

**ILSLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
REGULAR MEETING  
FEBRUARY 13, 2023  
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 (remote), Amy Mincher

Public: Claire Tebbs

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 2.13. 2023.pdf> for agenda and accompanying documents.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous regular meeting were accepted.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

There were no public comments.

**DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Joe directed the Board to Dana's monthly report, as she was unable to attend. Board Member Andy Hooper congratulated the *Addison Independent* on their coverage of the library, and Joe mentioned there would soon be a follow-up article about the Selectboard meeting of February 14.

Joe noted that Dana's plan for having a staff member replace her during her leave had led to complications because discussions with the union, of which the staff member is a part, had not concluded. Joe expressed hope that Dana's replacement would be able to attend the March Board meeting to get a sense of what was going on.

Board Member Steve Gross asked if Dana's replacement would have to step out of the union because they would suddenly be in a management position, then have to rejoin when Dana returned. The Board expressed concern and thought that this might be a sticking point. Joe said there would probably be an update soon.

Joe directed the Board to the Ilsley Annual Report prepared by Dana, which will be included as part of the town's Annual Report. Steve complimented the inclusion of the Ilsley 100 Project, and Joe noted the challenge between presenting a clear picture of the many positive aspects of the library and its services and the need to highlight the deficiencies in the building.

Joe said there had been conversations with the Selectboard to see if the Ilsley 100 team could speak at the town meeting, which Joe thought would be beneficial because of the possibility of a bond vote in 2024.

### **PROJECT TEAM UPDATE**

Board Member Amy Mincher summarized the four meetings at which the Ilsley 100 Project Team had received a lot of good feedback. The majority of the participants favored Option B. The Ilsley 100 Project Team voted in favor of Option B as well. Joe and Dana will present the decision to the Selectboard on January 14th. They already met with Selectboard members to listen to their concerns and anticipate questions. Amy noted that although Option D, building a new library was attractive for many reasons, one of the arguments against it was the complexity involved in developing the site. Given the urgency of the issues facing the building, it was thought that Option B would address these more expediently. Andy said that although Option B might be thought to be faster than Option D, this wasn't necessarily the case. The financial impact of a \$10-15 million bond would require looking at other funding sources and it might not be possible to go ahead with this as early as 2024. Amy said they had spoken to Selectboard members about those concerns.

Joe said the next step is a Request For Qualifications (RFQ), which does not have a cost apart from staff time. Joe said they would send out a call to numerous architectural firms and announce the project publicly, then narrow down the responders to 3 or 4. Next there would be a Request For Proposals (RFP), which would ask the firms how they would go about a design, what other work they have done, etc. Joe explained that there was a new idea to give a small stipend to contending firms (e.g. \$5,000) for them to make a plan in a few months. If the Selectboard agrees to endorse Option B, the RFQ would go out by the end of March, the firms would be vetted, then get May and June to make a plan. This way the library would end up with 3 to 4 options for plans. Amy said this would also allow assessment of how the firms interact with the community. Joe said there was enough money in this year's Capital Budget to cover a stipend for 3 to 4 firms. Secretary Meg Baker asked if the Ilsley 100 team knew if this process was appealing to firms or if it was easier to do an RFP. Joe agreed that it would be a lot of work for the firms but note that the selected firm would likely receive fees of about \$1.5 million.

Joe listed the desired outcomes of the next day's Selectboard meeting: Endorsement of Option B, reaffirmation of a contract with Christine Graham (a fundraising consultant who has been informally working with Dana who would ideally do a fundraising feasibility study next fall and interview people who are perceived to have the capacity for major donations), approval of the planned architect competition process.

Joe said finances were the source of many concerns, and Amy added that looking for community support and Christine Graham's interviews would contribute to a decision on the financial viability of Option B. Joe said it was understood that a government or state grant will provide a portion of the funding, and there was a significant potential portion in ARPA funding as well, so the project is viable and the bond vote may not have to be so large. Amy said people may not know how the funding process works, and Joe added that there was a need for a new waste water plant in town, which might also require a bond vote. Meg asked if any potential funding sources have expiration dates. Joe directed her to the Ilsley 100 Project Team report to the Selectboard, which includes detailed information about possible grants, some of which require action by 2026.

Amy said the next Ilsley 100 Project Team meeting would be Thursday, February 16, probably about the RFQ, as well as putting a plan in place for communication and vetting firm proposals (e.g. hosting tours of the library at certain times or Zoom meetings that interested firms would attend, etc.). Joe noted that the public feedback document, which includes Zoom chat comments and verbal feedback, was available through the Selectboard website. Meg said there was one outspoken individual in favor of the annex plan who felt that there had not been sufficient consideration of community feedback before the decision was made to narrow the options from four to two. Amy had explained that there had been a lot of thought put towards community feedback, and there hadn't been any others speaking out in support of an annex.

