

## BELFAST FOOD COOP BOARD MEETING – January 24, 2008

PRESENT: Karen Aveni, Richard Brown, Lorna Crichton, Scott Giroux, Allen Ginsberg, Kate Harris, Wayne Kraeger, Debbi Lasky, Susan Lauchlan, Mike Marino, Jerry Savitz, Paul Sheridan, Zafra Whitcomb. Staff: Pepper Bush, Erica Buswell, Goldy Goldstein. Member: Gail Sawyer

ABSENT: Kip Penney, Bindy Pendleton, Peri Tobin.

FACILITATOR: Jerry. Scribe: Paul. Timekeeper: Debbi. Vibewatcher: Lorna.

MINUTES: of December 20, 2008 were approved. No changes were made for web posting.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Saturday, January 26, at 1 PM at Belfast Library, showing of film, “King Corn” and discussion following.

Memorial service for member Bitsa Turner, Sat., Feb. 2nd at 2 PM, First Church.

Seeking to add to the wellness portion of the employee benefits plan, the management team is considering seeking a discount at a local exercise gym, such as Bay Area Fitness, at up to 60% off. Would need minimum of 40 people to sign up, making the yearly cost to those choosing to join about \$192 (\$16/mo). If this was also made available to coop members, would provide an additional benefit of membership and allow us to meet, or exceed, the minimum number of people required.

GM TEAM REPORT: written report received. It was asked what the phrase “...training course geared specifically towards our own needs...” meant. The answer was that most commercially available training materials are geared to corporate environments, and not cooperative ones. Thus, the need to develop some of our own materials, with help from Rising Stars, etc. Clarification about our net membership: growth in last month was not 25 members. Twenty-five new members have signed up; there are difficulties in determining numbers of older members not renewing, and it is an ongoing project to collect this information. A basement cleanup has resulted in establishment of a staff lounge, with a computer, microwave and a place to eat lunch.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT: reports that not all older patronage dividend vouchers have been used. Perhaps we should run a newsletter article urging members to use up old patronage dividend vouchers by a certain date, with a “soft” 30-day grace period? Pepper is working on state loans with the Deli Committee for purchase of new display cases. We also have a commitment from Camden National Bank, and will choose whichever offers us the lowest rates. Sales figures have been up, but more because of inflationary reasons; we are reducing inventory during our slow winter season. Snow plowing costs are up, cooler maintenance costs are down. Wage costs are up about 1%, due to raises started within the course of the last year. Deli area is still scraping along, not showing profit. It is rare for members leaving the coop to ask for their equity back, which raises the question: when does unclaimed equity get forfeited? Committee will ask Mike Nickerson, and report back.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE: Erica reported on what other coops do about member-workers’ Worker Compensation Insurance; she received varying responses. We will seek a quote from our insurance agent, but are told it is likely to be low cost. A few special workers are covered under our general liability policy: meat pickup, bottle redemption, newsletter editing. Goal is to phase out “general” worker-member jobs, and move to a model of “donated time” to the Coop. A proposal will come to the board next month. Also in future will be a proposal for quarterly New Member Orientations, to be done by volunteers and/or board members.

DELI COMMITTEE: Jerry reported on the question of customers bringing their own containers for deli items; the state has no regulations on this. We discovered that we give a discount of 25¢ per

pound when people bring their own containers; we should revise that to a 15¢ per container discount. Coop could also choose to have a higher standard than the state's if we find that at self-service areas (peanut butter, etc.) customers are not being sanitary, by putting spoons into their containers, for example. Managers have found a new brand for display/self-serve cases: Arneg (Canadian) for \$35-55K (not including compressors); ordering these next week. As to costs, wages have risen higher in the deli area than other areas. Discussion as to possibility of a Juice Bar. We do sell a lot of bottled juices. However we have staffing and space issues, this item to be revisited. A used ice-cream freezer was purchased from Swan Lake Grocery.

**ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE:** is working with the Deli Committee on removal of the Castle and replacement with a smaller children's area, an additional register as an express line, and a Customer Service desk. Bids and construction to occur this spring. The office nearest produce area to become the general merchandise sales area. We are looking at possibility of re-paving the parking lot. Susan will work with the committee to help identify more materials and better efficiency in our recycling of materials.

**BOARD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE:** Susan announced she is leaving this committee and has asked Paul to take on being convenor. He will schedule a meeting after committee members reply with their best times to meet.

**COOPERATIVE MAINE:** this group seeks to aid cooperative goals in the state of Maine, Paul reported. Given the distances involved, to save on travel costs, the group has been meeting via conference calls, especially during winter. They plan to have a face-to-face meeting twice per year and monthly phone calls. This April is the first year anniversary, and an in-person meeting and celebration will be held. Plans are currently for this to be at the Hope Festival in Brewer, but if that falls through, board expressed possible interest in hosting this in Belfast. Also planned is a Policy Committee to push the cooperative agenda at the executive and legislative levels in Augusta.

**ELECTIONS COMMITTEE:** Debbi asked the board what would be good dates for the Annual Meeting. Decided was Sunday, March 16, with March 30 as snow date. Discussion as to possibility of mailing of ballots with the patronage dividend. Debbi will consult with Erica. Who is running for the board? Up for reelection are: Jerry and Allen (yes, will run again), Lorna (undecided), and Bindy (not present). We are also allowed to have up to 17 board members and it was suggested that the Elections Committee seek out those who ran last year and were not elected, to encourage them to run again this year.

**MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE:** most board members responded to request for evaluations of General Management Team members. Common themes have been identified. Before adjourning to Executive Session to discuss, the question arose as to whether staff reps get to be at that session. The precedent is that they have left the room, even staff on the board who are not staff reps. Questions arose as to possible conflict of interests, including for local business owners or domestic partners of GMT members on the board. Some newer board members were not aware that they were expected to participate, as it was not specified for whole board. One staff rep came with expectation of participation. A special meeting of the board was suggested, but the bylaws require 21 days' notice. Disappointment that this issue was not discussed and clarified at last month's meeting, or even earlier. A staff rep preferred to table the GMT evaluation until the question had been settled. Both staff reps agreed to leave the room when the Executive Session occurred, to expedite the process. This situation will need to be discussed in near future.

**HOMEWORK:** Who is running for the board? Up for reelection are: Jerry and Allen (yes, both will run again), Lorna (undecided), and Bindy (not present). We are also allowed to have up to 17 board members and it was suggested that the Elections Committee seek out those who ran last year and

were not elected, to encourage them to run again this year. Also suggested was to add a list of the homework to the beginning of the following month's agenda. Finance Committee will ask Mike Nickerson about forfeiting of unclaimed equity and report back. Article and posters (plus website and register receipt notices) needed (by staff?) to ask members to either use or donate outstanding patronage dividend vouchers. Managers to revise the discount for customer-supplied containers to a 15¢ per container discount. Goldy to secure rental of Boathouse for Annual Meeting.

FACILITATOR: for next month, none chosen.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, February 28th at 6:30 pm at Waterfall Arts.

Board then adjourned into Executive Session.