

**ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING**  
**Board Meeting Agenda: February 5, 2018**  
**3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Juneau, Alaska**  
**Approved Minutes**

**Call to order:** Meeting was called to order by Chair, David Blacketer, at 3:00 p.m.

**Roll Call:** ACoA Commissioners present were David Blacketer, Chair; Marie Darlin, Vice Chair; and ACoA Commissioners Mary Shields, Duane Mayes, Rachel Greenberg, Marie Darlin, Gordon Glaser, Banarsi Lal, Linda Combs, Bob Sivertsen and Anna Frank.

ACoA Staff Present: Denise Daniello and Lesley Thompson

Members Absent: Katie Abbot

Amendments to the Agenda include: attending both Senate and House HSS hearings for Senior Benefits and meeting with the Governor in his conference room on Friday. Because of these changes, the commission will need to meet next week to complete the meeting's agenda.

**ACTION: Bob moved to amend the agenda, followed by a second from Gordon. Motion approved**

**ACTION: Mary moved to approve the agenda as amended, followed by a second from Bob. Motion approved.**

### **Executive Director and Staff Report**

Denise reviewed part of her written report. She noted her appreciation to AgeNet meeting at the same time as the Commission that allows for a coordinated senior advocacy effort. Denise thanked Rachel, ACoA Commissioner and AgeNet member, for helping to coordinate AgeNet's with ACoA legislative visits.

The meeting scheduled for the morning of February 6<sup>th</sup>, will bring together AgeNet, Pioneer Home Advisory Board, AARP, and ACoA members to discuss our legislative priorities for seniors. We will also hear a presentation by Elaine Ryan from the national AARP office. She will report on the 2017 Alaska Long-Term Care Supports Scorecard. AARP has developed long-term care support indicators and evaluate each state based on these indicators. This report has been completed for several years. The great news is that Alaska ranks 5<sup>th</sup> out of all of the states. This meeting is expected to inspire meaningful discussion in the development of new advocacy strategies for improvement long-term support services for Alaska seniors.

Denise reported that ACoA's Planning Committee provided oversight for the development of the senior survey for the state plan. The approved survey is in the board packet. The survey includes many of the core questions we have had in the past and in addition to new ones that aim to assess how seniors are faring, with a special focus on those receiving services and those who do not. The senior survey is now with our webmaster for final formatting before it is distributed in bulk to agencies serving seniors and published in the Senior Voice.

In December, the Commission received BRFSS PCI findings from the 20-state composite from the national Alzheimer's Association, which were compared with those for the Alaska population. Alaska showed slightly higher rates of subjective cognitive decline for persons age 45 and older (11.3% for Alaska compared to 10.4% for the 20-state composite), and even higher rates for persons age 60+ (14% for Alaska seniors ~~compared to 10.7% for seniors in the 20-state composite).~~

While Alaskans self-reported higher rates of memory loss and confusion, they also reported less impact on their health, ability to perform daily activities, and less diagnosed depression, as noted in the graph below. In addition, almost one-third of Alaskan seniors with self-reported memory problems live alone, which is an increase in the number of seniors with memory problems who reported living alone in the 2013 BRFSS PCI module. In 2013, 1 in 8 Alaskan seniors who self-reported cognitive decline also said they lived alone. In 2017, 1 in 3 Alaskan seniors now live alone. According to these findings, there are a growing number of seniors with memory loss who live alone and are at increased risk for self-neglect, falls, wandering, and hospitalizations.

Denise reported on the current financial report. Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) is ensuring that the Commission has enough funding for the fiscal year.

Lesley reviewed the ACoA Senior Snapshot which is completed every year as part of the annual report. The Snapshot in a comprehensive view of the senior population and includes senior statistics, cost of long-term care services and public assistance plus more. The ACoA Senior Snapshot is located on our website at [www.alaskaaging.org](http://www.alaskaaging.org) or in the 2017 annual report.

### **ACoA Committee & Representational Reports**

**Executive Committee:** David Blacketer, Chair – Dave read and reminded us how important the mission of the ACoA is. **It reads:** The mission of the Alaska Commission on Aging is to ensure the dignity and independence of all older Alaskans, and to assist them to lead useful and meaningful lives through planning, advocacy, education, and interagency cooperation.

**Legislative Teleconferences:** Marie reported that we will be holding a total of 8 teleconferences this legislative session. So far the legislature has been concentrating on the budget and not as much on proposed legislation. We will continue to follow the progress of the budget and any bills that might affect seniors.

**Planning Committee:** Mary Shields and Rachel Greenberg, Committee Co-Chairs

Rachel asked the commissioners to help ensure that the senior survey gets out to as many people 55 and older as possible and to help seniors fill out the survey as needed.

**Pioneer Home Advisory Board Report:** Bob Sivertsen, PHAB Chair

The Pioneer Home Advisory Board has been focusing on level 2 & 3 beds. Level 1 beds are not needed as much since more seniors receive home-and-community based services. In 2017 the Pioneer Homes served 543 residents. There are currently 320 that are ready to move in to a Pioneer Home today. There are still 5,372 seniors on the inactive waitlist and the numbers continue to climb.

The Pioneer Homes have been working on the pharmacy program in Anchorage. They have had to change the packing and the shipping process in order to ship to Pioneer Home outside of Anchorage.

Ketchikan Pioneer Home has a very active foundation board and the advisory board is hoping to replicate this in other Pioneer Homes around the state.

The Pioneer Homes proposed budget will include flat funding for fiscal year 2019. The Pioneer Homes are working on improving their assets and will be asking the Trust for funding in the near future.

**Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education:** Banarsi Lal (by teleconference)

Banarsi's report is in the board packet. The report includes their legislative advocacy items as well as advocating for a commission for the deaf and hard of hearing. The Governor's Council is encouraging the legislature to complete a long-term fiscal plan.

**ACTION: Establish ACoA FY2018-FY2019 Meeting Dates**

Note: The Executive Committee has proposed the dates below.

Tuesday, May 1, 2018 by video- and teleconference

Wednesday, September 19, 2018 (video and teleconference) (alternative September 18-19, Rural Outreach)

Wednesday, December 12, 2018 (video and teleconference)

Wednesday, February 13, 2019 (video- and teleconference) (alternative February 11-14, Legislative Advocacy in Juneau)

Gordon is not quite sure what the answer is between the need to meet with legislators in Juneau and the need to visit outlying areas.

Mary is concerned about how important it is to travel to outlying areas during a State Plan year.

Denise suggested that we should do more advocacy during the non-session months. Our budget has limited authority to accept additional funding unless the entity would purchase the tickets and directly pay for all of the expenses.

It was decided to wait until the next meeting to decide on future meeting dates.

**Rachel moved that our next teleconference would be May 1<sup>st</sup>. Second by Marie. Motion past.**

Meeting adjourned to February 6<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 a.m.

**ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING**  
**Joint Advocacy Partnership Meeting, February 6, 2018**  
**AgeNet, Pioneer Home Advisory Board, AARP Alaska**  
**Alaska Office Building (AOB)**  
**350 Main Street, Room 115, Juneau, Alaska**

**Call to order:** Meeting was called to order by Chair, David Blacketer, at 8:40 a.m.

**Roll Call:** ACoA Commissioners present were David Blacketer, Chair; Marie Darlin, Vice Chair; and ACoA Commissioners Mary Shields, Duane Mayes, Rachel Greenberg, Marie Darlin, Gordon Glaser, Banarsi Lal, Linda Combs, Bob Sivertsen and Anna Frank.

ACoA Staff Present: Denise Daniello and Lesley Thompson

Members Absent: Katie Abbot

David Welcomed the Senior Advocacy Partners to the meeting.

**Presentation and discussion of respective legislative advocacy priorities and advocacy materials**

***What advocacy interests do we share in common?***

**Discussion:** Based on information shared, ***what core themes do we need to emphasize in our meetings with legislators?***

- **Review of legislation and budget items of interest: Marie Darlin, ACoA Legislative Advocacy Committee Chair and Denise Daniello, ACoA Executive Director**
- **AgeNet** – the members each reviewed the meeting with the legislators that they were assigned to meet. Most were very positive meetings on AgeNet’s priorities.
- **Wrap-Up and Adjourn: David Blacketer, ACoA Chair**

**Return to the Alaska Commission on Aging meeting**

**12:30 p.m.**

**Preparing for Legislative Visits, ACoA Legislative Advocacy Committee**

- **Overview of ACoA Legislative Advocacy Priorities: Marie Darlin, Legislative Advocacy Committee Chair and Denise Daniello** – Marie and Denise reviewed our legislative priorities that we will be discussing with the legislators on Wednesday.
- **Review of ACoA Legislator Meeting Packets: Marie and Denise** – They also reviewed all of the reports and information in the meeting packets.
- **Review of Legislative Visits Schedule: Lesley Thompson, ACoA Planner (to be passed out during meeting)** The commissioners reviewed the plans for visits on Thursday.

**ACTION: ACoA Resolution 2018-001: Resolution in support of the Governor's capital request for the AHFC Senior Citizen Housing Development Fund.**

**Bob made a motion to approve the ACoA Resolution 2018-001 as written. Rachel second. Motion passed.**

### **Department of Health and Social Services**

#### **Valerie Davidson, Commissioner (*invited or designee*)**

John Sherwood filled in for Commissioner Valerie Davidson. Jon serves as Medicaid and Health Care Policy Director. Jon served 8 years as an ACoA Commissioner represented the department. This year we are celebrating 25 years of home-and-community based services which were written by Jon and Jetta Whittker.

Budget update: Jon reported that since Governor Walker took over he has cut the budget by almost 40% and eliminated over 3,000 state employees. The state has closed 40 facilities around the state, significantly reduced or eliminated over 100 programs and services.

The department has cut \$210 million since 2015, nearly 17% of the budget and eliminated 120 full and part-time jobs. The department is now doing less with less. The Pioneer Homes had to cut 23 full-time positions since 2015 which means that beds had to be left vacant. Funding for HSS has remained the same since last year even though demand for programs has increased.

The FY2019 budget proposal two significant increases for Medicaid funding and an \$18 million grant for substance abuse to be spent over 3 years. HSS need \$27 million for the Medicaid program plus a supplemental of \$93 million.

### **Division of Senior and Disabilities Services**

#### **Duane Mayes, Director; Lisa McGuire, Chief of Programs; and Lisa Morley, Grants Unit Program Manager**

Duane reported that the Governor's FY2019 proposed budget for SDS has no reductions to grants. The Medicaid budget for SDS also has no reductions. SDS has bi partisan support for the programs within the legislature but there are no guarantees to what may happen to the funding. Duane will be presenting to House Finance HSS on February 13<sup>th</sup> at 3:45 p.m.

The 1915 (K) option will join Alaska's other Medicaid programs. The option is targeted to go live late spring of 2018. Currently regulations are with the department of law for review. They has been some delay in the creation to the waiver. There were two rounds of stakeholder engagement meetings, they had to craft regulations and state plan amendments, data system change delay plus more.

