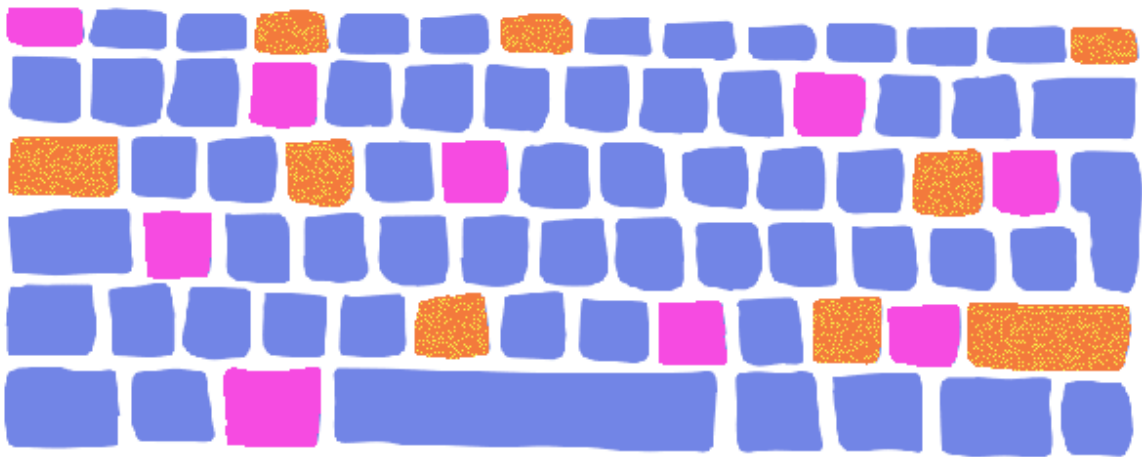


MARCH 24, 2026

March 24, 2026

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Dear members,

The Gazette will resume publishing letters in the next issue (4/14/26); all letters submitted during the pause, in addition to any new submissions, will be eligible for con-

sideration for that issue. The updated, clarified letters policy can be found below and on the Gazette's About page. All letters published going forward should adhere to these guidelines.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation.

The Co-Coordinating Editors

Lily Rothman

Eric Baldwin

Whitney Curry Wimbish

General Manager Joe Szladek

General Coordinator Ann Herpel

LETTERS POLICY

Letters should be no more than 300 words in length. The Letters Editor reserves the right to run a representative selection of letters on any given topic, in the event multiple letters make substantially similar points.

Letters must be the opinion of the letter-writer and can contain no more than 15% non-original writing.

All submissions must be original; we will not accept form, chain, or template letters for publication. We will not accept letters from nonmembers or former members, nor will we accept submissions prepared by someone other than the submitting member. Letters to the editor should reflect the authentic voice and writing of the submitting Coop member; submissions that appear to be generated or substantially written using artificial intelligence tools may not be published. Writers may include links to rep-

utable websites in submissions. Letters are meant to express opinions; the *Gazette* does not publish letters containing known inaccuracies or falsehoods. When facts are in dispute, writers may be asked to supply a reputable third-party source. The editors reserve the right to determine whether sources are sufficient and reliable for publication.

Letters must adhere to the Fairness, Anonymity and Respect policies (see below). They cannot be hateful, needlessly inflammatory, discriminatory, or libelous; contain personal attacks; make unsubstantiated claims or accusations; or be contrary to the values of the Coop, as expressed in our mission statement. The *Gazette* discourages the use of the Letters section to make accusations about identifiable members, and may edit or omit such content at its discretion. References to individuals may be permitted in the context of factual descriptions of public statements made in official Coop forums, such as the General Meeting, or to previously published letters or articles.

All submissions must be legible, intelligible, civil, and concisely written, with accurate and attributable statements of fact that are easily verifiable.

Letter writers are limited to one letter per issue.

Editor-Writer Guidelines: All submissions will be reviewed. Those that do not abide by *Gazette* policies will be rejected. Writers are responsible for the factual content of their stories. Editors may lightly copy edit letters to conform to the *Gazette* style guide (AP style). Editors will not revise or suggest improvements for grammar; writers are responsible for writing intelligible prose. Letters must contain a salutation (“To the Editor”) and a suggested title. Letters without a title will be given one by an editor.

FAIRNESS, ANONYMITY AND RESPECT POLICIES

In order to provide fair, comprehensive, factual coverage:

Fairness

1. The *Gazette* will not publish hearsay—that is, allegations not based on the author’s first-hand observation.
2. Editors will reject polemical accusations against specific members. Writers should instead address ideas.
3. The *Gazette* may allow publication of submissions that make claims about specific individuals, if necessary to make the point of the submission. To comply with Coop Fairness, Anonymity and Respect policies, those submissions will be shared with individuals named to enable them to write a response, and both submissions and responses will be published simultaneously. This means that the original submission may not appear until the issue after the one for which it was submitted. (Straightforward summaries of public statements by identifiable members, including at General Meetings or in the *Linewaiters’ Gazette*, will not necessarily require a response.)

Anonymity

Unattributed letters will not be published unless the *Gazette* knows the identity of the writer, and therefore must be signed when submitted (giving phone number). Such letters will be published only where a compelling reason is given to the editor as to why public identification of the writer would impose an unfair burden of embarrassment or difficulty. Such letters must relate to Coop issues and avoid any non-constructive, non-cooperative language.

Respect

Submissions to the *Gazette* must be in keeping with the Coop’s Anti-Discrimination Policy, and must not be hateful, inflammatory, or needlessly provocative. They may not be personally derogatory or insulting, even when strongly critical. The *Gazette* also does not tolerate abusive behavior towards staff and, consistent with New York

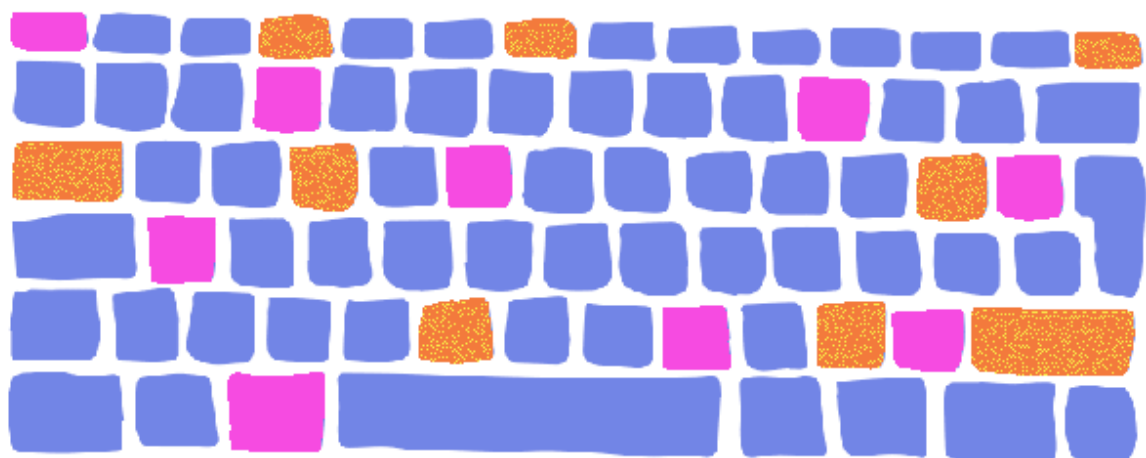
State workplace safety guidance—which defines workplace violence to include threats, harassment, abuse, and intimidation in the workplace—will not publish submissions that include such conduct toward staff or otherwise conflict with these requirements.

The *Gazette* is a collaboration among Coop members. When submitting, please consider the impact of your words on the writers, editors and production staff who use our limited workslot time to try to produce an informative and cooperative publication that reflects the values of our Coop community.

MARCH 3, 2026

March 24, 2026

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



LETTERS POLICY PAUSE

In order to conduct a review of the letters policy and to ensure it is being applied consistently and fairly, the *Linewaiters' Gazette* is temporarily pausing publication of letters to the editor. This pause will allow the Coordinating Editors time to assess current practices and determine whether any clarifications or updates are needed.

The pause is expected to last no more than one or two issues. Letters already submitted, as well as those received during this period, will be held and considered for publication once the *Gazette* resumes printing letters.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation.

Co-Coordinating Editors Lily Rothman, Eric Baldwin and Whitney Curry Wimbish

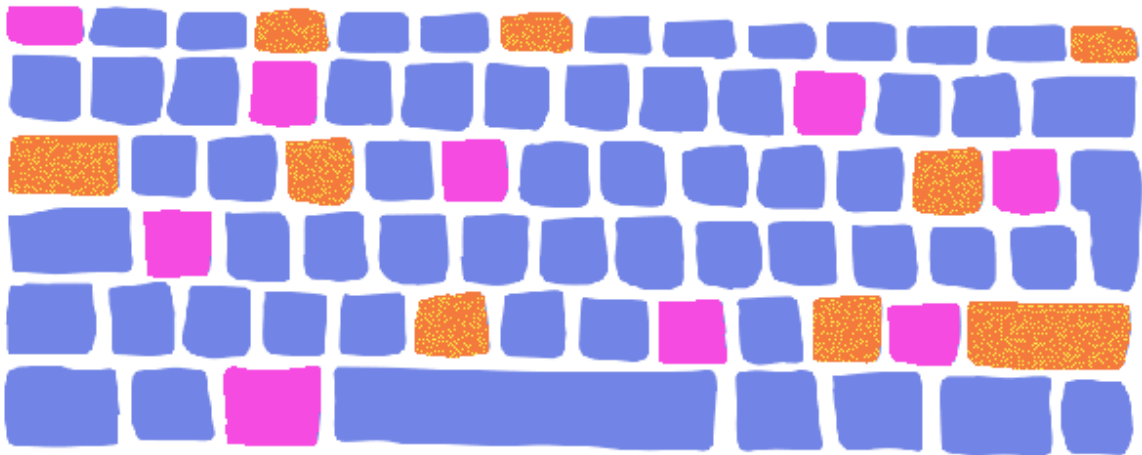
General Manager Joe Szladek

General Coordinator Ann Herpel

FEBRUARY 10, 2026

March 24, 2026

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



LIDL HIGHLIGHTS LACK OF COOP AFFORDABILITY

Dear Editor,

I appreciated very much Anita Bushell's January 20 article on the Park Slope branch of Lidl, a new German grocery store on of which I was unaware. Among other things, she

highlighted items in several categories that are more affordable at Lidl than they are at the Coop, including mandarin oranges, multigrain bread, and croissants. All but one variety of apple there are also on offer at a lower price. All this with no work requirement.

Bushell prefers the quality of goods and feeling of community at the Coop. I do too, but her survey highlights an important reality: Increasingly, we are a place less about affordable foods and more about elevated (or some might say snobby) preferences and responsible (or some might say politicized) sourcing.

Our markup was “temporarily” increased to 25% from 21% nearly six years ago and with spiraling health care and other costs, reporting out of the general meetings makes clear there is no return on the horizon to the original lower food prices. For the past year, I’ve found it cheaper to have coffee delivered from Finland than to buy it at the Coop, to give one example.

Meanwhile far more members seem interested in engaging in geopolitical debates than with costs and affordability. Instead of turning up our noses at Lidl, we should consider how to replicate their tight mission focus and efficiencies. Or we should at least be more honest about the fact that affordability, for those of us who don’t qualify for special programs, is slipping away at our beloved Coop.

In cooperation,

Ryan Tate

Receiving shift (Lifter)

REGARDING LIDL’S REVIEW

Dear Coop community,

Anita Bushell's January 20 article on the relative merits of Lidl and the Coop ("Cheap-Croissants but Lidl Charm") misses the mark. The Coop and Lidl are fundamentally different, but it hardly warrants pooh-poohing Lidl.

In truth, many Coop products are expensive, and Lidl is generally cheaper. As Ms. Bushell observes, the Coop wins on quality and variety. But many products at Lidl—like fresh breads—are actually superior to the Coop's. Lidl produce, while not as good as Coop produce, is decent and mostly cheaper than what's for sale at Trader Joe's. It's hardly fair to diminish it as "an okay option for last-minute dashes."

Frankly, I find Ms. Bushell's mockery of discount promotions as features of a "a glorified mini-mart" deeply out of touch when affordability is such an important issue. I also struggle to relate to her lamenting the loss of the semi-suburban Key Foods parking lot and ruing its replacement with housing units, many set aside for affordable housing. (N.B. It was community leaders who advocated for an affordable grocery store in the development.)

Lidl is not especially warm or charming; most groceries aren't. It employs the same antitheft gate system used across Europe. If this system reduces the shoplifting that chain supermarket operators often cite as reasons for avoiding certain neighborhoods, it's a reasonable trade-off. Lidl has been expanding across the city, often in neighborhoods lacking affordable alternatives. It's also open to anyone who walks off the street—unlike the Coop.

I rather like the Coop, which is why I'm a member, but that doesn't mean I look down on Lidl. I do however wholly disapprove of mocking a discount grocery store's food as "technically edible."

Sincerely,

Daniel Stone

PAGING COMPOSTABLE BAGS TO THE BULK AISLE

Dear Coop members:

As a newer member of the Coop, I've been impressed by the sustainable practices in place: a robust composting system, food donation to CHiPS and other food rescue organizations, reuse of delivery boxes for shoppers, and much more.

I'm curious about one, albeit small, area where we might be able to do better: the plastic bags used for pre-packaged bulk items and bread. I recognize there may be considerations I'm not aware of—cost or performance issues with compostable options—though given compostable bags are available in the produce section, I wonder if there's potential to transition these remaining plastic bags to compostable (or at the very least non-plastic) alternatives.

Part of my motivation for writing this letter is to see if this is something other members would support pursuing. The Coop's commitment to sustainability is a large part of what drew me to the organization, and I would love to help continue to drive this core part of our mission: "We strive to reduce the impact of our lifestyles on the world we share with other species and future generations."

Kindly,

Kristen Mashikian

FOOD HOLDS ENERGY WITH A MESSAGE

Dear Coop members,

In 2015, when my daughters were 5 and 4 years old, I joined the PSFC. Our family enjoyed all the organic goodies we are so blessed to have available. My friend Anna, also a PSFC member, pointed out how I would bring carrots and a peeler with me to the Children's Museum; my nephew would laugh at how my stroller would be full of food and called me a refrigerator.

We would not leave home without all our food.

In the book *Food Rules*, writer Michael Pollan observes how much of what he sees for sale doesn't "deserve to be called food." Instead, he prefers to "call them edible food-like substances."

Having growing up in Tunisia and in Switzerland, I was alarmed at the quality of food sold in the US. My studies confirmed what my intuition was telling me: food is more than calories and nutrients. It holds the energy of the farmer, the farm, nature, and the intention behind the making of that food. Food holds a message.

I started cooking for my community to have conversations on ethical food and why we need to know where our food comes from. When we eat local food, it's easier to know the energy it holds. We want to give money to people who are caring for our land and taking good care of their employees and animals. I don't want to eat anger and pain, do you?

Guided by that philosophy, I do not buy ingredients from Israel, and I'm in favor of boycotting all goods from there until Israel ends what an overwhelming number of human rights organizations and authorities on international law say is a genocide, and Palestinians live freely.

I am honored to serve the PSFC with my food. I offer a vegan Tunisian sandwich called LA TUNISIENNE, free of cruelty. Find it Sundays in the grab and go fridge.

Sincerely,

Nadia Ketoure

HAVE RACHMONES: IMAGINE MENSTRUATION WHERE IMPORT OF HYGIENE PRODUCTS IS BANNED

Fellow Members,

Perhaps you've heard someone ask: Why Israel? Why do thousands of Coop members demand a boycott of Israeli products, especially now that there's a ceasefire*? Let's take a closer look and use an Israeli newspaper as a source. On January 22, 2026 *Haaretz* reported a "shortage in basics such as beef, poultry and hygiene products, caused by Israel's decision to ban the entry of these products..."

These banned hygiene products include menstrual supplies and diapers. Last week, I received a charity request to fund period kits for menstruating women and girls in Gaza. I was ready to donate, but then wondered: would these even make it through the blockade?

In the Yiddish-English home of my girlhood, my mother would often tell me to "have rachmones" (empathy or compassion) for others. Whether or not you've ever menstruated, it should be easy to imagine how wretched it would be to have no products to absorb your menstrual blood, and how much more of a horror it would be if you were living in a freezing cold refugee camp with extremely limited toilets or clean running water, and let alone privacy.

Every time we member-owners stock, sell, and buy Israeli products, we contribute to the economy of a country that has chosen to keep Palestinians in Gaza without period products and diapers.

