



Meet Board Candidate

AARON DETTER

How long have you been a member/owner of the Co-op and why are you interested in serving on the board?

My wife and I have been Co-op owners since we moved to Decorah four years ago. We are both originally from this area of the country; when we decided to move to Decorah, the existence of the Co-op and the region's robust local food culture were key to our decision to make Decorah our home. I realize the tremendous value that the Co-op brings to this community. I want to serve on the Board so that I can help ensure that the Co-op stays strong and vital, in the vein of all those who have made it the community cornerstone that it is today.

What do you enjoy most about the Co-op and what is your vision for its future?

What I enjoy most about the Co-op is that it is a values-driven space; it offers my wife and me the opportunity to live our deeply held values when it comes to food consumption, the environment and supporting organic and local growers. We are able to embody these values - all while living in such a special, small-town community in such a beautiful rural region that is, without exaggeration, our dream come true.

My vision for the Co-op's future is a very auspicious one. I feel that the Co-op's future and that of our community as a whole are profoundly linked; the entire Decorah area benefits when the Co-op prospers, and vice versa. I see an ever-strengthening commitment to the Co-op's core values, and an increased membership base as more and more community members embrace sustainable, local food and its community-building power.

What kind of leadership or other experiences could you bring to the Co-op as a board member?

With a master's degree in urban and regional planning and over eight years of advanced professional experience, I am currently senior transportation planner at Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission here in Decorah. My role as a planner often places me in a leadership position among the communities in which I work - bringing together diverse viewpoints and tackling complex societal issues with the goal of achieving consensus toward common goals.

I worked as an advanced urban and regional planner at the New Mexico Department of Transportation based in Santa Fe for more than three years. During that time, I was appointed by the governor of that state to serve on the newly formed Rio Grande Trail Commission to represent the department in the development of a scenic destination trail running the entire length of the state. As part of my administration of multiple federal funding programs for sustainable transportation, I also administered and facilitated New Mexico's statewide Recreational Trails Advisory Board and ensured the state's continued eligibility to receive federal funding for multi-use trails.

As a planner, I have a great deal of experience facilitating community meetings, presenting to city councils and administering and facilitating our region's Transportation Policy Board, which oversees and awards millions of dollars in state and federal funding annually for transportation projects in our five-county region of northeast Iowa. My professional and personal interests are deeply rooted in sustainability and conservation. During graduate school in Upstate New York, my absolute favorite class was one called Landscape Conservation and Biodiversity. It was an elective course cross-listed within the biology department, taught by a conservation biologist and farmer. The course focused on sustainable food systems and agriculture, biodiversity and rural landscape conservation. It was the foundation for a life and career championing those causes. I believe my professional and educational background as well as my personal values and commitment to sustainability can help support the mission of the Co-op and guide it to continued success.

What experience do you have in working with a group process?

My work as a planner is practically defined by group processes - bringing together and communicating with diverse stakeholders, facilitating and coordinating public outreach and community feedback efforts, and administering state and federal funding programs that require close coordination with the public and various government agencies.

If elected, can you commit to a three-year term?

Yes

Are you willing to assure adherence to policy governance and a code of ethics?

Yes

What other interests do you have outside of the Co-op?

I'm a huge music fan and I love being outdoors in nature. For these reasons and more I feel blessed to have discovered Decorah and to be able to call this place home. I love attending recitals and concerts at Luther College and I relish opportunities to go hiking and bicycling all around Decorah and the Driftless area. I also enjoy landscaping and horticulture. I'm an admirer of pre-modern architecture and art, as well as some modern/post-modern. I have been fortunate and privileged to travel to locations across Europe, Canada and Australia, including studying French in France and Quebec, Canada. These days, my wife and I keep our travels pretty minimal and local due to concerns for climate change and the environment. I enjoy conversing in French when that rare opportunity arises. I've been a devoted, year-round bicycle commuter for more than a decade, including time living in Upstate New York and at the foot of the Southern Rocky Mountains. When I get the chance to read recreationally, I enjoy both fiction and non-fiction, especially social criticism and medieval European history. I had the opportunity to join the faculty at Luther College for the Fall 2021 semester as an adjunct instructor in Geographic Information Systems, the art and science of map-making and spatial analysis using specialized computer software. I have enjoyed that challenge and seeing the impressive work and scholarship of such bright students.



Meet Board Candidate

BILL IVERSON

How long have you been a member/owner of the Co-op and why are you interested in serving on the Board?
I've belonged to the Co-op since its beginning.

What do you enjoy most about the Co-op and what is your vision for its future?
I enjoy the people - staff and owners - the products and the friendly and accepting atmosphere around the Co-op.

What kind of leadership or other experiences could you bring to the Co-op as a Board member?
I have served on other area boards, often as an officer.

What experience do you have in working with a group process?
Our last year when we went through the hiring process for a new store manager

If elected, can you commit to a three-year term?
Yes

Are you willing to assure adherence to policy governance and a code of ethics?
Yes

What other interests do you have outside of the Co-op?
My interests are mostly tied to my home and recreational activities. I am retired.



