

**ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING**  
**Alaska Permanent Fund Corporation Building**  
**801 West 10<sup>th</sup> Ave., Suite 302, Juneau, Alaska**  
**February 9 - 12, 2015**  
**APPROVED Meeting Minutes**

**Monday February 9, 2015**

**Call to Order: 3:00 p.m.**

**Roll Call: ACoA Commissioners present:** Mary Shields, ACoA Chair; Anna Frank; David Blacketer, Rachel Greenberg, Bob Sivertsen, Marie Darlin, Eleanor Dementi, Duane Mayes and Paula Pawlowski.

**ACoA Commissioners via teleconference:** Rolf Numme, ACoA Vice Chair.

**ACoA Staff Present:** Denise Daniello, Lesley Thompson, and Sherice Cole

**ACTION: Adoption of the Agenda:** Motion to approve the agenda was made by Eleanor. Edna seconded the motion. Motion approved.

**ACTION: Adoption of Minutes, December 10-11, 2014 meeting:** Bob made the motion to approve the December 10-11, 2014 minutes with the correction noted by Mary Shields of the title for Rebecca Parker as the “general manager” of the Anchorage Senior Activities Center. Marie seconded the motion. Motion approved.

**A “Safety Moment” Announcement:** Lesley Thompson went over the safety of the meeting room and building.

**Chair Report: Mary Shields**

Mary announced the dates for the May meeting have been changed to May 5 and 6, 2015. Mary reported that the Executive Committee discussed ACoA’s legislative advocacy efforts and about changes to the budget for senior programs. Mary also noted that the Commission has begun work on the next state plan for senior services. Marie Darlin and David Blacketer are Co-Chairs of the State Plan Advisory Committee.

Mary stated that ACoA’s May meeting always coincides with the Older Alaskans Month Celebration. This year’s theme for the Older Alaskans Month (OAM) celebration is “Get into the

Act” which focuses on seniors taking charge of their health and making an impact in the communities where they live. Last year’s OAM focus was on senior fall prevention.

**ACoA Vice-Chair Report, Rolf Numme**

Rolf reported via teleconference. Rolf said he has gone through a lot with his back surgery and realizes how fragile life can be. Through his research for a medical provider, Rolf said he found that not all doctors accept Medicare. As a result, many seniors have to go without health care. Rolf said quality aftercare at home after hospital discharge is critical for recovery. People need access to medical care and services. People need to learn what is available to them, to ensure that they are getting the care they need. People should be proactive to maintain their health. Staying healthy helps the process of recovering from illness.

**Executive Director Report: Denise Daniello**

Denise reported that this meeting will be focused on legislative advocacy with our legislators to inform them about issues affecting seniors and their needs that we hear about during community forums, through surveys, and public comment. Denise described the details of the Governor’s budget, which were outlined in her written report, and the deficit we face which is largely due to falling oil revenues.

Denise noted the proposed funding reductions for the Senior Benefits Program in the Governor’s budget. This program is a critical safety net for seniors who are income eligible to receive a monthly cash payment so that they can afford basics like medication, housing, fuel, and food.

Denise also reported that the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation’s Senior Citizen Housing Development Fund has been zeroed out in the Governor’s capital budget along with the accessibility program and Homeless Assistance Program. In addition, there is a reduction in the Energy Assistance Program.

Denise said there is good news in the Governor’s budget. ACoA’s funding is intact in addition to most of the funding for the senior grant-funded services. There is a reduction in funding in the amount of \$33,800 total that will affect four grant programs administered by Senior & Disabilities Services that include Adult Day, Senior In-Home Services, Alzheimer’s disease and Related Dementia Education and Training Program, and the Brain Injury Grant program.

The ACoA Legislative Advocacy Committee and Executive Committee approved two budget and six policy priorities for FY2016 to build the continuum of long-term supports for older Alaskans. Our budget priorities include additional base funding for (1) National Family Caregiver Grant Program (\$325,000 GF/MH) which is an increase to serve family caregivers caring for elderly loved ones at home with Alzheimer's disease and other physical or cognitive impairments and for senior guardians who care for children (such as grandparents raising their grandchildren); and (2) *Senior In-Home Services* (\$350,000 GF/MH) to provide care coordination, homemaker services, and respite for family caregivers to address the growing waitlist of seniors for this program.

Denise said the Commission is working on planning and education activities. The four-year comprehensive Alaska State Plan for Senior Services, FY16-19 will be a significant planning effort over the next six months. The commission has assembled a State Plan Advisory Committee to work on that project. Marie Darlin and David Blacketer will co-chair that Committee. ACoA has engaged a consultant, Denali Daniels & Associates, to work with the Commission and the State Plan Advisory Committee to develop the draft plan.

*Alaska's Roadmap to Address Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias* is another major planning project for the Commission. Recently, the Roadmap was published. The Commission and other members of the Roadmap's core team have been doing a number of presentations about the Roadmap to raise public awareness about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias and strategies to improve the quality of life for Alaskans impacted by dementia. Recently, Representative Seaton, Chair of the House Health & Social Services Committee, asked ACoA to make a presentation on the Roadmap to his Committee in March. The Commission was also invited by the Alaska Association of Housing Authorities to make a presentation about the need for senior housing at a legislative Lunch and Learn scheduled for February 27<sup>th</sup>.

Denise talked about ACoA's Legislative Sunset Audit Review and introduced the auditors who are conducting the performance review. The auditors are Marcus Narvaez, Mark Lundahl and Josephine Stern from the Division of Legislative Audit. Marcus Narvaez and Josephine Stern were present at the meeting. The Commission's sunset date is June 30, 2016 unless the Legislature approves legislation next session to reauthorize the Commission, pending a successful audit review.

**Action Item:** Mary presented the ACoA Resolution 2015-001 in support of the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation's (AHFC) FY16 Capital Budget Request for the Senior Citizen Housing Development Fund in the amount of \$4.5 million.

Mary asked for a motion to adopt the AHFC Resolution. Bob Sivertsen made the motion to approve ACoA's Resolution 2015-001. Eleanor Dementi seconded the motion. Motion approved.

The move to approve the Resolution was tabled until the next day's meeting on Tuesday February 10 so that Jim McCall from AHFC's Senior Housing Office could be present and offer additional information for the Resolution if appropriate. Marie moved the motion to table the approval until Tuesday February 10. Rachel seconded the motion. Motion approved.

**ACTION: Establish ACoA FY2015-FY2016 Meeting Dates**

The Executive Committee recommended the following dates for ACoA's upcoming meetings:  
May 5 & 6 (Celebrate "Get into the Act: Older Americans Month in Alaska," Anchorage)  
September 15-17 (Rural Outreach Meeting, Destination TBD)  
December 9-10 (Winter Meeting, Anchorage)  
February 8-11, 2016 (Legislative Advocacy Meeting, Juneau)

Commissioners and staff discussed plans for ACoA's rural outreach meeting in September. Commissioners discussed having the September 15 - 17 board meeting in Anchorage and then to divide into two groups with one group driving to Seward and the Kenai Peninsula and the other group to drive to MatSu. Due to reduced travel funds, the Commission decided to visit rural communities on the road system to hold down costs.

The December Quarterly Meeting was also discussed as it may have to be held by teleconference, rather than face-to-face, to hold down costs.

Former Commissioner Betty Keegan suggested tagging on a side trip to Sitka during the February meeting.

Mary said that action for the board meeting dates will be taken on Tuesday, February 10, 2015.

