

Adopted Minutes
East End Food Co-op Board Meeting
Held Remotely via Cisco WebEx
August 15, 2022

In attendance:

Board Members: Tom Pandaleon, Vice President; Brian Alderman; Debi Johnson; Megan Moffitt; Marty Seltman

Management: Maura Holliday, General Manager; Elly Helgen, Marketing and Member Services; Erin Myers, IT; Tyler Kulp, Produce

Member-Owners: Mary Bearer, Bob Dobbs, Edward, Phil, Rebecca

Board Clerk: MaCall Scott

Absent Board Members: Ariel Barlow, President; Laura Valentine, Secretary; Mia Sorada, Treasurer

Introduction

In Ariel's absence, Megan volunteered to facilitate the meeting; she called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm and read the Ends Statement aloud.

The East End Food Co-op exists to enhance physical and social health in our community.

To these ends, we will create:

1. A sustainable member-owned business open to everyone
2. An ethical and resilient food infrastructure
3. A vibrant, dynamic community of happy, healthy people
4. A creative vision to transform the future

Check-In

Those in attendance checked in to express their feelings and any needs.

Amend/Approve Agenda

Decision: Motion to approve the agenda as written by Marty. Second from Tom.

Vote: 5.0.0

Member-Owners Open Session

After volunteering with 412 Food Rescue, Rebecca expressed concern that an organization employee wasn't aware that the Co-op is open for business. Tyler shared that they come three times per week to collect produce, so hopefully, that was an isolated case of unawareness.

Edward said they are pleased with our participation in the Food Bucks Rx program. They hope it will continue to grow and benefit the local patients and medical providers by improving access to organic food.

Mary asked if we would keep the Co-op in the East End of Pittsburgh when we expand. Maura responded that we intend to stay in the immediate area, as this will expand the current location rather than create a second location.

August Working Meeting Report

The August meeting was attended by Megan, Brian, Marty, Debi, Laura, Ariel, and Mia. They discussed board retention, continuity, turnover, board member relationships, how meetings could be restructured to improve engagement, and executive compensation. Megan added that they recused themselves from the executive compensation discussion.

GM Update

Maura provided the following update to the Directors before the meeting:

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This report is in addition to monthly monitoring reports. The expectation of this update is to give additional information to the Board of Directors that may not be included in the month's monitoring report. This report aligns with parts of sub-policy B7: Communication to the Board.... 'The General Manager shall not cause or allow the Board to be uninformed or unsupported in its work.'

Membership:

Current total member-owners: 15,756

New member-owners: June – 51 (7 refunds)

Total member equity: \$1,586,380

Register Round Up Total:

July recipient: Family House \$822.76

August recipient: Dress for Success <https://pittsburgh.dressforsuccess.org/>

Operations Update:

- Our first community event, Backyard Composting 101, was successful with 10 participants. The event was hosted by Repair the World.
- August events: Floral Terrarium class on August 6, hosted by our own Candace from Produce (we had 13 participants!); Penn Forest event on August 13; Tabling at VegFest and Run Around the Square on August 27.
- September events: Seed to Table Workshop with Royally Fit (they are a Community Partner) on September 10; Pittsburgh Urban Farm Tour on September 17.
- Dr. Tammy of Sea Moss Gel Lady sampled her products this past weekend, and we sponsored the Naptural Beauty Supply Anniversary Event.
- Convergence Conference is this week! This is a conference focused on center-store departments. The conference includes a "table show" where buyers can meet vendors, taste products, and purchase items at a discount. We will be sending three staff to that conference: Ian, Jared, and Jackson, who will represent the grocery and wellness departments.
- Our 2022 waste audit was on August 1 and 2. Once PRC completes the report, we can present the results and recommendations.
- CX Satisfaction Survey went live on August 1. Getting enough data to start presenting results will take 30-60 days.
- On July 29, Wharton Curtis came and funded a Pay-it-Forward for random shoppers and paid for \$2,300 of groceries.
- All Staff meetings were hosted during the first week of August.
- Dress for Success is tabling this month, on August 22.
- NCG Eastern Corridor is hosting a Large Co-op Peer Group meeting in Massachusetts for DRs (Designated Representatives). I will attend this meeting on August 16 and 17, traveling to Connecticut before and after to visit family.
- NCG's Fall DR meeting is September 21-22; the meeting is in Minneapolis; travel days will be September 19 and 22.

Updates & Clarifications:

- The Pay-it-Forward was the first of its kind at our Co-op. They (Wharton Curtis) approached us; they chose people at random and paid for their groceries. They did not ask for any public or private acknowledgment.
- We have hired about five new employees in the past few weeks.

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- The Convergence Conference is hosted by NCG; pre-pandemic, Maura used to go with a few buyers yearly. They have wellness and grocery “tracks” for people in buying and managing roles. It’s NCG’s opportunity to talk about new programs being rolled out.

Management Report

Elly shared that Marketing has been focused on summer events (see the GM update above). A new Cooperator comes out this month.

Erin reported that in IT, the customer survey has launched; we’ve had about twenty responses so far. We are looking at changes to our credit card processor, and there will also be a change to our gift card program.

Tyler said local produce is exploding; we have tons of tomatoes, onions, potatoes, zucchini, hard squash, pie pumpkins, local bouquets, and watermelons. We got the first of the season local, certified organic apples today – they are a variety called Red Free. It’s been slow in the store and slow in Produce, but we have the best stuff we’re going to have all year! Tyler was grateful for the opportunity to write an article for the newest Cooperator.