Duane talked about how Denise help develop information on family caregiving information in Alaska. This was helpful as Duane is a member of a steering committee that is an evidence based public health endowment identifying best practices throughout the country. Duane, Denise, Senator Micciche and Representative Spohnholz will be going to a meeting in May on this very issue.

**Recess to Friday, February 9 at 8:30 a.m.**

**The ACoA board meeting will reconvene in the Senior and Disabilities Services, 6<sup>th</sup> floor conference room.**

**ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING**  
**Board Meeting Agenda: February 12, 2018**  
**8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**  
**Draft Minutes**

Call to order: Meeting was called to order by Chair, David Blacketer, at 8:30 a.m.

Roll Call: ACoA Commissioners present were David Blacketer, Chair; Marie Darlin, Vice Chair; and ACoA Commissioners Mary Shields, Duane Mayes, Rachel Greenberg, Marie Darlin, Gordon Glaser, Banarsi Lal, Linda Combs, Bob Sivertsen and Anna Frank.

ACoA Staff Present: Denise Daniello and Lesley Thompson

Members Absent: Katie Abbot

**10:15 a.m. Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman**

**Kathryn Curry, Deputy LTC Ombudsman**

Kathryn Curry, the deputy LTC Ombudsman filled in for Teresa Holt who was not able to join today. Kathryn reported that the long-term care ombudsman staff and volunteers visited 989 facilities in FY2017 which was up from 736 facilities in FY2016. This increase was due to being more strategic in planning their visits and the increase in the number of volunteers. They have increased the use of Facebook to recruit volunteers which has been very successful. They have also increased the number of communities that now have volunteers. The increase in visits are having a positive impact with the facilities now knowing that there could be a visit at any time to talk to residents.

They have also increased the number of calls that come into the LTC office from both facilities, families and seniors. This has helped deal with problems before they become issues.

They also work with many other partners which has helped get the word out about the LTC Ombudsman and people are using the office more as a resource for these issues.

Kathryn shared a few stories that were very impactful.

**10:45 a.m. Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training Program**

**Rita Gray, Program Coordinator**

Rita referred the commissioners to the state plan for the MASST program. It is part of the department of labor and workforce development. The Plan is currently in draft form and changes can be made. It is very similar to the previous plan but during that time, 5 job centers had to be eliminated based on the budget. The MASST program had a 10% budget cut so the Department of Labor helped with funds. The grants have decreased so much that it is difficult for programs to use the 25% administrative cost because it cuts the labor cost so drastically.

The University cut all of the classes that were developed for MASST employees so now Rita is working hard to find other sources for MASST education.

Gordon stated that they miss having MASST people at the Anchorage Senior Activity Center. He loves to see them gain confidence over the period of time that they are at the center.

Rita explained that this year they have been working on re-entry programs for seniors who have been incarceration. There is a fellow that was in prison for 30 years but he joined the program at 80 years of age. He just received found a full time job last week!

Many of the MASST employees are retired but don't make enough income to live on. Even though this is a part-time position, it helps with essentials food and housing.

### **Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL)**

**Tristan Knutson-Lombardo, Assistant Director, and Tracy Vervelde, Aging and Disabilities Resource Center Coordinator**

SAIL provides services for seniors and persons with disabilities in SE Alaska. They have 4 offices in SE and serve as the ADRC in the entire area. They received a grant recently and will be able to hire 6 part-time staff in 6 villages in Southeast Alaska.

They have served close to 600 seniors last year which is about half of the people they served.

The older Alaska Blind seniors grant served 165 people around SE. They also have a program called veterans directive that helps vets who are meet the nursing home level of care. They have complete flexibility on how they want to have their services completed. The program can pay for home accessibility model, technology and anyway they want to spend their funding.

They also have funding for people who transition out of a nursing home. Sometimes these seniors may end up in a hospital bed for months because they have no place to go.

### **Wrap-Up & Closing Comments**

**Commissioners felt that the meeting was very worthwhile and informative. They liked the visits to the communities and to legislators on the hill.**

**11:30 a.m. Adjourn**

**Proposed Next Meeting: "Wrap-Up" Board Meeting Agenda: February 15, 2018**

**Draft Special “Wrap-Up” Board Meeting Agenda:  
February 15, 2018  
9:00 to 11:00 a.m. by Teleconference  
Draft Minutes**

Call to order: Meeting was called to order by Chair, David Blacketer, at 9:00 a.m.

Roll Call: ACoA Commissioners present were David Blacketer, Chair; Marie Darlin, Vice Chair; and ACoA Commissioners Mary Shields, Rachel Greenberg, Bob Sivertsen, Marie Darlin, Gordon Glaser and Banarsi Lal.

ACoA Staff Present: Denise Daniello and Lesley Thompson

Members Absent: Katie Abbot, Duane Mayes, Linda Combs and Anna Frank

**ACTION: Adoption of the meeting agenda. ACoA Commissioner Banarsi Lal moved to approve the draft agenda as presented, which was seconded by ACoA Commissioner Rachel. Adoption approved.**

**Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Report  
Mike Abbott, Chief Executive Officer, and Kelda Barstad, Program Officer**

Mike Abbot started his report by praising the work of ACoA. He really appreciates how we work well together. Mike went on to say that there has been many changes over the past 1.5 years with the Trust. They are still working on hiring a few more staff members and then the transition of the Trust will be complete. He has been with the Trust for the past 4 months and is continuing to work with the Trustees to make any changes that still need to take place in the next couple of months. The audit is even further delayed and will be out in April and perhaps even May. He is looking forward to addressing any issues the audit may find. He introduced Kelda Barstad who works with the Trust as a program officer.

