

CHEAP CROISSANTS BUT LIDL CHARM

January 20, 2026



ILLUSTRATION BY FRAN MENESSES

GERMANY'S BARGAIN-BASEMENT GROCERY CHAIN LIDL COMES TO PARK SLOPE

January 20, 2026

By Anita Bushell

An outpost of the German discount grocery chain Lidl opened to great fanfare on 5th Avenue on December 10. Shoppers lined up at dawn, and raced home to post their reviews on Reddit: “I was surprised at how big the store was, and also how much space they dedicated to anti-theft at the entrance/exit, since that means less space for things to sell,” shared one early visitor. Another Redditor posted a nostalgic lament for the grocery store that had once occupied Lidl’s location: “That Key Food had the best music,” they recalled. “Well-curated, 50s and 60s classics and deeper cuts played just a little louder than it needed to be.”

In addition to basic goods at affordable prices (most famously, a \$.49 freshly-baked croissant) and hard to find European products, Lidl is known for its rotating stock of specialty goods that won’t break the bank—think of it as a Teutonic Trader Joe’s. Or, given its small footprint and sterile aesthetic, think of it as a downgrade from the beloved and spacious Key Food that was demolished in 2021 to make way for the 184-unit housing development that encompasses Lidl.

Lidl was born in 1973 in Ludwigshafen, Germany. The original store had three employees and some 500 products. By the 1990s, the shop had grown into an international brand, with outposts in France and the UK. 2015 saw the establishment of its U.S. headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. The chain now operates 190 stores on the east coast of the U.S.

Its arrival in Park Slope comes at a time when households are getting more budget-conscious, and on the lookout for deals such as “seasonal apples” (no name mentioned) at \$1.39/lb. or a package of Lidl Preferred Selection cooked shrimp for the low price of \$6.99. But the Park Slope newcomer is going to have to work harder if it wants to lure shoppers away from the Coop or fill the shoes of Key Food, whose vast parking lot attracted shoppers from other neighborhoods.

LIDL IS KNOWN FOR ITS ROTATING STOCK OF SPECIALTY GOODS THAT WON'T BREAK THE BANK—THINK OF IT AS A TEUTONIC TRADER JOE'S.

In addition to being accessible to car owners across the borough, Key Food was known for the classic soft rock that pumped through the loudspeakers and a marvelous management team. In the era before Fresh Direct, this reporter remembers entering the store after days home with a sick child. "Where've you been?" one of the managers asked. When he learned the answer, he responded, "What's wrong with you? You could've picked up the phone and called. We deliver!"

Lidl, on the other hand, is comparatively small and utilitarian. With its gray tones, the street-level entrance has all the charm of a parking garage. The foyer is not warm or inviting, and there are no decorations or classic supermarket advertising posters. An escalator delivers a shopper from the lobby to the lower level, where she is greeted by a glass wall, adding to a sense of entrapment (one presumes the purpose of this barrier is to prevent shoplifting). After cashing out at a self-checkout station—no fun Coop conversations to be had here—said shopper exits through an opening in the aforementioned glass wall.

The store itself feels like a glorified mini-mart, with country music playing and offerings relying on marketing features such as "Monday Must-Haves," "Wednesday Weekly Deals," and "Weekend Super Sales." A myLidl app offers even more exclusive deals.

Should the Coop be nervous about the new kid on the block? Not a bit. To begin with, Lidl has a narrow selection of basic products. It's the kind of place where you might run in to get a carton of eggs or a container of milk, not whole cloves, which I tried and failed to find last week in the limited spice section. The Coop, of course, has an excellent spice section, with everything from Adobo to Zatar, and, all told, lower prices than I've seen anywhere in Brooklyn.

AN ESCALATOR DELIVERS A SHOPPER TO THE LOWER LEVEL, WHERE SHE IS GREETED BY A GLASS WALL, ADDING TO A SENSE OF ENTRAPMENT.

But there are bargains to be found at Lidl: a bag of mandarins costs \$2.78, less than half of the \$6.44 a similar bunch costs at the Coop. A loaf of Lidl multi-grain bread is priced at \$2.59, whereas a sliced loaf of Arnold's Multi-Grain bread costs \$5.03 at the Coop. Croissants are priced at \$.49. "Our famous 49-cent butter croissants are flown in from Europe and baked fresh daily in our stores," trumpets a company press release. "We dare you to find a flakier French pastry this side of the Atlantic!"

My family and I took them up on their challenge and embarked on a taste test, comparing the Coop's Colson bakery croissants available for \$2.11 with the version from Lidl. The Coop's treat won hands down, with a taller, flakier, and more subtle croissant. Lidl's iteration was smaller, heavier, and left a slightly fatty aftertaste.



PHOTO BY ANITA BUSHELL

A Colson Bakery croissant from the Coop, compared with Lidl's.

Depending on where you live, the newcomer is an okay option for last-minute dashes to grab basics. But if you're looking for a sense of community—or croissants that are better than technically edible—don't say I didn't warn you.

Anita Bushell is a freelance writer and native New Yorker. She is the author of One Way to Whitefish (2024), and Object Essays: A Collection (2022). Her work appears in multiple publications online.

IT'S HEARTS AFLUTTER BY THE ALMOND BUTTER

January 20, 2026



UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH THREE COOP COUPLES

January 20, 2026

By Susannah Jacob

You don't have to be a Coop member for long to get the hang of how things go at 782 Union Street. Radicchio and romaine live in the produce aisle, raw cashews are over in the bulk bins, and romance is... everywhere around us. From the new lovebirds making goo goo eyes by the coffee grinders to the longtime marrieds who consider shopping a Friday night date tradition, there's a whole lot of love going on. In advance of Valentine's Day, we asked three Coop couples to spill their secrets and shopping strategies.

APRIL GREENE & ARTHUR MEACHAM

Time together: 14 years

How did you meet?

Arthur: At the end of 2013, I switched from a receiving shift to a Monday night cashier shift, and April was already there. I noticed her, of course, but the Coop is busy. Then, in January 2014, there was a blizzard, and we were the only two cashiers who showed up for the 9 p.m. shift. The store was completely quiet. We just sat together and talked and laughed so much that when it came time to balance our drawers, we had to do it three times because we kept miscounting.

April: It was pretty great. We also did the very romantic walk to the ATM together in a blizzard to dump our envelopes.

Arthur: I asked for her number, and she gave me her business card. I texted her. It bounced, because it was a landline. I emailed her instead. She wrote back saying

she'd had a great time but had a boyfriend, though "it's not going that well." A month later, at our next shift, she said, "I broke up with that guy." We went on our first date a few nights later.

April: I remember him walking off into the blizzard carrying two enormous shopping bags for his lentil soup and then realizing he was going the wrong way and turning around. It was very cute. I remember thinking: even if this doesn't progress, this guy is showing me that better people exist.

Do you work shifts together?

Arthur: Not anymore—we have a six-year-old, Ivy, so someone needs to be home. I work later evening shifts. I love repair shifts because you get to see hidden corners of the Coop, like the roof.

April: I miss our recurring cashier crew—people from that shift came to our wedding. I still love checkout because you get the best conversations. It's like waiting tables: brief but often meaningful exchanges.

"WE JUST SAT TOGETHER AND TALKED AND LAUGHED SO MUCH THAT WHEN IT CAME TIME TO BALANCE OUR DRAWERS, WE HAD TO DO IT THREE TIMES BECAUSE WE KEPT MISCOUNTING."

Do you shop together as a family?

Arthur: April meal-plans, and I shop every weekend by bike. Ivy comes sometimes now—she helps push the cart and pick things out.

April: It's important to her because the Coop is such a big part of our lives.

Favorite Coop taste sensations?

Arthur: The apples, especially Candy Crisp—I've never seen them in a regular super-

market.

April: We have an elaborate cereal setup at home: three cereals, berries and high-protein vegan yogurt.

Any foods you disagree about?

April: Arthur's vegan, so he's not thrilled about my smelly cheeses.

Arthur: And I'm morally opposed to Brussels sprouts.



THOMAS LEVINESS & MAURA LEVINESS

Time together: 13 years

How did you meet?

Thomas: We met in Mexico. We worked at the same university—we were both teachers.

Maura: I was an art teacher and Thomas was an English teacher. When we met, Thomas was actually thinking about coming back to the U.S.

Thomas: I'd already given my notice. Then we met, and I thought, well, I'm going to stay. The university was happy to let me rescind my resignation.

Maura: Then we went to Spain because Thomas did a master's degree. We weren't married then—we are now.

Thomas: We lived there for a year, then moved here for three years, then went back to Mexico, and then came back here again.

Who joined the Coop first?

Maura: We joined at the same time, because one of Thomas's friends was already a member.

Thomas: I'd actually been to the Coop once in the early '90s. A friend from Marine Park was a member, and it was very different then. But when we moved here, I remembered it and thought, we've got to join the Food Coop.

Maura: Where I'm from in Mexico, we don't really have places like this. We have the mercado, which is cheap and sort of organic, but this was my first co-op. At first, I thought it was kind of hippie—but I really liked it. Once you start doing shifts, you meet people, and I found everyone very interesting and open-minded.

Do you work shifts together?

Thomas: Yes, we have a recurring shift together—checkout at 10:30. They always put us together. People sometimes look confused when they see us talking so much, and then when they realize we're a couple, they're like, "Oh, isn't that nice?"

Maura: Checkout is my favorite. I like talking to people and seeing all the products come through. I always ask, "What is this, and how are you going to cook it?" People give you recipes.

Do you shop together?

Maura: Always after our shift. We live super close, so we go every couple of days. We try to make a list. We try.

Thomas: And then we buy more than what's on it.

Maura: Bread is our first stop.

Thomas: She follows the list. I wander off and get lost.

“THEY ALWAYS PUT US TOGETHER. PEOPLE SOMETIMES LOOK CONFUSED WHEN THEY SEE US TALKING SO MUCH, AND THEN WHEN THEY REALIZE WE'RE A COUPLE, THEY'RE LIKE, ‘OH, ISN'T THAT NICE?’”

