

**ILSLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING
JULY 11, 2022
ILSLEY LIBRARY VERMONT ROOM
and via Zoom**

Board decisions are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

Present

Board members: Joe McVeigh, President; Meg Baker, Secretary; Andy Hooper, Treasurer (online mostly); Amy Mincher (online), Steve Gross
Library Director: Dana Hart
Minutes taken by: Vivian Ross

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

President Joe McVeigh called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.

See Board Packet <Board Packet 7.11. 2023.pdf> for agenda and accompanying documents.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the special meeting of June 12 and the regular meeting of June 13 were accepted without amendment.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No members of the public were in attendance.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Library Director Dana Hart directed the Trustees to her written report.

Meg Baker mentioned that her son was happy about the community food truck operation at a library event. Dana Hart said the food truck was made possible as a result of the town relaxing their food truck policy as the food in this case is given away rather than sold. Joe asked if the food was intended for library event patrons or for people with issues of food insecurity. Dana answered that it was for both, and having it for the former destigmatized the latter. Amy and Dana mentioned that the library is currently very short-staffed. Some staff are out with medical issues and there is some uncertainty as to when they will return. This puts additional pressure and causes some stress to the remaining staff members.

FINANCE REPORT

Joe distributed a quiz to the Board about the finances of the library. The answers revealed that approximately 15% of the budget is spent on collections (including subscriptions), the equivalent of about 2% of the budget is supplied by the Friends of the Library, about 70% of the budget goes to payroll (excluding benefits), and more money is spent on adult materials than youth materials. Library revenues last year accounted for about \$20,000; most of the revenue comes from out-of-town memberships. The value of funds in the Trustee-held accounts has dropped. A “trust agency account” is an account in which money is held for the library by the town. Among other purposes, trust agency accounts are used to distribute gifts from the Friends, from individuals, and from the dividends of Trustee-held accounts. Dana explained that monies that do not come directly from the town are usually deposited in a trust agency account. Unlike the line items in the normal annual operating budget, funds in trust agency accounts roll over from one fiscal year to the next.

Dana shared the end of the 2022 fiscal year budget account: the books are not yet fully closed, so things may change but not significantly. Unanticipated expenses included facility repair issues and the need to hire a cleaning service. Early in the year it was appeared the library would go over-budget, so collection spending was held in reserve but the overages were covered, and the collection reserves were used for materials as intended. 99% of the budget was spent, with \$7,146 left. Some invoices may still come in but these are unlikely to be for more than \$2,000.

Board Member Steve Gross asked how next year’s budget would look in terms of unpredictable facilities issues. Dana answered that the amounts for building repairs and service contracts were bumped up for the next year by \$16,000. The main worry is a catastrophic boiler or elevator failure; however, these can’t be budgeted for.

Meg asked if inflation had added to the cost of acquiring collections. Dana responded that this hadn’t been a noticeable issue yet but likely will be down the line. She plans a 2-4% increase in the collection budgets to account for this.

Joe asked how the funds in the unrestricted gifts trust agency account were spent. Dana said there is a detailed record. They are often used for items specific to programs, are age group nonspecific, or can’t easily fit into a regular category in the budget.

Figures for the capital budget were not presented. Dana explained that with new personnel in place, the town is re-examining its accounting practices. As a result there is not an entirely clear picture yet of what the capital budget looks like. Joe and Dana noted that the previous figure of about \$24,000 for a fundraising feasibility study will be redesignated for expenses related to the renovation/expansion project such as the fees of the fundraising consultant and architectural consultant. An additional \$15,000 was added to this fund for FY ’23. Dana estimated the remaining funds at about \$36,000.

PROJECT TEAM UPDATE

Joe noted that during the upcoming meeting of the Ilsley 100 Project Team, the draft of the preliminary square footage program plan would likely be approved, which designates how many feet should be devoted to each area, how each space would be used, necessary architectural features, etc. Amy mentioned that the plan will be beneficial in the process of getting community support and moving forward. Joe mentioned it will be necessary to bring in a cost-estimator sooner rather than later.

Meg re-emphasized her idea that community feedback should come as soon as possible, and asked if there had been a Selectboard response to the update that Joe and Dana delivered to them on June 28. Joe and Dana said the response was positive. Amy mentioned that having a table at the Midd Outdoor Market would raise awareness, and Joe mentioned a block party on August 4th which was a similar opportunity. Dana was concerned about having information by then.

Steve noted that five possible options had been presented for the facility plan and wondered if they were all viable. Joe said that part of the duty of the project team was due diligence and exploring all possible options, even if not all are ultimately workable. For example only fixing the problems with the current building is an option and would cost quite a bit, but what would it gain us? Moving some programs or areas to other locations would present staffing challenges. Meg added that multiple locations would be hard for families who may want to obtain materials for a variety of age groups at a single location. Steve wondered how to shift public favor away from simply fixing the building to coming up with a longer term solution.

