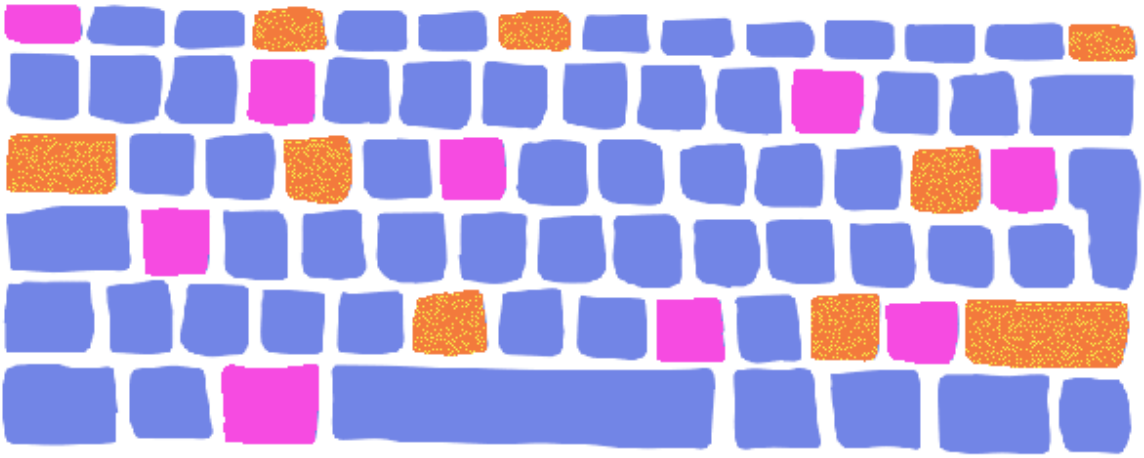
AUGUST 5, 2025

August 5, 2025

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



YOU’RE INVITED: AUGUST GATHERING TO SUPPORT COOPERATIVE EDUCATION IN ALABAMA

Friends and fellow members,

My name is Carmen. While recent Coop contention has felt particularly high-stakes and long-standing, members have always contested the terms of Coop self-governance. As a Coop kid, I began learning the skills and commitment necessary to facilitate collective decision-making. (Mostly, I learned to feed infants in childcare bagel-eighths to assuage them and to make sincere and short small talk with elementary school teachers. But worker-ownership is important too.) The Coop feels like a home and a possible future. I have strong feelings about the content of this and other conflicts, but I feel much more excited by the membership's investment in processes of worker ownership and conflict resolution.

Because of the Coop, I began studying worker ownership, learning popular education, and working with the Sand Mountain Cooperative Education Center in Alabama over a year ago. We use cooperative ownership to teach. We use education to build cooperative ownership. Groups of teachers, students, and workers gather to build popular education and worker ownership in Alabama. For more on the story and programs, please visit the website.

At 8 PM on August 9, a group of us will gather at Blockhill in South Slope. Come to learn, talk, and drink! Seriously.

Join us!

Excited to see you soon,

Carmen Lopez Villamil

MORE FREE EXPRESSION, JOY, AND FREE CLASSIFIED ADS

Dear Gazette and Coop Community,

How important are community and art to us?

I understand that having a robust community bulletin board in the stairwell is a fire hazard and cannot be returned to its past glory. I feel the loss to our community is large and nothing has been done about it. The Coop used to support our Coop-member-owned businesses in the stairwell and in the printed *Linewaiters' Gazette*. Can the digital *Gazette* please resume a robust and accessible classifieds section?

And can we go a step further in community engagement? I'd like to see us make space available for visual art at the Coop. A great opportunity is on the wall to the right of the exit, behind the cashiers. Presently, there's nothing on the brick besides a new "please don't scam EBT benefits" flyer in a plastic sleeve.

I hope we can offer available unadorned wall space to Coop artists in a fair, equitable and enriching way. Maybe seventeen artists can have a three-week showing each year. Randomly scheduled or first-come-first-served, simply let it schedule out for as long as necessary.

If we are here for health and wellness, then let's allow art to be an integral part of our communal and personal well-being. Let's share in how cleansing and inspiring art can be. Also, this would support our artists!

