

Plainfield Co-op Board Minutes

July 1, 2019

Board members present (all): Chris, Giordano, Charlotte, Pete. Sarah

Others: Jean Hamilton, Gail Falk, Lucy Blue, Michael Horowitz, Paula Emery

Yellow means to do. **Blue** means Board decision.

Check-ins

Discussed a change of regular meeting time but did not decide. This month's meeting will be either July 22 or 23.

Charlotte asked to collaborate on minutes distribution, per secretary duties. **Gail will send the draft minutes to Charlotte, who will make any additions or edits, then distribute by email to the Board. Once the minutes have been approved by the Board, Charlotte will send the minutes to Bob for posting on the website, after making any corrections made by the Board. This includes the minutes approved at the present meeting.**

Consent Agenda

Minutes for 5/6, 5/14, 5/28 and 6/13 were approved. The 6/13 minutes should be titled Unofficial Meeting Minutes. Same for May 14. There was a discussion about the wording of the first sentence in the third paragraph of the section on Financial Reporting **and it was decided to change the words "anything new or disruptive" to "any new or disruptive store operations."** In the same paragraph, it was **decided to add before the sentence that begins "Pete noted" the following sentence: "Jean spoke positively about the efforts of staff to adjust to change."**

With these changes, the minutes from the four meetings were approved. Sarah will send Charlotte the Action Items from the June 13 Executive Session to be included in the minutes of that meeting. She noted that the Executive Session ended at 8 pm, and also noted that the Ad Hoc committee is moving forward with Board approval to with identify a mediator.

Manager's Update.

Jean reported that sales are up and Accounts Payable are going down. The mood among staff is relatively calm. Some staff are experiencing personal strife, but there is no significant interpersonal conflict. She is working with Kevin to find ways to support staff and encourages Board to reach out with supportive gestures. More people are buying gift cards; management is looking at ways to make the cards more secure without making the process too complicated. Plan to limit gift card use to the individual member (excluding partners) and minor children. The Personnel policies were revised to reflect the decision that only staff (not partners or family members) can use the staff discount. **Sarah will send the most current Personnel Policies to Jean to assure that she has the most current version.**

Jean said she is working with Kevin to get reliable numbers about how much members are spending, and how much they would need to increase their spending for the store to break even. In sum, Jean feels the plan to keep the store steady and hold the course through the summer is working.

Board Monitoring – Part E – Board-Management Relationship

There was a general discussion about how E1 and E2 worked in practice, with agreement that the Board can go to Kevin for practical needs and don't always have to go through Jean. Charlotte questioned

whether the discussion about staff phone calls during the May 28 meeting was a violation of E2 because she considered it an evaluation of staff. Girodano remarked that this issue wasn't important to him, and that although it was important to other members of the Board he didn't care, and it was a waste of his time. After discussion, it was agreed that this sort of general communication about what the Board is hearing from members is not what is meant by "evaluation." An evaluation is a formal assessment of an individual staff member's job performance. There was further discussion about the fact that, while the Board needs to communicate with one voice, there may have to be a discussion to resolve difference of opinion before a decision is communicated with the GM or the public. Sarah raised up the need to continue to reflect on this.

The Board felt that E3 – Delegation to the General Manager was generally going okay.

E4 is also going okay. Charlotte questioned whether the Board was following E4(3) which defines the sources of information the Board may use for monitoring. It was agreed that this limitation applies to information used for the General Manager's performance evaluation, and that it is healthy and helpful for the Board to receive and reflect on feedback from members for other purposes.

E5. The General Manager is not currently providing the Board with all the logistical support it needs because of the General Manager's limited hours of work, but Jean said the budget for next year will include staff time for board logistical support.

Jean said that there may be a need to clarify the policies on how the Board brings member concerns to the General Manager. **Charlotte said she will look at that.**

Workgroup Updates

- Building permit. Gail will report at next regular meeting.
- Newsletter. Summer issue coming out shortly.
- Building Committee. Jean said they have a lot of energy. Currently building a new counter around the produce sink. Michael Horowitz was invited to join this committee.
- Fund-raising. On hold right now. Donors don't want to give money without a more defined plan for how the Co-op can be financially sustainable. Andy Robinson is working on the push to get people to buy more groceries and pre-buy more. **Board affirmed decision for the committee to be on hold.**
- Marketing Committee. Leah Tedesco is convenor. Don't have a date set for the next meeting yet. This is an operations committee, not a Board committee.
- Idea Board. **Jean is creating this and will send it to Bob Fancher for the website forthwith.**

Kitchen Table Meetings and Communications

- **Member Mailing. Sarah will send draft of the mailing tonight and asks Board to send any comments within 24 hours. She will send final draft to Pete on Wednesday. Pete will make the arrangements for the direct mail to be finalized and send.**
- **Member Poll.** There was discussion about what the poll should say. Items to cover include opinions about willingness to spend more, willingness to volunteer more time as a working member, move to Route 2, joining with another co-op. Perhaps language such as "The Board has determined that the following measures would help the financial stability of the Co-op. Which ones would you be willing to support?" Will send via email/Survey Monkey to all members with email addresses. **Jean will check the status of the Co-op Survey Monkey subscription.** There will be in-store handouts for people without internet access or an email

address. Giordano, Charlotte and Gail agreed to be a committee to develop the on-line survey. **Gail will convene.** Send draft to Board early week of July 15 with a goal of sending it to members July 19.

- August Board Retreat. Sarah reports that Andy Robinson agreed to facilitate. Need to line up dates with him. All Board members can do 8/3, 8/4, 8/10, 8/11. Sarah asked board members to hold those four dates while she nails down a date with Andy. Jean can host the retreat at her house. Retreat will be limited to invited guests, Jean, and Board.
- Member Meeting. There was considerable discussion about the best time to have the Member Meeting where the Board will report back to the members on long-term and short-term plans for the future. **September 14 at 4 pm was chosen.** To keep up Member involvement, it would be great to have a party or social event in August. **Sarah will ask the Marketing Committee to organize that.**
- Gift Card Promotion. Sara Norton said she would do a naming promotion, involving potentially renaming gift cards through member polls, but we haven't heard from her. **Jean will check back with her.**
- On line Communication. **All Board are asked and empowered to make social media posts about the Co-op.**

Lucy Blue shared the minutes from the Kitchen Table meeting she convened in the Community Center last month. **Jean will put them on the Bulletin Board and incorporate them into the on-line Idea Board.** Lucy said she is working on a promo for Gift Cards, and brought her written proposal for this endeavor. Lucy also suggested setting up an in-store idea board for people without internet access, and supplied a cork board to help get the ball rolling on that project. Les Snow is doing an analysis of the benefits of using a Gift Card. It was suggested that this go on Front Page Forum as well as other social media.

Board Development. **For the next meeting, Sarah asked that all Board members think about recruiting new Board members.** **Board elections will be at the September 14 meeting.**

At 8 pm the Board went into Executive Session to discuss Personnel Matters.

Exited Executive Session at 8:32pm

No decisions were made. The Board affirmed that the spirit of the draft agreement met the Board's goals.

Action Items:

- Board members will give any final feedback on the agreement to Sarah by the end of 7/2, with the intent that Sarah send the agreement on 7/3.
- Sarah will also follow up with the identified mediator, and thank/inform the ad hoc committee that its work, per its charge, is completed.
- Board will reconvene via a special meeting before the July Board meeting, if needed, for the purpose of discussing personnel matters. This meeting, if in executive session only, may be convened by phone. Minutes will be taken.

Board meeting adjourned.