

ILSLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 13, 2020
ELECTRONIC MEETING VIA ZOOM PLATFORM

MINUTES – DRAFT

Board decisions are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

Present

Board members: Joe McVeigh, President, Amy Mincher, Secretary, Andy Hooper, Treasurer, John Freidin, Catherine Nichols

Library Director: Dana Hart

Public: Steve Gross, Peggy Rush, Victoria DeWind

CONFIRMATION OF ADHERENCE TO VERMONT PUBLIC MEETING LAW

President Joe McVeigh confirmed that the meeting, which was held electronically, conformed to the temporary amendments to Vermont Open Meeting Law and was duly authorized to be held electronically pursuant to Addendum 6 to Executive Order 01-20 and Act 92. He further indicated how public notice had been given and described to the public how they could participate.

CALL TO ORDER

See Board Packet <Board Packet 4.13.2020.pdf> for agenda and accompanying documents.

President Joe McVeigh called the meeting to order at 2:05 pm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board approved the minutes of the regular meeting of March 9, 2020 without objection.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Steve described himself as the “convener of Middlebury Community Classic Film Club” and attended the meeting to thank Dana Hart, Chris Kirby, and other library staff for their support of the film club. The club has begun a new series called “Discovering the Strength Inside of Us”. This Club currently has 62 people (or couples) on the listserv for this group. The frequency of movie viewing has been increased from bi-weekly to weekly, meeting (virtually) on Tuesday evenings. This week’s film is *Kon-Tiki*. John asked how to get access, Steve said all club movies are available through the library’s service Kanopy. Chris and Renee Ursitti have offered technical support for accessing the films as necessary. Dana expressed gratitude to Steve for maintaining this active group through this time.

Victoria DeWind had no comments, was just listening in.

Peggy Rush commented that Bob Wallace, a key volunteer with the Friends of the Library, called her on Saturday and is doing well, getting around his house with the assistance of a cane.

BOARD FINANCIAL POLICY

John proposed some non-substantive modifications that will be incorporated into the new policy. The policy having been reviewed at a previous board meeting, adoption was moved by Amy Mincher, seconded by Catherine Nichols, passed unanimously.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Library Director Dana Hart directed board members to her written report, highlighting the following areas.

COVID-19

Covid-19 has closed all programming and all access to the library. The five part-time staff members were laid off effective April 10th, everyone else is working remotely. Maintenance and Dana still go into the office as needed. Huge transition, but everyone is working productively. The cloud-based Koha card catalog allows more work to be done off-site.

The Town of Middlebury has unrolled a voluntary furlough program running from April 20-July 31 with unemployment during that time and re-hiring at the end of that window. Dana anticipates 2-3 library staff will take advantage of this program. Catherine asked about the unemployment process and whether it was still available. Dana said it was still available, although the Department of Labor is heavily stressed with new claims.

NEW SERVICE – UNEMPLOYMENT PROCESS HELP

Library staff have been reviewing and improving available materials from the Vermont Department of Labor, becoming "civilian experts" to help residents applying for unemployment. This is not yet publicized because of potential of staff taking voluntary furlough, and because staff is unsure of demand for this service, which could be email or phone based. John suggested adding links to this and other library source on town emails.

In response to a question from Amy about questions on the Middlebury Mutual Aid group, Dana said this could be available to non-Middlebury residents.

NEW SERVICE – PATRON CALLS

Joe asked about the patron communication mentioned in the Director's Report. Dana described this service as effectively being wellness check, reminding people about the services still available, promoting social contact and breaking isolation. Patrons are selected based on the circulation count and the staff's own knowledge of high-use/low circulation patrons. John asked about incorporating a domestic violence safety check into these calls, and Dana said she would consider it.

OTHER

John asked about a mailing list including links to particularly insightful articles about the coronavirus crisis, possibly a new listserv.

Dana reported an anecdotal increase in the number of new memberships for young children, not sure how this will translate to long term trends.

Staff is discussing what the transition back to the building might look like, depending on the comfort people have with gatherings such as the summer reading group.

John asked about the need for sanitization before reopening. Dana reported that the Vermont DOL is referring questions like this to the CDC currently.

Joe asked about the fine-free initiative. Dana had intended to present this to the Select Board on April 28th but has pushed it back to May because of the other pressing issues in front of the Select Board. Dana said without the ability to borrow materials, online resources now available regardless of outstanding fines, and free memberships through the end of July for non-residents, a fine-free policy already essentially exists.

DISCUSSION OF IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON LIBRARY RENOVATION/EXPANSION PROJECT

John suggested this project should be delayed – while he was already not enthusiastic about the scaled-back project, suggested that this be put on hold until the beginning of the next year. Catherine concurred, agreeing that the citizens and town have “only so much bandwidth” for priorities right now. Andy and Amy agreed.

Dana felt optimistic prior to the quarantine, that the path forward was becoming clear, but was unsure that a major project could be effectively pursued while the library is closed, even if the board wanted to.

Joe said the school district has suspended its capital plan for next year, and he would be surprised if it was brought forward for a bond next year. He pointed out that the needs from the previous plan and analysis remain, but our hands are tied in near term, and perhaps we can begin tackling the needs in a piecemeal approach in a few months.

Catherine expressed sorrow that Dana had not had the opportunity to advance this project as they had expected when she was hired. Catherine inquired about how the Town Planning project was proceeding.

A straw poll recognized the board unanimously agreed a pause was appropriate. Dana asked that the Select Board be informed, and that it was not necessary to distribute this to the press. Joe volunteered himself, John and Dana to write a statement to the Select Board documenting this decision, and they agreed to do this.

BOARD COMMENTS AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Dana noted that the upgrades to the HVAC system are still in process and may be difficult to fund in the next budget cycle.

John suggested a recording secretary rather than having a trustee do the work of taking the minutes. John also asked about how to reopen the library buildings safely. Catherine added that schools and churches will have similar decisions to make.

ADJOURNMENT

President Joe McVeigh adjourned the meeting at 3:14 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will take place on Monday, May 11th at 2:00 p.m. via electronic meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Andy Hooper, Treasurer