



July 18, 2013 Astoria Co-op Board Meeting 6 p.m, at Co-op

Board Present: Mark Albrecht, Matthew Stanley, Allie Evans, Beth La Fleur, Libby Lawrence

Absent: Tom Duncan, Merianne Myers, Sam Seulean (excused)

Public attending: Diane Petcat

Public Comments: Diane discussed and distributed magazine articles on various co-ops in Spain and success in different sectors (Tikkun magazine, "The Mondragon Cooperative" p 23-26, Spring 2013).

Allie called the meeting to order.

Motion made to approve June 2013 board minutes. Seconded and approved.

Thursday Market booth staffing was discussed. Norma will be out next 2 Thursdays, then here on Aug 8. Libby can do the second shift on Aug 1st and also on Aug 15. Scheduling will keep happening over email.

Libby and Mark have experienced customers frustrated with set discount days. Matthew mentioned that starting in September, floating discount coupon will run with calendar month. Management team decided to follow through with advertised discount days, the Sept will do calendar monthly floating discount coupon. No piggybacking and will still do random discount days for promotional reasons.

Allie mentioned that there seems to be lots of signage now. Beth asked for clarification, especially since the deals book and coupon books are available at the market booth and we have to field questions on applicability. Matthew clarified that Co-op deals are for everyone and Co-op deals coupons are for everyone. Discount days and floating discount coupons are for members only. Discount can piggyback on co-op deals. Zetty will redo membership brochure to reflect this information.

Lenny, our newest cashier, signed up 6 members on his first day. Staff is way up on signing up members. The audit did say that consumer information is a big concern and a point to address. Matthew will email the audit. Matthew has broken down the audit recommendations into 3 months/6 months/9 months steps. Each management team member has goals to work on. It's not a strategic plan nor does it go beyond the year.

Discussion of the audit led to a discussion of our current rent and future possibilities of space. Come September 2016, Providence has an option to leave their lease early. Libby asked if a lease-buy-out can be an option, if we find moving into the Providence space truly desirable and the solid move for us if we expand in the future. Matthew answered with

possibly. It depends on where we are in 3 years. The Audit was good because it brought up options to really improve and increase sales in our existing space. A recommendation was to look less like a “pill” store and more like a grocery store look.

Allie mentioned that audit also stressed the need to save money today also, with an eye to future needs.

Libby asked if the merchandise in the shelving above the coffee/soup bar pays for itself. Matthew answered that it probably does not. Change management is also a part of this look to the future, especially for staff who are invested in the current look of the store. There is more to changing the look and merchandise display than what meets the eye, particularly when we have employees who care about their departments, which is a good thing. But it can make change a little stressful.

Libby asked if we can please get some new kids grocery carts. Matthew agreed that perhaps it's time to acquire more substantial kids carts.

Matthew next reviewed the Manager's report dated June 2013 (should this have read July 2013).

Every product in the Coop deal flyer is in the store (unless there is a distribution disruption. In that case a note is posted at the items space. No rainchecks.) For the coupon book not all items are necessarily at our store. Some items that we've brought in were a surprise in their popularity. Coupons are available at the item at the shelf, so customers do not have to be clutching their coupon book while shopping. Coupons do stack with discounts.

Mark asked if we could pre-prep some deli items. Also how about customer input--name your top 3 favorite deli items for example. Matthew added that it could be hard logistically because we need specific items. The deli staff arrives well before the doors open to get the fresh cooler filled for the day. It's hard to gauge what will fly out the cooler, but we do want customer feedback on favorite items. Sam will be doing a production schedule and costing of items. Margins are good but we need to know specific costs. The software is helping to tease that information out. We will also be starting to track sales. Sam is also digitizing the deli menu information. Judith is moving back to the East coast; Michelle will move into the deli.

As we look at the deli and perhaps increasing that department, one area which is getting a squeeze is the kids play area. The importance of this area is recognized and respected by both customers and staff. However, as we have to do more with our existing space (until a potential future expansionary move), this area might need to get squeezed even more; though we have really increased our kid's products items at competitive prices, which is also important. Ute funded the Petra Mathers mural; Petra has indicated she can find a good home for it if necessary. Ideally, a “good home” would be temporary until we expand our footprint and add the full kids space back in. The goal is to have a larger space for kids.

In response to the request to purchase equipment to improve operational capacity of deli and produce departments (reference the Manager's Report), Mark made a motion to approve, Libby seconded, and all were in favor.

While Matthew is out on vacation, Sam, Kelly and Mick have designated days as PIC (person in charge). This also gives staff a role that they can grow into. Internet upgrade went well. Charter has been really fast and no drops in service.

Regarding off-site space: we are keeping ears open for not long-term meeting space. Allie suggested that maybe communicating to staff as to why there are concessions to make now, there might be support for concessions. I.e., we're saving money now because we're going to need to spend on a store expansion in the future.

Next meeting is currently scheduled for Tuesday August 20th at 6 pm. Location To Be Announced. Allie will check with Merianne, Tom, and Sam if this will work for them.

Discussion on leasing the space on 14th Street followed. Discussion followed. All agreed to keep this conversation going.

Norma mentioned that people have commented on why don't cashiers help people bag, especially older people. It's about customer service. Matthew said they've reviewed this and stocked bags behind the counter and are offering to walk out groceries, particularly to those who need the extra help. Part of the audit will be creating a customer service policy. Matthew's been doing it by example but soon it'll be policy. Also streamlining the check out area is a recommendation of the audit.

Mark asked if we can leverage some of this information from other co-ops. Matt answered absolutely. Allie added that that's one of the co-ops principles--sharing information. We'll be looking at what else we can do as a board to position ourselves beyond the one year audit and move to 3 year, 5 year, 10 year.

Norma mentioned that at the May meeting at the Elliott, we kept asking Matthew about certain aspects of the audit and audit team that had just wrapped up that day, and he kept answering that he just couldn't talk about it quite yet and that we, as a board did not listen to him. It showed a lack of respect for Matthew and please lets do a better job of listening and respecting him more. It was 8 times he was asked; we need to respect his boundaries, even when we are anxiously awaiting information.

Meeting adjourned 8:36 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Beth La Fleur