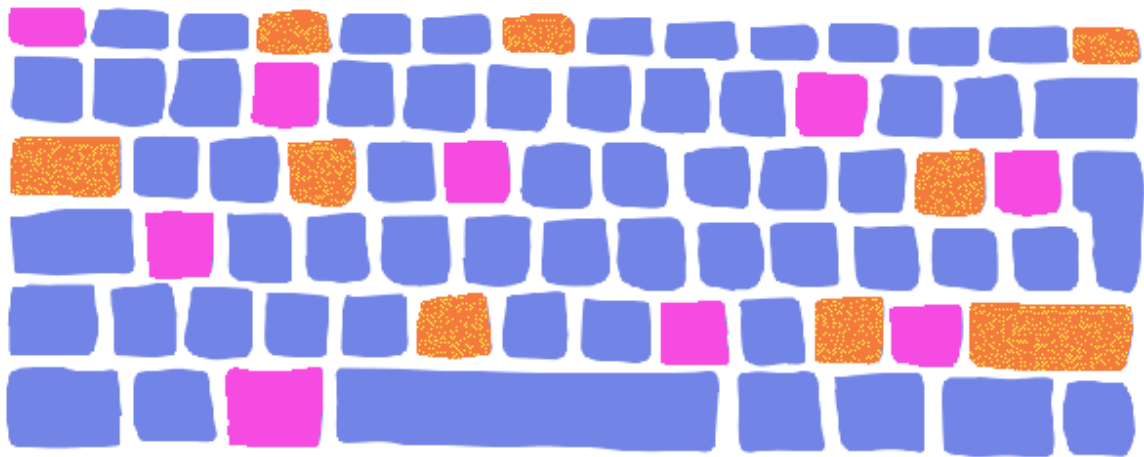


MARCH 24, 2026

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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Coop member; submissions that appear to be generated or substantially written using artificial intelligence tools may not be published.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.

TAKE OUR ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY

March 24, 2026



**Have you ever
encountered an
accessibility barrier
to attending the
General Meeting?**

**The Hybrid General
Meeting working
group would love to
hear from you!**

February 10, 2026

Have you ever encountered an accessibility barrier to attending the General Meeting?

The Hybrid General Meeting working group would love to hear from you.

Please take a moment to fill out this short survey.

MEMBER WORKSLOT OPPORTUNITY AS THE COOP'S CORPORATE SECRETARY

March 24, 2026



October 7, 2025—updated on October 15

Are you passionate about Coop governance and eager to step into a key leadership role at the Coop? We're seeking an enthusiastic member to join us as the Corporate Secretary. The Coop's current Secretary resigned on September 30. **This role is a member workslot position.**

The Secretary is an officer of the Coop, but is not a member of the Board of Directors.

The Secretary is elected each year during the Annual Meeting and serves a one-year term. As this election is to fill a position created by a resignation, the current opening will serve until the June 2026 Annual Meeting.

What We're Looking For:

Candidates should have a strong understanding of Coop governance, excellent organizational skills, and a commitment to transparency. If you want to support the Coop's Board, management, and the General Meeting, this workslot position may be perfect for you.

Key Responsibilities:

- Attend all 11 General Meetings and take minutes. If additional meetings are scheduled, the Secretary must also attend them.
- Issue draft minutes at least seven days before the next General Meeting.
- Present the draft minutes from the previous month at the monthly General Meeting and solicit corrections from those present.
- Send an electronic copy of the approved General Meeting minutes to the General Manager or another General Coordinator in their absence.
- Sign documents on behalf of the Park Slope Food Coop upon request from the Gener-

al Manager or as required by law.

Essential skills include attention to detail, punctuality, strong writing abilities, and the capacity to remain impartial while taking minutes.

If you are interested:

- You must attend the October 28 General Meeting at the Prospect Park Picnic House.
- You can nominate yourself or another member can nominate you.
- Please be prepared to make a brief statement to the General Meeting.

