

RIVERWEST COOPERATIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING 06.27.23 6:30pm

Board Members in Attendance: Jill, Quinn, Debbie, Wendy, Karen, Mark, Ned, Tommasina

Others in Attendance: Mimi, Juniper

Note Taker: Tommasina

Facilitator: Debbie

Time Keeper:

**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: I created a Trello board to keep track of our action items. Happy to walk anyone through it. You can use the Trello phone app or browser through the invite link in your email.
  - Wendy: if there's a store thing, make sure to call the store because the staff schedules change.
  - Karen: Having trouble keeping up on emails. Looking for support or feedback.
  - Wendy: We can give sabbaticals if anyone has a lot going on.
  - Debbie: I struggle with the emails too. It's hard sometimes to know when something should be a text and when it should be an email.
  - Thanks to Karen for getting communication check-in on the agenda so we can talk about this regularly!
- Coordinator Reports / Strategy / 30/60/90 Day Plans (20 minutes)
  - Store (5 minutes): Mimi: In May, we had Falcon Flea. Pop-ups have been driving up our store numbers. 30-60-90 goals is to go to farmers markets to meet with more local farmers. This Sunday, she will go over and introduce herself to some farmers. In 60 days, doing an ice cream social. Mimi has 4-5 artists wanting to come together. Trying to nail down a date still. Wanting to do a new system for inventory and doing orders on Mondays. Store is short-staffed. Wants to host training with Paula - wanting her to share the knowledge of what she does. Not everyone knows what Paula does. Mimi wants to share knowledge so we can maintain the store the way we need to.
    - Tommasina asks about being short-staffed—someone has left the co-op, and someone else was injured so we're down a few people. Mimi has someone in mind for hiring.
    - To be clear, we're not hiring another grocery coordinator right now.
    - Ned: it seems to suggest the sales from the cafe are 64% or total. Wendy: no, I think the comma is in the wrong place. It'd be helpful to have this historical data filled in.
    - Juniper: a lot of the grocery report is from Quickbooks. it's also in the weekly numbers for the Workers' Collective.
    - Debbie: (to Mimi) don't let this form constrain you. Feel free to put more thought into what you'd like to see here. As newer coordinators get in the flow of things, feel free to adjust what's in the report. A larger number of details than what is in here would be helpful. Something about what's happened throughout the month would be helpful. I've also noticed the 30-60-90 day plans are really different from one another. I noticed the way Juniper and Shannon had their goals made it more clear for when the goals are due and what is getting achieved versus missed.
    - Debbie: in the past, we've posted job descriptions publicly so we don't just hire our friends. Just for transparency, we should probably post the job listing.
    - Wendy: I hear you on the 30-60-90 plan uniformity. We can do that. Re: the report structures, I want to ask Wynston about a structure. Re: hiring, we want to bring in

