

BELFAST FOOD COOP BOARD MEETING – March 27, 2008

PRESENT: Karen Aveni, Richard Brown, Allen Ginsberg, Scott Giroux, Kate Harris, Wayne Kraeger, Debbi Lasky, Susan Lauchlan, Bindy Pendleton, Kip Penney, Paul Sheridan, Peri Tobin, Zafra Whitcomb. Staff: Pepper Bush, Erica Buswell, Goldy Goldstein. Members: Andree Bella, Barry Way. Absent: Mike Marino, Jerry Savitz.

FACILITATOR: Richard. Scribe: Paul. Timekeeper: Susan. Vibewatcher: Peri.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Eat Local Food Challenge, April 2, 5:30 PM, UU Church. Cooperative Maine Annual Meeting, April 19, 4 PM, UMaine Orono. Lorna may rejoin board in future—she was warmly thanked for her service; our use of Waterfall Arts may be affected. Jerry is fine after his surgery—get well soon!

MINUTES: of February 28, 2008 were approved (13-Yes, 3-Abstain, 0-No), with no changes. Changes were made for web posting, to maintain confidentiality re: contractor bids (13-Yes, 3-Abstain, 0-No).

GM TEAM REPORT: written report was received. Clarification: logo contest for the new re-useable plastic bags—these are sturdy, foldable recycled plastic totes. Suggestion that board members read the Energy Audit, much good info in there, many places for us to save money. Discussion on a recent verbal request to GM's to keep labor costs down. February labor percentage was not as good as it could be. Sales were up, but profits down. Deli had high labor numbers. How can we save on labor? We do want to keep people employed through the winter, but we are a business, must be level-headed. Goal: cut \$1000 a month in salaries in March and April. Ask each department—how can we save 3 or 5 or x hours? We may want to reconsider having shorter hours in winter, or cutting hours of deli service. We plan to shorten Sunday hours next winter. Segued to...

FINANCIAL COMMITTEE: ...a cut in hours will affect staff morale. We could wait to see how the whole year plays out. Monday 3/31 is inventory day, additional hours will be put in. Also, produce is working on cleaning their cabinets—each employee want to work a full 32 hours. Ask employees to understand hard times; take vacations now, not in August when they are needed in store. Deli is working on a positive approach, seeking to break even, with some price increases, and better training, which will show benefit in 6-8 months. Other increased cost factors: snow plowing, fuel—in all its ramifications, case installation. This brings up issues of communication: Financial Committee should present these ideas to the Management Oversight Committee, which will talk with the GMs. Question: what is the GMs "disaster plan?" Economy is failing; unrealistic that it will not effect us. HOMEWORK: add extra time for Finance next month.

MEMBER COMMENTS: Do we acknowledge members who donate their patronage dividends? Individually it would add a labor cost, but could be done in store or in newsletter. Barry Way, the new board clerk, was also introduced.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE: Discussed proposal: "Working members in the Continuing Project Program be covered under our worker's compensation policy." Passed (9-Yes, 0-No, 3-Abstain). Also discussed and voted upon was amendment to the previously approved Member Worker Program: "That the Continuing Project category of the working-member program not be expanded beyond the scope of its approved form and that all worker-member positions, through the process of attrition, eventually become uncompensated (with the exception of the BOD) as people currently holding down these positions leave them for whatever reason. All worker-members would become, essentially volunteers, without calling them that of course. As the discounts go away, then we would have just one category of working members that would essentially be uncompensated." Among the points made were: that work is an integral part of co-op life, and should not be discouraged; a

member would need compensation to drive to Portland, as one example; that if we were to pass this we should not exempt ourselves on the board, but rather lead by example, if we thought that it was the best choice for a worker-member program. Proposed: to strike this second amendment (i.e. not passed), (12-Yes, 1-No, 0-Abstain). Committee members were thanked for their lengthy work on this topic; some may continue on it.

Homework: add “working members” to our retreat agenda. New Member Orientations, tabled.

DELI COMMITTEE: Wayne reported in Jerry’s absence: thank yous and acknowledgment of the substantial work by many people that went into getting the new cooler cases installed. Old cases were sold for scrap, netting \$237.50. Some prices are being re-set on café menu items. To come: cash register/coffee counter to be moved out to provide more space for employees to work behind it. Sales are starting to turn around. Olives, available as self-service, are moving quickly. Question on the containers used: our round #5 plastic containers (e.g. olives) are not easily recycled, but have a low “oil impact;” our square #1 containers (e.g. take-out) are more easily recycled, but take more oil to manufacture. Ease of recycling is dependent on your town.

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE: four contractors are bidding on the rebuild of the “Castle” area (to become: Education area, Express checkout, Customer Service, Children’s area). Phil, who heads our maintenance department, and Scott will be going to Governor’s Energy Conference. Also, General Merchandise is moving to the front office space. Prototypes of adjustable grocery shelving has been installed for evaluation.

CAFÉ INTERNET ACCESS: discussion, no action-- Natural Living Center in Bangor has kiosk(s) available to research nutrition and vitamins/supplements. However, that is a different concept than wireless access, where customers supply their own laptops. Main concern for us is “people taking over tables—setting up offices,” leaving not enough tables for paying/eating customers. Chairs in Café have to support the Deli’s bottom line. Additional concern is being “bathed” in radio frequency waves; this occurs already, from nearby library, and from internal store inventory wireless systems. More research is needed on radio waves and health. We would have no control over customers’ use of the internet, but also no liability. Computer and cell phone usage are solitary, non-social activities; we want to nurture the social aspect of the café. However, reading a book/newspaper can also be considered non-social, solitary.

BY-LAWS COMMITTEE: to be discussed-- question of staff reps roles on board, especially attendance at executive sessions. Committee has not met, will meet with Zafra to discuss.

ANNUAL MEETING REVIEW: tabled to next meeting.

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE: petition for a special meeting, requiring 10% of membership has been dropped. Nominating board candidates from the floor of Annual Meeting was abandoned after last year. Not addressed in our by-laws are write-ins. If we want to allow/encourage write-ins we should add this to printed ballot. Election is ongoing to April 6th, or until quorum of 10% of membership has voted (approx. 230). Lack of publicity falls upon staff; elections are a board function. We need to be consistent in our application of election rules: if we say a member cannot run because they have not been a member for six months, we need to also be consistent with application of rules when we say that all nominations are due in writing by X date. Members interested in being on board are encouraged to join a committee to gain board experience in advance. A proposed schedule for the elections process was distributed.

MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE: GM evaluations are done, all three GMs have been rehired. Still to be reported to board more fully are the goals and strategies for the coming year. Basically: increase profitability, increase in GM skills, better financial analysis, and moving towards a living wage. Some of these are date specific, some are not.

HOMEWORK: Annual Meeting review, and New Member Orientations, tabled. Bylaws Committee will meet sometime after the Annual Meeting to consider staff reps questions. Unclaimed Patronage Dividends to be considered by board after "April 16th" reply from Mike Nickerson.

NEXT MEETING: Thurs., April. 24th at 6:30 pm at Waterfall Arts, Kip Penney facilitating.