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

April 1, 2025



April 1, 2025

By Nikia Dawkins

At the start of February's General Meeting, Chair David Moss announced that the Dispute Resolution Committee election would be postponed, which left just one issue on the official agenda. It was an issue that elicited excitement, frustration and personal accusations, an issue near and dear to the hearts of many—the Coop bulletin board. During an evening spent discussing hybrid meetings, unexpected financial loss and the search for a new general manager, the most hotly debated issue of the night was where this hypothetical bulletin board should be located.

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

General Manager Joe Holtz presented the Treasurer's Report, in which he compared the financial projections from 2023 to the financial actualities of 2024. It had been projected that the Coop would have a positive gain of $25,000, but the Coop actually lost

$420,000. Sales last year were up 6.68%, but income was down due to a lower markup and higher-than-expected expenses, including health benefits, electronic payment fees, and business insurance. The unexpected portion of the expenses totaled $438,000, with the bulk of that being the unexpected increase in health benefits, which cost $312,000 more than projected. However, despite these negative variances, the Coop still ended the year with $247,000 in positive cash flow. So, overall, there was an increase in cash despite a loss of income. A few members requested more information about the unexpected increase in expenses. Holtz explained that health insurance rates are skyrocketing across the country, adding that the Coop did tweak the employee health plan to save a little money, and now it is more expensive to seek treatment out-of-network. With regard to insurance, he wanted to make sure the Coop could be rebuilt if it were, say, hit by an asteroid or otherwise demolished, so coverage had to be increased. Finally, Holtz shared that he's working on getting into a program that will lower fees for electronic payments and that the newly extended shopping hours will also help improve Coop finances.

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

Valerie Vadala from the Personnel Committee said they were still reviewing candidates for the new General Manager and had whittled the pool down to four people who would be interviewed in the coming weeks. She said that replacing Joe Holtz,

who's been with us for 50 years, won't be easy. They're looking for someone both innovative and with the appropriate level of experience, who can handle the volume and intensity of the Coop.

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

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

Almost everyone seemed excited about the bulletin board—so excited, in fact, that there was a flurry of ideas. For every idea, however, there was an opposing idea, and for every point a counterpoint. The main issues revolved around the location of the bulletin board and the supervision of its content. Two members were extremely concerned that Vafai, who is a vocal supporter of Palestine, would weaponize the bulletin board to promote and organize the BDS movement. Vafai calmly replied, "I won't be running it," which left members arguing over whether anyone needed to run it. As for its location, members were divided on whether it should be located in the corner en-

trance (which is, perhaps, too small for such use), in the stairwell (where it originally existed but which may not meet fire code regulations or provide enough accessibility), just outside the Coop (which could exacerbate the Coop's current litter problem), or in place of the lockers near the entrance. The animated discussion was ultimately ended by Chair Moss because it was "really in the weeds."

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

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

COOP VENDORS WORKING WITH THE WONDERS OF THE NYC ECOSYSTEM

April 1, 2025



April 1, 2025

By Kim Velsey

In April, when everything in Brooklyn is once again blooming and blossoming, native wildflower bouquets grown on Greenpoint rooftop gardens will start arriving at the Coop. Marni Majorelle, a Coop member who runs a landscape design and build company, created the green roofs in 2016 and 2019, using state and city grants, as well as financial support from the buildings' owner Broadway Stages. After the grants ran out she started Untamed Flowers, a cut flower business to help cover the costs of maintaining the 60,000 square feet of gardens. "I was looking to create a business that supports biodiversity and also make something unique and different—no one else grows native wildflowers on rooftops in industrial North Brooklyn and sells them," Majorelle said. The bouquets, which include native plants like wild indigo, golden

alexanders, wild columbine, mountain mint and a smaller variety of sunflowers, have been sold at the Coop since last year.

WE’RE PART OF A COMMUNITY NETWORK AND WE FEEL LIKE IT’S PART OF THE COOP’S MISSION TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY INITIATIVES.









UNTAMED



Many birds and small mammals love Elderberries and it is a host plant for a number of butterflies and moths, most notably the Cecropia moth, North America's largest moth.



