions have been held over the past few years regarding tearing it down and building a new one or fully remodeling the existing. A study dated October 26, 2023 recommends they do a brand new two-story 60-bed addition on the existing home. The Advisory Board will pursue funding from the State for this; however, because there is only one veteran home in the state, dialogue should be had about opening a second Veteran and Pioneer Home in the Fairbanks region. Darlene Supplee asked if the study was available for public viewing. Bob will share it with Darlene.

The Pioneer Home Advisory Board sees the need for some basic planning on long-term care in the state.

Bob Pawlowski stated that the Advisory Board recommends legislators visit the Pioneer Homes and see the dynamics.

Bob mentioned that the Pioneer Homes do not have an "exit clause" for residents, but assisted living homes do, and people can be asked to leave. Jan Engan asked for more information about that, and Director Newman stated that Residential Licensing can answer that question. He knows that there are 30-day requirements for notice before anyone can be asked to leave.

Darlene Supplee stated that they use J-1 exchange visitors during the summer to fulfill seasonal jobs. She wondered if the industry has ever looked at J-1's to fill in on a continuous basis. Bob Pawlowski stated that it's a wonderful idea, but there are a host

of problems that can be associated with that, but there are qualified support people to bring in, and there are certainly pathways. He doesn't believe they have asked.

Bob Pawlowski distributed a fact sheet of the different Homes. He noted the number of vacant PCNs, rate of ADRD, and levels of care being provided. At the bottom of the fact sheet is the philosophy of the Homes.

Director Newman remembered about eight years ago under the Walker Administration there being a discussion about the privatization of the Pioneer Homes. He asked Bob Pawlowski what the philosophy is with the Advisory Board about the State's role in operating Pioneer Homes. Bob Pawlowski's personal opinion is that he would privatize. The bottom line is that it is a continued supported program in the state, and there are residents they have committed to take care of. The issue is not the State's role in it; the issue is the State's ability to provide the caretakers to maintain the quality of life that is in the philosophy of the Homes. Paula Pawlowski remembers that they tried to sell the Pioneer Homes both inside and outside of the state, and nobody wanted them or they would only take them with a huge subsidy.

#### **OLDER AMERICANS ACT (OAA) FUNDING INCREASE**

Chair Sivertsen stated that he talked about this issue with Sen. Murkowski's staff and shared the history of the OAA. Over the years, the qualifying age was lowered from 65 to 60. At one time there were seven states and four territories that didn't meet the population threshold in regards to the formula, so they were assigned a minimum allotment. Alaska used to have a one percent allotment, and in 1973, there was an amendment to adjust the state minimum allotment to no less than a half-percent, and territories were reduced to one-fourth percent. Over time the hold harmless clause has also changed.

Alaska is unique because of the size of the state and geography, regardless of the population base, and there has to be some consideration of Alaska's ability to provide services over the vast geographic distances given the fact that 85 percent of the communities in Alaska don't have a road system to them. In addition, there are severe weather conditions plus the darkness that affect providing services to seniors. The cost of living is also a consideration.

Chair Sivertsen stated that to increase Alaska' allotment back to a full percent would double the amount of money they are getting under the OAA. To provide this to Alaska would have little effect on the other states overall.

Nicole Wery-Tagaban remarked that if Alaska gets a double allocation, they have to have a match that goes with it. Chair Sivertsen understands that, but right now they don't have appropriate funding to serve the needs of the state. It will be a heavy lift for the State, but it would be very beneficial to programs.

Chair Sivertsen is concerned with the growing senior population because they will all qualify for services. He believes this is one of the easiest fixes they can do right now to make funds available.

Bob Pawlowski asked Nicole for the various match requirements.



Jan Engan reminded Chair Sivertsen that they were looking at doing something with the guidelines and compared it to cost of living adjustments that are given to the military. She wondered if they are going to do an ask and maybe include a cost-of-living adjustment as well because the high cost of living in Alaska is seriously impacting older adults. Those seniors who are unable to drive also have access issues.

