

**La Montanita Food Cooperative
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
March 18, 2014 – 5:30 pm**

Board Present: Martha Whitman, Ariana Marchello, Jake Garrity, Susan McAllister, Lisa Banwarth-Kuhn, Jessica Rowland, Leah Roco, Betsy VanLeit

Board Absent: Marshall Kovitz

Also Present: Deborah Good (admin assistant), Terry Bowling (General Manager), Jennifer Cornish (facilitator), David Hurley (research assistant), John Mulle (staff), Sharret Rose (staff), Michelle Franklin (staff), Valerie Smith (staff), Roger Eldridge (member), Stephanie Pfeiffer (member), Tracy Sprouls (member), Dianne Layden (member/researcher)

The meeting started at 5:33 p.m. at the Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Albuquerque. Jennifer Cornish facilitated and Deborah Good took notes.

1. Welcome – food & refreshment

Issues Raised: None

Actions Taken: None

Actions Required: None

2. Approve the Agenda

Issues Raised: Ariana moves and Susan seconds to approve the agenda.

Actions Taken: The agenda is approved unanimously.

Actions Required: None

3. Member Comments

Issues Raised:

- Due to the number of visitors, all present are invited to introduce themselves.
- A visitor/member reports that the Western Social Sciences Association Conference will take place on April 5, 2014. Marshall, Martha, and another consultant will give a presentation on co-ops in the Economics Section. The member will chair the panel.
- Board did not receive any emails except one operational question, sent on to Terry.
- A visitor/former board member shares that spending time in Colorado, far enough away from a small co-op in Fort Collins that he didn't go often, has made him even more appreciative of La Montanita.

Actions Taken: None

Actions Required: None

4. Consent Agenda

- a. Board Minutes February 2014
- b. Member Engagement Committee Minutes – February 24
- c. Board Development Committee Minutes - February 26
- d. Statement of Interest

Issues Raised: Betsy moves and Ariana seconds to approve the consent agenda.

Actions Taken: The consent agenda is approved unanimously.

Actions Required: None

5. Management Monitoring Reports – X6 Counsel to the Board

Issues Raised:

- Martha moves and Jake seconds to approve the report.
- Terry:
 - Westside store lost less in January than in December, and I hope for more improvement in February.
 - Other stores are doing very well in terms of sales.
 - Nob Hill store lease is currently being reviewed by legal counsel. The Gallup store lease is ready and will be considered by the Board during executive session today.
 - A new product—18 varieties of La Montanita bread—will be on shelves toward the end of the month.
 - New roof on the Nob Hill store is nearly complete.
- Discussion:
 - Staff: With Gallup doing so well, is there a point at which we look at moving to a bigger space? Terry: Yes. We're getting close to that point now, but I'm not financially ready to do it. A new building can come with a lot of problems. It would be costly to prepare a space for a co-op grocery.
 - Board: Will the store being too small impede progress of the store, which is growing in sales? Terry: Not yet. Parking is sometimes what will limit shoppers; parking lot in Gallup is adequate, and many shoppers walk.
 - Board: What's your take on what's happening with the Westside store? Terry: It's going fine, but it just takes time to build business. Deli sales are doing very well. We are trying to spread the word about who we are, putting info out to nearby businesses. Membership numbers are growing. We sell more memberships there than at other stores. One thing we have learned is that the Westside store serves a grab-and-go community, so we are adjusting to that.
 - Board: In your report on policy 6.3 – The data says, “The board has not notified me of any concerns relative to this policy.” This not clear.
 - Two comments for the Monitoring Checksheet:
 1. “The data will be affirmative, listing what items came up for board decision.”
 2. “Board acknowledges the good work of all those involved at the Westside store.”

Actions Taken: Passes unanimously

Actions Required: None

6. Board Study – Economics of Happiness

Issues Raised: See Appendix A.

Actions Taken: None

Actions Required: None

7. Board Functioning – All

Issues Raised:

- Board member presents a felt tree she created for use as an activity for those who stop by the Board table at the Earth Day event. The tree provides a visual for how the Co-op Principles and Ends provide the roots and trunk for the co-op's vendors and members (the flowers).
- Board members who have not yet done so must send their bios and pictures to Sarah Wentzel-Fisher (and photo also to Edite Cates) for use on the new co-op website. A board

member suggests changing wording on the board section of the website from “term expires” to “serves until.” She will contact Sarah Wentzel-Fisher with the suggestion.

- The self-evaluation was completed by all board members. Admin assistant to compile the report for next meeting.
- Upcoming committee meetings:
 - Member Engagement - Mon 3/24, 5:30 at CDC
 - Board Development - Tues 3/25, 5:30 at Martha’s
 - Finance Committee – Wed 4/23, 5:15 at CDC
- Six staff and board are going to CCMA (June 12-15). Board member Jessica agrees to organize the group to go to a variety of workshops (instead of all attending the same ones).

8. Administrative Assistant Duties

Issues Raised: See Task List

Actions Taken: None

Actions Required: None

9. Meeting Evaluation

Issues Raised:

- Board: I like that more visitors are attending our meetings.
- Board: Welcome to our new research assistant. You pose great questions. (Research assistant notes that he is very open to feedback.)
- Board: It was great to have a member speak up during our Board Study
- Board: Appreciated staff input.

