

## **Rhode Island Community Food Bank**

### **Board of Directors Meeting**

**February 6, 2024**

**Members Attending in Person:** Aline Binyungu, Brian Gross, David Macchioni, Jyothi Subramaniam, Lisa Wesner.

**Members Attending via Zoom:** Alison Tovar, Angelo Garcia, Cynthia Butler, Darrell Brown, Debbie Thurston, Kathy O'Donnell, Kim Fernandez, Martha Wofford, Mary Eastman, Maureen Barishian, Michael DiSandro, Paul Silver, Polly Wall, Rilwan Feyisitan, Yvette Kenner.

**Members Not Attending:** David Veliz, Genie McPherson Trevor, Mathies Santos, Peter Marino.

**Staff Attending:** Andrew Schiff, Christine Cannata, Lisa Roth Blackman, Jen Tomassini, Rachel Kramer.

**Visitor Attending:** Alina Ali, Senior Manager, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Feeding America.

#### **Welcome: Jyothi Subramaniam**

Jyothi called the meeting to order at 8:35 AM and turned the meeting to Debbie Thurston for the Secretary's Report.

#### **Secretary's Report - Debbie Thurston**

No alterations were required to the previous meeting minutes. Debbie asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Dave Macchioni made the motion, seconded by Lisa Wesner, aye vote unanimous.

#### **Strategic Planning Committee Report - Kim Fernandez**

Kim provided an overview of the Strategic Planning Committee's first meeting of 2024. The committee reviewed a six-month progress report and then met with Jennie Silbert from Spartina Consulting, the firm that will facilitate our strategic planning process this year. Jennie discussed Spartina's approach to planning and the planning timeline. It was agreed that membership on the Strategic Planning Committee should be expanded to add more voices from community members. The committee will meet again in mid-March and strategic planning will take center stage at the Board retreat on April 26th.

#### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Report - Jen Tomassini**

Jen provided an update on the organization's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) work, which was also detailed in a report provided to Board members before the meeting. Following the departure of our DEI Director, a committee of staff members has taken on more responsibility for our DEI efforts. The DEI committee is now tasked with developing recommendations for senior leadership regarding Food Bank policies and procedures, identifying topics and resources for training, maintaining our DEI resource and communications center, encouraging other staff to participate in events and trainings, and assisting in building community partnerships.

Jen highlighted some recent activities, including visits to the Tomaquag Museum in Exeter, focusing on indigenous history and challenges faced currently by members of the Narragansett tribe, a lunch and learn session with staff from Crossroads to explore the experience of unhoused individuals and families, and our annual "Cultural Exchange Luncheon" celebrating diverse cultures through food. This year's event features a meal prepared by the Women's Refugee Center, which is led by Board member Aline Binyungu, and serves African refugee families.

Additionally, the Food Bank is collaborating with RAMP (Real Access Motivates Progress) to ensure that all meal sites and pantries are accessible to people with disabilities. This involves surveying our network of agencies to identify barriers to access for physically disabled guests.

Following Jen's presentation, the Board heard from Alina Ali from Feeding America. Alina gave an overview of the national organization's DEI initiatives and explained that they are working on a three-year equity plan that will include goals for food banks.

### **Finance Committee Report - Christine Cannata and Mike DiSandro**

Mike DiSandro summarized the January 30th committee meeting, which included an investment update from BNY Mellon. The total market value of our BNY Mellon portfolio is \$11M, with approximately \$4M representing surplus funds. This leaves a true long-term investment of \$7M. While the challenging market of 2022 led to some loss in value, 70% of the losses were recovered in 2023.

Christine discussed the proposal to establish an endowment at the RI Foundation, which the Finance Committee voted to bring to the Board for approval. Lisa explained that some donors have expressed interest in contributing to an endowed fund, which we could start with an initial investment of \$10,000. Polly Wall, who previously chaired the Board of the RI Foundation, clarified that funds contributed to the endowment would be owned by the RI Foundation but designated for the Food Bank, with an annual draw of 4% to 5%.

Rilwan Feyisitan recommended that Board members have an opportunity to review the written proposal from the RI Foundation prior to a vote to approve the endowment. The vote was delayed until the next Board meeting. Lisa will send out the endowment documents for Board members to review.

Christine then reviewed the December 2023 financial statements. She noted that the Food Bank closed the month with an operating surplus of \$285K, compared to a budgeted surplus of \$125K. Public support and revenue were under budget by \$202K, primarily due to lower-than-expected contributions from organizations. Total expenses were ahead of budget by \$362K, offsetting the lower revenue.

### **Development Committee Report - Brian Gross and Lisa Roth Blackman**

Brian celebrated the success of the Thank-a-thon on January 24th, aimed at donors of \$5K or more, highlighting its positive impact on building relationships with donors. He also reported that we have so far raised \$192K in sponsorships for the upcoming Empty Bowls event on March 27th at the WaterFire Arts Center in Providence. Public ticket sales begin on February 14th, with early access for Board members.

Lisa's reviewed the Development Dashboard for the second quarter of FY24. The number of new donors is higher than last year, but the number of total donors is down. While our goal is to retain 86% of \$5K donors, we are at 67%. Online giving exceeded expectations, reaching 26% of total giving.

Lisa also described the Souper Bowl for Caring, an all-day telethon hosted by NBC10. It will air on February 8<sup>th</sup>. Our lead sponsors are Stop & Shop and BankNewport.

**Public Policy Committee Report - Andrew Schiff on behalf of Pete Marino**

Andrew described the Food Bank's event at the State House on January 30<sup>th</sup>. It was well-attended by Board members and member agencies. Following a brief presentation with awards for the House Speaker and Senate President, participants greeted state representatives and presented them with the Food Bank's advocacy priorities: increasing state funding for the Food Bank from \$550,000 to \$1M for food purchases, instituting free school meals for all students, and sustaining funding for SNAP incentives in FY25. Darrèll Brown, along with several other Board members praised the effort for its well-executed delivery, engaging interactions with elected officials, and overall effectiveness in networking and conveying our message.

Andrew explained that the SNAP incentives program, known as "Eat Well, Be Well," started in January in Stop & Shop and Walmart stores. Alison Tovar is evaluating the program. She is determining the impact of SNAP incentives on the diet and nutrition of SNAP recipients.

The Governor's proposed budget for FY25 includes level funding for the Food Bank: \$550,000.

**CEO Report - Andrew Schiff**

Over the next few months, Andrew will be arranging several visits to member agencies. He will inform the Board when visits are scheduled, so that interested Board members can join him.

The annual Board Retreat is scheduled for Friday, April 26 from 12 PM to 4 PM at Save the Bay in Providence. We will provide lunch and then hold a brief business meeting before moving on to strategic planning with Spartina Consulting.

Jyothi requested a motion to adjourn. Angelo made the motion, seconded by Debbie, aye vote unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 10:02 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Debbie Thurston".

Debbie Thurston, Secretary