

NOTE

2017 WEAVERS WAY CO-OP ELECTION

BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATES



Vote online at member.weaversway.coop or cast a paper ballot in the stores or by mail. (See the ballot on Page 26 for instructions.)

Each candidate was asked to respond to these questions:

1. Why are cooperatives in general and Weavers Way in particular important to you?

2. How will your experience, skills or unique perspectives strengthen the Co-op Board?

3. What do you perceive to be the long- and short-term challenges facing Weavers Way and how would you address them?

4. What volunteer experiences have you had with other cooperatives or organizations?

6. How can Board members better represent the opinions of the membership?

Joshua Bloom



I currently serve as Vice President of the Weavers Way Board and I am running for reelection. I value Weavers Way as a business that serves its member-owners and the community at large. I see cooperatives as a powerful economic model for growing local economies, retaining and reinvesting community spending, creating quality jobs and generating community wealth.

I've devoted my life to community-based economic development, working with cities and towns across the country on downtown revitalization and small-business development. In that capacity, I help civic leaders start community-owned businesses, including cooperatives.

We face a rapidly changing marketplace in the natural-foods sector. Whole Foods, Trader Joe's, Fresh Market and even Acme, Target and Costco are each taking larger shares of spending. Weavers Way is performing better than most co-ops nationally — most have flat or declining sales. I see the Board's job as being vigilant, strategic and adaptable to keep Weavers Way financially strong. We can do good work only if we do well.

My primary volunteer activity currently is Weavers Way. I am also active in an informal association of GLBT planners and architects, where I am organizing our participation in "International Park(ing) Day," a project to turn a parking space into a miniature park for a day.

I participate in member listening sessions and intend to participate in more of them. I would like to conduct regular mini-surveys on issues as they arise, so we can "take the temperature" of the membership on more issues, more frequently.

Eric Borgstrom



Having recently visited the posh Park Slope Food Co-op in Brooklyn and been turned away as a non-member, I highly value our Co-op's member-driven emphasis on inclusivity, food access and social justice.

Serving as an Administrative Judge in the federal government during the week and as a Weavers Way staff member on the weekends, I would bring a unique and novel perspective to the Board.

The Ambler expansion offers an excellent opportunity to grow the Co-op; however, the challenge with such growth and expansion will be to maintain our Co-op principles and social-justice values. I firmly believe that the members and staff drive our Co-op's success — both financially and as a pillar of social justice and change. The path forward will require growth not only in size and revenue, but also in enriching our members, staff and community.

I served previously for four years on a nonprofit board dedicated to bringing underserved Philadelphia-area youth to the Poconos for summer camp, leadership training and environmental education. I have coordinated a volunteer trip to a Dakota reservation, helped with tornado reconstruction in Alabama and currently serve on the Weavers Way Food Justice Committee. You may have seen me dressed as a soup can during our November food drive for Philabundance.

Be available and engaged. You can find me shopping daily or working on weekends in Weavers Way Mt. Airy for questions, suggestions and concerns about our beloved Co-op.

Meg Gruwell



- Co-ops are based on communities working together to meet their needs
- Provides a catalyst for other positive community change
- Weavers Way is moving to my community:
 - Look forward to gaining those benefits in Ambler
 - Appreciate the depth of knowledge Weavers Way has from years in business

- I am celiac, allergic to many nuts and lactose-intolerant, so I understand challenges many members face
- Background in city planning — helpful for work with the city or borough..
- Live in the suburbs of Ambler, so would represent the community to the Board.
- Good listener, and able to find commonality when opinions differ

- Challenges:
 - Competition with other grocers
 - Limited profits in groceries
- Address them by:
 - Supporting effort to expand to Ambler, and perhaps other locations in the future
 - Encourage members to be engaged with and support the Co-op

- In Seattle:
 - Volunteered with Puget Consumers Co-op
 - Volunteered with, and my children attended, a cooperative preschool
- Ambler Food Co-op:
 - Active in the Events and Volunteers Committee for 4 years, currently serving as co-chair
 - Volunteering on the Advisory Committee for the transition to Weavers Way

- Strong participation of membership in elections so the Board members are representative of the membership
- Provide suggestion boxes and encourage letters to the editors to make it easy for members to share concerns with staff and Board members
- Seek out and listen to members' opinions

Lisa Hogan



Cooperatives encourage us to use money and resources at the local level to promote community growth and cohesion, a great way to do business. Weavers Way is an area leader, providing local, healthy foods and employment; protecting the environment; and using safe, respectful practices. Food policy and shopping are political; my Weavers Way service reflects my ethics and values.

As a 4-year Board member, I have worked continuously for the success of our enterprise. I am an active Board leader as demonstrated by being Board Secretary, chairing the Bylaw Revision project, heading the Leadership Committee, serving the Member Loan Campaign, developing Board retreats and writing Shuttle articles. I attend annual Board trainings and am current on Board initiatives. The Ambler store is the right move for Weavers Way now and I will work for its success.

