RIVERWEST COOPERATIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING 09.17.19 6:30pm

Board Members in Attendance: Alex, Collin, Debbie, Karen, Rhiannon, Rēsse, Vince
Others in Attendance: Abby, Annica, Paula, Sara, Scott
Note Taker: Rhiannon
Facilitator: Alex
Time Keeper: Alex

Minutes

● Check Ins + Pronouns + Firestarter (5 minutes)

● Review Facilitation Style + Hand Signals (5 minutes)

● Board, WC, & Staff Social Gathering? (5 minutes)

Debbie: Revamping meeting structure for longer discussion topics; folks need to have Q&A ready at beginning of meeting. Not all staff/worker’s collective members want or can stay until the end of the meeting
Karen: Employees are paid for the 1st hour of meeting.
Debbie: It’s beneficial to have WC members here for most topics, but don’t feel pressured to stay the entire length. Staff feel a disconnect from the board, which makes their involvement in the gathering all the more beneficial.
*Debbie & Abby agree to talk after meeting about setting a date for staff/wc/board gathering*

● Update from Columinate (20 minutes)

Paula: Our last meeting was canceled because Brittany was sick, so it’s been about 3 weeks without a meeting. Brit reviewed our 30-day cafe plan, & addressed things happening in the store, nothing really solid came out. We need to create a tool for our pricing strategies.
- Change in basket size from ‘17 is...an average sale in ‘17 was $237/day; in ‘18 $227/day, ‘19 $209/day -- a lot less per day over each year.
- About 10 less customers and 200 item difference, per day

Abby: Brit was pleased with the plan. Clearly some keeping up is happening, but not as much as we’d/I’d hope, and we talked about this at our last cafe meeting. Pay attention to the pricing of items based on profit. Margins are currently WAY thin. We need to become more competitive and adjust pricing and inventory methods. This project is bigger than what the WC can do. We would like more participation.
Collin and Debbie are willing to help. Maybe reach out to other interested parties?
Abby: The more perspectives, the better. We should record those meetings.
Annica: Brit can probably record, and then send it to everyone.
Paula: Next meeting probably Friday 9/20
Vince: I hope this is part of a strategic plan to bring the business forward. Can we make a sub-committee?
Debbie: Labor is a percent of sales, so if sales are low then it affects that loss. It’s good to keep in mind how to increase sales beyond cutting labor.
Abby: How do we support the systems in place for selling more products? I would like to see September numbers
Karen: Can staff leave when things are slow if prep work is done... Is closing staff putting in appropriate amount of time compared to what’s required?
Vince: We appreciate how much Abby is doing -- the first priority is you getting better, Sept 27th may not be a realistic date for running upstairs.

Group appreciation of Abby’s commitment through injury!

Abby: Many conversations have been about, “The cafe is bleeding us dry, How do we fix it?” The cafe & store are linked. More customers in the store equal more café sales. It’s not just an issue of cutting hours.

Do you have any questions on the minutes or wish to attend a future meeting? Please contact board@riverwestcoop.org for more information.
Debbie: Everyone is involved! We need to look at it as a team' it’s gone too long with us having a doomsday attitude of the cafe.

- WC / Committee Updates (30 minutes) (potential order below)

  - Café
  
  Collin: Where is pricing/costing process? Diego said he’d help.
  Abby: I have done some work, but I’m still making sure our last inventory spreadsheet prices are correct. The next step is breaking down ingredients into manageable amounts for pricing. Then it'll be easy to pass work onto others for help.
  Collin: I’m still interested in helping.
  Debbie: If you work from home, log those hours! If there are some things you need--like reports or papers delivered to you- I can help. It’ll be an opportunity for you to do administrative stuff at home while you recover.
  Abby: I haven’t done much costing before but I haven’t had to go back and get prices and verify info. I will work on this & figure out how to ask for help specifically.
  Collin: QuickBooks has all our past invoices. While it doesn’t break down by item but we can break it down and keep track in spreadsheets.
  Annica: My dad is a restaurant consultant (free services), and is happy to support in any way possible. We can take advantage of that -- he definitely knows how to cost stuff.
  Karen: Is Gretchen feeling confident in her new role?
  Abby: Gretchen has specific areas she is helping with, not necessarily costing or admin stuff. She’s in charge of making sure the production plan is enacted. We need to figure out how to deal with employees & make prep lists & other internal systems.
  Karen: How can the board and WC support, or show appreciation, to the cafe?
  Abby: I think the co-op gathering is a good opportunity.
  Paula: Do we talk about dividing up job descriptions now, and move on to store?
  ALL: yes

