

# HOW A COOP MEMBERSHIP BECAME THE HOT TICKET

December 19, 2023



By Anita Bushell

Has joining the Coop become as hard as getting Springsteen tickets?

Several of my friends and neighbors wish to join the Coop but recount stories of frustrating midnight computer sessions as they try—and fail—to sign up for new member enrollment, the first step to becoming a member.

In a simpler era, you registered for an orientation session, which included a tour, and paid your member-owner equity investment, all of which now seems quite quaint. In the same way debit cards have replaced checks at the Coop, technology has come to

supplant some of the in-person steps.

Apart from tech, what's changed since my family joined the Coop in 1997, when the highest member numbers were in the 19,000s—the most recent new member number issued was 93,534, according to Membership Coordinator Matt Hoagland. Is it harder to join post pandemic or does it just seem so?

I spoke with Membership Coordinator Karen Mancuso, who said the Coop “is limited by our relatively small space so we have to limit the number of people who can join, and we do that by limiting the number of spots available for new-member enrollments.”

RIGHT NOW, WE ARE AVERAGING 15-20 MEMBERS LEAVING PER WEEK. WE ARE AVERAGING 40-50 MEMBERS JOINING PER WEEK.

The General Coordinators have always strived to balance the number of members with available workslots and the Coop's shopping capacity. As far back as 2009, when pre-registration became mandatory to attend orientation, the number of orientation spots has been modulated based on these needs. The current pause on new members is a result of this need for balance, and it reflects the new digitization of the member labor system.

So, let's compare getting Bruce Springsteen tickets—which I attempted to do last summer—to the mechanics of joining the Coop.

Getting Springsteen seats, back in the days of paper tickets, also meant showing up in person, waiting in line—possibly overnight in a tent—and eventually emerging victorious the next morning, with envelope in hand. More recently, my first step was logging on to the Ticketmaster website and becoming a “Verified Fan” (to prove I wasn't a robot or reseller). I received an email with a slot—a specific date and time—when I

could buy tickets. All in all, two steps. Pretty straightforward, unless Ticketmaster crashed as it did for Taylor Swift's *Eras* tour. Luckily, I was able to complete all the steps.

Now let's look at joining the Coop. First, you need to go to FoodCoop.com and read "The Essentials of Coop Membership." Next, you watch a brief video. Then you must read the Coop "Joining Agreements." All doable. The final step, scheduling an in-person appointment, is where things get a little tricky. Currently, the Coop's web page says: "In-person appointments are currently paused. We plan to resume in-person appointments in January 2024. Please check back in the New Year."

At this point, we have to talk about some numbers. According to General Coordinator Ann Herpel, the Coop currently has 15,821 active members, a figure which does not include those who are on a "definite leave of absence or unassigned."

"Members on a leave of absence cannot shop at the Coop during their leave, and we do not count them in our membership or shopping numbers," Herpel says. "Unassigned members are not counted in the membership numbers but could still shop if they have a grace period or use a suspension override pass." Members become unassigned when they are three or more cycles behind. They remain unassigned for 12 weeks and if they do not schedule and complete work they will be moved to "dormant" status. Once a member is dormant, they no longer have access to Member Services, cannot schedule shifts or shop and would need to rejoin the Coop, if they were interested."

Anyone who worked and shopped at the Coop pre-pandemic remembers how crowded it got. In the most recent issue of the *Linewaiters' Gazette*, longtime Coop member Bryce Komaroff said, "My number one issue with shopping before the pandemic was that you just couldn't fit anywhere. Now that things are a little more regulated, I feel like it's a better shopping experience."

## THE FINAL STEP, SCHEDULING AN IN-PERSON APPOINTMENT, IS WHERE THINGS GET A LITTLE TRICKY.

Now let's look at some more numbers. When I asked about how many members are leaving versus how many are joining, Herpel gave me statistics for the last six months:

"Right now, we are averaging 15-20 members leaving per week. We are averaging 40-50 members joining per week," although these numbers tend to diminish in the winter.