Chair Sivertsen stated that when Marty Lange does outreach visits, he checks the prices in the grocery stores. That's the problem with the current funding system. It is a flat appropriation based on population and doesn't take into account the actual cost of living in the various geographic areas.

Paula Pawlowski noted that inflation and the high cost of living in Alaska is also severely affecting the active duty and veteran populations.

Chair Sivertsen looks forward to hearing a response back on his letter.

#### **BUDGET UPDATE**

Nicole Wery-Tagaban reported that ACoA has two employees and two different funding sources: Interagency, which is the reimbursable service agreement (RSA) for \$214,000; and Mental Health Trust Authority funding for ACoA staffing and beneficiary program support for \$203,000.

Of the \$214,000, \$111,910 has been expended; and of the \$203,000, actual expenditures are \$58,777. The remaining balance for the RSA is \$102,089 and \$144,522 for the Trust funding.

At this moment, core services have not yet been encumbered, but they are working on it. Those average about \$15,000 per PCN, and it's been based on two staff, not three because the rural outreach coordinator position actually lives within SDS, so everything related to that position is billed to the Trust agreement within SDS.

Bob Pawlowski asked if the Trust funds are limited to the fiscal year. Nicole stated that they are limited to the fiscal year, and she highlighted that the expenses for this meeting are not included in the figures reflected on the spreadsheet.

Jan Engan asked if these line items are designated for specific expenditures or if they are interchangeable. Nicole stated that Marty Lange's position and the majority of the outreach and coordination that ACoA does is charged to the Trust. They do use the line items somewhat interchangeably and funds can be moved around, because they both support the program.

Darlene Supplee asked if "core services" is another term for "indirect cost." Nicole said it is similar to indirect cost. It covers things like IT, Department of Administration, office space, and accessing human resources and the commissioner's office.

Nicole Wery-Tagaban reported that they went through a very large statewide restructure of all the accounting system structures, which created a lot of chaos at the beginning and end of the fiscal year. It took close to four months to unwind all of the issues. They

received very little warning from the Division of Finance that this was coming and how it was going to work.

Director Newman thanked Chair Sivertsen, Jon Haghayeghi, and Nicole Wery-Tagaban for participating in a monthly discussion where they can touch base on the budget and any other issues that admin can assist ACoA with.

Nicole stated that employee self-service is within IRIS where the HRM system is, and SDS is in the process of going to employee self-service for the timesheet data entry. This means that employees within the SDS will go into IRIS and be able to enter their start and stop times, certify it, and then it will go to the supervisors and then to Nicole's team. This process will take Nicole's team out of the data entry aspect, and they will just do a review before the send it to the Division of Personnel. Kelda Barstad noted that Department of Revenue has already implemented it, and it's great. Director Newman stated that every department has been adopting it at their own pace. Nicole stated that SDS is one of the first divisions within the DOH to do it.

Janet Engan noted that as they come to reporting outcomes on ACoA's goals and objectives, they will need additional budget information specifically tied to providers and the specific programs they administer that are tied to funds attributed to the OAA funding formula. They need to know if the programs are making a difference in the lives of the people that are participating in those programs, and they need to know if they have made the right decisions with the funding formula. Nicole stated that there is data reported in SAMS, and they can talk to Kristin further about it. Nicole also highlighted that SAMS is sunsetting in April, and they will be introducing a new software program called GetCare that has more flexibility and reporting capabilities. AGENet recently received a spreadsheet that breaks down the grant dollars and amount of unduplicated people served in a high-level overview that she can share with ACoA. Director Newman noted that Jan is interested in more granular data and not a high-level overview.

Darlene Supplee felt it would be advantageous for Jan to meet with Kristin Cox and see the reports she has to do for the OAA. Every question Jan has asked, Kristin has data on. Kristin joined the meeting and explained that she does have lots of data, and she would be happy to sit down with Jan in person while the Commission is meeting in Juneau. Darlene would also like to participate in that conversation to share her perspective as a provider who is doing the reporting to Kristin.

