

Date: August 12, 2026, 7:00 PM – 10:00 PM.

Location: Online via Zoom

Attendance/Quorum

Board members present: John Bonvechio (President), Donna Frederick (Vice President), Debby Warren (Treasurer), Diane Standaert (Secretary), Summer Alston, Neisha Reynolds, Steph Carter, Amy Cao, and Kim Ionescu.

Board members not present: Cindy Scarborough

Others Present: Amy Zimmerman (Board Administrator), approximately eight Co-op owners and staff members.

A quorum was present.

Call to Order:

President John Bonvechio called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Agenda Review

August Board Retreat - Recap

The board held its retreat, facilitated by Molly Phipps, the Co-op's CBLD program director. The retreat was described as successful and included discussion of recent concerns, board responsibilities, staff experiences, workplace culture, and future board priorities.

Several board members noted that the retreat helped newer board members better understand the Co-op's history and helped the board develop a clearer path forward following the difficult July board meeting.

Executive Committee Work

The Executive Committee met multiple times since the July meeting, focusing on staff experiences, workplace culture, training and professional development, the General Manager evaluation process, engagement of an independent consultant, revisions to the grievance and whistleblower policies, and additional management support and coaching.

Independent Staff Experience / Organizational Review

Debby Warren and Diane Standaert reported on their efforts to identify an independent consultant to conduct a broad review of staff experience and workplace conditions at DCM, which would also incorporate the General Manager's performance review. They contacted six consulting organizations and were able to speak with five; four expressed interest and provided feedback or possible approaches. Following those conversations, the list was narrowed to two finalists. The Board planned to enter executive session later in the meeting to review the finalists and determine how to proceed.

The proposed independent review was described as broader than a traditional GM evaluation and would encompass the store as a whole, including staff experience and workplace conditions.

Board of Directors Minutes – August 2026

Board members discussed the value of engaging a third party for this year's review, noting that the General Manager is in his first year, many Board members are relatively new, and the Board has not completed a GM evaluation in several years. Members also discussed the benefit of outside guidance in conducting the review process.

Executive Committee Recommendations / Proposed Actions

Donna Frederick presented the Executive Committee's recommendations. These included:

- contracting with an independent consultant to conduct a broad staff experience review incorporating the GM performance review;
- using James Morrell if his schedule allowed, with Erin Shelby identified as another candidate;
- establishing a formal training timeline involving Gabby Davis, Laura King, and potentially Co-op U;
- completing the GM review by approximately October 7;
- finalizing and adopting updated grievance and whistleblower policies;
- continuing efforts to improve staff experience and workplace culture; and
- expanding professional development opportunities for staff.

Staff and Management Training

Jason completed two coaching sessions with Laura King, a leadership and development coach from Columinate. The Board may consider similar training for other managers.

The board discussed Co-op U as a potential starting framework through which employees could identify training interests and additional needs. They emphasized that staff should be asked what types of training they believe would be most useful rather than having the board or management determine all training priorities without employee input.

The Executive Committee reported that it had met with Gabby Davis, Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement Manager with National Co-op Grocers. Davis previously provided training for DCM and conducted the Co-op's prior staff survey, which included interviews with more than 20 employees. She has been developing a tailored training plan for DCM.

Two training sessions were scheduled for September 22 and 23: "Beyond Morale: Rebuilding Workplace Trust After Organizational Changes" and "Communicating with Clarity, Care, and Accountability."

Based on recommendations from Davis following her work with staff, managers will also complete identified Co-op U training courses. Courses identified included Introduction to Supervision, Supervising Former Peers, Communicating as a Supervisor, Managing Conflict, Providing Effective Feedback, Coaching for Success, Difficult Conversations, Disciplinary Conversations, Fostering a Culture of Accountability, and Employment Law.

Board Training and Policy Governance

Debby identified policy governance training as a priority for the Board. The Board discussed beginning with introductory policy governance education, engaging Columinate or another outside trainer for more formal training, and setting aside dedicated time during regular Board meetings for ongoing Board education.

Board of Directors Minutes – August 2026

Owner Comment Period

During the open comment period, member owners and members of staff express deep concern for current conditions at the co-op including worker condition, community engagement, and alignment with co-op mission and culture.

During owner comments, questions were raised concerning:

- whether former employees would be interviewed as part of the review;
- how findings would be communicated to members;
- what information could appropriately be shared publicly versus what would need to remain confidential;
- whether the review would address concerns raised by former employees;
- whether changes to the GM review criteria or process during the review cycle could create fairness or legal concerns;
- whether the GM should have input into any changes to the review process;
- whether the current GM review timeline complies with the policy register; and
- whether selecting a consultant from outside Durham was necessary or desirable.

CCMA Conference Recap

The board also discussed participation in the CCMA conference. The conference included approximately two and a half days of programming for general managers, board members, board presidents, consultants, and other cooperative leaders. The conference offered a variety of training and educational sessions focused on cooperative governance and operations. Based on the value of the conference, John noted that, as finances allow, the Co-op would like to consider sending three to four Board members to future CCMA conferences.

Approval of July 2026 Minutes

The board moved the July Minutes vote to the next meeting.

GM FYI Report – Jason Bowers (GM)

In the General Manager's absence, John Bonvechio presented highlights from the written GM/FYI report. The report addressed customer experience and inventory availability, completion of employee performance reviews and related pay increases, ongoing revisions to the employee handbook and grievance and whistleblower policies, refrigeration equipment and capital needs, and more.

The report was placed on file. No formal board action was taken.

Monitoring Reports - Jason Bowers (GM)

The Board briefly discussed the General Manager's financial monitoring report. Due to his absence, Board members agreed to defer further consideration of the report to the September meeting so that he would be available to address questions.

Moved to September: Vote for the Global A. Ends (from July) and vote for the BI Financial Condition.

Board of Directors Minutes – August 2026

Annual Meeting Timeline

Kim provided context on the scheduling of annual meetings. She noted that meeting dates have previously been adjusted to accommodate member availability, completion of year-end financial reporting, and store and staff capacity, particularly during the busy holiday season. November and December are particularly difficult periods for store staff to support an owner meeting because of holiday workload. As a result, the annual meeting has previously been shifted to January, and in one year was delayed further because of a snowstorm.

Executive Session

The Board entered executive session to discuss the consultants for the independent review; matters related to preferred shareholder redemption requests; and other confidential matters referenced during the open meeting.

Moved to Next Meeting

Vote on GM Monitoring Reports: Global A. Ends and BI Financial Condition.

Vote to approve the July 2026 minutes.