

TPSS Board of Representatives Meeting

Open Session (public part of meeting)¹ Minutes

Date/Location/Time: October 15, 2020 meeting (held remotely, on-line) 6:30 pm

Board present: Diane Curran (DC), Fred Feinstein (FF), Adam Frank (AF), Susan Cho (SC), Bob Gibson (BG), Katherine Tsantiris (KT), Susanne Lowen (SL)

Board absent: Katea Stitt

Staff present: Mike Houston (MH), General Manager (GM)

Members and Attendees present: Esteban de Dobrzysky (ED)

Minutes submitted by: Solveig Mortensen (SM), Board Administrator

Meeting held by zoom and telephone connection.

Board ACTION:

- The Board approved the September 20, 2020 open session Board meeting minutes.
- The Board approved the modified April 2020 open session minutes with included revisions, which clarify that the Board decided to hold an audit or review in the 2020 year.
- The Board accepted the October 2020 Ends and Indicators report as submitted by the GM.

Open Member Forum: DC introduced ED and shared how he wanted to join the meeting and express his interest in running as a Board candidate. DC reminded meeting attendees that people can contact the Board at the following email: board@tpss.coop

The Board discussed the housekeeping items, focusing on upcoming tasks listed on the topical calendar. A Board member shared that a prayer was offered at her church for the help the Co-op is providing to the organization, Small Things Matter.

GM Report: MH stated that his most recent GM report attempts to capture all the different things that have happened over the last 30 days, including the completion of the inventory cost testing procedure. In response to Board interest, MH explained that the Co-op is introducing the Buying Club. The Buying Club allows member-owners to order large quantities of items at a discounted price. MH shared that the Buying Club will allow member-owners to search through an online menu of hundreds of items, further supporting the needs of member-owners who want to limit their physical trips into the store. MH stated that the new feature of searching through an extensive catalog online still needs testing.

¹ Monthly Co-op Board meetings have open and closed portions. Members are welcome at the open portion of meetings. The closed part of Board meetings is reserved for discussion of finances, personnel, and legal issues.

MH then reported attending the Montgomery County Food Council's Racial Equity Committee meetings and learning informative, relevant information. MH explained that the leadership staff of the Montgomery County Food Council (MCFC) had recently received the equity training, so now the Council is including Food Council members and continuing to develop the training.

MH further described how the Montgomery County Food Council Racial Equity Committee attempts to focus on racism at the local level, as opposed to systemic racism at the broader level. In response to Board inquiry, MH elaborated that because the MCFC is oriented toward area businesses, they examine racial equity through local measurements, such as land ownership.

MH also reported that he attended a symposium re: next-gen packaging and noticed many companies were exploring innovative ideas, but describing a packaging revolution as coming in years, not months. MH gave an example of a food company's projected transition from plastics to more sustainable materials in March or April of 2021. MH explained that companies cannot shortcut their materials' testing period. MH commented that from the symposium, he gathered there are many conscientious, intelligent people attempting to address the issue.

A Board member commented that they had recently observed a line outside the store and hoped it meant Co-op business is still on the rise. MH confirmed that Co-op business continues to grow. MH explained that the Co-op is making plans to allow more people into the store in the winter months, including activating a flex register at register number 1 and adding three more sides to the tent to make it more comfortable for people to line up.

Quarterly Ends and Indicators Report: Mike provided a written report showing how Co-op had addressed "Ends" or goals in our policies, and his measures or indicators for meeting them. The time frame for the report is October 2019 through September 2020. The Ends are:

1. TPSS Co-op will be a sustainable cooperative enterprise that benefits the community at large — consistent with community needs, financial viability, cooperative principles, healthful living, and strong environmental stewardship.
2. Co-op members are involved in and knowledgeable about the meaning, benefits and responsibilities of cooperative ownership.
3. Co-op customers have access to goods produced in socially and environmentally responsible ways, with an emphasis on local and organic foods, at reasonable prices and in welcoming community marketplace settings.
4. Customers are knowledgeable about food and food related issues and can make informed choices about healthful living.
5. TPSS Co-op is committed to being inclusive and accessible to the whole community. The Co-op will build strong linkages through its outreach programs with surrounding communities and nearby farmers and businesses.
6. The TPSS Co-op staff has an empowering and positive workplace.