Untamed Flowers is one of several small, local vendors who work with the Coop and are doing new and interesting things with the city's ecosystem. Others include Afterlife Ag mushrooms, BK Rot, Greenspace on 4th, Gowanus Nursery and the (no longer very small) Gotham Greens. "We're part of a community network and we feel like it's part of the Coop's mission to support community initiatives," says produce buyer Cecelia Rembert. Also, things grown and produced in the city's ecosystem are often unique, exceptionally fresh and due to the small scale of many operations, not available at other stores.



Marni Majorelle, Coop member and founder of Untamed Flowers

“Small vendors will often come to the Coop because it’s easier to partner with us than to get a toehold in with bigger distributors,” said Rembert. “We have a little more flexibility and bandwidth for managing all the pieces involved. Bigger suppliers are much more systematized, so if your product is unique, it can be hard.”

AFTER LIFE



Fresh Mushrooms
Local, sustainable mushrooms to partner with collab on new recipes/products



Our Partners
Anyone who generates food scraps (restaurants, grocery, distributors, CPG etc)



Scraps Upcycling
We utilize the food scraps to crea
substrate fully sterilized



Mycelium Blocks
Turned into compost provided to
parks / farmers to



Indoor Farm in Queens
20+ types of mushrooms with new species in experimentation



CIRCULAR MUSHROOM FARMING

CIRCULAR MUSHROOM FARMING

For examples, the Coop is the only retail store that sells mushrooms from Afterlife Ag, a circular indoor farm that grows mushrooms in a Queens warehouse on compost it collects from restaurant kitchens and then sterilizes. Coop members can buy chestnut mushrooms and pink and yellow oysters. Co-founder Winson Wong noted that one of the big reasons Afterlife works with the Coop is that it doesn't require individual packaging, which "is better from a waste-management perspective and better for us as a company—it's a lot of work for us to put everything into 6- or 8-ounce containers." Afterlife, which also grows other varieties, including blue oyster, lion's mane and black king, primarily sells its mushrooms to schools, hospitals, and restaurants (they're delivered in 5 lb. boxes), including Pecking House, Craft, Hav & Mar and Two Boots. Wong added that they're also still scaling up, but at the moment, demand is not the limiting factor—it's financing and space, an issue for a lot of local companies that grow or make food in the city.



Perhaps it's not surprising then, that several of the companies the Coop work with a focus on breaking stuff down—that is, compost. BK Rot, a bike-powered compost and food-hauling service, sells its compost at the Coop. And as of this spring, so will Greenspace on 4th, the native plant community garden between Sackett and Union,

which makes “nice compost for a nice price. They do a really good job of balancing the nutrients and sell it in reused mesh coffee bags,” said Rembert.

Working with small, local vendors, however, means that supplies are often limited, seasonal (like the Vermont wreath-maker who incorporated foraged materials into Christmas wreaths) or fleeting. Brooklyn Grange operates rooftop farms in the Brooklyn Navy Yard and Sunset Park, and also rents them out for events. They used to sell at the Coop, but now only sells at farmers’ markets and through their own CSA. Others, like Gotham Greens, have become so big that they’re available not only at the Coop but also at thousands of other grocery stores around the country, although Rembert always tries to stock Gotham’s ugly greens mix, a scrap assortment of loose leaf lettuces, which the Coop sells for $2.58 a bag, and is less widely available than many of their premium varieties.



Native-plant supplier Gowanus Nursery

Sometimes vendors relocate to (literally) greener pastures. Michele Paladino ran

Gowanus Nursery, a native plant supplier on the corner of Van Brunt and Carroll Streets, for more than 20 years. She still works with the Coop and does pop-ups in Brooklyn, but she relocated full-time to northwest Connecticut in 2023. “I’m collecting native seed for many of the plants I grow and observing the wild locations they prefer to grow first-hand,” she wrote in email. She still considers herself a New Yorker, she added, and a big part of her decision to leave was more about the grind of running a small business in Brooklyn than her need for more nature. Still, she was thankful “to be able to connect the dots in a more profound way” and to be someplace where “there’s a bounty of protected public lands, and diversity, and wildlife is part of my everyday life.”