So, when your friends and neighbors vent their frustration at not being able to currently join the Coop, you can tell them the reason is that we are currently striking a good balance between workers, shoppers, and the physical limitations of the space. 15,821 current members fill all the available workslots. Due to the low member turnover, the number of admitted members over the past six months has been averaging 40-50 a week, leaving more than 1,800 people who have registered to take the orientation. Only a small fraction of those are able to secure an appointment.

The silver lining of the pandemic is that the member labor system has been optimized. In the past, member attendance at shifts varied wildly resulting in overbooking to ensure there was enough labor to, say, unload the trucks and stock the shelves. Currently, "the self-management system," says Herpel, "of scheduling and canceling efficiently keeps the Coop running at optimal staffing. Almost every cancellation gets filled by someone looking to work. It's remarkably stable and provides a steady, known quantity of member-workers."

Should your friends and neighbors give up? Absolutely not. Persistence always pays off. It just takes time. Come the new year, new appointments will open up again as attrition allows. From the Springsteen standpoint, there are only so many seats at so

many stadiums that can be sold. Currently the Coop is a sold-out tour. With concerts, promoters can add dates when the demand is high but eventually they run out of time and space to stage more shows. In the end, the Coop is currently as popular—and sold out—as a Taylor Swift show.

Oh, one more Springsteen note: I wasn't able to get my first choice venue—Madison Square Garden—and went to see him at the UBS Arena on Long Island. By the same token, you can always suggest your friends and neighbors join the Greene Hill Food Coop.

*Anita Bushell is a freelance writer and native New Yorker. She just published Object Essays, and is currently working on her second novel. She has written for the San Antonio Review, Friends Journal, Grande Dame Literary, Apple in the Dark, Motherwell, and Uncensored: American Family Experiences with Poverty and Homelessness.*

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COOP MEMBER BREWS THE RADICALLY SUSTAINABLE “TESLA OF BEER.” NOW THE COOP JUST NEEDS TO STOCK IT.

December 19, 2023



By Liz Welch

It was June 2020, peak-Covid, and John Midgely, the Brooklyn-based London-born art and fashion photographer was restless. He'd spent nearly four decades shooting celebs like Mos Def and Ozzy Osbourne for magazines, as well as the legendary Bethann Hardison in an iconic Gap campaign—but the industry had “changed radically,” he said over sandwiches at Park Slope’s Simple Loaf. “I was looking for a transition.”

He was in lockdown chatting about new possibilities with his cousin, Doug, who lives in London and who had worked in mergers and acquisitions for the multinational beverage company Diageo before leaving to become a consultant in the beverage industry. The two share a love of lager and Doug suggested that John take an online brewing class. It was called “The Science of Brewing,” and along with how to brew beer, John learned that the malting process, which is how beer is made, uses a tremendous amount of water and energy to turn barley into malt.

PHOTO BY JACKSON KRULE

"High consumption of good-quality water is characteristic of beer brewing," John, a Coop member, explained. "More than 90% of beer is water and an efficient brewery will typically use between four and six liters of water to produce one liter of beer."

John also learned that most of the waste happened during the malting process, as it involves germinating the barley, then making a mash and finally separating the particles from the warm sugary water to get the maltose necessary to make beer. This made him wonder: Was there a more efficient way to extract maltose from barley?

He began Googling around and quickly learned that there was: adding enzymes to the raw barley would cut out all the germinating and water waste involved in the malting steps. The result would be a "raw" beer.

John called Doug to bounce the idea off him.

"The beer industry is ripe for a renewal," John explains. "It worked with electric cars and solar panels, which are industries that have been revolutionized as a result." Why not beer? Doug agreed that it was worth investigating. Not long later, Cool Cousin Brewing was born.

John set up a home brewing station on the top floor of his recently renovated Bedford-Stuyvesant home. He ordered the enzymes online and started experimenting by adding them to the raw barley, and forgoing the multi-stepped malting process. It was all very exciting. There was only one problem: the beer did not taste good.