#### **FUTURE MEETING DATES AND OUTREACH PLANS**

Paula Pawlowski stated that in addition to the four quarterly meetings the Commission holds per year, other meetings are as follows:

- Four statewide teleconferences
- Executive Committee meetings to address:
  - Approval of quarterly meeting agendas – held prior to the four quarterly meetings
  - Podcast
  - Other Commission business.

#### Quarterly Meeting Calendar 2024:

- May – Quarterly meeting and outreach. Older Americans Month – coordinate with a local community activity to present the Governor’s proclamation.
- Late August/early September – Quarterly meeting potentially by Zoom. Look to mid September if it will be face to face.
  - *Note: Biannual Trust Improving Lives Conference is September 17 – 18 in Anchorage*
  - Kelda Barstad will send a list of Trust meeting dates so there is no accidental overlap.
- First week of December – Quarterly meeting in Anchorage or telephonically. Potential to coordinate a senior center session during this meeting.

#### Four Teleconferences

Paula Pawlowski suggested staggering the remaining teleconferences so they aren’t pushed right up to the quarterly meetings.

Potential teleconference schedule:

- June
- Late September/early October.

At the time of the December Commission meeting, they will have completed all four teleconferences, and they can discuss the outcomes and the potential to extend those into 2025. They will also be able to discuss the effectiveness of the podcasts.

Jan Engan asked if committee assignments have been made for the new year. Paula Pawlowski stated that they had not, and she and Chair Sivertsen had not yet talked about that. Jan also remarked that there are specific duties listed in the committee descriptions.

Jan noted that one final task they need to schedule is looking at the funding formula after July. Paula stated that they could focus their August/September meeting on this and discussing methods to measure the State Plan. Jan suggested a legislative wrap up for this meeting as well.

Darlene Supplee asked when the OAA reporting takes place. Kristin Cox stated that it runs on a federal calendar year, so it runs from October 1 through September 30, and that’s when data collection ends. SDS has until the end of January to complete and submit the report. She further stated that they have the ability to shift the data by one quarter. Nicole Wery-Tagaban commented that the State Plan started in October 2023.

Paula Pawlowski believes the Commission should stick with the quarterly meeting plan and talk to the people they think they will have on each agenda and make sure any reporting they do to the Commission is comfortable for their work schedules. Presenters she has listed for future agendas include Kristin Cox, Dan Robinson, and the Broadband Office.

Kelda Barstad asked if the Commission has a data committee. Paula stated that they do not as they rely on Jon Haghayeghi for the data.

Darlene Supplee announced the grand reopening of the Fairbanks Senior Center June 29<sup>th</sup>.

### **SENIOR SNAPSHOT AND ANNUAL REPORT UPDATES**

Jon Haghayeghi reviewed the following highlights from the Senior Snapshot as follows:

- In 2023, Alaskans aged 60+ (156,832) represent more than 21% of the State's total population (736,812).
- Alaska's 60+ population increased by 73% between April 2010 and July of 2023.
- Alaska's 65+ population increased by 101% between April 2010 and July of 2023.
- Alaska's 85+ population is expected to increase by 500% between 2023 and 2050 to 30,000+ seniors, of which an estimated one-third will experience ADRD.
- Alaska's senior population has increased in all regions across the state from 2010 to 2023.
- There has been a 107% increase in seniors aged 65 to 74 from 2010 to 2023.
- There has been a 99% increase in seniors aged 75 to 84 from 2010 to 2023.
- The fastest grown region for the population aged 60 and up is Southcentral followed by Southeast.
- There are 22,775 Alaskan veterans aged 65 and older, which is 31.9% of the senior population.
- Senior economic indicator averages, 2023:
  - Monthly Social Security benefits: \$1,797
  - Monthly Public Employee Retirement System (PERS) payments: \$2,292 for 19,999 seniors.
  - Monthly Teachers Retirement System (TRS) payments: \$3,372 for 6,364 seniors.

