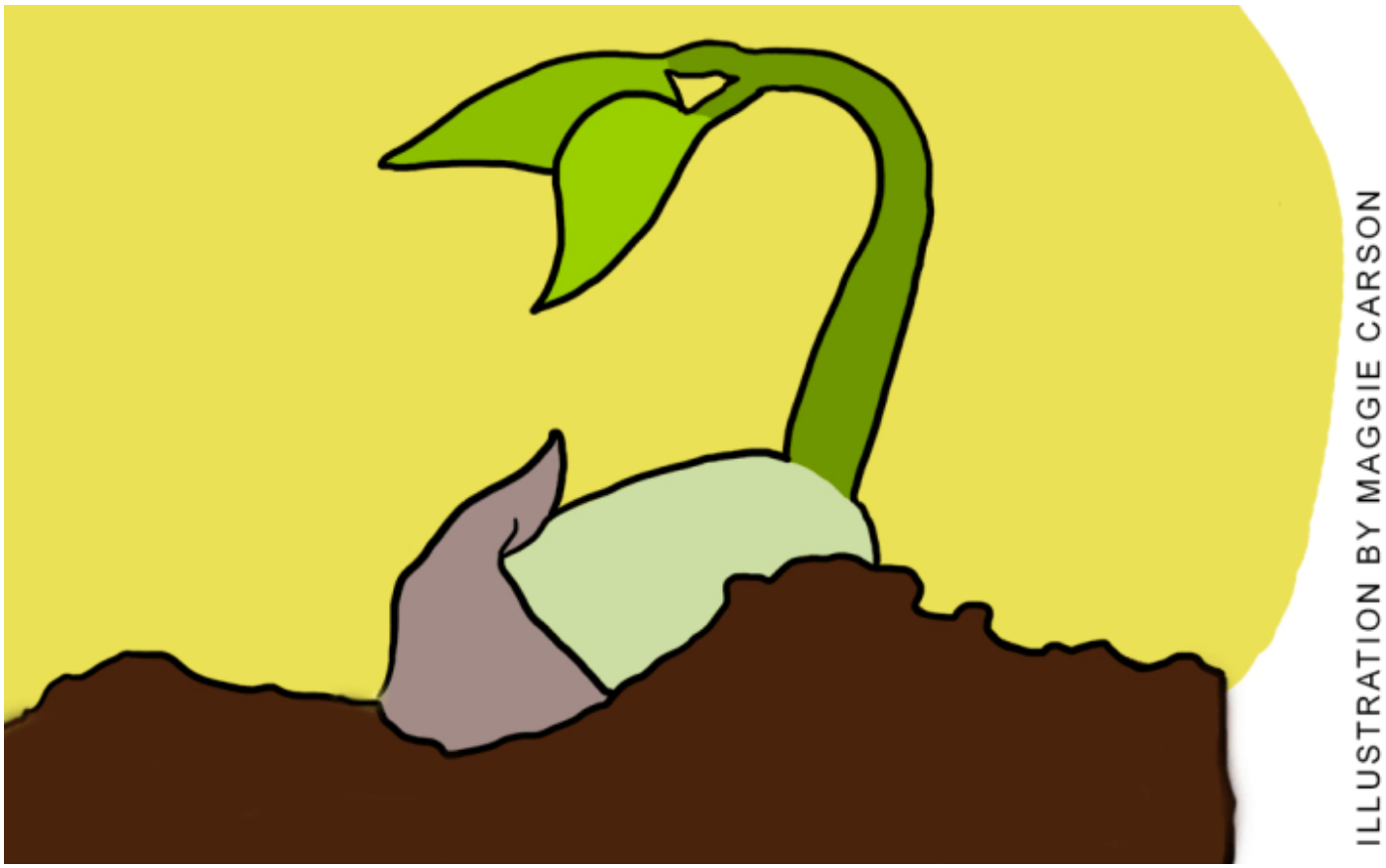
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE REPORT: WHY THE RECENT DROUGHT AND WILDFIRES?

