

Board of Directors Meeting

Monday, April 19, 6:00-7:30pm via Zoom

Facilitator: Brock Auerbach-Lynn Minutes: Madi Kay

Directors: Victoria Birkbeck, Peter Frank, Mike Strode, Teresa Meza, Whytnee Bush, Troy Martin, B. Auerbach-Lynn Auerbach-Lynn, Robert Montoya. **Owners:** l'Talia McCarthy, Nancy McClelland, Madi Kay, Rebecca Reynolds, Lee Rousar, Jessico Dickerson, David Nobel, Robert Curtis

6:03 **Opening, Check-in**

- B. Auerbach-Lynn: What post-pandemic activity are you most excited to get back to?
- B. Auerbach-Lynn: I'm excited to get back to climbing- such a release!
- V. Birkbeck: I want to go back to the movies- specifically Logan Theater!
- T. Meza: Traveling- I would love to go to Mexico!
- W. Bush: I'm excited for traveling as well!
- M. Strode: House club dancing! I want to dance!
- P. Frank: I'm excited for some nights out on the town with my wife!
- T. Martin: I would really like to go to a live sporting event or live music, more intimate venues.

6:07 **Meeting Agenda**

- M. Strode motions to approve agenda; all in favor.

6:10 **Owner Comments**

- NO OWNER COMMENTS

6:12 **Operations Report and Q&A**

- I. McCarthy: Did everyone read the Operations Report? [All reply yes]. Any questions?
- V. Birkbeck: Any update on the IEDL loan?
- N. McClelland: They did agree to reopen it, and we created a portal. We need to provide updated documentation for them- we're going back and forth updating info and it is in process!
- B. Auerbach-Lynn: Is there anything we need that we don't have?
- N. McClelland: It will take a minute, but I don't foresee any issues.
- T. Martin: How much are we able to receive?
- N. McClelland: Recently raised the cap to 500k- we will ask for it, I don't think we'll get 500k. I do think we will get somewhere between 150k and 500k.
- P. Frank: Do owners get to see the operations report? [No they do not] Maybe we can provide them with a quick recap of the Operations Report?
- I. McCarthy: In the Center Store, we had our first reset of Core Sets, and we are preparing for the next round in June. Our Bulk Buyer is stocking up Bulk goods for the upcoming Earth Day sale. Produce is plugging away- we need to fill an assistant manager position in May. Prepared Foods had a setback with a COVID related closure- they spent time getting back up to speed. Phil is working with NCG on improvements. ChowNow project is canceled due to staffing issues. In Ownership, March saw a lot of new owners and increased equity via the outreach organized by Madi and Brock. HR continues to facilitate trainings and Marketing continues to make fruitful partnerships with local organizations.
- N. McClelland: I wish the Finance Meeting Notes were available to everyone, but they're not. We want to emphasize that we are in a cash crisis.
- B. Auerbach-Lynn: What I want to reiterate to owners here is that there are changes that need to be made in order to improve our financial position. We have made changes that are positive and we are making good progress but more changes need to be made. Any more questions?
- B. Auerbach-Lynn motions to approve report; all in favor.

6:28 **C4 Board Meeting**

- M. Strobe: Let's do a bit of a round on this one.
- V. Birkbeck: I think we do better and better as committees get stronger. Our consensus making process is more casual than this implies, but I don't feel strongly about that.
- T. Meza: I feel like the "Owner Comments" period isn't in the Policy. I think it should be, if it's going to be a part of every meeting.
- B. Auerbach-Lynn: I agree with V. Birkbeck that work in the overall meeting is better because committee work is strong, and that we should include Owner comments in the policy. I think the meetings are going faster- once we work through all of our issues we will be able to do forward thinking.
- T. Martin: After reviewing it I don't see any red flags here. To reiterate what everyone is saying, we've been getting better. I think we have a good working machine here!
- W. Bush: I made a note for the Policy Committee for the addition of the owner comments section. We've got it to a place where we feel like we can openly have these conversations. Do we want to make any additions in the context of Madi's role? Although I don't think we need to.
- P. Frank: I'd like to pursue T. Meza's comment. We should have good decision making facilitation at the ready- we're getting along right now but we might not always and we should be prepared for that!
- M. Strobe: We also want to make sure that the Policy aligns with the Handbook.
- V. Birkbeck: We could try to make some time for "consensus" work at some point in our board meeting, in order to prepare for a future potential disagreement.
- M. Strobe: I motion to approve compliance with C4 Board Policy; all in favor.

