

Adopted Minutes  
East End Food Co-op Board Meeting  
Held Remotely via Cisco WebEx  
May 15, 2023

**In attendance:**

Board Members: Ariel Barlow, President; Laura Valentine, Secretary; Liz Geist, Marty Seltman, Carlos Gasca Yanez, Tom Pandaleon, Caoimhe Quach, Tyleda Worou

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

Member-Owners: Josh, Megan, Mia, 3 unnamed call-in users

Board Clerk: Jessie Ryan

Absent Board Members: Debi Johnson, Brian Alderman

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**Introduction**

The Board President called the meeting to order at 7:01 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:** The meeting agenda was approved without objection.

**Amend/Approve Minutes**

**Decision:** The April meeting minutes were approved without objection.

**Member-Owners Open Session**

Megan took a moment to say hello to the Board and her co-workers who were on the call. She thanked the Co-op staff for their hard work after finishing up another busy day.

A member-owner joined the meeting and took the time to say hello and ask a few questions. She thanked the Board members for their hard work. She asked for information regarding relocation. Maura explained that we have been working on relocating for a while, with a more concentrated effort over the past few years. We are in the process of site searching at the moment. We just had an in-person member forum, and a virtual meeting is scheduled on 5/24/23 if members want to attend. The agenda for the forums includes reviewing the relocation/expansion timeline and an opportunity for discussion. Carlos inquired where she lives, to which the member responded Point Breeze.

**May Working Meeting Report**

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, 9 out of 10 board members met from 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m. EST to discuss different expansion updates.

**GM Update**

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

This report is in addition to monthly monitoring reports. This update expects 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-

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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: 16,205

Current total fully paid member-owners: 13,915

New member-owners: April - 54 (5 refunds)

Total member equity: April - \$1,629,918

Total member-owner sales: April - \$768,218 (\$1,223,728 total sales - 63%)

**Register Round-Up Total:**

April-June Recipients: raised to date - \$766

<https://www.treepittsburgh.org>

<https://www.justsaychef.com/community>

**Operations Update:**

- YTD sales week ending 5/7/23: \$10,305,400, which is -3.9% below PY sales.
- It is that time of year again, grilling season, where we usually see an uptick in meat theft. We had a more unusual instance, where someone came in with a cardboard box in their cart and stuffed a large amount of meat in it and then covered with a coat. This was right on the cusp of a smaller meat theft. To help mediate the issue, we have been keeping some larger and more expensive cuts in the back, which are available upon request.
- Mercato now accepts SNAP payments online! We are also moving curbside back to Mercato in order to increase access to online ordering.
- NCG's Marketing Matters conference is this month, May 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>. We are sending two staff to the meeting. This will be the first in-person Marketing Matters meeting since 2019.
- The sidewalk beyond the co-op that goes past Extra Storage Space is nearly complete and looks like it will be opening for public use shortly! This may allow us to bring back our outdoor seating, but we will need to discuss this with the Front End since that pre-pandemic, this was a Front End responsibility to manage.
- May Events: May 13<sup>th</sup> – EEFC In-person Member-Owner Expansion Forum; May 22<sup>nd</sup> – Community Cultures Fermentation Series: Spring Kimchi; May 29<sup>th</sup> – Community Cultures Fermentation Series: Lacto-Fermented Pickles
- Bike to Work Day is May 19<sup>th</sup> and we are donating fruit & café baked goods!
- We did a test run in April with Fourth Friday Food Trucks, which went really well, so we will have Catatouillie here throughout the summer months on the Fourth Friday each month.
- We are hosting Body-Inclusive Yoga on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of June, July, August, and September

**Updates & Clarifications:**

- What happens when someone steals? Are there consequences?
  - We don't detain anyone. Usually, we try to make visual documentation of it so we can let staff know of individuals to be aware of. We try to use excessive customer service to deter them from taking anything further. We follow up on the incident and figure out what they might have taken from a loss perspective. We have never taken any action further than that since Maura has been here.
- We don't confront people in the act of stealing, correct?
  - Not typically. If we have watched them in the act, we will try to get them to give it back. We are not interested in getting violent.

