MEMBER-SUBMITTED ARTICLE: RESTORING SIMPLE MAJORITY FOR BOYCOTTS

May 5, 2026



May 5, 2026

By John Caramichael and Abdi-Hakin Dirie

We are now approaching a long-delayed vote on our proposal to restore simple majority voting (50%+1) for boycotts.

Currently, boycotts require a 75% supermajority to pass, making them the only Coop decision with special rules. All other decisions, including financial investments, are decided by simple majority. This includes past votes to spend millions to buy our building and contentious decisions on stocking meat and beer and opening a second location. (Note: Bylaws amendments require a 2/3 supermajority, but virtually all deci-

sions on Coop operations, including boycotts, do not amend the bylaws).

From 1973 to 2016, boycotts were also decided by simple majority, including those targeting apartheid South Africa and Chile under Pinochet. The idea of a supermajority requirement only emerged in 2009, just two months after Israel bombed Gaza, killing 1,417 Palestinians, including 313 children. Calls to boycott Israel prompted some members to push for a higher threshold, effectively moving the goalposts.

Further discussion in 2010, 2013 and 2015 brought more attention to the supermajority proposal. Members at the time commented that the policy was “an attempt to rig future votes” and likened it to Republican voter fraud laws meant to influence elections.

The 75% rule was eventually adopted in 2016 through a procedurally flawed vote. (Ironically, it only passed with 60% support and can be repealed by simple majority). The proposal was brought to the floor by a member who is a well-documented supporter of Israel in the *Gazette*, most recently calling for our Coop to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which falsely conflates criticism of Israel with antisemitism.

Like gerrymandering, the 75% threshold erodes democracy by giving disproportionate power to members opposing boycotts. While not explicitly naming Israel, the policy reflects a broader “Palestine Exception,” where advocacy for Palestinians faces institutional barriers.

In our Coop, the Palestine Exception threatens other solidarity work by making all boycotts much harder to pass. In 2017, 59% of members voted to boycott Tom Cat Bakery in Queens, in solidarity with workers seeking severance and basic protections from ICE. Despite majority support, the boycott failed under the 75% rule. The workers ultimately lost their fight, and our Coop shares responsibility.

In our time of rising fascism, war, genocide and exploitation, boycotts remain an essential tool of nonviolent resistance. Restoring simple majority voting will renew our

tradition of solidarity by removing a recently established barrier.

To address two common criticisms: First, some argue boycotts are “divisive” and require special rules. But our Coop has made many big decisions using simple majority. Disagreement is part of democracy. Manipulating the rules to advantage one side does not reduce disagreement; it merely undermines faith in the process. As seen with last year’s vote on hybrid General Meetings (in that case, needlessly requiring a bylaws amendment), applying special rules to block a popular policy created greater frustration.

Second, some claim supermajority reflects Coop “tradition,” referring to our past voting record on boycotts. It is true that past boycott votes often had high percentage levels of support, but the actual requirement was a simple majority until 2016.

Consider an analogy: the Coop’s city council district votes overwhelmingly blue each cycle. Should we require Democrats to win 75% to be elected because of that “tradition”? Such a rule would clearly be unfair. High percentage votes are welcome, but requiring a supermajority is different, because it grants unequal power to opponents of boycotts and distorts the democratic process.

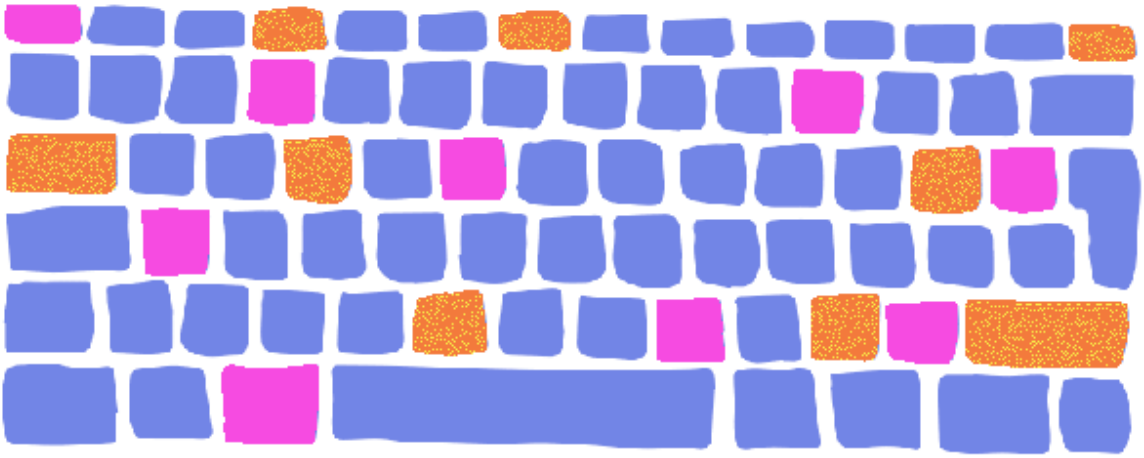
More broadly, these criticisms omit how and why the rule was introduced: in reaction to a proposed boycott of Israel. The seemingly neutral rhetoric belies the reality of a Palestine Exception.

Restoring simple majority voting is a step toward a more democratic and accessible Coop, in the spirit of reforms like hybrid meetings. Thank you for your consideration, and we hope to earn your “yes” vote at an upcoming General Meeting.

FEBRUARY 10, 2026

May 5, 2026

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



LIDL HIGHLIGHTS LACK OF COOP AFFORDABILITY

Dear Editor,

I appreciated very much Anita Bushell's January 20 article on the Park Slope branch of Lidl, a new German grocery story on of which I was unaware. Among other things, she highlighted items in several categories that are more affordable at Lidl than they are at the Coop, including mandarin oranges, multigrain bread, and croissants. All but one variety of apple there are also on offer at a lower price. All this with no work requirement.

Bushell prefers the quality of goods and feeling of community at the Coop. I do too, but her survey highlights an important reality: Increasingly, we are a place less about affordable foods and more about elevated (or some might say snobby) preferences and responsible (or some might say politicized) sourcing.

Our markup was "temporarily" increased to 25% from 21% nearly six years ago and with spiraling health care and other costs, reporting out of the general meetings makes clear there is no return on the horizon to the original lower food prices. For the past year, I've found it cheaper to have coffee delivered from Finland than to buy it at the Coop, to give one example.

Meanwhile far more members seem interested in engaging in geopolitical debates than with costs and affordability. Instead of turning up our noses at Lidl, we should consider how to replicate their tight mission focus and efficiencies. Or we should at least be more honest about the fact that affordability, for those of us who don't qualify for special programs, is slipping away at our beloved Coop.

