

Old Creamery Co-op Annual Meeting of Member-Owners, 10-4-2020

Remarks of Board President, Katy Eiseman

Thank you to everyone who joined us today.

Before joining the Board last summer, I was reflecting on my thoughts about what had been happening at the Creamery. I wrote a little manifesto that started with the assertion that “Radical changes are needed if the Creamery is to survive as a Co-op.”

We have instituted some major changes over the past year. We started out with positive and deliberate steps under Dan’s management, and the pandemic then required all of us to adapt and be flexible and set some of our plans to the side.

Just before the coronavirus turned our world upside down, in early March, we held a gathering of member-owners to review the Co-op’s Ends Statement and Values. We collectively went through exercises designed to help us understand our values and to prioritize for long-term planning. The top aspirational value, as ranked by those present, was that “The Co-op maintains financial solvency,” followed by two that almost tied with each other: that “The co-op strives to be aware of and responsive to the needs of the community” and that “Environmental sustainability is a core value at the Co-op.”

After that gathering, the Board shortened our Ends Statement, to read as follows: “Through a thriving cooperative enterprise, we encourage a vibrant healthy community and a sustainable local economy.”

This is the core purpose and mission of the Co-op. The Ends are what we strive for, as we navigate through the realities of Hilltown living, and now as we navigate through a pandemic and a change in management.

The great news is that when Dan told us it was time for him to move on, we were not at a complete loss. This is not our first rodeo. We have learned how to use Columinate as a resource for co-ops in transition, and were able to secure the services of a consultant who came this week and evaluated our operations and committed to providing support to staff remotely going forward. We know that we have capable staff, and more systems in place thanks to Dan’s leadership, to keep operations running.

As of yesterday, we have an interim management team. Toni Reed is now our Interim Store Manager, in charge of day-to-day retail operations. Sandra Segatti is now serving in the capacity of Finance and Human Resources Manager. They will both report to the Board. In the coming weeks we will develop a plan for longer term management of the Co-op.

We are now in peak leaf peeping season. Unlike all previous years, the shift into autumn may be the only tourist boost we see in sales. Heading into the winter, the focus must be on serving our local community's needs. We don't yet know what "a vibrant healthy community and a sustainable local economy" looks like during a pandemic, but the Board is committed to working with the staff and with all of you to serve the critical role that we all want the Creamery to serve for the Hilltowns.