MARCH GENERAL MEETING: SPRING PRODUCTS, BOARD CANDIDATES AND MORE

April 22, 2025



April 22, 2025

By Zach Schiffman

As attendees entered the Picnic House on March 25, the sidewalk was flanked with members advocating for various causes, handing out info sheets about hybrid meetings or QR code slips introducing candidates up for election. On one side of the immediate entry, members offered “halvah from Israel,” while on the other, a table with a handful of food options featured literature with voices from Gaza. The competing efforts outside the Picnic House foreshadowed what would come in the well-attended meeting, with the issues spilling into nearly every aspect of the agenda.

OPEN FORUM



Members turned out for the March General Meeting.

The Open Forum began with a member asking the Chair Committee to clarify the policy around open forum rules, pointing out that past meetings have allowed topics unrelated to Coop operations, with speakers granted longer than one minute. Chair Committee member David Moss responded that the committee uses a document called the Park Slope Food Coop Guide to General and Annual Meetings, which does not limit topics to Coop operations. He added that the one-minute rule is interpreted flexibly, depending on the needs of a particular meeting.

While some brought up items of general interest to the membership—honoring the anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist fire, increasing the amount of meetings eligible for work credit, a plea to stop members from eating while working the checkout shift—speakers continued to challenge the transparency of the general meetings.

Coop member Josh Geller flagged how he was not on the ballot for the evening's dispute resolution community, while member Noah Potter questioned how his agenda item had not come up, despite requesting it to be expedited. "I've been ghosted. I think it's inappropriate," Potter said, in the first of many comments he would make throughout the meeting.

One member asked if the June 24 General meeting date could be moved to avoid conflicting with the New York State and City primary elections, but outgoing General Coordinator Joe Holtz said that wasn't possible due to the timing of the annual financial audit.



Member Adam Tager asked the candidates some questions.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Holtz, who also serves as Treasurer, reported on the four-week period ending 3/2/25,

with a presentation of the top-line details and a full report sent to members' inboxes the previous week. The report compared the first four weeks of the current fiscal year to the same period last year, noting that the previous fiscal year ended in January 2024. Holtz pointed out that last year's gross margin for this period was unrealistically high due to error, ("The first four weeks last year had an unreasonably high gross margin that was unrealistic. So I didn't bother to write it down because it sorted itself out by the eight-week statement.") but that this year's data was more reliable, with a positive swing in bottom-line income from negative $35,000 to positive $33,000. He noted a rosy outlook, with sales up 10.4 percent, and an increase of $182,000 cash on hand, the most vital asset in the Coop's finances. The overall financial stability of the Coop is underscored by the increase in base markup from 24 percent to 25 percent.

As of February 25, 2024, total liabilities were $5.22 million, while total member equity—including member investments, paid-in capital and retained earnings—was $8.64 million. He explained that member equity includes all member investments and the Coop's retained earnings, and that donated investments are categorized as additional paid-in capital. He walked members through other financial statements, including a cash comparison from the beginning of the fiscal year.

The final portion of the report introduced a new feature: comparing projections for the year with the annualized actual results for the four-week period. Holtz noted that the Coop had projected $62.8 million in annual sales, but if current trends continue, sales could exceed $63.8 million. Expenses and gross margin were also slightly better than projected. He clarified that these annualized figures are theoretical and could shift. "The slow summer months are not yet included and therefore the projected variance could be overstated," he said. Holtz closed by explaining how annualization works mathematically. A member then raised a concern about whether the financial statement had been received by email (it had), and another asked about the backlog of new member applicants.

GENERAL COORDINATOR REPORTS

Joe Szladek, one of the general coordinators, began with a few announcements. He shared that the April General Meeting will be held at a new location: The theater at City Tech, located at 275 Jay Street in Brooklyn. The venue change was made “to accommodate the anticipated larger audience” for the discussion and a vote on the hybrid general meeting proposal. Szladek also announced two staffing updates: Guillermo Rojas Hernandez has started as a developer/programmer, and Eric Alger, a receiving coordinator, has left Coop employment. Szladek reminded members that the Coop’s hours had been extended.



Produce Buyer Cecelia Rembert asked for feedback.

Cecelia Rembert, one of the Coop’s two produce buyers, shared seasonal highlights: “The citrus season is wrapping up, so if you have been enjoying the California citrus, do it now,” she said, highlighting the Oro Blancos and mandarins.

She mentioned that berries are “mostly out of Mexico except for some blueberries from Chile,” and while pricing deals aren’t yet available, “look forward to that in a month or two, maybe in April and going into May.” Apples are also winding down and will be replaced by New Zealand apples in the summer. Rembert also gave a grape outlook: Grapes are currently out of South Africa right now but will soon move to Mexican grapes, with California grape season beginning in June. Local vegetables are just beginning to arrive, including “some little gem lettuce from Lancaster next week,” and “head lettuces coming the week after that.”

She highlighted California-grown Delta Queen asparagus and noted they are “on the lookout” for sustainably harvested ramps: “There aren’t that many farms that do that that we feel comfortable with.” Fiddlehead ferns have arrived as “a good sign of spring,” and she reminded members, “Make sure to cook them.”

Rembert also shared that the Coop has seeds in soil right now, and a new pallet of soil will arrive mostly on Thursdays over the next six or seven weekends. The Coop will also be running its small plant program through the spring, which she described as “really fun.” During the Q&A, member Serko Artinian raised concerns about the freshness of the raspberries. Rembert explained: “Raspberries have the highest sugar content, and they mold the fastest; sometimes, there’s more age on them than we would like.” Another member asked about reduced plastic packaging and lower-quality organic produce coming to the Coop. Rembert responded, “No, I haven’t noticed that,” regarding suppliers dumping poor-quality items at the Coop.

Dory Kornfield, a member of the Equity, Access and Community Committee (EACC), announced the upcoming launch of the Coop’s first-ever member demographic survey. The goal is to gather basic information about the Coop membership through a quick 15-question, five-minute survey. She emphasized that this is “not a household survey,” it’s an individual survey for people 18 and over. The questions will cover neighborhood, household composition, disabilities status, as well as some general demographic questions: age, race, gender and sexual orientation.

“The reason we are doing this is because the Coop doesn’t collect any of this information and we don’t know who we are or enough about ourselves to know if we are as diverse and welcoming as we say we are,” she said, noting that the data could help “inform and guide policy decisions, processes in the Coop.”

She cited childcare as an example: “Childcare has been a hot topic for a couple of years now, but we actually don’t know how many members have kids.”

Dan Weiss, a member of the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) since 2017, gave an overview of the committee’s role and process. “The Dispute Resolution Committee—our charge is to facilitate the resolution of disputes among members.” Weiss explained the committee handles “complaints of member misconduct,” including “conflict, goods, shopping for businesses, masking violations, violations of personal space, intimidation, harassment, incomplete work on shift.”

He described the work as consensus-based and guided by “GM-approved resolution procedures,” with two membership coordinators serving as liaisons. Weiss emphasized the committee’s standards: “Our members approach their work without prejudice. We set aside our political opinions to ensure the fair and equitable process for our membership.” He also addressed a recent development: “This month, we made a difficult decision to halt certain types of cases involving political issues at the Coop. We’re in the midst of legal proceedings related to these matters.”

Until a “reasonable framework” is developed, those cases will remain on hold, which he said has precedent: “We’ve had legal proceedings in the past involving civil rights issues, and we’ve had to pause on those cases.”