JOIN THE LINEWAITERS' GAZETTE: REPORTER POSITIONS OPEN NOW

March 24, 2026



ILLUSTRATION BY EVA SCHICKER

October 7, 2025

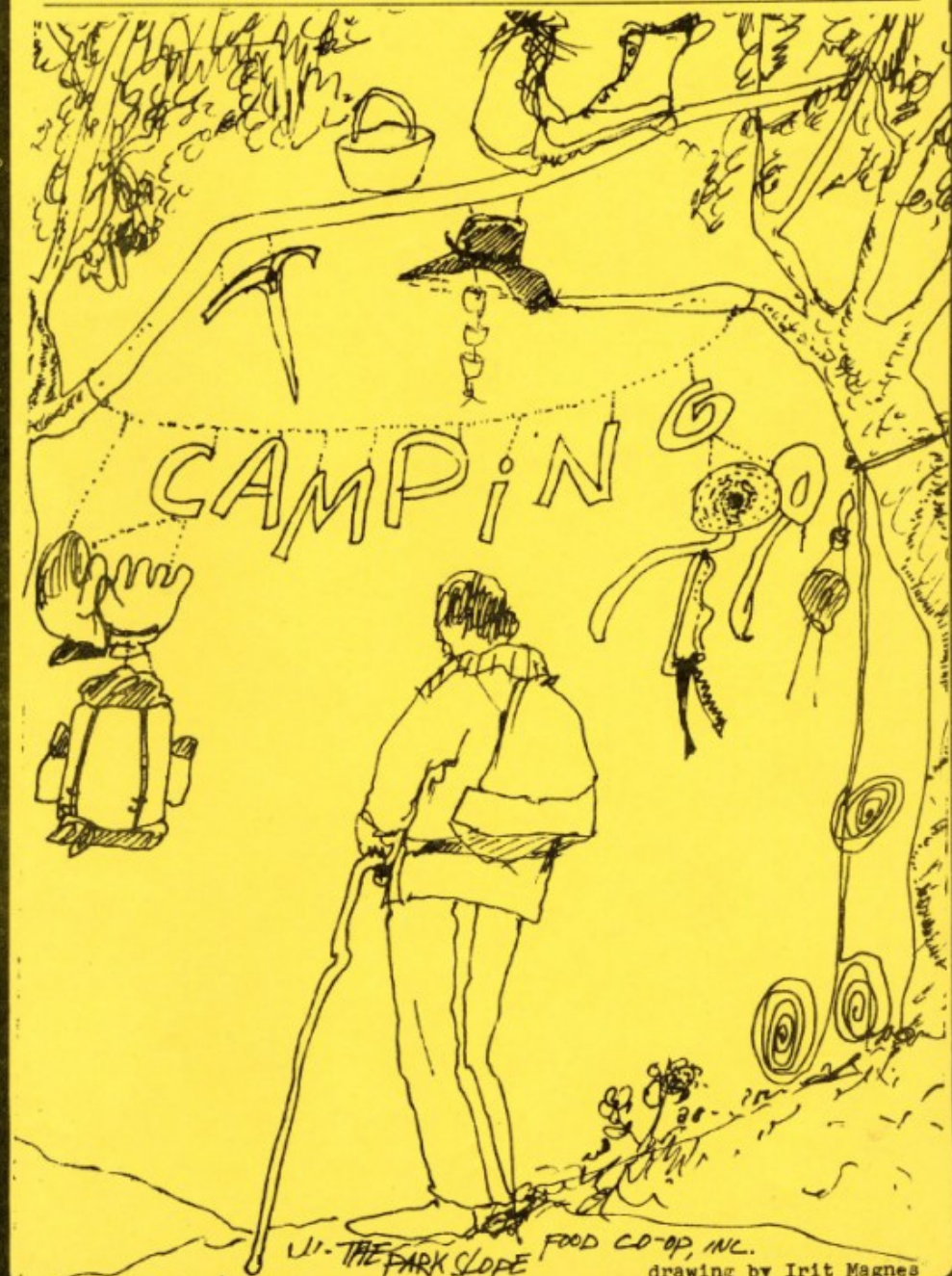
BRING THE STORIES OF THE COOP TO LIFE.

