

ROOTSTOCK

ISSUE #36

JAN - FEB 2020

The Official Newsletter of the **Belfast CO+op**

As of January 1, 2020 it will have been one year since our Board of Directors made the bold decision to revise our owner equity structure. The rationale for the restructure was based on two logical assumptions about how equity was being handled at our co-op:

1. We were undercapitalized for future growth
2. Our former structure (\$60 equity/\$15 annual fee) was fundamentally undemocratic



In all measurable ways we are meeting our neighbor's needs more comprehensively and moving our association towards a more sustainable future.

In addition to changing the equity structure and requirements, we restructured how we process equity payments and took on an ambitious project to clean up much of our inactive owner equity. As we head into 2020, I would like to take this opportunity to offer an update on the benefits that we have seen due to this change and the challenges that we still face.

All of these necessary and overdue changes make determining success difficult, however the primary indicators that I would use to evaluate the success or failure of the change would be an increase in overall capital, an increase in retained earnings, an increase in number of owners (including fully vested owners), and overall growth in the cooperative.

in this issue:

**Self Care Tips for Winter
Shopping at the Co-op
to Save the World
Annual Meeting 2020
Updates from the GM
and the Co-op's
Board of Directors**

In the eleven months following the change we have seen a \$32K increase in total capital and a \$27K increase in retained earnings. As we look to our need and desire to expand in the near future it becomes increasingly important that we build a strong foundation of capital in order to execute a successful project. Both the Board and I take our responsibilities as stewards of the Co-op's future seriously and we are acutely aware of the pitfalls of taking on a project without being properly capitalized.

....cont'd on page 3....



OPEN EVERYDAY TO EVERYONE 7:30^{AM} - 8^{PM}

BELFAST.COOP 123 HIGH STREET BELFAST, MAINE 04915 207.338.2532

why we're here:

THE BELFAST CO-OP EXISTS

so that OUR OWNERS AND OUR COMMUNITY WILL HAVE:

A thriving, just, and sustainable local food economy

A source of healthy, nutritious, affordable food, and water

An efficiently managed, democratically governed inclusive cooperative retail store

A greater understanding of health, food systems, cooperatives and economic and environmental sustainability

An invested, engaged, and empowered staff that thrive in a safe, respectful, inclusive, and equitable workplace

Founded in 1976, Belfast Co-op is Maine's oldest democratically owned and operated grocery store and cafe. Offering a wide selection of products that are organically produced and locally-sourced, at reasonable prices, to support healthy lifestyles. All are welcome.

who we are:

CURRENT OWNERS:

4047

STAFF:

70+

GENERAL MANAGER:

Doug Johnson
doug@belfast.coop

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Heather Selin, President
Crystal Howard-Doliber, Vice President
David Balicki, Treasurer
Annie Bussiere, Secretary
Ernie Cooper
Evans Goff, Staff Representative
Alessandra Martinelli
Edward Sheridan
Andrew Watkins

BOARD COMMITTEES

Finance:

boardfinance@belfast.coop

Owner Engagement:

boardowners@belfast.coop

Board Development:

boarddevelopment@belfast.coop

Expansion:

expansion@belfast.coop

Who is the Board?

The Co-op's board of directors is elected by the ownership and is made up of owners just like you. The entire group has a legal responsibility to ensure the Co-op's well-being. Board members work to keep the Co-op accountable to cooperative principles, adhere to the Bylaws and make sure that the Co-op remains a sustainable business. The Board supervises the General Manager of the store, who is responsible for carrying out Board policies.

**we're always looking
for more people to join
our board of directors
committees.**

**To find out more,
please email:**

board@belfast.coop

what's a co-op?

A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

ROOTSTOCK is the Belfast Co-op's newsletter.
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Marketing Dept of the Co-op.

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on 100% recycled paper.

Questions and submissions may be sent to
marketing@belfast.coop



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The number of active owners, those that are current with their equity payments or in the past those that were current in paying their annual fee, has actually fallen in the past year by close to 300 owners. I attribute the majority of that discrepancy to changing the allowable grace period that we provided for owners who were past their payment deadline.

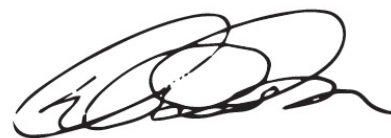
We used to allow a four month grace period for owners to postpone payment before they were suspended in addition to the two month "heads-up" they were given before their payment due date. When we restructured equity we did away with that grace period. To date we have 93 fully vested owners*, meaning owners that have paid the entirety of their \$200 equity share.