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- different circles and I think Mimi is doing that. We also should hire a new grocery coordinator and HR person.
- o Café (5 minutes): Shannon: Popups are really contributing. In July, I really want to review the contract for the commissary kitchen, and adjust them, including the \$15/hr for the rental space.
    - o Jill: you're doing such a great job!
    - o Debbie: I noticed no waste is listed. Shannon: I just didn't get to it, sorry. Debbie: how much of your time will be about the agreement as a priority vs re-pricing? Shannon: Wynston didn't want us to spend too much time repricing things. Debbie: my question is maybe before too much effort in the specifics of that agreement is seeing what the feasibility study is looking like. Bc we could probably bring someone in with the current contract, OR should we use that energy elsewhere.
  - o Admin Coordinator (5 minutes): Juniper: I started tracking everyone's hours store vs. elsewhere. I got trained in opening, closing, deliveries on Thursdays, so had a crash course in all of the different responsibilities. This month, I've started opening on my own, and closing on my own. Which has been great. We're all going to have to do that and work more store hours for the foreseeable future. Other projects I got done: business cards. Generic ones that board members can use. I also drafted some policies that are in various stages. Cash advance policy is on the agenda today. I also started a cash handling policy today and can hopefully bring to Finance soon, pretty descriptive. Has details like if over/under a certain amount to get in touch with coordinators. I'm also shaping up language in PTO policy. I want to show the coordinators the formula I'm putting into payroll to make sure it's good so we can have a more precise accounting of PTO and vacation. I want to get the specs for the ATM and outlets around the store. I've made a couple emails and need to wrap that up. Finish rolling that out. Lastpass is a good password manager. Figuring out the time clock thing. Ned/Mark, I know you're helping with Grants and Loans. WE have an application for D&O insurance that was long and confusing so it might be helpful to gather some information that you have. Maybe in July it'll get it finished.
    - o Debbie: the advance policy is the exact example of what should come before the board bc we haven't had that before. RE; store hours: knowing how to do stuff is important but in your job description it has a breakdown of how much to spend in the store vs office. We want to keep track of that and make sure you can prioritize the office work too. Juniper: even with more store hours, I think it's been like 80% I've gotten it done. Shannon: it was for training purposes because we have staffing shortages.
  - o Volunteer Coordinator (5 minutes): Wendy: May was okay. 53212 marketplace, had doing more planning for Falcon Flea and other summer events. I've had a few conversations about finding a new art curator for the cafe. We also need to find a carpenter to fix things like build a desk in the store and fix some things in the store. I'd like to build a free shelf outside for non-perishables. Something that staff could put out and keep an eye on it. People see our pile and throw their stuff on it so we want to have our own. Sunday nights and Wednesday nights we need help. Feels like I finished handing off admin stuff to Juniper. I want to do more volunteer work. We had the MADWRC conference, meeting the shared capital people who came and toured the store so that adds a whole level of connection and reality. We had to pack it on for Locust Street fest due to weather.
    - o Karen: in general, we wanted to keep in mind having volunteers to bring down labor costs. The goal for the hire is to split hours between store and cafe for decent PT hours. Admin should only have 1 shift a week in Store and Cafe. Debbie: 25 volunteers is like the lowest coverage. I looked in January, we had a low number historically. but now even May volunteer numbers are down to 25.
    - o Debbie: Wondering what direct efforts are you making and what are the obstacles to getting more volunteers?
    - o Wendy: Well I should make sure we're not counting committee volunteers. I email people and text them and re-email them. Maybe not a lot of follow-through. I know this job was better for me when I was going out more, and I'm finding myself

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exhausted and not wanting to go to bars and coffee shops. I know when I'm able to get out, I talk to people and sometimes we get more volunteers for that. Some of those people who came to Locust fest were from bowling. Getting younger people involved is great too. Debbie: we're running late, if you wanted to noodle on how to get more folks involved out of the meeting and get back to us.

- Committee Reports (20 minutes)
  - Finance Committee (10 - now 5- minutes): new section for how we're doing based on our budget. We were expecting to be down 11k, and instead we're down 27k. I did move our 13k at Educators into a money market account if we can put it in a 9 month CD. There is a penalty - calculated daily forfeiting the interest. Ned: thank you for that initiative. how confident are you that we wouldn't need it? Jill: the only way we would need it is for the columinate consulting, since we still have a fair amount . Tommasina: I'm worried about our current liabilities at 42k when we only have 46k in the month.
    - Juniper: the last transfer was \$6k which should hopefully cover us through July (6 weeks). Karen: when we get an email about the transfers, can we get the savings account balance? Tommasina: I'd love clarity on the closing checklist, just Debbie: yes let's update that. Wendy: what feels worse now than before? Jill: this is why I was pointing out our difference between budget and actual. our two biggest expense are our COGS and our wages. in both of those, we're not performing as a store of our size should. it's even more concerning because we have sizable free labor. Investing the 6k doesn't seem risky since others have trusted us with their money, the least we can do is invest it.
    - Karen: are we waiting to adjust our prices before we hear from Columinate? WEndy: yes/no. when we institute going to margins, we have to change how we're adding in our data. We can definitely adjust our prices but the overhaul, we've been waiting. we don't know how much money we can spend on labor and training and this POS system or something else. Mimi: some weeks we adjust prices when we get it on sale, but we haven't adjusted strategy as a whole. Wendy: we need to get more labor hours, to make these changes. Wynston didn't know we didn't have the money already. After our meeting today, we're not going to get the money in 2023. Maybe we will be closing in 2023. We still need more. We need help from all of us to get more member loans.
    - Let's have a separate meeting.
- Break (10 minutes) (end at 7:40?)
  - [SKIP] Communications (5 minutes)
    - We don't have the people and Karen doesn't feel qualified to run a marketing committee. We want to do the mural, the signs, and make videos. Wendy: we need to delegate things to other people. Think if you know people who do marketing, ask them to help. We don't need someone to do the marketing for free, we need someone to chair the committee of people who are doing the work. We have volunteers who just need people to tell them how to do it.
  - [SKIP] Membership (5 minutes)
- Schedule August Board Meeting & Board Orientation Follow-Up Items Meeting (5 minutes)
  - Continuous Improvement Plan Check-In Meeting: Tuesday, July 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm
  - July Board Meeting: Friday, July 21<sup>st</sup> at 5:00pm
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- [POSTPONED] Protocol for Advances Proposal (5 minutes)
  - Review the newly proposed policy about cash advances to staff