Bart DeCoursy from the International Trade Education Squad (ITES) reported that the group had signed on to a USMCA review organizational letter ahead of the mandatory six-year review of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement. He outlined their hopes for renegotiation: “End the offshoring of good-paying jobs, raise wages, strengthen rural communities, stop abuses of big tech, make medicine more affordable.” DeCoursy also

warned of the Trump administration's announcement of "reciprocal tariffs" beginning April 2, including a "25 percent tariff on all goods from any country that imports Venezuelan oil." He joked, "Almost by threatening one thing and walking it back, he could manipulate the market, but who's to say—he also just might not know what he's doing." He encouraged members to follow the squad on Bluesky to keep up on all things international trade.

A representative from the Personnel Committee gave a brief update, noting that the committee currently has only five members instead of the usual seven. They announced that in the April 1st Gazette, there will be an ad asking for more members, and encouraged anyone with experience in employment law, general management, staffing or conflict resolution to apply. The committee is also continuing the search for a new general coordinator to replace Joe Holtz: "Four people have been interviewed, and there's one or two more to be interviewed, and that's ongoing."

DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE ELECTION

Existing DRC committee member Christopher Cox presented two new members up for election, Dorothy Lund and Olivia Goldberg, and four members who are up for reelection: Deb Magocsi, Lee Bantle, Melinda Daniels and Grace Protos. Cox noted that the committee received dozens of applications for these spots, "definitely more than we could handle," and emphasized that this was "just the first step in helping rebuild the committee to handle our caseload."



Dispute Resolution Committee candidate Olivia Goldberg addressed the meeting.

New candidate Olivia Goldberg shared her long-standing Coop connection: “My parents met at the Coop’s 16th anniversary party in 1989, so I might not actually exist without the Coop”—and cited her professional experience in early childhood education, the tree care industry and food service. Dorothy Lund, a law professor at Columbia University, touted her work studying how organizations manage conflict, saying her skills could help people “feel like they’ve been seen and heard.”

Returning members emphasized commitment, collaboration and deep Coop knowledge. Deborah Magocsi recalled joining when the committee’s name changed from “Disciplinary” to “Dispute Resolution” and said she strives to “listen with an open mind and an open heart.” Grace Protos said she valued being part of a process where “people feel as if they’re actually seen,” and noted that the work “comes in emails and phone calls and committee meetings” beyond standard shift hours. Melinda Daniels said she brings “patience, empathy and problem solving” and called it an hon-

or to continue the work. Helen Koh read a statement from Lee Bantle, who was absent, in which he said his goal was “to take down the temperature when members are in conflict.”

During the Q&A, members raised serious concerns about the committee’s recent decision to pause certain politically sensitive cases. One asked: “If a member punches me and said it’s because I’m calling for a boycott, will your committee decline to consider my complaint?” Other questions addressed transparency, the onboarding process, and whether incumbents disputed how only six candidates were advanced. In response, Magocsi explained: “We can only bring a couple of members on at a time because it is a lengthy onboarding process.” Current members of the committee emphasized their hope to grow the DRC to 16 members, doubling the current size. The vote followed, with all six unopposed candidates elected to the board.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATES

The Board of Directors candidates all presented statements explaining why they should be elected. Dan Kaminsky submitted a video statement because he was attending “the biggest event in the pizza world… the Pizza Expo.” In his recorded statement, Kaminsky said he has been a Coop member since 2018 and is currently completing a master’s in social work: “Quite literally, my master’s degree is in the study and practice of Cooperation.” Other candidates introduced themselves in person, including Serko Artinian, who presented data from his informal poll of members, attempting to find out what percentage of people exclusively shop at the Coop and identifying pain points that members raised.



Board candidate Taylor Pate spoke at the meeting.

Lynn Husum, a Carroll Gardens resident who successfully sold her company last year, said she hoped to use her business acumen to serve the Coop. Taylor Pate highlighted her experience on nonprofit boards and at other food coops: “I believe that the solidarity economy and Cooperative movements are how we build community power.” Brandon West, the current board president, stressed his “institutional memory,” having the best record for GM attendance of any current members. He also hopes to make the Coop more democratic, easier to understand and less volatile. Ralph Yozzo advocated for term limits and listening to members. Noah Potter invoked our current president, saying he hopes to “Make the Coop Cooperative Again.” Elizabeth Tobier, the current Coop secretary, emphasized the importance of attendance at the General Meeting in her statement.

During the Q&A, candidates were asked to share what makes their platforms unique. Pate noted her “deep knowledge of supply chains” and experience with leadership

transitions (something the Coop currently faces with the departure of Joe Holtz), while Potter sought to facilitate “intramembership communication” and update bylaws. Artinian proposed “building coalitions with other coops” and using tech to bring the Coop into the future.

Candidates also discussed Coop challenges. Tobier said the hardest part is learning “how to communicate Cooperatively.” West cited structural tensions: “There are now differing ideas about what the board should do.” Several, including Yozzo, stressed the importance of preserving the Coop’s Cooperative spirit: “It means we cooperate, not rip ourselves apart.”

Members also raised concerns about candidate affiliations. One member asked the candidates to disclose endorsements, with Potter and Yozzo confirming they were endorsed by Coop for Unity. Another member asked if candidates aligned with Coop Members for Palestine, which Tonier dismissed as irrelevant, adding that it “has nothing to do with being a board member.” Finally, candidates responded to a question about hybrid meetings. Most supported the idea, while Tobier reiterated her view that board members should remain neutral on any upcoming votes or agenda items: “Our personal feelings as members would not come into play.”

A question about favorite Coop products offered a reprieve: For Serko Artinian, the heirloom organic oranges and for Ralph Yozzo, the gluten-free bread that’s not frozen—“Literally my family went up to Chatham, New York where they come from and we bought it there and it costs less at the Coop than right at the warehouse.”

Noah Potter refused to answer, “Just one? I don’t know if I can do that.” Lynn Husum shouted out the chickpea salad and the quiches that are no longer sold—“What happened to the quiches?” Taylor Pate said the White Mustache yogurt. West and Tobier both highlighted the beer selection.

Zach Schiffman is a social editor and writer at New York *magazine, comedian and Park Slope local.*

THE FUN COMMITTEE: BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH GATHERINGS AND JOY

April 22, 2025



April 22, 2025

By Liora Fishman

If you've been to a Coop cabaret, danced at a Coop-sponsored prom in a church basement, or made puppets with fellow members, you've probably experienced the work of the Fun Committee. These joyful events don't happen by accident—they're the product of a long Coop tradition, where member-driven activities have been part of

the culture since the early days.



PHOTO BY ZACHARY SCHULMAN

Thomas Oesau and Gabriella Di Piazza having fun in the Coop.
Returning once more after a COVID-prompted hiatus, the Coop's Fun Committee is responsible for organizing activities that strengthen community and keep members engaged beyond work shifts. While its current focus is on social gatherings and cultural events, the committee actually began with a straightforward mission: to help the Coop pay its rent. Originally called the "Fund-Raising Committee," it organized events like auctions to raise money during the Coop's early years.

One of the committee's early members, Martha Siegel, joined the Coop in 1973 and began contributing to community-building in 1983. "I started wanting to create a community through my passion: music," explained Siegel. Her passion quickly became a driving force behind the Fun Committee's evolution.

Siegel recalled that the then-Fund-Raising Committee was already active when she and Steve Browman launched the first Annual Food Coop Music Festival in 1984. "So we joined forces with that planning committee," she said, to plan a festival that could both raise funds and foster a greater sense of community through art and song. The festival was a major success, featuring over 100 musicians and drawing a crowd of 1,000 people—and continuing for several years. "I still have the programs from the first two years," Siegel said.

The Fun Committee through the years
Over time, the committee's role evolved to focus more on building community. Some past activities have included anniversary parties, rummage sales, Halloween gatherings and potluck suppers. There were music festivals modeled after Pete Seeger's Great Hudson River Revival, chamber music concerts, coffeehouse performances and even camping trips that drew up to 70 people.

