Miami-Dade County Office of Community Advocacy

Elder Affairs Advisory Board

Monthly Public Meeting

Thursday, January 29, 2026

Stephen P. Clark Government Center

111 NW 1St Street, 18th Floor, Room 3

Miami, Fl 33128

MINUTES

Members Present: Deborah J. Love, Armando Riera, Barby Morales, Winnie Tang, Brenda Lampon

Members Absent: Johnnie Kerr, Marina Blachman

I. Welcome

The meeting was called to order at **10:31 a.m.** Staff and members welcomed attendees. A quorum was present.

II. Reasonable Opportunity for the Public to Be Heard (2 minutes per person)

Public comments and introductions included:

- **Harold Foster**, Office of Senator René García, District 13
- **Jarice Rodriguez**, Chief Paratransit Operations (STS), Department of Transportation and Public Works (DTPW).
- **Lynette A. Chiverton**, Operations Administrator, Office of Innovation and Mobility Services, DTPW.

- **Martine Charles, MPH**, Director, Planning and Population Health, Alliance for Aging
- **Susie Weddle**, Owner & President, First Quality Medical Supplies, Inc.
- **Laura Morilla**, Executive Director, Miami-Dade County Office of Community Advocacy.
- **Joshua Ho, M.M., M.Ed.**, Program Director, Asian American Advisory Board, Office of Community Advocacy.

III. Approval of Agenda – January Meeting (Vote)

Motion: Deborah Lowe, second: Barbie Morales, vote: Passed unanimously

IV. Approval of Minutes – July 31, 2025 (Vote)

A motion was made to approve the minutes and passed unanimously.

V. Approval of Minutes – November 20,2025 (Vote)

A motion was made to approve the minutes and passed unanimously.

VI. Presentation: Florida Long-Term Care Program (PPL)

Presenter: Dianna "Di" Valenzuela, Community Liaison (PPL)

Ms. Valenzuela provided an overview of Florida's Long-Term Care Program and the **Participant Directed Option (PDO)**, explaining that eligible participants may **select, hire, and train caregivers** at no additional cost.

She explained that individuals generally must apply for the **Medicaid waiver program**, and once approved, the case manager asks whether the participant wants care through an agency or through the PDO program. If PDO is selected, the participant is referred to a financial management agency. (Discussion captured in meeting transcript.)

Discussion and Q&A highlights (as captured in transcript):

- **Service area/coverage:** A question was raised regarding whether the program functions in **Ocala, Florida** and how service coverage varies; it was noted that not all long-term care plans cover the entire state, and coverage may depend on the plan/provider.
- **ADRC vs. Alliance for Aging confusion:** Members discussed that one of the biggest community confusions is the distinction between **ADRC** and the **Alliance for Aging**, emphasizing the need for consistent language, messaging, and public education to guide residents to the correct place for services.

- **Outreach & education:** The presenter shared strategies used in presentations (including using clear "journey map"/summary materials and following approved language) and. stressed the importance of meeting people where they are (events, employer sites, etc.) to help caregivers and families understand available supports.
- **Language accessibility:** Members discussed the need for translated materials beyond English/Spanish/Creole, including a request to consider additional languages (e.g., Chinese) and culturally appropriate outreach.
- **Future presentation suggestion (SHINE):** A suggestion was raised to invite **SHINE** and/or subject matter experts to help the Board and community better understand recent and pending changes related to **Medicaid/Medicare**, noting that the system is complicated for everyone and even more so for older adults.
- The presenter encouraged referrals and noted that even if someone is unsure they qualify, the program can still guide and provide one-on-one support.

VII. Elections (Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Second Vice Chairperson)

Elections were held in accordance with bylaws, including written ballots as part of the public record.

A. Chairperson

- The floor was opened for nominations. A nomination was made for **Deborah Lowe**; she declined.
- **Barbie Morales** accepted the nomination for Chair, noting she would appreciate support and training to fulfill duties appropriately.
- Ms. Morales shared brief background and commitment to serving older adults and the community.
- Written ballot process was conducted.

Elected Chairperson: Barbie Morales

B. Vice Chairperson

- Nominations included **Armando Riera** and **Deborah Lowe**.
- Both candidates shared brief background and interest in serving.
- Written ballot process was conducted.