January 7, 2025



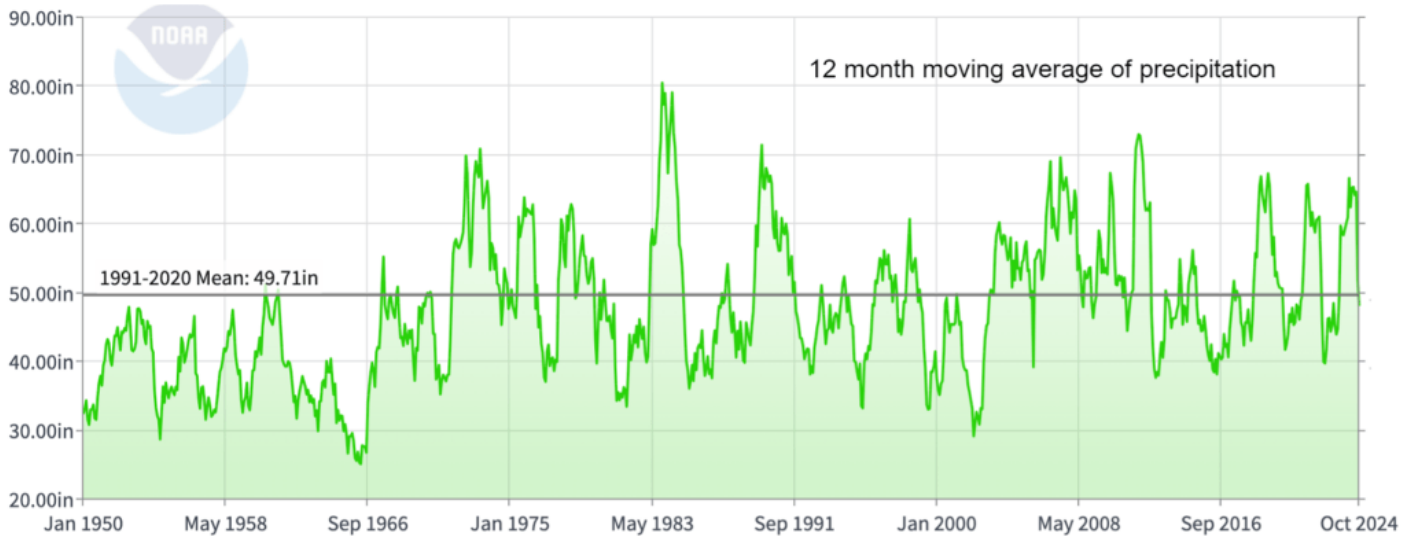
By Damon Turney, for the Environmental Committee

