

Winter 2026 Issue



2026, eNewsletters

The Plainfield Co-op Newsletter



Art by Mary Azarian

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About This Newsletter, Winter 2026



About This Newsletter, Winter 2026



by Glenda Bissex, Editor

Maybe even the skiers and snowshoe-ers, who are enjoying such great snow conditions this winter, yearn just a bit for the sight of something green and growing. The Plainfield Co-op can satisfy that yearning in several ways. Read on to learn about indoor growing kits, seeds, beautiful potted plants and already blooming flowers for the impatient, and a preview of the greenhouse.

As we look forward to spring, we also look back to our past, starting with Mary Azarian's 2021 Newsletter cover that seems to perfectly convey where we are as I write this: bundled up by the wood stove, reading seed catalogs. Recipes this issue include Randy's eternally scrumptious chocolate mousse. From an earlier era of protests (2011) Treasurer Les Snow reflects on the importance of cooperatives in creating a healthy society. And going back into ancient Co-op history, a letter to the Editor remembers Lyndol Hutchinson for his humanity, the man whose little vegetable stand on Route 2 eventually morphed into Plainfield Co-op and Hardware.

Reports on the present health of the Co-op from General Manager Jeannine DeWald and from Board President John Cleary are definitely encouraging and look ahead to more good news. It feels as though our Co-op winter is passing.

We welcome your letters, poems, photos, whatever. Submit to the Editor for our spring (May) issue.

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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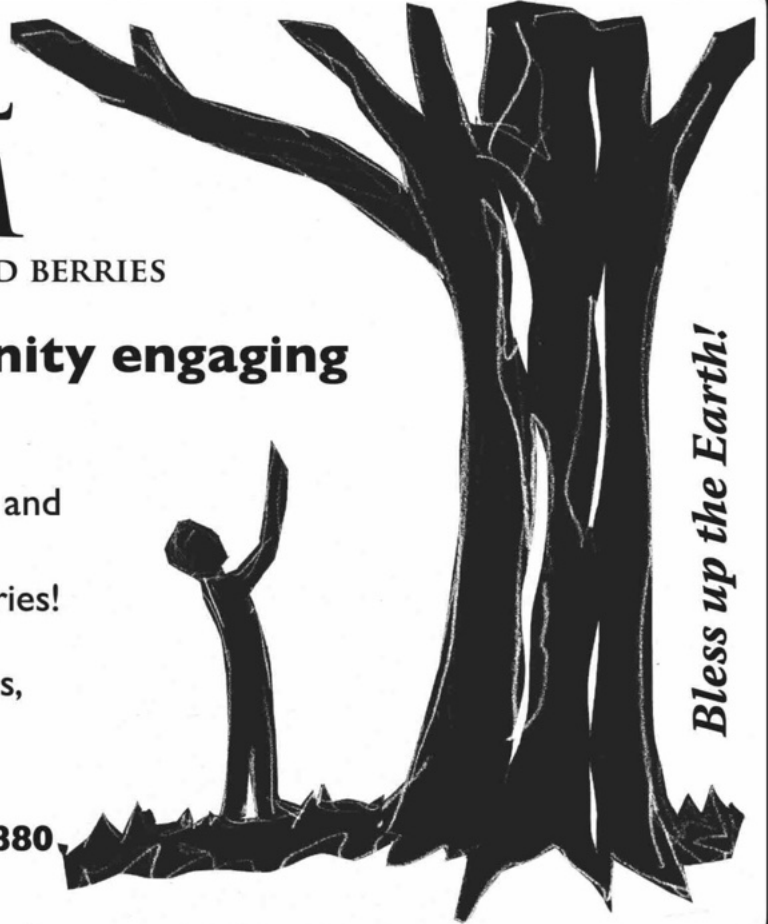
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Green Stuff



2026, from the Store

by Glenda Bissex

Plants for Sale

If you can't wait for the presence of green or blooming plants, look no farther than the Plainfield Co-op. Near the grocery-side checkout counter or opposite the Deli, you may find lush ferns, small daffodils in bloom, primroses in many colors and other joyous green things, as I did on a recent shopping trip.



Seed-Starting Supplies

If you're yearning to watch baby seedlings grow into adolescent or even adult plants, under your eyes, in the warmth of your house, many choices await you near the checkout counter on the hardware side of the store. There are kits with pre-planted seed trays and clear plastic domes—just add water. There are empty trays, waiting for you to put soil and seeds in the cells. And heat mats to speed up the sprouting. And growing lights to provide “sun” indoors. There is even a mini-greenhouse that will fit in a small space in your home. There are racks of seed packets, too., of course. So plant and imagine your best garden ever.



