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**Council Meeting Minutes**

**April 1, 2019**

**5:30pm**

**Facilitator: Mark**

**Note Taker: Rob**

**Present:** Steven Farnham, Scott Hess, Dr. Eric Jacobson, Shannon Lessley, Katie Michels, Mark Simakaski, Eva Schectman, Jess Knapp (Staff Rep)

Staff: Kari Bradley (GM), Stephani Kononan, Jay Wisner

Guests: Ed Fox

**Begin Recording 1**

**1. Welcome, Agenda Review, Time Allocation, Guest Policy Review 5:30 (0:00:40)**

Scott opened meeting. Mentioned that Jess, Staff Rep, had an injury but will log onto GoToMeeting. Thanked her for joining meeting online and wished her a speedy recovery.

**2. Cooperative Community Comments 5:31 (0:01:12)**

None

**3. Consent Agenda: Approval of Minutes, Refund Requests 5:32 (0:01:33)**

Scott noted Eric would not be able to make CCMA. Steven, if still interested, could go with Scott and Katie. Equity refund requests: 11 requests for 1,831 dollars. Mark made motion to accept agenda. Steven seconded. Scott opened for discussion or comments. None.

**All in favor. None opposed. No abstentions. The motion to accept passed.**

**4. Guest Speaker: Allison Mindel, Vermont Foodbank 5:33 (0:02:50)**

Kari introduced Allison Mindel, chief philanthropy officer at Vermont Foodbank. He noted the strong relationship with the Foodbank, they host Holiday Grocery Pack and work with us on Feed a Family food drive. Also have been recipient of HMCCF fund grant program.

Allison provided an overview of the impact HMC has had on the Foodbank since 2012, almost 32,000 meals worth of support. Gave summary of the Foodbank's mission and strategic direction, their vision that everyone in VT has access to enough food every day, everyone in VT is healthy, and everyone in VT takes part in action to eliminate hunger and poverty. Provided statistics about health impacts and impacts on the household from food insecurity. Foodbank provides shelf stable food to partners such as the Montpelier Food Pantry. Lately have been expanding programs to focus on more than just access to shelf stable food and to provide more access directly rather than through partner organizations. They

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also prioritize that food they are providing is as fresh and healthy as possible. They provide opportunities for everyone in Vermont to take action to work to eliminate food insecurity. They also make an effort to purchase food locally.

#### **5. Follow Up Discussion on Local Foods 6:09 (0:39:47)**

Scott opened discussion. Council would like to know how the Co-op can better interact with farmers. Katie works for Farm and Forest Viability Program at Vermont Housing Conversation Board. They provide planning and technical assistance to farm, food and forestry businesses. They fund business planners at other organizations who consult, guide, work on business plans, marketing, succession planning, etc. Katie gave overview of meeting with HMC's Lead Grocery Buyer Olivia Dunton about what Co-op is doing to support local: storytelling, promoting local vendors, discounts on local products. She referred council to ideas brought up by Jake Claro last month, such as continued commitment to local, thinking about distribution, consider potential expansion. Eva asked about succession planning, what does that look like, how can it be nurtured? Katie noted two main things are start early and have a viable business that has enough income and margin so there is the ability to retire and transfer something to successor.

#### **6. Diversity Committee Debrief 6:27 (0:57:36)**

Scott thanked Eva, on behalf of the council, for her tremendous amount of work for the diversity committee. Eva asked council for input on the recent training council attended. Comments included that it was valuable, instructive, not as uncomfortable as it might have been, would be great for staff to take the same training. Eva noted that she, Patrice and Ashley will continue committee's work and offered to work with Scott on a presentation for next month on power dynamics. She added that she would work with other council members on something related to any other topics they are interested in focusing on. Eric suggested doing more work in the community as well, making community members part of the committee and its work. Jay noted that HR will prepare something for next month's meeting based on the trainings they have been attending.

**Break 6:47 (1:17:28)**

**Begin Recording 2**

#### **7. Council Compensation 7:02 (0:00:58)**

Scott opened discussion. Steven had asked to bring up this topic. Question was raised, is council compensation fair? Should it be more? Would it attract a different caliber of council member or different level of expertise to the council? As currently constituted, council gets 10% discount, committee members who are not on council get 6% discount. Steven raised concern about travelling costs to get to Co-op for meetings, mentioned possibility of mileage reimbursement for council activity or allowance for food when coming to Co-op for committee meeting. Mark supported idea of being able to get something from the deli if council members are there for a meeting. Kari noted a flat compensation rather than a discount would provide more stability and help with budgeting. Could also be used strategically to attract top talent. Scott offered to work on a proposal regarding changes to council compensation. Mark mentioned putting it to the executive committee, they will take on the consideration of the proposal.

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### **8. Committee Reports 7:14 (0:12:18)**

Kari noted highlight of Bylaw Committee's work is possible solution that works for all committee members for the issue surrounding member voting. May have a solution that would involve commencing voting period with a meeting, so there is a meeting with discussion and also a paper/electronic ballot for voting outside of the meeting confines. Eric provided update on Ethics Committee, have had two meetings and continue to discuss issues, such as how to use ethics as a differentiator for the Co-op, how to turn the Israel/Palestine issue into a larger conversation about food ethics. Mark noted GM Evaluation Committee timeline was included in packet.

