Adopted Minutes
East End Food Co-op Board Meeting
Hybrid Meeting held in EEFC Conference Room and via Cisco WebEx
August 19th, 2024

In attendance:
Board Members: Nick Leise, Vice President; Tyleda Worou, Treasurer; Desmond Zheng, Secretary; Mark Bowers, Lucia Covato, Nico Demkin, Carlos Gasca Yanez
Management: Tyler Kulp, Interim General Manager
Member-Owners: Phil, Edward Joseph James
Board Clerk: Jessie Ryan
Absent Board Members: Tom Pandaleon, President

Introduction
Nick called the meeting to order at 7:03p.m. and read the Ends Statement aloud.

The East End Food Co-op exists to enhance physical and social health in our community.
To these ends, we will create:
1. A sustainable member-owned business open to everyone
2. An ethical and resilient food infrastructure
3. A vibrant, dynamic community of happy, healthy people
4. A creative vision to transform the future

Check-In
Those in attendance checked in to express their feelings and any needs.

Amend/Approve Agenda
Decision: Nick motioned to approve the agenda as written. There were no objections.

Amend/Approve Minutes
Decision: Nick motioned to approve the July meeting minutes as written. There were no objections.

Member-Owners Open Session
Edward took a moment to say hello and share his appreciation for the quality of food we sell at the Co-op, especially the produce and bulk herbs. He said it feels good to be a member of this community.

Phil offered to assist in the Finance Department, as he has the time and the background knowledge. Tyler can pass along his contact information to Shawn.

August Working Meeting Report
The Board met on 8/5/24 for its monthly Working Meeting and discussed the following:
1. Monitoring of reopened Café performance
2. Real Estate matters
3. Finance Department staffing & B1/NCG reporting schedule
4. Permanent GM search advertising & processing responses; accepting applications through September 6th and hope to have a candidate selected by the Annual Meeting.
5. EEFC Strategic Plan

The Board President reported on recent phone conversations with NCG regarding reporting, and with Attorney Jon Hughes regarding the Board's role in a future Capital Campaign.

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GM Update

This report is in addition to the monthly monitoring reports. This update expects to give additional information to the Board of Directors that may not be included in the month's monitoring report. This report aligns with parts of sub-policy B7: Communication to the Board…. 'The General Manager shall not cause or allow the Board to be uninformed or unsupported in its work.'

Membership:

Current active Member-Owners: 16,765
Fully Paid Member-Owners: 14,373
New Member-Owners: July - 34 (net)
Total Member Equity (as of 7/31/24): $1,681,537
Total Member-Owner Sales: July - $699,542
FYTD New Members (net) – 34 (1st month of FY2025)

Register Round-Up Total:

July-Sep (Q1) Recipients:

Landforce – landforcepgh.org
Family Resources – familyresources.org

YTD Total Raised: Not available at this time

Operations Update:

- We have launched a new membership database, called CRM. It is a cloud based membership application allowing us to easily manage member information and activity all in one place. This program also makes it easier for co-op members to sign up and join, as well as manage their own account information and communication preferences. As one of the first Co-ops to launch this program we got a shout-out in the NCG technology newsletter!
- Our Co-op sent three staff members including myself to NCG's Focus on Fresh conference in St. Paul at the end of July. Produce, and prepared foods came away with new ideas on merchandising, industry trends, data resources, new equipment innovations, new vendors/distributors + products, and developing peer networks. Plus it was fun!
- The Marketing and Produce departments represented our Co-op at Open Streets PGH. We received a donation of apples and bananas from Four Seasons Produce. Throughout the hot summer day we gave away 500 pieces of fruit plus Co-op swag to all interested passersby. Thank you to Jeff and Frank for hanging out!
- Jeff in Marketing and myself tabled at VegFest last Saturday. Giving out prizes in the form of Co-op stickers, badges, magnets, and notebooks. We also had Co-op branded tote bags for sale. Thanks to Desmond from our Board of Directors who also spent some time presenting our Co-op. It was a beautiful day and we had many wonderful snacks and visits from Co-op members present and future.
- YTD sales week ending 8/12/2024: $1,466,548 which is 4.6% above PY sales.

Updates/Questions/Comments:

- Do you get people who ask what the Co-op is?
    - Yes, that is the educational component of what we do. We tell them that we are a member-owned and operated natural food store and Pittsburgh's only food Co-op. It's a way for people to shop as part of a community, finding products that meet their standards and also shop with like-minded individuals.

