

**ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING
QUARTERLY MEETING**

December 5, 2022

Location

Videoconference

Commission Members:

Bob Sivertsen, Chair
Paula Pawlowski
Cheryl La Follette, *not present*
Nona Safra
Michael Coons
Bob Pawlowski
Janet Engan
Pam Samash
Darlene Supplee
Acting Director Anthony Newman
Lisa Von Bargaen

Guests:

Rita Gray, MASST Program
Jim McCall, AHFC
Stephanie Wheeler, LTC Ombudsman
Eric Gurley, Access Alaska
Brenda Sheldon, APH Advisory Board
Malan Paquette, advocate
Kristin Cox, SDS
Ellen Hackenmueller, SDS
Director Duane Mayes, DVR
Patrick Reinhart, GCDSE
Steve Williams, AMHTA

Staff

Jon Haghayeghi, Executive Director
Martin Lange, Rural Outreach Coordinator

Monday, December 5, 2022
CALL TO ORDER – 9:01 a.m.
ROLL CALL

ETHICS DISCLOSURE

No conflicts of interest were declared.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Chair Sivertsen **MOVED** to approve the agenda, **SECONDED** by Mike Coons. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

CHAIR REPORT

Chair Sivertsen reported that he has had regular interactions with Jon Haghayeghi where they discuss the progress on the State Plan and other activities of the Commission. He stated he has also engaged in Pioneer Homes visits and meetings regarding priorities and the upcoming legislative session. One of the key issues for Pioneer Homes is deferred maintenance.

VICE-CHAIR REPORT

Paula Pawlowski stated that she is awaiting the list of early proposed bills after the Governor and LT. Governor are sworn in. The Governor's budget should be out mid December. She has spoken with AgeNet, AARP and others, and it appears they will discontinue weekly legislative meetings during the session, although they will develop alerts on bills of interest.

Paula reported that Marge Stoneking from AARP recommended they look at February 1st to do a legislative Lunch and Learn in person in Juneau. This event will be jointly hosted by AgeNet, AARP, ACoA, and Marge recommends they invite the Long-Term Care Ombudsman this year as well. Paula Pawlowski stated that they will hold a virtual conference early in January to set the advocacy priorities with their partners. She also recommended they hold the ACoA meeting that week in Juneau to combine the Lunch and Learn, business meeting, and legislative visits, and she proposed flying in January 31st and leaving Friday, February 3rd.

Mike Coons asked for clarification on the Lunch and Learn and if that replaced legislative visits. Paula Pawlowski explained that they will still do the in-person legislative visits. The Lunch and Learn is an educational opportunity for the new legislators and new aides. Mike Coons also asked if they will have the opportunity to visit with the Governor and Lt. Governor. She stated that once the Commission agrees on dates, Jon can get started booking appointments.

Mike Coons remarked that Nancy Dahlstrom is interested in senior issues and may be interested in attending ACoA meetings.

Acting Director Newman clarified whether or not ex officios participate in the advocacy and advocacy planning. Paula Pawlowski stated that they can attend and observe, but their level of participation is up to them.

Pam Samash noted that she won't be able to attend in person and asked how she will be able to participate. Paula made a note of that and will work on it.

Bob Pawlowski noted that as chair of the Pioneer Homes Advisory Board, he has at least 11 members he specifically needs to see, and he asked for that to be considered in the scheduling.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND STAFF UPDATES

Jon Haghayeghi reported on the following activities since the last meeting:

- Regular updates on the work of staff to start going out to Commissioners.
- Lesley Thompson retired last month.
- Martin Lange has been hired as the rural outreach coordinator.
- Needs assessment has been completed, and the data has been submitted to Agnew::Beck.
- Presentations have been made to the Trust.
- Conducted a listening session in Kodiak.
- Martin Lange hosted a listening session in Petersburg.
- Upcoming priorities: Senior Snapshot update and Annual Reports for the last three years as one consolidated report. The Annual Report will be converted into more of a PowerPoint type layout.
- Reclassification of the planner position. The latest position description is 20 years old and needs to be updated. Once the position is reclassified, recruitment will begin.
- Recent meeting with Agnew::Beck.
- Vacancies continue to be a challenge at the State level as one out of six positions is vacant.
- Looking forward to determining priorities for the Commission and the upcoming legislative session.

Martin Lange introduced himself to Commissioners and explained his background as a vernacular media specialist and a vernacular media consultant in private industry. He has spent 20 years working with indigenous groups in Latin America on translating materials to indigenous languages in both print and video media. Caring for older family members brought he and his family to Alaska, and he is very happy to be working for the Commission and to bring his skills in working with indigenous peoples to this position as rural outreach coordinator.

STATE PLAN FOR SENIOR SERVICES

Timeline: Schedule of Project Tasks – August 2022 – June 2023

1. Project Management and Communications – Monthly
2. State Plan Advisory Committee meeting – January, April

3. Background Research – December. Meeting with Agnew::Beck and Louise Ryan for education on the new federal requirements.
4. Analysis of Needs Assessment Data – December. SurveyMonkey has the ability to aggregate data. Commissioners can request specific data from Jon. Paper surveys had a 10 percent response rate, and they received 5,000 responses online for a total of 6,000 responses. Looking at the data received statewide, there are gaps in data from certain demographics such as ethnicity and region. They need more data from rural and remote Alaska.
5. Intrastate Funding Formula – March.
6. Plan Development – May and effective in October.

After discussion among Commissioners, January 18th and the 24th were available to hold Advisory Committee meetings. Jon will discuss these dates with Agnew::Beck to determine their availability.

Commissioners reviewed the survey results and made observations about the data such as skipped answers skewing the data. Jon Haghayeghi noted that the overall response rate to the survey is greater than in years past, and he believes the large numbers help them in this situation.

