

WiLS Board Meeting

August 24, 2023 – 10:00 am – 3:00 pm



Mineral Point Elementary School
611 Cothorn Street, Mineral Point, WI

Board attendees in-person: Jennifer Chamberlain, (WiLS, ex-officio), Mindy King (University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point), Ashley McHose (Lakeshore Technical College), Sarah Miller (WiscNet), Steve Platteter (Prairie Lakes Library System), Tasha Saecker (Appleton Public Library), Micki Uppena (Mineral Point School District)

Board attendees virtual: Barbara Brattin (Kenosha Public Library), Heather Winter (Milwaukee Art Museum)

Finance committee attendees: Steve Midthun (in-person), Sharon Nellis (virtual), Plumer Lovelace (virtual), Ryan Ackerman (virtual)

Staff attendees: Jeff Brunner, Andi Coffin, Nick Smith (virtual), Tom Klement (virtual)

Absent: Michelle Byholm (Chequamegon School District), Jennifer Gurske (Madison Trust for Historic Preservation), Paula Norman (Rhineland School District), Ellen Sayed (Medical College of Wisconsin), Adrienne Thunder (Ho-Chunk Nation Language Division)

Notes

1. Call to Order; Changes/additions to the agenda
T. Saecker called the meeting to order at 10:01 am and asked for any changes to the agenda. No changes were suggested. J. Chamberlain provided a quick overview of the purpose of the first meeting of the year, and encouraged new members to be active participants.
2. Meeting host welcome & logistics
M. Uppena shared some information on the library and facility logistics.
3. Welcoming New Board Members & Introductions
T. Saecker welcomed the three new board members: Michelle Byholm, Mindy King, and Ashley McHose. The board members introduced themselves including answering the question, "Imagine you weren't a librarian or cultural heritage professional, what would you want to do & why? Or what do you want to be when you grow up?"

Tasha wanted to be in book publishing. Andi wants to be a journalist if WiLS fires her. Steve was a photojournalist and is considering going back to art photography after retirement. Jen is drawn to the legal field, especially the research component. Ashley would be a linguist or linguistics professor. Sarah would have been a librarian! Micki would do something studying people, like anthropology. Jeff would write and publish board games. Mindy was pre-med at the end of her undergraduate career but would now be a canoe guide in the boundary waters. Barb is retiring soon so this is a real question for her and she would like to be a docent in a national

park or participate in the environmental movement. Heather wanted to be Indiana Jones, a history professor, an archivist, and a baker. Nick would be a cartographer.

4. Approval of [June 2023 meeting minutes](#)

S. Miller moved to approve the June 2023 minutes, S. Platteter seconded. There was no discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Annual Board Orientation

J. Chamberlain led the board members through several key resources including Basecamp (communications platform), our annual meeting calendar, WiLS bylaws (with recent updates highlighted), board expectations and conflict of interest forms, etc. All of these referenced documents can be found in the Board Basecamp documents folder.

B. Brattin noted the change in bylaws to allow greater participation from member staff is welcome because it provides WiLS a diverse and more on-the-ground member perspective.

There were no questions or further discussion.

6. What WiLS Does: Brief Service Overview

A. Coffin and J. Chamberlain provided an overview of the staff and services of WiLS to help familiarize the board with the diversity and depth of WiLS services and expertise.

It was asked how many organizations like WiLS there are. While the number would be hard to pin down, there is a professional association called ICOLC for library consortia, which has 200+ members. It was also asked how long WiLS has managed some of the consortia discussed and shared that every few years, an opportunity comes up. The earliest was Recollection Wisconsin (at the time, Wisconsin Heritage Online) and the most recent was the City Library Collective in 2021.

There was a conversation about how we might encourage our vendor partners to be more financially supportive of the cooperative purchasing service. The recent change in how academic members pay for cooperative purchasing services – moving away from basing that amount on the price from the vendor toward service usage and work required from the WiLS team – was also discussed.

7. Election of board officers

The nominations committee put forward the following slate of officers. Tasha Saecker, Chair; Sarah Miller, Chair-Elect; Steve Platteter, Treasurer. No additional nominations were presented. M. Uppena moved to accept the slate of officers, B. Brattin seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Document: [Overview of the officer roles and responsibilities.](#)

8. Ideas to Action grant award approval

J. Chamberlain provided a quick overview of the cumulative impact of Ideas to Action over the past 5 years. J. Brunner, Ideas to Action co-coordinator presented the committee's recommended grantees for board approval for the upcoming 6th Ideas to Action cycle.

Members of the Board commented that the chosen projects are impressive and represent the reality that libraries are key organizations in their communities and respond creatively to community needs.

It was asked what the evaluation mechanism is for past projects funded to measure impact or reach. We survey the recipients to get their reflections and assessment. A more formal assessment strategy is in the works.

It was recognized that WiLS Ideas to Action Fund was launched around the same time that DPI's ability to distribute LSTA grants to individual libraries was diminished.

S. Platteter moved to accept the recommended grant awardees, S. Miller seconded. The motion carried unanimously with M. King abstaining from the vote.

It was noted that offers have not yet been extended to selected awardees but they will be contacted within the next few days.

The group paused for lunch at 12:30 and finance committee members joined after lunch for the second half of the meeting. We introduced ourselves for the newly joined meeting members.