Today, the Fun Committee continues that tradition by hosting events designed to bring Coop members together in ways that are joyful, inclusive and low-pressure.

The Fun Committee's next event is the 2nd Annual Potluck Picnic, on Saturday, June

14, in Prospect Park. All Coop members and their families are invited to bring a dish, a blanket and a spirit of sharing to this laid-back afternoon of food and connection. In case of rain, the event will be held the following Friday, June 21.

Thomas Oesau, a longtime Fun Committee member, said the committee is about more than fulfilling responsibilities. “Sometimes people think of the Coop as a place of rules and duties,” he said, “but there’s also this incredible creative spirit here. The Fun Committee exists to bring that out—to help members see each other as whole people, not just fellow workers or shoppers.”

He emphasized the continuity provided by longtime members. “It was great to have such a legacy of membership and tradition of activities,” Oesau said. “We had 16 annual Kids Variety Shows, lots of craft-based activities in the old community room and events at Old First Church and the Brooklyn Society for Ethical Culture.”

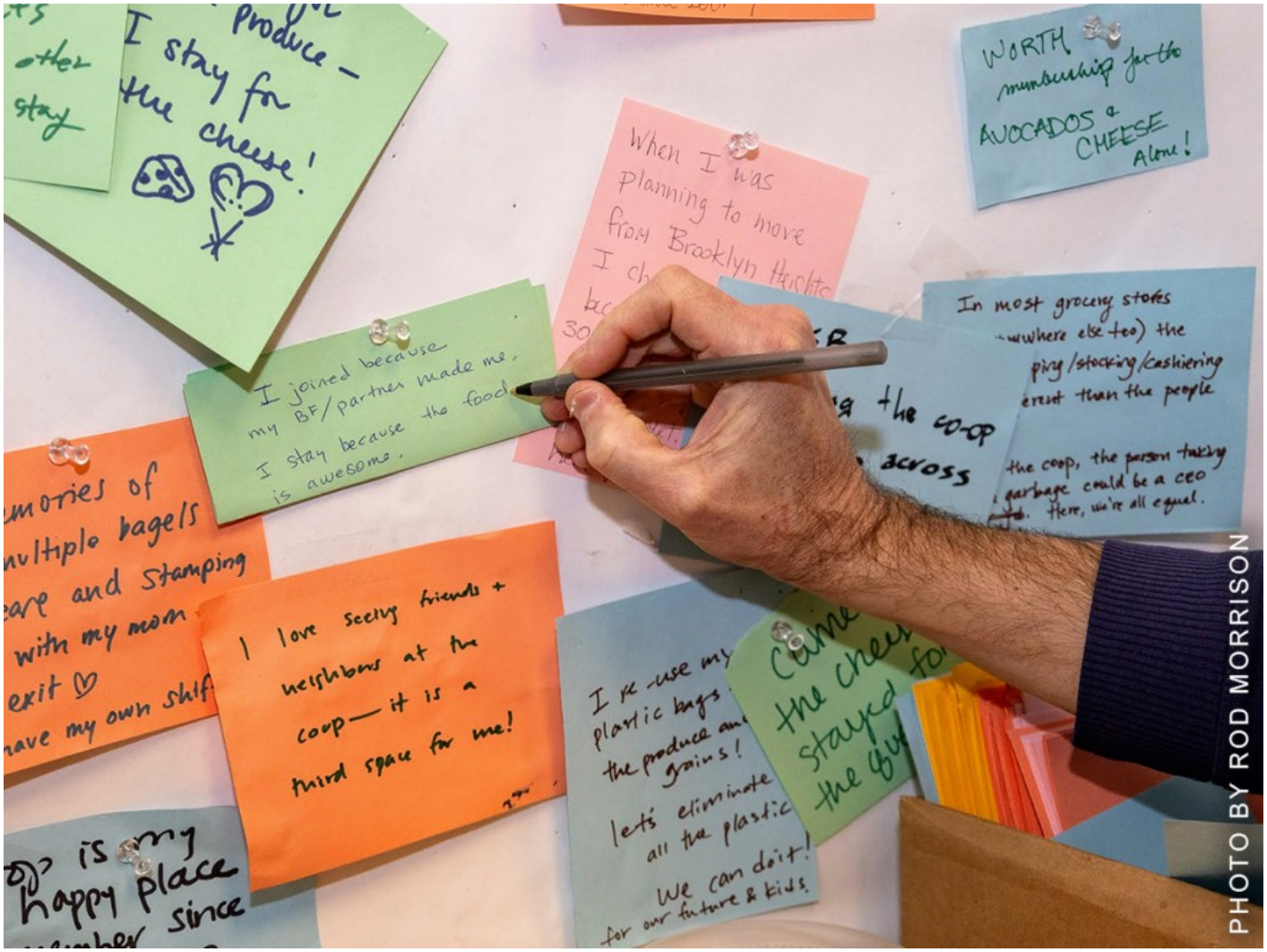
Siegel explained that the music festivals eventually evolved into annual Variety Shows. “We alternated years for audiences of adults and kids. Eventually, we only continued the Kids Variety Show because it attracted way more people,” she said. “They continued until Covid and even through it—in 2021 and 2022 we did them on Zoom. We also did a fun Trivia Night on Zoom.” Siegel retired from the committee in 2023.


RAISE THE BAR MIX
RAISE THE BAR MIX
KERNELS RAW
Setton Farms
California Pistachios
PRODUCE
PHOTO BY ZACHARY SCHULMAN

Thomas Oesau and Gabriella Di Piazza having fun the Coop.
Committee member Gabriella Di Piazza highlighted the vibrant energy of pre-Covid open mic nights, especially those held at the Old Stone House. “A particular highlight from pre-Covid days was seeing the range of talent and creativity on display within the Coop community,” she said. One performance that stayed with her was “a rap and tap combo performed by Sarah Safford, accompanied by Martha Siegel on cello and set to Run DMC’s instrumental of ‘You Be Illin.’ Good times!”

Fellow committee member Fadwa Abbas shared her appreciation for events that brought together different generations. She recalled a cardboard game afternoon where an eight-year-old girl outplayed everyone at Dixit—a favorite board game Abbas brought in. “She’d never played the game before but ended up being better at it than all of us,” Abbas said.

Events have varied in tone and format over the years. A spring cabaret featured performances by Coop members; a Coop Prom invited people to dress up and dance in a local church basement. Puppet-making workshops, trivia nights, movie screenings and seasonal gatherings all serve the same basic purpose: giving members a reason to slow down and connect with the Coop community.



Spreading joy with positive messages at the interactive 50th anniversary exhibition. Because the Coop's own members—musicians, artists, sound technicians and cook-s—are featured, the events are accessible and showcase the depth of talent in the community.

"A party might seem trivial, but it can be transformative," Oesau said. "You strike up a conversation on the dance floor, and suddenly you know someone you've only ever passed in the cereal aisle. It builds trust. It builds warmth."

Abbas believes the events create space for friendships and shared experiences. "The events we organize help people get to know each other beyond shopping and shift work," she said.

The committee meets regularly to plan, organize, promote and run events. Though

it’s part of the standard labor system at the Coop, members say the work is especially rewarding. “We’re doing labor, just like any other shift,” said Oesau, “but it feels different. You’re collaborating to make something delightful happen.”

“Before the pandemic, many of our events happened in the lounge upstairs in the Coop,” Abbas said. “It made organizing events like card-making or pumpkin-decorating easy. I think losing the lounge space forced us to think more creatively about organizing events in terms of both location and types of events.”

