willy street co-op

Annual Business Meeting - October 07, 2025

Agenda

Board members: Gigi Godwin, Anthony Hernandez, Tatiana Dennis, Isabel Spooner-Harvey, Debra Shapiro, Ashwini Rao, Ike Ross, and Dan Streit (Absent: Sarah Larson)

Staff members: Anya Firszt (General Manager), Paige Wickline (Director of Finance), Rosalyn Murphy (Board Executive Assistant), Kristina Kuhaupt (Customer Experience Manager), Liz Hawley (Education and Outreach Coordinator), Brendon Smith (Director of Communications and Marketing), Forrest Herschelman (Director of IT), and Courtney Van Der Wal (IT Systems Manager)

Board Candidates present: James Black, Gigi Godwin, Christina Hansen, Anthony Hernandez, Rebecca Snowhite, and Aristide Tessitore

Owners present:

Nancy Goyings
Meghan Gauger
Judith N. Fowler
Eva Lewandowski
Caryn Murphy
Mercedes Talvitie
Shirley Merker
Mary Knapp
Deanna Letts
Liz Coleman
Marianne Baik
Andrea Toth
Steve Rankin
Norah Pastorek
Ann Thering
Leslie Hutchins
Joanie Kanter
Bruce Noll
David Gebhardt
Anne Beal
Julie Neitzel
Tom Hecht
Doug Johnson
Michael McClennen
Claire Rynders
Lesleigh Luttrell
Laurie Gorman
Clarissa Murphy
Alicia Murphy
Steffry Langham
Diana Murphy
Laurel Sukup

A recording of this meeting is available here.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM

Assign a Timekeeper

- 1 min

Brendon Smith volunteered to be the Timekeeper

Agenda Approval & Minutes Approval

Time: 6:01 PM (5 Minutes)
Brendon Smith motioned to approve the agenda as written
Courtney Van Der Wal seconded the motion
A majority of Owners voted to approve
The motion carries

Minutes from 2023 Annual Meeting - quorum was not met last year, so these were not approved

Anya Firszt motioned to approve the 2023 Annual Meeting minutes
Brendon Smith seconded the motion
A majority of Owners voted to approve
The motion carries

Minutes from 2024 Annual Meeting

Paige Wickline motioned to approve the 2024 Annual Meeting minutes
Brendon Smith seconded the motion
A majority of Owners voted to approve
The motion carries

Welcome & Introductions of Board Members

From: Ashwini Rao, Board Vice President
Time: 6:06 PM (5 Minutes - included is the introduction of board members and announcements)

Announcements (Ashwini)

- Attendees cannot be seen or heard for your privacy and to preserve the quality of the audio presentation for everyone present
- There may be a delay as we switch between presenters; thank you for your patience
- We asked for any questions to be submitted by 10/1. We received one question and will answer that later in the meeting.
- To be eligible for a prize, you must stay for the duration of the meeting.
- This meeting is for Willy Street Co-op Owners. If you are a non-Owner, you may not vote on the minutes or receive a gift card.
- This meeting is being recorded.

Ashwini's Welcome:

"We will start with our Native American Land Acknowledgement

Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional, ancestral, and contemporary land of Indigenous people. We gather on land that was cared for and called home by the Peoria, Sauk, Meskwakee, Ho-Chunk, and Sioux Nations people, and other Native peoples from time immemorial.

It's wonderful to see so many of our member-owners, staff, and community partners here tonight.

Since my move to Madison 25 years ago, I'm constantly reminded that this co-op has always been more than a grocery store. It's a shared commitment — a living example of how collective ownership can shape not just how we shop, but how we care for each other, our neighborhoods, and our planet.

Before I go further, I just want to take a moment to thank our incredible staff — the heart of this co-op. Your daily work keeps our values alive in every interaction, every product on the shelf, and every decision made with care for our community and environment.

Thank you also to our General Manager, the Board of Directors, and to you - our member-owners for your thoughtful input, passion, and participation. Your engagement is what makes our co-op strong.

This past year has been a testament to our resilience and purpose. We continued to strengthen our financial stability while staying true to our mission — supporting local farmers, prioritizing fair wages, and keeping healthy, sustainable food accessible to all.

*We've expanded partnerships with local producers, deepened our commitment to food equity, and launched new community initiatives through the **Community Reinvestment Fund**. These projects help local organizations that share our values — creating ripple effects of good across the region.*

Our sustainability work has also continued to grow. From reducing waste and improving energy efficiency to sourcing more responsibly produced goods, we're demonstrating that environmental stewardship is not just possible — it's essential to who we are.

