



Grow the Co-op

2026
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Candidate Information



**ASHLAND
FOOD CO+OP**
EST. 1972

A LETTER FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MARCH 2026

Dear Co-op Owner,

Thank you for your interest in deepening your connection with our Co-op by being a prospective candidate for Board of Directors. The experience of serving on the Ashland Food Co-op Board is rewarding and engaging. We invite you to join us on this governance level. The Ashland Food Co-op (AFC) has a diverse ownership, and we encourage owners from a variety of backgrounds and experiences to apply.

Our store is a consumer-owned for profit cooperative that is governed by a board of directors democratically elected to oversee the cooperative. Our owners will be voting in June to fill the open positions.

Our Board Candidate packet contains specifics about being a Board Director, details of the election process and an application. To apply, you must be an AFC owner. Please contact our Board Administrator (boardofdirectors@ashlandfood.coop) with any questions. Our Board meeting minutes and meeting announcements are posted on a bulletin board as you enter the store. You can also find archives of Board meeting minutes on the Co-op website.

You are invited and encouraged to attend an information meeting for all interested Board Candidates on Wednesday, March 11 from 5:00PM-6:00PM in the Community Classroom, 300 Pioneer Street and attend the Board of Directors meeting at 6PM to see our Board in action. To receive meeting details, please RSVP by email to boardofdirectors@ashlandfood.coop.

We hope to meet or hear from you soon. Thank you and best of luck in your candidacy for the Ashland Food Co-op Board of Directors.

Sincerely,
Board Development Committee

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ON THE AFC BOARD?

Being a Board Director means you will have the opportunity to actively collaborate with talented and passionate individuals on a variety of projects on behalf of AFC, including philanthropy, finance, business, governance and more.

The primary duties of AFC Board Directors are:

- Setting long-range strategic goals and plans for the future
- Acting as trustees on behalf of the ownership
- Conducting financial oversight
- Hiring and supervising the General Manager

DESIRABLE CANDIDATE QUALITIES

The Board of Directors needs people with commitment to the entire AFC ownership and who possess a range of professional skill sets. To qualify as a Board candidate, you must be an AFC owner in good standing and participate in an interview with the Board Nominating Committee to check for qualifications and potential conflicts of interest. The Ashland Food Co-op has a diverse ownership.

- Prior service on a nonprofit, cooperative, or advisory board
- Experience with community outreach and engagement
- Experience with financial oversight, business operations, legal, or organizational leadership
- Demonstrated ability to think strategically and engage in long-range planning
- Experience working collaboratively within a group decision-making body
- Skills in negotiation, facilitation, and conflict resolution
- Strong written and verbal communication skills
- Experience with cooperative or collective governance models, community-based organizations, or values-driven enterprises is beneficial
- Knowledge of consensus-based decision making
- Understanding of the 8 Cooperative Principles
- Familiarity with natural and organic foods is a plus
- Ability to use email, shared documents, and basic digital tools *

COMMITMENT & RESPONSIBILITIES

- Volunteer approximately 10-20 hours per month. (This may fluctuate over the course of the year.)
- Attend monthly Board meetings
- Service on one or more Board committees and attend all committee meetings
- Plan and attend the AFC annual meeting
- Participate in Board/Owner events
- Attend trainings and retreats
- Attend other Board and AFC special events

COMPENSATION, TRAINING AND OTHER BENEFITS

- Monthly stipend
- A Board Discount on products purchased at AFC
- Meals before Board & committee meetings when meeting in person
- Professional training

* Some of the work of the Board is conducted virtually, by email and with the sharing of documents using Google Workspace tools.

2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATE APPLICATION

Closing Date for Applications is Thursday, March 26, 2026 at 9PM

There are up to three seats, each serving a three-year term

Board meetings are held on the second Wednesday evening of each month and last approximately 3-4 hours. Prep time for Board meetings generally requires several hours of reading. There are other Board responsibilities, listed on pages 6-7 of this document, which include Board committee meetings and other activities with AFC that will involve an additional 6-10 hours per month. Some meetings are in person and some are online. Board Directors will serve as a Board officer at some time during their term. Board officers will spend approximately 120 additional hours per year serving the Co-op.

