

Belfast Community Co-op Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

February 25, 2026, Public meeting commenced at 6:00 p.m. Abbott Room of the Belfast Free Library and via Zoom

Directors Present: Mary Bigelow, Todd Bluhm, Ernie Cooper, Susan Cutting (president), Rio Greeley, John Krueger (treasurer), Jim Miller (vice president), Kim Relick (secretary), Valerie Tate

Staff: Doug Johnson (GM), Emily Berry (scribe)

Owners: Annie Bussiere, Jamie Cermak, Richard Dines, Gina Ferendo, Steve Gold, Heather Q Hay, Ashleigh Russell, Lisa Sadler, James Shimko

Preliminaries

Agenda

The BOD accepted the agenda by consensus.

Announcements

The Co-op is hosting a hot cocoa bar on Saturday, February 28 from 11am - 2pm. Directors are encouraged to attend and talk to people about the upcoming Annual Meeting.

The upcoming Co-op Cafe will be held in Jefferson, ME on Sunday, March 29th. All directors are encouraged to attend.

One director has expressed interest in attending the 2026 CCMA conference. Other interested directors should reach out to Susan.

The Belfast Museum has a number of the Co-op's historical documents which they have digitized and shared with Susan. These documents have been added to the Board's shared google drive.

Owner Comments

None.

GM Reporting

Alignment

Doug asked the BOD to consider adopting an 8th Cooperative Principle: "Equity, Belonging, Inclusivity and Accessibility -- Cooperatives believe we are stronger when a proactive effort is put forth to engage everyone in governance, management and representation." ([Cooperative Values and Principles | National Co+op Grocers](#)). Operations would like to embrace this new principle, joining the PCC Markets in Seattle, NCG, and other co-ops nationwide. The 8th Principle has not yet been adopted by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) but discussions of adding an 8th Principle have been ongoing in the cooperative sector since 2020. For reference, "The ICA is the guardian of the Statement on the Cooperative Identity, which includes a definition, 10 values and 7 operational principles: it is the minimum common denominator for all cooperatives in all sectors and all regions." ([About International Cooperative Alliance | ICA](#)). Operations feels that the Co-op already follows this principle. The BOD would like a thorough discussion before any action is taken.

Doug will be attending NCG's Spring Meeting during the regularly scheduled April BOD meeting.

GM Update Report

Directors expressed their appreciation for the new "Do More Good" section in the monthly GM Update Report. One director said that it articulates exactly what the BOD wanted when they worked on the business plan; it provides stats and pulls everything together.

One director pointed out that the GM Report highlighted the relationship between prepared foods and basket size. As prepared foods sales increase, basket size decreases. Operations has also recognized this trend and will be discussing strategies to address this with workers during Open Book Management sessions.

Equal Exchange made the decision to return 2% of the purchases the Co-op bought from them in 2025. This came out

to roughly \$2400 and operations has decided to share this directly with workers, along with the \$1000 received from participating in NCG's impact study.

Board Action Items

Consent Agenda

The BOD accepted by consensus

1. January 28, 2026 BOD minutes,
2. the 2026 BOD Ballot with the current owners in good standing at 6130, and
3. policy C1 - Governing Style as in compliance.

New Committee Members

The BOD agreed by consensus to seat Richard Dines on the Strategic Work Committee and the Owner Engagement Committee.

B9 - Emergency General Management Succession

In the B9 - Emergency General Management Succession monitoring report, current Store Operations Manager Gina Ferendo is listed as the emergency GM successor with data regarding her qualifications. The report recommends that in the unlikely event that the GM position should unexpectedly become vacant, Gina will assume GM responsibilities in the short-term until the BOD can contract with Columinate for Interim GM services. The IGM can then assume GM responsibilities while a GM search is conducted, allowing Gina to resume her job duties in a timely manner. While this is the recommendation laid out in the B9 monitoring report any actions taken in the event of an emergency vacancy are at the discretion of the BOD.

The BOD accepted the B9 - Emergency General Management Succession monitoring report as in compliance.

B10 - Environmental Impact

The B10 - Environmental Impact policy was adopted by the BOD in June 2025 and this meeting was the first report on this policy.

A director wondered if having this policy made the GM think about the Co-op's environmental impact in a different way. Many of the metrics included in the report the GM had already been tracking, however, having a policy implicitly means creating goals and taking action as opposed to a static report.

