

BELFAST FOOD COOP BOARD MEETING - November 15, 2007

PRESENT: Karen Aveni, Richard Brown, Pepper Bush, Erica Buswell, Scott Giroux, Allen Ginsberg, Kate Harris, Wayne Kraeger, Debbi Lasky, Susan Lauchlan, Kip Penney, Jerry Savitz, Paul Sheridan, Zafra Whitcomb.

ABSENT: Lorna Crichton, Goldy Goldstein, Mike Marino, Bindy Pendleton, Peri Tobin.

FACILITATOR: Zafra. Scribe: Paul. Timekeeper: Debbi. Vibewatcher: Kip.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Kate Harris, new staff rep to board was introduced. Bindy sent word to ask us to fill out the board self-assessment sheet from the retreat and put into her mailbox.

GM TEAM REPORT: Discussion of NCGA membership; correction to report—the ad hoc committee was not disbanded, it never met; therefore, the board has not yet seen a cost/benefit analysis re membership. Board members encouraged to review Laddie Lushin's memo on working members before next meeting; it seems it was well worth the cost to have had him write this for us, as it covers topic quite well. Coop will have approximately 300 old fluorescent tubes removed from basement the week after Thanksgiving for proper disposal. Discussion on Coop accepting tubes from outside—probably not a good idea, opens us to risks; Belfast Transfer Station will accept these from individuals. Kimalee and Erica reported on the Rising Stars training they attended, and commented on how it helps to do their job better; much literature to sort through—if anything is useful for board it will be passed on to us. Erica and Kate represented us on a panel at the annual MOFGA Farmer-to-Farmer conference. One issue was the lack of grain storage, which prevents local grains being sold here. Discussion on availability of milling facilities—Crown of Maine seems to overcharge. Cooperative ownership could be a better model for storage, milling, etc. facilities. Coop partnering with growers? If there were greenhouses available we could have local produce through the winter. Can we organize our growers to extend the season? e.g. is more hydroponic possible? Larger greenhouses are easier to heat—town of Madison has its own electric supply company. Our produce manager, Genevieve Morgan, is leaving, and Tom Luther is possibly taking it on. Previous produce managers had relationships with growers. Set up a board committee? Segue into...

PURCHASING COMMITTEE REPORT: Karen reports that Caryn Knudsen, grocery manager, had poor response from vendors on a request for info sheets on their products. If we could state our needs clearly to vendors and growers, they might be able to respond better. Suggest that committee support and work with her, to follow up, phone calls, etc. How can Purch. Comm. not overstep our bounds re: policy? Develop a proposal, request a budget from the board, etc. are useful ways to prevent overstepping. Educational component—encourage and teach vendors to organize a coop, including crop rotation. However, farmers don't agree with each other easily. Note: deli mgr. Amy has been buying some items directly from growers.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT: re: equipment purchases—we have the money to spend, but have not found the exact products to buy. Set aside is \$12,000/year for capital purchases (= \$60,000 over 5 years) + \$5000 over 5 years from member fees, which could be used as an additional source. We have recently paid off about \$26,000 of debt. Pepper is also looking into low-interest state loan programs for equipment. Re: use of equity investment payments and annual membership fees—monies come into coop from operations and these member sources, as above. Monies are payable to expenses. All monies go into the same account, except equity investments are segregated. We have the option to borrow from equity account during our slow periods (Jan/Feb.) and avoid going to banks for loans.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE REPORT: GM's have met with Linda, a member architect, to assist us with a fresh perspective on a re-organization of merchandise, castle, deli areas. Report is due at end of month. New adjustable shelving has been installed for HABA.

DELI COMMITTEE REPORT: Amy has taken initiative, and is moving forward with determining model numbers, specifications for new cooler display cases. Hope is to save on both maintenance and energy, and increase sales. Plan is also to move the cashier counter outwards to allow soups to move up front. Also, produce area is in need of coolers. Management team will set priorities and decide. Note that Canadian exchange rate may effect final costs of coolers, as well as transportation costs.

MINUTES: board accepted the minutes of October 25th with these changes: error in the Financial Committee report, figure should be \$60,000, and not \$60,00 (sic): Yes 6, No 0, 3 Abstain. Also, board voted to remove the actual dollar amounts from the version of minutes for the website, so as not to disclose to potential suppliers what we have available to spend on equipment: Yes 8, No 0, Abstain 0.

FINANCIAL COMMITTEE, continued: on the subject of the use of equity investment payments and annual membership fees. A single sheet detailing the amounts brought in from equity payments was passed around. Memory was that board had originally said that equity was to be reserved to pay back investors, and was usable for capital equipment, to be kept in separate account. However, loans within the coop for operations are paid out as appropriate. Member fees are taxable as income. Two requests were made of the Finance Committee: to put into writing the ways that equity investment payments and annual membership fees are being used, and present this as a proposal to the board for our approval. Also, that sufficient copies of any written reports be available for all present.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE: no report, tabled.

MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE: Kip reported that committee should have been able to hand out our management team evaluation forms, but the sheets were not yet ready. Board members asked to pick up from their mailboxes, fill out, and return GM evaluation sheets in a sealed envelope to the Management Oversight Committee.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT: Erica reported receipt of the memo from Laddy Lushin, labor lawyer, on our worker member program; copies were distributed with the GM report. Please read before next month's meeting. Also, work is ongoing on a new member orientation, to increase members' sense of ownership.

HOMEWORK: Board members encouraged to review Laddie Lushin's memo on working members before next meeting. Board members to fill out the board self-assessment sheet and put into Bindy's mailbox. Finance Committee to put into writing the ways that equity investment payments and annual membership fees are being used, and present this as a proposal to the board for approval. Tabled report from Board Development Committee. Pepper will confirm with Mike Nickerson for 7 PM for December meeting. Board members to pick up from their mailboxes, fill out, and return GM evaluation sheets in a sealed envelope to the Management Oversight Committee.

FACILITATOR: for next month, Zafra Whitcomb.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday December 20 at 6:30 pm at Waterfall Arts.