BOARD DISCUSSION: MISSION AND VISION

The Board reviewed feedback on the draft vision and mission statements from the staff and from the Friends of the Library. Steve mentioned that the MCTV Board hoped to review the document and offer feedback at their July 13 meeting.

The Board first considered feedback from the staff on the vision statement. There was a question of who was meant by “we,” which Dana, Meg, and Steve agreed was the Trustees. Steve reminded everyone that they were responsible for making sure the vision was representative of everyone.

Joe brought up the feedback in which the staff wondered if the vision statement was too broad. The Board agreed that they had already decided it had to be broad to meet the needs of the whole community Steve reminded the Board that groups outside the Board won’t have context about the writing of the statement, but it still has to resonate with everyone.

The Board then considered the issue of lengthy sentences and accessibility. Meg mentioned that a tagline (e.g. “pursue passion, discover ideas, connect”) might be helpful. Joe said that phrasing was more important than sentence length, more sentences would be less accessible, and the aim had been to limit the length of each of these statements to one or two sentences.

Joe moved on to the feedback from the Friends who suggested replacing “imagine” with “envision”. Meg brought up “aspire” as a replacement that doesn’t repeat the word “vision”. Amy said the choice

might not make a huge difference. Joe said “envision” sounded more concrete. Meg looked up synonyms and suggested “hankering” which was endorsed by Andy Hooper via text message.

Moving on from the vision statement to discussion of the mission statement, Joe said the choice was between naming the Sarah Partridge Library directly or continuing on with “system.” Meg said a good next step would be to talk to staff at the Sarah Partridge Library.

Joe brought up the concern raised by the Friends of lack of specific mention of recreational reading, Steve and Joe agreed that libraries are understood to be bookish places. Most people immediately think of books and reading when they think of libraries. If our goal is to expand the public’s conception of what a library can be, we may not want to send them back to the idea of just books and reading. Dana said reading was definitely included in the language in the vision about “pursuing passions” and “discovering new ideas” and in the mission statement language about “engaging and accessible programs, services, and resources” and in the word “learn. Dana cautioned the Board to remember that perception was important. The Board agreed not to include “reading” specifically.

Joe moved on to the library staff feedback on the mission statement. A desired addition was the word “belong.” Everyone agreed about the importance of belonging, but struggled with how the word could be added grammatically to the grammatical structures of the existing sentences. Eventually it was agreed to revise the mission statement to read:

“The Ilsley Public Library System enriches lives and builds community connections by providing engaging and accessible programs, services, resources, and spaces that meet evolving community needs. Library staff invite everyone in to learn, create, and collaborate. The library is a safe and friendly environment where everyone belongs.”

Joe returned to the two unresolved issues: whether to use the term “Sarah Partridge Library” or “system” in the mission statement. “After further discussion the Board agreed “system” will be left in but made lowercase. The Board further decided to replace the word “imagine” with “envision” in the vision statement.

The revised vision and mission statements will be circulated for further feedback. The Board plans to vote on the final version at the next regular meeting.

DISCUSSION: SEPTEMBER ANNUAL APPEAL

Dana noted that Ilsley has never had an annual appeal, which is the custom of many other libraries and non-profits. Our fundraising consultant, Christine Graham, recommended starting such an appeal as a way to identify potential donors.

Dana presented several options for how an annual appeal might proceed:

1. Dana would write the letter herself, and the library would send it out, asking that checks be written to the town, though people might write checks to the library anyway out of habit. And some people are disinclined to write checks for donations to government entities.
2. Dana would send her letter through the Friends of the Library and have people write checks for IIsley but made out to the Friends. The challenge would be working through this with Friends of the Library to make sure that the IIsley annual appeal would not cut into the Friends' revenues and that the funds were not conflated. The potential benefit is that the Friends are an existing 501c3 whose mission is devoted to helping the library. So working with them seems like a no-brainer.
3. The library could create a new 501c3 (nonprofit organization) to receive gifts. However, this would be labor intensive and might further confuse potential donors: are they giving money to the town? To the Friends? To IIsley?

Dana's top choice is to work with the Friends of the Library. Dana, Meg, and Joe expressed the importance of making sure that there would be supports in place for the Friends and that the appeal would not create too much in the way of additional bookkeeping work for them. Dana mentioned she has started using Little Green Light, a donor tracking system that could make the process easier. It might be that IIsley could benefit the Friends by sharing this system with them.

The Board endorsed Dana's plan to begin an annual appeal. Dana and Amy will consider possible options further with the aid of Barbara Doyle-Wilch before approaching the President of the Friends to discuss possible collaboration.

BOARD COMMENTS AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Joe noted that all are welcome at the next IIsley 100 Project Team meeting on Thursday July 14th at 10am in the Community Meeting Room.

ADJOURNMENT

President Joe McVeigh adjourned the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will take place on Monday, August 8th, at 5 p.m.