

SELECTBOARD REPORT – February 14, 2017 – postponed until March 21, 2017

- The Middlebury Selectboard and Ilsley Trustees jointly established a seven-person Library Building Committee in March 2014. The committee was directed to assess library space needs, especially for children, teens, and computer users, and to obtain preliminary design options, and cost estimates if the committee determined that the building needs renovations and/or additions.

* * *

Since I last reported in April, the committee has:

- Selected Gossens Bachman of Montpelier as our architects – from the nine firms that made proposals. The committee has met with Gossens Bachman four times; members of Ilsley staff have done so considerably more often.
- Held a well-attended community meeting on Nov. 10. 2016. Emailed 300 personal invitations to this meeting. Meeting centered about tours of Ilsley to inspect the areas most needing improvement: children’s library, public computer space, heating and mechanical plants, entrances, basement leakage, community room, adult stacks, and meeting spaces. Following the tours, we had by small group discussions and each participant wrote a personal evaluation. [Glad to take any of you on that tour. Just let me know when would be a good time.]
- Invited three respected and experienced Middlebury citizens to participate in our meetings with our architects beginning Jan. 26. Those citizens are: Jack Goodman, Nancy Malcolm, and Ken Perine.

What has the committee learned about modern libraries and our building on Main Street?

A public library is a metaphor of its town. The degree to which its programs, facilities, accessibility, collections, instruction, and staff meet the needs of its

community is essential to the vigor of that community and plays a large part in its ability to attract and retain businesses and families.

1. Compared to all Vermont libraries with similar budgets, Ilsley ranks first statewide in visits, circulation, program attendance, and public computer usage and 59th nationally of 1,395 comparable libraries.
2. Despite and because of the digitization of reading materials, the demand for library services is growing. Although we anticipate having to warehouse fewer books, we now supply computers, Internet access, color printers, digital instruction/assistance, audio and videodiscs and streaming. While many local citizens own computers, many others cannot afford their own machines, the cost of an Internet connection, and/or color printer. These offerings are very similar to what it used to mean to provide free access to books, newspapers, and periodicals.
3. The existing children's area, which is half below grade, has very little natural light; is cramped; lacks clear lines of sight for staff and parents; has no ventilating system, and suffers from moisture and mold. We need better space to work with pre-literate children. The shelves are so tightly filled that we must remove one book to add another. Young children cannot reach many books or pull them from the shelves. Additional space that fosters imagination and discovery is needed to facilitate active learning children. There is NO space dedicated to the needs and interests of either teens or tweens. Every library we visited had wonderful areas for these age groups. The children's staff lacks adequate workspace and storage.
4. Ilsley's HVAC system is piecemeal in nature, consisting of more than ten separate A/C units, two different heating systems (steam and dry ducted heat) and no mechanical ventilation. The boiler is approaching the end of its lifespan. Windows throughout the building cannot be readily opened and are inadequately insulated.
5. Ilsley has two unsafe restrooms on the lowest floor. Because they are unmonitored and lockable, they are regularly misused and vandalized. Both also require modernization. The library would be would be far

more welcoming if it had at bathrooms on the 2nd and 3rd floors.

6. Access to Ilsley is unwelcoming, challenging, and unsafe. For control and safety a library should have a single entrance within sight of a staff person. Ilsley has three entrances, and only one is within sight of staff. Of our 170,000 visitors a year, 70% use the side entrance, which is completely out of sight of staff, adjacent to the children's library, unwelcoming, and cramped. Furthermore its elevator needs constant repair and should be replaced. The Main Street entrance is inaccessible to adults with infants and seniors who are frail. In the winter the steps are hazardous.
7. A renovated and modernized library will draw more users to Ilsley. However, the shortage of parking already compromises access by the elderly and adults with strollers. If a building were constructed in the parking lot behind Ilsley, parking will be even more limited.
8. The ways in which libraries serve their communities will change and probably expand in the future. Therefore architectural flexibility is critical to a successful renovation of IPL. The existing building is "cell like," inefficient, and hard to reconfigure. A successful design will not be constrained by lots of interior walls, fixed shelves, or low ceilings and will accommodate multiple uses in each space.
9. While the number of public computers in Ilsley is currently adequate, they accommodate only a single user at a time, and are located where they interfere with other patrons.
10. The entire building should be re-wired for technology – and perhaps electricity.
11. Ilsley Library lacks quiet spaces for silent study, such as: carrels and tables for one or two people with adequate lighting, ventilation, power supplies, and Internet access.
12. Shelving in the 1988 addition is both too high and too low for many patrons to reach, and its height blocks natural light. Fluorescent lighting in

the adult book stacks is too harsh for reading, inefficient, and expensive to maintain. Ilsley must stock 18 different kinds of light bulbs.

13. The parking issue, combined with the re-location of residences, schools, supermarkets, recreational facilities, and hardware and drug stores away from the center of town to areas to the south raises the question: whether it is wisest to remain on-site or to consider re-locating perhaps to space beside Mary Hogan school or elsewhere.

HOW CLOSE IS THE COMMITTEE TO MAKING ANY RECOMMENDATIONS:

We have made no final decisions, however the following choices are likely:

- The children's library and future areas for tweens and teens need to be moved out of the basement.
- If renovated, Ilsley will be required to install a mechanical ventilating system. At that time it would be wise to install new heating and air conditioning systems, and to make all windows air tight and workable.
- If the building is renovated, MCTV will no longer be permitted to operate on the fourth floor, because it has only one exit. The staff of MCTV has expressed its desire to relocate into the basement, once the mold and moisture problems there are solved. We would probably also move the digital and computer labs into the basement, since they do not require much daylight.
- To solve the leakage and mold problems, the perimeter of the original 1823 building will probably have to be excavated and sealed.
- We hope to restore the interior of the original library and increase its usefulness.
- The entrance to Ilsley needs to be re-configured so it is welcoming, accessible to all, and within sight of a staff member at all times. This will probably require the creation of a new entrance on Main Street and

elimination of the side entrance. For these reasons and because we're likely to excavate the perimeter of the original building, and because the elevator in the 1977 addition (opposite the municipal building) needs replacement, we may recommend eliminating the 1977 addition. Doing so will make the beautiful lines of the original structure more visible.

- We will probably recommend renovation of the two toilets in the basement and the construction of two or more new toilets elsewhere.
- Ilsley now has 17,000 square feet of useable space (not counting the 4th floor). To meet the demands of programs for children, tweens, and teens; to relocate the public computers; to move MCTV out of the fourth floor, and to create quiet reading and working nooks, Ilsley needs about 23,000 square feet.
- We are committed to having an outdoor garden, although it may have to be relocated.
- We would like to increase the ceiling height of the community meeting room and solve its moisture problems.
- Lighting as well as wiring for technology and electricity should probably be up-graded.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE:

- Development of a design. We are only at the beginning of that process and have so far seen only design concepts. It may take two to four months until we have a design for consideration.
- Only after we have chosen a design will we be able to estimate the approximate cost of renovating and expanding Ilsley or building anew on a different site.

- In the next several months, we must hire a fund-raising firm to do a feasibility study of Ilsley's ability raise funds to pay for this project. After that, a vigorous capital campaign must be initiated.
- Last April the committee estimated that construction might begin in May 2018. That now seems the earliest possible date.
- Kevin Unrath and I have spoken with Town Planner, Jennifer Murray, and CCV Vice President, Barbara Martin, to explore possible partnerships that would meet both Ilsley's needs and those of CCV on another group.