



Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2026 • 6pm

Arcata Co-op & Zoom

Present at meeting:

Board Members: Mike Connors (Treasurer), Elizabeth/Lizzy Gahm (Vice President/Employee Director), George WinterSun, Layla Richardson (President), Hayley Simera (Secretary), Jon Haumeder, Michael Cahill (Employee Director)

Absent Board Members:

Co-op Employees: Emily Walter, Sean Nolan, Paul Gonzalez

Member-owners: Roger, Kathleen Pelly (Zoom), Pat Bitton, Brenda Harper, Roger

1. Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 by Layla and introductions were made.

2. Agenda Review

The agenda was reviewed.

3. Approve November 13, 2025 Board Minutes

Minutes approved by consensus.

4. Owner Comment Period

- Roger – Nancy, a longtime member, went into a store and received bad customer service and then went to another store and experienced good customer service. I received virtually an identical statement from another owner. I had a negative experience at a store as well. I'm still hoping to get a bulk directory for both stores. I'm working on gathering information for a newsletter.
- M. Connors – Someone pointed out that Eureka Natural Foods and Wildberries have programs with points and coupons, etc.

5. Board Correspondence – reported by Layla

- We found out that John Corbett, a past General Manager, passed away recently. We are working to put together an article about his involvement with the Co-op.

6. Employee Guest Speaker – Paul Gonzalez, Arcata Store Manager

I started working at co-ops in Bellingham, WA. I opened a new Meat Department at the Astoria Co-op where I learned a lot about catering to the wants of the customers. I worked at the Briarpatch Co-op for a bit. I worked in a kitchen where people were unhappy. I was able to join management and help turn that situation around and ended the high turnover. I've always liked working at co-ops and being able to help customers find products that work for them. I started here as the Meat Department head in Arcata at little less than a year ago and most recently was able to step up into the role of Store Manager for Arcata.

7. Appoint Elections Committee Members

<p>Motion: Appoint Lizzy and Layla as Elections Committee Members. Approved by consensus.</p>
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8. Finance Committee – reported by M. Connors

The Finance Committee met earlier this week and reviewed the Q2 financials. The committee recommended the Board accept the financials.

Motion: Accept FY26 Q2 Financials.

Motion by M. Connors, 2nd from George. Motion Passes (7/0/0)

9. Fiscal Year 2027 Draft Board Expenses

The board will discuss this further at their retreat.

10. Owner Discounts – reported by Sean

Our owner discount used to be 5% once a month, on any day an owner chooses. In 2022 that discount changed to 10% off four times a year during Owner Appreciation Month. We can see that owner sales continue to grow with the change in discount. There is an increase in usage of the monthly discount, although we'd like to see that number increase. Having four quarterly owner sales months allows better marketing for these months, along with other sales. We are working to make sure we have exciting sales and discounts throughout the year for owners, not only during Owner Appreciation Months. We haven't lost engagement from our owners and at the same time we aren't losing money from the sales.

- M. Connors - How do these numbers compare to non-sale times? How has this discount impacted sales to non-owners? I think we need to get more people shopping at the Co-op. If you have more people, you can give more discounts. I would like some data as to why this current system is better for owners than the prior system.

ACTION: Sean will look into these questions.

- Layla – Why don't we go back to the monthly discounts?
 - o Sean – People complained at first when we made the change but no longer seem to complain. I don't think it would gain us shoppers or new owners. I don't see the benefits of going back to monthly discounts. More owners are using the quarterly discount, but I would like to see more marketing to get more owners to take advantage of their discounts.
 - o Layla – I would like to put it to the owners to vote on what they want.
- George – What can we do to increase traffic in the store from shoppers that wouldn't shop here in the first place?
 - o Sean – I'm excited to introduce new discounts this year to get more people in the door.

11. Annual Retreat

The Board is meeting on their own for a retreat on January 15 in Fortuna.

12. Theft – reported by Lizzy

One of the sales representatives pointed out that most wellness departments are located by customer service to deter theft, especially in the evening. In stores with high theft, they don't keep the actual product on the shelf. I think we need a better idea of how much product is being stolen. An employee wants a security guard at the Arcata store. Some companies keep a file on a person and track the total amount that person has stolen to reach the needed threshold to get the police involved. I think we all need to be trained in how to approach shoppers when they are shopping into a bag instead of a cart/basket. I wonder about moving my higher ticket items to where cameras can track them. I feel this needs to be addressed, even if it's to explain that we can't afford a security guard.

- Paul – we've talked about this in a dept. head meeting. Our margins take into account for theft. I do think our customer service folks do a good job of confronting theft. And I believe only Sr. Clerks and Department Heads should be involved in these interactions, as it could become a liability issue if not handled properly.
- Sean – Theft is a problem. We do build our margins to account for a certain amount of shrink. Wellness is meeting its margins. In general, our customers are happy because they aren't being harassed. We want to error on the side of good customer service. Having high priced items behind locked cases is a deterrent to shoppers. We are about to roll out our new Customer Service Training that will address some of these concerns.

13. Board Benefits

The board discussed adding the same employee shopping discount for the board. We thought it might be good for recruiting or for retention.

- Sean – My two cents is that I think this is a great idea, but it could potentially be a double-edged sword, as people could want to join just for the benefit. I think we also need to look at our process of recruiting and vetting candidates.

Motion: Create a 25% shopping discount for active Board members.
Motion by M. Cahill, 2nd from Jon. Motion Passes (6/0/1). M. Connors abstained.

ACTION: Sean will notify the board of when this discount becomes active.

14. GM Report

We had great sales leading up to Christmas with the highest one-day sales record on Tuesday, December 23. We've switched over to using the term owner, instead of members. We have had a few long-term employees retiring recently. We paid our Solstice bonus this year to employees, which many were appreciative of. We are rolling out a quarterly audit of the stores through a customer service lens. We're still working on the visual design of the new Co-op website and hope it will be up in February.

- M. Connors – I think it's amazing that we've had employees that have been here for over 40 years. How do you mitigate for that loss of institutional knowledge?
 - o Sean – We manage this by having detailed written procedures for each department.
 - o M. Connors – I'm wondering if there should be something in the Golden Discount policy that certifies that the person retiring has completed a certain amount of transitional information so that their department continues to run smoothly.

ACTION: Sean will share the new Organization Chart with the board when it's complete.

- Mike – What happened with the penny shortage issue?
 - o Sean – Last we talked we thought we were going to be rounding down on transactions. We found out we can't do that technologically. Instead, we are rounding up only on cash transactions.

15. Owner Comment

- None

16. New Business (items for next agenda):

Agenda Items:

- Finance Cmt.
- Board Expense budget
- Board retreat recap

Consensus reached to adjourn the January 8, 2026, meeting at 8:23pm and move into Executive Session.

Minutes by Emily Walter



**North Coast Co-op
Board of Directors Executive Session Minutes
January 8, 2026**

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Board Members: Mike Connors (Treasurer), Elizabeth Gahm (Vice President/Employee Director), George WinterSun, Layla Richardson (President), Hayley Simera (Secretary), Jon Haumeder, Michael Cahill (Employee Director)

Absent Board Members:

Co-op Employees: Sean Nolan

No reportable action.

Executive Session ended at 8:34pm.