Kelda went on to educate the Commission members on some of the priority areas for the Trust. They include ways to assist the state with Medicaid reform and criminal justice reform and reinvestment. These are main priorities areas that the Trust will continue to work on next year.

The Trust is also working on focus areas including: Disability Justice; Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment; Beneficiary Employment and Engagement; Workforce Development; and Housing and Long-Term Care Services and Supports. Kelda is the staff member for Long-Term Care Services and Supports. On the housing side there are many people impacted by homelessness and they are looking for ways to solve this problem. The Trust is currently financing housing coordinators in Anchorage, Juneau and Fairbanks. The challenge with strategies for homelessness is they are different in every area of the state so solutions must be flexible.

Kelda recommended that the first place people should start looking for help with housing is to talk to the ADRCs. They have information and contacts on availability.

The Trust has also been helping behavioral health with the new 1115(c) waivers. They will be negotiating the waiver with the federal government. They are trying to get the waivers approved more quickly than in the past.



SDS is working with the Trust on the Community First Choice program which will help with Alaskans on the independently waiver with the ability to obtain the Community First Choice program for queuing and supervision and Individual Supports Waiver and will give the disabilities community with more options as well as Companion Services for seniors.

Kelda is looking forward to the Trust focusing on the prevalence of the aging beneficiaries in Alaska. The Trust will be working on gathering this data in the near future as it has not been done before on this scale.

Gordon wanted to know what the Trust is doing for people who have recently been diagnosed with ADRD. He wants to ensure that the Trust is focusing on prevention and intervention. Kelda will get back to Gordon about what they are funding for prevention programs.

**Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, Senior Housing Office**  
**Jim McCall, Senior Housing Program Officer**

Jim introduced the commission to a new staff member, Kaylee Williams. She will answer phone calls when Jim is out of the office. Kaylee's phone number is 330-8429.

For 2018, there will be two new housing projects for seniors. One will have 42 units in the Palmer area and the other will be in Kenai which will have 6 units.

Jim reviewed the demographic information that he put together that is under the 2<sup>nd</sup> tab of his report.

Under tab 3 there is information on the 2018 Alaska Housing Assessment. The report says that the housing overcrowding in Alaska is twice the national rate. We know that this must affect many seniors in the state. They also noted that the state has a shortage of senior housing and we need to build at a much faster rate.

They also went on to report that nearly one in every three households are cost burdened for their rent and mortgage payment. They are challenged with paying their rent or mortgage every month.

The Housing Assessment report also mentioned that approximately 15,000 housing units in Alaska are estimated to be very energy inefficient.

Information under tab 4 talks about the economic recovery plan and wants to put Alaskans to work throughout the state and added programs that would address maintenance programs in Alaska. There are 4 AHFC programs that Jim believes directly affect seniors:

1. Weatherization Program
2. Housing Facilities Maintenance Program
3. Supplemental Program
4. Senior Citizen Housing Development Program

David thank Jim for his report.

**ACTION: Adoption of the December 12, 2017 draft meeting minutes. Mary Shields moved to approve the draft December 12, 2017 meeting minutes, followed by a second from ACoA Commissioner Rachel Greenberg. Minutes were approved as written.**

**Ethics Disclosures – Please send Ethics Disclosures to Denise but they are not needed for this meeting as it is considered a continuation of last weeks’ meeting.**

### **Commissioner Debriefings**

Each Commission team reported on their meetings with legislators’ and/or staff were positive and supportive of senior issues. The highlights from the teams were:

- **Team Darlin and Gohl**

Linda and Rachel met with Representative Lincoln to start their day. It was the Representative’s 2<sup>nd</sup> day on the job so he was very interested in what they had to say on senior issues. Senator Begich was glad to get the information and appreciated the fact that Marie was able to go back in time and talk about his father. They also met with Representative Chenault’s staff and Representative Millet who talked about HB 336 which will impact seniors. Representative Millet is also very interested in the subject of Long Term Care needs and programs.

- **Team Blacketer and Shields**

All of their meetings were very positive and successful with both republicans and democrats. Their first meeting was with Representative Tarr and she was called out to a meeting so Mary met with a staff member. Representative Stutes also is very supportive as well as Representative Tuck and Senator Meyer who will be running for Lt. Governor. Senator Meyer should sign on for Senator Kelly’s Senior Benefits bill. Representative Gara is concerned that there might not be enough money to fund additional people within the Senior Benefits program.

- **Team Greenberg**

Rachel reported that she met with mostly staff members because the legislators were on the house “floor”. She had very supportive comments with all of the staff members that she was able to talk to. Most members were aware of the senior programs that are in place. In addition to the list of legislators she was scheduled to meet with, she also made sure to meet with all of “valley” legislators.

- **Team Glaser and Frank**

Gordon and Anna explained how he also had a great experience with his legislators and staff. He talked to Representative Gruenberg who understands the importance of senior programs. Senator Gardner will be missed as she is not going to run again. She also really understands how important senior programs are. Representative Drummond also understood how important funding is for senior services and is running for re-election.

- **Team Sivertsen and Daniello**

Overall everyone was very supportive of senior programs. The team met with Representative Kawasaki and his biggest question was what about increasing the number of Pioneer Homes? Senator Bishop also supports taking care of seniors.

Senator McKinnon was very concerned about where the funding will come from for all of the senior programs. She was concerned that more seniors were moving into Alaska for the benefits which Denise explained was incorrect.

- **Rural Outreach Visits**

- **Juneau**

ACOA RURAL OUTREACH SITE VISIT – JUNEAU

Group 3: Marie Darlin and Bob Sivertsen, ACoA Commissioners with Linda Gohl as a volunteer.

