

Plainfield Co-op Board Minutes
Monday, October 28, 2019

Board Members Present: Charlotte, Sarah, Les, Chris (for the later part of the meeting), Cat (started as a visitor, became a Board member after Chris arrived)

Others: Jean (GM), Gail (note-taker)

Check-ins: Jean is leaving her paid job, and, in the short run will have more time for Co-op work. Les has a new job at Highland Center for the Arts.

Member-Owner input: Jean has been enjoying the Halloween decorations.

Manager's report: Staff meeting coming up on November 13. Getting into a rhythm of having quarterly mandatory staff meetings, which helps with communication. At 11/13 meeting will discuss pledge campaign, budget process and questions, outcome of September 14 member meeting.

Staff changes: Angie gave two-week notice. Will do an exit interview. Stephanie has taken over some of the in-house accounting duties.

Kevin is working on developing 2020 budget. Should have a draft in the next two weeks. Les reminded Jean that the budget should reflect the Policy Governance guidelines (F2). If the budget meets the criteria in F2, the Board should approve the budget.

Jean said register staff are struggling the awkwardness of having to deny family members access to a member's gift card. Would like to have the Board revisit the policy on membership (D3). Perhaps could change the policy with respect to access to gift cards, but not the policy on membership. Sarah said she will put this on the agenda for the November Board meeting. She suggested to Jean that staff consider other options besides changing the member policy.

Staff are still concerned that the Board sends out messages that the store is not doing well financially, and they do not like the proposal to hire a management position at \$25 per hour while staff are not getting cost of living increases. Otherwise, staff are functioning pretty well. Kevin is doing a really good job of scheduling.

Charlotte asked how staff are communicating complaints. Jean said these would go to Kevin first; he can consult with Jean if he chooses to. Jean hasn't received any requests for consultation or appeals from decisions Kevin has made.

Charlotte was concerned about poor communication in an email exchange between a staff member and a board member. Sarah said that email should not be used for staff-board communications about complaints or concerns. Staff concerns should be brought to the Board as a whole and not to an individual board member.

Charlotte said the Hardwick Gazette misquote Jean and gave inaccurate information about staff wages. Cat will find a copy of the article and circulate it.; Charlotte will draft a clarifying letter on the issue of wages. And circulate it to the Board. Jean will draft an update about wages at the Co-op to be included in the January newsletter and posted on the bulletin board. The final letter will be posted on the store bulletin board. There should be a longer discussion of wages in the next newsletter.

Monitoring. F1 Financial Report. Quarterly Monitoring. Jean reviewed the written monitoring report on F1 (1), (2) and (5). According to Jean's figures the Accounts Payable are in compliance. As of 10/4/2019 0% of Accounts Payable are out of current. Vendors are being paid on time! She is not sure why the Treasurer's report has different figures on accounts Payable, and she will confer with Giordano. The written report did not include a report on F(1)(4), which is in compliance. She will send the Board a written update. The Board accepted the F1 verbal summary with a written report to follow and found that F1 is in Full Compliance. This is the first time in several years that F1 has been in full compliance.

Part D. Continued monitoring of Membership policies was postponed to November.

F4. Treatment of Consumers. Jean provided a verbal report. The suggestion box and email are the systems for soliciting and considering customer opinion. There is not a robust system for documenting and responding to customer grievances. Jean will follow up on this. Customer safety and food handling have improved because of the efforts of the Building Committee. Sarah noted that risk mitigation is a Board concern, and the Board would like to know more about how staff is trained in safety practices, such as OSHA. Sarah will find an old F4 monitoring report and forward it to Jean with a request to see if the practices that were followed in the past are still occurring. Will revisit F4 at November meeting.

F5. Staff Treatment and Compensation. Jean provided a verbal report

(1) There are robust written personnel policies.

(2) No concerns about inconsistent application of personnel policies

(3) Records now maintained in a secure location (Operation manager's office)

(4) No complaints about internal inequity. Not sure about external equity. Staff are raising concerns about external equity.

