

**ILSLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING
November 14, 2022
JESSICA SWIFT COMMUNITY MEETING ROOM
and via Zoom**

Board decisions are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

Present

Board members: Joe McVeigh, President; Meg Baker, Secretary; Steve Gross
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 11.14. 2022.pdf> for agenda and accompanying documents.

Board Member Steve Gross began by expressing thanks to Chris Kirby for his work in supporting the Middlebury Community Classic Film Club as the group enters its fifth full season. The group meets in a hybrid format with Steve organizing the online component and Chris coordinating the in-person sessions at the library. The club has been tracking the use of the movies at the library, and although people aren't always able to attend, the featured movies are borrowed more than they otherwise would have been.

Secretary Meg Baker sought clarification for the qualifications to become a library trustee. Is it sufficient to live in the town of Middlebury or must one be a registered voter? Meg had spoken to someone interested in serving on the Board of Trustees, but was not a citizen and thus not a legal voter. Meg noted that the bylaws of the Board say that a trustee must be a legally qualified voter of the town, and as a non-US citizen the person in question is not and therefore ineligible to sit on the board. Joe suggested checking with the Town Clerk on the requirement.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

As there was an insufficient number of trustees present who had been in attendance, approval of the minutes of the October meeting were deferred to the December meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No members of the public were present.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dana directed the board to the Director's Report and asked if there were questions.

Dana noted that the new Operations Manager Royce McGrath will start on Dec 5th. Royce is coming from the Massachusetts public library system, most recently Concord, and got her MLIS degree from

Simmons University, which is a highly regarded library sciences school. Dana hopes that Royce's knowledge of Massachusetts library standards will help her share best practices that Ilsley can consider implementing.

Dana indicated that there was no update on the boiler; she tried to get in touch with Plouffe's but they are extremely busy because of the sudden cold and Jerry has been out for medical reasons so they're short-staffed. There is an update to be had, but Dana doesn't know what it is. Plouffe's is planning on doing more for the boiler, but for now it's working.

Joe directed the Board's attention to the article in the *Addison Independent* by John Flowers about the Project 100 Team. Joe and Dana spoke to him about the library vision, though it always comes down to the logistics of a new building, and the article was overshadowed on the front page by the announcement of expensive school repairs. Joe also noted the fifth installment of Dana's op-ed series, this one about the digital media lab, with an accompanying article by Ross Conrad. Meg particularly enjoyed the allusion to a secret passage. Steve noted the idea of the column is to show the variety of things going on in the library that people may not know about, and complimented Dana's writing.

Meg asked if Ilsley would be involved in Very Merry Middlebury. The library traditionally holds a holiday event on the first weekend of December, which is usually gingerbread house making. Meg noted that the used book sale takes place on the first Saturday of the month, and warned against the potential for a conflict in the use of the public meeting room on that day.

QUARTERLY FINANCE REPORT

Dana asked for questions on the quarterly finance report, explaining that the library is on track for everything except building maintenance, which will go over budget by an amount as yet unknown. Meg noted that the budget is a little ahead on adult materials, and asked if this is because of purchasing materials early. Dana said materials are often purchased early and the library doesn't buy anything in the last month of the year to allow invoices to come in and be paid and reconciled.

Steve asked if Dana was noticing prices affected by inflation. She answered that prices were increasing at the same rate as everything else. The library is requesting more materials funding for next year to offset costs as it may get worse in the future, but for now it's manageable.

Meg asked how going over budget on service contracts would be offset, and Dana said it would be balanced by savings in the "part time regular" salary line. Dana clarified that Plouffe's contract is under building repairs, service contracts include Mr. Mike's and Dennis Newton, who does AC units, electrical maintenance, and as-needed repairs. Dana said toilet maintenance costs were not yet added.

Joe asked if there had been a cutback on paper magazine subscriptions caused by the pandemic, and if there were more digital subscriptions. Dana said there were now 3,000 or so digital titles, and the library

is on a paper route for physical titles, which is expensive but easier. They are exploring a digital newspaper vendor, but it's not as user friendly or comprehensive.

DIRECTOR EVALUATION REPORT

Meg moved that the board go into Executive Session. Steve seconded the motion. All voted to go into Executive Session. The Board discussed with the Library Director her evaluation and made an appropriate motion in relation to her compensation.

PROJECT TEAM UPDATE

Dana said the Ilsley 100 Project Team would be hosting two public meetings, one in the Community Meeting Room on Wednesday, November 16, and an online one on Friday, November 18. She, Joe, and Jim Gish would be presenting the work done by the team, setting the context of what is happening with the library, overviewing difficulties, and discussing the new mission and vision. Joe will break down what the vision means to the building design, and Dana will describe new and expanded spaces. Then they will open up for community feedback. There will then be a meeting at Eastview and with a parents' group at Mary Hogan to address two of the significant demographic groups that use the library: retirees and parents of young children.

In terms of funding, Dana is looking into grants the library could be eligible for, and preparing a letter to prospective donors, some of whom aren't already Friends of the Library. The letter will hopefully go out in the next few weeks. She and Joe met with Dave Roberts, a member of the Brandon library trustee, and he said that fundraising should start with the closest circle of supporters and then work its way out. Dana said this was a reminder to bring people into closer circles. Another funding project is requesting congressional funding Bernie Sanders, starting in January or later.

