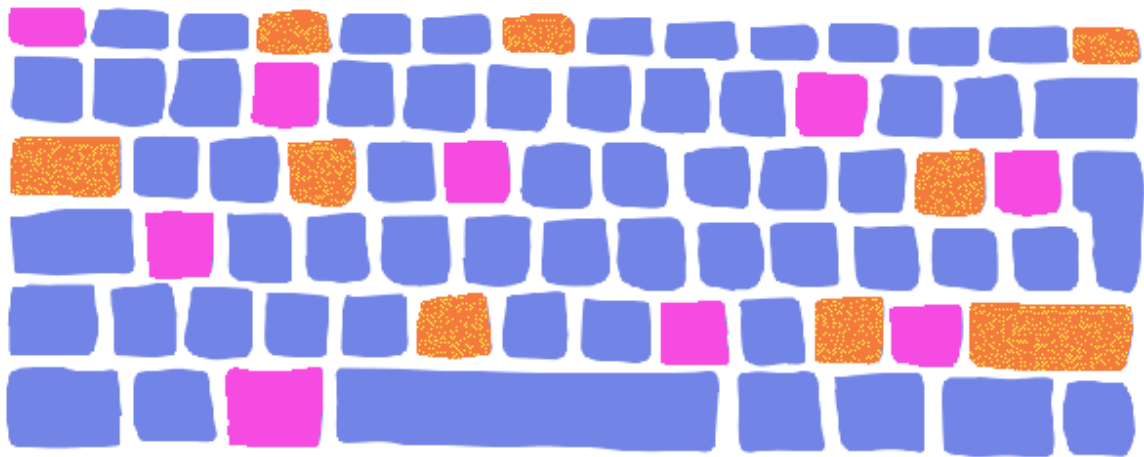


MAY 13, 2025

May 13, 2025

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



SEARCH FOR OPEN WORK SHIFTS IN YOUR CALENDAR APPLICATION!

Fellow members,

Everyone is familiar with the work shift system. You sign up for a labor shift every six weeks or so for the privilege of shopping at the Coop.

With the freelance system, there's a small calculus involved to determine whether you should sign up for a shift: are you actually free to work at that time?

I have a convenient solution for this problem! I created a calendar that mirrors the Coop's open shifts and you can add it to your favorite calendar application like Google Calendar, Microsoft Outlook or Apple Calendar.

Primarily, you can now view open work shifts against your personal calendar for assurance of your availability at the work shift time.

You can also do other intuitive stuff like keyword search for shifts, copy shifts to your calendar, and navigate to the shift sign up page on the Coop website to confirm the shift on your Coop account.

Hopefully, this eases your work shift planning. I pray you are never labor suspended at the Coop ever again.

You can find the links to add the open work shift calendar to calendar application here: <https://github.com/rexledesma/foodcoop-shift-calendar>.

In solidarity,

Rex Ledesma

NAOMI GATHERING!

Dear Coop Members,

Is your name Naomi? You are invited to a Naomi-only gathering to discuss Naomi Klein's book, *Doppelganger*. *Doppelganger* is about, among other things, being repeatedly confused with another Naomi.

- When: May 31, 2025 at 2:00 pm (rain date June 7, 2025 at 2:00pm)
- Where: Prospect Park Long Meadow, as north as you can get before hitting the paths (about a five minute walk from Grand Army Plaza)
- Why: For fun!

You're welcome to come if your name is Naomi. If your name is Naomy, Nomi, Noemi, or something similar, please join us as well. Bring a blanket and a snack to share, or not, and your copy of *Doppelganger*. (We will try to get Naomi Klein to show up, but no promises.) Tell all the Naomis in your life!

Sincerely,

Naomi Becker, One of the Coop Naomis

THE MYTH OF PLASTIC RECYCLING

Dear Coop members:

I read with interest the detailed and accurate environmental committee report by Stephanie Wilson about the items that NYC collects: "Recycling is Easier Than You Think" in the March 11 issue of the *Gazette*.

It is important to know what happens to all the plastic we put into those bins.

Plastics were invented in 1907. Since then, virtually ALL plastic items manufactured are still on this planet—either in landfills, as litter, in the oceans and virtually everywhere—microplastics have been found at astounding levels in every organ of our bodies! The only exceptions are plastics that have been incinerated—a process that releases microplastics and many highly toxic compounds into the air.

Plastic recycling is a myth created by petrochemical companies and chemical companies who frack ethane gas and manufacture plastics. They fear loss of market for their fossil fuel products due to increased efficiency of automobiles and green power alternatives. Therefore, plastics have become their growth industry. These companies invest a fortune in marketing touting recycling so that consumers will feel good about using plastics.

At best, only five to six percent of plastics actually get recycled (mostly in the few states with bottle bills)—and even those are mostly downcycled.

Plastic waste not only comprises a major source of deadly pollution; the extraction of starting materials and the manufacturing processes are major sources of greenhouse gases, thus climate change. Furthermore, toxic ethane cracking plants are located near poor and marginalized communities in which cancer and disease rates soar above the national average.

An excellent source of information is www.beyondplastics.org

I believe the Coop should do everything possible to reduce plastics on our shelves and inform our members about the many ruses such as bioplastics and so-called “green products” that are actually full of plastics.

Sincerely,

Will Boorstein

WHAT DOES THE COOP STAND FOR?

Greetings:

I have been a member of the Coop since 2008 and value its continued existence as a not-for-profit cooperative that provides affordable and healthy food. Cooperatives are political entities by default, because they present an alternative to undemocratic top-down for-profit organizational structures. However, there are those who want the Coop to be “apolitical” and remain silent while a country, whose defense we fund with our taxes, commits genocide.

I have been ashamed of the Coop’s inaction on the violence being carried out by Israel’s far right government in Gaza and the West Bank. At this point, I can only attribute inaction as a sign of indifference to Palestinian life and hostility towards Coop members like myself who believe in universal human rights, oppose genocide and expect the Coop to live up to its values.

In its inaction, the Coop is standing with those who demand the unconditional support of an ethno-nationalist and racist regime aligned with the Trump administration.

As the child of a torture survivor from Chile, I proudly told the story of the PSFC boycotting Chilean products during the Pinochet regime. Now, I’m ashamed to even call myself a member.

Sincerely,

Joao M. Da Silva

REPREHENSIBLE BEHAVIOR ON ALL SIDES

Dear Coop Members:

The Members for Palestine announced that the April 29 meeting at City Tech was cancelled because of a letter from an external activist group.

I read the letter sent to City Tech and found it morally disgusting: it has inaccurate statements about past general meetings, accusations based on flimsy speculation and bigoted innuendos about the Palestine Members. The group that sent the letter should be ashamed of themselves.

But the letter has kernels of truth. It is true both that the Palestine Members want the Coop to join the external Boycott, Divest, Sanction Israel (BDS) movement and that changing the bylaws to enable hybrid meetings is part one in their three-part strategy to do so (as they repeatedly state in their emails). It is also true that their effort to get members to vote for their hybrid proposal is not transparent: when they leaflet outside the Coop, they don't advertise their real motivation for hybrid (to align the Coop with BDS ideology) or why they are in such a hurry (they are eager for a BDS win).

I also read the Members for Palestine's email to their listserv sent after the meeting was cancelled. They refer to a group of their fellow Coop members as "Zionists"—not to describe those members' political affiliation, but as a dehumanizing label. It's dehumanizing because the Members for Palestine refuse to engage in any dialogue to learn about the diverse opinions of the members opposed to their BDS ideology, not one of whom supports "genocide" or "killing innocent families," and all of whom value coexistence. Instead of sincere efforts to communicate, the Members for Palestine prefer using "Zionist" as a slur to justify excluding their fellow members from the "equality," "diversity" and "cooperation" principles they claim to uphold. I find that morally disgusting, too.

Sincerely,

Zara Watkins

A VENUE FOR THE “HYBRID MEETINGS” GM VOTE

Dear fellow members:

Finding a venue for the hybrid meetings vote has proven difficult. Hybrid meetings are attractive, providing opportunity for wider participation, but some Coop members and General Coordinators have resisted them. Zionist members, by definition pro-Israel, have threatened leaving the Coop given subsequently successful hybrid and boycott votes. And Coordinators seem acutely concerned with the possibility of such an exiting of Zionist members.

(Why refer to “Zionists” rather than “Jews”? Zionism is the secular movement that established the “Jewish State,”—despite a substantial non-Jewish minority—and continues its half-century-plus occupation of Palestine. Many pro-boycott and anti-Zionism members are themselves Jews. The ultra-orthodox Williamsburg Hasidim are anti-Zionism and pro-boycott, supporting virtually every pro-Palestinian rally! Alternatively, there are far more fanatically pro-Israel Christian Zionists than Jewish ones! Clearly, both Jews and non-Jews are pro- and anti-Zionism.)

Anti-BDS letters have claimed that a boycott “will alienate a number of Coop members,” citing the Coop’s mission statement, which describes being “welcoming and accessible to all” and which “respect the opinions, needs and concerns of every members.” “Welcoming all” will obviously continue, regardless. Respecting “opinions, needs and concerns” doesn’t mean abjectly submitting to them. We cannot control how people “feel,” but foregoing a GM vote to satisfy such claims rewards what is little more than emotional blackmail. And it’s certainly not respectful of the opinions and concerns of

those calling for hybrid meetings.

Hybrid meetings—and when needed, virtual meetings—can work. No chance for disruptions like the one that occurred at the April 2015 GM, where Zionist members took over the stage, plunging the meeting into turmoil. Nothing in the bylaws prevents meetings from being held virtually, as were all the GMs during the Covid era. Those GMs did not require anything other than necessity. And neither should this proposal be denied a vote for spurious reasons.

