

## Application Form for the Franklin Community Co-op Board of Directors

Name: **George Touloumtzis**

Member since: **2002**

Live in: **Greenfield**

Current occupation: **psychiatric rehabilitation counselor**

*Why do you wish to serve on the Board?*

I view the experience, skills & knowledge I have accumulated during my two periods of service on the Board (2014-22 & 2023-present) – enhanced by attending nine national conferences, numerous regional meetings, plus voluminous reading – as an asset that belongs to the co-op. In addition, it's been particularly gratifying to serve during this exciting & challenging period of Green Fields Market's expansion/relocation, a process in which I'm hoping to stay actively involved. I have also served on the Board of the regional Neighboring Food Co-op Association (of which FCC is a founding member) for the past two years, and re-election to the FCC Board would allow me to continue to extend my service in that role (as the only Massachusetts representative). And as always – with my relentless focus on membership engagement – it would be an honor to keep striving to responsively and effectively represent my fellow member-owners.

*What do you see as the significance of the co-op and what is your relationship to the co-op / its significance in the community?*

I love co-ops – I believe they and the philosophy they represent could be the salvation of society and the planet. FCC has been a central part of my life since my partner & I chose to move here in 2002, largely because of the presence of Green Fields Market. Co-ops embody a transformative economic model, just fundamentally different: collectively owned and inherently local, because the owners use the services (consumer co-ops) or are the employees (worker co-ops). Co-ops also stand out – in our overly competitive society – through Co-op Principle #6: "Cooperation among Cooperatives" (wonderfully embodied in the regional NFCA I mentioned above). Our area is rich with co-ops of various types, with enough density to form this umbrella organization, expanding cooperative impact and influence.

*How has your work/life experience taught you the general skills listed below?*

*Being an effective Board member requires these general skills and qualities.*

- *Interest in serving FCC, commitment to its mission and values.*  
FCC's mission and values are essential to my daily life and my worldview. It would be an honor to continue to represent ownership in the ongoing effort to actualize these.
- *Ability to effectively discuss complex goals and future implications of decisions.*  
Professionally, I assist in the development of individuals' life goals, supporting them to weigh short- and long-term implications in decision-making. I've also been actively involved in broader goal-development and decision-making within the agency I work for, as a vocal direct-service worker and as part of my union's bargaining team.

- *Ability to read financial statements.*  
This is frankly not an area of strength, but my Board service (including ongoing training) has significantly increased my financial literacy, my ability to discern relevant data, and my capacity to ask prudent clarifying questions.
- *Communication and group process skills.*  
Work and training in human services (for 49 years, with two stints in grad school) has developed my communication and group process skills, including the capacity to practice mindfulness in stressful situations. These skills have been further enhanced by my participation in multiple town committees (see below).
- *Understanding of and commitment to Board requirements for confidentiality.*  
Respect for and the discipline to honor confidentiality is an essential and integral aspect of my work in the mental health field, as well during my Board service.
- *Ability to meet time commitment of 5-9 hours per month.*  
Throughout my eleven years of service on the Board, I have always exceeded that amount of monthly time commitment. During the six years I was honored to serve as Board President I was able to successfully manage the additional time demands required of that role. During my year off the Board (2022-23) – due to our term-limit bylaw – I continued to attend monthly Board meetings (reading the packet materials to prepare) and also served on several Board committees.
- *Commitment to learning about and becoming competent w/ Policy Governance.*  
I dove into getting oriented to the Policy Governance approach in the months prior to joining the Board in 2014. I've continued to hone my understanding and application through mindful practice of this system, as well as via conferences, workshops and extensive reading.

