



# Lewis-Mason-Thurston Area Agency on Aging

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Area Agency on Aging

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## ADVISORY COUNCIL

### Meeting Minutes for Wednesday, April 7, 2021

9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Teleconference (via ZOOM) <https://zoom.us/j/487746388>

Meeting ID: 487 746 388; Call in # (253) 215-8782; or (301) 715-8592

#### **Members Present**

Lewis County: Liz Hicker; Ronda Chumbley; Amy Turnbull; Cindy Clark; Heidi Buswell  
Mason County: Glenn Harper, Chair; Janeen McLaughlin; Bill Bezanson; Diane McLean  
Thurston County: Eileen McKenzieSullivan, Vice-Chair; Angela Hock; Michele Horaney;  
Judy Stratton; Howard Burton

#### **Members Absent**

Lewis County: N/A

Mason County: Debra Jamerson

Thurston County: N/A

#### **Staff Present**

Nicole Kiddoo, Executive Director; Joy McBride, Contracted Services Director; Dan Speigle,  
Fiscal Director; Valerie Aubertin, Contracts Manager; Lisa Jolly, Contracts Manager; Carrie  
Petit, Contracts Manager; Lisa Bachmann, Administrative Secretary

#### **Guests**

Bryan Hildebrand, Client Services Director for Senior Services for South Sound; Haley  
Dorian, Mason Transit Volunteer Program; Mike Ringgenberg, Mason County Transit; Rob  
Spinks and Stephanie Penland, Senior Nutrition Program, Senior Services for South Sound;  
Lynn Ford, Chair SCoA (State Council on Aging); Sheila Johnson-Teeter, Interim Regional  
Long Term Care Ombudsman; Jonathan Fork, Managing Attorney for Northwest Justice  
Project.

#### **Welcome & Introductions**

Glenn Harper called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.  
Attendance was taken and introductions were made.

#### **Approval of Minutes & Agenda**

Glenn Harper, Chair, entertained a motion to approve both the March 3, 2021 draft meeting  
minutes, as well as the draft agenda for the April 7, 2021 meeting. Bill Bezanson made a  
motion to approve the draft minutes and agenda. Heidi Buswell seconded the motion. The  
motion passed unanimously.

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### ***Community Updates/Announcements –***

Eileen McKenzieSullivan, Vice-Chair, reminded everyone about the virtual hunger walk on May 2 in both Mason and Thurston Counties. The walk will help raise money for Senior Services for South Sound's nutrition program, a community kitchen and The Thurston County Food Bank. Please call or email Eileen for more information. Some people have already started the virtual walk. So far, \$35,000 has been raised.

Bryan Hildebrand, Senior Services for South Sound, shared they have two groups studying how and when to re-open the senior centers. It is definitely their goal. They hosted one vaccination event with several hundred served at the Lacey Senior Center with a follow-up second vaccination. They are open to hosting more events but at this time the county seems to be using larger venues for these events.

### ***Council of Governments (CoG) – Eileen McKenzieSullivan***

The last CoG meeting was held on March 25, 2021. The group discussed concern about whether and how homebound seniors are able to access the COVID-19 vaccine. Some transit programs are getting involved as well as some home health professionals. At this time there does not seem to be an organized plan that all three counties know about.

Eileen shared Nicole's update about the state budget and that things are still being worked on. She also shared that relief funds have been approved at the federal level. She shared that LMTAAA is looking at some pilot projects to help seniors in the three counties. The agency has hired a temporary staff member to help with coordinating the vaccine effort, specifically for isolated seniors.

Eileen shared that Joy McBride, Contracted Services Director, gave a staffing update to the commissioners. The agency has brought on some new staff members and continuing with interviews for some of the other open positions at the agency. She also shared that Dan Speigle, Fiscal Director, gave a positive report to the commissioners. There has been a budgetary benefit because the agency has been operating with less staff.