Sincerely,

David Barouh

THE CASE FOR A MEMBER BYLAW AMENDMENT

To my fellow Coop members,

I was scheduled to present item 910 on the original agenda for the April GM.

Agenda item 910 is titled “Amending Coop bylaws, policies and procedures to ensure the Coop’s survival and success.” Given the late change in location of the April meeting, I unfortunately will not be able to present my item.

Time has passed since my submission a few short weeks ago and I’ve had time to reflect based on communications from other members from last month’s *Linewaiters’ Gazette* as well as online via various social media accounts. Now, I believe that item 910 is timelier than ever given many voices pushing towards more democracy within the Coop.

What does democracy look like within the Coop and how do we abide by its princi-

ples?

During my presentation, I planned to discuss:

1. Educating GM attendees on their individual approval and adherence to both the Rochdale Principles of Cooperation and—more importantly—commitment to the International Cooperative Alliance's (ICA) guidelines
2. Reinforcement of ICA's 2nd Principle: Democratic Member Control, which clearly outlines how democratic process is defined within a cooperative organization plus management of a cooperative's democratic governance
3. Highlight why the Coop needs to instill a bylaw amendment study committee to evaluate the existing bylaws and to ensure that, as the Coop evolves, processes to amend the bylaws will mitigate any biases through pillars of objectivity, consistency and transparency.

We are moving away from unity and members are currently being both verbally and electronically harassed for their identities, which is not acceptable. A sound, formal review group will mitigate any bias in voting and—hopefully—will ensure that we're upholding the foundational principles that we all signed up to follow.

In solidarity,

Zachary Zaban

CITY TECH NEEDED ONLY ONE REASON.

Dear Coop:

City Tech cancelled the PSFC General Meeting for April 29 and the usual single-issue boycott crew here are screaming conspiracy and racism and we-wuz-robbed. Yawn.

What they refuse to acknowledge is that the cancellation was justified. City Tech Theatre was sent a letter with a screenshot of an openly published Mailchimp announcement. Attributed to the boycott crew, it advertised the GM as a way to push forward what hundreds of millions of others worldwide see as the hateful boycotting of Israel. This announcement lay in stark contrast to the deceptively bland billing ("PSFC General Meeting" and "Hybrid Voting") sold to City Tech. Those are the facts. Read the Mailchimp announcement, then put yourself in the chair of any theatre or institutional administrator comparing these conflicting documents on their desk. I wager the eager presenters were judged as two-faced on their own merits, and cancelled like any other duplicitous customer.

This GM was an underhanded attempt to ram a hateful boycott through the court of public opinion. Those who created the GM proposal need to explain themselves, no one else. Selling wildly differing stories even in the name of human rights is still called lying. Rejection is called accountability.

What thousands of other lies and omissions has this group told us under the guise of free speech and human rights? When will our committees finally ban this cancerous, officially unrecognized, faction from our Cooperative?

Best,

Jesse Rosenfeld

THE COST TO THE COOP OF FIGHTING ONE ANOTHER

Greetings:

The controversy at Columbia University over student protests related to the war in Gaza has developed into a full-blown confrontation and quickly subsumed the institution into a chaotic spin. The same kind of thing can happen to the Coop, if we permit it. Grappling with a hot political issue offers no benefit to the store and can do it real damage.

The nation is in turmoil now, the right and left glaring at each other across a no person's land. I suggest that we suspend decisions that can foul the feelings of members toward each other.

There is always a way without violence. The Coop must keep clear of supporting either side and advocate for a settlement that ends hostility. Taking sides only perpetuates it.

Sincerely,

Rodger Parsons

HYBRID MEETINGS: WE CAN DO THIS

Greetings:

As a sponsor of the proposal to make General Meetings hybrid, I have to say that the fear of this commonsense step feels overblown. Here's a link to our proposal, including recommendations for implementation, developed alongside fellow members with professional expertise producing hybrid events.

Members express concerns that hybrid meetings will cost too much. We found the cost for what the Coop needs is low. Necessary equipment is largely covered by the Picnic House and the Coop, with additional needs being a camera and tripod, one--

time costs of \$300-\$400.

The Zoom tier the Coop currently subscribes to accommodates 300 participants, and scales up at \$0.16-0.50 per participant, depending on meeting size: for example, Webinars for 1,000 members cost \$340/month, or \$0.34/participant.

SimplyVoting, which we've used for several votes, costs \$200/ballot, accommodating 200 voters; that price also scales depending on the participant-count. Voting for 1,000 members costs \$500, bringing the cost for 1,000-person meetings to \$840, alongside the Zoom upgrade. Our rental at City Tech to vote on this proposal—had it taken place—would have cost us \$7,000+.

People also worry about privacy in hybrid meetings. I share this concern, but want to point out Zoom's safety features, which the Chair Committee utilized during Lock-down. Zoom offers watermark features to identify recordings' origins: screen recordings superimpose your email, and audio recordings are encoded with inaudible information that allows Zoom to identify the accounts from which recordings are made. If virtual participants can only register using emails on file with the Coop, we can identify anyone who might make and share a recording.

Of course, this is a big change, and we should be thoughtful about how we move forward. But hybrid meetings shouldn't scare us! We can do this.

In cooperation,

Morgan Võ

WHY DOES NOBODY SAY: THIS ENDS HERE

Dear Agenda Committee:

April 13, 2025—Cody Allen Balmer set fire to the Pennsylvania Governor's Residence in Harrisburg while the governor, a Jew, and his family were inside—for Palestine.

August 10, 2024—Kingston Avenue, Crown Heights. Vincent Sumpter stabbed a Jewish man, missing his heart by centimeters—for Palestine.

May 29, 2024—An East Flatbush yeshiva. Asghar Ali drove his car onto the sidewalk, attempting to strike a group of Orthodox Jewish students and rabbis—for Palestine.

January 26, 2025—The Park Slope restaurant *Miriam*. At 3 AM, three masked individuals defaced the storefront with red paint—for Palestine.

May 31, 2024—The Brooklyn Museum. Demonstrators graffitied the OY/YO sculpture, causing \$100,000 in damage—for Palestine.

Acts against Jewish individuals and business are indefensible. They do not ease the suffering in Gaza nor do they influence Israeli policy. They serve only one purpose: to deprive Jews of the most basic civil right—the right to safety in the public space.

In New York City, there have been more than 500 confirmed hate crimes targeting Jews since October 7, 2023.

The BDS movement rhetoric, which recasts the Jewish state as uniquely evil and Jews as imposters, inspires, encourages and incites this violence.

The Members for Palestine are attempting to amend the Coop's by-laws for the sole purpose of enabling a vote to endorse BDS.

Even if a BDS motion is defeated, simply entertaining the possibility of supporting BDS at the Coop will further normalize this false, toxic narrative—and further endanger Jews.

How is this even under consideration in a Coop that claims to be devoted to equality and inclusion?

Why is no one saying: this ends here?

Sincerely,

Barbara Mazor

IS THE COOP FASCISM ADJACENT?

Dear Coop community:

I am outraged that the vote on hybrid GM scheduled for April 29 was cancelled without any explanation. I have since learned that the cancellation was engineered by a pro-Zionist group called End Jew Hate and it isn't clear how that group got involved with PSFC's business. What is clear is that the Coop for Unity group has opposed the boycott of products from Israel since BDS was proposed years ago and their extreme rhetoric about PSFC4Pal set the stage for what occurred with City Tech.

Meanwhile the genocide perpetuated by the Israeli government against the Palestinian people continues, along with the ongoing occupation and apartheid state. The total destruction of homes, hospitals, schools across Gaza and the West Bank, the ruthless killing and starving of fellow humans is an unfathomable horror and a disgrace. By purchasing products from Israel we are complicit in these atrocities.

I joined PSFC 40 years ago and for most of those years was proud to be part of an organization that had integrity and stood for the values I believe in. I trusted that the leaders were ethical, representing our membership, choosing products that were healthy, local, humanely raised, etc. I shared in the work and enjoyed being part of a

strong collective. The bitter division and behind the scenes manipulation by the board and GCs over BDS have soured me to the coop and I am disgusted by this latest sham.

We, as a coop based on fairness and justice, should be in the forefront of the fight against fascism. Instead we are facing the same blind self righteousness dividing our country. The same fear and loathing that justifies deporting people for speaking out, or for no reason at all, is preventing a democratic vote from happening at PSFC.

Every member of our Coop deserves to be heard and vote in a hybrid GM on the question of boycotting Israel.

Sincerely,

Sarah Safford, member since 1985

STOP STYMYING THE SMOOTH FUNCTIONING OF DEMOCRACY AT THE COOP

Dear Coop Members:

A small group of extremists have once again delayed a vote on hybrid General Meetings, scheduled for April 29, through a coordinated campaign of harassment and threats against the venue set to host: last year at Brooklyn College, this year at CUNY.

To state the obvious: pressure groups use these anti-democratic tactics because they know their positions are unpopular. I agree with them on the facts: when there is a vote on continuing hybrid general meetings, it will pass easily. When there is a vote on the BDS proposal, polling suggests that it will also pass easily.

The question remains why the overly credulous General Coordinators keep folding under the pressure. Specific individuals are repeatedly preventing the smooth democratic functioning of the Coop, and the same individuals are repeatedly published in the *Gazette* trying to normalize and justify their radical positions. Why not vote?

