

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON AGING  
MEETING SUMMARY  
Friday, May 21, 2021**

**Members Present**

Anne Gross	Arapahoe County
Barbara Boyer	Arapahoe County
Bob Brocker	At Large Denver
Cary Johnson	Jefferson County
Cathy Noon	Arapahoe County
Dawn Perez	Adams County
Donna Mullins	Jefferson County
Houston "Tex" Elam	At Large Arapahoe County
Jim Dale	DRCOG Board - Golden
Karie Erickson	Douglas County
Phil Cernanec	At Large Arapahoe County
Wynne Shaw	DRCOG Board - Lone Tree

**Guests Present**

Debbi Haynie, Director Castle Rock Senior Center, Kristine Burrows, Jewish Family Services, Valerie Robson, Douglas County

**DRCOG Staff Present**

AJ Diamontopoulos, AHC Manager, Alejandra Lerma, Ombudsman, Amy Pulley ADRC Manager, Ana Lilia Lahowetz, Case Manager, Breanne Vailes, Case Manager, Cassie Scott, I&A Manager, Cindy Grainger, ADRC Administrative Assistant, Desiree Boelte, Case Manager, Erika Dubray, I&A Program Manager, Jayla Sanchez-Warren, AAA Division Director, Jenny Castle, Resource and Quality Assurance Coordinator, Lydia Dumam, Options Counselor, Mindy Patton, AAA Division Assistant, Rich Mauro, Senior Policy and Legislative Analyst, Ryan McGee, Transitions Counselor, Seema Mallory, Community Resource Specialist, Shannon Gimbel, Ombudsman Manager, Yacob Nayte, AHC Navigator

Cathy Noon Committee Chair – Called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m.

**Public Comment Period (Non-ACA Members)**

There was no Public Comment.

**Report of the Chair**

- Cathy attended the DRCOG virtual awards ceremony and congratulated Bob Brocker and Perla Gheiler of the ACA for their Distinguished Service award presented to them by DRCOG. The video honoring Bob and Perla at the ceremony was played.
- Cathy attended the Transportation Subcommittee and Community-based Services Task Force. An update on the Transportation Subcommittee was presented later in the meeting.

**Report of the AAA Director**

- DRCOG received the second round of Cares funding for \$1.1 million dollars, \$9.1 million from the American Rescue Act, and \$330,000 for vaccine outreach and education. In addition there will be other funds allocated through the Governor's office.

- Jayla had many meetings regarding how to spend these funds and the parameters associated with spending.
- AAAs have been directed to think about how to meet the current need and develop infrastructure that will help meet future need
- One thought is to build a kitchen in Douglas County to serve the southern population as it grows
- The AAA may need go to the DRCOG Board of Directors with an amendment to the budget to accommodate the funds received
- Jayla met with Dr. John Douglas from Tri-County Health. He informed her that Colorado had the worst COVID seven-day average in the nation
  - One in 81 people are infected.
  - We are amid our second largest surge, 58% of COVID cases are variant strains the largest is the UK virus.
  - Dr. Hurley thinks we may have reached the crest of the of the wave and hopes that we will continue to see a decline.
- Jayla will be thinking of creative ways to reach those who want to get vaccinated and those who might be on the fence but there is still going to be some of the population that don't want to be vaccinated.

#### Discussion

Phil Cernanec asked if those receiving Meals on Wheels delivery or other at home services are being asked if they have been vaccinated and whether they would like to be vaccinated so a home delivery vaccination could be done.

Jayla replied yes that the health departments are working to do that now, and most of the providers are having those conversations.

Jim Dale said he was pleased that Jefferson County has over 80% of the 65+ population is vaccinated. He urged grandkids 12 and older to get vaccinated to avoid infecting those who are still on the fence

- Jayla said the AAA is experiencing some staff turnover, Shannon had two openings in the Ombudsman program which were filled by two Case Managers as an internal shift.
  - Other staff are moving out of Colorado as Denver is an expensive place to live, they are leaving because they have growing families and cannot afford to purchase a house
  - DRCOG will be doing a salary survey to see if they are competitive with other similar positions
- The AAA would like to look at ways to work more efficiently. To do this they will need to do some database work
  - Currently they are assessing all their data systems and recently found they use 13 different systems to record data.
  - The hope is to use some of the COVID funding to streamlining those processes, so they don't have to enter data in three or four different places

#### Move to approve consent agenda

Items on the consent agenda included: Summary of the April 16, 2021, meeting.

Cathy asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda, Wynn Shaw made the motion, Donna Mullins seconded the motion. There was unanimous approval of the consent agenda.

- 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.