Howard Burton asked Eileen to explain for the transportation guests what the Council of Governments does. She explained it is LMTAAA's governing body, with one commissioner from each of the three counties: Sean Swope, Lewis County; Sharon Trask, Mason County; and Gary Edwards, Thurston County. They have legal authority to give the agency permission to spend money and for fulfilling their contracts. They also hire and supervise the Executive Director, Nicole Kiddoo.

### ***Advocacy & Legislative Committee – Michele Horaney***

Michele Horaney shared that the House and Senate are working on coming together with the budget. She hopes everyone had a chance to see the email sent out by W4A asking for our support on budget requests for the state legislators. It is our job to help advocate on these issues. She is working with Nicole Kiddoo and Howard Burton to make sure everyone has a customizable draft email and the contact information for our legislators.

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Howard added that it is important to convey that money used by LMTAAA in the community is well invested money. It keeps seniors from going into institutions, which is expensive.

Our experience advocating last month with the legislators was very positive.

Michele explained that there was concern over the budget with the pandemic at the beginning of the year, but the budget is actually in good shape. The legislature understands the power of keeping seniors in their homes with assistance due to less cost and better outcomes. So they just need ongoing reminders of the importance of this. Michele shared she will forward the W4A email to anyone who did not receive it.

### ***General Comments – Various Council Members***

Bill Bezanson asked if LMTAAA has looked into a nurse riding along with Home Delivered Meals to offer everyone a vaccination. Glenn Harper commented this was discussed at last month's meeting and asked if there was anything to update on this. Rob Spinks from Senior Services shared he had just met with Diana Yu regarding this. One of the challenges is that vaccines have to be used within a specific period of time once taken out of the vials.

Another challenge is the amount of time it takes per person because of the wait time after, so only four can be administered per hour. Bill wondered if this was different with the Johnson and Johnson vaccine because it does not have to stay frozen. He shared other states are doing this successfully. Joy McBride shared that at this time LMTAAA does not have a plan in place to help in that process. Glenn Harper discussed that with so many seniors not wanting to use the internet it would be great if this could be coordinated

### ***Socialization & Engagement Committee – Eileen McKenzieSullivan***

Eileen shared that the committee did not have a March meeting. She will be scheduling a meeting for them soon. The committee is working on the issue of loneliness in seniors, especially those who are isolated. They are looking into studies that show ways it can be combatted such as through technology, connecting with volunteers by phone and in-person visits. The GrandPad pilot project is going well, five seniors have received their GrandPads, and are providing feedback through a monthly survey. Glenn Harper added that the GrandPad program is for seniors 75 and older and are configured to help protect them from scammers.

### ***General Comments – Various Council Members***

Angela Hock shared that part of House Bill 1218 allows someone to come into long term care facilities due to loneliness. She is glad to see that since it shows importance is being put on addressing the issue of loneliness.

Glenn Harper shared that there are pen-pal programs that connect seniors in long-term care facilities and students. He would like to see something similar for seniors we service who are home-bound.

### ***State Council on Aging (SCoA) Report – Lynn Ford***

Lynn gave a quick summary of her report. There is now visiting allowed in the nursing homes. Vaccinations happened for all staff and patients when they first became available, but because there is not an ongoing plan for vaccinating new staff and incoming residents the percentage of those vaccinated has declined. This is being worked on. The State

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Long-Term Care Ombudsman spoke about the merging of House Bill 1218 with the Senate Bill 5294. Senate Bill 5294 talks about pre-pandemic preparedness. Previous disaster planning didn't discuss policies on pandemics, so this is something they want to have as a requirement for facilities as part of their plan. Lynn also shared the role of the Ombudsman program. They have been able to help resolve 94% of problems at the facility level. Due to COVID the number of volunteers has dropped from 350 to only 150. They are actively recruiting for new volunteers. Volunteers go into nursing homes or adult family homes virtually or in person about once per month and help monitor them for infractions and help resolve complaints. There is a great partnership between the program and the facilities. If people are interested they should contact their regional Ombudsman representative. Carrie Petit shared that our current temporary representative is Sheila Johnson-Teeter. There is a free training program and you can commit to working with as few or many facilities as you have time. It was suggested to have Sheila come speak to the Council.

