

BELFAST COOP BOARD MEETING – August 27, 2009

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

FACILITATOR: Allen. Scribe: Paul. Timekeeper: Bindy. Vibewatcher: Peri.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: introductions all around for the benefit of the new GMT members. Board is invited to the “Pass the Torch” event to thank outgoing GM’s and welcome the incoming Team, next Tues. 9/2 at 7 PM, in Co-op Café.

MINUTES: of July 23, 2009 were accepted as corrected: under PRESENT: spell “Weiner;” under SUSPENSION...: add “a question of” conflict with bylaws. 8 Yes, 0 No, 2 Abs. Minutes were also approved for web posting with no further changes. 8 Yes, 0 No, 2 Abs.

Minutes of Aug 6th, 2009 were accepted as corrected: under PRESENT: spell “Vowles” and “Grigsby”; under GMT Report: substitute street “party” for fair. 9 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abs. Minutes were also approved for web posting with removal of dollar figures. 9 Yes, 0 No, 1 Abs.

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

- over \$1000 was collected from the Customer Appreciation Day, approximately \$230 for each of four charities.
- a question for the GMT to consider: Customer Appreciation Day is put on by the staff for the customer/members. The Annual Meeting is put on by the board and staff for the members. How can the Co-op put on a party FOR the staff, without great amounts of work BY the staff? Also suggested was a “Thank You” poster in the new membership area, with the pictures of staff, so we may all learn their names.
- Staff party will require early closing of store Sun. 8/30 at 2 PM.

MEMBER COMMENTS: Chris Hughes encouraged our involvement in the events around “350.org” on October 24th. Wayne read a note from Chris Groden, concerning condition of trees between the Laundromat and the Co-op’s parking lots, and the need to cut down a dead tree. Trees are stressed from the drainage from the two lots. Also, possible need to replace railroad ties, as existing ones are deteriorating. Referred to the Buildings and Grounds Committee.

FINANCIAL REPORT: work proceeds on the budget, but this is a tricky process, with sales down. We had negative growth in June and July. Projecting that next summer will be the same? Budgets should be in board boxes by mid-September so we may study and vote at the board meeting at end of September. No plan to touch employee benefits. Looking at a possible cut to the patronage dividend, with cash available for that possibly down by 2/3rds. We are allowed to retain up to 80% of the Co-op’s profit, i.e. distribute only 20% as

dividend. Also a possible cut might be Christmas bonus, but not the summer bonus. August was similar to June and July (down about 2.6%) but possibly a bit worse. Committee is planning to use a new measure, "sales per labor hour." The "pain" is planned to be spread among staff and members, with input to be solicited from staff; suggested was to query staff at a meeting as to what type of cutback they would prefer, if necessary. Currently, we match up to 3% for IRAs. If we matched 2%, this would yield a good savings. Also to help balance the books, we could make the co-op's contributions to IRAs twice a year, even though amounts are deducted with each paycheck. Inventory is being looked over to identify slow movers. Questioned was the process, with only one reading of the budget, followed by a vote. We will discuss the summary; if there are any concerns on line items, board members can attend Finance Committee or ask a committee member.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE: further identifying of committee assignments and committee conveners: Joe on to, and Erica off of, the Finance Committee; Goldy off the Purchasing Policy Committee, GMT will need to chose a new member; Zafra agreed to call the next Long-Range Planning Committee meeting, but not be its convener.

LONG-RANGE PLANNING/BUSINESS PLAN BRAINSTORMING: led by Erica, we discussed 5 broad questions:

1. What's happening in the world that we are in a position to be able to respond to; what are the big issues that we should be making plans to address?
2. What is your vision of co-operative success look like?
3. What do you see as opportunities for our business?
4. Where do you see as areas where we could be more effective in fulfilling our mission and our values?
5. What plans can we make to bring ourselves back to our roots?

A wide range of ideas were presented in brainstorm fashion in response to the five questions. Jerome gently reminded us that the exercise was only for a one-year business plan, not for strategic plans for unlimited time plans. Erica will be preparing a document resulting from our session.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE: will be meeting next week to discuss immediate and through-next-year plans. Developing a plan of action and a priorities list, working with the budget process.

COMMUNITY INTERACTION COMMITTEE: is a reactive committee, after complaints from customers. Work will go on with Troy Howard school kids after the cutbacks from consolidation.

MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE: working on job descriptions for the new GMT, using a uniform pattern similar to other Co-op jobs and to aid in the evaluation process. Also, work on transition planning. Reminder for MOC to name two members to the subcommittee on a GMT hiring process; Zafra and Paul have begun to work on a draft.

HOMEWORK: Read the budget, call or confer with Finance Committee as needed.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, Sept. 24, 2009, 6:30 PM at Waterfall Arts,
with Zafra facilitating.