



Lewis-Mason-Thurston Area Agency on Aging

2404 Heritage Court SW
Olympia, WA 98502-2539
Phone: (360) 664-2168 • Fax: (360) 664-0791 • www.LMTAAA.org

Lewis-Mason-Thurston Area Agency on Aging
Council of Governments
Meeting Minutes via ZOOM Teleconference & In Person

January 25, 2024, 2:00pm

Members Present: Commissioner Sharon Trask, Mason County; Commissioner Sean Swope, Lewis County; and Commissioner Gary Edwards, Thurston County

Members Absent: N/A

Staff Present: Nicole Kiddoo, Executive Director; Sabrina Dean, Chief Financial Officer; Carrie Petit, Contracts Director; Jemma Williamson, Deputy Executive Director; Donna Feddern, Chief of Programs and Services; Emily MacFarland, Case Management Director; Mary Beth Mercer, Chief Human Resources Officer; Jessica Hodges, Senior Executive Assistant; Lisa Bachmann, Executive Assistant

Guests Present: Heidi Buswell, Alice Cunningham Kane, Tim Wood, Brandon Humphries, Sarah White, Lynnette Richardson,

Call to Order: Commissioner Trask called the meeting to order at 2:14 PM

Opening/Introductions

Introductions were made by all who attended, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval Draft Agenda and Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Edwards to approve the November 27, 2023 draft minutes and the January 25, 2024 draft agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Swope. A vote was taken and carried unanimously.

Public Comment: There were no public comments.

Election of Officers

A motion was made by Commissioner Swope to elect Commissioner Trask as Chair. The motion was Seconded by Commissioner Edwards. Commissioner Edwards nominated Commissioner Swope for Vice-Chair and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Trask. A vote was taken, and both motions carried unanimously.

Approval of Vouchers

Based on the recommendation of the Executive Director, Commissioner Edwards moved to approve the vouchers as noted from December 2022 (2 items), through December 31st, 2023, in the amount of \$756,725.87. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Swope. A vote was taken and carried unanimously. Sabrina thanked the Commissioners for their approval. There were two items from the 2022 budget that were not included in the information emailed to the Commissioners prior to the meeting. Commissioner Edwards followed up by stating that any time any changes are made to the meeting packet that the Commissioners should be notified prior to the meeting.

Advisory Council Report: Heidi Buswell, Vice-Chair

Heidi Buswell reported that the Advisory Council has a new slate of officers for the 2024 year. Cat McGaffigan, Thurston County, is the new Chair and she represents Lewis County, serving as Vice-Chair. She thanked the staff who put together the Area Plan, especially Jemma Williamson. The Council's primary focus this month is advocacy work on the Hill in support of two funding issues. The first is for \$2.8 million and will assist with the current shortage of in-home caregivers for long-term care clients. The second is \$15.2 million for Senior Nutrition. This will maintain the current support we are able to provide due to the extra funding the agency received during COVID. Heidi also shared that the council is doing well with Advisory Council members for Lewis and Thurston Counties, but in Mason County we are struggling to find appointees. Commissioner Trask stated that she will recruit for Mason.

Executive Director's Report: Nicole Kiddoo

Nicole announced LMTAAA's participation alongside other area agencies on aging in the state, advocating with legislators during the Washington Association of Area Agencies on Aging (W4A) annual grassroots advocacy days scheduled for January 23-26. The state legislative priorities of W4A are a \$2.58 million budget request for case management to assist with clients we are currently servicing that do not have a caregiver in the home. Our case managers are working as the stopgap with clients until a caregiver can be identified and supported. We did have budget sponsors in both the House and Senate, but we lost our Senate sponsor. Nicole mentioned that if any of the Commissioners have relationships with Senators, we would appreciate the support. The \$15.2 million request is for nutrition service for home delivered and congregate meals.

This is to support the \$18,000 that was allocated for services in response to COVID. If we do not receive this funding, we will have to enlist a waiting list. On page 18 of the meeting packet, you'll see the logos of several associations partnered on this ask displayed at the top. We have proviso language for the \$2.58 million.

W4A sent letters for HB1702. We have sponsors, and co-sponsors for the nutrition ask. There are a few other bills related to family caregivers that we are following and if we are asked to do more, we have a list that we can share that has the information with quick summary. Questions on legislative items: none heard. Nicole commended the Advisory Council members for their work in leading the legislative meetings.

