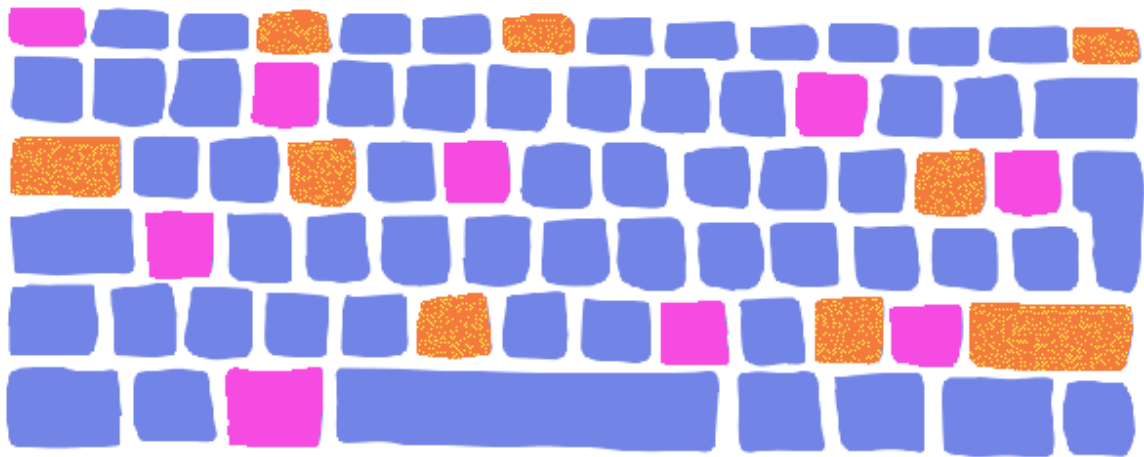


AUGUST 14, 2024

August 14, 2024

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



PSFC CARD PHONE INTEGRATION IS ALREADY HERE

Dear all,

Hey, I noticed in this July 2 article that the Coop is working on making a phone-based option for displaying a member's barcode, and that right now the barcode is just available via the website.

I wanted to make sure you are aware that as far as Android phones go, it's already possible to add your PSFC membership card to your phone's digital wallet. I have mine added to my Google Wallet, and from there I can bring a barcode up on my screen that readily scans me in to the Coop.

Happy to give some instructions if needed.

Max Miller

THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE RULING AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE COOP

Dear fellow members:

Millions of justice seekers of every ethnicity have had their aspirations heard by the International Court of Justice in the Hague. On July 19th, the ICJ ruled that the illegal settlements in the occupied territories must be evacuated and reparations made to those who lost their land.

This is the strongest opinion ever issued by the ICJ.

The Court found that "the regime of comprehensive restrictions imposed by Israel on Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory constitutes systemic discrimination based on, inter alia, race, religion or ethnic origin."

We are all enjoined not to be complicit in this apartheid scheme. PSFC has a role to

play by adopting the nonviolent boycott, divestment and sanctions principles urged by Palestinian civil society since 2005.

Ann Schneider

PROTECTING THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS THROUGH IN-PERSON VOTING

Dear fellow Cooperators,

After attending a few recent General Meetings, I am concerned about the impact that the group PSFC Members 4 Palestine is having on the democratic process of the Coop and how this would look in a world of hybrid voting. While this group preaches democracy and inclusivity, their actions are in direct contradiction of these values.

While I value a diversity of opinions in the Coop community, even when they diverge from my perspective, the tactics this group employs are chipping away at the integrity of the democratic process.

If you haven't attended a recent General Meeting, allow me to fill you in. It is evident that the conversations and decisions of the group are predetermined. The decisions that result from this feel orchestrated rather than organically derived from member input and healthy debate. Debate on agenda items and resolutions is limited because "their" decision has already been made before anyone has even scanned in their membership card to walk into the Picnic House.

It seems that this atmosphere has also led to a loss of decorum. I have observed Coop members wearing PSFC Members 4 Palestine pins uncooperatively sneer, giggle and generally bully anyone who dares to express an opposing viewpoint.

These actions undermine the values of the Coop, where every member should be free

to express their opinions and participate. If we let this behavior continue to fester, our debates will continue to lack the breadth and depth required for a healthy democratic process.

I'm concerned that if we move to online voting, this group would silo into their own side conversations and chat rooms instead of engaging in actual conversation. For this reason, I strongly support preserving the current in-person meeting format. The free and open exchange of ideas is essential for the health of the Coop community.

In cooperation,
Tali Rasis

WHILST DEBATING A BOYCOTT, CONSIDER A DOCUMENTARY'S MESSAGE

Dear Fellow Members:

For all those following world events with profound implications for our Coop, I highly recommend *The Night Won't End*, a searing film about life and death in Gaza under Israeli assault. The film, produced by Laila Al-Arian for the Al Jazeera documentary series *Fault Lines*, is free on YouTube. It eloquently conveys the grief, horror and courage of ordinary Palestinians who have watched their world reduced to rubble. Far worse than any fear for personal safety is the dread of knowing that loved ones, especially young children, are likely to suffer and die. I am haunted by moments such as the sequence during which an ambulance dispatcher remembers the two paramedics who were sent to rescue 6-year-old Hind Rajab: "I won't see heroes like them again. They knew they would be killed, and yet they went."

As the Coop engages in a necessary (and healthy) debate about whether to adopt a boycott of products implicated in Israel's crimes, the discussion can wind up feeling abstract. That's especially the case as U.S. election coverage takes over the head-

lines, crowding out the unbearable reality of unfolding genocide. As we continue to discuss how our Coop might take a small but meaningful step in alignment with the powerful international movement to free Palestine, it's important not to lose sight of what's at stake in human terms. Among other things, Al-Arian's film memorably contextualizes the International Court of Justice advisory opinion of July 19. That opinion clarifies once and for all that Israel's continued occupation of Palestinian territory (including the ever-expanding West Bank settlements) is "unlawful" and that "all States are under an obligation" to reject this illegal presence. The online news sites Mondoweiss and Electronic Intifada have good articles about the ICJ opinion.

In cooperation,
Jan Clausen

A RESPONSE TO "FEAR-BASED ACCUSATIONS" REGARDING PSFC MEMBERS FOR PALESTINE

Dear Fellow Members,

A Coop member for over 20 years, I'm writing to share my experience of petitioning in front of the Coop with Park Slope Food Coop Members for Palestine. I'd never canvassed at the Coop, and I was a little nervous at first. So, I was delighted by how many folks were in support of and/or wanted to hear more about our proposal for a targeted boycott of Israeli goods. I had thoughtful conversations with many members. The few who weren't interested simply said "no thank you" or "definitely not" and headed inside.

Given this experience, I was dismayed by the tenor of some of the letters in the July 23 Gazette. Those letters used words like "impose," "blanket ban" and "Coop-wide boycott" as though we are proposing to autocratically deprive fellow members of their right to make their own shopping decisions. These fear-based accusations need

to be corrected. PSFC Members for Palestine proposes a targeted boycott (of Sabra, SodaStream and Israeli produce), and we would like all members to have an opportunity to vote on that idea in a way that is accessible and open to all. It is that simple. To suggest that this is divisive or harmful to Coop unity underestimates our community and the messy but vital democratic experiment that Coop membership entails.

Other letters suggested that we avoid politics or focus more on local issues instead of “geopolitical advocacy.” In my view, being a member of the PSFC is an inherently political act. A core Coop principle is to be a “responsible and ethical employer and neighbor,” and I’m pretty sure that doesn’t simply apply to Union Street and environs. Our neighbors in Palestine deserve our attention and care. Voting on a targeted boycott proposal seems like the bare minimum.

With love,
Nancy Mercado

FROM AN ANTI-ZIONIST JEW

Dear Coop,

Authors of several recent letters published in the *Gazette* have expressed claims to represent the opinions of Jewish Coop members. Editors of the *Gazette* have let these statements stand without note that these are the thoughts of Jewish Coop members in support of the Israeli state, people who are not and never will be authorized to speak on behalf of all Jewish Coop members.

Jews are not monolithic. We are diverse in national/regional origin, religious belief, culture, language, race and political ideology. One need not be Jewish to be a Zionist supporter of the currently configured Israeli state, whereas I, like many Jews in the United States and around the world, oppose Israel for its apartheid government and its ongoing

ing commission of genocide.

I would never attempt to speak for all Jews or all Jewish Coop members and I am deeply disturbed by those who purport to represent my interests or needs as a Jew. I reject the Zionist claim that people who oppose the Israeli state are anti-Semitic or self-hating. I request that if the *Gazette* continues to publish letters that explicitly or implicitly speak for all Jews or Jewish Coop members, the editors include a disclaimer that these are the opinions of only one person or one segment of Coop Jews.

Alyce Barr

"DEMOCRACY" AT THE COOP

Dear fellow members:

Part of the definition of democracy includes the following:

"...protected rights that ensure the majority does not abuse its power to violate the rights of the minority." I would love to know which aspects of the proposed BDS vote adhere to these democratic values?

it's quite insulting that the pro BDS members of the Coop insist on simply "having the conversation" to adopt a boycott of Israeli goods while presenting the vote as upholding "democracy." Someone wrote "Regardless of whether you agree with me, we all deserve the chance to weigh in on this crucial topic. Let's bring this matter to a vote and let the members decide!"

No thank you. You can't scream "democracy" about a topic that a lot of members see as discriminatory. If the Coop is forced to have this conversation AGAIN as it did TWICE in the past, that will bring legitimacy that my country where I was born and

consider my second home is temporary and disposable.

We also seem to be “having the conversation” quite often at the Coop. Every *Gazette* issue, General Meeting, nearly every day someone is handing out propaganda and lies about “having the conversation.” However, it’s interesting. They seem to only be conversing with each other and no one else. DRC complaints regarding the war have gone up in addition to carts being vandalized. Also, people seem to really love crossing out “Israel” on the couscous box.

It’s getting harder for me to go to the Coop as often as I used to in the past. I now stretch out my visits as far apart as possible. No more lunches or random pop-ins for a quick snack. I want to avoid the place as much as I can as long as the BDS vote hangs over it. So much for democracy.

Jonathan Tobias

Editor’s note: The August 14, 2024 issue of the Linewaiters’ Gazette ran the above letter titled “‘Democracy’ at the Coop” signed by Jon T, who requested anonymity. The editor granted this request without inquiring about the reason for it, possibly in violation of the LWG letters’ policy. The writer of the letter is Jonathan Tobias.

JUNE ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

August 14, 2024



ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

By Rahima Nasa

July 23, 2024

Coop members trickled into the Prospect Park Picnic House in the early evening on June 25 for the Coop's Annual Meeting. Unlike General Meetings, Annual Meetings include board elections and a presentation of the Coop's finances during the past fiscal year.

Tensions from recent discussions about potentially boycotting Israeli goods loomed over the meeting. Outside the entrance to the Picnic House, volunteers from the Park Slope Food Coop Members for Palestine offered refreshments and Middle Eastern snacks as members made their way to the meeting. The group sought signatures in support of the Coop joining the global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. Discussions of whether the Coop should participate in the BDS movement, which seeks to pressure Israel to alter its policies toward Palestinians, have come up in Letters to the Editor and in recent meetings, and members in support of and in opposition to BDS made their voices heard during the Annual Meeting.

Committee Updates and Officer Elections

Prior to the financial presentation, members heard an update from General Coordinator for Purchasing and Operations, Joseph Szladek, about new produce at the Coop. “Aside from developing foreign policy, we got lots of great produce,” quipped Szladek as he reached the podium. “Look out for Sycamore honeydew in a few weeks—they are amazing.” A full list of the produce currently in stock can be found [here](#).

Jill Dovale, a member of the Animal Welfare Committee, then gave a brief presentation about the committee and its work. Though the committee was formed a decade ago, most members present at the meeting were unfamiliar with it. The Animal Welfare Committee creates guides and reports about animal welfare conditions related to products like milk, eggs, meat, and pet food. The reports include extensive research on vendors, whom committee members reach out to for specific details about what conditions are like for animals in their facilities.

Though these reports do not influence buying decisions in any official way, buyers do take them into consideration: “We use these guides on the buying team because of the excellent information they supply for us,” Szladek noted.

Though the information compiled by the committee should ideally be found near the products, Dovale acknowledged that it can be hard to locate, and the committee is therefore working on getting more visibility for its reports. QR codes linking to the welfare reports near certain products might be one possibility.

Board of Directors Elections

The meeting opened with a final opportunity for Board of Directors candidates to make their case for why they should win election to the board.

The Board of Directors plays a pivotal role in how the Coop operates by acting as the decision-making body for the Coop. There are five seats on the board and each car-

ries a three-year term. The board is required to meet at least ten times a year and must give Coop membership enough advance notice before its meetings so that all members can voice their concerns before the board officially meets.

This year, there were two board seats up for election and nine candidates vying for the positions. More information about the candidates can be found [here](#). Four of the nine nominees—Tess Brown-Lavoie, Ramon Maislen, Sondra Shaievitz and Keyian Vafai—were present at the meeting. All had the opportunity to make one last appeal for votes before voting officially ended. Members at the meeting also had the chance to ask questions before they cast their vote.

