

**ILSLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
REGULAR MEETING  
DECEMBER 12, 2022  
JESSICA SWIFT COMMUNITY MEETING ROOM  
and via Zoom**

MINUTES – DRAFT

Board decisions are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

Present

Board members: Joe McVeigh, President; Meg Baker, Secretary; Andy Hooper, Treasurer; Steve Gross (via Zoom), Amy Mincher  
Library Director: Dana Hart  
Public: No members of the public 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 12.12. 2022.pdf> for agenda and accompanying documents.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous regular meetings of October 10th and November 14th were approved.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No members of the public were present.

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Library Director Dana Hart reported she made an addition to the Operating Budget, adding \$11,000 for a full-time custodian with cleaning once a week by Mr. Mike's. Dana hopes to turn two part-time jobs into one 35-hour union position, and decrease Mr. Mike's visits from three times a week to one. This change brings the total Operating Budget increase for FY24 to \$71,000, at least half of which is contractual obligations. Dana will be presenting the budget to the Selectboard on Tuesday, December 13th.

Dana noted it was not ideal timing to have so many budget increases in one year, but the request can be decreased if the Selectboard deems it necessary.

Board Member Amy Mincher asked how the new Operations Manager was getting along, and Dana answered that she was mostly training at the desk and back room and they haven't worked together much yet, but she seems confident and good to work with on a personal basis. Today was the first day she opened the library, and Dana is optimistic and glad to have her.

Amy remarked upon the number of service calls in Dana's written report, especially those for lights. Dana said the light level in the reference room has stayed the same, but replacing the lobby lights made

them look dimmer by comparison. They will be calling Newton Electric to get a lighting plan as inexpensively as possible. Amy added that the Christmas tree adds a lot of light to the lobby as well.

Amy mentioned she had talked with Renee Ursitti about the upcoming queer creative space and it sounded great because there are people that really want it and the library is being intentional about inviting older teens. It's a powerful thing to have at the library.

#### **ILSLEY 100 PROJECT TEAM UPDATE**

Amy said the Project Team would be meeting on Thursday to review the four construction options, list their pros and cons, and narrow the options from four to two. Meg asked if this was before price estimates, and Amy answered that they've been working with an estimator to get *order of magnitude* estimates. There will be additional public meetings in January to talk about the options. Jim Gish recently put out a new blog post, Amy has been managing social media, and engagement has been increasing.

Board Member Steve Gross asked if the cost estimates gave a sense of the ratio between options and Joe said yes. Dana said the final number will be an estimate but it will still give a good idea of cost. Joe said the price range was \$6-15 million, but parking garages are extremely expensive (\$67,000 per space) and one would be most likely be necessary if the new building goes in behind the library in the current lower parking lot.

Meg asked if giving a range of prices would be better, which would require not an exact figure but include a margin of error. Dana said this would be tricky because the margin depends on the direction they would take with each option. The estimator worked with what they gave him, if they gave him more or less space he could re-estimate, but the team needs to impress on people that there's a lot of wiggle room. Meg wondered if including a standard 5% increase/decrease would help. Amy said they sort of already did this with inflation.

Meg said she has experience with running into unexpected problems in construction, and "about 5.1 million" is too specific, a 5-6 million range would be better. Dana said the "about" will get lost in the minds of the public, so this should be passed on to the Team, so they can think about how to present the range but say it's not locked down. Dana said they would need to wait for design options and then look at the ratio, though Meg said it would be important for people to have an idea of the amount of money that will be spent. Dana said there's anticipation of sticker shock, which would decrease after the feasibility study.

Steve reminded the Board not to let the mission and vision end up on the back burner, and each design should be kept in the context of these two statements, as they are meant to fulfill them. Treasurer Andy Hooper said the building will enable reaching of the vision, but it won't itself do the work and Dana said the current building is holding them back. Dana mentioned that the upcoming Thursday meeting of the Project Team will narrow the 4 options to 2, hopefully eliminating the option of simply renovating the building and the option of using an annex. Joe said it will be important to be able to say the Team looked into these options, now Dana hopes to get feedback on the other two. Andy asked if large building projects were something Dana had expected, and she said no, as few librarians get the opportunity.

Steve asked if it was wise to eliminate building options right out of the box. Dana answered that the team had considered whether it was better to eliminate options before sending them to the public or present options that didn't seem at all realistic. The Team decided to present all the options but to clearly indicate the ones they didn't see as viable. Meg said the discussion must include the cost of keeping the same building, and Dana agreed, saying that it will be necessary to explain why this option was not selected to people who didn't attend the meetings.

