CROSSWORD: BEANZ

August 18, 2026



APRIL GENERAL MEETING

August 18, 2026



ILLUSTRATION BY DEBORAH TINT

Report by Eric Baldwin

The April General Meeting of the Park Slope Food Coop drew roughly 400 members both in-person at the Picnic House and on Zoom. The night began with talk of tea bags, plastic seaweed packaging, and orientation bots, and ended with discussions on

voting thresholds for boycotts.

OPEN FORUM

The 15-minute open forum covered a lot of ground quickly.

Board candidate Barbara Mazor, speaking first, addressed the Agenda Committee, which she said had sent contradictory responses to her questions and failed to respond to follow-up. “Half truths are not truths,” she said, calling for fair representation of opposing viewpoints.

A staff letter was read aloud next, signed by more than 80 percent of the Coop’s roughly 70 full-time employees, excluding General Coordinators. The letter asked that any boycott proposal be brought forward as a membership-wide referendum rather than decided at a general meeting. “We have a wide variety of opinions on the boycott itself,” the letter said, “but we have come together to request a referendum vote, which would allow every member to vote by email ballot.”



Board member Tim Hospodar, joining via Zoom, responded to what he called “repeated and frankly slanderous remarks” made at recent meetings about so-called bad board members. He noted that neither the Coop for Unity website nor a related Instagram account listed him as a target. “Why are you framing me as a BDS bad guy when there’s no evidence around that?” he asked.

Other members raised concerns about supply chain resilience in light of the Iran

conflict and fertilizer prices, the Coop's plastic footprint (citing, specifically, seaweed products wrapped in individual plastic containers), and the ongoing mask policy. One member made a heartfelt plea to keep mask days, noting that for immunocompromised members, "it's the least we can do." Another suggested that members who forget their masks should have to pay for one, to reduce waste from the disposable supply at the door.

A relatively new member, David Tobey, offered a segue into lighter territory. "I know in a time when the Coop feels more divided than ever, we don't need more dissent," he said, before requesting that bulk tea be made available in larger bags.

GENERAL COORDINATOR REPORTS

General Manager Joe Szladek presented the Coop's eight-week financial statement, covering the period through March 29. Sales came in just under $10 million, roughly flat compared to the same period last year, with operating income of about $130,000, a notable improvement over last year's $68,000. Szladek attributed most of the difference to a one-time factor: the Coop purchased electronic shelf labels in the first weeks of last year's fiscal period, an expense that didn't recur this year. The labels, now visible throughout the store, are also laying the groundwork for a planned rollout of the Coop Deals program through National Cooperative Grocers, which would put 100 or more items on sale every two weeks.



The financial picture was broadly positive, though one line item gave pause. Healthcare costs for staff rose 15 percent, consuming much of the savings from a leaner payroll. “They usually don’t lie when they tell you they’re going to charge you more money,” Szladek said of the Coop’s healthcare provider. He added that claims data since week eight has looked somewhat better, and he hoped the trend would moderate by the next report.

The Coop is also adding members in earnest, with two new member orientations per week running through the summer. Chair Committee member David Moss raised the concern that people are now creating bots to secure orientation spots the moment they open online. Szladek confirmed it was a known issue. General Coordinator Matt Hoagland noted the Coop has been leaning toward a lottery system, something more like a Broadway ticket lottery than a first-come, first-served scramble, though no timeline has been set.

Members also raised questions about equity in membership access: as the process increasingly favors the tech-savvy, the Coop risks skewing further toward wealthier, younger members. “We can close our eyes and cater to people who can make bots,”

one member said, “or we can offer spots during orientations held in other neighborhoods. It’s our choice.”

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Valerie Vadala, representing the Personnel Committee, announced an open seat for a member with at least five years of HR or organizational development experience. The committee meets once monthly and works with the General Manager and General Coordinators on people-related matters.

Bart DeCoursy from the International Trade Education Squad invited members to a free screening of the documentary *WTO 99* at the Park Slope branch of the Brooklyn Public Library on June 6 at 1:00 p.m. He also offered a brisk update on the global trade situation: large importers are expected to be refunded for tariffs paid under court-invalidated policies, while the closure of the Strait of Hormuz following the Iran conflict continues to drive up global oil, fertilizer, and food prices. “Even a full reopening of the strait and an immediate end to hostilities would not spare the economy from significant pain in the months ahead,” he said.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

Three incumbents stood for re-election to the Dispute Resolution Committee: Christopher Cox, completing his first term; Michael Zito, who could not attend and was represented by a written statement read aloud by committee member Dan Weiss; and Weiss himself, now in his third term. Cox described the committee’s work, investigating complaints, interviewing parties, and seeking resolutions that benefit the community, and noted that his partner had mixed feelings about the time commitment. “She also said that I should, maybe, because it’s important work,” he said. “And I think it is important work.”

Members asked questions regarding the committee’s diversity (it currently has no members of color, Weiss acknowledged, though it has had them in the past), recent

use of outside legal counsel for a series of interrelated cases (Cox said the committee hopes not to refer further cases to an attorney), and the candidate selection process, given that three incumbents ran for three open seats with no challengers.

All three were re-elected by comfortable margins: Cox 243 to 38, Zito 231 to 44, and Weiss 213 to 58. The results were accepted by the Board.

MAIN EVENT ITEMS: BOYCOTT VOTING THRESHOLDS

The bulk of the evening was spent on two related agenda items on whether to restore simple majority voting for boycotts.

The first item, Restore Simple Majority for Boycott Votes, was presented by Abdi-Hakin Dirie and John Caramichael. They argued that the Coop's current 75 percent supermajority requirement for boycotts is a historically anomalous rule, introduced in 2016 in a procedurally flawed vote to prevent a boycott of Israeli products. For most of the Coop's 53-year history, Caramichael said, boycotts passed by simple majority, the same standard used for every other policy decision, including the votes to begin selling beer and red meat. The 75 percent threshold, he argued, effectively weighs some members' votes more than others. "When we walk into this room, we're all members," he said.

Dirie took up the case of the 2017 Tomcat Bakery boycott, involving a Queens company accused of exposing workers to an ICE raid, which received 59 percent support from Coop members but failed under the supermajority rule. "Our choice made other employers in the city more confident that they could exploit their workers without being held accountable," he said, citing an interview with the director of Brand Workers, the nonprofit that had organized the effort.

Joe Holtz, a Coop co-founder, raised a pointed question from the floor: why did the presentation omit the fact that earlier boycott votes had often garnered 90 percent or more support, making simple majority seem more contested historically than it had

been? Caramichael countered that the total number of recorded yes votes to initiate a boycott across the Coop's entire history was roughly 763, compared to more than 3,500 members who have signed the current petition to boycott Israeli goods. "We're talking about a different order of magnitude," he said.

A counter-argument from Zoom complicated the Tomcat narrative: one member said the workers' union had not requested a boycott, a claim the presenters disputed, arguing that the union had prioritized its relationship with the bakery over the workers' interests, which is why an outside nonprofit stepped in.

