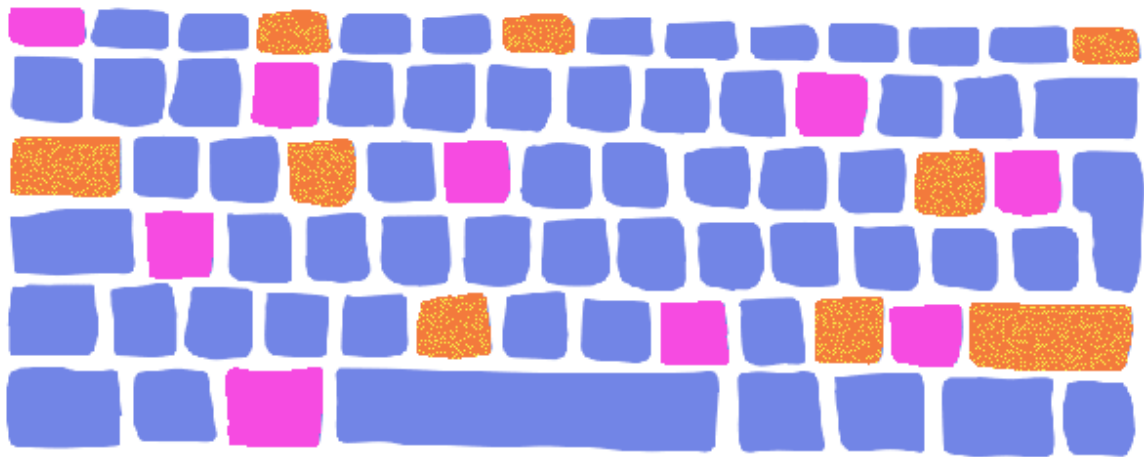


LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

July 3, 2023

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



LET THE PEOPLE VOTE ON A SECOND STORE!

To the Editor,

I've been excited about the idea of the Coop opening a second store, but I wasn't able to make the May General Meeting. So is that really that?? Please put it on the agenda again, and for those who get the chance to vote on it at a future GM—please let it move forward so that all of us can have a say!

This idea is about charting a way forward for the Coop—creating a new location would allow us to significantly expand the Coop's membership, giving many more people (in a new neighborhood!) access to the amazing, affordable food selection all of us love. Cooperatives around the world operate according to a set of seven core values, and launching a second store would advance at least two of them: concern for community, and voluntary and OPEN membership. Our current store isn't big enough to let everyone in who wants to be in, and the Coop has had to cap membership for years. The Coop is an extremely cool model of cooperation that most people have never seen before, that could enrich a lot of other people's lives. Let's share that!

Even if you have reservations about this idea, what the Second Location Study Committee is proposing is to create a NEW committee, which would continue to develop the idea and move it forward only if feasible. In other words, every good question that you have will be considered by that new, very smart group of people, and if that group can't figure out how to make it work, it won't happen. So why waste all of the work that's been done so far by voting the idea down now?

Please don't let fear rule the day. Give this proposal another chance & let the second store move forward!

Iele Paloumpis

DITCH THE FLIMSY CHEESE WRAP

To the Editor,

I was impressed by how little waste we generate. But we could do much better. I can't fathom why the cheeses still need to be wrapped in plastic. A few years ago, at least the plastic wrap was substantial and could be reused as long as the cheese was in the house. But this thin, perhaps less toxic wrap is bad all around. I'm sure no one likes to unwrap the cheese from under those sticky, sticky labels that hold the loose ends. My husband simply tears it open, leaving the cheese unwrapped to dry out and spoil. I undertake the painstakingly difficult task of pulling the ends of the plastic from under the label so I can rewrap the cheese and keep it for 10 days or so. The plastic we use now rips so easily there is little left to maintain the freshness of the cheese. A bad situation all around.

The new Zero Waste store in my neighborhood uses a paper called Formaticum, a paper that will biodegrade but is specifically designed to keep the cheese fresh. I belong to the Coop for several reasons, but minimizing my environmental impact is very, very important to me, and I'm guessing, to most members. Please make the transition. I'm willing to pay more for the environment. And thank you.

Ann Schneider

LET THE FULL MEMBERSHIP VOTE ON A SECOND STORE

To the Editor,

I'm disappointed that the idea of the Coop opening a second store was shot down at a recent GM by a margin of just 10 votes. I hope the Coop will give the idea a second hearing and allow all members to weigh in.

The Second Location Study Committee (which I'm not a part of) has been working to determine the feasibility of this idea for the last six years. The group includes people with expertise in urban planning, business, community development, and the creation

of grocery stores that improve food access for underserved neighborhoods. They've determined that the idea could work—the Coop has more money than ever before, we have a tried-and-true, scalable model, we could launch a second store without financial risk to the current one, and it would allow us to let in thousands of new members the current store can't accommodate.

The Committee wants to put the proposal to a vote of the full membership, and give members a month to cast their ballots—enough time for everyone to review the proposal, ask questions, and vote on their own schedule. But they can't do that unless it makes it through a GM—an hours-long experience that many members don't have time for, or don't fully understand the importance of. People at the GM asked some good questions about the proposal, but rather than allowing the conversation to continue, they voted to end it in a meeting that less than 1% of members attended.

This proposal gets at the heart of the Coop's mission: providing affordable, fresh food, in community. A second store would allow us to give that to thousands more. Please put this on the GM agenda again, vote yes to let the conversation continue, and then let all of the members decide.

Adrien Lorenzo Weibgen

DEMOCRACY DIES IN DARKNESS—BUT THE SECOND LOCATION SHOULD NOT

To the Editor,

Should 15,000 more people have access to the good food, low prices, and cooperation that we enjoy at the Coop? Should the Coop double its tremendous impact for the community and regional farmers? This is some of the promise of a second location of the Coop, which the May General Meeting (GM) struck down by only 14 votes to move

to a Coop-wide referendum.

The GM had 138 votes, less than 1% of active members. It was a marked contrast in verdict and sample size to the 2018 survey in which 86% of members strongly or somewhat supported a second Coop location. That survey saw 2,442 members respond—17 times the GM vote.

Expansion is not only a question about the future but also a crucial part of Coop history. We grew by nearly 10,000 members from 2001 to 2022, and those members could not have joined but for real estate purchases and transformations like accepting debit cards. The second location would continue that lineage of generosity that the majority of members have benefited from.

There are many important questions about a second location: Where should it be? How should it be funded? The Second Location Study Committee (SLSC) has grappled with these questions for nearly a decade. Their Draft Report and Recommendations and infographic give me confidence that we can answer those questions collectively.

We should engage with the Draft Report and make our voices heard, and we can look to Coop history for hope. Michael Freedman-Schnapp of the SLSC noted that the early 2000s expansion “was actually voted down the first time in a referendum [several years earlier]. So we were incredibly lucky that the opportunity to purchase that building came up again.” May we earn that second chance and take it so fruitfully.

In cooperation,

Phil Wong