Jan Engan felt they should educate on the State Plan during the Lunch and Learn.

Senior Population Projection

Jon Haghayeghi graphically demonstrated the growth Alaska will see in the age demographic of 80+ and noted it is very alarming in the sense of the amount of services and supports needed for these individuals by 2030. There will be more than a doubling of this population. The 85+ demographic has a 32 percent rate of Alzheimer's disease. He would like to try to quantify the dollar value of support services that would be needed to accommodate a population of that size. He will need to investigate the current service array and funding in order to make projections.

Pam Samash felt they need to focus on dementia awareness.

Needs Assessment

Senior Survey:

- Targeted survey for Alaskans age 55+.
- Used to learn about priorities from the senior perspective.

Elder Listening Sessions:

- Conversations with seniors and public members.
- Targeted questions to identify what is and is not working or seniors in Alaskan communities.

Provider Survey:

- Targeted survey for community-based service provider agencies and community health centers.

- Demonstrate the needs and considerations of service providers.

Updates:

- Fairbanks meeting and listening sessions in May of 2022. Top areas of concern:
 - Transportation services
 - Affordable housing
 - In-home support services
 - Availability of assisted living
 - Food insecurity/physical activity.
- Mat-Su listening session October 2022. Top areas of concern:
 - Transportation services
 - Affordable housing
 - Access to information
 - Inflation
 - Food insecurity/physical activity.
- Anchorage listening session October 2022. Top areas of concern:
 - Affordable housing
 - In-home support services
 - Transportation services
 - Cost of living increases/inflation
 - Financial abuse/exploitation.
- Southeast in September 2022
- Kodiak listening session November 2022
- New rural outreach coordinator.

There are common themes in the top areas of concern from the listening sessions. The individual senior surveys showed the following very important areas of need:

- Health care services – 84.25%
- Affordable and accessible housing – 70.36%
- Services for seniors with dementia and support for their families – 64.76%
- Senior protection – 64.28%
- Transportation – 60.68%

Provider Survey 2022 – Key Findings

Top issues facing seniors and their families:

- Independent living senior housing
- Assisted transportation
- Assisted living services
- Homemaker assistance.

Biggest roadblocks to providers:

- Workforce shortages
- Senior population growth
- Lack of sufficient funding
- Overcoming setbacks from the pandemic.

Jon Haghayeghi showed a graphic from SDS that demonstrated the number of units of service provided each fiscal year and the impact the pandemic had on services such as home-delivered meals doubling and congregate meals decreasing by more than half.

Mike Coons wondered if the significant decline in the number of people served in adult daycare is due to staffing issues. Jon wonders if it a combination of issues. Darlene Supplee noted that in the Interior, adult daycare facilities are still experiencing staffing shortages keeping them from opening to capacity.

Jan Engan asked about the transportation category showing number of units of service provided but not number of people served. She believes the number of people served is important. She also asked if there is a service option of providing in-home respite to caregivers. She noted that there is a category for “other” services, but she is unsure what falls under this category. Jon said he will ask Kristin Cox.

Pam Samash asked if family members getting paid to care for their aging parents is something that is paid for throughout the whole state. She also feels that increased communication would be valuable for seniors to know what resources are available to them. Acting Director Newman said that Alaska regulations state that people who have a legal duty to support an individual can't be paid to provide services to them. That regulation has been suspended during the federal public health emergency. There is a lot of interest in this topic, and it's possible the legislature may want to open that up. The big concern is exploitation, abuse, and fraud, so the appropriate guards need to be put in place to ensure they are protecting people. Darlene Supplee stated the model is already working in the veteran's directed program.

Lisa Von Bargen asked a clarifying question regarding the legal duty to support an individual. She felt this relates to an adult who has a child or is a legal guardian of someone; but an adult child does not have a legal obligation to care for a parent. Where does this sit in the regulations, and is this what needs to be opened up to be considered? Acting Director Newman agreed that it does. SDS allows for a sibling to care for another sibling, but he needs to reference the regulation to specify who is named. Lisa noted that she agrees there is the potential for an enormous amount of fraud and abuse in doing something like this, and she would be interested in being part of the solution for protections to prevent that. Acting Director Newman noted that other states are looking into this same issue as well because of the nationwide workforce shortages.

Nona Safra noted that she is an unpaid caregiver, and it's because she holds a power of attorney. Acting Director Newman stated that if she was being paid and has power of attorney, it's a conflict of interest. A lot has been learned through the pandemic as they have been able to allow flexibilities and suspend the regulation. He is unaware if they have seen more fraud, but they will need to do more investigation.

Bob Pawlowski stated that there is new legislation moving through the Senate that is set to increase the VA benefits for in-home care, including wellness checks for the home providers.

Biden-Harris Administration Priorities and New State Plan Guidance

- COVID-19 recovery
- Advancing equity
- Expanding access to home and community-based services
- Building a caregiving infrastructure.

ACoA Previous State Plan Goals:

1. Promote healthy aging and provide access to comprehensive and integrated health care.
2. Ensure seniors are financially secure.
3. Protect vulnerable seniors from abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and exploitation.
4. Ensure seniors have access to quality, affordable, accessible, safe, and appropriate housing, including senior housing, across the continuum of care.
5. Promote opportunities for meaningful aging, intergenerational connectivity, and civic engagement.
6. Provide quality and affordable home and community-based long-term support services to provide seniors with the highest quality of life.