The second item, Revise the Threshold to Change the 75% Supermajority Rule, came from Ramon Maislen. He argued for maintaining the 75 percent threshold on the grounds that it encourages cooperation and protects minority concerns, in keeping with the International Cooperative Alliance principles. He invoked Robert Owen's 1832 resolution that cooperators should not be identified with "any religious, irreligious, or political tenets whatsoever," and expressed concern that aligning the Coop with an outside political cause could threaten its autonomy and lead to the loss of longtime members.

His presentation was partly overshadowed by an earlier comment from a Zoom attendee who had used the phrase "Jewish supremacy," a term that drew applause from some in the room and sharp condemnation from others, including Maislen, Hospodar, and several members across perspectives. The phrase became a recurring reference point for the rest of the meeting, with multiple speakers calling it antisemitic and others arguing it had been taken out of context.

"We are all capable of working with one another," Maislen said. "Whatever your position, please be nice. Be respectful. Be kind."

Discussion was wide-ranging and, by most measures, unresolved. Supporters of the supermajority pointed to the risks of narrow majority decisions on emotionally charged issues; opponents argued that any threshold above 50 percent is inherently

undemocratic. One member raised the financial stakes: if a boycott vote passed 51 to 49 and even a fraction of the minority left the Coop, the resulting loss of member labor and revenue could raise costs for everyone. Another pointed out, with some economy of expression, that the Electoral College was what gave the country Trump.

No vote on either item was taken at this meeting. The Board of Directors voted to accept the minutes from the March GM and the DRC election, then the meeting was adjourned.

BEER SHIFT: THE COOP’S COLLABORATION WITH THREES BREWING

August 18, 2026



ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

May 26, 2026

By Lora Kelley

Beer fans at the Coop know that a tasty selection of seasonal craft brews can often be found on the endcap across from the beer shelves. Lately, that selection includes

the first-ever Coop-branded beer.


THREES BREWING
BEER SHIFT
PHOTO BY KATE PREVITE

Beer Shift is a collaboration between the Coop and Threes Brewing, a craft brewery with a tap room in Gowanus. The current seasonal iteration, a fresh, crisp summer lager, is available in a white can illustrated with a line-drawing of the Coop with yellow accents. The first version of Beer Shift, a malty amber lager, launched earlier this year. Members can look forward to more Beer Shift seasonal beers in the months ahead, Brian Robinson, the Coop beer buyer who led this project, told the *Linewaiters' Gazette*.

> "BEYOND THE TWO BUSINESSES' PHYSICAL PROXIMITY, AND THE FACT THAT THE COOP HAS STOCKED ITS CANS SINCE THE BREWERY'S EARLY DAYS, THE VALUES FELT ALIGNED." — MIKE NACLERIO, VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES & PRODUCTION AT THREES BREWING

Discussions about a collaboration with Threes Brewing began last September, when Robinson reached out to see if the brewery might be interested in working together. The team at Threes was "very receptive" to the idea, Robinson said. Partnering with Threes felt like a good fit for the Coop: "the brewery seems aligned with the Coop's brand," Robinson noted, since "Threes' brand says quality, local, they care." Many members are likely familiar with their signature cans, including Vliet pilsner, Logical Conclusion IPA, and Table Beer saison.



The Coop seemed like a natural partner for Threes, too: beyond the two businesses' physical proximity, and the fact that the Coop has stocked its cans since the brewery's early days, the values felt aligned, said Mike Naclerio, Vice President of Sales & Production at Threes. Threes has always striven to be "a part of a broader community, particularly in the Gowanus and Park Slope neighborhood[s]," he said, adding that cooperatives work together "for the greater good of that community. We've always tried to do the same thing through our space."

The Threes team took care of designing the labels—the waves pattern is part of the visual identity of all of its lager beers—and it has versions of the label designed in various colors, for future seasonal editions. Threes commissioned a freelance local designer to come up with a handful of illustrations of the Coop, and ran the drawings by the Coop team. "We went back and forth for a couple rounds of revisions, and ended up, I think, in a really cool place," Naclerio said.

After kicking off the process with Threes, getting Beer Shift on shelves took some time—in part because the government shutdown slowed down the process of getting new alcohol labels approved, Robinson explained. But, once the beer made it onto the shopping floor, the reception among members and staff was enthusiastic. The project, Robinson reflected, “promotes Coop pride, and people should feel proud about the Coop.” The institution can use its stature “for good, for elevating other local and quality vendors,” he said, adding that fellow staffers, including those working on cheese, bags, and T-shirts, have also done great work engaging local businesses through products and community events.



So far, Beer Shift has sold well, too. Members have purchased more than 3,500 cans; the Coop is currently working through the second batch of 100 cases, containing a total of 2,400 cans. The markup is the same as for other beers, Robinson noted, though he has negotiated a lower price from Threes. The beer itself is not custom-made for

the Coop—the summer lager is also sold under other labels, and in the Threes taproom. But, with the evidence that Coop members would buy enough beer to justify a one-off batch, that may be the way the collaboration goes in the future, Robinson said. “This is a step in the direction of: we can totally sell all that beer.”

Naclerio agreed. Though Threes rarely does one-off projects for partners, “there probably will be something unique, something one-off in nature that goes into the can” for the Coop one day. Whenever the Coop depletes its current run, he said, Threes is ready to go with more beer ideas, and more labels. “It can keep evolving,” he said, and “we can have fun with it together.”

Thus far, there has been “lots of love” for the collaboration, Robinson told the *Gazette*. “The Coop is a fun place,” and this project is “fun and representative of who we are as a community and retailer.”

Lora Kelley is a freelance writer in Brooklyn.

IN MEMORY OF MALIKA OWUSU-HASSAN

August 18, 2026


PARK SLOPE
FOOD COOP
EST 1973
OBITUARY



May 26, 2026

By Thomas Rayfiel

Malika Owusu-Hassan, for many years a familiar face at the Membership Office, died on January 22 of kidney disease. She was 75. Malika joined the Coop in 2004 and

retired in 2021. In pre-pandemic times, when FTOP (the Future Time Off Program) still existed, Malika “banked” many extra shifts upstairs, answering phones and dealing with members’ queries. Her daughter, Aziza, says, “Working weekly was something that filled the void of not going to work every day. She loved being a part of the Park Slope Food Coop! It was her own special place (where she could get away from the world for a little bit).The Coop made her feel like she was involved in something very important. Plus, she just loved shopping there and bringing home all the healthy and delicious food!”

Jana Cunningham, Membership Coordinator, says Malika worked “as often as she could.” When asked why, Malika replied that she enjoyed helping people. Jana remembers Malika as being, “kind, inquisitive and funny.”

Malika worked for many years as an educator in the public school system, eventually becoming a New York City Board of Education School Psychologist. One of her colleagues at Canarsie High School, Pastor Varrett John Kennedy, was a longtime friend. Regarding her professional career, he recalls:

“Malika had a unique ability to see potential in young people and to nurture their confidence, identity and voice. She served as a faculty advisor to the African American Club and was instrumental in creating a space where students could engage their heritage with pride and purpose. She was both firm and compassionate, holding high expectations while offering genuine care and support. Her presence in the school community was one of strength, authenticity and quiet leadership. She created joy, camaraderie and connection among students. That was Malika: always building community, always bringing people together.”

