

Belfast Community Co-op Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

August 26, 2026, Public meeting commenced at 6:00 p.m. at the Belfast Free Library and via Zoom

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

Absent: Mary Bigelow

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

Owners: Becky Bennett, Jamie Cermak, Gina Ferendo, Daniel Goldstein, Lisa Sadler

Preliminaries

Agenda

The BOD accepted the agenda by consensus.

Announcements

The Co-op's birthday is Sept 17th and traditionally customers are handed a piece of cake on the day. Directors have been asked to help serve and Kim will circulate a sign-up sheet.

Board candidate recruitment time is now. Mary has agreed to take on the recruitment process but it is up to the whole board to reach out to owners that would be good candidates.

Owner Comments

None.

GM Reporting

Alignment

Doug received the results from the customer satisfaction survey which he has begun reviewing and will share with the BOD. Monitoring of policy B5 - Treatment of Customers has been moved to the September BOD meeting and the results will be included in the report's data. There will also be pieces of the survey incorporated into the FY26-27 Business Plan.

GM Update Report

One director particularly liked the description of Equal Exchange's Peruvian coffee that Evans shared from his participation in the delegation to Peru. It was suggested that Equal Exchange could do a coffee tasting at the store or there could be a 'Coffee with the Board' event featuring Equal Exchange.

The monthly GM Report listed the goal of implementing Open Book Management with workers as complete. OBM will be ongoing and the next phase will be to engage more entry level workers. Timing during work hours can be a challenge for participation.

Directors noted the increase in fully vested owners and Doug responded that the Front End workers have consciously included becoming fully vested as part of the ownership explanation and pitch. There are other opportunities to encourage owners to fully vest, particularly during October, Co-op Month, which is a good time to do equity drive.

Board Action Items

Consent Agenda

The BOD accepted by consensus

1. the July 22, 2026 BOD meeting minutes and
2. changing the September BOD meeting to Zoom only due to anticipated construction at the Library.

C7 - Committee Principles

In reference to sub-policy C7.6, some directors pointed out that committees were not providing annual self-evaluations and recommended partial compliance with this policy. It was proposed the BOD could achieve compliance by setting deadlines for annual evaluations and recognizing that the process is informal.

The BOD accepted by consensus policy C7 as in partial compliance with a plan for compliance.

B7 - Communication to the Board

The BOD accepted by consensus the policy B7 - Communication to the Board monitoring report as in compliance.

B8 - Board Logistical Support

The BOD accepted by consensus the policy B8 - Board Logistical Support monitoring report as in compliance.

Draft Vision Statement

The Strategic Work Committee recommended the BOD accept the draft vision statement: "The Belfast Community Cooperative envisions a thriving community and world in which our co-op serves as an innovative leader of an inclusive economy that empowers people to build a more just, resilient, and connected future."

Directors discussed that the BCC is in a privileged position as a successful cooperative, while other co-ops are not as financially successful. In this position, it could be reasoned that the BCC has a responsibility to share the gift of cooperation: to grow membership, to explore partnerships with other food cooperatives, and to foster development of other cooperatives that serve our community.

The BOD also discussed obtaining owner input on this draft vision statement. The SWC will submit an ORF for an email to be sent to owners asking for feedback. Additionally, the ORF will request a display in the front of the store, asking for written comments. Feedback, email or written, will be collected during the month of September and considered by the SWC and BOD ahead of the November retreat.

Directors wondered what the plan would be for showing that the BCC is an innovative leader. That would be up to the BOD, it could potentially mean working on forming an affiliated non-profit. The next steps could be discussed at retreat.

The BOD discussed scope: the Vision Statement is general, the Ends are specific, the operations' Do More Good is the detailed strategy.

Directors questioned if they want to open the door to be more than a food store? The visioning activity from Dec 2023 showed that the future of the BCC is more than a grocery store. That door is already open and the BOD is making a vision that they are already working toward.

The BOD accepted by consensus the draft vision statement proposed by the Strategic Work Committee.

2026-2027 BOD Budget

The BOD asked about governance spending for co-ops in the BCC's national peer group, \$10-20M in sales. While the BCC governance budget is above median, it is not far off.

The BOD accepted by consensus the BOD's draft FY26-27 budget.

Proposed Mini-Retreat

It was proposed that the BOD gather on Friday Sept 4 from 10am - 12pm for a mini-retreat to discuss the ongoing policy review. This retreat will not be for making decisions, it will be an educational opportunity where directors can work through questions. The conversation will be facilitated by Laura King.

The BOD agreed by consensus to hold a mini-retreat on Sept 4th to discuss the policy review.

Board Discussion Items

50th Anniversary Party Debrief

There was a round of applause for the organizers of the 50th Anniversary Party. Well done, well attended, well organized!

The BOD expressed their gratitude to the storytellers and to Susan for her comments, which were powerful, meaningful, and much appreciated. Directors noted that there was a standing ovation for Peter Baldwin after he spoke, that there were around 200-250 attendees at the peak of the party, and there was a rainbow at the end of the event. A comment to a director following the event: “Best party I’ve ever attended!”, while other directors reported many additional positive comments.

Strategic Work Committee

At their monthly meeting SWC discussed the idea for an affiliated non-profit organization. The SWC expressed their interest in exploring that idea and the BOD gave them the go ahead.

Finance Committee

During their next meeting FC will be discussing the audit, and the summary from the auditor will be in the FC packet. They will also be discussing the FY26-27 budget.

Board Development Committee

The BDC is working on the designation of a clerk, parameters for owners on committees, and clarifying term lengths, limits, and removal of officers.

Owner Engagement Committee

During their August meeting the OEC was all in on the 50th party. In next month’s meeting they plan to go over new ideas for the future.

Executive Committee

Kim will put together a meeting of the Executive Committee along with the other committee chairs to discuss b-meeting and retreat agenda topics.

Closings

Homework

Full Board

- Send topics for b-meetings and/or retreat to the agenda planning group
- Reach out to potential BOD candidates
- Sign up for Sept 17th tabling
- Look at the 26-27 Business Plan & Budget
 - Add comments to document / get questions to Doug
 - Attend Sept 18th FC meeting

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”
- Connect with Doug/Jamie re: Equal Exchange coffee tasting or ‘Coffee with the Board’ event
- Include vesting opportunities in the topic sheet

Executive Committee

- Add committee evaluations to the BOD calendar
- Send retreat invite to the BOD

Strategic Work Committee

- Explore forming an affiliated non-profit

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
- Send reminder about questions/comments on the Business Plan
- Set up meeting re: b-meeting & retreat agenda topics

Mary

- Send out tabling reminders

Richard

- Submit ORF for collecting owner feedback on the Vision Statement

Emily

- Post in Beekeeper re: Vision Statement

Owner Comments

None.

Debrief

Directors agreed that they enjoyed the conversation on the vision statement.

Public meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm. Minutes respectfully submitted by Emily Berry, scribe.