



Board Meeting Minutes

3.19.2020

Attendance : Fred Medlicott, Joanne McCaughan, Cristina Rodriguez, Peter Brown, Linda Myers, Jim Hutcheon, Mel Bilodeau, Fern Moore (*Board Coordinator*), Grace Cox (*Staff Representative*)

Absent: Ben Witten, Jace Denton

Agenda

- Executive Session
- Agenda Review
- Announcements
- Mission Statement
- Commitments Review
- Emergency Task force
- Emergency hiring
- Staff Report
- Committee Reports
- Commitments
- Meeting Eval
- Next Facilitators

Commitments Review

- **Grace will solicit someone from BPC for the community solar project**
Pending. Fred talked to Mason and they will have detailed offering for he Co-op to review by Tuesday next week.
- **Fred will complete the member comment notes from September**
Pending
- **Fern will contact the photographer**
Pending
- **Fred will send back out the board pages password to all**
Pending
- **Fern will forward Collective meeting schedule to the Board**
Pending
- **Grace will follow through with this request and have them fill out the advocacy form**
Pending. Talked to legislator about it. It's a better bill than her first reading. Pat or Robyn should fill out the Advocacy form. The session is over.
- **Fred will send out a doodle poll for February.**
Pending. John will be contacting everyone
- **Fern will send out the bylaws task force process to all**
Pending
- **Fern will schedule Corey for end of year statements for March**
Pending
- **Jim will send out a doodle poll and will invite all once dates have been set for the financial overview training**
Pending
- **Jim will contact the non violent communication trainer**
Pending

- ***Fred will email Eco planning sustainability report to the Eco Planning Committee***
Pending
- ***Fern will contact the website about deleting the Elections bios***
Complete
- ***Everyone will review the board page on the website***
Pending

Announcements

- Grace shared something that it is moving to her, the videos on facebook featuring native jingle dancers sharing a prayer for healing. She can't separate from her mind, viruses have been an agent of genocide on this continent used against native people, yet they are willing to share these prayers with all of us is really moving.

Emergency Hiring

SEE ATTACHED DOCUMENT #1

Staff Members, Mish and Erin attended to discuss the Emergency Hiring proposal. They sent the proposal to the Board and Staff for feedback. Mish spoke to the proposal as we are not sure what will be happening and how bad the situation could be. If Staff get sick on a large scale, we have 12 people out right now. Working Members are also calling out of shifts. We don't have any Staff that are confirmed cases, but we need something in place in case we have lots of Staff out. We must keep our stores open. Erin asked if anyone had any questions.

Feedback

Fred- In the Staff feedback it cited past problems about temporary workers. What were those problems?

Erin replied that we used to have paid cashiers that were volunteers. They didn't have benefits or decision making power. Some cashiers organized and we did away with the paid cashier system. Staff saw that it hurt relationships and created an uncomfortable hierarchy.

Mish received legal advice from another Co-op regarding Part time workers. No paid leave is required for workers employed less than 29 hours per week. There are so many people laid off in our community and many hours to be covered in the store. There is a need.

Linda read all of docs but didn't get thru all the feedback. She agrees that bringing workers that haven't been a working member is problematic because of training. She finds it difficult to see how we would even train to begin with. She likes the idea of using the current working members. They are willing to step up and is a wonderful way to have our Members meet the need. She doesn't know about benefits etc.

Joanne does know labor law a little. We could consider benefits. Also instead of bringing on Staff perhaps we need to cut hours. Maybe one Store only or reduced orders at both.

Fred is very nervous about taking Volunteers and making them paid Staff . He supports the idea of offering service workers from other local Co-ops jobs. He doesn't financially support store closures. He would like to keep open as long as Staff feels comfortable.

Mo reiterates a specific contract would be offered, using average wage like we do with all staff. We are also considering offering contracts to former Staff first. All the contracts would have a specific time frame. Reducing store hours might have to happen as well. We are committed to keeping the food flowing as well as having adequate Staff to respond to changing conditions. We don't know when that will have to come into play.