In cooperation,

Ryan Tate
Receiving shift (Lifter)

REGARDING LIDL'S REVIEW

Dear Coop community,

Anita Bushell's January 20 article on the relative merits of Lidl and the Coop ("Cheap-Croissants but Lidl Charm") misses the mark. The Coop and Lidl are fundamentally different, but it hardly warrants pooh-poohing Lidl.

In truth, many Coop products are expensive, and Lidl is generally cheaper. As Ms. Bushell observes, the Coop wins on quality and variety. But many products at Lidl—-like fresh breads—are actually superior to the Coop's. Lidl produce, while not as good as Coop produce, is decent and mostly cheaper than what's for sale at Trader Joe's. It's hardly fair to diminish it as "an okay option for last-minute dashes."

Frankly, I find Ms. Bushell's mockery of discount promotions as features of a "a glorified mini-mart" deeply out of touch when affordability is such an important issue. I also struggle to relate to her lamenting the loss of the semi-suburban Key Foods parking lot and ruing its replacement with housing units, many set aside for affordable housing. (N.B. It was community leaders who advocated for an affordable grocery store in the development.)

Lidl is not especially warm or charming; most groceries aren't. It employs the same antitheft gate system used across Europe. If this system reduces the shoplifting that chain supermarket operators often cite as reasons for avoiding certain neighborhoods, it's a reasonable trade-off. Lidl has been expanding across the city, often in neighborhoods lacking affordable alternatives. It's also open to anyone who walks off the street—unlike the Coop.

I rather like the Coop, which is why I'm a member, but that doesn't mean I look down on Lidl. I do however wholly disapprove of mocking a discount grocery store's food as "technically edible."

Sincerely,

Daniel Stone

PAGING COMPOSTABLE BAGS TO THE BULK AISLE

Dear Coop members:

As a newer member of the Coop, I've been impressed by the sustainable practices in place: a robust composting system, food donation to CHiPS and other food rescue organizations, reuse of delivery boxes for shoppers, and much more.

I'm curious about one, albeit small, area where we might be able to do better: the plastic bags used for pre-packaged bulk items and bread. I recognize there may be considerations I'm not aware of—cost or performance issues with compostable options—though given compostable bags are available in the produce section, I wonder if there's potential to transition these remaining plastic bags to compostable (or at the very least non-plastic) alternatives.

Part of my motivation for writing this letter is to see if this is something other members would support pursuing. The Coop's commitment to sustainability is a large part of what drew me to the organization, and I would love to help continue to drive this core part of our mission: "We strive to reduce the impact of our lifestyles on the world we share with other species and future generations."

Kindly,

Kristen Mashikian

FOOD HOLDS ENERGY WITH A MESSAGE

Dear Coop members,

In 2015, when my daughters were 5 and 4 years old, I joined the PSFC. Our family enjoyed all the organic goodies we are so blessed to have available. My friend Anna, also a PSFC member, pointed out how I would bring carrots and a peeler with me to the Children's Museum; my nephew would laugh at how my stroller would be full of food and called me a refrigerator.

We would not leave home without all our food.

In the book *Food Rules*, writer Michael Pollan observes how much of what he sees for sale doesn't "deserve to be called food." Instead, he prefers to "call them edible food--like substances."

Having growing up in Tunisia and in Switzerland, I was alarmed at the quality of food sold in the US. My studies confirmed what my intuition was telling me: food is more than calories and nutrients. It holds the energy of the farmer, the farm, nature, and the intention behind the making of that food. Food holds a message.

I started cooking for my community to have conversations on ethical food and why we need to know where our food comes from. When we eat local food, it's easier to know the energy it holds. We want to give money to people who are caring for our land and taking good care of their employees and animals. I don't want to eat anger and pain, do you?

Guided by that philosophy, I do not buy ingredients from Israel, and I'm in favor of boycotting all goods from there until Israel ends what an overwhelming number of human rights organizations and authorities on international law say is a genocide, and

Palestinians live freely.

I am honored to serve the PSFC with my food. I offer a vegan Tunisian sandwich called LA TUNISIENNE, free of cruelty. Find it Sundays in the grab and go fridge.

Sincerely,

Nadia Ketoure

HAVE RACHMONES: IMAGINE MENSTRUATION WHERE IMPORT OF HYGIENE PRODUCTS IS BANNED

Fellow Members,

Perhaps you've heard someone ask: Why Israel? Why do thousands of Coop members demand a boycott of Israeli products, especially now that there's a ceasefire*? Let's take a closer look and use an Israeli newspaper as a source. On January 22, 2026 *Haaretz* reported a "shortage in basics such as beef, poultry and hygiene products, caused by Israel's decision to ban the entry of these products…".

These banned hygiene products include menstrual supplies and diapers. Last week, I received a charity request to fund period kits for menstruating women and girls in Gaza. I was ready to donate, but then wondered: would these even make it through the blockade?

In the Yiddish-English home of my girlhood, my mother would often tell me to "have rachmones" (empathy or compassion) for others. Whether or not you've ever menstruated, it should be easy to imagine how wretched it would be to have no products to absorb your menstrual blood, and how much more of a horror it would be if you were living in a freezing cold refugee camp with extremely limited toilets or clean run-

ning water, and let alone privacy.

Every time we member-owners stock, sell, and buy Israeli products, we contribute to the economy of a country that has chosen to keep Palestinians in Gaza without period products and diapers.

Have Rachmones,

Alyce Barr

* It’s hard to understand what Israel considers a ceasefire, since Israeli forces have killed over 470 Palestinians during the current ceasefire.

SOME SEE UPSIDE TO A “LOOMING COLLAPSE”

Dear Members,

I read recently of a “looming collapse” of Israel’s agricultural exports market. Whether or not we boycott Israeli goods at the Coop, this collapse could achieve what so many courageous amongst us have campaigned for: a better world.

Sincerely,

Damien Neva

KNOW THE FACTS BEFORE YOU VOTE

Dear Coop community:

As we gear up for what's sure to be a contentious discussion (and, finally, a vote!!) on the boycott of Israeli products, it's essential that members reach out and learn the facts about previous and current organizing efforts.

Please DO NOT believe claims of antisemitism (I for one am proudly Jewish) and other emotional appeals to secure votes against a boycott. Some members weaponize such claims, and it behooves all of us to understand the facts and vote our consciences.

The Coop has a long, proud history of boycotting products from countries and entities that fail to act in accordance with our Mission Statement. I urge all members to familiarize themselves with that Statement and the importance of boycotts in the struggles worldwide for justice.

Yes, this issue brings "conflict" among us and, yes, discussions on these matters can be challenging, but I believe in the Coop, its Mission Statement, and the integrity of our members to proceed with the facts and in a spirit of cooperation

Sincerely,

Carol Wald

TRYING TO "JOIN THE CONVERSATION" WOULD BE EASIER WITH SOME TRANSPARENCY, PLEASE

Dear Coop members:

I'm writing with questions about the December 30 "Join the Conversation" memo announcing a facilitated conversation about conflict in the Coop community, capped at 12 participants, with work-slot credit for attending. The memo emphasized confidentiality and directed members to apply online.

