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Please answer the following questions

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

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness. . . "

Charles Dickens wrote that in "A Tale of Two Cities" in 1859. I think that is applicable today with regard to the state food in America. Never have so many choices been possible, never have so many problems been associated with it. The possibilities of good food, and trash food are endless.

To me a food coop represents one of the best ways to help people obtain food with as little cost as possible. But with the recent competition in the food market ELFCO has slipped. Hardly the fault of any set of people, but the changing reality of today.

I think that coop's can survive--and survive well--if they adapt to today's environment. I like challenges, and believe that if you aren't a part of the solution you are a part of the problem. I'd like to think that I am a fairly creative individual and think outside the box. With this skill-set I hope to add ideas to the group at ELFCO--whether I win a board seat or not.

- What is your dream for East Lansing Cooperative?

My dream is a place much like the Northwind store, that is self sustaining, and reaches out to the area with the message that food can be both good and affordable. Show people how cooking is not a dark science and that endless drivethroughs and microwave food in dead boxes is not the only way to eat. I'm sure that over time ELFCO can do other neat, useful things. The goals of ELFO should never be static.

There is no reason why ELFCO can't conduct classes, ranging from spices to general cooking and to the large issues such as the state of food in the US (think Michael Polin).

- How should the East Lansing Food cooperative re-imagine itself to serve our members and the community?

First, it needs to find a better location than Northwind. The location was fine if you had a car and were interested in natural and organic things, but if most people don't really know what they are, it's hard to attract them.

Second, coop's (all of them, not just us) need to effectively self promote; to explain the difference between the coop and say Whole Foods, and talk about why better food matters. Only by making noise can the coop be seen.

Third, it needs to figure out what people want. Convenience items such as pre-sliced vegetables might not seem like a useful thing to some of us, but many people are pressed for time and see such things very useful. That which we might not be thinking of could be very valued by others.

The coop needs to try things and evaluate them. Efforts will succeed and fail. The trick is to learn which is which and take the good parts and run with them.

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

A resource for food and related items, and education. At least at first. Things like a cafe would be \*wonderful\* to have, but I know little enough about the practical operation of them to know if that is possible at first. Growing towards that is a great idea. Lunch/dinner items, drinks. . .

Outreach to the community, to educate people on better eating might be a cornerstone. But also listen--really listen and see what people want and need. I think we might find things we've not yet thought of as useful and needed.

The cooperative model is an excellent option for the distribution of goods in a non-profit manner. Anything that can lessen the cost of food is a big win for most people. I know that in my conversation with people, they are almost always amazed to hear that spices are so much cheaper (and better!) than the chain stores. That's just one facet. We need to promote that.

Another is instilling a sense of ownership in a place. The chain stores are faceless, soulless and do not care much about providing what is good as much as what is expedient. They have gotten better, which is why many shop there but coops did a better job before them. There is no reason why we can't continue that.

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

I have been shopping at coop's since 1978. When first introduced to the People's Food Coop in Ann Arbor I wasn't cooking much but did see that many of the items I used were excellent, and often cheaper than the other stores. Since then I have evolved. There is a strata of items that coop's carry that is apart from the mainstream (take Dr. Bronner's) that is excellent and made in a sustainable way.

ELFCO has done many good things but it got lost in the noise of all the options out there today. I do not think there is any reason why ELFCO cannot do this again.

I have a longer explanation of my thoughts at

<http://wb8wsf.org/coop-thoughts.html>