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- How do the food trucks work?
  - Elly responded that we did it once just as a fun event during the member drive to build excitement. It went really well and had a good response. The food truck owners enjoyed the collaboration and want to do it more often. We will continue the Fourth Friday Food Truck through the summer. Catatouillie is a non-profit, vegan food truck.
- How did you collect feedback on people's food truck experience?
  - Mostly by word of mouth
- Do we know the split between vegan and non-vegan members?
  - That is not data we collect
- Is the food truck operating as a supplement for our lack of Café hot bar food?
  - No, this is a separate Marketing/Member Services Engagement opportunity. It did bring traffic to the Co-op.
- It would be cool if we could track week-over-week numbers to see if we can quantify how much a food truck is helping drive business.
- Who else is going to the Marketing Matters conference with Debi?
  - Candace, our Community Engagement Coordinator

## Management Report

Tyler Kulp, Produce Manager, shared that it was a busy time in produce and floral this past week. They had a lot of bouquets in the store for Mother's Day, which sold well and looked nice. There were a lot of seedling and dirt sales. Last week was the busiest week in floral so far this year. Melons, cantaloupes, watermelon, and honeydew are in stock. He attended a one day conference at Four Seasons in Ephrata, PA, which is our largest produce distributor.

- Are there plans to fill the Plant Buyer position or will those responsibilities be delegated to other staff?
  - There never really was a Plant Buyer position or job description; Candance took on those responsibilities because she enjoyed it. Tyler still completes the seed orders and deals with vendors.
- Is there a way for members to know more about the people who are growing the food? Can we hang posters highlighting different growers?
  - We used to have large photos of some of the farms that we buy from, but they got a little outdated.
  - Debi, Elly, and Fran have worked on developing templates for highlighting local vendors and farmers, such as the color palette, logo, etc. This is on their to-do list.
- Do you have notes from your visit to Four Seasons?
  - Tyler did not have formal notes to present to the Board.

Elly Helgen, Marketing and Member Services Manager, shared that the department has been busy with a bunch of events scheduled in the coming months.

- Did you receive any feedback from the expansion meeting?
  - We did receive some feedback but there was only one comment left. We will debrief after the virtual meeting and figure out an action plan for communicating the conversations that were had. We did receive around 30 feedback forms from members who could not attend the meeting.

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- How will this information be communicated?
  - An email will be sent out summarizing the forums, addressing the main points that were discussed, and what we saw the most on the feedback forms. It could also be posted on the staff bulletin board.
- Are all the feedback forms going to be available somewhere?
  - The feedback forms are Google Forms, so that information can be transferred to a Google Sheet.
- A lot of staff member-owners were not notified of the meetings, so could you send an email out to their preferred email address? Maybe create a Beekeeper post as well?
  - The emails regarding the member forums went out to two lists, the governance list and the member list. Whatever email address folks used when they signed up for their membership is the one it was sent to. If employees are not receiving emails, they can see Customer Service, Elly, or Leslie to update their information.
  - If someone unsubscribes from one email, they unsubscribe from all lists.

### **B5 – Customer Service and Value**

The Policy Register states, “The General Manager shall not be unresponsive to customer needs.”

#### **Questions & Comments:**

- Maura reported full compliance on this report. This is the first report where she has included information from the CX survey that began last August. She picked the top indicators of satisfaction or dissatisfaction based on those survey results.
- In regards to unanswered comment cards, there is no commitment to a response in terms of the number of days. Most of the comment cards are product availability questions or requests for us to carry a certain product. Most of the unanswered ones are from folks who did not provide their contact information.
- Will the CX survey be a useful data collection point for us?
  - It was more positive than negative and the satisfaction scores reflect that. Most of the comments were positive.

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

**Decision:** The Board accepts the B5 report as compliant.

### **B10 - Environment**

The Policy Register states, “The General Manager shall not fail to take reasonable measures to ensure that the Co-op activities and practices minimize the Co-op’s negative impact, and maximize the Co-op’s positive impact, on the environment.”

