



COMMISSION ON AGING
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Commission on Aging - Advisory Board Minutes

Tuesday, April 1, 2025

9:00 a.m.

COA Conference Room

DRAFT: 5/14/2025

APPROVED: 6/3/2025

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	Absent	
Andy Hoort	Member	Present	
Lana Payne	Director	Present	
Emily Rice	Member	Present	
Ashlea Walter	County Commissioner	Present	
Penny Zika	Member	Present - Virtual	
Muriel Peavler	Member	Present	
Lacey Edgecomb	Member	Present	

Staff Present: Renee Woessner, Office Manager. Lisa Ferguson, Program Supervisor.

Guests: Nate Alger, County Administrator. Chris Forsyth, Deputy County Administrator.

ROLL CALL

Renee Woessner took roll call.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Motion to approve the agenda as presented

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

MINUTES APPROVAL

Motion to approve the Minutes of February 4, 2025

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

SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS

Project Alpha Overview – Chris Forsyth, Deputy County Administrator

- Deputy County Administrator Chris Forsyth provided an update on Project Alpha, a long-term initiative to develop a centralized facility supporting the Commission on Aging's Outdoor Services and County Facilities. It will replace outdated buildings, improve efficiency, and provide shared meeting and maintenance space. Possible financing options were discussed and could potentially include the sale of the Outdoor Services garage on Keystone.

OLD BUSINESS

GTCOA Staffing Updates

- Since the last meeting, several key staffing changes have been implemented. Effective March 10th, a long-serving Outdoor Services worker was promoted to Lead, moving from Grade C to E, adding structure and preparing for future succession. The Office Coordinator was also promoted to Office Manager, reducing the director's direct reports from 15 to 7 and shifting the role to salaried with an annual increase of \$10,700. Additionally, two new homemaker aides have been hired and are receiving excellent feedback. Recruitment remains slow but is not believed to be pay-related. A part-time front desk employee has also been hired and is thriving in the new role.

Medication Management Program

- The department has officially concluded its medication management service, a decision made with careful consideration. Most clients have transitioned successfully, with some finding that simpler systems like Thompson Pharmacy “blister packs” meet their needs. A small number of these clients face challenges with blister packs and self-administration. These cases are being monitored closely, and alternate solutions (including Nursing Visits) are being explored. The transition has also allowed for better identification of clients who may no longer be safe living alone due to medication-related risks.

Personal Vehicle Allowances

- A county vehicle fleet was ruled out due to cost and parking limitations. Staff continue using personal vehicles for work, but current mileage reimbursement is possibly insufficient given frequent rural travel and increased maintenance needs. A tiered monthly allowance, based on mileage, is being considered for the 2026 budget, with more details expected at the June Advisory Board meeting.

Senior Expo 2025

- The originally planned large-scale 2025 Senior Expo has been canceled due to high costs, limited venue availability, and minimal return on effort for both vendors and attendees. COA proposes launching quarterly, topic-specific mini expos at the new Senior Center instead, focusing on areas like elder law and home services. Planning is also underway to expand and improve Senior Day at the Fair, which has historically been a success.

Direct Care Worker Pay – previous COA staff

- All back pay (2020–2024) has been issued to current and former staff. Going forward, direct care worker payments are issued monthly and funded by the state. The program is now a permanent part of State of Michigan funding.

COA Fee For Services Scale

- The team is reviewing the current fee scale, which is outdated and overly complex. A simpler, standardized system (e.g., \$10/\$20/\$30 tiers) is being considered to improve clarity and fairness. Data and proposed changes will be presented in advance of the 2026 budget.

NEW BUSINESS

Senior Housing Exchange

- COA is exploring solutions to senior housing shortages, including shared housing models and partnerships with developers building low-income senior communities. Meetings with the City Housing Commission and local partners are underway. Rising evictions and rent hikes underscore the urgency.

Senior Loneliness & Isolation

- A new Companionship Visit service is underway, with staff using available time to check in on 35 (current) identified clients. Long-term goals include a volunteer-based model in collaboration with the Senior Center. Alternative names like “Community Outreach” are being considered to reduce stigma.

Senior Apartment Complexes

- Bed bug infestations persist at several senior apartment complexes. Client visits at facilities with multi-unit outbreaks are cancelled until professional extermination is confirmed. Residents are experiencing repeated infestations and the associated stress. The issue is expected to increase with warmer weather.

Senior Project Fresh 2025

- The 2025 Senior Project Fresh program is shifting from paper coupons to a digital card system, prompting some logistical and communication challenges. Additional funds can be used to either increase card balances or include more participants. To support this transition, the team is exploring tech education sessions—such as using QR codes and mobile apps—through existing Traversing Technology classes at the TC Senior Center. While the shift to digital raises concerns in rural areas with limited connectivity and among seniors unfamiliar with smartphones, COA is preparing proactive outreach and assistance. Staff remain hopeful the adjustments will improve access overtime and are focused on minimizing confusion through early communication and support.

COOP – Continuity of Operations Plan

- The Commission on Aging is actively participating in the county-wide Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) to ensure preparedness in the event of emergencies. A tabletop exercise is scheduled wherein departments will respond to a simulated emergency scenario. Internally, the department maintains printed client and staff records, including high-risk lists and schedules, to ensure continuity if electronic systems fail.

COA Staff Training

- The COA is enhancing training for Universal Aides, with upcoming sessions in partnership with Northbound Physical Therapy focused on mobility and exercise. Standardized housecleaning training is also being developed to ensure consistency in service expectations. Additionally, there's interest in future training around generational sensitivity and respectful communication—highlighting the need for caregivers to adapt their approach to align with the values and social norms of older adults.

2026 Contracts

- The Connect America emergency system will auto-renew. Meals on Wheels funding has been split between congregate and home-delivered meals; internal fund transfers are in progress. Further discussion will happen at the next meeting.

2026 Budget Considerations

- Discussions are underway regarding vehicle allowances, fee scale adjustments, staffing, and program expansions. More detailed planning will follow upcoming study sessions.

COA Mission Statement

- A potential update to the mission statement is being explored to better reflect COA's evolving role and community impact.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT (3 minutes per person)

None

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 11:15 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.

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Revised/ljp