

THE NOVEMBER GENERAL MEETING: TIME FOR ANOTHER COOP LOCATION?

December 26, 2022



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

A COOP-WIDE VOTE ON PLANS FOR SECOND STORE



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

By Hayley Gorenberg

The November 29 General Meeting focused on balancing factors for access, equity and financial sustainability, thanks to a report kicking off a multiyear process to assess adding a new Coop site elsewhere in Brooklyn.

The Park Slope Food Coop Second Location Study Committee's Draft Report and Recommendations recognizes that the PSFC has, for nearly a half-century, "been bucking the system and showing the world how we provide good food at low prices for working members," and identifies key steps for expanding to a second Brooklyn site.

THE REPORT ON OPENING A SECOND COOP PROPOSES RAISING UP TO \$20 MILLION THROUGH MEMBER LOANS AND OUTSIDE FINANCING.

The analysis, conducted by a committee of members that included up to three general coordinators, finds that the proposed expansion could best be accomplished through long-term lease or purchase of a building roughly the same size as the existing store, to “allow us to double our pre-pandemic membership and revenue.”

WHERE SHOULD THE NEW BUILDING BE LOCATED?

The report recommends finding a site near Park Slope “where a critical mass of Coop members living close by could seed the new store as we recruit members from the neighborhood to join.” It also proposes raising up to \$20 million through Coop member loans and outside financing.

COOP VOTE ON THE ISSUE

To move ahead, the report recommends a membership-wide referendum to create a new Second Location Steering Committee to prepare for expansion, accompanied by relevant authorizations to let Coop officials implement the plan—and also to allow the new steering committee to “abandon the project if it is unworkable or undermines the financial strength of the Coop.”

The report was completed just as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold. It was presented now, as membership is burgeoning, Coop finances improving, and “it is clear now that we will emerge from the pandemic financially solvent.” As the introduction to the report states, “once the IRS pays us for the tax credits that we are entitled to, we will have close to \$6 million in cash on hand—\$1.8 million more than when the pandemic started. And, with folks returning to work their shifts, and the Coop once again admitting new households at a rapid clip, we are rebuilding our membership and sales. We have grown the Coop by 3,000 members for a total of 14,693 over the past 11 months, and net sales are up 10% through week 36 compared to the same point last year. ”

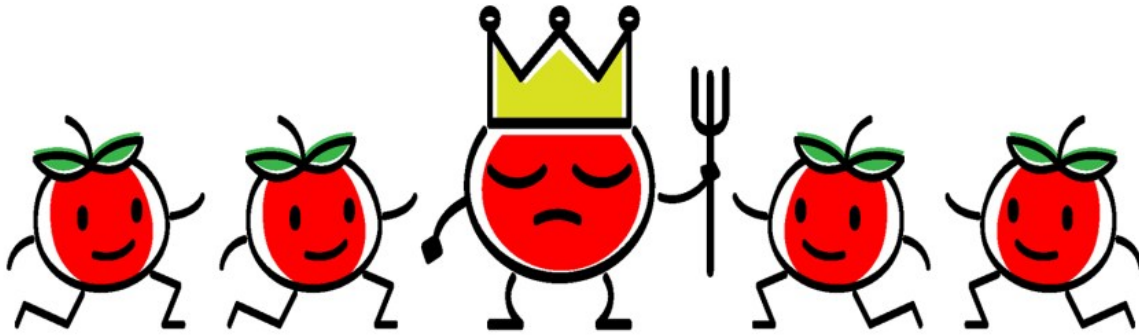


ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

LOTS OF QUESTIONS

Members who attended the November GM peppered the presenters with questions probing the location for a proposed second site, asking about the potential to spread the Coop’s benefits farther from Park Slope (perhaps even in another borough), and to consider locating the new site in a low-income community.

Presenters discussed the committee’s parameters for a viable second location, emphasizing the importance of a “fairly dense” population at least 1.5 miles from the Union Street location, with access to mass transit no less than a 10-minute walk and a ride of no more than 45 minutes. They also emphasized the importance of finding a “sweet spot” with proximity to existing members, such that the new site would have a base of Coop shoppers—but also far enough from Union Street to attract new members for whom the current location is inconvenient.

Many GM participants questioned whether prioritizing a mixed-income community adequately reflected the Coop’s commitment to diversity and inclusion. Presenters discussed the importance of financial viability, and particularly the significance of com-

munity members' purchasing power, and referenced one sample site the committee had looked at, which included space in a New York City Housing Authority building for low-income New Yorkers in a gentrifying neighborhood.

Member Michael Freedman-Schnapp, referencing his professional experience in the area, raised the need to "balance tensions," since a large number of members with very limited purchasing power, for example, using food stamps, would likely require a financial subsidy for the Coop.

MEMBERS AT THE NOVEMBER GM ASKED THE PRESENTERS QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LOCATION FOR A PROPOSED SECOND SITE.

Nonetheless, toward the end of the GM discussion, Study Committee Member Cary Hirschstein stated the committee was "hearing loud and clear" that a site enabling strong access for lower-income members was a priority.

The report document can be found [here](#), and the Second Location Committee can be reached via email at secondlocation@psfc.coop.

OTHER GM HIGHLIGHTS

The GM also featured an open forum discussion of the potential to expand use of home-compostable produce bags, along with an estimate by General Coordinator Joe Szladek that doing so would cost approximately \$50,000 annually.