### **9. Shopper Survey 7:20 (0:18:51)**

Kari presented results from 2019 shopper survey. 1,294 respondents, 89% were member-owners. High scores for how well we are meeting shoppers' needs. Even relatively low scoring categories have shown improvement in recent years. High scores for how well we are meeting needs in product categories. Store satisfaction categories got high scores except for price. 93% likely or highly likely to recommend the Co-op to a friend or colleague. Almost half said Co-op should consider charge for paper as possible means to reduce paper bag usage. Most respondents favored no change in terms of growth. Eric moved to extend times for further discussion. Scott seconded. Eva asked for extension of five minutes only, which was granted.

### **10. Monitoring Report 7:38 (0:36:19)**

Kari provided overview of reports for Treatment of Customers and Treatment of Members. One noncompliance associated with decline in customer count. Could be just one part of the overall story of what his happening at the Co-op and potential challenges. Mark motioned to accept report. Eva seconded. Scott opened for discussion. Jess noted on pages 32 and 34, titles for website headings are wrong. "You Own It" should be "Participate" on page 32, and on page 34, "Member-Owner Benefits" should be changed to "Participate" and "Ways to Save" should be changed to "Sales and Deals." Eric asked about access for customers to educational information about products that we sell. Believes they should be made more aware of information about products, suggested we may not be doing enough in this area. He suggested the report should indicate that the Co-op is working on this problem area, aware that it is not currently sufficient. Steven moved to add five minutes to discussion, which was granted. Kari noted the report covers a lot of areas we can and do inform customers about.

**Vote taken on motion to accept report. All in favor. Eric opposed. Steven abstained. All others in favor. Motion to accept report passed.**

### **11. Community Award Draft Criteria 7:49 (0:48:03)**

Kari led discussion about community award, asked for feedback on draft of criteria/guidelines/process. Mark said not to call it hero award. Liked how it is laid out. Supported the process as described in draft. Kari asked about naming it after individual. Eva noted it would be good to have it as a memorial, rather than named after someone living. Eric supported draft, asked about "lifetime" possibly being added to award name. Kari asked if "lifetime" would limit it to older people. Katie agreed, better to keep it broader and not use "lifetime". Mark moved to name it Hunger Mountain Cooperative Community Award. Eva seconded. Scott asked if anyone wanted something other than that, but nobody did. Scott

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noted he and Kari discussed award process and agreed that winner will be announced prior to Annual Meeting and recognized at meeting.

**12. Staff Rep Report 7:58 (0:56:24)**

Jess noted that she did not have information with her (joined meeting from home via GoToMeeting) and did not want to provide overview without information on hand. Did mention she had spoken with staff about morale in certain departments and noted some conflicts in management styles at times. Will have full report at next month's meeting.

**13. General Manager's FYI Report 8:00 (0:58:52)**

Kari noted the busy time of year, just had Member Appreciation Weekend and a case sale, both very successful. Bulk department promotion in April, with different item on sale each day. Earth Month all April long, Sustainability Saturday on 27th. Dinner and Discussion focused on local food on 25th. Week of May 6<sup>th</sup>, major project happening with replacement of the main heating/cooling system in the Co-op. Eva asked about Community Links program and how much do members know about it? How is it communicated? Stephani noted that the Links program is on their list for something to focus on in the near future. Eva noted the accessibility issues, having as much info as possible in print would be great.

**14. EMF Letter Review 8:07 (1:05:30)**

Mark took lead on reviewing information provided at last meeting about Wi-Fi concerns. Wrote response letter. Katie suggested taking out line mentioning vaccines. Eva agreed. Mark will strike that paragraph. Eric recommended just keeping the first three arguments and removing the last three. Steven seconded. Mark will strike those arguments.

**15. Wrap up, Actions, Communications, Calendar, and Evaluation 8:14 (1:12:06)**

Action items - forward EMF letter, CCMA arrangements will be made. Executive comm will work on compensation proposal. Kari will send out survey comments. Eva and Scott will talk about diversity project.

Communication – Kari noted after Dinner & Discussion event, council could have a piece in newsletter. Steven would like feedback from anyone who has used GoToMeeting to participate. Jess said her experience was good overall.

Calendar – Kari noted union leadership accepted invitation to present at June meeting. There is an opening in May, idea to have Ed Fox from Hanover, or an economist from the Dept. of Labor who is studying demographic trends in central Vermont. Eva noted either would be good.

**16. Council or Cooperative Community Comments 8:18 (1:16:54)**

Mark noted he and Steven talked to staff member who asked what was happening after staff survey. What has changed, etc. Feeling of not seeing direct action on survey.

**17. Other Business 8:19 (1:17:44)**

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**18. Executive Session: General Manager Contract Discussion 8:19 (1:17:48)**

The Council left executive session with no action. The meeting was adjourned by consensus at 8:45pm.