Council Meeting Minutes

September 22, 2026

Present:

Council: Carl Etnier, Steven Farnham, Jeff Roberts, Greg Gerdel (5:37:52PM), T Gram (Online), Mark Seltzer, Leesa Stewart (Online)

Staff: Mary Mullally, Elly Wood

Facilitator: Elly Wood

Guests: Council Appointees: Madeline August, Wayne Fawbush

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

1. **Group Bonding Exercise 5:30:18PM (Not recorded)**

2. **Commencement 5:35:20PM (0:00:02)**
Carl called the meeting to order, welcoming Council members, staff, and guests.

3. **Agenda Review 5:36:38PM (0:01:17):**

4. **Community Comments 5:37:32PM (0:03:12):**
None.

5. **Consent agenda 5:39:03PM (0:03:40):**
Jeff moved to approve the Consent Agenda, which consisted only of the September 8, 2026 minutes. Leesa seconded. Ayes: 5, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 1. The motion passed.

6. **Executive Session 5:41:33PM (0:06:12):**
Carl moved to find that premature knowledge by Co-op Members of the Council candidate interview questions could cause substantial harm to the Co-op or a person involved, and to enter executive session to discuss personnel issues involving a Co-op Member, under section 7.3(a) of the bylaws. Jeff seconded. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 0. The motion passed unanimously. Council entered Executive Session at 5:42:23PM. Jeff moved to exit Executive Session. Carl seconded. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 0. The motion passed unanimously. Council exited Executive Session at 6:05:55PM.

7. **Appointment Candidate Interviews 6:06:02PM (0:07:50):**
The following questions were presented to each candidate in turn:
As you think about the mission of the cooperative...
1. Could you tell us what strengths you would bring to the Council and any specific experiences that you have which might be useful in this position?
2. What would you see as your areas of greatest interest in your role on the council?
3. Describe experiences with councils, boards of directors, and cooperatives.
4. What would you like us to know that we have not asked?
5. Do you have any questions for us?
6. Would you be comfortable accepting the appointment to the Council, if the Council chooses to appoint you?

Wayne Fawbush:
Wayne stated co-ops add value to a community, helps a community control its own destiny, and keeps wealth local. Citing

multiple examples from his career, he explained that work for/with co-ops has dominated many chapters of his life. Wayne asserted that his promotion of co-operative principles and behaviour in all these endeavours would be useful in serving Hunger Mountain.
Wayne's interests in the co-op focus on growth, and how to make use of the new facility. Wayne has helped create and operate co-ops, focusing on building local resources that are controlled locally. He shared that he's run out of "house projects," and is looking for other ways to fill his time. He asked about the status of the new building, and Mary explained the progress thus far. Wayne shared that he would enjoy the challenge of a project beyond his garden and home maintenance.

Madeline August (0:32:40):
Madeline said she is analytical, curious, focuses on the big picture, and spent many years managing software in a public school system. She loves the Co-op, knows a little about it and wants to learn more to enable her to support it.
Madeline expressed that the manner in which the management-staff nexus fulfils the Co-op's mission is "close to her heart." She shared that during her years at SUNY Binghamton, and subsequently when she moved to Boston, she joined co-op's in both places; co-ops have always played an important role in her life. She has served on boards where her focus was fundraising, and finds the way different systems work to be very interesting. She asserted she would definitely join the Council if appointed.

8. Executive Session 6:54:03PM (0:53:50):
Jeff moved to find that knowledge by Co-op Members of Council deliberations around appointments could cause substantial harm to the Co-op or a person involved, and to enter executive session to discuss personnel issues involving a Co-op Member, under section 7.3(a) of the bylaws. Mark seconded. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 0. The motion passed unanimously. Council entered Executive Session at 6:54:35PM. Steven moved to exit Executive Session. Jeff seconded. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 0. The motion passed unanimously. Council exited Executive Session at 7:09:51PM.

