

Annual Member Celebration and Fall Feast
November 10, 2011
6:00-9:00

Opening comments: Ben Weiss (18:35)

- Explanation of business:
 - Please sign in as bylaws state that quorum for next year's board election is based on proportional annual member attendance.
 - Thank you to raffle and silent auction donors!!
 - All proceeds from auction and raffle go to the purchase of a meat freezer with windows.
 - Annual meeting is time for reflection, evaluation and feedback
5,875 hours worked by members, or 245 full days!! It is through our member efforts that we are able to sustain our mission and foster collective creativity. If we had to pay a fair wage to staff the store, we'd be looking at a 20% price increase in costs.
POS is almost fully integrated and we continue to set sales records. However, we are not reaching our sales goals each month and need ways to increase working members and sales. We need to increase sales, which means more work, more community outreach and more food availability to people of all income levels.
Our working model keeps expenses down and keeps each member holding equal ownership. Our members contribute their efforts to keep the co-op going! Members are required to work 3 hours every 4 weeks, some of us work more, some less, but our model keeps ownership equitable.
- Election of board members
 - Jess Glebke (re-election) – uproarious applause
 - Christian Russell, first time candidate.
- By law amendments
 - Regarding when meeting is held, previously stated to be held in October, would like to change to October or November.
 - Would like to make voting available online in the future
 - In the board member requirements section we would like to include the requirement that the member has been in good standing for one year prior to the BOD elections

OPEN FORUM, moderated by Jason Wiener:

- Tom Daley: There are a lot of people in town who would like to know if we are considering membership that does not require working hours.
 - Jess Glebke: our founding members said our goal was to provide access to food for people of all income levels and our working member model enables this to happen. When we talk about bringing in people that aren't working, we are talking about raising our prices. Even if we have a higher mark up, it would not

balance the cost of employing people. It's not off the table, but when we set out to do this the reason was to provide access and by changing the model we would be restricting access.

- How often is this issue discussed by the board? Terri Roberts: It is revisited by virtue of our monthly member meetings. We have committed to a cooperative business model and everything we have done so far is based on this model. It seems like an easy thing to switch from a working to tiered membership, similar to the Bozeman Co-op, but administratively this is not something we can do. It would cost a lot to administer and it would cost everyone at the cash register because we would have to raise our prices. We need to make sure that everyone who has committed to membership is shopping more regularly and I don't think we can throw in the towel quite yet because it doesn't work for some when it is working for a lot of us.

- Sarah McMillan: asked for clarification on how it will cost us more to have non-working members. If I'm there working, how would it impact costs to have 10 non-working members there.
 - Kate Keller and Val Coulter: They have noticed that we are having an increase in the number of members shopping and we don't have enough members working. The work is not getting done so Kate and Val end up doing more floor work as opposed to administrative work that they need to be doing. Fridays could require as many as 6 stockers for every 2 cashiers.
 - Ben Weiss: The purchases made by non-members would require more stocking and ordering hours, so it is more of a burden on our staff members. It is not just the "in the moment" expenses when the store is open, but the work that goes in to when the ordering and stocking.
 - Jack Rowan: other co-ops that have started with the working member model and then changed, it seems that what happens that, as with Bozeman, their working members are only 10% and they were required to hire staff. This is consistent with a lot of the co-ops that we have interviewed.
- Ben Kinder: I want to express support for the current model, and people involved who are spending physical time keeping it running. Other models where people don't have to work creates a class division, so there's something inherently valuable about keeping people involved as well as shopping.
- Andy Martinez: If there are 300 active members, but 900 enrolled members – how does that affect the other 600?
 - Ben Weiss: These are people that are not shopping, some have moved out of town, some signed on before the store opened and have not been involved. The 300 are active, shopping members.
- Rabi Vandergon: how much is the neighborhood around us using the co-op?
 - Terri Roberts: they are a cross section of Missoula. In the immediate neighborhood, we don't know a number off hand. We have members from the South Hills all the way to East Missoula.
 - Jack Rowan: We don't have as much representation from the multi-family houses in the neighborhood; mostly our west side participation is single family homes on the west side.
 - Jess Glebke: Our immediate marking goal is to engage this neighborhood.
- Jim Green: The Co-op is more than numbers, it's members. How many active members do we have if you fill the shifts and how many do we need?
 - Val Coulter: Shifts fluctuate daily. The calendar shows what we need for what we are doing right now. In general, it's about 4 stockers per day and three cashiers per day. This is different on the weekends, 2 stockers per shift (6 per day). That's about 200 members for each four week cycle.
 - Ben Weiss: 60% of those 300 hundred are only shopping before or after their shift and not spending that much money. We need about 80% of member's monthly grocery expenses to go to the Co-op.
 - \$55,000 is our monthly sale goal!!!

