

PSFC ANNUAL MEETING

July 25, 2022



By Travis Hartman

The Park Slope Food Coop held its Annual Meeting on June 28, 2022. In a meeting that lasted almost three hours, the Coop reviewed the audited financial report and elected two members of the Board of Directors and four officers of the Coop.

The audited financial report was presented by Salvatore Vicari and Zanna Masko, certified public accountants and advisors, of the firm Cornick, Garber & Sandler. Vicari went through every page of the report, analyzing where numbers were up and where they were down, while noting that cash is up from 2021. "The driving factor behind that is the PPP loans," said Vicari. Inventories were consistent from 2021 and prepaid expenses and other assets have risen since last year, as has total member equity. "It's a healthy balance sheet, it looks great," said Vicari.

Board member Bill Penner noted that without the PPP loans the Coop would have been operating at a loss, and Masko said, “That was the purpose of those federal grants—to help businesses to survive in those difficult situations. A lot of businesses went out of business, but the Coop was able to survive.” The audited financial report was accepted, and it was decided that Cornick, Garber & Sandler would produce the audited financial report next year as well.

“A LOT OF BUSINESSES WENT OUT OF BUSINESS, BUT THE COOP WAS ABLE TO SURVIVE.”

—ZANNA MASKO

The second order of business was the election of two members of the Board of Directors. According to foodcoop.com, when the Coop was incorporated in 1977, a Board of Directors was legally required. The Board’s role is not to overshadow or replace the member initiative, discussion and decision-making; that is the purpose of the General Meeting. Board members are elected once a year, for terms of three years on a rotating basis, at the Annual Meeting, which is always held on the last Tuesday in June.

Members were able to vote for the Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting or by using the advance ballot that all members receive by email. Each of the candidates present were given one minute to speak and three minutes to answer questions posed to them by members attending the meeting. In the end, Imani Q’Ryn was elected with 495 yes votes, followed by Brandon West with 317 yes votes.

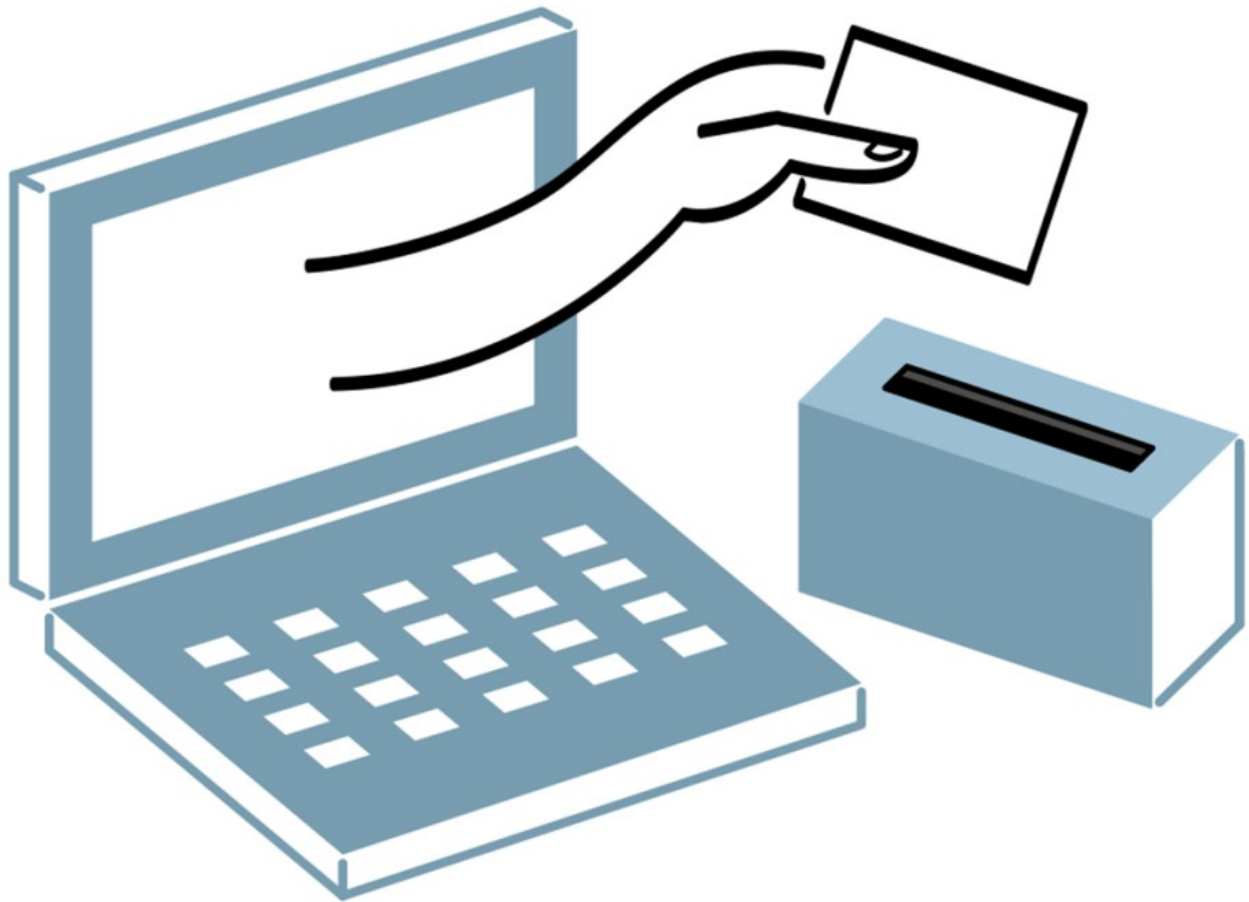


ILLUSTRATION BY STEPHEN SAVAGE

During the tabulation of the votes, which included both online voting and paper ballots, several committee reports were delivered. Members in attendance learned that the International Trade Education Squad will be issuing their findings between four and six times a year via their YouTube channel. It was also announced that the Committee Oversight Committee is looking for new members.

There was also a lively discussion about potentially granting credit to members who

attend General Meetings via Zoom, and discussion about uncovering what member labor is actually worth in financial terms. David Moss of the Chair Committee spoke about the impact of the pandemic, and of new hires to the Coop. “I think it’s safe to say that everyone on the Chair Committee believes that we should probably start offering credit to people for attending the Zoom meetings—that the numbers of people attending are too low—obviously someone could attend and not participate, and some people will do that, but we’ll get a lot more participation if we invite people at the cost of losing a few shifts. I’ll throw that idea out there for others to consider,” Moss said.

“EVERYONE ON THE CHAIR COMMITTEE BELIEVES THAT WE SHOULD PROBABLY START OFFERING CREDIT TO PEOPLE FOR ATTENDING THE ZOOM MEETINGS.”

—DAVID MOSS, CHAIR COMMITTEE

This topic was discussed by many of the attendees, and suggestions were offered on how members could potentially get credit for attending meetings virtually. One person suggested limiting shift credit to twice a year, as was the case with in-person meetings.

