

WiLS Board Meeting

August 16, 2022 – 9:30 am – 3:00 pm



Waunakee Public Library, Board Room
201 N Madison Street
Waunakee, WI 53597

Board Attendees: Hans Baierl (Moraine Park Technical College), Barbara Brattin (Kenosha Public Library), Jennifer Chamberlain, (WiLS, ex-officio), Jennifer Gurske (Madison Trust for Historic Preservation), Sarah Miller (WiscNet), Steve Platteter (Arrowhead Library System), Todd Roll (University of Wisconsin-Platteville), Tasha Saecker (Appleton Public Library), Adrienne Thunder (Ho-Chunk Nation Language Division), Teresa Voss (Verona Area School District)

Excused: Paula Norman (Tomahawk School District), Heather Winter (Milwaukee Art Museum), Micki Uppena (Mineral Point School District), Ellen Sayed (Medical College of Wisconsin),

Staff: Melody Clark, Andi Coffin

Agenda

1. Call to Order; Changes/additions to the agenda

Chair B. Brattin welcomed everyone to the meeting and called the meeting to order at 9:32 am. No changes or additions to the agenda were recommended. It was noted that the board will be joined by the WiLS finance committee following the lunch break.

2. Welcome and meeting logistics

J. Chamberlain welcomed the 22-23 WiLS board members to the first meeting of the fiscal year. She gave an overview of the meeting and the locations of restrooms and refreshments.

3. Welcoming new board members: Sarah Miller, Adrienne Thunder, Micki Uppena

B. Brattin welcomed the new board members. Unfortunately, Micki Uppena was unable to attend due to travel plans. S. Miller and A. Thunder introduced themselves and shared a little about their organization and connection to WiLS.

4. Get to Know Your Fellow Board Members & WiLS Staff

J. Chamberlain asked the board and staff to introduce themselves to the board by sharing one of their first or most memorable jobs along with one important lesson learned in that experience.

- Jennifer Chamberlain, WiLS Executive Director – Self-defined hustler as a child. Collected acorns for a neighbor (was paid in candy cigarettes). First real job was shredding checks. Learned patience and the importance of going slow and steady as well as have fun with the job even when it's tedious.
- Steve Platter, Director of Arrowhead Library System – First significant job was as a photographer for the WI Rapids Daily Tribune. Learned how to meet deadlines.

- Tasha Saecker, Assistant Director Appleton Public Library – Has been a librarian for over 30 years. First job was working as a nurse’s aide at a nursing home. She loved it! Learned teamwork and empathy.
- Adrienne Thunder, Ho-Chunk Nation Language Division – First job was as a youth worker in a federal youth worker program, and was assigned to an elementary school. The job gave her an appreciation for the all school workers.
- Melody Clark, Project and Consortia Manager, WiLS – First job was at 13 as a farm hand. Learned that crap happens, sometimes quite literally, and you just have to clean it up and move on.
- Teresa Voss, District Librarian for Verona School District Library – First Job was as a lifeguard. Learned the importance of teamwork and to appreciate when there is cold water and cold days, there will be warm towels later.
- Barb Brattin, Director of Kenosha Public Library and Kenosha County Library System – First job was popcorn girl at the Lincoln Theater. Learned multiples of 35 as everything was \$.35!
- Sarah Miller, WiscNet – First job was at a Cookies by Design boutique bakery. Had to deal with a lot of angry customers. Learned that you can’t just eat cookies all day, kill angry customers with kindness, and have empathy.
- Hans Baierl, Morain Park Technical College – First job was at a Kenosha movie theater as a projectionist. Helped prepare him for the chaos of libraries.
- Jennifer Gurske, Madison Trust of Historic Preservation – Worked at Victor Allen’s farmers market stand. Learned that perseverance and persistence pay off! Also learned fostering relationships is important.
- Andi Coffin, Communications and Consortia Manager, WiLS – First real paid job was at Chucky Cheese and was Chucky once a week. Learned to stay out of the ball pit and learned to have fun while working.

5. Approval of [June 2022 meeting minutes](#)

T. Voss moved to approve the June 2022 minutes as presented, S. Platteter seconded. Motion carried.

6. Action: Election of board officers

J. Chamberlain shared an [overview of the officer roles and responsibilities](#). It was noted that there is an Executive Committee consisting of the current chair, chair-elect and treasurer. It was noted that the Executive Committee will need to kick off a review of the director this year. The Chair presides at the meetings, appoints the finance committee members, and is an ex-officio member of all committees. The Chairperson elect is the chair of the finance committee which meets four times a year, two of which are joint board/finance committee meetings, so there are only two additional meetings. The treasurer has the most work outside of the board meetings.

