

**ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING
QUARTERLY MEETING**

February 27, 2023

Location
Juneau, Alaska

Commission Members:

Bob Sivertsen, Chair
Paula Pawlowski
Nona Safra
Bob Pawlowski
Janet Engan
Pam Samash
Darlene Supplee
Acting Director Anthony Newman
Lisa Von Bargaen

Guests:

Stephanie Wheeler, LTCO
Teresa Holt, AARP
Marge Stoneking, AARP
Jennifer Weissaupt, AMHB/ABADA
Kristin Cox, SDS
Louise Ryan, Region 10
Jim McCall, AHFC
Keren Kelley, Homer Senior Citizens
Ellen Hackenmueller, SDS
Lesley Thompson
Kelda Barstad, AMHTA

Staff

Jon Haghayeghi, Executive Director
Martin Lange, Rural Outreach Coordinator

Monday, February 27, 2023
CALL TO ORDER – 9:00 a.m.
ROLL CALL

ETHICS DISCLOSURES

No conflicts of interest were declared.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Bob Pawlowski **MOVED** to approve the agenda, **SECONDED** by Darlene Supplee.

Pam Samash asked for an amendment to the agenda to receive a presentation about healthcare costs affecting seniors and bills the Commission may want to consider either before or after public testimony. Chair Sivertsen noted the tight meeting timeline and full agenda and said they can shorten the public comment time and allow the presenter to use the last 10 minutes.

Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the agenda was approved as amended.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

Paula Pawlowski **MOVED** to approve the minutes from October 3, 2022 and December 5, 2022, **SECONDED** by Bob Pawlowski. Hearing no objections nor discussion, the motion **PASSED**.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 2023

Paula Pawlowski reported that according to the bylaws, the Commission elects officers for the upcoming year at the last meeting before the end of the fiscal year. Last year Boards and Commissions extended it so all boards and commissions do this in December instead of the end of the fiscal year, and all terms were moved to the end of December as well. ACoA inadvertently missed the December timeline, so they are holding elections during today's meeting for chair and vice-chair.

Paula stated that there has been discussion on whether or not ACoA has to change their bylaws to come into compliance with the State. The Bylaws Committee will be tasked with this undertaking and communicating with Boards and Commissions to see if there will be additional changes.

Darlene Supplee nominated Bob Sivertsen as chair. Nominations were closed, and Chair Sivertsen was reelected by unanimous vote.

Darlene Supplee nominated Paula Pawlowski as vice-chair. Nominations were closed, and Vice-Chair Pawlowski was reelected by unanimous vote.

Paula Pawlowski noted that both her and Chair Sivertsen's terms are up in December 2023.

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Chair Sivertsen stated that he would like to appoint the committees with the same members as currently exists. He remarked they will be getting new board members, and those members will be appointed to committees as they come on board.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Sivertsen reported that they have been working through the Senior Plan process. Senior and provider surveys have been completed, and they have worked with the contractor to wordsmith the goals, objectives, and outcomes. The Senior Snapshot has been completed and work will continue to move the Senior Plan forward. The contractor has been doing a great job, and they have been working directly with the Administration for Community Living (ACL).

Chair Sivertsen noted ACoA has had some recent vacancies on the board, so information was sent to Boards and Commissions to get those seats filled.

Chair Sivertsen reported that ACoA is being audited right now, and he has had conversations with the auditor about the last audit and corrective actions that have been taken. He stated that they will provide some updates on their policies and procedures.

VICE-CHAIR REPORT

Paula Pawlowski reported that the legislative group reviewed the legislative priorities from last year and tweaked the layout to make them more visually appealing. The committee set five priorities for this year to carry over a two-year period.

Advocacy Day was held in partnership with AgeNet, AARP, and the Ombudsman's office which was well attended and well received.

Paula stated that they hoped to do a survey before the elections were finished, but there were challenges to completing that. She believes they should look at doing one at the end of session to determine how the legislators feel about senior issues.

Paula Pawlowski noted in a previous set of minutes that the Commission was to receive a copy of the end-of-the-year report to the ACL, and she asked if that had been received. Ellen Hackenmueller stated that the report is finished and submitted. Kristin Cox stated that she has not received any feedback from ACL either approving or requesting amendments. Kristin also noted that she was unable to print a hard copy of the report. Paula requested an electronic copy when it gets finalized.

Paula Pawlowski asked Jon Haghayeghi if there were minutes created from the Advocacy Day event. Gavel to Gavel was unable to cover the event. Jon stated that the Commission didn't have anyone taking minutes. Teresa Holt stated that because it was a Lunch and Learn, she doesn't believe there were minutes.

Paula noted that they are still paying for minute preparation services, and she asked how long that contract is in effect and if staff feels it is dollars well spent. She also felt there were omissions from the last set of minutes.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE

Jon Haghayeghi reported that they are dealing with a once-every-eight-years audit, the renewal of the State Plan, the legislative session, and they lost a 15-year staff member. He stated that staff is stretched a little thin, but they are getting things done.

Jon Haghayeghi reported on the following activities:

- The Lunch and Learn was well attended and impressive. People were absorbing the information. Advocacy Day was also a success.
- As soon as the planner position is reclassified, he will be able to fill the vacancy, and staff will be able to handle more tasks.
- In terms of minute preparation, the funding ACoA has is to last through this fiscal year. Without them being fully staffed, the current services are very well worth it. They are looking into the potential of using other tools to integrate with Zoom, and he is hoping to become familiar with this technology that will save them time and money in producing their minutes. They will look into this as they get closer to the end of the fiscal year.
- Thanks to SDS and the Trust for being so supportive of the Commission. Also thanks to the Trust for supporting the reclassification of the planner position.
- He has been reviewing the policy manual and the bylaws as a part of the audit, and he has identified a couple inconsistencies. He would like to present some suggested edits at a future Commission meeting. These edits can be made to either the bylaws or to the operating manual to reconcile the inconsistencies.

Jon Haghayeghi stated that once they get the State Plan done, that should give staff direction to get busy and learn and evaluate. He and Marty are working on different things they can do to enhance their listening sessions and include an element of evaluation and a standardization of the evaluations as they go out in communities and identify gaps. They try to make fair comparisons to guide their State Plan with as much information as they can.

RURAL OUTREACH SPECIALIST UPDATE

Marty Lange stated that he is still learning what the job entails as the position has had different iterations over the years. He believes what Commissioners want is for him to be the eyes and the ears of the Commission, so that is what he is doing when he takes trips and then reports back to Commissioners.

Marty reported that he had a recent outreach trip to Nome, which is a hub city for 15 other villages/communities. He spent time at the Norton Sound Health Corporation and at the XYZ Senior Center.

Observations:

- The Senior Center has excellent staff, good funding, and is managed very well.
- The ED of the Senior Center is an amazing person with a wealth of experience.
- The Senior Center receives many small grants, and they spend an inordinate amount of time reporting on grants. The ED's dream is to receive one or two larger grants instead of 20 smaller grants.
- Norton Sound Health Corporation is huge and very well run. They serve seniors in the community and surrounding villages.

- Norton Sound staff were great and spent time visiting with him about what they do.
- Noticed significant gaps in terms of aging with both the Senior Center and Norton Sound:
 - There is no assisted living in Nome; only nursing home level of care at a cost of \$1818 per day. Very frustrating that Medicaid only pays only a small fraction of that. Need reimbursement based on actual costs.
 - There is no Alzheimer's disease and related dementia (ADRD) care at all. He observed two people with early onset ADRD at the Senior Center engaged in activities.
 - It was noted that as people age and need higher levels of care in the villages, they are sent to Anchorage or Fairbanks, which can be detrimental to them in a strange environment without friends or family. They feel people would fare better receiving services in their home communities.

Chair Sivertsen noted that if the hub community of Nome with a facility like Norton Sound doesn't have those programs available, there is nothing in the villages at all then. Marty explained that there are people from Norton Sound that provide limited amounts of care and keep an eye on people, but they don't really provide any medical out there.

Chair Sivertsen remarked that as they work with partners, if they focus on doing more with the hubs and less with trying to provide the many outlying areas with services, he thinks they have more success. By strengthening the hubs and enhancing telehealth services, that might be the best approach to serving the villages.

