

RIVERWEST COOPERATIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING 10.26.21 7:00pm – IN PERSON

Board Members in Attendance: Debbie, Karen, Wendy, Carolyn & Tyler

Others in Attendance: Allux, Jen & Nick

Note Taker: Debbie

Facilitator: Nick / Debbie

Time Keeper: Carloyn

Minutes

- Settle In + Check Ins + Pronouns + Firestarter (15 minutes)
- Review Facilitation Style + Hand Signals (5 minutes)
- Check In On Communication (5 minutes)
 - Tyler likes that people have been hitting reply all on the threads
 - Debbie mentioned that we have been focusing on when to use reply all versus reply to sender. Also, using “Time Sensitive” or “Urgent” or “Respond by” ...as necessary
- All Reports (25 minutes)
 - Store
 - Apologies for not getting the reports done in time
 - Nick & Jen have been learning their new roles
 - New products ordered - especially suggestions from staff, members, shoppers
 - New vendors being brought in
 - Empanadas
 - Native American owned coffee
 - Milwaukee-based wellness products
 - Some vendors are interested in consignment, like for holiday gifts. Including two Native American beadwork artists and stuff from RubbishREMADE
 - Still having supply chain issues with availability
 - Nick made a change to how we order dairy. Ordering twice a week to get a second shot to getting in what we need
 - One of our most consistent sources of revenue is membership renewals - we should push this more! Gifting memberships. Do it for the anniversary! Put in to the sponsored membership fund
 - Top sellers for all of Co-Op overall in September (\$ sales)
 - Philly
 - Tofu Breakfast Bagel
 - Tempeh Reuben
 - Membership
 - Mac & Cheese
 - Nothing in store side until it gets down the list into sourdough loaves and eggs, but that is based on each different brand and specific products, not by categories
 - Tyler: You should be able to run reports by categories. Nick answered that it is possible. Carolyn shared how it can be done; it's a pain, but possible. Nick mentioned that volunteers could be used to put that together.
 - Wendy: a lot could be done with CoPos that just weren't set up in the beginning. The question is whether we want to put the time into putting that together if ultimately we would want to change systems
 - Ken from CoPos was really responsive and created an update that could help with how to search product
 - Karen: Are you getting the support you need?

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- Nick: Overall, yes. Yesterday we had a call in and I ended up being there for over 11 hours. We need a defined attendance policy
- Jen: overall - positive. Lots of support. Good to have Nick to learn together. Yesterday was rough, needing to have coverage.
- o Tyler: When you stay that late, you are not working for free, right? Nick answered definitely not, we get paid, but I will have to cut hours elsewhere to not go into overtime
- o Café
 - o Allux reported on their first few weeks
 - o Sales have been going up
 - o Thinking about switching the menu soon - late December or early December (just additions and changing out; not a full overhaul)
 - o Working on bakery specials
 - o Tyler: could we add a line for labor cost in the monthly report? (**Debbie**)
 - o Wendy: We could work on updating the way the reports generally come from the Store & Café. Finance Committee & Coordinators can work on this (**Wendy**)
 - o Tyler: how many employees are paid at the Co-Op. Answer: 15-20
 - o Carolyn: I am confused about when it is even open. Answer: We are working on consistency. Café serving 8-11 breakfast Monday-Thursday. 8-12 breakfast Friday & Saturday. 8-3 brunch on Sunday. Dinner 12-7:30 Monday - Saturday.
 - o Carolyn response to answer: that schedule is still confusing
 - o Tyler asked if we make more money for breakfast or dinner. Answer: it depends on the day. Nothing is normal yet.
 - o Karen said that we should make sure store staff is telling customers about cafe hours
 - o Nick: since we just started offering breakfast again, it is slowly picking up.
 - o Karen: we could do a press release of our hours
 - Wendy will include cafe hours in the press release about the anniversary
 - o Shout out to Allux for bringing family recipes!
 - o Nick is working on digging out numbers for store and cafe from CoPos
 - o Tyler: numbers are awesome
 - o As far as Hazel's resignation, they have not responded. Wendy sent an original email to invite her to an exit interview last week
- o Volunteer Coordinator
 - o Volunteers trickling in
 - o Orientations starting in November - either by appointments or two regularly scheduled ones
 - o Great volunteers are returning
 - o Start of the produce team started today (10/25/21)
 - o Trying not to get bogged down by things dropped over the years (example: AT&T)
 - o Anniversary party on November 6th from 5:00-10:00 at the Falcon Bowl
 - Tents outside
 - Patio heaters
 - DJ IPod inside with board games and people hanging out
 - Menu will come out in the next few days so people can pre-order some dinner specials
 - Reaching out to musicians who might be interested in a super light open jam - like sing a song or do a toast
 - Wendy will have a slideshow of pictures she requests from the community
 - o Karen: you will be addressing the volunteers and labor exchange at some point? Wendy responded yes
- o Finance Committee
 - o Wendy will stay after to discuss finance
 - o We lost \$8,200 in September
 - o September was budgeted for a gain of \$2,600 - so over a \$10K difference
 - o We definitely will not see a profit at the end of the year

