

Olympia Food Co-op 2018 Election Information Pamphlet

Ballots are available and accepted until 9:00pm on November 15th in stores, and online at www.olympiafood.coop.

PART ONE: Meet Your Candidates for Co-op Board of Directors
PART TWO: Understanding Proposed Changes to Co-op Bylaws
PART THREE: 2018 Membership Ballot

PART ONE: Meet Your Candidates for the Co-op Board of Directors



Desdra Dawning



Frederick Jack Meldicott



Jim Hutcheon



Mel Bilodeau

1.) Why do you want to be on the Co-op Board of Directors?

Desdra Dawning:

I recently served for several years as a member on the OFC Board. A physical injury that interfered with my ability to fully participate led to my resignation. This has since been resolved. I have continued to serve on the Member Relations Committee and written for the Co-op Table magazine and now feel physically capable of offering my services and the knowledge and connections I gained as a former BOD member to the Co-op and its members. The longevity of this vital business is my primary concern.

Frederick Jack Meldicott:

I love the Food Co-op, it's where I get most of my food! I'd like to be more actively involved in operating and improving the organization and have a strong desire to be a cooperative leader in our community. I've also been encouraged to apply by acquaintances who are past and current board members.

Jim Hutcheon:

I have been a working member, volunteering in produce, for almost 5 years and I have served two years on the Co-op Board of Directors. At this point I feel like I have a better understanding of how things work at the co-op. I feel that my experience and skills enable me to continue contributing in a meaningful way to the Board of Directors.

Mel Bilodeau:

I care very deeply about the well being of the OFC (its members, volunteers, staff and suppliers) and I embody the philosophy of the OFC in many ways. I have been an OFC volunteer for 20-odd years and am a health enthusiast as well as a small, organic, and local food business owner.

2.) What general abilities and skills would you bring to the Board?

Desdra Dawning:

During my Board tenure, I gained a deeper knowledge and understanding of Co-op business, its historical and current role in the community, and the more intricate aspects of running a cooperative business in today's global marketplace. I am a writer and educator and highly value clear, honest communication in resolving difficult work situations, and in connecting Co-op members with the Staff Collective. I have written many articles for the Co-op newsletter over the past 7 years, and continue to do so.

Frederick Jack Meldicott:

I've studied the cooperative model, governance, and management as well as sustainable agriculture and food systems as part of my academic studies. I have recently begun a career in cooperative development at the Northwest Cooperative Development Center and have received training on board practices and consensus decision-making. I am familiar with small scale, local and organic agriculture businesses and their challenges through work experience and my academic studies. I've got strong written and verbal communication skills, I'm a creative problem solver, and I have experience facilitating meetings and taking minutes. I'm also a bookkeeper!

Jim Hutcheon:

I am organized, analytical, and a good communicator. I have a lot of practical experience motivating people. In addition to my work as a biology professor, I have organized fieldwork in foreign countries. In addition to basic administrative skills, I have worked with funders, organized volunteers, interacted with local stakeholders, organized budgets, and supplied field staff with food and resources.

Mel Bilodeau:

I value kind, thoughtful and clear communication and I continually practice these communication skills and seek opportunities to grow in effective ways. I am active in the Olympia community and have been a long contributor to several community groups through my years here in Olympia.

3.) What vision do you have for the Co-op?

Desdra Dawning:

We live in challenging times. The Cooperative business model is more important to a sustainable world now than it ever has been. Competition and consumerism are not working for us, on a global scale. The OFC has long served both our local community and the world outside as a role model in sanity. We are a collection of incredibly diverse humans with one underlying foundation: we all believe in equality, social justice and kindness. I see our Co-op—by doing our own inner house-keeping—continuing to grow and expand in offering this vision of sanity to our troubled world. On a more practical level, I want to be more involved in the Co-op Expansion process. Bigger (more expanded) is not necessarily better, but changes definitely need to come to our physical presence in the Olympia community, in order for us to better serve in getting good food to our members.