January 7, 2025

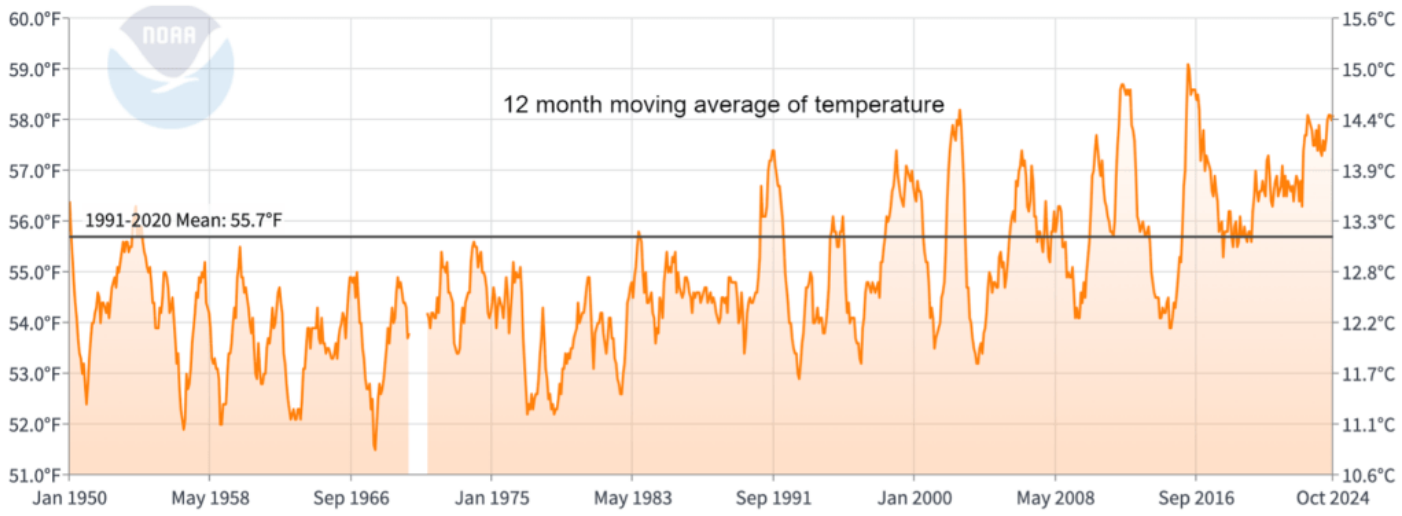
Our recent sunny autumn weather is not all warm news. Our heavily forested ecosystem is drying out[1], a fact clearly visible in the recent fall foliage having more brown than previous years. Of particular concern is the connection between our dry forests and the rise of forest fires in the tristate area, including many close to the city, which made air hazardous to breathe a few weeks ago. Our local Prospect Park was also damaged by a large forest fire that consumed two acres of trees and land on November 8.

So what's the reason for this, and what can be done to help? The data from environmental science points a clear finger at climate change but with a plot twist. Actual pre-

cipitation in our watershed has *increased* over the past 75 years, notwithstanding the exceptionally dry October we just had, as shown by the data below from the famous Central Park meteorological observatory.[2] Climate change is known to increase rainfall. This is due to increased evaporation of water from the oceans, which translates to more rainfall—what goes up must come down.



So how are we in drought then, you ask? This is the key issue. The higher temperatures on our forest and land nowadays mean they dry out much faster. Remember, evaporation occurs faster in warm temperatures, and the forest is a living system that loves to consume groundwater when it has a warm sunny day to do so. Below is the temperature history from the same observatory in Central Park—temperature rise is clearly the dominant factor here. These trends of precipitation and temperature are stronger in upstate cities like Albany or Binghamton, near our NYC watershed and reservoirs. The effect of higher evaporation means New York reservoir levels are a much better metric of drought severity than rainfall. Recent rains, just before November 27, have not been enough to improve reservoir levels.



Climate scientists call this faster drying process a “flash drought” effect[3], meaning a month of low rain now can have the same bad consequences as 12 months of drought a century ago. And increased rainfall is now necessary to keep our watershed in the same state as it was 50 years ago. At present date the reservoirs that hold water for New York City are unusually low, likely due to just a couple months of low rain. A worsening of this trend could threaten major costs or damage to NYC water quality, or to the subterranean tunnels that feed water to the city, not to mention the forest fires and air quality.

What can we do to help? The good news is that rain will return to New York, likely at increased levels. It remains to be seen if increased rainfall will be enough, given the higher temperatures, and higher evapo-transpiration. At some point in the future, environmental issues will need to be taken seriously by city/state/federal voters and officials, because bigger problems may arise that will not be pleasant. Recommended actions to help are:

• Stay engaged politically: Ensure our elected officials keep a smart focus on environ-

mental issues.

- Conservation: Fix leaks, reduce waste, consider rainwater barrels if feeding a large garden or landscape. Cover pools.
- Be fire conscious, particularly when outdoors at barbecues or similar events.
- Research and innovate: Study known solutions[4] and be active in developing new ones.

Want more? So do we. The Park Slope Food Coop Environmental Committee collects tips and hacks on issues of concern to the shopping members, so please feel welcome to reach out with additional information or suggestions at psfc.environmental.committee@gmail.com.

