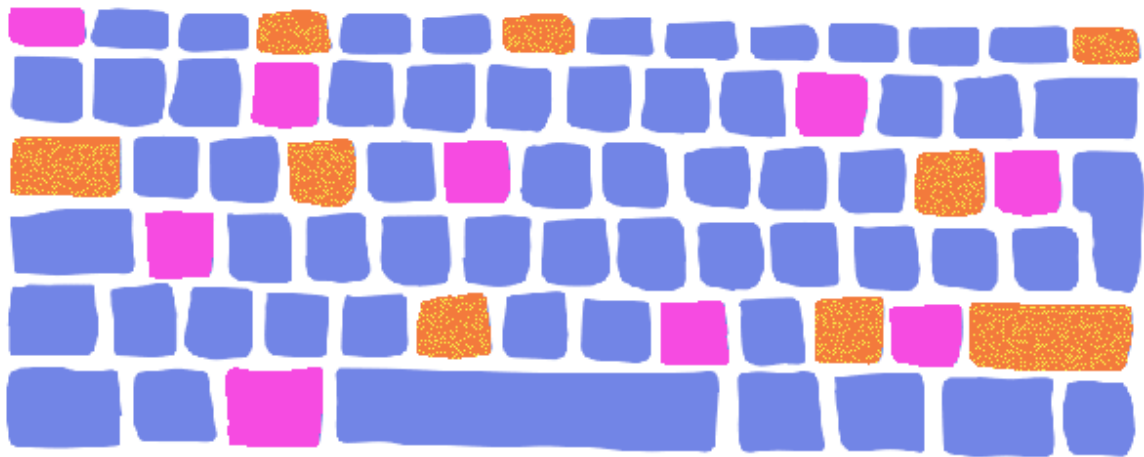


MARCH 11, 2025

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES; MAKING IT THROUGH AIRPORT SECURITY ISN'T ONE

To the Editor,

Today at LaGuardia, I accidentally handed the TSA guy the other white plastic card in my wallet—my Coop ID.

“Uh, do you have a driver’s license?” he asked really nicely. I laughed at my blunder. As I passed through, he grinned and said, “Thanks for being a member.”

Sasha Aslanian

A NUMBERS GAME

To the Editor:

We wanted to share with the membership a quirky and educational game we play as a family after a PSFC shop. We save the receipt and take turns quizzing each other about purchased items and their attributes. The game almost always starts with asking everyone at the dinner table to guess the most expensive item, followed by the least expensive item from that particular receipt. From there, we often shift to “most expensive per pound” and “least expensive per pound.” Eventually the game ends up being “how much were the raspberries?” “how much were the walnuts?” followed by guesses and the receipt-holder indicating to guess higher or lower.

We have found that the kids really get into this game and its lighthearted competitive nature. Plus it’s a fun way to introduce kids to economics and give them an understanding of grocery costs. We thought that other members and their kids might enjoy the receipt game too!

Suggested Questions for the Receipt Game:

- Most expensive item (and second most expensive item)

- Least expensive item (and second least expensive item)
- Heaviest weighable item
- Lightest weighable item
- Most expensive per pound
- Least expensive per pound
- Total number of items
- Total cost of the shop
- How much is X?

Matt Knapp and Rachel Natov

PLASTICS REDUCTION

Greetings:

Our family's plastic waste stream includes a lot of plastic containers that held various berries purchased at the Coop. At some of the Farmers Markets, berries are sold in paperboard containers instead.

Perhaps the Coop buyer of berries could explore switching to a paperboard container with our vendors and see if that's feasible. If the lack of the cover is an issue, I note that we sell Physalis berries from Colombia with a plastic film cover secured by a rubber-band. It is a separate piece from the plastic box.

In Cooperation,
Stewart Pravda

THIS IS FOR ALL THE CLUELESS PEOPLE

To the Editor,

On Thursday, I ventured to the Coop looking for dietary items required for the next few days prior to a specific medical exam. The Coop usually brings some peace to my day.

Turning down the bulk aisle, my journey came to a stop due to a large U-boat in the middle of the aisle. I made my way around to find on the other side a volunteer busily texting. I hoped the person they were texting was rushing over to move the cart out of my way. As I continued looking for white and colorless food without fiber, which is the opposite to my normal cravings, I was blocked again. I politely asked this shopper to make room for me, but they didn't respond. Then I realized that they had earbuds in their ears and were probably listening to some Brahms music which was more important than others needing clear passage.

