BOARD CANDIDATES: WHO THEY ARE AND WHY THEY RUN

April 19, 2022

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN DONOHUE

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member. I am also a member of the Chair Committee and have been so throughout my service on the Board.

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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

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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.

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FEBRUARY 22, 2022, GENERAL MEETING

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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."

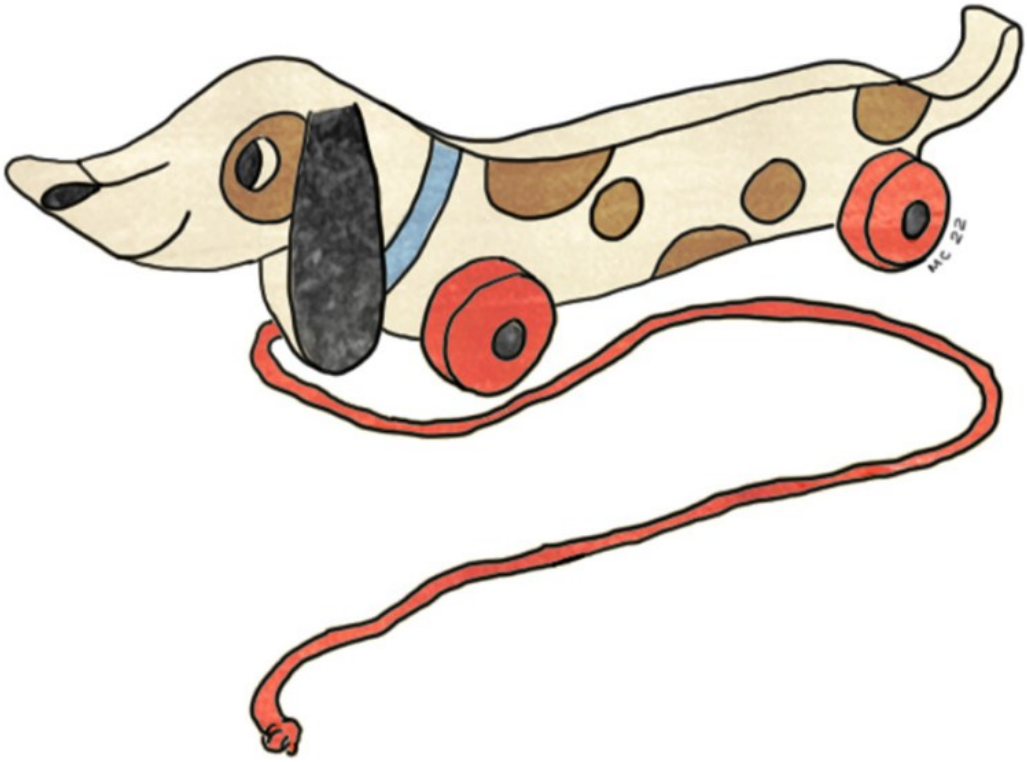
Allowing Parent of Young Children to Leave Membership

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.



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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.”

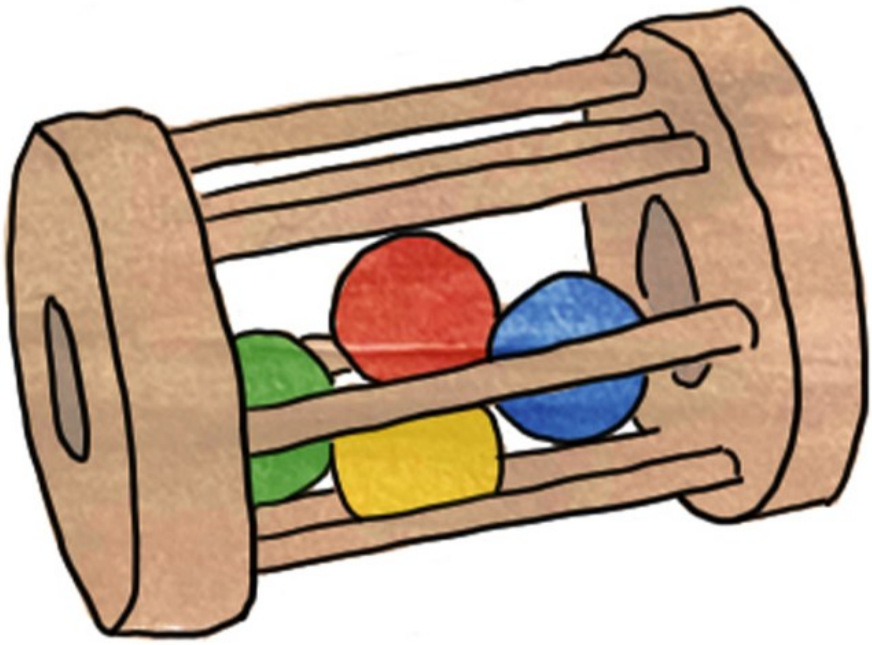

ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

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."

JESSE ROSENFELD: BOARD CANDIDATE STATEMENT

April 19, 2022

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 7th 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. ■