

Recommendation of gbA – John Freidin  
November 20, 2016

In 2014 the Middlebury Select Board and the Trustees of Ilesley Public Library jointly created the Middlebury Library Building Committee (LBC). It was charged with determining the needs of our library for additional and/or renovated space and, if necessary, employing an architectural firm to develop preliminary design options and cost estimates. I chaired this committee from its inception until it completed its work three and a half years later. One of the most rewarding and successful dimensions of the committee's efforts was selecting and working with the architectural firm gbA.

Prior to hiring gbA, the LBC conducted a national search for architects with experience in library design. Seventeen firms responded to our RFQ. The LBC asked four firms to submit proposals and then interviewed their principals. It unanimously selected gbA. Over the following year and a half, the committee, library staff, and I worked closely with gbA partners, Tom Bachman and Gregg Gossens. Every member of the committee and staff was delighted with these two architects and the support of the gbA staff.

gbA focused its work on four areas. First, it helped the LBC and library staff translate the Trustees' Long Term plan and the library's programmatic needs into architectural concepts. Second, it developed three preliminary proposals to meet those needs within the small, downtown space the library owns. Third, it refined the design the committee preferred. And fourth it superbly led public presentations of the chosen proposal and the reasoning behind it.

Throughout this year-and-a-half process, gbA offered the committee proposals that were imaginative and exciting as well as

suitable for a town that prizes its historical buildings. Tom and Gregg were always available to the committee, the library staff, the press, the public, and myself. Their design work and public presentations reflected sensitivity to the customs of a typical Vermont town and a sophisticated understanding of our library's needs.

I recommend the services of gbA with the greatest enthusiasm. gbA understands how libraries work and the necessity to build flexibility into their design so they can readily accommodate the unknown needs of the future. Tom and Gregg are excellent listeners -- always attentive, curious, imaginative, and delightful to work with. They completed their work on schedule and within our negotiated fee. And they kept meticulous minutes of all our discussions and decisions.

At this time, the Ilsley Board of Trustees is cultivating public support for the project and contemplating a major fund drive. When the time is appropriate, I will strongly recommend that the Town of Middlebury retain gbA to design and oversee the completion of the entire project.