



Dexter Regional Development Corporation

Minutes: September 1, 2009

Dexter Community Farmers Project

Members Present: Judy Craig, Dave Pearson, Courtney Brown, Judith Stephens, Roger Brawn, Barb O'Brien, Joan Peters, Darlene Bagley

Others Present: Fred Donovan, Joyce Duren, Marilyn Scribner, Dana Wilbur, Frank Spizuoco, Liz Breault, Lauraine Piquette, Scott Herring, Kelli Richardson, Tim Breen

Meeting opened: 7:05 p.m.

We got the grant to renovate the Fossa building. Now that we got the grant, the real work begins. Dave explained that we beat out all other communities for this grant. He feels we can build this into a great example to surrounding areas. We have gone through phase one and will now be entering phase two. We will not see any grant money until phase two is completed. The money has to go to a municipality. The town will hold the money. DRDC will submit invoices to the town and be reimbursed. We will put up the matching money.

We also have to appoint an advisory committee. The Town has used the human resources committee as an advisory committee in the past. The advisory committee is to watch over the project and make sure we are being honest with the money. We will hold a public hearing next Thursday at 7:00. The council will need to vote to approve phase two. There is also a series of letters we need to submit to our program development manager, Terry Stevens. Lauraine asked if the committee would get to meet with the architects. Judy plans to have the architects come to a meeting. Dave feels it is critical to keep everyone involved. Roger asked if we are going to be restoring? Judy replied that we will somewhat. We would ideally like to reuse the tin. But much of the building needs to be replaced.

The dairy farmers are working on the creamery part of the project. They were unable to make it tonight. The state has come up with a plan to process milk for the displaced farmers. They have recommended plastic bottles that mimic the look of glass.

We need to identify models for running the co-op (if that is what we decide.) Judy feels that we should not call it a co-op. She points out that people may feel they cannot shop there if they are not a member of the co-op. Dave feels members of the co-op could receive products at cost and then have a retail aspect as well where consumers (non-members) can buy at full price. Liz pointed out that it is confusing to call it a Farmer's Market and that people are getting the wrong idea. Judy agrees and suggests calling it the general store.

The differences in a co-op and a cooperative are discussed. In a co-op, members have a membership discount card and work hours at the store. Scott points out the main difference are how the profits are dispersed. A co-op is community owned. The workers and producers own the company. Each member owns a share.

Frank will do a producers survey. Fred feels we also need a consumer survey. It is mentioned that Susan would know how to go about this and what questions should be asked. Liz will speak with Susan about the survey. We can then get the information in papers and online.

Scott points out that we should also concentrate on consumer education. Tim states that we do not want other businesses in town to feel threatened. They need to realize that it will increase business for all.

Jason suggested to Judy earlier that we should ask other co-ops how they are run. The Action Committee has a list of co-ops and would like to visit some. Judy would like to call some of them. Tim has contacts to the Belfast Co-op.

Scott asked why DRDC does not want to operate the store. Dave and Judy replied that we might, it just has not been decided yet. Scott feels it makes perfect sense as a non-profit. Joyce was the CEO of a blueberry cooperative. The Cooperative started fresh pack business. The farmers made their profit after all the workers and expenses were paid. Scott suggests we define exactly what we want in regards to how the store is run. Frank offered the Action Committee to research and define our different options.

Tim stated that we need to know what producers/consumers are going to get out of their participation.

Judy points out that we need to be prepared not just for the general store but to sell in bulk to schools, hospitals, prisons, etc. Scott feels wholesale should be legally separate from the retail store.

We need to make a list of static products that we know the store can carry year round. Judy made a list of these products. We debated on what goods and products should be allowed in the store. Many felt it would be the store manager's or board of director's decision to make. Roger feels we should start with locally grown and produced item and see where to go from there. We also need to set up a "good's guideline" of what we can accept and what we cannot. Do we accept anyone's produce without spot-checking? Tim would hope the producers would have standards to set up. Frank feels the store manager should handle quality control.

Meeting adjourned: 8:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Courtney Brown, Secretary