  - Store
  
  Collin: Rēsse put in her notice
  Paula: There’s now an opportunity to shift some responsibilities. We must move quickly. We’ve been moving with Rachel, Annica, Rēsse, and we came up with a plan to move the store evening person into a management position, reduce my current position. I'll be supporting throughout the process.
  Rēsse: The position has been posted with a deadline of 9/20
  Collin: The hiring committee Collin, Rēsse, Sara, and Paula
  Debbie: Rēsse you are a huge asset & I appreciate you’re staying on board/Communications Committee. It is great to have that talent staying with us to some extent. And Paula, you have been here forever, it'll be a big pair of shoes to fill, it'll take someone very special to fulfil the task.

MARKETING

Ressie: I could help right away with any 30-60-90-day plans made. I have that skillset to help
Debbie: This needs to be laid out as a paid role, but awesome you're willing to help!

  - Volunteer Coordinator
  
  Annica: I've been mostly “new Ousia.” Only one membership per person, no sharing discounts.
  Vince: $5 minimum on cards?

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Annica: I know volunteers get intimidated, so they need talking points (e.g., the fees accrued yearly in credit card transactions). I’m fine to lay the boundary but I know others are not.

Annica: I had somebody say, “I’ll never volunteer again because of a year and a half ago,”

Collin: Yes that's something to be addressed. Also we know Abby is working on morale, we’re on an upswing generally.

Annica: Cafe volunteer numbers are up!

Karen: Has WC talked about the $5 minimum? There are some folks in the past who make people feel bad...

Annica: Yes, we say, “be hard but have heart

Volunteer Liaisons

Debbie: We should restructure; more of a conversation in advance, then a report presented as a volunteer liaison group.

Collin: Profit & loss report is not completely accurate because we’re missing last month’s transfers from the store to the cafe, but sales are looking much better in the cafe, and the cost-sales ratio looks good in the store. I sent out an email to the FC to meet, though it’s hard to align our schedules. Can we do anything to help the Communications Committee with marketing” We’re a community of staff/volunteers/board, so it’s hard to know what people can reasonably do in addition to other responsibilities. We can look at member discounts, but I’m just posing questions to others right now.

Abby: Transfers haven’t been done but we are working to fix that situation

Collin: I can also get more involved if need be, in Shelly’s position.

Karen: Events in the summer are coming to an end, so the CC will have more time to focus, but could still use more volunteers.

Vince: We lost $36k this year; yes we’re making progress but that’s a big hole to have ourselves into. We need to discuss a new lease to be signed by the president.

Collin: We made money last month, this month is only now being addressed.

Karen: Expansion has been brought up before, but if we got a loan that’d need to be by a certain time, so just to keep that in mind while whatever else we’re doing is happening.

Vince: No, we’re not in a favorable position to get a loan

Human Resources

Communications

Membership

Sustainability

- Agreed there’s nothing additional to report on with other committees given time constraints –

● Food Break (10 minutes) (End by 7:45!!!)

● Board Report Templates (20 minutes)

Please review board report templates and give feedback to what is requested and what is feasible.

Debbie: For the Finance Committee, we may need to have a better understanding of how to read the finance reports, such as profit/loss balance of month & year-to-date figures and a balance at the end of the month. Some of these are hard to put numbers to, I get it

Rësse: I think this restructuring is a good starting place, makes me think about what’s going on and roles of the committees, and what info should be shared.

Karen: It would be nice to look at them later, for folks to say what they want to know & also say what they wish was included on report.

Abby: I think it’s very helpful

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Debbie: I’m hoping people will give feedback if they’re writing a report, or if not hopefully send out requests to those writing reports; next month have these written out for the meeting.

- Include Chat about Volunteer Liaisons

- 2018 Board Retreat & 2019 GMM Recap (15 minutes)

Karen: We’re talking about scheduling a get together where folks can digest retreat notes & there are lots of action items to explore. We always have/approve budget at retreat. Collin offered to go over that stuff with interested people. Most importantly, we need to figure out the goals of retreat & prepare in advance to get numbers to look at.

