

Alfalfa House Members Council Meeting - minutes

Date: 23 May 2017

Time: 7pm

Location: Meeting Space, 8-10 Brown Street, Newtown

Facilitator: Katherine

Minutes: Matt

Timekeeper: Jonny

Meeting opened at: 7:00pm

Acknowledgement of Country: Before we begin the meeting, I would like to acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners, both past and present, of the land we occupy and upon which we meet — the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. It is also upon their ancestral lands that Alfalfa House is built.

1. Attendance and Apologies

Attendance: Jonathan Green (MC), Katherine Lustig (MC), Matt McMillan (MC), Catherine O'Keefe (MC), Victoria Taylor (MC), Maurice Cabrera (Manager), Nathan Wratten (member), Julia Gove (staff member), Janne King (staff member, arrived 7:30pm), Emma Lees (member, arrived 8:40pm)

Apologies: David Winterton (MC), Renata Field (MC)

2. Approval of Agenda

That the agenda be approved.

Moved: Jonny. Seconded: Victoria. Carried by consensus.

3. Consent Agenda

3.1. Adoption of Previous Minutes

That the minutes of the April meeting be adopted.

3.2. New Members and Cancellations

That members with the following membership numbers be accepted as new members.

12184 12185 12186 12187 12188 12189 12191 12192 12193 12194 12196 12197
12198 12199 12200 12201 12202 12203 12204 12205 12206 12207 12208 12209
12210 12211 12212 12213 12214 12215 12217 12218 12219 12220 12221 12224
12225 12227 12228 12229 12230 12231 12233 12234 12235 12236 12237 12238
12239 12240 12241 12242 12243 12244

That members with the following membership numbers be cancelled:

2533 4219 4284 4698 5055 5219 5462 8075 8244 8322 8384 8561 8580 9237 9291
9294 9379 9414 9419 9422 9667 9801 10011 10034 10134 10173 10218 10266
10351 10515 10536 10577 10584 10591 10600 10601 10602 10603 10613 10616
10618 10620 10621 10626 10627 10630 10631 10642 10644

3.3. Out-of-session Decisions/Proposals

NIL

3.4. Reports from Working Groups

3.4.1. Governance

3.4.1.1 Governance working group Mon 29 May 2017, 3pm upstairs at Lentils.

3.4.1.2 14 June 2017 marks six months from the date of implementation of the Annual Subscription Fee. I will draft and submit a six month review to MC. If any members or board members have any comments about the ASF or its implementation, please email Victoria.

3.4.2. Premises Solutions, Shop Development and Affordability - Maurice

Bulk liquid shelving is currently in construction phase through the Maker Space in Marrickville, to cost of \$2,690 (original budget was \$3,900) with a potential further outlay of \$660 for a metal drip tray. This shelving is planned to be completed and installed by end of May.

Forward Thinking Design has submitted their draft design for the shop re-fit. Most of the staff have been taken through the design and their feedback has been sought. I met with FTD today and provided them with our initial feedback. We are now working through breaking up the planned refit into stages and costing them before we table for discussion at the next MC.

[Draft design plan](#)

AH Storage Shed - Volunteers John Caley (assigned project manager), Ben Charlton (architect) and myself met with The Bower this week to discuss request for building material to build the AH shed. This will replace the existing metal structure and provide much needed storage space for a freezer, cardboard storage, lockable storage for power tools, documentation as well as space to place produce/bread deliveries under cover. We will only using recycled materials (as much as possible) and I will work with The Bower to provide AH products in exchange for building materials. Proposed completion date, end of June (TBC).

[AH Storage Shed design](#)

[AH Storage Shed requirements](#)

We still have 16 storage boxes held in Renata's garage, this needs to be moved and Stevie Bee has kindly agreed to house these and sort through/dispose/label remaining documents until we have the new storage built.

3.4.3. Sustainability

NIL

3.4.4. Volunteer Engagement

NIL

3.4.5. Community Outreach

NIL

3.4.6. Staff Liaison

NIL

3.4.7. Grants - Maurice/Nathan

Existing CBP grant, we have until 31 May to spend \$6,100. We are planning to spend the following \$1k (aircon mould remediation) and \$3.4k (bulk liquid shelving), which leave \$1.7k for wooden fabrication. My plan is to use these remaining funds to cover cost of materials for some of the shop re-fit. I am working with FTD to cost the stages for to assess this in more detail.

As previously mentioned, a recent new member Nathan Wratten joined on our open day and was very keen to volunteer and brings with him significant grant writing experience. Over the last month we submitted a grant to the Inner West Council for a \$10k grant with regards to funding for our annual fundraising event, AH Sustainability Fair Day. In addition we are submitting two further grants with; Australian Ethical Super \$10k to replace our shop refrigeration and Sydney City Council \$10k dollar for dollar matched funding also to focus on refrigeration and potential shop refit costs.

