MARCH GENERAL MEETING REPORT

May 5, 2026



May 5, 2026

By Emmett Lindner

Throughout the General Meeting, held on March 31, 2026, at the Picnic House in

Prospect Park, there was a recurring chorus: “Please refrain from applause.”



Approximately 200 members filled the Picnic House. Photograph by Rod Morrison.

The meeting’s agenda shifted from Coop finances to bylaws. Periodically, it prematurely veered toward the proposed boycott of Israeli goods—the last discussion item and what many considered the night’s main event. As talk of budgets and elections were interjected by opinions from both sides of the boycott debate, applause and snaps rippled through the in-person audience of roughly 200 people. For virtual attendance, 782 members signed up and approximately 360 signed on to Zoom.

The virtual meeting of remote members was projected onto a screen that was frequently flooded by laughing, crying and heart emojis.

“Please, stop sending emojis,” the chairman said. No one seemed to hear.



Request by the Chairman to stop sending emojis fell on deaf ears. Photograph by Rod Morrison.

Before tensions were raised as boycott proponents and detractors shared their views and candidates for the Coop's open board seat made their cases, the meeting began with standard procedures.

> AS OF FEBRUARY 21, 2026, NET SALES FOR THE YEAR WERE $63 MILLION, UP MORE THAN 5 PERCENT FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

OPEN FORUM

The 15-minute section of the assembly, in which members can make general comments in 60 seconds or less, began with a call to maintain peace amid rising boycott tensions.

"I just want to urge us not to break this fragile thing over an issue—Palestine–Israel—that many of us passionately disagree about, but that we here at the Coop real-

ly have little impact on," one member, Daniel, said.

The chairman interrupted to remind members that open forum discussions do not include items listed on the agenda.






Shahidah Tawwab

IRAN




Throughout the evening, members took the mic and spoke online to share their views—an avatar even made an appearance. Photographs by Rod Morrison.
The next member, Molly, broached a more domestic issue. They discussed a *Guardian* article that alleged there was a member of the Coop who worked for the Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency and detailed the potential hazards of shopping alongside that individual, who remained nameless. The comment ended with a plea for the Coop to investigate. Applause rang out.

General Manager Joe Szladek spoke next. His comments were focused on the limited amount of time allocated to the topic of a boycott of Israeli goods and his concern about process and deliberation. He used his time to urge members not to rush the deliberation of important issues.

The remaining time of the forum went to members who discussed IT modernization and the possible resolution to amend bylaws.

“If it’s not resolved easily, then we resolve it the hard way,” one member, Noah, said over Zoom. The “hard way” was not described, and a handful of people in the audience looked at each other and voiced confusion.



Following the retirement of Joe Holtz last summer, Joe Szladek assumed the role of General Manager. Photograph by Rod Morrison.

GENERAL COORDINATOR REPORTS

Mr. Szladek discussed the Coop's financial standings. As of February 21, 2026, net sales for the year were $63 million, up more than 5 percent from the previous year. There were roughly $13 million in expenses, and net income was about $227,000.

He thanked the members for their efforts to keep the Coop running and food turning over.

A line item that members later came back to was the "consultant fees" expense, and legal fees that jumped from $34,000 to about $68,000. Part of the former went into

the search for a new general manager and an executive coach. The latter was, in part, because of more money required to hire legal support for member disputes.

“There are a number of lawsuits that the Coop is facing, not all related to this topic of a boycott,” Mr. Szladek said. “But that’s something where the Coop has fees related to that.”



Joe Szladek conducted a review of the Coop’s finances. Photograph by Rod Morrison.

Mr. Szladek noted that electronic card payments had gone up, the Coop had spent more on digital shelf pricing, and the Coop last year spent $15,000 providing masks to members, to ensure everyone could shop equally and comfortably on days that re-quire them.

Prepared foods, a more recent addition to shelves, have been doing gangbusters. Pre--

made sandwiches from Court Street now account for about 1 percent of total sales. Those options could be a viable way to increase foot traffic and revenue, Mr. Szladek said.

He also said the General Coordinators were considering extending Coop operating hours.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATES

Seven candidates for the open Board of Directors position took the stage, detailing their causes and taking questions. Serko Artinian, a member for nearly 12 years, called the Coop his second home and said that it had untapped potential. A majority of members, he said, told him that they did not buy all of their groceries at the Coop. He alluded to the boycott debate, saying that he believes in members voting with their carts and in decisions made by broad consensus.

> “WHEN WE INCORPORATED, WE NEEDED PEOPLE ON THE BOARD WHO WOULD KEEP THE FLAME ALIVE, KEEP THAT FLAME OF DIRECT DEMOCRACY ALIVE,” MR. HOLTZ SAID.

Taylor Pate said she had a commitment to the solidarity economy, and she believed that making decisions together was vital for the Coop’s democratic values. She detailed her history of working with other coops to make sure people who have long lacked access to food were provided the means to feed themselves and their families. She ended by stating her support for Palestine, which elicited applause from several groups in the audience.

Barbara Mazor said that she joined the Coop in 1989, and she discussed what she saw as the responsibility of the Board.

“It is a failure of the duty of loyalty to prioritize an external cause over the good of the Coop,” she said. She added that a boycott on Israeli items would lead to a significant reduction in overall shopping volume.



Six of the seven candidates for Board of Director seats L to R: Serko Artinian, Tim Hospodar, Barbara Mazor, Taylor Pate, Rex Ledesma and Ralph Yozzo. Photographs by Rod Morrison

Rex Ledesma spoke next and stated that his goals were simple: “I want to empower

our community with transparency and abundance of conveniences in order to share and enjoy all that the Coop has to offer." He discussed a digital service he had built to keep members informed of the Coop's goings on and most recent shelf prices.

Joe Holtz, a Coop cofounder and former General Manager, approached the microphone.

"When we incorporated, we needed people on the board who would keep the flame alive, keep that flame of direct democracy alive," Mr. Holtz said. "That's why I'm running for the board, because I believe that the Coop has benefited from direct democracy."

> MS. MAZOR SAID THAT SHE BELIEVED THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR THE COOP IS REBUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND TRUST. "I SUPPORT DIALOG," SHE SAID.

Ralph Yozzo, a member for over 20 years, said that he was encouraged by everything he heard. He asked to play a video on the dangers of artificial intelligence, but his allotted time had expired.

Tim Hospodar yielded his time for the night's agenda. The candidates then took questions.

Ms. Pate said that she thinks the Coop has excellent buyers but could do more to be rigid with the producers it carries. She then specified she was referring to the proposed goods boycott and said she was a "strong supporter" of an Israeli boycott. She added that she has been on boards before with different opinions and was the vice president of her housing coop making fiduciary decisions. She was the only member running who supported the boycott.

Ms. Mazor said that she believed the most important issue for the Coop is rebuilding a sense of community and trust. “I support dialog,” she said, adding that people with strong opinions should meet and flesh out issues before it’s brought to the larger membership.

