

# First Alternative NATURAL FOODS CO-OP

**Fresh, local, organic groceries for everyone**

North Store: 2855 NW Grant Ave • South Store: 1007 SE 3rd St

# The SCOOP

March 2023



## *From the Board of Directors* **Patrick Monroe**

As we all patiently wait for spring's presence, we imagine tucking away our scarves, beanies, sweaters, and coats. It's time for some serious sun! Sadly,

March 20 doesn't come with a guarantee, but by golly here come the shorts! Unless you're that crazy guy who wears shorts year-round? Spoiler alert... I'm guilty. Enough bad clothing advice! I'm here for the essential facts, the low-down truth of the matter, or as we say at the Co-op, *The Scoop*! AKA that big thing on our logo!

So a brief background on how I landed here. When I heard the Board was a bit thin after an underwhelming election cycle, I offered to help and was elected directly to the Board by the Board members in July 2022. I am currently the Produce Manager at the North Co-op. I'm sure I've run into some of you out there on the floor. I hope to hear from more Owners in the future, after you've read this.

Here is where I drag out my soap box and here is where you, the reader, inch closer to the election ballot and the rest of—*The Scoop*! First Alternative is run

by an Owner-elected Board, assuming we have enough candidates to vote for. In years past, overall interest in elections has not been as enthusiastic as we would have liked. So here I am, Patrick—call me Uncle Sam—Monroe to ask for your candidacy in our 2023 Board election! Don't worry, you don't have to join the Army! You don't even have to put yourself on the ballot, but "I want you!" to spread the word! You, our army of Owners are being called to arms to help us find awesome candidates.

Originally, I joined the Board to help out during a low turnout election year, unsure of what I was getting myself into. Learning the inner workings of the Co-op has been an opportunity to peel away from the busy day-to-day operations of our store and support our mission for sustainability and social reform within

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## **March Board of Directors Committee Meetings**

### **Owner Relations Committee:**

The conduit for communication between Owners and the Board.

**Monday, March 13, 5:30 pm**

### **Board Recruitment & Elections Committee:**

Working to recruit qualified Board candidates.

**Tuesday, March 14, 6 pm**

**Finance Committee:** Reviews, analyzes, and makes recommendations on financial matters.

**Wednesday, March 15, 4:30 pm**

### **Board of Directors:**

Elected Owners putting cooperative principles into action.

**Tuesday, March 28, 6 pm**

Owners interested in virtual attendance can contact [BREC@firstalt.coop](mailto:BREC@firstalt.coop) for details.

# ANYONE CAN SHOP

## Open daily 7 am - 9 pm

*Interested in joining the Co-op Board of Directors? More info on the back!*



## From the Board of Directors **Patrick Monroe**

*Continued from previous page...*

our community and the world.

My role in operations is about watching margins, adjusting prices, honing quality, tracking inventory movement, managing staff, and, not least of all, jumping to the call of “do you have any more salad mix in the back” because let's be real, that year round local salad mix is where it's at (if only these cold winter days would subside then we could keep it in supply.) However, on the Board I am able to take my operations hat off and put on my governance hat.

The Governance side is separate from operations and leaves all operational decisions to the managers in the store. For years, I attended Board meetings, most often as the only Owner to show up. It was a great opportunity to see the inner workings of the Co-op's core principles, and a good introduction to get a preview of what was to come. Little did I know at the time that I would actually end up on the Board.

Recently the big topic has been the South Store Annex Rebuild. I enjoyed my insider access which included a tour after it was framed as well as seeing the end result. Although it has been rewarding to observe the Board collaborate with operations, my personal goal is to increase Owner engagement and feedback.

After attending a plethora of Board meetings, I decided to join Owner Relation Committee (ORC) as an Owner. ORC seemed a good fit with my Chef background and experience running events. Events are the opportunity for the Board to connect with owners and to support the local community. Sadly, due to the Pandemic it was slow going for us, but I stuck it out. We had opportunities to reinvent Owner engagement and really elaborate on what our social media presence could do during a pandemic. This was new to all of us but we all enjoyed pivoting to the changing times.