What are your favorite Coop taste sensations?

Thomas: Definitely the bread. Mixed berry scones, blueberry muffins, cinnamon amann, chocolate croissants. The sweet breads are our guilty pleasure. They used to have a cheese Danish that was incredible, but they stopped carrying it after Covid.

Is there a food that only one of you likes?

Thomas: I eat everything.

Maura: I'm allergic to a lot of things—it's not that I don't like them, I just can't eat them.

Thomas: She always wants yogurt. I keep trying all the non-dairy yogurts, and they just don't agree with me.



PHOTO BY JACKSON KRULE

BRIANNA BLAGROVE & ROCCO PERSICO

Time together: Four years

How did you meet?

Rocco: We met at school. We were both at Stony Brook University.

Brianna: It was our last year—we graduated together. We actually met on Hinge.

Who joined The Coop first?

Brianna: I did. I grew up around here, and my sister and I used to go to Park Slope all the time because we thought it was so cool. Her dad's girlfriend was a member and always told me, "You see that grocery store? You need a membership to shop there." So when I moved back to Brooklyn, joining felt inevitable.

Rocco: I didn't even know what a food coop was. They're not really a thing where I grew up, in Smithtown on Long Island. But it sounded appealing—a place where everyone understands how it works, everyone's done shifts, and there's this shared responsibility. The atmosphere is just nicer.

What are your favorite shifts?

Brianna: We usually work the same shifts. Checkout is my favorite. I've also done bread really early in the morning, which I liked, but checkout and office are my go-tos.

Rocco: Same. Checkout and office. I've done bulk, too. I wanted to do cheese once, but they moved me because they didn't need it that day.

What's your shopping strategy?

Brianna: We almost always shop after our shift.

Rocco: Pretty much every time.

Brianna: I don't really make a grocery list. When I'm on checkout, I mentally track what other people are buying. If something looks good, I'll ask, "Where'd you get that?" and then I'll go find it after. My shopping list is basically other people's groceries.

What are your favorite Coop taste sensations?

Rocco: I love the marinated Greek lima beans from the fridge near the vegetables. I'm also a sucker for the chocolate bar aisle—especially when we do express checkout, because you're just staring at it. I almost always grab a chocolate bar.

Brianna: Bagels and cream cheese are staples. He likes everything bagels; I get plain whole wheat.

Is there a food one of you loves that the other can't stand?

Brianna: I'm the type who buys things just to try them, and then I usually don't like them—so he eats them.

Rocco: I love those chocolate-covered Greek yogurt bars.

Brianna: I can't stand them. I like Skyr. No Greek yogurt for me.

Susannah Jacob is a history PhD student and a proficient operator of the slotted, plastic bag-taper machine in the Coop's bulk department.

'LIVE SMALL, LOVE LIFE, AND KEEP GOOD COMPANY'

January 20, 2026



MEET JIM CHRISTENSEN, A RECEIVING COORDINATOR AS 'CAN-DO' AS THEY COME

January 20, 2026

By Liz Welch

Jim Christensen's eclectic resume includes being named a finalist for a Nicholl Fellowship from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for a screenplay. He was 39 and managing a 20-person staff in a large Minneapolis coffee shop and had written a blue-collar riff on *North by Northwest* that sent up gangster movies. Jim replaced Hitchcock's Madison Avenue executive (Cary Grant) scrambling on Mount Rushmore with a divorced Chicago mechanic rescuing his daughter in the lobby of the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum. "I went to LA and met a bunch of agents," he said. "It was heady stuff!"

Ever since then, he said, "It has always been about finding a good day job so I could continue to write."

The recently turned 70-year-old can now add "Receiving Coordinator" (R.C.) at the Park Slope Food Coop to a list of gigs that already includes high school English teacher and soccer coach, advertising researcher and strategist, and manager/trainer of testing and hiring teams that created the TSA in the wake of 9/11. A long-distance relationship lured him to New York where he consecutively managed for the 2010 U.S. Census, was a store manager for Sterling Place, and was a "deliverista" for a 7th Ave. sandwich shop before taking up again self-employment as a painter and handyman.

"I was a sole proprietor, made a business card, and biked my ladder and tool bag all over Brooklyn to do repairs," he said. "It was great! But a bit lonely."

JIM ENJOYED GETTING TO KNOW THE PEOPLE WHO GRAVITATED TO THE REPAIR SHIFT—PAINTERS AND PLAYWRIGHTS, ARCHITECTS, AND JOURNALISTS.

Jim first joined the Coop as a member in 2009 after that long-distance girlfriend made it a stipulation when he moved from Minneapolis to live with her on 7th Ave in Park Slope. While their relationship did not endure, Jim's appreciation of the Coop did.

"I did the late-night commando cleaning shifts," he said of his early days earning work credits. "They were Sundays 8 p.m. to 2 a.m. but we'd meet just four times a year. I met the most interesting people."



PHOTO BY JENNIFER MACFARLANE

Craving that kind of community in his paid work, he applied for a staff job several years ago, which he did not get. But in 2025, at the encouragement of friends, Jim reapplied—this time for membership coordinator and receiving coordinator positions—and was interviewed the same week for both. As it happens, the Coop's lead facilities coordinator had recently departed for the New York Aquarium, so management wasted no time in tapping Jim's handyman experience and skills to help fill the void. For 15 months he fixed many things personally, and organized tools and spaces. Primarily he fielded all repairs requests and evaluated maintenance needs to manage evening Repairs shifts during which members cooperated to cross-train skills and fix things. He transitioned to receiving coordinator in December 2025.

"I loved the Repairs shifts," he said. "We did all kinds of things, ranging from painting to improvement. A blower in the cooler might need unclogging or a dripping faucet might need to be fixed. People worked cooperatively, often above their skill set. Some even learned how to weld."

JIM WILL CONTINUE TO DO WHAT HE HAS ALWAYS DONE: "LIVE SMALL, LOVE LIFE, AND KEEP GOOD COMPANY."

He singled out a bathroom-soap situation as one of their more satisfying small triumphs. Constantly leaking dispensers were a perennial problem until a late-night repair team figured out how the Coop could reduce plastic waste and save money with replacement. "We cut four millimeters from a plastic stirrup-shaped component. This shortened the piston stroke inside the mechanism so it dispenses only as much soap as necessary, making them cost-effective," he explained. "The team both piloted the modification and also videoed it to share so the next shift could alter the remaining dispensers."

Jim especially enjoyed getting to know the people who gravitated to that shift—painters and playwrights, architects and journalists. He feels similarly about everyone on

staff.

"The variety of people who work here is astonishing," he said. "Everyone is nice, professional, skilled and smart. The underlying vibe aligns with our mission statement. It's not too over-the-top to say I love my colleagues—and I love my job."

Another loveable facet of his new job: it allows him to read and write. In fact, he continues to write screenplays, including one he and his partner—a writer of short stories and fellow Coop member—have adapted from a memoir set in the Midwest.

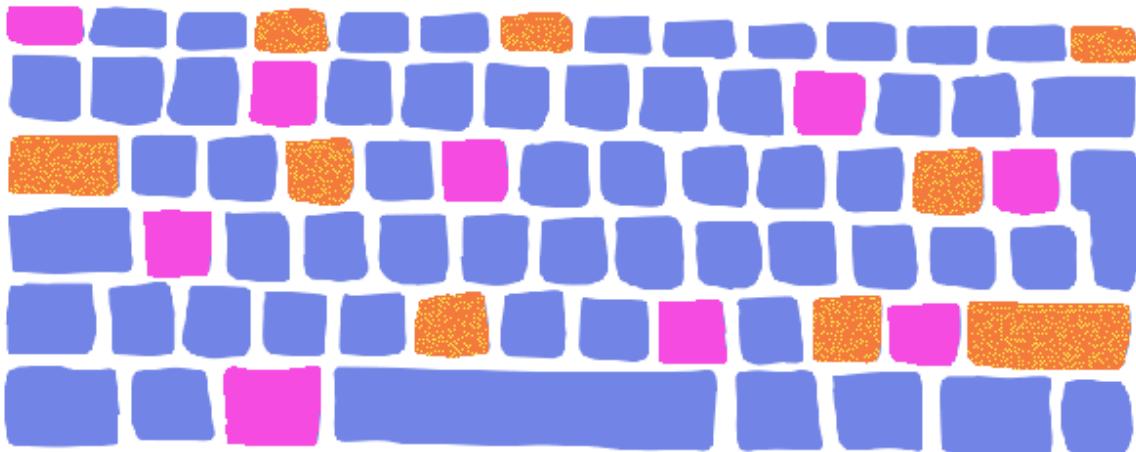
As the couple prepare to shop it around, Jim said he will continue to do what he has always done: "Live small, love life, and keep good company."

Liz Welch is a journalist, memoirist and book collaborator.

JANUARY 20, 2026

January 20, 2026

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



PSFC'S MISSION DEMANDS PROTECTIONS FOR ALL

Dear Coop members:

Coop leaders—most notably the directors—can look to the city for direction on combating harmful rhetoric to ensure that all members feel welcome at the Coop regard-

less of their political viewpoints.

Diversity of thought is foundational to the Coop. In Sun Yu's Book "Park Slope Food Coop 50 Years of Cooperation", Yu validates this notion by describing historical disputes within the Coop, which reaffirms that differing views are part of our DNA.

On December 30, NYC's Mayor's Office to Combat Antisemitism (MOCA) released its 2025 report on antisemitism. Some Coop members over the last 18 months—including some of the directors—have promoted messaging that paints alleged dysfunction at the Coop as a byproduct of members that are perceived to be Zionist.

We should all have critical thoughts on societal challenges, but not at the expense of dehumanizing a specific group of people. The MOCA report indicates that specific anti-Zionism rhetoric is detrimental to Jews. Specifically, "the practical consequence of anti-Zionist rhetoric is ... the dehumanization of all Jewish people ... when Zionism itself is characterized as racist or illegitimate, Jewish people become targets for hostility and violence."

