

Leverett Village Co op Board
March 18, 2020

Board Members: Jono Neiger, Jean Bergstrom, Sam Black, Karen Traub, Jeff Lacy-Lori Lynn Hoffer, Ann Ferguson, Martin Pittman, Danielle Barshack, Lise Coppinger

Absent: none

Others in Attendance: Paul Rosenberg, Patty Townsend, Erbin Crowell Neighboring Food Coop Association

Meeting opened at 7:05pm

Minutes approved from 3/12/20, 3/15/20

One minute check ins- Lise needs to be at the store if the refrigeration guy comes the third part of the audit is the HVAC. Ann mentions streamline communication and delegate to subcommittees to keep from getting overwhelmed. Jeff's concerns and suggestions are that we elect a president tonight, hopes Julio's resignation will not be permanent and suggests that we let the subcommittees do their work and report back to the board which would mean fewer emails among the whole board and more to the subcommittees- Jeff would like more presence on Nextdoor Shutesbury. Jono wants to get a rhythm going for meeting, wishes we could meet in person. Martin has reached out to personnel committee, infrastructure committee, feels overwhelmed and looking forward to finding the routine of the group- eager to hear update on who is coming in the store. Paul says sales have been brisk and we are committed to keeping to our store hours and our kitchen hours. Karen says it's been a roller coaster ride and priorities are getting people in the door and staying in the moment. Lori Lynn is concerned with where the board is at, feels at a disadvantage knowing what responsibilities the president had in relation to committees and wants to be clear about messaging what we are saying to the public about what hours we are open etc.

Jeff is in no position to put in the time Julio did as president.

Jono and Sam were nominated discussion ensued regarding the pro's of each- tabled until next meeting.

Erbin joins the meeting Jeff asks about the advantage of switching to non-profit and whether it makes sense in the short and long term.

Erbin is trying to understand the reason- to access external resources and avoid some expenses- suggests we are stretched too thin to start or change the organization, we probably shouldn't reinvent the wheel, maybe to attach to another organization. Not for profit, non-profit, 501 C 3 are all different entities- each complicated.

Sam says looking at taxes with a lawyer say the advantages of forming a Friends of the Lev Coop sharing a board- cannot see how the coop would lose anything.

Erbin says a 501c3 cannot be a coop because members cannot benefit through patronage- it will no longer be a cooperative. Attaining 501 c3 status can take a year or more and be taken away. If the idea is to shelter the assets of the coop, there are land trusts and other entities that can do that.

Jono says we decided to table this topic because it requires more research and asks Erbin to comment for a few minutes on the preliminary draft of the turnaround plan. Erbin would like to take a better look at the plan, run it by colleagues and return to talk to us. How can we best utilize Paul's presence to bridge to the next stage of management, looking at how that will be funded is a major question. There is an extraordinary amount of volunteer energy that will need to transition to staff.

Jeff asks how the River Valley Market is organized. Erbin says every cooperative is incorporated under Mass standards- cooperatives are by definition Not For Profit-like credit unions are businesses whose purpose is not to maximize benefits- incorporated as an S Corp. Erbin is happy to pull together resources on the status of Cooperatives. Leverett is a consumer Cooperative which means owners run it- if there is surplus (profit) it is reinvested or returned to the members- that is the essential cooperative structure. Erbin encourages us to set this aside to focus on the turnaround plan.

Paul says the coop contacted Laddie Lushin- preeminent cooperative Lawyer in the Northeast many years ago and got great advice on state laws and more with recommendations. There are resources out there to support businesses to help them weather this challenge for lending or grant resources.

Jono asks if there is an accounting of donations thus far and whether past givers have been thanked. Jeff has run through donation cards from the meeting and rounding up folks to see where their donations stand. Jono has a fundraising google doc for listing past donors. "LVC donations 2020"

Communication committee- important to get updates out about Covid 19 plan, curbside, kitchen, hours, what's happening
Open 9am-1:30 Kitchen hours to go
Store 8-6pm Friday pizza call ahead for to go 5-7pm
Soup will be served in containers- one soup and pizza and sandwiches

Curbside delivery- Paul says there has been no demand as of yet which of course could change- more importantly is the volunteer aspect- the product is changing every day. The offer of curbside pickup is being considered.

Jono says the central task if we want funding and loans we need the plan to show people. Take a moment everyone to review the plan

Paul says we are going to hit a wall (cash flow crisis and ability to move forward with inventory, volunteers) in about three weeks where we need to be prepared. Number one in Paul's thinking is in terms of operations, the plan, and fundraising- Jono and Paul will continue meeting. We must approach this methodically, realistically and in a detailed manner-now. The freezer is critical and will become even more as the weather warms up. Bottom line, we need an infusion of cash.

Susan Walker is working as bookkeeper at least for the moment and that is helpful for information and filing taxes. Another volunteer is needed to help with filing. Computers were picked up at the store where they have been for the last six weeks.

Martin says the executive committee needs to be a support team to Paul in store operations- Jono says the board president will take on the plan, and we need to fill in the details of what the plan is. What exactly is our fundraising goal and plan. We need to align our board in relation to Paul as the interim GM.

Volunteer coordinators report there are some new volunteers and a need for more.

Infrastructure- Lise needs to call the HVAC guy. Mo Gregoire would love to donate his time to replace lightbulbs in the ceiling that are missing and that should not affect the audit.

Karen presents the signs of intention- approved

Sam mentions tape marker to keep people out of café, tape at the register, enhanced cleaning techniques at the register.

Next meeting 7pm on 3/25/20 will also be a zoom meeting- use the same link
Adjourned at 9:41pm

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Traub