



APPROVED MINUTES

Upper Valley Food Co-op | Board of Directors Minutes

June 24th, 2025, 6pm | Hybrid

193 North Main Street | White River Junction, VT 05001+

Directors present: Chris Sneddon, Kat Flynn, Pamela Perkins, Tina Barney, Kerry Rosenthal, Kate Rohdenburg, Zea Luce, Sam Sukumar

Directors absent: Laura di Piazza, Rio Pires

GM present: Darrion Whalen

Members present: none

Others present: none

Facilitator: Tina Barney

Recorder: Larissa Sharff

PROCEEDINGS

Open meeting begins at 6:00pm. Called to order by Tina Barney.

1. Agenda & Announcements

- Check-ins and Reading of the Ends
- Board Emails: none
- Member Comments: none
- Agenda Amendment: The store budget will be moved to next month.
- Announcements: none

2. Meeting Minutes

- May Meeting Minutes
 - Change: none
 - **Approved by CONSENSUS**

3. New Business from the GM

- Fire Inspection
 - A fire inspection was done, which revealed a lot of minor issues that should be delt with. Darrion is contacting an electrician about getting some work done.
- Cooler Issue
 - Our coolers have struggled with the intense heat the past few days. They've gone down twice, but are currently running.
- Deli Price Adjustments
 - We're raising sandwich prices in our deli from 5.99 to 6.99. The cost for King Arthur bread has gone up, and the sandwiches have a low margin.
- UNFI was down
 - UNFI was hit by a cyberattack and wasn't sending out product for a few weeks. But they are almost fully back up and running.
 - Darrion turned down requests by news outlets to speak on this issue. He didn't want to have photos of empty shelves and encourage any panic.
 - This make us question our reliance on UNFI, though there aren't any other good options.
- Upcoming Events
 - The weather is looking nice for the Vendor Fair this Friday.
 - NOFA-VT is holding a farmer action event for this Thursday, which will take place in our parking lot.
- Grocery Manager
 - Our Grocery Manager, Mike Atkinson, will be moving to Florida over the summer. Which means we will need to hire a new grocery manager.

- Kate asked if there was any internal interest in taking on that position. Darrion said that most staff is comfortable in their current role and not interested in moving up.
- Budget Discussion
 - The store budget is not finished, so the discussion will be moved to next month. The board budget also hasn't been finalized, so that will be confirmed at next month's meeting as well.

4. Policy Governance

- EL&EL1 Global and Customer Service
 - Tina led the discussion of the policy and review of the monitoring.
 - There was a question of EL1.6 and the phrase "meet our customer's needs". How do we know our customer's needs?
 - Tina asked about the term "clean" when talking about food. Does the board want to use more specific language, or would that overstep in operations? The board will instead ask the GM to use more specific language when reporting on product selection.
 - Tina asked for more data regarding EL1.13 and customer feedback on staff, products, and the store in general. Darrion said that there are some squeaky wheels requesting specific products. He said that generally, the cash registers are the pinch point where any complaints come to the surface, either a price inaccuracy or challenging staff interactions.
 - **Approved by CONSENSUS.**
- M3 Delegation to the GM
 - Sam led the discussion of the policy.
 - **Approved by CONSENSUS**

5. New Business for the Board

- Kat's Reflections on CCMA
 - Kat heard an inspiring story about the Detroit People's Food Co-op and the importance of food sovereignty. She also went on a tour of a wild rice producer that supplies co-ops, and heard from a project manager about cleaning up Minnesota waterways to make community harvesting of wild rice more accessible.
 - <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/wildlife/shallowlakes/wildrice.html>
 - <https://www.dbcfsn.org/>
 - <https://independent.academia.edu/LaDonnaSandersRedmond>
 - <https://columinate.coop/consultants/ladonna-sanders-redmond/>
- Chris' Reflections on CCMA
 - He went to a workshop on finance statements with a hands-on activity, and feels that he now has a much better grasp.
 - He also went to a talk about the idea of adding a DEI principle to the Rochsdale 7 Co-operative Principles.
 - He went to another talk about consolidation in the food system and how it affects small food grocers, including food co-ops.
- Tina's Reflections on CCMA
 - Tina was struck by the struggle other co-ops are having with hiring and keeping GMs. Many co-ops are putting in an effort to have each board member get to know their GM, instead of just the executive roles on the board.
 - There was also a talk that discussed the term "food desert", which implies a natural occurrence, and that when there's an unfair mix of food availability, it should be called a "food apartheid".
 - Tina made some contacts with a CPA who is located in the Midwest, but has worked with a number of Vermont food co-ops. He agreed that doing a review is reasonable.
 - There was a discussion of the importance of making members feel like owners, even giving out nice owner certificates.
 - Next year's CCMA will be in Tacoma, WA.

- Nominating Committee Check-in

- The Nominating Committee did get a copy of the membership list. They are asking that everyone skim through and identify people that they have a personal connection to and thus might be able to talk to them directly about joining the board.
- The board asked for an elevator pitch when trying to recruit new board members.

- Strategic Planning

- Tina felt that the board should check in with members and staff, regarding strategic planning. She reached out to Darrion about getting the results from the staff survey done by Melanie Reid. He thought the board had already seen them and said he will have them sent over.
- Kate feels that the strategic plan should be, what are our goals over the next 5 years, and from there, what can we do to make steps toward those goals? Zea agreed that we should make a plan before diving into anything.
- Tina relayed that Darrion was confused about how much he should be doing and how much the board would be doing. He also noted that given Mike's departure as the Grocery Manager, his time will be limited.

- E&O Committee Check-in

- The timing of the E&O Committee meetings have changed.
- Pamela was at the last Community Connections with Laura, and it was a wonderful experience. A friend she hadn't seen in 10 years was there, and showed an interest in joining the board. A number of people commented on recent co-op events; the documentary club and the First Friday walks.
- Chris and Tina are planning to do the next Community Connections.
- Sam will be attending the Thursday NOFA-VT event and will use that as a chance to work on board recruitment.

6. Assignments

- G6: Zea
- Zea, Pamela, and Tina will attend June Local Vendor Days

7. General Session Adjourned 8:00pm