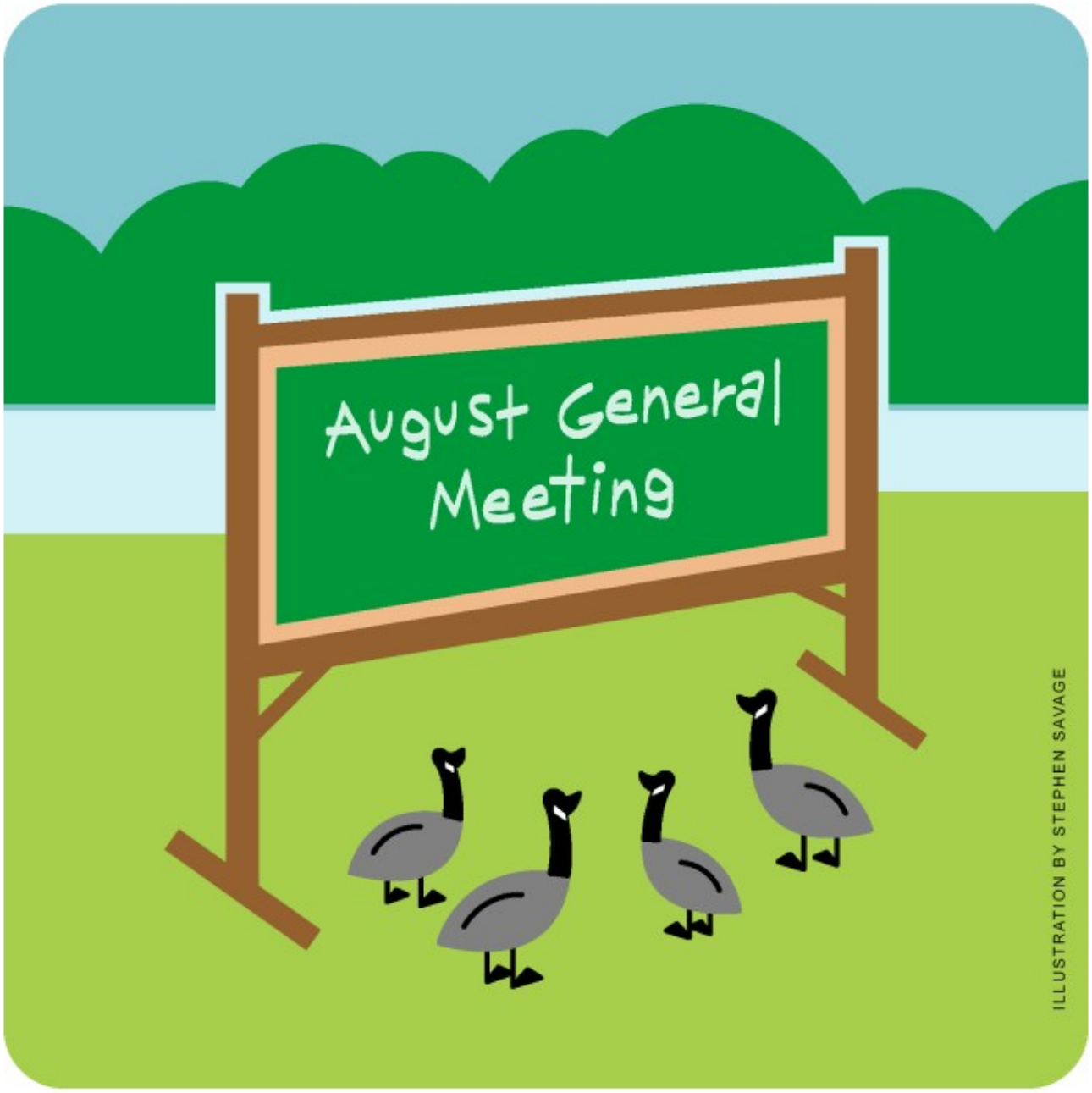
AUGUST GENERAL MEETING: NEW APPOINTMENTS AND DEBATE OVER HYBRID MEETINGS

October 7, 2025



October 7, 2025

By Dan Bergsagel

With the end of summer on the horizon, more than 100 Coop members attended the August General Meeting at the Picnic House in Prospect Park, where they approved a slate of new appointments. The Coop's board also debated a contentious proposal about moving toward a hybrid meeting structure next year.

OPEN FORUM

The meeting started with Open Forum statements. Some were straightforward, such as member requests to make the cilantro and parsley less wet and reinstate work credit for attending General Meetings.

Others were written statements that called on the General Coordinators to share the legal opinion that upheld the Coop's Board of Directors actions in the April 2025 General Meeting, when they voted to approve a referendum on hybrid meetings.

One member, Pam Thomas, presented an idea for a new kind of boycott, against LesserEvil popcorn, whose CEO, Charles Coristine, is the father of a staffer of President Trump's DOGE initiative, Edward Coristine.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Joe Szladek, the Coop's new general manager, reported that the Coop's year-to-date sales through July 20 were up 9.3 percent over the previous year.

He attributed the increase to longer opening hours, growth in membership and inflation. The Coop's gross margin—the money left over after subtracting the cost of goods from sales—increased by about $600,000. However, operating expenses have gone up a little more, by about $700,000.

The increase in operating expenses is partly related to one-off expenditures, such as the roll out of the new electronic shelf price labels, which make it easier to update prices, for approximately $50,000 and an increase in electronic payment service charges from our current provider of approximately $40,000.

MEAT REPORT

Masha Bezlepkina, the Coop's meat and prepared food buyer, presented a summary of recent farm visits, which were an opportunity to review practices at our supplying farms.

Interestingly, she noted that she is a vegetarian.

"So I knew nothing about meat, but I can differentiate between steaks now," she joked. "These farm visits were very educational for me."

The Coop strives to source meat from small farms and small farm partnerships. Bezlepkina explained that "the idea is that when you support small family farms, you allow them to make more profit. If farmers are more profitable that means they will care about the soil, and that means the animals will be healthy and the meat that comes from these animals will be more nutritional."

Following a member vote in 2002, the Coop can sell only 100 percent grass-fed and grass-finished beef. Bezlepkina reported that this typically requires around one acre per animal in a herd. For example, Slope Farms—a longterm farm partner of the Coop—has a herd of 100 to 120 animals located on its 97 acre farm.

Bezlepkina said a new partner for the Coop, Hickory Nut Gap Farms, sources beef from farms in North Carolina, Georgia and a few other southern states, where they can graze the animals year-round by moving them between mountainous regions in the summer, and coastal regions in the winter.

The farm partnership is interested in better making the nutritional case for its 100 percent grassfed beef. "They talk a lot about nutrition," Bezlepkina said. "However, they are very interested in actually testing it. They submitted some of their meat samples to organizations for testing, and they would like to develop standard tests." These tests will aim to demonstrate the nutritional benefits of grassfed cattle.

Member Robbie Gottlieb asked about whether the Coop was also selecting farms based on how they treat workers. Bezlepkina stressed that the Coop sources meat from “super tiny” farms, often only run by one person, where “these farmers are fanatics. It is really hard, but they love their jobs.”

The least encouraging outcome from the educational visits was on the outlook for the price of beef. “Usually the markets go up and then they come down,” said Bezlepkina, “but this market is just going up and up.”

COMMITEE REPORTS

International Trade Education Committee member Bart DeCoursy provided a brief narrative of what he believes are the negative impacts of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and its successor, the United States–Mexica–Canada Agreement (USMCA). He said the pacts have resulted in a “a dramatic increase in the agribusiness market share concentration and, as a result, small farmers were hit the hardest.”

NEW COORDINATING EDITORS FOR THE LINEWAITERS’ GAZETTE

The first agenda item was the election of Co-Coordinating Editors for the *Linewaiters’ Gazette*. Petra Lewis, an editor for the Gazette since 1999 and a member since 1994, explained the role. “Coordinating editors are responsible for overseeing the Gazette’s editors, writers, art directors, photographers, illustrators and production teams,” she said. “They play a crucial role in the quality, content and overall direction of the Gazette.”

Six candidates responded to a job posting in November, of which three were presented for election for the Co-Coordinating Editors roles: Eric Baldwin, Lily Rothman and Whitney Curry Wimbish. (Rothman is the managing editor of *Time* magazine.)

In response to questions about how the Co-Coordinating Editors would review guidelines for selecting submitted work for publication, Baldwin said they do not want to

“be the voice of the Gazette, but to guide that process. I believe that all of us are in agreement that that’s the role of an editor, to shepherd along your voices and make sure that this is a communal plural voice.”

All three candidates were elected.

ELIGIBILITY FOR POSITION OF TREASURER

Bookkeeping Coordinator Terry Meyers—along with Membership Coordinators Jana Cunningham and Yuwie Tantipech—led a presentation for the second agenda item: a vote to modify the language in the PSFC Guide to General and Annual Meetings to tighten the eligibility requirements to be elected as Treasurer of the Coop. The suggestion would specify that any candidate for the position “must, at the time of the election, be an upper-level management staff person who is chiefly responsible for the financial operations of the Coop.”

The item was presented as a common sense clarification of existing precedent: for the past 25 years of the Coop, the Treasurer has been an upper-level management staff person. Meyers said that “for the bookkeeping department in particular, having a member worker in the role of treasurer and thus not fully versed in all the financial aspects of the Co-op and only on site intermittently would be untenable. It would simply make the smooth functioning of the Coop impossible.”

Many members spoke in support of the motion from the floor; however, there were some comments with a note of caution. Adam Rosenberg was concerned that the candidate pool for treasurer would be overly restricted by the motion.

The proposed motion was voted by members to instead be considered an amendment to the Coop’s bylaws. It passed by a vote of 97 to 35, more than the threshold for a bylaw amendment, which requires a two-thirds majority.

HYBRID MEETINGS

Most of the drama occurred after the monthly meeting, during the board meeting that followed.

The procedural wrangling began with a complicated dispute between a Coop member and the Coop's corporate secretary about the previous monthly meeting's draft minutes, which led to those minutes not being approved.

The draft minutes will be amended and then presented again for a vote at the September meeting.

The discussion then turned to an issue that has roiled the Coop over the last year: whether to adopt a hybrid meeting format. Board President Brandon West took the stage.

"I know there's been a lot more conversation at the board meetings than usual, but I wanted to take this time to do this one more time and talk about something that's very pertinent and important to everyone at the Coop," he said.

West noted that a recent referendum about hybrid meetings reached a simple majority typically needed to pass motions, but fell short of the supermajority that would be needed to amend a bylaw.

West continued: "We need to be able to come to a decision about how we conduct a general meeting and it needs to not be weighed down by the conversation about BDS to the point that it shuts down our ability to function as a Coop."

BDS is the movement to boycott products from Israel, and questions have been raised at past general meetings about whether the hybrid meeting proposal is an effort to promote a BDS vote at the Coop.

West said that, after consulting with General Manager Szladek about the set of proposals, some Board members decided to make a motion to direct that general meetings be in hybrid format beginning in January 2026. West then explained a process for appointing a Hybrid Meeting Subcommittee to present the proposed details to the membership.

Szladek later clarified to the Gazette that his role was not in initiating or authorizing the decision, but in serving as a reference point for Board members on the governance lawyer's advice, as previously shared in an email to the membership sent on May 23 by Joe Holtz, Szladek's predecessor.

That email noted that such Board actions are legally allowable, though far outside the nearly 50 years of General Meeting precedent.

There was some confusion over the details for how this Subcommittee would be established, and concern about the limited consultation that the Chair Committee had in supporting this process. Members of the Chair Committee objected to the lack of consultation.