Have Rachmones,

Alyce Barr

* It's hard to understand what Israel considers a ceasefire, since Israeli forces have killed over 470 Palestinians during the current ceasefire.

SOME SEE UPSIDE TO A “LOOMING COLLAPSE”

Dear Members,

I read recently of a “looming collapse” of Israel’s agricultural exports market. Whether or not we boycott Israeli goods at the Coop, this collapse could achieve what so many courageous amongst us have campaigned for: a better world.

Sincerely,

Damien Neva

KNOW THE FACTS BEFORE YOU VOTE

Dear Coop community:

As we gear up for what’s sure to be a contentious discussion (and, finally, a vote!!) on

the boycott of Israeli products, it's essential that members reach out and learn the facts about previous and current organizing efforts.

Please DO NOT believe claims of antisemitism (I for one am proudly Jewish) and other emotional appeals to secure votes against a boycott. Some members weaponize such claims, and it behooves all of us to understand the facts and vote our consciences.

The Coop has a long, proud history of boycotting products from countries and entities that fail to act in accordance with our Mission Statement. I urge all members to familiarize themselves with that Statement and the importance of boycotts in the struggles worldwide for justice.

Yes, this issue brings "conflict" among us and, yes, discussions on these matters can be challenging, but I believe in the Coop, its Mission Statement, and the integrity of our members to proceed with the facts and in a spirit of cooperation

Sincerely,

Carol Wald

TRYING TO "JOIN THE CONVERSATION" WOULD BE EASIER WITH SOME TRANSPARENCY, PLEASE

Dear Coop members:

I'm writing with questions about the December 30 "Join the Conversation" memo announcing a facilitated conversation about conflict in the Coop community, capped at 12 participants, with work-slot credit for attending. The memo emphasized confidentiality and directed members to apply online.

I applied almost immediately, but wasn't selected. I understand that there was likely limited capacity, but when shift credit is offered for a limited-access event, the selection and approval process should be transparent.

Questions I hope the Coop can answer:

- Will there be additional sessions, and will members who weren't selected this time get priority or another clear path to participate?
- What were the selection criteria? Was it first-come/first-served, a lottery, or based on other considerations? If so, what were they? Was race, ethnicity, religion, or identity considered?
- Who approved this as eligible for shift credit, and under what policy or category? What safeguards ensured it was administered fairly and consistently?
- Where was this discussed publicly within Coop governance? I don't recall seeing it in General Meeting materials or minutes, but I'd appreciate a pointer if I missed it.

Sincerely,

Vivek Bhagwat

COOP WORK-SLOT CREDIT

Dear Editor:

On January 12, I participated in a Coop event for work-slot credit to discuss how conflict at the Coop "affected your experience as a Coop member." It covered "your experience as a Coop member during times of conflict, especially if it feels personal," and was not about making "decisions about a boycott or convincing anyone of a par-

ticular view.” (Quoted text is all pulled from the document from the moderators). Six people took part.

We agreed to no audio recording and no names. Moderators were asked what they were bringing back from this session to the Coop community. They said they were not providing any information to the Coop.

I argued that the Membership needs to obtain value for holding this session as the Coop provided the site and work slot credits to the participants. It is not a breach of confidentiality to provide a high-level report, which does not include names or direct quotes.

I noted that I could write a letter to the *Gazette*, following those guidelines. One participant was against any letter writing. The moderators who had advised that they were not decision makers, now ruled against my right to inform the Coop. At that point I left the session.

If the moderators want to hold this type of meeting under the “No Feedback” to Members rule, then it should not be held on Coop property. It is really a private activity. The Coop should not host or provide work-slot credits for something that doesn't inform the Members and directly or indirectly, benefit the Coop.

I respectfully request that any future sessions be canceled.

In Cooperation,

Stewart Pravda

IN THE LAND OF “BROKEN LAND DREAMS” (WITH APOLOGIES TO THE BOSS)

Dear Coop members,

My magical realism novel, *Broken Land Dreams*, out in Kindle and print, mentions the Coop and Park Slope. It's not just for Boomers, guys in search of themselves, or Brooklynites, but those in need of a Hired Power, progressives, mindfulness types, literary mavens, utopian dreamers, and young superheroes with contemplative and critical thinking powers.

The book defies a conventional linear narrative. In Part I, Jacob Traum, a grumpy, retired high school social worker and meditating lefty boomer, tells us his wife Maya has left him and warns him he needs to recover from himself. He describes the puzzling and socially unjust things he broods and dreams about that contribute to his disposition and emotional absence.

In Part II, the surreal story begins. With the help of his dreamt-up, gender-fluid, hired power with superpowers from the future, Jacob embarks on a Dante-esque, pandemic-era personal journey. In Hell Inc. he's confronted by, then manages to escape three right-wing rats, leaders of the Ratocracy conspiracy—Ratty Ghoulani, Ayn Ratnd, and Pete the New York Pizza Rat. The rats seek revenge by infesting his former high school with Ratocratic values and plan to take over Brooklyn. With the help of his Park Slope (Purgatory) men's group, the Brooklyn Codgers, and his high school students' socially conscious meditation group, imbued with their own superhero powers, Jacob must face himself as well as the Ratocrats in a final showdown to reach Heaven (the Brooklyn Botanic Garden), save Brooklyn, and earn back Maya.

In our post-pandemic and Trump-redux era, this re-telling of Dante's cosmic journey will appeal to many of us facing an uncertain future and to those who appreciate how truth, love, and Brooklyn-style dreams triumph over meanness, greed, fake news—and New York rats.

Sincerely,

David Forbes

NOTE FROM THE GAZETTE EDITORS

February 14, 2026

To Gazette readers,

Inconsistencies occurred in applying the Gazette's Letters to the Editor policies in the February 10, 2026 issue. As a result, two letters from that issue have been temporarily removed pending a review of those policies.

As the Coop's publisher, the General Coordinators have a responsibility to ensure that published material aligns with institutional and legal standards and that policies are applied consistently. In this instance, General Manager Joe Szladek and General Coordinator Ann Herpel were involved in the decision to remove the content in order to address those concerns.

A review of the Gazette's editorial standards and policies is underway to ensure they are clearly defined and consistently applied.

We regret any confusion this may cause and appreciate Gazette readers' understanding as we complete this review.

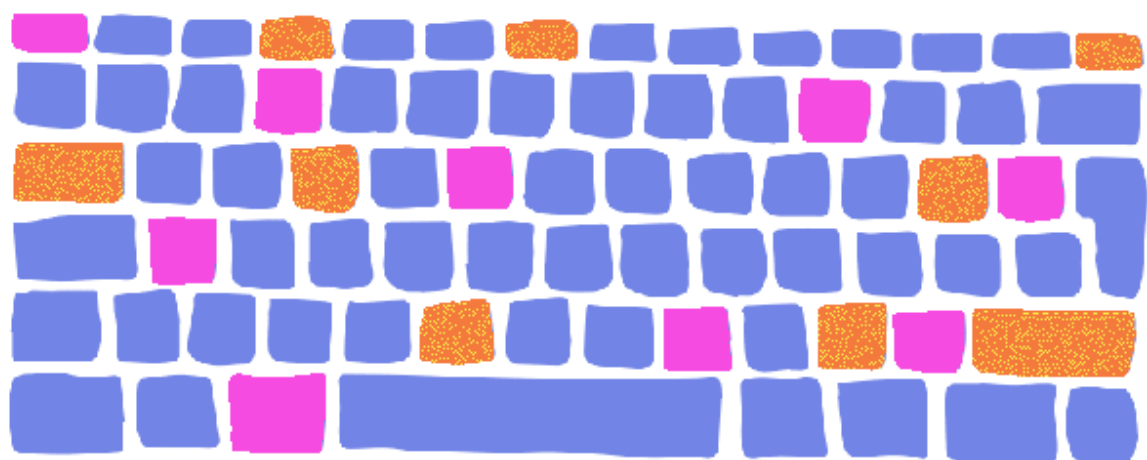
Thank you,

Gazette Editors, Joe Szladek and Ann Herpel

JANUARY 20, 2026

March 24, 2026

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



PSFC'S MISSION DEMANDS PROTECTIONS FOR ALL

Dear Coop members:

Coop leaders—most notably the directors—can look to the city for direction on combating harmful rhetoric to ensure that all members feel welcome at the Coop regardless of their political viewpoints.

Diversity of thought is foundational to the Coop. In Sun Yu's Book "Park Slope Food Coop 50 Years of Cooperation", Yu validates this notion by describing historical disputes within the Coop, which reaffirms that differing views are part of our DNA.

On December 30, NYC's Mayor's Office to Combat Antisemitism (MOCA) released its 2025 report on antisemitism. Some Coop members over the last 18 months—including some of the directors—have promoted messaging that paints alleged dysfunction at the Coop as a byproduct of members that are perceived to be Zionist.

We should all have critical thoughts on societal challenges, but not at the expense of dehumanizing a specific group of people. The MOCA report indicates that specific anti-Zionism rhetoric is detrimental to Jews. Specifically, "the practical consequence of anti-Zionist rhetoric is ... the dehumanization of all Jewish people ... when Zionism itself is characterized as racist or illegitimate, Jewish people become targets for hostility and violence."

Dehumanizing language leads to violence: In Crown Heights, two Jews have been stabbed.

Jews have been murdered in:

- Thousand Oaks
- Washington DC

- Boulder
- Manchester
- Sydney

Additionally there has been vandalism, arson, gun shots and car-rammings at synagogues and Jewish institutions in North America and Europe, including shuls within a stone's throw of the Coop.

Coop Leadership needs to maximize safety within the Coop—including protection for all Jewish members regardless of their political viewpoints—as this duty is listed in our mission statement, which states “we strive to make the Coop welcoming and accessible to all and to respect the opinions, needs and concerns of every member.”

Sincerely,
Zack Zaban

THE BDS-BONDI CONNECTION

Dear Coop members:

Lethal narratives incite violence:

Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, Charleston, South Carolina, June 17, 2015: Nine African Americans were murdered by a shooter radicalized by white supremacist, anti-Black rhetoric.

Tree of Life Synagogue, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, October 27, 2018: Eleven Jews at prayer were murdered by a shooter radicalized by white nationalist, anti-Semitic, anti-immigration rhetoric.

Chanukah celebration, Bondi Beach, Sydney, Australia, December 14, 2025:

Fifteen Jews were murdered by two shooters radicalized by antizionist, anti-Semitic rhetoric.

Our Coop must never provide a platform for lethal narratives—rhetoric that casts entire groups as inherently evil, assigns collective guilt and normalizes exclusion and violence. Yet, here we are. The same dehumanizing antizionist discourse that animated the Bondi shooters has been incessantly repeated by the Coop's BDS advocates in *Gazette* letters, pamphlets, Instagram posts and GM statements.

Their narrative relies on three core misrepresentations:

1. Israel's defensive war in Gaza, following the October 7, 2023 massacre of over 1,200 people and the kidnapping of 251, is labeled "genocide."
2. Israel's security measures in response to terrorist attacks on its population are labeled "apartheid."
3. Land purchases in the birthplace of Jewish civilization, and the Jewish quest for dignity and self-determination, are labeled "settler-colonialism."

These libels erase Palestinian responsibility and agency while portraying Israel as the sole aggressor. It ignores the long history of denied equality for Jews under Islamic rule as well as the opposition of Arab political leaders to Jewish equality and immigration.

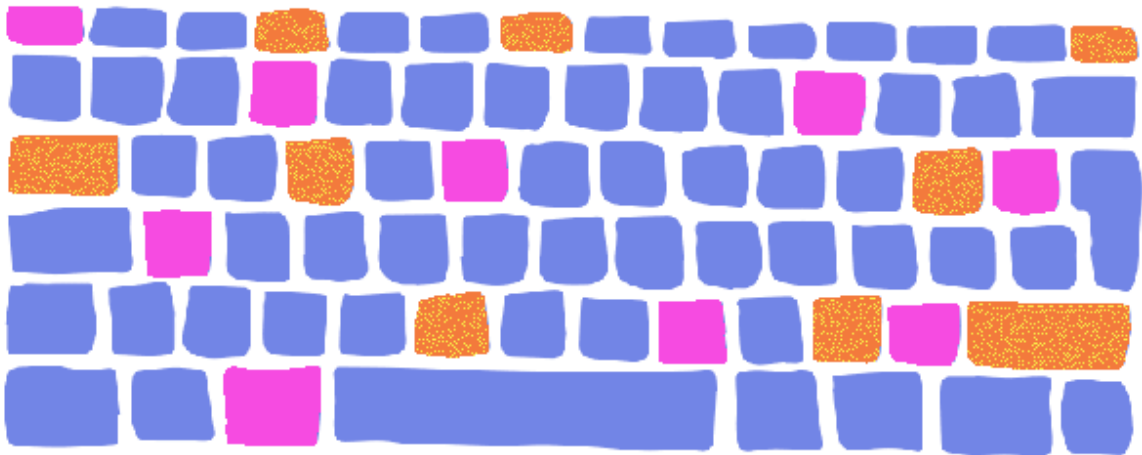
Antizionism is implicated in countless attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions worldwide. The BDS proposal is an attempt to exploit our Coop to further amplify the antizionist lethal narrative. Our General Meeting exists to steward our \$60M/year business. Our Coop should not be used to legitimize language that endangers any group of people, including Jews.

Sincerely,
Barbara Mazor

DECEMBER 30, 2025

March 24, 2026

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



APPLAUDING POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

Dear Coop members:

Granted, General Meetings aren't always fun and are sometimes even contentious. But we—the Coop Family—should be proud of some of our recent accomplishments

and current considerations. Starting in January, our new hybrid structure will open up participation to many more of our members. (Note: I would have gladly been more active over my last 18 years if I—as a single parent and very busy nonprofit manager—could have participated remotely.) And some new initiatives are exploring robust, creative ideas for enhancing education and awareness regarding committees and operating procedures; offering training, leadership development and greater inclusivity; and clarifying protocols for ensuring appropriate democratic communications. Way to go, Coop!

These types of developments help me feel even more welcome and inspired. Let's keep up the momentum and commitment to innovation, inclusivity and equity in our dynamic democratic experiment.

Sincerely,

Mitty Owens

Coop member since 2006; social justice writer on Substack

ATTILA THE HUN AND KARL MARX BOTH LIKE GOOD FOOD AT FAIR PRICES

Dear Coop members:

The Park Slope Food Coop is a grocery store. It is a good place for me to shop. The grocery-store aspect of the Coop is great; the political activism is not. I recall that at a GM in 2016, an “Education Committee” member urged us to go to Philadelphia and protest the Trans-Pacific Partnership at the Democratic Convention. Nearly a decade later, members argue over banning products. I stopped attending GMs. Now a member writes a letter about wishing for the ideological purity of a bread supplier.

On December 10, Lidl grocery store opened at 120 5th Ave., close to the Coop. Their prices are lower compared with the Coop prices for similar items. The produce is not as good as that of the Coop, but the bakery is better; they have freshly baked croissants that are crisp for 49 cents. They also offer a large selection of meat and fish at slightly lower prices. I have not yet tried the meats to know about the quality.

The Coop prides itself on being founded in 1972. I grew up where there are coop entities that are thriving to this day that were founded in 1908 and the other in 1915. Both stick to their knitting. The first one is a coop bank that started very small and over the last hundred years has expanded to many branches in many cities in India. No members or account holders entertain political activism at the bank. My question is how long before members of the PSFC are turned off by political activism and walk with their feet. If I have problems with any products, I have the option to NOT buy that product.

Sincerely,

Amol Kaikini

CHANUKA AND ANTIZIONISM

Dear members,

I recently saw a flyer advertising an Antizionist Chanuka party and thought this was hilarious seeing as Chanuka is the most Zionist Jewish holiday there is. On Chanuka, we celebrate indigenous Jewish resistance over Greek colonizers and the restoration of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel.

Unfortunately, there are quite a number of such self-proclaimed “antizionist” Jews right here at our coop who are working to ban the sale of Israeli goods (BDS).

As progressive as these folks might envision themselves to be, they are nothing but our generation's version of the Hellenistic Jews, who mistakenly thought that if only they were more empathetic towards their overlords, or better assimilated, they could "keep the peace." Tragically, they fell to the same fate as their "less liberal" brethren.

Because while the Hellenists were technically only against religious zealotry, not Jewish people per se, and antizionism opposes only Jewish *statehood*, ultimately, the soul of the Jew is inseparable from his or her body, and Jewish identity is intrinsically tied to the land of Israel, the center of which was known historically as "Judea," as it was the ancestral homeland of the tribe of Judah, the source of the word for "Jew."

