

Plainfield Co-op Minutes

4/8/2014

Present: Mike Peabody, Gail Falk, Bob Fancher, Sue Chickering, Art Chickering, Joseph Gainza

Minutes from March approved unanimously.

We also agreed to two small changes to the B-4 policy last meeting but it was not specified as to whose job that would be to write these up. **The secretary should make these changes and send to all to replace the old one** .

The Building Committee report:

No major problems were found with the building. Some safety issues will need to be addressed sooner than later. Sam Clark said that we will have it for discussion for our May meeting. The sooner that we can get him an estimate of how much they can spend this year, the sooner they can get started on the work. Mike and Dawn gave Sandra (the tax preparer) the estimation of about \$7500 for capital expenses. Gail suggests that we look at our capital account and our estimated expenditures so that we have a ballpark of approximately how much money is actually available. It would be her hope that the MC could talk with the treasurer and come up with some figures before the May meeting with the building committee. Bob agreed to follow up with this.

Customer/Staff concerns policy: It is our hope that this policy that Joseph drafted when approved by the MC, be put on the website once it is in its final version. Mike and Joseph will sort this out.

Membership Committee:

This has not happened as of yet and Gail will call Scott to follow up on this.

Tax filing status:

The state does not want corporations calling themselves cooperatives when they really aren't cooperatives. The language in our co-op records is not written in such a way as is required for us to be recognized as a legal cooperative. In the spirit of the law we have acted as a co-op and by all rights done everything necessary to be viewed this way. We can still file as a cooperative even though we are not "legally" a cooperative. We have been recognized as a co-op for many, many years. There are no barriers to filing our taxes this year and in the coming year.

Reflections on The Retreat:

Art - wondered about the pros and cons about being a non-profit organization because the kinds of ends we have are very consistent with the kinds of goals that other non-profit organizations have.

Joseph - began to think more about outreach and is there someone specifically in the MC with this as part of her job description? Karen is this person and she organizes workshops in the community center, she does advertising, etc. Joseph was thinking more in terms of education to the members, signage, labelling, educating our consumers and customers. To him, it seems like it would be important for there to be one person whose sole responsibility was this function. The forward thinking nature of the retreat was refreshing and rejuvenating

Mike - Karen was talking with Joseph and people are feeling a little nervous about the changing of our language of our Ends. So as far as their process regarding the MC's review of the Ends, they will be putting this on hold. It gives Mike hope to see us focus on these things.

Bob - felt that it was great to step back from the nitty gritty and look at the big picture. He agrees with Joseph that the marketing/outreach is very important, and changing our image should be one of our goals to build our membership.

Gail - has been feeling the need for that process for a number of years and it was a positive experience and writing a mission did not seem to be such a daunting task after all. It was refreshing.

Sue - found it a helpful, positive experience and especially appreciated Jamie's facilitation.

Follow up to retreat:

Still need the reports from Scott, Bob and Adrienne. We need to review each of these and determine which things need to be addressed and by whom. We need to remember to eliminate the phrase "in the following order..." when we revise the Ends when all the reports are in. We also need to talk more about Member/Board interactions and involvement because we did not get a chance to discuss this at the retreat as we had planned. Joseph has proposed the idea of an actual hand-held clipboard survey asking people if they read the newsletter.

Neighboring Food Cooperative Association (NFCA) meeting report: Gail, Adrienne and Mike attended this conference. Mike noticed that St. J was at least making an appearance and trying to make a go of it. Mike thinks we should join the New England Farm Association to support their cause as it is not very expensive and it will keep us well informed and make us all stronger. Mike attended a "Food For All" workshop - with a focus on affordability/food security. A lot of co-ops offer a flat 10% discount for people who fall within the needy bracket (proof that you are on WIC, food stamps or SSI - done confidentially), while another approach is to mark down

the basic staples for all shoppers. Some co-ops noticed an overall increase in membership and in overall sales even if it was not a monumental difference. They did not address the inherent costs of this approach. Mike ran a study and determined that over a one month period if we did this kind of a discount it would cost us only about \$450. There were a lot of start up co-ops there as well. Gail attended an interesting discussion about member loans as a way for the co-op to raise money at a 2% interest rate. Other co-ops have done this successfully, raising as much as 2 million \$. Art raised the question of coordinating with other co-ops to buy in bulk together. Mike has raised this issue before and been told no. We would have to go through a national brokerage to be able to accomplish this and for a co-op our size it is not cost effective.

MC Monitoring Report B5 - Treatment of Customers : The MC reports compliance with all aspects of this policy. Bob raised the question about whether the children's pplay area has been painted over yet. They have found a good paint for this project and it is likely underway or will be very soon. Joseph asked Mike to explain the "reduced access" statement, which Mike explained. This was identified as a priority by the building committee and it needsd to happen PRONTO! Gail wondered if there was a reason that falls or injuries were not recorded in this report and suggested that there should be a category for reporting these incidences. Mike says that as far as he remembers there were none and will add this category for the next time.

Link report:

Biweekly meetings have been cut back to monthly meetings and it has realy helped with payroll and productivity. We have worked our vendor payments down to less than 30% out of current (please fix if this is wrong). An insurance claim was filed for a freezer failure. Why didn't the smart meter catch this? This was our whole reasoning behind the smart meter. We might just get rid of it. Approximately 279 overdue members hadn't paid as of the March 31st deadline, but this was also due to some computer glitches. The board asked Mike to give us a number so we know how the change to equity is affecting our membership. Everyone can pay after Jan 1st and have until March 31st to pay instead if they would like. People who pay earlier get the benefit of the number of months they have paid for so there is a benefit to paying earlier in the year.

Board Monitoring report - C3 - Agenda Planning: Gail is keeping close tabs on this calendar and doing the time calculations ahead of the meeting. We are compliant with this policy.

Next meeting: May 13th 6:30 PM