



**2019**  
**Board of Directors**  
**Elections**  
**Candidate Statements**

## Joseph Meicher – Owner #1019

### **1. What is your motivation to serve on Just Local Food's Board of Directors and what do you hope to gain through your participation on the board?**

My motivation to serve on the Board of Directors for Just Local Food is twofold. First, serving on the board of directors for Just Local Food is a great opportunity to strengthen the local food systems in the Chippewa Valley. I want to provide guidance and leadership through Just Local Food's expansion as well as provide vision as the co-op takes on a larger role in the Eau Claire community. My background as a chef fueled my passion for furthering local food systems, and my education and recent experience working for Royal Credit Union has prepared me for the thorough analysis and responsible decision making required of board members. Secondly, I want to set a positive example for my daughters and show them what it means to be involved in a community as well as the importance of good food. Serving as a member of the board and being an advocate for just and locally sourced food really excites me!



By serving on the Just Local Food's Board of Directors, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of our local food system, and have an impact on the development of the Eau Claire food scene by strengthening the community of farmers, producers, chefs and enthusiastic home cooks. I also hope to grow both personally and professionally by being able to collaborate with different people, learn more about the operations of a co-op and work as a team to overcome challenges and adversity. I fully expect disagreements and differing thought processes; however, I look forward to these discussions and arriving at the best solution for the cooperative. Ultimately, serving on Just Local Food's Board of Directors would allow me to participate in a passion of mine, making quality, locally sourced food accessible to the entire Eau Claire Community.

### **2. Describe any professional or relevant experience that you believe could benefit the Co-op's Board in doing its work.**

My job at Royal Credit Union requires me to evaluate creditworthiness of loan applicants. I weigh the positives against risk factors and ultimately need to make a decision on how to best help the member while minimizing the credit union's exposure to risk. Decisions are rarely black and white, and require careful analysis. These analytical and decision making skills would adapt well to participation on the board.

Prior to working for RCU, I worked in restaurants in Eau Claire for ten years. During my time in the restaurant industry, I built strong relationships with farmers, local producers and other local restaurants. I also built a strong relationship with the Eau Claire Health Department as I have been involved in multiple restaurant openings. I have written various HACCP plans for restaurants which were approved by the state and granted a variance to the Wisconsin food code necessary for the restaurant's operations. I have formulated entire restaurant concepts, developed menus, worked with equipment representatives, brookers, distributors, the Eau

Claire building inspectors and health department, HVAC technicians, electricians, plumbers and contractors. My experience working through a restaurant opening would be beneficial and a great asset for the co-op during its expansion.

### **3. Describe your experience working collaboratively.**

I collaborate all the time as a loan officer at RCU. Myself, along with six others are constantly discussing positive attributes of a loan application as well as potential risks, alternative options and ultimately, arrive at the best possible solution. I thrive in this type of environment. I believe the best possible outcomes are achieved in a healthy collaborative environment. When I was a chef, it was critical that I built and encouraged a collaborative culture throughout the restaurant. I wanted all the cooks, servers, bartenders and dishwashers to feel comfortable and confident in sharing their ideas. Not only does a collaborative culture result in the best solutions, but it also reinforces the value everyone brings to team.

### **4. As a cooperative, Just Local Food follows the 7 cooperative principles. Please discuss an aspect of the seven cooperative principles you find interesting or meaningful.**

For myself, the most interesting cooperative principle is Education, Training and Information. I find this principle the most interesting because I think most people could use and appreciate a little help when it comes to their food choices; I think this is especially true in Eau Claire. One of the accomplishments I was very proud of during my time at the Local Lounge restaurant is the only beef we ever served was grass fed beef. This required constant education and training for both the staff and the restaurant guests. We never made a big deal about it, and asked servers only to dive into the details for guests if the guests were truly interested. We turned skeptics into believers and even into educators on grass fed beef. I love the fact that a little training and education (backed up by some tasty meat) is likely still benefiting our local food system as more people are conscious about how the meat they consume is raised.

I'm sure all of the employees of Just Local have stories where they provided education, training and information which resulted in a realization, a change of eating habits, a higher propensity to make good food choices or maybe just convincing someone to try something new. Knowledge is incredibly powerful and provides countless opportunities to grow the co-op, improve upon the local food scene and preserve culture and traditions.

### **5. What is your vision for the future of Just Local Food?**

I remember being a college student at UWEC and walking over to Just Local when it was in the old building by the courthouse and racking up student loan debt with good beer, cheese, bacon and tired produce. I remember when the Phoenix Park Farmer's Market began, and there was actually room to walk. Today, Just Local has outgrown its current location, the Farmer's Market is always packed, community gardens are prevalent and the independent restaurant scene is more exciting. These examples are all proof Eau Claire's food scene has evolved, and the demand for better food choices is increasing. Because of the growing desire to know where our food comes from and the increased demand for better food options, I believe the Co-op can be ambitious in its goals for the future.

My vision for Just Local Foods is for the cooperative to be at the center of the local food system in Eau Claire, as well play a larger role in the Eau Claire community. In the spirit of cooperation among cooperatives, I think Just Local Food can establish its place in the Eau Claire community in the same way the Viroqua Co-op has done so in Viroqua.

The Viroqua Co-op is so much more than a place to purchase groceries. They have a deli/kitchen preparing made-to-order sandwiches and salads, coffees and smoothies. It is always packed when I visit, and a lot of people are there just getting breakfast or meeting someone for coffee. The co-op in Viroqua is a gathering place, it's the place to be on Saturday morning, they host community events and teach classes to further their communities knowledge and passion for local food. Eau Claire is primed for Just Local Food to expand into a new building that would provide the the same type of opportunities as well as a platform to be a leader in the community.

