

Fall 2025 Issue

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The Plainfield Co-op Newsletter

Holidays



Michael loading a baled tree

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- Cabot Creamery

About This Newsletter, Fall 2025



by Glenda Bissex, Editor

Such a busy time of year! So much to be done. So many things changing. The Co-op has FIVE new members on its Board, with only John Cleary continuing. Read about the new Board [here](#). Suddenly there's snow on the freezing ground and our diets change from using garden produce to vegetables that can be stored. It's a good time to use the bulk foods the Co-op offers [here](#), as in the recipes starting [here](#). If you're dealing with a leak in your roof, you're in good company, as you'll see in the Co-op

Building Committee report [here](#). If you need a little humor amid the stress, read "Roux the Day" [here](#).

Much is going on behind the scenes to keep the Plainfield Co-op operating and improving. Read the General Manager's report [here](#) and be grateful you don't have to worry about what projects to prioritize and how to pay for them, and many, many other decisions. Overseeing it all is the Board, the members' representatives. Meet them [here](#). Read the President's report [here](#).

Buying local is a priority at the Plainfield Co-op, and holiday trees are no exception, as you'll see in Gail Falk's story and photos [here](#). Instead of the fragrance of flowers, it's now the fragrance of evergreens that will fill (or is filling or did fill) the greenhouse. The holiday trees, like the flowers, are transient, seasonal glories. Enjoy them while you may!

The Plainfield Co-op is not your usual chain grocery or hardware store, managed from afar to profit its executives and shareholders. Learn what co-ops stand for and how they empower you [here](#).

Buy your tree, buy your Darn Tough socks (the best!) and your stovepipe, your pet food and cabbage—all under one roof, with plenty of parking and no meters! The best way to support the Co-op is by shopping there often.

We want to hear from you. Deadline for submissions for the winter issue is Feb. 1, 2026.

The Newsletter Committee:

- Glenda Bissex, Editor, songboat@vtlink.net
 - Gail Falk, Staff Writer
 - Elizabeth Mathai, Design & Layout, and Ad Coordinator
 - Debra Stoleroff, Recipe Editor
-

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[Holiday Tree Farm](#)



Holiday Tree Farm



by Gail Falk, Staff Writer



In mid-November, when most Vermont farmers are putting their fields to bed, East Montpelier tree farmer Timo Bradley is getting ready for his annual harvest. By Thanksgiving, Bradley, his twin brother Markus, and friend John Hogan will have cut, baled, and tagged about 1,500 holiday trees from their acreage off Bliss Road and Center Road.



Timo Bradley

Bradley, who grew up in Calais and went to U-32 and UVM, has been growing trees in East Montpelier for 30 years, since veteran tree farmer Jim Goodall took him under his wing and taught him the trade. Every spring, Bradley and his partners plant about 1,500 saplings, which grow to Christmas tree size in 10 to 15 years. They grow a variety of firs: Canaan firs, Fraser firs, and Balsam firs., which grow interspersed with spruce volunteers. They locate each

seedling under the drip line of a tree that is marked for harvest in the fall. This protects the young plants and keeps the trees spaced.

This year's crop is looking good, says Bradley. The drought has been a concern but not a problem because of the mixed terrain of his land.

Tree farming is a side gig for Bradley, whose full-time work is co-managing TimberHomes Vermont. He says growing trees "is my happy place," where he can be out with the trees, away from phone and e-mail. The business is strictly wholesale — no cut-your-own tree sales. The trees all go to retailers like Plainfield Co-op.

Bradley has been selling his trees at the Route 2 Plainfield Hardware location since the store was Legare's. He enjoyed working with Rick and Gaye Christiansen during their tenure and now finds it "an absolute pleasure" to work with Michael Hoffman and the Co-op staff.

In the week before Thanksgiving Hoffman will lead a crew from the store and a crew from Mike Brown trucking in East Montpelier to the tree plantations. There they will load the baled trees onto Brown's flatbed trucks and deliver them to the Plainfield Co-op greenhouse, which will be transformed into an aromatic seasonal treescape.

