

Blue Hill Co-op Board Meeting
July 27, 2023, Blue Hill Co-op Café

Board Members Attending: Jo Barrett, Aaron Dority, Deborah Evans, Anne Gilchrist, Jerome Lawther, Jennifer Traub, Tim Tunney.

Absent Board Member(s): Jenny Brillhart, Annie Silver.

Others Attending: Julia Klein (Minute Taker), Kevin Gadsby (General Manager), Jennifer Coolidge, Greg Paulmier (Owner).

Julia Klein, minute taker

Jerome Lawther, meeting facilitator, timekeeper

Jennifer Traub, tasks and decisions

Meeting called to order at 6:03 PM.

Approval of Agenda

Anne moved to approve the agenda with adjustments. Aaron seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried.

Approval of Minutes

Anne moved to approve the May 25, 2023 BOD Minutes with revisions. Jo seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried. The board tabled the June 22, BOD and Annual Meeting Minutes for the August meeting.

Open Owner Time

Jen commented that a salad she purchased from the Café recently contained mushy slimy spinach. She returned the salad to the café and staff responded well, but Jen emphasized the importance of freshness in the café offerings.

Greg Paulmier expressed his hope the Co-op would purchase his blueberries again this year. He noted his appreciation that the Co-op is recycling boxes as containers for groceries per his suggestion last year. He inquired whether Kevin has considered offering EZ Pay at checkout. Tim responded that research into EZ Pay has begun and that Kevin has consulted with Weavers Way Co-op. Greg went on to suggest that masking tape be offered in the bulk section instead of the white stickers since it is cheaper, better for sealing paper bags, and may be written on. The board thanked Greg for his thoughts.

Working Owners – Jen Coolidge opened a discussion with the board regarding expressing appreciation to working owners. She explained that working builds owner involvement and working owners are passionate about the store and not solely working for the discount. However, some have expressed that they do not feel recognized for their work and that recognition would feel good. Jennifer suggested that the board might respond by sending a personal note to each working owner, perhaps 10 per month. Jennifer can supply addresses and postcards. She noted that she already sends out handwritten notes to new owners each month. Discussion ensued and the board suggested recognition on a public appreciation board or in the monthly email in addition to handwritten notes. The board brainstormed a streamlined process for the notes.

Jennifer will supply a manilla folder with postcards and addresses for directors to fill out notes monthly at board meetings and return to the folder for Jennifer to mail. Jo shared the phrase “culture of gratitude” and expressed her desire to encourage this culture at the Co-op.

Jennifer presented the August Co-op birthday month calendar. Live music is scheduled every day from 3-5, local food tastings, and a book signing with the Coyote Center are planned. The café hosted its second open mic with success. 30 people attended, including vacationers, with 13 musicians performing.

Jennifer alerted the board to a one-day retreat from Columinate for Board members held in Keene, NH in October. Jerome will look into the retreat. She also asked for a director to promote Farm Fresh Rewards on Facebook. Jerome volunteered to create a video with Jennifer.

Conflict of Interest Forms – Jerome reminded directors to update the online COI forms if there have been any changes.

Election Results – Deborah presented the election results noting that the bylaw revision passed by 86.5% and all 3 board members were voted in. **Anne moved to accept the election results. Aaron seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried.** The board thanked Deborah for her work!

Deborah noted a dramatic increase in owner participation in the last 3 years. She explained the marketing process from save-the-date notice in January to reminders sent during the voting process. 40% of votes received came in direct response to 4 reminder emails sent to owners who had not yet voted. Only twenty paper ballots were submitted in the store though some were stuffed in the box without a name or owner number.

Deborah and Jo expressed concern over ongoing problems with the email list. They noted that the number of ballots to owners in good standing has dropped in the past few years though the number of owners has increased and that the email list may not be an accurate reflection of the ownership. They are concerned that some owners who have invested in the Co-op may not be given the opportunity to vote and emphasized the need to send out postcards as long as there are owners who do not have email. Kevin responded that Jennifer Coolidge has been working on the email list, but it is complicated. Cashiers are taking updated contact information from customers with good response and submissions of updated contact information come in from the website daily. Kevin went on to report that upon inspection of the 110 returned postcards it was found that most were summer addresses, billing addresses, etc. Deborah noted that the email list updates should be completed by January and that the postcard design should be submitted to the board in February.

Election of Officers – Current officers expressed their willingness to continue in their roles. Tim noted that his schedule is limiting his ability to focus on the role of treasurer but he’s willing to continue if needed. **Deborah moved to maintain the slate of officers for another year. Jo seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried.**

Redemption Decision – Kevin reported that two investors have submitted valid requests for redemption. The Finance Committee does not yet have a predictive tool, but a surprise refund came in from NCG making redemption more viable at this time. **Anne moved to approve the Finance Committee’s recommendation to honor the two owner’s requests for redemption. Deborah seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried.** Subsequent requests for redemptions will be considered at the January board meeting. Work on the tool continues with counsel from NCG, Wegner, and Cheryl Boulet. Discussion ensued clarifying that it will be used to look beyond net profit and forecast how redemptions may impact the store during the slow season. Kevin reported a good response to the email regarding dividends.

GM Monitoring

B1 Q2 Financials – Kevin reported positive trends in sales growth and net operating income with profitability in June and 17% growth in July. Sales have exceeded \$1 million in July and are expected to do so again in August. The cash position is a bit lower with higher payables. All percentages are up significantly compared to the prior year and cash management has improved. Kevin noted that the café led growth last year, but growth has been even across the store this year. Café staffing continues to be a challenge. Jen suggested recruiting café staff from a culinary program.

Kevin commented that the full potential of the store is beginning to be seen. Some early summer day’s sales (at \$40,000) have been higher than the highest August daily sales in previous years. Growth is seen in both the customer count and the number of items sold. With payroll numbers down, he is considering increasing staff in seasonal months since there have not been enough hands to keep the shelves full. Jen suggested that working owners and board members could pull merchandise forward on shelves while shopping. All directors agreed to help.

Financial Conditions – Kevin reported that he has paid down \$50,000 of the line of credit which totaled \$203,000 by April. Kevin will be stocking savings accounts as soon as credit is paid down. **Tim moved to accept Kevin’s report on B1 as in compliance. Jo seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried.**

Board Monitoring

C6 Officer’s Roles – Jo presented her report on policy C6 and recommended changing his/her language in the policy to “their.” The board agreed that gendered language throughout the Policy Register should be adjusted. **Anne moved that the board is in compliance with policy C6. Aaron seconded the motion. The motion unanimously carried.** Jo commented that Policy B4 and bylaw 2.8 should be reviewed and aligned post-election. Jen and Jo will review B4.

Committee Recruitment – Jen asked if new recruits for committees need to be vetted by the board. The board responded that it depends on the committee and went on to comment that the committee charters should be reviewed and updated.

Agenda

Review B4 - Re-write Consistent with Bylaw 2.8 - Jo/Jen

Board Outgoing Communications Policy - Standards and Parameters - Jo

Annual Meeting Debrief - Jen/Julia

C7 Board Committee Principles - Tim
GM Report - B6 Staff Treatment and Compensation
Committee Charters

Meeting Evaluation: Long. Busy. Encouraging!

Meeting Adjourned: 7:38PM

Due Date for the Board Packet: Items for the Board Packet will be due on Thursday, August 17, 2023.

Next Board Meeting: Board Meeting Thursday, August 24, 2023, 6:00PM, Blue Hill Co-op, Café.

Minutes submitted by Julia Klein