

Oneota Community Co-op
Minutes for Regular Board Meeting
Tuesday, August 25, 6:00 pm, Co-op Classroom

Board Members Present: Brennan Allsworth, Hannah Breckbill, Erin Shaw, Amy Grinna, Steph Hughes, Piper Wood, Flannery Cerbin-Bohach

Board Members Absent: None

GM Present : Nate Furler

Co-op Staff Present : Tanya O'Connor

Administrative Assistant Present: Alison Blake

Member/Owners Present: None

Call to Order

Wood called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Agenda Review and Approval

The Board reviewed the proposed agenda. G5 was pulled from the consent agenda for separate discussion, and item 8.5: Review and Discussion of ISU Extension proposal was added.

Member Comments

The board received three member comments: a request to consider stocking plant-based bacon; a concern about the "Round Up" name due to its association with a pesticide brand; and feedback from a customer regarding price increases.

Resolution of Member Comments

In response to comments regarding price increases, staff will publish an educational blog post outlining how store pricing is determined.

Consent Agenda

Allsworth moved to accept the consent agenda, Breckbill seconded. All ayes, motion carried.
Compliance reported on L10:Board Logistical Support.

Policy Monitoring

G5 - Board Committee Principles

The Board discussed policy G5, specifically provision G5.8, which requires all committee members to adhere to and sign the Board Members' Code of Conduct. The Board noted non-compliance with this clause.

Shaw moved to report non-compliance on G5.8 and compliance with the remainder of G5.
Allsworth seconded. All ayes, motion carried.

August Deep Dive Subcommittee Report-Out

Bulletin Board Policy

Breckbill presented findings from the subcommittee on Co-op Public Statements and Political Engagement, with input gathered via a shared Google Doc.

1) Bulletin Board Policy

The subcommittee found the existing bulletin board policy to be adequate as written and does not recommend changes at this time

2) Co-op Visibility and Water Street Park

The subcommittee discussed ways to more clearly distinguish the co-op from demonstrations or gatherings that occur in the adjacent Water Street Park. Two options were identified: the Co-op could formally request signage to clarify the boundary between Co-op property and the park; and if demonstrations move in front of the store entrance and obstruct customer access, the Co-op has the ability to ask demonstrators to relocate.

3) Co-op Political Stances

The subcommittee recommends that the Co-op's Ends serve as the primary guide for determining whether to issue a public statement. Statements that align directly with the Co-op's Ends (relating to land, food, and related values) are appropriate areas for the Co-op to speak to. As a useful benchmark, a CCMA presenter offered the principle that the Co-op's membership should not be surprised by any stance the Co-op takes.

The subcommittee further recommends that any decision to issue a public or political statement should be deliberate and brought to the Board for discussion before any statement is made.

4) Merchandising Policy and Member Engagement

The subcommittee explored whether the Co-op could strengthen its merchandising policies to more closely reflect its Ends. As a model, the subcommittee highlighted a policy used by Willy Street Co-op: when 1% or more of their members raise a concern about a product within a calendar year, the co-op posts signage at that product for 45 days to facilitate member comment and collaboration. This policy places decision-making power with member-owners and supports cooperative principles. The subcommittee is interested in adapting a similar policy for Oneota.

Breckbill will prepare a formal written report in collaboration with subcommittee members.

Member Linkage Committee Updates

Co-op potlucks continue to be well attended and have drawn intergenerational participation. The committee noted that potluck scheduling has occasionally coincided with Lawn Chair Night, though that conflict is limited to a few months in the year.

The committee proposed Board tabling events this fall as a broader member engagement tool, with a streamlined approach: fewer events per season, a coffee coupon offer to members who stop by, and a few prepared questions to prompt conversation. The Board expressed support for

moving forward with scheduling. The Board Development Committee also indicated support for the initiative.

The committee also discussed incorporating questions into an upcoming shopper survey related to member-owner communication preferences, including how member-owners currently receive information about the Board and how they would prefer to receive it. Discussion touched on whether an additional question about member-owner interest in stronger Co-op stances around its Ends could be included, with a suggested preface providing context about the Ends. The Board noted care should be taken in question design to avoid leading respondents if multiple-choice options are used.

Board Development Committee Updates

The Employee Representation subcommittee is developing a survey to gauge interest among employees, board members, and member-owners in participating. The group will be composed of two employees, two board members, and two member-owners, selected from those who express interest.

Grinna is coordinating the October board training on GM contract review and executive performance evaluation. Materials including relevant articles and the GM contract will be distributed two to three weeks in advance. The Board also discussed revisiting ideas from the prior strategic plan as work continues through the remainder of the year.

Grow the Good Updates

Planning for the next grant cycle is underway. The Co-op received \$1,000 from the National Young Farmers Coalition and \$200 from Decorah Friends as starting funds for the season. The committee discussed shifting primary fundraising and grant activities to the fall as preferable timing, as it allows the committee to know available funds before commitments are made and provides better opportunity to cultivate potential sponsors.

Three board members are needed to support the program. Breckbill and Grinna confirmed their willingness to serve again, and Wood expressed interest in participating as well. Breckbill also indicated willingness to speak with the Farmers Market board about the Grow the Good program. Hughes offered to assist with proofreading materials as needed. Marketing materials are largely evergreen, with only contact information requiring updates.

GM Report

Furler reported that sales through July 2026 were -2.78% compared to budget. Owner Appreciation week saw slightly lower results than prior cycles, potentially due to reduced advance notification or seasonal vacation patterns. August is historically one of the slower sales months. Sales per labor hour and labor as a percentage of sales remain strong. Deli sales growth flattened in July, which was expected given the pricing reset that took place in July 2025

and the resulting shift in year-over-year comparisons. Labor was strategically increased in June and July to take advantage of summer staffing availability and has been managed well.

The next phase of the POS implementation includes full utilization of the new Autoscale devices for labeling house-packaged products. Work continues on refining system menus, scanners, and other elements that did not fully migrate from the prior system. Furler noted the ECRS system provides significantly enhanced reporting capabilities compared to CoPoOS. Full integration for the NCG Central Medium-size store cohort is now planned for the first week of November, shifted from the original September target. This is in recognition of the time and energy already invested in the ECRS transition. The Co-op will be one of the last stores in the cohort to complete this transition.

Several hires have been made to backfill positions vacated by students returning to school. The Deli department remains understaffed and is working to keep pace with demand. Wadsworth Construction has been engaged to repair and repaint wood elements on the front exterior of the store, including several rotted pieces, and the Co-op is likely to move forward with extending the front awning over the main entrance.

The Board discussed the proposed Decorah Pavilion and Market Plaza project. The city council approved a resolution enabling private fundraising to proceed, and the Co-op is working to clarify figures and feasibility related to a potential solar array component. Furler indicated willingness to form a subcommittee to support this discussion. The Board expressed support for outreach to member-owners as part of the process. Wood will follow up with Furler.

Strategic Retreat Planning

The Board reviewed preliminary input from an ISU Extension facilitator regarding the fall retreat. They recommended a series of smaller facilitation sessions in preparation for a fuller strategic planning process in 2027, rather than a single retreat focused on producing a completed strategic plan this year. The Board discussed this approach and will continue planning accordingly.

Reminders

September Potluck: Thursday, September 17 at 6:00 pm at Humble Hands Harvest.
October 7: Board Training in the Co-op Kitchen Classroom

Wrap Up

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for Monday, September 22, 2026 at 6:00 PM.

Breckbill moved to adjourn. Hughes seconded. All ayes, motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:54 PM.