JANUARY GENERAL MEETING REPORT

March 3, 2026

ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

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By Lora Kelley

As the temperature ticked below 20°, more than a hundred Coop members trudged through deep snow to assemble at the Picnic House for the January 27 General Meeting. The tone was fairly subdued as General Manager Joe Szladek gave a summary of the year’s finances; the Equity and Access and Community Committee presented the results of its demographics survey; next steps on hybrid meetings were announced; and members discussed supporting other coops. At the end of the meeting, a proposal to institute an official code of conduct resulted in a rare motion to table.

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OPEN FORUM

The Open Forum took just a few minutes, as only three members shared remarks. First, Chair Committee member David Moss read a note from member Noah Potter addressing the general coordinators, challenging them to “disclose the legal opinion that validates the end of member governance of the Coop,” and asking them to state whether there is any reason why the board cannot vote on its own resolution to align the Coop with the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions Movement without waiting for membership to vote.

Alyse Barr, in person, stood and spoke about the connections between Israeli companies and Immigrations and Customs Enforcement. She said that, as members of the Coop, “we can stop contributing to the economy of a country that not only oppresses and kills Palestinians, but also aids in our own oppression.” Greg Selig, noting that it was Holocaust Remembrance Day, requested that the Coop make a statement about standing with the Jewish community, and said that the previous remarks included “lies and libels.”

REPORTS

Szladek shared a financial update that covered almost the entire recent year, noting that the end of the fiscal year would come in early February. The Coop is ending the fiscal year with around $7.5 million in cash equivalents and investments, and made about $1.2 million in sales per week on average. Sales overall were up compared to the prior year, and membership has grown by about 3 percent.

The leadup to the recent snowstorm presented the Coop with major sales days: Friday, January 23, was one of the Coop’s busiest days ever, with lines down the block, capping off a week that brought in some $1.4 million in sales.

Szladek said that some of the Coop’s costs have gone up, including healthcare costs for staff and payroll costs. He noted that he hoped to see the Coop break even by the end of the fiscal year, Sunday, February 1, when the annual inventory would occur. When asked about the recent one percent markup increase Szladek cited the Coop’s rising expenses, and added that while the Coop would like to lower prices in the future, any change depends on whether expenses can be brought down, which has been challenging as costs continue to rise.

General Coordinator Eleanor Astrinsky shared that board submissions are due on

March 1. Then, asking for a show of hands of how many present members planned to help with year-end inventory, she explained that every item in the Coop would be counted the following weekend. This “snapshot” of a day at the Coop, she added, helps determine audits and taxes. She expressed thanks to all the staff who would be working that weekend, including those who don’t normally work on Sundays.

She asked the room to cheer and clap for the shovelers who helped clear the sidewalks during the “snowzilla” storm. The Coop used about 350 pounds of rock salt, which she noted is about the weight of a male ostrich. While some big stores had empty shelves, she added, the Coop was “super organized” and had items in stock. “The Coop was amazing. We got everything done,” she said, thanking the staff and members for keeping things running.

COMMITTEES

Leslie Schultz, presenting on behalf of the Personnel Committee, gave an overview of the committee’s role in the Coop, and noted that they were looking to fill an opening in the near future. The committee’s goals include supporting the General Manager, serving as a sounding board, and offering counsel on employment and personnel related matters. Much of the past year was focused on hiring and onboarding Szladek, she added. Barr asked if there were any plans to solicit feedback on Coop leadership’s performance from members, and Schultz said she would keep that question in mind.

