

Meeting Minutes for Weaver Street Market's Board of Directors

March 2019 Meeting

Monthly Board Meeting, WSM Admin Center, Hillsborough, NC on March 20, 2019, 6:00 pm to 9:30 pm

Directors present: Ruffin Slater (general manager), David Bright (secretary), Jon McDonald (chair), Linda Stier, and Charles Traitor.

Others attending: Susan Sachs (facilitator), Brenda Camp (notes), and Amy Lorang (worker owner and Elections Committee member).

1. Preliminaries

Owner Input: Amy Lorang said thanks for having her here.

Agenda: There were no changes to the agenda.

Minutes: Minutes from the February meeting were approved.

Decision: The Board approved the February meeting minutes.

2. Develop and Practice the Elevator Speech: "What the Board Does"

Jon McDonald and Ruffin Slater provided a draft "elevator speech" about the work of the Board. The draft was based on the work the Board undertook at their January retreat and a follow-up discussion at the February meeting. The Directors engaged in a roleplay activity in which they practiced the speech and then reported what worked and what didn't work so well.

From the activity, the Directors identified the following considerations for the next draft of the speech:

- Adapt the speech for different audiences, including someone interested in running for the Board, someone shopping with us but not an owner, and someone unfamiliar with cooperatives.
- Be clear in the language used. For example, choose familiar terms and familiar concepts.
- Start a conversation where the individual is and what their interest is.
- Be able to adapt the content to different lens, for example, what the board does versus how they do what they do.
- Start with a compelling question, such as, "What difference does it make that Weaver Street is a co-op?"
- Introduce concepts that make our Board different, such as, ownership structure and consensus. For example, the Board serves an organizing function for 20,000 consumer owners and 220 worker owners, so it encourages diversity while operating on consensus.
- Emphasize everyone has important roles—The Board listens and sets the vision; everyone guides and fulfills the mission. Have stories about the different roles.
- Test that the story is repeatable. For example, use consistent vocabulary that keeps the power with collective action. A repeatable story is "All of us together."

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- Emphasize that the work of the Board is just one way to contribute to the cooperative, that everyone finds the level they want to participate.
- Provide examples of collective actions that are making a difference now—the Round Up, supporting local farmers.
- Start with who you are and what your roles are in the cooperative.
- Share your enthusiasm about the co-op, why it's here, why we created it this way, and how you can be part of the journey

Next Steps: The agenda committee will continue to work on the language about “What the Board Does.”

Task: Brenda will add meeting notes in the editable document, including slides from Amy and more examples about collective action that is already making an impact.

3. Develop a Plan for Strategic Learning Sessions

Approach and Action Steps

At the January retreat, the Board set the goal to learn about three major societal issues in 2019—global warming, healthy food for everyone, and worker livelihood. The Board Directors reviewed a suggested plan for moving forward with this goal. The plan identified three steps: 1) Understand what is possible in these three areas, and to what extent are we reaching our potential, 2) Make owners aware of their role as “historical actors” that drive results, and 3) Consider WSM’s Scope—how do we reach more people? What investment is required?

McDonald pointed out that the three issues fall within the Ends, which the Board updated in 2016: *“A vibrant, sustainable food marketplace—defined by shared economics, shared community, and shared knowledge; driven by widespread and diverse participation; for owners and potential owners.* Slater pointed out that the exploration of the three issues also brings up an issue not addressed in the current Ends—At what cost? at what cost? What investment is required?

The Directors were in alignment on the approach, which included three overall actions: 1) talk about and explore the issues at Board meetings, 2) in store meetings listen to the views of owners on the issues and share with them our ideas, and 3) devote time at the summer retreat to explore the issue of scope.

Mini Co-op Fair

The Board discussed plans for the first store meeting, which will occur on April 10. Three goals were identified for the meetings: 1) engage owners in conversations about what’s possible, 2) listen to owners’ ideas and thoughts about the issues, and 3) encourage owners to participate. After discussing the draft plan for four tabling areas, the Directors agreed to have a tabling area that focuses on each of the three goals but to eliminate the fourth table that was to focus on scope.

Action Steps: The agenda committee and marketing will develop the visuals and table setup for the store meeting and send information to the Board to review.

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4. Board Business

Co-op Cafe

The Directors who attended the Co-op Café shared thoughts on the event. Linda Stier observed that there were a smaller number of co-ops attending this year and that most were interested in how to get a new co-op going. Ruffin noted that the café included a 10-minute video recap of the NCG research report. He also noted that Leila Wolfrum, the GM at Durham Co-op Market, shares in her talk what they had done to make their co-op more welcoming.

2019 Call for Candidates

The Board reviewed a draft of the 2018 Call for Candidates application packet and requested the following changes for the 2019 Call for Candidates:

- Reduce the amount of information.
- Structure the information “top down”—start with what the Board does, what it means to be a Board member, how to learn more, and then the application process.
- Introduce the Call for Candidates with a blog post that incorporates the “elevator speech” and refers the reader to the document for details.

Tasks: Brenda will create a draft of the Call for Candidates to be reviewed at the April meeting.

5. GM Reports

2019 March GM Report

General Manager Ruffin Slater presented his 2019 March General Report. Highlights include:

Sales Growth: Sales grew 7% over last year for the first 10 weeks of the quarter ending in March, with Carrboro up 5%, Southern Village up 5% and Hillsborough up 10%.

Raleigh hiring: We held a job fair on February 25 that was attended by 120 job candidates. Attendees were very interested in the co-op model and changing jobs to work at WSM.

New bag program begins on Earth Day April 22. We will start advertising the change in the store 30 days in advance of the start date. The new bag options will be:

1. Bring your own bag.
2. Buy a Weaver Bag for the new lower price of 99 cents.
3. Buy a bring-it-back sack for 15 cents.

Owner loan update: We kicked off our \$2 million owner loan offering with a mailing to 75 existing lenders. So far, we have received four loans totaling \$170k in loans from that mailing. We held our first house meeting in Raleigh on March 11 that was attended by 20 prospective lenders.

New HR manager: We hired a new HR manager, Melanie Grant, who will start April 1. The outgoing HR manager, Deborah Konneker, will stay on through June to help with the transition and the Raleigh opening.

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Monitoring Report B – Global Executive Constraint

The General Manager answered questions on “Monitoring Report B – Global Executive Constraint.”

Decision: The Board accepted Monitoring Report Policy B – Global Executive Constraint.

Monitoring Report Policy B7 – Communication to the Board

The General Manager answered questions on Monitoring Report Policy B7 – Communication to the Board.

Decision: The Board accepted Monitoring Report Policy B7 – Communication to the Board.

Monitoring Report Policy B8 – Board Logistical Support

The General Manager answered questions on Monitoring Report Policy B8 – Board Logistical Support. He noted that the IT team is exploring Microsoft Teams as our new internal communications platform, which would be good for Board communications as well. The platform supports online meetings, file sharing, video conferencing, and shared workspace.

Decision: The Board accepted Monitoring Report B8 – Board Logistical Support.

6. Open Board Time

The Directors agreed to move the first store meeting from Carrboro to Hillsborough. For the CCMA conference in June, Weaver Street Market will host a tour of the PFAP facility, the Food House, and the Hillsborough store. Jon and Ruffin will be leading a workshop at the conference that focuses on how our structure as a co-op, particularly worker ownership, positions us to take on big issues.

7. Closings

Decisions and Tasks

Next Month’s Agenda: revised Call for Candidates application packet, 2019 Elections Procedures Manual

Meeting Evaluation