THE BEER INDUSTRY IS RIPE FOR A RENEWAL. IT WORKED WITH ELECTRIC CARS, AND SOLAR PANELS, WHICH ARE INDUSTRIES THAT HAVE BEEN REVOLUTIONIZED AS A RESULT.

"After three months of tinkering, I got closer with taste," he said. "But it still needed

color.” So he toasted some raw barely and tossed it into the mix, which produced the pale lager golden glow he was looking for.

By then, he had joined a Brooklyn group of home brewing beer aficionados called “Brewminaries” who regularly met up in Park Slope to share stories and taste one another’s samples. “There was a generous and bright high school teacher whom I would lean on all the time,” John said.



PHOTO BY JACKSON KRULE

John was making a Kolsch lager, which has a lighter crisper taste than the pungent hop heavy IPAs that were all the rage. He continued to tinker and perfect his recipe and, once he was satisfied, even entered a few home-brewing competitions. After he won two—and proved his hypothesis that he could make a raw beer that was delicious—he was ready to move the Cool Cousin operation beyond his home.

He first went to Strong Rope, a small local brewery in Gowanus, whose owner Jason Sahler was a big supporter of sustainability. “He uses 100% New York state ingredi-

ents and wants to help grow the industry," John explained. Sahler connected John with Rich Michaels, a well-respected master brewer who worked at FXMat, a 500-barrel system in upstate New York that brewed Saranac Beers, among others. Rich had long been interested in making a sustainable beer and agreed to work with Cool Cousins.

"The concept of trying to make beer out of unmalted grain is not new," Rich explained. "People have been looking at doing this for 40 years—to save both energy and cost. But no one has been able to make it taste like beer."

Rich was intrigued by John's recipe, and dedication. "I've been brewing commercially for 31 years," he explained. "Brewers are sustainably-minded, so we are always interested in changing our practices. There have been breweries who have tried to do this but have struggled to make it taste like good beer."

THERE HAVE BEEN BREWERIES WHO HAVE TRIED TO DO THIS BUT HAVE STRUGGLED TO MAKE IT TASTE LIKE GOOD BEER.

By August 2023, they had a Kolsch lager that they felt was ready for prime time. John began reaching out to potential customers and Cool Cousin's first sale was to Dan Barber's acclaimed Blue Hill at Stone Barns restaurant in Tarrytown, New York.

"I emailed the website and was invited to bring a sample," John said. That lead to his first sale—ten cases—and the restaurant remains Cool Cousin's most consistent customer. Currently, the brand is available in 35 places throughout New York State including Total Wine in Westbury, Long Island. But shockingly, not the Coop.

"As long as Cool Cousin can work with a distributor, we'd be happy to stock the brand," says Kusi Merello, the Coop's beer buyer and a receiving coordinator. Known for its eclectic and wide ranging beer selection, the Coop sells more than a hundred

brands of beer. Their best seller is Brooklyn-based Sixpoint, but they also offer small independent brands like the women-owned TaLea. Kusi and her co-beer buyer Brian Robinson are constantly on the lookout for new brands to put on the shelves and Cool Cousins certainly aligns with the Coop's sustainability values. The issue, Kusi maintains, is how the beer is sold.

"The loading zone is not just ours, so we have to consolidate our purchase through one of the six distributors. Otherwise it is too much work for individuals," she explains.

This basic rule is summarized in the Coop's "new product consideration" protocol, which states:

"Product must be sold through a distributor. While we understand that many independent food producers do not use distributors, there are several important reasons for this requirement. Direct shipments increase the number of orders that have to be placed, the number of deliveries to the store, the number of invoices that have to be verified and received, and the number of invoices that have to be processed through our bookkeepers. Additionally, we are beyond capacity with the traffic from the hundreds of deliveries we already receive each week. We seldom add a distributor to bring just one or two products. However, we do *occasionally* make exceptions for local independent producers selling a *completely unique* product."

