

**Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative
Board of Directors Meeting
January 24, 2018**

Board Members Present: R.J. Adler, Molly Anderson, Nadine Barnicle, Ilaria Brancoli Busdraghi, Lynn Dunton, Kate Gridley (by speaker phone), Ann LaFiandra, Jay Leshinsky, Tam Stewart, Louise Vojtisek, Amanda Warren.

Board Members Absent:

Others present: Laura Asermily (MiddBikePed), Victoria DeWind (staff liaison), Glenn Lower (GM), Susan Shashok (Middlebury Select Board).

Board Monitor: Louise.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm.

Member-owner Business: Laura Asermily presented the concerns of the MiddBikePed group. They would like the Co-op, as a community leader, to be as accessible as possible for people who use bicycles for transportation. They are encouraging the Co-op to replace the bike rack that was removed during expansion. As the town as a whole is working toward initiatives that support bike, pedestrian and electric modes of transport, it is their hope that the Co-op can set an example by providing the best designed rack in a prominent location under protection from the weather for all types of bikes, including cargo and electric assisted. In addition to this group there is the Walk/Bike Council that is working on safety and infrastructure issues for bike riders. Lynn said narrow shoulders make biking dangerous. It was noted that cyclists can use sidewalks though there are hours limiting their use in the downtown. Glenn noted the idea that a rack in close proximity to the entrance would have to be moveable for plaza events. The Board supported the concept and asked if Laura could provide information that could go into the Under the Sun newsletter.

(Laura left the meeting at 6:50).

Ilaria reported a concern of a long-time member-owner about excessive plastic packaging in the new store. Ann noted a higher price for a same product at another store. Tam asked directors to post member-owner concerns on basecamp.

Approval of Minutes: On a motion by R.J., seconded by Ilaria, the minutes of December 20, 2017 were approved as amended with all in favor and Amanda and Nadine abstaining.

GM Report: Glenn informed the Board of plans to re-install wall signage removed in the expansion. This includes Ends, co-op principles and buying criteria as well as a board for events and information on local businesses. Molly suggested that there be a prominent display to welcome those who are food insecure and on Three Squares VT. Glenn noted a challenge in the balance of promoting and explaining the MNFC Food For All program versus privacy for those in need. Lynn suggested a display to show the meaning of Food For All in the entry way and partnering with the food shelves to get information out. Victoria noted the latter is being done. R.J. asked if an automatic discount at the registers for those using an EBT card was possible.

Glenn informed the Board of the plan to take a group picture of the Board for the web page at the upcoming retreat. Karin has proposed consolidating separate Board web pages into one. Using individual pictures with short bios made into a collage was discussed in order to eliminate the need to get all directors together for a group photo.

Molly asked about the hot bar sales. Glenn said they are starting slowly with just lunch but it will expand into dinner hours. An oven was down at the start but generally it has been very successful so far. Molly suggested that, with heavy use of café tables, additional seating be created if possible. Glenn noted that the café is double what it was before and summer will allow for outdoor options.

Glenn reported on the huge success of the Jan. 6th Grand Opening.

Lynn asked about December 4th quarter sales. The NCG eastern corridor co-ops saw 2% growth. MNFC had 12%. MNFC and City Market expansions put them in a strong place in comparison to other co-ops.

Molly thanked Glenn for holding inclusivity conversations with staff and working toward a long term plan.

GP 8 – Trusteeship and Relationship to Member-Owners: The revision committee is working through the ELs after which they will work on the GPs. Ends are published in the annual report and quarterly newsletter and will also be reinstalled on the café wall. The consensus was that the Board is complying with this GP.

Policy Revision: Ilaria reported on the revision committee work that has included input from Glenn. The goal is to create policies that will last into the future and make Board monitoring easier. They are reviewing the CDS policy templates to see if they reflect what the Co-op is doing rather than revising existing MNFC policies. They will add any language deemed necessary to reflect MNFC. The CDS templates do not include vendor policies and the committee feels it is no longer needed for MNFC and can be eliminated. The committee is also using the term “may not” instead to “must not” to set a better tone. (Susan left the meeting at 7:40).

Board Retreat: Tam asked the Board to consider creating time to have full conversations on multiple topics to create priorities for an annual work plan. He suggested four topics:

1 – Racism, inclusion and diversity. He suggested building on what Glenn has been doing with staff and exploring and defining community. He asked Lynn and Molly to lead on this issue with their experience in this area at the College.

2 – Re-branding & image. Tam suggested this can build on the idea of looking at the Co-op’s image in the community that Ann and R.J. are exploring. He would like to go back to the suggestion of a name change that came from Matt Dodds at Brandthology last year. Glenn said it was not pursued then because of the focus on fundraising and expansion. R.J. suggested inviting Matt to come to the retreat for this discussion. The intent is a strategic, sense-making conversation to understand why and how it would help rather than an actionable outcome. It was agreed to invite Karin to participate.

3 – Term limits. Kate agreed to lead this discussion and will explore readings to prepare for it.

4 – Staff appreciation. Louise will lead this and suggested it could link to inclusivity.

Executive Session: At 8:14, the Board voted all in favor on the motion by Louise, seconded by R.J., to go into executive session for a real estate discussion. At 8:42, the Board voted all in favor to come out of executive session on a motion by Ann, seconded by Jay.

Adjournment: At 8:44 the meeting was adjourned with all voting in favor of a motion by Molly, seconded by Nadine.

Respectfully submitted by Victoria DeWind