

BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATES STATEMENTS



Calvin Dame

1. Why would you like to serve on the Board of Directors of the Brattleboro Food Co-op (BFC)?

As I planned for my retirement years I was looking for a place with a strong sense of community and

with people who value sustainability. Brattleboro is one such place, and the Brattleboro Food Co-op embodies that sense of community and works to build sustainability resilience. I want to help to keep BFC strong and I feel I can make a contribution as a member of the Board of Directors.

2. What experience or involvement have you had with the BFC or other cooperative enterprises?

I lived in Vermont in the 1970s as the Vermont food co-ops as we now know them were just taking shape. I was a participant in the Plainfield Coop and friends with those serving as the co-op managers. I was delighted to be able to join BFC when I returned to Vermont eight years ago.

3. What opportunities or challenges do you see in the future for the BFC?

I think the Board's most important task during the coming year will be to facilitate the successful startup of the new General Manager. And then, the ongoing work towards greater diversity, equity, and inclusion continues, so that BFC will really be a welcoming community for all.

4. What qualities, skills, and experiences would you bring to your service as a BFC board member?

As a Unitarian Universalist minister, I have decades of experience with committees, boards, and nonprofits. Most relevant, perhaps, I served on the Unitarian Universalist Association Board of Trustees for eight years. The UUA is in many ways different from a co-op, but it is similar in size, scope and complexity.

An expectation for service on the UUA Board of Trustees (and other boards and committees of the UUA) was Anti-racist and Cultural Competence training, training that is useful in understanding the challenges of diversity and inclusion.

Calvin Dame *continued*

Also, I have experience as a congregational consultant. That work included board development, conflict management and policy governance. Of note, I trained with John Carver, the creator of the Policy Governance model.



Judy Fink

1. Why would you like to serve on the Board of Directors of the Brattleboro Food Co-op (BFC)?

I am completing my first 3 year term on the Board of the BFC.

I am committed to continuing my service, and to do all I can to contribute to the continuing health and success of our beloved community grocery store and regional resource.

2. What experience or involvement have you had with the BFC or other cooperative enterprises?

Though I have participated as a member in co-ops throughout my life, my 3 years of BFC Board service have given me an opportunity to learn firsthand how a cooperative grocery store is governed. The skills I have learned and put into practice will be key to my ability to take on new challenges and responsibilities.

3. What opportunities or challenges do you see in the future for the BFC?

Our town, like so much of the country, is experiencing upheaval related to COVID, climate change, food insecurity, racial and social inequities, and political uncertainty. The BFC is addressing these issues, has become a beacon in the region and is working to keep the community safe and healthy. Equally important, the BFC is exploring how it can become more welcoming to everyone in the community. In addition, we will be supporting the success of a new General Manager. These are all challenges and opportunities.

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Judy Fink *continued*

4. *What qualities, skills, and experiences would you bring to your service as a BFC board member?*

Intense curiosity, personal responsibility, good communication skills and a desire to be of service.

John Hatton *continued*

I'm a team player, good listener, strategist, and over-communicator.



John Hatton

1. *Why would you like to serve on the Board of Directors of the Brattleboro Food Co-op (BFC)?*

I am very committed to the Brattleboro Food Co-op. I have served on the BFC Board before, and hope that my history and experience with our co-op and its governance will be helpful to the next Board of Directors.

2. *What experience or involvement have you had with the BFC or other cooperative enterprises?*

I was on the BFC Board for 8 years, and Board president for 7 of those years. I stepped down because of term limits, and served another term two years later.

3. *What opportunities or challenges do you see in the future for the BFC?*

Our Co-op has large and ongoing challenges: local conventional supermarkets who have expanded their natural and organic foods selections; regional competitors (Trader Joe's and Whole Foods only 45 minutes away, for instance), on-line sellers of natural foods. But also we're subject to the state of the economy, and have most recently been hit by the pandemic. The challenges are endless. The opportunities? We have huge support from our community, so that's our core strength - our opportunity, I think, is to use that strength to stay alive and carve out a larger market share and continue to grow.

4. *What qualities, skills, and experiences would you bring to your service as a BFC board member?*



Jerelyn Wilson

1. *Why would you like to serve on the Board of Directors of the Brattleboro Food Co-op (BFC)?*

I am willing and eager to continue serving on the BFC Board of Directors. Having served two three year terms, this would be the last before reaching term limits. Currently I am serving as President of the Board, and Chair of the GM Search Committee. I have learned so much in the last six years about the retail grocery business, cooperative values and the role of the Board in supporting a thriving future for our Co-op. In hiring and orienting a new General Manager I will bring continuity and a perspective that will support the progressive initiatives we've begun while at the same time embracing the evolution of our Co-op.

