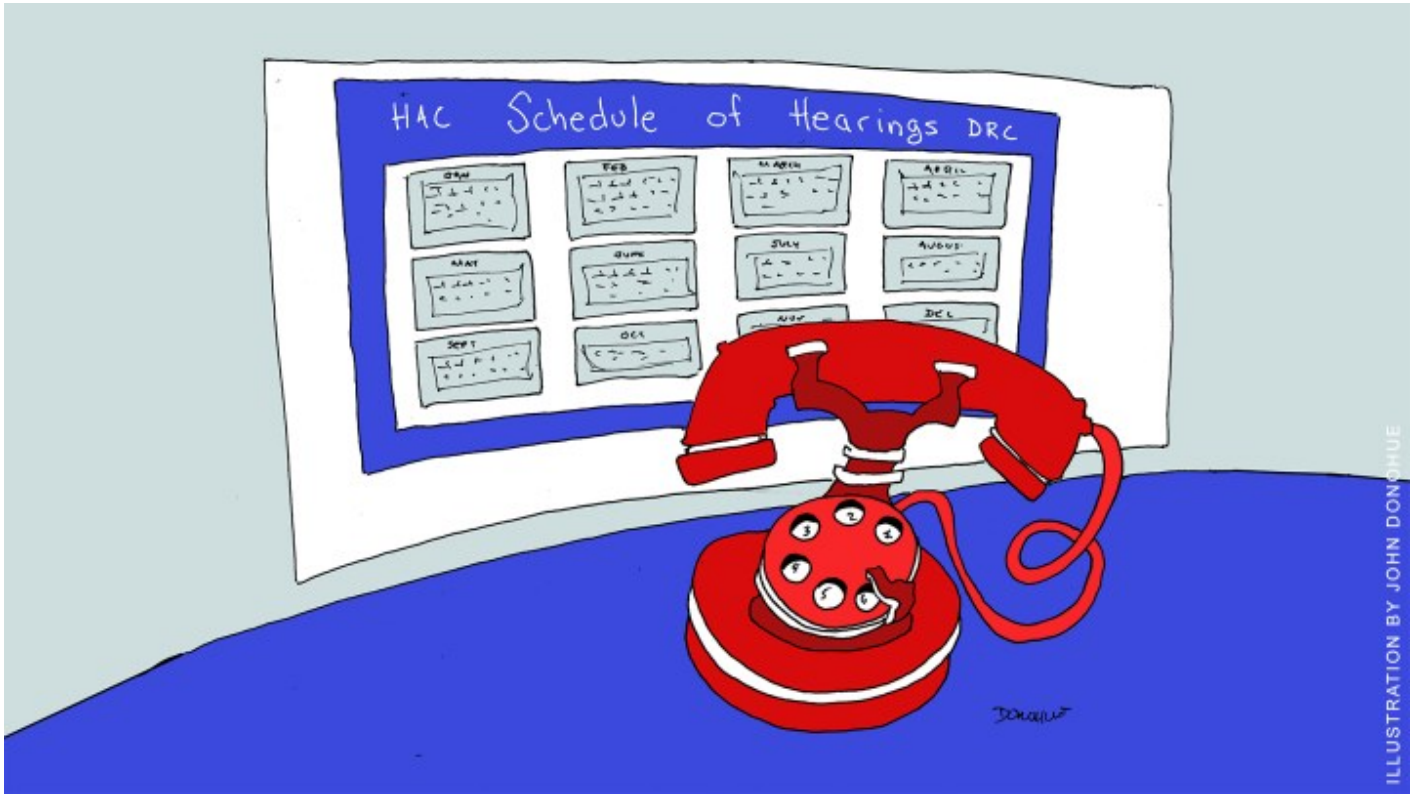
THE HEARING ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE (HAC) IS SEEKING NEW MEMBERS

July 15, 2025



July 15, 2025

HAC's work is organizing the scheduling of hearings for the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) and Hearing Administration Committee (HAC). The DRC seeks the resolution of disputes among members by investigating and determining if a member has violated Coop rules. If so, HAC determines the consequence for that violation. Hearings are held if a member wishes to appeal this determination.

HAC only meets when a hearing needs to be scheduled, and this is somewhat rare, with a current average of about one (1) hearing per year. HAC conducts its work by email and phone, and a member of HAC must be present at all hearings. Generally, HAC members will receive about 2–3 shifts for the scheduling of a hearing.

Prospective applicants should be:

• Members in good standing for at least a year before the pandemic

• Willing to work in a collaborative committee environment

• Interested in the ongoing business of the Coop

Please send statements of interest to psfchac@gmail.com. The Committee will interview applicants and then select candidates for election at the General Meeting. We are seeking an applicant pool that reflects the diversity of the Coop's membership.

MARCH GENERAL MEETING: SPRING PRODUCTS, BOARD CANDIDATES AND MORE

July 15, 2025



April 22, 2025

By Zach Schiffman

As attendees entered the Picnic House on March 25, the sidewalk was flanked with members advocating for various causes, handing out info sheets about hybrid meetings or QR code slips introducing candidates up for election. On one side of the immediate entry, members offered “halvah from Israel,” while on the other, a table with a handful of food options featured literature with voices from Gaza. The competing efforts outside the Picnic House foreshadowed what would come in the well-attended meeting, with the issues spilling into nearly every aspect of the agenda.

OPEN FORUM



Members turned out for the March General Meeting.

