

Plainfield Co-op Board Special Meeting Minutes - DRAFT
October 9, 2017
6:00 pm at the Community Center

Need for Special Meeting: Potential Restructure of the Management Collective
Called by: Jean Hamilton, President

Attendees: Bob Fancher, Sarah Phillips, Jean Hamilton, Pete Coleman, Chris Jackson, Alicia White

Absent: Giordano Checchi

Check In – Board members reported on which MC members they were able to connect with during the week and confirmed 5 responses to the MC survey.

- Alicia spoke with Kathleen and Chloe
- Jean spoke with Jeanine. Had an appointment with Anji that needs to be rescheduled (due to sickness, travel). Jean will reach out again. Jean reached out to Nancy, who did not feel she needed a face-to-face interview.
- Bob spoke with Chris and Karen.
- Chris spoke with Margie, but did not hear back from reach Matt.
- Pete exchanged email with Nancy.
- Survey: Nancy, Chloe, Karen, Chris, Margie

Jean reviewed the role of Executive Session, and the goals for the meeting – to identify themes that have emerged from MC feedback, strategies to support MC, and financial implications.

Entered into Executive Session at 6:20 to discuss personnel issues. The Board exited Executive Session at 7:09pm.

Jeanine, Margie, Nancy and Chloe joined the meeting at 7:11pm.

Themes that emerged from MC responses to the Board's survey - Challenges:

- A need for trustbuilding
- Need to layout an action plan or process for deciding on any changes to the management structure
- There are a number of management tasks that are not clearly defined in the current MC
 - Personnel management, scheduling and time off
 - Clarity on job descriptions, roles and responsibilities
 - Team leadership in moments of conflict
- Unbalanced accountability to the Board and the Co-op's Ends, that seems to be based in the current structure (e.g., Links)
- The current collective structure has emerged organically and supports the personal needs and interests of MC members, but may not be a strategic management plan. This flexibility is an important "benefit" that the Co-op offers, but also creates challenges.
- The feedback from MC members was that some change in management was a natural next step.
- The feedback from the MC members was that the Board's process of hearing from MC members was an important and valued first step.

These themes are connected to the impasse, and not necessarily the management collective structure itself. There were a number of strengths of the current management also discussed during executive session. The Co-op is in a strong place financially due to the work of the management.

The Board discussed strategies to support the MC

Some possible next steps

- Job descriptions – collect current descriptions and identify more clearly the staff and management functions that are needed
- Identify a way for the Board to ensure that all members of the management understand their accountability to achieving the Ends of the Co-op
- Gain some more clarity/feedback on what kind of help the Board could provide – there is a spectrum of ways that the Board could intervene. The Board discussed different perspectives on the role of the Board in the current situation. Some Board members still wish for more clarity from the MC about whether they are asking the Board to make a decision on management structure or support the MC in making a decision. It's still not clear if the MC is able to provide a decision on this issue. Some Board members do feel it's appropriate to intervene at this moment and make a decision about what the management structure will be. Even in this case, Board members agreed that the Board should be getting feedback and participation from MC members to inform its decision. Some Board members shared their thoughts about the importance of further process to develop any new management structure; that the current proposals designed by the MC committee are not adequate. All Board members feel that every member of the MC clearly provides value and is an important resource for the Co-op. The Board would like to see all members of the MC continue at the Co-op in a role.

The Board offered time for each MC member in attendance to provide their personal reflections on what role the Board could play immediately.

Jeanine suggested that if the Board wanted the MC to make a decision, that the Board should direct the MC to move away from consensus. In fact, the MC already has this policy as a tool. Jeanine suggested that the Board could provide clarity to the MC in whether it's an appropriate moment to break consensus.

Chloe suggested that the Board could support the MC by helping to structure their next management meeting. What skills do you want to bring to your work at the Co-op? What jobs do we need at the Co-op for it to succeed? Etc. Chloe expressed her desire that the management collective structure end. The Board asked for clarity on what was already on the management meeting agenda. There is no agenda yet developed. Chloe wants the Board to help the MC to move past personal conflict and tensions to address the strategic questions.

The Board discussed whether and how to create a thoughtful, deliberate process for deciding on the management structure that clearly identified goals for the ongoing conversation and milestones in a planning process. There was a discussion that the Board could layout a structured, transparent planning process, with a timeline and milestones, and then get feedback from MC members on this process.

The Board could also empower the MC to move forward with management structure changes – provide facilitation and support, but the MC, through its committee, has already done much of the work. This path forward recognizes the work of the MC already, and the need for making changes quickly. There is a recognition that any new management requires a transition process to be effective. There was also discussion about what challenges the new management restructure proposals do not necessarily address. There was a discussion that a stronger analysis of functions would more clearly identify the best management structure.

There were concerns raised by MC members about the uncertainty of future roles for each member based on the management structure proposals created. And there was some lack of optimism that additional information gathering process would be fruitful. Two types of assessment were discussed: skills inventory of existing management and an organization assessment of work functions/needs.

Communication from the Board to the MC

The Board focused on goals for communication – decisions were made in identifying key points for a communication.

- **Decision:** The Board recommends that each member of the MC write down their current job duties and responsibilities and provide this to the Board by Monday 10/16. If work is assigned to a committee, then MC members should define what their work is on a committee. This could occur by reallocating some time from the next management meeting.
- **Decision:** The Board will provide a roadmap for designing and deciding on the management structure that includes Board members and the MC in the process. This roadmap will have a clear timeframe and deadlines. The Roadmap proposal will be delivered to the MC by Friday 10/20.
 - The Board will ask the MC to vote on whether it will follow the Board's Roadmap.
- The Board wants to support the MC in deciding on a management structure, and the Board wants to be intentional in supporting a transition to a new management structure that takes into account the personal needs of all members of the current MC. The Roadmap will also consider the existing proposals by the MC restructure committee, and will draw on some of the information gathering that happened during the previous planning process.
- Communicate the importance of focusing on the Ends of the Co-op, and articulates some of the other themes that the Board heard from the MC survey.
- Alleviate some of the tension; support the Co-op staff and management. Acknowledge the existing stress – ask for a little trust and faith, a big deep breath, and confidence that the Co-op and staff can emerge from this process stronger.

Next Steps:

Jean will send a memo to the Management Collective by Thursday 10/12.

Sarah will provide a first draft of the Roadmap by Monday 10/16 to the Board via Google Docs.

All will comment and suggest edits to the Roadmap.

The Board called a Special Meeting for Thursday, October 19th to discuss and decide on a Management Decision Roadmap.

Alicia will propose some ideas to provide support to all members of the Co-op staff – support that acknowledges the profound and support that provides levity.