Jon Haghayeghi was shocked that when they look at the continuum of care, what enables people to be independent are intermediate forms of care, which are not available in those surrounding communities. That does not assist with aging independently.

Acting Director Newman stated that Norton Sound Health Corporation offers some home and community-based services (HCBS). Ellen Hackenmueller noted that Norton Sound is not a grantee, but SDS does provide a couple of grant programs to XYZ Senior Center. Nome also has a Center for Independent Living with Arctic Access. She stated that it sounds like there is a gap in ADRD services in Nome on the medical side of the spectrum. They recognize HCBS funding is limited and often does not meet the full need, but SDS does provide funding for a variety of programs in Nome.

Acting Director Newman clarified that Norton Sound has rural outreach coordinators, and it appears they are providing some services that sound like they could be personal care services. Marty Lange agreed. Acting Director Newman asked if Marty knew whether or not that was funded through the waiver, and Marty was unsure.

Marty also noted how much more expensive food was in Nome and wished they could share this information to the federal government that controls the funding formula.

Bob Pawlowski stated that Maniilaq has a smaller but comparable hospital in Kotzebue, which is the next hub he believes Marty would find value in going to. He felt the most important takeaway from Marty's presentation was the inability for ADRD to be addressed in the communities. He believes this is the most important aspect they should focus on given the aging of the highly respected elders who can become difficult to manage with ADRD in the hostile environment of the Arctic in the winter.

Janet Engan remarked that there are many different ways services can be provided to individuals in the family caregiving situation. Years ago before dementia care was widely talked about within the aging community, one of the local senior centers in her area had opened up a respite facility within their senior center. This center had an active program for seniors with ADRD. There was dedicated space, and people could partake in all of the activities with supervision. This concept still remains very popular, especially for smaller communities where transportation and distance are issues.

Jan recalled that during the last legislative session, there was movement on legislation to change some of the criteria for operating housing options for older adults. She thinks that should be explored in terms of foster homes or group homes for older adults. Acting Chair Newman noted that Stephanie Wheeler put the titles of the legislation into the chat. Adult Home Care is sponsored by Governor Dunleavy, and it will be getting a hearing this week. There is a lot of positive momentum behind it. In summary, it provides for a lighter assisted living option that would make it easier for people to establish their homes as places to provide adult home care. SDS is excited for the potential for rural Alaska.

Jan Engan commented that when she worked in Arizona, the state had specific licensure for respite care and adult daycare. Adult daycare required a nurse always be on staff, and respite care didn't require a nurse on staff, but there were staff trained in basic first aid. Respite care was offered in-home or as group respite care. Group respite care was very popular in the rural areas. In North Dakota when Title III-E came out, the division retained those dollars because they could find providers for the services, and the program was set up where payments were made to families to provide or pay for someone to come in to care for the seniors. It was a very individualized program. There are a lot of examples of best practices that could be incorporated in Alaska, but it would take examining the current state regulations.

Acting Director Newman noted that he has heard North Dakota mentioned in discussions about legally responsible caregivers in terms of family members who normally would have a legally responsible duty to care for an individual that allows them to get paid to provide some service. This is an issue that is catching a lot of wind in the legislature right now. The Service Employees International Union is working on a bill that may be introduced soon that will allow legally responsible persons to provide some types of care. The COVID public health emergency allowed SDS to lift the prohibition on legally responsible people caring for family members and being paid for it. They launched a provider survey over a week ago to ask if providers have taken advantage of that flexibility, and the survey closes at the end of the week. He is anxious to see if people have been taking advantage of that and whether or not it is something SDS should be pursuing on a long-term and permanent basis. Jan Engan followed up that when they talk about family caregiving, they should always remember the older adults

that are in the gap and are not receiving Medicaid waiver services but do not have the resources to pay for support. That economic gap needs to be brought into the conversation. Bob Pawlowski noted there is federal legislation working on caregivers for veterans that is opening up different pathways for funding that could be used as a model for family members to care for an aging person.

Jon Haghayeghi asked if there was any mechanism to prevent or discourage exploitation of seniors when allowing family members to provide care for them. Acting Director Newman stated that exploitation is an absolute concern, and the quality chief, Lynne Keilman-Cruz, is urging them to keep that front and center in the conversation. She has seen that when they allow family members to provide care for pay, there are opportunities for abuse of the funding happening more frequently. There are protections they can build in so that is less likely to occur. Darlene Supplee remarked that on the flip side, there are already people in the shadows for whom this is occurring, and by establishing these programs, it gives the State an avenue to shine light on them.

Jan liked Chair Sivertsen's idea of looking to the hubs to provide these services. She noted that Wasilla Area Senior Center has just opened their adult daycare facility in Willow, and they are using a variety of different funding sources to accomplish this. This goes back to the issue of centers receiving funding from multiple sources and looking for a way to consolidate that to put more dollars back into services rather than administrative work.

Pam Samash recently attended a hydroponics class, and this method of growing plants is very efficient. The high school in Fairbanks is producing more vegetables than they know what to do with, and they are giving the remainder to the homeless shelter. They learned how to build a hydroponics tree with buckets to be able to grow 16 plants. For more information, go to <https://www.Fairbankssoilwater.org/hydroponics.htm> if there is an issue of getting fresh vegetables to people.

Paula Pawlowski asked Marty Lange where he was planning on going next. She would also like to see him add a question to his inquiries: What are you doing about replacing the workforce, especially in remote and rural areas? Marty stated that people are going to be retiring in the senior centers in Valdez, Nome, and Utqiagvik over the next few years, so it will be important to start recruiting for replacements. His planned trips are to Kotzebue, Utqiagvik, and possibly to Bethel and Dutch Harbor. He is open to suggestions from Commissioners. He would also like to return to Nome to visit some of the rural villages. He will be taking Chair Sivertsen to Utqiagvik and possibly Jon Haghayeghi and will also visit some of the smaller communities as well. Paula noted that the Commission has visited Kotzebue and Utqiagvik in the past and had seen some of the surrounding areas, but it's time to cycle through there again. She noted that when they were in Kotzebue last time, the community was thrilled to be doing a program with the local high school for job recruitment in the hospital. Bob Pawlowski followed up that the difference between Kotzebue and many of the other hubs is that Kotzebue has the Red Dog Mine, so they have money which makes a difference in what is available and how they can expand their training programs as well as subsidizing medical programs.

Pam Samash stated that they did a senior survey for the seniors, but because they need the workforce to take care of the seniors, isn't it appropriate for them to do a survey to the younger people about why they are leaving Alaska? What do they like or not like about Alaska, and what concerns do they have so they can start to figure out how to keep the young people here. Alaska can't have a workforce if all the young people are leaving. Chair Sivertsen imagines the Department of Labor is currently doing that.

Chair Sivertsen further remarked that Senator Bishop informed him that he has been talking with the Department of Labor about reinstating the nursing program at AVTEC. Acting Director Newman suggested getting an audience with the new Department of Health Commissioner Heidi Hedberg. The healthcare workforce issue appears to be one of her top priorities. Jon Haghayeghi noted that Commissioner Hedberg requested for ACoA's legislative priorities so she was on the same page as the Commission. Chair Sivertsen recommended sending out the watch list anytime they send out the legislative priorities so people have comparative data and can back up their priorities.

