

JONI ELLIS
Board of Directors Questionnaire

Why would you like to serve on the Citizens Coop Board of Directors and what do you hope to accomplish?

I am interested in supporting the mission of the Co-op. Providing quality food from local sources for our community makes sense. It is responsible to the environment, the community and local farmers. I want to assist in establishing a paradigm shift in how we provide food for our community.

As a member of the BOD there will be times when you disagree with decisions made by the majority of the board. How might these disagreements affect your duties as a board member?

As a team player I feel obligated to have all the options on the table for the board to reflect upon. If the board finds one decision to be in the best interest of the Co-op, then as a team player, I am willing to go along with that decision. If I do not believe the decision to be in the best interest of the Co-op, I may for the record make it known, but would live with the decisions of the majority in the consensus process. We should be able to agree to disagree on some items. We come from different backgrounds and will have different perspectives. I think it is important that everyone be heard and all options be reviewed before making decisions.

Board experience: Have you served on a board of directors before? If so, please describe the organization and your role.

Yes, I am the Founder/Director of Optics for the Tropics, Inc. incorporated 10 years ago; I on the board of the Alachua Audubon Society; Paynes Prairie Chapter of the Native Plant Society. I have been on other boards in the past, such as homeowners associations, and other NGOs. As director for Optics for the Tropics, I maintain a budget, annual work plan, develop annual reports, fundraise, keep financial records, distribute equipment, and maintain correspondence. I have also developed promotional materials, organized special events, facilitated meetings, garnered support for controversial issues, created policy and written bylaws. I was in a position with the FL State Parks that oversaw all the Friends groups, 501c3 organizations that support parks. I made sure they were in compliance with their bylaws and contract with the park; I assisted with grant writing and fundraising events, I helped them with annual reports and financial record keeping.

As a board member, how would you guide the Co-op in fulfilling the values reflected in its mission statement?

I would assist by recruiting new members, researching products and new providers as needed, treat everyone as an equal member with a talent to contribute, assist with educational efforts to help consumers understand their relationship to their food and community, assist with outreach to under-served members of the community, and by volunteering when needed to fill in the gaps.

What do you feel are Citizens Coop's primary challenges and biggest opportunities, and how could you help the coop meet these challenges and maximize their opportunities?

Challenges: probably financial, like any new start up. Getting people in the door and making the purchases that support the cost of the infrastructure. Helping people understand the importance of their participation as an investment in changing how we view food in our society.

Opportunities: Our audience is more prone to be activist for a local food movement. Very nice space and partnerships with other organizations. Committed members.

Meet and Maximize: Recruit new members, encourage the members we have to participate more. One key feature of a successful nonprofit is to keep asking dedicated donors to increase their donations as the organization proves themselves to be what they said they would be. As the Co-op continues to provide services, we should be asking our members to annie up their commitments as well. Together we will grow into the vision we all want to support. I would be interested in assisting with educational workshops in the courtyard and special events that bring the community together.

In your opinion, what is the role of the Co-op in the community?

Build community around food issues, educate people about the importance of supporting local growers, nutritious meal planning, sustainability of the soil in food production. Everything in the mission statement.

Discuss what role you see yourself in fulfilling on the Board of Directors. How will you uphold the values of the co-op?

I have held managerial positions as a state employee, I would bring that experience to the table. I think it is important that a professional decorum is followed in all practices of the Co-op. I think the values reflected in the mission statement are a reflection of my lifestyle, so it would be a natural fit to transcend these values into an organization such as the Co-op. I think I bring a background as an educator, trainer, and special events coordinator to the table.

What is/are your passion (s) and as a member of the BOD how will you channel that passion to benefit the members of the coop and our local community?

My passion is education! My new found career is food production. Three years ago we bought 20 acres and began a homestead with the intent to grow our own food. We are making progress and learning so much along the way. I love the independence I feel when harvesting. This new direction has driven me to support the Co-op with my membership, my investment and my volunteer time. I am interested in surrounding myself with like minded people I can learn from and be part of a larger successful group. I want to change world around me for the better. I think the Co-op can do that on a local level. We can empower people to take responsibility for their food choices and participate in more sustainable practices.

Can you imagine any conflicts of interest that you might have regarding decision that the Board may have to make on behalf of coop owners? If so, describe.

Not at this time. While I do produce some food, it is primarily for our family. I do sell some surplus to neighbors on occasion, but I am not a consistent seller.

If some circumstance were to come up, I would be forthcoming in disclosing it before taking action.