6:35 **B8: Board Logistical Support**

- V. Birkbeck: Any suggested changes, questions, comments, concerns?
- M. Strobe: Hype up the logistical support we have received. It's a wonderful transformation- I feel that all compliance measures noted work!
- V. Birkbeck: One of the big goals for the board is to get it to be more of a more sustainable volunteer commitment- Madi's addition is hopeful for me that we are en route to becoming sustainable.

6:40 **B6: Staff Treatment and Compensation**

- B. Auerbach-Lynn: Everyone read this? [YES] Does anyone want to lift up anything from the report?
- T. Meza: "I am abstaining from the review of this policy as a staff member"
- B. Auerbach-Lynn: This is covering everything on a conceptual level, it is missing pieces that are hard for me to pin down. This doesn't specify how are the relations and how is the store doing. I agree with the policy in place, but I don't know how to put a policy around whether or not staff feel happy to work there and are feeling respected.
- V. Birkbeck: We can't make a policy that says "staff have to be happy at all times", but maybe instead, are there standards missing in the policy?
- B. Auerbach-Lynn: I don't see any insufficiencies in the Policy.
- T. Martin: Regarding the union relationship, should we somehow measure our relationship with the union as a figure to measure staff contentment?
- I. McCarthy: It's tough because not everyone is in the union, and this needs to be for the whole staff.
- P. Frank: I think we will need a staff survey for that... we should have it by July.
- V. Birkbeck: In a perfect world this would be accompanied by a staff survey, but for many reasons we do not have that currently.
- I. McCarthy: Bear in mind staff surveys are a multiple month process, we couldn't have pulled it together in a month.
- N. McClelland: But is that the only way to get staff input?
- I. McCarthy: We attempted to put one in through paylocity and staff was resistant because of the uncertainty of anonymity.
- B. Auerbach-Lynn: We wouldn't get as good of info, but the board could put out a survey potentially?
- V. Birkbeck: That could make sense, but one way or another the store is due for a survey and the NCG survey is the best option.

- M. Strobe: We're already 6 months past. It's not going to get any shorter if we keep shifting off, there will always be a challenge we are confronting.
- B. Auerbach-Lynn: Can we ask for a cheaper option? With less than 6 months?
- I. McCarthy: Carolee will have issues with this, but we can ask. My thought is that we owe it to the staff to do a real survey. If you want to have a quick and dirty one we can do that, but I think we should do the full one. By the way, the B6 Policy is based on the NCG and Columinate survey/standards.
- V. Birkbeck: The question here is, are we OK with the current time line or not?
- T. Martin: If we do a small one now, we can demonstrate to staff and owners that we are trying to listen to them and figure out how to make things better.
- I. McCarthy: We did administer a survey on Paylocity and I'm happy to share info, I just worry that the info we get will not be sufficient to base thoughts off of, if it's only a small group.
- V. Birkbeck: I also wonder what would we do with the info that we got? I. McCarthy's report and processes are extensive but they are quite new- they haven't had much of a chance to work yet.
- W. Bush: What we're trying to do with the quick and dirty survey is to elicit feedback, but yea maybe it's not the best way to do that! My hesitation is that we need a little more information, but with the upcoming survey I think we will get there.
- I. McCarthy: If you want a survey attached to this policy each year, you need to add it in. A GM would not expect a staff survey to be conducted every year, so the language needs to be added into the Policy.
- B. Auerbach-Lynn: The information needs to be actionable. Regarding sufficient data- we agree that we want surveys in order to say we have sufficient data for the report?
- I. McCarthy: Please note that I reported non compliance...
- M. Strobe: Is there an acceptable plan towards compliance and accomplishment? All in favor. We accept with acknowledgement with noncompliance; all in favor.
- V. Birkbeck: We agree now, and we will hear back about the conversation with Carolee about the survey options.
- I. McCarthy: I will report back after my conversation with Columinate.
- V. Birkbeck: We need to clarify if we want to add the survey into the B6 Policy.
- I. McCarthy: I think there needs to be a formal process for grievances from staff to the board... Should I make this or should you make this? Generally there's a mapped out grievance process.
- B. Auerbach-Lynn: Is there anything we need to work on and circle back to the board on?
- V. Birkbeck: Does anyone want to volunteer to make a conflict resolution staff form for the board?
- B. Auerbach-Lynn: I'll create a google doc and add everyone, and people can change it if they'd like.
- N. McClelland: Do staff understand that when the Board doesn't intervene or react, it's because of policy governance, not because they don't care?
- P. Frank: When there are problems that can be dealt with internally we cannot intervene, it needs to rise to the next level in order to be dealt with by us.
- V. Birkbeck: Whatever this process is, we should add it to B6.3.
- I. McCarthy: Once it gets figured out, I'll add it to the handbook.
- V. Birkbeck: We can add it to the path for compliance and we'll be all good!

