



Board Election Packet
2017 Election

Dear Potential Board Member,

Thank you for your interest! We have put together this packet as a way of answering your questions about board service – what the board does and how we operate, so you can decide if a leadership position on Common Ground Food Co-op’s board is right for you.

We begin with an outline of what a Board Member does, the role the Board plays in the Co-op and the packet concludes with the candidate application. Included are the following sections:

- Important Dates, Deadlines and Events
- Application Process
- What Does the Board Do?
- Board Service Q&A
- Board Application

After you have read the information in this packet, we encourage you to reach out to us with questions, participate in the candidate information sessions and take action to be more involved with the coop, whether or not board service is the path you choose.

We hope this offers you an idea of how things work at our co-op and what roles owners can play in creating the kind of change we want to see in our community and beyond.

In Cooperation,

The Common Ground Food Co-op Board

IMPORTANT DATES, DEADLINES AND EVENTS

July 1	Candidate packet available	In store and online
July 7, 5pm-7pm	Meet the Board	Common Ground
July 10, 5:30pm 6:15pm	Candidate information session Board meeting	Urbana Civic Center, 108 E Water St
August 11, 5pm-7pm	Meet the Board	Common Ground
August 14, 5:30pm 6:15pm	Candidate information session Board meeting	Urbana Civic Center, 108 E Water St
August 15, 10pm	Application due in store or by email	In store and online
August 19-27	Candidate screening interviews (by appointment)	Flatlander Classroom
September 1	Candidate slate announced	In store and online
September 8, 5pm-7pm	Optional Candidate Forum (Meet the Board)	Common Ground
September 11, 6:15pm	Board meeting	Urbana Civic Center, 108 E Water St
September 21 Evening	Meeting of Owners Voting concludes	Urbana Civic Center, 108 E Water St
October 1-7	New Board member orientation (to be scheduled)	Flatlander Classroom
October 9, 6:15pm	Board meeting	Urbana Civic Center, 108 E Water St

APPLICATION PROCESS

1) Read this packet and, optionally, attend a Board Candidate information session.

2) Email, mail, or hand in your application to:

Board@commonground.coop or Common Ground Food Co-op
ATTN: Board of Directors Election
300 S. Broadway, Suite 166
Urbana, IL 61801

3) A current Board member will contact you to acknowledge receipt of your application and set up an interview.

4) Consider joining current Board members during our Candidate Forum on Friday, September 8 from 5PM to 7PM. Also consider attending the annual Meeting of Owners (MOO), which is the final day of voting. While both of these events are optional, many owners appreciate the opportunity to meet candidates in person, in addition to reading your answers to the application questions, posted in the store, online, and available on the electronic ballot.

THANK YOU FOR APPLYING AND GOOD LUCK!

WHAT DOES THE BOARD DO?

THE BOARD SETS POLICY

The primary function of the Board is crafting policy defining the work of Common Ground Food Co-op (CGFC). To accomplish this, the Board uses a Policy Governance Model outlined by John Carver in his book, *Boards That Make a Difference*. This approach to governance emphasizes empowerment and accountability. The most far reaching of our policies define the **Ends** of CGFC. They are:

- **The Co-op is the center of a vibrant, inclusive community.**
- **The cooperative movement is strengthened.**
- **The Co-op serves as an educational resource on food issues.**
- **Our local food chain is more equitable, robust and environmentally sound.**

You can think of it this way - our store serves as a means to these Ends. Access to fresh, sustainably produced, or local food are what owners expect, but doing this also satisfies each of these Ends in a particular way. Ends Policies answers questions like “Why does Common Ground exist?” or “What changes does it make in the world?”. The Board delegates accomplishing these Ends to the Co-op management team and receives regular reports on progress.

THE BOARD DELEGATES OPERATIONS

The Board of Common Ground Food Co-op does not manage the day-to-day operations of our store. Board members hold no individual power over staff or store policy. The Board does not directly implement operational details of store performance; rather, a General Manager (GM), hired by the Board, handles the running of CGFC. Board members steer long-term goals for CGFC, and their deliberations and resolutions guide the GM towards fulfilling the mission of our Co-op.