Linewaiters Gazette



OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER
OF THE PARK SLOPE FOOD CO-OP, INC.

June 15, 1978



L.I. - THE PARK SLOPE FOOD CO-OP, INC.
drawing by Irit Magnes

Gazette from 1978.

POSITION OVERVIEW

The *Linewaiters' Gazette* is produced by four rotating teams, each responsible for creating a new issue every three weeks. As a reporter, you'll contribute one article every 12 weeks in collaboration with your team's editor. Reporters earn two work credits per published article.

Occasional attendance at General Meetings—and writing about them—is also part of the role.

WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR

We're seeking experienced journalists who can craft clear, engaging and deadline-driven stories. Ideal candidates are curious, community-minded and genuinely interested in the Coop's members, operations, products and history.

REQUIREMENTS

- Professional journalism or writing experience
- Strong editing and research skills
- Ability to meet deadlines and work collaboratively
- Membership in the Coop for at least six months

HOW TO APPLY

Please email your cover letter, résumé, and writing samples to:

✉ GazetteSubmissions@psfc.coop

CONFUSION, CONFLICT, AND BOARD'S DECISION TO ISSUE A REFERENDUM ON HYBRID MEETINGS ROCK APRIL GENERAL MEETING

March 24, 2026



May 13, 2025

By Leila Darabi

The April General Meeting (GM) held on April 29 at the Prospect Park Picnic House quickly became one of the most contentious in Coop history. Amid overflowing attendance, procedural confusion and accusations of obstruction, the Board voted to issue a Coop-wide referendum on whether to allow hybrid GMs. This vote followed a chaotic

Open Forum during which members voted—for the first time in Coop history—to adjourn the General Meeting and proceed directly to the Board of Directors meeting.

Based on the Board vote, the referendum will appear on the same ballot as the June Board of Directors election for which members will be able to vote online or by mail.

A Vote on a Vote at a Meeting about Meetings

The proposal that passed during the April Board meeting seeks to amend the Coop's bylaws to allow members to participate in GMs either in person or remotely via Zoom. First submitted to the Agenda Committee in December 2023, the topic of members voting to allow hybrid General Meetings has faced significant delays, with a meeting-venue cancellation and internal debate over whether a vote could be held without a larger venue due to the Coop's current policy that all GMs take place in person.

In a message sent to members prior to the GM, General Coordinator Ann Herpel shared a statement to explain a last-minute venue change and removal of hybrid voting from the April agenda:

Thursday, April 10, we received an email from City Tech canceling our rental. The email read: 'After further review, we can no longer accommodate this event. Sorry for any inconvenience this may cause.' Despite our attempts to contact the City Tech events staff via email and phone for further clarification, we did not receive a response.

To be absolutely clear, City Tech made the decision to cancel. This action was not initiated by the General Coordinators in any way.

As a result, the meeting moved to the Picnic House in Prospect Park, which filled to fire code capacity well before the 7:00 p.m. start time. General Coordinator Joe Szladek, who was helping with crowd control, later shared that he estimated that around 125–150 members didn't get into the meeting that evening.

Some of those members could be heard cheering and chanting “hybrid meetings” throughout the evening.

Inside the Picnic House, Board Member Keyian Vafai expressed frustration at larger venue cancellations preventing members from voting on the question of hybrid meetings, as he introduced a motion to amend the Coop’s bylaws.

“For over 17 months, members have been prevented from voting on the extremely popular proposal to make GMs hybrid,” he said. He added, “The General Coordinators repeatedly asked the Agenda Committee to delay a vote on this proposal, claiming without evidence that a larger venue was needed for the vote.” He spoke before a boisterous audience, many waving paper fans with slogans including “Member-Owner for Hybrid” and “Everyone Should Vote.”