**Executive Committee: Mary Shields, Chair**

Mary stated she covered the Executive Committee Report in her Chair report.

### **AK State Plan for Senior Services Advisory Committee: Marie Darlin & David Blacketer, Co-Chairs**

Marie and David discussed the State Plan Advisory Committee meeting held on January 21, 2015 in Anchorage that was facilitated by the contractor, Denali Daniels. ACoA members attending the meeting included Mary, David, Marie, Rachel, Denise, and Lesley. Marie said it was a busy work day. Denise said there was a very good turnout of 25 to 30 attendees. Providers, seniors, and agency representatives attended the meeting to provide support for the planning process.

### **Report from the State Plan Development Contractor, Denali Daniels**

Denali said the State Plan meeting went well with the stakeholders. Denali said Denise did a phenomenal job inviting stakeholders to the meeting. The current State Plan expires on June 30, 2015. Denali noted that the State Plan is used to satisfy a federal requirement through the Older Americans Act for all states to receive federal funding for senior programs/services. The needs assessments activities have been completed and include six elder-senior listening sessions, senior survey, and provider survey. At the first committee meeting, State Plan Advisory Committee members discussed strategy for the process. Currently, Committee members have approved a vision statement and have a set of draft goals that were being circulated for comment by Committee members. The next meeting is scheduled for February 17. The Committee will also need to develop strategies and performance measures for the goals in addition to the funding formula. The draft plan will be reviewed by the DHSS Commissioner and the U.S. Administration on Community Living before it is put out for public comment. The Plan is scheduled to be finalized in early June.

Denise noted the high response rate to the surveys: 2,280 Alaskans age 55+ responded to the senior survey and 85 providers responded to the provider survey.

### **Pioneer Home Advisory Board (PHAB) Report: Bob Sivertsen, PHAB Chair**

Bob reported the Pioneer Homes are home to 470 residents with 130 residents being veterans. The Homes are approximately 93% occupied. Bob described the different levels of care provided by the Homes. Level 1 provides meals, housing, and limited hands-on assistance. Level 2 provides assistance to residents with bathing, medication administration, and other personal tasks. Level 3 serves residents with dementia and others with high level of care needs. Bob noted that not all of the rooms in the Pioneer Homes are designed for Level 3 care, the type of care in highest demand, which contributes to the current waiting list.

The Pioneer Home Advisory Board is advocating for additional funds for operating and capital funds to repair the roof at the Palmer Home. In the past, the PHAB advocated to expand the number of beds in the Pioneer Homes. Now, their focus is on maintaining the existing facilities. The PHAB will conduct a “southern tour” next week of Homes in Juneau, Ketchikan and Sitka. The PHAB visited the “northern” homes at their last board meeting which included the Veterans’ Home in Palmer.

Bob said a 5% reduction has been proposed by the Governor’s budget. The Homes anticipate future funding reductions over the next few years.

**Governor’s Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE), Banarsi Lal**

Banarsi reported that the Council met on January 21-22, 2015 and advocated for their legislative priorities during meetings with legislators and their staff.

The Council is advocating for the removal of the term “gifted” from the GCDSE’s enabling statute to more accurately reflect the work of the Council for persons with developmental disabilities. The Council provides oversight for Special Education Programs in accordance with their State and Federal obligations. The Council worked with Representative Millet to draft HB 76 to remove the term “gifted” from the Council’s statute.

The Council advocates for people with disabling conditions who may have behavior that affects their ability to communicate with others, particularly law enforcement personnel. The Council is advocating for HB 77 sponsored by Representative Thompson.

The Council is advocating for capital funds in the amount of \$995,045 to establish the Denali Deaf Community Center.

The Council is in the process of formalizing its recommendations for expansion of Medicaid, particularly the home and community based services (HCBS) waivers. The Council encourages the State to investigate changing our current waiver system to add the 1915(k) and 1915(i) Medicaid State Plan options.

The Council is advocating for legislation to reuse and recycle durable medical equipment (HB 161), greater use of tele-health, and employing people with disabilities.

The next Council meeting is scheduled for May 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **Juneau Commission on Aging (JCoA), MaryAnn VandeCastle, JCoA Chair**

MaryAnn reported there has been an 81% increase in the senior population in Juneau since 2000. Unlike Anchorage and Fairbanks, the Juneau Commission on Aging is a volunteer operation that receives no staff support from the local government. This past year, the Juneau Commission on Aging held a Senior Food Forum to put a spotlight on the problem of senior hunger in Juneau. MaryAnn said that community transportation is another local issue affecting seniors. MaryAnn said the JCoA is not allowed to advocate on their own because they are an advisory board that reports to the City's Assembly.

In the past year, a task force was assembled to examine the need for senior assisted living in Juneau. A needs assessment was conducted by Agnew-Beck, funded by the City and Borough of Juneau, which identified the need for senior assisted living. One strategy to address this need would be to add beds for the Juneau Pioneer Home. Another is to build a senior assisted living home in Juneau. A group led by a local senior named Sioux Douglas is working to build a new senior assisted living facility for Juneau.

The City and Borough of Juneau is examining strategies to increase revenues for local government. One idea being explored is to remove the current sales tax exemption for seniors. JCoA offered recommendations to maintain the senior tax exemption by increasing the age requirements and maintaining the exemption for food, fuel and prescription medications in order to raise revenues and minimize the impact on seniors who are low-income.

MaryAnn reported that the senior retirement industry is second in line to the oil industry, based on findings from the Report on the Economic Well-Being for Alaska Seniors prepared by the UAA Institute of Economic Research (ISER). MaryAnn stated that when communities cut back on benefits for seniors, these actions reduce senior spending locally in their communities. The ISER report states that the economic benefits from the retirement industry are not seasonal like tourism. Senior spending fosters economies of scale, particularly in health care delivery, and helps to keep the cost of services down by spreading the fixed costs of operation over a larger customer base. MaryAnn added that cuts to senior programs will have economic consequences for communities.

Mary Shields noted that seniors comprise more than 15% of Alaska's population. Senior spending is a significant economic driver for the State.

Meeting recessed at 4:54 p.m.

**Tuesday February 10, 2015**

**Call to order: 8:20 a.m. Roll Call: Mary Shields, ACoA Chair; Anna Frank; David Blacketer, Rachel Greenberg, Bob Sivertsen, Marie Darlin, Eleanor Dementi, Duane Mayes and Paula Pawlowski. Rolf Numme attended by teleconference. ACoA Staff Present: Sherice (morning), Lesley (afternoon), and Denise**

**Office of the Governor, Rebecca Braun, Special Assistant to the Governor**

Rebecca introduced herself and said that she is a policy analyst. Rebecca said she used to publish in the policy area. In the past, she wrote a publication for the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA). On behalf of Governor Walker, she welcomes everyone. Rebecca also noted that this administration is the first one to be non-partisan administration in the history of Alaska. They have a lot of good ideas. It is important that we unite and come together. According to the states revenue forecast, FY15 will be less than half of what FY14 was, with obligations still remaining. The state has savings, but we will burn through that savings if things don't change. We have to prioritize, evaluate costs and combine services where possible. The Governor's Executive Office was reduced by 11%. Another effort is to partner with other entities, when possible. Alaska has tremendous assets, and has a broader economy than it did in the 1980's. One of the stable influences that our economy has is the senior population. Along with the benefits of seniors, come the obligations to seniors. One of the key challenges we face is the legacy we leave our children and grandchildren. The Governor alone can't do everything. The Administration can provide a framework, but it would be an empty shell without Alaskans and their expertise.

