

Weaver Street Market Board of Directors

Minutes of December 2007 meeting

Held at the Corner Building, Carrboro

6.15 - 9.00 p.m. Wednesday, December 19, 2007

Directors Present: Seth Elliott (treasurer), Tamara Fetters, James Morgan (secretary), Jacob Myers (chair), Robert Short, Ruffin Slater, Linda Stier, Lori Washington (director elect). Directors absent: none.

Others attending: Kate DeMayo (notes), Andy Sachs (facilitator), Geoff Gilson, Deborah Konneker, Alice Lamson, Eliza DuBose, Pete Pawsey, Bruno Sorrentino, Sara Carter, Jamie Borg (visitors)

Pre-meeting with worker-owners

Worker-owners had been particularly invited to attend for a general open discussion in a pre-meeting session. Copies were passed around of the two policies of particular relevance to worker-owners which were on the current agenda for Board review, and comments were invited. Input was also invited on any other points of interest to worker-owners which might be relevant to Board work. A lively discussion ensued in which board members and visitors all participated: items raised and discussed included the following:

- 20th anniversary planning
- improving the election process
- increasing worker-owner signup and worker-owner governance participation
- board/ownership linkage in general, why no consumer-owner pre-meeting
- professionalizing the board: increasing board executive support or director compensation, or both; volunteer support for the board
- improving owners' access to the board
- clarifying employee livable wage standards
- expanding policy protections for contract employees
- pay ratios of lowest to highest paid employees
- why "linkage", perhaps there are better terms to describe communications between board and ownership
- consider making space on board agenda for visitor comments/questions

Board of Directors Meeting

1. Preliminaries

The Board approved the Agenda, which the chair noted was shorter than usual. Minutes of the November meeting were accepted with one spelling correction.

2. Policy Review

2-3 Treatment of Staff

This policy had been flagged for review around the issue of contract workers: protections were not as complete as for direct employees. Might increasing use of contract workers be used by management to sidestep employee protections embodied in this executive limitations policy? GM indicated that there were very few regular contract workers, and these were all in the sushi bar and late-night store cleaning. These were both areas where contract work was an industry standard. There had been no change in this situation for many years and there were no expectations of it increasing. The Board received information from HR manager Deborah Konneker that there were functional, legal and contractual limitations on extending protections such as the right to bring a grievance to the Board to those who were not direct employees. The Board considered adding a clause prohibiting the GM from the use of contract employees as a way to circumvent the normal provisions of the policy but as there was no imminent danger of this occurring no consensus on this suggested addition emerged.

On a further theme, it was noted that the policy made no requirements concerning the specific language of communication with employees about their rights under the policy. Current practice involved offering of all relevant written information to employees in both English and Spanish, HR staff offered fluency in both these languages for personal interviews, and bilingual facilitation was provided as needed in group meetings. Signed communication was also provided when appropriate. Consideration was given to specifying particular multilingual provisions, but there was no consensus to do so. Several directors felt it was preferable to ensure that all employees received adequate communication on these provisions, not just the two language groups that were currently most prevalent, and the policy as currently written already provides this more inclusive protection.

Decision: no changes to existing policy. Tasks: none.

2-4 Compensation and benefits

This policy had been flagged for discussion with the possibility of adding livable wage standards to the policy. The current policy sets a maximum variation from local market rates for comparable jobs, and the concern was that the market wage rate in the grocery business both nationally and locally was lower than what was required to ensure livable wages for employees. It was noted that a provision had been added a couple of years ago that specified the circumstances under which the GM was permitted to operate outside of that required range, and this had allowed WSM wage rates to rise to meet and exceed livable wage standards according to a formula used by cooperatives across the country with appropriate regional adjustments. It had been regularly interpreted in GM reporting and accepted by the Board that such livable wage standards represented a reasonable minimum level of fair compensation for employees .

Decision: no changes to existing policy. Tasks: none

3. Election task force update

Eight owners had signed up to participate in this group. It was hope that it would begin meeting in January with a work product expected in 2-3 months. More participants may be added. Christy Raulli would be providing staff support to the group and it was hoped that Andy could be scheduled to facilitate. Two directors were assigned to attend and others were invited to drop in when they could.

4. Set up Board evaluation

Evaluation forms were circulated to be returned to Kate by Jan 3.

Task: all directors complete form

5. Set Board meeting dates for 2008

Meeting dates for 2008 were set for the evening of the third Wednesday of each month. Directors are reminded that 100% attendance is expected at each meeting and there is a procedure to seek adjusted dates if a conflict may emerge.

6. Pay Board compensation

The Board Treasurer circulated semi-annual director compensation in the form of WSM gift cards.

7. Board photographs

Photographs were made of the whole 2008 board and of the incoming director, Lori Washington.

8. Closings

Decisions and tasks were reviewed. Board newsletter topics for the month were agreed.

Meeting evaluation: excellent pre-meeting with useful input for tonight's agenda topics and generally.