



732 4th St. North, Virginia, MN 55792 (218) 741-4663

Board of Directors Candidate Information

Greetings!

Thank you for your interest in serving as a member of the Natural Harvest Food Cooperative's Board of Directors. At Natural Harvest Food Co-op, we are committed to a sustainable future through communication, cooperation, and education. We provide quality food, products and services for the health and well-being of our families, our community, and our planet.

This is an exciting and rewarding time to be involved with our Co-op! Our democratically controlled cooperative is over 4,400+ owners strong and still growing. The Board of Directors plays a critical role in ensuring the continued success and health of this important organization. We represent **all** the owners in determining appropriate organizational performance. We are engaged primarily in developing the vision and long-term viability of the Co-op. We do not run the store, nor do we have direct control over the daily operations of it.

The Board seeks owner input on the goals and vision of the organization. It reports periodically to the owners on the Board's activities, decisions, and compliance with board policies. We operate under what is called Policy Governance - a board operating system that emphasizes values, vision, and the empowerment of both board and staff.

The 2024 election process includes submission of a completed application, as well as guest attendance at a board meeting (virtual option) **or** a Coffee Chat (virtual option) with the perpetuation committee.

Please review the enclosed materials and contact us if you have any questions: board@naturalharvest.coop

Thank you again for your interest in serving the Natural Harvest Food Cooperative community!

In cooperation,

Stephen Levchak, Christina Forsythe, Victoria Ranua, Mike Nystrom, Jennifer Krenz, Dominic Renollet, Edie Carr, Jenna Kuitunen, Allison Hill

Current Co-op Board Members

Natural Harvest Food Co-op Board of Directors Application

*** Term for election: April 2024 – April 2027**

- Member-owners of the Natural Harvest Food Co-op are eligible to run for the Board of Directors. If the membership is held by a household, only one member from that household may serve on the Board at one time i.e. one household – one vote – one seat on the Board.
- Information submitted with this application may be published for the Co-op membership before elections and considered by the Board when making interim Board appointments.
- Please answer the following questions, using complete sentences, as answers may be published without accompanying questions.
- All candidates are required to **submit a digital photo of themselves**, preferably a head shot, along with the application.
- Campaigning is encouraged; however, it is prohibited in the store. The current Board and NHFC staff will actively promote the election.

Return completed application, by February 16th, to Natural Harvest or email it to board@naturalharvest.coop

Open Positions:

- Three (3) Full Term positions (April 2024 – April 2027)

Deadline for application to the Board of Directors is Friday, February 16th, 2024.

Name _____ Owner # _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Email Address _____

Answer the following questions using complete sentences on a separate piece of paper, typed Word document preferred. Your answers will be published in our spring newsletter, in-store, and on our website during the election.

Important Note: The content of your answers to these questions must not exceed a total length of 450 words.

1. **Why would you like to serve on the Board of Directors of Natural Harvest Food Co-op?**
2. **Describe any volunteer or paid experiences relevant to your service as a co-op board member. What skills or experience will you bring to the board?**
3. **What opportunities and challenges do you see in the future of Natural Harvest Food Co-op?**
4. **Other Comments.**

I hereby affirm that all the information provided in this application is true to the best of my knowledge and agree to have it released to the members of Natural Harvest Food Co-op as part of the Board of Directors' election process. I further understand that my application as a candidate is not complete until I attend one board meeting as a guest or a Coffee Chat meeting with the perpetuation committee members.

Signature _____ Date _____

What is the Board's Role?

The Board of Directors is the legal representative of NHFC owners and is responsible for the overall well-being of the Co-op. The Board exercises its authority through its relationship with the General Manager whom it hires and monitors. The Board's expectations and requirements for the General Manager's performance are clearly stated in the Board's written policies. The Board ensures the Co-op's success by verifying that the General Manager remains in compliance with those policies. NHFC maintains director and officer liability insurance coverage.

What the Board Does Not Do.

The Board does not involve itself in operational details. It does not make decisions about the products on store shelves, the specifics of personnel issues or other day-to-day matters. The Board governs by declaring, through its policies, the results it wants and the actions it wants the General Manager to avoid while achieving those results.

What are the Board's Policies?

To view the Board's policies and the Co-op's Bylaws, visit the Co-op's website: www.naturalharvest.coop

The Characteristics of Effective Directors: Self-Reflection

As you consider whether or not to run for the Board of Directors, it can be helpful to reflect on how your interests, experience, and motivations align with the characteristics of effective directors. You will not be asked to write about or share your responses to this section – these questions are only designed to give you an additional set of tools for determining if serving on the Board would be a good fit for you.

- Are you a passionate and enthusiastic owner-shopper at the Co-op?
- Are you interested in learning about and supporting the cooperative values and principles?
- Do you like to think about big-picture planning and developing systems and visions for the Co-op's future?
- Are you good at working in a team environment that makes decisions by consensus?
- Are you willing to delegate areas of decision making to others and hold them accountable for results?
- Are you willing to set aside any personal agendas to honor the diversity of owner perspectives?
- Are you willing to take on a "servant-leader" role and serve the Co-op through your participation and active engagement?

