

**ILSLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
REGULAR MEETING  
OCTOBER 10, 2022  
JESSICA SWIFT COMMUNITY MEETING ROOM  
and via Zoom**

MINUTES – DRAFT

Board decisions are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

Present

Board members: Joe McVeigh, President; Andy Hooper, Treasurer; Steve Gross (via Zoom), Amy Mincher  
Library Director: Dana Hart  
Public: None present  
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 10.10. 2022.pdf> for agenda and accompanying documents.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous regular meeting were approved.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No members of the public present.

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Library Director Dana Hart directed the Board to her written report. Board Member Amy Mincher asked about the results of a meeting between Dana, Revell Allen, and Jan Jafarian on the subject of the Friends of the Library receiving donations for the upcoming capital campaign. Dana replied that the meeting was very positive. Dana, Revell, and Jan will serve as a task force for working out the details, including the addition of appropriate language to the existing MOU between the Library and the Friends. These details will be later presented to the Trustees and to the Friends board for approval.

Amy asked if the Friends could be indemnified. Dana said this issue would need to be resolved by the Friends themselves, as the town's lawyer can't respond to the question due to a potential conflict of interest.

Treasurer Andy Hooper asked what legal question the Friends are exploring. Dana explained that the Friends were formed in the 1960s as an educational nonprofit, and at the time the library was a private 501c3. Ilsey became a municipal library in the 1970s, and one of the Friends is concerned that this shift could endanger the nonprofit status of Friends of the Library. In an unofficial conversation, a lawyer informed Dana that there was no problem, however to track down every relevant statute and write a report would be time-consuming and expensive.

Andy confirmed that a nonprofit 501c3 was allowed to pass money to a municipal institution. This is the common practice of similar groups throughout the state and the country. Dana noted that such a transfer of funds has been taking place for years. but having the Friends as a fiscal agent would simply mean it would be happening with larger sums of money.

Joe asked if there were any updates on filling the administrative assistant position. Dana answered that there were already two interviews scheduled, with others who could be competitively scheduled for interviews in upcoming weeks, all of whom are local. Dana commented that there had been a lot of out of state applicants who held MLIS degrees, who may not clearly grasp that this is an administrative position not a librarian. Dana confirmed that an MLIS degree is not required for the position.

Joe brought up the alarming number of service calls. Amy asked if the library bathrooms were functional. Dana answered that only the green bathroom was functioning because Plouffe's had only been able to replace one toilet so far. She added that the lack of public restrooms may result in a drop in people coming in off the street.

Dana announced she would soon be planning for maternity leave, the Board congratulated her.

#### **PROJECT TEAM UPDATE**

Amy said public meetings were in the planning process but not yet set in stone. The Team has been making a pros and cons list for the four project options, and discussing how valuable it will be to explore all options in depth when some may be ruled out sooner. For example, if the Ben Franklin building is sold, then that possibility will be off the table.

Joe summarized that the Team was in the process of selecting a new site and will be seeking public input. They have also hired a professional to estimate costs. The Team is exploring four possible options: keeping the current library without expansion, adding an annex to the current building (e.g. the former Ben Franklin building), renovating and expanding the current building, and building a new library in the EDI site (the lower parking lot.) Dana and Joe presented an update to the Selectboard, who seemed open to the possibility of building in the lower parking lot, which might include a parking garage and a partnership with an external party.

Andy, speaking as a member of the Selectboard, said there was a lot of desire to move forward on the Project, roadblocks have been identified and "triangulated" around. Dana asked if the main focus was on an EDI site or a new space with a parking garage, and Andy answered that he had not heard of the

parking garage option. Board member Steve Gross asked if there were other parking alternatives, as it was a sensitive issue, and Andy said there was no consensus.

Dana said the cost estimator was looking at the cost of building the library on top of two levels of parking. Steve emphasized that the library had to stay central to the town, and asked how potential renovation and expansion could take place if the building could not expand horizontally. Amy said this was up to an architect and Joe explained that the upper floors could possibly be dedicated to office or apartment space, which the library could expand into in the future.

Dana mentioned that she spent late summer and early fall reviewing temporary locations, exploring which were actually feasible and worth exploring. Most of the options would require the library's collection and operations to be relocated during construction. She will be focusing on this in the next few months.