### **Action Items**

#### **Approval to Cancel July 16, 2021 ACA Meeting**

Cathy asked for a motion to cancel the July 16, 2021, ACA Meeting, Karie Erickson made the motion, Barbara Boyer seconded the motion. Cancellation of the meeting was unanimously approved.

#### **Future of ACA meeting discussion**

Jayla told the group she was unsure when the AAA would return to the office and when it reopened what requirements the building would have in place. Parking needs to be addressed for staff and ACA members. The committee was asked what they thought about continuing to meet virtually at least through this year and reevaluate in January.

Some of the members like meeting virtually because they can see and hear better. Jayla suggested a couple of meetings could be in person, with food, and a speaker maybe at DRCOG or another place outside of downtown.

Phil said many of his meetings were continuing to meet virtually and liked the idea of an every six-month live meeting. Some of the organizations he is with are taking the opportunity to have outside speakers from other geographic areas speak and that may be a way to bring folks in that have experiences to share in other parts of the state or parts of the country.

Cathy felt it was probably a good use of people's time to be able to meet virtually, she supported the idea.

Karie Erickson agreed it was wise to continue with zoom.

### **Informational Briefings**

#### **Transportation Subcommittee Update**

Cathy and Jayla provided the update

- Douglas County provided an overview of their program which uses volunteer drivers
  - This is something that the ACA has talked about in the past about how to set up a program with volunteers, what obstacles would be involved in a program and how to overcome them.
  - It was a good learning experience for everyone to see how Douglas County's program has grown and to see some of the challenges.
  - At some point the Transportation Committee will give an overview to the ACA
- Ride Alliance provided a quick 20-minute presentation with the background and update.

- It was informative and a good launching place to prevent reinventing the wheel
- Cathy said if she could take one thing out of the conversation, was the need to have a central data point to avoid calling several different providers to provide a ride.
- Jayla explained that a Ride Alliance partnership of Route Match, Demand Trans, DRCOG and RTD is a good idea.
  - A Ride Alliance allows a ride request to be dispatched through a hub of available providers to get the ride accomplished.
  - Billing and payment features need to be added to the hub piece so that payment is seamless for the service provider.
    - One of the challenges is working with partner attorneys to get all the agreements signed.
    - The process is slow because all providers must agree.
  - Funding for the program has run out from the Federal Highway Administration. Jayla is looking for funding to continue the Ride Alliance. She has cost estimates and is hoping some COVID relief money can be used to make the hub operational.

#### Discussion

Phil asked if the Transportation Subcommittee had given some consideration given to a future with autonomous vehicles and what possibilities might exist in that kind of environment.

Cathy responded that as part of the discussion they will be looking at it but because things change so rapidly, they are not pursuing it at this time.

During the meeting, Karie's staff highlighted the complexities and challenges of having a volunteer program. People have the concept to just hire volunteers and it will be free and easy but that is not the case as it takes a lot to run and coordinate a volunteer program. There is liability insurance to cover and compliance that needs to be maintained with licenses and various background checks. They spoke of the wonderful relationships that volunteers established with the people that they drive and the human connection and its importance that may not be received in other types of programs.

Karie said she enjoys that the Transportation Subcommittee is really examining a lot of different options. She liked hearing about Ride Alliance and the work there, the talked about partnering with organizations like HopSkipDrive and felt to be successful creating a system that includes everything is important. The subcommittee is really examining different ideas to keep it successful, keep it cost effective, keep the relationships because they are working with a specific population.

Tex Elam as part of the subcommittee stated that this has been a good analysis from his perspective.

Bob Bocker said that we know from dealing with the legislature that you can't get more than one year's funding for any project at any one time. He thought it was probably time to start laying the groundwork for some ongoing transportation funding. Looking at the budget for the next two or three years, to start laying some groundwork at the legislature. Jayla thought Bob had a good point.

## Updates on Legislative Budgets

- Rich Mauro provided the legislative update he said the AAAs received more revenue than expected.
  - They anticipated getting approximately \$800 or \$900 million to be distributed in bill packages branded as the Colorado Come Back/Colorado Recovery funding.
  - Funds will be used to restore some of the programs that were cut in the last year or two.
  - Allocation will be in grants or given to local governments.
- The state funding for senior services budget line item was not proposed as they wanted it to be in the governor's budget, but they were successful in advocating with the Joint Budget Committee to reverse that decision and the line item is back to where it was before the pandemic.
- AAAs were able to hang on to the \$3 million in federal funding increase and not have it be supplanted.
  - The AAAs statewide will be seeing a \$3 million increase in funding over last year because of this increase.
- AAAs did not get the \$18 million replaced from the Older Coloradans Cash Fund which was taken last year and transferred to the state general fund.
  - Rich believed next year they would be in a position to advocate better by working with a number of allies in efforts to stabilize that line item and position it to be sustainable and be prepared for the older adult population growth.
- Senate Bill 158, the loan repayment program for geriatric care specialties, was introduced with five years of funding listed in the bill for almost \$2 million dollars
  - It was cut down in the senate appropriations committee to just the first-year funding at \$400,000.
  - It passed out of both the Committee and the Senate unanimously.
  - The challenge will be getting the Department of Public Health and Environment to build the \$400,000 into their base budget and continue to put it in their budget request in future years.
- Senator Danielson contacted Rich regarding how to spend the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds coming to the state.
  - The governor's office, House and Senate leadership are having conversations about how to spend this funding.
  - Senator Danielson encouraged Rich to work with the AAAs and others to come up with a proposal to submit to the Senate that she could advocate with the senate leadership.

