



APPROVED
Annual Meeting Minutes
Thursday, November 3, 2016
Montpelier City Hall, Lost Nation Theater

Council President and moderator Alex Brown called the meeting to order at 6:02pm. Alex welcomed everyone and introduced the Council members who were present and candidates for Council. Krystal Fuller verified there were at least 247 member-owners in attendance, which constituted a quorum.

Hedi Ballentine moved approval of the 2015 annual meeting minutes, Jill McCann seconded and the motion passed by voice vote, with one abstention.

Matt Levin of the advisory committee for the Hunger Mountain Cooperative Community Fund talked about the Fund and the process for selecting grant recipients. He then announced the 7 organizations to be awarded grants

- \$2000 to Another Way
- \$275 to Barre Area Senior Center
- \$1637 to Bethany Church
- \$500 to Calais Agriculture Committee
- \$2000 to Central Vermont Council on Aging
- \$1000 to Good Food Good, Medicine Program
- \$2000 to Vermont Foodbank

Alex Brown provided an overview of 2016 based on key measurements noting improvements in the number of members, sales, donations and sponsorships, local product sales, shopper satisfaction, staff earning at least the Vermont Livable Wage and energy usage.

Treasurer Scott Hess provided a brief financial report including 6.6% growth in sales, net income of \$103,032 and a patronage refund of \$168,926, half of which will be retained. Scott showed the trend in Co-op liabilities:equity ratio and reported that we ended the year at a healthy 1.02.

General Manager Kari Bradley talked about results from 2016 surveys of shoppers, employees and local vendors. He also discussed three highlights from the 2017 business plan, Bag that Bag, Co-op Conversation about member benefits and a new solar carport in the customer parking lot.

Alex called for questions and comments while pointing out the suggestion box available in the meeting room.

1. Sandal Cate asked will discount conversation include consideration of all types of discounts including for example coupons. Kari responded that the conversation will mainly focus on member benefits.

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2. Question about expansion to Barre? Kari said the Co-op has no expansion plans but is supporting Granite City Grocery, another co-op trying to open a store in Barre.
3. Michael Billingsley asked about sourcing of organic food. Kari said there was not an existing program but invited Michael to talk with him separately.
4. Barbara Scotch had a question about storage for root vegetables.
5. Rachel D. complimented livable wage achievement and asked about other employee benefits. Kari described the benefits plan including medical, dental and vision insurance.
6. Elizabeth Jesdale asked about livable wage metric since half of staff are part time, so how can they make livable wage? Kari explained the assumptions in the Joint Fiscal Office study assume that people are working full time hours and the Co-op does as well.
7. A new member commented that they would like a little more child-friendly environment. Kari said they would consider request to put out free fruit for children.
8. Susan Banfield asked if: is there an employee recognition program in place? Kari said an employee is chosen each year for a customer service award and this year it was Emma Paradis.
9. Elizabeth Parker asked how can the Co-op be more accessible to people on food stamps and other low income people.
10. David Feldman asked for further clarification on Co-op expenses and specifically the patronage refund. He suggested perhaps discounts should not be applied to certain products.
11. Mary expressed concern about produce out of season policies and the carbon footprint related. Kari said the Co-op is a full service store and while we emphasize local products we still need to meet the needs of over 8000 members.
12. A member asked for more detail about sales trends. Kari responded that the rate of growth picked up in 2016 after several years of decline.
13. Alec Hill informed owners that a problem in staff morale was presented to the council in the the August 29, 2016 council meeting.
14. Peter Kellman offered that while individual shoppers need to make their own decisions, the Co-op has a responsibility to educate shoppers.
15. Peter Watts asked about GMO policy. Kari said there is not a strict ban but the Co-op has worked hard on mandatory GMO labeling legislation.
16. Andrea Mills shared her concern about preserving local control of the Co-op and not succumbing to "industry standard" without discussion by members.

There followed a panel discussion entitled "Access to Healthy Food in Our Community." Guest panelists included: Jenna Banning of Hunger Free Vermont, Jaime Bedard of Just Basics, Inc., Jen Evans of Capstone Community Action and Chef David Eyler of Community Kitchen Academy. The panelists talked about their organizations and their work with food security and other poverty related issues. Members shared ideas about transportation; food waste and regional planning as ways to address food security.

Alex and Kari shared appreciations to Council members and those who contributed to the meeting. Krystal Fuller announced the winners of the raffle prizes.

Jill McCann moved, Paul Collins seconded and the members voted to unanimously meeting adjourn the meeting at 7:47pm.