

ILSLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
REGULAR MEETING  
February 12, 2024  
SARAH PARTRIDGE BRANCH LIBRARY

MINUTES

Board decisions are unanimous unless otherwise noted.

Present:

Board members: Amy Mincher, President; Joe McVeigh, Treasurer; Meg Baker, Secretary;  
Claire Tebbs, Natasha Sen  
Library Director: Dana Hart  
Sara Partridge Branch Librarian: Laura Fetterolf  
Minutes taken by: Fiona Gong  
Public: Barbara Doyle-Wilch

**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

President Amy Mincher called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

See Board Packet <Board Packet 2.12.2024.pdf> for agenda and accompanying documents.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the previous regular meeting of January 8, 2024 were accepted.

**DIRECTORS REPORT**

Library Director Dana Hart said that IIsley Public Library's current custodian Emanuel MacInnes is doing amazing. President Amy Mincher agreed, and mentioned how the custodian is building relationships as well. Dana said that having the custodian come in around noon and leave at seven is great because the custodian gets to interact with people and help set up programs in the evening. The custodian is doing fantastic and will be kept on even with the library's temporary transition.

Treasurer Joe McVeigh asked if the design boards for the library renovation were on display in the library, and Dana replied that they are displayed in the town office's.

**FRIENDS MOU**

Amy told the Board that the lawyer has approved the MOU. The Friends of IIsley Public Library have signed it, and it just needs the official approval of the board. There have only been a few things added to the addendum, which is if there are any funds remaining after the project, the town will have the right to take the funds back for library needs. Joe asked wouldn't people get their money back if it was donated for the project and the project didn't move forward? Natasha Sen said the money is given with the understanding that it's a donation and if the project doesn't move forward, then the town can use it for other library needs. Meg pointed out that many donations may be small and could be difficult to track back to donors. Dana said that if the

Friends have excess funds for the project, the funds should go to the town and not stay with the Friends. Dana also said that if there were funds donated to the project and the project didn't go forward and the donor wanted the money back, it would be given to them.

Joe McVeigh moved the approval of the Addendum to the Memorandum Between the Friends of the Ilsley Public Library and the Ilsley Public Library Trustees dated January 13, 2024. Secretary Meg Baker seconded the motion. The motion passed.

### **MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE STUDENT PROJECT UPDATE FROM CLAIRE TEBBS**

Claire Tebbs told the Board she worked last year with a Senior CAPSTONE community engagement course at the college, and they designed a really cool program called Addison Adventures. Addison Adventures is a questing program, which means it is a treasure hunt around a community. The Tri-Valley Transit company was interested in the project, because they wanted to connect community and belonging to public transit services. The college group did a great job, and the Addison Adventures program is currently housed on the library website. Addison Adventures has not yet been marketed to the public, so the library needs to figure out how to get it out. The students also created a template for the program so others in the community can propose an adventure. Claire said the project did not carry into the next semester but it is possible to have an intern continue the work of the project and the Center of Community Engagement is working on that for this project. Joe asked what the connection between the library and Addison Adventures is. Claire said it was decided the library had the best website and was a central community programming entity so it made sense to house it at the library

Barbara said that The Friends have tried to identify all the places where the library has lived, starting in 1775, and have made eleven posters that take you through all the places the library has lived. All the places are downtown, so it would be the perfect adventure for Addison Adventures. The Friends have also made posters that will be put up along Main Street for people to see.

Dana said she loves that the library often plays the role of connector. She also thanked Claire for organizing a fantastic community connections summit, all about the ways that students connect with community partners for learning and service, as well as career training and advancement. Barbara mentioned that these are the kind of things that bring students into downtown Middlebury.

### **SARAH PARTRIDGE UPDATES FROM LAURA FETTEROLF**

Sarah Partridge Librarian Laura Fetterolf said that in 2023 Sarah Partridge has started to see all of the work they've been doing start to bear fruit. In August, Sarah Partridge was made a branch library in the Koha system. This has made things so much better as it has streamlined work flow, made transferring books between Sarah Partridge and Ilsley a quicker process, and made the staff much happier. It has also made clearer to patrons that Sarah Partridge is a separate place from Ilsley, and this has been updated on the website and on new library cards. Sarah Partridge's hours are also on the website with Ilsley's hours.

