

COORDINATORS' CORNER: WHY WE MUST PRESERVE THE 75% BOYCOTT THRESHOLD

January 28, 2025



ILLUSTRATION BY ERIK SCHURINK

By The General Coordinator Team

January 28, 2025

In the Jan. 7, 2025, issue of the *Gazette*, we outlined several significant risks posed if the Coop were to boycott Israeli goods. Today, we turn our attention to a critical concern: a proposed repeal of the 75% supermajority requirement for General Meeting votes on boycotts. Advocates for the Israeli boycott are seeking to reduce this threshold to a simple majority, creating an easier path to approving a boycott of Israeli goods.

We understand that members who favor these changes value the Coop and are act-

ing on their beliefs in alignment with their political values. Members who have expressed a desire for a boycott may not intend to divide the Coop, but their proposals threaten to do just that—alienating members, destabilizing finances and detracting from our core mission of providing affordable, high-quality food to working members. While we respect their right to raise these issues, we must acknowledge the risks their proposals pose to the broader Coop community.

Upholding Cooperative Principles

The 75% threshold is not arbitrary—it is rooted in the International Cooperative Alliance’s 7 Cooperative Principles, which promote unity while embracing diversity. Decisions such as a boycott, which have far-reaching implications, should reflect a broad consensus rather than a slim majority. By preserving the 75% threshold, we ensure that boycotts genuinely represent the collective will of the membership and align with the Coop’s core values, as demonstrated by our 50-year legacy of inclusivity, shared labor and cooperation.

The Risks of Reducing the Boycott Threshold

Since 1973, boycotts at the Coop have historically received overwhelming support, often near 100%, with none below 80%. This support has been essential to maintaining the cohesion and sustainability of the Coop. Lowering the threshold would undermine this tradition and could result in:

- Divisiveness and distrust among members
- Member departures
- Fewer new members joining
- Financial instability
- Higher prices
- Staff layoffs

For more info on these risks, see our previous Coordinators' Corner [here](#).

Simple Majorities, Super Majorities and Coop Democracy

A simple majority vote for boycotts risks allowing the views of a narrow majority to override the concerns of a substantial minority, eroding the sense of belonging and mutual respect that defines our Coop. Divisive boycotts will alienate many members, causing thousands to feel unrepresented or unwelcome, potentially leading to significant departures.

In addition, requiring a 75% supermajority to approve a boycott is not anti-democratic; democracies often use supermajorities when unity, inclusivity and long-term stability are prioritized, particularly in situations where divisive outcomes could jeopardize the integrity of the institution. By requiring broader consensus for boycotts, the Coop avoids division, polarization and instability, safeguarding its core principles and sustainability, while a simple majority risks alienating members and weakening the community.

The Role of Politics at the Coop

Our shared labor and cooperative culture reflect the Coop's approach to political stances. While broader political considerations and boycotts are a part of the Coop's history, moving forward with a boycott without near unanimous support threatens to erode what unites us: the shared efforts of running a successful, welcoming and sustainable cooperative. By retaining a high threshold for boycotts, we prioritize the principles that bring us together.

Protecting the Coop's Future

The Coop's success is built on its shared labor model and ability to serve a diverse community. Lowering the 75% boycott threshold to a simple majority undermines our Coop.

We urge all members to act to protect our Coop:

- Attend General Meetings to voice your concerns.
- Vote against lowering the boycott threshold and related governance changes.
- Engage in respectful dialogue with fellow members about these issues.
- Write to the *Gazette* to share your perspective.

JANUARY 28, 2025

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Letters to the Editor



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The January 7 edition of "Coordinators' Corner: Our Coop at Risk" elicited a large and emphatic response from Coop members. We received some 60 letters most of which took issue with the general coordinators' positions vis-à-vis the possibility of a boycott of products made in Israel and the possibility of holding hybrid general meetings. The letters below offer a representative sample of these voices. —Letters Editor

Shade Grown Coffee at the Coop—Good for Biodiversity and Yummy

Dear Editor:

I am grateful that the Coop now reliably sells really yummy shade grown coffee from No. Six Depot. The coffee plant evolved as a shade grown species, meaning that it grows in the understory, beneath a diversity of larger trees. More complex habitats, with differing tree heights and different tree species, foster bird diversity. Different bird species are often associated with feeding at different heights in the tree canopy. Shade grown coffee offers this type of habitat structure that fosters bird diversity. However, nowadays, much of the world's coffee has been bred to grow in full sun, and no longer participates in complex habitat structures, resulting in much lower levels of biodiversity when compared to shade grown coffee plantations.

Murray Lantner

The Right Choice

Dear Fellow Members:

I'm not sure who on the staff put Extra Peaceful Olive Oil on the shelf, but it was the right move at the right time. The Park Slope Food Coop is a gem, like all organizations that search for decent social alternatives rather than serve as a center for profit-making or political posturing.

Such organizations face, from time to time, challenges that take one side or perturb its purpose. The label of the olive oil bottle includes the following: "Produced collaboratively by Arab and Jewish women in Israel."

It is not just an alternative to BDS, it is an avoidance to taking a side in the conflict. It posits a sensible path. The world is awash in disappointing leadership. Netanyahu, Trump, Putin and Xi Jinping are not so much leaders as they are perpetrators of perturbation.

This particular product offers a different path—not taking a side in a battle but collaboratively seeking a peaceful solution. It's as simple as that. It's one of the reasons I love the Coop. The world is not working well right now. Some Arab and Jewish women in Israel are.

Rodger Parsons

Where Are the Standards in Letters to the Editor?

To the Editors:

I do not understand how it benefits the Coop for the *Gazette* to continuously publish letters from the same three or four people who make outlandish, unsubstantiated claims about other members' alleged intentions and beliefs. I am getting tired of the right of myself and others to advocate for the boycott of a foreign government that is supported by our tax dollars, a government that consistently denies the human rights of the Palestinian people and wages war on civilians in nearby countries. It is outrageous that our right to free speech is equated with terrorism.

The obvious purpose of these letters is to create confusion and make slanderous statements. Their baseless and unproven accusations violate the *Gazette's* own Fairness Policy and Respect Policy.

It is not up for debate that we are entitled to our rights of freedom of speech and peaceful organizing.

I recommend that the *Gazette* staff review their own policies before they print any further letters, and not publish the same authors continuously.

Thank you,
Amina Ali

No to the Status Quo

My Fellow Coop Members,

I read the Jan. 7 letter from the General Coordinator team with great frustration and concern. Their panicked attempt to discourage the adoption of a hybrid meeting format read, to me, as an abdication of responsibility. To question, in the year 2025, how a hybrid meeting could possibly meet the needs of the membership is naïve. A group of competent people committed to a truly participatory democratic process would eagerly pursue a hybrid meeting structure rather than throwing up roadblocks under the guise of level-headed stewardship.

The General Coordinators seem to be far more interested in preserving the status quo than ensuring that the will of the membership is heard. If this letter is a true reflection of their leadership philosophy, I encourage them to resign.

Amanda Friedman

Coordinators' letter in Jan. 7 issue

To the Linewaiters' Gazette:

My initial reaction to the misleading, fear-mongering letter “Our Coop at Risk” was anger, but it was followed by deep sadness and a sense of betrayal.

I love the Coop because it represents a more just, more democratic way of doing business. The coordinators’ letter undercuts those values. Instead of confronting injustice, it advocates acquiescence; instead of expanding democracy, it seeks to override, even silence, members’ voices.

Let’s not fail our cooperative values, and let’s not fail the great moral test of our time.

Cooperatively,
Linda Ewing

The Hypocrisy of Our General Coordinators

Dear Editor:

I’ve been proud to be a member of the Coop, with all of its history and mission statement and principles of accessibility and community participation, as evidenced by ongoing masked shopping days, for one example. Which is why I am perplexed and, the longer this goes unaddressed, frustrated at the lack of movement on hybrid General Meetings. This has been something many members have supported and has been discussed since late summer last year—why the foot-dragging by leadership to vote on this, or at least continue the discussion? The longer this is ignored, the less it seems an oversight and the more it seems intentional, which raises other questions.

On a related note, the General Coordinators are not helping their case with their letter criticizing members pushing for a boycott of Israeli products. It is disappointing and, frankly, bold for leadership to use their bully pulpit to assign blame to PSFC Members for Palestine for fracturing the community when leadership is equally responsible

for that division. Protecting the status quo is a position, as inconvenient as it may be to acknowledge. It is illiberal to shut down discussion of this as divisive; good leadership fosters communication and looks for common ground. It doesn't vilify good-faith, principled positions.

In order to maintain the trust of membership, it behooves leadership to be responsive with members, be consistent in acting on our community values of accessibility and encouragement of member participation, and hold a vote on hybrid General Meetings. Enough with the games and passive-aggressive power plays. Even members we may disagree with deserve respect and to participate in Coop matters.

Maria Boncyk

Bring the Targeted Boycott of Israeli Goods to a Vote

Dear Editors,

Put up or shut up—bring the targeted boycott of Israeli goods to a vote. Thumbing the scale against the boycott like was so cravenly done in the Jan. 7 2025 *Linewaiters' Gazette* issue betrays a bad faith amongst the General Coordinator team on this matter. We are the Coop, bring this boycott to a vote and let it reflect the will of our body.

