

Nominee Name: Marshall Clabeaux
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Please answer the following questions:

Why would you like to serve on the ELFCO Board of Directors?

I would like to serve on the ELFCO Board of Directors because I want hands on, cooperative, community-building learning experience. I will bring knowledge, optimism, passion, and tireless work ethic into every task that the job of being on the Board of Directors requires. Farming is in my roots. Both my parents grew up on farm, my mother on a Traverse City Cherry orchard, and my father on a Benzie Animal farm. Growing up in Caledonia, MI, very much farm country, kept me close to my roots but I did engage much in growing food. I attempted my first urban garden last year, downtown Lansing Eastside, doing a 4 x 8 plot with some successes with tomatoes and sunflowers. These examples have helped shape me into learning and appreciating the value for true healthy food. In addition, I have prided myself in being a leader my entire life. I have most recently participated in a fellowship through Clinton Global Initiative University and America. Being a member of CGI has shown me many aspects of the energy, including the food and electricity production demands. I was able to travel to the University of California Berkeley for the CGI U conference and Atlanta, Georgia for CGI America. Through these experiences I have been able to establish connections across the country, furthering my communication skills, and have reenergized my passion for finding innovative solutions for our energy future including the essential task of pairing farmers with renewable energy sources to achieve a more sustainable system of agriculture.

What is your dream for East Lansing Food Cooperative?

My dream for the East Lansing Food Cooperative is in helping to shape the way the Lansing community and beyond thinks about our Energy systems. Through the education of our Energy systems and a first class experience in joining a food cooperative, I believe a conscious and connected community can be built to sustain. Having locally sourced food doesn't only benefit every generation in the surrounding community of reach but more importantly, our environment.

How should the East Lansing Food Cooperative reimagine itself to serve our owners and the community?

In our times of political turmoil, a starting place of change is getting to know your local community and neighbors closest to you. Being a neighbor is just one connection that has been lost in our 21st century media driven ultra technological

connection of times. Energy is all around us in all forms, as 1st world humans, we demand two primary energies everyday, food and electricity. These come at a cost on the obvious but at what cost do we demand them? When we recognize food as energy and energy as electricity we ultimately demand only one thing, Energy.

Our food systems are run on the basis that 400 gallons of oil a year are needed to feed the average American. This breakdown of oil in finding where our food comes from does not include the energy needed for livestock feed, packaging, refrigeration, transportation to retailers, or cooking. This disconnection can best be summed around the fact pointed out by Michael Pollan, “In the US, 20% of food is eaten in the car.”

Our current supermarkets and grocery stores lack the true reflection of external costs need to produce our food system. Beginning to capture these costs logically starts with the transition into renewable energy systems. In decreasing the 400 gallons of oil for the average American to eat we must start, at the roots, on the farm. With implementing renewable energy technologies throughout the farm, you accomplish two things; one, a farming revolution that allows a focus towards achieving more sustainable farming methods inherently saving farmers money on Energy costs while they raise their net farm income level which has reached a low level dating down memory lane, 1965, secondly, humanity receives the needed positive environmental impacts of producing Energy renewably.

The five key principles in driving a more sustainably focused agriculture system are the living soil, protecting the water of life, ecological pest management, maximizing biodiversity, and creating more money for the farmer. As we focus on these five principles we must regain the connection of our food as a relationship. If we live by Michael Pollan’s 7 rules for eating, we must recognize our disconnection to the food we eat and how often we break it as described in rule 2, “don’t eat anything with more than five ingredients, or ingredients you can’t pronounce.” Food as a true relationship takes work. A place to begin is by participating in food production to extent you can, preparing your own food, learning the origins of the food you buy, buying close to home helping to engage with local farmers, and learning, the economy and technology of food production, the best farming and gardening practices, and the life histories of the food species.

Change isn’t easy like convenience is. Change against big money isn’t easy but coming together with small sums is. The problems we face of reconnecting to our Energy systems is a deep-rooted problem. We know the root. As we face our energy descent from fossil fuels following known limits to growth, we must adapt into Energy systems that demand being environmentally sound, economically viable, and socially just or equitable. The change won’t be easy. But we must strive to live in a way that keeps focus on “meeting the needs of your generation

without compromising life for future generations.” as the Brundtland Commission described sustainability in 1987.

What do you think ELFCO’s role in our community should be? Why cooperatives?

I believe ELFCO’s role in the community needs to lie behind the creation of diverse membership to generate wealth in society through the expansion of healthy food sources while re establishing lost energy (food & electricity) connections through education about systems production and consumption. I strongly believe food as a relationship means not only preparing your own food but also understanding its energy, the calorie, as it’s roots. Engaging with locally sourced food helps to capture the external costs of 21st century farming practices. Learning these origins of food by buying close to home helps to engage local farmers with communities that have always had a relationship but without knowing each other’s stories and faces.

I believe in cooperatives in large part because of my many experiences working in diverse team settings. Whether being the minority playing travel sports growing up, having jobs at Fire House Subs and Sweet Lorraine’s Mac N Cheese, spending time at the YMCA, AAA, and CWA, or through my degree in Advertising during my capstone class where we exclusively worked as a team, Canopy House, earning a 4.0 full integrated marketing strategy for Brain Balance, I have been exposed to many cooperative principles without even knowing it. I have also been a part of the new economy movement for the past year working with the global cooperatives of cooperatives, the Mutual Aid Network, founded in Madison, Wisconsin, in creating a Mid-Michigan Mutual Aid Network. My fundamentals have always been cooperatively focused and I believe that is where my passion for creating and expanding the awareness of cooperatives comes from.

Please offer any additional thoughts you would like ELFCO owners to know about your interest in ELFCO’s future.

I do not have any more additional thoughts but I thank you for your time and consideration!