

JUNEAU COMMISSION ON AGING MINUTES

November 21, 2023 1:30 pm

Zoom Webinar



<https://juneau.zoom.us/j/81491760970?pwd=bkFwWk42Mllmazl0aFdMS3ArTG5qZz09>

Or Call In: 1-253-215-8782 Meeting ID: 814 9176 0970 Passcode: 858248

A. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Chair Emily Kane called the Juneau Commission on Aging (JCOA) meeting to order at 1:30 pm.

Present: Emily Kane, Carol Ende, Kathleen Samalon, Deborah Craig, Linda Kruger, Sue Warner, Jennifer Carson, and Jennifer Garrison.

Absent: Ann Stepetin

Others present: Tonya Muldoon, director, Southeast Regional Eldercare Coalition Project (SREC)

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Emily Kane said the new CBJ assembly liaison to JCOA, Waahlaal Giidaak, was not present; however, Waahlaal and Emily had a nice meeting with City Manager Katie Koester. Emily said there is some overlap with CBJ and JCOA priorities, including universal building design and affordable housing. Emily added her hopes that some senior care and child care programs can be integrated, as found in the Eden Alternative model. Sue Warner asked to remove the fitness subcommittee update on the agenda and proposed adding a discussion on the general format of JCOA minutes. Deb Craig requested that the SREC update be up first. Without objections, the amended agenda was considered to have passed.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the 2023-09-19 and 2023-10-17 JCOA meetings were put forward without objection.

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

There was no public participation on non-agenda items.

E. AGENDA TOPICS

1. Southeast Regional Eldercare Coalition (SREC) project update

After Deb Craig noted that there is a distinction between the SREC coalition and the SREC project, Tonya Muldoon spoke on the SREC project. She referred to a 2021 survey on the priorities of elder service providers. She said that providers desired recruitment help, paid short-term training, wage supplementation, services for employees, and having an eldercare navigator. Tonya said she looked at data on DSPs (direct support professionals) who work with elders and people with disabilities. Based on a national survey, 65 percent of DSP staff wanted more mental health and well-being services, 56 percent wanted the ability to advance in their organization, only 46 percent felt prepared by on-the-job training, 38 percent felt they were undercompensated, and many desired financial support towards a degree or certification.

Tonya noted that about half of high school graduates in Southeast Alaska move away, decreasing our workforce. She surveyed five local agencies that serve elders and found the average wage to be \$16 per hour and that the workforce tends to be people in their 60s. Training is very limited, so elders are responsible for training their own caregivers. Only one of the five agencies offers advanced training, she said, and that is through a pilot project. When asked about supplementing staff wages, the agencies were all opposed to even a small increase, such as 10 cents per hour. Juneau's population of 60-year olds now outnumber its 20-year olds for the first time, she reported.

Recently, the Alliance of Direct Support Professionals created national certifications based on skills associated with the group's code of ethics. Tonya noted that California is working with the alliance on a wage increase for DSPs. The state has a different Medicaid system than Alaska, but it will be interesting to monitor the success of the wage-increase program. The Alaska Caregivers Union helped pass a bill designed to help family caregivers receive compensation when the covid pandemic created a loss of caregivers, which caused family members to fill in. The law will end in June, but the union is working with the state and federal governments to maintain this compensation.

The Alaska Primary Care Association created an apprenticeship with the College of Direct Support Professionals in Anchorage, Tonya said, and skilled nursing facilities are offering apprenticeships for CNA, LPN, and RN training and high-wage incentives. She said SEARC is partnering to establish a state-wide PATH Academy.

Tonya said she will start focusing on a navigation service. Alaska already has the "Senior Voice" newspaper and the state-wide "Directory of Older Alaskans." She is now working at the Teal Street Center, and she has a variety of activity goals for the next two years, including a regional summit, job fairs, youth camps, training, national certifications, wage incentives, bolstering up senior centers, and creating a navigational tool. The summit will likely be next fall at Centennial Hall in Juneau and will be directed at employers, workers, and elders.

Tonya is hoping to promote a pipeline for DSP workers and is partnering with an online program to set up training. She is negotiating with UAS on hands-on training, which none of the agencies offer, and to create an apprenticeship, which could be a follow-up to the SEARHC PATH academy training. A SREC subgrant was awarded to Catholic Community Services for senior centers and training in the rural communities. Tonya is looking at video conferencing and at boosting technical infrastructure. She also hopes to develop a website to help elders find information and to link caregivers with certification and training. She noted that her office can be used for senior service information.

Collaborating with UAS, the PATH Academy, and the high schools to offer job fairs is another goal, she added. There is a lack of job fairs in Southeast Alaska that could be promoting local jobs for graduating seniors. Health care workers often need influence or a positive experience before they choose that type of career. Tonya said that the community could work more with youth. She expressed her desire to offer scholarships, especially in rural Southeast Alaska.

Deb noted that Tonya's information is why she and others came up with the plan for SREC, and it is helpful for others to have this background information. Tonya agreed and said she was shocked that providers do not support wage increases. The agencies are getting entry-level people and can't afford to have staff with more training. Deb said that there is a lack of understanding of the wage supplementation intent, because she had found that the agencies were in favor of it, and it is a large part of the SREC project: a million dollars. There will need to be a good explanation for not using that money, she added.

Tonya said that the agencies don't do hands-on care, which is the critical aspect of eldercare. If the agencies offer higher pay, they can't sustain it from their own budget.

Linda Kruger said one of the dimensions of an age-friendly community is health services and community support. She is working on an age-friendly Juneau, and Tonya's information will be a big help. She asked about a contact at UAS. Tonya said she is working with people in Sitka and Juneau.

Emily asked about the source of California's money for supplementing DSP wages. Tonya said that she believes it is from the state general fund. Locally, most agencies get a flat rate through Medicaid, insurance, or self pay. The Veterans Administration provides funds to veterans for a DSP. Long-term care insurance does not always cover home care. Emily asked about the senior service navigator. Tonya said that her office can do that now, but the navigation tool will be online and she hopes a workgroup can help design it. It will include help for seniors as well as for caregivers.

2. CBJ Assembly liaisons to JCOA

Emily said she will give the JCOA liaisons in the Juneau assembly the JCOA priorities for them to discuss at the annual assembly retreat in December. She said that current priorities for the assembly are housing and childcare, which both have overlap with the needs of seniors. She would like to add the fitness and social needs of seniors. She said seniors can be involved in childcare and perhaps there can be a place in the planned childcare center.

F. NEXT MEETING DATE

Thursday, January 16, 2023 at 1:30 pm.

G. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:34 pm.