

Plainfield Co-op Meeting Minutes – 7/8/2014

Present: Gail Falk, Sue Chickering, Bob Fancher, Mike Peabody, Art Chickering, Joseph Gainza, Adrienne Allison, Scott Harris

Minutes from June approved.

The change to C5 is in the new Policy Governance register that is on google docs. Mike will make this change in the website Register.

Ben Graham will give a thumbnail sketch of a design for construction plans and will deliver tonight.

The MC levied an order of No Trespass against a problematic customer-member-owner. The letter explaining the circumstances was read aloud to her by phone, since she has not provided the Co-op with a mailing address. The MC is working on writing a policy of how to deal with problematic customer-members. **We might want to revisit this issue before the annual meeting to discuss how we might deal with any potential problems.**

Membership committee: Scott sent out communication to folks on this committee to get some movement happening to almost no avail. Summer time is a tough time to get together.

Equity committee: Mike and Gail are meeting regularly and they discussed how the MC should deal with dividends. Mike's concern is that to refund a certain percentage to the membership at a certain time, there would have to be liquidity in cash flow. The Equity committee would need to develop some procedures and policy regarding this that works for the MC. If we calculate the "value of member sales" to determine this refund amount, it is only about 50% of our actual net income. We would have to determine a minimum amount for a refund check to be cut, researching how other co-ops proceed with this and whether they budget for this and what percentage it would be. Sue also wondered if we could instead do a "gift card" approach where credit is awarded instead of checks being sent. The Equity committee will look into all of this. **Do we want to ask the membership which approach they would prefer?** These are all good questions for the committee to discuss. Membership is currently around 620, an increase in membership. Mike will find out if we can offer the option of a credit instead.

Building Committee: Ben and Adrienne co-designed a new ramp with a "timber Round post" where the current post is, a removable metal grate supported on triangular granite slabs (over stay mat gravel). Sam Clark suggested (via notes read by Joseph) that we need to get moving on the structural necessities. The right carpenters could do this in late summer or early fall. Now that we have a design, we can move ahead. The MC gave Kathleen the go ahead to replace the rail on the old ramp and fix the chair-rail upstairs. The building committee should meet to create a budget for this project. Adrienne gave Mike a copy of the porch design so they can begin the next steps. Sam, Joe John or Mike Russell could probably locate willing carpenters to work in the crawl space which is where the first projects need to happen. Mike will see if Kathleen (Kate) will coordinate these efforts. We agree with the building committee that there should be a building "coordinator," and that the MC should designate the person. Also a wooden cover over the electrical boxes could really spruce things up. Kathleen could call GMP to ask if there are any rules about cover boxes. Joseph will ask Alan Banbury when the next building

committee will be. As far as the Board is concerned, we have authorized the MC and Building Committee to proceed as discussed at the last meeting, and now we are also authorizing work on the ramp based upon Ben and Alison's design.

MC Monitoring of the End: "The Co-op will be a market for the distribution of healthy food and other goods." Gail suggested that the chart that Mike included be revised to better reflect and aggregate the larger categories of food that we sell to glean more helpful information. She does not think it accurately reflects the priorities of our member-owners. The current list as it is, gives the MC an idea of what the top-selling items are and where they are experiencing success.. Mike said the MC finds it helpful to flip the list from the top 25 to the worst selling items to see if there are any products that might be discontinued. The amount of work it would take for Mike to aggregate this more thoroughly might not be worth the time it would take for him to do it. When the statistics are done to determine "local" products, it will be beneficial for us to understand what percentage of our sales are "locally produced" products. Discussion ensued regarding the difference/similarity between "organic" and "healthy". Mike recalls that based on the survey data, members often do equate healthy with organic. But Gail stressed that healthy could include foods that are not organic, but that are nutritional even if they are not organic, such as local eggs. There is a lot of ambiguity in the language of this end that lends itself to a wide spectrum of interpretation, thus leading to our lengthy and lively discussion regarding this End. The chart supplied with the report seemed somewhat unconnected to the report. . Mike felt like he received mixed messages in that the feedback about data in the chart seemed inconclusive. The MC is allowed to come up with its own interpretation of this End. It seems that we may be able to generate data that may better support this end in the future, when the revised end is revisited. After discussion, **the Board concluded that the report is compliant.**

Newsletter: This committee met last night and discussed that they are never really sure how many people actually read the newsletter, and this led them to discuss the other avenues we use for communication in general: facebook, the website, mouth-to-mouth, etc. How do we find out how many people read the newsletter, or what means of communication people do use regarding the Co-op? Communication being the crux of the matter. This seems to fall under both MC and Board jurisdiction, as far as the overriding theme of communication goes. Our newsletter is really thorough compared to other newsletters that are associated with other co-ops or organizations. Scott also feels that people are surveyed to death and that another survey is not a good idea, since our return rate is so low. He made the point that it is our responsibility as board members to take action to do what we think the members want -- they elected us. Mike told us the newsletter has a 48% "open rate" on the Co-op website through Constant Contact. This translates into about 25% of the overall membership. We mail to about 75 people. We don't receive much feedback via email, but we have received some positive feedback from people who receive a hard copy. New members should receive a copy of the Newsletter in a New Member packet. Mike said the MC is planning to put together a new member packet. **What do we think about creating an MC/Board Communications committee?** The next newsletter deadline is August 5th. Karen will be talking with staff about department updates. Even though the quarterly issue is challenging to use for advertising -- given its infrequency, it is still a valuable resource. But should it be revamped to become a shorter, more frequent form of communication? Our FB page got 34 visits today, 405 likes total. Sue wondered if Mike could give us a brief synopsis of how much our current

communication strategies are reaching our membership. The current pamphlet newsletter format doesn't work to read comfortably on a computer. Scott will send Joseph some links of other newsletters that would be more user friendly. Gail will also forward to Joseph the NFCA formatted letters. Scott would suggest that if the format is changed across the board, it would be easier for everyone and it wouldn't have to be quite as long. Constant Contact can be used to communicate sales electronically to those people who choose to receive this kind of communication. When people sign up to be members, they indicate whether or not they want to receive communications about deals. We agreed to postpone putting this committee together for a month to allow Mike time to gather more information regarding data from our various communication sources, online, in-house, newsletter, new member packets, etc. Also, this would give the Newsletter committee time to respond to some of the feedback we gave Joseph today. Adrienne suggested a board, black board or other in-store post, letting members know what is on sale, on a regular basis; it would be another good source of communication. One of our goals is to determine what our members are interested in learning about and educating them. "What are you buying when you shop at the Co-op?" was a question that was discussed by the newsletter committee last night. Joseph pointed out that when he shops here he is buying more than food. Keeping the Co-operative movement at the forefront of our minds is crucial. Communication committee is still a good idea, but just on hold for the time being.

Other: Mike suggested that it is important that we discuss the idea of balloting, which would allow people who cannot attend the annual meeting to cast a vote. Gail agreed to put this idea on the agenda for the August meeting.

C-6: Board Monitoring: Officers (revised March, 2014) Google Docs has become the way that we are maintaining our documents, and is the place where the most accurate and up-to-date version of our Policy Register can be found.

Next meeting: August 12th 6:30 PM