Mr. Holtz said that “over the coming years, the Coop should pay an immense amount of attention to the international principles of cooperation that are promulgated by the international cooperative Alliance.”



Former General Manager, Joe Holtz, seated center is also running for a seat on the Board. Photograph by Rod Morrison.

Mr. Artinian stated that there are “two things that are really important are unifying our members, our membership as a whole, so we all feel like we’re part of one Coop and we’re not broken into multiple pieces.”

He added: “The second area that I find as a candidate that we need to focus on is educating our users to understand what the future of tools and technologies like artificial general intelligence, even just A.I., have to do with the Coop, and how it could impact this in positive and negative ways.”

Mr. Yozzo, speaking of the need for closer scrutiny of Coop elections, said: “I think that’s a very good idea, because our voting used to be a couple hundred, now it’s up to like 6,000. We can look at the record and see if there’s any anomalies in how the voting happens.”

Speaking of the future, Mr. Hospodar said: “I’m wondering how many years from now until trucks are no longer allowed on Union, how long until the BQE goes away, and how long until we restart the second location committee to think about coastal locations.”

THE SLIDESHOW LISTED NINE PRODUCTS THE GROUP SUGGESTED BANNING, WHICH INCLUDED THREE DIFFERENT TAHINIS.

Mr. Ledesma advocated that more price transparency was needed, “so that Coop members can understand what is available for them to purchase in the visual sense, and also see how the price changes, so that they can see whether or not they’re buying things at a deal or buying things on sale.” He also stated that he believed in the “self-determination” of the Coop.

Mr. Artinian opined that “every and any topic that has brought consensus deserves full opportunity to be voted on, no matter what it is, whether it’s one of those boycotts or not, it doesn’t matter.”

Responding to a question about whether candidates would abide by majority decisions, Ms. Pate said that she votes for the will of the membership, and Mr. Yozzo stat-

ed that it was an impossible thing to say because the Coop has a fiduciary responsibility to its members and if the members wanted something against the fiduciary interest of the Coop, the Board would have to vote against it.



Alyce Barr was joined at the podium by Coop members advocating a boycott of Israeli products. Photograph by Rod Morrison.

BOYCOTT DEBATE

Those in favor of the ban took the stage. Alyce Barr spoke first and said that boycotts have a proven track record of eliciting change. She and a group of supporters behind her displayed a slideshow that noted, “We seek to avoid products that depend on the exploitation of others.” Some in the crowd noted the United States exploits many countries and its citizens.

“This is a very nuanced and complicated situation,” one member, Evan, said over Zoom. “For the sake of fairness and simplicity, rather than calling out Israel, there’d be a much easier way to just create guidelines, that if a country does X, they’re eligible for boycott. The U.S. would clearly fall into that.”

The Coop has a history of boycotts, Ms. Barr said, and the slideshow compared the Israeli occupation of Palestine to apartheid in South Africa.



A selection of Israeli products currently for sale at the Coop. Photograph by Rod Morrison.

The slideshow listed nine products the group suggested banning, which included three different tahinis.

Some members stated that there are dozens of genocides happening throughout the world. Several respondents said that this boycott would not preclude members from abstaining from other purchases. Some argued that the issue was too complex for a coop in Brooklyn to solve by banning a handful of products most do not have a connection to. Others said there is still work to be done.



Evan Abel participated in the boycott debate via Zoom. He was among the 360 members attending remotely. Photograph by Rod Morrison.

There were no definitive answers, and a divide among members appeared to persist

as the meeting concluded.

There was a vote to accept the previous session’s minutes, which passed.

FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING: FIRST VENTURE INTO HYBRID

May 5, 2026



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

March 24, 2026

By Zach Schiffman

The Coop held its first-ever hybrid general meeting on the evening of February 24, drawing roughly 103 members to the Picnic House in Prospect Park and another 123 participants on Zoom. Chair Maribeth Batcha opened the meeting with a plea for patience and good humor, acknowledging the technical ambition of this new undertak-

ing.

“We did test this out last week,” she said, “but this is the first time going live.” By the end of the evening, the hybrid format had largely delivered, though not without some early hiccups, including an open Zoom link that turned out to be shareable to anyone. (Luckily, no one sent it around.)




PHOTO BY AZIKIWE ABOAGYE

PHOTO BY AZIKIWE ABOAGYE



Clockwise from top left: Chair Maribeth Batcha opens the night's general meeting, members raise hands, members Jan and Leo join the meeting via zoom, members raise hands.

OPEN FORUM

A member named Gabriel started the Open Forum with a shout-out to the hybrid committee and mentioned a community art project, *Poppies for Palestine*. A written statement from member Noah Potter was read aloud by Chair Batcha, in which Potter objected to allowing members to vote remotely as a violation of the Coop's bylaws, which he argued had not been properly amended to permit it. Batcha noted there would be no votes at that evening's meeting.

Joe Holtz, the Coop's former general manager, raised a practical question about the new format: if a member logged on to the Zoom meeting just one minute before a vote, without having heard the preceding discussion, would they be permitted to

vote? The chair confirmed that they would, noting that the same rule applies to members who arrive late in person.

Member Yeija Chen raised several accessibility questions, including what accommodations the Coop would offer for members with access needs, whether the outdated guide to general meetings—last updated about a decade ago—might be revised, and whether members could present agenda items via prerecorded video. All three were answered affirmatively, with some details to be confirmed.

Members Lee Solomon and Sarede Switzer both flagged a security vulnerability in the Zoom link, noting it could be forwarded to nonmembers. Batcha acknowledged the error and said the Coop is working to require member number logins for future meetings and will audit ballots to prevent duplicate votes.

Member Jan Clausen asked over Zoom how many people were in the room versus on Zoom. The results were close: 123 on Zoom and 103 in person. There was no drop-off when the tally was checked again at the end of the meeting.

GENERAL COORDINATOR REPORTS



Joe Szladek going over January comparisons.

General Manager Joe Szladek opened his report by thanking staff and committee members for the enormous amount of work required to make the hybrid meeting happen. He then turned to a preview of the Coop's financial picture, noting that the full 52-week fiscal year statement would be presented at the March meeting.

Szladek shared a striking pre- versus post-pandemic comparison: across the January averages of 2018–2020 versus 2024–2026, the Coop's transaction volume is down 25.2 percent (from 75,357 to 56,371), even though membership has only declined 4.5 percent (from 16,985 to 16,216).

Units sold fell 16.7 percent and items purchased per member per month dropped from 97 to 85—a 12.4 percent decline. Sales dollars, meanwhile, are up 4.3 percent in nominal terms, from $5,050,784 to $5,266,857—a figure Szladek noted does not account for inflation.

Szladek attributed the drop primarily to the shift from a four-week to a six-week work-slot cycle.

“In a six-week cycle, you come to the Coop about 8.67 times a year,” he explained. “In a four-week cycle, you come 13 times.”