Damien Neva

In Defense of Democracy—a Messy and Vital Institution

Dear Fellow Members,

I am alarmed by the anti-cooperative recommendations paid staff are making to our supposedly member-led community.

I joined the Coop because I believe that communities are best served by institutions offering true democratic power and participation. As I've watched thousands of Palestinian civilians killed and starved in a war that I believe threatens the security of Israelis and Palestinians alike, I've pleaded with government officials to follow international law and restrict funding to a government committing war crimes. When it became clear they would not, I turned to local organizing. In an institution like the Coop, I have a voice in where my dollars are spent, and as the leading example of its kind, our collective action as a community has a broader impact.

During General Meetings, I've heard from other members who do not share my beliefs (and from many who do). I have no desire for a boycott to be implemented that does not reflect the support of our collective body. But I am alarmed by the suppressive behavior in the letter from the Coordinator Team, openly stalling a hybrid meeting model because PSFC Members for Palestine's "large email list would have an outsized impact with hybrid meetings in effect." All Coop members are on the email list inviting us to General Meetings; the many of us who have also opted to advocate for a boycott only represent an "outsized" impact to those who wish to minimize our perspective.

I am also appalled by the suggestion that we consider who the incoming presidential administration will "target" when setting Coop policy. In the coming months, independent democratic organizations like ours will be more important than ever. Protecting our messy but vital democratic process is paramount, regardless of whether a boycott is passed.

In Cooperation,
Sofía Campoamor

Calling Out Fundamental Dishonesty

To the editor,

As the matter of BDS is being worked through by members, I am eager for discussion to continue in a democratic and open manner—whatever the outcome.

The piece recently published under the “Coordinators Corner” was not that. It was a fundamentally dishonest piece. It wasn’t meant to educate, inform or argue a point.

It was meant to mislead.

Hard conversations deserve honesty and bravery. These authors offered neither.

There is a real discussion to be had about supporting Israeli industry, but it cannot occur if honesty is optional.

Walter Kaplan

On Hybrid Meetings

Dear Editor:

I attended most of the monthly meetings when they were on Zoom—all about accessibility and nothing to do with BDS (whether it was a topic of discussion or not). Going to the park on a winter Tuesday night is a lot to ask! I have not attended since we stopped Zoom.

I'm disappointed to read our General Coordinators buying into specious paranoid anti-democratic arguments (Coordinators' Corner: Our Coop at Risk from Jan. 7, 2025).

A rare positive outcome from the pandemic was the updating of our online functions, in member voting and member services.

Lisa Guido

Singling Out Israeli Goods

Dear Coop Members:

We have every right to boycott a country based on civil rights issues, but why are we singling out just one? If we boycott products from one country over civil rights issues then we need to add several more to that list. We sell products from China, Sri Lanka and Egypt to name just a few that are accused of significant civil rights issues by the U.N. and Amnesty International, among other groups.

If the boycott passes, we will need to examine all products we sell that come from countries with poor civil rights records. Otherwise, we will be hypocrites by deeming that only one country is worthy of a boycott, while turning a blind eye to all others. If we choose to do this then it will prove that we are not as liberal, open-minded and progressive as we'd like to think we are.

Michael Katz

Response to Coordinators' Corner

Good morning,

I'm writing to express my strong discomfort with the recent Coordinators' Corner. The claims against the boycott campaign are deeply troubling. Not only are they fearmongering, but they also misrepresent the values and goals we are working hard to uphold at the Coop.

More unsettling, however, is the assertion that a hybrid meeting model would harm the Coop's culture and democratic process. This position ignores the public safety risks we continue to face, going into the sixth year of a deadly pandemic, amidst surges in other contagious illnesses like norovirus and flu A. As someone who has been immunocompromised for over a year, I can attest to how difficult it has been to adjust to this new reality, made even harder by ableist practices like the one proposed by the General Coordinator Team.

The GCs' position appears to be aimed at undermining a democratic process that should be open, transparent and inclusive of all voices. The boycott and hybrid proposals aren't about division; they are about making Coop processes more equitable and values-driven, and giving more members the opportunity to engage meaningfully. The GCs' attempt to shut down this dialogue with misinformation and overreach is unacceptable.

As a proud Coop member, community organizer and third-generation New Yorker, I hope to see the Coop grow in service of the values of democracy, social responsibility, care and cooperation that it claims to uphold.

Solidarity,
Solange Amor

A Grateful Response to Coop Coordinators

Fellow Members,

I want to thank the Coordinators for taking an unequivocal stand against BDS at the Coop. It is my sincerest hope that the letter in the Coordinators' Corner represents an inflection point in this protracted, divisive conflict at the Coop.

Thank you, Coordinators, for calling out the strategic plan of the PSFC Members for Palestine to use hybrid voting to rush through a series of votes that would result in a Coop-damaging boycott.

Due to the ever-shifting nature of antisemitism, Jews suffer from a timing problem: Before good people begin to take action against new manifestations of antisemitism, the Jewish community must absorb and withstand the brunt of harm. We see this in the NYC government report that detailed hate crimes against Jews accounting for 54% of all hate crimes in NYC in 2024. We see this in the replacement of the word "Jews" with "Zionists" in calls to cleanse our public spaces. And we see this in boycotts based on the relentless delegitimization of the one and only Jewish state, Israel.

But we are a resilient people—we love our traditions, each other, our Jewish homeland and our neighbors. That love and pride in our identity has enabled us to weather all that history has thrown at us since the beginnings of our story over 3,000 years ago in the land of Israel.

We survived many attempts to destroy us and delegitimize us in the past, and we will survive the efforts of the PSFC Members for Palestine, too.

So, thank you again to the good people of the Coop—my Jewish and non-Jewish neighbors alike—who are currently taking a moral stand against a movement driven by hate that does no good for anyone.

Jonathan Aranov

Response to Coordinators' Corner

Dear Coop Members,

I was already disappointed that, for over one year, the General Coordinators obstructed our Coop's vote for a popular Hybrid meeting proposal—an issue of democracy. I was then disgusted by the GCs recent denouncement of the Hybrid proposal and PS-FC Members for Palestine in the last *Linewaiters' Gazette*. They based their arguments on the fiction that “thousands” of members might leave if a boycott passes. The bogeyman threat that members “might leave” is not a coherent rationale for the Coop Coordinators to undermine the will of our membership. They are deducing this from a handful of emails and letters sent by a vocal minority of members.

While they offer no concrete evidence, here's some data that we do have: PSFC Members for Palestine is the largest campaign of Coop members in the Coop's fifty-year history; its petition has over 3,000 signatories. The candidates it endorsed for the Board of Directors won with more votes than any candidates in Coop history. The board candidates who ran against the boycott—both lost with the most “no” votes ever received by board candidates in any Coop election. If there are Coop members who are against the principles of our Coop's democracy, and would leave based on a strong majority of membership voting on any proposal, then they should not be Coop members: They don't believe in the values stated in our membership manual, namely, the Second Principle of Cooperation—Democratic Member Control. Let actually-cooperative members take their place.

In Cooperation,
Sophie Glickman

Is the PSFC Any Better Than Costco?

Fellow Members,

I was really troubled by the latest “Coordinators’ Corner.” Its attack on PSFC Members for Palestine was disingenuous and manipulative.

One would hope that the Coop would put its considerable talents to designing and implementing a decision-making process grounded in a thoughtful and safe consideration of a boycott. Unfortunately, the opposite has been true; the Coop leadership has worked at every turn to prevent such a process from happening.

One thing I find particularly reprehensible is their repetition (without repudiating it) of the ludicrous slur that PFSC Members for Palestine, many of whom are Jewish, are anti-Semitic. By repeating the slur without repudiating it, the coordinators give it force while pretending it’s not coming from them.

I have felt for a long time that the coordinators, while arguing that the discussion would tear apart the Coop, have in fact been supporting the Israeli occupation.

In the face of 14 months of incessant bombing of hospitals, schools, apartment buildings, of daily images of children killed and neighborhoods in rubble, of unspeakable horrors in the news every day, the coordinators have not even hinted that they might be troubled by the ongoing slaughter and the clear intention—voiced by so many of Israel’s leadership—to completely destroy Palestinian society in Gaza and the West Bank.

The Coop was founded in the 1970s on principles of community built on cooperation, participation, and democracy as an alternative to the corporate food system which was symptomatic of so much that was wrong with our society. If 50 years later, we

can't even discuss and vote on how to apply those principles because it might affect the bottom line, what are we?

Just a buyers' club really. Costco with a veneer of environmentalism.

Is that what we want to be?

John Gordon

Virtue Signaling

To the Editor,

Given the editors' alleged principles, I was shocked (not for the first time) that they would publish a letter including the statement: "I refuse to support a genocide and the occupation of stolen lands" (Jan. 7, 2025 edition). This is an unacceptable, unsubstantiated reduction of one of the most complex international conflicts to a simplistic libel, one that has incited anti-Semitic hatred and violence around the world. It's but another example of the virtue-signaling that has dominated the Coop's culture since 2009, with no guardrails against vilification of a state fighting an unquestionable existential battle.

