

**Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative
Board of Directors Meeting
July 19, 2023**

Board Members Present: Erin Buckwalter (zoom), Suzanna “Zan” Goldblatt Clark, Ollie Cultrara, Lynn Dunton, Erika Dunyak, Caryne Eskridge, Barbara Hofer, Heather Kvasnak, Samantha Langevin, Cody Mears, Amanda Warren (zoom)

Board Members Absent: Erin Buckwalter present until 7 pm.

Others present: Harley Fjeld (substitute staff liaison), Greg Prescott (GM),

Board Monitor: Samantha Langevin

Call to Order: Samantha called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

Appointment Made: Prior to the June meeting, on a motion by Amanda, seconded by Barbara, and 9 voting in favor with 1 abstaining, Caryne Eskridge was appointed to the Board, filling a term that ends in 2025. This vote was conducted electronically.

Member-owner Business: Barbara asked for guidance on the difference between policy and operations on matters such as *does the co-op prioritize organic products? What does the board control? Members?* The board is responsible for creating the Ends, the member-owners vote on bylaws. The buying criteria is operational, and not within the Board’s domain.

Approval of Minutes: Erin made a motion to approve the June minutes. Samantha seconded. All approved, with Ollie abstaining.

Officer Elections: An in-depth look at position duties will be postponed to a later date. All directors agreed the Board is in compliance with BP6

Zan motioned to ratify the slate of candidates running for Officer Positions, with Heather seconding, and all voting in favor.

Zan motioned to approve the slate of candidates running unopposed- Amanda Warren for President, Samantha Langevin for Vice President and Ollie Cultrara for Treasurer. Heather seconded the motion. All approved.

Board Secretary was a contested election between Heather Kvasnak and Erin Buckwalter. Erin Buckwalter was elected to Secretary. Each had two minutes to speak, then the board voted anonymously by paper ballots. Members on zoom voted anonymously through a Google sheet. Greg collected the votes and tallied them after the meeting.

JEDI Committee: Greg has asked if we want to do a land acknowledgement at the annual meeting in September. When previously brought up it was put off until it can be done thoughtfully and thoroughly because it's easy for a land acknowledgement to become performative. Ollie shared the difference between a ‘statement of land’ and a ‘land acknowledgement’. According to Abenaki educator Judy Dow, a statement of land is a static, written statement that acknowledges the peoples indigenous to a particular place. A land acknowledgement is an oral acknowledgement of the land and peoples indigenous to the land, which varies with the specific location, season, speaker’s

relationship to the land, etc. Board members asked the purpose of a Co-op land acknowledgement. It could ground the Co-ops connection to the land in a time when grocery stores are largely disconnected from food sources. Lynn would like to answer the why before crafting a land acknowledgement, or create a participatory process with members. Zan inquired about the context of the why – in farming you're buying and working in the land, it makes sense to honor the land and the people who stewarded it. Is the Co-op acknowledging people who lived here before white people? Or furthering the Co-ops connection between food and land? Could the statement exist on the website and not the annual meeting? Erika, Zan, Amanda, Caryne, and Samantha discussed food acknowledgements vs land acknowledgements.

Samantha proposed the JEDI committee (other board members welcome) come up with options for a food or land acknowledgement to bring to the board; Zan and Caryne will collaborate.

Erin Buckwalter left at 7pm.

GM Report:

Sales growth for June was 8.2%. Second month in a row, since the pandemic started, that basket size is stable year over year. Customer count continues to steadily grow. Draft financial statements are available for the board. Patronage dividends, determined by the board, will change the final financials.

Greg will visit the Lebanon Food Co-op to meet with other General Managers tomorrow. They will discuss flood relief and other matters. Hunger Mountain had to close for one day due to catastrophic flooding in downtown Montpelier, the only damage was to their loading dock. MNFC has donated staff meals from our employees to theirs.

End Report – END III: Environmental Practices

Discuss the Ends report using the “ORID Framework:” Objective, Reflective, Interpretive and Decisional.

Objective: What data do we notice?

The board noted many facts and metrics from the ENDS report and acknowledged the invisible work that staff put into sorting waste and recycling, one example being that waste numbers have plateaued despite sales increasing. Board members are curious how to increase members participation in voting and attendance at the annual meeting.

Reflective: What did you notice here? What's your internal response to the packet? Board reflects solo for two minutes, then share.

Barbara and others asked the purpose of the annual meeting and acknowledged potential barriers to accessibility; school-night, time of day, and unclear purpose. Amanda noted that MNFC bylaws mandate an annual meeting. Barbara questioned the expense of providing a free dinner. *How can we emphasize the community aspect?* The annual meeting will be discussed over the course of the next year.

The Board decided to take up the question of monitoring local sales within the Environmental Sustainability End at a future time.

Interpretive: Board members talked in pairs, then shared.

Heather and Greg discussed how long the Ends report takes Greg to create. It comes from data compiled by all departments throughout the year. Traditionally MEM and Greg take time and effort to compile this data into the ENDS Report. This allows the Board to monitor our ENDS, and the ENDS are why the co-op exists.

Decisional: Barbara motioned to accept the ENDS Monitoring Report part 2- Environmentally Sustainable Practices, Cooperative Democratic Ownership, & Learning About These Values Ollie seconded. All approved.

Erika asked to consider how we are addressing ends outside of the co-op with other cooperatives.

Samantha motioned to move to executive session, Ollie seconded at 7:39 pm for the purposes of discussing patronage.

Executive Session: At 8:10 pm, Samantha made a motion to end executive session, Ollie seconded, with all voting in favor.

Adjournment: At 8:10 pm, Ollie made a motion to end the meeting, Zan seconded, with all voting in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Harley Fjeld