



Council Meeting Minutes

July 22, 2025

Present:

Council: Carl Etnier, Jeff Roberts, Steven Farnham, Giles Brule (online), Nona Estrin, T Gram (online), Catherine Lowther (online)

Staff: Mary Mullally, Sonia Carrasco, Elizabeth Jesdale, Rowan Sherwood (Departed 5:40), Tom Wright (Arrived 5:40)

Facilitator: Carl Etnier

Guests: Vince Todd, Co-op Attorney, Langrock, Sperry & Wool (5:40), Dan Voisin, Director of Environmental Assessment and Remediation, Stone Environmental (5:43PM - 6:08PM)

[Audio](#)

1. Commencement 5:30PM (0:00:04)

Carl called the meeting to order, welcomed all in attendance, and announced that Elly is on vacation, and that he would facilitate in her place.

2. Agenda Review 5:31PM (0:00:34)

Steven requested an item be added to Executive Session. It was decided to take it up at next Executive Committee.

3. Community Comments 5:32PM (0:02:14)

None.

4. Consent Agenda 5:33PM (0:03:11)

Jeff moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Nona seconded. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 0. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Executive Session 5:34PM (0:04:01)

Citing Bylaws §7.3c, Jeff moved to enter Executive Session. Giles seconded. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 0. The motion passed unanimously. The Council entered

Executive Session at 5:36PM, and exited Executive Session at 6:40PM.

Jeff moved to authorize the General Manager to proceed as agreed in Executive Session. Giles seconded. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 0. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Employee Emergency Loan Program Resolution Approval 6:41PM (0:08:07)

Tom described the Employee Emergency Loan Program, stating that the Co-op's enrolment in the program lapsed a few years ago. This past January, Tom initiated dialogue with EastRise Federal Credit Union to resume the program. The Co-op deposits \$10K in a savings account, and that money is used to secure up to ten emergency loans to employees, up to \$1000.00 each. If the employee fails to repay the money, the unpaid balance is deducted from the co-op's \$10K balance.

Steven suggested that today's "emergencies" could deplete \$1000.00

quickly, and asked if perhaps the amount should be increased? Mary and Tom indicated they'd like to maintain the amounts presented. Giles stated that he'd taken advantage of this program three different times when he was younger, and characterised it as a "lifeline."

Carl inquired if this employee benefit is part of the [union] contract. It is not.

Jeff raised concern about community discontent over the VSECU - NEFCU merger (which became EastRise) and floated the idea of engaging a different credit union. Tom explained that, this program enables [EastRise] to loan directly to employees, which opens a beneficial line of communication between employees and the credit union plus... employees participating in the 401K can borrow against that.

Steven inquired about a different approach to raising the ceiling amount, this time suggesting the Council approve the existing resolution, whilst simultaneously authorising the GM and CFO to increase the amount up to \$20,000. T mentioned that he is a member of EastRise, and he likes the idea of co-ops working with other co-ops, i.e., credit unions. In response to Jeff he suggested the only other credit union he knew of is NCFCU. Giles indicated his support to raise the ceiling amount, and authorise the GM and CFO to manage it at their discretion. Nona agreed to the increase, stating that most any non-routine dental work can easily exceed \$1000.00

After reservations expressed by Tom, Jeff suggested approving the resolution as presented, and authorising the increased amount in a separate motion.

Steven moved to approve the EastRise Credit Union Certificate of Corporate Resolution as it appears in the packet. Jeff seconded. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 0. The motion was unanimously approved.

Jeff moved to authorise the General Manager and the Finance Manager of

Hunger Mountain Co-op to negotiate with EastRise Federal Credit Union an increase in the total amount of debt secured in a way according to this resolution up to \$20,000 to be distributed to employees in emergency loans at [the GM's or CFO's] discretion. Steven seconded. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 0. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Break 6:58PM (0:25:15)

8. Business Plan 7:13PM (0:26:50)

Mary reviewed the business plan describing how it begins with the mission statement and Ends policy. They reviewed the previous years activity, shopper and employee surveys, conducted all staff meetings and a managers' retreat. Guided by that, they identified primary strategies, department managers developed their plans, and budgets were built from department goals for sales, taking into consideration both department and full store expenses.

Also in consideration is the current "situation": Tariffs, tight labour market, and lack of affordable housing.

Mary was happy to report that the employee survey showed improved staff satisfaction, and there's been a small reduction in turnover, and a new HVAC will decrease the Co-op's environmental impact by displacing consumption of 2700 gallons of propane. 37% of sales was generated from local products, and overall sales grew 5% in FY 2025.

In response to a query from Jeff how the plan addresses employee culture and harassment, Mary detailed an emphasis on communication and training. Steven commented that the plan consisted of an ambitious and impressive display of balls to keep in the air, and suggested a couple more: Solicit feedback from employees how to better equip them for more efficiency, and an employee suggestion program that provides a rewards for good ideas. Steven also asked if the plan could include some

goals to improve employee retention and overall enjoyment of work.

Carl asked if a protocol could be established through which a year-end report would document how many of the business plan's stated goals had been achieved, or progress on same. Mary added that to her list of action items.

Nona shared concern she'd heard from others about the rate of pay for the lowest paid workers, adding that it would be nice if we could say that we have a plan to address that. She asked Mary if she'd heard from folks. Mary indicated she'd heard from ~20 individuals, and added that likely, we're hearing about it now because the Co-op is in the midst of union contract negotiations.

In response to Jeff's inquiry if promotions and measures of success are listed according to priority, Mary said no - they're all considered important. Catherine asked to have Climate Change added to the list of Sustainability Initiatives. Mary responded that the very point of "Sustainability Initiatives," is to address the Co-op's carbon footprint.

9. Monitoring Report 7:34PM (0:47:42)

Mary reported full compliance with Policy L6 – Business and Financial Planning:

The General Manager must not cause or allow business plans, whether for operations or major capital expenditures, to deviate from the Council's Ends policies, risk financial jeopardy, or fail to be derived from a multi-year plan.

Steven moved to accept Monitoring Report. Jeff seconded. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0,

Abstentions: 0. The motion passed unanimously.

10. Wrap 7:40PM (0:53:20)

Carl announced there is no (currently scheduled) Council meetings in August, and reviewed when committees would meet. Mary listed Action Items:

What	Who
Finalise East Rise EELP resolution. Increase debt secured to not exceed \$20k	Tom
Follow up with Steven about business plan questions	Mary
With Council, Develop Business Plan progress report	Mary/ Council
Look at how climate change can/is included in business plan	Mary
Executive committee will meet July 24 and August 21	
Vision committee meets August 6	
Engagement committee set next date for annual meeting planning	Carl
Candidate meet and greet 4-6pm on August 7	
Scan EELP resolution to Steven	MM/TW

11. Adjournment 7:43PM (0:56:40)

Steven moved to adjourn. Jeff seconded. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 0. The motion passed unanimously. The Council Meeting adjourned at **7:44PM (0:56:56)**.