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- o We need to start the budget process soon with staff and committees
- o We had budgeted for a robust advertising budget in 2021 that was not used and might have gotten more people in the door if we spent that money
- o Labor is doing nothing but increasing, but hopefully that leads to higher sales
- o Lots more to go over, but we are short on time
- o Communications
 - o Social Media - coordinators and CommComm need to get together. Coordinators will take on the day-to-day
- o Membership
 - o Membership equity has been in the thousands for months (until September). It will likely be higher in October due to the GMM
 - o
- o Sustainability
- Schedule November Board Meeting (5 minutes)
 - o Thursday, November 18th from 6-8. Tentatively at the Falcon Bowl
- Break (10 minutes) (end at 7:05?)
- On-Going Equity & Inclusivity Work (35 minutes)
 - o **We need to move this higher on the agenda next month!**
 - o National Native Heritage Month
 - A statement is going into the Currents
 - ❖ The deadline was quick
 - We will be having initiatives throughout November
 - Will bring in new vendors, have new Native cafe specials, resources, book list, action steps for the community, organizations people can support - and tie it all in with the food
 - Jen is working on a timeline for when we will put stuff out on Social Media or in the store & cafe
 - Need to find businesses we can support BEYOND the month of November
 - ❖ Jen has had a hard time finding Native vendors, which is proving the point of why this is important
 - ❖ The prices might be higher, but there is a reason for that, and we need to see the value in that!
 - What Jen needs from the Board (**all Board**)
 - ❖ Action steps
 - ❖ Businesses to support
 - Jen is really appreciative of the support in actually doing this work, and not just talking about it
 - Wendy mentioned that Shelly McClone may have book recommendations and books we could sell on consignment
 - Carolyn mentioned that we could find Native vendors through WWBIC and the Native American Cultural Center
 - o Process for Board notice/approval for statements where we take a stance of sorts
 - Need to come to agreement and someone to write a procedure to be approved
 - Important to set guidelines about having oversight that is accountable to membership, but not nit-picking or micromanaging.
 - Turnaround needs to happen in a timely manner
 - This could fall under Social Media and Promotions policy
 - What is the timeline required to get to the Board? A week? A day? A marketing calendar could really help plan this in advance and clump multiple statements together.

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- If it is a culturally sensitive post, you need the board to oversee and give them the proper time frame.
- Need more flexibility on timeframes for urgent matters
- Statements going out should out to the board in nearly-complete wording
- Could use an editing committee
- **Debbie** will work on a draft of a policy for this. Karen and Jen will help take a look at it.
 - ❖ Bring in all social media posts about consistency, frequency... Guidelines and structure. **Karen** will check with Paula about what is already in place
- o Check in on timeline for Ubuntu work
 - Need new Board approval for fiscal sponsorship and for Wendy & Debbie to move forward seeking funds?
 - ❖ **We need to discuss this more at next month's meeting**
- o Racial Equity Implementation Guide for Food Hubs
 - Read before the meeting: **page 16** (pages 1-16 if you have not done so already)
 - Discuss 3 questions in that section
 - Producer relations
 - ❖ How can you help farmers of color overcome barriers to selling in your food hub
 - o Question: do we have any actual farmers we buy straight from
 - Yes
 - Are any of them owned by POC?
 - Not for sure
 - o Jen: We have some products from POC owned businesses, but none seem to be farmers. We need more!
 - Scales Family Farms
 - Venice from Alice's Garden
 - Teens Grow Greens
 - Willoway Farms
 - Farmers from Fondy Food Market
 - Look at the CSA guide that comes out every year!
 - o Tyler: What are the perimeters of "local"? Milwaukee? SE WI?
 - o What language do we use on signage? Instead of minority, maybe "Global Majority"
 - o Wendy - we have lost a lot of connections with smaller local vendors over the last few years
 - ❖ How can you engage with all of your farmers and suppliers to ensure that they fairly treat farm workers (the majority of whom are POC) and other employees/laborers?
 - o Have staff/volunteers go visit the farms! Engage membership by asking them to be a part of it!
 - o Don't need to ask for their finances, but go there and talk to employees and see their practices
 - o Be more diligent about researching the vendors we support
 - ❖ Overarching:
 - o We need to reach out to POC vendors and farmers. The hard work is finding them.
 - o The Co-Op spends a lot more time working on vendor relations than other people, so working smart by using resources available like the annual CSA guide
 - o We are able to be flexible with product quantities and contracts/agreements than many other food hubs

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- Pick 3 questions from next month's section
 - ❖ Circle back to Producer Relations after we get through all 7
 - ❖ Next month: look at Governance & Management
- o Any other ideas on what we can start doing now to be more equitable and inclusive?
- Follow Up For Restructuring (15 minutes)
 - o Workers Collective Roles & Definitions **Taken on by coordinators within the next month?**
 - o HR Specialist Position Needs to Be Posted! (Timeline?) **Nick took this on. It has been posted a few times. Jen and Wendy will help get the applications out**
 - We need a more aggressive approach to filling this than just posting it.
 - o Administrative Coordinator Position Needs to Be Posted! (Timeline?) **Hopefully start the process before the end of the year**
- Follow Up on Action Items (15 minutes) **Skipped**
 - o Important things to plan soon!
 - Letter from board to membership
 - ❖ Current state of affairs
 - ❖ How to support the Co-Op
 - ❖ Call for Board Candidates
 - Board role in staff and coordinator on-boarding
 - ❖ Debbie is supposed to draft talking points including:
 - o State of the Co-Op
 - o Role of Board /Coordinators/Staff
 - o How to communicate with the board
 - ❖ All new staff meets with a board member within first 2-3 weeks
 - ❖ What is the process for assigning a board member to the new staff member
 - ❖ Training new coordinators right now – make sure there is support
 - Set Up Columinate Meeting Including Board Members
 - ❖ What do we think would be the best use of our 3 or so hours???
 - Need to plan for the 2021 Board Retreat
 - Structure for volunteer liaisons
 - o Community Contacts List (Wendy, Debbie)
 - o Logging board member volunteer hours (ALL BOARD!)
 - o Help with content for social media posts if possible; like/comment/share! (ALL BOARD!)
 - o Sign the Code of Conduct & Ethics forms & return to the Co-Op (ALL BOARD!)
 - o Retreat Garden Plot Items

Next meeting: TBD

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