Greenhouse Preview

Although snow is still deep on the ground as I write this, I am wondering and Co-op customers are asking, “When will the greenhouse be open?” Never soon enough. It has always been the last week in April.

As before, the focus will be on getting plants from local growers. Claussen’s Greenhouse (Colchester) and Paquette Nursery (Williston) are the big suppliers. More local will be:



- Friends and Neighbors for organic veggie starts
- Blackbird Organics for flower and veggie starts
- Fairfax for perennials
- Great Brook Nursery (Ian and Roseanne)
- Oliver seed (local)
- Organic soil and fertilizer from Coast of Maine

Our gardening section in the store is being updated in April.

Photo Credits: Lisa Howard & Glenda Bissex



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Manager's Report, Winter 2026



2026, Reports and Updates



by Jeannine DeWald, General Manager

Greetings Plainfield Co-op Community! It's February in Vermont, and I think it's fair to say that the deep freeze we've been in since early January is starting to wear on many of us. But the days are slowly getting longer, the light is returning, and this seems like a good time to reflect on the days behind us and to take stock of how far we've come together.

This time last year, the Route 2 project was still in its infancy. We were closing the Village Store down, moving our inventory, building vendor relationships, onboarding a new staff, and facing numerous other challenges one after another, from POS system and accounting mergers that took months to resolve, to ongoing building improvements to transform the new space into something the Co-op could work with and make our own. There is still much to be done, but when I think back on where we were a year ago, and how impossible the project felt at times, it's truly amazing to find ourselves where we are now.

Financials

We're currently in the process of transitioning to a new bookkeeper, so we do not yet have completed 2025 financials, but we do know our total revenues for the year, and the growth over 2024 is something we should all be proud of. Revenues for 2024, which include the purchase of the Route 2 location in August, totaled \$1,228,000. Revenues for 2025, which include the move to Route 2 in February, totaled \$2,673,000. This is very significant growth for a business of our size, and we are still learning about the seasonal shifts and rhythms of the new location.

The budget process for 2026 was completed in mid-January, and while we do expect to see continued growth, my approach to the budgeting process leans on the conservative side. For me, it's always better to set realistic goals and celebrate larger wins when they happen. Total Revenues for 2026 are projected to be \$2,878,649, with net profit for the year projected at \$58,337. The table below provides summaries for each quarter and the year in total.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Income	534,929	908,874	720,026	714,820	2,878,649
Cost of Goods Sold	330,783	539,070	440,679	437,864	1,748,395
Expenses	231,192	320,496	215,674	273,431	1,071,917
Net Profit	-27,046	49,308	30,220	5,855	58,337

It is important to note that revenues at the Route 2 location are highly seasonal, and that the seasonal rhythms of the hardware store impact the grocery-side as well. While we are overall pleased with 2026 projections, the Co-op still finds itself in a position of financial losses for the first quarter, followed by much stronger second and third quarters, and finally a much leaner fourth quarter. In the early Spring of 2025, the Co-op addressed this issue with a loan we received from Vermont Community Foundation. This year, we will be able to ride out the slow season without any external borrowing, which is a major improvement over 2025 and a great relief to us all! 2026 will be our first full year in the Route 2 location, and some of the projected growth is attributed to that. We also have some exciting new developments and some big plans on the horizon that should bring us increased revenues in 2026!

Lower Food Prices

In December of this past year, Plainfield Co-op was approved for membership with INFRA (Independent Natural Foods Retailers Association), a cooperative of natural foods stores that leverages their collective buying power to negotiate wholesale pricing on organic and natural foods, supplements, and more! Since our approval, we have seen a significant decrease in our wholesale pricing through our primary supplier, KeHe distributors. Prices

on many items throughout the store have been coming down steadily since January, and we are now able to offer significantly lower prices on over 100 Cadia brand organic and natural pantry items – everything from peanut butter to canned beans, broths, pastas, tomato products, and cleaning essentials! [Cadia price list here](#).