John has tried to get Cool Cousin distributed through one of the six distributors based in New York City, but it is not easy. "Most want you to be selling at scale," he explains. Hopefully, this will change as the company continues to grow. It just added a hazy IPA to its offerings.

And yet, one could argue that Cool Cousin *is* completely unique. At least according to journalist Don Tse, "the baron of beer" who reached out to Rich Michaels in August 2023 looking for anyone who was brewing with enzymes as he was looking to do a story on sustainable beer.

"We were the only one," John said.

The story, "This New York Brewery Hopes to Revolutionize the Way Beer Is Made" ran in Forbes magazine on September 2, 2023 with the opening line: "New York's Cool Cousin Brewing is the first commercial brewing company in America to make beer entirely from unmalted barley, saving water and carbon dioxide with each brew."

Proof of John's hypothesis: there is space in the beer industry for raw sustainable beer. And soon, one hopes, there will be space in the Coop's shelves for the product.



PHOTO BY JACKSON KRULE

*Liz Welch re-joined the Gazette as a reporter in August 2023 after a hiatus. She is a longtime journalist and author/collaborator whose work can be seen at <http://www.lizwelch.com>.*

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## A COOP MEMBER OTHERWISE KNOWN AS A COMMUNITY GARDEN'S 'CHIEF CHICKEN STEWARD'

December 19, 2023



*By Sara Ivry*

If you walk to the corner of Throop and Dekalb Avenues in Bedford-Stuyvesant you'll

find, amid the northbound traffic headed towards Williamsburg, a peaceful oasis in a corner lot where once stood a school that Barbra Streisand is rumored to have attended.

It's Tranquility Farm, home to beehives, fruit trees, vegetable beds full of squash, Jerusalem artichokes, garlic, ginger, tomatoes, as well as 16 robust chickens whose feathers shimmer in the late autumn sun like silken petals. The eldest is JoJo. She strides regally around small piles of leaves near the herbs. JoJo will be 10 next spring, and loyal caretakers are already planning a celebration.



PHOTO BY JENNIFER MACFARLANE

“We’ll have cake and invite the community,” Tranquility member, chief chicken steward and longtime Park Slope Food Coop member Alex LaMond tells me. “It’s truly a community effort to have chickens.”

A school social worker, LaMond is passionate about city ecosystems and readily praises all the stakeholders who’ve come together to make sure raising a cluster of chickens in Brooklyn is not merely a viable endeavor, but a thriving one.

#### RAISING CHICKENS IS A COMMUNITY BUILDER. IT CONNECTS PEOPLE TO THEIR CULTURAL HERITAGE.

There’s the Parks Department, whose GreenThumb initiative specifically supports community gardens. There are contacts at the Department of Sanitation, which regularly picks up rotted wood and other waste the garden needs to get rid of; and folks from the Department of Health who tirelessly work to keep Tranquility Farms rat-free. There’s the young architect in the neighborhood who measured and cut wooden panels to put on the coop to protect the chickens against bad weather, and the kids who painted those panels in bright, happy colors. There are the two young gentlemen who take turns with LaMond to feed the chickens and clean their coop every morning, and then twice daily when it gets cold and their water freezes and becomes undrinkable.

It’s a paragon of collaboration, one that took years to achieve. When community gardener Ena McPherson founded Tranquility Farm in 2011, she and fellow green thumbs dreamed of raising chickens. They even built an ad-hoc coop with that goal in mind. But they faced garden-related challenges borne of the fact that Tranquility, like many urban gardens, was established on an abandoned lot. Members had to spend a great deal of time, LaMond explains, “clearing up rubble, building beds, doing soil testing, getting all that together.”



PHOTO BY JENNIFER MACFARLANE

When LaMond joined Tranquility in 2014, she helped make the dream of chickens—which was hers too—a reality. Now they're a vital part of the garden, roaming freely through the grounds when members are about. Of course, they're gorgeous and lay eggs—up to one a day per bird—but their critical contributions go beyond that. "They really build soil and they build ecosystems," LaMond says.

