

## **Responses & Questions from the Forum 1/29/20**

*(typed up from paper cards handed out & collected that evening)*

### **What Would You Like to Know?**

#### About timing:

- Projected opening time frame?
- Projected time line?
- What's the timeline?
- Timeline?
- Is there time, or flexibility, in the lease discussions with O'Neill for this to come together?
- Did owner of Wilson's contact GFM management before closing of Wilson's announced? (just curious)

#### The what-if's:

- If Wilson's doesn't work out, is there a Plan B? the numbers say we need to expand. What happens if Wilson's doesn't work out?
- What happens if moving to the Wilson's building falls through?
- What happens if a big box store like Wal-Mart or Market Basket opens on the French King?
- If the country slips into a recession, what happens to the sales projections (according to the market study?)
- In a town that has not grown in decades, how can we hope for continued growth each year? At least enough to carry this plan through?
  
- How does this process and financial trends compare with Brattleboro or River Valley Market?

#### About finances:

- Do we still have a mortgage on our building?
- How much would we need to finance this?
- Can we handle/pay the new rent? Is it fair and equitable?
- Is there a possibility to own the new space? Given the numbers of empty storefronts, how likely will it be to either rent or sell our current building?
- How much build-out is needed to occupy Wilson's; how would we afford this build out?
- Do you think we can break even with increased sales given that our debt is going to increase dramatically?
- What would a capital campaign look like?
- What would a capital campaign look like/how work?
- How would a capital campaign work? Member loans? Increased benefits?
- How much do member-owners need to invest to make this possible?

- When can we start donating for/to the capital fund? (Go for it!)
- Can you show profitability before expansion? What is your plan?
- Does the co-op compute sales per square foot?
- Will you make Fin (finance) reports such as P&L and Balance Sheet and Fin projections (if you take the risk) available to member-owners?
- What does the expansion budget look like? In other words what level of risk are we taking, how likely is our success, and what will we all need to do to enhance likelihood of success.
- What is the total amount that this move will cost? How will it be raised?

#### About prices going down:

- How can prices go down if there is a big loan to pay off? Will this take some time?
- Will prices go down if we are able to buy in larger amounts (bulk)?

#### About employees:

- Will you be able to find enough employees to staff this terrific market?

#### About the current store:

- How does our current building fit into the plan to occupy Wilson's?
- What happens if you don't sell the current store building?
- What would we do with our current building?
- Will GFM sell current building?
- Will we sell the current store? Is there a big danger of it remaining vacant?
- Will you continue to own our current building?
- What happens to our existing building? (if selling, when, in the process? Do we need to sell to finance the new site?)
- What will happen to our current space?
- What is the plan for the empty coop space? (and timeline)
- Concerned about getting our \$ out of the current building to roll into a new space
- What will happen to the existing building?
- Will we continue to keep McCusker's?

#### About products:

- What product areas can GFM expand on (create a niche) that would minimally impact our neighbor food stores?
- Would you offer catering?
- What's being planned for expansion of (for lack of better category) non "sales" areas like staff for community collaborations, demo kitchen, meeting room, co-op education?
- I've been thinking about what could the co-op offer that we lost when Wilson's closed ... and what do people keep asking for (think mercantile

depot) – kitchen wares dept., inexpensive underwear, more basic clothing, organic and coops?)

- If Produce were to grow as projected, would it remain all organic?
- Will there be expanded space for locally crafted artisan non-food items?
- Will there be a larger selection of bulk food items especially to reduce the amount of plastic packaging?
- What will it take to get more Bulk? (it seems access to self-sized-chosen bulk is being replaced by prepackaged, either at the coop or otherwise)i.e. bay leaves now only prepackaged; dried fruit raisins) if you buy bigger it costs less? Let's pursue living our values.
- Who decides what products will be added? Current buyers? A consultant? Product relevance is important and not always a Greenfield strength.
- My concern is that the new store will SO much room that the products you bring in will not sell because you aren't buying well.
- Can we have products for profit to fill the gap left by Wilson's kitchen suppliers?
- What can we do to cover the people that used the Barn for cheap food?
- How does the expansion allow us to lower prices?

#### About space determinations:

- How will you determine how much shopping space percentage of total square footage? Do you plan to use similar percentages to current store in all or most departments?
- Will the increased space allow for a large Wellness section?
- How does the size in Wilson's compare to the size of River Valley Market (I know you have to ballpark it ☺ )
- Will space use of new location include an efficient arrangement of product demo preparation and presentation to help build profit? (a la Trader Joe's in Hadley)
- Can we explore the "Barn"? it has 16,000 sq.ft., 3500 of which are downstairs and lots of coolers, etc. we could easily add additions on the building and have shuttles go from downtown.
- Curious about other possible spaces in the building for complimentary businesses – new downtown department store? Hotel? Other ideas.
- Are you concerned about investing infrastructure on a rented building? Kitchen/bakery etc. is a big investment, not all able to be taken out.
- What will be done with the upper floors?
- What would the status be of the upper floors?

