

**River Market Community Co-op  
Board of Directors**

**Minutes of Regular Meeting  
May 10, 2022**

**Directors Present:**

Dave Mickelson, Victoria Bradford Styrbicki, Mead Stone, Christina Arndt, Angela Hauge, Karen Hulstrand, Larry Martin, Scott Vrchota

**Directors Absent:**

None

The Directors present constituted a quorum.

**Others Present:**

Sara Morrison, River Market Community Co-op General Manager  
Kaitrin Halvorson, River Market Community Co-op Customer Experience Manager  
Pat Rossez, River Market Community Co-op Board Administrative Assistant  
Venee Russ, Owner

**Call to Order**

Mr. Mickelson called the May 10, 2022 meeting of the River Market Community Co-op (RMCC) Board of Directors to order at 6:05 p.m. All participants attended the meeting in-person at RMCC, except the Owner, who joined virtually via Zoom.

**Owner Comments**

The Owner declined to make any comments.

**Consent Agenda / Pulled Reports**

Mr. Mickelson reviewed the Agenda for the meeting and called on Directors to identify any reports to remove from the Consent Agenda for discussion. The April Meeting Minutes and the B1 report were pulled.

**Business**

**In-store Surveys**

Mr. Mickelson welcomed Ms. Halvorson, who shared her personal background and explained her role as Customer Experience Manager at RMCC. Her job involves 'delighting the customer' in all aspects, at all points of contact, and she shared with the Board her main responsibilities: she oversees store promotions, is the graphic designer (which encompasses the co-op's branding, store website, and eCommerce), and is responsible for the overall customer experience. She highlighted aspects of the customer experience that are easily overlooked but make an impact. She also described the customer satisfaction survey tool and the process used to

collect, analyze, and respond to feedback in order to improve the customer experience. She noted that the survey is randomly offered to customers; those who choose to complete it do so online; the vendor processes the input and compares it to other participating NCG co-ops; and returns data, including scores. The scores show where the co-op excels and where improvements can be made. For example, during Covid product availability scored low; as a result, management devised and implemented remediation strategies; the score rebounded and has since held steady. RMCC results can also be compared to other NCG co-ops. Most recently RMCC scored better than other co-ops in overall satisfaction and returns.

In response to questions, Ms. Halvorson described how she responds to and learns from each score and from the comments that customers make in the survey. She also shared that customers' comments consistently include product availability and ease of moving through the store. As a result, management has heightened awareness around merchandising, trying to make the biggest impact within the smallest footprint since the number of owners and shoppers has grown, but the amount of floor space has not. Ms. Halvorson also described new tactics used to alleviate issues with product availability and vendors. At the request of a Director, Ms. Halvorson then described what contributes to her having an especially good day at work. A Director thanked Ms. Halvorson for the great job she is doing, as reflected in customers' comments. The Director asked for more specifics around the branding effort, what is included: Ms. Halvorson explained the various components and the desired effects and results. She also reminded the Board where the customer comments are posted in the store and invited the Directors to read them. After a brief discussion about other items that could be included in the store, Ms. Halvorson mentioned she is always available to talk more about the data we receive.

### **GM Report/Open Discussion**

Mr. Mickelson invited Ms. Morrison to review the GM Report. Ms. Morrison reminded the Board that she will be in Norway for eleven days in June and will miss the June Board meeting, in which the budget, business plan, and marketing plan are due. Discussion followed regarding the information Ms. Morrison will provide for the Directors' review before her departure and what work will be resumed upon her return. Ms. Morrison then shared recent increased sales results and the celebration that was held. A Director also congratulated on Ms. Morrison's anniversary with RMCC. In response to a Director's question regarding coverage, Ms. Morrison explained that Andre and Katrin together are responsible for the co-op while she is out.

### **Strategic Planning**

Ms. Hulstrand started the conversation by describing the Steward Committee's next steps for Strategic Planning and results from the recent Board of Directors retreat. The Board was reminded to keep providing ideas for the Dream Board if there is any additional significant input to be considered. The Board was reminded that Mr. Stone prepared an analysis, which can be found in Basecamp, which could be a start to implementing the Retreat results. Directors then discussed the high-level next steps that will follow. Mr. Mickelson thanked the Committee members for their work.

The Board then discussed when the Strategic Plan should be completed: the timing is reflected in the Board's work plan, but it should be done right, not rushed to meet an arbitrary deadline. Ideally the plan would be finished in mid-October so it could be rolled out at the Annual Meeting. A robust discussion ensued regarding the roles of the Steward Committee, the Board,

and the general manager, what ideas are operational and would be executed by Ms. Morrison while the Directors focus on big ideas, End goals, and where the RMCC should be in the future while creating the space for the GM to determine how to meet those goals.

The topic of growth was discussed, with the recognition that it is difficult to keep growing within the confines of the current space, which may drive RMCC's strategic direction. Ms. Morrison shared that a commonly used industry metric is sales per square foot of space: sales of \$700 per square foot is considered being at capacity, indicating it is time to move; RMCC is at almost \$1,500 per square foot, or double the amount when grocers typically look for larger space. This is validated by the number of customer comments on the difficulty in moving through the aisles.