At Plainfield Co-op, Black Friday isn't a day for pushing and shoving crowds competing for sales. It's a day to breathe in the wonderful scent of the new-cut fir trees. It's a day to pick out your fresh, locally grown holiday tree. Tree sales will continue until Christmas or until all trees are sold.



Loading trees onto Mike Brown's truck



Trees arrive on a grey day, 2024

Photo Credits: Timo and Santa



Roux the Day



by Theis Bergstrom, Admin, Data and Personnel Manager

As the weather gets cold there's only one thing we could possibly be spending our time thinking about: food. Sometimes it's nice to regress our brains into the safety of what is, essentially, a dog's value system. It's not just a way of avoiding the horrors of the world, it's also a time-honored way of finding some safe, common ground with one's extended family and in-laws that doesn't involve any yelling or the use of language that's been socially unacceptable since before Reagan deregulated the banks. Family can be complicated.

Each of us celebrates the denuding of trees and the drop in temperature differently, but everyone can agree that cooking all day is much more comfortable when it's a little chilly out. The pull toward involved and elaborate cooking this time of year is, like any truly powerful force, a mix between benign and dangerous elements. Ambition must be mixed with humility lest you lose track of things for a moment too long and the beautiful roux you're toasting up gets too hot and burns. You had too many burners going at once didn't you? Now look what your hubris has wrought!



You burn the roux and it sets off an inevitable cascade of events: your Brussels begin to sprout, your beans turn green, your potatoes turn sweet, your berries... cran. Produce is in an uproar all around. At this point you must ask yourself, why were you making a roux instead of using cornstarch and broth to make the gravy; and furthermore, why can't you just use some good, packaged gravy? That's an excellent point, you tell yourself. This situation is completely salvageable though, all thanks to your comprehensive shopping trip to the Co-op.

The focused and curated selection of produce, groceries, bulk goods and more that you can find at the Co-op will help navigate any situation. Whether you need canned pumpkin, wild rice, nuts, oils, herbs, stuffing, broth, semi-soft cheese, or sparkling juice from Val de France, you'll find it at the Co-op.

I was making a little joke earlier about the produce, but the Co-op has Brussel sprouts without the word play, potatoes in both classic and intentionally sweet variety, beans that are meant to be green, cranberries, and more!

With a fully stocked pantry you'll be ready for whatever happens next, be it an invasion of in-laws or an excuse to stay off the internet for the day. Make some Chantilly potatoes. It's probably been a while; give them another try. Or duchess potatoes, those are nice. Or Alsatian Potato Pie; I've never tried it, why am I waiting? And now that I think about it, what really is the difference between scalloped potatoes and Pommies Anna? (I just asked my sister who says: "Pommies Anna are cooked in even layers in a circle. They don't have a cream base but are usually just potatoes, herbs, and butter with cheese sometimes.") Family isn't always complicated. Sometimes it's nice.



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[Why Buy Bulk Foods?](#)



Why Buy Bulk Foods?



2025, Recipes

by Glenda Bissex

There are many reasons, yet bulk purchases are languishing to the extent that we may lose this option. So please check out the bulk foods and let the staff know you value having them. Bags and a marker for writing PLU numbers are nearby or you can bring your own containers—just be sure to weigh them before filling.

Why buy bulk foods? Let me count the whys:

1. **Variety and choice.** If everything in the bulk bins were in packages, they would never fit on our shelves—not 12 kinds of flour, including gluten-free; nor 14 kinds of tea; nor 8 kinds of nuts; nor 5 kinds of granola. The list goes on and on. *Have you ever really looked at what's in the bulk food department?* I hadn't until making this list, which doesn't include the many, many herbs and spices. You can buy as large or small a quantity as you need—no waste. Which brings us to
2. **Saving money.** Pound for pound, you're paying less—sometimes a lot less—for bulk. It's hard to make direct comparisons with packaged foods since the Co-op generally doesn't carry a product in both forms. But with bulk, you're not paying for packaging, which brings us to
3. **Saving the earth.** Packaging materials, from production to disposal, consume resources and pollute ecosystems. Plastic is the worst, but paper packaging often leads to deforestation, and glass and metal need huge amounts of energy to produce and transport. Buying bulk foods, when you can, is one little way to spare the earth.