7:09 **Strategic Conversation: Dill Pickle Workplace**

- V. Birkbeck: Framing- I think we walked straight into this tension, monitoring B6 Policy while knowing that all is not paradise. Strategic conversations are not easy, and we have to do a lot of thinking about how to be a good employer to I. McCarthy. The B6 is the standard we are holding her to, and my intention for this conversation is for this to be the support. Minus T. Meza we do not work in the store but we have a stake and want to see it succeed. This is just a conversation to spark creativity- we want to be curious, rather than critical. My thoughts: we have a grocery store that has gone thru a difficult year, we are in a bad cash position, people are isolated and overwhelmed- our employee is overworked, doesn't have much time off, we have a union who is unhappy with how our contract is being implemented, managers who are experiencing defensiveness, burnout and feeling unhappy. Cooperatives, similar to non-profits, are a place where burnout happens easily- grocery is a really difficult industry. We are swimming

upstream- those are the bad observations. Good observations: creativity, passion, good store where people do good work.

- B. Auerbach-Lynn: Whenever I'm in there I continue to be extremely happy with everything that I see, this is the store that I dreamed I wish I would have and I'm proud of where we are.
- V. Birkbeck: I agree it's the grocery store I dreamed of!
- P. Frank: Being an independent grocery is incredibly hard- it's a volume business. Corps can just kill us in price.
- V. Birkbeck: What existing strengths that we can draw on? What does the workplace seem to be lacking? Strength: owners' and staff's dedication to the store- how do we use that dedication of owners and leverage that? Essentially there is some kind of disconnection happening.
- B. Auerbach-Lynn: We are seeing people continue to go way out of their way to support us.
- W. Bush: I don't think idealism and pragmatism need to be mutually exclusive. The frustrating part for me is that I hear it from customers and social media but why am I not hearing it directly from staff to the board? I want to open that link between board and staff.
- V. Birkbeck: I think we should create a closer connection between us and staff members. There is a great deal of mistrust in the organization. There hasn't been accountability or fair processes... I think it's distressing to see people are unhappy, but this problem has been building for years. I think we're making the right steps and we will continue to make steps but how quickly will it go? We're working on a bagging shift, and bulletin board in the store for more connection and transparency.
- I. McCarthy: Many staff blame the embezzlement on the board, staff and board relationships traditionally have been strained- I want to rebuild trust between board and staff. These types of culture shifts don't happen overnight- there's no way I can erase 10 years of bad relationships in one year. Brittany Baird will be doing financial training, which could help. I think there has been no education and training about what it means to be a cooperative owner.
- T. Martin: While giving them info to say like "we all believe in the same thing", with the education and training I think progress will come!
- R. Montoya: I wanted to say a couple of opportunities in the conversation: I think staff and management and board have a disconnect, the biggest disconnect is between staff and management, and there are trust and training issues.
- M. Strode: Is there an idea for a midyear 1 hour intentional space to build cohesion?
- N. McClelland via chat: "I work with a ton of co-ops: they are similar to non-profits in that they are mission-driven and board-run... but very different in that they still have to make a profit. No profit... no way to exercise the mission."
- V. Birkbeck: We agree on the fundamentals: more communication, more education, and mending relationships. I'm particularly thinking of the employee handbook- there are some processes for conflict resolution that have been fairly recently updated- if we carry through with those ideas we will see positive change.
- I. McCarthy: I just want to mention, the staff members have walked through the Respect Policy with their managers.
- P. Frank: We need to go to mediation and arbitration in order to squash this and move forward- we cannot move forward with how it is now and hope to survive as a store. I know you're in the process of moving forward with this but I just want to put it on record. Are we trying to become a consumer owner/worker owner coop? Where are we trying to go?
- V. Birkbeck: You bring up an important question. There's no way to solve smaller problems when we're dealing with the biggest problem.
- B. Auerbach-Lynn: I think we need a vision that we can all get behind. We need to figure out and conceptualize the compelling thing to fight for- it's a hard thing to focus on at the moment but we need to get folks involved in the vision.
- R. Montoya: I'm sitting here listening to broken relationships and mistrust, because the board is really new and not here for things. The GM manipulated the staff and blamed mistakes on the board. That was the foundation of mistrust- the staff thinks that the board is all mighty powerful and can change anything, when that's not the case at all.
- T. Meza: Working in the store, people come up to me and ask me to do things as a board member and I need to explain to them that I do not have power to do certain things- I am doing a lot of board education to staff members. I also think we need exit interviews, they are a great way for management to get feedback.
- V. Birkbeck: We should have a board bagging shift once a month, and a summer board retreat- let's get the date on the calendar.