Chief Financial Officer Report: Sabrina Dean

Sabrina reported the Agency's first in-house payroll was completed through HR Bamboo on Jan 5. This payroll provides more information for staff. In addition, they are working on a security design review for software with Sage Intacct that will help the Agency manage finances. Close to \$7 million has been brought in from billings for July 2022 to September 2023. The bank balance was shared from the previous three months. Commissioner Edwards asked what investment return we are getting on the account. Sabrina explained that investments are through Thurston County. An email was received yesterday from Thurston County returning some fees based upon the investments by Thurston County.

Lynnette Richardson, from the staff and a union member, spoke on behalf of the Bargaining Team. She thanked the Agency Management Team and the Commissioners for their support and for the retention incentive to help address the attrition rate. Sarah White, also an agency staff member, was in attendance to speak about the wage increase that was bargained for. She read a statement on behalf of coworker, Morgan Anderson, who was unable to attend the meeting regarding the short-term impact of the change of the salary schedule. Commissioner Trask thanked Sarah White and Morgan for their feedback.

Contractor Allocations to Senior Centers. Slides were shared that show the breakdown of expenditures from OAA funding by county. In the table congregate and home delivered meals are broken out in estimates by county. We have budgeted for 2024 based on the contracts and the number of clients and units for various services provided in 2023. These breakouts are estimates. Legal Services and Adult Daycare are only in Thurston County as there are no providers in Lewis and Mason Counties. Media Outreach is the Senior News split between Thurston and Mason Counties. A new program we are supporting is medical equipment banks, which are currently contracted to support the Thurston County Medical Bank. We are reaching out to Mason and Lewis Counties to and added an estimated amount for those counties. In OAA funding there are a few

contracts supporting Kinship Caregivers. We broke the funding out evenly between the counties for the two contracts with Older American's Act money as we did not have all the data to make it more realistic at this point. Services for Congregate meals were also identified. Catholic Community Services (CCS) provides the meals delivered for Lewis County. For Mason and Thurston Counties, it is Senior Service for South Sound (SSSS). Transportation for Lewis County is CCS and SSSS for Mason and Thurston. Family Education and Support Services (FESS) covers all three counties. Commissioner Swope asked for a line item for 2022-2023 as Lewis County numbers are staying the same, in the amount of funding. Carrie Petit, Contract Management Director, did not have that information broken out, but explained that increases were given to all nutrition providers to help with increase in the cost of supplies and food. Commissioner Swope commented that with the increase in seniors since 2022 and inflation between 12-22%, that an increase is not reflected in these numbers. Senior Centers are losing money, and it is getting harder and harder. There needs to be advocating to increase these revenue streams. Even though the number is staying the same, they are getting less as inflation is higher. These numbers are important with increases in other areas, to ensure we are increasing and at minimum advocating daily to get more revenue as we have lost a ton. The status of Lewis Senior Centers is like a prison as there is no funding. Nicole Kiddoo shared that we would provide the information for the comparison of 2022, 2023 and 2024. The unit rate was increased for all congregate home delivered meals last year to the state average which is about 7.5%. Everything we get under OAA that is earmarked for nutrition goes out minus 10% to administer the contracts. If they fund this at a federal level, it does not account for inflation or those that are coming onto services. The agency is grateful for monies from ARP, but it is the same issue that some seniors will drop off without additional funding. Commissioner Swope mentioned looking at enrichment dollars for the centers. Analysis on unit rates is impending. Commissioner Edwards added that a big piece is that we need to take care of the staff and also the customers, being the seniors. How is the Agency doing that? We may be missing the boat if we are not utilizing the Senior News to get information out to those user constituent categories about what our difficulties are. He was not sure if that was an issue since the Agency is donating to the Senior News, but he believed members of the staff or COG could post some editorial informative material. Seniors have the time and inclination to make those necessary phone calls. Senior News has a listing of all representatives and can tie that in with either editorial type writing or getting them to do segmented reporting on the types of challenges the Agency is having. Are we utilizing the Senior News to ensure they have the information? Nicole stated that we have not utilized Senior News for specific topics around federal legislation. Commissioner Edwards asked if there was any reason we should not be advocating through that medium. The Agency should enlist staff to make sure they accomplish that issue. There is also our Advisory group with dedicated people who are very aware of the situation at hand. Let's take

advantage of that and we can create a base of advocates to help us in that endeavor.

