

Food Justice Committee Meeting
February 6, 2019
Minutes

In Attendance

Pat Albright, Caitlyn Ashton, Howard Bilofsky, Susan Bloch, Eric Borgstrom (chair), Keith Brown, Andrea Huff, Mimi Kahn, Jeannine Kienzle, Seth Lerman, Kentu Malik, Jack Malinowski, Julie Martini, Denise Mathuthu, Megan McCrea, Emme McDermott, Sarah Mitteldorf, Craig Oppenheimer, Jon Scaffidi, Edwin Segal, Mary Segal, Norman Weiss

1. Welcome new members

We welcomed 7 new members, most of whom had attended the Town Hall Meeting and then became interested in joining the FJC.

2. Education/Programming Discussion (Jeannine) – see attached handout

Following up on our recent decision to include an educational segment for the first half hour of each meeting (similar to the HUNGER 101 that former chair, Brittany Barbato instituted), Jeannine shared information and led a discussion about education and programming. She mentioned that this segment could include a wide range of topics, for example, a media clip about a family on SNAP, a relevant news article, a guest speaker such as a representative from a Philly FoodScape or partner organization, etc. These different monthly foci would incorporate discussions about food justice issues. Jeannine also recommended several helpful resources for the FJC: Civil Eats, Organic Consumer's Association, Equal Exchange, and Equal Exchange Action Forum.

Jeannine raised the possibility of having a book club, either within or separate from the FJC meeting. The idea sparked great interest.

WW will host a Convergence of Committees meeting on April 11, 6-9 PM at Nexus. The meeting will allow for several WW interests to intersect: environment, social and food justice, and health and wellness. The documentary *Tomorrow* <https://www.tomorrow-documentary.com/> will be shown, and will be accompanied by a vegan potluck.

Jeannine recently visited the new Rowhouse Grocery at 1713 McKean Street in Point Breeze and shared her thoughts. The store is small, similar in size to a corner store, and “offers affordable fresh produce, meats, dairy, staple pantry items, as well as prepared salads, sandwiches, coffee and baked goods” <http://rowhousegrocery.com/>. The food is mainly non-organic, yet, according to Jeannine, the prices seemed high. The store intends to get much of its income from their catering business.

3. Food For All up-date following the Town Hall Meeting (Eric) – see attached handout

Eric led a lively and wide-ranging discussion about the main suggestions for improving the *Food For All* program, all of which emerged from the recent Town Hall Meeting.

Currently, of the 9,600 WW members, about 200 participate in the FFA program. In keeping with its mission statement, the FJC tries to make healthy food affordable to as many people as possible. Recognizing the finite amount of time and resources—of the FJC members, the WW staff, and the Co-op itself—our immediate goal is to identify practical, financially feasible solutions for improving the FFA program that can be implemented over the next year. The suggestion that was ranked top priority is to increase the amount of the FFA discount from its current 10%.

Eric divided the recommendations for increasing the discount into two groups: those with potentially big impacts and those with smaller impacts. We spent the majority of time discussing two of the big impact ideas, OPT OUT and ROUND UP, both of which could shunt money to the FFA program.

OPT OUT

Working members could choose to opt out of their discount (5% for working members and/or 10% for seniors).

ROUND UP (we might rename this to TOP OFF)

At the checkout counter shoppers could choose to top off their bill to the next full-dollar amount. This idea would have zero impact on the functioning of the co-op.

Committee members raised several critical questions, including the following.

What are the advantages/disadvantages of increasing the FFA discount to 15% versus 20%?

How should the FJC inform WW members about our preliminary ideas? Should we now update members in a short piece in the Shuttle or should we wait until we know more?

How do we best find out if members are interested in the OPT OUT plan?

Could we begin the TOP OFF plan in April and see how it goes?

Jeannine reminded us to communicate our ideas and plans better with Kirsten and WW membership. (Eric has since set up a meeting with membership and others to do this).

4. Announcements

Pat mentioned that Governor Wolf was not taking a strong stand on the threat to eliminate General Assistance. See <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/will-pennsylvania-convert-cash-assistance-to-housing-fund>

Upcoming Meetings – everyone welcome

- FFA Task Force meeting — Wed. Feb. 20th, 6-7:30, (555 Carpenter Lane)
- FJC meeting — Wed. March 6th, 6-7:30 PM (Nexus, 520 Carpenter Lane)

Education/Programming Handout (Jeannine)

In the past, our former Chair Brittany Barbato, began FJC meetings with HUNGER 101, an icebreaker if you will, delving into food justice issues. It was anything from a media clip about a family on SNAP, or an article or relevant news item to spark discussion amongst our group. The Committee has decided to add back this educational element since it has been missing for some time so that we have the opportunity to educate ourselves and allow time for discussion. A half hour has been allotted, which isn't enough time to really dissect everything, but we'll do our best to conquer what we can for now, and perhaps some future meetings can be solely educational and discussion oriented. We'd like to invite representatives from partner organizations, like Food Moxie, or our identified Food Scape organizations, and other speakers who are paving the way to fight food and social injustices.

Recommended sources:

CIVIL EATS: a daily news source for critical thought about the American food system. They publish stories that shift the conversation around sustainable agriculture in an effort to build economically and socially just communities. Founded in January 2009, Civil Eats is a community resource of over 100 contributors who are active participants in the evolving food landscape from Capitol Hill to Main Street. Civil Eats was named the James Beard Foundation's 2014 Publication of the Year.

Organic Consumer's Association: Online and grassroots public interest organization, and the only organization in the United States focused exclusively on promoting the views and interests of the nation's estimated 50 million consumers of organically and socially responsibly produced food and other products.

Mission: To protect consumers' right to safe, healthful food and other consumer products, a just food and farming system and an environment rich in biodiversity and free of pollutants.

