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Council Meeting Minutes May 1, 2023

Present: Eva Schectman, Jen Porrier, Steven Farnham, Julia Scheier, RJ Adler, Lauren Antler, Ashley Muscarella, Jeff Roberts

Absent: Catherine Lowther

Staff Representative: Genevieve Cambron

Staff: Kari Bradley, Mary Mullally, Tim Wingate, Jay Wisner

Guests: Kristian Connolly, Elizabeth Jesdale, Meg Walz

Facilitator: Elly Wood

Note Taker: Rowan Sherwood

[Meeting Recording Here](#)

1. **Executive Session:**
Interpersonal Relations -
Communicating Respectfully
5:30PM (Not recorded)

RJ moved to enter executive session, Steven seconded. The motion to enter executive session passed unanimously.

RJ moved to exit executive session, Eva seconded. The motion to exit executive session passed unanimously at 5:39PM.

2. **Welcome: meeting ground rules,**
agenda review 5:40PM (0:01:13)

Elly recited the meeting ground rules and the visitor guidelines. Eva moved to add another executive session to address a concern raised today. Steven seconded. No discussion. The motion to add another executive session was unanimously approved.

3. **Cooperative Community**
Comments 5:47PM (0:07:17)

None.

4. **Consent agenda: minutes, equity**
refund requests 5:48PM (0:07:43)

Steven moved to accept the consent agenda. RJ seconded. Kari said there were no refund

requests. The motion to accept the consent agenda was unanimously approved.

5. **Annual Meeting Update 5:49PM**
(0:09:23)

Kari reviewed the logistics. Owing to a lack of available tents for rent, VCFA's Alumnx Hall was selected as the venue, which will include an outside seating area. Kari presented a draft agenda, which includes a session for small groups. The committee is looking for topics, so Elly solicited thoughts from the group. Steven offered to ask folks what they think the Co-op can do to reduce the carbon footprint of the local food system. Jen suggested requesting solutions to food insecurity. Genevieve suggested what makes a co-op a co-op? Julia suggested asking what people truly want in terms of engagement? Kari offered how can the Co-op be more inclusive and equitable? The co-op just marked its 50th year – what would you like to see in the next 50? RJ thought we should focus on food insecurity. Lauren asked in what way can the Co-op contribute to resiliency in the next 5 years? Eva offered having a discussion about the intersection of the Co-op and the membership. How can the membership help the Co-op achieve the

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goals the membership wants? Steven asked if we could offer several questions and let small groups choose the topic that interests them. The group thought that was a good idea.

Kari appreciated everyone's ideas and asked if there were any other thoughts on AM at this point? Julia liked Steven's idea.

6. Governance budget 6:00PM (0:20:05)

Julia reviewed the proposed budget. She noted that last year we added stipends and reimbursement for council and committee members. These will increase in year two, and we need to vote on adopting the second-year increase. Genevieve asked about council development opportunities. Julia responded that attendance to CCMA Portland will be increased to 4 people since it is so close. The budget also includes the CBLD program along with additional workshops. Julia noted that the proposal provides some flexibility so folks can take advantage of other events that arise. Eva requested clarification of a discrepancy in budget and projection for the current year. Kari noted that it's confusing because stipends from this year will be paid out in the next fiscal year. Another difference is that Annual Meeting was online only last year, but will be hybrid this year. Hybrid incurs more expense. Julia moved to pass this budget. RJ seconded. The motion to approve the Governance Budget was unanimously approved.

Jay pointed out that the council did not vote on council compensation. Eva pointed out that the level two compensation will not be voted until 2025. Tim clarified that fiscal year 2024 was voted and FY 2025 compensation was discussed but not voted.

6:10 (0:30:18) – 10 minute break.

6:20PM (0:31:00) Elly began with a reminder that the year two Council compensation package from the previous agenda still needs to be voted. Julia moved to approve the year two Council compensation package as outlined in the packet. RJ seconded. The motion to approve the year two Council compensation package passed unanimously.

7. Employee Satisfaction Survey 6:22PM (0:32:26)

Kari introduced the topic, then Jay expounded on it. Jay explained that following last year's low response rate, this survey was presented first in the lineup of several annual surveys. Responses showed a typical spread in terms of longevity of employment: full time/part time/substitute, and bargaining unit/management, indicating it is fairly representative of our employee population. Fewer questions were asked this year. All responses were rated lower than last year. There were many thoughtful comments. Overall, there are mixed feelings about working at the Co-op, though folks appear to feel like they have a good relationship with their managers.