To be clear, this does not mean one must endorse everything the Israeli government does or that it is in any way above critique, but to call oneself an Antizionist while at the same time celebrating Chanuka, is oxymoronic.

Pro-Israel Jews and friends, as evidenced by the public Menorah lighting outside of the Coop this year, the antizionists are only making us stronger. Stay proud and stay loud.

Sarede Switzer

DECEMBER 9, 2025

March 24, 2026

Letters to the Editor



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

A VISION FOR OUR NEW MAYOR

Dear Coop community:

Our new mayor has proposed building city-owned supermarkets to offer more affordable food to New Yorkers. Yet building, staffing and operating a supermarket is no small task (and no small expense). Might there be an opportunity for the Coop to as-

sist?

As we have seen with coop ventures in New York and elsewhere, one of the problems with getting a coop off the ground is the difficulty of raising capital. As a shopper-owned institution, a coop has no equity to sell to potential investors, and without an ongoing business, raising money via loans is a nonstarter. New coops look to small investments by prospective members, but this is a hard row to hoe.

I recommend that the Coop approach the Mamdani administration and make a case for why they should invest in launching new coops—not in place of other efforts, but as a supplement. A strong case can be made: Rather than starting a new supermarket from the ground up, a new coop leverages the enthusiasm of supporters, and much of its start-up and ongoing costs are carried by working members, whose efforts also reduce the costs to shopping members. And our expertise in running a successful food coop for more than 50 years can assist new ones. For the administration, the attraction should be obvious: creating sustainable supermarkets at lower ongoing costs—and, you know, providing good food for shopping members since 2026. We already know our business model is superior to that of conventional supermarkets—the Coop does something like ten times the sales per square foot of shelf space, compared with typical supermarkets. The constraint on the growth of the coop model has been availability of capital. We can help the Mamdani administration reach its goals and also help spread our superior model across the city.

Regards,

Greg Costikyan

A CALL TO ACTION

Dear Fellow Member Owners,

The recent government shutdown has highlighted critical ongoing issues that I hope we, as Member Owners, can begin to address. First and foremost, I agree with others that we need to be offering more low-cost food options in order to attract low-income neighbors and enhance our community. As for me, a senior on a fixed income, I'm able to continue shopping at the Coop for fruits and vegetables and Field Day items, but I now go elsewhere to buy the rest, often for less, nearby. This is true for many of us and will be true for still more as health insurance and other costs spiral up. As the neighborhood has gentrified, I understand the impulse to offer more luxury goods to existing Member Owners but, truth be told, I miss the vibrant ethnic, class and racial diversity we used to have years ago.

In addition, I would be willing to pay a slightly higher markup on the (hopefully) increased volume of less expensive brands in order to more fully fund our current assistance to SNAP recipients and to institute an ongoing food drive for CHIPS. We're not "just" a grocery store. We're a beloved Brooklyn institution that needs to see our Mission Statement become an Action Statement in what are sure to be hard times ahead.

In cooperation,

Carol Wald

A DILEMMA IN THE BREAD SECTION

Dear Coop members:

This is a difficult conundrum that I believe members and Coop buyers should consider:

- Dave's Killer Bread is owned by Flowers Foods.

- Flowers Foods, through their PAC and individual contributions, sent 95% of donation funds during the 2024 election cycle to Republicans and Marco Rubio's PAC "Reclaim America," according to OpenSecrets.org.

- Dave's Bread that the Coop sells is both organic and, in our family, considered tasty.

- Dave's Bread discusses their program called "Second Chance Employment." They hire regardless of criminal history.

Should we, as individuals, continue to support Dave's Bread by buying their products as they do good work? Or should we, as individuals, stop buying it because the money goes to some fairly despicable candidates that do not reflect the values my family holds? I am not advocating for yet another boycott, but perhaps members can choose another bread option, if the Coop carries one, or the Coop can carry another fresh organic bread. Then people can "vote" when they make their selection.

In Cooperation,

Stewart Pravda and Cathy Monblatt

SUPPORTING LOW-INCOME MEMBERS IN OUR COMMUNITY

Fellow members,

Perhaps you saw a Coop Instagram post (November 1, 2025) about donating money to a SNAP fund for those currently eligible for the federal Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program. The post went up soon after Trump paused SNAP payments. News about SNAP changed daily, with states and the federal government arguing back and forth about whether or not SNAP would and could be funded.

SNAP replaced paper food stamps. Recipients' monthly benefits are electronically loaded on cards. In a pause, no funds are added. To be eligible for SNAP, a single person cannot earn more than \$2,608 gross per month, and a family of four, not more than \$5,358. Higher-income Coop members may not be able to imagine what it would be like to live on so little in New York City.

In this season of bounty and lavish tables and frenzied shopping, let's take time to think about what it is like to live with so much less. Let's also consider that people who earn even a tiny bit more than the cut-off don't get food assistance. If, as seems likely, Affordable Care Act health insurance subsidies end, many more New Yorkers will struggle to buy food, pay rent and stay healthy.

If you saw the Instagram request for donations, found the QR code at checkout and donated, thank you. I truly appreciate Coop staff and members who quickly put this program into action. I hope we can build on it, creating an enduring structure that does not depend on individual generosity. We can consider sliding scale mark-ups (with an option to pay more), making more members eligible for a lower markup, and offering more bulk and inexpensive products and fewer luxury goods. Together, we can do more.

In Cooperation,

Alyce Barr

LETTER OF GRATITUDE TO ALL COOP MEMBERS

Dear Park Slope Food Coop Members,

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all of you who generously contributed to the SNAP Assist program. Your willingness to share and to think of others reflects

the true spirit of community and compassion that makes the Coop so special.

When I read the message about your donations, I felt deeply moved. It is heartwarming to know that in a world often marked by hurry and hardship, there are people who still pause to care—who see the quiet struggles of others and respond with kindness. Your support makes it possible for people who rely on SNAP benefits to shop for healthy food with dignity and relief, especially during times when every dollar matters.

Your generosity is more than financial help. It is a gesture of solidarity, empathy and hope. It reminds us that the Coop is not just a place to buy food, but a living example of what can happen when people choose to stand together.

With sincere respect, appreciation and gratitude,

Olga Netchkassova

FOOD JUSTICE IS LOCAL AND GLOBAL

Dear Coop,

During the recent government shutdown, the SNAP benefits crisis focused my attention on local food needs as never before. (Not that I should have needed the wakeup call.) A recent news article reveals that a government model known as the Thrifty Food Plan requires SNAP recipients to survive on about \$6.30 per person per day. This reminded me that in 2008, long before the current horrors in Gaza, Israel “drew up a document calculating the minimum caloric intake necessary for Palestinians to avoid malnutrition so Israel could limit the amount of foodstuffs allowed into Gaza without causing outright starvation.” Despite obvious differences, both the Thrifty Food Plan and “putting Gaza on a diet” are policy tools that seem designed to keep large num-

bers of vulnerable people scrambling for bare survival.

In the face of such cruelty, how can we defend everyone's basic right to good nutrition? The fact that our Coop's mission links food with justice issues makes us a natural hub for action on this front. We already partner with CHIPS to help meet local needs. Individual members are doing amazing work, as documented in the November 18 *Gazette* article about Lewanika Senghor, whose organization the Village House Pantry, provides food to Brooklynites who might otherwise go without.

These are inspiring efforts, but more is clearly required. By finding creative ways to make better use of the PSFC's extensive resources, we can become leaders in addressing this massive and growing problem in our own neighborhood.

When it comes to Palestine, we have much farther to go. By continuing to sell goods from the country that has been found by numerous experts to have imposed a hideous famine on Gaza—in defiance of international law—we remain complicit with Israel's behavior. In the name of food justice and basic humanity, we must make a collective decision to boycott Israeli products.

In cooperation,

Jan Clausen

PLEASE REQUEST MORE PALESTINIAN PRODUCTS AT THE COOP

Dear Coop Members,

The holiday season has officially begun, which brings even more joy and chaos to the Coop as many of us fill our carts with a delicious variety of treats and ingredients for holiday favorites like pecan pie, eggnog and latkes. While walking through the buzz-

ing aisles of the Coop, I feel blessed by abundance. At the same time, I'm reminded that in Palestine, this holiday season will be filled with tremendous pain and suffering for so many who have lost their homes, friends, families and symbols of normalcy that represent sacred memories.

It has been over two years since Gaza began to experience what human rights organizations have called, and people of conscience all over the world know to be, a genocide. The call for a Free Palestine remains more relevant than ever. Even in the midst of unspeakable cruelty, there are Palestinian people calling on the world to stand in solidarity. And while we organize a boycott of Israeli products, it is imperative that we support the many farmers, craftspeople and writers (to name a few) who call Palestine home. We can do that right here at the Coop by stocking our shelves with olive oil, hummus, soap and tahini made by Palestinians.

Research by Park Slope Food Coop Members for Palestine has identified several of those businesses. Their incredible products should be on our shelves:

- Huwa Premium Olive Oil
- Al'Ard Palestinian olive oil, tahini, za'atar, and more
- Nabulsi olive oil soap
- Palestinian Soap Cooperative olive oil soap
- *The Gaza Kitchen* cookbook

Buying products from Palestinian-owned businesses is a small yet powerful way to show up for Palestine. If you're curious about trying these products too, you can request these products at foodcoop.com, navigating to Food > Product Suggestion.

In solidarity,

DON'T SAY TRANSPARENCY UNLESS YOU MEAN IT

To the editor:

I have now lost track of the number of times I have called for the General Coordinators to disclose the purported legal opinion that validates the end of member governance of the Coop. The response from the General Manager (hereinafter “the GCs’ Response”) to my demand in the November 18 edition of the *Linewaiters’ Gazette* does not address anything I’ve said. It repeats what we have been told previously, which I paraphrase as: (1) the General Coordinators sought legal counsel after the April 29 monthly meeting, (2) experienced legal counsel (a) validated what I believe can only reasonably be described as the usurpation of the Coop’s governance system by an activist faction and its representatives on the board, and (b) determined that implementation of hybrid meetings does not require a bylaw amendment, notwithstanding Article VI, paragraph 4 of the bylaws, and (3) confidentiality requires that the General Coordinators prevent the membership from seeing how the unnamed attorneys reached those conclusions.

However, the response contains some new propositions, such as:

1. Contradictorily, there is no legal opinion. There was just a discussion that is part of an “ongoing and broader dialogue about the Coop’s governance practices and legal compliance.”
2. The GCs’ goals include ensuring that all perspectives and member concerns are represented. I see no indication of an intent to represent members who want the rule of law to mean something.

3. The GCs' goals include "sound, transparent decision-making." I cannot fathom what that means. The conduct of the GCs is the opposite of transparent.

If they support transparency in decision-making, they will disclose whatever writing shows the basis for validating the conduct of the board on April 29 and for concluding that no bylaw amendment is necessary to implement hybrid voting.

Sincerely,

Noah Potter

TIME TO MOVE ON

Dear Coop members:

Folks, I continue to see back and forth over Palestine, and machinations to get things on the ballot about a boycott of Israel. At the same time there is a large group of people who feel the boycott idea to be unfairly and prejudicially applied to Israel. I think it is time to take this issue off the agenda. It arguably should have never been put on the Food Coop agenda to begin with, but it's clearly not going to happen without a tremendous amount of damage to the Coop. For those who don't like Israel, there is a way to make a statement: Don't buy their products. There is no justification for making everybody else in the Coop live by your positions when you and they can individually make their own choices.

Sincerely,

David Sher

FEAR FOR OUR FUTURE

Dear Fellow Members:

Fifteen years of Coop membership have saved my family thousands of dollars in food costs. In many respects, we can all thank each other for that. But if a fellow member retires after founding and serving the Coop for more than 50 years, I think throwing a celebration in appreciation of that member's essential work is utterly appropriate, and I certainly don't begrudge an earmark of less than \$2 per member to offer thanks, particularly for an event to which all members were invited and those who attended really enjoyed. So, I was dismayed when this expenditure, negligible compared to decades of member savings, was derided at October's General Meeting.

Maybe such derision, levied by members who don't let their scorn of the Coop's founder stop them from benefiting from what he built, is exactly why many fellow members are so worried about the Coop's future. In a recent *Gazette* edition, the Coop's long-serving board secretary tendered her resignation and suspended her membership. Perhaps to some, a loss this seismic is a minor snag along the road to advancing one particular agenda item. Some issues are just that important. To me, the Coop's top imperative is cooperation, regardless of viewpoint. Driving someone as thoughtful and devoted as Elizabeth Tobier away is antithetical to cooperation. As is selective empathy.

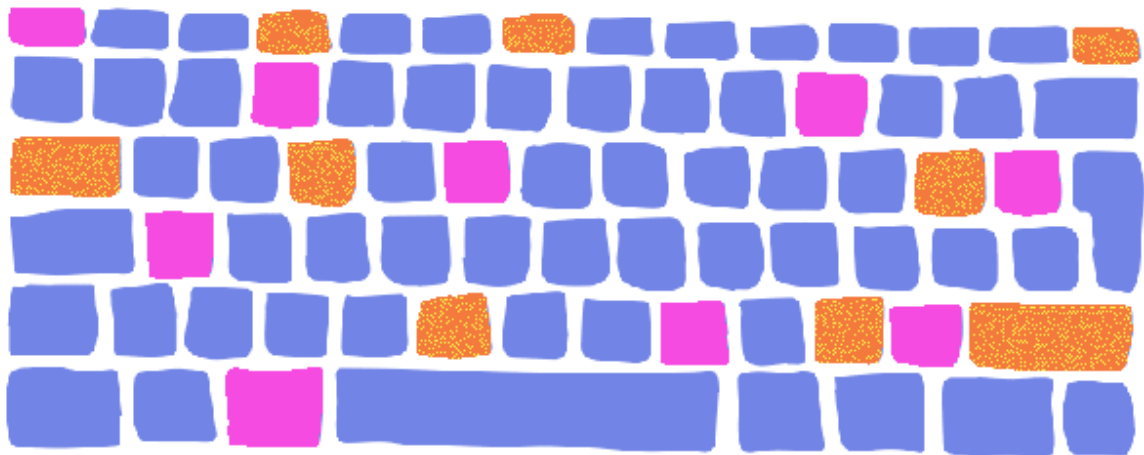
Pain is everywhere, and I used to think we all understood that. Is it recoverable?

Brian Shuman

NOVEMBER 18, 2025

March 24, 2026

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



CONGRATULATIONS COOP RUNNERS

Dear Members,

Congratulations to Coop members who completed the New York City Marathon on Sunday, Nov. 2. The marathon travels through all five boroughs from its start in Staten Island to the finish in Central Park, passing nearly right by the Coop on its route in Brooklyn along Fourth Ave. On Marathon Sunday, the whole city embraces the spirit of generosity, cheerfulness and bonhomie that I hope we all bring to our community year-round. I wish you all a speedy recovery, and I do believe we carry epsom salt in aisle four to help you along!

Barry Leybovich

FOOD COOP PRODUCT REVIEW

Dear Gazette and PSFC,

I think it would be highly useful for Coop members if the *Gazette* had a product review section with reviews provided by members. I have recommendations, good and bad, that I'd like to share, and would like to hear others' recommendations as well. It would also make members aware of products they didn't even know we sold—like cat-butt magnets or drying racks for plastic bags. Thanks!

Sincerely,
Michael Katz

DISCLOSE THE LEGAL OPINION NOW—"CONFIDENTIALITY" IS NOT A VALID EXCUSE

Dear Coop members:

The topic of the alleged legal opinion (a) stating that hybrid meetings can be implemented without amending the bylaws and (b) validating the practice of allowing the board to vote on matters that do not appear before it as member-initiated agenda items has been an ongoing topic of discussion. (See voluntary article, June 24, 2025, and letters to the editor and General Coordinator responses on Aug. 26 and Oct. 28, 2025.)

The General Coordinators have stated that the legal opinion is not in writing. On the basis of 20 years in commercial litigation in which I reviewed and drafted legal opinion letters, I say that that proposition is literally incredible. It calls into question (a) what question the GCs presented to the unidentified attorney(s) who rendered an opinion and (b) whether the attorney(s) examined the governing documents of the Coop and conducted an evaluation of the events of April and June 2025 in the context of New York law. The decision to change Coop practice on the magnitude of what is happening without a proper legal opinion is plausibly a breach of fiduciary duty.