**Department of Health and Social Services Commissioner Valerie Davidson**

Commissioner Valerie Davidson introduced herself and provided information about her professional and personal background. Previously, she served as the Senior Director of Legal and Intergovernmental Affairs for the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and served as Chair of the Tribal Technical Advisory Group to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid for ten years. Prior to that job, Commissioner Val was a teacher for Head Start. Commissioner Val is Yupik, born and raised in Bethel.

The Commissioner said the budget caught everyone by surprise, including the Governor.

The Commissioner said a reporter asked how she can do this Commissioner position when she comes from a village. Commissioner Val said to the reporter that children from Bethel are

taught from a very early age to do more with less. She stated that she is proud to be “a village girl.”

The Commissioner said one of the Department of Health & Social Service’s priorities is Medicaid expansion, which is a catalyst for Medicaid reform. Alaskans have been advocating for Medicaid expansion for the last few years. Commissioner Val said this has been an exciting time to be able to offer health care to people who have not been eligible for health care. Just because everyone is eligible doesn’t mean they will sign up. The state has lost a year of federal revenue because the state has had the option to reject this funding.

The Commissioner said she appreciates her appointment from Governor Walker even though we are in a tough fiscal environment. A real leader steps forward not backwards, and that is what Governor Walker is doing with Medicaid expansion. People can’t hunt and fish and work if they are not healthy.

Commissioner Val noted the report about Medicaid expansion that was prepared by the Lewin Group for the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium. It estimated about 42,000 people may be eligible for health care under Medicaid expansion. Currently, the state is eligible for 100% federal match for new Medicaid enrollees however the 100% federal match is only good for one more year. After that time, the federal match will gradually reduce to 90% reimbursement in 2020 and remain at that rate going forward. Commissioner Val said that Medicaid expansion is in the best interest for Alaska. The Evergreen Economics report that examines the impact of Medicaid expansion will be released soon. Commissioner Val added that Medicaid reform is also needed to enhance Medicaid services for people who need services and to sustain the program.

Funding cuts to the Department of Health and Social Services affect people directly unlike other departments. The other departments can cut funding for building infrastructure but cuts to the DHSS affect people’s health and quality of life.

Commissioner Val noted her appreciation for Governor Walker’s position on transparency.

The Commissioner talked about the cuts to the different senior programs. She stated that as a state, we have to live within our means and the price of oil.

A report from Evergreen stated that we need to increase administrative positions to meet the demands of processing Medicaid expansion.

The Affordable Health Care Act has made it easier to qualify for Medicaid in which eligibility is based on the modified adjusted gross income. Other states are being very creative with Medicaid expansion.

The Commissioner talked about the payment system of Medicaid and the Contractor Xerox. Xerox has a corrective action plan and payments to providers are improving.

The Commissioner said she was thrilled when Duane Mayes talks about the continuum of care and home and community based services (HCBS) to the Legislature during his division's presentations.

The Commissioner said Denise has provided her with a lot of information get her up to speed. Other individuals from the Department have also been incredibly gracious to bring her up to speed.

**Division of Senior & Disabilities Services (SDS), Duane Mayes, Director**

Duane introduced Deborah Etheridge, as Senior & Disabilities new Deputy Director. Deborah introduced herself and said that she comes from Minnesota and has 23 years of experience in home and community based services (HCBS). Deborah also has six years' experience in adult protection. Deborah also worked for Health Care Services in the Medicaid program.

Duane reviewed the cuts to SDS programs. Duane said they had to cut part of their administrative component's budget by 2.8%, which comes out to \$579,000. In the last four years, SDS has taken a slight cut to the administrative component. They are eliminating 3 positions. One of the three positions is already vacant. Adult Protective Services will also lose a position.

Last year, General Relief spent \$8.1 million, which is 100% funded with state funds. The Governor's budget reduced General Relief's budget by \$789,000.

SDS currently serves 560 people through the general relief budget with about one-half having a mental illness. The 1915(i) state plan option could provide services for this population and the State would receive federal reimbursement. The 1915(i) option could serve people with dementia, those with severe mental illness, and persons with brain injuries.

SDS avoids cutting state funds from the federal match programs. The senior grant funded services have been cut by \$33,000, which is 0.20% of the budget. The overall budget for senior

grants is \$16,298,000. The four grant programs affected include Senior In-Home Services, Adult Day, Alzheimer's Disease Education and Supports, and the Brain Injury Grant program. Funding for the Community and Developmental Disabilities Grant program is approximately \$13.5 million. The division is cutting \$506,000 GF for this program which amounts to about 3.6% of the total funding. This component often has money remaining at the end of the year.

Duane also noted that funds for senior residential services to operate the three assisted living homes in rural Alaska remain intact. Planning funds in the amount of \$200,000 were cut for this program.

The division is still working on the Automated Service Plan. This plan is a four phase project. The division is trying to move things to being automated, and have been working on this the last few years to improve efficiency and reduce cost.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid have issued new rules that will affect how home and community based services (HCBS) are provided that are specific to setting. SDS has to submit a transition plan to the Centers for Medicaid Services (CMS) by mid-March. This new rule requires that services receiving Medicaid reimbursement cannot be offered in places that appear to have an institutionalized setting. The setting has to look and feel like an integrated environment. In addition, the CMS new rulings state that agencies providing services cannot provide care coordination as this situation poses a conflict of interest. SDS has been working with providers to develop a plan that meets the new CMS requirements. The draft plan is on the SDS website for comments.

Duane also noted that SDS has been working with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium to examine the design of the "universal worker" which could be a Personal Care Assistant who would provide hands-on assistance, chore, and respite services. This concept was brought forward by tribal partners.

SDS is also working with the Office of Rate Review to address rates paid to rural providers. Tribal partners have contacted SDS about the current rate in statute being insufficient to pay for the cost of care which is significantly higher in rural areas.

SDS hired Meyers and Stauffer to look at the rates in the Assisted Living Homes in Alaska. They designed a tiered system to help with some residents needing more care. This tiered system has to work within SDS's existing budget.

## **Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority: Nancy Burke, Senior Program Officer**

Nancy said this is her fourth administration change. Nancy said thank you to the DHSS Commissioner, Valerie Davidson and her staff for keeping the Trust informed. Jeff is meeting with the Senate Finance Committee right now. The Senate Finance Committee is in the process of reviewing the Mental Health bill which serves people with cognitive impairments. The Trust beneficiaries include persons with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, mental illness, chronic alcoholism and substance misuse, developmental disabilities and brain injuries. The Trust has a seven member board of Trustees.

One of the Trust's priorities is the Homeless Assistance Program. The Trust has worked on the program for many years. In 2009, many organizations from around the state formed a "Housing Trust Coalition" with funding from Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC) and the Trust. This project developed in response to 30 deaths from people on the street in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau. The Coalition began by looking at what is wrong with our options for housing, finance, services. The Homeless Assistance Program is administered by AHFC.

Medicaid expansion and reform brings new hope for the homeless population. The homeless include those who are chronically homeless, persons who have been homeless for more than one year, or have had three episodes of being homeless in two years and have a disabling condition. These are the people who would most likely die from exposure on the streets and provide the focus for the Homeless Assistance Program. Nancy stated that Medicaid expansion will help people with substance abuse to be eligible for services. A number of the people on the street only have substance abuse as prominent diagnosis. After 2009, the Trust was able to implement some of their innovative housing models such as Housing First and some other outreach programs. They were able to house some of the chronically homeless people from the street. Once they have these people in safe housing, they can use resources and diagnostic tools to see if they have underlying disabilities that are not easy to document. This is a way to get treatment for this population and to help this population to get eligibility for income from social security. Nancy said the Trust's priorities include program funds for the Housing Trust Coalition, which is advocated through the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC).

