



**Please bring this insert to the
Annual Meeting on Wednesday, June 3
at *American Flatbread* in Middlebury.**

Annual Election Insert

June 2016

Warning

Voting for the election of the MNFC Board
of Directors will take place in the store
from 8 am Friday, May 1, 2015
through 7 pm Sunday, May 31, 2015.
Mail-in votes must be received by
Friday, May 29, 2015.

Election for the MNFC Board of Directors

Dear Co-op Members,

The MNFC is governed by an eleven member Board which is elected by you, its member-owners. Board members give their time to thoughtful deliberations concerning the future and well-being of the Co-op. The Board is directly accountable to the members for the activities and accomplishments of the store.

Specifically, it is responsible for:

- ♦ Monitoring the fiscal health of the Co-op;
- ♦ Developing, monitoring, and revising policies that guide the store to achieve outcomes consistent with the Co-op's values and vision;
- ♦ Acting as a representative for the member-owners;
- ♦ Ensuring through consistent monitoring that the General Manager achieves goals set by the Board; and
- ♦ Ensuring the Board operates according to its established processes.

This year, **four seats are open** (each a three year term). Included in this election mailing you will find the names of the six candidates seeking election to the Board along with their qualifications and reasons for wanting to serve on the Board.

Read the information in this packet and **cast your ballot by Sunday, May 31, 7pm**. The ballot and instructions for voting are located on the last pages of the Newsletter (it is not part of this insert).

Sincerely, *MNFC Board of Directors*



*Want to know more about the MNFC Board?
Check out the Board of Directors' page
on our MNFC website at
www.middleburycoop.com.*

- ♦ We will provide a variety of educational pathways for people to learn about healthy living.
- ♦ We will explore transitioning to a patronage dividend system.

Patronage dividends are the cooperative business way of sharing profits back to member-owners. Most of our peer co-ops are already using a patronage dividend system and report many advantages, including the following:

- ♦ It provides greater flexibility for using surplus profits, which can be used to offer lower prices, invest in the cooperative mission, expand building and services, or refund dividends to members.
- ♦ It protects the Co-op during lean years.
- ♦ The Patronage Refund System enables significant federal tax savings... as much as \$ 500,000 over eight years, it helps the Co-op return to profitability faster after an expansion, and
- ♦ It increases a sense of ownership and excitement among members.

I am happy to report that the Co-op has made great progress toward its mission goals. Our local food sales grew to 28% of total store sales last year; we have donated \$28,065 to our local food shelves and other non-profits in Addison County. Our membership has grown to over 4,350 households of member-owners. Our Food For All program has grown to 180 members. And cooking classes resumed this winter in collaboration with Hannaford Career Center.

Special thank you to a wonderful group of staff who helped make this year so successful. Also thank you to the 11 Board members who volunteer their time to support the Co-op. And thank you to our two Board members retiring this year: Mary Gill and Francisca Drexel.

Cooperatively yours,
Glenn Lower, General Manager

Please note:

The year-end **financial report** will be available to members at the Annual Meeting and at the registers in the store the week prior to the Annual Meeting. Please contact Glenn Lower at mnfc@together.net with any questions.



General Manager's Report 2015

by Glenn Lower

As of writing this report on April 2, we are several weeks away from closing out the books on our fiscal year.

Preliminary financials show that the Co-op had a healthy year with \$12.5 million in sales and approximately \$290,000 in profit. On average our financials translate to:

\$1.00 for every one dollar a customer spends at the Co-op...

\$.65 for farmers and companies that deliver food to the Co-op

\$.21 go to personnel compensation and expenses

\$.11 go to operational expenses

That leaves ... **\$.02 as our net profit**, or **2% of sales**, which we consider healthy but not excessive.

Aren't we all glad that these profits don't immediately leave our community to pay outside corporate investors?!

How shall we spend our surplus or profits?

Your elected Board of Directors spends a lot of time thinking about how the Co-op should be spending our surplus resources.

The Long Range Plan, evolved from our Co-op Conversations in 2014 with many Co-op member-owners, lays out three main goals:

- ⇒ **Goal 1:** The Co-op will provide the best quality products and services, and contribute effectively to a vibrant local economy.
- ⇒ **Goal 2:** The Co-op will improve access to healthy foods for an increasing number of people.
- ⇒ **Goal 3:** The Co-op will be fiscally and environmentally sustainable.