The report gave details on how the GM has addressed all of these ends. The Board thanked MH for a letter he recently posted on the Takoma Listserv, which clarified the Co-op's economic status in response to recent comments. The Board reflected on several local listserv discussions

and noted the value of keeping Co-op members informed of the Co-op's history and current status, and also what makes co-ops unique. The Board members agreed on the general importance of member education.

In response to Board inquiry, MH confirmed that the Co-op is increasing its number of local vendors, which is already a high percentage of the Co-op's total vendor portfolio.

In response to a question on the Co-op's "Pay it Forward" program, MH reported that he believes the Co-op still provides a donation place for Manna but may be using the program less overall. MH observed that the Co-op continues to make community contributions in other ways.

In response to Board inquiry, MH confirmed that full time employees receive benefits and clarified that 30 hours/week is considered full time. 96% of TPSS employees receive these benefits, which include 100% of health insurance premiums; 62% of deductibles; and eye, dental, and life insurance.

Board Business:

Committee Updates:

Membership Committee Affairs Committee (MCAC): FF shared that in the most recent MCAC meeting the Committee discussed the following items:

- the final plans and agenda for the next Saturday's (10/17/20) Member-Owners meeting
- SL's presentation focus for Saturday's meeting, which would be about how local communities are addressing food sustainability
- if in the retreat, the Board would want to consider how to engage the membership in some way
- the report on how the Co-op is being accessed for various food redistribution activities, involving packaging food boxes for distribution
- the Co-op's Community Engagement Manager's report on the current, local efforts to help people sign-up and register for the SNAP program and how the Co-op might work with community groups who are actively doing this.
 - A Board member gave the feedback that when he had inquired about the Board's potential organization of a SNAP sign-up volunteer assistance program at the Co-op, he heard that the Co-op might have to first be accepted as a community benefit organization. Furthermore, he gave the feedback that he underwent the SNAP training program and learned there is some complexity to it.
 - The Board discussed the various ways they could support a SNAP sign-up initiative and decided that BG would follow up with the Co-op's Community Engagement Manager to learn if there are potential next steps for participating in SNAP enrollment.

MH shared that while the USDA grant enabling SNAP recipients to double-up on fresh fruits and vegetables (double-bucks) expired on September 30, 2020, the Co-op is still collecting money from its "Feed a Neighbor Fund" and using some of those funds to continue the double-bucks initiative.

Nominations Committee, Upcoming Steps: The Board discussed how they needed to recruit several board members who are not running for re-election to count the ballots. The Board noted how in previous elections they asked an independent person--neither a Board member nor a staff--present for the count.

BG relayed that there are presently a total of seven people running for four Board seats. In addition to the two Board members running for re-election (DC and AF) the following individuals are also running: Esteban de Dobrzynski, Elizabeth Teuwen, Antoaneta (Toni) Tileva, Citlalli Velasquez, and Elias Vlanton.

The Board briefly discussed the various candidates' backgrounds and the importance of continuing to invite their participation and engagement, even if some do not become Board members after the election.

Policy Committee: discussion about DEI and holidays: SC summarized how the Committee is continuing to review policy L-2 and aiming to revisit the topic with the Board in November. To give more information on the standing of the L-2 policy revision process, SC recounted how the Policy Committee had created a document that provides all the proposed changes and superimposes them over the current policy register version of policy L-2. DC shared her plan to re-review the feedback from Co-op attorney Betty Grdina on the matter and meet with SC prior to the next Board meeting.

