

UNREST UPSTAIRS AT THE FOOD COOP

December 6, 2022

Letters to the Editor



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

To the Editor:

During the September General Meeting discussion about the penalty General Manager Joe Holtz faced for violating staff COVID protocols, Personnel Committee member Jean Callahan defended the actions of her committee, clarifying that it is a body elect-

ed to advise on hiring and firing matters. It did not act on a whim and consulted with a labor lawyer, she said. “We considered a full range of responses. We decided [the punishment] was a fair and proportionate response.”

“Some were fearful of Joe’s power,” Callahan said. “At the moment there are some deep and painful divides. Individual staff members feel silenced and unsafe.”

We appear to have disharmony between the members who make up the paid staff at our “Cooperative.”

Callahan tells us the personnel committee consulted with “a labor lawyer” when thinking about taking action against Joe. I’d be more impressed if she told us they had brought in a labor mediator!

General Coordinator Ann Herpel said, “I’m really dismayed that people are saying that the members have the final say on personnel issues.... That could have a chilling effect.... I’m angry. I’m dismayed. I’m appalled. I feel unsafe.”

Within the context of the Joe Holtz saga, Ann’s feelings are understandable but the discord there seems to be amongst the staff is intolerable, and that is of concern to all Coop members!

What is the personnel committee doing to bring a healthy atmosphere of working together to the Coordinators?

The personnel committee doesn’t publish reports about its private work. But given what’s transpired, all we know that they’ve done to bring peace is to deliver punishment.

As an NYC Family Court Mediator, I know a thing or two about disputes. Are we to just stroll the Coop aisles while a bad situation festers upstairs, wondering what if anything is being done to resolve it?

Andy Feldman