Sincerely,

Mac Simonson

ABOUT OUR MEETINGS

Dear Fellow Members:

If we're blocked from having a large in-person meeting, we should have a plan B and use the secure online vote that we have in place for board elections and coop-wide polls and referenda. Whatever the reasons, we have been prevented from renting an appropriately sized venue at least twice.

It's the height of "uncooperative behavior" to threaten venues. Those members should face the disciplinary committee for attempting to block our GM governance and wasting everybody's time.

I'm in favor of hybrid meetings because monthly physical attendance for three hours at the Picnic House on a Tuesday night is clearly too big a burden for participation in Coop governance. People with children, mobility issues, medical concerns or work commitments all deserve a say. The pandemic prompted us to figure out other tools that we can use. This is an opportunity to fix and update Coop governance.

Sincerely,

EVIDENCE THAT HYBRID GMS ARE A GOOD IDEA

Dear Coop members:

I write to address Elizabeth Tobier's letter, which deems hybrid General Meetings a "bad idea." Tobier suggests hybrid meetings would not draw many attendees. However, I believe all Coop members deserve equal access to democracy at every meeting.

Joe Holtz estimates 150 people as the average attendance at in-person GMs. Running the numbers provided by Tobier, average online attendance was 169. Even excluding the outliers of several meetings with higher attendance, such as the May and June 2020 meetings with 500 or 600 participants each, the average is 135.

One hundred and thirty-five attendees for online GMs is not far from 150 attendees in person. And of course, hybrid meetings will combine in-person and online attendance.

Importantly, there's currently no way to accommodate more than a fraction of our 16,000 person membership in the Picnic House, whose maximum capacity is 255. Case in point: our proposal was flagged by the GCs as necessitating a larger venue of 800-1,000. It's been in the Agenda Committee's queue since December 2023, but the GCs still haven't found a way for members to vote, in spite of the significant response it's received. Our current set-up means that the proposals that are the most interesting or important to members are the least likely to be heard.

Ultimately, our proposal to make GMs hybrid is not about numbers. It's about providing access to participate in democracy. If hybrid meetings increase access for even one Coop member who's disabled, a parent or caregiver or can't make it to the Picnic House on a Tuesday night, that's worth it. More likely, this will increase access for

many members and make our Coop more truly democratic. I invite you to read our full proposal, and to advocate for it to be brought to a vote. It's a good idea!

Best,

CJ Glackin

APRIL 22, 2025

May 13, 2025

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 smart-phone 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 (i-i) 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?

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]*

MEMBER SUBMISSION: BDS HAS NO PLACE IN THE PARK SLOPE FOOD COOP

May 13, 2025



April 1, 2025

By Barbara Mazor

Imagine a political movement that is hostile to your community or identity group. Now imagine that its supporters have engaged in violence against your community—assaults on individuals, gunfire, arson and the defacement of properties associated with your people. Imagine that these supporters justify their cause using false, misleading and incomplete information.

Now picture them refusing to engage with you in discussion. If you challenge their claims or point out the harm they cause, you're accused of acting in bad faith and vilified.

Finally, imagine that—even though this movement's goals have no direct relevance to the Park Slope Food Coop—its supporters are pushing the Coop to promote and endorse it.

If you can imagine all that, then you understand the current reality faced by many of the Coop's Israeli and Jewish members. This is precisely the situation with the Members 4 Palestine (M4P) campaign to push the Coop into endorsing the BDS Movement.

What BDS Stands For

BDS is an integral part of the anti-Israel movement. If the Coop were to endorse BDS, we would be aligning ourselves with those who:

- Rip down posters of hostages.
- Deface public property and Jewish businesses and institutions with graffiti.
- Assault and harass Jews in the name of "Free Palestine."
- Chant, "We don't want two states, we want '48," openly rejecting coexistence.

- Call the October 7 massacre “heroic.” This attack included 1,200 murders, mutilations, torture, rapes, burnings and kidnappings.
- Hold, abuse and starve kidnap victims.

Meanwhile, this movement ignores the atrocities of Hamas—including theft of aid, seizure of civilian infrastructure, intimidation and summary executions—against the very people of Gaza it claims to support.

BDS Is Not About Peace

BDS is not pro-peace. BDS is not pro-coexistence. Instead of endorsing BDS, we should be amplifying the voices of those who truly seek peace, such as:

- Bassem Eid
- Mohammed Dajani Daoudi and The Wasatia Movement
- Walid Salem
- The Palestinian Peace Coalition (Geneva Initiative)
- Roots/Shorashim/Judur
- The Parents Circle – Families Forum

M4P’s Refusal to Engage

Perhaps M4P is unaware of all this. On multiple occasions, we have invited M4P to engage in dialogue. They have ignored our entreaties. The only response has been a *Gazette* letter stating, “Let’s discuss it at the General Meeting.”

A one-minute sound bite at a General Meeting is not sufficient. Nor is there any guarantee that truly informed voices will be given the opportunity to speak.

A Violation of Coop Values

BDS and the broader anti-Israel movement are fundamentally at odds with the values of the Park Slope Food Coop and the Cooperative Principles of the International Cooperative Alliance.

Its very consideration by the Agenda Committee (AC) for scheduling represents a failure of the AC to act responsibly.

JANUARY GENERAL MEETING REPORT: HIGH TENSIONS ON A COLD NIGHT
AND A COOP DIVIDED

May 13, 2025



March 11, 2025

By William Doran

Coop members warmed themselves around pots of soup outside the Prospect Park Picnic House, awaiting entry for the January General Meeting (GM).

Once everyone was settled inside, the evening's agenda hovered above gathered members on a large projection screen. While there were other topics discussed, three contentious issues took up most of the two-and-a-half-hour gathering: boycotts, hybrid general meetings and committee elections.

OPEN FORUM

Several members spoke in favor of boycotting Israeli products and expressed disappointment in two General Coordinators' articles published in the January *Gazette*.

Some members who spoke that night chose to only give their first names.

A Coop member, Jim, argued that, “When the Coop was founded in the ’70s, we boycotted products from apartheid South Africa, despite the fact that the United States, under multiple presidents, had official policies protecting South Africa.”

Another member, Judy, pushed for open discussion: “The Coop is a member-led organization dedicated to democracy and to making the world a better place. Members need to be able to have this discussion. It’s been put off and refused to be discussed for over 10 years.”

Aaron, a member, labeled the General Coordinators’ stance in the *Gazette* as fear-mongering: “The place to mediate disagreements is at these general meetings. As a Jew, I’m pretty familiar with fear-mongering rhetoric around the non-violent protest movement for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS).”

A self-organized group, Coop 4 Unity, spoke against the boycott, calling for unity among members and extending an invitation to engage boycott supporters in dialogue. Another member, Barbara, directly criticized boycott supporters, saying: “You don’t understand the movement you’re promoting, or you are willfully lying to all of us. And to this group I’m going to ask you, do you value the Coop more than you hate Israel? And to everyone else I ask, if you value the Coop, then please, we have to do something to stop them.”



Aaron



Hana



Hima

Boycott supporters have also self-organized as PSFC 4 Palestine, publishing a zine called *The Olive Press*, which they distributed outside before the meeting, along with the aforementioned soup.

Members criticized the 75% majority voting threshold for boycotts, citing important decisions regularly made via simple majority, such as board elections and markup increases. To applause and laughter, a Coop member, Hana, sardonically identified several other things that could become policy with a simple majority: “We could allow suspended members to shop, but only if they wear a scarlet ‘S’ around their neck. We [could] make all Coop general meetings black-tie only. We could even refrigerate beer.”

Another member, Hima, criticized the concept of in-person-only general meetings: “This group of people here, we represent 2% of the membership. Why should we be the only exclusive club that gets to vote on any issues?” Hima continued, “During

COVID, we saw that technology is definitely available and accessible. It's exploitative that 100% of us work, but only 2% of us can actually vote."

"I CAN'T MEASURE THE IMPACT. IT WOULD BREAK MY HEART FOR PEOPLE TO LEAVE THE COOP JUST BECAUSE THEY DON'T AGREE WITH A COOP POLICY," SAID JOE HOLTZ, REGARDING THE PROPOSED BOYCOTT.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The Coop's net income dropped by about \$525,000 from the previous year, due largely to a 1% reduction in the base markup, which returned to 25% at the start of the 2026 fiscal year in February. In 2020, members voted to increase the markup from 21% to 25% to combat pandemic losses. It was later reduced to 24% to alleviate some of the pressure on members.

Treasurer and General Manager Joe Holtz stressed of the decrease, "You can't eat the markup, but you can eat the food." He highlighted cost of goods sold (the value of goods prior to markup) as a better indicator of how the Coop performed which was up roughly \$3 million over last year. He noted that member equity—the value of what we all own together, minus debts—stayed consistent from 2023 to 2024 at \$8.73 million.

Member questions shifted the focus back to boycotts, requesting financials to support the General Coordinators' stance against the boycotts that were published in the January *Gazette*. The January 7, 2025, piece, with a byline from the "General Coordinator Team," titled, "Coordinator's Corner: Our Coop at Risk," warned, in part: "Financial fallout from a boycott could force tough decisions such as raising prices or laying off staff."

Holtz responded, "I can't measure the impact. It would break my heart for people to leave the Coop just because they don't agree with a Coop policy." Calling attention to

thousands of members on both sides of the issue, Holtz said that taking a stance is a risky prospect, and that the Coop cannot afford to lose members. “I believe that cooperators are precious, and I don’t want to lose any of you.”

GENERAL COORDINATORS’ REPORTS

General Coordinator Lisa Moore validated member complaints about adherence to election protocols, citing that the Agenda Committee missed the deadline to publish an announcement in the *Gazette* prior to elections last year, and it did not announce the opening at the September 2024 GM.