    - We are thinking of ways to update our graphics and slogans to tie our brand to what we do and who we are. Jeff is interested in increasing the Co-op branded merchandise that we sell in the store. We are looking into getting more t-shirts and reusable bags. It's good fundraising and advertising.
- What would be the biggest obstacles to selling more merchandise in the store?
    - Space. If we wanted to make space, other products such as candles, books, etc. would have to be removed. Category Management exists in every department store. We always have to be honing in on what is moving and what isn't.
- Are we tracking the ROI on these community outreach events, as far as new members coming in?
    - Tyler and Jeff are trying to figure out a way to track this. There might be a way to capture this with the new CRM database, especially if we could sign members up on the spot at the events.
- What member information is stored in the CRM database?
    - Member number, contact information, how long you have been a member, etc. All information is confidential and is not sold or shared.

Tyleda joined the meeting at 7:33p.m.

B4 – Financial Conditions and Activities
The Policy Register states, "The General Manager shall not allow members to be uninformed or misinformed of their rights and responsibilities."

Questions/Comments/Clarifications:
- Is there anything that other Co-ops do as far as communication that we don't?
    - Some Co-ops have different cadences for communicating, especially by e-mail. There are some GMs that send out a separate weekly message, but they usually tie it in with their sales announcement. Frequency is the only thing Tyler has noticed. Some Co-ops have more active member engagement with their events.
- What platform do you see as the most beneficial for membership involvement and sales? Does it just come down to the emails?
    - The Co-op deals are a key component of that. It keeps people looking at the items that we are heavily promoting. Social media reaches a lot of people as well.
- Maybe our Staff or MOP Committee could start a YouTube channel to build more of a following and create more interaction and engagement.
    - If the MOP Committee wants to discuss that and come up with a plan to present to the Board, we would be open to it.
- Is it possible to add something about the democratic nature of the Co-op to the monthly e-mails?
    - It may be a good idea to touch on this in the Cooperator.
- Is there a way we can network with other Co-ops, such as REI?
    - It could be something like Community Partners. We could possibly have a separate tier of Community Partners that would only include Co-ops. The EEFC Credit Union could be a start for cross-promotion.
        - Give members a credit at the Credit Union to buy electric bikes from REI. REI works with Co-ops to produce bikes with their logo on them.

- How much goes into the community events as far as overhead?
    - A lot of time and labor. We don't spend a lot of money to participate in them, we usually do sponsorships. We do have a scholarship fund for PASA based on our seed sales. Community events exist to fulfill our Ends.

Decision: Nick motioned to accept the B4 as compliant. There were no objections.

Committee Updates

Resilience

Nick and Desmond are working on some things outside of the Committee. They hope to determine the direction of the Committee by the next meeting.

Finance

Tyleda shared some information about possible connections we could make in the community, such as Community Days and the Homewood Block Party. There are a few opportunities for the Co-op to table or donate food. Tyleda has not spoken with Shawn regarding finances since the last meeting, prior to presenting the B1 Report.

Board Perpetuation and Elections (BP&E)

Lucia and Tom met earlier this month to draft the timeline for the Board Election. The candidacy declaration period will be September 1st-October 6th. Packets will be available in the store and online. Staff will have the opportunity to elect someone for the one-year staff seat. The Board will spend two or three days tabling in the store to recruit members to run. There will be two sessions to meet the candidates and ask questions, one via Zoom and one in person. Once the candidacy declaration period ends, candidates will be vetted for eligibility between October 6th and 14th. This will give Jeff enough time to prepare and print information for the election and distribute it by October 18th. The voting period will be October 20th-December 1st. We have an improved platform for voting that we will test to make sure it is working properly before the voting period opens. Desmond recommended that applications and resumes should be sent to the Board email. Directors will table in the store October 20th-December 1st to notify members of the election. The votes will be counted December 2nd-6th. We will then inform the winners and confirm their acceptance. Once the candidates are elected, we will schedule a crash course with them, the General Manager, and the Finance Manager. We will seat the new Board Members on December 16th, and the Board retreat will be in January.

Member-Owner Participation (MOP)

The Committee will be meeting this Wednesday. They plan to discuss more details of the Annual Meeting, including food and budget. Mana Meals will be catering the meeting again this year.

Executive

The Committee will meet before next month's Board Meeting to discuss major topics on a deeper level.

Action Items

Directors reviewed progress or lack thereof on Action Items from previous meetings.

Appreciations

Those in attendance took a moment to share their thanks.

Closing
Next Meeting: Monday, September 23rd, 2024
Packet submissions due: Monday, September 16th, 2024

The meeting adjourned at 8:30p.m. without objection.

The Board and Interim General Manager entered Executive Session at 8:30p.m.