Susan Metz then asked about the possibility of tallying up the financial value of member labor. “We understand that 75 percent of the work in the Coop is done by members, and that member labor keeps prices down, and yet we never have a monetary value of what member labor is in any audit report, and I find this very disturbing,” Metz said. “What is the amount of money that member labor represents?” Metz then asked the auditors if it would be possible to create a system to report what member labor is worth.



Coop members at an earlier General Meeting, in 2019.

Joe Holtz responded, “It’s a good question, but varies from every single member depending on what they buy. There are some who love the Coop but barely ever shop, so how much do they get paid, quote unquote? It’s hard to monetize that. Members should each figure out what the Coop means to them, and figure out if it makes sense. If it does, they should tell their friends to join the Coop. The accountants have no basis to do what you’re asking.”

The meeting then moved on to the last item on the agenda: the election of the Board of Officers for the Coop. After a series of nominations for the positions of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer, the voting was engaged. Imani Q’ryn was elected President, Shayna Moliver was elected Vice President, with Elizabeth Tobier elected Secretary and Joe Holtz to serve as Treasurer. After the last round of voting the meeting was adjourned.

BOARD CANDIDATES: WHO THEY ARE AND WHY THEY RUN

July 25, 2022



ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN DONOHUE

From the Editors

The Park Slope Food Coop Board of Directors plays a crucial role in running the Coop. The Board makes its decisions based on the advice of members who attend the monthly General Meeting. There are five seats on this Board, and each term lasts three years. Members submit their applications to run for open seats in March each year, and then candidate statements are published in the *Linewaiters' Gazette*. Thanks to the pandemic, members will now have the chance to start voting online via a Coop-wide email that will go out in late May, and results will be announced at the

Annual Meeting in June.

There are six candidates for two open seats. Here is the 2022 slate:



IMANI Q'RYN

I was elected to the Board of Directors nearly 17 years ago and have continuously served in this capacity. I have served on the Board longer than any other elected member. I am also a member of the Chair Committee and have been so throughout my service on the Board.

Our Board of Directors is not a typical board. It was required by state law that the Coop have a Board of Directors. As a co-operative we liked our town hall style of governance, that every member has a say, every member has a vote. We wanted to continue that tradition. The Coop's attorney at that time came up with the idea that the Board should take the advice of the members on all subjects as a means of limiting the powers of the Board. It was written into our bylaws; most of the Board members that we've had since the Board was instituted decades ago have accepted this policy.

"I take the mandate to trust the membership and take their advice as a sacred duty. It's not my opinion or my position on an issue that is important. It is vital that I respect and trust the voice of the membership. The membership guides my vote."

I wrote those words three years ago in my bid for candidacy letter. I take the opportunity to state that again. These last three years have been the most challenging for me as a Board member and most dangerous for our form of governance and possibly the Coop in general. We had to do things as a Board that we had never done. We never meet outside of the General Meeting. During the beginning of COVID so much changed for the Coop and we were in uncharted territory. We got advice from our general counsel. We not only had to meet but we did so every week for hours! It was exhausting. We wanted the membership to have their voice, to weigh in and decide the direction that we would go as a co-operative. It is in crisis times like those that we could have lost what we had worked over 50 years to protect.

I was so proud and honored to be with that group of Board members: Bill P., Allen Z., Rachel A., Sukey T. and Joe H. We went through that fire and kept our word, our

promise to the membership.

I ask for your vote one last time. I hope that more members will step up and choose to participate in our form of governance. It's easier now to come to our meetings—they are on Zoom! All the Coop laws are made here. I also hope that those that really understand our kind of board will consider running next time we have an opening.

I love the Coop and hope that it exists for generations to come!



TIMOTHY HOSPODAR

In October 2020, when our Coop introduced a new phase of member labor, we met with an online scheduler deployed to support it. I showed up on that very first day to contribute in a way different than I had ever worked before—on a truck-unloading shift. Despite advance scheduling, a hiccup in the system prohibited me from working that first morning. And so, I showed up again on the very next morning, as scheduled,

and I worked on the sidewalk at 5:30 AM. I was surprised to like the shift, as there was a reason that I had never tried the shift before, counter to my history of working a variety of FTOP shifts, from CHIPS to childcare to cashiering. Well, here's an inconsequential fact about me: I greatly detest predawn roll calls, not to mention my distaste for cold outdoor activities in general. Be that as it may, I made truck-unloading shifts a weekly practice and showed up 27 times across the eight months before the broader phase of member labor began in July 2021.

There's an analogy here as it relates to one thing fatherhood helped me learn. Early morning hours, before the babe awakens, are sometimes the only chance to devote one's free time to the things that matter most. The Coop—as a market and as a community—has mattered so much to me, since joining 12 years ago and certainly in the last two. And its future, following these complicated times, is of grave importance. While my optimism helps me trust that survival is a given, I expect that our future state features exciting changes. I'd like to pledge my work shift to the Board and our membership at large, because I understand the General Meeting (as a whole) comprises the stewardship of change.

If granted the opportunity to serve our community in this role, I commit to employing several fair tactics I have learned in other roles. In the effort to mitigate bias, I'll exercise sensitive feedback tools of active listening, to ensure that the Board clarifies and validates as appropriate in addition to echoing the majority message. I'll help the Board identify any unsatisfied concerns to acknowledge disagreement around consensus. My prior work as a facilitator in decision-making sessions for executives has prepared me to promote a diversity of voices while encouraging dissenting opinions be taken into consideration. I respect that any upcoming changes can only result from an array of debate, and I am equipped to support the process. The timing is right, I believe, for me to support the Coop in this capacity.



AMY CAO

Fellow member-owners, my name is Amy Cao, and I humbly submit my candidacy to the Coop's Board of Directors. My growing passion for good food—its origins, its impact, its accessibility—I owe to the Food Coop. I was drawn to the Coop for the promise of delicious, affordable food, and over the years, I find myself becoming more and more attached to the less tangible aspects of what makes our community a true

collective—and how to nurture this spirit to help ensure its lasting success.

In my professional life, I am a communications strategist for nonprofits, schools, professional organizations, and public and private companies. This often positions me as an advisor to executives, faculty administration, public officials, and even board directors, to help them plan for growth opportunities, manage crises, and minimize risks. Previously, the City contracted me to work alongside social workers as a financial empowerment counselor. This brought me face to face with struggling New Yorkers, as I helped them navigate scarce resources in unforgiving situations.

These experiences have exposed me to unique and diverse challenges at all levels of an institution. This formed an inclusionary perspective that informs my daily life. As a liaison to stakeholders at many levels, I am a good listener. I do my best to understand differing points of view, encourage dialogue to solve problems, and respond thoughtfully and decisively when the situation commands it. As a Board Member, I would do this by leaning heavily on my member community.

