

**BYLAWS  
OF  
NEIGHBORHOOD CO-OP**

Article I  
Organization

Section 1.1 - **Name.** The name of the organization is Neighborhood Co-op (referred to in these bylaws as "the Co-op").

Section 1.2 - **Mission statement.** The mission of the Co-op is to serve the needs of its owners by providing wholesome foods - economically, in the cooperative tradition, and in ways that best promote the health of the individual, the community, and the Earth. The Co-op shall be operated on a cooperative basis, not for the purpose of making profits for the Co-op or for its owners as such, but for the purpose of benefiting owners as patrons.

Section 1.3 - **Nondiscrimination.** The Co-op shall not discriminate on the basis of race, nationality, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, disability or other arbitrary basis.

Section 1.4 - **Principal office.** The principal office of the Co-op shall be located at 1815 W. Main Street, Carbondale, Illinois 62901.

Section 1.5 - **Fiscal year.** The fiscal year of the Co-op shall coincide with the calendar year.

Article II  
Ownership

Section 2.1 - **Admission.** Ownership in the Co-op shall be voluntary and open to any individual, household or organization whose purpose in seeking ownership is to use its services and is willing to accept the responsibilities of ownership. Applicants will be admitted to ownership upon submitting required information and purchasing or subscribing to purchase not less than one nor more than five common shares, as determined by the Board of Directors. In case of doubtful eligibility, ownership shall be subject to approval by the Board at any time within six months after the date of application.

Section 2.2 - **Rights.** Each owner shall be entitled to make purchases from the Co-op on terms generally available to owners and to receive a copy of these bylaws. Each owner shall be entitled to participate in the governance of the Co-op as set forth in these bylaws. Rights of owners shall be personal rights and not property rights. Owners may contribute labor or services and thereby be entitled to receive discounts as determined by the Board. Except as otherwise required under these bylaws, subscribers shall be considered owners.

Section 2.3 - **Responsibilities.** Each owner shall keep reasonably current in payment of the share purchase requirement described in Section 2.1 above and shall notify the Co-op of any change to his or her name or address. Owners may be required to purchase additional shares or fractions of shares as approved at a meeting of owners. An owner who becomes delinquent by three months in meeting his or her share purchase obligation, or who fails to patronize the Co-op for a one-year period of time, shall be placed into inactive status. His or her participation rights shall then be suspended. An owner in inactive status may attain good standing by recommencing current payment of the share purchase requirement or by reestablishing a patronage relationship with the Co-op. References herein to the rights and entitlements of owners shall be understood to refer only to owners in good standing.

Section 2.4 - **Access to information.** Owners shall be provided reasonably adequate and timely information as to the organizational, operational, and financial affairs of the Co-op. Upon request that describes with reasonable particularity the information desired and a proper purpose therefor, an owner seeking Co-op information shall be provided the requested information, provided the following conditions are met:

- 1) the information is directly related to the requester's interest as an owner
- 2) the request evidences good faith
- 3) the request describes with reasonable particularity
  - a. a proper purpose for the information, and
  - b. the specific information desired.

All such requests are subject to such reasonable restrictions or conditions as are determined by the Board to be necessary to protect confidential or sensitive information. Further, any proper request necessitating information from the Co-op's records of owners shall be accommodated by means other than direct access to such records.

Section 2.5 - **Settlement of disputes.** In any dispute between the Co-op and any of its owners or former owners which cannot be resolved through informal negotiation, it shall be the policy of the Co-op to prefer the use of mediation whereby an impartial mediator may facilitate negotiations between the parties and assist them in developing a mutually acceptable settlement. No party with a grievance against the other shall have recourse to litigation until the matter is submitted to mediation and attempted to be resolved in good faith.

Section 2.6 - **Termination.** Ownership may be terminated voluntarily by an owner at any time upon notice to the Co-op. Ownership may be terminated involuntarily only for cause by the Board after the owner is provided fair notice of the charges and an opportunity to respond in person or in writing. Upon termination of ownership, all rights and interests in the Co-op shall cease except for rights to redemption of capital pursuant to Articles VII and VIII of these bylaws.

### Article III Meetings of Owners

Section 3.1 - **Annual meeting.** An annual meeting of owners shall be held within 180 days of the close of each fiscal year to review the operations of the Co-op, to elect directors, and to conduct such other business as may properly come before the meeting.

Section 3.2 - **Special meetings.** Special meetings of owners may be called by the Board and shall be called by the Secretary as soon as practicable upon receipt of petitions signed by ten percent of all owners, such petitions stating any proper business to be brought before the meeting.