After joining the Board I was placed on the Board Relations and Elections Committee (BREC). Although I was uncertain about my role, my lack of Board experience was quickly swept away, along with my initial uncertainties. The Co-op board is a great team and I've gained an understanding of how the Co-op's core principles are implemented as well as expanding my knowledge of business and cooperative governance. As a first time Board member, this has been a great start and believe this experience will benefit me in the future.

As I inch closer to the end of the column, I think about things prospective Board members might



want to know. For me, it was rewarding to peel back some of the layers of the Co-op and share my insights to the Board. Originally I felt like the timeline was a bit long for me. However, I find myself just now starting to be more comfortable with the Board members around me and filling the seat I've taken, or rather the seat I hope to fill. I have also appreciated the opportunity to receive and act on owner input in ways that improve our community.

We have senior Board members who are looking to move on and executive committee positions will be opening up. We hope you will consider filling these spots and help us successfully guide the Co-op forward on its journey.

Years before joining, I brought up Ranked Choice Voting to the board without much thought, I said my piece and moved on. Funny enough, they actually listened; even more to my surprise, they implemented it for all Board voting! I didn't even realize they had done it until the first Ranked Choice Voting occurred and I was on the Board to witness the results. I felt gratified, and that's not something you get everyday. It's tremendously fulfilling to see positive lasting change so quickly. Ranked Choice Voting is not only a boon for the Co-op, it's a step towards fixing all voting. Change starts small and starts local, but most of all, change starts when each of us steps up to the plate and cooperatively enacts it.

So I am asking for your support. It doesn't have to be a seat on the Board, it could be on a committee. There are plenty of ways to help. Do you know anyone who might be interested? Send them my way! Our cooperative collective is strong and I believe in that. So let's fill this ballot so we can use Ranked Choice Voting and help prove its worth, not just for your small, local Board elections but for other systems in need of voting reforms.

I thank you for your time, I thank you for your business, and most of all I thank you for reading this and hope to welcome some of you to a seat on the Board.

Be sure to check out more info at [firstalt.coop/governance](https://firstalt.coop/governance). Also feel free to send any Board inquiries to [Patrick.Monroe.Board@firstalt.coop](mailto:Patrick.Monroe.Board@firstalt.coop).

Lastly, don't forget all board submissions need to be in by March 31 by email.

# Allergen Info: Sesame Added to Food Labels as Major Allergen

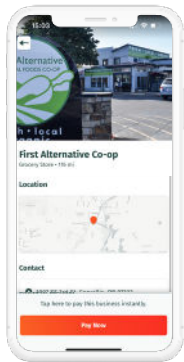
## A reminder to look at the label

Starting January 1, 2023, the FDA is requiring foods containing sesame to contain an allergy declaration on their labels. With some food producers, this is having the surprising effect of having them add sesame to products that didn't have it before, instead of changing their processes to eliminate possible cross-contamination.

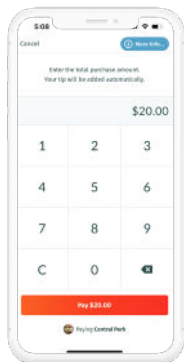
Consumer advocacy groups are currently petitioning the FDA to prohibit this behavior, but it stands as a strong reminder to look at labels, especially when food allergens are a concern. Read more about the issue at <https://bit.ly/3IYez3R>, and keep an eye on those labels!

## Paying with Kuto just got even easier.

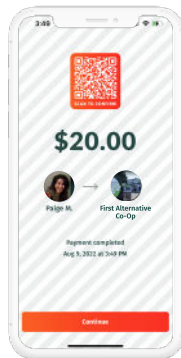
Introducing Kuto Push Pay, a simple 3-step process



1 Tap "Pay Now" on the Retailer Page



2 Enter Purchase Amount  
Discounts and gift cards are automatically applied



3 Show Payment Confirmation to Retailer

**kuto** Learn more and get the app at: [kuto.app](https://kuto.app)

## Customer Q&A

Answering the Co-op Community's Questions

**Q:** Why do you require a key to the public restrooms at the stores?

**A:** We understand it can be inconvenient to have to get a key for the public restrooms at the store, but have implemented this process to help resolve issues we were experiencing with theft and inappropriate/illegal behavior in these areas. Keys are located at Customer Service and we encourage you to help yourself (no need to wait to ask a cashier)! We appreciate your understanding.



