

Board Minutes
January 13, 2015

Present: Bob Fancher, Gail Falk, Art Chickering, Mike Peabody
Guest: Andy Robinson (for the first 2/3 of the meeting)

Gail introduced Andy Robinson, who is a Plainfield resident and an expert in training boards of small non-profits and assisting them in growth, fund-raising and planning. Andy is considering how he might be most helpful to us.

Because there was no quorum, the agenda was rearranged to focus on reports and discussion. Matters requiring approval were postponed to the February board meeting.

Reports

- **Building Committee.** The Building Committee has set a regular meeting day -- the third Tuesday of the month. Bob provided a summary of recently completed and in-progress work based on a report from Kathleen Hayes: Furnace room insulation and vapor barrier going into wall gaps, stone foundation gaps have been foamed; Getting a new 10 foot ladder, Ramp complete except for steel rails, which are here and are getting topcoated; Exit stairs at the design stage; Snow slide arresters installed and seem to be working well; Gamelon room door weather sealed; leaky wall in the gamelon room is being cleared off, sealed and insulated; Equipment bolted to walls so it will be considered a fixture in case of insurance claims; Fire sensors relocated to reduce nuisance alarms; Cleanout plugs installed in the long level drain from the produce sink to the store main drain.
- **Communication Committee.** See attached minutes. Great first meeting and good energy. Will be meeting monthly.
- **Equity.** Can't determine the patronage dividend until we have the 4th quarter report from the bookkeeper. Should be ready in either February or March. The Equity Committee will inform the Board when they have the figures and are ready with a recommendation. We need to amend Section 7.03 of the by-laws at Annual meeting to provide for situations where someone does not cash the dividend check. Bob and Mike are recommending the following language, which is adopted from the Hunger Mountain by-laws:

By obtaining and retaining membership in the Cooperative, each member agrees that if his or her patronage refund is not cashed within 90 days of the date on which it was issued by the Cooperative, the Cooperative shall have the right to make a contribution in the name of that member to support the local food system in a manner as may be directed by the Board from time to time.

The Board will need to approve this proposed amendment at a meeting where we have a quorum.

- **Treasurer.** Will schedule the financial review, postponed from last year, probably until the second quarter. Bob shared a list of the Metrics that the Hunger Mountain Co-op reports to the Board and to the members: some of them would be useful for us. We will consider at a future meeting.

2015 Budget, B2 report and Strategic Plan.

Mike reviewed the 2015 budget and answered questions. The Board recommended that it would be much easier to understand the budget document if the first column was the estimated full-year amount for 2014. The Board understands that it is impossible to have final figures for 2014 for a couple of months, and that the budget is based upon estimates for 2014 as well as predictions for 2015. The Board would like more information about what kind of wage raises are anticipated -- who will get raises? when? how was this determined? It was noted that the amount of the staff discount is approximately 10% of the wages and benefits; when considering whether we are paying a livable wage, the staff discount needs to be taken into account (i.e., compensation=wages+discount)

The B2 report was accepted. It was a month late. Also it is not in compliance because the budget is not based upon an up-to-date multi-year plan. We would like to see a narrative showing how the 2015 budget implements the multi-year plan.

There followed a discussion of why the MC continues to have trouble in writing timely updates to the Strategic Plan. We concluded that the Board should be taking responsibility for higher level Strategic Planning. If the Board steps up and works on a high level Strategic Planning process, it most likely will be much easier for the MC to come up with an operational plan for implementing it. Andy Robinson agreed to help us think through this process. To be discussed further. The Board also offered to find resources if the MC wants help in decision-making and group process.

Link Report

Some staff have heartfelt privacy concerns about having their picture on the wall and on their nametag. They are willing to wear a tag saying that they are Plainfield Co-op Staff, and they are willing for there to be a sign that gives the name of staff and what their responsibilities are. The Board members present accepted this as a way to move forward on this longstanding issue.

