

Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative
Board of Directors Meeting
April 28, 2010
Approved 5/26/10

Board Members Present: Kristin Bolton, Ilaria Brancoli Busdraghi, Ross Conrad, Francisca Drexel, Kate Gridley, Jay Leshinsky, Michelle McCauley, Ashar Nelson (presiding), Johanna Nichols, Tam Stewart.

Board Members Absent: Mary Gill.

Others present: Susan DeWind (staff liaison), Glenn Lower (General Manager), Reiner Winkler (staff); Lewis Holms, Judy Martini, Doug Shivers, David White (Board candidates) and Johanna Colwell (member-owner).

Board Monitor: Kristin

Call to Order: Ashar called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

Member's Business: Joanna Colwell wanted to make the Board aware of a bill just passed in Arizona to crack down on illegal immigrants which she says means there will be racial profiling, harassment and unjustified imprisonment of innocent people. Joanna hopes that MNFC will join a national effort to boycott Arizona products and tourism. Arizona is a big producer of lettuce, melons and lemons. Glenn said it will be difficult to pinpoint origins of these and other things as they are not labeled. How this will impact the store has to be considered and Ashar pointed out that a boycott can also negatively affect workers and producers with fair practices. There was consensus this would be a political action by the Board rather than a buying criteria issue. They will consider this further at the next meeting and Glenn will follow up further with Joanna.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of March 24, 2010 were approved as amended. The vote was all in favor with Jay and Johanna abstaining on a motion made by Ross and seconded by Tam.

General Manager's report: Glenn made a push for helping to get out the vote for Board elections. He asked that each Board member contact 10 people to ask them to vote. There are 9 candidates for 3 seats. Voting member-owners must use the ballot in the newsletter mailed to them. There will be no extras in the store. Last year 9% of members voted, above the average of 5-6% at other co-ops. Kate suggested Barry King to help count.

Education Committee: The Education Committee proposed a schedule of board education which includes linkage, sustainability, food choice footprint as well as tertiary (suppliers & members, waste, etc) carbon footprint, reading financial reports, local food system infrastructure and planning for growth. There was consensus on these topics. There is concern that there has not been enough time to reflect on what they are learning so the committee will look at ways to build that into their agendas. Ilaria felt that 10 minutes was not sufficient time for reflection. Longer meetings might help with this. Kate

suggested that a mid-year retreat (she will propose dates) would also help create reflection time and orient new members.

Linkage Committee: There was discussion about logistics of the Annual Meeting. Board members in matching T-shirts and name tags will float through crowd with new color Annual Report to engage member-owners. Music breaks will include “business” announcements. A suggestion box will be included at the member table. Input and questions will be compiled by Tam. Johanna will compile “elevator” speeches.

Board Development Committee: The committee has worked on voting procedures. There was discussion about filling the Executive Committee for next year. Michelle (as VP), Jay, Kate, Tam and possibly Francisca all expressed interest in serving. Kristin (as Secretary) did as well if she is re-elected. There was consensus that new board members can consult with Executive Committee even if not they are not on the committee.

Other topics: Johanna brought up the problem of too many emails and wondered if there is any policy over who can send what and when. No, there is no policy. Tam suggested starting a “base camp” website to collect and store informational reports and use monthly packets only for information necessary for meetings. He will make a short presentation about how this works at the next meeting.

Johanna also asked about having Ends considered in the next Business Plan.

Linkage: Kristin started the discussion summarizing readings that were sent out.

Consensus among co-ops is there must be three elements in linking to member-owners.

Economic: a mutual benefits that we do offer - discounts, sales, Co-op Connection, etc.

Transparency: reporting to member-owners on financial status, how we serve them, involve them in strategic thinking and report back, and engage through meetings, bulletin board, newsletter and website.

Cognition: build a sense of community through which people can identify who we are as a community and how to sustain it. Surveys are one way to achieve this.

Glenn reminded the Board of the importance of offering a variety of levels and ways for people to engage with the Board; it is not one size fits all. The primary way for people is economic; without this other ways will not follow.

Issues discussed were: defining and separating Board linkage from operational linkage while still collaborating. The Board already does a lot of linkage but how do they know if it is successful (if it does not go well they get feed back). There is concern that they do not know the demographics of member-owners (do they need to know them?). They should work on how to attract younger members (expand variety of ways – more electronic?). There should be a 5 year plan for communication to be proactive. Of importance was the need to change our communication as the community changes.

Meeting Closure: Items for next agenda: dairy issue from James Maroney, Arizona boycott, reflection on Linkage discussion, June retreat, sustainability/food choice footprint, Annual Meeting, “base camp”. On a motion by Kate, seconded by Ross, all voted in favor to adjourn the meeting at 8:48 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Susan DeWind