In addition to our new everyday low prices on the Cadia line, beginning February 11th we will be offering bi-weekly sale pricing on dozens of additional grocery-side items. This is a major win for the Co-op and our shoppers. As a small store with limited buying power, we have always struggled with affordability, and despite years of valiant efforts at the Village Store location to keep prices down, our precarious financial position precluded us from joining larger cooperatives like INFRA or National Cooperative Grocers. Now, because of our growth at the new location, we have finally been able to make this leap, and it feels amazing. We are so grateful to our customers for helping us get here, and we are so excited to provide our expanded offerings at new, lower prices!

Your Support Matters

I'll leave you all with my deep gratitude for your support and continued patronage. We love seeing all of you in the store, and hope that our efforts toward a more affordable shopping experience will help all of you to keep that support going long into the future. We encourage you to share our exciting new developments with your friends and neighbors so that we may continue to expand our community and make access to healthy, affordable food available to all!



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[Staff List, Winter 2026](#)



Staff List, Winter 2026



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

Seeking Ad Coordinator

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President's Report, Winter 2026



2026, Reports and Updates



by John Cleary, Board President

At the January meeting, the Co-op's board reviewed and approved the 2026 Budget, providing an annual operating plan for the business. With only one year of operations at this location, there are still significant unknowns about how fast the business will continue to grow. The budget used conservative estimates and there is a good chance that we will perform better than budgeted.

This is a welcome change from many years at the old village

location where the sales were decreasing and we rarely hit our targeted budget numbers. The 2026 budget shows annual sales of approximately \$2.9 million, compared to the last few years in the village location where sales hovered around \$1 million.

Sales of certain categories such as Beer/wine and Bakery have doubled compared to the village location. While the produce department hasn't reached its potential yet, sales will be about \$50,000 higher than they were in the village. Core hardware sales should benefit from a full store refresh that will be happening over the next few months. In exchange for signing a new 7 year contract with our current hardware supplier, they have committed significant resources to redesigning the hardware layout and product selection as well as providing new shelving and physically helping to implement the new layout. Very exciting!

Our cash position is also significantly improved. Last year we had to take out a short term loan to finance the purchase of the greenhouse inventory because we were short on cash. We paid that back almost immediately and now have sufficient cash on hand to handle stocking the greenhouse as well as getting through the slow winter season. The primary financial challenge facing the Co-op has to do with budgeting and planning for significant

repairs to the building and infrastructure. As we get further into this year and see how well the business performs, we will feel more confident in spending money from our capital reserve account on these long term improvements.

Personally, it feels great to have this level of optimism about the future of the Co-op. The last few years in the village were incredibly stressful and uncertain. Even as the plan for the new store developed, it was still uncertain if it would work out in the way we envisioned. The success we are seeing today is due to the strong support of the Co-op community. Thank you all!

Board Members

- John Cleary, President <johnclearyvt@gmail.com>
- Carla Siegle, Vice President <carla@littlebrookvermont.com>
- Maureen Lynch, Secretary <maureen.mlynch@gmail.com>
- Jeremy Matt, Treasurer <jeremy.matt@gmail.com>
- Allen Freund, Liaison to the Building committee <allenfreund123@gmail.com>

To contact as a group: board@plainfieldcoop.com

The Co-op Board meets on the 3rd Tuesday of each month from 6-8 p.m., in person at the Co-op. [Board Meeting Minutes can be found here](#)

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Article amended on 2/20/2026



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[Winter Squash, Kale and White Bean Soup](#)



Winter Squash, Kale and White Bean Soup



2026, Recipes

Collected by Debra Stoleroff

I've eaten beans forever – red, kidney and black beans but not until this year have I cooked with white beans. Now I can't get enough of them. Canelli and Great Northern are my go-to white beans.

I first tasted a more delicious version of this soup at a potluck. It was so good, I had to try to recreate it. I've mused a few recipes to try to replicate the potluck dish. This, too, is delicious, but I have to say, not as delicious as the version I tasted at the potluck. BUT, it is now one of my go-to winter soups.