A Director encouraged Ms. Morrison to let the Board know if they are encroaching in her space as GM. She responded with her thoughts on the roles of the Board and the GM, how they work together. She also shared that it is important to her that for any topic, after considering information Ms. Morrison has provided and the Board has reflected upon, the Board is in agreement on their approach. She encouraged the Board to adequately reflect before approaching her with a direction they would like her to take, making sure the direction is truly good for the co-op and meets the customers' needs.

The Board then considered if a steering committee should be formed to focus on expanding, taking into consideration realistic timing of getting owners' input and how some of the factors will be contentious (i.e., location). Ms. Morrison commented that it will be important for the Board to present an enthusiastic, united front for whatever direction is pursued. Mr. Mickelson explained how the work plan is constructed, how it is the Directors' contract with themselves on what will be worked on, and how something like this topic would normally be escalated and included in the workplan. He also commented that other approaches could be pursued if Directors are frustrated with the timing and/or approach that is being taken. Additional discussion then followed on what types of topics are the Board's responsibility verses what is operational and Ms. Morrison's responsibility, the goals of the Strategic Plan, how those goals are put into motion, and how they align with the Ends. That led to additional discussion regarding growth and expanding, how much owner input is needed, and how to tell them the story of whichever outcome is pursued. Ms. Morrison mentioned that if expansion does not occur, it will be increasingly difficult for the GM to be in compliance with most, if not all, B1 report metrics. Mr. Stone prepared thoughts regarding expansion that he will send to Directors as they consider what is best for the co-op's future. The idea of establishing an expansion steering committee and potential timing was discussed further. Mr. Mickelson closed the discussion by reminding Directors that their obligation is to do what is in the best interest for the most owners and for the co-op.

### **Spring Retreat Debrief**

Mr. Mickelson thanked Directors for a good day and expressed his appreciation for everyone's input.

### **7:06 to 7:15 Break**

## **Director Candidates for 2022 & Recruiting**

Mr. Mickelson opened the discussion by reviewing the two Directors' terms that are expiring and their plans for running for re-election. Discussion then focused on the five other candidates who may potentially run for the Board.

Mr. Mickelson also shared the new candidate requirements, which he updated with input from the Spring Retreat:

- Commit to participation in New Director Orientation (online training of board-sponsored training events and use of collaboration software).
- Confirm some degree of computer literacy (knowledge and ability to use computers and related technology effectively).
- Acknowledge understanding of time commitment and attendance of Board events.
- Attend at least one (1) Board of Directors meeting in the previous year.

These four points would be required in addition to the three existing requisites. Specifics of the requirements, as well as the practice of interviewing and what is covered in them, were discussed in more detail. A motion to accept the Board of Director Candidate Eligibility Requirements was made by Ms. Bradford Styrbicki, seconded by Mr. Martin, and passed by a unanimous vote. The approved changes will be incorporated in the appropriate materials.

## **Pulled Reports**

Mr. Mickelson opened the discussion of the two pulled reports. Two corrections to the April Board meeting minutes were noted. A motion to accept the amended minutes was made by Ms. Hulstrand, seconded by Ms. Arndt, and passed unanimously. The B1 report was also discussed as subpart 2 was not in compliance. Mr. Mickelson commented Ms. Morrison gave an excellent explanation for the non-compliance, but he pulled the report to ensure he understands the causal factors behind the non-compliance and whether the issue has been reversed. Ms. Morrison further explained reasons for non-compliance (namely a delay in implementing price increases and the costs to figure out the issue), when the full effects will likely be realized, and what has been done to prevent future issues. A motion to accept the B1 Report, non-compliance with subpart 2 was made by Mr. Mickelson, seconded by Ms. Hauge, and passed unanimously.

## **Director Questions and Assignments**

Mr. Stone reminded the committees to complete their workplans for next year and to submit them to him. He also informed the Board that, in his role as RMCC Treasurer, he selected Sara Budenske as RMCC's auditor. In response to there being no more Director questions, Mr. Mickelson asked Ms. Rossez to review the Director Assignments, which she did by reciting the items listed below.

## **Leadership Tasks and Work**

- Provide GM with election candidate bios by August 25
- Review Committee charters at July meeting
- Approve candidate slate at August 9 Board meeting
- Brainstorm annual work plan

### **Board Monitoring Reports**

- C.6 – Officers’ Roles
- C.8— Governance Investment
- D.3 – Delegation to General Manager
- D.4 – Monitoring General Manager Performance

### **General Manager Activities**

The Board noted that the GM is responsible for B.2, listed in Monitoring Reports.

### **Monitoring Reports**

- B.2 – Business Planning & Financial Budgeting

### **Executive Committee**

- Prepare to review Committee charters in July meeting
- Strategic Plan Phase IV (*finish*)

### **Board Development Committee**

- Notify candidates of nomination by August 18

### **Growth & Engagement Committee**

- Present research on affordability programs offered by co-ops

### **Currents Articles**

- June 25 for July/Aug

It was suggested that Ms. Hauge write a column for regarding the farm tour.

### **Other Considerations**

- Monthly NCG call (Paula G.)
- Columinate call with Todd
- +/-Delta

Ms. Morrison left the meeting.

### **Director Closed Session**

After confirmation that no owners were present and the meeting recording was stopped, the Board entered a closed session in which they discussed the GM RFP drafting and review process.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Upon the conclusion of the Director Closed Session and there being no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Ms. Bradford Styrbicki, seconded by Mr. Stone, was unanimously passed, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Submitted by Pat Rossez, RMCC Board Administrative Assistant