Belfast Community Co-op Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

July 22, 2026, Public meeting commenced at 6:00 p.m. at the Belfast Free Library and via Zoom
Directors Present: Mary Bigelow, Ernie Cooper, Susan Cutting (president), Richard Dines (vice president), Rio Greeley, Jim Miller, Kim Relick (secretary), James Shimko, Valerie Tate
Absent: Todd Bluhm, John Krueger (treasurer)
Staff: Doug Johnson (GM), Emily Berry (scribe)
Owners: Heather Q Hay, Lisa Sadler, John Miller, Cristiane Gil,

<u>Preliminaries</u>

Agenda

The following changes were recommended for the *Board Action Items* section of the agenda: item *4. Board 2026-27 Budget* be tabled until the August meeting and new items *4. Process for Creating the Strategic Vision* & *5. Additional Consulting Funds* be added. The BOD agreed by consensus to accept the agenda with the recommended revisions.

Announcements

Directors were encouraged to sign-up with Mary to volunteer for the 50th Anniversary Party.
The next NFCA Peer Dialogue is scheduled for July 23rd from 6:30 - 7:30 pm and all directors are welcome to attend.

Owner Comments

John Miller began with how impressed he is with the Co-op but had a couple of points for improvement. First, he is disappointed in the signage in the cafe regarding the time limit, it gives the impression of being demanding and those who disagree with it are considered not cooperative. He doesn’t believe that staff should be required to enforce a time limit. Second, he noted the amount of noise in the cafe and offered several options to dampen the level, such as chair leg tips and sound absorbing materials around the kitchen or hung from the ceiling. He also gave his interpretation that the purview of Operations includes: staff, staffing the store, and stocking the store; anything beyond that should have input from owners. Therefore, the signage on cafe tables should not be an Operations issue, owners should have an avenue to provide input.

<u>GM Reporting</u>

Alignment

Waterfall Arts has put out a call for art related to the Co-op. The deadline for submission is August 13th.
Evans Goff, Grocery Manager, just returned from serving as a delegate with Equal Exchange on a trip to Northern Peru to meet farmers and learn about Coffee growing and processing. He is excited to share what he has learned!
Doug let the BOD know that a photo of the Co-op building when it was Brooks Drug was posted on the Facebook page You Know You Love Belfast…

GM Update Report

This July the Co-op is participating in the “Into the Light” fundraiser for the organization Finding Our Voices. This fundraiser involves 126 businesses across 28 towns who are donating proceeds from yellow items and the BCC has chosen bananas.
Operations will be revisiting the time policy on the Cafe tables around September when the summer season slows. Doug did express that the issues that policy was aiming to address seem to have been resolved and for the most part not a lot of enforcement has been needed. Directors questioned whether signs should be removed now if the issue has been resolved. Operations is reluctant to make any change at the moment. The policy was implemented to address concerns from workers and to see those concerns assuaged Operations would like to let sit for a little while. A Director spoke to their preference removing the signage; dealing with individuals as needed and preserving the

community hub. Another Director relayed the informal feedback they had received about the cafe table time limit: one shopper was saddened by the vibe and another echoed the previous director's sentiment for dealing with individuals as needed.

<u>Board Action Items</u>

Consent Agenda

The BOD accepted by consensus:

1. The minutes from the June 24, 2026 BOD meeting,
2. Policy C6 - Officers' Roles as in compliance, and
3. Procedure C4 - Sharing Board Meeting Packets.

VP Role Proposal

The BOD thanked Jim for his time, thoughtfulness, and service as an officer. The BOD accepted by consensus Jim's resignation from the role of vice president.

The BOD agreed by consensus to appoint Richard Dines to the role of vice president for the remainder of this current one-year term.

B6 - Staff Treatment and Compensation

The B6 monitoring report utilized data from the annual staff satisfaction survey. A director questioned why the scores from this year's survey would be lower, however slightly, than previous years despite the store being safer and more efficient post-renovation. The proportion of staff participating in the survey is biennial, a survey of all the workers occurs one year, followed by a survey of half the workers (randomly chosen) the next year. This year's survey included a smaller subset of workers and thus each individual's responses will have a greater impact on the survey results. It is thought that not having an in-house HR manager for the last three years has had a negative impact. The recent hiring of a People & Culture Manager should improve staff satisfaction. Doug also noted that this same survey has been done for the past 10 years and while some questions' scores rise or dip year-over-year, the trend has been toward improvement.

Doug was surprised by this survey's standard deviation scores. Scores that are higher indicate that there are workers that have a very different experience of the workplace than others. Melanie Reid, who administers the staff survey, does follow-up interviews when standard deviations are notable and provides Doug with a report from these interviews (all participants are kept anonymous). The report indicates that some concerns are not necessarily about things happening right now, but things that have happened in the past that individuals may be holding on to. Working through the renovation may not have necessarily affected the survey participants; since the average timeline is 4 years for workers, many of the staff have only worked in the current iteration of the store.