I'm sure all owners have their ideal vision of what Just Local Food can become. If elected to serve on the Board of Directors, I would embrace all ideas, and work to develop the best possible plan for owners, employees and the Eau Claire community.

#### **6. Have you attended a board meeting?**

I have not yet attended a board meeting, although I will be at the meeting on April 23rd. I have been fortunate enough to speak with current board members about the dynamics and structure of the meetings, and I am confident that I would fit well with the group and embrace the challenges and opportunities ahead.

## **Mike Buck – Owner #1113**

### **1. What is your motivation to serve on Just Local Food's Board of Directors and what do you hope to gain through your participation on the board?**

I have over 9 years of work in the cooperative space and am committed to supporting the cooperative model through my resources of time, experience and leadership. I hope to be a resource to the management team and its members.

### **2. Describe any professional or relevant experience that you believe could benefit the Co-op's Board in doing its work.**

I am currently the C.E.O. for Consumers Cooperative Association of Eau Claire (better known in the community as Mega! CO-OP). I have more than 28 years of experience in the grocery store segment and am now responsible for leading a team of 350 team members as they operate 33 convenience



stores located throughout West Central Wisconsin. I have served on multiple for profit and non-profit boards over the last 8 years and am currently serving on the finance committee and executive committee for Special Olympics of Wisconsin.

**3. Describe your experience working collaboratively.**

I am not a “top down” leader. I have a firm believe that as a leader, my primary responsibility to my team is to inspire and enable and to my company, it is to develop strategies and tactics that improve market share and profitability. Collaboration doesn’t mean that everyone agrees on everything, I believe it means that it means everyone is heard.

**4. As a cooperative, Just Local Food follows the 7 cooperative principles. Please discuss an aspect of the seven cooperative principles you find interesting or meaningful.**

Number 7 – “Concern for the Community”. Cooperatives operate as community minded organizations, we are owned by the communities we serve. I believe there is a little “magic” that happens when an organization aligns its engagement with the communities it serves. This happens when the organizations mission, the store environment, the products offered, educational opportunities and community involvement all align.

**5. What is your vision for the future of Just Local Food?**

At this stage...I don’t know, what I don’t know – so this may change as I better understand the challenges and successes that the management team has had over the last few years. With that said, my voice would lean towards more community involvement, data driven decisions (related to product offering) and more space to do what you do well (not necessarily new space, but definitely more space). Additionally, I believe there is mutual interest in both Just Local Food and Mega! CO-OP. As an example, we have significant interest in offering “better for you” food offerings. This isn’t a core competency of Mega! CO-OP, but does seem to be a competency for Just Local Food.

**6. Have you attended a board meeting?**

Not Just Local Food, but I do have significant experience in both attending as a board member and hosting as the manager.

## **Kyle Lehman – Owner #789**

**1. What is your motivation to serve on Just Local Food’s Board of Directors and what do you hope to gain through your participation on the board?**

My motivation to serve comes from being involved with the rebrand and capital campaign while working for Draft Design House. We worked with the board as well as the past GM, I noticed some policy/directions the store was going in that I wish I could have offered a more action filled opinion and possible solution but being on the visual side I wasn’t able to.



**2. Describe any professional or relevant experience that you believe could benefit the Co-op's Board in doing its work.**

My experience with farm fresh food comes from growing up on a Wisconsin dairy farm as well as a large family history of farmers and truck drivers. Not only did I grow up in the industry I have photographed for a number of local restaurants and been apart of marketing campaigns that have seen huge returns.

**3. Describe your experience working collaboratively.**

I currently own a co-working space right in the heart of Eau Claire. The co-working model is 100% collaborating.

**4. As a cooperative, Just Local Food follows the 7 cooperative principles. Please discuss an aspect of the seven cooperative principles you find interesting or meaningful.**

Education, Training and Information are the foundation of my co-working business. To see that JLF has the same core principles made confident in this opportunity being a good fit.

**5. What is your vision for the future of Just Local Food?**

Expansion.

**6. Have you attended a board meeting?**

Yes, multiple!

## **Jim Deutsch (Incumbent) – Owner #30**

**1. What is your motivation to serve on Just Local Food's Board of Directors and what do you hope to gain through your participation on the board?**

I have currently served one term on the board and would like to continue serving. During my term the board has worked together through many challenges and opportunities. The current board has worked well together to move the Co-op forward and the cohesion is strong among all. The positive growth and success of JLF is one of the main reasons I would like to serve another term.



**2. Describe any professional or relevant experience that you believe could benefit the Co-op's Board in doing its work.**

I have served one term for the last 3 years and I believe I can bring that experience to help the board. I also think my experience as a farmer and a business owner brings an important perspective to the board.

**3. Describe your experience working collaboratively.**

I have worked collaboratively with the other board members over the past term.

**4. As a cooperative, Just Local Food follows the 7 cooperative principles. Please discuss an aspect of the seven cooperative principles you find interesting or meaningful.**

One of the seven cooperative principles that is meaningful to me is *concern for the community*. I try to bring a perspective of the community to the board meetings.

**5. What is your vision for the future of Just Local Food?**

My vision for JLF is keeping and improving financial sustainability. I also envision JLF continuing to grow the local food movement here in the Chippewa Valley.

**6. Have you attended a board meeting?**

Yes I have attended many board meetings.

**Our Annual Meeting will be held May 14<sup>th</sup> at the Brewing Projekt at 5:30pm. You will have a chance to meet the candidates and hear them speak briefly about their experience and candidate statements.**

**All owners are welcome (and encouraged!) to attend.**

**You are allowed one vote per owner number. Please choose three candidates you'd like to see elected to the Board of Directors.**

**Votes may be cast in-store, online, or at the Annual Meeting.**