

Town of Middlebury
Ilsley Library Renovation Expansion Working Group
Minutes of Meeting
December 2, 2021

Present:

Selectboard Members Dan Brown and Lindsey Fuentes-George
Ilsley Library Board of Trustees Joe McVeigh and Amy Mincher
Library Director Dana Hart
Town Staff Working Group Liaison Judith Harris

Also Present: Library Building Committee Members Nick Artim and John Freidin

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. by Joe McVeigh and the agenda was adopted as presented.

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as presented.

Approval of 11/18/21 Minutes

The minutes were approved as presented.

Conversation with Library Building Committee members John Freidin and Nick Artim

Nick Artim outlined what he sees as five options for the project: 1. Doing nothing 2. Renovating within the existing building shell. 3. Renovating and Expanding beyond the existing building shell (in a phased approach) 4. Renovating and Expanding beyond the existing building shell (all at one time) and 5. Moving off the current site. Nick suggested one way for the subsequent Design Team to move forward would be to evaluate each of these options, with board budget figures, and present them to the selectboard/public. Nick also explained that he felt the Library Building Committee (LBC) received unanticipated negative pushback from the public because they didn't explain these options and their pros/cons fully enough.

In answer to Joe's question, "Do you feel that this is the right site for the library?" John Freidin explained that the LBC first started by trying to determine what was *needed* in the library building. He urged the Design Team to start out with a needs assessment. He also explained that the prices the LBC got indicated it would be more expensive per square foot to build new as opposed to renovating (and the prices did not include acquisition and site preparation). Nick emphasized the importance of having the library in its current location to strengthening the downtown. Both acknowledged that there were more advantages than disadvantages to keeping the library in its current location.

John explained that while it was possible to remove the steel trusses in the 1988 addition, it would be enormously expensive, and even if the trusses could be removed, there would still be a lack of space. Nick explained that the question came down to value for money, and it was determined it wasn't worth it to try and gut out the 1988 addition and make it sit nicely with an addition. It was determined to be better value for the money to take down the 1988 addition.

48 In response to Judith’s observation that trying to plan for a 100 year building can be difficult for many people to
49 conceive of, Nick replied that this is why adaptability/flexibility is the highest priority. Spaces need to be flexible,
50 and the library professionals can figure out how to make those spaces work as the nature of library services and
51 collections change over time. John encourage the Working Group to speak with Stuart Hamilton, the designer of
52 the 1988 addition, to better appreciate how the addition came to be.

53
54 John noted that providing an accessible entrance from Main Street is another big part of why the 1988 addition
55 was required to come down. Nick expanded, explaining that ADA was in its infancy back when the 1978 addition
56 was created. What was viewed as an appropriately accessible entrance then would not be considered
57 acceptable now.

58
59 Nick and John gave an overview of the RFP process for selecting an architect, noting that gbA had relevant
60 experience, was local, and had a feasible fee structure. Nick noted that the contract with gbA was only for a
61 feasibility study, not construction documents. John noted that gbA had designed the Kellog-Hubbard library and
62 successfully overseen a process where the library was able to continue to operate in one part of the library while
63 the addition was put on, which was appealing to the LBC.

64
65 John explained that all the research the LBC did (working with staff, etc) indicated that the library needed an
66 additional 6,000 square feet. They considered moving a portion of library operations—for example, the
67 Children’s Library—to another site. But it was decided, after significant staff push back which the LBC agreed
68 with, not to pursue that route.

69
70 John noted that the leaking basement can be fixed without removing the additions, but it is more expensive and
71 problematic.

72
73 Amy asked at what point in the process did the LBC begin to consider prices, and John replied that it wasn’t part
74 of their charge. They didn’t have a budget; they were asked to get prices. Amy asked if John would suggest
75 changing this for the second time around, and John said he would not, saying he believes that building to cost
76 would not work for this project. Nick said, from a select board point of view, it would be helpful to have broad
77 strokes budget figures for the five different options he outlined in the beginning of the meeting; this would
78 allow us to choose a direction to move forward with, based on square footage estimates.

79
80 Nick expressed that he felt design-build would not work for this project, because libraries are too specialized.

81
82 John gave the following advice to the subsequent Design Team: Put five select board members on the Design
83 Team. It would be helpful to have some kind of interactive website for the project, to foster community member
84 interest, participation, and input. Talk to Glenn Lowry, at the Natural Foods Coop, because he did a great job
85 managing that renovation process. Try to move forward with a Slow Democracy process.

86
87 In response to Joe’s question, What would have moved things along last time, when the design plan was
88 presented and then seemed to stall out? Nick reflected that it was largely a result of timing. The town was
89 focusing on the downtown bridge project, and then COVID hit. He noted that the past decade has been a time of
90 major infrastructure update in Middlebury, and it is time for Ilsley and Public Works to be addressed next.

91
92 Nick explained that parking was considered, but that parking didn’t drive all aspects of the plan. It was seen as
93 important and was taken into discussion. Nick offered some suggestions on board composition: one select board
94 member, a library rep, a facilities person, a community member, a finance/funding person, the town manager,
95 an independent design professional, and a PR officer. He also suggested reaching out to possible partners, such

96 as CCV. Finally, he noted that from a sustainability perspective, you get better energy return from keeping and
97 renovating the 1924 building.

98
99 Finalize Name for “Non-professional Design Team”

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101 After several suggestions and discussion about potential names, the group agreed by consensus on “Ilsley 100”
102 as a project name (which could be shortened to “IPL 100”), and “Design Advisory Team” for the group name. The
103 name of the subsequent committee would then be “IPL 100 Design Advisory Team.” It was suggested that Amy
104 and Joe bring the name back to the library trustees for input/confirmation.

105
106 Questions for the Meeting with architects from gbA

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108 Dan: How could this have been done in stages/phased?

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110 Judith: The architects followed the instructions they were given. Let’s ask them if they would suggest changing
111 ‘the question’ to the architects.

112
113 Amy: What was the difference in the project in Montpelier and in Middlebury? Did the architects play the same
114 role in both situations?

115
116 Dana: What was the most challenging aspect of the library program they were given to work with, or the most
117 challenging part of the space they were given to work with?

118
119 Joe clarified that what we are really asking the architects for is input on how we can set the next group up for
120 success.

121
122 Next Steps

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124 Plans were made for Joe to request time to address the Selectboard to give an update on the Working Group’s
125 progress.

126
127 Plans were made for the Working Group to meet on December 9th (focusing on the conversation with the
128 architects); on December 16th (focusing on 1. The questions of cost/budget 2. The organization of supporting
129 committees and 3. Recommendations for Design Advisory Team composition); and on December 23rd (focusing
130 on a draft version of the report). A goal was set to get a draft of the report to the Selectboard before the end of
131 the year. The Working Group will not meet on December 30th.

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133 The next meeting of the Ilsley Renovation and Expansion Working Group will be Thursday, December 9, 2021 at
134 2:00.

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136 The meeting adjourned at 3:33 p.m.

137 Respectfully submitted,
138 Dana Hart

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