### **PR CAMPAIGN UPDATE**

Joe summarized the questions facing the Team: Where would the new library go? What will it look like? How will we pay for it? How do we communicate to the public? Joe suggested that leading with explaining costs and logistical details sends people in the direction of fixating on how the library will look, so it's important to get the community excited about the vision and meeting community needs. The current plan is to have four meetings in November and December to discuss the history and mission of the library and invite feedback from the public. Meetings will take place at the library, online, in a retirement community, and one most likely at Mary Hogan. There will be a slideshow and narration to use, and the virtual meeting will be recorded and put on the library website. Dana mentioned that she had decided with Amy and Jim Gish that meetings would not be too long: approximately thirty minutes of group questions and feedback. Basically, as Joe summarized, "here's our vision for the library, what's yours?" Joe said there would be another meeting in the new year to look more specifically at options.

Joe mentioned that another strategy for promotion will be to recruit a series of people who are well-known or representative of a demographic in the community and take photos of them with a part of the library that's important to them, then place the photos and their personal quotes around the library. This would involve about a dozen people and a local photographer. If willing, participants could sit down with Kurt Broderson of MCTV, who will create a promo video.

Dana, Joe, Jim Gish, Secretary Meg Baker, and Renee Ursitti make up a communication subteam who will be heavily involved in this campaign, and Dana is continuing to write op eds about the library. Her next topic is the digital media lab.

Joe asked if it would make sense to discuss library renovation at Town Meeting in March. Dana expressed concern that town meeting is unpredictable, and her approach in the past has been to mention the library as little as possible, as it often starts a conversation about funds. Amy added that town meeting often goes on for a long time so the public may not appreciate the addition to the meeting time. Joe argued that Town Meeting would be an important way to put the library in front of

voters. Amy and Dana saw the benefits of this but disagreed. This discussion will be continued at a later date.

Amy mentioned the possibility of hiring a part time grant writer to help find funding for the Project, and Dana answered that there was no choice, as some specific desirable grants are difficult to write. Amy wondered if someone could be hired to find grants and train others in grant writing, and Dana liked the idea but suggested that such a person's going rate would be high. The hiring of a grant writer will most likely be necessary, but the specifics are undecided.

## **VOTE ON FY 24 BUDGET**

### Operating Budget

Joe asked if there had been any changes, as there had previously been a placeholder. Dana answered that this was the line for regular wages. The only difference from the previous version of the budget was the regular full time salary figure. Andy pointed out an overall increase of almost 8%, which Dana confirmed was driven by the increasing cost of living.

Joe asked for a reminder of how the budget worked in terms of the Sarah Partridge Library, and Dana replied that its costs \$15,000 to run Sarah Partridge each year. The town of Middlebury pays half and the East Middlebury Prudential Committee pays the other half. The part time regular salary line includes the cost of the Sarah Partridge librarian taking shifts at Ilsley and Ilsley staff covering for the Sarah Partridge librarian. Joe asked if materials were separated between libraries. Dana explained that they were labeled and tracked, though they move between libraries frequently.

### Capital Budget

Dana informed the Board that nothing had changed since the capital budget was presented at the September meeting, but the library will have to hire a grant writer. This is not a specific piece of the Project Team budget, a certain amount of money is requested for our fund-raising consultant which could also go toward a grant writer. The main pieces of the Capital Budget are the Project Team, non-historic window repair, and carpet cleaning. Joe said the budget line should be discussed at a Project Team meeting, as Dana will be presenting the Capital Budget to the Infrastructure Committee. Dana said that in the future the library will have to restore crumbling cement and railings on the front steps, though the costs of these operations are unknown; therefore Dana can't be sure if she budgeted a reasonable amount. Heating, cooling, and elevator modernization costs can be put off, but there's a chance something could go wrong any day.

Amy asked about the leak in the children's room due to heavy rain, and Dana explained that some places simply leak when it rains. An electrician and plumber concluded that it was coming through either the roof or the foundation. The roof would be difficult to fix because the water moves horizontally, and the foundation is difficult because it's hard to explore. The leaks are not too large and can be dealt with via buckets and a dehumidifier.