Directors called out the Co-op's energy usage with surprise since the renovation was supposed to incorporate more sustainable energy systems. The GM pointed out that trends will not be established for several years citing examples of changes from the renovation such as the switch from heating oil to propane and the addition of 40 feet of refrigeration.

The BOD accepted the B10 - Environmental Impact monitoring report as in compliance.

GM Compensation Process & RFP

The BOD discussed the process for GM compensation and the initial draft of the RFP. The BOD was comfortable moving beyond the private reflection portion of the process and onto the RFP. A director suggested an additional point on the RFP addressing Doug's impact as an individual on the store.

The BOD approved by consensus the revised draft of the RFP.

Board Retreat Date

The BOD discussed possible dates for a 2026 retreat. No topic has been determined but a review of the Ends stood out as a possible choice. The BOD will be working on a comprehensive review of the policy register and it was suggested that in September the process will have progressed enough that the BOD could discuss common and unique concerns regarding policy register.

The BOD discussed the pros and cons of engaging a Columinate facilitator during the next retreat.

The BOD will move forward with finding a date in September for the next retreat.

GM Evaluation

The BOD will review the drafts of the GM evaluation over the next week or two and then meet in executive session if necessary before the March BOD meeting.

Board Discussion

Film Proposal

The BOD is looking at working with Torchlight to make a short film about ways in which the Co-op has helped the community over the last 50 years. The BOD raised questions about the timing and cost of the project. The OEC will continue to gather information and report back in March.

Annual Meeting Plan

The Annual Meeting agenda was provided during the meeting and plans for a dry run were announced.

B Meeting Topics

This topic was tabled until the March meeting.

Committee Reports

The Finance Committee reported having a good meeting with no conflicts and great numbers. FC directed the BOD to their written report included in the packet.

During their monthly meeting the Strategic Work Committee discussed their committee charter. Kim & Richard, SWC co-chairs, will draft a plan for what the committee would like to accomplish this year which the committee can use to create a recommendation for the board. They have been considering creating a process for drafting a 3 - 5 year strategic plan. It is possible a September retreat would work to finalize such a plan with the full BOD.

The Owner Engagement Committee had nothing additional to report and directed the BOD to their written report included in the packet.

The Board Development Committee has begun to review the Policy Register. To assist the review, drafts of the Policy Register have been adapted to use affirmative language for editing. Final drafts will be switched back to executive limitation language for approval. In addition to individuals, BDC would like to have committees review and suggest edits to the Policy Register together.

The Executive Committee discussed the possibility of sending individuals to the upcoming CCMA conference. Richard has expressed interest in attending. It seems likely that the BCC will have a number of presenters at the conference and costs incurred for attendees would be limited to travel and lodging.

April 2026 Meeting

The BOD agreed by consensus to move the April 2026 BOD meeting to April 15.

According to the monitoring schedule, the GM reports on policy B5 - Treatment of Customers during the April meeting, however, data from the upcoming customer survey will not be available in time for inclusion in the monitoring report. The BOD agreed by consensus to move the monitoring of policy B5 to the August 2026 meeting.

Closings

Homework

Full Board

1. Co-op Cafe March 29
 - a. Let Susan know if you plan to attend
 - b. Register yourself for the event
2. Let Susan know if you would like to attend the 2026 CCMA conference
3. Send Kim or Exec Comm B-meeting topic ideas

4. Spread the word about the 2026 Annual Meeting
5. Respond to retreat date availability

All Committees

1. Send Kim or Exec Comm B-meeting topic ideas
2. Send Exec Comm retreat topic ideas
3. Board Development Committee
4. Gather information on proposed 8th Cooperative Principle

Doug

1. Update the Board introduction to the NCG Statement on Israel-Palestine Conflict, noting that the Co-op would provide country of origin information when possible.
2. In future B1 reports:
 - a. define net income
 - b. Interpret financial trends
3. Delve into mapping a path to meeting a livable waged

Susan

1. Contact the BOD re: GM evaluation executive session
2. Send the BOD a poll for retreat dates in September
3. Send previous GM evaluations to the BOD

Owner Comments

None.

Debrief

John took the opportunity to clarify that he would like to see the directors trusting each other and solving problems without bringing in an outside facilitator.

Public meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm. Minutes respectfully submitted by Emily Berry, scribe.