Finally, can we agree that beautification of our space should be the next step after everything is functional?

Our ship is in order, now please, let's have more free expression, joy and free classified ads.

In community, art, and peace, with best wishes and gratitude,

Wally Wallach
PSFC member since 2011

Editors' note: Members of the Gazette *lament the loss of our stairwell bulletin board as well and are indeed working on a digital Classifieds section.*

COORDINATORS' REPORT IS AWESOME, NEEDS A HOME ONLINE

Dear Fellow Members:

General Coordinator Elinoar Astrinsky presented an awesome report at the June general meeting. We learned about the intricacies of keeping our refrigeration and cooling systems operational. Then Elinoar told us about the outstanding work by our buyers to keep the Coop supplied in the aftermath of the UNFI cyber-crash. Last, we heard about new staff members. It was great. I want more of it. Keeping the Coop going is so much more than just putting things on the shelves and working the checkouts. And it's really interesting, too.

It would be so wonderful if the coordinator's report could be on video and accessible online so anyone in the Coop could view it at any time. I think this could really boost engagement and feelings of ownership within the Coop community. I hope, if the GC's are amenable, we can get some members to look into the feasibility of doing this.

In Cooperation,

Barbara Mazor

WILL A BATHROOM CLEANER AND LIFTER BE 'AMERICA'S FAVORITE COUPLE'?

To the Cherished Editorial Team,

In the middle of the night, scrolling Instagram, I saw a contest/fundraiser hosted by *Variety* magazine and Jeff Goldblum for “America’s Favorite Couple.” The perfect click-bait for a sleepy romantic who loves talking about her partner and tries to donate regularly (time, clothes, blood, what have you). I enjoyed answering questions like “how did your love story begin” and “what’s your favorite memory” and fell asleep with a smile shortly thereafter. The next week, I found out we were finalists! I’ve never campaigned for anything, but campaigning for love and charity felt like a nice place to start. I designed a poster with a talented young artist that was an illustration of our first date and started sending out the page to friends to either give a free vote or donate to one of the charities for the chance to give a few more votes.

While at my lifting shift the following week, I mentioned the contest to my fellow members. Several of them said they wanted to vote for me as soon as they had reception again (outside of the basement) and that we should tell the *Gazette*! The contest runs through August and you can vote here. I’m not sure if this is a letter, or an announcement or just a note to another special human I haven’t met yet, in any case, thanks for reading.

Grateful for all that you do and to be a part of this incredible community with my partner, Michael Hernandez-Stern. The groceries are good too (especially the cheese!)

Warm regards,

Jewell Hernandez-Stern

THE COOP IS UNGOVERNABLE

Dear Members,

The Coop is ungovernable.

At the April GM, a member said, “We have not only this hybrid vote sabotaged by right wing Jewish extremists, but it’s happened in the past many times.” This filthy slur of “Jewish” was not blunted by “right-wing” or “extremists.”

And yet while proclaiming responsibility to run the GM “impartially” every meeting, the chair committee reacted spinelessly, diminishing Jew-hate to ”name-calling” and letting the member continue. Standard business ethics across the US would result in immediate expulsion from the meeting and the organization, and I support full expulsion. But the DRC will not touch it, nor did the *Gazette* report on it. So I see all three committees as complicit in degrading safety for Jews at the Coop.

April’s GM culminated in BDS’s illegal takeover of the Coop’s general meeting by forcing through a referendum on hybrid voting, not for the sake of Palestinians but for what many see as supporting a global call for violence. Again, the chair committee did worse than nothing and simply surrendered their own authority. It should have been stopped by the board of directors, but, stocked with BDS-friendly members, they abandoned their responsibility to the membership at large.

What can you and I do? Contact management and protest with severely reduced shopping until management and committees uproot what Baila Olidort recently called “evil.” Regarding the June GM: While I applaud Joe Holtz’s stewardship, and his warning to the membership about a take-over of the board of directors by BDS’s undemocratic machinations, we cannot rely on last-minute surprises by management. BDS is cancerous to our Coop. It needs excision.

Jesse Rosenfeld

SHOULD ISRAEL BE BOYCOTTED?