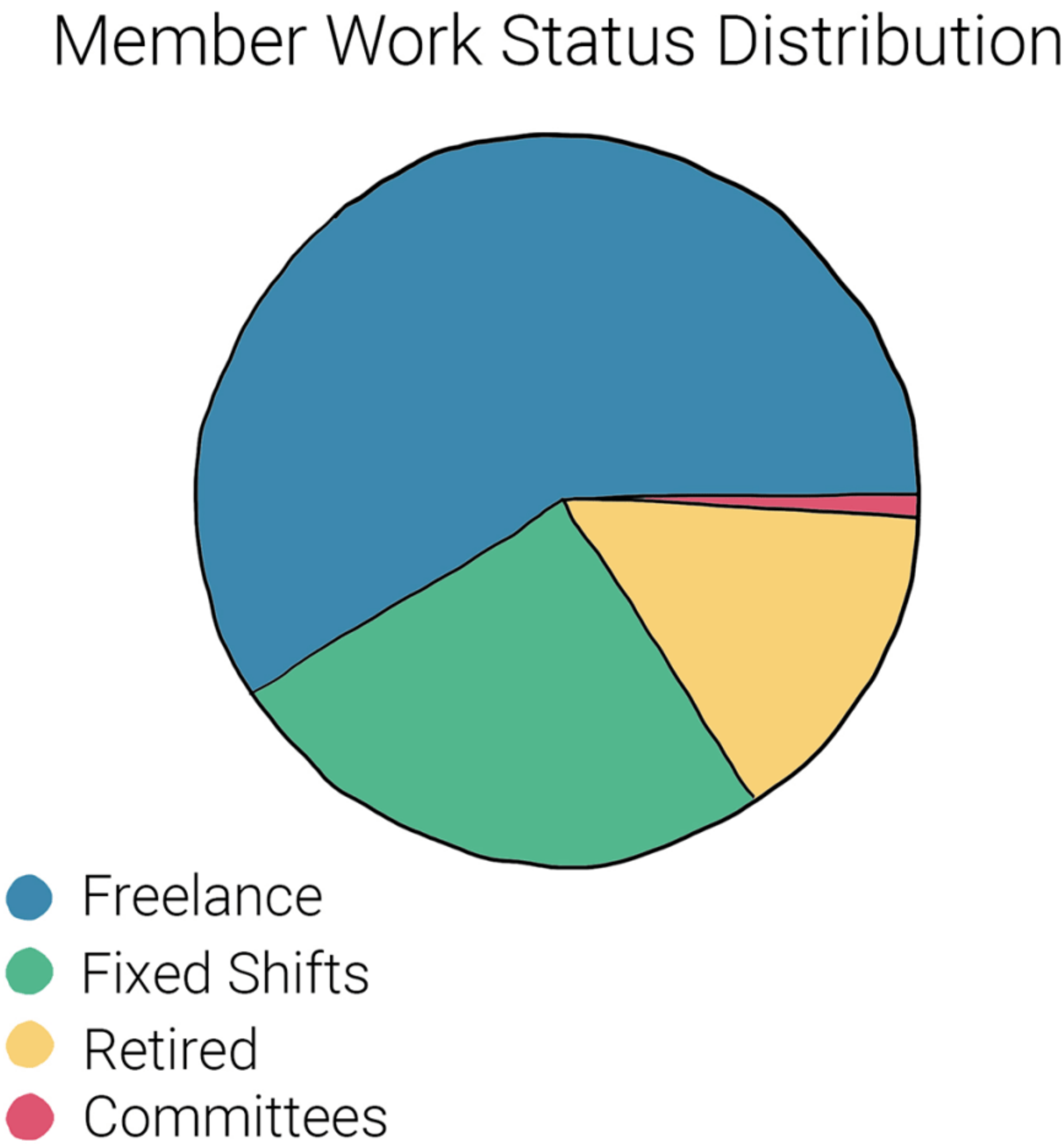
Joe Holtz, presenting as a member of the Coop’s Revolving Loan Committee, summarized the work of the committee, which solicits and evaluates applications from other coops for loans. Since the 1970s, he said, the Coop has advised newer coops, and in 2012, a Coop General Meeting voted to create a revolving loan fund committee. The resulting Fund for New Food Coops was funded by three donations of $20,000 each from the Coop, and by donations from members totaling about $5,000. So far, the fund has received three loan applications, all from the Greene Hill Food Coop. The first one, for $10,000, has been completely paid back; the remaining principle of a second loan, in the amount of $12,000, was combined last year with a loan of

$60,000. The outstanding balance is about $64,000; total assets of the fund are $74,100, with about $9,300 in a money market fund available to lend.