I believe an elected Board Member has a duty of responsibility to the membership. Over the years, I've had the privilege to speak with many of you over the course of countless shops, while stocking shelves, scanning your IDs, and walking your groceries home with you. I am immensely proud of the Coop community, and I am committed to working together with you to secure its financial health and future sustainability, in service to our founding Cooperative principles. With your confidence in my ability to take your lead by heeding the advice of the membership to act in the best interest of the Coop, I hope to earn your vote.



BRANDON WEST

My name is Brandon West, I have been a member since 2009, when I first moved into the neighborhood, and soon after became a squad leader for stocking and receiving. I also recently ran for City Council in the community, in 2021. For a career, I'm currently a labor organizer for local journalists and have worked in voting rights and organizing. I have always been very close to the Coop and its mission. It is incredibly chal-

lenging to maintain large membership-led organizations. I have experienced that fact, not just as an active member of this Coop, but in other collective processes and while working in government.

As the pandemic put an incredible strain on the Coop, and some challenging decisions were made about how to plan for the present and future, I wished I had an avenue to be more directly involved with the Coop. Not just as a way to be more directly connected in a community important to me during a time when “community” is harder to find, but also so that we can bring more member input into some of the seriously important decisions this Coop will have in the future. My goal and intention of running for this position is to mainly focus on decision-making, and helping work to build participation in the general meetings, which were once much larger.

We all remember the more contentious, but better-attended meetings in the past 10 years. While we have progressed a lot in this time, I think the challenge our Coop faces as being large but also democratic is critical, especially when our membership numbers have dropped in light of the pandemic, and that we are in a more vulnerable state financially than we were before it started. I also pledge to work to make sure that members are brought more into major decisions in the future and support developing a process for how we rethink our democratic processes in the face of so much change to the Coop. Our leaders made several tough decisions quickly, and I believe the Coop is much better for it, but I think more tough questions are ahead, and there are a lot of unknowns. I think it’s important to try to bring as many folks into these decisions as we can, and make more members aware of the challenges we face as a Coop.

I think our mission is strong and widely felt and believe the next few years in the City will be challenging with a shift towards living with the pandemic. What that does physically and financially to the Coop remains to be known. We must make sure that our members who are most negatively impacted, and who struggle financially, should be centered as much as possible.

In addition to this, I think the fiscal health of the Coop is incredibly important, and I will also work to make sure that the relationship between coordinators and staff is always a focus and highlighted. The Coop needs to be a great place to be a member and to work, and I will use my background in conflict negotiation to help mediate any issues if they come up, and contribute to mitigating conversations if needed.



GEORGE SARAH OLKEN

I knew the Park Slope Food Coop was magical when I saw the red sign-in books at La Louve Coopérative in Paris, which is not only built on our model but copied our store down to the color of the binders. There is a special pleasure in our rituals: calling out over the intercom “What are those little mushrooms in miso soup?” (enoki); the line painted on the backyard wall to indicate how high to stack compost buckets; walking a member and their cart up Seventh Avenue and learning how they came to New York in the 1960s—or last month. The Coop is my happy place, I’ve made friends there, I run into friends there, I want it to flourish.

I would like to join the Coop Board of Directors to be a voice for that flourishing. I believe Board members, like coordinators and committee members, can use their position to influence discussions and decision-making in a positive direction, especially because the Board is our one elected leadership body. With a mandate from the membership, I will use this position to emphasize working together and building community.

Recently the Coop has had to make difficult decisions: How to run the virtual GM? How to re-organize member labor? How to support members struggling from the pandemic? There is no abstract entity “The Coop” to address these questions. We must address them through cooperation as members.

We need to re-educate ourselves about how our Coop functions and re-imagine our role within it. As we become more reliant on technology (goodbye red binders), we must find ways to make that technology accessible so that every member can learn how it operates. As our finances fluctuate due to unforeseen crises—the next pandemic or future supply-chain breakdowns—members need to take an active role in the decisions of how we react.

This is work I’ve tried to do on an individual level as a squad leader, by bringing items to the GM, by joining with members of the unofficial Coop Study Group, and by speak-

ing with staff and community elders: What was the Coop like before we owned the building? How do we resolve disputes? How do you pick the perfect melon?

Since joining in 2007, I've worked on the shopping floor, in the basement, and in the office. In 2018, I became a shopping squad leader. I was heartbroken when the pandemic severed the relationships with my fellow squad members and with the members of the Coop staff who supported us. These relationships are as important as the smooth operation of our grocery store—they are what make the Coop what it is! I believe the GM and management should be guided by the goal of fostering greater connection among cooperators.

Outside the Coop, I drive the Bookmobile for Brooklyn Public Library, bringing library service to communities all over the borough. I live just south of Prospect Park with my partner, Jenny, and our cat, Tahini (who never does her work shift). I look forward to answering questions at the March 29th GM and I hope I can continue to serve the Coop as a member of the Board.



JESSE ROSENFELD

A member since 2004, I have worked as cashier, cheese and olive bagger, FTOP stock boy, babysitter, and in second-floor guest registration. My paid profession is that of Addictions Counselor on the Lower East Side. My free time has been galvanized by the 2016 elections; I have joined Get Organized Brooklyn and regularly do phonebanking to support voter-expansion drives.

Demonstrably supporting our cooperative goals of shared success, I have brought products to our shelves and successfully brought a proposal to the approval stage at our GM. Pre-pandemic, my work slot was Secretary for the General Meeting and I took the minutes every month. Our meetings are one special set of gears in the whole enterprise, and I was proud to have been re-elected yearly for eight years straight. I consider myself very familiar with the GM and AM processes.

I love it at the Coop. I meet people here I wouldn't usually encounter and discuss things I wouldn't ever know about. I shop every couple of days because of its warm familiarity, and I like being part of an organization that is a standard-bearer for food and environmental justice. The Coop is my chosen community and I feel a part of it every day when I walk down Seventh Avenue, seeing fellow members on their way to and from the store.

With a proven record of support for the health of our enterprise, I am running for the Board of Directors because I see the Coop as a business first. As such, the Board is obligated to remain alert to the legal and fiduciary responsibilities of the Coop rather than maintain advocacy for any particular issue. Members at the coming election will likely ask a version of, "How will you improve the Coop as a member of the Board?" My answer will be, "There is nothing that a Board member should do outside of taking the advice of the membership on how to vote for proposals, which they have always done."

For any proposal that is problematic, I will ask myself the same questions as any Board member: Will a proposal ratified by the General Meeting put the financial and legal health of the Coop at risk? Does the proposal violate the spirit and letter of the Coop's own bylaws or NYS articles of incorporation, and our own mission statement?

Thank you and I look forward to your vote.

