

Board Meeting News – February 2023

This is an abbreviated report as I was not able to attend the meeting this month. The Board agenda included their monthly Board Process Policy review, Jedi work and setting their yearly Board budget. Four people interesting in running for the Board joined the meeting. What I include here are items from Greg's GM report that staff may like to know.

In the monthly financial report: Sales growth for January was 7% over last January. Year-to-date sales growth was 5.41% over last year. This year's budget has been set for 3% growth. By department: 18% bread, 10.5% wellness, 2.4% produce, 16.5% tax 2, 4.9% grocery, 1.5% meat, 3.7% bulk, 8.8% cheese, 9% dairy and 14% deli. In January, compared to last year, the customer count was 33,123, an 18.4% increase and basket size was \$55.77, a -9.5% decrease.

Greg reported delays for two programs he had hoped would be in place soon. The first was that the GusNIP Grant for Double Up Food Bucks program has been delayed due to confusion over its reimbursement process. NFCA and Farm Fresh Rhode Island are administering this program and the Co-op awaits their decisions on what is eligible and how the reimbursement works.

The other update was the plan for serving WIC participants in the store. The Co-op has the eligible products on the shelves, the card processors are updated and a price survey has been submitted. To be done still is program training, meeting reporting requirements, price approval and completing the WIC Grocer Agreement.

The Board monitored two ELs this month. The first was Emergency Succession. Jen Kilzer will step as interim in the GM role should it become necessary and will lead the management team. She will also be the one to represent the Co-op with NCG.

The other EL was Financial Condition and Activities. The Co-op continues to thrive and outperforms on all the NCG benchmarks. Along with the strong sales growth, the Co-op has \$2.99 in liquid assets for each \$1 in debt. The Co-op has \$1 in equity for every \$.16 in short and long term debt. This low debt number is because the Co-op paid off its business mortgage with funds from the forgiven PPP loan. The Co-op has \$1,417,425 in member equity, up 5.35% over last year, from 6,234 member-owners, a 6% increase. The Co-op continues to meet its space needs by holding real estate leases for three staff parking lots, the Cave and 13 Washington St. And we pay our bills on time!!

In industry news, Walmart is raising its starting wage to \$14/hr. and expanding education and training benefits. Avian flu and feed costs are the main cause behind high egg prices. On-line, pick-up grocery orders rose in December by 2.4% to \$9.1 billion nationwide. Whole Foods' new initiative "Growing with Purpose" is a 10 year growth plan to improve performance, customer experience, team building and to open 30 or more stores.

From your staff liaison Victoria