In August the circulation stats dropped in number, because as a new branch only the physical checkouts and renewals from Sarah Partridge are counted, instead of all the transfers between Ilsley and Sarah Partridge. There were 185 checkouts in August, and the library was open 14 days in August, so there were roughly 13 books checked out a day in August. In 2023, there were 1,127 visitors total. That encompasses a standalone book group that meets at Sarah Partridge, which is about 15 people who meet every other week. This also includes the East Middlebury Preschool Co-Op which comes from September-November for an hour long preschool storytime. About 2-3 people a month come to Sarah Partridge to get books from the non-holdable collection. The non-holdable collection is a collection of books 6 months or younger that cannot be put on hold. When a book from the collection is in the library, it goes on the shelf. This also includes numbers for the summer picnic storytime. Family storytime has taken a hit, as all the younger kids in the area have aged up. Sarah Partridge is trying to make sure it is a viable and important institution in East Middlebury and beyond, which could not be done without the support of Ilsley.

Laura said Trisha Allen comes to Sarah Partridge once a week to help with storytime, and Royce comes by to get desk time. Laura will be getting desk time at Ilsley, and she also does cataloging at Ilsley occasionally. Dana said the non-holdable collection is great because it is bringing people to Sarah Partridge, which they will have to get used to when Ilsley is in it's remote location. Dana has also brainstormed about what role Sarah Partridge will play during construction. Laura said she has thought about how to get Sarah Partridge stable and more viable for when Ilsley needs it.

Joe asked about the relationship between Sarah Partridge and the building, as at Ilsley the town owns the building and the books. Laura said the building is owned by the East Middlebury Prudential Committee and water district. The deed to the East Middlebury Community House states there must be a library in East Middlebury. Ilsley owns the books at Sarah Partridge, The Prudential Committee owns everything else, like the wifi, the telephone line, but Ilsley owns the phone. The Prudential Committee also pays half of Laura's salary and the materials budget. Dana said it costs around \$15,000 a year to run Sarah Partridge, and the Prudential Committee pays for half of it.

Laura said the building is in good shape, they are looking to renovate in the next ten years, noting that there is difficulty in getting workers, but they are working on building up a capital budget to be able to do so. The boiler has been fixed, and works much better now. Henry Haskell cleans and he is doing wonderfully.

### **PROJECT TEAM UPDATE**

Dana said on February 13, Joe, Dana, and Chris Huston from ReArch will be at the Middlebury Town Selectboard meeting, and will be presenting the final schematic designs and the high level funding plan. The cost estimate is just under \$17 million dollars, including almost a million dollars to account for inflation between now and spring 2025. With \$500,000 from government rebate, that gets the cost down to \$16.5 million, with \$8 million anticipated from grants and gifts

combined. There is \$2 million in grants, and \$500,000 from the municipal energy resilience program. Dana is applying for another \$1 million in grants, and then there will be \$6 million in pledges. That would mean 50% of the project is paid for outside of municipal borrowing and \$8.5 million is in public funding. There is a real public cost, but the library can make the case that it is worth it, targeting a May 7th bond vote. If the selectboard says yes, the library will go all out in fundraising, and do a presentation at Town Meeting Day, which may include the premiere of a promotional video that ReArch is doing.

April 15th is the informational meeting at 7 PM. The project will be the only thing talked about at that meeting. There will be a second informational meeting the night before the bond vote which will have funding information. The library should hear back from all of the grants applied for by the end of 2024, and the capital campaign will be completed in the winter of 2025, with a move into the temporary building in February 2025, with construction to start in March 2-25, so with a year and a half of construction, the library can move into the new building in summer of 2026, all if the vote goes forward.

Meg said there have been concerns of the selectboard that the library will not be able to raise enough. She asked if there is a way to let the selectboard know that the Trustees have a great deal of confidence. Dana said she will be sending an email out individually to select board members to let them know what the library has in pledges and reminding them that the library paid a financial advisor to help anticipate fundraising capabilities.

Joe said the town is required to bond for the entire amount, and the Trustees need to remind the town that they are getting a \$17 million library for only \$8.5 million.

Claire asked what will be put on the ballot for this vote. Dana said there will be context on the funding on the ballot. Dana said she has an updated Q&A sheet that she will send out to answer people's really high level questions. Amy said she wants to make sure everything is covered so the Trustees can go back to people with answers.

