

RIVERWEST COOPERATIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING 05.22.23 6:30pm

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

Others in Attendance: Juniper

Note Taker: Ned

Facilitator: Debbie

Time Keeper: Debbie

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)
 - Karen: please write if a response is required in the subject of the email
 - Debbie: it is helpful to include the deadline for responding in the subject line as well
- Coordinator Reports / Strategy / 30/60/90 Day Plans (20 minutes)
 - Store (5 minutes):
 - We want to make sure the board reports are more reflective of what we want to know. The current monthly report is the standard one; some of us preferred Nick's version. This is a conversation we should have with Mimi.
 - Café (5 minutes)
 - Debbie: Shoutout for Shannon's 30-60-90 goals. Coordinator-level conversations about hiring an additional coordinator, which should be proposed to the board before established as goals. We should discuss our hiring goals as coordinators have not raised them to the board and the Hiring Committee does not have the power to hire coordinators without board approval. Reporting back to Shannon and Mimi should be to ask that they share proposals for coordinator hires with the board. The last discussions were about hiring Grocery Coordinator, Admin Coordinator, and HR Coordinator, which we paused, but we have not discussed hiring additional Grocery or Cafe Coordinators as a goal. We still might undertake this hiring, but the coordinators need to bring it to the board before setting goals. I also would like Shannon to clarify what the next meeting mentioned on the report entails and whether it is a coordinator versus board meeting and, also, how rentals and pop-ups figure into these figures.
 - Admin Coordinator (5 minutes)
 - Juniper: It was my first month after onboarding, which went well despite late data submission and which feels comfortable. ... I started using the marketing calendar, drafting proposals for discussion with the Finance Committee (i.e., advances), and, then, drafting a vacation and PTO policy as there were inconsistencies in the writing. For instance, there was no definition of what a vacation week technically was. Fixing things like this and the PTO structure is a focus when it comes to clarifying language. We are getting business cards with a new design, hopefully printed by late May / June. I will include 30-60-90 goals in my report in the future, such as switching the alarm to the internet through set-up and testing, as well as moving beyond a verbal ATM agreement with Brewery Credit Union so that we can put it in place. For June, we'll hope to get a social media team running, to automate the PTO hours on payroll, and to calculate past PTO. In June and July, we'll try to update security cameras and eliminate extra phone and internet lines that are not in use.
 - Debbie: What is the advance proposal to finance?

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- Juniper: Someone requested an advance on their pay for one period, but we don't have a policy on this practice. We need to write up a policy regarding what amount it would be and how we would calculate it. We need to finalize the numbers and wording to ensure that there is a formal procedure for requesting the advance, how long we have before we must respond, and how we delivery it.
- Debbie: So, we did give the advance?
- Jill: Yes, we didn't want to turn down the request to give the employee advance simply because we did not have a policy.
- Mark: Why do we need to give employee advances in the first place?
- Juniper: I am drafting an advance policy and will share with the board
- Wendy: It doesn't come up often, but, if we are going to do it, we need to document it so that we do it right. ... There's a limit in how much advance we can give an employee.
- Debbie: Normally this would go through HR approval, rather than board approval, but, **Juniper, please circulate the advance pay policy for board awareness.**
- Volunteer Coordinator (5 minutes)
 - Wendy: We had a great first meeting with Debbie and Rebecca about forming a volunteer committee. Hopefully, as it builds, it will be a space where specific teams would meet at monthly meetings to coordinate different tasks as I cannot meet with every volunteer each week or month. I spoke with Collin about Seitan Phillies (Co-op softball team) and he is considering whether to commit to planning pick-up games. We could use these gathering opportunities to help recruit volunteers. Please provide feedback on the dates that you can volunteer, including at the RW24.
 - Quinn: How does it feel to be more focused now on volunteer coordination?
 - Wendy: It feels good.
 - **Debbie: Wendy, please add 30-60-90 day goals to the Volunteer Coordinator report, provide more specific information about the next meeting, and give more specific details for the request that the board sign-up for Locust St.**
 - Wendy: My goal is to schedule Locust St. volunteering so that we always have a board member as, last year, just Shannon and I divided the work over the day.
 - Mark: How do you slot people for volunteer shifts?
 - Wendy: I do it manually. Every couple of years, we look for volunteer management software. However, it is not quite what we need for the price. ... I will ensure that our 30-60-90 goals are shared with the Board.
 - Quinn: Do individual coordinators come up with their own 30-60-90 goals?
 - Wendy: Yes, and, also, we come up with some goals together.
 - Quinn: So, they are not quite done yet?
 - Wendy: Yes, we're still working on them.
 - Quinn: Does the Board want to provide any input to the goals? Usually, each Coordinator has a profit goal. Do we have a way to measure how much café versus grocery are contributing to profit?
 - Wendy: We haven't done that, but, yes, we can talk about that.
 - Debbie: The 30-60-90 goals are more about planning tasks for upcoming months. Shannon's document shows how goals are more about how to onboard employees. ... Longer term, goal setting will be somewhat different than this plan.
 - Wendy: Part of the goals right now are just Mimi and Shannon doing some research into how we set goals as they don't have background, finding training for it, looking at some of Wynston's advice, and working with finance to set those goals.
 - Quinn: Are you considering a volunteer goal in terms of how many we have?
 - Wendy: I have set goals, but they haven't been met.
 - Karen: If we have 35 uncovered shifts, that means that coordinators are working in the store and you don't have much time to work on your tasks. Right?