I made it out and started having a snack of my last fiber-laden apple before my exam, and a person a little older than I decided to tie their dog up to the bench right next to mine without even saying pardon or, "Is it ok to leave my dog here?" I am very pro--dog and love my own monsters, but this one who was tied up immediately started sniffing at my food, and I had to physically move the animal away from me to continue with my apple treat.

My moment of peace finally came upon arriving home to tell my dogs about the hungry one that was tied up at the bench, which I believe was put there for humans to sit on, not for dogs to drool over fellow members' laps.

Obstructedly yours,

Mark Paperno

GOODBYE TO A COOP JOB I LOVED

To the Editor:

I'm no Joe Holtz, but the Jeteresque farewell tour of the "Soul of Coop" has got me, on the brink of coop retirement myself, wondering whether I might earn a tiny asterisk in PSFC history.

Since joining, I have had only one job: walker. I love it, largely because you don't have to be inside the Coop but I also really enjoy the brief conversations, and in a few cases, the fact that they are brief. Until spring 2020, I had the same shift my entire coop career. I was planning to keep it forever. My question to the *Gazette*: Is having just one job for a whole career common? Unique? Noteworthy? Who Cares?

Even if I get the asterisk, it will have its own asterisk since, due to the global pandemic I didn't have the exact same shift my entire career. After work slots resumed, I couldn't get my Wed C week 8 a.m. shift back, took the closest thing I could get (Friday E week) and will finish my career in that slot.

Is it weird that with a US government determined to destroy the US government, global warming definitely gonna get much worse, friends terrified of deportation, and [fill in your preferred reasons for rage/fear], I'm feeling a little wistful about my walking shifts (though not wistful enough to keep doing them when I don't have to)?

I'm not trying to steal Joe's thunder. He's a hero. I guess what I want to say is that working at the Coop has been a privilege, and shopping without working will be even better.

If awarded, the asterisk can be left for me in the office.

Thank you,
Kenny Bruno

VOTING VIA ZOOM ON GM

Good morning,

My name is Patricia López. I am an active Coop member.

I am writing because I want to ask for a hybrid GM vote. Because of my work schedule, I can never make it on time and have the opportunity to vote. I assume many fellow Coop members are in the same position.

Improving the accessibility to voting online makes it democratic.

Thank you.
Patricia López

IN SUPPORT OF HYBRID MEETINGS

Dear Fellow Coop Members,

I write today in support of hybrid General Meetings. It is disheartening to me that the Agenda Committee and General Coordinators have stalled in bringing this popular proposal to a vote, after over a year since it was first brought to the Agenda Committee.

As a Coop member of nearly two decades, I know that our democratic processes are part of what makes the Coop so much more than just another grocery store. I have attended many general meetings over the years, including Zoom meetings that happened during the pandemic. These have been important moments for me to learn firsthand about Coop members' priorities and concerns, participate in the nuts and bolts of Coop governance, and to weigh in on topics from plastic bag use to markups, confirming new committee members and BDS. Casting my vote at the GM is the primary way for me to help shape a Coop that reflects my values.

At an institution that purports to value inclusion, obstructing a vote on hybrid GMs stands out as an antidemocratic and exclusive power move. I am expecting my first child this spring. I would like to be able to continue to stay connected with my Coop community and participate in decisions affecting the PSFC's future. That feels especially important during this transitional moment, with Joe Holtz's imminent retirement. It is high time that hybrid meetings were brought to a vote.

In cooperation,
Jean Rohe

HYBRID GENERAL MEETINGS

Dear Editor,

I am writing to advocate for the implementation of hybrid General Meetings at the Park Slope Food Coop. As a long-time member committed to our cooperative's principles of inclusivity and democratic decision-making, I believe that adopting a hybrid format for our monthly meetings would significantly enhance member participation and equity.

Currently, our in-person General Meetings face several limitations:

- Limited capacity: The Prospect Park Picnic House, where meetings are held, can only accommodate 240 people, representing a mere 1.5% of our membership.
- Accessibility barriers: Many members face challenges attending in-person meetings due to work schedules, childcare responsibilities or mobility issues.
- Reduced engagement: Our Coop has experienced a 9% decrease in membership since in-person meetings were suspended.

Implementing hybrid meetings would address these issues by:

- Increasing participation: Virtual attendance options would allow more members to engage in crucial discussions and votes on Coop matters.
- Enhancing accessibility: Members unable to attend in person could still contribute their voices and votes from home.
- Strengthening our cooperative spirit: By embracing technology to include more members, we reinforce our commitment to collective ownership and decision-making.

