

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 2024



*From the First Alternative
Board of Directors*

Emily Stimac

January marked the beginning of a time of transition at our Co-op. Our wonderful and adept General Manager Cindee Lolik has decided to begin the next chapter of her life, retirement, this month. Cindee has guided the store through ups and downs for the last thirteen years and while we knew the day would come that we had to say goodbye, it still feels way too soon. We hope to continue to see her happy smile in our aisles as the days go on.

Hiring and overseeing the General Manager of the stores is the main responsibility of the board. While much of the time (for instance, the last thirteen years!) this work involves listening to reports from our GM and finessing the policies that guide the GM's decisions, the hiring process is a much more

Goodbye from Cindee Lolik

Leaving my position at the Co-op is, of course, bittersweet. I'm looking forward to retirement but will miss my colleagues and my relationships with the co-op community. Over the past thirteen years, I have enjoyed the opportunities and challenges of working at a great Co-op that is staffed by a wonderful group of people, governed by a solid and caring board, and patronized by loyal and giving Owners and customers.

I will miss that role and all of you greatly. Plans are currently to stay in the area while my partner and I discuss what we want to be now that we're all grown up and retired.

Thank you, First Alternative!



active role. Beginning in January the Board gathered together to make a plan that would keep the stores running, even flourishing, as we move forward with a hunt for the next General Manager. At our January Board meeting we voted to hire an Interim General Manager (IGM) to cover the GM responsibilities.

This March, we welcome a new face to the stores: Wynston Estis, our IGM. During the coming months, while the Board searches for a new GM, Wynston will work with the store managers to keep the stores in good running order. Wynston is coming to us with over twenty years of experience in cooperative business. She has worked with thirteen co-ops in the last eight years, helping them navigate the path to a new general manager. You could say she is a GOAT-IGM and you would be absolutely accurate. If you see Wynston in the stores, please say hello and give her a warm Co-op welcome.

Another item at the Board meeting was the presentation of a plan of action from our Policy Governance team outlining their steps for updating the Board's policies. This may seem to you like a dry subject—and you would be correct. However, policies are the backbone of Policy Governance and the framework from which we operate as a Board. The collection of policies remains a living document that we review monthly and that our General Manager reports on. We look forward to bringing these policies into the current day and age to serve our Co-op better.

Speaking of policies, we heard from Cindee on our monthly "L" (limitation) reports, and discussed L-I, Staff treatment. Looking at the numbers from our last

Continued on next page...



Cindee with Linn Benton NAACP members

From the Board of Directors,

Emily Stimac *Continued...*

biennial survey reminded me that the Co-op is much more than a grocery store. The ratings were off the charts! With a starting wage well above minimum, benefits, paid leave, and a healthy work environment, there is more than an economic bottom line at work here and it's truly something to be proud of supporting.

Our second report, the L-10, details the environmental efforts of the store. Your store has most of these refined to a science, and the details of this report amounted to fifteen pages covering every aspect of how we do business with an eye toward sustainability.

One thing that stood out to me during the report was the complexity of each issue. Owners and shoppers at large depend on us to curate the store's selection with the health of the earth as a top priority, and by default our own health. We face tough choices on every aisle and in every department. For example, the challenge of selecting containers for our deli food. The current reusable plastic selection has been proven the best option over "compostable" corn paper containers. This is because compostable corn containers; while they do break down quickly, are made with GMO corn and thus support GMO agriculture, something we know you don't want to support. Now do you see how these decisions are anything but simple?

Reducing fossil fuel dependency is one sustainability issue we can usually agree on, and we are making some fun progress on that front. Look for the installation of electric vehicle chargers at the South



Store in collaboration with Pacific Power this spring. In addition, solar panels to increase our energy production are nearing completion on both stores. Other big projects will be on hold as we search for our new GM, but we will keep in mind the importance of sustainability as we choose our ideal candidate.

As a final note, in March we wrap up our call for Board of Directors candidates. If you are interested in taking a more active role in Co-op ownership, we invite you to follow this link firstalt.coop/governance to the website for more information and the application to run for a position.