THE BOARD BUILDS THE FUTURE

On a more nuts and bolts level, the Board is the key catalyst for continued evolution at CGFC. Therefore, the Board works to ensure communication with the ownership and responds to owner concerns. Beyond responsibility to equity holders, the Board is legally accountable to the State of Illinois for the actions of CGFC. Therefore it must craft policy to ensure that the organization operates in a legal and prudent manner. The Board also provides continuity. Board terms are three years; however, Board members may aspire to serve several terms, in an effort to learn the way the organization works, thus providing leadership and stewardship for generations ahead. Through its actions, the Board shapes the future of CGFC encompassing the diverse interests, issues, passions, and concerns of the ownership. Hopefully these actions encourage owners to further their personal involvement at Common Ground Food Co-op.

BOARD SERVICE Q&A

Q: Who can run for the Board?

A: Any Co-op owner in good standing who is not paid staff of the Co-op may run for the Board. “Good standing” means that your equity (owner share) is paid in full and that your current, correct contact information is on file with the Co-op. Additionally, Board members may not be relatives of the General Manager. For the purposes of eligibility, relatives are defined to include spouses, parents, children, brothers, sisters, brothers- and sisters-in-law, fathers- and mothers-in-law, stepparents, stepbrothers, stepsisters, and stepchildren. No Board member shall reside with or date the General Manager.

Q: How can I know if I would make a good Board member?

A: While prior experience on a board may be helpful, we don’t want anyone to think it is required. We have made a list of traits that are good to have – if you think you possess some, many, or all, you could be a great addition to the board. These include but are not limited to:

- Commitment to the Ends of Common Ground Food Co-op;
- Knowledge of and interest in the issues of concern to the Co-op;
- Capacity for personal growth;
- Willingness for long-term service;
- Readiness to work with and listen to others;
- Unique background, skills, and contacts;
- Humility, humor, honesty and integrity;
- Ability to commit time and energy to focusing on the big picture.

Q: How many owners serve on the Board?

A: The Board consists of at most 9 elected owners. There are four officers – President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary. Officers are elected by the Board as a whole at the first meeting with newly elected directors.

Q: How long are the terms?

A: Full Board terms are three (3) years. Newly elected Board members begin their service at the Board meeting on October 9, 2017, and their term will last until the 2019 elections are completed. Board members may run for re-election.

Q: How many seats are up for election in 2017?

A: Due to an early resignation, we will be filling four seats this year. Three of the seats will be full three year terms (2017-2020) and will go to the candidates receiving the three highest vote totals. The remaining seat will have two years, filling the remainder of a 2015-2018 term that was vacated early, and will be awarded to the candidate receiving the next highest vote total.

Q: Do owners still vote if the number of candidates is less than or equal to the number of seats?

A: Yes. All our Board members must be democratically elected in accordance to our bylaws. Article 4, section 3 states, "All directors shall be elected by secret ballot, and the nominee(s) receiving the greatest number of votes shall be elected." They need your votes!

Q: Is there a candidate screening process?

A: Yes! 2016 was the first year we implemented this and felt that it was a positive experience for everyone involved. It was designed to make sure you as a candidate know what you're getting yourself into by joining the board – and that you're excited and ready to start learning more after your election! After you submit your application by the August 15 deadline, we will set up a time to meet in person and talk informally. This gives candidates the chance to withdraw if they decide they aren't ready to serve, and the board the chance to make sure that everyone running is prepared to serve as a Board member if elected. After that, we'll officially announce the slate of candidates on September 1.

Q. Is there any training for Board members?

A: Newly elected Board members will attend a New Board Member Orientation in early October. Opportunities for ongoing training and development opportunities are provided to all Board members, including an annual one day retreat, and Board members often participate in national conferences.

Q: When are Board meetings?

A: Meetings are the second Monday of each month from 6:15-8:15PM. They are generally held at the Urbana Civic Center, 108 E. Water St.

