

The Network of Bay Area Worker Cooperatives (NoBAWC) GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Wednesday, November 19 at 7:30 pm at
Rainbow Grocery Cooperative
Rainbow Meeting Space @ 1769 Folsom Street (near corner of 14th ST)
San Francisco, CA 94103

We would appreciate your feedback. Please contact Rick Auerbach, our administrative facilitator, at rick@nobawc.org or 510-910-0568.

Attendance: Ron Patiro, Raly Syka (Three Stone Hearth), Dylan West (Three Stone Hearth), Laura Smoot, Tim Huet (Arizmendi, NoBAWC), John Curl (Heartwood, NoBAWC), Max Perez (Arizmendi), Rashke Morow (Rainbow Grocery, NoBAWC), Rick Auerbach (NoBAWC)
Facilitator: Max Perez - Arizmendi Bakery, Panaderia & Pizzeria - Valencia Street

Agenda

1. *Introductions - 5 minutes*
2. *Talk/Discussion with Amy Johnson of the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives (USFWC). Amy will speak about: the relationship between USFWC, NoBAWC and other regional worker cooperative networks around the country; how can the USFWC & NoBAWC collaborate; what's happening at USFWC and in other U.S. regions; USFWC's connections with the international cooperative movement.*
3. *Break: 15 Minutes*
4. *Business Meeting:*
 - A. *Amend/Accept agenda.*
 - B. *Announcements.*
 - C. *Board/Finance Report*
5. *Member recommendations for skill sharing workshops/presentations at future GMMs.*
6. *Date and location of the next NoBAWC general membership meeting*

Minutes

Item#1 Introductions

Max Perez welcomes all attendees.

Rick Auerbach announces that Amy Johnson from the U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives had to cancel on short notice due to a family emergency.

Attendees introduce themselves. It is decided to start the meeting with the business items on the agenda and to use the remaining to have attendees speak about their coops and their interest in NoBAWC.

Item#4 Business Meeting

A. This part of the meeting has been modeled to take up less time so that there is more time for other things that are of interest to coops.

For this reason minutes from the last GMM are no longer reviewed at the meeting.

B. The board would like to clarify that everybody is welcome to participate, if they've paid dues or not.

The NoBAWC member discount cards have not been send out yet; it will still happen. In the future this will happen in a timely manner.

The board would like to create a rotation of facilitators from different coops, please get in touch with Tim Huet if somebody, or members of their coop, would like to facilitate an upcoming meeting. Facilitating NoBAWC meeting is an excellent opportunity for facilitation training and practice.

A. Financially NOBAWC is doing fine and there is money to do things. All that is needed is for members to let the board know what kind of activities, events or workshops they would like NoBAWC to see organize.

Item# 5 Member recommendations for skill sharing workshops/presentations at future GMMs.

NoBAWC is a member run and member driven organization and therefore it is important for members to let the board know what they are excited about to participate in, or what they would feel excited about contributing to NoBAWC. There is no interest in having the organization run by a person that is paid to create these events.

One idea, for example, is to organize a day workshop that could be useful for coops to participate in. To make such an event useful and productive for members, member feedback and input is needed to avoid offering workshops that are not of interest for members.

Are people interested in generating ideas for future meetings? What would draw coops in? What are some of the things that attendees' coops would benefit from?

- Communication is a big thing in diverse work places. How we deal and interact with each other can create friction and it all starts with communication. Working together can become difficult when communication breaks down.
- Finding a common vision is important to maintain a cooperative or collective in a capitalist system.
- Anti Oppression Training is another subject that is of importance. There have been conversations about how to run coops in a democratic manner and to recognize that certain structures of power and privilege are operating in coops even when it is not about single coworkers being aggressive or oppressive, but there are sometimes patterns at work that need to be looked and there is need for clarity on how we relate to each other. There is an interest in laying groundwork. For a coop to be in contact and being in touch with NoBAWC is important because to have opportunities to be in touch with other coops and have access to skill sharing with other coops in this sense is not only really interesting but necessary.

