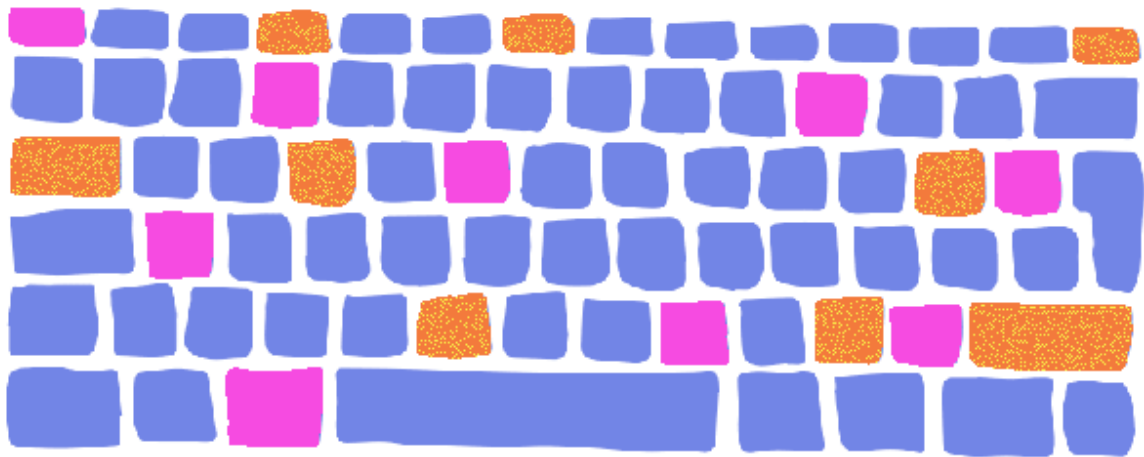


MAY 5, 2026

May 5, 2026

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



A YEAR AND A HALF ON THE WAITLIST

Dear Coop members,

In 2024, I signed up for as many checkout waitlists as I could. After a year and a half, I finally got off one of the lists. I was happy, but also stunned that it took that long: When I joined the Coop in 2017, I got off a similar waitlist in about two months. Today, you can't even get on a walking or checkout waitlist—every one is filled to capacity.

There's a lot to like about the changes we've made in recent years to our work system. The online system is easy to use and the increased availability of one-off shifts has increased work flexibility. But some of the changes have been for the worse. It's been getting harder to get one-off shifts and to get onto recurring shifts. Before the pandemic, we had a shift exchange board if you needed to miss a shift. You could also show up for an FTOP shift without pre-scheduling. Those options are gone.

The Coop's labor model relies on members providing labor, and the Coop needs to manage its labor needs carefully. But the model has to work for both the Coop and the members. It only works if members can actually get on a shift. I'd like the general coordinators to report to the membership on how the work slot system is currently designed, including how work slot numbers are determined and apportioned, and whether there's an opportunity to review it with the member experience in mind, not just operational efficiency.

*In cooperation,
Eric Rasmussen*

IN SUPPORT OF A REFERENDUM

Dear Coop members,

As staff members of the Coop with a range of political perspectives, we ask the presenters of the boycott proposal to bring this item forward as a referendum of the full

membership, rather than deciding it solely at a General Meeting.

The signatories below represent over 80% of our 70 full-time employees (and excludes the General Coordinators). We have a wide variety of opinions on the boycott itself, but we have come together to request a referendum vote, which would allow every member to vote by email ballot, ensuring equal participation and transparency.

This request comes from care for the Coop, its members and the long-term health of our organization. A referendum offers the clearest way to understand how the entire membership feels about this issue. While General Meetings have served the Coop well for decades, decisions with the potential for division deserve the broadest possible participation. Those seeking a similar boycott in 2012 recognized this and asked for a referendum. Past referendums have determined major issues such as hybrid General Meetings, purchasing another building and selling meat and beer.

A referendum allows all members to be heard, regardless of work or life schedules. It ensures fairness, accessibility and legitimacy by reflecting the will of the full membership—not only those able to attend a single meeting.

As staff, we've dedicated our energy and care to the Coop, and we know every decision shapes members' experiences and the community we share. Our goal is that every member feels at home here, and that means listening to every voice.

The aim is not only to reach a decision, but to reach one the Coop can collectively stand behind. A referendum provides the strongest foundation for that unity and shared purpose.

Sincerely,

Anna Adelson

Carline Aurelus

Masha Bezlepkina

Gillian Chi

Jim Christensen
Gabriel Concha
Sophie Cowen
Jana Cunningham
Ibou Diallo
Elly Dittmar
Dennis Dorgan
Dominique Esser
Francisco D. Ferreiro
Jessa Fisher
Mae Frankeberger
Karina Gee
Britt Henriksson
Martha Hoffman
John Horsman
Fiona Iacovangelo
Ronald Jean-Gilles
Marlen Tapia Jimenez
Joseph Gordon
Phi Lee Lam
Gustavo Lopez
Ken MacDonald
Alexandra MacDonnell
Henry Maldonado
Karen Mancuso
Marion Moran
Karen Martin
Terry Meyers
Jonathan Miller
Chris Moore
Garrett Mukai

Kevin O'Sullivan
Adrienne Pabst
Charles Parham
Lisa Pelavin
Jerome Petitgand
Marvin Pique
Valerie Ratron-Neal
Cecelia Rembert
Craig Roberts
Brian Robinson
Amy Sanford
Eiko Saotome
Jacquelyn Scaduto
Jacob Slaton
Jason Sparks
Renee St. Furcy
David St. Germain
Tanya Steinberg
Jack Stroman
Yuwadee Tantipech
Alexander Walsh
Zili Wang
Yuri Weber
Jason Weiner
Oren Yaniv
Andrew Young

BDS DOES NOT ALIGN WITH COOP VALUES

Dear Coop members:

General Manager Joe Szladek is correct that Coop decisions on contested issues deserve thorough deliberation. As part of the cooperative movement, our actions should be guided by the International Cooperative Alliance principles, applying them both to our core mission and to any activities beyond the operation of our store.