Fellow Board Members Tess Brown-Lavoie and Keyian Vafai, as well as Szladek, voiced support for the proposal, but collectively the Board agreed to continue discussion for another month and present the directive to a Board Vote at the next General Meeting, an approach suggested by Szladek.

Dan Bergsagel is a structural engineer from London. He likes to talk about the unexpected things hiding in plain sight.

October 7, 2025



HYBRID MEETINGS ARE COOPERATIVE JUSTICE

Dear Coop community,

As someone who works to make technology more accessible for people with disabilities—many of whom are too often excluded from participating fully in daily life—I've

been heartened to see the Board move forward with establishing hybrid meetings.

The truth is, much of our world is designed with the assumption that everyone can participate in the same way. But we know that's not the case. Hybrid access gives us the chance, right here in our Coop, to help level that playing field. It's a concrete step toward inclusion, making sure that more members are able to join in one of the best parts of living in our great city: the democratic process of cooperative governance.

In a time when disability rights are being challenged across the country, it is especially meaningful to see our Coop taking a different path—one that centers equity, care, and community. Hybrid meetings are not just about technology; they're about affirming our cooperative values and ensuring that no one is left out.

I encourage the Board to continue leading in this direction. It's an opportunity to live out the spirit of cooperation we all value and to strengthen our community by making it more welcoming to everyone.

In solidarity,

Matthew Bambach

PEACHES

Dear Coop members:

In the Sept. 16, 2025, letters to the editor, there is a letter by a member who had peaches that "were not very good." I would like to reply that this season, I had amazing, delicious, juicy local IPM yellow peaches almost every time. I let the peaches sit out a day or two to soften and ripen. I was sorry when I shopped last week that there were no longer any local IPM yellow peaches. I look forward to them next season.

Sincerely,

Julie Gabriel

IN SUPPORT OF HYBRID MEETINGS

Dear Coop community:

I've heard that the Coop Board is considering hybrid meetings. I'm writing to fully support hybrid meetings so those members who wish to attend in person may do so, and those many more (busy parents, disabled, crowd-avoidant folks) who may wish to attend online may also do so.

Approving hybrid meetings and hybrid voting strikes me as a logical, rational move to include as many members as possible.

Kind regards,

Daniel Millman
Member since 2014

YES TO HYBRID MEETINGS

To the editor,

I have been a Coop member for the last 11 years, since moving back to New York City from California. As much as I would like to attend every meeting, it is just not possible for me. I am very interested in what happens at the Coop and am completely in favor

of hybrid meetings. As the saying goes, no one is smarter than all of us—hybrid meetings give all members an opportunity to be part of the discussion and to vote on the many important issues that are discussed. I urge the Board to approve hybrid meetings so we can move on and start working together for the benefit of all members.

In Cooperation,

Joy Millman

IN SUPPORT OF HYBRID MEETINGS

Dear Gazette:

I am writing to support the PSFC Board in implementing hybrid general membership meetings for our beloved Coop. Participating in our Coop's democracy should not be hindered by an inability to show up to a physical space (because of Covid concern, childcare needs, or myriad other reasons). The recent vote showed that a large majority of the members who voted support hybrid meetings. Thank you in advance, PSFC Board, for making this a reality.

Sincerely,

Steve Quester

BOARD VOTE TO ENACT HYBRID MEETINGS

To the editor,

I’m relieved to hear that the Coop board will likely hold a vote on hybrid meetings soon and that it is expected to pass. Those members who voted have already made it clear that the majority prefers more accessibility to decision making. We want the wider membership to be able to participate fully, only fair given that we’re all owners.

I’m confident that the Coop can (in this instance anyway) show the world what democracy, inclusiveness and tolerance look like in an intolerant time.

Best regards,

Sierra Smigelsky

PRESERVING A COOPERATIVE COMMUNITY

Dear Coop community:

Did a lack of decorum at August’s Food Coop General Meeting signal tacit approval to blacklist members? A member was allowed to belittle and vilify fellow members who signed the petition opposing the Israeli government’s escalating mistreatment of the Palestinian populations.

Singling out a member by name and publicly accusing them of being unfit for participation in Coop activities because they signed a petition smells a bit like McCarthyism, no?

What cold wind is blowing through what was formed as a socially democratic institution?

We, all members, are responsible for preserving this very special cooperative commu-

nity.

Sincerely,

Pam Thomas

HYBRID MEETING FORMAT!

Hello Coop Members!

I am soooooo excited and in complete support of our Board for passing this crucial ability for all of us to be able to attend and make important decisions about our beloved Coop. Thank you to all who made this happen! It is so hard to attend monthly meetings and now we can all do this from the comfort and ease of our electronic devices from anywhere in the world! I am currently overseas tending to sick elderly parents and do not know when I'll be able to return. And being able to attend a meeting virtually is the only way I can be a vital part of our community. So another big thanks!

Sincerely,

Ūna Weiss

EVERYBODY GETS A VOTE!

Dear Coop members:

Having been away for some months, I am now gratified to learn that there will, in fact, be a way for ALL of us to vote on Coop matters after all! The Board will meet and

discuss the matter of hybrid voting, that is to say, voting both in person and from home, in the near future. Moms and/or dads in need of child care or elder care, those who are disabled and can't get to the park, those who are immunocompromised and risk illness and even death as did my own (and only) brother last June from exposure to Covid, those for whom a walk at night through a City park is a little too daunting… we ALL will get to vote on all Coop matters from the comfort of home or office if we prefer not going to meet in person. Our Board will take the information gained by previous discussions, forums and votes and will make it happen!! Finally!!

The crisis of governance with which we've been confronted will be resolved democratically, and by all Coop members, in the near future. What a relief! The Coop gets more democratic while the rest of the country gives in to bullies. That's why I love our Coop. We can undergo difficult change and the bullies don't win. This gives me hope for us all.

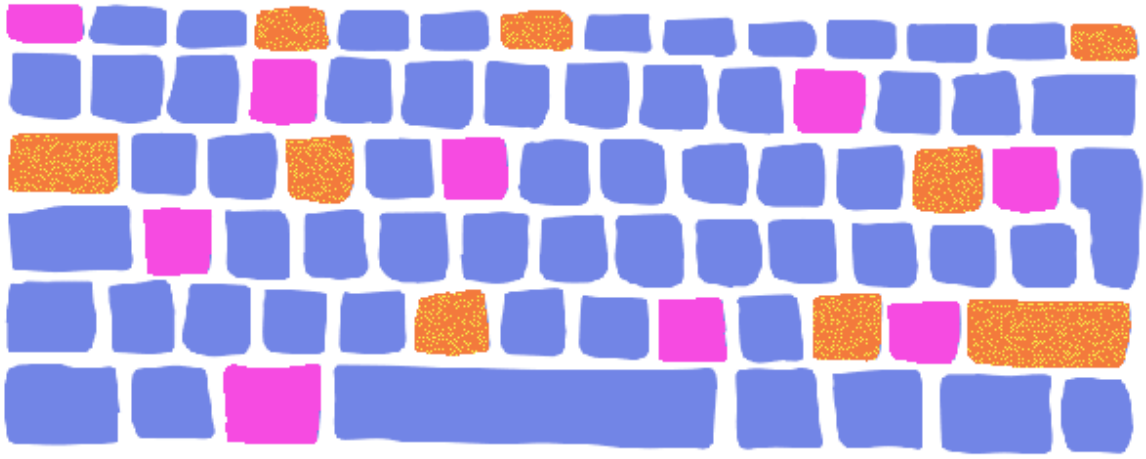
Sincerely,

Carol Wald

AUGUST 5, 2025

October 7, 2025

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



YOU’RE INVITED: AUGUST GATHERING TO SUPPORT COOPERATIVE EDUCATION IN ALABAMA

Friends and fellow members,

My name is Carmen. While recent Coop contention has felt particularly high-stakes

and long-standing, members have always contested the terms of Coop self-governance. As a Coop kid, I began learning the skills and commitment necessary to facilitate collective decision-making. (Mostly, I learned to feed infants in childcare bagel-eighths to assuage them and to make sincere and short small talk with elementary school teachers. But worker-ownership is important too.) The Coop feels like a home and a possible future. I have strong feelings about the content of this and other conflicts, but I feel much more excited by the membership's investment in processes of worker ownership and conflict resolution.

Because of the Coop, I began studying worker ownership, learning popular education, and working with the Sand Mountain Cooperative Education Center in Alabama over a year ago. We use cooperative ownership to teach. We use education to build cooperative ownership. Groups of teachers, students, and workers gather to build popular education and worker ownership in Alabama. For more on the story and programs, please visit the website.

At 8 PM on August 9, a group of us will gather at Blockhill in South Slope. Come to learn, talk, and drink! Seriously.

Join us!

Excited to see you soon,

Carmen Lopez Villamil

MORE FREE EXPRESSION, JOY, AND FREE CLASSIFIED ADS

Dear Gazette and Coop Community,

How important are community and art to us?

I understand that having a robust community bulletin board in the stairwell is a fire hazard and cannot be returned to its past glory. I feel the loss to our community is large and nothing has been done about it. The Coop used to support our Coop-member-owned businesses in the stairwell and in the printed *Linewaiters' Gazette*. Can the digital *Gazette* please resume a robust and accessible classifieds section?

And can we go a step further in community engagement? I'd like to see us make space available for visual art at the Coop. A great opportunity is on the wall to the right of the exit, behind the cashiers. Presently, there's nothing on the brick besides a new "please don't scam EBT benefits" flyer in a plastic sleeve.

I hope we can offer available unadorned wall space to Coop artists in a fair, equitable and enriching way. Maybe seventeen artists can have a three-week showing each year. Randomly scheduled or first-come-first-served, simply let it schedule out for as long as necessary.

If we are here for health and wellness, then let's allow art to be an integral part of our communal and personal well-being. Let's share in how cleansing and inspiring art can be. Also, this would support our artists!

Finally, can we agree that beautification of our space should be the next step after everything is functional?

Our ship is in order, now please, let's have more free expression, joy and free classified ads.

In community, art, and peace, with best wishes and gratitude,

Wally Wallach
PSFC member since 2011

Editors' note: Members of the Gazette *lament the loss of our stairwell bulletin board*

as well and are indeed working on a digital Classifieds section.

COORDINATORS' REPORT IS AWESOME, NEEDS A HOME ONLINE

Dear Fellow Members:

General Coordinator Elinoar Astrinsky presented an awesome report at the June general meeting. We learned about the intricacies of keeping our refrigeration and cooling systems operational. Then Elinoar told us about the outstanding work by our buyers to keep the Coop supplied in the aftermath of the UNFI cyber-crash. Last, we heard about new staff members. It was great. I want more of it. Keeping the Coop going is so much more than just putting things on the shelves and working the checkouts. And it's really interesting, too.

It would be so wonderful if the coordinator's report could be on video and accessible online so anyone in the Coop could view it at any time. I think this could really boost engagement and feelings of ownership within the Coop community. I hope, if the GC's are amenable, we can get some members to look into the feasibility of doing this.

In Cooperation,

Barbara Mazor

WILL A BATHROOM CLEANER AND LIFTER BE 'AMERICA'S FAVORITE COUPLE'?

To the Cherished Editorial Team,

In the middle of the night, scrolling Instagram, I saw a contest/fundraiser hosted by *Variety* magazine and Jeff Goldblum for “America’s Favorite Couple.” The perfect click-bait for a sleepy romantic who loves talking about her partner and tries to donate regularly (time, clothes, blood, what have you). I enjoyed answering questions like “how did your love story begin” and “what’s your favorite memory” and fell asleep with a smile shortly thereafter. The next week, I found out we were finalists! I’ve never campaigned for anything, but campaigning for love and charity felt like a nice place to start. I designed a poster with a talented young artist that was an illustration of our first date and started sending out the page to friends to either give a free vote or donate to one of the charities for the chance to give a few more votes.