Meg said that people are still asking questions about parking and handicapped access. Dana said Historic Preservation is warming up to solutions that the architects are working on. Amy said the designers created a compromise about the front entrance of the building for handicapped access, they are creating a little bit of an entrance at the same level of the stairs for the front entrance. Joe said they are also looking at the solution of a ramp as you need some steps to have the front of the library level with the back. Joe gave the Trustees a virtual tour of the plans for the library. There are still discussions about outdoor programming space. Dana said that the exterior materials have not yet been settled, and that ReArch is currently doing the landscaping themselves and have been successful with it in the past. The reason for this is to keep the project under \$17 million the library decided not to use a landscape architect consultant but this is subject to change.

Dana said the library is planning to use the ground floor of the Duclos Building from the National Bank of Middlebury for the temporary library building during construction. There will also be no

further changes to the design until the library gets more money for changes. ReArch has been fantastic to work with, and the library can now use the design images publicly to promote.

Barbara said it is important that the Trustees and Friends understand they have a huge role in advocating for the project. Natasaha said it's the people who aren't supportive of the project that the library needs to connect with, and the library should think about how to find them and connect with them.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY DISCUSSION**

Meg said the Ilsey Staff have asked for a social media policy, as they are doing a lot of posting on Front Porch Forum, and other social media platforms and would like to have general guidelines around posts and responses to posts. The ALA says that libraries are designated public forums. Meg read from guidance published by the ALA: "*The Supreme Court of the United States has defined a "designated public forum" as a forum set aside by government for expressive activities. As with a traditional public forum, designated public forums are subject to "strict scrutiny," meaning that First Amendment principles apply. While libraries may impose time, place, or manner regulations (which do not readily apply to the online environment), the courts closely examine any content-based speech restrictions to determine whether they violate the rights of the speaker. Viewpoint discrimination is prohibited in any forum.*" (see ALA Social Media Guidelines for Public and Academic Libraries, <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/socialmediaguidelines>)

Meg said that anytime a library removes a comment or restricts kinds of comments they are potentially violating First Amendment Rights. Natasha said she thinks the library should hire a constitutional law scholar and a First Amendment lawyer to help write the policy, as it is very complex. Meg said the ALA doesn't have any guidance on what kinds of restrictions could be placed, there are a lot of libraries that do have social media policies, but many of them could be taken to court. Dana said while there is not currently a social media policy, there are procedures, and there is a difference between board policies and internal procedures. Amy said she thinks there could be an internal policy with rules for staff, and an external public facing policy.

Natasha said if you have a policy you have to have someone making the call for what is defamatory, what counts as a personal attack, and monitoring comments constantly. Meg said you would have to either remove nobody or block comments entirely. Amy said if the library doesn't allow comments it creates the idea that they don't welcome them, which is not the goal, especially around the building project where the library is trying to facilitate comments and conversation. Joe said the purpose of social media is engaging with people. Meg said you could do something where you don't turn off comments but make answers private. She also said the library is in a tricky place as an open place for public dialogue, but it means the library needs to be careful about the messages we are putting out, because the library can't restrict comments about it. The Board shared concerns about receiving negative comments during promotion of the renovation, and Amy said from what she's posted so far the response has been overwhelmingly positive. Amy also said the library sometimes shares articles from the Addison

Independent, which often has negative comments on the article, and should the library share that or not.

Dana said at the next board meeting the Trustees will complete committee assignments, so the earliest they could have a draft would be April, it would be voted on in May, by which time the bond vote will have happened. Dana said she thinks the library should continue what it is doing now and later assess or wait for another library to take the lead on social media policies, before which the library should turn off comments on everything. Dana and Meg will go through some of the social media policy pieces that Meg has found, and then connect with Benj Putnam, the Middlebury Town Attorney about it. Dana will also follow up with Renee, who requested the social media policy. Dana said the biggest way social media has been a problem for the library in the past is when there has been an event that attracts inappropriate comments.

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

Amy said the Hannaford Culinary Arts Program added on for a gratuity for the Staff Appreciation Lunch. Amy said the Friends would've liked to see more mingling of the Friends, Trustees, and Staff. Amy will share plans with the Trustees so they have a plan for the Staff Appreciation Lunch next year.

Meg said it is Amy's last official meeting as a library trustee!! She has served six years of service, and finished as President. The Board said it has been amazing to work with Amy, and she is incredibly good and an inspiration. They hope she will continue in other ways to support the library, and as a Friend. Amy said Dana will run the next meeting and come up with the agenda until the board is reorganized.

### **ADJOURN**

President Amy Mincher adjourned the meeting at 6:45 PM.

The next regularly scheduled meeting will take place on Monday, January 11th, at 5 PM.