Dehumanizing language leads to violence: In Crown Heights, two Jews have been stabbed.

Jews have been murdered in:

- Thousand Oaks
- Washington DC
- Boulder
- Manchester
- Sydney

Additionally there has been vandalism, arson, gun shots and car-rammings at syna-

gogues and Jewish institutions in North America and Europe, including shuls within a stone's throw of the Coop.

Coop Leadership needs to maximize safety within the Coop—including protection for all Jewish members regardless of their political viewpoints—as this duty is listed in our mission statement, which states “we strive to make the Coop welcoming and accessible to all and to respect the opinions, needs and concerns of every member.”

Sincerely,
Zack Zaban

THE BDS-BONDI CONNECTION

Dear Coop members:

Lethal narratives incite violence:

Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, Charleston, South Carolina, June 17, 2015: Nine African Americans were murdered by a shooter radicalized by white supremacist, anti-Black rhetoric.

Tree of Life Synagogue, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, October 27, 2018: Eleven Jews at prayer were murdered by a shooter radicalized by white nationalist, anti-Semitic, anti-immigration rhetoric.

Chanukah celebration, Bondi Beach, Sydney, Australia, December 14, 2025: Fifteen Jews were murdered by two shooters radicalized by antizionist, anti-Semitic rhetoric.

Our Coop must never provide a platform for lethal narratives—rhetoric that casts en-

tire groups as inherently evil, assigns collective guilt and normalizes exclusion and violence. Yet, here we are. The same dehumanizing antizionist discourse that animated the Bondi shooters has been incessantly repeated by the Coop's BDS advocates in *Gazette* letters, pamphlets, Instagram posts and GM statements.

Their narrative relies on three core misrepresentations:

1. Israel's defensive war in Gaza, following the October 7, 2023 massacre of over 1,200 people and the kidnapping of 251, is labeled "genocide."
2. Israel's security measures in response to terrorist attacks on its population are labeled "apartheid."
3. Land purchases in the birthplace of Jewish civilization, and the Jewish quest for dignity and self-determination, are labeled "settler-colonialism."

These libels erase Palestinian responsibility and agency while portraying Israel as the sole aggressor. It ignores the long history of denied equality for Jews under Islamic rule as well as the opposition of Arab political leaders to Jewish equality and immigration.

Antizionism is implicated in countless attacks on Jews and Jewish institutions worldwide. The BDS proposal is an attempt to exploit our Coop to further amplify the antizionist lethal narrative. Our General Meeting exists to steward our \$60M/year business. Our Coop should not be used to legitimize language that endangers any group of people, including Jews.

Sincerely,
Barbara Mazor

FOOD CLASS: MUSHROOMS 101

January 20, 2026



The Park Slope Food Coop Cooking Squad Presents:

mushrooms 101

Kick off your culinary adventures in the new year with mushrooms! Guest chef and squad member William Doran will be joined by some of the Coop's mushroom suppliers to talk ***all things mushroom*** and share three different ways to prepare the humble fungi, including an *oyster mushroom ragout with polenta* and a *mushroom pâté*. Both recipes are vegan.



Wed., Jan 21, 2026 7:30 PM EST

Park Slope Food Coop – 2nd Floor Kitchen

\$10 cash fee for in-person attendees or join online for free!

Register:

foodcoopcooks.org/rsvp or scan the QR code.
Find us on Instagram @*foodcoopcooks*



January 20, 2026

Kick off your culinary adventures in the new year with mushrooms! Join us with guest chef and squad member William Doran to talk all things mushroom on Wednesday, January 21, at 7:30 p.m. as part of the Coop's monthly cooking series. William will demonstrate three different ways to prepare mushrooms, including an oyster mushroom ragout with polenta and a mushroom pâté.

The class will be in-person at the Coop *and* streamed online via Zoom. For in-person attendees, there is a ten-dollar cash-only fee taken at the door to help cover the cost of ingredients. Attendees will get to interact with the chef and sample the recipes! (Both recipes mentioned above are vegan.)

ABOUT THE CHEF

William Doran is a licensed architect, educator and food writer based in Brooklyn, NY. He was born and raised in New Orleans and has spent most of his life stoking a passion for cooking and bringing people together through food. In 2021, he started publishing recipes and food stories at adventurouscooks.com and began hosting virtual and in-person cooking classes the following year. His passions for food and architecture brought him to New York City in 2022, when he also joined the Coop—and subsequently the Cooking Squad. William publishes a free quarterly newsletter and you can also find him on social media as @adventurouscooks.

RSVP, PARTICIPATE, AND FOLLOW

Sign up for classes, download recipes, and find shopping lists to cook along from home at foodcoopcooks.org. As classes are added, they will show up on the Squad's home page. Check back regularly for updates! Follow the Cooking Squad on Instagram at @foodcoopcooks for more content including shopping sessions with guest chefs!

TEACH A CLASS

Though cooperation is at the heart of the Coop's mission, so is food! The Cooking Committee is looking for guest chefs to share their food expertise, traditions, and special treats. Members receive FTOP credit for preparing and delivering classes. Tell us what you want to teach!

FEBRUARY CONCERT SERIES

January 20, 2026

SEASON 2, 6TH CONCERT!!

THE PSFC CONCERT SERIES

FEATURING FOUR ACTS



PORTERFIELD - FT. OR BAREKET AND INES VELASCO

TERESA ROSAS - ALAN GRUBNER - SAM WEBER TRIO

NOA FORT

ZOSHA WARPEHA & JONATHAN KAISER

FRIDAY,
FEB 13, 2026
DOORS 6 PM
SHOW 6:30; \$10

SHAPESHIFTER LAB
837 UNION ST,
BROOKLYN, NY 11215

Get your
tickets here!



January 20, 2026

Join us for the next Park Slope Food Coop Concert Series on Friday, February 13, at ShapeShifter Lab.

Buy Tickets Here!

Set 1: 6:30 PM - 6:50 PM

PORTERFIELD — FT. OR BAREKET AND INES VELASCO

Joined by Or Bareket and Ines Velasco, Jacob Aviner leads this trio in a new batch of never-before-heard songs, reimagining his band Porterfield. More info:

- Jacob Aviner — vocals, electric guitar
- Or Bareket — upright bass
- Ines Velasco — drumset

Set 2: 7:00 PM - 7:20 PM

THERESA ROSAS - ALAN GRUBNER - SAM WEBER TRIO

Trio project focused on songs, compositions, and improvisations.

- Theresa Rosas — piano, vocals
- Alan Grubner — violin
- Sam Weber — bass

Set 3: 7:30 PM - 7:50 PM

NOA FORT

Solo set featuring Noa Fort's original songs.

- Noa Fort — voice, piano

Set 4: 8:00 PM - 8:20 PM

ZOSHA WARPEHA & JONATHAN KAISER

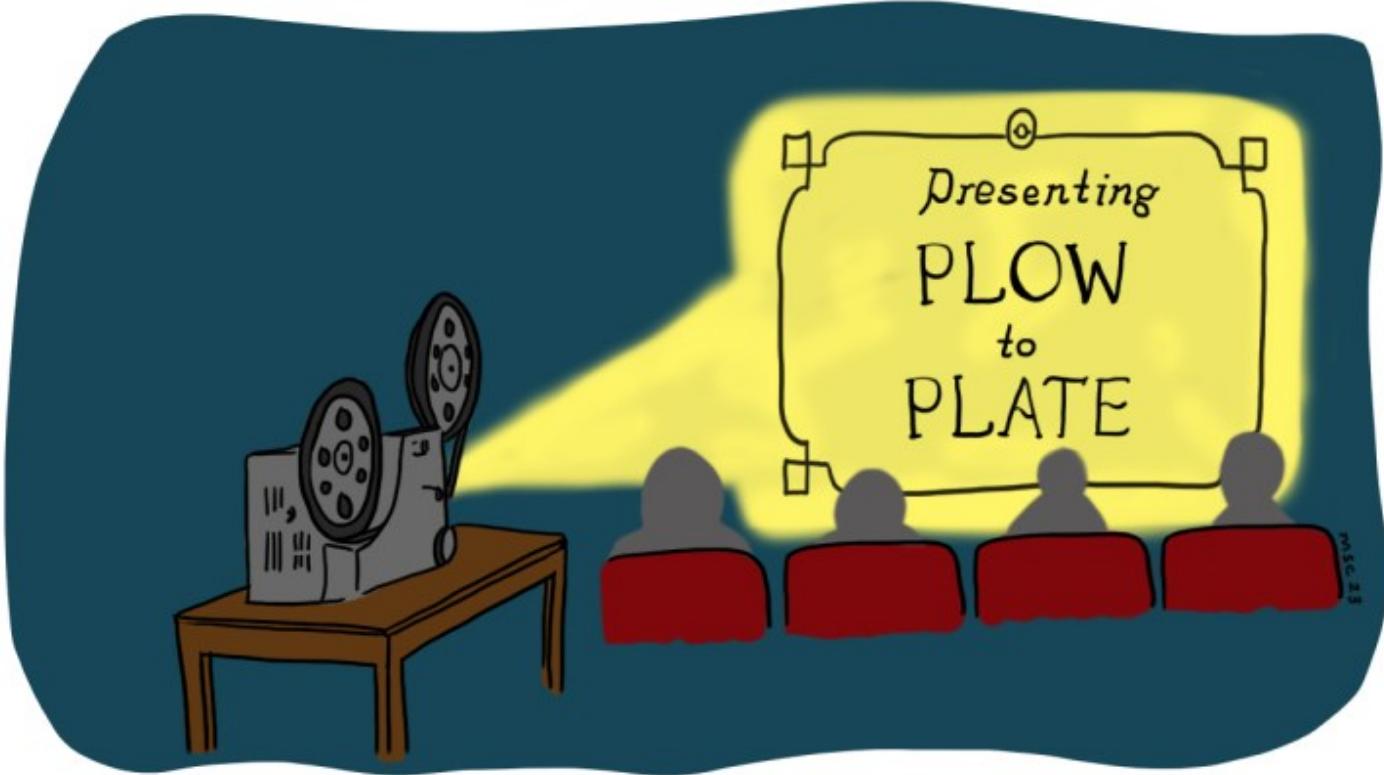
New atmospheric duo exploring textural, drone-based, and improvised spaces for har-danger d'amore and cello.