The Open Forum began with a member asking the Chair Committee to clarify the poli-

cy around open forum rules, pointing out that past meetings have allowed topics unrelated to Coop operations, with speakers granted longer than one minute. Chair Committee member David Moss responded that the committee uses a document called the Park Slope Food Coop Guide to General and Annual Meetings, which does not limit topics to Coop operations. He added that the one-minute rule is interpreted flexibly, depending on the needs of a particular meeting.

While some brought up items of general interest to the membership—honoring the anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist fire, increasing the amount of meetings eligible for work credit, a plea to stop members from eating while working the checkout shift—speakers continued to challenge the transparency of the general meetings.

Coop member Josh Geller flagged how he was not on the ballot for the evening's dispute resolution community, while member Noah Potter questioned how his agenda item had not come up, despite requesting it to be expedited. "I've been ghosted. I think it's inappropriate," Potter said, in the first of many comments he would make throughout the meeting.

One member asked if the June 24 General meeting date could be moved to avoid conflicting with the New York State and City primary elections, but outgoing General Coordinator Joe Holtz said that wasn't possible due to the timing of the annual financial audit.



Member Adam Tager asked the candidates some questions.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Holtz, who also serves as Treasurer, reported on the four-week period ending 3/2/25, with a presentation of the top-line details and a full report sent to members' inboxes the previous week. The report compared the first four weeks of the current fiscal year to the same period last year, noting that the previous fiscal year ended in January 2024. Holtz pointed out that last year's gross margin for this period was unrealistically high due to error, ("The first four weeks last year had an unreasonably high gross margin that was unrealistic. So I didn't bother to write it down because it sorted itself out by the eight-week statement.") but that this year's data was more reliable, with a positive swing in bottom-line income from negative $35,000 to positive $33,000. He noted a rosy outlook, with sales up 10.4 percent, and an increase of $182,000 cash on hand, the most vital asset in the Coop's finances. The overall financial stability of the Coop is underscored by the increase in base markup from 24 percent to 25 per-

cent.

As of February 25, 2024, total liabilities were $5.22 million, while total member equity—including member investments, paid-in capital and retained earnings—was $8.64 million. He explained that member equity includes all member investments and the Coop's retained earnings, and that donated investments are categorized as additional paid-in capital. He walked members through other financial statements, including a cash comparison from the beginning of the fiscal year.

The final portion of the report introduced a new feature: comparing projections for the year with the annualized actual results for the four-week period. Holtz noted that the Coop had projected $62.8 million in annual sales, but if current trends continue, sales could exceed $63.8 million. Expenses and gross margin were also slightly better than projected. He clarified that these annualized figures are theoretical and could shift. "The slow summer months are not yet included and therefore the projected variance could be overstated," he said. Holtz closed by explaining how annualization works mathematically. A member then raised a concern about whether the financial statement had been received by email (it had), and another asked about the backlog of new member applicants.

GENERAL COORDINATOR REPORTS

Joe Szladek, one of the general coordinators, began with a few announcements. He shared that the April General Meeting will be held at a new location: The theater at City Tech, located at 275 Jay Street in Brooklyn. The venue change was made "to accommodate the anticipated larger audience" for the discussion and a vote on the hybrid general meeting proposal. Szladek also announced two staffing updates: Guillermo Rojas Hernandez has started as a developer/programmer, and Eric Alger, a receiving coordinator, has left Coop employment. Szladek reminded members that the Coop's hours had been extended.



Produce Buyer Cecelia Rembert asked for feedback.

Cecelia Rembert, one of the Coop's two produce buyers, shared seasonal highlights: "The citrus season is wrapping up, so if you have been enjoying the California citrus, do it now," she said, highlighting the Oro Blancos and mandarins.

She mentioned that berries are "mostly out of Mexico except for some blueberries from Chile," and while pricing deals aren't yet available, "look forward to that in a month or two, maybe in April and going into May." Apples are also winding down and will be replaced by New Zealand apples in the summer. Rembert also gave a grape outlook: Grapes are currently out of South Africa right now but will soon move to Mexican grapes, with California grape season beginning in June. Local vegetables are just beginning to arrive, including "some little gem lettuce from Lancaster next week," and "head lettuces coming the week after that."

She highlighted California-grown Delta Queen asparagus and noted they are "on the lookout" for sustainably harvested ramps: "There aren't that many farms that do that

that we feel comfortable with." Fiddlehead ferns have arrived as "a good sign of spring," and she reminded members, "Make sure to cook them."

Rembert also shared that the Coop has seeds in soil right now, and a new pallet of soil will arrive mostly on Thursdays over the next six or seven weekends. The Coop will also be running its small plant program through the spring, which she described as "really fun." During the Q&A, member Serko Artinian raised concerns about the freshness of the raspberries. Rembert explained: "Raspberries have the highest sugar content, and they mold the fastest; sometimes, there's more age on them than we would like." Another member asked about reduced plastic packaging and lower-quality organic produce coming to the Coop. Rembert responded, "No, I haven't noticed that," regarding suppliers dumping poor-quality items at the Coop.

Dory Kornfield, a member of the Equity, Access and Community Committee (EACC), announced the upcoming launch of the Coop's first-ever member demographic survey. The goal is to gather basic information about the Coop membership through a quick 15-question, five-minute survey. She emphasized that this is "not a household survey," it's an individual survey for people 18 and over. The questions will cover neighborhood, household composition, disabilities status, as well as some general demographic questions: age, race, gender and sexual orientation.