General Coordinator Ann Herpel addressed questions about allowing visitors at the Coop, noting that capacity limits due to COVID-19 and sheer holiday crowding posed barriers to opening up access for visitors. Noting that demand for visitor access tends to coincide with Coop members' holiday shopping, Herpel said the General Coordinators are endeavoring "to make it a better system that works for everyone."

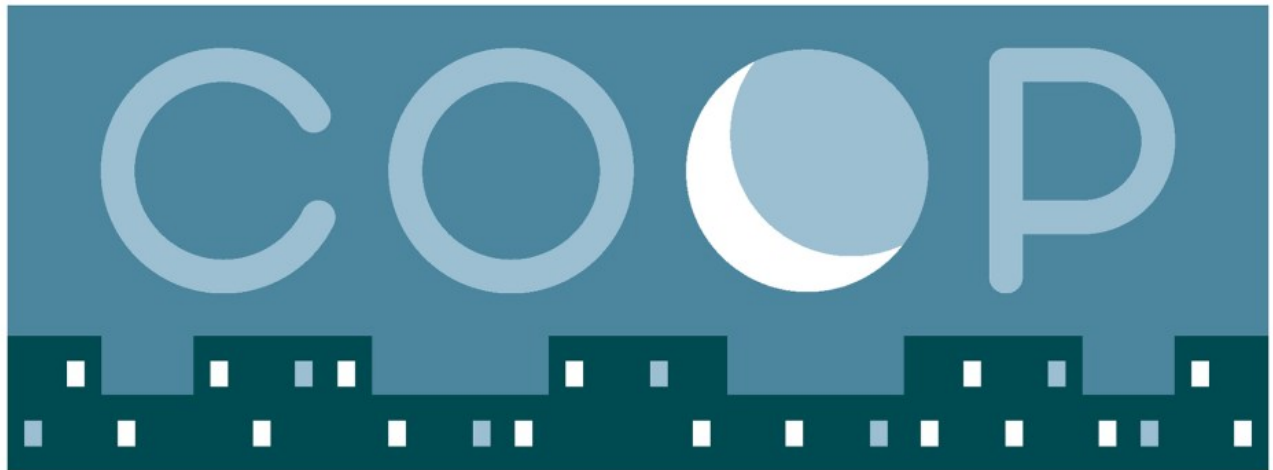


ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

In response to questions about extending hours, the coordinators reported that the Coop is low on member labor, as well as staff who want to work at night, as would be required to extend evening hours—and also that pandemic-era lifestyle rhythms seemed to have changed, such that the Coop was seeing reduced demand for night-time hours.

In response to a member question about whether the pandemic-triggered 25% markup might be reduced back to 21%, Holtz acknowledged that the general coordinator's report to the October GM had touched on meeting the criteria necessary to reduce the markup, but that financial analysis indicated it was "not prudent to do so at that time." Holtz noted the Coop's commitment to report back on the potential to change the markup in January 2023.

Hayley Gorenberg is a longtime Coop member and civil rights advocate.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW AND THE YEAR AHEAD—WHAT 2023 HOLDS FOR THE COOP

December 26, 2022





Masked members smile with their eyes as they stock the shelves.

By Travis Hartman

NOTABLE EVENTS IN 2022 AS REPORTED BY THE *LINEWAITERS' GAZETTE*

First let's look back, and then into the new year. In late 2021, the 20-month membership freeze was lifted, allowing membership to grow again. In February 2020, the Coop had over 17,000 members but membership had fallen to 12,555 by the end of November 2021. This is a 26 percent drop in less than two years, and the Coop's lowest member total since February 2004. When the freeze lifted, orientations were shifted online and the Coop enrolled more than 100 people on the first week of the new interim process.

JANUARY:

Those at the General Meeting learned that Coop finances have taken a significant turn to the positive, one major factor being the pandemic price increase. The increase

took the markup from 21 percent to the current 25 percent, which helped to close the operating loss short-term by bringing in an additional \$25,000 per week.

FEBRUARY:

Membership Coordinator Annette Laskaris retires after 21 years.

Russia declares war on Ukraine, causing shockwaves up and down the supply chain. The war impacts gas prices and causes transit issues, which in turn affects prices of the goods being transported. The region is known as the breadbasket of Europe, and the stresses of war caused the price for wheat per bushel to rise to the highest level in 14 years, surging nearly 80 percent over the previous year.



Tags await shopping members at the entrance door.

MARCH:

The Coop's membership climbs to 13,000 and has a backlog of 600 people who have completed orientation but who have not yet joined due to limited new member enroll-

ment appointments.