Members living further away—a consequence of rising costs in the neighborhood—are shopping elsewhere between their less-frequent visits. Inflation has further dampened discretionary purchases. He also noted that more committee meetings are now conducted over video. Committees including the *Linewaiters*‘ *Gazette*, the Agenda Committee, the Personnel Committee and newer groups like the Plastics Reduction Committee have all moved online—reducing foot traffic and incidental shopping.

To address the shortfall, Szladek outlined several new initiatives.

The Coop is close to joining Co-op Deals, a program through National Co+op Grocers (NCG) that would put roughly 100 items on sale every two weeks at 20–40 percent off. A new prepared-foods cooler has been ordered and will replace the seltzer end cap near the front of the store. Longer term, the Coop is exploring home delivery.



PHOTO BY AZIKIWE ABOAGYE


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Clockwise from top left: Tim Hospodor scenario planning, Board member Lynn Husum listens intently, Tim Hospodor asks us to use our imagination in regard to the banana markup, members sign out for the night, Elinoar Astrinsky presents the citrus selection.

On the expense side, the Coop has been managing staffing lean—avoiding new hires when possible as staff have departed—and has made adjustments to the staff health plan, with a new plan year beginning March 1. The dairy cooler on the shopping floor is also being expanded into the backyard area to ease refrigeration strain on busy Fridays and Saturdays.

Szladek also announced that a Financial Advisory Committee is now forming, as approved at the December 2025 general meeting. The committee will include members with financial expertise and work collaboratively with the Coop's financial team to review performance, advise on concerns and adopt clear financial benchmarks. Applications were published in the March 3rd *Gazette* and on the PSFC website. The commit-

tee is advisory only, reporting to the general manager, the GC of finance and/or the treasurer.

Member Alyse Barr asked Szladek to address a controversy that had been circulating among members: the temporary removal of two letters from the *Gazette* on February 13th.

After the February 10th issue of the *Gazette* was published, General Coordinator Ann Herpel and Szladek became aware that two different versions of the letters policy were in use.

In one version of the policy, members may name other members, but accusations are not permitted—letters or articles that target or attack specific members by name will be rejected, and writers are expected to address ideas rather than individuals.

In the other version, shared by editors with some members via email, members were told they could not name anyone at all.

Herpel and Szladek said they were concerned that there was a lack of clarity about the policy on names appearing in member submissions and that members had subsequently been asked to adhere to different standards. As a result, publication of two letters was temporarily paused while the policy was clarified.

“The publisher’s role is not editorial,” Szladek said. “We do not make content decisions, but we do take responsibility for institutional oversight, ensuring policies are applied consistently.” He said *Gazette* editors are now working to clarify and strengthen the letters policy and will share the updated version with the membership.

Herpel came to the podium to add that the removal was “procedural, not punitive,” and that assurances were given to affected members that the policy would be applied fairly to all.

General Coordinator Elinoar Astrinsky followed with the operations report, beginning with thanks to members who came out to shovel during recent snowstorms. She offered an enthusiastic tour of the Coop's current citrus selection (IRL examples included!)—pomelos, Minneola tangelos, Meyer lemons, Lisbon lemons and Sorrento lemons from the Amalfi Coast—and urged members to pick up morning produce shifts, which she said remain consistently hard to fill in winter.

COMMITTEE REPORTS





Amy Brinker & Rahima Nasa pitch their podcast committee.

Lois Wilcken, appearing via Zoom on behalf of the Plastics Reduction Committee, announced a new member survey on plastic use at the Coop. Members can access the survey via QR code or through a link that was published in the March 3rd *Gazette*. The survey will be open through mid-May.

Members Amy Brinker and Rahima Nasa presented a discussion item to form an official Podcast Committee. The duo—Brinker, a writer and editor with book-publishing audio experience, and Nasa, a journalist and producer with credits at NPR, WNYC, and Pushkin Industries—described a vision for a Coop oral history podcast that would capture members' personal recollections, illuminate the Coop's 50-year history, spotlight committees and squads and explore themes of food justice and community.

The pair played a short audio teaser recorded outside the Coop, featuring members sharing what they'd want the podcast to cover: romances in the cheese aisle, the mys-

tery of who organizes the basement, the evolution of Coop policy and one memorable suggestion—”I want to know if anybody ever died in the Coop. Has anyone gone into labor in the Coop?”

The proposal called for one work credit per 30-minute episode per person on a six-week release cadence, with a rough annual budget of $300 for RSS-feed and website hosting. The podcast would be publicly available. Brinker noted that the *Gazette* itself had recommended the project form as a separate committee, given the technical infrastructure and editorial expertise required.

Several members raised questions. Multiple speakers asked how the committee would maintain editorial independence from the general coordinators, particularly in light of the recent *Gazette* letter controversy. Brinker emphasized that the show would not function as journalism or cover breaking news and would focus on oral history and institutional memory rather than current controversies. Both presenters said they intended to follow the *Gazette*‘s existing editorial policy.

Other commenters noted the work-credit-to-hours ratio seemed low—roughly nine hours of work per 30-minute episode, split two ways—and suggested the committee coordinate closely with the Archives Committee and the Center for Brooklyn History, which has an existing relationship with the Coop. Other members asked to be involved in the committee, creating a learning opportunity for people without professional podcast experience. One veteran member, recalling that the Coop didn’t assign member numbers for its first few years and arriving late to collect hers, said she was “thrilled” at the prospect of a podcast. The item was a discussion only; no vote was taken.

Board member Tim Hospodar brought an ambitious and somewhat unconventional discussion item to the membership: a call to collectively reimagine the Coop’s markup structure. He began with an interactive quiz about the markup on bananas at the Coop, leading to a lengthy explanation about why the price is inconsistent at the Coop.

He also laid out scenarios for multiple types of Coop members, adding up how much the markup is costing different types of shoppers per year. Using an Airbnb-derived design exercise called the “11-Star Framework,” Hospodar invited members to think creatively about how the Coop closes the gap between its expenses and revenue.

He offered three categories for discussion: growing revenue; finding cost reductions; and, if the markup were made permanent and a surplus resulted, deciding how to return value to members—through something like a farm bus trip to visit a supplier, for example.

In response to some confusion about the current markup’s status, Szladek clarified that while the original 25 percent markup was approved in 2020 as a temporary measure during COVID-19—when member labor had largely ceased—a subsequent 2023 general meeting vote gave the GCs authority to set the markup anywhere between 21 percent and 25 percent, based on projected finances.

“It is not a temporary markup,” he said. The Coop has been operating between 24–25 percent since then, with an effective rate of about 26.5 percent when accounting for the roughly $900,000 in annual product loss that gets factored back in.

Discussion then ranged broadly. One member proposed satellite storefronts in neighborhoods like Bed-Stuy or Crown Heights as both an equity measure and a practical alternative to home delivery. Another suggested listing prepared foods on the Too Good To Go app to generate nightly revenue from surplus items.

Several members raised concerns about the Coop’s affordability and accessibility, noting that as shopping frequency declines, members may increasingly use the Coop for specialty items rather than staples. One member pointed out the difficulty of buying bulk staples like rice in large quantities.

