



Council Meeting Minutes

March 10, 2026

Present:

Council: Carl Etnier, Steven Farnham, Jeff Roberts, Giles Brule (Online), Greg Gerdel, T Gram (Online), Catherine Lowther (Online), Mark Seltzer, Leesa Stewart

Staff: Mary Mullally, Jess Knapp, Rowan Sherwood (Online), Elly Wood, Tom Wright

Facilitator: Elly Wood

Guests: None

[Audio](#) (Timestamps in blue indicate where audio corresponding to a given paragraph can be found in the recording.)

1. Commencement 5:30:31PM (0:00:04)

Carl called the meeting to order, welcoming Council members, staff, and guests.

2. Agenda Review 5:31:50PM (0:01:08):

Carl indicated that after committee reports, there is a need to appoint cochairs to the Strategic Planning Committee, and that the item about making Council guest videos public is a vote item, not merely a discussion item. Steven requested removing the equity report from the consent agenda, to be discussed separately. There was no objection to the changes.

3. Check In 5:33:13PM (0:02:41):

Elly posed this question: You are asked, with no preparation, to discuss a topic for ten minutes. What is your topic. Say a little about it. Elly also asked a bonus question: When will the US stop the annual shift on (and off) daylight savings time?

Topics included Travel across America on AmTrak, Creativity, Design, Running a diesel vehicle on vegetable oil, Do's and don'ts of Caribbean travel, Email security practices, Extemporaneous speaking, Green HVAC or mitigate climate change

with kelp, Importance of reducing climate impact, Organising, Co-op stocking logistics, Making whatever is in the refrigerator into a delicious meal, Importance of an organisation's financial audit, and What I would do if elected governor.

EDT comments: Eliminate EDT. Stay on ET. EDT will never be abolished - stay on it year-round. Split the difference and stay there. Done with seasonal changes. Coordinate EDT with Europe. Pick a lane and stay there. May be done with EDT by 2035, Use military time and set 00:00 hours at daybreak. Stay on ET and make restaurants stay open later.

4. Community Comments 5:44:13PM (0:13:45):

None.

5. Consent Agenda 5:44:43 PM (0:14:07):

Carl moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Steven seconded. Ayes: 8, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 0. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Equity Report 5:45:28PM (0:15:00):

Steven asked if more detail can be distilled from the number of current members to better reflect the proportion of individuals actually engaging in patronising the Co-op vs. members who may purchase little or nothing in a year's time, and chart those who make few or no trips to the Co-op in a given time period vs. those who visit frequently. Not to exclude anyone, and not to identify them, but to get a better sense of the *quantity* of folks actively supporting and engaged with the Co-op.

Tom explained that the data is available. Rowan chimed in that 400 members spent in excess of \$10,000, 28 members purchased in excess of \$20,000.00, and the Co-op's top spender purchased \$33,500.00 worth of goods.

Leesa indicated that the number of patronage refunds would be a good indicator of "active" members, to which Rowan added that roughly 7500 checks were issued. Anyone whose refund was less than \$1.00 would not receive a check. She also shared that the average "spend" is ~\$3000.00 per year.

Carl moved to approve the Equity Report. Steven seconded. Ayes: 8, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 0. The motion passed unanimously.

7. Q2 Financial Report (Tom and Mary): 5:53:45PM (0:21:22):

Tom presented balance sheet data. Carl thanked Tom for the supplemental information and explanations he included in separate columns in the report.

Mary presented the YTD Income Statement. Steven indicated that 1410% increase in income going from a negative number to a positive one made no sense, and presented a hypothetical where the same difference in amounts with the low is \$1.00, and the the high is \$341,612.00 would be an increase of 34,161,200%, which is silly and tells nothing. He stated that instead, that space should be occupied by a number which tells us something, and

suggested that a "sweet spot" be identified (between a low and a high) and the number in that space could indicate the distance from the centre of that sweet spot (akin to σ (standard deviation) on a bell curve).

Tom assented, and pointed to the Income Statement where actual net income is compared to budgeted.

Carl requested that in future the pages of the financial statements be numbered, thanked Tom for the inflation-adjusted numbers, and requested clarification on the Δ between numbers in the inflation-adjusted numbers, to which Tom explained that they are adjusted to FY25.

Steven requested the documents be displayed in front of the group so presenters can point to numbers enabling all to follow; Mark counter suggested a row and column format to make it easy to name and find the numbers being discussed.

Carl suggested he and Mary discuss which figures should be published and which ones not.

8. L5 & L7 Monitoring Report: Protection of Assets 6:14:40PM (0:44:10):

Steven moved to accept the L5 Monitoring Report. Leesa seconded.

Repeating the phrase "blown out of the water" several times, Mary enumerated various benchmarks that were met by more than very comfortable margins. She mentioned that she's meeting with representatives of the insurance company to review coverage, and clarified that what is presented is as of December 2025.