In 2019, the ICA issued a Declaration on Positive Peace through Cooperatives. In 2023 it called for peace in Israel and Palestine, urging all parties to pursue a peaceful resolution that safeguards lives and livelihoods on both sides.

The BDS movement is fundamentally at odds with this vision of positive peace. A proposal to align our Coop with BDS should not be considered. Doing so is not neutral; it confers legitimacy on an approach in conflict with our stated principles.

BDS does not advance a shared future for Israelis and Palestinians. It does not foster coexistence and rejects mutual recognition. It presents itself as nonviolent, yet fails to meaningfully address armed groups or violence against Jews.

The contents of recent *Gazette* letters and the statements at the General Meeting have convinced me that the Coop's BDS advocates have no practical interest in the welfare of Palestinian Arabs and promoting peace. Rather their efforts are to dehumanize and exclude anyone who disagrees with their cause.

Coop engagement with the Israel-Palestine conflict should promote efforts to bring about a peaceful end to the conflict. Our Coop's voice should be used for:

- Calling for the disarmament of Hamas and other militant groups so reconstruction can commence.

- Supporting and amplifying voices, such as Realign for Palestine, that work to bring about pragmatic solutions.
- Recognizing the shared humanity and aspirations of both sides.

Our Coop must act consistently with ICA principles and our shared community values.

Sincerely,
Barbara Mazor

GENOCIDE PERSISTS WHILE PSFC PROCRASTINATES

Fellow members,

On March 31, I was one of several members who presented a proposal to boycott Israeli goods, a proposal that waited more than two years to come before the membership. During that long wait, a genocide raged in Gaza, with more than 75,000 slaughtered according to research published in the world's leading medical journals (likely a vast undercount). Meanwhile, settler violence against West Bank Palestinians radically escalated and the U.S. Israel war of aggression on Iran claimed massive casualties across the Middle East.

In the April 14 Coordinators' Corner, general coordinators wrote, "There is an urgency among some members to move boycott discussions forward," adding that "elected governance committees' responsibility requires resisting compressed timelines."

There's nothing compressed about a timeline that prevented the PSFC from having a GM discussion or vote for over two years. Now that we've finally had the GM discus-

sion, it's time for a vote. This is our governance practice.

During these past two years, GCs have made many excuses for this unconscionable delay. They said it would cost over \$40K to find a big enough venue to address the matter, simultaneously arguing against hybrid or remote meetings. Throughout this time, we who condemn Israeli genocide and support a boycott have stood in front of the Coop and talked with any member willing to speak with us, we've written to the Gazette (and have often been censored), we've written our own publications that have been condemned as "rogue" for expressing criticism of GC actions or genocide.

And here is a link to an article by me from the 04/14/2026 Gazette.

The GCs are right about one thing: Many of us feel urgency to do whatever we can to stand against genocide and to implement a boycott of Israeli products. It's time to vote on this boycott—as soon as possible. Let's stop procrastinating and make it happen at the next GM.

Now is the time,
Alyce Barr

VOTE TO KEEP A SUPERMAJORITY

Dear members and editor,

Because I believe that the Coop is at a critical juncture, I am asking members to:

- Look for emails from the Coop and check the Coop's website for the GM Agenda each month. When any agenda item has the word "boycott" please sign up for attending "online" or "in person."

- Please vote for me in the Board election this June. You'll receive an email in late May or early June which will guide you on how to vote online. Here is a link to all candidate statements.
- My Campaign: I might lose this election because 3000+ members will be receiving an email urging them to vote against me. Please talk to and reach out to all members that you know if you believe that electing me is important. Please also, if you have the time and inclination, campaign for me on the sidewalk outside the Coop.

Members of the Board of Directors have the final vote after receiving the advice of the members at a General Meeting or through a member referendum. As the senior General Coordinator, I had a vote on the Board from 1977 to May 2025 and I approved the advice of the members every time. I look forward to continuing to help nurture the Coop in the coming years whether or not I am on the Board.

Currently there is a great difference of opinion on whether the Coop should boycott products from Israel. The problem we face is that all prior boycotts at the Coop were supported by nearly 100% of the members. The Coop is a community and this situation could rip the Coop apart. Please vote to preserve the supermajority needed for boycotts.

Sincerely,
Joe Holtz

JOE SZLADEK IS MOVING THE GOAL POSTS

Dear Linewaiters' Gazette,

I have a lot of time and respect for Joe Szladek, but must call him out for moving the goalposts in his Coordinators' Corner column of April 14, 2026. Just as the groundswell

of support to boycott Israeli goods at the Coop has inched us closer to adjudication by members in our newly-minted hybrid General Meeting, a call for this issue to be settled by referendum is a nonstarter. This sort of manipulation from the bully pulpit illustrates exactly what I distrust about our Coop leadership, namely its unwillingness to let our vibrant democracy flourish. Please sit this one out, Joe, and let this issue be decided in the General Meeting.

*Sincerely,
Damien Neva*

SZLADEK RESPONDS TO NEVA LETTER

Dear Coop Members,

Contrary to the claim made in Damien's letter, there is no attempt to move the goalposts. Rather, there is a call to maintain consistency with past practice. In supporting a referendum, I am advocating for the same standard the Coop followed when it last considered a boycott of Israeli goods in 2012—ensuring that all members can participate and have their voices heard.

A referendum is not a barrier to democratic participation; it is a way to broaden it. Keeping that standard in place ensures fairness, transparency and continuity in how the Coop handles matters of this importance.

*Joe Szladek
General Manager*

NATIONWIDE RESISTANCE TO BDS

Hello Coop:

The Hamas-supporting BDS movement continues to receive strong nationwide push-back. Join the fight against it. BDS violates our PSFC's International Principles of Cooperation and our Mission Statement. They need PSFC, not the other way around.

