

MEMBERS WEIGH IN ON THE RETURN OF RECURRING SHIFTS

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By Sara Ivry

Earlier this year, the Food Coop announced plans are afoot to restore regular workslots, which will be referred to as “recurring” shifts. The FTOP-for-all model that was implemented during the pandemic will continue for those who want to keep working “freelance,” which is the new term replacing the term “FTOP.” While some members welcome the reversion, others are leery. A handful weigh in below.

Jennifer Bernstein

Cashier; sometimes does check out

Freelance book editor



PHOTO BY JENNIFER BERNSTEIN

FTOP is basically what we've been doing. I like meeting different Coop communities, different subsets of the community, by being there at different times of day and on different shifts. Right now, there's not that feeling of, 'Oh my gosh, my shift is coming up.' That dread.

I recently checked out a guy who was up to just over \$600 in his shop. Mostly he was getting vegetables. He got some supplements, too, and it was super fun checking him out. It turned out my husband checked him out before, also, and my hunch was he comes on a regular schedule. I wouldn't have been able to meet him before.

Jon Nealon

Formerly an office worker

Video production



PHOTO BY SKYWALKERPL VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

I didn't even know this was happening. It's funny because I've always assumed regular shifts weren't coming back. I overheard some people talking at the Coop about how the system as it is now is working really well, and that there is a really low no-show rate, so why change?

I used to do office shifts, and now I do checkout. I still look for office work, but it's harder to find because the office has been completely streamlined in the pandemic. It's been more computerized, so there are fewer shifts. I doubt my office shift will be there in the future; I don't see the value of it, given the efficiency of the new system.

But it's great that the shifts will be longer apart. There's no downside to that.

Francesca Valerio

Former squad leader, now floor monitor

Executive Director of the Robert Lehman Foundation



People prefer to be able to make their own schedule. I did a work slot last week and we were talking about this. People were saying it always seemed whenever time came for your scheduled time of the month, it was a bad time—there was a work meeting you had to cancel, for instance. How it is now is practical, but it's understandable that the Coop needs some standardized way of organizing shifts. Right now it's random. Some days there are a thousand people who want to work. Other days there's no one. The walkers have said that the only way to get a shift is to go on after midnight, cause that's when the Coop posts slots, and by the morning they're all gone. That's a downside: if you want to be a walker you have to stay up 'til midnight.

Yana Calou

Receiving and checkout

Non-profit director



PHOTO BY LIZ LATTY

I've been a member for about eight years on a couple of different squads—checkout, cheese-wrapping, whatever's there, except office work—before we moved to this way of doing things, and I've had some lovely pros both ways. It was nice to have the continuity of my work—of knowing when my shift was going to be and to see the same people over and over. There was a civility to that. Now you definitely meet new people and since Coop staff solved the problem of never being able to get a shift, it's been quite lovely to look at my schedule for the week and pick something that works from there. I'm not a hard line either way. I enjoy the routine of the old ways.

Opal L

Stocking

Musician/singer-songwriter



PHOTO BY LUCASBOSCH VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

I'm indifferent. I've done both, and on the one hand it's great to meet new people every six week cycle at the Coop. You can make a lot of friends. On the other hand, it's definitely nice to work with the same people. But I'm on the fence. I've been coming here since I was a kid but then I left and came back a few times since I'm an adult.

Abigail Miller

Office worker

Graphic designer



PHOTO BY MAGGIE SCHREINER

I'm a Coop member since 2006 and have mostly done office shifts. For the past several years I did "post orientation," now called "new member enrollment." I like how flexible the new system is but I feel nostalgic about how I used to work with the same people for years. I know we won't be magically time-machined back to the before times.

Sara Ivry is a long-time member of the Food Coop. An editor, writer, and podcaster, she lives in Clinton Hill.