



UNAPPROVED

2018 Annual Meeting
Thursday, November 1, 2018
Lost Nation Theater
Business Meeting- 6:00-8:00pm

Council Members Present: Scott Hess, Steven Farnham, Patrice Siergiey, Carl Etnier, Eric Jacobson, Lydia Busler, Mark Simakaski, Ashley Hill

General Manager: Kari Bradley

Welcome and Approval of 2017 minutes: Council President Scott Hess called the meeting to order at 6:05pm. He announced that Council Elections are still underway. Ballot boxes close at 8 pm tonight. It was verified there was a quorum.

Bill _ moved, Dan Jones seconded to approve the 2017 minutes. Discussion: It was stated that some of the comments from last year at the end of the meeting were not included in the minutes. The video recording from last year will be reviewed and the minutes will be amended to include the comments at the end of the meeting.
The motion to approve the minutes as amended carried unanimously.

Moderator Stephanie Lahar explained the logistics of the meeting, including the fact that some members are able to participate “virtually,” online.

Hunger Mountain Cooperative Community Fund Grant Awards: Matt Levin announced the recipients of this year’s grants from the Hunger Mountain Cooperative Community Fund. These included:

- Ananda Gardens
- Another Way Community Center
- Good Samaritan Haven
- Salvation Farms
- Steadyfoot Farm
- Twin Valley Senior Center
- Capstone Community Action

Guest Speaker: Carl Etnier introduced the guest speaker: Philip Ackerman-Leist. A short period of questions and answers from the audience followed his presentation.

Co-op Reports, Question and Answer: Scott Hess presented President’s Report including growth in membership, local economic impact and the formation of a Bylaw Committee. Scott and Kari presented the Treasurer’s Report as José Aguayo was not present; they covered results from Fiscal 2018 including the announcement

of a patronage refund. Kari presented the General Manager's Report covering Member discounts, 2018 Employee Survey and Co-op products.

Stephanie Lahar opened the floor to comments and questions.

Bruce S: would like to challenge co-op to raise the percentage of employees that are happy/satisfied to be employed there.

Sandal C: asked what other co-ops we buy from? Kari Bradley explained- number one is Deep Root Organic Farmers, also Organic Valley, Equal Exchange, La Riojana and others.

Rachel G: has the co-op ever considered screening based on politics - companies that do not practice in socially responsible ways? Kari Bradley stated that we don't use political issues as part of the criteria. We used to use "fair trade" as a criteria; however, "fair trade" has lost its "weight" more recently.

Kari Bradley also mentioned that, for example, the Council has been approached about considering how to think about human rights in that context.

Eric Jacobson stated that the co-op has been working over the past few years on issues related to ethics.

A member stated that he appreciates that the Council is trying to be socially responsible; hopes they don't do business with TD Bank, as they support the pipeline.

Some discussion followed around investments. Kari said Co-op spreads cash around local banks to maintain maximum FDIC insurance. The Co-op did recently transfer \$100,000 from TD Bank account to Vermont Community Loan Fund.

Sam S: Citizens Against Plastic Pollution: spoke about single use bags at the cash register - would like to eliminate plastic bags for produce. The Montpelier City Council is going to be very proactive around banning plastic bags. Encouraged people to support eliminating plastic bags. Noted that Article 4 will address this; he asked people to support this.

Fred C: asked about senior members voluntarily giving up discounts - will the money from that go directly to the other Co-op Cares discounts? Kari Bradley explained that it won't be as simple as going directly from one to the other.

Lawrence: how good are the discounts for the disabled? Kari Bradley explained the "Co-op Cares" which is a 10% discount which is based on income sensitivity. Also mentioned a 6% discount for disabled members who are not able to participate in work program.

Elizabeth: impressed with how "Co-op Cares" is progressing. Appreciates reduction of some items in the produce section; she is distressed that bulk purchasing is decreasing - she recommended voting "yes" on Article 4. Encouraged promoting reusable bags and increasing bulk purchasing.

Carl Etnier: Responded to the question of senior discount versus Co-op Cares to low income people. He stated that the discounts have been increasing at an unsustainable rate, and the hope is that if enough seniors voluntarily give up the senior discount, then the Co-op Cares discount can grow.

Armand Altman congratulated the co-op for supporting the new co-op in Morrisville. Asked whether there has been a way to find out more specifics about “why” some of employees that responded to the survey are not responding that they are happy/satisfied to work there. How to raise this?

Kari Bradley explained that the survey process this year was followed up with some focus groups to more deeply pursue some of the themes that resulted, in an effort to find out more about the “whys” behind the dissatisfaction.

Comment was made about the small Dixie cups in the café area. She sees a lot of them thrown away. Kari Bradley stated this continues to be an ongoing discussion – reusable cups have been tried, but they disappear over time.

Peter: has research been done around plastic bags? The “compostable” bags in the bulk section might not be compostable at some waste facilities. Kari Bradley stated that the “bio bag” in the bulk department can’t be dropped at the local compost facilities; however, we are encouraged to try them in our home compost systems.

Lisa R: is a member as well as a staff member. Sometimes the versions you get from the management is the “shiny apple.” She encouraged members to request the survey result and read it. Themes of broken trust, lack of communication, and safety issues. She shared an incident when she attended a Council meeting and an inappropriate joke was shared. She asked for change at the co-op. She stated that there have been reports of bullying that have been passed along to the Council. She invited members to listen to the Council tape; she is planning to approach the Council again to ask for a new President. She expressed her dissatisfaction.

Kari Bradley responded that all of the perspectives of staff are valid, and that he invites feedback in an effort to improve.

Question about organic farms with septic being sprayed.

Marie D: have been using the bio-bags for years. They do compost in hers; however, she has heard from the locals, e.g. Vermont Compost, that they cannot use these bags at their facilities.

Amy: has been requesting products that are on the less expensive end, for lower income customers – for example “Field Day” – she appreciates that the co-op is responding to that request.

Stephanie Lahar wrapped up the audience questions/comments portion of the meeting.

Kari Bradley gave many thanks to contributors to the evening and acknowledged outgoing Council members, Carl Etnier, José Aguayo and Lydia Busler.

The raffle prizes were awarded.

Paul moved to adjourn at 7:57pm. This motion was seconded and carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Stoudt, Note Taker