Cornell rejected a Student Assembly's resolution divesting from the Cornell-Technion partnership, signaling that when Israel is singled out among other nations, it exemplifies social injustice. Reminds me of how BDS quietly ignores PSFC goods from human-rights abusing countries of China, Turkey and the U.S.

University of Texas at Dallas suspended its SJP chapter through 2027 for disrupting official proceedings, stripping them of university recognition. The Coop's General Meeting Chair Committee long ago should have taken similar action against BDS's illegal takeover of the Coop's April 2025 General Meeting, leading to our votes becoming meaningless.

Burlington, Vermont rejected an anti-Israel ballot question, while a separate resolution funded screenings of "The Other," a documentary exploring the complex relationship between Israelis and Palestinians, plus up to \$10,000 for "restorative community dialogue sessions" with trained facilitators. Can PSFC follow suit?

The state of Indiana signed Senate Bill 160, legislation designed to prevent individuals from concealing their identities while committing acts of intimidation in public spaces. Why not apply this to the average PSFC General Meeting?

Duke University's chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine was suspended after it posted an image on Instagram of two pigs—one labeled "U.S. Imperialism" holding the torch of liberty and the other labeled "Zionism" holding the Star of David.

Informed by disruptive “protesters” calling for violence outside of synagogues, the New York City Council established protest-free buffer zones outside houses of worship and religious schools.

More to come!

Jesse Rosenfeld

SOME QUESTIONS REGARDING THE DRC’S RESPONSE TO MY LETTER

Dear Coop members:

The *Gazette* published a letter of mine (“The DRC’s Shameful Failure” from April 14) regarding my dissatisfaction with how they handled a mediation between me and another member. The DRC responded to my complaint with a letter of their own in the same issue.

I request that the DRC answer these questions for consideration by the Coop membership:

You state that you “felt that offering mediation was an appropriate conclusion to our investigation.” What exactly did you hope this mediation would accomplish?

What “agreement” do you believe resulted from my mediation? The person I was conversing with simply checked out of the meeting without as much as a “goodbye.” If the DRC can simply hide behind the confidentiality clause here, what kind of clarification, not to mention enforcement, can ever be made for such supposed “agreements?”

What is the point of offering mediation as an option if there is no clear stated goal as to what the mediation is meant to accomplish? If I had known that agreeing to “partici-

pate” in a mediation meant shutting all doors for future action regardless of the mediation’s conclusion, I would never have agreed to mediation.

It feels to me as if the DRC proposes mediation not as a sincere effort to try to resolve a conflict, but rather to pat themselves on the back so they can claim that they “followed all the procedures” and “did whatever they could” so they can then wash their hands from any further involvement or duty in the matter. This is quite irresponsible.

I do not see anything in my experience that could be deemed a “resolution” of anything.

*Sincerely,
Sarede Switzer*

ISRAELI PRODUCTS BOYCOTT

Dear Members,

We will soon have a chance to vote on a proposed Coop boycott of Israeli products. Voting **YES** will affirm Palestinian civil society’s nonviolent Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) call for the international community to uphold their human rights. I appreciated the informative presentation by PSFC4Palestine at the March 2026 General Meeting, as well as Board candidate Taylor Pate’s clear and principled advocacy on this issue.

I will be voting **YES** for the following reasons:

- The Coop’s Mission Statement commits us to social responsibility and care for others.

- BDS is a call from Palestinian civil society to act on those values through nonviolent economic pressure.
- Palestinians are asking the international community to boycott goods and companies connected to Israel as a protest against ongoing violence, displacement and systemic injustice.
- Targeting products made in Israel not antisemitic. I strongly oppose antisemitism, and I also oppose the genocide, violence and displacement of Palestinians in Gaza, Israel and the West Bank.
- As members of the Park Slope Food Coop, we have a responsibility to uphold principles of fairness and justice both locally and globally.

*Sincerely,
Christine Schmidt*

YES, IT IS GENOCIDE

Dear Coop,

Recently, a Gazette editor rejected my letter because I declined to supply an expert reference for my statement that Israel has committed genocide against the Palestinian people. I've since heard from other members who have been required to supply "attribution" when making this claim. For future reference, here is a partial list of human rights organizations, international law bodies, Holocaust and genocide scholars, and other authoritative sources that have publicly recognized Israel's genocide:

Organizations

- • South Africa's case against Israel before the International Court of Justice (ICJ)

- • The U.N. Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (UN-SCIIP)
- • Report by the U.N.'s Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory ("Legal analysis of the conduct of Israel in Gaza pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide")
- • International Association of Genocide Scholars
- • Lemkin Institute for Genocide Preven
- • Genocide Watch
- • Amnesty International
- • Human Rights Watch
- • Doctors without Borders (MSF)
- • B'Tselem
- • Physicians for Human Rights Israel
- • Oxfam
- • Medico International
- • University Network for Human Rights
- • The Center for Constitutional Rights

Individual authorities

- • Omer Bartov, Israeli genocide scholar
- • Raz Segal, Israeli historian
- • Shmuel Lederman, Israeli specialist in political theory and genocide studies
- • Amos Goldberg, Israeli professor of Holocaust Studies
- • Lee Mordechai, Israeli historian
- • Francesca Albanese, U.N. Special Rapporteur on Palestinian rights in the occupied territories
- • Nimer Sultany, human rights lawyer and editor of the Palestinian Yearbook of International Law

- • Maryam Jamshidi, Associate Professor of International Law at the University of Colorado Law School

Fellow members, please feel free to cite this letter if and when you encounter an editorial diktat forbidding you to mention Israel's genocide.

