

Minutes: Yahara River Grocery Cooperative Board Meeting

**Training Room, Stoughton Fire Department, 401 East Main St., Stoughton, Wisconsin
6:15 p.m. – 8:15 p.m., Tuesday, November 25, 2008**

Board Members and Committee Chairs Present:

Myra Hajny (President); Norma Sampson (Vice President); Warren Kmiec (Treasurer);
Deb Piper (Secretary); Marlene Widra (Member-at-Large); Homer Howard (Senior Liaison);
Jon Hajny (Research)

Other Committee Members Present:

Kristine Vaughn (Membership)

Also Present:

Wynston Estis (Interim General Manager)

Myra Hajny called the meeting to order and reviewed the agenda for the meeting. Deb Piper reviewed the minutes from the November 3 board meeting. On **MOTION** (Kmiec/Howard) and unanimous vote, the minutes were approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT – WARREN KMIEC

Warren reviewed the profit & loss statement and balance sheet comparisons for November 11 and November 16. The loss for each week averaged \$1500, better than in previous weeks, but still a loss. He also reviewed the balance sheet and noted there is a new line item for contributed matching funds, including the Cap Up campaign (\$300 to date in November). Warren noted that with Laura Anderson's assistance, the paperwork/invoices and filing have been organized.

Homer Howard reported that the Vennevoll community, for the second consecutive year, selected YRGC to be the recipient of one of their year-end contributions. Homer presented a check for \$200 to Warren, who will send a note of thanks and appreciation to Vennevoll.

Myra raised the question of how to maintain operations when the co-op is still losing money. Wynston Estis reported that the store is prioritizing what products can go on the shelves, what vendors to bring in, etc. It has been a difficult process when there is such an overriding past due amount with so many vendors. There are more people coming in to the store, but they are not necessarily buying more. But they are speaking with the staff, and are starting to buy.

INTERIM GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT – WYNSTON ESTIS

Wynston presented her report to the board. She reported that it's been difficult to stock the store without the funds to do so. People are coming in to the store and are buying what we have to offer and there is a more supportive response from the vendors. But the past debt is making it difficult to move ahead. The re-set for the store went very well and has resulted in a more organized floor display and a better flow. Phase 1 (produce and price audit) and Phase 2 (re-set) are now done. Phase 3 will address local vendors and work on the past due debt.

Wynston also reported there has been more community involvement. A group, which wishes to remain anonymous, provided the co-op with a budget of \$2500 to pull non-sellable items off the shelves. That inventory was then donated to Time Bank of Dane County. Evergreen State Bank also donated \$500 to pull product from the shelves and donate it to the Stoughton Food Pantry. The Stoughton Holiday Fund is working with YRGC to put together \$10 bags of groceries for customers to purchase for the funds. Vendors have also been willing to work with the Co-op. Parisi Farms forgave their past-due invoice back to the co-op as a donation.

There are more volunteers working in the store. Cindy Jones from Willy Street Co-op's accounts payable office is now working with Warren one day a week. The morale in the store is much improved and the staff is coming in to shop and volunteer.

The loan from Willy Street was spent on inventory. The store is working with UNFI on debt and has attained a volume discount with them. There is also a rebate agreement with UNFI, which is being put toward the equipment loans.

Wynston reported that the Catapult POS system has some features that are not helpful and the sales reports do not agree between Quick Books and Catapult. There is no final audit system with Catapult. Wynston is working with a database expert from Willy Street and will work with accountant Peg Sheldon as well.

Shelf pricing is nearly complete from the re-set. Margins have been lowered quite a bit across the board. There are approximate 50 new items on the shelves and Certco has filled YRGC's order and it is working well. The Thanksgiving turkey sales went well; all the turkeys were sold. Wynston is now looking for holiday specials for gift packets and food products.

There are some personnel changes coming up. Mackenzie is leaving at the end of November to travel and Liam is moving to California. Erik Ellefsen accepted the position of evening supervisor. There are 16 volunteers who are getting into a routine for regular volunteer shifts.

YAHARA RIVER SHOW – MARLENE WIDRA

Marlene reported that the Yahara River Show went very well and was well attended. YRCG will receive an estimated \$1000 as a split of the proceeds with the Stoughton Opera House.

DICKENS OF A RUN/WALK – NORMA SAMPSON

Norma reported that there is now a Battle of the Sexes competition. Amy Ketterer joined Marlene Widra's challenge and will run the race in shorts, along with Jim McGrogan. To date there are 16 pre-registered runners and walkers. Norma reported that there have been press releases sent to all the papers and television stations in the area.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE – MYRA HAJNY

Myra reported that the new Chamber administrator is very interested in helping the co-op and wants the store to join the Chamber. They are willing to accept a partial payment now and work out details later. The Chamber sells gift certificates during the holidays and YRGC will be a participating member.

REVIEW COMMITTEE STRUCTURE – MYRA HAJNY

Myra reviewed the current committee structure as they are written in the by-laws. The proposed recommendation is a 9-member board, which would then vote on the officers and appoint committees as needed. There would be three-year terms, which would be staggered.

Jon reported that the Research Committee's recommendation last summer was to restructure the current committees, pared down to board officers and six standing committees with voting privileges. It was decided the Research Committee would draw up the two options to be discussed at the December 9 board meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

RESEARCH – JON HAJNY

Jon reported that he and Mary Condon would work on the by-law updates for the annual meeting. Jon and Laura are working on the Benefits Research to report at the December 9 meeting.

MARKETING – NORMA SAMPSON

Norma reported that Willy Street Co-op has been very helpful with space on their web site for the Dickens Run and for YRGC news updates. There is a need to post weekly sales goals in the store and to create a thermometer for the capital campaign.

Myra pointed out the both Norma and Deb worked hard on writing and publishing the latest newsletter in a very short period of time.

PERSONNEL – MYRA HAJNY

Myra reported that there have been three applicants for the General Manager position and interviews are scheduled for December 1. Willy Street Co-op's human resources staff will assist with creating interview questions and is posting the position on several more web sites. The plan is to have the personnel committee interview the applicants in the first round. The second interview will be with the store's staff and the third interview will be with the board.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Myra reported that there has not been any word yet on the Dane County loan application. It is unclear what the loan process is and the time frame for notification. Myra will follow up with Stephen Lawrence.

On **MOTION** (Howard/J. Hajny), the board meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled board meeting will be held December 9, 2008 at 6 p.m., at the Fire Station Training Room, 401 E. Main Street.

Respectfully submitted,
Deb Piper
Secretary
Yahara River Grocery Cooperative