

Draft Agenda for Co-op Board Meeting 7-8-20

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

Meeting started 7:03 pm.

Minutes for 7-1-20 Approved

President's Report (Sam)

Paul really wants 3 three-door coolers, so for the MA Food Security infrastructure grant Sam wrote up justification re the large percentage of seniors in Leverett and our food desert problem. His proposal asked for a grant only to purchase the three coolers (about \$18K), although the probable target of the grant is businesses in gateway cities, so winning the grant may not be likely.

Finance Committee Report (Jono)

Jono said at our Finance committee meeting this week we agreed that it is a priority to switch our accounting system to Quick Books on Sept 1. We need to do research on the LBOS system and do an upgrade. We will ask Paul to contact Pierre who is the dealer and support person for our LBOS system to try to arrange a meeting with him about possibilities as soon as possible. The 2018 report the Board received from Pierre about possible updates shows that we can do a lot better with an investment in our existing POS system than in buying a whole new such system.

Cory Greenberg has been a stellar support person. Today Paul, Susan Walker (SW) and Cory had a 2 hour meeting. Problem: The reality is that we are not able to get the balance sheet up to date, since the accounting chaos of last year has not been solved. The store's clunky accounting system involves a lot of manual transfer of data. The previous consultant who did the books was not a bookkeeper, and didn't know how to do Sage. SW is taking a lot of time to clean it up. We can do better budgeting when we get better numbers from the past so we can get clearer on Utilities, payroll taxes, etc. to expect in the future.

Ann summarized a discussion with Art Ames, former very successful GM of the Berkshire Co-op. He stressed that we should have a two year business turnaround plan if possible before we do major equipment purchases and that we should in any case buy second-hand equipment. He thought we should prioritize buying the Quick Book accounting system as soon as possible and also setting up the process to search for a new GM quickly.

Communications and Member Outreach (Jean):

Jean said that Lori Lynn and she are continuing to work on a brochure. Jean is trying to get her husband Steve to come up with a catchy phrase to advertise the Coop. If anyone has a good logo send it to her. Jean asked her to send messages for her weekly Mail Chimp message by tomorrow. Agenda for July 15 will be put in the message.

- **Membership sub-committee (Ann):** The member data process is working well with coordination between cashiers, the bookkeeper, Suzette Snow-Cobb and Ann to record member share purchases and new members. The Active Member phone campaign has

been started by Ann and Peggy Wolff. We are calling members who need to purchase new shares since their membership benefits have expired. When we call we are updating them on Co-op news and correcting any contact information. Hopefully Karen, Jean and Lise will join us as time permits so we can complete calling all 122 members who are in this status.

- Newsletter (Ann): The newsletter will be out this week. It has taken more time than we hoped because of the lack of complete financial data for one of the articles. We hope to have it out in time to boost participation in the Board Committee meeting Weds. July 15. A reminder and agenda for that meeting is included in the newsletter.

Discussion of July 15 Community Zoom Meeting:

Martin said that so far 4 people have reached out to him for July 15. We plan to use regular link for our Board meetings. Interested people should be directed to Martin. Jono and Martin will have administrative roles during this meeting.

If anyone need to do a power point for a report, they need to contact Martin. He took a screen shot of everyone to share for the July 15 announcement. In terms of the agenda, Martin will start the meeting with Zoom explanations, then Sam will give a brief intro, and then Jono will facilitate. We can't give detailed financials at this point because SW is still behind on the data. We decided to add a report from the GM to the agenda. Ann will do so and send that agenda to Jean. (Agenda is attached as an addendum below). The theme of the meeting will be what have we been doing these late 5 months, what aim to achieve

Martin noted that other people will be on same status as the Board members in the meeting. We can also have them do the Chat. Ann suggested letting the public ask questions after each item on the agenda. The overall timeline for the meeting was set at one and ½ hours. Martin should be the timekeeper. We should look at agenda and set time limits. Ann will send agenda and possible times.

Jean thinks we need a screen shot on the Finances and maybe some revenue graphs and asked Jono to pull together a graph, since this is helpful for visual learners. Jono said that the corrected revenue for May was at or over 65K, which is the same or more as the store grossed for May 2019. He pointed out that committee chairs may want to do one image for each committee when they give their reports, because there is a screen share function on the screen.

Jean: Any news in store? Jono pointed out that a small work party that he organized (himself, Jean, Ann and the Costa family) helped to do yard work for the bushes and trees in the Co-op back yard.

There was a discussion about the projected repeat of the negative ad against the Co-op in the Montague Reporter. Ellen Edge has sent a supportive letter to the editor which should appear in the next issue. Jeff asks whether sales have dropped and the answer was No. Danielle said that Faye Zipcowitz asked the American Bar association about the law firm referred to in the ad and she and Sam Lovejoy said that nowhere is there listed a JSmith law firm. Karen said that the editor of the paper said they don't usually investigate ads. We decided to inform the Montague Reporter that the American Bar Association has verified that it isn't a listed firm. Ann agreed to contact the editor about this.