Homelessness is talked about as being an institution. The Housing First model emphasizes on giving these homeless people a reason to look forward to their future. Juneau's homeless have than those in other communities. The Glory Hole has volunteered to be our lead organization for the Housing First Program. Tanana Chiefs and Tlingit & Haida Housing Authority have

partnered with the Trust for this housing emphasis. The Tlingit and Haida Housing Authority will be the developer in Juneau and has donated land. They are hoping to provide up to 50 people with housing. Southeast Independent Living Center (SAIL) is also a partner with the Juneau project.

The Trust has provided a grant to the Glory Hole to fund an outreach worker to help connect homeless people in Juneau with services.

### **Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC), Senior Housing Office – Jim McCall, Senior Housing Officer**

Jim reviewed his report on AHFC's housing developments that include a total investment of \$36.2 million in housing statewide. There are six new developments in four communities for a total 180 units. Three of the developments have \$2 million in funding from the Rasmuson Foundation.

#### New Senior Housing Projects

Juneau - Home Run Apartments: The developer is GMD Development & the St. Vincent De Paul Society. This will be a 41 unit senior housing complex with commercial space for four retail shops. The cost will be just under \$17 million. Funding will consist of \$4.3 million tax credits, an AHFC first loan of \$3 million, an AHFC 2nd loan of \$788,000, Senior Citizen Development Housing funds of \$2.3 million, a supplemental loan of \$1.8 million and a HUD loan of \$1.6 million.

Juneau – Sleep Spruce: The developer is Tlingit Haida Housing Authority. This will be a 24 unit affordable senior housing project. The total development cost will be just under \$12 million. The funding package consists of \$9 million low-income tax credits, \$400,000 Rasmuson Foundation Grant, and other sources are from AHFC. The anticipated completion will be fall 2016.

Soldotna – Silverwood Housing Phase III: The developer is Kenai Peninsula Housing Initiative. This will be a newly constructed five unit property for mixed income seniors with 80% of the units being ADA accessible. The project cost is \$1.4 million funded with \$635,000 from the Senior Citizen Development Housing Fund, \$311,000 in AHFC Home Program grants, and funds will be from other sources.

Cordova – Cordova Mews: The developer is Cordova Mews Associates. This is an existing property that will be renovated. The property will hold 24 units and will be for low income families.

Anchorage – Creekview Plaza: The developer is Cook Inlet Housing Authority. This complex will be 49 new units for low-income seniors. The development will combine residential and commercial space. This is supported by \$1.4 million in Rasmuson Foundation funding.

Anchorage – Grass Creek North: The developer is Cook Inlet Housing Authority. This housing will hold 40 new affordable rentals for families. This development is also supported with \$400,000 from the Rasmuson Foundation.

### Public Housing Update

Jim stated that a security update is planned for Juneau Mountain View Senior Apartments.

Jim provided an update on waitlists for public housing statewide: Chugiak Manor in Anchorage - 181 people; Golden Ages in Fairbanks - 52 people; Mountain View Senior Apartments in Juneau – 114 people; Swan Lake Terrace in Sitka - 34 people; Bay View Terrace in Ketchikan - 40 people; and Willow Woods Apartments in Wasilla - 138 people. The total number of people on AHFC’s waitlist for public housing is 559 people which include seniors age 62+ and disabled persons of any age.

Energy update: Since 2008, Jim noted that the weatherization program has received \$350 million in funding. Through November 1, 2014, AHFC has expended \$291 million for weatherization improvements around the state, which has been used to weatherize 15,402 homes. There have been 22,500 rebates paid with an average rebate of \$7,000 each. The annual energy cost savings from the weatherization updates is \$1,500 per year. There are currently 153 people statewide on the rebate waitlist.

### **Division of Pioneer Homes: Vickie Wilson, Acting Director**

Vickie said she is coming into the acting director status after having spent the last 17 years working for the Pioneer Homes. Prior to working as the Administrator for the Fairbanks Pioneer Home, she was the director for the Dillingham senior center, and earlier operated a private sector nursing home. Vickie said she will be presenting the Pioneer Home budget request to the House Finance Committee next week. She appreciates the opportunity to make her presentation to the Commission and to answer questions.

The Alaska Pioneer Homes were established in 1913, with the first Pioneer Home in Sitka. The Sitka home is presently licensed for 65 beds, but in proportion to its size, they could hold more beds. When residents move from the Fairbanks Pioneer Home to the Sitka Home, they do not want to go back home to Fairbanks. The Fairbanks home is licensed for 93 occupants. The Palmer home is licensed for 79 and is the home where Veterans are placed. All of the Pioneer Homes have veterans, but a majority of the Veterans are housed at the Palmer home.

Since 1996, Vickie noted that the Pioneer Homes have had their own pharmacy which has produced great cost savings.

There are 16 full and part time employees that work in the Juneau central office or in the pharmacy. The majority of the overall budget goes to employees who provide direct care to the residents. The FY2016 operating budget request is \$62.963 million. The Alaska Pioneer Homes budget is only 2% of the department's budget. The average employee turnover rate for the Alaska Pioneer Homes is around 20% to 25% per year.

There are 303 people on the active list between the six homes. When a room opens in a Home, the highest individual on the active waitlist must move into the Pioneer Home within 30 days or goes to the bottom of the waitlist.

There are 4,729 people on the inactive wait list. Eight three percent of the individuals on the inactive wait list have lived in Alaska for 20 years or more. The Homes do not see many people who have just moved up from the lower 48.

Level 1 Care is \$2,350 a month, with a total occupancy of 38. Seventeen residents are in Level 1 care with payment assistance. Level 2 Care is \$4,250 a month, with a total occupancy of 80 residents. Level 3 Care is \$6,170 per month, which is the highest level of care. Between the six homes, there are 68 residents on Medicaid waivers and 75 residents on payment assistance.

Vicki also stated that the Homes do not charge the entire cost of care. The division will ask the Legislature to approve a rate increase. The Homes have not had a rate increase for 6 or 7 years. This process will be made available for public comment. The new rate will be based on cost of living (COLA) that is used by Social Security.

The Pioneer Homes are successful in achieving their mission. The demand for Level 3 care, which is usually dementia care, continues to increase. The Homes have adopted an electronic medical records program. They are working to standardize practices in all six homes.

All of the homes are equipped with an electronic lock system.

Challenges for the Pioneer Homes: The facilities are aging and maintenance is a challenge. The division is trying to figure out how to maintain levels of service for a growing senior population amidst the budget cuts. The division is working to adjust the facilities to better meet the needs of people with dementia.

### **Public Comment**

Sioux Douglas, Chair for the Senior Services Support Group Inc. provided public comment. Sioux described the Senior Services Support Group as a non-profit organization. The organization conducted a market demand study through the [www.jedc.org](http://www.jedc.org) (Juneau Economic Development Council) and found that there is a significant need for senior assisted living in Juneau.

Sioux stated that plans are moving forward with developing a senior assisted living facility and are now beginning the pre-developmental stage. In the fiscal context, there is a declining revenue environment. Sioux said that Jim McCall with the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation said there are possible collaborations that could help to get funding together. Sioux suggests it would be helpful to remind people that the retired population is the second biggest industry besides oil.

