



# *Interested in Serving on* **GREENSTAR CO-OP'S COUNCIL?**

***Thank you for your interest in serving on GreenStar's Council (Board of Directors). We look forward to hearing your voice, benefiting from your ideas, and working with you to make the Co-op an even better place.***

## **Should You Seek a Seat on Council? Some Considerations**

Serving on the Council can be rewarding and fun (more on that shortly), but it's also a serious commitment. As a Council member, you're required to abide by the legal, ethical, and practical responsibilities of being on a board of directors. This means you stay informed and make reasonable judgments based on this information; that you attend meetings regularly; that you are responsive to other member-owners who want to share opinions or ask questions; that you don't use information obtained by being on the board to the detriment of the Co-op; that you disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest; and, in your capacity as a Council member, that you put the good of the Co-op first, and abide by the Code of Conduct for Council members (Policy C.5, in GreenStar's Policy Book). State requirements imposed on board members of a business that seeks licenses (such as for selling alcohol) have complicated things, by imposing further qualifications, such as being at least 21 years old, a US citizen or permanent resident alien, and not having past felony convictions. There's a fair amount of fine print, so, if you have questions, feel free to contact us at: [council@greenstar.coop](mailto:council@greenstar.coop).

Before the election (or applying for appointment), we encourage you to attend at least one Council meeting and check us out. All Council meetings are open to all member-owners, except for certain executive session matters. Meetings are typically on the 2nd Tuesday of the month, from 6:30 to 9:30 pm, in The Classrooms @ GreenStar's Classroom, across Buffalo Street from the West End store. Agendas are posted in both stores and the GreenStar website. If you become a candidate, also plan to attend two member functions during the election period where candidates will introduce themselves.

We're always looking for skilled, caring people who will add their voice and ideas to the governance of the Co-op, and help represent our diverse Membership. Please read these materials, and, if you think you have the time, energy, inclination and passion to make GreenStar even better, fill out the Declaration of Candidacy form and run for Council! Or, if there is a vacancy, submit the Application for Appointment (by mid-November).

***Typically, in January or February, there are opportunities to speak with current Council members, to get some first-hand information and impressions about what running for and being on Council involve. This could be in the form of scheduled informational sessions or tabling in the stores by Council members. Watch for notices about this in the stores, in GreenLeaf or on the website.***

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**WHAT DOES COUNCIL ACTUALLY DO?** State law requires GreenStar, as a cooperative corporation, to have a board of directors (which we call our Council) that is ultimately responsible for all aspects of the Co-op and to the member-owners. In practice, Council makes the "big-picture" policy decisions, approves the annual budget, and provides oversight of the Co-op's finances and store operations. Day-to-day management of the stores and their operations is delegated to a professional General Manager (GM) chosen and regularly evaluated by Council; the GM then selects and supervises the rest of the staff. What Council focuses on includes evaluating our GM (Brandon Kane), our style of governance and the regular updating of our

policies, co-op expansion which recently involved opening a new satellite store in Collegetown, and a “solar farm” in West Danby, and invigorated member-owner involvement.

**WHAT’S ALL THIS ABOUT “ENGAGEMENT” WITH MEMBER-OWNERS?** One of Council’s primary roles is listening to member-owners and trying to represent their interests. This can happen formally or informally, at Spring and Fall Membership meetings, special “town hall” sessions and focus groups, and through tabling at the stores by Council members and member-owner surveys. Our Membership Committee has been working hard to reinvigorate these traditional forms of outreach, as well as come up with new ones. Maybe you have ideas about this and could help us to build a more engaged Membership.

**OK, BUT WHAT WOULD I ACTUALLY DO, DAY-TO-DAY OR MONTH-TO-MONTH?** You would be expected to come, prepared, to Council meetings (normally, once a month; special meetings are called if necessary) and to serve on at least one committee (again, normally with monthly meetings). When all the prep and meeting time is added up, it’s at least 10-12 hours a month. Most people do more than this, especially if they serve as an officer, chair a committee or lead a project. Many people do outside research or attend conferences and report back to Council.

**WHAT’S A MEETING LIKE?** The Council meeting is our main forum for doing business. There we hear reports from and ask questions of management staff, discuss and amend proposals for action, and vote on new policies. This can involve quite a bit of discussion and debate (and usually goes on for about 3 hours), but, when everyone comes prepared, can be quite effective. We use a version of Robert’s rules – parliamentary procedure – to run the meetings. It might sound formal at first, but is designed to provide everyone a fair hearing. The best way to learn what a meeting is like is to attend one – they are on the second Tuesday of each month, starting at 6:30 pm, usually in GreenStar’s Classroom Space ( across Buffalo Street from the West End store). Council meetings are open to all member-owners. Hope to see you there!

**WHAT’S THIS I’VE HEARD ABOUT POLICY GOVERNANCE?** At the end of 2010, Council voted to change its governance approach, by using the Policy Governance model “in a form chosen by Council.” Policy Governance is a style that is popular in the co-op world. It’s designed to help keep the board focused on the job of high-level planning and goal setting and to give the staff more leeway in running the stores and in implementing Co-op policy, with accountability to be ensured through extensive General Manager reporting.

Since making this decision, Council has spent much time in developing new policies in the Policy Governance style, which are gradually replacing many of our older policies. At the end of 2013, Council adopted 7 broad “ends statements” (how we want our member-owners and community to benefit from our co-op’s existence). Council now receives frequent, formal reports for Council’s review, detailing how these ends are being reflected in store operations, and how the “limitations” Council has established on GM actions are being respected.

**AND WHAT DO I GET?** You get to meet lots of interesting people, have a chance to go to trainings and conferences in exotic locales like Texas or Wisconsin or Idaho, and become more involved in your Co-op than you thought possible. Also, you get a superworker discount at the register – that’s 17.5% off almost everything you buy. In 2011, the Membership authorized Council to provide its members with modest, monetary “stipends,” and Council decided to implement such a system starting in 2012. “Regular” Council members currently receive \$1,200/year, committee chairs \$1,800/year, and the President (chosen annually by Council, and who has many additional responsibilities) \$2,400/year. If requested, childcare is now available at Council meetings, for Council members’ children (at no cost). NOTE: Council voted to accept reduced

stipends for the 2018 fiscal year.

**SOUNDS GOOD SO FAR. HOW DO I RUN (OR APPLY)?** Fill out the Declaration of Candidacy form (to run in the election) or Application for Appointment (between elections, when there's a vacancy), both of which are available at the each store or on the website (look for the "RUN for our Board of Directors" button). If you want to run in the election, don't wait until the last moment (there are essay questions!). Then start educating yourself...and launch your campaign.

**EDUCATING MYSELF? CAMPAIGN?** Yes! Educate yourself by coming to some meetings, attending an informational session for prospective candidates (or watch for Council members tabling in the stores), or calling/emailing a Council member (such as council officers; contact info for all Council members is in the GreenLeaf newsletter and on the website). There's a lot of useful information in the Council section of the GreenStar website ([www.greenstar.coop](http://www.greenstar.coop)) - click on Council and Committee Documents to find all Co-op policies. These are also assembled in the Policy Book, a hard copy of which is available for viewing at our stores. Campaigning has traditionally been pretty low key at GreenStar - feel free to table and tell your friends - the more people who care, get involved, and vote, the healthier our Co-op will be! Tabling can be arranged with staff at the Front Desk. If you do table in the store, we ask that you be respectful of others and not interrupt the normal functioning of the store.

***Again, thanks for your interest. We can't wait to meet you and work with you. And, good luck!***