Key strategies to achieving these goals include:

- ◆ We will explore expansion opportunities on our current site.
- ◆ We will provide healthy food at fair prices.

Introducing the 2015 Election Candidates

Questions to the 2015 candidates:

- ⇒ *Why are you interested in serving on the board of Directors?*
- ⇒ *Briefly describe any experience you have had with cooperatives and not-for-profit organizations.*
- ⇒ *What has been your experience working with groups and what is your approach to group dynamics?*
- ⇒ *Is there anything else you would like the membership to know about you?*

This year **four seats are open** on the MNFC Board of Directors. The election ballot is located on the back page of the Newsletter.



Nadine Canter Barnicle

Weybridge

The first thing I did on my first day in August 1998 as a resident of Middlebury was join the Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op (MNFC). I have invested in MNFC both as a member and as a regular customer ever since. It has always been my goal to serve on the MNFC Board of Directors when the time was right. That time is now. I would like to be part of the next chapter of the MNFC as the organization considers its evolving role in and re-source to the community. My passion and commitment to the need for healthy food choices comes from struggling with a lifetime of food allergies. The MNFC is one of the reasons we chose to settle in the Middlebury area and has always met my evolving health challenges with whole food choices.

I have served on many boards and committees including the Quarry Hill School, the Middlebury Conservation Commission, the Weybridge Conservation Committee and the Weybridge Planning Commission. I am a founding committee member of the Weybridge Energy Committee and a founding board member of Idle-Free Vermont.



I have worked as a strategic environmental communications specialist with non-profits and government agencies for the past 25 years. Most recently, I was the Community Relations Manager for Addison County Transit Resources (ACTR) for more than 7 years. As a consultant clients have included Middlebury College, Housing Vermont, Vermont Land Trust, The Intervale Foundation, the Vermont State Air Pollution and Climate Change Division and ACTR. I am currently the principal of Canter Barnicle Communications: CAVU (collaborations ahead-vision unlimited) whose mission is to cultivate sustainable local communities by providing strategies and tools for collaboration, outreach and engagement. One of the areas of focus includes transportation demand management where we have begun work locally to create collaborative opportunities to address mobile source energy issues (including vehicle idling) to mitigate global climate change.

I would be honored to serve on the MNFC Board of Directors. I look forward to the opportunity to add my voice to an effective and active group of people representing goodness and health in our community.



Lynn A. Dunton
Middlebury

The Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op is my “go to market”. The shift away from traditional supermarkets took place for me when I became more conscious about eating food that was fresh, healthy, local, and organic. I feel a tangible sense of community and energy whenever I enter the store. Staff members are friendly, knowledgeable, and helpful. As a strong believer in supporting our local economy, I shop at the Co-op because I know that I am supporting a local business as well as many farmers and producers across Vermont. For me, the Co-op is a local treasure.

During the past twenty five years, I have worked and volunteered for several not-for profit organizations across Addison County. At the core

wasn’t the main concern. They were providing access to products that weren’t available at supermarkets and groceries. Today competition from “natural foods” chains and from the natural foods niches of major groceries chains is a larger and larger part of the landscape of the healthy food. This has become a major point of discussion in food co-ops across the US.

Over the last few months food co-op staff and Board members came together in regional gatherings across the country with support from the Cooperative Development Service to continue that discussion. The question being asked at the regional gatherings was “imagine we are heading off on a journey into the future that includes co-ops thriving in a competitive marketplace. On our journey what should we take and what should we leave behind”? Small groups met to exchange ideas about that question and were asked to distill their conversations to a few words.

What should we take? Inclusivity, community built on real relationships, retaining identity and core values, commitment to engage with the community, innovation; transparency, support of local producers, improved prices and price perception, welcoming before belonging.

What should we leave? Outmoded attitudes, exclusivity, us against them mentality, fear of change, moral superiority, fear of strategic decisions, complacency.