While concerns about technical challenges have been raised, many organizations have successfully adopted hybrid meeting models. With proper planning and investment in appropriate technology, we can overcome these hurdles.

As I write, we approach our next General Meeting on February 25, 2025, I urge the Board and General Coordinators to seriously consider implementing a hybrid format. This change would align with our Coop's values of inclusivity and shared responsibility, ensuring that all members have the opportunity to participate in shaping our community's future.

Sincerely,
William Clark

IF ICE COMES KNOCKING

Greetings:

If ICE comes knocking, will the General Coordinators open the doors?

That's been on my mind ever since the latest Coordinators' Corner published on February 18. They name that by "engaging in boycotts or divestments against Israel," the Coop would be exposed to "legal, financial or other harm" from Project 2025 and Project Esther. For the unaware, those are Trump's MAGA manifestos. But if you're reading this, you're most likely uber aware that Project 2025 targets everything under the sun.

I am deeply troubled by the significant risk the General Coordinators would put us, the member-owners, and our community, by capitulating to the fascists that follow those manifestos. This government is denying trans people their documents and healthcare, it is threatening the sanctuary status of cities, it is repealing OSHA guidebooks and dissolving NLRB regional offices. It has let go thousands of national park workers just this past week.

So, if ICE knocks on the doors of the Coop, will we turn over a neighbor, for fear of the legal, financial or other harm they can bring to the Coop?

These are questions that are no longer far-off hypotheticals. My community has spent the last month making rapid response plans, and we actually have to use them. It will be four more years of planning, responding and surviving. Maybe you are insulated in your privilege of being a cliché Coop member, and you think you are not in community with anyone on the frontlines, facing direct threats every day. But you are a New Yorker, so that means you are definitely in proximity. Now is the time to do the work and be in community. That means showing up to the General Meetings, and exercis-

ing your power, so the Coop does not bend the knee to MAGA.

Lin Mo

THE ROAD TO HELL IS PAVED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS

Dear Coop members:

Some fellow members think an Israeli boycott aligns with Coop values. Does it? The devil is in the details, and members should ask several key questions:

Is it ethical to boycott an entire nation? Why Israel?

Israel has its fair share of challenges, but were Israel as awful as BDS states, should we not boycott all products from problematic countries, including China, Turkey, Vietnam and even the states of FL & TX? Were it legal, should all citizens from those countries be banned at the Coop?

How will this work?

There is a reason the Arab boycott of Israel ultimately failed: We live in a globalized economy. There are inputs from many places in most of the products that we consume. Should all cell phones be banned from entering our premises? Do we implement a very costly & unreliable system to try to track the inputs of all the products we buy? How do we factor dual citizenship when defining Israeli ownership?

Will it help?

This is not about our economic power: The Coop only carries about ten products from Israel at any one time. Resolving conflicts requires dialogue. How does aligning with a

group which boycotts academics and all forms of exchange help develop trust on the ground, a prerequisite for a negotiated settlement? If this conflict is so important to members, why not start a dialogue group?

What will be the impact on the Coop?

It has already had a negative impact on the culture and the community. For the dire economic and legal impact, please read the Coordinator's Corner articles on the subject!

The Coop is an amazing model which does a lot of good in our community. Let's not mess it up with a misguided support of BDS.

Bruno Grandsard

THE LIE OF A NEUTRAL POSITION

Greetings:

The 75% threshold was introduced in 2016 specifically to impede a BDS vote; that is the sole purpose of this policy which does not apply to any other aspect of Coop governance. In the midst of a genocide that is inextricably connected to food, water, land and agriculture, the coordinators choose to publish not one but THREE unprecedented, thinly veiled, fear-mongering texts full of wild speculations in an attempt to discourage members from voting their consciousness.

I am deeply disappointed that this is deemed acceptable. Threatening people with unsubstantiated predictions of price increases and cutbacks, playing on people's economic fears to push their agenda. How shameful. The Coop establishment can only see "divisiveness" as something that comes from others, but not from their own ac-

tions and policies. Why are these inflammatory texts from coordinators not “divisive”? Why is erecting outrageous bureaucratic roadblocks to hybrid voting not “divisive”?

The Coop is indeed at risk, not because of some organizing, but because of its willingness to undercut itself and compromise its integrity in order to prevent what is clearly a popular measure from even being voted on. If the proboycott camp is so marginal, then why impede the vote? If it is so popular, then why are we constantly being addressed as agitators that the Coop needs to be protected from?