Mel agrees that reducing hours is great idea. Offering jobs to local Co-op workers that are laid off, volunteers or former volunteers would be ideal.

Grace has lots of thoughts. There is no consensus with Staff and Staff have not discussed it as a whole. There is so much unknown. She would like to see out of this proposal, freeing up the notion that we could do this and benchmarks of when we would do it. Store hour cuts and closures are common right now. Some stores are splitting AM and PM workers, so they don't have to quarantine the whole Staff if there is a confirmed case. Some are closing mid day for sanitizing shifts. There is also conversation on part time workers, most co-ops use them already because we are a collective this sets us apart on this. There are so many unanswered questions in this proposal.

Erin adds we don't have the capacity to hire as we normally would. We would first hire former staff and utilize the finalist pools, etc. Erin adds the Hiring team was not in support of this proposal. we can nearly staff the stores right now and it is frankly traumatizing to be in the store on shift.

Fred would like decisions on staffing levels and store hours empowered to Staff, they must have the power to make those decisions on the fly as needed.

Linda agrees with Fred about empowering the Staff to make these decisions. Shortening store hours could give relief. She also likes the idea of using other local Co-op workers that are laid off. Perhaps offer bonus discount cards for the Volunteer Cashiers and even Stockers. Could we use current Volunteer cashiers to do training on the fly? She also feels that we should not be closing either store at all but supports reduced hours.

Jim asked since we just hired, how many were on the alternate list?

4 were listed as alternates. Erin has a list of people that she knows have the skills we need. We have a large finalist list and know that they are interested in cashiering as well as have other skills. There are concerns from the Task Force, that we are clear that this does not lead to a permanent position.

Mish shared the amount of exhaustion that people working on the floor are experiencing. We can't rely on people to work this hard. We wanted to come to the Board right away before complete collapse. We are committed to doing anything before hiring, including reduced hours, pickup service. Admin work has been suspended that is not deemed essential. We are trying to avoid a lot of stress and anxiety. We don't want to send all shifts to the beepers. If beepers had people to call, it would reduce stress and increase the ability to sanitize and enforce social distancing.

Mo adds that one thing that we do have are job descriptions between Volunteers and Staff. We would contract with people to do the Staff job descriptions. We wanted to take advantage of this Board meeting because it is a scheduled point of decision making. The Board holds a role in hiring and we don't want to put work in to something that is not worth pursuing from the Board angle. We may be able to address Staff process around emergency hiring. We are just getting a handle on remote meetings, like this. We have ways to get Collective input. We need Staff to enforce social distancing restrictions. Her initial assumptions are that Front End cannot take on this customer monitoring. We may need the labor to enact them.

Grace agrees we need to move quickly. Another piece on her mind, We are expecting the health department to no longer allow self service food. We don't know if we have people coming out of the Deli to help on the floor or perhaps help with packaging and grab and go. It could come down to one day that we can't Staff the store. The more we can do to be responsive helps build the communities confidence.

Mel, thirds Freds proposal to empower Staff to do what is needed. Perhaps also emailing Members about when the parking lot is full, please do not come in. She is also in favor of postponement of opening the Deli.

Proposal

The Board empowers the Emergency Task Force to hire temporary workers on an as needed basis to address the Covid 19 emergency.

Consent

Stand Aside- Grace

Jim adds if the Board can support Staff at all in this effort, please ask. Please reach out whenever needed.

Emergency Task Force

The Emergency Task Force assembled to respond to the Covid-19 emergency. Staff on the Task force include Mo, Mish, Nichelle, Matt, Siobhan, and Max. They are meeting a couple times a week as there seems to be information everyday.

