

Expanding the Circle of Cooperation



7th
Annual
Member
MEETING

On Sunday, March 28th, 2021 Orcas Food Co-op members joined the Board of Directors and staff online for our 7th annual Member Meeting.

Following the announcement of the outcome of the Board of Directors Election and Bylaws amendment vote (approved), General Manager Learner Limbach gave an overview of the Co-op's financials and response to the pandemic in 2020 and updated participants on the store's expansion projects.

(Find full details in the [2020 General Manager Report](#) and [2020 Community Impact Report](#))

This year, we were joined by Cooperative Development Consultant, Holly O'Neil and Cooperative Development Specialist Dr. John A. McNamara who announced the launch of Cooperative San Juan Islands and the opportunity to participate in the Northwest Cooperative Development Center's upcoming Co-op Academy.

Building on last year's Annual Meeting discussion, virtual breakout discussion rooms were organized around 6 topics and in each category were asked "What can we do to strengthen and improve our Co-op to better serve Member's needs and Expand the Circle of Cooperation". This year is the midway point in our [5-year Strategic Plan](#), and these breakout discussions will be a part of informing our Strategic Plan review that will be conducted throughout 2021.

Notes from each group's discussion follow.



Education and Events

- Kombucha, Sauerkraut, Pickling Classes
- Opportunities to learn more about the products: why we are sourcing certain things over others (check out PCC for what they do and don't buy)
- Team up with the Sounder to help advertise
- “Grow your own” gardening classes. Winter gardening, container gardening, etc.
- Different ways we can nourish ourselves
- Infused honey
- Starting a business class
- Accounting classes
- How to fix things: Fix-it fair. Cottage industry where people bring in broken items to have fixed and either sold or they pay for service
- Bee co-op: Learning how to care for bees
- Poultry tending: How to care for them and what to feed them organically.
- Local Farmer Highlights: Get educated and help them do some work. Worktrade education.
- Pruning classes
- Collaboration with the Seed Bank

Store Products and Offerings

- Steps towards bioregional food products, grown in Pac NW
- Increase bulk offerings- more diversity
- Pacific NW grown grains
- What can we offer that doesn't come in little packages?
- Increase local produce, and make it easier to identify
- Local dried seaweed & herbs
- Mushrooms
- More robust, resilient food supply here, instead of shopping big box off island
- Local seed company
- Less packaged, questionable ingredients. Check our packaging and ingredients before it gets into the store.
- Less chips, cookies, snacks, which are getting too much shelf space. Be bold on paring down.
- Free seed exchange library
- Cooperative fertilizer
- More NW, local grains & produce- mushrooms, seaweed
- Less packaged and processed products
- Garden resources- seed bank, local seeds, fertilizer from local animals
- BE BOLD in paring down products; More of Less



Credit Union Development

- Participants were interested in a credit union because they are supporters of cooperatives and want to see their money stay local.
- There was concerns about the regulatory complexity and costs of opening our own new credit union.
- A working group from Community Foundation Economic Resiliency Group has been working to bring a community focused credit union to Orcas Island.
- We selected Puget Sound Cooperative Credit Union because their values seem to be in alignment with the Orcas Community.
- PSCCU has already received approval from their board to pursue a branch here and they are now researching how to accomplish this.
- PSCCU will be looking for a certain number of members to sign up before they can justify a branch. (Can do that now for as little as \$5). They will need to accomplish a certain dollar value of deposits, they will need a central location to rent, and they would like a member of the Orcas Community to join their board.
- We believe it is possible a branch will be open on Orcas Island by the end of the year.