Section 3.3 - **Time and place.** The date, time and place of all meetings of owners shall be determined by the Board or, in the event that the Board fails to so act, by the Secretary. Meetings shall be held at a time and place convenient to owners.

Section 3.4 - **Notice.** Written notice of the time, place, and purpose or purposes of any meeting of owners shall be mailed to each owner not less than twenty-one days nor more than forty-five days before the date of the meeting.

Section 3.5 - **Record dates.** Unless otherwise determined by the Board, only persons who are owners at the close of business on the tenth day immediately preceding the date of distribution of notices shall be entitled to notice of any meeting of owners and to vote at such meeting.

Section 3.6 - **Quorum.** The presence in person or by proxy at the opening of the meeting of three percent of all owners shall be necessary and sufficient to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of owners.

Section 3.7 - **Voting.** Unless otherwise required by these bylaws, each owner shall have one and only one vote on each matter submitted to a vote of owners irrespective of the number of shares held. Unless otherwise required by law or by these bylaws, issues shall be decided by a simple majority of votes cast except where one or more choices are to be made from several alternatives, in which case the alternative(s) receiving the most votes shall be considered approved. Any business conducted at a meeting of owners other than that specified in the notice of the meeting shall be of an advisory nature only. Meetings of owners shall be conducted generally in accordance with reasonable and accepted rules of parliamentary procedure. The Board shall institute procedures intended to reasonably assure the integrity of the voting process.

Section 3.8 - **Absentee ballots.** Owners may vote by absentee ballots on any issue presented to a meeting of owners, provided that owners have previously been notified in writing of the exact motion or resolution and a copy of the same is attached to the absentee ballot. The Co-op shall make available at the store absentee ballots for this purpose not later than twenty-one days before the date of the meeting. Absentee ballots must be received by the Co-op in person or by mail no later than the day before the date of the meeting. A vote cast by absentee ballot shall be read at the meeting of owners, and shall be equivalent to presence in person by the owner at such meeting.

Section 3.9 - **Proxies.** Owners who are unable to attend a meeting may vote by written proxy executed in favor of another owner. A proxy shall be effective only with respect to one particular meeting of owners, and no owner may hold more than one such proxy at any one time.

Section 3.10 - **Issues submitted by owners.** Notices of a meeting of owners shall include any proper issues submitted by petition of five percent of all owners. Petitions must be received by the Co-op not less than sixty-five days before the date of the meeting at which they are to be presented to a vote of owners.

Section 3.11 - **Communication by electronic means.** Unless otherwise required by these bylaws, any notice, consent, ballot, petition, or other document required or permitted by these bylaws may be delivered by electronic means, provided that, in the case where such communication expressly or impliedly requires the signature of the person submitting the communication, means are in place to reasonably assure the authenticity of the signature.

#### Article IV Board of Directors

Section 4.1 - **Powers and duties.** Except as to matters reserved to owners by law or by these bylaws, the business and affairs of the Co-op shall be managed under the direction and supervision of the Board of Directors (sometimes referred to in these bylaws as "the Board"). Such powers shall reside exclusively in the Board as a deliberative body; they may reside in individual directors only to the extent explicitly so delegated by the Board. The duties of the Board shall include, but not be limited to, overseeing the operations and finances of the Co-op, establishing policies to guide operational decisions, engaging a general manager and monitoring and evaluating his or her performance, securing good conditions of employment and reasonable employee benefits, and assuring that the purpose and mission of the Co-op are properly carried out.

Section 4.2 - **Number and qualifications.** The Board shall consist of nine individuals. All directors shall be owners. A person cannot be a director if the person:

- is currently employed by the Co-op,
- has been employed by the Co-op within the past 24 months,
- has ever been dismissed from employment by the Co-op for cause,
- has any overriding conflict of interest with the Co-op; or
- is a parent of, sibling of, child of, or resides in the same household with, someone who is disqualified from being a director because of their employment, former employment, or conflict of interest with the Co-op.

Section 4.3 - **Nominations, election and terms.** Directors may be nominated by the Board, by a nominating committee, or by petitions signed by at least fifty owners and submitted to the Co-op at least sixty days before the date of the annual meeting. Directors shall be elected by owners at the annual meeting. At the first annual meeting after adoption of these bylaws and periodically thereafter as may be necessary, directors shall be elected for specific one, two or three year terms in order to assure that no more than three terms expire in each year. Candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall be given the longest available terms. At other times directors shall be elected for terms of three years. Directors shall hold office until their successors are elected or until their offices are terminated sooner in accordance with these bylaws.