Aziza underscores this, calling her “a quiet activist,” working for local causes that she hoped would eventually lead to greater change. On a more personal note, when Aziza was young, Malika strongly encouraged her to get involved in the sport of fencing, feeling it would grow to become an important influence on her life. Aziza recently won the Women’s Vet-40 Saber gold medal at the North American Cup championship.

Malika is survived by her youngest brother, Darrall Lafayette; her five children, Mark, Khalil, Sabriyah, Aziza and Queen-Sheba; her nine grandchildren and her eight great--grandchildren.

Aziza adds: “The only thing my mother loved more than making the community a better place was being with her family.”

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

MAY 26, 2026

August 18, 2026



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

GM FACT CHECK

Dear Coop members:

During the voting discussion at the GM on April 28, a member incorrectly stated that Trump lost the popular vote. According to the Federal Election Commission Harris re-

ceived 75.0 million vs Trump's 77.3 million.

Thank you,
Brett Applebaum

ICE OUT OF PSFC!

Dear Coop community,

I am horrified to learn that there is an ICE attorney who is a member at the Park Slope Food Coop. A fellow Coop member informed us of this at the March General Meeting, thanks to a Guardian investigation into the personal lives of ICE attorneys who deport our neighbors. I highly recommend everyone read the article, which is titled, "The secretive, destructive work of an ICE attorney: 'My job is to do what I'm told.' "

ICE attorneys are a critical part of the Trump administration's deportation machine. Their explicit job is to provide reason to immigration judges—also hired by the Department of Homeland Security—to dismiss asylum claims and tear families apart. Every day, ICE attorneys provide a legal façade for the brutal federal agents who tear our neighbors out of their homes, imprison them in horrendous camps and deport our neighbors to countries they never even came from.

Park Slope Food Coop strives to be "welcoming and accessible to all"—but that doesn't work for an attorney whose job it is to help identify, kidnap and deport our neighbors. That kind of person makes the Coop unsafe, and the Coop has a responsibility to remove such a member.

If anyone sees ICE agents—or other deputized federal agents doing the work of ICE—nearby the Coop or elsewhere in New York, you can call the NYC community hotline at (229) 304-8720. The hotline is staffed daily from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. in English

and Spanish.

As a Coop community and neighbors, we all have a responsibility to protect one another from the violence of this fascist administration.

Sincerely,
Sophie Shepherd

DEMOCRACY REQUIRES PARTICIPATION. DIAL IN FOR THE MAY 26 GENERAL MEETING

Fellow member-owners,

On May 26, members will vote on two measures that could permanently alter how this Coop makes decisions: whether to lower the 75% threshold required to enact any boycott, and whether to align the Coop with BDS. Whatever your views, these are among the most consequential votes in our Coop's history.

Our diffuse governance structure makes it so that these decisions will be made by a few hundred members out of 16,000. Moreover, at a General Meeting, only the presenters of an agenda item have a guaranteed voice. Those who oppose it may or may not be called on by the chair… randomly, with no time to build a case or an opportunity for rebuttal.

While this is a workable format for routine business, it is a remarkably poor one for a binary vote on a question that has consumed this Coop since October 2023. One side gets a prepared presentation while the other gets to hope they're called on.

There is already a group with a mailing list of over 3,000 members who will be alerted exactly how and when to show up. If the broader membership sits it out, the outcome will reflect that slice of us—not all of us.

I'll be honest: I have a strong perspective on both items. But I'm not writing to share them or convince you. I'm writing because a decision this significant deserves the widest possible participation, and because I believe that sunlight is the best antiseptic.

You can participate from your couch: The May 26 General Meeting is available via Zoom, but you must register to participate in advance. To join, visit your Member Services account at foodcoop.com. Sign-up closes at 5:00 p.m. the day of the meeting.

Sincerely,
Tali Rasis

PLEA FOR CONFLICT MEDIATION

Dear Coop members:

It is now known that the Agenda Committee has scheduled the vote to eliminate the 75% super majority for boycotts and the vote to align the Coop to BDS principles for the next general meeting on May 26. Regardless of how unbalanced this process has been, there is another way. A more cooperative way: Mediation.

NY Peace Institute, a non-profit conflict resolution organization, has been contacted and are ready to develop a fair, proven process that has all sides work toward a focused way forward to repair our community. They did precisely this when a similar is-

sue over the Israel/Palestinian conflict fractured at P.S. 261. Their work in that case and countless others along with their commitment to empower all stakeholders to find creative and durable solutions to disputes is exactly what the Coop needs now. It is who we truly are.

So how do we implement this? If you are reading this before 5 p.m. on May 26, register to attend the general meeting and vote AGAINST changing the 75% super majority requirement and vote AGAINST aligning PSFC to BDS Principles. Regardless of the vote results, sign the petitions being circulated which state mediation as a desirable course of action. Attend General Meetings.

As Joe Szladek said in his letter to membership, “When attendance is low, well-organized participation by any side of an issue can have an outsized impact.” This is precisely how the voices of the unaffiliated but affected membership can be heard.

While it is understandable that sympathy for the Palestinian cause is high, aligning with BDS will not help them, or us. Alignment will expose us to financial and legal jeopardy. There is a third way. Let’s embrace each other and take back our unity.

With gratitude,
Greg Selig

MY STORY

Dear Coop members:

I am a Jewish Coop member who supports BDS because I believe that external pressure on the Israeli government is necessary if peace is ever to be achieved for every-

one, Jews and Palestinians, who live in that land.

My parents grew up surrounded by anti-Semitism. My mother was born in Germany in 1925. She fled to Belgium with her family in 1938 and survived the war living underground in Brussels, working as a nanny. My father was born in Vienna in 1923. His father was in the early Zionist movement there. He fled with his family to Palestine in 1938. In 1948, in NYC, they fell in love and married.

They ingrained in me a deep horror of racism of any kind and an understanding of the importance of speaking out and acting against injustice.

As a teenager I was a Socialist Zionist. I admired the kibbutzim and the idea of "a land without people for a people without land." I knew Jewish refugees from Europe were refused entry to so many countries. But as I got older, I realized that much of what I had been told about Israel was untrue. And I understood the contradictions inherent in a state that gave privileges to one group of people over another. Those contradictions have led Israel to becoming the monstrous actor in the world that it is today.

I am writing this letter because I am upset by statements that BDS supporters are bringing hate to the Coop. I want undecided people to have a portrait of someone who has come to my position over time. I support BDS at the Coop not out of feelings of hate, but out of a deep love for my fellow human beings.

With hopes for a just peace,
Judy Loebl

BEFORE ANY BOYCOTT VOTE

To the editor:

The March 31 GM slideshow featured Rod Morrison's photograph, reproduced in the current *Linewaiters' Gazette*, showing Israeli products for sale at the Coop. There were nine items displayed, sold by five companies: Dorst, Equal Exchange, Seed & Mill, Eco Love and Al Arz Tahini. To adhere to BDS guidelines for a boycott, according to their website, these companies must "play a clear and direct role in Israel's crimes against Palestinians." The organization is thus not advocating a blanket boycott of all Israeli goods.

Before the Coop community can be asked to vote on a boycott, or on a referendum on voting to have a boycott, we need to hear from the Coop's pro-BDS supporters about the specific politics held by these specific Israeli companies, to ensure that this would not be a blanket boycott of all Israeli products, regardless of their company policies.