SDS GRANTS MANAGER UPDATE

Ellen Hackenmueller provided an update as follows:

- SDS is over halfway through the fiscal year.
- In terms of the administrative challenges related to the cyberattack, the grants management database being down, and backlogs in processing due to some capacity delays related to the workforce shortage in Fiscal Management Services, she is happy to report that they are seeing some improvement. Overall, things have been timelier in FY'23 than they were in '21 or '22. They are seeing isolated areas with some coding concerns and payment delays, but across programs statewide, things are trending towards the timelines they would like to see.
- This time of year the Grants Unit works with the Fiscal Management partners and grants administrators to begin preparing for FY'24. All indications so far seem that they will be on time for posting their continuations and solicitations for FY'24. Program managers in the Grants Unit are working with the grants administrators right now to prepare all those documents, and they anticipate a mid March posting and release of information.
- Grants Unit staffing has been stable for the last two years, and they have a really solid team of program managers. Partners in Grants and Contracts continue to struggle with recruitment and retention challenges. This has unfortunately delayed new projects with SDS.
- SDS continues to keep an eye on the Governor's proposed budget and the increment that has been included for SDS community-based grant programs. All reports from stakeholder groups who have been at the Capitol for the past few weeks indicate a positive reaction. They are also getting a very large number of legislative inquiries clarifying details. There is a high level of awareness on this issue. This increment is desperately needed by SDS providers. The provider group under the senior grant programs is astonishing with what they have been able to do with service provision, continuity, and adaptation throughout the pandemic, but the challenges of the pandemic, workforce, inflation, supply chain

issues, and increase in need has left many providers struggling. SDS is now seeing service reductions, waitlists, and providers unable to meet the need. SDS is well aware of the challenges and hopes that the funding increment can help alleviate a small portion of the challenges.

- Federal funding opportunities continue to be explored to support the areas of need in Alaska. SDS was awarded a federal grant that will support Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) and the overall governance structure within the state. The project has not yet gotten started and is held up in the procurement process right now. Ellen will keep the Commission informed as they get that project rolling.
- SDS and Public health partnered to submit a grant application targeted towards fall prevention activities for seniors. They should hear back in April or May as to whether or not they will be awarded. She will report back to the Commission on the outcome.
- SDS is watching for an announcement for an upcoming opportunity for the Alzheimer's and Dementia Pilot Initiative, which is a federal grant from the ACL. SDS has been a recipient of that award in past years.
- Division of Public Health has hired a dementia program coordinator who has been in the role for a month or two now. SDS is excited about partnership opportunities. That position in the state makes Alaska eligible to apply for BOLD Act funding, which is another funding stream for dementia-targeted federal funds.
- The Grants Unit is excited about the progress on ACoA's State Plan.
- The Grants Unit currently has one database they require grantees to report their information into called SAMS. The State of Alaska was able to successfully work through the procurement process, and they identified a new vendor for a replacement database product. They will work through internal IT processes over the next few months and will work with everyone to migrate to this new system. It will be a heavy lift, but it should create better outcomes for the end users. Part of the contract will include migrating past data back into the new system to provide access to that historical data.

Based on a question from Chair Sivertsen, Ellen Hackenmueller stated that the funding formula allocates funding out by region. Chair Sivertsen discussed the process for reallocating the funding formula. Jon Haghayeghi agreed that there are a lot of steps that need to be taken to do a revision, and it doesn't seem like it would be the most effective use of time and may be something to look at off-cycle over the next two years.

Jan Engan asked if the SAMS database is different than the Harmony database. Ellen stated that SAMS is a WellSky product that is different than the Harmony system, which is also a WellSky product. The division uses both SAMS and Harmony to collect different information. The Older American's Act (OAA) grantees utilize SAMS, which is the system they are looking to replace.

Jan Engan asked if the federal grants they are applying for are one-time or ongoing funding. Ellen Hackenmueller stated that all the federal grants they are currently looking at are internally discretionary grants, which are often multi-year terms depending on the program, but they would not be considered a sustaining funding source for the state. Jan wondered how the State can continue to fund projects and

programs that are created through grants. She wondered if they need legislative approval for this because the legislature would be involved in picking up future funding when the grants conclude. Ellen stated that when they apply for these types of projects, it does not go to the legislature, but they do submit a request to apply, and they must get approval from the department commissioner. Many of these projects are for a specific course of work or for a pilot project. They have conversations throughout the scope of work and in the reporting about what the sustainability plan is, which can vary depending on the outcome of the project. If they have a successful project that becomes a priority for the department and division, they may look at how to find internal funding to sustain it. Darlene Supplee added that when the State receives funding that is passed along to providers, it allows the providers to then seek out match funding or apply for other grants based on data collected.

Ellen Hackenmueller stated that the Grants Unit has seen improvement in their staffing and operations, although they are not where they want to be yet. She believes that the process efficiencies they have seen so far are tied back to the grants management database GEMS coming back online.

Chair Sivertsen asked how much funding those grants will bring to the state, and Ellen replied that she will get back to the Commission with that information.

PIONEER HOMES PRIORITIES

Bob Pawlowski stated that the Pioneer Homes Advisory Board submitted their recommendations to the Governor. The important points are that one of the things they share in common with ACoA is the issue of planning for long-term care and financial security. To this point in time, Pioneer Homes residents have not seriously complained or been impacted by the 14.6 percent increase in their rates, which was due to aligning the Cost-of-Living Index with the rate increases based on HB 96. The fact sheets include the five capital projects they would like to see done. They have \$31.4M of deferred maintenance on these homes, yet in talking to the administrators, they also have projects they need to do to keep the homes modern and functional. The biggest challenge in all Pioneer Homes right now is staff vacancies.

Bob Pawlowski reported to the Commission as follows:

Alaska Pioneer Homes

- Mission – Providing elder Alaskans a home and community, celebrating life through final breath.
- Division consists of six assisted living homes in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Ketchikan, Palmer, and Sitka.
- The Pioneer Homes system has been in operation for 110 years with the first home in Sitka opening in 1913.

Anchorage Pioneer Home:

- Licensed beds: 177
- Staff: 138 PCNs with 19 vacant
- Current residents: 133 – 75% occupancy. 20 beds held due to remodeling.
- Residents with ADRD: 69 – 52%.

- Residents by level of care:
 - Level 1 – 10 (7%)
 - Level 2 – 32 (24%)
 - Level 3 – 12 (9%)
 - Level 4 – 74 (56%)
 - Level 5 – 5 (4%)
- Fourth floor Complex Behavior Neighborhood open – 9 beds.

Alaska Veterans and Pioneer Home:

- Licensed beds: 79
- Staff: 69 PCNs with 8 vacant
- Current residents: 75 – 95% occupancy.
- Residents with ADRD: 47 – 63%.
- Residents by level of care:
 - Level 1 – 8 (11%)
 - Level 2 – 14 (19%)
 - Level 3 – 7 (9%)
 - Level 4 – 46 (61%)
 - Level 5 – 0

This past year there were two major windstorms that could have jeopardized the roof of this Pioneer Home that has been identified as a problem for over seven years. There has been a proposal to fix this roof for the last five years. With the two recent roof collapses in Palmer and Anchorage, there is a great deal of concern about losing this roof and having nowhere to put residents. During the last windstorm in December, staff simply stayed at the home and worked 24/7.

Fairbanks Pioneer Home:

- Licensed beds: 91
- Staff: 74 PCNs with 20 vacant
- Current residents: 79 – 87% occupancy.
- Residents with ADRD: 49 – 62%.
- Residents by level of care:
 - Level 1 – 12 (15%)
 - Level 2 – 18 (23%)
 - Level 3 – 16 (20%)
 - Level 4 – 33 (42%)
 - Level 5 – 0

Fairbanks continues to be under a study to determine whether it makes sense to refurbish the building (\$150M) or replace the building (\$160M). They have the land and some options to explore with the Veterans Administration (VA), but the reality is the building is in serious need for restructuring and revitalization.

Juneau Pioneer Home:

- Licensed beds: 49
- Staff: 47 PCNs with 2 vacant

- Current residents: 49 – 100% occupancy.
- Residents with ADRD: 33 – 67%.
- Residents by level of care:
 - Level 1 – 5 (10%)
 - Level 2 – 18 (37%)
 - Level 3 – 9 (18%)
 - Level 4 – 17 (35%)
 - Level 5 – 0

The Juneau Pioneer Home has a badly needed project to give residents exterior time. The courtyard is very limited. It has been partially funded but will be inadequate for the projects needed as all projects are coming in at three times the estimated cost.

Ketchikan Pioneer Home:

- Licensed beds: 45
- Staff: 48 PCNs with 8 vacant
- Current residents: 44 – 98% occupancy.
- Residents with ADRD: 25 – 57%.
- Residents by level of care:
 - Level 1 – 12 (15%)
 - Level 2 – 18 (23%)
 - Level 3 – 16 (20%)
 - Level 4 – 33 (42%)
 - Level 5 – 0

Ketchikan has a new administrator, and there is a lot of effort to move some projects forward.

