

Belfast Community Co-op Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

January 24, 2024, Public meeting commenced at 6:03 p.m. at the Belfast Free Library and via Zoom.

Directors Present: Sasha Breus, Babette Cohen-Solal, Ernie Cooper (Vice President), Susan Cutting (president), Rio Greeley, John Krueger (treasurer), Jim Miller, Valerie Tate (secretary), Collin Thompson

Absent: Corinne Burr

Staff: Doug Johnson (GM), Emily Berry (scribe)

Owners: Todd Bluhm, Annie Bussiere, Jamie Cermak, Beth Dickinson, Gina Ferendo, Naya Flanzala, Ashleigh Russell, Charles Sterbach, Michael Walter

Agenda Review

The BOD accepted the agenda by consensus.

Strategic Work

Prior to convening the December 20, 2023 BOD meeting, directors and meeting attendees were asked to participate in a strategic work activity, envisioning a scenario 20 years in the future when the Co-op has won the Global Award for Co-operative Excellence and Community Engagement. Participants were asked to imagine what the Co-op did to earn this award and their ideas were compiled and shared. Building on the activity done in December, each director, and Doug, was asked to choose the idea that most resonated with them and was given two minutes to relate why. Highlights of the responses included: a local food system developed by a county-wide collaboration of organizations; lower cost, no shame, no bureaucratic complexity, honor system for food access; food education; accessible, safe haven for healthy food for all income levels; a cooperative city; distribution hub, growers network, business mentoring, capital support, land access, reduced barriers to entry for producers; strong interdisciplinary local food economy that normalizes co-op values; cooperative model as a system to share the wealth, alternative to capitalism, experiments in a new approach; stewards creating a more just economy, sharing best practices with other towns; and everyone in the community is fed, housed, and supported through personal relationships, connections, and events.

GM Reporting

Alignment

Doug reported that the Co-op would be opening late at 11am Thursday, January 25th, to provide safe access for a crane in the parking lot. Crane operator and crew will be moving the rooftop HVAC units onto the roof and putting the refrigeration rack into place.

The renovation project seems to be on schedule with equipment arriving when planned, with the exception of some kitchen equipment which showed up earlier than expected. Doug noted that the switch gear is still delayed and he should know by February 20th roughly when that will arrive. If it is delayed further, there is a plan B. Additionally, the shelving has shipped and is expected soon.

GM Update Report

The directors complimented the graphics and information going out to owners about the next phase of the renovation project and consequent sales.

Board Action

B - Global Executive Constraint

Doug noted that the B - Global Executive Constraint monitoring report does reference a number of reports that are submitted to the BOD throughout the year.

One director commented that the capital campaign owner loans could be cited as an additional piece of data under the Cooperative Principle 4: Autonomy & Independence portion of the report.

The BOD accepted by consensus the B - Global Executive Constraint monitoring report as in compliance.

Consent Agenda

The BOD accepted by consensus:

1. The minutes from the December 20, 2023 BOD meeting,
2. Policy C - Global Governance Commitment as in compliance, and
3. Policy D - Global Board Management Connection as in compliance.

Strategic Work Leadership Recommendation

The Board Development Committee recommended that the BOD authorize Valerie to lead the BOD's strategic efforts going forward and accept her proposal for an initial approach to developing a strategic work process. BD Comm based their recommendation on the energy and creativity that Valerie has brought to the process of strategic planning thus far.

Valerie emphasized that the early research portion of the proposal should involve several directors, not just one person. This was initially suggested to her by Corinne.

The BOD accepted by consensus the recommendation to authorize Valerie to lead the BOD's strategic efforts and the proposal outlined for the initial approach to the process.

Waldo County Climate Action Coalition

Waldo County Climate Action Coalition is an outgrowth of the All Belfast Climate Dialogues. This coalition intends to build on those initial dialogues by gathering together local organizations concerned about and working toward addressing climate change. The Waldo County Climate Action Coalition has held three meetings so far and at the most recent meeting, the Co-op was invited to join. The Board Development Committee recommended that the Co-op join and designate Ernie as their official representative.

The BOD discussed what the role of Operations might be. Ernie, who attended the meeting, responded that the Co-op as a general entity has been invited to be a member. There are no commitments to specific work or action at this point other than attending meetings and sharing what the organization is doing, as well as listening to what others are doing. And, there is no financial commitment. The BOD can reassess their membership in the Coalition at any time. By joining, the Co-op will be lending its voice to shaping the organization. Rio expressed interest in also being a representative and others were interested in attending the next Coalition meeting.

The BOD approved of joining the Waldo County Climate Action Coalition by consensus.

Annual Meeting Plan

The 2024 Annual Meeting will be held at the UU Church. The Common Cents Meet & Greet will not occur in conjunction with the Annual Meeting due to space restrictions at the church. OEC is putting together plans to hold the Meet & Greet in July with a picnic.

Board Calls to New Owners

The OEC had suggested that Board members call new owners who expressed interest in Board and/or committee work when they signed up. A concern was expressed that these would be recruiting calls. The OEC has drafted talking points and explained that the content of the calls would be more of an introduction/welcome, a discussion about the Co-op, an opportunity to answer questions, and a chance to invite these owners to attend BOD meetings. The BOD accepts by consensus the OEC's recommendation to contact new owners interested in Board work. The OEC will work out organizational details.

Board Discussion Items & Committee Updates

CCMA Conference Call for Proposals

The Consumer Cooperative Management Association's (CCMA) annual conference will be held in Portland, ME this year. All directors are encouraged to attend and, if interested, give a presentation. CCMA is currently requesting proposals for presentations. This call for proposals will close March 1, 2024.

Owner Engagement Committee

The Cabin Fever Reliever Dance Party will be held February 3 and there is a sign-up sheet for directors to volunteer. Attending directors are encouraged to wear their Co-op t-shirts. Details are in this packet's OEC report.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee spent the bulk of their January meeting looking at the Renovation Project Summary. Their primary concern is about contingency and identifying where the contingency could fail. Currently, the project is just over 50% complete and within budget. The FinCom is looking at the budget continuously and feels at this point there is every confidence that the project will complete within the budget target. The remaining contingency should cover any fluctuating cost of construction. The budget will be recast in April.

Homework

Full BOD

1. Take policy poll CI
2. Keep experimenting Beekeeper
3. Wear BOD t-shirts to dance!

Officers

1. Incorporate Columinate training reports into the agenda

Owner Engagement Committee

1. Learn about the intersection of Marketing and OEC roles and responsibilities
2. Brainstorm topics for Owner Forums
3. Develop process for director calls to owners

Susan

1. Talk to Thane about organizing a local training

Valerie

1. Draft a capital campaign debrief

2. Draft a BOD document storage report

Ernie

1. Notify BOD of Waldo County Climate Action Coalition meetings

John

1. Organize brainstorming session re: CCMA call for proposals
 - a. Valerie, Ernie, Susan, Jim, Doug, Collin

Debrief

Directors were given the opportunity to share comments, concerns, gratitude, and insights regarding the meeting. Many enjoyed the creative thinking at the beginning of the meeting.

Meeting adjourned 7:49pm. Minutes respectfully submitted by Emily Berry, scribe.