I applied almost immediately, but wasn't selected. I understand that there was likely limited capacity, but when shift credit is offered for a limited-access event, the selection and approval process should be transparent.

Questions I hope the Coop can answer:

- Will there be additional sessions, and will members who weren't selected this time get priority or another clear path to participate?
- What were the selection criteria? Was it first-come/first-served, a lottery, or based on other considerations? If so, what were they? Was race, ethnicity, religion, or identity considered?
- Who approved this as eligible for shift credit, and under what policy or category? What safeguards ensured it was administered fairly and consistently?
- Where was this discussed publicly within Coop governance? I don't recall seeing it in General Meeting materials or minutes, but I'd appreciate a pointer if I missed it.

Sincerely,

Vivek Bhagwat

COOP WORK-SLOT CREDIT

Dear Editor:

On January 12, I participated in a Coop event for work-slot credit to discuss how conflict at the Coop "affected your experience as a Coop member." It covered "your experience as a Coop member during times of conflict, especially if it feels personal," and was not about making "decisions about a boycott or convincing anyone of a par-

ticular view.” (Quoted text is all pulled from the document from the moderators). Six people took part.

We agreed to no audio recording and no names. Moderators were asked what they were bringing back from this session to the Coop community. They said they were not providing any information to the Coop.

I argued that the Membership needs to obtain value for holding this session as the Coop provided the site and work slot credits to the participants. It is not a breach of confidentiality to provide a high-level report, which does not include names or direct quotes.

I noted that I could write a letter to the *Gazette*, following those guidelines. One participant was against any letter writing. The moderators who had advised that they were not decision makers, now ruled against my right to inform the Coop. At that point I left the session.

If the moderators want to hold this type of meeting under the “No Feedback” to Members rule, then it should not be held on Coop property. It is really a private activity. The Coop should not host or provide work-slot credits for something that doesn’t inform the Members and directly or indirectly, benefit the Coop.

I respectfully request that any future sessions be canceled.

In Cooperation,

Stewart Pravda

IN THE LAND OF "BROKEN LAND DREAMS" (WITH APOLOGIES TO THE BOSS)

Dear Coop members,

My magical realism novel, *Broken Land Dreams,* out in Kindle and print, mentions the Coop and Park Slope. It's not just for Boomers, guys in search of themselves, or Brooklynites, but those in need of a Hired Power, progressives, mindfulness types, literary mavens, utopian dreamers, and young superheroes with contemplative and critical thinking powers.

The book defies a conventional linear narrative. In Part I, Jacob Traum, a grumpy, retired high school social worker and meditating lefty boomer, tells us his wife Maya has left him and warns him he needs to recover from himself. He describes the puzzling and socially unjust things he broods and dreams about that contribute to his disposition and emotional absence.

In Part II, the surreal story begins. With the help of his dreamt-up, gender-fluid, hired power with superpowers from the future, Jacob embarks on a Dante-esque, pandemic-era personal journey. In Hell Inc. he's confronted by, then manages to escape three right-wing rats, leaders of the Ratocracy conspiracy—Ratty Ghouliani, Ayn Ratnd, and Pete the New York Pizza Rat. The rats seek revenge by infesting his former high school with Ratocratic values and plan to take over Brooklyn. With the help of his Park Slope (Purgatory) men's group, the Brooklyn Codgers, and his high school students' socially conscious meditation group, imbued with their own superhero powers, Jacob must face himself as well as the Ratocrats in a final showdown to reach Heaven (the Brooklyn Botanic Garden), save Brooklyn, and earn back Maya.

In our post-pandemic and Trump-redux era, this re-telling of Dante's cosmic journey will appeal to many of us facing an uncertain future and to those who appreciate how truth, love, and Brooklyn-style dreams triumph over meanness, greed, fake news—and New York rats.

Sincerely,

David Forbes

NOTE FROM THE GAZETTE EDITORS

February 14, 2026

To Gazette readers,

Inconsistencies occurred in applying the Gazette's Letters to the Editor policies in the February 10, 2026 issue. As a result, two letters from that issue have been temporarily removed pending a review of those policies.

As the Coop's publisher, the General Coordinators have a responsibility to ensure that published material aligns with institutional and legal standards and that policies are applied consistently. In this instance, General Manager Joe Szladek and General Coordinator Ann Herpel were involved in the decision to remove the content in order to address those concerns.

A review of the Gazette's editorial standards and policies is underway to ensure they are clearly defined and consistently applied.

We regret any confusion this may cause and appreciate Gazette readers' understanding as we complete this review.

Thank you,

Gazette Editors, Joe Szladek and Ann Herpel

DECEMBER GENERAL MEETING: BDS TENSIONS FLARE AGAIN

May 5, 2026



ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

December 30, 2025

By Kayla Levy

During the final General Meeting of 2025, held on December 2 at the Prospect Park Picnic House, tensions over a proposed boycott of Israeli goods, which have simmered all year, burst into the open again.

As members filed into the rows of white folding chairs, Jan Clausen, a writer and Coop member since the 1970s, stood in the center aisle handing out copies of “The Olive Press,” a zine published by Park Slope Food Coop Members for Palestine. Shortly before 7 p.m., General Manager Joseph Szladek approached and asked her to stop.

“Members aren’t allowed to pamphlet while someone is shopping for milk, and being at the General Meeting is akin to that,” Szladek said in a follow-up interview, adding that the Coop would always allow members to distribute materials in a public space, like the Union Street sidewalk.

Clausen responded that for decades there was a literature table at the general meetings, where members handed out all sorts of pamphlets, including political materials. “I’ve seen a lot of rules made up to suppress speech,” she said.

This exchange foreshadowed much of what came next: an update from the Chair Committee on a long-debated proposal for hybrid meetings, a communications proposal related to the staff’s ability to send “do-not-reply” emails, and, in less contentious news, a rundown on Thanksgiving shopping.

OPEN FORUM LEADS TO BOYCOTT DEBATE, AGAIN

The majority of the nine members who took to the floor during the open forum discussed issues related to the boycott debate. Meeting chair Dan Hegwood read aloud a letter from Noah Potter voicing dissatisfaction with the Board of Directors, who broke with typical protocol and authorized a referendum vote on hybrid meetings at the April GM.

While ostensibly about virtual attendance at general meetings, the issue of hybrid vot-

ing has become tied up in the fight over the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS). In his letter, Potter said the Board's decision to proceed with the vote marked "the end of member governance of the Coop."

Opponents of BDS say the push for hybrid meetings actually represents an effort by BDS supporters to get their proposal approved by the Coop, since in-person votes on the matter have been canceled. They say in a hybrid meeting, a BDS vote is more likely to pass.