Sitka Pioneer Home:

- Licensed beds: 65
- Staff: 62 PCNs with 5 vacant
- Current residents: 59 – 91% occupancy.
- Residents with ADRD: 31 – 53%.
- Residents by level of care:
 - Level 1 – 4 (7%)
 - Level 2 – 16 (27%)
 - Level 3 – 15 (25%)
 - Level 4 – 24 (41%)
 - Level 5 – 0

There is a great concern with the building of a new hospital in Sitka that they will lose their existing staffing at the Pioneer Home. Some of the discussions include training opportunities for staff to advance their careers as well as comparable salaries. Chair Sivertsen noted that similar circumstances are occurring in Wrangell and Prince of Wales, so this is a regional issue. Bob Pawlowski noted that they also need to pay close attention to getting skilled training for dealing with ADRD.

Bob Pawlowski stated that all the legislators who have Pioneer Homes in their communities received an extensive fact sheet that includes the five capital projects that each home administrator said were their priorities.

Bob concluded his presentation by noting that the transition in the new committee is doing fine, shared services remain a challenge, and they will continue to work to see how to expand VA beds.

Chair Sivertsen remarked that the Sitka Pioneer Home has needs to replace the original tile on the roof of the building. He also stated that in regards to the potential to build a new home in Fairbanks, there would be greater utility efficiencies, and with the ADRD population and other age-related issues, they can better design homes to provide services to the residents. As they look at rebuilding, it's not just associated with the cost; it is the ability to provide services in a manner that works for the residents and the State of Alaska. Bob Pawlowski stated that double occupancy in a room for people with ADRD is very challenging. Chair Sivertsen stated that most of the facilities are multiple occupancy in a room, and matching people to reside together becomes a challenge based on behavioral issues and frailty.

Kelda Barstad stated that ADRD training for staff is something the Trust has supported in the past, and the Trust would be interested in having a conversation with the Pioneer Homes about that.

Jon Haghayeghi stated that he will be serving on the SHARP board, and they are dedicated to recruiting and retaining medical experts across the state. He will do what he can to assist with the aging demographic.

Chair Sivertsen wondered if there was an ability for the State to access funds through the broadband bill to update the systems within the Pioneer Homes. Lisa Von Barga stated that the funding for broadband that the state is going to get will be released in a grant program. They will open up a grant program for entities like Internet service providers; utility companies; tribal entities; and community anchor institutions, which she believes the Pioneer Homes would be considered, and they would be able to apply for grant funding for deployment of broadband. The prioritization in which that funding has to be spent based on the federal guidelines is locations that are unserved first, and then locations that are underserved, and then community anchor institutions lacking 1 gig symmetrical service. If there are locations where there are Pioneer Homes that are underserved or are unserved, they will likely be included in one of the projects that gets funded, and they should have 1 gig symmetrical service after that. If they are in a location which is considered served, which as far as she knows, all of the homes are in a location considered a served area, it becomes a third tier of projects. They have to get through the unserved and the underserved across the state before they get back to the community anchor institutions in the served locations.

Bob Pawlowski asked if it would be better for the State to apply for those grants or the foundations behind the Pioneer Homes. Lisa Von Barga stated that the grants are intended to be deployment, which means the infrastructure to get Internet to a location. That can be considered middle mile, the space in between communities; or it can be last mile, which is getting fiber or microwave connection to an actual location. The

requirement will be that whoever applies has to be able to operate and maintain that network. Her opinion is that the best thing that the Pioneer Homes can do is work with their Internet service providers to make sure that when they are applying for grant funds to improve the networks, it will include the Pioneer Homes getting 1 gig symmetrical service as a result of that.

Acting Director Newman asked Lisa Von Barga for a sense of a timeline where people might begin to see improvements. Lisa shared the following for the Broadband Equity and Access Deployment (BEAD) funding:

Five-Year Action Plan:

- The clock started on November 15th when the State received their planning grant under the BEAD Program.
- They have 270 days to finish that, which puts them into August.
- The Broadband Office is planning to submit the Five-Year Action Plan on June 15th.
- On June 30th, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) will announce the amount of funding coming to each state.
- From that June 30th date, states have 180 days to get their initial proposals finished. The Broadband Office plans to get theirs submitted on July 31st. They are taking a very aggressive stance.
- From the time that NTIA approves the initial proposal, the State officially has a full year to finish the final proposal, which would be possibly February of '25. The Broadband Office is planning to get their final proposal submitted by November 30, 2023 and will have determined what projects are going to be funded.
- From the time they make awards to those recipients, entities have four years to finish their projects. The federal guidelines allow for a one-year extension, if possible, under very significant extenuating circumstances that have to be approved by the assistant secretary of commerce. More than likely, all of these projects will have to be done in four years.
- The Broadband Office is intending to stagger the awards because of construction constraints including workforce, supply chain, and seasonality.
- From today, they are looking at approximately six to seven years for completion of everything.

Lisa Von Barga wanted Commissioners to understand that in the interim, there is a significant amount of funding of hundreds of millions of dollars coming into the state under other broadband programs. The USDA Rural Utility Service is putting a significant amount of money into the state through their Reconnect and Community Connect programs. The Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program is also putting a significant amount of money into the state. The biggest award was made in August last year to Doyon and Alaska Communications Systems (ACS). The Middle Mile Program is getting ready to announce awards in the next 30 to 60 days, so they will see additional projects funded. USDA Reconnect is getting ready to announce another set of awards as is USDA Community Connect.

Pam Samash asked about programs available in Nenana. All the Internet comes off a cell tower, and if too many people use it at once, the service slows way down. She

wondered if that was a qualifying factor for getting approved for any kind of help for her community. Lisa Von Bargaen stated that that is over-subscription and is not something that the federal programs deal with. They deal with whether or not service is available to a location and what that service is and if they are considered unserved or underserved based on the amount of speed for upload and download. They are considered unserved if they cannot achieve 25 megabits per second download and 3 megabits per second upload. They are considered underserved if they cannot reach 100 megabits per second download and 20 megabits per second upload. Served is they have 100 megs download and 20 megs upload or better. However, for a community anchor institution like a senior center, city hall, tribal hall, or a library, unserved is considered lack of 1 gig per second symmetrical service.

Pam Samash inquired about people who live outside of town farther than the six-mile range of the cell tower. Lisa Von Bargaen stated that they are required to be achieving universal service, which is Internet to everyone. There are some nuances to this, but they are casting as wide a net as absolutely possible. They are doing everything they can to hit as many places as possible. There is some argument as to whether a remote cabin or a fish camp should be considered a “must-have” location for Internet service. The argument in the Broadband Office is the nature of doing business is changing significantly. Places that would have been considered a rural cabin or a weekend getaway are now places where people need to be able to do business. The Broadband Office recognizes that people who are not within the official municipal boundaries of a location are still valid locations that need to be served.

Jon Haghayeghi asked if Starlink is going to be a part of this. Lisa stated that Starlink and the satellites do not meet the requirements for the federal programs.

Lisa stated that their website is built up and added to on a regular basis, so people should visit <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/abo/>. One of the most exciting things currently on the website is a draft network design. There are maps that show all of the served, unserved, and underserved locations in the state; where all the projects are of the networks that are not in place yet but have been funded by the existing programs; and a draft network design to all of the unserved locations in the state along with a capital cost model. Next week the Broadband Office is going to start twice weekly call-in/Zoom meetings to talk about general broadband subjects at one and technical issues on the other.

Lisa Von Bargaen offered to do further presentations with the Commission separate from their regularly scheduled quarterly meetings. Paula Pawlowski stated that the Commission has wanted to have Lisa give them an in-depth look at their website and how to find information, but the State Plan derailed them for these other types of issues. Paula has her on the list of future training for the Commissioners.

OTHER INFORMATION FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

Legislative Visits

Chair Sivertsen stated that with the recent COVID outbreak at the Capitol, they have decided to cancel their in-person legislative visits. They will work to schedule Zoom meetings in lieu of the in-person visits.