Meg asked if the Project Team was aware the a library bond vote could be contested in the same election cycle as the ACS D school bond vote. Dana said they were hoping for a bond vote in 2024. Joe added that the Team needed to agree on the direction the project would take, then take that to Selectboard who will hopefully agree with that recommendation. Subsequent steps would include a Request of Qualifications. The field of interested design firms would be narrowed and then a Request for Proposals would be issued. It would be necessary to have a design firm in place and an approved design in order to know the cost of the project with some accuracy in order to request the amount for the bond. Joe mentioned that the Select Board may ask to look into other options relating to the space behind the library. If the Selectboard opted to build a new facility it would be necessary to collaborate with a developer in order to share costs. Meg said it will be necessary to look into the possibility of holding a bond vote at the same time as the school district's substantial capital project. Andy mentioned that since residents of Burlington had overwhelmingly approved a \$165 million bond for a new school, there was now an expectation that school projects can be very large.

#### **TRUSTEE FINANCES**

Andy reported on the funds overseen by the Trustees. He indicated that the most recent quarter had not been ideal for our investments which had gone down about 4 in value, though since then some has been recovered. Some of the amounts visible on the finance spread sheet are restricted; their purpose is to generate income to support the purchase of specific subject matter materials for the collection. Andy suggested making these available to the library for purchases, and Dana said the end of the year is the perfect time to do that. As the funds need to be allocated into specific trust agency accounts for the town, Dana requested that Andy indicate the exact amounts to be used for each fund.

#### **POLICY COMMITTEE REPORT**

Meg and Andy comprise the Governance Committee, and lead the board in reviewing library policies. The ideal is to be sure that each policy is reviewed, though not necessarily changed, at least every three years.

On behalf of the board, the Governance Committee reviewed the following policies: Reallocating Expenditures in the Budget, Professional Development and Education, Conflict of Interest, and Animals in the Library.

Dana asked about the Animals in the Library policy, and Meg said they had wanted changes but were not sure they would be enforceable, but would like the Board in future to consider whether it is possible to look at immunizations and vaccinations of service animals. Dana said she didn't think the library could mandate that. Joe added that a service animal is defined by ADA as a dog, and the questions that can be asked are very limited and don't extend to the health of the dog. Meg said she referenced ADA, and

vaccine mandates are allowed but you can't ask about it unless there was an incident with an unvaccinated dog that caused a problem, in which case the library would not be legally liable. Joe asked if service animals had to be specifically licensed, Meg said not in Middlebury. Dana said an emotional support animal could theoretically be any type of animal, but only a dog can be a service animal. The library has had problems with patrons bringing in emotional support chickens. Overall, the four policies were reviewed, and no changes were made. Dana will note the date of review on each policy.

### **RECRUITING NEW TRUSTEES**

Joe asked for the names of people we might recruit to join the board. Meg said it may be helpful to put something on Front Porch Forum. Amy asks how many positions are open and Dana answered one, as Andy is not planning on running for a second term. Amy asked if candidates need to submit paperwork this year as that requirement had been waived during part of the pandemic. Dana said yes, candidates will need to register with Town Clerk Ann Webster and gather signatures which must be turned in 45 days in advance of the election on March 7th. Dana noted it would be ideal to recruit people the Board thinks would make good Trustees.

Andy reported he had spoken with the individual who had inquired if non-citizens could run for the board. He found that the Middlebury Town Charter requires citizenship. There are towns in Vermont where non-US citizens can vote on local matters, but Middlebury is not one of them. Andy asked if Middlebury became one, would this person be eligible for the Board? Dana answered that the Town Charter would need to be revised, and this is beyond the control of the library Trustees. Meg said the individual was not necessarily that interested in serving on the Board, but wanted it to be a known concern.

Joe said they need enthusiastic people to help with publicity. Dana checked the period remaining in each Trustee's term. Trustees are eligible to serve for two consecutive three-year terms, after which they must take at least a year off before running again. Andy's first term ends in 2023. Meg's first term ends in 2024, so she can run again. Amy's second term ends in 2024 so she will need to step down at that point. Steve's first term ends in 2025 at which point he can run for a second term. Joe's second term ends in 2025, at which point he will need to step down. Joe said a few years ago the board had briefly considered the possibility of increasing the Board size, as we are one of the smallest library Boards in the state.