At the June meeting, it was announced that hybrid voting was supported by 66.43 percent of members in a referendum, which was not enough for the 66.67 percent needed for a bylaw amendment.

The Board then independently decided to authorize hybrid meetings in September.

Later, Barbara Mazor, a Coop member since 1988, asked four board members that she termed "activists"—who have shown support for BDS or the April motion—if they would adhere to hypothetical future votes where Coop membership rejected BDS. She and Board Member Keyian Vafai had a muffled exchange, after which Mazor said, "I'll take that as a no."

Vafai, however, spoke up five minutes later: "Yes, I absolutely believe in voting with the membership." Board members Tess Brown-Lavoie, Tim Hospodar and Brandon West, who Mazor also called out by name, did not comment.

Two members made non-BDS-related comments. Hospodar raised concerns with an amendment passed in August affirming that the Coop Treasurer must be an upper-level management staff person, and former General Manager Joe Holtz asked attendees to support a developing co-op in Brazil, which he previously wrote about in the *Linewaiters' Gazette*.

THE NUMBERS: COOP FINANCES & THANKSGIVING SALES

The General Coordinators' reports largely centered on numbers—including the standard update on the financial health of the Coop from General Manager and Treasurer Szladek, and a seasonal report on Thanksgiving sales.

Year-to-date sales through November 9 were up 8.5 percent over the previous year, but the cost of goods and running the Coop were, too, meaning the business had a $372,000 deficit, Szladek said. The General Manager reassured members that sales usually pick up during the fall and winter and he expects the Coop to come "close" to breaking even by year's end.

Szladek attributed some of this year's deficit to costly one-off expenses and rising healthcare expenses for personnel, as seen nationally. He said the Coop is seriously considering how to balance rising healthcare costs while maintaining a strong staff plan, and noted in follow-ups that the current self-insured, premium-free plan has saved the Coop "a tremendous amount of money over the years."

Next, Elinoar Astrinsky, a General Coordinator since 2009, detailed Thanksgiving sales—a staggering volume of food totaling more than a Boeing 787's cargo load. Shoppers bought 38,000 pounds of produce, 7,760 pounds of cheese (cheddar was the most popular) and plenty of walnuts (about 1,000 pounds), she said.

Astrinsky concluded with a shout-out to staff for keeping the store well-stocked and relatively line-free, which elicited applause from the audience. Meeting chair Hegwood, who repeatedly asked attendees to hold their applause during politically fraught moments, joked that applause was only appropriate "when we're having Thanksgiving sales numbers."

AN UPDATE ON HYBRID MEETINGS

Following a brief committee update from the International Trade Education Squad about the Trump Administration's trade policy (which, in summary, remains volatile

but still impacts the Coop far less than other grocers thanks to our focus on local goods), the Chair Committee issued a progress update on hybrid meetings.

After the Chair Committee solicited support for the transition to hybrid meetings, nine people expressed interest, seven responded to an outreach email and six were selected for the role, explained Committee member Josef Szende. The positions are short--term and will be evaluated for long-term participation, he added.

During a period for questions, Mazor took to the stage again to ask whether members will be able to comment on the Committee's eventual proposal, expressing specific concerns about how the meetings will be kept civilized. Szende responded that he couldn't speak to specifics (the Committee hasn't yet met), but that the transition will be collaborative.

"This is not a consulting firm delivering a product. This is a community. We're working together and we need to dialogue," he said "It's going to be a process and it's definitely not going to be perfect."

TWO ELECTIONS & A PROPOSAL ABOUT ELECTIONS—PLUS A DISCUSSION ABOUT RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION

Chair Hegwood opened the GM agenda by urging members to be "civil and generous," a request that was mostly respected during the 90-minute session covering two proposals and votes.

The meeting opened with member Michael Freedman-Schnapp, who brought his earlier proposal for a member-led Financial Advisory Committee to a vote. Most members expressed support for the Committee, especially since Freedman-Schnapp added a revision in response to feedback that reserves two of the seven seats for members without financial expertise.

"I don't have a lot of expertise, but I have thoughts about what are socially responsible investments that I would want the Coop to make," said Alyce Barr, a member of

nearly 50 years, explaining that a Committee with a mix of backgrounds would foster cooperation. The vote passed 111 to 11.

Next came a hotly debated agenda item from Coop member Rosa Palermo, who proposed reserving the "do-not-reply" email—used for one-way staff communications—for operational updates and announcements, not personal opinions or advocacy. Her proposal came in response to a controversial message that Holtz sent from the "do-not-reply" email weeks before the Board of Directors Election (and his retirement).

In the message that staff said was sent to 34,000 active and inactive members, Holtz said that he was speaking only for himself, but encouraged all recipients to vote against Dan Kaminsky and Taylor Pate—pro-BDS candidates endorsed by PSFC Members for Palestine. Kaminsky and Pate both lost the election.

In her opening statement, Palermo mentioned the email, saying that it made her think about how "our communication tools support equal member voice and align with our cooperative values." However, she maintained that the proposal was about communication structures, not specific political views, and never named Holtz explicitly.

This caused confusion for at least one member, who took to the mic to ask for clarification on the email, but most speakers understood its subtext, and many expressed support for the proposal, citing frustration with Holtz's message.

However, the response wasn't all positive. One member questioned whether the proposal even merited consideration, noting he was sure "Joe was very sorry," which drew applause that the chair quickly curtailed. Later, while Palermo discussed how communication can be used to strengthen cooperativism and increase access, an audience member shouted, "why the lies" prompting the chair to intervene again and remind members not to shout out.

The discussion concluded with a member named John, who said he was present in

support of Palermo, emphasizing that there are already participatory channels where members can share personal viewpoints, namely, the GM or *Gazette*.

Next, the evening saw two elections: Members re-elected Jacob Heyman-Kantor (120-5) and elected Josh Geller (93-31) to serve on the Hearing Officer Committee (HOC), following brief presentations of their qualifications and a question-and-answer segment.

Directly following the HOC election, members George Sarah Olken and Sophia Li presented an aptly timed proposal on establishing an Election Committee to administer open elections on a consistent schedule. As it currently stands, committee elections are not held on a fixed schedule. Typically, when a committee has an open seat, sitting members solicit interest from Coop members and contenders are asked to make a case at the GM (or join in a less formal manner).

“Those elections work, in general, the way we just saw,” said Olken, referencing the HOC election. “It’s not exactly an election because we don’t know how many other people applied, it’s two people running for two positions, members often don’t know what the committee even does and then in almost all cases the nominees slip through.”

Olken and Li’s proposal, by contrast, presents a more thoughtful vision of open and participatory elections overseen by the Election Committee. Their plan centers on two meetings: first, a nomination GM where members can put themselves or others forward for open positions from the floor. Then, a vote in June, aligning with the Board of Directors Elections. This model closely mirrors that of the Brooklyn Public Library Union, where Olken is President.