### **Juneau Pioneer Home**

Gina Del Rosario, Pioneer Home Administrator and Lead Maintenance employee walked us through the Pioneer Home explaining how the Eden Alternative philosophy has been implemented. Since I last visited this Pioneer Home over 12 years ago, there have been several remodeled areas to make the Pioneer Home feel less institutional and more of a home and community environment. There are now dining stations on most of the community wings, giving residents a dining choice. The Pioneer Home Chef/Cook has been at this Pioneer Home since it first opened. The new bathing rooms were very impressive, with kidney shaped tubs for easy access for the resident, and ease of use for the staff. The room and heating systems were designed to keep the room at a comfortable temperature, sliding partitions to create more privacy, and great safety features are included. I was very impressed with the staffing, which includes a Geriatric Advanced Nurse Practitioner, LPN's and CNA's. There are more Level III residents than Level II, and Level I where there are only a few residents in the more independent community. The Pioneer Home was very clean and tidy, and the grounds well kept. I think the staff are incredibly attentive and concerned for the well-being of the residents. It is a good alternative for Southeast residents and their families to seriously consider placement in this facility versus moving out of town or out of the state.

### **Wildflower Court, Private Non-Profit Nursing Home**

Anne Thibodeau, Chief Financial Officer and Kirk Elmore, Activities Director, explained what services are included for residents, how the facility functions in the community and in close partnership with Bartlett Hospital. It is utilized as a rehabilitation center in addition to providing nursing home level of care. We were able to visit with a gentleman resident who was helping create a Happy Birthday banner for a fellow resident who will be 100 years old next week. The recreation activity area is in the planning stages for a remodel and update. The daily cost of care, if I remember correctly, is about \$900 a day. It seems more rehabilitation beds may be needed for this northern area of Southeast. When their rehab beds are full, people are often sent out of town to another rehab center.

## **Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes, Elders Program**

We were not able to meet with Justin Jones, Wellness Coordinator, but saw him in full form leading an Elder's chair exercise class at the T&H Hall at Salmon Creek. There were about 12 people very engaged in following his instruction. He was incredibly enthusiastic and engaging. We nearly joined the group!

Anne Sepetin, Family Service Worker and Elders Coordinator was in the kitchen, assisting with preparing the elder's lunch. There were another 20 folks waiting for lunch in addition to the Elders exercising. Anne took a time out and spoke with us, sharing with us some of the services they provide to elders. They are currently planning for their annual Caregivers Workshop, to be held March 15, 2018. Every other Tuesday they host special speakers on topics of interest to Elders and their families at the T&H Training Center at Salmon Creek. Every other Thursday they host a Legislative Advocacy forum at 11:30, with lunch at noon. On Fridays, they have Elder volunteers assisting the Tlingit language literacy program at Harborview Elementary School. They are now helping with a Suicide Prevention Program for teens at the Alternative High School. The Elders' Program also provide one-time emergency funding \$250 a year, for those elders struggling to pay utility bills or who have other critical needs.

## **The Bridge Adult Day Program, Catholic Community Services**

Kelsey Wood, Program Supervisor lead us around the converted early 20th century home, which is a very home-like environment, to accommodate those individuals with memory loss and persons with Alzheimer's disease. This program is vital for families who are caregiving loved-ones, who may be working, or need respite from the daily demands of caregiving. They provide a lunch and snacks, daily chair exercising and stimulating mental activities. They are soliciting new participants.

Enrollment declines during the winter months. Next door, the Care-A-Van transportation program is administered and houses the vans. This is also a vital program in this community. This service includes transporting and assisting seniors and individuals with disabilities for doctor appointments, banking and shopping, and local events. The fees are \$190 full day at market rate, and then a sliding scale based on income.

## **Trillium Landing, Independent Living Apartments for Individuals 55 years or Older**

The Trillium opened last September. The 49-unit facility is full and has a waitlist. There are 7 units that rent at market rates, and 42 units that are income qualifying, with subsidized rents. Paula Lindsay, Trillium Manager, and Sonny, the Maintenance Supervisor, gave us a grand tour including the mechanical room and rooftop which is covered in solar panels. The solar panels generate electricity to help run the communal hot water heaters. We toured three apartments, a studio, a one bedroom and a two bedroom. All had several windows, views and window coverings, hard flooring, and nice cabinets and trim. We also toured a handicap accessible unit which was very impressive. There is a communal gathering place on the entry level, and a nearby bus stop. This was a needed addition to the Juneau housing market as community senior housing options are limited.

## Hospice and Home Care of Juneau – Catholic Community Services

Amanda Williams, Director of Hospice and Home Care loves her job. This program includes hospice care, bereavement services, and in-home care for those with medical needs having difficulty leaving their home for medical care. The in-home health care provides skilled nursing care on call (24/7) which may include blood draws for lab work, blood pressure monitoring and assistance with medications. Staff includes physical/occupational/speech therapists in addition to home health aides. These services provide support for family caregivers as well.

I was most impressed with the employees we met at all of these facilities; were engaged and passionate about helping older Alaskans and Elders live comfortably, ensuring they receive needed services and are able to remain Juneau as long as possible; it is their community, their home.



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I thank the ACOA Commissioners and Denise Daniello, Executive Director for inviting me to accompany Marie Darlin and Bob Sivertsen, ACOA Commissioners on these important site visits.