Our Co-op Conversations are one way MNFC has of asking the questions: what we should take and what we should leave in the future? Which of the “takes” and “leaves” from our conversations as well as those from regional groups are most important to MNFC? And how will they be translated into action and operations? As we develop the specifics of MNFC’s long term plan we will continue to ask for ideas and feedback from our member-owners. Board members will be available at the spring festival on May 2nd at MNFC and at the 2015 MNFC Annual Meeting on June 3 at American Flatbread. We look forward to hearing from you.

Jay Leshinsky,
Board President

In response to various questions, Glenn mentioned the help from a consultant to organize all the various points of view. Expansion can be seen as a means to an end rather than the end goal itself. This planning effort is different from earlier expansions as they included adding new departments and larger building footprints. On-line comments about the Co-op have been very positive. Co-op Development Services (CDS) will be helping with the decision process this summer that will be worked on primarily by the Board and MNFC staff.

Board Elections: Jay announced the results of the Board elections. Tam, Ilaria and Ross were re-elected. Kate Gridley will re-join the Board. As Steve Getz has had to resign due to his relocation to Maine, A.J. Adler will fill his seat as the next highest vote getter.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 pm on a motion by Peggy Rush, seconded by Susan Shashok. All voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Victoria DeWind



President’s Report 2015
by Jay Leshinsky

As I look back on the Co-op Conversations of 2014 and development of MNFC’s Long Range Plan I am appreciative of all the member-owners who participated at meetings, through letters and email and through conversations in the store and in the community with staff and Board members. One of the graphics that made the greatest impression on me at those local meetings was the MNFC

time-line. At the time of our founding in 1976, the Articles of Incorporation stated our co-op was created to achieve social objectives (healthy food for the member-owners) through economic means (a cooperative run food store). That was not a typical reason for starting a grocery store in the 1970’s.

Recently I spoke with a Board member of a food-co-op that is about the same age as MNFC. He remembers that at their beginning competition

of each experience, I had a strong sense of connection to the mission of the organization. I have twenty plus years of financial management experience in small and large organizations. Last spring, I received my MS in Mediation & Applied Conflict Studies and for the past two years have assisted organizations, families, and couples to find common ground. During my professional career, I have had the pleasure of working collaboratively with others to dream, strategize, develop, and to thoughtfully implement long range plans.

I feel a strong sense of connection to the Co-op and believe that I have much to contribute to the Board and organization as the Long Range Plan is implemented. The Co-op has developed a map for the future and I would very much like to be a part of the team that moves this plan forward.



Jay Leshinsky
(Incumbent)
Middlebury

I’ve served on the MNFC Board since December of 2007. At that time the Board began meeting with community members, Co-op member-owners and many representatives of the local food movement to gather information about our local food system. Collaborating with our General

Manager we combined that information with the Co-op Conversations of this past year to write a Strategic Plan for the Co-op’s future. I’d like to continue my work with the other Board members on the next stage of refining and implementing that plan.

Before serving on the MNFC Board I worked as an administrator for the Champlain Valley Head Start program and was a Board member for several Vermont non-profit organizations. As MNFC Board President I’ve participated in meetings with our regional group of co-ops (the Neighboring Food Co-ops), the Cooperative Development Service and the National Cooperative Grocers.



For the past 5 years I've been President of the MNFC Board. I've always seen that role as a facilitator who helps the Board do its work collaboratively, openly, and efficiently. I've run Board meeting with the philosophy that Directors, staff and member-owners all have valuable insights that can help us plan for the Co-op's future. I believe that operating with respectful listening and open discussion the Board can lead MNFC in the best way possible.

I've been a shopper and then member of MNFC since 1976. Until I became a Board member I thought of MNFC as a food store that was organized as a cooperative. Now I think of it as a cooperative that runs a food store. Our more than 4200 member-owners have expressed a range of priorities about healthy food, our local community and the earth community.

I welcome the challenge of working with our General Manager and the other Board members to use all the information we've gathered about our member-owner's needs to create the best plan for MNFC's future.



Owen Rogal
Hancock

My interest in serving on the Board grows out of my interest in the politics of food, healthy food, local farming and getting the produce of those farms to local markets. My wife and I garden, bake, cook —my interest in serving at

the Co-op is an extension of the life I lead day in, day out.

