

**Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative
Board of Directors Meeting
June 17, 2026**

Board Members Present: Amanda Warren, Ed Blechner, Erin Buckwalter, Caroline Corrente, Barbara Hofer, Kristin Hocker, Caryne Eskridge, Ollie Cultrara, Samantha Langevin, Caitlin Harder, Ashley Peluso

Board Members Absent: none

Others Present: Greg Prescott (GM), Bonnie Hudspeth, Bethany Farrell, Kacie O'Connell, Aubrey Mills, Wendy Hollander, Julia Reed

Call to order: 6:01 pm

Board Process Policy 5: Code of Conduct

Board members shared their potential conflicts of interest.

Member-Owner Business

No member owner business was shared today.

Minutes

A motion was made by Erin, seconded by Ollie, to accept the May minutes. All voted in favor, except Ashley and Caitlin who abstained.

50th Anniversary Celebration

Julia shared current plans for MNFC's 50th Anniversary celebrations, framing the anniversary as a strategic opportunity also. There are 4 aspects:

1. Merchandise includes a poster, a series of t-shirts, stickers, and tote bags. The Co-op worked with a local design firm, which looked through thousands of MNFC documents to guide them. Stickers and shirts will be produced locally and folks who want a poster framed can get a discount at Middlebury Frame. The artwork is the visual underpinning for all the aspects of the celebration and is designed to celebrate the co-op's history, values, and community. Proceeds from merch sales will be donated to Hope and the CVOEO.
2. The celebration on Aug 22nd is free on the Middlebury Town Green from 10am-3pm. It's open to the public and will be family friendly. The goal is to gather, connect, & celebrate what the Co-op has meant to the community for the past 50 years, and look ahead to the future. They're using sidewalk signs to link some of the icons in the poster to some of the stories behind them as well as quotes from some of the interviews they've conducted. There will be live music, food trucks, engagement from community partners, etc. The hub will be at the gazebo, with information about membership and an "ask a board member" station.

3. Memory Gallery - After the celebration, there will be an intimate celebration for the opening of the Memory Gallery at the Town Hall Theater. The goal is to celebrate how we got here featuring historic photographs, oral histories, etc. The gallery will remain open for four weeks after the opening. The Co-op also plans to continue collecting memories, stories, and photos and will share them on the website in the future.
4. There will also be a broader awareness campaign to keep the Co-op more visible through the summer and beyond. The campaign kicked off last month and will continue through the fall. The messages include: 'Buying local before it was cool,' 'Your community-owned grocery store since 1976,' and 'Values never go out of style.'

Board members are not being asked to staff the event on August 22nd, but are invited to be ambassadors and hosts, help at an activity station, or help at the merchandise station.

Julia said we can promote the Annual Meeting at the Celebration to try to raise awareness about that event a few weeks later. Julia will be creating a survey to gauge the board's interest in helping and Greg will share it as we get closer to the event. Greg and the operations team are working on figuring out what is possible around if the store will be open during the celebration or closed.

Ends Policy Report Part 1: Healthy Food

Board members expressed appreciation that Food for All numbers are strong despite the current administration's efforts to limit the number of people eligible for food assistance benefits. The change made last year to no longer accept VA benefits for Food for All came along with a commitment from staff to work with VA folks to determine if they have food assistance needs and eligibility in another manner. Folks also appreciated the new data, including WIC sales. Our member-owner numbers continue to grow, which is not the norm for our peer co-ops.

Samantha made a motion to monitor Ends Part 1 and Ollie seconded. All voted in favor to accept it as on time, reasonable interpretation, data provided, and compliant.

Ends Policy Report Part 2: Vibrant Local Economy

Board members expressed excitement about the increase in organic items. The Co-op recently adopted universal PLUs, which will allow better tracking of organic produce. Next year, we will have new data in the report as a result. Board members commented on the limitations of the Vermont definition of "local" through Act 129 and how it limits producers just across the lake or nearby across the border in Canada, for example. Members appreciated the data about MNFC jobs and the local companies with which MNFC contracts - they show our co-op's positive contribution to our local economy broadly.

