

Alfalfa House Members Council Meeting - Minutes  
Date: Tuesday 26 July 2016  
Time: 7pm  
Location: Meeting Space, 8-10 Brown Street, Newtown

Facilitator: Jonny  
Minutes: Andrew

**Meeting opened at:** 7.11pm

**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: Andrew McNicol (MC), David Begg (MC), Jonathan Green (MC), Maurice Cabrera (MC) (via phone), Simon Holmes (Manager), Stevie Bee (member), Suzie Hollott (member), Cath Renwick (member), Julia (Staff member).  
Apologies: Katherine Lustig (MC), Renata (MC), Celine (member).

**2. Approval of Agenda**

That the agenda be approved.  
Moved: Jonny. Seconded: Andrew. CARRIED by consensus.

**3. Consent Agenda**

**3.1. Adoption of Previous Minutes**

That the minutes of the 28 June 2016 meeting be adopted.

**3.2. New members and cancellations**

That members with the following membership numbers: 11556 to 11606 with 9 skipped records (11560, 11568, 11572, 11590, 11592, 11601, 11602, 11603, 11605) and 0 blank records be accepted as new members.

That members with the following membership numbers be cancelled: 1757, 3077, 3190, 3192, 3345, 3532, 4153, 4540, 5121, 5513, 5524, 5634, 6153, 6205, 6405, 6478, 6504, 6509, 6601, 674, 6803, 6827, 6902, 7135, 7460, 7625, 7664, 7710, 7856, 7894, 7931, 7940, 7969, 8089, 8199, 8281, 8388, 8448, 8663, 8672, 8749, 8869, 8898, 9031, 9161, 9193, 9274, 9287, 9297, 9361, 9418, 9530, 9555, 9557, 9641, 9684, 9694, 9696, 9697, 9701, 9703, 9727, 9734, 9735, 9738, 9746 and 9761.

**3.3. Out-of-Session Decisions / Proposals**

NIL.

**3.4. Reports from Working Groups**

#### **3.4.1. Governance (Andrew, Katherine, Renata)**

Carried over actions:

- Draft a policy on developing policies.
- Draft a new Code of Conduct Policy and Procedures.
- Create hard and electronic folders with index for all policies.
- Conduct and document a quarterly site audit based on the WH&S report. Bring in additional group members to help.
- That a WHS safety and risk management system be prepared in line with the recommendations of the report not later than August 2016, including a documented WHS induction program, updated incident reporting and emergency procedures.
- Katherine - need to look through and work out which jobs need volunteers and how we will get them.
- Katherine to contact Emily from volunteer engagement working group and Maurice.

None of these have been completed. Carry over to next month.

#### **3.4.2. Premises Solutions (David)**

NIL

#### **3.4.3. Finance (Jonny)**

Carried over action: Assist Simon with the transition to Sustainable Numbers. Let the rest of MC know if there's any more support they need from MC. In process. We have signed the engagement letter with Sustainable Numbers; and we will send our termination letter to Keeping Company.

Carried over action: Report back to MC if Sustainable Numbers recommends/requests an audit. Anthony Zahra (Sustainable Numbers) does not recommend that we audit the 2016 FYE numbers.

[June 2016 Treasurer's Report](#)

[June 2016 Dashboard Report](#)

June 2016 Monthly Report

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=16cqb2HPkzh7CW0N4hlnhxCtye-xZYqkqnCmAP2z2PsY>

**3.4.4. Building Website and Other IT (Stevie)**

NIL

**3.4.5. Marketing (Cath, Celine, Suzie)**

Carried over action: Consider optimal time for sending newsletters.  
Liaise with Simon.

**3.4.6. Affordability (Maurice)**

NIL

**3.4.7. Sustainability (Celine, Katherine)**

NIL

**3.4.8. Volunteer Engagement (Adam, Emily)**

NIL

**3.4.9. Community outreach (Adam)**

NIL

**3.4.10. Staff Liaison (Jonny, Renata)**

NIL

**3.5. Manager's Report**

[Here.](#)

Carried over action: Tell SJM that we will not be auditing this year so they do not need to attend our stocktake - Done. They would like to mention their availability for future audits if and when they arise.

Carried over action: Ask 2SER about the possibility of a story, and -mention in a way that does not sound like a bribe- that we will probably be continuing to the campaign again this year - Done: no guarantee that they would do a story on us unless there was a story there. Will discuss whether we give them the remaining food grant later on in this meeting.

Carried over action: Advertise the volunteer coordinator position be advertised as per policy, pending changes made by SLWG to ensure it is in line with other AH JDs, at the shop co-ordinator rate following consultation with staff.

Status: The latest JD has been circulated to staff, but have received no responses to date. I believe that some staff members may be attending MC tonight, and may wish to speak on this matter.

Carried over action: Ask insurance company about under 18 people volunteering, particularly from the legal age of working and the cost of any change to our premium.

### **3.6. Staffing (appointments and resignations)**

NIL.