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- Wendy: Yes, coordinators get pulled into the store. Daytime shifts are more heavily covered. We're busier, but our time is limited to placing orders, etc.
- Committee Reports (15 minutes)
 - Finance Committee (5 minutes)
 - Karen: If we aren't going to make a profit, is there a goal for a negative profit?
 - Jill: Yes, our budget is in the negative this year.
 - Karen: But, is there an idea of what is a decent amount of loss?
 - Jill: In a nutshell, the bigger question is how we are going to meet inventory. ... What we have been doing every three months is counting everything in store, putting value to it, and counting that relative to prior months. ... Our biggest expenses are cost of goods sold and payroll, so hiring more people would make us lose money. Getting into the costs of goods requires upgrading our point-of-sale system so that we actually can track loss.
 - Debbie: I think that we used to see "Actuals versus Budget" reports long ago, but we have been so far off our budget that we haven't used it recently. Can we run a report in Quickbooks?
 - Wendy: We can't run it from Quickbooks but, we do have a separate document for tracking that. We can show in the report what our budget is going to be.
 - Debbie: That would be helpful.
 - Wendy: \$4,000 will be transferred to pay for the Columinate bill this week, and probably more soon for payroll.
 - Debbie: And we'll submit the Columinate bill immediately to WEDC for reimbursement...
 - Karen: We need to have a note about which transfers are to pay for which expenses.
 - Wendy: It's to cover expenses generally.
 - Debbie: Are we planning to have all member loans in the new bank account?
 - Jill: We took a check and haven't deposited it yet, but we want to move everything over. It would be more beneficial.
 - Debbie: So, changing completely over is in discussion but hasn't happened yet?
 - Jill: Yes.
 - Debbie: Regarding a non-formal financial audit, we should call it a "financial review", and I think that would be beneficial. Also, I wanted more clarity around accounts like employee advances, the financial cash clearing account, ...
 - Wendy: Cash clearing account is checks that haven't cleared. Also, it is a whole thing for the other side of labor costs. ... For sure, it's the checks that haven't cleared.
 - Communications (5 minutes)

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- Karen: We had trouble finding a new meeting, so we missed a couple of weeks. But, we're working on the same things.
 - Wendy: Juniper has taken on more social media responsibilities, which has been awesome. She has been getting them done. Thank you. Also, I started writing a grant for an RFP for recreating the billboard we used to have on Center & Fratney. Hopefully, we'll have that at the next Communications Committee and can start putting it out into the world.
 - Karen: Please remember to help comment or share posts on social media.
 - Debbie: If we focused a lot of energy toward getting CommComm volunteers, is it reasonable that only two coordinators would be on that committee in the future so the coordinators can use that energy on other projects?
 - Karen: We're talking about having Mimi and Shannon come to every other meeting.
 - Debbie: I think it would be ideal for there to only be one or two coordinators attending the CommComm meetings, and they bring information back to the full coordinator team during the coordinator meetings each week; that seems like a better use of everyone's time. Also, please let me know if anything is needed from me for the GMM recap as mentioned in the CommComm board report.
 - Karen: Every coordinator is supposed to be on a committee.
 - Debbie: Just not all coordinators on one.
 - Wendy: There's a need for all of us to be at the meetings at different points in time.
 - Debbie: It might be a better use of time to have fewer coordinators and more volunteers on the CommComm.
- Membership (5 minutes)
 - Quinn: The report is pretty straightforward in terms of our numbers. We have a volunteer working Sunday shifts as a cashier, Amy, who usually is completing all weekly data input on Sundays. There's another volunteer who may be able to work remotely on the welcome letter to new members. That will be nice having a second volunteer to work on that part.
 - Karen: Good job and \$1,300 in membership equity for April is a great number. 6,395 active members - what does that mean?
 - Quinn: I'm unsure.
 - Karen: It's good to know how many are up to date with their dues.
 - Debbie: I had the same thought.
 - Quinn: Wendy has that information.
 - Wendy: Let's work on it together. ... My request is whether you (Quinn) can work on new language around the sponsored membership program. ... I can show you what we have.
 - Quinn: So, new language and a flier? Anything else?

