



## **February 28, 2013 Board Meeting**

Present: Merianne Myers, Kelly Huckestein, Matt Stanley, Tom Duncan, Allie Evans, Beth La Fleur

Absent (excused): Mindy Stokes, Mark Albrecht

Merianne introduced and welcomed guest speakers from Clatsop County Health Department Norma Hernandez and Tori Sutherland. Both work with the WIC program. Tori has been a life-long Co-op shopper, has seen the WIC/Co-op discussion come up every 5-10 years. She is also the State WIC Compliance Investigator for stores in our area and has seen some interesting changes in stores. The First Alternative Coop in Corvallis did the switch to include WIC items and encouraged Matthew to contact Michelle Adams, General Manager, to see how the shift has impacted the store and membership base.

It has been a point of board discussion off and on for the past few years about providing purchasing options so that WIC participants could find qualifying items at the Co-op. Norma and Tori provided valuable information on the WIC program and stressed that it is not a program for low income people, but rather a program for nutritional supplement. They spoke about the following points: Misconceptions about WIC; What can we do as a community to provide access to good food; Look beyond ourselves with an open heart and open mind; Just as the Co-op isn't just for hippies, WIC isn't just for low income; There are low income participants, but there are also "young hippies" and many Coast Guard families in the program; WIC is a (federal-USDA) social program; It is important to teach nutrition, bring people into the Co-op, and there is value to both the Co-op and WIC participants in exposing those participants to healthy foods; WIC provides a supplemental dollar amount-participants are spending their own money on groceries as well; Though WIC purchases are limited to certain choices, most of the participant's grocery budget isn't under the WIC limitations.

Norma mentioned how successful the Farm Direct program has been and it has been a real mind-shifting experience for those involved.

Kelly asked why aren't potatoes allowed under WIC.

Tori answered that it's only white potatoes, not yams, etc. The USDA thought is that kids under 5 years old are getting their potato "budget" from french fries. Farmers really watch what the USDA allows in the WIC programming. Most WIC participants do use up their monthly voucher. As to logistics, the cashier would write in the total of qualified purchases, and the voucher gets sent to WIC. WIC

sends the grocery store reimbursement. Grocers can set their own prices, but it must be within reason. A pilot program goes into effect Aug 13, 2013 to switch from paper vouchers to sliding cards that get “pre-loaded” with the dollar amount. Starting June 2014, all participants should be transitioned to the card system, which will make the program much easier for the grocers. Items must be prepackaged in order to work with the sliding card program (ie no bulk items). But Co-op could pre-package some bulk items with a bar code with minimal extra effort. Other discussion items: Must a store use official WIC signage: Not necessarily, but any alternate signage must be submitted and approved. About how many WIC users in Clatsop County? 1,312. That does not include Pacific County, WA. Now, some organic produce items are allowed under the program rules. This program is based on nutritional needs, not income. So for instance, a woman who is exclusively full time breast-feeding needs more nutritional supplement dollars than a woman who is breast-feeding only part of the time. Also based on how many children under 5. What is the ball park benefit dollar amount? High end approximately \$45, low end approximately \$30. It is a supplement to other sources. If an item is organic, but not marketed that way, could it still qualify? Interesting question... Do people ask about the Co-op? Yes, especially about availability of gluten free items.

Short discussion amongst Board members on importance of Co-op members to not stigmatize, to not be intolerant. We are a small community, and can't allow or afford ourselves to do that. We can't be snobbish about food and choices about people we don't know and food choices others make. Certain grocery products that the Co-op would be required to carry were discussed. Can we afford the shelf space. Tom brought forth the topic of whether we want to carry products that pollute so heinously and are demonstratively bad. This isn't a judgement; certain manufacturers and products are demonstratively bad. We exclude products, not people, but by doing one we do the other; perhaps it's being anti the political process that forces people to eat poorly.

Guest speakers concluded and Board was grateful for their participation and insights and will continue to explore how/if the Co-op can incorporate WIC approved products.

A motion was made (Kelly) to approve the November/December 2012 and the January 2013 board meeting minutes. It was seconded (Allie) and unanimously approved.

Merianne announced the annual meeting date: Sunday May 5, 2013 at the Lovell Showroom, approximately 1-3pm, with the exact time to be announced. It would be great to get a “food person” to come and give a talk. Details to follow.

Merianne discussed breaking into subcommittees to deal with “competition” and “expansion” topics. Merianne has protocols for doing research and timelines to do reporting to the group and will bring those at a future meeting or email the template. The committees will organize ourselves to do the work we need to do, and need to report what we’ve learned. Expansion subcommittee: Merianne, Beth, Mark. Competition subcommittee: Kelly, Allie, Tom.

Allie asked how to best coordinate this effort with the market study which is set to begin in March.

Matthew added that by the end of March, we will have a printed market study report. It might make sense to wait for that and use it as a starting point for committee work.

Merianne discussed the need for three board members, and hopefully we will get those filled ASAP while being mindful of bringing members on who have skills and attributes which complement the board “check-sheet”.

Matthew discussed the February Manager’s Report (on-file). The Floating Discount Day has been very successful, and well received by members. He is anticipating a busy May, June, and July, though will have to be aggressive to make it happen. Possibility of adding a second cashier position for certain days/times, rather than relying on awaiting for the bell to ring and taking staff away from regular tasks. However, this would add to the labor cost which already is a tad high. 23 1/2% would be decent for labor cost. Savings are holding steady. Health insurance costs are going to be going up. If staff wants to keep the low hourly requirement (24 hrs/week) to qualify, costs will be passed on to employees to a degree. Plan now is to renew the health plan, and keep shopping for a better deal and minimize costs to employees.

Matthew discussed the market study. The consultant will look at four different potential relocation (expansion) sites. Merianne suggested that a presentation could be done at the annual meeting, to put to rest any unfounded rumors about the direction of the Co-op. Beth added that this market study is also about gathering information to maintain competitive advantage and identify strengths and weaknesses in light of competition. This is part of strategic planning, and we should be strategically planning.

Matthew discussed continuing co-op education opportunities for employees and outreach by management to employees. Many staff don’t have a deep understanding of co-ops when they come on board. Mick’s 15th anniversary

with the co-op is in April. We have a few other employees celebrating multi-year anniversary dates with the Co-op this year.

The meeting adjourned at 9 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth La Fleur