

**ILSLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 13 2023
JESSICA SWIFT COMMUNITY MEETING ROOM
and via Zoom**

MINUTES

Board decisions are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

Present

Board members: Amy Mincher, President; Meg Baker, Secretary; Joe McVeigh, Treasurer;
Steve Gross, Claire Tebbs
Library Director: Dana Hart
Public: Royce McGrath, Kelly Flynn
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 3.13.23.pdf> for agenda and accompanying documents.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Member of the public Royce McGrath suggested clarifying who would be joining Laurie Patton on the anniversary panel (Laurie Patton is not married to Bill McKibben). Other than that, the minutes of the previous regular meeting were accepted.

BOARD ORGANIZATION

Board Member Steve Gross motioned that Amy Mincher should be President, Meg Baker Secretary, and Joe McVeigh Treasurer. Secretary Meg Baker seconded. The Board voted 5 in favor, none opposed.

Committee assignments are as follows: Amy Mincher: Ilsley 100, Friends of the Library liaison; Meg Baker: Governance (Chair), Director Evaluation (Chair); Joe McVeigh: Ilsley 100; Steve Gross: MCTV liaison, Governance; Claire Tebbs: Director Evaluation

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Member of the public Kelly Flynn, also a member of the Weybridge Selectboard, brought up the concern that Weybridge residents don't have access to library services unless they pay for them, so they wanted to connect with Ilsley to discuss paying for membership of non-ACSD members. Kelly's goal was to gauge interest, what the price might be, and what services Weybridge residents could access.

Library Director Dana Hart said that Weybridge would be the first town to join Ilsley from outside Middlebury, and would set a precedent. Weybridge residents already have access to the

building, but to borrow collections they would need to contract with IIsley for library cards for their residents. This contract would require the involvement of the Middlebury Selectboard. Kelly said there is a lot of interest in Weybridge, which is home to about 750 voting residents. Dana asked if the Weybridge Selectboard had a budget in mind for the library issue, Kelly replied that there are a “reasonable” amount of funds available for use, but they did not have a number. There was a lot of library discussion at Town Meeting, at which residents gave their blessing for discussions with IIsley to begin.

Amy asked after the personal and family fee rates for out of town residents, which Dana answered were \$45 annually for an individual full card, \$70 annually for a family full card. Dana also mentioned that Home Card isn't fully honored, as Home Card holders can only check out older materials. Kelly said that the ideal would be for Weybridge residents to have the same access as Middlebury residents. Not all Weybridge children have access to IIsley materials through ACSD.

Amy asked if there was a committee looking into this, to which Dana replied that there had been a few years ago. Joe added that IIsley had been thinking about the possibility of Ripton and Weybridge joining, but issues with school consolidation were heated at the time so inter-town library use seemed sensitive and was put on the back burner. Kelly said that Weybridge would be happy to work with Ripton or be a guinea pig for joining IIsley. Dana said that the first priority with this issue was a thoughtful solution that could be a model in the future. Dana then said she already had questions and ideas for the Board to start thinking about on its own, so Kelly suggested she could go back to the Weybridge Selectboard and say the Board was enthusiastic and thought bringing Weybridge in was possible, but there is caution because it would be the first town to join and the Board has yet to discuss a fee structure or connect with the Middlebury Selectboard. There was general agreement.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Dana explained that her maternity plan is officially in order, with Royce McGrath acting as director while supported by Tricia Allen and Chris Kirby. Overall the library is in a good position for day to day operations, and Dana will still be doing the budget, though she doesn't anticipate having to ask for much more money this year.

Dana then updated the Board on another personnel matter: the budget for hiring a full-time custodian was approved, though there is a process for getting the position approved, so by July 1st there will hopefully be someone in that position. Royce is taking over the facilities updates in the Director's Reports.

Meg asked Dana how she plans to rest during her leave. Dana replied that she will be stepping back for 2 months, then work only on hiring a custodian or on IIsley 100 tasks for 4 months. Meg then asked how the Trustees could be supportive, Dana assured her that the people who can help will be doing everything they can to make sure Dana doesn't get too involved. She anticipates touching base with the staff to be consulted or delegate tasks, but not much beyond this.

PROJECT TEAM UPDATE

Joe reminded the Board that before the last meeting the Ilsley 100 committee was about to go before the Selectboard, where they asked to the Selectboard for the following: to endorse Option B (renovate and expand on the current site), to get a design team to work with, and to allow the library to receive money in order to pay Christine Graham to be a fundraising consultant. The Selectboard agreed to all but funds for Christine Graham, saying the town had not passed the next year's budget and so could not delegate funds until after Town Meeting Day. The Ilsley 100 team will bring this back to the board at their next meeting.