**Motion: Andy moved to approve the budget for FY 24 with the values of \$801,000 for Operating, \$182,500 for Capital, and \$26,997 for Revenue. Amy seconded the motion. Four members voted in favor, none opposed. The motion passed.**

Amy asked if there was an upcoming Selectboard meeting that it would be helpful to attend to support the budget proposal. Dana answered that there was usually a meeting in December, but she isn't concerned about the budget passing because, despite the large increase in the Capital Budget, the Selectboard usually follows the recommendation of the Infrastructure Committee. Dana said that in the case that cuts needed to be made, collections spending would be cut first.

### **STRATEGIC PRIORITIZING**

This process is no longer referred to as strategic planning, as per Meg's observation that it would be extremely difficult to make a "plan" while the new building was still in development. That kind of strategic planning would have taken years of deep diving. Joe asked what would be most helpful for Dana, for example finding strategic direction instead of a set plan or finding out what direction the Board can give the staff that would be useful but efficient. Dana answered that the top four bullet points developed by the board during the pandemic were helpful because the staff could incorporate them into annual planning goals.

Steve said it would be necessary to figure out what kind of things could be done to design a series of coordinated steps for the future, and Joe asked how everyone would like to see the mission and vision brought to life through specific actions or recommendations. Dana said the decision of how granular the goals should be would be left to the Trustees, the staff could design deliverables.

Amy emphasized the importance of this process in making sure that no one gets burned out because of the immense amount of action being undertaken in the next year. It will be necessary to outline strategic goals that don't overload Dana or the staff, or overemphasize the building project (or that compensate for overemphasis by taking pressure off other areas. Joe reminded the Board that Dana would eventually be on leave, so leadership and goals should be "non-Dana specific." Dana said the staff had already set their goals, and a new set of strategic priorities would not be implemented until next summer.

Steve asked what a healthy balance between work and life would look like while still involving everyone in the strategic planning. Joe answered that the Project Team always discovers ways to find connections to library goals and can be helpful in this way, while Amy noted that a large portion of the work is being done by Dana, Judith Harris, and Joe. Dana said it would be hard to delegate work effectively, but the library is working on it.

Steve, Dana, and Joe were delegated to think on this strategic prioritizing process, and discussed a meeting they had had earlier that day where they talked about the possibility of bringing in an external facilitator or facilitating the prioritization themselves. The facilitator hired two years ago had brought his own ideas and was generally helpful, and with reasonable rates. Another option they had reviewed was

bringing in other local facilitators. Dana and Amy were concerned that an outside person would be more focused on the wider picture than the minutia of goals. Andy emphasized that the point of this process was to bring the mission to life, and noted that Joe was a competent facilitator. Amy added that an outside facilitator would not be the best use of money at this point in time. Dana agreed, as unexpected expenses were coming.

Steve asked if Joe would be able to present his own ideas while facilitating, and Joe said yes. Joe would gladly facilitate after talking to Steve about his ideas for this process while Dana thinks of a way to outline the actual system. Dana said that the planning process should not exist in a vacuum, and should take stock of politics, outside perspectives, etc. Joe mentioned that the library might have a meeting for staff (and potentially community members) in order to bring in outside ideas. Dana said that the staff would already be receiving feedback on the progress of their goals based on their interactions with patrons. Dana said the next step was to have another meeting between herself, Joe, and Steve in order to hammer out a solid process.

#### **BOARD COMMENTS AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Joe asked the Director Evaluation Committee about their progress. Amy said that they had received comments from Town Manager Kathleen Ramsay and the next step was to have a face-to-face conversation with Dana, then present the results at the November Trustee meeting. Amy is unable to attend this meeting, however Meg can present the evaluation results to the board.

On behalf of the Governance Committee Andy said that they have been reviewing library policies and anticipated having some for the Trustees to review at the November meeting. Dana noted that our practice is to review policies every three years, however, they needn't be edited or changed unless circumstance have changed.

Joe mentioned that Andy's first term on the Board was coming to an end in March of 2023 and wondered if he would run again, considering his additional duties on the Selectboard. Andy answered that he is seriously considering not running again, so the Board may want to begin looking into recruiting fresh candidates. Those running for office are required to submit a petition with the signatures of 30 Middlebury voters by the end of January.

Joe recalled that part of the mission of the Trustees is to stay informed about the workings and current trends of libraries and hoped to make that a part of subsequent board meetings. He also noted that the board has never completed an evaluation or review of its own work and hoped to do this in the new year

#### **ADJOURN**

President Joe McVeigh adjourned the meeting at 6:20 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will take place on Monday, November 14th, at 5 p.m.