Astrinsky offered context: most grocery stores mark up items at 50–100 percent, using loss-leader pricing on basics like milk and eggs to draw customers in. “The Coop

doesn’t do that,” she said. On the question of a second location—which came up in member comments—she noted that a previous committee estimated the cost of building out a new store at approximately $20 million, and that other Brooklyn co-op ventures have struggled in the current real estate environment.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING



Board of Directors vote to approve the last meeting’s minutes.

Board President Brandon West led the Board of Directors meeting. Directors Tim Hospodar and Lynn Husum were also present. The board voted to approve the minutes from the January 27, 2026 general meeting.

Zach Schiffman is a social editor and writer at New York *magazine, comedian, and Park Slope local.*

JANUARY GENERAL MEETING REPORT

May 5, 2026



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

March 3, 2026

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.



ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

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:

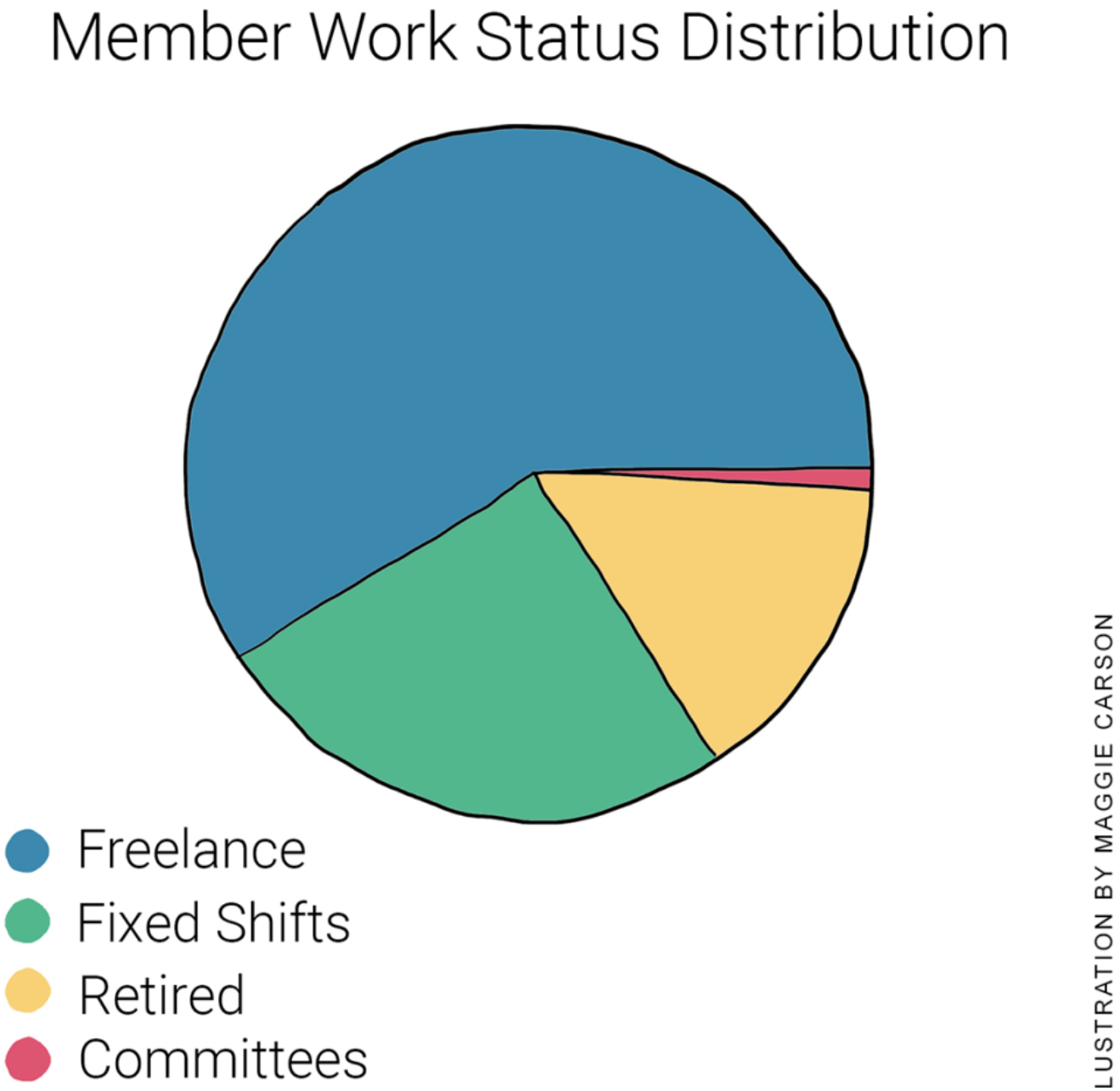


ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

- 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.