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- Wendy: Not really, we just need to update the language.
- Quinn: Alright, I will write some new language about the sponsored membership program.
- Schedule July Board Meeting & Board Orientation Follow-Up Items Meeting (5 minutes)
 - July board meeting: Friday, July 21, 5-7 PM at the Polish Falcon (pending Shannon & Mimi availability)
 - Board orientation follow-up items meeting: Debbie realized that she needs to confirm Rachel's availability before we schedule this meeting.
 - June Board Meeting: Tuesday, June 27th at 6:30pm
 - Continuous Improvement Plan Check-In Meeting: Tuesday, July 11th at 6:00pm
- Break (10 minutes) (end at 7:35?)
- Volunteer Liaison Positions / Volunteer Committee (10 minutes)
 - Co-op Orientations
 - Wendy: I have been doing new volunteer orientations on Tuesdays and Saturdays, but we are changing these to general events that all members can attend so that we can share more information about the Co-op and invite volunteers.
 - Quinn: Have you considered requiring or strongly encouraging new members to volunteer?
 - Wendy: Yes, that would be nice. We also are working on volunteer recruitment events, like bowling, and on board and committee recruitment. I am trying to expand volunteer work by encouraging the volunteers who are more comfortable to try new tasks.
 - Mark: Are there any crucial volunteer slots?
 - Wendy: Any time on Saturdays, although mornings are better now, and, also, Mondays and Wednesdays. I am trying to create a flier that shows open shifts. It mainly is Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings, as well as Thursday mornings at 6 AM for the deliveries.
 - Events / Networking / Sports
 - Board & Committee Recruitment
 - Debbie: My takeaways from the meeting with Wendy and Rebecca was that the goal of having a Volunteer Committee would be:
 - ❖ Social, network, and sports events
 - ❖ Showing more value to volunteering other than labor like we did before the pandemic,
 - ❖ Building recruitment out of that group to join the board and committees other than the three hour shift alone,
 - ❖ Communication with coordinators and board (this is why we have had volunteer liaison roles and need to return to that structure as part of the

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Volunteer Committee, being the voice to coordinators and also report to board).

- ❖ Forming volunteer squads/teams, like the Bulk team and Thursday Morning Team
 - ❖ Training in new volunteers through a buddy system and through training of new people to reduce demand on staff.
 - Karen: In the past, Board members were expected to volunteer 12 hours per month in the store/café, but we changed that because people were not willing/able to commit that much time to the Board. That is when we came up with different expectations, and only “Volunteer Liaisons” were expected to volunteer regularly in the store/café
 - Jill: I think we should have “board happy hours”, and we could designate one day a week for board members to participate and we could take turns, ...
 - Debbie: Yes, a collaboration between “board happy hours” and the social events from the Volunteer Committee could be combined so that we aren’t having a zillion under-attended events and so that the Volunteer Committee and board members are working together to draw volunteers.
 - Jill: Weekly training, too, is good so that we can bring people together.
 - Wendy: I can come up with a proposal for the board.
 - Karen: The volunteer liaisons were supposed to be the early or new people voted on, the new board members, or board members who don’t have a committee.
 - Debbie: That’s the goal now as, if you’re not in an officer or committee role, you’re contributing.
 - Karen: All board members are supposed to be on a committee, so that’s the reasoning of having a “committee” for the volunteer liaisons.
- Check In on Financing Options (10 minutes)
 - Member Loan Program
 - Debbie: No changes since last month, at \$34,000 committed.
 - Fundraising Efforts
 - Grants & Loans Ad Hoc Committee???
 - Debbie: We’ll have more eyes on this with the ad-hoc committee that Ned and Mark will create.
 - Ned: Yes, Mark and I will work on this and on the ad-hoc committee in June once I am back in Milwaukee.
 - Debbie: Zach at Riverworks also would be interested in helping eventually, although he just had a baby. Once he is ready, I will share his contact information so that Ned and Mark will invite him to participate.
 - Wendy: I will send notes and contacts from a conference that I recently attended. They could be helpful for Mark and Ned in establishing the Grants & Loans Ad-Hoc Committee.