Short term: Drive the development of the third store while not overtaxing current administrative resources. Maximize potential of our real-estate holdings. Pay debts on time, increase and educate membership and pay an annual member rebate. Realize Mission and Ends.

Long term: Remain profitable even as margins diminish and competition increases. Position ourselves with smart decisions for the future.

Political campaigning, consultant to and member of, local organizations.

Board members should be in the stores frequently to speak with member-owners and shoppers before decisions are made. We can sit at the membership desk and listen, attend member forums and general membership meetings to hear member points of view and represent those at Board meetings.

Toni Jelinek



I see cooperatives as "connections" — a simple, direct way for the people who do the real work to connect to each other and to the people who buy their goods and services. When I shop at a co-op like Weavers Way, I feel that connection, knowing that I'm helping real people make a living and realize their dream.

Like many current Board members, I have a business background. Since the Co-op is a business, good business guidance from the Board is important. I've served on nonprofit boards for many years, and I know how tight budgets are and how necessary it is to have directors who are committed to the success of the organization. I'm really good at both the money and the people aspects of board work.

Growth isn't always easy! Short-term, Weavers Way will be challenged by the addition of the Ambler Food Co-op and opening the new store. Long-term, we face stiff competition from the big chains. I would help the Board continue to be mission-driven and provide good value to members and casual shoppers alike.

I've served on at least eight different nonprofit boards. I've been a board president, treasurer and secretary. My most relevant experience is with Prairie Oaks Institute in Minnesota, a 20-acre farm dedicated to education and community-building around sustainable agriculture.

Connect! Listen! Communicate!

Meredith MacVittie



Co-ops offer a great way to invest in a community. From the collective ownership of members to the local job creation and the selection of products that are better for our environment in many ways, food co-ops bring economic development, environmental benefits and a sense of accomplishment to their communities.

While the current Board members bring a lot of financial and nonprofit experience, my background is in marketing. I have recently moved into a marketing project manager role in my professional life — organization is key for every board!

Both long- and short-term, thoughtful expansion needs to be balanced with maintaining our roots and community feel. Financial solvency should be a primary concern with any expansion proposal. We also need to determine the unique value we can bring to the communities in which we propose to engage. New and current locations need to be given enough autonomy to serve their immediate communities while functioning as part of the whole.

I have been volunteering with the Ambler Food Co-op since 2014 on the communications and advisory committees. I am a deacon at Boehm's United Church of Christ, helping to make financial and policy decisions for my congregation.

Engagement from Board members at member meetings, in-store meet-and-greets and responding to email from members are key traits Board members should possess. I plan to do all I can to remain open and engaged, and use member comments and concerns to bring up relevant issues with the Board.

Deidre Shaffer



I have been a Co-op member for 13 years. The organization has a focus on what I call the "3-C's" — communication, collaboration and community." The Co-op is a community based organization with a welcoming business environment. Weavers Way is near my home and focuses on promoting activities, offering products that are locally grown, and is focused on environmental issues that hopefully sustain us as a community.

I am presently working at the Cooperative and have a grasp on operations. I understand the organizational model they are utilizing with their leadership positions. I have many years of experience as a teacher, coach, executive director of a nonprofit human-service agency and as a college administrator. As a change manager, I believe my three strengths are leadership development, project-management and relationship-building.

The short-term challenge would be the opening of a third Co-op in Ambler. The continued sustainability of the three locations and maintaining a focus on education, environmental issues and healthy living would be the long-term challenges.

I have been a volunteer for the following organizations/groups: Carpenter Woods Town Watch, Chestnut Hill/ Mt. Airy Teachers Fund, judge for Parkway Northwest School for Peace and Social Justice and a volunteer for C.W. Henry School 5K Race.

By being visible and listening to the members as they communicate their thoughts and ideas. This could be done by offering focus groups, presentations and/or on-site tabling.

David Woo



Cooperative enterprise, the best expression of economic democracy today; mutual needs met by Weavers Way demonstrates that investing and patronizing a business we own pays dividends beyond our patronage rebate. We create jobs and expand opportunities for ourselves and our neighbors.

The Board is term-limited and I realize the importance of why our founders thought that so important in our governance. It can slow us down, training and educating new directors, but the chance to bring in new perspectives and refocus old ones expands perceptions on what's possible in executing the will of our membership. I support term limits.

The education and engagement of our membership is ongoing; that success has to be repeated to keep a successful business enterprise fresh and creative. Adoption of current communication practices and technology help us do the work insuring our membership is informed and engaged, enough to draw leadership from within to guide us to a strong and relevant future.

I have regularly met and advised many food co-op start-ups and my experience as a member and director-at-large has been invaluable in strengthening them and in turn the cooperative enterprise movement in general. We all benefit from a stable co-op sector to prosper and learn.

By being an active member first, I regularly shop in the stores and know them well. The growing awareness of cooperatives in the general public means that we are all advocates and educators responsible to the movement and our membership to learn and grow for our mutual benefit.