She quieted doubts, however, about the legitimacy of the election in question, saying: “There’s no evidence suggesting that these committees intentionally omitted their announcements from the *Gazette*. Nor should the omission cast doubts on the validity of the elections.”

She called for an update to the Coop’s Guide for General Meetings and Annual Meetings to include guidelines on vacancy announcements and potential consequences for omitting the required steps mentioned. Moore noted, “All committees should be held to the same standard to ensure transparency, cultivate trust and encourage participation among all members.” She invited interested members to submit their information to psfcac@gmail.com, reiterating that there are still openings on the Agenda Committee.

Lastly, she indicated that the Coop has identified several 800-seat (or larger) venues for in-person voting on hybrid meetings. The Agenda Committee will reach out to the proposal’s presenters to select a date.



Lisa Moore



Joe Szladek

General Coordinator Joe Szladek closed the presentation of GC reports by reminding everyone of the Coop's early closing on February 1 for annual inventory.

EIGHT MEMBERS PROPOSED A NEW COMMITTEE TO SHRINK COOP RELIANCE ON PLASTIC. THE COMMITTEE WOULD SOLICIT COOP-MEMBER PARTICIPATION AND WORK WITH STAFF TO IDENTIFY AND IMPLEMENT CONCRETE CHANGES.

MEMBER COMMITTEE REPORTS

The Pension Education and Reporting Committee solicited members to submit questions for the Committee's upcoming annual report in the *Gazette*.

The Personnel Committee shared progress on its search for a new General Manager

to replace Joe Holtz, who will retire in June of 2025. The committee anticipates selection by late spring of this year. The job posting and salary are publicly available on the Coop's website.

The International Trade Education Committee highlighted potential impacts of Trump Administration tariffs and encouraged members to read "What New Trump Tariffs Would Mean for the Coop," published in the *Gazette* last December by *Gazette* reporter Leila Darabi.

PLASTIC REDUCTION

Eight members proposed a new committee to shrink Coop reliance on plastic. The committee would solicit Coop-member participation and work with staff to identify and implement concrete changes.

Fifteen-year-member Jessica Roff supported the need for such a committee by sharing some staggering statistics: "Of all the plastic produced [in the U.S.] since 1950, 91% has never been recycled." She continued, "Many of the things that make plastic problematic to recycle are the same things that harm our bodies and the environment. There are more than 16,000 chemicals in plastic."

Roff and many of the other presenters advocating for the committee's creation combat environmental hazards in their professional lives. They outlined opportunities and challenges while acknowledging the Coop's significant history of environmental advocacy and valuable insights that could come from Coop members and staff.

Members expressed gratitude for the group's work and posed questions about how to forge ahead. Things like reuseable, member-provided containers came up, as well as frustration over the lack of plastic-free options for some food items, like milk. Presenters emphasized that this must happen in community to be successful. Members can submit questions and ideas to reduce.plastic.psfc@gmail.com.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Meeting Chair Imani Q'Ryn announced that this may be her last meeting, after serving the Coop for 20 years. Many cheered and offered standing applause, expressing thanks for her service.

The Board of Directors voted to accept the advice of the general membership. Director Tim Hospodar addressed how the Coop's board of directors meets, acknowledging that this portion of the GM is the one time that the board is mandated to meet, however brief.



Imani Q'Ryn seated at left



Tim Hospodar

He suggested leveraging this time as an opportunity to more adeptly engage general membership and discuss important issues. Hospodar proposed, "...Perhaps we can maximize this chance to discuss topics that the board finds concerning or disconcerting. He continued, "The Board of Directors does not have a dedicated part of the meeting to report out or raise our concerns."

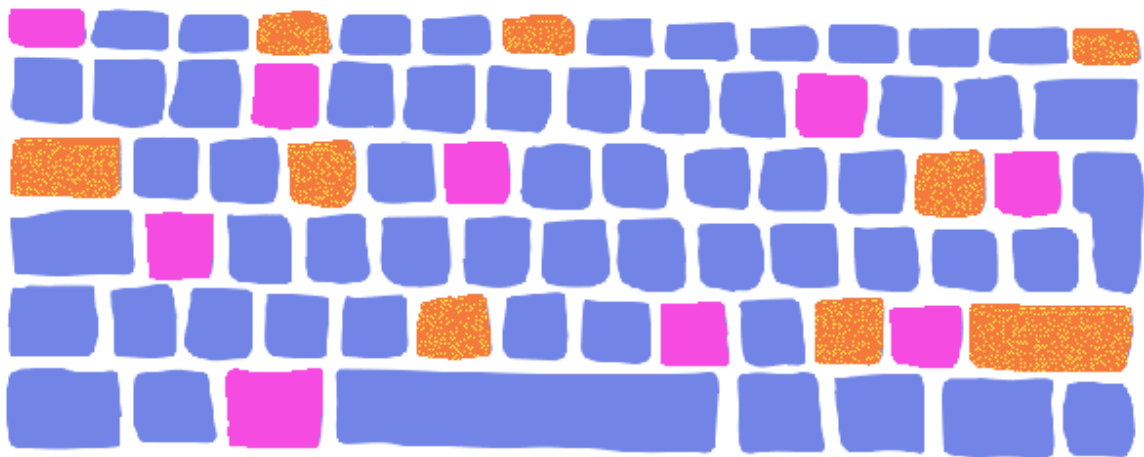
Ironically, the discussion was cut short for the sake of time, and the GM adjourned.

William Doran is a licensed architect, educator and food writer based in Brooklyn, NY. Though originally from New Orleans, LA, he has been a Coop member and New York City resident since 2022. He has taught cooking classes for the Coop (foodcoopcooks.org) and publishes a free quarterly newsletter at adventurouscooks.com.

MARCH 11, 2025

May 13, 2025

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS PRIVILEGES; MAKING IT THROUGH AIRPORT SECURITY ISN'T ONE

To the Editor,

Today at LaGuardia, I accidentally handed the TSA guy the other white plastic card in my wallet—my Coop ID.

“Uh, do you have a driver’s license?” he asked really nicely. I laughed at my blunder. As I passed through, he grinned and said, “Thanks for being a member.”

Sasha Aslanian

A NUMBERS GAME

To the Editor:

We wanted to share with the membership a quirky and educational game we play as a family after a PSFC shop. We save the receipt and take turns quizzing each other about purchased items and their attributes. The game almost always starts with asking everyone at the dinner table to guess the most expensive item, followed by the least expensive item from that particular receipt. From there, we often shift to “most expensive per pound” and “least expensive per pound.” Eventually the game ends up being “how much were the raspberries?” “how much were the walnuts?” followed by guesses and the receipt-holder indicating to guess higher or lower.

We have found that the kids really get into this game and its lighthearted competitive nature. Plus it’s a fun way to introduce kids to economics and give them an understanding of grocery costs. We thought that other members and their kids might enjoy the receipt game too!

Suggested Questions for the Receipt Game:

- Most expensive item (and second most expensive item)
- Least expensive item (and second least expensive item)
- Heaviest weighable item
- Lightest weighable item
- Most expensive per pound
- Least expensive per pound
- Total number of items
- Total cost of the shop
- How much is X?

Matt Knapp and Rachel Natov

PLASTICS REDUCTION

Greetings:

Our family's plastic waste stream includes a lot of plastic containers that held various berries purchased at the Coop. At some of the Farmers Markets, berries are sold in paperboard containers instead.

Perhaps the Coop buyer of berries could explore switching to a paperboard container with our vendors and see if that's feasible. If the lack of the cover is an issue, I note that we sell Physalis berries from Colombia with a plastic film cover secured by a rubber-band. It is a separate piece from the plastic box.

In Cooperation,

THIS IS FOR ALL THE CLUELESS PEOPLE

To the Editor,

On Thursday, I ventured to the Coop looking for dietary items required for the next few days prior to a specific medical exam. The Coop usually brings some peace to my day.

Turning down the bulk aisle, my journey came to a stop due to a large U-boat in the middle of the aisle. I made my way around to find on the other side a volunteer busily texting. I hoped the person they were texting was rushing over to move the cart out of my way. As I continued looking for white and colorless food without fiber, which is the opposite to my normal cravings, I was blocked again. I politely asked this shopper to make room for me, but they didn't respond. Then I realized that they had earbuds in their ears and were probably listening to some Brahms music which was more important than others needing clear passage.

I made it out and started having a snack of my last fiber-laden apple before my exam, and a person a little older than I decided to tie their dog up to the bench right next to mine without even saying pardon or, "Is it ok to leave my dog here?" I am very pro--dog and love my own monsters, but this one who was tied up immediately started sniffing at my food, and I had to physically move the animal away from me to continue with my apple treat.

My moment of peace finally came upon arriving home to tell my dogs about the hungry one that was tied up at the bench, which I believe was put there for humans to sit on, not for dogs to drool over fellow members' laps.

Obstructedly yours,
Mark Paperno

GOODBYE TO A COOP JOB I LOVED

To the Editor:

I'm no Joe Holtz, but the Jeteresque farewell tour of the "Soul of Coop" has got me, on the brink of coop retirement myself, wondering whether I might earn a tiny asterisk in PSFC history.

Since joining, I have had only one job: walker. I love it, largely because you don't have to be inside the Coop but I also really enjoy the brief conversations, and in a few cases, the fact that they are brief. Until spring 2020, I had the same shift my entire coop career. I was planning to keep it forever. My question to the *Gazette*: Is having just one job for a whole career common? Unique? Noteworthy? Who Cares?

