

FEBRUARY 22, 2022, GENERAL MEETING

March 22, 2022



February GM Covers Hearing Committee Election, Explores Child Care Proposal

By Frank Haberle

On February 22, approximately 110 PSFC members gathered by Zoom for the February General Meeting. The agenda items included voting for Hearing Administration Committee candidates, and discussion of a proposal to allow one member of a two-parent household to suspend membership in order to take care of children. Several brief committee and coordinator reports rounded out the events. With two items on the agenda, a smaller February crowd, and seasoned veterans running the event the meeting wrapped up in a crisp 90 minutes.

Electing New Hearing Committee Members

The first agenda item invited attending members to vote on two members who

sought to join the Hearing Administration Committee (HAC). As explained by Committee member Dominique Bravo, the HAC acts as part of the PSFC's Disciplinary Committees, playing the role of organizing hearings by scheduling the events, calling in Coop members for hearings, and making sure that all procedures are followed. Bravo invited the two candidates, both 20-year members of the Coop, to speak about their qualifications. Only one of the two candidates, Israella Mayeri, was in attendance.

"I joined the Coop when I moved to this neighborhood," said Mayeri. "I joined the Coop because I liked the people and I liked the idea of joining a cooperative. I want to join this committee to make a greater contribution to the Coop."

Several attending members asked questions, including: "The Disciplinary Committee seems like such an important committee that does such confidential work. What is your experience and what makes you qualified to serve on this committee?" Bravo, who is a lawyer, clarified that there are a number of committees and that this committee does not manage the actual hearings. "I'm a retired lawyer," Mayeri added. "I'm very good with working with other people in a team. I want to contribute to this effort."

Allowing Parent of Young Children to Leave Membership

The second agenda item was a discussion item that allows one member of a two-adult household with a child or children under school age to leave membership. As presented by Ryan Snelson, a member of the Coop since December, the agenda item stated, "The Coop needs to better accommodate pandemic parents—allowing one partner to leave indefinitely so the other partner can care for their child or children under school age."

"Being a parent right now is extremely difficult," Snelson said, opening the discussion. "What makes it more difficult is being a parent and being able to meet shopping and work shift requirements. All we are asking for is that the Coop allow one parent to take care of their child. I've brought this up a number of times with the membership

office. I keep hearing, 'This is the way it has always been done.' I'm asking for one household partner to not have to work shifts."

Members weighed in on the proposal. One asked for clarification: "Would one member be exempt from the work requirement, or would they be placed on leave?"

Another added, "We could make an effort to restart child care, which would be a better way. I am somewhat opposed to keeping people out because we need member labor but also because it's an important part of building the bond in the community."

Questions were raised about how to accommodate single-parent households and people who are taking care of elders and sick family members. A recurring concern focused on drawing from the pool of member workers we need to keep the Coop fully functioning.

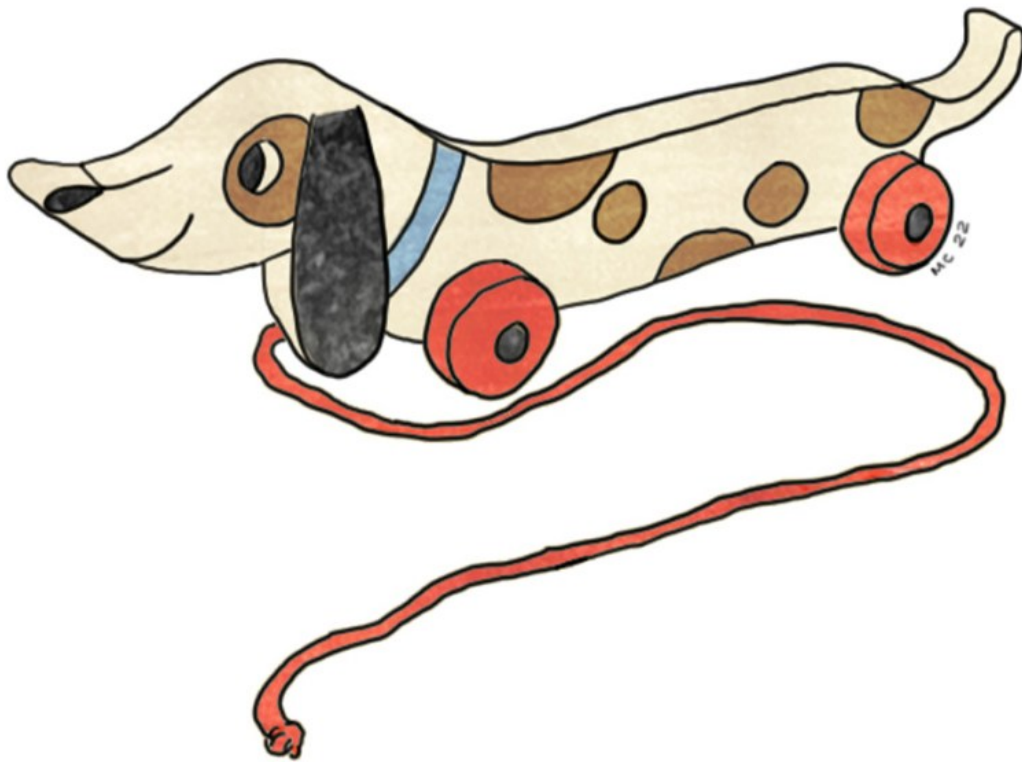


ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

As one member noted, “As a new member you may not understand how the Coop works. When you say, ‘Half my household is not working,’ you’re doing something that is non-Coop. We need all our labor. There are other things we can be doing. If parents decide to opt out it undermines our model. Very few coops can do our work. Honestly, you just joined the Coop. Why do you want to mess with our model?”

