

Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative
Board of Directors Meeting
February 16, 2011
Approved 3/23/11

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

Absent: Kate Gridley.

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

Board Monitor: Tam

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

Member Business: Tam and Ross spoke with James Maroney in addition to the letter Jay wrote. Kristin reported a comment from Christina del Piero asking that the Co-op not expand but use store space more efficiently. She also asked that the MNFC Facebook page be updated frequently and include items such as recipes.

Approval of Minutes: On a motion by Tam, seconded by Karen, the minutes of January 26 were approved by all as amended.

General Manager's Report: Due to the early meeting date this month, financial monitoring reports will be included in the March meeting agenda.

Glenn received notice about the closure of Farmer's Diner.

Glenn attended the ACORN Wholesale Collaborative meeting. They are in the early stages of work on serving as a connection between institutions and growers of local food. They would like one main producer and buyer to get this started. The challenge is to find pricing that works for both producers and buyers.

Glenn shared some items from the management team retreat. Their discussion included priorities for higher staff compensation and benefits to retain quality staff, education for staff and members, efficient use of store space, expansion and buying criteria challenges. Carbon footprint assessment was not seen as a high priority. Karen said it would be good for staff to understand how this is a long range goal that can effect the Co-op in the future and why the Board cares about it.

Glenn will report back to the Board on store policy decisions about Cabot butter.

NOFA Meeting: Jay talked of the NOFA meeting he attended which focused just on the Vermont food system. The challenge discussed was sourcing issues and the blocks to getting local food into institutions, including price (affordability), customer demands, and budgets. Glenn sees the effort involving a cultural change through social marketing and keeping the local food discussion in front of people.

Board Work Plan: The Board discussed the draft 20% local food consumption by 2020 goal. The Executive Committee considered the goal and thought it would be hard to

measure. Glenn suggested thinking of it as “what if we try to achieve this goal”. He proposed instead of looking for an exact percentage increase to see this as an effort to shift people closer toward local on a continuum of food choices. The Farm to Plate goal is a 5% increase. ACRP’s goal is 10%. Glenn said there needs to be cultural changes to achieve this goal and is county-wide work, not just MNFC. The Board will look at a summit of small and large players along with consumers that could start to bring pressure for changes and MNFC could lead by example for the region.

Ross asked the Board to consider adding “organic” to the goal wording. There was discussion about if this would be a good idea because of the sometimes negative reaction to the term “organic”. Effort could be made to redefine organic, perhaps with a different label. Reiner said price is a primary issue and how to make organic affordable would have to be considered. An organic goal could be a Co-op goal independent of the broader community goal of local.

Jay asked how to connect this idea to Ends, how to engage members about this and what would the Board’s role be in prioritizing and setting a long range plan. Ross suggested adding questions about this to the election ballots and let members help define steps.

The 20-20 goal involves collaboration with other community efforts as well as setting goals, educating members about it and connecting it to Ends.

The Board agreed that the Executive Committee will work on the draft goals to send to member-owners in the April newsletter and refine what will be Board work and what will be operational. The Board brainstormed a list of possible questions that could be included on the May ballot to understand member-owner priorities.

The Vision - is it a good idea?

Scale of 1-5 on its importance.

Would you pay more for local?

How important is local in your food choices?

How important is organic or sustainable in your food choices?

Do you feel informed about local and organic?

List of topics – on which would you like more information?

Do you think buying local will help the local economy?

How would you like to see the Co-op grow as the local economy grows (give options)?

Concerns of Addison County Organic Farmers: Jay said he had responded to Bay Hammond and Ben Gleason about their concerns. They are appreciative of the response and the Co-op’s efforts. The operational issues will be considered.

Next meeting agenda: Monitoring reports, Annual Meeting – Linkage, Executive Committee 20-20 goal, Buying Criteria, Elections.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 pm on a motion by Mary seconded by Michelle with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Susan DeWind