Members queried and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of this proposal. While some appreciated how it could make elections more open, many raised concerns about practicalities, like how long and chaotic a nomination meeting could be, or how devoting two of ten annual GMs to elections could deter from other work mem-

bers need to do.

Li and Olken waived most of their allotted wrap-up remark time to let others speak, and then gave a brief thank-you at the end. “This is exactly the conversation I think we need to have,” said Olken. “I am glad this proposal engendered this and I’m hopeful that by trying to change our systems we will figure out what exactly we want them to be.”

At the conclusion of the meeting, all board members voted in favor to accept the members’ advice on the Financial Advisory Committee and Hearing Officer Committee Elections held earlier in the evening.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

May 5, 2026



December 30, 2025

Has the conflict over the Coop's possible involvement in a boycott of Israeli goods or related issues affected your experience as a Coop member?

Join two experienced mediators for a facilitated conversation. This will be open to any Coop member regardless of their perspective or involvement.

This is a chance to share your thoughts and feelings about the Coop community and how you have been impacted, and hear how others in your community have been impacted.

This conversation is meant to focus on your experience as a Coop member during times of conflict, especially if it feels personal. This space is for open listening and dia-

logue, not for making decisions about a boycott or convincing anyone of a particular view.

Confidentiality is very important to allow everyone an opportunity to share in ways that we don't often have while rushing to and from the Coop. By choosing to come to this conversation, you agree to the ground rule to keep everything said confidential.

You will get work slot credit for joining this conversation. This initial conversation is capped at 12 people. If more than 12 people sign up, it might be possible to schedule additional sessions.

When: January 12, 6:00–8:00 p.m. at the Coop.

Who: Your facilitators are two long-time Coop members and trained mediators.

Facilitator 1 is a divorce and family mediator with a private, sliding scale, mediation practice. She also teaches the Small-Claims Mediation Clinic at a law school where she takes the students to night court. She also teaches conflict resolution skills in 3-5 day intensives as a certified New York State Trainer. She believes that understanding is everyone's hidden superpower.

Facilitator 2 is a Brooklyn based mediator and trainer. She teaches mediation at a law school and trains as a New York State-certified trainer. She mediates family and community disputes. She believes that engaging with conflict can have a truly transformational effect.

How to Register: If you are interested in attending, please complete the survey at the link below. The Coop will notify you regarding your participation.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1okaCePiXLEIe-6GD117Tt340fb9_y5U6pv-Abx7zgVEc/edit

SEPTEMBER 16, 2025

May 5, 2026



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

ONLINE ASYNCHRONOUS DISCUSSION AND VOTING (THANKS + UPDATE)

To the editors,

I wanted to thank Membership Coordinator Jason Weiner for shouting out my proposal during his July GM presentation!

As a quick overview, my proposal (agenda item #915) is to make the decision-making process at the Coop more convenient and accessible by:

1. Setting up an online forum to discuss agenda items ahead of GMs.
2. Having an “early voting” option for agenda items.

For full details of the proposal and a feedback form, please visit https://tinyurl.com/ps-fc-online-forum

A member who found my proposal through Jason’s presentation suggested setting up a group to collaborate on the proposal, so I’ve created a Discord server for folks interested in getting involved. I will send an invite link for the server to those who indicate in the feedback form that they are interested in helping out.

Thanks again to Jason and to anyone who takes the time to consider my proposal!

Sincerely,
Yejia Chen

A More Democratic Coop Is Possible

Dear Coop members,

For those who don’t know, a fantastically thorough and well-researched proposal for online asynchronous discussion and voting (“async” for short) was recently submitted

to the Agenda Committee. See Yejia's letter above for an introduction!

Online asynchronous discussion is the only format that would give every member the opportunity to voice their opinion. Even hybrid discussions, despite increasing attendance and voting, would still hit their time limit as most in-person ones do.

Async also enables deliberate, productive conversation between members, truly maximizes voter turnout and complements GMs regardless of their format.

Plus, async could be implemented without a bylaws amendment, by considering online votes to be mail ballots or advice for the next board meeting (these methods might require legal confirmation), or by having the board approve accepting online votes ahead of each upcoming meeting.

And async would be implemented after the Coop resolves the already (briefly) scheduled boycott items, so members can discuss it without fearing ulterior motives from its supporters or opponents.

Despite the recent conflict in the Coop, I don't think it's controversial to say that serious flaws in our decision-making procedures have been exposed (e.g., board norms, venue scheduling). I hope members on both sides of the boycott and hybrid issues will read the proposal and submit their feedback (positive or negative) and thoughts on Coop democracy.

With member input and support, I'm optimistic async could translate this all-time high interest in Coop governance into a more engaged, collaborative membership. If you want to test it out for yourself, Yejia has set up a sort of async "free sample" by creating the online comment board and Discord group—check it out and bring your big ideas for the Coop!

In cooperation,
Tyler Yandrofski

The Newly Minted Plastics Reduction Committee Is Ready To Go

Dear Coop Community,

We, the members of the new Plastics Reduction Committee, wish to thank everyone who turned out for the General Meeting on July 29 and voted overwhelmingly to support our proposal for formal committee status. For those who couldn't make it, we invite you to find out what all the excitement is about through our Committee Fact Sheet, available for your perusal here.

Those of you whose memories do not scroll back as far as the 1950s—most of you, right?—might find it difficult to imagine a world without plastic. We know that this work is going to take a lot of imagination, creative thinking and engaging with the Coop community.

We're excited to roll up our sleeves and get to work. It is our goal to improve options at the Coop to meet the needs of members who are concerned about the health and environmental impacts of plastic food packaging. We also aim to educate those who want to learn more about these impacts. We'll work toward these goals while being guided by the collaborative, affordable and healthy spirit of the Coop.

We welcome your participation through feedback. You may reach us at reduce.plastic.psfc@gmail.com.

With hopes for a healthier, happier world for you and your children,

The Plastics Reduction Committee
Lesley Broder, Ricki Jaeckel, Zoë Kaplan-Lewis, Jessica Roff, Anne Schoeneborn, Abigail Shelton, Matthew Spencer, Lois Wilcken

Toward a More Inclusive Coop

Coop Community,

When the Equity, Access and Community Committee surveyed members, I reflected on how, during my 47-year membership, our Coop had become increasingly whiter and wealthier. So much has changed about the nature of what we sell… more and more luxury goods, no self-bagged bulk, fewer items that would appeal to those with limited income.

What would it take to make the Coop more diverse, more welcoming to people who cannot afford much of what we sell or might feel uncomfortable in our current store? What would it take to get the word out to potential members who don't know someone already in the Coop, who don't travel in similar social circles, who don't speak English as a first language?

We could contact community organizations, like CHiPS, the Center for Family Life and the Red Hook Initiative, asking for their input on how to do better outreach to their communities. We could schedule targeted info sessions and open houses.