Some possible names suggested to approach were Claire Tebbs, Jeff Rehbach, Liza Sacheli, Meredith Rehbach, and Jennifer Blackwell.

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING: SWOT AND PRIORITY AREAS**

Joe summarized the strategic planning process by saying the Board would revisit the mission and vision, do a brief SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), and come up with a list of priorities. This list will go to Dana, who will give it to the staff for feedback. Dana reminded the board that experts indicate that the eve of a major construction project is not an ideal time to try to implement a full-blown strategic plan; the ideas generated here would carry the library from now to the

new building, working as a *bridge plan*. Joe reviewed the vision and mission indicating that part of the planning process should include looking at how the aspirations of the mission can be realized in real life.

#### STRENGTHS

- Staff (Amy)
- Good communication channels (Andy)
- Unique institution in the community as the only public library (Steve)
- Strong programming (Meg), wide variety (Steve)
- Dedicated patrons, creative, strong, well-rounded children's programming (Meg)
- MCTV (Amy)
- Location (Joe)
- Focus on the future and the community (Steve)
- Demonstrated commitment to reach underserved and marginalized populations (Meg)
- High circulation rate (Amy)
- Positive image in the minds of the community (Steve)

#### WEAKNESSES

- MUMS students have difficulty getting to the library (Amy)
- Elevator functionality (Amy)
- The physical building (Meg)
- Insufficient resources to support service demands that we see as important (Steve)
- Supporting middle grade students (Steve)
- Supporting the homeless (Steve)
- Class divide should not exist, but it does with implicit bias (Amy) (Dana said this is something they try to focus on with Renee Wells but there can always be work to be done, Amy noted there is a divide in who uses library, people with more money don't use the library as much. Meg said patrons seem solidly middle class. Dana said people with more money are less likely to realize they use the library.)
- Telling the library's story, there's a gap in understanding

#### OPPORTUNITIES

- Reach out to more underserved and marginalized communities (Meg)
- Multilingual families are increasing, particularly Chinese and Spanish (Meg)
- New partnerships with local organizations (Dana)
- Lack of robust public libraries in surrounding communities (Joe)
- Changing post-pandemic dynamics, providing quiet spaces to work and Zoom (Amy), providing "third spaces" for friendships to form (Andy)
- Technology and communication, e-books and other electronic materials (Joe)
- Reaching people where they are via Zoom programming (Amy)
- Upcoming capital campaign, opportunity for a new and renovated space (Dana)

## THREATS

- Looming economic downturn, inflation (Steve)
- Not passing the bond (Meg), competition in voter support with potential school bond vote (Dana)
- Political attacks aimed at libraries (Steve); Book challenges (Dana)
- Boiler and building infrastructure collapsing (Amy)
- Temporary relocation poses a threat to operations (Dana)
- Staff morale (Amy)
- Rising mental health and public safety concerns as an ongoing issue for staff (Meg)
- Level of societal stress manifesting everywhere (Steve)
- Staff shortages (Meg)

## PRIORITY AREAS (not more than 10, will be narrowed down to 2-4 after staff feedback)

- What we can do to help staff on work/life balance in the next few years, staff support and retention, redoubling efforts to be supportive (Steve)
- Focusing on connection with others, programming, events, third spaces, meeting the needs of those who want to be left alone (Joe)
- Evolving community needs: Assessing, understanding, and responding to them (Joe, Meg, Amy, Dana)
- Fundraising efforts and finances, finding support for the bond vote (Amy)
- Being creative about spaces for library activities and seeking partners who can host events elsewhere (Meg), doing what we can with what we have (Dana)
- Continue operations during the building project (Dana)
- Figuring out how to supporting “learning and creation” and helping community members to pursue passions (Meg)
- Inviting everyone in, given what Amy said about the class divide (Dana)

Dana will bring this list to the staff for their feedback.

## BOARD COMMENTS AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Andy reported that a patron asked him about the transition to digital. They love physical browsing and don't understand browsing in the digital world. This could be an opportunity to improve digital browsing and make it easier to use or for patrons to understand.

Steve mentioned that the Middlebury Community Classic Film Club would have a discussion on Thursday December 15th on *Picture of You*, the final film in their Voyages series. This marks the end of the 5th year of the film club.

## ADJOURN

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

The next regularly scheduled meeting will take place on Monday, January 9th, at 5 p.m.