Respectfully submitted,



**Linda Gohl, Older Alaskan and Volunteer Advocate  
Hoonah**

### **Hoonah Report by Lesley Thompson and Kelda Barstad Alaska Commission on Aging February 2018 Meeting**

Hoonah or Xunaa was originally settled by the Huna Tlingit because of the excellent protection this location offered from winds and weather. Xunaa translates in the Tlingit language to 'Protection from the North Wind'.<sup>1</sup>

The population of Hoonah is around 800, and about 30% are seniors. While traveling to Hoonah, Kelda Barstad from the Mental Health Trust Authority and Lesley Thompson with the Alaska Commission on Aging traveled by plane on Thursday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018 (unfortunately Linda Combs, Alaska Commission on Aging was not able to travel with the group.) We were able to meet with a variety of providers and seniors in the community. Everyone we met was friendly and forthcoming with the needs and services of seniors in the area.

Hoonah has a large Tlingit population where about 70% of the population is of Alaska Native heritage and the Hoonah Indian Association is the federally recognized tribal government.

There are several ways to get to Hoonah. One is to take the Alaska Marine Highway (ferry) and another is to fly in a small plane. The current cost to fly is \$170 one way so it is not a cheap investment. It takes about 35 minutes to get to Hoonah by air and approximately 3.3 hours by ferry which travels about once a week to Hoonah at a cost of \$42 one way. The other way is to be on a cruise ship and travel to the seasonal tourist operation, Icy Strait Point which is only a few miles from the community Hoonah.

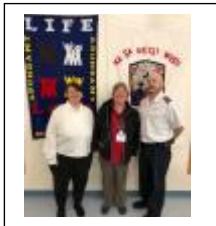
Fishing has always been the mainstay of Hoonah's economy. Well over 100 residents hold commercial fishing permits. Chichagof Island has the largest brown bear population in the world, approximately 3 bears per square mile. Hoonah has the world's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest zipline, 5300 feet long with a 1300-foot vertical drop which is part of a seasonal tourist operation, Icy Strait Point.

**Our Hoonah visits included:**

**Hoonah City Offices** - met with Mayor Gerald Byers



**Hoonah Salvation Army** – talked to Majors Kevin and Tina Bottjen



**Hoonah Senior Center** – had lunch and talked with elders and staff

**Tlingit Elder Housing** – met with the building manager of building for elders 55+. This building is owned by Tlingit



this 10 unit and Haida

Housing Authority and is within walking distance to the senior center.

**SEARHC clinic** – SEARHC is a non-profit health consortium which serves the health interests of the residents of Southeast Alaska. They have primary care, behavioral health, dental, and health promotion, traveling clinics, nurse hotline pharmacy.

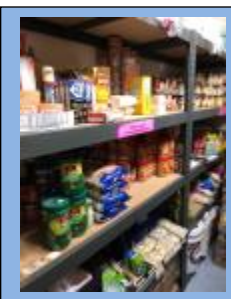


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Overall we learned that many elders in Hoonah are low income and currently in need of assistance. This could be food, wheelchair ramps, help with cleaning, transportation or in need of socialization. The city does not have property taxes. Seniors are exempt from the 6.5 sales tax and some people from "the outside" are making Hoonah their retirement home because of the cheap costs for seniors.

While meeting with the new mayor, Gerald Byers, he is concerned for seniors. Although there are no taxes for seniors and they get a cost savings break on both sewer and water rates, it takes a fulltime job to financially afford to pay for housing. Many homes in Hoonah have 4 generations or families living in one place. There is little to no energy assistance in the community which affects seniors the most.



The Salvation Army serves food boxes, assistance seniors, has a large gathering area and helps the people of Hoonah as needed. They link with other providers to offer as much assistance.

The senior center is open from 8am to 2pm and offers a variety of programs. Tina Martin is the director working for Catholic Community Services based in Juneau. The SEARCH clinic has a behavioral health aide that has a men's breakfast each Monday at the senior center to talk about behavioral health issues. Things like depression, loneliness, grieving and other issues that might be of interest to the men. The women also have a group that meets at the senior center but it is not facilitated by SEARHC.

The meals program specializes in homemade food. The day we were fresh homemade bread with tuna fish, homemade tomato soup and fresh each congregate meal they serve anywhere from 8 – 16 elders. They also 10 elders in the meals on wheels program. The director of the senior center and beyond when helping seniors. They can get a food box at the center or application for state or federal assistance programs. They have a MASST helps at the center and is having a great time learning many new things. have a caravan to help pick up and deliver seniors to the center or clinic.



there we had fruit salad. At serve up to goes above fill out an person who They also

The senior center invited us back anytime (Kelda brought yummy fresh strawberries.) One elder was looking for a place to get a food box as he was all out of food. Some were working on a puzzle and some chatting over a cup of coffee. Tlingit and Haida (T&H) use to serve Hoonah but now the Hoonah Indian Association has taken over and unfortunately they have no funds and cannot help people.

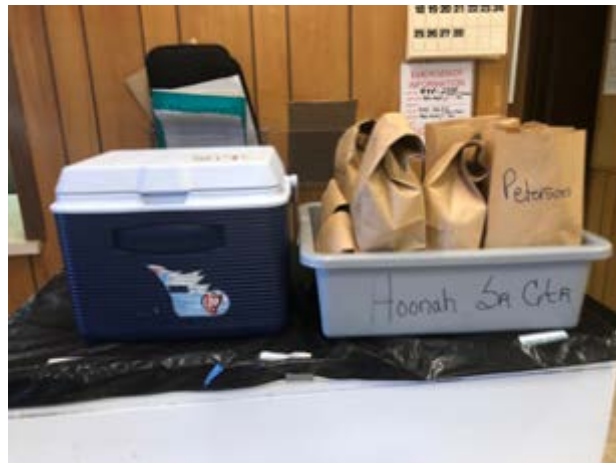
Before T&H left Hoonah, they built elder housing. It is 10 rentals and most of the elders are single. They do not have a waitlist and it has taken over 3 months to fill a vacant apartment. The manager keeps up with the maintenance and one senior has taken the responsibility of taking care of the other elders. She admitted to being very bossy and tries to keep everyone in line (which we admit she was doing a great job with one elder.)