Notes

1. Hillary Howard, “New York City Drought Warning Declared for First Time in Over 20 Years,” *New York Times*, 11/08/24.
2. National Centers for Environmental Monitoring, website for meteorological site USW00094728, accessed 11/26/24.
3. Yuan et al., “A Global Transition to Flash Droughts under Climate Change,” *Science*, 2023
4. U.S. E.P.A., Prepare for Drought, www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/prepare-drought, accessed 11/29/24.

MEMBER SUBMISSION: STOP FORCING ME TO SHOP, VOTE, AND THINK LIKE YOU

January 7, 2025



By Jesse Rosenfeld

January 7, 2025

Voting on hybrid General Meetings is approaching. Blending online and in-person voting sounds nice until you realize it's another opportunistic ploy by BDS to boycott Israel. An irresponsible and reckless minority faction uninvolved in the day-to-day complexities of running a business wants to force all of us to shop and vote for their violent ideology.

Why not just vote in person?

BDS knows that any future votes on Israel-related issues—both pro and anti—will result in a turnout too large for our regular General Meetings. Since BDS openly supports Hamas, and the internet is wallpapered with the weekly violence that the pro-

Hamas movement perpetrates, larger spaces have already rejected PSFC because of BDS' awful reputation.

How will hybrid affect PSFC?

BDS disingenuously cites the disabled or democracy or working families. But during COVID, when we had fully online voting, our democratically-minded, immuno-compromised and working families never pushed General Meeting attendance past 100. And BDS at PSFC have publicly connected hybrid with boycotting Israel.

What is their strategy to get hybrid meetings?

Change PSFC bylaws so that hybrid is allowed outside of emergency situations like COVID. This is akin to changing the U.S. Constitution over one single issue somewhere in foreign lands.

What do hybrid supporters overlook?

As per our last Treasurer's Report, PSFC is presently operating at a net loss, so how will spending extra money on tech improve operations? Have we asked staff how officially supporting militancy could affect their livelihoods and families? Where is the official health emergency so that we need to go hybrid? How does hybrid resolve the imbalance between those who propose ideas and those who have 45 minutes to decide on its impact? If online voting helps even only one member who can't physically make it to a meeting, why does 'even only one' not apply to protect the safety of those who fear being identified and recorded online by members who support violent extremists? Hybrid supporters have only offered slogans, never a blueprint for how hybrid helps everyone.

And if BDS harms our store, violates our rights, maligns our reputation, repels our distributors and eviscerates staff pensions, so what? BDS won't admit responsibility. BDS apparently only sees how PSFC's fragile trust-based governance can be toppled, leav-

ing behind a turn-key storefront that exists to support anti-Jewish militant extremists like Hamas. See Assad's Syria for how well that worked.

What can we do?

Watch for Jason Wiener's proposal "A New Coop Meeting Format for True Democratic Participation" (unaffiliated with Unity) because he is correct that hybrid doesn't fix any voting problems; show up to vote against hybrid if it ever is proposed; and contact me at Coop4Unity@gmail.com.

BDS needs the Coop. Not the other way around.

OLIVE OILS AT THE COOP: PRESERVING QUALITY AND FAIR PRICES IN THE FACE OF GLOBAL CHALLENGES

January 7, 2025


GREEN GOLD
GRAZA
ZOE
EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
Casa Parcja
Organic
MITICA
ILIADA
FRANTOIA
EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
BRAGG
ORGANIC
EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
SAIFAN
Spectrum
field day
First Cold Pressed
EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL
Organic Olive Oil
BONO
Partanna
FRANTOIA
FRANKIES 457
OLIVE OIL
Spectrum
ORGANIC
Extra Virgin
Mediterranean
Olive Oil
BELARIA
Extra Virgin
Olive Oil
EXTRA VIRGIN
OLIVE OIL
PHOTO BY ROD MORRISON



ILLUSTRATION BY ROD MORRISON

By Jess Powers

October 15, 2024

If you suspect that recent increases in olive oil prices are due to climate change, you are correct. But, happily, the Coop carries many interesting, tasty olive oils at fair price points even with a global market that’s in the pits.

