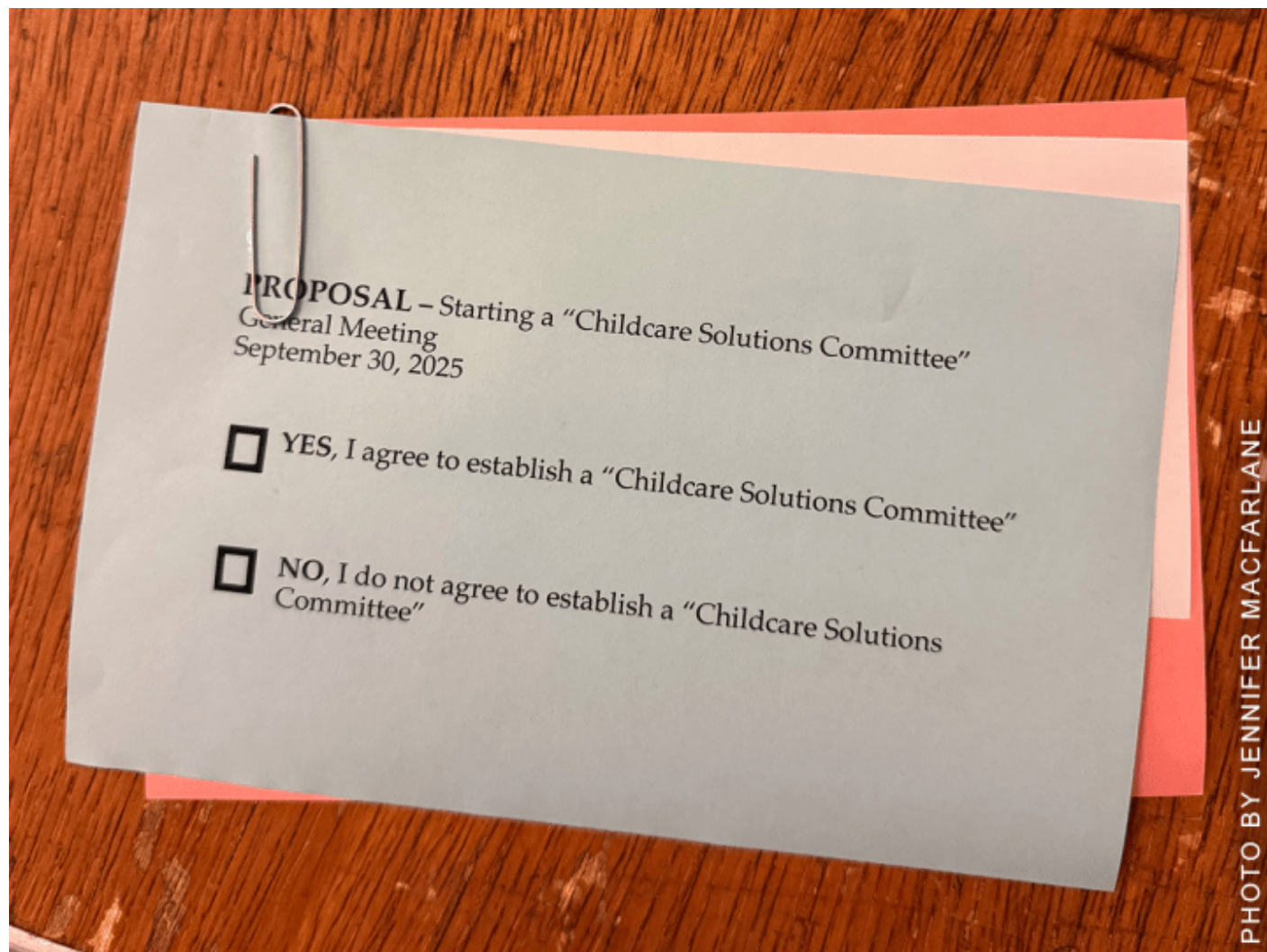


HYBRID MEETINGS ARE COMING. CHILDCARE MIGHT BE NEXT

October 28, 2025



NOTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER GENERAL MEETING

October 28, 2025

By Susannah Jacob

On a mild, early autumn night, the Prospect Park Picnic House held an attentive audience for the Coop's September General Meeting. During the open forum, Coop Secretary Elizabeth Tobier both resigned and suspended her membership in protest of political activism on the Coop board. The members approved overwhelmingly a proposal to start a committee to explore equitable alternatives to now-defunct, in-house child-

care. The Board of Directors voted to approve hybrid GM meetings, on the basis of a simple majority vote in favor that occurred this past summer.