Guiding Principles:

1. **Keep seniors strong, healthy, and secure.** Seniors can access information, education, and resources to help them make healthy choices about nutrition, physical activity, community involvement, relationships, and peer support to reduce their risk of chronic disease, mental illness, and substance misuse, leading to healthy and productive lives. Seniors have access to financial planning tools and a safety net to ensure they can age with dignity and choice.
2. **Promote independence, empowerment, and choice.** Older Alaskans are recognized as a valuable resource and a powerful economic and political force. Whenever possible, strengthen the voice and participation of seniors on issues affecting them.
3. **Target services to the most vulnerable seniors.** Service providers focus on outreach to seniors who are frail, low-income, members of minority communities, non-English speakers, and those living in rural areas to ensure that they are aware of and are able to access services and supports.
4. **Highlight community contributions.** Above all, programs and services seek to acknowledge and support the abundant vital contributions of older Alaskans. Supporting seniors increases their capacity to contribute to the well-being of their families, communities, and all Alaskans.
5. **Offer a full continuum of care and housing.** Services are provided in each community or region to meet the needs of seniors at each stage of the continuum of care.

Commissioners provided the following comments related to the last State Plan goals:

- Financial security needs to be kept on there, but what is the board doing from an education standpoint, particularly people in the 50 to 60 age range who are coming closer to retirement?
- The objectives and strategies currently in the State Plan under financial security could be enhanced. Education could be enhanced through newsletters and webinars, and education about financial security should begin in high school, not

age 50 or 60. Work with employers on strengthening their retirement program promotion to employees.

- Life skills to carry people through their lifespan need to be taught at an early age with communication about intergenerational being a normalized occurrence. Regular conversations about aging, disability, death, and planning for these facets of life would set people up for success.
- There are people on Social Security that are just slightly over income to qualify for heating assistance and other public benefits, and those are the people who are financially insecure. People in the lower income range receive all the benefits available to them.
- They need to start advocating for a healthy economy for Alaska seniors so that services from non-profits and the private sector are available.
- These six goals are an excellent umbrella in which to create the new State Plan.
- They have not addressed the rural population that has lived a subsistence and bartering lifestyle without gainful employment. These people do not have a retirement plan or Social Security.
- Because of the economy, it is getting more and more difficult to live in the bush communities, and there is an outmigration of younger people from the villages leaving no one to take care of the seniors. They need to engage with tribal organizations and see what they can do to partner to help to keep youth in the communities.
- The way the goals are written, it sounds like a public relations campaign. They need to review the past plan to see what partners were tasked to do and what was accomplished in furtherance of these goals. It's one thing to create a goal; it's another to make things happen. It is the Commission's responsibility to ensure partners are doing what they say they will do.
- Highlighted that the survey question related to household income had 5,170 responses, and the top sources of income are PFD, Social Security, pension from employer or union, personal savings, and investments.
- Would like to keep a realistic number of goals to achieve meaningful movement.
- The Commission has a finite amount of funding to accomplish the goals, and if they spread themselves too thin, they won't be helping to the extent they can. If there is a way they can bolster a program to help the majority of seniors, that is one of the Commission's obligations. The Older Americans Act (OAA) requires the Commission to reach out to the rural, isolated areas because that is where the biggest poverty issues are as well as lack of services.
- Would like to see reports from partners on progress on State Plan goals and objectives on a quarterly or biannual basis.
- Partner with Department of Health (DOH) on the data they are gathering now and intertwine that to gauge if they are reaching their goals and outcomes.
- The data shows a significant portion of funding goes to public or non-profit transportation, but survey responses indicate that 88 percent of the respondents drive themselves. Again, would like to have reporting on unduplicated numbers of riders.
- Commission should vote on their highest priorities.

Funding Formula – Five Weight Factors

Component	Definition	Current Weighting
1. Total senior population factor	Age 60+	12.5
2. Minority factor	Nonwhite and/or Hispanic	12.5
3. Poverty factor	Below 175% of the Alaska poverty level	27.5
4. Frail factor – physical or mental	Age 80+	25
5. Rural factor	Urban: MOA, FNSB, MSB Rural: CBJ, KGB, KPB, KIB Remote: Everything else	Urban – zero Rural – 11.25 Remote – 22.5

Jon Haghayeghi asked for a discussion on the component of “frail factor,” noting that there has been a question about the terminology. He directed Commissioners to the data highlighting the increased rates of Alzheimer’s disease in the 85+ population. Chair Sivertsen wondered about the average age of admittance into the Pioneer Homes, and thought they could perhaps associate that to the frail factor. He opined that perhaps it is the stage at which home and community-based services are no longer appropriate for a person. Jan Engan thought that social isolation also plays into the frail factor, but she doesn’t know how they can objectively measure frailty, because people can be frail at age 60. Darlene Supplee stated that people’s ADLs and IADLs are measured and collected as they enter service. The State has recently added a space on the intake form for “has Alzheimer’s or related dementia disorder” that is separate from the ADLs and IADLs. She suggested that instead of basing the frail factor on age, utilize DOH’s data on level of disability. Acting Director Newman also noted that there is a higher likelihood that people who are 80+ are white and of a higher economic status. He wonders about the people of other ethnicities with poorer health outcomes who never make it to 80 and feels that is an issue that merits reconsideration of the frail factor.

Internal Timeline

- ✓ Identify SPA Advisory Committee members
- ✓ Set meeting schedule
- ✓ Senior Needs Assessment
- ✓ Develop recommendations for Needs Assessment
- ✓ Approval of Needs Assessment
- ✓ Distribution and data collection
- ✓ Input data
- ✓ Analyze data
- ✓ Present data from listening sessions and needs assessments
- **Develop goals and objectives**
- **Address strategies and performance outcomes**
- **Funding formula**
- **Review current funding formula: Census data, regions, definitions for various factors, assign weights to factors, distribution of federal and state funds.**

Chair Sivertsen suggested that they have a discussion on how the Commission can reach out to the remote/rural population for feedback for the State Plan. He wondered what resources they can pair with and attach the survey to. He also believes they need to better utilize their Native corporation partners. He thinks that the lack of access to broadband contributed to low response rates for those areas. He also suggested targeted campaigns for certain regions of the state.

