

Expressions

Local Artisan Co-Op
Scituate, MA

Who We Are

Expressions was established in June, 2011 to showcase, promote and sell unique handcrafted items produced by local artists/artisans. It is a working cooperative. Each member shares in financial and working responsibilities of making the cooperative function.

The key to a successful co-op is not just quality of the craft items but also in the attitude of its members. Each member is an equal partner in this venture and must respect the opinions, creativity and originality of each artisan in the co-op. It is through this cooperative spirit that we strive to grow as a group and individually.

These policies have written to document membership responsibilities and shop procedures.

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Membership Responsibilities

All members are responsible for the following in order to remain in good standing with the co-op:

- Work the number of hours assigned by the scheduler each month.
- Pay monthly rent as determined by vote of membership.
- Contribute the agreed % of sales for operating expenses.
- Attend membership meetings; if a meeting is missed, it is the member's responsibility to read the minutes.
- Perform housekeeping duties during scheduled shifts.
- Maintain a cooperative and positive attitude.

It is important these basic requirements are clearly understood. Any questions should be addressed to the Co-Managers who will help everyone feel knowledgeable about and comfortable with their membership in Expressions.

Each member is restricted to producing items only in the category(s) they were accepted into at the co-op. The member must be able to produce enough product to keep the shop reasonably well stocked. All products must be labeled with the member's assigned code and a price. Expansion into a new category will require an assessment by the Quality Assurance Committee and a full vote by the co-op membership.

Applying for Membership

To become a member, a completed application and a non-refundable application/jurying fee of \$15 must first be submitted, along with several samples of the artist's work. All sitting members will be asked to view the works and application. If more than half of the members vote in favor, then the applicant will be asked to attend a meeting at which he/she will present his/her works and answer questions from members. After the meeting, members will take a final vote to determine if the applicant and their works are a good fit for the cooperative.

Fees

Upon acceptance by the membership, a member is obligated to pay first month's rent of \$150, and last month's rent of \$150. The total amount expected at the time of acceptance is \$300.00. Members are required to agree to a one-year commitment. If a member decides to leave the co-op before one year, he/she will forfeit the last month's rent.

Checks for items sold during each month (minus 15% commission and the following month's rent) will be issued to the artist/artisan by the tenth of the following month. Any monthly rent due must be paid within two weeks.

Training

Upon acceptance in the co-op, the new member will be expected to work four shifts as part of his/her training. Shifts should include two openings and two closings, if possible. Upon successful training, the new member will be expected to work independently going forward.

Probation Period

The first six months of membership in the co-op will be considered a probationary period. The member's work will be regularly evaluated by the Quality Assurance Committee and suggestions may be made as to

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pricing and presentation. The Co-Managers will monitor the new member's participation at meetings and during his/her work shifts paying particular attention to the attitude and spirit of cooperation displayed. If necessary, the new member will be provided a letter outlining any noted concerns and the expected remedial actions. After six months the Co-Managers will formally document the end of the probationary period or request that the new member leave the co-op.

Leave of Absence

Up to two months may be taken for reasons of health of a member or member's immediate family. The request must be made in writing to the Co-Managers. All responsibilities and obligations remain in effect except the member is excused from working shifts. Only one two month leave of absence per calendar year will be allowed and is granted only in cases of emergency.

Tenure and Resignation

Members may remain part of the cooperative as long as they fulfill the obligations of membership as set forth. For those who choose to leave, one month written notice to the Co-Managers is required for resignation. If a member leaves before the end of one full year, or fails to provide one month's written notice, the \$150 last month rent will be forfeited.

Disciplinary Policy

If a member is in violation of the Membership Responsibilities as stated above they face Disciplinary Action.

- First incident – the member will be given a verbal warning and must sign a statement to that effect.
- Second incident – the member will receive a written warning and be asked to come into compliance as stated in the Policies and Agreement. Member must also sign the written warning.
- Third incident – member's issue will be given to the review committee with the recommendation for removal.

The member shall be given the opportunity to speak to the full membership prior to the vote being taken. Upon recommendation to remove 2/3 vote of the members is required for removal.