Joe then explained the process of the design phase. Firstly, an RFQ (Request for Qualifications) has already been sent to 15 or 20 architects in the region and publicized by the *Addison Independent*. 11 different firm representatives attended an Ilsley 100 meeting for interested firms on March 3rd. Dana also hosted two in-person tours for 6 interested firms, and there is a new page on the Ilsley website for the RFQ with information on cost analysis, a square footage program, adjacency diagrams, and more. Amy said the team can't favor any one firm, and all answers to questions, tour videos, etc. must be made available to everyone. Firms have until March 27th to show interest at which point Ilsley will narrow their options to 3-4 to invite to the second design round. The firms will present a concept of what they envision for this specific building as well as a normal RFP (Request for Proposal).

Joe said there were many decisions still to make, for example how the final design would be chosen and how much community input will be solicited. If everything goes well, the next 3-4 firms will be chosen by May, after which they would have May and June to make a design for Ilsley. The Ilsley 100 Team hopes to choose a design in July, then sign on with a firm in August in order to have a specific plan and budget in mind in time for the bond vote. In this case the firm would have to work busily in late summer and early fall and fundraising would have to begin so there could be an estimate of how much might come off the future bond.

On the communications front, Joe then listed the things Ilsley 100 had been doing: another report submitted to the Selectboard, there was an informational table at Town Meeting and on the day of voting, Joe spoke about the project at Town Meeting, the Ilsley impact report was handed out as well as summaries of current goings-on, and Amy posted more on social media. Dana quoted Tricia Allen as saying almost everyone leaving Town Meeting had a flier or was talking about the library, which points to more positive public knowledge of the project.

Amy asked what funding looked like so far, and Dana explained that she had submitted an application for \$2 million in congressional funding from Bernie Sanders' office, a pre-application for \$100,000 from VCDP will soon be underway, and a needs assessment will go to the Department of Libraries with signaled intent to apply for capital campaign funding. Hopefully the application will be released in early April. The Vermont Community Foundation has a \$25,000 Walter Cerf grant for which Ilsley is a strong candidate, and Ilsley is on the regional planning board priority list. Amy noted that we need to examine ways for donors to easily add us to their estate planning. Some banking organizations also have nonprofit arms to facilitate donations.

Dana reminded the Board that money would go through the Friends of the Library, and the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) and other documents would significantly return in the fall.

Joe summarized the three fronts on which the Ilsley 100 Project Team is working: design, community engagement, and fundraising. Engagement is expected to increase with the 100th anniversary celebrations, but Joe also said it was time to rally volunteer groups to take on some work for the project (e.g. fundraising team). Claire offered to send Dana a list of grants the library could apply for on the basis of being part of the designated downtown district of Middlebury. Steve agreed that multiple teams within the Project Team made sense. Meg asked when the duties of the team would be over, and Joe and Dana answered that the team would be finished when the everything had been moved out of the temporary space and into the new library. At the moment, Ilsley plans to continue as it is for the foreseeable future. Meg wondered how the Ilsley 100 team would ensure continuity as members reached the end of their terms, but Amy said she planned to stay on. Joe expressed similar wishes but added that they may have to consult the bylaws on this. Joe brought up the question of what the Friends of the Library's role in the project would be. Dana said the Friends treasurer would be working with herself and Royce and could join the Capital Campaign committee. The Capital Campaign committee, as suggested by Christine Graham, would consist of 5-6 people with a few who could solicit direct donations. The Friends will also be accepting checks for the capital campaign. Dana estimated that this would get going in August or September, around the same time as the feasibility study.

BRIDGE PLAN CHECK-IN

Dana discussed a productive followup workshop she had with the staff, where the staff made smaller goals and actions steps for the strategic priorities, which will cover the next two years. Dana pointed the Board to the Bridge Plan, the first part of which was for public eyes, the second of which was a more internal document listing staff tasks associated with the broader goals. Meg questioned whether "passive programming" in the "creating community connections" section could be reworded to be more clear about intent. The document originally said "asynchronous programming," which is back on the table. Joe asked Royce what her thoughts were on the process, and she said the staff meeting was very positive and the plan is coming together nicely.

Steve questioned the phrasing of "reduced services," suggesting it be changed to "different services" or something with less negative connotations. This can also be reworded. Amy expressed concern about an informational disconnect between the staff and the Board and Ilsley 100 team. Dana said she had been updating the staff monthly, but was now planning to send weekly updates to the staff. She also suggested there could be an informal gathering or meeting between the staff and the Ilsley 100 team so they could get to know each other. It might also be helpful to extend a more formal invitation for staff members to attend Ilsley 100 meetings, especially as they will want a voice in building design choices later on.