– Art Credit: Debra Stoleroff

Brazilian Black Bean Soup



2025, Recipes

From Moosewood Cookbook by Mollie Katzen, collected by Debra Stoleroff

I love the heartiness of black bean soup; it soothes the soul on cold winter days. The orange in this black bean soup sets it apart from other recipes.

NOTE: ingredients in bold can be found in the Co-op's bulk section. Most other ingredients are available in the Co-op's grocery section.

Ingredients

- **2 cups dried black beans**
- 3 1/2 cups water or stock
- **2 teaspoons salt**
- 2 cups onions, chopped
- 5 garlic cloves, crushed
- **1 1/2 tablespoons cumin**
- **1 teaspoon corriander**
- **2 tablespoons oil**
- 1 large carrot, diced
- 1 stalk chopped celery
- 1 cup bell pepper, diced (optional)
- 2 oranges; peeled, seeded and chopped
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1 tablespoon dry sherry
- **1/4 teaspoon black pepper**
- **1/4 teaspoon red pepper**
- 1/2 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- sour cream (optional)
- cilantro (optional)



- salsa (optional)

Preparation

1. NOTE: Begin soaking beans at least 4 hours ahead.
 - Rinse beans. Cover them with water and let them soak (4 hours).
 - Pour off excess water.
 - Place in a pot with 3 1/2 cups of water or stock and salt.
 - Bring to a boil, cover, simmer 1 1/2 hours over very low heat.
 2. Sauté onions and garlic in oil. Add carrot, celery, bell pepper, coriander and cumin.
 3. Add the sautéed mixture to the beans.
 4. Stir in oranges, orange juice, dry sherry, black pepper, cayenne and lemon juice.
 5. Simmer over very low heat 10-15 mins more.
 6. For a thicker soup, puree some of the soup in a blender and return to the pot.
 7. For a hotter soup add more red pepper.
 8. Serve topped with sour cream, cilantro and/or salsa.
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Tassajara Oatmeal Bread



2025, Recipes

From the Tassajara Bread Book by Edward Espe Brown, collected by Debra Stoleroff

I learned how to bake bread while in college. The Tassajara Bread book and family recipes from friends were always the go-to for recipes. Here is one of my favorites.

NOTE: ingredients in bold can be found in the Co-op's bulk section

Ingredients

Yield: 2 loaves

- **2 packages dry yeast** (= 4 1/2 teaspoons or 1/4 oz.)
- 3 cups lukewarm water (85 to 105 degrees)
- **1/4 cup honey or molasses**
- 1 cup dry milk
- **2 cups unbleached white flour**
- **2 cups whole-wheat flour**
- **4 teaspoons salt**
- **1/4 cup oil**
- **2-3 cups rolled oats**
- **2-3 cups whole wheat flour** for forming the dough and kneading



Preparation

1. In a large bowl, dissolve the yeast in water and stir in the honey and dry milk.
2. Stir in 4 cups of the flour to form a thick batter and beat 100 strokes with a spoon.
3. Let the dough rise for 45 minutes, then add the salt and oil and an additional 3 cups of the flour and knead until the dough comes away from the sides of the bowl.
4. Knead on a floured board, using about 1 cup more flour if needed to keep the dough

- from sticking, for about 10 minutes, until the dough is smooth.
5. Let it rise for 50 to 60 minutes, until it is doubled in size.
 6. Punch down and let it rise again for 40 to 50 minutes, until doubled in size.
 7. Shape into two round loaves and place them on a baking sheet.
 8. Let them rise for 20 to 25 minutes.
 9. Bake in a 350-degree oven for 1 hour or until golden brown.
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Maple Granola

Maple Granola



2025, Recipes

From King Arthur Flour Whole Grain Baking, adapted by Gail Falk

*I like to make this slow-baking granola on a chilly evening. It fills the house with a warm, comforting maple-y aroma. **The ingredients in bold are available at the Co-op in bulk.** The Co-op also sells coconut flakes, sliced almonds and vanilla, but not in bulk.*

Preparation & Ingredients

Preheat oven to 250 degrees.