What truly defines our success isn't just numbers — it's the connections we nurture. We see this every time a member-owner shares feedback that shapes our decisions. We see it in our partnerships with local nonprofits, and in our continued efforts to make healthy food accessible through programs like Double Dollars.

And we see it in the way our stores have become gathering places — spaces that reflect the diversity, creativity, and compassion of the communities we serve."

Introduction of Board Members (Ashwini)

- Tatiana Dennis - Community Reinvestment Fund
- Gigi Godwin – Board treasurer and Policy Committee
- Sarah Larson – Board President and Finance Committee
- Isabel Spooner Harvey - Policy Committee and Community Reinvestment Fund
- Anthony Hernandez - DEI Committee and Community Reinvestment Fund
- Debra Shapiro - Board Development Committee
- Dan Streit - Policy Committee
- Ike Ross - Finance Committee and Board Development Committee
- Ashwini Rao – Board Vice President and Finance Committee

Year In Review

From: Anya Firszt, General Manager
Time: 6:16 PM (10 Minutes)
Presentation:

"Welcome to this year's Annual Business Meeting.

Thank you all for joining us today - and helping us achieve quorum!

I want to highlight some of the Co-op's achievements over the past fiscal year, including a significant milestone as we celebrated our 50th anniversary. For half a century, our staff, vendors, community partners, and you, our Owners, have been the reason we have remained open for business. Thank you all for your support over the years.

Our operation has been fairly routine over the last fifty years; staff have shown up to work, opened the doors, purchased and stocked products, bagged groceries, served our Owners and customers, and responded to comments, emails, and calls. However, there is nothing routine about the work they do - no two days are ever the same. Staff perform their routine tasks while navigating a variety of challenges, including delivery schedule issues, out-of-stock items, employee absences, weather conditions, power outages, and equipment malfunctions. Nicely done.

At the end of last fiscal year, we employed 370 people. Of those 370, a little over 300 were hourly employees and members of the bargaining unit who are represented by the union; the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America (UE); the remaining 60 employees are salaried, non-bargaining unit employees.

As a reminder, we have been in a partnership with the UE since 2020; and in March 2024, we successfully negotiated our third contract. The current 3-year contract offered additional benefits and wages for our hourly employees, while being mindful of our fiscal responsibility to our Owners and the co-op's long-term success.

From my perspective, one of the most important relationships we have is the partnership we have developed with the UE, and I look forward to our continued efforts to make the Co-op a stronger and better place to work.

I want to extend my thanks and appreciation to all our staff for their dedication and commitment to the Co-op. They are vital to our continued success. Thank you.

Last fiscal year, our actions continued to support our values, which is to source local products and ingredients when possible. The Co-op currently offers 527 local brands at our stores, which is about one-third of our total annual sales.

In addition to promoting local products and vendors, we promoted Fair Trade products by educating people about their benefits. The Fair Trade food system helps preserve and support healthy farming communities globally, not just locally.

We also promoted our Inclusive Trade program, which focuses on products sourced from companies owned and operated by individuals from underrepresented groups. These groups include

- *Women*
- *Black, Indigenous, and/or Persons of Color*
- *LGBTQIA+ people*
- *Veterans, and*
- *Persons with disabilities*

I am proud of our efforts to develop a diverse vendor pool that aligns with our mission, vision, and values.

Our 34,150 Owners played a vital role in making the Co-op's year a success. You purchased (a lot of) groceries, supported equity initiatives, attended classes, and supported various programs - like the Double Dollars program that is funded by our reusable bag initiative, food donations for our food pantry partners, and the Pantries of Plenty Community fund drive. Additionally, our shoppers supported Community Shares of Wisconsin's CHIP Program with $355,730 in donations collected at the register. Community Shares supports over 70 local nonprofits that focus on environmental and social justice in our community.

Our Access Program is available to qualified individuals, which offers a reduced ownership equity investment structure, along with discounts on purchases. At our Willy North location, we continue to offer WIC, which is a program providing access to nutritional foods for Women, Infants, and Children, and we accept SNAP benefits at all three stores.

Our Community Reinvestment Fund, which is funded by abandoned equity, awarded a total of $85,000 in grants to community organizations last year. Of this amount, $20,000 was granted to three recipients as part of our new program, Rooted in Our Community. This fund is designated for larger capital purchases and investments that support our local, sustainable food system. Since the inception of the Community Reinvestment Fund program in 1992, the Co-op has given nearly $600k back to the community.