- Zosha Warpeha — hardanger d'amore
- Jonathan Kaiser — cello

Buy Tickets Here!

PLOW TO PLATE PRESENTS: RODENTS OF UNUSUAL SIZE

January 20, 2026



January 20, 2026

By Adam Rabiner

Rodents of Unusual Size begins on Delacroix Island, Louisiana. A street sign on the left prominently announces: "Dead End." Another, on the right: "End of the World." But despite the area's isolation and hardship, many die-hard Cajuns like fisherman Thomas Gonzalez refuse to leave this marshy swampland south of New Orleans. There is even an invasive species of giant rodent, originally from South America, known as the nutria, which positively adores the place. The film is the story of humans and nutria living together in an uneasy peace and equilibrium that constantly threatens to tip one way or another.

The nutria, a giant rat with two yellow buckteeth and webbed feet weighing up to 20 pounds, first came to Louisiana in the 1930s, when furriers transported them from Argentina, to breed with muskrats for their fur. This enterprise was initially lucrative. Fatefully, though, the nutria is thought to have escaped from their cages during a storm. They adapted well to the bayou, and hunters and trappers kept the population

in relative balance. However, in the 1980s, the animal-rights movement against fur caused the bottom to fall out of the market, and pelts lost their value. With no one hunting the nutria any longer, zero predators except alligators, and the ability to create a new litter every three months, the nutria population exploded from five to 20 million. In short order, they began eating up the swamps and causing massive harm to the delicate ecosystems, which went from verdant green vegetation to brown mud flats.

Louisiana created the Nutria Control Program, which offered a five-dollar bounty for each nutria tail turned in, with no limits. This program provided a lifeline to many local fishermen and fisherwomen. While most nutria hunters have no problem with exchanging tails for pelts, Bimbo Phillips, a native American from the Atakapa-Ishak tribe, continues the tradition of using the pelts for coats as his ancestors did.

One of the essential questions posed by *Rodents of Unusual Size* is what economic value, if any, can we extract from the nutria today? Phillips may be on to something. *Righteous Fur* is a company whose mission is to bring designer nutria fur clothing to the contemporary fashion market. Their goal is to raise public awareness about coastal restoration while providing an eco-friendly alternative to traditional fur.

Louisiana has also promoted cooking and eating nutria. The government commissioned a study and has hired local and celebratory chefs to make nutria sausages, Slim Jims, hot tamales, gumbo and other locally popular dishes. The nutria has a lot going for it. The animal is a vegetarian that only eats roots; has a clean, grass-fed diet; is lean and is reputedly tasty. One chef said it is an excellent alternative to chicken breast and described eating it “like tasting Louisiana.” That is quite an endorsement. However, the animal’s aesthetics are a significant strike against it, hurting its promotion. After all, it looks like a giant rat. The nutria, in this respect, faces some of the same challenges that edible insects do in terms of mainstream acceptance among your average American consumer.

Another question raised by the film is how we should view this invader on our shores.

It is indisputably destructive to the environment. Though cute, especially when they are babies, nutria's aggressive nature toward everyone but their owners and high maintenance requirements make them poor pets. Yet they have been Louisianans' neighbors for about 100 years, and people there have become fond of them. They were the mascot for the New Orleans Zephyrs, a now-defunct minor league baseball team. The Louisiana Fur and Wildlife Festival features a nutria-skinning competition and a Fur Queen Beauty Contest. Some wealthy homeowners of a local golf community routinely steal and tamper with the traps set by the pest control specialist. They believe that showing kindness is a good example for children. Love them or leave them, the nutria is here to stay.

***Rodents of Unusual Size* Tuesday, February 10th, 2026 @ 7:00 p.m.**

Screening link: Visit our Upcoming Events page

To be added to our mailing list for future screening announcements, please email a request to plowtoplate@gmail.com.

Note: From October 2025 through March 2026, Plow to Plate is exclusively featuring Grasshopper Film documentaries. *Rodents of Unusual Size* is a Tilapia Film distributed by Grasshopper Film.

Adam Rabiner lives in Ditmas Park with his wife, Dina.

THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE EDUCATION SQUAD (ITES) REPORT

January 20, 2026



January 20, 2026

By M.J. Williams for the ITES

The International Trade Education Squad (ITES) seeks Coop member involvement in two exciting opportunities.

WERE YOU AT THE 1999 WTO PROTESTS?

Did you participate in the World Trade Organization (WTO) demonstrations in Seattle in 1999? Would you be willing to share your personal experiences and reflections with us? Your stories and commentary could enrich educational resources the ITES is developing in conjunction with the release of the new, documentary film "WTO/99," produced, in part, by PSFC member Debra McClutchy.

If you would like to share your experiences from the WTO protests, please email us

at coopites@gmail.com no later than January 30, 2026.

JOIN OUR SQUAD!

The ITES is also seeking new members. We work collaboratively to inform Coop members about trade deals, tariffs and related trade issues that shape our politics, impact our lives and affect the Coop. Squad members take on tasks that reflect their individual interests and abilities as to international trade and together contribute to ITES's educational resources and programs.

The ITES meets every six to eight weeks via Zoom when we discuss upcoming tasks, such as writing articles for the *Linewaiters' Gazette*, running social media, inviting guest speakers for community forums, organizing other educational programs and preparing discussions for presentation to the GM.

The ITES does not require its members have any previous experience in the subject area. We are looking for committed individuals who are interested in sticking up for working people, protecting the environment, calling out systemic corporate abuse, and working cooperatively and creatively to educate their fellow Coop members.

If you are interested in joining the ITES, please email us at coopites@gmail.com.

Please also follow us on Bluesky at: @psfc-trade.bsky.social.

HYBRID MEETINGS ARE COMING. CHILDCARE MIGHT BE NEXT

January 20, 2026

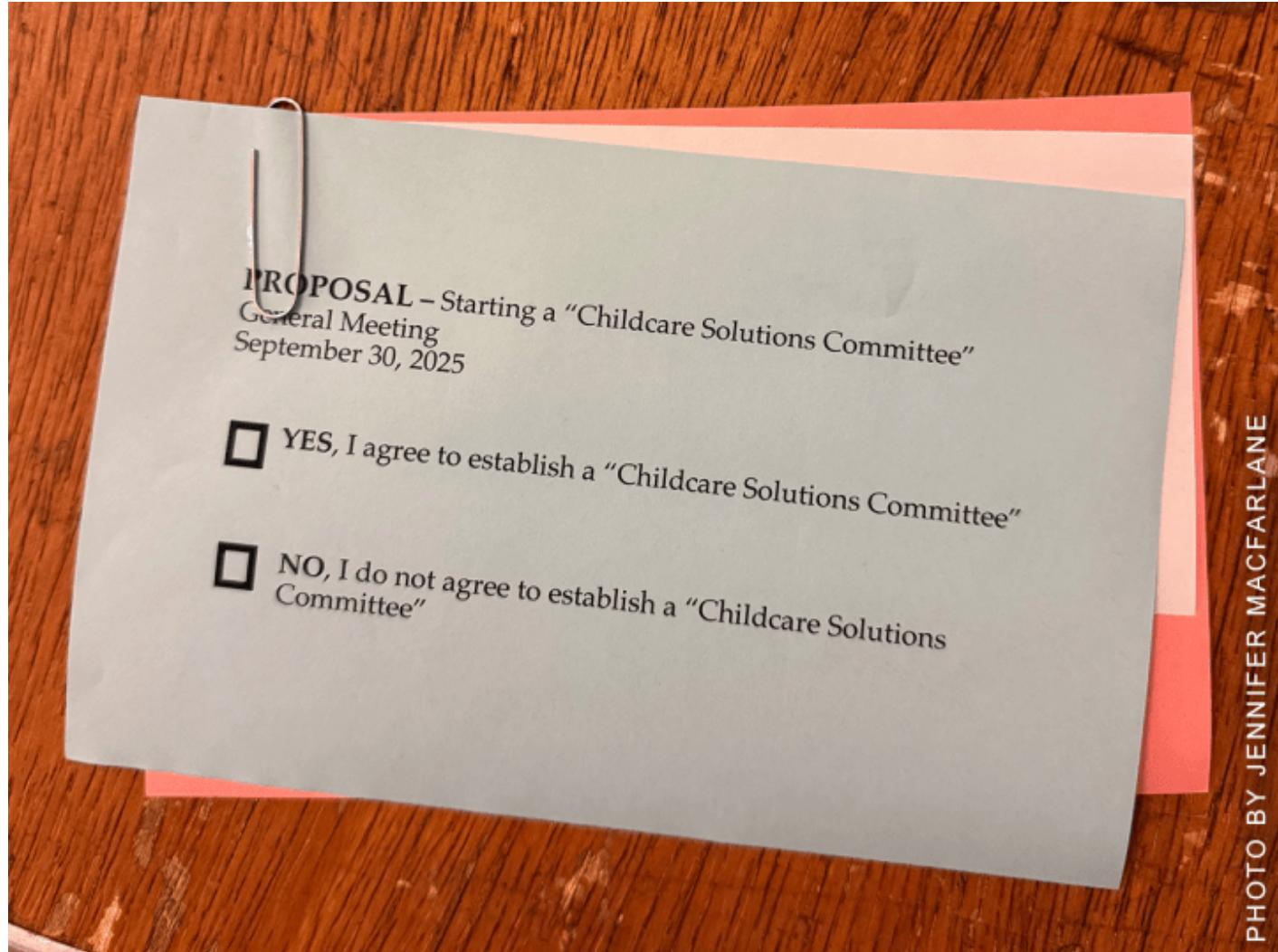


PHOTO BY JENNIFER MACFARLANE

NOTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER GENERAL MEETING

October 28, 2025

By Susannah Jacob

On a mild, early autumn night, the Prospect Park Picnic House held an attentive audience for the Coop's September General Meeting. During the open forum, Coop Secretary Elizabeth Tobier both resigned and suspended her membership in protest of political activism on the Coop board. The members approved overwhelmingly a proposal to start a committee to explore equitable alternatives to now-defunct, in-house childcare. The Board of Directors voted to approve hybrid GM meetings, on the basis of a simple majority vote in favor that occurred this past summer.

