BOARD CANDIDATES: WHO THEY ARE AND WHY THEY'RE RUNNING

March 11, 2025



Illustration by John Donohue

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First some background on the Coop's Board. The Park Slope Food Coop Board of Directors plays a crucial role in running the Coop. Board members make their decisions based on the advice of Coop members who attend the monthly General Meetings. There are five seats on the Board, and each term lasts three years. Members submit their applications to run for open seats in March of each year and candidate statements are published in the *Linewaiters' Gazette*. Nominees will have the opportunity to introduce themselves at the March 25 General Meeting. All members can start voting online via a Coop-wide email that will go out in late May, and results will be an-

nounced at the Annual Meeting on June 24.

This year there are seven candidates for two open seats. Here are the 2025 candidates and their statements (in alphabetical order):

SERKO ARTINIAN



My name is Serko Artinian, and I’m running for the Board of the Park Slope Food Coop. The Coop is a second home to me, and the primary reason I moved to Brooklyn in the first place! I’ve been a devoted member for over 10 years and have a near perfect attendance record. Growing up in my Armenian immigrant family’s restaurant gives me a unique perspective on the world, one that translates into humility, compassion and equality for all. I love eating, and feeding [others], after having first realized the power of good food while watching my master chef mom’s cooking as a kid.

Joining the Coop in June of 2014 has been one of the best decisions of my life. I was fortunate enough to be a squad leader for a handful of months ahead of the pandemic. That experience taught me real the resiliency of the Coop, which after 50 years is stronger than ever! Eternally grateful to the Board of Directors for their wisdom, hard work and leadership to get us through those dark times.

Cooking and photography are my favorite forms of artistic expression, which naturally transitions to the Coop given our more recent foray into featuring members who are chefs. I graduated with a bachelor's degree in film & video production from Drexel University. This life experience helps inform and make me a valuable asset as a Coop Board of Directors member when it comes to envisioning the future of our web, social and real world presence.

My partner and I moved in Park Slope in 2023 for two reasons: living within walking distance of both the Coop and Prospect Park! My dedication to the Coop grows by the day, and I'd be incredibly honored to be given the opportunity to serve our community as a member of the Coop Board of Directors!

LYNN HUSUM



As a dedicated member of the Park Slope Food Coop for the past seven years, I have experienced firsthand the power of cooperation, community and shared responsibility. I am running for the Board of Directors because I believe in the Coop's mission and want to contribute my experience and passion to its continued success.

For 21 years, I owned and operated a business that employed up to 15 full-time staff and collaborated with third-party teams across manufacturing, warehousing and

sales. This experience has given me a deep understanding of organizational leadership, financial responsibility and the importance of fostering a strong, collaborative workplace. I know what it takes to balance efficiency with ethical business practices, and I believe these skills can help strengthen our Coop's operations and governance.

Beyond my business background, I am an active member of our broader community, regularly volunteering at Chips, where I find fulfillment in service and connection. The Park Slope Food Coop is more than just a place to shop—it is a model of what is possible when people come together with shared values. I love being a part of this cooperative world, and I would be honored to help guide its future.

If elected, I will be committed to transparency, inclusivity and ensuring that our Coop continues to thrive as a member-driven institution. I would love the opportunity to bring my leadership experience, cooperative enthusiasm and dedication to service to the Board of Directors.

I appreciate your support and look forward to serving this incredible community.

DAN KAMINSKY



Hi! My name is Dan Kaminsky, and I am excited to run for the Park Slope Food Coop Board of Directors. With the impending change of leadership, it is important to have a board that embodies a cooperative outlook and prioritizes democratic participation. I have significant experience with cooperatives, participatory democracy, community organizing and food justice. I also have a Master's degree in Social Innovation, for which I focused my studies on worker cooperatives.

In my professional life, I work as an adjunct professor, teaching NYC politics at Manhattan College, as well as a pizza tour guide (pizza is among my greatest passions) with Scott's Pizza Tours. I am also pursuing a masters in social work and have been training to be a therapist at a low-income clinic.

Much of my work over the last decade has been in local politics. I have worked on campaigns, in nonprofits and in the office of a state senator. In addition, I currently serve as a board member on Community Board 7. This work stems from my deep love and dedication to Brooklyn, the place where I was born and raised and have essentially always called home.

Cooperatives have been a central part of my adult life. I founded a cooperative tour company called Social Justice Tours and was involved with Bluestockings, a collectively run bookstore in the Lower East Side, for more than six years. I participated in the Cargo Bike collective, a cooperative bike messenger company, and have founded and lived in housing cooperatives throughout Brooklyn.