Some changes have already taken place to protect the community, including closing the Free Store. We are asking shoppers to stop bringing in used containers. Cashiers wear gloves and change them often. We are taking breaks to wash and sanitize the registers. We are bringing in field sinks to set up outside of the entrances and will be asking shoppers to wash before entering. We have alcohol wipes available at the entrance as well. No shopper maximums have been instituted yet but it is in discussion. We talked about reserving opening hours for those at risk, but have reservations about this. We don't wanna ensure ultimate safety to these people. We are putting energy instead to a pick up service. We hope to have this going next week. We are helping Staff that are more vulnerable by trying to meet Staff needs and supporting how they choose to respond based on medical and family needs.

The Task force is sending out updates to the Membership via email, they sent the most recent one today.

Feedback:

Fred asked if folks are accessing unemployment?

We haven't laid anyone off. We are paying sick leave. We have Finance and Labor CAT looking at long term projections. Our emergency leave fund policy is 6 months of paid leave. We are aware we cannot offer that to 50 Staff. Sales are up 50% so cash is good, for now. We will look at federal programs. If we lay people off our understanding is that they lose their health insurance.

Fred mentioned that we can do 'temporary standby' if approved, workers get unemployment for 4 weeks and can apply for an extension. They at the NW Co-op Development Center have been doing a lot of that work lately. Please reach out for more information if needed.

Jim asked about limiting shoppers in the stores. How would that be implemented? It seems it would be best to get in place sooner than later.

If we had the extra labor we would need one person at the door to monitor and extra help for sanitizing.

Grace has read 100 emails a day from other Co-ops. She also called Rainbow Grocery in San Francisco and checked in about what happens to the giant spike in sales when the state is shelter at home. Data shows that the shelter at home reduces sales again. Its likely that the sales increase will not continue. Due to massive supply reduction as well as lots of other factors. There are excellent ideas for monitoring shoppers in store that only took one extra person. We fear angering customers, but Rainbow says they struggle for about half an hour and then they are pleased that we are getting the food to the people. She has sent ideas on to the Task Force.

Fred mentioned that the cheesemonger Gordon is blogging about essential workers, he encourages the Board to read it. Gordon is who Grace spoke to.

The Task Force concluded to feel free to reach out with ideas to work on .

Staff Report

The last two reports have covered our Covid-19 response and issues that we are seeing. Four new Staff have started and are working, and are in the early days of training. It has been a great experience working with them on the front end. Nothing like trial by fire, right?

The Sales growth that we are experiencing right now is causing concern and we are loosing sleep. This is the kind of thing that will challenge every system we have, the inability to respond quickly (although the task force has done great), and our tendency to run our cash tight. She gets emails everyday on how we an spend the money showing in the cash flow due to the high sales growth. Truth is, we will probably spend it on sick leave. We don't have a way to support our workers on long leave. Some people are pulling overtime hours which increases the payroll. We aren't even thinking about the health care costs. we are front line emergency workers. We have no idea if we are exposed, times a thousand. There is concern about that. This is the greatest level of uncertainty in her 35 years at the Co-op. This is also the first time we collectively hold the anxiety and uncertainty. Our Members have been extremely kind and supportive. A lot of folks are trying to practice social distancing, because our stores are already small and crowded. We are looking forward to discussions about limiting customers. We also cancelled quarterly inventory.

Feedback:

Fred asked if the Board could get updates weekly on what has been decided. It would be helpful for bigger picture decisions.

- Grace will ask the Task Force to update the Board weekly

Board Retreat

Joanne and Jim last week about the proposed 2020 Board Retreat. They sent out an email last week to the Board with ideas and when for discussion.

Joanne shared that the ideas sounded good then but the situation has changed. Those are good goals, but this might not be the time to explore that. We could do mini retreats instead.

Feedback:

Fred would not like the 48 hour retreat, not now. He would like everyone to email Jim and Joanne about what we want to get out of a retreat and how can we meet those goals.

Linda also believes not now, but planning is important. This will all be pandemonium for a while. A two day retreat will not work well in these times. Mini things would be great.

Jim mentioned that another thing in the email was a list of topics. He would like to discuss and prioritize them. Or offer other ideas to Jim or Joanne.

