

**ILSLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
REGULAR MEETING
OCTOBER 12, 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 Peggy Rush

Minutes taken by Saskia Gori-Montanelli.

CALL TO ORDER

President Joe McVeigh called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm.
See Board Packet <Board Packet 10.12.2020.pdf> for agenda and accompanying documents.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the regular meeting of September 14th were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT: DISCUSSION OF THE *FREEDOM TO READ STATEMENT*

The board discussed the American Library Association's [Freedom to Read Statement](#),

Library Director Dana Hart added that the values that are presented are challenged every day, and it can still be hard to stand up for these values. Joe noted the historical context of when the statement was written (during the height of McCarthyism). Amy appreciated the reasoning reflected in this statement.

Within the context of the Freedom to Read statement, Dana described a 2019 request to reconsider materials. A patron was unhappy with a book that contained violent and graphic content, including a depiction of rape. This patron followed the Ilsley policy on reconsidering materials by speaking with the director and submitting a form. She further attended a board meeting where the board chose not to have the book removed from the collection.

Dana also mentioned a recent request from a patron to put a trigger warning on a book that referred to suicide. A trigger warning is a notice at the beginning of a book that warns the reader of potentially upsetting content. Dana noted that such requests can feel benign, but they are small manifestations of undermining the freedom to read. John added that it would be inappropriate to post a notice saying that a book is not appropriate, with the intention of getting people not to read it.

Joe presented a graphic from the American Library Association which showed a [list of the most commonly-challenged books in 2018 and 2019](#). Most of them were challenged by parents because they included LGBTQ+ content.

Joe brought up a question about older works, such as *Hucklebury Finn* or *Lolita*; their language and content might be considered inappropriate or questionable today. Catherine agreed that the content is disturbing but indicated that they're still considered to be classics. Andy noted that *Hucklebury Finn* is still read in local high schools.

FINE FREE UPDATE

Dana updated the board on the library's plan to go fine free. She presented the plan to the Select Board, at their meeting on September 29th. Their response was largely supportive. The Select Board recognized that this was a trustee decision. Dana is requesting that The Library go fine free on July 1st, 2021 at the beginning of the next fiscal year.

Select Board Chair Brian Carpenter indicated that he was in favor of the plan but expressed concern about the impact on the budget. He hoped that the operating budget would be adjusted to take this reduction of revenue into consideration. Dana responded that the IIsley Library had renegotiated the copier contract, which saved about \$2,000. As for the rest of the money, it would be the cost of this mission-driven decision.

Another option would be a fundraising effort to offset this reduction in revenue. Andy said that if there's a big loss of revenue, one fundraiser might not make up the difference. Amy agreed that this didn't seem feasible. Dana said that \$9,000 is not much in comparison to the negative impact the fines have made on the community.

Dana mentioned that David Weinstock was retiring, and that he offered to assist the library by helping with writing an appeal letter, or assisting with fundraising, an area in which he is quite experienced.

VOTE ON FY 22 BUDGET

The board reviewed the proposed FY 22 budget that was initially presented at the previous meeting of the board.

The cost of the proposed HVAC system has changed in the Capital Budget. It was originally set to \$485,000. After Dana met with Dan Werner and check with Engineering Services of Vermont it was decided to increase the anticipated cost to \$600,000 dollars. The agreement with the heating/cooling

contractor needed to include a contingency. It is now planned that the project go out to bid in November 2021 (FY 22) instead of March 2021 (FY 21), so that construction would begin in the summer of FY 23.

Dana explained that “shifting budget for Kanopy” in the juvenile nonfiction books section was intended to cover increased usage of Kanopy, a movie streaming service.

Amy asked about modernizing the elevator. Dana met with Bay State Elevator, who said it would be possible to upgrade the elevator to ADA standards within the current envelope. Dana hoped the elevator renovation would be part of a more comprehensive plan, but it might not be. At the recommendation of the town’s Infrastructure Committee a placeholder figure has been added to the Capital Budget of \$103,000 for FY26.

John moved to approve the budget as presented. Andy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Elaborating on her report, Dana reported that Barbara Blodgett was interested in applying for a grant from the Middlebury Garden Club to renovate the garden in front of the building so that it would be easier to manage. Dana expressed concern was that it was imprudent to invest money in the front garden as the hoped-for renovation/expansion project might undo it. She said this was a good idea and a generous offer, but that it might be better if it was addressed later.

Catherine countered that it would be nice to get this grant now instead of waiting a few years. She was of the opinion that as the general aesthetics of the town have been improving, especially with the new Triangle Park, that the library’s garden should keep pace.

Dana’s hope was that any new design would be relatively low maintenance, because although they would provide volunteer work for the installation of new plants, the Garden Club would not provide ongoing maintenance.