Section 4.4 - **Compensation.** The Board is authorized to fix the stipends of directors and officers in reasonable amounts with directors having the option of receiving such compensation in the form of store credits valued at 125% of the amount of cash compensation. Directors may be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred in connection with the performance of authorized business of the Co-op.

Section 4.5 - **Standards of conduct.** Directors shall be responsible at all times for discharging their duties in good faith, in a manner that they reasonably believe to be in the best interests of the Co-op and with the care that an ordinarily prudent person in a like position would use under similar circumstances.

Section 4.6 - **Conflicts of interest.** Directors shall be under an affirmative duty to disclose their actual or potential conflicts of interest in any matter under consideration by the Board, and such interest shall be made a matter of record in the minutes of the meeting. Directors having such an interest shall be permitted to make a statement with regard to the matter and shall then be required to leave the meeting room. A transaction in which a director has an interest shall be prohibited unless the transaction is fair to the Co-op and is approved by no less than a two-thirds majority of all disinterested directors.

Section 4.7 - **Indemnification.** In order to attract and retain qualified people to serve in positions of responsibility, the Co-op shall indemnify its directors, officers, general manager, and other responsible agents as would be required by, and may indemnify them as would be permitted by, the General Not For Profit Corporation Act of 1986, if the Co-op were a not for profit corporation formed under that Act, except that indemnification shall not be required if the person has been successful otherwise than on the merits in defense of any action, suit, claim or proceeding. Indemnification payments shall be made on a priority basis but only in such increments and at such times as will not jeopardize the ability of the Co-op to pay its other obligations as they become due.

Section 4.8 - **Committees.** The Board may appoint special or standing committees to advise the Board or to exercise such authority as the Board shall designate. Such committees shall include at least one director. The appointment of any committee shall not relieve the Board of its responsibilities in the oversight of the Co-op.

Section 4.9 - **Termination.** The term of office of a director may be terminated prior to its expiration in any of the following ways: (i) voluntarily by a director upon notice to the Secretary; (ii) automatically upon termination of ownership in the Co-op or other disqualification; and (iii) for cause by a majority of all directors or by vote at a meeting of owners called in whole or part for such purpose, provided the director is accorded fair notice of the charges and an opportunity to respond in person or in writing. A director who is absent from three consecutive Board meetings, unless excused by the Board for good cause, shall be presumed to have resigned.

Section 4.10 - **Vacancies.** Any vacancy among directors occurring between annual meetings may be filled by the Board for the remainder of the unexpired term.

## Article V Meetings of the Board

Section 5.1 - **Meetings.** The Board of Directors may determine the times and places of its meetings. Special meetings may be called by the Chair and shall be called by the Secretary upon request of any three directors.

Section 5.2 - **Notice.** Meetings called by resolution of the Board shall require no notice, it being the responsibility of absent directors to inquire as to the time of further scheduled meetings. Special meetings shall require written or oral notice to all directors. Written notice shall be delivered at least five days before the date of the meeting and oral notices shall be given in person or by a telecommunications device at least forty-eight hours before the time of the meeting. Notices of meetings of the Board shall also be posted in a timely manner and in a conspicuous place in the Co-op's store, but the inadvertent failure to do so shall not affect the validity of the meeting.

Section 5.3 - **Waiver of notice.** Any notice of a meeting required under these bylaws may be waived in writing at any time before or after the meeting for which notice is required. A person who attends a meeting other than for the sole purpose of objecting to the adequacy of the notice shall be deemed to have waived any objection to the notice.

Section 5.4 - **Quorum.** The presence in person of a majority of directors shall be necessary and sufficient to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of the Board.

Section 5.5 - **Decision making.** Decisions at meetings of the Board shall be made by formal consensus, whereby all expressed concerns are resolved or those having unresolved concerns agree to "stand aside." Any decision made by consensus shall be deemed to be inclusive of a vote in any required percentage. If, in the opinion of a majority of directors present, diligent efforts have failed to produce a consensus and the issue requires immediate action, then such issue may be decided by a majority vote.

Section 5.6 - **Action without a meeting.** Any action required or permitted to be taken at a meeting of the Board may be taken without a meeting only if a written consent to the action is signed by all directors and filed with the minutes of meetings.

Section 5.7 - **Open meetings.** Meetings of the Board and all committees shall be open to owners and employees of the Co-op. Sessions of a meeting may be closed only as to matters of a particularly sensitive nature.

