

Minutes

French Broad Food Coop

Annual Owners' Meeting

June 5, 2019

The meeting began at 6:00 pm and was held at the YMI Cultural Center in Asheville. Quorum was present. 61 owners were in attendance. Prior to the meeting, owners were treated to snacks, wine, and tea.

Meeting Summary:

- **Board introductions**
- **Review & approval of agenda and 2018 minutes**
- **GM Report presented by Bobby & Board members**
- **Owner comments heard**
- **Board candidates introduced**
- **Coop awards presented**

Opening remarks – Pauline Heyne

- Thanks to local vendors here tonight providing drinks and snacks.
- Brief review of Board work and how the Board serves owners and the larger community.
- Owners are encouraged to attend Board meetings, 3rd Thursday of each month at 5:30 in the MLC (Movement and Learning Center).
- Review of agenda for tonight's meeting.

Agenda for tonight and minutes of 2018 annual meeting: A motion to approve the minutes of the 2018 annual meeting and the agenda for tonight's meeting was made and seconded. Both minutes and agenda were approved as presented.

GM Report: Bobby Sullivan, General Manager – Full report appears at the end of these minutes.

Board members addressed the five components of our Ends Policy

- Community – Ashley See
- Education and outreach – Josh O'Conner
- Products – Kelly Fain
- Staff environment – Veronica Sotolongo
- Financial Health – Adam Bowers

Josh Littlejohn gave a brief review of our expansion project thus far. Original goals of the expansion project were a bigger/better store, improved parking, keep it affordable, remain open during construction. Over the last several years, we have had a few setbacks, have had to rethink our options, and are now researching expanding our current buildings.

Special thanks to outgoing Board members Bob LeRoy and Kelly Fain for their years of service.

Owner comments: Adam reviewed ground rules for speaking (state your name, use the microphone, limit comments to 90 seconds).

- Cynthia Samson – I love the coop! I shop 3-6 times/week. The Guardian newspaper calls 2019 the “year of the vegan.” Request to make the V (identifying vegan items) more noticeable.
- Meghan Ibach – Thanks to all. I love the coop. I use the Bulk section as much as possible and reuse containers. Sometimes the cost of refills is more costly than the original item. Request to revisit the

prices in the bulk area for people who are trying to be conscious of reusing containers.

- Michelle Smith – Love the hot bar. Questions why there are 2 co-chairs of the Board. How do you typically handle objections? How do you measure transformation now?
- Response to Michelle’s questions – Pauline
 - It’s a lot of work to be on the Board, to be an officer of the Board. We all have jobs. We decided to split up the job so there’s not as much pressure.
 - Objections – We are a very friendly Board; we understand that we all come from different backgrounds. We work through objections.
 - Transformative force – Doesn’t happen overnight. We’re constantly evaluating – how to do things better, more efficiently, how to continue to engage our community and help them understand how important it is to be a coop owner.
- Jo Bell – The coop has not given rebates for a few years, and I’m wondering what that’s about. I suggested that owners have the option to have their rebate given to staff as a bonus, but that idea didn’t go anywhere.
 - Response – Adam – It was recommended by our audit this year that we not issue owner rebates. Sage Turner added that we can only give rebates in years we are profitable.
- Marie Long - appreciate this event and the coop, appreciate the friendly people who work there. I love the all-organic produce and would encourage more local produce. I also love the bulk section. I’ve noticed that register lines sometimes get really long with only one register open and wonder if there’s a way to solve that issue.
- Suzanne Tourtillott – I shop at the coop 2-3 times a week, have shopped here for many years, have been an owner for about 2 years. It’s exciting to see so many people involved & enthusiastic. My experience has been overwhelmingly positive. Thanks to the Board & all who work so hard to keep the coop going. I became an owner because I felt there was more that I could do than just shop. I will encourage others to become owners and participate in this very democratic organization. I’m excited to hear about the building plans if they’re ever going to happen. I’m an active volunteer and I tried a few months ago to get information about getting on the Board, seeing the minutes, and I couldn’t get any information. I think it’s difficult for new people to find out about how to get involved at the Board level or any other level.
- Justina Prenatt – I’m a long-time owner and I’m excited to hear about the “Everyone Welcome” connection. I will make this observation (as I did last year) that we’re an almost entirely white room and I feel sad about that because I know that it’s important to Bobby, the Board, and staff. I wonder if we could do something like offer free ownerships to the first 100 people of color who want to become owners. Or maybe we could offer a discount to people who live in housing projects. What are ways we could become even more welcoming? It’s important and I hope we keep working on it. Also, in our work to be environmentally sensitive, this is an area where we could be even more transformative. We need to celebrate it, advertise it, focus on it. Do people know what efforts the coop is making and has been making for 40 years? I’d like to see us get even more radical, have fewer packaged products on the shelves.