BOARD CANDIDATES: WHO THEY ARE AND WHY THEY RUN

July 25, 2022



ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN DONOHUE

From the Editors

The Park Slope Food Coop Board of Directors plays a crucial role in running the Coop. The Board makes its decisions based on the advice of members who attend the monthly General Meeting. There are five seats on this Board, and each term lasts three years. Members submit their applications to run for open seats in March each year, and then candidate statements are published in the *Linewaiters' Gazette*. Thanks to the pandemic, members will now have the chance to start voting online via a Coop-wide email that will go out in late May, and results will be announced at the

Annual Meeting in June.

There are six candidates for two open seats. Here is the 2022 slate:



IMANI Q'RYN

I was elected to the Board of Directors nearly 17 years ago and have continuously served in this capacity. I have served on the Board longer than any other elected member. I am also a member of the Chair Committee and have been so throughout my service on the Board.

Our Board of Directors is not a typical board. It was required by state law that the Coop have a Board of Directors. As a co-operative we liked our town hall style of governance, that every member has a say, every member has a vote. We wanted to continue that tradition. The Coop's attorney at that time came up with the idea that the Board should take the advice of the members on all subjects as a means of limiting the powers of the Board. It was written into our by-laws; most of the Board members that we've had since the Board was instituted decades ago have accepted this policy.

"I take the mandate to trust the membership and take their advice as a sacred duty. It's not my opinion, or my position on an issue that is important. It is vital that I respect and trust the voice of the membership. The membership guides my vote."

I wrote those words three years ago in my bid for candidacy letter. I take the opportunity to state that again. These last three years have been the most challenging for me as a Board member and most dangerous for our form of governance and possibly the Coop in General. We had to do things as a board that we had never done. We never meet outside of the General Meeting. During the beginning of COVID so much changed for the Coop and we were in uncharted territory. We got advice from our general counsel. We not only had to meet but we did so every week for hours! It was exhausting. We wanted the membership to have their voice, to weigh in and decide the direction that we would go as a co-operative. It is in crisis times like those that we could have lost what we had worked over 50 years to protect.

I was so proud and honored to be with that group of Board members: Bill P., Allen Z., Rachel A., Sukey T. and Joe H. We went through that fire and kept our word, our

promise to the membership.

I ask for your vote one last time. I hope that more members will step up and choose to participate in our form of governance. It's easier now to come to our meetings, they are on Zoom! All the Coop laws are made here. I also hope that those that really understand our kind of board will consider running next time we have an opening.

I love the Coop and hope that it exists for generations to come!



TIMOTHY HOSPODAR

In October 2020, when our Coop introduced a new phase of member labor, we met with an online scheduler deployed to support it. I showed up on that very first day to contribute in a way different than I had ever worked before—on a truck-unloading shift. Despite advance scheduling, a hiccup in the system prohibited me from working that first morning. And so, I showed up again on the very next morning, as scheduled,

and I worked on the sidewalk at 5:30 AM. I was surprised to like the shift, as there was a reason that I had never tried the shift before, counter to my history of working a variety of FTOP shifts from CHIPS to childcare to cashiering. Well, here's an inconsequential fact about me: I greatly detest predawn roll calls, not to mention my distaste for cold outdoor activities in general. Be that as it may, I made truck-unloading shifts a weekly practice and showed up 27 times across the eight months before the broader phase of member labor began in July 2021.

There's an analogy here as it relates to one thing fatherhood helped me learn. Early morning hours, before the babe awakens, are sometimes the only chance to devote one's free time to things that matter most. The Coop—as a market and as a community—has mattered so much to me, since joining twelve years ago and certainly in the last two. And its future, following these complicated times, is of grave importance. While my optimism helps me trust that survival is a given, I expect that our future state features exciting changes. I'd like to pledge my work shift to the Board and our membership at large, because I understand the General Meeting (as a whole) comprises the stewardship of change.

If granted the opportunity to serve our community in this role, I commit to employing several fair tactics I have learned in other roles. In the effort to mitigate bias, I'll exercise sensitive feedback tools of active listening, to ensure that the Board clarifies and validates as appropriate in addition to echoing the majority message. I'll help the Board identify any unsatisfied concerns to acknowledge disagreement around consensus. My prior work as a facilitator in decision-making sessions for executives has prepared me to promote a diversity of voices while encouraging dissenting opinions be taken into consideration. I respect that any upcoming changes can only result from an array of debate, and I am equipped to support the process. The timing is right, I believe, for me to support the Coop in this capacity.



AMY CAO

Fellow member-owners, my name is Amy Cao, and I humbly submit my candidacy to the Coop's Board of Directors. My growing passion for good food—its origins, its impact, its accessibility—I owe to the Food Coop. I was drawn to the Coop for the promise of delicious, affordable food, and over the years, I find myself becoming more and more attached to the less tangible aspects of what makes our community a true

collective—and how to nurture this spirit to help ensure its lasting success.

In my professional life, I am a communications strategist for nonprofits, schools, professional organizations, and public and private companies. This often positions me as an advisor to executives, faculty administration, public officials, and even board directors, to help them plan for growth opportunities, manage crises and minimize risks. Previously, the City contracted me to work alongside social workers as a financial empowerment counselor. This brought me face to face with struggling New Yorkers, as I helped them navigate scarce resources in unforgiving situations.

These experiences have exposed me to unique and diverse challenges at all levels of an institution. This formed an inclusionary perspective that informs my daily life. As a liaison to stakeholders at many levels, I am a good listener. I do my best to understand differing points of view, encourage dialogue to solve problems, and respond thoughtfully and decisively when the situation commands it. As a Board Member, I would do this by leaning heavily on my member community.

I believe an elected Board Member has a duty of responsibility to the membership. Over the years, I've had the privilege to speak with many of you over the course of countless shops, while stocking shelves, scanning your IDs and walking your groceries home with you. I am immensely proud of the Coop community, and I am committed to working together with you to secure its financial health and future sustainability, in service to our founding Cooperative principles. With your confidence in my ability to take your lead by heeding the advice of the membership to act in the best interest of the Coop, I hope to earn your vote.



BRANDON WEST

My name is Brandon West, I have been a member since 2009, when I first moved into the neighborhood, and soon after became a squad leader for stocking and receiving. I also recently ran for City Council in the community in 2021. For a career, I'm currently a labor organizer for local journalists and have worked in voting rights and organizing. I have always been very close to the Coop and its mission. It is incredibly challenging

to maintain large membership-led organizations. I have experienced that fact, not just as an active member of this Coop, but in other collective processes and while working in government.

As the pandemic put an incredible strain on the Coop, and some challenging decisions were made about how to plan for the present and future, I wished I had an avenue to be more directly involved with the Coop. Not just as a way to be more directly connected in a community important to me during a time when “community” is harder to find, but also so that we can bring more member input into some of the seriously important decisions this Coop will have in the future. My goal and intention of running for this position is to mainly focus on decision making, and helping work to build participation in the general meetings, which were once much larger.