In your largest bowl, mix together:

- 7 cups **rolled oats**
- 1 cup wheat germ (omit if you want it to be gluten free)
- 1 cup **sunflower seeds**
- 1 cup flaked coconut
- 1 cup sliced almonds
- 1 cup **walnuts** or pecans, broken up
- 1/2 tsp **salt**



Whisk together in a separate bowl or 2-cup measuring cup:

- 4/5 cup **canola or vegetable oil**
- 2/3 cup **maple syrup**
- 1 Tbs vanilla extract

Pour the syrup mixture slowly over the dry ingredients and mix until well combined.

Line 2 large, rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper; spread the granola over the baking sheets and bake.

After an hour stir the mixture and reverse the position of the baking sheets in the oven. Bake for another hour (a total of two hours of baking). Remove pans from oven and let the granola cool completely. If you like, add dried fruit.

Store in large jars or other airtight containers.

An advertisement for East Hill Tree Farm. The ad is enclosed in a black rectangular border. On the right side, there is a large, stylized black silhouette of a tree with a person standing at its base with arms raised. The text is arranged on the left side of the ad.

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3499 East Hill Rd Plainfield, VT

Bless up the Earth!

General Manager's Report, November 2025



2025, Reports and Updates



by Jeannine DeWald, General Manager

Autumn is upon us at the Plainfield Co-op, and with each change of the season come new milestones and challenges. With the arrival of cooler weather, our focus has changed from outdoor barbecues, gatherings, gardening and home improvement projects to selling thousands of pounds of pumpkins, hundreds of mums, and helping our shoppers prepare for the winter ahead.

On the Hardware-side, we're currently in the midst of the busy season for stovepipe sales; since September, sales of stovepipe and accessories have totaled \$39,330. The store is also well-stocked with wood-heating and weatherization supplies, and winter essentials like snow shovels and roof rakes, ice melt, and tube sand. And to keep your feet cozy and dry, we have replenished our large selection of locally made Darn Tough socks in all sizes, colors, and patterns. We are still planning to re-design our space with our hardware vendor, but as with all good things, careful planning and well-thought-out selection and design take time. We have a tentative date set in mid-March to complete the project, which will also include improved shelving and layout for the Grocery-side. Stay-tuned for updates!

On the Grocery-side, local produce is largely done for the season, but we still have some offerings from LePage Farm, Small Axe Farm, and Blackbird Organics, as well as Vermont-grown cranberries from Vermont Cranberry Company. Our shelves are also well stocked with seasonal items like stuffing, cranberry sauce, canned pumpkin, broths and gravies, all of which are **on sale** through December 31st. We also have a newly expanded Supplements section with local products

from Samhain Herbs, Grian Herbs, Maple Minerals, and Peaceful Harvest Mushrooms, as well as a selection of high-quality national brands like Gaia Herbs, Solaray, Source Naturals, Boiron, Hyland's, and more!

As of November 1st, the Deli has made a transition from made-to-order items to a grab-and-go model, with a rotating selection of hot and cold sandwiches, packaged salads, baked tofu, desserts, Rhapsody eggrolls, and calzones from La Strada Bakery. We also have a rotating selection of hot soups to warm your belly on the chilly days ahead. After much thought, we decided to remove the tables from the deli area.

While we loved being able to offer a place for folks to sit and eat, the space is quite small, and shoppers with carts or mobility devices were not able to make the tight turns to get from one grocery aisle to another. As we continue to work on a long-term vision for the store's layout, providing some form of seating will be an important consideration. Please be patient while we work toward solutions that best serve our entire community.

Looking to the Co-op's financials, sales for the third quarter (July through September) totaled \$703,261. While these numbers are impressive compared with the Co-op's financial condition in 2024, they are still below the current Q3 budget of \$781,732, and considerably lower than the project's original budget of \$869,894. There are many reasons for this. The late start and minimal planning of the move continue to affect our current bottom line. The projections assumed that if the Co-op combined its product line with the Hardware store's, that we would see an immediate 91% increase in Grocery sales, and a steady 3% increase in Hardware store sales year over year, which has not been the case. It's important to understand that the village store's inventory had been largely decimated by the time the move came in February of this year, and that immediately following the purchase, hardware sales dropped off due to a variety of factors, including delivery issues, customer loyalty, and the 2024 flooding which caused a Route 2 closure for a substantial number of weeks. We have steadily been rebuilding our product line and customer base, but it takes time to recover, and factors like the long, narrow shape of the Grocery-side, limited shelf-space, and product pricing have continued to be a challenge.



