

Island Readers and Writers  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Saturday, June 22, 2024  
Zoom

Meeting Participants: Jan Coates, Elizabeth Hodder Corbus, Michelle Finn, Alexandra Hinrichs, Deborah Jamieson, Debra Lay, Alison Kupfer Poteet, Kelsey Buckley (Board Clerk); Emily Wexler

Debra Lay called the meeting to order at 2:09pm

Debra gave an introduction to the meeting and to Emily Wexler who gave an overview of the agenda.

The Board began a review of IRW's strategic plan, led by Emily.

*Goal 1: Building on past successes, take organization leadership development to the next level*

What are 1-2 accomplishments you want to highlight for this goal?

Debra: We did formalize the operational...governance committee, and we have documents to support this. We have also "leaned in" on committee work including the notable formation of the FHIC and Nancy's fund committees.

One thing listed is annual planning sessions—we use our January/February meeting as an annual planning session each year.

Elizabeth Hodder Corbus asked for an overview of goals that have been achieved vs those that have not, as new Board members have less institutional knowledge to bring to this review.

Jan gave some context to the items around Board development and status on those action items.

Elizabeth voiced concerns about the Board's approach to reviewing the plan without a more in-depth analysis.

The group deliberated and agreed to move forward reviewing high level items in the strategic plan and reflecting. Emily asked that veteran BOD members offer input and context.

Michelle Finn highlighted successes in the areas of increased BOD engagement, including new committees, our professional development programming and new work around early childhood education. When we want to branch out in new directions, we do it thoughtfully. We have expanded into new capacities from building a good foundation. It's an exciting if slightly scary time.

Emily asked Debbie Jamieson for her input both as a Board Member and as the principal of a partner school. Debbie highlighted the Dear Teacher conference as a huge success from her perspective as a participant. She also reiterated Elizabeth's concerns about not diving into the plan in more forensic detail, elaborating that we may want a record of the efficacy of the strategic plan to help inform a new Executive Director and build institutional knowledge.

*Goal 2: Increase the organization's long-term sustainability through focused financial, visibility and quality measures efforts*

Jan referenced items in the strategic plan that indicated IRW would explore creating MOUs with schools and sharing expenses. This is an area we have not pursued this item to the level planned due to the impact of the pandemic; it was a priority to support programming.

Allison also offered the reflection that our thinking around financial sustainability and visibility has changed dramatically since 2019. She hopes that we will prioritize next generation giving and communications toward building this area.

Jan indicated that fundraising and development in general needs to be a priority for the organization and for a new Executive Director in order to ensure sustainability.

Debra asked about the future of Dear Teacher and ways to open it up to collaborators for partnership. Jan indicated that staff has been in talks around how to make this happen.

Jan also mentioned that while we may not have MOUs, we do have school agreements and can pursue other ways to share costs.

Michelle asked Jan about the Staff Handbook and protocols and procedures that have been created and indicated the significant work that has gone into that project. Michelle also highlighted "keeping abreast of trends in education" and acknowledged the effort that IRW's ED makes to this point and that BOD may need to contribute moving forward.

Alexandra Hinrichs asked for clarity around the role of Board members acting as ambassadors for IRW.

Debra answered that the best way to do this is to continue spreading our messaging and mission and encourage others to get involved.

Elizabeth also asked about how to be more involved as an ambassador and in peer to peer fundraising and felt it would be helpful to have additional in-person meetings.

Jan indicated that we should review our meetings and calendar.

*Goal Three: Using existing offerings as a launch pad, deepen and enhance impact of program and professional development efforts*

Debra pointed out that the third goal is very staff-driven.

Jan explained that there is an evaluative system for all of IRW's programs. It would be helpful to allocate resources for a consultant to continue to evaluate our programs and provide longitudinal data on programs.

Alexandra Hinrichs gave feedback on how much enthusiasm authors see from kids that may not find its way into quantitative feedback. IRW programs come together in a collaborative, impactful way even when there are challenges.

Elizabeth added that Dear Teacher has been a huge success and wondered about its future during the ED search. How can we build and sustain?

Michelle: Dear Teacher can be a fundraising driver. Sponsorship of teachers.

Allison: Our work is not just for one program (e.g. Dear Teacher) but to influence teachers and practice broadly.

Elizabeth: We seed creativity and empowerment in communities.

Debbie Jamieson shared ripples of impact from Dear Teacher.

Alex: This is a way for IRW to extend its programming impact without having to expand programming into more schools, because we only have so many resources to expand our partner school network. The magic of IRW can be extended. What are the fundraising opportunities around Dear Teacher?

*Emily wrapped the conversation on the strategic plan and departed at 3:18pm.*

Debbie moved to accept the minutes from the April Board meeting.  
Allison seconded.

All approved.

### *Governance*

Michelle reported that the Governance committee has been meeting to prepare a slate for the August board meeting. We have opted to elect a Vice President this year and have asked for nominations.

Debbie Jamieson has been nominated for the role of Vice President. We also have a transition on the Board with the departure of Allison Kupfer Poteet. Andrea Gilmore has been nominated for Treasurer. Susan Peck has been nominated for Secretary.

We have traditionally voted in the election of officers at the Summer Morning in Maine meeting; this year due to the meeting's change in date, it will not be feasible for us to all meet in person.

Jan checked the bylaws to offer guidance on setting a date for a special meeting for elections.

### *Finance*

Allison Kupfer Poteet presented the Budget vs. Actuals, Profit & Loss statements, and Balance sheet. Jan Coates presented the Grants Dashboard, noting the application to the CF Adams Charitable Trust for a three year gift.

### *Motions*

1. The Financial Health & Investment Committee presented for Board approval a motion to authorize Harpswell Capital Advisors to execute an asset allocation of the Nancy Fund of 60% global equities and 40% core bonds with a 4% annual draw. Debra Lay moved. Allison Kupfer Poteet seconded. All approved. No discussion.
2. Allison Kupfer Poteet moved to accept the 990 IRS Tax Return for 2024 as prepared by HMV LLC for 2023. Debra Lay seconded. All approved. No discussion.

### *Board Business*

BOD Dates will be distributed and discussed via email.

### *Executive Director's Report*

Jan referenced the director reports from Director of Communications & Engagement Kelsey Buckley and Director of School Programs Alison Johnson.

Jan would like the Board to continue discussing the future of Dear Teacher and how we will plan and allocate for this program. The Board has expressed support for Dear Teacher and we are now looking to consider it in the light of becoming a permanent program.

### *Nancy Fund*

The committee has continued to refer to the bequest money as the Nancy Fund. The committee has discussed the future of the fund. The committee has recommended the program be titled Forever Books. Jan is in talks with illustrator Chris Van Dusen to design a bookplate with a frog mascot.

The bookplate would be placed in books given to Pre-K–grade 2 children.

*FIHC Report*

There will be funds allocated for focus groups around the Forever Books programming.