Last year, the Co-op updated our Boycott Policy to better serve all our Owners. This change empowers our Owners to make decisions regarding products we sell rather than placing that responsibility solely in management's hands. This is just one more example of how co-ops differ from other businesses, by offering Owners greater opportunities to provide input on the products we carry and the services we offer.

Store hours were standardized at Willy North and Willy West to be the same as Willy East last year, which is to open at 7:30 AM. This change allowed us to offer breakfast at all three locations; have your tried our new breakfast empanadas, they are delicious.

At Willy West, we completed our solar panel installation project in partnership with Legacy Solar Co-op and Full Spectrum Solar. Our new solar array has generated more than 60,000 kilowatt-hours this summer. This represents a savings of approximately $7,000 on our energy bill, not to mention over 100,000 pounds or 50 tons of carbon dioxide avoided using clean energy from the sun.

I would like to take a moment to reflect on our 50th anniversary. We owe a great deal to our founding Owners, who laid the groundwork for what we are today. If they had not taken control over how and where their food was grown and produced, we might not exist as we do now.

Some highlights from our 50th celebration include:

The Board hosted a reception last fall - it was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with familiar faces and meet some of the Co-op's founding Owners and staff. After our business meeting last year, we had the pleasure of hearing from three founding Owners, who shared their stories about the early years of Willy Street Co-op and highlighted the importance of the cooperative business model.

As part of our anniversary celebration, we decided to install a new mural at our East store. The design chosen by Owners was submitted by muralist Sylvia Annelise Hecht and is titled "Rooted in Our Community."

And, finally, in celebration of our 50th, we partnered with local businesses where Co-op Owners could receive a free item or a discount on a purchase just for being an Owner - we called this year-long program Community Perks. Thank you to those participating businesses for helping us celebrate.

In the world of grocery cooperatives, our Co-op is considered one of the country's largest consumer grocery co-ops. We have 3 retail stores, a production kitchen, a centralized administrative office, and our eastside community space, Aubergine. Here's to you for making us what we are today, and here's to another fifty years!

Before I finish, one final note…
I want to extend my gratitude and appreciation to the Board of Directors for their guidance and support throughout the past year. Their thoughtful work reviewing and revising their governance policies to reflect a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive place to work and shop is exemplary, and so is their dedication to serve in the capacity they do, thank you.

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Now, I want to welcome Paige Wickline, Director of Finance, who will provide the FY25 financial update."

Financial Report

From: Paige Wickline, Director of Finance
Time: 6:26 PM (10 Minutes)
Presentation:

"Thank you Anya!

Fiscal Year 2025 ended with Willy Street Co-op in a strong financial position. Our Co-op has a history of being financially sound which has allowed us to grow into the vibrant business we are today. Our financial sustainability ensures our long term viability and allows us to withstand challenges and continue to focus on our mission which is to:

Cultivate and empower community, customers, employees, and suppliers through cooperative principles and practices.

We ended the year with just under 4 Million dollars in cash and a strong liquidity position where our current assets are greater than our current liabilities. This is a reflection of our ability to pay off our short term debts and meet our financial obligations. Our cash is used to cover our weekly cash outflows which vary from a low of 1 Million dollars on a slow week to over 2 Million for a week that includes our employee payroll. We also used some of our cash to invest in equipment and refrigeration upgrades at Willy East that occurred at the end of August this year.

One item we no longer have on our books is owner bonds. The last time we issued owner bonds was in 2018 to pay for the expansion at Willy West. The bonds issued for that project totaled $674,500. At the beginning of the fiscal year the only bonds remaining on our books were the Willy West 7 year bonds in the amount of $295,000. These matured and were paid out in January 2025. Thank you again to our owners for your financial support for this and past expansions.

For the fiscal year that ended on June 29, 2025 sales were just shy of $70 million dollars coming in at $69.6 million. This was an increase of $4.7 million dollars and 7.3% growth over our sales in fiscal year 2024. Willy North had the largest sales growth at 8.6%, with Willy West coming in at 7.5% and Willy East at 6.2% growth.

One third of the items we sell are from local vendors/producers or farmers. The remaining items are spourced from regional and national distributors.

Our gross sales profit or margin dollars are the funds remaining after we pay our vendors for the cost of the products we sell. After paying for the cost of the items we sold we had $25.5 million dollars remaining. Our margin as a percent of sales has remained stable. Maintaining a stable margin percent has been an operational challenge for many Co-ops, but we have a strong operational infrastructure to ensure we maintain our margin.