#### About affecting other stores:

- How will our growth likely affect Foster's, which is a local icon? I don't mind if we make a dent in the gross sales of other stores in this area.
- Concerned about harmful market impact on Foster's if co-op expands. Any data?

- What will be the impact on Rise Above Bakery? I'd hate to see Brian run out of business.
- What will the impact be on Foster's Market? How can we support them as a community?

About environment/sustainability/social responsibility:

- As the Prepared Foods Dept. expands, can we as a corporation and socially responsible business, commit to transitioning to all compostable containers, to set an earth responsible example?
- As we incorporate new offerings such as meat will we establish what our values are around this? i.e. will we source meat that is locally and truly humanely raised?
- Can we continue to look at our environmental footprint, i.e. how to reduce it? for example can we increase programs like Terracycle, can we promote bulk department usage?
- I'm concerned about our environmental footprint – plastic packaging and especially increasing meat products, which are detrimental to the environment. How to educate people on environmental impacts?

**What Would You Like to See?**

- Actual sit down restaurant area
- Nice dining area - open
- A design with an intimate feel
- Knowledgeable wellness staff (responsive, available)
- GFM on first floor; other co-ops on other floors like clothing/shoes/housewares
- Definitely wine at GFM!
- Eco-filling/reusable packages station. (Dr. Bronner's, laundry detergent, etc.)
- A commercial kitchen (small) for entrepreneurs to rent/incubate.
- Cooking classes/demos.
- Classes for youth and others – maybe a cooking class?
- A kitchen space for cooking classes.
- Community projects – volunteer to help
- A classroom with cooking/teaching room with facilities; collaborate with Mary Ellen Warhol and partner of Stockbridge Farm, etc. for healthy, creative food
- Space for community art shows, music jams, talks, ecological teaching, etc.
- Collaborations with the community.
- Plant based/vegan increase in both deli and products
- I really appreciate the all organic produce section.
- Expanded local sourcing if possible.

- Increased vegetarian options in the Hot Bar
- Expanded produce
- Inclusion of our less fortunate (financial) through discounts (and advertising it)
- Less plastic use
- More Bulk
- Expanded Bulk section
- Specialize in order to not have to compete
- Larger international offerings
- Attention to having a real member-owner customer service desk and space for educational activities
- We need to educate the citizenry through sales, education and sustainable practices.
- Health consultants with an R.N.
- Departments – more garden, household and energy
- Links with credit union / co-op economy
- An ongoing effort to work toward decreasing the environmental impact of operating the co-op.
- An ongoing effort to educate the members and non-members in creating a smaller environmentally destructive footprint.
- I think this opportunity is fantastic! I would love to see expanded deli/hot food area with an inviting, large sitting space, like in other large coops around the country; a community space for lectures, meetings, presentations and a venue for the community to connect with the store and its mission! I am excited by this possibility of a large coop downtown.
- No more Roundup at the coop
- Would like to see a serious plan for reducing prices – that will go a long way in the “more welcoming” dept.
- Expanded product lines for people who cannot afford more expensive stuff! Example: not all people can afford coffee at \$14/lb. but could afford a can of Maxwell House at \$4-\$5/can/lb.
- Kids Play Space
- A cheese section that rivals the one at Brattleboro Co-op!
- A Butcher!
- Produce & More Fruit!
- Roller-skating rink in the basement ☺ put sales & community room on second floor instead!
- Keep/expand community art gallery space please
- Plants and indoor starts in the spring.
- A successful move to the Wilson’s space. I think it can work!
- I would also like to see our member/owners and the whole population of Greenfield hear about ALL the ways the co-op supports our community.
- Meeting/hanging out space – sustained =

- Things that sell with good overhead income – given more space to cover costs: prepared food, bakery, beer & wine
- Opportunities to invest in the food coop
- Maybe more out-of-town outlets will help increase sales (like one in Turners Falls?)
- Less expensive/more local (think Foster's) – why does it cost me 20% more to buy the same Cabot 2# cheese at the food coop?

**Additional comments/questions:**

Members have VOTE on whether to expand and any other decisions = Democracy. Other coops do that.

It would seem that for the store to continue to grow sales the community (area) would need to grow in population. I believe I heard that Franklin County has lost people. How is Greenfield doing in that regard?