SC presented the Policy Committee's question of whether, in observation of diversity equity and inclusion, the Board wants to pursue changing the names of the holidays on both the Board and the Co-op store's calendar. DC gave the feedback that she believes the Board/Co-op will be doing a full diversity equity inclusion training in 2021 and thinks a review of how the Co-op/Board names or addresses the holidays will be included.

Decision on electronic meeting platform and vote: KT and SC noted that they have listed the different features of the various platforms in consideration: Zoom, Webex, Google meet-up, and Jitsi. The Board recognized that Google meet-up and Jitsi are free, but that Zoom was necessary for member meetings; it's the platform with which most people are familiar. The Board noted some of Zoom's advanced settings and also discussed security needs for any of the platforms. DC planned to follow up separately with KT, SC, and AF to learn more.

Initial Retreat planning: DC reported that she spoke with the Board's current Columinate consultant, Martha Whiteman and was introduced to Jade Barker who will become the new Columinate consultant when Martha retires at the end of the year. Until that time, Jade and Martha will work together and overlap. DC shared that Jade has a background as a facilitator and has been a board member and board president herself. DC stated that Jade will work with the Board's retreat planning team. AF volunteered to join the retreat planning team, which will include FF, KS, AF, MH, Martha and Jade. DC will let Martha and Jade know the composition of the team.

8:19pm

Board Representatives' Committee Memberships:

Membership and Community Affairs Committee: FF, BG, SL, DC (FF Chair)

Audit and Finance Committee: AF, SC, BG, KT (AF Chair)

Personnel Committee: DC, KS (DC Chair)

Policy Committee: SC, AF, KT (SC Chair)

Nominations Committee: BG, FF, SL (BG Chair)

Junction Committee: FF, KS (FF Chair)

Expansion Committee: AF, SC, SL (AF Chair)

Board Development Committee: DC, AF (chair position shared)

Board Representatives' Committee Memberships:

(Committee Memberships still reflecting 2019-2020 term)

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Audit and Finance Committee: AF, SC, BG, KT (AF Chair)

Personnel Committee: DC, KS (DC Chair)

Policy Committee: SC, AF, KT (SC Chair)

Nominations Committee: BG, FF, SL (BG Chair)

Junction Committee: FF, KS (FF Chair)

Expansion Committee: AF, SC (AF Chair)

Board Development Committee: DC, AF (chair position shared)

Term 2020-2021 Meeting Attendance:

	Dec
Cho	*
Curran	*
Feinstein	*
Frank	*
Gibson	*
Stitt	Ex
Teuwen	*
Tsantiris	*
Velasquez	*

(Ex=excused)
 (Re=Resigned)

Board Terms:

Board Representative	Term:	Term Ends:
Cho	3 years (consecutive term)	2022
Curran	3 years (consecutive term)	2023
Feinstein	3 years (consecutive term)	2022
Frank	3 years (consecutive term)	2023
Gibson	2 years	2021
Stitt	3 years	2021
Teuwen	3 years	2023
Tsantiris	3 years	2022
Velasquez	1 year	2021

Term 2019-2020 Meeting Attendance:

	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.
Cho	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Curran	*	Ex	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Feinstein	*	*	Ex	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Frank	Ex	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Gibson	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Kamara	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	Re	Re	Re.
Lowen	*	*	Ex	*	*	*	*	*	*	Ex	*
Stitt	*	Ex	Ex	*	Ex	*	Ex	Ex	Ex	*	Ex
Tsantiris	Ex	*	Ex	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

(Ex=excused)
 (Re=Resigned)

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Board Representative	Term:	Term Ends:
Cho	3 years (consecutive term)	2022
Curran	3 years	2020
Feinstein	3 years (consecutive term)	2022
Frank	3 years (consecutive term)	2020
Gibson	2 years	2021
Lowen	3 years	2020
Stitt	3 years	2021
Tsantiris	3 years	2022
Currently vacant	3 years	2021