OPEN FORUM

Seven members took the microphone during the meeting's open forum. Board member Tim Hospodar asked the General Coordinators to speak to the "topics of harassment, violence, exposure, and liability." He asked the GCs to address harassment of members who book venues for meetings, how to address meeting attendees who come without scanning their IDs, and how to address harassment board members have received via email throughout 2025.

Mitty Owens, a Coop member for 20 years, spoke in favor of hybrid meetings, as a busy parent and nonprofit social justice manager. He affirmed his belief that hybrid meetings would foster greater participation and participation.

Gus Vianna-Biehler, a member since the 90s, spoke to suggest that while Coop prices may be lower than those at stores like Union Market, they are still expensive. He asked that the new board look into opportunities to offer discounts for New Yorkers like himself who are retired, on fixed incomes and coping with medical expenses.

Carly Benkov, a member for 15 years, spoke for the first time at an open forum to ask for further information about recurring shifts—how many slots are available total, and how many people are on the waitlist to join. She expressed interest in the Coop opening a greater number of recurring shifts for people who would like to join them.

Elizabeth Tobier, a member of the Coop for 35 years, and who has served as Secretary for a combined 13 years (2002-2010, 2020-2025), read aloud an impassioned letter that she also submitted to this issue of the *Linewaiters' Gazette*, which announced her resignation. She added that she will also be suspending her Coop membership.

Charlie Rogers of the Chair Committee read a note from present member Barbara Mazor, who requested her contribution be read. Her message "invited everyone in the Coop to take a break from their activities on BDS [the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement] throughout [sic] the end of the year."

PRICES ARE UP 25% SINCE 2019. MEANWHILE, TRANSACTIONS ARE DOWN AND MEMBERS ARE BUYING FEWER ITEMS PER SHOP.

A note from member Noah Potter went unread, because a rule requires members' presence in order to have a note read aloud, and Potter was absent. It was suggested that Potter submit his message to the *Linewaiters' Gazette*.

Board member Keyian Vafai asked how products are chosen through the online product suggestion form.



GENERAL COORDINATORS REPORTS

General Manager and Treasurer Joe Szladek addressed questions raised during the open forum. He explained that thousands of product suggestion forms are submitted through the Member Services website, and they are read by every staff person and taken into consideration without strict criteria. Buyers consider if the proposed product fits Coop standards, fills a gap, is local, good quality and whether it's affordable—or perhaps offers a more affordable version of something already being offered at the Coop.

Szladek described the Coop's existing income-based plan, which offers a reduced markup for members on income assistance—a 21% markup instead of the standard 25% markup.

On the subject of harassment, he confirmed that members attending meetings are required to scan in—he walked into the meeting without scanning, and was called back to scan in. He also addressed friction at the Coop, in General Meetings and in the pages of the *Gazette*. “There’s a lot of tension. We feel it here. Staff and other committees have been on the receiving end of a lot of really intense and sometimes quite nasty emails. It’s very concerning,” Szladek said. He advised members seeking to lodge complaints to go to the Dispute Resolution Committee, which has a process to handle complaints. He said he was sorry to learn that Elizabeth Tobier is resigning.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Szladek presented a slideshow detailing the Coop's financial health. In general, costs are rising across the board. He reported that sales are up 9.2% in the first 32 weeks over the same period in the last year. Expenses, from payroll to insurance, however, went up 12.8% in the same period. Net income this fiscal year is negative at -\$457,000. He pointed out that that negative number may reflect summer sales that dwindle during months when members take vacations, and the fall could likely bring an uptick in sales. He reported that the Coop is looking for ways to manage rising costs, including by lowering the cost of accepting debit cards through a new service

provider.

Szladek informed the members that prices are up 25% across the board, since 2019. He also reported that transactions are down, and members are buying fewer items in each transaction. These shifts may reflect members who live further from the Coop, and thus shop there less frequently, as well as inflation.

GENERAL COORDINATOR REPORT

General Coordinator Matt Hoagland offered some numbers and perspective around recurring shifts and the waitlist. Recurring shifts are 50% of the work currently available at the Coop and around 50% of all recurring openings are filled (leaving 50% of recurring options available, which is over 3,000 shifts).

Using checkout and 6:00 p.m. evening shifts as the base example for popular shifts and stocking as an example of currently available recurring shifts, he reported there were no checkout or 6:00 p.m. recurring shifts available, but there were a lot of stocking recurring shifts with exception to M-Th, 7:30 p.m.

COOP CHEESEMONGER YURI WEBER WAS COMMENDED FOR BUYING A PALETTE OF GRUYERE FROM WISCONSIN, AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE LONGSTANDING GRUYERE FROM SWITZERLAND.

The highest demand for a task on the waitlist is checkout and the most popular time is 6 pm, both by significant numbers. Checkout on Monday through Thursday at 6:00 p.m. is by far the most desired shift, but it only accounts for roughly 2% of total work done at the Coop. With a near 50/50 split of those shifts between recurring and freelance members, currently around 1% of the membership has access to 50% of the most desired work. The Coop staff has been fielding requests for more recurring shifts, though the challenge is that members tend to want the same few slots.

General Coordinator Elinor Astrinsky made a report concerning the impact of tariffs on products carried by the Coop. She explained that distributors have been trying to run down inventories and avoid shifting costs to consumers as long as possible. New shipments portend the end of that era. Health and beauty product prices have already increased between 5 and 30 percent. Swiss knives, coffee, Vietnamese shrimp, Australian and New Zealand lamb, and Swiss cheese are all examples of imported products with prices set to rise. “I think the most important part is that our buyers are consistently and constantly looking for alternatives, trying to get better deals, looking for more distributors, looking for people who will give us volume discounts, looking for new relationships.” Astrinsky complimented Yuri Weber, the Coop’s cheese buyer, for buying a palette of Gruyere from Wisconsin as an alternative to the longstanding Swiss Gruyere. The new Gruyere is being sold alongside the existing one, and Astrinsky suggested that Coop members sample it.

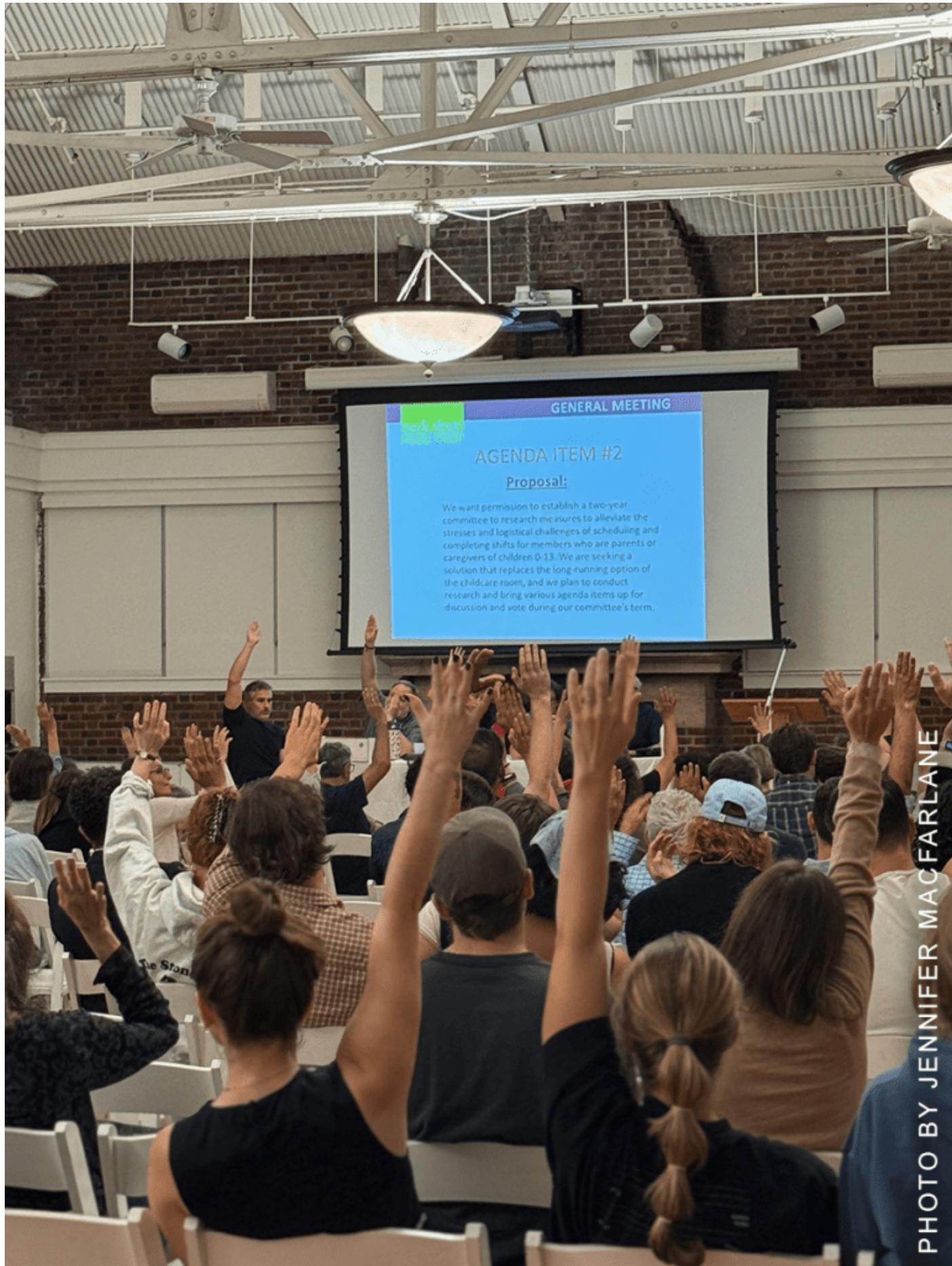


PHOTO BY JENNIFER MACFARLANE

AGENDA ITEM ONE: FINANCIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

In the first agenda item, member Michael Freedman-Schnapp presented his previously-circulated idea for a financial advisory committee made up of members that would “help support the Coop during a period of transition and financial uncertainty that exists in the grocery industry across the country.” He cited tariffs, the pandemic, and inflation as reasons to create a delegated work committee of members with financial expertise to collaborate with the Coop’s financial team. Members queried and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of this proposal.