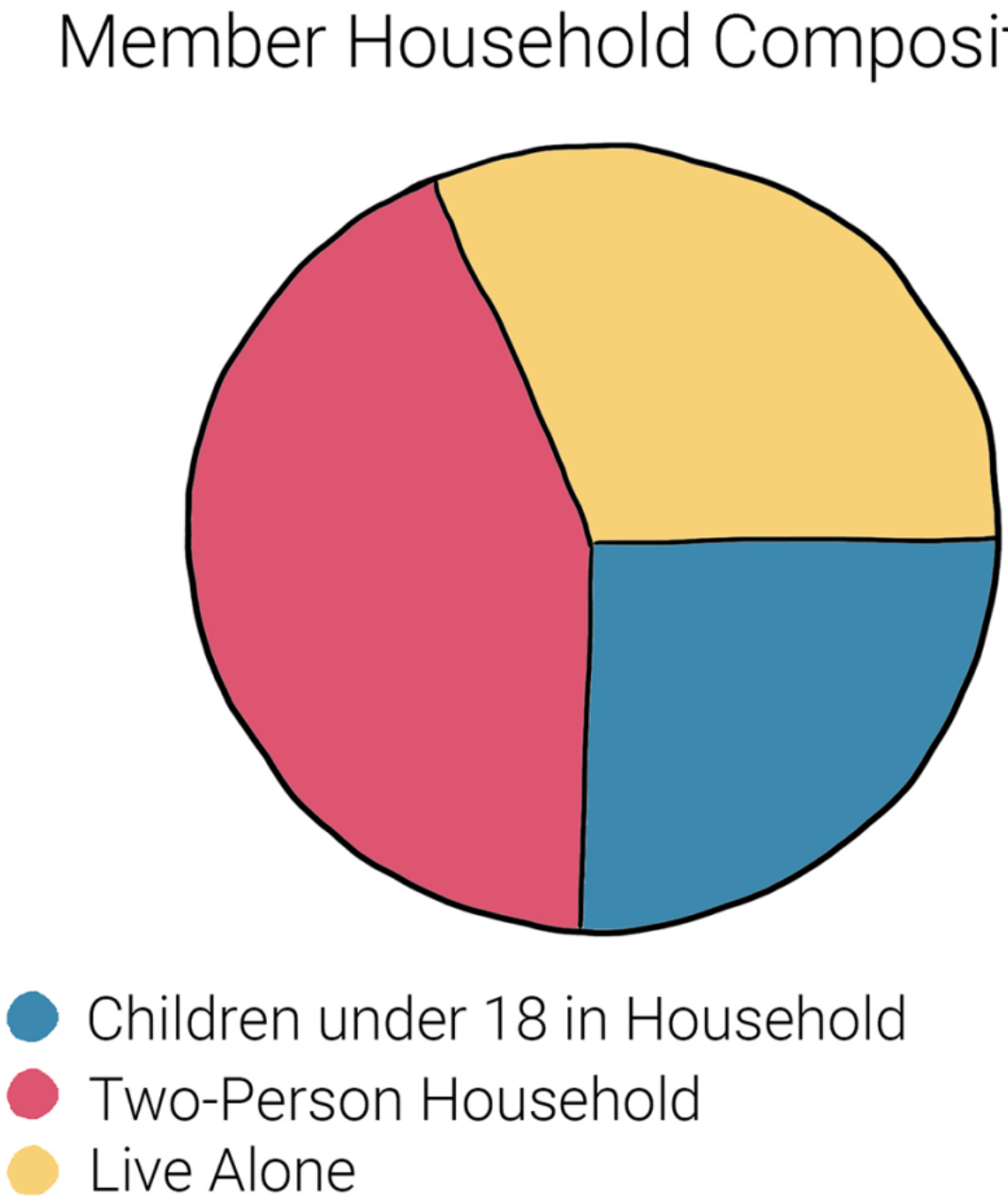


ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

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.

DECEMBER GENERAL MEETING: BDS TENSIONS FLARE AGAIN

May 5, 2026



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

December 30, 2025

By Kayla Levy

During the final General Meeting of 2025, held on December 2 at the Prospect Park Picnic House, tensions over a proposed boycott of Israeli goods, which have simmered all year, burst into the open again.

As members filed into the rows of white folding chairs, Jan Clausen, a writer and Coop member since the 1970s, stood in the center aisle handing out copies of “The Olive Press,” a zine published by Park Slope Food Coop Members for Palestine. Shortly before 7 p.m., General Manager Joseph Szladek approached and asked her to stop.

“Members aren’t allowed to pamphlet while someone is shopping for milk, and being at the General Meeting is akin to that,” Szladek said in a follow-up interview, adding that the Coop would always allow members to distribute materials in a public space, like the Union Street sidewalk.

Clausen responded that for decades there was a literature table at the general meetings, where members handed out all sorts of pamphlets, including political materials. “I’ve seen a lot of rules made up to suppress speech,” she said.

This exchange foreshadowed much of what came next: an update from the Chair Committee on a long-debated proposal for hybrid meetings, a communications proposal related to the staff’s ability to send “do-not-reply” emails, and, in less contentious news, a rundown on Thanksgiving shopping.

OPEN FORUM LEADS TO BOYCOTT DEBATE, AGAIN

The majority of the nine members who took to the floor during the open forum discussed issues related to the boycott debate. Meeting chair Dan Hegwood read aloud a letter from Noah Potter voicing dissatisfaction with the Board of Directors, who broke with typical protocol and authorized a referendum vote on hybrid meetings at the April GM.

While ostensibly about virtual attendance at general meetings, the issue of hybrid vot-

ing has become tied up in the fight over the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS). In his letter, Potter said the Board's decision to proceed with the vote marked "the end of member governance of the Coop."

Opponents of BDS say the push for hybrid meetings actually represents an effort by BDS supporters to get their proposal approved by the Coop, since in-person votes on the matter have been canceled. They say in a hybrid meeting, a BDS vote is more likely to pass.

At the June meeting, it was announced that hybrid voting was supported by 66.43 percent of members in a referendum, which was not enough for the 66.67 percent needed for a bylaw amendment.

The Board then independently decided to authorize hybrid meetings in September.

Later, Barbara Mazor, a Coop member since 1988, asked four board members that she termed "activists"—who have shown support for BDS or the April motion—if they would adhere to hypothetical future votes where Coop membership rejected BDS. She and Board Member Keyian Vafai had a muffled exchange, after which Mazor said, "I'll take that as a no."

Vafai, however, spoke up five minutes later: "Yes, I absolutely believe in voting with the membership." Board members Tess Brown-Lavoie, Tim Hospodar and Brandon West, who Mazor also called out by name, did not comment.

Two members made non-BDS-related comments. Hospodar raised concerns with an amendment passed in August affirming that the Coop Treasurer must be an upper-level management staff person, and former General Manager Joe Holtz asked attendees to support a developing co-op in Brazil, which he previously wrote about in the *Linewaiters' Gazette*.

THE NUMBERS: COOP FINANCES & THANKSGIVING SALES

The General Coordinators' reports largely centered on numbers—including the standard update on the financial health of the Coop from General Manager and Treasurer Szladek, and a seasonal report on Thanksgiving sales.

Year-to-date sales through November 9 were up 8.5 percent over the previous year, but the cost of goods and running the Coop were, too, meaning the business had a $372,000 deficit, Szladek said. The General Manager reassured members that sales usually pick up during the fall and winter and he expects the Coop to come "close" to breaking even by year's end.

Szladek attributed some of this year's deficit to costly one-off expenses and rising healthcare expenses for personnel, as seen nationally. He said the Coop is seriously considering how to balance rising healthcare costs while maintaining a strong staff plan, and noted in follow-ups that the current self-insured, premium-free plan has saved the Coop "a tremendous amount of money over the years."

Next, Elinoar Astrinsky, a General Coordinator since 2009, detailed Thanksgiving sales—a staggering volume of food totaling more than a Boeing 787's cargo load. Shoppers bought 38,000 pounds of produce, 7,760 pounds of cheese (cheddar was the most popular) and plenty of walnuts (about 1,000 pounds), she said.

Astrinsky concluded with a shout-out to staff for keeping the store well-stocked and relatively line-free, which elicited applause from the audience. Meeting chair Hegwood, who repeatedly asked attendees to hold their applause during politically fraught moments, joked that applause was only appropriate "when we're having Thanksgiving sales numbers."

AN UPDATE ON HYBRID MEETINGS

Following a brief committee update from the International Trade Education Squad about the Trump Administration's trade policy (which, in summary, remains volatile

but still impacts the Coop far less than other grocers thanks to our focus on local goods), the Chair Committee issued a progress update on hybrid meetings.

After the Chair Committee solicited support for the transition to hybrid meetings, nine people expressed interest, seven responded to an outreach email and six were selected for the role, explained Committee member Josef Szende. The positions are short--term and will be evaluated for long-term participation, he added.

During a period for questions, Mazor took to the stage again to ask whether members will be able to comment on the Committee's eventual proposal, expressing specific concerns about how the meetings will be kept civilized. Szende responded that he couldn't speak to specifics (the Committee hasn't yet met), but that the transition will be collaborative.