Removals

Membership from co-op may be terminated for any of the following reasons:

- Failure pay dues for two consecutive months.
- Not fulfilling work responsibilities i.e.:
 - missing three scheduled shifts
 - tardiness
 - consistent bookkeeping and/or shop errors
 - A non-cooperative and non-positive attitude.

There must be a 2/3 vote by the Co-Managers and Quality Assurance to bring a recommendation for removal to the membership. The person being considered for removal shall have the opportunity to meet with the above mentioned group prior to a vote being taken on the matter. The member shall be given the opportunity to speak to the full membership prior to a vote being taken. Upon recommendation to remove, a 2/3 vote of the members is required for removal.

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For any member leaving the co-op, whether by resignation or by request, the Treasurer is empowered to withhold any monies due the member to cover any expenses incurred by the member, such as unfulfilled work obligations or unpaid fees.

Procedures

Categories

Membership averages 15-20 artisans who create varied crafts. Applicants apply and are accepted for specific categories. Any modifications or limits voted by the full co-op membership are noted on the application form. The form is then kept on file; this ensures a clear understanding by both new members and the current membership of the exact terms of acceptance. Establishing clear, specific category guidelines allows full and creative exploration of a craft area by the new member while easing any possible anxiety of another member having a similar category.

No licensed products may be sold in the shop.

Scheduling

The staffing responsibilities are divided equally amongst all members. The shift calendar is filled out monthly by the Scheduler using information provided by each member on availability. The deadline for shift requests is the **15th of the month**. If personal conflicts arise with the schedule, members may switch shifts with another willing member. The schedule posted at the shop should reflect this change. If something unexpected prevents someone from being able to work their scheduled shift, the member should contact the membership to find a replacement. If no one is available call one of managers.

Working in the Shop

It is important to remember that each member, when working in the shop, represents the co-op. Dress appropriately and greet and treat customers in a friendly manner. A neat, professional and business casual appearance is expected. Please refrain from wearing sweatpants, t-shirts, sweatshirts, etc. Men are expected to wear collared shirts. Neat jeans are perfectly acceptable.

The shop hours are generally 9:30AM – 5:30PM M, T, W, Th, F and S; 12 – 5PM on Sundays. Exceptions occur around holidays. NOTE: January, February and March the co-op will be closed Mondays to be in compliance with The Welch Company's hours. Opening duties include confirming the cash drawer.

The afternoon shift begins at 1:15 to allow a fifteen minute overlap between members. The afternoon shift has specific closing procedures outlined in the blue binder and the "Cheat Sheet". The shop must be left ready for the next day and secured with proper lights off and doors secured. Each day also has a cleaning duty assigned.

Any cash shortage or bookkeeping errors are the responsibility of the person working that shift. If the cash shortage is not rectified by the end of the month the shortage will be deducted from the member's sales.

Meetings

Personal and professional camaraderie is a very important part of our cooperative! To keep informed and to encourage discussion, periodic meetings are scheduled. All members are expected to attend scheduled meetings, including a mandatory "annual meeting". Membership meetings generally held on a monthly or "as needed" basis and are convened to encourage active, frank discussions as we each "own" a part of this

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business. Agenda items are solicited prior to the meeting from all members. Financial status of the co-op is always covered at these meetings. Constructive suggestions and comments are welcome and needed at the meetings but must be conveyed with tact and respect. Minutes are issued to all after each membership meeting. Members are responsible for reading the minutes.

Smaller meetings are also held on regular or as-needed basis for committees or special projects. These meetings are more restricted in their agenda topics and attendance. Summaries of key decisions should be communicated to the entire membership by email, as appropriate.

Other Policies

Secondary Products by Members

Each sitting member may be allowed to introduce one “outside the box” or secondary product for sale, depending on available shop space. To do this, the member needs to present it in an email (along with pictures) to the entire membership. If a majority of members votes in favor, the product will be allowed. Members may be asked to remove secondary products to allow for adequate space for incoming members. If a member would like to introduce another secondary product, he/she must follow the above steps of acceptance and jurying. Once approved, the new secondary product may take the place of the member's previous secondary product.

