

**Willimantic Food Co-op  
Annual Meeting  
May 23, 2021**

**The meeting was conducted virtually, on Zoom.**

**Board Attending:** Linda Brock, Alice Rubin, Kathleen Krider, Nancy McMerriman, Joanne Todd, Stefan Kamola, Natasha Sheer, Matthew Coolbeth

**Staff:** Patty Smith (Operations), Steve Murphy (Technical support)

**Absent:** none

Quorum was met (31 participants in attendance)

**Call to Order:** 5:04 pm

Agenda Item
<b>Welcome; BOD Elections, and Board Chair Report (Kathleen Krider, Board Chair)</b>
Meeting guidelines (stay muted until it's your turn to speak) and announcement that the meeting is being recorded.
The results of Board of Directors Election were announced by Matthew Coolbeth: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o All candidates on the proposed slate were elected by a majority vote:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>46 ballots cast</li><li>44 votes in favor of Natasha Sheer</li><li>46 votes in favor of Steve Bachiochi</li></ul></li></ul>
On behalf of the Board, Kathleen thanked Stefan Kamola for his service on the Board of Directors. Stefan will be leaving CT and will no longer be serving on the Board.
Poll: How long have you been a member of the Coop: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o less than 1 year: 6%</li><li>o 1 to 5 years: 6%</li><li>o 6 to 10 years: 17%</li><li>o 10 to 20 years: 6%</li><li>o 20+ years: 67%</li></ul>
Board chair report, presented by Kathleen Krider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Kathleen expressed her gratitude for all the people who kept the Coop running this past year, despite unprecedented challenges. The Coop remains financially healthy, and was able to offer financial support to other Coops that are struggling, fulfilling one of the Cooperative Principles (cooperation amongst Coops).</li></ul>
<b>Treasurer's Report (Joanne Todd, Board Treasurer)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Joanne thanked Kathleen for her service as the Board Chair for 13 years. Kathleen will be stepping down as the Board Chair, but she will continue to serve on the Board.</li><li>• Joanne presented the Income Statement and the Balance Sheet for 2020 compared to 2019.</li></ul>

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- Despite all the uncertainty due to COVID in 2020, the year ended well. The Coop was successful in serving its members while keeping everyone safe. The Payroll Protection Loan helped ensure that the Coop continued its role as an essential service provider and employer: the loan allowed the Coop to retain all of the staff and provide Hazard Pay.
- Curbside service incurred extra costs. The Webcart service was not in the budget, but it was implemented to increase the efficiency of the Curbside service.
- The Coop was able to support the local community through charitable donations.
- 2021 started with lower sales (compared to 2020); it is predicted to be a break-even year.

**Reincorporation Update (Joanne Todd, Board Treasurer)**

- Joanne presented a summary of the goals and the process of reincorporation.
- Goal: changing from a non-stock corporation to a CT Cooperative (note: the Cooperative form allows patronage rebates).
- The Coop led a collaborative effort to update (modernize) the CT Cooperative Statute. In 2019 the CT legislature voted unanimously to update the statute.
- Next steps:
  - member education and involvement: we will need a petition signed by 5% of active members.
  - reincorporation will require some changes to the Bylaws

**Board Committees: Opportunities for member-owners (Natasha Sheer and Stefan Kamola, Board Directors)**

- The Board of Directors meets monthly to discuss issues pertaining to the general health of the Coop.
- Board Committees meet outside of the monthly Board meetings to discuss specific issues in depth and report back to the Board:
  - Member Engagement Committee: getting member-owners interested and involved in various aspects of the Coop
  - Board Perpetuation Committee: building and maintaining a strong and cohesive Board of Directors
  - Reincorporation: changing from a non-stock corporation to a CT Cooperative
  - Bylaw and Policy Revisions Committee: legal aspects of the Coop
- Board Committees welcome member-owner involvement. Interested members to contact the Board: [board@willimanticfood.coop](mailto:board@willimanticfood.coop)

**2020 Member Survey Results (Linda Brock, Board Secretary)**

- Spring 2020 survey yielded over 1200 shopper responses (17% of members!)
- The survey included an open-ended question “What are one or two of the most important things about the Coop to you?”
  - 60% of responses had to do with food quality, selection, freshness, healthy, organic, local, bulk section.
  - 40% of responses had to do with values, including the well-being of producers and workers, and other ethical and environmental issues.

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- recognizing the overlap between the food-related and ethical issues
- The survey results affirm who we are, sustain who we are, and provide motivation for increasing our impact.
- Sustaining who we are and increasing our impact requires member engagement. Shopping, in itself, is a way to engage. Members can further engage by participating on committees, or in events. Member participation helps sustain who we are, and inform our decisions.

**Poll: What is your favorite department of the Coop?**

- Wellness: 5%
- Bulk: 30%
- Produce: 25%
- All of them: 40%

**GM report and 2019 Staff Survey Results (Alice Rubin, General Manager)**

- Columinate 2019 Survey results:
  - overall scores for employee satisfaction are well above the average for similar organizations
  - positive results in all categories, demonstrating the relative strength of the organization operationally, culturally, and as an employer
  - Alice highlighted the staff's engagement and ability to work as a team
- Alice presented a timeline: March 2020 to May 2021
  - Despite the uncertainty and challenges of the last year (COVID, of course, but also a power outage due to tropical storm Isaias, resulting in the loss of all refrigerated and frozen products), the Coop ended the year with a member holiday discount and year-end donations to the community.
- Moving ahead: Expansion?

**Expansion Update (Alice Rubin, General Manager)**

- The initial expansion plan (brand new store) came with a 10 million dollar price tag!
- The second option consists of building an addition to our current store. The addition provides kitchen space for prepared foods, as well as office and meeting space. We started looking at this option just before COVID hit, then everything was put on hold. Now that we are starting to return to normal, we will be revisiting this option. Many unknowns still remain.
- The existing building at 87 Church is currently being used for storage and the parking lot is being used by the staff.
- In a few months, the senior center (community center) will open, and we will see what that looks like.

**Celebration of the Staff**

- The Board thanked the staff for their incredible commitment and service, ensuring everyone was safe, food was available, and our "bottom line" was not affected.
- Thank you to Steve Scanlon who took all the staff photos.

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**Q&A and Comments**

- Edna Williams: “Thank you to whomever negotiated the PPP loan; many small businesses were not able to even complete the paperwork.”
- Bill Potvin commented that he believes that the Coop can do better environmentally.
- Jean de Smet commented on the survey results, specifically the Coop’s support of local businesses (such as Hosmer Mountain Soda and Mountain Dairy), and suggesting that the Coop consider advertising its local products on billboards.
- Mark Dodd commented that the Coop should go further in decreasing or eliminating the use of plastic in the products it offers. Patty Smith responded that the Coop is working with the NCGA (National Coop Grocers Association) to track the number of items we carry that are packaged in plastic, set targets, and implement processes to reduce that number.
- Paula Coughlin commented that she is encouraged to see the increase in diversity of the staff in recent years, but what about the diversity of the shoppers? Patty referred to the Ends statement which documents the Coop’s goal of being inclusive and representative of the local community. This goal encompasses all of the Coop’s stake-holders, including staff, shoppers, Board members, etc. Patty shared that the Coop is currently working on a diversity statement, which has not yet been finalized or published.
- Winky Gordon asked how members can be involved in the Expansion discussion. Alice responded that members can contact her directly.

**Meeting adjourned** at 6:21 pm (motion to adjourn: Stefan, second: Linda).