Senior Lobby day will be October 21. They are hoping it can be in person.

Lynn shared that September is the end of her term as a member of the State Council on Aging, and invited Council members to think about taking on the role. There is a monthly meeting that is currently held via Zoom, but later would require the ability to stay overnight.

### ***General Comments – Various Council Members***

Glenn Harper added that as Advisory Council members they are allowed to serve on two committees and encouraged everyone to sit on at least one.

Michele shared with Howard's help, the Advocacy Committee is preparing a Power Point presentation with simple steps on how to advocate. They are looking for more members for their committee.

Glenn commented that Charyl Warriner is no longer with the agency. Lisa Bachmann shared that she is supporting Nicole with some of those duties until a new Executive Assistant has been hired. In Charyl's absence, committee members may email her for assistance and she will work with Nicole and other LMTAAA staff members to take care of any needs.

### ***Kinship Care Report – Carrie Petit***

These programs help support grandparents and other family members who are informally raise children outside of adoption or foster care. LMTAAA subcontracts with Family Education and Support Services (FESS) in all three of our counties to provide supportive services to kinship caregivers. Carrie announced that the annual statewide Voices of Children contest is underway, which consists of an essay, poems and drawing contest for children living relatives. This year the contest includes a contest for the caregivers also. They are looking for judges to help go over a portion the submitted material. Several Council members indicated interest. It was suggested that someone from the program come and speak to the Council.

Glenn brought up the Powerful Tools for Caregivers Program and the Family Caregiver

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Support Program and thought it would be great to have more information on what the programs are and how they work in our community.

Carrie shared it would also be great if Bryan Hildebrand and Paul Taylor from Senior Services for South Sound could come talk to the committee on the adult day care program formerly called STARS, now named Brighter Days Adult Day Care which is a great respite program for families in our area. They have been doing some exciting remote activities during the pandemic.

**Guest Speakers – Transportation Providers:** Lisa Jolly introduced Bryan Hildebrand from Senior Services in Thurston County, Hailey Dorian with the volunteer program with Mason County Transportation and Mike Ringgenberg from Mason County Transportation. Lewis County Catholic Community Services was unable to attend. She shared they all have transportation contracts with LMTAAA funded by the Older Americans Act.

**Mason:** Haley Dorian shared they partner with LMTAAA to mostly service vulnerable seniors who need assistance with out of county medical appointments. They will help with other essential errands in conjunction with that. They require at least a week's notice. The pandemic has affected their volunteers. They used to have eight but now have three, and are looking for more. They get great feedback from seniors on how much they depend on the program. Volunteers are reimbursed the IRS rate for their mileage. Passenger assistance training is required and provided for free. To recruit new volunteers they have done outreach at community events and senior centers and posted ads, but this usually brings more clients than volunteers.

Mike Ringgenberg shared that one problem is that most of the drivers are older than the passengers. Also with COVID they have not felt comfortable driving other passengers. Due to this lack of volunteers they are having to have regular staff drive, which means paying regular wages. Dial-A-Ride can sometimes provide rides with two hours' notice. They are working on an app that allows rides to be scheduled through their phones. It should be ready for use in a few days. They have partnered with the HUB in Belfair to transport seniors needing their vaccines to the High School and back each Wednesday. They also partnered with the Senior Center in Shelton to see if there was interest in a Bingo night to help with isolation, but they found seniors do not like to go out at night, so did not offer that again.