We all remember the more contentious, but better attended meetings in the past 10 years. While we have progressed a lot in this time, I think the challenge our Coop faces as being large but also democratic is critical, especially when our membership numbers have dropped in light of the pandemic, and that we are in a more vulnerable state financially as we were before it started. I also pledge to work to make sure that members are brought more into major decisions in the future and support developing a process for how we rethink our democratic processes in the face of so much change to the Coop. Our leaders made several tough decisions quickly, and I believe the Coop is much better for it, but I think more tough questions are ahead, and there are a lot of unknowns. I think it's important to try to bring as many folks into these decisions as we can, and make more members aware of the challenges we face as a Coop.

I think our mission is strong and widely felt and believe the next few years in the City will be challenging with a shift towards living with the pandemic. What that does physically and financially to the Coop remains to be known. We must make sure that our members who are most negatively impacted, and who struggle financially, should be centered as much as possible.

In addition to this, I think the fiscal health of the Coop is incredibly important, and I

will also work to make sure that the relationship between coordinators and staff is always a focus and highlighted. The Coop needs to be a great place to be a member and to work, and I will use my background in conflict negotiation to help mediate any issues if they come up, and contribute to mitigating conversations if needed.



GEORGE SARAH OLKEN

I knew the Park Slope Food Coop was magical when I saw the red sign-in books at La Louve Coopérative in Paris, which is not only built on our model but copied our store down to the color of the binders. There is a special pleasure in our rituals: calling out over the intercom “What are those little mushrooms in miso soup?” (enoki); the line painted on the backyard wall to indicate how high to stack compost buckets; walking a member and their cart up Seventh Avenue and learning how they came to New York in the 60s—or last month. The Coop is my happy place, I’ve made friends there, I run into friends there, I want it to flourish.

I would like to join the Coop Board of Directors to be a voice for that flourishing. I believe Board members, like coordinators and committee members, can use their position to influence discussions and decision-making in a positive direction, especially because the Board is our one elected leadership body. With a mandate from the membership, I will use this position to emphasize working together and building community.

Recently the Coop has had to make difficult decisions: How to run the virtual GM? How to re-organize member labor? How to support members struggling from the pandemic? There is no abstract entity “The Coop” to address these questions. We must address them through cooperation as members.

We need to re-educate ourselves about how our Coop functions and re-imagine our role within it. As we become more reliant on technology (goodbye red binders), we must find ways to make that technology accessible so that every member can learn how it operates. As our finances fluctuate due to unforeseen crises—the next pandemic or future supply chain breakdowns—members need to take an active role in the decisions of how we react.

This is work I’ve tried to do on an individual level as a squad leader, by bringing items to the GM, by joining with members of the unofficial Coop Study Group, and by speak-

ing with staff and community elders: What was the Coop like before we owned the building? How do we resolve disputes? How do you pick the perfect melon?

Since joining in 2007, I've worked on the shopping floor, in the basement, and in the office. In 2018, I became a shopping squad leader. I was heartbroken when the pandemic severed the relationships with my fellow squad members and with the members of the Coop staff who supported us. These relationships are as important as the smooth operation of our grocery store—they are what make the Coop what it is! I believe the GM and management should be guided by the goal of fostering greater connection among cooperators.

Outside the Coop, I drive the Bookmobile for Brooklyn Public Library, bringing library service to communities all over the borough. I live just south of Prospect Park with my partner Jenny and our cat Tahini (who never does her work shift). I look forward to answering questions at the March 29 GM and I hope I can continue to serve the Coop as a member of the Board.



JESSE ROSENFELD

A member since 2004, I have worked as cashier, cheese and olive bagger, FTOP stock boy, babysitter and in 2nd floor guest registration. My paid profession is that of Addictions Counselor on the Lower East Side. My free time has been galvanized by the 2016 elections; I have joined Get Organized Brooklyn and regularly do phonebanking to support voter-expansion drives.

Demonstrably supporting our cooperative goals of shared success, I have brought products to our shelves and successfully brought a proposal to the approval stage at our GM. Pre-pandemic, my work slot was Secretary for the General Meeting and I took the minutes every month. Our meetings are one special set of gears in the whole enterprise, and I was proud to have been re-elected yearly for eight years straight. I consider myself very familiar with the GM and AM processes.

I love it at the Coop. I meet people here I wouldn't usually encounter and discuss things I wouldn't ever know about. I shop every couple of days because of its warm familiarity, and I like being part of an organization that is a standard-bearer for food and environmental justice. The Coop is my chosen community and I feel a part of it every day when I walk down Seventh Avenue, seeing fellow members on their way to and from the store.

With a proven record of support for the health of our enterprise, I am running for the Board of Directors because I see the Coop as a business first. As such, the Board is obligated to remain alert to the legal and fiduciary responsibilities of the Coop rather than maintain advocacy for any particular issue. Members at the coming election will likely ask a version of, "How will you improve the Coop as a member of the Board?" My answer will be, "There is nothing that a Board member should do outside of taking the advice of the membership on how to vote for proposals, which they have always done."

For any proposal that is problematic, I will ask myself the same questions as any Board member: Will a proposal ratified by the General Meeting put the financial and legal health of the Coop at risk? Does the proposal violate the spirit and letter of the Coop's own by-laws or NYS articles of incorporation, and our own mission statement?

Thank you and I look forward to your vote.

BOARD CANDIDATES: WHO THEY ARE AND WHY THEY RUN

July 25, 2022



ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN DONOHUE

From the Editors

The Park Slope Food Coop Board of Directors plays a crucial role in running the Coop. The Board makes its decisions based on the advice of members who attend the monthly General Meeting. There are five seats on this Board, and each term lasts three years. Members submit their applications to run for open seats in March each year, and then candidate statements are published in the *Linewaiters' Gazette*. Thanks to the pandemic, members will now have the chance to start voting online via a Coop-wide email that will go out in late May, and results will be announced at the

Annual Meeting in June.

There are six candidates for two open seats. Here is the 2022 slate:



IMANI Q'RYN

I was elected to the Board of Directors nearly 17 years ago and have continuously served in this capacity. I have served on the board longer than any other elected member. I am also a member of the Chair Committee and have been so throughout my service on the Board.

"Our Board of Directors is not a typical Board. It was required by state law that the Coop have a Board of Directors. As a co-operative we liked our town hall style of governance, that every member has a say, every member has a vote. We wanted to continue that tradition. The Coop's attorney at that time came up with the idea that the Board should take the advice of the members on all subjects as a means of limiting the powers of the Board. It was written into our by-laws; most of the Board Members that we've had since the Board was instituted decades ago have accepted this policy."

"I take the mandate to trust the membership and take their advice as a sacred duty. It's not my opinion, or my position on an issue that is important. It is vital that I respect and trust the voice of the membership. The membership guides my vote."

