

EVI Inc, Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

2.20.2019

Present: Peter Bardaglio (Board Member), Stuart Friedman (Community Member), Steve Gibbs (Board Member), Jeff Gilmore (Board Member), Phebe Gustafson (Community Member), Lisa Ripperton (Board Member), Jen Rowley (Community Member), Bradford Smith (Board Member), Kumari Weaver (Community Member)

Review of Annual Meeting of EVI, Inc. membership, identifying issues that merit further consideration.

Members were concerned about the dire financial straits that both Kestrel Perch and West Haven Farm are in. The upbeat presentation from Groundswell seemed a bit jarring in comparison. (see below)

Peter in his capacity as board member of Groundswell shared the following upcoming plans. A 106-acre farm in Mecklenburg has become available. There are long-term investors who are willing to invest in a farm such as this that has a history of using sustainable practices. The plan is that Groundswell would assume the management of the farm over time, which allows them to address their central mission of equity, social justice and land equity/reparations.

Groundswell will continue to use the site it leases from EVI, Inc., but farmers from the EVI site would have the option of “graduating” to the Mecklenburg site. The trend seems to be moving away from “incubator farms” to just making land available for farmers to work.

The recent Climate Summit Conference viewings brought the plight of our EVI farms (Kestrel Perch, West Haven Farm) to the notice of everyone who attended. There is a movement among Villagers to help save the farms.

The annual meeting was well-attended: EVI people are clearly interested in what happens to our land here.

The discussion moved to “what things work.” Stuart shared his knowledge of Vermont farms, where “hub” or “shared” CSA farming seemed to be working well. One grows corn, one grows greens, etc., rather than one farm trying to grow 40 different crops on one piece of land. The one farm CSA model is just not viable any longer in our area. Bradford referenced a project from when he was at Cornell in the 80’s called FLOW, which was an aggregation of farms that worked together to fill larger orders at markets, for example. That seemed to be a good model.

The other thing working well is “Value-Added Products,” e.g. at the Ithaca Farmer’s Market, which is not as much about produce as it once was.

Bradford also mentioned the Youth Farm Project, though their mission is more about agricultural education and addressing injustice in the food system rather than trying to turn a profit.

Standardize process for regular communications with the membership.

Jeff sees this as having 4 parts: 1) have meetings with a posted agenda; 2) announce meetings and agendas ahead of time; 3) take minutes of the meetings; and 4) involve EVI residents.

There will be regularly monthly meetings (scheduled on the 3rd Wednesday of the month), except during the holidays.

Bradford suggested developing a way to communicate only with EVI, Inc. members (possibly via a list-serv) to emphasize that membership is valuable. No decision was made.

Roles of officers.

It was agreed that as Interim Chairperson, Lisa is responsible for agenda-building, with input from other members of the Board. It was also agreed that roughly 10 days before the monthly meeting she will send out a suggested agenda to the Board for input. Then, a week before the monthly meeting she will send out an agenda to the Village. The Secretary is responsible for the minutes of each meeting.

EVI, Inc. is a 501c3 non-profit, and its bylaws require that there be a Chairperson, an Ombudsperson, a Secretary and a Treasurer. It was suggested for next month's meeting that there be a clarification of the Ombudsperson's responsibilities and further discussion of the bylaws (Jeff will send these out to the Board).

Bradford agreed to serve as Secretary. Jeff suggested that at each meeting someone should be chosen to take notes upon which Bradford will base the minutes.

Formalize explicit policy on conflicts of interests and recusals.

Peter offered that Groundswell has such a policy that could serve as a model for EVI, Inc., and will send this out to the Board.

Develop process for addressing concerns that arise between members, residents, and lessees.

The thought was that this would be the responsibility of the Ombudsperson, as a way of introducing people with concerns/problems to the Board. The Ombudsperson could speak on their behalf if they wish to remain anonymous.

Elect officers.

Bradford nominated Lisa for Chairperson; Peter seconded the nomination. All agreed.

Lisa nominated Jeff for Treasurer; Peter seconded. All agreed.

Jeff nominated Bradford for Secretary; Peter seconded. All agreed.

Jeff nominated Kumari for Interim Boardmember; Peter seconded. All agreed.

Other announcements.

The Land Partnership Committee met the first week of February. Their plans for the current year are to build a trail from the water tank down to the mailboxes and do plantings of trees and shrubs alongside of it. In subsequent years they are tentatively planning to build one or more trails down near City Lights (along the "avenue of trees"). Bradford suggested another project might be the removal of woody material at the edge of the FROG Pond and to take

down the tree of heaven and box elder in the area between the stream and the north boundary of Groundswell.

Items for next meeting:

- A clarification of the Ombudsperson's responsibilities and further discussion of the bylaws.
- Using Groundswell's policy as a model, formalize an explicit policy on conflicts of interest and recusals.
- Develop process for addressing concerns that arise between members, residents, and lessees.