

Commission on Aging - Advisory Board Minutes

Tuesday, February 4th, 2025

9:00 a.m.

COA Conference Room

DRAFT: 3/18/2025

APPROVED:

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at the Commission on Aging Office, 1609 Park Drive, Traverse City, MI, by Chair, Lana Payne.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Dennis Mann	Member	Present	
Marilyn Jaquish	Member	Present	
Andy Hoort	Member	Absent	
Lana Payne	Director	Present	
Emily Rice	Member	Present	
Ashlea Walter	County Commissioner	Absent	
Penny Zika	Member	Present - Virtual	
Muriel Peavler	Member	Present	
Lacey Edgecomb	Member	Present - Virtual	

Staff Present: Renee Woessner, Office Coordinator

Guests: None

ROLL CALL

Renee Woessner took roll call.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Motion to approve the agenda as presented

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVED:	Peavler
SECONDED:	Rice
AYES:	Mann, Payne, Rice, Zika, Peavler, Edgecomb
NAYS:	None

MINUTES APPROVAL

Motion to approve the Minutes of December 3rd

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVED:	Rice
SECONDED:	Edgecomb
AYES:	Mann, Payne, Rice, Zika, Peavler, Edgecomb
NAYS:	None

SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

COA Advisory Board Membership

- Welcome New Members!
 - Introductions of new members: Dr. Dennis Mann and Marilyn Jaquish.
- Advisory Board Membership List
 - The updated membership list was reviewed and distributed.
- Election of Advisory Board Chair and Vice Chair
 - Per GTCOA Advisory Board Bylaws, Director Payne is automatically elected as Board Chair.
 - Member Muriel Peavler nominated Member Emily Rice for re-election as Vice Chair. The nomination was unanimously approved by all members.
- 2025 Advisory Board Schedule
 - The 2025 Advisory Board Schedule was approved and is available on the GTCOA website.
- COA Confidentiality Statements
 - Members were reminded to review and sign the COA Confidentiality Statements.

OLD BUSINESS

GTCOA Staffing Updates

- Wages for COA Homemaker Aide positions have increased significantly over the past three years, attracting stronger candidates. Although some initial hires did not work out, two recent hires with in-home senior care experience are performing well. Each new hire allows 50 clients to be removed from the waitlist, which has dropped from over 300 to just over 200. Three full-time positions remain, with two candidates currently being interviewed.
- After relocating to our shared space, the office no longer answers phones in the reception area due to HIPAA concerns. To address staffing shortages, a part-time front desk position was approved. A new hire with a wealth of experience will start on the 24th. All other staffing needs are currently met.
- Direct Care Worker Pay has been released, and current COA staff have received retroactive payments for 2020–2024. Payments will now be monthly, at a current rate of \$3.40 per hour.
- In April 2024, three staffing upgrades were requested for the 2025 budget but were not included. The County Administrator supports presenting two of these requests to the Board of Commissioners in March (one request was approved last fall). The two

requests include creating a team lead position for Outdoor Services and transitioning the Office Coordinator role to an Office Manager to improve supervision of office staff and work-flow efficiency. Both proposals received unanimous support from attendees, with plans to revisit adding a supervisor when the Outdoor Services crew expands in future.

Project Alpha

- The Commission on Aging is involved in discussions about relocating its Outdoor Services operations to a new facility as part of a county initiative, with potential funding through a bond issue. The Department of Public Works (DPW) is also deciding whether to join this plan, and their board's decision is pending. The current facility, which includes a garage built with millage dollars and the adjacent old animal control building, is inadequate. Growing the program and adding staff is contingent on securing a new, central location. Further updates will follow as decisions unfold.

Medication Management Program

- The GTCOA is transitioning away from the Medication Management program, and this decision has been extensively reviewed. Concerns include not only liability but client safety. To ease the transition, LPNs will assist clients by contacting doctors and pharmacies to update prescriptions and ensure continuity of care.