AGENDA ITEM TWO: PROPOSAL TO START A “CHILDCARE SOLUTIONS COMMITTEE” TO EX- PLORE EQUITABLE OPTIONS IN PLACE OF IN-HOUSE CHILDCARE

Coop member Brian Russ proposed a two-year committee to research “measures to alleviate the stresses and logistical challenges of scheduling and completing shifts for members who are parents or caregivers of children under 13.” Russ has been endeavoring since 2022 to replace the former in-house childcare the Coop offered to parents while they shop. While increased insurance rates made restoring the previous arrangement cost-prohibitive despite widespread support from members, Russ proposed a committee to formulate alternatives. Membership Coordinator Jana Cunningham spoke to discuss her concern that the proposal is underdeveloped, and lacks details about the size of the committee or its goal. GC Elinoar Astrinsky motioned to amend the “two-year committee” to a “one-year committee,” an amendment that was almost unanimously adopted. The proposal was approved 101 to 25.

AGENDA ITEM THREE: ELECTION FOR THE HEARING ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE (HAC)

HAC member Dominique Bravo introduced HAC candidate Matt Cecil. Matt Cecil addressed the meeting, and was approved for a three-year term on the HAC, 104 to 12.

AGENDA ITEM 4: ELECTION FOR HEARING OFFICER COMMITTEE (HOC)

HOC member Catherine McCaw summarized the work of the HOC Committee. She then spoke on behalf of Andrea Hirshman, an HOC member who was not present but was up for reelection. HOC member Marian Hertz spoke on behalf of Julie Vasady Kovacs, who was also up for reelection. HOC members Marian Hertz and Liam Malanaphy, HOC members also up for reelection, both spoke on their own behalf. Hertz was reelected 108 to 8. Hirshman was reelected 104 to 10. Vasady Kovacs was reelected 104 to 10. Malanaphy was reelected 108 to 9.

PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

Coop Secretary Elizabeth Tobier presented the minutes from the July 29 and August 26 General Meetings. The former was approved and the latter was approved as amended.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' MEETING

During the Board of Directors' meeting, the board moved to accept the membership's advice on Agenda Item 884, a proposal for hybrid General Meetings. The item received 66.43 % votes in favor through a referendum vote. The notion had previously been put forth as a by-law amendment. As a proposal, however, it required only a simple majority vote to pass, which it received. In fact, the proposal received more votes than any in Coop history. Board members Tess Brown-Lavoie, Tim Hospodar, Keyian Vafai, and Brandon West voted in favor of accepting the membership's advice. Board member Lynn Husum voted against. GM and board member Joe Szladek abstained, reading a statement explaining his decision. He said, "I want to be clear on my position here: while I support the members' vote, I do not support this type of Board action." He summarized his views: "I respect the members' majority vote for hybrid; I recognize the Board's legal authority to act, though far outside of Coop norms; I am deeply concerned about again breaking 50 years of precedent; I am equally concerned about hybrid becoming entangled with divisive issues and forming the foundation for future governance; and I believe protecting norms and process is essential to

the long-term health of the Coop." Szladek added that while he disagreed with how the process unfolded, he will respect its outcome, and help implement the change carefully and fairly.

All board members voted in favor to accept the members' advice of the Hearing Administration Committee and Hearing Officer Committee Elections held earlier in the evening.

Susannah Jacob is a native Texan and PhD student of US history. She takes pride in her proficient operation of the slotted, plastic bag-taper machine in the Coop's bulk department.

IT'S PUT YOUR CHILD TO WORK DAY EVERY DAY AT THE COOP

January 20, 2026

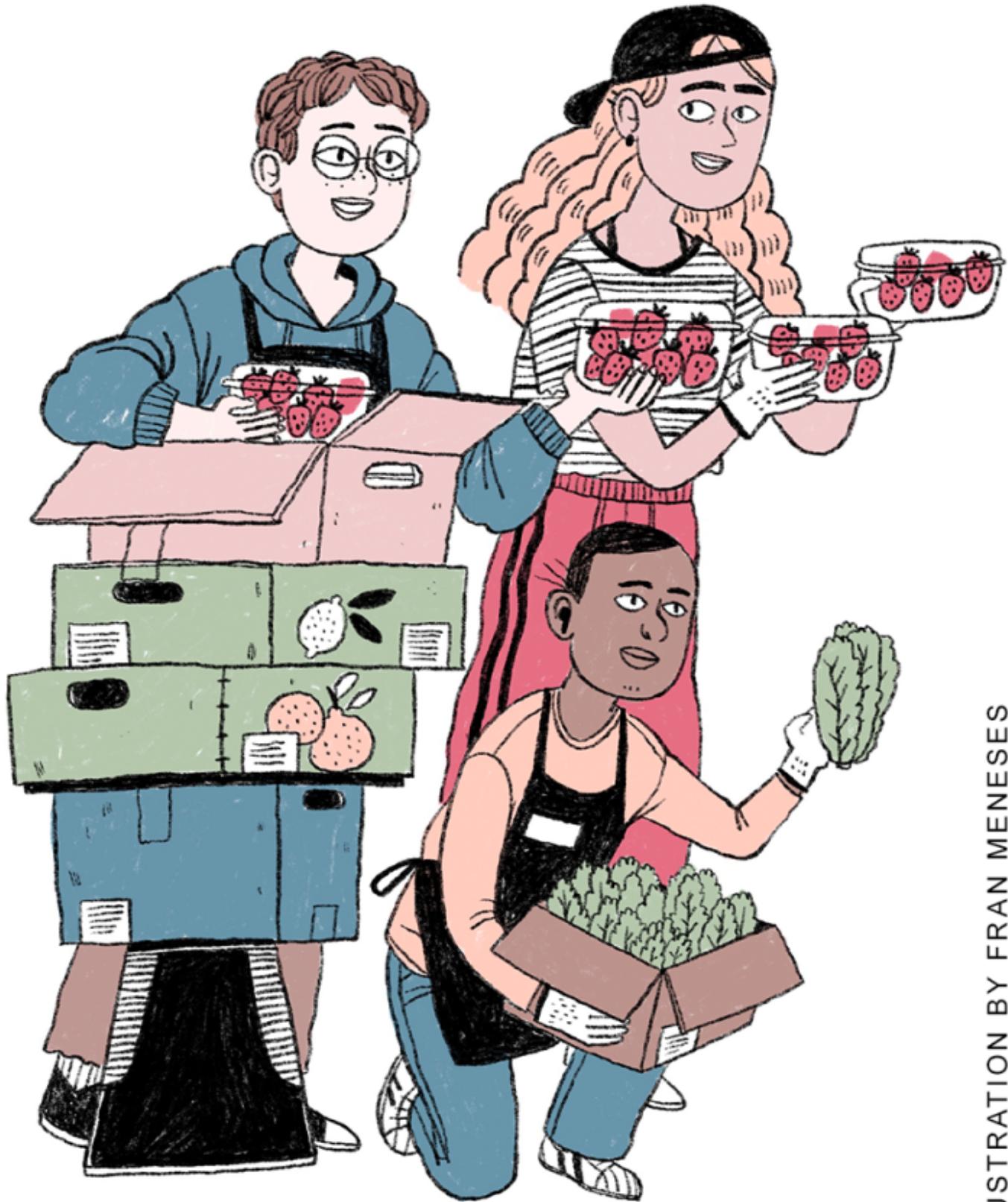


ILLUSTRATION BY FRAN MENESSES

YOUNG LABORERS DEVELOP WORK ETHIC AND EARN POCKET MONEY—AND THEIR PARENTS’ ETERNAL AFFECTION

October 28, 2025

By *Liz Welch*

My daughter just turned 14 this past September, and we've already begun exploring what kind of work experience she'd like to try now that she's legally allowed to work in New York State. Up until now, she has earned money caring for neighbors' cats and, on occasion, selling her artwork. I once mentioned babysitting as a possible teen job, to which she quickly replied: "Um, no thank you. I prefer cats to small children."

Fair enough, but not much of a résumé builder.

And then one day I spotted my dear friend Luise's teenage son Anatole stocking shelves at the Coop. "What are you doing?" I asked him.

He flashed his megawatt smile and said, "Working a shift for my parents."

I was flooded with thoughts—ranging from 'his parents are brilliant,' to, 'Wait, does the Coop *allow* this?'—which Anatole must have intuited, as he added: "When Bella turns 14, she can work here too."

Considering my husband just did a weekday 5:30 a.m. shift to avoid household suspension, I thought, "This is a triple-win!" She gets work experience, we get credit—and a break from the constant nail-biting brink of suspension—and she becomes a more conscious and connected member of a community where "work for food" takes on so many layered meanings.

My next question was, "How do we sign up?"

I spoke with Membership Coordinator Jana Cunningham who explained, "Any child

age 14 to 17 can work at the Coop with working papers—which need to be on file at the Coop. They can get these from the guidance counselor at their school (see “how” in sidebar below), bring them to the Coop along with a parent or guardian and we issue a card that says ‘working papers on file’ so we know they can legally work.”

Once again, I thought, Anatole’s parents truly are brilliant. And then I wondered, how many other adults with working-age children are aware of this?