- Chelsey McKiern: It's proportional- we need as many shopping as we have working. We need everyone. On the product request form, can there be a section where staff responds to the request?
 - Jess Glebke: Because our operational costs have stayed the same, the more people that shop, the more we can lower costs.
 - Jack Rowan: This is in the works and a couple members are building the board.
- Rhonna Cailison, not a member: How do you choose products, is the reason members aren't shopping because there's a lack of variety or things people want? I also read an article about the heritage product and are you cross-referencing and not-reinventing the wheel?
 - Amy Weiss: I was formerly the chair of product committee. Our policy, posted online, it is based on what members want, so there are not a ton of restrictions.
 - Ben Weiss: the results of the poll show that location, price and working-member model were issues. We see this as a marketing/educational opportunity because a lot of those comments came from working members who said it was a deterrent to have to work.
 - Kate Keller: Regarding product requests, when we started the store we were 500 square feet and these were products provided by independent businesses, so we selected among those and selected carefully according to price. We wanted to reduce ethical damage and carbon footprint. At some point there's a lot of give with what we're allowing into the store. I have held the reins on a lot of the product that has been brought into the store. Doing research beyond what we bring into the store has been up to the product committee. It has been difficult to find distributors that meet our needs. United Natural Foods has a lot of the products and a lot of products can be sourced locally, but those will be above the cost our members are willing to pay. As we increase volume, we can increase diversity. We work with Lifeline, Western Montana Growers Co-Op, Clark Fork River Market to see what products are available and our carrying them depends on if they are being bought.
- Carmen Hauck: One of our big problems is that we want more selection, but we need more buy in. Location is tough – it's not far from home, but not on my route home. We need to make an effort to buy what we can here and then request what we can't. Growth is incremental. As we increase our buying power then we have more volume accessible to us.
- Sarah McMillian: we are reaching about half the sales we are projecting we need. We know we should all shop more but we are not doing it. What is the solution? I voted to be a working member, but I don't want this to fizzle and die and if we keep selling only half of what we need, we are going to. One reason my household doesn't shop here is that one of my house members is not a member. Are we really going to get 300 more and how long has it taken us to get here? We need to think more creatively.
- Genevieve: Shop the Co-op first and then if there are products you can't find go to another place. Start with the Co-op first.
- Becky Hostead: has there been talk of one day a week where anyone can shop here?

- Terri Roberts: we have done that in the past and is not significantly different than allowing someone to shop three times before becoming a member. We have done this in the past and it has not had a big impact on our sales. The last time this was done was when we were still in our smaller space.
- Stacey Kroah: My tight budget keeps me coming to the Co-op, it is cheaper than the Good Food Store. Put in a product request even if you don't think it's going to go through.
- Polly Troutman: is there the ability for us to have wine and beer available?
 - Terri Roberts: This is in process, we are in the process of applying for the permits and we hope this will happen within 4-5 months.
- Marina Zeleski: can we get t-shirts that say working and drinking members?
- Meredith Printz: Founding member: I make the decision all the time if I want to get a bottle of wine but can't go to the Co-op. If only 60% of our active members only shop once a month, then our working members should shop more. If we don't get to our sales goal then we should look at our model, but there's a lot we can do before we get to that point. We should have a metric to see if we should look at a new model.
- Jim Green: We were lapsed members. We began as part of the buying club then it was inconvenient to shop here, but we recently rejoined. How can we reach out to the inactive members?
- Kim Bossfrom: \$50,000 and 300 members is about \$165 that each member should spend each month. I'm guilty, we don't spend that. I love the model, but if there's a way to change that – that's a tough model to follow
 - Ben Weiss: one of the ways we address it, if it's more convenient for you to work 6 hours and him not to work, that's acceptable. One member can work the hours for any other member. If it ceases to work, then those hours can be spent doing other community outreach, Garden City Harvest or working at the Pov. I don't see it as volunteering. My wife and I figure out how much we save more working at the co-op in savings than we do at our day jobs.
 - Jack Rowan: We aren't going to check how many adults work in each household, so the working member should be the one that does the shopping.
- Becky Sidas: on behalf of the Co-op, I'd like to see if I do 70 or 80% of my food budget here, how many people spend that much here. (looked to be about 10-15%)
 - Jess Glebke: There is a case discount, with only 20% mark up.
- Sarah McMillian: Do we ever do sales? Sometimes I buy things I wouldn't otherwise try because they are on sale.
 - Kate Keller: Margins in the grocery industry are soft of predatory, where other items in the store are marked up to account for the other sale item. Our prices constantly change to reflect changes. Our margin is marked up 20-25%, if we receive a sale, the price reflects that immediately. This is not said because it's a lot of extra work to show that it's a sale item.
- Katie Homer: One of the barriers to membership is that it's a long term investment and we don't know how long we'll be here. For students who are struggling but aren't eligible for the low income payment plan... paying the full amount may be too much.
 - As a student, you only pay \$25/year. Regular membership is \$125 for a life time

membership.

- Beth Lemming: props to Kate and Val
- Darren Austin: Founding member, this has been a great dream to see this become realized. The most important part of advertising is to use your voice, bring people in and show them what's happening. This is how we can make change happen in our community!!