

MEETING MINUTES, March 28, 2018

- Present:** William Craig, Elizabeth Blum, Kevin Birdsey, Harrison Drinkwater, Ed Howes, Benoit Roisin, Dana Cook Grossman, Victoria Fullerton, Don Kreis, Anthony Roisman
- Absent:** Ann Shriver Sargent, Thomas Battles
- Staff:** Ed Fox (General Manager), Mark Langlois (Director of Finance), April Harkness (Board Administrator), Lori Hildbrand (Director of Human Resources), Amanda Charland (Director of Member Services & Outreach)
- Members:** Rosemary Fifield (also a 2018 board candidate), Natasha Niffka (also a 2018 board candidate), Nicole Vecchi (also a 2018 board candidate), Jessica Saturley-Hall (also a 2018 board candidate)

Bill Craig called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Hanover Board Room, Hanover, NH, store.

Consent Agenda: February 28, 2018, Meeting Minutes (Appendix A) and February 2018 Share Redemption Requests

MOTION: Dana Grossman moved to accept the February 28, 2018, meeting minutes and the February Share Redemption Requests.

Liz Blum seconded the motion.

VOTED: 10 in favor, 0 opposed. The motion passed.

General Manager Report

Ed Fox informed the board that the Co-op is in significantly better financial condition this year than it was at the same time last year. Investments in infrastructure are beginning to show results, including gains realized through our new perpetual inventory system and successful public policy outreach through organizations such as the Main Street Alliance in Vermont (which is engaging in ongoing discussions about raising the minimum wage) and the Vital Communities Corporate Council (which is engaging in conversations about workforce housing shortages).

Because unemployment is so low in this region (under 2%), Co-op staffing levels are still down (about 7% below the desired level). Notably, however, close to 80% of the Co-op's employees are full-time with benefits.

Other factors contributing to the Co-op's improved financial condition include resource-sharing within the organization (such as cross-training and clustering of employees) and realization of some benefits from the Catapult system.

At a policy level, the board's recent SNAP resolution has received significant traction across other organizations with a similar mission, as well as with our membership and shoppers.

Policy Monitoring

Monitoring Report: ENDS Global

Ed Fox worked with staff to create this year's Ends Report. The new format has been well-received, and General Managers from other cooperatives have asked for copies. A member of the board stated that it contains a good blend of facts along with important anecdotal information about the Co-op.

MOTION: Liz Blum moved to approve the Ends Report.

Dana Grossman seconded the motion.

VOTED: 9 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 abstained. The motion passed.

GP 2 – Board Deliverables, GP 3 – Governance Development, GP 4 – Board Members Code of Conduct, GP 7 – Monitoring Board Performance

The board discussed the policy monitoring process and how to best follow-up with practical suggestions provided in the survey responses. There is a Policy Review Committee, but it has yet to meet. Bill and Kevin are members of that committee. It was also suggested that some of the action items proposed in the monitoring process may be better suited as board retreat topics due to the importance of the issues.

For now, it was decided that Bill will solicit suggestions from the board on how to create better questions on future surveys. One suggested format was to list the policy as written and ask an open-ended follow-up question, such as what's working and what's not. It was further suggested that the board solicit an outside view on how they're doing by asking management and employees to reflect on the board's actions and processes.

It was suggested that the Policy Review Task Force look at how the board monitors policies and that a separate group look at revising the Co-op's Ends.

Member Comments

Jessica Saturley-Hall (member and 2018 Candidate for the Board) asked how the board helps the General Manager. Ed said that, among many other things, the board establishes the vision for the Co-op to help guide member engagement, which further provides direction for programs and messaging. The board is always evolving, he added, and the relationship between the board and the GM is truly a collaborative effort.

Committee and Task Force Updates

Annual Meeting

It was noted that the timeframe for the Annual Meeting agenda is tight, specifically around the time allotted for candidate speeches and the ensuing Q&A. The board assured the candidates that they will not be cut off while speaking but encouraged them to heed the time constraints.

Election Committee

In-store campaigning schedules will be available soon, and board members were encouraged to join in on some tabling times to get to know the candidates, spend time with the membership, and help get out the vote.

All voting materials are available in the stores, on the website, and on monitors and A-frames throughout the stores. The Election Committee is meeting on April 2 and asked members of the board to submit suggestions for the new-director orientation process.

Hanover Consumer Cooperative Fund (HCCF)

The HCCF needs a new Chair and committee members. The board will wait until the new board members are seated before making those decisions.

New Business/Action Items

21-day Racial Equity Challenge

Liz explained the *21-day Racial Equity Challenge process to the board*. She recommended that members of the board take part in the program this year, during the month of April, to learn more about the issues involved in racial equity. (For more information, see: <http://www.foodsolutionsne.org/get-involved/21-day-racial-equity-habit-building-challenge>.) Board members enthusiastically embraced the plan.

MOTION: Harrison Drinkwater moved to encourage all members of the board to participate in the 21-day Racial Equity Challenge, beginning April 1.

Don Kreis seconded the motion.

(As an agenda item for April, the board would like to learn more about sister cooperatives).

VOTED: 10 in favor, 0 opposed. The motion passed.

Employee Satisfaction Survey

The Co-op is conducting an employee survey, and the board is invited to submit some questions of their own. Don and Benoit will work together on formulating some questions and will submit them to HR Director Lori Hildbrand by April 6.

HCCS Branding and Name

Bill Craig introduced the possibility of considering a change in the name of the organization, to something more inclusive than the Hanover Consumer Cooperative Society.

The reasons expressed in favor of considering such a move focused largely around the negative perception that residents of many Upper Valley towns have regarding any entity with “Hanover” in its name, especially at a time when the organization is trying to expand its reach into more economically and nutritionally challenged communities. Also mentioned was the fact that the official name is no longer reflective of reality, given that the organization has stores and other business units located in Lebanon, White River Junction, and Wilder, as well as Hanover.

The reasons expressed against considering such a move included concern about losing the history and legacy of the current name; concern about the work and expense involved in implementing a name change; the possibility of generating bad press by creating an appearance of an identity crisis; and a belief that the disjunction between the organization’s reality and its name offers an entrée to explaining what makes us different and special. In addition, it was noted that the membership should

be consulted on such a decision, so we know whether there is even a problem with our name and branding.

After strong opinions were voiced on both sides of the matter, the wording of a motion was finally worked out.

MOTION: Dana Grossman moved to form a committee to investigate the costs, feasibility, drawbacks, and benefits of considering changing the formal name of the HCCS and to report back to the board at its May meeting.

Harrison Drinkwater seconded the motion.

VOTED: 2 in favor, 6 opposed, 2 abstained. The motion failed.

Benoit Roisin and Victoria Fullerton left the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

MOTION: Liz Blum moved to adjourn at 8:26 p.m.

Ed Howes seconded the motion.

VOTED: 8 in favor. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

April Harkness
Board Administrator

Dana Cook Grossman
Board Secretary