*Which of the following specialized skills or other community/organizational experience would you bring to your board service? Board members should bring three or more: business experience, retail/wholesale (esp. grocery); **experience working w/ complex organizations\***; experience with real estate acquisitions; **labor relations\*** and/or personnel management experience; marketing experience; financial analysis/ investment experience; **leadership\*** and **group facilitation skills\***; **other Board of Directors experience\***; **other co-op experience\***; experience w/ food growing/ prep.*

- *\*Complex organizations:* I've worked at Clinical & Support Options for 22 years in several roles (currently Respite clinician/outreach). Despite my front line status, I've actively participated in partnering with management on programmatic plans and changes. My additional role as Human Rights Officer (22 years at CSO, 37 years overall) places me in the complicated position of asserting/advocating for clients' rights in relation to co-workers' conduct and management policy, while maintaining good boundaries and good professional relationships.
- I've participated in *\*labor relations* as a member of my union's bargaining team.
- I've had much opportunity through my work and training to develop my *\*group facilitation skills*. In rehabilitation/recovery, group process is grounded in the principles of mutual respect, transparency, and empowerment. Serving as Board

President for six years (plus training & consultation specific to this role) honed my *\*leadership skills* (or more accurately “servant-leadership”, a concept I learned of during my Board service). My facilitation and leadership skills have been further enhanced by opportunities to serve as Chair on other committees:

- Since moving to Greenfield in 2002 I've served on a number of town committees: Tree Committee; Commission on Disability Access (Chair); Master Plan Advisory Committee (Transportation Subcommittee Chair); Library Advisory Committee; Community Development Block Grant RFP review working group. Current: Planning Board (Vice-Chair); “Sustainable Greenfield” [Master Plan] Implementation Comm. (Vice-Chair/facilitator); FRTA Advisory Comm. (ex-Chair).
- From 2005-09 I served on the *\*Board of Directors* of the (unsuccessful) effort to create the Greenfield Mercantile community-owned discount clothing store. Despite the discouraging outcome, this was a learning experience as far as recognizing the necessity to bridge the gap between idealized vision and practical implementation (e.g., solid business plan, adequate capitalization). For the past two years I've served on the Board of the NFCA (a co-op of co-ops).
- When I lived in Boston I was a *\*member-owner* of the (now sadly closed) *Harvest Food Co-op*.

*After reading the enclosed article, “Policy Governance and the Role of the Board,” do you have any questions, concerns, or comments about Policy Governance?*

I've become very familiar with the Policy Governance approach and – while it can sometimes feel counterintuitive – I find it effective. The “Ends” capture the spirit of larger aspirations and priorities and the ‘means’ (Executive Limitation policies) help to frame a healthy Board/General Manager working relationship about how to realistically implement those dreams. I have observed that there is some risk that this process can become static or passive. It therefore requires discipline and vigilance on the part of the Board to “monitor” (supervise) the GM (a core responsibility the Board fulfills on behalf of ownership) with sharp attention, and to be alert to notice when a policy needs to be changed. During the past year, the Board has painstakingly worked on reviewing and revising our policies, a process in which I was deeply engaged (serving on two relevant committees). During my tenure as President we incorporated “strategic conversations” into our monthly agendas -- opportunities for ‘safe’ dynamic discussions on important topics designed to respect the Board/GM boundary required by Policy Governance while maximizing synergy and collaboration.

*Is there anything else, relevant or irrelevant, that you would like us to know about you?*

- I love downtowns, a wondrous blend of civic and commercial activity in a public space. It's important to me that both of our stores are in downtowns.
- I'm an avid cyclist (I usually visit McCusker's by bike) as well as being a zealous advocate for all non-automotive modes of transportation. One benefit of a downtown store is that it can be reached via multimodal means of transport, and therefore accessible to the broadest spectrum of potential shoppers/owners.

# NOMINATION FORM

Candidate's Name: George Touloumtzis

Candidate's Town or City: Greenfield

Year Member-Owner Joined: 2002

Nominations for the directors shall be made by petition, signed by at least three member-owners of the Co-op. (Only one signature per member-owner number per nominee.)

I nominate the above candidate to run for a seat in the 2026 Board of Directors election of Franklin Community Cooperative:

1. Member-owner name (print): Eveline Mac Dougal


Town or city of residence: Greenfield

Signature: 

Approximate year member-owner joined: 1987

2. Member-owner name (print): ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Jennifer Ollis

Town or city of residence: Greenfield

Signature: 

Approximate year member-owner joined: 2022(?)

3. Member-owner name (print): Janina Thayer

Town or city of residence: Greenfield

Signature: Janina Thayer

Approximate year member-owner joined: pre 2020

Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Please Return Form To: BOD Clerk, by January 30, 2026