

Board Candidates 11/2022

Richard Barton

Describe your involvement with the Co-op:

I joined the Co-op Board about five years ago. In collaboration with other board members, our general manager, and consultants, I have worked to evaluate and execute on our expansion to the new downtown location in Salt City Market.

Before joining the Syracuse Cooperation Market, I was a member of the GreenStar Co-op in Ithaca for several years, and the Park Slope Food Coop in Brooklyn for several years before that.

Describe your relevant paid or volunteer experience:

As a professor of policy studies and public administration at the Maxwell School, I have experience in leadership and data analysis.

Also, as a member of the Park Slope Food Coop, I served as a squad leader in charge of stocking shelves.

What do you see as our Co-op's role in the broader community?

As I see it, the Syracuse Cooperative Market is part of a movement fighting for sustainable agriculture, healthy living, and economic equality. The Co-op advances these goals by selling whole foods from local farmers, and national goods that are organic and fair trade. This movement stands in stark contrast with mainstream grocery stores that predominantly sell highly processed foods that are grown in large-scale factory farms and produced by large corporations that are detached from local communities, unconcerned about their environmental impact, and contribute to wealth inequality by lining the pockets of CEOs and shareholders.

Our Co-op plays an important role in this movement. Here in Central New York, with a local economy that has long been dependent on agriculture, the Syracuse Cooperative Market connects local farmers to the growing network of consumers.

Please provide a personal statement, including anything you feel is relevant to your Candidacy:

I believe that Co-op can grow even stronger and more impactful by continuing efforts to increase diversity among member-owners. We live in a city with extremely high levels of intergenerational poverty and racial segregation. The Co-op has made efforts to attract low-income members (i.e. by accepting SNAP benefits). I think the Co-op can do more to recruit, and improve accessibility and lower costs for city residents that are low income and people of color. And, most importantly, as a board member, I am firmly committed to my fiduciary duty to the existing member-owners of SCM. To me, this means that the goals of expansion/relocation and greater inclusivity are, while important, subservient to preserving the SCM as an institution, and protecting the interests and investments of current owners.

Tracy Hogarth

Describe your involvement with the Co-op:

I have been a member of the coop for about 7 years and have attended membership meetings.

Describe your relevant paid or volunteer experience:

I am an entrepreneur and have run my own business. Additionally, I have served on other community focused board. I have been head of committees for the Board I have been a member and have also served as President of two boards. I understand the commitment of being a Board.

I have an BS in Environmental Science and Forestry from SUNY ESF and believe in living a sustainable life style. Supporting food co-ops has been an ethics if my life.

What do you see as our Co-op's role in the broader community?

I see the role of the co-op as helping our community to eat healthier by offering high-quality foods at fair prices. Additionally, I hope that the co-op helps to build community and is a proponent of living sustainably.

Please provide a personal statement, including anything you feel is relevant to your Candidacy:

No response

Denee Page

Describe your involvement with the Co-op:

Over 1 year and attended the membership meeting last fall.

Describe your relevant paid or volunteer experience:

I spent my early life growing up on a small family farm with the majority of my family being in agricultural. Having locally sourced food was not just a privilege but an expected and fiscally responsible way of life. After leaving my hometown, I went to college and law school and found myself drifting further away from small sourced food as I moved to more populated areas in the Northeast and Southeast United States. I entered higher education shortly after finishing law school and I have spent the last 10 plus years devoted to enrollment, financial literacy, and strategic planning. In the communities I've lived in I've volunteered with work placement and food bank organizations.

What do you see as our Co-op's role in the broader community?

I feel providing safe, healthy, and accessible food options to the entire community is the most important way the Co-op can contribute to the Syracuse community. The double dollars program and opening the location in downtown Syracuse expands the accessibility of the Co-op to members of the community who may have felt fiscally or geographically isolated before.

Please provide a personal statement, including anything you feel is relevant to your Candidacy:

I think one of the most important unsung efforts of the Co-op is the environmental impact. Having access to bulk foods and locally sourced produce, meats, and cheese is rare in Syracuse. One of my passions is environmental stability and it is something I would like to continue to foster along side the Co-op's current efforts.

Ryan Suser

Describe your involvement with the Co-op:

I have not yet enrolled as a member. I visited the Westcott location a lot while I had an apartment on Maryland Ave. (about 7 years ago). I since moved and did not use the Co-op much until Salt City opened. I once again go rather frequently. Frequently enough that I'm embarrassed not to be a member. I promise I will fix that. I have also worked on a legal matter for the Co-op.

[Nominations Note: All board members must be members of the Cooperative. Membership status is verified before terms begin.]

Describe your relevant paid or volunteer experience:

I am a lawyer and am always happy to offer my opinion on matters where that expertise may be helpful. I have also served on the McMahon Ryan board over the past six years, and have learned a lot about board functions from that experience. I am generally familiar with boards from my legal experience as well, in terms of corporate governance etc.

My community involvement, recently, has mostly been through my work in politics. I ran to represent the 11th District (mostly Onondaga Hill) in the County Legislature, last year, and lost to my Republican opponent. I am running to represent the Town of Onondaga Board this year. I have worked on and around political campaigns (including representing Democrats in Court) for the past several years now, including before I started running myself.

