LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

October 17, 2023



RE: GENERAL MEETINGS

Members and leadership,

Some greet in-person General Meetings as a “return to normal.” They also carry disappointment. Months ago, leadership was asked to implement a hybrid solution [of virtual and in-person attendance]. Sadly, there’s no indication that this possibility was considered nor is it clear that the membership actually voted for one or the other option (though I may have missed it).

In person has advantages and advocacy. So does the greater inclusion facilitated by hybrid. What is the greater good for our community? With thousands of members, we need greater participation at meetings to consider important, financially impactful or long-range matters.

In recent months, generally fewer than 150 members dialed in, sometimes less than 90. Yet I attended more meetings than in the decade preceding the pandemic because of online access. Will in-person meetings burgeon? It is fair to speculate that a fair number of members attended only to garner two work credits.

After 13 years being engaged yet never living close by, my status is now “retired.” Shopping, periodically working a shift (not required but enjoyed) and attending monthly evening meetings is impractical for me. This decision lacks flexibility. Even post-2019, circumstances were unchanged. Isn’t there wisdom in better access electronically? Why not avail ourselves of all opportunities? If in-person carries more value, then let the new one-credit policy apply to in-person attendence, but don’t deny participation to the rest.

Respectfully,
Amita Rodman

Editors’ note: Amita Rodman is incorrect in characterizing hybrid meetings as something the General Coordinators can just implement. The GCs explained several times that virtual meetings were an emergency measure during COVID and that the GCs have been unwinding emergency measures. They also stated that members can submit an agenda item to discuss a hybrid meeting format. In addition, the Chair Commit-

tee stated that they were not yet prepared to run a hybrid meeting, and that they would need more people, more equipment and more time to work on how the GM would function effectively.

LET'S VOTE ON MASKED DAYS—WITH A REMOTE OPTION

To the Editor,

I love the Coop and have been a member for many years, but the lifting of the mask mandate has made the Coop a less accessible space for people who, like me, are disabled, immunocompromised, live in a household with others who are disabled or immunocompromised or for any other reason want or need to limit their potential for COVID exposure. The proposal discussed at the September General Meeting—mandating masking two days a week—would help make the Coop a safer space for everyone and would be easy to implement, just like the carrot tags that limit capacity only on certain days. Those who strongly don't want to mask could shop five days a week, while the other two days could be COVID-safer spaces for anyone who needs to mask or is fine with donning a mask to support their fellow Coop members. This would also allow COVID-cautious members to choose work shifts that require masking and help reduce the cumulative risks of the Coop staff who keep the Coop running day in and day out.

Please put this item up for a vote at an upcoming GM—and please create an option for remote participation for that meeting (and in general). Without a remote option and with no mask mandate at the newly in-person GMs, many of the people for whom masked days would be most important will be kept out of the conversation and effectively disfranchised. We are part of the Coop community too. Please vote to make the Coop a safer space for us and let us have a voice in the process.

Adrien Lorenzo Weibgen

Note from General Coordinator Ann Herpel: As I suggested at September's GM, there is an option for all members to vote on a proposal for masking: a Coop-wide referendum. Holding a referendum is the solution, as every member would receive a ballot and could vote on this important issue, especially those who cannot attend an in--person meeting due to health reasons. If a member wants to have a referendum on this subject, they are welcome to place an item on the agenda of a future GM.