

Plainfield Co-op Board
Meeting by Zoom
May 4, 2020

Board members present: Cat, Les, Rose, Giordano, Sarah (for part of the meeting)

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

Cat, as vice president, prepared the agenda and chaired the meeting.

Most of the participants were able to connect and to stay connected (with brief exceptions) by Zoom. Sarah had technical difficulties and participated only in part of the meeting.

Check-in. All expressed delight that Sarah is once again able to join the Board.

Consent agenda. The draft minutes for April 13 were approved. The draft minutes for April 20 were approved subject to correction of a typo.

Member owner input. No call-ins or input from members. Cat gave a thumbs up to the Co-op toilet paper. Les said that the survey is now closed. Two more responses to the survey came in after the compilation presented to the board at the April 20 meeting.

General Manager's Update. Peter reported that the Payroll Protection Plan funding application was approved. Application for EIDL (Economic Injury Disaster Loan) funds is complete, but cannot yet be submitted because the SBA website is not accepting applications. Peter is checking daily and is in touch with the Congressional delegation so our application can go in as soon as possible.

The staff member who was responsible for financial and office work is no longer employed at the Co-op. Before rehiring, Peter plans to reconfigure the position, in consultation with Kevin and Naomi (the bookkeeper) and other staff so that more of the bookkeeping can be brought inhouse, and to eliminate the inefficient step of having to copy all the invoices and send them to Even Keel (bookkeeping firm). There was a long-term plan to make this change and Peter would have preferred to have more time to do it, but the staff vacancy moves this issue to the front burner. It will take a few weeks before the position can be filled – time to develop the job description and recruit. Peter thinks the position should be filled by a professional bookkeeper.

Finances are okay right now. Will be in the black through May as the Payroll Protection funds will cover April and May. Peter said his main concern now is the summer if we aren't able to open for the summer or if sales are flat or if we don't get the EIDL loan. Peter expects that the state guidelines for having the store open will be so restrictive that they may not be practical for the small square footage of our store. However, he said, it will be impossible to meet our budget guidelines if the doors are not open to the public. Also some shoppers may want to continue to do online ordering, which will create a staffing challenge. The staff is in active discussion about

various scenarios for maintaining social distancing, including a walk-up window for small orders, a red/green light to indicate when there are too many customers in the store.

Peter reviewed some staff changes. He said morale of staff is generally good. Almost all the staff have gotten the online training that the state will be requiring for businesses that are open to the public.

Peter participated in a conference call with other regional co-ops. All are talking about revisiting their budgets. Some co-ops are seeing increased sales; others are seeing decreases. Some have much longer order queues than Plainfield. Many days the Co-op is able to fill all orders by the end of the day.

Peter said the store addressed three main concerns from the survey: The phone lines are no longer busy most of the time. The inventory is online. And the queue time after ordering is significantly shorter. Most customers are now ordering online, which makes it a lot easier for the instore shoppers and keeps the phone lines freer. With the decrease in calling, the store no longer needs phone volunteers for some of the shifts; Peter will tell Paula Emery that the volunteer hours can be curtailed. Rose congratulated Peter on getting the inventory online.

Peter noted that produce is now a big income source (more than 20% of total sales). He said it would be a good time to do a sales flyer to promote departments with slower sales.

Sarah said the April financials will be a good indicator of how we are doing. Peter said we already know that the gross revenue was \$88K for April, which was less than budgeted, but we still need to see the expense figures.

Items from Policy Governance Calendar for May

1. New Board and staff orientation. Rose and Cat said they feel they have had adequate training through one-on-one coaching, looking at the website, reading the Policy Guidelines and watching policy governance videos. (Sarah left the meeting at this point because of fluctuating audio) Only one new staff, who is getting training. A former worker is back as a substitute.
2. Distribution of Annual Dividend. The previously approved dividend will be distributed next week. Peter has drafted a letter to the membership that explains how the dividend will be added to members' gift cards. He invited feedback from the Board.

Committee/Work Group Updates

1. Cat will follow up with Les about a plan to let members know the results of the survey and the actions taken in response to member comments. Peter will add a description of the actions taken to the letter he is sending to members (see above).

2. Marketing Committee (what's left of it) met by Zoom. Bob Fancher, Peter, and Leah. Discussed need for a May sales flyer. Discussed Building sign. Peter said he found the conditional use permit for the sign out front. The limitations arise because the sign is on Town property, not Co-op property, and was approved in conjunction with the Fire Department monument. With the limitations, the Co-op can't add additional signage to the back of the sign. Peter proposes moving the sign from the street to the front of the building. The Co-op is permitted to have a small sign with a finger pointing from the street to the building. Will do that. Also plan to put a 2' x 12' sign on the building; this can be done with a simple application to the Zoning Administrator, a much quicker process than conditional use. The Marketing Committee also discussed a direct mail to Plainfield and maybe Marshfield residents, targeted to the general public when we are ready to reopen the store. This would cost \$2-300 dollars, which is within the Marketing Committee budget.
3. Membership Coordination. Just Paula Emery right now, who has been doing a great job coordinating phone volunteers. Peter raised the question of whether it is time to start thinking about hiring for the Membership/Marketing position that is in the budget.
4. Building Committee. Mike Brodsky is resigning because of other time commitments. Chris Thompson has done some projects. The generator is on order and will require outside site work. Peter is waiting to hear from the Building Committee about whether they can go forward with the floor work targeted for Memorial Day weekend.

Next Meeting May 18 at 6 pm by Zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 7:15.