What do you see as our Co-op's role in the broader community?

I interact with the Co-op as one of many people going from downtown to the Southern / Western suburbs. The Co-op plays an important role in providing us with quality products at affordable prices. But I also believe the Co-op plays an important role in providing those same things to people who are not driving through but in fact live right there where the Co-op is located.

Please provide a personal statement, including anything you feel is relevant to your Candidacy:

Before law, my background was in our family owned catering / restaurant business in downtown Baltimore. I have always and will always devote whatever energy I can to making sure that local businesses prevail over big ones. The Co-op is one of many wonderful examples of strong local businesses who need our support or else everything will become a mega-company. I am excited to be considered for this opportunity.

Leah Witmer (appointee application - submitted June 2022)

Describe your involvement with the Co-op:

I am excited about my recent Co-op membership (as of 3/2022). I have not yet been afforded the opportunity to attend Co-op events, but look forward to doing so in the near future.

[Nominations Note: Leah was appointed to an interim term in June 2022, which commenced in August 2022.]

Describe your relevant paid or volunteer experience:

I work for the City of Syracuse as the Director of the Bureau of Administrative Adjudication and the Parking Violations Bureau and also serve in the capacity as Administrative Law

Judge and Supervising Hearing Examiner for those Bureaus. In these roles, as well as, throughout my legal career I have focused on public service within our local community. I began as a law student at Syracuse University College of Law where I volunteered and taught in local elementary and high schools. I continued my public service through my early legal career at Hiscock Legal Aid Society. During this time, I have also prioritized service on local boards (I currently sit on the Central New York Women's Bar Association), local volunteering (I volunteer with the Volunteer Lawyer Project legal clinics) and community involvement (I am on the PTO's for my children's schools).

What do you see as our Co-op's role in the broader community?

The pillars outlined on your website's homepage perfectly encompass what I see as the Co-op's role in the broader community: great food, strong community and local economy. Access to affordable and healthy food sourced through local vendors is imperative to our community's growth and stability.

Please provide a personal statement, including anything you feel is relevant to your Candidacy:

My community involvement has been primarily been connected to my legal career in recent years in large part due to maximizing my time and effort in the face of Covid, raising young children and advancing my legal career. I have previously served on non-legal community boards, such as ACR Health, and am looking for similar opportunities to connect and foster growth in my community. As my children have started approaching school age and entering the SCSD I have become more involved through their PTO's and extracurricular activities and look forward to being considered for the Co-op Board to continue to extend my community involvement.

Meagan Weatherby

Describe your involvement with the Co-op:

I joined the Co-op's Board of Directors in January 2014. During my three terms I have served as Co-President (2015), Vice President (2017), and President (2016, 2018, 2019-2022). I have participated in the Board Perpetuation Committee each year, including chairing that committee in 2014-2015 and 2017-2018; joined the Bylaws Committee in 2019; and previously volunteered on the ad hoc committee for the Co-op's Backyard Permaculture Garden.

Describe your relevant paid or volunteer experience:

I work as the Development & Communications Manager at Cooperative Federal, a non-profit, mission-driven credit union that was "born" inside the Syracuse Cooperative Market back in 1982. My responsibilities include program management, grant writing and reporting, engaging with community partners, overseeing outreach and communications, and collaborating on business and strategic planning. I began my tenure at Coop Fed in 2005, originally serving as an AmeriCorps*VISTA (2005-2007) before joining the staff and eventually the management team. With a role focused on community development, I work to strike a balance between strategic goals, the collective needs of our membership, and our core mission: fostering social and economic justice in Syracuse. Many of the skills I have learned in my career – from interpreting financial statements, to preparing Annual Reports, to business planning – aid my service on the Syracuse Cooperative Market's board.

What do you see as our Co-op's role in the broader community?

Our Co-op has been a cornerstone of CNY's cooperative economy for 50 years. As a conduit between Syracuse households and sustainably produced food, SCM has been a pioneer in the natural foods movement and a friend to local farmers. SCM is a defining characteristic of the Westcott neighborhood, part of our beloved walkable (and bike-able) community. It's a locus of energy where you can't help but run into your friends and neighbors; where you can really believe that the purchases you make support conscious businesses, local jobs, and the creation of a stronger, fairer economy. Finally, it's an embodiment of the next challenge for the cooperative movement: as the economic and food-system landscape evolves, how do we stay competitive, relevant, and responsive to our members and the community at large? Those are the questions our board and leadership team must grapple with today.

Please provide a personal statement, including anything you feel is relevant to your Candidacy:

Our world needs an interconnected set of solutions in order to overcome a tangle of problems. People and the planet are starving for real nourishment, for thoughtful policies that see beyond short-term profit. We're starving for a different way to interact with each other and the institutions around us; for meaningful, safe, and fair jobs. Sometimes, we're just straight-out starving. To me, our best hope for finding those solutions is creating a solidarity economy. Starting right here, where we live and work, we can make choices that gradually transform ourselves and our communities. We can use our successes and our failures to enrich kindred work in other communities; to build bridges between those communities until the solidarity economy is everywhere.

SCM is part of the solution in Syracuse. As a member of the board, I will work to keep SCM strong, sustainable, and engaged with this vision.