OPEN FORUM

Seven members took the microphone during the meeting's open forum. Board member Tim Hospodar asked the General Coordinators to speak to the "topics of harassment, violence, exposure, and liability." He asked the GCs to address harassment of members who book venues for meetings, how to address meeting attendees who come without scanning their IDs, and how to address harassment board members have received via email throughout 2025.

Mitty Owens, a Coop member for 20 years, spoke in favor of hybrid meetings, as a busy parent and nonprofit social justice manager. He affirmed his belief that hybrid meetings would foster greater participation and participation.

Gus Vianna-Biehler, a member since the 90s, spoke to suggest that while Coop prices may be lower than those at stores like Union Market, they are still expensive. He asked that the new board look into opportunities to offer discounts for New Yorkers like himself who are retired, on fixed incomes and coping with medical expenses.

Carly Benkov, a member for 15 years, spoke for the first time at an open forum to ask for further information about recurring shifts—how many slots are available total, and how many people are on the waitlist to join. She expressed interest in the Coop opening a greater number of recurring shifts for people who would like to join them.

Elizabeth Tobier, a member of the Coop for 35 years, and who has served as Secretary for a combined 13 years (2002–2010, 2020–2025), read aloud an impassioned letter that she also submitted to this issue of the *Linewaiters' Gazette*, which announced her resignation. She added that she will also be suspending her Coop membership.

Charlie Rogers of the Chair Committee read a note from present member Barbara Ma-

zor, who requested her contribution be read. Her message “invited everyone in the Coop to take a break from their activities on BDS [the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement] throughout [sic] the end of the year.”

PRICES ARE UP 25% SINCE 2019. MEANWHILE, TRANSACTIONS ARE DOWN AND MEMBERS ARE BUYING FEWER ITEMS PER SHOP.

A note from member Noah Potter went unread, because a rule requires members' presence in order to have a note read aloud, and Potter was absent. It was suggested that Potter submit his message to the *Linewaiters' Gazette*.

Board member Keyian Vafai asked how products are chosen through the online product suggestion form.



GENERAL COORDINATORS REPORTS

General Manager and Treasurer Joe Szladek addressed questions raised during the open forum. He explained that thousands of product suggestion forms are submitted through the Member Services website, and they are read by every staff person and taken into consideration without strict criteria. Buyers consider if the proposed product fits Coop standards, fills a gap, is local, good quality and whether it's affordable—or perhaps offers a more affordable version of something already being offered at the Coop.

Szladek described the Coop's existing income-based plan, which offers a reduced markup for members on income assistance—a 21% markup instead of the standard 25% markup.

On the subject of harassment, he confirmed that members attending meetings are required to scan in—he walked into the meeting without scanning, and was called back to scan in. He also addressed friction at the Coop, in General Meetings and in the pages of the *Gazette*. “There's a lot of tension. We feel it here. Staff and other committees have been on the receiving end of a lot of really intense and sometimes quite nasty emails. It's very concerning,” Szladek said. He advised members seeking to lodge complaints to go to the Dispute Resolution Committee, which has a process to handle complaints. He said he was sorry to learn that Elizabeth Tobier is resigning.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Szladek presented a slideshow detailing the Coop's financial health. In general, costs are rising across the board. He reported that sales are up 9.2% in the first 32 weeks over the same period in the last year. Expenses, from payroll to insurance, however, went up 12.8% in the same period. Net income this fiscal year is negative at -\$457,000. He pointed out that that negative number may reflect summer sales that dwindle during months when members take vacations, and the fall could likely bring an uptick in sales. He reported that the Coop is looking for ways to manage rising costs, including by lowering the cost of accepting debit cards through a new service

provider.

Szladek informed the members that prices are up 25% across the board, since 2019. He also reported that transactions are down, and members are buying fewer items in each transaction. These shifts may reflect members who live further from the Coop, and thus shop there less frequently, as well as inflation.

GENERAL COORDINATOR REPORT

General Coordinator Matt Hoagland offered some numbers and perspective around recurring shifts and the waitlist. Recurring shifts are 50% of the work currently available at the Coop and around 50% of all recurring openings are filled (leaving 50% of recurring options available, which is over 3,000 shifts).

Using checkout and 6:00 p.m. evening shifts as the base example for popular shifts and stocking as an example of currently available recurring shifts, he reported there were no checkout or 6:00 p.m. recurring shifts available, but there were a lot of stocking recurring shifts with exception to M-Th, 7:30 p.m.

COOP CHEESEMONGER YURI WEBER WAS COMMENDED FOR BUYING A PALETTE OF GRUYERE FROM WISCONSIN, AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE LONGSTANDING GRUYERE FROM SWITZERLAND.