Photo Credit: Lisa Howard

While sales at \$829,570 and profit at \$72,230 in the second quarter were strong, since the Greenhouse season ended, revenues have not been adequate to generate a positive net income. Losses for the third quarter totaled \$14,593, much of which is represented by a large stovepipe pre-order, as well as other inventory on the shelf that is not turning as quickly as we would like. Having responded to the seasonal shift in revenues with adjustments to staffing and purchasing, we can see improvement when comparing September to August.

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We know that grocery pricing is also a significant factor here, as evidenced by our average basket size of about \$27. While we have greatly expanded what the Co-op offers, most customers still shop with us as a place to buy a few extras, rather than a store where they shop their full list. We are working to address this in multiple ways. Most importantly, we have applied for membership with INFRA, a cooperative of independent natural foods retailers that leverages their collective buying power to negotiate better pricing with national vendors. If approved, we will see a significant reduction in our wholesale costs. Much of that savings will be passed on to shoppers, with a specific focus on significantly lowering the prices of staple items like pasta, beans, tomato products, breakfast cereals,

nut butters, packaged meals, and more. The approval process takes several months; we expect to have an answer by late December. Assuming we are approved, some prices will come down significantly by mid-January, with more price reductions to follow as we head into spring. We are very excited by this prospect, and are feeling hopeful that our application will be approved, and that we will finally be able to meet the affordability goals laid out for this project. For now, we ask all members who can afford it, to please shop with us as much as possible while we weather these growing pains.

In the meantime, we have also begun using a web-based program called SPINS to identify the best-selling natural foods products in our region, and, where pricing and scale allow, have been upgrading our product selection to ensure we have the selection we need to have a successful store. This is a long and evolving process, but we have made significant improvements over the past few months, expanding our meatless offerings in the refrigerated section, growing our Supplements offerings, and replacing pantry items with the most popular brands with an eye toward affordability. Once we have access to better pricing, we plan to incorporate more of these best-selling items at prices much more affordable than what we are currently able to offer. Ultimately, we see the combination of an improved store layout, improved pricing through INFRA, and improved selection through SPINS to be the way forward in making this a successful co-op. With any luck, we hope to be launching a new model that incorporates all of these elements by early spring.

In other good news, we continue to see our membership numbers growing, with an additional 45 new members joining from July through September, and a total of \$4,150 dollars of new equity paid in over the period, all of which has been earmarked as funding for our long list of capital projects, including replacement of the Grocery-side roof, replacement of the loading dock, replacement of the walk-in cooler components, and financing the store reset. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but we know our community is with us, and look forward to working together to meet our goals. As always, we want to thank all of you for your continued support of your Co-op as this project evolves into a more sustainable and successful operation.

All of us at the Co-op are wishing you a warm and peaceful winter, and a joyous Holiday Season.

Staff List, November 2025



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- Jeannine – General Manager
- Lisa – Lead Buyer/Greenhouse/Produce
- Michael – Hardware and Operations Manager
- Theis – Admin, Data and Personnel Manager
- Beatrix – Deli Staff
- Dawn – Grocery Buyer
- Billy – Deli Lead
- Marlow – Admin and Data Assistant
- Hillary – Pet Department Buyer
- Deb – Staff
- Brooke – Staff
- Abigail – Staff

Dave Ertel Retires

General Manager Jeannine DeWald said of his retirement,

“David was a key member of the Co-op team and brought his many years of experience to the Plainfield Hardware. He was the buyer for the hardware department and the voice of our store each Monday morning on WDEV. He was known around the store for his warm smile and patient, thoughtful approach to customer service. We miss him already and hope he visits often!”



*Dave Ertel making coffee, as he did on his last morning at work.
Photo Credit: Lisa Howard*

The Building Committee has been Building!