In terms of overall growth of the cooperative, we are succeeding well beyond anyone's expectations. In the past year we grew our sales revenues by over 7%, a data point that is even more impressive when comparing our store to our peers across the country that are on average experiencing between 1% and 2% growth. We are still awaiting finalized financial statements from our accountants, but indicators point to a net positive fiscal year for 2019.

* **'Fully Vested'** means these owners have paid their full \$200 equity investment and shown full financial support for our co-op. The more fully vested owners we have, the better the financial health of the Co-op looks to lending agencies- which will help with future expansion plans! Additionally, Owners will not be asked for additional fees or payments at the register.

We were able to increase our starting wage for workers in October and currently 100% of our workers meet the livable wage according to the MIT Living Wage Calculator (<https://livingwage.mit.edu/>). Our local sales as a percentage of total sales last year topped 36% and currently 57 cents of every dollar that you spend at your Co-op stays in our state. We renovated our entrance and restrooms this past year to make our store more accessible and inclusive to more members of our community and easier for shopping in general. In all measurable ways we are meeting our neighbor's needs more comprehensively and moving our association towards a more sustainable future.

This past year has brought a number of successes and surprises to all of us here at your Co-op. We have seen our community's ability to adapt to change with grace and courage. We have seen overwhelming generosity and support expressed through our Common Cents and Giving Tree programs. We have seen brave community members step up and serve the difficult role of Director at a time when our co-op has needed to make bold decisions to ensure our future viability. Looking forward to 2020, I see nothing but opportunities for your co-op to create greater positive impact and touch the lives of more of our neighbors.



Doug Johnson
General Manager

Bylaws Committee Update

Heather Selin - BOD President

In 2018, the Board of Directors (BOD) of the Belfast Co-op began a complete review of the Co-op's bylaws. Our goals are to:

- Simplify language and eliminate ambiguity
- Reduce language addressing operational issues
- Ensure the bylaws permit sufficient flexibility for potential expansion of the Co-op
- Align the bylaws with current practices of the Co-op
- Align the bylaws with best practice as recommended by co-op governance experts
- Ensure the bylaws are consistent with state law

This review is nearly complete. Beginning at the end of January, the BOD will present the proposed changes to Co-op owners and invite owners' inputs through dissemination of the proposals at the store, through email, and through information sessions.

Changes to the bylaws must be approved by a two-thirds majority of Co-op owners in good standing. After owner input is incorporated, a final proposal will be circulated to owners in spring 2020, with the voting process to begin 30 days after the final proposal is circulated. Voting will close after 30 days, or after 10% of owners in good standing have voted, whichever comes later.

Stay tuned for detailed proposals and updates in late January 2020!

A hand holding a white sign that says "You're Invited" in blue cursive. To the right of the sign is a large blue letter "A". The background is grey with diagonal lines and black motion lines around the sign.



of directors
Annual Meeting
 of owners

United Farmers Market of Maine
18 SPRING STREET, BELFAST.

**for our 2021
common cents recipients**

the nominees for the Board of Directors

food & drink with fellow Belfast Co-op owners

Run for the Board of Directors!



The Belfast Co-op is looking for energetic and collaborative member-owners to join the Board of Directors.

This is a great opportunity to share ideas, learn new skills, and guide the future direction of the Co-op. If you're ready for a new challenge, like working with others, and want to make a difference in our community, please consider running for a seat on the Board.

Q and A Session for interested candidates:

Tuesday, January 14 5:30-7pm in the Co-op Cafe

Meet and greet Board members in the Co-op:

Saturday, January 11th, 1-3pm

Wednesday, January 22nd, 4-6pm

For more information and an application, visit the Customer Service desk or go online to <https://belfast.coop/board-of-directors/>.

Contact us at bdcomm@belfast.coop.

THE DEADLINE FOR APPLICATION SUBMISSION IS: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5th

Nominate your favorite local non-profits for Common Cents!

Pick up a nomination form at the Customer Service desk or download from our website.

