

## BELFAST FOOD COOP BOARD MEETING - April 24, 2008

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

FACILITATOR: Kip. Scribe: Paul. Timekeeper: Zafra Vibewatcher: none

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Cooperative Maine has published its survey; "Stronger Together, a Directory of Maine's Cooperative Economy;" a copy was passed around; personal copies were offered by e-mail or will be left in mailbox for those without e-mail. Belfast Co-op as well as Co-op Maine were represented at the HOPE Festival in Orono; several people in that area are beginning work to form a co-op and Belfast was envied for having a co-op. We are still looking for someone on the board to be co-scribe; requires reading and writing skill. Allen has a new e-mail address: <fidfarm@roadrunner.com> Looking for volunteers to represent us at a health fair sponsored by Bank of America, May 7th, 11-1 PM. Coastal Mountains Land Trust is having an informational meeting May 9th, 9-10:30 AM at Darby's upstairs; info on the proposed new Greenway along the RR right-of-way and on Sears Island; note that the Trust now covers the coast up to Prospect. Fedco is having annual tree surplus sale May 2-3 open to public 9 AM - 3 PM.

ELECTIONS COMMITTEE: no report; we were unsure of number of ballots cast so far, but it was estimated that the tote bag logo design had about four times as many ballots cast. We need better publicity. Also was noted that ballot did not state how many positions for which one could vote.

MINUTES: of March 27, 2008 were approved (9-Yes, 0-No, 1-Abstain), with these changes: under Minutes of Feb. 28, should read: "Changes were made for web posting, to maintain confidentiality re: contractor bids;" under Elections Committee, add final line: "A proposed schedule for the elections process was distributed;" under GM Team Report, should read: "foldable RECYCLED plastic totes." Changes were made for web posting, removing financial figures from the GM Team Report.

MEETING PLACE: Lorna Crichton explained that our use of Waterfall Arts entails some staff time; their usual charge is \$15/hour for non-profits. We then discussed the options: Darby's upstairs, Senior Spectrum, Volunteers of America (Kate will check on this). We voted to continue at Waterfall (9-Yes, 1-No, 0 Abstain). Along with choosing a facilitator for next meetings we will also choose two setup people, and cooperate on taking down chairs and tables at each meeting's end.

GM TEAM REPORT: written report was received. Clarification: "rewriting" of the Personnel Manual is actually updating it. The All-staff meetings will again be at two different times, AM and PM. Staff board reps were encouraged to attend the All-staff meetings to introduce themselves as reps, and possible discussion there. GMs were asked to report back to board on the staff reaction to the pay-for-performance vs. merit increase ideas. Goldy was out on vacation. Our "seasonal" presence at Belfast Farmer's Market will be once a month on Main Street, starting May 23. We will get a mobile vendor's license, to sell prepared all-local foods. The Market is excited to have us there and do not see us as competition. Do the employees understand our financial problems this spring? Some have taken time off to help reduce costs. This will be discussed at the All-staff meeting. We hope to be better prepared next winter.

MEMBER COMMENTS: After checking, it was noticed that we do not have a budget line for board meeting rentals, only trainings, but this can probably be arranged. Changes were suggested in the format of the newsletter, possibly a one or two page newsprint style, with more community input, and maybe advertisers to fund the printing? The committee is Erica and Mary Ruoff, who will report back.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: After looking at the budget, what we planned to spend versus what we did

