Statement by Diana Armstrong to the Board of Directors and Guests, April 12, 2016

I want to talk about the ballot. One of the 5 candidates for the 4 positions dropped out a few days before the election. Thus, the election became uncontested. Uncontested means, as everyone knows, the candidate doesn't face a challenger, thus the outcome is already known, which is, the candidate will be seated. But the ballot we were faced with had a "Yes" and a "No" beside each candidate, unlike the ballots we are used to which have only a box which you check or don't check.

On March 4, the day before the election, an update on the election was sent to managers and assistant managers at the Co-op for them to share with their staff. This says:

"To give our owners a choice in an uncontested election, owners can vote "yes" or "no" for each candidate." This may have also appeared on the ballot itself, I don't remember.

This is confusing. Also, if you read between the lines, which everybody can do in a nanosecond, you sense the option of using your vote to do harm. You can vote against candidates. Even though this is an uncontested election, a candidate or candidates can be prevented from taking a seat. If a candidate receives 20 yes votes and 21 no votes, they wouldn't be seated.

The intention of voting "yes" or "no" was to determine terms. But the bylaws say: "... candidates receiving the highest number of votes shall be given the longest available terms." It doesn't say the candidates receiving the highest number of "yes" votes.

But does voting "yes" or "no" for up to 4 candidates determine 3 term possibilities? No. I thought David should have the 1-year term because he's new. But the ballot did not allow me to vote this. To weight my vote toward David getting the fewest votes, I would have had to vote "no" for him. It's confusing and upsetting to suggest voting against a candidate, especially in an uncontested election.

Here's what your ballot should have said. This would have been positive and served to build community instead of tear it down and spark or feed rumors.

"As the election is now uncontested, all 4 candidates will be seated. However, to determine terms, please vote (put a check in the box) for the two candidates you believe should have 3-year terms."

This still prevents me from indicating I think David should have the 1-year term, but I am voting positively not negatively. The best way to determine terms would have been to rank the candidates from 1 to 4, 1 and 2 meaning the longest terms."

So why didn't you make the ballot reflect the "no contest" reality? Didn't you think about your unconventional ballot from the perspective of the voter?

In conclusion, by failing to declare this election to be uncontested and by having a "no" option as a way to determine terms, you caused most of the trouble.