#### **BRIDGE PLAN CHECK-IN**

Joe summarized the recent developments in the bridge plan process and directed the Board to the bridge plan draft. Meg noted a typo: "everyone" is misspelled twice. Amy mentioned the Ilsley's 100th anniversary, then asked what kind of celebrations there should be, and when. Joe said although the inscription above the front door on the building says 1923, the building was dedicated in 1924. Amy said Dana was thinking about having an event in the fall. Joe said Laurie Patton had offered to host a panel on libraries, with herself, her husband, Bill McKibben, and Sue Halpern as panelists, but there were details to be worked out (e.g. location, whether it would be academic, and who other panelists might be.) Meanwhile the board could consider hosting individual events in a year-long series.

On the question of whether there should there be a Board committee for this event, Amy said it could be an event led by community members, Meg suggested the Friends of the Library. Amy said she could write to Revell Allen, President of the Friends, and gauge her thoughts on the subject, then also write to Catherine Nichols to pick her brain about the best course of action.

Joe said friendraising and community awareness of the library was increasingly important with the upcoming project, and he then explained the recent poster social media campaigns, but there were still physical posters in need of locations.

Joe then redirected the Board to the bridge plan. Steve asked if the goals set out could be met under the current budget. Amy replied that the goals are broad so they can be met in a variety of ways, so the budget would most likely cover them. Meg said the only potential difficulty was continuity of service, as

there would definitely be costs. Joe said much of the goal implementation was essentially staff time, but they would ask Dana to take a look at that. Joe had asked if there was transition plan in the event of necessary relocation, and Dana had said ideally there would be a wide-open space for materials, and that costs depended on the availability of rented space and moving operations. The assumption is that not all of the collections will be moved, some will go into storage. Amy said there would need to be a professional library moving service, not just a “bucket brigade.”

Claire Tebbs asked if the bridge plan draft would incorporate action steps and goals, and who would be making them. The Board answered that the goals came first, then action steps, and that the staff would be making goals. Amy mentioned the concern of accidentally making the goals and action steps a staff to-do list to hand off, to which Joe replied that Dana and the Board came up with the strategic areas and direction, then the staff takes charge. Meg asked if this draft plan was a finished document or more for discussion, Joe said he didn't know, Steve said it would be a good starting point for discussion problem solving for Dana and the staff.

## **BOARD EVALUATION**

Joe directed the Board to the Board member checklist and list of responsibilities. Looking at the checklist, Joe said they accomplished most of the items, but not as much in terms of self-education. Pre-COVID there had been an annual event for library trustees with professional development and idea sharing, since then more things have been online. Joe mentioned the Vermont library email list, which often includes professional development opportunities.

Joe transitioned to self-assessment tools. He said a statistical analysis would be interesting but perhaps too intense for the first round of evaluation. Meg said her biggest question was how Dana and the rest of the staff would rate the function of the Board on the whole. Joe said the Board would ask Dana to check in with the staff about this. Meg also said she wasn't sure the staff would agree that the Board is focused on larger picture things. Joe and other Board members expressed that they didn't feel they participated in enough library programs. Amy said she had heard that going to about one event per month was a good goal. Steve noted that the film club was a good opportunity for this, then named the three upcoming films under the theme of finding peace. Amy said she felt the Board workload was a little lopsided because of the Ilsley 100 project, Meg agreed. Andy asked Joe what his weekly workload was, Joe answered “a lot.”

Joe directed the Board to the wider evaluation sheet, noting that a lot of progress was made with focusing on bigger picture issues. Amy said she didn't know how to rate “communication with key stakeholders.” Meg said the Board did a better job communicating with some groups than others. Amy asked who Joe thought the key stakeholders were. He replied that it was the patrons, staff, other organizations in town that do similar work (e.g. schools and the Sheldon Museum), and other bodies of governance like the Selectboard. Meg said it was hard to self-rate because so much work is delegated to Dana, then suggested more direct communication with Dana to see if there was anything the Board could do without stepping on her toes. Joe directed the Board to the last question (“How can we be a better board with enhances skills this time next year?”), which was contributed by Steve. Steve

explained he wanted this to be addressed every year in order to build consistency and intentionality. This question would help set an agenda and allow the Board to envision completion of their goals.

Claire made a note on the big picture section of the evaluation, saying the mission was reflected in the smaller goals, so the strategic priorities should be reflected in the evaluation of the Board. She noted that another board she was on had brainstormed needed skills, identifying which skills were growing and which needed help, which was a helpful way to see gaps and look for new members. Joe said this was only the first time they had self-evaluated, and that there would most likely be other ways. Meg said there was something to be said for the idea that much of the Board's work fits into strategic priorities, and they might be a useful framework for identifying goals. Meg asked how long the bridge plan was meant to last, the reply was 4 to 5 years.

Amy said she was thinking about social media campaigns introducing the staff and Board members to bring public awareness to their roles. Meg said people don't really know about the Board or its elections, and Claire agreed that the Board is somewhat hidden. She noted that the term "Trustees" sounded mysterious, and more public appreciation and awareness would be beneficial.

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

Joe thanked Andy for his three years of service, then asked if he had remarks. Andy said he really appreciated the Board, and their energy for an organization that wasn't high profile.

Joe said the next meeting would be the first Board meeting after the town meeting, so it would be organizational. Hopefully Royce will be able to come, as Dana may only be able to attend one or two more meetings before her leave.

#### **ADJOURN**

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

The next regularly scheduled meeting will take place on Monday, March 13th, at 5 p.m.