Fundraising (Karen)

A new Ice Cream Flag is arriving to advertise that the store has ice cream. We are carrying Bart's and Snow's ice cream and novelties. Sam and Karen will meet next Weds. with someone from the UMA Isenberg School of Management to get a student to help with our online presence. Karen mentioned that Ann helped Fundraising to pinpoint weak areas in our record keeping. Karen reached out to MJ Johnson and her partner Mel who have experience in working with spread sheets. They would volunteer to help us create member lists including their donations. A vendor, Sarah Sheilds, signed over her vendor payment as a donation to the Coop.

Karen talked to Jay Deane who helped Quabbin Coop with their successful telethon. He noted that 1,600 people follow the LVC Facebook page which is impressive and will help outreach for our September telethon. He will come to Friday fundraising meeting to discuss tips. Karen will gear up her organizing for our telethon after next week. For the event, in addition to Wildcat Halloran performing music, Cinda Jones's forester will give a talk on the Paul Jones forest, and hopefully we can get Patty Townsend to do yoga, among others.

Personnel (Danielle)

Danielle spoke to Erbin who will send descriptions of the GM position that other Coops have had. Erbin didn't have an opinion re whether a GM or Co-managers is a better model: What counts is whether people work well as a team. Jono points out we should be thinking of 3-6 months to hire a GM since Paul would like to be relieved of his interim GM duties by then. It was pointed out that we really need to get started in running ads for the GM position since it may take some time to find the right candidate.

Danielle and Martin will be looking at and updating the employee handbook. Regarding the question of who is going to be on the Search committee (SC) it was suggested that the Search committee should include Paul, several Co-op consultants like Erbin Crowell or Cory Greenberg if possible, several Co-op members with Coop experience, such as Mary Jo Johnson and Suzette Snow Cobb, as well as several Board members. There was some discussion of who from the Board might serve.

Jono pointed out that in the last GM hiring process there was a subgroup on SC that eliminated weak candidates and then the remainder were ranked by the SC, and then the Board narrowed the candidates down based on that and interviewed 3 people in person before making the final decision. Martin suggests a future conversation with Board about how to weigh criteria, eg. local experience vs. outside candidate. Several expressed preference for a process which lists pros and cons rather than number rankings for candidates. There was agreement that we needn't list a salary on any hiring ad, but be willing to negotiate on a range once we have candidates. Sam suggests that the SC and Board should draw up a list of questions for candidate interviews. Ann said she would send docs from 2018 GM search, including the ad and the interview questions.

The decision was that the SC should consist of one outside expert, three Coop members, several Board members, and the present GM. The SC can come up with interview questions and then run them by Board. After a discussion about community and staff input to the search process, it was agreed that the Board bears the primary responsibility for the GM hiring.

Sustainability (Danielle)

Ann asked whether we can have a followup discussion about replicating the big trash bin on porch. Danielle wonders if we should get Ben Goldberg to make one. Jean said she would contact Ben. Someone suggested galvanized trash bins, chained together. Karen wonders who will empty these trash bins. More trash bins means more trash. The decision for now is not to have recycling station outside: we can have more outside receptacles when we have more paid staff that can empty them. We just have to ensure that recycling from store is done regularly. In the future, Jono would be willing to find a location for the storage shed we can put up that could house such recyclables.

Infrastructure (Martin)

Brian Blynn is taking out first freezer tomorrow and second out in few days. Down payment to Atkins has been made. Possibility that Brian out of town next week, might need help, e.g. We only have till end of month to get Atkins freezer. Martin will be in touch with Jeff re pickup at Atkins. We discussed having our own volunteer work crew to get the old equipment out of the store so the floor can be worked on before our new equipment from Atkins is due.

Meeting adjourned at 8:33 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Ann Ferguson, Clerk

Addendum: Board Community Update zoom Meeting Weds. July 15, 7-8: 30pm

Get an update on the last 6 months of Coop history and successes, get your questions answered and provide feedback! Stock up on your ice cream at the store and bring your sundae to the meeting! Contact Martin Pittman (martinpittman@earthlink.net) for registration information.

AGENDA (and suggested times)*

*Questions can be noted in the Chat. Note: Total time comes to 90 minutes

- 1) Martin explains Zoom procedures (5 min)
- 2) President's Report on Fundraising, Donations, interim management team (10 min)
- 3) General Manager Report: Paul Rosenberg (10 min)
- 4) Finance Report: Numbers, successes and challenges (10 min)
- 5) Board Structure and Committee reports (Total 35 minutes)
 - o Fundraising (10),
 - o Communications and Membership(10)
 - o Infrastructure (10)
 - o Sustainability (5)
- 6) Join the Solidarity Economy in MA? Report by Hendrix Berry (5 min)
- 7) Next 6 Months Turnaround Plan (10 min)