

**ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING
QUARTERLY MEETING**

May 24 - 25, 2023

Location

Wasilla/Palmer, Alaska

Commission Members:

Bob Sivertsen, Chair
Paula Pawlowski
Bob Pawlowski
Nona Safra
Janet Engan
Darlene Supplee
Lisa Von Bargaen, ex-officio

Guests:

Stephanie Wheeler, LTCO
Marge Stoneking, AARP
Jim McCall, AHFC
Ellen Hackenmueller, SDS
Lesley Thompson
Brenda Shelden
Elda McCraw
Lynne Keilman-Cruz, SDS
Jeanne' Larson, MIO
Gail Sorensen, BBNA
Chuck Foster
Alvin Ancheta, LTCO
Fred Agree

Staff

Jon Haghayeghi, Executive Director
Martin Lange, Rural Outreach Coordinator

Wednesday, May 24, 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 Paula Pawlowski. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the agenda was approved as presented.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

Paula Pawlowski **MOVED** to approve the minutes from the February 27, 2023 meeting, **SECONDED** by Bob Pawlowski. Paula Pawlowski requested the minutes be sent to Commissioners as soon as they are finished so they have a chance to review them. Hearing no objections nor further discussion, the motion **PASSED**, and the minutes were approved as presented.

ADDRESS BY WASILLA MAYOR GLENDA LEDFORD

Mayor Ledford welcomed Commissioners to Wasilla and the Wasilla Area Seniors and thanked them for having her today. She reviewed the mission of ACoA, and she stated that the City of Wasilla has a growing number of seniors who contribute to the community by giving of their time, wisdom, and experience. She recognizes the need for a community that offers senior services in support for their older adults to participate and live independently. The contributions of the older population are priceless and improve a comprehensive community when individuals of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds are included.

Mayor Ledford thanked members for the work they do on the Commission and thanked them for coming to Wasilla to see their programs.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Sivertsen reported that the Commission has been very busy, and staff have been working on the Senior Plan, which is in its final stages. They are also working on the sunset audit for the Commission. Because of the turnover in Commission staff, auditors granted an extension of time to turn in documents. The audit should be completed by next week. Jon and Marty have been working on processes to ensure they are more prepared for the next audit.

Other highlights include:

- Jon Haghayeghi has been presenting to the Trust, and he has been responding to questions and inquiries throughout the legislative session.
- Paula Pawlowski has been working with AARP on legislation affecting seniors.
- Numerous meetings have been taking place regarding the State Plan, and Jon has been working with the contractors and Administration for Community Living (ACL) on details related to the State Plan.

VICE-CHAIR REPORT

Paula Pawlowski reported that working on the audit was interesting, enlightening, and daunting as she had and reviewed a lot of historical documentation related to the Commission. She felt it was overwhelming for the staff to have to do the State Plan and audit simultaneously, but going forward it will be a good thing to know what is needed to accomplish these tasks. She referenced the board packet and noted that the report from the last audit is contained therein. She appreciated responding to the audit and reflecting on the accomplishments of the Commission, and she feels that they are a stronger Commission now than they were in the past.

Paula stated she attended the Medicare listening session in Anchorage at the Senior Center. There weren't many answers offered during the listening session, but the federal representative was there to listen to how Medicare is not working in Alaska. A phrase she found powerful during the listening session was, "Alaska is not like other states. In fact, Alaska is very fragile when it comes to Medicare and Medicaid."

The legislative session wrapped up, and as they suspected, new legislators and aides were unfamiliar with the Commission. The Commission, in partnership with AARP and AgeNet, held a review about what next year will bring as they push forward their advocacy during year two of the session. Paula would like to have a series of white papers ready to go for the legislative session before her term is up in December. She would also like to set up a calendar for outreach for state informative teleconferences. This will allow them to go into a region and touch on more than just legislative issues and collect information.

Paula Pawlowski remarked that she has printed copies of the Senior Voice available at the meeting for anyone interested.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE

Jon Haghayeghi reported the following updates:

Program Coordinator II Position

Staff are working on and have almost completed the reclassification of the planner position. It will be entering the recruitment stage and is now classified as a program coordinator II position with the responsibility to oversee statewide programs. The intention is to have a point person who is in charge of monitoring the goals from the State Plan to ensure they are being implemented and there is follow through. In addition, the position will be in charge of information gathering and distribution, education, and advocacy at the statewide level with the intention of forming networks at the local level. Another responsibility will be the distribution of media, such as producing radio content for seniors that may not have access to the Internet or television.

Rural and Remote Survey

Part of this survey includes gathering information about connectivity in rural Alaska and what radio stations people listen to. Content creation is a big theme the Commission will continue pushing forward, which was inspired by Marty Lange.

State Plan

The intent is to do work between State Plans that can help guide the Advisory Committee and Commissioners when they are working on the next iteration of the State Plan.

The Commission has worked with SDS to get the State Plan update, and it is still being edited as they work through the public comment process. There is a meeting of the Advisory Committee planned for June 5th to discuss public comments that will be made during a meeting on May 31st. A recent meeting took place with Louise Ryan from ACL to receive a second round of feedback on the plan. Jon also attended an equity meeting with the senior community that represents the LGBT community across the nation to ensure that all of the components of the Biden-Harris guidelines have been incorporated in the plan.

Given that no unforeseen circumstances arise, they should have no problem meeting the July 1st deadline for completion of the State Plan.

Audit

Thank you to Commissioners for assisting staff in gathering materials. The information was very helpful to answer the questions in the audit.

Office/Administration

ACoA does not currently have a permanent office, so staff are situated within SDS's offices. Jon Haghayeghi has been telecommuting during this time. They are hopeful their offices will be completed soon.

RURAL OUTREACH SPECIALIST UPDATE

Marty Lange reported that staff receive five to 15 phone calls per week from people who are desperate for help, and he always tries to get the callers connected to resources. This is what inspired him to create magnets that contain resource contacts, which he encouraged Commissioners to distribute. It was suggested to him that when conducting the rural and remote surveys, they give a magnet to people who complete a survey.

Marty stated that he and Jon have discussed what the contents of the survey should be for people in rural and remote Alaska without overwhelming them with a long survey. They are trying to time the survey to about 13 minutes, which equates to approximately 50 to 55 questions. He has taken information from the Senior Survey they used in the fall, and he has added some new questions. As he is meeting PCAs and people from the Elder Mentor Program, they are willing to do the surveys with seniors on behalf of the Commission. The Commission is in the process of acquiring iPads that can be sent out to people to conduct the surveys. He also has people in Nome and Fairbanks that are going through the survey with a few elders as a test version. This has helped Marty to polish and fine tune some things that weren't clear to the seniors. He believes they will have a very good survey, and he believes this will help them when they do the survey for the next State Plan.

Bob Pawlowski noted that in the process of looking at the need for veteran beds in the Pioneer Homes, it was interesting to see the range of veterans in the different boroughs where Pioneer Homes are located. What was most significant and should be factored

into the Interior is 10.6 percent of the Fairbanks North Star Borough population per capita are veterans. He believes this is a very important and substantial factor.

Marty Lange recently spoke to the people from the broadband initiative, and they have asked him to participate. He shared his concern that in one generation they could see the erasure of the Alaskan ethnic identities because kids will drop their own identities to become a “world citizen” rather than a local citizen. He stated that he shared these concerns with the broadband initiative, and they are listening. They are planning a trip up to Utqiagvik in July, and Marty has invited the federal representative so he can see the reality of the village and what they would be erasing if they don’t do their homework ahead of time to prepare people.

Paula Pawlowski suggested presenting on this at the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) Youth and Elder component. Lisa Von Barga stated that Marty should reach out to Nicole Borromeo, and she will put Marty in touch with her.