While at my lifting shift the following week, I mentioned the contest to my fellow members. Several of them said they wanted to vote for me as soon as they had reception again (outside of the basement) and that we should tell the *Gazette*! The contest runs through August and you can vote here. I’m not sure if this is a letter, or an announcement or just a note to another special human I haven’t met yet, in any case, thanks for reading.

Grateful for all that you do and to be a part of this incredible community with my partner, Michael Hernandez-Stern. The groceries are good too (especially the cheese!)

Warm regards,

Jewell Hernandez-Stern

THE COOP IS UNGOVERNABLE

Dear Members,

The Coop is ungovernable.

At the April GM, a member said, “We have not only this hybrid vote sabotaged by right wing Jewish extremists, but it’s happened in the past many times.” This filthy slur of “Jewish” was not blunted by “right-wing” or “extremists.”

And yet while proclaiming responsibility to run the GM “impartially” every meeting, the chair committee reacted spinelessly, diminishing Jew-hate to ”name-calling” and letting the member continue. Standard business ethics across the US would result in immediate expulsion from the meeting and the organization, and I support full expulsion. But the DRC will not touch it, nor did the *Gazette* report on it. So I see all three committees as complicit in degrading safety for Jews at the Coop.

April’s GM culminated in BDS’s illegal takeover of the Coop’s general meeting by forcing through a referendum on hybrid voting, not for the sake of Palestinians but for what many see as supporting a global call for violence. Again, the chair committee did worse than nothing and simply surrendered their own authority. It should have been stopped by the board of directors, but, stocked with BDS-friendly members, they abandoned their responsibility to the membership at large.

What can you and I do? Contact management and protest with severely reduced shopping until management and committees uproot what Baila Olidort recently called “evil.” Regarding the June GM: While I applaud Joe Holtz’s stewardship, and his warning to the membership about a take-over of the board of directors by BDS’s undemocratic machinations, we cannot rely on last-minute surprises by management. BDS is cancerous to our Coop. It needs excision.

Jesse Rosenfeld

SHOULD ISRAEL BE BOYCOTTED?

Dear editor,

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has claimed that Iran is “months, maybe weeks” away from developing nuclear weapons. But Netanyahu has made this claim repeatedly for the last thirty years at least, as we’ve seen from a CNN montage of news clips circulating on the internet of him doing so.

Recall the pressure campaign in the runup to the disastrous 2003 invasion of Iraq, based on that same bogus narrative about weapons of mass destruction. Such allegations have been repeatedly used to justify our country’s many interventions, all in service to Israel—and of no material benefit to us. Such allegations justified the bombing destruction of Libya, which turned the nation with the highest standard of living in all of Africa into one now running slave markets. They justified funding a terrorist war against the state of Syria that finally resulted in that country’s destruction.

Israel is known to possess many nuclear weapons, albeit undeclared. And both the CIA and Mossad have found no evidence that Iran seeks nuclear weapons. Nonetheless, Israel initiated an unprovoked surprise bombing of Iran on June 13.

The basic plan of the Zionist project is to transform the Middle East to Israel’s liking. In 1948, Israel’s declaration of statehood necessitated the violent displacement of more than 700,000 Palestinian Arabs into refugee status and triggered war, all for the purpose of ensuring a Jewish majority in a state with a substantial minority of non-Jewish Arabs.

A recent Pennsylvania State University poll reported in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz that 82 percent of Israelis wanted the Palestinian population of Gaza removed en masse, and that a stunning 47 percent would be comfortable with having them all killed.

If there was ever a country that needed to be boycotted, that country is Israel.

David Barouh

OPPOSING WAR CRIMES ISN’T ANTI-COOP

Dear Coop members:

PSFC Members for Palestine have been labeled anti-Coop outsiders. I’m 70, Jewish, Brooklyn-born and a 47-year Coop member, not an outsider. Neither are over 3,500 other members, horrified by Israel’s genocidal apartheid government. We demand nothing more than respect and equal treatment from an organization we care deeply about.

For over a decade, a small group of pro-Israel members, currently called Coop4Unity, have worked ceaselessly to prevent a boycott of Israeli goods, blocking any effort toward the most peaceful vehicle for political and social change: economic boycott. They have sought support beyond our Coop, including from the NY Post and Bronx Congressman Ritchie Torres, who has taken $1.5 million-plus in donations from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a lobby with huge financial influence in federal, state and local elections.

With tacit and overt support from GCs, led by former GM Joe Holtz, pro-Israel members disrupted meetings, and intimidated fellow members who advocate peaceful protest. A member of Coop4Unity filed a lawsuit against the Coop. Result: the Dispute Resolution Committee froze all cases related to Israel/Palestine, leaving unprotected members facing doxing and public harassment from Coop4Unity. Another Coop committee, the Diversity, Equity, and Access Committee, was also banned from work on all issues related to “the Middle East.”

Coop4Unity’s disproportionate power was evident in Holtz’s huddling with them (e.g., April 29 GM) and his Coop-wide personal attack on Board candidates Taylor Pate and Dan Kaminsky, instructing members to vote against them. Joe Szladek, our new GM,

can bring to an end this era of unchecked, uncooperative and biased behavior.

Opposing war crimes isn't anti-Coop, just as demanding reproductive freedom isn't anti-life. People following traditions of the Montgomery Bus Boycott and boycott against South African apartheid deserve respect and fairness from our Coop. We are insiders, committed to core PSFC values: democracy and food justice.

In solidarity,

Alyce Barr

***Coordinator Response to Alyce Barr's Letter**:*

Dear Coop members,

I'd like to respond to claims in Alyce Barr's above letter that reference Coop staff and committees:

The letter accuses the general coordinator team of giving "tacit or overt support to disrupt meetings or intimidate others." That is entirely untrue. Our role is to run the operations of the Coop and uphold its policies and procedures. Some have misinterpreted this as taking sides, but we are simply following long-standing practices to support the Coop's sustainability.

On the status of DRC complaints as referenced in the letter: The recent volume and complexity of cases related to Israel and Palestine have slowed the DRC's response. They are actively working to develop a process to handle them, and we truly appreciate the time and effort they're putting in to move things forward.

I'm not aware of any ban preventing the EACC from working on issues related to the Middle East, as the letter suggests.

The letter also mentions Joe Holtz 'huddling' with members of Coop4Unity at a GM, but I think we should be cautious about linking conversations to political allegiance or assuming someone is acting on another's behalf. I've recently spoken with members on both sides of issues to listen, understand their perspectives, and help find constructive paths forward for the Coop, and will continue to do so. I know other staff and members have done the same, and I hope that continues. That kind of open communication is essential to keeping our Coop strong and supporting a respectful, cooperative culture.

Respectfully,
Joe Szladek
General Manager

MOVE TO REJECT REMOTE MEETINGS RIPPED FROM MAGA PLAYBOOK

Greetings:

On Tuesday, June 24, the vote in favor of hybrid meetings was narrowly defeated, by a hair. The results showed that a minority of Coop members (barely more than a third) have successfully denied the vote to those unable to attend GM meetings for a host of reasons (we all know what they are).

Undoubtedly, that minority is a heterogeneous group and some may have had honorable, procedural reasons for doing so. There is also no doubt a sizable minority—perhaps majority—of that group who dishonorably voted against hybrid in order to quash the possibility of a successful subsequent vote they didn't want to happen: a vote in favor of a boycott of Israeli goods.

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Deny voting rights of people because they may use their vote to favor certain policies or legislation you strongly oppose? Yes, it's out of the

MAGA playbook. Afraid of a potential voting result? Disenfranchise the ones who may make it happen and cover yourself with Orwellian doublespeak. That's why I use the word "dishonorable." There's not only no honor in that, there's none of the courage it takes to live up to the democratic principles of equal rights. No one ever said democracy is easy.

Sincerely,

Allan Novick

LET'S JOIN THE MODERN ERA AND USE REMOTE MEETINGS

Dear Sir or Madam:

Recently, I voted in favor of allowing members to participate in General Meetings (GMs) remotely. It's fairly clear that some who did likewise hope this will promote their anti-Israeli BDS ambitions, which I do not share (and also voted against board candidates who do promote BDS). But really; it's the 21st century, and few of us can cram into a small space in Prospect Park, and Coop members should be able to participate regardless.

I'm sorry that the motion to enable remote meetings failed (barely), and hope the issue will arise again. Among other things, I live in Lower Manhattan, and yes, I do my shift and shop at the Coop faithfully, but it's not an easy stretch, and I'm probably not going to spend time on the subway to go to a GM.

If remote GMs are permitted, it won't be to my benefit, because I'll have to faithfully show up at every general meeting and vote against anti-Semitism. The city with the largest Jewish population in the world is not Jerusalem, nor yet Tel Aviv. It is New York. I don't believe the Coop should tell our Jewish neighbors, "Your kind are not wel-

come here.” (I am not Jewish.) Nor do I support Netanyahu’s genocidal regime, but I don’t believe the Coop should have a foreign policy. (And if it does, can we talk about Russia and China?)

But sure, participation in the GM should be open to all, and technology makes that easy.

We should go there.

Regards,

Greg Costikyan

THE COOP IS NOT A POLITICAL ORGAN

Dear Editors:

I have been a member for approximately 35 years. In my experience and with one notable exception (BDS) Coop controversies have been largely about operations, including expanding the store, pension fund management, plastic bags, meat, beer, vendor labor and management practices, etc.

As a cooperative food store the mission is to provide good food to working members at low prices. Simple enough.

At its core the organization’s social compact is founded as a jointly owned business and economic unit for the benefit of its members. It is not a social justice or humanitarian organization like the ACLU, Amnesty International and Doctors Without Borders among many others.

By its mission it is not a political party or an organization for promoting political causes. Political controversy by its nature encompasses diverse opinions, and large-scale community organizations prosper best when diversity is acknowledged and accepted.

There are many injustices in the world and specific advocacy organizations to champion those causes. Politics are personal and I respect a person’s decision to not buy a particular product because they find it offensive for any reason. Members can make their own decisions.

In the past the Coop has been a place where we have come together with a single common purpose: to eat good food at low prices. Politicizing the Coop by successfully promoting controversies beyond the scope of the cooperative mission will only offer a false victory. It will not result in meaningful outcomes beyond talking points and continuing to divide the Coop community, which is not the objective.

In cooperation,

Glenn Brill

JULY 15, 2025

October 7, 2025



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

DON’T DISENFRANCHISE ME

Greetings:

Now that we know nearly two-thirds of member voters want remote access to the general meetings, and that we are free to have hybrid meetings without a change to the bylaws (legal advice received by senior staff after the referendum was happening),

can we please reopen meeting access? Since it’s not a boycott or a bylaw change, all we need is a simple majority to approve, if we even need a vote.

For reasons of work/childcare/medical/mobility and room capacity, we can’t all participate otherwise.

Sincerely,
Lisa Guido

DEMOCRACY, GENERALLY COORDINATED

Greetings:

As recently noted by outgoing General Manager Joe Holtz, Coop members have the right under New York State law to participate in our democratic processes virtually. But our bid to enshrine that right into our bylaws has failed, winning 66.45% of a vote that required 66.67%. That slim margin is a testament to how critical the General Coordinators’ fearmongering was in defeating a commonsense proposal rooted in a desire to expand access and maximize participation at the Coop.

The GCs will tout the PSFC’s commitment to democracy and member input. They’ll invite you to General Meetings where you can “have your voice heard.” But after a year and a half of obstruction, obfuscation and the blatant misuse of their bully pulpit, I speak from experience when I say they’ll only let you participate if they think they’ll still be in control at the end of the day.

