

**HARVEST MEMBER MEETING  
CAMBRIDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY  
AUGUST 28, 2012**

Board members in attendance: Annette Ghelfi, Wendy Holding, Andrew Kessel, Christina Lively, Rebecca Nemecek, Christian West, Scotland Willis.

Staff members in attendance: Chris Durkin, Tom Fidler, David Hermann, Diane Simpson, Katie Kinch, and Ernest Paulin.

Total Attendance - 40

Meeting minutes taken by Diane Simpson, Annette Ghelfi, Wendy Holding, Andrew Kessel, Christina Lively, Christian West, and Scotland Willis.

Meeting commenced at 6:35 p.m.

**Agenda Review**

Christina started the meeting by welcoming everyone and letting them know the purpose of the meeting, which was to continue gathering feedback from the questionnaire. She then outlined the steps the meeting would take while pointing out each item on the agenda.

**Update on Stores**

At 6:39 Chris Durkin, Member Services Director, gave an update on the new Cambridge store. He thanked the city of Cambridge and the library for helping with the logistics.

The old Harvest store was closed last Wednesday, August 22. It was bittersweet. Harvest had many good years there. It was tough to leave. The "loft" (over the walk-in refrigerator case) had hundred of things that had been stored F O R E V E R. A total of 256 cases of paper were shredded. They are still figuring out what to do with the archives. Eight boxes of paper, photographs, and memorabilia are going to U. Mass Boston, which runs the Digital Open Archives. Their mission is described below. A shout-out went to the Friendly Board Administrator for linking them up with this resource.

*The university's urban mission and strong support of community service is reflected in the department's collections of records of urban planning, social action, alternative movements, and community organizations. Additionally, the location of the campus in the Dorchester section of Boston has prompted the department to make available sources for the study of Dorchester history.*

Now the focus is on the new store. Since it is not completely set up, Chris is still working from home on his laptop. The store offices are at 1035 Cambridge Street, Suite 16-C. Parking is tight. There has to be a staff person or Board member present in order to hold meetings.

Things that are in the new store:

- Registers
- Front desk
- Shelves

The aisles will be narrower and the shelves will be higher, but through this configuration, Harvest will be able to retain 85 to 90% of the items sold at the old store. Current plans are for an early September opening. But the store cannot open until the city signs off, so they can't promise any specific date at this point.

The new store will have a carryout service to bring your groceries to your vehicle, whether it is parked across the street or in the Green Street garage.

#### Q & A

Q: What is the rent?

A: Don't know.

Q: What is the financial difference between the two sites and the old site?

A: It will be less in total expense.

Q: Will there be bulk water?

A: Yes. We will be focusing on bulk, organic, and local foods. There will also be a better special order system.

Q: It's difficult ordering a whole case. Can you put it online and ask if someone wants the rest of the case?

A: The problem is storing it. (Christina interjected this was a good idea and maybe we could figure out how to do this.)

Chris Durkin said that when the new store has an opening date it will go out on email and Facebook.

Q: How many employees were you able to retain?

A: Only 12 employees laid off.

#### Other Updates

- JP is doing well now. Slight dip when Whole Foods opened but now it's back to normal.
- Arboretum store opening is still set for December.
- Arboretum store has dedicated parking and a "scratch" deli (food made from scratch).

Q: What was the reason for closing the old store?

A: The lease was up. There was financial competition. It wouldn't have been financially beneficial for us.

Q: Will there be catering? Coffee?

A: Catering? Yes. Coffee? I don't know.

Q: How many years is the lease for?

A: Ten years. Old store would have been a shorter lease and higher rent.

Q: Will you have turkeys?

A: Yes.

Q: Will you have sushi?

A: Not from Harvest. Michael is the deli manager—he might negotiate to get it there.

Q: Will you have a bulletin board?

A: Yes—same as the old one.

Q: How much of a reduction in space is it?

A: It's a little over half of what we had.

Q: What is the percentage of members at each store?

A: Cambridge 60%, JP less than 40%.

Q: Do we know the demographics of the members?

A: We do not collect demographic data.

Q: Can you list how long people have been members?

A: Yes, we can list that.

Q: Where is “not allowing GMO foods?”

A: You might discuss that under what would make membership more valuable to you.

The Q &A ended at 6:55 p.m. Christina came up and explained the “World Café” concept and how it operated. She read the ground rules, which were developed by World Café, and then explained how the groups would run. She went over the questions that would be discussed. Facilitators would have to stay at the same table, but everyone else would move around.

At 7:03 everybody divided up into groups. The questions they discussed are in the following sections. This was called “Harvesting” (no pun intended).

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### **How do we better foster a sense of community?**

#### 1) Engagement

Community/committees/shared interests

Make it fun, entertaining

Draw people in

#### 2) Events

Four dinners/year with discussion topics

Have a speaker/reception

Volunteers run event

Have a picnic

#### 3) Have info sharing

Listserve

Recipes

Tips

Make it searchable

4) Communication

Need more transparency

Info on progress of the co-op

History of the co-op in the store

Display the co-op principles

Word-of-mouth advertising

Maybe incentives?