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- Shared Capital / LEAF Loans
 - Debbie: We agreed that we would hold off on the LEAF loan because it is a combined effort with the Shared Capital application. Once we have all the documentation ready to submit to Shared Capital, we will consider whether to share it with LEAF. Also, Ned, Wendy, and I will schedule another meeting with Roderick at Shared Capital. I am waiting on Ned and Wendy to confirm their availability.
 - Wendy: I will send Mark the documents that we sent to Shared Capital and Columinate.
 - Debbie: For Mark's awareness, Shared Capital asked that we hold off on submitting the full loan until the Columinate feasibility study is complete, but they actively are engaging with us.
 - Mark: Yes, Jill gave me a clear picture.
 - Tenant Lease Agreement
 - ❖ Debbie: Please add to the notes that Tommasina please follow-up with Nola and, eventually, we will ask if Nola has enough capacity for this work.
- Check In on Columinate Feasibility Study (10 minutes)
 - Market Study (Debbie)
 - Financial Feasibility (Don)
 - Debbie: We met with Debbie from Columinate. The next step is for Wynston and Don to formalize more of a proforma that is accurate as to where we are right now (whereas the initial proforma was as if we were continuing forward with our state in 2022; which didn't reflect measures that we had taken, like closing the café). The new proforma will include things like reopening café and adding more staffing. The next meeting is this Thursday, 2-3 PM, and we'll share the notes with Coordinators and Board. We'll discuss what would happen if we had alcohol, more meat, and more conventional / name brand items, and if we upgraded our marketing.
 - Wendy: I just forwarded the recording of our Columinate meeting about the market study, about 45 minutes, in case you all want to listen and raise questions.
 - Debbie: A deeper dive, following up on Ned and Mark's e-mails, may be necessary as I haven't had a chance to follow-up on those thoughts. Please keep sending these things around. We'll have a chance to review.
 - Wendy: Debbie S.'s buckets of changes are pretty simplistic, as she admits, and Don and Wynston's input as to changes will be helpful.
 - Ned: Can we ask Columinate to change the word "weak" in the Market Study?
 - Wendy: We aren't going to get them to change their language, which is from a market perspective, but we can summarize it in our own language when sharing with members.

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- Debbie: Agreed. Also, we can emphasize with our members that this is what we're up against.
- Jill: Also, please watch the Columinate meeting video because it became more tactical and practical regarding how we can serve the community better as west of Holston St. is our greatest opportunity. We had to get beyond the picky stuff of alcohol, meat, and conventional foods before getting more tactical.
- Mark: This is a mega-topic that we probably can't discuss in great depth now, but is there an appetite here for changing these products?
- Wendy: We emphasize that the membership would be making these changes, not the board or the coordinators. We also ask how much square footage we would have to give up. Debbie added that conventional products' margins are low and alcohol theft is high, so we might not make much margin. We keep pushing with them on our actual product selection, on creative ideas for the café, and on how we can market better to areas that aren't typical Co-op people.
- Debbie: That has been repeated a lot as the market study is high-level regarding our area.
- Mark: Are they surveying members about product preference?
- Wendy: I don't think that there will be another survey like that from Columinate. They might recommend that we do it ourselves. They did the CAT survey to this end. I can walk through it. We will have to redefine the language to Shared Capital regarding why we are deciding to ignore such recommendations. ... Debbie's main thing was how to capture more money out of our community. Even if we had all active members shopping on a regular basis, that's less than 1/5 of the population in Riverwest. So, there are more marketing opportunities.
- Leadership and Capacity Assessment (Wynston)
 - Debbie: Wynston met with coordinators a while ago.
 - Wendy: That was a while ago. I hope to hear back from her soon about following up on that meeting.
- Inventory Practices & Upcoming Changes (10 minutes)
 - The Finance Committee has agreed that, going forward, we are going to do a monthly inventory starting with May
 - The inventory that we do does not assist us in any meaningful way to be able to track theft in the store and we really need to consider this for the future.
 - Jill: I am working to get our inventory adjustments shared with the board, which would be a breakdown of inventory adjustments since 2020. I did not understand that what we were doing was inventory, where we count everything and reconcile it with what the computer says was sold - that's not what we're doing. We have been counting, every quarter, the dollar value of all products in store. ... For me, this sparked other questions about what happens in the store and whether we have an understanding of the extent to which stuff is being stolen, which is a fact of life in retail. Right now, there isn't any definitive way to calculate our loss. For me as part of the Finance Committee, that was a giant revelation for me. I then looked back at how our costs are continually fluctuating. If you look at our mark-up, the cost of goods sold rarely hits that percentage. There are lots of other things happening, like spoilage and employee meals ... I think that we need

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a better handle on some of this from a reporting perspective, which would involve doing monthly inventory at minimum as we last did inventory in December.

