

MINUTES: January 5, 2009

KARMA CO-OPERATIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, Jan. 5, 2009, 7:00 pm – 9:30 pm
Annex Art Centre, 1073 Bathurst St.

Directors present: Donald Altman, Arthur Jacobs, Harry Koster, Reg McQuaid, Jae Steele, Kevin Taylor

Absent: ahdri mandiela, Sarah Pretty

Staff Present: Justin McNabb, G.M.

Minutes recorded by: Aislinn Clancy

1) Call to order

- Meeting was called to order at 7 pm by Harry Koster.

2) Minutes of previous meeting

Last meeting's minutes are not available at this time. They have been typed, and will be available for approval next meeting. Some communication difficulties (e-mail) were the cause.

3) General Manager's report - Justin

a) Staffing Report

- Rachel Climenhaga was hired as a shift manager to replace Philip. She was formerly a clerk, and is a member. She's seen as a good addition to the team.
- Greg is now the member-labourer coordinator
- Justin feels that the coop is now properly staffed, with professionals, they feel tighter as a team and staff are working on a more full-time basis and they got the holiday time they needed.
- Staff meeting – the staff need more training; they are weak in some areas of knowledge such as nutrition, supplements, and beauty products. Instruction re these topics can be sought from within the Karma membership. A training session has been organized, facilitated by Anthony DiPasquale, who responded to a posting and has expertise in nutrition. Jae offered her services for future trainings if needed.
- Benefits – board members discussed the discrepancy between the benefits for those working at other food coops, as compared to the staff at Karma. It seems that Karma's benefits are much more accessible than is seen at other shops.

b) Building Report

- Member's room still under construction, the delay is because the building committee wants lots of feedback from the members. The date for the room to be "usable" is Sunday January 25th, for the food issues forum.
- There are plans to re-locate the overstock, insulate the facility further and drywall.

- Maintenance – the architects will come to give samples of track lighting. This will help the store look more professional and perhaps promote sales. This is the final phase of the summer renovation project.
- Shopping carts are to be available for January 10th.
- Business License was easily renewed

c) Produce Report

- Turkeys – there was a delay in the delivery of the holiday turkeys, due to inclement weather. Some people were okay with the delay. The additional space in the store meant that there was more storage space available and therefore a better facilitation of the storage and sales of the birds.
- Frozen juices – a note was made that at times there is not frozen juices (conventional) available at all times. But this is due to the cash and carry where the juice is bought being out of certain products at times, as delivery service is not used for conventional products.

4. Committee Reports

a) Building Committee:

- Art reported that a number of quotes are being sought for work on the roof – there is a need for a new roof and additional insulation. The quotes should be available for the February board meeting. Donald asked to have these quotes available to the finance committee for their meeting. Green roofs were said to be too expensive. Donald will give the name of an additional contractor to check with. The question is can we afford a new roof, or will we have to settle for repairing the present one.
- The south east (corner) wall is falling on the outside. This is to be fixed when the roof is repaired.

b) Chronicle update/Food Issues:

- Jae was unable to go to the Chronicle meeting, but will get updates and follow up on the minutes. Jae will attend the food issues meeting coming up at The Butler’s Pantry on Markham Ave.

c) Outreach/Website Committee:

- Outreach committee - Kevin is attempting to expand outreach efforts with Sarah
- They will post volunteer recruitment for members of the outreach committee in the store. They will check the postal codes of where members currently reside and attempt to learn “how members heard about Karma”. Any help recruiting committee members would be welcome.
- All we do should focus on outreach – create electronic posters, have information on the website, look into more opportunities to publicize events.
- Outreach ideas include the Bloor Street Festival, Toronto Vegetarian Association, vegetarian fair or other ideas that include a nominal fee, or advertising in the

community newspapers. It was suggested that word of mouth promotion could also be effective.

- Website committee – minutes for committees are posted on the website. Kevin will bring news to the web committee if board members would like to make suggestions. – a note was made that karma is listed under retail (rather than food) on the www.coopsontario.com website.
- The last member survey was removed from the website. A new survey should be created. The survey was one that was completed online and the report was accessible via a link on the website. Hard copy of the survey is also missing.
- Reg noted that the events committee needs new members. A suggestion was made for them to connect with the outreach group.

