

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON AGING
MEETING SUMMARY
Friday, January 21, 2022**

Members Present

Ada Anderson	Douglas County
Barbara Boyer	Arapahoe County
Bob Brocker	At Large City and County of Denver
Bob Davis	City and County of Broomfield
Cary Johnson	Jefferson County
Cathy Noon	Arapahoe County
Connie Ward	Jefferson County
Dawn Perez	Adams County
Donna Mullens	Jefferson County
Houston "Tex" Elam	At Large Arapahoe County
Jim Dale	At Large Jefferson County - Golden
Karie Erickson	Douglas County
Perla Gheiler	City and County of Denver
Phil Cernanec	At Large
Sean Wood	Clear Creek County
Steve Conklin	DRCOG Board, - Edgewater
Wynne Shaw	DRCOG Board - Lone Tree

Guests Present

Conner McCarthy, Aging Resources of Douglas County, Debbi Haynie, Castle Rock Senior Center, Jarett Hughes, Governor's Office, Kristine Burrows, Jewish Family Services, Mark Levine, DRCOG Consultant,

DRCOG Staff Present

AJ Diamontopoulos, AHC Manager, Ana Lilia Lahowetz, Case Manager, Caitlin Phillips, Ombudsman, Desiree Boelte, SHIP Program Manager, Erika Dubray, I&A Program Manager, Fonda Buckles, ADRC Manager, Jayla Sanchez-Warren, AAA Division Director, Jenny Castle, Resource and Quality Assurance Coordinator, Jennifer Reeves Transitions & VDC Manager, Kelly Roberts, Community Resource Specialist, Liv Bergman, Community Resource Specialist, Marlene Priest, AHC Navigator, Mindy Patton, AAA Division Assistant, Rachana Bhattarai, SHIP Counselor, Rich Mauro, Director Legislative Affairs, Shannon Gimbel, Ombudsman Manager, Sharon Day, AAA Business Operations Manager, Yacob Nate AHC Navigator, Zack Gibbons, Fiscal Specialist

Cathy Noon Committee Chair – Called the meeting to order at 11:04 a.m.

Public Comment Period (Non-ACA Members)

There was no Public Comment.

Report of the Chair

Cathy conveyed to the group she may be unable to participate in some of the upcoming ACA meetings.

Report of the AAA Director

- The AAA is working on updating data systems. Currently they are using many systems to derive data from. This makes it hard to keep data consistent.
 - Providers will be using the new system and will be trained by DRCOG.
 - An RFP was put out to vendors, the team is currently reviewing RFPs and conducting interviews. They have narrowed the search to two vendors and will choose by end of January and hope to have the system ready in early summer.
- The state is in the process of replacing their Peer Place system that is used to collect data for Older Americans Act programs. They are currently working with their vendor to develop the database. Transition to that system will happen in the spring for staff and providers.
- Jayla said since COVID, the AAA has lost 29 staff, which is uncommon, 20 of those have left the state.
 - Because of the turnover there has been more opportunity for staff to move up and transfer into other areas of interest.
 - Jayla has filled the ADRC Manager position vacated by Amy Pulley. The new Manager is Fonda Buckles.
- Jayla informed the group that Brad Calvert from the Regional Planning Division will be leaving DRCOG. He accepted a position in Steamboat Springs. Brad was instrumental in developing and managing Boomer Bond which is used by several cities.
- Sharon Day told the group the AAA has received their \$6 million in federal carryover funds. The amount was higher than normal due to the \$8 million in COVID relief funds they received and needed to use.
- The DRCOG Finance and Budget committee approved moving forward with the ARPA funds and will be putting out an RFP once the contract has been signed
- Jayla stated that it has been difficult for our providers to utilize additional funds due to staffing shortages.
 - DRCOG has lost two providers for in-home care due to this shortage and has been providing vouchers to private pay companies to get services done.
 - The AAA is trying to find additional private contractors to add the voucher program to cover the need.
- Jayla expressed how difficult it is for older adults when they don't receive in-home services and how this can elevate them to the next level of care which usually means moving from their home.

There was discussion regarding the rate of pay for in-home workers and the need for employers to pay their staff more. Jayla said this will be seen in higher unit costs in the future for providers.
- Jayla is working on a strategic plan and will share that with the group at a future meeting.
- The AAA has offered to assist the Boulder AAA with response to needs from the recent Marshall fire. Erika Dubray is the dedicated contact person to help respond if Boulder needs help in their efforts.

Move to approve consent agenda

Items on the consent agenda included: Summaries of the November 19, 2021 meeting

Phil Cernanec motioned for approval, Barbara Boyer seconded the motion, the consent agenda was unanimously approved.

Agendas and summaries are posted on the DRCOG website located at <https://drcog.org/calendar> from there choose the month and date of the meeting, click on the event. Once clicked you will find the link to the meeting for that month.

Informational Briefings

Modernization of the Older Coloradans' Act – Jarett Hughes, Sr. Policy Advisor on Aging

- Jarett gave a brief background of how he arrived at his current position as Senior Policy Advisor. He leads policy development and agency implementation, while supporting individuals and families.
- He is currently working on health disparities and workforce development, recognizing health care costs, and supporting community services and community organizations.
- Jarett presented several slides showing a variety of demographics. He encouraged the group to share the information.
- Jarett explained how Lifelong Colorado comprises local and regional work that helps inform decision making and planning at the state level. Slide 13 of his presentation showed a comprehensive chart illustrating entities involved.
- Jarett told the group that the Strategic Action Plan on Aging (SAPGA) will sunset in July of 2022. The hope is to integrate and expand the scope of work under Human Services to work with Lifelong Colorado, the Colorado Commission and use the strategies outlined by SAPGA to have one cohesive body. This begins with the modernization of the Older Coloradans Act.
- Prime Sponsors of HB22-1035 Modernization Of The Older Coloradans' Act are Representatives Mary Young and Mary Bradfield and Senators Joann Ginal and Bob Rankin. The remaining slides provided background and outlined key areas of the modernization of the Act and is calendared for February 4th. There is no fiscal note for this bill only a workload increase which has suggested the movement of \$110,000 in funds from the Department of Local Affairs to pay for a lead coordinator FTE.