Israel has enough enemies, including Hamas, Hezbollah, Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Houthis (did I leave anyone out?), without the Coop joining the destructive "non-violent" efforts of the BDS movement to delegitimize Israel. Boycotting the few Israeli products carried at the Coop will make absolutely no difference to the outcome of this conflict but members are free to make their own decisions. The fact that it's repeatedly been made clear how offensive this movement is to many Coop members seems to have no impact on the would-be Hamas-supporting members who wish for the destruction of the one and only Jewish majority state in the world.

Sylvia Lowenthal

Why a Boycott

Dear Gazette:

I'm a Coop member and I write this message to say that our Coop is not at risk. It is misleading to use those words to incite hate against BDS. Boycott is our peaceful way to stop arming the killing machine. I was shot with two dum dum bullets by an Israeli sniper with American guns in 2002. Dumdums are bullets that explode inside the body and leave huge damage. I'm still in pain. Please help us by stopping to fund the army that kills my people.

*Warmest,
Khaled Jarrar*

BDS & Israeli products

To the editors:

I love the PSFC to which I have belonged for nearly 50 years, like Joe Holtz. I would never wish to do anything that might jeopardize the health and cooperative wealth of the Coop. BDS is a legitimate political tactic and hence it can be legitimately proposed to a cooperative organization like the Coop. The Coop might vote and once the vote is completed it might be announced what the vote was. The Coop members might wish to impose upon us at that time a decision about whether or not we wish to purchase products from Israel. Until such time, each shopper is welcome to pursue their own boycott, or not. If sales of Israeli products plummet, then that is also a suc-

cessful way to create a boycott. Each one of us, in the end, must decide about what we feel about what the U.S. is fueling in Gaza—the destruction of its population with an intent to make the Gaza strip unlivable for the current population—if this not genocide, then, it is, at very least, ethnic cleansing. I cannot imagine that most of us wish to support the targeting of a civilian population, children and noncombatants, and destruction of the health care system and basic sanitation, the targeting of doctors and journalists and children. Our options for effective action are severely limited. Nevertheless, it feels imperative for each one of us to familiarize ourselves with the bombardment of the Gaza strip and to decide how we might wish to respond.

Sincerely,
Karen Malpede

A Demand for Transparency

Dear Editor:

I write to understand more about the Coordinators and who they are. Is a list of the current Coordinators available on the Coop website?

If not, such information should be made available and easily accessible to the members, particularly if such Coordinators use their positions of power and influence to promote anti-democratic processes within the Coop and sabotage proposed reforms like a hybrid general meeting structure (see the latest Coordinator's Corner, which is a shameful and embarrassing use of this platform).

If the Coordinators wish to make their opinions known, they should make their faces known. Say it with your full chest.

Signed,

Christopher Pepe

Editor's Note: Names and photos of general coordinators at the Coop are readily available—and long have been—on a poster in the entrance lobby and on the second floor.

Hybrid Meetings Are Long Overdue

Dear fellow Coop members,

Over the years, I've convinced friends to join the Coop, arguing that it represents a community-led space that resists the otherwise impersonal, inaccessible, top-down structures we encounter in our everyday lives. While I still believe this, I am disappointed by the bad-faith opposition to a shift that would make our Coop vastly more inclusive and democratic: making all General Meetings hybrid. It is even more appalling that some insist on suppressing the membership's democratic workings to tip the scales on one potential future vote, and are willing to accuse fellow members of being dishonest about their legitimate accessibility concerns in the process.

I joined the Coop in 2019 but couldn't attend a GM until the meetings went remote in 2020; my pre-COVID work schedule and commute time to the Picnic House had made it impossible before. Now that we've returned to in-person-only meetings, vital conversations and votes about the future of this place are once again left to a very small minority of members. People who do not have childcare access; whose work schedules are unpredictable; who can't risk another COVID infection; or who face barriers traveling to the Picnic House (among so many other groups) are left without a say in Coop matters. I am still COVID-cautious, both for my own safety and that of others, and the current indoors, mask-optional GM setup asks me to compromise those concerns in order to fully participate in the Coop.

If we really believe in an inclusive, member-led co-op model—or if we, as our mission

statement says, “seek to maximize participation at every level, from policy making to running the store”—we will take this sensible step to make meetings and votes more accessible to all members by going hybrid.

Mai Schotz

We Need Ethical Leadership

Fellow Members,

The Coop has always been a community driven by principles of democracy and ethical actions. Boycotts are a cornerstone of free speech and democracy, and suppressing this form of expression undermines the democratic principles upon which the Coop was built. Embracing hybrid meetings upholds the Coop’s commitment to accessibility and transparency, ensuring every member can voice their perspective and contribute to decision-making. Expanding access strengthens, rather than divides, our collective interest in shaping the Coop’s future.

Lowering the vote threshold from 75% to 50% ensures that the Coop operates as a true democracy, where decisions reflect the will of the majority. A 50% threshold means every voice has equal weight in shaping our collective future, whereas a 75% threshold sets an unreasonably high bar and privileges the status quo over progress.

Claims that a boycott would financially ruin the Coop are rooted in fear, not fact. The Coop’s financial stability relies on our collective participation and shared commitment, not on passive avoidance of contentious issues. Would some members leave? Perhaps. But ethical leadership isn’t about placating everyone; it’s about doing what’s right.

Legally, while anti-BDS legislation exists, it largely targets state entities and is often

legally dubious. Numerous organizations across the U.S. have engaged in BDS campaigns without legal consequences. Framing a principled boycott as “anti-Semitic” conflates criticism of Israeli policies with prejudice against Jewish people—a fear mongering narrative that erases the diversity of Jewish voices supporting BDS.

This is about more than numbers of risk; it’s about who we are. Will we stand on the side of justice and dignity, or will we allow fear to paralyze us? A boycott of Israeli goods is not a threat to the Coop—it’s an opportunity to affirm our values and stand for justice.

Signed,
Leah Susman

Correction to Dec. General Meeting Report

Dear Editor:

I wanted to request a correction in the Dec. GM Report. Specifically, this paragraph:

“[Ann Herpel] also noted that the Agenda Committee had placed a notice about the election in the *Gazette*, on FoodCoop.com and on the Coop Corner bulletin board, as required.”

This entire paragraph is misleading and incorrect. The Agenda Committee did not place a notice in the *Gazette* until after the election. That’s why the election was unfair.

The post on foodcoop.com was not visible on the front page, and also, it was posted in 2021. Follow this link from The Internet Archive to see that it was originally posted in 2021. You can also have a look at the Food Coop website to confirm that there is

no way for a member to find this post. Furthermore, while it's good to post openings in as many places as possible, according to our procedures it's not how members are to be notified. The notification is required in the *Linewaiters' Gazette*.

Members were also not notified of candidate openings at the General Meeting, which the Agenda Committee claimed several times. If you review the meeting minutes, you can see that the announcement for other committee elections were noted, but not that of the Agenda Committee.

Lastly, the post on the Coop Corner bulletin board also happened after the election.

Thank you.

Warmly,
Keyian Vafai

Emotional Blackmail in the Linewaiters' Gazette

Dear Members:

Reading the latest *Linewaiters' Gazette*, I was distressed to see the General Coordinator Team put such a heavy-handed thumb on the scale in the ongoing debate about BDS at the Coop. And I find the emotional blackmail of unwarranted claims that this debate might destroy the Coop particularly reprehensible. Please stop!

Robert Rosen

In the Corner for the Coordinators' Corner

Dear Membership,

We, the undersigned, thank the General Coordinators for taking a principled stand against the campaign to have PSFC boycott Israeli goods. The GC's have correctly identified the financial and legal dangers associated with this destructive campaign.

Aaron Miller

Alan Brown

Alan Salzberg

Amy Potter

Anita Aboulafia

Arkadiy and Aleksandra Malamud

Avishay Mazor

Baila Olidort

Barbara Mazor

Batya Lerner

Bonnie Loewenstein

Bozhena Vistman

Bruno Grandsard

Carina Hueber

Carol Wiener

Catherine Weinstock

Chaim and Shula Scharf

Christina Gantcher

Constantine Kaniklidis

Corrine Lang

Dave Marcus

Diana Maislen

Eddie D.

Elizabeth King

Ellen Simon

Eric E.

Erik Diamond

Fran Hawthorne

Fran Saunders

Frances Weiner

Frumie Lev

Frumie Lichtenstien

Gerald Weider

H. Schweitzer

Hannah Lieberman

Harry Schweitzer

Harvey Lang

Jamie Alexander

Jamie Alexander Principe

Jena Goldman

Jesse Rosenfeld

Jill Levy

Jonathan Hirsh

Jonathan Lief

Jonathan Tobias

Josh Levy

Josh Suskewicz

Judith Foster

Karen Shaw

Larisa Fomovsky

Lauren Rosenblum

Linda Marsanico

Linda Wong

Liora Cobin

Lorin Robyn Goldhirsh

Madeleine Nash

Malcolm Varon

Malkah Spitalny and husband

Maor X.