All candidates were asked about their position on BDS and whether they personally supported the movement. Brown-Lavoie and Vafai stated that they personally support BDS but would uphold whatever the majority of members decided on the issue. - Maislen and Shaievitz stated that they did not support BDS but would also support the will of the membership. Maislen pointed to his Letter to the Editor in the *Gazette*, which was also signed by Shaievitz and over 60 other members. Maislen reiterated that he wanted the Coop to remain a place of unity.

“The Food Coop is not a political forum,” Shaievitz, a corporate lawyer turned energy healer, stated. “We’re not going to solve this Middle East issue at a little food coop in New York.” Shaievitz claimed that the recent push for BDS came from a contingent of new members joining in the last year. Members in the crowd booed the statement. One member who identified herself as Jewish shouted that she supported BDS and had been a member for over 30 years.

Several news outlets, including the *Gazette*, have documented discussions about the Coop’s potential involvement in the BDS movement for more than a decade. In 2012, the Coop voted against the motion to hold a referendum to join the international boycott of Israeli goods. There were 1,005 members who voted against the referendum and 653 voted in favor.

Once the candidates were done speaking, members cast their final ballots. Members could vote by paper proxy before the meeting, online or by ballot at the meeting. If the member had already voted by the other methods, the ballot at the meeting would void the prior votes. The ballots had members' ID numbers to ensure that members didn't vote more than once.

The winning candidate had to garner more YES votes than NO votes. This means that if a candidate received more NO votes than YES votes, they were ineligible to win. Member workers diligently counted ballots throughout the meeting so the winners could be announced before the meeting ended.

Brown-Lavoie and Vafai, who had both been endorsed by PSFC Members for Palestine, won election to the Board.

Audited Financial Statement Report

The June meeting also offered an opportunity to review the financial health of the Coop with financial experts. Representatives from Cornick, Garber & Sandler, LLP (CGS), the Coop's auditing firm, presented the Coop's audited financial statement for the last fiscal year, ending on January 28, 2024.

The Coop's finances are in good health. Overall, total investments increased for the Coop, which allowed for increased investments in debt securities comprising U.S. Government Treasuries, U.S. Government Agency Bonds, and Bank CDs of less than \$250,000 each. All these securities are purchased through our account at Vanguard. The Coop's net sales increased from \$48,172,077 to \$54,969,951 this past year. After calculating losses and operating expenses, total net income was \$289,499.

Members received a full copy of the audited financial report, which can also be found [here](#).

Members were able to ask the auditors questions about the Coop's fiscal health,

which several were keen to do. When asked about where Coop investments were made, the accountants explained that the investments were spread through a diverse portfolio and the particular industries could be found in the financial statement distributed to members. Another member wondered which banks the Coop used and one of the accountants responded that all were highly rated banks like Morgan Stanley.

Once the presentation ended, members voted to accept the audited financial statement as well as to continue to use the Coop's current auditing firm for the next fiscal year.

Officer Elections

The meeting concluded with officer elections for President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary. The Coop's President and Vice-President also sit on the Board of Directors. You can learn more about the difference between a Board Member and an officer [here](#).

The only contested position was treasurer, as board member Tim Hospodar attempted to unseat Joe Holtz. When he came to the podium to make his case, Hospodar highlighted his background working for a financial accounting firm and his commitment to the Coop's values over the years. At one point, he raised his fist and shouted "Down with the occupation!" Ultimately, Hospodar did not prevail.

Brandon West was elected president, Imani Q'ryn vice-president, Elizabeth Tobier secretary, and Holtz remained treasurer.

Rahima Nasa enjoys writing for the Gazette because of all the members she's gotten to meet and because it allows her to learn about how the Coop works. When she's not writing for the Gazette, Rahima likes to experiment with new ingredients and is on a never-ending quest to make the perfect pie crust.

MAY GM: MEMBERS DIVIDED ON ISRAEL, ALIGNED IN DISDAIN FOR PLASTIC WASTE

August 14, 2024



By Leila Darabi

The May General Meeting kicked off on May 28 at the Prospect Park Picnic House with a charged open forum focused not only on members' differing views on the Israel-Hamas War, but on how those views are communicated. The chair committee reminded members throughout the evening that singling out other members in their statements would not be tolerated and repeatedly asked members to refrain from shouting out comments from the audience.

Members also discussed a proposal to bring back the print edition of the *Linewaiters'*

Gazette and a proposal to create a new committee to reduce the Coop's plastic use.

OPEN FORUM

During the open forum, several speakers called on fellow members to embrace civility. (Note: Coop members are not required to share their full names during the open forum.)

Seth Pollack shared that he felt some materials being circulated ahead of the Park Slope Food Coop Board of Directors elections reflected the division among members and stated "the very, very least that I feel we can do is answer the call of civil society groups and join the BDS movement" referring to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign.

ONE MEMBER REPORTED THAT LABELS OF ISRAELI PEARLED COUSCOUS HAVE BEEN DEFACED ON THE COOP SHELVES AND CALLED THE BEHAVIOR "PETTY AND UNCOOPERATIVE."

Jonathan T. claimed that another Coop member had been called a Nazi by another member and that "hate has no place here and neither does BDS."

Amos reported that labels of Israeli pearled couscous have been defaced on the Coop shelves and called the behavior "petty and uncooperative."

Several members addressed the ongoing debate around whether the Coop would need to change its bylaws to permit virtual or hybrid meetings and voting by proxy.

Dena Beard stated that she works for the Tow Center for Performing Arts at Brooklyn College, a potential venue to host a GM that included a BDS discussion or vote, and that she felt threatened after receiving a voicemail from a member warning her that

hosting such a meeting would incite violence. Tensions peaked when Beard said that one voicemail had come from a member whom she mentioned by name.

MJ reported that Professor Michael Haber had, pro bono, drafted a legal memo after reviewing the Coop's bylaws and that in his opinion the Coop would not need to change bylaws to legally host hybrid or virtual meetings.

Alex also commented on the benefits of virtual meetings, noting that virtual meetings and votes worked well throughout the pandemic.

In response to the open forum, General Coordinators offered some clarifications:

Joe Holtz shared that the Coop's lawyer had reached the opposite conclusion and thought the bylaws would indeed first need to change before a virtual or hybrid meeting could be considered. He noted that the Board had received both decisions.

GENERAL COORDINATOR ELINOR ASTRINSKY REPORTED THAT THERE HAS BEEN AN UPTICK IN NON-MEMBERS ENTERING THE STORE AND CAUTIONED SHOPPERS AND WORKERS TO KEEP THEIR VALUABLES CLOSE AT ALL TIMES.

Ann Herpel also clarified that Brooklyn College had offered to host a GM where a BDS vote could take place but that, before signing a contract, the General Coordinators asked the agenda committee to contact the four members who had previously submitted items related to a vote on the boycott of products from Israel to confirm that these items could be brought to the May GM. Herpel shared that:

"All four members declined the May 28th date and instead requested to postpone their items until after another pending agenda item about changing the 75% supermajority currently needed to approve a boycott was discussed and voted on," and closed stating: "Though it took more years than many would have liked, the [General Coordi-

nators] did fulfill our commitment to secure a location.”

TREASURER’S REPORT

Holtz also reviewed the 12-week financial statement shared ahead of the meeting covering the period from April 21 through May 28, 2024. He shared that there has been a 7.65% increase in average weekly sales compared to the previous year, but that he expected this average to fall to around 5% by the end of the year.

Holtz also took questions, clarifying that the Coop currently marks products up 24% over wholesale, a 1% decrease from the previous year, which impacts profits.

COORDINATOR’S REPORTS

General Coordinator Elinor Astrinsky shared what she called a “nuts and bolts” report with updates across a range of topics. Among these, she reported that there has been an uptick in non-members entering the store and cautioned shoppers and workers to keep their valuables close at all times. She also stressed than anyone working a shift should wear close-toed shoes.

ALEX GODIN SHARED THAT “THE COOP FEELS MORE AND MORE LIKE A WHOLE FOODS AND LESS LIKE A COMMUNITY,” LAMENTING THE LOSS OF FREE CHILD-CARE AND THE STORE BULLETIN BOARD.

Herpel read a statement from the General Coordinators taking issue with how their views were characterized during the April GM during a vote on the Coop’s HR policies.

COMMITTEE REPORT

Bart DeCoursy of the International Trade Education Squad gave the lone committee report sharing awareness that hearings are ongoing to settle Mexico’s ongoing dis-

pute with the U.S. over corn. Mexico refuses to import genetically modified corn, which accounts for most corn grown in the U.S.

NOSTALGIA FOR A PRINT EDITION OF THE *LINEWAITERS' GAZETTE*

For the first of two agenda items for discussion, Alex Godin shared that “the Coop feels more and more like a Whole Foods and less like a community,” lamenting that the loss of free childcare and the store bulletin board during the pandemic also contributed to this feeling. The proposal: reinstate a print version of the Coop’s newsletter, the *Linewaiters’ Gazette*.

Eric Lewis, a former co-coordinating editor of the *Gazette* voiced enthusiastic support and suggested investigating ad sales as a way to cover costs and testing out a new print version for a year to see what worked. The *Gazette*, he said, “is a place for budding journalists... and deepens and strengthens the sense of community [at the Coop]”

Coop member Morgan also shared, in support of the proposal, “print ephemera is an amazing way to create an embodied sense of community.”

Coop member Kian asked what the cost would be to reinstate a print edition. In response, Herpel shared that in the last 30 days, the online *Gazette* has received 31,000 views of articles and 10,000 visitors. She also said that to revive the print edition, the Coop would need to replace several computers, resubscribe to Adobe software and cover the cost of printing.

Staff member Jana Cunningham shared that the Coop is working on adding classified ads to the digital *Gazette*.

Coop member Yasmine also voiced support, noting that digital news can be changed but that “in print, the work of journalists is set in stone.”

TRACY FITZ PROPOSED THE CREATION OF A COOP CLIMATE CRISIS COMMITTEE AND COLLECTED EMAILS FROM MEMBERS WHO WOULD BE INTERESTED TO JOIN.

In response to a question about the kind of paper used to print the *Gazette*, Herpel clarified that the prior *Gazette* was printed on post-consumer newsprint by a union print shop.

The second and final agenda item, introduced by Tracy Fitz, proposed the creation of a Coop Climate Crisis Committee (4Cs) and collected emails from members who would be interested to join.

“In 2019, the Coop went through 49,000 plastic produce bags a week. We now use 57% of that, 28,200 produce bags a week because we have clamshells instead!” In a lively presentation, Fitz pulled sample bags and plastic clamshells out of a bag and waved them around, inspiring laughter across a room that an hour earlier had felt quite tense. “We’re all addicted, [to plastic]!” she cried. A suggestion to wrap General Coordinators in plastic as an artistic action drew applause.

During the discussion that followed, no one disagreed, but members shared additional thoughts on ways to reduce plastic.

Zoe added that compostable bags also include fossil fuel and aren’t necessarily a safe alternative.

Sunny shared that she had a similar idea to create a committee and asked interested members to email plasticfreefoodcoop@gmail.com to join, noting that she was open to joining forces and creating a single Coop Climate Crisis Committee.

Lois Wilken urged people to read her recent *Gazette* submission “Love Letter from a Mermaid: On Plastics and Your Health.”

For historical context, Holtz shared that the Coop had in the past banned plastic produce bags, then brought them back. “There’s a lot of education to do,” Holtz said. “We also sell something in aisle four to wash and reuse plastic bags.”

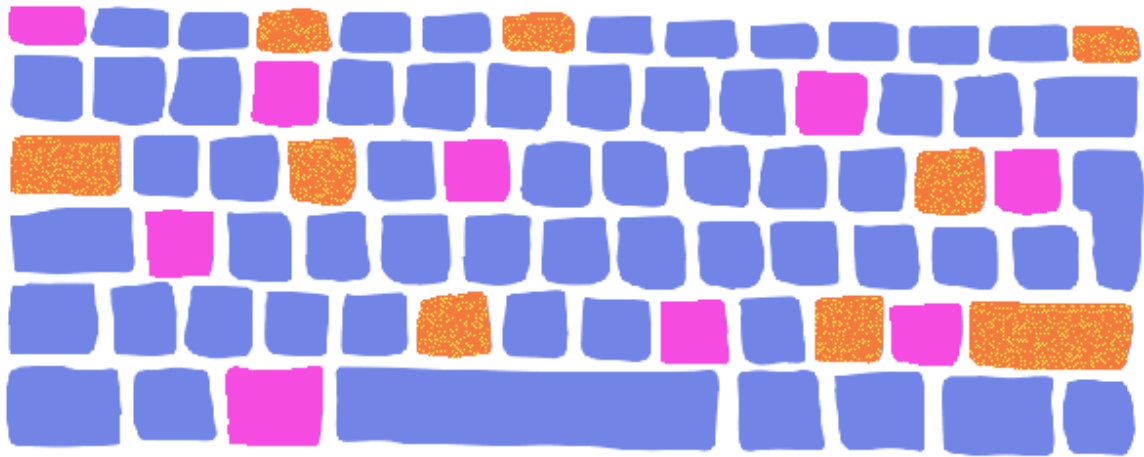
CLOSING

Board member Brandon West called a vote to close the meeting during which the board voted to accept the minutes from the April GM.

