

Agenda for Co-op Board Meeting 5-13-20

Minutes for 5-6-20 Approved

Attendance: Martin Pittman, Ann Ferguson, Karen Traub, Danielle Barshak, Lise Coppinger, Jean Bergstrom, Sam Black, Jono Neiger (late) and Jeff Lacy (late). Absent: Lori Lynn Hoffer.

President's Report (Sam) (10 min.)

- Considering the large debts we have, the sensible thing is to not feel we need to pay off right away but to find ongoing funding, e.g. lenders. For future Boards, the ability to think long term is important. Re Turnaround plan, we need to have structured plan to pay off debts for the future that involve guidance for future Boards as well.
- Can the store be more than just a convenience store? Good idea now to build up groceries and sales but ultimately we have to think beyond the grocery model. Point: There is no retail outlet for artists in Leverett, so perhaps a Pop-up art sale, e.g. buy gifts etc.
- This summer sometime the state will probably be relaxing regulations for outdoor dining space (also maybe indoors) Need to think ahead of how to expand outdoor space. Need to have some visioning.
- Sam sent the Federal Emergency Disaster loan application for \$10K advance. That would be a loan at 1%, but the program can provide loans to businesses of up to 2 million at 3.75% interest. This is the second phase of this federal program's handouts, since original money was spent out but program has recently been re-funded and re-opened. The application only allowed us to apply for 10K emergency grant, but we may be turned down because of already receiving PPP loan.

Finance Committee Report (10 min.)

Finance committee did not meet and Jono the chair was not yet present at the meeting. Ann briefly summarized what the officers had discussed:

- The continuing negotiation by Paul (with Jono, and working with bookkeeper Susan Walker) to balance paying down some vendor debts, creating payback plans with others.
- UNFI lawyer has been contacted but has not yet replied.
- There is a need to work more on the Turnaround plan, particularly with budgeting for the summer and fall phases to balance revenues and expenses and pay down debts.
- This budgeting projection process is now on hold because of computer and Sage accounting system programs that have slowed down the bookkeeping catch up.

Fundraising (10 min) Karen, chair:

- Virtual fundraising, challenge grant etc. Challenge grant: Since March 11 have brought in 10,970, have got 5950, and from GoFundMe have only \$580 to go to have reached the money

to get the promised \$4K challenge grant (Note post meeting: This challenge grant of \$4K is now withdrawn: some of that group of donors may donate to the new challenge grant instead.)

- New challenge from Anonymous donor who would do a Matching grant of \$7500 if we bring in \$7500 in addition. This campaign is targeted to pay down the UNFI debt. Karen talked to Hendrix and says the campaign can be advertised as a Support the Coop and Pay Local Vendors campaign: we aim to raise funds to pay down local vendors. Hendrix asked about the Buy a Shelf Campaign started last January? Sam says it didn't work when it was started and it is not worth starting again.
- Karen has found that many people really want to give now to the Coop: everyone on the Board should keep talking to their friends. She talked to Don Southwick who has recently donated \$250 targeted toward paying down the credit card, and she is hopeful he will donate more.
- Karen supports a big on-line community meeting in June. For a fundraising campaign it would usually be a soiree with food, music and potential donors, but can't do such an event with pandemic. Am thinking about Zoom meeting which includes an introduction by the Board president, a virtual tour of the store with featured items and then closing with peaceful musical interlude. People would be on Mute but would have chance to chat, raise questions. Free event but could ask for donations.
- GoFundMe account is still a problem. Can't speak to anyone by phone in the GoFundMe management. Money coming to us anyway into our bank account, but it is hard to change the content on the page. Alex Phillips still has to edit it as he is the one who created the account, and he is very busy right now.
- Board fundraising: Hopes that the whole Board will be involved with fundraising.

Communications and Member Outreach (10 min) Jean and Ann:

Jean's report:

- Communications & Member Outreach have been meeting on Fridays. Ann has great ideas re membership. We decided to divide up responsibilities: Ann will be point person for Membership and Jean and LL will be for Communication, and we are in touch with Karen on both issues
- Working on a script for register for why be a member
- Also Karen, Lori Lynn and Jean will be working on a brochure. Trifold with brochure with map, appeal to bikers to circulate.
- Jean calling the Coop partners to get details on the deal they made with the previous management and what discounts if any they provide to our members. We will update as we get that info.

Ann's report:

- Membership process and data is being worked on. Peggy Wolff typed up the hand written notes that previous Membership staff Cindy Coffin had and Ann edited them.

- They are now with Suzette Snow Cobb who will edit them further, and plan to meet with two new volunteers who have agreed to help input membership payment and requests for new memberships into our L-BOSS system which communicates with the cash register information.
- The two further steps are 1) for share purchases to be entered into financials by bookkeeper Susan Walker and then 2) some Board volunteer needs to get the L-BOSS updated data to edit and update our Google spread sheets of Active and Paid Up (Lifetime) members so we can do phone campaigns with members and be sure that we have accurate contact and membership information for them.

Karen suggested that Lise Coppinger be brought into this editing process for the Membership Process Notes since she is a good detail person, and also stressed the need to train cashier volunteers in the details of the membership process as well as benefits of membership. Lise agreed to help edit the Notes.