Nomination deadline: Friday, January 24th

Co-op Owners will vote at the upcoming Annual Meeting on March 1st, 2020 and choose the 2021 roster of recipients!

every penny counts!

common cents

IN COMMUNITY WE TRUST

A nomination form for the Common Cents program. The form is titled "ROUND UP AT THE REGISTER FOR A GOOD CAUSE EVERY MONTH" and "common cents IN COMMUNITY WE TRUST". It includes a section for "THE BELFAST CO-OP'S GLOBAL ENDS STATEMENT" with a list of values. Below this is a section titled "FORM MUST BE FILLED OUT COMPLETELY" with fields for "Organization name:", "How does this group align with our global ends statement?", "Organization Contact Person:", "Organization Contact Phone and Email:", "Organization website or Facebook:", "Organization physical/billing address:", and "Is this group a registered 501(c)(3)?". There are checkboxes for "yes" and "no". At the bottom, there is a section for "Nominees are voted on at the Annual Meeting by Co-op Owners every spring for the following year and will be invited to attend the event. Organizations may only be voted in to the program every 2 years, if they have not been elected, they may re-enter." and fields for "Received by:", "Approved by:", "Received Date:", and "Contacted Date:". The form is dated "Based 10/2/19".



But what if the customer *isn't* always right?

There is a popular joke seen floating around on social media that goes something like, “No, I’m not hitting on you. I’m just doing my job.” This is relatable and funny to so many retail workers because of how often customer service friendliness gets misconstrued into meaning something more or makes the worker feel like they can’t say when they are uncomfortable. It’s not to say that a romance has never blossomed from the humble beginnings of helping a customer find the mustard or that the cashier in the checkout line isn’t genuinely interested in how you are doing today-- but it is to say that there is a time and a place for everything.

At the Co-op we strongly value the close, personal connection we are able to have with our owners and other customers because it is truly what makes shopping

(and working!) here more special. We want EVERYONE to feel comfortable in the Co-op community from worker to shopper to I’m-just-popping-in-for-the-bathroom-er. With this in mind we would like to invite our customers to be positive contributors to the culture we are trying to create.

Keep having good conversations, ask for help when you need to find things, share your favorite recipes with us or ask for ours, and have fun in those aisles-- we are here to help you and love that part of our job! Just remember that commenting on our physical appearances, asking overly personal questions, making crass jokes, asking someone to smile, and flirting isn’t appropriate and puts the worker in an uncomfortable position. And lastly, if someone tells you they are uncomfortable with an interaction, it doesn’t mean you are a bad person, it just means that interaction wasn’t appreciated. Simply apologize and move on. We’ll be here the next time you come in, ready to help out any way we can. **Thank you for helping make our Co-op community safe, inclusive, and enjoyable!**

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SHOPPING *at the* CO-OP *to* CHANGE *the* WORLD

Over a year ago, my husband and I watched a film called “The Clean Bin Project.” The images of plastic-filled ocean water and albatross feeding plastic to their young forever changed us both. We set a goal to significantly reduce the amount of waste - especially plastic waste - our family produced. Having lived in different parts of the country, I am

aware of how lucky we are to have a place to shop like the Belfast Co-op. Not only can I buy local yogurt in a returnable glass jar, I have an entire aisle of bulk dry goods to choose from. I love that the spices are ONLY sold in bulk (so much more affordable that way too!) and that I can even find bulk tea, herbs, and baking supplies.

Here are some easy ways to reduce your waste when shopping at the Co-op.

Bread: Bake your own using bulk flour, yeast, salt, and olive oil. Buy loose bagels and put them in your own cloth bread bag. We are gluten-free and found an awesome recipe online for bread made from whole green buckwheat that is the best GF bread I’ve ever had. Bonus: I can pre-order green buckwheat groats in bulk at a 15% discount at the co-op and they come in a paper sack.

Produce: Buy unpackaged items and use your own cloth bags again. Most items sold in plastic packages are also available unpackaged (e.g. mushrooms, lettuces, carrots, etc.). If you forget your bags, I usually just forego them, but our green disposable produce bags are now totally compostable in your home compost. They still have a carbon footprint, but are a much better option than plastic.

Dry Goods: Tare your containers from home at the register or use the scales available in the bulk aisles. You can also bring more fabric bags with ties. You can get baking supplies, snacks, grains, beans, nuts, seeds, granola, spices, medicinal herbs, and teas.

Liquids: Bring your empty glass jars from home instead of putting them in your recycle bin. Tare them and fill with liquids like olive oil, vinegar, honey, maple syrup, kombucha, laundry detergent and dish soap!