9. Progress on Strategic Plan

J. Chamberlain shared a mid-year update on work-to-date on the 2022-2027 strategic plan. Key takeaways are: there has been a tremendous amount of work done already on the plan. Chamberlain is proud of the work WiLS staff has done to infuse the goal areas and objectives throughout their project and team work. As this is really the first full implementation year, our assessment plan is simply to capture the activities done in response to the plan. In subsequent years, we will identify areas to assess in terms of impact and effectiveness.

The Board was asked what they would like to see in the year-end evaluation of the strategic plan. Members appreciated the spreadsheet format and generally approved of the approach of counting the activities toward the goal as the primary metric.

10. WiLS Finances 101

- a. Role of Finance Committee and Treasurer – J. Chamberlain provided a brief overview of how the finance committee and treasurer assist the director and financials team in overseeing financial operations.
- b. [23-24 Budget](#) – J. Chamberlain shared the current year budget and provided a brief recap of what the board approved in June and how we see this budget in light of how we ended FY23. The Board had no questions or concerns.
- c. June 2023 draft financials – T. Klement shared Preliminary June 2023 (year-end) Financials. In terms of the bottom line, we are ending the year with a slight deficit, however this is only 11% of the projected deficit. If the board would like to move money from the Ideas to Action fund to partially cover 2023 grant awards given, we could end the year with a balanced budget. It was asked about previous years and if most years ended in a deficit or a surplus; we were often in the black prior to 2020 (pandemic) but the last few were in the red. The deficit, however, is small in comparison to WiLS' complete financial picture. It was recommended by a member of the Finance Committee that having an accurate and transparent budget is important and that it

should show the deficit. Because WiLS is a non-profit doesn't mean no profit; we are still a business.

It was clarified that Recollection Wisconsin and WPLC assets are considered Capital accounts because those funds are designated for those groups, a little like their own designated checking accounts. The Elsevier Tokens were explained as passes for academic articles we purchased at a discount in 2014 and a number of those remain on the books as inventory WiLS can resell.

T. Klement shared and reviewed the Balance Sheet, June 2023 Budget with Actuals. It was asked how the UW System budget shortfall might affect WiLS' revenue. While there may be subscription cancelations, the loss in revenue is negligible and mitigated by the change in how we charge academic libraries for service. A coding error was found which brought us closer to a balanced budget.

- d. [Investment policy](#) – T. Klement reminded the board that the investment policy guides our investment decisions. It is reviewed annually by the finance committee and any recommended changes are given to the board for final approval. Our investment policy includes a focus on socially responsible investment funds.

There was conversation about the benefits of having many investments. A balance is important to have for diversification but too many investments can be difficult to manage. If there is concern regarding recent bank failures, it was noted that percentage of assets insured is a good measure of a bank's stability and First Business assets are insured in the 90% range.

- e. Audit process – T. Klement reminded the board that WiLS undergoes a full audit process every two years (in even fiscal years) and a review process in odd fiscal years. This coming year will be a full audit. We use Wegner CPAs out of Madison as our audit team. We consistently receive great feedback in our audits and typically have minimal material changes to make. Our financial team does amazing work!

11. Building consulting bid proposals and managing capacity

J. Chamberlain provided a recap of the where things stand today in regards to the work being done to address consulting capacity and improved project estimation. Addressing these capacity concerns is identified in our strategic plan as a key priority. We have been making a series of improvements/changes to fine tune back-office type of work related to consulting, and we are looking for feedback from the board to identify the next set of steps/modifications we'd like to make to help continue to make improvements. J. Chamberlain views this work as incremental and we have time to make minor tweaks rather than needing to consider bigger changes that might negatively impact member participation. Our mission and values need to guide this work, and that includes affordability and access.

We are seeking board member feedback on the questions below:

- Do you have experience setting rates or doing hourly estimates? If yes, what has worked well/not well in your process?
- What factors do you consider when reviewing a proposal from a consultant?

- What are your thoughts/ideas on how WiLS should balance staff capacity, financial sustainability, and honoring affordability for members?

It was shared that when members contact WiLS, they don't consider the cost implications of that time, and more the cost considerations about the outcome – that they make decisions based on the best possible outcome rather than the bottom line price. Use the data collected by Kim to see if there are particular types of projects that expend lots of hours and then we can do a better job of estimating from the outset. It was noted that underestimating is riskier for WiLS than estimating accurately and providing members with higher bottom line quotes. It was asked how often we lose a potential project after a proposed cost is presented; this is a rare event. It was suggested that considering some projects “Q&D” (quick and dirty) versus the one-off projects where you need to develop custom materials that are unique might help develop the appropriate cost range or model. It was asked if WiLS consulting projects stay within scope, and while they usually do, there are unexpected requests that are difficult to account for. It was noted that we don't know for sure that a 30% increase in cost is unaffordable and that it's very normal practice to add a percentage to the estimate for other services. It was also suggested that the team could take on fewer projects. It was suggested that over explaining isn't helpful; present the costs as the worth of the service (not that staff costs are going up, etc.). This is bolstered by WiLS' great reputation in quality of work. WiLS could also right-size its reserves with this in mind. Or, we make ourselves available to negotiation if the cost is too steep. Keep in mind that it would be more devastating to WiLS' business if a member or members of the consulting team leaves their position.

12. Wrap up and next meeting

J. Chamberlain thanked everyone for attending our first meeting of the 2023/2024 year, and Micki Uppena for hosting today. If you're interested in hosting the June 2024 meeting, please let Jennifer know.

Next meeting will be held via Zoom on December 12.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:00 pm.