Marjorie Ordene

Meg Robertson

Mike Gantcher

Mindy Werner

Mirele Rosenberger

Murray Lantner

Naomi Bernstein

Neal Kantor

Noah P.

Nogah Rotstein

Nona Aguilar

Norm Green

Olivia Hughes

Perry Swergold

Ramon Maislen

Rebecca S.

Roberta Arnold

Rodger Parsons

Rosalie Weider

Sarah Eisinger

Sarede Switzer

Saul Raw

Sondra Shaievitz

Steven Berke

Susan Miller and husband

Sylvia Lowenthal

Tali Rasis

Tim Rohde

Yuval Inselberg

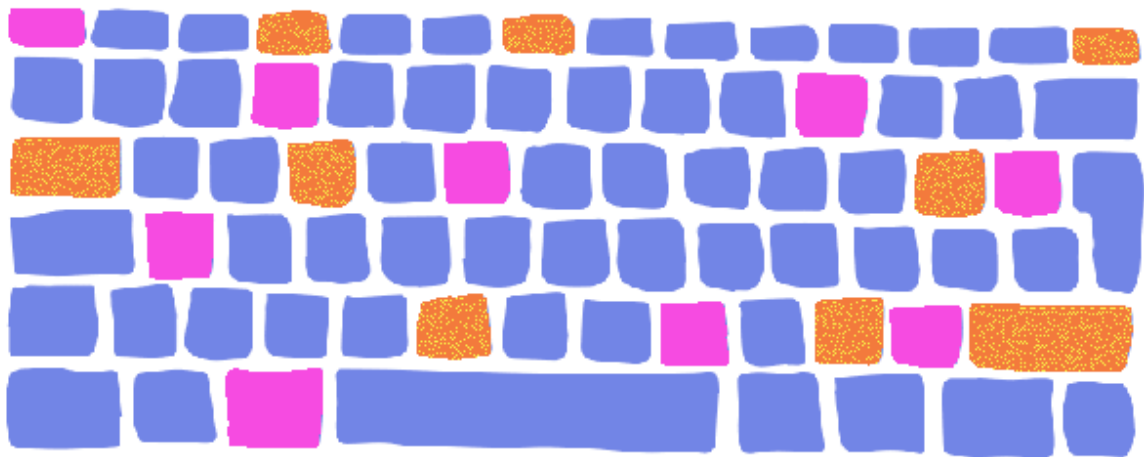
Zachary Konigsberg

Zara W.

JANUARY 7, 2025

January 28, 2025

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Give more TLC to the Food Coop!

Greetings!

The Coop is amazing. For more than 50 years, this neighborhood community has out-competed corporate giants, offering better products at lower prices. But this success is fragile. The existence of this institution is truly miraculous and should not be taken

for granted. Perhaps members have already forgotten our dire financial condition during the pandemic?

Good governance and the pragmatic business approach of the management team have been key to this success. Far from promoting rigidity, the Mission Statement and the Environmental Policy Guidelines are replete with language such as “will strive,” “we prefer,” “we try,” providing flexibility to buyers and GMs to ensure that they do good, without harming the business.

Sourcing of affordable, local and organic produce is prioritized. But there are also nonorganic and imports in our bins, including Mexican blueberries, Belgium endives, Israeli peppers, Peruvian mangoes. Plastic bags are not offered at checkout, but there is a choice of compostable and traditional produce bags, and even spinach in big plastic containers. And yes, we do carry products from multiple undemocratic or deeply flawed countries, and even from states which ban abortion.

A Coop that places ideological purity ahead of its mission statement, adopts non-consensual policies, tinkers with governance or pursues narrow partisan issues unrelated to its core mission is likely to experience what is typical for such businesses: decline and potential failure (think of X).

We are riding on the shoulders of 50 years of community effort. We should strive to continue improving the Coop, perhaps expanding to more locations, acting as a model to new communities, and thereby supporting our ecological transition while improving the health and pocketbooks of more people. At a minimum, let's not mess it up!

Bruno Grandsard

Time for a Hybrid Meeting Option

Dear Coop Members,

At the September General Meeting, there was a presentation about moving to hybrid meetings, which would give us the choice of either remote or in-person participation. This would open the way for so many more people to join in vital PSFC discussions and votes. It is an essential accommodation when, for various reasons, many who want to participate are unable to get to the Prospect Park Picnic House on Tuesday nights. (It's telling that at a recent GM I attended, the Picnic House was over capacity, meaning that if members *do* turn out in greater numbers, we don't even have a venue large enough to hold them!).

The presentation on hybrid meetings was clear and very well received. I expected the item to be on the agenda for a decision within a month or two. What happened? Assuming a positive vote, it will still take some time to implement this sensible proposal. Let's move ahead together!

Winston McIntosh

(B)ring in the Fun in 2025

To the editor:

A big thank you to the Fun Committee for the Happy Hour at BierWax on December 5.

They truly lived up to their name. It was just so much fun to be out and with friendly people. It was a wonderful reminder of what the Coop can be. Beyond just a grocery store with good prices.

I'm looking forward to more events from the Fun Committee in 2025.

Help for Coop Members Parenting Small Children

Fellow Members,

As COVID wound down, I was thrilled when our Coop reinstated member labor and returned to more familiar shopping procedures. Unfortunately, childcare, a long-standing support for families with young children, was yet another seemingly permanent casualty. We've been told that the Coop can no longer obtain affordable insurance for it.

If we cannot reinstate childcare, there are other ways to support families with young children, in particular, single-parent families. We can offer them longer than one year of parental leave from required work; I suggest at least three to four years, enough time for free daytime childcare in the form of 3K and Pre-K, to be available. I also suggest that this could be extended on a case-by-case basis, as needed. Perhaps a committee of members who are single parents could help us develop guidelines.

We can also offer an easy means for parents of young children (and so many others) to participate in Coop governance via virtual attendance at our monthly General Meetings. Currently, the only members who can take part in our GMs are those who can get to the Prospect Park Picnic house at 7p.m. on the last Tuesday of each month. For parents of young children (especially single parents), people who live far from the Picnic House, those with mobility issues or other caregiver responsibilities, there is no option to join these meetings, to offer opinions on important Coop matters, to bring proposals to the floor, or to vote on others' proposals.

The Picnic House holds around 200 people, and our Coop has over 15,000 members. If we want to call our Coop a democratically run organization, we need to do much

better in making its democracy more inclusive. Hybrid meetings would be a great start.

Cooperatively,
Alyce Barr

Conflict Resolution, Not Conflict Escalation

To the Editor:

Eight agenda items relate to the campaign to make the Coop part of the Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement.

I sponsored the seventh, item 901, which would “pause any member vote on items relating to a boycott of products associated with Israel pending four mediation sessions within six months from the vote on this item and issuance of a document containing a statement by each side.”

The proposal that the Coop declare its allegiance to BDS polarizes the membership. Joe Holtz wrote in the *Linewaiters' Gazette* on February 26, 2024, for the General Coordinators, that the Israel boycott is qualitatively different from other boycotts that have been proposed in the past, and the campaign could result in thousands of members withdrawing. The differences in beliefs about the Israel-Palestine conflict have reached the point of vilification and overt hostility between members. There is no mechanism for resolving member disputes arising out of political identities and other belief systems. The Dispute Resolution Committee is not equipped to deal with such disputes—and there are now multiple cases before the DRC resulting from this conflict. It seems self-evident that an attempt at collective conflict resolution would benefit the Coop.

Agenda Committee guideline number 2 provides that “an item may be placed ahead of others submitted earlier if the item requires more immediate attention or its timely consideration at the GM is beneficial to the efficient running of the Coop....”

I requested that the Agenda Committee expedite discussion of item 901. The Agenda Committee did not do so, nor has it responded to my question how it applies Guideline 2.

To promote cooperative dispute resolution, I urge that the Agenda Committee schedule discussion of item 901 ahead of earlier pending boycott-related items or explain why Guideline 2 does not apply.

Noah Potter

Mission Statement in Support of Coop Culture

Dear members,

A BDS proponent approached me some weeks ago, asking me to support their proposal. I said it doesn't align with the Coop mission. “That's not really true,” she retorted. The word “really” is of interest here.

I'd like to share my POV regarding the BDS boycott proposal, informed by the Coop's mission statement. One could argue that the following sentences from the statement are relevant to their proposal:

“We seek to avoid products that depend on the exploitation of others.”

However, “exploitation of others” relates to the labor culture at the company and how it treats staff; those companies are presumably independent from the government of

the country they're in.

"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 policymaking to running the store."

This applies within the parameters of the aforementioned items in the mission statement, not losing sight of the first line of that last paragraph: "We are committed to diversity and equality. We oppose discrimination in any form."

Yet...if there is a reason to exclude suppliers in Israel, it would be that "We prefer to buy from local...producers." If suppliers in Israel would be excluded for that reason, it would be legit...*and apply to all suppliers in all faraway places, all politics aside.*

If it has to come to a vote, I'd suggest to appeal to Coop members as individuals and as allies of each other by way of Coop mission, no matter their backgrounds. Beyond that, I believe in the power of the individual consumer to forgo a product for whatever reason, political reasons included. It'd be a great thing if we did more of it.