Sincerely,
Morgan Võ

LOOKING FORWARD WITH OPTIMISM

Fellow Members,

This summer I will turn 70 and will have been a member of this Coop for more than two-thirds of my life.

As I move into the next decade, our Coop moves into a new phase of its life, with Joe Szladek in the role of General Manager. Welcome and congratulations, Joe.

As a clear-eyed optimist, I imagine the possibilities and work as hard as I can to achieve it. At this moment, I have great hope for what our Coop can achieve under the leadership of a forward-looking General Manager.

Like all Coop leaders, a GM needs to be even-handed and open, fair in their treatment of every Coop member and constituency. They can help us become a truly democratic organization that uses all available tools, so that 17,000 members have the best possible chance to engage in policy- and decision-making. At a moment when a literal majority of Coop members want the opportunity to attend General Meetings online (while the still undecided Hybrid Referendum leaves that up in the air), they can help us transition to hybrid, fully virtual or asynchronous decision-making.

This means leaving behind an overly nostalgic and often unhelpful “we’ve always done it this way” perspective, choosing instead a more analytical stance. It’s time to review how well things actually worked before and consider what needs to change to meet the current moment.

During my 30-plus years working in NYC public education, I learned from and with every child I taught, every teacher and principal I coached and every parent who trusted their child with me. As Joe Szladek assumes his important new role, I look forward to

his willingness to learn from and with all members and his commitment to our mission: food, social and environmental justice.

In solidarity,
Alyce Barr

THE COOP HAS CHANGED—EXCEPT FOR THE LEADERSHIP

Dear Coop members:

“The city has changed,” said NY-7 Rep Nydia Velázquez on Democratic Primary night. “Zohran knew it. The other candidates didn’t see it. And that is why we are here celebrating this beautiful moment.”

The Coop has changed. Everyone knows it, especially younger people, disabled people, members targeted by racism and Islamophobia, shift workers, supporters of Park Slope Food Coop for Palestine and so on. The Coop leadership doesn’t see it. And that is why it’s not hard to imagine the Coop’s eventual fade.

Kerry Carnahan

MORE DEMOCRACY AT THE COOP: ONWARD!

How disheartening to read that the referendum for hybrid meetings failed to pass. The odds were stacked against it though and I believe that the majority of members do care about greater access to the decision-making process. So…let’s forge ahead!

My co-worker Jason Weiner drafted a robust proposal last year. Member Yejia Chen al-

so came up with a solid plan this Spring. The original hybrid meeting proposal, from CJ Glackin & Morgan Võ, has good recommendations too.

I hope that the General Manager, the Agenda Committee, the General Coordinators and the Membership at large will agree to quickly usher these forward. There is always a lot to do, we are all pulled left and right, but this is urgent. With proper planning we can come up with proposals to vote on in the not so distant future. We have to be agile and steadfast about this. We also have to be transparent, accountable and stop the on-going back-stabbing, slandering and other shenanigans.

The above proposals and ideas could be fully discussed at the next GM; small committees of members and/or staff can be organized to generate ideas and research feasibility with regular reporting, clear timelines and deadlines. The Coop can perhaps postpone other projects to focus on this issue. This is not rocket science. It's a business decision related to priorities and allocation of resources.

I encourage all members to push for this in the coming months, and not let it be buried under other priorities or by institutional inertia, nay-sayers and pushback. If we don't stand behind reforming the system to allow greater participation, the Coop will only pay lip service to a core principle: "Democratic Member Control." And skeptical members will have a point: The Coop is just another "glorified buyers club" with performative democratic values.

In solidarity,
Delphine Selles-Alvarez
Membership Coordinator at the Coop

NEW DEMOCRACY 2.0

Dear Coop members:

We best serve the democratic process when we allow everyone to come to the table. Regardless of technology enhancements, our biggest accessibility limitation will always be time. If we continue to only allow members to participate in discussion and voting on Tuesdays at 7 p.m., we disenfranchise anyone unavailable then. Whether it's the inability to travel, log on or simply focus due to other constraints like family, location or just life, those members can't participate.

We need a system that won't require someone who lost the affordable connectivity program to be pressured by personal cost to participate. We need to give parents and people who work nights time to digest information and not be forced to divide their attention. We need ways that give members with different learning styles and accessibility needs the same info as those at the GM.

I believe it's important to recognize that nowhere in the principles of cooperation does it say that members must agree with each other. Cooperation is finding common ground. The Coop is not meant to be a cookie cutter of anyone's beliefs. That's what makes it beautiful, messy and home to us all. Conflict is inherent in this space. Discourse is a necessity to allow these different opinions a voice. Our current system does not give time or ability to receive, process and respond. It limits participation, it limits engagement, it limits understanding and most importantly it limits factual information and transparent communication.

It keeps us from properly hearing each other. It makes us react and not engage in the best ways. It keeps us from making as much progress as we could.

It's time for **a new Coop democracy.** Please attend the July General Meeting to discuss my agenda item.

Sincerely,
Jason Weiner
Membership Coordinator at the Coop

SPECIAL PRIVILEGES FOR HOLTZ?

Dear Coop members:

In his June 6 email, Joe Holz says that “I’m speaking today only for myself and not on behalf of the staff or General Coordinator team.”

If Holtz is speaking only for himself, as one member equal among many thousands of other PFSC members, how is it that he was authorized to send his email to all members on the PFSC email database? Are all members, speaking only for themselves, able to send emails to the entire PFSC email list when they wish?

Sincerely,
Erich Hahn

JOE HOLTZ’S ABUSE OF AUTHORITY

Dear member owners,

Joe Holtz’s abuse of authority in using the Coop’s mailing list to send a message to each of us about how to vote in the upcoming election is outrageous. I’ve been an active member of our beloved Coop for more than two decades, so I have heard Joe’s opinion on many things over all these years. But this is next level, to use our member directory to send a personal message about how to vote.

Joe Holtz’s intervention is straight up election interference and an egregious abuse of his power and privilege. Not only is it outrageous that Joe did this himself, I would like to understand which General Coordinators allowed him this access and which General

Coordinators knew about this email before it went out and didn't have the judgment to see this as an inflammatory smear campaign against our own members? Please explain.

Sincerely,
Kathleen Sullivan

IS THE COOP LOSING ITS PROGRESSIVE SPIRIT?

Folks,

I'd firstly like to congratulate and welcome Joe Szladek to his new role. It's tough taking on a leadership role from a set of founders, as I know from my experience advising many startups and nonprofits around the world.

I joined the Coop because good food is good politics—if not, why buy organic or biodynamic? But the recent developments at the Coop have left me feeling insulted, condescended to, and frankly, unwelcome. The spate of missives from the GCs was bad enough, but Joe Holtz's email decrying board candidates was the height of paternalistic hypocrisy. If the candidates aren't allowed a similar platform to rebut any smears against them, is this really a democracy?

The contrast with Brooklyn, and the rest of the city—in light of the mayoral primary—-couldn't be more stark. The recent elections have proven that the electorate has uplifted candidates such as Mamdani, Hanif, Lander and others who have espoused justice for Palestinians and a variety of progressive causes. This begs the question: Has the Coop become a conservative institution with a set of ossified principles and bound by inertia? What happened to the kind of spirit that led to Chilean products being boycotted (under Pinochet)? Are we going to be so out of step with the community around us?

Maybe I should give up expecting better and go somewhere else.

I was honestly expecting Joe Holtz to email us all urging us to vote for Cuomo. Perhaps he still will?

Regards,
Jayanth Eranki

SEEKING ANSWERS ABOUT ALL-MEMBER EMAIL

Dear Editors:

I’m confused—how and why was an overly political and biased email on the Board elections from Joe Holtz sent to all members using the Coop’s official ‘no-reply’ mailing list? I do not consent to my email being used by the Coop in this manner for any political and/or campaign message, and have never received one until now.

Additionally, was Holtz’s letter meant to coerce, convince and/or rationalize in some way that Coop members need to agree to carry even one single product, let alone several, from a country openly and defiantly committing genocide in front of the entire globe with full U.S. support of funding, intelligence and weapons? Again, confused and would like an explanation.

Sincerely,
A.L. Steiner

MOURNING FRIEND'S FAMILY, CALLING FOR BOYCOTT

To my fellow members,

I have a good friend who is Palestinian and grew up as a farmer in a village called Khuza'a, southern Gaza. I mentioned him in a letter early last year (a letter that was originally refused for publication by the Gazette).

In the last month, I learned from him that his entire village was completely erased by Israel (there is no other word for it). Over 50 of his relatives were killed. The fate of the rest of the over 15,000 residents is by and large unknown, a tragedy in itself.

Khuza'a's population was not that far off from the size of the Coop's membership.

Among false narratives from the General Coordinators that a mere boycott of Israeli goods would destroy the Coop—narratives then used to prevent discussion and demonize members—I make the same appeal as in my previous letter: Let's keep our focus on the real destruction happening in Palestine.

In cooperation and solidarity,
Abdi-Hakin Dirie

FROM TAIPEI TO PARK SLOPE: IN SUPPORT OF THE COOP'S VALUES

To the Editor:

I've been a proud member of the Park Slope Food Coop for 15 years and have always valued its spirit of cooperation and commitment to providing high-quality, sustainable food to our community.

However, since the attacks in October 2023, I've been troubled by what feels like a shift in the Coop's atmosphere. A vocal minority has pushed rhetoric that feels out of step with the inclusive and cooperative spirit that has long defined this community.

As someone who grew up in Taiwan—a place where democracy and civil liberties were hard-won—I'm deeply unsettled by the selective moral outrage directed at Israel. Though imperfect like any democracy, Israel stands alone in the region in offering meaningful protections for women, minorities and LGBTQ individuals. Yet it is often the sole target of intense condemnation, while regimes like China, Russia and Egypt—whose human rights abuses are well-documented—escape similar scrutiny. Criticizing a government's policies is one thing; singling out an entire nation and its people as uniquely immoral is something else entirely.

Regardless of where one stands on this complex and emotional issue, it is crucial to preserve the Coop's core values: cooperation, inclusivity and a focus on good food and community. I greatly appreciate the dedication of our General Coordinators, whose hard work reassures me that the Coop's spirit can continue to thrive. I want to thank Joe Holtz for his decades of service to the Coop and for his recent letter—a voice of reason and moral clarity from someone who has long embodied the values of the Coop. As Joe steps back from his role, I believe his words serve as a timely reminder of what this community stands for: cooperation, respect and a shared commitment to the Coop's founding principles.