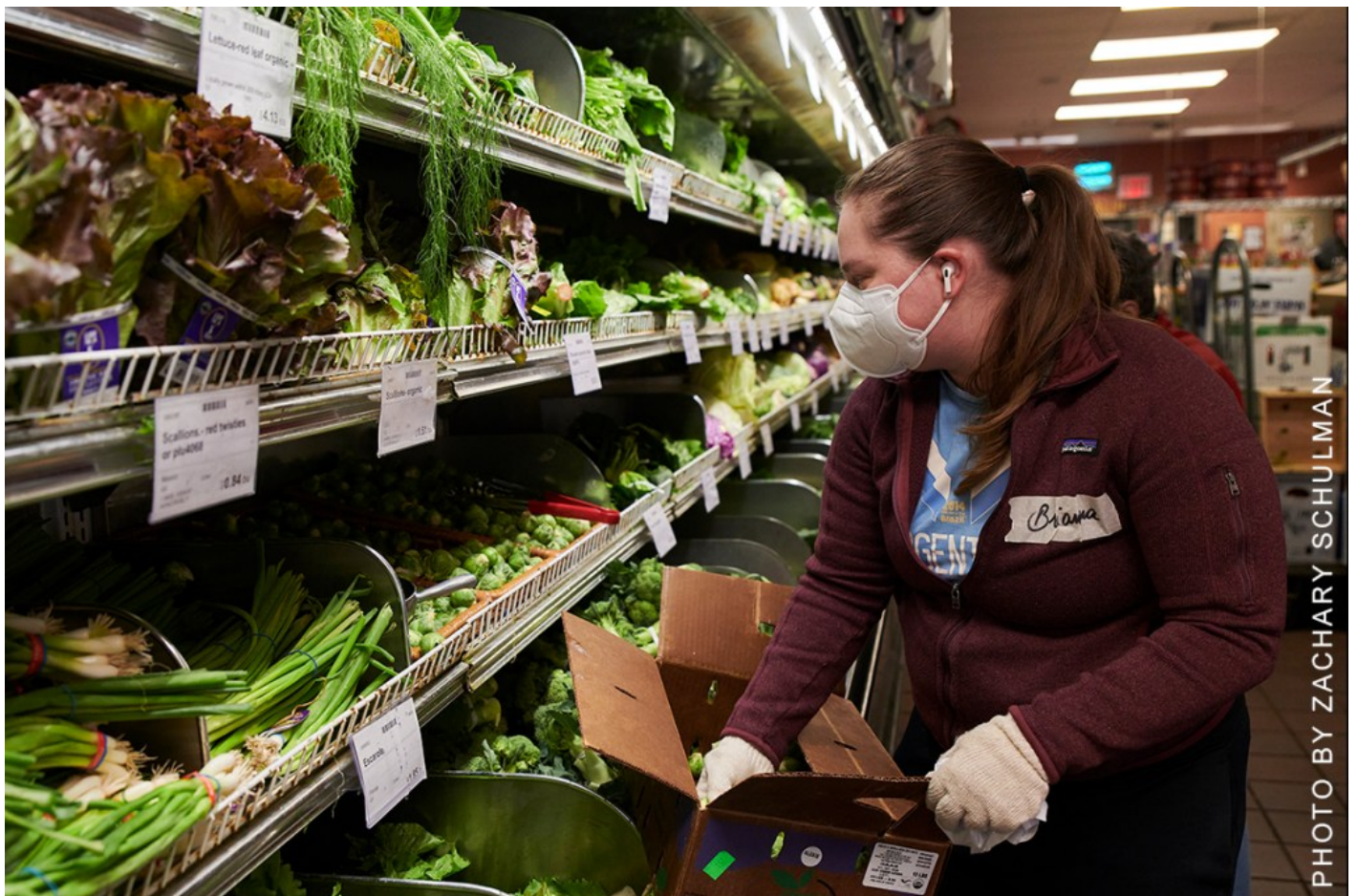
APRIL:

The member labor cycle expands to six weeks due to membership growth. Coop staff analyzes the over 10,000 working members and shifts available and finds that there are fewer shifts available than people who need them.

The Coop ushers in a new era with a sign at the entrance that flashes green and says “Next Member.”

JUNE:

The election of the Board of Officers for the Coop sees Imani Q’ryn elected president, Shayna Moliver elected vice president, Elizabeth Tobier elected secretary and Joe Holtz to serve as treasurer.



A member stocks produce.

JULY:

Coop General Manager and Treasurer Joe Holtz, who helped found the Coop in 1973, is suspended for 30 days without pay and barred from the Coop premises until July 31 for breaching COVID protocols by returning to work while awaiting test results.

AUGUST:

The Consumer Price Index Report put out by the U.S. Department of Labor records a 10.4 percent increase in overall food costs between June 2021 and June 2022, with more dramatic hikes in specific categories of food.

OCTOBER:

Two incidences of theft from the summer are reported at the Coop, one occurring in the stairwell that leads to the basement, the other occurring in staff lockers on the second floor. Signage warning members not to leave their valuables are posted in the stairwell and general coordinators discuss installation of locks on several doors to prevent access to staff spaces by potential bad actors.

ON THE MASKS FRONT, THE GENERAL COORDINATORS DECIDED IT WAS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE COOP TO KEEP THEM MANDATORY FOR THE TIME BEING.

NOVEMBER:

On November 1, the Coop complies with Mayor Eric Adams' new rules regarding COVID protocols at work. Members will no longer be required to show proof of vaccination to work a shift and unvaccinated workers may return to working their shifts.



A masked member peruses a cookbook.

WHAT MEMBERS ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO IN 2023:

Ally Levine, who has been a member for a couple years, visited the Coop several times before becoming a member and would really like to bring some of her friends to see the magic of the Coop. “I hope they bring back the visitor passes. But I also hope they leave the limit on how many people can be in the store,” she said, commenting on the weekend crowds that used to flood the aisles.

Ariel Schwartz is really looking forward to enjoying more produce and summer fruit. After only being a member for around a year, “I can’t really complain too much,” she said of the Coop’s current state. “It gets really busy sometimes but you can’t really change that.”

