

**Red Wiggler Community Farm
Board Meeting Minutes
January 28, 2020**

The meeting was held on Thursday, January 28, 2020 via video.

The following Board members were present:

- Katie Leary Sebastian, President
- Louis Eby
- Chris Garosi, Treasurer
- Kim Guay
- Cynthia Hamilton
- Jim Heaney, Vice-President
- Ben Laimon
- Elgin Martin
- Stacy Molander, Secretary

The following staff members were in attendance:

- Woody Woodroof, Executive Director
- Ashlee Edelblut
- Ashley Jordan
- Melissa McLearen
- Darlene Richardson
- Sandy Yuen

A quorum was present. The meeting was called to order by Katie at 8:00 AM.

The minutes of the Board meeting held on November 19, 2020 were approved without amendment.

Program Review

The RWCF staff presented a comprehensive overview of farm activities during 2020 and plans for 2021.

Timeline of Events

A detailed timeline of events was presented by Melissa. The presentation explained the pandemic protocols that were put into place, how decisions were made over the course of the year and acknowledged that safety was the number one priority. Highlights of the presentation included:

- When the stay-at-home order was issued in March, staff quickly pivoted to focus on being a working farm, producing much needed food for community members.

- In April, the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) application was submitted and approved.
- In May, some of the Growers began to return to the farm and by September all of the Growers were back at work in some capacity.
- A major hail storm in June impacted production but the staff worked together to overcome the challenges.

Pandemic Response Pivot Statement

A pandemic response pivot statement was presented by Mellissa as follows:

1. Sustain the farm and the production of healthy food for our community.
2. Holistically protect the health of our community.
3. Sustain all employees by paying wages according to their schedule regardless of pandemic impact.
4. Shift to 50% of distribution intentionally directed to low-income members of our community.
5. Shift vocational development and educational focus to include life-skills for navigating the pandemic for all employees and volunteers.
6. Reassess and update our actions frequently to uphold our vision and mission while protecting the health and safety of our community.

Volunteer Program

An overview of the volunteer program was presented by Darlene. Highlights of the presentation included:

- There were fewer volunteers on the farm, mostly seasoned volunteers working more hours each. Smaller teams were utilized to ensure social distancing.
- Staff did not host large groups or service-learning students.
- The intern program was a success. It included 6 participants and was shortened to 10 weeks.
- As staff look ahead to 2021, the volunteer program will include continued seasoned volunteers in small teams in the short term. Staff will revisit the possibility of larger group visits and volunteers with developmental disabilities later in the year.

Education Program

An overview of the education program was presented by Darlene. Highlights of the presentation included:

- All farm visits were postponed.
- Staff had a renewed focus on CSA education.
- Staff participated in virtual events hosted by other groups, including a virtual on-farm visit.
- As staff look ahead to 2021, they are exploring more virtual visits and making the discovery garden space available for families and/or small

groups to use independently. Staff will reevaluate other programs later in the year.

Grower Program

An overview of the Grower program was presented by Melissa. Highlights of the presentation included:

- As Growers were brought back, staff assessed their ability to follow protocols and adjusted accordingly.
- Staff suspended individual goals for the season, and instead focused on life skills for the pandemic.
- Maintaining Grower wages was important and the PPP allowed for that.
- There were some benefits of the new approach including small teams allowing for greater quality in teaching, lower levels of fatigue from a less intense schedule and less conflict generally.
- As staff look ahead to 2021, they will keep smaller regular teams, establish mentors for Growers and slowly increase schedules.

CSA Distribution

An overview of CSA distribution was presented by Ashley. Highlights of the presentation included:

- Changes to the program included a shift in the ratio of the gourmet CSA to Neighbors in Need (F2FB & F2GH) donations from a 70/30 split to a 50/50 split.
- The number of food bank partners increased and the distribution doubled, which helped to meet the increased need during the pandemic.
- All on-farm and off-farm retail markets were canceled.
- As staff look ahead to 2021, they intend to keep the 50/50 ratio of gourmet CSA to donations ratio.

Farming and Production

An overview of farming and production was presented by Ashley. Highlights of the presentation included:

- Despite the pandemic, farm operations were successful and yields were strong.
- Staff focused on soil health, better weed management and better cross training of staff.
- As staff look ahead to 2021, they plan to reduce what is planted and continue focusing on more efficient farming.

Care Farming

An overview of the care farming program was presented by Andrea. Highlights of the presentation included:

- This year focused on laying the foundation for the program by creating a mission statement, designing a logo, establishing social media channels and developing a website.
- Virtual check-ins were held with farms within the network.
- Technical assistance was provided and staff presented at relevant conferences.
- As staff look ahead to 2021, they will continue to build the network, host a virtual workshop series and curate a technical assistance video library.

Discussion

At the conclusion of the presentation, there was a robust question and answer period. The Board expressed appreciation for the way in which the staff handled a very challenging year. It was acknowledged that some of the changes to programming and farm operations that came as a result of the pandemic, were actually changes staff had been considering making.

Despite a very challenging year positive outcomes included:

- Shifting the ratio of the gourmet CSA to donations to 50/50 which staff believes better reflects the mission and values of RWCF.
- Greater use of seasoned volunteers (i.e., decreasing the number of volunteers but increasing the average hours per person) has created greater efficiency and strengthened relationships.
- The pandemic forced staff to reduce the complexity of the farm and this simplification was welcomed and appreciated by staff.
- The benefits of smaller teams of Growers were welcomed by both Growers and staff.

Housekeeping

The meeting concluded with a few housekeeping items as follows:

- The Executive Committee will be meeting more often this year.
- All Committee Chairs are encouraged to establish meeting schedules for the year.
- Board bios have been updated.
- End of year staff appreciation notes were well received.
- Please share with Katie any suggested Board discussion topic and/or ways to improve the Board meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 AM.

Minutes prepared by Stacy Molander.