I therefore request that the pro-BDS group submit such a list for the next issue of the *Gazette*, perhaps as a reply to this letter. We need clear and verifiable information about the politics of companies selling Israeli products carried by the Coop. Please name the product, name the company and provide evidence of the company's support for the war in Gaza.

In cooperation,
Kathy Hieatt

BOYCOTTING THE BOYCOTT

Dear Editor,

I'm deeply concerned about the rift intensifying in the PSFC community regarding the proposed boycott of products originating in Israel. I'm worried because I see the surfacing of dangerous anti-Semitic sentiments that have been brewing throughout this conversation. I'm worried because I see a highly vocal, well-organized group, which represents a very small percentage of the overall membership, taking over our discourse and governance structures. I'm worried because I see the things I love about this Coop being torn apart in service of a boycott that won't have any impact at all on human rights abuses in the Middle East (something I care deeply about).

I don't want to leave the Coop if the boycott passes. More likely, I will retain my membership, but boycott the Coop itself.

I really don't want to be put in that position.

Sincerely,
Geoff Davenport

A VOTE FOR JUSTICE AND HUMAN DIGNITY

Dear Coop community:

As a proud Jew and a proud Coop member for over 30 years, I am deeply saddened to see the wonderful traditions of both Judaism and our Coop contorted beyond recognition as cries of "divisiveness" and "anti-Semitism" have entered the discourse about

whether we should boycott Israeli goods. I stand with leaders in the international human rights community (including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International) as well as with Israeli human rights groups (including B'Tselem, ACRI, Yesh Din and HaMoked) in condemning violations when they occur regardless of who the perpetrators or victims are. As the child of Holocaust survivors I'm especially horrified by the ongoing atrocities in the Occupied Territories and urge our beloved Coop members to stand strong in the face of these violations of international law and vote YES to boycott Israeli goods and AGAINST the supermajority rule developed to thwart that boycott. We have a moral obligation to do so.

Sincerely,
Carol Wald

ABUSE OF THE COOP'S EMAIL LIST

Dear Coop members:

For the second time in a year, the General Manager has taken it upon themselves to use the Coop's Email List to give their opinion about a live issue. In both cases the issue is Israel-Palestine, and in both cases the GM has seen fit to put their finger on the scale in favor of the pro-Israel segment of our membership.

The April 28 email states that a member is being investigated for remarks quoted earlier in the email. But in sending this email, our GM has both prejudged the matter and prejudiced the proceedings of the dispute resolution process he mentions. The email publicly labels the remarks as "unfortunate," "unacceptable," "anti-Semitic" and having "no place at the Coop." Worse, it refers to "the member who *made the anti-Semitic statement.*" These prejudicial comments were sent to the entire member-

ship, including those who will sit in judgement on the allegations.

I requested to speak to Joe Szladek about this on May 5 and he kindly agreed. I asked him to explain why remarks condemning ethnic supremacism were anti-Semitic in his opinion. He did not really do so; instead he stated that he had heard from a lot of members who were upset and essentially told me that this is why he had sent the email. But this surely can't be the standard for evaluating whether remarks are racist (anti-Semitism being a form of racism). That determination should be based on objective criteria not whether, or how many, people report being upset by them. If the latter is the standard, then all it takes for free speech to be selectively shut down is for a group of people to claim they found remarks "hurtful" to quote the email. That would be a shame.

Joe, please respond if you feel I am mischaracterizing our discussion.

Signed, Anonymous

Editors' note: Per our policy the Gazette permits anonymous letters only in certain cases.

JOE SZLADEK RESPONDS

Dear Coop members,

Anonymous asked whether I felt they mischaracterized our conversation, and I'd like to clarify what I shared.

During our discussion, I told them that members could review my email to the membership directly for my reasoning and the context in which it was written.

I also told them that, yes, part of my responsibility as General Manager is listening seriously when large numbers of members report that a statement felt discriminatory,

threatening or harmful to them, particularly in a workplace and community environment. That does not mean that “whoever is upset wins,” nor does it mean that accusations alone determine outcomes. It means concerns raised by a substantial portion of the membership and staff cannot simply be dismissed or ignored, and deserve attention and appropriate review.

Ensuring that members and staff feel safe and respected participating in Coop life is part of my role, and I will continue to take such concerns seriously.

Joe Szladek
General Manager
Park Slope Food Coop

PROUD OF OUR COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Dear fellow members:

I write on behalf of myself and not the Board.

It is so important that a vote on a boycott of Israeli products is finally happening. I appreciate everyone who has cooperated toward this possibility over long years. The committee for hybrid meetings has done a wonderful job implementing safe and well-run meetings, with participation from members and staff in the room and online. The chair committee has managed difficult discussions. Members who waited since 2023 to present their boycott proposal finally offered incredibly poignant arguments for why a boycott is urgent, and in keeping with Coop history. Without these efforts, it would not be possible for the Board to receive the will of the membership on this issue. I am proud to work on the difficult project of democratic governance with all of you.

Reaching a vote at the GM is a victory for Coop democracy. The boycott proposal has faced countless obstructions and procedural delays. Bureaucratic gauntlets and uncooperative behavior have harmed the health of Coop democracy; trust in our governance is low. A referendum would further delay a decisive vote on May 26th. Long-standing precedent is that decisions such as this are made by members at GMs.

Israel's genocide in Palestine, and metastasizing violence in Iran and Lebanon, are relentless. Our complicity in U.S.-Israel wars is painful and exhausting. A boycott is the least we can do. I am proud to be a Coop member as we, I hope, align our buying practices with our moral conscience.

That said, as a board member, I look forward to hearing from members on this issue. I pledge to perform my due diligence in an unbiased way, and vote according to the will of membership, as I have since I was elected.

Sincerely,
Tess Brown-Lavoie
Vice President of the PSFC Board

GENERAL MANAGER'S WHOLLY INAPPROPRIATE MISSIVE

Dear Coop members:

Mr. Szladek's email sent to members of the Coop raises profound concern about our

leadership.

His letter suggests to me that he did not reach out directly to the individual to hear what was meant by the phrase “Jewish supremacism.” There is an “investigation” not yet complete but that sounds more like a witch hunt, as Szladek’s email effectively conveys to the membership inappropriately and arbitrarily that the member is guilty of antisemitism. Szladek thus escalates tensions. To my knowledge, no other individual facing any disciplinary action has warranted such a missive from the General Manager. The only remote comparison is Holtz’s offensive missive to restrain any vote.

Mr. Szladek effectively demeans all who find the genocide being waged by Israel unconscionable and criminal. I find that as profoundly hurtful as it is horrifying. This is an abuse of power and an attempt to slant membership views to his misguided efforts to counter “anti-Semitism” by again conflating rejection of Zionism with hatred of Jews.

Many argue that support of the current fascist regime in Israel is itself anti-Semitism, resulting in reinforcement of hatred of Jews by those already so inclined. The people SERIOUSLY being hurt, maimed and murdered by the hundreds of thousands are Palestinian and Lebanese children, women, families.

