

Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative
Board of Directors Meeting
April 27, 2011
Approved 5/25/11

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

Absent: Michelle McCauley,

Others present: Joseph Cadoret (staff/board candidate), Susan DeWind (Staff Liaison), Glenn Lower (General Manager), James Maroney (interested person), Reiner Winkler (staff).

Board Monitor: Tam

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

Member Business: There was another brief visit by James Maroney who mentioned a recent trip to Spain where he visited two natural food stores in Madrid and Barcelona. Both stores carried products that were exclusively organic. He then did a yolk color comparison of eggs from his farm with other commercial pasture fed and organic eggs that the Co-op sells. His were a darker orange which he said showed the high nutritional value and the importance of truly free range, organically fed chickens. He was asking buyers to look beyond the label to test the quality of products. After he left the meeting, the Board discussed James' mission to have MNFC go all organic. It was noted that the stores in Spain were serving large cities, not small communities. Glenn said MNFC would be a tiny, expensive, very different store. Reiner pointed out that the Co-op gives choices to customers. The Board has indicated to James that their role is not to dictate product line but to do long range planning and monitor meeting goals.

Kristin brought up two issues for awareness by the Board. She met with Addison County Organic Farmers. They are concerned about GMOs and the lack of labeling. The farmers feel powerless in face of this. The Board agreed it would be very hard to filter products in the store without the labeling but that the newsletter and website could be used for educating people on this issue. Francisca mentioned that the CEO of Stony Fields is appealing to the Obama administration to earmark food subsidies for certified organic foods.

Kristin also noted a BBC program about seafood from Thailand as being toxic and unsustainably harvested by slave labor. She hopes MNFC does not sell fish from Thailand. The Monterey Bay Aquarium regularly releases evaluations of fish toxicity and sustainable harvesting practices which Tam suggested be posted in the store and on the website.

Approval of Minutes: On a motion by Kristin, seconded by Ross, the minutes of March 23 were approved as amended by all except Karen, Jay and Tam who abstained.

General Manager's Report: Glenn informed the Board that Megan Lassonde has been hired as Deli manager. Next step will be to hire a new assistant manager.

Glenn met with Jon Griesser (formerly of Spring Hill) from Earth Shift on April 26. He will be preparing a new carbon footprint study proposal for MNFC.

Annual Meeting: The meeting will be on June 4 on the Green. The board discussed how they would like to interact with member-owners at the event. Kate suggested cards with questions for people to write on. Mary felt these could be left with people after starting small discussions. Kristin and Jay felt questions should be about what the Board work has been and how people view that. Tam thought a summary of the work could go in the Annual Report with a card for people to fill out later. Kevin suggested a large mural of paper on which people could write comments. Tam, Kate and Karen will meet with Glenn to decide what they will do.

Board Development Committee: Michelle is making a poster for elections and arranging ballot counting. The committee will meet in early May to plan the orientation packet.

Linkage Committee: Glenn and Karin Mott will prepare the Annual Report for the meeting. The Board page on the website will have links to pages for each committee. The committees will each maintain their own page.

Tam presented the proposed simplified charter for the committee: "The purpose of the Communication & Outreach Committee is to facilitate communication and outreach between the Board and MNFC members." There was consensus on the simplicity of the statement but it was felt education should be included. A variation considered was calling it the Communication Committee which facilitates education and outreach. Glenn said giving it this title would make sense for people going to the website. Reiner felt it should do more to reflect communication back and forth, not in one direction. The Committee will review these ideas for final wording to be adopted at the next meeting. Glenn will research the use of the term shareholder instead of member-owner.

(Kevin left the meeting at 7:45)

Executive Committee: The Committee presented a draft language change to a sentence in EL 9.1. They proposed it to read "That products are selected with a primary **and increasing** emphasis on organic and local items" (new words in bold). The Board felt the words should show intention to increase these and reflect the urgency to do so. Glenn felt it is clear and puts into words what the Co-op is already doing. There was consensus that the EL report will help the Board understand what obstacles there are to increasing organic and local product both in and out of the store. The new wording was adopted in a motion by Ross that was seconded by Mary with all in favor.

A motion was made by Kate, seconded by Karen that the EL 9.1 be reviewed by the Board semi-annually rather than annually. All voted in favor.

The Board will hold the election of Board officers in May prior to the election tally. Should those that are running be re-elected, Jay, Kristin and Tam indicated they would be

willing to continue being President, Treasurer and Secretary respectively. Michelle has indicated she can not continue as Vice President because she's going on sabbatical.

The committee requests that Board members send Jay summaries of ideas from the Retreat from which a Board work plan can be put together at the next meeting.

Buying Criteria: As it is not a standing committee, the Buying Criteria Committee (BCC) does not have a charter. The Executive Committee feels there should be one.

BCC work and their question if there should be an expansion of the criteria to define what is healthy rather than only what is not healthy were discussed. BCC asks, are the criteria now a good definition of healthy or should it be more specific and complete. While providing healthy food is one of the Co-op Ends, Glenn said the effort should be measurable. Right now the Buying Criteria is what he uses and he measures success by staying within the criteria. (He noted that Parabens and high fructose corn syrup will be added soon).

There was Board consensus with Reiner's assessment that while the Co-op can filter items based on specific solid rules, there are many items that are open to interpretation and moving targets as to whether they are "healthy". While buyers have goals for healthy food in purchasing, they can not be overly confined. GMOs are an example. The Co-op can try to avoid them but can not promise they are not in the store as these are not labeled as such. The Board sees that while the criteria provide a list, MNFC also has a purchasing philosophy. Glenn pointed out that most other co-ops, in the face of stiff competition, focus more on differentiation and ownership rather than providing healthy food and MNFC is unique in its stringent criteria.

Jay suggested that the Board is not ready for a policy decision on this and proposed it be included as an education issue for the Board.

Next meeting agenda: Linkage, Executive Committee, Board work plan, officer elections.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:48 pm on a motion by Tam seconded by Kristin with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Susan DeWind