

## **Minutes from July 28, 2021 Leverett Village Co-op Board of Directors Meeting**

In attendance: Danielle Barshak, Sam Black, Lise Coppinger, MaryJo Johnson, Kari Ridge, GM John Calhoun

Meeting called to order at 7:09 p.m. Board unanimously approved Minutes from June 23, 2021 Board Meeting.

### **President's Report (Sam Black):**

Paperwork for the second round of PPP funding has been filed and we expect to have complete forgiveness of the loan. Paperwork has also been filed for the Pour License and we expect the Co-op will receive this within a week or so, which enables the Co-op to pour beer and wine. The next step will be to compile material for the patio modification license, to allow the Co-op to serve beer and wine on the under-construction patio.

### **GM's Report (John Calhoun):**

John said it has been a busy time and the most significant aspect is the installation of the new Point of Sale system. There are still some tweaks to be worked out and some can be fixed remotely by the technicians who installed it. John said this has been the first week that something hasn't been breaking or not working: the pizza ovens are working, the gas leak was fixed, the produce cooler was serviced and the floor was re-tiled. He added that he has learned a lot about HVACs and gas piping and coolers.

John said that, while sales exceeded projections in March and April, May through July have been a different story, and he's adjusting projections for the next fiscal year and thinking of other strategies to increase sales. He added that increasing selection is not going to be enough to reach sales goals. He pointed out that the Co-op has money in the bank and could withstand a slow period.

John has brought in vitamins and gifts and is hoping to switch distributors from UNFI to AGNE to offer products that the Co-op can't get from other vendors, like loaves of bread that cost just a couple bucks and eggs for under \$2. He's trying to appeal to people in the community who currently feel like the Co-op isn't the store where they do all their shopping. AGNE, he said would replace the non-local produce and allow the Co-op to stock other popular products and appeal to people who might not have the budget to currently do all their shopping at the Co-op.

John said it is a hard time for the café and it's difficult to find staff. Once he has a new deli manager in place, John looks forward to offering menu items that pair well with beer and wine.

MaryJo asked if we're communicating with the community to ask what they need and tell them what the Co-op needs – are there things we could say to people to encourage them to shop more? John said the LVC started to put together a survey and added that it was really helpful when the New Orleans Co-op did a survey. MaryJo offered to start working on a draft of a survey. Sam and Danielle already have a draft of questions they could send to MaryJo so she could work on it further.

### **Infrastructure Report (Lise Coppinger):**

A carpenter will be putting in a door at the Co-op that leads to the new patio. Lise told John to let the Board know if he needs help with the other components for putting the patio together. Kari said that she, Lori Lynn, Lise and John had met to discuss patio plans in late spring and we can all work together on the final plan. John said he wants a simple plan to rope off an area around Lauren's Garden and include a few round tables and chairs – things that can be moved in winter to make way for snowplowing. Lise agreed that we are looking at a simple plan for this year.

### **New Business:**

**Rattlesnake Gutter Saturday Markets** – John said the Co-op's busiest two days so far this year have been on Market days, with \$4,000-plus in sales on those days. He added that the new Point of Sale system was up and running in time for the July market. The Markets are meeting the Co-op's mission of being a gathering space. He said people are connecting the Co-op with good vibes on Market days and it has been good for attendees, vendors and the Co-op. Kari said she has been hearing positive feedback from vendors and attendees at every market and the markets planning committee has started a waiting list because so many vendors want to be a part of it. John said he likes the size of the markets and that trying to enlarge it would require a lot more work and staff.

**Jono Farewell** – Since Jono was unable to attend this July meeting, the Board decided to thank him for his volunteerism and learn more about the electronic files from Jono next time.

**Tobacco Sales** – John said it makes sense for the Co-op to resume selling tobacco and he realizes there is a desire of the Board to have a discussion about it first. He said the only reason the Co-op stopped selling tobacco products is because the store was not financially able to pay the vendor for a time. He said the LVC is different from other Co-ops in that it's a convenience store, a general store and a café/gathering place. John said he thinks that selling tobacco makes us more inclusive and added that, from the numbers' point of view, it makes sense to sell them (he said that in 2016, tobacco products comprised between 4 and 4 ½% of the Co-op's overall sales). He said that, with wages increasing and no places to trim expenses, tobacco sales are a low-effort item to add to stock and this could encourage some people to do other shopping at the Co-op. People coming in for a pack of cigarettes could see what else the Co-op sells and make the Co-op their place for shopping. John said he's not a supporter of

big tobacco, but this would make our business more sustainable and allow us to keep offering things like local produce.

Lise said it would be great to know whose decision it is whether or not to sell tobacco. MaryJo said those figures from 2016 appear to indicate that the membership supports the Co-op selling tobacco products. MaryJo said her Co-op in New York was all about organic and fair trade, and that the LVC strives for inclusivity.

Danielle said that her stance against big tobacco is based on her legal experience. She added that this is complicated enough that she would feel more comfortable about the process once we hear from other Co-op's about whether this is a GM or a Board decision, and also how other Co-ops made the decision to sell, or not sell, tobacco. Danielle said this is not a decision that can be made hastily, without doing our homework and talking with other co-ops and co-op experts.

Sam said no one is ignorant to the fact that tobacco is a legally obtainable drug that can do great harm to the body, just as drinking alcohol can do great harm, and he thinks it is a GM decision. John said he thinks that it is a GM decision and said the LVC's Ends Statement is the guiding policy that puts him in bounds for making this type of decision. John said the LVC can get tobacco products through the AGNE distributor with a discount if the LVC becomes a member or AGNE. Kari said that she's not a supporter of big tobacco, and also it seems that the Co-op must already have had these discussions and a resolution from members and the community, since the store previously sold tobacco products for many years. Kari said she suspects it is a GM decision, but is interested to hear what other Co-ops and Co-op experts have to say about their experiences.

Danielle said she will research this and report back at the next meeting on the question of whether selling tobacco products is a GM decision.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kari Ridge

Clerk, LVC Board of Directors