Commissioner Swope requested to speak to the comment from an Agency staff member regarding staff losing \$250 on their checks. Mary Beth Mercer, Chief Human Resources Officer, explained that with the new payroll schedule the same amount of money will be received through the annual year. The Agency changed from getting paid twice a month to every other week, so each paycheck is slightly smaller, but there two additional times staff are paid, which makes them equal in the long run. We allowed staff to cash out some of their leave until we catch up with our COLA and targeted wage increases. Sabrina Dean reiterated that they are being paid more frequently. Commissioner Edwards asked for clarification around what actually happened, the total amount did not change, so really nothing was taken away? Mary Beth confirmed that to be correct. Nicole Kiddoo asked if the Commissioners would like to approve the budget all at once after the executive session, which would allow them to hear all of the impacts and ask additional questions. It was decided to table the motion to approve the salary adjustments until after the executive session.

Deputy Executive Director Report: Jemma Williamson

Jemma explained that the new Area Plan will be for 2024-2027. The Area Plan is mandated under the Older American's Act (OAA) and our contractual obligation under our partnership with the Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and Aging and Long-Term Support Administration (AL TSA). The plan helps the Agency focus on our goals and objectives. There are three themes to address our goals within the plan: Healthy Aging; Expand and strengthen services and supports that prevent or delay entry into Medicaid funded long term services and supports; and Person-Centered Home & Community Based Services. We focused on key themes heard through our survey and forums to focus on what the key tasks will be to address those needs. Throughout all forums, a lack of affordable housing and homelessness came up as frequent grievances. In order to help meet these key themes, we will continue our advocacy in local meetings; partner with National Nutrition programs and coalitions; and expand partnerships and explore mobile food options. We will ensure our staff is adequately trained with Medicare orientation and enrollment support to best meet the needs. We will also meet with local transportation providers to increase capacity, define key resources and educate on available transportation options. Socialization is a big topic of interest since COVID and efforts are being made towards the implementation of a telephone reassurance program, related outreach events, research tools and programs that address social isolation. We want to identify partners and understand the barriers impacting access to services. This will allow us to adapt our outreach plan to better serve these populations and provide ongoing staff training to understand these needs. Messaging is another area we will focus on so we can better

support getting information out through materials like our resource guides and outreach presentations in the community. Commissioner Swope asked for quality assurance checks with our congregate meals to ensure that the folks providing them are qualified and to test the quality of the meals being served to the seniors. Lewis County hears that the quality of the meals is not very good. He shared that we need to work to somehow bolster that to ensure we are using our money wisely and are well invested in making sure that our seniors are taking full advantage of the meals. To give them the best quality we can, we have to do quality assurance with the program. He would like to see us dropping by to do those check-ins. Commissioner Trask confirmed that was a great idea. Commissioner Edwards added that a younger persons taste buds may be different and so discovering anything that may be the issue like the flavor, portion, presentation or quality could help with making improvements. It is seniors that are reporting these things back. Commissioner Edwards will attempt to attend a senior center to taste the meals. Commissioner Trask asked about Blue Zones. Donna reported the Blue Zone projects are in Lewis and Mason counties. The Agency will be attending the kickoff at the Senior Center in Shelton as one focus is nutrition. Commissioner Trask asked for a report back on how that goes. Commissioner Swope commented on the great job presenting the Area Plan to the senior centers and asked where the most participation was. Nicole Kiddoo confirmed that the Twin Cities Senior Center had the biggest turnout.

A motion was made by Commissioner Swope that upon the recommendation of the Executive Director, I move to approve Lewis Mason Thurston Area Agency on Aging's 2024 Area Plan budget in the amount of \$17,532,763, with the Total AAA Budgeted and non-budgeted Total (ALTSA plus other funding, which includes provider match and Program Income) on the Summary Tab of the Area Plan Budget workbook of \$2,815,349." The motion was seconded by Commissioner Edwards. A vote was taken and carried unanimously. Nicole Kiddoo commended the Advisory Council as they did a lot to help with the survey development, attendance to the forums, and commentary. They were instrumental in the process.