"The reason we are doing this is because the Coop doesn't collect any of this information and we don't know who we are or enough about ourselves to know if we are as diverse and welcoming as we say we are," she said, noting that the data could help "inform and guide policy decisions, processes in the Coop."

She cited childcare as an example: "Childcare has been a hot topic for a couple of years now, but we actually don't know how many members have kids."

Dan Weiss, a member of the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) since 2017, gave an overview of the committee's role and process. "The Dispute Resolution Committee—our charge is to facilitate the resolution of disputes among members." Weiss ex-

plained the committee handles “complaints of member misconduct,” including “conflict, goods, shopping for businesses, masking violations, violations of personal space, intimidation, harassment, incomplete work on shift.”

He described the work as consensus-based and guided by “GM-approved resolution procedures,” with two membership coordinators serving as liaisons. Weiss emphasized the committee’s standards: “Our members approach their work without prejudice. We set aside our political opinions to ensure the fair and equitable process for our membership.” He also addressed a recent development: “This month, we made a difficult decision to halt certain types of cases involving political issues at the Coop. We’re in the midst of legal proceedings related to these matters.”

Until a “reasonable framework” is developed, those cases will remain on hold, which he said has precedent: “We’ve had legal proceedings in the past involving civil rights issues, and we’ve had to pause on those cases.”

Bart DeCoursy from the International Trade Education Squad (ITES) reported that the group had signed on to a USMCA review organizational letter ahead of the mandatory six-year review of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement. He outlined their hopes for renegotiation: “End the offshoring of good-paying jobs, raise wages, strengthen rural communities, stop abuses of big tech, make medicine more affordable.” DeCoursy also warned of the Trump administration’s announcement of “reciprocal tariffs” beginning April 2, including a “25 percent tariff on all goods from any country that imports Venezuelan oil.” He joked, “Almost by threatening one thing and walking it back, he could manipulate the market, but who’s to say—he also just might not know what he’s doing.” He encouraged members to follow the squad on Bluesky to keep up on all things international trade.

A representative from the Personnel Committee gave a brief update, noting that the committee currently has only five members instead of the usual seven. They announced that in the April 1st Gazette, there will be an ad asking for more members, and encouraged anyone with experience in employment law, general management,

staffing or conflict resolution to apply. The committee is also continuing the search for a new general coordinator to replace Joe Holtz: “Four people have been interviewed, and there’s one or two more to be interviewed, and that’s ongoing.”

DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE ELECTION

Existing DRC committee member Christopher Cox presented two new members up for election, Dorothy Lund and Olivia Goldberg, and four members who are up for reelection: Deb Magocsi, Lee Bantle, Melinda Daniels and Grace Protos. Cox noted that the committee received dozens of applications for these spots, “definitely more than we could handle,” and emphasized that this was “just the first step in helping rebuild the committee to handle our caseload.”



Dispute Resolution Committee candidate Olivia Goldberg addressed the meeting.

New candidate Olivia Goldberg shared her long-standing Coop connection: “My parents met at the Coop’s 16th anniversary party in 1989, so I might not actually exist

without the Coop”—and cited her professional experience in early childhood education, the tree care industry and food service. Dorothy Lund, a law professor at Columbia University, touted her work studying how organizations manage conflict, saying her skills could help people “feel like they’ve been seen and heard.”

Returning members emphasized commitment, collaboration and deep Coop knowledge. Deborah Magocsi recalled joining when the committee’s name changed from “Disciplinary” to “Dispute Resolution” and said she strives to “listen with an open mind and an open heart.” Grace Protos said she valued being part of a process where “people feel as if they’re actually seen,” and noted that the work “comes in emails and phone calls and committee meetings” beyond standard shift hours. Melinda Daniels said she brings “patience, empathy and problem solving” and called it an honor to continue the work. Helen Koh read a statement from Lee Bantle, who was absent, in which he said his goal was “to take down the temperature when members are in conflict.”

During the Q&A, members raised serious concerns about the committee’s recent decision to pause certain politically sensitive cases. One asked: “If a member punches me and said it’s because I’m calling for a boycott, will your committee decline to consider my complaint?” Other questions addressed transparency, the onboarding process, and whether incumbents disputed how only six candidates were advanced. In response, Magocsi explained: “We can only bring a couple of members on at a time because it is a lengthy onboarding process.” Current members of the committee emphasized their hope to grow the DRC to 16 members, doubling the current size. The vote followed, with all six unopposed candidates elected to the board.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATES

The Board of Directors candidates all presented statements explaining why they should be elected. Dan Kaminsky submitted a video statement because he was attending “the biggest event in the pizza world… the Pizza Expo.” In his recorded statement, Kaminsky said he has been a Coop member since 2018 and is currently com-

pleting a master's in social work: "Quite literally, my master's degree is in the study and practice of Cooperation." Other candidates introduced themselves in person, including Serko Artinian, who presented data from his informal poll of members, attempting to find out what percentage of people exclusively shop at the Coop and identifying pain points that members raised.



Board candidate Taylor Pate spoke at the meeting.

Lynn Husum, a Carroll Gardens resident who successfully sold her company last year, said she hoped to use her business acumen to serve the Coop. Taylor Pate highlighted her experience on nonprofit boards and at other food coops: "I believe that the solidarity economy and Cooperative movements are how we build community power." Brandon West, the current board president, stressed his "institutional memory," having the best record for GM attendance of any current members. He also hopes to make the Coop more democratic, easier to understand and less volatile. Ralph Yozzo advocated for term limits and listening to members. Noah Potter invoked our current

president, saying he hopes to “Make the Coop Cooperative Again.” Elizabeth Tobier, the current Coop secretary, emphasized the importance of attendance at the General Meeting in her statement.

