



# TWO MINUTES OF YOUR TIME WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE THIS BOARD ELECTION SEASON

PLEASE UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION [HERE](#):



UPDATE

- EMAIL
- ADDRESS
- PHONE

By Nate Furler, GM

Over the last 16 years I have worked with our marketing team and board of directors to host the annual board election. Having accurate contact information for members, in particular email and postal addresses, are vital to the efficient hosting of the election process. To put it simply, taking two minutes of your time each January to ensure your email and postal addresses are up-to-date can save the Co-op thousands of dollars in postage and staff labor.

Please know that your contact information is safely housed in our private database. Aside from our annual election, we may occasionally utilize this information for mailings regarding special savings opportunities through our own cooperative membership with National Co+op Grocers (NCG). Your privacy is important to us as well as NCG and we do not share this information with others.

Our commitment to the democratic process of our board election is unwavering. However, the process is costly. Until the advent of technology allowing us to host an election digitally, the primary expense of the board election was paper and mailing materials, postage, and a large amount of labor hours due to putting the mailing together in-house.

A number of years ago we shifted from the entirely paper mailed election (ballots) to a combined digital platform and paper mailing. The current hybrid system saves us a considerable amount of labor hours, but still has a large financial cost - around \$5,000 per year for the combined digital and paper communication, and online voting services. The paper mailing portion of the hybrid election alone costs roughly \$3,000 each year. The most recent paper mailing (2023) included a printed letter announcing the election and annual meeting, as well as voting instructions and online login credentials.

A year or two ago, the OCC Board and I put together a survey opportunity for members to give feedback about shifting to an entirely digital election and annual meeting announcement. The proposal was to shift away from a paper mailing due to the considerable expense (and environmental cost) of the format. However, Co-op bylaws state the following:

Article IV: Meetings of Members

### 4.3 Notice

Written notice of all member meetings, including the date, time, place, and purpose, shall be delivered to each member not less than ten days nor more than ninety days before the meeting date. If issues

which require a member vote are on the agenda of the meeting (except "Order of Business" issues), ballots for voting by mail shall accompany the written notice (including instructions on the procedures for properly casting a ballot).

Though we are decades into the digital age, it continues to be commonly accepted that "in writing" means printed on paper and delivered personally to an individual or entity. Our board has carefully considered where we need to stand in relation to our bylaws and what they state. Therefore, we have continued to utilize a printed and mailed letter through the postal service. The OCC board has discussed several times whether adjusting the bylaws to include digital communication is pertinent. However, each time a sticking point lies in the large number of members that we do not have email addresses for compared to postal addresses. (We currently have only postal addresses (no email) for 1,299 of the total 3,167 members in good standing.) This concern for accessibility is understandable, especially since we wish to make the democratic process available to all members in good standing.

Another sizable argument (garnered from the survey) against an entirely digital election process was that it would actually prevent some members from being able to vote in the election. However, what I believe was missed with this prior survey is the fact that the same paper ballot would still be available for anyone wishing to vote - just like it always has been. The option to vote in-store via paper ballot, or request a paper ballot be mailed (via USPS) to a member, would still exist. Our typical marketing channels regarding the election and annual meeting would also continue - through digital, print, and in-store avenues.

Since shifting to an online election option, the number of paper ballots requested and completed numbers less than 30 annually. This encourages my thinking that having a primarily digital election, including communication, is something that is feasible in our near future. However, this shift, and resulting financial savings, is only possible through the diligence of our membership. Even if you believe the Co-op has your current information, please take a moment to fill out the survey at this link: <https://forms.gle/8pS7fnvn7Mewo46W9>. The brief amount of time it will take to submit the survey will lead to significant financial savings for our election proceedings.

In cooperation,

Nate