The Climate Crisis' Effects on the Olive Oil Market

Southern Europe, in particular, has experienced numerous conditions related to climate change that have limited olive oil production: drought, scorching temperatures, wildfires and flooding. Aging olive trees, which typically can't be shaken by the harvesting machines that resemble Edward Scissorhands and need to be hand picked, produce far less fruit and require additional labor costs. Kevin O'Sullivan, a receiving coordinator for 19 years, purchases the non-specialty olive oils at the Coop from natural foods distributors. He notes that prices are currently 30-50% higher and that some buyers might therefore have "sticker shock."



PHOTO BY ROD MORRISON

Chosen Foods Avocado Oil prices have hardly changed

Mintec, a firm that provides commodity price data and analysis, notes online that an "uptick in production estimates for Spain's 2023/2024 season" and "beneficial rains in March and April" led to declines in olive oil prices on the commodities market relative to the shortages in the previous years. But they also point out that there are "dwindling [olive] oil reserves" which producers use to blend their oils. Greek olive production, meanwhile, has faced additional burdens due to heat and the olive fruit fly pest,

causing production to drop, sometimes dramatically. And Turkey has extended its olive oil export ban, further limiting supply.



Coop's Olive Oil Team: Britt Henriksson, Yuri Weber, Kevin O'Sullivan

California producers' prices have also gone up. O'Sullivan notes that there are two big companies in the state, California Olive Ranch and Cobram. Like many producers, many of the oils from California Olive Ranch are 90% blends from Argentina and North Africa purchased on the commodities market. They also produce another, California Olive Ranch 100% California Olive Oil, that is made exclusively with California olives, and is described on their website as "complex with floral, grass, and fresh herb notes." It's "quite expensive," says O'Sullivan, at $35 for one liter. Cobram, meanwhile, didn't sell well and was dropped from the Coop's roster.

IT’S LIKELY THAT CHANGES IN THE WORLD MARKET FOR OLIVE OIL ARE LESS OF AN ISSUE AT THE COOP, WHERE SHOPPERS PAY LESS OF A MARKUP.

While Mintec expresses concerns about consumers choosing alternative oils, including sunflower or rapeseed, due to comparatively high olive oil prices, it’s likely that changes in the world market for olive oil are less of an issue at the Coop, where shoppers pay less of a markup. Sales of Chosen Foods avocado oil at the Coop, for example, have remained steady. O’Sullivan notes that a Sicilian olive oil that costs $25 for a 750ml bottle at the Coop retails for $45 in nearby shops.



PHOTO BY ROD MORRISON

Single producer olive oils are on the endcap opposite the chicken

Cheese, Bulk, Coffee and Fancy Foods Buyer Yuri Weber, who has worked at the Coop for 23 years, purchases the four or five brands of single producer olive oils located at the back end cap across from the chicken case with colleague Britt Henriksson, also a receiving coordinator and buyer. Weber agrees that “prices are really going up.” But, he adds, “considering what you’re getting, hand pressed, good product for a little ex-

tra money," it's still a very good value.

Specialty Olive Oils at the Coop, Including Mentis Estate, Produced by a Coop Member



PHOTO BY ROD MORRISON

Mentis Estate comes direct from the producer, Anastassios Menti

Spain produces just under half of the world's olives. Historically, olive trees were planted and cultivated by the Romans; later, Muslims brought their irrigation exper-

tise. Millenary olive trees (those over 1,000 years old) in Catalonia have been formally recognized as a world heritage agricultural site. Olives grow in many of the same regions as wine and different microclimates affect their taste. Spanish olive oils are known for being more yellow in color than Italian versions, which tend to be more green. The former tastes fruity and nutty while the latter is said to have a grassy, herbal profile.