Meet Board Candidate

BAILEY LUTZ

How long have you been a member/owner of the Co-op and why are you interested in serving on the Board?

I became an owner of the Oneota Co-op officially on New Years Eve of 2020! I have been a patron, though, since I moved to the Decorah area from Minneapolis in early 2019.

In a nutshell: I would love to serve - helping to carry on the grass-roots traditions of food co-ops and to increase local food availability and accessibility.

What do you enjoy most about the Co-op and what is your vision for its future?

I have greatly appreciated the availability of local foods -- produce, dry goods, dairy and meat alike - and would love to see that expand!

Expansion of local food availability could happen through strengthened partnerships with the Iowa Food Hub (IFH) and Decorah Farmers Market (DHM) as well as investment in facilities/infrastructure for smaller farmers and producers to wash/pack/process/distribute their goods.

I can imagine IFH transporting product to the Co-op from producers who might not have enough capacity to utilize other distribution chains; I can imagine the reverse happening as well with special orders of bulk commodities getting to producers. Decorah Farmers Market and IFH could perhaps act as aggregation points for small producers whose product might not get on the shelves otherwise because they can't consistently meet the Co-op's needs.

Along those lines, a barrier to small producers who want to expand to meet wholesale needs is often capital required to invest in particular facilities, equipment, certifications, etc. If the Co-op, IFH, DFM, and Spectrum Kitchen (and others?!) were to co-invest in things like an egg-washer, a Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certified produce processing room, scholarships for meat cutting apprenticeships...imagine how much more robust and diverse the local food economy could be!

I would also love to see a "needs-based" membership discount implemented. Even when good food is available and on the shelves, it's not always easy to buy. Models that currently exist offer the "needs-based" membership to folks who access SNAP and WIC, disability insurance, and state-provided health insurance. Their discount is available for every purchase, not just once a month. I believe this would increase the buying capacity of folks who already shop at the Co-op and would even draw in new customers.

What kind of leadership or other experiences could you bring to the Co-op as a Board member?

I was an employee-owner of a large food co-op, Seward, in Minneapolis for three years before moving to Decorah, and was an employee at Oneota Co-op during the winter off season one year. I believe the general staff's perspective and directive is absolutely essential to a functional, thriving place of business. Though I am not presently working at a food co-op, I do believe I can still bring some of that perspective to the table. Maybe there could even be an employee designated seat on the Board as there is in other co-ops?

While working at Seward Co-op, I was quite involved in the successful unionization efforts of staff and was eventually elected as one of eight representatives for collective bargaining of our contract with management. I helped successfully bargain for equitable raise schedules, equalization

of full-time and part-time wages, tardiness and absence policies that honored the fact that life happens, expansion of PTO for hourly workers, customer-directed policies that more effectively protected POC and LGBTQ staff members, to highlight a few achievements of our bargaining committee!

I am also the vice president of our local chapter of the National Young Farmers Coalition. I help facilitate meetings, send out group communications, coordinate with the national committee, disseminate resources, and have a jolly good time talking with other farmers. It's a fairly informal group where most formalities occur between our chapter officers and the national committee.

And I'm a small farm business owner! I raise goats for meat as well as brush management for ecological restoration, and I have a strong goal to operate as a state-recognized, worker-owned cooperative. I've navigated a lot of legalese in starting and growing my business!

What experience do you have in working with a group process?

My experience with group processes is manifold! As an employee-owner at Seward Co-op in Minneapolis, I regularly attended board meetings and was witness to their public democratic process. I would have liked to see more engagement with the membership present at meetings. My time on the union's bargaining committee also contributed to my experience in a formal legal setting.

I have also been part of an incubator farm and communal living situation where we had a group facilitator that helped us define our individual and group goals, work through miscommunication constructively and establish regular check-ins/team meetings. It was an evolving process that helped to highlight the need for timely communication as well as the need to be adaptive in how we relay and receive communication.

Additionally, I am part of a working group of farmers and food entrepreneurs that makes a point of including personal updates on the agenda in addition to more "professional" updates. The acknowledgment of how our personhood is interwoven into our work has been essential to strengthening our trust in one another. We have also spent quite some time on developing overall group culture, determining shared values, representing those values through our engagement with stakeholders, and adapting our group schedules and communications to our individual and collective needs.

While much of my group process experience may be considered less formal or even unconventional, I do believe that's an asset to groups that might not have had those experiences represented before.

If elected, can you commit to a three-year term?

Yes

Are you willing to assure adherence to policy governance and a code of ethics?

Yes

What other interests do you have outside of the Co-op?

My most peaceful moments are walks through the woods with my partner and our dog (Simmi, short for Persimmon) and two black cats (Mulberry and Hickory). We like to find fungi, puzzle out which tree is which, and try to determine how fresh animal tracks are. And when we're not in the woods, we're cooking big dinners for our lovely circle of friends or having a beer with them at Pulpit.