

Shared Harvest – The Elgin Food Cooperative Nov. 13, 2023 Annual Shareholder Meeting Minutes

Jen Abbey called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. at the Meadows Community Room C at Gail Borden Public Library and live via Zoom.

Board members present: Gail Cohen, Allison Goodman, Jeremy Hayes, Jen Abbey, Rebecca Lagesse, Martin Nobs, and Jennifer Shroder.

Jen A. welcomed everyone to the meeting, presented the agenda and current board members.

Rebecca presented a brief refresher on What is Shared Harvest and our purpose.

Rebecca presented 2022 annual meeting minutes. Jen Abbey moved that we approve the minutes, and Allison Goodman seconded. Motion carried.

Gail presented the financial report from Nov. 1, 2022 through Oct. 31, 2023 (see deck). Loans in escrow are being paid back as the former capital campaign did not result in the Spring Street location for our store.

Jen A. kicked off the Year In Review detailing community outreach, events, tasks and education we have taken part in. Community presentation “The Future of Grocery Store Cooperatives” and invited attendees to have Shared Harvest present to groups they’re a part of. We had a presence at Hawthorne Hill and Elgin Sustainability Commission Earth Day events. We hosted a Spring Picnic in partnership with UUCE and McQueen Station Farm. It included a potluck and farm tour. We were present at Elgin’s first ever Pride Parade and Festival, Juneteenth Cultural Festival, and End of Summer Bash. Some board members took part in a free webinar series hosted by Food Co-op Initiative (FCI) over the summer, and in Sept. Shared Harvest representatives attend FCI’s annual Up & Coming conference in St Paul. We are participating in monthly peer group calls through FCI with four other co-ops also in development stage 2B. We are networking with elected officials at all levels to ensure awareness for future grant/funding opportunities and our media kit is being refreshed to help facilitate this.

Allison talked about our presence at the 2023 Downtown Elgin Farmers Market. We enjoyed connecting with attendees over the course of the season, sharing vegetable temporary tattoos and being recognized for Meet Your Neighbor Day. We sold two DIY Farm to Table meal kits (Salsa kit and pizza kits) which were delicious and well received. In early October we hosted our Farm to Table Dinner which due to cold weather was held indoors at the Centre of Elgin’s Heritage Ballroom. Chef Greg Shannon of Elgin Public House worked with our wonderful farm partners to put together a fantastic event. We again partnered with Elgin Symphony Orchestra to offer discounted tickets to that evening’s show to our dinner attendees. Allison thanked all of our volunteers for helping in so many ways over the course of the past year.

Martin presented A Look Ahead noting that our co-op organization is currently in development stage 2B, and our current task is to evaluate potential sites/update market study. He presented the board's current priorities for the store location including being downtown (or downtown-adjacent) to promote economic development in Elgin, being walkable/bikeable/access to public transit. Online and in person discussion shared agreement that we should continue to focus on the downtown area. Martin presented our Top 3 Goals & Priorities for 2024 which include 1) Locking in a site, 2) Expanding Shareholder & Community Relationships (finding expertise in legal, finance, grants, construction, marketing to join the board or serve on a volunteer team), and 3) Growing # of Shareholders.

Election: Jeremy introduced board nominee Virginia T. Motion to accept the board candidate came from Rebecca, Gail seconded. Motion carried.

Carol led a Q&A session during which location priorities and goals for 2024 were reviewed. All attendees were entered into prize drawing for Equal Exchange products and five names were drawn. Jen A. will coordinate delivery for those attending online.

Motion to adjourn from Jen A. at 8:10 p.m. and was seconded by Rebecca. Motion carried.