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

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE SEEKS NEW MEMBERS

April 1, 2025



April 1, 2025

The Personnel Committee works collaboratively with the General Coordinators (GC-s), the Coop's upper-level management team, to provide guidance and support human resources and operational issues such as personnel policies, recruitment and hiring, strategic planning, human resource systems and processes, succession planning and organizational development.

We seek members with at least five years of upper-level management experience or expertise in employment law, human resources (including benefits, performance evaluation, compensation analysis, recruitment and hiring), organizational development, personnel and team management and finance. 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 have excellent attendance.

The Committee meets monthly with the General Coordinators on the third Tuesday at

6:30pm (via Zoom). 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 résumé and a (short) letter explaining your interest in and qualifications for this important Committee to pc.psfc@gmail.com.

Please put “Personnel Committee Application” in the subject line, then go to http://bit.ly/2mFY2p1 to complete a short questionnaire.

Deadline for Applications: May 15, 2025*

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

* Deadline has been extended to June 1, 2025

IN MEMORY OF KATHRYN DRUMMER

April 1, 2025



April 1, 2025

By Thomas Rayfiel

Kathryn Drummer, for many years a Saturday morning Shopping Squad Leader, died on January 12, 2025. She was 73. Longtime residents of Park Slope may remember Kathryn's store Waltzing Matilda, on First Street off Seventh Avenue. From 1995 until 2004, the store featured an eclectic mix of salvaged and restored furniture, not to mention antique jewelry and, briefly, "retro candy," including wax lips and giant jawbreakers. Over a varied career that included teaching, catering and renovating local buildings, her abiding passion was to haunt estate sales and flea markets, finding offbeat and funky décor which she displayed in a space reflecting her own very personal aesthetic. Her college friend and roommate Jan Cunningham Hodson, recalls:

"Kathy was the first person to interest me in antiques, in upcycling furniture, and she taught me the joy of finding treasures along the street. She knew about all-things-vintage at that young age and often came home from class with a treasure she had picked up from someone's junk at the curb."

> CARING FOR OTHERS, BOTH HUMANS AND ANIMALS, PLAYED A HUGE PART IN KATHRYN'S LIFE.

Kathryn joined the Coop in 1990 and was, in the words of her daughter, Anna Sarfaty, "a true believer," not only arriving before 6am to prepare the Coop but coming earlier in the week to pick up the keys so she could open the doors. Anna remembers, in those less liability-conscious times, happily wandering in the Coop, bagel in hand, from the basement to the main floor to the upstairs offices, a child on the loose, while her mother ensured the smooth running of the early-morning rush. Kathryn loved to cook, later in life sending her daughter care packages of Coop food. She was willing to shop at any time, wait on any length of line, chatting with fellow members, enjoy-

ing herself.

Caring for others, both humans and animals, played a huge part in Kathryn's life. She volunteered to take part in hospice vigils, a program that provides support and comfort for patients in their final stages of life. She would bring homemade soup or talk or just sit with people. She would also take in stray cats and elderly, often sick, dogs, feeding and nursing them. "It's no wonder," Anna says, "that I became a veterinarian."

Kathryn lived on Sixth Avenue for 45 years and was an integral part of the neighborhood. Her friend Gerry McCleave wrote: "I must mention her joy when we would meet accidently and her big welcoming smile and positive approach even when things got difficult. I was lucky to know her and enjoy her conversation."

Kathryn is survived by her daughter, Anna Sarfaty, grandson, Rafi, her brother, Alan, nephew and niece Dylan and Dasha, and her sister, Dorothy.

Coop member Thomas Rayfiel is the author of eight novels. He has also written "living obituaries" for VICE TV.

APRIL 1, 2025

April 1, 2025



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

How to Determine Product Markups

Dear Members,

In reviewing the recent 53-week financials, I was struck by section three: *Markup*. I am curious about the rhyme and reason of what seems like a very complex markup system based on the type of product. Why not a simple percentage across the board? NOTE: I am not commenting on the actual percent of the markup.

If any of the Staff would respond that would be of interest. Thank you.