Joe asked what the role of the Trustees would be in the Bridge Plan, and Dana replied that the Trustees would give documents and directions to the staff and evaluate the director, but mostly

make sure the community was represented in the Bridge Plan and smoothing out any issues in the future. Amy asked how the success of the Bridge Plan would be measured. Dana said that community feedback, annual feedback and goal setting, and statistics were the three main measuring implements. Dana also mentioned staff morale, as examined in a self-reporting survey, could also be measured. However, survey and evaluation capacity is limited because this work is expensive and time consuming. Dana concluded that she was considering putting the Bridge Plan forward for a Board vote at the next regular meeting, but this wasn't urgent.

100TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Dana said the 100th anniversary panel discussion date was set for September 27th, but the location and timing are still to be determined. Amy and Dana suggested forming a committee for the planning of celebratory anniversary events. The hope is to have an event each month celebrating the library's history or looking into the future with a focus on feel-good events and rounding up grassroots support for the library. We will need a small group of patrons, staff, and trustees to plan the events. Meg volunteered to help. Joe noted that the Memorial Day parade could be a big opportunity to put the library in public view before the bond vote, perhaps with someone dressed up as Colonel Ilesley. The brochure Dana created about things the library does that are lesser known could also come in handy. Amy suggested that Steve pick a library-themed movie for the film club. Dana said Tricia Allen was heading up parade preparations, which so far include getting patrons to march behind a banner wearing Ilesley T-shirts and distributing a small branded trinket and the Ilesley 100 Project handout. If the Board were to decide to do something bigger, they would also have to find funding. Additionally, Memorial Day is a paid holiday for staff, so they shouldn't be asked to participate, though they could if they wanted to.

EXTENDING SERVICE TO WEYBRIDGE

Dana mentioned that she had reached out to other Vermont libraries to find out how they handle serving other municipalities, but there aren't many that do so. In general there are two big questions: what will the number of new patrons be, and what will the library charge for its services? The number of new patrons could be based on a per capita number or on the number of people who actually use the library. Some considerations related to the cost are the number of new patrons, what the individual rate would be, and whether the price will be based on the amount paid by Middlebury taxpayers. There are currently 78 registered students in Weybridge, who get free library cards through ACSD. The question is how to keep the price low enough that it's attractive to Weybridge residents but high enough that Middlebury taxpayers aren't disgruntled. Middlebury taxpayers currently pay roughly \$89 per capita. The Sarah Partridge costs \$14,000 at 11 hours a week, and Ilesley spends \$10.80 per Middlebury resident on collections. Dana thought that the only thing Weybridge residents would gain access to is the collection, so it could make sense to base the payment on that. Meg mentioned that Weybridge is generally more affluent, and a pricing decision needs to be sensitive to this since asking Middlebury taxpayers to subsidize costs for a more affluent town would not be equitable. Dana hoped that the relationship with Weybridge could become a model for less affluent towns as well, and so developing a reasonable cost would be important to establishing the relationship. In the future, more Weybridge patrons could mean an increase in purchases of new releases and

best sellers and there wouldn't necessarily be a huge influx in building use or programming, so it might be beneficial to the library as a whole.

Joe noted that there are costs beyond increasing the collection that aren't immediately apparent, especially with the building project. Some people have access to the library but aren't aware of it and there could be an equity issue if Weybridge residents end up paying less than Middlebury taxpayers. Dana said she could crunch numbers on some possibilities. Royce said it was also important to focus on how beneficial it would be to have more Weybridge patrons, and the cost was small compared to the potential gain, and it will be important to remember that this would serve as a model in the future. Claire reiterated that equity issues were important to consider, and asked whether the same structure could function in different towns.

Steve asked which towns were candidates to use IIsley (e.g. just towns within the school district vs. anywhere in Vermont, etc.), as well as whether IIsley would specifically reach out to other communities. Dana explained IIsley isn't obligated to extend an offer to every town, as eligibility is on a case by case basis. Meg added that being part of the school district should be factored into the decision of whether or how a town outside of the district could join since our current discussions include an understanding that Weybridge students already have access to the collections. She also mentioned that governance is another factor in this conversation. The library would have to consider whether this contracts would give Weybridge any voice in library operations which are currently managed exclusively by the town of Middlebury. Dana did not believe that the library should allow governance from outside towns, as their decision to contract into a relationship with IIsley (or not to) would be their voice in library operations.

BOARD COMMENTS AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There were no Board comments or unfinished business. The Board presented Dana with a maternity gift and wished her well on her leave.

ADJOURN

President Amy Mincher adjourned the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will take place on Monday, April 10th, at 5 p.m.