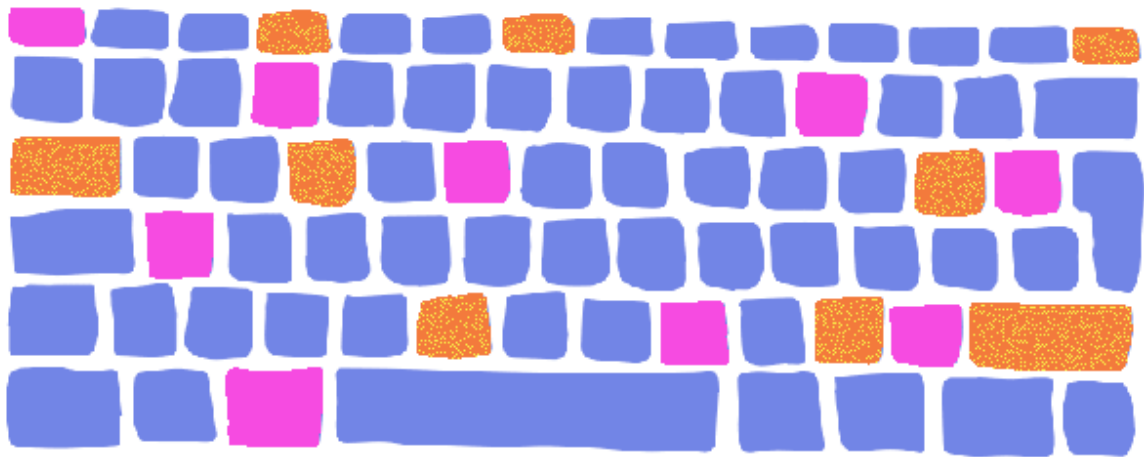


OCTOBER 28, 2025

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



CARRYING OUT THE WILL OF THE MEMBERSHIP

Dear members,

I write as an individual board member, not on behalf of the Board.

During the September General Meeting, a majority of the Board voted to enable hybrid General Meetings to fulfill our mandate to carry out the will of the membership while remaining in legal compliance.

Here is the background: Members discussed the proposal for hybrid meetings (#884) in September 2024, sharing enthusiasm, support, concerns and technical questions. While many proposals are voted on shortly after they're discussed, this vote was delayed. General Coordinators claimed they needed a larger venue and couldn't secure one. They ignored recommendations by Agenda Committee and board members, including holding a meeting virtually. In an unprecedented stalemate, the Board was unable to receive the will of the membership through normal mechanisms. Joe Holtz called this a "governance crisis."

At the April 2025 GM, the Board voted to enable all members to vote on Hybrid via electronic ballot (a referendum). Holtz told the authors of #884 that their measure must be a bylaws amendment, which requires a two-thirds majority to pass. However, the legal team determined that was unnecessary. A strong majority—66.43% of members—voted for hybrid GMs. The Board had a clear legal duty to carry this out, despite the circuitous route.

I sincerely regret that this process has left some members feeling blindsided. In the future, when board members have discussion items, I recommend we publish them alongside the rest of the GM Agenda, as we did in September.

When normal protocols fail, we must bring our creativity and collaborative ethic to bear. Proving we can work across differences is increasingly important in this political and cultural climate. I hope and believe the Coop can be a rare example in this regard.

In cooperation,

Tess Brown-Lavoie

Vice President, PSFC Board

General Manager Joe Szladek Responds to Brown-Lavoie:

I want to clarify a few points from Tess Brown-Lavoie's letter about hybrid General Meetings (GMs). I appreciate Tess's engagement and commitment to open dialogue.

Tess wrote that the General Coordinators "claimed they needed a larger venue and couldn't secure one." The need for a larger space was not a claim but a practical reality we communicated to the Agenda Committee for months. The proposal became linked to a boycott of Israeli goods through emails circulated by a member group, *PS-FC Members for Palestine*. In one such email, the group wrote: "*Hybrid GMs will also let us finally vote on boycotting Israel.*" Based on experience with previous contentious topics, we knew our regular meeting space could not safely or fairly accommodate the expected turnout.

We did secure two larger venues—City Tech and a church auditorium in Sunset Park. City Tech later canceled after receiving messages from individuals outside the Coop, and the church withdrew after learning of the topic and possible demonstrations. We kept the Agenda Committee informed and continued searching for alternatives.

Tess also wrote that the GCs "ignored recommendations... including holding a meeting virtually." We did not ignore those ideas. The GCs simply do not have the authority to move a GM online outside of a declared public health emergency. That authority rests with the GM and Board, and we have always respected that boundary.

Finally, when the Board voted on April 29, it did still believe a bylaw amendment was required for hybrid GMs. However, on May 23, Joe Holtz informed members that legal counsel had since advised otherwise and that only a simple majority was needed. The Board then had about ten days to adjust the referendum before it was mailed but did not do so.

PROTECTING THE COOP

Dear Coop members:

At the September GM, four of the five elected directors voted to authorize hybrid meetings, tasking the Chair Committee—apparently without its consent—to figure out implementation. This action violated established procedures as well as the trust of the membership. That they have now done this twice should concern all of us. They appear increasingly emboldened to act independently of the General Meeting and at their own discretion.

This situation arose because a group of Coop members believe it is appropriate to exploit the Coop's reputation in support of a movement that seeks to end the existence of the State of Israel.

I suggest three actions to end this quagmire and refocus on what the Coop does best—food.

1. **Hold a referendum** asking the membership:

"Do you want the Coop to continue using its resources to discuss joining the BDS movement?"

Responses: Yes or No.

Issue this referendum without any further explanation or commentary.

2. **Hold a referendum** on the 75% supermajority for boycotts, combining the two related items currently in the agenda queue. Each side may submit a statement of up to 200 words. The arguments have already been published in the *Gazette* and can be restated succinctly.

3. **Hold an open discussion** to brainstorm how to protect the Coop when highly contentious issues are introduced. We currently have no process for vetting agenda

submissions or requiring opposing sides to meet. Our discussion format is inadequate for complex issues: there is no opportunity for a prepared counter-presentation, no control over who speaks, no mechanism to verify information, and no opportunity for rebuttal.

Let's make the Coop fun again.

Sincerely,

Barbara Mazor

IN PROTEST OF BOARD POLITICAL ACTIVISM WITHIN THE COOP

To the Members:

I have been a member of our Coop for 35 years. My current workslot is serving as secretary. My primary activity as Coop secretary is recording General Meeting minutes. Effective upon my submission of the September GM minutes to the Coop office for member circulation, I will resign as secretary in protest of the uncooperative, self-seeking and destructive actions of our current board of directors.

This Board is using the Coop as a political tool and a resume-builder. These people are blind and uncaring about the havoc they wreak. They think they have the right, but they are wrong. We don't have a board to set Coop policy. Membership along with the coordinating staff are sufficient for this purpose.

I will also be suspending my Coop membership.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Tobier