In cooperation and against atrocity,

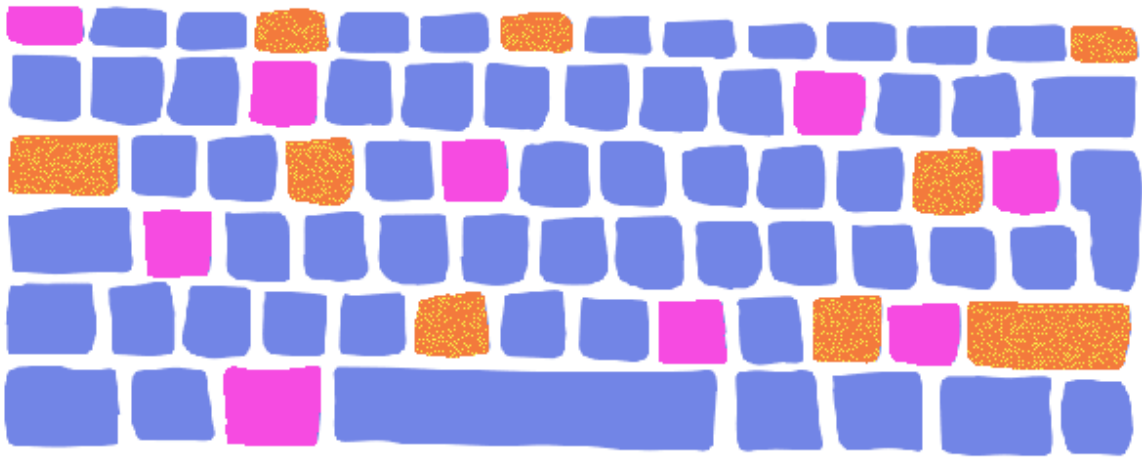
Jan Clausen

Editors' note: Due to an editing error, this letter was inadvertently omitted from this issue. It was uploaded on May 7.

FEBRUARY 10, 2026

May 5, 2026

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



LIDL HIGHLIGHTS LACK OF COOP AFFORDABILITY

Dear Editor,

I appreciated very much Anita Bushell's January 20 article on the Park Slope branch of Lidl, a new German grocery store on of which I was unaware. Among other things, she

highlighted items in several categories that are more affordable at Lidl than they are at the Coop, including mandarin oranges, multigrain bread, and croissants. All but one variety of apple there are also on offer at a lower price. All this with no work requirement.

Bushell prefers the quality of goods and feeling of community at the Coop. I do too, but her survey highlights an important reality: Increasingly, we are a place less about affordable foods and more about elevated (or some might say snobby) preferences and responsible (or some might say politicized) sourcing.

Our markup was “temporarily” increased to 25% from 21% nearly six years ago and with spiraling health care and other costs, reporting out of the general meetings makes clear there is no return on the horizon to the original lower food prices. For the past year, I’ve found it cheaper to have coffee delivered from Finland than to buy it at the Coop, to give one example.

Meanwhile far more members seem interested in engaging in geopolitical debates than with costs and affordability. Instead of turning up our noses at Lidl, we should consider how to replicate their tight mission focus and efficiencies. Or we should at least be more honest about the fact that affordability, for those of us who don’t qualify for special programs, is slipping away at our beloved Coop.

In cooperation,

Ryan Tate

Receiving shift (Lifter)

REGARDING LIDL’S REVIEW

Dear Coop community,

Anita Bushell's January 20 article on the relative merits of Lidl and the Coop ("Cheap-Croissants but Lidl Charm") misses the mark. The Coop and Lidl are fundamentally different, but it hardly warrants pooh-poohing Lidl.

In truth, many Coop products are expensive, and Lidl is generally cheaper. As Ms. Bushell observes, the Coop wins on quality and variety. But many products at Lidl—like fresh breads—are actually superior to the Coop's. Lidl produce, while not as good as Coop produce, is decent and mostly cheaper than what's for sale at Trader Joe's. It's hardly fair to diminish it as "an okay option for last-minute dashes."

Frankly, I find Ms. Bushell's mockery of discount promotions as features of a "a glorified mini-mart" deeply out of touch when affordability is such an important issue. I also struggle to relate to her lamenting the loss of the semi-suburban Key Foods parking lot and ruing its replacement with housing units, many set aside for affordable housing. (N.B. It was community leaders who advocated for an affordable grocery store in the development.)

Lidl is not especially warm or charming; most groceries aren't. It employs the same antitheft gate system used across Europe. If this system reduces the shoplifting that chain supermarket operators often cite as reasons for avoiding certain neighborhoods, it's a reasonable trade-off. Lidl has been expanding across the city, often in neighborhoods lacking affordable alternatives. It's also open to anyone who walks off the street—unlike the Coop.

I rather like the Coop, which is why I'm a member, but that doesn't mean I look down on Lidl. I do however wholly disapprove of mocking a discount grocery store's food as "technically edible."

Sincerely,

Daniel Stone

PAGING COMPOSTABLE BAGS TO THE BULK AISLE

Dear Coop members:

As a newer member of the Coop, I've been impressed by the sustainable practices in place: a robust composting system, food donation to CHiPS and other food rescue organizations, reuse of delivery boxes for shoppers, and much more.

I'm curious about one, albeit small, area where we might be able to do better: the plastic bags used for pre-packaged bulk items and bread. I recognize there may be considerations I'm not aware of—cost or performance issues with compostable options—though given compostable bags are available in the produce section, I wonder if there's potential to transition these remaining plastic bags to compostable (or at the very least non-plastic) alternatives.

Part of my motivation for writing this letter is to see if this is something other members would support pursuing. The Coop's commitment to sustainability is a large part of what drew me to the organization, and I would love to help continue to drive this core part of our mission: "We strive to reduce the impact of our lifestyles on the world we share with other species and future generations."

Kindly,

Kristen Mashikian

FOOD HOLDS ENERGY WITH A MESSAGE

Dear Coop members,

In 2015, when my daughters were 5 and 4 years old, I joined the PSFC. Our family enjoyed all the organic goodies we are so blessed to have available. My friend Anna, also a PSFC member, pointed out how I would bring carrots and a peeler with me to the Children's Museum; my nephew would laugh at how my stroller would be full of food and called me a refrigerator.

We would not leave home without all our food.

