

**Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative
Board of Directors Meeting
January 26, 2011**

Board Members Present: Kristin Bolton, Ilaria Brancoli Busdraghi, Ross Conrad, Francisca Drexel, Mary Gill, Kate Gridley, Kevin Lehman, Jay Leshinsky, Michelle McCauley, Karen Miller-Lane, Tam Stewart.

Others present: Susan DeWind (Staff Liaison), Glenn Lower (General Manager), James Maroney and Hillary Zhao (staff).

Board Monitor: Tam

Call to Order: Jay called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm.

Member Business: The Board had a brief visit from James Maroney on the state of Agriculture in VT. As he wrote in a recent letter in the Addison Independent, he feels that Farm to Plate efforts will not succeed until the State deals with conventional dairy. The Douglas administration did not include conventional dairy in its lake clean up plan and the EPA now has renounced the plan. The industry is “drowning” in product and it must shrink if prices are to rise. James urged the Board to join with Addison County Regional Planning in organizing a forum, including the film “Bloom” about lake pollution, in April for Earth Day. He would like to see the forum produce a vote for organic vs. conventional dairy. Glenn and Kevin commented about “Bloom” that, while it is informative about the problems, it does not offer solutions. James would also like the Board to actively support and work with Monument Farms, as well as Stonewood, Misty Knolls and others, to convert to being organic. Kevin said ACRP might sponsor a forum.

Karen reported a request to have a wider curb cut for the first handicap parking space or to relocate the space to make it more accessible.

Kristin reported on a meeting of the Addison County Organic Farmers in which concerns were expressed about their visibility to MNFC customers and their relationships with the Co-op which they highly value. For the most part they appreciate good work by MNFC but there are times they feel there is uneven promotional efforts, inaccurate labeling of “local” on some products and limited education of staff about their products. They would like to have a better understanding of access to the Producer of the Month program and hope the Co-op will consider some day having its own butcher shop with wholesale meat purchasing. They suggest the Co-op consider having a coordinator to work with farmers and look at ways to serve a broader community, educate on healthy food choices and make the Co-op more transparent. Glenn said he will look at these issues and report back anything Board related.

Approval of Minutes: On a motion by Ross, seconded by Kristin, the minutes of December 15 were approved as amended by all except Kevin who abstained.

General Manager’s Report: Glenn said they are still working out how to make the new Board bulletin board accessible in a front hall location. Glenn will work with Tam on

resolving this issue in time for the elections. Kate will take photos of board members which can be ready in two weeks.

Glenn said he would send a list of the recipients of MNFC loans. Glenn reported, and the Board supported, his offer of loans to Pete's Greens, after their fire, and other farmers hit hard by wind storms. He said that they are grateful for the offer and said what would help the most is for people to make a point of buying their products to keep income flowing. Kristin offered to write a letter for the March newsletter on this.

Glenn reported on H121, a bill being considered in the VT legislature that could hurt co-operative businesses. While broadening their ability to raise capital, it would seriously weaken the definition of co-op, allowing many non co-ops to use the "co-op" name. NFCA has written a letter protesting the bill. Glenn will also draft a letter for the Board to sign after Executive Committee approval.

BDC Committee: Kate went to the CBL-101 gathering and said she will share the MNFC Board Orientation Packet with other coops from the meeting that asked to see it.

Seats held by Kate, Tam and Ilaria are open for the upcoming elections. Kate asked are there people with specific skills that should be encouraged to run. It was agreed that people interested in serving do not need specific skills beyond having time and dedication to the group process and the work of the board.

Other BDC work will include conflict of interest forms signed annually, Board monitoring, committee structure, GP language, self-evaluation and a mid-year retreat.

Retreat Review: The board expressed their appreciation for the work Kristin did organizing the retreat. Kristin proposed a goal to help focus Board work to come which she later wrote up to read:

"The **goal** is that **20% (25%?)** food eaten in Addison County by 2020 will be **local** (and **organic?**) and more accessible (**affordable**) to folks on low income. We will accomplish this through

- **collaboration** with appropriate local, state, regional and national organizations
- **education** of membership, staff and the community
- "brick and mortar" (**store**) changes
- watchful vigilance regarding **peak oil, climate change and uncertain economic times.**"

Ross commented that peak oil and climate change may effect the ability to produce food and for MNFC to stock the store. There was consensus that collaboration is essential to Board work. Collaboration could include researching what is happening and not happening in the region, what groups and systems exist, how farmers are responding to efforts and what can the Co-op do. Jay proposed that we should fill in the map of the local food system, identify stakeholders and fill in the gaps. Kate felt that effort should create sustainability ahead of change. In working with other groups, the Board can be active in bolstering the local food system without duplicating other efforts or trying to do more than it can effectively take on.

Tam talked about different ways the Co-op educates people:

- Board to Board
- Board to member-owners
- Board to store (buying criteria)

- Store to member-owners, staff, vendors and community
- Member-owners to member-owners

It was agreed that operational education and Board education need to be separated in a Board Policy.

Kevin will send out the Farm to Plate summary, ACORN's 2010 Strategic Plan and a Slow Money article from Slowmoney.org for the Board to read for the next meeting

Webinar Report: Mary passed around a handout from the class on Roles and Responsibilities of Directors. She reiterated that time, attention to group process and a willingness to learn are the qualifications for directors.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:50pm on a motion by Karen seconded by Tam with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Susan DeWind