Directors wondered about the BCC's turnover rate compared to other co-ops. For the past 5 years the turnover rate in the conventional grocery industry was around 70%, currently it is right around 55%. The turnover rate for co-ops is around 50% and the BCC a little lower than that at 40.8%, which has been steady for the past 7 - 8 years.

The BOD accepted by consensus the B6 - Staff Treatment and Compensation monitoring report as not in compliance with a plan for compliance.

Process for Creating the Strategic Vision

The Strategic Work Committee presented the following milestones in the process for developing a long-term strategic vision: "The SWC plans to produce a draft long-term vision statement at its next meeting to recommend to the full Board for consideration at the August Board meeting. A draft vision statement from the full Board can then be shared with the owners for their review and feedback before the Board retreat on November 14th. The SWC and the full Board can continue to work on the vision statement and build consensus before having a deeper discussion at the

November retreat to arrive at a long-term strategic vision statement to be approved at the December Board meeting."

Directors questioned how SWC envisions the process of sharing the draft vision statement with BCC owners. SWC is open to various methods but it could be as simple as an email coupled with information available in the front of the store.

BOD accepted by consensus the process for creating the strategic vision.

Additional Consulting Funds

At this time the BOD has utilized 13 of the 15 allotted Columinate consulting hours for this calendar year. Columinate has offered the BOD six additional hours for $930 to cover until the end of the year. A director pointed out that there is sufficient money already in the budget to cover this. Additionally, the fiscal year ends on September 30th and using additional funds may not be necessary; the additional hours can be included in the FY26-27 budget.

The BOD agreed by consensus to contract with Columinate for additional consulting hours for the 2026 calendar year.

Discussion Items

50th Anniversary Board Volunteering

OEC encouraged directors to sign up for volunteer hours for the 50th Anniversary Party by the end of the month. Marketing may adjust the schedule based on willing volunteers. The party will be held from 2 - 6pm and set-up will begin at 10am.

Draft FY26-27 Business Plan

Doug gave the BOD a presentation on the 2026-2027 business plan. The presentation covered:

- grocery fundamentals
    - revenue, cost of goods, margin, net income, distributors, sales per department
- current trends
    - indicated by coMetrics (protect margin, manage controllables, conserve cash, be prepared) and reports from FMI, The Food Industry Association, which works with grocery stores and also consumers
- BCC Business Plan
    - Administrative Management Team: Gina Ferendo, Jamie Cermak, Heather Q Hay, Carol Bullock
    - reference materials: Food Retailing Industry Report, US Shopper Grocery Trends Report from FMI, US Census Bureau's American Community Survey, NCG Annual Report and Ends Report, Maine Economic Indicators Report, NCG 2026 Business Plan, US Consumer Trends Report, Ahold Delhaize Annual Report
    - The Big Idea: operationalizes the Ends and breaks it down into achievable paths
- budget
    - Look at previous year: growth, margins, COLA, labor, other expenses, EBITDA, cash flow, days of cash on hand
    - Dynamic tool to be reviewed and adjusted to reflect circumstances and goals

Directors encouraged Doug to emphasize what draws people to the Co-op in the business plan.

Strategic Work Committee

SWC stressed the value in having conversations about the strategic vision and teeing up further conversations. SWC also stated that they will be thinking bigger than operating a successful grocery store, i.e., the co-op economy.

Finance Committee

See the committee report.

Board Development Committee
See the committee report.
Owner Engagement Committee
It's all hands on deck for the 50th! Rio is working with Marketing on an invitation to the Ownership; ideas and feedback from directors are welcome.
Executive Committee
See the committee report.

<u>Closings</u>
Homework
Full Board
- Send topics for b-meetings and/or retreat to the agenda planning group
- Consider:
  - How to achieve a strong co-op economy?
  - How to achieve a more resilient local food system?
  - Can/should the BCC create a 510(c)(3) to support its goals?
- Sign-up to volunteer at 50th party by **Friday, July 31st**
- Send 50th invite ideas to Rio

Committee Chairs
- Send Kim b-meeting topic ideas for October
- Meet in Sept to plan Nov retreat

Agenda Planning Group
- Find a time to have discussions re: policies D3 & D4

Board Development Committee
- Gather information on proposed 8th Cooperative Principle
- Weigh in on B-meeting topics
- 6-month Columinate services eval
- Look at self-assessment tools other boards are using
- Discuss next steps with the self-assessment results

Owner Engagement Committee
- Look into developing an owner survey
- Think about "community" vs "owners"

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

Susan

- Follow-up on owner comment

Kim

- Think about the Board Calendar

Mary

- Send out tabling reminders

Emily

- Include Procedure C4 in the Policy Register

Owner Comments

None

Debrief

Thanks to Doug for a great business plan presentation.

Public meeting adjourned at 8:03pm. Minutes respectfully submitted by Emily Berry, scribe.