However, Szladek’s email conveys no effort at any deeper understanding, preferring to inflame. The phrase “Jewish supremacy” is understood by many, including Jews, as rejection of those who believe “superiority” justifies cruelty and death. See, e.g., https://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/202101_this_is_apartheid.

The upshot of Szladek’s commentary is support of apartheid and its consequences of ethnic cleansing, genocide and the need for Bibi to continue to wage war to keep him out of prison where he belongs. Any group’s notion of “supremacy” is absurd, brittle, and false.

This abuse of power can have only one outcome: Szladek must resign.

Boycott the horror of Apartheid Israel.

Sincerely,
George Carter

UNION MARKET BLUES

Dear Coop members,

When I first joined the Coop, I walked its aisles like they were an art gallery. Every shelf felt curated, the best version of everything, chosen not just for quality but for principle. The Coop taught me that a grocery store can be an expression of values rather than just a place to buy things cheaper than at Union Market.

So I noticed the Sabra hummus. Not because it is particularly good (it isn't), but because it seemed out of place. In a space this limited, every product on the shelf is a choice. This is a Coop that refuses to sell Coca-Cola over labor abuses, that boycotted South African goods over apartheid, that won't stock bottled water on environmental grounds. And yet products from a state whose treatment of Palestinians has been called apartheid by B'Tselem, Israel's own leading human rights organization, take up valuable space on our shelves without scrutiny.

The reason is not that the membership supports this. A small group of members have spent years using procedural maneuvering to prevent a democratic vote. They raised the boycott threshold from a simple majority to 75% in 2016 specifically because they feared losing. They fought hybrid meetings to limit participation. When the story reaches the *New York Post*, it is the BDS supporters who get cast as unreasonable, fixated on hummus and red peppers. But caring about where our hummus comes from

is the entire point of a coop like this one.

On May 26, we vote on restoring simple majority for boycotts, the same standard this Coop used for decades. I urge every member to attend. I joined a Coop that cares, not a discount Union Market, and I would like to keep shopping at one.

Sincerely,
Ali Safarkhani

RESPONSE FROM THE GENERAL COORDINATORS

This letter contains two factual inaccuracies that readers should be aware of.

Sabra is no longer jointly owned by an Israeli company. In 2024, PepsiCo purchased the remaining 50% stake in Sabra from Strauss Group, becoming the sole owner of the company. All Sabra products distributed and marketed in the United States are now produced under PepsiCo's ownership.

The Coop did previously boycott Coca-Cola products. However, that boycott expired in October 2018 when its advocates did not present it for renewal, as required under the Coop's boycott procedures. Under those rules, boycott advocates must seek renewal each October or the boycott automatically lapses. The Coop currently sells products associated with The Coca-Cola Company, including items under the Simply and Fairlife labels.

ARE WE FORCING OUR FRIENDS INTO THE HANDS OF OUR ENEMIES?

Dear Coop members:

At the GM in March, a commenter said that "BDS pushes the moderate political forces

in Israel towards the right." Was the speaker disingenuous or merely ignorant?

Earlier this month, former Israeli prime minister Yair Lapid, a "moderate," joined forces with former Israeli PM, the right-wing settler advocate Naftali Bennett in a bid to unseat Benjamin Netanyahu. Bennett is on record advocating "shoot to kill" policies, even of young Palestinians. "They are not children—they are terrorists," said Bennet in 2018. Lapid's views are much the same: "We need to get the Palestinians out of our lives. What we have to do is build a high wall and get them out of our sight… There will be no peace". (https://www.timesofisrael.com/lapid-israel-needs--to-separate-from-the-palestinians/)

Certainly there are Israelis who oppose their government. If they stand against genocide, as some do (in a poll conducted at Hebrew University from last August, 62% of Israelis agreed with the statement that there are "no innocents in Gaza") they should stand for justice—justice that is outlined in international law and on which the BDS movement is founded.

Standing for justice is an obligation for all human beings, only amplified when our country is a partner in genocide. Vote YES on May 26.

Sincerely,
Mischa Berlin

GENERAL MEETINGS NOW ARE A NEW FORM OF TORTURE

Dear fellow Coop members,

After almost 20 years of my Coop membership I've decided to write the *Gazette* for

the first time.

You see, I have to confess: I'm not able to attend the monthly meetings any more. Just thinking of going makes me sick to my stomach.

Sitting among M4P feels like being trapped in an enemy camp, which leads to extreme discomfort, anxiety and deep sadness.

In my 46 years in America the Coop is the ONLY place where I have ever experienced this—a thick clot of concentrated hatred that's almost palpable.

I don't have the emotional strength, to subject myself to this torture any more.

To tell you the truth even shopping itself has become much less pleasant lately.

Respectfully,
Asya M. Gorokhovsky

WHO ARE WE?

To the Editor:

One day last year I was talking with an old friend and Coop member about the proposal to boycott Israeli products. "I hate what Israel is doing," he said, but in the next breath he told me he loves the Coop and is afraid that a boycott might break it apart.

I've thought about that conversation a lot. I'm guessing there are other members who are really upset at what Israel is doing in Gaza and in Palestine generally, who unders-

tand that the U.S. is supporting Israel with military aid, but feel like the conflict has nothing to do with the Coop, and nothing we do here in Park Slope is going to change what's happening there. I've heard people say that deciding to boycott Israeli products will divide the Coop community and damage the cooperative spirit that it embodies.

For me, the critical questions are "Who are we?" and "What do we stand for?"

We have all watched as Israel has bombed Gaza, killing more than 70,000 people, over 20,000 of whom are children. We have seen Gaza reduced to rubble, its hospitals, schools, libraries systematically destroyed. They have done all this with our support.

No one pretends that the Coop deciding to boycott Israeli products will stop the slaughter and end the occupation. But the action will reverberate, in part because the Coop is so large and carries historical weight both in NYC and across the country. It will be another dent in the armor.

We have an opportunity to do something meaningful on May 26. Doing it will require all of us to step up and take action!

Who are we if we don't stand for anything?

Sincerely,
John Gordon

WHY I WAS CANVASSING OUTSIDE THE COOP

Dear Coop members:

I was moved by the proposal to boycott Israeli products at the March GM. I also thoroughly enjoyed the panel invitation from the same meeting. Check it out here if you haven't seen it yet. Wherever there is standing against oppression and standing for freedom for all (not just some), that's where I want to be. Thank you so much to the team of boycott presenters and the team of panel organizers. Their willingness to stand in solidarity with Palestinians and propose that we all together do so was a complete win for me.

Pointing at systematic state oppression is no small thing. Oppression wants to be normal or un-notable or even better, invisible or elusive. In fact, it is ugly and mean, it hurts across generations, it starves people, it separates them, it ranks them, it forces folks on trails of tears, and it does not want to be identified or take accountability. Right now, it's choke-holding Palestinians to the point of genocide and complete erasure. The harm from this contorted position cannot be innocently supported on our grocery story. We must say yes to a boycott.

To all the folks at the Park Slope Food Coop who have connections and family in Israel, I am so grateful. We need your local connections to move the issue even further. We need our own local connections here in Brooklyn to move our own government even further. Let's see our collective actions lead to collective freedom and peace for all. Palestinians, you are not invisible to us!

