

RUTLAND FREE LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

June 18, 2025 5:15PM

Meeting at Rutland Free Library Fox Room

Attending: Ann Bannister__A_; Joe Bertelloni__X_; Gabi Bourassa__A_; Clare Coppock____X_; Leonard DeLorenzo____X_; Russell Glitman__A_; Allyn Kahle__X_; Kevin Klamm__A_; Carolyn Meub__A_; Matt Olewnik____X_; Joanne Pencak__A_; Cathy Reynolds__X_; Cathy Solsaa__A_; John Skinner__A_; Randal Smathers__A_; Amy Williams__A_ (X is present, A is absent)

Presiding: Clare Coppock

Secretary: Allyn Kahle

Guest/s: Barbara Doyle-Wilch, library programmer; Michael Minadeo, WLA Architects; Steve Roy, WLA Architects

Meeting was called to order by Clare at 5:20 pm.

Agenda Addition(s): Raffle tickets for the quilt were handed out to the members who were present.

The regular meeting agenda was suspended in order for Barbara Doyle-Wilch, the Library Planner, to lead a conversation/questioning opportunity with the board using the following questions. The architects will use her program to help design the space at 88 Merchants Row.

1. What basics does the community need this project to do?

(Russell had submitted answers by email and Clare led the replies with his answers.) It should create a safe, welcoming space for all the community that provides opportunities to share ideas and points of view, learn new skills, entertain, gain new experiences through activities and foster intellectual curiosity and creativity in children to engender life-long use of the service. It should offer the latest digital content and resources as well as expanded access to regional cultural and historic venues and the ability to check-out physical resources. (RG)

Comments from the other participants included that the library should be a place to have local history displays; be a hub, there should be many reasons to come to the library; a place that is well maintained; a children's spaces that is safe and welcoming and not accessed through the adult section; a place where people can access the internet privately such as for telehealth care.

2. What does this project have the potential to do for the community?

It has the potential to be a nexus for community activities/functions, whether civic, artistic, educational or physical, that foster a sense of community and grows that community by offering activities and functions that integrate the library into people's lives. Developing these activities/functions in partnership with other key community drivers, as suggested by some board members, such as Wonderfeet, the Paramount, Godnick Center, Chaffee, Boys & Girls Club, Rutland Rec, The Mint, etc... will help weave the library into the life of the community. With a re-imagined Book-Mobile not all these events need be held at the library. (RG)

Comments from those present included: opportunities for conversation groups; space for “library of things”; a magnet space for meetings and gatherings; a movie theater space; remote working spaces.

3. Who are the users of the library? What (activities, functions, uses) will happen in the new library?

Everyone should be able to use the library. The activities and functions should take people into the community physically while supported by books and related digital resources that often have a Vermont connection. For instance, hosting a local nature walk with the Vermont author Tom Wessels, or bird watching with the Rutland Audubon Society using the Merlin app and birding books, cooking demonstrations with Vermont cookbook authors at a local restaurant or a grow your own veggies class for kids with resources about the plants and gardening and “Meet Your Farmer” tours. Hosting traditional functions such as author talks, Osher or similar learning seminars and forums, line dancing classes and hosting community organization meetings should be on the menu as well.(RG)

Comments from the board included: we should have a dedicated space for teens; work space for groups; space for English language learning, possibly where seniors could tutor; kitchen in public space; some space/s could be available when staff is not present.

4. Architecturally, what does a new library look like (inside and out)? What experiential qualities does it have?

It should be an open, bright space that has elements that connect to the community and its history, while providing a venue to exhibit the creative energy of the area.(RG)

Comments from the board included: stacks should not be so crowded, claustrophobic; should be open, bright, warm, cozy; should not be institutional; needs a welcoming entrance; accessibility for all; division between staff and public spaces; easy and affordable to maintain.

5. What was your best/worst library experience?

Worst:

- inaccessible, hard to park, hard to get around in
- terrible bathrooms
- institutional, no charm

Best

- places for collaboration, large tables, good lighting, many computers
- very open, artistic, displays of antique books, stacks were not right in front of you when you came in
- circle shape
- bookmobile experiences

6. This project is an opportunity to re-think what a library is, how it serves the community, and how it operates. Are there policies that could be introduced with a new building?

Two possible policies: first, of community engagement, meeting patrons where they are, in terms of their diverse pursuits, interests and needs; secondly, adopting technology and sustainability-forward approach to managing the services and facility. "Library" in the traditional sense of a catalog of books, periodicals and media in any format is almost a misnomer. It needs to offer much more than that; to be the experiential hub of its patrons. (RG)

Comments from the board: balance between the need for a collection and weeding; Barbara suggested we need to think about how we would measure the success of the new library, is it how big a collection we have, how much foot traffic there is, or something else? She also suggested the library should mirror the community.

7. What are the overall goals for sustainability and energy efficiency for this project?

Ideally the physical plant will be a showcase for sustainability and energy efficiency. It would be great to partner with Stafford Tech to use the building as a living laboratory for some of their classes while offering supporting media resources. (RG)

Comments from the board: There should be a balance between costs and sustainability; we should utilize the existing infrastructure to save costs as much as possible; we would have a lease at Bloomer building which could help with maintenance planning.

8. What other good can come out of this project? Possibly unexpected? What isn't obvious; what haven't we thought of?

- Selling the idea to the city is important.
- We need to convince the people who insist on staying at 10 Court St. The group in Middlebury had an itemized list of all the problems with the old building and how much it would cost to repair each of them that was posted at all public meetings.
- Maybe we need a nod to the "nostalgic" in new plans.
- We need to educate the public to what the library could be.
- Steve Roy asked how the design could reflect Rutland as a city. Answers included: Convenience to town, meeting spaces only minutes from downtown areas; Rutland is a "scrappy" town, not fancy or rich; marble industry connection; railroad connection.
- The middle class are often the users of a library.

Barbara estimated that her program would be available by mid-July.

Adjournment: 6:40

Next Board Meeting: Wednesday, July 16, 2025 @ 5:15 pm