Contract Director's Report: Carrie Petit

Carrie Petit gave a quick update on the hard work the contracting team has been doing the past few months. In January we renewed our Older American's Act (OAA) contract with their current providers for Congregate and Home Delivered Nutrition Services, Transportation, Adult Day Care, and Legal Services. The team is also working on a Request for Proposals (RFP). This RFP is for specific programs under the Family Caregiver Support Program and Kinship Care Programs, funded through OAA and state funding. This includes contracts for services such as Out of Home Respite Care, Family Caregiver Counseling Services, as well as services supporting Kinship Caregivers such as the

Navigator Program, Caregiver Support Program and other caregiver services with the Kinship programs. We start the new 4-year cycle in July.

Community Supports Director's Report: Donna Feddern

We are close to having the Hospital Transitions Program up and running. We have signed the contract with Providence, hired for the position and are working on getting her trained. Today is her first meeting with the Providence staff. This program will help patients with the transition out of the hospital back to their homes in an effort to reduce readmissions. We have had some Internal promotions and now have a full team training staff in dementia care and caring for someone with dementia. Our Family Caregiver Support Program team will be focusing on outreach to promote the Mac and TSOA programs. Donna also shared they have outreach events scheduled for the Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) team for the year. She is working with the new Communications Manager to get the word out. She is also working on streamlining the telephone process with front desk to reduce transfer rates.

Case Management Director's Report: Emily MacFarland

Emily shared that they reached their goal of 75 clients to 1 case manager and are continually monitoring the influx of cases as it ebbs and flows. She is also monitoring case transfers for clients with no paid care in place. These cases take extra time because we have to fill in assisting the client in areas the caregiver normally would as well as providing more contact or an extra visit to check on their welfare. They are continuing to staff challenging cases alongside HCS. She also explained that with Health Homes, they are watching the data with the two Care Coordinators to see when it is time to bring on a third coordinator. Commissioner Swope requested a year over year increase for the program. Emily advised we are starting to look at that data, ensuring we are careful with the contracts we carry.

Executive Session- Commissioner Swope read the RCW for the Executive Session. The Executive Session started at 3:38 pm and ended at 4:04 pm, under RCW 42.30.110 (1) (g). Mary Beth Mercer, read the motion(s).

The first motion was for a cost-of-living increase for represented staff was made by Commissioner Swope. "Based upon the recommendation of the Executive Director, I move to approve the proposed Addendum C - Contract wage reopener for 2024, bargained between Lewis-Mason-Thurston Area Agency on Aging and Local 618-A of the Washington State Council of County and City Employees with the provisions to be applied retroactively to all agency employees effective January 1, 2024." The motion was seconded by Commissioner Edwards. A vote was taken and carried unanimously.

The second motion was for a cost-of-living increase for the unrepresented staff was made by Commissioner Swope. “Based upon the recommendation of the Executive Director, I move to approve unrepresented staff targeted wage increases and a 3.5% COLA increase, retroactive to January 1, 2024”. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Edwards. There was a call for discussion. Commissioner Edwards referred to the information in the attachments and asked if they need to be included on either of those motions? It was agreed to add in the attachment information and to add additional language to the memorandum. A vote was taken and carried unanimously.

The third motion for an increase in the Executive Director’s Salary was made by Commissioner Swope. “In addition to any agency-wide 3.5% COLA increase approved for LMTAAA represented and unrepresented staff, I move that the Executive Director’s salary be increased by an additional 7%, effective January 1, 2024.” The motion was seconded by Commissioner Edwards. There was no discussion. The vote was carried unanimously.

Area Plan Budget Motion:

This motion was moved and seconded during the Area Plan report earlier in the meeting. There was a call for discussion. There was no discussion. The vote was taken and carried unanimously.

Commissioner Trask stated that this is all very well earned we have amazing staff, amazing supervisors between the represented and non-represented staff, our LMTAAA is probably the number one in the state.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 pm. The next regular meeting of the CoG is scheduled for May 30, 2024 at 1:00 pm and it will be hybrid.

Submitted by:

Lisa Bachmann, Executive Assistant by way of Jessica Hodges’s notes
Reviewed by Sarah Cockrell, Senior Executive Assistant