Sincerely,
Linda Wong

MAY GENERAL MEETING REPORT

October 7, 2025

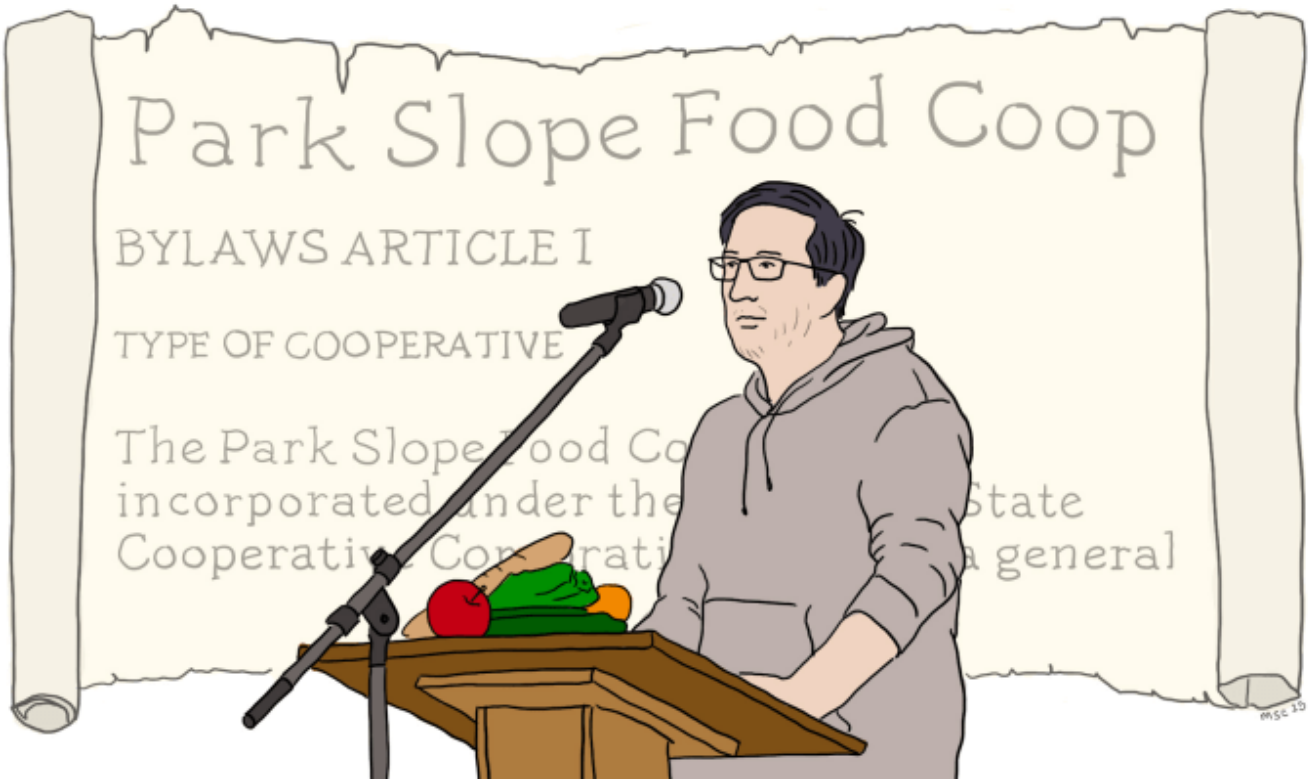


ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

June 24, 2025

By Kim Velsey

The May 27 General Meeting was well attended, with a large number of members coming out to voice opinions, concerns and frustrations about what happened at the April 29 meeting, when the Board—for the first time in Coop history—adjourned the General Meeting without discussing the published agenda, went straight to the board meeting and voted to allow a Coop-wide referendum on hybrid meetings. Supporters and opponents of the Board's move both turned out, many of them wearing buttons, and used every opportunity to speak up about the situation. There was also an extended discussion of hybrid meetings following Coop Secretary Elizabeth Tobier's proposal to amend the bylaws to specify when Coop meetings could be held remotely.

Open Forum

The Open Forum segment was dominated by questions and comments on the events of the April meeting. Someone asked what would happen to agenda items from the

last meeting—would they be carried over? Jaime Principe, commenting that the "standard procedure that has been around for as long the Coop has been completely disregarded," wanted to know the name of the legal counsel who had advised the Coop that a referendum could be held after the last meeting—a demand echoed by several others, including Noah Potter. Potter also withdrew his name from the running for the Board. Someone else said that board members who voted to adjourn the GM and move on to the board meeting and referendum vote without public discussion should resign. A number of people in the audience applauded until the meeting chair told members to hold their applause.

One member asked, as she put it, a "less serious" question about why there weren't peanut- and almond-butter grinders at the Coop as it seemed like it would be sustainable and affordable to have them.

Treasurer's Report

Coop General Manager and Treasurer Joe Holtz, first noted that the Coop would be closing early, at 5 p.m., on Juneteenth (June 19).

Holtz then addressed what had happened at the April meeting and the Coop's decision to allow a referendum on hybrid meetings to move forward: "We received a legal opinion that it was OK for the Board to take the action they did at the GM meeting. We're not saying it's right." Holtz noted that they had deviated from the Coop's general bylaws for the first time in the Coop's history; the one other time the Board deviated from the membership's advice, during the 1990s, the agenda was followed and advice was given. Holtz said that before the April GM, a message was sent out by members of the pro-Palestinian group, which led to what he called a "curated group" attending. "We have not had such curated general meetings in the Coop's past," said Holtz. Though what happened, "is legal," he added, "we do not believe it is right or in the best interest of the Coop. The boards in the past have been trustees of the democratic process." He noted, however, that "elections have consequences."

Holtz said that the legal counsel was a firm that has a specialty department in cooperative law and that there was no written opinion; he felt he could not share the firm's name without consulting them and speaking with the General Coordinators. When asked by a member what the cost of the legal advice had been and if the advice of membership was sought before seeking legal advice, Holtz responded that the Coop had not received an invoice yet, but that legal fees were a line item in the financial statement, to be used at the General Coordinators' discretion, and that there was not "a history of micromanaging the staff."

Asked how many times meeting venues had been cancelled because of an email campaign that threatened violence—referring to City Tech cancelling the Coop's venue rental—Holtz said that he didn't think violence was ever threatened, rather that people had called the venue and predicted it. "I wish we were at City Tech on April 29—that would have been the best thing, in my opinion," he said.

Holtz then presented the highlights for the income statement for the 12 weeks ending April 27—the full eight-page document was sent to members via email. Compared to the same period last year, net sales were up: $14.91 million this year vs. $13.52 million last year. The gross margin is up 19.61% from 19.23%, and operating income went from $2,000 negative to $85,000 positive. These numbers were likely impacted by changing the base markup from 24% to 25%.

Alyce Barr asked about the legal expenses for the Unity council lawsuit initiated last year. Holtz said that total legal fees last year came to $2,513 and this year so far are $3,412, and that the Coop has a robust insurance policy for suits brought against it, but has to pay out $35,000 before the insurance kicks in.

Member Committee Reports

Steve Jenkins of the Personnel Committee announced that General Coordinator Joe Szladek had been selected as the Coop's next General Manager. The Coop, with the help of the Carlyle Search Group, reviewed over 1,200 resumes, interviewed five can-

didates in person, did another round with three candidates, then a final round with Coop staff members. Szladek's dedication to the Coop and his vision "made him a natural choice," according to Jenkins.

After that, Szladek got up to speak, starting off with a joke that Coop members "got another Joe." He said it was an honor to be stepping into the role given how special our Coop is: "It's proof that a member-owned co-op can thrive on a large scale. We've thrived, with members providing over 80 percent of the labor." He added that he'd been a staff member for the past 15 years and a member for five more and "felt very lucky to be running this store." His top priority, he said, "will be the stability of the Coop."

> "I DON'T THINK THE COOP WOULD BE HERE, AT LEAST NOT IN THIS FORM AND THIS SIZE, IF NOT FOR JOE [HOLTZ]."
>
> *INCOMING GENERAL MANAGER JOE SZLADEK*

"We're employed by membership to help run our shared business," he added, which meant being "transparent when it matters, navigating disagreements, keeping the health of the Coop front and center. I think we significantly agree on more than [we] disagree on." Thousands of members, he said, rely on the Coop, unaware of the flyering and debates, and while their voices don't often show up at these meetings, they are important for the Coop to take into consideration. He also thanked Joe Holtz for his leadership and tireless work on behalf of the Coop "I don't think the Coop would be here, at least not in this form and this size, if not for Joe."

Szladek also said he would be looking into ways to keep the Coop competitive: offering more prepared foods, building on the success of Court Street sandwiches, and even possibly adding home delivery. Asked whether the Coop would be hiring another General Coordinator to replace him, Szladek said they are considering different op-

tions.

Bart DeCoursey of the International Trade Information Squad then gave a short presentation on Trump's tariffs, describing the havoc they were wreaking on the market while making projections difficult. He added that the committee has room for new members.



ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

Revolving Loan Committee Election

Kathy Martino, the only current member of the Revolving Loan Committee, and Joe Holtz, the staff liaison to the committee, were up for re-election and election, respectively. Martino explained that the committee oversees a fund, which currently has around $67,000, that gives low-interest loans to new worker co-ops like the Greene Hill Food Coop in Clinton Hill. Greene Hill received two loans, one of which was paid off, another which has about $7,000 left, and the committee is in the process of evaluating another loan application from them.

Martino described her background working at the New York City's Comptroller's Office. Then Holtz explained the origins of the fund: It was created in response to the many inquiries the Coop received asking for guidance and help—the Coop would mail out information packets but felt that it was not enough, particularly for groups who wanted to start worker co-ops, which largely fell out of favor in the 1970s. The fund, which sits in a 501c3 (or non-profit) foundation, is a donor-advised fund, with the Coop serving as donor and supplying advice through the Revolving Loan Fund Committee. When loans are repaid, they are returned to the fund.

The Revolving Loan Fund Committee now has two members—one, who was not at the meeting, still has time on her term and therefore is not up for re-election. As Holtz explained, the committee often goes a long time without work, during which period members do not receive work credit.

One member suggested adding a third member to the team who could learn from their institutional knowledge, which Martino replied was a great idea.

The vote followed, with Martino re-elected and Holtz elected to the committee.

Pension Education and Reporting Committee Election

Nils Mellquist and Avi Fisher, both up for re-election to the Pension Education and Reporting Committee, explained their qualifications briefly, then, in response to member questions, explained at length that the committee helps manage the Coop staff's $12

million pension fund by interfacing with the investment manager and keeping tabs on its performance. “We try not to advise, just make sure it is adhering to the mission statement,” said Fisher. There was some confusion among audience members between the Coop mission statement and the pension’s mission statement—which are different—and whether the investments were in companies that were socially responsible. “I’ve been on the committee since 2019, and I’m surprised it’s taken someone that long to ask that,” said Fisher, explaining that there were no socially responsible carve outs, but that members could introduce resolutions to make them. One member suggested that staff members, but not the larger membership, have a say over whether the investments were socially responsible. A staff member got up to say that while they do not currently have a say over the pension fund, they do have control over their own 401Ks.

Both Fisher and Mellquist were re-elected.

Remote Meetings

Coop Secretary Elizabeth Tobier presented a proposal to amend Article VI of the bylaws to add a paragraph specifying under which circumstances a GM can be held remotely using a videoconferencing application. Speaking on the benefits of in-person discussion and engagement, she argued that remote meetings should only be held when the Coop cannot locate a meeting space in which to hold a scheduled meeting, either because of anticipated member turnout and/or a politically charged topic on the agenda. “There is this myth that the GM is the decision-making body of the Coop. No, it isn’t,” she said. “It’s a place where members come together. Working on ideas together is the actual work of the General Meeting. This is best achieved by getting together in person.”

She also presented graphs on hybrid meetings held during the pandemic, showing that while meeting attendance started out exceptionally high—around 500—it fell to levels comparable to or even lower than average GM attendance, around 100.

> “THERE IS THIS MYTH THAT THE GM IS THE DECISION-MAKING BODY OF THE COOP. NO, IT ISN’T.”
>
> *COOP SECRETARY ELIZABETH TOBIER*

A number of members then spoke in favor of and against the proposal. Several members spoke of their positive experiences with hybrid meetings in other groups, including community boards and unions. Membership Coordinator Jana Cunningham recommended not only making meetings remote, but recording them and delaying voting until the next meeting to accommodate people who were not only unable to attend in person, but working or putting kids to bed during the meeting time.

Another member said that if an issue was so divisive that no one would rent the Coop space to discuss it, it was better to “let the issue lie” because “we don’t want to overturn what we’ve created.”