Equal Exchange: Equal Exchange was founded to challenge the existing trade model, which favors large plantations, agri-business, and multi-national corporations; support small farmers; and connect consumers and producers through information, education, and the exchange of products in the marketplace. With our founding, we joined a growing movement of small farmers, alternative traders (ATOs), religious organizations, and non-profits throughout the world with like-minded principles and objectives. Underlying our work is the belief that only through organization, can small farmers survive and thrive. The cooperative model has been essential for building this model of change.

Weavers Way Co-op sells Equal Exchange Fair Trade bananas, coffee, chocolate and avocados.

Fair Trade is a way of doing business that ultimately aims to keep small farmers an active part of the world marketplace, and aims to empower consumers to make purchases that support their values. Fair Trade is a set of business practices voluntarily adopted by the producers and buyers of agricultural commodities and hand-made crafts that are designed to advance many economic, social and environmental goals.

EQUAL EXCHANGE ACTION FORUM:

We invite you to help us shape the Equal Exchange Action Forum. Our vision is of a vibrant community of *citizen-consumers*, working together to deepen our collective understanding of these issues and taking actions where strategic. We imagine a focus on learning and sharing in the first year as together we give this initiative more form. Within the context of Equal Exchange's mission, we will share the challenges and successes we experience in building supply chains for small farmers. Over time, we will take actions that challenge the corporate control of food, increase the market viability of small farmers and their co-operatives, and reshape our food system in ways that benefit all of us.

UPCOMING: APRIL 11, 6-9pm at Mt. Airy Nexus – Convergence of Committees – Screening of TOMORROW documentary.

Vegan potluck along with the screening. Meet and greet with members of Committees where the environment, social and food justice, and our health and wellness intersect.

TOMORROW sets out to showcase alternative and creative ways of viewing agriculture, economics, energy and education. It offers constructive solutions to act on a local level to make a difference on a global level. So far, no other documentary has gone down such an optimistic road.

Food Justice Committee – Food For All Task Force

MISSION & VISION: Currently, approximately 200 of 9,600 Weavers Way members are signed up as participants in the FFA program, with approximately 157 FFA participants actually shopping at WW on average each month. There is no magic target number for FFA participants or active FFA shoppers; however, in keeping with the FJC's mission statement, we strive to make healthy food affordable to as many people as possible. Recognizing the finite resources and time of the FJC members, the WW staff, and the Co-op itself, the goal of the FFA Task Force is to identify practical, financially feasible solutions to implement within the next 12 months. After implementation and sufficient time for the FFA improvements to germinate, the FFA program will be re-evaluated.

MEASURABLES: The FJC will evaluate the efficacy of the FFA program by two data sets – (1) the number of FFA participants and active shoppers; (2) the total discounts (\$) afforded to FFA shoppers.

FUNDING OF INCREASED DISCOUNTS:

The FFA Task Force, FFA interviews, and the Town Hall generated ideas for several programs to fund an increased FFA discount:

BIG IMPACT IDEAS

1. **OPT-OUT:** Would a large enough number of Working Members (WM) volunteer to opt-out of their 5% discount or Seniors (SD) opt-out of their 10% discount to have those funds allocated to the FFA program?
2. **HOURS BANK:** FFA participants may stack their 10% discount with the WM (5%) discount for a total discount of 15%. Would WW members be willing to complete the WM hours for FFA participants? To be equitable, we would likely need to complete the total hours for all FFA members to have the discount evenly distributed.
3. **ROUND UP:** When checking out, all shoppers would be able to select the option of rounding up to the next full-dollar amount, with those funds allocated to the FFA program. We would implement the program to be automatic, plus, it could also be available to NONMEMBERS on request.
4. **FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN:** Direct solicitations to members with a target amount.

SMALLER IMPACT IDEAS

1. **GIVING TUESDAY:** Add the FFA program to the Giving Tuesday rotation, recognizing that we average approximately \$1,000-1,500 each month for Giving Tuesday.
2. **Raise annual equity payments from \$30 to \$40** with additional income allocated to FFA. This poses problems since these payments are EQUITY, which members may reacquire if they leave the Co-op.
3. **Promote EasyPay** to decrease Co-op's costs for use of credit and debit cards.

FFA TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The FFA Task Force proposes the implementation of three programs to fund an increase in the FFA discount. To increase the likelihood of WW Management's acceptance of the overall proposal, the Task Force recommends that the TOTAL DISCOUNT offered to FFA participants be capped at 20% until the impact of the increase discount and the ensuing outreach and promotion of the FFA program has been quantified.

The FFA Task Force recommends the implementation of the OPT-OUT, HOURS BANK, and ROUND-UP programs described above.

ACTION PLAN

1. Initiate a survey of Working Members (3,100), explaining the proposal to increase the FFA discount by re-allocating the WM discount to those who opt-out. In 2018, the WM discount totaled \$575,000, whereas the FFA discount totaled \$50,000. If 10% of the WM agreed to opt-out, we could theoretically double the FFA discount.
What if we set a goal of 500 WM agreeing to OPTOUT?
2. Design the HOURS BANK. Consult with Kirsten Bernal to quantify the approximate number of hours to be completed for FFA members (6 hours/adult in each household annually). Once we have a number, we set an elevated goal to account for increased FFA members. Then we figure out the logistics of recording FFA volunteer hours – maybe a single Member Number that can be used for the Hours Bank. Once we have a GOAL, we publicize. Once the goal is reached ALL FFA participants will get 5%. This would incentivize FFA members to help volunteer as well.
3. Round up. This is simply logistics with the IT department, Jon Roesser, and Norman Weiss. We delegate to one or two FJC members to work with Norman and Jon. Perhaps consulting another Co-op that already has this implemented. Then publicize.