Sincerely,
Janna Beckler

FACTS ABOUT THE BOYCOTT SUPERMAJORITY

Members:

The successful adoption of our Boycott Supermajority appealed to common sense. I saw how our boycott guidelines in 2016 were only suggestions, not rules, and therefore prone to exploitation by outsider, non-PSFC movements that could steal our cooperative's platform to maximize visibility. I campaigned against ALL divisive boycotts and highlighted how cooperation among labor is honoring diversity. I showed how our guideline's weaknesses left cracks in our stability, and then we voted to plug those cracks. The supermajority vote was successful and perfectly legal. There is always grousing about "procedure" from the losing side, yet no one has ever challenged the actual results or proceedings. The supermajority continues to prevent violations of our International Cooperative Alliance and Mission Statement, and cancelling it means BDS ushering in support for a violently misogynistic, racist and Jew-hating theocracy (something BDS has never ever ever denied). Yes, we should fight that. How difficult is it to say we stand against violent theocracy?

The Boycott Supermajority simply codifies how PSFC spoke as one body, one voice, decades before BDS existed. Our natural cohesion meant no one considered simple majorities worth debating since all other boycotts were approved by nearly 100% of membership. If BDS is certain they represent the vast majority opinion, shouldn't they shoot for the historical 90% other boycotts have achieved? They can't. They won't. The "simple majority" counter-argument is therefore evasive and obfuscating, a red-herring foisted by the losing side trying to literally rewrite the rules for themselves only, exemplifying a boycott strategy the supermajority was designed to prevent.

Please vote to maintain our Boycott Supermajority. We did a good thing by adopting it. A really good thing.

Sincerely,
Jesse Rosenfeld

SUPPORTING OUR COOP'S PRINCIPLES

Dear Coop members,

It was appalling at the April General Meeting to hear a Coop member say "Jewish supremacism is a problem in this country….." and furthermore to hear some Coop members applaud the remark, a comment worthy of Tucker Carlson, Candice Owens and Nick Fuentes.

A statement issued afterwards by PSFC4Palestine did NOT directly condemn the aforementioned member's hateful statement. They weakly said in a detached manner, "The use of this term in an American context can call to mind harmful, centuries old conspiracies portraying Jews as a coordinated group seeking power over politics, finance or public life."

Their statement went on to explain how the supremacy label is (understandably) often used in the Israel-Palestine context (which is irrelevant because the Coop member's hateful comment was unquestionably in the context of the United States).

We as a community should be supporting groups on the ground in Israel-Palestine doing the real work of promoting justice every day. As longtime Palestinian activist Aziz Abu Sarah recently told journalist Peter Beinart, Palestinians and Israelis working together is NOT "normalizing the status quo" as "we're not accepting or normalizing the occupation….or current reality. Some people," he added, "are misusing normalization for any joint work between Israelis and Palestinians."

Does the Coop want to align itself with BDS which has condemned Palestinian-Israeli lead organizations like Standing Together and the Palestinian-Israeli produced Oscar-winning documentary *No Other Land*? These and other Israeli-Palestinian co-led groups such as Abraham Initiatives, Parents Circle Forum and the Palestinian lead environment focused Arava Institute are the initiatives the Coop should be supporting, not the exclusionary BDS.

In peace and cooperation,
Steven Gold

THE ESSENTIAL MEANINGLESSNESS OF A BOYCOTT

Dear Coop members:

In my opinion the Park Slope Food Coop boycotting a handful of items made in Israel, will have absolutely no effect on the goings on in the Middle East.

All it will be is a statement. Much like the statement we made in support of Black Lives Matter on July 28, 2020. From the minutes of that meeting, the proposal put forth said:

“The Park Slope Food Coop unequivocally supports Black lives and the dismantling of all systems that propagate and empower systemic racism #BlackLivesMatter.”

The proposal passed “with 96% in favor and 4% against (260, yes. 10, no).”

Virtually no one was against doing what we did here.

Early in my Food Coop career we supported the Grape Workers Boycott. I recall in that case that no one anywhere (except the owners of the grape orchards) objected to the idea of supporting the workers. Plus, the Coop sells way more California grapes than we sell Israeli bell peppers.

With our opportunity to join the BDS Boycott of Israel Products movement, Coop sentiment is WAY LESS clear. There is no unanimity amongst our 17,000 members. I'd say it's more like a hate fest.

If we remove the 75% boycott voting threshold and activate our blessed "right" to simple majority decisions, what would it really mean if the boycott was passed 8,501 to 8,499?

I say it would mean nothing.

Sincerely,
Andy Feldman

BETRAYING THE PRINCIPLES OF OUR COMMUNITY

Fellow members:

I have been a Coop member for 15 years because I believe in what this place is supposed to represent: a community built on genuine cooperation, across difference,

without exception.

What happened at the April GM was a betrayal of that. Not a political disagreement. A betrayal where some Coop members cheered a speaker who called Jewish supremacism a national problem. Elsewhere member complaints have been dismissed as “Jewish privilege.” In one incident, a woman stocking shelves was screamed at over supposed political disagreements. These are not the actions of a community in good faith disagreement. They are a campaign of dehumanization happening inside our store.

Somehow, I continue to be called a racist, a genocide-supporter and a “Zionist” despite consistently speaking respectfully and with moral clarity on what is happening within our community.

Sadly, the PSFC Palestine group doubled down on the term Jewish Supremacism via email and continues to spread hatred and libel. In fact, the PSFC Palestine email represents another assault on our sense of community. This is not who we are as a Coop. Full stop. That’s what I said at the GM and that’s what I’ll say in this email. I believe cooperation means cooperating with everyone, including those I disagree with. That is the founding principle of this Coop.

Board members who have participated in or enabled this campaign of hatred and dehumanization should step down. Not as punishment, but because leadership requires the trust of the whole community, and that trust has been broken.

The Park Slope Food Coop could be a model for how people in genuine conflict find a way to work together. That possibility still exists. But not if we keep allowing what is happening to continue.

In cooperation,
Ramon Maislen

IN SUPPORT OF TAYLOR PATE’S CANDIDACY

Dear Coop Members,

I want to give a big shoutout to Taylor Pate, who is running for the Board of Directors. If you have not yet read Pate’s board statement, please do so.

Taylor Pate is a person of deep integrity and principle, with a longstanding commitment to social, economic and racial justice. She brings extensive experience working at the intersection of food policy and procurement, has been a member of multiple food co-op communities in NYC, and has served on nonprofit and housing co-op boards. But beyond her qualifications, Taylor understands something fundamental: that access to fresh, affordable quality food should never be a luxury determined by income or zip code. Not only is Taylor highly qualified; she is also the strongest candidate running. That was especially clear at the March General Meeting, where her thoughtful and grounded responses stood out.

Taylor leads with courage and humility. She is unapologetically anti-genocide and anti-apartheid. She does not hesitate to articulate her support for boycotting Israeli products at PSFC, while also making clear that she will affirm the will of the membership, no matter which way the boycott vote goes.

Fellow PSFC members: we are now at a crossroads. At a time when people across our country are refusing to stay silent in the face of ongoing atrocities being committed by the Israeli government with full support of our own, we too have a choice about what kind of co-op we want to be. We can take a stand or we can be silent. But be assured, silence sends a message too, and it is chilling.