## Discussion

Phil Cernanec mentioned checking the Colorado Senior Lobby website for legislative updates. He said there was the HOA bill that has been stripped of a lot but they still consider it to be important. He stressed the importance of a long-range view and being persistent in having a plan for dealing with long term issues to avoid surprise assessments that can impact those on limited or fixed incomes.

Phil said broadband access has been an issue regarding frontier and rural areas of Colorado but also there is a thickness of coverage that occurs in both suburban and urban areas. Some

providers have shored up some of their systems in suburban areas which continues to be an issue. The office of consumer complaint is having broadband issues brought to them and are allowing some complaint coverage and awareness.

House bills 1109 and 1289 are progressing, one has to do with the broadband deployment board and how it is going to be organized. Moving some of it to the Office of Information and Technology which is a plus. Phil said deployment of geriatricians in outer areas in Colorado need to have technology to deal with some remote issues and be able to transmit information to a physician. He told the group the benefit of the tuition program would be to try and hold on to those folks.

House bill 1289 deals with some of the allocation of federal funds led by Representative Kennedy

Colorado Senior Lobby, also known as Colorado Center for Aging has been having a series of webinars. Colorado Senior Lobby website provides a chance to hear from communities and what they have done and how issues are championed within your community. They have talked about the importance in dealing with legislative issues such as population, older folks tend to vote. The average retirement age in Colorado is in the mid-70s and by continuing to work older adults contribute to the tax base in investments in Colorado. It is often thought that seniors are known for having their hands out but actually there are a lot of older Coloradans that contribute to the vitality in the state. Elizabeth Garner the state's demographer is also on the soapbox with this, because the future of workers in Colorado is going to be thinner than it has been as the older population in Colorado out numbers, those that are under 18. This will continue to be a trend.

#### Ombudsman Update

- Shannon said that staffing has been incredibly difficult in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, they lost a lot of staff and were not staffed well to begin with.
- Long-term care was hit hard with the virus and having people who want to work in a job that is incredibly difficult and does not pay well has been a huge challenge.
- Because of the staff shortages, facilities are being cited by the health department for things with poor clinical outcomes such as skin breakdown, wound care, poor nutrition, and hygiene.
  - This is also happening in long-term care and assisted living facilities.
  - Shannon explained that the normal procedure with somebody having a high level of care should be to assess and then be discharged.
  - Residents are not being assessed appropriately and physicians have not been seeing them as they were before COVID, or residents have not been to a clinic to be assessed.
- There have been breakthrough cases that are happening in long term care.
  - It has not been determined if those breakthroughs may be a variance.
  - Residents are mostly asymptomatic. It doesn't seem that they are able to spread it after they've had the vaccine, and nobody has been hospitalized or died.
- As of two weeks ago. 84% of residents in nursing homes across the state are vaccinated and 64% of staff in nursing homes have had a vaccine, assisted living 94% of their residents are vaccinated and 67% of the staff.
- Ombudsmen are getting a lot of complaints about the lack of care and the lack of staffing. Issues around visitation, homes not opening as they should Shannon said staff are working on those complaints.

### County Reports

Arapahoe County - Cathy Noon

The City of Centennial stepped up for Older Americans month in May. Cathy was pleased since she is no longer there to provide reminders for older adults.

Arapahoe County did vaccine clinics and identified people that couldn't get out and are working with Tri-County to get those people vaccinated.

Douglas County - Karie Erickson

Douglas County is at 93% vaccination rate for those 70 and older

Jefferson County - Donna Y Mullins and Cary Johnson

Donna said each year Jefferson County does a Senior Heroes Award event with the Seniors Research Center, this year they would like to shift gears by honoring caretakers.

Cary is working to get the Commissioners proclamation for Elder Abuse Awareness Day, on June 15th in the hope of keeping the awareness of elder abuse in front of everyone.

### Other Matters by Members

No other matters were discussed.

Next meeting – **June 18, 2021**

### Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:01 p.m.