“The current stalemate is a governance crisis for our Coop. We can’t govern our 17,000-member cooperative if no issue that interests more than 250 of those members can ever be discussed.” Vafai continued, “The board has an obligation to hear the advice of our members and to ensure that members can provide their advice without delay.”



Chair Committee huddle at the April GM

Historic Motion to Adjourn the General Meeting

The Board meeting and controversial vote were preceded by a chaotic General Meeting.

Many members spoke during the open forum about their inability to participate in person and their support for hybrid meetings. “I’m a single parent, and it’s very hard for me to go to meetings. It’s exploitative to require that every member contribute their labor to collectively run this Coop, but doesn’t guarantee that everyone can vote,” Marina said. “This Coop is, and always was, undemocratic. This can be changed through adopting the hybrid GMs to make for a truly democratic and cooperative Coop world.”

Alyce Barr, a member since 1978, said: “Hybrid meetings maximize participation...Efforts to minimize participation have another name. It’s called voter suppression.”

Founding Coop member Donnie Rotkin reflected on the deeper stakes, acknowledging that many see a vote on hybrid meetings as a vote in favor of boycotting products from Israel as part of the Boycott, Divest, Sanctions (BDS) movement: “What I’m going to say is about conflict and not about hybrid meetings in general, but about all of this anti-democracy stuff. BDS lost two significant votes, big votes. We fought, we argued. We lost. The Coop went on.”

The turning point came when, at the end of the Open Forum, a Coop member moved to adjourn the General Meeting and proceed directly to the Board session. That motion triggered procedural confusion and live consultations of Robert’s rules of order, the guide to the General and Annual Meetings, and the Coop bylaws. At one point, the Chair Committee and Board members huddled onstage with the bylaws, attempting to determine whether such a motion was valid.

Procedural Confusion and Onstage Bylaw Review

“Tell them the page, what’s the rule again?” one chair committee member asked aloud.

The motion was introduced by a member named John, who stated: “I think the Board of Directors need more time to talk about getting the Coop through this governance crisis...Therefore, using section 21 of Robert’s rules, I move to adjourn this meeting and transition to the Board of Directors committee.”

A member from the floor seconded this motion, which was then contested by the Chair who ruled to continue with the General Meeting. Another member then moved to overrule the Chair, a motion that passed. Throughout this portion of the meeting, participants shouted from the floor for clarification and called on the Chair committee to project written versions of the motion to adjourn the meeting and the motion to overrule the Chair on screen before voting on each. Despite frequent pleas from the Chair committee for order, members waved paper fans, clapped and cheered while several General Coordinators shouted that, in their view, the GM and Board meeting could not be separated, and that adjourning one meant adjourning the other.

Both votes (to first overrule the Chair, then to move directly to the Board of Directors meeting) passed by an overwhelming majority, with more than 200 members voting in favor of each and about a dozen voting against, including several General Coordinators.

“This was the first ever meeting that we adjourned before the expected ending time,” said General Coordinator and Coop Cofounder Joe Holtz in an email following the meeting. “It is the first time that the Board took over a meeting and stopped asking to hear the advice of the members who were present.”

A Motion for the Board to Issue a Referendum

With the GM adjourned, the Board meeting formally began. Vafai made the motion to issue a mail ballot referendum on hybrid meetings (Agenda Item 884). The motion was seconded by Tim Hospedar.

Holtz and Imani Q’ryn both opposed the motion and argued at length that they felt

the Board had not sufficiently heard the advice of the members. As Chair Committee member David Moss explained in a follow-up interview: “There is a provision in the by-laws that says, at any time the board can decide to have a referendum. So, if you look at that sentence in isolation, then you can say, well, the Board can do whatever they want.” He expounded. “Another counter argument would be, well, at any time when there’s notice. I think the bylaws are poorly drafted on that point. That’s my personal opinion.”