Bob Pawlowski complimented Marty on focusing on the importance of incorporating culture into the broadband.

Darlene Supplee remarked that Jon and Marty have done an amazing job in the last year given the amount of work that was put on them.

DISCUSSION OF REVISED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AND BYLAWS

Paula Pawlowski directed Commissioners to the copies of the bylaws and policies and procedures contained in their packets. She explained that the board can adopt the policies and procedures themselves, and she would prefer to do that at the September meeting. She noted that the bylaws have to go out for public comment for at least 60 days, which corresponds to their upcoming meeting September. She noted that the large print on the documents indicates the revisions, and the rationale for the changes is also provided. Commissioners should review the documents and provide their feedback to staff for inclusion in the September board packet.

Paula Pawlowski completed a detailed review of the edits to the bylaws and the policies and procedures with Commissioners and fielded questions and comments as they arose.

Bob Pawlowski suggested they look at what statutory changes they may need to clarify because the department structure has changed. Jon Haghayeghi mentioned that one of the audit questions related to statutory recommendations.

SDS GRANTS MANAGER UPDATE

Ellen Hackenmueller provided an update on current Grants Unit activities as follows:

- The Grants Unit manages state and federal community grant programs that serve seniors and people with disabilities, including the Older American Act (OAA) funds that the Commission provides oversight and guidance on.
- This is the busiest time of year for the Grants Unit as they are working with their partners preparing for the next fiscal year that begins on July 1st.
- The Grant’s Unit is very encouraged that the legislature passed a budget that included the increment increase for SDS community-based grant programs. The

budget is still pending the Governor's signature. Thank you to the Commission for the education and awareness brought to the importance of these programs.

- The Grants Unit is working on the updated calculations based on the increment, which will be distributed with the FY'24 awards. The increment was roughly \$1.4M, and \$586,000 is earmarked specifically for the Centers for Independent Living. The balance of \$912,000 will be distributed to remaining agencies for senior grant programs.

Paula Pawlowski noted that it wasn't until the Commission's review for the legislative audit that they realized they really didn't have a handle on who received the federal dollars, so the Commission would like to work closer with Ellen to get that information and be a part of the process. Ellen stated that they would be happy to provide that list. It does shift a little bit year to year, but they can mark as one of their annual tasks to ensure the Commission is included on the distribution list of who is receiving state and federal grant dollars. Paula would also be interested to see what is going to happen to the statutes with the bifurcation of the department and how that relates to the Commission.

Darlene Supplee asked what percentage of seniors the Centers for Independent Living serve. Ellen has that statistic and will send it to Jon as a follow up, but it's very significant at approximately 70 percent.

Chair Sivertsen asked if the Grants Unit is able to meet all the requests for funding for services. Ellen Hackenmueller shared the process by which the state manages grant applications and awards in general. All of that is governed by Alaska Administrative Code that lays out processes for all of the state procurement functions, including the provision of grant applications and grant services. The state puts out requests for proposals that operate on a rolling basis, which is typically on a three-year cycle. Agencies apply for those, and a team is convened to review and assess all those applications. The applications are scored based on their proposed project, proposed services, the eligibility criteria, and the target populations, and the top scoring applicants receive funding. It depends on the program and how much funding is available and how many applications are received for whether or not all applicants are funded.

Chair Sivertsen further asked if the scoring and criteria take into consideration the remoteness of the programs as compared to more of an urban setting. Ellen stated that is taken into consideration for the OAA programs because that is one of the criteria for that program. With the purely state-funded programs, she believes they have similar criteria written in to each proposal, but she would need to pull those by program to verify.

Paula Pawlowski asked if there is a process by which the Grants Unit helps unfunded programs find other funding. Ellen stated that any determination about funding level on an application comes with appeal rights, but the unit does not have a standard process to connect agencies with other community resources that might be available.

Darlene Supplee noted that each region has specific funding that is designated based on the funding formula. If a provider submitted a budget that reflects the operating costs but it exceeds what SDS can fund for that region, they may be funded but not fully

funded. Ellen agreed and stated that there is this added layer that depending on the level of funding available for the total program or that particular region, SDS may also have situations where an agency receives a grant award not in the full amount of the operating budget they submitted.

Jan Engan asked if the total sum of money that goes out for the OAA funds includes the federal dollars plus the state share of match that becomes available to the agencies that are responding to the RFPs. Ellen stated that it does.

Marge Stoneking asked which grant programs are federal and which are state funded. Ellen reported that the programs that receive a portion of federal funding under the OAA are the Nutrition, Transportation, and Support Program; Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Program; and the National Family Caregiver Support Program. Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) do not receive federal funds as part of their operating budgets.

Ellen Hackenmueller continued with her updates as follows:

- The OAA Annual State Program Report has been requested by the Commission for FY'22. The OAA program manager Kristin Cox received some requests from the ACL for some clarification and edits on those reports, which have been submitted, and they are awaiting final approval from ACL in response to those edits. Once SDS receives approval, they will pass the report through Jon Haghayeghi for distribution to the Commission.
- The ADRC governance project is a federal grant SDS applied for a year ago and was awarded. SDS has had significant delays in getting the project started as it needed to work through the procurement and contracting processes of the state. They have approval to go ahead and begin those activities as everything was signed and finalized about two weeks ago. They are outlining their project plan and getting ready to convene stakeholders for the first couple meetings. This project aims to help create more of a statewide governance and oversight infrastructure of the ADRC program across different divisions within the department such as Behavioral Health and Public Assistance because the requests ADRCs receive go beyond the oversight of just SDS.

Jan Engan noted that ADRCs do not receive any Title III funding; however, the ADRC concept came out of the Administration on Aging and is also in the OAA. She asked if contracts or scopes of work for ADRCs include equal or same treatment to those older adults who are not waiver eligible because of being slightly above the income guidelines but don't have sufficient resources to purchase on their own. Ellen stated that ADRCs do not have eligibility or population restrictions on information and referral services. They will take a call from anybody.

Ellen Hackenmueller and Jeanne' Larson highlighted the following for the Medicare Information Office (MIO):

- The MIO is a small team of dedicated, knowledgeable staff that accomplish an incredible amount of work. They are currently focused on the upcoming Consumer Protection and Fraud Prevention event happening in person in Anchorage on Tuesday, June 6th at the Mountain View Library. Other partner agencies for the event include the Better Business Bureau, Federal Trade

Commission, Social Security, the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman, and other organizations.

- The MIO continues to provide education, support, and resources regarding the shortage of Medicare providers.
- The MIO is seeing an increase in applications for the Medicare Ambassador Program for organizations that serve Medicare beneficiaries. This program provides resources about the Medicare program to distribute to community members ambassadors work with to increase outreach and information to agencies that don't have a certified Medicare counselor.

Ellen Hackenmueller opened the floor for additional questions for the Grants Unit. Darlene Supplee asked when ARPA funds to SDS providers will end. Ellen stated that the federal expiration for the funds is September 30, 2024. Due to the state fiscal year not aligning with that, SDS needs to have the funds spent by June 30, 2024. Agencies will continue to have that ARPA supplemental funding included in their award for FY'24. Ellen can pull the numbers based on the projections to provide an estimate of how much funding that may be, but she noted that anything not spent by providers in this current fiscal year will be re-issued in FY'24, but they won't know the FY'23 unexpended funds until after the books are closed.

ALASKA HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION (AHFC)

Jim McCall presented to the Commission as follows:

GOAL Awards

- GOAL award notice was sent out in January.
- There was only one senior award for this current year, Wasilla Area Seniors, Inc. (WASI). It will be a sister building to Willow House called Aspen House and will offer 40 units of housing for people 55 years of age and older.
- The total development cost will be around \$14M to \$15M.
- AHFC is contributing \$1.2M in Senior Citizen Housing Development Funds and 30 sponsor-based rental assistance vouchers. There will also be tax credits available, and there will be some solar capacity.
- Jim was surprised there was only one senior award this year.

