



Members Approve Building Loan, Agree to By-Law & Policy Changes

Member donations critical to obtaining excellent loan terms

At last Sunday’s special Membership Meeting, members unanimously approved the proposed loan to help finance much needed Co-op building repairs, agreeing to allow the Co-op to borrow up to \$50,000 to cover the costs of the repairs. “When we bought the building 5 years ago, all we could afford to fix was the roof,” recalls Treasurer Charlie Reiss. Since then, the building has continued to deteriorate, impacting the Co-op’s ability to operate efficiently.

The loan, provided by the Community Loan Fund of the Capital Region, is meant as a supplement to the money raised by the Co-op to do the necessary work. “The more money we are able to raise from our members and community supporters, the less we will need to borrow,” explained Reiss.

The Co-op has begun collecting donations that were pledged to this project in the last few months, and will be asking its vendors and businesses in the community for their support as well. So far, the Co-op has received over \$30,000 in pledges, well beyond what the Co-op Board expected to receive.

The Community Loan Fund provided excellent terms for the loan, which will be amortized over 40 years, with a balloon at year 20. “This will result in a lower monthly mortgage payment than we have now, which will improve our cash position,” said Reiss. There is also, as Reiss pointed out, no penalty for pre-payment. “If we continue to manage our finances well, and are able to grow our sales, we may be able to pay off the loan in advance.”

When asked about the 20 year balloon payment, Reiss explained that balloon payments offer an opportunity to refinance,

(Continued on page 4)



WHAT CO-OP PROJECTS WILL OUR DONATIONS HELP FUND?

The Cambridge Food Co-op building requires many repairs, improvements, and upgrades. The list below includes some of the most critical, and some of the Co-op’s “wish list.” All repairs are contingent upon adequate funding.

- ◆ Make repairs to the brickwork and front steps
- ◆ Improve drainage around the outside of the building
- ◆ Remove rotting exterior wood; replace siding
- ◆ Dry out basement to make it useful for storage
- ◆ Repaint front of the building
- ◆ Replace more windows

- ◆ Improve air conditioning
- ◆ Upgrade furnace
- ◆ Improve registers/displays

Thank you to everyone who has pledged and donated to this critically important project!

Inside this issue:	
Co-op Turns It Around	P. 2
Spring Membership Meeting Scheduled	P. 2
Co-op Events	P.3



Co-op 2018 Turnaround Results in \$20,000 Profit

Increasing sales in 2019 a primary goal

After a shaky start, 2018 turned out to be a successful year for the Cambridge Food Co-op, netting more than \$20,000 in profit and providing a little breathing room as 2019 gets underway. “Our sales were down from 2017 to 2018,” explained Charlie Reiss, Co-op Treasurer. “But our expenses went down more, which made all the difference.”

One reason for the lower expenses is that the Co-op was not fully staffed for the entire year, and since the personnel line is the biggest expense the Co-op has, it necessarily had an impact on the bottom line. “It is unlikely that we will see a reduction in this line for 2019,” said Reiss.

The reduction in member discounts also had a significant impact on the Co-op’s bottom line in 2018. “It’s impossible to overstate how significant this was to improving the financial health of the Co-op,” said Reiss.

While lower expenses can be helpful, the drop in sales is of some concern to the Co-op Board. Co-op Co-Managers Melissa Carll and Shannon Woodcock are tasked with increasing gross sales by 2% in 2019—a seemingly small percentage but in reality

a significant increase over the last year. “We hope to increase bulk sales, and we’re looking at offering beer and wine,” says Carll.

Making better use of Co-op space may also help drive up sales. “We expect that improvements to the building, from “curb appeal” to better heating and cooling, to more storage for backstock will help us attract shoppers and create loyal Co-op customers,” said Reiss.

One theory about the drop in sales relates to the reduction in open hours last year. Originally implemented to address

(Continued on page 4)

Board of Advisors 2019 Meetings

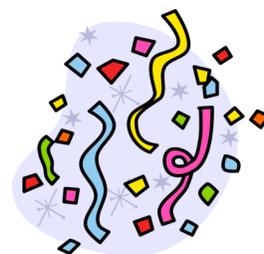
The upcoming Co-op Board meeting dates are listed below. All meetings are held in Room 4 upstairs at the Co-op unless otherwise noted, and begin at 6:30 p.m. Dates are subject to change. Members are welcome and encouraged to attend!

