

Minutes

Swarthmore Co-op Board Meeting

November 28, 2022

Swarthmore Borough Hall – Community Room

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: Greg Bockman, President; Stephanie Edwards, Vice President; John Moots, Treasurer; Mark Rossi, Secretary; Donna Francher, Kevin Kebea, Vibhat Nair, Lauren Shohet, Keith West; Kira Montagno, General Manager

Absent: Ines Rodriguez

Call to Order / Agenda Review

Greg called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

Review/Approve October 24, 2022 Minutes

There were no changes to the draft minutes from the October 24 Board Meeting. Lauren made a motion for the minutes to be approved, Donna seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Member comments

There were no member guests at the meeting.

General Manager Monthly Update Report

Kira presented the General Manager and team reports for review and discussion. Following are the highlights from her presentation, along with discussion points that followed:

There are noticeable leaks coming from the roof onto the sales floor.

Action: Kira is in the process of getting estimates to present to the Board at the next meeting.

Additional security cameras are being installed along the front and side of the building. These cameras are intended to complement the existing interior and exterior security cameras. There is a proposal in place to install four cameras at a total cost of \$4,500.

Action: Kira will apprise the Board of the final plan to install the cameras.

The highlight of the past month was the successful preparation for the Thanksgiving holiday.

We are working on ways to better track our Thanksgiving orders and sales results in the coming year. The data is currently difficult to import from the website, but we are making improvements so that data is easier to capture and more relevant.

Discussion:

Stephanie asked if the smaller menu make a difference in our overall results, as some choices were not available this year. Kira responded that that sales were down overall, perhaps because more people traveled this year. However, sales of larger turkeys increased this year (22lbs and up), so some people who stayed local had larger groups at their homes.

Kira noted that we will have filet and chicken for Christmas this year.

The Board and Kira discussed ongoing staffing issues. Produce in particular is a key area of concern. It may be necessary to hire person with strong produce experience once the holidays have ended.

Stephanie suggested that we may need to think about hiring and Assistant GM-level person. Donna noted that we could invest in training if we were to promote internally to fill this position.

Keith asked if there is a plan in place for how to add new resources? Kira responded that local coops are my first choice for talent to fill our open positions.

Greg suggested that we can approach this issue in a few ways: Add an Assistant GM? Or fill specific voids in areas of the store, e.g. product or deli or specialty?

Kira is looking at all of these items carefully to determine the best balance of what we need vs. what we can afford and will share her plans with the Board.

Other Operational Highlights:

Kira reported that we are considering a Beer and Wine Happy Hour for Owners and combining this with the Cheese CSA that has been recently announced.

Several Board Members asked about how well our owners know about things that are happening in the store. Specifically, how do we improve What's Fresh? Are people missing the content of what is in the issues and because of how the content is presented. What vehicles do we have to communicate? Keith suggested that we need to better advertise improvements we are making. These will be items for increased focus in the new year.

Financial Highlights - October

- Profit of \$7k which is about \$4k more than last year

- Sales of \$458,000 are \$27k down compared to last year
- Total store expenses of \$150K are down \$10k compared to last year
- Customer Count of 19k which was slightly down compared to last year
- Basket size is \$23.70 down a dollar compared to last year
- Wages are \$66k down \$10k compared to last year
- Occupancy is \$15k down \$22k compared to last year
- Administrative expenses are \$42k for the month, up \$15k compared to last year. There were several unique items that contributed to this higher than usual number when compared with last year or other months: Recruiting expenses of \$9,000, likely the last expenditure for the GM search; miscellaneous taxes and licenses of \$6,200 for the liquor license renewal; and consultant fees \$6,200, and professional expenses, \$5,700, compared to last year's numbers.

Overall sales are down \$27k; however our expenses and wages were lower than the budget/last year's numbers, so we were able to make a small profit of \$7k.

Cash position of \$629k reflects the increase of \$7k for October and up \$130k compared this period last year.