Ollie made a motion to monitor Ends Part 1 and Erin seconded. All voted in favor to accept it as on time, reasonable interpretation, data provided, and compliant.

CCMA (Consumer Cooperative Management Association) Conference Report Out

Ollie and Kristin shared a report from attending the CCMA conference recently; both learned a lot and feel more connected to internal and external Co-op issues. Several folks expressed finding great value in the workshop Ollie hosted. Gaby Davis did a recorded workshop about GM Burnout and they recommended that all board members watch it when it becomes available. The new CEO from NCG spoke; her background is grocery but not Co-ops and she is both learning a lot and has some good insights to share. Ollie shared a suggestion that the Board consider creating an end about JEDI. Right now the Board and operations are aligned, but one way to support decisions based on our shared values is having it in our Ends to codify this commitment. Kristin shared that not all aspects of CCMA felt welcoming and while there were affinity spaces organized, that was an obvious space for improvement and discussion in the future.

JEDI

We are continuing to work with consultant Toni Brineger to advance the Board's JEDI understanding and work, and serve as a resource for all board members. Our current contract is through the end of the current fiscal year. Toni did interviews with all board members in the last year and noted that there were some words that many of us use somewhat differently. Because of this, the committee is working on developing definitions for the Board to use to ensure shared language. The committee is currently drafting these but moving forward, the whole Board will have opportunities to contribute.

The board shared reactions to the draft definitions shared by the Committee. There was gratitude for the clarity these definitions provide and for the Committee's work to develop them. It was noted that the current definitions primarily focus on the board's work and it would be interesting to see what we might add if/when we develop an End around JEDI. This meeting had time for quick reactions but in future board meetings, we will have more opportunities to wordsmith them. Board members are welcome to share more feedback on the draft definitions as well as information about how they could best participate in these conversations, either by sharing more on basecamp, sharing with Committee members, or connecting directly with Toni.

Monitoring Board Process Policy 4 and 5: Attendance & Code of Conduct

100% of board members felt like we were meeting the full extent of both policies by voting a 4 or 5 out of 5.

Meetings Dates & Start Time

Meetings will continue on the 3rd Wednesday from 6-8 or 8:30 except for April, which will now be the 2nd Wednesday (April 14th) to avoid April school break in Addison County.

The August meeting has been cancelled so more board members can participate in the 50th celebrations. Because the meeting is cancelled, we will be monitoring BP 7 in July instead of August.

Officer Election Plan & Check-In

Voting for officer elections will happen at our board meeting in July. Tomorrow, we will all receive an email from Barbara with all the details about nominations. We can send anonymous nominations to member-owner Peggy Rush, who will connect with the nominated parties and share the slate for voting at the next meeting. If there are contested positions, each person nominated will give a brief statement at the July meeting before voting.

Steering Committee Update

Erin offered context for the creation of the Steering Committee (SC) and their role in helping the co-op create a new long-range plan. The SC has been gathering both information internal to MNFC and externally through interviews and surveys. They are charged with developing a Strategic Planning Committee (SPC), whose job it will be to plan and carry out a community engagement process that will inform the Co-op's long-range planning. This SPC will have three main phases of work: 1) plan how they will engage with the community to receive meaningful feedback to inform the long-range plan, 2) carry out the community engagement process, and 3) generate a report or way to share out the themes and information gathered from the community engagement process to inform the long-range plan. The SC envisions that the work of the SPC will be around eight months and expects that the SPC will work closely with Julia and the communications staff of the co-op. The SC has reached consensus that the SPC should include Board members, staff, and community members. The SC expects to have a charter for the SPC and more detailed recommendations for the structure of the SPC's membership for the next meeting.

GM Report

Greg shared highlights and answered questions about the report.

Samantha made a motion to end the meeting at 8:33 pm and Kristin seconded. All voted in favor.