Oesau described how the committee adapted during the pandemic by hosting virtual events like trivia and an online open mic. They also partnered with the Diversity and Equality Committee on “Black Voices: Showcasing Black Creativity at the Coop” and created a 50th Anniversary exhibition in the Coop lobby. “All of that expanded our model,” he said. “Now, collaboration is central. We work with outside spaces and members who want to help lead programs.”

Newer members like Rob Price have brought fresh energy. “After meeting the team and learning about the community work that the team does, I thought that my background and skills could add value to the Fun Committee,” he said. “Once I joined, I realized how the Coop community has so many shared values, and that there truly is a need to foster this by making space for the members to come together outside of shopping or shifts.”

For Di Piazza, working on the 50th anniversary exhibition was a turning point. “Joining the committee became an avenue for me to engage with members beyond the shopping floor,” she said. “One highlight was working on the 50th anniversary exhibition and diving into the Coop’s archives, which helped me connect with the deeper history and perspectives of our membership.”

“We have been trying to be thoughtful about representation, inclusiveness and access,” said Oesau, “with our engagements a reflection of the Coop’s principles and goals overall. Recent iteration and experimentation has opened up new opportunities

and events, while preserving some level of tradition so that people can return for events they enjoy."

"We have a wonderful resource in the members themselves—lots of wisdom, talent and skill," Abbas said. "So all we have to do is create opportunities for people to get to know one another in a social or creative setting."

To reach out to the Fun Committee and get involved, send an email to psfcfun@gmail.com. You can also follow along with upcoming events and behind-the-scenes planning on Instagram at @psfc_fun_committee.

Liora Fishman joined the Coop in December 2021. She lives in Prospect Heights and has a wonderful dog, Ollie, whom she loves very much.

Editors' note: Two quotes that were originally incorrectly attributed to a Fun Committee member have been removed from this article.

WHERE DOES THE COOP'S FOOD ACTUALLY COME FROM?

April 22, 2025



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

April 22, 2025

By Dan Bergsagel

You may think you know where the Coop's Brazil nuts and French couscous come from. But what about the English and Persian cucumbers? Or the Japanese eggplant and Jerusalem artichokes?

If you understand the origin of food and its journey from farms and other producers to the Coop's aisles, you may be able to better grasp the potential impact of tariffs during this tumultuous economic period.

Leila Darabi's insightful article from December 2024 outlined some of the potential overall impacts that the Trump administration's tariffs could have on the agricultural sector and, consequently, prices at the Coop. Here's a further exploration of tariffs and the Coop, based on an examination of the origins of the products lining the

Coop’s aisles.

BUYING STRATEGY

The Coop seeks out food using two complementary aims: to source the best and to source locally. This approach is clearest with fresh produce.

“We try to source the best representation of the item,” explained Cecelia Rembert, the Coop’s fruit buyer. But buyers also try to prioritize sourcing from producers who are local, which the Coop defines as being within a 500-mile radius—a one-day drive—of Brooklyn. Using local suppliers ensures products are fresh and supports the regional economy.

Of course, not all produce can be bought locally.

“The local growing season is from May to September or October. During the season a lot of the food comes locally from the North East,” Rembert said. “Outside of the local growing season, a lot of our produce comes from California and Mexico. Certain items are never grown in the United States, so we are always sourcing them from afar. Pineapples always come from Costa Rica. Bananas always come from Ecuador. Avocados come from Mexico almost all year round.”

FOOD ORIGINS

What’s more, even mapping the origins of the Coop’s food is not easy.

“A lot of the data depends on what information is recorded when the food is received. Often we’re more interested in getting it on the shelf and selling it than extra paperwork,” said Ken Macdonald, a Receiving Coordinator who is involved in IT at the Coop.

Yet Macdonald provides a glimmer of hope for data enthusiasts: “We are in the middle of a big shift to a new database system right now, so probably in a year or two we

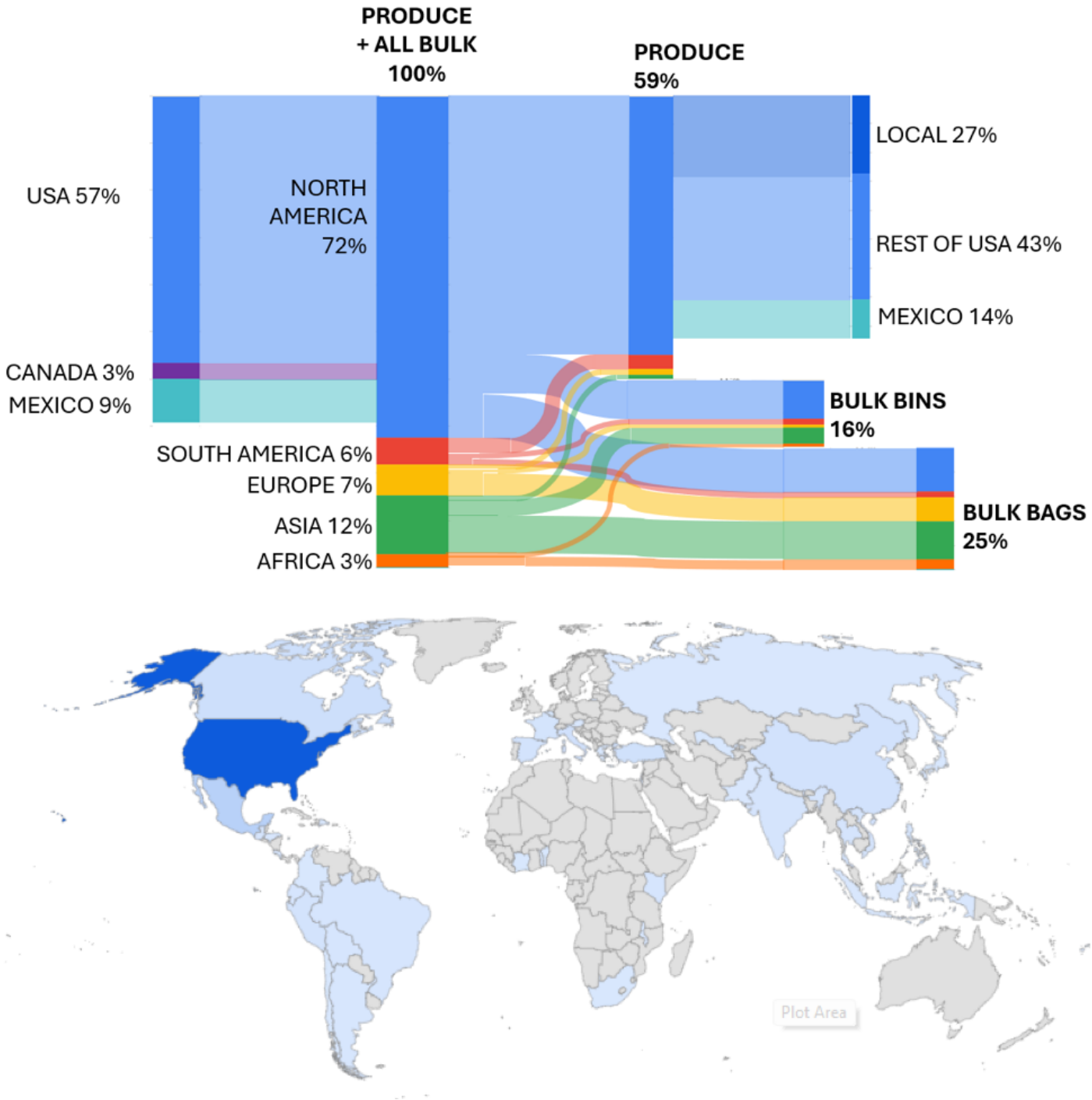
will have more access to origin information.”