3.4.8. Marketing - Celine

Here are the following activities we are working on or are being planned:

- Contacting and pitching to food/health related instagram influencers who can get us some air time
- Cross promoting with other organisations and businesses such as Milkwood, Cornersmith, etc
- New member support - improving how we welcome new members through sending a welcome pack as well as having volunteers on the look-out for new customers in the shop
- Having and promoting weekly specials at the point of sale, through SM and utilising the A frame blackboard
- Faces of Alfalfa photos - photographing members and getting a quote about why they like Alfalfa to share on SM and on new website
- Creating informative content on both SM and the newsletter

3.4.9. Website - Maurice

The website working group met on 9 May and reviewed the draft version of the new website. We are all very impressed and excited with how it looks, we are now working through a list of tasks which needs to be completed by end of April. We will regroup in early June to review and we are working to a go-live of mid June.

3.5. Manager's Report

[Manager's report](#)

3.6. Staffing (appointments and resignations)

NIL

3.7. Deferred Matters / Business Arising

NIL

3.8. Food Grants

On hold.

3.9. Workplace Health and Safety

- GIO is scheduled to meet with Yue Ajioka and myself on 23 May with regards to her Certificate of Capacity submission.
- Cleaning with regards to mould remediation is scheduled for 19 May at 7am (3 door refrigerator) and 24 May (2 x air conditioner)

3.10. Vision and Mission for Alfalfa House

The development of vision and mission statements is a long outstanding item which is hindering the development of full marketing plans. A survey was conducted of members asking for their thoughts on the matter, and some draft statements were written, but agreement was never reached under the previous MC. A small ad-hoc team (Katherine and Celine, together with any others interested) will meet to progress this. Those wishing to contribute are asked to contact Katherine.

That the Consent Agenda Items be approved.

Moved: Jonny. Seconded: Victoria. Carried by consensus.

4. Apron, Shirt and Tote Bag printing (Renata, 5 mins)

That the proposal for printing costs [here](#), be approved.

We can approve the costs as they appear, and if Renata can save us money further, that's a bonus.

Moved: Matt. Seconded: Catherine. Carried by consensus.

5. Finance Working Group (Jonny, 15 mins)

[April 2017 Treasurer's Report](#)

[April 2017 Dashboard](#)

Jonny will revise the historical comparative numbers (Apr 16, 15) based on where new memberships are tracked, but our sales are still down. Since we were closed for five days in April, the end result may be that we are flat for the month.

The insolvency buffer has doubled in the last couple of months, probably due to the annual subscription fee, and lowering of purchases.

Katherine queried why recruitment fees are recorded as a profit on the dashboard. Maurice explained that we received a credit back after paying twice with credit card.

Katherine queried the absence of recycling fees and was advised that the old “recycling” fees were for pickups of particular materials (eg styrofoam) which we now get for free, rather than generic recycling. The rest of the recycling is on the same bill as waste to landfill.

Victoria asked if anyone has looked into water usage in David’s absence. Katherine offered to do so.

ACTION ITEM: Maurice to provide Katherine with water bills for the last two years.

6. Amendments to Rules 2015 (Victoria, 10 mins)

The amendments to the Rules passed by the AGM in November 2015 were rejected by NSW Fair Trading in January 2016, and are not effective. Therefore the old s18, which requires an annual financial audit, continues to subsist in AH Rules. As this old s18 refers to repealed legislation (the Cooperative Act 1992), I advise that this is an ‘empty’ obligation, and therefore propose the following motion to the board -

The AH board notes

- 1. the continued subsistence of the old section 18 of the AH Rules, which refers to repealed legislation;*
- 2. the proposed amendments to s18, agreed by the AH membership at the AH AGM November 2015; and*
- 3. that there is no obligation in the current legislation for a small cooperative such as AH to undertake a financial audit every year.*

In the light of the proposed amendments to s18, the board notes with approval that AH did not hold a financial audit in 2016, and does not propose to hold one in 2017; and considers this in line with the the wishes of the membership as expressed in the AGM resolution in November 2015.

Moved: Jonny. Seconded: Matt. Carried by consensus

7. Product Strategy (Katherine, 20 mins)

Report [HERE](#).

Recommendations:

1. That no herbs, spices or teas currently carried by the shop be discontinued.
2. That niche products are not discontinued unless it is shown that there are zero sales in a year.
3. That significant changes to shelf space for products be justified by the sales over time, which are determined by an examination of the sales data over the past three years.
4. Further, that a report be provided to MC with the proposed product line strategy based on sales data, member survey information and the like.