"This is not a consulting firm delivering a product. This is a community. We're working together and we need to dialogue," he said "It's going to be a process and it's definitely not going to be perfect."

TWO ELECTIONS & A PROPOSAL ABOUT ELECTIONS—PLUS A DISCUSSION ABOUT RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION

Chair Hegwood opened the GM agenda by urging members to be "civil and generous," a request that was mostly respected during the 90-minute session covering two proposals and votes.

The meeting opened with member Michael Freedman-Schnapp, who brought his earlier proposal for a member-led Financial Advisory Committee to a vote. Most members expressed support for the Committee, especially since Freedman-Schnapp added a revision in response to feedback that reserves two of the seven seats for members without financial expertise.

"I don't have a lot of expertise, but I have thoughts about what are socially responsible investments that I would want the Coop to make," said Alyce Barr, a member of

nearly 50 years, explaining that a Committee with a mix of backgrounds would foster cooperation. The vote passed 111 to 11.

Next came a hotly debated agenda item from Coop member Rosa Palermo, who proposed reserving the "do-not-reply" email—used for one-way staff communications—for operational updates and announcements, not personal opinions or advocacy. Her proposal came in response to a controversial message that Holtz sent from the "do-not-reply" email weeks before the Board of Directors Election (and his retirement).

In the message that staff said was sent to 34,000 active and inactive members, Holtz said that he was speaking only for himself, but encouraged all recipients to vote against Dan Kaminsky and Taylor Pate—pro-BDS candidates endorsed by PSFC Members for Palestine. Kaminsky and Pate both lost the election.

In her opening statement, Palermo mentioned the email, saying that it made her think about how "our communication tools support equal member voice and align with our cooperative values." However, she maintained that the proposal was about communication structures, not specific political views, and never named Holtz explicitly.

This caused confusion for at least one member, who took to the mic to ask for clarification on the email, but most speakers understood its subtext, and many expressed support for the proposal, citing frustration with Holtz's message.

However, the response wasn't all positive. One member questioned whether the proposal even merited consideration, noting he was sure "Joe was very sorry," which drew applause that the chair quickly curtailed. Later, while Palermo discussed how communication can be used to strengthen cooperativism and increase access, an audience member shouted, "why the lies" prompting the chair to intervene again and remind members not to shout out.

The discussion concluded with a member named John, who said he was present in

support of Palermo, emphasizing that there are already participatory channels where members can share personal viewpoints, namely, the GM or *Gazette*.

Next, the evening saw two elections: Members re-elected Jacob Heyman-Kantor (120-5) and elected Josh Geller (93-31) to serve on the Hearing Officer Committee (HOC), following brief presentations of their qualifications and a question-and-answer segment.

Directly following the HOC election, members George Sarah Olken and Sophia Li presented an aptly timed proposal on establishing an Election Committee to administer open elections on a consistent schedule. As it currently stands, committee elections are not held on a fixed schedule. Typically, when a committee has an open seat, sitting members solicit interest from Coop members and contenders are asked to make a case at the GM (or join in a less formal manner).

“Those elections work, in general, the way we just saw,” said Olken, referencing the HOC election. “It’s not exactly an election because we don’t know how many other people applied, it’s two people running for two positions, members often don’t know what the committee even does and then in almost all cases the nominees slip through.”

Olken and Li’s proposal, by contrast, presents a more thoughtful vision of open and participatory elections overseen by the Election Committee. Their plan centers on two meetings: first, a nomination GM where members can put themselves or others forward for open positions from the floor. Then, a vote in June, aligning with the Board of Directors Elections. This model closely mirrors that of the Brooklyn Public Library Union, where Olken is President.

Members queried and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of this proposal. While some appreciated how it could make elections more open, many raised concerns about practicalities, like how long and chaotic a nomination meeting could be, or how devoting two of ten annual GMs to elections could deter from other work mem-

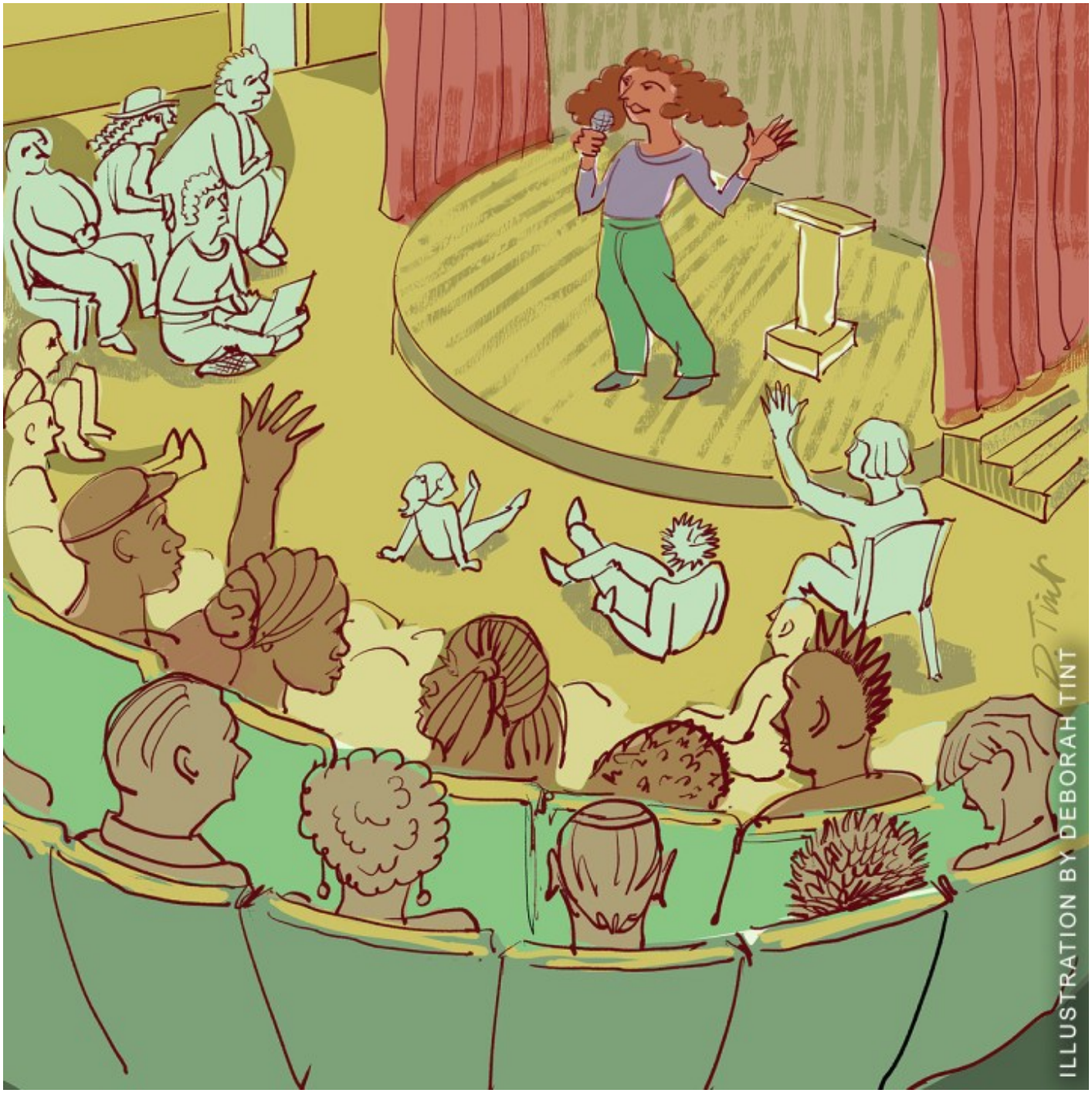
bers need to do.