Would it be valuable for coops if NoBAWC would arrange somebody to come to their coop and give a workshop?

- There is always the question if the people who would benefit from participating in Anti Oppression training will actually participate.
- There are groups who would want all their members to participate and would need help with organizing such an event; this brings up the question of costs for such a training outside of fees since it could mean for some coops not to be open for business for one day so that everyone can participate.
- Coops can also share how they incorporate things like anti oppression in their organization. For example, Rainbow Grocery has an Anti Oppression Workgroup (AOW) that can be contacted by other coops and also the Conflict Resolution team (CRT) is available to support other coops.

The board is very much interested in organizing a series of workshops at coops' requests where a person, or trainers, will go to a coop that has a need for specific skills to be shared rather than putting on a workshop and see who will attend.

That idea is very well received.

Another idea for which the board would like to get feedback and hear the membership thoughts, is to have roundtable discussions about different issues, for example about different ways of decision making at coops; some coops work with consensus and other make decisions by simple majority. The board envisions these roundtable discussions to be an opportunity to exchange experiences and to see what can we learn from each other.

How about opening up NOBAWC to consumer coops?

- The Bay Area has more worker coops than housing coops and consumer coops. So it would be great to discuss if there could be more sharing. Coops are a way to share ownership and build an alternative to capitalism.
- Historically, in the 80's, InterCollective, NoBAWC's predecessor so to speak, was a mixture of coops, food coops, housing coops, etc. Housing coops had very different concerns, which seemed to hold discussions or projects back. NoBAWC perceived focusing on worker coops as an advantage for it's members.
- Ideally there is solidarity between all kinds of coops. But if it would be a good thing for other kind of coops to join NoBAWC and vice versa? Opening up to other coops might not work to the benefit of these different coops since their issues and priorities might be very different.
- Discussions of how housing and worker coops can work together are definitely interesting. This could maybe a theme for a meeting with housing and worker coops; it is probably possible to find ways to support each other without starting a larger organizations.
- NoBAWC would most likely benefit from opening up to meetings and discussions with other kind of coops like the Credit Union; they do not see the advantage in investing in coops and to engage them in conversation could be helpful.
- There are coops who are hybrids and NoBAWC could get members from such coops to come here and talk about it.
- It would be interesting and exciting to hear what is going on with coops in different regions and what their successes and challenges are in different parts of the country. Potentially it could bring public attention from people who are not already involved in coops.
- Worker coops are sometimes anti technology and a workshop about how to use Basecamp, or Google Docs to write proposals for example.

How coops can come together and work with community organizations to spread the word on coops, how can we bring the community in touch and informed about the coop movement?

- Growing into the community is part of the bigger picture of NOBAWC. NOBAWC is going through a transition, which is not complete, but to do more outreach and form alliances would be the next step.
- Having more potlucks and celebrating together.
- Informing about and working toward a more sustainable ecology
- NOBAWC could have a night and talk about how to do outreach where there were successful examples of outreach.

How to create connections?

- Workshops about coop skills and inviting also people from other groups. For example, coops have a lot of meeting and facilitation skills that could be useful for others. The facilitation training at the last GMM was really helpful.

The board wants to gather ideas and find out what members want?

- In a perfect world it would behoove us to have a major one day workshop because that brings an organization together.
- Marketing, some organizations hire marketing organizations but they usually market themselves. There is a coop that can offer workshops of social marketing.
- Find out which four workshops members would like to see (survey).
- There was a happy hour co-sponsored with the USFWC which was well received. This could happen more often and alternate between the East Bay and San Francisco.

The shortlist of issues coops are dealing with and desired services:

- Communication skills and differences in diverse environment
- Building a common vision
- Anti oppression
- Potlucks
- Organizational techniques/holacracy
- Burn out
- Multi sectoral alliances
- Regional activities
- Directory of coop services
- Working with community cooperations
- Cross sector faire
- Technical tools to support coop governance

Date and Location of the next NoBAWC GMM

Next meeting will be in February in the East Bay. Exact date and place still to be determined, but a possible location is Three Stone Hearth.

A social gathering or two before that are possible.