To qualify as a candidate for the Board Director positions, you must be a Co-op owner and participate in a screening interview with the Board Nominating Committee to check for basic qualifications and potential conflicts of interest. The Board Nominating Committee will read all applications and then schedule interviews with candidates between April 1 and April 3, 2026. All candidates who are forwarded by the committee will be notified and officially entered into the election process. Forwarded candidates will be asked to submit a 150-word campaign statement and to provide a high resolution photo, which will be published in election materials.

Prospective candidates are invited to attend an information meeting on Wednesday, March 11 at 5PM in the Community Classroom, 300 Pioneer Street. This is an opportunity for all prospective candidates to learn more about the role of a Board Director and to have any questions answered. Prospective candidates should also attend the March Board of Directors meeting, immediately following the information meeting. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to receive meeting details by contacting the Board Administrator by email at boardofdirectors@ashlandfood.coop.

For additional information or questions regarding candidacy, please contact the Board Development Committee, at boardofdirectors@ashlandfood.coop.

2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

Please provide written responses to the following questions on the online application, along with your name, owner number, resume, references, and e-signature. The Board Nominating Committee will review your answers and use them to determine your eligibility for candidacy. Your answers will also be posted online to inform voters.

- 1** Why do you want to serve as an AFC Board Director?
- 2** All the decisions made by the Board are done through consensus decision-making.
 - A. What experience do you have with consensus decision-making?
 - B. Tell us how you have dealt with a situation where there was group disagreement, but you were able to help craft a resolution to the problem.
- 3** What experience, education, training and/or skills make you particularly qualified to serve as a member of the AFC Board of Directors?
- 4** What key opportunities do you think AFC faces?
- 5** What is your experience/history with natural and organic foods?
- 6** The Bylaws of the Ashland Food Cooperative (Section 4.6) provide that any person with an overriding conflict of interest may not serve on its Board of Directors (please see: <http://www.ashlandfood.coop/ownership/bylaws>). An overriding conflict of interest is one that is ongoing and is in conflict with the business of the Co-op or its mission and principles. Based on your reading of the Ashland Food Co-op Bylaws, do you have any interests that you think may potentially create a conflict of interest with the Ashland Food Cooperative?

Feel free to reach out to the Board Administrator if you have any questions, boardadministrator@ashlandfood.coop.

2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION PROCESS CALENDAR

MARCH 11 • CANDIDATE INFORMATION MEETING, 5PM

Attend the information meeting for potential candidates on Wednesday, March 11 at 5 p.m. in the Community Classroom, 300 Pioneer Street. Board Directors will be present to answer your questions. Attend the March Board Meeting directly after.

MARCH 26 • FILE DATE

You will need to submit a Board Candidate Application by Thursday, March 26 at 9PM. Applications are submitted online.

APRIL 1-3 • INTERVIEW

The Nominating Committee will schedule your interview between April 1 and April 3.

APRIL 9 • NOTIFICATION

Forwarded candidates will be notified by April 9.

APRIL 21 • STATEMENTS & HEADSHOTS DUE

Candidate statements are due to marketing@ashlandfood.coop by Friday, April 21. Schedule headshots with the Marketing Department by April 21.

APRIL 29 • VIDEOTAPING

Candidates will be videotaped for the Co-op website on April 29. All candidates will be asked the same questions for the short, videotaped interview.

MAY 18 • ELECTION

Voting by E-ballots begins on May 18 and ends on Monday, June 8 at 9 PM.

JUNE 12 • ELECTION ANNOUNCEMENT

Ballots will be counted electronically the morning of June 9. Candidates will be notified on the afternoon of June 9 and announced to the public on June 12.

JUNE/JULY DATE TBD • ORIENTATION

New Board Directors will receive a detailed orientation.

AUGUST 12 • FIRST BOARD MEETING

Wednesday, August 12, 2026 at 6PM. Board Directors meet at 5PM for a pre-meeting discussion.

2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS JOB DESCRIPTION

Roles, Responsibilities & Qualifications

Board Directors are volunteers who are typically elected for three-year terms; however, some may be elected for two or one year terms due to vacancies that may occur. The Board of Directors has four primary duties:

- Make key decisions to oversee and guide the business and affairs of the Cooperative
- Act as trustees for AFC owners and inform owners about the status of the Cooperative
- Ensure sound management of the Cooperative
- Set long-range goals and plans for the future

The Board of Directors acts as a single body and speaks with one voice.