Pam Samash received a suggestion from a community member to post flyers at the prominent gathering locations in the villages such as the store and the post office. It was suggested to make the flyers simple, use plain language, and include pictures. Chair Sivertsen also noted that they should consider translating the flyers into the Native language of the areas they are targeting.

Mike Coons suggested asking the Governor and Lt. Governor to help get the information to the Native corporations.

Janet Engan stated that when she worked on the survey, she intentionally broke it up into service categories. She asked that the data be pulled out for the communities they didn't receive much response from. She noted that although broadband seems to be an issue, many people filled out the survey online. She wants to know specifically what the responses were from the rural and remote areas.

Bob Pawlowski stated that the Alaska Village Electric Cooperative may be very interested in the data ACoA is gathering. They have 58 remote villages, and the information that is showing up in the survey would be of interest for their business as well as their partnership models with these communities.

Marty Lange suggested doing recorded conversations and interviews rather than paper. In oral societies, there is a large contingency that don't use paper. He added that it is something he would be able to do as a part of his position. The Trust has encouraged him to do as much in-person outreach as possible, and it would also give him the opportunity to conduct the surveys.

Darlene Supplee stated that as a provider, she deals with the rural population in Salcha, North Pole, Delta Junction, and Nenana that are not computer literate yet. She stated that when she reviewed the income levels of the survey respondents, they are missing data for those folks who are not computer literate. Their discussions going forward need to focus on both online and paper surveys and planning for mailing out those paper surveys. The surveys need to be written in big bold letters so people can read them. She suggested lessening some of the questions as well.

Mike Coons noted there was a question about computer literacy on the survey. He thought it would be interesting to know if the data shows whether or not people of low income own computers. Some people who only have a cell phone and not a computer might have a harder time completing a survey on their phone. Chair Sivertsen noted that Commerce, Community, and Economic Development is doing a broadband project and is delving into that.

DIVISION OF SENIOR AND DISABILITIES SERVICES (SDS) UPDATES

Acting Director Newman highlighted the following from SDS:

Department of Health Updates

- Heidi Hedberg is the new acting commissioner. She was previously director of the Division of Public Health (DPH).
- Gennifer Moreau-Johnson has put in her resignation as director of the Division of Behavioral Health (DBH). With this resignation, three of the five division director positions at DOH will be unfilled: DBH, DPH, and SDS. Instead of making Governor appointments to these three positions, there will be a transparent and competitive process for those positions to be filled. Recruitment will take place on Workplace Alaska, and the commissioner's office hopes to have the directors in those three roles installed by the beginning of the legislative session in mid January.
- There is speculation that the public health emergency on the federal level will end April 11, 2023. The State expects to receive word mid February. SDS has drafted and received approval for regulations that will help the State to keep some of the flexibilities from the public health emergency. The Division of Public Assistance (DPA) has to return to their normal Medicaid eligibility processes and operations that have been suspended throughout the pandemic, and they have a variety of expectations they have to meet. DPA has a full 12 months to initiate full renewal of individuals who were enrolled in Medicaid, but it will be a monumental task that SDS may assist with.

Grants

Acting Director Newman stated that he takes every opportunity possible to underscore the importance of grants for seniors and people with disabilities. Grants serve many people at relatively low cost, and he emphasizes this with new leadership at DOH. There have been challenges throughout the pandemic, and although it's been good to have the federal COVID relief funding, it has been challenging to get the grant funding out with the short staffing they are experiencing at the Department.

Based on a question from Chair Sivertsen, Acting Director Newman stated that the division looks for grant opportunities, and they get permission from the commissioner to apply for them. Once awarded, they then work with the Grants and Contracts Unit to ensure all the appropriate business processes are followed to get those funds out. Sometimes there needs to be a competitive process, and other times there doesn't.

Rate Updates

- Legislative increment of \$32.9M for home and community-based services (HCBS). Retroactive to July 1st.
- Rate rebasing regulations currently out for public comment. The link to the regulations was provided to Commissioners.

American Rescue Plan Act Section 9817 Projects (Enhanced FMAP):

- Direct support professional (DSP) recruitment and retention incentives - \$7M has been distributed in the first round of funding for specific needs that waiver providers have to recruit and retain DSPs.
- DSP training and certification – Working with University of Alaska Anchorage to set a longer-term goal to improve the workforce. This project accredits the Alaska Training Cooperative to be able to provide a DSP certification through the National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals. There are currently 120 people participating in the pilot project receiving free training and honoraria for milestones they reach. SDS is hopeful to finish the project in two years and have both DSPs who have enhanced their skills in providing direct support and a program they will be able to keep long term after the funding goes away.

Bob Pawlowski asked if the DSP training applies to Pioneer Homes staff as State employees. Acting Director Newman stated that they had been approached with this, and they gave it serious consideration. Providers commented during the process that they are so short staffed they can't afford to give to DSPs time to get training. This funding provides both the agencies and the employees a small stipend, and they couldn't figure out how to do that for a State entity. The hope is that eventually the Pioneer Homes will be able to participate.

Jan Engan asked if the federal relief dollars are one-time funding or if they are anticipating any further funding, particularly as it applies to the recruitment and retention incentives. Acting Director Newman stated that it is one-time funding that has to be spent down by March of 2024. SDS and the Trust are trying to brainstorm ways to keep the DSP training and certification project going after the money runs out.

Jan also asked if the DSP training and certification project is a part of or is running alongside of the SHARP program. Acting Director Newman stated that SHARP is operated by DPH and is a program that does loan forgiveness and sign-on bonuses for people who work in certain healthcare positions such as physicians and dentists, particularly those that go to rural areas. The DSP program operates separately from SHARP, but they have had conversations with the SHARP program about whether DSPs could be subject to that program.