spend, the outcome seems positive, as we had "budgeted to lose..." What this means is that next year we need a better budgeting process. This has been a slow time, and a slow economy, with fuel surcharges on almost everything. Overall, we are in a good position--several years ago we were running negative in springtime. There has been more use of the discounts by members, which is an economic indicator. Finance committee was asked to report back on the current percentage of sales to members. In FY 2006 this was 51% and in FY 2007 about 50%. Writers of reports were asked to take credit for their work, by adding their names to written reports. Proposed winter hours of 9-5 on Sundays would be from Jan. 1- March 31. It was suggested that if in the future we have to ask staff to reduce hours, the board could lead by example by voluntarily dropping our own discounts for the same period. The insurance for the board is liability insurance, required but expensive. Encouraging was that electricity costs are lower, as are the cooler maintenance costs. Wages, (including benefits, IRA matching) went up, significantly in some departments; but overall only 2% higher, deli being the biggest cost right now. Both the Equity fund and Membership fees are in the positive. We are paying off long-term debt to shareholders. Theft seems to be low, when separated from spoilage costs, as per department managers' reporting. Sales are up 7.75% for the six months ending 3/31/08; most of that increase reflects price increases, and not increased moving of products. This set of financial reports were the second most detailed to be distributed (after those from our accountant, Mike Nickerson in December). Patronage dividends redeemed were \$24,000 out of \$56,000 issued (with \$1300 donated back to co-op). This has depressed our cash flow for the month of March as members are using their patronage dividends instead of paying with cash.

DELI COMMITTEE: has not met in the last month. Thanks to Zafra for installing and tweaking the program that will help Amy to calculate and log the Deli's labor costs on a weekly basis. Frustration was expressed that there seems to be no progress, or method for delegating supervision over, the alterations to the coffee/cashier counter. The amount of Deli business has increased but no new space is available in which staff can work. Plumbers are coming in, electricians were in last week. We asked managers to report on progress at next meeting.

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE: the new coolers and their installation bill together used up most of the recent loan proceeds. The installation glitches are still being tweaked. The amount available for coolers and the front-end improvements consisted of the loan plus some member equity. As it stands now it seems we will be able to complete installation for the Express checkout, and building of cabinets for Customer Service and walls for Children's area. Wayne and Scott will donate some time for these. This should leave enough funds for the actual checkout software and register. For the General Merchandise area, there are only small materials costs, and again, will be done with donated labor. Finally, backup/delegation/deputization is crucial when a manager will be unavailable.

ANNUAL MEETING REVIEW: Elections issues will be taken up by the By-laws and Elections committees. Other suggestions included: not advertising it as a potluck but as followed by a dinner provided by co-op--more than enough food was available--but members seemed to not stick around for meal; a raffle to encourage attendance; better publicity; have agenda available on the website; have a financial report for members. Kate related her experiences with Greenville co-op annual meetings which were all day; had as many as 150 members attend; much and varied publicity; childcare available; a verbal survey taken for direction, with breakout discussion groups facilitated by board members; no dinner, but a potluck dessert; and the day ended with a contra dance. We discussed a strong disagreement with management's decision to pay staff to attend our annual meeting--as much as two-thirds of those attending were staff, managers, and board. It was stressed that we should avoid arguing with our members at this meeting, but have it more of a "listening by the board" session, and less reports from the board. Make it clear that the day is not about operations/products, but more about policy. Added to next agenda was 10 minutes for continuation of this topic, focusing on improvements for future.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE: members were asked to consider what they would like to

see for a retreat or for a training. We will be reminded, but please bring your ideas to next meeting.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE: has much new energy, with three new members, who are seeking to build outreach, work with the hospital, and with Searsport Adult Education, and to develop a new member orientation.

MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE: has met with the GMs and spoke with them on the financial picture. The MOC sees itself as an advisory committee, a liaison between the board and the GMs. Should committees speak directly to GMs or through the MOC? There is no good policy on this--fuzzy guidelines. MOC was originally a hiring committee, and has had an evolving role. Possibly change its name from "Oversight" to "Liaison?" Board members were urged to review for next meeting the Bylaws (Article V, Section 6) on the Powers of the Board.

HOMEWORK: Unclaimed patronage dividends to be considered by board after "April 16th" reply from Mike Nickerson. Board members to ponder retreat ideas. Review bylaws--Powers of Board. Finance Committee to report on percentage of sales to members. GMT to report on staff reaction to performance pay vs. merit increases and on progress of deli counter move.

NEXT MEETING: Thurs. May 22, 6:30 pm at Waterfall Arts, Zafra facilitating, Karen and Mike on set-up.