9. Appoint Candidates 7:09:51PM (0:55:40):
Steven moved to appoint Madeline August and Wayne Fawbush to the Council through the end of the 2027 Council year. Jeff seconded. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 0. The motion passed unanimously. The appointments will take effect when the vacancies arise, at the beginning of the next Council year, at the Council meeting on November 10, 2026.

10. Break 7:13:16PM (0:59:05)

11. Council Self-Evaluation 7:24:01PM (0:59:53):
Leesa explained that she, Carl, Laura King, and Mark reviewed procedures and content of the Council's past self evaluation surveys, and determined that questions from past surveys could be reused, which would also provide for consistency year over year.
Means to maintain confidentiality was discussed, and the committee recommended Laura as a third party to conduct the survey confidentially, compile, summarise, and report results.
Carl explained how the group arrived at consensus, and Mark added that guidance should be provided for free-form comments to elicit more constructive responses to avoid Laura's need to edit or redact. Citing an example from 2024, he added that we should avoid abstract or vague criticism; concerns or critique should be expressed clearly and include constructive suggestions for improvement. This would avoid a person's need to break confidentiality in order to explain their comments, and it would eliminate Laura's

need to edit. Carl added that a hybrid approach could allow (only) Laura to know the source(s) of comments, enabling her to counsel the writer(s) and elicit more constructive responses. Jeff suggested that 2024 being a particularly challenging time, it was a poor example, and that the cited comment(s) were more about the challenges faced at that time and less about the individual who composed them, further suggesting the very need for "guardrails" is itself a failure.
Steven stated that if mellifluous and delicate language is a prerequisite to being allowed to comment, then any individual for whom the past year has been challenging may need a therapist or translator to walk them through it, adding that a certain amount of the message and honesty is lost if the individual is prohibited from stating their heartfelt truth. Mark responded: Let them "say what they say," but such sentiment should at minimum be followed with an explanation of needed changes or improvements; he seemed to agree that allowing an intermediary to "sanitise" comments may result in the message being misconstrued. Leesa added that sometimes messages are easier to hear if communicated in words the listener is willing to hear; that said, Leesa asserted that we shouldn't spend too much energy on something that occurred two years ago when the Council is in a much different space now.
It was determined (by the absence of objection) that, the consensus proposal in the packet would guide the process with these amendments: Technology permitting, for followup purposes, the facilitator (Laura) will be able to see who has/has not filled the survey, and that it will be independently determined by each survey respondent whether Laura can identify any given comments' author(s) for the purpose of counselling.

12. Ballot Committee Appointments 7:49:25 (1:24:50):

Mary announced that there is now a sufficient number of co-op members who have volunteered to serve on the Ballot Committee: T Gram, Jess Knapp, Deborah Messing, Rowan Sherwood, and Dorie Wilsnack.
Jeff moved to appoint T Gram, Jess Knapp, Deborah Messing, Mary Mullally, Rowan Sherwood, and Dorie Wilsnack to the 2026 Ballot Committee. Leesa seconded. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 0. The motion passed unanimously.

13. Denouement 7:51:11PM (1:26:39):
Carl, Mary, Mark, and Leesa named action items.

Action Items		
What	Who	♪♪
Inform Ballot committee members of their appointment	CR	
Inform Council of new appointees	Carl	
Circulate interview questions to the council development committee		
Communicate with Laura about the evaluation survey	Carl	
Revise self evaluation survey with some comments about how to fill out the final questions		

Evaluation (1:30:30): Council members rated the meeting 8, with one 9. Comments included: Good discussion with appointees, Appreciate dialogue about the Council Self Evaluation survey, Covered a lot of good ground, Walking away with two new Councillors, Productive - looking forward to working with two new folks.

14. Adjournment 7:57:15PM (1:32:43):
Jeff moved to adjourn. T seconded. Ayes: 6, Nays: 0, Abstentions: 0. The motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 7:57:45PM.