In the late seventies and early eighties when my wife and I lived in Oberlin, OH, we with another couple and a few other people ran the Good Food Co-op, keeping the books, meeting and unloading FORC trucks, stocking the shelves, cleaning, and clerking. When we moved to Davenport, IA, in 1986, one of the first things we did was join New Pioneer Co-op in Iowa City — too far from Davenport for us to become involved but shopping there at least once a month. When I helped one of our daughters move to Minneapolis in 2009, one of the first things we did was to join the Wedge. Now my daughter's partner is director

financials are in good standing. Annual sales continue to grow, although at a lower percentage than previously, and reached \$12 million for the first time this last year. Current assets are \$1.5 million to cover operations. Other assets cover insurance, capital improvements and repairs. With liabilities of \$1.7 million, total equity is \$3.7 million. Net profit of \$351,717 (2.9%) is higher than before because of lower expenses and loans being repaid. Sales numbers per square footage are high.

There was a question about the effect on sales and profits by the newspaper coupons. Between 200 and 250 are redeemed each week. They are used to encourage new shoppers to come to the store. Producers of the Week or Member-Only Deals support products that support MNFC values.

Glenn described the Co-op Conversations in more detail. Phase 1 was started in February at the time that MNFC bought the property next to the Co-op currently rented by Watson Scott. How to use this additional land was part of the conversations. There were 15 small neighborhood meetings to discuss how MNFC is doing and what its future may look like. Having the local producers at the Annual Meeting is the culmination of Phase 1. All the input from the conversations will be used in developing a draft a plan over the summer for Phase 2. In the autumn, for Phase 3, the draft plan will be presented back to member-owners to ask them “how did we do?” The details, including a summary, of all conversations are posted on the MNFC website.

Glenn presented some of the comments in the general categories of his summary:

- **Food** - good, honest, organic, healthy, favorite departments, variety.
- **Positives** - community hub, social aspects, overall shopping experience, staff, Co-op history, supporting the local economy.
- **Negatives** – crowded, prices, need more cream cheese and don't be like Shaw's.
- **What's next?** - affordability, access to healthy food, outreach to the community.
- **Physical space needs** - work space, café, bathrooms, aisles and parking.
- **Education** – be a primary goal, dedicated space, cooking classes, connection to schools.
- **Products** – meat, deli, reduced packaging, pros and cons of one stop shopping, stay as is, offer local produce only, limit growth to keep balance and scale.
- **Alternatives to growth** - go back to pre-order roots, satellite stores in other towns, Energy efficiency and sustainability.



Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op Minutes of the Annual Meeting May 31, 2014

To be approved at the 2015 Annual Meeting

Board Members Present: R.J. Adler, Ilaria Brancoli Busdraghi, Ross Conrad, Francisca Drexel, Jay Leshinsky, Sheila McGrory-Klyza, Tam Stewart.

Board Members Absent: Mary Gill, Kate Gridley, Kevin Lehman, Louise Vojtisek.

Others present: Victoria DeWind (staff liaison), Glenn Lower (General Manager) and approximately 35 people in attendance including several staff and approximately 12 local producers.

Call to Order: Glenn called the meeting to order at 7:09 pm in the Methodist Church in Middlebury, welcoming everyone to the 38th MNFC Annual Meeting.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the 2013 Annual Meeting were approved, with all in favor, on a motion made by Peggy Rush and seconded by R.J. Adler.

President's Report: Jay talked about the Co-op Conversations and planning future changes at MNFC. Competition in the natural foods industry is growing and, while there is no immediate competition locally for MNFC. It can be seen in Burlington with the new Trader Joe's. Doing business cooperatively in the community and involving members from the outset of the planning process is important.

General Manager's Report: Glenn talked about three important efforts at MNFC over the last year.

- First has been the long range planning process in Co-op Conversations.
- Next has been connecting with other co-ops through the Neighboring Food Co-op Association. Together they have worked on meeting competition, giving peer support, creating new goals and supporting sustainable local food systems.
- Third is completing the agreement for a solar energy installation with Misty Knolls Farm.

Glenn wrapped up his report by thanking the local producers for coming to the meeting.

