



Lewis - Mason - Thurston Area Agency on Aging

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Advisory Council Draft Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, March 6, 2024 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM

In Person & Via Zoom

Members Present

Lewis County: Heidi Buswell, Vice-Chair, Debbie Aust & Greg Rohr

Mason County: Becky Cronquist

Thurston County: Cat McGaffigan, Chair, Ellen Wendt, Angela Hock, Anna Schlecht, Michelle Horaney & Eileen McKenzieSullivan

Members Absent – Tim Wood, Lewis County

Staff Present

Nicole Kiddoo, Executive Director; Jemma Williamson, Deputy Executive Director; Carrie Petit, Contracts Director; Donna Feddern, Chief of Programs & Services; Kyle Sanchez, ADRC Supervisor; Valerie Aubertin, Community Supports Director; Emily MacFarland, Case Management Supervisor; Lisa Bachmann, Executive Assistant; & Chrissy Franklin, Administrative Coordinator.

Guests Present

Kathy McDowell, prospective new member, and Carol Brock, Lewis County Seniors

Welcome and Introductions, Cat McGaffigan

Cat welcomed everyone and referenced the themes for the month that are highlighted in the agenda. Introductions were made and included sharing a received or giving a compliment to someone in attendance.

Approval of the February 2024 Draft Agenda and January 2023 Draft Minutes

Eileen McKenzieSullivan made the motion to approve the February Agenda and January Minutes. The motion was seconded by Greg Rohr. The vote to approve the draft agenda and minutes was passed unanimously.

2024 Advisory Council Goals, Cat McGaffigan

Cat let the group in a discussion regarding the goals the council would like for the 2024 year. She referred to some of the goals from previous years and explained that we can continue working on some of the previous goals and/or create some new goals. The goals are something we can refer to throughout the year and that will help the group stay on track. Eileen McKenzieSullivan added that it is good to keep in mind that their role is to advise and support the staff. The council members shared their suggestions for the goals they would like for the 2024 year. The suggestions were:

- OAA reauthorization;
- support and enhance LMTAAA staff in their efforts;

- be a voice for the different generations of seniors, maybe have an LMTAAA app that also has info on W4A and USAging – this would keep up current with what the newer generation of seniors is used to;
- review the agency mission statement;
- provide senior housing forums;
- have support paths for seniors trying to navigate services;
- knowledge and info around DEI – have an understanding of how it impacts clients;
- outreach efforts
- **be supportive of what is brought to the group from their committees.**

The list will be reviewed, and a document created that will be emailed out before the next meeting so that the members are able to add additional input.

WA Cares Presentation, Kyle Sanchez, ADRC Supervisor

Kyle shared his Power Point presentation on WA Cares with the council. The presentation included information about what qualifies a person to be eligible for the program; who can provide the assistance; and where you can be living to receive the assistance. He explained that this money can be used to pay for care from a professional, friend or family member. It can cover training, support or respite for that person. You can also use the money for adaptive equipment, home delivered meals, approved home modifications or transportation. It does not, however, provide any money for medical expenses. 70% of people will need some sort of long-term care during their life and the cost for 20 hours of help per week costs \$35,880 per year. Additional slides covered information on how to figure out what your monthly contribution will be, how you can apply for an exemption, and what percentage of benefit you will receive if you retire before you have contributed the 10 years required for the full benefit. The members had several questions and comments regarding the program. It was asked if the money you have set aside for yourself can be used to assist someone else? Michelle Horaney added that there is a bill to kill the program or make it easier to opt out. She believes some of the hesitancy to the program is that there have been long-term insurance companies that have gone out of business and seniors have lost their contributions. Eileen asked if the amount paid out will increase each year with inflation. Debbie wondered if the amount coming out of paychecks would also increase over time to help cover increases for inflation. Kyle shared that the program is currently set up to be solvent through 2099. If they did not make correct estimates on how many will participate, it could be that the amount contributed may need to increase. It was also clarified that this is like auto insurance, if you don't use the benefit, you do not get money back and it does not get passed to a beneficiary. He let the group know that the agency is happy to do presentations for groups in the community. A target audience for these presentations is for people who are still working and may not have any plan in place in case they need assistance once retired. Please let him know if they know of a group or organization that could benefit from this information. He also added reiterated that this program can also be used for situations like needing assistance to recuperate from a car accident or surgery.

