

RIVERWEST COOPERATIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING 03.20.23 6:30pm

Board Members in Attendance: Tommasina, Debbie Powers, Wendy Mesich, Karen, Quinn Wilder, Jill Capicchioni

Others in Attendance: Mimi, Juniper, Shannon

Note Taker: Tommasina

Facilitator: Debbie

Time Keeper:

Minutes

NOTE: WE WILL START CHECK INS AT 6:30 SHARP

- Introductions + Pronouns + Check Ins + Firestarter (10 minutes)
 - Review Facilitation Style + Hand Signals
 - Take Pause and Speak Up – Accountability and Inclusion
- Check In On Communication (5 minutes)
 - Tommasina wants people to send approval/acknowledgement for Board meeting minutes.
 - We want to get meeting minutes out to the board and staff ASAP. Tommasina commits to sending out meeting minutes directly after the meeting, and then getting them out to the board and attendees, then once approved, she will send them to staff as well.
 - Karen likes getting the Worker Collective meeting minutes. Shannon recommends commenting on the document to give any feedback.
- Coordinator Reports / Strategy (20 minutes)
 - Store (5 minutes): Mimi - in March we had the situation with the freezer. Had to mark down frozen goods, at first down 25% off, then 50% off. Most of it has been sold. Now we have a system of checking the thermometers to make sure the fridge and freezer.
 - Mimi will visit a few places around town for consignment ideas. Sherman Phoenix and the Southside to check in about those.
 - We had \$3,000 in sales on Sunday! Consequently, we had a lot of orders to put away today. Re: top-selling days for the last year - we've only had 24 days over \$3,000 in the last year, so that's great.
 - Mimi wants to do some fun and goofy co-op commercials to get the word out.
 - Mimi created a green Grocery Ordering binder with all the vendor ordering forms. Much more organized now.
 - Debbie asks if we could tally how much we lost from the cooler. We could do that.
Take-away: For the March grocery coordinator report, we'll include that number.
 - Café (5 minutes)
 - Shannon reworked the report table so that events and grab 'n' go items are not tallied together. Grab 'n' go has been steady. Top selling items are consistent. The Spaghetti Dinner is tallied in the Deli total, so monthly difference in the totals is from that. (That's why February looked so much lower than January deli sales.)
 - Cafe rentals are paying us \$15/hour. Bremen Community Garden was doing a sales split for us. We waived the fee for this Thursday for Maya Ophelia's, but afterwards they'll pay the hourly rental fee.
 - Volunteer Coordinator (5 minutes)
 - Number of volunteers has been pretty good. Volunteers who need to cancel a shift have rescheduled, which has been awesome.
 - Wednesday April 5th is the pre-chili cookoff at Polish Falcon. Wendy will be off between the 5th and the WMSE's event on the 15th. Looking for volunteers to help cook 30 gallons of chili. If you're interested in volunteering at the WMSE, Wendy will be looking for that.
 - 414 Day is coming up. We need to talk about it more.

