

A Statement from The Roast Office: Our Bittersweet Farewell

To our cherished community,

It is with a heavy heart that we address the recent developments concerning The Roast Office. As many of you know, a public post by Cara Mathis of the Given Tuft Foundation (formerly Given Memorial Library) led to an outpouring of comments regarding our closure. We had hoped to navigate this as a private matter, but the situation has escalated to a point where we feel compelled to share our truth.

While on vacation, seeing the online discussion unfold, I quipped to my wife, Kelly, "Well, I know what I'm going to be dealing with when I return." (See Note 1)

We've played by their rules and complied with their demands, but it's now clear The Roast Office can no longer operate at The Outpost. Their position was never going to change. The board has fundamentally missed the mark, overlooking the immense community support for our coffee shop—support that would undoubtedly have extended to the library itself through book purchases.

Looking back at the emails, meetings, and public statements from The Outpost board, a clear agenda emerges. While the closure of The Roast Office is deeply disappointing for us and our dedicated team, and despite the emotions involved, we are, in a way, relieved to no longer engage with The Outpost board. This allows us to focus on The Roast Office's next chapter.

We are truly saddened to air these grievances publicly, but we feel it is necessary. We genuinely tried to resolve this in good faith. However, the Board is clearly spinning a narrative to suit its own agenda, which has led to significant community backlash following their initial announcement. On the advice of our attorney, we have withheld this full statement until now.

So, pour yourself a nice cup of coffee...

A Community's Heartfelt Support

First, let me reiterate: Wow! The heartfelt sentiments for Carol, her team, and The Roast Office have been absolutely incredible. It is profoundly clear that **The Roast Office truly belongs to this community.**

Before addressing the immediate situation, I need to take you back to the beginning.

In 2014, Tom McPherson, then a member of the Given Memorial Library board, approached me with the idea of opening a coffee shop. I remember thinking, "Why me? I operate restaurants." But after a weekend of consideration, I saw the potential. Andy Bleggi and I had worked

together before, and he'd once suggested we partner on a venture. This felt like the perfect project. And so, The Roast Office was born! Andy focused on the design, while I developed the menu, planned the kitchen, and created the name "The Roast Office" with the tagline "Stamping out fatigue one cup at a time"—a nod to our location in the building's former postmaster's office.

For years, our relationship with the library was excellent and mutually beneficial. We were always responsive to their suggestions and financial needs as a nonprofit. As our business grew, we voluntarily took on more expenses beyond our rent at their request. For example, in July 2019, we began paying **100% of the water bill** for the entire building and **\$200 per month** toward the electric bill, despite our original September 15, 2014 lease stating the landlord would cover all utilities. Furthermore, Elliott's has partnered many times on special fundraising events, significantly boosting the library's efforts.

During COVID, with many volunteers unable to work, the bookshop was essentially closed. Carol offered to sell books. My team at Elliott's even produced meals at a reduced price for Givens to sell to its loyal patrons, with proceeds going towards Givens' operational expenses, like rent. This truly highlights our commitment to our community.

The New Board and Shifting Demands

Around late 2023 and early 2024, the Village of Pinehurst took over Given's Library. The **Given Tuft Foundation** was formed, separating from the Village and becoming our new landlord. In the summer of 2024, the new board appointed **Cara Mathis** as Executive Director. (We only recently learned that Cara Mathis is married to Mr. Mathis, a current board member.)

Around July 2024, at the end of our original 2014 lease, we met with the 2024 board members. This meeting took an unexpected turn. They demanded significantly more money from us, beyond what our original lease stipulated. One member even quipped, "You make plenty of money in the coffee shop." Our original lease was for **\$1,200.00 per month** (including taxes and utilities) with an annual CPI increase capped at 3%. By July 2024, we were paying **\$1,395.00 monthly** plus the aforementioned utilities.

We asked them to propose a new number. They presented a **71.68% increase**, equating to an **additional \$1,000 monthly expense** for us. It was clear they were struggling financially and saw us as a solution. It felt as though "control" and "money," specifically extracting it from us as the sub-tenant, became the new Foundation Board's focus. We agreed to the increase but requested a **one-year backstop** on the lease. We felt this increase far exceeded a reasonable amount and wanted the option to renegotiate for 2025, as it was questionable for our bottom line.

Let me be clear: **we were not obligated to agree to any of this**. We had the right to exercise a **five-year lease continuation** with an annual 3% cap increase, which would have amounted to a nominal increase of just **\$41.85 per month**. Our lease terms mirrored theirs. We highly doubt the building owner imposed a 71% rent increase on Givens, and we are certain they would not have agreed to such a substantial hike. It seems no good deed goes unpunished.