5. Finance Committee Report:

- Donald provided a mid-year financial summary covering the period June-November.
- Howard has been an excellent addition to the committee. There were some miscommunications and confusion related to the budget. The committee will outline some roles and responsibilities among the group to improve this for next month.
- There is a \$41,000 dollar deficit to date for the current fiscal year. Some of this can be mitigated by the accountant by moving some expenses from maintenance to capital.
- Sales are down since before the renovations, and have not recovered; membership numbers are also down substantially. Staff finds it difficult to accurately measure the degree of shrinkage because the average markup might be inaccurate.
- Committee must work with staff to find a way to more accurately determine the shrinkage. Donald noted that if the coop were to purchase a point of sale system, these challenges would be resolved.
- There was some discussion about the cause of the decrease in membership, and also the decline in working members. It would be good to determine how many members have left the coop, or if there has been a decline in new members, etc. Perhaps a request can be made to get improved communication from the member coordinator.
- Recommendations from the finance committee are to increase sales by 1.8% per month and hold expenses, in order to finish the year with not more than \$11,000 deficit. Also, recruit new members rather than chase outstanding debts, shrink the shrink, improve the control of inventory, and improve the use of markups to improve the bottom line.
- Note was made that there is an inconsistency of brands, also a suggestion was made to look into the supplement stock as a source of increased sales by offering a better selection. This note will be made to Justin and/or Sarah.

Inventory Issues

- In the past inventory spot checks were used month-to-month instead of large inventory efforts. Especially with high value items effort should be made to control the amount of errors made by cashiers. At present an accurate picture of sales vs. purchases can be

made only in May and November when large groups meet to check inventory. A note was made to consider increasing inventory sessions to quarterly rather than bi-annually, and to conduct these on stat holidays to ensure no loss of sales.

- An effort could also be made to check the market value of products, and change prices to be competitive.

6. Food Issues Forum Update

- The food issues forum will be a day organized for members and friends to come to the store to have questions answered about food. There will be those there from the committee to share their knowledge, a rotating schedule for different topics, and representatives present at different times of day – the event was advertised in the Chronicle. A more detailed agenda will be promoted closer to the date of the event. Some topics include – food policies, GMOs, environmental impact of food, cost, origin, sustainability, treatment of workers and not harming animals. DVDs on GMOs will be available, a nutritionist will be present to talk about nutrition. Jae could come and give some recipes, and sell her book so people can learn how to cook different foods. Event is from 1 – 4:30 on Sunday the 25th of January.
- A suggestion was made to offer an event that spotlighted unknown products, perhaps give special tours with a nutritionist or chef – the outreach committee/events committee could look into this idea.

7. Members Survey

Board members suggested that a survey of Karma members should solicit the following information:

- How did you find Karma
- Why did you join?
- How long have you been a member? Age? Other demographic info?
- What keeps you coming to Karma?
- What do you buy?
- What don't you buy at Karma?
- Number of household members? Their ages? Income?
- How often do you shop at Karma?
- Why do you shop elsewhere?
- What would you like to see at Karma that you haven't seen?
- Do you take advantage of the special order option?
- Do you participate in events? If so which ones?
- Do you read the Chronicle?
- Questions about labour – do you work? Why or why not?
- What has been your experience as a worker?
- Are there tasks you would like to do that aren't presently offered?
- What is your experience with paid staff?
- What is your experience with member workers?
- When do you shop? Day/time?

MINUTES: January 5, 2009

- How do you get there?
 - Are store hours conducive?
 - Comment on food choices? Convenience, taste, organic, local, prepared foods
 - What are your favorite products?
 - If people have an expertise that is useful to Karma?
 - Get input on where to advertise the coop,
 - How do you feel about the look and feel of the store? The layout? The renovations? Cleanliness?
 - Do you feel some products are overpriced? Underpriced?
 - Do you use CSAs, farmers market or a garden?
- Donald will talk to the finance committee about suggested questions for the survey.

Next meeting: Monday, February 2, 7.00 pm, at the Annex Art Centre.