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- o Looking to see if we have the capacity to do the 53212Marketplace Mother's Day event.
- o Admin Coordinator (5 minutes)
 - o Juniper wants to be on top of quickbooks and emails; she's had help from Wendy. Not too much to report yet. If anyone needs anything, just let her know. We might need to look into other training like from Quickbooks (\$600 training for permanent access to documents).
 - o Juniper and Wendy will talk at the coordinator meeting tomorrow about the Marketing Spreadsheet.
 - o Juniper is still getting up to speed organizing invoices etc.
 - o Debbie offered to check in individually with Juniper and Mimi in the next few weeks to hear how things are going and how the board can support both of them in their roles.
- Committee Reports (15 minutes)
 - o Finance Committee (5 minutes)
 - We did lose money in February. We're still trending positively. Jill included a comparison of last year in the notes. We made some aspirational goals in our budget, but we didn't meet that goal for February.
 - We have \$34,000 committed in Member Loans.
 - We want to separate out the member loans into a new bank account with Educators Credit Union. There might be a Black-owned credit union in Milwaukee, Jill can look into it and chat with Mimi about it. Goal is to get the new banking situation wrapped up in the next few weeks.
 - We don't have the February Profit & Loss and other finance forms yet because it's tax season and we haven't gotten them from the accountant yet. Wendy and Jill will be available to answer questions from the board and staff when it comes out.
 - o Membership (5 minutes): we got 16 new memberships, \$780 in equity. Balance is still about \$3,000 for sponsored memberships. The group of volunteers who are calling 400 new members from the past year are still going on. Quinn has a good core of volunteers and once the routine gets hammered out, he can imagine new members getting welcomed within a week or two of signing up. One volunteer had a fun idea to have a membership committee meet-up at Wednesday 5-8pm to hang out and help with the shift.
 - o Sponsored memberships are for a year and for anyone who gets government food assistance is eligible. We have approximately \$3,000 that is sitting in that fund – 150 memberships – to give out. We might need to help get the word out better to the staff and volunteers to offer people the sponsored memberships. Wendy will make sure we talk about it at the Workers Collective meeting.
 - o Communications (5 minutes)
 - We need more people on the committee. We've had a lot of great posts on Social Media (Becky's doing comparison posts of prices at the co-op vs. other stores, and Shellbell is posting funny Monday memes).
 - When will we make a decision on the OnMilwaukee contract renewal? We're having a separate CommComm meeting about this.
 - How many newsletters are we doing a month? CommComm needs to figure this out but 2 every month is too many.
 - Wendy arranged for our old billboard spot (near the corner of Center and Fratney) to be back up! Nice way to engage our membership in the neighborhood. Wendy will have someone help write a request for proposal for painting it; the cost will need to be approved by the board.
- Schedule May Board Meeting (5 minutes): May 22nd at 6:30pm possibly at the Falcon Bowl
- Break (9 minutes) (end at 7:50?)

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- Check In on Financing Options (5 minutes)
 - Member Loan Program
 - Fundraising Efforts
 - CoFUND grant: \$10,000 for business operations, application is due next Friday. Wendy is envisioning specifying that we'd have money budgeted for tabling or event specialist funding. Educational materials, handouts etc. Right now we don't have a budget for events.
 - Shared Capital
 - Wendy will get in touch with Roderick to set up regular meetings with them.
 - Tenant Lease Agreement: Tommasina has shared the current draft of the lease with Nola, and will call her this week to follow up.

- Check In on Columinate Feasibility Study (10 minutes)
 - Market Study (Columinate's Debbie):
 - We have concerns with the market study questions (only asking customers their address and how much they spent). Wendy will respond to Columinate Debbie to ask why those particular questions. We want to know if we can ask other questions.
 - Wendy is wondering: have we ever nailed down what we want for the co-op? What's our vision? More vegan? Distribution hub for businesses? More education? Café? How many FTEs do we need to be who we want to be? How much profit do we need to make? It will take a lot of effort to ask these questions at the register anyways, so we want to make sure we're meeting our needs.
 - Quinn is concerned about what profit-making burden the loan might place on us. What's sustainable and what would change the character of our co-op? That's an important question for us, collectively.
 - Debbie clarifies we always want to make a profit (but that any significant profit would be shared with membership and/or staff, or would be put into improvements for the business).
 - Wendy recalls that before Covid, when we envisioned making \$1.25-1.5 million/year, we figured out that we could afford x number of full-time staff, employee raises, putting more money in the bank, and we'd be in the fiscal position to buy the building etc.
 - Karen wants to know where customers have seen us online—in social media and advertising. Also, food-related, like what kinds of things people buy?
 - Debbie wants us to know what kinds of questions have been successful in the past. We might want to consider a follow-up survey or something instead of trying to fit everything we want to know into this CAT survey that is intensive and has to cover every single shopper for about a week.
 - We'll need a committee member or staff every hour of those 7 days (or however many days it takes) to make sure we ask every person.
 - We might only be a few tweaks away from being sustainable or profitable, making smarter purchases, using Copos better, switching to better markup strategy. We are also a cultural hub, not just an Outpost. These are the things we want Columinate to know and help us support.
 - Wendy is talking to Columinate Debbie tomorrow and hopefully that intro call will alleviate some of these concerns and clarify the survey questions.
 - Financial Feasibility (Don)
 - Leadership and Capacity Assessment (Wynston)