Mark mentioned L7.5, inquiring about security at 707. Mary responded that there is a security system and fire alarm monitoring at 707, and it is insured. Mark continued, citing L7.11, asking if there is flood sensing/monitoring that would alert staff to water in the building. Mary replied that there are cameras in place, and new sump pumps installed.

Citing the strong numbers at the beginning of Mary's report, Carl asked "Are we using

our financial strength to advance our mission and ends as effectively as we could?” Mary assented that “there is room,” and that is part of what will be addressed in strategic planning.

Steven posed a question to his Council colleagues suggesting that they might respond with advice from Mary and Tom: He noted that every Council policy is addressed in a monitoring report annually except for L5 and L7 which, coupled with the quarterly financials, are reviewed four times per year. Steven named some parts of L5 and L7, and asked if they could be identified as crucial to be addressed quarterly, and could the other parts of L5 and L7 be addressed annually as is the case with all other monitoring.

Both Mary and Tom responded with interest in this idea. Leesa suggested that annual reporting of L5 and L7 would suffice with the caveat that Mary and or Tom would apprise the Council of any events that occurred between L5 and L7 anniversary dates.

T suggested that whether the full report is presented quarterly might depend on how much effort is required to produce it.

Catherine suggested that the Co-op devote some of its financial well-being to reduce the Co-op’s impact on the climate. Jeff suggested that reporting annually might create a risk, and floated the idea of reporting biannually instead of quarterly.

Echoing Leesa’s remarks, Mark likes the idea, but suggested that any material changes ought to be reported quarterly

Ayes: 8, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 0. The motion to accept L5 and L7 Monitoring Report passed unanimously.

9. Guest Michael Billingsley: Coronal Mass Ejections 6:32:10PM (1:01:38):

Michael shared some images, and detailed activity of the sun and what leads to CMEs (Coronal Mass Ejections), which occasionally eject from sunspots. Considering the importance of knowing when these might occur, NASA launched

the SDO (Solar Dynamics Observatory) a satellite designed to monitor activity on the sun’s surface, with the intent to know what the sun was doing prior to its endangering (or causing harm on) Earth. To understand the scale of damage that might occur, it is believed that a CME stripped the atmosphere from Mars.

Michael described the scale used to measure the severity of CMEs, and recalled the Carrington Event of 1859, that was subsequently calculated on the scale at X25. Michael continued that by examining evidence found in cores drilled from the depths of the Earth, it has been determined that a flare of the intensity of the Carrington Event occurs roughly every 150 years.

The crux of this is that CME’s hurl magnetically charged plasma clouds toward Earth which may cause damage on the scale that occurred in 1859, in which induced currents in telegraph wires was so intense as to cause them to melt.

If such occurred today, the damage would be crippling including: the electric grid would be destroyed, communications lost, there would no longer be any control over nuclear reactors; all activity that depends on electricity or is powered by it would cease, with no means of recovery.

Michael wrapped his presentation by recalling his experiences in Putney, where several hundred individuals were committed to re-learning nineteenth-century skills: blacksmithing, horse-drawn logging, bee keeping, making soap, in other words, a sustainable local economy.

Mark inquired how far in advance CMEs can be predicted. They cannot be predicted. Catherine asked what causes CMEs. That is the field of heliophysics, The sun is held together by magnetism and gravity. The dynamics of the magnetism is unpredictable, but once a sunspot appears of a certain size and magnetic configuration, it’s likely to produce a flare. Steven asked how an organisation like HMC might prepare for a CME so as to be

helpful, supportive, and useful to the community? Citing the [March 13, 1989 solar storm](#) that shut down Hydro Quebec for nine hours, he asked if there are degrees of survivability in CMEs? Response time depends on the solar wind, or velocity with which the plasma cloud heads toward Earth, meaning 18 to 36 hours. When it is half-way here, we can determine the polar orientation of the plasma ball's magnetic field. If its magnetic orientation matches Earth's, much less damage will be done than if it is inverted. Citing his handout, Michael advised the group to know that there will be no communications whatsoever. This occurred in South Africa. When they rebuilt their grid, they constructed it such that it could be switched off. New Zealand and UK followed suit. No other country has done this, including the US, which has a noncooperative, capitalist economy. Even if the grid can be saved, GPS, which controls banking will be cooked, so you'd have to imagine constructing (or having already preconstructed) a local economy.

10. Break 6:56:00PM (1:25:40):

11. Resume Coronal Mass Ejection Discussion 7:14:00PM (1:25:52):

Steven expressed regret that there wasn't more time to discuss the implication(s) of CME's and think more about how the Co-op could respond to one. Jeff mentioned that strategic planning has begun, and he believes attention should be given to the implications of a CME-type catastrophe, and how HMC could respond to help the broader community. T expressed that Sustainability and Resilience Committee would be interested in addressing this; he continued stating that addressing climate change, big tech surveillance and the data they compile is responsible for most emissions growth in recent years, ergo, decoupling from that would be beneficial. Steven commented that this is not a "remote risk;" it is utterly certain to occur,

it's just a matter of when. He cited policy L7.11: Not allow the Co-op to operate without contingency plans for disruption to operations from force majeure.