Budget

The Governor will release his budget December 15th.

Waitlist Eradication Project

The legislature directed the Department to put together a plan on how to eradicate the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Waiver wait list, and they also want a plan on how to prevent future wait lists for any waiver from occurring. SDS will be proposing some structural changes to how they assess people for waivers and provide services to them that they believe will affect all of the Division's waivers. The report must be delivered to the legislature by December 20th. They have hosted webinars for stakeholders, and one more webinar will be held December 15th to share the draft plan.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment was heard, and a full transcript was prepared.

PARTNER REPORTS

SDS Grants Manager Update

Ellen Hackenmueller reported as follows:

General Updates:

- Administrative challenges with the Grants and Contracts Unit include the cyberattack causing the GEMS database to be down for nine months and restored in May 2022. Things are more on track for this fiscal year, and they have seen improvements in processing timelines as they have more staff. They are not completely on track, as the provider community is aware, and there are still delays in payments being issued. On whole, things are trending in the right direction, and they hope it continues to improve this fiscal year.
- Looking to see where they can continue to make administrative efficiencies.
- Seeing movement on ARPA-funded special projects for innovative projects to meet the needs of seniors that go above and beyond the OAA programming. Ten awards have gone out the door.
- Looking at an expansion of the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) network through Trust funding. SDS is in the very early stages of that project right now with the Grants and Contracts Unit. They are looking forward to receiving their final data on regional areas of the state that could use additional support so they can target their request for proposals to a specific region to expand an ADRC site into.
- SDS has internally finalized the FY'22 numbers for grant services. This grant funding is inclusive of all of the grant funding SDS provides and is not exclusive to seniors. Grant services for FY'22 are just over 25,000 individuals served at a cost of just over \$800 per person as the state and federal portion of grant funds. It does not include matching funds that agencies provide. If the Commission would like to see numbers specific to senior services, SDS can provide those. This figure is often used for educational purposes to validate the cost-effectiveness of providing grant services that support people and keep them out of higher levels of care.

Acting Director Newman underscored that grant services are very cost effective in serving a lot of people at a low cost; whereas, the Alaskans Living Independently waiver is approximately \$35,000 per person per year.

Jan Engan asked about the ADRCs being listed under "other" and not under OAA. She stated that the OAA funds ADRCs. Ellen Hackenmueller stated that the State of Alaska does not use OAA dollars to support the ADRC network; they use general funds and a small portion that is allocated from the Trust. The State has reserved the OAA federal award dollars to go exclusively towards nutrition, transportation, and support; National Family Caregiver Support; health promotion and disease prevention grant programs,

and the Title VII Ombudsman funding. There are a number of services in the OAA that would be eligible to be funded by federal dollars, but the State is paying for them because they have chosen to consolidate their use of federal funds in those three primary programs. When she uses the term “OAA,” it is not inclusive of all services that are eligible to be funded through OAA, it’s inclusive of what the State has chosen to spend those dollars on.

Other Activities:

- Kristin Cox manages the grant programs that are funded primarily from the OAA grant dollars. She is busy with end-of-the-year reporting activities to the Administration for Community Living (ACL). When the reporting is completed, it will be provided to the Commission.

Grant Allocation Process for OAA Programs:

- Funding for those programs is allocated regionally statewide based on the funding formula that ACoA approves and provides to the State.
- They go on a year-by-year basis based on the amount of federal funding they receive from the federal government as well as the amount of general fund dollars appropriated by the legislature.
- They plug in the amounts allocated per program into a spreadsheet, and it provides them the regional totals by program. If there are multiple providers in a region to receive funding, SDS goes back to the overall application process and reviews the quality of the applications and how they were scored by the review committee as well as a performance history of the grantees and the proposed services. At that point, the funding is parsed out among various grantees. If there is only one grantee in a region, they may get the entirety of the funding earmarked for that region.
- This process is updated year to year based on their funding allocations and any recommended changes SDS may have received.

Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC)

Jim McCall highlighted the following:

FY 2024 Capital Budget

- AHFC board met October 19, 2022 and approved the FY 2024 capital budget.
- The Governor’s budget will be coming out mid-December, and they will wait to see how this budget aligns with the Governor’s budget.
- Programs pertaining to seniors:
 - Senior Housing Development Fund
 - Affordable Housing Development Program
 - HUD Federal HOME Grant Program
 - HUD Capital Fund Program
 - Federal and Other Competitive Grants
 - Competitive Grants for Public Housing
 - Supplemental Housing Development Program
 - Energy Program – Weatherization.

- Board Resolution – The AHFC dividend to the State, according to the established Transfer Plan, is calculated at \$23,445,000. The nine-year average represents about \$31M.

Total Senior Units by Fiscal Year 2001 - 2022

The graphic illustrates that senior housing remains a high priority for AHFC. 2003 was a high year with 144 units; the low was in 2012 with 20 units; but the average over the period is 64 units.

Key Challenges for 2024:

- Rising interest rates making home buying more difficult.
- Renters are facing housing instability due to COVID impacts, rising rents and utility costs, and wage issues. Vacancy rates are low as well.
- A key challenge in rural communities is finding sufficient funding to develop new affordable housing units while preserving the existing housing stock.

Summary of AHFC FY 2022 Accomplishments:

- \$262M went out for rent relief, and more than 67,000 Alaskans have received some type of assistance through that program.
- Administered the Alaska Housing Homeowner Assistance Program to provide assistance for mortgage relief, tax relief, and utility assistance. 11,000 people have applied for some aspect of this program. Many of the applicants were senior citizens who were seeking assistance.
- The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act became law on November 15, 2021. Under this act, Alaska will receive \$18M of federal funding to assist with weatherization, energy-related education, and teacher housing.