Phyllis Trout, who has been a Coop member for decades, is happy to experience the

camaraderie of working on a squad again. “Working with people and getting to know people, it’s always a joy!” she said.

ONE MEMBER SAYS SHE HOPES THEY BRING BACK THE VISITOR PASSES.

Trout’s friend Lisa Wilde, who has been with the Coop for almost 20 years, is hoping that the Coop will be able to bring back more slots for compost shifts in 2023. She said that during the pandemic the amount of food waste the Coop has been able to compost was reduced for various reasons. “The hope is for more external sites to become available and more member work slots for composting. It saves the Coop money, because we have to pay for the compost to be taken away. Food waste is a huge issue!”

Jeffery Birnbaum has one thought for what the Coop should do in 2023: “Get rid of the masks,” he said. “For the most part the Coop is full of amazing compassion in general and the more I work the more I realize the camaraderie and support of the staff.” But he feels like the masking policy is not effective. “Wearing two masks maybe, but one is not that useful.”

The Coop took a member poll in November of 2022 to assess the overall interest in the mask policy, and while a very slight majority favored removing the mandatory wearing of masks, the general coordinators decided it was in the best interest of the member population to keep the policy in place for the time being.

Travis Hartman has been a Coop member for over 10 years and likes looking for the why behind the who, what, when and where.



PHOTO BY ZACHARY SCHULMAN

A member stocks beer.

RETAILING 101: COOL STUFF AT END OF THE AISLE

December 26, 2022



By Travis Hartman

THE ENDCAP IS WHERE YOUR SHOPPING SHOULD START

As shoppers wind their way through the Coop, ticking items off a shopping list, eyes wander up and down the aisle among a wide array of items, looking for what they need. When they exit certain aisles, they may encounter a treasure trove of new items, potential gifts and delightful things from around the world, curated and displayed on the shelf at the end, known as the endcap.



PHOTO BY JOHN MIDGLEY

Endcaps like this one can boost sales significantly for the items it features.

ENDCAP BASICS

In normal stores, endcaps are highly prized real estate, and stores often charge a premium to display items on them. Actual numbers are hard to pin down, but anecdotal evidence from 2018 points to somewhere between \$6 billion and \$8 billion charged for placement each year in the United States. This is because endcaps punch far above their weight in sales. According to a study done in 2009, in a typical store, only about 2% of total items are displayed on endcaps, but the items placed there result in around 30% of total sales. Supermarket research from the last 50 years has established that endcaps can increase an item's sales from between 23% to as high as over an 1,000% increase.

Almost every aisle in the Coop has shelving that faces out at the end, but the Coop has designated three endcaps that feature new and interesting items for shoppers, where items are rotated and updated frequently. Unlike most stores, the Coop does not charge distributors to place items on endcaps. The three endcaps are referred to as the “new products” endcap (across from the eggs), the chocolate endcap (at the front of aisle 6/7) and the specialty, or fancy, food endcap (across from the chicken case).



PHOTO BY JOHN MIDGLEY

Fancy food buyer Yuri Weber poses in front of the fancy sauces and sausages.

YURI'S TAKE

Yuri Weber, the buyer for the fancy foods endcap, explained the difference between the selections: "For the front endcap, it's new products (and sometimes mis-picks from distributors) and things that just don't quite fit anyplace else—water filter systems, for example."

YURI WEBER SAYS THAT THE FANCY FOOD ENDCAP SHOULD CONTAIN ITEMS THAT WOULDN'T NORMALLY SHOW UP WRITTEN ON YOUR SHOPPING LIST BUT, ONCE YOU'VE SEEN THEM, ARE HARD TO RESIST.

Treats? "The chocolate endcap is fancy chocolate and seasonal sweets," Weber said. "The fancy food endcap usually has a smattering of local products, high-end olive oils, vinegars and hot sauces that rotate in and out. It also acts as an extension of the cheese department, in that we buy cheese accompaniments that would be sold at the cheese counter of more traditional stores."



Colorful chocolate bars entice customers on the endcap near the checkout.

GIFTS AND SHOPPING SEASONS

Weber has been stocking the fancy foods endcap since 2008, when he inherited it along with the cheese department. His philosophy for the fancy food endcap is that it should contain items that wouldn't normally show up written on your shopping list but, once you've seen them, are hard to resist. Items that you might purchase as gifts or simply on impulse. He has a rough schedule for varying items corresponding with the time of year, like BBQ sauce in the summer and fancy olive oil and vinegar and gift boxes during the holidays.

"I'm always on the lookout for new items either locally produced or specialty from Europe that members would be interested in. These are either discovered by (Coop cheese specialist) Britt [Henriksson] or myself, recommended by members or distributors," Weber said.

ENDCAPS HOLD A TREASURE TROVE OF NEW ITEMS, POTENTIAL GIFTS AND DELIGHTFUL ITEMS FROM AROUND THE WORLD.

WHAT'S YOUR FANCY?

Items on the fancy food endcap don't normally make their way into the general circulation of the store, but there have been some exceptions when it just made sense and the items have become mainstream enough to start getting scribbled onto shopping lists. The chili crisp condiment is one that became so popular that it transitioned to a regular item this year, migrating to aisle 6B with the other ethnic condiments. "I think it was an item that captured the zeitgeist for some reason," said Weber. "That and it's really tasty."



Fancy hot sauces are lined up on an endcap near the express checkout.

