

SUMMARY OF CO-OP BOARD MEETING, SEPTEMBER 27, 2017

Last week, more than 50 Co-op members gathered with the Co-op Board of Advisors at the Brieman Building to address recent staff changes and financial issues our Co-op has been facing in recent months. It was a critically important meeting, at a critical time, and it was encouraging to see just how passionate members are about their Co-op. What follows is a comprehensive list of the questions and issues raised at that meeting, along with suggestions from those in attendance as to how the Co-op may begin to make the changes necessary to survive and thrive going forward.

The Board of Advisors, with critical input from the staff, is using this list to help set operational and organizational priorities for the coming months and years. Over time, the Board hopes to answer any questions asked, and explore the feasibility of all of the suggestions raised. The results of these efforts will be shared with the membership regularly, through email communication, newsletters, discussions, and frequent updates to the web page. Hard copies will be made available in the store as well.

If you were not in attendance at the meeting, and your questions or suggestions are not listed below, feel free to forward them to goodfood@cambridgefoodcoop.com, or write them down and drop them at the Co-op the next time you stop in. We will add them to the list, and address them as soon as possible. Thank you for your continued support.

QUESTIONS ASKED

GENERAL:

1. Is the Co-op still sustainable in Cambridge?
2. How can we help Melissa and Rebeca through this transition?

FINANCIAL:

3. What is aging debt? Why do we have it? How do we fix it?
4. When was last audit?
5. If we had an increase of 7-8K in discounts, what was commensurate increase in sales?
6. What are credit card fees?
7. Could we use Co-op Gift Cards (re-loadable, declining balance) to reduce CC fees?

STORE MANAGEMENT:

1. Do we need both organic and conventional herbs and spices?
2. Can we grow our grab and go food offerings?
3. Can we improve our electronic presence and communication?
4. Can we join with other co-ops to improve our buying power?
5. What are our biggest sellers by volume and income?
6. What happened to Callebaut Chocolate Chips?

SUGGESTIONS

Identity

1. Review/revise mission statement
2. Start calling members "member owners"
3. Focus on our uniqueness

4. Start calling volunteer shifts “investment hours” or similar
5. Look at how we view our co-op

The Co-op’s Role in the Community

1. Recognize role of co-op in local food justice work/issues
2. Begin “Main Street” collaboration with other organizations like Hubbard Hall to address shared issues
3. Make sure it’s clear Co-op is open to the public, “everybody welcome”

Communication

1. Leave hard copies of board/management communications at register
2. Board communications—need to be better
3. Better board communication around finances—how have fundraising monies been used
4. Look into the policy governance model of co-op management

Public Relations

1. Improve social media content and connection
2. Better promote local emphasis of co-op
3. Use newspaper promotion more widely
4. Publish a wish list of things/expertise needed

Financial

1. Don’t institute a patronage system
2. Think about discount as donation
3. Don’t refer to member discount as a cost, or as a “loss”
4. Renegotiate cc fees
5. Begin GoFundMe campaign or similar to help with financial crisis
6. Offer a declining balance co-op card to help reduce cc fees
7. Continue the discount and offer a choice to take no discount but divide and funds left at the end of the year according to what was purchased.
8. Temporary reduction in discounts

Worker/Member Management

1. Remember the financial value of working members, vs. having to pay additional staff
2. Review of working member model—make sure we still offer working memberships
3. More super workers
4. Specialized worker jobs
5. Advertise member owner positions when they are vacant
6. More volunteer opportunities other than working shifts
7. More volunteer meetings/discussions/training

Store Management

1. Offer workshop on how to shop co-op on a budget
2. Offer more Grab & Go food
3. The co-op needs to be more affordable
4. Address reasons why not all members shop the co-op
5. Too many “luxury” items in inventory
6. Institute a POS (point of sale) system to help manage inventory/drive decision-making

7. Offer workshops
8. Consider a “coordinator” and “buyer” staff positions/roles
9. Coordinate buying with other co-ops
10. Worker members could work an extra shift or 2 over the next few months to help
11. Eliminate items that don't sell; examine items by price point to make sure co-op is competitive