The Board holds the General Manager (GM) accountable for their decisions and performance in conducting the store's daily business.

BOARD OF DIRECTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Policy & Planning

- Define the purpose and values of the Cooperative
- Establish long-range and strategic goals
- Set Board policies and standards to achieve Board goals and objectives
- Look after the best interests of the Cooperative as a whole
- Make decisions about the Cooperative's governance system and development of policies

Financial & Legal

- Hire the GM of the Cooperative, define their duties, and set their compensation
- Supervise and evaluate the performance of the GM
- Ensure that AFC is well managed according to all store values and policies
- Oversee the financial wellbeing of the Ashland Food Co-op
- Ensure proper financial controls are in place
- Approve annual budgets and tax filings
- Prepare annual financial report to owners
- Implement a Duty of Care, Loyalty and Obedience to the Ashland Food Co-op and its owners

Internal

- Establish and serve on Board committees
- Monitor progress towards goals and achievement of objectives
- Perpetuate a strong Board through recruitment, elections, and training
- Review election procedures and ensure smooth transitions between Board terms

Ownership & Community

- Organize owner meetings
- Establish and maintain effective avenues of owner input and involvement consistent with AFC goals
- Establish standing and ad hoc committees of the Board, and recruit owner volunteers as needed
- Establish and review policies for cooperative participation
- Communicate updates regularly with owners

2026 BOARD OF DIRECTORS JOB DESCRIPTION

Roles, Responsibilities & Qualifications

Code of Ethics

- Directors shall hold the good of the Ashland Food Co-op to be above that of any interest group, individual Board Director, owner or AFC employee at all times. Directors act in accordance with the AFC Board Director Code of Ethics.

Director Responsibilities and Opportunities

- Being a Board director requires an average commitment of 10-20 hours per month.
- Understand AFC Bylaws and policies
- Attend monthly Board Meetings, Closed Work Sessions and Executive Sessions
- Serve on one or more Board Standing Committees
- Prepare for Committee and Board meetings
- Serve as Chair of a Board Committee at least once during a term
- Serve as a Board Officer at least once during a term
- Join an Ad Hoc Committee as needed
- Prepare and participate in the annual GM evaluation
- Attend trainings, retreats and strategic planning sessions
- Plan and attend the AFC Annual Meeting
- Fulfill the duties listed in the Board Director job description
- The Board speaks with one voice and Directors actively support all Board decisions
- Maintain confidentiality and actively support all decisions made by the Board
- Fulfill commitments within the agreed-upon deadlines
- Financially support AFC by being an active owner and shopper
- Recruitment and mentoring of new Directors
- Participate in other Board/employee/owner events as assigned

BOARD OF DIRECTORS CODE OF ETHICS

All Board business will be conducted at meetings properly announced and open to the public, unless covered by the policy on Executive Sessions. (Bylaw section 5.2 Meeting of the Board Notice, Section 5.7 Open meetings.)

Confidentiality will be maintained for all sensitive issues at Executive Meetings and Committee Meetings. At all meetings where confidential information is shared the person who is chairing the meeting will be responsible for delineating those issues that are confidential and recapping at the end of the meeting what (if anything) can be shared and with whom. This information will become part of the Executive Minutes.

When sending confidential information via email, it shall be clearly marked at the beginning as being a “confidential document.” All minutes, information, memos, and General Manager files of a confidential nature shall be clearly marked “confidential” and handled in a confidential manner. All confidential material will be stored on an “external drive” and deposited in our locked fire protective box located in the Board office, accessible only to Board Directors and the Board Administrator.

All personnel, real estate, marketing, strategic planning and financial matters will be considered sensitive issues. Directors shall use the utmost professional judgment and discretion in discussing these issues and disputed or confidential corporate actions, policies or issues with owners, employees or the general public. (Bylaw section 5.7 Open meetings.)

Directors shall at all times hold the good of the Ashland Food Co-op to be above that of any interest group, individual Board member, and AFC owner or AFC employee. Directors shall be responsible at all times for discharging their duties in good faith, with the care that an ordinary prudent person in a like position would exercise under similar circumstances and in a manner that they reasonably believe to be in the best interests of the Ashland Food Co-op. (Bylaw section 4.5 Standards of conduct.)

All Directors recognize that, except when the Board is in a formal meeting, each Director’s authority is equal only to the rights and authority of any individual owner of the AFC and that no individual Director may take action on behalf of the AFC alone unless explicitly delegated that authority by the entire Board.