While not all origin data is currently accessible, the Coop does record and publish weekly information on the origin of produce as well as occasional updates on the origin of bulk items, both in bins and in bags. This does not provide information on many items on our shelves, but it does enable us to generate a snapshot of where we currently source the food placed in the aisles on the far right as one enters the Coop.

Produce and bulk items sourced from North America make up 72 percent of the total, with U.S.-grown food accounting for 57 percent of the total, Mexican-grown for 9 percent, and Canadian-grown for 3 percent. All other countries individually contribute less than 3 percent.

Even though we are not currently in the local growing season, 27 percent of our produce items are sourced within a 500-mile radius, while 92 percent of our produce comes from North America. Some current locally grown produce include famous New York apples and hardy root vegetables like beets, potatoes, turnips and celeriac. Some items are even sourced from within a 5-mile radius, such as Brooklyn-grown Gotham Greens salad and basil.

The Coop’s reliance on other countries and regions increases for bulk items, with only 58 percent of our bulk bin items and 36 percent of our bulk bagged items coming from North America. Additionally, 25 percent of our bulk binned items and 31 percent of our bulk bagged items come from Asia, while 20 percent of our bulk bagged items come from Europe.



The data presented here is based on the variety of items on sale, not on the volume of each item of food sold. Two Coop produce staples skew these statistics significantly when the quantities sold are considered instead of the variety. Rembert estimates that around $13 million worth of produce is sold at the Coop each year, including $500,000 of bananas and $750,000 of avocados. These foods—both sourced almost exclusively from outside the US—together account for over 10% of produce sales by volume.

THE TARIFFS TODAY

Most of our produce and bulk items are sourced within the U.S., but certainly not all of them. Does this leave the Coop open to price volatility caused by tariffs?

Since President Trump has taken office, there has been significant confusion and instability associated with his tariff policies. Has there been any change in the Coop's food supply? "We haven't heard anything from our distributors," Rembert explained. "The produce business is pretty matter-of-fact. People just do their thing. The market will reflect the supply or the demand, but nothing has changed yet."

It is tempting to try and anticipate food distribution disruption based on prior experience. Does the COVID-19 pandemic offer any lessons?

For Rembert, the banana supply was an interesting case study in supply chain dynamics. "We get our bananas from Equal Exchange—a small cooperative importer. When there was high demand for cargo ships during the pandemic, as a small distributor, they were often bumped. So we had some trouble getting bananas."

Rembert added that "the tariffs are different as there isn't really any supply chain disruption—things are just going to cost more. We're not going to do anything different. The price will go up, and we'll continue to apply the same markup. That might affect member purchasing, and we may see that demand goes down."

The recent headlines have all been about the impact of tariffs on exporting Kentucky bourbon and on importing European wine. Is it only a matter of time before they come for our fabled cheese case? Rembert, again: "It will be interesting to see what kind of impact this trade war—if it continues as a trade war for years—will have on reshaping what the Coop carries and what members are buying."

And finally, for the trivia fans: Our Brazil nuts and French couscous come from Brazil and France, but the English cucumbers are Canadian, the Persian cucumbers are Do-

minican, the Japanese eggplant are Honduran and the Jerusalem artichokes are American.

Dan Bergsagel is a structural engineer from London. He likes to talk about the unexpected things hiding in plain sight.

COMPOST COMMITTEE REPORT: NEW COMPOST ON THE BLOCK

April 22, 2025



April 22, 2025

By Mark Hellermann for the Compost Committee

The Coop generates upwards of 23 tons of food scraps each year. About a third of this gets composted at nine local sites in Brooklyn by members who are part of the PSFC Compost Squad. One of these community sites is just down the street at Union and 4th Ave—GreenSpace on 4th (GS4). A few weeks ago the Coop started offering this compost for sale. The sifted compost from GS4 is sold in repurposed paper coffee filter bags from a coffee shop in Windsor Terrace. All of the bags have unique brown stains (not unlike the packaging on the legendary Powdermilk Biscuits).

Compost inside the bag is made from fruit and vegetable scraps collected at the Coop and from CHIPS soup kitchen. Sources of carbon (aka "browns") are wood chips from Greenwood Cemetery, wood shavings from a few Gowanus carpenters, leaves, coffee grounds and small amounts of cocoa chaff. No animal products are used in the making of this product. Except for the delivery of browns every few weeks, these materials arrive at GS4 via people-powered U-Boats. Most production does not rely on burning fossil fuels. You could say this is an ultra-local product that completes a full circle between Coop food scraps and Coop member gardens. (Someone actually did say that.)

Staff at the Coop (especially Cecelia Rembert and Joe Gordon) have been very supportive about getting this compost on the shelves so it can find its way into your flower and vegetable beds.

Food scraps not composted at community gardens get picked up by a commercial hauler known as Mr. T, which processes it into bioenergy in New Jersey. Coop members are making a concerted effort to increase local composting and to minimize the amount of food scraps being carted out of state and made into biogas and biosolids.

If you are interested in helping us process more of this nutrient-rich black gold, consider joining the Compost Squad. There are several openings and they are posted on the bulletin board by the elevator and also listed in "Join the Compost Committee" in this

edition of the *Linewaiters' Gazette*. Or you can contact psfccompost@gmail.com.

For more information on GS4 Compost, visit greenspaceon4th.org.

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Letters to the Editor



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

Editor's note: The April 29 General Meeting (GM) was to be held at the Theatre at City Tech University, a location the General Coordinators (GCs) chose to accommodate a large turnout expected in response to agenda items including a vote to establish hybrid GMs. On April 10, officials at City Tech notified the GCs that they were cancelling the Coop's rental reservation; they offered no explanation for this decision. In its wake, the GCs moved the coming April GM to the Picnic

House in Prospect Park and removed the hybrid vote from the agenda until further notice. The letters below were written before the cancellation at City Tech was known. Those members who wrote submissions regarding hybrid voting were given the opportunity to pull their letters from the Gazette. Members who opted to proceed with publication of their letters notwithstanding the late venue change appear below.

ONLINE, ASYNCHRONOUS DISCUSSION AND VOTING

To Coop members interested in more inclusive decision-making,

If the Coop wants members to "participat[e] in the Coop's decision-making process," it should make the process easy and convenient. General Meetings are neither.

I propose to create an online forum and virtual polling place where members can discuss and vote on agenda items ahead of GMs.

Online forums have been around since the 1970s. As a format for discussion, they have the following advantages over live meetings:

- **They are scalable.** One hundred people speaking for one minute each would take up almost the entire two hours of a GM. Online forums let more people participate, and people can contribute more considered responses.
- **They are more convenient.** Any reasonable time for the GM is also a time when the Coop is typically open, so at minimum, GMs exclude employees and other members working at the Coop during the meeting. Online forums would let everyone participate in the governance of the Coop, regardless of their schedules.
- **They are accessible to more people.** As a neurodivergent person, I have difficul-

ty processing information in real-time, including during live meetings. Online forums would make it easier for me to fully understand and make informed decisions on agenda items. They are also easier to make accessible for people with visual and auditory disabilities.

Online, asynchronous voting is also more scalable, convenient, and accessible than in-person, live voting. Around 4,000 people voted in the last Board of Directors elections, compared to the 240 that can fit in the Picnic House. Let's do that for all votes.

For details on how this could work, cost estimates and a comment form, please visit **tinyurl.com/psfc-online-forum**. I would greatly appreciate people's thoughts on this proposal!

Thank you,
Yejia Chen

RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW

Dear Gazette Editors,

"Well, ya got trouble . . . right here in River City."
– The Music Man

A great deal of time and energy has gone into the ongoing debate of whether or not to boycott a few products—in an official way—rather than letting Coop members make their own decisions. So much time and so much energy.