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- Discuss 2023 Annual Budget Draft (20 minutes)
 - Changes made to draft discussed in February:
 - Increased July café sales for RW24
 - Changed January numbers to projections instead of actuals
 - Increased payroll to reflect filling open positions
 - Not yet included in draft:
 - Additional advertising expenses (CommComm budget): Currently no ad budget and no event budget.
 - ❖ CommComm Report doesn't have many details from the OnMilwaukee meeting, which doesn't help the rest of the board know how effective their ads are.
 - ❖ **Take-away: let's ask Columinate for input on % of sales to use on advertising and type of ads. We'll assume that later on, there will be a proposal to the board from CommComm for a budget amendment.**
 - Cost for updating or creating a new website: CommComm wants to update and use our wordpress site on the original domain. We are still paying for both Squarespace (current site) and Siteground (old WordPress site). Quinn had a proposal for ~\$1k for upgrading/updating our website from a friend who would do it for cheap. **Take-away: we're going to skip this item in the budget and discuss at CommComm level.**
 - Cost for Point of Sales system update or replacement - this is a capital expenditure which would show up on the balance sheet, and does not need to be in the budget.
 - Ready to approve??? Unanimous approval of the budget at 8:54pm.
- Discuss Planning General Membership Meeting (GMM) (10 minutes)
 - Date & Time: April 30, 2023 – Noon to 3pm (board try to stay an hour after)
 - Location: Falcon Bowl
 - **Action item for everyone: please review the checklist Debbie sent out to see if you can take on anything to prepare for the meeting.**
 - 2021 / 2022 Annual Reports (CommComm): **Action item: Tommasina can work on writing content for the annual report. She'll follow up with Debbie**
 - Determine Agenda & Discussion Questions
 - **Action item: Karen will work on coming up with 3 discussion questions.** We could also do a Facebook poll to see what people want to talk about.
 - Assign an Emcee and Note Taker
 - Notetaker: Admin Coordinator?
 - Announce & Advertise Timeline
 - Announced March 17th
 - Additional advertising needs? **Action item: Next Newsletter: we'll include a renew your membership thing in our general GMM meeting.** (Quinn did just get caught up on sending renewal membership reminders.) - confirmation? This is through the membership email and the newsletter is from mail chimp correct?

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- ❖ Karen noted that the membership committee has found it very effective to directly reach out, and specifically mentioning the connection to voting at the gmm to those that have not renewed in the last year (correction: since the last GMM which could skip the months of Quinn's recent renewal reminders. This catches those that were more engaged as long ago as the last GMM)
- Flyering the neighborhood: Jill can flier about the meeting and “shop like a member” thing. “Renew your membership before the meeting so you can cast your vote”.
- Call for Board Members Timeline
 - Launched March 17th
 - Deadline (according to bylaws) is March 31st
 - Board Recruitment Ad Hoc Committee
- Reflection Time (5 minutes)
 - Recap major topics and action items
 - What surprised us?
 - What still puzzles us?
 - What questions are not yet answered?
- Reminder of Action Items
 - **Communications Policy**
 - ❖ Debbie is supposed to take a stab at it; anyone else willing to give it a go?
 - **Board role in staff and coordinator on-boarding**
 - ❖ Debbie is supposed to draft talking points including:
 - State of the Co-Op
 - Role of Board /Coordinators/Staff
 - How to communicate with the board
 - ❖ All new staff meets with a board member within first 2-3 weeks
 - ❖ What is the process for assigning a board member to the new staff member
 - **Structure for Volunteer Liaisons**
 - ❖ Timeline to bring this back?
 - ❖ Communication between liaisons?
 - ❖ Reporting to the Board?
- Community Contacts List
- Retreat Garden Plot Items

Next Board Meeting: April 24th at 6:30pm

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