Li and Olken waived most of their allotted wrap-up remark time to let others speak, and then gave a brief thank-you at the end. “This is exactly the conversation I think we need to have,” said Olken. “I am glad this proposal engendered this and I’m hopeful that by trying to change our systems we will figure out what exactly we want them to be.”

At the conclusion of the meeting, all board members voted in favor to accept the members’ advice on the Financial Advisory Committee and Hearing Officer Committee Elections held earlier in the evening.

OCTOBER GENERAL MEETING REPORT

May 5, 2026



December 9, 2025

By Oluwakemi Aladesuyi

Since the Coop began offering work credits for meeting attendance, General Meetings have been well attended, and the October 28 meeting was no exception.

Open Forum

The Open Forum session focused on how the Coop could support the community as SNAP benefits faced expiration during the government shutdown. A small discussion group was proposed to address this concern. While it appears that SNAP benefits have since been extended for at least another year, the discussion raised important questions about how the community can continue supporting its members through on-going economic challenges.

Reports

General Manager Joe Szladek made a financial report for the last 36 weeks. Several one-time expenses contributed to higher personnel costs, including a retirement party for Joe Holtz, consulting fees to help recruit a new general manager and IT support.

Other trends of note:

- Debit transaction fees have increased, though the Coop will be switching vendors soon and will charge lower fees.
- Healthcare expenses are growing faster than inflation each year, becoming an increasingly large portion of personnel costs.
- Sales per member have declined since the Coop switched from a four-week to a six-week work cycle (that is, post-Covid).

On a positive note, sales in the prepared foods section continue to expand.

Looking ahead, the Coop is considering hiring another receiving coordinator as well as staff with significant financial expertise.

One member questioned whether the Coop could rely more heavily on member-led squads rather than hiring additional staff, noting that some coordinating roles had previously been handled by members. The response to that question emphasized that

work remains in members' hands, with staff primarily helping to speed up processes.

General Coordinator Matt Hoagland reported on the recurring shift system. Popular positions like office work and checkout fill quickly, but early morning lifting shifts have been difficult to staff.

The International Trade Education Squad (ITES) then presented information about how current tariffs are creating uncertainty across the supply chain.

Elections

Several elections took place during the meeting. The first was for the Hearing Administration Committee, which hears disciplinary issues. The vote tallies were as follows:

Irene Bunnell: 123 YES 2 NO

Stephen Klein: 80 YES 23 NO

Sam Klugman: 121 YES 2 NO

Members also voted to fill several open seats on the Agenda Committee, which reviews items proposed for discussion at General Meetings. Since the October 7, 2023 attacks in Israel and the subsequent war in Gaza, what is and isn't allowed to be discussed at Coop General Meetings has been particularly contentious, especially regarding whether the Coop should support the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) movement.

Dominique Bravo explained that those who had spoken publicly about "political issues" were not considered eligible candidates for open seats on the Agenda Committee, a criterion that was decided by current committee members. Agenda Committee vote results are below:

Dominique Bravo: 94 YES 29 NO

Matt Cecil: 99 YES 20 NO

Robbie Gottlieb: 126 YES 3 NO

Alice Procter: 125 YES 2 NO

Finally, Rebecca Schoenberg-Jones was elected Corporate Secretary, a result which met with boisterous applause.

Member Presentations

The pandemic served as a revealing moment for the Coop, exposing fundamental questions about how the Coop operates and how members engage with one another. One of the most significant issues that emerged was the question of how members should meet and participate in decision-making processes.

Yejia Chen presented a proposal to introduce online asynchronous voting, a system that would allow members to review agenda items in advance and vote on them remotely.

Chen gave a robust presentation arguing that this approach would increase participation by making the voting process more accessible to members who might not be able to attend meetings in person as well as for the neurodiverse.

Following the presentation, the proposal sparked a lively discussion that touched on several practical and philosophical concerns. Members raised questions about the costs of implementing voting software and what post-pandemic communication should look like within the Coop more broadly.

A central concern centered on the Coop's parliamentary procedures: how would on-

line asynchronous voting accommodate the spontaneous amendments and adjustments that typically occur during live meetings? In traditional in-person elections, members have the opportunity to comment and make slight modifications to proposals in real-time. Would an asynchronous system allow for similar flexibility? Some suggested that voting software could enable discussion forums and commenting features, though this raised additional questions about whether such forums would require moderation.