But now we have serious problems in our own country, problems that threaten our livelihoods, our health, our economy, our ability to make choices and many of the free-

doms we have taken for granted all of our lives. We need everyone to focus on this, using individual and collective efforts. Right here, right now.

In Cooperation,
Cynthia Blayer

EQUITY, ACCESS AND COMMUNITY COMMITTEE (EACC) LWG STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF HYBRID MEETINGS AND HYBRID VOTING AT PSFC GENERAL MEETING (GM)

Dear Coop members:

The Equity, Access and Community Committee works to help ensure the Coop meets its mission, which states, “We are committed to diversity and equality. We oppose discrimination in any form. We strive to make the Coop welcoming and accessible to all. We seek to maximize participation at every level, from policy making to running the store.”

In line with this mission, we observe that the in-person only attendance requirement for General Meetings is a barrier that dramatically reduces member participation. This unnecessary requirement, made obsolete by technology the Coop drew upon during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates inequities including: wealth, gender, race, geography, ability, family composition and others.

The upcoming April 29 vote on an agenda item to expand General Meetings from in--person only to hybrid is a crucial step toward the Park Slope Food Coop’s mission to maximize participation in policy-making and make the Coop welcoming and accessible to all. Decisions about the Coop are made at General Meetings. We should and must include as many members as possible so that they can attend, be heard and vote at General Meetings.

In-person only meetings make participation difficult—or impossible—for a wide swath of Coop members. Parents, caregivers, disabled and immunocompromised members, folks who live far from Prospect Park (where GMs are usually held), members employed in night work and other Coop members unable to attend a Tuesday evening meeting in Park Slope are essentially prohibited from the democratic governance of our Coop.

Hybrid meetings are one way to expand participation in shaping our Coop to folks for whom attending an in-person meeting is not possible. The Equity, Access and Community Committee strongly supports the measure to make General Meeting attendance and voting hybrid.

In solidarity,
Jordan Dunn and Dory Kornfeld

MORE COMPASSION AND RESPECT, PLEASE

To the Editors,

I love General Meetings. To me, coming together as a community to consider enhancements to the place where we buy our food is the Rockwellian ideal of civic engagement. Certainly, Coop members' passion for doing the right thing is an essential ingredient in the vibrancy of our cooperative grocery store.

But lately, one issue has turbo-charged moral striving, and allowed bitter factionalism to tarnish the utopian sheen of my family's primary source of nourishment. It's understandable that so much of our attention has turned to a conflict that has killed, maimed and displaced the relatives of many of our fellow members. Their anguish is not to be dismissed, nor should it matter "which side" they're on. But I can hold compassion for victims of this horrible conflict and still wonder:

How did so many members become convinced that adopting a singular stance on a complex and deeply fractious issue should be the Coop's highest priority?

How does aligning the Coop with an organization that does not recognize Israel's right to exist promote peace, or improve conditions in Gaza?

How do legal actions brought by members of Coop 4 Unity achieve anything resembling unity?

It is deeply unfortunate that so many members would rather attribute disagreement to moral failure than tolerate or attempt to understand opposition. Maybe this toxic penchant for oversimplifying very complex issues is related to the rampant smartphone usage I've noticed during GMs these days. Whatever it is, I just wish we could recognize that "victory" at the Coop will neither ease pain nor improve the world. Only compassion and respect for each other, no matter how difficult, can do that.

Best,
Brian Shuman

LET OUR VOICES BE HEARD—REALLY

Member-owners,

Kudos to the Equity, Access and Community committee for their recent demographic survey, a step toward understanding members' identities and needs.

I hope the General Manager Search Committee will follow this lead and survey members about what's important in a new GM (whose salary, like all Coop employees, is funded by the markup we pay).

To date, the only communication we have received from the GM Search Team was emailed on 12/20/24. It concludes, *If you have questions or comments for the Search Committee, please contact us via this link: bit.ly/PSFCgmquestion*.

Though any member who opened this email during that hectic December week had the option to “ask questions or make comments,” this is a far cry from seeking members’ input on what they want in a new GM.

This email was signed:

The GM Search Committee

Yolanda McBride, Valerie Vadala, and Steve Jenkins, representing the Personnel Committee

Karen Mancuso and Charles Parham, representing the hourly paid staff

Ann Herpel and Matt Hoagland, representing the General Coordinator team

Only three member-owners represent over 16,000 of us. I encourage them to be in full communication with all of us, to seek our opinions, and to make use of our experience and expertise.

I joined the Coop in 1978. We need a new General Manager who honors the Coop’s history of food and social justice and who helps us persevere at a time when outside forces encourage us to capitulate.

Best,
Alyce Barr

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS AMONG BOARD MEMBERS

Dear Fellow members:

The race for Board of Directors seats begins.

Eight members are running for two seats on the Board. Two of the candidates (Taylor Pate and Dan Kaminsky) are part of PSFC Members 4 Palestine, pushing the Coop to boycott Israel—a campaign that is tearing our Coop apart. Two other candidates (Noah Potter and Ralph Yozzo) have been endorsed by the Coop 4 Unity group fighting to preserve the Coop's autonomy, harmony and financial stability.

At the March general meeting, during the Q&A of the candidates, a member asked about a complaint (to the State Division of Human Rights) filed by a member who was active in the Coop 4 Unity group, and whether it would be a conflict of interest for the Coop 4 Unity candidates to be on the Board.

The answer: No, because the member who filed the complaint did so on his own initiative, none of the other Coop 4 Unity members are involved in it, and that member is not running for the Board.

You know what IS a conflict of interest? Actively pursuing a campaign that is dividing the Coop and creating hostility among the members—which is what current Directors Keyian Vafai and Tess Brown-Lavoie are doing.

Many kind thanks,
Zara Watkins

WHAT'S THEIR VERSION OF TRANSPARENCY?

Greetings:

At the March membership meeting, a BDS adherent stated that a director candidate endorsed by Coop 4 Unity would have a conflict of interest due to the "Coop 4 Unity lawsuit" (actually a proceeding at the State Department of Human Rights). As a candidate endorsed by C4U, I responded that there is no such lawsuit: a member affiliated with C4U brought the claim on his own behalf, not 'on behalf' of or in coordination with C4U.

Here's a fuller response. The only possible conflicts I can imagine would be if a C4U-affiliated director were (a) to share confidential information (such as legal advice from the Coop's counsel) with the claimant, or (b) to compel a settlement on terms that are unfair to the Coop. Even if there were a conflict, (a) I have no reason to believe that any director would have access to confidential information without assistance from staff—which I assume would not be given, and it is a standard practice for corporate directors in such situations to be excluded from (i) discussions of the claim and (ii) any vote relating to the claim. I challenge the member asserting a potential breach of fiduciary duty to state the basis for her belief. (Incidentally, this discussion shows the need to evaluate comprehensive bylaw amendments.)

Letters to the *Gazette* in support of the boycott from two board candidates appear on the Members 4 Palestine's website (https://psfc4palestine.org/boycott-letters/ letters dated 3/19/24 and 1/7/25). Pate was a moderator of M4P's January 2025 teach-in. When the candidates were questioned whether their platforms and beliefs align with M4P, she did not respond; Dan Kaminsky was not present to answer. Neither one's candidacy statement mentions their M4P affiliation.

What is M4P's version of transparency?

Noah Potter

FEELING BAD ABOUT THE COOP

Greetings:

I feel upset. We should be spending these next few months celebrating the remarkable accomplishments of Joe Holtz during his 50-year tenure as General Manager. Under Joe's stewardship we achieved the improbable. We should all feel gratitude and satisfaction and be looking forward to the Coop's continued success and stability.