Sometimes Weber finds that the fancy foods shelf is just too small to hold all the fancy foods. At one point he pulled in a wide variety of Rancho Gordo beans that have now found a home in aisle 6: Black Garbanzo, Christmas Lima, Cranberry, Domingo Rojo, Mayocoba, Royal Corona, Pozole and Wild Rice. "I tried to pick beans that were either different from what we sold in the bulk aisle or what members had suggested in our Instagram feed," said Weber.

Weber says the biggest challenges stocking the fancy foods endcap are that all the prices need to be applied with a price gun, and that the area can get congested when the express line snakes around. But this may be a boon to the shopper waiting in line, who can peruse some of the finest items from around the world while waiting to check out.

Editor's Note: Since this article was written, there is a new endcap that features discounted food. Located at the back end of aisles four and five, across from the yogurt, the selections here change frequently.

Travis Hartman has been a Coop member for over 10 years and likes trying to find the why behind the who, what, when and where.

ONE MEMBER'S ROLE IN TAKING THE GAZETTE FULLY ONLINE

December 26, 2022



PHOTO BY JOHN MIDGLEY

GOING MOBILE: MATTHEW LANDFIELD AND THE DIGITIZATION OF THE *LINEWAITERS' GAZETTE*

By Liora Fishman

In 2002, Matthew Landfield found himself living just a stone's throw away from the Coop, in an apartment on Union and 5th Avenue. Though he was working in publishing, Landfield fulfilled his membership duties in the office upstairs, processing new members. What the Coop community and Landfield himself didn't know was that, in a few short years, he would become a pivotal member of the *Linewaiters' Gazette*. "At that time [that I joined the Coop], I was working in magazine publishing. And as I was reading the *Gazette*, I saw that they were looking for someone with publishing experience," Landfield said of his early beginnings on the publication.

Landfield joined the staff of the *Gazette* and helped with the layout of the print publication for more than 18 years. As a paper publication, the *Gazette* was prepared by Coop members and sent to an outside vendor for printing. "Every time it was printed, a massive stack of papers would be delivered and distributed to members," Landfield recalled.



PHOTO BY JOHN MIDGLEY

Matt Landfield poses with an old print edition of the *Gazette*.

Yet, in 2020, the Coop, the *Gazette* and much of our lives came to a screeching halt because of the pandemic. “I was an art director at the time,” Landfield said, speaking of the tumultuous months of the spring of 2020. “Member labor had been suspended. There was a big question of what do we do? Where do we go from here?”

UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

With the city eerily quiet, the hum of traffic and pedestrian chatter briefly replaced by banging pots and pans in the evening and otherwise not much else, the fate of the Coop and the *Linewaiters’ Gazette* hung in the balance. The paper had relied, in part, on in-person communication and coordination—a task that felt pretty daunting and frightening due to the pandemic.

“[COORDINATING EDITOR NANCY ROSENBERG] CALLED ME AND SAID SHE WANTED TO CONTINUE PUBLISHING THE *GAZETTE*—ON THE INTERNET”

—MATTHEW LANDFIELD

“Long before COVID, there had been a couple conversations about what it would mean to take the *Gazette* digital,” Landfield said. Yet these conversations had been in the abstract, and hadn’t resolved the additional manpower and work that digitization would require. The pivotal moment came in the summer of 2020, when *Gazette* Coordinating Editor Nancy Rosenberg decided that, with the pandemic still hanging over our heads, taking the publication digital was no longer an abstract idea but a critical one.

“Nancy called me and said she wanted to continue publishing the *Gazette*—on the internet,” Landfield recounted. “And I thought, OK, that sounds like a good idea, but we’d need to figure out how, exactly, to do it.” Other members of the *Gazette* team

joined in and helped Landfield and Rosenberg figure out how to keep the newsletter running.



Landfield sits at a computer in the Coop offices.

You may, at this point, wonder why exactly it was so important to the coordinating editors to take the *Gazette* digital at a time when so many other things (the fate of the world, perhaps) felt more pressing. After all, the Coop itself was not yet back to normal business. But it was the *Gazette*'s granularity and locality that made its digitization feel so urgent: It provided a sense of normalcy. "There is a need for community to be connected, to communicate with each other," Landfield explained. And so the process began.

THE WORK BEGINS

"We talked to everyone that touched the *Gazette*—coordinators, reporters—to figure out what we'd need to do this, and what we would lose by doing this," Landfield said.

Pre-pandemic Coop members will recall that the *Linewaiters' Gazette* contained classifieds, calendars and ads that were not able to be carried over to its digital version.

What was born of out this undertaking was a skeleton version of the *Gazette*, but a skeleton that represented the very core of the publication: articles by reporters, letters to the editor and member submissions. "It represents an archive of the Coop's history, going all the way back to the beginning," Landfield said.

Throughout the spring and summer of 2020, the *Linewaiters' Gazette* was still being published entirely by members, despite member labor being suspended. But those working at the *Gazette* at the time felt that it was a cause worthy of the late, thankless hours. "The whole world was going through this enormous transition," Landfield explained, "and there were very important things to keep the community informed about."

As so often happens, the *Gazette's* technological transition led to additional innovations. As art director, Landfield took the opportunity to experiment with content and explore opportunities: "We tried to incorporate a new kind of flavor to the paper, including color, more photographs, new illustrations, and new types of columns like recipe columns," Landfield explained. He wanted to be sure that they were "using this platform for what it really could do."