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- [POSTPONED] Check In on Volunteer Liaison Positions / Volunteer Committee (10 minutes)
  - Co-op Orientations
  - Events / Networking / Sports
  - Board & Committee Recruitment
  
- Check In on Financing Options (10 minutes)
  - Grants & Loans Ad Hoc Committee
  - Member Loan Program
  - Fundraising Efforts
  - Shared Capital / LEAF Loans
    - Tenant Lease Agreement
  
- Check In on Columinate Feasibility Study (10 minutes)
  - Market Study (Debbie)
  - Financial Feasibility (Don)
  - Leadership and Capacity Assessment (Wynston)
  
- Discuss Planning 2023 Board Retreat (15 minutes)
  - Side committee to plan topics - 3 nights and 3 hours each
    - Debbie: What is the priority of the board retreat? Looking at the CIP and what our goals are. And what we're going to do proactively to change the finances at the co-op, and how we would close ethically so maybe we don't need to wait for the outcomes of the feasibility study. Mimi: shouldn't we wait to get the results of the feasibility study? Karen: We can wait but there's also a lot of finance stuff to sort out before then. Whatever topics need to happen need to happen. We don't need to have a traditional retreat just decide these areas.
    - Wendy: Along with the feasibility study, we need to be researching these decisions: we need to change the proforma so we can show that to shared capital, so we can get on the docket for shared capital. I thought the board retreat was to look at Wynston's part of the study, the proforma so we could understand it. We could look at the grants, and the member loans programs, and decide how much we need from Shared Capital because we want the best POS for example or whatever. I thought we needed to know what inputs to change. I thought the point of the retreat was to make those final decisions, to put into the shared capital loan information we're trying to push forward. These committees need to come up with a vision for the cafe etc. doesn't matter what we call it. We need to know when we can make these decisions and make deadlines. We need to work backwards.
    - Karen: Yes, retreat when we get all of that stuff. What you're staying about the committees and stuff, that's stuff we could do with an extra meeting? Juniper: I do agree, I think that we don't have a lot of time to make these decisions, but we're just putting ourselves in a worse position if we wait. Doing it faster will be helpful so we have some wiggle room. I would be happy to invest a lot more time in it and a timeline would be helpful. it's obviously important but not something that needs to be done like checks are cashed.
    - Tommasina: What would be helpful for coordinators re: POS research? Juniper: If anyone else wants to help gather technical stuff, like certain features, broad type things, things Mimi and Shannon would like if they were to have their ideal POS system, get an idea of what other people have? We need three things re: POS research: 1) technical information 2) expectations set 3) what outposts does. Ned: I'd be happy to help with this. Essentially the only thing I'm good at is gathering information by this time, please don't hesitate to ask me to do that. Just

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send me an email. What OTHER decisions are we referencing? independent of the feasibility study, can you confirm what other questions? Wendy: when can we hire another coordinator and HR? what is the vision for the cafe? what do we want it to look like? it's been sitting for a year. there hasn't been one solid exciting vision for that space. Among the staff, we'll take pictures of menus etc., but we don't feel like there's an energy behind it. part of it is because shannon is swamped. what equipment do we need? do want to put \$50k in it? or rock out what we have?