Chair Committee Goodbye

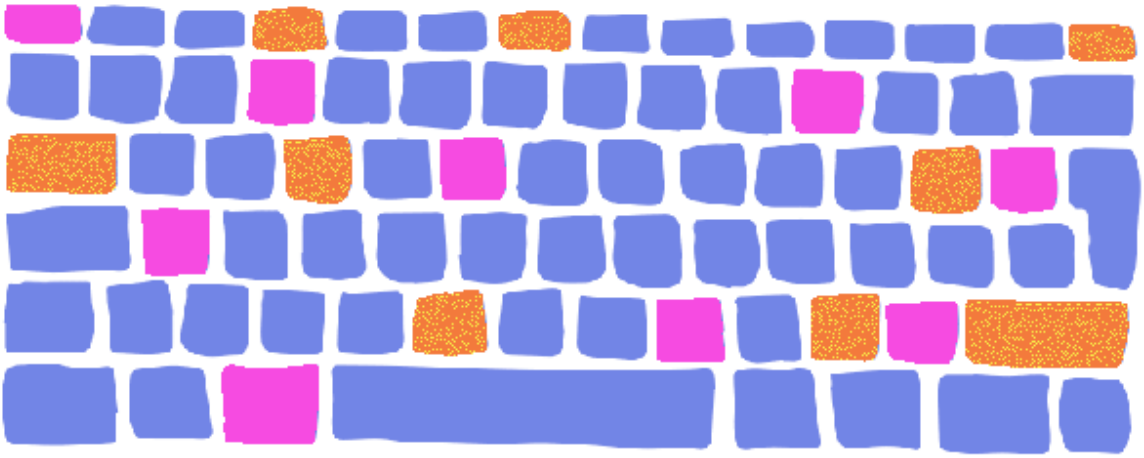
Imani Q’ryn announced that it was her last board meeting as a member of the Chair Committee after 18 years on the Board and 20 years on the committee. “It’s been an honor being on the Board and working with my fellow Chair Committee members,” she said.

Kim Velsey has been a Coop member since 2020. When she’s not writing for the Gazette*, she’s a staff writer at* New York *magazine.*

JUNE 3, 2025

October 7, 2025

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



REQUEST FOR HYBRID MEETINGS

Dear Coop members:

I am a long-standing Coop member and urge the Coop to put in place hybrid general meetings.

A large percentage of Coop members are simply unable to attend in person meetings due to family and work obligations, and long distances to travel. I currently care for my elderly parents in Maryland and am in Brooklyn infrequently and randomly, but I still shop at the Coop and fulfill all my work obligations. Many members are in similar situations. Not to mention elderly or disabled members who may have health or physical issues which prevent them from attending in person meetings easily. Hybrid zoom meetings have become standard throughout both the public and the private sectors in this country. The Coop has embraced the digital age in many ways, far too many to list here. Hybrid GM's make common sense in 2025 and would allow more members to participate in the Coop's democratic process.

I have read the Jan. 7 Coordinator's Corner article *Our Coop at Risk* in the *Gazette*, encouraging members to oppose the hybrid meeting proposal. I find this baffling. Only offering in-person meetings essentially disenfranchises all but a handful of our many thousands of members. It flies in the face of all common sense. With regard to the BDS boycott, lowering the boycott threshold to 50% is unacceptable. No boycott of any kind should be enacted without at least a two thirds consensus of Coop members, and in-person meetings should be allowed to proceed in a hybrid fashion. This would be a good compromise and uphold the democratic values of the Coop. But discouraging a more democratic, easily accessible GM process is not a good look, and gives the appearance that the general coordinators and the board are against member participation on controversial topics.

Sincerely,
Becky Burrows

ISRAEL OBSESSION

Dear Coop members:

I’m a long time Coop member and I joined to be part of a cooperative workplace devoted to healthy food. The idea that the Coop should be a place to fight the problems of the Middle East is simply not an appropriate or fair use of member time and resources. I think that the discussion of Palestine and Israel should be banned from the agenda of the Coop and people who cannot leave this alone should have their membership revoked.

Sincerely,
David Sher

ARE COOP STAFF OUT OF TOUCH?

Dear *Linewaiters’ Gazette*:

I have been watching the evolution of the issue of hybrid meetings. I feel like the staff is trying to do what they think is right for the Coop, but they are out of touch with the democratic process and the actual will of the members. Blocking votes and overriding the board’s attempt to reinstate the membership’s voice is a sign that you’re doing it wrong.

Sincerely,
Bill Beckler

UPHOLDING DEMOCRACY AND ACCESSIBILITY IN OUR COOP

To the Editor,

As a longtime member-owner, I am deeply concerned by the ongoing delay in issuing a referendum on hybrid General Meetings, despite a clear directive from the Board. The Board, elected by and accountable to the membership, has called for this referendum to give members a voice on an important issue of accessibility and participation.

The continued postponement—now stretching to 18 months—prevents us from exercising our democratic rights as members and undermines the cooperative values of openness, equity and democratic member control that are foundational to the Coop. Seeking further legal opinions at this stage appears to be an unnecessary barrier, especially given the Coordinators' previously stated opposition to hybrid meetings. As member-owners, we expect our paid staff to respect the decisions of the Board and the will of the membership.

I urge the General Coordinators to follow the Board's directive and issue the referendum by the end of May. Anything less is a disservice to our Coop's principles and to the rights of its members to participate fully in our governance.

Sincerely,
William Clark

A NOTE OF GRATITUDE

Dear Editors,

Many thanks to the Board members who listened to the requests of the membership expressed at the April General Meeting and voted to move the long-delayed hybrid

meetings proposal to a referendum.

For me the General Meeting was a hopeful exercise of democracy. The chair committee extended the open forum time enabling more voices to be heard; a Board member, a member of the agenda setting committee, and many members shared their perspectives. The lively response to a member's motion to provide a path forward engaged the whole room in thinking about how Coop decisions are made and who makes them.

I came away with a new understanding that every General Meeting is a portion of a Board meeting "that is devoted to receiving the advice of the members" (Coop's Bylaws, Article VI, 2). Soon we will all have the chance to vote on a proposal to allow more members to give our advice to the Board through hybrid meetings.

In cooperation,
Kathy McCullagh

REMOVE ROGUE DIRECTORS

Dear Members:

The April 29 General Meeting was an exercise in mob rule and a rejection of the rule of law, a fundamental principle of democracy.

The Coop is a corporation governed by the laws of New York state. It operates under its bylaws and governing documents, including the Guide to the General and Annual Meetings, which states:

When the Coop incorporated, the members decided that the Board of Directors (BOD) would be required to meet openly and vote only on issues that were taken up and vot-

ed on by the membership.

The Guide affirms the role of the Agenda Committee:

IV. Agenda of the General Meeting
A. The Agenda Committee impartially sets the agenda of the General Meeting.
C. The Agenda Committee will assemble the items, prioritize them, and submit them for publication in the Linewaiters' Gazette 5 to 12 days prior to the General Meeting.

The bylaws further state:

ARTICLE VI – MEETINGS
The membership shall be given notice of each such (Board of Directors) meeting prior to such meeting. The directors shall inform those members who shall be present of the nature of the business to come before the directors and receive the advice of the members on such matters. The portion of the Board of Directors meeting that is devoted to receiving the advice of the members shall be known as the General Meeting.

On April 29, Directors Tess Lavoie-Brown and Keyian Favai conducted a board meeting that violated these governing rules. Without proper process and member input, they authorized a referendum to change the bylaws. Director Tim Hospodar voted in support of this breach.

These Directors failed to uphold their fiduciary responsibility and violated members' rights.

They must resign—or be removed.

Voice your opposition. Please sign the recall petition**.**

Barbara Mazor
coop4unity.org

FINDING “VALUE” IN THE COOP’S COLLECTION AND AGGREGATION OF PERSONAL DATA AND OPINION

To the editors:

Why take the Coop’s demographic survey?

I oppose efforts like this and think them unlawful.

The PSFC survey email reads: “organizations like our Coop regularly find value in collecting such information in order to assess needs.”

What needs?

Where is the need for “value,” if that value works to divide us?

It’s needless surveys like this and the hunt to gather, aggregate and mine “value” from intrusive data collection among individuals in voluntary community like ours, of race, sex and the like that speak of identity, that trouble me. All this surveying has divided us, has got our country into the hands of an alliance of clever despots who feed on occasions like this, in organizations like ours, to denounce voluntary communities who accrue social data from individuals, without inner aim, without clear purpose. And it’s intrusive, divisive and needless. Of what value then?

Respectfully submitted,
Allen Tobias

A BIG THANK YOU

Dear Coop Members:

Because there were so many members wanting to speak during Open Forum, I never got a chance, so here goes: I'm 71 years old, and my husband is 76. We're both immunocompromised but make it to almost every GM (wearing masks) because we love our Coop and want to participate in democratic community gatherings. We risk our safety every month so that we can attend.

It was enormously gratifying to learn that the Board authorized a vote by our ENTIRE membership online about finally ratifying having monthly GM's online and in person!!

A big thank you to those who helped make this vote possible after 17 months of delays!! Democracy is messy but it works!!

Sincerely,
Carol Wald

THE TRUTH COMES LIMPING AFTER

To the editor:

I could give you my legal perspective of the April 29 Board of Directors meeting (I'm an appellate attorney well versed in corporate governance disputes), but I will let the Park Slope Food Coop Members for Palestine speak for themselves. Here is their Instagram video and email telling you exactly what happened: PSFCM4P were so angry that they took over and ended the meeting; Directors Tess Brown-Lavoie and Keyian Vafai discussed an issue that was not on the agenda; and they decreed that the Coop will issue a referendum on hybrid meetings because the PSFCM4P demand hybrid

meetings now.

The General Coordinators implored Tess and Keyian to stop because their action was illegal under the Coop's bylaws. The bylaws are the rules the Coop follows when making decisions as a cooperative corporation. Why was their action illegal? The word "illegal" means against a law, and bylaws are laws.

Our bylaws require Directors to make decisions at a Board meeting, but the PSFCM4P ended the scheduled meeting. Our bylaws also require that the entire membership be informed of "the business to come before the directors." Our Guide to the General Meetings (rules clarifying our bylaws) require a minimum five days advance notice of an agenda item so all members can decide whether to come "give advice to the directors."

Tess and Keyian, leaders of the campaign to boycott Israel, gave ***no*** advance notice of their agenda—not even to their fellow Directors Imani Qryn and Joe Holtz. PSFCM4P proclaim their takeover was "democracy" in action. It was great political theater, but not democracy. Democracy requires following laws. The PSFCM4P letters here are also not democracy. They are words of an *activistocracy* taking totalitarian control—over you and our beloved Coop.

Sincerely,
Zara Watkins

OUR RIGHT TO DECIDE

Dear Coop Members,

I am a longtime Coop member who has occasionally dipped a toe into PSFC governance. When I did so, I experienced firsthand the undue influence that the General Co-

ordinators often exert. Thus, I appreciate the way in which the group Park Slope Food Coop Members for Palestine has worked alongside other democracy-minded members to make our General Meetings hybrid.

I was angry when I read the GCs' latest column, where they try to argue that caring about the fate of people who are being bombed and starved by a country heavily supported by our own government somehow equates to being the vessel of an ideology, driven only by a single issue. *Even if* PSFC4Palestine's only motive for supporting hybrid meetings was to make it easier to vote on a boycott, wouldn't that still be a good thing? But that's not all they care about, as I know from conversations with a few of them. It's just that they reject the GCs' effort to define "cooperation" in narrow, apolitical terms.