Actions Taken: None

Actions Required: None

10. Next Meeting Agenda Construction

Issues Raised:

- At the next Board meeting, we will review our self-evaluation.
- In May, we start the process for RFP for GM compensation. Everyone should read “GM Compensation” article that is in the board handbook (task list by April board meeting).

Actions Taken: None

Actions Required: None

11. Adjourn Regular Session

Issues Raised: Martha moves and Ariana seconds to adjourn the regular session.

Actions Taken: Meeting adjourned at 8:00pm, followed by an executive session.

Actions Required: None

ATTACHMENT A: BOARD STUDY

La Montanita Food Co-op
Board of Directors Meeting – March 18, 2014

Topic – Economics of Happiness

Led by: David Hurley

Goal for discussion: The film, *Economics of Happiness*, is a big-picture take on the impacts of globalization on interpersonal relationships and communities. It lays out a framework of the problem and then proposes interesting solutions. After watching the film, the Board discussed reactions, guided by questions prepared by the research assistant.

Summary of film:

- Globalization has placed outside economic pressure on remote communities and societies across the planet, creating intense competition that has broken down relationships.
- Globalization is an economic process. Through deregulation of trade and finance, it allows large corporations freedom to reach larger areas across national boundaries.
- The focus is on profit, not on people, which increases competition and division. This has major implications for ecosystem and people around the world.
- At the individual level, globalization has caused people to focus on material reward. This is not tied to happiness, which has more to do with feeling connected to other people. Instead, globalization breeds comparison and competition.
- Globalization has sold certain culture (“American way of life”) and appearance (blue eyes, lighter skin), causing people to reject their own culture and encouraging consumerism.
- Urbanization (the growth of urban populations around the world) has had impacts on natural resources. Urban populations consume more than their land-based predecessors. Competition for jobs and commodities creates conflict between ethnic groups.
- Globalization is seen as inevitable, driven by free market economy, deregulation of trade and finance, and subsidies for large corporations. Policymakers support it because of believing economic growth (increasing GDP) is the answer for problems and a measure of progress.
- How to address the problems:
 - Personal changes are important, but more important is addressing the institutions at the root of the problem (WTO and transnational corporations and banks)
 - Economists are finding new ways of measuring progress beyond material wealth, and taking into account larger costs that are part of the economic process: e.g. Genuine Progress Index (GPI).
 - Localization: Reducing the scale of economic activity; creating more accountable and sustainable economies by producing what we need closer to home; local business and banking.

- Policy changes: Bring transnational corporations under democratic control; remove subsidies for large corporations; regulation of the banking system.
- Food-based movements are emerging: edible school yards, CSAs, urban gardens, farmers markets, etc.
- Help the global south achieve food self-reliance (it is a myth that the global south requires the northern demand for their economic progress.)

Discussion – Key Themes:

1. Co-op is an example of localization. But more than local is important.

- For co-ops, the film was a message of hope because it frames being a member of the co-op as (from the seed to the store to the stove) as benefitting the local community all along the chain. That’s what we hope for, what we strive for. It shows that it can be done.
- Visitor: The Co-op doesn’t provide local product and sells products that have GMO ingredients. Sometimes the co-op falls into the same trap of concern about the bottom line. (Response from staff and Board: We sell product from a regional area. New Mexico is limited in production because of its dry climate and short growing season. Efforts by the co-op and others in the local food movement have helped make phenomenal strides in the local production of food in New Mexico. The co-op has also supported local animal protein—a market we have created through store sales and through the CDC purchasing from ranchers. Also local chips, salsa, and cheeses. The CDC page of the co-op website lists all of the vendors and programs.
- What we think of local as in New Mexico is different. We talk about production regions. “Local” might be bigger than New Mexico for us because of climate and geography.
- Organic was a hot trend for a while, and now it’s local. That benefits the co-op. But it is also being faked by large corporations (like Lays, in the film), which could lead people to “burn out” on the concept. How do we prepare for when the trend changes?
- Just because it is local does not mean it is the best choice. It’s not just about where it is coming from but how it was produced that is important.
- Also remember the rest of the film’s title: happiness. There is a sense of pride being connected to local food and farming, a sense of dignity for small farmers.

2. Policy changes vs. individual choices

- The average consumer is plugged into this big global system. At the same time, corporations are trying to tell the consumers that they can contribute on an individual scale. But bigger question is how to impact at larger level of policy.
- What is the role of the co-op in terms of promoting values at a more societal level, to start influencing at policy level. Does the co-op lobby?

- Key is that it is not just what one individual or one organization is doing, but we have to be thinking over and over about who we partner with and how we create the web of relationships.
- Changing light bulbs (individual choices) I do think is important. It's not going to change the world, but it's a great starting place, even psychologically. It makes larger change seem more possible.
- I did find it disempowering that the individual choices can't make a difference. Collectively, we can make significant differences. We are consumers. We drive demand.
- One of the things we have to remember is that everyone in this room is very engaged in these issues. Telling people to change their lightbulbs, you don't want that to lead to complacency. It has to be a first step and then go further. Not everyone is as aware and committed and conscious, so I do think it is a danger to say "if you change your lightbulbs we will solve our problems."

Next steps: Board Development Committee will discuss and determine whether to continue this discussion next month. David (research assistant) posed good questions.