Erik Schurink

Towards a Liberatory Coop

Dear Coop Members,

As we edge closer towards the end of the year, I've been reflecting on the ways in which I show up in community and how the Coop and its values are an extension of my own. I feel an immense amount of gratitude for access to such an abundance of quality food, but also for the potential that the Coop has to become a liberatory space for the people. As a member, I believe that it's critical that we demand that the goods

that we have on our shelves be reflective of our values. It's a radical act to choose not to purchase food from mega corporations and instead, to support small businesses and regenerative, family-owned farms.

In the same vein, I refuse to support a genocide and the occupation of stolen land. And I feel hopeful knowing that so many other Coop members share my commitment. I look forward to the day when we'll make it official, following in the footsteps of leaders at Olympia Food Co-Op in Washington state, as well as our neighbors at Greene Hill Food Co-Op. As an expression of their solidarity with Palestine, Greene Hill members voted in October to join the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaign, pledging not to stock Israeli products in their store until the end of the occupation.

If we are a collective that believes that the Coop is reflective of our values, then we must continue to decide how the millions of dollars that we spend on food every year will demonstrate what they are. Audre Lorde spoke truth when she wrote:

And I dream of our coming together

encircled driven
not only by love
but by lust for a working tomorrow
the flights of this journey
maples. uncertain
and necessary as water.

Taylor Pate

MEMBER SUBMISSION: STOP FORCING ME TO SHOP, VOTE, AND THINK

LIKE YOU

January 28, 2025



By Jesse Rosenfeld

January 7, 2025

Voting on hybrid General Meetings is approaching. Blending online and in-person voting sounds nice until you realize it's another opportunistic ploy by BDS to boycott Israel. An irresponsible and reckless minority faction uninvolved in the day-to-day complexities of running a business wants to force all of us to shop and vote for their violent ideology.

Why not just vote in person?

BDS knows that any future votes on Israel-related issues—both pro and anti—will re-

sult in a turnout too large for our regular General Meetings. Since BDS openly supports Hamas, and the internet is wallpapered with the weekly violence that the pro-Hamas movement perpetrates, larger spaces have already rejected PSFC because of BDS' awful reputation.

How will hybrid affect PSFC?

BDS disingenuously cites the disabled or democracy or working families. But during COVID, when we had fully online voting, our democratically-minded, immuno-compromised and working families never pushed General Meeting attendance past 100. And BDS at PSFC have publicly connected hybrid with boycotting Israel.

What is their strategy to get hybrid meetings?

Change PSFC bylaws so that hybrid is allowed outside of emergency situations like COVID. This is akin to changing the U.S. Constitution over one single issue somewhere in foreign lands.

What do hybrid supporters overlook?

As per our last Treasurer's Report, PSFC is presently operating at a net loss, so how will spending extra money on tech improve operations? Have we asked staff how officially supporting militancy could affect their livelihoods and families? Where is the official health emergency so that we need to go hybrid? How does hybrid resolve the imbalance between those who propose ideas and those who have 45 minutes to decide on its impact? If online voting helps even only one member who can't physically make it to a meeting, why does 'even only one' not apply to protect the safety of those who fear being identified and recorded online by members who support violent extremists? Hybrid supporters have only offered slogans, never a blueprint for how hybrid helps everyone.

And if BDS harms our store, violates our rights, maligns our reputation, repels our dis-

tributors and eviscerates staff pensions, so what? BDS won't admit responsibility. BDS apparently only sees how PSFC's fragile trust-based governance can be toppled, leaving behind a turn-key storefront that exists to support anti-Jewish militant extremists like Hamas. See Assad's Syria for how well that worked.

What can we do?

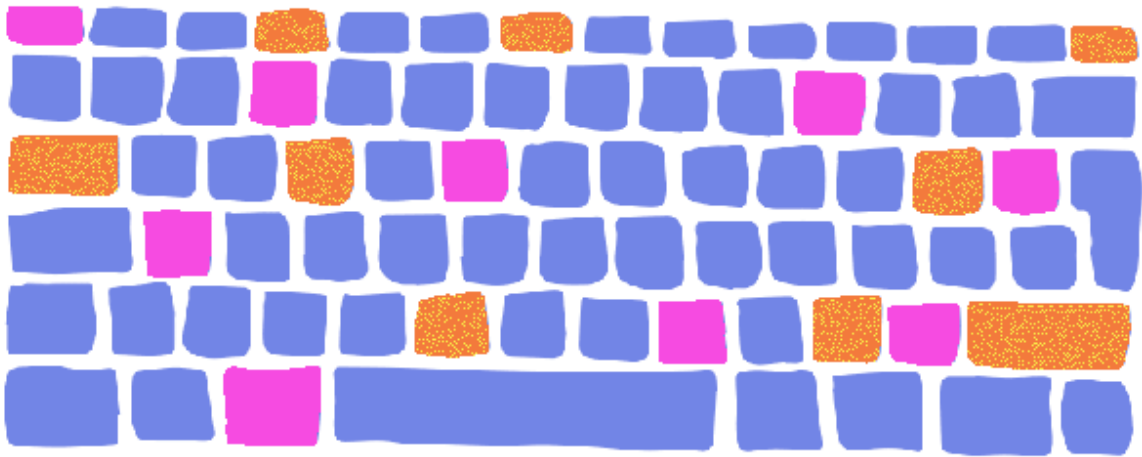
Watch for Jason Wiener's proposal "A New Coop Meeting Format for True Democratic Participation" (unaffiliated with Unity) because he is correct that hybrid doesn't fix any voting problems; show up to vote against hybrid if it ever is proposed; and contact me at Coop4Unity@gmail.com.

BDS needs the Coop. Not the other way around.

DECEMBER 17, 2024

January 28, 2025

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



ALARMING COST RISE AT THE COOP

Dear Fellow Members:

It was deeply distressing to learn that the Coop plans to return to what was supposed to be a temporary, pandemic gross margin of 25% after failing a very modest retreat

to 24% (“Notes from the October General Meeting”). It seems clear that something permanent has shifted in the cost structure of this organization to the point of institutionalized bloat. If the Coop is to serve its core mission of affordable food then costs must come down permanently and a more serious examination of expenses must be undertaken.

The ability and willingness to do so should be prominent in the criteria for selecting Joe Holtz’s replacement. Unfortunately the selection process has thus far proceeded with a minimal role for members, whose focused interests in low margins differ from the interests of coordinators paid from the margin. Member approval was not sought to extend the “temporary” higher margin another year (essentially making it permanent) nor was any information or analysis of how we got to this point brought to the meeting where the decision was announced, judging from the *Gazette* report. Instead members received an update about another cost center in the works, home delivery.

A reckoning on expenses is inevitable. We should collectively summon the grit to face it now rather than later, when it will be much more difficult to do so. We as members must also be vocal when coordinators fail to consult us on important matters.

In cooperation,
Ryan Tate

Dear Ryan,

The Gazette Letters Editor asked the General Coordinators to respond to your letter.

At the March 2023 GM, members voted to give authority to the General Coordinators to annually set the markup in a range of 21-25%, based on the Coop’s financial situation. You can read the minutes from that meeting.

Second, at the October 2024 GM, Joe Holtz gave a detailed report of why the markup was going back up to 25%. This document, shown at the GM, provides the financial

reasons the markup will be increasing to 25% on Feb 3, 2025 (the first day of the fiscal year 2026). Every member received this document, either by email or text, before the meeting.

The delivery service's cost to the Coop is pure speculation. In fact, we predict the opposite. However, since it hasn't started yet, no one knows what its effect on our finances will be. It's also important to note that the service will have a trial period, after which it will come to a GM for final approval or rejection by members.

Sincerely,

The General Coordinators

IT STARTED WITH WORDS

Dear Editor:

In 2021, Holocaust survivors began a campaign to show how that genocide “started with words.”

The current epidemic of antisemitic and anti-Zionist speech, and subsequent global escalation of antisemitic violence, echo that phrase. We are witnessing the latest provocation for the historically recurring, multi-millennial expulsions and genocidal attacks on Jews, in this instance for defending themselves against their terrorist enemies who have declared their genocidal “intent,” intent being required to prove genocide.

According to Gazette policy, letters cannot be “hateful, needlessly inflammatory, discriminatory libelous, personal attacks....” Apparently, this principle applies only to attacks on individuals, not religious, national or ethnic groups, though I’m certain such sustained attacks on any groups other than Jews and Israel would never appear in the

Gazette. (A letter of mine was rejected as “inflammatory” for using the word “Arab” as a descriptive, non-pejorative term, and Palestinians identify as Arabs).

For years the editors have intentionally or thoughtlessly ignored their policy that letters must be written with “accurate, attributed, easily verifiable statements of facts separated from opinions.” If this is true, why publish a letter alleging “haunting parallels” between the nuclear attack on Hiroshima and Israel’s actions in Gaza? Israel is widely recognized for making unprecedented wartime efforts to avoid civilian casualties, undermined by Hamas operating within civilian infrastructure.