In Cooperation,

Stewart Pravda

Speaking for the Trees

Dear Fellow Members,

I never expected to write in to raise a concern with a fellow member's interpretation of a verse from the Tanakh, but here we are! Sarede Rachel Switzer references Deuteronomy 20:19 in a submission from March 11, 2025. To quote: "For man is a tree in the field."

While I appreciate the author's sentiment that people are like trees because "throughout our lives, we also grow—developing and refining our character traits—through ridding ourselves of ego (not unlike the seed disintegrating into the ground)," I think it's important to read the entire verse (from the 1999 JPS translation):

"When in your war against a city you have to besiege it a long time in order to capture it, you must not destroy its trees, wielding the ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down. Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you into the besieged city?"

This is not a passage about how people are like trees; it is about how people can flee dangerous situations, but trees cannot because they are rooted to the ground. For this reason, we are instructed never to destroy fruit-bearing trees.

That said, a March 6 article published by Equal Exchange (a Coop supplier) about the

recent experience of Palestinian farmers in the West Bank asserts:

“In January 2025, Israeli [sic] carried out 2,161 assaults against West Bank Palestinians; some of these attacks resulted in the uprooting of 960 olive trees.… While PARC has been able to export the new harvest oil to the United States, there is concern that the obstacles, such as increased checkpoints and settler violence, will only continue into the rest of the year.”

This is a tragedy.

Rebecca Schoenberg-Jones

What Do You Think About a Plastic Reduction Committee?

Dear Fellow Members,

We are a group of members working to form a Plastic Reduction Committee at the Coop. You may have heard our presentation at the January membership meeting. The committee aims to decrease the Coop’s reliance on plastics because of their documented negative impacts on human and environmental health from pollution, toxics, material waste and greenhouse gas emissions, which bring environmental injustice to front- and fence-line communities, most often home to low-income and other marginalized groups.

Our committee would collaborate with Coop staff to assess plastic use; gather information on what’s working and what could be improved; and develop proposals, educational events and tabling based on our insights. Projects that would potentially support staff in reducing plastic at the Coop include but are not limited to:

• Increasing availability of plastic-free options.

• Improving self-service options for bulk items.

• Reducing plastics for repackaging items.

• Finding alternatives to prepackaged items.

All while considering equity and addressing disparate impacts on Coop members of different means.

We were encouraged by the interest and questions at our January presentation. The next step is for members to vote on our proposal; we hope to be on a meeting agenda imminently.

Meanwhile, we are writing to keep the conversation going. If you have anything to ask or share, please email us at reduceplasticpsfc@gmail.com, ideally by April 15 so that we can answer you at the April General Meeting, if we are on the agenda. If we are not, we will answer your questions by email and as a follow-up letter or article in the *Gazette*.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

The aspiring Plastic Reduction Committee:

Lesley Broder

Ricki Jaeckel

Zoë Kaplan-Lewis

Jessica Roff

Anne Schoeneborn

Abby Shelton

Matthew Spencer

Lois Wilcken

Can I Buy Six Grapes and Leave the Rest?

Dear Staff,

I was shocked and overjoyed to learn this year that it's acceptable to snap off and purchase a small piece of celery from a larger bunch. This was an eye-opening moment that only escalated in the subsequent weeks, as I learned with joy that you could snap a single banana off a bunch or break open a box of Spindrift and purchase just one can. Now I wonder where the limits are.

Can I rip off just a handful of grapes, put them in a bag, and leave the rest behind? I sure hope so—I'm always buying more grapes than I need. The sign near the eggs forbidding the act of cutting a carton in half suggests that until recently I could've enjoyed the unique joy of purchasing just six eggs—or maybe even two? One? Of course, you can break apart a six pack of beer, but what about a six pack of granola bars? A single sprig of parsley from a bunch? How should I think about this? What are the rules? Are there any?

Nate (Nathaniel) Parrott

Chair Committee, Govern Thyself

Dear Editor,

The Committee is breaking its own rule when speeches are permitted during Open Forums. Your rule states: “Members will have up to one minute to ask a brief question regarding Coop operations.” The report of the January GM includes remarks about boycotts from several members which were not, in fact, questions.