WiLS have a finance team consisting of Tom Klement, who is WiLS accountant and CFO, and Lisa Marten, who is WiLS Financial Coordinator. They work on all financials. The Treasurer reviews budgets, and ensures WiLS is fiscally responsible. Everything is laid out for the treasurer, and the director tries to make the position as easy as possible. All treasurer documents are transparent and available to the whole board. It is asked that the treasurer position serve a 2 or 3 year term.

Barb Brattin is serving as this year's chair. Ellen Sayed has agreed to run for treasurer and Hans Baierl for the chair-elect. B. Brattin called for additional nominations. There were no additional motions from the floor. T. Saecker moved to accept the slate of officers as presented, T. Voss seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

7. Reports

Director's Report – J. Chamberlain shared a written report.

T. Voss and J. Gurske, Ideas to Action Committee representatives, announced that 9 awards were given, a total of \$40,000.

It was noted that Recollection Wisconsin has been largely funded by state funding, however, it was not recently written into the current state biennial budget and therefore the consortium has been examining sustainable long-term funding. WiLS consulting team is assisting with the RW strategic plan.

It was noted that although there has been no recent staff turnover, WiLS is looking at updating hiring practices to ensure inclusive hiring and prepare for future hires.

The Mukurtu project is in the second year of a three-year NEH grant. The Ho-chunk nation has been a part of two iterations. This year the project is partnering with the Stockbridge Munsee community. The project hired a new fellow for the year, Kelsie Flack. Erin Hughes works ten hours a week on the project and provides training support and information on the project. Erin and Emily Pfothauer will be visiting the Ho-Chunk nation in a few weeks. This fall the digital project team will be working on a proposal to the board requesting a release of funds for staff capacity to build out this project.

It was asked if there is anyone on staff who writes grant applications. J. Chamberlain noted that WiLS has done some recent restructuring of staff. S. Gold is now working on new business development and E. Pfothauer has taken on grant management that may eventually turn into a service that could be available to members. Right now, that expertise is being focused on Recollection Wisconsin funding.

It was also noted that the WPLC team has shrunk over the past few years and is doing an internal reorganization.

8. Annual Board Orientation

J. Chamberlain led the board through an orientation. A Basecamp demonstration was given. Basecamp is the site that houses all meeting materials, board communications, and other reference materials. J. Chamberlain then covered several core documents that outline the various roles and responsibilities of being a board member, meeting calendar for the year, etc., as well as sharing the Governance pages on the WiLS website.

The bylaws were shared and the voting structure was highlighted. It was noted that WiLS' has an annual meeting that is always on the last Friday in February and is now virtual.

WiLS' mission was shared: *We believe libraries, cultural institutions, and their partners make the world a better place. We build relationships and provide services so they can do more with their time and money. We help our members turn ideas into action.*

It was shared that the new tagline is *Ideas to Action* and is being used quite a bit. WiLS also has organizational values that help to guide the organization's work.

It was noted that the fourth value was recently re-written for clarity: *We strive to do the best we can. We are honest with ourselves and others. We are reflective about what we do and who we are as an organization, we recognize when we can do better, and we do our best to improve.*

It was noted that two years ago the Board approved up to 2% pro-bono time for each staff to have time in their day for doing service work. This helps to give staff a sense of purpose and development.

B. Brattin asked how WiLS plans to diversify, noting staff doesn't turn over very much, and board members are typically leaders within their organizations which also tend to not be diverse. J. Chamberlain shared that board members need to be the WiLS member rep but they do not have to be an organization's leader, and noted that WiLS does now have three non-library representatives. It was also noted the member-at-large position is a great opportunity for increasing diversity.

As the bylaws are reviewed in the upcoming year, the WiLS board may want to rethink/revisit the board composition.

The board member expectations were shared. J. Chamberlain shared that for the most part, WiLS wants board members' energy and brains, their advice, with keeping WiLS accountable – fiscally and strategically, and with making sure that the Director has the support they need. The communications piece is integral and WiLS board members are asked to act as an advocate for WiLS and WiLS' services, and to communicate with various member constituencies about WiLS' services and projects, including at meetings and conferences with those constituents, over email distribution lists, and otherwise as appropriate. It was noted that the Board Brief that is sent out via Basecamp can serve as a report if a member is working with a group that would like a report. The board is also responsible for hiring the director position.