Pam Samash asked a variety of questions related to legislative visits. Paula Pawlowski explained that this year the intention was to do the legislative visits in person because the previous years' Zoom meetings worked only 50 percent of the time. Because of the outbreak, all Commissioners will be doing Zoom only. In terms of supporting specific bills, Commissioners will be provided information about specific hearings to attend when bills are being heard in committee, but the Commission is not coming out and formally supporting bills.

Chair Sivertsen asked Commissioners to take notes of their Zoom legislative meetings, and they can report out at the next ACoA meeting as a follow up of their legislative advocacy.

Amendment to the Agenda

Due to the limited number of Commissioners who appeared at the meeting in person, Chair Sivertsen cancelled the items on the agenda scheduled for Thursday, March 2, 2023. Paula Pawlowski asked for an item be added to today's agenda to determine future Quarterly meeting as well as committee meeting dates. Because the in-person legislative visits were cancelled and the agenda items for the last day were removed, in-person Commissioners cut their trip short and returned home after the conclusion of today's meeting.

Alaska Workforce Investment Board

Lisa Von Barga suggested ACoA and the Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB) get together and hold a joint work session. She is the secondary representative on the AWIB and recently attended their quarterly meeting. There were many times she was thinking about how important it is to get the two groups together because there was a lot of discussion about making sure aging individuals are incorporated into the workforce.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment was heard, and a full transcript was prepared.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY FOLLOWUP

Commissioners discussed Senator Shelley Hughes presentation on the following healthcare bills this session that she asked for the Commission's support on:

- SB 45 – Direct Healthcare Agreements
- SB 3 – Alaska Healthcare Consumers' Right to Shop Act
- SB 8 – Certificate of Need
- HB 21 – School/University Employee Health Insurance

Senator Hughes also encouraged the Commission to talk to the federal delegation regarding equitable Medicaid/Medicare reimbursement rates and to testify at an upcoming hearing regarding Alaska's 80th Percentile Rule.

Chair Sivertsen asked Paula Pawlowski to get copies of the bills. Paula suggested sending out links to the copies of the bills. She will determine where the bills are in the process of hearings and will send an e-mail to Commissioners with the up-to-date information.

Jan Engan noted that Senator Hughes asked the Commission to consider a resolution in support of eliminating the 80th Percentile Rule, and Jan asked if that is an action the Commission would take up today. Commissioners noted their unfamiliarity with the subject matter, and Chair Sivertsen remarked that the Commission will need to get additional information before they move forward.

STATE PLAN FOR SENIOR SERVICES

Jon Haghayeghi reviewed the guidance document from the ACL which explains what ACoA has left to do to complete their State Plan. The draft State Plan needs to be handed off to the regional administrator on July 1, 2023. They have been working on completing the goals, objectives, strategies, and outcomes that are all related to the required topic areas such as COVID-19, equity, et cetera. Jan Engan noted that they need to have at least one goal, objective, strategy, or outcome for each key topic area, but they don't have to address all of them in each bullet point. There are specific ones they do need to address that were included in the reauthorization of the Older American's Act (OAA) such as malnutrition, fall screening, and suicide risk screening.

Jon Haghayeghi noted that the guidance also includes information on revising the Intrastate Funding Formula (IFF) during the State Plan cycle per the statutory requirements in Attachment C. Any change to the IFF factors or weights requires approval by the assistant secretary for aging. The publication is up for review and comment and must include a statement of the formula's assumptions and goals; have a discussion of the population, economic, and social data to be used for each planning and service area in the state; and a demonstration of the allocation of funds to each planning and service area in the state.

Jon stated that he has had conversations about the funding formula with Jan Engan and Ellen Hackenmueller, and he opened up the conversation with Commissioners by screen sharing the spreadsheet. He referred Commissioners to the column demonstrating the State General Fund (GF) and noted that there is about \$2.23M divided out by region. The state amount is driven by the funding formula. The percentage weight is a long, complicated formula. When they are dealing with the OAA, they are trying to determine how they are going to allocate federal funds based off a formula, but they were unable to find a formula for the base allocation for the federal funds. He asked if the federal funding amounts should be formula driven, or if there is a reason why the base allocations have been set the way they have been.

Ellen Hackenmueller stated that she and Jon looked at it together and reviewed historical information, and they were trying to find if there was documentation of the justification of why the formula was applied to the base GF amount versus the base federal amount. They were wondering if it was a mistake that the formula was applied to the wrong column on the spreadsheet. Acting Director Newman stated that they are aware there is no formula being applied to the federal dollars. Jan Engan stated that she found a comment that Louise Ryan made, which she shared with Jon and Chair Sivertsen, that ACoA is not addressing the requirements of the OAA by using the federal dollars as a base allocation no matter what formula they use to get that. To reach low income, minorities, and rural people, they need to apply the factors to the federal dollars. Then they can use the state dollars any way they want because it ends

up being a portion of match. Jan doesn't know how they go about changing it midstream because it was approved by ACL.

Darlene Supplee noted that just because the formula is not showing up on this particular spreadsheet doesn't mean there isn't a formula somewhere that created these numbers. Jan Engan noted that when she first came on and tried to work on the numbers, she couldn't come up with anything. Darlene wondered if they shouldn't try to reach out to one of the past program managers.

Jan stated that in the states she has worked in, the factors are applied to the federal dollars because that's what the OAA instructs them to do. Jon stated that they will work to figure out what adjustment was being made to the formula or whether there was a nominal dollar. Darlene noted that there isn't much difference between the formula that's used in the GF and what is used in the federal. The percentages are fairly similar. Jon noted that region 7 contained a pretty big difference, 4 percent versus almost 8 percent, but the others are all pretty much in the ballpark.

Louise Ryan joined the meeting, and although she didn't have access to the documents, she stated that it would be helpful to figure out how their federal dollars have been distributed, and there should be a State Plan section on how the funding was distributed. Since Alaska is considered a single planning service area, Alaska's formula doesn't have to be quite the same as what is required of states that have multiple planning and service areas, but they do need to have a way to distribute the federal dollars that looks at things like equity, rural, and remote factors. State dollars and federal dollars typically roll along the same formula. Jon Haghayeghi will connect with Louise later this week to provide a recap on how today's meeting went.

Jon turned the conversation to the goals and objectives document:

Topic Area:	Goal Category:
1. OAA Core Programs	Goal 1 and throughout
2. COVID-19	Goal 1, Goal 5
3. Equity	Goal 2, Goal 3, Goal 4, Goal 6
4. Expanding Access in HCBS	Goal 4, Goal 6
5. Caregiving	Goal 7

Jon Haghayeghi reviewed the draft document and took notes on comments as they went through. He noted that he will make small grammatical edits to the document.

Goal 1: Promote healthy aging in place and provide access to comprehensive and integrated healthcare.

Objective 1-B: Seniors have food security with access to healthy food.

Comments:

- Jon: Simplify the congregate and home-delivered meal outcome measure to, "Restore utilization to pre-COVID levels of the congregate meals." There has

been a huge drop of congregate meals since the pandemic, and they want to see that increased and home-delivered meals decreased.

- Jan: “Expand, encourage, and increase” strategies, are they assuming that’s going to be automatically happening by partner agencies and ACoA will be able to gather data from a centralized location? Commissioners engaged in a discussion regarding bringing partners to the table if responsibility for task completion falls on them. Any strategies and outcome measures that are developed need to be vetted by the entities responsible to ensure they are possible to accomplish and measure. These future meetings of ACoA and their partners should be focused on developing strategies and outcome measures, and today’s discussion should focus on the goals and objectives. It was suggested that not all strategies require outcome measures, and they should have a finite number of outcome measures. Louise Ryan remarked that the Commission creates the plan but doesn’t carry out the plan. They need to pay close attention to who they will assign to carry out the activities, and that will help them determine what they will measure and how they will get their data.
- Jon: Unsure of how to track the outcome measure of “Increase the utilization of vouchers for seniors in local farmers markets.”
- Darlene: Senior Farmers Market is an established grant, and providers receive senior coupons with regulations they must adhere to in administering. Those coupons can be used at farmer’s markets. The outcome measures are a utilization of vouchers and an educational component. Again, today should be an exercise in going over the goals and objectives, and the strategies and outcome measures should be dealt with in a separate meeting of partners.