## Follow First Alternative Co-op on social media

For up-to-the-minute news, giveaways, recipes, special offers, and tons of cooperative fun.

@firstaltcoop



Facebook • Instagram • TikTok • Twitter • YouTube

## Subscribe to our Email Newsletter



Scan this QR Code with your smart phone to join our email list. *Subscribers receive twice-monthly emails plus occasional special offers, coupons & announcements.*



The Co-op welcomed

**36** new Owners in January 2023



# ★ ★ ★ Board Seeks New Directors ★ ★ ★

First Alternative has been going strong for more than 50 years and needs a strong Board of Directors to continue thriving into the future. If you would like to join other Owners in making important decisions about the Co-op you should consider a position on the Board.

## What Does the Board Do?

The Board develops a vision for First Alternative and decides on strategies to achieve that vision. It decides when it's time to remodel or expand a store, how to serve a broader community and the role of the Co-op in the broader community. The Board also makes financial decisions including setting the annual budget, when to spend cash or take on debt and when to declare a patronage dividend. Another important duty is hiring and supervising the General Manager. Supervisions is done through monitoring compliance with written policies that cover all areas of operations. This frees the Board from micromanaging day to day decisions and frees our professional manager to implement the policies in any reasonable way. The Board seeks input from Owners and ensures the continuation of an effective Board through recruitment.

## What is required from Directors?

- Be a shareholder of First Alternative
- Have an interest in the organization's mission and goals
- Have a willingness to further your knowledge through orientation and training
- Have a willingness to represent the organization to the community
- Provide about 10-15 hours of service per month, distributed approximately as follows:
  - 6-8 hours Board meetings, including preparation and attendance, on the last Tuesday of each month. Board meetings are typically 3 hours.

- 2-4 hours Committee Meetings including preparation and attendance. Committee meets are typically 1-1 ½ hours.
- Participate in 1 annual weekend goal setting retreat (local)

The directors are elected in June. A full Board is composed of 10 directors elected to three-year terms, with 3 or 4 positions regularly coming up for election each year. This year there are three 3-year positions open and one 1-year position. The Board Recruitment and Elections Committee recruits and endorses candidates with the knowledge and skills needed to do the work of the Board. All Owners are eligible to run and are highly encouraged to do so. This year, as in previous years, candidates with financial management, accounting or legal backgrounds would bolster our already strong board. If we are fortunate again to have more candidates running than available positions, we will, for the first time, use ranked choice voting. This method has been shown to have results best representative of the voters' choices. If we have the same or fewer candidates than positions, we will use the election system we've used in the past, including allowing for write-ins. In either case, the candidates receiving the most votes will get the 3-year term positions.

Each Board member receives a 15% in-store discount on items not already on sale, as well as a delicious dinner before each in-person Board meeting. Training, conference opportunities and related travel expenses are covered.

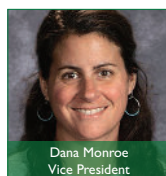
If you would like more information, or would like to request an application packet, please contact the Board Recruitment and Elections Committee chair at [BREC@firstalt.coop](mailto:BREC@firstalt.coop). An application packet can be downloaded from the First Alternative website. The deadline for returning applications is March 31.

## Your 2023 Co-op Board of Directors

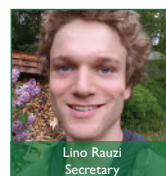
Learn more at:  
[firstalt.coop/governance](http://firstalt.coop/governance).



Jasmin Woodside  
President



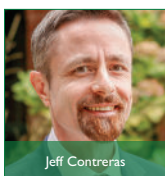
Dana Monroe  
Vice President



Lino Rauzi  
Secretary



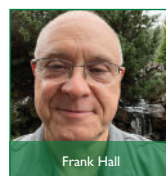
Rob May  
Treasurer



Jeff Contreras



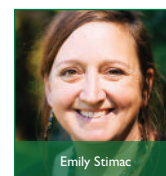
Camille Freitag



Frank Hall



Patrick Monroe



Emily Stimac