Bob Pawlowski suggested to look at data regarding the number of seniors receiving PERS payments because there may be possible growth as those in tier 3 reach 30 years of service or 60 years of age.

- There are 10,263 seniors receiving Senior Benefits.
- Seniors on SNAP and other senior assistance programs, 2021 (*updated information was unable to be obtained*):
  - 7,420 seniors 65+ were on SNAP with an average monthly benefit of \$258.
  - 7,584 seniors 65+ were receiving APA at an average monthly benefit of \$295.
  - 1,740 households with a senior member 65+ received heating assistance.

Director Newman stated that a contact person at Public Assistance is Rebecca Stovall, the division operations manager, if the Commission wanted to request updated SNAP figures.

Senior Housing, 2023:

- AHFC total units of senior/disabled housing – 610 units

- AHFC wait list for senior/disabled housing – 1,911
- AHFC wait list for housing vouchers – 6,060 families
- AHFC senior housing units funded for development – 40 units.

Director Newman asked about the dip in the waitlist for housing vouchers from 2020 to 2023, and Jim McCall stated that the numbers fluctuate from year to year based on people that apply. One thing that could have impacted the number in 2023 is that AHFC holds an opening for the voucher program in Anchorage approximately every 18 months. Once they receive applications and close the list, they start working on everything. What they could be looking at is the process of receiving the applications and working through that list. They may also see a decline in 2024 and 2025 and then a jump back up again in 2026. For all of the other communities, applications are open throughout the year.

Senior Health: ADRD:

- Number of people with ADRD estimate for 2025: 11,000.
- 2021, number of caregivers in Alaska, 25,000.

Senior Behavioral Health, 2022:

- 7.1% heavy drinkers
- 9.6% heavy smokers
- 6.8% binge drinkers
- 8.5% frequent mental distress
- 27.8% obese.

Senior Health, leading cause of death age 65+, 2022:

- Suicides – 24
- Fatal falls (accidental) – 54
- Other accidental – 71
- Alcohol-induced – 51
- Drug-induced – 16
- Cancer – 751
- Heart diseases – 678
- Stroke – 167
- Influenza and pneumonia – 41
- Chronic lower respiratory diseases – 176
- Alzheimer's disease – 173
- Diabetes mellitus – 123
- Chronic liver disease – 34
- Parkinson's disease – 61
- Accident/unintentional injuries – 125
- COVID-19 – 200

Senior Safety, Long-Term Care Ombudsman, 2023:

- 827 unannounced visits to senior assisted living homes
- 355 complaints
- 248 opened cases

- 20 active volunteer ombudsmen.

Senior Safety, Adult Protective Services, FY2023:

- 8,255 reports of harm
- 1,557 referred to APS investigators
- 1,761 screened in for investigation.

Eligible Medicare Beneficiaries, 2023:

- 110,140 Alaskans on Medicare. Need to verify if this is all Medicare recipients or just seniors aged 60 and above. Check with the Medicare Information Office.

Home and Community-Based Grant Services for Seniors, FY2023:

- State and federal funding for senior grant services - \$18,431,305
- 21,054 seniors aged 60+ were served
- Average cost per individual aged 60+, \$699.63. *Commissioners double checked the figure and determined it is \$875.43.*

Commissioners and staff discussed the need to double check the number comparisons in the document from year to year as the numbers may have shifted. These figures also do not represent match funding generated by senior providers.

Kristin Cox stated that the total budget serves more than just people 60 and over. She said that Nicole calculated the number of people 60+ compared to the total number of people served, which was approximately 75 percent, and then she took 75% of the total budget and divided that by the total number of seniors 60+. The \$699.63 is different because it is a change in calculation from previous years. Chair Sivertsen noted that they need to address this in the text of the Snapshot.