In the most recent *Gazette*, I read that the General Coordinators have refused to say whether they will issue the referendum on hybrid meetings as directed by the Board at the April GM. Now I find out that Joe Holtz says they are getting legal advice about next steps. Once again, employees of the member-owners are acting like bosses or corporate CEOs who can do whatever they please. I am grateful to those on the Board who stood up for the membership and our right to decide this question via referendum.

Sincerely,
Winston McIntosh

PETITION TO RECALL MEMBERS OF THE COOP'S BOARD

Dear Coop,

We are collecting signatures for a recall of three members of the Coop's Board of Directors: Tess Brown-Lavoie, Keyian Vafai, and Tim Hospodar. These board members

voted “yes” when Park Slope Food Coop Members for Palestine illegally forced through a referendum on hybrid voting at the April GM. They did so without notifying membership, as required per our bylaws, thus stealing yours and everyone else’s vote.

Please add your name to the Recall Petition here.

Sincerely;
Jesse Rosenfeld

BDS VS. COOP(ERATION)

Dear Coop members:

I understand why BDS wants to isolate Israeli companies from selling their wares in the US and elsewhere, like I understand why Hamas exists. Without a doubt, Israel’s war on Gaza is horrendous beyond words, as has been violent aggression toward the Palestinians since even before the founding of the state of Israel.

However, what I don’t understand is that BDS is spending its time and efforts on achieving the goal of getting Israeli products boycotted from the Park Slope Food Coop of all places. You don’t resolve a severely polarized conflict by sabotaging the essence of a non-political entity that actively strives for inclusivity and diversity, and has done so successfully for 50 years, with great effort by many.

Take your fight to the corporate world of commerce instead. That’s where your fight gets the ROI on your time and efforts you’re looking for by upping reach and scale. And if a difference can be made, it’s on the scale of corporate profits.

So again, don’t pick on a Coop that embraces, models and nurtures cultural unders-

tanding and collaboration. Taking the BDS fight to the Coop defeats BDS's purpose on two fronts—fighting a fight where it shouldn't be fought, and not fighting the fight where it could make the difference BDS seeks. Fighting the Coop is a waste of many people's time and energy, not in the least of those who support BDS and its mission.

Thank you!
Erik Schurink

BDS IS TOO TOXIC FOR EVENT SPACES—AND FOR US

Dear fellow Coop members:

I was one of dozens of members who couldn't get into the April general meeting due to capacity constraints. It was a frustrating but enlightening experience, as it became clear in talking to fellow members on the line that many are missing the plot. There was anger about the cancellation of our contract for the theater at City Tech, and rage at an apparent move by an unaffiliated NGO that led to City Tech backing out, but zero reflection on why City Tech would take such a push seriously.

Why such drama about a process issue at the Coop? For anyone not following along, the animating force for the push for hybrid meetings is to make it easier to vote on boycotting Israel at the Coop in alignment with the BDS movement. No matter our feelings about the wars in the Middle East and the terrible plight of people there, the BDS movement is widely perceived as toxically antisemitic. It is so toxic that many city institutions want nothing to do with it, whatsoever. That's why it's been hard to schedule large venues to hold such meetings, and that's why Coop BDS activists are pushing so hard for virtual meetings instead.

So, I pose the question to my fellow Coop members: if even a whiff of association with BDS is considered too toxic for public spaces in the city, why isn't it for us? We would-

n’t—and certainly shouldn’t—tolerate affiliation with racist and hateful outside groups of other sorts; why are we putting up with this? There are many ways to support the Palestinian cause without aligning with outright anti-Semites.

I can only hope that my fellow Coopers don’t realize who they are trying to get in bed with. Time to wake up.

Sincerely,
Josh Suskewicz

THAT “OTHER” ISSUE

Dear Coop members:

Why has there been such controversy over the hybrid meetings proposal? It’s a virtual no-brainer that such meetings would be a boon for greater participation in the Coop’s democracy, so why has the proposal been on the table for so long without a vote? But of course we know why; we know that the reason has nothing to do with the subject of hybrid meetings itself, but rather that such meetings might facilitate a vote on that *other issue*—the proposed Israel boycott, and the drive by certain Coop factions to prevent that vote from ever happening, lest it succeed. All else has become secondary to that goal, come hell or high water. Larger venues have been difficult to find, and when one has been found, it has been mysteriously sabotaged and called off. Thus, the hybrid meetings vote has become a casualty to that *other issue*.

But a solution is evident, and easy to implement. During the COVID years, when in--person meetings were thought to be dangerous, meetings were held online. The coordinators are responsible for arranging General Meetings, and simply interpreted online meetings to be the equivalent of in-person ones. Thus, meetings continued to take place. Nothing in the bylaws prevents that. By the same logic, controversial pro-

posals judged to demand larger venues can simply be held online. Coordinators need not spend time and money searching for a large in-person venue, only to see it cancelled, victim to specious arguments and dirty pool. They can simply notify the membership via their normal email announcements of the coming General Meeting, that it will be held online, and send along the links announcing the agenda and setting up the voting. So why is this charade that a venue cannot be found going on?

Sincerely,
David Barouh

CASTING ASPERSIONS INSTEAD OF VOTES

To my fellow members and General Coordinators who've tried to stop the referendum on hybrid voting:

You tried, but failed, to inhibit our democracy as a way to avoid engaging in an honest conversation and vote on the issues of BDS.

I am a Jewish descendant of Holocaust survivors. In the 1930s, there were Americans who saw my people's plight as their burden, and helped get my grandpa out of Germany. When genocide is happening, neutrality is impossible; we are either complicit or opposed. Today at the Coop, we can do our part by standing in solidarity with the people of Palestine by boycotting goods from Israel, the state committing genocide against them.

Instead of engaging on the issues, I have mostly seen anti-hybrid/BDS campaigns simply cast aspersions on us as a group. There are baseless rumors that we are violent. We have been doxxed. One member in a previous *Gazette* letter wrote that we are "holding the Coop hostage"! At the 4/29 GM, we were even scolded by a Board member for acting dangerously because, the reasoning went, by demanding that the

Board issue a referendum on hybrid voting we were not letting our own voices be heard. We've waited over 18 months for the Board to allow a vote on increased accessibility to voting; I trust everyone can see the rhetorical gymnastics here.

I am proud we won a referendum on hybrid voting. We have a governance that clearly does not wish to have this conversation, but we still succeeded. Ultimately, we need a robust conversation and vote on these issues. For example, does supporting a state that is intentionally starving an entire population uphold our mission to "oppose discrimination in any form"? Don't change the subject; let's discuss and vote about it.

Sincerely,
Rosie Lopeman, artist, teacher and member of PSFC For Palestine

---

REFLECTIONS ON HYBRID GENERAL MEETINGS

Dear Coop members:

"More people will attend a Hybrid General Meeting than one at the Picnic House."

Surely this is the thinking of members who are vehemently demanding that we establish permanent Hybrid Meetings.

Based on the evidence below, this may not always be the case.

Elizabeth Tobier's April 22 letter gave the attendance at 35 Zoom GMs during Covid. Every Coop member was free to participate in these meetings while eating dinner and doing household chores.

The average attendance from May 2020 to August 2023 was 150. Attendance was highest the first few months but then dropped precipitously.

In September 2023 the GM returned to the Picnic House. Minutes of 17 meetings through March 2025 are posted on our website. They tell how many members voted, when there was a vote.

The average number of votes cast in these elections was 159.

This shows that MORE people have been attending GMs at the Picnic House since we ended Covid Zooming!

Picnic House attendance was greatest in October 2024 when there were Personnel Committee and Masking Mandate votes. Were these members attending a meeting for big decisions?

I am left considering what effect the issue of boycotting Israel is having on the extremely intense Food Coop conversation about whether or not to establish permanent hybrid meetings. In my opinion the boycott issue is the MAIN impetus and this gives me the creeps.

I have no doubt that if hybrid meetings were established and there was a vote on a boycott, a record number of members would chime in, even if the voting system was put in place hastily.

IF, and I repeat IF, members sanction hybrid meetings, we'd better take our time setting up a flawless system free of fraud potential, that will also give members sufficient time for considering issues.

Sincerely,
Andy Feldman

HIDING GEHIND “DEMOCRACY” FOR STAGING A “COUP”

Dear Coop members:

The monthly GM has typically about 200 attendees, or only a bit more than one percent of the membership base. Whatever decisions are made on that day reflect the will of that motivated and engaged one percent; in no way does it reflect the will of the 99% members who do not vote. To call it democracy and the will of the membership is a farce.

The lack of engagement of 99% of the membership is a shame, but understandable, and not unexpected. After all, people lead busy lives, and schlepping to a two-hour evening meeting in the park to discuss the formation of a work-rules or recycling committee is asking a lot.

The lack of participation in our Coop’s governance becomes particularly worrisome, however, when a small group of highly motivated actors coordinate their activities with an outside group to take over the control of the Coop. Indeed, it only takes 100–150 people to gain the majority vote during those monthly GMs.

The Coop must rethink its governance, to protect itself from bad actors!

Sincerely,
Bruno Grandsard

---

150 MEMBERS LEFT WITHOUT A VOICE

To my fellow members —

An article from the May *Gazette* describes how, at the April GM, board member Imani

Q’ryn spoke to attendees about the risks of the board issuing a Coop-wide referendum on hybrid meetings. She warned that “what we’re doing right here is very dangerous… hold your power. Do not give it to us.” Sadly, I was among those excluded from the Picnic House due to capacity issues and couldn’t hear her statement from my spot near the front of the 150-person long line of members who had hoped to get in. A tall room divider blocked our view of the meeting through the windows, the shut doors prevented us from hearing what was said, and we were told that if we did anything beyond quietly standing in line, someone would call the police.

Respectfully, Q’ryn’s statement frustrates me. “Hold your power” rings a little hollow to those of us stuck outside. What power should we hold? The power of the first 250 people who show up to make decisions for the rest of us? If “the Coop is built on discussion” as Joe Holtz says, then why are there over a hundred people waiting in line who can’t make their voices heard? I don’t see any danger in issuing a Coop-wide mail-in ballot to make a decision, especially on a matter that has already seen so much discussion and faced so many logistical hurdles.

I agree with Q’ryn that the membership should hold our power and not give it away—and hybrid GMs are exactly how we can do that.

Sincerely,
Robert Lord

LET THE REFERENDUM ON HYBRID MEETINGS HAPPEN!

Dear Fellow Park Slope Food Coop Members,

I just sent the following message to the Coop General Coordinators:

I am horrified to learn that rather than carrying out the clearly demonstrated will of

the membership of the Coop to hold a vote on whether or not to allow hybrid general meetings, the GC's are hiring lawyers!

This is ABSURD! Let the members vote on the question.

I was at the GM at the end of April and the twisted logic expressed by Joe Holtz and Imani Q'ryn arguing against the decision by the Board to go ahead with a referendum was astounding.

How on earth can stopping a referendum from happening be described as a defense of democracy?

LET THE REFERENDUM HAPPEN!

In solidarity,
Judith Loebl

DISENFRANCHISEMENT IS WRONG

To the editors,

If what has been reported is true, and the General Coordinators are seeking legal advice on how to prevent members from attending General Meetings virtually, then we have truly arrived at a moment of crisis.

To spend Coop resources (our money) disenfranchising members who otherwise can't attend and have their voice heard for reasons like physical disability, lack of childcare and needing to work is an outrageous dereliction of duty.

We should be better than this.

Thank you for your attention,
Walter Kaplan

REFERENDUM AS THE ULTIMATE VOICE OF THE MEMBERSHIP?