In the book *Food Rules*, writer Michael Pollan observes how much of what he sees for sale doesn't "deserve to be called food." Instead, he prefers to "call them edible food-like substances."

Having growing up in Tunisia and in Switzerland, I was alarmed at the quality of food sold in the US. My studies confirmed what my intuition was telling me: food is more than calories and nutrients. It holds the energy of the farmer, the farm, nature, and the intention behind the making of that food. Food holds a message.

I started cooking for my community to have conversations on ethical food and why we need to know where our food comes from. When we eat local food, it's easier to know the energy it holds. We want to give money to people who are caring for our land and taking good care of their employees and animals. I don't want to eat anger and pain, do you?

Guided by that philosophy, I do not buy ingredients from Israel, and I'm in favor of boycotting all goods from there until Israel ends what an overwhelming number of human rights organizations and authorities on international law say is a genocide, and Palestinians live freely.

I am honored to serve the PSFC with my food. I offer a vegan Tunisian sandwich called LA TUNISIENNE, free of cruelty. Find it Sundays in the grab and go fridge.

Sincerely,

Nadia Ketoure

HAVE RACHMONES: IMAGINE MENSTRUATION WHERE IMPORT OF HYGIENE PRODUCTS IS BANNED

Fellow Members,

Perhaps you've heard someone ask: Why Israel? Why do thousands of Coop members demand a boycott of Israeli products, especially now that there's a ceasefire*? Let's take a closer look and use an Israeli newspaper as a source. On January 22, 2026 *Haaretz* reported a "shortage in basics such as beef, poultry and hygiene products, caused by Israel's decision to ban the entry of these products...".

These banned hygiene products include menstrual supplies and diapers. Last week, I received a charity request to fund period kits for menstruating women and girls in Gaza. I was ready to donate, but then wondered: would these even make it through the blockade?

In the Yiddish-English home of my girlhood, my mother would often tell me to "have rachmones" (empathy or compassion) for others. Whether or not you've ever menstruated, it should be easy to imagine how wretched it would be to have no products to absorb your menstrual blood, and how much more of a horror it would be if you were living in a freezing cold refugee camp with extremely limited toilets or clean running water, and let alone privacy.

Every time we member-owners stock, sell, and buy Israeli products, we contribute to the economy of a country that has chosen to keep Palestinians in Gaza without period products and diapers.

Have Rachmones,

Alyce Barr

* It's hard to understand what Israel considers a ceasefire, since Israeli forces have killed over 470 Palestinians during the current ceasefire.

SOME SEE UPSIDE TO A “LOOMING COLLAPSE”

Dear Members,

I read recently of a “looming collapse” of Israel’s agricultural exports market. Whether or not we boycott Israeli goods at the Coop, this collapse could achieve what so many courageous amongst us have campaigned for: a better world.

Sincerely,

Damien Neva

KNOW THE FACTS BEFORE YOU VOTE

Dear Coop community:

As we gear up for what’s sure to be a contentious discussion (and, finally, a vote!!) on

the boycott of Israeli products, it's essential that members reach out and learn the facts about previous and current organizing efforts.

Please DO NOT believe claims of antisemitism (I for one am proudly Jewish) and other emotional appeals to secure votes against a boycott. Some members weaponize such claims, and it behooves all of us to understand the facts and vote our consciences.

The Coop has a long, proud history of boycotting products from countries and entities that fail to act in accordance with our Mission Statement. I urge all members to familiarize themselves with that Statement and the importance of boycotts in the struggles worldwide for justice.

Yes, this issue brings "conflict" among us and, yes, discussions on these matters can be challenging, but I believe in the Coop, its Mission Statement, and the integrity of our members to proceed with the facts and in a spirit of cooperation

Sincerely,

Carol Wald

TRYING TO "JOIN THE CONVERSATION" WOULD BE EASIER WITH SOME TRANSPARENCY, PLEASE

Dear Coop members:

I'm writing with questions about the December 30 "Join the Conversation" memo announcing a facilitated conversation about conflict in the Coop community, capped at 12 participants, with work-slot credit for attending. The memo emphasized confidentiality and directed members to apply online.

I applied almost immediately, but wasn't selected. I understand that there was likely limited capacity, but when shift credit is offered for a limited-access event, the selection and approval process should be transparent.

Questions I hope the Coop can answer:

- Will there be additional sessions, and will members who weren't selected this time get priority or another clear path to participate?
- What were the selection criteria? Was it first-come/first-served, a lottery, or based on other considerations? If so, what were they? Was race, ethnicity, religion, or identity considered?
- Who approved this as eligible for shift credit, and under what policy or category? What safeguards ensured it was administered fairly and consistently?
- Where was this discussed publicly within Coop governance? I don't recall seeing it in General Meeting materials or minutes, but I'd appreciate a pointer if I missed it.

Sincerely,

Vivek Bhagwat

COOP WORK-SLOT CREDIT

Dear Editor:

On January 12, I participated in a Coop event for work-slot credit to discuss how conflict at the Coop "affected your experience as a Coop member." It covered "your experience as a Coop member during times of conflict, especially if it feels personal," and was not about making "decisions about a boycott or convincing anyone of a par-

ticular view.” (Quoted text is all pulled from the document from the moderators). Six people took part.

We agreed to no audio recording and no names. Moderators were asked what they were bringing back from this session to the Coop community. They said they were not providing any information to the Coop.

I argued that the Membership needs to obtain value for holding this session as the Coop provided the site and work slot credits to the participants. It is not a breach of confidentiality to provide a high-level report, which does not include names or direct quotes.

I noted that I could write a letter to the *Gazette*, following those guidelines. One participant was against any letter writing. The moderators who had advised that they were not decision makers, now ruled against my right to inform the Coop. At that point I left the session.

If the moderators want to hold this type of meeting under the “No Feedback” to Members rule, then it should not be held on Coop property. It is really a private activity. The Coop should not host or provide work-slot credits for something that doesn’t inform the Members and directly or indirectly, benefit the Coop.