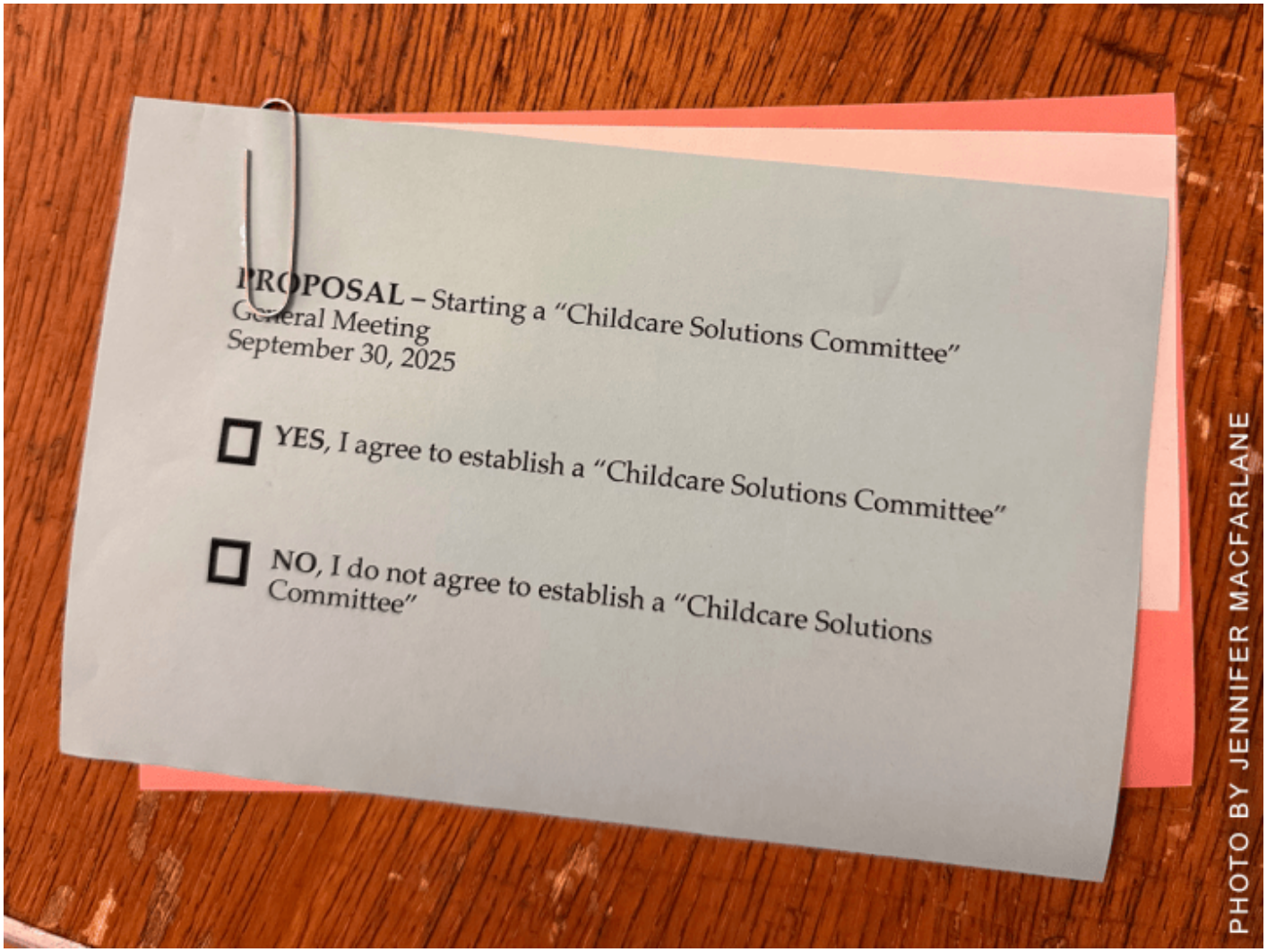
Members also expressed concern about potential drawbacks of a hybrid voting system. Would early voting actually disincentivize attendance at meetings, causing people to miss important discussions? If votes were tallied both asynchronously and in person, would this create equity concerns between different voting methods? There was uncertainty about whether asynchronous participation would truly increase engagement or simply fragment it.

Overall, the discussion revealed concerns that the proposal felt somewhat haphazard in its approach to timeline and synchronicity. While the intention to increase accessibility was clear, questions remained about how to preserve the deliberative, collaborative nature of the Coop's decision-making process in a hybrid model.

Oluwakemi Aladesuyi is a journalist, yoga teacher and potter.

HYBRID MEETINGS ARE COMING. CHILDCARE MIGHT BE NEXT

May 5, 2026



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 childcare. 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 Mazor, 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.

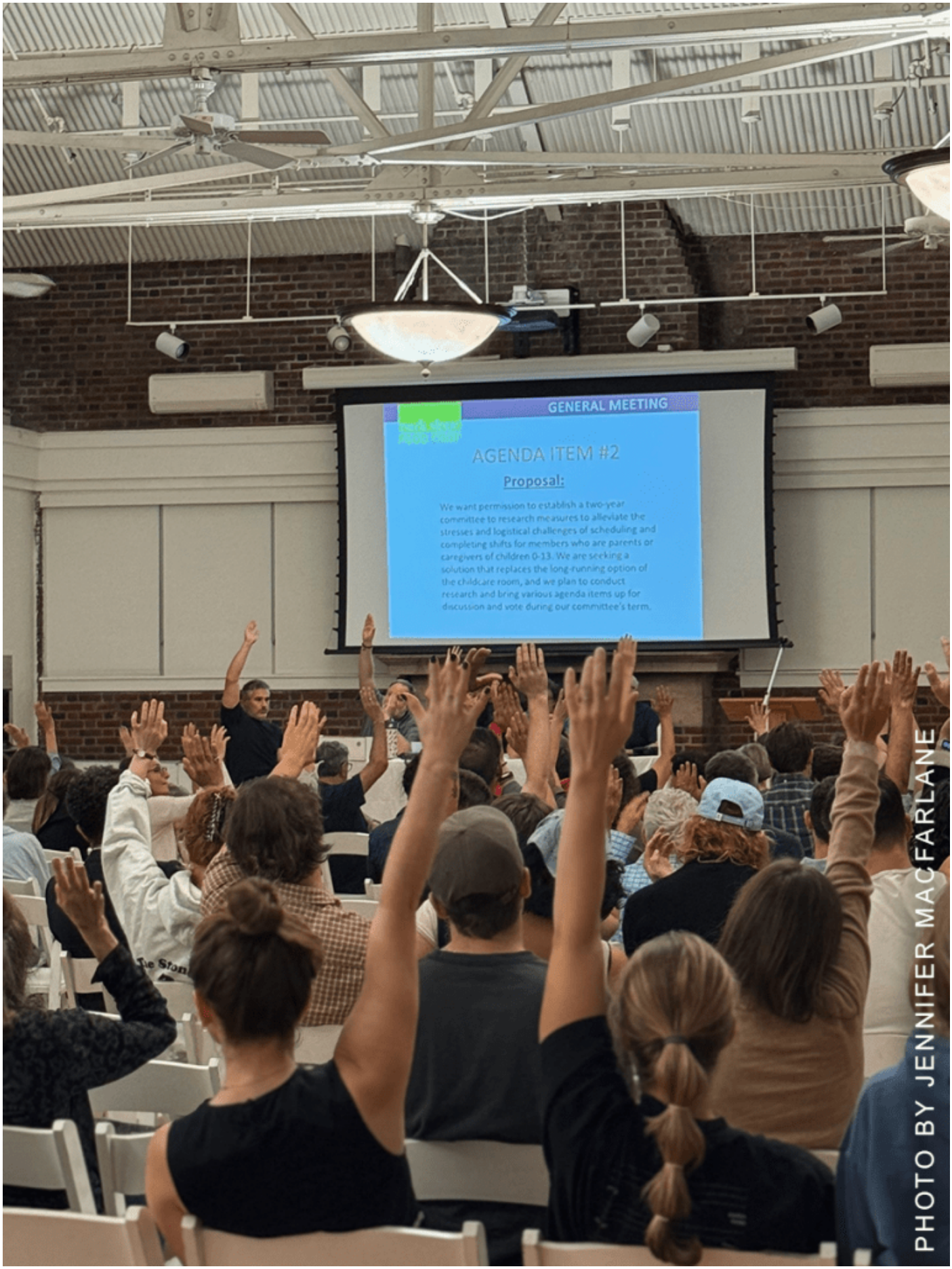


PHOTO BY JENNIFER MACFARLANE

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 Elinoar 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 Szladek 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.