We also need to ask ourselves, what would I be willing to do to make this Coop more inclusive, more reflective of a broader cross-section of New Yorkers? Would I be willing to pay a larger markup so that people who need financial support could pay a lower markup? Would I be willing to see fewer luxury products on the shelves and more inexpensive basics? What could I do to make people from other communities feel welcome?

There are so many ways we could evaluate our Coop: How many cheeses do we sell? How many craft beers? How many products in plastic clamshells? Who can afford to be a member? How do we care for the most vulnerable among us?

How do we open our door in a way that lets more people in?

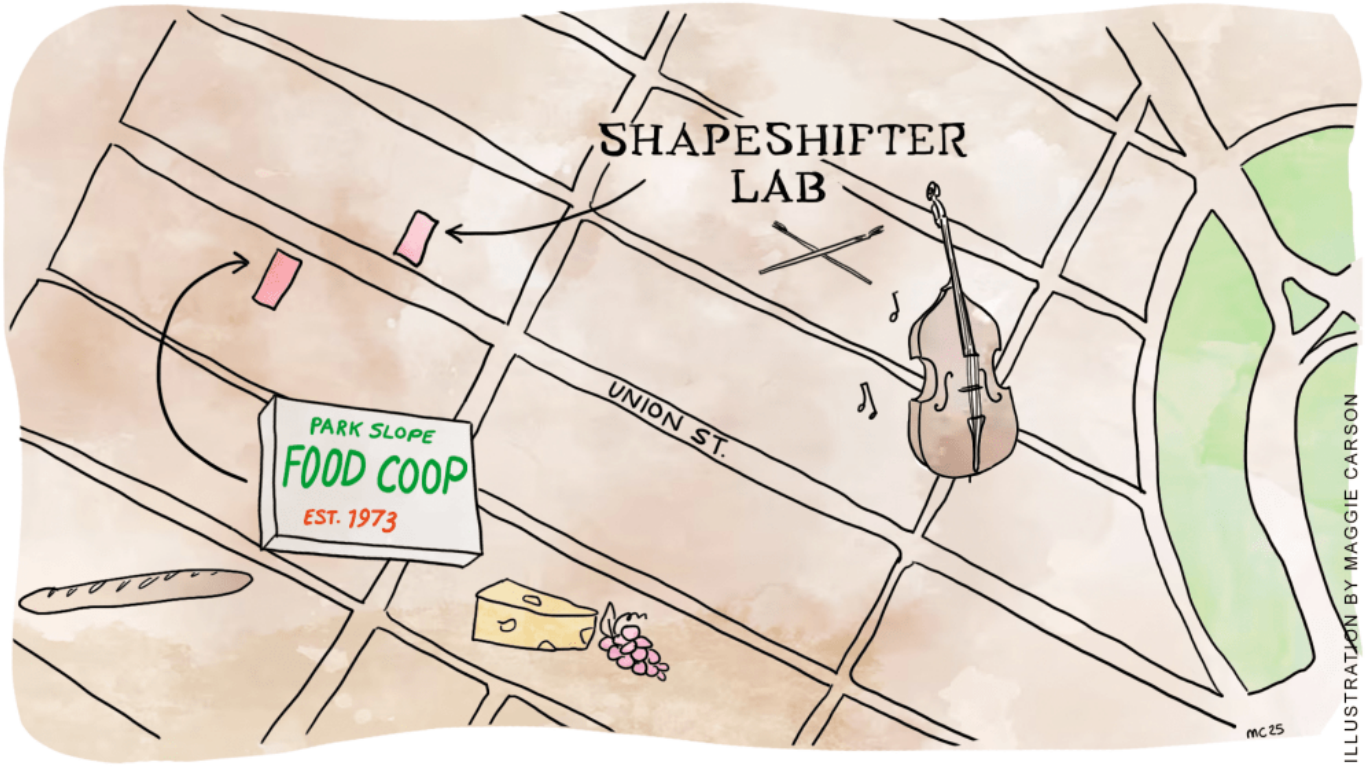
We have so much; let’s share.

Sincerely,
Alyce Barr

ShapeShifter Offers Art, Jazz and Community — Right Across the Street

To the editor:

How many members of our Coop know what a treasure of artistic value is just across the street at 837 Union Street? It’s called ShapeShifter Lab “Brooklyn Music and Arts Space.” I admit I’m writing this with a personal motive. Right now and until the end of October, there’s an art exhibition sponsored by Good Neighbors of Park Slope (GNPS), an organization that many PSFC members are a part of.



GNPS is an all-volunteer, nonprofit, aging-in-place organization open to residents of Park Slope and surrounding areas who are age 55 and over. Our goal is to create a network of members to make life in our neighborhood easier and more fulfilling, while maintaining our autonomy and quality of life in our homes.

Back to the art exhibition at ShapeShifter, there are several exhibitors who are PSFC members. I won't name them. You have to go see their art! Hours at ShapeShifter are quite "shifty." When there's an event, they are open. When it's open, the moment you walk in, and even before you open the front door, you will see two amazing paintings staring you in the face. They are by our mom, Florence Siegel (1921-2014). Although she never got to be a member of PSFC or GNPS, she did live in my South Slope house for her last three years.

So if you like jazz and/or art and want to support local artists, please go check out ShapeShifter and the current art exhibition!

Stop in one hour before each event on their schedule to take a look to find times to go.

Martha Siegel and Loren Siegel

Your Vote Is Meaningless Here

Dear Members,

Welcome back from summer vacation. Coop governance is cracking.

The August General Meeting (GM) resulted in the Board of Directors unilaterally ignoring membership input and announcing their intention to fast-track hybrid meetings. Remember, we had a Coop-wide referendum defeating the idea.

So now your vote means nothing.

How was this allowed to happen? At the April 2025 GM, the BDS faction arranged for the hostile takeover of the GM. The BDS-friendly Board then introduced a proposal to hold said rejected referendum. This opened to the door to your now effective irrelevance.

Most of our Board supports boycotting Israel, and their representative global BDS movement openly support Hamas, who identify kidnapping and rape as resistance. Hybrid voting is their stated method to achieve a boycott that the majority of our members don't want. Your vote, and our cooperative model of governance, is the price you pay. The fear of speaking out against a divisive faction that in effect supports a genocidal fascist terrorist group is palpable. It is indifference, it is cowardice, and one day too late you will have always been against it.

In protest I retract my extra Covid-era investment. I call upon membership to follow my lead and join me at coop4unity@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
Jesse Rosenfeld

On Hybrid Meetings and the BDS Debate

Dear Coop members,

The Board of Directors has again acted outside our Coop's longstanding tradition of basing decisions on member votes. Our *Guide to the General and Annual Meeting* states clearly that the Board votes only on issues already decided by the membership.