“We’ve had some really sleepy years,” Holtz said, noting that the committee’s work is done on a volunteer basis by three members retired from workslot obligations, who were elected to their positions and have a fiduciary responsibility. The committee, he added, is now working on a concept proposal to the new mayoral administration “encouraging the administration to consider member-run food coops to achieve its goal of providing low-cost foods in high-need neighborhoods.”

Next, Jordan Dunn of the Equity, Access, and Community Committee presented a “demographic snapshot” of the Coop’s membership, based on a survey it ran from April to June of last year. The purpose of the survey was to identify underrepresented groups at the Coop and see if there were particular communities that saw attrition: 4,711 people, representing about 27% of the membership, completed the survey. The breakdown of survey respondents aligns with the overall membership in terms of zip code and work status (retired and exempt), Dunn said, suggesting that the survey captured a representative sample of members.

Some of the findings:



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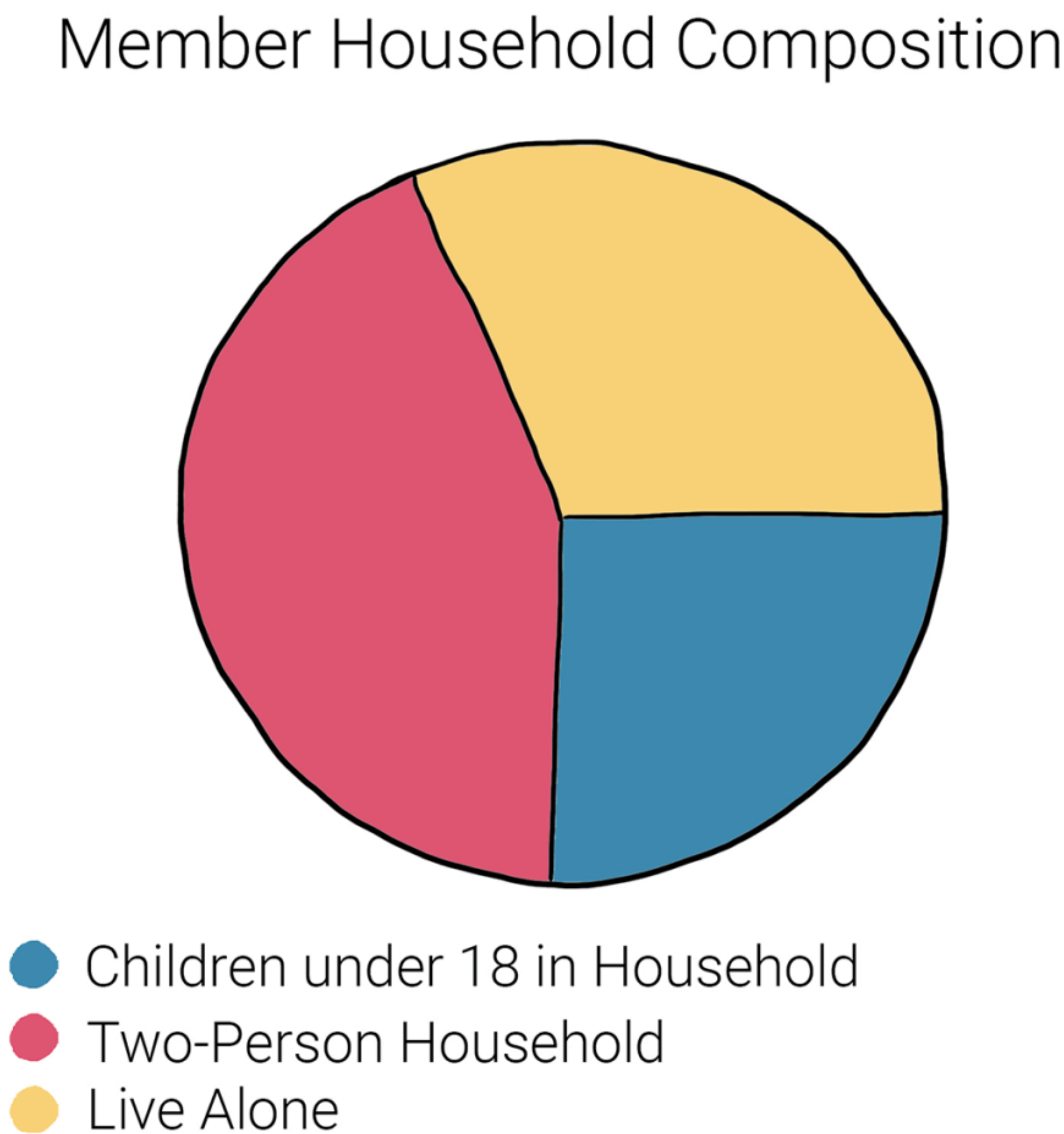
- 56% of members work shifts on a freelance basis, 24% are on fixed shifts, 14% are retired and 1% of members serve on committees.
- 63% of respondents identified as female and 31% as male, with 5% indicating they are nonbinary, gender nonconforming, gender fluid or intersex and 2% indicating that they are transgender.
- Responding to a question about sexual orientation, 71% said they are straight and