Frederick Jack Meldicott:

Frankly, I'm pretty happy with the way the Co-op currently operates and mostly hope to help it continue to chug along. I am curious about the possibility of making the Co-op a truly multi-stakeholder model where the workers receive some ownership; my understanding is that the co-op informally operates in this way to some degree already. I am also interested in the possibility of developing an online ordering platform for purchasing product from local growers and producers, creating a one-stop platform could significantly streamline the process for procurement staff who currently have to contact many purveyors individually and could also potentially be expanded to the public thereby effectively creating a regional online-based food hub.

Jim Hutcheon:

My vision is for the Co-op to keep creatively finding ways to fulfill its mission. Although all of the goals of the Co-op are important, I am particularly interested in the first two goals: Provide information about food; make good food accessible to more people.

Mel Bilodeau:

One vision I have for our Co-op is to keep and create ways to continue to enliven the staff. I would also be ecstatic to contribute to finding happy and effective ways to encourage people to reduce waste (like reducing every day packaging).

4.) What else would you like to share?

Desdra Dawning:

I would very much like to share in facilitating a reconciliation in our community between the Co-op BOD and Staff Collective and any members who have felt discounted or misunderstood in years past. We can no longer afford to be weighed down by harsh judgments and emotions. It is time for us to open up conversation and discover, once again, our community humanity in the face of forces that gain strength from our division. United we truly do stand! I see the Board as the Bridge that has the potential for serving in this capacity.

Frederick Jack Meldicott:

I take my work seriously but I don't take myself seriously. My focus will be on providing the best service to the consumer-owners and workers of the Co-op, not pushing my own ideas or agenda.

Jim Hutcheon:

I have been a vegetarian for 35 years and involved with food co-ops nearly all my adult life. I have a long-standing commitment to the health of the individual, the community, and the planet. I believe strongly in the values set forth in the Olympia Food Co-op's mission statement. Our food and our diet makes up a significant portion of most people's monthly expenses and as such, I believe we all have a fundamental right to good and healthy food choices.

Mel Bilodeau:

In general being supportive is important to me, as well as keeping things as simple as possible even in the face of complexity.

Please indicate your support for up to 4 candidates using the Membership Ballot or online at www.olympiafood.coop.

PART TWO: Understanding Proposed Changes to Co-op Bylaws

The Co-op Board of Directors approved changes proposed to four sections of the organization's bylaws. Our membership will make the final decision. Language proposed for removal appears in ~~strike through format~~. Language proposed for inclusion appears in underline format. Please indicate your position using the Member Ballot or online at www.olympiafood.coop.

Section II: Membership

Paragraph 1. Eligibility

Membership in the Cooperative is open to any person who meets all qualifications set forth in these bylaws and who pays a non-refundable ~~lifetime~~ membership fee, or qualifies for one of our free memberships.

- a.) **PROPOSED CHANGE:** Allow inactive memberships to be removed by deleting "lifetime" from the fee description.
REASON: The organization would benefit from the ability to remove long-term inactive members from the membership records.
- b.) **PROPOSED CHANGE:** Include language on free memberships.
REASON: The bylaws currently require payments for all memberships.

Paragraph 2. Non-discrimination

...These classes of (protected) people include people who are discriminated against based on race, sex, religious creed, national origin, immigration status, age, ~~disability~~, size, sexual orientation, gender orientation, marital status, and economic status.

- c.) **PROPOSED CHANGE:** Include national origin and immigration status as protected classes.
REASON: To increase protections for vulnerable populations not currently being considered.
- d.) **PROPOSED CHANGE:** Replace "disability" with "ability."
REASON: Demonstrate understanding that everyone faces challenges, and all are whole.

Paragraph 3. Member Status

An active member maintains current ~~address~~ contact information on file and keeps current in their ~~dues~~ equity. An active member becomes an inactive member if they;

- 1. fail to ~~pay dues~~ make timely equity payments; or*
- 2. fail to maintain current ~~address~~ contact information on file for one year; or*
- 3. fail to renew a ~~low-income~~ Cooperative Access membership; or*
- 4. fail to interact with the Co-op for a period of six years or more. Interacting can be responding to a communication from the Co-op, voting in the annual election or shopping at the Co-op; or*
- 5. request inactive status*

- e.) **PROPOSED CHANGE:** Replace "address" with "contact information."
REASON: Requiring a physical address discriminates against our unhoused members and many members choose not to interact with the Co-op using a mailing address. Email addresses will still meet our member communication needs.
- f.) **PROPOSED CHANGE:** Replace "dues" with "equity" throughout the document.
REASON: Equity is refundable. Dues are not.

