

# Allegan County Commission on Aging



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**Chairperson: Rich Butler**  
**Vice Chairperson: Sally Heavener**

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## **COMMISSION ON AGING - MINUTES**

Larry Ladenburger called the meeting to order at 9:00 am on January 15, 2025 - Pledge of Allegiance, Roll call

The Commission of Aging met in the Zimmerman Room of the Human Services Building.

### **ROLL CALL:**

**PRESENT:** Commissioner Mark DeYoung, Chairperson Larry Ladenburger, Vice-Chairperson Rich Butler, Lue Phelps, Mary Campbell, Sally Heavener, Jo VerBeek, Jim Storey

**ZOOM:** Pat Petersen

**OTHERS:** Allegan County Senior Services: Director Jen Garcia, Teresa Galloway  
Western Michigan Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine: Fernando Ospina, Ruth Butters

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES- ADOPTED**

Approval of minutes moved by Sally Heavener, supported by Jo VerBeek. All in favor, motion carried.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:** None at this time

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA- ADOPTED AS PRESENTED**

Approval of the agenda moved Jim Storey, supported by Rich Butler. All in favor, motion carried.

### **PRESENTATIONS:**

Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine: Fernando Ospina

Community Action of Allegan County: Esperanza Carrasco-Morales

Allegan County Health Department, Community Links Program: Michelle Boutain

### **PUBLIC INPUT FOR PRESENTATION:**

Community Discussion on Senior and Health & Social Needs included members of the public, healthcare representatives, public health, transportation, senior clubs, and homecare agencies. Summary of community feedback included in minutes below:

#### **1. Isolation, Health, and Mental Health:**

- Many seniors lack close family or friends, with 41% of Casco township population being seniors.
- Isolation contributes to feelings of depression and disconnection. Social connection makes a difference.
- Community spaces, such as hospitals with underutilized rooms, could be better leveraged for social and educational gatherings.
- Opportunities exist to repurpose vacant school buildings as senior centers or community hubs, potentially linked with transportation improvements.
- There is a need to better integrate care and recognize early signs of mental health deterioration.
- Resistance to Services: Some individuals resist using available services, highlighting a need for testimonials and success stories to encourage acceptance.

#### **Mission Statement**

“Dedicated to serving Allegan County seniors by developing and coordinating services that support their independence, maintain their dignity, and preserve their quality of life”

- Seniors have an increasing need for home-based medicine, such as Primary Care, traveling Podiatrist, PT/OT and other health services. Telehealth is not yet a reliable source for seniors due to the lack of technical training and knowledge base along with connectivity and internet shortages.

**2. Digital Divide:**

- Many seniors are not online and miss important information due to the reliance on digital communication.
- State agencies could use public service announcements to improve awareness of available services and resources.
- Comprehensive Resources: Physical booklets listing services, income limits, and programs for seniors could improve access for those not online.

**3. Lack of Transportation:**

- Transportation barriers include limited services, stigma around public transport, and a lack of awareness about available options.
- Funding cuts reduce the availability of programs.
- "Bus buddies", which educate and assist users, initiatives could be helpful for some.

**4. Long-Term Caregiving:**

- Caregivers often experience declining health due to limited time for socialization and personal care while supporting their loved ones.
- Families and caregivers face significant challenges managing dementia without sufficient medical support.
- Workforce and need not in alignment. Working with high school age youth or Tech Center could help fill workforce gap, providing more services and reduce caregiver burdens.
- Seniors wish to age in place but need more help with tasks like housekeeping, laundry, and yard maintenance.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

Election of Officers – Larry Ladenburger opened the floor for nominations for Chair, stating he received interest from current Vice Chairperson, Rich Butler, and COA member Sally Heavener. No additional nominations were entered. Ladenburger determined through vetting with Heavener and Butler that the member receiving the most votes would take the Chair position, and that with the lesser would assume the Vice Chair position. COA members took to a paper vote tallied by Allegan County Senior Service’s administrative assistant. Voting results tallied:

Chairperson, Rich Butler  
 Vice Chairperson, Sally Heavener

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS:**

**DIRECTOR’S REPORT** – As presented

**FINANCIAL REPORTS** – As presented

**2025 COA PLANNING CALENDAR** – As presented

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

2025 COA Strategic Goals

**SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Policy & Procedure Committee – S Heavener/J. VerBeek  
 Senior Services Workgroup – P. Petersen/M. Campbell/R. Butler

AAAWM Board of Directors- M.Campbell  
AAAWM Advisory Council- Jo Verbeek

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS:**

Adult Day Service (ADS) Contract Recommendation  
In Home Support (HIS) Contract Recommendation  
Holland Senior Community Day: May 30, 8:30a – 2:00p  
Boomer Bash 2025: Confirming date and event name

**ROUND TABLE (COA MEMBER TIME):**

- Members brought up wishes for a Consent Agenda model for meetings moving forward; consensus from the group to test for February COA meeting
- Commissioner Mark DeYoung stated he is glad to be part of the Commission on Aging.
- Thank you to Larry Ladenburger for his years of service on the board.

**ADJOURNMENT UNTIL September 18, 2024**

Motion to adjourn by Pat Petersen, supported by Jim Storey. All in favor, motion carried.  
The meeting adjourned at 11:22 am. Next Meeting February 19, 2025 from 9:00 am-11:00 am in the Zimmerman Room at the Human Services Building