Category Creeping

Category creeping is when a member creates a product that involves another medium that is outside the parameters of that member's assigned category; such as a potter that begins a line of ceramic jewelry. Prior to introducing a new item, the member must adhere to the following procedures:

Ask the member (jeweler) whose work/pieces fall in that category for their position and show them the item. **Permission needs to be granted from the member in that medium, the QA Committee and the Co-Managers. If permission is not granted the product cannot be sold.**

If the member receives a negative vote, it can be appealed by having the full membership vote on the new item; a majority vote is required to get permission to sell the product.

If a member puts items in the shop without permission as stated above, it will be removed until the process/policy is followed and a determination is made. Strict adherence to this policy and process will be enforced. **Only members of the QA Committee and Co-Managers may remove an item from display unless a piece is broken.**

If a member believes another member has created an item and has "category crept", they must alert the QA Committee or Co-Managers. They can, if comfortable, work it out with the other member. If that is not successful, they will request the QA Committee or Co-Managers to resolve the issue. The Co-Managers have final say, but it can be overruled by having the full membership vote on the issue.

Similarly, if a member has a problem with another member's work/display, etc. they can follow the same procedure described in the previous paragraph.

Insurance

The cooperative carries liability insurance, which does not include products in the shop. If a member wishes to insure products, this must be done individually.

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Organization

The organization operates as an artisan cooperative. The operating structure and functions are as follows:

Co-Managers

The Co-Managers shall have general responsibility and supervision of the daily affairs of the shop. The Co-Managers will ensure consistency of shop practices, be the primary communicator to the membership and maintain inventory of supplies.

Treasurer

Treasurer will be the primary interface with the bookkeeper and communicate financial status of the co-op to the full membership. The Treasurer is responsible for examining/auditing the financial statements and is a co-signer (along with the Co-Managers) for expenditures and has significant input regarding purchases.

Scheduler

The Scheduler is responsible for preparing the monthly shift calendar. The calendar must reasonably reflect constraints but also be considered fair to all. The calendars must be emailed and posted in the shop two weeks prior to the next month.

Advertising/Publicity Committee

The Committee is responsible for generating publicity, planning special events, and liaising with reporters. The Committee must submit an annual operating budget (via the Treasurer) and be prepared to report on monthly expenses/programs at General Meetings. Monthly expenditures will not be required to be pre-approved once the budget is accepted.

New Applicant / New Member / Visiting Artist Committee

The New Member committee is the primary point contact for prospective new members and Visiting Artists. Prospective members and visiting artists are required to complete an application and provide sample work to the New Member committee. A Coordinator from the committee will answer any questions the prospective member / VA has and explain the general co-op expectations. The Coordinator and Co-Managers will lead the evaluation of the applicant's work and solicit input from any existing members, especially members with related work or significant knowledge of the category being assessed. The Coordinator will obtain representative examples of the applicant's work and present the applicant to the membership for voting.

Each member will be asked to vote either via email or in person by contacting the Coordinator. Majority will rule with the one exception that a member in the same Category has veto rights if they feel the work does not reflect high standards in the medium.

If the New Member committee is unavailable, the Co-Managers may perform these functions as needed.

Quality Assurance Committee

The Quality Assurance (QA) Committee is responsible for ensuring that high standards are maintained and for notifying members of quality deterioration, damaged products, pricing, packaging, quantities and any product flaws. Particular attention is given to new products in a member's assigned category. Items that do not represent professional quality will be removed from display and placed in the backroom with a note explaining the concern. The member will also be notified by email.

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The QA Committee is also tasked with monitoring product to ensure that "category creeping" does not occur. Members are accepted into the co-op by category/medium and are not allowed to display/sell product from different categories without prior permission.

Secretary

The Secretary shall record and maintain records of all proceedings of the regular meetings and email these to all members. These records shall also be maintained at the shop and be available to any member.

Please note:

In the event of dissolution of the cooperative, all bills will be paid, all assets sold and the remaining money will be divided equally among members in good standing.

Document history

- Original co-op opening, April 2011; policies adopted around June 2012
- Edited October 24, 2018 to update certain details about scheduling and category creeping
- Edited March 18, 2019 to update process adopted in January 2019 regarding presenting secondary products (aka "outside the box", aka "out of the box"); changed from present to co-managers to present to full membership via email. Also, added this "document history" section.
- Edited November 13, 2019 to remove \$50 one-time joining fee and add descriptive information about the schedule around holidays.