Capital Budget

- HB 39 – Omnibus bill that passed and is awaiting action from the Governor.
- Weatherization Program - \$10M
- Senior Citizen Housing Development Fund - \$1.75M
- Rural Professional Housing Program - \$7.25M (an increase of \$5M from years past)
- HOME federal match - \$4.75M of federal and state funds
- HUD Capital Fund - \$3.2M to maintain and operate public housing units statewide
- Supplemental - \$3M to partner with rural housing authorities for construction of basic elements of housing
- Alaska Housing - Housing Development Fund - \$11M which is funding for the Alaska Corporation for Affordable Housing (ACAH)
- AHFC's total capital budget is \$51.8M. The state portion of that is \$23.1M.

Public Housing Snapshot

- Senior disabled designated units around the state: As of May 1, 2023 there are 1,507 individuals on the wait list. These include seniors 62 or older or an individual with a disability of any age.
- In June of '22 there were 1,151 people on the wait list, so there has been a 31 percent increase in the last year.
- First opening for the Housing Choice Voucher Program in Anchorage throughout the month of April, and they received 3,500 to 4,000 applications. They will process those applicants and vouchers over the next 18 to 24 months before the next opening.

Meadows in Fairbanks

- Accepting rental applications now.
- 18 units of senior housing that will be opening this year.
- One bedroom/one bath with a one-car garage.
- All units are fully ADA compliant.
- Includes a low-income family housing component.

Housing Market Snapshot

- Southeast leads the state in average sales price through the first quarter - \$467,000.
- New listings are down in almost every region of the state.
- Interest rates have gone up.
- The average sales price in the first quarter:
 - Anchorage - \$449,000
 - Mat-Su - \$374,000
 - Kenai Peninsula Borough - \$353,000
 - Fairbanks - \$318,000.

USDA 504 Program

USDA has been a long-standing partner of AHFC. Jim McCall spoke to Amy Millburn with USDA Kenai, and she reported to him information he thought would be valuable to the Commission.

USDA has a Family Housing Repair Loan and Grant Program known as the 504 Program. This is a program that helps lower-income applicants remove health and safety hazards or repair their homes, and this can include roofs, winterization, heating systems, structure repair, water/sewer systems, ramps, et cetera. There are two components to this program, previously a loan with a cap of \$40,000 at 1 percent, and the senior could also apply for a one-time-only grant up to \$10,000 for a combined total of \$50,000. USDA does not apply in the Municipality of Anchorage or the Fairbanks city limits. USDA has roughly \$269,000 in loan funds appropriated and \$239,000 in grant funds. Only five applications have been received for these funds, four on the Kenai Peninsula and one in Mat-Su.

Jim McCall recognizes the need for this around the state and feels that he and the Commission collectively can spread the word.

USDA is currently experiencing some staffing shortages with only 6 people to cover the entire state of Alaska, and some staff have a little bit of trepidation about the program.

USDA Rural Disaster Grants

Jim McCall noted the recent disasters in Nome and Western Alaska, and this program offers up to \$40,000 for individuals impacted in those communities through a Presidential disaster declaration for calendar year 2022. There is \$500,000 allocated to the state of Alaska, and USDA could potentially request more federal authority. There have been no applications for these grant funds.

Jim stated that USDA has arrangements with non-profits so the non-profit agencies can connect with USDA, and the non-profits are effectively “packagers” for the 504 loan and grant, and the non-profit receives a payment for the service up to \$750 for each one they do. The non-profit acts as a conduit to help get this information into the hands of the consumers who might be able to benefit and utilize it.

Jim suggested to Amy Millburn that she consider meeting with ACoA at some point, and he shared her contact information with the Commission.

Jim opened the floor to questions. Bob Pawlowski asked if federal disasters apply to the fisheries or if it has to be structural. Jim understands that it has to be structural.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR, SDS

Lynne Keilman-Cruz joined the meeting and shared that she has been with SDS for about 16 years and has been acting as deputy director through numerous administrations.

Lynne shared the following highlights from SDS:

- \$32.9M for rate rebasing for home and community-based waivers went into effect on May 1st. SDS did a rate rebasing package for regulations. SDS gave 10 percent on July 1st of 2022, and that was rolled into the rate rebase, and the rate went up May 1st.
- ARPA projects:
 - DSP Training and Certification with the university is going well. The project started with 120 people and has fallen off to less than 100 now.
 - Direct Support Professional Incentive Payments for home and community-based providers to pay out for recruitment, hiring, and retention bonuses related to the pandemic. SDS has paid out about \$13M, and the project is wrapping up.
- Proposed budget:
 - \$647,000 passed the Senate and the House for a resource allocation tool for the home and community-based waivers to assess an individual’s needs and determine how much resource SDS can give them. This will be helpful for budget setting and ensuring the right amount of money is going to the right people.

- The House inserted \$30M for an additional raise to home and community-based services. The Senate reduced it to \$15M, and SDS is waiting to see the final result.
- Office of Public Advocacy (OPA) is declining to take on new individuals for guardianship/conservatorship cases, which affects all of SDS's beneficiaries. SDS is working with OPA to figure out how they can help.

Lynne Keilman-Cruz opened up the floor for questions. Nona Safra asked if Lynne would be working with the Governor's Council on the guardianship presentation they will be doing at their upcoming quarterly meeting. Lynne stated she will be there.

Darlene Supplee asked for the percentage of seniors that are addressed through the state in terms of guardianship/conservatorship. Lynne believes it is around 1,700 total individuals who are served through OPA. Darlene felt it would be interesting to know specifically how many of those are seniors for planning purposes. Lynne stated that they can get some numbers, because SDS makes referrals to OPA through Adult Protective Services, but she will make a note to ask if total senior numbers are available.

Chair Sivertsen remarked that with the OPA crisis, it demonstrates the need for workforce development. Jan Engan noted that without access to public guardians, SDS may see more Adult Protective Services referrals.

Jan Engan inquired about legislation regarding people who are legally responsible for adults, and she believes she read language in the bill that adult children can be legally responsible for adult parents. She asked how this can trickle down to require adult children to be responsible for their parents. Lynne Keilman-Cruz stated that there were two bills, one being an adult foster care bill called Adult Host Home, a Governor's bill which they believe will pass. Senator Giessel put forth other legislation on legally responsible individuals, and that bill was specific to 1915(k) Community First Choice (CFC) individuals only. This bill got attached to the Adult Host Home bill to pass it through. The complicating aspect is that there are two different kinds of personal care, the 1905 State Plan Personal Care and the 1915(k) CFC, both Medicaid State Plan services. The federal government said they can do this for legally responsible individuals for CFC, but they cannot do it for the 1905 regular State Plan personal care. Lynne stated that during the pandemic, they allowed legally responsible individuals to provide services under the home and community-based waivers.

Just prior to the end of the emergency declaration, the feds stated that states can apply for an 1115 waiver to allow those regular State Plan services to continue employing legally responsible individuals all the way through November. Alaska applied for that, and they reversed at the last minute to say they will allow legally responsible individuals to provide those services through November.

Lynne stated that people get confused about family caregivers. Under normal circumstances, SDS does allow adult parents to be the provider of adult children as long as they are not the guardian. If they are the guardian, they can get a court order that states they are the only person that can provide the services to their adult child, and they can continue to provide that service.

The legally responsible individual is a person who is either a spouse, a parent of a minor child, or the guardian.

So in summary, the 1115 waiver allows legally responsible people to care for a family member through November for the 1905(a) State Plan services, and because of the legislation, CFC personal care will allow a legally responsible person to provide the care in perpetuity.

WASILLA AREA SENIOR CENTER, INC.

