



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, March 22, 2017

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Coming up in the state senate session this year are two legislative pieces concerning worker co-operatives in Massachusetts, one of them being very important to stop.

Meanwhile we're working to improve our member service and reestablish the importance of co-operative leadership in today's political climate.

In that spirit VAWC co-organized a public presentation at Marlboro College, have fielded internship applications for member co-ops and are preparing

Legislative Engagement

Massachusetts state senate will see two motions regarding worker co-ops hit the floor this session. The VAWC board sent letters to the state senators voicing concerns.

“HD.601 An Act relative to job creation through employee ownership” seeks to give employees of companies in MA the first right of refusal. As it stands now VAWC is not included as a resource and we're working to include VAWC in the information pipeline.



Attendees at our conversion presentation with Vermont Employee Ownership Center ask questions about lending packages.

In Senate Docket 1862 Senator Cyr of Hyannis is proposing amendment to Massachusetts General Law 157A, employee owned incorporation law. In it

former owners of converted co-operatives could own and control more shares in their co-operative. As most readers of this report know, Democratic Member Control is the second co-op principle and says members have equal voting rights: “one member one vote.” Cyr's amendment waters down the identity and democratic function of co-operatives and is unnecessary to financing strong, successful conversions.

Democratic Member Control

“Co-operatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members...[and] have equal voting rights (one member, one vote)”

-International Co-operative Alliance

Taken from the co-operative principles. Senator Cyr's proposed amendment to 157A, S.D.1862, threatens this principle.

VAWC has feedback from legal counsel thanks to our partnership with Neighboring Food Co-op Association (NFCA) as well as draft letters and contact information. Contact us to make impact on these legislative measures.

Co-opreneurship

VAWC worked with the Vermont Employee Ownership Center (VEOC) to present “Selling a Small Business to a Worker Co-operative” at Marlboro College in Brattleboro on

March 21. The free and open to the public workshop had 20+ owners and employees from six businesses interested in converting.

The goal of the workshop was to leverage the conversion activity and VAWC's co-op led support in the region. Attendees participated in a two hour event full of information on past conversions, VEOC and their conference, co-op history and movement resources and VAWC's long term support model.

Interco-operation

The NFCA, a partner of VAWC with whom we work on the Certificate of Co-operative Enterprise, VCBA and more, celebrated their sixth anniversary on March 7 and held their annual meeting on March 18.

We are so thankful to have another secondary co-operative in our region building the co-operative economy and wish you dozens more trips around the sun along with us.

Franklin Community Co-op (Green Field's and McCusker's Markets) held their annual meeting on March 7. Out of the conversation there among dedicated members we set meetings with FCC general manager John Williams about our hybrid bakery concept and with the principle at Four Rivers Charter School about including curriculum about co-operatives.

VAWC was part of five co-ops from the worker co-op sector supporting the event. We wish you well as you prepare for your 40th year, FCC!

Co-operative Education

We have a fresh round of internship applicants from our Certificate in Co-operative Enterprise at UMass, Amherst, Economics Department. Four

VAWC member co-ops received applications for the summer and will be awaiting responses from their prospective host co-ops.

This is an example of the benefits of having the classes we co-created focus on co-operatives as it gives focus to our model and the issues we're encountering. The outcomes of the interest built on co-operatives have supported co-ops in researching their economic and environmental impacts, potential expansions and marketing programming.

If you have any questions about how to be more involved with the internship program please ask.

Calling all Co-operators!

VAWC Annual Meeting

May 24, 2017

VAWC's board will be preparing a letter as part of the annual report to give you their perspective on another year of co-op led activities that you made possible.

I will be crafting the rest of the report which will include highlights and reporting from the last year.

The elections committee will be organizing this year's election which will have two open seats for directors elected from members and one open seat for our stakeholder director seat from other cross sector co-operatives.

We will also have speakers from Mount Holyoke College and allied co-operatives who will speak about our shared goals and how working with VAWC is advancing the co-operative

community and economy. We hope you and all your co-op's members can come! All are welcome.

Upcoming Events

Next VAWC Board Meeting

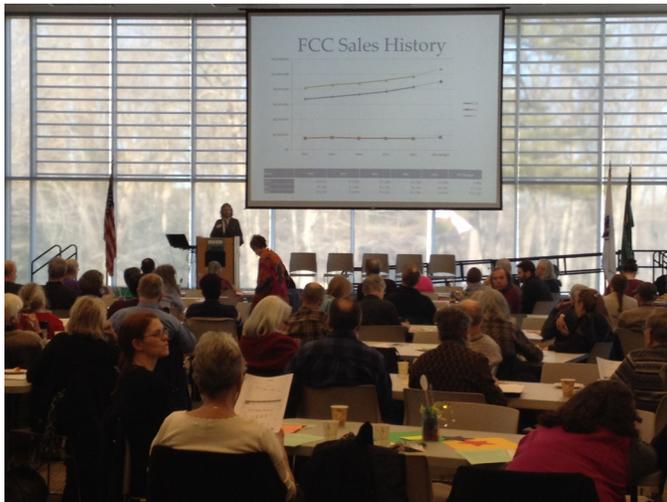
April 26, 2017, 6:30pm. Location to be determined. Contact Adam or any board member with questions.

Vermont Employee Ownership Conference

June 2, University of Vermont Davis Center, Burlington, Vermont. Join us as VAWC will be presenting on two workshops.

Eastern Conference for Workplace Democracy

June 9-11, 2017 at Fordham University Lincoln Center in New York City in partnership with NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives.



Franklin Community Co-op's Treasurer reports to members.

First time reading this Report?

As a co-op of worker co-ops that have come together as a means of strengthening the efforts of 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. 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 of all member co-ops;
- 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

Working
for a Co-operative Economy