Debbie: Columinate touches on lots of stuff, which is a potential point for transition that could be really dived into. It is necessary for the WC to be present, ideally the whole WC. Could we discuss previously proposed dates -- anyone who’s on the ground, let’s make sure we solidify a chunk of time for everyone --

Debbie: We talked specifically about external expansions, like a sister business in RW or somewhere, & from that an ad hoc committee was formed, and we decided not at that (or this) point is it wise structurally to open a portion of our business or an additional business. Though it comes up often at retreats, I think some of those past notes are worth reading & digesting, but I was part of the expansion committee & we realized we need to focus where we are now before taking on a new venture

Collin: The strategic plan from Columinate would be a good topic for the retreat

- Schedule November board meeting (5 minutes)

SET FOR: 11/26/2019 630-830PM @ River Revitalization Foundation

- Schedule 2019 Board Retreat: November 15-17 at Hostel? THE VIBE? UEC? (5 minutes)

Tentatively set for 11/15-17/19

Next meeting: **October 29th @ 6:30** at the River Revitalization Foundation

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Reports

Store Reports:

Sara: The weather cooperated nicely and we held our annual Labor Day picnic.

- We said our farewells to Ousia as the VC and welcomed Annica into this role.
- Since the last meeting we had to repair the walk-in cooler. Paula caught this just in time. We did not lose any product.
- I am now in the habit of checking the temperature of the walk-in every time I go in.

Since Rësse has resigned from her store employee position, the WC met with Rachel to restructure the store positions and update job descriptions.

- We would like to hire an evening WC manager.

Paula was able to download an update to CoPos. I will look into some of the changes later today.

- We already noticed there are better movement reports by item. This should be very helpful for purchasing.

Coming up:

- Sidewalk Sessions (later today).
- Meeting with Brittany from Columinate 9/13
- Beerline 5K 9/21. We will have a table with information about the co-op as well as refreshments for sale.
- Inventory is scheduled for 9/29.
- Store hiring.

Paula: Inventory is scheduled for Sunday, September 29, 2019. We can use as much help as possible with counting and entering in the spreadsheet. Please contact Annica if you are able to help.

- The last Columinate meeting, August 26. It was attended by Sara and Paula, and Abby from home. We talked about store operations, how we calculate pricing, inventory and shrink. The concepts of Margin and Mark-up continue to be a subject of discussion. Brittany shared an excel form from NCG Contribution to Margin tool. This would allow very detailed calculation of departments, and individual products. I welcome anyone interested in numbers, pricing, analytics to meet to review how this tool might be used. We need to create a plan for operational improvements as well as marketing. It will take a team of workers and perhaps board members to work out the details. Please consider this as a subject for the Board Retreat.

- Changing store manager structure/positions

Annica, Paula, Sara and Rësse met with Rachel to discuss changing management positions, and adding a store worker. This was something the WC was working on but with Rësse’s resignation, it became more urgent. Rachel helped by recording our thoughts into a solid job description for the evening store manager position. We discussed the possibility of additional help to cover store hours, specifically closing shifts.

Café Report:

Do you have any questions on the minutes or wish to attend a future meeting? Please contact board@riverwestcoop.org for more information.
Abby:

Main Points:

- Costing is the most pressing project for the Cafe. Currently Abby is the only person to work on it. Progress has been slow.
- Gretchen's new title (Kitchen Lead) has been announced and she has been working on putting together points to bring up at a meeting, regarding changes that she feels need to be made to cafe systems. She has been responsible for overseeing the grab-n-go production plan.
- Abby will continue to be absent from the Cafe till after Sept 27, but hopes to be able to cross-train in the store soon. She has been feeling really out of the loop due to physical absence, and believes that reconnecting is essential to continue progress toward our goals. Staff continues to do tips/payroll/ordering.

Abby’s Absence

- Abby is still out of the cafe until after September 27th. She has been participating in communication and some meetings from home. She is working on costing recipes from home.
- It may be possible for Abby to pick up some hours in the store soon - to cross train on the register. Currently both ankles are still booted and walking must be assisted with either crutches or a walker. Working in the store would also provide access to coPos, which would be helpful for monitoring cafe sales/any progress the cafe is making.
- Cafe staff has been in communication with Abby about the going's - on in her absence. She has been logging any significant remote work on a document she created. She will continue to use the time card to document labor (outside of scheduled cafe hours) after her return to the Cafe.
- Tips and ordering continue to be taken care of by specifically delegated staff. Annica has taken over the bulk of the Volunteer Coordinating for the cafe. She and Abby plan to meet regularly (when Abby returns) to work together to address the volunteer situation in the cafe.