The conflict-of-interest form was shared and noted that it does not need to be signed annually, but J. Chamberlain will reach out to those members that still need to sign.

The organization chart was shared and it was noted that the staff is really flexible. It was shared that the Strategy and Staff Development teams were created in 2019. WiLS is a flat organization, so the Staff Development team helps the director support staff by individually checking in with all staff members. The strategy group represents all the various teams and helps to direct the organization. In addition, the director works with all teams.

Documentation shared: [Mission and values](#); [Calendar of meetings](#); [Conflict of interest](#); [Board member expectations](#); [Org chart with teams](#); Strategic Plan; [Board Briefs](#), [Bylaws](#)

9. Brainstorming activities on the strategic plan

J. Chamberlain had asked the board to review the [one-page strategic plan](#). As reported at the June meeting, the staff will be generating a list of activities and strategies that directly support the goals and objectives during the mid-September staff retreat. However, it was noted, in advance of that, J. Chamberlain would like to gather any thoughts and suggestions about how this plan supports the work each board member is doing in their own organization.

T. Voss asked what the board's role is in looking at this. J. Chamberlain asked the group to think about where does this resonate with you within your organization and with your position? And where does something not sit right with you? It was noted that today's focus is on the activities.

It was asked what is the difference in the roles between WLA and WiLS. WLA is a professional organization, and its intention is to build professionalism within its membership. The obvious and largest difference is that WiLS is a service provider whereas WLA is an association. WLA is not particularly providing services for their membership. A. Coffin noted that WiLS has been careful to not overlap with WLA and sees WiLS supporting implementation whereas WLA supports more training. WiLS strives to be complimentary to WLA, not competitive.

B. Brattin stated concern about WiLS overstressing abilities. J. Gurske agreed and noted that she was apprehensive about approaching WiLS for speaking engagements. J. Chamberlain stated WiLS appreciated those opportunities and wants members to come to us. It is imperative to balance membership needs and maintain fiscal responsibility.

T. Voss asked if WiLS had a rubric for making project determinations. It was noted that yes, WiLS does. Currently, E. Pfothauer is monitoring the landscape of grant opportunities and is aware of the projects that are in the pipeline in order to understand what type of grant-based projects to take on. This type of decision-making process is also being extended to any new WiLS projects.

S. Miller noted that the staff has a good understanding of what new projects can be taken on, has a process in place to evaluate projects, and the staff is at capacity. It sounds like the organization has a good handle on this process, so it was asked if this is even a problem that needs to be solved.

The group broke for lunch at 12:00 pm.

The meeting was reconvened at 12:38 pm.

Members of the WiLS finance committee joining for the second half of the meeting were recognized and introduced to the board.

- Plumer Lovelace, Operations Team Leader, County Health Ranking & Roadmaps, UW-Madison, previous WLA Executive Director – His first job was in an elementary school showing films. Went to a summer training program. Taught him how to remain calm under fire.

- Tom Klement, CFO WiLS – Worked at a bottling plant, worked with several ex-cons. Learned hard work and the importance of variation of work.

Brainstorming activities on the strategic plan conversation continued.

T. Saecker noted the health and strategic piece is one that many libraries struggle with. How to do that healthily takes a lot of pruning and strategy and this piece will speak to a lot of members. This could be something that could be developed for a WLA program; where WiLS lands and how to maintain this.

WiLS is looking at creating a toolkit for how library boards can do future planning and succession planning. It was asked if this was something that the group would find helpful. Several agreed that yes, this is something that they may find useful.

A. Thunder noted WiLS may need to think of defining community, as it is a good idea to have a mutual understanding of this to better collaborate. Noting that in current culture there is a contraction in communities and trust may need to be developed in communities. And it needs to be understood there is a portion of your population that may not be invested or don't see the vision of the organization.

It was asked if there is table setting or groundwork that needs to be done for this first. Does WiLS need to better understand the landscape? A. Thunder noted that it is important to understand the naysayers and the concerns that individuals or groups within your community have. Noting that a way to do this is to find commonalities among groups and then move forward from those similarities.

J. Chamberlain noted that Barabra Alveraz, one of this year's ALA Movers and Shakers, is doing a WiLS World Shorts this week, and because of the topic, this may butt up against some members' values.

A. Coffin shared that Recollection Wisconsin is working on a harmful content statement and noted that it is important to be very neutral in this process.