Dear editor,

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has claimed that Iran is “months, maybe weeks” away from developing nuclear weapons. But Netanyahu has made this claim repeatedly for the last thirty years at least, as we’ve seen from a CNN montage of news clips circulating on the internet of him doing so.

Recall the pressure campaign in the runup to the disastrous 2003 invasion of Iraq, based on that same bogus narrative about weapons of mass destruction. Such allegations have been repeatedly used to justify our country’s many interventions, all in service to Israel—and of no material benefit to us. Such allegations justified the bombing destruction of Libya, which turned the nation with the highest standard of living in all of Africa into one now running slave markets. They justified funding a terrorist war against the state of Syria that finally resulted in that country’s destruction.

Israel is known to possess many nuclear weapons, albeit undeclared. And both the CIA and Mossad have found no evidence that Iran seeks nuclear weapons. Nonetheless, Israel initiated an unprovoked surprise bombing of Iran on June 13.

The basic plan of the Zionist project is to transform the Middle East to Israel’s liking. In 1948, Israel’s declaration of statehood necessitated the violent displacement of more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs into refugee status and triggered war, all for the purpose of ensuring a Jewish majority in a state with a substantial minority of non-Jewish Arabs.

A recent Pennsylvania State University poll reported in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz that 82 percent of Israelis wanted the Palestinian population of Gaza removed en masse, and that a stunning 47 percent would be comfortable with having them all killed.

If there was ever a country that needed to be boycotted, that country is Israel.

David Barouh

OPPOSING WAR CRIMES ISN’T ANTI-COOP

Dear Coop members:

PSFC Members for Palestine have been labeled anti-Coop outsiders. I’m 70, Jewish, Brooklyn-born and a 47-year Coop member, not an outsider. Neither are over 3,500 other members, horrified by Israel’s genocidal apartheid government. We demand nothing more than respect and equal treatment from an organization we care deeply about.

For over a decade, a small group of pro-Israel members, currently called Coop4Unity, have worked ceaselessly to prevent a boycott of Israeli goods, blocking any effort toward the most peaceful vehicle for political and social change: economic boycott. They have sought support beyond our Coop, including from the NY Post and Bronx Congressman Ritchie Torres, who has taken $1.5 million-plus in donations from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a lobby with huge financial influence in federal, state and local elections.

With tacit and overt support from GCs, led by former GM Joe Holtz, pro-Israel members disrupted meetings, and intimidated fellow members who advocate peaceful protest. A member of Coop4Unity filed a lawsuit against the Coop. Result: the Dispute Resolution Committee froze all cases related to Israel/Palestine, leaving unprotected members facing doxing and public harassment from Coop4Unity. Another Coop committee, the Diversity, Equity, and Access Committee, was also banned from work on all issues related to “the Middle East.”

Coop4Unity’s disproportionate power was evident in Holtz’s huddling with them (e.g., April 29 GM) and his Coop-wide personal attack on Board candidates Taylor Pate and Dan Kaminsky, instructing members to vote against them. Joe Szladek, our new GM,

can bring to an end this era of unchecked, uncooperative and biased behavior.

Opposing war crimes isn't anti-Coop, just as demanding reproductive freedom isn't anti-life. People following traditions of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and boycott against South African apartheid deserve respect and fairness from our Coop. We are insiders, committed to core PSFC values: democracy and food justice.

In solidarity,

Alyce Barr

***Coordinator Response to Alyce Barr's Letter**:*

Dear Coop members,

I'd like to respond to claims in Alyce Barr's above letter that reference Coop staff and committees:

The letter accuses the general coordinator team of giving "tacit or overt support to disrupt meetings or intimidate others." That is entirely untrue. Our role is to run the operations of the Coop and uphold its policies and procedures. Some have misinterpreted this as taking sides, but we are simply following long-standing practices to support the Coop's sustainability.

On the status of DRC complaints as referenced in the letter: The recent volume and complexity of cases related to Israel and Palestine have slowed the DRC's response. They are actively working to develop a process to handle them, and we truly appreciate the time and effort they're putting in to move things forward.