During the Q&A, candidates were asked to share what makes their platforms unique. Pate noted her “deep knowledge of supply chains” and experience with leadership transitions (something the Coop currently faces with the departure of Joe Holtz), while Potter sought to facilitate “intramembership communication” and update bylaws. Artinian proposed “building coalitions with other coops” and using tech to bring the Coop into the future.

Candidates also discussed Coop challenges. Tobier said the hardest part is learning “how to communicate Cooperatively.” West cited structural tensions: “There are now differing ideas about what the board should do.” Several, including Yozzo, stressed the importance of preserving the Coop’s Cooperative spirit: “It means we cooperate, not rip ourselves apart.”

Members also raised concerns about candidate affiliations. One member asked the candidates to disclose endorsements, with Potter and Yozzo confirming they were endorsed by Coop for Unity. Another member asked if candidates aligned with Coop Members for Palestine, which Tonier dismissed as irrelevant, adding that it “has nothing to do with being a board member.” Finally, candidates responded to a question about hybrid meetings. Most supported the idea, while Tobier reiterated her view that board members should remain neutral on any upcoming votes or agenda items: “Our personal feelings as members would not come into play.”

A question about favorite Coop products offered a reprieve: For Serko Artinian, the heirloom organic oranges and for Ralph Yozzo, the gluten-free bread that’s not frozen—“Literally my family went up to Chatham, New York where they come from and we bought it there and it costs less at the Coop than right at the warehouse.”

Noah Potter refused to answer, “Just one? I don’t know if I can do that.” Lynn Husum

shouted out the chickpea salad and the quiches that are no longer sold—“What happened to the quiches?” Taylor Pate said the White Mustache yogurt. West and Tobier both highlighted the beer selection.

Zach Schiffman is a social editor and writer at New York *magazine, comedian and Park Slope local.*

COST CUTTING, THE BULLETIN BOARD, AND A $4,000 QUESTION: NOTES FROM THE FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING

July 15, 2025



ILLUSTRATION BY DEBORAH TINT

April 1, 2025

By Nikia Dawkins

At the start of February's General Meeting, Chair David Moss announced that the Dispute Resolution Committee election would be postponed, which left just one issue on the official agenda. It was an issue that elicited excitement, frustration and personal accusations, an issue near and dear to the hearts of many—the Coop bulletin board.

During an evening spent discussing hybrid meetings, unexpected financial loss and the search for a new general manager, the most hotly debated issue of the night was where this hypothetical bulletin board should be located.

But first, the open forum began with an impassioned plea from member Spike Kahn about the need for hybrid meetings. While wearing a mask, Kahn argued that hybrid meetings would allow more accessibility for members like herself who are immuno-compromised or otherwise unable to attend in person, adding that they would also be more democratic because Prospect Park's Picnic House is not large enough to accommodate the entire Coop community. Later, during the General Coordinators' Reports, Joe Szladek addressed concerns that the GCs are fundamentally against hybrid meetings. "We are not opposed to considering it," he said, "but are concerned about the impact and how it will be implemented." He went on to raise the following questions: How do we ensure that only Coop members have access and that no one video records or screenshots the meetings? How do we determine who can be remote and who must be there in person? And, finally, how much will it cost? Szladek advised that one tech company gave him a quote of $4,000 per meeting. "And when I asked if we could DIY, they laughed," he said. Szladek floated the idea that we could, perhaps, purchase equipment and use skilled member labor instead of a third party, but right now there are more questions than answers. He bemoaned that a lot of these issues weren't properly addressed by those who initially proposed the idea. "Yes, they were!" said Carol Wald from the audience, after which a few other members raised their hands to speak on the topic, but Chair Moss determined there wasn't enough time left for discussion on the matter.

General Manager Joe Holtz presented the Treasurer's Report, in which he compared the financial projections from 2023 to the financial actualities of 2024. It had been projected that the Coop would have a positive gain of $25,000, but the Coop actually lost $420,000. Sales last year were up 6.68%, but income was down due to a lower markup and higher-than-expected expenses, including health benefits, electronic payment fees, and business insurance. The unexpected portion of the expenses totaled $438,000, with the bulk of that being the unexpected increase in health benefits,

which cost $312,000 more than projected. However, despite these negative variances, the Coop still ended the year with $247,000 in positive cash flow. So, overall, there was an increase in cash despite a loss of income. A few members requested more information about the unexpected increase in expenses. Holtz explained that health insurance rates are skyrocketing across the country, adding that the Coop did tweak the employee health plan to save a little money, and now it is more expensive to seek treatment out-of-network. With regard to insurance, he wanted to make sure the Coop could be rebuilt if it were, say, hit by an asteroid or otherwise demolished, so coverage had to be increased. Finally, Holtz shared that he's working on getting into a program that will lower fees for electronic payments and that the newly extended shopping hours will also help improve Coop finances.