I wrote those words three years ago in my bid for candidacy letter. I take the opportunity to state that again. These last three years have been the most challenging for me as a Board Member and most dangerous for our form of governance and possibly the Coop in General. We had to do things as a Board that we had never done. We never meet outside of the General Meeting. During the beginning of COVID so much changed for the Coop and we were in uncharted territory. We got advice from our general counsel. We not only had to meet but we did so every week for hours! It was exhausting. We wanted the membership to have their voice, to weigh in and decide the direction that we would go as a co-operative. It is in crisis times like those that we could have lost what we had worked over 50 years to protect.

I was so proud and honored to be with that group of Board members: Bill P., Allen Z.,

Rachel A., Sukey T. and Joe H. We went through that fire and kept our word, our promise to the membership.

I ask for your vote one last time. I hope that more members will step up and choose to participate in our form of governance. It's easier now to come to our meetings, they are on Zoom! All the Coop laws are made here. I also hope that those that really understand our kind of Board will consider running next time we have an opening.

I love the Coop and hope that it exists for generations to come!



TIMOTHY HOSPODAR

In October 2020, when our Coop introduced a new phase of member labor, we met with an online scheduler deployed to support it. I showed up on that very first day to contribute in a way different than I had ever worked before—on a truck-unloading shift. Despite advance scheduling, a hiccup in the system prohibited me from working that first morning. And so, I showed up again on the very next morning, as scheduled,

and I worked on the sidewalk at 5:30 AM. I was surprised to like the shift, as there was a reason that I had never tried the shift before, counter to my history of working a variety of FTOP shifts from CHIPS to childcare to cashiering. Well, here's an inconsequential fact about me: I greatly detest predawn roll calls, not to mention my distaste for cold outdoor activities in general. Be that as it may, I made truck-unloading shifts a weekly practice and showed up 27 times across the eight months before the broader phase of member labor began in July 2021.

There's an analogy here as it relates to one thing fatherhood helped me learn. Early morning hours, before the babe awakens, are sometimes the only chance to devote one's free time to things that matter most. The Coop—as a market and as a community—has mattered so much to me, since joining twelve years ago and certainly in the last two. And its future, following these complicated times, is of grave importance. While my optimism helps me trust that survival is a given, I expect that our future state features exciting changes. I'd like to pledge my work shift to the board and our membership at large, because I understand the General Meeting (as a whole) comprises the stewardship of change.

If granted the opportunity to serve our community in this role, I commit to employing several fair tactics I have learned in other roles. In the effort to mitigate bias, I'll exercise sensitive feedback tools of active listening, to ensure that the board clarifies and validates as appropriate in addition to echoing the majority message. I'll help the board identify any unsatisfied concerns to acknowledge disagreement around consensus. My prior work as a facilitator in decision-making sessions for executives has prepared me to promote a diversity of voices while encouraging dissenting opinions be taken into consideration. I respect that any upcoming changes can only result from an array of debate, and I am equipped to support the process. The timing is right, I believe, for me to support the Coop in this capacity.



AMY CAO

Fellow members-owners, my name is Amy Cao, and I humbly submit my candidacy to the Coop's Board of Directors. My growing passion for good food—its origins, its impact, its accessibility—I owe to the Food Coop. I was drawn to the Coop for the promise of delicious, affordable food, and over the years, I find myself becoming more and more attached to the less tangible aspects of what makes our community a true

collective—and how to nurture this spirit to help ensure its lasting success.

In my professional life, I am a communications strategist for nonprofits, schools, professional organizations and public and private companies. This often positions me as an advisor to executives, faculty administration, public officials and even board directors, to help them plan for growth opportunities, manage crises and minimize risks. Previously, the City contracted me to work alongside social workers as a financial empowerment counselor. This brought me face to face with struggling New Yorkers, as I helped them navigate scarce resources in unforgiving situations.

These experiences have exposed me to unique and diverse challenges at all levels of an institution. This formed an inclusionary perspective that informs my daily life. As a liaison to stakeholders at many levels, I am a good listener. I do my best to understand differing points of view, encourage dialogue to solve problems, and respond thoughtfully and decisively when the situation commands it. As a Board Member, I would do this by leaning heavily on my member community.

I believe an elected Board Member has a duty of responsibility to the membership. Over the years, I've had the privilege to speak with many of you over the course of countless shops, while stocking shelves, scanning your IDs and walking your groceries home with you. I am immensely proud of the Coop community, and I am committed to working together with you to secure its financial health and future sustainability, in service to our founding Cooperative principles. With your confidence in my ability to take your lead by heeding the advice of the membership to act in the best interest of the Coop, I hope to earn your vote.



BRANDON WEST

My name is Brandon West, I have been a member since 2009, when I first moved into the neighborhood, and soon after became a squad leader for stocking and receiving. I also recently ran for City Council in the community in 2021. For a career, I'm currently a labor organizer for local journalists and have worked in voting rights and organizing. I have always been very close to the Coop and its mission. It is incredibly challenging

to maintain large membership-led organizations. I have experienced that fact, not just as an active member of this Coop, but in other collective processes and while working in government.

As the pandemic put an incredible strain on the Coop, and some challenging decisions were made about how to plan for the present and future, I wished I had an avenue to be more directly involved with the Coop. Not just as a way to be more directly connected in a community important to me during a time when “community” is harder to find, but also so that we can bring more member input into some of the seriously important decisions this Coop will have in the future. My goal and intention of running for this position is to mainly focus on decision making, and helping work to build participation in the general meetings, which were once much larger.

We all remember the more contentious, but better attended meetings in the past 10 years. While we have progressed a lot in this time, I think the challenge our Coop faces as being large but also democratic is critical, especially when our membership numbers have dropped in light of the pandemic, and that we are in a more vulnerable state financially as we were before it started. I also pledge to work to make sure that members are brought more into major decisions in the future and support developing a process for how we rethink our democratic processes in the face of so much change to the Coop. Our leaders made several tough decisions quickly, and I believe the Coop is much better for it, but I think more tough questions are ahead, and there are a lot of unknowns. I think it's important to try to bring as many folks into these decisions as we can, and make more members aware of the challenges we face as a Coop.

I think our mission is strong and widely felt and believe the next few years in the City will be challenging with a shift towards living with the pandemic. What that does physically and financially to the Coop remains to be known. We must make sure that our members who are most negatively impacted, and who struggle financially, should be centered as much as possible.

In addition to this, I think the fiscal health of the Coop is incredibly important, and I

will also work to make sure that the relationship between coordinators and staff is always a focus and highlighted. The Coop needs to be a great place to be a member and to work, and I will use my background in conflict negotiation to help mediate any issues if they come up, and contribute to mitigating conversations if needed.



GEORGE SARAH OLKEN

I knew the Park Slope Food Coop was magical when I saw the red sign-in books at La Louve Coopérative in Paris, which is not only built on our model but copied our store down to the color of the binders. There is a special pleasure in our rituals: calling out over the intercom “What are those little mushrooms in miso soup?” (enoki); the line painted on the backyard wall to indicate how high to stack compost buckets; walking a member and their cart up Seventh Avenue and learning how they came to New York in the 60s—or last month. The Coop is my happy place, I’ve made friends there, I run into friends there, I want it to flourish.