JULY 2, 2024

August 14, 2024

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



TRAGEDY

Dear Editor,

The Coop sells my favorite brand of salsa

but only “mild” and “medium”

Where is the “hot”?

I must buy my Green Mountain Gringo elsewhere

Louise Palmer

LONG SHOPPING HOURS

Hello,

Has the Coop considered returning to pre-COVID shopping hours? I seem to remember the shopping floor opening at 6 a.m. and closing at 10 p.m. Our current hours of 8 a.m.–8 p.m. can be pretty limiting during the work week.

Lucia Brockaway

THE GENERAL COORDINATORS RESPOND:

Prior to the pandemic, the Coop was open 8 a.m.–10 p.m., Monday through Friday, 6 a.m.–10 p.m. on Saturday and 6 a.m.–8 p.m. on Sunday. The General Coordinators are planning on extending the hours until 9 p.m., Monday through Saturday, but do not have a date on which the hours will change. We have operational challenges that need to be resolved before making the change. We currently do not have plans to open earlier on the weekends because of other operational challenges.

KEEP ON ROCKIN’ IN THE FREE WORLD (AND IN THE PSFC)

Hi fellow members,

I have a cute short story and media I wanted to share... not sure if it will qualify for posting:

I work in the Membership Office and on my last shift this May I took a call from a fellow Coop member, who explained he was missing some shifts because he was going on tour. Working in the music industry, I naturally asked which tour—he and his choir were invited to play on the nationwide Neil Young tour. What a coincidence! I was going to see Neil Young twice that week (ended up actually being three). He said he's Reverend Billy Talen and the Stop Shopping Choir, many of whom are Coop members. Neil Young had just plucked them out of the blue and asked them to go on tour with him. I always knew there were various people who worked in the music industry among Coop members, but how serendipitous that I picked up this call and was going to see this show, and that most of the group were Coop members!

Just wanted to share videos of them playing in support of Neil Young in Bridgeport, Connecticut and to acknowledge their achievement and their awesome message of stop climate change/save the Earth!

Thanks,
Natalie Freilich

POETRY OF POLITICS

To the *Linewaiters' Gazette*:

Please keep politics out of the Coop;

it does not improve the store.

Just a world more full of weeping

knocking on the door.

Rodger Parsons

LET'S PIVOT BACK TOWARD OUR STRENGTHS

Dear Park Slope Food Coop,

I have seen a flood of letters with regard to the deadly crisis in the Middle East—letters supporting Israel, letters Supporting Palestine, letters calling for a boycott and letters opposing one. Clearly, members of the Coop have many different ideas.

Regardless of what we believe, the Park Slope Food Coop likely cannot solve the problem, and continued debate will only serve to divide and anger our members. Rather, we should focus our energies not on what we cannot solve, but on what we can: supporting our local farms, fighting food insecurity in our own neighborhood, preaching about sustainable food and farming and helping other food coops get started.

Individual members should feel free to support Israel, Palestine, both or neither. But no member should feel that the Coop is not a safe haven to shop. Let's concentrate on what we do best.

David Meltzer

A THIRD WAY: ENGAGEMENT

Dear Coop,

As our Coop members passionately explore a path to promote a peaceful future for Palestinians and Israelis, I want to highlight grassroots, civil society-based groups working on the ground that are worthy of our encouragement as they make a positive difference in people's lives through direct engagement with each other.

Standing Together is a movement mobilizing Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel against the occupation and for peace, equality and social justice. Co-lead by an Israeli and a Palestinian, this group bravely confronts critical issues head on. The Abraham Initiatives' mission is to advance social inclusion and equal rights for Israel's Palestinian citizens in order to promote a more just society existing alongside an independent, sovereign Palestinian state. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel promotes human rights and civil liberties for everyone in Israel *and* in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Recognizing the practical need to address environmental issues that do not abruptly stop at a community's border, the Arava Institute, currently lead by a Palestinian, brings Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians together in graduate studies while confronting their political and cultural differences.

These are just a few examples of humans on the ground, dealing directly with each other. Disengaging from one another is not an option they are willing to take.

In cooperation,
Steven Gold

GROUNDHOG DAY: THE WAR WITHIN THE COOP

Dear Members,

Twelve years ago, in March of 2012, the Coop held a large and very expensive meeting that required security arrangements in order to vote on whether to hold a referendum on boycotting Israeli products. The outcome was a definitive vote against such a

referendum in favor of cohesiveness, and against divisiveness, within the Coop.

Like the *Dobbs* decision that reversed what was considered settled law concerning abortion, the Coop's current activism by those determined to reverse the anti-referendum vote are back again and if they fail again who knows how many times they will resurface to make still another such proposal, put the Coop in offensive social turmoil and waste Coop time and financial resources.

And given the very minimal relevance of this movement to the Coop's purpose and values, why should this proposal even be allowed to come to the floor a second time?

Recently, a growing number of academic institutions, the primary sites of BDS activism, are refusing to adopt the BDS agenda, which includes banning association with Israeli scholars and universities, in favor of their core purpose of education and academic debate.

And predictably, anti-Israel activists are becoming increasingly destructive and anti-American, burning Israeli and American flags outside the NYC Israeli embassy and defacing the Brooklyn Museum and the homes of the museum's president and Jewish board members with red paint, labeling them "white supremacist Zionists," among the many incidents,.

Finally, note that since January 2009, the Gazette has published 377,684 words concerning this marginally relevant topic, likely dramatically more than any other subject.

On the basis of the arguments provided above, I urge the agenda committee and the board of directors to refuse a second attempt to bring the BDS proposal to a vote.

Sylvia Lowenthal

TRUTH AND/OR CONSEQUENCES

Dear Members,

The internet makes it possible to retrieve all kinds of information practically instantaneously. It's also excellent for spreading misinformation and disinformation, also known as untruths, false statements or lies.

We are all human and we all want to believe the things that support our confirmation biases. We owe it to ourselves to be curious and to verify things before hitting the "like" button or sharing with others. It's even more important to verify when dealing with content that informs our actions and opinions.

Our *Linewaiters' Gazette* and our General Meetings are also platforms that are susceptible for spreading disinformation and misinformation. A member could knowingly or unknowingly repeat an untruth. The Coop should not be a platform for false information. Who should be responsible for ensuring this doesn't happen?

The onus should fall on the member. I suggest that if a member provided a statement to the *Gazette* or the GM, and the statement is later demonstrated to be untrue or incomplete or misleading, that member should lose the privilege of publishing and speaking to the GM for at least one year.

This is a harsh consequence for lying. But if free speech is valued, then it also must be true and accurate and falsehoods should have a cost. Our Coop platforms should not be carelessly abused.

Barbara Mazor

IN DEFENSE OF A PROPOSED BOYCOTT

To the Editors,

I'm a long-time Coop member. I remember when the Coop chose to boycott grapes. Though I adored grapes, I decided that justice was more important than my taste buds. I was a teacher at Smith College during the apartheid struggle in South Africa. I taught my classes in the administration building, occupied by the students. I worked with students, faculty and administration to call a five college teach-in that resulted in significant divestment from South Africa. I was at the Coop meeting that voted not to vote on the current BDS movement. Since then I have been silent. But I do believe that Israel, a state, is doing itself and Jews—and I am a Jew—and the ideas of Judaism, a grave disservice by its eight-month attack, its targeting of hospitals, universities, homes, refugee camps. By its inability to defeat the great violence of Oct. 7 with the greater violence of this relentless assault with U.S. weapons. My concern for the welfare of all people makes me believe in the justice of a BDS Movement that would urge the state of Israel to change its ways. BDS is a nonviolent movement, and the Coop is a nonviolent space, with rancor toward none, good food for all. Would that we could do more to help all those facing starvation. Nevertheless, we are not demanded to finish the work, neither are we allowed to abandon the nonviolent work for justice that lies at the heart of Judaism.

Yours in peace,

Karen Malpede

THE COOP DOES NOT BOYCOTT ISRAEL

Coop members,

Park Slope Food Coop does not boycott Israel in any form and it never will. For good reason. Public boycott advocates (PBAs) here and / or outside PSFC are...

Anti-PSFC: A member at the latest Open Forum openly called for division inside PSFC instead of unity, saying "This is a divisive time," as if it proved something; Another member in the last *Gazette* sneered at cooperative volunteer labor here as "a veneer of virtue."

Anti-working class and anti-creative class: Masked assailants with weapons locked workers inside at Columbia University and physically harassed security workers at Brooklyn Museum, then left behind damaged buildings and artwork for low-wage immigrant employees to clean up.

Pro-violent threats: PBAs splashed the Brooklyn Museum's Jewish leaders' houses with paint and painted red triangles (Hamas' trademark targeting symbol).

Pro Jew-hatred: At the NOVA Music Festival Exhibition, I personally witnessed Hamas supporters and PBAs happily celebrating together outside calling for more Jewish deaths.

Pro-terror: PBAs at PSFC have never ever criticized the truce-breaking, LGBT-murdering, mediievally misogynistic, terror-campaign of Hamas towards Jews and Palestinians alike.

Those against boycotting Israel stand naturally with PSFC's mission of non-violence and cooperation, yet the rest of PSFC's response has been inadequate. Everyone, floor members, GC's, staff, etc., please speak up!

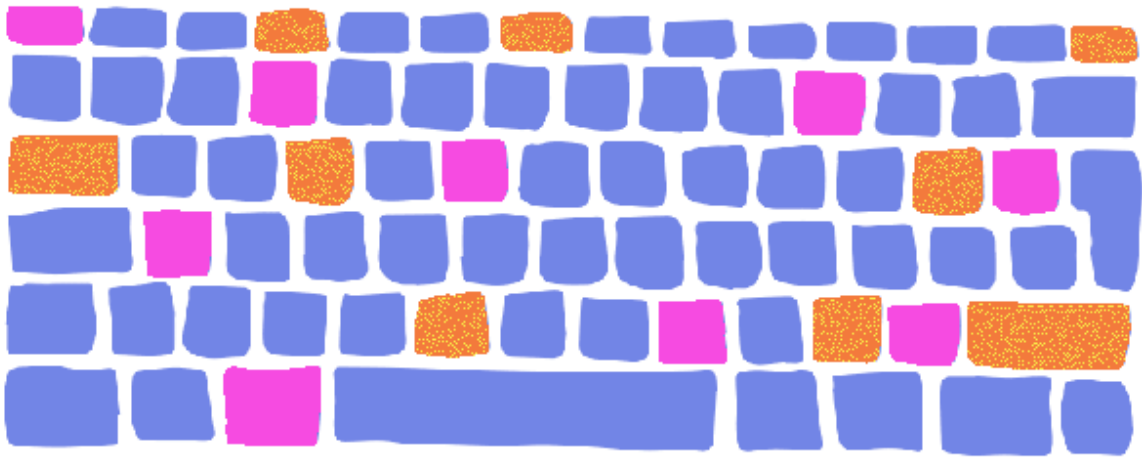
Those of you who have signed boycott of Israel petitions may have had no idea what you were supporting. If you can, remove your name and then help to keep BDS outside our Coop.

Jesse Rosenfeld

MAY 21, 2024

August 14, 2024

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Editor's note: The Gazette acknowledges that a math error was published in Morgan Vö's April 30th letter and in Dena Beard's letter below. Both letters claim that only .015% of members can assemble at our General Meetings, when in fact the correct number is 1.5%.

Keep Our Ramps Wild and Wonderful

FELLOW RAMP ENTHUSIASTS,

Ramps are an exciting and fleeting marker that warm weather has finally arrived and harvest season is around the corner. The fact that they are a native species that can only be foraged, and their season is so short, makes each bunch special.

However, I noticed that the ramps the Coop sells come with the bulb and root intact.

The bulbs are like the heart of a ramp—they're what make them grow. Harvesting the entire bulb and roots prevents the plant from regenerating in future years.

According to responsible foraging practices, ramps should be snipped from the leaves only to allow the bulb to grow a new plant in future years. Some botanists also recommend taking only one of the two leaves of the plant—leaving the remaining leaf to photosynthesize.

It takes several years for ramps to mature. If you couple bad foraging practices with over-harvesting due to extreme demand, there's a real risk that patches will be depleted and ramps will become extinct.

I'm concerned our current supplier may not be engaging in sustainable and conservation-minded foraging practices. According to my research, NJ-based Meadows and More, which is carried by Farm to People and Fresh Direct, offers responsibly foraged ramps. Perhaps there are additional suppliers.

Shouldn't we be leading the charge in demanding responsible foraging practices? If we want ramps on our plates each spring, we've got to give them a fighting chance to regrow.

Together, we can ensure that ramps stick around for generations to come.

In cooperation,

Return Policy

DEAR MEMBERS:

The Food Coop allows returns of certain products within 30 days of purchase, provided that you have the Paid-In-Full receipt. This **MUST** be presented, per policy.

I use a debit card to pay for items and after reconciling my receipt, recycle the receipt.

Some items, like a product in a glass jar or can, may not have an apparent problem until you use it. In my case, two glass product jars had caps on too tight to open, even after using hot water, grip cloths, and jar openers.

I have no problem with the time limitation. But I asked the Office if they could provide a copy of the paid receipt and the answer was no.

I am curious if it is the case that the Office doesn't store paid receipts or perhaps could store the receipts to assist members with returns.