Discussion:

Phil Cernanec asked if they were planning to address the shortages of staffing for service providers.

Jarett said they recognized the problem and are looking at using some of the American Rescue Plan funds, as well as ongoing state funding to help build health care staff, drivers, meal delivery etc.

Jayla mentioned her concern with so many entities wanting money that they may look to take funds from the AAAs which hasn't enough funding currently. She said there is a need to build relationships and look at other ways to combine funding sources such as what is done with the DRCOG federal highway dollars and AAA transportation funds.

- Jarett would like to have a conversation with all the AAAs to figure out creative solutions to address the wait lists. His plan is to work on the statute this year and begin those funding conversations the following year.

Legislative Update – Rich Mauro

- Rich's update was on the Older Coloradans Act since Jarett covered this his only addition was that he is working with AJ Diamontopoulos and DRCOG's regional planning economist, Zack Feldman, to update the AAA funding report to begin focusing on specific recommendation as a starting point for discussion to stabilize AAA funding.

InnovAge Update – Shannon Gimbel

- Shannon informed the committee that Innovage, the PACE program in the region, was audited from June through July by the Attorney General.
- As a result of the audit, CMS and HCPF sanctioned Innovage for not delivering contracted services being paid for under Medicare and Medicaid. Participants were not getting care, access to adaptive equipment or medications.
- Innovage will have to come into compliance and demonstrate that they can adequately care for participants including those living in contracted assisted living and nursing homes.
- As of December 23rd, Innovage could not enroll any new participants until CMS and HCPF lift the sanctions.
 - There were a handful of those who were in the middle of enrollment during that time who were allowed to enroll
 - Those wanting to enroll after December 23rd are not going to be able to, this impacts residents in assisted living.
- Ombudsmen are working to notify participants who are in this category to make sure that the resident and family are informed.

Supporting County Councils – Cathy Noon

- Cathy began the conversation explaining the difficulty the region is having with the County Councils losing people and in the rural mountain regions having no councils at all.
- Jayla gave background on why the councils were developed she said the AAA is encouraged to implement and support County Councils under the Older Americans Act. The original goal was to have older adults in the community get together and discuss issues affecting them in their community and be a part of helping the AAA make decisions in planning and funding and give feedback on their needs. In turn the AAA would give information back to the county councils. This has evolved and the councils are more independent with their own agendas now.
- Jayla asked the group how the AAA can best support their councils.
 - Cathy stated that Arapahoe County has lost many of their rural plains participants especially since COVID and holding meetings virtually. She said that they have about 20 members now who are mostly providers. They receive \$3,000 from a grant which pays for a part time coordinator and their website. She was not sure of the stability of those funds as commissioners and others change. Barbara Boyer said Arapahoe County has struggled for many years with what their purpose was other than providers networking with each other.

- Bob Davis from Broomfield said their council just raises money, they help their rescue program give money to people who have a need. Participants know little about DRCOG. He quit going to meetings two years ago and told them he would remain the representative for DRCOG until they found a replacement. At the time he stopped attending he didn't feel that they had the support they could use from the AAA, and the council was not supporting the AAA as much as they could. Erika Dubray from DRCOG said she had been attending the Broomfield meetings for about 5 months and has developed a better relationship with them. Their members are older adults with no providers in attendance.
 - Dawn Perez said Adams County has about 60% older adults and 40% providers. She said she and others on the council donate funds to support their group, but don't have any other funding support from the county. They have enough to keep up their phone, PO Box and Zoom meeting. All their funding comes from their annual conference which they have been unable to have due to COVID.
 - Donna Mullins said they have a solid group in Jefferson County but have lost membership. They have been able to do some activities but have lost a lot of the structure they had previously. She said they don't have much of an opportunity to provide a report and thought if a representative from DRCOG could participate in their meetings to provide a report and reeducate their council of the aging network that would be helpful. Cary Johnson said many of their members have been with them for many years and they have lost people since COVID. They no longer receive funding from the county and have only been able to keep going financially because they have had less spending during COVID.
 - In Denver, Perla has close relationships with several city council members, and they are her biggest supporters in getting funding from the city. Their Commission on Aging meets regularly and is working on more advocacy.
 - Jayla suggested having a regional summit meeting with all the councils. She proposed a further discussion at the February meeting to begin planning. Suggested topics were educating councils, getting input from area participants, advocacy, funding and promoting councils to get more participation. Jayla also wanted to engage the County Commissions and build communications with them and the County Councils.
- The discussion evolved into a larger conversation regarding housing specifically for older adults. How much need was in the region and how the influx of refugees and the Marshall fire victims has complicated the problem. It was stated that often housing discussions are centered around the homeless and families with small children without consideration for older adults on limited incomes. Jayla said these were good topics to have with the county councils.

County Reports

- There were no county reports.

Other Matters by Members

- Wynn Shaw mentioned that Nathan Estrada from NymbI Sciences was going to speak to their Living in Aging Well group.

Next meeting – **February 18, 2022**

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:38 p.m.