To the Editor:

It seems reasonable that a vote impacting members incapable of attending General Meetings (GMs) must happen in a way that allows for the votes by those otherwise excluded. Increasing the capacity of an in-person venue by fourfold only responds to one of the myriad factors that prohibit the membership-at-large from deeply participating in the cooperation of this organization. Allocating a new space for only ~6% of membership remains imperfect to survey, respect and understand the thousands of voices that cannot reach our community as easily. Yet we promise each other equal voting rights in principle.

As a data guy, I wrestle with the fact that science can theorize using small samples, but this runs counter to ICA's Statement on the Cooperative Identity (1995) which defines equal voting rights as "one member, one vote." More to the point, why is this clause truncated from the ICA's Cooperative Principles as they appear in the About section on foodcoop.com—who removed it from our website? Honoring that our Coop has a unique governance structure, as a member of the Board of Directors I acknowledge that I require the advice of every member willing to vote in favor of or against innovating the meeting structure in a way that impacts our governance structure. I recognize it is inappropriate to vote on this topic at a Board meeting without first welcoming the voice of every member. Sample size of N, in this case, will not suffice.

In a way, it's ironic the scheduled vote, of which the membership was notified, did not happen at the April 2025 GM. Although I have studied the advice of hundreds of mem-

bers via email, dozens of articles in the *Gazette*, and in discussion and Open Forum at many GMs, only a referendum will provide each member one vote.

Sincerely,
Tim Hospodar, Member of the Board of Directors who accepted the advice of the members present on April 29 to commence the Board meeting without further discussion in an expedited effort to solve this conundrum

---

DON’T MOURN—ORGANIZE!

Fellow Members,

I grew up knowing the deep and lasting harm of political and identity smear lists. My father was jailed in the US for labor organizing, then captured and locked in solitary confinement in Spain, for fighting Franco. In a deal to gain his freedom, he was forced to silence his political voice.

On a list of Jewish teachers, my mother faced a quota system that prevented her from working in her own town. Her brother was similarly denied access to engineering school.

Fast forward to 2025: the US is again collecting names, lists, and punishing speech. Here at our Coop, General Coordinators—people we pay to lead—are using labels like PMP* to marginalize anyone who speaks in favor of hybrid meetings, condemns genocide or advocates boycotting products from an apartheid state. They publish names of Board candidates to vote for (or not), based on the spurious assumption that members who voice ethical objections to crimes against humanity are “ideologically driven” and therefore unconcerned with the good of the Coop.

In GM comments and Coordinators’ Corner editorials, GCs are creating a narrative in

which anyone who advocates for a system that allows more than 250 of us at a time to participate in governance—or condemns forced starvation—is somehow less a Coop member than those who work to avoid a vote on hybrid meetings, block discussion of a boycott or remain silent.

All member-owners have the right to equitable treatment by the GCs. All member-owners deserve respect and a system of governance that enables their ideas and proposals to reach the wider Coop membership for discussions and votes. All member-owners have the right to share individual thoughts and to gather in groups to express support for their ideas. Organizing in this way should not put anyone in the GCs' crosshairs.

*In their May 13 Coordinators' Corner column, General Coordinators used the acronym PMP in referring to Park Slope Food Coop Members for Palestine

In Cooperation,
Alyce Barr

GCS DON'T APPEAR TO WANT THE MOST QUALIFIED CANDIDATES FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dear Fellow Members:

In reading statements from the candidates for our upcoming Board election, I was favorably struck by the following:

Taylor Pate joined the Central Brooklyn Food Coop because she "was interested in organizing with other black folks and creating a grocery store that was built for those that have historically lacked access to fresh food in Central Brooklyn…. With inequality and lack of access to quality food in NYC,'' Taylor believes "it's crucial to keep the

Coop affordable, and for members to have access to information about the food supply chains that impact the food that we buy."

Dan Kaminsky has "worked on campaigns, in nonprofits and in the office of a state senator" and in addition serves on Community Board 7. Cooperatives have been a central part of Dan's adult life, including "a cooperative tour company called Social Justice Tours and… Bluestockings, a collectively run bookstore in the Lower East Side." Dan participated in a cooperative bike messenger company and in housing cooperatives throughout Brooklyn.

In my eyes, these statements reflect cooperative values, period. Yet in the latest post from the General Coordinators, I read that these people represent "ideologically--driven member groups" that they are hell bent on advancing one issue, that they couldn't give a hoot about the overall welfare of the Coop. It's as if we were talking about members of some fringe sectarian political group—you know, the kind you see at rallies handing out newspapers dripping with rhetoric that reflects their current party line. What does this caricature have to do with a food justice advocate or a Community Board member?

Let's maybe set aside the GCs' (very self-interested—they are afraid they won't get to run the whole show anymore) scare-mongering and evaluate the candidates on the merits?

In cooperation,
Annabel Bruno

COOP LEADERS SHOULD HELP, NOT HINDER, OUR DEMOCRACY!

Dear fellow Coop members:

After reading publications in the *Gazette* casting unfair suspicions on my board candidacy, I'd like to share my response with the membership.

I've valued creating friendships, building relationships with staff and being part of a Coop that aligns with my values, in particular to support an alternative to grocery corporations, encourage democratic decision making and have access to high quality and affordable food. This is an inherently political act. Some of the first cooperatives in this country were instrumental in the Civil Rights movement and the end of slavery. Cooperatives are political institutions by design.

I'm running for the board because I believe in coops as ways to build economic power, create community and effect change. I'm highly qualified to act as a board member to serve the will of the membership, as you can see in my board candidacy statement.

Members have exercised their democratic power, for example, by voting to ban Chilean grapes during the Pinochet regime. I'm proud to echo the thousands of members calling for a ban of products from Israel, a country that is perpetuating a genocide.

I've been devastated by the efforts of a few members to ostracize and harass those who wish to exercise their member power by putting a boycott to a vote. I've received unwelcome emails and threats, and have been publicly doxxed. It's disappointing that GCs have used bureaucracy to hamper members exercising their democratic rights.

All members, including myself, should feel safe in exercising their rights. If certain members—supported by the GCs—continue to suppress efforts to allow membership to vote for hybrid meetings and any form of a boycott, this sets a dangerous precedent by obstructing the will of members to take part in democratic decisions about an organization in which we're all deeply invested.

In solidarity,
Taylor Pate

THE APRIL GM WAS A SUCCESS FOR DEMOCRACY AT THE COOP

Greetings:

I attended the April 29 Coop general meeting. I did not know what to expect after the cancellation of the City Tech venue and the agenda committee decided to strike the hybrid meeting vote from the agenda. Along with the majority of the people in the room, I was outraged that an outside group, with the support of a pro-Israel minority in the Coop, are strong arming the Coop from exercising the right to vote.

The Board's vote to issue a referendum reflected members' will and it was only enabled by active participation in the April's General Meeting. The membership is fed up with 17 months of delays on this important issue. Hopefully, the General Coordinators, the Agenda Committee and Joe Holtz will not drag their feet or, worse, overturn the decision to have a direct mail-in vote on a hybrid vote meeting. Let us sustain the Coop's tradition of membership democracy by facilitating, instead of resisting, a membership vote on the right to boycott Israeli or foreign companies that profit out of Palestinian oppression.

Sincerely,
David Diaz

IS THIS WHAT “DEMOCRACY” LOOKS LIKE?

Dear Coop members:

My partner and I hired a babysitter at $25/hour for four hours to attend the GM on 4/29/25. Usually, one of us stays with the kids when attending meetings and working shifts because we can’t afford childcare otherwise. One must give up our right to vote so the other can attend, since proxy voting isn’t allowed. We both planned to vote for hybrid so both of us could finally vote and not waste $100 on childcare. Since City Tech was forced to cancel, we attended the meeting anyway. Here are my experiences:

• I approached the chair committee to request that the proposed motion to adjourn the GM be rephrased in accessible terms because it was very confusing for many members. The chair responded very condescendingly. He should have known to present the vote in a neutral way.

• The chair and staff weren’t honest that City Tech was sabotaged by “End Jew Hatred.”

• A group of people in the rear alcove loudly heckled speakers. No one silenced them. An older white woman from that group approached a Black mother to ask her to quiet her toddler’s laughter. I called her out on her racism since she never once told her white friends to quiet their shouting, which was far louder and angrier.

As a Black woman and a mom, I felt unwelcome and unsafe and left the GM in tears. I have no time for haters. I‘ll only attend future GMs when they’re hybrid. At least the Board agreed to a referendum so we can finally vote on hybrid. But why do we even need to vote? Why can’t all GMs be hybrid so that we can all vote? The Coop should be an example of what democracy can look like, not emulate our dysfunctional two--party political system.

Sincerely,
LaShaun Ellis

SOME QUESTIONS FOR PSFCM4P

Dear Coop members: Explain to me how it works, Part 1

Members 4 Palestine wants the Coop membership to join the BDS movement. I've tried communicating with M4P about how the BDS agenda will bring about resolution to the "Israel-Palestine conflict" but the BDS belief system seems to prohibit dialogue with anyone who asks questions.

Here are some questions I'd like to discuss with M4P concerning the three main BDS demands:

1. Ending Israel's occupation and colonization of all Arab lands

Focusing only on the West Bank:

Does BDS expect that Hamas will take control when the Israeli military leaves?

What will happen to the Palestinian Authority?

What is necessary to prevent a State of Palestine in the West Bank from destabilizing Jordan?

2. Full equality for the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel

What categories of inequality need to be addressed?

Does BDS support organizations that are fighting discrimination in Israel?
Does BDS propose reform legislation?

3. Right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties.

What's the number of people who want to return?

If Israeli law does not provide a procedure for transferring property title from current owners to returners, does BDS propose legislation?

What if property was in a town that was razed and is now under a national forest or a new neighborhood?

How long will this process take and who will pay for it?

Some general questions:

If you support a secular democratic State of Palestine, do you repudiate Hamas?

What kind of Israeli coalition government could implement the BDS agenda?

I've seen no indication that the BDS movement offers serious policy proposals.

I've seen no indication that anyone in M4P has thought through how the demands they want the Coop to adopt can be met. Maybe that's why they refuse dialogue.

Sincerely,
Noah Potter

HELP FEED PEOPLE IN GAZA

Dear Coop Members,

If you are Jewish and are at all bothered by the atrocities Israel is committing against the people of Gaza, you might want to sign this statement by Jews for Food Aid for People in Gaza:

It’s obviously no substitute for the long-obstructed vote for BDS at the Coop, but it is a little something.

Thanks,
Robert Rosen

LET US VOTE!

To the Editor,

Let us vote!

I want to thank the Board of Directors for voting to issue a referendum on hybrid General Meetings. It should never have taken this long. Member-owners shouldn’t have to fight this hard just to participate in our Coop democracy.

Which begs the question: When did voting become so controversial at the Coop?

This April, after an outside harassment campaign targeted (and thereby canceled) the venue secured for the hybrid GM vote, Coop leadership moved the meeting to a smaller space and quietly removed the hybrid GM vote from the agenda. This vote had been secured for this GM after more than 15 months of member democratic efforts.

At the meeting, there was no explanation, no accountability and no mention of the disruption or the agenda change in the General Coordinators' report. Again, where is the accountability for our member democracy?

If we want accountability and a stronger Coop democracy, then we need better visibility of member voices. One way to do this is by restoring the Coop Bulletin Board—a physical space where members could share ideas, stay informed and engage. That board was essential for transparency and connection.

Since its removal during COVID, we've been pushed into isolated conversations—just those on our shifts or whoever we happen to bump into in the aisles. That's not a community—that's a silence. And with that comes apathy, confusion and a loss of accountability.

We need hybrid meetings. We need a bulletin board. And we need leadership that represents, not overrides, member voices.

Vote YES on the referendum. This is about access, accountability and whether we still have a member democracy.

In cooperation,
Rosa Palermo