I respectfully request that any future sessions be canceled.

In Cooperation,

Stewart Pravda

IN THE LAND OF “BROKEN LAND DREAMS” (WITH APOLOGIES TO THE BOSS)

Dear Coop members,

My magical realism novel, *Broken Land Dreams*, out in Kindle and print, mentions the Coop and Park Slope. It's not just for Boomers, guys in search of themselves, or Brooklynites, but those in need of a Hired Power, progressives, mindfulness types, literary mavens, utopian dreamers, and young superheroes with contemplative and critical thinking powers.

The book defies a conventional linear narrative. In Part I, Jacob Traum, a grumpy, retired high school social worker and meditating lefty boomer, tells us his wife Maya has left him and warns him he needs to recover from himself. He describes the puzzling and socially unjust things he broods and dreams about that contribute to his disposition and emotional absence.

In Part II, the surreal story begins. With the help of his dreamt-up, gender-fluid, hired power with superpowers from the future, Jacob embarks on a Dante-esque, pandemic-era personal journey. In Hell Inc. he's confronted by, then manages to escape three right-wing rats, leaders of the Ratocracy conspiracy—Ratty Ghoulani, Ayn Ratnd, and Pete the New York Pizza Rat. The rats seek revenge by infesting his former high school with Ratocratic values and plan to take over Brooklyn. With the help of his Park Slope (Purgatory) men's group, the Brooklyn Codgers, and his high school students' socially conscious meditation group, imbued with their own superhero powers, Jacob must face himself as well as the Ratocrats in a final showdown to reach Heaven (the Brooklyn Botanic Garden), save Brooklyn, and earn back Maya.

In our post-pandemic and Trump-redux era, this re-telling of Dante's cosmic journey will appeal to many of us facing an uncertain future and to those who appreciate how truth, love, and Brooklyn-style dreams triumph over meanness, greed, fake news—and New York rats.

Sincerely,

David Forbes

NOTE FROM THE GAZETTE EDITORS

February 14, 2026

To Gazette readers,

Inconsistencies occurred in applying the Gazette's Letters to the Editor policies in the February 10, 2026 issue. As a result, two letters from that issue have been temporarily removed pending a review of those policies.

As the Coop's publisher, the General Coordinators have a responsibility to ensure that published material aligns with institutional and legal standards and that policies are applied consistently. In this instance, General Manager Joe Szladek and General Coordinator Ann Herpel were involved in the decision to remove the content in order to address those concerns.

A review of the Gazette's editorial standards and policies is underway to ensure they are clearly defined and consistently applied.

We regret any confusion this may cause and appreciate Gazette readers' understanding as we complete this review.

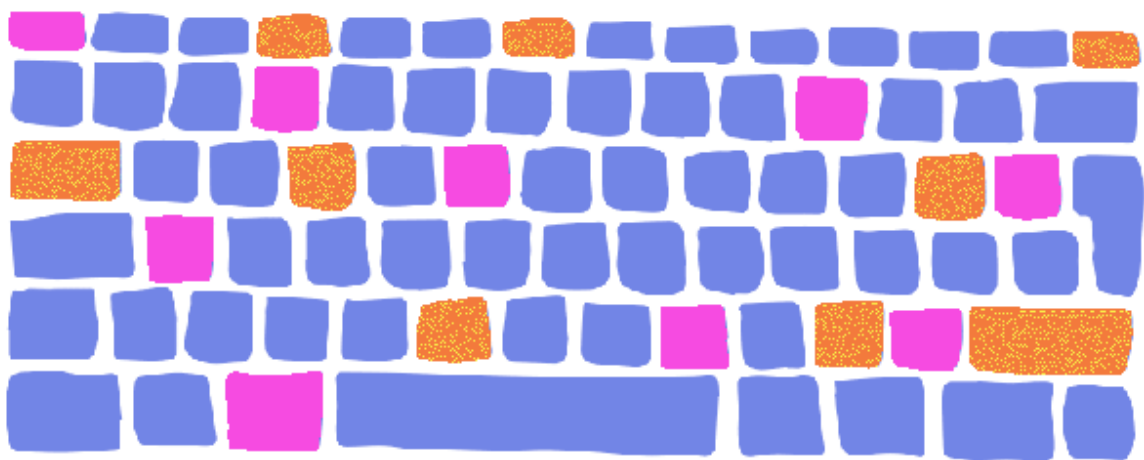
Thank you,

Gazette Editors, Joe Szladek and Ann Herpel

DECEMBER 30, 2025

May 5, 2026

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



APPLAUDING POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

Dear Coop members:

Granted, General Meetings aren't always fun and are sometimes even contentious. But we—the Coop Family—should be proud of some of our recent accomplishments and current considerations. Starting in January, our new hybrid structure will open up participation to many more of our members. (Note: I would have gladly been more active over my last 18 years if I—as a single parent and very busy nonprofit manager—could have participated remotely.) And some new initiatives are exploring robust, creative ideas for enhancing education and awareness regarding committees and operating procedures; offering training, leadership development and greater inclusivity; and clarifying protocols for ensuring appropriate democratic communications. Way to go, Coop!

These types of developments help me feel even more welcome and inspired. Let's keep up the momentum and commitment to innovation, inclusivity and equity in our dynamic democratic experiment.

Sincerely,

Mitty Owens

Coop member since 2006; social justice writer on Substack

ATTILA THE HUN AND KARL MARX BOTH LIKE GOOD FOOD AT FAIR PRICES

Dear Coop members:

The Park Slope Food Coop is a grocery store. It is a good place for me to shop. The grocery-store aspect of the Coop is great; the political activism is not. I recall that at a GM in 2016, an “Education Committee” member urged us to go to Philadelphia and protest the Trans-Pacific Partnership at the Democratic Convention. Nearly a decade later, members argue over banning products. I stopped attending GMs. Now a member writes a letter about wishing for the ideological purity of a bread supplier.