She recalls results from soil testing in 2015 that indicated high levels of lead, a toxic remnant of an era when building codes were laxer and materials used in construction more perilous. Now, the garden has a sophisticated compost program which combines chicken and food waste to help fertilize its soil and crops. When the garden underwent testing last year, members were delighted to find their soil is now lead-free.

Now "we can actually grow food for our community, which we do," she says, and the chickens serve as "ambassadors for the garden. Kids love them, elderly love them.

They bring people into the space. I can't tell you how times people walk by and they're like, 'Chickens. Oh my gosh! My family in Puerto Rico—' 'My family in DR—' 'Back when I was in Jamaica, my grandmother had chickens. I used to take care of them.' It's a community builder... it connects people to their cultural heritage."

OF COURSE, THEY'RE GORGEOUS AND LAY EGGS—UP TO ONE A DAY PER BIRD—BUT THEIR CRITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS GO BEYOND THAT. "THEY REALLY BUILD SOIL AND THEY BUILD ECOSYSTEMS," LAMOND SAYS.

During the pandemic, LaMond had the opportunity to share her passion for raising chickens widely. Because people were staying home to eat at the time, egg sales skyrocketed and some areas experienced shortages. To address that dearth, many individuals as well as community gardeners became interested in raising chickens. In turn, Greg Anderson, a Community Engagement Coordinator for GreenThumb, asked LaMond if she'd be willing to teach a class on what it takes to raise chickens in community gardens.

That first year, the lesson was one-off and remote—LaMond Zoomed with participants from the garden's gazebo and offered insight about what it takes to get a coop together and rat-proof it, among other advice, and not to expect that egg bounties would lead to any significant profit. Public interest in the course grew, and Anderson asked LaMond if she'd teach again—and furthermore make her one-off lesson into a series.

She did so with the help of two fellow Tranquility members. In exchange, Tranquility received an expansive new coop for their feathered squad. It has designated, hay-filled nesting boxes, an area to sleep and a chicken run. After the course ran this year, Tranquility received \$6,000 from the Parks Department for their work—enough to help the garden open a bank account and plan for future means of ensuring sustainability, such as solar panels or fashioning a way to access reliable water from hy-

drants rather than depending on the whims of rainfall.



PHOTO BY JENNIFER MACFARLANE

Teams of members from community gardens from all five boroughs apply to participate in LaMond's course, which now runs monthly over half a year from spring through fall, and features guest speakers from the Departments of Sanitation and Health. At the end, participating gardens receive a new coop.

"We teach everything," LaMond says. "How we started, what the benefits are. Everything from chicken breeds to first aid. How to maintain the chicken coop, how to feed water, the mathematics of it, how many eggs can you expect a week. Where to source food from, how to get fresh water, cleaning, maintenance, all of that stuff."

LaMond sees herself not just as a teacher, but also as an enthusiastic student. The chickens are her tutors. "They teach me about patience, about livestock stewardship, which is different from obviously pets, but also how to care for animals, which is a really beautiful thing to coexist with animals and how we can coexist with them," she says. "We've had a couple of years where we really were close to rat infestation. So they've taught me about not giving up, and that's where it really takes community."

Being a "chicken lady" has also given LaMond greater appreciation for the Coop.

"All praise to the farmers and growers and chicken keepers and livestock keepers that are out there day in and day out in three-degree weather providing for us," she says. "It deepens your appreciation for what it takes to produce food. And that's the Coop, at least for me."

*A long-time Food Coop member, Sara Ivry lives in Clinton Hill with her son.*

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COOP BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINATIONS ARE DUE

December 19, 2023



*Interested in serving on the Coop's Board of Directors?  
Nominations are now open!*

## OPENINGS

There are two openings on the Board for terms of three years.