30% responded that they are LGBQ+.

- 97% of the respondents speak English at home, and 3% indicated that they don’t speak English at home.
- 80% did not report having a disability and 20% indicated that they do have a disability, which included those related to mobility or sensory impairments, mental health-related limitations or chronic illness.
- 76% of the respondents identified as white only; 9% identified as multiracial or multi-ethnic; 8% identified as Asian or Pacific Islander; 3% identified as Black, African or African American only; 1% as Arab, SWANA, Arab or North African only; and 2% as Latino/a, Latine, Latinx, or Hispanic or Indigenous, Native American, or Alaska Native. (Dunn noted that “Unfortunately, there was an error in the survey format, so we had to collapse that 2%” into one response.) About 9% of total respondents left this question blank.
- 51% of members reported that they practice no religion or are atheist or agnostic, 21% are Jewish only (an additional 3% selected both Jewish and “no religion, atheist, or agnostic”), 11% are Christian of any denomination and the remainder wrote in a specific identity, and/or selected multiple identities, while 9.5% preferred not to respond.
- 31% of members live alone, with 42% living in two-person households. About one quarter said they have children under 18 in their household.
- At least half of members walk to the Coop.
- 58% of members have a graduate or post graduate degree.
- 48% of Coop households make over $150,000 a year. About 70% make more than $101,000 a year, with just 10% making under $55,000. 10% reported making over $350,000.



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The committee's next steps, Dunn said, may include further research, and recommending ways that the Coop could take to increase equity and diversity.

Next, a representative of the International Trade Education Squad shared data on tariffs and noted that the squad was collaborating on a documentary about the World Trade Organization demonstrations in Seattle in 1999.

The hybrid commission of the Chair Committee presented next. At the September

2025 General Meeting, a member explained the board voted to go forward with the hybrid agenda, or the hybrid mandate. That mandate then passed on to the Chair Committee, which did interviews and chose nine members to kick off a hybrid GM working group. The group—which includes regular members, chair members, and staff—has been meeting a few times a week to prepare for hybrid meetings.

One goal, committee member Lisa Pacenza said, is to make the meetings more accessible, noting that the snow that evening could have made it difficult for some members to access the in-person meeting. Another priority is that the meetings be "seamless," with members able to participate whether they are at home or at the Picnic House, and still feel part of the community. And it's important, Pacenza added, that the meetings are secure and safe, especially for voting.

