



Meeting Minutes

In Attendance:

- Bob Meyers
- Becky Bird
- Gayle Carlson
- Audrey Finlayson
- Jerry Thex, Jr.
- Peggy Tombre
- Alex Ward
- Nancy Anderson
- Brian LaMoure
- Tessa Bailly
- Kerrie Reidelbach
- Lindsey Carter
- Kristen Page-Nei (guest speaker)

Welcome and Introductions:

Special welcome to our newest council members Nancy Anderson and Brian LaMoure.

Discussion:

- **State Elder Justice Councils Status:** Both Nancy and Alex are currently assigned to a council, and, due to a lack of leadership and administrative support, there is not a lot going on. Some councils still have openings that are not getting filled. Currently, gaps in Chair positions are being advertised. The governor's office has recently done some promotion to solicit interest about these openings.
- **2025 Governor's Conference on Aging:** Tessa reported the conference is scheduled for September 16 - 17 (adjusted to 15 - 17 after this meeting date) in Helena at the Great Northern Best Western Hotel. The hotel has one large conference room that can break into three breakout sessions. The hotel will only allow for 20 state-rate rooms, so the plan is to work with other hotels in the area for state rates. The parking options include the parking garage, a small space in the back of the hotel, and a parking lot across from the hotel in the back.

A discussion about potential speakers and topics led to the idea of providing information on dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Tessa will work with Nancy and reach out to Melanie with the Alzheimer's Association for ideas.

April Staudinger with the Community Services Bureau has a contract with Mountain Pacific to work on long-term care planning for the state. Tessa and Kerrie have a meeting scheduled to discuss partnering with them for one of their upcoming summits scheduled in Helena and will possibly share the conference venue for this. Audrey volunteered to be on the February 5 call. Other ideas included the Fraudsters Group, which Alex is a part of, and a general session for giving a legislative update, which would include a breakout to cover civic engagement and promote ongoing work with elected officials. Kristen from AARP would be honored to cover these topics. Nann Parrett with SLTC is working on a conference logo and updating the conference website with a save-the-date flyer.

- **The 69th legislative session:** What impacts Montanans older adults? Kristen Page-Nei, AARP lobbyist, opened with an invitation to the Day at the Capital on February 10. Attached is the flyer about the upcoming day. Register at the following link: events.aarp.org/MTLobbyDay2025 [events.aarp.org]

Following the meeting, Lindsey was able to get approval for SLTC to have a vendor table at this event. In addition, Kristen also invited the council to participate in AARP's Fridays at Noon weekly AARP MT Fighting for 50+ Legislative Advocacy Action & Update Meeting (Email kpagenei@aarp.org).

Kristen noted AARP supports the AAAs' \$4 million request over the biennium. However, since this request is not in the Governor's budget, it will be challenging to amend an appropriation of this amount. The process for approval includes passing through the House, House Bill 2, the Senate, Senate Finance, and the conference committee.

AAAs were not included in the provider rate study last session. Providers that were included received an average 18% increase, while AAAs received a modest 4% after years of decreased/flat funding. AARP argues it is an important cause to support, as OAA support services can prevent the need for more costly services.

Kristen shared an AARP link (states.aarp.org/montana/aarp-montana-advocacy-center) that provides information about Montana AARP legislative priorities, including the fact sheet she reviewed with the group. It also includes a sign-up for action alerts, which typically come out on Monday and Tuesday evenings, along with opportunities to advocate and much more. She also suggested council members familiarize themselves with the [Montana legislative website](#). Any questions can be brought to the Friday noon meetings during the last section of the agenda.

Note: Council members can testify as individuals only. Council members may not represent the council.

- **SLTC Division Administrator Update:** Lindsey Carter, SLTC Administrator, presented the SLTC report to the Joint Subcommittee on Health and Human Services Section B on January 23. Senator Mercer had some interest in APS, and there may be an upcoming meeting to discuss. The group had a presumptive eligibility question about impact on the state for individuals not eligible (other states have found about a 1% burden).

Senate Bill 100 revises funding for assisted living services. This would move assisted living facility services from the Big Sky Waiver (BSW) to the Community First Choice program, which is an entitlement program. Lindsey also explained about the decrease in funding for the BSW program, which is based on previous spending and projections. SLTCD wants to better align its appropriation with projected spending. Please see the spreadsheet Lindsey promised to share at this link: [SLTC Present Law Adjustment Fact Sheet](#). Looking at the 2026-27 projections and comparing them to the 2024 actuals shows a projected increase in spending.

Jerry asked, if anyone is looking at making the application process easier for Medicaid. Lindsey responded, saying there is some delay with the application and the time it takes to gather the required information and get approved. It can take up to 90 days for the aged, blind, and disabled. SLTC is aiming to develop a plan on how to meet the growing needs of aging population and is in the process of strategic planning for the service delivery system.

Gayle noted they are watching SNAP, Medicaid, and any other public programs throughout the session.

Council Priorities:

Social Determinants of Health: Special emphasis on access to nutritious food choices, transportation, housing, and social support/community inclusion.

Elder Justice and Fraud Prevention: Special emphasis on crime, fraud, and scam prevention.

Age-Friendly Health Systems: Special emphasis on dementia care and caregiver workforce/family caregivers.