Even if I get the asterisk, it will have its own asterisk since, due to the global pandemic I didn't have the exact same shift my entire career. After work slots resumed, I couldn't get my Wed C week 8 a.m. shift back, took the closest thing I could get (Friday E week) and will finish my career in that slot.

Is it weird that with a US government determined to destroy the US government, global warming definitely gonna get much worse, friends terrified of deportation, and [fill in your preferred reasons for rage/fear], I'm feeling a little wistful about my walking shifts (though not wistful enough to keep doing them when I don't have to)?

I'm not trying to steal Joe's thunder. He's a hero. I guess what I want to say is that working at the Coop has been a privilege, and shopping without working will be even better.

If awarded, the asterisk can be left for me in the office.

Thank you,
Kenny Bruno

VOTING VIA ZOOM ON GM

Good morning,

My name is Patricia López. I am an active Coop member.

I am writing because I want to ask for a hybrid GM vote. Because of my work schedule, I can never make it on time and have the opportunity to vote. I assume many fellow Coop members are in the same position.

Improving the accessibility to voting online makes it democratic.

Thank you.
Patricia López

IN SUPPORT OF HYBRID MEETINGS

Dear Fellow Coop Members,

I write today in support of hybrid General Meetings. It is disheartening to me that the Agenda Committee and General Coordinators have stalled in bringing this popular proposal to a vote, after over a year since it was first brought to the Agenda Com-

mittee.

As a Coop member of nearly two decades, I know that our democratic processes are part of what makes the Coop so much more than just another grocery store. I have attended many general meetings over the years, including Zoom meetings that happened during the pandemic. These have been important moments for me to learn firsthand about Coop members' priorities and concerns, participate in the nuts and bolts of Coop governance, and to weigh in on topics from plastic bag use to markups, confirming new committee members and BDS. Casting my vote at the GM is the primary way for me to help shape a Coop that reflects my values.

At an institution that purports to value inclusion, obstructing a vote on hybrid GMs stands out as an antidemocratic and exclusive power move. I am expecting my first child this spring. I would like to be able to continue to stay connected with my Coop community and participate in decisions affecting the PSFC's future. That feels especially important during this transitional moment, with Joe Holtz's imminent retirement. It is high time that hybrid meetings were brought to a vote.

In cooperation,

Jean Rohe

HYBRID GENERAL MEETINGS

Dear Editor,

I am writing to advocate for the implementation of hybrid General Meetings at the Park Slope Food Coop. As a long-time member committed to our cooperative's principles of inclusivity and democratic decision-making, I believe that adopting a hybrid format for our monthly meetings would significantly enhance member participation and equity.

Currently, our in-person General Meetings face several limitations:

- Limited capacity: The Prospect Park Picnic House, where meetings are held, can only accommodate 240 people, representing a mere 1.5% of our membership.
- Accessibility barriers: Many members face challenges attending in-person meetings due to work schedules, childcare responsibilities or mobility issues.
- Reduced engagement: Our Coop has experienced a 9% decrease in membership since in-person meetings were suspended.

Implementing hybrid meetings would address these issues by:

- Increasing participation: Virtual attendance options would allow more members to engage in crucial discussions and votes on Coop matters.
- Enhancing accessibility: Members unable to attend in person could still contribute their voices and votes from home.
- Strengthening our cooperative spirit: By embracing technology to include more members, we reinforce our commitment to collective ownership and decision-making.

While concerns about technical challenges have been raised, many organizations have successfully adopted hybrid meeting models. With proper planning and investment in appropriate technology, we can overcome these hurdles.

As I write, we approach our next General Meeting on February 25, 2025, I urge the Board and General Coordinators to seriously consider implementing a hybrid format. This change would align with our Coop's values of inclusivity and shared responsibility, ensuring that all members have the opportunity to participate in shaping our community's future.

Sincerely,
William Clark

IF ICE COMES KNOCKING

Greetings:

If ICE comes knocking, will the General Coordinators open the doors?

That's been on my mind ever since the latest Coordinators' Corner published on February 18. They name that by "engaging in boycotts or divestments against Israel," the Coop would be exposed to "legal, financial or other harm" from Project 2025 and Project Esther. For the unaware, those are Trump's MAGA manifestos. But if you're reading this, you're most likely uber aware that Project 2025 targets everything under the sun.

I am deeply troubled by the significant risk the General Coordinators would put us, the member-owners, and our community, by capitulating to the fascists that follow those manifestos. This government is denying trans people their documents and healthcare, it is threatening the sanctuary status of cities, it is repealing OSHA guidebooks and dissolving NLRB regional offices. It has let go thousands of national park workers just this past week.

So, if ICE knocks on the doors of the Coop, will we turn over a neighbor, for fear of the legal, financial or other harm they can bring to the Coop?

These are questions that are no longer far-off hypotheticals. My community has spent the last month making rapid response plans, and we actually have to use them. It will be four more years of planning, responding and surviving. Maybe you are insulated in your privilege of being a cliché Coop member, and you think you are not in communi-

ty with anyone on the frontlines, facing direct threats every day. But you are a New Yorker, so that means you are definitely in proximity. Now is the time to do the work and be in community. That means showing up to the General Meetings, and exercising your power, so the Coop does not bend the knee to MAGA.

Lin Mo

THE ROAD TO HELL IS PAVED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS

Dear Coop members:

Some fellow members think an Israeli boycott aligns with Coop values. Does it? The devil is in the details, and members should ask several key questions:

Is it ethical to boycott an entire nation? Why Israel?

Israel has its fair share of challenges, but were Israel as awful as BDS states, should we not boycott all products from problematic countries, including China, Turkey, Vietnam and even the states of FL & TX? Were it legal, should all citizens from those countries be banned at the Coop?

How will this work?

There is a reason the Arab boycott of Israel ultimately failed: We live in a globalized economy. There are inputs from many places in most of the products that we consume. Should all cell phones be banned from entering our premises? Do we implement a very costly & unreliable system to try to track the inputs of all the products we buy? How do we factor dual citizenship when defining Israeli ownership?

Will it help?

This is not about our economic power: The Coop only carries about ten products from Israel at any one time. Resolving conflicts requires dialogue. How does aligning with a group which boycotts academics and all forms of exchange help develop trust on the ground, a prerequisite for a negotiated settlement? If this conflict is so important to members, why not start a dialogue group?

What will be the impact on the Coop?

It has already had a negative impact on the culture and the community. For the dire economic and legal impact, please read the Coordinator's Corner articles on the subject!

The Coop is an amazing model which does a lot of good in our community. Let's not mess it up with a misguided support of BDS.

Bruno Grandsard

THE LIE OF A NEUTRAL POSITION

Greetings:

The 75% threshold was introduced in 2016 specifically to impede a BDS vote; that is the sole purpose of this policy which does not apply to any other aspect of Coop governance. In the midst of a genocide that is inextricably connected to food, water, land and agriculture, the coordinators choose to publish not one but THREE unprecedented, thinly veiled, fear-mongering texts full of wild speculations in an attempt to discourage members from voting their consciousness.

I am deeply disappointed that this is deemed acceptable. Threatening people with unsubstantiated predictions of price increases and cutbacks, playing on people's eco-

conomic fears to push their agenda. How shameful. The Coop establishment can only see “divisiveness” as something that comes from others, but not from their own actions and policies. Why are these inflammatory texts from coordinators not “divisive”? Why is erecting outrageous bureaucratic roadblocks to hybrid voting not “divisive”?

The Coop is indeed at risk, not because of some organizing, but because of its willingness to undercut itself and compromise its integrity in order to prevent what is clearly a popular measure from even being voted on. If the proboycott camp is so marginal, then why impede the vote? If it is so popular, then why are we constantly being addressed as agitators that the Coop needs to be protected from?

The answer should be obvious: Whether they realize it or not, the establishment’s claim of political neutrality is simply untrue. The constant hand-wringing over the safety and comfort of Coop members clearly does not include us. None of this discourse includes us. Just a total disregard for thousands of members; their will, their politics, their discomforts. There is absolutely an insidious racism at play here. The Coop establishment needs to wake up and include ALL of us in the body politic.

Tiffany Malakooti

YOU CAN’T WITCH HUNT THE BOSS

Dear Coop members:

Making decisions together as a diverse community can be strenuous. We must negotiate differences in our values and perspectives. Leaders of democratic organizations must host difficult conversations and facilitate decisions with multiple perspectives. It is a dereliction of duty and gross overstepping on the part of General Coordinators to inhibit agenda items they disagree with (as they are currently doing).

A recent letter (“The General Coordinators Are Not the Enemy”) accuses PSFC Members for Palestine of conducting a “witch hunt” against the GCs. This group advocates a broadly supported democratic vote on a boycott of Israeli goods, and has come against obstructions, delays and opaque processes, exposing the limitations of our democratic governance. These months and years of obstructions are detailed in the GC’s explicit opposition to fulfilling a basic mandate of their jobs: improving member democracy through hybrid GMs and enabling voting on a boycott of products from an apartheid state.

As I was addressed as a pro-Palestine Board member in the aforementioned letter, I want to respond. Let’s remember the power dynamics and leadership structures implicit in the Salem witch trials and other crusades against women and other dispossessed people throughout history. Actual witch hunts are how those with power repress peoples’ movements, criminalize otherness and create scapegoats to distract from actual sources of crisis and tension. GCs are hired by members like us and charged with running the Coop. As American democracy faces unprecedented challenges (from powerful people who describe conflicts with political opponents as “witch hunts” to victimize themselves while wielding bully pulpits to crush dissent), I hope we embrace the fruitful challenges of diversity and democracy. Land and food justice movements have always proved that local liberation is bound up with global liberation. We need the Coop more than ever to prove there are functional alternatives to authoritarianism, constant war and austerity.

