

UNAPPROVED



2019 Annual Meeting  
Thursday, November 7, 2019  
Lost Nation Theater, Montpelier  
Business Meeting: 6:00-8:00pm

Welcome and Approval of 2018 minutes- Scott Hess called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He reminded co-op members to vote, as the election process is still underway.

Stephanie Lahar, moderator, reviewed the agenda. It was verified that there was a quorum.

Jay Wisner moved to approve the minutes of November 1, 2018. Seconded by Sandal Cate. This motion carried.

Employee Appreciation- Jess Knapp recognized Alex Fontaine as recipient of 2019 Award for Excellence in Customer Service.

Jess Knapp recognized those employees who have been working at the co-op for 20 years or more: Robert Kirigin, Mary Wells, Mary Trafton, Ben Bashore, Patrick Luce, Giles Brule, Nancy McShane, and Rebecca Grayck

Local Foods Panel- Eva Schectman introduced the Local Foods Panelists: Claire Georges, Butterfly Bakery, and Emily von Trapp, von Trapp Flowers. Stephanie Lahar interviewed the panelists; they shared some of their experiences which led to their current positions. Some members in the audience asked questions of the panelists.

Hunger Mountain Cooperative Community Fund Grants- Matt Levin announced the recipients of this year's grants from the Hunger Mountain Cooperative Community Fund. These included Capstone Community Action (\$1500), Family Center of Washington County (\$1500) and Herb Craft LLC (\$2500).

Reports, Question and Answer- Mark Simakaski reviewed highlights from the Treasurer's Report. The Co-op continued a multi-year trend of declining growth in sales; factoring for food price inflation (New England Consumer Price Index for food-at-home), sales growth in Fiscal Year 2019 was 0.4%. The Co-op generated just 0.3% in net income from earnings. There will be a patronage refund for the year in large part due to a one-time conversion of member paid-in equity to common capital per Co-op bylaws.

## UNAPPROVED

Scott Hess reviewed highlights from the President's Report. He reported that a Bylaw Committee is currently working on updating the bylaws; meeting notes are shared online after each meeting. He encouraged those present to attend forums and sessions which will be offered in the future to continue the discussion around bylaws. Katie Michels spoke about Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Kari Bradley reviewed highlights from the Manager's Report including discussion of demographic trends and labor contract negotiations.

Stephanie Lahar moderated questions and answers from the audience.

Sandal Cate inquired about "rounding up." Is there a way to promote this more actively or visibly? Kari Bradley indicated that he doesn't have data available but that somewhere in the hundreds of dollars have been collected using the "rounding up" option.

Question regarding fluctuation in the growth rate reported earlier in the meeting: Kari Bradley explained that the number of transactions has been decreasing over the last several years. In part this is because there are more places to purchase the same items that the co-op sells.

Question: What does each member spend on average each year at the co-op? The answer was not readily available.

Question regarding patronage refund: Is there a way to opt out of the patronage refund? Mark explained that by law we are required to distribute at least 20% of a patronage refund as cash or credit. However, members can opt to donate their refund to the Cooperative Community Fund. Likewise, if members do not claim their refund it will be considered a donation.

Some of the member workers stood to support Lisa Rochelle, a member as well as a staff member. She expressed some issues of dissatisfaction with worker conditions such as wages. She stated that we need a transparency bylaw. Amelia Salata-Hartman shared her frustration, after 100 hours of negotiation, with the current status. Melissa Pelkey expressed concerns that the co-op is becoming more corporate.

A member raised concern about employee dismay expressed at the annual meeting, given that she sees cheerful staff at the store; she wants to know how to stay abreast of negotiations and staff issues. Employees responded that they are allowed to talk directly with customers about issues. The monthly report is available, as it is public record.

A brief discussion followed regarding membership identification cards.

## UNAPPROVED

Rick Barstow asked if there is a way to make the senior member discount flexible? Kari did not know if there is a technical solution for that.

Questions about payment cards: Is it less expensive to use debit versus credit? Yes The swiping system had changed so that when you use “wave” it treats your card like a credit card; however it is believed this has been remedied.

Steven Farnham noted that committee meetings are always open, and he invited attendance at meetings as the bylaws work is being completed.

Andrew Sullivan noted that the local labor union has a Facebook page, and anyone can access this to get ongoing information about negotiations.

Suggestion was made to take advantage of the traffic that is going to the new business on Barre Street (Barr Hill), to increase customer activity at the co-op.

An employee and a Co-op member stated that a great many of people who work at the co-op love working there. What they want is to be treated fairly and to have transparency from the management.

Elizabeth Jesdale said that this body, the annual meeting, is the largest gathering of voting members and that 15 minutes is not long enough for discussion.

Stephanie Lahar invited people to stay after the meeting concludes to follow up on questions or comments that were not heard.

Community Award- Eric Jacobson described the new award and introduced presenter Susan Turner. Susan introduced Allison Levin and presented her the Community Award. Allison Levin accepted the award and spoke about her efforts to serve the community through Community Harvest of Central Vermont

Wrap Up and Closing: Kari expressed appreciations to those who supported the meeting including Lost Nation Theater, Paul Richardson, child care volunteers, Morse Block Deli and Co-op staff who have helped set up and clean up. Special thank you to the Community Relations Team

Scott recognized outgoing Council members Shannon Lessley, Ashley Hill, and Mark Simakaski. Olivia Dunton, Julia Goldstein and Andrew Sullivan were welcomed as new Council members. Mark Simakaski and Katie Michels announced raffle winners.

Susan Swanson moved to adjourn at 7:59pm. Seconded by Jay Wisner, this motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lisa Stoudt, Note Taker