I'm not aware of any ban preventing the EACC from working on issues related to the Middle East, as the letter suggests.

The letter also mentions Joe Holtz 'huddling' with members of Coop4Unity at a GM, but I think we should be cautious about linking conversations to political allegiance or assuming someone is acting on another's behalf. I've recently spoken with members on both sides of issues to listen, understand their perspectives, and help find constructive paths forward for the Coop, and will continue to do so. I know other staff and members have done the same, and I hope that continues. That kind of open communication is essential to keeping our Coop strong and supporting a respectful, cooperative culture.

Respectfully,
Joe Szladek
General Manager

MOVE TO REJECT REMOTE MEETINGS RIPPED FROM MAGA PLAYBOOK

Greetings:

On Tuesday, June 24, the vote in favor of hybrid meetings was narrowly defeated, by a hair. The results showed that a minority of Coop members (barely more than a third) have successfully denied the vote to those unable to attend GM meetings for a host of reasons (we all know what they are).

Undoubtedly, that minority is a heterogeneous group and some may have had honorable, procedural reasons for doing so. There is also no doubt a sizable minority—perhaps majority—of that group who dishonorably voted against hybrid in order to quash the possibility of a successful subsequent vote they didn't want to happen: a vote in favor of a boycott of Israeli goods.

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Deny voting rights of people because they may use their vote to favor certain policies or legislation you strongly oppose? Yes, it's out of the

MAGA playbook. Afraid of a potential voting result? Disenfranchise the ones who may make it happen and cover yourself with Orwellian doublespeak. That's why I use the word "dishonorable." There's not only no honor in that, there's none of the courage it takes to live up to the democratic principles of equal rights. No one ever said democracy is easy.

Sincerely,

Allan Novick

LET'S JOIN THE MODERN ERA AND USE REMOTE MEETINGS

Dear Sir or Madam:

Recently, I voted in favor of allowing members to participate in General Meetings (GMs) remotely. It's fairly clear that some who did likewise hope this will promote their anti-Israeli BDS ambitions, which I do not share (and also voted against board candidates who do promote BDS). But really; it's the 21st century, and few of us can cram into a small space in Prospect Park, and Coop members should be able to participate regardless.

I'm sorry that the motion to enable remote meetings failed (barely), and hope the issue will arise again. Among other things, I live in Lower Manhattan, and yes, I do my shift and shop at the Coop faithfully, but it's not an easy stretch, and I'm probably not going to spend time on the subway to go to a GM.

If remote GMs are permitted, it won't be to my benefit, because I'll have to faithfully show up at every general meeting and vote against anti-Semitism. The city with the largest Jewish population in the world is not Jerusalem, nor yet Tel Aviv. It is New York. I don't believe the Coop should tell our Jewish neighbors, "Your kind are not wel-

come here.” (I am not Jewish.) Nor do I support Netanyahu’s genocidal regime, but I don’t believe the Coop should have a foreign policy. (And if it does, can we talk about Russia and China?)

But sure, participation in the GM should be open to all, and technology makes that easy.

We should go there.

Regards,

Greg Costikyan

THE COOP IS NOT A POLITICAL ORGAN

Dear Editors:

I have been a member for approximately 35 years. In my experience and with one notable exception (BDS) Coop controversies have been largely about operations, including expanding the store, pension fund management, plastic bags, meat, beer, vendor labor and management practices, etc.

As a cooperative food store the mission is to provide good food to working members at low prices. Simple enough.

At its core the organization’s social compact is founded as a jointly owned business and economic unit for the benefit of its members. It is not a social justice or humanitarian organization like the ACLU, Amnesty International and Doctors Without Borders among many others.

By its mission it is not a political party or an organization for promoting political causes. Political controversy by its nature encompasses diverse opinions, and large-scale community organizations prosper best when diversity is acknowledged and accepted.

There are many injustices in the world and specific advocacy organizations to champion those causes. Politics are personal and I respect a person’s decision to not buy a particular product because they find it offensive for any reason. Members can make their own decisions.

In the past the Coop has been a place where we have come together with a single common purpose: to eat good food at low prices. Politicizing the Coop by successfully promoting controversies beyond the scope of the cooperative mission will only offer a false victory. It will not result in meaningful outcomes beyond talking points and continuing to divide the Coop community, which is not the objective.