Unfounded Allegations and Our Efforts to Resolve

Fast forward to current events. On May 20th of this year, Bailey Jordan contacted us to set up a meeting with Andy and me, along with himself and Carty Davis, to discuss the lease. After numerous scheduling conflicts, we finally met at Elliott's on Linden on Wednesday, May 28th, at 11:00 AM.

During this meeting, board member Carty Davis made **damaging allegations against Carol**. He claimed they had observed her, even taking notes on numerous negative interactions with guests. It was suggested we replace Carol or at least discipline her. I immediately pushed back, stating they were out of line and that Carol should be present if such accusations were made. I also told them **how we run our business is not their concern**. If there were issues, why weren't they brought to our attention when they allegedly occurred so we could proactively address them? (I asked Carty Davis for these notes, but he refused to provide any specifics to this day.)

We pointed out that reviews for the coffee shop almost universally highlighted **positive comments about Carol and her positive impact on the community**. They even claimed our sales were down during this back-and-forth, which is simply untrue. I informed them that Carol keeps Andy and me apprised of everything happening within the building, and that it was their manager, Cara Mathis, who had an agenda. I presented facts: Cara had stated she wanted to remove our sign, insisting the building should be known as The Outpost, not The Roast Office. Carol has shared numerous other unrealistic instances with us; I could go on, but you get the picture. We suggested a meeting between Carol, Cara Mathis, Andy or me, and Bailey Jordan or Carty Davis, to **clear the air and resolve any differences**. They agreed this was a good idea, but it never materialized.

Additionally, during that meeting, they claimed we had not renewed our lease in writing, only verbally, and that a written renewal was required within the lease's specified timeframe. We immediately said we would put it "in writing" by the next day, and we did. It's important to note that when we sent it, there was no discussion about its necessity or whether it was acceptable. **There was no mention of their intention to cancel our lease.**

Throughout the meeting, they continued to **pressure us to adjust our business model to increase revenue** so they could raise the rent further. We had exhausted most options due to the building's unique situation and historical code restrictions. We even suggested they buy us out if they wanted to change direction or expand. They expressed a desire for a bar with alcohol, which we felt did not belong in our coffee shop.

Ultimately, at this meeting, we agreed to continue paying the current rent and lease, but we were not interested in any nominal increase this year. We were confident we could continue to pay the vastly escalated \$1,000.00 rent increase from the last meeting. **At no time were we presented with a new lease to sign.** We also agreed to keep exploring ways to add a kitchen to expand the menu and increase revenue. We had presented that option previously, but it never gained traction. Things are never simple with tenants, sub-tenants, a building owner, and highly restrictive historic building codes. Given the long-standing relationship, our word should have been binding.

The Unthinkable: Eviction and Brand Seizure

Andy and I began looking internally for a buyer for The Roast Office. We were **fatigued by their behavior**, and we knew Carol was exhausted from dealing with Cara Mathis. We thought a "changing of the guard" could benefit all parties and bring a fresh perspective. We found an ideal candidate who would continue The Roast Office's legacy, including all our recipes and techniques, preserve the name, and work with Carol and the board. We presented the board with a formal note about this. (See note 2)

Following this confidential email, we received a **legal document from their attorney for notice to vacate the building and surrender our equipment, as well as our name, "The Roast Office."** Yes, you read that correctly! They wanted to end our lease, seize the equipment we had paid for, and seize our brand name, "The Roast Office." (see Note 3())

They then released an online statement that **bears no resemblance to the facts**. This was done without our knowledge or agreement, and while I was on a family vacation. It's also worth noting that they had previously requested, "that you and Cara agree on a statement that will be made available to the public regarding the end of the relationship and the mutual appreciation of each party of the other." This never happened. We were still disputing ownership of equipment and the brand name. When under counsel, one expects a formal statement to be presented by their attorney for mutual agreement once details are clarified, not during a dispute over equipment and name ownership.

We have sent numerous emails offering to remain a tenant under our current terms. We have tried to appeal to them, especially given the public's overwhelming support for our brand. Ultimately, they repeated the same dialogue: "fill out the RFP." We did that too, echoing what they purportedly wanted. It's also worth noting the board takes the position that we refused to sign a lease, and simultaneously claims we were in breach of the lease by bringing a viable new owner. (See note 4)

Honestly, receiving the note from their attorney was surreal. Even crazier, they then sent letters soliciting other businesses to operate our coffee shop and use—or discard—our name in our location. The board assumed they would simply keep the name and equipment.