The main grocery store is employee owned and the prices are about twice that of Anchorage and about 4/5ths the price in Juneau. Gas was around \$4.00 per gallon and indeed it is expensive to live.



The community is blessed to have the SEARHC clinic that was built a few years ago with the assistance of the Denali Group. You will find most services that you need and it is open to everyone. They have a high percentage of Medicaid, Medicare and Tribally

Sponsored programs and Veteran’s Benefits insurance.



## **Report on Sitka Trip, Thursday, February 8, 2018**

**Mary E. Shields**

On February 8, 2018, Anna Frank and I went to Sitka as an outreach effort for the Alaska Commission on Aging. It was a wonderful day to make the flight and the weather in Sitka was beautiful.

Following is a summary of the visits we made while there:

Stop one: Swan Lake Senior Center (11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.) Contact: Sandra Koval

The Senior Center Care A Van met us at the Sitka airport and provided us with all transportation during our Sitka visit. Please express our appreciation for this.

We met with Sandy and discussed with her the Alaska Commission on Aging various activities currently being conducted: meetings with members of the Legislature and the positive reception the extension of the Senior Benefits program by members of both the House and the Senate; the printing of the Annual report which will be sent to her by email so she would have easy access to the “Snapshot”; preparation for a survey to be conducted later this year to obtain information for the upcoming 4 year plan.

Sandy shared with us the difficulty she has had in getting cultural based foods (fish, venison, etc.) Anna suggested that she contact the tribal leaders in the area on the fish as well as Fish and Wildlife. I suggested that she also get in direct contact with members of the NRA who are hunters in the Sitka area and any other hunters in the Sitka area to make them aware of the situation. It could be that they are unaware of the problem. We agreed that this should be done sooner, not later, in case folks had extra stored in their freezers.

We had lunch at the facility and met with some of the individuals eating there afterward. We explained who we were and encouraged any questions. One gentleman does want a boat purchased that he would captain – he then could fish for the Senior Center. We explained that that was not something the Commission could do.

Stop two: Sitka Community Hospital (12:40 – 1:30 p.m.) Contact: Lorraine Daly

The Care A Van picked us up at the Senior Center and took us to the Hospital for our next meeting. Lorraine Daly is relatively new to her position. We toured the facility and met several members of the staff. We explained to Lorraine the purpose of our trip (see above under Senior Center). The hospital is a live in facility for long term care (15 beds) as well as providing end of life care, part-time skilled nursing, and other community support systems. It no longer handles pre-natal or delivery care.

Stop three: Braveheart Volunteers (1:40 – 2:30 p.m.) Contact: Maury Hackett

Care A Van delivered us to Braveheart where we were warmly welcomed by Maury and one of her volunteers (whose name I failed to record): They had some wonderful fruit and cheese snacks



prepared for us (which we greatly appreciated). We again explained what the Commission was doing and some of the upcoming projects. We advised Maury that she would be able to access the Annual Report on line for detailed information. She briefed us on Braveheart Volunteers activities: grief and bereavement programs, caregiver support, respite, education and training for volunteers. Braveheart's offices are just across from the Sitka Pioneer Home. This allows them to be easily accessible to those who require its services. One of Braveheart's major concerns is the aging of the Sitka community and the lower number of younger individuals in the area.

Stop four: Sitka Pioneer Home (2:40 – 3:30 p.m.) Contact: Dayna Arnold

We met with Dayna and also explained to her what the Commission was currently doing and some of the upcoming projects for which we would need the support of her and the residents of the Sitka Pioneer Home. Dayna took us on a tour of the Home, the various rooms and sections. While on the tour, Anna discovered that someone she knew still lived there.

Dayna had arranged for a meeting with as many of the residents who wished to come and meet us and ask questions. This gave Anna and me the opportunity to let them know what The Commission did, what activities were currently taking place in Juneau and the upcoming questionnaire that would be coming out to start development of the four year plan. Anna's friend was there and she had the opportunity to say "hello" to her. Many of the questions coming from the group applied specifically to the potential needs of the Home. We explained to the best of our ability what we could and could not accomplish on their behalf.

This meeting ran a little longer than planned but it was definitely worth it. The Pioneer Home has been updated in several ways since I visited it with the Pioneer Home Board. The front façade work is complete and it was lovely. Its atmosphere was very positive. A few of the people had listed Juneau as their first Home request. One stated that she was very happy in Sitka, had made new friends and didn't plan to leave to go to Juneau.

Stop five: Center for Community (3:40 – 4:30 p.m.) Contact: Brian O'Callaghan

We were running a little late, but were warmly greeted by Brian and his staff. (Brian had been at our Tuesday meeting in Juneau.) They were aware of the Commission's current activities and upcoming work. One of the major concerns was the lack of Care Coordinator visits to Wrangell as a result in the changes in the rules. The Center's core purposes were reviewed. We had to shorten the meeting as the Care A Van was arriving to take us to the airport.

All in all, a great trip.