5) Types of Outreach

New social media communication

Fundamentals of Outreach

Meet people where they are

--different locations

--have event around specific interests

--make it fun, social

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**The statement below reflects harvest's global ends—the reason we exist.**

Harvest Cooperative Markets exists for these ends:

A welcoming shopping experience guided by transparent, values-based decisions.

A healthy, sustainable and vibrant community for our members, customers and staff.

An organization that provides members, customers and staff with a voice.

A stronger local food system.

Access to affordably-priced foods and other products that contribute to a healthy lifestyle.

Do they seem on-track to you? Where would you like to see Harvest in five years?

1) Culture

More member involvement

--Decisions

--Information reminders

--Relationship with staff & Board

A way of distinguishing Harvest from other grocers

2) Transparency

--Values are stated but are not clear/evident

--What does it mean to be value-based?

--Need more timely info for member response

3) Diversity

A more diverse Harvest that reflects the demographics of the city

4) Education

Greater awareness of:

- Food products and health risk effects
  - Reminder of big decisions being made
- Healthier food options

Also:

Members would like to see a 5-year plan for member involvement  
Members would also like to see a tighter connection to local farms

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**Improve customer service**

- 1) Customer service on floor is lacking
- 2) Need a better/more enjoyable workplace that is reflective of our values
- 3) Bag service would be helpful
- 4) More easily accessible product info for dietary needed
- 5) Need more reliable cash registers
- 6) Employee cross-training
- 7) Clean the shopping baskets!! (snuck in by F.B.A.)

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**What would make membership more valuable to you?**

- GMO labeling/healthy world
- Website info on why co-ops are different
- Better member feedback system (categorized or computerized)
- Different levels of membership
- Publicity on our positive aspects
- Connecting to other co-ops
- Creation of co-op packet for new members
- Reciprocal discount for members of other co-ops
- Labeling education (what does GMO, natural, organic mean?)
- Price per ounce and price per pound
- Inclusion in other local co-ops
- Outlets for volunteering
- Optional worker co-op with voucher
- Lower-cost food
- Discount each month on a staple
- Reaching out to other colleges (besides Harvard & MIT)

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**Updates to the new stores**

- 1) Questions
  - Will there be...turkeys? parking? Green Street access?
- 2) Concerns
  - No public restrooms (but exceptions will be made in case of dire need)
  - Will there be extended hours to improve sales?
  - There's one less register in the new store

Security of carriage service (will carriages get lost or stolen?)

3) Requests

Expand services

More connection channels

--Website

o Arboretum development and discussion

--Facebook

--In-store signage

--Local papers: Gazette, Patch/Tab/other media

Bulk ordering system: computer kiosk

Lease information

Short-dated product shelf (reduced prices)

Some type of “draw” (maybe for Arboretum store)

--Wine-tastings

--Growler station on tap (local brews)

--Food from different countries

Plan from management on communication between separate office and employees at stores

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**What ideas have you seen at other co-ops that you would like Harvest to consider?**

1) Bulk splitting/buyers club

--Day pickup—prepay

2) More transparency

--Engaging members about larger decisions

3) Co-op community-Building

--Community dinners

--More ways for people to connect so it feels like a community

o Creates loyalty—an important competitive advantage

4) Annual strategic vision for co-op values

--Engage members to discuss the year ahead

5) Volunteer opportunities

--Newsletter

--Submit columns to Harvest Times

--Better use of Website

o Special page for members exchange and involvement

--Modernize Web presence

o Actively submit digital input

6) Weed out unhealthy products

--Substitute healthier products and focus on the “core”

7) Strategic partnerships with like-minded businesses

--Help promote each other

--Cambridge Naturals in Porter Square

8) Education of consumer

--Books

--Computer/interactive

--More workshops & classes that are better advertised

--Bulk section sign saying, "Bag what you need—everything else gets tossed."

The "Harvest" ended at 8:25 p.m. Then Wayne, of MSCC made a statement. "What are you gonna do? Pick a topic and run with it!" Andrew, who is chair of that committee, explained what the MSCC (Membership and Social Concerns Committee) was and what it did. He announced that it met on the fourth Monday of the month and invited everyone present to join.

In response to a question, Christina said that the next step would be for the Board to write this up. Some ideas are pie-in-the-sky and some will advance. They can't do them all. They can see what's most important and focus on that.

Chris Durkin announced that September 4<sup>th</sup> was the deadline to apply for the Board and encourage everyone present to put in an application.

A member of the audience said they would like this specific group to be invited back for a follow-up meeting. He was informed that there was a Board meeting every month and he was welcome to come to that.

A second signup sheet went around to get the names of the latecomers. The meeting ended at 8:30 p.m.