Moving forward, hybrid meetings will include a Zoom component, with members required to sign up ahead of time, in order to ensure only members are attending and voting. "We're not splashing out for a special hybrid setup," Pacenza said. Members on Zoom would see the stage on video, and hear the audio through microphones, much like members in the room. A moderator would ensure that visuals (such as slides) are visible for Zoom participants. Future votes would involve a Zoom poll for people attending remotely, and the usual paper votes for those in the room. "We haven't figured out a perfect voting system, but the current system isn't perfect either," Pacenza added. The meetings would continue to follow Robert's Rules of Order. (And, starting in February, people will be required to write their member number on their in-person vote, to ensure that no in-person member is also voting online.)

General Coordinator Matt Hoagland said that flyers and links would be posted soon to solicit feedback on accessibility. "We do want to hear directly from people who have a personal need, so please keep that in mind," he said, adding that the first meeting with a Zoom component would be in February. The committee was planning two trial runs. "We'll try to get some more experiences and turn up the heat so we know what to expect when we go live."

AGENDA

Members of the currently informal—as they put it, “hopefully soon to be formal”—Principle Six Committee spoke next. The group proposes to deepen the 11-year relationship between the Park Slope Food Coop and the Cooperative Economic Alliance of New York City (CEANY). Principle Six, which refers to cooperation among coops, is one of the seven principles guiding coops around the world. Already, seventeen Coop members receive workslot credit for contributing to CEANY including by helping the alliance with media campaigns.

The official committee, which would be voted on at a future meeting, would include 12 members who would offer services on projects to CEANY. An open call will be posted soon, and the committee plans to present a committee report at least once or twice a year and publish updates in the *Linewaiters’ Gazette* at least once a year. Members asked a few questions, mostly about logistics, and Holtz replied: “I’m glad that you all have brought this proposal.”

What followed was a bit of confusion: After Moss said the next item would be “adopting community agreements and a code of conduct” and that there would be a vote, a member of the Agenda Committee said that this was supposed to be a discussion item. After a bit of back and forth, Moss announced that the meeting would move forward with voting on the item.

Jason Weiner, a longtime Coop member and staffer, presented on the idea of adopting a formalized code of conduct. Noting that “the GM has been operating for decades without any robust guidance and protection for the individual,” he proposed that the Coop institute a set of agreements based on suggestions from various stakeholders. Weiner put together a draft borrowing from the ideas of trauma-informed care and the Democratic Socialists of America’s code of conduct. He argued that such a code was “long overdue,” and that it could protect members legally and facilitate “an environment for humane interaction.”

After Weiner finished his slides, Moss asked, “What are we voting on?” to which Weiner responded, “We are voting yes or no, whether we should adopt a Coop set of community agreements, and a code.” If the yes vote prevails, Weiner said, the decision would move to the Dispute Resolution Committee and to the Coop’s legal advisors. The text Weiner had shown in his slides, he added, was the draft.

A number of questions followed, including about why this was going for a vote at the meeting and whether members would have a say about the contents of a text that could affect discipline. Members thanked Weiner for his hard work, but some noted that the proposal was substantially different from his July presentation, “A Call for Cooperative Renewal,” which addressed a number of suggestions for Coop governance. (While Weiner had mentioned a potential code of conduct in that presentation, it wasn’t the presentation’s main focus.)

Following some respectful discussion and dissent, a member suggested tabling this vote. After looking up the rules on the Coop’s’ website, Moss—noting that in his 20 years on the Chair Committee, this was the first table he recalled dealing with—read out that tabling a motion means laying aside the main motion, and that it may include the provision that the item be taken up later or at a future meeting. By a show of hands, an overwhelming majority of members present voted to table the proposal.

Rebecca Schoenberg Jones, Coop Secretary, went onstage to ask if there were any corrections to the minutes of the December 2, 2025, General Meeting, and no one raised any.

The five members of the board of directors who were present voted unanimously to accept the advice of the members with regard to the meeting minutes, and the meeting was adjourned.

Lora Kelley is a writer and journalist in Brooklyn.