Protein, Meat & Dairy: Your Belfast Co-op sells bulk tofu, eggs, cheese, meat, fish, nut butters, nuts and seeds. You can buy milk and yogurt in glass jars and local butter in compostable waxed paper wrappers.

Ready to Eat Food: Eat in at the cafe using plates and metal silverware, rather than taking your food to-go. It’s a great spot to sit and relax anyway. And if you have to run, bring your reusable coffee mug!

Cleaning supplies: I make my own using simple recipes from the internet, mostly involving baking soda and vinegar. I have even made my own laundry soap, deodorant, toothpaste and shampoo from bulk ingredients purchased at the co-op. You can also purchase unwrapped soap and bulk Dr. Bronners liquid soap, dish soap, laundry detergent, and others.

And my personal favorite perk to being a Co-op owner?

The bulk pre-order. You can preorder larger quantities of your favorite items at a 15% discount. We keep all of our bulk dry goods in a big metal trash can with a tight-fitting lid. They last for months and months and we always have staple foods on hand.

But guess what? Even after several years of shopping like this, I still forget my bags on occasion. When you do, opt for compostable paper bags over plastic ones or pick up one of the many cardboard boxes available near the registers to collect your items in. We also sell co-op logo glass jars (glass always wins over plastic when it comes to environmentalism. Did you know that plastic can only be downcycled into plastic lumber or carpet padding while glass can be remelted and turned into glass jars over and over again?)

The zero waste journey is a hard one. We’ve had our lapses, especially when travelling or dealing with stressful times. **Don’t be too hard on yourself, just know that every little thing you DO do is a win!**

self care tips for winter

Annie Bussiere, BOD Secretary & Worker-Owner

Winter in Maine is beautiful but long which makes taking time for self-care essential. Instead of hibernating away or simply going through the motions until Spring comes, embrace all the stillness of winter by nurturing your body and spirit.

Annie's Winter Self Care Essentials from the Co-op

Dried Nettle

from the Wellness Bulk Herb section for soups or for drinking as tea

Baron De Ley Tempranillo

a beautiful wine for sipping with dinner or in your cozy clothes

Weleda Skin Food

ultra rich lotions, body butter, and lip balm

Cocokind lip balm

The Macabeet is very subtle for those looking for color as well as protection



food

Think warm, nutrient dense, and comforting. A long simmered stew or soup is the perfect way to warm your heart and home, eat local even in winter, and add much needed humidity to that crisp winter air that permeates through the walls of so many delightfully old Maine farmhouses. Incorporate sturdy local storage crops (potatoes, carrots, onions, etc.), meat from the deep freezer or recent hunts, and dried herbs into a meal that can last for days. Bones and vegetable scraps can be frozen until you have enough then used to make nourishing broths. I like to sprinkle in dried nettle leaf from the Wellness bulk herb section or local dried seaweed from Atlantic Holdfast Co. for greater depth of flavor and added vitamins and minerals. Always make more than you think you need-- soup gets better after the first day and is perfect for sharing.

skin care

Maine winters can mean just about anything which can really wreak havoc on your skin. Take care to moisturize after getting out of the shower or before heading out into the frigid temperatures, when your skin is most vulnerable. Hitting the slopes or sitting out in the middle of a lake for some ice fishing? Remember that sunburns can still happen in the winter. Apply a nice mineral sunscreen to your face before heading out for good measure. For cracked skin and chapped lips, thick balms with beeswax, shea butter, and/or lanolin are great for healing and protecting. Lastly, remembering to hydrate can be harder in the winter but constant temperature changes and lack of humidity can really dry you out. For extra hydration, drink water, humidify your home, and moisturize your skin.