Allison Lee, Executive Director of ResCare Alaska: Allison said ResCare provides services across the state and across the spectrum with home and community based services (HCBS). Allison is in support of the 1915(k) Medicaid option. Allison said she manages an assisted living home in Sterling, Alaska. The home serves residents who have advanced dementia. The real challenge for providing care is their residents qualifying for the waiver program. Allison explained that one of her residents was cared for about six years. That person is now doing great. Because that person's health has improved, they no longer qualify for the waiver. However, that person has dementia and is not safe to live independently. They require 24-hour care. Allison stated that she does not know what to do with her residents who need the care but do not qualify for nursing level of care and therefore the Medicaid waiver program. Her home cannot afford to provide 24 hours of care without being paid. Allison would like Senior & Disabilities Services (SDS) to support the 1915(k) Medicaid option.

Duane Mayes, SDS Director, and Deb Etheridge, SDS Deputy Director, said when working in Minnesota, they developed an "elder with an exception rule." The division is now working on this issue.

Holly Handler, Supervisor Attorney, Alaska Legal Services: Holly said Alaska Legal Services is a non-profit agency that provides free civil legal assistance for seniors, veterans, and low income Alaskans. The agency operates on federal grants, state grants, private funds and volunteer hours. There are now 11 Alaska Legal Services offices across the state. A long-term goal is to add offices in Kodiak and Sitka. The agency wants to ensure current offices are appropriately funded and sustainable before moving forward with expansion. The agency's other goal is to establish an office in every community where there is a superior court.

In FY14, Alaska Legal Services provided 6,046 hours of services. Karen Godnick, a former Attorney, pushed hard to expand what they are doing in terms of outreach in the rural communities. Karen worked with Tribal non-profits and places that have been underserved in the justice system. There are two attorneys, one in Dillingham and one in Barrow, who do wills and probates full time. Alaska Legal Services provide education about legal services for seniors such as wills and the consequences of not having a will in place.

Connie Sipe, Executive Director, Center for Community: Connie said the Center is based out of Sitka and started in 1979. They provide services to people with developmental disabilities in Sitka and surrounding areas. In the past, the Center for Community provided services for seniors however there are no elders in Sitka who live independently and are on the waiver for their home- and community-based services. The senior provider network is very interested in persons with dementia being eligible for waiver services. The Center for Community views the 1915(i) and (k) options as good options, but they are a little concerned about the respite rules. Senior advocates have been working for the last 10 to 14 years to change eligibility criteria for the waiver which is different in each state. Connie noted that there are two levels of nursing care that the federal government provides reimbursement. They include skilled nursing and intermediate care facility. Connie stated that home- and community-based services fall under the "intermediate" level of care.

Connie noted that the process for implementing the 1915(i) and (k) options could take three to four years. Connie questioned why the State could not amend the waiver eligibility requirements for intermediate care to include home- and community-based services for persons with cognitive impairments. If ADRD was a qualifying primary diagnosis under the waiver program, the Pioneer Homes could save a lot of money.

**Medicaid Expansion & Reform for Alaska Seniors: Chris Ashenbrenner, DHSS Medicaid Expansion Program Manager & Monique Martin, DHSS Health Care Policy Advisor.**

Chris Ashenbrenner was asked to come out of retirement to and came on board to work with Commissioner Val on the Medicaid expansion and reform project. Monique Martin is the DHSS Health Care Policy Director. They work together on the Medicaid expansion and reform project. Monique said she recently joined the state. Prior, she worked with Commissioner Davidson at the Alaska Native Tribal Health Council (ANTHC) and helped people to sign up for affordable health care.

Chris said Medicaid expansion covers people who are at 138% or below federal poverty level which is \$20,000 a year for an individual and \$27,000 for a couple. The reason why Medicaid expansion is important right now is because the federal government reimburse at 100% for new enrollees under the expansion program. Medicaid covers an income category of the disabled, blind, elderly and children. In order for an adult to be covered, they have to be caring for a child. There are adults who are not covered by health insurance right now and would be covered under Medicaid expansion. Many times, people think that just because someone is low-income, they will qualify for Medicaid – but they have to fall in one of the aforementioned categories to qualify. When the Supreme Court ruled on the Affordable Health Care Act, the court said states do not have to accept Medicaid expansion. Because some states did not expand their Medicaid program, it created a doughnut hole where people do not qualify for insurance through the Affordable Health Care Act and do not qualify for traditional Medicaid program.

#### **Legislator Visits: Marie Darlin, Chair of ACoA Legislative Advocacy Committee**

Marie reviewed ACoA's position papers for ACoA's budget and policy priorities. Lesley reviewed the legislative visit schedule for Commissioners.

#### **Making Sausage:" An Overview of the Legislative Process: Wilda Laughlin, DHSS Deputy Legislative Liaison**

Wilda provided an insider review of the legislative process and the making of a bill.

#### **Advocacy Partner Reports**

**AARP Alaska: Ken Helander, Advocacy Director & Marie Darlin, Capitol City Task Force.** Ken and Marie reviewed AARP's legislative advocacy priorities that included Enactment of the CARE Act; HB 5 (Conservatorships, Rep Hawker); HB 8 (Power of Attorney Statute); Restore cuts to Senior Benefits; Increase funding for Family Caregiver Services Support Program (\$325,000); Increase funding for Senior In-Home Services (\$350,000); SB 1 (statewide smoke-free workforce bill); and Medicaid Expansion.

#### **Marianne Mills, AgeNet**

Marianne said AgeNet is Alaska's membership association of providers of senior services. AgeNet provides services that are the least expensive in the continuum of care for older adults such as Meals on Wheels, meals at senior centers, chore or light house-keeping, case management, personal care services, bathing and respite for family members that care for their loved ones. AgeNet also does health promotion, disease promotion, and senior housing promotion.

Marianne said AgeNet also educates people about the fact that Alaska has the fastest growing senior population and that seniors give great economic contribution to Alaska. Older Alaskans prefer to stay in their homes and their communities. AgeNet's mission to help seniors achieve being able to stay in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. Nursing homes cost \$100,000 to \$200,000 a year to stay there, this is why AgeNet promotes home and community based services (HCBS).

Marianne said AgeNet has noticed in the past year that rural members in the western and northwest parts of the state are starting to lose services because the organizations in their area no longer provide elder care. We don't want people to have to move from their homes and communities in order to get services.

Marianne said AgeNet's legislative priorities align with ACoA's legislative priorities.

- 1) Increase the National Family Caregiver Grant Program
- 2) Increase Senior In-Home Services Grant Program.
- 3) Increase Senior Grants in the Aging and Disability Centers.

The capital budget priority is to increase the Alaska Housing Senior Citizen Development Housing Fund.

Marianne said AgeNet was advised not to ask for increases to these senior grants. AgeNet changed their priorities to only educate the legislators and to request to keep the grants at their current level. These grants are important for people that are not eligible for Medicaid Waivers or are waiting to be covered. Compared to other divisions and departments, Senior and Disability Services (SDS) programs have minimal cuts.

Marianne said AgeNet is emphasizing the Alzheimer's message that approximately 50% of people 85 and older suffer from Alzheimer's disease or related dementias. AgeNet is educating legislators how home and community based services (HCBS), helps reduce costs of care compared to the cost of nursing homes.

Denise said she appreciates Marianne's words of wisdom, especially her words on protecting the funds that are currently in senior services. Denise said she is pleased that funding was retained for the senior grant-funded services.