Columinate

- Brittany (the consultant) was pleased with the 30 day plan for the cafe. At the last meeting, she agreed that the next step for the cafe would be to cost out recipes so that we can get an accurate picture for proper pricing, based on our target margin.

Gretchen Promotion

- Gretchen's new title (Kitchen Lead) has been announced and she has been working to put together points to bring up at a meeting, regarding changes that she feels need to be made to cafe systems. She has been keeping Abby apprised about the state of the cafe and about the performance of staff in her absence.
- Gretchen and Abby will work together on implementing a review process for staff.
- Gretchen has also been responsible for overseeing the grab-n-go production plan for the cafe, including an increase in bakery production.

Volunteer Coordinator:

Annica:

- New Recruitment Plan
- Volunteer Resource Packets

Do you have any questions on the minutes or wish to attend a future meeting? Please contact board@riverwestcoop.org for more information.
After completing my first week as Volunteer Coordinator, I have observed that a more aggressive volunteer recruitment plan will need to be put in motion as soon as possible. There seems to be weekly interest by possible volunteers (whether through the online form, emails, or in person), but there is just not enough interest to fill the slots we need covered to best assist staff/managers in the cafe and store. I plan to sift through and contact past volunteers/volunteers who dropped off the schedule, as well as eventually get “off campus” and table at local schools.

I am currently in the process of putting together volunteer resource packets for the store and the cafe. Both will include task lists volunteers can reference during their shifts. Making this information easily available will hopefully allow volunteers a bit more autonomy and support productivity during a shift. I recognize that some volunteers prefer to stay behind the counter in the store (I have been told all about our Friday night knitters!), but for those who want to do more work and are unsure about what they can do, the task list can be a guide for them if a staff member/manager is busy. The resource packet in the store will also include instructions for often used CoPos maneuvers and talking points for customers (i.e. membership).

In light of conversations about our financial situation, I am starting to reinforce a couple Co-op “rules” that have not been upheld the best in the best. The first rule is the $5 card minimum. I will make new signs for the registers, provide the statistics supporting why we have that minimum in the volunteer resource packet in the store, and include a discussion of the rule during new volunteer training. The second rule is the “one membership per person” rule. I want to equip volunteers (again through training and the resource packet) with the proper tools to respectfully handle customers who want to use a membership belonging to their partner/child/sibling/friend/etc.

There are updated volunteer interest forms on a clipboard behind the store registers. My contact information is on them as well as new volunteer orientation days. I will now hold volunteer orientations on Tuesdays at 3pm and Fridays at 11am.

I have had a wonderful past week meeting the volunteers that currently contribute their time to the Co-op and appreciate their patience as I start to get to know their personalities, their schedules, and their names :’) I also appreciate everyone bearing with me as I get the lay of the land, and I am excited to bring my own flair to the Co-op!

**Human Resources:**

Rachel: I condensed to just what I completed and what I plan to do in the next few weeks (so, long term goals are removed from the report, but kept on the weekly WC emails).

**Completed**

- Conducted Annica’s employee orientation.
- Prepared HR Coordinator review. Collin sent out.
- Researched medical reimbursement options for employees.
- Met with WC to discuss medical reimbursement options + store restructuring options.

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- Sent Board the WC proposal to restructure the store.

To do

- Map out Evening Store Manager hiring process and contact WC/board to assign roles.
- Abby’s 3 month review.
- Iron out Shelly’s job description, review process, and hour tracking method.
- Employee handbook updates/research current labor laws to ensure co-op is compliant
- Come up with a confidential system to log complaints, grievances, write ups for WC managers and staff.

Here is my Timecard. Please let me know if you have any questions!

Finance Committee:

Collin: We won’t have the financial reports until close to the meeting. I will get them out as soon as they are ready. Overall we are seeing improvements and I expect this to continue despite some setbacks.

I will be reaching out to the FC this week to schedule a meeting for this month. I would like to discuss the role of the FC and when/where to step in. I would also like to discuss this with the WC and Board as a whole. Maybe there are some additional numbers that the FC can report on each month or week and work with the WC to get those. If there is any information that would be helpful for Board members please let me know at the meeting.

