

## BELFAST COOP BOARD MEETING – May 28, 2009 FINAL

PRESENT: Russ Barber, Jeanne Gail, Allen Ginsberg, Wayne Kraeger, Debbi Lasky, Bindy Pendleton, Kip Penney, Phil Prince, Jerry Savitz, Paul Sheridan, Jerome Weiner.  
Absent: Peri Tobin, Zafra Whitcomb. Staff: Erica Buswell, Goldy Goldstein.

FACILITATOR: Wayne. Scribe: Paul. Timekeeper: Debbi. Vibewatcher: Goldy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: in the recent “Best of the Best” competition run by the VillageSoup.com and the Republican Journal our Co-op was voted first place in: Healthiest Lunch; Health Food Store; Beer & Wine; and second place in: Fruits & Vegetables; Bagels & Bread. There will be a Best of the Best celebration on Thursday, June 11, at Hutchinson Center. Members and board urged to attend. Congratulations to Zafra on birth of his son, Zevediah Xavier.

MINUTES: of April 23, 2009 were accepted (12 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abs) with these corrections: under GMT Report, should read: “All Congressmembers;” under CCMA ATTENDANCE, Pittsburgh is spelled with an ‘h.’ These were also approved for web posting (13 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abs).

GENERAL MANAGEMENT TEAM (GMT) REPORT: written report was received. Questions/ comments:

- question re: additional summer staff--can we increase hours or must we take on new employees? The front end and deli will need more staff.
- the in-service ‘webinars’ are discussed by the participating staff together, the day following.
- board is asked to provide their impressions, in writing, on the results of the member survey
- clear, large signs were suggested to make all aware of the new “not shopping into your own bag” policy. Also suggested was a Republican Journal and/or newsletter article that the Co-op wants it to be known that we are no longer “easy,” when it comes to shoplifting.
- attendance at staff meetings is voluntary, resulting in about 50% attendance, and a good flow of ideas, as those there are choosing to be there.
- Pepper’s financial responsibilities are being well-covered by Rosemarie and Zafra.

MEMBER COMMENTS: Kip reported on a comment from a staff member who was glad to be included in the process of choosing new management. As to our ability to lobby, Jerome reported that, in his opinion, clearly we have no lobbying restrictions, except that it should be within the realm of the Co-op’s mission: co-operatives, food issues, etc. and not something tangential (e.g. abortion). A proposal was made: “To thank them for their service, we extend the 5% discount to the outgoing board members to September 30, this not being a policy decision, but a one-time decision, and the board will revisit this as a policy issue in the future.” Discussion included: discounts for the board are not a line item in the budget; board service is volunteering; while some recent board members might deserve this extension as a form of ‘pension,’ other may not, perhaps we need to institute ‘pay-for-performance’ for the board: show up to meetings, run committees, work on committees, earning additional compensation; problems with discounts in general—they open the co-op to an open-ended amount of lost revenue, as opposed to flat amounts paid for board service (other co-ops do this—board service need not be volunteering); also discounts are inherently unfair as those who spend more at Co-op, or have bigger households, benefiting from the discounts unproportionally; in the past, other discounts (employee, etc.) needed to be reduced due to the effect on co-op’s bottom line; perhaps we can offer a gift certificate to these past board members? Proposal passed: 9 Yes, 1 No, 1 Abs. The Board Development committee will research what other coops do and report back; Zafra is reminded that we need a report on the cost of board discounts to the

co-op, including a breakdown of the range, not identified by board member.

**OFFICER ELECTIONS:** Nominated, and unanimously re-elected, for these positions: President - Bindy Pendleton; Vice-President - Debbi Lasky; Treasurer - Allen Ginsberg. Un-nominated, and unelected, was position of Secretary; Peri and Zafra will be asked. Debbi will do next month's agenda. Additionally, Paul Sheridan agreed to be co-scribe, along with Jeanne Gail.

**FINANCIAL REPORT:** received April income-to-wage summary. April was not a good month, it is traditionally not a good month. Sales were down 5.4%, but the cost of goods was way down. Wages as a percentage of sales were up a bit. Sales by department: Beer/wine down 16%, however wine and beer supplies were up (!), Bulk was flat, at 0% change, HABA was down 5%, Deli was down 13% but showed income, learning from last year with improved portion control, and less employee turnover. So far month of May is also still down. How do we recapture labor and overhead expenses? Customer Appreciation Day is expensive, especially with overtime wages; board members can help by volunteering to work areas such as book sale. Plan is to have less music/bands, equipment, use our in-house musicians more; not do the kids' activities, have more healers' demos, etc.; book sale is popular and proceeds are for charity. We recently borrowed from our own "savings," rather than from credit line. Our financial employees seem to be on top of our situation. The day-to-day labor costs need the most vigilance. Our Dirigo (health) insurance bill is not in yet. A plan is in place for the Accounts Payable clerk's maternity leave—she is training a replacement from the staff. Department managers are doing very well, managing their margins, working towards their goals. We do not yet know what raises might be. Cost of insurance(s) may be up. A possibility is to not rehire for every position, reduce through attrition, but this is limited. Re: board budget—need a small group to put together recommendations during budget process, Finance Committee will make suggestions.

**FOCUS QUESTIONS FOR LONG-RANGE PLANNING:** Only some long-range planning has been done in the past: annual business plan and the annual budget. Long-range planning can be a source of dissension on boards. Proposed was that we discuss one topic per month during each of eleven months. We could also work from members' responses to the survey. We have a mission statement and a values statement, but not a vision statement or an ends statement. Suggested is that we add one question to each month's agenda, and a notice of the question for the following month. Discussion item: what are the differences between a vision statement and a mission statement? Proposal: "Board will spend 20 minutes at every meeting discussing long-range planning." Accepted (11 Y, 0 No, 0 Abs).

**MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE:** stating personal reasons, Pepper Bush recently took three weeks vacation, returned to work, and then took a 90-day leave of absence. He wants to return to work for co-op, but not to the GMT. The MOC suggested we keep the GMT at two managers rather than replace Pepper while the MOC is in the process of reconsidering the management structure. The search for new manager(s) is moving forward; we received applications from 16 candidates, 4 of these from within the co-op. So far, the MOC will interview 6 of these candidates. There will be a second round of interviews, and then MOC will make a set of first choices, who will be invited to a "meet and greet" gathering with the GMT, HR, Finance Committee, board members, staff board members included. Department managers feel that staff compatibility is important. Staff leans towards the team approach.

**COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:** changes proposed in names-- rather than Environmental, it will be

the Recycling Committee, a standing committee. Also, rather than Design and Building, it will be Building and Grounds (formerly the Environmental Committee).

**BOARD DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE:** all board members received a copy of the section of the Employee Handbook that outlined the procedure for the Grievance Committee. It is a clear policy and should be used in future case of disagreements between managers and staff.

**HOMEWORK:** Board to review the report on the member survey and forward impressions to Erica. Added to agenda was: long range planning; discussion on how to do Customer Appreciation less expensively; board budget—realistic line amounts; Secretary's election; Finance report on the costs of board's discounts.

**NEXT MEETING:** Thursday, June 25, 2009, 6:30 PM at Waterfall Arts, with Kip facilitating.