Committee Reports

Advocacy – did not meet

Co-Sound – Have been in total emergency mode supporting Co-ops that are closed temporarily and/or in danger of going out of business. They have shared resources that they are using. By hosting a weekly emergency call. The hope is that by pooling resources we will increase support for each other. The Cooperative Business Association, is offering 2 million dollar loans but they are difficult for Co-ops to access. We strongly encourage people to support the Co-ops in town by purchasing gift cards etc. Burial Grounds opened a week ago and the Voyeur is struggling because they don't have events.

Finance – Sales were over budget, as were payroll wages. Margin was on budget. Medical payables from the 3rd quarter were \$170,000 up. We are \$60,00 down from budget which was swung by a \$230k medical payable. These medical payables have not been accrued quarterly, Finance is working on a way to have accrue that way. Cash is worse than this time last year. \$100,000 in the kitchen remodel. We have received the loan to cover those expenses. It may be a factor of when invoices fell. The overall ratios are looking okay. Cash is great right now because of the boom in Sales creating a cushion to weather what happens. This opened the door to increase retained earnings, there were concerns raised by Staff by initiatives in the past that have not been met, because the money is not restricted. Some benefit should go to Staff as it should create mechanisms to retain those earnings. The effects of Covid 19 are Sales are up at both Stores even with the Deli decreased sales and supply chain issues. Beer and wine is in the works the process will be delayed given the circumstances. We did lose \$60,000, we ate into our assets last year. We need to think about as a Board how to reverse that trend.

Feedback:

Mel asked why we don't have the loan yet?

Grace answered that the last pieces of paper work are getting signed. They will be submitted next week. They got held up when we asked

the Board for approval on two resolutions. Sales tax had not been included in that amount so we wrote the loan for a higher amount.

Linda wonders about the \$60,000 loss. And still Staff got bonuses and Board donations were accrued. This comes back to a reserve of funds for expansion. She asked about the discounts reduction a few years ago, that should have netted \$300,000.

Grace answered that every time we save money it is spent on operations.

Peter wondered if this crisis ruin the Food Co-op? With the expenses for health, overtime etc

Fred answered that every business is in serious danger, it is not due to all the benefits we provide the workers. He pushes back on the idea that giving the staff a bonus was wrong. The additional medical occurred after the fiscal period that is not the same as the fiscal year. they were not from that time period to be clear, it was not a regular year. Medical was \$100, 000 more, that makes up the short fall. There is a medical reserve account to create a buffer, but without a real clear guideline of what constitutes an emergency. Some of those funds can be used for this situation but it was not accessed.

Linda clarified that she does not not agree with staff bonuses just for having made a profit .

Please send any concerns or items for finance to address to Linda or Fred

- Fred will send the finance notes out to all

Expansion – update on kitchen expansion was sent out via email.

Eco Planning – no report

Personnel – executive session

Member Relations – had a small meeting with just Mo and Mel. They agreed on Member Rights and Responsibilities draft. she will send it out

- Mel will send the Member Rights and Responsibilities draft out to all

Local- no report

Standing Hiring- no report

Community Sustaining Fund (CSF) Liaison – has been meeting still trying to change non profit statues will be submitting a proposal to the state.

Elections Task Force- no report

Board Pages Task Force- no report

Executive Session

Proposal

The Board of Directors consented to following through with Option A from the ESP report to the Board. Staff Members updated goals could be adopted and the ESP go forward minus the consent of the non-participating staff.

Consent

Stand Aside- 2

Commitments

- ***Fred will complete the member comment notes from September***
Pending
- ***Fern will contact the photographer***
Pending
- ***Fred will send back out the board pages password to all***
Pending

- ***Fern will forward Collective meeting schedule to the Board***
Pending
- ***Jim will send out a doodle poll and will invite all once dates have been set for the financial overview training***
Pending
- ***Jim will contact the non violent communication trainer***
Pending
- ***Fred will email Eco planning sustainability report to the Eco Planning Committee***
Pending
- ***Grace will ask the Task Force to update the Board weekly***
- ***Fred will send the finance notes out to all***
- ***Mel will send the Member Rights and Responsibilities draft out to all***
- ***Jim will send executive session decision to Fern***

Meeting Eval

Thanks for working through setting up the virtual meeting goes to Fred.