The price increases you have noticed when buying groceries have been due to increases in the wholesale cost we pay our vendors. While inflation has continued to slow down over the past year, there have been other pressures on costs including labor shortages due to immigration changes under the current administration along with increased costs from Tariffs and the ongoing impact of avian flu on the cost of eggs. With our focus on local, the impact of these factors has been less for us than on large national grocery chains.

Of the $25.5 million dollars in gross profit, $17.7 million was spent on wages and benefits for staff, and $7.6 million was spent on operating expenses. Operating expenses include costs we incur to run our Co-op such as rent, utilities, repairs, and maintenance. The remaining funds is our income from operations which came in at $230,750 or .34% of sales.

We also have other income and expenses that are not directly related to selling groceries. Other income includes interest on deposits we have at financial institutions, patronage dividends we receive from other Co-ops that we belong to, along with sales commissions for third party sales from our Sushi Vendor. Other expenses include interest on the bonds our owners have purchased to support past expansions and the loan we have at Summit Credit Union that is secured by real estate. We own the building and land at our east location and the property is used as collateral which allows us to obtain a lower interest rate on a loan when we need to borrow funds for expanding our business.

After adding other income and deducting other expenses we had a net positive of other income in the amount of $348,973. Our net income before provision for income taxes is $579,723 or .84% of sales.

Our profit share policy allows profits to be shared with staff on a quarterly basis when our net income for the quarter is greater than 1% of sales and profit share is recommended by management and approved by our Board of Directors. The only quarter in FY25 that met all of the qualifications for profit share was quarter 3. For Quarter three total profit share paid to staff was $39,106. The hourly profit share amount each staff member received was .273 per hour worked in the quarter. For full time staff who worked 40 hours per week in the quarter, their profit share amount was $142.00.

When co-ops have a profit at the end of the fiscal year they may distribute the Owners' share of the profit back to the Owners in the form of a patronage refund. These profits are distributed in direct proportion to a co-op Owner's patronage (purchases) and is made up of retained patronage equity and store credit.

We will be distributing $505,600 of our profits back to our owners. $202,240 will be distributed as a store credit that owners will be able to use at the register and the remaining $303,360 will be held by the Co-op as retained patronage equity. We will be sharing out the details regarding the individual amounts of store credit and the timing of when they will be available at our retail locations in the near future.

We are happy to report that we had a successful year financially where we were able to share profits with both our staff and our owners!

Next Ashwini will introduce you to the Board Candidates."

Introduction of Board Candidates

From: Ashwini Rao, Board Vice President
Time: 6:36 PM (10 Minutes w/ candidate statement)
Presentation:

We have 7 people running for the BoD this year! Two of them are incumbents. The election will run from October 1st through October 22nd. Online and vote-by-phone ballots will be due at 11:59 pm Monday, October 20, and all paper ballots must be received by 6:00 pm October 22, 2025, when the Board holds its Special Meeting to receive a tally of the votes.

- Lucas Bleyle

- James Black
- Gigi Godwin
- Christina Hansen
- Anthony Hernandez
- Rebecca Snowhite
- Aristide Tessitore

Owner Q&A

Presenter: Ashwini
Time: 6:46 PM (10 minutes)
From: Owners

Q: Why does the bakery at each of the three stores stock almost entirely sourdough bread? People like me who prefer yeasted bread are out of luck most of the time. Could we possibly have a more even selection? Even 2/3 sourdough to 1/3 yeasted bread would be an improvement.

A: I appreciate you mentioning this to us!

Artisan sourdough breads are very successful sellers for us historically, so we carry a large selection of them. Brownberry and S. Rosen's both have a fair amount of yeasted breads that might better suit your needs. Another part of our selection is trying to find local bread vendors who are willing to service our accounts. I have not encountered very many over the years, nor do we necessarily have space to add new bread vendors, because of our long term relationships with our current bread vendors.

Dean Kallas
Grocery Category Manager
WSGC

Prize Drawings

Time: 6:56 PM (5 minutes)
From: Deb Shapiro, Board Member

- $25 Winner: Anne Beal
- $50 Winner: Laurie Gorman
- $75 Winner: Steffry Langham
- $100 Winner: Judith N. Fowler

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 PM

Minutes respectfully submitted by Rosalyn Murphy.
Minutes approved at the MMMM DD, YYYY AMP