I would like to join the Coop Board of Directors to be a voice for that flourishing. I believe board members, like coordinators and committee members, can use their position to influence discussions and decision-making in a positive direction, especially because the board is our one elected leadership body. With a mandate from the membership, I will use this position to emphasize working together and building community.

Recently the Coop has had to make difficult decisions: How to run the virtual GM? How to re-organize member labor? How to support members struggling from the pandemic? There is no abstract entity “The Coop” to address these questions. WE must address them through cooperation as members.

We need to re-educate ourselves about how our Coop functions and re-imagine our role within it. As we become more reliant on technology (goodbye red binders), we must find ways to make that technology accessible so that every member can learn how it operates. As our finances fluctuate due to unforeseen crises—the next pandemic or future supply chain breakdowns—members need to take an active role in the decisions of how we react.

This is work I’ve tried to do on an individual level as a squad leader, by bringing items to the GM, by joining with members of the unofficial Coop Study Group, and by speak-

ing with staff and community elders: What was the Coop like before we owned the building? How do we resolve disputes? How do you pick the perfect melon?

Since joining in 2007, I've worked on the shopping floor, in the basement, and in the office. In 2018, I became a shopping squad leader. I was heartbroken when the pandemic severed the relationships with my fellow squad members and with the members of the Coop staff who supported us. These relationships are as important as the smooth operation of our grocery store—they are what make the Coop what it is! I believe the GM and management should be guided by the goal of fostering greater connection among cooperators.

Outside the Coop, I drive the Bookmobile for Brooklyn Public Library, bringing library service to communities all over the borough. I live just south of Prospect Park with my partner Jenny and our cat Tahini (who never does her work shift). I look forward to answering questions at the March 29 GM and I hope I can continue to serve the Coop as a member of the Board.



JESSE ROSENFELD

A member since 2004, I have worked as cashier, cheese and olive bagger, FTOP stock boy, babysitter and in 2nd floor guest registration. My paid profession is that of Addictions Counselor on the Lower East Side. My free time has been galvanized by the 2016 elections; I have joined Get Organized Brooklyn and regularly do phonebanking to support voter-expansion drives.

Demonstrably supporting our cooperative goals of shared success, I have brought products to our shelves and successfully brought a proposal to the approval stage at our GM. Pre-pandemic, my work slot was Secretary for the General Meeting and I took the minutes every month. Our meetings are one special set of gears in the whole enterprise, and I was proud to have been re-elected yearly for eight years straight. I consider myself very familiar with the GM and AM processes.

I love it at the Coop. I meet people here I wouldn't usually encounter and discuss things I wouldn't ever know about. I shop every couple of days because of its warm familiarity, and I like being part of an organization that is a standard-bearer for food and environmental justice. The Coop is my chosen community and I feel a part of it every day when I walk down Seventh Avenue, seeing fellow members on their way to and from the store.

With a proven record of support for the health of our enterprise, I am running for the Board of Directors because I see the Coop as a business first. As such, the Board is obligated to remain alert to the legal and fiduciary responsibilities of the Coop rather than maintain advocacy for any particular issue. Members at the coming election will likely ask a version of, "How will you improve the Coop as a member of the Board?" My answer will be, "There is nothing that a Board member should do outside of taking the advice of the membership on how to vote for proposals, which they have always done."

For any proposal that is problematic, I will ask myself the same questions as any Board member: Will a proposal ratified by the General Meeting put the financial and legal health of the Coop at risk? Does the proposal violate the spirit and letter of the Coop's own by-laws or NYS articles of incorporation, and our own mission statement?

Thank you and I look forward to your vote.

FEBRUARY 22, 2022, GENERAL MEETING

July 25, 2022



ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

February GM Covers Hearing Committee Election, Explores Child Care Proposal

By Frank Haberle

On February 22, approximately 110 PSFC members gathered by Zoom for the February General Meeting. The agenda items included voting for Hearing Administration Committee candidates, and discussion of a proposal to allow one member of a two-parent household to suspend membership in order to take care of children. Several brief committee and coordinator reports rounded out the events. With two items on the agenda, a smaller February crowd, and seasoned veterans running the event the meeting wrapped up in a crisp 90 minutes.

Electing New Hearing Committee Members

The first agenda item invited attending members to vote on two members who sought to join the Hearing Administration Committee (HAC). As explained by Committee member Dominique Bravo, the HAC acts as part of the PSFC's Disciplinary Committees, playing the role of organizing hearings by scheduling the events, calling in Coop members for hearings, and making sure that all procedures are followed. Bravo invited the two candidates, both 20-year members of the Coop, to speak about their qualifications. Only one of the two candidates, Israella Mayeri, was in attendance.

"I joined the Coop when I moved to this neighborhood," said Mayeri. "I joined the Coop because I liked the people and I liked the idea of joining a cooperative. I want to join this committee to make a greater contribution to the Coop."

Several attending members asked questions, including: "The Disciplinary Committee seems like such an important committee that does such confidential work. What is your experience and what makes you qualified to serve on this committee?" Bravo, who is a lawyer, clarified that there are a number of committees and that this committee does not manage the actual hearings. "I'm a retired lawyer," Mayeri added. "I'm very good with working with other people in a team. I want to contribute to this effort."

Allowing Parent of Young Children to Leave Membership

The second agenda item was a discussion item that allows one member of a two-adult household with a child or children under school age to leave membership. As presented by Ryan Snelson, a member of the Coop since December, the agenda item stated, "The Coop needs to better accommodate pandemic parents—allowing one partner to leave indefinitely so the other partner can care for their child or children under school age."

"Being a parent right now is extremely difficult," Snelson said, opening the discussion. "What makes it more difficult is being a parent and being able to meet shopping and work shift requirements. All we are asking for is that the Coop allow one parent to

take care of their child. I've brought this up a number of times with the membership office. I keep hearing, 'This is the way it has always been done.' I'm asking for one household partner to not have to work shifts."

Members weighed in on the proposal. One asked for clarification: "Would one member be exempt from the work requirement, or would they be placed on leave?"

Another added, "We could make an effort to restart child care, which would be a better way. I am somewhat opposed to keeping people out because we need member labor but also because it's an important part of building the bond in the community."

Questions were raised about how to accommodate single-parent households and people who are taking care of elders and sick family members. A recurring concern focused on drawing from the pool of member workers we need to keep the Coop fully functioning.

