

NOVEMBER 5, 2024

November 5, 2024

Letters to the Editor



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

TAKING PART IN TRANSITIONING TO THE COOP'S POST-HOLTZ ERA

Fellow Coop members,

What a time of transition! As Joe Holtz, founding member and current General Manag-

er and Treasurer, plans his retirement, we members have the responsibility to think about the Coop's next 5, 10... 50 years. The Coop has many (many!) strengths and this transition provides us an opportunity to build on them and continue seeking improvements. It's time to roll up our sleeves and partner with the search team to find the best possible candidate for these very important jobs. (I'm saying "jobs" plural with the understanding that no one person can possibly replace Joe!)

There is so much energy and expertise in our membership and I'm sure many of us are, like me, eager to support these transitions. So far, we haven't received detailed information about member involvement in the search and decision-making process. How do we get involved to serve our Coop at this critical time?

*Sincerely,
Elaine Roghanian*

HOPING FOR HYBRID GENERAL MEETINGS

Fellow Coop Members,

I am writing in support of a remote option for all Coop general meetings. I understand that this was discussed at the September GM and I'm hoping it soon becomes a reality.

As a midwife who works nights, as well as a parent with two toddlers at home (one with lung disease), I am stretched for time and have to be cautious about indoor activities that could expose my family to infection.

My husband grew up coming to the Coop his entire life and I have been a member for over 14 years. Our Coop membership is important to us, especially as we raise a third generation of members.

As we enter the high season for respiratory infections, remote general meetings are a simple solution that will let us both continue to be active participants in the Coop community without needing to change our work schedules, arrange childcare or compromise on infection prevention efforts for our two-year-old son.

With hope,
Rachel Blatt

HYBRID GM = ACCESS FOR ALL

To the Editor:

I have been a Coop member since the '70s. Sometimes checkout workers have exclaimed, "You're old!!" when they notice my three digit member number. Then they quickly recover and say, "I mean you've been a member for a long time."

Yes, I am getting old. I used to do receiving and lift heavy boxes of juice gallons. Haul compost bins. Not anymore. Now I'm retired and I experience chronic medical conditions that too often sideline me from being out in the world. This includes going to in-person meetings. Attending the monthly Coop meeting in-person is a long shot for people like me. Why not hold these meetings with a remote option? Working remotely during the pandemic allowed me, and many others, to see how we could stay active using platforms like Zoom, while also keeping safe and operating within our physical limitations. This technology is not rocket science. It is a no-brainer to adopt a hybrid meeting model and be as inclusive as possible for all Coop members.

Christina Fuentes

A COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSION FOR HYBRID GMS

Dear Fellow Coop Members:

We write with gratitude for the Agenda Committee, the Chair Committee and the September GM attendees for facilitating a collaborative discussion towards making GMs hybrid and supporting accessibility in our Coop.

It was exciting to be part of a rigorous conversation centered around enabling the participation of as many members as possible. Members shared personal experiences with disability, and with being parents of young children unable to attend most GMs (it was one such member's first GM, and he lamented that his partner, watching their children, couldn't be there as well). Members offered skills and expertise as folks who've coordinated large-scale hybrid meetings at companies with locations around the world. And members voiced concerns about privacy, and whether hybrid models could support the Coop's community ethos. Much appreciated were contributions from Chair Committee members who expressed enthusiasm about making GMs more accessible, and who conveyed confidence in the Coop's ability to develop solutions that would make hybrid GMs work for us.

We want to highlight one stand-out contribution, delivered with panache by Membership Coordinator Jason Weiner (and published as "A New Coop Democracy" in the Oct. 15th issue). Jason offered support for the values at the heart of our proposal, but clarified that—hybrid or not—a meeting held on Tuesday nights would still prevent plenty of folks from participating in the Coop's governance. While we still believe in the value of expanding our current model of participation to allow for remote attendance, we wholly support Jason's call to make voting on the important issues facing the Coop available to every one of its members. Making GMs hybrid is a good move, but it won't be the last in making our Coop a truly democratic community endeavor.

In solidarity,
CJ Glackin & Morgan Vö

HEADING OFF THE COOP'S POTENTIAL FINANCIAL LOSSES

Dear Coop:

At the recent General Meeting (September 24, 2024) the Coop's finances were presented. The presentation seemed to show the Coop is experiencing lackluster sales in terms of items sold and dollars spent. It was stated that the Coop will be fortunate if it can manage to "break even" by the end of the year. I found this somewhat alarming—as a Coop member for more than 30 years, the Coop's continued health and existence is critical! Since the core mission of the Coop is to sell good food (and other items) to its members at lower prices, how to increase sales should be at the forefront of the Coop's plans. A few ways to achieve better sales were mentioned and should be seriously considered, including increasing the membership (I do not find the Coop crowded compared to before the pandemic), eliminating the "carrot-based" caps on numbers of people shopping at any given time (very rarely have I been there when there are no available carrots and I shop on weekends), and increasing the hours the Coop is open. Inflation has bumped up prices and certainly has impacted sales, so it is a good idea for the Coop to more regularly promote the on-sale products it offers, as was mentioned at the GM. Additional ideas for increasing sales could surely be found by engaging with members who have retail and other business expertise.