Later, during the General Coordinators' Reports, Elinoar Astrinsky outlined several ways that members can also help to cut costs. She said that members are now being used for front end support on the shopping floor, a decision designed to decrease staff hours. She suggested that members sign up for squad leader roles and repair shifts to further decrease the Coop's expenses. Most of the repair work requires skill and expertise (so if you *are* experienced, please sign up!), but some of the work can be done by almost anyone, such as painting. She stressed that using member labor instead of hired help saves a lot of money, and that many squad leaders are aging out or retiring, so we need a new generation to step up. On a similar note, Chairwoman and Board Member Imani Q'ryn informed the crowd that she would be retiring in June, which means that we will need a new chair committee member and a new board member to replace her.

Valerie Vadala from the Personnel Committee said they were still reviewing candidates for the new General Manager and had whittled the pool down to four people who would be interviewed in the coming weeks. She said that replacing Joe Holtz, who's been with us for 50 years, won't be easy. They're looking for someone both innovative and with the appropriate level of experience, who can handle the volume and intensity of the Coop.

Speaking on behalf of the International Trade Education Committee, Bart DeCoursy reported that Trump's tariffs would begin on April 2, raising U.S. inflation by 0.8%. He encouraged members to visit BlueSky for more information as the economic impact will be ongoing and extensive.

At this point, the meeting moved to the official agenda, and Keyian Vafai gave a presentation explaining the history of the Coop bulletin board, from its initial creation in the 1980s to its removal in 2020 due to Covid precautions and fire code regulations. There is now an official Coop-business-only bulletin board in the corner entrance, and he proposed that members should be allowed to use it as well. His presentation was followed by that of Katheryn Keller, who argued that reinstating the bulletin board would foster connection, provide access to trustworthy local resources, and encourage non-digital engagement. A small-business owner herself, she said that over the years, she was able to find a pet sitter, a subletter and multiple clients via the old bulletin board, and she believes that reinstating it would create a lifeline for service providers and freelancers, as well as a shared information hub for events and opportunities. She also presented the results of a member survey she created to determine the level of interest in the bulletin board, and although she was only able to survey 375 out of 17,000 members, the response was overwhelmingly positive.

Almost everyone seemed excited about the bulletin board—so excited, in fact, that there was a flurry of ideas. For every idea, however, there was an opposing idea, and for every point a counterpoint. The main issues revolved around the location of the bulletin board and the supervision of its content. Two members were extremely concerned that Vafai, who is a vocal supporter of Palestine, would weaponize the bulletin board to promote and organize the BDS movement. Vafai calmly replied, "I won't be running it," which left members arguing over whether anyone needed to run it. As for its location, members were divided on whether it should be located in the corner entrance (which is, perhaps, too small for such use), in the stairwell (where it originally existed but which may not meet fire code regulations or provide enough accessibility), just outside the Coop (which could exacerbate the Coop's current litter problem), or in place of the lockers near the entrance. The animated discussion was ultimately

ended by Chair Moss because it was “really in the weeds.”

The Board then voted to approve the minutes of the January GM after no one had any suggested changes, and the meeting disbanded.

Nikia Dawkins is a creative writer, journalist, and night owl.

INTERESTED IN ENGAGING COOP WORK?

July 15, 2025



November 26, 2024

DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE (DRC) SEEKS NEW MEMBERS

SKILLS NEEDED

- Communication • Problem solving • Conflict resolution
- Dealing with complex situations
- Investigation • Writing • Research

OUR WORK INCLUDES

- Resolving conflicts between members
- Applying Coop rules and regulations
- Discussing policy issues related to the committee’s work
- Investigating allegations of uncooperative behavior by members and engaging in problem-solving
- Frequent contact with committee members
- Participating in mediation, hearings and other conflict resolution methods

REQUIREMENTS

- In order to be considered for this position, any candidate must:
- Be a member for at least a year
- Have an excellent attendance record
- Possess the ability to work on a team
- Have good writing skills
- Have computer proficiency (Excel, Word, email)—this is essential
- Attend evening meetings every six weeks

We often work more than the 2.75 hours in a 6-week period. These hours are credited and can be banked for future use.

We recognize the importance of various points of view when considering cases brought to us. We are seeking a candidate pool that reflects the diversity of the Coop’s membership.