The current issue is hybrid meetings, and the push is complicated by attempts from Members for Palestine (M4P) to link the Coop to the BDS Movement. Whatever one's views on technology or accessibility, we must not confuse a governance question with an outside political campaign.

We must disentangle hybrid meetings from BDS.

BDS is not a neutral, nonviolent human rights initiative. Its leadership praised the October 7 attacks and remains tied to groups that promote violence. It does not improve life for Palestinians and offers no vision of peaceful coexistence. Instead, it seeks to delegitimize Israel and normalizes hostility toward Jews.

In June's record-turnout election, members decisively rejected the two identified pro-BDS candidates. M4P has failed to significantly increase the number of votes in their favor from 2024, demonstrating limited support. Coop members voted to remain focused on food, affordability and cooperative values. The membership has rejected BDS.

Hybrid meetings deserve careful study on their own terms. Committees could explore feasibility, technology and costs, then report back for a membership vote. That process respects our governance model. But the Coop should firmly close the door on BDS resolutions. Continuing to entertain them only wastes energy and divides members.

The General Coordinators, Chair Committee and Agenda Committee are responsible for stewarding the Coop. They have every reason to declare, “The Coop will no longer entertain motions related to BDS.” If they won’t, the only explanation is a lack of desire or a lack of will.

Sincerely,
Barbara Mazor

Remember What Never Again Truly Means

Dear Coop Members:

The PSFC I joined nearly 30 years ago was one I’ve always believed in. The sense of diversity, equity and inclusion defines our solidarity. Yes, DEI is a very good thing, unlike the lies and horror Nazis like Trump are pushing.

But in my entire life, I have always believed that those of us who value these principles share a common bond in the rejection of genocide. Community is always fraught with internal disagreements and dissension. But I draw the line at those who feel, and often quite belligerently, that Israel has a right to commit war crimes, ethnic cleansing and—as Jewish scholars and Shoah survivors have written, among others—quite clearly genocide by the far right-wing Likud government.

There is NEVER a justification for genocide. People who are blasé or supportive of this

should be ashamed to walk into the Coop. I think they should reconsider their views and if they are unable to recognize that butchering and maiming tens of thousands of babies, children, aid workers, journalists, families and starving them to death is wrong, perhaps they should not be a part of the PSFC community. I invite them to shop elsewhere and end their membership.

To those struggling and open to changing their views, painful as it may be—I respect and honor this profound moment. Remember what Never Again truly means.

For we ALL, living in the U.S. must face the struggle of a nation built on slavery, racism and genocide. Our world hurtles down the highway of self-inflicted extinction if we do not end global heating. Middle East and Gaza gas fields motivate much of "Western" support of genocide in order to secure yet more foul fuels with which to burn our only planet to death.

Sincerely,
George Carter

Toward a More Democratic Future Coop

Fellow Members,

The last Board election is behind us, we have a new General Coordinator and democratic practices are challenged everywhere we look. We have a unique opportunity to reflect on the recent Board election and strengthen our democracy here in our coop. One concrete step we can take: honestly repair harm done when former GC Joe Holtz sent a personal email to the full membership, taking advantage of his access to the Coop email list and directing members' votes in the upcoming election.

The Personnel Committee, General Meeting and Board of Directors need to take ac-

tion to prevent future abuse of the email list and substantially biased GC writing in the *Gazette*. They can ensure that, as a retired GC, Joe Holtz is entitled only to write individual letters to the *Gazette*, like any other member, and not those that express any favored position of power. Though Joe is now retired, he should be informed in writing that his past actions were inappropriate and unacceptable.

Coop Management and the Personnel Committee owe a public apology, in the *Gazette* (and in email), to Taylor Pate and Dan Kaminsky, who were vilified by Joe Holtz. They can acknowledge that it is likely that Joe's email impacted the election, and while we are not doing the election over, we must take steps to make sure nothing like this ever happens again.

In cooperation and for democracy,
Kathy McCullagh

Call for Grassroots Organizing While Working Towards Boycott

Dear Coop members:

I've just returned to Brooklyn from a year spent out of the country. Active in Palestine solidarity work before my departure, I came back to a sickening sense of déjà vu. Every day brings new Israeli atrocities in Gaza, atrocities that are fully underwritten by the U.S. government using our tax dollars. Meanwhile, even as manufactured famine rages, our Coop still hasn't made the decision to boycott Israeli products. In fact, despite a wildly successful petition campaign, we haven't even managed to take the basic democratic step of putting the issue to a vote.

As a long-time and proud Coop member, I feel both frustrated and ashamed, and I know these feelings are widely shared by other members. Is this really who we are as a Coop? What does it mean if we can't do the minimum to uphold our mission state-

ment promise to avoid complicity in exploitative practices?

In the face of these sentiments, we should not give up, as I won't. This is the time for creative approaches. I call on my fellow members to join me to advocate for justice for Palestine in all the ways we can think of. Here are a few examples: talking to people about Palestine as we wait on the checkout line, publicizing which Israeli products are currently being sold so that shoppers can avoid them, speaking out against genocide at GM Open Forums, identifying explicitly as PSFC for Palestine at marches and protests, and building an alliance with the folks at Greene Hill Coop, which voted to join the BDS movement last year. Yes, we urgently need to enact an official boycott—but while we work to make that happen, let's be working toward a sturdy grassroots culture of Palestine solidarity at the PSFC.

Sincerely,
Kumru Toktamis
Member since 1993

Let's Organize to Rid Our Coop of the Political Operatives

To the Members:

Our board is now acting independently, and their strategies to re-create our Coop and interfere with our structure and the staff is in full swing. They think they are justified in their actions and because they are legally our board, the legal architecture gives them an advantage.

Every year there is a board election and board members' terms are three years. I propose we organize with one another now so we can work to eventually rid our board of members with a political agenda.

If you are interested in doing this, please email me at PoliticsOut@proton.me.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Tobier

Peaches

Dear Coop staff:

Can you please investigate and report on the situation with peaches this year at the Coop? They have not been very good. I thought it might be just my perception, but I have asked friends and everyone says they feel the peaches have been terrible this year. Why? Are we doing something different with buying or storing? Was it just a bad year for peaches? What gives? I look forward to peach season all year. This year has been a disappointment.

Sincerely,
Aida Stoddard

Produce Buyer Cecelia Rembert responds with insights into the Peach Process and this year's crop: The current produce buying team at the Coop has been buying fruits and vegetables for the Coop since 2017, and our produce department overall has had very little turnover in this time. We are storing peaches the same way we always do: they are never refrigerated at the Coop, whether on the shopping floor or in the basement. We have been ordering from the same suppliers and growers, mostly. Our conventional peaches are generally Southern U.S. in the early season. In organic, we try to get Watsonia (fourth-generation family farm in South Carolina), and in conventional we try to get Big Smile (also a family- run commercial farm in South Carolina).