According to General Coordinator Joe Holtz, during the 1980s it was very difficult to find extra virgin olive oil (EVOO). When he noticed a truck delivering the product, however, a sourcing relationship was established. Today, as part of their work to ensure that the Coop carries the best olive oils, Weber and Henriksson meet with distributors, taste oils and learn about the products the Coop sells. Henriksson is even scheduled to travel to Portugal at the end of October to visit olive estates.



PHOTO BY ROD MORRISON

California Ranch Olive Oil is 100% domestically produced

Among the Coop's wide selection of olive oils are several notable brands by smaller producers, including Casa Pareja, a certified organic and biodynamic olive oil producer in southern Spain. Their oil is made from a blend of varietals—Weber describes the flavor as "dynamic, peppery, everything you want from cooking to finishing, and reasonably priced." It is available in a 750ml bottle and a 3-liter tin. Two others are from Portugal, CARM (Casa Agrícola Roboredo Madeira) and Esporão. CARM also produces

wines in the Douro region. Weber describes CARM as a “great olive oil” and Esporão as “full flavored, round, spicy,” produced on a small farm.

Anastassios Mentis, a Coop member since 2016, is a photographer and olive oil producer who emigrated to Astoria in 1996. An eastern Mediterranean olive farm that his great-grandfather founded and planted in the 1870s used to sell “bulk” olive oil. But a photo shoot with a distributor and a desire to help the local economy after the financial crisis led Mentis to obtain permits to import and bottle the green gold from Greece. He now works with his mother—who is 89 years old and manager of the estate—and is able to cut out the middleman by manufacturing and selling directly to stores and consumers. They also produce a locally hand-harvested sea salt.

Mentis Estate grows Atheniola olives: “In mythology, Athena gave olives from this region, formerly known as Sparta, to the city of Athens,” Mentis explains. Estate labels on olive oils signify that all of the olives are sourced from that specific location. Weber describes Mentis Estate olive oil as “warm and buttery.” Marketing materials describe a “subtle aroma of artichoke” and creaminess. This is a pure, unblended olive oil.

> “IN MYTHOLOGY, ATHENA GAVE OLIVES FROM THIS REGION, FORMERLY KNOWN AS SPARTA, TO THE CITY OF ATHENS,” MENTIS EXPLAINS.

Weber notes that there are members who look forward to the annual sale of freshly pressed olive oil in November and December. Organic Tonda Iblea Olio Nuovo from Sicily will be available just before Thanksgiving and last year’s harvest was described by distributors as having “green tomato aroma and fruity flavor.” The freshness of these EVOOs may have added health benefits associated with high-polyphenol (or high--phenolic) oil’s peppery tasting, beneficial compounds with antioxidants and other properties.



Member, Patrick Porter, stocking the olive oil shelves

Bad Actors in the Olive Oil Market

In addition to high prices and supply issues, the olive oil market has been the subject of concerns publicized in a *60 Minutes* episode titled “Agromafia” that aired in 2016. The episode described counterfeit olive oil (diluted with sunflower or canola oil and with added chemical flavorings and coloring) and other food frauds that generate $16 billion in profits per year.

The Coop decided to source olive oil from California, notes Holtz, because of the “re-curring news articles about cheating taking place by some European olive oil purvey-ors.”

According to Weber, however, the Coop works with “smaller, reputable producers.” He pointed out that the product we get from California is unadulterated, free of pu-mice, rapeseed and other impurities. It is pure EVOO. Holtz adds that Casa Pareja Miti-

ca is imported by Forever Cheese, a “company [that] has deep ties to many Spanish producers.”

The Coop’s well-established relationships with producers, built on trust, make the Coop’s olive oil selection different — and more reliable — even as climate and market forces continue to challenge this centuries-old industry.

Jess Powers is a former chef who works in emergency management. IG: @foodand-fury.

