

**Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative  
Board of Directors Meeting  
January 27, 2010  
Approved 2/10/10**

**Board members present:** Kristin Bolton, Ilaria Brancoli Busdraghi, Ross Conrad, Francisca Drexel, Mary Gill, Kate Gridley, Jay Leshinsky, Michelle McCauley, Ashar Nelson (presiding), Johanna Nichols, Tam Stewart

**Board members absent:** none

**Others present:** Susan DeWind (staff liaison), Robert Keren (recorder of minutes), Glenn Lower (general manager), Bill McKibben (guest speaker), Reiner Winkler (bulk foods manager), and about eight others

**Board monitor:** Kristin

**Call to order:** Ashar called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Society Church.

**Member-owners' business**

Mary said a member-owner asked her if the Co-op could open a half-hour earlier so people could pick up lunch before going to work.

Ross shared the document "Vision for Organic Agriculture" by Elizabeth Henderson.

Marie Kireker sent a message to board, voicing support for what the board is doing.

**Approval of the minutes of the meeting of November 11, 2009**

The minutes were approved. [Amendments, if any, and the vote were not recorded.].

**Board education**

Ashar introduced Bill McKibben, author of "the End of Nature" (1989), the first book to reveal in depth the threat of global warming. Bill led the "350.org" and "Step It Up" international movements to reduce carbon emissions, has written about 13 books, and is scholar-in-residence at Middlebury College.

[The following notes were contributed by Mary Gill.] Climate change: the science is gloomy. Physical changes to the Earth are happening rapidly and are chaotic. This is occurring at small changes in temperature and if we look at projection of 3-5 degrees Celsius, we anticipate the physical changes will be very dramatic. New England is already seeing differences. Warm air holds more moisture, thus results in more dramatic rainstorms. Even Ripton felt the results of severe storms and Ripton has an ideal forest terrain that should protect it from such occurrences. As it gets warmer it gets harder to grow food. More arid climates occur. Grain outputs will drop 50% if we increase temp by 3-5 degrees.

It is worse than we thought. Politically, we are doing nothing about it. Copenhagen was a failure and it blew up the process. In essence, US and China said they would take care of this ourselves. US push is marginal right now; we are not sure what will happen in Obama's agenda this year.

Peak oil: the forecasts are real and accurate. Pressure to substitute is immense. Coal is cheap, but it is also most dangerous. If we want to create electricity for electric cars, the push will be to make cheap power with coal. We use oil inefficiently, e.g., farming and fertilizer.

Livestock farming is a major contributor to climate change. Factory farm with mass production of dairy and beef lead to high-end climate problems with methane and , carbon. We could turn this around. Cows that eat grass are beneficial to climate and farming.

Local agriculture will increase out of necessity. More economical and best pay off environmentally. We are seeing an increase in farms, and most of new farms are small. They are spreading around periphery of cities. Chittenden County shows an increase of 19%. CSA's are over subscribed.

Farmer's Markets are the fastest growing markets in the US. They do not seem to be affected by recession. We need more planning and thinking to expand this opportunity. Think about expanding to include more local products. Get all interested players to get together to figure out where the gaps are and how to fill them. There is no barley malt plant in Vermont. If we had one, we could make brewing beer more efficient and cost effective. Oats is another product not available here. We need a business plan that encourages producers to grow food aimed at a mass-market group. Too much of our products are for higher-end consumers. Infrastructure gaps need to be planned for. Vermont state government is not forward-thinking on this need. The Center for Agricultural Economy in Hardwick: it's worth a field trip for the board.

Addison County is limping along. Need to build a critical mass. We are in a place where we can plan and tell farmers what we will need in the future. Placing orders in advance. There should be more help from the political system (state government). Communities need to push this to make it happen. This side benefit will mean increase in communities working together. Local food production and distribution builds community. Businesses should set goals that push this trend. Can local coop's come together and extend the culture?

Glenn is meeting with local co-ops. The hope is that the co-op organization will do the visionary thinking and to establish the infrastructure. We can become more political and ask our representatives to push this topic (local foods and climate change) toward becoming a serious movement. We need to organize. Members of the MNFC will appreciate us taking a stand. They look to the MNFC for safe and healthy food. The need in the future to help the environment and local community will be well received. Focus

on expanding local foods and the movement will gain in influence. Our growth does not lead to destructive practices, unless growth comes from high-end products.

Local vs. organic: are they in conflict? Some products are hard to grow organically (e.g., apples). Consequently Bill puts his faith in a locally operated orchard that is conscious about its use of pesticides. He trusts the farmer because the farmer is accountable to local markets. There are large organic markets out there; they are like industrial farms. We could have local farmers come and explain why and what pesticides they use. Co-op can host or facilitate discussions between consumer and farmers. Our food safety regulations are ridiculous. They make it difficult for local producers to sell because of regulations. We need locally produced foods that the majority of people can afford. By increasing infrastructure, can we increase supply and thus reduce the cost over time?

What percentage of our locally produced food can feed our region? The Agriculture Department estimates we could become self sufficient in about one year. We need 20,000 acres; we need more grain; some of the high cost is because consumers are looking for the “perfect” looking food. We need diversified agriculture to reduce harmful pollutants and chemicals. 50% of people were farmers 100 years ago. We now have more prisoners than we have farmers. We have replaced human workers with chemicals. (Bill recommended David Cline, an Amish Ohio dairy farmer’s book of essays). Believes in judicious use of antibiotics and pesticides. There are acceptable and unacceptable levels. We are more likely to trust local farmers than some conglomerate.

The Co-op’s role should be to figure out the infrastructure gaps in the local food economy, and to coordinate the planning and action needed to close the gaps. Bill urged the Co-op to work with “two players” so Addison County can produce more of its own food: Middlebury College and Montpelier. The history of co-ops, he said, originated from a radical political idea about how to organize society. The member-owners of the MNFC would be glad if the MNFC took a stand; they trust the MNFC to make decisions about healthy foods.

### **General manager’s report**

Glenn discussed the upcoming meeting (Jan. 30) of the Neighboring Food Co-ops. The group will vote whether to become a legal entity under Chapter 501.C.6.

### **Linkage Committee**

Johanna announced that she will not run for re-election to the board this spring. Tam spoke to the board about writing articles for the Co-op newsletter. Your article should speak to the ends, he recommended.

### **Board Development Committee**

Ashar thanked the committee for streamlining the process for conducting the board assessment survey. Ashar asked the committee to compose an executive summary of the survey for discussion for the next time we go through this process.

### **Executive Committee**

At Ross's request, the board postponed action on the proposed Governance Process Policies until a later meeting.

With regard to renewing the consultant agreement with CBLD, the board asked Glenn to do a cost analysis to decide whether to contract with CBLD on an annual basis or whether to retain CBLD's services on an hourly basis as necessary.

**Meeting closure**

At the next meeting (Feb. 10 at One Washington Street) the board will meet with James Maroney for a discussion about organic milk and milk products.

On a motion by Michelle, seconded by Jay, the board voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:50 p.m.