Equal Exchange Coconut Milk Chocolate

rich and creamy without
dairy or refined sugars

Pacha Soap Co. Bath Froth Bombs

My favorite is french lavender scent

Chromalux Full Spectrum Light Bulb

in the General Merchandise section

Vitamin D3 supplement

find a variety of options in
the Wellness section

Atlantic Holdfast Seaweed Co. soup mix

for adding to soups and/or beans

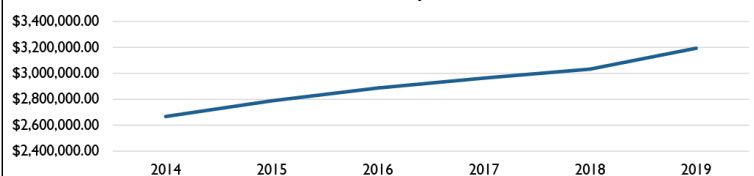
light

Finding time to bring light into your life will make getting through the winter a lot easier. Getting outside in daylight hours for even 15 minutes can do wonders for uplifting your spirit. One could argue that hanging out in the Co-op seating area when the light comes streaming in during the early afternoon has the same effect-- you can even get your soup fix then too with the Deli's delicious soups made from scratch. At night, beeswax candles are lovely to have on hand for the warm light and subtle scent they give off. Not to mention, you will be prepared for that inevitable power outage. Full spectrum light bulbs are also said to improve mood and wakefulness and can make a difference in your house. And of course, seek companionship and activity in the winter because metaphorical light can be just as important, if not more, than physical light in the winter. Our community bulletin board is full of ways to connect with others and yourself. There is light out there, you just have to find it.

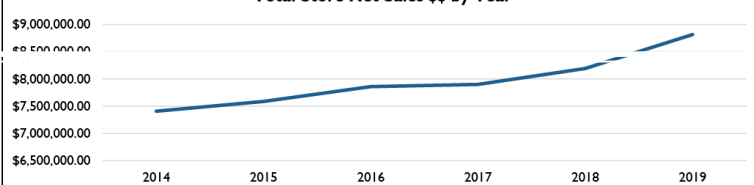
Finance Update

from the November 2019 GM report
to the BOD on Policy A, Global Ends:

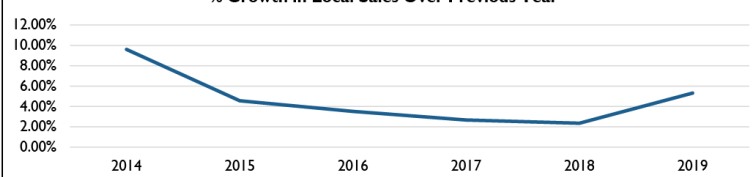
Total Local Sales \$\$ by Year



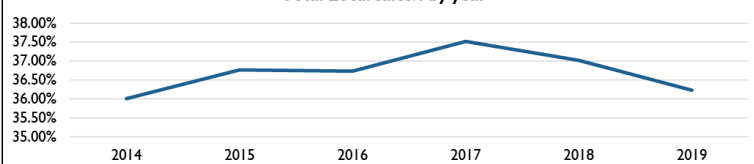
Total Store Net Sales \$\$ by Year



% Growth in Local Sales Over Previous Year



Total Local sales% by year



Our co-op is committed to offering the farmers and producers in our community a dependable and consistent outlet for their products. We want our local suppliers to continue to be able to provide for their families as well as to provide us with quality products for years to come, and to that end we prioritize strong relationships with our local producers. The Co-op plays a vital role in the growth of our local food economy and our success as a retailer, an employer, and as a source for education and information about the local food system is directly tied to the health and wellbeing of the local economy.

ROUND UP your purchases at the register in support of worthy causes when you shop at your Belfast Co-op.

100% of all donated money goes on to each monthly recipient.



Hospice Volunteers of Waldo County

END OF LIFE & BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

JANUARY

WALDO COUNTY WOOD SHED is a 100% volunteer-run non-profit organization that serves the wood-heat needs of neighbors in need throughout Waldo County and beyond since 2015. As of the end of December, the Woodshed had distributed more than 60 cords of wood from its 8 distribution sites this season alone. Volunteers are needed to split, move, stack, and distribute wood, and should contact Bob MacGregor at kilndry@kilndry.com to offer their help. Folks may request a 1/4 cord of wood for short-term heating assistance by calling 207-338-2692. Visit their website or Facebook for more information, or to donate or volunteer.

More info at
www.waldocountywoodshed.org

HOSPICE VOLUNTEERS OF WALDO COUNTY (HVOWC) provides non-medical caregiving for patients and families at the end of life and bereavement support services. They are a 501C-3 charitable organization- all their services are provided free of charge. They are an independent organization reliant on donations from the community. HVOWC offers free confidential support to anyone with a life-limiting illness and their families and to anyone grieving the loss of a loved one from any cause, support for caregivers at the end of life, and educational resources and workshops for everyone. They also partner with medical hospice programs to provide volunteer support. "In Waldo County, no one need die or grieve alone"

More info at
www.hopicevolunteersofwaldocounty.org

FEBRUARY

RECENT RECIPIENTS

OCTOBER

SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT SERVICES OF MIDCOAST, ME (SASSMM) is dedicated to providing advocacy and support to survivors and others affected by sexual assault, sexual abuse and sexual harassment. Services include a free, private 24-hour Helpline with advocates who are understanding and ready to help: 1-800-871-7741.