Marlene Munsell shared that WASI's mission is to enable seniors to live as independently as possible for as long as possible, and they do that through many programs. WASI has been voted Best of the Valley by the Mat-Su Valley community for 10 years in a row.

Programs include:

- Nutrition – congregate and Meals on Wheels. Year to date they have provided 96,102 meals to 1,084 unduplicated seniors. On average they provide between 100 to 186 meals a day through congregate meals, and attendance is menu dependent. They also allow meal pick-up service, and that tops out at 50 a day. Meals on Wheels delivers between 230 and 250 meals to seniors at home.
- Transportation – WASI has been offering transportation for a few years, but in October of last year, the program expanded with two vehicles. They offer seniors a ride to lunch in a five-mile radius, and they help seniors with their shopping twice a week. They also provide rides to the doctor and the pharmacy. Starting last October, ridership jumped from 1,500 last year to 7,491 rides this year to date. Transportation is the biggest barrier to seniors in the Mat-Su.
- Healthy Aging – Exercise classes continue to grow at both WASI and Mid-Valley Adult Day Care. They offer classes in person and virtually such as Tai Chi, Strong Seniors, and yoga is offered at the WASI center. They also offer a computer lab and puzzle tables and a variety of classes.
- Gardens and Greenhouses – Purchased with a state of Alaska grant and AARP grant. Seniors select a bed to take care of for the entire summer. The gardens build community, pride, and ownership. This year they are going to try to grow something for WASI in any vacant beds that were not claimed by a senior.
- Senior In-Home Services – 50 to 70 program participants assisted with small chores.
- Housing Management – 176 apartments on the campus: 128 units are for age 62 and older, 8 units are Blueberry Point at Mid-Valley Houston, and 40 units are at Willow House, which is a brand-new building. Next to Willow will be Aspen House.

Mid-Valley Senior Center

In April 2019 WASI acquired Mid-Valley Senior Center. Because they are building a new program of adult day services, they have had a manager on site and have been growing the services. They have 25 seniors come to the center for lunch. A few weeks ago saw the grand opening of the adult day services and their first client starts soon.

Fundraising

Marlene explained that WASI receives grants and holds fundraisers. The biggest fundraiser of the year is the Miles for Meals Fun Run, which will be June 24th this year. They will also be doing a raffle for a day at Knik Glacier with a helicopter ride and dinner for two. Tickets are \$20.

Bob Pawlowski commented that WASI's location is outstanding. It has easy access from several different routes.

Paula Pawlowski was very interested in the gardens as the chair of the board of the Anchorage Senior Center where they just installed 22 raised beds, and she feels they need a fence. Marlene Munsell stated that for most of their gardens, they have not needed a fence, and the seniors installed flashing items on the beds to detract moose.

Chair Sivertsen commented on the funding for the organization and the number of programs they do to serve the large number of people they do. He wondered if the housing helps to fund the operation. Marlene stated that it helps a little bit, but costs are going up and there are many challenges. Her goal and the goal of the board is to make sure they are telling their story and getting community support. All of the staff work together to write grants.

Marlene stated that they have an awesome volunteer base, and right now they have about 6,600 hours of volunteer time. As a part of the volunteerism, they have a group of senior ambassadors who go out in the community and represent the work WASI does and exchange information.

Bob Pawlowski asked about the wait list for housing. Marlene stated that the waitlist is 195 people, and 40 of those will go away when they get the new complex. Jan Engan asked if they have a wait list for the meal programs. Marlene stated that they did have a home-delivered meal wait list back in October, but a month ago they were able to restart service to those people on the wait list and are monitoring the budget as they move forward. She also noted that the membership fee is \$30 per year. The grant-funded exercise classes are free.

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

As the ACoA representative on the Council, Nona Safra reported the following:

Legislative Priorities: Increase efficiencies and protect home and community-based services:

- Better facilitate the Environmental Modification (E-Mod) program with smart home technology, physical accessibility, and remote monitoring to ensure greater independence for the HCBS recipients.
- Increase savings and self-determination with the option for people to direct their own services in a more independent and flexible manner, participant-directed services.
- HCBS Medicaid rate structure. Providers are hurting from an outdated and flawed rate structure that does not cover the cost of doing business in some

service categories resulting in a loss of providers, especially in rural and remote areas or with hard-to-serve individuals like those with behavioral challenges.

- Initiate adult companion services for people with disabilities who have meaningful lives that require non-medical supervision that can be provided in any community setting to avoid isolation and regression. Companion services would facilitate independence, promote community inclusion, and prevent isolation.
- Consider softening or removing any regulatory barriers to HCBS services including routine and repeated evaluations for adults on waivers who experience a disability that is stable and who are well connected to supports and services. Some of this is redundant and unnecessary. If a person on a waiver is at risk of losing their waiver services because a necessary HCBS service cannot be found and delivered for lack of workforce or other barriers, SDS should have emergency power.

Zoom Meetings with Congressional Delegation:

- Asked if they opposed the Medicaid cuts
- Asked that they pass the Better Care, Better Jobs Act
- Asked that they pass the HCBS Access Act
- Asked that they provide funding to address the direct care worker crisis
- Asked that they increase funding for affordable, accessible, and integrated public housing.

Nona Safra let Representative Peltola know that her seat on the Governor's Council is designated for the Alaska Commission on Aging, and that finding a direct service provider is a challenge. In Alaska between 2020 and 2030, the need for new direct care workers will outpace the need for any other job. Alaska alone will need 13.7 percent increase in home healthcare workers. Rep. Peltola seemed surprised by that.

The Council developed a white paper that a partial solution may be to restore the Title III funding formula to the original allotment of 1 percent set in the OAA of 1965. Alaska will never receive more funds using the current .5 percent formula, which negatively affects states such as Alaska that are experiencing a faster growth in the older population. Nona asked the delegation to consider the percentage of the senior population compared to the entire state population as a factor. Since Alaska is a vast state with unconnected communities that faces logistical challenges that other states do not, they should allocate funds with a COLA similar to funds that are paid to the military for areas that are remote in Alaska.

They also spoke about Social Security and asked the delegation to co-sponsor the Stop the Wait Act to eliminate the five-month waiting period for Social Security Disability benefits and immediately provide Medicare coverage for SSDI beneficiaries who are uninsured or unable to afford health insurance. They also asked them to support the following:

- SSI Restoration Act
- SSI Savings Penalty Elimination Act
- Work Without Worry Act
- Marriage Equality for Disabled Adults Act

Nona Safra reported that they asked the delegation to pass the fiscal year 2024 appropriations bill without cuts to funding for education, employment, housing, developmental disability programs, and other programs that support people with disabilities to live and work in communities. They asked that they avoid cuts and harmful changes to programs that provide supports for people with disabilities including Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security, SSI, and SNAP. They also asked that they protect and expand Medicaid because it provides vital healthcare and home and community-based services for people with disabilities to live in the community.

The Council also addressed the criminal/legal system and asked they pass the 911 Community Crisis Responders Act of 2023 as well as the LEAD Initiative bill introduced by Senator Casey that provides grants for training, improving call systems, collecting better data, and fully funded community crisis response, including 24/7 access to mobile crisis units staffed by clinical and peer professionals trained in trauma-informed care.

Nona stated that she chairs the Council's Employment Committee and is part of the Alaska Work Matters Task Force. She expressed her gratitude to Duane Mayes as a champion for people with disabilities and seniors through the MASST program. More employers need to sign onto the MASST program so more seniors can get back into the workforce for job training and relevant skills. The Employment Committee meets quarterly, and her job as chair is to ensure they meet all the goals in the Council's Five-Year State Plan.