NEW BUSINESS

COA 2025 Fee for Services Scale

- The 2025 fee scale for the Commission on Aging is based on income tiers, with those at or below 200% of the federally-mandated poverty level receiving services for free. The scale is divided between single and two-person households, and services are billed per visit. Approximately 75% of clients receive free services, while those who decline to disclose income are placed in the highest tier level. Funding primarily comes from millage revenue, with significant donations also supporting emergency and heating assistance programs. Clients receiving free services are also eligible for financial assistance. Even clients who pay for services receive them at a significantly reduced rate compared to hiring similar services privately.

Transportation Program

- Per client allowances for transportation assistance have been increased for 2025. The goal is to assist individuals with transportation needs by offering a significant increase in vouchers, up to \$120 per person per month or \$360 per quarter. This increase ensures clients can afford multiple trips for non-emergency medical appointments or other necessary errands, and will provide the COA a better understanding of the actual demand for transportation assistance. Previously, the voucher system was limited to \$40 per month, which did not reflect the full extent of the need. The program allowance increase will provide flexibility, as people can use the vouchers for any travel need, not just medical visits. The GTCOA is seeking new contracts to add additional

transportation options to the program, and there are ongoing discussions about whether it may be more cost-effective to operate a dedicated vehicle for transportation. While purchasing a vehicle isn't a feasible option right now, maintaining the program and exploring cost-effective alternatives is the priority. In the future, efforts will continue to assess the costs of the transportation program, ensuring that it meets the community's needs effectively.

Personal Vehicle Allowances

- County Administration is supportive of the COA exploring the potential of offering a personal vehicle allowance for staff who use their own vehicles for work. Staff currently receive mileage reimbursement, but frequent driving for client visits leads to significant expenses for items like tires, brakes, and insurance. A Personal Vehicle Allowance would help staff cover these costs without adjusting overall pay scales. The possibility of a vehicle fleet was dismissed due to cost and parking constraints. The allowance would provide relief for in-home workers who drive regularly, addressing the challenges of using personal vehicles for work-related tasks.

Certified Healthcare Facility for Certified Nursing Assistant CEUs

- GTCOA is now recognized as a Certified Healthcare Facility for fulfilling CNAs' continuing education requirements.

Safe Harbor/Senior Homelessness

- There is a significant shortage of affordable housing for seniors locally, and while some organizations are working on solutions, progress has been slow. A meeting scheduled for the end of February aims to gather information and develop strategies. To qualify for assistance, seniors often need to be chronically homeless, which is a barrier for many who need help earlier. The current focus on workforce housing has further marginalized seniors, leaving seniors without the resources they need, particularly those without access to technology or the internet. Efforts are underway to create a comprehensive list of available senior housing and to improve coordination between agencies. Another key issue is housing accessibility; many seniors struggle with multi-story buildings due to the lack of elevators, making it difficult for them to live independently. COA Director will be involved in future meetings regarding housing for low-income seniors.

2025 Grand Traverse County Senior Expo

- Discussion is ongoing around date and location of the proposed 2025 Senior Expo.

Senior Loneliness & Isolation

- The issue of senior loneliness and isolation, which significantly impacts health, was discussed, with plans to revisit it in future meetings. An all-staff training on Martin Luther King Day helped identify clients who are particularly lonely, and efforts are underway to address this concern. The CHS Senior Companion Program receives millage funding of \$25,000 annually for Grand Traverse County seniors, but there is a shortage of senior volunteers to match with isolated seniors, leading to the idea of recruiting non-senior volunteers for companionship. Later in the year, the team plans to

collaborate with organizations like the Senior Center, which has a strong volunteer pool. In the meantime, nursing staff will visit seniors on the isolation list when possible, and other workers will be sent to visit if their appointments are canceled. The team remains committed to addressing the issue and is passionate about this work.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT (3 minutes per person)

None

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 11:00 A.M.

Minutes available by contacting the Grand Traverse County Commission on Aging office by telephone at (231) 922-4688, and by mail at the following address: 1615 Park Drive, Traverse City, MI 49686.

RCW/rcw
Revised: ljp