

**Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative  
Board of Directors Meeting  
October 27, 2010**

**Approved 11/17/10**

**Board Members Present:** Kristin Bolton, Ross Conrad, Mary Gill, Jay Leshinsky, Karen Miller-Lane, Kevin Lehman, Tam Stewart.

**Board Members Absent:** Ilaria Brancoli Busdraghi, Francisca Drexel, Kate Gridley, Michelle McCauley.

**Others present:** Susan DeWind (Staff Liaison), Glenn Lower (General Manager), Reiner Winkler (Bulk Manager)

**Board Monitor:** Tam

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

**Member Business:** Glenn reported Ben Gleason's concern about the definition of "local" that MNFC is using. King Arthur flour is not grown or milled in Vermont. MNFC has removed the "local" label from the display. Susan reported staff concern about and opposition to any possibility of expanded store hours because of cost, burnout and night time safety. Kristin noted the need for a scale in Bulk department for customers. James Maroney would like the Co-op to host a community discussion about the term "natural" as applied to food. The Buying Criteria Committee is talking about this and the Board agreed that that would be the best venue for him to have a discussion for now.

**Approval of Minutes:** On a motion by Kristin, seconded by Karen, the minutes of September 22 were approved unanimously as amended.

**General Manager's Report:** Ross and Glenn met with Spring Hill about having a carbon footprint assessment done. Spring Hill has given an estimate to cover baseline data on the physical plant, energy use, food categories and some store and customer activities. Other estimates will be pursued and Jay suggested Natural Logic. The Board consensus was to continue researching this and consider next steps at their retreat this winter.

Kristin commented on Eat Local Month. Even though the goal of \$250,000 was not met there was a 15% increase over last year. While sales in produce remain strong in September, it takes more work for staff to handle it resulting lower sales growth for the department. Glenn commented that the increase in the percentage of local products at MNFC will be gradual unless the Co-op takes big steps.

**EL 1 Report:** In a general discussion, Ross requested that the EL reports have more information about steps that will be taken to correct or improve situations. Glenn said he is happy for feedback and will add more to the report. Glenn said, where he noted in the report the need for improvement, he will meet with the Management team to consider steps. He does not want to discount the small number of negative reviews even though

they do not show a serious problem. The Board should check if Glenn's interpretation of data is acceptable proof of compliance.

EL 1.2 - Consistent policies: primary purpose is about discrimination. Glenn noted existence of one inconsistent rule for Front End and mentioned the challenge of monitoring all policies now that there are so many.

EL 1.1 – Grievances: The Board requested the report show procedure for handling grievances, not if there were any.

All were in favor of accepting this monitoring report.

**Ends Report:** There was discussion of the report and the 3-year plan that Glenn presented to meet the Ends. In Section III b (promotion of environmentally friendly products), except as shown in the Fair Trade/reusable chart, Glenn noted that tracking specific products did not happen so much as tracking local. Grass fed beef would be good to track as local and having a low carbon footprint. He has not tracked bags and containers. Glenn posed the question, “how much work do we do to show the work done to do a good job on Ends”. Kristin felt the managers could help decide what is worth the work. The Board felt a baseline needs to be set to measure success and reporting should include more about survey data and outcomes instead of activities. Glenn offered to produce a list of trackable items before the retreat. Kevin asked if the solar hot water heater had saved any money. Glenn said it was hard to tell due to the new electrical uses added since then.

The Board voted unanimously to accept the report.

**Linkage:** Tam reported on the committee meeting to assess goals, evaluate success of different linkage modes and work for the coming year. They felt that the website and the bulletin board are the easiest medium for people to get information. The newsletter could be a backup source for those who do not use the internet. Tam presented possible page links to include in any website redesign and Glenn said he would give that higher priority. Consensus was that a Board member should be able to manage the page. Kevin suggested outsourcing this if budget allowed and emphasized Facebook as a way to promote and communicate. A suggestion was made for more specific language in EL 7.6 to provide for linkage mechanism; the Linkage Committee could propose language. Glenn will report back on a date for completion of website redesign.

Reiner would like consistent content to keep the Board page in the Newsletter full each month. This can include meeting topics, information and website links. Glenn said he will work with Karin on Bulletin Board options.

**Education:** On the 7 growth scenarios, the Board consensus was to consider, in light of the retreat, what is at stake, what are the pressures on the store and are longer hours a solution. Each board member summarized their views:

Glenn commented that in the past the easiest, controllable step to take was physical expansion but the Co-op now has the opportunity to look at broader possibilities for expansion perhaps combining different approaches. Susan spoke to exploring differing options without tying them to store physical expansion as they may relieve some pressures indirectly and allow us to keep the important qualities of what the store is now. Karen is excited by the creative ideas beyond the “usual”. Michelle supports exploring

other possible projects before planning store expansion. Jay thinks the scenarios reflect all their work on Ends and hopes to facilitate a process that meets co-op needs. Reiner is glad for the proactive work around local, education, storage, possible involvement with local institutions, etc. He sees possible need for expansion as well but does not want to lose what we are. Ross likes the creative thinking and believes there is a need to act differently if we want to create a different result than expansion. Mary sees us as a magnet for the community in the local economy, increasing use of the store by offering more and a satellite store as a possible solution to relieve pressure. Tam feels the Co-op should start with multiple options incrementally, not just one scenario, separate from the store. Kevin said it would be good for the various alternatives to be used together to reach more people.

The Board sees these ideas as many options in the next generation of choices and they raise questions to answer: How do we preserve the community of the store? What size store loses that? How do we leverage the Co-op as a social engine? How do we make these options achievable? How can we influence customer behavior to alleviate pressures on the store?

**CBLD 101:** Will be held Jan. 8 in Brattleboro on co-operative governance, finance, history and networking

**Board Development Committee:** Candidates for the next elections need to be added to the list of committee work as well as strengthening wording on webinars, self-evaluation and monitoring. It was agreed that Tam will contact Michael Healy for help on this.

**Executive Session:** On a motion by Ross, seconded by Kristin, all voted in favor of going into Executive Session at 8:38 pm and come out to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 pm. on a motion by Tam Stewart, seconded by Karen Miller-Lane.

Respectfully submitted by Susan DeWind