

JULY GENERAL MEETING REPORT

August 26, 2025



Illustration by Caty Bartholomew

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By William Doran

A boisterous crowd quickly filled the Atolye Venue and Bar on 6th Street in Gowanus for the Coop's July 2025 General Meeting (GM). General coordinator and committee reports followed a lively open forum, as did a full agenda that included committee elections and a vote to officially create the Plastics Reduction Committee.

OPEN FORUM

Nine members came up to share thoughts on a variety of issues, including hybrid meetings, the boycott of Israeli products and the Agenda Committee election to take place that evening.

Sentiments in favor of the boycott have grown significantly more pointed over the

course of 2025. Six of the nine members who came up spoke very passionately about the war in Gaza. Member Gabriel Young quoted UN Secretary General António Guterres in calling it “the moral challenge of our century,” stating that “Palestinians are starving to death: 88 children as of yesterday.” He continued, “and yet we continue to stock food from Israel at our Coop.”

Member Damien Neva echoed the gravity of the situation: “Facing annihilation for the last 22 months, Palestinians in Gaza are now being subjected to a starvation campaign of an industrial scale by Israel.”

Member Noah Potter then came up to speak out against the candidacy of Adrien Weibgen for membership on the Agenda Committee. Chair Committee Member David Moss asked Potter to leave the stage and the venue after Potter accused Weibgen of expressing personal support for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement and highlighting her personal social media accounts on a flyer that was passed out on the sidewalk prior to the meeting.

NEW GENERAL MANAGER JOE SZLADEK ADDRESSED THE HIGH TENSIONS FELT DURING THE OPEN FORUM AND RECENTLY AT THE COOP SURROUNDING THE BOYCOTT OF ISRAELI PRODUCTS.

Lastly in the Open Forum, member Makrand Bhoot reminded us of the Coop’s 50-year commitment to supporting CHiPS (Community Help in Park Slope) with donations of food and member labor. Members can select a shift at CHiPS for their work slot. Bhoot asked why the CHiPS shift does not have an assigned coordinator.

GENERAL COORDINATOR REPORTS

Before providing a thorough treasury report, new General Manager Joe Szladek—who succeeded Joe Holtz—addressed the high tensions felt during the open forum and re-

cently at the Coop surrounding the boycott of Israeli products. He discouraged the publication of individuals' names, saying, "This does really feel like it crosses a line. Members are being publicly named, and there are flyers being passed out about them."

Szladek also mentioned Members' concerns about their physical safety on both sides of the boycott issue, stating that he felt compelled to seek help from Community Affairs and other mediation organizations to get advice on how to manage the tensions. After he rhetorically asked, "What do we do?" an audience member boldly shouted, "We vote!" This referred to a general membership vote on boycotting Israeli products—which lies at the heart of the current conflict.

COOP SALES THROUGH JUNE 2025 WERE AT ROUGHLY \$25,000,000—AN INCREASE OF ABOUT 10.1% OVER THE SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR.

TREASURY REPORT

Coop sales through June 2025 were at roughly \$25,000,000—an increase of about 10.1% over the same period last year, due to a number of factors: The Coop is now open 7% more hours; the markup on goods increased by 1% as of February 2025 and membership is approximately 4 to 5% higher than it was last year. Inflation also impacts this number.

The Cost of Goods Sold (COGS) as of June also went up from \$18,000,000 to \$20,000,000 over the same period last year. Gross Margin Dollars to date—the money we keep—is sitting close to \$4,900,000, while operating expenses were \$120,000 higher than that. As of August 2025, the Coop is operating at a slight loss. The Coop does have non-operating income that helps make up the difference—which includes things like new member investments and interest earned on Coop investments—totaling \$160,000.

THE COOP'S GRAB-AND-GO REFRIGERATOR IS NOW BACK UP AND RUNNING. HIGH TARIFFS ON EQUIPMENT ADDED SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE COST AND THE TIME IT TOOK TO REPLACE THAT CASE.

GENERAL COORDINATOR REPORT

General Coordinator Elinor Astrinsky provided assorted updates on Coop operations and staff, along with a few announcements. The Coop's grab-and-go refrigerator, typically offering Court Street Grocers sandwiches and sushi (among other treats), is now back up and running. High tariffs on equipment added significantly to the cost and the time it took to replace that case.

The Coop is changing the way food processing shifts are structured by combining bulk and cheese shifts into more generic food processing shifts to make member labor more flexible addressing day-to-day workloads. Astrinsky also mentioned that Food Processing is looking for squad leaders in both bulk and cheese. Interested members should have worked shifts on the squad they're interested in leading and speak directly to food processing staff during their shift.

The Coop has also hired a new bookkeeper named Jacob Slaton. He is currently training under Kathy Hieatt, who will retire soon.

Astrinsky brought attention to author Sun Yu who wrote a book about the Coop called *Park Slope Food Coop: Fifty Years of Cooperation*, written solely based on archived editions of the *Gazette*.