Treasurer's Report: The written report is not the final version as the audit will not be completed until early June. The draft report however shows MNFC

of sustainability there. We are a family committed to co-ops.

I was a university professor in Davenport for 28 years so was constantly working with groups, the faculty as a whole, the members of my department, and, most intensely, my four classes of students each semester. I like working with people, listening to varied points of view, ideas, and approaches, working out positions that satisfy all parties.

My wife is a reference librarian, which means that our lives are governed by principles that grow out of the world of the library: the importance of being informed — knowing what you're talking about before talking — and community.

Writers I love are Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, William Morris, Virginia Woolf (Morris is relevant to my application). And many others, living as well as dead.

In VT we belong to four libraries (another kind of co-op) and are considering joining a fifth.

My wife and I moved to Hancock in September 2014, a dream we had since our earliest days together. We have a second daughter in NYC.



**Louise Vojtisek
(Incumbent)
Middlebury**

I have had the pleasure of serving on the Board for two years and have learned so much in the process. Working with this group of forward-looking, generous people has been a remarkable and rewarding experience, and definitely one

I want to prolong. There is much work to be done, as anyone can see in our recently completed Strategic Plan. I believe I'm just hitting my stride and am well prepared to contribute to the exciting future of the Middlebury Natural Foods Coop.



I served on the Board of the Middlebury Community Players and continue to participate in some MCP projects, and volunteer at the Town Hall Theater. I have also been involved in not for profit professional organizations at the state and national levels.

For many years, I was employed in local schools as a school psychologist ... working with, for, and within groups has been a focal part of my life. Increasingly, I find I enjoy working within groupings that offer a variety of viewpoints and opinions, and learning to view matters in a variety of ways. It is always exciting to experience creative but often disparate viewpoints that lead to a great solution to a problem the group had in common. I find great satisfaction working in groups that solicit input from everyone, share "air time" well, and rely on consensus in reaching important decisions. Happily, the MNFC Board works just that way!

I am deeply committed to the future of the Co-op and welcome the opportunity to be involved in shaping that future through continued Board service. Making healthy food accessible to more people, providing services that contribute to good nutrition and wellness, and retaining finances for buying and selling food within our immediate community are goals I hold dear ... working with the MNFC Board allows me to accomplish those goals.



Judy Wiger-Grohs

Middlebury

I wish to serve on the Board of Directors because I believe I can make a significant contribution to the Co-op's long-term development plans and its plans for continued and expanded public education and outreach. As a member of the Co-op I strongly believe in its mission and guiding principles, particularly its goal to continuously seek out "ecologically sound and healthful patterns of production and consump-

tion". I believe the Co-op is playing an increasingly important and influential role in the Middlebury community. My hope is to assist in developing strategies for bringing additional community members to the Co-op. Such strategies, whether educational or financial, would enable the Co-op's products to be within reach of more of Middlebury's residents.

My experience with co-operatives is limited to my involvement at MNFC where I am both a member and a volunteer. However, I have had considerably more experience with non-profit organizations. Until recently I was a member of the Board of Directors for the Willowell Foundation, based in Monkton, VT. I work with Middlebury's Hospice Volunteer Services in a number of educational outreach capacities. I am an education volunteer at ECHO Lake Aquarium and Science Center in Burlington. And, I work with the UVM Extension Service Forest Pest First Detectors Program in the area of educational outreach. Most importantly, I spent the majority of my 34-year career in education as a high school science teacher at Vergennes Union High School (VUHS).

I have extensive experience working in groups including day-to-day interactions with students, meetings with colleagues, professional development and various district-wide and statewide committees. I believe most group dynamics necessitate establishing a sense of community among members based on equity, respect and trust. As I became heavily invested in teacher leadership and worked in a number of leadership capacities at a number of different levels I continued to employ these same basic principles - community, equity, respect, and trust.

As a teacher leader I played a critical role in initiating and implementing beneficial change at VUHS. I have considerable experience in the areas of communication, facilitation and budget development. Related to the above, I am a trained facilitator for both the National School Reform Faculty and the Educational Testing Service's "Formative Assessment" program. If elected to MNFC's Board of Directors I would hope to put all of these skills and experience to good use for the membership.