The next quarterly meeting of the Governor's Council is June 1st and 2nd, and the last item on the agenda is focused on the guardianship crisis and alternatives. This is open to the public. They are interested in hearing how this issue impacts families and individuals as well as alternatives to traditional guardianship such as Supported Decision Making Agreements (SDMA).

Jan Engan asked if there are non-profit entities in Alaska that solely do guardianship for the disabled population. Nona is not aware of any. Jan noted that in North Dakota, the legislature passed funding for private businesses to take on doing guardianship.

Chair Sivertsen asked about Council priorities for 2024. Nona stated that a lot of what the Council focuses on is special education and early childhood. The majority of the members of the board are parents or people with disabilities, and Nona takes opportunities to remind them that they are all seniors in waiting. The Council discusses cuts to education and Medicaid waivers as well as eliminating the I/DD waiver waitlist. Chair Sivertsen stated that they need to ensure ACoA and the Council are not opposed on issues and that they jointly support priorities in different venues. If Nona receives any information in the upcoming Council meeting that the Commission can assist with, she should let the Commission know.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public appeared before the Commission to provide comment.

STATE PLAN FOR SENIOR SERVICES

Jon Haghayeghi reminded Commissioners of the needs assessment that took place in October and November. That data has been compiled, and demographic data has been updated in the plan. In trying to stay in line with their previous timeline, the Commission has submitted the plan for public comment. During this time they are making some edits, but they are hoping the edits are inconsequential and are mostly grammatical or are updates from SDS.

Staff have worked closely with the consultants up through March, and at that time, the document was handed over so they could update the memos that went into the State Plan as well as incorporate the updated funding formula. The funding formula is now based off of the intent of the OAA and is applied to federal dollars. There is no calculation of state amounts in the State Plan. There is a further breakdown of the amounts that go to each census area as well as all of the sources for all the updated population data.

Jon Haghayeghi stated that over the last few weeks they have been incorporating feedback they have received. They received feedback multiple times from Louise Ryan regarding equity and specificity of actual outcomes, and her overall reaction to the plan has been good. They are hoping to get good feedback from the public regarding the form of the current plan. A link to the document can be found on the notices on ACoA's webpage. The Advisory Committee will be meeting on June 5th where they will be incorporating any additional feedback received by the public, and the plan will be forwarded on for signatures.

Overall, the plan is similar to the previous plan and has been updated with more current verbiage, and an additional goal was added. What makes this State Plan unique nationwide is that by statute, Alaska has the Commission on Aging that stipulates that they will create the State Plan, but the grantee to the State Plan is SDS who administers the funding, so it's a collaborative process. Jon stated that in between plans, he would like to learn more about how SDS grants work and how the OAA is actually implemented so he's not overly reliant on SDS when he has an uncertainty.

During the development of the plan, the Advisory Committee addressed the goals and objectives. They have had a funding formula meeting in which they talked about the background and motivations for investigating a potential change in the formula after this plan.

Jan Engan questioned the use of the term "base allocation" in sections of the plan. Ellen Hackenmueller stated that it is a carryover of language or incorrect terminology from a prior plan. The state distributes funding through the funding formula calculation. She will be reviewing those specific citations.

Paula Pawlowski noted that there is a duplicate page right at the beginning of the plan.

Darlene Supplee remarked that as they get past this plan and start planning for the next one and gathering data, every provider uses a Consumer Characteristic Form, and all of that data goes into SAMS. The data contained therein is vast. Jon can get those

reports, and they can figure out where they want to go and how they can use it for legislative approaches.

Paula Pawlowski asked that the September agenda include a presentation by Lisa Von Bergen so they can see the rich community data contained on the website.

Commissioners requested they be sent the Word document so they can review it before the public comment session. Marty Lange asked Commissioners to send senior-related photos for the final State Plan. Jan Engan suggested contacting AgeNet to request photos from provider agencies.

Commissioners engaged in a conversation that the funding formula should not be changed until the RFPs go out for a new three-year funding cycle for providers because it is damaging to programs when the funding formula is altered mid cycle. Ellen Hackenmueller stated that at the funding formula meeting, the feedback from stakeholders was loud and clear that it was not recommended to do a change in the middle of that three-year cycle. She and Jon have not taken that specific question to Louise yet, but they can run that by her as they go into the implementation phase and see if ACL has specific concerns about that. Ellen believes that if they lay out the implementation timeline and the justification for why they are doing it, there likely won't be any issue with that at the federal level. Darlene Supplee added that for providers to know ahead of time what they will be facing when the funding formula is changed will be extremely helpful in strategizing.

Jon Haghayeghi screen shared the draft State Plan and reviewed the plan with Commissioners highlighting the major changes made from the previous plan including:

- Goals have been better defined
- Leads have been identified for outcome measures
- Languages was added to show inclusivity
- The Social Need, Equity, and Diversity section
- Funding formula Region 4 census area was split into Chugach and Copper River to match the 2020 Census.
- Footnotes were added to the funding formula spreadsheet.

Other than updating the funding formula and the associated appendices, what is left is to catalog all of the public comments that they receive and put them at the end and discuss how they will be addressed.

Jan Engan noted a discrepancy between the total funding formula allocation and the total Title III funding listed in the chart on Appendix B. Ellen noted that SDS has other federal funds in Title III that don't get added into the funding formula spreadsheet which is specific to one program allocation. They will double check that the footnotes clearly delineate that.

Chair Sivertsen requested a timeline document outlining the efforts it took to accomplish the State Plan because it will be useful to be able to do it in house in the future and not have to hire a contractor.

COMMENTS

Darlene Supple thanked Chair Sivertsen and Paula Pawlowski for the amount of work that they accomplish. Jon Haghayeghi thanked Chair Sivertsen and Paula Pawlowski for having his back whenever he has needed it.

RECESS

Chair Sivertsen recessed the meeting at 2:10 p.m.

SITE VISITS

Commissioners engaged in site visits to WASI Mid-Valley Adult Day Care facility in Houston, Alaska.

Thursday, May 25, 2023

CALL TO ORDER – 9:00 a.m.

ROLL CALL

ADDRESS BY MAT-SU BOROUGH MAYOR EDNA DeVRIES

Mayor Edna DeVries appeared before the Commission and remarked on her previous service on the Commission. She welcomed Commissioners to the Mat-Su and thanked them for the work they do on behalf of seniors.

Mayor DeVries reported that the Mat-Su Borough is growing by leaps and bounds, and the population has gone up 25 percent in the last 10 years. The largest sector of the population increase comes from seniors, many of whom are looking to locate into single-story homes. Mat-Su has some senior housing and market-based senior housing, so there are options, but there isn't enough. The Mat-Su Borough is experiencing a housing shortage for the entire population. Property value assessments continue to rise, and keeping property taxes low has been a challenge.

Mayor DeVries stated that last year on the ballot, the Mat-Su had an initiative to increase the senior and disabled veteran's property tax exemption up to \$264,000. The average price for a house in the Valley is \$359,000, so this does not meet the average price, but it was an improvement from the previous \$218,000 exemption.

Mayor DeVries once again thanked the Commission and noted the work they do is very important because the senior population is expanding all over the state.

Paula Pawlowski asked Mayor DeVries to speak to senior transportation options in the Valley. Mayor DeVries stated that seniors in Palmer and Wasilla have van options that they take to doctors appointments. The borough does not have transportation similar to what the Municipality of Anchorage has, but they do have a private contractor that does transit within the borough as well as takes workers back and forth to Anchorage on a set schedule. The private contractor received grants to put bus stops up in a few locations around Palmer, but there wasn't enough activity to run regular routes along those stops, so they have gone to a call-in appointment system.

Mayor DeVries stated that because the population of the borough exceeded 100,000, they are now considered urban rather than rural. With that comes a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and one of the facets of that is transit. She noted that

the private contractor is now on the federal fiscal year, but the borough's portion of the transit won't be considered until next year, so there will be a gap that the borough will have to make some decisions on.