#### **AARP, Ken Helander and Marie Darlin**

Ken gave an overview of AARP. AARP started in 1958 by a retired school principal, Ethyl Percy Andrus from California. Ethyl was informed that a person was found living in a chicken coop. This person was a retired teacher. Ethyl found this person and was appalled that someone who took care of people during her career was now living in a chicken coop. Ethyl started the enterprise of AARP. AARP advocates for

people over the age of 50. AARP has over the years, reframed and redrafted what it is all about. The organization now includes people over the age of 50. They help people prepare for retirement. AARP endorses some services, insurance and some other products. The state office of Alaska is not involved with that side of the organization.

AARP stands as a beacon to the world that aging is a “good thing” and there are benefits that go with aging. There is advocacy that needs to happen because it is a constant changing experience. Aging today is not the same as it was 50 or 60 years ago. Our life expectancy is different and our needs are different.

The kinds of things AARP is advocating for is also different, and we are seeing that dramatically in Alaska. We are going to have to make some tough choices. Ken said he appreciates that Marie is also able to be here in Juneau as an AARP advocate. Marie is very effective and has the ability to walk up to the hill and talk to the legislators and staff. Ken said Marie probably has known some of the legislators since they were kids.

AARP headquarters are in Washington D.C. They have a huge presence on Capitol Hill. AARP advocates on behalf of older people across the country about things that affect all of us like Medicare and Social Security. These are national programs. The Older Americans Act which is also a national program. AARP is concerned about protecting the older worker, protecting pensions, and protecting seniors from unfair utility increases. AARP has a policy research institute. Projects that become initiatives in the states as well on the Capital Hill come from AARP’s Policy Research Institute. The research is conducted by AARP and its partnerships with many other organizations like the Robert Wood Foundation, Kaiser Foundation, and the United Health Care Fund.

#### State agenda

##### Enactment of House Bill 5

Ken said House Bill 5 has to do with expanding the pool of eligible persons to serve as conservators as Power of attorney. Ken said HB8 is an umbrella for documents like power of attorney for finance and health care. This bill helps to make these types of documents portable across state lines. Representative Hughes combined HB8 and HB5 into one bill this year. Denise noted that ACoA supports HB 5 too.

##### Senate Bill 1

SB1 does not prohibit smoking. It keeps people smoking outside. AARP supports this and keeping older adults healthy.

Denise asked about the terms of approval that is outlined in the bill such as Pioneer Home’s residents and where they can smoke. Denise also asked about older people who Personal Care Assistance services at home. Would they be allowed to smoke in their own homes since this is a place of employment for the PCA worker?

Ken said Senator Micciche is addressing these issues in his bill.

Teresa Holt, Long-term Care Ombudsman, noted that the health care requirement requires people to smoke no closer than 50 feet from the door entry. It would be difficult for elderly residents to stand outside in the winter 50 feet from the door. Workers allow the residents to remain 20 ft. away from the entry of the door since this could be a health risk factor of slipping on the ice.

Kens said AARP supports Medicaid expansion.

**Representative Hughes and HB8 Powers of Attorney, Ginger Blaisdell, Chief of Staff.**

Representative Hughes thanked the commission for what it does for seniors in Alaska.

Representative Hughes said it is good to see the agenda at this meeting and glad she could come along with Ginger, her chief of staff. Her office has been working on this bill for two years. The main goal is to protect people from fraud and abuse. This bill also helps to clarify and simplify the understanding for everyone, so everyone knows exactly what they are signing. They are hearing widespread support from organizations that includes AARP. Representative Hughes asked for ACoA's support too. She noted her biggest concern to be adults who can be exploited due to their vulnerable situation.

Chief of Staff, Ginger Blaisdell: Ginger said the need for this bill was originally brought to their office from Ken Helander, Denise Daniello, and Diana Weber (former Long-Term Care Ombudsman). Diana Weber has written a couple of articles in the paper about fraud. A lot of time it is adults taking care of their elderly parents. There was recently a case where a daughter was charged with taking \$680,000 from her parent. This bill goes over the clarification of terminology. The principal is the person that owns the property or the money. The person that has the power of attorney is responsible to have the same honesty as an attorney. When it goes to court they will be treated the same as someone that is knowledgeable, and to show integrity to deal with that persons financial matters.

**Action Item: ACoA Motion to Approve Advocacy for HB 8**

Mary called for a motion for the commission to support House Bill 8. Marie motioned to approve. All Commissioners voted in support of the bill.

**Action Item: ACoA Motion and Approval for the AHFC Resolution**

Mary moved a motion for the commissioners to vote on the Resolution for AHFC for FY16 Capital Budget Request for an amended amount of \$4.5 Million. Motion amended, all commissioners supported the bill with the amended amount of \$4.5 Million. Motion carried.

**Thursday February 12, 2015**

**Meeting called to order:** 8:30 a.m.

**Roll call:** Commissioners present: Mary Shields, Edna DeVries, David Blacketer, Duane Mayes, Anna Frank, Rachel Greenberg and Paula Pawlowski.

Commissioners not present: Marie Darlin and Eleanor Dementi.

Attending by teleconference: Rolf Numme and Bob Sivertsen.

Staff Present: Denise Daniello, Sherice Cole.

Commissioner Marie Darlin and Staff member Lesley Thompson were attending the commissions Legislative Teleconference.

### **Commissioner Discussion of Legislator Visits**

#### Rachel Greenberg and David Blacketer

Rachel said some of the legislators and staff were very supportive of senior services. They also had some legislators and staff who were in favor of restoring funding for AHFC's Senior Housing Development Fund. Overall, their visits went well and the people on the hill recognize that the senior population is growing. A couple of the legislators liked the new layout of the annual report and found the information very valuable.

David said this was his first time going up on the hill and he thanked Rachel for accompanied him as she is a seasoned advocate. David said Rachel is a quarter back and does an excellent job at explaining the priorities. David said he was impressed how responsive the legislators and staff were to ACoA's priorities and Rachel.

#### Paula Pawlowski

Paula said she talked with Senator Coghill. Paula said the Senator has an aging father and receives in-home care. He has always been caring and sensitive about seniors.

Paula said she went with Mary Shields to visit with Senator Kevin Meyers who also understands the whole picture. Senator Meyer and Senator Coghill didn't have time to read the whole ADRD Roadmap, but were interested. Paula also visited with Senator Mackinnon who is hard to sell and is pretty black and white. She listened to the fact that seniors are productive citizens and they aren't a drain on community, economy, or on our resources.

Paula said Senator Coghill, Senator Meyer, and Senator Mackinnon understand that Senior Benefits are spent in the community.

#### Edna Devries

Edna said she seconded the other Commissioner's comments. She thinks they were well received by the legislators and their staff. This year, the legislature really hit the floor running. There has been a lot of talk about having an extended session, as well as a special session. The two reports we had, the ACoA Annual Report and the ADRD Roadmap, were very well received. Edna said we planted a seed, so if they need a resource, they will have these publications to look at. Edna said the Senior Snapshot will be helpful to the legislators and suggested to have a link on our website for the Snapshot.

#### Anna Frank

Anna said everyone who she met with was very polite and it seemed that it helped with having AgeNet meet with the legislature before the Commission. Everyone was open and she didn't get anyone that didn't want to talk. Some talked more than she did. She feels like she is the new kid on the block.

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Edna said they had a chance meeting with Channel 2 news. The camera wasn't running. Edna gave the reporter the Commission's legislative packet.

