

Plainfield Co-op Board Minutes
May Ordinary Meeting - June 4, 2018
6:15 pm at the Community Center

Attendees: Sarah Phillips, Jay Herbert, Peter Boyle, Giordano Checchi

Absent: Chris Jackson, Alicia White

Staff: Kevin, Rosemond

It was suggested that re-appointment of Jean and Board officers be added to the agenda.

Management Report - Jean as interim GM

Jean shared that the month has gone by quickly. Staff are still experiencing frustrations, but the morale is generally positive as the new management structure is being implemented.

Accounts payable - \$18,000 is out of current, generally on par with our norm. >15 days out of current has improved; about 12% of totally payables is in this category. There is a new process in place for raising an alert on any invoices; and this seems to be working well. There was a significant breakdown in the accounting process in May which resulted in 2 weeks of invoices not being processed. Jeanine will be training Kevin in her tasks and will be transitioning out as Kevin takes on this work. Sarah asked if Jean/Kevin will communicate formally with Jeanine about her employment ending. **Action:** Kevin (with support from Jean) will communicate with Jeanine about her employment end date.

There was a glitche with COPOS, which is not uncommon. There was a renewed discussion and commitment to having the Co-op respond to the financial review that occurred in 2016. **Action:** Kevin will review the financial review.

Transitions – Jean reported that all staff signed new job descriptions and the new wage structure was implemented. Personnel Policies have been circulated by email and in the back room. There was a staff meeting, and it has been communicated to all staff that they will be expected to sign off on reviewing personnel policies. Staff can also print off their own copy. Signing is simply an acknowledgement of receipt and review, and not necessarily agreement. Staff are still encouraged to raise thoughts and issues. **Action:** Kevin will follow up on obtaining signed staff acknowledgements of the personnel policies.

The Floor Manager and Floor Staff positions are still a new way of understanding how the floor schedules and staffing needs are met. There was no additional action taken on this during the month.

Action: Kevin will be added to basecamp and given Admin privileges before basecamp is taken down. (Chloe has the admin currently). Rosemond will download and archive what was used on basecamp.

Action: Jean will share new job descriptions with Kevin.

Kevin's first date

Kevin reported on his first day; he spent a number of hours with Jeanine learning about basic financial management. He is already identifying some small areas for procedural improvement, and eventually there may be larger areas for improvement.

Committee Updates

Building Committee, redistribution of 2nd floor space. Progress report.

The office is well underway. The Building Committee is highly functional right now! The Building Committee has benefitted from having staff/board attend. Kathleen attends, and Jean has been attending the past couple meetings. The Building Committee continues to make capital improvements based on the \$7,000 budget approved by the Board. The next major area of improvement is improvement for the produce counter. These funds are coming from CAPEX (along with the market consultant).

Community Center Committee. Establishing a community center committee is one possible way to involve the users of the Community Center. There is an informal group that Buffy has organized that has been making some improvements to the community center. This self-organized group has been cleaning and keeping the community center updated. The Board discussed whether this group wants to serve as a committee; it is understood that they have not yet articulated that they want to be the community center committee. Does the Community Center need a committee? Would this be an operating committee or a board committee?

There was discussion about whether planning or making operational changes about the Community Center is something the Board wants to undertake or what level of involvement the Board wants to have. There are differing viewpoints about the value of the community center in relation to the Co-op's mission and ends. Is working with the community center group the role of the GM? Does the GM have the capacity to take on this work at this time? How can the Board support the GM in moving forward?

Kevin expressed a need to have oversight of the community center as GM b/c it's operation is directly related to the store. We expect that the ad hoc group may put together a proposal for the community center. We are not making decisions today – but it is helpful to understand the thoughtful work the group is undertaking. **Decision**: At this point, we agreed that Kevin, as GM, is the primary point of contact for any group interested in moving forward a community center proposal. It was affirmed that Board oversight occurs through its normal policy governance and budget approval roles.

Market Research

Jean provided an overview of the market research purpose and process. The report provides an analysis of our current facility and sales, methodology of the study, comparative environment and sales projects for expansion at the current site and a unnamed potential site on Route 2. Progress of Debbie Saussuna's work.

The Board started to discuss the report, and Debbie joined the Board by phone to answer any questions about the report. Sarah mentioned that the report does not take into account associated costs with expansion or relocation, which are equally as significant. Still, the report provides really valuable insight into our market and areas of growth with or without expansion and/or relocation. Kevin mentioned comparing this report to the member/customer survey that the Board undertook before the recent strategic plan – and there are some interesting differences between the Market Research and our own survey. The Board also started discussing parking constraints.

Sales forecasts – Jean asked Debbie to explain how she determines the analog sales forecast. Debbie provided an explanation. There was discussion about which end (north/south of village) on Rte 2 that made the most sense – there are benefits to both. There was discussion about how much improvement could be made to sales simply by making the sales floor more efficient and less congested (able to use carts better). Debbie suggested that this is not her specialty area, and that the role of the Co-op as a

“convenience” grocery suggests that this would not change and would not mean higher sales per visit per customer in general. Debbie made a recommendation that the Co-op sell prepared foods from Hunger Mountain Co-op which would mean that the Co-op could increase prepared food sales without investing in the personnel or infrastructure (equipment).

Decision: The Board accepts the market research study and asks the Expansion Finance Committee to reconvene with next steps.

Board Transition

Decisions: The Board appointed Jean to the vacant seat on the Board. Giordano stepped down as President. Board Officers are Jean as President, Giordano as Vice President, Sarah as Secretary. With Alicia absent, the Board affirmed her continuing in this role. If Alicia does not want to continue as Treasurer, Giordano may be willing to take on this role. Alicia and Jean are no longer interim financial controllers for the Co-op.

Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. Kevin was invited to stay during executive session.

The Board did not make any decisions during executive session.

Action: The Board asked Kevin to communicate with any applicants for new positions, and asked that Kevin present a hiring plan for new positions at the next Board meeting.

Approval of previous meetings minutes.

There was no regular April Board Meeting due to the Annual Meeting. **Decision:** The Board approved the Special Meeting Minutes on 4/26, the Annual Meeting Minutes on 4/29, and the Special Board Meeting on 5/7.

Financials - Line of Credit

Jean presented an overview of financials. In the first three months, sales remained strong, but are not enough to reach short and long-term budget goals or to cover expenses. There is a renewed urgency to have the Board and management focus on implementing the strategic plan and a plan to achieve financial sustainability. The Board discussed areas for decreasing expenses for efficiencies and for increasing sales. There remains a question about how much these changes will be enough to support the financial health of the Co-op. There is agreement that a long-term plan is essential.

Jean, as interim GM, extended interest only payments until October 2018 on our initial draw of \$5,000. There is an additional \$40,000 in credit available.

Other Business

Participation of the co-op to a community supper this coming fall. Request from Michael Cerulli for the co-op to sponsor one supper. **Action:** The Board postponed this until the next meeting.

Opportunity to introduce Kevin to the membership – **Action:** Sarah and Gail will organize a booth at the Plainfield Farmer’s Market on 6/22 or 6/29.

Items recommended for next meeting

- Policy Governance & Board Policy Revisions
 - **Action:** Sarah will schedule and organize a policy governance training
- Staff Celebration
- Community supper