

Draft Minutes for Co-op Board Meeting 6-10-20

Minutes for 6-3-20 Approved

Present: Jono Neiger, Ann Ferguson, Lise Coppinger, Danielle Barshak, Karen Traub, Martin Pittman, Jean Bergstrom, Sam Black

Absent: Lori Lynn Hoffer, Jeff Lacy

President's Report (Sam)

- Ice Cream is here in the small freezer by the register. It is half gallons of Snow's ice cream and pints of Bart's. There will also be another small freezer brought on line which will be selling ice cream and frozen treats such as popsicles.
- Wonderful things are happening re the WSRI ad, as Joe, an experienced marketer, is working with Karen on that campaign, as well as on advertising the Coop on Facebook.
- Sam and Cindy painted picnic tables and merry-go-round in preparation for summer use of the Coop outdoor space.
- Outdoor Dining Protocol: Sam submitted the protocol draft for outdoor dining to the Leverett Board of Health, who say that it is acceptable. We still need to find out whether the ABCC will accept beer and wine out at the picnic tables. Maybe there can be a dedicated corridor around the parking lot.

Discussion:

Martin wonders whether Paul is OK with opening kitchen for more take-out and eating outside. Paul has step by step strategy, does not want to commit staff time to serving outdoors at this time although Jono has talked with him in regard to bringing in menu changes over time. Sam mentions the barbeque pit, manned by volunteers, as something to try to use for a special outdoor event. Jono says we could consider a Friday night barbeque event, to be organized by the Board. Board should do footwork about such events, including checking out the ABCC protocol around outside beer and wine consumption. It was suggested we could call Julio back in as a volunteer barbeque chef!

Finance Committee (Jono):

Jono has reports from bookkeeper (Susan Walker: SW) which were reviewed at the Finance committee meeting, and Cory revised how we were doing the numbers. SW just sent Jan-March profit and loss statements.

Suggestion: we could look at them this week and have SW at the meeting next week. Paul reports SW is close to being caught up with April and May with profit and loss. The other thing we need is the balance sheet with debt load, accounts payable and liabilities so we have an overview of the business's financial state. Goal would be that Paul would do an expedited version of an inventory through May 31 so as to the difference between revenue and expenses during the period. We are using a lot of bookkeeper time. Due to PPP \$\$, she is doing 23-24 hours a week. Paul believes the goal for her services should come down to 8 hours a week when we are in regular mode.

Jono checked bank account balances: yesterday the operating capital account has \$26K and the Raise the Roof (donations fund) account has \$26K. This is after first UNFI payment of \$12.5 K. Jono just signed another round of 15K worth of payroll checks etc. which have not yet been taken out of the first account. We have still 9K in our main account (after these present checks are paid) to buffer us with working capital. Paul and Jono felt quite good to be able to do such an aggressive payment of vendor debt. Jono says we have paid off 10-20K in debt to local vendors, and paid 10 local vendors down to zero! Jono mentions that all vendors Paul has contacted have not required COD but allowed 30 to 45 days for payment, which is due to their trust in Paul.

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Sidehill Farm is going to start selling to us again so we can now carry their milk products including yoghurt.

Martin asked about the plan to pay for SW's work, since the PPP funds expired two days ago. Jono reports that Paul is going to negotiate her hourly rate. Paul and the Executive officers (Jono, Sam and Ann) are going to have a meeting this week to discuss long range plans for this fall and winter, after seasonal revenue decline. We need to work out a realistic budget that will allow us to pay the salary of a GM to replace Paul.

Sam is going to do some research on how other businesses do their accounting and asks for volunteers to help with this research. Karen and Danielle volunteered to help. Ann pointed out that our accounting system as a Co-op is more complicated than other small comparable businesses and we need to consider switching our accounting software system to save bookkeeping time, but this investment would need to be budgeted in.

Fundraising (Karen)

Some discussion of a Vendor Pay off campaign, possibly using the matching grant we have received of \$7500. Karen suggests instead we take a breath in fundraising. We should be seeing where we are at, celebrating our successes.

Sam, Karen, Lori, Jean are working on website to get it updated. When we finally are able to get and install the big three door freezer that was a part of our Equipment capital campaign (for which we raised nearly \$20K) we can have big celebration.

- WRSI Ad

Joe is working on the ad: Our second place award in the radio station contest for small businesses allows us 100 hours a week on 4 stations. Joe has worked with Hadley Gardens etc. He came up with draft ad. Theme is: How Close are You to the LVC? And the answer is: Probably not close enough! The ad will run for 2 weeks then he and Karen will craft another more specific ad.