Article VI  
Officers

Section 6.1 - **Designation and qualifications.** The principal officers of the Co-op shall consist of Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer or Secretary-Treasurer. The Board may designate other officers or assistant officers. The Chair and Vice Chair shall be directors.

Section 6.2 - **Election, terms and removal.** Officers shall be elected by the Board at its first meeting following the annual meeting of owners. Officers shall serve for terms of one year or until election of their successors. Officers may be removed and replaced by the Board at any time whenever the best interests of the Co-op would thereby be served.

Section 6.3 - **Duties.** In addition to signing or attesting to formal documents on behalf of the Co-op as authorized by the Board, officers shall have the following duties and such additional duties as are determined by the Board:

(a) The Chair shall be responsible for assuring the orderly conduct of all meetings, coordinating the activities of the Board, and maintaining effective communication with the general manager, and shall present a report of operations at the annual meeting of owners.

(b) The Vice Chair shall be responsible for performing the duties of the Chair in his or her absence or disability and, as requested, assisting the Chair in the performance of his or her duties.

(c) The Secretary shall be responsible for the recording and keeping of adequate minutes of all meetings of the Board and of owners, issuing notices required under these bylaws, and authenticating records of the Co-op.

(d) The Treasurer shall monitor the maintenance of financial records, the compilation of financial reports, and the filing of all required reports and returns, and shall present a financial report at the annual meeting of owners.

Unless the Board determines otherwise, the Chair shall have the authority to execute on behalf of the Co-op, and the Secretary to attest to, documents evidencing transactions authorized by the Board.

Article VII  
Capital Shares

Section 7.1 - **Issuance and terms.** To evidence capital funds provided by owners, the Co-op shall issue common shares. Shares may be issued only to persons eligible for and admitted to ownership in the Co-op. Shares shall be issued only upon full payment of their par value in money, property or services. No shares shall be issued except at their par value of one hundred dollars per share, nor in amounts to exceed five hundred dollars to any one shareholder. Shares shall be entitled to no dividend or other monetary return on investment.

Section 7.2 - **Shares shall be Uncertificated.** The Co-op's shares of common stock shall be uncertificated. All sales of shares shall be numbered and recorded in a stock register maintained by the Co-op, and the Co-op's official stock register shall be evidence of ownership of common stock. The Co-op shall send to each new owner, within a reasonable time after the owner has purchased one or more shares, a written notice stating that the Co-op is organized under the laws of the State of Illinois; the name of the owner to whom the stock is issued; and the number and class of shares issued. The notice shall prominently state that, in accordance with these bylaws, the shares are transferable only to the Co-op or as a gift to a person who has been approved to become an owner, and that the right to vote attaches to the status of ownership on a one-owner-one-vote basis.

Section 7.3 - **Forfeiture.** All subscriptions for purchase of shares shall require full payment within one year of the date of subscription. If an owner fails to make full payment within the one-year period and

fails to correct the delinquency within thirty days of the date of mailing of a notice of delinquency, all share purchase payments of such owner shall be irrevocably forfeited to the Co-op.

Section 7.4 - **Restrictions on Transfer.** The Co-op's common stock is transferrable only: a) to the Co-op, or b) to a person who is an owner or who has been approved for ownership, provided that the transfer is gratuitous. Any attempted transfer contrary to this section shall be wholly void and shall confer no rights on the intended transferee.

Section 7.5 - **Redemption.** Upon request following termination of ownership, common shares shall be redeemed when replacement capital is provided by other owners. Shares shall be redeemable at the lesser of their carrying value on the books of the Co-op or their net book value, less a reasonable processing fee, if any, as determined by the Board. Redemption proceeds shall be subject to offset by amounts due and payable to the Co-op by the owner. No redemption shall be made when such payment would impair the ability of the Co-op to meet its other obligations as they become due. Reapplications for ownership after full or partial redemption shall be subject to full repayment of redemption proceeds.

#### Article VIII Patronage Dividends

Section 8.1 - **Distribution of net savings.** The realized net savings of the Co-op, to the extent attributable to the patronage of owners, shall be received and held by the Co-op for and as the property of its owners, the basis of each owner's interest therein being as set forth in this article. Such net savings shall be allocated and distributed among owners as patronage dividends in proportion to their patronage and in conformity with federal income tax law. An owner in inactive status by reason of delinquency in the share purchase obligation shall share in such distribution only in the proportion to which the owner has complied with such obligation. In determining and allocating adjusted net savings, the Co-op shall use a single allocation unit except to the extent that, subsequent to the adoption of these bylaws, it shall engage in any new and distinct line of business.