Ingredients

- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
- 2 – 4 celery ribs, finely chopped
- 5 medium – large garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 tsp. chili flakes
- 1 lb. peeled and cubed delicata or butternut squash
- 8 thyme sprigs or 2 teaspoons of thyme
- 1 (15 oz.) can Great Northern Beans (or Canelli beans), rinsed and drained (or chickpeas)
- 4 cups stemmed and roughly chopped lacinato kale
- 4 cups lower-sodium vegetable or chicken broth
- 2 1/2 cups water
- 3/4 tsp. smoked paprika
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese, plus more for garnish

- 1 to 2 Tbsp. finely chopped fresh parsley
- Toasted pumpkin seeds for garnish (optional)

Preparation

1. Heat oil in a large soup pot or Dutch oven over medium heat. Once hot, add onions, garlic and celery; cook 8 minutes, until soft.
2. Stir in chili flakes, squash, and thyme sprigs; cook 4 to 5 minutes, until aromatic.
3. Add white beans, kale, broth, water, smoked paprika, salt, and pepper; increase heat to bring soup to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, uncovered, for 25 minutes, or until squash is tender.
4. Remove thyme sprigs, and stir in parsley and Parmesan. Taste and adjust seasonings as needed.
5. Ladle soup into bowls and garnish with toasted pumpkin seeds and additional Parmesan cheese, if desired.



Mushroom, Red Pepper, Harissa & Goat Cheese Frittata



2026, Recipes

Collected by Debra Stoleroff

This delicious frittata is easy to make. It is supposed to be baked in a 10-inch cast iron pan but it can also be baked in a casserole dish as well.

Ingredients

- 8 eggs
- 2 Tbsp milk
- Salt and pepper
- 1-2 Tbsp harissa (more or less to taste, or substitute sambal oelek)
 - NOTE: Harissas vary in thickness/pastiness. If your harissa is a thicker, drier paste, stir in a little olive oil till it becomes more liquid and easier to spread.
- 1 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 small – medium onion
- 2 cups of fresh sliced crimini mushrooms (but you can use your favorite kind)
- 1 – 1 1/2 cup red pepper (diced – 1” pieces)
- 2 medium – large cloves garlic (minced)
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 1/4 cup crumbled goat cheese
- 1/2 tsp paprika



Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F
2. In a mixing bowl, beat the eggs with milk, salt and pepper until fluffy. Set aside

3. In a cast iron pan, sauté onions and garlic.
4. Add the sliced mushrooms and the diced red pepper to the onions and garlic. Sauté for 3-4 min.
5. Stir in 1-2 Tbsp of harissa to taste.
6. Stir in chopped parsley. Sauté for 1-2 minutes.
7. Spread the sautéed vegetables out into an even layer.
8. Sprinkle the goat cheese evenly across the top of the vegetables.
9. Re-whisk the eggs until fluffy, then pour eggs evenly over the top of the other ingredients, tilting the pan in each direction to make sure all ingredients are evenly covered with egg.
10. Cook for 2 minutes until the edges begin to solidify and brown a bit.
11. Sprinkle the paprika lightly across the top of the eggs.
12. Place the frittata carefully in the oven. Bake for about 10 minutes, until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean.
13. Remove from the oven and allow the frittata to cool for a few minutes.

NOTE: if baking in a casserole dish:

7. Oil the bottom of a casserole dish.
8. Spread the vegetables evenly across the bottom of the casserole dish.
9. And follow the rest of the directions, only in the casserole dish.



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[Randy Keeney's Chocolate Mousse](#)



Randy Keeney's Chocolate Mousse



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Collected by Debra Stoleroff

There are community members who, in the not distant past, didn't need to have their surnames added. This recipe would have been titled Randy's Chocolate Mousse. But time marches on, our dear community members grow elderly or pass on. Their names are substituted with current awesome people but those who dwelled here are not forgotten. Their memories and recipes continue to fill our bellies.

Randy Keeney was an active Co-op member. She was an artist, a poet, a horsewoman and an absolutely fantastic cook! She lived on Maple Hill. Her home is now that of Kagen Dewey and Elise Magnant of [Blackbird Organics](#).

Ingredients

- 7 oz. dark chocolate
- 1/4 cup black coffee
- 5 eggs separated
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 2 Tbsp sugar with 1 tsp vanilla and 2 Tbsp brandy in it

Preparation

1. Melt chocolate in double boiler
2. Add coffee
3. Beat egg yolks with sugar
4. Stir in warm chocolate
5. Stir in cream
6. Beat egg whites stiff and fold into the mixture



SOOOOO good. If there's any left, refrigerate it, covered. The mousse is also delicious frozen!



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The Ingenious Encasement



by Theis Bergstrom, Admin., Data, and Personnel Manager

Encased meats probably represent the pinnacle of human achievement. Since before we began measuring time, before we looked at the stars and pondered the meaning of existence, before we uttered a second grunt and began down the path towards language and music; before all that, we pondered the exquisite joy of grinding food up and stuffing it into a clear casing. This fact is incontrovertible

and I refuse to hear otherwise.