#### Mary Shields and Bob Sivertsen

Mary said she and Bob had very good meetings. However, one visit was on the tough side having to do with budget. They did find that the legislators and staff were very supportive and were very surprised at the Senior Benefits situation. Mary and Bob explained how the cut would work and that any change to the payment structure could open up the Senior Benefit statute because the eligibility structure was set in statute. The legislators did not like having to open up the statute. They liked the layout of the packet and the information. They were glad to see that the Department is starting to work on ADRD and that the Trust is a partner. Most of the visits went well. Their visit with Mary's Representative Geran Tarr went smoothly. They also met with Bob's Senator, Senator Stedman and a couple of others. One thing the legislators appreciated was our position on senior housing. They appreciated seeing ACoA's Resolution for AHFC's Senior Citizen Housing Development Fund (SCHDF). Most of the legislators did not know that funding for the SCHDF had been zeroed out.

#### Denise Daniello and Eleanor Dementi

Denise said Eleanor is well known on the hill. They had good visits. The information provided was well received. They found that some legislators and staff were unaware how the cuts were affecting senior programs, especially the Senior Benefits. Denise said that she and Eleanor emphasized that the Commission wanted to keep what we had in the programs and that we were not asking for more money. They thanked the legislature for all of the support they have given to the senior programs throughout the years. The legislators really appreciated the ADRD Roadmap.

Denise said the Commission has received an invitation to do a presentation on the ADRD Roadmap, and will probably do the presentation in mid-March. Denise said she will also be doing a presentation about the importance of senior housing later this month with the Alaska Housing Regional Authority. Denise said they also went to the house session with Chief Justice Dana Fabe. Anna did the opening prayer, which was very nice and well spoken. Eleanor was recognized by Representative Talerico. Chief Justice Dana Fabe spoke on a number of issues having to do with the importance of the courts in rural Alaska. People living in rural Alaska should not have to come to the city in order to find justice. Chief Justice Fabe talked briefly about her new Elder Law Task Force. Denise said she felt it was a very productive day, and thanked everybody for being there and doing what they do best.

#### **Elder Protection, Office of Long Term Care Ombudsman, Teresa Holt, Long Term Care Ombudsman:**

Teresa said there was a fire at an assisted living home in the MatSu area. Responding to emergency situations at senior homes is part of her job. Teresa said there were 16 residents in the home. They had to transport the residents to a different home. One problem they found is they have to find a new way to keep their records. No one agency has a list of residents in each home because there are some residents on private pay, on waivers, General Relief, and Public Assistance. The home administrators

didn't have time to grab all of the paperwork. Everyone got out of the home and no one was hurt, or needed immediate medical care. They realized they need to have a list off site and a list of plans and medications for the residents. They need to know who the decision makers are for the residents and the guardian's contact information.

The Long-term Care Ombudsman's job is to go and check on the residents, and to give the residents a choice to stay there or to be placed elsewhere.

Teresa said that for federal reporting purposes, the OLTCO does a count of the homes and the number of the beds. In Alaska, there are 18 nursing homes with a total of 674 people; 266 assisted living homes that are specifically licensed for seniors; 200 homes that have a dual license for either mental health &/or for seniors. There are 3,500 individuals who live in a total of 500 different facilities. It is snap shot count as homes close and re-open.

There are 4000 seniors who live in assisted living facilities. Her office tries to make one visit to every facility throughout the state every year. Her office has three investigative staff, her herself and the Deputy Long-term Care Ombudsman. Last year they did 355 friendly visits.

Last year they opened 727 cases, and did 455 visits. Most cases they do an in- person visit. Their other goal is to get some volunteers around the state, so they can do more visits.

They are trying to increase their volunteer base. They currently have 8 new volunteers. Their first goal is to have 25 volunteers that could do a visit every month. The more visits they do, the more likely they get complaints. When their office gets complaints, they get more cases. The more cases they get, gives them less time to do friendly visits. They had 1,150 complaints last fiscal year. Compared to the last 5 years, they have increased in all categories. Teresa is excited and proud of her staff.

The new Long-term Care Ombudsman's federal regulations were published yesterday. Teresa said she will be doing webinars and will be going to the state Long-term Care Ombudsman's conference in April. The new federal regulations will go into effect on July 1, 2016. It is expected that the state will have to make some changes in its regulations to be aligned with the new federal rulings from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid. Theresa said that she and Duane Mayes plan to meet about these changes over the next two weeks.

**Adult Protective Services, Brenda Mahlatini, Social Services Program Officer**

Brenda reported, their new data base system, Harmony has been a little cumbersome. As they are going through their cases, they are seeing better documentation. Investigations are more complete, the assessments and plans are much better. They have centralized their intake. They have three intake workers, one UA worker and one licensing worker that are all doing intake. Every report of harm and every complaint comes through the system. Their office works with the agency that needs to be involved.

Brenda reported that the Governor's Budget cut one APS worker. They have 13 investigators for the entire state. Last year they did over 2000 investigations from reports of harm. This does not include information and referral provided or other actions they have taken. APS has identified they need more training and support when working with guardians.

There has been an increase of senior financial exploitation across the board. APS needs to investigate the factors responsible for the rise in exploitation. They are talking about what types of documentation they need to attach to the reports to make sure the money is spent where it needs to be. The Long-term Care Committee is meeting right now. There is some discussion around how many provisions they want to put into place. They don't want to make it difficult for guardians to get information that they need.

Brenda stated when workers cannot travel into rural areas due to weather they need to use their designees. Designees are folks they use in rural areas. They use a lot of law enforcement, and healthcare aids such as nurses and personal care attendants to be their "eyes." They are working on training these designees so they can feel confident in what they are doing. The Kenaitze Tribe from Kenai has 500 people and a good portion of them have agreed to be designees for Adult Protective services. The training will be for three days. These designees have agreed to work with their tribal members and to work with people in the community.

Brenda said the assisted living home's fire showed there is good coordinated effort between all agencies, the Long-term Care Ombudsman's Office, Adult Protective Services, Elder Fraud, and the Office of Public Advocacy.

The Adult Protective Services are used to responding to homes that are being closed and they do this weekly. They are not used to those emergency types of situations with a fire or earthquake, etc. The circle of care gives providers the ability to do this. This will be APS's next target - to become more efficient in emergency situations. Assisted living homes are required to have an emergency plan. Last year they received over 6,500 reports of harm. This year, APS anticipates they will receive almost 7,400 reports of harm. Comparing FY2011 to FY2014, there has been a 35% increase in reports of harm. The reports of harm for assisted living homes are actual investigations. Reports of harm from information and referral don't need an investigation because abuse has not happened, but they may need help finding resources or guidance for where they need to go to get help.

#### **Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training Program, Rita Bowen, Statewide Program Coordinator**

Prior to 2004, Rita stated that the MASST program was housed in the Alaska Commission on Aging. Rita said they recently updated their state plan with the state's current demographics. Rita said two years ago, there was a 50% reduction in the MASST Program. This year, the Department of Labor as a whole is expecting a 12.8% reduction. They are shuffling into new positions and are considering a reduction to the hours at the job centers. They are also reducing pass thru grants to the state grantees. At the federal level, their state plan was approved. The next update to their state plan is due by July 2017. The U.S. Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Health & Social Services have different fiscal calendars, so she has to update their State Plan with both of the Departments.

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Rita said the Older Americans Act is going through reauthorization right now. So, they are making some changes to the Senior Community Services Employment Program (SCSEP). Alaska calls the program Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training Program (MASST). Alaska is the only state that has renamed the program. The changes that are being looked at are increasing the poverty rate from 125% to 133%. They are worried about funding cuts since Alaska's budget is so little. Alaska only receives funding for less than 1 half of 1 % of the population. The Federal Government will give \$6,000 per participant, but it costs \$10,000 for the training per participant. The state of Alaska contributes the other \$4,000. The program can retain plan participants for up to 4 years.