Public Housing Highlights

- Chugach Manor received new windows and a roof upgrade.
- Additions and rehab work continues at Golden Towers and Southall Manor in Fairbanks.
- Senior/disabled facility in Seward is receiving fire suppression and detection upgrades.
- Senior disabled wait list – 1,256 seniors or people with disabilities waiting for those units. Last year in October there was 1,241.

Research and Rural Development Department Board Report

- The Inflation Reduction Act focuses on home energy efficiency upgrades, and a requirement is that homes are energy rated. There used to be 160 energy raters statewide, and that has fallen to 25. There is an effort underway to train people so that when this funding comes through, they will have energy raters trained to meet the requirements of this program.

State Plan Discussion Topic:

To provide Alaskans access to safe, quality, affordable housing, how has the State met this goal over the past four years?

- In 2019, AHFC provided funding for three new senior developments consisting of 73 units in Palmer, Seward, and Eagle River. Those developers accessed the HOME Program, the Tax Credit Program, the Senior Fund, and the Housing Trust Fund. In total, that represents about \$21M of new construction to complete those developments.
- In 2020, AHFC provided funding for three new senior developments in Wasilla, Anchorage, and Kenai totaling \$24.4M in development costs resulting in 102 units. Those developers used the same funding sources mentioned above.
- In 2021, AHFC provided funding for another three developments in Wasilla, Anchorage, and Palmer totaling \$30.1M in development costs for 104 units. Those developers used the same funding sources mentioned above.
- In 2022, AHFC provided funding for three more developments in Anchorage, Eagle River, and Valdez totaling \$33.1M in development costs for 100 units. Those developers used the same funding sources mentioned above.

In summary, 12 new developments were constructed throughout the state in seven different communities representing \$109M in total development costs for 379 units at an average per unit cost of \$286,000.

Mortgage Division: Assisted Living Developments 2019 - 2022

- 31 loans totaling \$18.2M for mostly single-family residences.
- Four of those homes were specific to seniors.
- 15 other homes could have had a senior in them depending on the licensing.
- \$11.7M was earmarked for senior assisted living that could potentially have a senior in it over the last four years.
- 22 in Anchorage, 3 in Palmer, 2 in Seward, 2 in Wasilla, 1 in Homer, 1 in Kenai.

Weatherization Program

- Seniors have priority access to this program.
- \$26M has funneled into this program over the years.
- Through 2020, over 21,000 homes have been weatherized and made more energy efficient.

Planning Division: Senior Access Program

- \$1.8M allocated to the Senior Access Program.
- Provides up to \$25,000 for owner-occupied dwellings/\$20,000 for renter-occupied dwellings along the road system; \$30,000 owner/\$25,000 renter for off the road or rail system; and \$35,000/\$30,000 for small communities in very rural areas around the state.
- Provides up to \$10,000 in modifications for small assisted living homes.
- Program of last resort behind VA, USDA, and other programs, but it is available to Alaskans 55 years of age or older who have a documented need, meet eligibility requirements, and it must be their principal residence.

Public Housing

- AHFC owns and operates over 600 units of senior/disabled housing across the state in eight communities.

- Seniors pay roughly 27% of their income toward the rent.
- 4,500 Housing Choice Vouchers available to Alaskans which provide shelter to approximately 10,000 people each day.
- Many of those vouchers are specific to veteran and homeless populations, but seniors can benefit from it.

Mortgage Division: Senior Home Purchases

- Silent Generation born 1925-1945 and Baby Boomers born 1946-1964:
 - 2019 – 228 mortgages for those populations:
 - 13 – Silent Generation
 - 215 – Baby Boomers
 - 2020 – 257 mortgages for these populations:
 - 15 – Silent Generation
 - 242 – Baby Boomers
 - 2021 – 199 mortgages for these populations:
 - 17 – Silent Generation
 - 182 – Baby Boomers
 - 2022 – 122 mortgages for those populations:
 - 5 – Silent Generation
 - 117 – Baby Boomers
- Over this period, 806 seniors have bought homes through AHFC, 50 in the silent Generation, 756 were Baby Boomers. Six percent were over age 74 or higher.

Alaska Corporation for Affordable Housing (non-profit subsidiary of AHFC):

- Developing two developments in Fairbanks:
 - Borealis Park – 40 units of one, two, and three-bedroom units.
 - The Meadows – 18 units of one-bedroom, ranch-style, accessible units for seniors.
- Both developments should be opening in 2023.

Statewide Housing Homeless Office

- Single point of contact for non-profits and supported housing providers regarding funding, technical, and counseling assistance; data collection; best practice sharing; and connecting those who are facing homelessness with community partners who provide services.
- Modeled after Senior Housing Office of AHFC.

Rent Relief Program:

- Over \$260M in federal funding to Alaskans due to COVID-19 impacts.
- 12 months worth of rent and utility relief.
- Over 26,000 applications.
- 66,000+ individuals served, and many of those were senior households.

Housing Assistance Program:

- \$50M in federal funding for foreclosures, delinquencies, and forbearances resulting from COVID-19 impacts.
- This program continues.

- Over 12,000 applications received, many of whom were senior citizens.

Over his 24 years in this field, one of the benefits Jim sees is the relationship AHFC and ACoA have together to be able to coordinate and facilitate. Jim receives hundreds of phone calls each year from seniors, family members, and partners attempting to assist seniors with various housing needs. He conducts surveys of the assisted living industry to have a barometer of what is going on in the marketplace. He works closely with local senior communities and councils on senior issues and also keeps inventory lists of assisted and independent housing units.

Chair Sivertsen expressed his appreciation to Jim McCall for the presentation.

Mike Coons noted that there are new houses, but he wanted to know the status of lands upon which to build. Jim McCall noted that they can have all the best programs in the world, but if they don't make land available for people to develop, it won't matter. Land is a huge issue.