Instead, the Coop is held hostage by a group of members who have introduced division, distrust and enmity into the Coop. They seek to impose ideological conformity, disregarding differing perspectives.

I feel betrayed. The Coop is built on trust, goodwill and respect. Members say, "If only one person is affected, we should…." or "We must have dialog and understanding." Yet our concerns are ignored, even mocked. Requests for dialogue are dismissed. The committees tasked with addressing disputes appear to be at best indifferent, at worst hostile.

I feel disappointed. The General Coordinators responsible for the Coop's success have clearly stated the risks posed by PSFC Members for Palestine (M4P) three part strategy:

1. Hybrid General Meetings
2. Simple majority boycott threshold
3. Boycott Israeli products.

The General Coordinators, the Agenda Committee and the Chair Committee all have the authority to reject these reckless proposals.

Instead, at great cost to the Coop, they proceed.

I feel disrespected. The violence motivated by “Free Palestine” is real and directed against Jews. No other movement targeting any other identity group would ever be considered in the Coop.

Yet, we are forced to spend our precious free time defending ourselves. By allowing this motion to proceed, the Coop legitimizes a proposal that threatens our safety, even if it is rejected. The Coop is saying it’s acceptable to promote violence against Jews. Therefore, we resist.

I feel unwelcome and no one cares.

Barbara Mazor

Editor’s Note: Barbara Mazor states that the GCs, Agenda Committee and Chair have the authority to “reject these reckless proposals.” That is incorrect; the GCs and Chair committee have no authority to prohibit agenda items. Only the agenda committee has the authority as defined by the GM to create the agenda. The agenda committee is the body in the Coop’s governance which is authorized to create the GM agenda. Nowhere in the organization’s governance documents are the GCs or the Chair given that authority.

IN THE SPIRIT OF MUTUAL EDUCATION

Dear Rebecca Schoenberg-Jones,

I was pleased to see that you read my article regarding the Jewish holiday of Tu B'Shvat and that you appreciated the parallel between humans and trees in terms of how we both grow and develop by way of self-abnegation (trees through a seed disintegrating into the ground, and humans through humbling ourselves by way of nullifying our egos).

As you alluded to, the verse from which I excerpted the phrase "For man is a tree in the field" (Deuteronomy 20:19) is indeed on a literal level a reference to how we are instructed to behave during wartime.

It is certainly unfortunate that Hamas has set up so many of its terror bases in such close proximity to trees to have resulted in such environmental devastation in Gaza.

Getting back to the focus of my original article however, it is well known amongst Torah scholars that there are a multitude of ways in which the Torah can be read and understood. The Hebrew language is replete with inner and multitudinous meanings, deeming all translations somewhat inadequate.

It is taught that there are four basic lenses through which the Torah can be read, known as: *Pshat* (Simple), *Remez* (Allegorical), *Drush* (Homiletical) and *Sod* (Secret/Mystical).

While you correctly cited the meaning of the verse on a Pshat (Simple) level, I was sharing a well-known Sod (Secret/Mystical) understanding based on Chassidic and Kabbalistic teachings.

If you'd be interested in learning more about how to understand the Torah through a more mystical lens, let's set up a *chavruta* (lit. "learning partner/friend"), meaning, I'd like to offer that we learn together in friendship. I would love to hear from you.

Sarede Rachel Switzer

WHAT'S THE TRUE CO$T OF HYBRID MEETINGS?

Greetings:

I've built numerous hybrid events and can confirm they require significant investment in time, equipment, technical staff and platform subscriptions.

Organizations that rush into hybrid formats inevitably face low online attendance, technical glitches and unexpected costs that could have been anticipated with proper planning.

Recently, a Members for Palestine advocate claimed hybrid meetings would have "no financial impact" on the Coop. This statement simply isn't based in reality.

Before making such a significant change to our organization, we need proper due diligence. I propose that interested members join me to:

- Create a cost-benefit analysis with multiple scaled options
- Design a detailed technology implementation plan
- Solicit vendor proposals with actual costs
- Develop a comprehensive budget for review
- Set aside political differences for the Coop's benefit

Claims that raising these concerns is "fearmongering" ignore the real challenges of hybrid implementation. A concept is not a plan.

Until we do this work, please vote NO on April 29. I've reached out to M4P for their cost estimates and welcome collaboration on creating a proper proposal that address-

es these practical realities.

Respectfully,
Meg Robertson
Member, Coop 4 Unity

WAIT WAIT…DON'T DOX ME!

Dear Members:

The Gazette editors' grace was now ending

As our members had long been sensing

"He submits and submits"

"Wish he'd find a new hobby that sticks"

Still a guy who defends ethnic cleansing.

Lauren Hudson

EVIDENCE THAT "HYBRID" GENERAL MEETINGS ARE A BAD IDEA

To Members:

There has been much clamoring lately in favor of switching to "hybrid" General Meetings (GMs), so that members who cannot attend in person can nevertheless partici-

pate. “Hybrid” GMs could also be useful when no space can accommodate member interest in an agenda item.

Looking at the actual history of GM attendance when all meetings were held remotely shows that making the GMs hybrid will not draw more members. The first two meetings did have much higher participation than usual. I do not have the actual record of how many came to the May and June 2020 meetings, but I think it reached 500 or 600. From the General Meeting minutes, below are the numbers in attendance at GMs at the highpoint in the meeting (people came and went throughout).

Another way of solving the problem of membership interest exceeding venue space for certain GMs is to change the bylaws to accommodate allowing GMs to be held over Zoom only in those instances.

Record of member attendance at remotely-held General Meetings:

May	2020	No record
June	2020	No record
July	2020	341
August	2020	451
September	2020	221
October	2020	169
November	2020	No meeting
December	2020	170
January	2021	131
February	2021	205
March	2021	200

April	2021	207
May	2021	110
June	2021	127
July	2021	187
August	2021	127
September	2021	170
October	2021	95
November	2021	130
December	2021	No meeting
January	2022	154
February	2022	105
March	2022	100
April	2022	123
May	2022	120
June	2022	86
July	2022	149
August	2022	112
September	2022	165
October	2022	201
November	2022	126
December	2022	No meeting
January	2023	116
February	2023	121

March	2023	116
April	2023	85
May	2023	128
June	2023	72
July	2023	80
August	2023	61

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Tobier

QUESTIONS ON FUNDING PROPOSED HYBRID MEETINGS

Greetings:

Who and how will the current hybrid meeting proposal be funded for over 16,000 people?

Multibillion-dollar companies regularly host online, verified hybrid meetings. However, these organizations have fully dedicated staff members and business units allocated specifically to this function.

We are a community-based organization in Brooklyn. The reality—which should be abundantly clear to anyone who has engaged with any financial documentation that the Coop has produced recently—is that we do not have the cash capital of a multibillion-dollar organization.

My request to members proposing this new format is quite simple: Where within our budget will the monetary cost be absorbed for investment in hybrid meetings, not on-

ly for technology, but also for the operational fees associated with staffing to set up and maintain the rigor of the meeting? Who will ensure that a physical space accommodates engagement for online members? And most importantly: who will validate and authenticate that only members join meetings virtually?

I love the idea of making meetings more accessible for all, but in its current state, the hybrid meeting proposal lacks the clarity and rigor necessary to make meetings accessible for all.

Thank you,
Zachary Zaban

WHAT A “REFERENDUM” ENTAILS AND MEANS

Greetings:

Lady Bracknell: To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. (Oscar Wilde’s The Importance of Being Earnest)

As a 20-year member of the Park Slope Food Coop I used to hear the word “referendum” and assumed that it meant that we polled the entire membership and truly found out the general will of the membership.