Perhaps the Coop would consider elective electronic receipts so that we don't have to print out receipts for members who don't need the paper. The electronic receipts could be sent to a member's email. Many stores have this option. This can save a lot of paper.

Thank you for your consideration of the above.

*In Cooperation,
Stewart Pravda*

Contra Assertions of Coop Leadership, Its Bylaws Do Not Bar Hybrid General Meetings

DEAR MEMBERS,

At April's General Meeting, a member led a welcome discussion about making the Coop more accessible to working families and other members who are less able to fulfill work requirements and physically attend General Meetings. Her proposal was met with spirited approval. Several members shared encouraging ideas. Everyone in the packed Picnic House agreed that more of our nearly 16,000 members should be "in the room" for Coop General Meetings.

And then the Coop's General Manager took the mic to temper enthusiasm for a hybrid meeting option (i.e., in-person and online). "Read the bylaws," he admonished. General Manager Joe Holtz reminded us that our bylaws, written in the 1970s by a lawyer-member, require all votes be cast "in person." And so, he intimated, the Coop cannot simply approve holding its meetings online.

Well, I have read the bylaws. And the Coop's meeting guide. I've also consulted with a fellow lawyer who advises New York cooperatives like ours.

Our bylaws state: *"All votes shall be cast in person and no proxy voting shall be permitted...however...the Board may...direct that a mail ballot be taken"* In other words, all votes must be cast personally, not by "proxy," and during the General Meeting—except when the Board directs voting by mail.

New York law, which governs the Coop, agrees. State law specifically says that "in person" presence at board meetings is fulfilled via any technology that allows everyone participating to hear each other contemporaneously, i.e., conference calls, Zoom, etc.

Though they were drafted in the 1970s, the Coop's bylaws continue to serve us well - today. The good news is state law and our bylaws tell us that our "in person" voting requirement is met equally by physical *and* online presence at General Meetings.

Onwards,
M.J. Williams, Esq.

Hybrid Meetings Will Provide True Inclusion

DEAR ALL:

I'm writing in support of the proposal to allow hybrid (online and in-person) General Meetings, which at the time of my writing has been obstructed from being heard for several months. As a Coop member-owner with disabilities, this proposal is personally important to me, as well as important to the health and vibrancy of the Coop as a whole.

At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, disability communities noted that schools, workplaces and other organizations, which had previously balked at providing virtual and hybrid options as disability accommodations, suddenly found ways to make that approach work. Many, including myself, hoped organizations would learn from this—and many have continued to provide hybrid options. It's disheartening to see that the Coop has backslid and, despite clearly having the capacity to conduct virtual meetings, the Agenda Committee and General Coordinators are digging in heels rather than embracing the opportunity to truly include all members of our community.

It's also worth noting that, as a place of business, the Coop may have obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act to ensure equal access and communication for members with disabilities. I wouldn't want the Coop to run afoul of the law; and even

more so, as a community that purports to care about its members, I would hope the Coop wouldn't want to be in violation of the spirit of the law and of inclusivity.

This proposal is deeply important to members with disabilities, as well as parents, caregivers and many others. All of us deserve to participate in the Coop's General Meetings and policymaking. I hope the Coop will finally allow members to hear the hybrid proposal at a General Meeting, and I urge everyone to vote in favor.

*In cooperation,
CJ Glackin*

Bullying and Mockery at General Meeting

TO THE EDITOR:

I attended the April General Meeting and wanted to share something I heard there. I have been a Coop member for 5 years, but have not attended a GM previously. What I heard was a group attending the meeting laughing at multiple speakers. The laughter was not at jokes or awkward pauses. They were laughing with derision. They were laughing over people with whom they disagreed. I find their behavior unacceptable and creating a hostile atmosphere at what is supposed to be an inclusive community meeting. I also worry that their bullying will discourage members from speaking at the GM.

I ask that in future meetings if this or other groups attempt to menace our fellow members, those running the meeting do not tolerate it. I plan to be at my second meeting as soon as possible and hope to not see this behavior again.

*Thanks,
Nathalie Hirschtritt*

Is the Coop a Welcoming Environment for Its Muslim Members?

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Last month, while walking aisles of the Coop, my young daughter asked, “Why are there no things for Ramadan at the Coop?”

I turned to her, surprised.

She pointed to the endcap. “Here—where the Coop always puts the Christmas and Easter and Hanukkah stuff... you know.” I gave her a response about how Ramadan isn’t a consumer holiday (yes, she understands what that means), and we moved on to croissants.

See, growing up Muslim in NYC, I never expected my Muslimness to be affirmed, represented or even acknowledged positively in spaces like our grocery store.

In fact, a few weeks earlier, the night before the first of Ramadan, the Coop didn’t even have any dates on the shelf, let alone anything else that acknowledged the start of Ramadan. Yes, maybe there were some in the basement. Yes, maybe there were lots of other Muslim Coop members shopping for their Ramadan dates that night, but still: The night before Ramadan, there were no dates on the shelves.

That night, I realized that the Coop was a place that maybe didn’t want me—or at least didn’t know me, or didn’t care to.

This Ramadan, as I watched Muslims across the sea be slaughtered, I wondered: Is the Coop, whose ethos is about community and cooperation, concerned at all for its Muslim members and whether they feel safe and welcome in its climate of silence, erasure and “neutrality”?

My daughter's question was a hopeful one. She didn't see any reason why Ramadan items wouldn't be displayed prominently in her grocery store where the Christmas and Hanukkah items go.

She's right. We deserve to feel welcome, safe and affirmed in our Coop, too. I thank PSFC for Palestine for their advocacy that makes us feel less alone.

With hope,

A fellow Coop member

(The author of this letter has requested their name be omitted for safety reasons.)

Let's Stick to Our Mission: Trust and Respect for All!

FELLOW MEMBERS,

I have been a member of our cherished Coop for about 8 years. I value our cooperation. I love being a part of a trusted neighborhood institution. Our Coop works because we work together, despite our differences. The mission statement reads: "Working together builds trust through cooperation. We strive to make the Coop welcoming and accessible to all and to respect the opinions, needs and concerns of every member."

However, since some members reignited efforts to join the BDS movement I have not felt trust or safety in the building. On the eve of Passover, I visited the Coop to pick up some last-minute things for my Seder, one of which was matzah. As I placed the box of matzah made in Jerusalem in my cart, I had an overwhelming wave of fear pass over me. What if someone were to challenge my purchase because I chose the Israeli matzah? Was I prepared to discuss and defend my purchase? No one should experience fear of confrontation within our Coop walls, especially when purchasing a

food needed to celebrate one's religion.

This issue is far too divisive and will rot our precious community. Let's preserve trust and safety. Can we please put the BDS talk to rest? Each member can make their own informed choice of what to purchase. Let's practice what we preach!

Abigail Greenbaum

My Bamba, My Choice

DEAR EDITOR:

I buy EcoLove Shampoo and Conditioner at the Coop. They are beautiful, environmentally-sound, Israeli products. As an Israeli, I am proud of the innovation and to have them at my Coop. The movement to stop selling Israeli products at the Coop is profoundly triggering to me and it makes me feel like I do not belong at the Coop, that there is no room for an Israeli person among its members. I am not alone. The message is, "If it's from there, we don't want it here."

I wonder, when US governmental policies led to the separation of children from their parents at the US/Mexico border, and toddlers were subsequently held in cages, how many Coop members deeply opposed this policy, and how many were horrified by the actions of the first Trump presidency, and how many still had the privilege to continue to earn a livelihood notwithstanding the actions of their government, and their deep opposition thereto?

The privilege of being psychologically troubled without an actual disruption to your life is not lost on us. If you think that ending the nightmare in the Middle East will be the result of a Bamba boycott and it makes you feel better not to buy it, then don't. I'd like to, though.

Discovering Joy in Al Arz Tahini: A Delicious Recipe Inside!

FELLOW SHOPPERS,

I hope this letter finds you well and within arm's reach of the delightful creaminess of one of my favorite Coop products: Al Arz Tahini! There's something about its smooth texture and rich flavor that brings my palate great joy.

If you have yet to discover this gem while browsing the aisles, you can find it nestled near the nut butters. Not only does it satisfy my cravings, but it also carries a meaningful story of inclusivity and support for human rights. Did you know it's made by an Israeli Arab who champions LGBT rights? It's truly inspiring to see a product that not only tastes great but also stands for something meaningful.

Now, onto a delicious and quick tahini recipe that's one of my favorites, a Date Tahini Smoothie:

Ingredients:

- 2 cups of your favorite milk
- 1 frozen banana, sliced
- 4 pitted frozen dates
- ¼ cup of Al Arz Tahini
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Dash of sea salt
- Ice cubes

Instructions:

1. In a blender, combine the milk, banana, dates, tahini, vanilla extract and sea salt.
2. Blend until smooth, adding ice cubes as desired for thickness.
3. Pour into a glass, take a sip, and savor the creamy goodness of standing against BDS and supporting products that promote unity and understanding.

I hope you give this product a try! Here's to spreading love, inclusivity, and delicious flavors with every jar of Al Arz Tahini.

*In cooperation,
Tali Rasis*

On Antisemitism

DEAR FELLOW COOP MEMBERS:

To all those labeling the BDS campaign as antisemitic, your accusations are contributing to an international campaign of dangerous misinformation and fearmongering. You endanger Jews by degrading the meaning of antisemitism, which everyone should take seriously. In 2021, a distinguished group of Holocaust, Jewish studies and Middle Eastern studies scholars convened in Jerusalem to craft a comprehensive definition of the term—a corrective to definitions of antisemitism which wrongly conflate Judaism with Zionism.

The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism states: “Supporting the Palestinian demand for justice and the full grant of their political, national, civil and human rights” is NOT antisemitic. Neither is “evidence-based criticism of Israel.” Also included in the declaration: “Boycott, divestment and sanctions are commonplace, non-violent forms

of political protest against states. In the Israeli case they are not, in and of themselves, antisemitic.”

Disingenuous rhetoric forces us to clarify language when it is weaponized in bad faith. Accusing PSFC Members for Palestine of being “violent” or “antisemitic” is akin to reducing the brave students currently protesting on their campuses against genocide to “outside” and “violent” “agitators.” There is no violence in demanding divestment from complicit institutions, no violence in demanding justice for a state that has murdered over 40,000 Palestinians in less than seven months. However, it is harmful and dangerous to falsely accuse such movements of threatening the safety of others, as when our fellow Coop members coordinated a campaign threatening the Brooklyn College Tow Center with violence if they rented it to the PSFC for a boycott discussion. Such campaigns produce a dampening effect on our ability to engage in genuine debate, and bring a carceral logic into our community that enables the kinds of violent crackdown on peaceful protest that we are seeing all across the world.

Read more on the JDA [here](#).

From Jewish Coop members,

Harry August, Alyce Barr, Anya Bernstein, Mischa Berlin, Naomi Brussel, Allison Chomet, Jesse Daniels, Susanna de Martino, Moriah Engelberg, Andy Fidoten, Naomi Fischer, Tal Frieden, Aaron Friedman, Caroline Friedman, Claire Glass, Sophie Glickman, Willa Glickman, Hannah Gold, Maurice Goldberg, Phoebe Helander, Rachel Levenson, Madeleine Levin, Jake Lichter, Julian Meltzer, HanaKyle Moranz, Mallory Muratore, Willy Naess, Todd Neufeld, Aaron Posner, Bob Rosen, Gemma Sack, Djuna Schamus, Rebecca Schoenberg-Jones, Mai Schotz, Zachary Schulman, Monroe Street Schostal, Hillela Simpson, Adam Thoma-Perry, Jess Wachtler, Carol Wald, Fay Walker, M.J. Williams

Coop Unity

DEAR FELLOW COOP MEMBERS:

If you are reading this letter, then you already are aware there is a group of members who are exploiting Coop resources to promote the highly divisive and controversial BDS Movement. This movement includes the unlawful, destructive and violent demonstrations at US college campuses that occurred at the end of April 2024. The BDS Movement's goal is to eliminate the State of Israel and return Jews to a condition of powerlessness.

If you agree the Park Slope Food Coop should not be used as a forum for BDS, you are not alone. We have joined together to preserve the Coop community's cohesiveness. We are Pro-Peace, Pro-Coexistence, Pro-Coop.

We are Coop Members for Unity. You can join us and learn more at this link.

Barbara Mazor

Coop Members for Unity

Let the Coop Be Unified Against Genocide

TO THE EDITOR:

Recent letters have called for a unified Coop—one that values diversity and welcomes all. Disguised by these familiar terms for progressive values is an underlying demand to support Israel by purchasing its products. According to those who call for unity, this support must be unconditional. If not, the Coop will be disunited, uninclusive, even anti-Semitic. If we follow this logic, this support must continue while Israel commits

genocide against Palestinians, killing over 30,000—including over 15,000 children; it must continue while Israel allows and fosters illegal settlements on stolen Palestinian land; it must continue while Israel blocks virtually all food and medical aid from entering Gaza and creates famine; it must continue while Israel denies equal rights to its Palestinian citizens, keeping them under military rule; it must continue while Israel surveils and arrests and imprisons Palestinian children and adults without charges; it must continue while Israel remains a separate and unequal state where Palestinian Israelis cannot even travel on the same roads as Jewish Israelis.