### **3.7. Deferred Matters / Business Arising**

#### **3.7.1. October 2015 Fundraiser Report**

Past action item: Adam to produce and distribute an October 2015 fundraiser report to MC.

#### **3.7.2. Storage**

Storage of old documentation has been completed. Further storage of 6-8 boxes from the shop to Renata's place happening in the next few weeks.

#### **3.7.3. Internal front shop fitting**

Staff and Ben to discuss installation, volunteers and timeframe. - Done! Installation has been completed.

#### **3.7.4. AGM**

To be held on Tuesday 22nd November.

November MC meeting to be held Tuesday 15.

Renata to coordinate and request for volunteers to help plan the social AGM event.

#### **3.7.5. Thursday shop hours**

Stevie and Simon: Look at numbers more. - Done!

Renata and Stevie: Do a poll to members about opening hours. -

Done! Drafted and going out soon.

Simon: Brief the staff and come back with an interim report. - Done!

#### **3.7.6. Under 18 volunteers**

Interim policy- Children accompanying parents can be there with them, supervised by the parent and not officially volunteering. Children under 18 cannot volunteer alone. If staff have any concerns about the child, to let Simon know.

Andrew: Look at the membership age and rules within the constitution  
- Done! The only restriction on members is that they are “natural persons”.

**3.7.7. MC casual vacancy**

Katherine: Talk to Suzy about the casual vacancy. Done!

Simon: Put the vacancy in the next e-news. - Done!

**3.8. Food Grants**

NIL

**3.9. Workplace Health and Safety**

NIL

That the Consent Agenda Items be approved.

Moved: Jonny. Seconded: Andrew. CARRIED by consensus.

**4. Lease Renewal (10 minutes)**

The lease renewal of AH has been finalised, and will be available for signing by two directors at the MC meeting. The document itself is four pages in total, as an renewal of AH's existing lease - it captures the changes to the agreement without reiterating the matters that remain the same.

Suzie: Did we look into moving premises?

Simon: Yes, but realistically we didn't feel there were any better options nearby that made competitive sense.

Jonny: We would have looked into it if we had more resources.

Cath: What are our opt-out options at the 5 year mark? A: We can leave.

Jonny proposes that two directors (Katherine and Jonny) of the MC execute the amended lease with our landlord.

Moved: Jonny. Seconded: David. CARRIED by consensus.

**ACTION: Katherine and Jonny sign the lease.**

**5. Treasurer's Report (10 minutes)**

Jonny summarised part 1 of the treasurer's report.

We've cut as many expenses as we can, transitioned to new bookkeepers (almost half the cost) and staff has been working hard to reduce costs. We still have a desperate need to increase revenue to stay afloat. We need more shopping but also participation in general.

Q: Should we be rethinking price drops etc? A: We've done a good job with what we've done, but the only people benefiting from the drops are existing members, which makes our numbers actually lower. We would need this to be paired with a membership drive to actually benefit us.

Maurice: Larger question, perhaps we have too many working groups and we should refine them so we can focus on what's important.

Maurice: we are reporting a loss of \$23k for the year. But in terms of what the shop is worth to the members (owner's equity) we have not seen a drop.

**We will keep this as an existing agenda item. We need to keep discussing balance sheets, and profit and loss, especially leading up the AGM.**

#### **6. 2SER Food Grant (20 minutes)**

Last year we donated the equivalent of 20 food boxes over 20 weeks to 2SER's subscriber drive. This year the proposal under discussion is that we do something similar. This would involve occasional mention of Alfalfa House during the drive. Simon asked about feasibility of there being a story covered by 2SER regarding Alfalfa House, but they would only do this 'if there is a story'.

We need to decide whether we will award the remaining food grant to 2SER.

20 boxes at \$25, equalling \$500 total 'value'. However, this would actually cost us less.

Stevie: Sounds good but only if we track the success of this. Also feel we should be proactive and quick about getting a story picked up.

Jonny: Does the marketing group want to take on that responsibility? A: Yes.

Proposal: That we give a food grant to 2SER of \$500 and that it will be tracked.

Suzie: \$25 food box is at member price. Perhaps we should give away memberships so it's easier to track?

Maurice: Alternatively, offer a guided tour when picking up their box, to explain the benefits of Alfalfa House and membership.

Amended proposal: We will give 2SER a food grant that is limited to \$500. We will track it. Marketing group will find a story to 2SER. Membership will be included in the package. Simon will work out the cost to keep it all below \$500. A brief guided tour will be available to recipients collecting boxes.

Moved: David. Seconded: Jonny. CARRIED by consensus.

**ACTION:** Marketing group to look into proposing a story to 2SER.

**ACTION:** Simon to organise and track this.

#### **7. New MC Member (20 minutes)**

Emily left recently and we have a few months before the next AGM. We have asked membership for interest in joining and have 2 interested people.

We can appoint someone ourselves.

Jonny proposes that we get back to the interested parties and give them info so we can potentially elect them over email prior to the next MC meeting.