- Jill: Tactically, we need to focus on 3 things: 1) our payroll is a huge percentage of our budget and it's already topping out at 35% wages as a percentage of sales. We either need to not hire more people or sell more, or more volunteers to offset that. There are other things, like we could suspend discounts, but we need to think about tactical things like that. Do we all need to focus on getting more volunteers? That's an economical way to get more there. We thought hiring more would help, it hasn't helped. Do we all focus on getting more volunteers or members in? That's cash on top. The house is on fire, that would be my suggestion.
- Ned: I agree with Wendy about re-opening the cafe. I had assumed that we were waiting on the feasibility study, however, wherever we can have that conversation I'd be happy to have it. I feel kind of paralyzed.
- Karen: Was anyone thinking we would reopen before spring of 2024? No,
- Wendy: we still need to make our own decisions on whether to have sandwiches or pasta on plugging it into the proforma.
- Karen: When we were talking Jill, does changing inventory matter?
- Jill: Whether it's related to how we're doing our pricing or there's issues with shrinkage, or money issues, the net is that our gross profit percentage is still too low. we can adjust how we're doing the markups but it's still tending really low. Wages as a percentage of sales in a small grocery store should be 15%.
- Debbie: I think we were out of alignment because we weren't solidly assigning action items, and I thought coordinators were divying up pricing and inventory is on Mimi. POs system is under Juniper and recruitment and more volunteers would fall under Wendy. sure there will be more board members, but the person who should go ahead are those coordinators. if you're not feeling empowered to go forward with the talisman, that worries me. We can't flesh out these details in a 2 hours a month meeting. If we have to make a decision between pasta and fresh vegetables, the coordinators need to be making these decisions at the coordinator meetings. Shannon: On our 30-60-90 things, we had a callout for a committee. There has been some movement - it's not as fast as we need it to be. Mimi: Doing all of this will require more time. I go deep on ordering but I'm not generally in the office. I don't have the time without literal delegation of responsibilities. I do well when someone tells me what to do. I want someone to tell me to research something. We could be better at delegating so we're not just asking "well what do we need?" we need to delegate.
- karen: I still think we should meet again soon. To Wendy's point, if we can have people take on the tasks, if we accomplish that, that's great.
- Quinn: I'm hearing people say where is strategy happening? We might need to come together more during this time. We still don't know why we're losing so much money. A ton of money disappeared in March, and we don't know why, which could be difficult to explain to anyone who would want to give us money. The work needs to happen in the ad-hoc committees and get a few board members on each one. And volunteers- what we've been doing has not been increasing our volunteers? When I made those 50 phone calls, we got 5 new volunteers. if that ratio would hold, we have another 600 or so people we could call. That could make a huge difference.
- Wendy: two things to keep in mind: 1) we haven't done: communications committee we haven't been doing our newsletter or getting things out. We have

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not been doing any advertising. Yes, our payroll is high, but when we spent a year in meetings redesigning job descriptions, it was to work in pairs. We have been understaffed for years. Not all of the historical knowledge was passed on from sara to nick to mimi. when we look at why our sales aren't high, it's because the knowledge hasn't been shared and passed down. Lots of moving pieces in there. I agree with phone calls to new members. We divided jobs up for a reason.

- o Dates & Time Commitments
  - Wendy: Will we have decisions ready to go by August 19 if we meet then? re: choosing a POS system.
  - Mark: Are we asking the right people? I'm sure other people know this better.
- o Location August 19 and 20: 10-5 on Saturday, and 10-2 on Sunday.
- o Hire a Facilitator? Need a separate notetaker?
- o Agenda
  - If anyone can help Debbie make the agenda, she'd love it.
  - Separate Request from Quinn: how to look at a budget, to understand what people have been talking about about sales and COGS. two things- WEndy could send out readings. Jill would be happy to host a pre-meeting, log into Quickbooks.
    - ❖ Tommasina, Karen, Ned, Mimi, Quinn Jill, before July 21st.
- Extra board meeting: July 10 at 5pm-7pm to discuss finances. WEndy will be in charge of where there will be. Jill and Debbie will coordinate on agenda.
- Reflection Time (? minutes)
  - o Recap major topics and action items
  - o What surprised us?
  - o What still puzzles us?
  - o 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:
      - o State of the Co-Op
      - o Role of Board /Coordinators/Staff
      - o 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?
- o Community Contacts List
- o Retreat Garden Plot Items

Next Board Meeting: July 21<sup>st</sup> at 6:30pm

August meeting : August 28th at 6:30pm

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