Taylor has shown that she is willing to lead with principle, even when it is difficult. That is exactly the kind of leadership our co-op needs right now.

Sincerely,
Upjeet Chandan

VOTE YES FOR A BOYCOTT

Dear Coop,

In recent days, I've been seeing news stories about the horrific unsanitary conditions in Gaza. Living in crowded tents, Palestinian children are covered with painful insect bites. Sewage overflows. The rat population is exploding. Rodents are so aggressive that people are afraid to sleep at night. These factors compound the effects from a severe shortage of necessary medications, food and building supplies—all due to Israel's ongoing blockade. A clip from Democracy Now details "the collapse of every essential condition required for human survival."

In this time of vigorous debate and inflamed rhetoric at the Coop, I want to re-center the underlying issue: justice for Palestine. I want to pay attention to the actual conditions that Palestinians are enduring—in Gaza, yes, but also in the Occupied West Bank, where Palestinian villagers are under attack by violent Israeli settlers as detailed in a powerful report by PSFC member Jasper Nathaniel during an online panel ("Palestine, Produce, Principles") held on April 21.

But I want to do more than lament Palestinian suffering and rage against the perpetrators. I want to embrace the idea that justice for Palestine means something incredibly positive. The horizon is liberation, not merely an end to genocide and apartheid. That sentiment is beautifully captured on a T-shirt I purchased from a Coop member many years ago. On the front it says "PALESTINE." On the back is a list that I only have space to quote in part: "The right to memory…the right to be heard…the right to

fish…the right to farm…the right to swim in the sea…the right to cross the ocean…”

In support of all these rights, please vote “yes” to adopt a Coop boycott of Israeli products that will end when Israel complies with international law in its treatment of Palestinians.

In cooperation,
Jan Clausen

THE BOYCOTT’S REAL OBJECTIVE

Dear Coop members:

I urge all members to think critically about the strategic ambiguity in the language of the boycott proposal and presentation shared by Members4Palestine at the April GM.

“Until Israel complies with international law in its treatment of Palestinians…”

From their presentation, this entails:

“Ending the occupation and colonization of Palestinian lands…”

They invite members to apply their own definition of what constitutes *Palestinian Lands*. For some, this will mean Gaza and the West Bank. The strategic ambiguity is that “*Palestinian lands*” could be interpreted many ways, including the internationally recognized land of Israel.

Make no mistake, a vote for this boycott IS a vote to boycott Israel until it no longer

exists. This is not a boycott for peace and equality. This is not a boycott for a two-state solution. You may have those noble goals in your heart, but a “YES” vote for this boycott is aligning yourself with the goal of completely dismantling the world’s only Jewish-majority state.

The organizers of this boycott did not seek cooperation with members opposed to that goal to find common ground. They exploited the latest escalation in hostilities, initiated by Hamas’ massacre on October 7, to push an agenda they have sought for decades, ending the state of Israel. They will gladly accept the support of members with less extreme goals to advance their agenda.

Should this boycott pass, the Coop will likely lose many Jewish families, who history has cruelly taught, time and again, that without Jewish self-determination there is no guarantee of safety for Jews when societies turn against them. When we leave, will the Coop ever again be able to muster 50%+1 members who accept your definition of peace between Israel and Palestine to end this boycott?

Respectfully,
Daniel G.

Editors’ note: Per our policy the Gazette permits anonymous letters only in certain cases.

IT DIDN’T NEED TO BE THIS WAY

To the diplomat who spoke at the last General Meeting:

In November 2024 I submitted an agenda item that might have spared the member-

ship at large from being bombarded with the topic of the “Israel boycott.”

The item, now Agenda Item 901, would pause a vote and establish a conflict resolution process by which the supporters and opponents of realigning the Coop with the principles of the BDS movement (which requires boycotting Israeli products), would engage in mediated dialogue and, if they could not resolve their differences, would allow the factions to present their respective proposals at the same time.

In January the Agenda Committee resumed scheduling agenda item relating to the BDS alignment vote.

On January 6 the Agenda Committee contacted me about scheduling Agenda Item 901 for discussion. On January I asked how it planned to schedule the items for discussion and voting since a vote on aligning with BDS would make mine futile. The Committee did not respond. I sent follow-up emails on January 16, February 23, on March 13. On March 14, I received a response that addressed technical matters but ignored that question.

I sent follow-up emails March 27, April 7, April 21 and finally May 5, the day before the Agenda Committee met to set the schedule for this month’s meeting.

The Agenda Committee never responded, and it scheduled the BDS-alignment vote for this month’s meeting.

I tried.
Noah Potter

IN RESPONSE TO NOAH POTTER’S LETTER

The Agenda Committee balances many competing demands and takes many factors

into account in crafting the GM agendas, including but not limited to the order in which items were received, the efficient running of the Coop, the proponents' availability, and other items in the queue. Our decisions are informed by the AC's charter and rules, which are available on the Coop's website. Out of respect for members on both sides of the issue who have been waiting for years for these discussions to take place, we have been advancing items related to a potential boycott of Israeli goods now that hybrid meetings make it possible to do so.

Noah Potter's item was submitted a full year after the boycott proposal he refers to and the AC engaged with his inquiries numerous times. No member has the right to insist that their item be heard before another member's item despite being submitted many months after, nor to demand that other members' items be indefinitely paused in service of their own.

The Agenda Committee

A LESSON FROM A HISTORIC SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT

Dear Coop community,

In 1984, ten young grocery workers at Dunnes Stores in Dublin took a courageous stand: They refused to handle South African goods in protest against apartheid. They maintained their pickets in solidarity with millions of oppressed people they had never met, and their perseverance changed history.The strike was the direct catalyst for Ireland becoming the first Western European nation to ban South African goods. Other countries followed suit.

For their bravery, the grocery workers were praised by Nelson Mandela, who told them that "ordinary people far away from the crucible of apartheid cared for our freedom." Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who met them on his way to receive his Nobel

Peace Prize, simply called them “quite remarkable people” whose refusal to handle South African goods represented a “unique and inspirational act of international solidarity.”

This moment is a proud chapter in Irish history, and one I remember clearly. Growing up, my parents boycotted South African goods in our home. They taught us that standing up for equal rights meant STANDING UP FOR EVERYONE, WITH NO EXCEPTIONS.

Today, we members of the Coop have that same power to make a choice that sends a message. By voting to cease stocking Israeli goods, we can show our opposition to Israel’s apartheid policies against the Palestinian people.

We are a community of kind, caring and open people. While we may often feel powerless in the face of global events, in our own community we are not. We can choose to do what is right. It is a matter of principle: we should not stock products that help fund apartheid.