Is there another country that supplies Coop products, a country that is committing similar atrocities? Is there another apartheid state that sells its goods to the Coop? If so—we must immediately unify to boycott products from such countries, just as we must now unify to boycott Israeli products.

May we use our cooperation to repair the world,
Alyce Barr

Consistent Foreign Policy

DEAR FELLOW MEMBERS:

Not that I'm in favor of the Coop having a foreign policy, but if we have one, we should be consistent about our beliefs.

If a boycott of Israeli goods should be adopted, the Coop should also boycott all goods from:

1. The People's Republic of China, because of their genocidal treatment of the Uighurs and Tibetans, and its repression of the people of Hong Kong.
2. The Russian Federation, because of its unnecessary war of aggression against

Ukraine, their illegal annexation of Crimea, and their continued occupation of portions of the Republic of Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, in defiance of international law, and their bans on LGBTQ+ movements and imprisonment of LGBTQ+ activists.

3. The Kingdom of Morocco, because of their continued occupation of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, in defiance of international law, and its imprisonment of LGBTQ+ people.
4. The Republic of Turkiye, because of its continued oppression of its Kurdish minority.
5. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, because of its treatment of its only legitimate opposition party, including barring its candidate from the next election on no legitimate grounds.
6. The Republic of Azerbaijan, because of its ethnic cleansing and oppression of its Armenian minority in Nagorno-Karabakh.
7. The Republic of Serbia, because of its continued denial of independence to the ethnic-Albanian inhabitants of Kosovo.
8. The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, because of its military coup and refusal to accept the results of its democratic 2021 election.
9. Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen, because of their direct assault on international, including American, shipping in the Red Sea.
10. Iran, Iraq and Pakistan, because they level the death penalty for LGBTQ+ relationships.
11. Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Nigeria, Togo, Ghana, Liberia, Senegal, Mauritania, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for imprisonment of LGBTQ+ people.

Greg Costikyan

Let's Give Institutional Neutrality Its Due

DEAR *LINEWAITERS' GAZETTE*,

Institutional neutrality will keep any issue which offers no tangible benefit out of the Coop. BDS is one such issue. They have turned up the heat but offer little light in the discussion. Union Street is not the Middle East.

Iran and Hamas have no intention of making peace and mostly foment terror. Don't - make the Coop a battleground. There are plenty of places to go for that game.

The Coop is a beacon of how sensible management works. Politics can spoil the fruit of years of patient and loving labor. The best way forward is keeping outside issues outside the Coop.

Rodger Parsons

Democracy, Guardrails and the Coop

DEAR COOP MEMBERS:

One thing I find so interesting about the Coop is that it serves as a social experiment in democracy, testing how democratic principles can be effectively implemented. Different countries and organizations apply democracy in various ways, but at its core, it emphasizes the rule of the majority, ensuring decision-making reflects the collective will and is grounded in equality and fairness. In other words, merely calling yourself a democracy doesn't make you one; you need to stay true to its core principle. This principle is that every member's vote contributes equally to shaping our policies and laws, balancing majority interests with protections for minority rights.

In our Coop, applying democracy means not just following majority rule but also installing guardrails to protect the basic rights of all community members. For example, a decision to boycott certain products should consider the impact on members who

find these products a core part of their identity. This raises a difficult question: What is more important in democracy, the basic rights that should never be compromised, or majority rule? Ideally, when these work together, democracy is at its best.

We should strive to achieve this balance if we are truly serious about democracy. This is indeed a process, but to move in that direction, I suggest adding a guardrail to avoid boycotting products based on ethnicity.

Sincerely,
Yuval Inselberg

A Practical Solution to the Coop's GM Venue Issue

DEAR MEMBERS,

Considering that less than .015% of our membership can assemble at our current General Meeting ("GM") venue, it's discouraging that the Coop's administration has given up on finding a larger venue for GMs with popular agenda items. Instead, it's using difficulties with renting a venue as a means to prevent popular agenda items from being presented to our membership.

I invite the General Coordinators ("GCs") to prove me wrong, but I have particular insight into this issue.

As readers might recall, I direct Brooklyn College's Tow Theater, which the Coop sought to rent for two different Coop meetings. Because one of these meetings concerned a boycott of certain Israeli goods, a dozen Coop members, opposed to this boycott, falsely claimed Brooklyn College would witness violence if it hosted the meeting. These threats worked, and Brooklyn College will no longer rent to the Coop. Still, I offered to assist the GCs with finding another venue, as long as they would ensure

Coop members would not harass another institution. The GCs rebuffed my offer. Moreover, the GCs have clarified that they will do nothing to prevent members from engaging in intimidation tactics that interfere with Coop business and democratic processes. Since October 2023, the GCs have managed to find only my venue, will not accept help with finding another location and will permit Coop members to sabotage future rentals with violent threats.

As a result, when the Coop administration tells a member that their GM proposal requires a larger venue, the administration is really saying that the member proposal will not be heard.

We should reject suppression of our democratic process and demand the Coop administration place all member proposals onto GM agendas. A practical and productive solution that circumvents this censorship is holding online or online/live GMs. Let's do it!

Dena Beard

DEAR COOP MEMBERS,

I attended the April GM, where I heard several comments referencing a letter from Dena Beard in the April 30th issue of the *Linewaiters' Gazette*. I am extremely disturbed by the incident reported in that letter and would like to alert my fellow members to the urgency of correcting the problems it highlights. In brief, following Joe Holtz's announcement at the March GM that the Brooklyn College Tow Center was a possible venue for a future GM involving a BDS proposal, Coop members who oppose the proposal contacted the Brooklyn College administration and used scare tactics to scuttle the arrangement. As a result, Brooklyn College will not rent to us.

In other words, Coop members who are afraid of the results if we follow the democratic decision-making process mandated in our bylaws successfully intervened to sabo-

tage that process. This sets a very dangerous precedent, especially if this serious breach of cooperative principles goes unchallenged. Making a bad situation even worse, the episode caused negative professional consequences for Dena herself.

When one member raised this matter at the April GM, General Coordinator Ann Herpel replied that people are free to file a complaint with the Dispute Resolution Committee. She then spoke of a recent email in which she cautioned members against contacting potential meeting venues, either to facilitate arrangements or to lobby against a rental—as though the two sorts of “infraction” were somehow comparable.

I had hoped the GCs would offer more constructive leadership in this situation by making clear that threats of violence and obstruction of Coop operations are unacceptable and uncooperative. Absent that messaging, we the members are still faced with the pressing task that Dena’s letter outlines: “It is essential that we find ways to renew the Coop’s democracy.”

*In cooperation,
Kumru Toktamis*

One Response to Allegations of a “Coordinated Campaign” of Intimidation regarding BDS Discussion

DEAR EDITOR:

In a letter titled “Coop Members Engage in Intimidation Campaign” (Apr. 30, *Linewaiters’ Gazette*) Dena Beard writes she “received 11 voicemails and was forwarded an email sent to senior Brooklyn College leadership that urged them to deny rental requests by the PSFC.” The rental request was for discussion of BDS. Ms. Beard further implies that she initiated the availability of her workplace, The Tow Center, stating “I offered space to help the Coop carry out its member-driven operations.”

Ms. Beard states she believes the communications were a “coordinated campaign” and “each message suggested that violence would occur if the college rented to the PSFC.” She does not state which party the callers indicated could be violent. She does not produce any quote from the email to support her claim. She provides no evidence for what she describes as “being bullied and harassed,” “intimidation tactics” and “adversely affected professionally.”

If Ms. Beard feels intimidated by a few voicemails, then surely she must understand how some Coop members feel about using Coop resources to promote the annihilationist BDS movement. In light of the recent violent campus pro-BDS demonstrations, concern about violence coming from the BDS side is not unreasonable. Brooklyn College is a publicly funded institution and New Yorkers have a right to voice their opinion on how it is used.

Avishay Mazor

Ignore a Boycott's Impact on Members at Our Own Peril

DEAR MEMBERS:

The rise of antisemitism in Brooklyn should concern everyone in our community. The suggested boycott of Israeli goods is a divisive issue, unsupported by many members. The divisiveness is causing unnecessary personal anguish to many members of our community. Ignoring the impact is a deliberate choice.

It is critical that we abide by the Coop's democratic model and debate this issue in a civil way, in accordance with our rules and bylaws. I have personally witnessed and heard about the harassment of members of our community. For example, a member was yelled at in line simply for being Israeli and not supportive of the BDS movement. Though I believe that people should promote the causes they believe in, the intima-

tion of other members is unacceptable and not in line with the spirit of the Coop.

I am against this boycott, aligned with BDS, which not only targets Israeli products but also organizations and grassroots initiatives like Peace Now. I don't believe the ideas promoted by BDS are aligned with the Coop's values. Israeli products are a small part of the wonderful international offerings of our local Coop and part of why I love shopping here. I also value the diversity of the Coop community, which has members from all over the world and borough.

Though, of course, individual members should remain free to make buying choices that align with their values, I opposed implementing this on a Coop-wide level. There are atrocities happening globally; to single out Israel seems unjustified. While I understand the intent behind the boycott is a peaceful protest, bringing this debate to our Coop seeds division. We should engage democratically, respecting each other's viewpoints and following cooperative principles. Cooperation is at the core of our community, not confrontation and shouting at people you disagree with.

Diana Chase

Let's Build Community, Not Destroy It

DEAR FELLOW COOP MEMBERS,

Since joining the Coop just two years ago, one of the things that I have found most striking is the true diversity of thought, which seems to exist in fewer and fewer spaces as our world becomes more divisive. If we adopt BDS, we will alienate member-owners who may not agree with the movement's tactics or objectives. Our Coop should strive to be inclusive and welcoming to all members, regardless of their political beliefs.

BDS unfairly singles out and demonizes Israel, undermining efforts towards peace and dialogue. By endorsing BDS, the Coop would take a stance on a highly complex and contentious issue, potentially polarizing our community and detracting from our shared goals of sustainability, social responsibility, and creating community.

Instead of endorsing BDS, I believe our Coop should focus on fostering dialogue and understanding around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Let's work together to build a more inclusive and united community, where diverse perspectives are respected and celebrated.

Aaron Karas

Community, the Antidote

FELLOW MEMBERS,

These past several months have been some of the loneliest of my life.

Jews are 0.2% of the world's population. Our voices are easily drowned out by the masses, and many of us are afraid to speak up. We watch our neighbors stay silent as antisemitism rages throughout our city and our world. But the loudest voices are not always the right ones.

So, today, I am using my voice. Maybe it will reach beyond the noise.

Most of my family lives in Israel, the homeland of the Jewish people. They are not monsters targeting civilians and committing genocide as several Coop members have stated, as if their libel is decided fact. My Israeli family members are good, loving people. They left their families to fight in a war they did not start or wish for. They fight to protect their children from terrorism and to return our community's kidnapped people.

I walk the streets here, surrounded by antisemitic graffiti on lampposts and buildings. I watch as Jewish students around the country are intimidated and harassed at school, while “peaceful” student protestors are thanked by Hamas and the Islamic Republic of Iran. And I see the insidious rot of antisemitism taking root in our beautiful Coop under the guise of the BDS movement.

I wonder—is this community, this neighborhood, this city, this country, a place where I belong? Should I abandon my home here?

But then, I remember the resilience of the Jewish people. The antidote to the hatred is more community, more connection, and more togetherness, not less. We will lean on our non-Jewish community members who see truth past deception and seek unity over division.

And as Jews have done for over three thousand years, we will lean on each other.

Jonathan Aranov

Taking Issue with Selective Fact-Checks

DEAR EDITOR:

I was disappointed to read the following in an article covering the February GM:

“[Member Jesse Rosenfeld] stated that the BDS website itself describes ‘armed resistance’ and ‘any action, whether one considers it legally or ethically justifiable.’ [Note: This reporter’s review and fact check of the BDS website did not find these words; rather, ‘non-violence’ and opposition to ‘discrimination, including anti-Semitism.’]”

Since the reporter did not fact check any other member statement quoted, it’s surprising to me that Rosenfeld’s line was singled out. It’s doubly surprising to me that the

reporter was unable to find support of armed resistance on BDS's site!

One search of the phrase "BDS armed resistance" led me to the statement put out by BDS on October 7th. The statement does not mention the mass kidnapping and murder of civilians, including infants, nor speak out against brutality and violence, but instead venerates the "powerful armed reaction" of that day, regardless of "how international law regulates it"—exactly as Rosenfeld said.

I encourage members to search and read for themselves. The statement is not hard to find, and it speaks clearly to BDS's perspective on violence and whether Jewish lives should be valued.

There is something uniquely upsetting about reading BDS's statement and knowing that, while it existed in plain sight, the *Gazette* reporter chose to ignore it and instead highlighted BDS's ostensible stance against antisemitism (which, even if it were true in practice, is irrelevant to their stance on armed resistance.)

If I may suggest: *Gazette* readers understand that quotes of members' statements and opinions are just that—statements and opinions. There's no need to fact check what members are saying, especially if fact checkers can't check without bias.

In cooperation,
Tamar Lindenbaum

The Board of Directors Failed Us on April 30

DEAR COOP MEMBERS:

My name is Ramon Maislen, and I'm running for the Board of Directors to ensure that the Coop is not put in legal or financial jeopardy.

Unfortunately, recent General Meetings (GMs) have put us at risk. The actions of PSFC Members for Palestine are detrimental to the Coop and prioritize personal agendas over Coop welfare. They are encouraging members to vote against Coop interests even when they are unrelated to a boycott.

Discussion at recent GMs has been devoted to discussion of boycotting a handful of products out of the thousands we sell rather than actual Coop issues.

At the April 30th GM this had real consequences. The General Coordinators spent months working on policies to strengthen the HR policies after it became apparent that the current policies were outdated and leave the Coop open to litigation. Joe Holtz made a compelling case as to the importance of passing agenda item: "Personnel Policies: Personnel Committee, and General Coordinator Roles." Despite the lack of credible counterarguments, the PSFC Members for Palestine voted as a bloc against the agenda item.

Sadly, what we've seen over the past few months is that a vocal minority is dominating the conversation. I encourage more members to come to the GMs and make sure that your voice is heard.

Critically, I believe that the Board of Directors (BOD) made the wrong decision in voting with the majority on April 30th. The BOD had an obligation to vote in favor of the Personnel Committee agenda item to ensure the Coop doesn't face potential litigation. I hope that you'll vote for Sondra Shaevitz and me (45 years of collective Coop membership) so that we can ensure that voting on agenda items is never tainted by political ideology.

Ramon Maislen

Want to Join Coop Members in an Upstate Summer Community?

DEAR MEMBERS,

Just want to give a shot out to my summer community upstate, a parallel universe to the Food Coop with lots of dual cooperators. Two hours out of the city, Lake Huntington Summer Community is retro (as in salsa and potlucks) and a great place to benignly neglect your kids while reading a good book or napping on a chaise. We're a loosely situated group of bigger houses and cottages on a communal 17-acre property in Sullivan County, a ten-minute drive to the Delaware River and the site of Woodstock. We have a great pool with lifeguard and gated shallow section; a beautiful lake for swimming, boating, and fishing; tennis courts; woods to roam; baseball and basketball; a playground; and, most importantly, a revolving cast of fun-loving kids, from toddlers to teens.

Check us out online at this link.

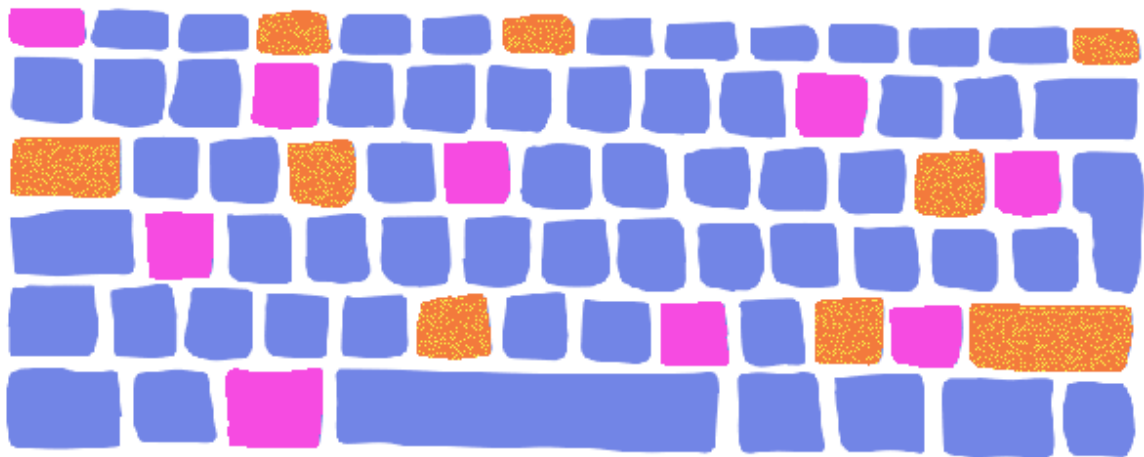
Hope to see you this summer!

Allie Pennell

APRIL 30, 2024

August 14, 2024

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Please Expand List of Vegan Foods

Dear Park Slope Food Coop,

As a vegan who has been a member of the Coop for over 20 years with a vegetarian daughter, I am of course very happy with the wonderful selection of fresh produce you carry year-round. But I am constantly disappointed by some of the packaged

products which are either lacking in options, or which have been discontinued.

For instance, for years the only real vegan jerky we have carried is the same extremely dry Primal Spirit sticks. There are many vegan jerky brands now—for instance Louisville Vegan Jerky, which can be found at Whole Foods and is excellent—and even Beyond has their own brand now. Please let's have more vegan jerky options!

Also, in the yogurt department we could really use more Silk soy yogurts or some other brand of soy yogurt, for instance a vanilla flavor and a plain soy yogurt. Forager is tasty, but cashew (and oat and coconut) yogurts have NO nutritional value—no protein or calcium. Soy is the most nutritious type of yogurt and milk for vegans.

Lastly, please bring back Sweet Earth Benevolent Bacon, Quorn Chiqin Fillets, and Meatless Grounds (vegetarian), Earth Balance Vegan Cheddar Flavor Squares, Wholly Veggie Buffalo Cauliflower Wings, Van Leeuwen vegan chocolate ice cream, and Mings Bings Plant-based Egg and Cheese flavor if possible. It would also be great if we could sell Impossible Burgers in addition to our other Impossible products.

*Thank you so much for considering,
Eva Airdjis*

Needed: More Transparency In Regards to General Coordinators Team

Dear Coop Members,

In the aftermath of General Manager Joe Holtz's suspension in the summer of 2022, Personnel Committee Member Jean Callahan was quoted in the *Gazette* as saying there were "deep and painful divides" within the Coop Coordinators group.

I wrote a letter to the *Gazette* that fall asking how the Coop could allow such discord to be hiding in our organization as we shopped and worked.

In the time since I heard nothing about the issue, so at the recent March General Meeting (GM) I asked about the situation. We were informed that the General Coordinators team has been working with the NY Peace Institute (an organization that promotes peace in our community). I said this was great, but it was too bad that it took my question at the GM almost two years later to learn about it.

We are now in the process of establishing new “Personnel Policies, Personnel Committee, and General Coordinator Roles.”

I think these procedures ought to include mechanisms for more transparency and communication between the coordinators, the Personnel Committee and the members, such that we are informed about things like the above, and more!

The membership deserves to be kept up to date about coordinator and Personnel Committee activity ongoingly. Not just when a major issue is percolating, a big decision is pending or a crisis is taking place. What about a report in every *Gazette* issue about what these people are thinking about, the projects they are working on and what they are discussing in their meetings?

Andy Feldman

Value of Walkers

To the editor:

As a Coop member for 22 years, I think the system of walkers has been one of the most useful and practical improvements that I’ve observed. I remember some letters that derided it, but it has truly stood the test of time.

I notice instances where shoppers are left waiting longer than necessary or practical. Wouldn’t it make sense to expand the number of people doing walking shifts at higher volume shopping times to eliminate long waits?

Nice opportunity for a pleasant walk while serving a useful purpose. All while giving your dog some exercise if you wish!

Cordially,
Saul D. Raw

Expanding Access to General Meetings

Dear Fellow Coop Members:

I'm writing to advocate for a proposal I submitted in December 2023 to make General Meetings hybrid (in-person and online).

I submitted this proposal to support member participation. Our current GM venue is the Prospect Park Picnic House, with a capacity of 240. Our membership is 15.5k, which means a maximum of 0.015% of us can participate in the Coop's policymaking on any given issue. The PSFC mission states that we "seek to maximize participation at every level." Given the precedent-setting pandemic-era online GMs, it's regrettable that we aren't utilizing everyday technologies to fulfill that mission.

Since submitting this proposal, I've talked with folks for whom expanded avenues of attendance are critical to their ability to help shape our Coop. These are people with accessibility needs, for whom travel can be burdensome and large gatherings potentially dangerous; caregivers, whether new parents or people with ailing family, who need to stay close to loved ones; members who live in different boroughs, or even different parts of the state or country. If these members contribute their labor, they deserve the opportunity to have a say in the Coop's governance.

Since submitting my proposal, I've been notified multiple times that I should prepare to present, only to be told that for one reason or another it has been taken off the agenda. The latest reason was that the Picnic House can't hold all the people who would want to talk about this proposal, and larger venues aren't available; I don't

take pleasure in this irony.

If you support this proposal, please reach out to our administration and let them know you'd like to see it come to the floor. We all deserve to participate, and to me, this proposal is straightforward common sense.

*In cooperation,
Morgan Võ*

Endorsing Ramon Maislen and Sondra Shaievitz for the Board of Directors

Dear Fellow Coop Members,

I would like to endorse Ramon Maislen and Sondra Shaievitz for the Board of Directors. Ramon and Sondra both spoke at the March GM. Their responses were clear, agreeable, and focused exclusively on the role.

I would gladly call them both "Pro-Coop."

Ramon and Sondra have many decades of membership experience between them. This sweat equity is important: I feel uneasy about so many other candidates since they have only a few years at the Coop and want to jump into such an important role. Some of them have admitted to only attending a few General Meetings, if at all. This role requires a deep-rooted understanding of our community and organization. That understanding can only be acquired through long-term experience, both in working shifts and in participating in our organizational processes.

Ramon and Sondra come with a great deal of experience in business and law. Their experience focusing on the legal and financial bottom line for our Coop is vital to our stability.

Ramon and Sondra appear fully capable of setting aside personal opinions for the

greater good of the PSFC. They accept what the Board role has always been, to simply approve the wishes of the general meeting and not to use it for activism inside or outside the Coop.

I encourage fellow members to support Ramon Maislen and Sondra Shaievitz by voting YES for them during the election. It's worth noting that according to PSFC's voting guidelines, you can vote YES for more than one candidate (two yeses, for example, is fine), and you can vote NO for as many as you'd like. Also important—candidates require more YES votes than NO votes to be elected.

*Sincerely,
Elia Jeifez*

What Happened to Jason Toothpaste?

Fellow Cooperators:

Did you notice the “new and improved” Jason toothpaste? We’ve tried three different flavors and they’re all disgusting.

I reached out to Hain Celestial, the parent company, and they provided the old and new ingredient lists. They’re almost completely different products: two thirds of the ingredients changed and the only ones to remain the same are water, glycerin, silica and stevia extract—and stevia jumped up from almost the bottom of the list to close to the top. (I think stevia is the ingredient that I find so disgusting.)

This is just a simple example of American capitalism. Someone makes a great product and builds up a small base of loyal customers, a large corporation buys them out, tries to expand market share by releasing a “new and improved” version that’ll appeal to the masses, and destroys the product in the process. This is why we can’t have nice things.

*Petty rant over,
Christopher Diamond*

Coop Members Engage in Intimidation Campaign

Dear Members,

I am a new member of the PSFC and the Director of the Tow Center at Brooklyn College.

The General Coordinators inquired about renting the Tow Center's theater on February 13, 2024, for a Coop-wide discussion about a boycott of Israeli products. They requested extra security, so I assured them that our events were overseen by a private security firm.

I attended the March GM for work credit, where Joe Holtz announced the Tow Center's theater as a potential meeting space, but also that the Coop would no longer need the venue. On March 27, Joe withdrew the inquiry. On April 1 though, Joe emailed me to see if the theater was still available.

Before that, from Friday, March 29, through Sunday, March 31, I received 11 voice-mails and was forwarded an email sent to senior Brooklyn College leadership that urged them to deny rental requests by the PSFC. This was clearly a coordinated campaign by Coop members opposed to any discussion of a boycott. All these communications followed a script; each message suggested that violence would occur if the college rented to the PSFC. Of course, based on these threats, Brooklyn College can no longer rent the theater to the Coop. Additionally, I've been adversely affected professionally and, since most of these messages were left by Coop members, I now feel much less comfortable at the PSFC. I offered space to help the Coop carry out its member-driven operations, and I do not appreciate being bullied and harassed.

How can the Coop have difficult conversations if intimidation tactics like these contin-

ue to obstruct discussions? It is essential that we find ways to renew the Coop's democracy.

Dena Beard

Voicing Dissent: Standing Against BDS Petition at Park Slope Coop

To the Editor,

In recent weeks, supporters of the BDS movement have been stationed prominently outside the Coop, actively soliciting signatures for a petition urging a boycott of Israeli products. One of them wrote to the *Gazette*, painting a rosy picture of the reception she received.

However, there's growing sentiment among some of us that this campaign is deeply offensive, fostering divisiveness within our Coop community and exhibiting shades of antisemitism. Attempts by at least one Coop member to engage with the BDS supporters and express his concerns were met with disregard. Members who have approached the front desk with their objections have been informed that while the Coop has received numerous complaints, it cannot prohibit petitioners from gathering signatures on the sidewalk.

While acknowledging the right of individuals and organizations to advocate for their causes outside the Coop, many of us are eager to voice our opposition within our community. The apparent silence of passersby should not be misconstrued as silent consent; rather, it reflects discomfort and disagreement with the BDS petition. Numerous Coop members, including friends and acquaintances, share this discomfort and wish to ensure that our dissenting voices are also heard.

