



## **Valley Alliance of Worker Co-operatives**

**Supporting the Success of Worker Co-operation in the Valley & Beyond**

### **Report from the Executive Director for VAWC Member Meeting, November 30, 2016**

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## Introduction

Congratulations to VAWC Member Co-ops for an exciting National Co-op Month! VAWC sponsored a film screening and educational radio spots. We also represented VAWC Members on a panel of co-ops and took part in a shared full page ad in two newspapers.



## New Political Context

It would be difficult to ignore the recent presidential election here in the United States. The results relate to us as a secondary co-op. Co-operatives of all stripes might recognize a continued invisibility in political dialog yet this is an especially mournful moment as an organization reliant on incorporation and legislation.

We want our incorporation statutes and current regulations to continue to protect our co-op identities and co-op members. After all we recommend co-op incorporation for all co-ops. I hope regional economic development recognizes the co-op advantage of rooting jobs and wealth in communities over the long term instead of models based on profit extraction.

Donald Trump's campaign is seen by both support and opposition as one that blames communities of color and immigrants and denigrates women and working people.

Stefano Zagmani, author of *Co-operative Enterprise, Facing the Challenge of Globalization* tells us



that lack of economic democracy threatens our political democracy. He cites the stated rationale of the European Union rejecting democratic proposals for economic stability because they might threaten traditional investment.

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“Lack of economic democracy threatens political democracy.”

*-Stefano Zagmani*

*Professor of Economics  
University of Bologna, Italy*

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It is more important than ever to support co-op structures throughout our economy. We have an opportunity to vocalize our support for legislation sympathetic to co-ops, like incorporation law, and to build relationships with legislators to educate and collaborate with them for further activity.

Aggregate organizations and secondary co-operatives like VAWC have a unique ability to

advocate on behalf of all our members, express our Concern for Community and spread the message about the co-operative advantage to decision makers.

## Recognition of Co-op Month: Governors of Massachusetts and Vermont

As members of the Valley Co-operative Business Association, VAWC was part of a successful strategy to have Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker recognize Co-op Month 2016 as well as co-op incorporation statutes. With the Proclamation (pictured above) we seek to secure co-op incorporation to protect our unique structure as well as establish communication for further collaboration. “Whereas co-operatives are recognized in the laws and statutes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as member-owned enterprises...”

Vermont legislature signed a similar proclamation that cited their particular statutes, too, so all VAWC membership can celebrate our political engagement.



## Visionaries Screening

Despite a storm laying snow and ice throughout the valley the show went on for our screening. Over 40 people saw co-ops from around the world featured, including Real Pickles, in *In the Spirit of Co-operation*, the one-hour episode of *The Visionaries* produced for PBS in celebration of NCBA CLUSA's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Thanks to the Garden Theater in Greenfield as well as VCBA, Franklin Community Co-operative and Neighboring Food Co-op Association for their partnership.

## 11<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration and Visioning

Thanks to everyone for coming to our 11th Anniversary Meeting! The visioning exercise, awards and trivia made for a productive, and enjoyable meeting.

The winners of the 2016 VAWC Awards are:

Jesse Owens Dues and Fund Payment Award: *Pioneer Valley Photovoltaics Co-op*

Julie Graham Spirit of Co-operation Award: *Pedal People Co-operative*

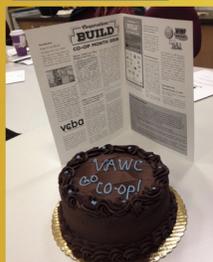
Emilia Romagna Principle 6 Cross Sector Collaboration Award: *Neighboring Food Co-operatives*

Jose Arizmendi VAWC Economy Builder Award: *Pioneer Valley Photovoltaics Co-op*

Yes, we had our first double award winner! After the ceremony and a round of co-op trivia every attendee took a moment to express their needs and goals looking ahead to the next eleven years. It was inspiring to see



## 11<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dreaming and Direction: "What do you want Year 22 to look like?"