Every month there is a Mayor Managers meeting among the four governments, Wasilla, Palmer, the Mat-Su Borough, and Houston, and they gather to discuss upcoming challenges. They were discussing transit, and a program was mentioned where taxi drivers in the Valley are getting vouchers to provide transportation for seniors. She is hoping something like that can continue.

Bob Pawlowski noted that the Mat-Su Valley is approximately the size of West Virginia, and it's very puzzling that having 100,000 people qualifies this region as urban. Mayor DeVries stated that it's a federal mandate, and they have no choice about the designation.

Mayor DeVries stated that they are working with the Congressional delegation on trying to get a Social Security branch office in the Valley for the seniors since the Valley has been designated an urban region.

Chair Sivertsen asked if the Mat-Su has a sales tax. Mayor DeVries stated that the City of Palmer and the City of Wasilla have a sales tax, but the borough does not. It has been on the ballot three times in the last 10 years, and it's always been voted down. The borough receives property tax, which is the biggest income contributor for the borough. Neither sales tax in Palmer nor Wasilla has a senior exemption.

Bob Pawlowski remarked that he is glad to see barge work going on at Point MacKenzie. Mayor DeVries noted they have received a couple of EDA grants to do some repairs on the sleeves. She is a big proponent for the Knik Arm crossing because it's something the borough needs. The commissioner for the Department of Transportation noted that because of all the infrastructure funding, he has never seen as many grants out there as there is now for projects like the Knik Arm crossing. The Mat-Su Borough has been unable to convince the Anchorage mayor or the Assembly that the Knik Arm crossing is as good for Anchorage as it is for the Valley.

DISCUSSION OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNOR

Chair Sivertsen opened up a discussion about a Commission-sponsored letter to the Governor. In the past, they have sent their letter to the Governor after the budget has come out, which is poor timing because it gives them little opportunity to provide recommendations on funding for senior issues. He would like to discuss the timing of the letter and how to frame their recommendations.

Jan Engan asked if a list of bills that relate to senior issues has been compiled that will be continued in the second session of the two-year legislative session. Marge Stoneking spoke to what AARP is recommending and supporting that they expect to continue on into the second session:

- Three healthcare licensing compacts to reduce the barrier to hiring out-of-state people to address the shortage of workforce in healthcare and therefore healthcare access for seniors:

- Nursing Licensure Multistate Compact – the administration is in support of this compact. 1,500 new nurses are needed in Alaska each year, and the university is only able to produce 324 yearly.
- Physical Therapy Licensure Compact
- Audiology and Speech Language Pathology Interstate Compact.
- SB 88 – Public Employees’ Retirement System, which is a priority bill of the Senate majority. Senator Giessel has indicated that there will be work on this bill during the interim. AARP is a long-time supporter of pensions and retirement programs for a secure and dignified retirement for all. This was raised to a priority for AARP this year because the state employee workforce is impacting services.
- SB 135, Alaska Work and Save Program introduced by Senator Bill Wielechowski at the end of the session. This is a retirement savings program that is sponsored by and housed at state government to provide a workplace retirement program for employers that don’t provide their own. This is a program that exists in 17 other states.
- SB 104, Civil Legal Services Fund sponsored by Senator Dunbar which changes the statutory formula for the percentage of legal fees going to fund civil legal services from 10 percent to 25 percent. When this fund was initially set up, it was set at 25 but reduced to 10 during negotiations because the demand was unknown. It has become apparent that the demand far outweighs the capacity to assist low-income constituents with civil legal services, and seniors make up a good portion of the clientele.
- HB 145, Payday Loan Reform sponsored by Representative Wright. This legislation impacts low-income Alaskans. AARP is increasingly hearing from social services partners that seniors are coming to them for help with payday loans. Payday loans have special treatment under state law currently that doesn’t cap them at the APR percentage rate that all other small loans are. This legislation would repeal those special exclusion rules and cap the APR and fees at 36 percent as well as add an anti-invasion provision to capture online payday lenders.
- HB 196 – Representative Mina sponsored legislation to change the eligibility system for food stamps, although it could be expanded to all need-based systems. It would streamline the system so that if a person was already eligible for one program, they would be automatically eligible for others they qualify for.
- SB 138 – Senate State Affairs Committee omnibus election reform bill. This legislation has been negotiated on both sides and is expected to pass. Provisions AARP is supportive of seeing include ballot curing for absentee ballots, repealing the witness signature and including signature verification instead, providing postage paid on all absentee ballots, and permanent absentee registration.

Chair Sivertsen stated that the Commission will keep an eye on these bills for next year. Paula Pawlowski thanked Marge Stoneking for all her help with the legislative watch this year. Paula appreciates the partnership with the Commission, AARP, and AgeNet and looks forward to continued collaboration.

Marge Stoneking noted that AARP will be sending their own communications to the Governor shoring up the budget priorities AARP supported this year that are in the budget in the hopes that they will stay in the budget. These priorities include the increase to Senior Community Grants and Independent Living Centers as well as the resource allocation tool project that is in a funding increment to SDS to help them better allocate Medicaid waiver services funding and would allow them to stand up a participant-directed care model of service delivery. Chair Sivertsen asked that Marge forward that letter to Jon Haghayeghi for dissemination to the Commission.

Chair Sivertsen suggested the Commission consider writing two letters to the Governor, one as a follow up to the legislative session and one at the beginning of the session.

Jan Engan remarked that home-delivered meals experienced huge growth during the pandemic, and all sectors are looking at losing the funding that supported that. She suggested advocating for home-delivered meals, particularly given the increase in the senior population and the increase in the 80+ demographic and the increased need for home-delivered meals. Paula Pawlowski believes that is well worth looking at because home-delivered and congregate meals come through the Nutrition and Transportation grant through the feds to the state; however, the extra money was COVID money. She noted that the Anchorage Senior Center doesn't do congregate meals, they have a café, but they began providing take-out meals during COVID, and now they realize their base of seniors are out there and still need the food. They might be able to work with AgeNet to get some of those figures from the senior centers.

Paula Pawlowski suggested that the Commission do a white paper on topics such as transportation, nutrition, home caregiving, et cetera, by utilizing data from the State Plan. She also believes they need to look at the budget items in July to have a discussion with Director Newman in August before SDS's budget goes to the Governor. They can then forward their letter of recommendations to the Governor before he puts out his budget in December.

Chair Sivertsen noted that intertwined with the congregate and home-delivered meals is the issue with the Food Banks, because the senior centers receive hundreds of pounds of food from the Food Banks. Food security has been an issue across the state.

Bob Pawlowski remarked that as they talk about food insecurity, they need to consider transportation accessibility as well, particularly in areas like the Kenai Peninsula and the Mat-Su Borough. Road maintenance is a Department of Transportation (DOT) issue. Chair Sivertsen remembered back to their site visit to Anchor Point noting that DOT is responsible for the main highways, but they often plow in driveways that can be very long and there is no option for the senior resident to get out of their driveway. Access in the winter is a concern.

Nona Safra shared that she is seeing more and more seniors utilize the Food Bank, and the line is mostly seniors over 65 who are getting there by taxi. Some of the items at the Food Bank are provided by a grant to serve families with children, and those items are not available to seniors. The items included in the boxes for seniors are difficult to prepare meals from, and they are not nutritionally balanced. The amounts the seniors receive are also more restrictive because there are so many people. Food insecurity is

very real on the Kenai Peninsula. Congregate meals are offered at senior centers across the Kenai Peninsula, and Anchor Point has started breakfast four days a week because the restaurant that serves breakfast in town closed. They offer dinner one night a week, and that is all that is offered for congregate meals. Homer offers congregate meals, but there is no more salad bar. Seniors have to have a hot meal. Homer's Meals on Wheels can go a certain radius around Homer, but it does not go as far as Anchor Point. The Meals on Wheels in Ninilchik comes down to Mile 150, so there is a gap in service to Anchor Point, and the Anchor Point Senior Center doesn't offer home-delivered meals. The Kenai Peninsula Borough is the second fastest growing borough in the state, and yet there are people that live near the bigger population centers on the Kenai that cannot get those services.

