

MEMBER SUBMISSION: CASE FOR THE LINEWAITERS' GAZETTE AS DIGITAL KNOWLEDGE BASE

January 28, 2025



By Tim Hospodar, Member of PSFC Board of Directors

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During our Coop's December 2024 General Meeting, a member interrupted the proceedings with a point of information in order to reference the *PSFC Guide to the General and Annual Meeting*. They drew our attention to Committee Election Procedures in Section VIII. This section's item A, about candidate eligibility, includes the instruction for all Coop Committees to announce openings in the *Linewaiters' Gazette*. Only minutes prior to this interruption, I was speaking to the assembled members about an election in October, at which, as a present member serving on the Board of Directors, I abstained from voting. The lack of sufficient information I cited resulted from debate

at the October GM regarding the election's announcement in the Gazette.



Image of a screenshot showing Instagram @foodcoop account's post driving traffic to Linewaiters' Gazette with a visualization of the Agenda Committee's call for nominations, 06 November 2024, credit: author

Performing due diligence during a meeting, on an iPhone 15, isn't ideal. Do you use

the *Gazette*'s Table of Contents—i.e., the Committee Info section? Do you go post to post, using the left/right buttons at the bottom of the page? Do you leverage the tags hiding at the bottom of each post in a subtle, desaturated color—e.g., #2024-11-05—which collates all posts for said issue? And when you don't find what you are looking for, should you conclude it was deleted, hard-to-find, unprinted or never submitted?

Not finding the information you need in Instagram; not finding emails or texts or mail from our Coop; finding it tacked to the Coop Corner; and finding it on the Coop website are all moot points in consideration that the Election Procedures single out the *Gazette* as a single source of truth unless we introduce a debate about the temporal qualities of all these channels. And it's worth noting that the *Guide to Meetings* was published in 2011 with 2016 amendments—before the pandemic accelerated the digitization of the *Gazette*—when the printed resource was truly a paper trail. Recent discussions at GMs about the *Gazette* returning to paper seem timely!



Image of a photograph depicting an infographic hanging in the produce section at the PSFC that illustrates the various sweet potatoes known to be carried at the Food Coop. 23 January 2023, credit: author

I'm not submitting an opinion against printed materials. Instead, I want to promote the *Gazette* expanding as a digital knowledge base boasting domain expertise and transparency. The fifth principle of cooperation's focus on education can be interpreted as a reminder that knowledge sharing is a critical element of community. And a knowledge base enables our sharing. Sharing is more than workshops upstairs or on Zoom. Where's the playbook for a successful second location; how do we offboard executive decision-makers; can we inform new members what is an "end-cap" and

which ones are dedicated to new products, fancy products, or magically discounted products? Why do some bananas go from green to black and what's with all these potatoes? It is not useful to trap this info in signs and various digital channels—some of which expire on your phone after 24 hours. While it is important to meet members where they are—or where their eyes fall—we also need a persistent, digital library.

When not serving the Food Coop, Hospodar can be found wearing a Computer Scientist hat—fixated on information management and process improvements.