Elected Vice Chairperson: Deborah Lowe

C. Second Vice Chairperson

- A nomination was made for **Armando Riera**; no additional nominations were recorded in transcript.
- Written ballot process was conducted.

Elected Second Vice Chairperson: Armando Riera

2026 Elected Officers:

- Chair: Barbie Morales
- Vice Chair: Deborah Lowe
- Second Vice Chair: Armando Riera

VI. Committee Reports

A. Community Outreach Committee
Members volunteered; staff will coordinate first meeting and confirm members.

B. Older Adult Resource Fair
Date: April 30, 2026
Location: Milander Center, Hialeah
Discussion included vendor expansion and outreach strategy.

C. Older Adult Resource Guide
The Resource Guide was discussed as a "community resource directory" (compared to "Yellow Pages") intended to help older adults locate services and supports. Updates and expansion of resources were encouraged. The Creole edition was mentioned as forthcoming/near completion, with plans to share it once available. Creole edition published; guide available in English, Spanish, and Creole. Future ideas included combining languages and expanding services info.

VII. Old Business

A. Ethics Refresher Training
The Board supported rescheduling the Ethics Refresher Training with Mr. Robert Thompson.
Vote: Passed unanimously.

B. Alliance for Aging Follow-Up
Recommendation to invite Alliance for Aging for future presentation.

Vote: Passed unanimously.

Additional Presentation/Discussion captured in transcript): DTPW MetroConnect Service Update

Note: The MetroConnect update was referenced under Announcements in the agenda and in the Minutes; meeting transcript reflects a detailed discussion and Q&A.

A DTPW representative provided an overview of **MetroConnect**, described as the County's on-demand service operating within designated zones, comparable to an on-demand ride service, accessible primarily through an app (with customer service options for those without smartphones). The discussion included that the app may show multiple transportation options and comparative travel times.

Key updates (effective February 1, 2026):

- Fare implementation: **$3.75 per trip**
- **$1.50 discount** when connecting to eligible transit hubs
- Service operating **Monday–Friday, 6:30 a.m.–7:00 p.m.**
- **No weekend service**
- Service discontinued in the **Civic Center** and **Waterford Business District** zones due to availability of other bus service coverage

Discussion and Q&A highlights (as captured in transcript):

- Clarification requested on what MetroConnect is and how it works; DTPW explained zones, app-based booking, tracking, and alternative transit options shown in the app.
- Difference between **MetroConnect and STS** was discussed: STS is door-to-door service for people with disabilities; MetroConnect is for broader community use with wheelchair accessible vehicles in each zone and ADA compliance; MetroConnect has a minimum age requirement (as discussed in transcript).
- Members requested **updated flyers/postcards** with the new service information to share with the community; discussion included requests for **large print** and accessibility features (and mention of Braille/accessible formats).
- Discussion included concerns about community awareness and the value of MetroConnect for medical appointments, groceries, and connections to transit hubs.

- A community-based example was shared regarding challenges experienced with STS in a clinical setting; DTPW encouraged reporting issues to the County so they can be addressed, noting the scale of service demand and available mechanisms to resolve urgent situations.
- A member emphasized distinguishing between contractor vs. County when seeking resolution and referenced the County contact number during discussion (as stated in transcript).
- DTPW indicated interest in attending community events for outreach and requested that the Board share events so DTPW can participate.

VIII. New Business

A. Discussion on the 2026 Meeting Calendar (Vote)
2026 Meeting Calendar
Discussion included rotating locations for accessibility and confirming 10 meetings per year. **Motion:** Deborah Lowe, **second:** Barby Morales, **vote:** Passed unanimously

IX. Announcements

A. Congratulations to Armando Riera on reappointment (Commissioner Natalie Milian Orbis, District 6).
B. MetroConnect service update effective February 1, 2026
C. Appreciation expressed for Mario Tapia's service after resignation
D. Upcoming Lunar New Year community outreach event noted

X. Adjournment

Motion: Winnie Tang, **second:** Armando Riera, **vote:** Passed unanimously
Time: 12:10 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned.