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THE COMPOST

Vol. 43, Number 2 Summer 2021

STORE HOURS

8:00 am - 8:00 pm
Every Day

Co-op Scoop *Alice Rubin*

Our incredibly beautiful Spring has jumped right into Summer – or at least for the moment. I have never seen this many flowers, or such wild fluctuations of weather. It is hard to know what time of year it is.

It is also hard to know what to with our property across the street. Building material costs are through the roof, and taking on large debt at what I see as an uncertain time, doesn't seem like a good idea.

We are thinking that scaling back the project might be a good idea. Building a kitchen where we could make prepared foods to sell out of our store is what the membership has been asking for. We would focus on using locally grown ingredients as much as possible. This all seems good, and possible. Probably even profitable.

Any project we pursue must make good financial sense as well as meet the needs of the Membership. It is the Board's job to ensure that the project meets these criteria. We still have a lot of work to do before we will know this.

And before we even really begin to do the work, I hit the snag. Packaging. If we expect the food to sell, people have to be able to see it. If the packaging is clear – it is either made from petroleum products and those are not always being recycled. Or it is made from plant based material, which will compost, but only '...in an actively managed, municipal or commercial composting facility'. The catch to that being that there isn't one in Eastern Connecticut! The closest ones seem to be in Charleston, Rhode Island and New Milford Connecticut.

If everyone could just stay home, cook all of our own meals and eat them on our china plates with our metal flatware, we'd be ok. But that is not going to happen. We all are going to buy some prepared food, something – hummus, tofu salad, frozen mac & cheese -- that involves some kind of packaging that we cannot compost in our backyard compost pile, no matter how well we manage it. From what I can tell, recycling is not consistently happening, and that is probably not going to change in the near future. If the better alternative is plant based compostable utensils and dishes, then we need to figure out a way to have '...an actively managed, municipal or commercial composting facility,' somewhere in our community.

continued on page 3

CONTENTS

Co-op Scoop.....	1
Reincorporation.....	2
Which Came First.....	4
Save the Date.....	6

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Becoming a Connecticut Cooperative

Joanne Todd

The Willimantic Food Co-op Board would like to reincorporate under the Connecticut Cooperative statute that was updated in 2019. The motivation for this change goes back several years when the Board began considering patronage rebates to members. Patronage rebates are a return of income to members based on their purchases. The Board was advised by their attorney that the Co-op's current legal form, a Connecticut nonstock corporation, would not allow patronage rebates. The attorney recommended changing to a cooperative structure but counseled against incorporating under the Connecticut Cooperative Statute because it did not adequately protect members from liability. He recommended incorporating under another state's statute.

The Board decided it was time to update the statute because we should be able to incorporate within our own state. The change could also encourage the formation of new Connecticut cooperatives, or at least not discourage them. In a true collaborative effort, we began our advocacy journey to change the statute with the help of the Neighboring Food Co-op Association, Fiddleheads Food Co-op, Mad River Food Co-op, the New England Farmers Union, the Credit Union League of Connecticut, and our local legislative delegation. The updated statute - Senate Bill 138: An Act Modern-

continued on page 3



Becoming a CT Co-op *cont'd from page 2*

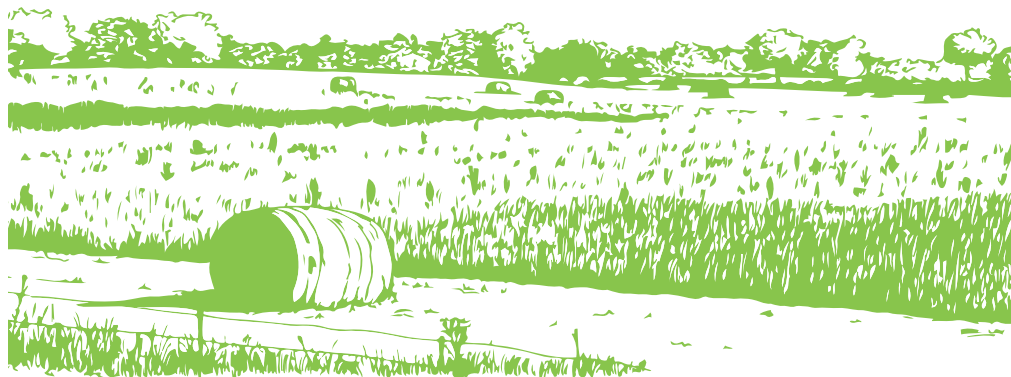
izing the Cooperative Association Statutes - was passed in the 2019 Legislative Session and became law.

The Board is now embarking on the legal process to become incorporated as a Connecticut Cooperative. The steps are:

1. Set up a legal entity as a Connecticut Cooperative
2. Merge the current Willimantic Food Co-op entity into the new entity.

The merger will require a petition signed by 5% of active members followed by a member vote. The Board views this as a welcome opportunity to engage with members around being a cooperative and the possibility of patronage rebates. When the legal structure changes, the Board will also recommend bylaw changes to support distribution of patronage rebates. Patronage rebates would be decided by the Board each year based on the adequacy of income and the needs of the Co-op.

If you have questions or comments or if you are interested in helping make our reincorporation a reality, go to willimanticfood.coop/about-the-co-op/our-board, on the right side of the page (desktop) or at the bottom of the page (mobile) is a contact form—let us know what you think. 🥕



Co-op Scoop *continued from page 1*

To be more concise – I do not want the Co-op making delicious, locally grown salads/soups/entrees/desserts, and wind up also creating a huge pile of plastic that winds up in the landfill. We have to figure out how to do better.

But back to our store in the here and now! Sales have been steadily growing and they are almost at pre pandemic levels. What has been the most interesting thing to me is the large increase in sales of meat, both fresh (up 34%) and frozen (up 58%)! The flip side is a slow and steady decrease in Wellness sales. I am not sure what all of this means. Are these changes a result of new shopping habits formed while many of us were 'on hold' for Covid? Will these new habits stick or shift again to something different?

The new reality of managing what had been a very consistent business is being able to be patient, sit, wait and see what happens next. Don't over react! We are watching, tweaking this and that, but not anything big. We are looking at our pricing to be sure that our prices are competitive with other grocery stores - we are doing all that we can to make food affordable to our members.

Our Member survey (see page 7 of our Annual Report) showed that the quality and selection of products was one of the most important things to our Members. Please let us know when there is something you wished you could buy at the Co-op. We will do our best to stock the products you want on our Co-op's shelves! 🥕



Which Came First? *Chris Swift*

When we first relocated to this area about 15 years ago one of the first things we did was join the local co-op. One of the next priorities was to order a small backyard flock of laying chickens. This was not a business investment, but rather an attempt to secure and maintain a quality food source for a growing family. My situation has evolved over the years bringing me employment at the Willimantic Food Co-op where I am responsible for maintaining the supply of eggs.

Before children (BC) we had been working members of the East End Food Co-op in Pittsburgh. After moving to New England we participated in a couple of buyers' clubs and we relied on the Hartford Farmers Market for produce and eggs. We would buy 30 brown eggs on a flat each week off of a truck in the parking lot.

Using the space available at our new home in Mansfield, I decided to purchase some White Rock and Dark Cornish chickens. I was amazed at the variety of chicken breeds available. Currently I am visiting the flocks of chickens that are providing eggs for you through our co-op. I still marvel at the birds' diversity.

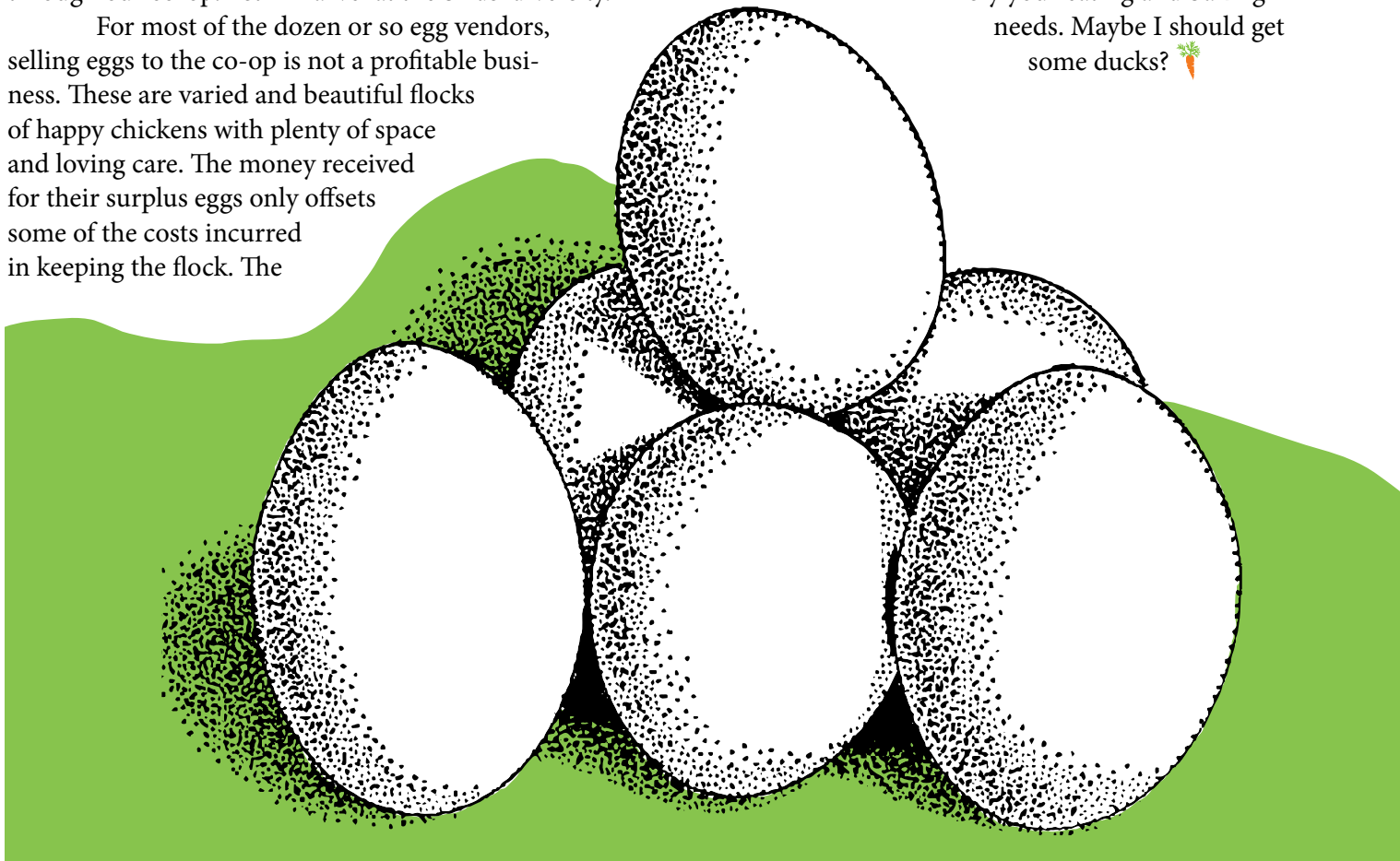
For most of the dozen or so egg vendors, selling eggs to the co-op is not a profitable business. These are varied and beautiful flocks of happy chickens with plenty of space and loving care. The money received for their surplus eggs only offsets some of the costs incurred in keeping the flock. The

results of this small scale agriculture include fresher eggs from healthier birds and, I like to imagine, more nutritious food.

We sell a lot of eggs here at our co-op. In addition to the over 200 dozen chicken eggs sold each week, we have cultivated a market and supply of duck eggs which are often used in baking yet can still be fried, boiled, poached or scrambled like the old familiar chicken egg.

More recently we have started selling goose eggs either singly or by the half dozen. Goose eggs are much larger with a thick shell. They still contain all the b-vitamins, a full range of amino acids, and are considered a complete protein. A goose egg has a higher ratio of yolk to white than the other eggs. This yolk is thicker relative to chicken or duck, but the white is thinner and runnier. Geese are seasonal layers so their eggs will not be available year round.

Perhaps we might reintroduce guinea fowl eggs or turkey in the years to come. For the time being we have several options to satisfy your eating and baking needs. Maybe I should get some ducks? 🥕





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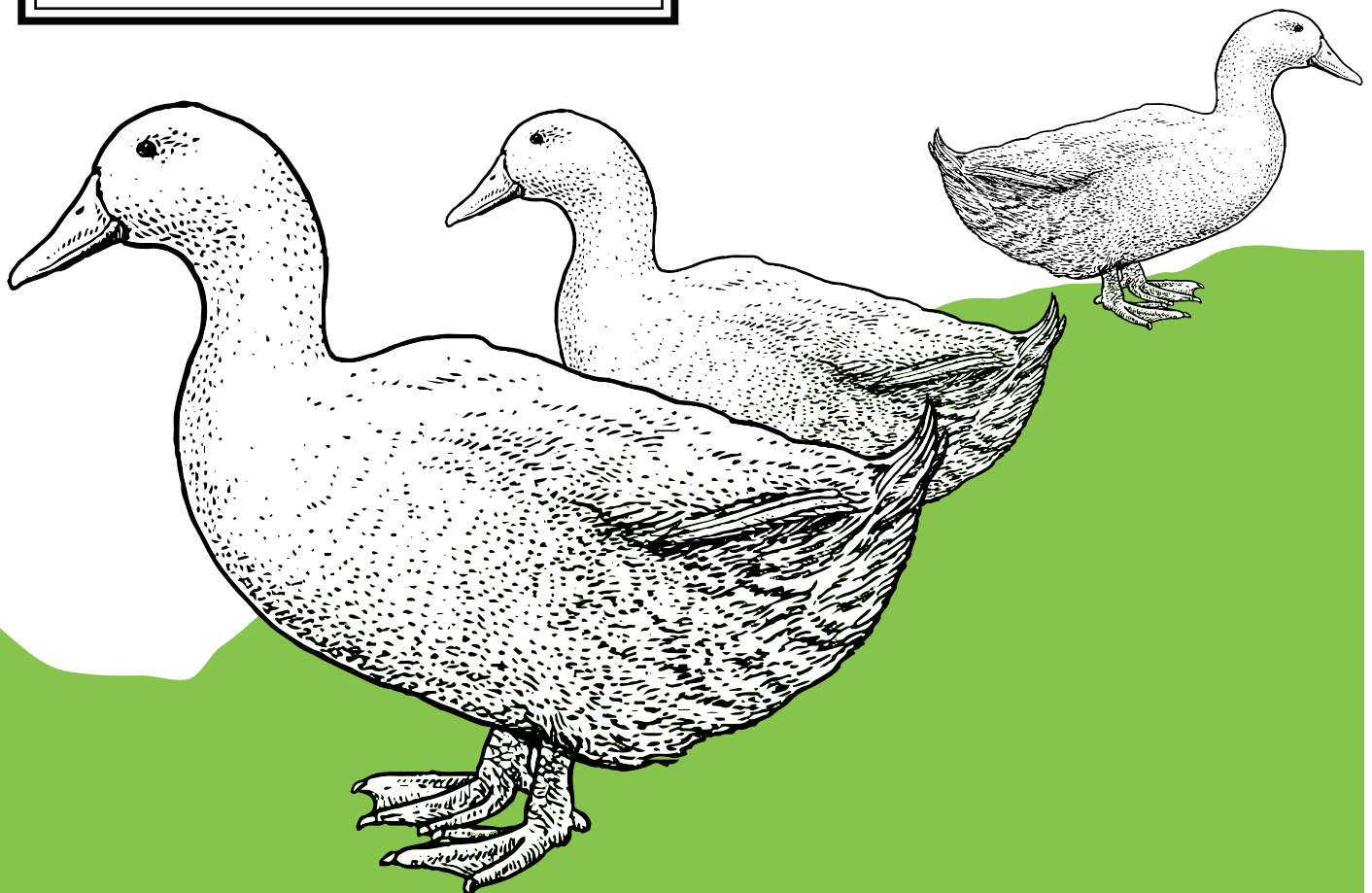
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