

# WiLS Board Meeting - Minutes

## December 9, 2024 – 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm



Zoom

### Board Members (o indicates absent)

- Michelle Byholm (Chequamegon School District)
- Jennifer Chamberlain (WiLS, ex-officio)
- Jennifer Follett (Madison Metropolitan School District)
- Gary Flynn (Gateway Technical College)
- Frank Foss (Milwaukee Art Museum)
- Jennifer Gurske (Madison Trust for Historic Preservation)
- Mindy King (University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point)
- Kristina Gómez (Milwaukee Public Library)
- o Sarah Miller (WiscNet)
- Steve Platteter (Prairie Lakes Library System)
- Tasha Saecker (Appleton Public Library)
- Kim Olson-Kopp (Viterbo University)
- Andrew Prellwitz (Ripon College)
- Adrienne Thunder (Ho-Chunk Nation Language Division)
- o Micki Uppena (Mineral Point School District)

**Staff attendees:** Melody Clark, Andi Coffin, Sara Gold, Tom Klement

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

J. Gurske, chair-elect, is running today's meeting in S. Miller's absence. J. Gurske called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm and asked for any changes to the agenda. No changes were suggested.

#### 2. Welcome & Recognition of Guests & Comments

J. Gurske welcomed everyone to the December meeting and recognized the WiLS members, Alaina Morales and Joe Dyal from St. Norbert College, joining us today. Gurske shared the history that a 2023 review of the WiLS bylaws revealed a provision that allows WiLS general members to attend WiLS board meeting, so we are thrilled that some of our members are taking advantage of that option today. We are glad to welcome our member guests and we invite you to listen in. Just a point of clarification that only WiLS elected board members are allowed to vote on any action items.

J. Gurske asked the guests to introduce themselves. If questions arise during today's meeting, please jot them down and Jennifer Chamberlain will be reaching out after the meeting via email to solicit any questions or additional comments they may have.

#### 3. Approval of August 30, 2024 board minutes – J. Gurske

K. Gomez moved to approve the August 30 minutes, T. Saecker seconded. There was no discussion. The motion carried.

#### 4. Reports & Updates

a. **Chair's report** – J. Gurske indicated there is no report for this month.

b. **Financial Report** – T. Klement shared the July 2024 Balance Sheet and the Budget with Actuals. It was noted that the fund balanced increased with the addition of last year's budget surplus. There were no comments.

c. **Director's Report** – J. Chamberlain provided a brief, verbal report.

- WiLS will be closed Dec 24 & 25 and Dec 31 and Jan 1 for the holidays.
- Jennifer will be meeting with each staff member in January to review the 2024 year and discuss goals for the coming year. In alignment with our preliminary DEIA action plan, Jennifer is asking each staff member to identify a DEIA related goal.
- The City Library Collective has 1-2 new members - Waukesha Public Library and Hedberg Public Library (Janesville) - joining next year, and they will be launching a new two-year research project. Wauwatosa Public Library also expressed interest but is waiting for a better time to request membership formally.
- The Culture Keepers Convening received \$5000 from the Packers Foundation and we are awaiting to hear about an NEH grant request later this month. The 2025 convening has been scheduled for May 14-16 and is being hosted by the Red Cliff Nation.
- Some of you may be aware that Kim Kiesewetter has designed a data dashboard for public libraries based on annual library report data. This tool is under a statewide pilot with the WPLC and that pilot is ending this month. Next steps are for the WPLC Technology Steering committee to review feedback data and make a recommendation for future developments. WiLS will continue to use this dashboard internally with our public library strategic planning partners, and in other public library related research.
- Jennifer has been asked to serve a 3-year term on the UW Madison iSchool's Advisory council.

d. **Strategic Plan Year 3 Update** – J. Chamberlain shared that all of the WiLS project teams are reviewing their team's work on the strategic plan goals and objectives to date, applying a progress rating to each objective area that the team has been working on. They are setting activity plans for the coming year, and the strategy group will be reviewing all of the team plans to find areas of alignment. The DEIA audit and action plan that Jen will be sharing later in the meeting will be worked into the implementation plan, and may serve as a major focus for our work in 2025.

e. **401K Discretionary Contribution Plan update** – J. Chamberlain thanked the board for reviewing her proposal and taking action last month to amend our 401K plan language to allow for this discretionary option going forward. For official record keeping, it is noted in these minutes that the board unanimously approved to add a discretionary contribution plan to the 401K retirement plan. The language has been added to allow for this option, and Jennifer will be bringing a proposal to the board at the April meeting for your consideration. It will take into account FY24 year-end balance and will include a suggested allocation model.

5. **Presentation: Collaboration Support Services** – M. Clark and S. Gold provided an overview of this WiLS service area. See the presentation slides are [here](#). Board members were asked which collaborations they had personal experience and nearly all were represented, with Recollection Wisconsin being the collaboration that most members had personal experience with. They were also asked for ideas about what more WiLS could do to support members' collaborations.

Questions from the board: It was asked what WiLS' capacity is like? What does it look like to take on more? WiLS talks this through at both the project team level but also at the Strategy Group level. We step back, look at the capacity of team members, pivot or bring in staffers to

help who have expertise or capacity. While we are 'at capacity,' there is space for growth within the project teams and the contacts for service.

*5-minute break*

6. Discussion: WiLS Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility Audit and Findings – J. Chamberlain shared a brief overview of the report findings. The WiLS strategy group held a discussion on their initial reaction to the report and additional questions/concerns. After today's board meeting, the WiLS staff will be discussing it as a whole group later this week.