“Nobody’s trying to undermine the Coop for this model,” Snelson responded. “I’m just

asking for us to look at this from the perspective of parents with young children. Do we want to look at the way we do business? Is the end game for the Coop to make more money, or increase labor?"

One member added, "I think child care is a really important part of the Coop. If people aren't in favor of this proposal, then we should consider bringing back child care." Another responded, "This may be part of a larger issue that concerns other members who are caring for people right now. I don't see how taking back child care can be done right now. I think this is a non-issue."

Snelson wrapped up the conversation by thanking everyone for their consideration. "I appreciate this, but I'm not asking for child care," he concluded. "I'm asking for a policy where one parent can leave the Coop for child care responsibility. All your points about how the Coop worked in 1973 are good points, but this is not 1973."

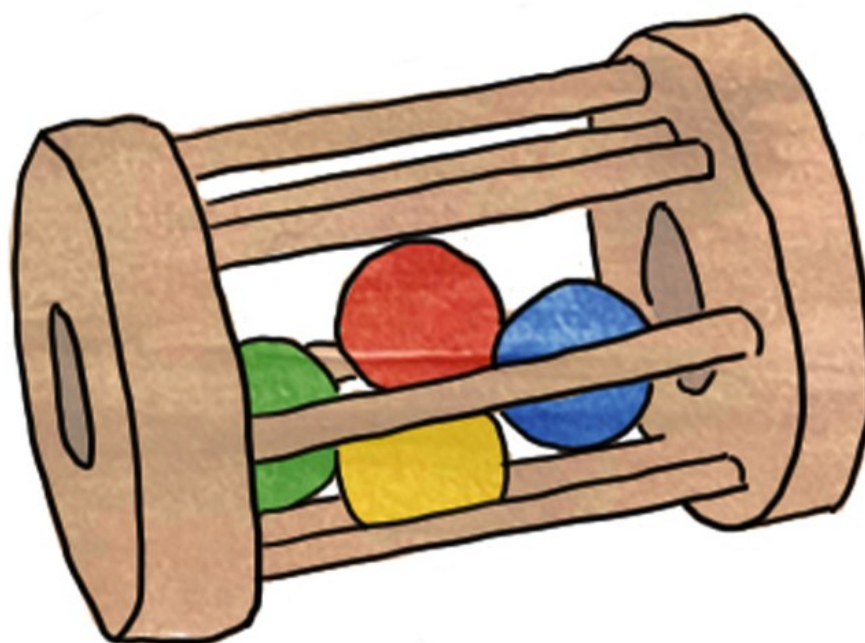


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Committee and Coordinator Reports

Prior to the agenda items, there were a number of reports. Joe Holtz, General Manager, General Coordinator and Treasurer, reported on Coop finances, underscoring that there were indicators that the first four weeks of the 2022 fiscal year were off to a slow start, but that we are finally close to a cash flow break-even. “The advent of adding new members is important,” Holtz said. “We lost 4,500 to 5,000 members during

COVID. We are building back. We are now at about 13,000 and adding 100 or so a week.” When asked what the optimal enrollment would be, Holtz said “we had 17,100 members when the pandemic started. Right now, we have a goal of 15,000. Let’s get there first.” Other members asked about how long price markups and fluctuating prices (which reflect price fluctuations and increases passed on by suppliers) would last. Holtz added that when member labor returns to 100% and the temporary worker system is sunsetted, the Coop will be able to look more closely at lowering prices.

General Coordinator Ann Herpel reported on the return of the member workforce and enrollment. “We are now reintroducing the food processing in the basement. If you are interested in olives and cheese work, you can find those shifts now. We have planned for the temp people to be here another two months.” Regarding enrollment, Herpel stated that “we have new member enrollment sessions four times a week now with over 100 appointments to enroll. We have 1,000 new members since we started enrollment on December 5. Staff and members are reporting that the new members have been really enthusiastic.” A very brief report on several international labor events in the news was reported by Bart DeCourcy of the International Trade Information Squad, rounding out the committee and Coordinator reports. In comments just before the reports, Imani Q’ryn, Board member, encouraged members to consider running for Board membership. “I’ve been on the Board 20 years. I want to encourage others to join the Board, especially people of color. If you love the Coop, help us protect the voice of the people.”