Great way to meet, thank you!

Next Meeting and Facilitators

Facilitators- Fred and Mel

Prepare for another remote meeting. Fred and Fern will link up before next meeting to investigate hosting member comment online.

Decisions out of Meeting

4/2 SBA Loan Programs

From Finance via email

There are two new disaster relief programs available to the Co-op. These programs are administered through the Small Business Association and are available to businesses who have up to 500 employees. We are planning to apply for both programs.

1. Emergency Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) is a low interest loan designed to provide up to 6 months of operating costs based on the projected impact of Covid 19 on the business. Loans can be up to \$2,000,000 and can have up to 30 years to pay back.
2. Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) Is a forgivable loan program designed to payroll expenses for 2 mont. If the business does not lay anyone off or reduce wages the loan will be forgiven completely.

Both programs have a ton of details. We have looked at them thoroughly including attending webinars and doing deep website dives. The Finance CAT plans to apply for both programs. If you want to know more about them, please check out the small business administration website.

The SBA is unaccustomed to working with co-ops, so it is unclear if this will require a board resolution. There are hundreds of thousands of eligible businesses, so we want to get our applications in right away. The SBA is promising a very aggressive timeline for application approvals, but the queue is growing as I type, so we wanna get in line quickly.

If you have comments or questions (after checking the sba website) please let me know as soon as possible, particularly if you have concerns that could make it difficult for us to pass a resolution should one be needed. I can say a lot more about why we think either program would be good for us, but would rather answer specific questions. Suffice it to say that Olympia Food Co-op is an excellent and caring employer and we are nervous about our ability to afford our generous sick and family leave programs.

Consent

4/6 SBA Signatory

From Finance via email

Proposal

The Board of Directors of the Olympia Food Co-op hereby authorizes Harry Levine to be the official signatory for our application and all things related to the SBA Paycheck Protection Program.

Consent

Attached Documents

1. Emergency Hiring Proposal

3.17.2020

To: The OFC Board of Directors

From: The Covid-19 Taskforce (Matt, Max, Mo and Michelle W)

Re: **Proposal to Approve an Emergency Hire of Temp Workers**

Background:

The Co-op is experiencing a 50% increase in sales. We have 12-15 staff off work, due to illness, being high risk for the virus or to take care of their children. This number is changing daily. Working member cashiers are calling out as well. We have many retired volunteers, some with health issues. We are relying on our younger, healthier staff to work long hours in packed stores, with few days off.

Here are concerns from the Hiring Team (in bold) and the Task Force's responses:

Does everyone from the task force think this is needed?

The task force is in support of a plan for an emergency hiring of additional workers to help us during this pandemic. We'd like to move forward to hire and train temporary, on-call workers to fill in for us, as many staff and working members (especially front

end workers) will be unable to work. We are not sure what the worst case scenario will look like for staffing. We want to make sure that we are able to keep our doors open for the community, while providing our workers with adequate rest, days off and time for home schooling their kids. As more people are diagnosed with Covid-19, there will be additional quarantines required as well.

Is there consent for this?

There is consent among the task force, yes. Collective wide or otherwise, we don't know yet. The Task Force has a proposal in the staff journal, that is passing so far, (deadline 3/20) to authorize us to “make decisions by consensus about store operations that need to respond to government agency directives, or emerging staffing needs, as that information develops”.

Are you looking for consent from staff and BOD or just BOD, if just BOD, why?

At this time, we are not looking to get staff consent, because this is an urgent and rapidly changing issue. If it gets held up in protracted collective process, we might not have the ability to meet our staffing needs. That's not to say that we couldn't work on gathering some kind of quick staff feedback on the plan, however. We felt that going directly to the BOD would be the most prudent route, as the BOD consents to all hiring.