COORDINATORS’ CORNER: A MESSAGE FROM JOE HOLTZ

January 7, 2025



October 15, 2024

Dear Members,

In 1972, I was part of the small original founding/planning group that worked on launching the Coop during the latter part of that year, and then managed the official opening in February 1973. In early June 1975, at the age of 25, I became the first Coop employee. In late June 2025, after 50 years on the job as a General Coordinator, I will retire.

The recognition of the Coop's 50th anniversary, in 2023, helped me conclude that my 50th anniversary of becoming our first employee was a fitting time for this difficult decision. I stayed all these years because of how special the Coop is and because of the difference the Coop makes in so many people's lives. I have stayed because of the overwhelmingly positive energy and thoughts so many of our members have about the Coop. I have stayed because of how much our members care for the Coop and feel connected to their Coop.

And I have stayed because of the Coop's great staff. Over the years, I have been, and continue to be, fortunate to have wonderful, dedicated, hard-working, thoughtful and caring employee-colleagues. They understand how special the Coop is, and it has been an honor to have worked side-by-side with each of them in this interesting, challenging and exciting endeavor of serving the membership and making the Coop strong.

I also stayed because every year I could answer the following question with a "Yes": Is the job still interesting and challenging? To this day my answer remains: Yes. Nevertheless, it is time for the Coop to forge into the future without me as an employee. I feel that responsible planning includes retiring while I can still walk, talk, think and be available to the Coop.

I've been privileged to have had the opportunity to help both members and staff build

a democratic institution that welcomes people from all walks of life into the community and practices cooperation through genuine participation in running our communally owned store. I have loved helping to build a community success in a society that is so focused on individual success.

My sister and I grew up in a three-generation household of seven. My home had nearly constant visits by a ton of relatives and family friends. There was always conversation and interaction. As a kid, I asked questions about how businesses worked, partly due to an instinctive love of numbers. The Coop job included both elements: lots of interactions with people and lots of numbers. As an adult I never saw myself working for a profit-making business. However, a member/owner cooperative business was the right fit for me. People who want to cooperate are precious to me.

My dad told me time and again that people "should not rest on their laurels" and not base their actions on past successes and not rest because of any positive "newspaper clippings." I incorporated those lessons into my life at the Coop. I came to understand that a killer of businesses was overconfidence. I came to understand that we must always carve a path toward success and avoid the paths that could put us into a downward spiral. This was integral to my approach to good stewardship of our Coop.

I am grateful for having the opportunity to do this job for this community, this "local society," for what will soon be 50 years. I'm confident that the staff and you—the thousands of members who make up this local society—will continue caring for the Coop, ensuring that it continues for generations. Thank you all for caring.

Joe Holtz
General Coordinator, General Manager and Co-Founder

PS: I hope to write more articles for the *Gazette* in the coming months about the parts of the Coop that most resonate with me and that have contributed to building this vibrant and vital cooperative of ours.

IN MEMORY OF MAITEFA ANGAZA

January 7, 2025



By Thomas Rayfiel

October 15, 2024

Maitefa Angaza, a journalist, activist, filmmaker and spiritual leader who co-founded the Coop's Diversity & Equality Committee, died August 8, 2024. Maitefa joined the Coop in 1989. As Jasmina Nikolov, her friend and fellow committee member, recalls:

"The committee formed partially in response to a change that Black members of the Coop community had been feeling. As the neighborhood gentrified, the Coop had be-

come less friendly to its Black and Brown members and more incidents occurred. Maitefa was one of those who felt the shift and wanted to bring about positive changes to ensure that all Coop members felt protected and included."

Lewanika Senghor, former membership coordinator and liaison to the committee, praised Maitefa's commitment to this mission. She did not live near the Coop. Despite pressing demands on her time at home, she would take a bus, then a train to attend meetings, supplying fellow members with vegan snacks such as Uncle Eddie's Peanut Butter Chocolate Chip Cookies and Cocomels. A consistent thread running through the reminiscences of those who knew her was Maitefa's empathy and resourcefulness in solving the often difficult problems this committee was presented with. Senghor emphasized her strong desire to contribute to the community and "help the Coop become a better version of what it could be."