Why would you destroy a perfectly good business that pays its rent and bills on time each month? Why would you dismantle a company that has been a well-loved and respected community presence? Why would you throw out its innocent employees and then try to find someone else to operate and pay rent? Even with the outpouring of positive comments, why double down on your position?

None of this was necessary. To the folks of Moore County and The Village of Pinehurst, I genuinely cannot express enough **gratitude for each and every one of you who has spoken so highly of Carol and her team throughout the years**. You have truly lifted Carol's heart, and ours.

Unfortunately, their communications and responses have made a path to resolution untenable. They want to control the direction of our business and **destroy a perfectly loved brand**. The actions of this board certainly hide behind contracts to inflict maximum pain. Their single-minded approach, focused solely on more money, feels like a big-city real estate transaction! So much

for conversation and verbal agreements. They have forgotten what they stand for: **community, literacy education, and the preservation of history**. As a result, they have damaged an enduring relationship.

On a personal note, many folks have commented on boycotting the bookstore. I urge you to reconsider. This board and its director, Cara Mathis, have put many people in difficult situations. We should look past their actions for the **greater good of literacy and education**, which are close to all our hearts.

We wish them goodwill as we closed The Roast Office on **July 27th, 2025**. We are genuinely sorry to our beloved community. Carol will be at The Roast Office with a few pots of coffee until the end of business on **July 31st**.

Mark and Andy

Note 1:

Released by the outpost

July 9th 2025

**Entire statement made on the Outposts Social Media platform Instagram on July 9th 2025
Presumably by Cara Mattis**

Eleven years ago, the Given Tufts Foundation approached Mark Elliott and his team with a proposal to add a vibrant coffee spot to its bookshop in the newly renovated Outpost building in downtown Pinehurst.

For more than a decade, the Given Tufts Bookshop and the Roast Office have partnered to make the Outpost one of Pinehurst's most important gathering places.

Now, as of July 31, this decade-long chapter will close, as Mark and his team have decided to no longer operate at the Outpost.

The Given Tufts Foundation would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Elliotts team for their partnership over the years. It's been an honor sharing our space with such a dedicated group of people, and we're grateful for the time and energy they brought to the building - and our community

While we'll miss their presence and respect their decision to seek other ventures, we are excited for what's ahead at the Outpost.

Stay tuned for what's next — We're brewing up something new, and we look forward to sharing it with you soon.

Thank you for your continued support, and here's to a new chapter.

Note 2:

Email we sent on Date: Wed, Jun 25, 2025 at 10:32 AM

Carty and Bailey,

Just wanted to give you an update on the Roast Office. As mentioned previously we have had multiple interested parties that wanted to purchase the Roast Office so we contacted them to see which one we felt would be the best fit going forward. We have entered a CONFIDENTIAL purchase agreement with one of them which will be closed on or before August 31, 2025.

We have explained to them your desires and goals on the growth of the bookstore and we believe their goal and your goals align. They will be able to put fresh leadership behind the Roast Office and we believe they will be able to work with your new manager of the bookstore. You can call me for more information.

We have presented several ideas to them that we thought would help expand the Roast Office goals at the same time fit in well with the bookstore goals you presented.

Please remind your advisory board and management of the bookstore this is very CONFIDENTIAL and not to be discussed with anyone outside your board. In addition, please remind them we have a lease with you all which precludes leasing or entering any other agreement with any outside parties that interfere with our business without our permission or knowledge.

Call me if you have any questions or concerns,

Thank you, Andy Bleggi

Note 3:

Notice received via email

Date: Wed, Jun 25, 2025 at 4:19 PM

Subject: Given Tufts Foundation-E&B Cafe, LLC

Mr. Bleggi,

I have been requested by the Given Tufts Foundation Board of Directors to send you the attached letter regarding the above captioned matter. Please forward this email with the attachment to Mr. Elliott as I do not have his email address.

From the outpost attorney

Dear Gentlemen:

I represent Given Tufts Foundation, Inc. (the "Foundation") and have been requested to contact you in connection with E&B Café, LLC's ("E&B") lease with the Foundation. Following is a brief summary of the events which have transpired in connection with the lease:

1 Given Tufts Foundation, Inc. (the "Landlord") and E&B Café, LLC (the Tenant") originally entered into that certain Commercial Lease Agreement dated September 15, 2014 with respect to a portion of the Old Pinehurst Post Office building located at 95 Cherokee Road in the Village of Pinehurst, North Carolina described therein (the "Premises") which included an expiration date for the Lease of July 31, 2024 (the "Lease").