- B.Auerbach-Lynn: Should we send a message saying “Hi we’re the board we’re here and would like to hear what you have to say” ?
- R. Montoya: Maybe we can get a quarterly staff survey about management?
- I. McCarthy: We could start a Staff Treatment Committee- 2 board members and 2 staff members. They can work together on B6 Policy and solicit staff feedback.
- V. Birkbeck: I think we have great ideas to move forward with.
- B.Auerbach-Lynn: I’m worried about May 1st.
- V. Birkbeck: Maybe we set up a board table at the front of the store
- I. McCarthy: I love that idea- we’re trying to get ahead of what goes down. We’re working on a public statement, I will send it to the board soon.

7:46 **Approvals**

- T. Meza: Hoping to have an antiracist task force committee- we need to talk to the Policy Committee to see Executive Limitations. We propose having a meeting on May 11th- just beginning the process (it will be long) to continue working on work done during the Abolitionist Workshop.
- B.Auerbach-Lynn: Is everyone in favor of all approvals; all in favor.

7:49 **Upcoming Items, Next Agenda**

- V. Birkbeck: I would like to move the Code of Conduct to June- closer to elections and will kind of present what we’re going to be operating by. The review will probably be really long; all in favor. Next month let’s not do succession, let’s do GM self review and review.
- M. Strobe: Moving C5
- V. Birkbeck: Please add relevant timeline pieces from B6 today to the calendar; just so we don’t lose anything.

7:54 **Meeting Assessment**

- On a scale of 1 - 10 how do we think the meeting went?
- V. Birkbeck: 7! I like accessing creativity but I do wish we had a 90 min meeting. I thought that I. McCarthy’s B6 report was one of the best and most comprehensive reports I’ve ever seen.
- T. Martin: 8! We went over, and we don’t have the answers to everything right now, but that’s okay!
- P. Frank: 8! It’s a bummer that we didn’t see owners- we expected to see them. We’re getting a lot of messages but those people are not showing up to see the work happening.
- W. Bush: Agreed- bummed not to see people here.
- T. Meza: 6/7! It’s nice to see the strategy conversation, although we JUST had the monitoring where we said we wouldn’t do operational things, and then we turned around and veered into operations a bit.
- M. Strobe: 6! It’s easier to have an outside voice facilitating. Plus one to T. Meza where there were moments that we can hand off to the Policy Committee.
- B.Auerbach-Lynn: People feeling comfortable emailing us but not talking to us in real life-. conducive of the world we live in.

8:01 **Adjourn**

- B.Auerbach-Lynn motions to adjourn; all in favor.