“The policy has existed since the beginning of the Coop,” Cunningham says. “Most parents don’t seem to know about it.”

THIS IS A TRIPLE-WIN! SHE GETS WORK EXPERIENCE, WE GET CREDIT—AND A BREAK FROM THE CONSTANT NAIL-BITING BRINK OF SUSPENSION

Currently, there are about 230 minors with work papers on file at the Coop. “We mostly have kids coming to work in the summertime,” Cunningham adds. “September to June, fewer kids work.”

Anatole is a high school senior, and veteran “working-papers-on-file” Coop member. Now 17, he started doing shifts at age 14—and has since clocked more than 20.

He says that he enjoys the work. “You meet so many interesting people at the Coop,” he tells me. “And you learn a lot about them by what is in their shopping cart.”

When probed, he admits that this was entirely his parents’ idea. The incentive? “Snacks,” he says. “If I work my shift and shop for the family, I’m rewarded with complete freedom when it comes to buying snacks.”

I spoke to another young worker named William who got his working papers in spring 2025, when he was still in eighth grade. Both of his parents are school teachers who

thought having him clock shifts would be a good way to learn about responsibility, and William says “getting good work experience” was his reason for signing on. He has worked six shifts thus far and says he likes the Coop’s overall “vibe.”

“The customers are also workers, so everyone has filled the same roles,” he explains. “Knowing that makes me feel secure—no one is looking down on you.”



Cunningham says the staff love working with young people. “They’re more willing, even if they’re not as capable! They’re excited to do anything 99.9% of the time.”

There are rules pertaining to what minors can and cannot do. For instance, they must stay on the Coop property, which means they can’t do cart returns. Nor can they work in the basement, or at the checkout. “We don’t want them handling beer,” Cunningham explains. “It’s not a NYS requirement! But that’s unique to us.”

Max, who is currently in tenth grade, has been working for more than a year. When he signed up, his mother Makela came in to work his first shift with him.

'IT'S A PREVIEW TO WORKING MY FIRST JOB,' A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SAYS. 'PLUS, I KNOW MY WAY AROUND THE PLACE BECAUSE I'VE BEEN GOING SINCE I WAS LITTLE.'

"We did a receiving shift together," she explains. "The receiving coordinator said it was great to do it that way."

"It's a preview to working my first job," Max says. "Plus, I know my way around the place because I've been going since I was little."

Makela pays Max to do shifts as she and her wife view the work as incredibly helpful for their family. "He takes it seriously," she says.

Max says he has learned that he likes working with people. "On my second shift, the receiving coordinator said there was another kid who was working for the first time," Max says. "He said, 'Show him the ropes!'" Max did—and declares, "He was a natural!"

READ BEFORE DELEGATING:

If there's a child aged 14 to 17 in your household, here is what you need in order for them to work your Coop shift:

- **Fill out a NY Application for Employment Certificate** found in the guidance counselor's office at your child's school. If your child is homeschooled, go to your zoned school. The application can also be downloaded from The New York State Department of Education.
- To complete the application, your child needs a **birth certificate** as proof of age

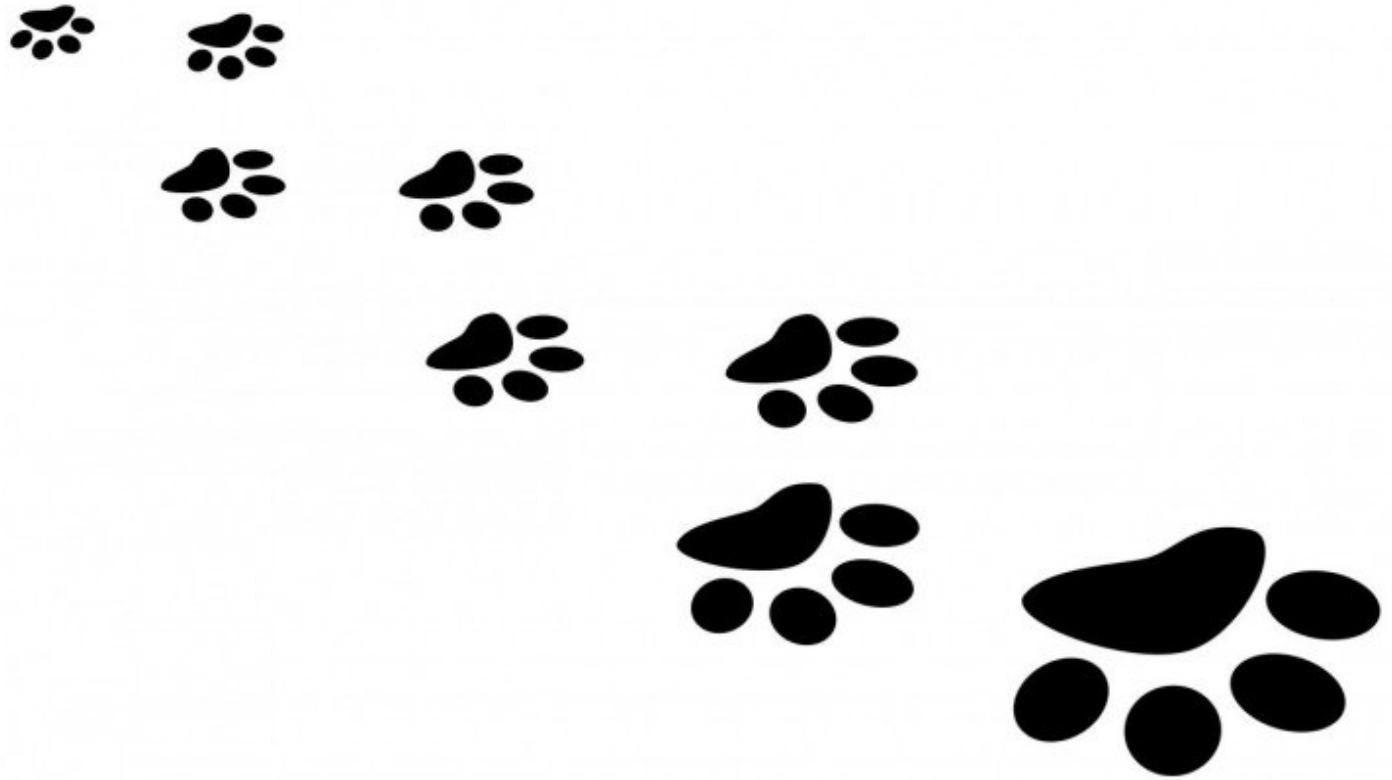
and a **doctor's note** stating that the child is fit for employment.

- Once the application is approved by the counselor, the parent must accompany the child to the Coop to **get the child's own dedicated Coop card and number**. Prior to this fall, the minor's card had the name and photo of one of their Coop member parents or guardians along with a "work papers on file" declaration. That policy has just recently changed so the child can now get their own personal card, with their photo on it. This allows the child to both work shifts and shop. On that note, if your child has an old card with your photo on it, please have them come get a new card with their photo.
- The child must **bring their card when they work**—as the "work papers on file" identification makes their labor legal in the state of NY. As for their Coop "committee" it will be designated as CHILD.
- Important note:** any child of a Coop member is entitled to shop at the Coop, with or without working papers. If you would like your child to shop independently, bring them to the office to get their own Coop card.
- For those who want to work, once the child's paperwork is on file at the Coop, the adult they're "working for" can **sign them up for shifts** using the adult's number.
- Once a minor turns 18**, they can continue working shifts for their household as they're no longer required to do their own work shifts as they had historically had to do. That new rule was passed in 2023, as it was too difficult for kids who went to college to keep up with their Coop work commitment. Now, if a college-aged kid (between 18 and 22) lives at home, they must *join* the Coop as a member, contribute the \$100 investment fee—either all at once or via a payment plan—and join the work-exempt "Youth Committee."
- Important caveat:** the "Youth Committee" simply means the member is between the ages of 18 and 22. It does not require shifts. Also, it does not require that the "youth" live with Coop members. So anyone aged 18 to 21 can join the PSFC, get a membership card that designates them as "Youth Committee", and therefore shop without working shifts. When that person turns 22, they are required to start working shifts.

Liz Welch is a journalist, memoirist, and book collaborator.

A DOG DAY AFTERNOON AT THE COOP

January 20, 2026



A PACK OF COOP CANINES SAT AND WAGGED FOR MEMBER-PHOTOGRAPHER JACKSON KRULE

Words by Anita Bushell and Photography by Jackson Krule

October 28, 2025

They sit or they lie down on the sidewalk, patiently waiting for their human to return.

If the timing is right, they meet others like them during Canine Rush Hours (after school, when parents and their children stop by for a quick shop with their dogs in tow; or when people grab a few things before dinner while taking dogs for their evening walk). “Sometimes there is a whole pack out there!” says Elly Dittmar, Membership Coordinator and dog admirer.

A beat-up aluminum dog bowl lives by the bench near the entrance. Sometimes a walking shift worker fills it; other times a dog owner is moved to do so. It’s not a scientific system, and there’s only one rule: Dogs must be secured to the bench, and away from the door. “I think it would be great if we could add a dog shift,” said a Coop member named Ronna, whose dog Shelby accompanies her to and from the Coop. “Everyone would want that job!”



ALL TIED UP

“The Coop is the only place I would ever tie her up. She’s safe.” - Ronna, Shelby’s

PHOTO BY JACKSON KRULE

owner



AT YOUR SERVICE

"Millie likes coming to the Coop if it's not too crowded. She has some human friends who she's gotten to know. She also knows the aisle where the treats are!" - Rebecca, Millie's owner

PHOTO BY JACKSON KRULE



FIERCE ATTACHMENTS

"I hope he doesn't take too long. I wonder what they sell in there..." - Miranda, waiting for her owner

Anita Bushell is a freelance writer and native New Yorker. She recently published One Way to Whitefish, a novel.