During the Board meeting, Holtz argued that a mail ballot should only follow a properly noticed GM vote. “The Coop is built on discussion,” he said. “Every mail ballot that we’ve ever had has been from the advice of the members to have one.”

Q’ryn warned against setting a precedent that bypasses inclusive debate. “What we’re doing right here is very dangerous, and it changes the whole governance of the Coop,” she said, her voice quavering. “Hold your power. Do not give it to us.”

“We voted for you!” one member shouted, triggering applause.

Ultimately, the motion passed 3–2, with Vafai, Hospedar and Tess Brown-Lavoie voting in favor, and Holtz and Imani Q’ryn voting against. Board member Brandon West was absent.

What the Debate is Really About

While the procedural details and bylaws dominated much of the April GM, the deeper disagreement centers around three fundamental questions about how the Coop should function:

1. Are Coop members allowed to organize?

Chair Committee member David Moss criticized what he described as a coordinated effort by PSFC Members for Palestine (M4P) and some Board members to flood the

room and overrule the chair, calling it an “orchestrated strategy.”

“The meeting’s outcome was predetermined,” Moss wrote in a statement submitted to the *Gazette*. “M4P and three board members had effectively planned ahead to secure their preferred result.”

In contrast, Brown-Lavoie defended the organizing: “Mass-mobilization organizing is democracy,” she said. “The Board didn’t decide anything. The Board is enabling a decision that was brought...forth by members.”

2. Is the Board required to hear additional advice from members before issuing a referendum—or has it already heard enough?

Holtz argued that the Board had not yet heard the advice of the members in a formal setting:

“The Board hasn’t gotten the advice of the members yet,” he said. “We’re skipping that step.”

Brown-Lavoie countered that hundreds of emails, meeting turnout and months of engagement had already constituted clear member input: “It is incumbent on the Board to enable that listening to the will of the membership... And that falls outside of normal procedure because normal procedure had been blocked.”

3. Will the Board’s decision hold up?

Holtz raised doubts about whether the referendum would stand. “We have not followed [the process for] amending the bylaws,” he said. “And this is not the way you go about it.”

As of publication, Coop leadership had not announced any plan to challenge the referendum vote.

Following the GM, the *Gazette* asked the General Coordinators whether they consider the referendum vote to be valid under Coop bylaws; whether there are plans to challenge, delay, or block implementation of the vote or its results; and whether they plan to issue a formal statement to the membership regarding their position. The General Coordinators declined to comment on these questions.

Competing Views of Governance

In a follow-up conversation, Board Member Keyian Vafai defended the decision to issue a referendum as a necessary and overdue response to member demand. “After 17 months of delay and obstruction, it was clear that a referendum was the only way that the Board would be able to hear the advice of members on this important proposal,” he said.

“Our bylaws allow the Board, by a majority vote, to direct a mail ballot ‘on any matter.’” He continued, “Members will receive the referendum on hybrid GMs on the same ballot as the Board of Directors election, and this will allow the Board to hear the advice of the membership on a proposal that’s waited seventeen months for a vote.”

Chair Committee Member David Moss noted that while he and other Chairs support hybrid meetings in principle, the tactics used to reach the vote may signal a broader shift. “It will be interesting to see if M4P limits its ability to control PSFC governance to forcing votes on hybrid meetings and boycott-related issues, or if this signals a fundamental shift in Coop governance.”

Vafai, by contrast, sees the referendum as an overdue fulfillment of democratic process. “I have an obligation as a Board member to ensure that our Coop remains a member-run democracy,” he said. “To do that, we must make sure that the Board can hear the advice of our membership.”

Leila Darabi joined the Gazette as a reporter in 2016. She posts photos of the food

she makes with Coop ingredients on Instagram (@persian_ish); and cohosts Cringe-watchers, a podcast that uses binge-worthy TV as a lens to discuss sex, politics, and culture.