The Board agrees that while an individual Director may disagree with a policy or action adopted by a majority of the Board, they should support said policy or action as being the considered judgment of the Board. The Board shall strive to make decisions by consensus, attempting to reconcile differing points of view based upon the best interests of the Ashland Food Co-op. (Bylaw section 5.5 Decision making.)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS CODE OF ETHICS

Directors have the right and responsibility to present further evidence and argument to the Board for additional consideration in a manner consistent with the Board's practices, and the Board shall have the duty to reconsider its actions.

If a Director has any actual or potential conflict of interest in any manner under consideration by the Board or by a committee exercising the authority of the Board, they have the affirmative duty of full disclosure. Such interest shall be made a matter of record in the minutes of the meeting. Disclosure must include the existence of the relationship, the nature of the conflict (i.e. financial, family ties, etc.), and the intention to not participate in the decision regarding the matter, as well as the intention not to participate in deliberations leading up to the decision. They must abstain from voting on the issue and using their personal influence on the matter. (Bylaw section 4.6 Conflicts of interest.)

These requirements should not be construed as preventing the Board member from briefly stating their position in the matter, nor from answering pertinent questions from other Directors since their knowledge may be of great assistance. If, as a result of being on the Board, a business advantage comes to the attention of a Director they must always defer to the Co-op. Only after an informal evaluation, and a determination by their disinterested peers, should the Director pursue the matter for their own account or the benefit of others.

Except as to matters reserved to owners by law, or by our Cooperative Bylaws, the corporate powers of the Co-op shall be exercised by or under the authority of the Board of Directors. At all times Directors shall recognize that they project an image as representatives of the Co-op and shall conduct themselves in a professional manner which fosters confidence and reflects positively on AFC, its owners, its staff and its Board. (Bylaw section 4.1 Powers and duties.)

If the Board finds that a Director is in violation of any aspect of the Cooperative Bylaws or Code of Ethics it may request that Director's resignation following the process outlined in Section 4.9 of the Bylaws. (Bylaw section 4.9 Termination.)

Positive relations between the Board, AFC staff and owners are vital. When approached by a staff member or owner regarding a management issue, follow the AFC Board "Procedure for Handling Board Director Contacts from Owners, Customers or Staff Members."

Directors are free to express their personal opinions or interpret Board decisions as long as it is clearly presented as personal opinions and not as a statement from the Board. Board Directors shall never present or characterize views of another Director.

Directors must always receive approval from the General Manager before making requests of staff that would require any substantial time or effort on their part.

ASHLAND FOOD CO-OP MISSION & VALUES STATEMENT

OUR CO-OP'S MISSION

Ashland Food Co-op exists to serve our owners and our community by:

- Operating a socially responsible business that provides a full selection of natural foods and quality products
- Emphasizing locally produced, organically grown and ecologically sound products
- Offering a variety of necessities at basic prices
- Providing friendly, knowledgeable customer service
- Promoting awareness about food, nutrition, and health
- Providing a workplace that fosters opportunities for participation, empowerment, and growth in an environment of mutual respect and cooperation

OUR CO-OP'S VISION

JOYFULLY WORKING TOGETHER

- Delighting Shoppers
- Enhancing Health
- Enriching Community

OUR BOARD VALUES

COOPERATION • EMPOWERMENT • COLLABORATION
INTEGRITY • INVOLVEMENT • RESPONSIBILITY
PASSION • VISION

We follow the Eight Co-op Principles!

Read more by clicking [here](#).

ASHLAND FOOD CO-OP BOARD MEMBERS AND TERMS

End of Term	Name	Position
2026	Mark Gibbs	President
2026	Bob Kaplan	Director
2026	Ernesto Soto	Treasurer
2027	Jen Gibbs	Secretary
2027	Kathryn Kavanagh	Vice-President
2028	Elizabeth Walsh	Director
2028	Evan Archerd	Director
2028	Joanna Wnorowski	Director

**Please submit your application online by 9PM on or before
March 26, 2026.**

CHECKLIST:

-  Answers to AFC Board Candidate Questionnaire
(Found on page 5 of this packet)
-  Signed Board Candidate Application
-  Resume
-  List of three professional references with names, addresses,
email addresses and phone numbers