Another allegation is “purposeful starvation” of Palestinians. Note that Hamas is known to frequently hijack food provided by Israel and intended for civilians.

As to calls for a ceasefire, it was during a ceasefire that Hamas committed its brutality on Oct 7, 2023.

Sadly, I don’t expect this letter to have any impact on the editors, Board of Directors, Diversity Committee or BDS activists. This Coop is what it is, a community lacking ethical agency and commitment to its principle of inclusiveness for *all* members.

Sylvia Lowenthal

HYBRID MEETINGS: MAKING A BAD SYSTEM WORSE

Dear Editor:

The Coop’s town hall type GM was appropriate for a simpler time. We were small, intimate, and running the store was relatively simple. Now it is more complex. The Coop manages dozens of employees, pension and health plans, reserve funds, property, etc. It is a \$60M/year business.

Our current system allows any member to introduce any agenda item, and it must be scheduled for a GM. There is no obligation to provide an impact or cost/benefit analysis. The presentations are brief and there is no opportunity for prepared counter responses. Instead, we have ad hoc responses often based more on feelings than on facts. All present members vote, and the Board of Directors, by tradition, mirrors the meeting proceedings thereby making the meeting decision official and legal.

The system allows for abuse and irresponsible decision making, such as when an update to the personnel policy was rejected. The hybrid meeting would amplify these deficiencies.

Aside from the recklessness of voting to change the bylaws without a plan on how to carry out hybrid meetings and taking on additional expenses when the Coop sales are not meeting costs, there does not appear to be a demand to attend GM's that would warrant holding hybrid meetings, except for the push to have the Coop endorse the BDS movement, and with it endorse the Hamas war against Israel's existence as a Jewish and democratic state. Anyone who believes the former does not include the latter has not done due diligence. The BDS faction has been very public about promoting hybrid meetings as a means to hold a BDS vote. A vote for hybrid is a vote for BDS. BDS will destroy our Coop. Please vote against hybrid meetings.

Barbara Mazor

BDS IS ALREADY HURTING OUR FINANCES

Dear Membership,

BDS has already damaged PSFC's balance sheet and threatens staff pensions. Just imagine the ruin if we ever vote them a place at our table.

At the October General Meeting, the financial report stated awareness that people aren't shopping due to political "disputes." I am one of those people. It's my coop and I'm disgusted every time I see BDS openly attempt to dictate what I buy, what I believe and how to behave politically.

Frequent stops and socializing once translated into me spending over \$1,000 a month. Since March, I don't crack \$350. I just get essentials, and I'm out. Coming up is our ultimate protest: not shopping altogether yet refusing to relinquish membership.

I join Jews, Christians and Muslims in resisting this attack on our Coop, a growing groundswell ever since Hamas broke the truce on October 7, 2023, raping, kidnapping and murdering 1,200 Jews and Muslims of every age.

But what about, "I'm Jewish so it's OK," or, "I'm anti-Zionist, not anti-Jew"? My reply is, "Nope, not buying that either." History looks brutal for the minuscule, misinformed Jewish groups who initially supported the Germans politically and at concentration camps, or spied for Stalin. And public anti-Zionist figures worldwide are open about their violent intentions towards (yeah, right) Zionists.

BDS goes beyond purging certain kinds of Jews from PSFC and ignoring how Palestinians were always more terrified of Hamas than the IDF. This is 1930's level bigotry and whatever term passes for Fascism on the Left.

It literally nauseates me now to visit. I imagine that titillates some keffiyeh-clad members, but look at them and ask yourself, "What's funny about ruining this place?"

BDS needs the Coop, not the other way around.

Jesse Rosenfeld

HEALTH INSURANCE FOR FREELANCERS

Dear PSCF Community,

As a freelancer for more than 10 years, health insurance has been a real struggle both in terms of cost, coverage and network. I found Opolis in 2023 and enrolled in 2024 and am happy to say I will renew for 2025. I felt other freelancers would want to know about this option for health insurance. The fact that Opolis is also an insured coop is a double bonus for the PSFC community. I can attest you won't find cheaper and better health insurance on the open market.

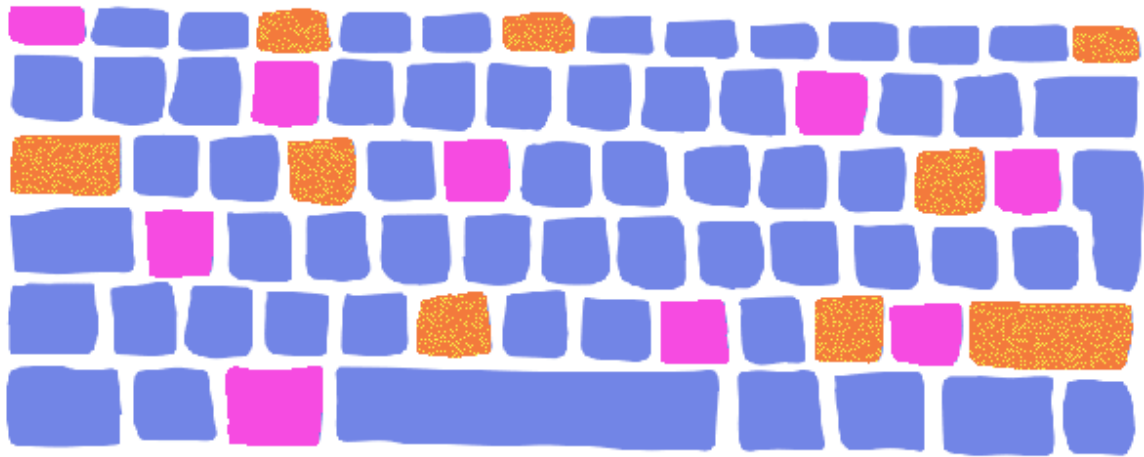
Thanks,

Johanna Kolodny

SEPTEMBER 24, 2024

January 28, 2025

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



JEEZ THE CHEESE IS TOO BIG

Hi Members,

I'm not necessarily a cheese enthusiast, but my partner and son are. They love cheese and love trying new cheeses. Years ago, this was easy to do, as the cheeses

cut were of various shapes and sizes.

For the past many years, however, cheeses tend to be about the same size, which discourages trying different types. I'd love to buy a piece of parmesan, but not a \$10 block of it. I'm hoping we can add a diversity of sizes to the cheeses being displayed which would reflect our members' various needs.

Here's to bringing back small and medium sizes of cheese—let's make cheese great again.

Thanks and hope to see the new sizes soon.

Respectfully in cooperation,

Jesse Farrell

RE: CRITIQUE OF JULY 2024 PROPOSAL ITEM

To the Members:

Three Coop area coordinators brought a proposal item to the July 2024 General Meeting (GM) on behalf of a group of 52 area coordinators. It was posted in the GM agenda notice as "Urgent Resubmission of Personnel Committee Proposal," and was a reworking of a similar proposal that was brought by the General Coordinators to the April 2024 GM and voted down. Both proposals sought to set policies concerning the powers of the Coop committee known as the Personnel Committee, as well as detailing the supervisory hierarchy of Coop staff. The version of the proposal brought to the July 2024 GM was approved by the members.

Both versions of the proposal included language that disenfranchises membership, which I find unnecessary and baffling.

One is the statement:

“The personnel policies of the Park Slope Food Coop shall be the responsibility of the General Manager, GC Team, and/or the Personnel Committee. Those entities have the sole authority to bring agenda items related to personnel policies to the General Meeting.”

Why can't a non-General Coordinator or non-Personnel Committee member bring an agenda item concerning personnel policies if that member thinks it's needed? Very perplexing.

Two is the statement:

“Once approved, the above motions shall replace all other GM-approved motions on matters in the areas specified above regarding employment policies and procedures for the General Coordinators and the General Manager.”

What is objectionable to me about this is that the GM was not provided with the specific policies and procedures being replaced. These documents could and should have been made available to members so they could be fully informed on the matter. Links to these documents could have been posted online or emailed to members before the meeting.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Tobier

RE: “THE COOP IS AT CAPACITY AND CROWDED: CAN ANYTHING BE DONE?”

Dear fellow members:

In reading this article I was struck by the mention of the Second Location Study Committee (SLSC), its rigorous investigation into the feasibility and the community benefits of a second location, and its simple rejection by a close margin of 74 votes to 64 votes. That's 138 of approximately 16,000 Coop members who participated in the vote. The article goes on to survey several other potential avenues for increasing capacity and improving efficiency within the walls of the current PSFC building, none of which sound promising or would benefit the greater Brooklyn community and sustainable vendors at large.

After reading this article, I went back to look at the PSFC's Mission Statement. There are two lines included that I believe support the ideas held within the SLSC's report. Support for that initiative had the potential to satisfy our Mission and would also ameliorate the problem of overcrowding at the PSFC.

Here are the two lines:

"We are a part of and support the cooperative movement."

"We strive to reduce the impact of our lifestyles on the world we share with other species and future generations."