*Mary E. Shields*

- **Wrangell**

**ACoA Commissioners David Blacketer, Gordon Glaser, and  
Denise Daniello, ACoA Executive Director  
February 8, 2018**

Background: As part of its FY2018 rural outreach visits to Southeast, the Commission made a one-day visit to Wrangell on February 8 to gather information about services provided to seniors as well as public perceptions about what's working well and areas for improvement with respect to health care, social supports, and housing. The Commission visited the Wrangell Senior Center, Alaska Island Community Services, and Harbor House.

Wrangell is a community of 2,387 residents of which 748 are seniors age 60 and older who represent 16% of the local population (Alaska Department of Labor, Research and Analysis Unit 2017 population estimates). According to estimates, the senior population is projected to peak at 2025 before leveling off and declining. The majority of resident seniors are between 65-74 years old with an estimated 314 persons age 60+ in total. The median age is 48.3.

Wrangell's senior (age 65+) median income is \$26,875, which is significantly lower than \$56,196 for the state's median income for seniors. Approximately 18% of Wrangell seniors receive public assistance in the forms of Senior Benefits and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps) (Division of Public Assistance 2017). Almost a third of the Wrangell senior population (30%) lives alone ([www.seniorcare.com/director/ak/wrangell](http://www.seniorcare.com/director/ak/wrangell)).

Wrangell Senior Center and the Elder-Senior Listening Session: The Senior Center, administered by Catholic Community Services (Southeast Community Services based in Juneau), provides congregate meals, home-delivered meals, transportation, health promotion activities and other services for seniors. The Commission conducted the first Elder-Senior Listening Session at the Wrangell Senior Center, as part of the needs assessment activities for the next State Plan for Senior Services, FY2020-FY2023. The Listening Session presented state and local information about the senior population and types of services provided. Participants, using the turning point polling technology, identified senior primary concerns, service gaps, and provided other information. Fifteen persons attended the session of which 84% had lived in Wrangell for more than 5 years. When asked whether or not they would be able to live independently in the future, more than half of the participants said they believed that would be possible for at least another ten years. The majority of participants were renters.

Access to health care and community-based long-term support services were identified as the most needed services for seniors in Wrangell. Two-thirds of the participants had either experienced elder abuse themselves or knew someone who had, with the most common form being financial exploitation.

Access to health care was a primary concern observed by participants noting that doctors need to be better informed about patient mental health needs. Despite Wrangell's aging population, participants noted, there are no cardiologists or oncologists. In addition, there are no surgeries performed in Wrangell at this time. If a person requires surgery or is ready to deliver a baby, they are sent to Juneau. Participants also expressed concerns about the erosion of the ferry system, meaning fewer services offered, as some people do not like to fly or are unable to do so.

Alaska Island Community Services (AICS): AICS merged with SEARHC on April 1, 2017 to increase the availability of health care resources. AICS offers dental services (off site), primary care, itinerant mental health/behavioral health care (provided off site every 3 months), small treatment procedures (“for cyst and wart removal”), and chronic disease care (diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and gastro-intestinal problems). AICS offers 11 patient rooms, 3 doctors, and 2 nurse practitioners. AICS also offers community-based long-term support services (Personal Care Services, waiver services, and in-home help) however, the person providing the tour noted that it is “getting harder and harder to get patients approved for services.” AICS has no cardiologists on site. There are no deliveries or complicated procedures performed on-site, according to our tour guide, because the hospital cannot afford the insurance. Instead, patients are referred elsewhere.

AICS Medical Clinic works in teams consisting of a doctor or nurse practitioner, care coordinator, and medical assistant. AICS accepts most insurance plans and provides a sliding discount fee for services based on income and family size.

Harbor House Assisted Living and Senior Housing: Harbor House, a licensed assisted living facility, provides independent housing and assisted living for seniors. The facility is the former Old Sourdough Lodge that includes 16-bedrooms renovated into 11 independent senior housing units and 5 assisted living units. The assisted living wing specializes in memory care. Resident doors are personalized with a picture that the resident chooses to help them remember their room. The vision of Harbor House is to provide a place where people can age in place and even in the same room, if they so choose. The owner told us that he planned to move to Wrangell to retire after being in the senior assisted living business for 15 years in the Mat-Su Valley, but saw a critical need for assisted living in Wrangell, with few other options available, and decided to open Harbor House. The owner specializes in seniors with challenging behaviors. Harbor House has been opened for one year. The owner said that he personally financed the building renovation and operations using no public funding. Up until recently, Harbor House only took private pay residents. Within the last month, they submitted their first Medicaid waiver claim. In addition to the owner, Harbor House has a charge nurse and two additional nurses in the assisted living wing. They are looking to hire an activities director. All units are currently occupied.

Harbor House charges \$1,500 monthly for independent senior housing and \$150 day for assisted living (or \$4,500 monthly). They provide 3 daily meals (in addition to snacks), house cleaning, laundry service and 24 hour security. The owner told us that the senior housing rents provide a financial cushion for the assisted living units.

Harbor House follows the Green House model. They offer 24-hour kitchen service and allow pets. We were able to visit a couple of rooms during our visit. Each room was spacious and had its own bathroom. One of the assisted living rooms housed an elderly woman recovering from a stroke. Her room was decorated with holiday items including a Christmas tree with strings of lighting around the room, a Halloween mask, a chest of antique dolls, and family pictures. Another resident’s room was decorated with Alaska Native art.

The building is spacious and includes a large kitchen, congregate style dining room, and large community room with children's playground equipment to encourage grandchildren to visit their grandparents. Harbor House is the primary assisted living facility for Wrangell seniors. They have plans to offer hospice care in the future.

**Adjourned 11:10 a.m.**

**Next meeting: Tuesday, May 1, 2018 by teleconference/videoconference;**