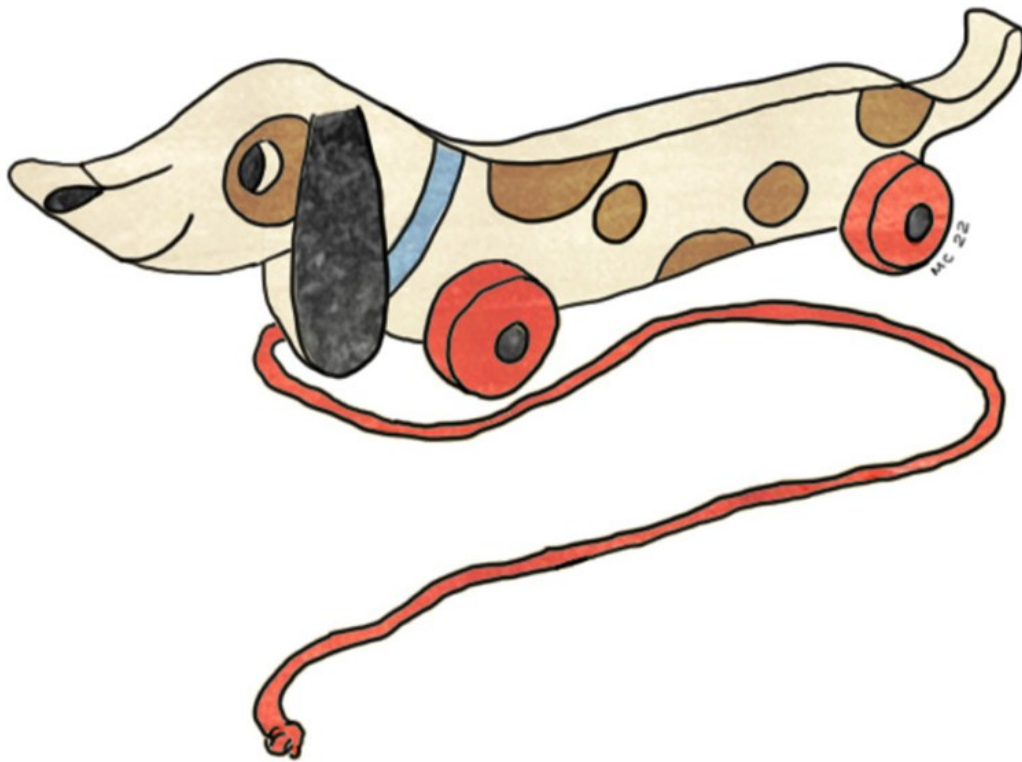


ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

As one member noted, “As a new member you may not understand how the Coop works. When you say, ‘Half my household is not working,’ you’re doing something that is non-Coop. We need all our labor. There are other things we can be doing. If parents decide to opt out it undermines our model. Very few coops can do our work. Honestly, you just joined the Coop. Why do you want to mess with our model?”

“Nobody’s trying to undermine the Coop for this model,” Snelson responded. “I’m just

asking for us to look at this from the perspective of parents with young children. Do we want to look at the way we do business? Is the end game for the Coop to make more money, or increase labor?"

One member added, "I think child care is a really important part of the Coop. If people aren't in favor of this proposal, then we should consider bringing back child care." Another responded, "This may be part of a larger issue that concerns other members who are caring for people right now. I don't see how taking back child care can be done right now. I think this is a non-issue."

Snelson wrapped up the conversation by thanking everyone for their consideration. "I appreciate this, but I'm not asking for child care," he concluded. "I'm asking for a policy where one parent can leave the Coop for child care responsibility. All your points about how the Coop worked in 1973 are good points, but this is not 1973."

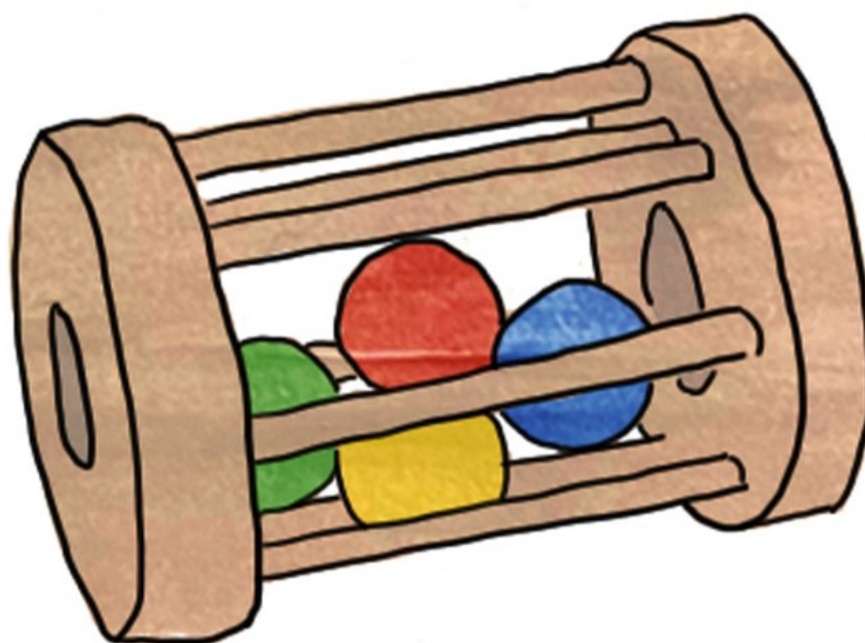


ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

Committee and Coordinator Reports

Prior to the agenda items, there were a number of reports. Joe Holtz, General Manager, General Coordinator and Treasurer, reported on Coop finances, underscoring that there were indicators that the first four weeks of the 2022 fiscal year were off to a slow start, but that we are finally close to a cash flow break-even. “The advent of adding new members is important,” Holtz said. “We lost 4,500 to 5,000 members during

COVID. We are building back. We are now at about 13,000 and adding 100 or so a week.” When asked what the optimal enrollment would be, Holtz said “we had 17,100 members when the pandemic started. Right now, we have a goal of 15,000. Let’s get there first.” Other members asked about how long price markups and fluctuating prices (which reflect price fluctuations and increases passed on by suppliers) would last. Holtz added that when member labor returns to 100% and the temporary worker system is sunsetted, the Coop will be able to look more closely at lowering prices.

General Coordinator Ann Herpel reported on the return of the member workforce and enrollment. “We are now reintroducing the food processing in the basement. If you are interested in olives and cheese work, you can find those shifts now. We have planned for the temp people to be here another two months.” Regarding enrollment, Herpel stated that “we have new member enrollment sessions four times a week now with over 100 appointments to enroll. We have 1,000 new members since we started enrollment on December 5. Staff and members are reporting that the new members have been really enthusiastic.” A very brief report on several international labor events in the news was reported by Bart DeCourcy of the International Trade Information Squad, rounding out the committee and Coordinator reports. In comments just before the reports, Imani Q’ryn, Board member, encouraged members to consider running for Board membership. “I’ve been on the Board 20 years. I want to encourage others to join the Board, especially people of color. If you love the Coop, help us protect the voice of the people.”