We wish you the best this month and look forward to seeing you in the store!

Hello from Wynston Estis

Hello First Alternative Co-op Community, I'm getting very excited to meet you. Having just read your February edition of The Scoop, it's clear that you all are a very accomplished team of people. You are amping up your Commissary operations, repairing the Annex building's infrastructure, moving several of your administrative offices, and recently replaced much of your refrigeration in both site's produce departments. That's A LOT!

I'm looking forward to supporting the remaining projects that are underway and learning from you about your new dreams for the Co-op's future. It's my focus to support First Alternative staff, management, Board of Directors and community in making the next several months an inclusive, enriching, enjoyable, and very successful part of your Cooperative's history. See you in a couple of weeks!

Wynston • She/Her/Hers



March Board Committee Meetings

Owners interested in virtual attendance should contact BREC@firstalt.coop for details.

Owner Relations Committee:

The conduit for communication between Owners and the Board.

Monday, March 11, 6pm

Board Recruitment & Elections Committee:

Working to recruit qualified Board candidates.

Wednesday, March 12, 5pm

Finance Committee:

Reviews, analyzes, and makes recommendations on financial matters.

Wednesday, March 20, 4:30pm

Board of Directors:

Elected Owners putting our cooperative principles into action.

Tuesday, March 26, 6pm

**Two locations
Open daily
7 am - 9 pm**

**Everyone is
Welcome**

★ ★ ★ 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)

Visit firstalt.coop/governance for more information

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 four 3-year positions open.**

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 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. An application packet can be downloaded from the First Alternative website. The deadline for returning applications is March 31.

The Co-op welcomed...

45

new Owners in January

Learn more and become an Owner at
firstalt.coop/ownership

A statement from the First Alternative Board of Directors:

First Alternative General Manager, Cindee Lolik, Retires

First Alternative Co-op's General Manager, Cindee Lolik, has announced her retirement from her position at the Co-op as of March 1, 2024

Cindee's departure marks the end of an era for First Alternative. Cindee has skillfully guided the Co-op through many challenges over her thirteen years of service, including financial difficulties, COVID, and the commissary fire. We are indebted to her commitment and vision that propelled us to our present position in our community and industry, and we are grateful for everything she has done for our Co-op and our staff.

First Alternative's Board of Directors recognize that recruiting and identifying the future GM of our cooperative is a critically important decision for our staff, Owners, and community. Evaluating candidates may take many months to come to a successful close. As a first step in this process, the Board has identified an interim leadership plan to ensure our operations and governance will continue seamlessly during the recruitment phase.

The Board of Directors has decided to engage an experienced Co-op industry manager as an Interim General Manager. We are excited to introduce Wynston Estis (she/her) in the role of Interim General Manager beginning March 7, 2024. Her primary role is to provide stability to operations and support to Co-op staff.

We expect her role with First Alternative to last between 4-6 months, with a possible extension beyond that if required. Wynston has a strong background at the general management level at several Co-ops across the country, including multi-store and commissary

organizations. We are excited to bring her breadth of experience as an Interim General Manager to our stores during our search for our long-term GM.

Wynston's background brings a wealth of proven experience to our Co-op during this time, including her ability to support staff and to provide stability. She has experience serving in thirteen different communities in the last eight years as an Interim General Manager.

Our clear intention as a Board for this interim period is to strengthen and grow our foundation while successfully navigating this current transition to the future. Thank you all so much for your passion, dedication, and service to First Alternative! The Board is very grateful for your support of our Co-op as we move forward in this process.

Owners with questions or comments are encouraged to reach out to the Board of Directors at faboard@firstalt.coop.

**Read statements
from Cindee and
new interim GM
Wynston inside!**



**We look forward to seeing her in-store,
shopping for favorites like persimmons.**



**Cindee with Jasmin Woodside
& Mark Tarasawa**



**Cindee grilling at
the South Store**



Thanks, Cindee, we'll miss you!