

Leverett Village Co op Board
March 5, 2020

Board Members: Julio Mendez-Pres, Jono Neiger-Treasurer, Jean Bergstrom, Sam Black, Lise Coppinger

Absent: Karen Traub-Clerk, Jeff Lacy-Vice Pres, Lori Lynn Hoffer

Others in Attendance: Ann Ferguson, Danielle Barshack, Paul Rosenberg, Patty

Call to order 7:11 pm

Minutes of Feb 26, 2020 meeting approved (Changes were made on Google Docs Spreadsheet that Jono's Term is 1/21. Meeting Minutes have correct Term on them)

(We met in the Coop Cafe, at new tables, chairs, and two booths. Procured by Julio, moved by moving van with his son, and delivered that day. The place looks grand!)

Jono - reviews "the numbers" to keep our efforts focused and grounded

On Google doc's – financial update from recent closing tapes

Daily average for receipts for the last three weeks is \$908.29 (Served alcohol is not on spreadsheet yet)

Julio - points out that before the new board, there were days that we brought in \$60.00 to 300.00! So we have seen a remarkable increase in sales.

Jono - Profit/loss monthly, cash flow, projections into the future was shown on a new spreadsheet made a few days ago by Cori, that reveals the need for the store to increase to \$1,500 a day in order to not run out of money by mid April.

Julio - introduces that there may be a group loan for larger sums of money in the near future.

Jono - the next phase – plug numbers in, target loans to stabilize things and pay down vendor debt

Julio – Matching donation – with same amt. of money, find other matchers for next fundraiser in smaller matches. Stair stepping to the 50K by added new matching grant donors along the way.

Jean - adds that the incentive for 50K is lessened because it is so much money. If we add matching donors it will stimulate people to donate.

Ann - group loan has to be secure, with returns, in case coop fails. People are willing to do that now. Strategic question about hitting those same loaners for more donations towards matching fundraising. We don't want to burn donors out.

Julio - coordination – Sam, Jeff, Ann get together and Julio will come, and they will coordinate the loans/fundraising. Some individuals may want to donate to a definite piece of equipment or project rather than a fundraiser. We need to prioritize those and aim for the top 5 things that need to be bought.

Sam - seconds the idea to have a list we promote for needs of the coop, itemized equipment needs, and also money loans. He knows a family that would like to host a celebration/gathering for the coop's successful fundraising to date.

Fundraising Report - Sam - not for profit discussion is shut down due to people being sick. We are waiting for Larry Farber to get better and let us know what the potential is.

Staffing: Discussion about staffing. Paid staff/volunteers/scheduling

Julio - sent an email with concerns about dwindling paid staff. He is not interested in having board members get burnt out staffing the register. We have to make the numbers work to shift register to employees. Important for BOD to be looking for money potential and not be burnt out. This business has to function with employees being paid to staff the store. He is concerned about BOD's quality of life.

Jono - asks Sam if he has free time from not working register, will he be able to coordinate volunteers? Sam replies it will be problematic when there are not enough volunteers, but that he is up for the job of volunteer coordinator.

Paul - so grateful to BOD and members of store!

Landmarks for day to day operations:

#1 - One of the keys to success is the extent to which we can have volunteers to contribute now, for 3-6 months. No getting around that. Need to rely on well trained volunteer staff, front end and kitchen. We have made progress in even the last two days. We must change staffing in kitchen. He has secured services of two people as volunteers that can help in kitchen.

#2 - Organizing, re-structuring, reconceptualizing bakery and deli moving forward. His opinion every area of store, we must downsize and streamline and learn how to manage it before we expand areas of the store. We must use volunteers.

#3 - We must come to understand what we are as a community owned responsible grocery store, we have to focus on our immediate needs. Biggest aspect – secure another 50K in the next 2-3 weeks. Loans or donations. After that we have to secure another 50K in the next 2-3 months if we want to have a chance to move forward. Without the store functioning well, everything is pie in the sky. We all need to be doing this concurrently. He knows how to do this. So clear in his mind how we need to move forward in the real world. “Use me, you are not going to use me up! I will tell you when I feel I’m getting used up. I am so excited, this is an amazing group!”

Patty - we are focused on the store, but we also see the importance of café development. Keeping us afloat and making a wonderful place to be. We need to be SO careful. We need to walk a fine line, and we need to come down in labor and food costs. We have to streamline ingredients and we have to make money on the food we make.

Lise - gives the example of a gluten free pizza having pesto, sun dried tomatoes and two other costly toppings, being sold for \$3.35. This is an example of the store losing money by not covering the costs for what was made and also not making any profit on what was sold.

Julio - Starting Monday we are going to a 1 paid cook system with volunteers.

Paul - Store - (great pause) - hell of love, and yet seeing a slow down in purchasing. Red flags are out. Cost of goods has gone way down, but no one is buying and things are slowing down. Coop is selling great products at grocery store pricing. Board needs to put a ton of effort to getting people in here, and shop, and be patient with us as we grow the store. He spent time today to imagine what the store will look like. It will involve down sizing the store for a little while and seeing that items are correctly priced. Ways of purchasing for consumers has changed greatly. People do a lot of online shopping. He spent time yesterday at another coop. They said they are definitely feeling the effects of people buying online and not going to stores! Our biggest challenge is maintaining people flowing through the store with products in hand that are of value and what they want.