Tess Brown-Lavoie
Board Member
Park Slope Food Coop

WANT FOR OTHERS WHAT YOU WANT FOR YOURSELVES

Dear Coop Members,

Do we support injustice? It is not just to support a government that oppresses the Palestinian people by killing them, stealing from them, wrongly imprisoning them, calling them animals, etc. The world sees the documented footage and evidence of this continuous abuse and is calling it out. Coop members have a right and a duty to speak about our Coop participating in this horror. Do the Coop coordinators believe that Palestinians don't deserve the same human rights as themselves?

With justice comes peace. Coop members seeking a boycott of Israeli products want to see the Coop stand for human rights for all people, not just a select few. Practicing free speech, organizing peacefully and refusing to benefit from Palestinian people's oppression should not be considered threatening.

Thank you,
Shahidah Tawwab

LET'S GO, HYBRID MEETINGS!

Hi,

My name is Alex Pyle, I have been a member of the PSFC for 6 years, and I would like there to be hybrid voting available for general meetings.

Thank you,
Alex Pyle

STOP DELAYING THE VOTE ON HYBRID MEETINGS

Hi there,

I find it quite bothersome that the GCs continue to delay the vote on hybrid GMs. It's clearly a very popular proposal; virtually every other community group I belong to provide hybrid meeting options, and it makes participating in meeting way easier for people (particularly for parents with young children like myself who don't have the time they used to to travel for meetings).

It also makes one wonder if the GCs are resorting to antidemocratic sabotage, perhaps intentionally delaying the hybrid policy because they know it would finally lead to us making the morally correct and long overdue decision to ban the sale of products from Israel.

I love the Coop—it seems like the only institution that isn't completely dysfunctional these days—and want to be able to attend GMs to participate in Coop business decisions. Please stop delaying the vote on hybrid GMs and make sure a vote finally happens on Tuesday, April 29.

Sincerely,

Alejandro Silva

THE PROPOSED BOYCOTT OF ISRAELI GOODS

Greetings:

This suggestion to boycott Israeli goods has come up before. When it came up previously it led to the most divisive general meeting in the Coop's history.

While I do not support Israeli actions in Gaza and the West Bank, a boycott of a few Israeli products is not an effective way forward for a FOOD store. As a food store our boycott of products that may contain glyphosate is much more straightforward. If you are concerned about Israeli attacks on Palestinians, contact your representatives and senators. For a food store, the stocking of Palestinian products is a more successful approach, and probably does more for Palestinians than a boycott of Israeli products by PSFC could.

In cooperation,
Adam Segal-Isaacson

COORDINATORS' CORNER: SAFEGUARDING THE COOP'S FUTURE

May 13, 2025

COORDINATORS' CORNER

ILLUSTRATION BY ERIK SCHURINK

February 18, 2025

By The General Coordinator Team

This is our third Coordinators' Corner of 2025, addressing concerns and highlighting the risks associated with a campaign led by members from PSFC Members for Palestine, who aim to have the Coop join a BDS-targeted boycott of Israeli goods.

THE COOP'S BOYCOTT HISTORY

The Coop has a long tradition of participating in boycotts. Since 1989 we've joined a number of boycotts, with an impressive 97% of members voting in favor across all boycott votes. This overwhelming support reflects the Coop's commitment to building consensus and aligns with the International Cooperative Alliance's Seven Cooperative Principles, which promote unity while embracing diversity.

SUCH SCRUTINY COULD RESULT IN COSTLY LEGAL BATTLES, GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATIONS AND MAJOR DISRUPTIONS TO THE COOP’S OPERATIONS AND STABILITY.

PSFC Members for Palestine are proposing to repeal the Coop’s 75% supermajority requirement for General Meeting (GM) votes on boycotts and replace it with a simple majority to make it easier to approve a Coop boycott of Israeli goods. A boycott without broad member support undermines the Principles of Cooperation, weakens the Coop’s cohesion and threatens its stability, as outlined in a previous Coordinators’ Corner. Maintaining the 75% supermajority is a reasonable minimum, especially given that boycott votes have historically averaged 97% in favor. This threshold ensures that boycotts are only advanced with sufficient member support to preserve Coop unity and protect it from harmful risk.

PSFC BOYCOTT HISTORY (1989-PRESENT)

Date	Boycott	Yes Votes	No Votes	Approval %
January 1989	Chile, S. Africa, non-UFW grapes	19	0	100%
July 1989	All tuna fish	9	0	100%
December 1990	Bumble Bee Tuna	15	1	94%
August 1991	Non-UFW Grapes	30	7	81%
February 1993	Colorado	37	8	82%
May 1997	Garden Burger	36	1	97%
January 2001	Domino Sugar	38	0	100%
2004-2018	Coca Cola products	1,959*	41*	98%

Date	Boycott	Yes Votes	No Votes	Approval %
November 2010	Flaum Appetizing	165	3	98%
August 2018	CamelBak products	175	5	97%

*Aggregate of annual votes

POLITICAL AND LEGAL RISKS TO JOINING BDS

We believe the Coop faces significant external risks by aligning with the BDS movement. Politically motivated initiatives such as Project 2025 and Project Esther explicitly target organizations engaging in boycotts or divestments against Israel. These efforts promote policies and legislation that could expose the Coop to legal, financial or other harm. Aligning with BDS could bring scrutiny under laws such as the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) or the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO), as outlined in Project Esther. Such scrutiny could result in costly legal battles, government investigations and major disruptions to the Coop's operations and stability.

Our concerns are not unfounded. The broader goal of PSFC Members for Palestine is to connect the Coop to the global BDS movement, as outlined on their website:

*The BDS framework offers us clarity around the particularities of our boycott demands, and **connects us to a global movement** while otherwise enabling us to work autonomously and independently to address our specific context here at the Coop. In committing to BDS, we follow the lead of Palestinian trade unions, which have unanimously declared their support to the movement. If we believe Palestinians are agents in their own liberation and that we should support them, then we should take up their call to endorse BDS.*

We maintain that aligning with the BDS movement exposes the Coop to significant political, legal and financial risks that could jeopardize its operations and stability.

THE GENERAL COORDINATORS' ROLE

Some members have asked why the General Coordinators (GCs) are speaking out on this topic. The answer lies in the GCs' responsibilities, as outlined by the Coop's by-laws, governance and history. As Chief Administrative Officers, GCs are obligated to act in the Coop's best interest. Our duties include overseeing daily operations, financial management, long-term planning, sustainability and risk management. Protecting the Coop by anticipating and mitigating risks is central to our role.

The GCs have been accused of fear-mongering for identifying these risks. We firmly reject this characterization. Assessing risks and providing honest evaluations is not fear-mongering—it is fundamental to our role as Chief Administrative Officers. By openly sharing information about potential challenges, we offer a perspective grounded in the Coop's operations and financial sustainability, ensuring that members have the knowledge to make informed decisions in the Coop's best interest.

Our duty is to keep the Coop strong and resilient, now and for the future.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Since our founding in 1973, Coop members have collectively worked over 4 million shifts. Each shift represents a vote for cooperation and the Coop's unique member-worker model. While political initiatives and boycotts have played a role in our history—accounting for just over 2,500 member votes on boycott related matters—they are a much smaller part of our identity compared to the millions of shifts worked to sustain the Coop's daily operations. It's evident that the Coop's strength lies in the collective work and dedication of its members to our participatory model, not in pursuing measures that lack broad support, and fail to build consensus.

The risks tied to the BDS proposal—whether legal, operational or otherwise—are too significant to ignore. Boycotting Israel could divert attention and resources away from the Coop's day to day work: ensuring smooth operations, financial stability and maintaining the cohesiveness of our diverse membership. Cooperation is at the heart of

our Coop, and unity among members is essential to its success.

OUR DUTY IS TO KEEP THE COOP STRONG AND RESILIENT, NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE.

The General Coordinators emphasize that the Coop's longevity depends on our longstanding commitment to collaboration and our shared efforts. When proposals arise that jeopardize the Coop's stability, it is our responsibility to speak out. Our primary duty is to safeguard the Coop's ability to thrive, ensuring it continues to serve as a successful member-worker model for current and future members, and as an inspiration for others seeking to establish new member-labor food cooperatives.

We urge all members to act to protect our Coop:

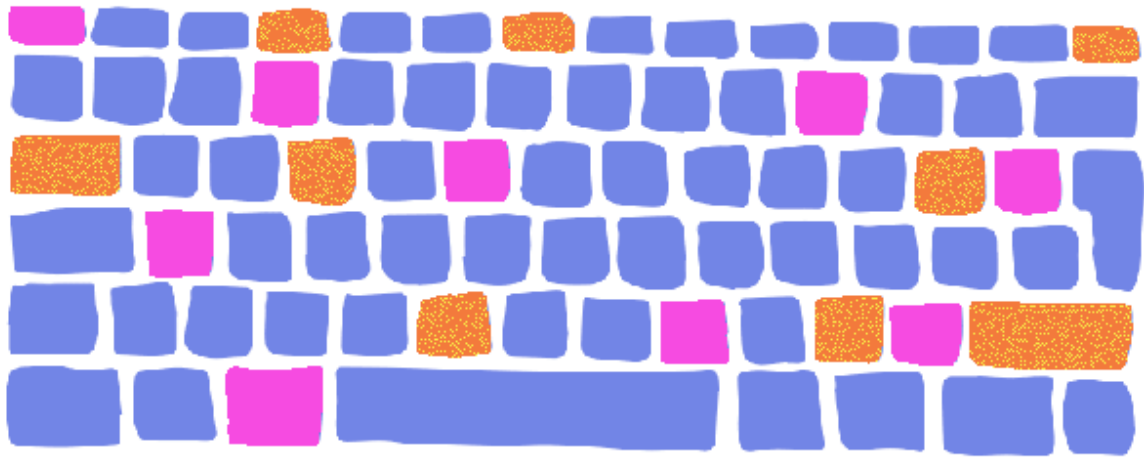
- Attend General Meetings to voice your concerns.
- Vote against lowering the 75% supermajority boycott threshold.
- Engage in respectful dialogue with fellow members about these issues.
- Write to the Gazette to share your perspective.