More info at sassmm.org



SASSMM staff, volunteers, and Co-op Staff
all mixed in together

OUT MAINE works toward a welcoming and affirming Maine for all rural young people of diverse sexual orientations, gender expressions and gender identities. In partnership with their allies and families, OUT Maine supports, educates and empowers these youth in their journey from adolescence to adulthood.

More info at www.outmaine.org



Jeanne Dooley (holding check on R), Executive
Director of OUT Maine, and Co-op Staff

NOVEMBER

In October, Co-op shoppers donated **\$3,864.43** to SASSMM (Sexual Assault Support Services of Midcoast Maine). In November, Co-op shoppers donated **\$3,510.47** to OUT Maine. In December, our Co-op shoppers have rounded up **\$3,738.28** to RSU #3's Waldo County Growing Project.



Co-op History Project



Bindy Pendleton (left) and Debbie Lasky (right), former Co-op board members, recently met with Megan Pinette (center), President of the Belfast Historical Society and Museum, to celebrate the new partnership between our two organizations. Documents from the Co-op's History Project will be archived at the museum! The sorting has begun... past directors & members, if you have historical materials from the Co-op's past or want to get involved with the project, please contact current Co-op Board Director:

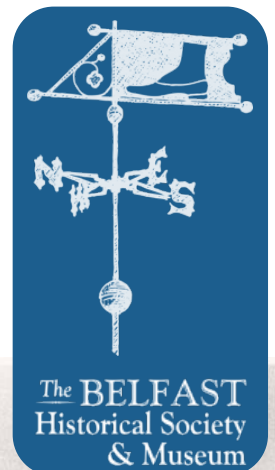
Kate Hanson at mkhanson@comcast.net.

The Belfast Historical Society and Museum is dedicated to the collection, conservation, preservation and interpretation of artifacts relevant to Belfast history. Visitors to the Museum will enjoy vintage photographs, maps, postcard collections and interpretive displays. An extensive archives and library are available for research.

More info at: <https://www.belfastmuseum.org/>

Maine Celebrates its 200th Birthday!

2020 marks Maine's bicentennial (1820-2020). Locally and statewide there will be many programs and events celebrating our great state.



SAVE THE DATE March 1-7
belfast co-op **OWNER** appreciation week



a quarterly event, during the week, owners are able to save 10% off any one transaction* with other surprises as well

love local day everyone
saves 10%
ALL DAY
on all local items

@ Belfast Co+op
love • local • food

BOARD MEETINGS

January 23

February 27

6pm Social Time, 6:15pm Meeting

Unitarian Universalist
Church of Belfast

37 Miller St.

OWNERSHIP UPDATE



questions
about equity or
ownership?
carla@belfast.coop

4047 current owners
508 new owners IN 2019

October - **41**
November - **38**
December - **38**

93 fully vested owners
as of December 2019

(Since the change in equity of 1/2019,
owners may choose to pay full equity of
\$200: no more annual installments and
better financial health of the Co-op)

CO+OP CALENDAR

12/31....New Year by the Bay (nybb.org)

1/01....New Year's Day (store closed)

1/01.....NEW SALES CYCLE

1/22.....NEW SALES CYCLE

1/23.....**Co-op Board Meeting, 6pm**
at the Unitarian Universalist Church

1/31.....**LOVE LOCAL DAY**

1/31-2/01....Belfast Winter Whoopla

2/05.....NEW SALES CYCLE

2/14.....Valentine's Day

2/19.....NEW SALES CYCLE

2/27.....**Co-op Board Meeting, 6pm**
at the Unitarian Universalist Church

2/28.....**LOVE LOCAL DAY**

3/1.....**Co-op Annual Meeting, 2-5pm**
at the United Farmers Market

3/1-7.....**Owner Appreciation Week**

- watch the Co-op's bulletin board and facebook
for more updates to our calendar
- for more community info: ourtownbelfast.org