The highest demand for a task on the waitlist is checkout and the most popular time is 6 pm, both by significant numbers. Checkout on Monday through Thursday at 6:00 p.m. is by far the most desired shift, but it only accounts for roughly 2% of total work done at the Coop. With a near 50/50 split of those shifts between recurring and freelance members, currently around 1% of the membership has access to 50% of the most desired work. The Coop staff has been fielding requests for more recurring shifts, though the challenge is that members tend to want the same few slots.

General Coordinator Elinor Astrinsky made a report concerning the impact of tariffs on products carried by the Coop. She explained that distributors have been trying to run down inventories and avoid shifting costs to consumers as long as possible. New shipments portend the end of that era. Health and beauty product prices have already increased between 5 and 30 percent. Swiss knives, coffee, Vietnamese shrimp, Australian and New Zealand lamb, and Swiss cheese are all examples of imported products with prices set to rise. "I think the most important part is that our buyers are consistently and constantly looking for alternatives, trying to get better deals, looking for more distributors, looking for people who will give us volume discounts, looking for new relationships." Astrinsky complimented Yuri Weber, the Coop's cheese buyer, for buying a palette of Gruyere from Wisconsin as an alternative to the longstanding Swiss Gruyere. The new Gruyere is being sold alongside the existing one, and Astrinsky suggested that Coop members sample it.