Elly and Erin clarified the Food Bucks and Food Bucks Rx programs. The Food Trust facilitates these programs, which the USDA funds. With the Food Bucks program, the Co-op has the authority to issue and redeem coupons, whereas Food Bucks Rx is issued by medical providers and redeemed at the Co-op.

B4 – Member Rights and Responsibilities

The Policy Register states, “The General Manager shall not allow members to be uninformed or misinformed of their rights and responsibilities.” Maura presented the B4 and reported compliance with all provisions of the policy.

Questions & Comments:

- Tom noted that the number of email addresses we have tagged as belonging to a member is relatively high – nearly 2/3 of the active membership. He gave kudos to operations for working hard to collect that information.
- DO members have the ability to opt-out of governance emails?
 - Yes, when we receive a member’s email address, they are subscribed to all Co-op emails; they can unsubscribe as they wish.
- In sub policy B4.2 (*The GM will not: Create an environment that discourages membership and member participation.*), one way to think of that is in terms of a volunteer program; is this a place where we can think about whether we encourage or discourage this kind of activity?
 - Maura responded that in a recent conversation with someone at the Keystone Development Cooperative, she learned that the main reason other co-ops can have a volunteer program is that they require all members to participate. It has to be required of everyone or no one. Marty shared that the MOP Committee’s research found that not always the case. This conversation will be continued during the MOP Committee Update.
- Tom suggested that Special Meetings should be added to the interpretation of B4.5 as a way that member feedback may be obtained. Special Meetings can be called either by a majority vote of the Board or the written petition of at least 500 members.

Decision: Tom motioned to accept the B4 report as compliant. Second from Marty.

Vote: 5.0.0

The Board completed the GM Monitoring Matrix, highlighting strengths and opportunities.

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Committee Updates:

Resilience

The Committee met a few weeks ago; on the agenda:

- 1) An update on the energy engineering conversation with the University of Pittsburgh and Carnegie Mellon to assess the potential for alternative energy approaches as we move towards expansion. The team asked for better prioritization among the four pillars in our energy independence thesis; our order of priorities is:
 - (1) Resilience – defined as trying not to lose food for one day and preserving 20% of our food supply for seven days
 - (2) Ecology – things like net zero and climate impact of our energy usage
 - (3) Independence – being able to operate independently of our big utilities
 - (4) Financial Health – we don't want to be worse off because of investments we've madeThe next step is a workshop in early September with the folks at Pitt and CMU using a tool called GridLAB-D simulation software.

- 2) Discussion of a bioreactor-related project that would incorporate the food waste streams around the Co-op as well as energy streams that could be generated from that food waste to add to our energy resilience.
 - What is a bioreactor? Composting food generates heat; from that heat, you can generate electricity; from that electricity, you can power giant batteries that you can move around and plug in places.
- 3) For the next meeting (a week from this Thursday at Mellon Park): A conversation on what being a climate-resistant grocery store looks like; it's about how we stay ahead of the curve in the coming decades.

Finance

Brian reported that the B1 is coming up in September, and the Finance Committee will work with Shawn to ensure it is ready to present to the Board. Also, on Shawn's plate is heading up a project to bring accounting in-house.

Board Perpetuation and Elections (BP&E)

The Board and Committee pamphlets are complete. Debi and Brian will be tabling 11-1 this Friday. So far, Tom and Marty are the only ones who have tabled – they shared that it was a positive experience. Board candidacy declaration ends on September 25, and then we will pivot to the voting phase. The Zoom Board Q&A session for candidates is upcoming, with the date to be determined. The staff voting process is still being solidified.

Member-Owner Participation (MOP)

On the MOP agenda:

- 1) They are working to reinstitute a volunteer program; much energy is going into this project, and they want to confirm that they have Board and Management support before continuing.
- 2) MOP was tasked with working to increase member participation at the committee level. A brochure draft was made by committee members and finalized by Debi. It will be handed out while Board members are tabling in the upcoming weeks.
- 3) Marty wondered if we would be able to add a few governance-related questions to the new customer survey that is given to randomly selected shoppers at the register. Elly responded that, unfortunately, we could not customize those questions. Marty will put the regular bi-annual governance survey back on the MOP agenda.

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Annual Meeting

Marty gave a brief update: the plan is to have a more engaging outdoor event in October. They have reached out to multiple outdoor venues and found only three that are available: Tree Pittsburgh has a site along the river toward Lawrenceville (about \$1000), the Sherwood Event Center in Wilkinsburg (\$1250-\$1500), and the Frick Park Environmental Center which was likely too small (\$400-\$500). They hope to solidify a plan at the next Committee meeting. Marty noted that venue planning should begin earlier in the future.

Policy and Governance

Megan had no news to report in Laura's absence.

Capital Campaign

In Mia's absence, there were no updates.

Action Items

Directors and managers reviewed progress or lack thereof on action items from previous meetings.

Appreciations

Those in attendance took a moment to share acknowledgments.

Closing

Next Meeting: Monday, September 19, 2022

Packet submission due: Monday, September 11, 2022

Decision: Motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 pm by Brian. Second by Tom.

Vote: 5.0.0

The Board entered Executive Session to discuss expansion updates with the General Manager.

Minutes respectfully submitted by MaCall Scott, Board Clerk.