

Swarthmore Co-op Board Meeting

Minutes

November 22, 2021

Via Zoom

The existence of this member-owned market means that Swarthmore and its surrounding communities will be healthier and more vibrant, the local food system will thrive, and meaningful connections will be forged between member-owners, customers, and workers in a welcoming environment.

In Attendance: Donna Francher, President; Greg Bockman, Vice President; John Moots, Treasurer; Mark Rossi, Secretary; Stephanie Edwards, Jim Godderz, Kevin Kebea, Lauren Shohet.

Absent: Ines Rodriguez, Vibhat Nair, Mike Litka, General Manager

Call to Order / Agenda Review

Donna called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Review/Approval of October Meeting Minutes

There were no questions related to the content of the draft minutes of the October Board Meeting. John made a motion to approve the minutes as written and the motion passed unanimously.

General Manager Monthly Update Report

Mike was not able to attend the meeting to present the General Manager's Monthly Report, however, Board members received copies of the report for review.

Action: Board members can check with Mike on any questions they have, and Mike can summarize the November and December monthly reports at the December Board Meeting.

Finance Report

There was no Finance Committee meeting since the last Board Meeting. John noted that the one agenda still on the radar is the purchase of the refurbished deli and meat cases. (See October Board Meeting Minutes for details.) As discussed at the October meeting, Mike and the Finance Committee will create a business case outlining this expenditure and plan to share it with the Board in advance of or during the next meeting on December 20.

Meeting Arrangements for 2022

Donna asked Board members for their thoughts on whether we should we should have all monthly Board meetings via Zoom in 2022 or a combination of in-person and Zoom meetings. Everyone agreed that it would it would be good to have some meetings in

person, and that one in-person meeting per quarter would be ideal. Lauren suggested that we include a Co-op staff person at our in-person meetings as well.

Action: Mark will check with Borough Hall to see if the Community Room can be reserved for in-person meetings.

Donna and Mark will let the Board know the in-person and Zoom meeting schedule for 2022.

Board Monitoring:

D2: GM Accountability

Mark made motion that Mike is in compliance with D2, Accountability of the GM, and the motion passed unanimously.

Owner Engagement Committee Report

Lauren updated the Board on some of the activities that we would like to reinstitute, however, in-person events continue to be hampered by the pandemic. For example, we didn't get interest in the Cookie Swap. Generally, it's been difficult to attract volunteers for in-person events.

Discussion:

Lauren suggested that we may want to start thinking about community engagement at a higher, more strategic level that reflects the contributions of consumer cooperatives in the community and furthers owner/member engagement. The focus is more on developing owners' understanding of the coop mission and our future role in the community beyond its role as a local, convenient food market.

The Board discussed that every member is really a small business owner, but we don't think of it that way. Does it matter that we are a Co-op, and if so how do we encourage our owners to focus on this? And for our shoppers, who are owners and non-owners alike, is the fact that we are a Co-op really important to them?

Stephanie suggested that we may co-sponsor projects with other groups to reinforce our commitment to the community, and that can considering forging more relationships with other community groups.

John noted that Lauren's idea is really about improving the way we tell the story, and in effect is an ingredient of how we brand the store. Monthly newsletter from the board could be sent to owners to encourage deeper knowledge of what Co-ops are about, but do we have the resources to do this?

We can generate ideas at the Board level, but can we help Mike operationalize them with all of the other day-to-day challenges of running the store?

This led to the question that we continue to ask: What are we and what do we want to be? How much should the board be doing vs. others, including owners and staff? How do we balance our aspirational goals of explaining the cooperative mission with running the store and building sales?

Everyone agreed that it may be time for the Board to have a retreat meeting to focus deeper on answering these questions. John noted that the new budget will be finalized at the end of the first quarter, and perhaps we can use this session to identify priorities that can be supported in the approved budget that will help with our marketing and messaging.

Survey Results/Strategy Follow up:

Based on this discussion, the Board agreed that we should hold a retreat meet to discuss strategy planning, including the results of the customer and member surveys that were completed by Sabria Aziz. (See Vibhat's update from the October Board meeting).

Donna proposed a meeting at her house on the last weekend of January (Saturday preferred).

Action: Donna, Mark and John offered to meet with Donna to help frame out a timetable and agenda. It was noted that the monthly Board meeting is Monday, January 24, and it was agreed that we will use a portion of this meeting to prepare for the retreat meeting the following Saturday.

Adjournment: Lauren made motion to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Next Meeting: December 20, 2021, via Zoom

November 22 Board Meeting Documents:

Board Meeting Agenda, November 22, 2021

Draft Board Meeting Minutes: October 25, 2021

General Manager Monthly Report – November 2021

2022 Budget Highlights, comparison with 2021 Actual and Projected Results

GM Monitoring: D2, Accountability of the GM, November 2021

Sales and income graphs, November 2021

Actual vs. Budget, November 2021

Co-op Income Statement, November 2021

Co-op Cash Flow Statement, November 2021

Co-op Balance Sheet, November 2021

13 month rolling income statement, parts 1 and 2, November 2021

Co-op 2021 vs. 2020 Sales, November 2021