Assisted Living and Long-Term Care: Alaska Pioneer Homes, 2023:

- 65% of residents at Level III and Level IV care
- 243 applicants on active wait list
- 82.2 is the average resident age.

Alaska Long-Term Care: Daily and Annual Costs – Private Pay

- Nursing home, private room, median daily rate - \$1,099/day
  - U.S. rate in 2023 is \$297/day
- Nursing home, private room, median yearly rate - \$401,169/year
  - U.S. rate in 2023 is \$108,405/year
- Assisted living home, average median daily rate - \$238/day
  - U.S. rate in 2023 is \$148/day
- Assisted living home, average annual median rate - \$86,951/year
  - U.S. rate in 2023 is \$54,000/year
- Home health aide, median daily rate - \$200/day
  - U.S. rate in 2023 is \$169/day
- Home health aide, annual median rate - \$72,820/year.
  - U.S. rate in 2023 is \$61,776/year

#### Long-Term Care, LTSS Supports, FY2023

- 1,766 Alaskans Living Independently Waivers, age 65+
- 2,013 Personal Care Services and Community First Choice, age 60+

Lesley Thompson joined the meeting and announced that the Senior Benefits passed the Senate, so it has moved to the House. She referenced the Snapshot that discusses Senior Benefits and felt that it didn't make sense that for Southcentral the number of people receiving benefits dropped from 5,388 in 2022 to 2,862 in 2023. Jon suggested that perhaps 2022's figure needs to be verified because it is the outlier.

Darlene Supplee asked why there has been such a decrease in personal care services and Community First Choice from 2019 to 2023. Director Newman stated that there has been a gradual decline in the number of providers who are able to provide these services due to lack of staffing. He noted that this issue also came up when he was presenting to the legislature regarding legally responsible individuals to be able to provide personal care through the Community First Choice.

Darlene asked if the State keeps track of people who have been approved for a waiver but have been unable to obtain staff to realize the services. Director Newman doesn't believe they do. SDS approves the service, but they don't ensure that the person gets the personal care services. This would be information obtained at the individual agency level. He stated that SDS does know how many waivers are being actualized after approval.

Jim McCall stated that the document references Southeast continuing to have the highest concentration of seniors at more than one in four residents, but he also notices that approximately 30 percent of the population of the Kenai Peninsula is seniors over the age of 60, which is more than one in four. Lesley Thompson stated that Jim is correct, but she noted that Haines has the highest per capita rate of seniors, which is one in four, but it's not all of Southeast. This should be clarified in the Snapshot. After doing some research, Jim McCall determined that Wrangell at 36.9 exceeds Haines at 36.5 and Hoonah/Angoon follows at 34.8.

#### Annual Report

Jon Haghayeghi led Commissioners through a brief review of the Annual Report looking for feedback on what Commissioners would like to see expanded upon. He highlighted the following sections:

- A description of the Commission and its membership
- Outreach and advocacy
- Listening sessions from 2022 – summaries of issues for seniors statewide
- The State Plan for Senior Services:
  - Surveys
  - Outreach to providers
  - Resulting goals
  - Funding formula
- Legislative Audit
- Teleconferences
- Senior demographics and how they have changed over the past decade.

Jon stated that this will be a useful document when the Commission is asked to provide a report on its activities. He noted that the annual report is not included in this year's legislative packets in order to keep the focus on the advocacy efforts.

Feedback:

- Paula Pawlowski commends the effort that went into the report, but she feels that the work of the Commission should come first and the biographies of the Commissioners should come last.
- Darlene Supplee finds the annual report useful and user friendly.
- Chair Sivertsen believes the annual report conveys what they need to convey based on the feedback they received from the audit.

**CAPITOL VISITS AND ADVOCACY PRIORITIES**

Chair Sivertsen noted that they are down two Commissioners for the legislative visits, but Paula Pawlowski has rearranged the visits to account for that.