- Wendy: It always is done quarterly. Most retail grocery stores don't run true inventory. We definitely will tighten it up.
- Jill: Anecdotally, what we discussed at the GMM and how we aren't selling meat, we don't know whether meat is our most stolen item because we aren't tracking that.
- Debbie: To confirm, it's the change in the dollar amount in our store currently without taking into account how much was ordered?
- Wendy: We took the December inventory number, added all the purchases since then to it, subtracted our ending inventory, and that number should equal our cost. If it doesn't, we have to make an adjustment. We had quite a large difference, which could be due to theft, spoilage, miscounting, etc. ...
- Debbie: I assumed that because we count inventory based on department (produce/frozen/grocery/health & beauty..), that we were tracking where losses were happening, but it turns out that is not the case. It would be good to know whether the majority of our change is happening in frozen versus supplements versus produce. That would be useful. I assume that it's happening on the financial side, so it could be a goal.
- Wendy: We don't track our cost of goods that closely yet because we haven't been using our point-of-sale system usually.
- Debbie: Yes, it's a goal.
- Wendy: Quarterly inventory is more helpful than monthly inventory.
- Jill: My point is that we should be at 50% gross margin but are at 25%.
- Wendy: Until we switch to pricing margins, we aren't going to hit that.
- Jill: We still should be at least at 50%.
- Wendy: Inventory is scheduled for May 30th-31st. If anyone is willing to help with inventory or finance, please contact Wendy or Jill, respectively.

- Vote in Officer Roles (5 minutes)

- NOTE: Tommasina was not present for this portion of the meeting, but did confirm consensus via email after the meeting
- President
 - Debbie: We should acknowledge that I will be one year past our two x two-year presidential term limit because I have already been in this role for four years, and will be on our fifth year if I am elected as president.
 - **CONSENSUS VOTE: Debbie for president.**
- Vice President
 - Debbie: I spoke with Ned last week to request that he run for VP. Ned agreed to be VP and train for president over the coming year, which is going to be very busy for him with his dissertation writing.
 - **CONSENSUS VOTE: Ned for Vice President.**

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- Treasurer
 - CONSENSUS VOTE: Jill for Treasurer.
- Secretary
 - CONSENSUS VOTE: Tommasina for Secretary.
- Discuss Planning 2023 Board Retreat (10 minutes)
 - Dates & Time Commitments
 - Location
 - Agenda
 - Debbie: The end of our feasibility study might be good timing so that we can discuss how to implement it. We also will need to discuss updating the Continuous Improvement Plan. We would not want to vote on the 2024 budget because there would be these other topics, so we would vote on the 2024 budget separately. I am thinking of August or September for the retreat.
 - Wendy: I agree with not focusing on the 2024 budget because we would have other big discussion topics.
 - Debbie: Generally, we do a 1.5-day retreat over a weekend nearby. Last year, we did it upstairs at Company Brewing. We used to go out of town but shifted to doing it in Milwaukee for convenience.
 - Karen: Teambuilding through going out to dinner on Saturday night of the retreat would be great.
 - Wendy: I can host a retreat team-building event at my house on Saturday night
 - Debbie: So, everyone is comfortable with staying in Milwaukee. It would be good to get back to going out of town in the future.
 - Hire a Facilitator? Need a separate notetaker?
 - Debbie: I will reach out to Rachel about facilitating the board retreat for pay.
- - Summary [to Ned via phone after meeting because Debbie's computer died, ending Ned's Zoom call]
 - Debbie: The focal point will be on the feasibility study, its implications, and its implementation. The other piece would be circling back to the Continuous Improvement Plan and updating it to reflect our new goals and prioritization. Also, while we all agree that coordinators would be invited, we need to determine what the obligation of coordinator position is. Wendy will take that back to the coordinator team. Finally, we are aiming to schedule the retreat in late August / early September. Debbie will email everyone to work on scheduling those dates for the board retreat.
- Reflection Time (? minutes)
 - Recap major topics and action items
 - What surprised us?
 - What still puzzles us?
 - What questions are not yet answered?

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- 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: June 27th at 6:30pm