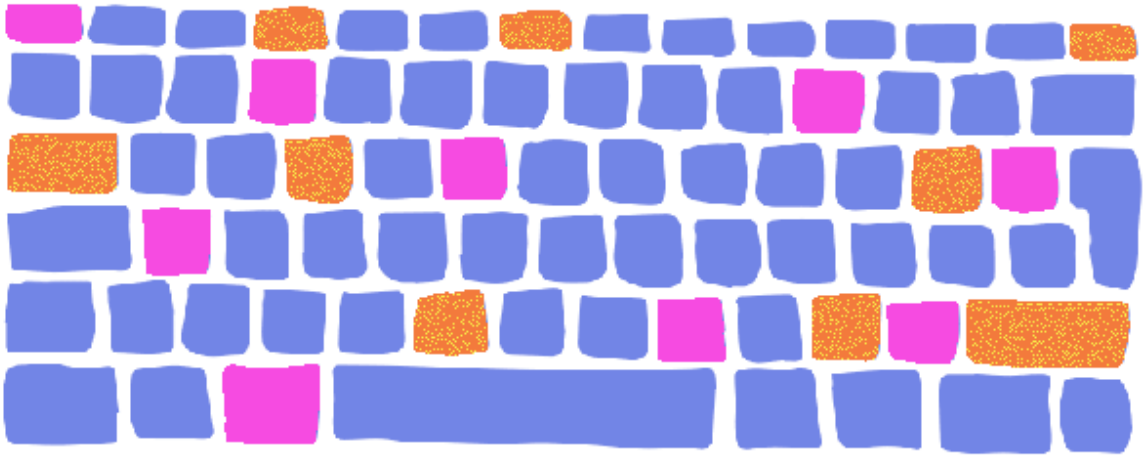
We did find both variations of South Carolina peaches to be inconsistent in quality; a good lot would be followed by one that was mealy. My research into the South Carolina peach season this year reports a lot of cool temperatures and rain in the early summer, which maybe impacted the harvest quality? We know that mealiness is generally a result of “chill damage” from refrigerating peaches at any point post-harvest—-maybe it can also be caused by cool weather? It sometimes takes us a few days to fully assess how a current lot of peaches we have received is ripening, because they come in to us hard. We pivoted in and out of South Carolina peaches several times in the early summer, trying to catch different varieties and lots. As a result of the inconsistency, we pivoted earlier than usual out of conventional South Carolina peaches to New Jersey peaches (Fralinger’s) as soon as they became available.

But, from mid-July onwards we have been selling local IPM yellow and white peaches from a network of local farms and we have found those mostly very good. And it was a wonderful nectarine season!

AUGUST 26, 2025

May 5, 2026

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



August 26, 2025

DISCLOSE ANY WRITING SHOWING THE LEGAL OPINION—NOW

Dear Coop members:

This letter responds in part to the voluntary article in the June 24 edition of the *Line-*

waiters' Gazette criticizing the General Coordinators' recourse to attorneys for a legal opinion on the validity of the purported action by the board on April 29. I have one criticism of the GC's conduct: it was entirely appropriate for the GCs to seek a legal opinion, but an epic fail not to disclose the opinion itself. The severity of the conduct of the leaders of the BDS faction and their ally—based on magical thinking that making the Coop declare its allegiance to a fusion of the failed Arab boycott and Bolshevik anti-zionism disguised as a human rights movement will do anything but build Omar Barghouti's brand while damaging the Coop—entirely justifies legal fees. They have normalized the practice of directors' votes on items that are not on the agenda. I have litigated corporate control disputes for over 21 years as a commercial litigator, and the proposition that the board can vote on agenda items that would amend the bylaws without prior notice to the membership is literally incredible. Anyone who is concerned about the future of the Coop must see whatever writing exists so the membership can evaluate it.

The GCs reliance on an oral opinion—with no writing that can be examined or even placed in the Coop's records—is irresponsible. Further, unless the firm considers malpractice an acceptable practice, there must be a writing in the law firm's files showing the legal reasoning—an email from an associate to a partner or a memo to the file. If the GCs relied on an oral opinion, then they need to obtain and disclose—now—whatever writing the attorneys generated.

Sincerely,
Noah Potter

General Manager Response to Noah Potter's Letter:

Dear Coop Members,

During the General Meeting and Board meeting on April 29, the Board voted 3-2 to instruct the General Coordinators to issue a referendum ballot to amend the Coop's bylaws to allow for hybrid meetings. This decision was made without first seeking advice

from the members through a vote at that evening's General Meeting.

The General Coordinators sought legal guidance, consulting with a law firm with deep experience in cooperative governance. The key conclusions of the General Coordinators were shared with all members in a message from then-General Manager Joe Holtz:

• The Board has the legal authority to take the actions it did on April 29.
• A bylaw amendment is not necessary to allow for hybrid General Meetings.

Our discussions with attorneys are confidential. This is standard practice for authorized representatives of cooperatives and similar organizations. We are committed to sharing our conclusions that directly impact Coop membership.

Respectfully,

Joe Szladek

General Manager

ANOTHER MEETING, ANOTHER RETURN TO THE MIDDLE EAST

Dear Coop members:

Another meeting where hybrid attendance as a way of back dooring an anti-Israel boycott is rearing its ugly head. What would-be boycotters do not realize is that there will be severe legal repercussions to the Coop for their actions if they choose BDS. Creating a hostile environment is absolutely not legal and this venal movement clearly does that.

There is a growing movement at the state and federal level to stop this kind of thing, and it may well end in the permanent closure of the Coop, destroying community access to low-cost food.

Sincerely,
David Sher

THE COOP REMAINS UNGOVERNABLE

Hello Coop,

The Coop remains ungovernable.

At the April GM, a member uttered their filthy Jew-hate ("Jew" was used as a slur, not "Zionist") and they were neither removed from the meeting, nor reported by the *Gazette*, nor removed from the Coop. I am not even allowed to name them as per *Gazette* restrictions. The DRC, the Chair Committee and the *Gazette* are all complicit in this cover up.

This is an embarrassment to the Coop as a whole. Why is someone who would be expelled immediately from any other organization still allowed to walk through the front door and pretend innocence? It's inexplicable because no one has the guts to explain it. Not honestly, not without dodging, deflecting or victim-shaming.

I call for their permanent expulsion, and every moment nothing happens only adds weight to our collective shame that no one is doing anything. Evil flourishes when good people like yourselves do exactly that: nothing.

Cooperation, right there in our name, is ignored. Our General Meetings are overrun by the most inhumane of participants. And our financial bottom line suffers for it, es-

pecially when members of conscience reflexively diminish their spending as protest. - Tolerating Jew-hate is the tip of the spear buried deep in our heart and exemplifies how we are failing to govern ourselves.

And people wonder why a Human Rights Commission complaint was filed against the Coop.

Sincerely,
Jesse Rosenfeld