

Plainfield Co-op Board  
Special Meeting by Zoom  
March 30, 2020

Board members present: Cat, Les, Giordano, Rose

Board member absent: Sarah

Others present: Peter (GM), Gail (minute taker)

Sarah (Board President) was unable to participate. In her absence, Cat, as vice president, prepared the agenda and chaired the meeting.

All participants were able to connect and to stay connected by Zoom.

The March 23 meeting minutes had been previously circulated by email. Comments made by email will be incorporated into the minutes by Les, who will finalize the minutes. Les also noted a typo (word "more" missing).

Cat stated the purpose of the Special Meeting was to consider and carry out the Board's leadership responsibilities in a time of crisis. She said this time of the Covid-19 epidemic and restrictions is uncharted territory; we have never had a crisis like this. Cat expressed gratitude for Peter Youngbaer's leadership as General Manager.

Before the meeting, Les circulated to the Board materials to refresh their knowledge of Policy Governance principles and a specific memo on leadership in time of crisis. Cat said the primary advice is for leadership to speak with one voice.

Peter had circulated a memo about a recent store break-in. Later in the meeting, Peter reviewed details about the break-in and management actions to upgrade security. All board members except Sarah had commented on the memo by e-mail. It was agreed that a memo about the break-in should go out promptly. It should be sent by Peter because it is an Operations concern. Peter suggested that, to communicate unity of leadership, the memo should start: "In collaboration with the Board, we would like the membership to know ...." This was agreed to.

There then followed a discussion about what message (s) the Board should communicate to the membership. After discussion, it was agreed that the message from the Board should address the following points:

- Explain why the annual meeting was postponed and when it will be rescheduled (but it was agreed it is too early to set a new date)
- Explain why the store is closed. Store will be closed until April 30 and then will reassess.
- Explain that the Board is meeting twice a month during the crisis period, let people know they can call in to participate in or observe the meeting, and how to do it.
- Urge contributions to the St. Corona Fund and also let people know it is being used and is available for use by people in need.
- Say that the Board is considering a governance-focused survey.

Cat said the message should be short.

Giordano and Les agreed to work on a draft of the message to members, and will circulate it to Rose, Cat, Peter and Sarah for comment.

The Board will finalize the memo at its next meeting (see below).

There was discussion about how to get messaging out to members. In addition to e-mail, it was suggested that the message could be printed and put in shopping bags to reach people who don't get email. This suggestion was not further discussed.

Rose raised the question about whether the Board or management should offer a channel for feedback from members. Les said that the Board should do a member survey and ask about members' desires for the future. Rose said she was referring to feedback about the new system for ordering by phone and email while the store was closed to the public. Peter said that there were still internal bugs in the system, and the phone lines are in use constantly. People are often getting a busy signal when they call. He said that Paula Emery's work to recruit volunteers has been helpful in providing a person upstairs to take orders over the phone. He said there is no capacity at this point for an additional path of communication at the management level. Peter suggested the survey could be on the back of the flyer.

Peter said that communication with members is also occurring through social media. Leah Tedesco does this, using Facebook and other social media. She is working 2 to 4 hours a week on this. Les asked whether the Board wants to have its own voice on social media, but there was no follow up on this, other than discussion of the email memo from the board (see above).

Peter reported that the St. Corona Fund had received about \$660 in donations as of Saturday. Six people have used it. Management increased the amount that could be spent by users from \$30 to \$50. Still more than \$300 in the fund. Peter urges the Board to get the word out that the fund is useful and appreciated, and that people should still contribute. Peter said NFCA put a little article about the St. Corona Fund in their latest newsletter.

Peter has spent a lot of energy reviewing the information coming from federal agencies about how the new stimulus relief bills affect the Co-op and its employees. The Co-op is eligible to get reimbursed for 100 percent of paid leave for employees who are out on C-19-related leave. There are 3 such employees at present. The Co-op gets reimbursed by subtracting the amount paid as leave to eligible staff from its quarterly payment to the federal government for payroll tax withholding. Peter noted that this is a very efficient and quick way for the Co-op to be reimbursed.

Peter said there have been no layoffs. He is considering suspending the personnel policy in order to pay people on sick leave the maximum amount they could be reimbursed by the feds (100% of pay). The purpose of suspending the policy would be to do the best for our employees. Have to decide one way or the other before this coming Sunday. It's not clear

whether employees have to use accrued time off. Peter says it is impossible to get through to DOL to get answers to questions because their phones are consistently busy.

The Board will have two meetings by Zoom in April, with a goal of keeping each meeting to about an hour in length. The meetings will be on April 6 and April 20 on Zoom. Cat will prepare the agendas and chair the meetings. At the April 6 meeting the Board will finalize the message to be sent to members.