I joined the PSFC in 2018, and one of the reasons I did was because the Coop embodies the ethos that larger change stems from people organizing in their community contexts. This philosophy has been a core driver of my life choices. For example, while in graduate school, I took a job as a tour guide on a double-decker bus to help pay my way through school. I began talking to my coworkers about organizing a union to fight back against severe mistreatment. Over the next year, I helped lead the union campaign. We went on to organize all the other double-decker buses in this city. What started as a few workers at a single double-decker company spread across the country with every worker of the Big Bus company (a national corporation) now under union contract.

I care deeply about PSFC because it aligns with my passion for food justice. In 2009, I moved to New Orleans to help organize a youth-led urban farm in the lower 9th ward in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. My commitment to community work deepened, but in this experience, a food system analysis was added; sensitivity to the realities of

food deserts, waste streams, food system inequities and structural racism and the importance of local food amidst the context of climate crisis became ingrained in my fundamental outlook. I brought this lens back to Brooklyn, where I helped found a small rooftop farming coop on top of the Pfizer building. These experiences continue to inform my commitment to the Park Slope Food Coop today.

PSFC is a profound example of the powers of cooperation, and I hope to join the board to help keep the Coop rooted in the democratic, cooperative principles it was founded upon, and to uphold the voice of the members. For these reasons, I look forward to applying my experiences working, organizing and managing cooperatives to the PSFC.

TAYLOR PATE



As a member of multiple food coops in NYC, board member of my housing coop, a nonprofit board member and food policy and food procurement professional, I feel excited to contribute to the Coop community as a board member. My interest in running and serving on the board of PSFC stems from my commitment to building and creating resources for the communities that I'm part of. I believe that worker coops are a critical part of the solidarity economy that can be used to build community power. I believe that making decisions about the types of food our communities consume is in-

credibly important, and that cooperative decision making builds stronger participatory democracies.

When I moved to New York City eight years ago, I knew that I wanted to become a member of a food coop as a way to create community and connect with where my food was being sourced. I first joined the Greene Hill Food Coop and volunteered my member labor by purchasing cheese and other dairy products from local producers. When I learned about the Central Brooklyn Food Coop, I joined because I was interested in organizing with other black folks and creating a grocery store that was built for those that have historically lacked access to fresh food in Central Brooklyn.

In my professional life, I work in food policy and food procurement where I've built many relationships with farmers and producers, some of which we carry at the Coop (such as Lancaster Farm Fresh Coop, Blue Moon Acres and Hepworth Farms). I have managed large budgets and managed procurement projects for e-commerce grocery store Farm to People and restaurant group Dig. Additionally, I've participated in hiring processes and managed employees of my housing coop. I've learned about the importance of supporting sustainable and small-scale producers for building resilient supply chains. By spending our dollars on values-aligned producers, we are contributing to sustaining our local economies and enabling small farmers to create the infrastructure necessary to feed our communities. This has a direct impact on the quality of the food we eat, the climate and the prices that we pay at the coop. With inequality and lack of access to quality food in NYC, I believe that it's crucial to keep the Coop affordable, and for members to have access to information about the food supply chains that impact the food that we buy every day.

Three years ago, I joined the Park Slope Food Coop because so many of my friends shared how much they loved all of the amazing food that they had access to, as well as the importance of the Coop as a space to build community. Several years later, I moved into a housing coop, where I served as the vice president. Beyond my experience with food coops, I've also held leadership roles on the board of Slow Food NYC and Slow Food USA, a global organization that works towards good, clean and fair

food for all. All of these experiences have given me the financial literacy and community building skills necessary to serve as a board member at the Park Slope Food Coop. My participation in various cooperative communities has given me the experience of developing values-aligned policies in community with other members and shareholders, and amongst those with varying opinions. As PSFC faces a transition with the retirement of a founding-director, I hope that I can contribute these skills as the Coop moves through this change.

As a member of the PSFC board, my job would be to represent the voice of other Coop members. I've made many friends at the Coop and I've gotten the opportunity to learn about what matters to them most, whether it be prices, sourcing or plastic use. I've enjoyed getting to know the staff at the Coop, as well as learning more about Coop operations through working various shifts. I plan to use that same sense of curiosity as a board member and to actively listen to what Coop members are most excited and passionate about. It's more important than ever for us to gather as a community and strengthen this institution that has fed us for so long.

ELIZABETH TOBIER



Fellow Coop members: My name is Elizabeth Tobier and I am interested in a seat on our board of directors.

I joined the Coop in 1990 and my workslot assignments have included cashiering, receiving squad and office cleaning. My current workslot is Coop secretary. I previously served on the board from 2003 – 2010. I regularly attend the monthly General Meeting.

I earn my living as Assistant Controller at the Episcopal Church Foundation. I live in the Bronx.

The reason I wish to serve on our board again is I feel there is confusion at the Coop at this time on the role of the board.