**Thurston:** Bryan Hildebrand shared that Senior Services for South Sound's transportation program is for seniors 60 and older who live outside the regular service area for Intercity Transit or Dial-a-Lift or the appointment is out of the service area. They are entirely funded through an Older American's Act contract with LMTAAA. Service can be for medical appointments and other essential errands like grocery shopping and getting medications from pharmacies. They provide hundreds of rides each month. Rides are provided by volunteers by appointment Monday-Friday 8-5 at no cost. They prefer a week's notice but will help with three days or even less for urgent situations. During the pandemic they were down to three volunteers but are back up to twelve. They encourage drivers to use one of the eight SSSS vehicles, but they can use their own and then mileage is reimbursed. They

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have one wheelchair van. Volunteers must be insured. Michael Corona runs the program. Appointments that require the driver to wait several hours for a procedure are the most challenging to find drivers.

**Lewis:** Lisa Jolly reported for Lewis County and shared that Catholic Community Services Transportation uses paid drivers and the organization's vehicles. She shared that while the county is pretty spread out the reports show they are able to service all their requests.

### ***General Comments***

Eileen McKenzieSullivan stated it is too bad there is not more transportation available to take seniors who are isolated to social activities instead of just for reasons that are medical or nutritional. Haley Dorian mentioned in Mason County they do have their Dial-A-Ride program that helps seniors get to places within the county, like the senior center.

### ***Executive Director Update – Nicole Kiddoo***

Nicole expressed her thanks for the transportation providers and all the work they do in our communities to support our clients. She welcomed Diane and let her know she would set up an orientation with her and some other new members.

Nicole shared that the American Rescue Plan passed. We expect to receive additional Older American's Act funding in the amount of 1.7 million dollars to support their programs, including transportation. These programs help meet basic needs with the majority of the funding going towards meals. We will work on prioritizing the funding based on the needs. We use the information from our calls with you to help understand what those needs are.

At the state level, we are waiting for the Legislature to finalize their work, and watching for potential cuts to programs that affect older and disabled adults. We are focusing on and advocating for these three priorities:

- 1) Funding related to the case management program, specifically 10 million to backfill for workforce loss due to COVID.
- 2) COVID vaccination funding to help support our communities and clients so that those who want to get vaccinated can, including help transporting them. There is discussion of having mobile sites come to homebound seniors. We hired a temporary vaccination coordinator, Rebecca Holmes, who also provides administrative support for W4A. We are working on our plan for how we can support the community in this effort. We will plan to have Rebecca come speak to the group, hopefully in May. There is about 16.3 million in funding to ensure long-term care clients can get the vaccine and we are hoping to get part of that.
- 3) \$25.4 million to help ensure clients living in their homes can keep more of their income to help cover basic needs like housing and food.

Nicole shared she feels much more confident about our budget now than she did nine-ten months ago when it sounded like our budget was going to be reduced by 15%. Hopefully by the end of this month the Senate and House will have their budgets set and then we will have a better idea of where we stand. Dan concurred that the budget is usually finished by April 20 or 21.

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Nicole thanked everyone for their help advocating. She explained we are working on a template that council members can use to reach out to their legislators and representatives. They can take the letter template and add a personal story before sending it off. She shared that as constituents and volunteers the council members' voices mean more than hers. Nicole will work with Michele to finish the template so it can get out to everyone.

### ***General Comments – Various Council Members***

Bill Bezanson commented that about 90% of the country feels more optimistic now than they did ten months ago.

Heidi Buswell asked Nicole how we are doing with staffing needs. Nicole shared we have just hired three new case managers and have filled our open Contracts Manager position. We still have some positions we need to fill and a recruitment email will go out so they can see what positions are open. We had our first round of interviews for the Executive Assistant position but will continue to look. In the meantime Lisa Bachmann will continue to assist us in that role. We also still have a vacant Community Supports Director position we are working to fill.

**Public Comments:** N/A

### ***Next Advisory Council Meeting***

Advisory Council meetings will continue via teleconferencing until further notice. The next scheduled meeting will be on Wednesday, May 5, 2021, at 9:30 a.m., via ZOOM.

### ***Adjournment***

Glenn thanked everyone for their support and help with everything. He called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Eileen McKenzieSullivan made the motion to adjourn and Howard Burton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimous. The meeting was adjourned at 11:26 pm.

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**Submitted by: Lisa Bachmann, Administrative Secretary**