Julio - amazon going into food industry, selling for so much less is a challenge. Large supermarkets are also feeling the online problem. Our area, with its community that gets involved, we can use as a resource. People are providing such positive kudos for the newsletter. More and more we are going to have exposure associated with larger events we do, which will increase people coming to the store.

Jono - It's also about habits, new ones, will take a little while to rebuild. People have changed their habits, and through newsletter and events, people come and see that they can buy stuff. It will take some time. Communication and outreach. We can beat this slump. It is March and we are still in winter mode. We will come into spring and be in a really good place! That is when we really have potential to turn things around.

Ann - why do we need 50k in two weeks? We may miss the possibility of getting more money if we rush. She is concerned and wants to know - Paul why it is so important?

Paul - I just used 50K as rough, operating needs and our paying down of our vendors. Balancing act happening now. In his mind it is a goal. He would be so happy if we raised even 20K. He respects the work everyone is doing and believes we can meet our goals.

Jono - we need to get accurate numbers tied to exactly what we need. So the next push is aligned with spring.

Paul - beer and wine is the only place that sees increase in revenue. It requires no labor except him. We need as much product into store asap. Alcohol, cigarettes brought in more money than grocery and deli ever did. Perhaps...

Grocery - why in a hurry to fill shelves? Because everyone can shop here and walk away knowing that something is changing here. That requires for us to see the big picture and juggle things well.

Julio - we have to come up with terms for loans, fundraising group is meeting to do this. Community is complacent. We have a great new board and Paul's back (Yay Paul and Patty!) Things may look all fine, but that is not the truth. We need volunteering! Highlighted in our communications. Call to arms - we need 5 volunteers. Can people commit?

Sam - is doing coordination. We need specific jobs. And we need hours.

Danielle - last year we did town meeting lunch, do we want to do that? Reserve to do it at Shutesbury and Wendell. A place to make pitch for volunteers.

Jono - too much for us to even think about doing that. Too big of a job.

Paul and Sam will come up with jobs and time slots, Jean will put out communication about the need for Volunteers.

Jean - #1) We had a meeting this week, communication committee, dates for spring fling are June 13th with a rain date of 14th June. We are moving forward! Rising from the ashes, celebrate the coop! We are excited and going to make it happen. Talking about a Coop Mascot to appeal to kids.

#2) We are looking into having travel logs, we will visit a country and have slides and try 4 different wines, and food treats. With each country we have a theme and we can get some wonderful travel logs.

#3) Another thing is a wine and paint theme, get supplies and people get a canvas and people can paint and drink wine and eat food. "Paint and Pickle" is something Julio has done before. We have a lot of ideas, Leverett gaming guild, we would like to have 1 or 2 events a week. Dominoes, bird walk with brunch, permaculture garden walk, etc.

SIGN out front looks SO FANTASTIC! (Thank you Lori Lynn!)

Jean's sister in law is a furniture painter, hoping to ask her to paint a new sign. DO WE WANT TO CHANGE THE NAME OF THE COOP?

We need to involve the members. We need to let them know that in ___ months we are going to make a name change, get people involved, and change the sign. Get them to drop their suggestions off at the store. Have a prize? BOD winnows suggestions down to a few for voting of membership?

Paul - We used to have membership days - discounts, prizes. We also used to have Saturday food and wine tastings.

Jean and Lori are working at updating website. Coop cash? Still doing? Gift cards?

New Go Fundme page? Problems - too many fundraising initiatives. Go fundme is not doing anything, one has to reach a percentage of what we are raising, before we get promoted by them. It has run its course. All agree to end the Go Fundme and start something else fresh.

Lise - presents Coop Closet idea. Needs a good name. The idea is to have the back part of the store be a place where we sell items that the community drops off for resale. All money goes to the Coop. Lise will receive items, decide what gets put on the shelf, prices items. There will need to be a button on the register for these sale items. Great opportunity for the community to support the Coop by bringing things in excellent shape for resale, like what they would drop off at the

Hospice shop or Salvation Army, but instead they drop things off and Coop makes money. No clothes, only items in excellent shape, clean, etc. Details to follow. (Everyone in room supports the idea) We need to come up with a cleaver name for it, invite people to drop items off (place to be determined) and then encourage people to come in and see what is on the shelves!

Julio - wants brochures - Jean coop flyer? - to show what do we offer, schedule, items, next event, check out our website, etc.

Jean - Chamber of commerce, is willing to post events on website.

Lise - Wants to continue the flow of hierarchy (lack of a better word), communicating the way we have been feels good. Gathering of ideas and information to report to committees and then have appropriate people make decisions.

Jono - Shows Roles & Responsibilities chart on wall (Ann F. Procured a projector that we used to show computer stuff on the wall) This chart is on Google Docs under "Coop Organization Board Documents."

Agenda Items we did not address: Potential New Board members, Bylaw review

Respectfully Submitted,
Lise Coppinger