- g.) **PROPOSED CHANGE:** Replace “low-income membership” with “Cooperative Access...”
REASON: We recognize that our members face economic pressure due to varying circumstances, and the name change reflects that understanding.
- h.) **PROPOSED CHANGE:** Include criteria for inactive members as 6 years without interaction.
REASON: The organization needs a mechanism to determine when members’ records should be removed, who no longer respond or no longer wish to be an active member.

Paragraph 11. Markups

Members shall pay markups on goods purchased from the Cooperative which shall be less than those paid by non-members. Volunteer Working Members are eligible to pay markups on goods purchased from the Cooperative which shall be less than those paid by non-volunteers. The Board shall determine the procedure and amount of special membership category discount and non-member markups.

Paragraph 11. Discounts and Surcharges

Working Members will receive discounts on goods purchased from the Cooperative. Non-members will pay a surcharge when purchasing goods. The Board shall determine the procedures and amount of special membership categories and discounts, including Working Member discounts and non-member surcharges.”

- i.) **PROPOSED CHANGE:** Replace “markups” with “discounts and surcharges” throughout the document and rewrite paragraph for accuracy.
REASON: The Co-op does not technically mark the cost of items up for non-members, but rather adds a surcharge to their whole purchase. Working Members do not pay less mark up than members, but rather receive a discount on member prices. The paragraph rewrite increases clarity.

Section III: Board of Directors

Paragraph 8. Contracts for Profit

Except for fair compensation for services actually rendered, a director shall not during ~~her/his~~ their term of office be a party to a contract for profit with the Cooperative differing in any way from the business relations accorded members generally or upon terms differing from those generally current among members.

- j.) **PROPOSED CHANGE:** Replace all “her/hers” and “him/his” with “theirs/their/they.”
REASON: The terms “their/theirs/they” are inclusive of non-binary individuals.

Section IV: Staff

Paragraph 1. Major Responsibilities

The major responsibilities of Staff are to...

- 4. maintain accurate and up-to-date corporate records, articles, Bylaws, Board meeting minutes, membership meeting minutes notes, all-staff collective meeting minutes, notes and required reports; and make these documents accessible to members;*
- 5. maintain accurate and up-to-date membership records including names, addresses, fee records, and ~~dues~~ equity records;*

- k.) **PROPOSED CHANGE:** Replace “minutes” with “notes.”
REASON: Staff Collective meetings have notetakers who create notes summaries rather than meeting minutes.

Section V: Financial Information

Paragraph 1. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year ends December 31. AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Board shall select an experienced accountant to conduct an audit at least every three (3) years. Members of the audit committee or the accountant may not be employees, or officers of the cooperative or their immediate families; Board members may be on the audit committee, but the committee may not be composed entirely of Board members. The audit committee or accountant shall report their findings to the Board in writing and in a timely fashion.

Paragraph 2. Financial Reviews

The Board shall select a qualified accountant to conduct an annual financial review or compilation of statements, and a full audit at least every five years. The accountant shall report their findings to the Board in writing and in a timely fashion. The accountant may not be an employee or director of the cooperative, nor a member of their immediate families.

- l.) **PROPOSED CHANGE:** Create separate paragraphs for “Fiscal Year” and “Financial Reviews”
REASON: Improved organization of information within the document.
- m.) **PROPOSED CHANGE:** Hold Fiscal Audits every 5 years.
REASON: In addition to the financial audits previously conducted every 3 years, the Co-op currently has a full review conducted annually, thus allowing for a reduction in the frequency of full financial audits.

Paragraph 2: 3. Reports

The financial coordinator or a member of the Finance committee shall report to the members at the annual meeting and in the Cooperative’s newsletter publication(s). The Finance committee will also report to the Board as required.

- n.) **PROPOSED CHANGE:** Replace “Newsletter” with “publication(s)”
REASON: The Cooperative is now producing a magazine and an in-store flier, this language is more comprehensive.

Please indicate your position on proposed bylaws changes using the Membership Ballot or at www.olympiafood.coop.