

**Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative**  
**Board of Directors Meeting**  
**July 28, 2021**

**Board Members Present:** Molly Anderson, Nadine Branicle, Erin Buckwalter, Ollie Cultrara Lynn Dunton, Kate Gridley, Samantha Langevin, Esther Thomas, Amanda Warren.

**Board Members Absent:** Ilaria Brancoli Busdraghi, Tam Stewart.

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

**Board Monitor:**

**Call to Order:** Kate called the meeting to order at 6:10pm.

**Member-owner Business:** Kate reported a concern by a member-owner about the new egg policy that requires grading, labelling, and dating for dropping off eggs. They feel local people should be able to bring any extra eggs to the Co-op. Greg said the Co-op is not able to sell the excess quickly enough. He recommended they contact Kris (dairy manager) about this. It is uncertain if empty egg cartons will continue to be available for reuse by customers but hopefully they will in at least in a pared down number.

**Approval of Minutes:** On a motion by Molly, seconded by Lynn, the minutes of June 23, 2021 were approved as amended with all in favor and Ollie abstaining.

**Communications:** Nadine reviewed the newsletter article sign-up for directors. Directors put their names down for the coming year. Amanda asked if the theme for the next print issue has been decided. Nadine said it has not but JEDI will be a recurring topic.

**GM Report:** Greg started the review for Glenn's report. He noted that while business was strong, reducing plastics and starting in-person activities and events will be a primary focus as pandemic restrictions ease.

Greg noted that several departments have negative growth compared to last June with the pandemic, but in grocery, beer and wine have seen growth. The largest increase of 256% is in the Deli as it returns to some of its earlier offerings. They went from \$50,000 in sales last year to over \$180,000 this year. Lynn thanked Greg for the year comparison chart for sales, customer counts and basket size.

**Board Candidates:** Glenn reported Karin's finding that some member-owners did not feel informed enough about candidates in deciding how to vote. It was suggested that this was due to so many candidates running this year. While it was noted that candidate events in earlier years did not have a large attendance, the Board felt that in person meet and greets are the best way for people to engage with candidates. Some worried that an on-line forum would feel competitive and too much like a debate. Lynn suggested incorporating meet and greets into other events. Kate suggested looking at the election cycle to support out door candidate events.

**Picnic tables:** Molly noted that often the tables are occupied by customers from the bagel deli. Greg said the Co-op wants to be a good neighbor and as sandwiches and salads are not available he wants to consider what is best for now.

**Plastics:** Increased use of plastic packaging due to the pandemic is a recurring concern and Kate suggested one way to reduce it is to cut cheese to order and wrap it in waxed paper. It increases labor but uses less plastic and provides good customer service. This could apply to

meat too. Greg said labor is the biggest issue as well as not having a cheese case set up for this with back stock capacity.

(Nadine left the meeting at 7:00)

Samantha asked if it is possible to track packaging types throughout the store - plastic vs compostable vs recyclable. Greg said with so many variables it might be hard to do and he'd want clarification on exactly what the Board would like to learn. It was suggested a college class might take this on as a project and Molly said she would look into this.

Molly suggested that increasing bulk offerings would help. She asked if bulk yogurt is possible. Greg was also asked about bulk olives. He said that labor for the deli is short for the salad bar – all departments are down by 3 people each – and they don't want to open the bar until they know it can stay open.

Environmental practices: Kate wondered if the Co-op should consider the carbon footprint of produce from far away and only offer what is seasonally available locally, recognizing that this would not sit well with some customers. Molly suggested carbon labelling by producers or distributors to educate people. Greg said the NCG is working on this. It was suggested that carbon foot print of local products versus that of plastic packaging should be studied.

**Ends Monitoring Report:** The Board agreed the Ends report was on time with reasonable interpretation of sufficient data and is in compliance.

**BP 6 – Officers' Roles:** Kate had posted the results of the analysis that she, Lynn and Ilaria had done on the work done by the President. The concern is overloading one person and, to prevent burn out, they suggest tasks be shared. Board officers will meet to look further into this. Lynn suggested that if there is someone on the Board with IT expertise, they could monitor the Basecamp operations. The Board agreed that they have been following this policy in the past but will continue evaluating and editing the policy for review on the October agenda.

**Officer Elections:** On a motion by Molly, seconded by Samantha, the Board voted all in favor to ratify the uncontested slate of officers and committee chairs:

President – Amanda Warren

Vice President – Kate Gridley

Treasurer – Lynn Dunton

Secretary – Ilaria Brancoli Busdraghi

Board Development Committee – Erin Buckwalter

JEDI Committee – Esther Thomas

Communications – Nadine Barnicle

Amanda as President presided over the remainder of the meeting

**ACORN:** The Board discussed ACORN's request for MNFC support and participation in its effort to support local food networks with aggregate and distribution infrastructure for this region of the state. Their first consideration was whether this is an operational issue or Board work. While they support ACORN, the Board agreed they do not have enough information to know if and how the Co-op could fit into their plans. They would like management's perspective on partnering with ACORN and Greg said he will start a conversation with Glenn, Karin and Emily on this. Samantha wondered if there would be a conflict partnering with programs that might compete with the Co-op. Erin said it would be good to understand if ACORN is collaborating

with other food hub networks. They agreed that this is not the Board's first responsibility but they will support the staff in considering the request from ACORN.

**Board Meeting Schedule:** It was agreed that the August and October meetings will start at 6:00pm. The September meeting will be on Sunday the 26<sup>th</sup> at 9-10:00am followed by the two hour JEDI retreat.

All voted in favor of a motion by Kate, seconded by Molly that meeting agendas be posted on the Board page of the MNFC website on the Monday preceding the meetings starting in October. It was agreed that this will support more democratic access to the meetings and increase transparency. Using social media and local publications such as Front Porch Forum was suggested. Erin suggested a one-time announcement providing a link to the website to help people know where to view it. Greg will review this with Karin and Glenn.

**JEDI Committee:** Esther read the committee statement: We will unlearn together, learn together, share together, create a safe space to be honest and process together. She said the committee wants the September retreat to be a place to connect, build trust and to share and face fears together. She had planned an exercise for this meeting but due to the late hour, it was agreed to make agenda time in August for it. Esther said her fear in JEDI work is that everyone wants an action plan asap and she feels that taking time to look inside oneself must come first. This means being ready to be vulnerable.

Glenn had asked in his report if anyone on the Board wants to participate in the regional JEDI group meetings. The Committee will consider this.

**Adjournment:** At 8:02 the meeting was adjourned with all voting in favor of a motion by Samantha, seconded by Kate.

Respectfully submitted by Victoria DeWind