

**Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative
Board of Directors Meeting
May 27, 2009
Approved 6/24/09**

Board members present: Kristin Bolton, Kate Gridley, Barry King, Jay Leshinsky, Ashar Nelson (presiding), Johanna Nichols, Kira Winslow

Board members absent: Leslie Blow, Ilaria Brancoli Busdraghi, Ross Conrad, Michelle McCauley

Regular attendees: Susan DeWind (staff liaison), Robert Keren (recorder of minutes), Glenn Lower (general manager)

Invited guests: Bill Suhr, Tara Kelley

Others present: Jason Chance, Paul Martin, Walter O'Donoghue, Robin Scheu

Board monitor: Kristin

Meeting held at: Ilsley Library

Call to order: Ashar called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Approval of the minutes of the meeting on April 15, 2009

On a motion made by Barry and seconded by Kristin, the board voted 7-0 to approve the draft minutes as submitted.

General manager's report

Glenn explained that the Co-op is going through its first full audit in 10 years. He also shared with the board the income statement and balance sheet that will be available to member-owners at the Annual Meeting on May 30, 2009. The board then discussed the Co-op's transparency about finances vis-à-vis posting the information in a newsletter or on the MNFC website. Glenn offered to check with neighboring co-ops about how they share financial information with members. Kristin offered to work with Glenn on an article that would accompany the two spreadsheets in the September Co-op Newsletter.

Glenn also reviewed plans for the Annual Meeting, and the board recommended engaging members at the meeting in small group discussions about local food.

Linkage Committee

Johanna reported that the committee would like board members to be thinking of questions for the next member survey. The board discussed the possibility of asking questions pertaining to the ends, to the use of members' e-mail addresses, and the functionality of the MNFC website.

Board Development Committee

Jay reported on Cooperative Board Leadership Development's next webinar (which will be on linkage with the members), and the availability to board members of webinars at any time on CBLD's website.

Ashar strongly recommended that the Linkage Committee watch the webinar on linkage.

Executive Committee

Due to the time (6:55 p.m.) and the expectation that the board's education discussion would commence at 7 p.m., the board did not review the proposed Board-General Manager Relationship Policy or the revised Executive Limitations Policies. Susan DeWind suggested two changes in wording in the Board-General Manager Relationship Policy.

Board Education

Bill Suhr, proprietor of Champlain Orchards, spoke to the board about the fledgling "business owners group – south" with which he has been meeting. He discussed Pete's Greens' CSA in the Hardwick area and noted that with 300 members "it is a very effective way to move food to customers." (Mr. Suhr provides that CSA with apples.) Barry asked Mr. Suhr how the MNFC can support the business owners group – south. Mr. Suhr talked about how marketing is a major challenge for farmers and producers. He also talked about the need for more types of "microclimates" for storage of fresh foods.

Robin Scheu, executive director of the Addison County Economic Development Commission (ACEDC), said the business owners group – south has proven to be a valuable place for peer-to-peer support and sharing best practices.

Glenn said in his view there is a large untapped market of consumers in the Addison County region, and yet there is much competition among producers and retailers for that market. He also said he is working toward changing the Co-op's image as an exclusive place to shop.

Kristin spoke about a small group with which she has been participating. The group is trying to establish a "food hub" in Addison County. The group has many initiatives going on, is in the learning phase, needs to do some planning, and is looking for funding for such a plan. With regard to funding, the ACEDC is assisting.

Next, Tara Kelley, the coordinator of the Rutland Area Farm and Food Link (RAFFL), joined the conversation. She said her group got started five or six years ago from the land-use point of view since land use is addressed in the master plans of most of her region's municipalities. "So conserving land is half of RAFFL's challenge and keeping farms viable is the other half," she said.

Her group has learned that farmers want to farm and that they need someone else to do the marketing. That was the origin of RAFFL's "Locally Grown Guide": to tell people

where the farms, farm stands and farmer's markets are located, when they're open, and what they have to offer.

RAFFL has helped with marketing via the Locally Grown Guide and assisted by starting a winter farmer's market. Ms. Kelley sees a future where the demand of consumers in her region will exceed the supply of local farmers and producers. Next step: develop an infrastructure for storage, processing and/or distribution of products.

Final comments included:

- the "grow an extra row" program,
- enlist the aid of Middlebury College,
- enlist the aid of the Hannaford Career Center,
- the current movement is like a "new-age Grange movement,"
- an obstacle to achieving a thriving local food network is the "middle man" who takes a bite out of the farmer's profit and/or adds cost to the consumer, and
- the overarching goal should be sustainability and a living wage.

Executive session

The board ended the open meeting with Mr. Suhr and Ms. Kelley and thanked them for their participation. On a motion by Barry, seconded by Kristin, the board voted 7-0 at 8:35 p.m. to go into executive session to discuss board elections.

Adjournment

Following the executive session, on a motion by Kate, seconded by Jay, the board voted 7 to 0 at 9:05p.m. to adjourn the meeting.