In the Aug. 26 issue of the *Linewaiters' Gazette* I called for disclosure of the fabled legal opinion. GC Joe Szladek responded there that the opinion is confidential. That response is not valid. No law is stopping management from disclosing to the membership whatever shred of writing shows the legal reasoning—which they should do for an opinion that supposedly legitimizes the end of the Coop's historical governance structure and calls into question whether the Coop's bylaws and guidelines mean anything. Even if the legal opinion were confidential, nothing prevents management from making a limited waiver of confidentiality with whatever redactions are necessary.

Disclose the opinion now.

Sincerely,
Noah Potter

Editors Note:

Noah sent a version of this letter to the LWG on Aug. 29, 2025, for inclusion in the Sept. 16, 2025 issue of the LWG, though it was not published. Noah intended to deliver a version of the letter to the Chair Committee at the Sept. 30 meeting but he was sick that night and, at his request, a fellow member delivered the letter to the Chair Committee to be read (in accordance with the meeting rules). The Chair Committee did not read the revised letter due to his absence. The report on the meeting in the LWG noted a comment during the meeting that he should submit the letter to the LWG.

General Manager Response to Noah Potter's Letter

Dear Coop Members,

Following the April 29 Board meeting, the General Coordinators sought legal guidance from attorneys with extensive experience in cooperative governance. This was not a request for a single, formal legal “opinion,” but part of an ongoing and broader dialogue about the Coop’s governance practices and legal compliance. We have consulted these attorneys numerous times to clarify questions of authority, process and best practices under cooperative law.

We approach these consultations thoughtfully and thoroughly—asking questions from multiple angles to test the consistency and reliability of the attorneys’ guidance. Our goal is to ensure that all perspectives and member concerns are represented in how we frame our inquiries, and that the resulting advice supports sound, transparent decision-making.

Based on advice from the Coop’s governance attorneys, and as previously shared with members:

- The Board has the authority under the bylaws to take the action it did on April 29.
- A bylaw amendment is not required to allow hybrid General Meetings.

Maintaining confidentiality in communications with legal counsel is both standard and essential. This confidentiality protects the Coop's ability to seek candid, independent advice and to meet its fiduciary responsibilities to the membership. While we share the conclusions of our legal consultations when they directly affect Coop operations or members—as we have done here—the underlying attorney-client communications are privileged and not disclosed. This approach is consistent with standard practices across cooperatives, nonprofits and other member-owned organizations.

Respectfully,
Joe Szladek
General Manager

I MET WITH A SAILOR FROM THE GLOBAL SUMUD FLOTILLA

Dear members,

On Friday, Oct. 10, 2025, at my local coffee shop in Gowanus, I met with a sailor from the Global Sumud Flotilla, an international civil-society maritime initiative aimed at challenging the Israeli blockade of Gaza. This person across the table from me shared that they were only a few days removed from having been taken from international waters at gunpoint by Israeli forces while attempting to deliver humanitarian aid to Palestinians, a mission they described as a moral and legal obligation under the Genocide Convention.

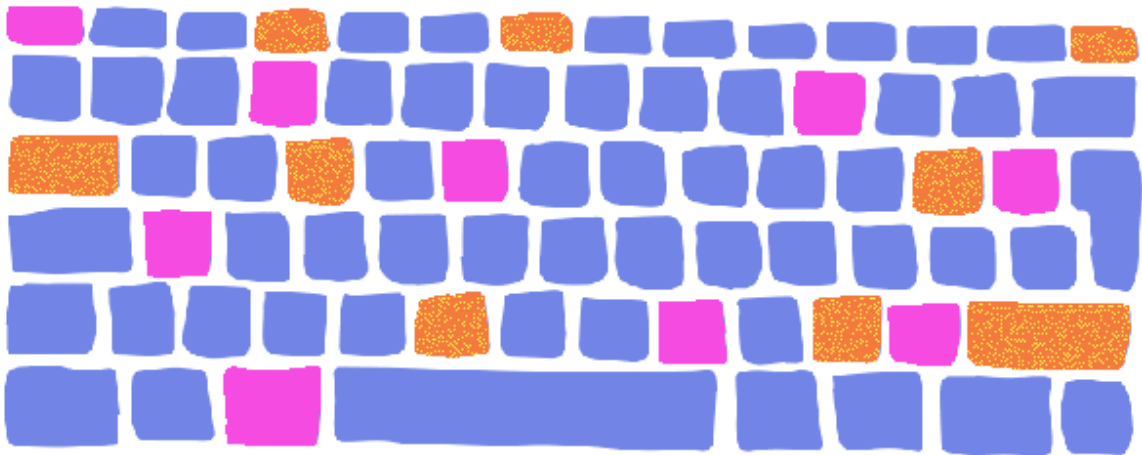
I was struck by this person's bravery and could not help but reflect on the inertia of our cooperative over the last two years to not even table a vote for the boycott of Israeli goods. Have we become so numb that we fail to recognize the humanity of Palestinians? A better Coop and world are possible, just as the many boats sailing toward Gaza have inspired so many to believe.

Sincerely,
Damien Neva

OCTOBER 28, 2025

March 24, 2026

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 hy-

brid 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

OCTOBER 7, 2025

March 24, 2026

Letters to the Editor



HYBRID MEETINGS ARE COOPERATIVE JUSTICE

Dear Coop community,

As someone who works to make technology more accessible for people with disabilities—many of whom are too often excluded from participating fully in daily life—I’ve been heartened to see the Board move forward with establishing hybrid meetings.

The truth is, much of our world is designed with the assumption that everyone can participate in the same way. But we know that’s not the case. Hybrid access gives us the chance, right here in our Coop, to help level that playing field. It’s a concrete step toward inclusion, making sure that more members are able to join in one of the best parts of living in our great city: the democratic process of cooperative governance.

In a time when disability rights are being challenged across the country, it is especially meaningful to see our Coop taking a different path—one that centers equity, care, and community. Hybrid meetings are not just about technology; they’re about affirming our cooperative values and ensuring that no one is left out.

I encourage the Board to continue leading in this direction. It’s an opportunity to live out the spirit of cooperation we all value and to strengthen our community by making it more welcoming to everyone.

In solidarity,

Matthew Bambach

PEACHES

Dear Coop members:

In the Sept. 16, 2025, letters to the editor, there is a letter by a member who had peaches that “were not very good.” I would like to reply that this season, I had amazing, delicious, juicy local IPM yellow peaches almost every time. I let the peaches sit

out a day or two to soften and ripen. I was sorry when I shopped last week that there were no longer any local IPM yellow peaches. I look forward to them next season.

Sincerely,

Julie Gabriel

IN SUPPORT OF HYBRID MEETINGS

Dear Coop community:

I've heard that the Coop Board is considering hybrid meetings. I'm writing to fully support hybrid meetings so those members who wish to attend in person may do so, and those many more (busy parents, disabled, crowd-avoidant folks) who may wish to attend online may also do so.

Approving hybrid meetings and hybrid voting strikes me as a logical, rational move to include as many members as possible.

Kind regards,

Daniel Millman

Member since 2014

YES TO HYBRID MEETINGS

To the editor,

I have been a Coop member for the last 11 years, since moving back to New York City from California. As much as I would like to attend every meeting, it is just not possible for me. I am very interested in what happens at the Coop and am completely in favor of hybrid meetings. As the saying goes, no one is smarter than all of us—hybrid meetings give all members an opportunity to be part of the discussion and to vote on the many important issues that are discussed. I urge the Board to approve hybrid meetings so we can move on and start working together for the benefit of all members.

In Cooperation,

Joy Millman

IN SUPPORT OF HYBRID MEETINGS

Dear Gazette:

I am writing to support the PSFC Board in implementing hybrid general membership meetings for our beloved Coop. Participating in our Coop's democracy should not be hindered by an inability to show up to a physical space (because of Covid concern, childcare needs, or myriad other reasons). The recent vote showed that a large majority of the members who voted support hybrid meetings. Thank you in advance, PSFC Board, for making this a reality.

Sincerely,

Steve Quester

BOARD VOTE TO ENACT HYBRID MEETINGS

To the editor,

I'm relieved to hear that the Coop board will likely hold a vote on hybrid meetings soon and that it is expected to pass. Those members who voted have already made it clear that the majority prefers more accessibility to decision making. We want the wider membership to be able to participate fully, only fair given that we're all owners.

I'm confident that the Coop can (in this instance anyway) show the world what democracy, inclusiveness and tolerance look like in an intolerant time.

Best regards,

Sierra Smigelsky

PRESERVING A COOPERATIVE COMMUNITY

Dear Coop community:

Did a lack of decorum at August's Food Coop General Meeting signal tacit approval to blacklist members? A member was allowed to belittle and vilify fellow members who signed the petition opposing the Israeli government's escalating mistreatment of the Palestinian populations.

Singling out a member by name and publicly accusing them of being unfit for participation in Coop activities because they signed a petition smells a bit like McCarthyism, no?

What cold wind is blowing through what was formed as a socially democratic institution?

We, all members, are responsible for preserving this very special cooperative community.

Sincerely,

Pam Thomas

HYBRID MEETING FORMAT!

Hello Coop Members!

I am soooooo excited and in complete support of our Board for passing this crucial ability for all of us to be able to attend and make important decisions about our beloved Coop. Thank you to all who made this happen! It is so hard to attend monthly meetings and now we can all do this from the comfort and ease of our electronic devices from anywhere in the world! I am currently overseas tending to sick elderly parents and do not know when I'll be able to return. And being able to attend a meeting virtually is the only way I can be a vital part of our community. So another big thanks!

Sincerely,

Una Weiss

EVERYBODY GETS A VOTE!

Dear Coop members:

Having been away for some months, I am now gratified to learn that there will, in fact, be a way for ALL of us to vote on Coop matters after all! The Board will meet and discuss the matter of hybrid voting, that is to say, voting both in person and from home, in the near future. Moms and/or dads in need of child care or elder care, those who are disabled and can't get to the park, those who are immunocompromised and risk illness and even death as did my own (and only) brother last June from exposure to Covid, those for whom a walk at night through a City park is a little too daunting... we ALL will get to vote on all Coop matters from the comfort of home or office if we prefer not going to meet in person. Our Board will take the information gained by previous discussions, forums and votes and will make it happen!! Finally!!

The crisis of governance with which we've been confronted will be resolved democratically, and by all Coop members, in the near future. What a relief! The Coop gets more democratic while the rest of the country gives in to bullies. That's why I love our Coop. We can undergo difficult change and the bullies don't win. This gives me hope for us all.

Sincerely,

Carol Wald

SEPTEMBER 16, 2025

March 24, 2026

Letters to the Editor



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

ONLINE ASYNCHRONOUS DISCUSSION AND VOTING (THANKS + UPDATE)

To the editors,

I wanted to thank Membership Coordinator Jason Weiner for shouting out my proposal during his July GM presentation!

As a quick overview, my proposal (agenda item #915) is to make the decision-making

process at the Coop more convenient and accessible by:

1. Setting up an online forum to discuss agenda items ahead of GMs.
2. Having an “early voting” option for agenda items.

For full details of the proposal and a feedback form, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/ps-fc-online-forum>

A member who found my proposal through Jason’s presentation suggested setting up a group to collaborate on the proposal, so I’ve created a Discord server for folks interested in getting involved. I will send an invite link for the server to those who indicate in the feedback form that they are interested in helping out.

Thanks again to Jason and to anyone who takes the time to consider my proposal!

*Sincerely,
Yejia Chen*

A More Democratic Coop Is Possible

Dear Coop members,

For those who don’t know, a fantastically thorough and well-researched proposal for online asynchronous discussion and voting (“async” for short) was recently submitted to the Agenda Committee. See Yejia’s letter above for an introduction!

Online asynchronous discussion is the only format that would give every member the opportunity to voice their opinion. Even hybrid discussions, despite increasing atten-

dance and voting, would still hit their time limit as most in-person ones do.

Async also enables deliberate, productive conversation between members, truly maximizes voter turnout and complements GMs regardless of their format.

Plus, async could be implemented without a bylaws amendment, by considering online votes to be mail ballots or advice for the next board meeting (these methods might require legal confirmation), or by having the board approve accepting online votes ahead of each upcoming meeting.

And async would be implemented after the Coop resolves the already (briefly) scheduled boycott items, so members can discuss it without fearing ulterior motives from its supporters or opponents.

Despite the recent conflict in the Coop, I don't think it's controversial to say that serious flaws in our decision-making procedures have been exposed (e.g., board norms, venue scheduling). I hope members on both sides of the boycott and hybrid issues will read the proposal and submit their feedback (positive or negative) and thoughts on Coop democracy.

With member input and support, I'm optimistic async could translate this all-time high interest in Coop governance into a more engaged, collaborative membership. If you want to test it out for yourself, Yejia has set up a sort of async "free sample" by creating the online comment board and Discord group—check it out and bring your big ideas for the Coop!

*In cooperation,
Tyler Yandrofski*

The Newly Minted Plastics Reduction Committee Is Ready To Go

Dear Coop Community,

We, the members of the new Plastics Reduction Committee, wish to thank everyone who turned out for the General Meeting on July 29 and voted overwhelmingly to support our proposal for formal committee status. For those who couldn't make it, we invite you to find out what all the excitement is about through our Committee Fact Sheet, available for your perusal here.

Those of you whose memories do not scroll back as far as the 1950s—most of you, right?—might find it difficult to imagine a world without plastic. We know that this work is going to take a lot of imagination, creative thinking and engaging with the Coop community.

We're excited to roll up our sleeves and get to work. It is our goal to improve options at the Coop to meet the needs of members who are concerned about the health and environmental impacts of plastic food packaging. We also aim to educate those who want to learn more about these impacts. We'll work toward these goals while being guided by the collaborative, affordable and healthy spirit of the Coop.

We welcome your participation through feedback. You may reach us at reduce.plastic.psfc@gmail.com.

With hopes for a healthier, happier world for you and your children,

The Plastics Reduction Committee

Lesley Broder, Ricki Jaeckel, Zoë Kaplan-Lewis, Jessica Roff, Anne Schoeneborn, Abigail Shelton, Matthew Spencer, Lois Wilcken

Toward a More Inclusive Coop

Coop Community,

When the Equity, Access and Community Committee surveyed members, I reflected on how, during my 47-year membership, our Coop had become increasingly whiter and wealthier. So much has changed about the nature of what we sell... more and more luxury goods, no self-bagged bulk, fewer items that would appeal to those with limited income.

What would it take to make the Coop more diverse, more welcoming to people who cannot afford much of what we sell or might feel uncomfortable in our current store? What would it take to get the word out to potential members who don't know someone already in the Coop, who don't travel in similar social circles, who don't speak English as a first language?

We could contact community organizations, like CHiPS, the Center for Family Life and the Red Hook Initiative, asking for their input on how to do better outreach to their communities. We could schedule targeted info sessions and open houses.

We also need to ask ourselves, what would I be willing to do to make this Coop more inclusive, more reflective of a broader cross-section of New Yorkers? Would I be willing to pay a larger markup so that people who need financial support could pay a lower markup? Would I be willing to see fewer luxury products on the shelves and more inexpensive basics? What could I do to make people from other communities feel welcome?

There are so many ways we could evaluate our Coop: How many cheeses do we sell? How many craft beers? How many products in plastic clamshells? Who can afford to be a member? How do we care for the most vulnerable among us?

How do we open our door in a way that lets more people in?