Outside of the coop, Maitefa led an extraordinarily productive life writing for *Essence Magazine, Black Issues Book Review, The Network Journal, The New York Amsterdam News, Nu Origins Magazine,* and *Black Star News,* as well as serving as senior writer and copyeditor for *Our Time Press*. She also co-produced the documentary *In Our Heads About Our Hair*, in which Black women (and girls) talk about their hair and its relation to identity, politics and self-expression. In addition to her professional accomplishments, Maitefa was co-founder and one of the High Priestesses of Shrim Sa, an Afro-Kamitic spiritual organization. Kamta is a shamanic tradition based upon ancient Egyptian theology, Kongo-Angolan philosophy, Caribbean Spiritism and Afrikan American Spiritualism.

She is survived by her husband, Menshemsaqa Angaza; her brother, Bradley Barton; her sons, Osayande Angaza and Hemamset Angaza; and her grandchildren, Tuji Foxworth, Kayson Fox, Maati Angaza, Annura Angaza and Senmeri Angaza.

Maitefa was also an author. Of her book, *Kwanzaa: From Holiday to Every Day*, a reviewer for the African American Literature Book Club wrote: "Her aim is not only to encourage folks to observe Kwanzaa during the seven days of the holiday's season, but

also to inspire observers to keep it alive year-round by finding ways to put the seven principles (Unity, Self-Determination, Collective Work and Responsibility, Cooperative Economics, Purpose, Creativity, and Faith) into practice on a daily basis," principles Maitefa clearly embodied in her own life.

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

MEMBER SUBMISSION: A NEW COOP DEMOCRACY

January 7, 2025



By Jason Weiner

October 15, 2024

When the Coop was a small community, the town hall format worked. These days, it doesn't serve our membership.

We currently have a selective, not a representative democracy: the members who always attend General Meetings, people directly connected to an item and those just there for credit (the unfortunate way to bulk up participation). Members involved in the initial discussion are a completely different group from those who only have about 45 minutes to decide how to vote at a following meeting.

Our main decision-making body is an incomplete composition of approximately 2% of membership. A common complaint we hear is that members weren't aware a vote or discussion was happening, even with all the ways we promote and disseminate. We should allow everyone to have a voice, be part of our democracy, and stop limiting to a time and format that doesn't allow full participation at the GM.

It's time to have all members vote.

I understand the desire to modify the system by going hybrid, which attempts to address some of these issues. However, it doesn't fix our systems:

– It's not representative and maintains the selectiveness that is inherently inequitable.

– It's attempt to be more inclusive actually disenfranchises those without the technology resources to participate and maintains the time constraint that prevents many members' involvement.

– It creates more work for staff (who will be the ones to bear the burden of managing costly systems that still don't allow for maximum participation).

We need a change that honors the fundamental right for all members to be heard, if we want to continue this type of governance.

It's time to make the GM a discussion-only format.

GM credit should be like jury duty (where it becomes your work responsibility for the entire year so members build a greater understanding of these items and it's not just about increasing participation).

After each discussion, the full membership could access:

- The full recording of the discussion
- A detailed summary
- A pro and con list on any item
- Additional discourse through an online forum
- And most importantly, an opportunity to hear how the hourly paid staff feel on any topic. This Coop belongs to ALL OF US, but it's the staff's livelihood and future that is affected by every decision that comes out of the meeting. True community-based governance centers those most impacted within the community.

All this could be online, in the office and even in paper format if needed, so that all members can access. This could be achieved with minimal work (and cost), unlike attempting to manage in-person and online simultaneously with the myriad complications and oversight that a hybrid system would require.

Members need time to actually understand items coming up for vote.

We shouldn't have to incentivize voting, but I get it. Maybe if members participate in every vote in a calendar year we could give them a bonus credit?

It’s time to bring voting to all. It’s time to change to full accessibility.

Jason Weiner is Membership Coordinator at the Coop.