Expectations and Qualifications of Board Membership Include:

- Must be a Co-op owner in good standing and be at least 18 years of age
- Must state all potential conflicts of interest and must not have an overriding conflict of interest
- A three-year commitment to serving on the Board
- Willingness to learn about the Co-op's bylaws and Policy Governance
- Able to access and utilize technology – email correspondence, electronic document storage, occasional virtual meetings, etc.
- Preparation for, and active participation at, monthly Board meetings and any special meetings/closed meetings
- Serve on one sub-committee (see section below)
- Attendance at Board monthly board meetings, training sessions, the annual retreat, and the annual owner meeting
- Volunteer at store-based events once or twice a year, if requested
- Ability to understand financial statements (training provided!)
- A willingness to take responsibility for Board duties and to work together with understanding, mutual support, and respect
- An ability to keep certain information and materials confidential
- Integrity, flexibility, and common sense

Serving on the Co-op Board of Directors: What to Expect

DUTIES	TIME COMMITMENT	SUPPORTING INFORMATION
Attend/participate in monthly meetings, focusing on policy & governance, strategic planning/ goal setting in a teamwork environment	2 hrs. per month, sometimes less, rarely more	Meeting usually held on 3rd or 4th Tuesdays of the month, depending on members' schedules and availability
Meeting Prep Time - Read meeting materials in advance of the monthly meeting, jot down questions/comments	1/2 hr. per month	Materials are sent out one week in advance of meeting
Serve on a sub-committee, meet as needed	1 hr. per month during busy season 1/4 hr. per month in non-busy season	GM EVALUATION: Board monitor reports, GM evaluation and contract renewals EDUCATION: Plan Annual Meeting, Board Orientation, Yearly Board Retreat/Training PERPETUATION: Board member recruitment, member/owner engagement
Participate in consulting sessions by phone if scheduled, not required but highly beneficial	1 hr. per month	A professional Board consultant, experienced in Co-op management and board membership, provides up to 1 hour per month of consultant time, as requested. Meetings are scheduled as board members deem it desirable, on topics chosen by the board.
Volunteer with 1 or 2 special store events (such as Customer Appreciation, Owner Appreciation, Anniversary, etc.) per year	6 hrs. per year	One or two members are encouraged to volunteer at each event – no need for all members to attend all events!
Attend Board Orientation	4 hrs. per year	All Board and GM are encouraged to attend this yearly event, as this is where new members meet existing members and a new team is formed!
Attend Board Retreat/Training	6 hrs. per year	Yearly Fall Retreat provides training with a professional consultant. This is team building/training with the GM and is a valuable learning opportunity
Communicate about and address other matters as they occur	1/2 hr. per month	Things pop up from time to time; weekly checking of email keeps board members apprised of any "in-between meetings" issues. Sometimes matters can be addressed via email instead of being placed on a meeting agenda.
TOTAL	4-5 hrs. per month +16 hrs. per year	For regular board work For yearly events, combined

Contact the Board directly through email with any questions: board@naturalharvest.coop

The Policy Governance® Model

Policy Governance®, an integrated board leadership paradigm created by Dr. John Carver, is a groundbreaking model of governance designed to empower boards of directors to fulfill their obligation of accountability for the organizations they govern. As a generic system, it is applicable to the governing body of any enterprise. The model enables the board to focus on the larger issues, to delegate with clarity, to control management's job without meddling, to rigorously evaluate the accomplishment of the organization; to truly lead its organization.

In contrast to the approaches typically used by boards, Policy Governance separates issues of organizational purpose (ENDS) from all other organizational issues (MEANS), placing primary importance on those Ends. Policy Governance boards demand accomplishment of purpose, and only limit the staff's available means to those which do not violate the board's pre-stated standards of prudence and ethics.

The board's own Means are defined in accordance with the roles of the board, its members, the chair and other officers, and any committees the board may need to help it accomplish its job. This includes the necessity to "speak with one voice". Dissent is expressed during the discussion preceding a vote. Once taken, the board's decisions may subsequently be changed, but are never to be undermined. The board's expectations for itself also set out self-imposed rules regarding the delegation of authority to the staff and the method by which board-stated criteria will be used for evaluation. Policy Governance boards delegate with care. There is no confusion about who is responsible to the board or for what board expectations they are responsible. Double delegation (for example, to a board committee as well as to the CEO) is eliminated. Furthermore, boards that decide to utilize a CEO function are able to hold this one position exclusively accountable.

Evaluation, with such carefully stated expectations, is nothing more than seeking an answer to the question, "Have our expectations been met?" The board, having clarified its expectations, can assess performance in that light. This focused approach reduces the mountains of paperwork boards often feel obliged to review. Moreover, those boards which worry that they are only furnished the data management wants to give them find that, in stating their expectations and demanding a relevant and credible accounting of performance, they have effectively taken over control of their major information needs. Their staff no longer has to read their minds.

Policy Governance is a radical and effective change in the way boards conceive of and do their job. It allows greater accountability. Board leadership isn't just rhetoric. It's a reality.

NHFC ENDS STATEMENT adopted by the Board January 23, 2012

1. A Greater Sense of Community.
2. Community members are better informed about cooperative principles and personal and environmental health.
3. People in our area have access to healthy products.
4. A vibrant local food economy.

The Seven Cooperative Principles and Value

1. Voluntary and Open Membership

Co-operatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination.

2. Democratic Member Control

Co-operatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. People serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-operatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and co-operatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

3. Member Economic Participation

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. They usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing the co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and

supporting other activities approved by the membership.

4. Autonomy and Independence

Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

5. Education, Training, and Information

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

6. Co-operation Among Co-operatives

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional, and international structures.

7. Concern for Community

While focusing on member needs, co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

Cooperative Values

Basic cooperative values are general norms that cooperators, cooperative leaders, and cooperative staff should share; the values should determine their way of thinking and acting. This list of ten values was proclaimed by the International Co-operative Alliance in 1995.

Self-help

Self-responsibility

Democracy

Equality

Equity

Solidarity

Honesty

Openness

Social Responsibility

Caring for Others