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**Council Meeting Minutes
May 4, 2020
Video Conference**

Present: Scott Hess, Katie Michels, Pat Siergiey, Steven Farnham, Olivia Dunton, Julia Goldstein, Eric Jacobson, Eva Schectman, Andrew Sullivan.

Staff Representative: Jess Knapp.

Staff: Kari Bradley, Stephani Kononan, Kendra Mills, Mary Mullally, Tim Wingate, Jay Wisner.

Facilitator: Elly Wood

Note Taker: Rowan Sherwood

1. Welcome, agenda review, time allocation, guest policy review. 5:33PM (0:02:33)

Elly welcomed everyone and reviewed procedures and ground rules for the meeting. Kari requested new agenda item to suspend performance evaluations requirement during Pandemic. Steven requested a voted item be added to authorise signing for NSB bank account. Eva requested guidance on addressing questions Eric circulated via email at the beginning of the meeting, which members had not reviewed. Eric suggested addressing during preparedness discussion.

2. Cooperative Community Comments. 5:41PM (0:10:36)

Steven shared a communication from a member who requested a mask policy, which the Co-op subsequently implemented. Jay explained that Eric's questions were not received by non-council members; Elly requested Eric post them in the chat window. Eric obliged.

3. Consent agenda: approval of minutes, equity refund requests (and Account Resolution and Entity Authorisation). 5:45PM (0:14:08)

Scott added to consent agenda: Authorise Steven to sign *Account Resolution and Entity Authorisation* to establish a separate account at Northfield Savings Bank to process curbside pick-up PayPal payments. Scott moved to accept the consent agenda. Katie seconded. No discussion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

4. Coronavirus preparedness, response and Council role. 5:50PM (0:18:53)

Elly encouraged folks to take a wide view of the situation. Kari reiterated that we are looking for big picture guidance, especially in evaluating community need. There was a bit of discussion about how uncertain the future is and how we can't assume a specific timeframe for a return to "normal," or that we'll ever return to a familiar "normal." The Co-op could be strengthening relationships with local farmers, maybe to the point of having food grown specifically for the co-op. We need to expand our role as community organisers.

Katie pointed out that this is just the beginning of this conversation, and that this focuses specifically on the co-op.

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Steven explained that while operations are not typically Council's purview, many ideas/topics raised will unavoidably be operational in nature.

Eva spoke to the need of attracting top talent and building leadership from within the co-op. We could use this opportunity to re-evaluate the layout of the store. She expressed strong emphasis on social returns and financial sustainability, and strong support for HMC vendors.

Jess wondered how we better serve the high risk community. What jobs to create? How to make this sustainable? We may need to rethink our product selection and suppliers based on both availability and peoples changing priorities. This is not going away.

Julia expressed deep concern for the food supply, especially in terms of meat. She talked about striking a balance between supporting local farmers, which are often more expensive, and food insecurity/poverty.

Eric said we should expand our curbside offering, and brought up the fact that people are going elsewhere for products they could get here if we offered them in that venue.

Katie appreciated Kari's memo, and is appreciative of the better relations between staff and management. If there's a way to continue that dialogue, cooperation, and shared purpose that would be amazing. Encourage diversity of suppliers; strengthen local food system; and think beyond UNFI to other distributors. (Following Eric's lead) pursue other grocery opportunities, co-operatively instead of competitively. Help farmers with innovation in ways that benefit the co-op. When pandemic passes, assess new needs (market study).

Olivia focused on community need - what will it look like in the next 1 to 2 years? She returned to Julia's point of balancing support for local farmers and ensuring there is an affordability option in everything we do. Safety is really important. Maintain education resource, social presence, and good communications with members. Reiterated Eva's sentiment about bringing in talent, and nurturing existing talent.

Pat agreed on support of local vendors, expand online and curbside, and added we should limit buying from China. Make purchasing decisions that support local and US economy.

Scott asked about a "rolling" truckload sale, featuring different products over time, and/or a preorder option. A "Costco-like" model, offering larger sized packages? Add to ends: "Safe shopping and working environment for all."

Steven wondered what guidance the council should provide. What future do we want to "bet" on? Plan on a slightly unstable, but otherwise mostly normal next couple years (which means meeting the co-op membership's needs is mostly operational)... Or should we assume the possibility of major supply disruptions, and other crises, which would necessitate modifying the business model, and beginning mitigation planning now (which

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necessitates greater input from Council and membership)? He is worried about supplies next winter and asked how big of a pivot the store should make.

Aware of the time, Elly thanked everyone and asked the executive committee to synthesize ideas.

Andrew expressed appreciation for improved union/management relations. He also expressed concern about the protocol employees use to inform management/co-workers if they've potentially contracted the virus. What does insurance cover related to the virus? It was apparently communicated to employees that discipline would be suspended for attendance-related issues, but he's concerned that a write-up had been issued for tardiness. He also wondered if employee's temperatures should be routinely checked, and what action should be taken for abnormal readings.

Elly responded that they could clarify some of these things off line.

Steven suggested before we leave this topic, we need to decide on Action Items or Next Steps. Kari responded that the executive committee will take this up and maybe schedule a special Council meeting.

