

## **Onion River Co-op/City Market**

Board of Directors Meeting  
Remote Phone Conference\*  
March 23, 2020

### **Board Attendance:**

Faye Mack, Board Member, President  
Eric Boehm, Board Member, Vice President  
Joanna Grossman, Board Member  
Caroline Keller, Board Member  
Jody Landon, Board Members  
Leah Soderquist, Board Member  
Kristina Sweet, Board Member  
Jim Rudolph, Treasurer  
Allison Searson, Secretary

### **Absent:**

### **Also in attendance:**

Michael Healy, Board Facilitator  
John Tashiro, General Manager  
Caroline Aubry, Membership Manager  
Madelyn Cataford, Director of Finance  
Mae Quilty, Outreach & Education Manager  
Kiersten Hallquist, Member & Board Minutes-Taker  
Serrill Flash, Member  
Brent Demers (joined during review of D9)  
Claire Ross

A quorum was established, and the meeting started at 6:02 PM.

### **Preliminaries**

Faye thanked everyone for taking time to attend the meeting during a busy and confusing time for everyone.

### Review Agenda

The agenda was accepted as written.

### Review Minutes

The February 24, 2020 minutes were accepted with the following changes: correct the spelling on third paragraph on NOFA reflections: “ZAFAs wines.”

### Review Follow-Up Items

The Board review the Action Items list, and four items were removed.

## **Open Member Time**

The Board Members, special guests, City Market staff, and Members in attendance introduced themselves.

Serrill shared frustrations with the Board's executive session that have been consistently scheduled for the past two years. Serrill is just asking whether if this is needed or necessary, or the membership could have more access to the meeting content. Serrill would like the Board to continue to re-evaluate the necessity of the executive sessions.

Faye shared her appreciation to Serrill for sharing with the Board.

## **GM Update**

### Monthly GM Update

John presented his update to the Board. Highlights from John's updates included but were not limited to continuing efforts of the staff and leadership around COVID-19 - additional training and precautions in place and the recent boil notice that caused both stores to close and future planning to work to ensure stores can stay open should this occur again in the future.

The Board shared personal observations and asked clarifying questions.

### Update on COVID-19

John presented his update on COVID-19 to the Board.

The Board asked clarifying questions.

The Board shared concern for the Rally for Change program with lower transaction rates. The stores are seeing declines in transaction, however, basket sizes have also grown significantly.

John shared that management recognizes the incredible efforts of the entire staff during this challenging time. He shared that negotiations were taking place with the Union executive team to collectively work together to come to an agreement during these unprecedented circumstances, while continuing to adhere to the parameters outlined in the existing employment contract. He recognized and conveyed how proud he was to see staff stepping up in a number of ways and finding ways to support each other.

In addition to the many operational adjustments since early March, John shared they were looking at the plexiglass for the front-end area. City Market's Head of Operations had visited various retailers, who had installed the protective plexiglass to see if there was an option that would best fit City Market. Management hopes to have something in place very soon and would keep the Board updated.

John discussed existing delivery service and efforts to expand it further. City Market had increased its current capacity to up to 20 deliveries a day, five days a week and has found it challenging to maintain. The demands being put on staff to increase the delivery service capacity have been very

taxing to find additional capacity, the Operations department is currently exploring potential community partners to play a role in food delivery to customers and members.

One Board member shared that a local Hannaford store suspended their Hannaford To Go service to redirect staff to restocking and in-store management under the current workload and staff demands.

The Board asked about messaging and communications for managing store flow and social distancing. John shared various examples and perspectives as follows:

- Signage has been enhanced over the past week to communicate and remind customers about good practices (i.e. wearing gloves in the bulk section, using the hand sani-wipes, etc.) and further improving and expanding upon messaging for the staff.
- Rationing/managing store flow gets more complicated, especially when there is a rise in “panic”-/“fear”-buying and how they ensure all customers have fair access to the resources they need.
- Focused energy on supporting the staff to communicate about social distancing and promote good social distancing practice (i.e. buttons for the staff, tape on the floor, etc.).
- Bi-weekly Management Team meetings (consisting of over 50 managers across 7-8 locations) have moved to fully remote meetings to help model good social distancing practices.
- Mae shared that new shelf-level signage is being rolled out in the stores, starting tomorrow, regarding social distancing and making mindful purchases.
- Discussing the potential for managing traffic into the stores, but had not made the decision to manage this yet; they’ve seen a large variance in traffic across store hours and are hesitant to manage access when people come to the stores when they are able to shop; they are looking at monitoring and managing the operating hours to better align to shopping habits.

The Board asked if management has a plan in place if/when a store staff member tests positive for COVID-19. John shared management had scenario planned for such situations, under the likelihood this will occur; they have a “Pandemic Plan” to outline steps for staffing and leadership if/when it occurs including how long it would last, how much it would cost, and department-specific planning if it were to occur in specific departments.

The Board asked if there is currently a protocol for employees coming into work (i.e. taking temperatures), or if City Market is currently relying on staff to report their own issues. John explained that staff protocols have been in place since very early on including but not limited to sending staff members home anytime they indicate they are not feeling well as a precaution. If a staff member has a fever, the fever must be cleared for at least 24 hours before returning to work. Communications are around illness, not specific to having/exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms.

The Board asked whether Operations is working under parity between the two stores, which have different spaces. John shared that currently they are working under parity across the two stores; the challenges are similar across both stores – i.e. need for enhanced signage, social distancing badges, and bulk management.

The Board asked about the impact of UVM sending their students home, if the store has seen a drop-in employee hours and support with students leaving. John shared that he has seen an increase

in student employee availability with the move to remote learning. He has also seen an up-tick in application rates with restaurants closing in the area.