March 27, April 24, May 22, June 26, July 24, Aug. 28, Sept. 25, Oct. 23, Nov. 20, Dec. 8

Spring Membership Meeting Scheduled for Sunday, June 2nd

Agenda to include review of 2018 financials and activities, goals for 2019-- and a party!

The Co-op Spring Membership meeting, a celebration of the past year and a look ahead to what’s coming up for the Co-op, is scheduled for Sunday, June 2nd from 4-7 p.m. This meeting, which will include a potluck supper and maybe even some music in addition to the business meeting, will be a welcome opportunity to celebrate our Co-op community. Look for an email in the next few weeks which will include the schedule and agenda, but until then—save the date!





THE CAMBRIDGE FOOD CO-OP

Wholesome, affordable foods in a spirit of respect for each other and our world

Movie Night Draws Enthusiastic Crowd

More than 30 Co-op members and friends filled the Freight Depot last month to experience “Food For Change,” a 2017 documentary by Steven Alves highlighting the history and importance of the food co-op movement. Movie night was “a great way to kick off this year’s calendar of events,” said Shannon Woodcock, Co-op Co-manager responsible for member relations. “We want people to see the co-op as a provider of social opportunities, education, and fun, as well as a grocery store.” The next event is a seed starting workshop on April 13, offered by Janet Britt. This event is free for members—sign up at the Co-op!

Look for Co-op BOA member Fern Bradley’s impressions of the film in next month’s newsletter.



Time to send in your Building Campaign donations!

Your pledges were instrumental in helping the Co-op obtain excellent terms on the loan to make needed repairs and improvements to our building—after our members, it’s our greatest asset! Now’s the time to send in your donation! Make sure to include “pledged donation” in the memo line, send it to the attention of Jessica, and tell us who you are, so we can match your pledge with your donation.

Didn’t pledge? There’s still time to join the party—send in your donation today!

COME TO A SPRING SEED STARTING WORKSHOP!

Are you ready to start planting a garden? Join Co-op member Janet Britt for tips on growing your own healthy seedlings. Janet has enjoyed growing vegetable, flower, and herb seedlings for over 40 years. We will learn about seed selection, timing, soil and

container choices and creating a good growing environment. Bring home seedlings to plant! Interested participants must register at the Co-op office. FREE for Co-op Members, \$5 general public. Space is limited, so sign up today at the Co-op!





(Loan & By Laws Votes, continued from page 1)

which the Co-op would consider if there are still monies due on this loan. “A balloon doesn’t necessarily mean that we need to come up with tens of thousands of dollars right away. It just means that we will need to look into refinancing at that time.”

Members also voted on some long overdue changes to the by-laws. The name of the co-op, formerly the Village Store Co-op, was changed in the by-laws to match the legal name of “Cambridge Food Co-op, Inc.” The annual and semi-annual member meetings are now called the Spring Meeting and the Autumn Meeting, and the new bylaws allow for some flexibility in scheduling these meetings. Meeting notice can also now be given via email and posting in the store, instead of in local newspapers.

Some changes were made to Membership Policies as well. Members voted to eliminate the 2– and 3-year dues payment options, in favor of single year renewals only. “We offered the option of paying dues for a few years in advance as a way of raising much needed cash towards the end of 2017,” explained Membership Committee Chair Kathleen Quinn. “We are grateful for everyone who helped the Co-op through the multiyear dues payment option at that difficult time.”

Since then, as the Co-op’s finances have improved, the Co-op has looked for ways to improve efficiency in its accounting and

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2nd Floor above the Cambridge Food Coop

Rent Includes

Heat & Electricity
Air Conditioner
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Office Rent: \$300/ month.

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money management. Because of the difficulty that multi year payments pose in year to year accounting, the Board recommend eliminating this program. “Of course the Co-op will honor any dues payments made in advance through this program,” said Quinn.

(Successful 2018, continued from page 2)

staffing issues, the change in hours may be related to the drop in sales. Says Reiss, “it is hard to know for sure, but we are looking at the change in hours as a contributing factor in the decline in sales last year. No decision has been made as to changing the hours again, but we will be looking at all factors which may have had an impact on gross sales.”