

RIVERWEST COOPERATIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING 11.30.22 6:30pm

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

Others in Attendance: Quinn, Shannon

Note Taker: Tommasina

Facilitator: Debbie

Time Keeper: Ned

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
 - Practice acknowledging “As a ____ person, speaking to ____ people in the room...”
- Check In On Communication (5 minutes)
 - Tommasina is going to update the admin calendar with all important dates for all of us to use
 - Tommasina is curious about using Slack with all board members
 - Debbie is open to trying Slack in the new year once things slow down
 - Wendy says sometimes texting is important when things are urgent, and then we can get back onto email
 - Debbie has been struggling with keeping up with emails and wants to be more responsive
 - Wendy says it's the first time she's noticed that with Debbie and it's okay to take a breather
- Coordinator Reports / Strategy (15 minutes)
 - Store (5 minutes)
 - Tommasina asks why we're up 22%. Could be the basket total is up to \$19.15 with the same number of sales as last month. Would be in the finance report so we'll follow up there.
 - Café (5 minutes)
 - Good sales, attributed to having an extra person back there dedicated to making the grab n' go. They put in the notice so we're already seeing a little dip in November. Cost of waste also goes up with more production. Lots of work done on rental agreements– we sent it out to the board for any last edits but they're close to approval. Ladle Lady is our only consistent person. Shannon is reaching out to some other people like Royally Vegan and Cake Bandit. Having a contract might help others take on the hours to rent the space.
 - To bump up sales, we're trying some different products in grab n' go.
 - Karen - how consistent is grab 'n' go? Shannon: Todd was working Wednesday and Thursday so people got used to that, so they'd come in then. Once we got more product in, there was a lag before people got stuff.
 - Wendy- we're going to push Holiday Market for OnMilwaukee but we could maybe do that in January.
 - Jill: any benefit in a survey for grab 'n' go on Facebook?
 - Shannon: probably couldn't hurt. might be a nice way to engage. Jill offers to help.
 - Debbie: I did a thorough review of the tenant agreement so don't wait for me on approval or sending it out.
 - Karen: would ladle Lady want to do another day of the week?
 - Shannon: we did say we're keeping it vegetarian.
 - Wendy: if it's coming in to the kitchen, we're not going to do it. no meat in our pots.
 - Volunteer Coordinator (5 minutes)

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- o 37 volunteers in the store. Lots of openings still. one person came in to train and did not come back. I'm collecting emails at events.
 - o Thursday mornings, Wednesday and Friday mornings and nights need coverage.
 - o Halloween pumpkin patch - was so nice, people tabled, great turnout.
 - o In October, we did some birthday party work.
 - o Wendy also took on the admin role - lots of mess to work through.
 - o Karen: you feel like you're taking care of things that are important?
 - o Wendy: there were some mistakes. lot of misentered invoices for the wrong vendors. not a lot, but enough to have to clean up. lots of money is being mailed out to fix
 - o Wendy: other updates: revamped the consignment invoices better. The Birthday party went great! big sign looked so nice. filled in some of the member loan berry and we need to get the member drive one filled in and then we'll do another post.
 - o Wendy: Next up is Spaghetti Dinner: I want someone to coordinate it
- Committee Reports (15 minutes)
 - o Finance Committee (5 minutes)
 - We're teetering on the edge of the profitability - but fixing the accounts payable. Store numbers are strong and continue to increase. Not having enough staff has been helpful. It's great it wasn't more of a loss with the fixes for accounts payable. All the member loans have been 0% so far which is great for us.
 - o Communications (5 minutes)
 - Ned: I've been trying to get the new members who've joined and haven't heard from Gibson.
 - Wendy: I can talk to Gibson next time I see him.
 - Ned: once I have that, I can ask the new members about exposure to OnMilwaukee. Could more people access the database?
 - Wendy: we want to protect personal information, but we should obviously get you access so you can reach out. If you're getting people on the phone, let's make sure to talk about volunteer recruitment.
 - Tommasina: twilio is a texting service you might be able to use.
 - Karen: we're going to have two different newsletters - holiday market, and then another one about membership drive and membership loan. and a short and sweet board message.
 - o Membership (5 minutes)
 - Quinn expressed interest in joining and heading up.
 - Wendy is going to revamp the gift membership form.
 - Jill: on the gift membership note, if you have the means, think of friends who might not have memberships and add the cards to your holiday cards.
- On-Going Equity & Inclusivity Work (15 minutes)
 - o Watch 2 videos from Columinate's Co-op Café series and discuss
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQuEc6qipec&t=5s>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vGB8Ffw2l3Q>
 - Lots of organizations feel pressure to address "but what are we doing?" whereas having the conversations is the work. Not to pat ourselves on the back, but we don't have to get down on ourselves because what we're doing is the work.
 - A lot of food coops think that providing discounts is sufficient for diversity and inclusion, but it's more about the products and quality of the products, and conversations outside of the co-op community to build the membership. It's about the conversations.
 - second video: great example of the first video's point. a co-op hosted listening sessions thinking that they would start carrying more ethnic foods and signs in other languages but the listening sessions found that people with different heritages had their own ethnic grocery stores. It was all about listening.
 - Karen: Who do we try to please? current members or others?