### VAWC Membership:

- More people, co-op members and conversions
- "Chapters" of VAWC
- 100% worker co-ops involved
- More trades & tech co-ops
- More benefits



## Working for a Co-operative Economy

### Education:

- 500+ students learning co-ops per year up from @175
- K-12 co-op education
- VAWC is household name
- Keep momentum and Peer-to-Peer support

### Community & Co-op Relations:

- Co-op incorporation widespread
- VAWC becomes household name
- VAWC retirement fund
- "Co-op Hero" campaign
- Build a Co-op Bank
- People no longer have to ask "Why Go Co-op?"

overwhelming excitement about goals of development VAWC Membership, educational programming and community relations. See details pictured to the right.

It is exciting to be part of a secondary co-operative to carry out non-revenue generating but crucial work. Combining member service with long term education

and development has been successful for VAWC Member Co-ops on many fronts. Don't see your contribution in there? Have other ideas? Contact me and I'll revise this version.

### Upcoming Events

#### Next VAWC Board Meeting

December 14, 2016, 6:30pm.  
Location to be determined.

## First time reading this Report?

VAWC is itself an expression of co-operative principles — a co-op of worker co-ops that have come together as a means of strengthening the efforts of our individual co-ops to develop their businesses, serve their members, and contribute to the wider co-operative economy. Our core goal is to provide ourselves with the resources and support we need to advance our co-operatives, empower our members, and benefit more people in our communities. VAWC Representatives attend meetings, direct resources while defining the goals of our organization. Interested in being a Representative or on the Board? Contact [adam@valleyworker.coop](mailto:adam@valleyworker.coop). Here's some of our core activities:

- Ad/PR campaign through area food co-op newsletters, local and movement media;
- Maintain your **VAWC Owners' Manual** aimed at educating, training, and empowering current and especially new members;
- Measures of economic and environmental impact and a shared identity among VAWC members; and
- Developing our co-operative economy especially with inter-VAWC purchasing and cross sector collaboration.
- Education of many sorts including directing the UMass, Amherst Co-operative Enterprise Collaborative (on Facebook) and the Certificate in Co-operative Enterprise we co-created.
- Operating the **VAWC Interco-operative Development Fund** made from 5% of VAWC Member surplus, owned and controlled by VAWC Members.

Worker co-operatives and our movement are made stronger through shared identity, statutes and structural provisions that preserve our individual autonomy while clearly identifying our organizations as co-operatives united in the common cause of developing a co-operative economy.

#### Definition

A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

#### Values

Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

#### Principles

The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice.

- Voluntary and Open Membership
- Democratic Member Control
- Member Economic Participation
- Autonomy and Independence
- Education, Information and Training
- Co-operation among Co-operatives
- Concern for Community

The worker co-operative identity is further detailed by the World Declaration on Co-operative Worker Ownership established by CICOPA (The International Organisation of Industrial, Artisan and Service Producers' Co-operatives) in 2004.

The Valley Alliance of Worker Co-operatives (VAWC) is rooted in the ideals of co-operation, mutuality and solidarity. VAWC is itself an expression of co-operative principles — a “co-op of co-ops” that have come together as a means of strengthening the efforts of our individual co-ops to develop their businesses, serve their members, and contribute to the wider co-operative economy. Our core goal is to provide ourselves with the resources and support we need to advance our co-operatives, empower our members, and benefit more people in our communities.

## VAWC Member Co-ops

Brattleboro Holistic Health Co-op  
Broadfork Permaculture Co-op  
Collective Copies  
Co-op 108  
Green Mountain Spinnery Co-op  
Mindel and Morse Builders Co-op  
Pedal People Co-operative  
Pioneer Valley Photovoltaics

## VAWC Board of Directors

Randy Zucco  
Collective Copies – Chair  
Philippe Rigollaud  
Pioneer Valley Photovoltaics  
(PV2) – Secretary  
Anasuya Weil  
Co-op 108 – Treasurer  
Deirdre Kelley  
Brattleboro Holistic Health  
Co-op - Director  
Suzette Snow-Cobb  
Franklin Community Co-op  
– Stakeholder Director

[www.valleyworker.coop](http://www.valleyworker.coop)

**Working**  
for a Co-operative Economy