In fact it's easily argued that the entire history of humanity has been described as one continuous sausage rope, each link of which represents a distinct era, culture, or landmark. Some of these links are Italian, some are Rosemary & Red Wine, or Chorizo, Kielbasa, Irish Bangers, Chicken & Apple, and even the humble Hot Dog. And because for



the past fifteen years or so humankind has been completely united with the singular focus of expanding and refining this most exquisite of food formats, we're now at a place where there are numerous quality sausages that are plant based. What a world!

Maybe take a moment from your winter doldrums to fire up a grill or a pan and remember the importance of our shared cultural dream of encasing protein as a vague cylinder and throw a sausage on for the old gods.

Occupy a Health-Generating Economy



2026, History

Excerpt reprinted from Plainfield Co-op Newsletter, Winter 2011

Les Snow was the Co-op's treasurer fifteen years ago, in an earlier time of protests. Then it was "Occupy Wall Street" instead of "No Kings." Here are some of his thoughts accompanying his financial report in the Winter 2011 Newsletter:

"Worldwide, 2011 has been a year people have taken to the streets to demand the end of oppression, be it economic, political, religious or otherwise. As a treasurer of a food co-operative, I have found some related big questions between the lines of our financial reports. Two being, 'What part has the dominant economic system played in that oppression?' and 'What part does an economy based on cooperative principles play in creating healthy and happy lives for all?'

"I've found some answers to those questions in a 2010 book by John Restakis titled *Humanizing the Economy: Cooperatives in the Age of Capital.*" Les quotes from the summary on the back cover: "'Corporate capitalism is failing to meet even the most basic needs of billions of people around the world, undermining the foundation of healthy societies, caring communities, and personal well-being. With over 800 members in 85 countries, the co-operative movement is positioned to help create a more equitable, just, and humane future.'

"In *Humanizing the Economy*, the author details the co-operative movement's place in economic history and provides examples of local and regional economies around the world where co-operatives are prominent in the lives of most residents. Restakis also takes on the myth promoted by many politicians that free market capitalism is a foundation of democracy, and shows how a co-operative based market economy promotes democracy and is responsive to the needs of all."

Editor's note: *Humanizing the Economy* is still in print.

We welcome your suggestions for readings or brief reviews to be published in future Newsletters. Send to Glenda Bissex at songboat@vtlink.net.



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Memories of Lyndol Hutchinson



2026, History

Editor's note: In the summer 2024 Newsletter, Gail Falk traced the history of the Plainfield Co-op and Hardware back to its beginning in the little farm stand by Route 2 run by Lyndol Hutchinson and his family, which expanded into Hutchinson Gardens. A reader who worked for them then sent Gail this remembrance.

Letter to the Editor

I am so grateful for your reporting about Hutchinson Gardens! I was happy that, on a whim, looking up Hutchinson Gardens, I found some history.

The photo of Lyndol with the pumpkins was total joy because I worked for him and was in the truck when he handed me pumpkins. I unloaded them into greenhouses and reveled in the variety of shapes and sizes (like us); when customers came, I'd escort them into the greenhouses, and I was fascinated seeing who was drawn to what shapes. I loved Lyndol and his wife Edna, although I knew Edna less well.



I worked 3 hours a day in the summer of 1971 (and 1972?) and would report in to Lyndol about his plans for me that day (always different). He favored me a bit after I planted the straightest rows of lettuce he'd ever had.

I could go on about the vivid details I saw as he'd check in with the weather — eyebrows twitched, nostrils became so astute, as he'd calculate. During corn season, sometimes he'd sit in the field with a shotgun to protect the corn from raccoons. And tired as he was, he'd sort the corn into bins of 1s, 2s, and 3s for kernel size to please his customers.

I learned so much about hard work, and from the sidelines, appreciated how much risk went into farming. It's all that risk that made Lyndol so alive.

He had oil furnaces (I think) heating the greenhouses to grow the plant starts that locals bought. Timing was everything, especially the first ripe tomatoes! And he brought in some Northern Spy apples and showed me the thumb-fit test to identify them — he prized them as a late apple, and they were the best apples I ever ate.

He was an example of what it means to be human that humans today rarely get to see or interact with.

Joan Lederman

Woods Hole MA 02543

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