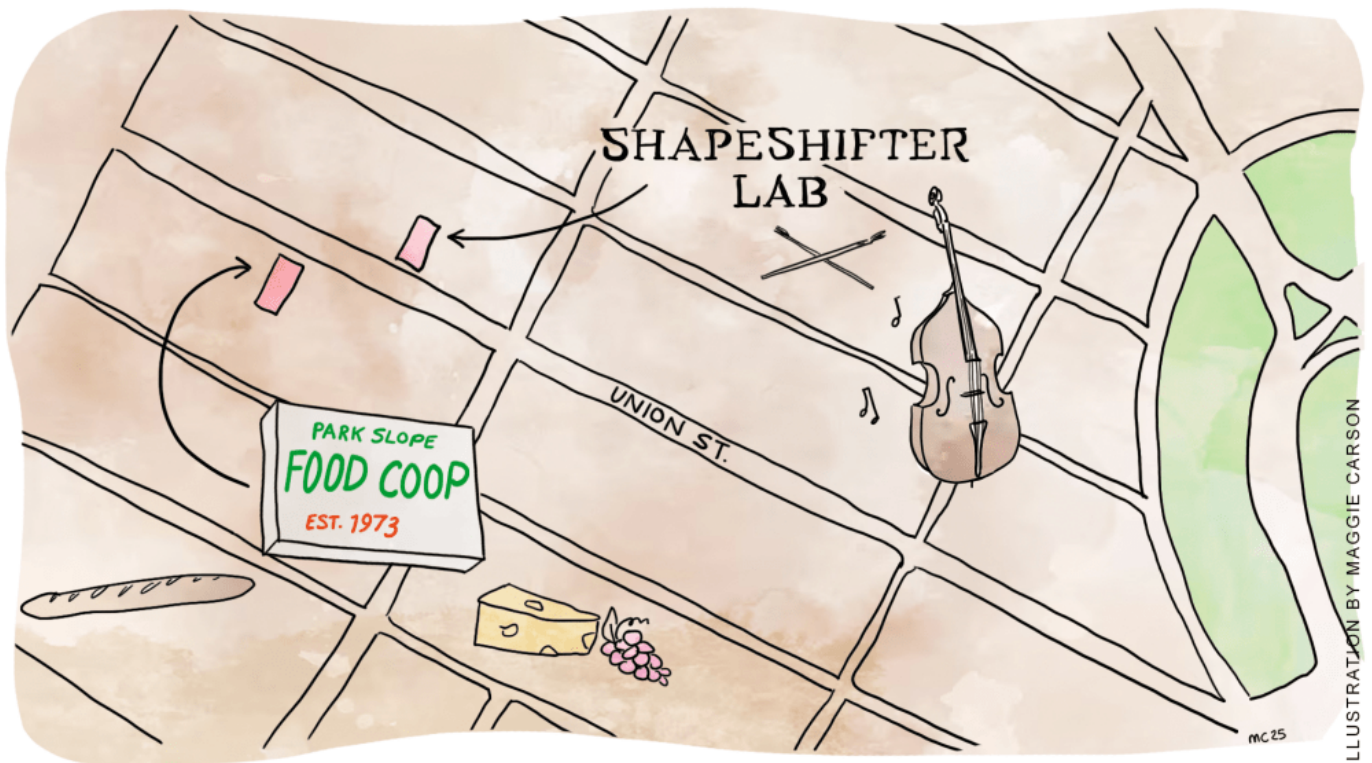
We have so much; let's share.

Sincerely,
Alyce Barr

ShapeShifter Offers Art, Jazz and Community — Right Across the Street

To the editor:

How many members of our Coop know what a treasure of artistic value is just across the street at 837 Union Street? It's called ShapeShifter Lab "Brooklyn Music and Arts Space." I admit I'm writing this with a personal motive. Right now and until the end of October, there's an art exhibition sponsored by Good Neighbors of Park Slope (GNPS), an organization that many PSFC members are a part of.



GNPS is an all-volunteer, nonprofit, aging-in-place organization open to residents of Park Slope and surrounding areas who are age 55 and over. Our goal is to create a network of members to make life in our neighborhood easier and more fulfilling, while

maintaining our autonomy and quality of life in our homes.

Back to the art exhibition at ShapeShifter, there are several exhibitors who are PSFC members. I won't name them. You have to go see their art! Hours at ShapeShifter are quite "shifty." When there's an event, they are open. When it's open, the moment you walk in, and even before you open the front door, you will see two amazing paintings staring you in the face. They are by our mom, Florence Siegel (1921-2014). Although she never got to be a member of PSFC or GNPS, she did live in my South Slope house for her last three years.

So if you like jazz and/or art and want to support local artists, please go check out ShapeShifter and the current art exhibition!

Stop in one hour before each event on their schedule to take a look to find times to go.

Martha Siegel and Loren Siegel

Your Vote Is Meaningless Here

Dear Members,

Welcome back from summer vacation. Coop governance is cracking.

The August General Meeting (GM) resulted in the Board of Directors unilaterally ignoring membership input and announcing their intention to fast-track hybrid meetings. Remember, we had a Coop-wide referendum defeating the idea.

So now your vote means nothing.

How was this allowed to happen? At the April 2025 GM, the BDS faction arranged for the hostile takeover of the GM. The BDS-friendly Board then introduced a proposal to hold said rejected referendum. This opened the door to your now effective irrelevance.

Most of our Board supports boycotting Israel, and their representative global BDS movement openly support Hamas, who identify kidnapping and rape as resistance. Hybrid voting is their stated method to achieve a boycott that the majority of our members don't want. Your vote, and our cooperative model of governance, is the price you pay. The fear of speaking out against a divisive faction that in effect supports a genocidal fascist terrorist group is palpable. It is indifference, it is cowardice, and one day too late you will have always been against it.

In protest I retract my extra Covid-era investment. I call upon membership to follow my lead and join me at coop4unity@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Jesse Rosenfeld

On Hybrid Meetings and the BDS Debate

Dear Coop members,

The Board of Directors has again acted outside our Coop's longstanding tradition of basing decisions on member votes. Our *Guide to the General and Annual Meeting* states clearly that the Board votes only on issues already decided by the membership.

The current issue is hybrid meetings, and the push is complicated by attempts from Members for Palestine (M4P) to link the Coop to the BDS Movement. Whatever one's

views on technology or accessibility, we must not confuse a governance question with an outside political campaign.

We must disentangle hybrid meetings from BDS.

BDS is not a neutral, nonviolent human rights initiative. Its leadership praised the October 7 attacks and remains tied to groups that promote violence. It does not improve life for Palestinians and offers no vision of peaceful coexistence. Instead, it seeks to delegitimize Israel and normalizes hostility toward Jews.

In June's record-turnout election, members decisively rejected the two identified pro-BDS candidates. M4P has failed to significantly increase the number of votes in their favor from 2024, demonstrating limited support. Coop members voted to remain focused on food, affordability and cooperative values. The membership has rejected BDS.

Hybrid meetings deserve careful study on their own terms. Committees could explore feasibility, technology and costs, then report back for a membership vote. That process respects our governance model. But the Coop should firmly close the door on BDS resolutions. Continuing to entertain them only wastes energy and divides members.

The General Coordinators, Chair Committee and Agenda Committee are responsible for stewarding the Coop. They have every reason to declare, "The Coop will no longer entertain motions related to BDS." If they won't, the only explanation is a lack of desire or a lack of will.

Sincerely,

Barbara Mazor

Remember What Never Again Truly Means

Dear Coop Members:

The PSFC I joined nearly 30 years ago was one I've always believed in. The sense of diversity, equity and inclusion defines our solidarity. Yes, DEI is a very good thing, unlike the lies and horror Nazis like Trump are pushing.

But in my entire life, I have always believed that those of us who value these principles share a common bond in the rejection of genocide. Community is always fraught with internal disagreements and dissension. But I draw the line at those who feel, and often quite belligerently, that Israel has a right to commit war crimes, ethnic cleansing and—as Jewish scholars and Shoah survivors have written, among others—quite clearly genocide by the far right-wing Likud government.

There is NEVER a justification for genocide. People who are blasé or supportive of this should be ashamed to walk into the Coop. I think they should reconsider their views and if they are unable to recognize that butchering and maiming tens of thousands of babies, children, aid workers, journalists, families and starving them to death is wrong, perhaps they should not be a part of the PSFC community. I invite them to shop elsewhere and end their membership.

To those struggling and open to changing their views, painful as it may be—I respect and honor this profound moment. Remember what Never Again truly means.

For we ALL, living in the U.S. must face the struggle of a nation built on slavery, racism and genocide. Our world hurtles down the highway of self-inflicted extinction if we do not end global heating. Middle East and Gaza gas fields motivate much of “Western” support of genocide in order to secure yet more foul fuels with which to burn our only planet to death.

*Sincerely,
George Carter*

Toward a More Democratic Future Coop

Fellow Members,

The last Board election is behind us, we have a new General Coordinator and democratic practices are challenged everywhere we look. We have a unique opportunity to reflect on the recent Board election and strengthen our democracy here in our coop. One concrete step we can take: honestly repair harm done when former GC Joe Holtz sent a personal email to the full membership, taking advantage of his access to the Coop email list and directing members' votes in the upcoming election.

The Personnel Committee, General Meeting and Board of Directors need to take action to prevent future abuse of the email list and substantially biased GC writing in the *Gazette*. They can ensure that, as a retired GC, Joe Holtz is entitled only to write individual letters to the *Gazette*, like any other member, and not those that express any favored position of power. Though Joe is now retired, he should be informed in writing that his past actions were inappropriate and unacceptable.

Coop Management and the Personnel Committee owe a public apology, in the *Gazette* (and in email), to Taylor Pate and Dan Kaminsky, who were vilified by Joe Holtz. They can acknowledge that it is likely that Joe's email impacted the election, and while we are not doing the election over, we must take steps to make sure nothing like this ever happens again.

*In cooperation and for democracy,
Kathy McCullagh*

Call for Grassroots Organizing While Working Towards Boycott

Dear Coop members:

I've just returned to Brooklyn from a year spent out of the country. Active in Palestine solidarity work before my departure, I came back to a sickening sense of déjà vu. Every day brings new Israeli atrocities in Gaza, atrocities that are fully underwritten by the U.S. government using our tax dollars. Meanwhile, even as manufactured famine rages, our Coop still hasn't made the decision to boycott Israeli products. In fact, despite a wildly successful petition campaign, we haven't even managed to take the basic democratic step of putting the issue to a vote.

As a long-time and proud Coop member, I feel both frustrated and ashamed, and I know these feelings are widely shared by other members. Is this really who we are as a Coop? What does it mean if we can't do the minimum to uphold our mission statement promise to avoid complicity in exploitative practices?

In the face of these sentiments, we should not give up, as I won't. This is the time for creative approaches. I call on my fellow members to join me to advocate for justice for Palestine in all the ways we can think of. Here are a few examples: talking to people about Palestine as we wait on the checkout line, publicizing which Israeli products are currently being sold so that shoppers can avoid them, speaking out against genocide at GM Open Forums, identifying explicitly as PSFC for Palestine at marches and protests, and building an alliance with the folks at Greene Hill Coop, which voted to join the BDS movement last year. Yes, we urgently need to enact an official boycott—but while we work to make that happen, let's be working toward a sturdy grassroots culture of Palestine solidarity at the PSFC.

Sincerely,

Kumru Toktamis

Member since 1993

Let's Organize to Rid Our Coop of the Political Operatives

To the Members:

Our board is now acting independently, and their strategies to re-create our Coop and interfere with our structure and the staff is in full swing. They think they are justified in their actions and because they are legally our board, the legal architecture gives them an advantage.

Every year there is a board election and board members' terms are three years. I propose we organize with one another now so we can work to eventually rid our board of members with a political agenda.

If you are interested in doing this, please email me at PoliticsOut@proton.me.

*Sincerely,
Elizabeth Tobier*

Peaches

Dear Coop staff:

Can you please investigate and report on the situation with peaches this year at the Coop? They have not been very good. I thought it might be just my perception, but I have asked friends and everyone says they feel the peaches have been terrible this year. Why? Are we doing something different with buying or storing? Was it just a bad

year for peaches? What gives? I look forward to peach season all year. This year has been a disappointment.

Sincerely,

Aida Stoddard

Produce Buyer Cecelia Rembert responds with insights into the Peach Process and this year's crop: The current produce buying team at the Coop has been buying fruits and vegetables for the Coop since 2017, and our produce department overall has had very little turnover in this time. We are storing peaches the same way we always do: they are never refrigerated at the Coop, whether on the shopping floor or in the basement. We have been ordering from the same suppliers and growers, mostly. Our conventional peaches are generally Southern U.S. in the early season. In organic, we try to get Watsonia (fourth-generation family farm in South Carolina), and in conventional we try to get Big Smile (also a family-run commercial farm in South Carolina).

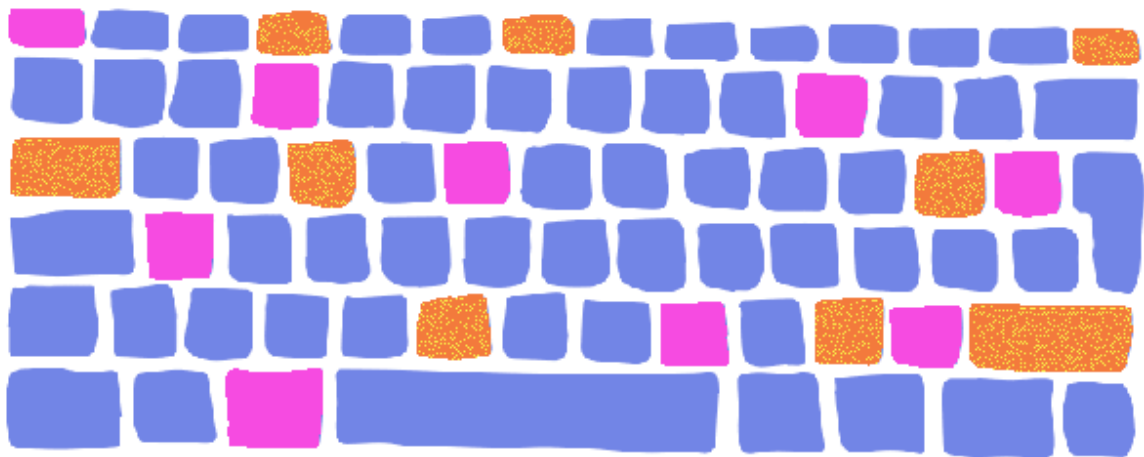
We did find both variations of South Carolina peaches to be inconsistent in quality; a good lot would be followed by one that was mealy. My research into the South Carolina peach season this year reports a lot of cool temperatures and rain in the early summer, which maybe impacted the harvest quality? We know that mealiness is generally a result of "chill damage" from refrigerating peaches at any point post-harvest—maybe it can also be caused by cool weather? It sometimes takes us a few days to fully assess how a current lot of peaches we have received is ripening, because they come in to us hard. We pivoted in and out of South Carolina peaches several times in the early summer, trying to catch different varieties and lots. As a result of the inconsistency, we pivoted earlier than usual out of conventional South Carolina peaches to New Jersey peaches (Fralinger's) as soon as they became available.

But, from mid-July onwards we have been selling local IPM yellow and white peaches from a network of local farms and we have found those mostly very good. And it was a wonderful nectarine season!

AUGUST 26, 2025

March 24, 2026

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



August 26, 2025

DISCLOSE ANY WRITING SHOWING THE LEGAL OPINION—NOW

Dear Coop members:

This letter responds in part to the voluntary article in the June 24 edition of the *Line-waiters' Gazette* criticizing the General Coordinators' recourse to attorneys for a legal opinion on the validity of the purported action by the board on April 29. I have one criticism of the GC's conduct: it was entirely appropriate for the GCs to seek a legal opinion, but an epic fail not to disclose the opinion itself. The severity of the conduct of the leaders of the BDS faction and their ally—based on magical thinking that making the Coop declare its allegiance to a fusion of the failed Arab boycott and Bolshevik anti-zionism disguised as a human rights movement will do anything but build Omar Barghouti's brand while damaging the Coop—entirely justifies legal fees. They have normalized the practice of directors' votes on items that are not on the agenda. I have litigated corporate control disputes for over 21 years as a commercial litigator, and the proposition that the board can vote on agenda items that would amend the bylaws without prior notice to the membership is literally incredible. Anyone who is concerned about the future of the Coop must see whatever writing exists so the membership can evaluate it.

The GCs reliance on an oral opinion—with no writing that can be examined or even placed in the Coop's records—is irresponsible. Further, unless the firm considers malpractice an acceptable practice, there must be a writing in the law firm's files showing the legal reasoning—an email from an associate to a partner or a memo to the file. If the GCs relied on an oral opinion, then they need to obtain and disclose—now—whatever writing the attorneys generated.

Sincerely,
Noah Potter

General Manager Response to Noah Potter's Letter:

Dear Coop Members,

During the General Meeting and Board meeting on April 29, the Board voted 3-2 to instruct the General Coordinators to issue a referendum ballot to amend the Coop's by-laws to allow for hybrid meetings. This decision was made without first seeking advice from the members through a vote at that evening's General Meeting.

The General Coordinators sought legal guidance, consulting with a law firm with deep experience in cooperative governance. The key conclusions of the General Coordinators were shared with all members in a message from then-General Manager Joe Holtz:

- The Board has the legal authority to take the actions it did on April 29.
- A bylaw amendment is not necessary to allow for hybrid General Meetings.

Our discussions with attorneys are confidential. This is standard practice for authorized representatives of cooperatives and similar organizations. We are committed to sharing our conclusions that directly impact Coop membership.

Respectfully,

Joe Szladek

General Manager

ANOTHER MEETING, ANOTHER RETURN TO THE MIDDLE EAST

Dear Coop members:

Another meeting where hybrid attendance as a way of back dooring an anti-Israel boy-

cott is rearing its ugly head. What would-be boycotters do not realize is that there will be severe legal repercussions to the Coop for their actions if they choose BDS. Creating a hostile environment is absolutely not legal and this venal movement clearly does that.