WA Cares Updates and LMTAAA Role, Nicole Kiddoo, Executive Director

Nicole Kiddoo shared that we are tasked to help build the network. Once in place, it will allow people to access their benefits and apply for services. We will still have staff members available to assist those who prefer to talk to a person or who do not have access to the internet. We are still waiting to hear from the state what our funding will be for the technology piece of the program. She will report more about the bill that will be on the ballot this fall at a later date. The agency is dedicated to sharing information about WA Cares in an unbiased way and so are focused on sharing information about the program.

Reports:

Community Updates & Announcements

Lewis County: *Eileen McKenzieSullivan*

Eileen shared that this Saturday is the Lewis County Seniors Fundraiser Night of Magic at The Loft, starting at 6:00 pm.

Mason County: *Eileen McKenzieSullivan*

The nutrition site opened at the methodist church on Valentine's Day and was well attended. Nicole Kiddoo and several staff and council members attended. The food was delicious and the hard work that went into the reopening was appreciated.

Socialization & Engagement Committee, Angela Hock

Angela shared that Ellen Wendt is assisting with streamlining their flyer. They may even create more than one so that they can highlight different topics throughout the year. They met with Val Aubertin, the new Community Supports Director, who has some suggestions of where the flyers can be placed. South Sound Senior Services (SSSS) has a discussion group about isolation. It was reported in the paper that it is a state of emergency in Lewis County, because 45% of the citizens are reporting loneliness and social isolation. She is working on finding more information on how that percentage was determined; who did the study, how many participants were polled, and how did they choose the participants. Donna Feddern, Chief of Programs and Services, commented that the Center of Disease Control (CDC) and Department of Health (DOH) have that as one of their questions that they ask on their Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). They make phone calls to gather their data and you can order it from them. Cat McGaffigan, Chair, added some links to the chat about the survey Donna was referring to. Lisa will email these links to the council members.

Housing Committee & Charter, Anna Schlecht

Anna shared that she met with Donna Feddern recently regarding having housing forums in each county, starting in Lewis. These forums will be used to build relationships with others in the community that are like-minded on this topic. It will provide the opportunity to gather info and get to know who provides funding, who is already doing this, what current resources are available in each county, who does renovations, etc. This will assist them with moving forward in the future. It will also help provide information for them to use when they meet with County Commissioners and others in local government so they can answer questions with accuracy. They would like to start with Lewis County this September, Mason County in early spring of 2025 and Thurston County in late spring of 2025. The perception is that seniors have these nice little homes and gardens with pets and enough money for their needs. This perception does not help with the argument that they need housing and help. She knows a lot of seniors that are getting pushed out of their homes because of rent increases. They will be working on what strategy will work best for each county. She will be meeting with Nicole and Donna tomorrow and together they will draft something for the entire council to review. Debbie and Eileen shared interest in joining the committee and the council would like to receive updates on this topic. Anna shared that the next meeting will be at 2:00 pm on Wednesday, March 27.

Advocacy & Legislative Committee, Michele Horaney

Michele thanked everyone for their help with advocating. Everyone was very prepared, and it helped having multiple people at each meeting to show support. She also gave a brief report on what is going in with the State Council on Aging (SCoA). They discussed portability for WA Cares, which would allow benefits to be used, even if the participant moves to a different state.

Executive Director Report, Nicole Kiddoo, Executive Director

Nicole thanked the council for their support in advocating and shared that the final budget just dropped. For the nutrition funding, \$12 million of the \$15 million was approved. Unfortunately, the Case Management request did not make the budgets in the House or Senate. We will continue to advocate for both. Nicole also

shared that she will be traveling to the USAging Conference in D.C. this weekend with two other staff members and will be advocating for the Older Americans' Act (OAA) reenactment.

State Council on Aging Report, Michele Horaney

Michele referenced her report that was emailed to the members prior to the meeting. The bylaws were updated at the last meeting as well as some general housekeeping. There was also information on the updates to The Washington State Legislative Website. They have made it much easier to navigate the program.

Participation in the OAA Month, Nicole Kiddoo, Executive Director

Nicole stated that the council needs to decide what we want to do as a group to bring this to the forefront. We need to get the proclamations out to the County Commissioner's Offices. We will need to set aside time during the April meeting to focus on what the reauthorization is. Please take some time to familiarize yourself on the policy brief so that we are all informed for what our participation will be. There is a great tool kit on the USAging website.

Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Heidi and seconded by Michele Horaney. It was unanimously decided to adjourn. The meeting ended at 12:00 pm. The next scheduled meeting is on April 3rd at 9:30 am.

Minutes taken by

Lisa Bachmann, Executive Assistant