Belfast Community Co-op Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

May 20, 2026, Public meeting commenced at 6:01 p.m. at the BCC Admin Conference Room and via Zoom
Directors Present: Mary Bigelow, Todd Bluhm, Ernie Cooper, Susan Cutting (president), Richard Dines Rio Greeley, John Krueger (treasurer), Jim Miller (vice president), Kim Relick (secretary), James Shimko, Valerie Tate
Staff: Doug Johnson (GM), Emily Berry (scribe)
Owners: Jamie Cermak, Cristiane Gil, Gina Ferendo, Patty Duffy
Guests: Joe Durra

Preliminaries

Agenda
The BOD agreed to add items: *4. Board Packets*, *5. Retreat date*, and *6. Strategic Priorities* to the *Board Action Items* as well as removing the April minutes from the consent agenda to allow for discussion. With these adjustments, the BOD accepted the agenda by consensus

Announcements
Director stipends will be distributed through the owner rewards system beginning on June 1.
The Co-op will be hosting a *Grow Your Own Pizza* event on Thursday, May 21st from 4-5pm.
Co-op Trivia Night is scheduled for June 9th at 6:30pm at Must Be Nice Lobster.
The BOD acknowledged and honored Marie Giggie who worked at the Co-op for more than 37 years and recently passed away.
During April's Co-op Cafe, members of Kim's discussion group formed an informal group of board members from Maine food co-ops who intend to meet quarterly. The first meeting was on May 19th and the next meeting will be in August.
The BOD welcomed Joe Durra of Columinate Financial Services, the BCC's Fractional CFO, to this meeting.

Owner Comments
None.

GM Reporting

Alignment
Doug let the BOD know that he will not be attending CCMA. He has been sitting in on the team's presentation practice sessions and is confident that they will knock it out of the park. Because of the BCC's participation in CCMA, directors will have access to all the recordings from CCMA.
In response to the Robbins Lumber fire, the Co-op will be donating $5,000 to the Maine Strong Memorial Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit committed to supporting Maine families during times of hardship. Additionally, through the month of June, the Co-op will match any customer donations to the Maine Strong Memorial Foundation made at register, up to another $5,000.

GM Update
Doug reported that the Staff Satisfaction Survey was completed this month and directors asked about the high standard deviation on some questions. This indicates a perceived inconsistency in the worker experience at the Co-op. Some participants gave questions a high score while some participants gave a low score to those same questions. Melanie Reid, who administered the survey, will be conducting follow-up interviews.
The Co-op will be receiving its NCG patronage dividend from 2025, the remaining balance from the 2014 dividend, and retained patronage from 2015. In October 2025, the Co-op also received a portion of the NCG Joint Liability Fund contribution back. The JLF contribution had increased during the Co-op's renovation but once the renovation was complete and liability reassessed, the refund was issued.

A director questioned the seasonality of local sales. Doug let the BOD know that there does not seem to be an increase in local sales during the summer and there is no cap on the percentage of total sales coming from local vendors/producers.

Directors wondered if the summer season presented possibilities for encouraging owners who are seasonal residents to fully vest. It is always possible, especially during tabling events. Interestingly, Doug reported that the percentage of sales to owners dips in the summer, travelers come in and some locals choose not to venture downtown.

With the new plan for financial reporting that was discussed in April, the BOD will be reviewing April financials in June. Joe Durra told the BOD that they should have financial data in their hands by the 20th of the following month, the 15th most likely. His goal is to constantly review the entire process and improve it incrementally for a quicker, easier, and better turnaround.

Spurred on by the shared services presentation at the P6 Conference, there is now a GM group, formed from the six Maine NCG co-ops, discussing the possibilities for different kinds of consolidation and shared services. Doug talked about the strength that comes from recognizing that we are more alike than different. Any potential path forward will be done with a lot of discussion.

In his report, Doug touched on the advocacy work around food insecurity done by Heather Q Hay and Gina Ferendo. A director questioned who might know where the Co-op's voice could be effective in future advocacy work. Rob Brown of the Cooperative Development Institute (CDI) is a BCC owner and an excellent point person in the community for advocacy.