Bob Pawlowski asked what the benchmark number for affordable housing is. Jim stated that as a general rule, households should not spend more than 30 percent of their income toward housing. Jim felt a good question for ACoA to ask would be what percent of rent or mortgage are people paying based on their income to determine if they are rent or mortgage burdened.

Darlene Supplee asked if they have cost per unit numbers for rehabilitating senior housing. Jim noted that Willow Point was rehabbed in 2021 for \$217,000 per unit. Rehabbing units is more cost effective. He explained that if rehab is not a component of the Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP), those projects won't score. He encouraged people to pay attention to the QAP public comment period.

Acting Director Newman asked about the availability of new units since 2001, and he wondered why there was so much variability from year to year. Jim said the reasoning is multifaceted and is influenced by the number of developers in any given year that want to focus on this, and he highlighted Denali Commission funding that was in addition to the legislative appropriation to AHFC for some of those higher years.

Alaska Work Matters Task Force

Patrick Reinhart from the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (GCDSE) and Director Duane Mayes from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) presented to the Commission on the Alaska Work Matters Task Force final report as follows:

Employment Policy Context:

- 2014: Alaska becomes an Employment First State. Beneficiary Employment and Engagement became a Trust focus area.
- 2018: Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOLWD) repealed Alaska's subminimum wage regulation.
- 2018: National Governor's Association Employment Learning Lab.

- 2019: Empowerment Through Employment Conference.

Draft Task Force Documents:

State Exchange on Employment and Disability (SEED) developed:

- Task force brief
- Telework policy guide for state and local policymakers
- COVID-19: Federal disability-specific and other related guidance policy brief.

Purpose of the Report:

- Review existing policies, practices, and procedures; barriers; and workforce utilization data regarding the employment of people with disabilities in the state of Alaska.
- Prepare a report with recommendations for policies, practices, and procedures.

Task Force Composition:

Commissioners, CEOs, executive directors, directors, private citizens, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, the Trust, and Trust beneficiary boards are among the members.

Timeframes, Resource Allocation, Deliverables: 12 months

Resource Allocation:

- Virtual meeting platform costs, transcription, and staff time to facilitate
- Designated time to participate in task force meetings and reports.

Deliverables:

- Statewide data pull regarding services provided to Alaskans with disabilities across the lifespan to support employment and employment outcomes.
- At least four statewide meetings with task force members.
- Policy enhancement recommendation report relating to improving employment outcomes.

Patrick Reinhart stated that implementation of this plan is critical. Seniors and people with disabilities have a role to play in employment, particularly during this critical time of a much-reduced workforce.

Recommendations – Section 1

State of Alaska as a Model Employer for Individuals with Disabilities

1. Set utilization goals for State hiring.
2. Increase awareness and utilization of the existing Provisional Hire program.
3. Establish a centralized accommodation fund for State positions.
4. Increase State employment for people with the most significant disabilities through support for personal care services.
5. Ensure that all State of Alaska online platforms are fully accessible.
6. Educate executive and legislative staff about disability employment trends and data on employment outcomes.

Recommendations – Section 2

Building the Capacity of the Private Sector

1. Build on the existing Business Engagement Services Teams (BEST) to increase collaboration between private sector employers in order to increase diversity and inclusion.
2. Continue planning and implementing job fairs (including virtual and reverse job fairs) to connect employers and job seekers with disabilities.
3. Increase the number of students with disabilities served by the Alaska Vocational Technical Education Center (AVTEC).
4. Increase the number of people with disabilities involved in apprenticeships and internships.
5. Support disability-owned and disabled veteran-owned businesses through procurement and contracting systems.
6. Reduce hiring barriers for job seekers with justice system involvement.

Recommendations – Section 3

Employment Services and Support

1. Strengthen State support for Employment First.
2. Strengthen implementation of the state Medicaid plan and waivers to better support employment services and outcomes.
3. Expand the use of the Individual Placement and Supports (IPS) model for people with mental health conditions or substance use disorders.
4. Improve transportation policies to require options that are reliable and accessible for individuals with disabilities.
5. Support rural traditional skill development such as subsistence and self-employment.

Recommendations – Section 4

Preparing for Work and Transition

1. Expand and improve existing school-to-work transition resources for school personnel.
2. Strengthen the At-Risk Youth Initiative.

Recommendations – Section 5

Stay at Work, Return to Work

1. Improve stay-at-work and return-to-work policies and programs for individuals who become ill or injured on the job.
2. Support and encourage teleworking where possible and desirable.
3. Invest in post-COVID health and safety planning.
4. Support and expand the Senior Employment Initiative.

What's Next?

Formation of an ad hoc committee to coordinate activities and assess progress with respect to implementation of recommendations included in this report.

- Directors of DVR and GCDSE will chair this committee.
- Use the annual Employment First report as the vehicle to document progress made.
- Administrative support for the ad hoc committee will occur through the GCDSE.

- Updates will occur through the existing beneficiary boards.

Chair Sivertsen thanked Director Mayes and Patrick Reinhart for the presentation, and he believes the plan has a lot of potential for doing great work within the state. He also shared his frustration with the lack of staffing and technicians at the State level leaving existing staff overwhelmed and unable to do their jobs to their full potential. He also discussed kids being at risk because of the lack of education during the pandemic. He believes a lot of kids are not going to be ready for college and will be looking for jobs or going on to technical education. Until the State has a stable workforce, departments need to have the flexibility to move forward with everyone who wants to work, and they needed to be supported so they can do their jobs.

Director Mayes stated that when people walk in the door of DVR and are ready to work right now, they need to be fast tracked through the eligibility process so they can get into a plan sooner than later. In statute, DVR has up to six months to get someone into service. He is relentless with his staff to use their gut instincts to make quick decisions. At the national level, vocational rehabilitation is talking about improving the customer experience so people know they will be served quickly. The system is too slow and bureaucratic and needs to be loosened up to be able to make a difference to people.