- Telethon

A song contest had been proposed for the best Co-op song but Joe advises that contests are bad since they require judges and winners and losers. Instead he suggests that the telethon be organized as a festival, and be a curated showcase of people's expressions of love for Coop with many kinds of expression allowed, e.g. submissions could include an original song, poem, or story about the Co-op. It would be possible for local musicians to play at telethon. There could also be an auction of goods

and services. Steve Adams was mentioned, and Jean said he would probably write a song!

Timeline: Karen is thinking August or maybe September. Karen has recorded a friend fluteplaying. Got Wild Halloran musician to agree to do Zoom. We need a producer, tech people, Date. Maybe form a subcommittee?

There was a discussion regarding the timing of such a telethon. Jono suggested better to do it in November or December because of summer and also that it will need to be on Zoom.

Communications and Member Outreach (Jean)

No new developments yet. Jean is working on the information from Coop business partners and what discounts if any they allow Coop members. She and Lori Lynn are working on a new Coop brochure to list member benefits. Jean sends out Mail Chimp message to members every Thurs., has added 40 new people to the list, now about 570.

Sam asked if the need for a volunteers clean up crew for the outside area could be advertised, including cutting the grass. Laureen and Jono would help.

Ann announced that the Membership Data Protocol Notes are just about ready. Suzette continues to work as volunteer doing updates to the Member Data on the register L-Boss system and for now Ann has updated Member Google doc lists for the Board and will continue to do so. Ann is chairing a Membership Phone campaign meeting with members of the Fundraising and Member Outreach committee members this Monday.

Infrastructure (Lise)

Eversource audit part 2 happened Monday, refrigeration and heating need a lot of work because of previous systems. The contractors can only do what Eversource will allow them to do for us. We still have the 25K interest free loan from Eversource that we can use for energy renovations. Refrigeration room is really inefficient and needs to be changed. Contractors are going to be putting in propane gas and remove oil backup. We will have to wait until audit is done and then we can come up with an alternative vision.

Regarding removal of old freezer and Fridge units: MJMoran was going to charge \$400 to take out Freon but there is a problem of connection with compressor. Once the appliances are removed, Mark Gamble will come look at floor repairs. Paul has been in touch with Kelly at Atkins Farm North regarding the freezer purchase. Lise, Martin and Brian will visit at Atkins North to scope out the relocation of that freezer to our store. If all plans work out, Paul will finalize sale. Jono said Paul and Kelly completed negotiations at \$3500 for purchase of the freezer. Martin notes Paul's methodological approach.

It was noted that in general only committee chairs should be contacting Paul in regards to store operation decisions. Jono reminds the Board that we have volunteers for floor repairs, e.g. Ben Goldberg, etc.

Old Business: Public Zoom Meeting for July 15?

There was general agreement that we should start making all our Zoom Board meetings open for public attendance starting this coming Board meeting on Weds. June 18. Martin points out that there is a distinction between such meetings where public can attend but the agenda is designed for ongoing Board business, and a public community meeting which is set up for major presentations or summaries of the financial situation, the capital campaign and a substantial question and answer period. The latter is what we would do at a public community meeting like the one we are planning for July 15: the plan would be to have a financial report, discuss the turnaround plan, thank donors and structure in questions and answers by and to the public. Our financial numbers for the first two quarters of 2020 will be ready by the end of June and could be presented at such a public community meeting which could also show revenue and expense trends.

Decision: We will send out an invitation to our members on Mail Chimp to attend our weekly Board Zoom meetings starting this Weds. June 18 and have Martin be the person who sends out the link.

Other:

- Karen was very touched by Cheryl Howland's 10 lb. donation of Rattlesnake Gutter coffee.
- Paul was moved to tears at his success in bringing back the local (Springfield) distributors of Riojana wine because it was a large delivery that marks a turning point in the store's efforts to renegotiate with a big local vendor.
- Danielle mentions that the Lake Wyola crowd are an ideal market for the Co-op to sell take out food, lunch etc, and recently the staff working at the parking lot want to know who to refer people to. Jean will write up a flyer about Co-op offerings for them to have at the station.
- Martin wanted to know if it is possible to stay open later in summer months, for example to stay open regularly to 7 pm? Jono will talk to Paul re hours.
- It was noted that the Clerk should be sure to bring the hard copies of the Board minutes up to date on the store bulletin board. Ann is updating online versions of these minutes and sending them to Lori Lynn to post on the Coop website.

Respectfully submitted

Ann Ferguson, Clerk