I am familiar with SLSC's report and was one of the 138 voters. I am writing this letter with the hope of stimulating interest in the ideas and information gathered by the SLSC. My concern is that the participation of voting members was woefully small and a good idea was laid to rest prematurely.

A third line from our Mission statement speaks to this hope:

"We seek to maximize participation at every level, from policy making to running the store."

Cheers!

REGARDING REFERENDA AND HYBRID MEETINGS

To the Editors,

With all the controversy about holding referenda and hybrid meetings, a few statistics I obtained from the office may shed some light on these subjects.

It turns out that the total number of members who participated in this year's Board of Directors election out of more than 15,000 members was around 3,800, and this was apparently atypically high, likely due to efforts to get BDS partisans onto the Board; the number of members who vote is usually around 1,000—a tiny fraction of the total.

As for virtual meetings, during the height of the pandemic, after an initial surge in attendance in the spring of 2020, the numbers dwindled and ultimately fell to under 100 by August 2023.

Even the unprecedented and very costly 2012 General Meeting, which required security presence to consider a referendum on joining BDS, attracted fewer than 2,000 members.

It's likely that referenda and hybrid meetings would produce similarly minimal participation since the vast majority of members simply want to do their work shifts and shop at the Coop in a congenial and welcoming atmosphere and aren't interested in subjects outside the Coop's fundamental mission of providing good food at low prices for working members.

Sylvia Lowenthal

BOYCOTT NEXT STEPS: A MODEST PROPOSAL

Dear fellow members,

I'd like to propose a simple, hopefully modest proposal as we look to individually express our views on a boycott of Israeli goods—in short, let us all vote with our wallets as we see fit.

To those that support a boycott: create a list of all products that you believe should not be purchased, publicize that list in a central location (perhaps on a social media page dedicated to the effort), and encourage those that agree with you to not buy those products.

Others who do not support the boycott can continue to purchase products as they see fit.

There is rarely a one-size-fits-all solution to complex issues, especially those as nuanced and emotionally charged as this, and pushing for an entire community to adopt a set of principles is divisive and unnecessary. Let us all be informed and take individual action that aligns with our own personal outlook.

In cooperation, even when we disagree,

Paul Blachar

GENERAL COORDINATORS (GCS) ANN HERPEL AND MATT HOAGLAND RESPOND TO STEPHEN KLEIN'S LETTER, "OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES

OF FINDING WORK SHIFTS”:

Dear Stephen,

We offer these answers to help all Coop members understand how complex Coop operations are and the factors that must be considered before changing the labor system.

1. **Availability of Shifts**

As of Sept. 3, there were 12,037 members in the work pool. The six-week shift calendar had 2,184 shifts per week, projecting 13,104 shifts per cycle. The difference between these two figures (work pool and projected shifts over six weeks) is 1,067, leaving a weekly surplus of 177 shifts. In other words, there is at least one shift for every member to work in the six-week cycle, plus 1,067.

Members might feel that there is a dearth of shifts. But from an operational perspective, even with the surplus, the Coop often runs without optimal member-workers where work goes uncompleted or staff step in because the task has to be done.

2. **Expanded store hours are coming soon.** While the start date is TBD, the GCs have decided to expand the shopping hours to 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Sunday hours will remain 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. Closing the Coop one hour later, six days per week, will add approximately 30 shifts, meeting at the end of the Coop day, per week.

3. **Reducing the shift length to two hours or increasing the shift cycle length:** Neither would affect shift size, nor reduce demand for popular shifts and start times.

The benefit of reducing the shift length would be to add one more shift-time daily at the END the day, something the expanded store hours will accomplish. However, unlike expanding hours, it would also be burdensome for the operations for many other reasons we can't explain in this brief response.

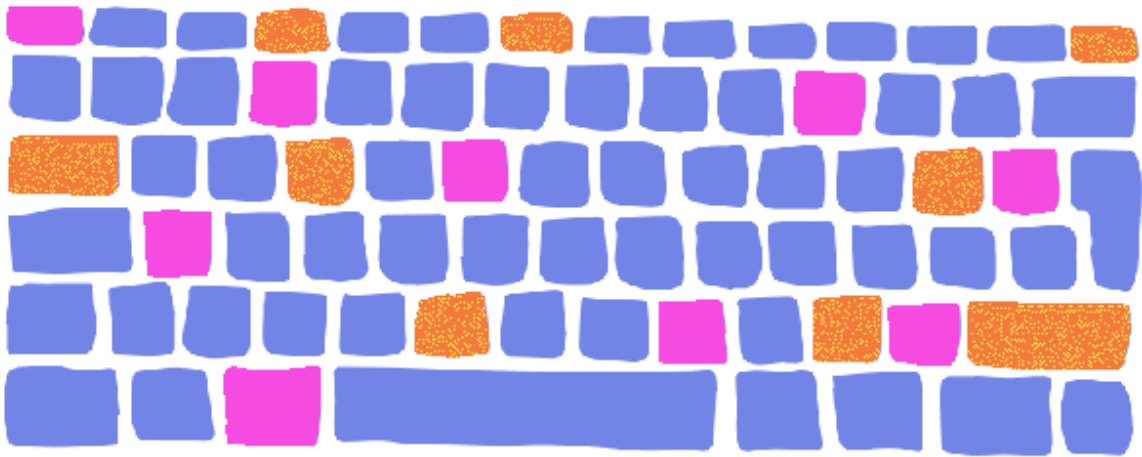
Increasing the cycle length beyond six weeks would require the Coop to grow around 2,000 members per additional week, far beyond our building's capacity to buy, receive, shelf, and sell groceries to the membership. The impact on the check-out line or queue to enter would be detrimental, to say the least.

4. **Limiting Shift Credits:** Only 3% of the members in the working-pool have 10 or more shifts in their shift bank. Many work on committees like the Gazette or Chair Committee or restricted shifts that need additional training unavailable to most members. Those that do use the shift calendar are more than balanced out by the shift surplus. In fact, the vast majority of members— over 95%—have shift credit banks ranging from -3 to +2 shifts. They are not accumulating enough shifts to crowd out other members from the shift calendar. Note there is currently a two-shift limit on scheduled shifts that helps to prevent shift hoarding.

SEPTEMBER 4, 2024

January 28, 2025

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



GIVE FUNGI THE RESPECT THEY'RE DUE

Dear Coop,

A very minor bone to pick: I tend to work checkout shifts, and am always dismayed that mushrooms are categorized under vegetable in the checkout system. Not only

are mushrooms not vegetables, they aren't even plants. Fungi are their own biological kingdom (along with plants, animals, protists and monera). So, in a biological sense, a mushroom is as much a vegetable as a chicken is—that is to say, not at all.

In cooperation,

Abaye Steinmetz-Silber

RE: JUNE ANNUAL MEETING REPORT (7/23/24)

To the Editor:

The June Annual Meeting Report (7/23/24) contains a misleading statement, “The Board of Directors plays a pivotal role in how the Coop operates by acting as the decision-making body for the Coop.”

Actually, unlike most organizations, the members on the Board of Directors at the Park Slope Food Coop (PSFC) are expected by other Coop members to receive and follow the advice provided to it in the form of General Meeting (GM) votes on all matters brought there. In other words, even if a PSFC board member disagrees with a particular GM voting result on a proposal or election item, the board member will accept the advice provided by the membership vote. That is why the GM chair usually states at the beginning of every GM that the GM is the decision-making body of the Coop. That is why members discuss and vote on all matters before the board votes on whether or not to accept their advice. That is why board candidates are generally questioned by members to make sure that, if elected, he or she will honor this PSFC cooperative tradition.

Please correct the online report error so that readers are not led astray on the role of the board.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Tobier

LET'S RETHINK MEMBERSHIP CAPS AND IMPOSE OCCUPANCY ONES

Dear Editor,

The solution to Coop crowding surely involves more market force and less central planning than the current approach. Rather than capping total membership, total member occupancy should be capped, either at fire code maximum or some lower number at which shopping becomes truly painful (which, in my experience, is extremely rare).

This controls crowding through natural consequences. If the Coop fills on Sundays, for example, there will be lines, encouraging those who can shop on less crowded days to do so, while making shopping possible for those who need to do so on that day—including people are currently denied this opportunity by the membership caps.

The central planning that has occurred thus far is certainly appreciated, and ideas like later shopping hours are great. Making the cap about how full the building is rather than how full the membership rolls are makes the Coop more inclusive while relieving some planning burden from our General Coordinators.

Ryan Tate

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES OF FINDING WORK SHIFTS

Dear Coop,

I as well as many other community members that I know have increasingly struggled with finding shifts. I am wondering if the Coop would consider some of the following suggestions: increased hours, reducing to two-hour shifts and/or shifts every eight weeks and limiting the number of shift credits one is able to accumulate in a year. These are all preliminary notional ideas, so obviously, they would need to be researched in regards to the effect any or all of these would have on operations, membership and solidarity.