Infrastructure (10 min) Lise:

- Eversource Mass Save is replacing the fans on the walk in, so after tomorrow the Coop will be saving \$\$ on electricity. On freezer there is electricity in the glass and will install a sensor to save money.
- Martin: Paul and he met and spoke of two phase removal of old equipment, need to have Freon removing and also electric disconnect. Brian Blynn will take stuff away.

For replacement of freezer:

- Re Atkins freezer, Paul reconnected with them. Sense is that they may be willing to sell it earlier than July. Shared that if Coop comes and gets freezer, we could pay in low \$3Ks, and Kelly expressed openness.
- Overlapping option: Paul is negotiating with the Mark Snow company to bring a merchandize freezer for customers near registers, and also plans to move back room freezer to front for little popsicles, ice cream etc. These freezers would be in addition to the large three door freezer from Atkins or elsewhere.
- Looking at other purchasing possibilities for large freezer, e.g. Gillette

For dairy case, started looking into options

Karen: would it be helpful to have a time goal for ice cream freezer? Martin shared our Board sense of urgency with Paul, who is working on it, but thinks we can get the merchandize freezer quicker hopefully even by Memorial Day.

Personnel/Volunteers (5 min) Sam:

- There are now a stable set of volunteers who are working with Paul, always interested in training new volunteers, one for kitchen. He asked the Board to please keep advertising for

volunteers. Karen asked for clarity about the decision that people can't bring own mugs anymore? This is waivable.

- **Action Proposal:** All agreed that it would be good to have a staff meeting with volunteers and staff.

Sustainability (5 min) Danielle:

Danielle mentioned she thought she was the only one on the committee but Ann and Jean said they were also on the committee (Note: Jono is also on this committee).

- Outside eating will be great if we can buy only compostable plates for disposal. Danielle will think about and ask Paul. Jono says it would be good to send a recommendation to Paul (and kitchen crew) and source biodegradable material. Usual complaint is that it is more expensive.
- Karen works with Greg Innis for Garlic and Arts (on Board of Quabbin Harvest) and he has a whole system of composting. Karen would be happy to contact them. We could set up delivery to him.
- Jono: we are not set up to do composting on the property. We could reduce packaging, for example try to reduce one use disposable containers, and communicate to members.
- Jono: We could be doing a lot more sharing with small local Coops to make a more sustainable business.

Old Business (15 min)

Public Zoom Meeting for June (10 min)

- We would need to communicate with members what doing, what is happening with store. Martin is skilled in tech issues and will work with Jono and Sam on planning
- Two challenges are 1) Content and 2) Dynamic presentation. Let's set a date and figure out content. Is it info giving or some gathering? Ann suggested we need to build in some feedback feature. Jean has been doing huge Zoom meetings with different presenters and there are people chatting and sending questions and then host intervenes to try to answer most important questions. Karen agrees with Jean that large Zoom—have moderator calling on people and someone else moderating chat list to bring to moderator.
- What steps should we do? Karen wants to try moderated experience with 5-10 people and will get ideas. Could be Board members and friends.
- What content? Martin: Set up white board. First suggestion is the question: What do you want from a Coop? People can write on it and it appears to all. Can show videos! Can make video tour. Jono: There is a lot of updating that we can do for people, maybe committees come up with different inputs, questions. Jean points out a member survey, e.g. Dec. 3 Special Member meeting, people came up with ideas. Thinks it is a bit disrespectful to keep asking people what they want from the Coop. Instead we should fill them in on what we are doing, ask for questions. Ann suggested a YouTube video of Paul, Patty and Rue dancing around stocking the store. She has talked to a member who agreed to put together a show with a song about the

Coop, suggested a possible contest for best song etc. but this would need more time to develop, not ready in June. Martin: First Zoom meeting for Coop public it would be good not to be too ambitious. Need to be realistic, need to find good balance between content and excitement. Karen suggested a 2 minute Board check-in for each Board member, and say something about how the Coop committee is coming together. Jono: Agrees with the idea of trying something simple—lay out an agenda with some interaction, can't imagine a big draw for early summer evening.

New Business:

Protocol for Letters to Board (5 min)

Discussion of a recent letter to the Board which came both by personal communication and an email to the website raised the question of whether that counted as a formal letter to the Board. Karen pointed out that she got a letter from Amherst Chamber of Commerce on the Coop Face Book page which she monitors. Jono suggested that if an issue comes in from the community, Communications people can answer, or if it concerns infrastructure or staff, it needs to go to store manager first. In these situations it is important to respond immediately to community member. Have to make judgement call as to whether should send email to Board or not. Jeff pointed out that it is unavoidable that issues will come to Board members but we need to know what to do with them, and mostly Paul should be involved. Karen felt that in the case we are discussing we are all interchangeable. But if more controversial, shouldn't give own opinion. People thought Karen gave a beautiful response to the recent letter to the Board. Karen is now checking the email from the website, is automatically coming to her, so the Board gave her a go ahead to respond as she sees fit to such messages.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Ferguson, Clerk