IMAGE BY EVA SCHICKER

## CANDIDATE DEADLINE

If you wish to submit your name for nomination, you must declare your candidacy by submitting a statement of up to 750 words to [gazettesubmissions@psfc.coop](mailto:gazettesubmissions@psfc.coop). Candidates may also opt to include a small photo for online publication. Deadline for candidacy submission is Friday, March 1, 2024.

## DECIDING AND VOTING

Candidates will have the opportunity to present their platforms at the March 26, 2024 General Meeting (GM). Every Coop member will receive an online ballot via email in May. Paper ballots will be available upon request. The votes from the advance online voting will be combined with the in-person votes at the Annual Meeting on June 25, 2024.

## DUTIES OF THE DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors comprises five elected Coop members and the senior General Coordinator present. Members serve three-year terms. Members of the Board are expected to attend GMs monthly. They receive Coop work credit for their attendance. From our inception in 1973 to the present, the monthly General Meeting has been an integral decision-making body of the Coop. Since the Coop was incorporated in 1977, we have been legally required to have a Board of Directors. The bylaws of the Park Slope Food Coop state: "The portion of the Board of Directors meeting that is devoted to receiving the advice of the members shall be known as the General Meeting... The members who gather to give advice to the directors may choose to vote in order to express their support or opposition for any of the issues that have come before the meeting."

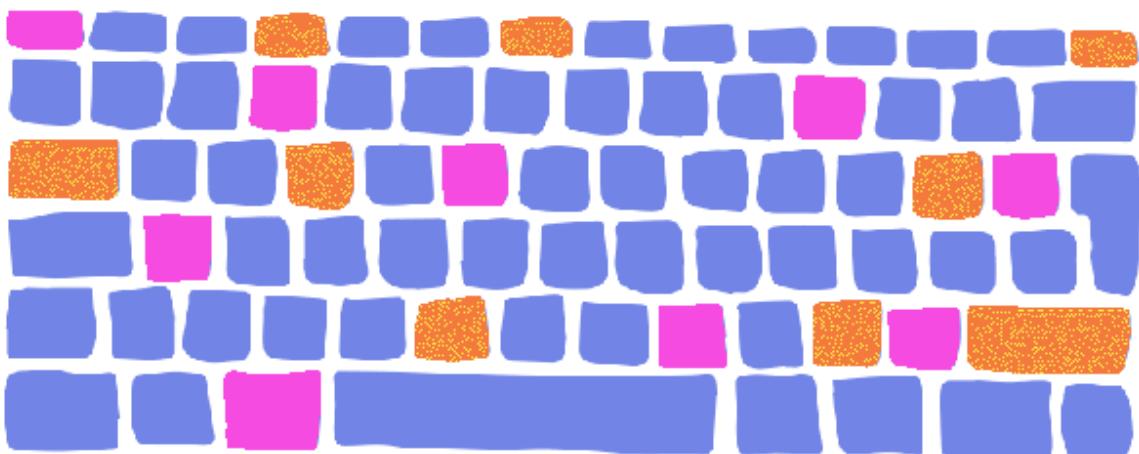
*For more information about Coop governance, please see [The GM and the Board of Directors and Amended Bylaws of Park Slope Food Coop](#).*

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

December 19, 2023

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



## CHILDCARE

Dear Editor,

Since the main purpose of childcare is to help working members, reducing the maximum time to two hours is not a reasonable solution to obtain insurance. Why not hire a contractor to cut through the wall and add a door to the offices? That solution sounds like the most effective way to obtain insurance. Having childcare for shopping parents is a convenience but having it for working parents is a necessity.