#### **Questions & Comments:**

- Maura reported full compliance on this report.
- We did an updated waste audit this year for the first time since 2019.
- What monthly metrics are you thinking about to keep track of progress?
  - Elly stated once we form the green team of staff members, it is something the team could decide. We will continue doing a waste audit, maybe monthly, on a smaller scale.
- Is there a timeline to form this green team/group?
  - No, but hopefully soon.

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- Are there ways to diminish plastic in the packaging used at the Co-op?
  - After the green team is formed, they will compile ideas on how to do that.
- Before COVID, arugula was available by weight. Any thoughts about resuming that?
  - Tyler stated that this is unlikely because there was a lot of waste from those bulk greens. He is looking at bringing back bulk mushrooms.
- The 2019 data was not included in this report. Laura was able to find this number: 84% diversion.
- Do you think a year-over-year is a reasonable goal, or should we do it every two years? It seems like the audit takes a good bit of work and you haven't had a chance to implement everything.
  - Maura and Elly have discussed completing an audit on a monthly basis/more frequently/less intense way so they can report and make changes sooner. It would be ideal to not have to rely on a third-party audit as frequently. It does cost money and if we have staff that can perform the audit, that is our preference.
- Can we move away from plastic in the Grab and Go?
  - We have done a ton of research and there are options. Pittsburgh is in a tough delivery zone, which makes it hard to get products. A lot of suppliers that we have access to, don't carry the products that we are looking for. We just got an updated list of newer products that are coming out to the market for grab-and-go items. Amber is very passionate about this and is constantly looking for alternatives.
- Is our membership willing to pay more for packaging that is environmentally friendly?
- Carlos has heard discussion in the Millvale community about forming a buying Co-op for biodegradable products for take-out restaurants. The idea is to get a group of restaurants together to buy biodegradable products and create enough volume to reduce the use of plastic.
- What method do we use to compare the impact of our food waste v. the plastic waste we generate?
  - We do not have any of that information yet. The baseline was the Waste Audit Report.
  - Packaged products sell more than bulk items. The food waste on the floor and the labor it took to keep it tidy just wasn't manageable. From an economic standpoint, it has been a financial boost and savings in the Produce department.

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

**Decision:** The Board accepts the B10 report as compliant.

**Committee Updates:**

**Resilience**

The Committee has created its Charter. Laura will send it around via email to get approval from all Directors through Discord. Laura is not able to attend meetings at the current time, so there has been discussion around moving the meeting, but that would depend on the member-owners who participate as well.

**Finance**

The Finance Committee did not meet this month because they knew the B1 would not be ready. There were emails exchanged between Brian, Tom, and Shawn regarding the status of the B1. Maura shared that the bank reconciliation is complete. MaCall and Shawn are working as much as they can to get the books for November and December up to date and closed, then they will close Q3.

**Board Perpetuation and Elections (BP&E)**

The Committee has not been meeting. The Committee Charter was approved without objection.

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**Member-Owner Participation (MOP)**

The discussion at the last meeting was about the Annual Meeting. Marty and Fran went to check out potential locations for the Annual Meeting, which included Hosanna House, Union Project, Eastminster Church, the Wilksburg Train Station, and East End Cooperative Ministries. East End Cooperative Ministries seems to be the best space with the most parking. They are hoping to choose a location and pick a date at the next meeting. Tom and Fran shared some ideas for member-run recycling programs and projects from other Co-ops. Thirty people attended the in-person Expansion Forum. People seemed open to expanding the search radius for a new location. Fran gave a general presentation about the Capital Campaign.

**Expansion**

A few new members have joined the Expansion Committee. Carlos is working on setting up an Expansion Committee email address, to which people can respond or send information. Maura, Fran, and Carlos plan to meet monthly between the Board Meeting and the Working Meeting to talk through expansion updates.

**Compensation and Team Relations**

The Committee still needs to finalize its Charter.

**Executive**

They will be working on sending out an internal Board Newsletter. Ariel will reach out to all Directors to see if they have any updates or news to share. They will also reach out to committee heads to check in on committee goals and see if they are in need of anything.

**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 their thanks.

**Closing**

**Next Meeting:** Monday, June 19, 2023

**Packet submission due:** Monday, June 12, 2023

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m. without objection.