Paula Pawlowski reported that they determined the priority legislators to visit, and they also assigned Commissioners to visit their own legislators. She stated that she arranged meetings so Commissioners don't have the same partners for every visit.

Paula reviewed aloud the schedule of meetings with attendees. There are three legislators they will be unable to meet with, but they will be provided a folder of information about the Commission.

Paula directed Commissioners to the legislative packet and walked everyone through the contents of the packet:

- Information about the Commission
- List of Commissioners
- Legislative priorities (based on information contained in the Senior Snapshot):
  - Support Senior Grant Services – page 13 of the Snapshot
  - AHFC/Housing – page 7 of the Snapshot
  - Reauthorization of the Senior Benefits Program – page 5 of the Snapshot.
- Senior Snapshot
- ACoA Magnet

Jim McCall offered a report on the Senior Fund for this year. Of the \$1.75M, AHFC awarded two senior facilities, Kenai Peninsula Housing Initiatives, Inc for "Rainbow Flats." It is a \$2.217M development of six units, and \$878,050 of the \$1.75M was invested by AHFC. The remainder of the money, \$871,950 was invested in Cook Inlet's property in Anchorage, Tyonek Terrace. Tyonek Terrace is an existing facility, so it will be a rehabilitation to bring it current.

Rainbow Flats will cost \$369,500 per unit, and Tyonek Terrace will be about \$264,000 per unit.



## **CLOSING COMMENTS**

Paula Pawlowski appreciates the time spent during these meetings sharing ideas with Commissioners to build a path forward.

Nona Safra found the meeting very informative. She is sorry to miss the meeting in person as well as the legislative visits.

Bob Pawlowski appreciates the opportunity to talk about the Pioneer Homes and that they are one of the canaries in the coalmine on the challenges that are facing all seniors that need assistance.

Janet Engan stated that there was a lot of information to process from this meeting. She appreciated the good side conversations. She is happy to see they are going to partner with people for their State Plan on Aging.

Darlene Supplee appreciated the meeting and being able to strategize over the course of this past year. She apologized for being unable to be in person for this meeting. She thanked Paula Pawlowski and Chair Sivertsen for staying on and providing consistency to the Commission with their knowledge and experience so they can continue the momentum.

Director Newman thanked Chair Sivertsen and Paula Pawlowski for their leadership today. He wished everyone luck on their visits, and he looks forward to the follow up. He appreciates the partnership between the ACoA staff and the Admin team for getting him set up in this building. He is looking forward to continuing to learn, and they will correct some of the data issues identified today. A personal goal of his in the coming year is going to be placing more attention to the growth of the senior population, and he looks forward to devoting more attention to that.

Kelda Barstad appreciated the invitation to the meeting and participating in the lively conversations. It's good to hear about what's going to be happening with the State Plan and future meetings and visits to gather more information about the needs of senior beneficiaries, because they are specialized and it's known they need to do more to improve that continuum of care for older Alaskans who are also Trust beneficiaries.

Lisa Von Bargen apologized she couldn't be there in person. She wished Commissioners good luck in their visits. She looks forward to hearing the outcome of those meetings. She echoed everyone else's comments. Thanks to the leadership for the consistency. The dedication of this group is incredible. She is very thankful for everyone's effort to attend to the needs of seniors.

Chair Sivertsen thanked everyone online for participating and giving input. He stated that it's important that they hear from around the state what the needs are and what the Commission can do to help. He looks forward to going to the legislative visits. He appreciates the compassion of this board wanting to help seniors in the state live more productive lives. A lot of work went into the preparation of this meeting, and being able to share the State Plan will be great. The Senior Snapshot is always interesting to the legislators. Staff have done a wonderful job putting everything together. The format for

the agenda and the number of topics was just right because it allowed time for discussion and interaction.

Jon Haghayeghi thanked everyone for their time and wished everyone luck during their visits.

**ADJOURN**

Janet Engan **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Bob Pawlowski. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.