The answer should be obvious: Whether they realize it or not, the establishment’s claim of political neutrality is simply untrue. The constant hand-wringing over the safety and comfort of Coop members clearly does not include us. None of this discourse includes us. Just a total disregard for thousands of members; their will, their politics, their discomforts. There is absolutely an insidious racism at play here. The Coop establishment needs to wake up and include ALL of us in the body politic.

Tiffany Malakooti

YOU CAN’T WITCH HUNT THE BOSS

Dear Coop members:

Making decisions together as a diverse community can be strenuous. We must negotiate differences in our values and perspectives. Leaders of democratic organizations must host difficult conversations and facilitate decisions with multiple perspectives. It is a dereliction of duty and gross overstepping on the part of General Coordinators to inhibit agenda items they disagree with (as they are currently doing).

A recent letter (“The General Coordinators Are Not the Enemy”) accuses PSFC Members for Palestine of conducting a “witch hunt” against the GCs. This group advocates

a broadly supported democratic vote on a boycott of Israeli goods, and has come against obstructions, delays and opaque processes, exposing the limitations of our democratic governance. These months and years of obstructions are detailed in the GC's explicit opposition to fulfilling a basic mandate of their jobs: improving member democracy through hybrid GMs and enabling voting on a boycott of products from an apartheid state.

As I was addressed as a pro-Palestine Board member in the aforementioned letter, I want to respond. Let's remember the power dynamics and leadership structures implicit in the Salem witch trials and other crusades against women and other dispossessed people throughout history. Actual witch hunts are how those with power repress peoples' movements, criminalize otherness and create scapegoats to distract from actual sources of crisis and tension. GCs are hired by members like us and charged with running the Coop. As American democracy faces unprecedented challenges (from powerful people who describe conflicts with political opponents as "witch hunts" to victimize themselves while wielding bully pulpits to crush dissent), I hope we embrace the fruitful challenges of diversity and democracy. Land and food justice movements have always proved that local liberation is bound up with global liberation. We need the Coop more than ever to prove there are functional alternatives to authoritarianism, constant war and austerity.

Tess Brown-Lavoie
Board Member
Park Slope Food Coop

WANT FOR OTHERS WHAT YOU WANT FOR YOURSELVES

Dear Coop Members,

Do we support injustice? It is not just to support a government that oppresses the Palestinian people by killing them, stealing from them, wrongly imprisoning them, calling them animals, etc. The world sees the documented footage and evidence of this continuous abuse and is calling it out. Coop members have a right and a duty to speak about our Coop participating in this horror. Do the Coop coordinators believe that Palestinians don't deserve the same human rights as themselves?

With justice comes peace. Coop members seeking a boycott of Israeli products want to see the Coop stand for human rights for all people, not just a select few. Practicing free speech, organizing peacefully and refusing to benefit from Palestinian people's oppression should not be considered threatening.

Thank you,
Shahidah Tawwab

LET'S GO, HYBRID MEETINGS!

Hi,

My name is Alex Pyle, I have been a member of the PSFC for 6 years, and I would like there to be hybrid voting available for general meetings.

Thank you,
Alex Pyle

STOP DELAYING THE VOTE ON HYBRID MEETINGS

Hi there,

I find it quite bothersome that the GCs continue to delay the vote on hybrid GMs. It's clearly a very popular proposal; virtually every other community group I belong to provide hybrid meeting options, and it makes participating in meeting way easier for people (particularly for parents with young children like myself who don't have the time they used to to travel for meetings).

It also makes one wonder if the GCs are resorting to antidemocratic sabotage, perhaps intentionally delaying the hybrid policy because they know it would finally lead to us making the morally correct and long overdue decision to ban the sale of products from Israel.

I love the Coop—it seems like the only institution that isn't completely dysfunctional these days—and want to be able to attend GMs to participate in Coop business decisions. Please stop delaying the vote on hybrid GMs and make sure a vote finally happens on Tuesday, April 29.

Sincerely,

Alejandro Silva

THE PROPOSED BOYCOTT OF ISRAELI GOODS

Greetings:

This suggestion to boycott Israeli goods has come up before. When it came up previously it led to the most divisive general meeting in the Coop's history.

While I do not support Israeli actions in Gaza and the West Bank, a boycott of a few Israeli products is not an effective way forward for a FOOD store. As a food store our boycott of products that may contain glyphosate is much more straightforward. If you are concerned about Israeli attacks on Palestinians, contact your representatives and senators. For a food store, the stocking of Palestinian products is a more successful approach, and probably does more for Palestinians than a boycott of Israeli products by PSFC could.

In cooperation,

Adam Segal-Isaacson