Please be more vigilant in enforcing this rule.

Sylvia Lowenthal

Complying in Advance With Trump?

Dear Coop community,

I oppose boycotting Israeli goods at the Coop and support the 75% approval requirement for boycotts. However, I was troubled to read the Coordinators’ Corner article published February 18, where they recommend against a boycott for fear of hypothetical future harm from the Trump-aligned Heritage Foundation (authors of Projects 2025 and Esther).

In the past five weeks, many entities have chosen to comply with the Trump administration’s hostile executive orders. The orders I’ve tracked closely are anti-transgender: They set out to prohibit things like mentioning trans people or gender identity, -trans healthcare for people under 19 and students wearing their own clothes or using the restroom at school. These orders threaten to withhold federal funds (for example,

SNAP authorization) from entities that do not comply.

I'm disappointed by the hospitals, government agencies and nonprofits which chose to, for example, expunge all mention of trans people from their websites. I'm disappointed and *surprised* that the General Coordinator Team recommends against a boycott *in case* a boycott causes the Heritage Foundation to target the Coop.

My wife received her first gender-affirming photo ID from the Coop. She has since legally changed her name and sex. But under this administration and its executive orders, she will not be permitted documents like a passport. All federal entities have been directed to list her as "male." This is not hypothetical: It has been stated and uniformly enacted policy in the past five weeks under Trump.

Transgender Americans are afraid. Now we are afraid at the Coop too. If the Trump administration demands you misgender trans worker-members and this seems to threaten the Coop's ability to accept SNAP, will you comply in advance with that, too?

In cooperation,

Elijah Morningstar

Cheating on the Coop at ShopRite

Greetings,

In the article "Confessions of Coop Cheaters" by Liz Welch there was no mention of the largest supermarkets in the area. That is the ShopRite on McDonald Ave at Avenue I. Prices are the best in the area. The store highlight is the grass-finished beef and lamb from Australia. Many cuts for a fraction of the Coop prices.

Even bigger is the Brooklyn ShopRite out in Gateway. Too far to bike.

In solidarity,

Don Wiss

We Want Hybid Meetings, Now!

Dear Fellow Members,

It was disheartening to hear a General Coordinator at our last General Meeting say that some of the concerns surrounding hybrid voting—such as privacy and security—remain unexamined and require subcommittee investigation before any vote can take place. Those important issues were addressed directly and convincingly by knowledgeable IT folks during the discussion session of the hybrid proposal. Because the always-changing participation in General Meetings necessitated by in-person-only attendance allows for decontextualized and ahistorical statements, and few members are able to attend every General Meeting as I have, such statements can be made without correction. This contributes to an erosion of trust in the democratic processes of the Coop.

Schedule the much-delayed vote on expanding member participation already! This is the 21st century and the Coop has already proven that online meetings are feasible. C’mon, people!

Carol Wald

Using the MAGA Handbook to Suppress Democracy at the Coop

Greetings,

I am another Jewish Coop member supporting the BDS campaign against apartheid Israeli products. The absolutely undemocratic, one-sided presentation by the “Coop leadership” in the *Linewaiters’ Gazette*—calling for keeping the status quo and saying even a vote on the issue would be divisive—takes a page out of the MAGA handbook of voter suppression.

Hybrid meetings would help allow a broader participation of parents, the elderly, those with mobility issues and other members who do not want to be in a large room of people during flu season. This is a separate issue from BDS. It is a proposal that has long been necessary since the Coop membership is larger than a local physical space to hold meetings. To deny a more democratic, participatory scheme that would allow more involvement in the guidance and policies of the Coop is exactly akin to Trump’s plan to suppress votes that he doesn’t agree with.

With kids being killed, starved and bombed in Gaza, we can’t wait to just vote this current board out. We must act now. Economic boycotts are effective, or they wouldn’t be trying so hard to stop them. BDS is a nonviolent way to vote with our wallets to stop Israeli aggression and let the U.S. legislators know their constituents are watching as they vote to fund Israel’s weapon industry. Ceasefire now!

