

Rutland Area Food Coop Board of Directors Agenda
August 28, 2025
Location: RAFC board meeting room



Start Time: 6:04 PM

Adjourned: 8:02 PM

Call to Order & Attendees

Board Present: Theresa Haywood, Steve Morneau, Kathleen Wanner, Jen Sanford, Jeanne Kaufman, Scout Edenfield, Sue Priest, Irene Gold, Kevin Gustafson
Staff: Chris Ettori (GM), Ivan (Marketing Director, joined later)
Absent: Kevin Drohan, Justine Ligon

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 PM by *Theresa Haywood* (Facilitator)

Approval of Previous Minutes

Jen Sanford moved to approve the September minutes, *Jeanne Kaufman* seconded, and all board members affirmed approval.

Announcements & Comments from Staff/Guests

No significant announcements were recorded at this time.

Treasurer's Report / Finance Committee

Jeanne Kaufman presented the finance update. The finances were described as “clear cut,” with no major red flags, though there was a slight adjustment from the prior year.

A point of concern was the ongoing sales decline: the store has seen six consecutive months of year-over-year sales drops. Jeanne and Chris discussed the trend, noting that while sales typically increase around the holidays, even key months have been lower than usual.

Chris elaborated that the sales decline is likely due to a mix of factors: reduced marketing, store

presentation issues, stocking challenges, and the absence of previous staff (notably Anthony and Jameson), whose experience and attention to stocking and presentation had positively impacted sales. The group agreed that both marketing and store presentation are now critical focus areas.

Committee Updates

a. Education & Outreach

Theresa shared that the committee is working to bring recipe cards (likely plant-based and featuring store ingredients) back to the store, and is exploring partnerships with a local herbalist and Stafford Tech for educational programming. The committee is also looking into seeking corporate sponsorships to upgrade the store kitchen into a more functional teaching space. Sue mentioned Home Depot being supportive of local projects and could be a potential partner.

b. Strategic Planning / Lease

Kevin and Kathleen summarized the committee's efforts to consolidate both long- and short-term planning into a single reference document ("one spreadsheet to rule them all"). The board is preparing for the upcoming lease renewal (preferring a five-year term rather than seven) and discussed which building improvements should be the landlord's responsibility versus the Coop's and the need to discuss this further with Mark Foley, the landlord. There was consensus to begin discussions with Mark before January 2026 to ensure a smooth renewal process.

c. Membership Outreach

Steve reported that the Nourishing Neighbors program is continuing to grow, now coordinating meals at both the women's and men's houses going forward. The committee is working on improving volunteer coordination and email communication, as some scheduling mix-ups occurred last month. There was a call to build a more robust system for tracking and recruiting volunteers. We will look at this at our next meeting and expand on our current spreadsheet.

Policy Governance

Irene presented reports for Policy D and D1. No questions or concerns were raised by the board. Chris was unable to complete Policy B7 this month due to a challenging workload; he will bring this report to the next meeting. There was no pushback from the board on this.

Old Business

Board Retreat

The board retreat is scheduled for November 9th at 10:00 AM. Discussion included logistics for hotel accommodations for Molly; Sue offered a voucher she is willing to donate.

Fall Newsletter Discussion

Content for the upcoming newsletter will include:

- an update on the Nourishing Neighbors program (with Steve and Kathleen drafting a summary),
- an announcement about transitioning the round-up program to support a new cause (refugee resettlement)
- a call for volunteers and an emphasis on thanking current volunteers and highlighting the Coop's ongoing community efforts.
- Holiday Food Drive

30th Anniversary/Logo Release Event

Plans are in motion for a celebration on December 13th, where board members will be in the store handing out cupcakes or cake to mark the Coop's 30th year and the launch of the new logo/brand. Details will be finalized and included in the newsletter.

Marketing Discussion

Ivan, the Marketing Director, joined the meeting and introductions were made. He outlined the upcoming rebranding, including a new logo to be rolled out soon. Once branding is finalized, the marketing team will launch ads in the Mountain Times and Rutland Herald, increase use of social media, and consider coupon offers to track campaign effectiveness.

Swag items (totes, shirts, stickers) are on hold until the rebrand is complete. Ivan discussed using Mountain Times' service to improve the Coop's presence in online directories.

Kevin asked about metrics for marketing success; Ivan and Chris agreed that sales, social media engagement, and coupon redemption would be tracked.

Store Operations & Staffing

Chris delivered his GM report, highlighting several operational updates:

- Staffing: The store has restructured, creating new roles for retail floor manager (Gerri) and point of sale/member services specialist (Tess), with the aim to improve merchandising and inventory accuracy.
- Grant: A grant request for \$146,000 (toward a \$211,000 project) has been submitted for store improvements (floor, shelving, coolers, freezer). Kathleen did a lot of the heavy lifting on the application process.
- Inventory: The board/volunteer approach to inventory saved approximately \$7200 annually compared to outsourcing. Chris noted the process was a learning experience, and improvements are planned for next time.

- Hiring: The search continues for a full-time cashier, with the goal of improving front-end operations and member engagement.
- Local Sourcing: There is renewed emphasis on building relationships with local farmers and suppliers.

New Business

a. Inventory Discussion

The board discussed the sustainability of quarterly inventories being handled by board members and volunteers. While most enjoyed the experience, it was agreed that opening the opportunity to member volunteers would be beneficial. Consensus was reached to continue this approach, with a goal to build a volunteer list which will be taken on by the Membership Committee.

b. CBLD Program Renewal

The board unanimously approved renewing the CBLD (Columinate Board Leadership Development) program at \$5,500/year. Several members noted the value of the training and consulting, especially for new board members.

Community Outreach & Upcoming Events

- Food Drive: A collection box will be set up at the store for the holidays, with donations likely going to BROCC or the Rutland County Parent Child Center. Scout will coordinate and provide a blurb for the newsletter.
- Chamber Mixer: Board members will continue to participate in the monthly mixer. The board will continue to raffle off Co-op gift cards at the mixers to raise awareness and bring in shoppers.
- Upcoming Meetings: Dates for committee and board meetings were reviewed and confirmed.

Future Agenda Items

- Lease negotiation strategies
- Holiday/staff appreciation event
- Additional CBLD offerings

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 PM.