Objective 1-D: Increase the availability and accessibility of preventative health services such as screenings and vaccinations to seniors across the state.

Objective 1-F: Advocate for access for seniors to integrated behavioral health and primary care.

Comments:

- Chair: There is time during today’s meeting to review strategies.

Objective 1-H: Seniors have access to affordable healthcare including affordable prescription drugs.

Comments:

- Jan: Agree that they need to review the strategies because some of them are pretty far reaching.
- Darlene: The strategies are the result of a huge brainstorming activity that needs to be fine tuned to determine what is realistic.
- Jon: There is opportunity to remove what they believe is unattainable or overreaching.

Objective 1-J:

- Promote and advocate for a comprehensive response to future natural disasters, pandemics, or public health crises for senior providers.

Objective 1-L: Increase the number of healthcare providers trained in geriatric care.

Objective 1-N: Promote the development and implementation of programs to increase healthy behaviors and lifestyle choices, such as physical activity and healthy eating.

Objective 1-P: Advocate for increasing use of telehealth services to expand access to healthcare.

Comments:

- Darlene: All of these objectives are just for Goal 1.

Goal 2: Encourage seniors to be financially secure.

Objective 2-B: Advocate for a safety net that supports and benefits the financial security of older Alaskans to include such programs, services, and financial supplements to incomes as core senior grant-funded services, senior benefits, housing assistance, heating assistance, weatherization, SNAP, and the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD).

Comments:

- Jan: Add the word “such” after “supplements to incomes.”

Objective 2-D: Increase education so that seniors and caregivers understand financial and long-term care planning.

Comments:

- Paula: Does Miller’s Trust fall under this objective?

Objective 2-F: Increase access to employment opportunities for seniors.

Comments:

- Jan: Could the objectives and strategies relating to employment be sent over to MASST to have them review it? They might have other plans.
- Jon: ACoA will be reaching out to Rita Gray, who may have played a role in developing the strategies.

Objective 2-H: Promote opportunities to reduce the cost of living for seniors through lower cost housing and transportation, among other services.

Comments:

- Jan: That’s a good goal, because there is a seminar out of ACL going on that talks about housing and transportation for community living working together.

Goal 3: Promote opportunities to protect vulnerable seniors from abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation.

Objective 3-A: Through education and awareness, promote primary prevention of elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation and reduce the rate of recidivism.

Objective 3-C: Improve the reporting of elder abuse and neglect.

Comments:

- Jon: Doesn't understand exactly what the intention is of this objective.
- Jan: Isn't Adult Protective Services (APS) working on a new reporting system?
- A.D. Newman: APS has a new critical incident reporting system in the works and is under development.
- Kelda: Reporting rates amongst mandated reporters are low in Alaska. Not everybody who should be reporting does report.
- A.D. Newman: That's the impetus for the new system that uses data mining technology to try to understand what they don't know.

Objective 3-E: Coordinate with the Working Interdisciplinary Network of Guardianship Stakeholders (WINGS) to continue to improve Alaska's guardianship and conservatorship systems to ensure they meet the needs of seniors.

Comments:

- Jan: Is that a current system that's working in Alaska? Is that the whole guardianship program?
- Kelda: It is a special workgroup that came out of a grant that continues to meet to improve the guardianship and conservatorship system. Unsure if they actually want WINGS identified in their objective. She believes WINGS has every intention to continue meeting as a group, but it is specialized group including the Court System, Trust, and APS. The Trust provided some funding initially, but the Court System received a federal grant that now sustains the group.
- Jan: Should we be talking with APS about this, or who oversees guardianship type things within the state?
- A.D. Newman: Department of Administration.
- Kelda: The Alaska Court System.
- Louise Ryan: WINGS is one approach, but when thinking more globally around guardianships, they also want to be more inclusive about alternatives to guardianships and how to help people make healthcare decisions in advance. All that planning fits very well with the OAA legal services. How do they help people make the decisions ahead of time to help prevent guardianships such as durable powers of attorney and get healthcare decision-making paperwork completed? Think about being more inclusive about a variety of strategies. There is also the education component that doesn't have to be limited to just one group. Also take a look at the role of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO).
- Jan: The only place the LTCO was mentioned was in a measurable outcome. Does this objective fit better someplace else in the document?

- Darlene: It seems like some of these objectives can be combined and written more broadly where they can umbrella a lot of the OAA programs.
- Bob: This is a good objective to bring in the role of the LTCO.
- Jan: For this particular goal, look at Title VII of the OAA, which encompasses the three different parts of legal services, ombudsman, and APS. Agree with Darlene that they could come up with a better goal and then have very broad objectives in each of those three areas.
- Teresa Holt: The ombudsman collects data, so they could have a goal around ombudsman visits. APS also collects data as does Residential Licensing for people in assisted living homes. Would love to work with Jon on this objective to put some specific measures in there. The WINGS group is doing many amazing things and have made some big changes, so she believes they can keep that in there.
- Kelda Barstad: Wasn't recommending getting rid of the WINGS reference entirely, just maybe moving it from the objective because the objective probably wants to speak to legal decision-making as a whole versus a specific strategy through the WINGS network. Agree that WINGS has been amazing and has accomplished many of their goals.
- Paula: Where, if at all, does the Miller's Trust come into play with guardianships?
- Jan: This would go into the components dealing with financial planning or long-term care planning.
- Bob: This would fit as an outcome measure as far as what is the trend of Miller's Trust being used in the assisted living world.

Objective 3-G: Work with partners to provide support and assistance to victims of elder abuse and neglect.

Comments:

- Jon: No outcome measures have been determined for this objective.
- Jan: Are any of the safety networks in Alaska that are set up for younger people able to help older adults? One community out of state set up a hotel to be a safety network for older victims of abuse. This is a good goal to have, but she isn't sure who is going to do it. Perhaps APS? Outcomes for that would hopefully be that they would have networks available for older adults that become victims of violence or domestic abuse.
- A.D. Newman: This would be a question to look at with APS. The other thought is the General Relief Assisted Living Home program is strictly financial support and lodging for people who have nowhere else to go, and the legislature just increased the rate that those homes receive. SDS is unsure if that rate increase has resulted in more homes and/or fewer homes ending their services. It will take some time, but SDS will be gathering data to see if increasing the rate has had the intended effect.
- Kelda Barstad: The Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault might be a good partner in this area.
- Teresa Holt: They might use this objective to put the WINGS and ombudsman under as a strategy. There is also the Office of Elder Fraud and Assistance as another place to get information. They take on cases mostly related to financial abuse.

Goal 4: Promote improved access for seniors to quality, affordable, accessible, safe, and appropriate housing, including senior housing, across the continuum of care.

Objective 4-B: Promote successful models for aging in place and senior housing options.

Objective 4-D: Share information about programs and opportunities to assist them in renovating their homes to allow seniors to age in place as well as other residential options.

Comments:

- Jim: Gave comments on Friday when the group met to discuss the goals and objectives.

Objective 4-F: Advocate for continuing development of affordable and accessible housing statewide for seniors.

Objective 4-H: Advocate for continued funding for affordable housing that helps seniors stay in their homes and preserves existing affordable housing for seniors statewide.

Comments:

- Darlene: 4-F and 4-H are very similar and can be combined.
- Kelda Barstad: F is building and H is the continuum and the subsidy process. The strategies demonstrate how they were separated out.

Objective 4-J: Address and reduce homelessness among seniors.

Comments:

- Marty: Maybe change the language “reduce.”
- Paula: They might consider connecting with the VA to find out about homeless vets, because they may have additional data.

Objective 4-L: Ensure adequate care is available across the continuum should seniors need to leave their home for rehabilitation or additional supports.

Comments:

- Darlene: It comes down to words like “ensure” and how they can ensure that versus “support.”
- Kelda Barstad: Questioning if this is housing or if this is long-term supports and services (LTSS).

Goal 5: Promote opportunities for meaningful aging, intergenerational connectivity, civic engagement, and address impacts from social isolation, particularly due to COVID-19, as one example.