Victoria asked why Katherine considers this to be a strategic issue rather than operational (for staff). Katherine clarified that while individual items aren't a strategic thing, a wider view of what AH offers is a strategic matter.

Janne explained that having fewer items has been a solution to OHS risks.

Catherine advised that, in retail, category reviews are usually undertaken every six months and this is in the Manager's role description. Such work is usually guided by an annual strategic plan.

Julia explained that many of the lines (herbs, spices, etc) were deleted because stock did not sell before its use-by date, while others were discontinued by the supplier. Some items were discontinued because sales volumes were too small compared with minimum order quantities, or to make sure all display items were reachable (not too high or too low).

Renata's suggestion (prior to the meeting, by email) that Lucy be asked for a plan, was brought up.

Katherine said she would like to hear from Lucy to understand if there a sales strategy and, if so, what metrics are used (eg number of sales, kilograms, ageing of inventory, our ability to order low enough quantities, etc).

Maurice advised that Lucy has gone through on year analysis of items by category, but being only four weeks into the role, she is not yet in a position to deliver reports. He also advised that the draft of the Forward Thinking Design plan for the shop takes into account the sales of each category.

Victoria proposes that #1 and #2 of the proposal be amended to take into account the issues of time limits and availability mentioned by the staff.

Jonny suggested that staff provide information on their general direction for buying, in terms of a broader strategy, but not necessarily in a large and time consuming report.

Maurice voiced the view that the issues were largely operational, and that many of the decisions to discontinue items were from before his time as Manager. A process has been followed in all discontinuations. On point 1, some products are no longer available or will no longer fit. On point 2, in the past it has been difficult to report on zero sales. On point 3, strategic use of shelf space is currently underway. On point 4, going down to the level of detail of individual product lines is too detailed. He suggested that staff make an effort to be clear about our plans to discontinue items, and that reasons for discontinuation could be communicated through signage.

Jonny asked if a summary of the buying strategy could be provided. Maurice responded that this would be covered by the annual plan he would be putting together with Catherine. Jonny asked when this would be available and was told that we could expect it at the next MC

meeting. Jonny asked if Katherine was sufficiently satisfied with this to table the discussion and Katherine agreed she was.

Maurice advised that he would bring the design proposal to the next MC meeting which would address the issue of Taste Organics opening in six weeks: To also produce a buying strategy for next month would push that back. Jonny suggested it could happen for the following meeting.

Katherine said she would like to see a strategy that indicates what AH is actually trying to be, not a strategy for each and every item.

Julia advised that there was a strategy in place but not contained in a single document.

Jonny asked that we be given assurance that no big changes would take place until there was a discussion about strategy, in about 2-3 months.

8. External Engagement - snack foods (Emma, 10 mins)

Report [HERE](#).

Recommendation: That Alfalfa House position itself as the go-to supplier for snacks for local meetings and events held by community groups, business entities, public administration and the like.

Jonny expressed support but asked who would do the work on this. Emma advised that she would work with Celine (Marketing Working Group), and one other volunteer who's interested in doing outreach. Catherine offered to assist.

Maurice queried how snack foods would be ordered by such groups, with or without the new website.

Victoria asked when we would hear how it was going. Emma suggested that August was feasible..

Moved: Katherine. Seconded: Jonny. Carried by consensus.

9. Other business

9.1. Volunteer morning tea

Victoria, Katherine and Catherine didn't get invited to the morning tea to celebrate volunteers. But they will be next time!

9.2. Paper bags

Katherine asked if giving away free paper bags goes against our goal of trying to reduce packaging?

Maurice advised that, during the open day, we got cheaper ones that don't tear as easily and gave them away to encourage people to shop. Staff are finding that people browse and buy

smaller quantities when bags are available. They will see how it goes for the next month, and canvass feedback, and report back.

Jonny suggested this is one of those areas where we can't be perfect all the time. In some aspects, we have to choose where we're going to be on the spectrum of sustainability versus staying in business. Maybe we set a limit on the number of paper bags we give away per month, or something.

Emma suggested a sign asking people to "bring this bag for your next shop".

Julia said that charging for a paper bag is a big barrier to shopping, and a shock to many people. Having a paper bag to give away beats oven wrap or other solutions.

Victoria asked if we could move to a system where the cost of the bag is built-in, and people who use entirely their own containers get a saving.

9.3. Update on EBA

Catherine advised that she has done some background research and would send around an information document on it.

Wrap-up/check-in occurred.

Meeting closed at: 9:11pm

Next meeting date: 27 June 2017