In cooperation,

Glenn Brill

JULY 15, 2025

August 5, 2025



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

DON’T DISENFRANCHISE ME

Greetings:

Now that we know nearly two-thirds of member voters want remote access to the general meetings, and that we are free to have hybrid meetings without a change to the bylaws (legal advice received by senior staff after the referendum was happening),

can we please reopen meeting access? Since it’s not a boycott or a bylaw change, all we need is a simple majority to approve, if we even need a vote.

For reasons of work/childcare/medical/mobility and room capacity, we can’t all participate otherwise.

Sincerely,
Lisa Guido

DEMOCRACY, GENERALLY COORDINATED

Greetings:

As recently noted by outgoing General Manager Joe Holtz, Coop members have the right under New York State law to participate in our democratic processes virtually. But our bid to enshrine that right into our bylaws has failed, winning 66.45% of a vote that required 66.67%. That slim margin is a testament to how critical the General Coordinators’ fearmongering was in defeating a commonsense proposal rooted in a desire to expand access and maximize participation at the Coop.

The GCs will tout the PSFC’s commitment to democracy and member input. They’ll invite you to General Meetings where you can “have your voice heard.” But after a year and a half of obstruction, obfuscation and the blatant misuse of their bully pulpit, I speak from experience when I say they’ll only let you participate if they think they’ll still be in control at the end of the day.

Sincerely,
Morgan Võ

LOOKING FORWARD WITH OPTIMISM

Fellow Members,

This summer I will turn 70 and will have been a member of this Coop for more than two-thirds of my life.

As I move into the next decade, our Coop moves into a new phase of its life, with Joe Szladek in the role of General Manager. Welcome and congratulations, Joe.

As a clear-eyed optimist, I imagine the possibilities and work as hard as I can to achieve it. At this moment, I have great hope for what our Coop can achieve under the leadership of a forward-looking General Manager.

Like all Coop leaders, a GM needs to be even-handed and open, fair in their treatment of every Coop member and constituency. They can help us become a truly democratic organization that uses all available tools, so that 17,000 members have the best possible chance to engage in policy- and decision-making. At a moment when a literal majority of Coop members want the opportunity to attend General Meetings online (while the still undecided Hybrid Referendum leaves that up in the air), they can help us transition to hybrid, fully virtual or asynchronous decision-making.

This means leaving behind an overly nostalgic and often unhelpful “we’ve always done it this way” perspective, choosing instead a more analytical stance. It’s time to review how well things actually worked before and consider what needs to change to meet the current moment.

During my 30-plus years working in NYC public education, I learned from and with every child I taught, every teacher and principal I coached and every parent who trusted their child with me. As Joe Szladek assumes his important new role, I look forward to

his willingness to learn from and with all members and his commitment to our mission: food, social and environmental justice.

In solidarity,
Alyce Barr

THE COOP HAS CHANGED—EXCEPT FOR THE LEADERSHIP

Dear Coop members:

“The city has changed,” said NY-7 Rep Nydia Velázquez on Democratic Primary night. “Zohran knew it. The other candidates didn’t see it. And that is why we are here celebrating this beautiful moment.”

The Coop has changed. Everyone knows it, especially younger people, disabled people, members targeted by racism and Islamophobia, shift workers, supporters of Park Slope Food Coop for Palestine and so on. The Coop leadership doesn’t see it. And that is why it’s not hard to imagine the Coop’s eventual fade.

Kerry Carnahan

MORE DEMOCRACY AT THE COOP: ONWARD!

How disheartening to read that the referendum for hybrid meetings failed to pass. The odds were stacked against it though and I believe that the majority of members do care about greater access to the decision-making process. So…let’s forge ahead!

My co-worker Jason Weiner drafted a robust proposal last year. Member Yejia Chen al-

so came up with a solid plan this Spring. The original hybrid meeting proposal, from CJ Glackin & Morgan Võ, has good recommendations too.