The General Coordinator Team

FEBRUARY 18, 2025

May 13, 2025

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



FINDING THE COOP ABROAD

Dear Coop Members:

This is in the “What are the odds?” department.

I am in Southern Mexico—Ciudad of Oaxaca. On a van trip to see and make paper,

and to see the work of artist Francisco Toledo I found myself in a group of 11 other ex-pats. Of the 11 of us seven of us were from Park Slope and five are Coop members! (Another revealed former Coop membership.)

Surprise!

Riva Rosenfield

EVIL ON BOTH SIDES

Greetings:

Having been a member since 1980, I have witnessed many conflicts in the Coop. A short letter regarding boycott of Israeli products. This whole issue is toxic for liberal and left organizations, creating divisions that interfere with other vital concerns. I find evil on both sides of the Hamas-Israel war.

Bill Miller

FEWER THAN TEN ITEMS AT THE COOP ARE ISRAELI

Dear Gazette Editor,

Coop members calling themselves psfc4palestine want us to boycott certain products from Israel, based on the “BDS targeted list” to “materially enforce economic pressure on Israeli companies complicit with apartheid.”

On January 7, 2025 the Coordinators said, “The Coop currently carries less than ten

items from Israel.” GM Joe Holtz gave me this list on January 22, gathered from July 2024 sales data:

Product	Average weekly unit sales
Ecolove (assorted)	14.84
Seed & Mill Tahini	6.17
Soom Tahini	13.0
Al Arz Tahini (assorted)	54.67
Osem Bamba	258.33
Total	347.01

Joe estimates that the Coop sells “over 400,000 units” of product per week.

Joe said, “Occasionally a fresh produce item comes from Israel. None at present. The BDS targeted list includes SodaStream, Sabra, and Israeli produce such as peppers, carrots, and clementines.”

“Sabra is now 100% owned by PepsiCo and is manufactured in the United States,” he said. “They want us to boycott SodaStream. SodaStream is no longer carried by the Coop.”

As of July 11, the Coop carried ZERO items from Israel that BDS is targeting, though sometimes we sell produce they’re focusing on.

The boycott ignores products we always sell! This makes no sense and so I question the entire boycott premise.

Could a boycott mainly represent a position statement?

If the Coop thought that Israel was treating the Palestinian people badly, now and throughout history, rather than joining a flawed boycott, let's think for ourselves and make a declaration, e.g.:

"We unequivocally support the right of Palestinians to live with freedom and dignity and the dismantling of all systems that propagate and empower discriminatory treatment of these people."

Some psfc4palestine supporters propose changing longstanding Coop boycott voting rules just for them, such that a simple "majority vote" activates their boycott. I object.

Andy Feldman

NO TO BDS

Dear *Gazette* Submissions:

I wholly concur with *The Linewaiters' Gazette* article, entitled "Stop Forcing Me To Shop, Vote, And Think Like You." Its closing sentence, "BDS needs the Coop. Not the other way around," is spot on. Our Coop has nothing to gain and everything to lose by linking itself to the BDS movement. I can't help but think of the BDS movement against the Israeli company, Soda Stream, that had been located in the West Bank, and employed hundreds of West Bank Palestinians, and then in the face of intense international pressure, moved its operations inside Israel proper; and with that move, the jobs of many of those West Bank Palestinians were lost. So yes BDS was successful in Soda Stream leaving the West Bank, but did so without care or regard for those Palestinian workers harmed by them. So too at our Coop, adopting hybrid meetings could potentially lead to the Coop adopting BDS. This would likely lead to loss of members (myself—a 23-year member included), loss of revenue, potential legal action,

etc. And then the bad press (and ethics issue) of having our Coop, via BDS, take the side of Hamas, a terrorist group that sanctioned the rape, murder and kidnapping of Israelis and foreign nationals.

I love the Coop, I love Israel (though not its current government), I support a peaceful, independent Palestinian State; but as seen in the Soda Stream example, BDS works against all of these entities.

Let's unify our Coop and get back to the business of being a Coop and not a platform for those who seek to divide us.

Murray Lantner

PS: I love that we have some really tasty shade grown coffee in the Coop, it tastes good and its good for biodiversity.

OUR GENERAL COORDINATORS ARE FALLING SHORT

Coop Members,

I was taken aback to read the GC's January 7 inflammatory, fear-mongering opinion piece "Our Coop At Risk," that opposed both a referendum on boycotting Israeli products and hybrid GMs. Their January 28 follow-up on preserving the 75% supermajority for boycotts simply reiterated those points rather than responding to new concerns.

My own opinion, while in favor of a boycott, is nuanced. It is straightforward to not stock Israeli-made products such as Sabra Hummus, but from working produce receiving and processing, I can see practical challenges in screening out produce deliveries at receiving, as they are variably sourced at the distributors' discretion. Those same challenges arise for any boycott, yet boycotts are in the tradition and history of the

Coop. I think it's worth exploring, planning, discussing and voting, to balance the commitment to preserving human life and rights with the effective functioning of the store.

In both articles, the GCs fall short of the Coop's founding principles of "respecting the opinions, needs, and concerns of every member" and seeking "to maximize participation at every level, from policy making to running the store." Why should a boycott alone require a 75% supermajority unlike all other potentially divisive issues? The only reason I can see is the GC's blind spot on this one topic. However, the most critical democratic advance is hybrid GMs. Boycott-opposed members would also benefit from hybrid GMs.

How is it respectful and participatory to exclude members from GMs given a lack of evening childcare? It is highly unlikely that a referendum at a hybrid GM would lead to a mass exodus of thousands of members as threatened by these articles; what factual basis is there for that assumption? Some might leave if the boycott motion passed. There are many would-be members to join.

In Cooperation,
Eve Goodman

THE GENERAL COORDINATORS ARE NOT THE ENEMY

Dear Coop Members,

I'm writing because there are concerning developments at the Coop that may not be widely known. Unless you attend General Meetings (GM) or carefully follow the *Gazette*, you might be unaware that there is a group of members actively working against the General Coordinators (GC). In fact, I would call it a witch hunt.

These members, two of whom are on the Board, are making false accusations at GMs, sowing seeds of distrust and creating “gotcha” moments to cast the GCs in the worst possible light. Example one: An Agenda Committee member missed the deadline to place a new member recruitment ad in the *Gazette*; believing mistakenly it had been placed, GC Ann Herpel said as much at a GM. Though this was a simple human error, individuals have repeatedly used this negligible incident to publicly shame and embarrass the GCs. They’ve wasted valuable staff time by rehashing this and dragging the GCs through the mud. Example two: At the January GM, one of these Board members made bogus claims about labor violations against the Coop. This is just two of many similar incidents.

Why are they doing this? Maybe it is retribution because the GCs haven’t supported their political agenda. They want you to believe that the GCs are the enemy. In reality the GCs are doing exactly what we hired them to do. They work tirelessly to make sure our Coop continues to thrive, to get us the best food for less money, and to be a good employer. They are succeeding.

These people want you to lose faith in our GCs. Don’t fall for it. Please pay attention. The Board of Directors elections are just around the corner. It’s up to us to protect what we have built together. If you want to know more, just ask me.

Sincerely,
Karen Mancuso
Membership Coordinator

YES, WE’RE POLITICAL... BUT ALSO A COOP WHERE PEOPLE SHOULD CO-OPERATE!

Greetings:

Some Boycott, Divest, Sanction (“BDS”) opponents argue that introducing politics into the Coop is a bad idea, while some advocates defend their activity on the basis that the Coop is political with a history of boycotts. I think this discussion misses the mark.

If organizing a local community, with its own detailed rules & regulations, voting system, taxation (i.e. working requirements!) and support for local farmers, is not political... I don’t know what is! So yes, the Coop is a political organization, and that is fine.

If political advocacy is part of the Coop’s DNA, it is also a Cooperative run according to participatory principals which place open-minded cooperation at the center of our activity. Those who think all issues should be settled by voting perhaps believe that the Coop is a republic, where majority rules, damned be minority rights. But the Mission Statement is clear: “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.” Past boycotts have been narrow in scope/impact, consensual, supported by the General Coordinators and did not personally impact many members.

BDS fails to be in compliance with our mission statement on several accounts: first, the organization is secretive, exclusionary and refuses to engage with opponents—not exactly cooperative behavior. Second, it is not consensual, and fosters tremendous divisiveness. Third, it is discriminatory against one country/group, and does not respect the rights of a substantial group of members; the atmosphere it fosters at the Coop may actually violate Title VII. And finally, it clearly jeopardizes the future of the Coop.