About 15 years ago, I argued regarding some Coop loan program that we have 14,000 members and shouldn’t we hear from them before we vote??

I attended that 2012 vote about boycott at Brooklyn Tech. I was amazed at the turnout; the line was all the way around the building and the meeting went on for hours.

I thought for sure all these people wouldn’t vote against a vote. I was incorrect.

To answer the question. It turns out a referendum is only of those who choose to vote. And the current numbers show that a recent high of 2,802 people voted yes in the recent board of directors election for one candidate. That’s 2,802 out of 16,000 approximate members. Or 17.5% of the membership.

The general membership should be aware that if you create a mailing list or social group of several thousand people in the Food Coop that will listen to the group’s endorsements (given the current voter turnout) you can significantly affect the future of the Coop.

What appears to be the “silent majority” may not be aware of that fact. And this is a small attempt to shine some light on it.

Ralph Yozzo

BETTER DEMOCRACY THROUGH THOUGHTFUL REFORM—NOT JUST HYBRID

Greetings:

There is growing momentum to create a more representative and deliberative governing process; one that works for parents, the immunocompromised, staff and for the tech-savvy and tech-limited alike. As a busy parent, I understand the call for increased accessibility to General Meetings. At the same time, a fundamental change to our governing structure MUST be approached with care.

The Members 4 Palestine endorsed proposal focuses only on a bylaw change to enable hybrid meetings.

Though hybrid meetings may *appear* to increase accessibility, they also introduce a new online space that can quickly devolve into something toxic. Online debate has a way of flattening contentious issues into the same kind of venomous discussions which rage on Twitter/Reddit…pitting one avatar against another. The hybrid proposal offers no mechanism to ensure digital engagement is constructive, equitable and safe.

In order to enable members to cooperatively solve problems, we need clear and effective policies in place BEFORE we amend our bylaws.

We also need to widen the lens through which we view this issue; we should not risk further polarization without genuine reform. There have been several other proposals that have appealing ideas. For example, Membership Coordinator Jason Weiner shared his ideas in a Gazette submission ("A New Coop Democracy" 10/15). To my knowledge, there are several other proposals as well.

To affect true and meaningful change, we should form a committee to design a governance structure that strengthens member voices and democratic participation. This committee would comprehensively study the issues and flesh out all related proposals in order to evaluate their risks and benefits and take the best of each.

In cooperation,
Tali Rasis

ANTI-HYBRIDERS WANT US TO CUT OFF OUR NOSE TO SPITE OUR FACE

Dear Coop members:

The Food Coop's mission statement reads "We are committed to diversity and equali-

ty. We oppose discrimination in any form. We strive to make the Coop welcoming and accessible to all and to respect the opinions, needs and concerns of every member. We seek to maximize participation at every level, from policy making to running the store."

Hybrid GMs would FINALLY fulfill this commitment to extend policy-making powers to ALL 17,000 of us. For the past 53 years, this right has been reserved only for those privileged enough to attend in-person.

General Coordinators and pro-Israel members don't want Hybrid and want to "cut off our nose to spite our face" by voting against our best and democratic interests. The boogie man? The proposal to de-shelve Israeli products made by an apartheid regime actively engaging in collective punishment of 2 million Palestinians through forced starvation, genocide, ethnic cleansing and land theft. It's offensive that a call for racial justice and human rights is leveraged to shut down hybrid meetings that would finally allow a democratic structure for all 17,000 of us. Don't want to boycott Israel? Then vote against it during a hybrid meeting. Several other pending proposals: reduce our reliance on plastic bags; bring back the bulletin board for member usage; bring back the print version of *Linewaiters' Gazette* and possibly more.

We used zoom during COVID. THIS was our "feasibility study." Create a hybrid squad to overcome tech problems. One anti-hybrider suggested Coop-approved exemptions only for the sick, disabled and parents with young kids to attend virtual GMs. Another wants only some proposals to be voted through hybrid.

REJECT ANYTHING THAT DOESN'T ALLOW ALL OF US TO PARTICIPATE BY HYBRID FOR EVERY GM. Anyone who continues to deprive all of this right are obstructionists to a truly democratic Coop.

In solidarity,
Hima B.

PLEASE CONSIDER THE ENVIRONMENTAL TOLL IN GAZA

Dear Fellow Members,

I am a long-time Coop member with a form of cancer linked to asbestos exposure. It's an experience I wouldn't wish on anybody. I flinch when I even see the word "asbestos," let alone when I hear about new incidents of environmental contamination with this horrific poison. Recently I read a story in the Electronic Intifada: "Asbestos Dust Threat Looms Over Much of Gaza" (published March 24). I learned that Israel's destruction of an estimated 92 percent of housing units in Gaza has created some 39 million tons of debris, much of it asbestos-laden (UN figures). Pulmonologist Dr. Shadi Awad of Al-Shifa Hospital describes the consequences: "polluted air enters the airways and directly impacts lung tissues." Those who escape cancer may develop other severe respiratory disorders.

It's easy to feel distanced from atrocities occurring thousands of miles away. I have not felt detached from the suffering in Gaza, but reading this story renewed my sense of urgency. I can't bear to think of small children (those "lucky" ones who survive the current carnage) going on to develop asbestos-related lung diseases. Given Israel's deliberate targeting of medical infrastructure, will appropriate treatment even be available?

Coop members have the option to join a powerful global movement that refuses complicity with these horrors. We can send a clear signal to our own government, the chief patron of Israel's rampage: We refuse cooperation with genocide and occupation.

Don't fall for the argument that our Coop is too small to make a meaningful difference.

Or that it’s not worth “upsetting” Coop members who support a genocidal ethnostate. Action on the local level is exactly what’s needed to chip away at the wall of impunity that permits unspeakable crimes to continue unchecked. Please join PSFC4Palestine in calling for an Israeli products boycott.

In Cooperation,
[Name Withheld]

COOK WITH THE COOP!

April 22, 2025

THE COOP
COOKING SQUAD
PRESENTS

•

4-23-2025
7:30 - 8:30 PM EDT

SIMPLE SIPS AND BITES

A FREE, ONLINE COOKING CLASS







THE BEST SHRIMP COCKTAIL

BUTTER BEANS WITH RICOTTA AND PESTO

HERB LEMONADE

TAUGHT BY PARK SLOPE FOOD COOP MEMBER RACHEL LUO



REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN

FOODCOOPCOOKS.ORG
IG: @FOODCOOPCOOKS

April 22, 2025

By William Doran for the Cooking Committee

Join the Cooking Squad and Coop Member **Rachel Luo** for *Simple Sips and Bites* on **Wednesday, April 23**, **at 7:30 p.m. EDT on Zoom** as part of the Coop's monthly cooking series. Rachel will share some entertaining basics and three elegant recipes for entertaining: the best shrimp cocktail, butter beans with ricotta and pesto and an herb lemonade! Born into Houston's diverse food scene, she grew up constantly exploring new foods and fell in love with the ways food could translate stories and bring people together. Formerly the head of a bartending agency and a bartender for private events across the city, Rachel has hosted countless events.

RSVP, PARTICIPATE AND FOLLOW

Sign up for classes, download recipes and find shopping lists to cook along from home at **foodcoopcooks.org**. As classes are added they will show up on the Committee's home page. Check back regularly for updates! Follow the Cooking Committee on Instagram at **instagram.com/foodcoopcooks** for more content including shopping sessions with guest chefs!

TEACH A CLASS

Though cooperation is at the heart of the Coop's mission, so is food! The Cooking Committee is looking for guest chefs to share their food expertise, traditions and special treats. Members receive work credit for preparing and delivering classes. Tell us what you want to teach at **foodcoopcooks.org/contact**.