

Soil & Health Association of NZ
Special General Meeting

4 May 2024, 10am – 12 noon

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Jenny Lux, Charles Hyland, Kaitlyn Lamb, Alison White, Donald Nordeng (providing technical assistance), Joanne Turner, Greg Turner, Tiffany Tompkins, Lou Vicente, David McNeill, Jamie Tucker, Philippa Jamieson, Angelika Biener, Marion Thomson.

Online: Lis Pedersen, Rebecka Keeling, Dave Woods, Gillian Woods, Emma Wilson, Pete Davis, Jenny-Kaye Potaka (not a current member), Terry Woods, Scott Walters, Claire Flynn, Setha Davenport, Dave Kennedy, Zane Brown, James Drury, Lawrence Speedy (not a current member), Claire Bleakley, Nicola Chung (staff).

Apologies: Matt Morris, Steffan Browning, Brendan Hoare, Noel Josephson

WELCOME

Karakia and welcome from Jenny Lux. Jenny outlined the agenda, and thanked the OrganicNZ and Soil & Health staff and contractors: Liz Fenwick, Nicola Chung, Meghan Read, Tess Lenart, Claire Flynn, Sheryn Dean, Philippa Jamieson; and OANZ / Organic Week staff, Tiffany Tompkins, Lou Vicente, Marion Wood (former chair), David McNeill, Fran Bailey; and other National Councillors Matt Morris, Melanie Morris (treasurer, recently stepped down), Charles Hyland, Kaitlyn Lamb, Rebecka Keeling.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW & DISCUSSION

- Jenny outlined the interim financial report. The final 2023-2024 report will be audited and presented to the AGM in August.
- Declining advertising sales, declining sales and subscriptions. Approximate annual loss of \$45,800. Cash in the bank approximately \$55,000.
- The audit cost for the group (Soil & Health and BioGro) is not yet included. The apparent loss ('impairment') for BioGro likely to be reversed in the current financial year (an accounting anomaly between financial years).
- *OrganicNZ* has had a slow downward trend over several years and has been running at a loss. Not viable to continue publishing it for the foreseeable future. Many other media, especially print, are suffering similarly.
- Retail sales have gone down from 2500-3000 to 800 magazines per issue; membership (subscriptions) from around 3000 to currently 1405.
- Organic Week is sponsored and therefore separately funded – very successful. Got \$37k approximately in sponsorship for Organic Week in just a few months. Over 100,000 social media reach in the last 28 days.
- Successful annual appeal for Soil & Health last year; goes to Soil & Health activities like the GE campaign, not to *OrganicNZ*.
- Several members expressed sadness at the loss of *OrganicNZ* as a print magazine: organics was visible in shops, magazines kept and passed on;

double issue with the Biodynamic Association's Harvest magazine was valued.

- Discussion of various options for *OrganicNZ* e.g. fewer print copies per year; print for members only or segment of members who want it; combine or collaborate with other magazines or organisations. Similar ideas also expressed in the survey. However the current financial situation has led to a complete halt of publication and any future possibilities for a full magazine whether print or digital would need to be planned, budgeted and properly funded if they were to work.

SURVEY RESULTS

- Jenny summarised survey results – 395 people responded; approximately 67% are members/subscribers. Many comments.
- Various responses to how much people would pay per month e.g. \$5. Previous digital subscription was \$60 annually. 80% would subscribe to a digital magazine.
- Some survey respondents and attendees at the SGM suggested tiered membership levels to allow for people's differing budgets.

SOIL & HEALTH'S CORE FOCUS

- Discussion – more than a magazine – membership means supporting and belonging to a cause. We can't let the magazine's demise kill Soil & Health.
- Changing landscape – public may not be joining the dots, so many different groups. Why join Soil & Health? Need to concentrate on core focus.
- Purpose expressed by one member 'to be the united voice of common sense' – may not have been made clear to members of the high value of this.

FUNDING

- Campaign donations – mainly from members, or also other supporters? Need to reach way beyond our members – not only organic, but also the GE campaign, glyphosate campaign. Organic Week drawing people in. Great reach on Facebook – 15,000 followers.
- Discussion: some people won't subscribe to digital. Could we look at higher membership fee, members only, fewer printed issues per year, lower production values? However print magazine currently isn't viable. Must invest in digital; also need money to do all the things our members want.
- Discussion of advertising revenue: less online, but can measure. Print – can't measure advertising accurately so print has a limited life.
- Discussion: both print and digital have environmental impacts.

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR NATIONAL COUNCIL

- Jenny called for expressions of interest in joining National Council: a treasurer, people with skills in digital strategy, fundraising, NGO governance.
- Two positions currently vacant out of seven.
- Also, two of the current five National Council members have indicated they intend to step down at the AGM, so nominations for these positions are critical for the survival of Soil & Health.
- The Council can co-opt people onto National Council at any time; nominations for election will happen before the AGM which is in August.
- National Council will contact people who offered their help via the survey.

REMITTS

REMIT 1: *That the Soil & Health Association re-register as an Incorporated Society under the Incorporated Societies Act 2022.*

22 votes in favour, CARRIED

REMIT 2: *That the constitution be amended to include the following clause under 'objects': 'To honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi'*

21 votes in favour, CARRIED

REMIT 3: *That the revised constitution adopted by members at the 2023 AGM be adopted again*

22 votes in favour, CARRIED

REMIT 4: *That production of OrganicNZ cease until such time as it becomes financially viable.*

20 votes in favour; 1 against, 1 abstention, CARRIED

REMIT 5: *That the membership fee be amended.*

Discussion – urgent to get digital strategy up and running ASAP and keep fees low. Could offer tiered memberships to encourage people with money to give more.

Clarification: remit means that the NC review and establish a new membership fee.

22 votes in favour, CARRIED

Remit 6: *That an e-newsletter for members only be established*

20 votes in favour, 1 against, 1 abstention, CARRIED

Remit 7: *That National Council be empowered to rationalise our web offerings if required*

22 votes in favour, CARRIED

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Strategy – including digital strategy

- Digital strategy taskforce needed urgently. Tiffany, Lou, Terry, Claire, Zane, Pete, Dave volunteered to help. Survey results will help in developing the strategy.

- Ideas include Patreon platform for sharing; also Soil & Health could be a facilitator for people sharing video content (have many offers), attract youth members and engagement.
- Email newsletter: Philippa volunteering to edit the Good Dirt as the interim newsletter for members. Two versions: for members with more information, and for supporters. Lou offered help with the IT side.

Strategy for the organic sector

- Tiffany wants Soil & Health to be part of a conversation about a strategy for the whole organic sector, bring all organic organisations together, and work out a good business model for the sector. She sees Soil & Health as the ‘marketing arm’ of the whole sector, Quorum Sense as the extension arm.