

Co-op Board Meeting

November 15, 2016

Attendance: Gail Falk, Sarah Phillips, Giordano Checchi, Bob Fancher, Jean Hamilton

Links: Chloe Budnick, Nancy Ellen

Check -in

Jean shared a resource from the Farm to Plate Network for Co-ops to provide a retail “expert” to observe the store and make best practice recommendations. The MC will review and contact the Network if this is something they choose to pursue.

The Board discussed ways to share the monitoring reports with members. Bob will create a member/owner-only space on the website where these can be posted and shared. We agreed that the monitoring reports have excellent information about the Co-op and that sharing them with members also creates transparency, which is important.

VOTE: The Board unanimously elected Jean Hamilton to the Board.

She will serve until the next Annual Meeting.

The next newsletter will include information about Jean (new Board member) and, also new Staff members. We will take a group board photo in December. Jean will forward a bio and photo to Chloe.

Review of Monitoring of End 3 Sustainability

All agreed that the interpretation of this End by the Management Collective was reasonable. We talked about additional data or future quantifiable measures to look at in the report, and that this helps to set targets or understand our benchmarks. Electric, fuel and waste pick up utilization info from the Co-op’s bills would add value in future reports. There may be additional ways to measure sustainability.

The Board accepts the monitoring report as presented by the Management Collective. The spirit of sustainability and the creative solutions pursued by the MC are great!

There was further “strategic conversation” about sustainability. Are there opportunities for education of customers/members about how the Co-op works sustainably? Could we accept more recyclable and reusable materials from customers? (that could be difficult) What about an educational event for families? Could education coincide with the changing state rules? Are there organizations that could partner in an effort – e.g., CVSWD or ARCC (Additional Recycling Collection Center). The Co-op has also chosen to endorse Energy Independent Vermont (carbon tax coalition) – we can continue to talk about this work with members, and also the important ways that the Coalition is considering ways to mitigate the impact of any carbon tax with low income Vermonters.

Strategic Plan

Member Survey

Sarah designed a survey to present the goals and work of the strategic plan, to educate and engage members in moving forward the plan. The MC has the survey link and will distribute via the email list and it will be posted on the website. There may be other ways to distribute – is in the capable hands of the MC. The survey takes at least 10 minutes to complete – and folks should know this upfront. There's a lot of information in the survey. The MC is welcome to let Sarah know if any edits need to be made before the survey is sent out.

Building status

The Co-op applied for a building permit under the current zoning regulations, which we understand will remain applicable for the Co-op during a building project.

Also, Nico Rubin, the town tree officer, said we can take down the maple tree, if necessary

Updates from the MC on the Strategic Plan

MC Leads for Committees: Building – Nancy, Financial – Anji, Internal Layout – Jeannine, Food Access – Matt, Communications – Karen (Chloe will double check), Membership – Chloe

The goal is for all committee volunteers to be contacted by the first week of December. The first task of all committees will be to develop their charter, including “code of conduct”, meeting times.

Base camp looks like an awesome tool. Sarah volunteered to support Chloe with thinking about “project management” of the strategic plan or ways to put the plan into action. Chloe welcomed this and will be in touch with Sarah before the end of November.

Committee Updates

Building committee – there's a leaky door to the cooler that will hopefully be fixed soon.

B1 Financial Report

There was a discussion on some of the challenges driving up expenses and driving down net profit. We are in the red, and it will be difficult to end the year in the black. There are some concerns that doing the work of the strategic plan will take staff energy and resources that are difficult to afford at this moment in time, even if the long-term benefits of the strategic plan are good for the bottom line of the co-op. We discussed the importance of the committee work to be largely completed by volunteers, and to have staff/MC steer the committees to provide critical direction.

Which expense accounts are most off budget? Wages, professional fees (these were one-time).

Which departments might be able to withstand mark-ups? The MC has the best understanding of the challenges in this area. Is increasing the gross margin an effective way to address the current issues?

What are the steps that the MC can take to control expenditures? What are the issues that are driving up wages?

What are the consequences of ending the year in the red? No dividends for members; continued problems could have larger consequences. There's an opportunity to “right the ship” at this moment.

How can the Board support the MC to help control wages? Are there ways that we could simplify monitoring? How can we help the MC to focus on the “day-to-day” and not lose sight of the strategic plan?

VOTE: The Board accepts the B1 report, except for B1.2. Specifically, the Board asks that *Subpolicy 2 Plan for Compliance* be revised to more strongly address expenses.

The Board acknowledges that there are ways that the Board can place pressure on staff hours, which can impact wage expenses, and the Board encourages/empowers the MC to be vocal when this happens. The Board acknowledges that implementation of the strategic plan should be carefully considered and welcomes the MC to take this into consideration. The Board is concerned about efficiency NOT hourly wage. The Board invites MC to provide the Board with feedback on how to support the MC in achieving financial compliance.

Link Report

The Board should feel free to look at BaseCamp and decide if they want to use it to help organize the Board’s work. New light in the cheese cooler – yeah! There is a working member that is going to help with outdoor maintenance. The Link evaluation was included in the MC minutes.

Board Budget

Bob will send along the board budget for review by email.

Next Board Meeting remains 12/20/2016.

VOTE: Giordano was voted in as the Vice President.

He will serve until annual meeting. He will chair January and February.

Consent Agenda: October minutes were approved.

Postponed items:

Co-op position on political signs and materials

Board monitoring: C8, Governance Investment

Implementing By-law on Co-ops as Members – The Board will decide on this by email. Gail distributed draft language.