

**OVFC Board Meeting
Minutes
Wednesday February 10
7:00 pm**

Via Zoom

In attendance: Lynne, Janice, Chris, Nicole, Ashleigh, Cheryl S., Joanne, Perri-Rae, Cheryl K., Cameron

1. Administration

- The agenda was approved.
- The minutes of the January 22 meeting were approved as circulated.

2. Orders

- Sales for February were \$8,888.40 compared to \$7,698 last year. 72 customers ordered from 31 producers. 10 new people signed up and 3 ordered and paid. All learned about us via word of mouth.
- AAA Farms has resigned as a producer because of the new requirement for a inspection by the local health unit. More on this later.
- The Burnstown order is usually available for pick-up at 4:00 pm. This month, the order came at 2:30 pm. This affected at least one customer.

Action: Lynne and Cheryl K. to look at scheduling.

- The township is using our metal cabinet. Since this doesn't affect us, the board decided to let them go ahead and use our stuff (as long as we are not using it).
- Membership for Volunteers: There is one volunteer who is not a member. That means that she cannot use the \$20.00 Gift Certificate given to all volunteers.

Action: Board members to think about how to reward this person.

3. Food Handling

Janice reviewed the discussions that she has been having with Chase of the RCDHU. The following is taken from a notice to producers written by Janice.

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We are writing to inform you of an important regulatory change affecting the Ottawa Valley Food Co-operative (OVFC). The province has been working towards a unified

approach to the classification and assessment of farmers' markets. As part of this process, it has been determined that online markets do not qualify for the farmers' market exemption unless customers have access to a physical market location. Consequently, OVFC is no longer classified as a farmers' market and is now officially recognized as a food premise.

What Does This Mean for OVFC Food Producers?

With this transition, the OVFC and its food producers must adhere to food safety regulations established by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Agribusiness (OMAFRA) and local public health authorities. Key changes include:

- **Mandatory health unit inspections:** All food producers must undergo inspection by their local public health unit, except for farmers who exclusively sell whole, unprocessed fruits and vegetables.
- **Certified food preparation facilities:** All processed and prepared foods must be produced in an inspected kitchen that meets regulatory standards.
- **Food safety certification:** Anyone handling processed or prepared foods must complete an approved Food Safety course to ensure compliance with food regulations.
- **Out-of-province producer licensing:** Producers based outside of Ontario must obtain the appropriate license to legally sell their products within the province of Ontario.

While this reclassification represents a shift in the OVFC's operations, it ultimately strengthens our organization and benefits our members. Key advantages include:

- The OVFC is no longer restricted by farmer ratio requirements, meaning we can welcome more producers who meet our standards.
- Customers can shop with greater confidence, knowing that all OVFC products adhere to strict food safety standards.
- Our co-operative is growing stronger, aligning with provincial food regulations, and positioning us for future expansion.

What Does This Mean for the Producer Review Committee?

- Farmer ratios no longer matter. The OVFC can accept any producer who meets our standards.
- A food producer **MUST** be:
 - Inspected by their local health unit (the only exception is farmer's who exclusively sell whole, unprocessed fruits and vegetables).
- A food producer who processes or prepares food **MUST**:
 - Complete and pass a food safety course
 - Use an inspected kitchen

- Out-of-province producers **MUST**:
 - Obtain the appropriate license to legally sell their food products within the province of Ontario (including farmers who exclusively sell whole, unprocessed fruits and vegetables).

I appreciate your ongoing support as we embrace this transition together! If you have any questions or need guidance, please reach out – I’m here to help.

Together, we’re building a stronger, safer, and more sustainable OVFC!

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Food Handling: We do need somebody who has taken the Food Handling Course at events such as dinners. Chase recommended that we also have such a person at delivery day. Cameron has taken the course and she found it interesting.

Local Distribution: Chase is also reviewing our local distribution locations. They have been notified. Locations that are stores are okay, others will be contacted to make sure that practices are in place such that food does not spoil while waiting for customers.

Producer Application: Janice presented the updated New Producer Application which was reviewed by the board and the board made some changes. The revised version was subsequently approved by e-mail.

Chase and Tatianna (from RCDHU) will be invited to our AGM so that they can answer questions from our members.

Janice will ask RCDHU if there are grants available to help producers comply with the new regulations.

A temperature log for coolers is needed. This should show what is being done to keep coolers at the proper temperature, and log occasions when this doesn’t happen.

Delivery Day will be inspected twice a year.

4. Financial

Joanne e-mailed the Financial Statement for 2024, Annual Report for 2024 and the Budget for 2025 to Chris who sent them to the board. They will be discussed at the next board meeting.

5. Events

- Lynne is willing to run an auction as long as somebody is willing to help her.
- Food from the Farm: Perri-Rae suggested that we hold an event where producers bring samples of their produce to a venue for tasting by members. Cheryl K will ask producers if they are willing to participate in such an event. Perri-Rae is willing to sponsor it. A silent auction could be included in the event.
- AGM – set date at next meeting.

6. Advertising

Word of mouth appears to be effective in getting new members. Some ideas as to how we can get new members:

- Ask Anne Douglas to write articles for local papers etc. She is a local author.
- Suggest that members mention the co-op on their own Facebook page. Ask Katrina to give them something that they can post.

7. Next Meeting - Wednesday March 19.