<u>Board Action Items</u>

April Minutes

It was recommended that the minutes from the April 2026 meeting be amended. A statement under the item *March 2026 Minutes* should read "The executive session scheduled for April 14th was to discuss the GM Compensation Proposal and the GM Compensation Agreement." With this amendment, the BOD accepted by consensus the minutes from the April 15, 2026 BOD meeting.

Consent Agenda

The BOD accepted by consensus policy D2 - Accountability of the GM as in compliance.

B3 - Asset Protection

The Finance Committee recommended the BOD accept the B3 monitoring report as in compliance.

Doug will be checking on the coverage of the Co-op's insurance policy. During their May meeting, FC encouraged Doug to look into raising the policy which runs September to September.

The BOD accepted by consensus the B3 - Asset Protection monitoring report as in compliance.

Committee Assignments

The BOD accepted by consensus the proposed 2026 committee roster.

Board Packets

Historically, a preliminary packet of information has been distributed to the BOD on the Friday prior to the monthly BOD meeting and a final packet on the Monday prior to the BOD meeting. Often the preliminary packet is missing many key documents and contains documents that require additional editing. It was recommended that the BOD forgo the preliminary packet in lieu of a Friday reminder to submit documents for inclusion in the packet, along with a link to documents that are already available. A complete information packet will continue to be distributed on Mondays prior to the BOD meeting.

The BOD accepted by consensus the proposal to replace the preliminary packets with a reminder to submit documents along with a link to already available documents. Additionally, the executive committee committed to having a final agenda distributed to all directors by 5pm of the Friday prior to the BOD meeting.

Retreat Date
The next BOD retreat is scheduled for Saturday, November 14, 2026. The BOD agreed that the retreat will be planned by the committee chairs in September.
Strategic Priorities
The Strategic Work Committee presented their proposed objective for 2026. They would like to work on developing a written long-term strategic vision that will serve the community and provide the Co-op direction going forward. They plan to work with all stakeholders to create a vision for what the Co-op can achieve over the next five years as well as a longer term north star vision.
The BOD accepted by consensus the Strategic Work Committee's proposed objective.

<u>Discussion Items</u>
Livable Wage
Doug gave the BOD a presentation on livable wage which included: an explanation of livable wage models, the current state of the BCC, a history of BCC wage growth, BCC wages compared to NCG peer group (Co-ops within $10-20M sales), a strategy to care for workers, as well as additional context and the path forward.
The two livable wage models that Doug highlighted were the MIT and NCG models. One of the largest differences between the two models is that NCG's model takes into account benefits, things that co-ops offer that other businesses don't, whereas the MIT model does not. When using the NCG model 100% of BCC workers are making a livable wage. To bring the BCC average wage up to the MIT model it would be a $700,000 increase and to bring the median wage up to the MIT model it would be a $942,000 increase. Going forward Doug plans to continue annual wage increases that outpace COLA and inflation and continue to invest in benefits as a core component of total compensation.
Doug and the BOD discussed that the biggest thing affecting all businesses right now is instability, which makes projecting out trickier than ever. Each expense for workers is increasing: housing, insurance, transportation, etc., and there is a difference between projecting wages and projecting expenses. Directors wondered if there is a place for worker housing in the BCC's future.
Board's Annual Review
Tabled until June.
<u>Closings</u>
Homework
Full Board
- Sign up for tabling events

Committee Chairs
- Send Kim B-meeting topic ideas for May & October
- Meet in Sept to plan Nov retreat
- Work on committee budgets at your next meeting

Board Development Committee
- Gather information on proposed 8th Cooperative Principle
- Weigh in on B-meeting topics
- 6-month Columinate services eval
- Draft procedure for sharing meeting packets/recordings

Owner Engagement Committee

- Look into developing an owner survey

Doug

- 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.
- In future B1 reports:
    - define net income
    - Interpret financial trends

Kim

- Think about the Board Calendar

Mary

- Send out tabling reminders

John

- Send out last year's committee budgets

Owner Comments

None.

Debrief

The BOD thanked Joe for attending and Doug for the presentation.

Public meeting adjourned at 8:04 pm. Minutes respectfully submitted by Emily Berry, scribe.