Nona stated that during COVID in Anchor Point, they were offering home-delivered meals, which afforded them an opportunity to check to see if seniors' driveways were being shoveled for emergencies as well as doing wellness checks. This is no longer happening. The Kenai borough is the size of New Hampshire and Maryland put together, and there is no transportation to get from one part to another. Taxi vouchers issued in Homer can take riders almost to Anchor Point, but not to the senior center because it is outside the zone. The \$5 taxi voucher becomes a \$45 ride. The Homer transportation group is looking at what has been successful, which is the bus system owned by the Ninilchik Traditional Council. They are running accessible buses that go back and forth between Soldotna and Homer, and the bus driver is wonderful. Kenaitze is going to offer bus service from Sterling north. There is the CARTS system in Soldotna and Kenai that has accessible buses that aren't being used because the CARTS schedules aren't available when people need them. The 5311 grant has been reopened, but providers need to be a current grantee to apply, which means that new people who want to solve the problem cannot apply. The transportation group has been in touch with the federal and state delegations to try to change that so new people can apply for these grants and get a real transportation system working on the Kenai Peninsula.

Darlene Supplee noted that the Senior Snapshot comes out in January, so they can't wait for the Snapshot in order to send recommendations to the Governor. She further noted that the NTS grant is the true way the state can actually wrap services around seniors with a percentage that matches the growth. She also noted that it's unrealistic to think senior centers can do congregate meals. It's cheaper for the Fairbanks Senior Center to deliver a meal than it is to pick up somebody and bring them to the Senior Center. Darlene explained that senior centers can provide multiple services through Meals on Wheels, and the key is ensuring these organizations have enough funding to provide these wrap-around services that help get seniors into the system for whatever services they qualify for. A meal is more than a meal. She noted that none of the senior centers are going to be able to handle the growth of congregate meals, and they have to be able to think outside the box if nutrition is their primary focus. Darlene also noted that this year's increase to senior grants is the first in 10 years. Every year they need to advocate for increases to that.

Jan Engan stated that years ago there was a federal program called United We Ride, and most states were involved in that. She believes they need to start asking questions

about whatever happened to that coordination within communities. In other states she worked in, DOT was coordinating and facilitating that.

Jan also believes they need to advocate for financial security, particularly if taxes will increase at the state level. Bob Pawlowski shared his concern about a statewide sales tax and the disincentive it would be for military members retiring to Alaska.

Bob Pawlowski does not feel they need to wait for the Senior Snapshot to send the letter of recommendations to the Governor. He thinks it's very important they send the Governor a white paper on senior veterans and the need to coordinate with the federal government for increasing federal funding for veteran programs.

Paula Pawlowski suggested they hold a statewide teleconference in July to talk about food security and the Nutrition and Transportation grant and how that affects senior centers. They can ask senior centers and Food Banks to participate in this and can have Ellen Hackenmueller as their expert to have a listening session that would give them information to send to the Governor. Chair Sivertsen stated that they will need to develop a format for the summit. Paula Pawlowski will work on a schedule with Jon and Marty, and they will tie in Director Newman. Darlene Supplee requested they ask Director Newman how much they will be losing in ARPA funds in the NTS grant. Commissioners brainstormed other departments and partners that focus on seniors that they should invite, and transportation was suggested. Darlene cautioned that nutrition and transportation should be two separate meetings. Chair Sivertsen suggested that every few months they could have different meetings with singular topic areas. Paula feels that this will replace the legislative teleconference, and they will get a lot more information out of it. Chair Sivertsen also suggested inviting someone from the Governor's office to listen in.

Chair Sivertsen asked for the public in attendance at the meeting to offer comment on the discussion.

Brenda Shelden noted that the bylaws at Article 7 under "Committees" states that all committees may include persons not members of the Commission with the exception of Executive and Nominating Committees. Brenda suggested having people who are boots on the ground around the state participate in Commission committees. Bob Pawlowski agreed and noted the strong relationship between the Pioneer Home board and the Alaska Veteran Advisory Commission. He believes there are other commissions that could offer some beneficial partnerships in committees. Chair Sivertsen also agreed, and he noted that they already have a list of providers that responded to the Provider Survey, so they have a base to start partnering with.

Fred Agree expressed his appreciation for the work of the Commission.

Jim McCall agreed with the conversations regarding the NTS and the issues that surround it. He noted that he is receiving phone calls from assisted living home operators who are burned out or cannot find enough people to work in their facility. He sees this a major issue developing for smaller assisted living providers, and it will have ramifications for senior assisted living as they move forward. Bob Pawlowski agrees and believes this demonstrates the value of the compacts; however, traveling

specialists are more expensive, and it will increase the rates. Plus, they will need special accommodations, which hospitals may be able to afford, but assisted living homes may not. Jim McCall remarked that a lot of the issue lies with national organizations coming in to Alaska with the ability to pay higher rates and attracting staff away from the smaller homes that pay lower wages. He stated that this is a quiet issue that is rippling throughout the industry that will come to a head in the future. Paula Pawlowski stated that nutrition and transportation are their top two priorities, but third is workforce development.

LEGISLATIVE AUDIT DISCUSSION

Chair Sivertsen stated that the Commission undergoes a sunset audit every eight years in which they are required to answer questions in regards to activities of the Commission. There was quite a bit of data the auditors requested that staff didn't have access to. Working with Paula Pawlowski, they were able to access some of the historical information they needed. Chair Sivertsen noted that there will be a process through the legislature as to whether or not to continue or sunset the Commission. One of the caveats to that is that under the OAA, there is a requirement that there is an advisory board within the state to meet the requirements of the Older Americans Act, which is the role the Commission fills.

Jon Haghayeghi stated that the audit process has been ongoing for several months through a series of requests for more and more information. They have been drafting responses to the latest set of questions, which he would like to review with Commissioners today to receive feedback.

Jon took a moment to thank Chair Sivertsen and Paula Pawlowski for their work on the audit. He noted that staff have developed a new file system that is currently in SharePoint. They create monthly folders that include the presentations and whatever they worked on for that month, and the folder will be uploaded to SDS's network so they have a record of all of their presentations. They are also working on identifying gaps that the Commission should provide that they can address over the next several years. He stated that staff are going to produce a calendar that accounts for not just the time and expected deliverables but also when they should get started on projects.

Jon reviewed the audit questions, and responses were displayed on the screen. He asked for additional feedback beyond responses already drafted.

1. What has the Commission accomplished/worked on during the timeframe of July 1st, 2019 through January 31st, 2022? Please describe the activity of the Commission during the time frame.

a. Please provide a detailed list of all events and accomplishments from this time period.

- Bob Pawlowski felt it was important to highlight the collaboration between the Alaska Pioneer Home Advisory Board and the Alaska Commission on Aging where a representative is at each of their meetings.
- Chair Sivertsen stated that Commissioners have served on the selection committees for Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority Trustees.

- Nona Safra stated that ACoA has a statutory seat on the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education.

b. Please provide specifics about the Commission's collaborative efforts and the education and outreach events. Please include names of organizations.

- No additional feedback was offered.

2. During the timeframe of July 1, 2019 through January 31, 2023, please provide the recommendations made to the Governor and legislature (per AS 44.29.790(a)(2)).

a. Please provide the information by fiscal year.

