

BELFAST COOP BOARD MEETING – November 29, 2009

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS: The first railroad train back into Belfast will be on Saturday, Nov. 21, at 11 AM from Brooks. Restoration group has a 2-year lease on the railbed. Next summer there will be trains from Brooks and Waldo to keep the RR open. Railbed is for sale, but the trail is negotiable.

MINUTES: of Oct. 22, 2009 were accepted as corrected: under FINANCE, change to read: "There was a net savings in reduction of Costs of Goods, however this was offset by increases in wages." No changes made for web distribution. Both versions were accepted, 7 Yes, 0 No, 3 Abs.

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

- long range planning is on tonight's agenda.
- in planning for solar electricity, care is needed as savings may not justify capital outlay. Co-op can have renewable electricity now (wind, hydro) via Interfaith Power, but it will cost more.
- to clarify, it was the outside stairs that were repaired at rear of store.
- new compressors are saving us approximately \$500/month in electricity bills.
- important to note that the Port Clyde Fresh Catch is a cooperative, and we should advertise it as such.
- the newest checkout register is fully functional.
- a very positive report, thank you GMT!

MEMBER COMMENTS: Passed on comments from members: "exciting to feel the new energy in the store..." There appears to be many close-to-date/dollar-off stickers on the same items in the meat and cheese dept. Maybe we are over-ordering?

FINANCE COMMITTEE: Sales are off by 1.7%. Department by department fluctuations are leveling off. The gross margin is up over last year, less than 1%. Some items in store are adjusted with a bit more aggressive discount for "sell-by date." November and December are better months for sales. Do not foresee any great bump in labor hours. Will probably be meeting with Mike Nickerson, our accountant, at the January meeting. The patronage dividend cannot be determined until more figures are finalized. The latest we can issue dividends is 8.5 months after close of the fiscal year. Hannaford has shrunk its bulk section; sales in our section are up 5% over last year.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE: committee has not met. Board set the date for retreat on Sat. Jan. 30, with a snow date on Feb. 6. Many felt having an outside perspective is vital for the retreat, to facilitate, or contribute to the discussion. We can be narrow, with a limited amount of input—do they do things differently at Co-op X? What are other coops doing? For example, at Hanover Co-op in Lebanon, VT, Don Kreiss who was President, or past President. GMs

need direction—greening the building?; Board/GM relationship?; expansion? An expansion can take 2 years to come up with a proposal. Also discussed was “The Transition Handbook,” helping communities move from oil dependency to local resiliency. We need to set priorities for the GMT’s sake. Also on elections, noted were the expiring terms: Debbi, Kip, Peri, and Zafra. These people need to inform board of their decision to run again, or not. Also: all board members need to be working on possible new candidates, please forward names to the committee.

LONG RANGE PLANNING: Erica is the convener, and Chris has added himself to the committee. Homework: GMT to ensure the committee meets, via direction to Erica, or by Chris, as Erica’s replacement, setting a date.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS: Russ and others met with City officials concerning drainage into parking lot, etc. The High St. “non-parking space” between our front driveways is to be striped as a non-parking area. Any action on a swale or berm for drainage is long-range, to be incorporated into future sidewalk plans. There is a catch basin on lower Pendleton Street, and if we wanted to open it, it would be at our cost. We also need to consider long-range building plans: demolish existing building, expand it, and/or renovate existing building? We have approval to work on the stairs that lead to the lower parking lot, but no monies are budgeted for that work. Expansion of building on the “Morrison side” appears too expensive. There is an outside possibility for the Mathews Bros. lot, on our side of Spring St. There will be ongoing store cleanouts over the winter: range hood, basement junk, etc. There is movement to define our driveways as an Exit and as an Entrance to the parking lot, mark some parking spots as diagonals to further encourage this, need some engineering to help design and add greenery—but we also need to know where the building will be.

RECYCLING: committee is meeting regularly, deciding on focus. Joe will talk to other co-ops. Phil has collected some plastics in the basement to go to Mid-Coast Waste. Discussed composting of (customer) café plate scrapings. A co-op in southern Maine has a full eco-friendly line of deli service ware—more companies are coming online. MOFGA uses corn-based recyclables at Common Ground. Anything more in partnership with the City? Too early to say—we can continue to push.

PURCHASING POLICY COMMITTEE: Committee members are reviewing a draft flyer: “How members can influence purchasing policy at the Co-op.” This will be the basis for a probable newsletter article. Committee members were alerted to think about whether we would limit tobacco sales. We have contacted one other co-op that we know has a policy on boycotts, in the event we might want to adopt something similar. There is a movement to market specific products to lower income people (via the WIC program) that would require their purchase of commercial-grade goods, and not some of the healthier choices in the same category that we carry. We could accept produce vouchers through the farmstand program. Department managers would want to be involved with any shelf space issues.

COMMUNITY INTERACTION: no messages received. Goldy, Fran, and Erica represented us at the Maine Foods event in Rockport and Goldy’s photo was in the Republican Journal; he also represented us at the Downtown Business Council.

MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE: has met with, and without, the GMT. Reviewed department responsibilities, as well as the strengths and weaknesses and goals of each department. The GMT is asking for a strategic plan. The MOC is impressed with the depth and detail going into their work.

HOMEWORK: if Mike Nickerson is coming, that will change the December agenda. If not: Long Range Planning Committee to convene; board retreat topics; think about possible candidates; incumbents to decide on running or not; review Elections timeline; committees to think about questions to be answered by board retreat. Asking GMTs to report back dollar amount on membership billing, process for renewing.

NEXT MEETING: Thursday, Dec. 17, 2009, 6:30 PM at Waterfall Arts, with Allen facilitating. Note, this is the THIRD Thursday of month. In January, meetings will revert to the fourth Thursday of the month.