In solidarity,

Spike Kahn

Opposing the Ideology Guiding the General Coordinators

Dear Coop Members,

The PSFC General Coordinators (GCs) have guided the Coop beautifully. The place just works, for 50+ years, thanks in large part to their leadership.

A notorious exception is the GCs' now-public catastrophizing campaign against popular member proposals: holding hybrid general meetings; restoring the Coop's traditional boycott voting threshold; and boycotting goods that fund ethnic cleansing and genocide. In pursuing this anti-member campaign, the GCs have shed their folksy competent personas. All along have they (or some of them) been ideologues, eager to twist facts, abuse their power and disable member participation? Is this outsize power gone astray, gone haywire?

What else explains why an otherwise resourceful Coop has been unable to find a larger venue for an in-person Coop vote on hybrid meetings or a boycott? The excuses don't add up: This is about squashing member proposals, and it's shameful malfeasance.

What else but ideology explains the GCs seeking guidance from the Heritage Foundation, the favored think tank for MAGA Republicans? In a recent *Gazette*, the GCs suggest the Coop comply in advance with the Heritage Foundation's blueprints for fascism: "Project 2025" and "Project Esther." Doing so, the GCs cravenly direct the Coop to fall in line with fascistic repression pursued by the current MAGA administration.

Coop staff and members are rightfully alarmed about the reactionary politics, and unseemly tactics, that animate the GCs' bizarre campaign against popular member proposals. Now is not the time for blind allegiance to the GCs, as called for in a recent *Gazette* letter. Instead, it's time for members, staff and the Coop Board to act on and insist on healthy skepticism and scrutiny at the Coop, fair and open dialogue, checks on power, transparency, democratic processes, all engaged in by as many Coop members and staff as possible.

M.J. Williams

Anticipatory Obedience Is an Existential Threat to Our Coop

To The Editor,

I was deeply perturbed by last month's Coordinators' Corner "Safeguarding the Coop's Future." Beyond the purported subject matter of BDS and hybrid meetings, the article signaled a terrifying direction for the General Coordinators to be taking in this political moment.

In their article, the GCs argued against BDS and hybrid meetings on the grounds that it "could result in costly legal battles, government investigations and major disruptions to the Coop's operations and stability." This is textbook "anticipatory obedience" as popularized by historian Timothy Snyder in his book *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons From the Twentieth Century*. The concept of anticipatory obedience and its effects are clear: By preemptively submitting to repression before being forced, institutions signal to power the extent of what it can accomplish.

Regardless of one's feelings about hybrid meetings or BDS, the Coop should be practicing democracy and bringing these issues to a vote. By fear mongering about potential future repression the Coordinators not only overstep their mandate, they signal their moral cowardice.

We are living in historic, unprecedented and terrifying times. The only way to make it through is to root ourselves in democracy and collective power. For the Coop, this means the issue is not BDS or hybrid, it is a question of whether we are a democratic cooperative body willing to stand up for that ideal or if we will preemptively bend to the will of this country's fascist leadership. In their letter, the GCs made it clear which side of that dichotomy they fall on. That is not the leadership we need in this moment. And in this Coop member's opinion, if we can't practice democracy within our cooperative body, then we don't deserve to have a Coop at all.

Sincerely,

Eva Lewis

Coop for Unity. Who We Are.

Dear Members,

We are Coop 4 Unity (C4U), a group formed out of concern that determined cohorts within the Coop are leveraging PSFC to advance damaging partisan positions, threatening our community's cohesion and exposing the Coop to financial and legal risk.

Members stand by four values:

1. Diverse Viewpoints: Hold a belief that people with diverse political views can come together to build and sustain a successful collective enterprise.

2. Safety: Assert that absolutely no group should feel unwelcome or unsafe in the Coop.

3. Prevent Exploitation: Oppose the exploitation of the Coop and its reputation for promoting highly charged partisan politics. The Coop is a business first and foremost with at least $60M annually in business and dozens of employees.

4. Promote Active Engagement: We advocate for greater member engagement and participation in Coop decision-making. Any governance changes should be undertaken only after full investigation by a PSFC committee.

