**Minutes of the Meeting of the Rowland Cooperative**

**January 13, 2019**

**Rowland Cafe, 2:00 pm**

**Community Meeting**

Attending: Elsie Andersen, Lorraine Bentley, Caryn Christianson, Kenny Christianson, Wendy Fitchner, John Gillen, Laurel Mason, Randy Nilsen, Brian Thompson, Bob Wicksnes

Excused: Christine Foland, Winnie Olsen

The meeting commenced at 2:12 p.m.

Kenny welcomed the attendees and updated the group on recent coop activities. The roof is currently being replaced with a red metal roof so solar panels can be installed. We have been working with Rich Tussel of the building department to explore what is feasible legally and to obtain the necessary permits. Initial plans include using the front of the general store building as a grocery store, breakfast café, and pizzeria while the toll house is being renovated. Longer term plans include using the toll house for ice cream, gifts, and a small museum, and renovating the back of the general store building for a restaurant with a music venue and a meeting room while the front can be used as a grocery store.

A conference table, picnic table half-circle table, benches, chairs, and book cases were purchased at a surplus furniture sale at Ithaca College.

Interest in the coop has been growing. After Kenny sent the plans to the building department on Thursday January 10, he was contacted by Town Supervisor Mike Mancini and Katie Collins from the News Eagle. Kenny will meet with Katie on Wednesday, January 16 for a story about the coop and future plans for Rowland.

Brian Thompson, who worked with the company that updated the electric service, explained that the service had been divided into four accounts: restaurant, apartment, back of store, and landlord. This was done when the back of the store was used as a beauty salon. Brian also described some of the issues that prevented him from using the restaurant more under the previous owners, including inconsistent hours and slow service. The coop must try to avoid these problems.

Discussion ensued concerning the need for the restaurant and pizzeria run by the coop to have consistent hours of operation, quality food, and quick service. There is an untapped market for breakfast sandwiches for commuters in the early morning weekday hours.

Bob Wicksnes, who grows vegetables during the summer, expressed some of the frustrations in trying to serve a retail market. Now he usually just gives away the produce he grows. Any time he grew food, such as pumpkins, for a particular group or purpose, he ended up giving the food away anyway. Other members suggested that the coop could provide a market for the food he grows, but Bob was determined to remain non-committal.

Kenny then described the history of coops in general and the seven cooperative principles developed in Rochdale, England in 1844. He explained the history of the Rowland Cooperative and the current structure. The board and officers have remained the same since 2012. The board consists of

 Kenny Christianson, President

 Winnie Olsen, Vice President

 Christine Foland, Secretary
 Laurel Mason, Treasurer

 Lorraine Bentley

 Elsie Andersen

The coop formed in 2012 to address the problems of economic plight in Rowland and to assist Robert Tellefsen to purchase the building and run the Rowland Café. He lost the building to foreclosure in 2017. Kenny used money from an inheritance to purchase the building in October 2018, after a year of negotiating with the previous owners and trying to obtain a clear title.

The group discussed the items that the grocery store could sell and the hours of operation. Members agreed that the business should start small at first, with limited products and hours of operation. We should start with basic groceries, breakfast, and pizza. Local products should be emphasized as much as possible.

Caryn and Wendy agreed to set up a face book page for the coop, so members could list the items they would like to purchase from the store. Kenny agreed to set up a web page where access to coop records could be provided, and the public could learn about the coop through an electronic brochure.

Kenny mentioned that the coop could provide other types of services to its members, such as access to tubes and rafts in the basement of the toll house.

Laurel discussed the potential problems we may face in finding reliable labor, and her strong desire for local access to groceries, especially organic products.

The next community meeting will be on Sunday, January 20 at 2:00 pm in the Rowland Café.

Kenny thanked everyone for attending and expressed the hope that they would be willing to be active in the coop moving forward.

The meeting adjourned at 3:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenny Christianson for Christine Foland