Paula Pawlowski talked about successful educational programs in Nome and Mt. Edgecumbe, and she wondered if they are outreaching into lower educational systems like high schools. Director Mayes suggested ACoA receive presentations from the Alaska Workforce Investment Board or the trade industries.

Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority

Steve Williams thanked Chair Sivertsen for his participation in the nomination panel for the interview process for new Trustees. The panel, which is comprised of all the beneficiary boards and the Alaska Native Health Board, reviews applications and extends invitations to the interview process and deliberates on who they want to put forward to the Governor for consideration. That process will be followed by confirmation by the legislature.

Steve thanked Jon, Marty, and Nona Safra for participating in the November board meeting. Nona provided the mission moment at the beginning of the board meeting, and Jon and Marty were on the agenda to provide an update on the Commission.

Governor Dunleavy was recently sworn in, and the organization of the legislature is starting to take shape. The House is still up in the air as they await final election and other decisions. There has been a lot of turn over in the legislature, so there has been talk about educating legislators on the very complicated community-based system. This will take a lot of time and consistent messaging.

Chair Sivertsen explained that their senior survey process this year was one of the best ever. It is obvious to the Commission that they need to figure out a way to penetrate rural and remote Alaska. The demographics show they are reaching the main hubs, but he believes the gap from rural and remote is a result of poor broadband. There are also language and other communication barriers they need to explore. These are important

issues for the Commission to figure out, and it is also required by the OAA. The Commission appreciates the support of the Trust for their assistance in helping them gather statewide feedback.

Jon Haghayeghi shared that Kelda Barstad informed him there are more than 1,800 radios in the state of Alaska that are used for different purposes. He and Marty are thinking about producing content that would allow them to reach the rural communities. Steve Williams stated that he will be meeting with the Alaska Native Health Board, and he can request information from them about how they can get information out.

Steve Williams stated that another issue they need to be aware of for the next couple of years is the bifurcation of DHSS into DOH and DFCS to ensure the transition is moving smoothly and that there are no gaps or miscommunication between the departments. He also noted that there will be two different departments that will be separate in the budget process, and they will need to pay attention to how that shapes the conversation in the legislature as they develop and approve a budget for FY '24. He also noted that DHSS was aware that during the bifurcation, there were some issues they needed to set off to the side that they were going to take care of this session. One example being that DOH is the statutory advisor to the Trust, but DFCS now needs to be included because beneficiaries access services from both departments.

Steve asked if Commissioners have seen any impacts to elders resulting from the bifurcation. Chair Sivertsen didn't have anything to relay, and he believes it might be because they are still working under the same budget. Bob Pawlowski stated that nothing has come up so far from the perspective of the Pioneer Homes. Most of the issues right now deal with the rate adjustment and the service and staffing shortfall. Bob noted that they are very pleased with Kim Koval as she is a very strong commissioner. Acting Director Newman feels that Commissioner Hedberg will be very interested to hear what the Trust is hearing on the ground, both positives and negatives. He added that the reasoning behind the bifurcation was to provide the commissioners of each department the time to delve into the intricacies of the operations of the divisions so they could start looking at improvements and efficiencies. He stated that he is very pleased with the outcome of the bifurcation and the depth of understanding Commissioner Hedberg is able to put into the divisions within the DOH. Steve added that with a major transition such as this, there will be stumbling blocks and unknown hurdles they will have to overcome. It will be good for the departments to be able to be proactive instead of always reactive.

Other highlights from the Trust include:

- Trust committee meetings take place January 5th and 6th. The board meeting will be in Juneau January 24th and 25th.
- Eric Boyer is in the process of wrapping up the interview process for a program officer position. They are hopeful that an offer will be made in the next week or so, and then the Trust will be fully staffed.
- December 6th there will be a special Resource Management Committee meeting regarding a project in Sitka to create housing for the beneficiary homeless population. They will be asking Trustees for the use of Trust lands to help accomplish that.

- Permanent supportive housing and home and community-based services remain key focus areas of the Trust.
- Mental Health Trust lands are managed with the one sole purpose to generate revenue for the Trust to be able to distribute and impact programs, services, and individual beneficiary lives.

NEXT STEPS, MEETING DATES AND TIMES

- State Plan Advisory Committee meetings January 18th and 24th.
- Quarterly board meeting January 31st through February 3rd.

Bob Pawlowski asked that Jon Haghayeghi create a matrix between the goals that were laid out and specific questions that had data behind them, an example being financial security, that could help the discussion be a little clearer. He asked Jon to provide statistics on financial security, affordable housing, and others as they review the goals. Jan Engan stated that as they use the data from their needs assessment, they need to remember the Biden-Harris administration's four focus areas. The guidance contains other components that need to involve SDS with service standards specifically addressing malnutrition and traumatic brain injuries and falls.

CLOSING COMMENTS

- Jon Haghayeghi is doing a fabulous job, and welcome to Marty Lange.
- Grateful for the discussion they had today. Pleased that the Commission is taking the time to have these difficult discussions.
- Hopeful they can narrow down the State Plan to have fewer items to focus on and do them well.
- Love that the Commission is looking more toward action.
- Struggle with some of the goals under housing, and it's difficult to capture what is happening in housing in a few succinct bullets.
- Appreciate the work AHFC does for the state of Alaska.
- Appreciate the funding formula discussion.
- Grateful to have Ellen Hackenmueller available to the Commission. She's a great resource at SDS.
- One of the most productive meetings they have had in a long time. They need to ensure they do a better job of following up after the State Plan has been created.
- Thanks to Commissioners, partners, and staff.

ADJOURN

Jan Engan **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Mike Coons. Hearing no opposition, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at approximately 4:30 p.m.