2 Landlord and Tenant entered into Amendment 1 to the Lease effective November 3, 2014 which related to the sharing of cost to upfit the Premises and the ownership of all the Improvements therein by the Landlord ("Amendment 1")

3 Thereafter, Landlord and the Tenant entered into that certain Extension of Lease Agreement dated September 12, 2024, (the "Lease Extension") which, by its terms, expires on July 31, 2025 (the "Expiration Date") unless, no later than one hundred twenty (120) days prior to the Expiration Date, the Tenant provides the Landlord written notice of Tenant's intention to renew the Lease (the "Renewal Notice") and prior to providing the Renewal Notice, Landlord and Tenant have agreed on the rent to be paid by the Tenant to the Landlord during the renewal period (the "Renewal Rent").

4

5 Tenant did not provide Landlord the Renewal Notice more than the required one hundred twenty (120) days prior to the Expiration Date nor did Landlord and Tenant ever agree on the Renewal Rent.

The Landlord and the Tenant together with Elliot's Catering Company ("Elliot's") also entered into that certain Operating Agreement dated July 11, 2015, with respect to certain terms and conditions related to the operation of the food service business located in the Premises (the "Operating Agreement").

Based on the foregoing paragraphs 1-5, the Landlord herewith notifies the Tenant that the term of the Lease Extension will end on the Expiration Date of July 31, 2025. The Lease, Amendment 1 and the Operating Agreement each provides that on termination of the Lease, the furniture, fixtures, equipment including all improvements located on and about the Premises together with the name "Roast Office" will continue to be owned by the Landlord and shall remain in the Premises when the Tenant vacates the Premises.

In order to facilitate a seamless transaction when the Lease terminates, the Landlord asks that you coordinate vacating the Premises with Cara Mathis who manages the building for the Foundation and that you and Cara

-agree on a statement that will be made available to the public regarding the end of the relationship and the mutual appreciation of each party of the other

Note 4:

The Roast Office.

Monday 21st July 2025

To the Board,

This email serves as a final, urgent appeal to reconsider the current trajectory regarding The Roast Office. Our establishment has been an indispensable component of The Outpost's success, and the synergy between both brands is undeniable. Trying to determine which is more important is counterproductive; the public embraces the entire integrated space.

We partnered with this organization long before the current management, and without a doubt, we've consistently delivered on the vision The Outpost board established many years prior to your arrival.

We implore you to set aside any personal disagreements and reflect on what the board truly stands for. The Roast Office has consistently delivered on its commitments and contributed significantly to the overall enterprise.

We want to continue operating the coffee shop. The Roast Office facilitates 120 to 170 individual customer interactions daily. Each of these interactions presents a valuable opportunity to generate additional sales and enhance the financial health of your organization.

Furthermore, it's crucial to understand the operational complexities of our business. Much of our food preparation occurs off-site and requires daily transportation to The Roast Office. This logistical challenge is often beyond the scope of many operators. While a functional kitchen at The Roast Office was initially desired, it proved impractical due to space, planning, logistics, and cost considerations. Implementing a commercial kitchen would necessitate significant investments in a hood system with fire suppression (potentially \$20,000) and a grease trap, among other costly requirements.

Regarding a bar operation, you have the option to sublet the space. However, we do not view it as a harmonious addition to a dedicated coffee shop.

As Andy and I emphasized in our May meeting, there appears to be a personal agenda at play. It is imperative that we mediate this situation and regain a clear perspective.

Approximately 12 months ago, you requested that we absorb a significant 71% increase in renewal and other fees. We agreed to this, even though we were not obligated to. At that time, we requested a 12-month backstop in case we couldn't sustain the increase. At the May 2025 meeting, we confirmed our comfort with taking on these new terms permanently and, in turn, requested a waiver of the 3% increase for the next 12 months.

We regret that the recent online storm created by your initial post has escalated on social media, creating unnecessary tension. We believe it's crucial to set aside personal agendas and focus on what truly benefits The Outpost and its community.

While I do not know Cara personally, it is time to set aside hubris and objectively evaluate if this current path is truly beneficial for The Outpost.

We have, and will continue to, pursue a positive resolution for all parties involved. We ask that you do the same.

As it stands, your potential options are:

- **Kill our business:** This would eliminate a stable and profitable revenue stream.
- **Buy us out:** We have previously suggested this as a viable option.
- **Facilitate a sale to an aligned party:** We have offered an alternative to own our business, aligning with your expansion goals, including the potential for alcohol sales.
- **Allow The Roast Office to continue operating:** This would maintain a consistent and proven income generator for your organization.
- **Attempt to find a new operator:** While someone may eventually operate a business in the space, this option carries significant risks and delays.