Employee Benefit Plan Renewal

Following up from the last Board meeting, Kira reported that Dawn Betts, HR Consultant, renewed our current employee benefit plan for 2023.

The Board discussed that Kira, Dawn and the Finance Committee should be planning ahead for the 2024 plan renewal to be sure that what we are offering makes sense for the needs of the staff, and the right benefit choices are available to them. We may want to consider adjusting our plan accordingly.

Action: Kira will plan for an informational session to take place with the staff in Spring 2023.

Finance Committee Report

John reported that the Finance Committee did not meet during the past month but will be meeting soon to discuss the following:

- Staff Bonuses for 2023
- 2023 Budget (to be finalized in March 2023)

Stephanie also noted the need to simplify our profit and loss statements to aid in finalizing a future budget. The Finance Committee and Kira will discuss and implement improvements that help us with having important information readily available.

Action: The Finance Committee will update the Board at the next Board meeting; intensive budget planning will take in January 2023.

Board Monitoring:

D2: GM Accountability

We will await confirmation of compliance with D2 until the December 2022 Board Meeting and vote that we are in compliance at that time.

Old Business

First Place Swarthmore Support

The \$500 gift card has been presented to First Place Swarthmore for aid to the refugee family.

Centennial Foundation Update

Donna says we will hold up on requesting a contribution from the Swarthmore Centennial Foundation for improvements to the patio until we have developed a plan for how we would like to use the space.

New Business

Swarthmorean Article

Lauren reached out to the Swarthmorean regarding our interest in submitting an article about Kira's appointment as GM. The editors will accept an article up to 500 words.

Next Step: Lauren will write and submit the article.

Solar Panels

Vibhat reported that there is interest from Philip Coleman in providing solar panels over 15 parking spaces on Myers Ave. The Co-op and other businesses could purchase energy generated by the panels toward our monthly electric bill. The panels would also supply power to charging stations at each parking space. Kira noted that our current electric bills have been going up. We are at \$43,000 year-to-date. Last year our total electric bill was \$52,000. The Board will receive a presentation for what would be charged.

Next step: The Board would like to learn more about how this process and logistics would work. Vibhat will invite Philip Coleman to make a presentation to the Board at a future Board meeting. Keith will investigate whether we could apply for a grant to cover the costs of obtaining solar power in the store.

Calendar Review for 2023

Greg noted that the Board will meet monthly in 2023 on the fourth Monday of each month. Meetings will be at 7:30 p.m. If someone is traveling and they want to join the meeting they can call into an attending Board member to participate via phone.

Donna suggested that we read one of the seven Co-op principles at each meeting. The Board agreed.

Action: Mark will prepare and send out the Annual Monitoring Calendar for 2023, which lists the agenda items to be covered at each meeting, and the list of meeting dates. (Note that in April, there is no Board Meeting because this is when the annual owner meeting takes place.)

Board Nominations

Greg reminded the Board that the following Board members have three-year terms that are due to expire in April 2023: Stephanie, Donna, Vibhat and Lauren.

Discussion: Stephanie will be leaving the Board. Donna, Vibhat and Lauren all expressed interest in remaining on the Board.

This will create the need to fill Stephanie's position. We also can choose to fill another position that was vacated by Jim Godderz in 2022.

Next Steps: Greg encouraged the Board to start identifying people who may be interested in serving on the Board in the future. Lauren, Vibhat and Mark volunteered to serve with Greg on the Nominating Committee to identify candidates for election at the April 2023 meeting. The Board identified the following areas of interest: Diversity, Agriculture, Finance and Branding.

Action: Mark will update and share the current list of terms for all Board members as of December 2022.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9 p.m.

Next meeting: December 19, 2022

November 28 Meeting Documents:

November 28, 2022 Meeting Agenda
DRAFT Minutes, October 24 Board Meeting
Statement of Cash Flows, 10/29/22
Balance Sheet, 10/29/22
Profit and Loss, 10/29/22
Side by Side 1, 10/29/22
Side by Side 2, 10/29/22
General Manager Report for 11/28/22 Meeting