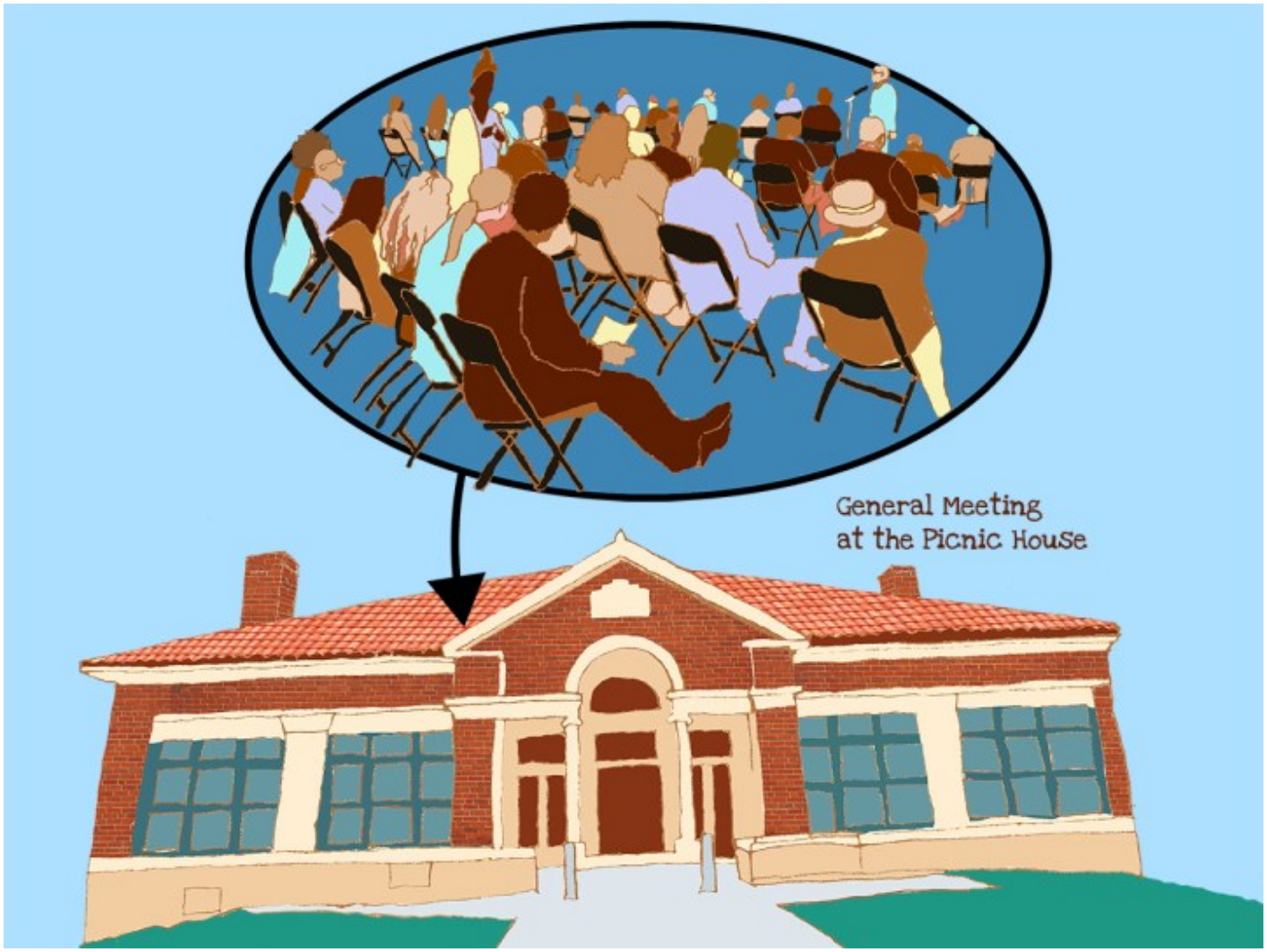
CONTACT

foodcoopdrc@gmail.com with the subject line: Joining the DRC

Join us to make the Coop the best place it can be for everyone.

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

July 15, 2025



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.

