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Council Meeting Minutes

February 6, 2017

Facilitator: Carl Etnier

Note Taker: Michael Dougherty

Council members: Bertil Agell, Alex Brown, Rita Ricketson, Scott Hess, Carl Etnier, Steven Farnham, Marci Young, Mark Simakaski, Ashley Hill (arr. 6:17)

Staff: Kari Bradley, Michal Duffy (staff rep.), Stephani Kononan, Mary Mullally (dep. 7:06), Kevin O'Donnell (arr. 6:20), Mike Hauser (dep. 7:06)

Guests: Ed Fox (Hanover Co-op)

5:30 – Welcome: Kari asked to add an agenda item on whether the Co-op should issue a statement in response to the government's executive action on immigration.

5:31 - Community comments: Bertil had 15 shoppers fill out informal feedback surveys. Customers came from a wide radius, and comments about pricing and environmental concerns were common. Marci spoke to a representative from vendor Elmore Roots Nursery, who had trouble getting a call back from staff. Kari will follow up.

5:38 - Consent agenda: Marci requested that the comment from the January 2 minutes regarding council members serving on two committees be struck since this is not a part of written guidelines or bylaws. Alex said that this expectation should be conveyed in some way, and the minutes do reflect the discussion from the January meeting. **Bertil moved to approve the minutes as-is. Steven seconded. Approved.**

5:45 - Retreat follow-up: Alex presented a list of potential projects as follow-up from the retreat in the categories of monitoring the triple bottom line, council perpetuation, and communication. The group expressed preferences on the items listed, favoring numbers 1, 4, and 8 under the triple bottom line category, and all four items under the council perpetuation category. Alex asked Kari to schedule two reports, one from NCG on the competitive landscape and one from management on responding to sales decline. Alex suggested establishing a committee focused on communicating information from management to members, with a goal of increasing customer loyalty. The executive committee will determine whether there should be a committee or ongoing discussion on customer loyalty.

The group discussed establishing a committee on council perpetuation, and voted by a show of hands to form one.

6:08 – Strategy discussion- Environmental Ends: Kari, Mary and Mike presented on the Co-op's efforts to reduce its environmental impact through facility improvements and the Green Team's work across departments. The council discussed environmental goals through vision, strategy, and information.

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Vision: Scott suggested seeking existing metrics (LEED, state or national standards) by which the Co-op could measure its environmental progress. The group discussed strategic partnerships like Central Vermont Solid Waste Management's Zero Waste plan, Efficiency Vermont, and Vermont Farm to Plate, as well as the Co-op's participation in broader conversations such as GMO labeling and local herbicide spraying. Mark said vendors could benefit from the Co-op's guidance towards environmental ends. Progress in this area should also serve to increase customer loyalty. Scott said greater awareness of environmental programs in customer surveys would be a measurable indicator of success.

Strategy: The group discussed greater consideration of packaging impacts, toxicity in cleaning supplies, life cycle assessments of products, and reducing single occupancy vehicles and other transportation or delivery options. Michal suggested expanding lists of banned ingredients utilizing existing databases like Skin Deep.

Information: Rita noted that messaging of environmental progress should be careful not to alienate customers who may already consider the store too expensive. Bertil said we should evaluate how much of our resources we're spending on environmental ends. Michal suggested using the picnic table area to host strategic partners like Central VT Solid Waste Management District. Alex suggested separating beer and prepared foods from measurements of local sourcing.

### 7:06 BREAK

7:20 - Monitoring report - L4 compensation: Kari said the Co-op invests heavily in staff compensation for reasons of principle and strategy. The Co-op's employee turnover rate was 18% in 2016, well below the national average. Kari noted an update based on revised livable wage and basic needs budget rates from the Joint Fiscal Office. Kari will send an update. **Scott moved to accept the monitoring report. Rita seconded. Approved.**

7:30 - GM report: Kari presented the GM report and added that Member Appreciation Day is Thursday, the shopper survey begins Tuesday and the membership drive has been successful. The Co-op is considering offering a discount to members qualifying for WIC benefits while the point of sale system remains unable to accept eWIC payments. The group discussed management's options in pressuring this vendor to move on the WIC update, or seek another point of sale vendor. Ashley said this is an unmet need in our community, while the Co-op positions itself as a community resource. Kari noted that there is a cost to leaving this vendor - thousands of dollars and many hours of staff time across departments. Kari suggested setting this as an agenda item for March - Ravi, Tim and Kari will provide an assessment of the options for resolving this issue.

7:51 - Discount review: The group discussed whether the council should decide on any changes to member discounts. Alex said discounts are pricing decisions, not member benefits, which makes them management decisions. Ashley said the large impact of discounts on the financial bottom line necessitates the council being involved in those decisions. **Mark moved that the committee will make recommendations to management regarding member discounts, which Kari will bring to the council for a**

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**yes or no vote. Ashley seconded.** Bertil suggested the committee should report a policy to the council, which will then make a recommendation to management. **Ashley moved to amend the motion: the committee will report directly to the council for a yes or no vote. Bertil seconded.** Mark noted that the committee is not chartered with recommending policies to the council. **Vote on amendment: by a voice vote, motion declined. Vote on original motion: by a voice vote, motion declined.** Discretion to involve the council in member discount decisions remains with management.

8:20 - CDS services: Alex said council members should coordinate individual use of remaining Cooperative Development Services time through Alex.

8:22 - GM evaluation committee: Alex asked the group to consider forming a committee to evaluate the GM. Carl, Ashley, and Scott offered to join. Kari will only be evaluated on existing criteria. Steven asked whether council members would see staff survey responses prior to completing their own review. Scott and Alex said no - the council member's responses should be unbiased - although the full council will see the survey results during executive session.

8:30 - Staff rep report: Michal said there is an overall feeling amongst the union of blanket denials by managers of step 1 grievances. There are two upcoming arbitrations. The Green Team is developing evaluation processes for department recycling.

8:32 - Responding to the government's immigration order: Kari asked the group to advise on whether the Co-op should respond to the administration or its immigration order. Historically the Co-op is non-partisan unless an issue relates to a product we sell. A member asked whether the Co-op would become a sanctuary business. Ashley said we should issue a statement that everyone is welcome at the Co-op as a member, shopper, or community member. Steven suggested adding a disclaimer that we don't typically make political statements. Mark noted that a statement may alienate some shoppers who side with the administration. Michal suggested that a message of inclusion could be presented in the context of the Co-op's existing mission.

8:40 - Wrap up: Steven said that employee discounts should have been included in the co-op conversations. Members need full disclosure about employee discounts and how much they cost the Co-op in order to make informed decisions on how aggressively to defend the senior discount.

8:45 - **Marci moved to adjourn. Mark seconded. Meeting adjourned.**

Action Items:

Kari will follow up on a vendor issue.

The executive committee will determine whether there should be a committee or ongoing discussion on customer loyalty.

Kari will send out updated data on the Basic Needs Budget rates.

Ravi, Tim and Kari will provide an assessment of the options for resolving the eWIC issue.