Objective 5-B: Expand access to lifelong learning and personal growth opportunities.

Comments:

- Darlene: Change the word “Expand.”

Objective 5-D: Increase intergenerational interaction to promote understanding and support.

Comments:

- Jon: Would like more information about this objective.
- Marty: Wasn't the discussion around communal meals for senior nutrition with schools, especially in rural communities where there can be intergenerational communication based around a meal?
- A.D. Newman: This is similar to increased social interaction.
- Pam: The Native elders in Nenana will come into the public school and sit down with them in the auditorium and tell them stories about growing up and how they handled problems to help kids deal with stress instead of turning to drugs.
- Bob: The 880 Program and the Livable Communities Program going on with AARP are programs embracing this specific point. Teresa Holt: Groups are doing listening sessions in Anchorage and Juneau to create what is needed under eight domains – many of which are covered in this State Plan – to make the communities more age friendly. Listening sessions will be this year and next, and they will implement the plan next year.

Objective 5-F: Seniors have opportunities for meaningful civic engagement.

Comments:

- Paula: When they were tracking volunteerism in the AmeriCorps Program, Alaska is one of the top 10 states that runs on volunteerism. Alaska has huge opportunities for volunteers, senior volunteers in particular.

Objective 5-H: Promote social connectedness and combat isolation, particularly from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Goal 6: Promote person-centered, quality, and affordable home and community-based support services that provide seniors with the highest quality of life, targeted to individuals with the greatest economic and social need.

Objective 6-B: Services are targeted to those seniors who have the greatest economic and social need, are considered vulnerable, and/or at risk for long-term care placement.

Comments:

- Darlene: Instead of “Services are targeted,” there needs to be an active word like “support” or “promote.”
- Jon: Will go through the whole document to update the verbiage.
- Bob: Bring in the VA on the strategies for this objective because the VA is deeply involved in economic and social need in terms of long-term placement.
- Jan: Is there somebody at the VA in Alaska that works specifically with veterans who are aging that might be a candidate to sit on the Commission at any time?
- Bob: Will reach out to Bill Sorrells, chair of the Alaska Veteran Advisory Council and others for suggestions. There are definitely people serving as different veteran service officers. There is a seat on the Pioneer Homes Advisory Council for the Alaska Veterans Advisory Council, and John Lee is moving into that position.

Objective 6-D: Address workforce shortages to meet the in-home service needs of the increasing senior population, especially in rural Alaska.

Comments:

- Darlene: Change the word “Address.”

Objective 6-F: Senior services are available and culturally appropriate.

Comments:

- Darlene: Wordsmith.

Objective 6-H: Blank.

Objective 6-J: Streamline access to senior services by strengthening the Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), case management and/or care coordination, and the senior center network.

Comments:

- Darlene: Wordsmith.

Objective 6-L: Improve services for seniors with higher care needs such as ADRD and behavioral health.

Comments:

- Jon: Spell out ADRD.
- Darlene: Wordsmith.
- Jan: Could this be an objective that would go under the behavioral health section? Jon: Good point. Will make a note and see if it fits better there.
- Bob: This might be a good area to have an outcome measure on the implementation of the BOLD Act.
- Kelda Barstad: Is this specific to home and community-based services implementation or healthcare overall? And Alaska has not received the BOLD Act grant yet. It’s in the application stage.

Objective 6-N: Work with the legislature to develop and implement regulations for quality standards for long-term services and supports, including residential and in-home settings, so that caregiver skills are appropriate to the population they serve.

Comments:

- A.D. Newman: The legislature doesn't do regulations.
- Jon: Statutory changes would be the intention.
- A.D. Newman: If this is an issue so urgent as to require legislative action, he hasn't heard of it in his official capacity. This is more regulatory than legislative. All of SDS's regulations are aimed at improving standards and the quality of the LTSS.
- Kelda Barstad: If she is remembering correctly, the issue was with private pay and assisted living home and personal care services.
- Darlene: This objective needs to be rewritten. The intent was there, but it needs to be rewritten to make sense.
- Jon: Does the Commission want to work with legislators to develop and implement any bills that encourage that?
- A.D. Newman: Quality standards are often developed with CMS's authority over waiver services. Grants are another thing. He wondered if what was trying to be achieved is the idea that as the Division promulgates regulations around these things, that there would be an active public comment making sure they are as good as they can be.
- Darlene: The strategies don't make any sense.
- Jon: Remove "Work with the legislature to develop and implement regulations for," and then work with the Commission to drill down on what they are trying to accomplish with the objective.
- Kelda Barstad: Private pay providers don't have as much regulation as the Medicaid providers do, so there have been some problems in the past with personal care services and assisted living homes that are entirely private pay providing good quality care.
- Ellen Hackenmueller: Sent this language to Jetta Whitaker and had her look over it, and Jetta had some thoughts about it but they are not clear on directives for SDS. Will send Jetta's comments to Jon.
- A.D. Newman: As one of the strategies denotes, he is unaware of any draft Assisted Living Home regulations.
- Kelda Barstad: Believe this is referencing something that was in the past.
- Jon: Will work with Kelda offline.

Goal 7: Promote opportunities to support family caregivers to provide care and support to seniors without putting their own physical, emotional, and financial well-being on hold and at risk.

Objective 7-B: Increase awareness of an outreach to family caregivers.

Objective 7-D: Strengthen services and supports for family caregivers.

Comments:

- Jon: Will wordsmith language.

Objective 7-F: Expand data, research, and evidence-based practices to support family caregivers.

Comments:

- Marty: How do they expand the data, research, and evidence-based practices?
- Darlene: Do we have enough data in our state, and if so, where do we find it?
- Marty: When they say, “support family caregivers,” are they saying support the people giving care, or are they saying that they are supporting the idea of family caregivers? Jon: Provide support to the individuals providing care to a senior.
- A.D. Newman: This is a very hot issue because there is a lot of interest in the state retaining the flexibility that was introduced during the pandemic to allow legally responsible family caregivers to continue to be able to be paid to provide care. This objective doesn’t seem limited to that hot topic.
- Darlene: It’s an important component and believes it needs to be in here somewhere over the next four years.
- Jan: Wouldn’t they also include a statement about the BOLD Act?
- Darlene: The BOLD component would be supporting the data collection and the numbers.
- Bob: Was part of the group that worked on this objective, and that’s why it is inclusive of federal programs in the strategies. The VA’s program under the Elizabeth Dole Home Caregiver’s Act is very heavy on data as are several other bills that have looked at planning for aging populations.
- Jan: The State Plan guidance letter talks about family caregiver as being one of the key topics from the Biden-Harris Administration. It references the Family Caregiving Advisory Council final recommendations. She doesn’t believe they have to have all of the recommendations, but this objective is almost identical to the fifth goal of the recommendations.
- Kelda Barstad: Maybe instead of “expand” they want to say “promote awareness of,” so people know about the programs that could be available. Do they know how many family caregivers there are in Alaska?
- A.D. Newman: SDS is doing a survey right now because they don’t have any idea how frequently this is being used.
- Jan: Is there a definition for somebody who is reasonable responsible? And are they taking that only in context then of the Medicaid waiver dollars or from families that take care of their family members?
- A.D. Newman: There are definitions in regulation for who a legally responsible caregiver is: Spouse, parent of a minor child, and then a vaguer “and other legally responsible persons,” which is understood to be a guardian. The regulations he is referring to are specific to Medicaid personal care services and Medicaid waiver.
- Bob: Unsure if a task force would be as valuable as a survey tool to the different entities such as Indian Health Services and others to see how community family caregivers are functioning in the different rural communities.

- Kelda Barstad: Are grandparents raising grandchildren intended to be covered in this section? They could be.
- Paula: Alaska has a large population of grandparents raising grandchildren without legal guardianship.

Funding Formula White Paper

Jon Haghayeghi stated that if they were to make a modification to the funding formula, it would hurt one region to benefit another. Chair Sivertsen has been working on a white paper to hand off to Senator Murkowski, and the ask is instead of having them trying to divvy up resources that are inadequate, give Alaska a full percent instead.