We are still planning on assisting the cafe with reviewing our price points and any other areas they might need assistance. I would also like to hear where things are at with the consultation and what directions might be taken. The FC could provide assistance and oversight in that area.

That is all for now, I expect we will have a good amount of discussion at the meeting.

Building Maintenance Committee:

Vince: No Report

Communications Committee:

Rēsse:

SIDEWALK SESSIONS:

- Sidewalk Sessions to come:
  - Saturday, August 24th  4:00-7:00pm
    - It was a gloomy day, but the sidewalk sessions went great! Good crowd.
  - Sunday, September 1st  4:00-7:00pm
    - Possibly last SS of the season?

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CENTER STREET DAZE August 10th:

- There was a new crew heading the ART Cart Race this year. They did wonderfully and had a blast.
- We did not have a vending booth there this year.

CLARKE STREET DAZE August 17th:

- This street festival went very well. I'm not sure if anyone has had a chance to look at the numbers.
- We brainstormed afterwards with Belles about our experience. Creating a more uniform process when it comes to throwing events through the Comm. Comm. was a suggestion we are beginning to work on.

LABOR DAY POTLUCK September 2nd:

- The Labor Day Potluck went very well. People contributed to a creative send off for Ousia. Good vibes.

DANCING IN THE STREET (working title) September 28th:

- This would be our last outdoors event of the season
- Possibly Equinox themed
- Possibly tied into a final Sidewalk Session

IN PROGRESS:

- **Newsletter**: Tommasina is working up ways to create a better work flow for the newsletter. This system would allow for better scheduling and the option to have more consistent content.
- **Consistent Meeting**: We are still working on solidifying a consistent meeting time.
- **Processes**: As a committee, we are working on and implementing process that will help make things more efficient.
- **Co-op Conference**: We have been contacted by Liam O'Brien about attending the Cooperative Point Co-op Conference. We will be discussing this and looking into it further at our next Comm. Comm. meeting.
- **Rèsse**: With shifting roles at the co-op, my role as head of the Comm. Comm. may also be shifting some (able to add responsibilities).

Membership Committee:

Karen:

- Alex is trained and has jumped right in. Thanks Alex!
- Annica and I are trying to find a time to catch each other about some VC/membership stuff and about getting one more volunteer
- We could use someone with good sleuthing skills to help look into membership concerns.

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- It sounds like she is doing a great job with training volunteers on key points and signing up new members. Thx Annica!
- Good timing because last month was low at $600 equity brought in and is usually $900-$1200.
- If anyone wants specific numbers or info, I can include them next meeting.

Membership Main points:
- yay Alex! Trained and doing.
- yay Annica! Embracing membership.
- member equity will increase with Annica’s focus on signing up new members.
- average $900-1200 per month.

Sustainability Committee:

Hannah: I will be passing the torch to Jason Clark - norqii@gmail.com. Can you remove me from this list and add him please?

One update for Suscom. We are promoting the Climate Strike on September 20, meeting at 12 noon at Milwaukee City Hall. There is also a rally on Saturday the 21st from midday at the Milwaukee County Courthouse. I hope to see you all there! The students have asked for our support and solidarity in securing a safe climate future for all - it’s really important that we promote this and encourage friends and family.

Also, the Boomerang Bag group will continue once I leave. The co-op now has 500 bags circulating. The main organisers will be Mari Carini and Georgia Rockwell. You will get to know them as they continue to bring in bags over the winter. This may well end if they decide to donate elsewhere or discontinue the group, but at the moment it is alive and well. I feel that the stand should remain for many months to come regardless, to encourage community members to continue to boomerang their bags. Please look after it well and keep up the reminders. I have enjoyed seeing it blossom into a well-known and respected project.

I’ve very much enjoyed being included in board happenings, as well as all the rest of my co-op roles! My time in Milwaukee has only been as amazing as it has been with the friendships I have made in Riverwest and at the co-operative. I would love to see you all in person on September 22 for our goodbye potluck at 2pm, RRF. If not, we will say our goodbyes later this month. If you are coming, please bring a plate of food (and a plate, utensils and a cup, of course).

Volunteer Liaisons:

Belles / Alex / Wendy / Debbie: No Report; think about any info you would like to share at the meeting.

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