B. Brattin noted that staff does pressure leaders into making stands and DPI meets with System Directors once a week. These meetings began during the pandemic and it was discovered that many of the smaller libraries and library systems did not have the board support they need. J. Gurske noted that the WI Historical Society ran into issues with their boards as well and sees the need for board support.

J. Chamberlain noted that how to keep board institutional knowledge and continuity seems to be very relevant to members. S. Miller noted that board stewardship is an art and science.

J. Chamberlain asked S. Miller what makes the WiscNet Board functional. S. Miller believes that the organization's leadership needs to build and foster the board, with great attention to detail, and an eye on the future including rolling board turnovers.

S. Miller shared that for all new WiscNet Board members, they do a one-on-one onboarding meeting.

S. Platteter noted that no term limits can be problematic as it can prevent flexibility. There is a line then between holding institutional knowledge and recruiting new members.

P. Lovelace notes energy and effort that is needed for recruitment. Creating a pipeline, of sorts, can be imperative to recruitment. Identifying individuals with diverse backgrounds and skills is essential. Having clear, identified core competencies and skill sets is critical.

It was asked then is this something that we spend time working and building and is it marketable. Is this something that an organization would be willing to hire WiLS to do?

It was noted it may not need to be something that WiLS has to do if the experts aren't there, but WiLS can be the connector. WiLS has made connections for organizations in the past when WiLS hasn't been able to provide the expertise or hasn't had the capacity.

Staff will be reviewing the plan and then will also be discussing the things that WiLS does that don't fall under the plan.

10. WiLS Finances 101

- Sharon Nellis joined the meeting. She was the BSN program director at UW Madison School of Nursing. First job out of college was staffing Hall's retail store.

a. Role of Finance Committee

J. Chamberlain described [the role and function of the finance committee.](#)

The Finance Committee is a committee of the Board and makes financial recommendations to the Board. The committee reviews the monthly financials. The treasurer is the board rep that does in-depth reviews of the financials, but all board members are welcome to review all financials.

P. Lovelace asked if the finance committee will review based on the highlighted content. J. Chamberlain noted that all payables, receivables, etc. will be made available, however, each finance committee member does not need to review everything. The treasurer will provide that check and balance on behalf of the finance committee.

T. Klement noted that auditors speak highly of the system WiLS has in place with the finance committee.

b. Annual Budget

J. Chamberlain shared the 22/23 budget approved by the board in June. She provided an overview of the budget categories including expected revenue sources, expenses, and pass-through dollars like WPLC and Recollection Wisconsin sponsorships.

It was noted that WiLS 2022 Budget will end in a loss due to loss in investment accounts. The 22/23 budget is also expected to end in a deficit.

c. June 2022 draft financials

T. Klement walked the board through the balance sheet and monthly budget with actuals that shows YTD revenue and expenses.

The balance sheet is a picture of WiLS' financial situation from inception to right now. It was noted that a few fiscal agencies were switched to sponsorships over the past year.

J. Chamberlain explained to the board that each board meeting will cover the most currently available monthly report. In between meetings, J. Chamberlain will post monthly financial reports via Basecamp as they are ready. During busier times, there can be a delay of 8 weeks or more for the finance team to reconcile and for J. Chamberlain to review. The treasurer does a spot-check review of all financials each month, so it is not required that all board members do so. However, they are available for anyone interested.

d. Audit process

T. Klement described the audit process that WiLS undertakes annually. WiLS undergoes a full audit every two years, with a review on the off-years, working with Wegner CPAs out of Madison. The auditors will share their findings with the board each spring.

T. Klement shared a handout explaining the difference between an audit and a review. It was asked if the audit could be extended from three years of reviews instead of two for cost savings. T. Klement will inquire about this possibility with the auditors.

e. Investment policy

T. Klement shared the [investment policy](#), which is reviewed regularly by the Finance Committee and any changes are approved by the board. The board typically hears an annual investment presentation from First Business Bank in the spring.

There were no additional questions regarding the finances.

11. Wrap up and next meeting

B. Brattin asked the group for meeting feedback such as comments on what they learned today, what went particularly well in today's meeting (or could use improvement), or what they are looking forward to in the coming year. P. Lovelace appreciated the orientation and the lunch invite. B. Brattin noted that it would be great at a future meeting to discuss upcoming goals or projects that each board member is undergoing.

The next meeting of the board is on December 8, virtual from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm.

The meeting ended at 2:32 pm.