The reason we have a board is to fulfill an obligation required by the state of New York. New York State law needs decision-making to be in the hands of a board. Previous to our becoming incorporated, Coop members just met, discussed issues, voted and made decisions without an overseeing authority. In order to carry on legally, our General Meetings became the place in the monthly board meetings where members talked about things and voted on things, as usual, and this was then termed "advice" for the board members, who then held their own vote on whether to accept the "advice" of the members. Unless that "advice" involves illegal activity, we expect the board to accept it, whatever their personal opinions are concerning it. So, the whole having a board thing is just theater, from our point of view.

It is important for PSFC members to bear in mind that in order to retain our culture of cooperation, we must never permit the election of members with any type of outside agenda that they intend to implement as board members.

I am not talking about members who have opinions, criticisms, or hopes, in addition to wanting to serve as board members. It is only dangerous if they use their platform as board members to try to change things at the Coop that way (even if you agree with what they want to do as board members).

I actually don't think anyone consciously is trying to take over the Coop in this way right now, but because of the way the board election notice is worded, "Candidates will have the opportunity to present their platform," it seems to invite candidates to develop a "platform." And, we really only want board members who are experienced in being Coop members, have attended many General Meetings, and understand our structure.

Today, all of us members are lucky enough to enjoy one of the most amazing, resilient, strong cooperative organizations in the world. Although many members are frustrated or critical about certain aspects of our Coop (including me), it is very important for the Coop's survival that all of us remembers to communicate our concerns using a cooperative mindset, not an activist one.

In my view, being an activist is extremely important and valuable in the larger arena of the outside world. But members who neglect to communicate cooperatively at all times in Coop spaces in favor of promoting an activist cause, risk destroying our organization.

[Editor's note, 3/13/25: The above statement has been amended to include the first three paragraphs, which were erroneously omitted from the version that was originally published on 3/11/25. The Gazette apologizes for the error.]

BRANDON WEST



Hi everyone, I am the current president of the Board of Directors, and I am running for reelection. I have been on the Board since 2022, joined the Coop in 2009, and became a squad leader soon after. In my current role, after Imani's departure, I will have the longest amount of experience on this Board, and I believe that institutional memory is important. I want to thank Imani for her long leadership and commitment to helping build this institution. At times the workings of the Coop are opaque and I try in my role to share and communicate about process and direct members to where

they might best advocate for what they want.

I have a lot of ideas and thoughts about the Coop—it is an institution that I love and have invested so much time into. But I also believe that the current intent is for the member democracy to lead in decision making. So if the role of the Board were to change, I think that discussion should happen at the member democracy level. I don't think Board members should unilaterally change the process without there being a conversation broadly about it. That said, I think there is a lot of work to be done to improve our member democracy and internal systems and I hope members take that on.

Process is important to me. I serve on two other nonprofit boards and serve on the local Community Board 6. I also have a masters in Public administration with a focus on management. I currently work in labor organizing, mostly in the media industry, but also have a background in voting rights organizing and coalition building. I also ran for City Council in the community in 2021. I've seen the good, the bad and the ugly of democratic processes, and I hope we can move collectively to a Coop that feels more democratic, easier to understand and less volatile. I have seen the vibes at the General Meetings become more confrontational, and I think there are a few different sources to that. But I believe we can and must push for making this not an institution dictated by a few who can withstand conflict the most, but one that is welcoming to a wider set of people and managed fairly and consistently. Also I have a background in government budgeting and have some fluency in finance. I hope we can continue to prepare well for the future, and bring progressive cooperative ideas into our business, and workplace, as much as possible.

To state the obvious, we are an atypical Board, where the expectation for many years is to have the role only serve the minimal legal requirements and have the guidance and direction of the institution be done at the member level. At times, I've seen this rule bend a bit. I think it may warrant a larger conversation if we should reconsider this, and maybe it makes sense to have it when we find a replacement for Joe Holtz. While the Board can step in to protect key fiduciary decisions and veto the member-

ship, I think we as a board should try to do that as infrequently as possible, and instead, have better processes to make important decisions. We have had many far reaching decisions made as a large body, and the Board did not intervene, and I think we can continue to do that but only if members are engaged and informed to do so.

I’m always happy to grab a coffee or a zoom with anyone who wants to talk more about the Coop. I hope the *Gazette* can share my personal email with anyone who requests it. I would love your vote and to have the opportunity to continue to serve in this role. Thank you!

RALPH YOZZO



My name is Ralph Yozzo, and I'd like to contribute to the Coop by serving the members as a member of the Board of Directors.

First, I'd like to thank the Coop founders and members for the now five decades of service to the community.

I've been a member for more than two of those decades.

I’ve served as a general meeting crew shift member and attended many, many general meetings.

As the Coop bylaws state the general meeting is “devoted to receiving the advice of the members”

Over the 20 years, I’ve served in many phases of the food service business thanks to the Coop. From checkout, to walker, to office, to lifting. I have to say that walking is my favorite.

As a director I would mostly listen to the membership and it would be my honor to serve. I would also promise to only serve the minimum term to give everyone a chance.