

OCTOBER 15, 2024

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# Letters to the Editor



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

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## **PACKAGED BREAD**

Dear Editor,

The last two times I shopped at the Coop there wasn't much available in the packaged bread section. No organic breads of either Arnold or Dave's.

I have noticed that shortages in this section have been a problem for some time. Once I asked the delivery person why the organics are often not available. He said that he only delivers that bread once a week.

I asked the front desk person about the lack of bread, and she called a buyer on the second floor who said that the distributor sets the delivery schedule.

I don't work as a buyer nor do I know the industry. I am not criticizing the staff on this. But I would suggest that the Coop explore other options — perhaps UNFI carries bread or we have some unused clout due to our membership in a National Coop buying organization.

Having bare shelves in packaged bread is a sign that something's wrong. I hope a fix can be found.

Perhaps a Coop staff will reply in the Gazette.

In Cooperation,  
*Stewart Pravda*

## **RESPONSE FROM RECEIVING COORDINATOR LISA HIDEM:**

Hi Stewart,

As the bread buyer, I was asked to respond to your letter.

There are several things at play here regarding the stocking of the breads in aisle 2. The first is that these breads are brought by drivers who own the route. This means that I don't actually place an order for them from a distributor. We are supposed to be

on their route 2 or 3 times a week, usually for Monday, Thursday, and Saturday deliveries. Since I don't actually place an order with them, they deliver whatever quantities of the breads they have available. Despite the fact that we sell not insignificant quantities of these breads, because we are a single store as opposed to a chain store (like Key Foods) we're considered lower on the totem pole regarding what we get (and get higher pricing to boot!).

The drivers also seem to short us when we most need it—like the beginning of September. They apparently had emergencies and couldn't deliver, hence the shelves were bare. I've told them on numerous occasions that our shelf space is too valuable to be sitting empty. Unfortunately, we have no space to be storing stacks of bread trays so that more is available, and no space to be storing empty bread trays until the next delivery.

I did check to see if our biggest supplier, UNFI, carries any of the breads and it seems that they only carry about three SKUs of the Dave's Killer bread line, and it's frozen. If we were to sell it stacked out, this would mean that technically we should put a sell-by date on it (which in all honesty, probably wouldn't happen and the bread wouldn't get rotated and you'd end up with moldy bread on the shelf). Currently the drivers take an inventory of their shelves, pull and give us credit for short-dated product still on the shelf, and stock the shelves themselves—all of which is tremendously helpful.

I know it's not the same thing, but all of the Bread Alone bread is organic and made just a few hours away in the Hudson Valley.

Hopefully this gives you a little more perspective on the bread in aisle 2, and be assured that I find it equally frustrating when I see those shelves bare for days. I will try to turn the screws tighter on these drivers and try to get them to deliver more often, but I could only threaten them with discontinuing their lines altogether, which I don't think is what you want.

Regards,

*Lisa*

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## **IN DEFENSE OF OPEN STREETS**

Dear Editor,

On 9/24/24, the *Gazette* published an article from a member titled “Open Streets Not for All,” decrying the open street on Vanderbilt Avenue in Prospect Heights, and claiming that it has had a deleterious impact on local businesses.

More than 64% of residents in Prospect Heights do not own a car, according to some sources. Studies show that repurposing city streets for bike lanes and other uses actually improve sales for local businesses. In NYC in general, more than 90% of street space is devoted to the movement or free public storage of ecologically catastrophic death machines, despite the fact that we are in a global environmental crisis, and the emissions of both global warming gasses and microplastics (which mostly come from car tires) mean we need to drastically shift toward more sustainable means of transportation. In the meantime, Gov. Hochul’s “pause” on congestion pricing has resulted in a loss to the MTA of more than \$240 million in revenues, so far, that could have been used to improve public transit in our region, as well as estimates of more than 3 million hours in traffic delays.

We don’t need fewer open streets, we need more. We don’t need fewer bike lanes, we need more—and indeed an integrated protected network for cyclists to support the shift away from motor vehicles. In general, we need to repurpose our streets to support people, rather than cars.

Regards,

*Greg Costikyan*

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## **IN SUPPORT OF HYBRID MEETINGS**

Dear fellow members,

As a member of the Coop since 2020, I've never felt so optimistic about the future of Coop democracy as I did during the September GM's discussion of a proposal to institute hybrid meetings. The presenters, CJ and Morgan, began by stating what we often hear at GMs: "participating in the GMs is the best way to have your voice heard." Solely in-person GMs limit participation from members who may be: immunocompromised or disabled, parents or caregivers, working too late to make a 7 p.m. meeting, or living far away from the Picnic House. Given that the GM is where we make major Coop decisions, we must work to ensure that these common situations do not block members' participation in discussion or voting.

The presence of a hybrid meeting does not take away from the in-person component that we love, it merely increases the amount of seats at the table. The Picnic House holds 255 people at max capacity, but think about who else, at our Coop of over 16,000 members, could have a voice on an online platform! A concern voiced by some in the GM discussion is the potential security risk a virtual meeting holds. However, multiple members of the Chair Committee mentioned that during peak-Covid, these issues were solved through individualized voting links, watermarked Zoom screens, and email registration. As one CC member said: "I'm confident that we can solve any technical challenges."

In the year 2024, we should be fearless in embracing the hybrid nature of our world, which has changed radically since the 20th century, when our bylaws were written. As the presenters noted, "If even one extra person who is normally not able to attend GMs can participate, vote, and make their voice heard, we're working towards a more inclusive and democratic Coop."

*Alexandra Gaynor*

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## **BOYCOTT NEXT STEPS: A MODEST PROPOSAL**

Dear fellow members,

I'd like to propose a simple, hopefully modest proposal as we look to individually express our views on a boycott of Israeli goods—in short, let us all vote with our wallets as we see fit.

To those that support a boycott: Create a list of all products that you believe should not be purchased, publicize that list in a central location (perhaps on a social media page dedicated to the effort), and encourage those that agree with you to not buy those products.

Others that do not support the boycott can continue to purchase products as they see fit.

There is rarely a one-size-fits-all solution to complex issues, especially those as nuanced and emotionally charged as this, and pushing for an entire community to adopt a set of principles is divisive and unnecessary. Let us all be informed and take individual action that aligns with our own personal outlook.

In cooperation, even when we disagree,

*Paul Blachar*