

**Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative  
Board of Directors Meeting  
April 27, 2022**

**Board Members Present:** Molly Anderson, Nadine Barnicle, Erin Buckwalter, Ilaria Brancoli Busdraghi, Kate Gridley, Samantha Langevin, Amanda Warren.

**Board Members Absent:** Ollie Cultrara, Lynn Dunton, Esther Thomas,

**Others present:** Victoria DeWind (staff liaison), Greg Prescott (GM).

**Board Monitor:** Ilaria

**Call to Order:** Amanda called the meeting to order at 6:19pm via Zoom video.

**Member-owner Business:** Kate reported a comment from a member-owner about the opportunity to have cheese cut to order and wrapped in paper. She said this is a great service that can help reduce plastic packaging.

Amanda shared comments from consultant Carolee Coulter who assisted the Board with the GM search. She praised their thorough, kind and even fun process as one of the best search team efforts she has supported.

**Approval of Minutes:** On a motion by Ilaria, seconded by Erin, the minutes of March 23, 2022 were approved with all in favor and Nadine and Ilaria abstaining.

**JEDI Committee:** Nadine, Samantha and Molly said they were not able to attend the first May 21<sup>st</sup> session with Tabitha Moore. Nadine said she could attend remotely if that was an option. Tabitha will have to be asked if this is okay. With this in mind the Board discussed if it should be postponed until after the elections with mixed opinions. Kate also brought up her concern that child care is not offered to staff for workshops and she did not feel the Board should have a benefit they do not get. Some felt that this is a different situation than staff workshops and the cost would be covered in the Board budget. All these concerns will go to the JEDI committee that is meeting May 2.

There is a Land Acknowledgement workshop from which Ollie and Nadine may do a presentation for the Board.

**GM Report:** Greg said that while March was zero growth, April numbers were boosted by Easter sales. It isn't often that low growth days due to snow storms are not made up before and after as in this past March.

Greg said he has started reviewing the 2022-23 business plan with the management team that Glenn wrote before he left. They are looking at how the plan works interdepartmentally and considering goals and priorities that will carry over into the next year.

The wage scale has increased base pay and caps. There will be a Columinate training on wages for Greg and Laura.

Greg reported he received several comments on the optional mask policy. They cover the full range from positive to negative. The Co-op will continue setting mask policy based on CDC and State Health Department recommendations.

MNFC has joined the Family Farm partnership to support and increase sales of dairy brands in the partnership. In talking to other Co-ops, there seemed to be no downside or reason not to support this as many brands are already sold at the Co-op.

The GM transition reports will move to be a quarterly check-in with the Board. Greg said he has met with most of the directors one-on-one which has been very helpful in creating transparency. Samantha asked about his staff meetings. He said they went really well using “Start, Stop, Continue” as the theme. Some of the input included a “no growth” model, increased local, more benefits and opportunities and not to lose the Co-op’s identity.

**EL 5 – Treatment of Customers:** Greg said he had provided customer comments in his report to give the Board a fuller picture of customer input on the surveys. They show the importance of greeting and interacting with customers without overwhelming them. A simple hello is often the best. It was suggested that some survey questions include a scale rather than yes or no answers.

The Board discussed how customer treatment fits into the Co-op’s mission of “responding to the member needs accordingly”. Customer contact to the Board should be as user friendly as possible on the website.

Samantha asked how discrimination fits into section 2 – “not allow an unsafe shopping experience for customers”. She said this includes discrimination and it should be about how to prevent it as well as how to respond to it. Greg said the Co-op is actively trying to do this and agreed this should be added to the operational interpretation.

The Board agreed the report was on time with reasonable interpretation of sufficient data and in compliance.

**BP 3 – Agenda Planning:** Amanda said that JEDI work will be added to the work calendar. The Board agreed that input from all directors is helpful in creating the calendar rather than just the President putting it together. It will be added to Basecamp as separate project.

**Board Policy Review:** Amanda said she continues to think the Board should consider writing a policy clarifying how the Board responds to member-owner feedback that is specifically related to the Board’s processes and policies. The Board agreed it was of high interest, and that a logical time to address it would be during the full policy audit planned as part of their JEDI training with Tabitha Moore.

Amanda recalled the Columinate template for Board/Management relationship and how they work together. She felt it is explicit and valuable. She made a motion, seconded by Kate, that this BMR-0 be implemented and included in the policy register. All voted in favor.

**Board retreats:** Amanda asked if there should be an August retreat in addition to the JEDI retreats. Erin suggested that the BDC committee do more than elections and could help with policy review and training. There is a three part virtual Columinate policy governance training this fall that could be worked in with the JEDI policy review. Kate also offered her house for a social Board gathering in the summer.

**Elections:** Voting will start May 1 and run until 7pm May 31. Results will be announced June 3<sup>rd</sup> on the website and in the store. Kate agreed to notify candidates of results but suggested BDC committee members be trained for this.

One candidate had asked about a meet-and-greet to introduce herself to members. Doing this in the store or on Zoom and if it would be optional or required was discussed though it was agreed it is too late for this year. Kate said they are free to greet people on the plaza. Emailing people and posting on Front Porch Forum were suggested. Recording individual videos for the website was also suggested. The BDC will consider these ideas for future elections.

**Communications:** Upcoming articles are being written by Samantha, Amanda and Ollie.

**Adjournment:** At 8:24 the Board adjourned the meeting on a motion by Ilaria, seconded by Amanda, with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Victoria DeWind