Willimantic Food Co-op
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
August 6, 2026 6:00-8:00 PM
WorkMode Office Space, 109 Valley St Suite B, Willimantic

Directors attending: Patty Smith, Matthew Coolbeth, Stephanie White, Tomasyn Goode, Peter Kirk, Kathe Gable, Katherine Gavin, Jessica Larkin-Wells, Monica Van Beusekom
Others attending: James Cashmore-Everton, Jim Mark, Brett Calkins

Call to Order – 6:02pm

Introductory Discussion about Landlord Concerns

The board met with legal counsel to discuss our lease renewal related to challenges to the lease's validity from our landlord.

Consent Agenda

- June meeting minutes

  Action: Approve June minutes as written. (Motion: Gable, Second: Kirk, Abstained: Larkin-Wells (not present in room). Motion approved by all others.)

Monitoring Reports

- Board Monitoring Report D.1 Governing Style

  Action: Approve D.1 Monitoring Report as compliant. (Motion: Gavin, Second: Coolbeth, Abstained: Larkin-Wells (not present in room).)
  - Some of these bullets are vague
    - Item 3: "maintain group discipline, authority, and responsibility" – what does this mean in practice?
      - Not a relevant issue – current board works well together
    - Item 5: "encourage diverse viewpoints" – seek new board members with diverse views, or encourage existing board to share diverse views?
      - Haven't had any divisive issues where this is relevant

  (Motion approved by all others.)
- Board Monitoring Report D.2 The Board's Job

  Action: Approve D.2 Monitoring Report as compliant. (Motion: Goode, Second: Coolbeth.)
  - Tweak verbiage – highlighted in yellow
    - Removed mention of "recently hired" general manager – several years ago now
    - Finance 101 not written anywhere as mandatory for new board members
      - *Action item*: Create onboarding document listing mandatory trainings
        - Board Perpetuation Committee will do this

  (Motion unanimously approved.)
- GM Monitoring Report B.1 Staff Treatment & Compensation

Action: Accept B.1 Monitoring Report as compliant. (Motion: Larkin-Wells, Second: Goode, Abstained: Smith.)

- Great scores on staff survey, trending up year over year
- Only thing survey doesn't cover is handling of personnel documents, but we have several controls on this – definitely compliant
- Columinate survey becoming archaic – very long, questions asked might not feel important/relevant to staff
    - Patty, Jen, & Todd considering shorter, more frequent surveys in lieu of one massive yearly data collection
        - By taking data on only one day of the year, risk of catching someone in a bad mood – might skew overall scores
        - Interpretation of data from Columinate not always the most useful
    - Is it worth contacting NCG about Columinate survey's diminished usefulness? If we pay for their services, they should be aware
        - Patty was considering contacting James & Columinate CEO – feedback good idea
- Evidence of compliance doesn't need to come from specific source, per policy – free to change method of data collection as we like
    - Whatever we replace current survey with would be well researched, best practice
        - Jen would likely be consultant
- Staff speak out –
    - Self evaluation shorter this year – much better, more succinct
    - Shorter, more frequent surveys will yield more accurate data
    - Because workplace is so unique, questions should be more tailored to the specifics of our workplace
        - Columinate survey tells us that we are doing well, but doesn't tell us how we could be better
        - Would yield more creative input
    - Long lag time between getting survey results and management getting the chance to respond to it
        - Leading vs lagging data – maybe keep old survey for continuity, but also do new surveys for leading data
            - (Motion approved by all others.)

Landlord Concerns

- Landlord asserts that our lease is invalid
- Does not believe our existing rent rate reflects the value of the property
    - Proposing new lease with significantly higher rent rate
    - Number he proposed today is much higher than what he had previously proposed
- Landlord says we pay our employees & vendors fairly, so we should pay him fairly as well
- Board agrees to provide a response by next Friday

Executive Session to Discuss Progress on Expansion Feasibility Work – 7:13pm

Action: Enter executive session. (Motion: Van Beusekom, Second: Goode. Motion unanimously approved.)

Executive session adjourned at 8:03pm.

Monitoring Reports cont'd.

- GM Monitoring Report B.3 Financial Condition & Activities
    - *Postponed until next month's meeting*

Store Report

- Doing well – nothing out of the ordinary happening

Update on Rollout of new Member Benefits Program

- Small handful of emails from dissatisfied members
    - Mostly seniors concerned about losing their discount
- Front end been doing great, getting more positive feedback than negative even from seniors
- Messaging will continue
    - Social media messaging postponed until actual launch as PR consultants suggested
- Patty writing newsletter article to address member concerns
- Ramp eligibility requirements
    - Lots of people in need are getting kicked off SNAP – consider allowing people who have gotten kicked off in the past year and a half even if they don't receive SNAP currently

Fall Board Retreat Planning

- Finalized date September 26th
- What topics should we prioritize?
    - *Postponed until next month's meeting*

Action: Adjourn meeting. (Motion: Van Beusekom, Second: Gable. Motion unanimously approved.)

Adjourn – 8:24pm