Genevieve asked how long the survey was open and if it was the same as in the past. Steven observed that depending on the the responses to some of the questions, privacy and confidentiality of some individuals could be compromised. Elizabeth commented that while there was plenty of notification, it can be hard for folks find time to complete it. Some might not feel comfortable asking for the time and space. She suggested structuring it like an all staff training to give respondents more opportunity. Also, she mentioned the money available for a sandwich reward if enough people complete the survey – for those who routinely complete the survey, it's

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frustrating to never receive the reward. Genevieve expressed concern that "feeling essential and valued" cannot be addressed in a single question. "Feeling essential" and "feeling valued" are two distinct experiences. If the answer to feeling "essential" is not identical to the answer to feeling "valued," it is impossible to resolve, and undermines the validity of any answer. Ergo, these should be presented as two distinct questions. She thinks staff should be able to provide guidance on the selection and wording of survey questions. Steven appreciated that the report is substantial, and noted a similar need to separate the item about discrimination and respect into two items.

8. Monitoring report: L2 Treatment of Employees 6:37PM (0:47:45)

Kari presented the annual L2 report. He highlighted that we have improved safety performance significantly and gave credit to the safety team for accomplishing that. He updated the policy on harassment claims, noting that it is not realistic to not have any complaints, but it is critical to deal with them appropriately when they occur. The turnover rate has nearly doubled. That reflects the retail industry and the workforce at large. It is still a strength that the co-op has the employee retention that it does. Eva shared that with such a low rating on the question about respect, she does not think there is compliance. Julia agrees.

Steven moved to approve the report, adding he plans to vote against. RJ seconded. Ashley likes the language around treatment of staff. It's very clear. Steven voiced concerns, and thinks the motion should not pass noting item #7: If the numbers are not there, it's not compliant - low severity perhaps, but non-compliant. RJ asked if we want to make it a semi-annual report to ensure the low numbers are improved -

maybe conduct the survey more frequently, or some other less intensive way to gauge? Jay responded that surveys can be conducted more frequently, but thinks the burden would be felt by employees - it's hard to get folks to respond once a year. Genevieve suggested that staff be involved in determining what questions are asked. It may lead to more participation. Eva respects the forthcoming nature of the report.

Ashley asked what happens if it's not accepted. Kari said he would probably resubmit an updated version. Julia asked if they could accept it pending a change? Kari explained that it cannot be amended on the fly. He will edit the report and recommend a plan. The motion to approve the L2 monitoring report was unanimously defeated. Kari will resubmit with non-compliance for June meeting.

9. HMCCF Committee report 6:52PM (1:02:08)

Julia shared the changes for this year and asked for a vote on the updated charter. Julia moved to accept the charter. Steven seconded. Steven loved the process detailed in the charter but asked if the charter itself should be more concise. Julia agrees. Suggests accepting this one and she will work on aligning with other charters for next year. The motion to accept the charter passed unanimously.

10. Meeting evaluation 6:55PM (1:05:36)

RJ noted he has never seen a monitoring report not be accepted. Wants to be clear that there is appreciation for Kari and his work. Kari appreciated respectful communication and noted that is what accountability is all about. Jeff thought the conversation around the report was well done. Jen thought Elly was respectful to

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Elizabeth in nudging her to wrap her thoughts. Genevieve supports what others said. Lauren thought the communication around the monitoring report was exemplary. Steven thanked Kari for graciously accepting the outcome of the monitoring report vote. Eva feels respect from everyone here. Ashley echoed what has been said. Receiving negative feedback from employees is uncomfortable, and the report did not seem biased. This suggests Kari trusts the council to interpret the data. Julia appreciated Steven's communications.

11. Wrap: Action Items, Calendar, Future Agenda Items 7:01PM (1:11:34)

Eva promoted the upcoming Dinner & Discussion and encouraged folks to register soon, adding that all the info is on the website. Ashley shared that she won't be here at the end of June. She will be hiking the Long Trail. The group expressed enthusiasm for her adventure.

12. Council or Cooperative Community Comments 7:03PM (1:13:20)

None.

Eva moved to enter executive session to discuss two matters: labor relations/personnel issues involving a co-op employee, member, or vendor; and complaints or actions against a co-op employee, member, or vendor. Steven seconded. The motion to enter executive session passed unanimously, and the group entered executive session at 7:05PM.

RJ moved to exit exec session. Jen seconded. The motion to exit executive session passed unanimously. The group exited Executive Session at 7:59PM

RJ moved to adjourn. Jen seconded. The motion to adjourn passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:00PM

No votes or action was taken during the executive session.

Open Meeting Action Items	Who
Add guest policy to council shared document, email to Council	Kari
Incorporate approved Governance Budget into FY 2024 operating budget	Kari
Resubmit L2 for June 5 meeting	Kari
Incorporate HMCCF charter into website and shared folder	Kari