In Cooperation,
Bruno Grandsard

ENOUGH HIDING BEHIND “DEMOCRACY”

Hello,

Amazing quote from a letter-writer in the last issue of the *Gazette*. It was also refreshing:

“If there are Coop members who are against the principles of our Coop’s democracy, and would leave based on a strong majority of membership voting on any proposal, then they should not be Coop members.”

It’s astonishing for those people pushing BDS to hide behind “democracy” when it was clearly stated by the General Coordinators how every initiative the BDS people are pushing are far from “democratic.” It’s nice though to finally see how the pro-BDS members feel about us. They don’t want us there so it was good to hear someone - come out and say it.

We are not going anywhere and we will fight BDS until the end and call you out every step of the way.

Jonathan Tobias

THE LIE BEHIND “HYBRID” VOTING

Hello Coop,

The first time hybrid voting (online and in person) was floated as a feature of Coop governance was some months ago at a General Meeting. Joe Holtz was explaining to a BDS supporter why we can’t just adopt hybrid, that we need to change the by-laws. Their immediate response was, ‘How do we change the by-laws?’

People, people, people. Hybrid voting is not, never was, and never will be, about democracy, working families or the immunocompromised. Those buzzwords were trotted out later to sweeten the Big Lie.

BDS is merely a 'non-violent' arm of Hamas (who claims to represent Palestinians), a very violent militant extremist movement that terrifies and oppresses Palestinians, uses 'slave' to label those of African descent, caricatures African Americans as birthing monkeys, is itching to forcibly displace 6,000,000 Jews of Middle Eastern and European descent (genocide, anyone?) and is part of the Muslim Brotherhood who wants to colonize the world under a Caliphate. BDS itself champions Hamas, including the rape and kidnapping and infanticide of October 7, and wants to kick you out of the Coop if you disagree. BDS is nothing more than slogans spouted by the reckless. From the very start, a vote for hybrid has been a vote to open the door to voting for all of the above and it takes little effort to find it in their own words.

Don't be fooled into thinking this is a debate about democracy. Voting against the hybrid model is voting against a BDS faction who support everything you find repellent, including genocide. Drop everything. Show up to the General Meetings. Keep our Coop a cooperative.

BDS needs the Coop. Not the other way around.

Jesse Rosenfeld

THE GENERAL COORDINATORS' PATRONIZING TONE

Dear Coop Members,

In addition to my many substantive disagreements with the Coordinators' Corner column in the January 7 issue, I was offended by the patronizing tone taken by the GCs,

who wrote: “The broader membership may not fully understand the narrow perspective of this group [PSFC4Palestine] or the risks their actions pose to the Coop.”

First of all, why assume naiveté on the part of the “broader membership?” And second, what does it mean to frame as “narrow” the efforts of Coop members to help call a halt to Israel’s killing spree and the colonial occupation that gave rise to it? How is it “narrow” for Coop members who are themselves Palestinian, and/or Muslim, and/or Arab, to call out our Coop’s complicity with these horrors? How is it “narrow” for anti-Zionist Jewish Coop members to reject the cynical use of identity politics to shield Israel and its US partner in crime? How is it “narrow” for members who lack some obvious personal connection to the issue to nonetheless feel responsible for correcting blatant injustice that’s bankrolled and armed using our tax dollars?

In the January 28 *Gazette* issue, the GCs double down on their patronizing approach, admonishing the membership that the 75% supermajority requirement for approving a boycott must not be repealed, as this would “divide the Coop.” I would like them to explain what is “non-divisive” about allowing a small minority of voting members to block a boycott that is desired by a majority of up to 74%? Is that because, in the GCs’ eyes, those who desire a boycott are “narrow” by definition? Does each “narrow” opinion in favor of a boycott count as a mere fraction of each opinion against? Is that what the GCs are saying? Is this their vision of democratic decision-making?

In cooperation,

Jan Clausen

I LOVE THE COOP BUT...

Fellow Members,

A friend and I were talking about the recent Coordinators’ Corner piece. They asked

me how I felt about it. “Furious,” I replied. “I love the Coop but it keeps wronging me.”

Over and over I have expected our Coop to operate as it is described in its mission and in the documents that detail policies and procedures. I expect even-handed leadership and fairness. But over and over—just like the recent article, and the 2019 union busting antics—I have seen upper management using a heavy-handed, “we know what is best,” top-down style of leadership.

Of late, our General Coordinators have been openly anti-democratic. It seems they only support member participation in governance if it will bring about outcomes they approve of, and that they will stop at nothing to suppress proposals they disagree with. They’ve told us that hybrid meetings could result in a boycott of Israeli products (which they don’t want) so they also are unsupportive of hybrid meetings. If only they could take a broader view: hybrid meetings could create openings for participation for a wide range of Coop members, on myriad topics.

If this is truly a cooperative, then where are the General Coordinators’ efforts to cooperate—instead of dictate? Where is evidence of General Coordinators listening to members who do not agree with them. What I see in their article is open hostility—not cooperation.

Everyone who knows me knows I love the Coop, and cooperative models of engagement. Going into my 20th year of membership, I want more for and from the Coop than the limited perspectives imposed by management.

In Cooperation,
HanaKyle Moranz

SUPPRESSION OF FREE SPEECH

Dear Fellow Members:

I joined the Park Slope Food Coop more than 50 years ago and I was primarily attracted to it not only because it provides the community with good food at good prices, but also because of its willingness to take stands on numerous moral issues.

This latter tradition has prevailed for decades, until recently. The current actions of the Coop General Coordinators are not only at variance with our long history of support for moral issues, they constitute an effort to suppress free speech and must be strongly opposed.

Pressuring Israel, peacefully, to change its policies regarding the Palestinians is a moral imperative that none should shrink from...especially the Coop membership.

While some members may leave the Coop because of the BDS boycott effort, a larger number of people are likely to join.

John McGettrick

CAN THE COOP GOVERNING STRUCTURE EVOLVE?

To the editors,

I was disheartened to read the statement of the General Coordinators ("Our Coop at Risk") in the January 7, 2025 *Gazette* claiming, essentially, that the boycott of Israeli products would lead to the collapse of the Coop. I am not surprised by this support of the Israeli destruction of Palestine. The General Managers have done that before.

In the *Gazette* of March 8, 2012, Joe Holtz wrote that a vote against having a Coop-wide referendum about boycotting Israeli products would be a vote for the Coop. This tactic was and is, to spread fear among Coop members. The GCs now say if we oppose Israel's genocidal attack on the Palestinian people, we will destroy our Coop.

The GCs are our employees. They direct our paid staff. As the Coop has grown to more than 16,000 members, our decision-making process has placed more authority in the hands of the GCs. They have to keep the Coop functioning and they do it very well. But the governing structure of the Coop has not evolved with its burgeoning membership. We are still subject to a few decisions made by fewer than five percent of the members at monthly General Meetings. And the GCs make many other decisions for us.

That's why hybrid General Meetings are a better option.

Many members can't do more here than their work shifts and grocery shopping. They may rarely think about the political aspects of our Coop. But many members know that oppressive regimes and corporations can be challenged by boycotts.

The century-old war on Palestine continues, culminating now in the murder of tens of thousands of Palestinians. Hybrid meetings might bring greater member participation. It might show us that the vast majority of Coop members support a boycott of Israeli products.

Naomi Brussel

GENERAL COORDINATORS OVERREACH

Dear Editors,

I'm deeply concerned about the irresponsible and fear-mongering editorial posted by the Coop's General Coordinators in last month's *Linewaiters' Gazette*. Given their elevated platform and the placement of this letter, it seems that the general coordinators are using a bully pulpit to make it clear that they are in direct opposition to bringing a potential boycott of Israeli goods to a vote, and they are maligning the good faith efforts brought forth by PSFC for Palestine to bring this essential and timely question to the membership. It's disingenuous to use low-income members and Coop staff as a wedge and to use the potential of diminished sales to argue against bringing something to a democratic vote. The truth is that nothing at the Coop requires a 75% vote. Even changing the bylaws only requires a two-thirds majority. The general coordinators are "bringing divisiveness to the coop" and spreading misinformation by posting a letter like this one.

Best,
Nancy Mercado

PSFC AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

To the Editor:

With "hybrid" the PSFC would be in compliance with the second Principle of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA): Coops are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting the policies and making decisions. Coop members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote). PSFC did have democratic governance, in compliance with ICA's second Principle during the Covid--Zoom GM meetings.

ALL members could vote on the agenda items at the monthly GM Zoom meetings.

Mary Buchwald

UMBAGE AT THE GENERAL COORDINATORS' INCONSISTENCY

Greetings:

I recall attending a General Meeting many years ago where a member spoke up about how the water bladders the coop was stocking were produced by a subsidiary of a corporation that also produced munitions and how there were alternatives available that were not owned by corporations that produced munitions. Maybe he suggested other brands? I then remember a staff thanking the member for the information and saying that they would switch manufacturers. It occurred without comment.

The Coop is a political project. We have values and we stand for things. I wish we stood for more things!! Where our money goes matters.

The Coordinators' Corner pieces of the last two issues proposes that the Coop won't be successful if a boycott of Israeli products passes without near unanimous support—a bar that is not even required to amend our bylaws, the agreement that makes us a cooperative. I think it is fine to *want* that level of agreement but ludicrous to demand it, especially when the vote we are considering is among the impassioned people who are able and choose to attend an in-person general meeting.

Finally, it saddens me that the General Coordinators have felt it necessary to weigh in on hybrid meetings (against) and a boycott of Israeli products (also against) but didn't feel it was necessary to weigh in on the proposal to remove masking at the coop, a policy that would endanger the actual physical health of vulnerable coop members.

Best,

Rebecca Schoenberg-Jones