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COOP MEMBER EXPELLED AFTER REPEATED MASK-WEARING VIOLATIONS

July 15, 2025

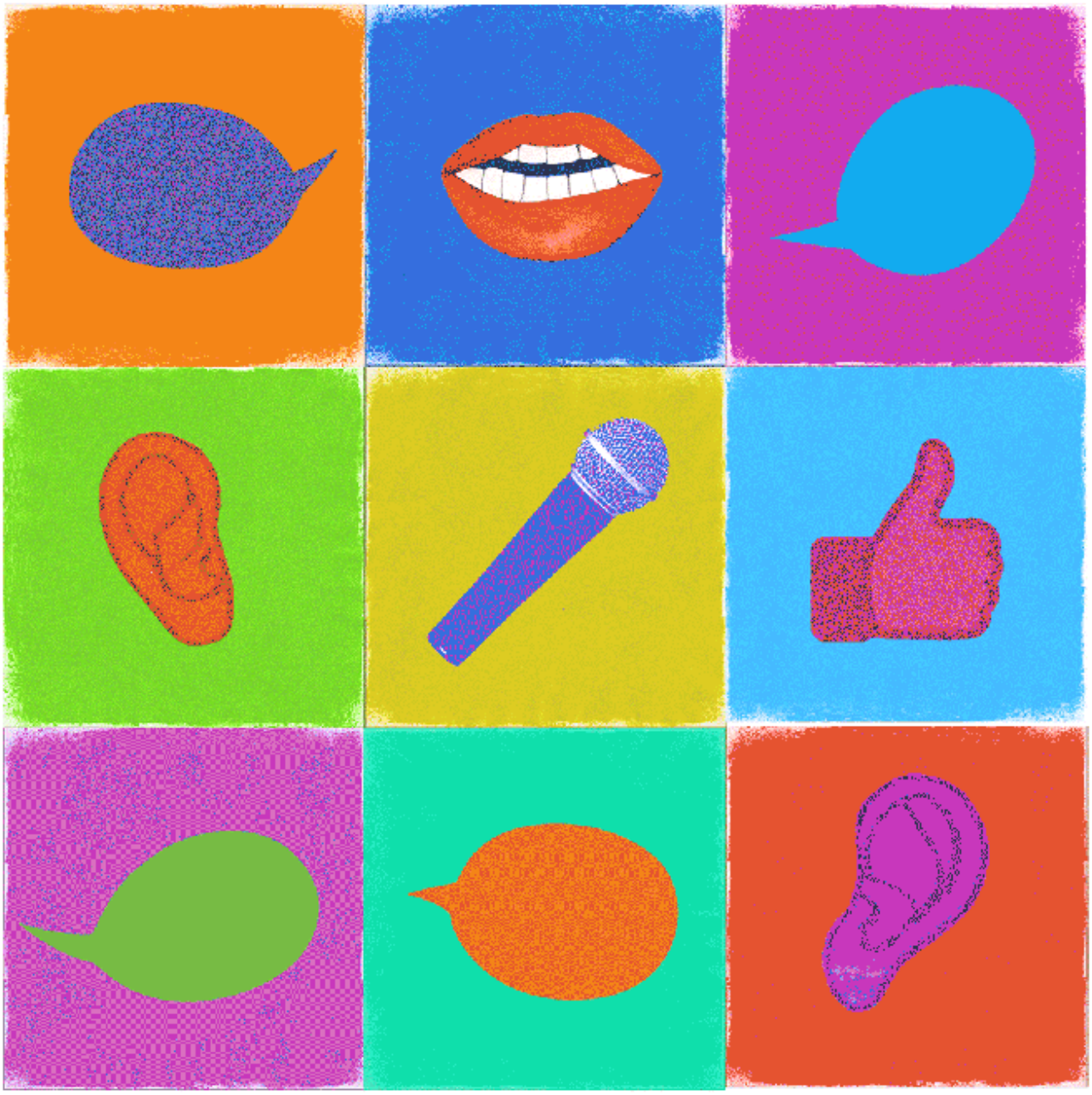


ILLUSTRATION BY CATY BARTHOLOMEW

By Jess Powers

On May 12, 2022, a Coop Hearing was held to determine whether a member violated rules on Dec. 10 and 20, 2020, and exhibited extremely uncooperative behavior. As described in previous pieces regarding the dispute resolution process, participants included the accused individual, various witnesses on both sides, members of the Hearing Administration Committee, the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC), the Hearing

Officers Committee, and 15 Coop members who served as the Hearing Group, each with responsibilities to ensure a fair outcome.

For transparency, the *Linewaiters' Gazette* reports on hearings but the name of the accused is withheld to protect confidentiality. At the request of the committees involved, all names are withheld.

After a year and a half of delays due to the pandemic, members gathered in a spare assembly room at the Picnic House in Prospect Park. The Hearing Administration Committee organized the logistics, arranged the date and venue, and contacted a list of randomly selected Coop members to serve as a Hearing Group. There were a few bumps: not enough copies of documents were made and participants were not miked, occasionally making it difficult to hear. Members of the Hearing Officers Committee kept the proceedings on track and would ultimately decide on a penalty based on the decision of the Hearing Group. After serving for a few hours, only nine of the 15 Hearing Group participants voted on whether the member violated the rules, per the PSFC Disciplinary Procedures.

The accused and committee members introduced themselves. Two members of the DRC shared the results of the investigation. The accused, who will remain anonymous, is a lean white woman in her 60s who wore green clogs and introduced herself as a dancer and a healer.

The investigator began by explaining that the accused member had exhibited a "flagrant disregard for Coop rules" by repeatedly refusing to wear a mask, had altercations with staff and cashiers, and rejected COVID-19 as a "conspiracy theory." She had a history of refusing to adhere to Coop rules and had been put on probation in the past.

After an incident is reported, an investigation is conducted and, depending on what is learned, one of nine pre-hearing actions takes place, ranging from a verbal warning to work-slot adjustments. For a dispute to rise to the level of a hearing, the rule-defying

behavior must be generally egregious and continue despite attempts to remedy it. The accused is given the option to resign or to have a hearing or arbitration to determine whether they will remain a Coop member.

The accused interjected that she was “not informed about the ability to bring witnesses” until the last minute. A Hearing Officer stated that the disciplinary hearing letter the woman had received included specific details about the process and that other rules and procedures are available online. He also reiterated that the matter at hand was to discuss what was alleged to have happened on Dec. 10 and 20, 2021 and that what occurred years before was only relevant if it pertained to this discussion.

The first witness, A.M., joined the Coop 25 years ago, worked as a paid checkout worker during the pandemic when member labor was suspended, and subsequently was hired full-time to the Coop staff. She recalled the accused wearing a mask under her chin as she approached checkout and A.M. asked her to put it on properly. The accused responded that “masks don’t protect us.” A.M. explained that it was the policy of the Coop. The accused pulled the mask up and replied, “Are you happy now?” A.M. countered, “You don’t need to be so rude,” to which the accused responded loudly, “You’re the rude one.”

> FOR A DISPUTE TO RISE TO THE LEVEL OF A HEARING, THE RULE-DEFYING BEHAVIOR MUST BE GENERALLY EGREGIOUS, AND CONTINUE DESPITE ATTEMPTS TO REMEDY IT.

A.M. said that it was “not an easy time for folks,” between the stress of the pandemic, long lines, and few people allowed into the Coop at a time. She said that some members didn’t realize that the paid cashiers were Coop members, and that a few people were aggressive or disrespectful every week. Cashiers were instructed not to engage these folks further and to call on permanent staff if support was needed. In this case, A.M. was unnerved by the incident and was encouraged to file a report.

When given a chance to ask questions, the accused immediately apologized to A.M. She explained that since joining the Coop 26 years ago, she observed increasing amounts of “micromanagement” and that she was frustrated with the adoption of rules on mask-wearing.

After receiving a letter from the DRC, it would likely have been possible to resolve the case by apologizing to the parties involved and following the mask-wearing rule. The accused explained, however, that she wanted “to be heard.”

A witness who was unable to attend the hearing in person submitted a letter confirming that she witnessed the incident at the adjacent checkout. She stated that the accused “explained why masks do not work” and became “combative.”