There is a growing movement at the state and federal level to stop this kind of thing, and it may well end in the permanent closure of the Coop, destroying community access to low-cost food.

Sincerely,
David Sher

THE COOP REMAINS UNGOVERNABLE

Hello Coop,

The Coop remains ungovernable.

At the April GM, a member uttered their filthy Jew-hate (“Jew” was used as a slur, not “Zionist”) and they were neither removed from the meeting, nor reported by the *Gazette*, nor removed from the Coop. I am not even allowed to name them as per *Gazette* restrictions. The DRC, the Chair Committee and the *Gazette* are all complicit in this cover up.

This is an embarrassment to the Coop as a whole. Why is someone who would be expelled immediately from any other organization still allowed to walk through the front door and pretend innocence? It’s inexplicable because no one has the guts to explain it. Not honestly, not without dodging, deflecting or victim-shaming.

I call for their permanent expulsion, and every moment nothing happens only adds

weight to our collective shame that no one is doing anything. Evil flourishes when good people like yourselves do exactly that: nothing.

Cooperation, right there in our name, is ignored. Our General Meetings are overrun by the most inhumane of participants. And our financial bottom line suffers for it, especially when members of conscience reflexively diminish their spending as protest. - Tolerating Jew-hate is the tip of the spear buried deep in our heart and exemplifies how we are failing to govern ourselves.

And people wonder why a Human Rights Commission complaint was filed against the Coop.

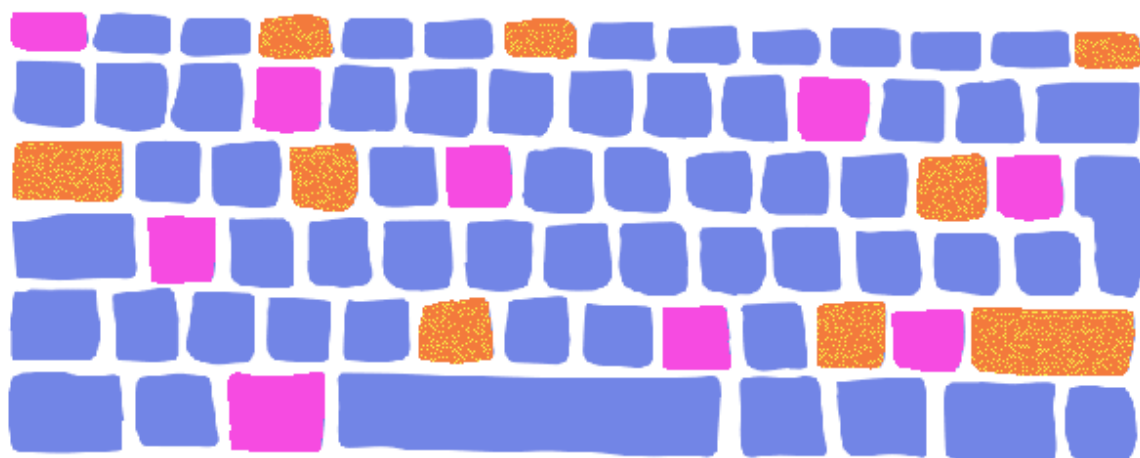
Sincerely,

Jesse Rosenfeld

AUGUST 5, 2025

March 24, 2026

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



YOU'RE INVITED: AUGUST GATHERING TO SUPPORT COOPERATIVE EDUCATION IN ALABAMA

Friends and fellow members,

My name is Carmen. While recent Coop contention has felt particularly high-stakes

and long-standing, members have always contested the terms of Coop self-governance. As a Coop kid, I began learning the skills and commitment necessary to facilitate collective decision-making. (Mostly, I learned to feed infants in childcare bagel-eighths to assuage them and to make sincere and short small talk with elementary school teachers. But worker-ownership is important too.) The Coop feels like a home and a possible future. I have strong feelings about the content of this and other conflicts, but I feel much more excited by the membership's investment in processes of worker ownership and conflict resolution.

Because of the Coop, I began studying worker ownership, learning popular education, and working with the Sand Mountain Cooperative Education Center in Alabama over a year ago. We use cooperative ownership to teach. We use education to build cooperative ownership. Groups of teachers, students, and workers gather to build popular education and worker ownership in Alabama. For more on the story and programs, please visit the website.

At 8 PM on August 9, a group of us will gather at Blockhill in South Slope. Come to learn, talk, and drink! Seriously.

Join us!

Excited to see you soon,

Carmen Lopez Villamil

MORE FREE EXPRESSION, JOY, AND FREE CLASSIFIED ADS

Dear Gazette and Coop Community,

How important are community and art to us?

I understand that having a robust community bulletin board in the stairwell is a fire hazard and cannot be returned to its past glory. I feel the loss to our community is large and nothing has been done about it. The Coop used to support our Coop-member-owned businesses in the stairwell and in the printed *Linewaiters' Gazette*. Can the digital *Gazette* please resume a robust and accessible classifieds section?

And can we go a step further in community engagement? I'd like to see us make space available for visual art at the Coop. A great opportunity is on the wall to the right of the exit, behind the cashiers. Presently, there's nothing on the brick besides a new "please don't scam EBT benefits" flyer in a plastic sleeve.

I hope we can offer available unadorned wall space to Coop artists in a fair, equitable and enriching way. Maybe seventeen artists can have a three-week showing each year. Randomly scheduled or first-come-first-served, simply let it schedule out for as long as necessary.

If we are here for health and wellness, then let's allow art to be an integral part of our communal and personal well-being. Let's share in how cleansing and inspiring art can be. Also, this would support our artists!

Finally, can we agree that beautification of our space should be the next step after everything is functional?

Our ship is in order, now please, let's have more free expression, joy and free classified ads.

In community, art, and peace, with best wishes and gratitude,

Wally Wallach

PSFC member since 2011

Editors' note: Members of the Gazette lament the loss of our stairwell bulletin board

as well and are indeed working on a digital Classifieds section.

COORDINATORS' REPORT IS AWESOME, NEEDS A HOME ONLINE

Dear Fellow Members:

General Coordinator Elinoar Astrinsky presented an awesome report at the June general meeting. We learned about the intricacies of keeping our refrigeration and cooling systems operational. Then Elinoar told us about the outstanding work by our buyers to keep the Coop supplied in the aftermath of the UNFI cyber-crash. Last, we heard about new staff members. It was great. I want more of it. Keeping the Coop going is so much more than just putting things on the shelves and working the checkouts. And it's really interesting, too.

It would be so wonderful if the coordinator's report could be on video and accessible online so anyone in the Coop could view it at any time. I think this could really boost engagement and feelings of ownership within the Coop community. I hope, if the GC's are amenable, we can get some members to look into the feasibility of doing this.

In Cooperation,

Barbara Mazor

WILL A BATHROOM CLEANER AND LIFTER BE 'AMERICA'S FAVORITE COUPLE'?

To the Cherished Editorial Team,

In the middle of the night, scrolling Instagram, I saw a contest/fundraiser hosted by *Variety* magazine and Jeff Goldblum for “America’s Favorite Couple.” The perfect click-bait for a sleepy romantic who loves talking about her partner and tries to donate regularly (time, clothes, blood, what have you). I enjoyed answering questions like “how did your love story begin” and “what’s your favorite memory” and fell asleep with a smile shortly thereafter. The next week, I found out we were finalists! I’ve never campaigned for anything, but campaigning for love and charity felt like a nice place to start. I designed a poster with a talented young artist that was an illustration of our first date and started sending out the page to friends to either give a free vote or donate to one of the charities for the chance to give a few more votes.

While at my lifting shift the following week, I mentioned the contest to my fellow members. Several of them said they wanted to vote for me as soon as they had reception again (outside of the basement) and that we should tell the *Gazette*! The contest runs through August and you can vote here. I’m not sure if this is a letter, or an announcement or just a note to another special human I haven’t met yet, in any case, thanks for reading.

Grateful for all that you do and to be a part of this incredible community with my partner, Michael Hernandez-Stern. The groceries are good too (especially the cheese!)

Warm regards,

Jewell Hernandez-Stern

THE COOP IS UNGOVERNABLE

Dear Members,

The Coop is ungovernable.

At the April GM, a member said, “We have not only this hybrid vote sabotaged by right wing Jewish extremists, but it’s happened in the past many times.” This filthy slur of “Jewish” was not blunted by “right-wing” or “extremists.”

And yet while proclaiming responsibility to run the GM “impartially” every meeting, the chair committee reacted spinelessly, diminishing Jew-hate to “name-calling” and letting the member continue. Standard business ethics across the US would result in immediate expulsion from the meeting and the organization, and I support full expulsion. But the DRC will not touch it, nor did the *Gazette* report on it. So I see all three committees as complicit in degrading safety for Jews at the Coop.

April’s GM culminated in BDS’s illegal takeover of the Coop’s general meeting by forcing through a referendum on hybrid voting, not for the sake of Palestinians but for what many see as supporting a global call for violence. Again, the chair committee did worse than nothing and simply surrendered their own authority. It should have been stopped by the board of directors, but, stocked with BDS-friendly members, they abandoned their responsibility to the membership at large.

What can you and I do? Contact management and protest with severely reduced shopping until management and committees uproot what Baila Olidort recently called “evil.” Regarding the June GM: While I applaud Joe Holtz’s stewardship, and his warning to the membership about a take-over of the board of directors by BDS’s undemocratic machinations, we cannot rely on last-minute surprises by management. BDS is cancerous to our Coop. It needs excision.

Jesse Rosenfeld

SHOULD ISRAEL BE BOYCOTTED?

Dear editor,

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has claimed that Iran is “months, maybe weeks” away from developing nuclear weapons. But Netanyahu has made this claim repeatedly for the last thirty years at least, as we’ve seen from a CNN montage of news clips circulating on the internet of him doing so.

Recall the pressure campaign in the runup to the disastrous 2003 invasion of Iraq, based on that same bogus narrative about weapons of mass destruction. Such allegations have been repeatedly used to justify our country’s many interventions, all in service to Israel—and of no material benefit to us. Such allegations justified the bombing destruction of Libya, which turned the nation with the highest standard of living in all of Africa into one now running slave markets. They justified funding a terrorist war against the state of Syria that finally resulted in that country’s destruction.

Israel is known to possess many nuclear weapons, albeit undeclared. And both the CIA and Mossad have found no evidence that Iran seeks nuclear weapons. Nonetheless, Israel initiated an unprovoked surprise bombing of Iran on June 13.

The basic plan of the Zionist project is to transform the Middle East to Israel’s liking. In 1948, Israel’s declaration of statehood necessitated the violent displacement of more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs into refugee status and triggered war, all for the purpose of ensuring a Jewish majority in a state with a substantial minority of non-Jewish Arabs.

A recent Pennsylvania State University poll reported in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz that 82 percent of Israelis wanted the Palestinian population of Gaza removed en masse, and that a stunning 47 percent would be comfortable with having them all killed.

If there was ever a country that needed to be boycotted, that country is Israel.

David Barouh

OPPOSING WAR CRIMES ISN'T ANTI-COOP

Dear Coop members:

PSFC Members for Palestine have been labeled anti-Coop outsiders. I'm 70, Jewish, Brooklyn-born and a 47-year Coop member, not an outsider. Neither are over 3,500 other members, horrified by Israel's genocidal apartheid government. We demand nothing more than respect and equal treatment from an organization we care deeply about.

For over a decade, a small group of pro-Israel members, currently called Coop4Unity, have worked ceaselessly to prevent a boycott of Israeli goods, blocking any effort toward the most peaceful vehicle for political and social change: economic boycott. They have sought support beyond our Coop, including from the NY Post and Bronx Congressman Ritchie Torres, who has taken \$1.5 million-plus in donations from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a lobby with huge financial influence in federal, state and local elections.

With tacit and overt support from GCs, led by former GM Joe Holtz, pro-Israel members disrupted meetings, and intimidated fellow members who advocate peaceful protest. A member of Coop4Unity filed a lawsuit against the Coop. Result: the Dispute Resolution Committee froze all cases related to Israel/Palestine, leaving unprotected members facing doxing and public harassment from Coop4Unity. Another Coop committee, the Diversity, Equity, and Access Committee, was also banned from work on all issues related to "the Middle East."

Coop4Unity's disproportionate power was evident in Holtz's huddling with them (e.g., April 29 GM) and his Coop-wide personal attack on Board candidates Taylor Pate and Dan Kaminsky, instructing members to vote against them. Joe Szladek, our new GM,

can bring to an end this era of unchecked, uncooperative and biased behavior.

Opposing war crimes isn't anti-Coop, just as demanding reproductive freedom isn't anti-life. People following traditions of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and boycott against South African apartheid deserve respect and fairness from our Coop. We are insiders, committed to core PSFC values: democracy and food justice.

In solidarity,

Alyce Barr

Coordinator Response to Alyce Barr's Letter:

Dear Coop members,

I'd like to respond to claims in Alyce Barr's above letter that reference Coop staff and committees:

The letter accuses the general coordinator team of giving "tacit or overt support to disrupt meetings or intimidate others." That is entirely untrue. Our role is to run the operations of the Coop and uphold its policies and procedures. Some have misinterpreted this as taking sides, but we are simply following long-standing practices to support the Coop's sustainability.

On the status of DRC complaints as referenced in the letter: The recent volume and complexity of cases related to Israel and Palestine have slowed the DRC's response. They are actively working to develop a process to handle them, and we truly appreciate the time and effort they're putting in to move things forward.

I'm not aware of any ban preventing the EACC from working on issues related to the Middle East, as the letter suggests.

The letter also mentions Joe Holtz ‘huddling’ with members of Coop4Unity at a GM, but I think we should be cautious about linking conversations to political allegiance or assuming someone is acting on another’s behalf. I’ve recently spoken with members on both sides of issues to listen, understand their perspectives, and help find constructive paths forward for the Coop, and will continue to do so. I know other staff and members have done the same, and I hope that continues. That kind of open communication is essential to keeping our Coop strong and supporting a respectful, cooperative culture.

*Respectfully,
Joe Szladek
General Manager*

MOVE TO REJECT REMOTE MEETINGS RIPPED FROM MAGA PLAYBOOK

Greetings:

On Tuesday, June 24, the vote in favor of hybrid meetings was narrowly defeated, by a hair. The results showed that a minority of Coop members (barely more than a third) have successfully denied the vote to those unable to attend GM meetings for a host of reasons (we all know what they are).

Undoubtedly, that minority is a heterogeneous group and some may have had honorable, procedural reasons for doing so. There is also no doubt a sizable minority—perhaps majority—of that group who dishonorably voted against hybrid in order to quash the possibility of a successful subsequent vote they didn’t want to happen: a vote in favor of a boycott of Israeli goods.

Sounds familiar, doesn’t it? Deny voting rights of people because they may use their vote to favor certain policies or legislation you strongly oppose? Yes, it’s out of the

MAGA playbook. Afraid of a potential voting result? Disenfranchise the ones who may make it happen and cover yourself with Orwellian doublespeak. That's why I use the word "dishonorable." There's not only no honor in that, there's none of the courage it takes to live up to the democratic principles of equal rights. No one ever said democracy is easy.

Sincerely,

Allan Novick

LET'S JOIN THE MODERN ERA AND USE REMOTE MEETINGS

Dear Sir or Madam:

Recently, I voted in favor of allowing members to participate in General Meetings (GMs) remotely. It's fairly clear that some who did likewise hope this will promote their anti-Israeli BDS ambitions, which I do not share (and also voted against board candidates who do promote BDS). But really; it's the 21st century, and few of us can cram into a small space in Prospect Park, and Coop members should be able to participate regardless.

I'm sorry that the motion to enable remote meetings failed (barely), and hope the issue will arise again. Among other things, I live in Lower Manhattan, and yes, I do my shift and shop at the Coop faithfully, but it's not an easy stretch, and I'm probably not going to spend time on the subway to go to a GM.

If remote GMs are permitted, it won't be to my benefit, because I'll have to faithfully show up at every general meeting and vote against anti-Semitism. The city with the largest Jewish population in the world is not Jerusalem, nor yet Tel Aviv. It is New York. I don't believe the Coop should tell our Jewish neighbors, "Your kind are not wel-

come here.” (I am not Jewish.) Nor do I support Netanyahu’s genocidal regime, but I don’t believe the Coop should have a foreign policy. (And if it does, can we talk about Russia and China?)

But sure, participation in the GM should be open to all, and technology makes that easy.

We should go there.