The Board shared their appreciation for the transparent communication and incredible hard work they've seen from John, leadership, the operations team, and the staff.

John gave a final shout out to the senior leadership team, sharing they've been going non-stop for the past three to four weeks (from water boil advisory straight into COVID-19). Every day they host an 11am call-in meeting, working continuously to address the unprecedented challenges in partnership with broader management and the staff. The staff continues to step up at a time when there is an incredible amount of uncertainty.

#### Revised B6: Emergency General Manager Succession

John presented an update on B6. Emergency General Manager Succession Plan to the Board. John shared that Eric has moved into primary successor role and Madelyn accepted the role of secondary successor to the General Manager. Madelyn completed the GM training last week.

The Board shared their appreciation and admiration for the turnaround time on developing a new plan with a recent shift in leadership.

#### **Board Monitoring**

Caroline Keller presented D9 to the Board and found the Board in compliance with the policy.

Caroline shared personal observations and review notes. Caroline asked if the Board wanted to establish a formal process if/when a Board member leaves prior to the end of their term. A senior board members shared that the appointment process has been historically case-based, depending on the timing of the Board member stepping down (i.e. proximity to the election); the general sentiment across the Board was that the flexibility is helpful and that a more formal process could emerge from the Board Perpetuation review and process. The Board did not feel something formal was necessary at this time.

#### **Act 69 - Single Use Plastic Products**

John and Brent reviewed Act 69 and presented observations to the Board. John shared that City Market still plans to roll out the elimination of single-use plastic bags from the front end, which has stemmed from Act 69 (overview of the Act was included in the Board packet).

Brent provided an overview in the progress toward removing single-use plastic bags in the front-end of the stores. The project launched with a project charter in February 2019, and goal to eliminate single-use plastic bags from the front end at the April 2020 Earth Day celebration. Securing paper bags has presented a challenge of its own; the paper industry has seen an uptick in demand and major manufacturers were not taking new clients. The stores are continuing work to phase out single-use plastic bags from the front end.

The Board asked clarifying questions.

Brent provided numbers regarding paper vs. plastic bags in 2019; plastic bag use was significantly higher.

Brent said there currently isn't a plan in place to waive the single-use plastic bag fee for any individuals, even those qualifying for benefits. The stores want to gather initial data before exploring any adjustments or any waivers. This was not addressed in the Bill, unfortunately, and the stores are working within the limitations of the law and funding possibilities.

When the stores are mandated to collect a fee for the single-use bag (April 2020), the fee will remain with the host institution/store.

Mae and Brent also have a project charter for eliminating single-use plastic throughout the entire stores, looking at the individual department use. This includes use of compostable-only bags in produce, bulk as well as trays for meat and seafood, and sushi. This includes exploring repurposing and recycling options for the phased out single-use plastic.

### **Open Board Time**

The Board shared their appreciation for staff's and leadership's efforts and work to support families and immunocompromised individuals in the face of the COVID-19 epidemic.

Faye acknowledged the level of outreach the Board members are receiving in light of recent events, and Faye shared appreciation for how the Board is working to maintain a shared voice when working through complex conversations and questions.

Caroline asked Michael to provide an overview on accessing the Columinate Webinars.

Leah shared a quick and temporary farewell, as she quickly approaches mamahood! Good luck, Leah!

### **Future Planning**

#### Open Member Response

Serrill was still on the call during Open Member Response. Faye shared an overview of the process of the Board moving into executive session. When John, Faye, Eric and Michael meet to develop the agenda, they always question items and the level of confidentiality required around certain issues. The goal is always to minimize executive session, and Faye sincerely appreciated the question and the frustrations around it. Faye offered to follow-up with Serrill directly to walk through the process together.

#### CCMA Update

John has not heard back regarding the timing of the CCMA session, or whether proposals have been accepted for the session. Kristina and Caroline indicated continued interest in the CCMA session, and were approved to attend if the CCMA event still occurs.

#### Update on Spring Retreat

Faye presented plans regarding the April 18 (Saturday) Spring Board Retreat. The Board will not meet in person for the retreat. The following options were provided: postponing the retreat to a

later date, canceling it and only hosting one retreat, or creative ways to have strategic conversations. Faye did not support hosting an 8-hour retreat over the phone.

### Review Calendar

The Board did not have any calendar items to discuss, at the March meeting.

### **Wrap Up**

The Board shared the desire for videoconferencing, however, appreciated the success of the audio-only meeting process and its success.

The Board shared appreciation for the efforts everyone is making to address the COVID-19 pandemic, the long hours, and the dedication from all of the staff and managers.

The Board shared appreciation for the Act 69 – phase-out of single-used plastic bags in the Store’s front end as a break from the weight of the COVID-19 conversations – a thoughtfully designed agenda.

The Board shared appreciation for the member share and historical background regarding executive session.

John shared gratitude for the Board and their patience during this especially complex and demanding time, for speaking in one voice and recognizing the challenges, and their continued support.

### **Executive Session**

The Board moved into Executive Session at 8:02 PM to discuss expansion and contracts. The Board came out of Executive Session at 9:22 PM.

### **Adjourn**

The Board adjourned at 9:22 PM.

### **Action Items**

(March 2020)

**Jody** will place a hardcopy of the Conflict of Interest form in the mail to Madelyn.

**Michael and Faye** provide the Board with information on how to access and utilize the Columinate Webinars.

**Faye** will follow-up with Serrill to walk through the process of determining items for executive session together.

**Faye**, within the week, will facilitate a decision around the April 18 Board Retreat time slot currently held – whether the time will be used for a strategic conversation or simply cleared it from Board members’ calendars.

**Kristina, Caroline, and Jody** will connect with John to begin planning for a committee to explore opportunities to better represent the diversity of the community City Market serves in the Board and staff.