Board candidates introduced: The following candidates introduced themselves with a brief statement. Full application and résumés, if available, will be posted on the FBFC website. Five Board seats are open. Ballots for Board elections and changes to the bylaws will be available online or sent via USPS later this month.

- Paul Schulman
- Zan Naar
- Christa Hamilton

Josh O’Conner reviewed our voting process. For owners in good standing as of May 5, 2019, there will be 2 ways to vote: 1) a paper ballot will be mailed out and may be returned by mail or in person at the coop; 2) electronic voting will be available again this year. Link will be listed on the coop website.

Coop awards presented – Clare Schwartz:

A brief co+op history: The co+op

- Staff appreciation.....Ellie Warden
- Coop sweethearts of the year.....Diane Nettle & Pat Battle who got married at the coop
- Incredible Bulk award.....Jess who has purchased the most bulk items this past year.
Bulk bags were given to all owners in attendance tonight.
- Farewell gifts were given to outgoing Board members Bob LeRoy and Kelly Fain.
- Merchant awards.....Rosetta's Kitchen, French Broad Chocolate Lounge, Smiling Hara,
and No Evil Foods

Closing remarks from Bob LeRoy, gratitude for the co-op and for his time on the Board.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:17 pm.

Jean Karpen, Board Assistant

GM ADDRESS

It's an absolute honor to do the work I do every day, so thank you for making that possible! For a pretty small store, the FBFC is a highly complex democratic organization:

- Thousands of owners
- Many more customers
- 35 staff members
- 11 board members
- 1000's of local items we buy direct
- NCG

So, what ultimately guides us?

Ends Policies - and each one will be addressed by a board member today. They are basically our goals (they are on the back of the agendas at your seats) and they start with what's called our Global Ends Policy, which mirrors our Vision Statement in the bylaws:

Global Ends: The French Broad Food Co-op is to be a transformative force in our community and in our work, and to serve as a model of a sustainable business alternative that nurtures social and economic well-being in an environmentally sensitive manner.

I have thought a lot about what it means to be a transformative force and when I first looked at this policy originally, I thought it was weird because it is so vague. But over time I realized how wise this was. Our mission statement gets specific, so all the necessary aspects of what we're doing are covered:

It says:

- The French Broad Food Co-op is dedicated to serving our owners and the Western North Carolina community by providing high quality natural foods and personal care products through a mutually beneficial exchange....

But, back to the transformative force part and the vagueness of that word. How do we accomplish that and what does it really mean to be transformative? And why is it wise for that policy to be vague? Because, each co-op generation can reinterpret what that means for each era Asheville faces. Clearly it was transformative to open up a business on this side of downtown in the early 90's. What would it mean to be transformative today? Here's what I think, but I want to make clear that as owners, you can help me to interpret what it might mean to be transformative. After all, the board has to approve my interpretations of our policies. That's a big part of what they do.

- Work hard on reducing plastics – we've been giving out free cloth bulk bags to people when they join the co-op, putting paper bags in the bulk room
- Looking at everything we do through the lens of DEI
- Increase food access
- Local anchor downtown