

MEMBER LABOR

August 17, 2020

Dear Members,

At the August General Meeting I hope to propose to restore a modified, voluntary and temporary member labor system. I had hoped that the General Coordinators would do this, but since they have not, I hope that we, the members and owners of the Park Slope Food Coop can convince them with our collective vote. There are two reasons that this is important to our Coop. First, the current system of only paid labor is eroding our culture of cooperation and turning our unique Coop into a regular store with all of the spoken and unspoken alienation between staff and customers that we have so beautifully avoided for almost 50 years. Second, because we do not have member labor, we have hired a huge number of new, temporary staff and we still are not open for our full hours, consequently we are losing an incredible amount of money each week—according to Joe Holtz, our General Manager, about \$90,000/week. We are paying only minimum wage to the temporary staff, thus going back on our values to be an excellent employer. We are also jeopardizing our permanent staff's job security as our financial condition worsens.

I will propose that member labor is returned to solve both problems. I will propose that each area of labor is examined with key staff to make sure that public health and safety protocols are established and easy to follow; the protocols for check out and shopping will no doubt be different from receiving for example. Initially, members will still be able to shop without working and we will offer modest incentives to members to bank work shift credits, for example, credit for 2 full shifts in the future for every 4 hour shift worked voluntarily. I will try to anticipate as many issues as I can in my presentation, but the agenda item specifies that restoring member labor will involve cooperative revision.

My usual work slot is leading the Loan Committee and in that capacity I regularly interact with groups wanting to start a Coop using our model. I had two such conversa-

tions this week, one with a group in Connecticut and another in upstate NY. I sent them each a couple of videos that are on YouTube about our Coop. I urge you all to look up these short videos to be reminded of how special and functional our model is. Let's bring it back. Please sign up for the GM and consider voting to restore our model.

*In Cooperation,
Rachel Porter*