In Cooperation,
Tim Forker

IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE COOP

To the Board of Directors,

According to the New York Times, the recently-deceased Hamas leader, Yahya Sinwar “built Hamas’s ability to harm Israel in service of the group’s long-term goal of destroying the Jewish state and building an Islamist, Palestinian nation in its place.” And as far as we know, this is the goal of the Palestinian-founded BDS movement that a group of Coop members have been trying to advance almost continuously since 2009.

According to the National Cooperative Business Association Clusa International, there are hundreds of food coops serving more than one million members in the United States. As far as we know, only one is boycotting Israel, the Olympia Food Co-op in Washington State, a decision made in 2014. Around that time, a few other food coops considered such a boycott but summarily rejected the idea. And at the largest and most costly meeting ever held at our Coop, a proposed referendum on boycotting Israel was rejected by the members present.

And yet, this anti-Israel contingent persists in their activism, despite the repeatedly stated fact that this is deeply offensive to many members based on ethnic and religious identities and contrary to the Coop’s assurance of a welcoming environment.

Some years ago, despite repeated efforts by a member of the Diversity Committee to convince it to act, not only did the committee have no interest in doing so, but it barred that member from the committee.

And so I ask the Board of Directors to weigh in on what kind of Coop this is and what kind of Coop you want it to be. Directors have the power to make a proposal to end this crusade, in the best interests of the Coop, and to overrule any contrary member advice. Do you have the courage?

Sylvia Lowenthal

THE CASE AGAINST A BDS ENDORSEMENT

Dear Cooperators,

Tragically, on October 7, 2023 Hamas committed the largest slaughter of Jews in a single day since the Holocaust. It was a gleeful spree of rape, murder, mutilation, burnings and kidnappings, surpassing ISIS in its brutality. The number brutally murdered compared to Israel's population is the equivalent of 29 9/11 in the US.

On October 8, the BDS Movement website posted: "We believe that the heroic actions of Hamas fighters against the occupying forces are reasonable in their quest...." And goes on to describe the massacre as "deserved" and "justified" against "military and civilians."

The Coop faction, Members 4 Palestine (M4P), posted on their website: "the BDS framework offers [them] clarity" and our Coop should "endorse BDS." This is their "clarity," a movement that supports, glorifies and encourages the flagrant and reprehensible violation of the norms of civilized behavior. M4P engages in the same language and false claims of the wider BDS movement, a movement that has inspired and incited vandalism and violence here in Brooklyn and beyond.

It is inconceivable that our Coop would even consider aligning ourselves with such a violent and destructive movement. If a proposal to boycott Israeli products were ever brought to a General Meeting, it would be a loud and clear declaration that Jews are neither welcome nor safe at the Park Slope Food Coop.

This is a deeply harmful path that must be avoided.

With hopes of unity and compassion,
Sondra Shaievitz

HOW SINWAR'S LEGACY REACHED THE PSFC

Coop Membership,

Yahya Sinwar, the leader of Hamas, has been killed.

Many Palestinians blame Sinwar for their suffering, wishing he 'rots in Hell'. Public boycott advocates (PBAs) would do well to listen.

While relieved myself that the planner of October 7th's rampage of rape, kidnapping and infanticide plans no more, I am not celebrating. Rather, I view it as another chapter of sacrificing PSFC's special cooperative model on the altar of an international movement that blames Jews for everything.

Today's version of anti-Jewish uses smokescreens. At September's General Meeting 'nonviolent' PBAs masked their violence towards Jews through indifference to Jewish safety. There, when Jewish members voiced real fears of their faces being recorded and passed along to hate groups during online meetings, indifferent PBAs and indifferent members of the Chair Committee pooh-poohed the security flaws while touting complete faith in their own stunning lack of knowledge of online conference technology. Online voting itself is an admitted tactic for changing PSFC's bylaws to get one more shot at boycotting Israeli goods (the only Jewish country) and was never about accessibility. Some Jews in 1930s-1940s Germany and in Soviet Russia succumbed to antisemitism too, giving cover to genocidal regimes, and Jewish PBAs worldwide today are arguably their counterparts.

Jew hatred at PSFC today is real and my inner alarm bells are the bottom line. Certainly LGBT+ concerns would never be treated so callously. The only good thing Hamas killed on October 7th was plausible deniability, finally showing PBAs have been dishonest with PSFC about Jews all along.

PBAs relying on extremist militants for inspiration have dehumanized PSFC into overt Jew hatred in our aisles, our General Meetings and our committees. That, and continued Palestinian suffering, is the legacy of Sinwar. So no, I'm not celebrating.

Jesse Rosenfeld