Regards,

Greg Costikyan

THE COOP IS NOT A POLITICAL ORGAN

Dear Editors:

I have been a member for approximately 35 years. In my experience and with one notable exception (BDS) Coop controversies have been largely about operations, including expanding the store, pension fund management, plastic bags, meat, beer, vendor labor and management practices, etc.

As a cooperative food store the mission is to provide good food to working members at low prices. Simple enough.

At its core the organization’s social compact is founded as a jointly owned business and economic unit for the benefit of its members. It is not a social justice or humanitarian organization like the ACLU, Amnesty International and Doctors Without Borders among many others.

By its mission it is not a political party or an organization for promoting political causes. Political controversy by its nature encompasses diverse opinions, and large-scale community organizations prosper best when diversity is acknowledged and accepted.

There are many injustices in the world and specific advocacy organizations to champion those causes. Politics are personal and I respect a person's decision to not buy a particular product because they find it offensive for any reason. Members can make their own decisions.

In the past the Coop has been a place where we have come together with a single common purpose: to eat good food at low prices. Politicizing the Coop by successfully promoting controversies beyond the scope of the cooperative mission will only offer a false victory. It will not result in meaningful outcomes beyond talking points and continuing to divide the Coop community, which is not the objective.

In cooperation,

Glenn Brill

JULY 15, 2025

March 24, 2026

Letters to the Editor



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

DON'T DISENFRANCHISE ME

Greetings:

Now that we know nearly two-thirds of member voters want remote access to the general meetings, and that we are free to have hybrid meetings without a change to the bylaws (legal advice received by senior staff after the referendum was happening),

can we please reopen meeting access? Since it's not a boycott or a bylaw change, all we need is a simple majority to approve, if we even need a vote.

For reasons of work/childcare/medical/mobility and room capacity, we can't all participate otherwise.

*Sincerely,
Lisa Guido*

DEMOCRACY, GENERALLY COORDINATED

Greetings:

As recently noted by outgoing General Manager Joe Holtz, Coop members have the right under New York State law to participate in our democratic processes virtually. But our bid to enshrine that right into our bylaws has failed, winning 66.45% of a vote that required 66.67%. That slim margin is a testament to how critical the General Coordinators' fearmongering was in defeating a commonsense proposal rooted in a desire to expand access and maximize participation at the Coop.

The GCs will tout the PSFC's commitment to democracy and member input. They'll invite you to General Meetings where you can "have your voice heard." But after a year and a half of obstruction, obfuscation and the blatant misuse of their bully pulpit, I speak from experience when I say they'll only let you participate if they think they'll still be in control at the end of the day.

*Sincerely,
Morgan Võ*

LOOKING FORWARD WITH OPTIMISM

Fellow Members,

This summer I will turn 70 and will have been a member of this Coop for more than two-thirds of my life.

As I move into the next decade, our Coop moves into a new phase of its life, with Joe Szladek in the role of General Manager. Welcome and congratulations, Joe.

As a clear-eyed optimist, I imagine the possibilities and work as hard as I can to achieve it. At this moment, I have great hope for what our Coop can achieve under the leadership of a forward-looking General Manager.

Like all Coop leaders, a GM needs to be even-handed and open, fair in their treatment of every Coop member and constituency. They can help us become a truly democratic organization that uses all available tools, so that 17,000 members have the best possible chance to engage in policy- and decision-making. At a moment when a literal majority of Coop members want the opportunity to attend General Meetings online (while the still undecided Hybrid Referendum leaves that up in the air), they can help us transition to hybrid, fully virtual or asynchronous decision-making.

This means leaving behind an overly nostalgic and often unhelpful “we’ve always done it this way” perspective, choosing instead a more analytical stance. It’s time to review how well things actually worked before and consider what needs to change to meet the current moment.

During my 30-plus years working in NYC public education, I learned from and with every child I taught, every teacher and principal I coached and every parent who trusted their child with me. As Joe Szladek assumes his important new role, I look forward to

his willingness to learn from and with all members and his commitment to our mission: food, social and environmental justice.

*In solidarity,
Alyce Barr*

THE COOP HAS CHANGED—EXCEPT FOR THE LEADERSHIP

Dear Coop members:

“The city has changed,” said NY-7 Rep Nydia Velázquez on Democratic Primary night. “Zohran knew it. The other candidates didn’t see it. And that is why we are here celebrating this beautiful moment.”

The Coop has changed. Everyone knows it, especially younger people, disabled people, members targeted by racism and Islamophobia, shift workers, supporters of Park Slope Food Coop for Palestine and so on. The Coop leadership doesn’t see it. And that is why it’s not hard to imagine the Coop’s eventual fade.

Kerry Carnahan

MORE DEMOCRACY AT THE COOP: ONWARD!

How disheartening to read that the referendum for hybrid meetings failed to pass. The odds were stacked against it though and I believe that the majority of members do care about greater access to the decision-making process. So...let’s forge ahead!

My co-worker Jason Weiner drafted a robust proposal last year. Member Yejia Chen al-

so came up with a solid plan this Spring. The original hybrid meeting proposal, from CJ Glackin & Morgan Vö, has good recommendations too.

I hope that the General Manager, the Agenda Committee, the General Coordinators and the Membership at large will agree to quickly usher these forward. There is always a lot to do, we are all pulled left and right, but this is urgent. With proper planning we can come up with proposals to vote on in the not so distant future. We have to be agile and steadfast about this. We also have to be transparent, accountable and stop the on-going back-stabbing, slandering and other shenanigans.

The above proposals and ideas could be fully discussed at the next GM; small committees of members and/or staff can be organized to generate ideas and research feasibility with regular reporting, clear timelines and deadlines. The Coop can perhaps postpone other projects to focus on this issue. This is not rocket science. It's a business decision related to priorities and allocation of resources.

I encourage all members to push for this in the coming months, and not let it be buried under other priorities or by institutional inertia, nay-sayers and pushback. If we don't stand behind reforming the system to allow greater participation, the Coop will only pay lip service to a core principle: "Democratic Member Control." And skeptical members will have a point: The Coop is just another "glorified buyers club" with performative democratic values.

In solidarity,

Delphine Selles-Alvarez

Membership Coordinator at the Coop

NEW DEMOCRACY 2.0

Dear Coop members:

We best serve the democratic process when we allow everyone to come to the table. Regardless of technology enhancements, our biggest accessibility limitation will always be time. If we continue to only allow members to participate in discussion and voting on Tuesdays at 7 p.m., we disenfranchise anyone unavailable then. Whether it's the inability to travel, log on or simply focus due to other constraints like family, location or just life, those members can't participate.

We need a system that won't require someone who lost the affordable connectivity program to be pressured by personal cost to participate. We need to give parents and people who work nights time to digest information and not be forced to divide their attention. We need ways that give members with different learning styles and accessibility needs the same info as those at the GM.

I believe it's important to recognize that nowhere in the principles of cooperation does it say that members must agree with each other. Cooperation is finding common ground. The Coop is not meant to be a cookie cutter of anyone's beliefs. That's what makes it beautiful, messy and home to us all. Conflict is inherent in this space. Discourse is a necessity to allow these different opinions a voice. Our current system does not give time or ability to receive, process and respond. It limits participation, it limits engagement, it limits understanding and most importantly it limits factual information and transparent communication.

It keeps us from properly hearing each other. It makes us react and not engage in the best ways. It keeps us from making as much progress as we could.

It's time for **a new Coop democracy**. Please attend the July General Meeting to discuss my agenda item.

Sincerely,

Jason Weiner

Membership Coordinator at the Coop

SPECIAL PRIVILEGES FOR HOLTZ?

Dear Coop members:

In his June 6 email, Joe Holz says that “I’m speaking today only for myself and not on behalf of the staff or General Coordinator team.”

If Holtz is speaking only for himself, as one member equal among many thousands of other PFSC members, how is it that he was authorized to send his email to all members on the PFSC email database? Are all members, speaking only for themselves, able to send emails to the entire PFSC email list when they wish?

*Sincerely,
Erich Hahn*

JOE HOLTZ’S ABUSE OF AUTHORITY

Dear member owners,

Joe Holtz’s abuse of authority in using the Coop’s mailing list to send a message to each of us about how to vote in the upcoming election is outrageous. I’ve been an active member of our beloved Coop for more than two decades, so I have heard Joe’s opinion on many things over all these years. But this is next level, to use our member directory to send a personal message about how to vote.

Joe Holtz’s intervention is straight up election interference and an egregious abuse of his power and privilege. Not only is it outrageous that Joe did this himself, I would like to understand which General Coordinators allowed him this access and which General

Coordinators knew about this email before it went out and didn't have the judgment to see this as an inflammatory smear campaign against our own members? Please explain.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Sullivan

IS THE COOP LOSING ITS PROGRESSIVE SPIRIT?

Folks,

I'd firstly like to congratulate and welcome Joe Szladek to his new role. It's tough taking on a leadership role from a set of founders, as I know from my experience advising many startups and nonprofits around the world.

I joined the Coop because good food is good politics—if not, why buy organic or biodynamic? But the recent developments at the Coop have left me feeling insulted, condescended to, and frankly, unwelcome. The spate of missives from the GCs was bad enough, but Joe Holtz's email decrying board candidates was the height of paternalistic hypocrisy. If the candidates aren't allowed a similar platform to rebut any smears against them, is this really a democracy?

The contrast with Brooklyn, and the rest of the city—in light of the mayoral primary—couldn't be more stark. The recent elections have proven that the electorate has uplifted candidates such as Mamdani, Hanif, Lander and others who have espoused justice for Palestinians and a variety of progressive causes. This begs the question: Has the Coop become a conservative institution with a set of ossified principles and bound by inertia? What happened to the kind of spirit that led to Chilean products being boycotted (under Pinochet)? Are we going to be so out of step with the community around us?

Maybe I should give up expecting better and go somewhere else.

I was honestly expecting Joe Holtz to email us all urging us to vote for Cuomo. Perhaps he still will?

*Regards,
Jayanth Eranki*

SEEKING ANSWERS ABOUT ALL-MEMBER EMAIL

Dear Editors:

I'm confused—how and why was an overly political and biased email on the Board elections from Joe Holtz sent to all members using the Coop's official 'no-reply' mailing list? I do not consent to my email being used by the Coop in this manner for any political and/or campaign message, and have never received one until now.

Additionally, was Holtz's letter meant to coerce, convince and/or rationalize in some way that Coop members need to agree to carry even one single product, let alone several, from a country openly and defiantly committing genocide in front of the entire globe with full U.S. support of funding, intelligence and weapons? Again, confused and would like an explanation.

*Sincerely,
A.L. Steiner*

MOURNING FRIEND'S FAMILY, CALLING FOR BOYCOTT

To my fellow members,

I have a good friend who is Palestinian and grew up as a farmer in a village called Khuza'a, southern Gaza. I mentioned him in a letter early last year (a letter that was originally refused for publication by the Gazette).

In the last month, I learned from him that his entire village was completely erased by Israel (there is no other word for it). Over 50 of his relatives were killed. The fate of the rest of the over 15,000 residents is by and large unknown, a tragedy in itself.

Khuza'a's population was not that far off from the size of the Coop's membership.

Among false narratives from the General Coordinators that a mere boycott of Israeli goods would destroy the Coop—narratives then used to prevent discussion and demonize members—I make the same appeal as in my previous letter: Let's keep our focus on the real destruction happening in Palestine.

In cooperation and solidarity,

Abdi-Hakin Dirie

FROM TAIPEI TO PARK SLOPE: IN SUPPORT OF THE COOP'S VALUES

To the Editor:

I've been a proud member of the Park Slope Food Coop for 15 years and have always valued its spirit of cooperation and commitment to providing high-quality, sustainable food to our community.

However, since the attacks in October 2023, I've been troubled by what feels like a shift in the Coop's atmosphere. A vocal minority has pushed rhetoric that feels out of step with the inclusive and cooperative spirit that has long defined this community.

As someone who grew up in Taiwan—a place where democracy and civil liberties were hard-won—I'm deeply unsettled by the selective moral outrage directed at Israel. Though imperfect like any democracy, Israel stands alone in the region in offering meaningful protections for women, minorities and LGBTQ individuals. Yet it is often the sole target of intense condemnation, while regimes like China, Russia and Egypt—whose human rights abuses are well-documented—escape similar scrutiny. Criticizing a government's policies is one thing; singling out an entire nation and its people as uniquely immoral is something else entirely.

Regardless of where one stands on this complex and emotional issue, it is crucial to preserve the Coop's core values: cooperation, inclusivity and a focus on good food and community. I greatly appreciate the dedication of our General Coordinators, whose hard work reassures me that the Coop's spirit can continue to thrive. I want to thank Joe Holtz for his decades of service to the Coop and for his recent letter—a voice of reason and moral clarity from someone who has long embodied the values of the Coop. As Joe steps back from his role, I believe his words serve as a timely reminder of what this community stands for: cooperation, respect and a shared commitment to the Coop's founding principles.

Sincerely,
Linda Wong

JUNE 24, 2025

March 24, 2026

Letters to the Editor



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

A DEMOCRATIC VOTE

To My Fellow Members:

In the heated controversy over the boycott of Israeli goods at the Coop, the proposal for hybrid (in person and online attendance and voting) has been linked to the boycott of Israeli goods.

I'm concerned that members might be voting soon on whether or not to have hybrid voting as a sort of "proxy vote" on whether or not to boycott Israeli goods. The "Coordinators Corner" in this paper has been instrumental in creating confusion and the GCs have used their power to influence the membership on both issues and now on the Board of Directors election coming up as well. They have recommended that members vote only for those Board nominees who are unaffiliated with either group (pro- or anti-boycott).

I have been a vocal supporter of an Israeli boycott since 2009 and, yes, I have a dog in this fight. Yes, the organized efforts of PSFC Members for Palestine have pushed our Board to issue a referendum on hybrid voting SO THAT WE CAN ALL HAVE A VOICE. ON EVERY ISSUE PROPOSED. Yes, this isn't "the way we've always done it," but those of us who are aware of the struggle to secure a fully democratic vote on hybrid voting know that a referendum that allows each and every member to vote and be heard is the only democratic solution to the crisis of governance facing us.

Lifelong activists know the truth: Democracy is always worth the struggle.

*Sincerely,
Carol Wald*

MY FEW CENTS ON BDS ISRAEL/PALESTINE

Dear Coop members:

I am sick of the binary one side-ism as displayed in our Coop community.

If a boycott could actually target the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza or actually alleviate Palestinian suffering, I'd support it (it will not.)

I do not support affiliating with the BDS movement which BOYCOTTED the film “No Other Land” (doesn’t that tell you something?).

I am very angry about Israel’s right-wing government and its murderous thuggery, its starvation of Gazans, its vilifying and abuse of Israelis who are seeking to end the war and bring the remaining hostages home.

I have family in Israel, and I have lived there. It is a complicated situation and reducing it to a “settler colonialist project” lacks nuance and historical understanding.

Asking an elected official to launch an investigation into the Coop does not help the Coop or Jews.

There are Israeli Jews, Israeli Palestinians and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza who are working together for peace. It would be nice to amplify those voices.

Palestinians in Gaza are protesting against Hamas. It would be nice to amplify those voices.

I am very angry at those who deny or justify as resistance, the murder, rape and kidnapping of Israelis on October 7.

Sabra Hummus is overrated.

We Can Do Better.

*In Cooperation,
Lisa Badner*

LET'S KEEP DISCUSSING AND DECIDING TOGETHER

To the Editor:

Where were you on February 15, 2003? On that day 14 million people worldwide protested the United States' imminent invasion of Iraq. The world said no to war and the United States proceeded to invade Iraq against our will, converting our collective resources into mass death. Today our government and ruling classes once again ignore the will of the people by funding the Gaza genocide, and it's shocking to see this blatant disregard for what the people actually want replicated here at our humble Food Coop, replete with irresponsible and misleading speech from Coop leadership.

Consider: Coop members want the ability to make decisions for ourselves about the Coop's commitments and actions in the face of anything, including any moral crisis, because without the power to make our decisions in a truly cooperative and collective way, the Park Slope Food Coop is just a glorified buyer's club. It is an error to fail to reject oppression everywhere we have the power to do so, whether in the grocery aisle or Congress or on a flotilla delivering humanitarian aid! Are we so cynical and brain-washed that we don't want the power to decide whether and how we want to decide—on anything?

I'm not—and that's why I voted for hybrid voting and Dan Kaminsky and Taylor Pate for Coop Board. Dear Coop comrade, I hope you continue to weigh in however you see fit!