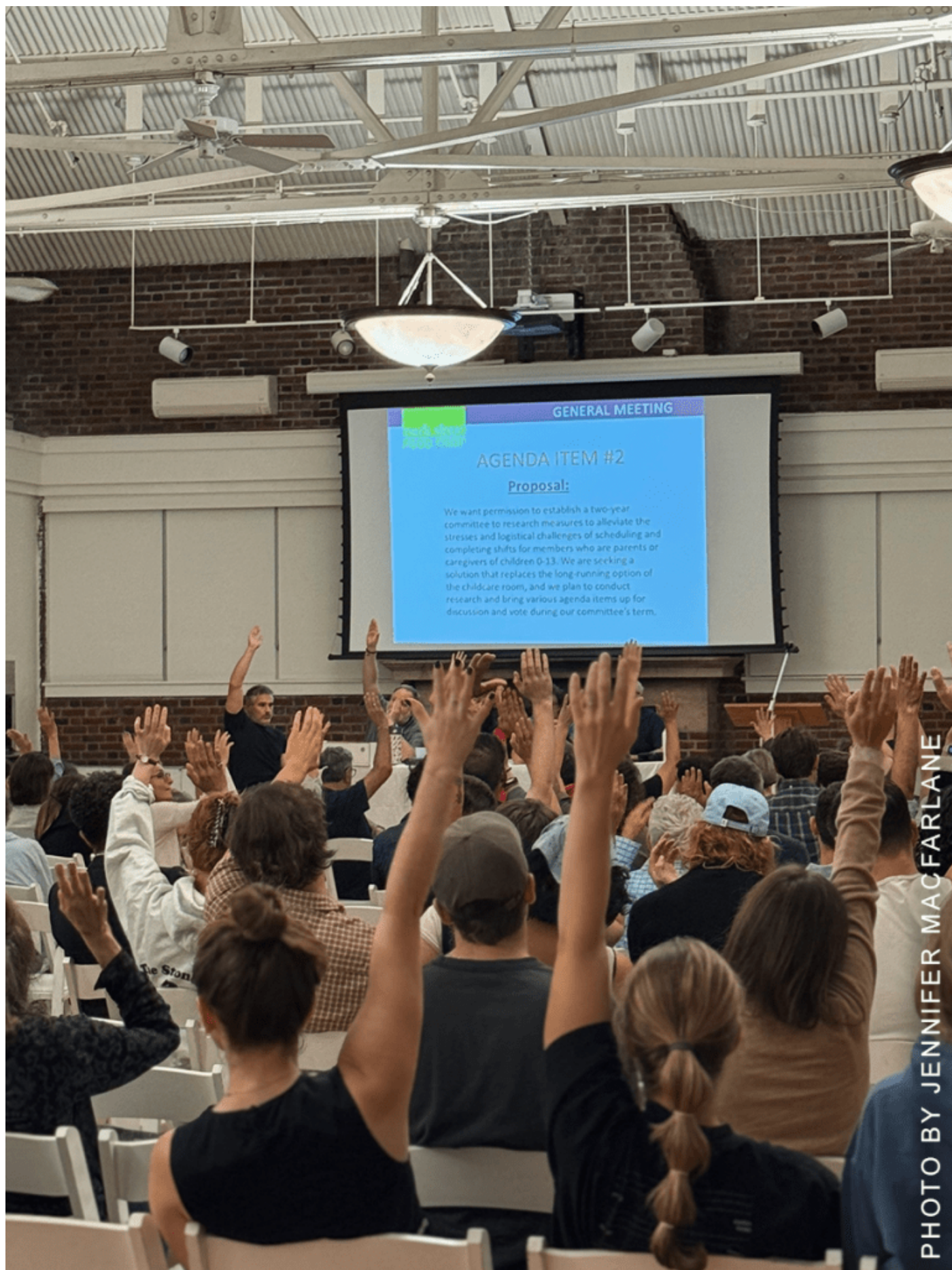


PHOTO BY JENNIFER MACFARLANE

AGENDA ITEM ONE: FINANCIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

In the first agenda item, member Michael Freedman-Schnapp presented his previously-circulated idea for a financial advisory committee made up of members that would “help support the Coop during a period of transition and financial uncertainty that exists in the grocery industry across the country.” He cited tariffs, the pandemic, and inflation as reasons to create a delegated work committee of members with financial expertise to collaborate with the Coop’s financial team. Members queried and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of this proposal.

AGENDA ITEM TWO: PROPOSAL TO START A “CHILDCARE SOLUTIONS COMMITTEE” TO EXPLORE EQUITABLE OPTIONS IN PLACE OF IN-HOUSE CHILDCARE

Coop member Brian Russ proposed a two-year committee to research “measures to alleviate the stresses and logistical challenges of scheduling and completing shifts for members who are parents or caregivers of children under 13.” Russ has been endeavoring since 2022 to replace the former in-house childcare the Coop offered to parents while they shop. While increased insurance rates made restoring the previous arrangement cost-prohibitive despite widespread support from members, Russ proposed a committee to formulate alternatives. Membership Coordinator Jana Cunningham spoke to discuss her concern that the proposal is underdeveloped, and lacks details about the size of the committee or its goal. GC Elinor Astrinsky motioned to amend the “two-year committee” to a “one-year committee,” an amendment that was almost unanimously adopted. The proposal was approved 101 to 25.

AGENDA ITEM THREE: ELECTION FOR THE HEARING ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE (HAC)

HAC member Dominique Bravo introduced HAC candidate Matt Cecil. Matt Cecil addressed the meeting, and was approved for a three-year term on the HAC, 104 to 12.

AGENDA ITEM 4: ELECTION FOR HEARING OFFICER COMMITTEE (HOC)

HOC member Catherine McCaw summarized the work of the HOC Committee. She then spoke on behalf of Andrea Hirshman, an HOC member who was not present but was up for reelection. HOC member Marian Hertz spoke on behalf of Julie Vasady Kovacs, who was also up for reelection. HOC members Marian Hertz and Liam Malanaphy, HOC members also up for reelection, both spoke on their own behalf. Hertz was reelected 108 to 8. Hirshman was reelected 104 to 10. Vasady Kovacs was reelected 104 to 10. Malanaphy was reelected 108 to 9.

PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

Coop Secretary Elizabeth Tobier presented the minutes from the July 29 and August 26 General Meetings. The former was approved and the latter was approved as amended.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING

During the Board of Directors' meeting, the board moved to accept the membership's advice on Agenda Item 884, a proposal for hybrid General Meetings. The item received 66.43 % votes in favor through a referendum vote. The notion had previously been put forth as a by-law amendment. As a proposal, however, it required only a simple majority vote to pass, which it received. In fact, the proposal received more votes than any in Coop history. Board members Tess Brown-Lavoie, Tim Hospodar, Keyian Vafai, and Brandon West voted in favor of accepting the membership's advice. Board member Lynn Husum voted against. GM and board member Joe Szladdek abstained, reading a statement explaining his decision. He said, "I want to be clear on my position here: while I support the members' vote, I do not support this type of Board action." He summarized his views: "I respect the members' majority vote for hybrid; I recognize the Board's legal authority to act, though far outside of Coop norms; I am deeply concerned about again breaking 50 years of precedent; I am equally concerned about hybrid becoming entangled with divisive issues and forming the foundation for future governance; and I believe protecting norms and process is essential to

the long-term health of the Coop.” Szladek added that while he disagreed with how the process unfolded, he will respect its outcome, and help implement the change carefully and fairly.

All board members voted in favor to accept the members’ advice of the Hearing Administration Committee and Hearing Officer Committee Elections held earlier in the evening.

Susannah Jacob is a native Texan and PhD student of US history. She takes pride in her proficient operation of the slotted, plastic bag-taper machine in the Coop’s bulk department.