Stevie: concerned about new MC members never having been at a meeting.

Maurice: Will they submit an application to inform us of their interest.

Simon can send introductory packet.

**ACTION:** Jonny to contact the two interested members - Katherine(?) and Suzie - to 1) invite them to attend the next MC meeting and 2) ask them to provide MC with some of their experience and interest and 3) provide them with the introductory documentation for MC members. Katherine potentially to assist.

#### **8. Thursday Shop Hours (20 minutes)**

History

- Staff felt that being open until 8 was potentially a waste of money for the shop, especially during winter.
- We looked at the actual numbers and we were making \$9 on average for that hour over the year.
- Simon discussed further with staff.

Simon looked at how many of the transactions were staff purchases over the past 6 months. 11/28 weeks had staff purchases.

Some objections are practical, but also relate to the sheer length of the day. We have 2 staff members who will also be away for long periods later in the year. (Simon may be able to adjust hours to accommodate.)

Various staff members have no problem with the shop being open late, but other staff do and find it incredibly unenjoyable. The 2 staff currently doing the shift don't mind it, but it becomes difficult to cover because other staff don't like it, which creates a problem with rostering.

Member survey ready to go. Surveymonkey questions are as follows.

- If Alfalfa House was to open earlier, would you choose to shop during these hours and days?
- Do you shop on Thursdays between 7 and 8pm?
- Are there other times you'd like the co-op to be open?

Maurice: Strong concerns about the survey. This is a staffing issue and we don't need to ask membership through the survey to help us with a staffing issue.

Cath: Are we asking the members who do shop in this hour? Also, should we focus on non-members and when they want to shop, though very difficult to gauge.

Jonny: The survey would help influence how to change hours.

Maurice: We should focus on more pressing matters than opening hours right now, and it may be better to wait until the AGM.

David: One issue is staffing and the broader issue is what hours we are open. The latter is the bigger issue and will be helped by the survey.

Proposal: We conduct a survey relating to opening hours, and in the meantime staffing will be conducted as deemed by Simon.

Moved: Jonny. Seconded: David. Passed with consensus with Maurice standing aside.

**ACTION: Stevie and Renata to sort out the survey.**

**ACTION: Simon to work with staffing.**

Jonny: We're a NFP and we're working for our members and community, and employing people in an ethical business. If we're making a profit during that hour, we should be open. If we have to rearrange staffing for that to happen, that would be preferable, as long as it is sustainable for staff.

## 9. **Vision and Mission (20 minutes)**

There are 3 vision and mission options for review, based on responses the the member survey sent out recently. [They can be read here.](#)

"Celine, Cath and Suzie have each done a draft so they are different in different ways. It would be great to get feedback on which ones hit the right spot for the MC."

We (Andrew) missed the newsletter cutoff so we have not yet sent these out to members for discussion. What would be a good way to move forward on this?

It was decided MC would discuss these options over email and have a response by August 8.

**ACTION: Andrew to set up Doodle poll for options.**

**ACTION: MC to send a response to Celine, Cath and Suzie by the 8<sup>th</sup>.**

**10. Annual Fee (20 minutes)**

The marketing working group (MWG) have created a comparison of fee structure for various food co-ops. We are the only one that doesn't have an annual fee.

MWG plan on including a recommendation for an annual fee in their marketing strategy but feel the potential for more income should be discussed earlier rather than later given the situation of our bottom line. They would also like MC's feedback on this recommendation and some background as to why a fee hasn't been introduced in the past as there may be valid reasons the MWG are unaware of.

Example of potential income:

Annual fee of \$19.95 = \$84,787 p.a (based on current database of 4250).

If only 70% are willing to renew, that's still almost \$60k p.a.

NB: The maximum we can set an annual subscription without changing our rules (Schedule 2) is \$20.

Stevie with some history: Initially there were 20 \$1 shares AND a \$10 annual fee. This was from 1998 until 2003. There were issues about tracking payments at the time, also. 60 of the 300 members turned up to a meeting to decide on the new structure, in order to remove barriers to membership, and sales went up 20% in the next month. There were other changes also, but this was considered to be the kickstart.

Jonny: Membership sustained for shopping.

Stevie: Some may not be prepared to pay the fee unless there was a perception of value elsewhere.

Julia: Important to be upfront with members about our financial situation.

Simon: Our current joining fee is a pretty good deal actually. Currently we aren't trading profitably and it is equitable to suggest members should pay an annual fee.

David: Concern it might solve our problem initially, but it doesn't tackle the issue of needing more people through the door. Would like the discussion to go forward but has not yet decided on a view.

Maurice: Reviewing the membership fee and discount is definitely a good thing to do. However an annual fee may drive members away. Perhaps we should reconsider the member discount, and reduce it for members who do not shop regularly.

Cath: If we get cash money from membership, this will better enable us to do proper marketing.

**ACTION: Marketing working group to come up with a proposal to put to MC.**

**Meeting closed at 9:05pm**