Reducing store hours instead of hiring temps

We think this could be a great idea, if sales indicate a slow down of customer buying. We don't want people in the stores getting paid to do essentially nothing. Plus, limited hours would allow us to do a morning cleaning and night cleaning, instead of just relying on only a mid-day clean or two. There are concerns that we will add to store crowding if we reduce hours. We may pursue this idea due to a lack of staffing at some point too. We are not sure that trimming a few hours off our days would solve potential massive staff and working member shortages.

Directing Deli to cease production based on NCG recommendations, this would free up staff.

We agree with not reopening the salad bar until the pandemic is over. Having additional grab-n-go, packaged items for sale could benefit our community. With restaurants closed, kids at home and more sick people to care for, having prepared food could be a very helpful and welcome addition to our store offerings.

If we bring more people into the store we increase risk of infection

True, but if we have no workers to cashier or stock shelves, we face a severe financial risk and stop bringing food to the people entirely. Unfortunately, this feels like a catch 22 type of situation. We have about 800 or more shoppers a day per store.

Having a few temp workers will not add a significant risk and can help us keep up with sanitizing!

The amount of work this will take will likely not be worth the amount of help we get

We can train cashiers in 10 hours, plus some additional admin trainings. We also may have a few current WM Cashiers willing and trained to step into this type of role.

Many of the former staff are either retired/don't want to cashier/don't need the money

Offer temp positions to former staff in all areas, not just cashiering

Cashiering is the area that seems to have the most immediate need. We may also be able to use extra labor to staff the "grocery pick up system" we are working on creating, which former staff could help with.

Hiring does not think it is a good idea to hire/pay wms- want to keep it separated, (team feels like this would only be ok if we paid all wm cashiers all the time during this outbreak)

Understandable, this is a good point. But also, we feel like there needs to be some kind of perk to bring some skilled, not at risk, and healthy WM's back to front end. Or to keep them there. Double discount points got thrown around? We have had Paid, WM and Staff Cashiers in the past, with different job duties and expectations. We may not have time to develop all of this. Perhaps hiring temps, not WMs would be better. Temps could be trained to cashier, stock, clean, etc.

What about having a big cashier training day where we train unemployed collective workers as contract workers (New Moon, Le Voyeur, Burial Grounds, Orca, Dumpster Values, Flaming Eggplant)

We love this idea.

Offer temp cashier positions to people in our finalist pool- would need to contact cashier coordinators to see about feasibility of training them (not great to train right now due to social distancing recommendations)

Some of us like this idea and some don't. We'd have to keep expressing that working as a temp cashier wouldn't help your chances of becoming a permanent employee. There might be some resentment at the end of the finalist's temp work if/when they weren't offered a position. However, this could be a solid option to bring in people who have the skills and values for co-op work.

Would need to have a firm end date for the positions (April 24th) extend if needed

For this current emergency, yes. These would be contract workers with a specific employment period, pay and benefits. Our hope is to have some kind of framework in place for future staffing crisis's as well.

Hiring Team Feels highly likely that this won't be needed

We hear you and ask that we all be realists about this. Collectively we seem to go to the "everything will be alright" option far too readily. Yes, this could not be needed now, or throughout the course of the disease, however long it lasts. But also, having false confidence doesn't help our business be prepared. Also, what's the harm in doing what numerous other grocery stores are doing and develop a contingency plan?

Do more outreach to get wms during this time (same issue w/ social distancing)? Or offer greater incentives to volunteer (more gold cards).

We think this is a great idea in addition to other options listed previously.

Very little support for using a temp agency to hire workers

The Task Force is not attached to using a Temp Agency and would need to have the support of Hiring and Training to proceed.

Proposal: The Board approves an emergency hiring of temporary workers, who will be on-call to cover severe staffing shortages during this pandemic.