Chair Sivertsen stated that the OAA set certain minimum dollar amounts for states and territories. The states with a minimum allocation were 1 percent of the total funding appropriation. The funding appropriations were done by population, and there were seven states and other territories that didn't meet the population criteria, so they received the minimum. That was changed through a reauthorization to reduce it to a half a percent. Rather than go back and try to recalculate the funding formula, the easiest fix to this is to bring it back to 1 percent.

Chair Sivertsen explained that if they try to adjust the funding formula, one of the problems is the manner by which the funding formula is amended is fairly complicated. They have to show the math, and they have to explain and justify the movement of funds. He believes asking for the 1 percent is justifiable given flat funding and inflation.

Chair Sivertsen had a conversation about this issue with Senator Murkowski in Ketchikan, and he later received a follow-up call from her office asking if the Commission wanted to pursue this issue. This is the impetus for the white paper.

Jon Haghayeghi showed Commissioners the graphic depicting inflation-adjusted NTS funds per Alaska senior in 1995 (\$70) versus 2022 (\$30). NTS accounts for about 70 percent of the funding that goes towards seniors. This is driven by flat funding, inflation, and the growing number of Alaskan seniors.

Jan Engan asked if the paper discusses the other states and territories that are getting minimal funding like Alaska receives and are single state units on aging. She is also wondering about reaching out to those other states to get support for this concept, particularly as they are coming closer to another reauthorization of the OAA. Chair Sivertsen felt confident that with Senator Murkowski's experience in appropriations as well as her experience with the reauthorization of the OAA in the past, she will gather the support she needs from the other states.

REVIEW ADVOCACY PACKET

Jon Haghayeghi and Paula Pawlowski led the Commissioners through a discussion of the ACoA advocacy packet that will be sent out to legislators. Paula thanked Jon and Marty for the outstanding job they have done during their first legislative session. She also thanked Nona Safra for her work in editing the advocacy packet. Paula noted that they developed these priorities based on data they received from the Senior Survey.

Alaska Commission on Aging 2023 Legislative Priorities:

1. Support governor’s budget proposal for an increase of \$1.49M for senior grant services and Centers for Independent Living.

Based on a question from Janet Engan, Ellen Hackenmueller stated that if the budget proposal passes, that funding will be allocated to SDS’s Community Grants budget line. That budget line funds a number of community-based grant programming, not all of which is targeted toward seniors. There is a distinction that people should be aware of between SDS Community Grants and what stakeholder groups and partners are calling “Senior Grants.” There is an internal working list at SDS of what they consider to be senior-focused grants, but that is not a legislative designation. The current bill language allocates \$1.49M to SDS’s Community-Based grant line with \$586K of that carved out specifically for the Centers for Independent Living. SDS has been communicating to stakeholder groups that if there are certain programs or services they think funding should be allocated towards, please communicate that to legislators. There are some lobbyists who may be moving forward some intent language to help specify a list of programs. Ellen also remarked that SDS’s home and community-based grant programs overall for FY’22 served around 27,000 individuals, and the vast majority of people served through this program are seniors at 19,002 for FY’22.

2. Increase Medicaid Optional Services Medicaid Waiver and Community First Choice Program.

Marge Stoneking inquired as to the ask for this priority because the title says “Increase,” but the supporting text reads more to “maintain.” Under HCBS Medicaid waiver services, AARP has prioritized and advocated with the legislature for a participant-directed care option, because they believe HCBS services are threatened by the workforce crisis and that participant-directed care and the ability of waiver participants to directly hire their own workers could augment the workforce.

3. Maintain capital funding for AHFC’s Senior Citizen Housing Development Fund.

Marge Stoneking stated that AARP is exploring asking for an increase to this this year with the last of the ARPA funds given the fact that the funding has not increased in many years and the senior population has grown dramatically.

Jim McCall stated that it’s also important to remember that last year the ask started at \$1.5M and was later bumped up to \$1.75. While this primarily does help with development aspects, it’s also used to source the Senior Access Program.

Paula Pawlowski asked Jim McCall if ACoA needs to do a resolution for the packet or if this was sufficient as is. Jim abstained from commenting.

4. Increase Public Assistance Programs: Senior Benefits, SNAP, Heating Assistance.

Jon Haghayeghi asked Marge Stoneking for the source of the data demonstrating how much revenue seniors bring into the state of Alaska every year. Marge will send that information.

Kelda Barstad asked what the percentage of low-income seniors is in the state. Marge Stoneking stated that the senior poverty level is between 9 and 10 percent.

5. Increase access to healthcare, specifically Medicare.

Darlene Supplee asked for clarification on the ask for this priority. Paula Pawlowski stated that right now there aren't any incentives, and that's the point. Some states under licensure require a certain number of Medicare patients as part of a medical practice. Also, many people buying supplemental Medicare insurance are purchasing policies that do not work in Alaska. Paula further suggested the ask would be to examine the issue and see where the impact could be. Jan Engan also suggested mentioning the issues of Medicaid paying more than Medicare and the 80th Percentile Rule.

Bob Pawlowski commented that he looked at the numbers, and in Alaska there are 185 primary care providers and 100,000 seniors. He will send the statistics to Jon.

Paula Pawlowski further stated that they will continue to tweak the talking points for this priority, and there has also been talk of convening an overall statewide discussion.

6. Provide support for local transportation programs through capital projects and community grants.

Paula Pawlowski noted that when conducting their legislative visits, Commissioners should note that this is year one of a two-year legislative cycle. Next year some of the priorities will hopefully drop off, and the document will continue to be updated. Commissioners should realistically select two of the topics to discuss during their 15-minute meetings depending on which committees the legislators sit on. They should be sure to let the legislators know how these issues affect seniors in the legislators' region.

Senior Snapshot

Paula Pawlowski referred Commissioners to the Senior Snapshot included in the packet. This publication is the most pertinent one ACoA does for legislators, and they keep it and refer to it throughout the session.

Jon Haghayeghi pointed out the bullet point that denotes that Alaska's 85+ population is going to increase by 500 percent between 2022 and 2050, and of that group, approximately one-third will experience ADRD. This is an important message to communicate to legislators.

Who We Are

Also contained in the packet is a paper explaining who the Commission is and what they pay attention to. The document also includes the roster for ACoA.

AHFC Resolution

Paula Pawlowski asked Chair Sivertsen if before they deliver the packets, they revisit the resolution for AHFC. She sent last year's resolution to Jon Haghayeghi but is not sure it's been updated. Chair Sivertsen felt they should send it out to legislators as a follow up after the packets.

Other

Pam Samash requested Jon Haghayeghi send her a hard copy packet to share in her community.

Paula Pawlowski remarked that next year the plan is to do a legislative advocacy packet review two weeks prior to their quarterly meeting so as not to take up board meeting time reviewing the packet. She reminded Commissioners to be sure to thank legislators for their time and to take notes of the meetings to send to Jon and Marty to compile.

DETERMINE FUTURE MEETINGS

Paula Pawlowski suggested the following schedule:

- April 17, 2023 – Bylaws Committee – Nona Safra, Pam Samash, Paula Pawlowski, Jon Haghayeghi, and Marty Lange.
- May 19, 2023 – Wrap up legislative discussion with partners AARP and LTCO.
- May 2023 – Quarterly ACoA meeting. Jon will send out a poll to determine dates.
- June 5, 2023 – Pam Samash, Nona Safra, Chair Sivertsen, Jon Haghayeghi to discuss a legislative post survey.
- August 14, 2023 – Meet with Alaska Workforce Investment Board (AWIB).
- September 18 – 19, 2023 – Quarterly ACoA meeting. Have Lisa Von Barga present.
- December 4 – 5, 2023 – Quarterly ACoA meeting. Elections will be held.

Jan Engan noted that there will need to be several more meetings for the State Plan to develop the strategies and outcomes.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jim McCall announced the following retirements:

- AHFC Deputy Executive Director Mark Romick has retired and will be replaced by Akis Gialopsos.
- Director of Mortgage Operations Jan Miyagishima is retiring after nine years.

ADJOURN

Darlene Supplee **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Pam Samash. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at approximately 4:45 p.m.