Section 8.2 - **Exceptions.** Net savings may be reduced by such reasonable reserves for necessary business purposes as is determined by the Board. Any allocations of such a nominal amount as not to justify the expenses of distribution may, as determined by the Board, be excluded from distribution provided that they are not then or later distributed to other owners. Owners shall retain the right to waive in whole or in part, by action at a meeting of owners, any patronage dividends to which they may be entitled.

Section 8.3 - **Consent of owners.** By obtaining or retaining ownership in the Co-op, each owner shall thereby consent to take into account, in the manner and to the extent required by Section 1385 of the Internal Revenue Code, the stated dollar amount of any qualified written notice of allocation in the taxable year in which such notice is received.

Section 8.4 - **Retained amounts.** A portion of patronage dividends may be retained for the reasonable capital needs of the Co-op. Such amounts shall be credited to revolving capital accounts in the names of recipient owners, shall accrue no monetary return on investment, and shall be nontransferable. They shall be redeemed when determined by the Board to be no longer needed for capital purposes. At that time they shall be redeemed in the order of the oldest outstanding amounts and on a pro rata basis among such amounts, except that redemptions may be made payable only to owners who are then in good standing or become so within a stated period of time. Retained amounts may also be redeemed under compelling circumstances as determined by the Board. They shall be subject at all times to being offset by amounts otherwise due and payable to the Co-op.

Section 8.5 - **Allocation of net loss.** In the event the Co-op shall incur a net loss in any fiscal year, the patronage-sourced portion of such loss shall be carried forward to offset patronage-sourced income in subsequent years, and any remaining loss shall be carried back and forward to offset nonpatronage-sourced income in prior and subsequent years in accordance with federal income tax law.

## Article IX Fundamental Changes and Investments

Section 9.1 - **Definition.** A fundamental change to the Co-op shall include a substantive amendment to the articles of incorporation, liquidation or dissolution, sale of a material portion of real or personal property that is necessary for the transaction of business without provision for its replacement or substitution by similar property or property serving a similar function, and any change that would materially alter the corporate structure or purpose of the Co-op.

Section 9.2 - **Required approval.** Fundamental changes to the Co-op may be effected only in the following manner:

- (a) by a resolution of the Board approving the change at two successive meetings of the Board; and
- (b) thereafter by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of owners present and voting at a regular or special meeting of owners called in whole or in part for the purpose of approving the fundamental changes.

Section 9.3 - **Investments.** The Co-op may by majority vote at a meeting of owners invest an amount not to exceed twenty-five percent of its paid-up stock and surplus funds in the stock of another corporation, or may invest any amount necessary in a cooperative association where the amount of the investment is based upon the volume of business transacted by the Co-op with such association, provided that notice of such issue is given in the notice of the meeting at which such action is to be taken.

## Article X Interpretation and Amendment of Bylaws

Section 10.1 - **Interpretation.** The Board of Directors shall have the power to interpret these bylaws, apply them to particular circumstances, and adopt policies in furtherance of them, provided that all such actions are reasonable and consistent with these bylaws.

Section 10.2 - **Severability.** In the event that any provision of these bylaws is determined to be invalid or unenforceable under any statute or rule of law, then such provision shall be deemed inoperative to such extent and shall be deemed modified to conform with such statute or rule of law without affecting the validity or enforceability of any other provision of these bylaws.

Section 10.3 - **Amendment.** These bylaws may be amended or repealed only at a meeting of owners, provided that the proposed amendments are stated or fully described in the notice of the meeting at which the amendments are to be adopted.



Appendix:

**EXPLANATION OF PATRONAGE  
DIVIDEND CONSENT PROVISION**

The Internal Revenue Code generally requires each person receiving a patronage dividend to include the amount of such distribution in his or her gross income in the taxable year in which it is received. Under bylaw section 8.3, mere acceptance or retention of ownership in the Co-op constitutes consent to such inclusion in taxable income, including the portion of the patronage dividends that is retained by the Co-op for its capital needs.

The Co-op has been advised by legal counsel, however, that the general rule for inclusion in income of patronage dividends is subject to an exception that is applicable to consumer cooperatives. Under that exception, a patronage dividend is not required to be included in gross income if the owner's purchases from the Co-op related to "personal, living or family items." The patronage dividend would be taxable to a member only if his or her purchases related to the operation of a trade or business or other income-producing activities.

In effect, the consent provision is of no significance to members of the Co-op, except as to organizational owners and except where the purchases of owners who are natural persons are for business or income-producing purposes.