The investigators learned that, following the incident at the checkout, the accused went to the Service Desk outside the office to inquire about the mask policy. Another witness who was unable to attend recounted in written testimony that the accused began to yell after hearing her options. She shared that the accused said that people were “trying to control her” and that she was “yelling her theories.”

After the incidents on the first date, a warning letter was sent by mail on Dec. 18. A popup screen alerted the entrance desk worker when the accused arrived to shop. The letter was also presented by hand to the accused by a Membership Coordinator. The accused was given a mask and allowed to shop on Dec. 20, the date of the second incident.

A Membership Coordinator (MC) at the Coop for over a decade was the next witness. She alluded to previous challenges with the accused and the Hearing Officer restated that prior bad acts are not relevant to this discussion. When the accused questioned the MC on her testimony, a representative exchange ensued:

Accused: “As a squad leader, I did things very differently. There was dancing, good music during our shift.”

MC: “Nothing wrong with that.”

Accused: “I have creative energy, I’m being nice, a person who thinks differently and acts differently. It could be frustrating, nobody hearing what you’re saying.”

MC: “I tried to help you with this, I said to go to a General Meeting [Coop decision making process]. Screaming in the aisle is not the way. I came into the frozen aisle, there you were.”

Accused: “I was frustrated. I was not the only member frustrated. It was the wrong time, wrong place. The woman who was on me… I started singing, trying to channel my energy. I was singing too [loudly], told I shouldn’t dance. I’m an artist. My memory is the word ‘fascist,’ not acting as a cooperative, as a ‘fascist organization.’”

MC: “You’re absolutely right, you said ‘fascist.’ I don’t remember ‘organization.’ By the time I got to you, two more people were present. It was a little wild, that’s why they got staff. People felt uncomfortable… I understand frustration totally, but there has to be some common ground. You seem to be very often outside of that common ground.”

Accused: “Every society has somebody who is a little different.”

A former member of the DRC, P.V., testified about an investigation in 2018. It was relevant only in order to demonstrate that there was a pattern of behavior. A letter shared in the welcome packet and later questions asked by the accused revealed that the prior issues involved arriving late or leaving work shifts early, bringing a child to shifts, and not providing adequate direction as a squad leader. A previous investigation led to a six-month probationary period, which was successfully fulfilled. P.V. shared the impression that the accused followed the rules that made sense to her, not the Coop rules in general.

IN HER TESTIMONY, THE ACCUSED ACKNOWLEDGED THE PAST INCIDENTS AND DESCRIBED BEING EXAMINED “UNDER A MICROSCOPE.” SHE DESCRIBED HERSELF AS HAVING A “PERSONALITY OF PASSION” THAT PEOPLE MISINTERPRET.

J.B., a witness for the accused, has worked in food processing and been a Coop member since 2008. She met the accused over a decade ago at a New England dance camp and described her as being community-minded, conscientious, high-spirited, and an amazing teacher.

In her testimony, the accused acknowledged the past incidents and described being examined “under a microscope.” She described herself as having a “personality of passion” that people misinterpret. She shared a family tragedy and said that she received a lot of love and support from the Coop at that time. She expressed feeling attacked in the years since and admitted to acting defensively toward administrative staff in response. She described herself as being “big into conflict resolution.”

The accused also described anxiety and having difficulty breathing while wearing a mask, adding that she had an “ADA card.” The DRC investigators responded that this “never came up” in conversations with her and added that the process to apply for a medical exemption was described in the attachment to the letter dated Dec. 18.

The 15 members of the Hearing Group were allowed to ask questions. They approached the situation with care. One member asked why the accused couldn’t put aside her personal beliefs about masks, having “presented [herself] as a person who likes to spread love.” The accused responded: “I am spreading love, by telling the truth. You’re not getting enough oxygen [wearing a mask], I have a different way of seeing it.”

When asked if she was aware that a mask mandate was in place in the state of New York on the dates in question, the accused countered: “It’s not a law, it’s a mandate.

The Governor cannot make laws, they can only administer them. They attempted to trick everyone. We don't have to follow it."

A DRC member clarified that many mask-wearing cases came before the committee during the pandemic. With the exception of this one, they were de-escalated and resolved by claiming a medical exemption, through workarounds or designated shoppers. She explained that the accused was uncooperative on the phone and the investigator "couldn't have a constructive conversation with her." The accused "would not back down from the idea that a mask is wrong, and she is right." She explained further that this was not the outcome the DRC wanted. The accused responded that she didn't have a conversation over the phone or that it was so brief that she didn't recall it.

The remaining nine members of the Hearing Group were reminded that the "intention is irrelevant." They were to decide whether the accused violated a rule on Dec. 10 and 20 and whether she exhibited "extremely uncooperative behavior."

We left the Picnic House while the Hearing Group deliberated.

The Hearing Group decided that the rules were broken on those dates and the accused exhibited extremely uncooperative behavior. The Hearing Officers then decided that expulsion is the appropriate penalty. The reasoning was two-fold: first, that was the penalty in other cases where members exhibited uncooperative behavior, and second, the context of a global pandemic before a vaccine was widely available made this behavior particularly uncooperative.

Members of the various committees involved in the dispute resolution process are working to refine and continually improve the process. Any proposed changes will be presented during a General Meeting for Coop members to vote on. In this case, Coop peers decided that expulsion was the most appropriate outcome.

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eating. IG: @foodandfury