On December 10, Lidl grocery store opened at 120 5th Ave., close to the Coop. Their prices are lower compared with the Coop prices for similar items. The produce is not as good as that of the Coop, but the bakery is better; they have freshly baked croissants that are crisp for 49 cents. They also offer a large selection of meat and fish at slightly lower prices. I have not yet tried the meats to know about the quality.

The Coop prides itself on being founded in 1972. I grew up where there are coop entities that are thriving to this day that were founded in 1908 and the other in 1915. Both stick to their knitting. The first one is a coop bank that started very small and over the last hundred years has expanded to many branches in many cities in India. No members or account holders entertain political activism at the bank. My question is how long before members of the PSFC are turned off by political activism and walk with their feet. If I have problems with any products, I have the option to NOT buy that product.

Sincerely,

Amol Kaikini

CHANUKA AND ANTIZIONISM

Dear members,

I recently saw a flyer advertising an Antizionist Chanuka party and thought this was hilarious seeing as Chanuka is the most Zionist Jewish holiday there is. On Chanuka, we celebrate indigenous Jewish resistance over Greek colonizers and the restoration of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel.

Unfortunately, there are quite a number of such self-proclaimed “antizionist” Jews right here at our coop who are working to ban the sale of Israeli goods (BDS).

As progressive as these folks might envision themselves to be, they are nothing but our generation’s version of the Hellenistic Jews, who mistakenly thought that if only they were more empathetic towards their overlords, or better assimilated, they could “keep the peace.” Tragically, they fell to the same fate as their “less liberal” brethren.

Because while the Hellenists were technically only against religious zealotry, not Jewish people per se, and antizionism opposes only Jewish *statehood*, ultimately, the soul of the Jew is inseparable from his or her body, and Jewish identity is intrinsically tied to the land of Israel, the center of which was known historically as “Judea,” as it was the ancestral homeland of the tribe of Judah, the source of the word for “Jew.”

To be clear, this does not mean one must endorse everything the Israeli government does or that it is in any way above critique, but to call oneself an Antizionist while at the same time celebrating Chanuka, is oxymoronic.

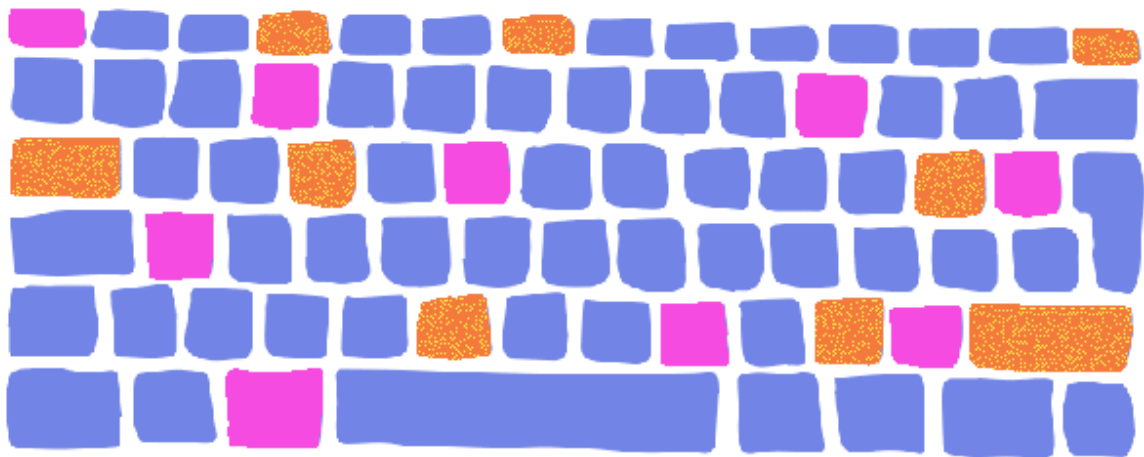
Pro-Israel Jews and friends, as evidenced by the public Menorah lighting outside of the Coop this year, the antizionists are only making us stronger. Stay proud and stay loud.

Sarede Switzer

NOVEMBER 18, 2025

May 5, 2026

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



CONGRATULATIONS COOP RUNNERS

Dear Members,

Congratulations to Coop members who completed the New York City Marathon on Sunday, Nov. 2. The marathon travels through all five boroughs from its start in Staten Island to the finish in Central Park, passing nearly right by the Coop on its route in Brooklyn along Fourth Ave. On Marathon Sunday, the whole city embraces the spirit of generosity, cheerfulness and bonhomie that I hope we all bring to our community year-round. I wish you all a speedy recovery, and I do believe we carry epsom salt in aisle four to help you along!

Barry Leybovich

FOOD COOP PRODUCT REVIEW

Dear Gazette and PSFC,

I think it would be highly useful for Coop members if the *Gazette* had a product review section with reviews provided by members. I have recommendations, good and bad, that I'd like to share, and would like to hear others' recommendations as well. It would also make members aware of products they didn't even know we sold—like cat-butt magnets or drying racks for plastic bags. Thanks!

Sincerely,

Michael Katz

DISCLOSE THE LEGAL OPINION NOW—“CONFIDENTIALITY” IS NOT A VALID EXCUSE

Dear Coop members:

The topic of the alleged legal opinion (a) stating that hybrid meetings can be implemented without amending the bylaws and (b) validating the practice of allowing the board to vote on matters that do not appear before it as member-initiated agenda items has been an ongoing topic of discussion. (See voluntary article, June 24, 2025, and letters to the editor and General Coordinator responses on Aug. 26 and Oct. 28, 2025.)

The General Coordinators have stated that the legal opinion is not in writing. On the basis of 20 years in commercial litigation in which I reviewed and drafted legal opinion letters, I say that that proposition is literally incredible. It calls into question (a) what question the GCs presented to the unidentified attorney(s) who rendered an opinion and (b) whether the attorney(s) examined the governing documents of the Coop and conducted an evaluation of the events of April and June 2025 in the context of New York law. The decision to change Coop practice on the magnitude of what is happening without a proper legal opinion is plausibly a breach of fiduciary duty.

