



August 28, 2014 Board Meeting, 7:00 pm, 486–12th Street, Astoria

Present: Allie Evans, Beth La Fleur, Matt Stanley, Hilary Herman, Sam Seulean, Angela Sidlo, Libby Lawrence

Absent: Brad Hill, Norma Hernandez

Public present: none

Call to order.

Logistics: Allie discussed the next Board meeting times and location. Next meetings will be scheduled: September 18, October 23, November 20, and we will hold off on setting a December date. October 26 could be a Board retreat date. Meetings will be at 7 pm, location to be determined.

Farm to Fork dinner with Marco, Co-op and Columbia Memorial Hospital will be October 1st. Volunteers are welcome to staff the dinner service. Kids cooking class/ store tour at the Co-op will be September 21st, 11–11:30 am.

Public Comment/Board Comment: Matt reviewed a letter sent to the Co-op by Victoria Stoppiello (previous interim GM). Her letter discussed a realization by individuals and other Co-ops (First Alternative in Corvallis), that many of the items in the “Co-op Deals” flyers may or do contain GMO’s. She wanted to bring the issue of labelling to our attention. Matt mentioned that brands buy space in the Deals flyers and the NCGA doesn’t have a GMO agenda. This issue brings us back to the theme of product standards, which has been popping up in previous recent board meetings. People rely on us to do the research on products; perhaps we need a mission statement of sorts about the products we carry. Beth added that perhaps we need to continue customer education of terminologies, meanings, and labels, for example, OG, nonGMO, no BGH, etc. Matt and staff will look into this and draft up possibilities.

Minutes: Angela motioned to approve the July 23, 2014 minutes. Sam seconded; all approved.

Off-site Space: Matt has a proposal to rent a small office space in the white building on the corner of 12th and Exchange, owned by Sean Fitzpatrick and Ann Carpenter (Co-op owners). The agreement will include the use of the kitchenette, bathrooms, use of conference room. We can afford it, the rent is very fair, and use of the space

would really help out the staff and allow for more efficiency. Libby motioned to go ahead and rent the space, Hilary seconded; all approved.

Eden Foods: Matt reviewed the recent controversy of Eden Foods. Eden Foods will not pay for birth control for its employees. Co-ops are dealing with this in various ways. Eden makes foods that really don't have a comparable or similar product. It's a premium product (canned beans in particular) and is unique. Eden's issue is political, and we are not going to take a stance on this because our members may fall on both sides of the issue. It's not a food issue or product quality. This is more about a company being allowed to discriminate against a portion of their employees; it's a movement. People's Co-op did a survey and are considering boycotting Eden. Some stores have put "shelf-talkers" up (ie signage) indicating that they are considering the issue. This approach leaves the choice up to the customer, to buy the product or not, under the circumstances.

This brings up the issue of worker-care/worker treatment and if/how this impacts our product standards. We've had about 10 people say they don't agree with Eden, but Eden does have BPA-free cans, beans grown in the USA, and cooked with seaweed. Allie suggested we have a position of "we give you (co-op owner) free choice to buy or not buy the product". She stressed the need to be transparent about it, and have shoppers use their free will. Perhaps put a discussion box in the newsletter: "We're discussing it, please give us your feedback", "We're continuing to search for a comparable product." She is curious about what else we don't know about product issues, such as worker care. Matt said it is likely that the story likely to be better behind dried beans from Oregon in bulk vs organically grown in Mexico. Matt added that if we are too rigid in our ranking or priorities of product quality, we could easily back ourselves into a corner. Allie suggested we leave it to the customer to choose and state that we are doing our best. Beth agreed. Matt added that regarding product standards, we've had implicit understanding, but it just hasn't been explicit or written down or official policy. Libby added that she believes we must be transparent no matter our direction.

Matt described a tool he has recently looked at called "How Good". It's a product rating system. Companies get fully sleuthed including worker standards, and companies are given a rating of "globes" which can be shown in shelf signage. Sales tend to go up when the customer sees more globes associated with a product.. Many west coast co-ops use this tool. It's about \$1,500/year. This could solve many of these items we've talked about tonight.

Manager's Report: Matthew discussed the **Financials**. We have transferred \$20,000 over to the savings account in the last few months. This is a good feeling. We are still seeing sales growth despite no discount days/floating discounts, etc. The recent Oregon Department of Employment payroll audit was frustrating and took a good amount of time. Outcome was that SPIFS/gift cards in exchange for service, etc. should have been accounted for on payroll, so the Co-op would get taxed on that by the State (as would the individual recipient). In the end, we owed the State a minimal amount of money (nothing in comparison to the amount of time spent by the auditor or Matt and key staff) and there is an outside chance that the IRS may contact us about this issue in a year.

Over all, we're doing well at 2.39% at the end of the 2nd quarter. Margins are good, sales are strong. September usually dips, so we'll see what this coming month brings. Matt will check the Customer and Patronage Refunds \$9,930 line item from the Balance Sheet

Signage: In order to pursue new signage, we will need a variance from the City sign regulations. The variance request should be on the September Planning Commission docket.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Beth La Fleur, Board Secretary