Best,

*Stacey Sarnicola*

*Response from General Coordinator Lisa Moore: We understand that childcare is a crucial need for parents who work at the Coop. That's why the program was implemented in the 1980s. We are committed to finding a solution that works for everyone. The General Coordinators and the sponsors of Return Childcare to the Coop are working together to find additional insurance carriers who won't require us to have a childcare license. It's important to clarify that the November 7, 2023 issue of the Gazette incorrectly stated that the time children spent in childcare would be reduced to two hours. The General Coordinators would not restrict the time so drastically as it would defeat the purpose of having childcare.*

*As reported at two prior General Meetings, the Coop's childcare cannot be licensed because we do not meet New York's stringent requirements. One of these requirements is that the room must have two exit doors into a hallway or the street, known as egresses. Egress is a means of exit or a way of leaving, and fire egress is more specifically defined as a method for exiting a structure during a fire. According to New York City's fire code, all exits must have an accessible means of egress, i.e., a continuous and unobstructed way of egress travel from any accessible point in a building or facility to a public way. Cutting through the wall to add a door to the offices would not*

*meet the fire code standards.*

*We are doing everything possible to restore childcare services at the Coop. We understand the importance of this service to our members.*

*The General Coordinators will provide another update to the membership on childcare in the near future.*

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## **'TIS THE SEASON**

To the Editor,

As gift givers prepare presents for their loved ones, many Coop members will be considering how to minimize waste. Using recycled wrapping paper, a reusable gift bag or creating your own wrap from extra fabric or paper are some options. While shopping at the Coop recently, I saw quite a bit of non-recycled wrapping paper on display in aisle two and later found rolls of recycled paper in a box in another part of the store.

We should not be carrying non-recycled wrapping paper. There are many vendors currently carrying recycled wrapping paper in a variety of sizes. And these vendors very likely do not have an environmental policy, as we do, which states that we are: "Minimizing disposable products, by seeking durable alternatives and/or alternatives which have recycled content" and "The Coop will strive to support the best products and practices in regard to the health, safety and preservation of humans, animals and the overall biosphere that it can achieve."

Looking at the countries of origin of the non-recycled wrapping paper on display, I noticed that some were from China. Old growth forests are practically non-existent in China today after years of reckless and poorly managed logging. There are more re-

cent policies in place to maintain what is left and replant trees—but is that where the wrapping paper and wood products “Made in China” come from? Probably not. As China began to implement policies for their largely decimated forests, there was an impetus to keep manufacturing paper and wood products. Timber has been sourced from pristine forests in nearby countries like Russia, both legally and illegally.

Every purchase we make has wide-reaching environmental ramifications. So let's please be true to our environmental policy and more consistently carry recycled rather than non-recycled paper products.

In Cooperation,

*Cynthia Blayer*

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## **NO TO BDS**

Hello Editors,

It is imperative for the physical safety of PSFC to know that BDS explicitly supports violence.

Just check the BDS website. The call to use “armed resistance” (<https://tinyurl.com/2zxbu93h>) is explicit. Support for ‘armed reaction’ is explicit (<https://tinyurl.com/yhdmk9hm>). Omar Barghouti’s justification for ‘...illegal or immoral acts of violence that the oppressed may commit...’ in a *Guardian* article is explicit.

People around the world are being physically harmed and killed. That alone is the litmus test. PSFC is not equipped for this and cannot be perceived as taking sides among violence. Simply read the news to see how such a stance plays out in real time. As always, I maintain PSFC should remain explicitly non-violent.

The *Gazette*, PSFC's official voice, is now informed that it is giving a platform to a movement that explicitly supports violence. As an equal working member I feel unsafe and physically threatened through such letters. No working member or volunteer is allowed to feel unsafe. I unapologetically demand that the *Gazette* stop publishing letters supporting BDS.

*Jesse Rosenfeld*

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## **THE SOCIAL IMPORTANCE OF CIVIL DEBATE**

Dear Editor:

To support a democratic society we must have an appreciation for the social importance of civil debate. History is filled with moments in which communities came to a seeming moral impasse. But if in a democratic framework the best option for discourse across divides is to quietly agree to disagree, then what would this framework have to offer us when we face a genuine crisis of consciousness?