In the Aug. 26 issue of the *Linewaiters' Gazette* I called for disclosure of the fabled legal opinion. GC Joe Szladek responded there that the opinion is confidential. That response is not valid. No law is stopping management from disclosing to the membership whatever shred of writing shows the legal reasoning—which they should do for an opinion that supposedly legitimizes the end of the Coop's historical governance structure and calls into question whether the Coop's bylaws and guidelines mean anything. Even if the legal opinion were confidential, nothing prevents management from making a limited waiver of confidentiality with whatever redactions are necessary.

Disclose the opinion now.

Sincerely,
Noah Potter

Editors Note:

Noah sent a version of this letter to the LWG on Aug. 29, 2025, for inclusion in the Sept. 16, 2025 issue of the LWG, though it was not published. Noah intended to deliver a version of the letter to the Chair Committee at the Sept. 30 meeting but he was sick that night and, at his request, a fellow member delivered the letter to the Chair Committee to be read (in accordance with the meeting rules). The Chair Committee did not read the revised letter due to his absence. The report on the meeting in the LWG noted a comment during the meeting that he should submit the letter to the LWG.

General Manager Response to Noah Potter's Letter

Dear Coop Members,

Following the April 29 Board meeting, the General Coordinators sought legal guidance from attorneys with extensive experience in cooperative governance. This was not a request for a single, formal legal “opinion,” but part of an ongoing and broader dialogue about the Coop’s governance practices and legal compliance. We have consulted these attorneys numerous times to clarify questions of authority, process and best practices under cooperative law.

We approach these consultations thoughtfully and thoroughly—asking questions from multiple angles to test the consistency and reliability of the attorneys’ guidance. Our goal is to ensure that all perspectives and member concerns are represented in how we frame our inquiries, and that the resulting advice supports sound, transparent decision-making.

Based on advice from the Coop’s governance attorneys, and as previously shared

with members:

- The Board has the authority under the bylaws to take the action it did on April 29.
- A bylaw amendment is not required to allow hybrid General Meetings.

Maintaining confidentiality in communications with legal counsel is both standard and essential. This confidentiality protects the Coop's ability to seek candid, independent advice and to meet its fiduciary responsibilities to the membership. While we share the conclusions of our legal consultations when they directly affect Coop operations or members—as we have done here—the underlying attorney-client communications are privileged and not disclosed. This approach is consistent with standard practices across cooperatives, nonprofits and other member-owned organizations.

Respectfully,
Joe Szladek
General Manager

I MET WITH A SAILOR FROM THE GLOBAL SUMUD FLOTILLA

Dear members,

On Friday, Oct. 10, 2025, at my local coffee shop in Gowanus, I met with a sailor from the Global Sumud Flotilla, an international civil-society maritime initiative aimed at challenging the Israeli blockade of Gaza. This person across the table from me shared that they were only a few days removed from having been taken from international waters at gunpoint by Israeli forces while attempting to deliver humanitarian aid to Palestinians, a mission they described as a moral and legal obligation under the Genocide Convention.

I was struck by this person's bravery and could not help but reflect on the inertia of our cooperative over the last two years to not even table a vote for the boycott of Israeli goods. Have we become so numb that we fail to recognize the humanity of Palestinians? A better Coop and world are possible, just as the many boats sailing toward Gaza have inspired so many to believe.

Sincerely,

Damien Neva

OCTOBER 7, 2025

May 5, 2026

Letters to the Editor



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 community.

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,

Una 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

JULY 15, 2025

May 5, 2026

Letters to the Editor



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. Dis-course 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.

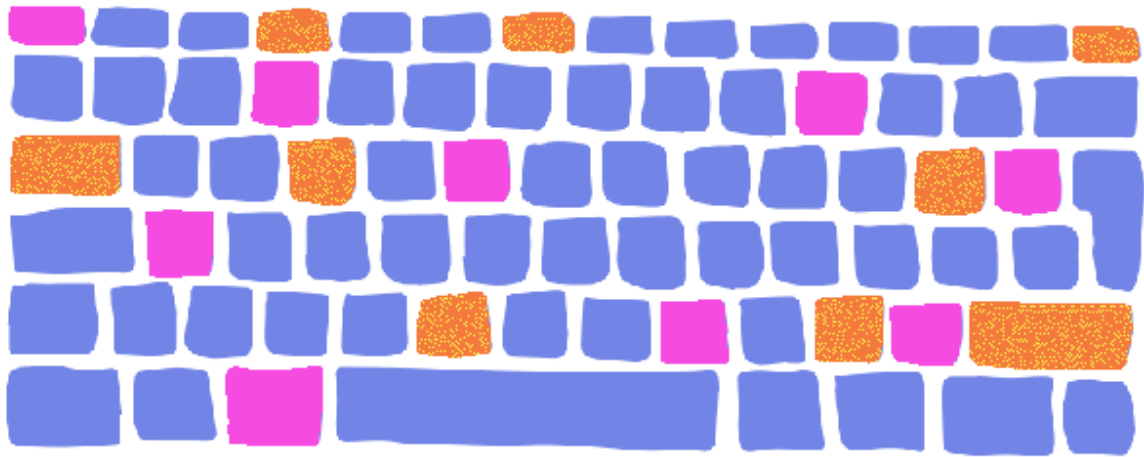
Regardless of where one stands on this complex and emotional issue, it is crucial to preserve the Coop's core values: cooperation, inclusivity and a focus on good food and community. I greatly appreciate the dedication of our General Coordinators, whose hard work reassures me that the Coop's spirit can 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

JUNE 3, 2025

May 5, 2026

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 mem-

ber, 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 voted 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 mak-

ing 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 Coordinators 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 understanding 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 wouldn'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 proposals 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 mem-

bership 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 per-

cent 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 Loeb

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 members 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 discus-

sion 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*