

**Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative
Board of Directors Meeting
July 22, 2020**

Board Members Present: Molly Anderson, Nadine Barnicle, Ilaria Brancoli Busdraghi, Erin Buckwalter, Lynn Dunton, Sophie Esser Calvi, Kate Gridley, Tam Stewart, Esther Thomas, Louise Vojtisek.

Board Members Absent: Amanda Warren (maternity leave)

Others present: Victoria DeWind (staff liaison), Greg Prescott (Store Manager).

Board Monitor: Louise.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 6:33 pm via Zoom video.

Member-owner Business: Ilaria shared the concern of a member-owner about the amount of plastic being used in the store. Tam said there is a constant flow of emails both for and against the mask requirement. He said there is approximately one person each day that refuses. Many end up agreeing after conversations about the requirement with information. Shaw's requires them and Hannaford will next week.

Approval of Minutes: On a motion by Ilaria, seconded by Molly, the minutes of June 23, 2020 were approved as amended with all in favor.

Ilaria asked if there had been a response from the accountant about patronage dividends. Lynn replied that patronage funds retained and any expenses incurred using them will be put on the income statement. The funds are unrestricted for their use.

GM Report: Greg reviewed the last month with the Board. He said that daily customer counts have noticeably increased to about 1,000/day, especially on Fridays and Saturdays. Some of these are repeat customers in the week so basket size is down. It was about \$90 in March and is now \$60. June saw an overall sales growth of 12% over June 2019. July is trending close to 8%.

Though the Deli is starting production they are packaging in larger sizes rather than single serve so that customers don't need to shop as often for those products. It will be quite a while before the hot bar is opened. The bulk department is increasing the number of gravity bins to eliminate prepackaging but it will be a while before reusable containers will be allowed. The new 10 cent charge for large paper bags has increased reusable bag use. Curbside pick-up will continue at least until the State Emergency order is lifted. About 12 use it on Tuesdays, 9 on Wednesdays and 6 on Thursdays.

2020 Ends Report Part 2 – Environmental Practices, Cooperative Democratic Ownership and Education: Louise asked about recycling the shipping containers and the extra labor and expense to do so. It is mostly the time to unpack, breakdown so they are still usable, separate and move to the Cave for storage that takes staff away from the floor and creates the extra labor and cost. Not only is this the environmentally right thing to do but it represents significant savings for producers. The Board agreed the staff should know that they acknowledge this extra work and appreciate the staff efforts. Greg told them about the award the newsletter cover picture won in the spring print issue.

Louise praised the "Co-op 101" staff workshop so they have information about co-ops for customers. Molly suggested making this into a webinar. She also suggested that the report should

note changes because of the pandemic. Tam said the report is for the whole fiscal year and progress was made before that. Greg suggested a clarifying statement at the beginning about changes in March. He will draft this and send it to Tam.

Greg said there had been a plan to eliminate plastic bags starting on Earth Day but that was put on hold. The Board supported the plan for the slow return of reusable containers for customer safety.

Lynn asked about compostable plastic containers such as City Market is promoting. Greg said that Chittenden Solid Waste has a high heat composting facility that can break these down; Addison County does not. They have to go in the trash as they cannot be recycled. Greg will follow up on this.

The Board agreed that the reports were on time with reasonable interpretation of sufficient data and were in compliance. The Board appreciated the direct reports from staff in the report.

Columinate Webinar: Anti-racism and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion will be discussed in the Abolitionist Challenge webinar. Six books for six monthly meetings will be discussed. Tam said any directors signing up will be reimbursed from the Board budget. It is hoped they will report back to the Board.

BP – Officers’ Roles: The pandemic has delayed the review of this BP but should be finished soon. Kate felt that the responsibilities for the President should be redistributed and balanced so being President is not a burden. The Board agreed to this.

The Board agreed that they are in compliance with the unrevised text. Tam will post completed revisions to be adopted at another meeting.

Draft EL 11 – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: The decision to create this EL came from the winter retreat. Tam noted that few if any co-ops have such an EL and this is precedent setting. Nadine said she felt the language was “stark” and the words too broad and undefined. She sees it as a place holder for a more nuanced policy. Tam said Glenn has been working on how he will implement and report on this for all areas of the Co-op. Greg said that staff want more DEI work at the Co-op and Glenn wants to respond to and move forward with them.

After lengthy discussion the Board agreed that the EL needs a broader conversation which can evolve from the first report from Glenn on what work has been done. It is important that the language be clearly defined so it will serve well for future GMs. It was also agreed that it would be good for the Board to have its own DEI policy for overseeing the work. Esther agreed to contact Renee Wells, Dean for Diversity at Middlebury College, to see if she will do training with the Board, with compensation. Doing this at an August retreat was suggested.

All voted in favor of a motion by Tam, seconded by Molly, to adopt the EL 11 as written.

Work Plan: Tam suggested this be postponed until the next meeting or at an August retreat due to changing pandemic conditions. He asked if topics should be added to the newsletter plan.

Sophie asked if the store could have an electronic debit card for members-owners which would draw from their pre-funded account. Patronage checks could be deposited there instead of being mailed. Greg said the point of sale capabilities are being researched for security and accuracy and could be implemented next year.

Adjournment: At 8:32 the meeting was adjourned with all voting in favor of a motion by Nadine, seconded by Ilaria.

Respectfully submitted by Victoria DeWind