I hope that the General Manager, the Agenda Committee, the General Coordinators and the Membership at large will agree to quickly usher these forward. There is always a lot to do, we are all pulled left and right, but this is urgent. With proper planning we can come up with proposals to vote on in the not so distant future. We have to be agile and steadfast about this. We also have to be transparent, accountable and stop the on-going back-stabbing, slandering and other shenanigans.

The above proposals and ideas could be fully discussed at the next GM; small committees of members and/or staff can be organized to generate ideas and research feasibility with regular reporting, clear timelines and deadlines. The Coop can perhaps postpone other projects to focus on this issue. This is not rocket science. It's a business decision related to priorities and allocation of resources.

I encourage all members to push for this in the coming months, and not let it be buried under other priorities or by institutional inertia, nay-sayers and pushback. If we don't stand behind reforming the system to allow greater participation, the Coop will only pay lip service to a core principle: "Democratic Member Control." And skeptical members will have a point: The Coop is just another "glorified buyers club" with performative democratic values.

In solidarity,
Delphine Selles-Alvarez
Membership Coordinator at the Coop

NEW DEMOCRACY 2.0

Dear Coop members:

We best serve the democratic process when we allow everyone to come to the table. Regardless of technology enhancements, our biggest accessibility limitation will always be time. If we continue to only allow members to participate in discussion and voting on Tuesdays at 7 p.m., we disenfranchise anyone unavailable then. Whether it's the inability to travel, log on or simply focus due to other constraints like family, location or just life, those members can't participate.

We need a system that won't require someone who lost the affordable connectivity program to be pressured by personal cost to participate. We need to give parents and people who work nights time to digest information and not be forced to divide their attention. We need ways that give members with different learning styles and accessibility needs the same info as those at the GM.

I believe it's important to recognize that nowhere in the principles of cooperation does it say that members must agree with each other. Cooperation is finding common ground. The Coop is not meant to be a cookie cutter of anyone's beliefs. That's what makes it beautiful, messy and home to us all. Conflict is inherent in this space. Discourse is a necessity to allow these different opinions a voice. Our current system does not give time or ability to receive, process and respond. It limits participation, it limits engagement, it limits understanding and most importantly it limits factual information and transparent communication.

It keeps us from properly hearing each other. It makes us react and not engage in the best ways. It keeps us from making as much progress as we could.

It's time for **a new Coop democracy.** Please attend the July General Meeting to discuss my agenda item.

Sincerely,
Jason Weiner
Membership Coordinator at the Coop

SPECIAL PRIVILEGES FOR HOLTZ?

Dear Coop members:

In his June 6 email, Joe Holz says that “I’m speaking today only for myself and not on behalf of the staff or General Coordinator team.”

If Holtz is speaking only for himself, as one member equal among many thousands of other PFSC members, how is it that he was authorized to send his email to all members on the PFSC email database? Are all members, speaking only for themselves, able to send emails to the entire PFSC email list when they wish?

Sincerely,
Erich Hahn

JOE HOLTZ’S ABUSE OF AUTHORITY

Dear member owners,

Joe Holtz’s abuse of authority in using the Coop’s mailing list to send a message to each of us about how to vote in the upcoming election is outrageous. I’ve been an active member of our beloved Coop for more than two decades, so I have heard Joe’s opinion on many things over all these years. But this is next level, to use our member directory to send a personal message about how to vote.

Joe Holtz’s intervention is straight up election interference and an egregious abuse of his power and privilege. Not only is it outrageous that Joe did this himself, I would like to understand which General Coordinators allowed him this access and which General

Coordinators knew about this email before it went out and didn't have the judgment to see this as an inflammatory smear campaign against our own members? Please explain.

Sincerely,
Kathleen Sullivan

IS THE COOP LOSING ITS PROGRESSIVE SPIRIT?

Folks,

I'd firstly like to congratulate and welcome Joe Szladek to his new role. It's tough taking on a leadership role from a set of founders, as I know from my experience advising many startups and nonprofits around the world.

I joined the Coop because good food is good politics—if not, why buy organic or biodynamic? But the recent developments at the Coop have left me feeling insulted, condescended to, and frankly, unwelcome. The spate of missives from the GCs was bad enough, but Joe Holtz's email decrying board candidates was the height of paternalistic hypocrisy. If the candidates aren't allowed a similar platform to rebut any smears against them, is this really a democracy?

