

Minutes: Yahara River Grocery Cooperative Board Meeting

**Stoughton EMS Building, Fourth Street, Stoughton, Wisconsin
6:40 p.m. - 8:31 p.m., Tuesday, June 24, 2008**

Board Members and Committee Chairs Present:

Myra Hajny (President); Norma Sampson (Vice President); Warren Kmiec (Treasurer);
Marlene Widra (Member-at-Large); Laura Anderson (Membership); Jon Hajny (Research);
Homer Howard (Senior Liaison); Glen Timmcke (Product Buyers)

Other Committee Members Present:

Mary Condon (Research); Kristine Vaughn (Membership)

Also Present:

Mike Markin (YRGC General Manager)

President Myra Hajny called the meeting to order. The agenda for the meeting was reviewed. Norma Sampson reviewed the minutes from the June 10, 2008 board meeting. She noted that she had changed the date for the next meeting, and Myra asked that "met" on page 4 be amended to read "meet." On **MOTION** (J. Hajny/Kmiec) and unanimous vote, the minutes with the two amendments were approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Warren Kmiec

Warren reported that he would prepare a profit-loss statement for June for the next board meeting. He noted that the Board needs to do something dramatic to keep the store open, and that it needs a plan to raise additional capital. He said Mike would discuss some of the issues in the General Manager's report.

Jon Hajny recommended clearing the agenda and going immediately to the General Manager's report.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT – Mike Markin

Mike reported that he had sent consultant Mel Braverman's report by email to Board members before the meeting. Mike reviewed the report and pointed out that increasing sales and reworking the store are long-term fixes. In the short-term, the store needs a "quick burst of cash." He recommended going to the bank for another loan with a good plan that includes raising \$50,000 in collateral from members and the community.

Warren outlined several ways to raise funds that could be used to secure a loan:

1. Create a shopper's club or encourage shoppers to purchase a gift card or set up a line of credit at the store. This would be a way to give the co-op an advance loan each month.
2. Push investments with new members. Lower the investment amount to \$200 for 3 years.
3. Promote memberships.
4. Focus on fundraising events including the August Uff Da 500 and the fall Chili Cook Off.

Discussion ensued. The Board decided to follow-up the mailing of the co-op's first newsletter with a letter to members asking them to invest. Warren volunteered to draft the letter. Homer Howard will donate \$450 for postage to mail the letter. Warren noted that he also thinks it is important to conduct a product-mix survey of the members to better ascertain their shopping needs.

Myra asked for volunteers to label and stamp the co-op's "More than food" newsletter at 6 p.m. Friday, June 27, at her home.

Other Business

Laura Anderson asked the Board to clarify its policy on refunding membership fees. She noted that she had reviewed the by-laws and past minutes and had not found anything concerning refunds. On **MOTION** (Kmiec/Widra) the Yahara River Grocery Cooperative will not refund membership fees. The motion carried.

Myra announced that a member had requested the Board share the information from the focus groups. It was decided to include the focus group report with the minutes of the meeting and post them on the web site. See Attachment 1.

On **MOTION** (Anderson/J. Hajny) and unanimous vote, the meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

Next meeting: Tuesday, July 8, from 6 – 8 p.m.
Location: Stoughton EMS training room.

Respectfully submitted,
Norma Sampson
Vice Chair
Yahara River Grocery Cooperative

ATTACHMENT 1

Informal notes taken by Warren Kmiec at four focus groups of YRGC members during June 2008

Many families with kids....tight budgets, but awareness of nutrition and health.

60% of the population of Stoughton is Senior Citizen, very price conscious, but also aware of “higher values” that co-op supports: earth friendly cleaning products, local growers and producers, fair exchange products. Do higher values have to mean higher prices?

Stress **convenience** and **service**, “You don’t need a map to shop at the co-op.”

Organic is the **right** answer to “What type of food do you want?”

Affordable is the **real** answer to “What motivates your shopping choices?”

Need more education about “What does ‘co-op’ mean?”

Parking has not proved a problem. No one mentioned it.

They appreciate the help carrying out grocery packages. Look for improvement in “detail” especially at cashier. Seniors are less tolerant about price mistakes. Most would want the sales slip to double check, so the question “Do you want a receipt” seems like we’re trying to be sneaky.

Food comments

Rolled oats.....bulk is nice but can we see some Quaker Oats boxes ? Individual microwave packs?

The Mango’s are great!

Yeast, yes! Bakers are happy.

Specialty products...more ethnic foods, especially Norwegian (familiarity, identity)

Smaller size options are better,

Produce is pretty

Love the lettuce in boxes that keep them fresh

No-caffeine soda

More standard brands would be appreciated

Focused shopper. Comes for specific “specialties”, is delighted by finding an array of new products that are menu interesting. Recipe ideas are appreciated.

Perhaps advertising can provide “meal of the week” recipe, with a list of ingredients to buy at the co-op.

Love the bulk mixes, grains, and spices.

What about marketing “camping treats” for the summer vacation trip?

Can local meats be placed in one place only? Local has big value to co-op shopper.

Opening Day “sticker shock” about high prices at YRGC discouraged many from coming back. The emphasis on organic, gluten free, and natural food brands left many people feeling like they were out of place or in an alien environment. This especially was a shock for those who expected a 2nd Main St Market type store. Need to find a blend of standard brands and other types of product choices.

Price labeling has been erroneous at times.

Telephone message in the office should stress our store number for customer service.

Recommend printed advertising that list standard brands at attractive prices as a way to reintroduce alienated shoppers to the co-op as a “regular” store.

Every shopper wants to feel like they got a “deal”.

Local has more value, than organic. Organic means expensive and strange.

Keep stressing the “gas cost” of shopping in Madison.

Co-Op means “ease of shopping”quick in and quick out. No overwhelming aisles.

Look for more products that are “wow” products that bring people in for them again and again like the Blue Marble milk. Suggested: Stone Wheat Crackers, Michael Frozen Custard any “Chose brand meats” would be very popular. (What other local brands are favorites?)

Someone noted that his neighbors connote the side walk music with “undesirable elements” such as dirty hippie types and thus are not approaching the store to shop. People were not surprised that this was the impression given Stoughton’s conservative bent. Other’s mentioned a type of “divide” perceived in Stoughton between those who live beyond the (river? bend in Hwy 51, new housing) that are ‘Madison’ focused and never come downtown.