Be aware of the significant obstacles involved in opening a new business in this space. This includes potential months without rent while a new operator develops their concept and meets all current regulations. We are aware that potential operators have explored leasing from you and buying us out and operating The Roast Office, only to withdraw due to the volatile situation or a reluctance to get involved.

Clearly, we represent your best and most proven partner. Andy and I are willing to work with you, even if that means facilitating a future sale of the brand to a buyer more aligned with your specific desires. Arbitrarily terminating The Roast Office is nonsensical. It has consistently served all stakeholders well, and the public adores The Roast Office. Why would the board choose to eliminate it?

When emotions are set aside, it's clear that The Roast Office has been a champion of The Outpost for over a decade. Debating whether you are a bookshop that serves coffee or a coffee shop that sells books is futile; it's a "chicken and the egg" scenario. We are, and have been, one cohesive entity since 2014.

As we have stated numerous times, we are prepared to continue our existing 5-year lease with the agreed-upon annual increases 3% starting in 2026.

We sincerely hope we can reach a harmonious and mutually beneficial conclusion.

On a personal note, this situation feels surreal. Neither Andy nor I anticipated this, as we pride ourselves on our ability to navigate most business challenges. This situation is particularly perplexing. We genuinely hope that differences and personal feelings can be put aside, allowing us to focus on the practical matter of operating a profitable and enduring entity that supports worthwhile endeavors.

With Respect,

Mark and Andy

Email traffic expressing our concerns in 2024 regarding the escalation in rents and context to ask for a one year back stop on the lease

Sent: Wednesday, August 7, 2024 1:42 PM

Cc: Andy Bleggi Carty Davis, baily

Subject: Re: Roast Office Lease Update

I need to pause a second on this? We are increasing our rent by over 100% we are happy to undertake the increase. but we want an option to renegotiate after 12 months. looking at our increased expenses I'm not sure what we about to start paying is sustainable for us.

I think a line on the lease that states this! will allow us time to work with our numbers over a fiscal year.

If things look good we can continue with the rent as is or if it's not looking so good we can come back to discussions.

As stated the roast office is unique in the fact that we own and do not operate. Given the small revenues it generates it leaves very little for the owner as a profit. a business of this size should ideally be ran by an owner/operator.

If you can add this I'm comfortable taking on responsibility.

Thank you

Mark

Email traffic before the meeting

First contact from our landlord to discuss the lease

Any other time we have meet upstairs in the conference room of the outpost building.

Email sent May 13th 2025 11:19am

Hi, Mark and Andy. I trust you are both well and staying busy.

Carty Davis and I would like to meet with you to discuss the Roast Office Lease. You'll recall meeting Carty, Rich Keating and me last year when we did a walk-around the building. Rich's Board of Director's term ended in December, so he will not be attending our meeting.

Carty is out of town until Tuesday next week. How does your schedule look on the following dates/times:

- Tuesday, May 20th (anytime)
- Wednesday, May 21st (between 9am and noon; or anytime after 1pm)
- Thursday, May 22nd (any time other than 10am to noon)
- Friday, May 23rd (between 9am and noon; or anytime after 1pm)

Carty and I would be happy to come to your office or wherever you would like to meet. We prefer not to meet at the Roast Office, so we are not a distraction.

Thanks, Bailey.

Please note topics in red

May 14th

Mark and Andy, Carty and I are available on the 27th, but prefer the 28th if possible. If we go with the 28th, we are available between 9am and noon and 1pm and 4pm. Most anytime on the 27th works. Let us know your preference and where to meet. Again, we prefer to meet somewhere other than the Bookshop.

As far as discussion topics, we would like to cover the following:

- Lease term and payment
- Roast Office plan to increase sales
- Roast Office plan to make improvements to the space
- Feedback from the Bookshop staff, volunteers and guests

If you have other topics you would like to cover, please let us know.

Thanks, Bailey and Carty.

Email traffic after meeting

Date: Thu, May 29, 2025, at 9:43 AM
Subject: Roast Office Leases
To: Andy Bleggi
Cc: Davis Carty

Andy and Mark, thanks again for your time yesterday.

As requested, attached is the original lease, operating agreement and the lease extension we executed last year.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Thanks, Bailey.

Sent: Thursday, May 29, 2025 11:05 AM
To: Bailey Jordan Carty Davis
Cc: Mark Elliott

Bailey and Davis,

Thank you for meeting with us yesterday and getting this email to us so quickly.

Please accept this as our notice to renew the lease we are currently paying: \$2,395. which consist both of Rental Rate and CAM fees. (All Inclusive).

We will also work to get you a list of ideas of ways we believe we can continue to work together to grow our businesses going forward within the next 3 weeks.

Thank you again,

Andy