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- Jill: It's about seeking out other feedback.
- Karen: to check with our membership or others?
- Debbie: our membership isn't necessarily separate from the community. we maybe delineate that sometime more than is necessary.
- Jill: What we want is more customers, not just surveying our customers. We want to survey everyone in the community to better serve everyone in the community.
- Ned: if the riverwest co-op wants to be a more diverse and robust community in terms of membership, the important step will be to listen to people who are not currently members and understand what if anything they're looking for from us and not to assume that the solution will be for the Coop to carry products that they're getting from their local stores. Membership discounts are insufficient, as suggested by the Columinate videos.
- Ned: I think that, if we want to expand our membership in Harambee, we should host a listening session there. That was one take-away that I had from the Columinate videos.
- Wendy: We could go further than just Harambee. Alice's Gardens, Sherman Phoenix. Fondy market. Needs a concerted effort. Maybe even a directive from the board to the staff. At times, ordering it might be hard but sharing knowledge about relationships is important.
- Debbie: I do think we need to consider how white our membership, volunteer base, staff and so on is. it's not going to be great to just ask how we can get people to spend money at our store. feels like we need more groundwork.
- Karen: We do serve a diverse group of people with mental health issues. Maybe we could learn how to handle issues that might arise.
- Debbie: keep an ear out if we could do a mental health training for staff and volunteers
- Break (10 minutes) (end at 7:40?)
- Schedule January Board Meeting (5 minutes)
 - o Shannon - Wednesday and Thursdays are hard for her.
 - o December 29th meeting Jill and Quinn can't make.
 - o No Ned in January, and remote Tommasina.
 - o Dan said we could use the Daily Bird or Riverworks.
 - o Wendy will make sure we can do the December and January one at Daily Bird so we can have internet.
 - o Regarding Ned's availability, he's OOO January through March. He won't be responding through email. Keep him on the emails but if it's required be very clear about getting his attention. He'll be back in early April. We'll get his input for the General Member Meeting.
- Hiring Process Check in (10 minutes)
 - o Admin Coordinator
 - o Grocery Coordinator
 - o HR Coordinator
 - o First meeting is this Friday at 7pm.
 - o Karen will look for old applicants who might want to be considered for other roles.
 - o Debbie says to be loud in email if we need her for dates for follow-up on hiring
- Check In on Financing Options (10 minutes)
 - o Shared Capital
 - Business Plan
 - Tenant Lease Agreement
 - big questions still to answer- what are we going to buy? what are the values of our assets? a timeline for receiving the money? draw in 2 increments it sounds like within 6 months - 7% for 10 years, first 6 months are interest only. targeting to the loan committee on January 10. we need all the question answered in the next two weeks. he'll present it in the January then still a lot of underwriting so it'll probably be in February. so we have time to talk in person about it. probably 25 minutes at the January meeting. \$870/month.

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- Wendy: what POS system are we looking for? We need to hire more people and labor hours to implement and research a POS system. so that year timeline is to get up to speed. They were excited to hear that we were looking at the consultant and the grant to help us with the consulting fees.
 - Ned: It'd be ideal to compare two loan offers. Ned will look into LEAF to see if we can apply.
 - Wendy: I'd work on that with you. They work with Shared Capital sometimes.
 - Jill: We should look into NFFI food grant (Shared Capital mentioned this to us)
 - Debbie: We need to be careful about our capacity.
 - WEndy: If we don't get this loan, then what are we going to do? We need to keep trying and we know what we want to say to funders now.
 - Jill: member loan - we still need their money even if we don't get the loan.
 - Debbie: We should ask if we can pay off early and make sure there is no pre-payment penalty. Jill will ask this.
 - o Member Loan Program
 - it will just help with our fluidity and get a new POS system. upgrading that is an important aspect of our profitability.
 - Our goal is \$35,000. all money pledged is \$8000 now.
 - could each board member think of people to ask?
 - Tommasina will send the revised lease agreement to Paula when we get it from Nola and ask for a timeline for their feedback. Debbie would like to be there in the last week of December to review in person. if possible.
 - Karen and Wendy can look through member list to find good members to ask
 - Ned is interested in looking through COPOS to see top spenders
 - o Consultant - December 15 is the deadline for the consultant grant from the Wisconsin - we need to compile a quote from a consultant for a feasibility study and community letters. quotes from Wynston - they had seen our email a few weeks ago. They were going to respond today, they're pretty busy but our location and our general needs align well with what they're willing and able to do. That's the only lead we have so hopefully that works out. We can be flexible in terms of starting the work depending on Wynston's schedule. Amelia and Clare- can be our community support. past board member, etc. Ned will draft something. Wendy will reach out to Amelia.
 - o We are requiring board members to log into Asana and mark if you did something. Poke around now and try to use it in January.
 - o Monday meeting- Wendy and Ned will schedule a time to chat about the new grant.
 - o Fundraising Drive
 - o Other Options?
- Membership Engagement (10 minutes)
 - o Canvass neighborhood for volunteers, holiday maker space, t-shirts, hours, special orders... Include coupons?
 - o Board member cards (business cards including "Shop like a Member" one-time discount?
 - o Board outreach – contact key members about the member loan program
 - Continuous Improvement Plan Check-In (10 minutes)
 - o Review updated plan document
 - o Focus on Yes items with High Priority
 - o Schedule CIP Meeting with Rachel in January
 - for one hour - it'd be great to have a few coordinators there.
 - board training for new board members - scheduled
 -
 - o Nick's idea

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- 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
 - **Plan General Membership Meeting (GMM)**
 - ❖ Mid to late fall???
 - ❖ Need future timeline of planning GMM, retreats...
 - ❖ 2021 Annual Report?
 - **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

Board Meeting: December 29th at 6:00pm

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