Astrinsky added that the Coop is holding a special summer food drive to support the soup kitchen and pantry CHiPS. Donation boxes are located near the Coop exit through the end of August, or you can donate via a QR code at each checkout.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Member Sarah Schenck made some announcements on behalf of Wordsprouts, the Coop's longstanding reading series that features published authors who are also Coop members. The next event is Wednesday, September 24, at 7 pm at the Old Stone House of Brooklyn, at 336 3rd Street. It will feature Carina Finn's book, *Feast and Famine*. RSVP to Wordsprouts events at Eventbrite. Members may also make suggestions for future events or nominate featured speakers via email at psfcwordsprouts@gmail.com. You can also follow the Wordsprouts squad on Instagram at [@foodcoopwordsprouts](https://www.instagram.com/foodcoopwordsprouts).

THE COOP COOKING SQUAD HOSTED ITS FIRST IN-PERSON COOKING CLASS SINCE THE PANDEMIC ON WEDNESDAY, JULY 30, AT THE COOP. THE CLASS FEATURED BREAKFAST TACOS.

The International Trade Education Squad (ITES) provided an update on tariffs. The Trump Administration continues to negotiate tariffs and extend deadlines for agreements, making for a very uncertain future. The squad also highlighted that the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) is coming up for its six-year review next year. ITES is seeking new members. If interested, contact the squad via its Bluesky Account at trade@psfc-trade.bsky.social.

The Coop Cooking squad hosted its first in-person cooking class since the pandemic on Wednesday, July 30, at the Coop. The class featured breakfast tacos, and it was also broadcast on Zoom. You can watch the classes, which are hosted monthly, here on the squad's YouTube page. Next class will feature an eggplant dish by *Gazette* reporter Leila Darabi on Wednesday, September 24, at 7:30 pm. Learn more at foodcoopcooks.org or on the squads Instagram page: [instagram.com/foodcoopcooks](https://www.instagram.com/foodcoopcooks).

AGENDA

The evening's agenda included two elections: Members approved Adrien Lorenzo Weibgen (190-21) and Leslie Schultz (185-10) to serve on the Agenda and Personnel Committees, respectively, following brief presentations of their experience and relevant qualifications.

THE PLASTICS REDUCTION COMMITTEE WILL NOW BECOME AN OFFICIAL WORKING COMMITTEE AT THE COOP TO WORK WITH STAFF TO DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO SHRINK OUR RELIANCE ON PLASTICS.

The Plastics Reduction Committee was also approved by the membership by a vote of 181-14. This new committee made a full presentation of their proposal to the GM in January 2025 and will now become an official working committee at the Coop to work with staff to develop strategies to shrink our reliance on plastics. Members may email the new committee at reduce.plastic.psfc@gmail.com to offer suggestions, ask questions or participate.

The agenda concluded with a beautiful presentation by Coop Membership Coordinator Jason Weiner titled "A Call for Cooperative Renewal," which guided members through a critical reconsideration of the general meeting format and how we make decisions. His presentation compared the Coop's somewhat antiquated form of governance to its sophisticated membership management and inventory systems.

He noted, "Despite increasing membership tenfold, the general meeting format hasn't meaningfully changed in decades." He continued, "Democratic Coop governance should involve all members, but our system doesn't come close." His proposal focused primarily on ways the Coop can use technology to push the meeting format and decision-making processes into a more equitable and inclusive future.

He noted the inconsistency of attendance at meetings and the fact that only roughly 1% of the Coop's entire membership are able to attend a single, in-person meeting (and vote). You can find Weiner's full presentation on You Tube as well as the full text of Weiner's presentation. Weiner also solicits questions and comments from membership via an online submission form.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Board President Brandon West came to the stage to lead the Board of Directors meeting. Directors Tim Hospodar and Lynn Husum were also present. The Board voted to officially accept the advice of the membership, as well as the items voted on during the meeting.

Board Member Husum presented the findings of a hybrid meeting referendum paper recount called by the Board at the June 2025 Annual Meeting. The recount took place at the Coop on Wednesday, June 23. Husum reported that 6,371 votes were cast online via Simply Voting and 133 paper ballots were cast, for a total of 6,504 votes. Of the 133 paper ballots, 79 were yes and 54 were no. No discrepancy was found between the initial count and the recount of the paper ballots. Two Coop members working a Flex shift on the shopping floor were tapped at random to conduct the recount in the presence of Board Members Husum, Keyian Vefai and Hospodar, along with the two members who were the original paper ballot counters, General Coordinator Matt Hoagland, IT Coordinator Gerald Barker and Coop General Manager Joe Szladdek.

William Doran is a licensed architect, educator and food writer based in Brooklyn, NY. Though originally from New Orleans, LA, he has been a Coop member and New York City resident since 2022. He has taught cooking classes for the Coop (foodcoopcooks.org) and publishes a free quarterly newsletter at adventurouscooks.com.