

Blue Hill Co-op Board Meeting

July 21, 2009

Blue Hill Public Library

Board Members Attending: Gail Bartlett, Deborah Wiggs, Becky McCall, Erich Reed, Chip Angell

Other Attendees: Karen Doherty (General Manager), Heather Albert-Knopp (owner, minutes taker), Ken Weinberg (owner), Mia Strong (owner), John Miller (owner)

Approval of June Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved with one adjustment, changing the statement of one Board member regarding the GM report.

Time Open to Owners.

Ken Weinberg, John Miller and Mia Strong were present at the meeting. Ken raised the issue of insufficient parking at the Co-op. John shared his opinions about a letter the Board received from Bob St. Peter in the spring.

Discussion: The future of the Co-op (Gail)

Board members were asked to read the article “Identifying Crisis, Sharing Opportunities” in preparation for this discussion. Gail opened the discussion by sharing her assessment that the Co-op has perhaps not been realistic about assessing our market niche and our role in the community. While national groups like the National Cooperative Grocers Association (NCGA) are working to make co-ops stronger and successful, they have underlying assumptions, for instance that co-ops ought to be a source for one-stop shopping, mimicking the departments of a supermarket. However, that is not how most customers use the Blue Hill Co-op, and may not be the best operating model for our Co-op. In the subsequent discussion, the Board members present agreed that one-stop shopping may not be the right model for the Blue Hill Co-op. The appropriate niche may be focusing on fresh and local produce, fresh meat, bulk, café, medicinals and local seafood. Canned goods and other areas could be compressed to emphasize these focus areas. Farmers’ markets are also expanding exponentially, and this could be a good time to explore closer collaborations. The Board then discussed the Co-op’s ends statements, and whether they could be changed to encapsulate this new vision for what the co-op could be. The current ends statements were borrowed from the Hanover Co-op in New Hampshire, and our Co-op was “test-driving” them for this year. Hanover is a much bigger co-op, and it may be that a more simple, mission statement is what our Co-op needs to guide us. The work of monitoring the ends statements is labor-intensive and time-consuming for the GM, and the statements themselves seem grander than what our Co-op is aspiring to. **The Board decided to keep ends statements A1 (Mission Statement), A2 (Local Foods), and the definition of the seven parts of community, and remove the other ends statements A3-A8.** The Board also agreed that in order to gather more data on moving toward a different store model and to discuss this concept with owners, the Board could include a short two or three question survey in the next newsletter.

Monitoring Report of Policy D2 - Budgeting and Financial Planning

D2 monitoring report accepted. D2 is in compliance.

In the future, the Board would like to track the sales of local items, and see this reported in the budget with benchmarks.

Monitoring Report of Policy D3 – Asset Protection

D3 monitoring report accepted. D3 is in compliance.

The Board will look into having an audit done. Chip will explore whether the current accountant's work will meet the auditing needs.

Review of value of outside facilitator

The Board agreed that it is very valuable to have a meeting facilitator that is not a Board member. Gail will contact Steve Benson to ask him to continue facilitating Board meetings.

Nominating Committee Report

There are many Board member applications coming in. Three applications have been completed, two more owners say they will complete the application. An additional three to four individuals are considering submitting applications. According to the by-laws, the Co-op can have between seven and nine total Board members. As two current Board members have continuing terms, the Board can open between five and seven seats for next year. **The Board agreed to open five seats on the Board for this year's election.** There will be a meet and greet night on August 25 for the Board candidates to mingle with owners.

Board Budget

Tabled until the August Board meeting as Bob Sullivan is not present.

GM Report

One Board member expressed the opinion that the process of exploring the feasibility of moving the Co-op should be kept active, as opportunities may arise at any time. A Board member asked about the number of active owners – Karen responded that the number is about 1100, about the same that it's been for a decade. Karen also clarified that sales have gone down a bit in July, and that to derive the budget projections she took figures from last year for each quarter and budgeted either an increase or decrease over last those figures for each area. Karen will make available a copy of the budget that is easier to download – either as a PDF, or by printing hard copies. Karen expressed surprise at the low number of survey returns. Responding to a question about the line of credit, Karen explained that she has not accessed it yet, nor does she see a need to use it unless sales fall well below the budget. The cash flow is currently positive. A Board member asked about the owner coupons, and how they compared to owner discounts last year. Karen explained that the bookkeeper had not tracked owner discounts properly last year, so a comparison isn't possible. Karen felt that the coupon provided too much discount, but it was successful in that people seemed happy. It is unclear whether the coupons drove sales, though sales in June were very good. A Board member stressed the importance of returning economic benefit to our owners.

Agenda items for next month's meeting: Board budget, report on D1, quarterly financials, proposal to adopt revised policy template from CDS, planning for annual meeting, report from Board Development Committee, monitor A1 (Karen), continue with GM evaluation in executive session

Next month's meeting will be Tuesday, August 19 at 6:30 pm at the Blue Hill Library

Adjourned to Executive Session on GM Evaluation

Minutes respectfully submitted by Heather Albert-Knopp