Joe explained that the team had hired Henry Erickson to serve as a conceptual estimator for the four options under consideration. He provides ballpark figures so that the cost can be taken into consideration when making a decision, in conjunction with community feedback and the work the team has done in thinking about complications like parking or interrupting library activities during construction. Board member Amy Mincher and staff member Renee Ursitti have been working on social media outreach, Joe, Jason Duquette-Hoffman, and Kurt Broderson have been working on collecting photos and quotes about why library is important from community for a slideshow, a social media campaign, and posters. People from many demographics and age groups have already helped out.

Meg asked if Dana had connected with ACSD communication manager Emily Blistein and suggested issuing a reminder that all ACSD students are eligible for a library card. Dana hadn't, but said it was a great idea and she would reach out.

Joe said there were planned to be another series of meetings in 2023 after costs had come in to talk about price and how each option would fulfill community requests, then get more feedback. Steve said that even ballpark estimates were beneficial for getting a ratio between options, then wondered if there could be ambassadors for the library who could share enthusiasm with organizations they were already

part of, potentially make presentations. He then asked if meetings would be available on Zoom just to watch. Dana answered that the upcoming Friday meeting is Zoom only, and there would be a recording available after the fact. Joe said that library ambassadors was a good idea, but wondered who would be able to do it.

STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION 1

Dana, Steve, and Joe had been charged with figuring out strategic prioritizing, and they met, and decided to consider a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), which is helpful for starting strategic planning, but taking the temperature of the living and operating environment precedes this. Joe mentioned Steve's spring retreat points of consideration: environment, security, economics, and technology. Joe said he thought it would be a good idea to discuss the state of the local environment as it related to the library, such as Chris English's work with demographics: should the children's room increase in size if the child population isn't decreasing, should that be considered, etc. ? Joe put together questions that could have an impact on planning and priorities going ahead, which weren't written in stone and could be amended. The Board looked over the questions.

Steve mentioned the last week's elections, where some had criticized Biden for focusing on democracy instead of the economy, but voters showed they cared about democracy. The library is supposed to be a democratic space, and this is valued across both Vermont and the nation. In terms of economics there are rough times ahead, including a potential recession, so the question is how to convince people to spend money on a project, and how to present it as meaningful. Steve also said there was a question of balance between virtual and physical spaces, which comes into play all the time. In terms of security there was the recent incident at UVA, so the library has to be aware of its own security. There will be turbulence so planning needs to be more flexible than rigid.

Dana brought up the politics question, she couldn't think of any impending legislation that could affect the library directly, but book bans and political problems are coming across the country and it's only a matter of time before Ilsley is affected. Libraries should be apolitical, but they have values and some members of society could see these as political. This is an existential crisis for libraries that Dana does not know how to deal with.

Joe asked if Ilsley had a weapons policy, and Dana said it was addressed in the code of conduct. Joe mentioned an instance of drag queen story time at a library in a neighboring state where someone showed up armed, and Meg added that there had been a similar incident closer to home. Steve said it was important to be prepared, not afraid.

Dana said custodial staffing will be the biggest challenge over the next few years, but hopefully there will be opportunities to improve the system when there is a new library building. In terms of competition, Dana didn't think this was applicable to the library because its goal is to lift everyone up, but perception of competition from schools or the Vermont Book Shop might be important to address with the community. Joe agreed that there was no traditional competition except for attention: what do

people do instead of going to the library; should we be thinking about attracting people from other areas; how does one engage the homebound community?

Meg said the question list was difficult because it was so global and made the process bigger not smaller. Joe said he wanted to discuss the larger context of the community and things that are happening that the Board isn't aware of. Meg answered that she had thought discussing context had been part of the vision, and she is not sure getting bigger instead of smaller is helpful to her.

Dana said she had been attending a series of strategic planning workshops which the Department of Libraries had hired professional library facilitators to run. It's helpful but not super applicable to Ilesley because the process is too large-scale. The facilitators suggested that libraries in transition or in the middle of construction should consider a "bridge plan" rather than a full blown strategic plan as a bridge plan would be narrower and include what activities and programs can be continued, what can't, what will make it difficult to continue operations, and what can be carried through the transition. Bridge plans tend to be more focused on operations, less on community needs.

Steve said it would be pertinent to follow Meg's advice and get focused on a bridge plan. He suggested emphasizing activity and outreach efforts that would create success, noting that anything that builds community will make it easier to get support for the building project.

Joe said community engagement had been addressed by Dana, Renee, Jim, and Joe, so it wasn't just a staff undertaking. Joe recently went to workshop facilitated by the United Way on the subject of managing VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity), and they emphasized focus on smaller things, but having a big picture was necessary. The question is then what the next steps in the bridging or prioritizing process should be and who the guidance is going to.

Dana said that in the meeting with Steve and Joe they had wanted to vote on a strategic plan in February, which now seems difficult, but the next steps would be brainstorming of potential goals, priorities, or activities, then narrow down the list in January before the vote in February. Meg said it sounded very optimistic, and there was a gap between the current discussion and this process. She also clarified that suggested priorities were to be mostly carried out staff.

Meg suggested coming back to the mission statement and asking what phrases like "enriching lives" look like in real life, then considering how to engage with people who are disenfranchised. After this the Board can see what is most vital to continue during construction. Dana said this sounded reasonable, Joe suggested he should work with Meg before the December meeting to continue with the strategic planning and prioritizing process.

BOARD COMMENTS AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There were no comments or unfinished business.

ADJOURN

President Joe McVeigh adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will take place on Monday, December 12th, at 5 p.m.