The contrast with Brooklyn, and the rest of the city—in light of the mayoral primary—-couldn't be more stark. The recent elections have proven that the electorate has uplifted candidates such as Mamdani, Hanif, Lander and others who have espoused justice for Palestinians and a variety of progressive causes. This begs the question: Has the Coop become a conservative institution with a set of ossified principles and bound by inertia? What happened to the kind of spirit that led to Chilean products being boycotted (under Pinochet)? Are we going to be so out of step with the community around us?

Maybe I should give up expecting better and go somewhere else.

I was honestly expecting Joe Holtz to email us all urging us to vote for Cuomo. Perhaps he still will?

Regards,
Jayanth Eranki

SEEKING ANSWERS ABOUT ALL-MEMBER EMAIL

Dear Editors:

I’m confused—how and why was an overly political and biased email on the Board elections from Joe Holtz sent to all members using the Coop’s official ‘no-reply’ mailing list? I do not consent to my email being used by the Coop in this manner for any political and/or campaign message, and have never received one until now.

Additionally, was Holtz’s letter meant to coerce, convince and/or rationalize in some way that Coop members need to agree to carry even one single product, let alone several, from a country openly and defiantly committing genocide in front of the entire globe with full U.S. support of funding, intelligence and weapons? Again, confused and would like an explanation.

Sincerely,
A.L. Steiner

MOURNING FRIEND'S FAMILY, CALLING FOR BOYCOTT

To my fellow members,

I have a good friend who is Palestinian and grew up as a farmer in a village called Khuza'a, southern Gaza. I mentioned him in a letter early last year (a letter that was originally refused for publication by the Gazette).

In the last month, I learned from him that his entire village was completely erased by Israel (there is no other word for it). Over 50 of his relatives were killed. The fate of the rest of the over 15,000 residents is by and large unknown, a tragedy in itself.

Khuza'a's population was not that far off from the size of the Coop's membership.

Among false narratives from the General Coordinators that a mere boycott of Israeli goods would destroy the Coop—narratives then used to prevent discussion and demonize members—I make the same appeal as in my previous letter: Let's keep our focus on the real destruction happening in Palestine.

In cooperation and solidarity,
Abdi-Hakin Dirie

FROM TAIPEI TO PARK SLOPE: IN SUPPORT OF THE COOP'S VALUES

To the Editor:

I've been a proud member of the Park Slope Food Coop for 15 years and have always valued its spirit of cooperation and commitment to providing high-quality, sustainable food to our community.

However, since the attacks in October 2023, I've been troubled by what feels like a shift in the Coop's atmosphere. A vocal minority has pushed rhetoric that feels out of step with the inclusive and cooperative spirit that has long defined this community.

As someone who grew up in Taiwan—a place where democracy and civil liberties were hard-won—I'm deeply unsettled by the selective moral outrage directed at Israel. Though imperfect like any democracy, Israel stands alone in the region in offering meaningful protections for women, minorities and LGBTQ individuals. Yet it is often the sole target of intense condemnation, while regimes like China, Russia and Egypt—whose human rights abuses are well-documented—escape similar scrutiny. Criticizing a government's policies is one thing; singling out an entire nation and its people as uniquely immoral is something else entirely.