Jackson Krule is a New York based photographer. He graduated from The Tisch School of the Arts at New York University in 2014. He is currently the Senior Visual Producer at The Players' Tribune.

PHOTO BY JACKSON KRULE

CHAIR COMMITTEE LOOKING FOR NEW MEMBERS!

January 20, 2026



ILLUSTRATION BY EVA SCHICKER

October 28, 2025

The Chair Committee administers the monthly General Meetings of the Coop. The Chair Committee oversees the execution of meeting agendas as set by the Agenda Committee.

We seek members with extensive experience in developing, maintaining and facilitating hybrid virtual and in-person meetings. Selected members may either serve on an ad hoc tech committee to design hybrid meetings, and/or stay on as permanent members of the Chair Committee to run the virtual component of GMs.

Applicants should have at least a minimum of three years of Coop membership before applying for this committee, experience working shifts at the Coop and excellent attendance.

The Committee meets monthly at the General Meeting. Additional work and meetings outside the scheduled time will be required.

If you have the relevant work experience and Coop tenure and are interested in serving the Coop in this capacity, please email your resume and a letter explaining your interest in and qualifications for this important Committee to psfcchair@gmail.com. Please put “Chair Committee Application” in the subject line.

Deadline for Applications: November 15, 2025

Diversity Statement: We seek an application pool that reflects the diversity of the Coop's membership.

NEWLY FORMED FAMILY SUPPORT COMMITTEE LOOKING FOR MEMBERS

January 20, 2026



October 28, 2025

The Family Support Committee was voted into existence at the September 30, 2025 - General Meeting and now seeks to assemble a dedicated team of diverse members. The goal of the Family Support Committee is to come up with ways to return the Coop to its former, more family-friendly model similar to when childcare was an option for shoppers and those doing their shifts. As a committee, over the course of one year, we plan to survey current members, analyze work slot patterns and collaborate with Coop leadership to introduce new policies that better support families.

We are eager to incorporate a broad range of voices and perspectives, with a particular emphasis on engaging parents, as this committee aims to address their unique needs as they navigate work and parenting.

When the Coop's childcare program ended around the time of Covid, we first fought to bring it back, but due to many outside factors it became nearly impossible to make childcare a part of the Coop again.

Scheduling, managing and completing shifts is no doubt a challenge for any adult with a full-time job; but for working parents, especially those with children aged 0-12, it can be nearly impossible. As members of the Coop for over 17 years, Brian Russ and Lauren Belski, who proposed this committee, have seen the frustrations parents went through when the Coop ended its childcare program. We know many families who had no choice but to leave the Coop completely.

The Family Support Committee is seeking 4-8 new members and members will be awarded workslot credits for their work. Meetings will take place every six weeks and be conducted either online or in person when possible. Members will be allocated specific tasks, and will be required to conduct research or compile findings outside of meeting times.

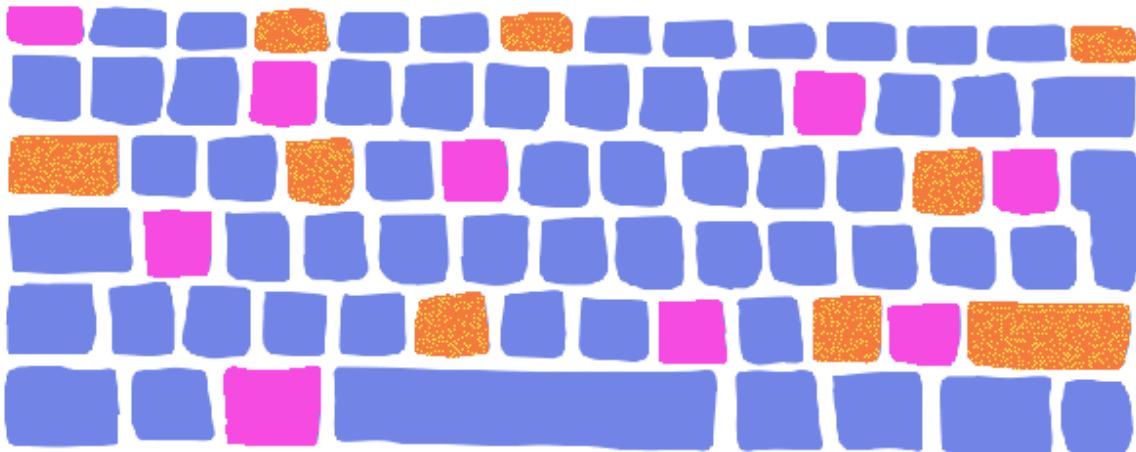
In one year's time we aim to report back to Coop leadership team with a solid four to five actionable changes in policy that will relieve the stresses of being a Coop member while also being a working parent.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Family Support Committee, please send an email to Lauren Belski (lauren.belski@gmail.com) and Brian Russ (bruss81@gmail.com). In your message, please explain your family situation, why you would be interested in joining this committee and a few ideas you may already have brewing.

OCTOBER 28, 2025

January 20, 2026

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



CARRYING OUT THE WILL OF THE MEMBERSHIP

Dear members,

I write as an individual board member, not on behalf of the Board.

During the September General Meeting, a majority of the Board voted to enable hy-

brid General Meetings to fulfill our mandate to carry out the will of the membership while remaining in legal compliance.

Here is the background: Members discussed the proposal for hybrid meetings (#884) in September 2024, sharing enthusiasm, support, concerns and technical questions. While many proposals are voted on shortly after they're discussed, this vote was delayed. General Coordinators claimed they needed a larger venue and couldn't secure one. They ignored recommendations by Agenda Committee and board members, including holding a meeting virtually. In an unprecedented stalemate, the Board was unable to receive the will of the membership through normal mechanisms. Joe Holtz called this a "governance crisis."

At the April 2025 GM, the Board voted to enable all members to vote on Hybrid via electronic ballot (a referendum). Holtz told the authors of #884 that their measure must be a bylaws amendment, which requires a two-thirds majority to pass. However, the legal team determined that was unnecessary. A strong majority—66.43% of members—voted for hybrid GMs. The Board had a clear legal duty to carry this out, despite the circuitous route.

I sincerely regret that this process has left some members feeling blindsided. In the future, when board members have discussion items, I recommend we publish them alongside the rest of the GM Agenda, as we did in September.

When normal protocols fail, we must bring our creativity and collaborative ethic to bear. Proving we can work across differences is increasingly important in this political and cultural climate. I hope and believe the Coop can be a rare example in this regard.

In cooperation,

Tess Brown-Lavoie

Vice President, PSFC Board

General Manager Joe Szladek Responds to Brown-Lavoie:

I want to clarify a few points from Tess Brown-Lavoie's letter about hybrid General Meetings (GMs). I appreciate Tess's engagement and commitment to open dialogue.

Tess wrote that the General Coordinators "claimed they needed a larger venue and couldn't secure one." The need for a larger space was not a claim but a practical reality we communicated to the Agenda Committee for months. The proposal became linked to a boycott of Israeli goods through emails circulated by a member group, *PS-FC Members for Palestine*. In one such email, the group wrote: "*Hybrid GMs will also let us finally vote on boycotting Israel.*" Based on experience with previous contentious topics, we knew our regular meeting space could not safely or fairly accommodate the expected turnout.

We did secure two larger venues—City Tech and a church auditorium in Sunset Park. City Tech later canceled after receiving messages from individuals outside the Coop, and the church withdrew after learning of the topic and possible demonstrations. We kept the Agenda Committee informed and continued searching for alternatives.

Tess also wrote that the GCs "ignored recommendations... including holding a meeting virtually." We did not ignore those ideas. The GCs simply do not have the authority to move a GM online outside of a declared public health emergency. That authority rests with the GM and Board, and we have always respected that boundary.

Finally, when the Board voted on April 29, it did still believe a bylaw amendment was required for hybrid GMs. However, on May 23, Joe Holtz informed members that legal counsel had since advised otherwise and that only a simple majority was needed. The Board then had about ten days to adjust the referendum before it was mailed but did not do so.

PROTECTING THE COOP

Dear Coop members:

At the September GM, four of the five elected directors voted to authorize hybrid meetings, tasking the Chair Committee—apparently without its consent—to figure out implementation. This action violated established procedures as well as the trust of the membership. That they have now done this twice should concern all of us. They appear increasingly emboldened to act independently of the General Meeting and at their own discretion.

This situation arose because a group of Coop members believe it is appropriate to exploit the Coop's reputation in support of a movement that seeks to end the existence of the State of Israel.

I suggest three actions to end this quagmire and refocus on what the Coop does best—food.

1. **Hold a referendum** asking the membership:

“Do you want the Coop to continue using its resources to discuss joining the BDS movement?”

Responses: Yes or No.

Issue this referendum without any further explanation or commentary.

2. **Hold a referendum** on the 75% supermajority for boycotts, combining the two related items currently in the agenda queue. Each side may submit a statement of up to 200 words. The arguments have already been published in the *Gazette* and can be restated succinctly.

3. **Hold an open discussion** to brainstorm how to protect the Coop when highly contentious issues are introduced. We currently have no process for vetting agenda

submissions or requiring opposing sides to meet. Our discussion format is inadequate for complex issues: there is no opportunity for a prepared counter-presentation, no control over who speaks, no mechanism to verify information, and no opportunity for rebuttal.

Let's make the Coop fun again.

Sincerely,
Barbara Mazor

IN PROTEST OF BOARD POLITICAL ACTIVISM WITHIN THE COOP

To the Members:

I have been a member of our Coop for 35 years. My current workslot is serving as secretary. My primary activity as Coop secretary is recording General Meeting minutes. Effective upon my submission of the September GM minutes to the Coop office for member circulation, I will resign as secretary in protest of the uncooperative, self-seeking and destructive actions of our current board of directors.

This Board is using the Coop as a political tool and a resume-builder. These people are blind and uncaring about the havoc they wreak. They think they have the right, but they are wrong. We don't have a board to set Coop policy. Membership along with the coordinating staff are sufficient for this purpose.

I will also be suspending my Coop membership.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Tobier