2025, Reports and Updates

by Mike Brosky

It has been a very busy spring and summer for the Co-op Building Committee. The Committee had not met regularly for many months during the time before and after the acquisition of the Route 2 location, but began to meet again in February of this year. Shortly after restarting regular meetings, we were made aware of a fire marshall's inspection of the Rt. 2 location, which state law requires before the sale of any public building. This report served as a primary focus for the remainder of the year as we dug into the findings and quickly started to make plans to address them. Some of the findings included electrical violations, like an insufficient number of lighted exit signs and an inadequate number of outlets, leading to the over-use of extension cords. Other findings were more focused on safety, like lack of hand railings and safety gates.

The first order of business was to obtain quotes from electricians. The staff reached out to a few different contractors, and the Committee reviewed and provided input on which contractor to choose. While the electrical work was ongoing in the late spring and early summer, members of the Committee began tackling some of the other findings. One of the first was the missing safety gates and handrails. Barry Walz, who joined the Committee this year, quickly made in his woodshop a gate for the top of the stairs leading to the basement. Make sure to check out the gate next time you're in the store—it's very nicely done!

Barry also tackled other items cited in the inspection report, like adding a handrail to the stairs leading up to the office, and installing a fire-rated door on the basement furnace room. In fact, the furnace room was a major focus for the fire inspector: there were findings for insufficient layers of sheetrock (only 1 layer was installed at the time of the inspection) and the room was improperly vented. Joe John, a long-time Building Committee volunteer, led the effort to bring the furnace room into compliance. After

installing a second layer of sheetrock and painstakingly filling in gaps around various pipe penetrations, a vent to the exterior was added along with spackle for all the joints. This work plus the addition of the fire-rated door brought the furnace room into compliance.

The Co-op staff, led by David Ertel and Michael Hoffman, took care of many other items cited by the inspector, such as removing extension cords and adding bathroom signage. By doing many walk-throughs, they made sure the store was ready for re-inspection by the fire marshall in September.

Along with addressing the findings in the fire marshall's report, the Committee supported the Co-op in other ways. We advised on the HVAC installation this summer and assisted where we could with building platforms for the compressors and removing brush behind the store.



David Ertel, Jeremy Matt and Joe John working on the roof.

On the horizon is deciding how to deal with the roof over the grocery section. This past spring it was discovered that it has numerous leaks, made worse over time by ice dams. The Committee is working with Jeanine and the Board to determine whether a repair can be made in the short term in order to allow for a more permanent solution to happen in the spring. Stay tuned for an update in the next newsletter.

The members of the Building Committee are

- Mike Brosky
- Barry Walz
- Joe John
- David Ertel
- Kyle Cheney

President's Report, November 2025



2025, Reports and Updates



by John Cleary, Board President

At our well attended Annual Meeting in August, an enthusiastic new Board of Directors was elected (with one continuing member, myself). The outgoing Board deserves a standing ovation for the work they accomplished over the last three years to shepherd the business through the complicated process of planning, fundraising and relocation. Huge thanks to Rose Paul, Anne Van Couvering, Clare Dumas, Andy Robinson and Jan Waterman for all the hours of work on the expansion project. It was more work than a typical board would take on, but everyone rose to the challenge. The new Board will continue with the usual board duties of fiscal oversight and policy governance, but is also taking on the new challenge of envisioning the long-term future of this store now that the transition is completed.

During the October Board meeting, the new directors toured the building to get a better understanding of the physical infrastructure and operations. The main hardware side of the building is in good shape with minimal needs, but the older, single story section housing the grocery department needs a lot of work. Infrastructure like the walk-in cooler, loading dock and roof all need attention. The recent installation of efficient heat pumps will save the Co-op money through the winter, reduce our fossil fuel consumption and provide cooling in the summer as well. The Co-op Building Committee was a huge help on that project and many other smaller projects around the store.

Developing a comprehensive plan to address facility needs will be a top priority for the new Board. This process will take some time because infrastructure will need to be designed for the future of the business, not just meeting today's needs. For example, the roof, loading dock and back wall repair are interconnected projects. If there are going to be any changes to the building footprint (such as moving the walk-in cooler to an exterior

addition or changing the roof line) these decisions need to be made in a coordinated way. We will likely seek some outside assistance from an experienced contractor as this plan is developed.

