

BELFAST CO-OP BOARD MEETING Minutes – October 22, 2009

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Distributed was new pamphlet, "Best of the Bay" concerning coastal farms and food production; City will be hiring an economic development staffer. Reminder about parade/rally Sat. 10/24 at 2:30 re Climate Change Action, organized by the 350.org group, including Co-op. Saturday is also Maine Apple day at MOFGA.

MINUTES: of Sept. 24, 2009 were accepted as corrected: under COMMUNITY INTERACTION, change to read: "recent High Street Block Party." No changes made for web distribution. Both versions were Accepted, 8 Yes, 0 No, 2 Abs.

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

Questions/comments:

- Re: smoking policy, employees must be 20+ feet from building, where it cannot blow back into building. Staff seems OK with changes so far. We may want to consider a smoke-free campus, as done in schools, hospitals, etc.? Purchasing Policy Committee to look at selling tobacco if we go smoke-free.
- work is ongoing on membership billing and determining who is and is not a member in good standing. Board asked for follow up on these issues.
- GMs feel their 1st month has been positive. Also, the lack of complaints are a silent compliment to the GMs.

MEMBER COMMENTS: A member passed on thanks for cleaner restroom. GMs had 2 letters: one member was disappointed, spent \$200 then was asked for additional 25¢ for a bag. GMs will reply to letter, and are reconsidering the policy. Use of carrot vs. stick methods to encourage bag reduction. We may need better cashier training for engagement/encouragement.. Second letter concerning unhappiness with a deli cashier, a reply was sent.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: 2009 was a good year, considering the economy. Sales were down 1.1%. There was a net savings in reduction of Costs of Goods, however this was offset by increases in wages. Our savings account is used in winter for urgent needs, to avoid costs of using line of credit. We are paying vendors early when possible to obtain discounts. Payables are reviewed weekly. Noted was that the unusually low Wage to Sales ratio of August (19%) if averaged with the Sept. figure (29%) brings us back on target, to about 24-25%. The recent inventory done by an outside company went well, saved several hundred dollars, and we are confident in their numbers. Yielded better staff morale too, as only two staff members put in any considerable extra hours.

**BOARD DEVELOPMENT AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE:** committee has not met lately. No dates planned yet for retreat; Jan/Feb at latest, to avoid the election cycle. We are asked to bring ideas to next board meeting, such as more strategic planning, and setting directions for the GMs. If being ambitious, we may have to consider a more than 4-hour retreat, and since we have a lunch anyway, we may want to do 6 hours: 3 hrs-lunch-3 hrs. Erica Buswell sent word about an excellent discussion course: "Getting Back to Roots," and suggested that prospective candidates take the course before running, as well as incumbents, if reelected. A reminder that the election cycle has already begun: Sept. 1, board members tasked with considering who we may know who would be a good candidate; Nov. 1, committee to draft article for newsletter. Candidate from last year who won, but was unable to serve, Tony Swebilius, will be called.

**BUSINESS PLAN:** Erica sent the list of nine points from the board input last month, asking us to shorten list to five points. We asked Erica if she would convene the Long- Range Planning Committee. Reminder: that the managers put together the Business Plan from the Budget, which dictates the limits of the business plan. This is a possible retreat topic. Definition of a Strategic plan is 3-5 years, a business plan is 1 year.

**BUILDING AND GROUNDS:** committee is working on a list of projects, and will meet again shortly. City will check on the parking lot drainage, as well as the unmarked, non-official parking spot in front. Possibility that City will move Pendleton Street sidewalk to our side of that street, and it may add enhancements at the edge of our lot; City will be working with us.

**PURCHASING POLICY COMMITTEE:** Committee is working on a outline for the process members might use to influence purchasing decisions, and introduce this in a newsletter article.

**MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE:** the GM transition is going well, and Erica and Goldy are happy in their new positions. Each department is working on evaluating itself and setting goals. Discussion was held about the Morrison property, as part of strategic planning for possible future expansion of store to the south. Much more discussion, analysis and construction estimates are needed. The big question is the cost, versus the square footage of the building to be gained.

**HOMEWORK:** Erica to convene long-range planning committee; board members to think about possible candidates; we need to shortly set the Annual Meeting date, to continue election work; also we should consider retreat proposal ideas; B&G committee to meet; Joe to update us on membership renewals.

**NEXT MEETING:** Thursday, Nov. 19, 2009, 6:30 PM at Waterfall Arts, with Allen facilitating. Note this is the THIRD Thursday of month and December will also be on the third Thursday, Dec. 17th, due to holidays.