As organizing for and against BDS at the Coop rises again, it will be crucial to provide our community a genuine outlet for the expression of our views. An effective democracy enables and supports meaningful dialogue around complex and difficult issues. Strong communities work to bolster this capacity as needed, rather than relinquish it at the first sign of disagreement.

There are conflicting opinions regarding the BDS movement, at the Coop and beyond. But that sense of conflict is only exacerbated by the force of silence that we allow between us. We owe it to ourselves—as members of a community committed to equality, opposed to discrimination in any form, seeking to maximize participation at every level—to encourage a discussion that can clarify and expand our viewpoints concerning what response is required of us in this urgent moment.

Gratefully,

*Morgan Võ*

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## **MISSED CONNECTIONS?**

Dear Fellow Members,

It was a hot Friday afternoon in August and I was checking out a shopper who couldn't find corn syrup. He was roasting peaches later and the corn syrup was for the homemade caramel sauce that, along with homemade whipped cream, would transform them into peach sundaes. Obviously this was the best thing I'd ever heard and I told him so. We continued to chat pleasantly for a few minutes before he paid, introduced himself, shook my hand and left. Ten minutes later while checking out another shopper, it hit me: Peach sundaes are hot—and I'm pretty sure that guy was supposed to be my new boyfriend? Alas my peach sundae opportunity is long gone. But what if yours doesn't have to be? What if the *Linewaiters' Gazette* had... drumroll... a missed connections section!

During a recent shift, I asked a fellow member what she thought of the *Gazette* having a missed connections section and she was reminded of a missed connection of her own. While she was working a checkout shift, a shopper admired her outfit and she'd confidently told them it came from the Gap. Later she realized the outfit wasn't from the Gap at all—it was from J Crew! She wished she could tell them somehow—because somewhere out there perhaps they were clicking away on gap.com not finding what they're looking for. What could we possibly do about this? Missed connections!

And so dear reader, since a section in *Gazette* isn't actually an option, I did what people do in situations like this—I created a private Reddit community. In order to post and read missed connections, please sign up for a Reddit account, sign in, go to <http://http://>

[s://www.reddit.com/r/psfcmissedconnections/](https://www.reddit.com/r/psfcmissedconnections/) and click “Request to Join.” And should you wish to reach out with thoughts, questions or ideas, please email me at [psfcmissedconnections@gmail.com](mailto:psfcmissedconnections@gmail.com).

Warmly,

*Arpita Dey*

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## **DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES AT RISK**

Dear members,

The largest threat to PSFC continuing to function as a democratically governed Coop is not whether our General Meetings are in-person or a hybrid of in-person plus on-line.

The Coop’s dedication to democratic governing means that all of us are bound by operational changes determined by a simple majority of members present at a general meeting where a vote is held.

If a proposal had been voted on during the September meeting, it could have been decided by a simple majority of the 105 who attended: 53 individuals, representing just 1/3 of 1% of our current 15,500 members.

Pre-pandemic, 500-750 people attended the in-person GMs, representing, 3-4% of membership. The offer of earning a shift credit first attracted me, but I kept coming back to learn more. My experience of the online meetings, which attracted 150-250 participants, was that even though this represented only 1% of membership, there was a higher level of engagement in the details of a specific discussion or vote, general Coop governance, and/or sharing experience (personal, professional, or Coop insti-

tutional memory) about how a decision might affect members and staff. Since a voting issue requires a 2-step process (discussion at one GM before being scheduled for a vote at a second GM) there was a greater chance that those voting were present during the previous discussion so that they could better evaluate changes in the final proposal.

It's time for the Coop to think more creatively about how to govern democratically, or we will be governed solely those who have the time and motivation to attend monthly meetings. Or, using September as an example, decisions could be made by 53 members.

*Jan Rigsby*

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## **PRINT GAZETTE?**

Hello!

I'm wondering if there's a plan/interest in bringing back the print Gazette? I'd be happy to help facilitate or participate in any conversations.

*Alex Godin*

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## CROSSWORD: "ZED"

December 19, 2023