In cooperation,
Maya Bodinger

Refusing Our Complicity

Dear Members,

During February's GM, it was suggested that we should donate to the aid group Anera instead of pushing for a boycott at the Coop. As of April 2nd, Anera announced that it would be pausing operations in Gaza following the IDF's targeted strikes of three World Central Kitchen vehicles on April 1st, which killed seven aid workers, as well as the killing of Anera aid worker, Mousa Shawwa, by an IDF strike on March 8th. These killings follow the indiscriminate slaughter of more than 33,000 Palestinians by IDF violence since October of last year.

Supporting relief efforts is necessary, as is stopping the ongoing genocide. When relief is being cut off and aid workers themselves are murdered, our focus must be to refuse our complicity in the violence that exacerbates the need for relief in the first place. We can and must do many things at once, including enacting a principled boycott of Israeli goods at the Coop.

*In cooperation,
Laura Henriksen*

A Ban on Israeli Products Threatens the Coop's Spirit of Inclusivity

Dear Editor:

My favorite thing about PSFC is the warmth and diversity of our community. As a cooperative of Brooklyn residents with a myriad of unique identities and perspectives, every one of us is joyfully accountable for the labor required to keep PSFC's doors open and our shelves stocked. For me, the privilege of having access to produce that's affordable, local and organic is a huge plus. However, what I appreciate most is the spirit of our collective that has transformed grocery shopping from a tedious chore into an expression of belonging. I rarely leave a shift without learning about a new veg-

etable or getting inspired by a fellow PSFC member to try a new recipe. Our modern world is a hectic, complicated and scary place, and PSFC feels like a haven from that. We care about each other. Over the past six months, well-meaning members of “PSFC Members for Palestine” have threatened the inclusive culture of our Coop with a call to ban products from Israel. They align themselves with the BDS movement whose messaging is widely known to incorporate antisemitic tropes about the perceived powers and evils of Jewish people. Antisemitic discrimination has triggered atrocious violence throughout history and is currently fueling attacks on Jewish people and spaces in New York City and throughout the United States. The conflict between Israel and Hamas is deeply polarizing; by adopting a ban against Israel, we would be inviting antisemitism into the PSFC. Such an act would alienate Jewish and pro-Israel members and attract negative PR. Most importantly, this boycott would undermine and erode our culture and values. We owe it to our community and to PSFC to be a beacon of inclusivity and belonging. It is for this reason that I oppose a ban on products from Israel.

Sylvia Tobias

Don't Like It? Don't Buy It!

Dear Linewaiters' Gazette:

Recently I was approached on the sidewalk in front of the Coop asking to sign a petition supporting a boycott of Coop products imported from Israel. This came a week after my neighbor's home was vandalized with “FREE GAZA” spray paint (their door has a visible mezuzah), and days before I was told in a CEC 15 meeting if I had a problem with antisemitism in my son's school, I should just send him to private Jewish day school.

We moved to Park Slope 10 years ago, in part because of its beauty, friendly vibe and proximity to the park. Within the month I dragged my husband to the Food Coop's orientation. I'm a registered dietitian and value good quality food. I naively never locked

my brownstone door during the day, that is until October 8th (we also have a visible mezuzah).

The hate that's invaded our community these last six months has been painful. You don't have to like or support a government or country overseas, but we're neighbors. We deserve a right to feel safe and welcome in Park Slope and at the Food Coop. Lately I have felt neither. This boycott is divisive. If buying tahini to make sabich sandwiches—the kind I like to get in Tel Aviv—bothers you so much, don't buy it.

So much of what we eat is rooted in who we are. Why are we ostracizing members? We should be welcoming differences in our community, not fueling hostility between each other. This demonization of Israel is outright antisemitism and there is no place for it at the Food Coop.

*Thank you,
Shira Sussi*

Boycotting Israel is Hurtful to Many of Us, and Hurts the Coop

Dear fellow members:

My message about the recent push to boycott Israeli products is simple and heartfelt: The proposal is deeply hurtful.

The last six months have been nightmarish for those of us with a direct connection to Israel and Palestine. This is a traumatic and scary time. Divisive efforts like BDS make it worse, not better. A boycott is hurtful because it assigns all the blame to one side, delegitimizing the experience of Israelis wrapped up in a complex conflict, along with the vast majority of Jews who have deep ties to Israel. And, it must be said, boycotting Jews has a dark and sinister echo of centuries of systematic and murderous antisemitism in both Europe and the Middle East. Critics of Israel have an affirmative obligation to distance themselves from antisemitism, and an indiscriminate tool like a

countrywide boycott fails that test.

Some say that the fact that the boycott hurts is the point. But we should be better than that, and also mindful of our obligations as a community. Hurting Coop members is also hurtful to the Coop itself.

I understand the desire to take a stand, support suffering people and oppose war. But this boycott is not simply a convenient way to express solidarity with Palestinians under bombardment. We as a community owe it to our members with ties to both Israel and Palestine not to oversimplify the situation, and not to demonize people on either side.

Instead, let's devote our energy to positive and healing acts. Some of the products we carry at the Coop come from peace and co-existence initiatives in Israel and Palestine. Instead of boycotting them, let's feature and celebrate them.

Josh Suskewicz

Re: PSFC for Palestine

To the Editor and Fellow Coop Members:

If you don't want to buy peppers grown in Israel, don't buy peppers grown in Israel. To insist, however, that everyone else must follow suit is domineering, wrong and, in this case, antisemitic.

For over 2,000 years, Jews have been singled out, isolated, scrutinized and subject to abuse. Explicit antisemitism is no longer socially acceptable. Today, however, Israel offers a convenient proxy for those who cannot tolerate a Jewish expression of independence and sovereignty. Antipathy to Israel is not only fashionable, but the price of admission in many progressive spaces.

Israel is not above reproach. Absolutist and single-minded calls to eliminate it, however, are another thing entirely. No one's calling to eradicate other Coop sources with troubling human rights records such as Honduras, Ecuador or, for that matter, Texas. Yet "PSFC for Palestine" is openly committed to a movement that opposes Israel's mere existence. According to its own proponents, the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement aims to eliminate the world's only Jewish state.

At the end of the day, a Coop boycott would not even register on the Israeli economy. It would, however, invariably lead many Jewish Coop members to feel unwelcome and send the message that it's acceptable to single out Jews for mistreatment. In that light, the zeal with which some have taken towards vilifying Israel understandably leaves many, including this Coop member, feeling rattled.

Michael Snow

Regarding a Potential Boycott of Israeli Products

Dear Editor:

We've been here before. Some years ago there was a proposal to boycott Israeli products at the Coop. A rundown of products found that there were only a few products of Israeli origin that the Coop carried. Additionally, of course there were very divergent opinions within the Coop on Israel. We must look to the effective meaning of any boycott and the divisiveness of any movement within our membership. We have agreed, for instance, to no longer carry Cheerios, because of concerns about glyphosate. Most Coop members were in agreement on this. An Israeli boycott does not have the same level of support. Curiously, concerted action by people who claim to support Palestinians led SodaStream some years ago to close its West Bank facility, thus removing jobs from Palestinians. Was that a win for Palestinians overall? We must look at the long-term effects of any action we take on the issue at hand but also on our ability to operate as a food store with a diverse population.

In Cooperation,
Adam Segal-Isaacson

The Divisiveness BDS Seeds Is Antithetical to the Coop Mission

Dear Fellow Members:

I was born in Israel and spent my formative years there. My grandfather, who emigrated to Israel after the Holocaust, was a small farmer who grew clementines and was a member of an agricultural cooperative. Perhaps, through random chance, I have crossed paths with a fellow PSFC member-owner who directly enjoyed the literal fruits of his labor.

The events of the October 7th massacre in Israel and the ongoing hostage crisis in Gaza weigh heavily on me on a daily basis. I also, deeply and unequivocally, empathize with the suffering of Palestinians and innocent civilians affected by the ongoing war on Hamas. I hope the silent majority of member owners also simultaneously hold both of these truths with heavy hearts.

My hope for the region is to achieve a just and lasting peace. The BDS approach undermines efforts for peace and coexistence by seeding resentment instead of encouraging cooperation. The BDS movement is in direct contradiction with peace-building, and makes reconciliation impossible. With this in mind, I cannot support the Coop joining the BDS movement.

The BDS movement makes it clear that peaceful coexistence is not its goal when they condone violence and criticize organizations and businesses that advocate for dialogue and mutual coexistence.

If the Coop votes to join the BDS movement, it will be in direct conflict with my values of supporting a peaceful resolution between Israel and Palestine and my household will, with broken hearts, leave the Coop.

Sincerely,
Tali Rasis

BDS: Historically Rejected By Responsible Parties

To the Editors, Members, and Board of Directors,

BDS is a movement that primarily plays out on college campuses, where students vote to have their institutions divest from Israeli companies, refuse cooperation with Israeli universities and where students disrupt Israeli speakers. Support of this movement on campuses has also, not surprisingly, resulted in harassment, exclusion and even attacks on Jewish students, as well as damage to property. Several lawsuits are pending against these institutions for permitting an antisemitic climate, and government agencies are amping up policies against antisemitism. Nor is there evidence of university administrations acting on these student decisions.

As to food coops, more than a decade ago only one American food coop, Olympia, voted to boycott Israeli products, to the best of my knowledge. All others voted no: Port Townsend, Davis, Sacramento, Seattle, Ann Arbor, and finally, Park Slope, whose super-majority vote against a referendum in 2012 was essentially a vote against joining BDS.

The primary reasons for their decisions given by leaders at these coops were the lack of qualifications to take actions on international conflicts and to resolve the conflict in the Middle East; that such actions countered the purposes of a food coop; and that such actions would damage coops. In the case of Seattle Central, a committee member there called consideration of the boycott “a malignancy to our business.”

There is no evidence I can find that apart from our Coop, any other is revisiting campaigns to join BDS.

I add here that in 2016, the NYC Council voted, by a super-majority, in favor of a reso-

lution “condemning all efforts to delegitimize the State of Israel and the global movement to boycott, divest from, and sanction the people of Israel.” Similar proposals have been passed by New York State and other states.

Sylvia Lowenthal

Why Is the PSFC a Success Story?

Dear Coop Members:

Before joining the Coop, I was skeptical about the concept. Despite my reservations, the allure of affordable prices and quality produce convinced me to give it a try. I vividly recall my first shift, thinking, “Let’s just get this over with and return to my usual business.”

However, to my surprise, I discovered a peculiar joy in arranging fruits and vegetables. Initially, I couldn’t pinpoint the source of my contentment. Over time, it became clear: The satisfaction didn’t stem from the task of organizing produce itself, but from feeling connected to a diverse community of individuals, all united in the simple act of sorting carrots and apples. It was beautifully straightforward and profoundly unifying. At the end of the day, we’re all fundamentally alike, no matter your profession, where you were born, or your political views. There was a place for everyone to feel welcome.

I’ve enjoyed every shift at the Coop, growing to value its true inclusiveness and, of course, the exceptional food.

Recently, however, the atmosphere has shifted. Politics and polarization have crept in, threatening the delicate fabric of our cooperative. The Coop is at a critical juncture. I earnestly hope we can all recall the core principles that have sustained our community since 1973 and strive to preserve this wonderful community as healthy and truly inclusive for all.

*Thanks,
Yuval Inselberg*

Taking Issue With Coordinators' Corner Column

Coop Members,

I am 68 years old and I joined the Coop when I was 23. For many years I was proud to be part of a cooperative that was tied to issues of food and labor justice. I learned from the Coop that organic growing practices were more important for farm workers than for me as a consumer, and that supporting their right to work without exposure to harmful chemicals was paramount.

Fast forward to now: Joe Holtz's recent piece (March 19 Coordinators' Corner) has upset me to my core. I'm frustrated and ashamed that the Coop has not taken a stand against the Israeli genocide, against Israel's deliberate starvation of Gazans, its aid blockades and its destruction and theft of Palestinian farmland. BDS seems like the least we could do.

I have known Joe Holtz since I joined the Coop. I have valued and respected the work he did to establish and sustain the Coop. In his writing, he worries about the Coop's future 50 years. Fifty years from now, it is very unlikely that Joe or I will be alive, but people can judge us then by what we did and said now, in the face of this genocide.

Alyce Barr

Response to 2/26/24 Coordinators' Corner

To the LWG Editors:

I was dismayed and disappointed by the opinions expressed by Joe Holtz in his February 26 Coordinators' Corner column. His byline states that he speaks on behalf of

all the General Coordinators. I would like to know by what process the rest of the coordinators agreed with what he said and why their names did not appear.

He states that some members feel unwelcome at the Coop because of the language of a petition. Who are these members and what is making them feel unwelcome? We as members and humans have the right to question and criticize our own government and any other foreign government, especially the conduct of a foreign state that is taking our tax dollars. I have read the petition from PSFC Members for Palestine and find nothing that could be interpreted as harassing about it.