Catherine recommended *Transition Towns* by Rob Hopkins. Greg mentioned the Billings Farm Museum in Woodstock, which is a working model of old technology. Leesa mentioned that it wasn't that long ago that we had manual cash registers and typewriters. They worked once - they could work again.

12. Produce Videos of Invited Council Presenters 7:14:00PM (1:33:25):

Carl moved to authorize the release to the public, video recordings of invited Council presentations provided that:

(a) Community Relations approves the process, and

(b) the presenters have signed a consent form acknowledging public distribution of their image. Jeff seconded. Carl explained that the idea is to make the talks during Council meetings available to the members and public, cautioning that some may be a bit uncomfortable about appearing in videos of these discussions being made available to the public.

Giles opined that five minutes for the presenters is not enough for this to be workable. He supports the idea, but wants the presenters to have more time. Catherine echoed Giles' sentiment. Jeff stated more planning is needed.

Steven suggested that it would have been immensely helpful if a presentation like Michael's could have been recorded on video, uploaded, and made available for Council members to view as part of the packet. Then the entire time allotted to the subject in the meeting could be used for questions and discussion.

Rowan likes that idea partly because it fixes it so folks in the room who do not wish to be in the video aren't.

Jeff expressed concern about the time commitment to watch a video. Catherine suggested utilising ORCA media to provide this. Steven clarified that his suggestion

did not involve CR; asserting that there are a couple individuals on the Council now who could produce such videos, and then publicise the link so it can be viewed. He went on to explain that it takes the better part of a day to read all the material in the packet; viewing a thirty-minute video is a de minimis.

Returning to discussion of the original idea, Leesa stated that people in a video of the meeting are likely to be unobtrusive, and that most would forget pretty quickly that the meeting is being recorded. Mark raised concern about “scope creep.”

Carl noted that there was not consensus forming around the original motion, and so moved to remand the matter to Engagement Committee. Jeff seconded. The motion was accepted without objection.

13. Committee Reports 7:24:14PM (1:43:37):

There was no discussion on committee reports.

14. Strategic Planning Proto Appointments 7:25:13PM (1:44:34):

Leesa moved to appoint Rita Ricketson and Jeff Roberts to lead the Strategic Planning Committee. Mark seconded. Steven stated support for the motion, but strongly urged that the proto committee assertively seek to populate the committee with individuals from a variety of demographics, emphasising a focus on younger members. Ayes: 8, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 0. The motion passed unanimously.

15. Executive Session - GM Evaluation Process: 7:27:58PM (1:47:22):

Citing bylaws §7.3a&c, Carl stated, “Whereas that knowledge of a topic to be discussed in executive session by Co-op members could cause substantial harm to the Co-op or a person involved, I move to enter executive session to discuss a personnel issue involving a Co-op employee.” Leesa seconded. Ayes: 8, Nays: Y, Abstentions: Z. The motion passed

unanimously. Council entered Executive Session at 7:31:04PM (1:50:28)

Council exited Executive Session at 7:39:12PM (1:50:32)

16. Eval Committee Appointments 7:40:07PM (1:50:45):

Jeff moved to appoint Leesa and Steven to the 2026 GM Evaluation Committee. Greg seconded. Ayes: 7, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 1. The motion passed.

17. Action Items 7:41:51PM (1:52:26):

Mary Listed action items.


18. Denouement 7:43:30PM (1:54:03):

Carl listed calendar items: The fourth Tuesday optional meeting is will not be scheduled. The Columinate Policy Governance course is underway. Mark mentioned that in the first week, the attendees formed groups and discussed ends policies, and structure. Council members evaluated the meeting between 7 and 9 out of 10, with the following comments:

Grateful for presenter. Appreciation of Michael. Get [CMEs] on the radar. Treat to see a financially stable organisation. Glad to see [subject of CMEs] cracked open. Appreciate the level of detail in the financial reports. Glad folks are interested in it. Appreciate that the group works together well.

19. Adjournment 7:50:01PM (2:00:34):

Hearing no objection, Elly declared the meeting adjourned at 7:50:26PM (2:00:59)

Action	Who	
Include page numbers on financial statements	Mary/Tom	
Request to add line and column #'s to financial statements	Mary/Tom	
Discuss financial presentations, including frequency, their next meeting	Carl/Mary	
Discuss a plan for video presentations	Engagement Committee	
Further discuss Michael Billingsly's presentation	Sustainability & Resilience Committee	