

Minutes
Weavers Way Cooperative Association
General Membership Meeting
Tuesday, December 3, 2001

Bob Noble, Vice-President, called the meeting of the Weavers Way Co-op General Membership to order at 7:35 p.m. on the evening of Tuesday December 3, 2001 at the Church of the Annunciation Lincoln Drive and Carpenter Lane. Bob announced that a quorum was met and thanked everyone for attending.

AGENDA REVIEW: The agenda was accepted as is. Bob Noble introduced the Board members to the meeting.

MINUTES APPROVAL: The minutes from the June 5, 2001 membership meeting were approved.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Marilyn Anthony

Weavers Way has been working on some projects such as the Henry School community outreach project, known as the Marketplace, the Urban Garden, and a Board Retreat where we discussed Strategic Planning, looking further into the future of the co-op. Each is a positive outgrowth of cooperative principles in action. Two of the larger projects at hand are the Expansion and Policy Governance. Policy Governance, will change the Board's relation to Weavers Way from operations review to policy review. Currently the board is writing and approving policy, which will govern the co-op. Once adopted, it will be periodically reviewed. This approach will free up the board to govern and take it out of daily operation of the store. Adopting the policies has been a slow process. The board is now dividing up the various sections of policy among teams to expedite the process.

Regarding expansion, the final piece (to financing the purchase, renovation, and start up costs of 608-610 Carpenter Lane) is getting Member Loans. We are halfway to our target of \$150,000 in Member Loans.

At the June Meeting, Vince Pieri received a distinguished service award. Vince said Weavers Way is more than cheap cheese. Many openings are coming up for the Board next June. Committees need more participation. Please volunteer or nominate someone you know. Call Sylvia Carter with a nomination.

MANAGER'S REPORT: Ed McGann

Ed reviewed the financial report. Sales are close to target. Gross margin/gross profit is doing very well. We have a low margin to operate off of, so keeping expenses low is important.

Operations update: Painting the interior of the store is underway. The 2nd floor is a test area for new signage. Workshop services improving: Thank you Sarah James and Education Committee! Thanks to everyone involved in the Market Place (Henry School Project). The Weavers Way Garden: a great opportunity for the store and community, but its continuation is threatened. It needs volunteers and funding.

Volunteers: Weavers Way depends on volunteerism. We need to spread the load. Committees and the Board both can use member support. Vince Pieri said: "Get involved."

The last recession we did well. Since September 11th, we have done well. September 11th, the store was packed. Weavers Way is about community, closeness, feeling safe. There is a trend towards smaller stores where people meet and commune. We need to stay mindful of trends and stay energized about sustaining our co-op.

STAFF AWARDS: Ed McGann

We want to recognize our longtime employees, those with over twenty years service:

Paul Labess, hired 1975 and still with us as Produce Purchaser.

Madelyn Morris, hired 1977, our Membership Coordinator.

Walter Bader, hired 1978, deli.

Steve Hebden, hired 1979, variety of capacities including Environmental Coordinator.

Dale Kinley, hired 1981, Fresh Foods Manager.

Norman Weiss, 1976-1981, 1985 to present, Purchasing Manager.

CREDIT UNION UPDATE: John Tuffy

John Tuffy introduced himself to the membership and invited them to stop by his table with displays and information about the credit union services. Formerly Local 169 Credit Union, now the Delaware Federal Credit Union, they provide full service to over 900 members. They now have a web page for home banking. There is a \$10 gift certificate usable at Weavers Way for new members. He told the membership that he was looking forward to a return to Weavers Way, with their own office space, as soon as the expansion was in effect. Currently the office hours are 9-4 Monday through Friday at the Elkins Park location and Saturdays 10am – 2pm at Weavers Way on the second floor.

WHERE OUR CONVENTIONAL PRODUCE COMES FROM: Bill Riley

Bill used visual aids (now posted at the store on the first floor bulletin board) to show where Weavers Way's produce comes from. They showed the warehouse, forklift, truck, food center, produce displays, etc. Each morning Paul Labess purchases our produce and gives tickets to Bill for pick up. There are about twenty-five stores on each side on a gangway wide enough for a forklift to travel. Each store specializes in one produce item. Bill thanked the store for the opportunity to grow and expressed the sentiment that he feels taken care of.

HENRY SCHOOL UPDATE: Yvonne Thompson-Friend

There are 15 core members on the Market Place Henry School community project. The project is generating new members from the families of Henry School students, which affirms our efforts. Children ask their parents to join. At Back-to-School-Night, Weavers Way is there with products and activities.