Q. What happens at a Board meeting?

A. Each meeting has an agenda, which we follow closely. We meet at 5:45 for an informal, bring your own supper. The meetings begin at 6:15 with an opportunity for visitors to give comments, followed by about an hour studying or discussing a specific topic or project. The second hour of the meeting are business items such as GM and board monitoring. Some meetings include Executive Sessions to discuss issues of a sensitive nature. Typically, these regard staffing or money concerns for which confidentiality is necessary to protect the interests of the Co-op.

The agenda and supporting documents are posted to the Board website. Meetings are open to owners. Minutes from the meeting are posted under the minutes section of the Co-op's website after approval by the Board, about a month after the meeting. Reading past meeting minutes would be a good way to learn what the Board is doing and what you could expect at a meeting.

Q: How does the Board stay in contact between meetings?

A: The Co-op Board primarily communicates through email and Basecamp between meetings. Each committee also meets either in person or online between meetings.

Q: What is the time commitment for an individual Board member?

A: We estimate the average time spent per month to be between 6 and 10 hours. Board members are expected to prepare for and attend each monthly meeting. Preparation includes reading reports and other materials, participating in committee meetings, owner events, conference calls, and additional optional working groups, and preparing materials for the board. Board members must have access to email and the internet and be able to use both on a regular basis (several times a week). In accordance with our Bylaws, absences at 3 meetings within a 12-month period is equivalent to resigning.

Q: How well does the Board get along?

A: Our Board values a relaxed, collegial atmosphere, with respect for all members and an intention to adapt to the needs of its owners. Part of maintaining a good dynamic also means examining how we each perform in groups, accepting feedback and learning how to become better Board members. We work well together and take a reflective approach to continuous improvement.

Q: Do Board members get paid?

A: Members of the Board are not paid but do receive a store credit of \$80 each month to thank them for their service and work. You will receive a 1099-MISC for this compensation each January.

Q: I have another question; how can I get more information?

A: Great! Please send us an email at board@commonground.coop. You could also join us at our candidate information sessions at 5:30 before our July 10 and August 14 board meetings, or find us at Meet the Board on the second Friday of the month (July 7 and August 11) at Common Ground.

CANDIDATE APPLICATION

DATE APPLICATION RECEIVED: _____ **NAME:** _____
OWNER NUMBER: _____ **EMAIL:** _____

ELIGIBILITY

The qualifications for Board service are specified in the Co-op Bylaws. To qualify for a position on the Common Ground Board, you must be an active owner in good standing with regard to your ownership equity in the store. You may not be paid staff of Common Ground Food Co-op. You may not be a relative of the General Manager.

_ I certify that I am eligible to be on the Board of Directors. Co-op staff will verify your eligibility.

TIME COMMITMENT

Board members are expected to be prepared and attend each meeting. Our regularly scheduled meeting is the second Monday of each month from 6:15-8:15pm.

_ I certify that I am able to be a prepared participant in monthly board meetings and additional communication and activities, both online and in person.

PHOTOGRAPH

Attach a recent photo of yourself to your submission. If you email it, please include it as a separate .jpg file to your email. Make sure you are the subject of the photo and easily identifiable – many of us know faces, not names! If you don't have a photo to use, we can have one taken for you.

Please note that answers to the rest of the questions will be publicly available during the voting period. They will be posted online and in the store, along with your photograph and the date you submitted your application.

MOTIVATION AND CONTRIBUTION

Please answer the following two questions. You may answer them separately or address them together. Please limit your answer to 200 words total.

What motivates you to run for the Board? What do you see as the ways you will contribute to our organization?

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

We know that many potential board members may have past experiences serving on boards, in other leadership roles, and within our community. Please share any relevant experiences with us here. Please limit your answer to 200 words.

COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT

Most members of our board serve on at least one of three standing committees. What committee would you most like to join and why?

- Board development: responsible for ensuring the board functions, primarily by providing educational opportunities to the board as a whole and by facilitating the election process
- Owner Outreach: responsible for liaising with co-op staff to develop programs and events, like the Meeting of Owners
- Policy: responsible for interpreting policies and documenting procedures
- Democracy Project: responsible for working with GM and other staff to ensure owner engagement including future direction of Common Ground Food Co-Op.