A few main ideas are rising to the surface for the WiLS staff are:

- We are so glad to have the start of an action plan! We were running in place a bit with this work internally, so having a guide to help us move forward is exactly what we needed.
- What does serving in a leadership role mean for WiLS, and look like for WiLS, particularly in light of our lack of broad diversity among our staff?
- We are eager to develop our own organization definitions of these terms. Dr. Bright and the conversation at our retreat provided a strong start, but we will continue to work on these so they fit our organizational tone and match our communication approach.
- WiLS staff was reassured to see the Board's perspective on how you view WiLS' role in this work and your overall support of this work.
- We are thinking a lot about what this work looks like when we partner with groups or members particularly when they receive questions or concerns from their local municipalities or communities. I.e: in strategic planning
- Also thinking a lot about what we communicate externally about this work.

What would be really helpful to us is to first hear any reactions or questions you had after reviewing the report? And also, we'd love to hear about the current state of DEIA work commitment within your own organizations. Are you currently experiencing or do you anticipate any changes to your organization's approach or commitment to DEIA related work?

Board comments:

- It was asked if WiLS has any data from membership asking for EDI support. We did a survey in 2021 and there was some interest. We were encouraged to re-do that survey to justify any action taken externally with members. It was noted, too, that this report has inspired Board members to ask questions of their own staff and organizations.
- It was noted that the addendum on page 23 was interesting with regards to what is going on in Dr. Bright's home state of North Carolina. It was also noted that our state legislature has displayed resistance to work in this area for state organizations, including removing positions that support DEI work. In addition, books about DEI are being challenged in the state. Board members have seen open records requests for emails about DEI. WiLS is seeing this resistance in our consulting work, specifically in questions about gender identity in surveys, which is based on best-practice language but we also have to figure out how to support members and not put them in difficult positions. It

was also noted that we should not capitulate early; anticipating resistance should not cause us to self-censor. Since WiLS is not subject to open records requests, that gives us some room to do the work. It was noted that WiLS should move forward and do the right thing – do the good work – both within WiLS as a workplace and also externally with members. There was a webinar with ALA offering guidance on this very question that was reassuring; the link might be shareable. It was noted that progress might be slow, and pendular, but should not be backwards and we have professional ethics to anchor us. It was noted that we can take advantage of our insulated nature, where funding is not directly tied to one organization. It was also noted that conflict that may arise in libraries or communities we work with wouldn't be something WiLS can template a response to; each instance is going to need a different approach.

- Board members shared that their EDI work hasn't stopped but they are noticing things seem quieter about it. Library staff are supportive of doing the work but the morale around it is difficult because they don't feel supported by stakeholders. Seeing the work happen at places where there is the freedom to do the work could be uplifting. Some members noted that DEI has taken a backseat in their strategic plans. Organizations are reminded to stay grounded in their policies, especially if those policies have DEI roots.
- It was asked if WiLS wanted guidance on which path to take and it was shared that we will be in all three paths, but the third is a growth / reach goal. Most of our work will live in the second tier. It was recommended that WiLS do all three paths and the unknown is unknown; it could include helping members "color inside the lines."
- It was shared that having language that justifies what's on the shelf is very empowering and comforting.
- Members like the term belonging, which is especially powerful re: staff retention and culture, but it doesn't need to replace any of the "DEIA" words.
- DEIA work is core to our work, it always has been, and it doesn't help us to see the work as 'additional' in the last few years. It is our delightfully subversive act to continue to support DEIA efforts.
- It was asked what is meant by the comment on page 23. It was about what is the offering we bring to the work for members? We often work in cost-recovery; how does that work in this situation, if at all? How can we support members on this journey as well as our own organization?
- Please keep in contact with WiLS with changes or thoughts. Thank you!

7. Discussion – Focusing the WiLS Annual Report – A. Coffin shared with the board the recent approach to preparing our annual reports to our members. We are looking to align the workload with the expected return on that time invested. As we streamline content, we would like to know what is most important to you, as a WiLS member, to know or learn about in our annual report?

Board comments:

- The work of Recollection Wisconsin, in particular how much it impacts a small organization like ours, is so important to share.

- Showcasing the consulting work is really important too. They are helping our members align their work with their organizational missions. This matches up with a theme we'd already been discussing which is "how WiLS helps with decision-making."
  - City Library Collective – there's been a lot of buzz about this work, but it's not clear WiLS' connection to this group. Perhaps a theme of "WiLS Behind the Work" to shout-out how WiLS is contributing to these statewide projects.
  - More storytelling around individual libraries and the impact their experiences with WiLS have had on their libraries. Perhaps highlighting one Ideas to Action award winner?
  - Schools and libraries experiencing cuts – how can or does WiLS fill the gap when a library is short-staffed? Let WiLS help you do more with less.
8. Stars/wishes – J. Gurske asked the board to go around the table and share one thing they learned or liked in today's meeting, or one thing they'd suggest we try for next time/any suggested improvements:

Board comments:

- Love the Parade of Homes collection from [Madison Trust's digital collection](#)!
- Appreciated the Final Report from Dr. Bright and the conversation around the topic of DEIA work.

G. Flynn moved to adjourn; K. Gomez seconded. Meeting adjourned at 3:57 pm CT and the next meeting will be held via Zoom on April 3, from 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm. This will be a joint meeting between the Board and the Finance Committee. Please mark your calendars for the February 28 Annual Member Meeting; we would love to see as many board members there as possible.

J. Chamberlain thanked the board for their service this year, and wished everyone a joy-filled holiday season. Looking forward to continuing our work in 2025!