Landfield lounges next to another Coop print favorite—the cookbooks section.

A FATE UNKNOWN

In the fall of 2020, the Coop hired members as temporary staff until member labor came back.

“I wasn’t interested in creating some sort of second class of worker, which is what I was concerned is what we were approaching,” Landfield said. “It wasn’t clear to us when member labor would come back, and it didn’t make sense to expect people to volunteer their time to publish the *Gazette* without any timeline for return to the Coop.”

But when it became clear that member labor would, in fact, return, Coordinating Editors Nancy Rosenberg and Carey Meyers agreed that it was time to relaunch the *Gazette*—this time fully digital.

BACK IN ACTION

Prior to member labor restarting, the *Gazette* was operating as an entirely volunteer-run publication. Now it would require the infrastructure to put member labor to work. Contributors needed to work in WordPress at the same time, collaborate via email, and ultimately present a cohesive and vibrant publication that was entirely digital, yet still captured the essence of the Coop and the *Gazette* itself.

In the spring of 2021, the *Gazette* relaunched with a new structure and workflow to allow for a 70-person team to collaborate online. After months of backend work and writing, the publication relaunched for Coop readers in the fall of 2021.

“It was kind of crazy,” Landfield remembered. “There were financial decisions to take into account, logistics to consider when it came to allowing members to collaborate on this kind of work remotely...but I did it—I built the digital infrastructure,” Landfield said, acknowledging that his work was no small feat—and that it went above and beyond what is expected of a Coop member.

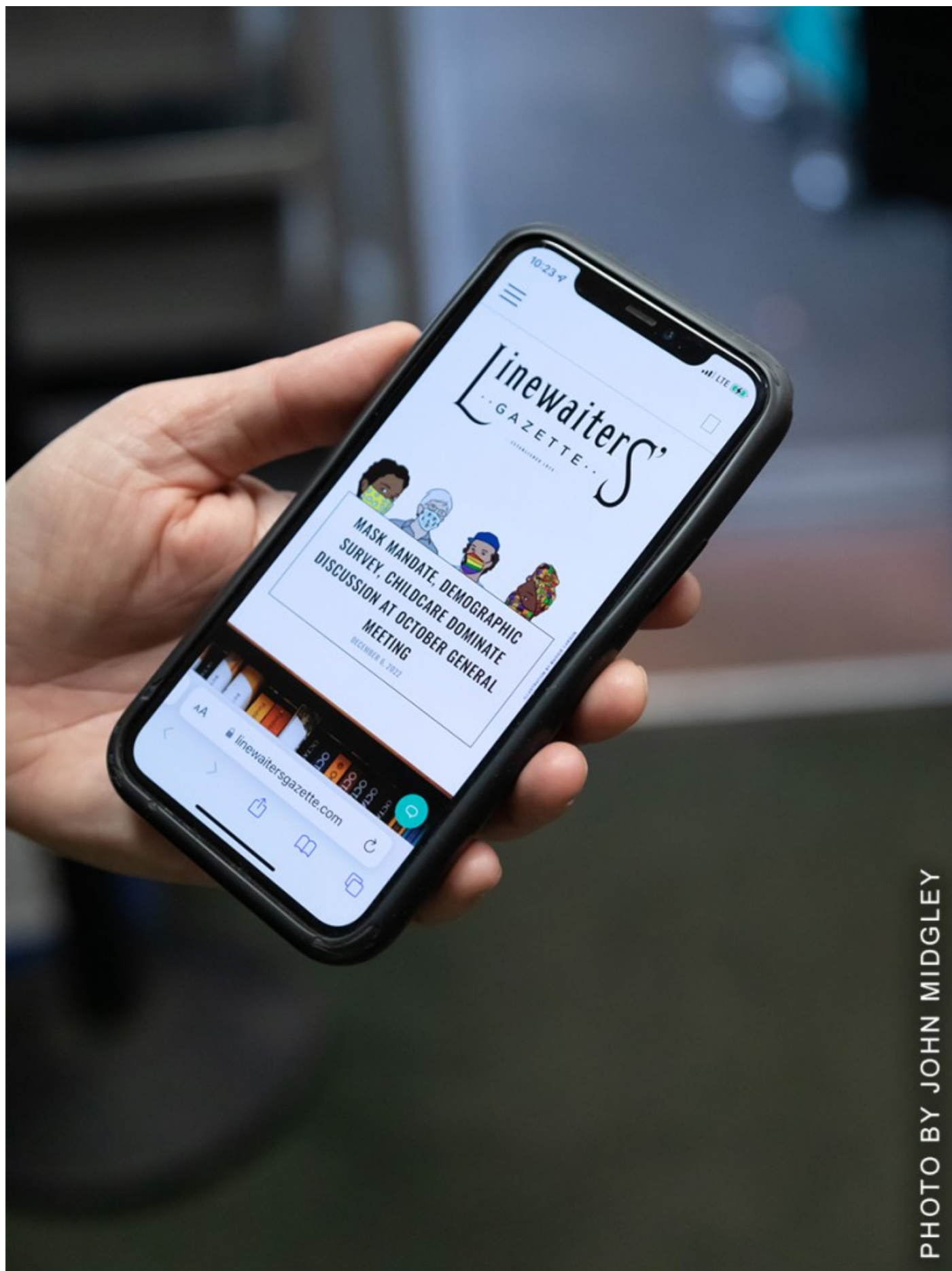


PHOTO BY JOHN MIDGLEY

A phone displays the new digital *Gazette*.