The MC completed a written evaluation of the Link, and Mike shared it with the Board. After reading the MC evaluation, the Board concluded that a joint Board-MC training about the respective roles and responsibilities of each group could be helpful -- something else we could follow up on with Andy Robinson.

Monitoring Policy B (Global Constraint). Report accepted

Board Monitoring

- C Global Governance
- D Global Board Management

Read, considered, we are in compliance.

Next meeting: Tuesday, February 10, 2015 at 6:30 pm.

Topics carried forward to next meeting:

- Strategic Planning -- Board's role
- MC Evaluation (deferred)
- Board governance Calendar (deferred)
- What we mean by the End "Sustain the Environment through its operations and the products it offers"

Plainfield Co-op
Communications Committee
Jan. 5, 2015

Present: Sara Norton, Karla Haas Moskowitz, Karen Starr, Glenda Bissex, Adrienne Alison, Angella Gibbons, Bob Fancher, Alex Thayer, Joseph Gainza.

Facilitator: Karen Starr
Scribe: Joseph Gainza

Note: the decisions of the committee are in **bold**.

After introductions we discussed the Co-op Global Ends to provide a context for our work.

- Not all the ends are relevant to a communications committee;
- they provide a broad context
- the ends are a “lens;”
- “affordable” - the board and Management Collective (MC) is still struggling to adequately define the term – still, part of our messaging needs to be that the Co-op sells many items of “basic” food competitively priced.

After reading the board's charter for the Communications Committee (CC), we agreed to add to the means of communication listed in the charter: “face-to-face communication and outreach.”

- some of these means of communicating were previously done by a membership committee; the membership committee has not been meeting and must be considered defunct for the time being
- **we discussed whether to ask the board to incorporate the membership committee into the CC; we agreed to not do that at this time;**
- **we will look at who the target audience is for each means of communication**

A discussion followed about what material is given to new member/owners when they first sign up; is there a membership packet?

- There is a pamphlet given out, which provides basic information;
- Sometimes flyers are given to shoppers who are not members – some customers see this as “proselytizing;”
- many people come in to just shop and are not interested in the “larger” issues of the Co-op;
- about 30% of Co-op revenue is from non-member shoppers

The CC decided to review the pamphlet and other materials handed out to shoppers and to think about what might be added to a new member/owner packet.

Suggestions for engaging new and present members included:

- person-to-person contacts with new members;
- member “teas;”

The CC would like to see a member/owner database which could be used to:

- understand the geographical spread of member/owners
- think about the diversity of shoppers;
- how many shoppers have computers;
- create an e-mail list for communication of sales, specials, events, etc. (see the Adamant Co-op’s periodic e-mail messages as an example)

We discussed what the goals of the CC might be:

- greater member/owner involvement;
- get local people to shop at the Co-op;
- help member/owners and the larger community to understand how they can be part of something larger than themselves;
- to promote the alternative economics which co-ops represent; (“get over yourself, joining a co-op is a moral imperative”)
- promote events organized, produced and/or hosted by the Co-op;
- communicate and maintain an allegiance to the Co-op ends;
- raise awareness of food and related issues;
- increase appreciation of the Co-op as a locally owned grocery store run for the benefit of the community.

Suggested ways to achieve these goals:

- Periodic (monthly) service projects in the community;
- community dinners;
- hosting meetings for such groups as Food Not Bombs;
- hang pictures and statements of member/owners, to provide a personal touch – people are motivated by an emotional connection;
- include other community organizations in our promotional material, eg. The Plainfield Health Center, Twin Valley Senior Center;
- promote food activism;
- set up situations and events which bring people together;
- good communication brings members;
- collect e-mail addresses, phone numbers and other information at all events;
- all communication from the Co-op should contain same message with same language.

We formed three task groups to meet in between meetings of the full CC:

- Media – Bob, Alex, Glenda, Joseph
- Education/Outreach – Sara, Karla, Angella, Adrienne, Karen
- In-store communication - ?

We will meet on the 4th Wednesday of the month.

Next Meeting: Jan. 28, 6:30 – 8:00

Location – Earthwalk – Angella will send out directions.