With these beliefs, we act in four key ways:

1. Seek productive understanding through honest dialogue and minimize activity that exploits the Coop for highly charged partisan issues without first analyzing long-term impact.

2. Abide by the Cooperative Values and Principles from the International Cooperative Alliance.

3. Promote actions that maximize the Coop's financial success and stability.

4. Act to ensure that Coop governance changes should be undertaken only after full investigation.

If you wish to join us, please contact us at Coop4Unity.org.

Jesse Rosenfeld

Coop for Unity

Those in Favor of Turning a Page, Say Aye

Greetings,

Politics and the Coop are not a good mix. BDS followers are less interested in the Coop and more in their agenda, which has nothing to do with the Coop. It will, in fact, cause differences to be amplified and distort the organization. The present situation makes this clear.

The business of the Coop is the store itself, not what can be politically appended to the store. Compelling any means to pull off their coup, the expansion of anything but a voting member meeting of the Coop is but another way around a bend that can

break the Coop.

The Middle East is stuck in a sad spiral of conflict. We do not need to emulate this kind of thing. It might even be helpful if we created an example of a way out of having to choose sides.

If a small area on one of the shelves in the store featured both Israeli and Palestinian products, we could demonstrate both good wishes for peace and an example of living side by side. But mostly we could end the BDS diversion of energy to the notion of taking sides in a sad scene.

It’s time to turn the page.

Rodger Parsons

Khalil and the Coop

Dear Coop members,

It’s hard to read the news these days without experiencing grief, fear and disbelief at the flagrant disregard for democracy, honesty and empathy. News of recent Columbia University graduate Mahmoud Khalil’s detention paints a particularly dire picture. Khalil has a green card. He has committed no crime. Yet he has been imprisoned over a thousand miles from his pregnant wife simply for being Palestinian and for trying to reach an agreement between student protesters and Columbia’s administration.

Anyone who cares about the rights of noncitizens or First Amendment rights should be outraged. We should also consider what this attack on freedom and justice means. It not only highlights Donald Trump’s gleeful authoritarianism, but also demonstrates that Project Esther and related Zionist projects have been dangerously empowered. I

shouldn’t have to say, but will mention here, that I wholeheartedly condemn anti-semitism. But I also condemn those who purposely strip that term of real meaning and use it as a weapon to dox, and now detain or even deport, those who envision freedom for Palestinians.

How does this relate to the Coop? Here we are seeing legitimate, thoughtful and caring organizing efforts labeled as “dangerous.” Here an overly empowered Coop administration is trying to tip the scales away from pro-Palestinian organizers and open democratic process. In this political environment, Coop members should be unified behind the Coop’s mission. This does not mean that we will all agree on a boycott of Israeli products. But it does mean that we should affirm democratic process, honesty and fairness. Moving expeditiously to vote on a boycott is one simple way the Coop can model integrity and cooperation in these frightening times.

In Cooperation,

Sophie Glickman

Witch Hunt or Simple Expectations of Duty

Dear Editor,

At the January General Meeting (GM), a General Coordinator (GC) concluded the meeting by correcting themselves about the Agenda Committee election in October—the election was not preceded by a call for candidates in the *Linewaiters’ Gazette*. Not for a few years, apparently. This correction not only served to reverse the assertions made that night during the GC Reports portion of the GM but to correct for the GC claims dating back to the Nov/Dec GM when GC Ann Herpel introduced the idea. To be clear, the Board never requested staff time be spent digging through years of *Gazette*s to find support for their claims.

What the Board expects, on behalf of the membership, is accurate information presented by the Coordinators at GMs, as stated in the GM Procedures and Guidelines published on the PSFC website. Painting this Board behavior as a witch hunt (as MC Karen Mancuso did in a letter to the Feb 18 *Gazette*) is unfair. Contrary to Karen's claim in the letter, I'm a member of the Board who does not want you perceiving GCs as the enemy. I love our staff for their impressive stewardship of our Coop. But Karen's mention of GC's human error needs revisiting.

