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Present: Scott Hess, Katie Michels, Olivia Dunton, Steven Farnham, Eva Schectman, Andrew Sullivan

Staff: Kari Bradley, Stephani Kononan, Jay Wisner

Facilitator: Scott Hess

Note taker: Rowan Sherwood

Special Meeting Purpose: Review this year's Consumer Cooperative Management Association (CCMA) conference, and discuss potential takeaways.

Scott welcomed participants, and launched the meeting, asking if there were any Co-operative Community Comments. Hearing none, the CCMA discussion began.

6:36PM (0:03:26)

Kari highlighted East Side Co-op's version of what we call Co-op Cares program (discount for low-income members). We could consider unemployment as a qualifier for benefits and extending the enrolment period. The goal is to make it as easy as possible for folks to access the program and to treat everyone with dignity and respect. Double Up Food Bucks is a federal grant program that matches 50% of the cost of produce, but is currently unavailable to co-ops in Vermont. We need a fiscal agent to apply for the matching funds. It is something to explore.

6:39PM (0:06:39)

Adding conventional products was discussed as a way to make shopping at the co-op more affordable. Since UNFI has acquired Supervalu foods, it is more feasible now. The group thought that we would need a compelling reason to make such a drastic ideological shift. We could lose customers as a result. Steven explained that a compelling reason would be if we were the only store in town and wanted to have a more competitive edge. That is not the case. Katie brought up that one reason could be if we wanted to be more of a one stop shop for folks. She also suggested that maybe NOFA could help facilitate implementing Double Up Food Bucks.

5:47PM (0:14:23)

Eva quoted the axiom "Never let a good crisis go to waste" as facilitator for change. There may be less resistance to change now because needs and priorities are different and greater. This time could be an opportunity to try new ideas that were unthinkable before.

5:52PM (0:19:12)

Eva asked how badly Supervalu products violate our banned ingredients list. We don't know. Scott said that this is a long range discussion and if we were to change our product mix it

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would have to be across the board – not a few miscellaneous products. Would this invite competition from another organic market?

5:55PM (0:22:17)

Steven addressed Katie's point of being a one stop shop. Would conventional products really draw people in? Would it make us more affordable? We don't want to supplant the Field Day line we already carry. Andrew asserted that lower prices will help. Kari warned it could be unwise from a business perspective to try to rebrand without sufficient dialog – HMC is clearly a natural foods store; this is what our customers have historically valued.

6:04PM (0:31:18)

Eva said we should ask the folks who use Co-op Cares about their experience in the store and how it more effectively meet their needs. Steven said we need to look at affordability from the big picture. He asked to redirect the conversation to other CCMA topics, like curbside delivery, and the basics bags offered by some co-ops. Katie said that when we focus on affordability it lets people know we are listening to their needs. We could better promote Co-op Cares.

6:11PM (0:38:27)

Katie and Eva presented the work of the Diversity Committee. They're developing an idea to host member meetings to hear how we can be more inclusive. Eva reached out to Kathy Johnson of CQ Strategies who is willing to facilitate such meetings. To allow for meaningful exchanges, Kathy recommends a maximum length of 2-3 hours, and 20 participants. Kari urged the committee to be very clear on the purpose of the meetings. Katie asked if there was a budget to hire Kathy. Steven said that we need a variety of views to be fully educated. Stephani said we could promote these meetings as we would a workshop. She also expressed concern that it would be too close to annual meeting and the pre-meetings leading up to it. Next steps are to see if there is a budget for it and Katie said she would contact [LaDonna Sanders Redmond](#) about council training in this area.

6:27PM (0:53:52)

The Abolitionist Challenge is something that meets once a month for 5 months and explores topics of undoing racism. It costs \$225/person. Steven and Eva expressed interest.

6:35PM (1:02:23)

Scott asked if there was any further discussion of CCMA topics. It was agreed that there was and the council could touch back in on it in future meetings. Steven noted that of 5 days of CCMA only one was focused on governance. He asked what the council could offer towards operational goals.

6:39PM (1:06:01)

Steven moved to enter executive session. Eva seconded. Without objection, Scott declared the commencement of executive session.

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Steven moved to exit executive session. Katie seconded. Without objection, Scott declared executive session ended. Open meeting resumed.

Scott asked for any community or Council comments. There were none.

Scott asked if there was other business. There was none.

7:07PM

Olivia moved to Adjourn. Eva seconded. Meeting adjourned.