Since most of the Board is new, we will be undergoing some training in Policy Governance so that we can function smoothly and provide the right type of assistance and support to the General Manager without being directly involved in daily operations. Policy Governance is a comprehensive model whereby governing boards establish their values and expectations in policy, delegate implementation to the General Manager, and monitor the outcome of operational activities against the stated policies. Policy Governance gives boards the capacity and role clarity to truly be trustees for the member-owners.

As we move into our 2nd year of operations at this location, we welcome your thoughts and ideas. I love shopping at this store and have heard that many of you feel the same way. We have a wonderful and hard-working staff. Let's let them know how much we appreciate them. See you around the store!

Board Members

- John Cleary, President
- Carla Siegle, Vice President
- Maureen Lynch, Secretary
- Jeremy Matt, Treasurer
- Allen Freund, Liaison to the Building committee
- Katherine Bizzoco

Contact: board@plainfieldcoop.com

The Co-op Board meets on the 3rd Tuesday of each month from 6 - 7:30 pm, in person at the Co-op.



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[Introducing the Plainfield Co-op Board of Directors](#)



Introducing the Plainfield Co-op Board of Directors



2025, Reports and Updates

Five new Board members were elected at the Co-op Annual Meeting in August. John Cleary, former Treasurer, continues on as President. Read their amazing brief biographies. In future newsletters we plan to publish more in-depth interviews.

John Cleary, President

I have lived on Gray Road in Plainfield for the last 18 years. Together with my wife Lauren and our kids, I have operated a small organic farm, selling beef, pork, eggs, and raising jersey heifers for a local dairy farmer.

In the past I have worked on various farms and directed the organic certification program for Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA-VT). I have worked for Organic Valley cooperative for the last 20 years, serving farmer-owners across the northeast. I currently serve on the board of Rural Vermont, and I have served on the boards of several other organizations.

I have been involved with local food co-ops for more than 25 years, and I'm a strong believer in their vital mission of bringing together communities in a way that focuses on values and healthy foods. I am willing to work on the difficult issues facing the Plainfield Co-op and am committed to an inclusive process that values member input.





Allen Freund, Liaison to the Building committee

After graduating from Queens College in 1967, I moved from NYC. Settling in Bethel, I taught 6th grade, enjoyed summers as dairy farm hand, and built my own log home from scratch. After getting a Masters in Educational Administration,

I was the principal at the Rumney School, Middlesex and then at the Charlotte Central School.

From 1984 through 2009, my wife Debbie and I owned and operated Squash Valley Produce in Waterbury Center. We distributed fresh produce and specialty foods throughout central Vermont, provided logistics for many local organic farmers and had a retail outlet on Route 100 in Waterbury Center. Since selling Squash Valley I've been working with NOFA-VT's Vermont Organic Farmers and the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers Association. My passion for local sustainable agricultural systems is second only to my love of family, including four grandchildren.

Maureen Lynch, Secretary

I have been a member of the Plainfield Co-op since moving to town in 2021, and I feel strongly about working and growing together in community and supporting local businesses. I am grateful to be able to volunteer my time to serve on the Conservation Commission and now the Co-op Board, and I am excited to support the work of the Co-op as it grows into its new home on Route 2.



In my professional life, I work in environmental sustainability in the tourism industry in Antarctica. My background is in marine and freshwater ecology and fisheries, and I have worked in ecosystems from the North Atlantic, to the Great Lakes, to Antarctica, to Vermont lakes and streams with Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department.



Jeremy Matt, Treasurer

I'm a lifelong Vermonter. I grew up in southern Vermont and moved to Plainfield in 2009 with my family. My kids all attended Twinfield starting in kindergarten and have all graduated or are currently seniors in high school. For fun, I enjoy mountain biking, hiking, and working with my hands; I'm competent at rough and finish carpentry and am a decent blacksmith.

Volunteering is also important to me. I've served on the board of CVFiber (now NEKCV) since 2018, trying to bring fiber internet to Plainfield. I'm excited to begin working to help the Co-op grow into the new Route 2 space.