Amy agreed that the aesthetics of the garden are a concern for the board but indicated that she wanted more information before going any further. She noted that members of the Garden Club generally reported being overextended. Dana and Amy wished to ensure that Anna Benson, the library gardener, would be a part of this process. Dana said that she will get in touch with Barbara and try to arrange a meeting with her and with Anna so they can start discussing possible plans for the spring.

Board members indicated that they would like more information about the proposed design and project before approving it.

Amy reported that the Friends of the Library have met twice in the past two months. Barbara Doyle-Wilch will be facilitating a retreat with them. Amy is hopeful that this will help broaden their thinking

about what their role can be in the future. Amy also reported that she had attended a First Wednesdays presentation online which had about 60 attendees, a number similar to those we usually get for in-person presentations. Dana and the board thanked Amy for serving as our liaison to the Friends.

REVISITING BOARD PRIORITIES FOR FY 21

Joe reminded the board of the priorities for FY 21 that were agreed upon at the board's retreat and at the regular board meeting in June 2020.

The board prioritized major needs for the library as follows:

1. Provide safe spaces/places to meet and gather; even though we cannot be socially close people need to connect
2. Provide public access to computers and the internet
3. Offer additional training for new forms of technology-enabled communication (such as telehealth consultations); provide technology instruction and guidance
4. Provide support for children's education and assistance to parents (if schools remain closed)

Those items enumerated above are for Dana and the staff to implement.

The Board prioritized its own activities for the coming year as follows:

1. Develop a plan for how to communicate with the community, emphasizing facing outwards; develop talking points; use varied means of communication
2. Create new policies that deal with our current realities (e.g. social distancing, etc.)
3. Strengthen and clarify our relationship with the Friends of the Library, MCTV, the East Middlebury Prudential Committee, and possibly with a new group to spearhead fundraising
4. Build connections with new community partners

The board has already updated its policies to require social distancing and mask-wearing in the library as outlined in priority 2. The board has also approved an updated memorandum of understanding with the Middlebury Prudential Committee regarding Sarah Partridge Library. Amy Mincher has been leading efforts to work more collaboratively with the Friends of the Library. Joe and Dana have been regularly attending meetings of MCTV. So some progress has been made towards priority 3.

The board broke into two breakout rooms to brainstorm ideas about what needed to be done in order to move forward with priority 1 and priority 4.

The two groups came up with the following ideas which were shared with the group as a whole. Board president Joe McVeigh has combined the ideas into a [shared Google document](#) and invited board members to continue to contribute their thoughts and ideas before the next meeting.

ILSLEY LIBRARY BOARD BRAINSTORMING ON 2020-2021 PRIORITIES

2020-2021 BOARD PRIORITY 1: DEVELOP A PLAN FOR HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE COMMUNITY, EMPHASIZING FACING OUTWARDS; DEVELOPING TALKING POINTS; USING VARIED MEANS OF COMMUNICATIONS

N.B: Need to clarify role of board members as compared to the roles of the library staff in communications. Need to coordinate and avoid duplication of efforts (Amy)

1) What is the message? What are the talking points?

- Need for greater communication about available library hours and programs
- General publicity campaign in advance of renovation/expansion bond vote/fundraising. C.f. Greenfield, Mass. library efforts.

2) What are some varied means of communication that might be used?

- Regular newspaper column (from Dana?)
- Letters to editor in local paper
- Front Porch Forum
- Social media: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter

3) How do we develop a communications plan?

- Develop a good channel/method of communication to get people to get involved and for future planning. (C.f. Jim Gish's efforts on behalf of town construction project.)

2020-2021 BOARD PRIORITY 4: BUILD CONNECTIONS WITH NEW COMMUNITY PARTNERS

1) Who are potential community partners for us?

- Neighbors Together
- Rotary Club (Andy will be attending new member breakfast)

2) What needs do we have that might be addressed through partnerships?

- Joining forces on programs,
- Gaining support for fundraising
- Endorsements for bond votes
- Feedback from professions who might have useful specific expertise for us

3) How can we go about doing this? What would it actually look like to be forming and maintaining these partnerships?

- Keep a representative at the table to help keep the library in other partner groups' minds.
- Take advantage of any partnership opportunities that might arise.
- Develop a series of general talking points about the library

- Develop a list of potential partners that the trustees could reach out to.

BOARD COMMENTS AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS (NEW OR OTHER BUSINESS)

Member of the Public Peggy Rush said that the Classic Film Club, sponsored by the library had increased in members at its most recent discussion.

ADJOURNMENT

President Joe McVeigh adjourned the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will take place on November 9, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. via electronic meeting.