

MEMBER-SUBMITTED ARTICLE: EXPANDING THE DIALOGUE AT GENERAL MEETINGS—BUT ONLY ON TUESDAYS?

May 5, 2026



Illustration by Olexa Hewryk

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By Tim Hospodar

Hybrid meeting formats have enabled a larger fraction of the membership to join General Meetings on Tuesdays. The resulting attendance, however, cannot always speak freely due to time constraints. And members who are conflicted on Tuesday nights are not meaningfully accommodated simply through virtual connectivity. Hybrid solves for some accessibility issues, but it does not tackle the concern of members who have Tuesday conflicts or the compression of discussion that comes with growing participation.

At the February GM, during the agenda discussion about boycotts, someone noted that all members of the Board of Directors had their hands raised at the same time. I'll try not to take it personally, having deferred my allotted minutes during the Board Candidates presentation in favor of the boycott discussion, but the fact remains: The majority of the Board, if not *all but one member*, did not have a chance to speak. This moment demonstrated the difficulty our meetings face under real time limitations, especially when agenda items generate deep and sincere engagement.

To be clear, this is not a critique of how meetings are chaired. The logistics of the GM have changed and the participant count has changed as well. When historians reference our Coop's earliest days, we recall that town hall-style meetings were proportionately smaller—much smaller—than the in-person attendance we can expect at Prospect Park's Picnic House. I'd also like to positively shout out prior GM discussions (July and October 2025), where members presented ideas around digital tools supporting asynchronous conversation. I am a huge fan of digital knowledge sharing and of those proposals. Still, I believe that approach only provides so much support for membership voice, whereas longer meetings enable greater face time.

What would a singular GM look like if it stretched beyond just one Tuesday night? I am not asking for different topics on different nights. I am suggesting that the Agenda Committee size and weigh agenda items in a way that ensures robust discussion is never truncated. This could mean that a meeting is continued across multiple weeknights. To avoid burdening the Agenda Committee, the necessary size of a meeting could also be informed by registration count. When an agenda item triggers a massive number of registrations (including both on-site and virtual preferences) it follows that a massive discussion should be expected and prepared for.

This is also why rotating or adding weeknights other than Tuesday matters. Again, hybrid addresses some accessibility concerns, but it does not resolve conflicts for members who simply cannot attend on Tuesday evenings. A cooperative meeting reveals consensus only after a diversity of voices are shared, and those voices can only be heard when time allows.

If this resonates with you, I invite members to continue discussion around digital communication tools (knowledge bases, discussion platforms, electronic voting and more), and to begin consideration of a redesigned General Meeting format that enables greater participation—even experimentally.

Tim Hospodar is a member of the Coop's Board of Directors—as such he needs to hear as many voices of the membership as possible.