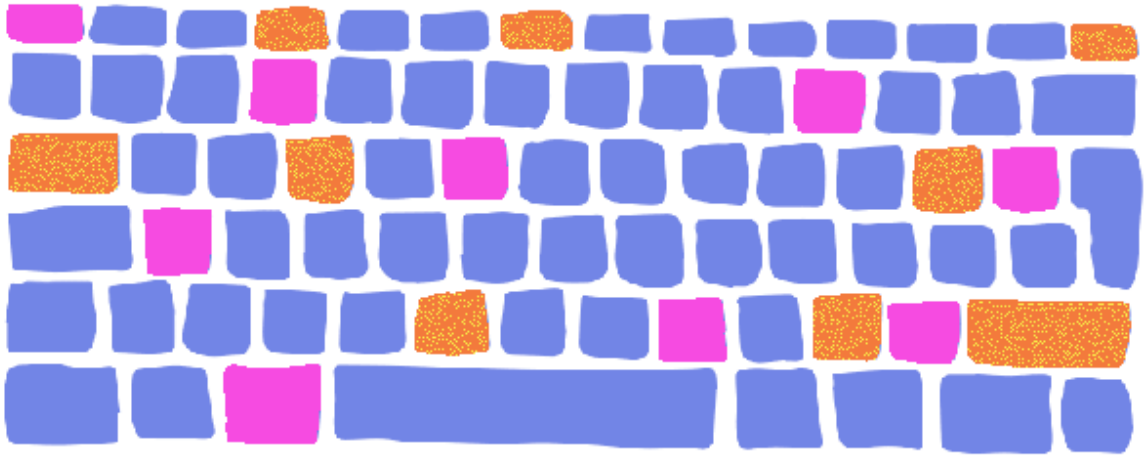
Regardless of where one stands on this complex and emotional issue, it is crucial to preserve the Coop's core values: cooperation, inclusivity and a focus on good food and community. I greatly appreciate the dedication of our General Coordinators, whose hard work reassures me that the Coop's spirit can continue to thrive. I want to thank Joe Holtz for his decades of service to the Coop and for his recent letter—a voice of reason and moral clarity from someone who has long embodied the values of the Coop. As Joe steps back from his role, I believe his words serve as a timely reminder of what this community stands for: cooperation, respect and a shared commitment to the Coop's founding principles.

Sincerely,
Linda Wong

MAY 13, 2025

August 5, 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 repeat-

edly 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 every-

where—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 Lockdown. 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,

Lisa Guido

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

August 5, 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 smartphone usage I've noticed during GMs these days. Whatever it is, I just wish we could recognize that "victory" at the Coop will neither ease pain nor improve the world. Only compassion and respect for each other, no matter how difficult, can do that.

Best,
Brian Shuman

LET OUR VOICES BE HEARD—REALLY

Member-owners,

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

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

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

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

This email was signed:

The GM Search Committee

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

Karen Mancuso and Charles Parham, representing the hourly paid staff

Ann Herpel and Matt Hoagland, representing the General Coordinator team

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

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

Best,
Alyce Barr

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS AMONG BOARD MEMBERS

Dear Fellow members:

The race for Board of Directors seats begins.

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

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

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

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

Many kind thanks,
Zara Watkins

WHAT'S THEIR VERSION OF TRANSPARENCY?

Greetings:

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

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

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

What is M4P's version of transparency?

Noah Potter

FEELING BAD ABOUT THE COOP

Greetings:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I feel unwelcome and no one cares.

Barbara Mazor

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

IN THE SPIRIT OF MUTUAL EDUCATION

Dear Rebecca Schoenberg-Jones,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sarede Rachel Switzer

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

Greetings:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

es these practical realities.

Respectfully,
Meg Robertson
Member, Coop 4 Unity

WAIT WAIT…DON'T DOX ME!

Dear Members:

The Gazette editors' grace was now ending

As our members had long been sensing

"He submits and submits"

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

Still a guy who defends ethnic cleansing.

Lauren Hudson

EVIDENCE THAT "HYBRID" GENERAL MEETINGS ARE A BAD IDEA

To Members:

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

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

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

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

Record of member attendance at remotely-held General Meetings:

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

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

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

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Tobier

QUESTIONS ON FUNDING PROPOSED HYBRID MEETINGS

Greetings:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you,
Zachary Zaban

WHAT A “REFERENDUM” ENTAILS AND MEANS

Greetings:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ralph Yozzo

BETTER DEMOCRACY THROUGH THOUGHTFUL REFORM—NOT JUST HYBRID

Greetings:

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

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

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

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

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

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

In cooperation,
Tali Rasis

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

Dear Coop members:

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

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

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

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

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

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

In solidarity,
Hima B.

PLEASE CONSIDER THE ENVIRONMENTAL TOLL IN GAZA

Dear Fellow Members,

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

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

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

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

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

In Cooperation,
[Name Withheld]

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

August 5, 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

August 5, 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.