THINKING BACK

Landfield is stepping down from his role as coordinating editor of the *Linewaiters' Gazette* this year. "I'm a small business owner, and with the pandemic, I had time on my hands," Landfield explained. "But now I need to care for my business and myself."

It's a big shift for the publication: What does a digital *Gazette* look like without the man who built that infrastructure? Yet Landfield is confident that he leaves the publication not only in good hands but in a self-sufficient place.

THE PSFC IS NOT JUST A GROCERY STORE, IT IS A COMMUNITY.

—MATTHEW LANDFIELD

"It has not been the easiest process," Landfield said of the digital migration. "Much of this was pulled together with spit and chewing gum at first. I'm proud of the work that's been done, and the publication seems to be functioning without too much input from me—which to me is a sign that I did what I set out to do: to transition the publication from a place of complete cessation to a sustainable place."

"The *Gazette* went from being defunct completely, to a functioning, viable publication, Landfield said. "[The staff] all worked together to create it and I'm very proud of having been a part of that."



Signs around the Coop tout the digital publication.

Landfield intends on spending more time with his family and taking more time to leave the city and explore upstate. But the Coop and the *Gazette* itself have left a lasting impression on him. When asked what lessons he's taken away from his experience in the Coop for so many years, as well as the *Gazette*, Landfield said: "The PSFC is not just a grocery store, it is a community. And that community is bound by food, but it is also a community that exists online—it needs to be connected and stay connected. The online *Gazette* is an opportunity to do that. And there's still so much more that can be done."

In the true spirit of the Coop, Landfield also mentioned that the digital migration would not have been possible with his counterparts. "I would have never done any of this without Nancy Rosenberg," Landfield said firmly. "She did all of the hard labor of mobilizing the staff, and seeing her do that was remarkable."

Landfield's tenure at the *Gazette* is one of lasting significance. His 20-plus years of

service for the publication is impressive alone, but, with the digital migration of the *Gazette*, he was critical to its resurgence in the wake of the pandemic. It cannot be understated how important that last bit is. Throughout the pandemic, the *Linewaiters' Gazette* stood for community, consistency, and discourse. Now, with Landfield's leadership, it's a digitized archive of the Coop and its members throughout some of the most tumultuous times in history.

Yet for Landfield, it's the spirit and the ethos of the *Gazette* that he's most proud of. "The *Gazette* is a representation of the Coop's ethos of cooperation. It is a publication that is the product of a community collaborating with one another. It has produced excellence, and it represents the best of what the Coop is: a cooperative project."

Before our conversation concluded, Landfield underscored his enduring sentiment, one that can speak to his unyielding dedication to the Coop and the *Gazette* itself: "The Coop is a community first—not just a physical place."

Liora Fishman lives in Prospect Heights. She's been a Coop member since 2021.

PUZZLE

December 26, 2022



HAPPY
NEW
YEAR

The Crossword

David Levinson Wilk

FILM NIGHT IS BACK

December 26, 2022



FEATURING COOP MEMBERS WORKING IN THE BUSINESS

By Gabriel Rhodes

If you're a fan of cinema in any form, you might be pleased to learn that the Coop has a multitude of filmmakers among its ranks. From directors to editors, producers to set designers, gaffers to grips, we got it all.

Almost 10 years ago, the Coop Film Night Committee was formed to showcase the work of filmmakers from the Coop. Since then we've screened over 100 films of all shapes and sizes – from animation to documentary, feature narratives to short music videos. We feel that the Coop's creative community should be celebrated and shared, and it's our job to bring their work to you.

Once a month we showcase films that count Coop members among their key crew. We follow our screenings with a Q&A sessions featuring those key contributors so Coop members can dialogue directly with the filmmakers and learn about their creative process. It is also our intention to provide a venue for films that might fall outside of traditional distribution networks to be seen, e.g., small-budget, independent productions by filmmakers who are cutting their teeth or who might see filmmaking as more of a hobby than a career. Our hope is that these filmmakers are buoyed by the appreciative Coop audience and encouraged to make more work.

AT THE COOP - FROM DIRECTORS TO EDITORS, PRODUCERS TO SET DESIGNERS, GAFFERS TO GRIPS, WE GOT IT ALL.

When the pandemic started, our screening room in the 2nd-floor Meeting Space went dark. However, we are now prepared to restart our monthly screening series after a nearly 3-year hiatus. We will be holding future screenings remotely on Zoom. All screenings will still be followed by a Q&A with the filmmakers, and it is our hope that the format change will still feel as intimate and supportive as our in-person screenings were. Most of the films we will be screening are not available on other streaming services. We are not another version of Netflix. We are community cinema, powered by the creative capital of the Coop members!

Our first screening will be ***My Kid Could Paint That***, a 2007 feature documentary by Amir Bar-Lev. For more information about the film and the screening, please see the ad at the bottom of this article.

To receive the screening link or be included on our email Listserve for future screening announcements, please send a request to be added to: jlymiller@me.com.

To submit films for screening consideration, please email a link to the film with a short synopsis and filmmakers' bio to: gabrielrhodes@me.com.

