

BELFAST COOP BOARD MEETING – December 17, 2009

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Paul invited all to his home in Northport for a Welcome to the New Years party, Sat. 1/2 from 12-3 PM. Kip invited all to Garden Variety's party on Fri. 12/18 from 12-6 PM, on Rt. 139, near Rt. 220, in Thorndike. Bindy recently visited the White River Junction, VT co-op and met with the assistant manager there.

MINUTES: of Nov. 29, 2009 were accepted as corrected: under Attendance, Phil and Jerome were Absent; under Member Comments, change to: "...many close-to-date/dollar-off stickers on the same items...;" under Purchasing Policy change to: "We could accept produce vouchers..." and "Department managers would want to be involved..." No changes made for web distribution. Both versions were accepted, 10 Yes, 0 No, 2 Abs.

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

- The Broadreach agency recently gave cashiers and managers a one-hour training in the "Card Me" program (no alcohol sales to minors). The store, cashiers, and managers are each liable in case of infractions.
- For wage increases, managers are using an amalgam of three philosophies: pay-for-performance, cost-of-living adjustments, and Livable Wage goals. Are in process of defining measurable goals, but all wage increases are based on budgetary maximums.
- For scrap metal recyclables from basement we may be getting some money back, or at least breaking even.
- Managers were impressed at the staff's "seamless" turkey distribution process; there was slightly fewer number sold, and slightly less weight compared to prior year. Some customers used a "Turkey Club" arrangement, paying on installment, in advance.

MEMBER COMMENTS: the goal of "speed through" checkout does not hold in the Deli department, as one person is doing many tasks. To discuss with manager, and a report back in future. Board was urged to consider investigate a medical marijuana growing and dispensing license.

FINANCE COMMITTEE: We are doing OK, surprisingly so. November was an improvement over October's numbers. Cost of goods was 3% lower compared to prior year. We posted a net income for November. From Oct. to Nov. we improved the wage-to-sales ratio, 21% and the compensation-to-sales ratio, 27%. This all means that we are operating more efficiently. Bulk department has been strong this year, but went down in November, probably. Produce is much stronger, and dairy, HABA, and Deli areas were up 3% in sales. Deli has an increased gross margin, with net sales up, and spoilage down two thirds. Our savings account is in good shape going into the winter: Equity, Member fees, and Coop savings. The patronage dividend will be hammered out with Mike Nickerson. Possibility of \$100K available, a large portion of which can be retained for debt

reduction, or capital costs/asset improvements. Small businesses, typical to groceries, have a debt to equity ratio of 12% debt to 88% equity. Our dividend can be distributed as late as May. We will put a notice in newsletter that Patronage dividend will be later than usual this year. Report on members' annual dues is forthcoming. Our net income is ahead of the budgeted amount.

**BOARD DEVELOPMENT AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE:** we discussed retreat: possible facilitators—Deb Burwell, Carol Carriuola; and scheduling, and purpose. Topics: Board/GM policy areas and Long-Range Planning. Open discussion, brainstorming, without a document (other than notes) as a goal. Would we want Jerome to run a Long-Range planning discussion? He has previously reminded us that this is a six-month minimum process. Aim is to plan on a six-hour retreat, before and after lunch, with “Vision” in the AM and “How to write a road map” in the PM. We also need to lead towards a method for member input, such as at Annual Meeting. A facilitator will be sought out, with pre-retreat reading(s). In election news, the following incumbents stated that they will run again: Debbi, Kip, Zafra; with Peri deciding not to run. Annual meeting was set for Sunday, March 21, snow date 28th, and that this will be the start of the elections, with nominations starting in the last week in February.

**BUILDING AND GROUNDS COMMITTEE:** Wayne presented a plan for possible expansion, atop and in front of the existing building, adding about 775 sq. ft. (We now have about 6000 sq. ft. retail space.) This concept is more affordable than expansion over Morrison property. The basement cleanup is adding shelf space for more beer and wine supplies.

**RECYCLING COMMITTEE:** current focus is a decrease in Deli waste, in the customer stream—food scraps. Need to find out where the nearest industrial composter is located (Hawk Ridge, in Unity was suggested). Bindy and Phil took a load of plastics to Rockport, where 90% was acceptable. Dave Crabel, of City recycling committee will be at our committee's next meeting. Aim is a board policy statement/Value statement/Mission statement directing our decreasing waste.

**PURCHASING POLICY COMMITTEE:** “WIC” program report: it may be impossible for us to participate. Baby food, and dry cereal is an issue, as required are brands known to contain GMOs, due to pressure from corporate Washington lobbyists. Also we would have to find a new distributor, with minimum order restrictions. Managers were asked to please look into possibility of a workaround.

**HOMEWORK:** the January 30 date for retreat may move, after a facilitator is chosen. Long Range Planning Committee to convene; think about possible candidates; 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, Jan. 28, 2009, 6:30 PM at Waterfall Arts, with Allen facilitating. A major portion of meeting will be to hear and meet with accountant, Mike Nickerson.