Stephen Klein

TWO COOP LOVERS FOR HYBRID MEETINGS

Dear Coop-ers,

The PSFC was a major plug in our respective moves to Brooklyn. As folks who love fresh local produce and supporting community-run grocery stores, we were both beyond excited to see if the Coop would live up to its hype. And, in so many aspects, the Coop *has* delivered as we hoped it would: delicious produce, excellent bulk items, sweet treats discovered while stocking the dairy aisle and fun and quirky co-owners that we can chat with while working a shift. Despite these obvious perks, there is at least one key way in which the Coop has fallen short: providing inclusive General Meetings.

Part of what makes the Coop special is that it is *defined* by its community, and together, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. We work collectively to restock, check out and request new and exciting products. We even work together to put to-

gether this newsletter. It's disappointing, then, that this does not extend to being open and welcoming for our GMs. Hybrid GMs offer the chance for folks with different schedules, needs, abilities and time constraints to more easily participate in making the Coop a more inclusive community. Since the pandemic, meetings utilizing Zoom and other virtual participation platforms have become par for the course. They are common-place for doctor visits, university classes, work huddles, fundraising events, NYC community board meetings—you can even do a virtual interview for TSA PreCheck and Global Entry! Today's widespread use of virtual meeting spaces demonstrates a common understanding of the benefits of the inclusivity that they offer. If we are truly a Coop where all members can contribute to our definition as a collective, prioritizing hybrid meetings should be at the top of the list.

Jessie Wesley

Estee Ward

ON HYBRID VOTING, AKA MAKING PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY WORK AT THE COOP

Hello!

A few months ago, I got an email from the Coop announcing the vote for Board of Directors. I was excited to take part in the board election! Unfortunately, I was out of the country and on-leave; how was that going to work? Well, it worked swimmingly. The vote would be taking place in-person at the next General Meeting *and* online in the lead-up to the meeting. I could vote online—and early!

I clicked on the link, signed in, read the candidate statements one final time and voted. The whole process took five minutes. Democracy in action, 2024! Amazing!

This experience, however, stood in powerful contrast to the fact that we are still unable to vote online regarding measures raised at the GM. Every month, the GM notice goes out with the exhortation that “Participating in the meeting is your way of having a voice in important issues that affect you and your Coop. Meaningful member participation strengthens our governance system, ensures that the board of directors hears from the Coop membership, and upholds the democratic principle at the heart of cooperatives.” This is inspiring stuff, so it’s too bad that, given the resistance to hybrid meetings, a Coop with over 16,000 members has its major issues decided in-person by about 200.

It’s not as though this is a new issue. For decades now, members have been raising the need to make the coop governance process more accessible. As we approach the November 2024 election, in a political atmosphere where US democracy is on the line in a historically unprecedented way, maybe we can do our part by working together to make the little village that is PSFC a place where the ideal of participatory democracy is reflected in our practices.

Jim McKay

DIRECT DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE COOP

To the editor:

I write on behalf of Coop 4 Unity, a group of Coop members who understand and oppose the goals and tactics of the Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) movement.

Instead of continuing to fill the *Linewaiters’ Gazette* with letters for and against the renewed push to declare the Coop in solidarity with a boycott of the State of Israel, Coop 4 Unity proposes direct communications with Park Slope Food Coop Members 4 Palestine, the BDS faction within the Coop.

In the July 23, 2024, edition of the *Linewaiters' Gazette*, a member of the unity group put out a call for mediation. There has been no response to that call. Ironically, a BDS supporter's letter in the same edition concluded with a dinner invitation to members who oppose the efforts of "Members 4 Palestine." We construe that dinner invitation as an expression of willingness on the part of the BDS faction to engage in direct dialogue.

The letter with the dinner invitation did not include the member's contact information. The email address for the Coop group is coop4unity@gmail.com. If anyone from the BDS faction (or any Coop member) wants to communicate directly about the future of the Coop—and move the conversation out of the *Linewaiters' Gazette*—please contact us at that address.

Noah Potter

A SECOND REQUEST FOR WELL-INTENTIONED DIALOGUE WITH PRO-BDS COOP MEMBERS

Dear PSFC Members for Palestine,

I have received no response from the BDS-inspired PSFC Members for Palestine regarding multiple good-faith requests for mediation to negotiate a resolution to the intensifying conflict that has arisen as PSFC Members for Palestine attempt to resurrect a boycott of Israeli products, characterizing it as a moral imperative for the Coop.

Instead members of this faction have taken to mocking opponents of the boycott (see, for instance, Carol Wald's July 23 letter in which she writes of "the pearl-clutching hysteria over members who support a targeted boycott of Israeli goods) and those who worry about BDS's infiltration of the Coop, in the form of letters to the *Linewaiters' Gazette* that assert the moral superiority of their position (see, for example, Lisa

Guido's July 23 letter in which she states "what's being done by Israel to Gaza with the financial backing of the USA is one of the greatest moral atrocities of our lifetime, and it did not begin as a reaction to Hamas on October 7. To be silent, to equivocate, to deny, is to tacitly endorse an act of generational evil.")

We reject the tactic of Jews weaponizing their identity in support of BDS. Their anti-Zionism is no more morally superior than the beliefs and concerns of other Jews. That is true in the Coop context, as anywhere.

I repeat my invitation to participate in a mediated constructive dialogue on these issues. We are giving your faction the benefit of the doubt that you do not understand the harm you are causing to many fellow members in a community grocery store based on cooperation.

If you do not respond to our request, we will understand your silence as an expression of your unwillingness to communicate and, by extension, your callousness towards this harm, and, ultimately, your disregard for the fiscal health of the Coop's business.

With hopes of cooperation,

Ramon Maislen, Coop 4 Unity

JUST SAY NO...TO MEDIATION REGARDING THE BDS AGENDA

Dear Members,

I have read Ramon Maislen's letter (published in the July 23, 2023 issue of the *Gazette*) and the follow-up letter that was handed out at the July 30, 2023 GM. In these, he proposed a private mediation session between Coop 4 Unity and PSFC Members for Palestine to clarify how the group intends to "align the agenda of BDS with

the principles of the Coop” and to discuss the “rise in confrontations between Coop members and strategies to ensure the safety and respect of all members.”

I don’t think it makes sense to hold a mediation between Coop 4 Unity and PSFC for Palestine or between Ramon and a representative of PSFC Members for Palestine. A proposed boycott would affect all members of the Coop. Just like all other Coop-wide issues, the specifics of what this boycott would entail should be brought to the full membership, for discussion at a General Meeting and (ultimately) a vote. Nothing needs to be said behind closed doors; this must be a discussion open to all members.

There is a place for mediation at the Coop—the Dispute Resolution Committee is available to any members who find themselves in personal disputes or unresolved negative interactions.

I am a Jewish woman who also worries about antisemitism, but BDS and PSFC Members for Palestine are not antisemitic. I believe Israel is committing crimes against humanity and that the least we can do as a Coop is to discuss whether to boycott certain Israeli products.

Cooperatively,

Rebecca Schoenberg-Jones

LET’S VOTE ON BDS

To Coop Members,

Controversy in any group is natural. I am convinced that in our Coop with a clear process for shared decision-making and sufficient individual emotional maturity, constant arguments can be avoided. Neither of these criteria is easy to achieve. Both depend

upon the commitment of members to each other and to common goals that are at least as strong as the commitment to one's own opinion and interest—a caring community.

Trust in a democratic process is delicate. We have suffered early childhood trauma as well as violent historical assaults on our identity that resulted in loss, grief and anguish. The process for collective decision-making in a caring community needs to include consequences for cheating and violence. We need vision, courage and trust.

You win some; you lose some. Feeling safe requires winning with grace and humility and/or losing with dignity, acceptance and adaptation.

With contemporary digital capacity, secure processes to vote can be adapted. We use infinite ways of sharing information, thinking and experiences. With so much technology, we don't need to be all in the same place to cast a ballot.

A fair voting process for collective decision-making will be inclusive, respectful and equitable if it is managed by an impartial team and overseen by members of different factions. Hope for peace includes enough vision, trust and courage to try democracy.

Susan Metz

THE COOP'S COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRACY

Dear Coop Members,

I've been a member since February 2020, and what I love most about the Coop is its commitment to democracy. We are all workers, members and owners, with hierarchy limited to administrative necessity. Our voices are equal and we act in the best interest of the majority.

In the summer of 2020, I saw the Coop's commitment to democracy tested. In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement and the murder of George Floyd, many members called for an official statement in support of the movement. Although it was clear that the majority of members would likely support such a statement, our leaders decided to wait until a vote could be held. While this felt counterintuitive at the time, it demonstrated the Coop's integrity and dedication to democratic processes.

Today, we are faced with another tragic moment. The war in Gaza has entered its ninth month with no clear end in sight. Israel continues its bombardment and civilian deaths rise daily. We now have an opportunity to act by stopping the sale of products that help fund this violence. As the Coop has done in the past, it must show integrity and put this question to a membership vote. The delay in voting feels excessive and unlike the BLM voting delay, the rationale here is unclear.

If the membership votes to keep BDS-sanctioned products on the shelves, so be it. But what is most important is maintaining our commitment to democracy. Without it, the Coop ceases to be what it is.

Atticus Hoffman