- Bob Pawlowski stated that it is important to note in here that the Commission has functioned as well as it can in the face of unforeseen vacancies. The recommendation to the Governor and the legislature is to ensure that appointments are expeditiously made to keep the knowledge level as broad as possible.
- Jan Engan mentioned that the Lt. Governor and Chief of Staff attended one of the quarterly meetings and had lunch with the Commission.
- Paula Pawlowski stated that the Governor also attended the meeting in Fairbanks.

b. Have there been any recommendations specifically regarding the Commission's own statutes? Were these recommendations, and if so, why?

- Jim McCall felt that in the written response that Boards and Commissions denied them two additional seats, they should use the agency names of AHFC and DOL&WD instead of personal names. He also suggested they think about adding Department of Transportation. Jim also noted that the way he reads this, adding the new seats to the Commission could have been a statutory change that would not have routed through Boards and Commissions.
- Bob Pawlowski noted that the mission statement is clear in ACoA's bylaws, but it is not clear in the statute.
- Lesley Thompson stated that Boards and Commission at first agreed the Commission could have those two positions, then they called her back to say that ACoA's statutes don't allow it, so they will have to change the statutes. The Commission determined that they didn't want to open up their statutes at that time because of the potential for dramatic change to the statutes once opened.
- Jim McCall stated that nutrition, transportation, and housing have always been at the forefront of comments the Commission receives, and at what point will the Commission address their statutes to include those agencies that have a vested interest in those issues? The statutes haven't been looked at in 40 years. He also noted that the issues of the Commission don't go to the AHFC board because there is no formal relationship between the two groups.

- Jon Haghayeghi noted that there are parts of ACoA's statutes that are very specific, so that may be some motivation behind the question.
- Jim McCall stated that ACoA is doing a tremendous amount of education about many issues that impact seniors when they are required to participate formally with the designated roles. But in the example of DOT, does a representative from DOT understand the issues as well as everyone on the Commission? If they were sitting at the table and could hear the comments that are shared, they could understand how far reaching the impacts are.
- Darlene Supplee stated that those seats hold departments accountable.

3. Please provide how long and how many vacancies there were for the executive director position and the rural outreach coordinator between July 1, 2019 through January 31, 2023?

a. Please provide who filled this position in between vacancies.

- Paula Pawlowski would like to see Denise Daniello's time be her actual employment dates with the Commission starting in 2006. Jon highlighted that the reporting period starts July 1, 2019. Paula also noted that while Lesley Thompson was in acting status, she was doing two positions at one time, so not everything got done.
- Jan Engan asked if they are accounting for the current vacant position. Jon stated that the position has been reclassified, and they should be recruiting for it any day now. Jan believes that the vacancy and reclassification should be noted in here. Paula noted that the question only asked for executive director and outreach coordinator.

b. Please explain what impact, if any, the vacancies had on Commission operations and activities.

- Darlene Supplee asked if the Commission could function without staff. Paula Pawlowski stated that they could not. Jan Engan noted that they wouldn't have access to the e-mails and records. Jon stated that Director Newman could technically be the Commissioner that was the administrative access point, and the Commission would still be subject to the Open Meetings Act; whereas, staff are not.
- Lesley Thompson stated that at the last audit eight years ago, the audit got stuck in Senate Finance where they took away two of the Commission's four positions. ACoA never got back their administrative position, and SDS did some of the work. They also took away the planner II position for about five years, so it was just her and Denice for four years working 10 to 12 hours a day.

4. Please provide the status of the State Plan and when it will be submitted.

- This response had been reviewed by Ellen Hackenmueller and Director Newman, and Commissioners provided no additional feedback.

5. The Commission statute states the Commission shall prepare and submit to the Governor and legislature an annual analysis and evaluation of the

services that are provided to older Alaskans. Please describe how the Commission is meeting this requirement. Please provide the annual analyses/evaluations for each fiscal year within the timeframe July 1, 2019 through January 31, 2023.

- Jon will send the Commission a copy of this questions and response document as well as a copy of the State Plan. Commissioners should provide feedback on this question as soon as possible so Jon can get the responses back to the auditors.
- Bob Pawlowski feels it's very important they include the Senior Snapshot in this response because it's a communication tool for the legislature for what is happening on an annual basis.
- Paula Pawlowski noted that the Annual Report was a casualty of staff turnover and COVID.
- Lesley Thompson stated that she would be happy to look over the document as well. She also noted that documents that are distributed at ACoA meetings are supposed to be posted on the website. She noted that in the last audit, they were dinged for not posting documents correctly.

6. Per statute, the Commission shall encourage the development of municipal commissions serving older Alaskans in community-oriented programs and services for the benefit of older Alaskans. During the time frame of July 1st, 2019 through January 31st, 2023, list the activities that the Commission has accomplished that meet this requirement.

- Jan Engan stated that one example is Mat-Su Council on Aging.
- Paula Pawlowski noted the Anchorage Senior Advisory Committee.
- Darlene Supplee noted the Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) in Fairbanks.
- Jon Haghayeghi noted the quarterly meetings where they do outreach and provide recommendations to providers.
- Bob Pawlowski noted that when the Commission does a visit to a community, the activities are often located in the senior center or multiple senior centers in the area. Jan Engan added that they should also include the site visits.
- Darlene Supplee stated they should include the cross pollination of Commissioners serving on multiple councils and committees in their communities and statewide.

Additional Remarks

Jim McCall mentioned that AHFC and ACoA's statutes are the only statutes in state government that are specifically enumerated or connected. Since they are directly enumerated in the statutes, why would they not enumerate in this response? With the housing endeavors that AHFC has accomplished over this time period, why wouldn't they specifically talk about the formal relationship and include those things as activities they have collaborated on? He also noted that he was interviewed during the last sunset audit, but he has not been interviewed for this audit. Bob Pawlowski appreciated Jim bringing up the subject of being connected in statute.

Jim McCall also noted that this appears to be a much more in-depth audit question and answer than they have historically seen. Paula Pawlowski agreed.

Darlene Supplee suggested switching some of the more passive responses in the audit to be more active, because the Commission has accomplished these activities.

Paula Pawlowski stated that Jon will submit the finalized responses, and there will most likely be another go around of questions to the Commission. At that point they may also reach out to partners and ask questions. She noted that they will need to find champions in the legislature for this process, and they will need to work with Director Newman to determine the path this audit will follow.

Darlene Supplee suggested they look at the budget and divide their activities into dollars so they can continue to justify the work they do.

Lesley Thompson noted that although the responses frequently mentioned that work was not accomplished due to staffing, the only thing they didn't get done were the annual reports. She believes it should be mentioned that Gordon Glaser as chair volunteered a tremendous amount of time helping her, and all the Commissioners stepped up to take on responsibilities and put in a lot of time. She stated that this is a hard-working board that deserves to give themselves the credit they deserve.

Jon Haghayeghi stated that he was unable to find the statutory language explaining that ACoA is a statutory advisor to the Trust. Lesley suggested that it might be in the Trust's statutes.

CALENDAR

- The September 18 – 19, 2023 meeting location is yet to be determined. Staff will come up with options for Commissioners.
- November 28 – 29, 2023 via Zoom.

FINAL COMMENTS

Jim McCall remarked on the debt ceiling default and the ramifications including: Impacts to Social Security checks and food stamps, approximately 40 percent of the state budget is paid for with federal dollars, 15,000 Alaskans employed by the federal government will be impacted, state or federal tourist attractions closing down, federal fisheries being impacted, and development projects being impacted as well. Paula Pawlowski stated that if the U.S. does default, Commissioners should be prepared to gather information from their communities about the impacts to seniors.

ADJOURN

Acting Chair Paula Pawlowski closed the meeting at 12:20.

SITE VISITS

Commissioners engaged in site visits to Palmer Pioneer Home and Maple Springs Assisted Living.