It's OK to say, "I don't know, I'll find out." In fact, Robert's Rules of Orders essentially requires abstentions for lack of sufficient information. In this way, the human error could have been avoided. No one asked Ann to make her point of order; Ann took the stage without a prompt. In fact, she took a risk by introducing her claim. Simple human errors arise from uncalculated risks. But recent Coordinators' Corner articles, however, require the reader to understand GCs are astute risk assessors. What's scarier: GCs taking uncalculated risks or taking calculated risks later shown to be inappropriate?

Tim Hospodar

Timing?

Fellow members,

A proposal for hybrid General Meetings was first submitted to the Agenda Committee in November 2023. It was then delayed for the better part of a year before coming up for discussion at the September 2024 GM.

Before that date, Joe Holtz, presenting no supporting data, insisted that the discussion would need a venue larger than the Picnic House. Eventually, his objection was withdrawn, finally allowing the item to be considered by the membership. There was

space in the Picnic House for all who showed up and reactions were overwhelmingly positive.

As for any proposal, a vote follows discussion, typically quickly when a proposal has been favorably received. In this case, Joe renewed his claims of needing a larger venue and no vote was scheduled, even as the *Gazette* was flooded with letters clamoring for hybrid. It was not until the January 2025 GM (14 months post-submission) that GC Lisa Moore announced the identification of a voting venue. Despite this, as of mid-March, the vote still hasn't been scheduled.

Recently, the GCs have stepped up their obstruction. They say they might support hybrid in theory, but not in this form. They insist that a comprehensive study needs to take place. Why didn't they voice this concern when the proposal was first submitted? Where were these concerns when the Coop successfully conducted fully remote meetings during Covid? Waiting until the eve of this vote is a blatant delaying tactic. Is it being deployed because hybrid meetings offer more members a voice and a vote, potentially diminishing the GCs' power?

Hybrid meeting technology is available and reliable for organizations larger than ours. The time to adopt hybrid GMs is now.

Alyce Barr

Some Israeli Boycott Issues to Consider

Dear Fellow Members,

One of several arguments brought up against a boycott of Israeli products is that Israel is being "singled out" unfairly, given that there are many bad actors in the world. But there's a very good reason for Americans to "single out" Israel. A hefty chunk of

our tax dollars, several billion dollars worth—more aid than for any other single country—go to Israel every year, no strings attached. This in addition to arming Israel to the teeth with advanced weaponry, which Israel uses freely on its occupied Arab civilian population, both those in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel is a prosperous country, and not in need of handouts, while our own country could use those dollars for worthwhile projects here at home. So U.S. citizens have a direct stake in that country, and thus should have every right to a say in its affairs.

Israel's partisans have defended Israel's violent acts in its occupied territories with the claim that "Israel has the legal right to defend itself." But Israel, as an occupying power, has no such right—rather, the people under occupation (and in this case for almost 50 years now) have every right to resist their occupation. Hamas and Hezbollah are resistance groups. While one can pin almost any fighting group with a legitimate accusation of "terrorist acts," there was no proof or justification for the accusation of the October 7 "beheaded babies."

Finally, Israel partisans have often claimed that this campaign to boycott Israel is antisemitic. But many of those pro-boycott people are themselves Jews, some of whom may have themselves lost relations in a particular past holocaust we're all familiar with. Loose phrases like "antisemitism" and "hate" should not be equated with anti-Zionism, the colonial project that has violently displaced and oppressed Palestine's indigenous Arab population.

David Barouh

FILM NIGHT IS LOOKING FOR MOVIES TO SCREEN!

April 1, 2025



April 1, 2025

Calling all directors, producers, editors, cinematographers and screenwriters: We are now accepting submissions for films made or crewed by Coop members. Films of any length (features to shorts) and any genre will be considered for screening. The films are screened via Zoom, and we hold a Q&A after every screening so Coop members can engage with the filmmakers to learn more about their process and their work. If you'd like to submit a film, please send a link and a short synopsis to: gabriel-rhodes@me.com.

And if you'd like to be on the email list for future Film Night announcements, send a request to join the email blast to: jlymiller@me.com.

Jennifer Miller and Gabriel Rhodes live in Brooklyn and have been Coop members for

20 years plus.