Sincerely,

Kerry Carnahan

COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

Dear Coop Members:

I just opened my email to get another anti-BDS missive from PSFC leadership. This time it's Joe Holtz telling me that it's a violation of cooperative principles to bring the BDS conversation to the Coop because of the controversy it causes. Missing is any reference to the incredibly disruptive and threatening behavior by members who oppose a boycott of Israeli products. BDS activists aren't doing everything in their power to prevent a democratic vote on an issue of obvious importance to members, even if Holtz thinks it's a waste of time. I am tired of Coop leadership that continually puts a thumb on the scale in these deliberations, exploiting access to the full member list and using dedicated space in the *Linewaiters' Gazette* to skew the discussion. That's the violation of cooperative principles here, and a shameful misuse of power.

Sincerely,

Emily Drabinski

THE PAID STAFF FORMULA

Dear Coop Members:

The Coop is not a success because we get to vote at General Meetings.

Same thing for GM "discussion items." These conversations ARE NOT in-depth thinking sessions. They are casual opportunities for sharing opinions and ideas. Just like a letter or article in the *Gazette*.

When decision votes are placed on the agenda, members have a chance to approve or disapprove of ideas and plans that others HAVE thought through—individuals, ad

hoc groups, official committees and the paid staff.

Careful, thorough thinking can only happen with these other entities.

I think the paid staff formula is our secret sauce. Members are supercharged to think about the Coop every day, not just once a month. They take love and concern to another level. If you really want to make a difference, find one of these people and talk to them one on one. I've done this many times during my 46 years here.

What is the great achievement of the Coop?

Has our not-for-profit system moved our society and world away from capitalism? Absolutely not! Has our example of cooperation ended killing and war? Emphatically no!

The Food Coop is a triumph because a group of people volunteer their time and energy to own, run and shop at a high-quality, low-priced food store.

We have led the way in the natural food movement. Look at the many stores of all sizes and shapes that now stock the kind of items the Coop had been selling from day one.

We're not going to change the world by fighting about causes members are peeved about. Ones inside the building or out in the world. Doing this is not a great example for anyone.

Sincerely,

Andy Feldman

ARE WE STILL A COOP?

To the Editor:

I'm writing as a Coop member for nearly 30 years and a member of the Agenda Committee—now retired—for 7 1/2 years.

Does the Food Coop we all thought we belong to—a community of people who work together and make decisions collectively—still exist?

At the April GM, three people met in secret and, effectively declaring themselves the sole decision-makers of the Coop, “voted” to hold a referendum. They “voted” on an item that was not on that month’s GM agenda and had never, in fact, been on a GM agenda for formal discussion and advice by the PSFC membership.

These three members of the Board of Directors—Tim Hospodar, Tess Brown Lavoie and Keyian Vafai—not only violated nearly a half-century of Coop bylaws and tradition. They also violated the assumption on which they were elected to the Board: the assumption that Board members would always vote according to the advice of the membership at that GM and not substitute their own opinions.

If we let these three get away with this behavior, we will no longer have a Coop. The PSFC will simply be another corporation run by a clique that’s answerable only to itself, not to the community.

I urge everyone to take two steps:

1. Sign petitions to recall Tim Hospodar, Tess Brown Lavoie and Keyian Vafai.
2. Vote NO on the referendum—even if you agree with the topic of the referendum (hybrid meetings). Voting yes is a vote for dictatorship, not for hybrid meetings. The hybrid proposal can be properly put on a future GM agenda.

*In GENUINE cooperation,
Fran Hawthorne*

A BOARD CANDIDATE'S REPLY TO THE COORDINATORS' CORNER

Greetings:

My name is Dan Kaminsky, and I'm running for Coop Board. I am one of two candidates endorsed by PSFC Members for Palestine. In last month's Coordinators' Corner and Joe's recent email, it was suggested that I haven't been transparent about my views on BDS. Since I have written prior *Linewaiters' Gazette* articles and made statements during General Meetings, this accusation was surprising to me. To reiterate my stance, I believe the Coop should boycott Israeli products. With two million people in Gaza on the brink of starvation (among other horrors), it is my view that a Coop committed to food justice should take action.

Those views notwithstanding, the role of a board member is to uphold the will of the membership, regardless of personal opinions. I am fully capable of placing democratically agreed-upon decisions ahead of my views when they are in conflict.

I hold democratic processes as a sacred value. What has been alarming to me is not the range of views on the Coop's role in this international crisis—that is to be expected—but rather the inability of the democratic process itself to unfold. As a board candidate, my priority is to ensure the democratic functioning of our cooperative. On facilitating democratic processes, I am well-equipped. Much of my career has been explicitly focused on democracy, cooperatives and voter participation. In addition, I am a social worker, therapist and trained mediator—skill sets that are particularly valuable during a volatile time.

The Coordinators' Corner seemed rooted in fear for the Coop's future. I share that un-

derlying fear, but coupled with it I hold critical optimism. We can emerge more democratic, more equitable, more cooperative and more justice-oriented than ever before.

Sincerely,

Dan Kaminsky

UPHOLDING MEMBER DISCUSSION AND VOTING

Dear *Gazette* Readers:

I have been a member of the Park Slope Food Coop since 1973. I love being a Coop member for the availability of healthy food at affordable prices, our diverse members, and the democratic and social justice principles we uphold. I am responding to Joe Holtz's June 4 email, where he states: "PSFC Members for Palestine, and the Board members they support, have a clear strategy: first, to pass hybrid meetings; then, to lower the boycott threshold from 75% to just 51%," and then advises members to vote no for two Board candidates because they are endorsed by PSFC Members for Palestine.

On the first point, Joe is conflating passing hybrid meetings with the other steps he opposes. I strongly object to this and am disappointed that Joe doesn't use his communication to advocate for voting yes on hybrid meetings. Hybrid meetings are a key way to promote our mission, which states, "We are committed to diversity and equality. We oppose discrimination in any form." Many Coop members cannot attend general meetings in person for reasons including disability, illness and childcare. Only having meetings in person discriminates against these members, and undermines diversity, equality, and democracy at the Coop.

On the second point, I object to Joe's one-dimensional portrayal of two Board candidates, and using this reason to recommend we vote no on these individuals. Besides

any endorsements a Board candidate receives, we should look at each person's qualifications and what they bring to the Coop, including their written statements and presentations, and not smear them.

I do believe the boycott threshold should be at least 67% to reflect a minimum of two-thirds support. What is most important is that we uphold rather than undermine facilitating member discussion and voting. That is how we "make the Coop welcoming and accessible to all."

Sincerely,

Deborah Kaplan

IS THE COOP SAFE FOR MUSLIMS? DOES THE COOP CARE?

Dear Coop Members:

I was reading about Trump's new "Muslim Ban" when my sister asked me if I had seen Joe Holtz's email. One of the most sacred days of the Islamic year had just begun: the Day of Arafah, which we Muslims mark by fasting, praying and seeking forgiveness. (I am praying for forgiveness that I cannot do more for the starving babies of Gaza.) Tomorrow will be Eid, the fourth since the genocide began.

There are people who want us dead. Or, at best, gone. It has always been true of this country, even of this supposedly liberal city, my lifelong home. When I joined the Coop 11 years ago, I didn't imagine that it would be true here as well.

I have been quiet at the Coop for 20 months now. Despite threats of doxxing, hateful comments in the freezer aisle, vitriol in this very paper, a thousand micro- and macro-aggressions. I don't know how much longer I can participate in the psychological exercise of buying my groceries in a place that is not just indifferent to me and "my kind"

but openly hostile to us.

With Joe Holtz's last, deeply disturbing tirade, it is clearer than ever that the Coop is willing to throw away its democratic principles in order to support a genocide.

What more do any of us need to see that the Coop is not a safe place for Muslims or Arabs? Palestinians are being slaughtered and starved with our taxes, and it seems those with power are concerned with whether their deaths are disturbing our dinners (they should). I am tired of being a quiet, "well-behaved" Muslim lest I be seen as a threat. I did not sign up for hatred, but I did sign up for the Coop. Maybe it's time I left.

Sincerely,

Saadia Khalid

ENDANGERING OUR COOP

To the Editor:

A Jewish couple is shot to death on the streets of Washington, D.C. to the cry of "Free Palestine!"

At least ten Jews at a vigil for Hamas's hostages are set aflame on the streets of Colorado to the slogan of "Free Palestine!"

Jewish businesses are vandalized to the chants of "Free Palestine!"

When I joined the Coop 15 years ago, I assumed I'd be in the company of a thoughtful, respectful community. I didn't expect to find PSFC members following the maddening crowd, blindly cheering on a culture of death, jihadism and misogyny. I never

imagined they'd be waving the flag of an ideology that calls for violence against Western liberal values, the annihilation of Israel and Jews everywhere.

The BDS campaign is the pet project of M4P. It is evil. BDS advances the most primitive, vilest hatred.

No one waving this flag, no one marching to the beat of Free Palestine can plead ignorance to the fact that it is a cause driven by sheer hate. It recalls another era not that long ago, when "civilized" people normalized violence against Jews. Today the perpetrators attacking Jews make it abundantly clear to us so that we don't need to scratch our heads: They are motivated and incited to violence by the values championed by BDS.

The Coop is being twisted out of shape by this nefarious campaign. Should it succeed, we will see the tragic undoing of the PSFC.

It is up to us to put an end to this dangerous powder keg now.

*Sincerely,
Baila Olidort*

THE MORAL LITMUS TEST OF OUR TIME

Greetings:

I've been a member of the Coop since 1999 and share our members' love of PSFC. I'm also Jewish, raised and educated in Zionism. I lived in Israel for three years in the 1980s. I'm writing to support our Coop's adoption of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it complies with international law and universal principles of human rights, as called for by Palestinian civil society since 2005.

We are horrified by the violence being visited upon Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank as well as within the 1949 armistice line that delineated Israel's borders. And horrified by the violence visited upon Israeli people, in particular on October 7, 2023. In Israel and in the United States, there is an assumption that no act of Israeli violence justifies any Palestinian violence, while any act of Palestinian violence justifies unlimited Israeli violence. As members of this Coop, let's reject this grisly calculus, and let's reject violence. BDS is a nonviolent international response to the ongoing catastrophe being visited upon the Palestinian people.

We have all seen the images of starving people in the Gaza Strip, while people in Israel, sometimes mere meters from the fence that keeps Gazans imprisoned, eat and drink their fill. As a cooperative dedicated to making food available to our community, how can we look away?

I paid attention in Hebrew school (and went on to teach in Jewish schools). I know that Israel's actions, before and after October 7, 2023, are in breathtaking contravention to the principles of our faith. I support BDS because I am Jewish, and I urge our membership to embrace BDS as a righteous and nonviolent response to what Angela Davis, quoting June Jordan, has described as the moral litmus test of our time.

Sincerely,

H. Steven Quester

IN RESPONSE TO THE GENERAL MEETING

Hello,

Before going to the GM, I read the news. An Israeli strike had killed dozens sheltering in a Gaza school. When I reached the picnic house, a woman waved an Israeli flag. I wondered how Palestinian Coop members felt having to enter the meeting walking

past that flag. This blatant, tone-deaf gesture set the tone for the GM. The grandstanding claims that advocating for hybrid meetings is akin to Trump's totalitarianism were outrageous. The Trump administration has deported students who have advocated for Palestine.

A low point for me was when a woman scolded "young people" for "disrespect." The Coop was started by people who were at one point young, and I wouldn't describe anyone as young who was disrespectful at the meeting. I'm an educator, have spent many years working with young people, mostly sixth graders, and I know not to conflate dissent with disrespect. Young people have been the vanguards of positive change. The characterization seems only to belittle the efforts of some members. Besides, MLK was 25 when he led the Montgomery Bus Boycott, 39 when he was assassinated. Greta Thunberg is 22. In contrast, Trump is 78 years old, Netanyahu is 75, and Putin is 72.

I was talking to another member after the meeting, about farms, when an older woman pointed at us and interrupted, "Were you listening? I hope you were listening to the woman who spoke about respecting older people. You need to be listening." This was rude and presumptuous. When I tried to engage her in conversation, she walked away as I was speaking.

Many members need to reflect on their entitlement and privilege and their biases against initiatives led by younger and non-white members of this "Cooperative." People are dying while we engage in navel-gazing shouting matches at GMs.

In solidarity,

Tess Raser

APPRECIATION FOR THE GENERAL COORDINATORS

Dear PSFC Community,

My family joined the Coop in 2010, and since then our gratitude for being part of such a special community has steadily increased. As we all know, the Coop is more than our primary food source, nourishing our children from infancy to adolescence. Long-time shift-mates have become dear friends, and we've had more fascinating one-off encounters with fellow members than we can count. So many different passions, perspectives and areas of expertise to encounter while shopping, working shifts, attending GM's or reading the *Gazette*.

But none of this splendor would be available without stability. And the Coop's stability is heavily reliant on our wonderful, hardworking General Coordinators. I hope they know how appreciated their efforts are. I hope appreciation for how well they serve the Coop outweighs the complaints they receive for having the temerity to prioritize store operation over geopolitical grievance.

I hope a critical mass of members understand that shuffling that priority would come at stability's expense.

Sincerely,

Brian Shuman

Food Processing

COMMUNICATING TO THE MEMBERSHIP

Fellow Coop Members.

As a long-time (1994) member, I am troubled by the Coop's decision to forward a

copy of Joe Holtz's letter to what I can only assume is the entire membership. I hope they will do the same for a response from the two people he specifically called for members to vote against. His points are good and well-intended, I am sure, but it is not in the spirit of the Coop as he describes it to only disseminate one man's opinion to every member of the coop, elevating it via direct access to every member. Yes, their platforms are available on the website, but a direct attack on their positions to the entire membership without giving them equal space and access is really not fair.

Sincerely,

Joshua Starbuck

APOLOGIES IN THE EXPRESS CHECKOUT

Dear Coop Members:

I would like to take this space to apologize to the woman who was checking me out in the express line on Saturday, May 24, at around 2 p.m.

I was short, curt and angry because I was in self-inflicted pain due to a sprain of my right big toe (bunion?). I could safely ride a bike for eight-plus miles (!!!), but basic/simple walking was wretched and painful. And I sadly took it partially out on you.

I apologized and explained my situation at the checkout itself immediately when this happened, but I feel a public apology in the *Linewaiter's Gazette* is needed as well.

I am on the mend, shouldn't have shopped while injured. Learned my lesson.

May peace and respect be with you.

Best,

Jack Szwegold

POLITICIANS HAVE OVERTURNED OUR GENERAL MEETING

To the Members:

We are all being used.

Our Food Coop has been taken over by politicians that are using populist ideas to gain control of the board of directors. They have successfully manipulated member idealism and the annual openings on the member-elected board to take over the reins of the General Meeting.

The Park Slope Food Coop is not a political organization. We are a diverse group of members that organize and work together to provide high-quality food for ourselves.

Many of us are politically active as well as being members of our Coop. Some of us have altruistic goals regarding people's rights and environmentalism. Well, over the past couple of years, a group of well-organized political operatives have used these common character traits to pit members against one another and the General Coordinators and take over the General Meeting.

Even if you agree with their stated aims, it's not a good thing that they have infiltrated our organization. By gaining control of the board of directors, they mean to achieve their aims by using the General Meeting as a cover for forcing staff and other members to bend to their will.

These people do not have the Coop's interests at heart; they are only interested in controlling the organization politically and will end up destroying it.

*Sincerely,
Elizabeth Tobier*

DISGUSTING, ANTI-DEMOCRATIC MOVE BY OUTGOING GM

Dear Gazette,

I am writing to request that you all cover this gross abuse of power on the front page of our newspaper.

That Joe Holtz would abuse the immense power of having access to an all-members email blast in order to attempt to influence 17,000 members to vote according to his own values, all under the thin guise of supposedly promoting democracy, is a total violation of our beautiful institution.

He did not urge us to vote, he urged us to vote NO. He did not encourage us to participate in the democratic process, he encouraged us to vote against the candidates that he doesn't like.

It is not as if PSFC Members for Palestine have the power to do the same.

This is a disgusting abuse of power, and an attempt to rob our institution from doing what little is in our power to take even a meager moral stand on the ongoing genocide and ethnic cleansing processes in Gaza. We deserve the right to be able to do so, and we are taking the necessary steps to do so in a way that aligns with the democratic process.

I am outraged. I am disgusted. I am deeply disappointed. This is the type of thing people get fired for. The man ought to be publicly censured for taking such an anti-democratic stance. No hero's salute for Joe Holtz. If he did any good work for this communi-

ty, that gets undone here, at least in my mind.

Sincerely,

Mike Tumbarello