My professional life has been varied. After attending UVM, I worked as an environmental engineer for a firm in Montpelier investigating and remediating hazardous waste sites. I mostly worked on smaller "brownfield" sites, but also provided environmental oversight on larger projects such as Burlington's Waterfront North redevelopment. In 2017 I switched career tracks and returned to UVM to study data science. I earned my PhD and currently work as a machine learning engineer for a company in Montpelier.

Carla Siegle, Vice President

I am a retired political economist who owns and operates a small sheep farm in Plainfield, Vermont. During my teaching career I taught economic theory, economic mathematics, international

trade, monetary policy and history of economic thought. Most of my life I have enjoyed a side hustle building low income housing such as tiny houses and am currently building a small cabin for a young family. I enjoy writing fiction, horseback riding, studying Hebrew, and playing various musical instruments. I am passionate about making healthy food available to everyone.



Note: **Katherine Bizzoco**, Board member, will be introduced in the next Newsletter.

Contact information for Board Members

- Katherine Bizzoco <kathy@greenfrogpublishing.com>
- Allen Freund <allenfreund123@gmail.com>
- Jeremy Matt <jeremy.matt@gmail.com>
- Maureen Lynch <maureen.mlynch@gmail.com>
- Carla Siegle <carla@littlebrookvermont.com>
- John Cleary <johnclearyvt@gmail.com>
- board@plainfieldcoop.com to contact them as a group



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Co-operative Principles



With our move to a new location and merger with the Plainfield Hardware, we are becoming a new kind of co-operative. This is a time to remind ourselves of the Co-operative principles and reflect on how we are now fulfilling them.

Co-operative Principles

Plainfield Co-op and most other Co-operatives around the world operate according to the same core principles and values, adopted by the International Co-operative Alliance in 1995. Co-operatives trace the roots of these principles to the first modern co-operative, founded in Rochdale, England in 1844.

1. **Voluntary and Open Membership**

Co-operatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

2. **Democratic Member Control**

Co-operatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions. Men and women serving as elected representatives are accountable to the membership. In primary co-operatives members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and co-operatives at other levels are also organized in a democratic manner.

3. **Member Economic Participation**

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. Members usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes: developing their co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible; benefiting members in

proportion to their transactions with the co-operative; and supporting other activities approved by the membership.

4. Autonomy and Independence

Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

5. Education, Training and Information

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public – particularly young people and opinion leaders – about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

6. Co-operation among Co-operatives

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

7. Concern for Community

Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.



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[Help Us Remember John Wires \(1922 -2013\)](#)

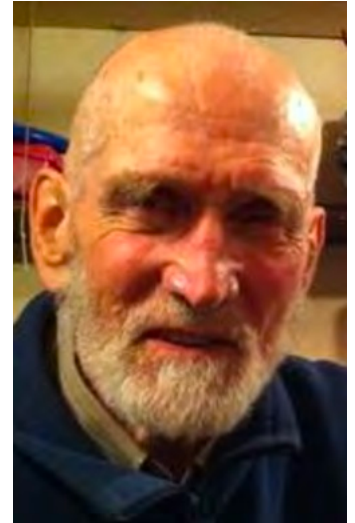


Help Us Remember John Wires (1922 -2013)



John was devoted to co-operative principles and to the Plainfield Co-op. He was famous for his nature walks. He lived in Plainfield for many years, and when his cabin on Spruce Mt. Rd. burned down in the late 1980's, he invited the community to gather with him in the Community Center to help him think about what to do next.

On his 70th birthday (March 3, 1992) the community honored him with a quilt with squares made by individual friends. For a time after his death in 2013 the quilt hung in the lobby of the Community Center. Since then, Jodi Vilardi has been its caretaker. Now that the Plainfield Granary has re-opened the Community Center, some of John's friends felt it would once again be a fitting place to hang the quilt and honor this legendary member of our community. Aedan and Chris agreed.



John Wires

Now Jodi is reaching out to gather memories of John to include with the quilt. If you contributed a square, if you knew John, if you have just heard about him, you're invited to send your thoughts and stories to Jodi <jbvilardi@gmail.com>. If you need inspiration, the quilt is now hanging in the new Community Center. Deadline for getting memories to Jodi is Dec. 15. Be sure to include your name.

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