One activity is Curriculum Development. This covers how food is grown in the US, ethnic foods, how they are prepared. How does McDonald's fit in? An understanding of fast food vs. whole foods, cooperative principles are taught. To learn they cook it, taste it and students discuss the process.

Another activity is the Market Place. It has grown in leaps and bounds. Students learn business principles and cooperative principles. Last year they earned \$600. One portion was donated to the Heifer Project. Half a cow and half a goat were donated. Books and pencils were donated to schools. They beautified the school with flowers and rewarded their best customer with a certificate. This is an exciting accomplishment. Weavers Way was given a national award to recognize our accomplishments. Carol Lee, Margie Lofton, Wendy Willard, Sylvia Carter, Stephanie Johnson, and Margie Felton were recognized as key participants.

GARDEN UPDATE: Dorothy Guy

We need money and volunteers. Our garden is not visible to the street, the site was not "urban blight", but there was some trash. Steve Hebden put up a fence, tilled soil, and started a compost heap. Amy Dubin picked up. Interested birds came around. We have a beekeeper. Henry School is getting involved. We had two planting parties. Enthusiastic family groups attended. Please visit the garden and enjoy peace, solitude, orderliness and creativity. Feed your soul.

EXPANSION UPDATE: David Baskin

Repairs, occupancy, tenants are all details being hammered out. We are ready to move on the purchase of 608-610 Carpenter Lane pending financing finalization. The architects are on hold. The Member Loan Program is moving along, with 50% of the Member Loan financing in hand or pledged. Please help us reach our goal of \$150,000 in member loans. The member equity has been raised, over \$40,000, exceeding expectations. The two banks involved are the National Coop Bank and a Bank in Washington. The Reinvestment Fund, a Philadelphia group that works with neighborhood groups is also involved.

\$350,000 is bank financed

\$60,000 is member equity

\$150,000 is member loans...totaling \$560,000 for the total package. 80% of the financing is in place.

ENDANGERED FISH ISSUE: Bonnie Hay

The Environment Committee will inform membership about facts, which may affect member buying (sources: National Audubon Society, Monterey Aquarium, etc.). These facts include: what pollution comes from fish farming, which species are endangered, and which species are likely to have mercury. This info will help members buy the most environmentally friendly fish.

Some of the ideas generated to provide information include a Shuttle article, putting information on the Environment Committee bulletin board, and placing a chart on the fish case.

SHOULD THERE BE A LIMIT ON THE NUMBER OF STAFF ON THE BOARD?: Shelly Brick

I am liaison to NEC (Northeast Cooperatives), a previous Board Member, and a current Committee Member. I want to bring up the topic of worker representation on the Board and possibly form an ad hoc committee to research the matter. 6 of 17 Board Members being employees, poses a conflict of interest. It is possible that a Board Motion could require employees to remove themselves from the vote. This would leave the Board without a quorum, rendering the Board unable to act on an issue. Being an employee creates personal biases and prejudices. The Bylaws already require 2 Staff Representatives.

Comments:

1. If we cannot have good faith/trust, we are too big. Why worry about conflict of interest?
2. If you are asking that when you vote, look into your heart and if you feel a conflict of interest, refrain, we already do this. Each member was elected on the premise they can serve the membership: staffers and non-staffers.
3. As a member of the Leadership Committee and a Board Member, I want to say there has been no behavior indicating conflict of interest. The Board should be able to recognize conflict of interest. They should then remove them. Steps can be taken. I have seen this group in action. I have nothing but positive things to say about the new Board Members, their ability to learn their duties and execute them.
4. There is potential to effect the operation of the Co-op. The decision making process might be hindered.
5. It was hard to get people to run before. Vince would plead for women to get on the Board. We should be focused on encouraging people to be on the Board, not limit who can be on it.
6. I worked with Vince. I share Shelly's concern. Why do other co-op's limit employees on the Board? Let's research. Things may be fine, but let's head off problems. The Board is the General Manager's supervisor. The staff already has an influence on the operation of the co-op. We need staff representation, but we need balance. It is difficult to separate staff focus from member focus.
7. The issue is not 6 or 7 staff people. We have trouble getting Staff Representatives as it is. Staffers are members too. Restrict a portion of our membership from the Board?
8. I was struck by the number of members elected. I was thrilled. Before it was like pulling teeth. It helps when staff sees the Board perspective.

There was some dispute as to whether the proposition was disingenuous, how neutral the investigation into this issue would be, and that this was underpinned by who would be on the ad hoc committee.

Shelly closed inviting any interested parties to please contact her.

DOOR PRIZES GIVEN AWAY