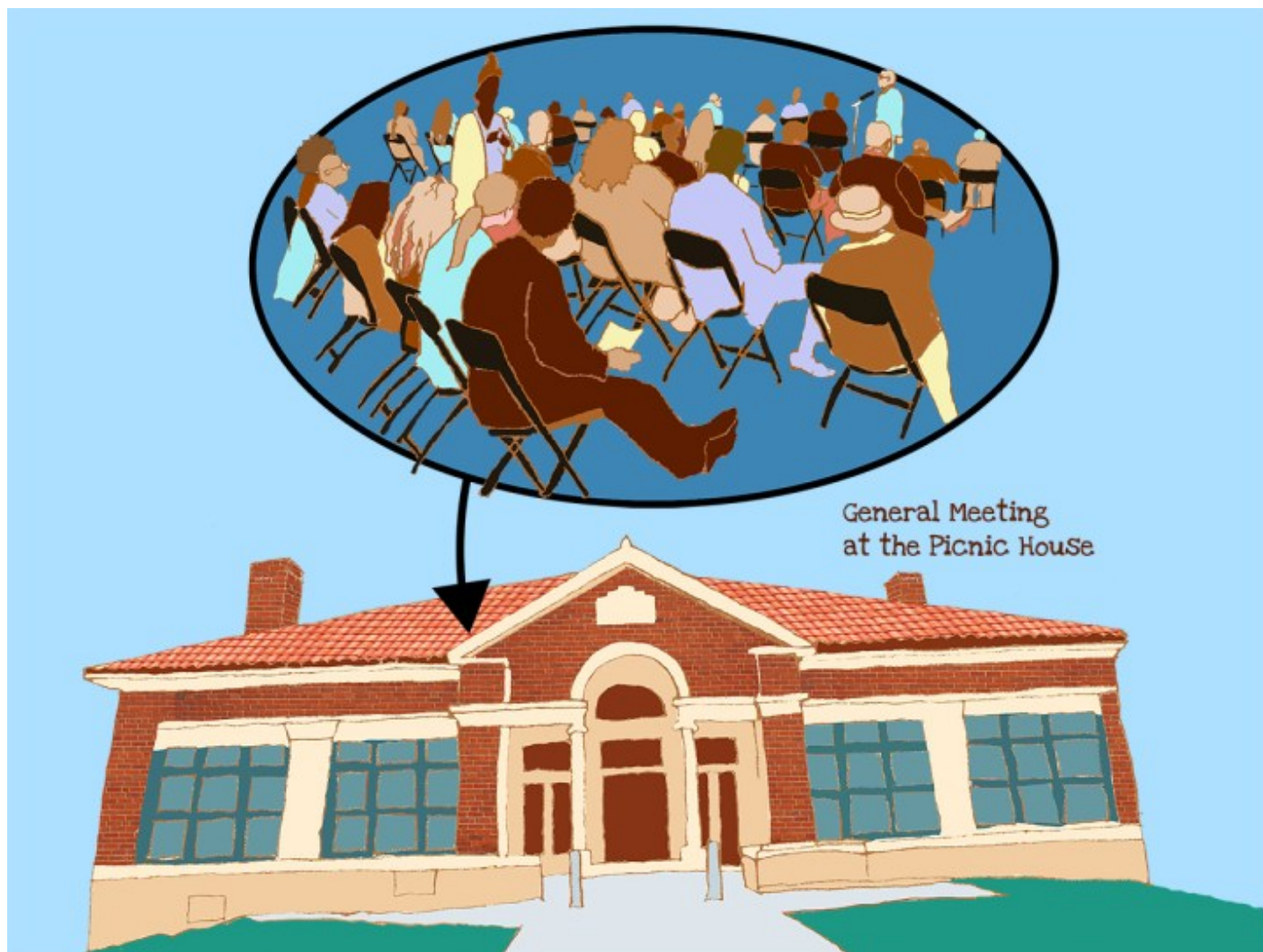
I think it is an abuse of position and privilege for Mr. Holtz to favor one group of members over another and claim to represent the persons who direct the Coop. This is his personal opinion and has a chilling effect on open discussions and in a sense “poisons the jury pool” that will later be allowed to participate in some kind of far-off vote or consensus process (which I sincerely doubt will ever occur — it’s all rhetoric to me). I think as a Coop it is an overdue time for us to have discussions about power and privilege and how they are used unfairly.

Yours truly

Amina Ali

TWISTS AND TURNS OF ROBERT’S RULES AT THE FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING

August 14, 2024



By Jess Powers

The General Meeting (GM) held its February 27 gathering in person at ShapeShifter Labs, a performance space diagonally across the street from the Park Slope Food Coop. Roughly 132 members attended that rainy evening.

OPEN FORUM POLITICALLY CHARGED BUT RESPECTFUL

The Open Forum began with questions about securing a larger meeting space, so the Coop can hold a vote on a proposal to boycott Israeli goods. Past votes drew large crowds and led to a rules change requiring a supermajority for boycotts. The current venue doesn't have sufficient capacity to house the vote.

FLEX WORKER CAROL WALD'S REMARKS ELICITED BOTH APPLAUSE AND A REMINDER FROM CHAIR COMMITTEE MEMBER IMANI Q'RYN THAT APPLAUSE AND BOOS ARE DISCOURAGED AT THE MEETING.

Carol Wald, a flex worker, acknowledged strong feelings on the subject as “a proud Jew, whose grandfather and uncle were killed in Auschwitz. The rage and grief and trauma that propels so many to work against the boycott,” she said, “[is what] compels me to work with Palestinian people against genocide.” She called for mutual respect as debate continues. Her remarks elicited both applause and a reminder from Chair Committee member Imani Q’ryn that applause and boos are discouraged at the meeting.

Coop member Sophie Glickman spoke of a strategic boycott as the civilian death toll in Gaza exceeds 30,000, many of the victims women and children. She continued that Israel is using starvation as a tactic—a war crime—and that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has openly stated his opposition to Palestinian statehood. She did not wish to “[make] fellow Jewish Coop members uncomfortable” but inquired about the location for the vote.

Outspoken Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) critic, Jesse Rosenfeld said that Coop members who support Palestine support BDS, and that BDS supports violence. He stated that the BDS website itself describes “armed resistance” and “any action, whether one considers it legally or ethically justifiable.” [Note: This reporter’s review and fact check of the BDS website did not find these words; rather, “non-violence” and opposition to “discrimination, including anti-Semitism.”]

Rosenfeld continued, “October 7, rape, infanticide... when will the Chair Committee clamp down [against BDS]?” His comments were also met by applause—and another reminder from Chair Committee member Q’ryn about applause and boos.

Brian Shuman, a food processor, expressed appreciation for Carol Wald (who spoke earlier), even though he disagreed with her position. He supports Anera (American Near East Refugee Aid), which provides immediate emergency aid and he “opposes BDS, which does not acknowledge Israel’s right to exist and is anti-Semitic.”

In response, someone in the audience called a point of order, asking whether clarification can be made if a point made is based on fact or opinion.

GENERAL COORDINATOR UPDATES ON SPACE FOR BDS VOTE, CHILDCARE AND FLYERS IN THE STAIRWELL

Ann Herpel provided updates as one of five General Coordinators. Regarding the larger space for a BDS vote, “we are making progress,” she said. The Coop is negotiating with a venue, and although an agreement isn’t finalized, “it looks promising... hopeful,” she continued.

“CHILDCARE WILL NOT BE RETURNING TO THE COOP,” ANN HERPEL ANNOUNCED. THOSE INVOLVED HAD BEEN WAITING TO HEAR BACK FROM A FINAL INSURANCE BROKER AND WERE UNSUCCESSFUL IN SECURING COVERAGE.

“Childcare will not be returning to the Coop,” Herpel announced. Those involved had been waiting to hear back from a final insurance broker and were unsuccessful in securing coverage. The “landscape around insurance has changed dramatically,” she continued, and “would now require a license to operate [childcare].” The Coop will repurpose the room for operational needs.

In another shift from pre-pandemic times, the stairwell leading up to the office used to be covered in flyers announcing things like shows, rooms for rent and kombucha SCOBYs to share. That practice is not going to return, Herpel declared. The New York City Fire Department (FDNY) and New York State Insurance Fund (NYSIF—which the

Coop gets inspected by) declared that fire exits have to be “unobstructed.”

Herpel is working with the staff liaison to the *Gazette* to create a digital listing for community events, things for sale or trade, etc.

TREASURER’S REPORT

General Coordinator Joe Holtz presented the preliminary 52-week Financial Statement, provided online with the agenda for the GM. He explained that the financial statement needs to be audited, and there are usually not many changes.

ONE OF THE “EXTRAORDINARY THINGS” ABOUT THE COOP, GENERAL COORDINATOR JOE HOLTZ EFFUSED, IS THAT WE HAD A COMPLETE INVENTORY TURNOVER OF 62 TIMES THIS YEAR. PLENTY OF STORES HAVE TURNS OF 14 TIMES A YEAR.

One of the “extraordinary things” about the Coop, Holtz effused, is that we had a complete inventory turnover of 62 times this year, exceeding the year prior. Plenty of stores, he continued, have turns of 14 times a year. “Our dried mangos are less hard,” he mused.

REPORT ON NEW LABELS AND FUTURE NCG SAVINGS

General Coordinator Joe Szladek explained that new electronic shelf labels appearing in the produce aisles (and soon to spread throughout the store) will provide more accuracy in pricing, as prices change often. This is due to purchasing from a vendor at a different wholesale price or when United Natural Foods, Inc. (UNFI) has a deal on some items.

Szladek continued that he hopes the electronic shelf labels will save a few hours a day of staff time daily by not having to reprint and post new labels. He also expects the Coop to implement a National Cooperative Grocer program called Coop Deals af-

ter the deployment of electronic shelf labels is complete throughout the store. With Coop Deals, members will see savings on particular items of 20–30% off every two weeks, from Kettle brand potato chips to yogurt. Currently, staff are “too busy to handle all the labels” in order to comply with requirements NCG has set, but electronic shelf labels will solve some of those issues. Additionally, utilizing NCG resources would save staff time previously spent negotiating prices.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE PRESENTS REVISED RULES

Deb Magocsi, Helen Koh, and Grace Protos from the Dispute Resolution Committee presented the sole proposal on the agenda, “Revisions to the Procedures that Govern the Coop’s Disciplinary Process.”

Magocsi explained that the original rules were written in 2005, revised in 2012, and again in 2018. The nature of disputes has changed and committee members have “seen many opportunities to make the process better,” she continued. She described the process as unnecessarily adversarial and legalistic, and the intent of the new rules to be “more reflective of a cooperative institution.”

DEB MAGOCSI FROM THE DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE DESCRIBED THE HEARING PROCESS AS LONG, “ARDUOUS AND PAINFUL FOR EVERYONE,” “HUMILIATING FOR THE ACCUSED,” AND SHARED THAT THE “HEARING GROUP FELT IT WAS A WASTE OF TIME AND ENERGY.”

The disciplinary process involves the Dispute Resolution Committee, which investigates complaints and recommends actions; the Hearing Administration Committee, which organizes and administers hearings; and the Hearing Officer Committee, which runs hearings. In summary, when the DRC receives a report of member misconduct, it assigns a member to investigate, and the full committee decides by consensus how to respond, typically a warning letter—but potentially the maximum penalty: being

asked to resign. See also: How the Dispute Resolution Process at the Coop Works; Inside the Coop Hearing Process; and Coop Member Expelled After Repeated Mask Wearing Violations.

The goal, Magocsi explained, is to use “more accessible language,” to have a “clearer definition of member misconduct,” and to recommend “mediation as the first option” thereby “[avoiding] hearings and judicial style process.” Hearings would still be available to members wishing to appeal serious DRC decisions, but the rule change would mean instead of the hearing group, three members of the HOC would determine whether the misconduct took place, rather than Coop members selected at random.

Magocsi described the hearing process as long (up to five hours), “arduous and painful for everyone,” “humiliating for the accused,” and shared that the “hearing group felt it was a waste of time and energy.”

Jesse Rosenfeld then proposed an amendment to “various ‘-isms’” in Article III sec D Part 6, which reads: “Racist, sexist, homophobic, ageist, discriminatory, or other harmful conduct.” He said that “harmful conduct is a good start” but urged the members to “add to it” after the “Trump administration normalized a lot of hatred.” Specifically, he asked to add: “xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia.”

Member Abdi, who is Muslim and Somali, countered that he “[feels] protected by the amendment as is.” Others chimed in for or against. A vote on the amendment was held and the “nays” had it.

The meeting then returned to discussion of the proposal of the Committee. George, a floor monitor, argued that we “need a process that allows more informed, deliberative decision-making.”

There was a move to table the vote, followed by a Robert’s Rules check. (Robert’s Rules of Order are the parliamentary procedures used by many voluntary organizations for governance of meetings.)

A point of information was made and Koh explained that the agenda item was presented for discussion at the previous meeting. A vote to table was held, and the “nays” had it again. Discussion continued on the proposal.

David Moss of the Chair Committee argued that it’s a “good proposal and there’s no f—ing way to get a group of people to read 20-page documents before they come to the meeting.” Member Jim concurred that there are “a lot of holes in the democratic process overall,” but he believed that it’s important to be fair to those who invested time in the agenda item. “In a democracy,” he continued, “it’s on us to be informed and to come to the meeting prepared. As we move forward, there are a lot of discussions to be had about procedures.” Dan agreed and reminded the room of the process already in place: Vote on the item tonight, propose an amendment if there are any issues, and resolve those later.

In the end, 115 voted in favor of the new guidelines and five opposed. The Coop board accepted the advice of the members and the meeting was adjourned.

Jess Powers works in emergency management and enjoys adventures in nature and cooking. She’s on IG @foodandfury.