The priority age is 75 years and older. Sometimes people have to go back to work because Social Security is capped, but food and gas are not. MASST participants have to have two or more barriers to employment to qualify for the program. Barriers include low literacy, limited employment history, a disability, &/or English as a second language. Rita said her office is working with the Department of Education and the University system to try and merge programs together to eliminate duplication of services. This past year the program had a total of 235 people, 54 of them secured jobs and earn an average wage of \$35,000 a year. 60% of the participants have entered into employment and 72.2% have retained employment.

Rita said this is the last program for seniors to come to for employment training before being at risk of homelessness, or having to couch surf. Rita said she is really proud to work with the commission and enjoys going around the state to help people.

Mary said there is a MASST Participant currently working for the commission and there is a participant working at the Anchorage Senior Center.

### **Paula Pawlowski, Serve Alaska**

Paula reported the Americorp Program started many years ago under President Johnson and President Kennedy. The two presidents blended two branches of the government together into the Corporation for Community Services and Volunteerism. The name was changed under Governor Palin to Serve Alaska. Now Serve Alaska is under the Department of Community and Regional Affairs inside Commerce Community Economic Development. Serve Alaska is a federal pass through for grants for AmeriCorps Members. The idea of the program is that there is a local issue and AmeriCorps Members are used as local solutions. Members gain employment skills and confidence through service to one's community. Members can be a member for two years and then re-join at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. In return for their service, they receive an education stipend that will go up in 2016 to \$5,800 per year. The service hour requirement is 1,700 hours. There is a reduced stipend for reduced hours. Members can use their stipend for continuing education, paying debts on education and they can give it away.

Paula said Serve Alaska also develops a state plan. Serve Alaska has 15 commission members who are appointed by the Governor to serve. The seats are filled with people who represent different state departments and there are volunteer seats, especially for those 55 and older. Serve Alaska assists with the First Lady's volunteer awards. They are looking at other ways to recognize volunteerism. In smaller communities, it is pride in where they live. In 2013, they had 155 AmeriCorps members across the state.

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These members recruited 4,371 volunteers in their own local areas. It was the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Serve Alaska this last year and they were visited by the federal program officer. Serve Alaska took her to Togiak. Togiak had a village gathering with a potluck and potlatch. There were three women who ranged in age from 70 to 90 years old and were Vista volunteers in their time. Serve Alaska also does a national rating of where Alaska sits. One national rate is that Alaska is the 10<sup>th</sup> state in ranking that has the largest volunteerism base.

### **Southeast Alaska Independent Living Council (SAIL)**

**Joan O’Keefe - Executive Director, Jordan Nigro - Deputy Director & Laura Lucas, ADRC Coordinator**

Jordan reported SAIL’s mission is to inspire personal independence for the people they serve. They are an Aging and Disability Resource Center so they serve seniors and people of all disabilities. Last year SAIL served 630 individuals over the age of 60 years old. This age group is their largest growing demographic. They are always trying to get the word out about their services. The Older Blind Alaskans Program served 192 seniors last year. They do peer support groups and offer services for folks for people that are losing vision as they get older. Recently they have begun Medicare counseling. Their five core services are, peer support, advocacy, nursing home transition and diversion, youth transition services, information and referral, and independent living training.

As an Aging and Disability Resource Center, they provide a lot of services and provide options counseling. They provide help with outdoor recreation and community access for their clients. They provide benefit counseling, help people to see how much they can work and still retain their benefits such as Medicaid benefits etc.

Jordan said that the Older Blind Alaskans Program has an interpreter referral line. SAIL is currently the agency in Southeast that refers people to interpreters. SAIL serves as a “loan closet” and loan people equipment that they need. They have a lot of durable medical equipment such as wheel chairs, magnifiers and pocket talkers. Pocket talkers are good for amplifying who they are talking to. They also help to assess homes to see what needs to be modified for people so they can remain in their homes. They are working on adding a chapter for Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia, which they believe will be really helpful for the senior population. They provide disability and ADA awareness presentations and assistance. They provide a consumer service fund to fund things that no insurance will pay for.

SAIL is funded through local state and federal grants, foundation grants, individual donations and fundraiser events.

### Advocacy issues

SAIL is involved in homeless coalitions in each community that they have offices in. They address the continuum of care, affordable housing, and accessible housing, transportation and employment. They are always working on paying attention to what is going on and try to be up on what the issues are.

Across the board, Independent living services received a 13.2% cut out of Vocational Rehabilitation and the information referral line were completely zeroed out. SAIL will advocate for restoring these funds which amount to \$100,000 for lost services.

Denise asked about the interpreter line and how this will affect people with disabilities and what the state's responsibility is to this population.

Joan answered SAIL has had this grant for the last 20 years. The grant has paid for advocacy for deaf people. Doctors and lawyers have been reluctant to use interpreters. Joan said if sign language is a person's way to communicate, English is their second language. SAIL does a lot of education with different providers with what they are supposed to do under ADA Rules. With the grant, they do a peer support group for the deaf and a peer support group for the interpreters so they can collaborate on training and provide the services for the people that need it. Joan thinks the legislators thought that the interpreters could be replaced with videos. The problem is the people in the rural communities are not set up for that. The deaf community has said pretty loud that they prefer a person in the court and with the DVR Program.

Denise asked if this would affect all interpreters for the state.

Joan answered in Anchorage there are two for profit interpreters.

Paula asked Joan to identify the communities SAIL serves. Joan stated SAIL currently have consumers in 18 or 19 communities and they have offices in Juneau, Haines, Sitka and Ketchikan.

#### **Wrap-Up & Closing Comments by Commissioners**

Rachel said she always appreciates seeing everyone. She always learns something new when she meets with the Commission. From meeting with the legislators, her eyes have opened up to some possibilities in how the Commission can collaborate and work with providers and different state agencies. Rachel said she thinks that the Commission will be able to move forward in a positive way.

Paula said she is so glad we can meet face to face. It gives us more information. Paula said she really appreciates the fact that the Commission represents different areas around the state and the partners we work with.

David said his learning curve is up there and appreciates being part of the process of helping other seniors. Meeting with legislators and being with Rachel as a partner has helped him to learn a lot. David said it has been a really good experience being able to serve on the State Plan Committee with Marie.

Bob Sivertsen said he found the legislative visits very rewarding. It was a pleasure to have Mary as his partner in meeting with legislators. Bob said he was impressed at the number of legislators that took an interest in what the Commission does. Bob said he thinks the information that was presented will be used later on. Bob said the general message he got from the visits was that they are concerned about seniors and the impact of budget cuts for seniors.

Edna thanked the staff for being so willing to pick everyone up and being so accommodating to them. Edna said it was a good meeting and she looks forward to meeting with everyone later.

Anna thanked everyone for helping her to learn what being an elder entails. It has been interesting and heard a comment from her granddaughter. Anna's granddaughter, who is a staff member for one of the legislators said when she was listening to the people about the elder program, she said she needs to get involved with our elders. This is what young people need to do.

Anna said we just have to be willing to step out of our comfort zone.

Mary is very pleased with the work that the commission has completed to prepare for the legislative advocacy visits and what has been accomplished over the past year. Staff keep Commissioners informed.

**Meeting Adjourned at 11:00 a.m.**