2. *What experience or involvement have you had with the BFC or other cooperative enterprises?*

I have been a Co-op member since 1983. Along with a small team I helped initiate the very first regular Co-op newsletter and was the editor for about 10 years. I served three terms on the Board in the late 90's and early 2000's. I've attended numerous Board trainings and meetings of the Neighboring Food Co-op Association (NFCA), a regional federation of food co-ops working together toward a shared vision of a thriving regional economy.

3. *What opportunities or challenges do you see in the future for the BFC?*

The big challenge ahead of us is hiring and orienting a new General Manager that will embrace the positive initiatives we have in motion

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Jerelyn Wilson *continued*

and foster growth in the areas that will ensure a thriving future for our community-oriented cooperative.

4. *What qualities, skills, and experiences would you bring to your service as a BFC board member?*

I bring a commitment to cooperative leadership, equity, diversity and inclusion, and a belief that we can be a welcoming community marketplace with a fair and supportive workplace. In my years as a teacher, as well as working in a small mission-based company in Brattleboro I have honed my communication skills and understand the importance of team effort. I am familiar with financial statements and believe that all three legs of the triple bottom line have to be strong in order for an enterprise to realize its mission.



Johanna Zalneraitis

1. *Why would you like to serve on the Board of Directors of the Brattleboro Food Co-op (BFC)?*

Since I have now purchased a home in Brattleboro (after 17 years in an apt. downtown) I want

to increase my community involvement. I believe wholeheartedly in natural foods, and I want to gain more knowledge of how the Co-op works. I want to be an integral part in helping the Co-op be a successful business. I also want to get to know more people in my community. I've worked in another grocery store for almost 18 years, and we do not have a board. That's fine, but I buy more groceries from the Co-op for many reasons, and I'm hoping to contribute to continuing to help the Co-op continue and grow. I want the Co-op to maintain being an anchor of downtown Brattleboro.

2. *What experience or involvement have you had with the BFC or other cooperative enterprises?*

Johanna Zalneraitis *continued*

I remember back in my teenage years in the 80's when the "Co-op" was more of a wholesale "order from a catalog" kind of business out of a little corner room in a building. My 2 sisters and I would only come up to Brattleboro for a night every week. I loved going to the Co-op, because it was like nothing we had in our town in Southern Massachusetts. I loved Brattleboro, so I started staying with my father for school vacations, and eventually the summer of 1988 when I was able to work in town (Yellow Square Gallery). I then came back and worked from January – August before I left for UMass Amherst. Finally, I was back for the summer of 1990 where I worked as an administrative assistant at a local business.

After graduating from UMass, no matter where I lived, I would drive over an hour to the Co-op to shop, particularly for bulk tofu. People thought that I was crazy, but I was vegan and I liked buying natural and organic food.

Zooming ahead to 2004 my father told me that there was an apartment available via my father's landlord, Stephen Baker. I couldn't pass it up even if it meant a 38 mile commute to work. It also meant no more commute to the Co-op, as I could walk there in two minutes from my apartment.

After becoming a member the increased discount if I worked two hours per month wasn't my only motivation. I worked out of town. I started working with Dan Ridgway in Bulk, but then I found myself loving the cheese counter because it was exposed to the entrance where I would have more exposure to people. I even ended up with a standing "shift" on the first Tuesday of every month. That still stands today.

Intermittently I have bagged and stocked shelves, too. I also pick up the order at Grafton Cheese every other week at this point. Before the new location opened I did help Sabine with cleaning and putting up shelf tags for incoming product. It's a beautiful renovation, and I also helped maintain the grounds outside when inside member hours were still restricted during Covid -19.

3. *What opportunities or challenges do you see in the future for the BFC?*

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Johanna Zalneraitis *continued*

I'm already impressed with all the work the Co-op does to support local businesses with money and/or food. The addition of the Round Ups are great as a reminder of the differences between the Co-op and other grocery stores. That being said, being a smaller grocery store it is challenging to keep profits high enough to stay in business. In this "season" of Covid-19 it's even harder because gauging supply and demand has changed. Also the social landscape has changed. Interaction among everyone is different, and it can be difficult to maintain civility. I would love to see the Co-op promoting a little more compassion and understanding messages at the door. We're all just trying to survive, but we need to all be as happy as we can during times of stress.

4. What qualities, skills, and experiences would you bring to your service as a BFC board member?

I might not know the intricate details about the functioning of the Co-op, but I want to learn. This is not just for the Co-op, but for the town, because without the Co-op downtown wouldn't be the same. I know a lot of people in Brattleboro as I have been semi-living to now permanently over the last 30 years. I believe so many people want to see success and growth at the Co-op and I want to listen to all suggestions, hopes, and dreams.