5. Executive committee: Council Workplan 6:42PM (1:11:11)

Kari began by acknowledging that given the current rapidly changing situation the council workplan needs to accommodate. Steven made some revisions. Questions to be answered are: Where do we go from here? Can council development happen remotely? Can bylaw changes be handled remotely? Eric added that the council should make a decision about whether or not to move forward with the bylaws before the committee looks at it.

Eva likes Steven's revisions and brought up that recruitment could happen using video that could be posted to the website and other places. It could allow for the whole council to be more active in recruitment.

Kari referenced several annual programs that need to be evaluated:

- Annual meeting – we are starting to prepare for a remote version.
- Council elections – a majority of members already vote electronic.
- Recruitment – needs to be figured out.
- GM Evaluation – when is the right time and how to go about an employee survey?
- HMCCF – it looks like 10K will be available for grants, We should proceed with this. Should there be a more specific focus?
- HMCCA – go forward with the award as in the past.

Scott moved to adopt the revised council workplan, Eva seconded. No further discussion. **8 in favour, Eric opposed, no abstentions. The motion passed.**

6. Committee Reports 7:03PM (1:32:20)

Kari will schedule meetings for HMCCF, Bylaw and Recruitment Committees.

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7. Monitoring Report: L2 Treatment of employees 7:04PM (1:33:00)

There were 2 non-compliant items: Safety and Evaluation. As far as safety goes, we are moving in the right direction but the numbers from the last employee survey were low. It feels like requiring evaluations right now is a burden to both staff and management.

Scott moved to accept the report. Pat seconded.

Discussion: Steven asked if information for evaluations was still being gathered and wondered why the numbers for respect and training were so low. Kari responded that although he's thought about it the reason is not clear. We have a response plan but progress is hard to assess. As far as collecting data for evaluations – it varies between departments. He clarified that they can still happen if it is helpful, but he would like to lift the requirement for the time being.

Steven expressed that he wants to ensure that suspension of evaluations does preclude employees who really step up being properly recognised.

Jay clarified that in terms of injury rates we are doing very well. Elly added that the daily meetings are helpful for addressing safety issues as they arise.

The motion passed unanimously.

Scott moved to suspend the requirement for employee evaluations for the rest of calendar year 2020. Eva seconded.

Discussion: Kari said the union officers are open to it. Steven asked Jess for input. She hasn't heard anything about it.

The motion passed unanimously.

8. Staff Rep Report 7:23PM (1:52:06)

Jess presented a brief report. There were some concerns about a write-up for minor infractions – employees don't need that right now. Eva asked what level of consequence would result from the write-up and Jess responded it depends on what disciplinary step is involved.

Scott asked Olivia and Andrew for insight into employee mood. The both agreed that there is a general feeling of good will, a strong team spirit even amidst all of the uncertainty. They expressed concern about steadfast employees burning out. While there is general good will among employees, the stress comes in because they feel a bit lost and directionless as things change so quickly and their normal routines are upended.

Jess updated her earlier statement that she had been misinformed about the write-up.

9. GM Report 7:31PM (2:00:07)

Kari reported that April sales were down, transactions were down, basket size is up. We are averaging about 700 transactions a day. We are waiting on details about the PPP loan. Given reasonably strong sales it may not be necessary. We are getting a 16K patronage refund from NCG.

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CIGNA health insurance rates will increase significantly. Their first proposal requires a 21% increase but we are endeavouring to reduce it. It will likely settle in between 9-14%. We are proceeding despite the increase because of the poor image created by changing providers too frequently.

Steven wanted to know if there has been a trend in claims that led to the increase. Jay replied that it is due to several very large claims. Steven asked if it was reasonable, and Kari said no, but it is close to standard.

Eva added that in her experience, double-digit percentage increases are neither uncommon nor surprising.

10. Climate resolution 7:41PM (2:09:50)

Scott moved to accept the climate resolution that supports a house climate initiative. Steven seconded.

Discussion: Eric supports it but wanted to know why Vermont's congressional delegation are not co-signers.

Andrew is inclined not to support it because he does not believe that carbon tax efforts will be effective. He also wanted to know why Vermont representatives do not support it. **Scott and Steven withdrew their motion and the council will revisit it next month.**

11. Wrap-up: actions, communications, calendar 7:46PM (2:14:43)

The executive committee will develop next steps for an action plan, we will move forward on annual events, Scott will research the climate resolution. Eva mentioned she considered sharing a link to information about temporary changes to WIC, but upon closer inspection, discovered that the changes were insignificant and temporary, and thus thought it was not worth Kari's time to review.

12. Meeting evaluation 7:48PM (2:17:10)

Elly requested input on the meeting. Andrew asked if Olivia could speak to the feeling of being lost in the grocery department. Olivia said they could talk offline. Eric felt as if some of his questions were not addressed. Scott felt as if the group did not stick to the topics at hand. Otherwise participants were generally satisfied.

Scott moved to adjourn the meeting. Steven seconded, and the meeting was adjourned. 7:57PM (2:25:40)