For the November meeting, Jean will provide more information about compliance with F4 and F5.

(Chris arrived at this point, and so there was a quorum).

Going forward the Board wants to keep thinking about how to streamline the reports and have the Board feel comfortable that they are getting the information they need to carry out their monitoring responsibilities.

Sarah noted that the personnel policies could be simplified; they are very thorough for an organization the size of the Plainfield Co-op. She also noted that the policies will have to be revised when the new management structure is adopted.

Minutes. Approved with revisions by Sarah. Gail will make the changes, and send them to Charlotte, to send on to Bob Fancher for posting on the website and will make sure they are posted on the bulletin board.

Committee/Workgroup Updates

- Newsletter. Gail said the next issue of the newsletter will be delayed to come out in January to give the Board and staff time to come up with specific plans for following up the September 14 member meeting.
- Building Committee. Great work on bathroom. Next projects are rotting boards by the back entrance and cutting branches that are encroaching on building.
- Marketing Committee. Les attended. Focusing on Co-op Basics. Making it easier to shop on a limited income. Coupons? Sarah will send the names of people who signed up on 9/14 for work that might fit in to Marketing.
- Working Member Involvement Options. Kevin and Jean will list opportunities for engagement. Les offered to help do that. Options include a fundraiser for building improvements, membership committee, community Center committee. Charlotte will send Jean a list of projects she would like to spearhead.

Sarah will draft an e-message update for members on what is happening as follow-up.

Board Development.

- Board membership. The Board accepted Chris Jackson's resignation and expressed appreciation to Chris for all his work on the Board. Cat Klarich was appointed to fill Chris's term. She will need to be elected to the Board by the members at the next Annual Meeting.
- Board roster. Sarah reviewed the terms of the remaining Board members. She prepared a chart to clarify the terms. Charlotte is filling Jean's unexpired term, and will need to be reelected at the next Annual Meeting. Giordano's term ends in 2021. Sarah will be up for reelection in spring 2020. Les's current term will end in 2021, and he will be eligible to run for a full term then.
- Board Member Job Description. The Board approved the Board job description developed by Charlotte and Les, with the correction that the name of the organization is "Plainfield Co-op. Also take out the statement that having a phone and email are not requirements.
- Sarah has a good video about the duties of Board members which she will share. Videos are a good way to get across the complexities of Board membership.
- Board budget development. On November agenda.

Management Proposal. Jean reviewed the 10/29/19 proposal for a new positions. Don't know for sure what it will be called or how many hours. Position will report to Kevin but will provide liaison between staff and Board. Questions about how Kevin will stay in the loop.

The Board discussed the pros and cons of the proposal. Here are comments: Proposal supports what's emerging organically. Salary makes sense. Happy it focuses on improving internal communications. Should improve staff/board relationship. How will we get a good candidate? Hopeful we can get a good candidate). Great that Kevin is willing to have a more active role with the Board. Doubtful about the Executive committee aspect because it isn't consistent with Policy Governance principles; would like to see it as an interim measure that is phased out, or a timeframe for re-evaluating it. Great to have a focus on marketing and membership. Good example of creative problem solving. Realistic. Hope it will be marketing and membership – not just marketing. Tricky to have a role that does liaison with the Board but reports back to Kevin.

Sarah said that Jean and Kevin should use this proposal as a basis to build the budget for next year. Sarah will ask Giordano to develop the Board's budget and send it to Jean for inclusion in the overall budget. This will be reviewed at the November meeting along with the overall budget.

Sarah said the Board should be involved in hiring since the person is going to have Board communication as a major duty.

Will ask Kevin to come to the next Board meeting.

Jean will continue as acting GM until the new position (Marketing/Membership) is hired.

Before Jean leaves, she should organize a personnel evaluation of Kevin.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30.

November meeting date to be determined by Google poll as the regular meeting date is Thanksgiving week.