FILM
NIGHT

JANUARY 11 - 7PM



My Kid Could Paint That

In the span of only a few months, 4-year-old Marla Olmstead rocketed from total obscurity into international renown – and sold over \$300,000 dollar's worth of paintings. She was compared to Kandinsky and Pollock, and called "a budding Picasso." From the beginning, many faulted her parents for exposing Marla to the glare of the media and accused a couple of exploiting their daughter for financial gain.

And then, five months into Marla's new life as a celebrity and just short of her fifth birthday, a 60 Minutes exposé suggested that the paintings were painted by her father. As quickly as the public built Marla up, they tore her down.

This documentary will be screened over Zoom on **Thursday, January 11th, at 7 pm.** Director Amir Bar-Lev will be present for a Q&A after the screening.

Amir Bar-Lev's directorial credits include *Fighter* (2001), *My Kid Could Paint That* (2007), the Emmy Award-winning *The Tillman Story* (2010), *Happy Valley* (2014), and *Long Strange Trip* (2017). Bar-Lev also co-produced the 2009 Academy Award Nominee *Trouble The Water*.

To receive the screening link or be included on our email Listserv for future screening announcements, please send a request to be added to: jlymiller@me.com

Views expressed by the presenter do not necessarily represent the Park Slope Coop

Park Slope Food COOP 782 Union St., Brooklyn, NY 11215 (btwn 6th & 7th Ave.) • (718) 622-0560

SAFE FOOD COMMITTEE REPORT

December 26, 2022



PLOW TO PLATE PRESENTS: *THIS ORGANIC LIFE—HAWTHORNE VALLEY FARM*

By Adam Rabiner

This Organic Life is a television series found on HUDSY, a community-inspired app and media platform with a mission to bring the Hudson Valley “closer together online and in-person, fostering connection in innovative, collaborative and unique ways.” Episode one, hosted by Wen-Jay Ying, owner and founder of Local Roots NYC, focuses on Hawthorne Valley Farm in Ghent, New York. In the course of Wen-Jay’s visit to the farm, she talks to Executive Director Martin Ping, Field Vegetable and CSA Manager Todd Newlin, Dairy Herd Manager Jess Brobst and Creamery Manager Jeremy Shapiro. These conversations show that Hawthorne Valley Farm similarly fosters connection, community and innovation through its biodynamic and regenerative farming,

farm store, Waldorf school and educational programs.

Ping, who oversees the whole operation, provides the big picture: a farm striving to create a balance between the land, animals, plants and people—all the more challenging due to climate change and COVID. He explains the need for imagination to attempt this balance. The farm seeks to foster connections among co-workers, consumers, producers and members of the community, near and far. Like our own Food Coop, Ping sees the exchange of goods and services as being about relationships, not simply transactions. When you personally know the farmers who produce your food, the nourishment you receive from a meal exceeds its nutritional value. Ping rejects the market-based paradigms of industrial agriculture focused exclusively on balance sheets and profitability, and looks beyond them to determine the farm's return on investment. Admiring the beautiful Berkshire mountains in the distance, he points to his favorite peak, spreads his arms and pronounces that he is among the one-tenth of one percent—one of the wealthiest men on the planet.

THE CYCLE OF LIFE ON A FARM

Todd Newlin explains how the farm makes compost, laying piles of food waste and other organic matter in covered windrows. The compost is not for direct use on any vegetable crop but for cover crops which will eventually be plowed into the earth in preparation for the subsequent vegetables. The cover crop's purpose is not simply to strengthen the soil and hold the land in place, but also to enrich the soil by adding organic matter like nitrogen. Newlin is harking back to the farming practices of the original Native American stewards of the land, who respected and replicated the natural systems, which resemble a self-feeding circle. He concedes that it is tough but worth it: when achieved, the land is more resilient and the vegetables, with roots deep in the rich soil, taste better.

Wen-Jay was fortunate to visit Jess Brobst on the very morning that Bertha gave birth to a baby bull. Jess explains that the act of giving birth turned Bertha into a cow. Before that, she was actually a heifer. Bertha, who still has her placenta attached, is

part of the B line. Her baby's name will start with B to better track its lineage. The placenta, which is nutritionally rich, will be left for Bertha to eat if she desires. Jess hypothesizes that some cows do this instinctually, to clean up the birth site and keep predators away. If not eaten, it will be added to the compost heap. Jess points out a lame bull lying nearby who may be put down if he cannot recover. She then points at the newborn (perhaps to be named Billie) and says these two animals are a great example of the cycle of life on a farm.

THE HUDSON VALLEY IS A MAJOR SUPPLIER OF OUR COOP

Jeremy Shapiro demonstrates how Hawthorne Valley milks its cows, with a mechanical suction device attached to the teats on the udder. Each cow can give anywhere from five to ten gallons a day, more or less, depending on the soil and grass or particular cow. He explains that smaller dairy farmers have a hard time competing with larger operations due to the cost structures and lack of economies of scale. He observes that the dairy industry as a whole is suffering from less demand due to changing dietary habits and the belief that cows contribute disproportionately to methane production and global warming.

One can only look forward to future episodes featuring Gopal, Kinderhook and Deep Roots farms. We are fortunate that the Hudson Valley is a major supplier of our Coop.

This Organic Life—Hawthorne Valley Farm, coming up on Tuesday, January 10, 2023, at 7 p.m.

Screening link: <https://plowtoplatefilms.weebly.com/upcoming-events.html>