With kindness,
Connie Bree

LET US TOGETHER AFFIRM OUR SHARED VALUES

Dear Coop family:

I’m looking forward to us affirming both our core values and our greater cohesion. The tension has impacted me deeply. As a Black man with a Jewish mom (and Rabbi uncle), I understand many sides of oppression and issues of fear and insecurity. While praise is due to the huge Jewish movement that has undertaken self-reflection and

faced difficult truths, sadly, a different ilk has been a highly vocal minority here—attempting to silence our solidarity around one of the world's most important movements for peace and justice; advocating undemocratic measures; and claiming that our legitimate peaceful measures promulgate anti-Semitism and even terrorism. (I was called a Jew-hater and Nazi for passing out fliers asking simply for a vote to enable even a discussion of BDS.) Though this has tarnished my feelings toward the Coop, still, this is democracy, and we must find a way to forge our way through it, hoping to enhance greater mutual understanding but knowing that not everyone will be pleased. Still, if we are committed to a fair and transparent process, I'm confident that most members will respect the outcome, and hopefully feel even stronger about our little microcosmic experience in true participatory democracy.

Forward Ever!
Mitty Owens, 20-year member

DEMOCRACY NEEDS A SIMPLE MAJORITY

Dear fellow cooperators,

I attended my first virtual General Meeting last month and so appreciated the opportunity to listen from home—many thanks to all who worked to enable hybrid meetings, and a more accessible democratic forum, an option for our coop. I also appreciated the thoughtful presentation about restoring the simple majority as the requirement to support a boycott, as was the case for over 40 years of Coop history. I understand how returning to a simple majority would give each person's vote equal weight, which seems fundamental to democratic decision making.

Engaging in democratic member control is one of the Seven Principles of Cooperation

that, according to our website, “guide and protect the integrity of our business as a democratic institution beholden only to our Member-Owners (you).” Democracy doesn’t mean we all, or almost all, have to have the same ideas or be in agreement—far from it. Democracy means each of us has a voice, an equal voice, in decisions about our coop. Respecting a simple majority vote on boycotts is an important way to practice living this democratic principle. I’m glad we have the chance to “protect the integrity of our coop” by restoring the simple majority for boycotts at the May general meeting.

In cooperation,
Kathy McCullagh

WANT MORE COOP MEMBERS? PASS BDS!

Dear new friends and fellow Coop members,

There are so many red herrings coming from a small contingent that keeps insisting we abandon a core cooperative principle: solidarity (source: International Cooperate Alliance). Our mission says we “strive to reduce the impact of our lifestyles on the world… We try to lead by example, educating ourselves and others.” BDS is a global, values-driven solidarity campaign that aligns with our mission. The worry that it would meaningfully shrink our membership is simply absurd.

I’m new to PSFC. I only joined after dragging my feet. I hesitated when I realized that the Coop sold Israeli-made goods. I finally joined because I saw PSFC support for CHIPS and because there was an active boycott group (PSFC4P). Their existence gave me confidence that the Coop could still be aligned with my values. If we pass a boycott, as other Coops have done, we will be more successful, not less. (See: UK Coop, Alleanza, Firenze, Green Hill)

When I talk to Park Slope neighbors about the Coop, three replies keep coming up: “It’s great, isn’t it?”, “I can’t get in. I’ve been trying for months (or even years)!”, or a cautious naming that the Coop does not support BDS. That’s telling.

Coops offer an alternative to corporate systems precisely because they are political by design: a space where everyday people collaborate to reimagine our ways of producing and consuming. Sustainable, less corrupted, and considerate of the lives of all involved. If we want PSFC to live up to our mission statement as “a part of and support[ing] the cooperative movement,” the choice is clear: rather than be driven by fear, we must center our values and enact boycott measures that reflect solidarity.

With hope, cooperation & solidarity,
Anonymous

Editors’ note: Per our policy the Gazette permits anonymous letters only in certain cases.

ANTI-ZIONISM IS ITS OWN FORM OF HATE

Dear Coop friends –

Have we really turned into a place where dozens of people applaud when someone says “Jewish supremacism is a problem in this country”? The applause is more troubling than the actual statement. Are people actually unaware of the history, implications and consequences of this racist statement?

I think we can now clearly see the toxic effect the anti-Zionist Israel boycott campaign conducted by Members 4 Palestine (M4P) has had on our community.

One of the M4P leaders walks around our Coop wearing a black T-shirt with the declaration “Antizionism Is Not Antisemitism.”

I agree. Anti-Zionism is its own form of hate. Antisemitism attacks Jewish assimilation (“you can’t live as a minority”). Anti-Zionism attacks the Jewish collective (“you can’t live as a majority”). Antisemitism libels Jews as “non-white race-polluters who infiltrate and subvert nations.” Anti-Zionism libels Jews as “white colonizers who enact Jewish supremacy and are inherently genocidal.” The message of each is: “Jews Don’t Belong. Jews Out.”

If this boycott discussion continues, if the Coop continues to provide a platform for anti-Zionism, then the toxicity, hate, mistrust and division will only increase. Our Coop is no place for anti-Zionist hate.

The Coop survives on cooperation; this is not cooperation. It’s time to end this now.

Barbara Mazor

DO THE RIGHT THING

Dear Coop members:

As a somewhat recent Coop member but a long-time Jew (78 years), I find the charges of antisemitism repeatedly hurled at those who support a Coop boycott of Israeli products to be at best ill-informed and at worst dishonest. I urge *Gazette* readers to join the large number of Coop members, Jews and non-Jews, who support the boycott and to vote for it at the end of this month. The supermajority requirement is just the latest anti-democratic move by the opposition; we mustn’t let these tactics prevent us from taking a moral stand against Israel’s genocidal policies.

Sincerely,
Robert Rosen

MEMBER-SUBMITTED ARTICLE: INTRODUCING TWO OF THE FOUNDING MEMBERS OF THE PLASTIC REDUCTION COMMITTEE

August 18, 2026



May 26, 2026

By Zoe Kaplan-Lewis and Lois Wilcken

Lois Wilcken

I joined the Coop in the summer of 1996, in part to learn about cooperatives and in part because I’m a longtime vegetarian with concerns about toxins in our food. I heard from friends that the Coop carried organic food at reasonable prices. As it turns out, toxic micro- and nanoparticles (MNPs) from plastic packaging shed into that nice clean food. I have some quality science I can share with you about that.

I have had a longtime, intuitive antipathy for plastics, and I can recall the rage I felt when my family got its first artificial holiday tree. I refused to decorate it—or even look at it. I go back to when we drank soda through paper straws, so I know what’s possible. We cannot turn back the clock, but we can do a lot better on plastic reduction than we are, and we can start with single-use plastics. We can do it in a cooperative spirit.



Dad shows Lois her first (real) Christmas tree.

Zoë Kaplan-Lewis

My love for food is inseparable from my experiences at the Park Slope Food Coop, like methodically picking out produce with my mom when I was a kid. It felt like the food was teaching me something—a deeper connection and appreciation for nature. Like that every orange is different—some have smooth skin, some have rough skin, and those will have different tastes. I still love to pick an odd-looking piece of fruit and wonder what it will taste like, how it will compare to the others.

My love for food expanded into an appreciation for growers when I worked on Grindstone Farm, a supplier to the Coop. If you want to read about my experience, check

out the *Linewaiters' Gazette* archives for an article my father wrote: "A Visit to Grindstone Farm," August 2, 2007.



Zoë at Grindstone Farm—a supplier to the Coop.

As plastic packaging became more common, I started to notice the plastic more than the food. It began as a sensory issue. Plastic packaging was difficult to open and created so much waste. As I learned more about the health hazards of plastic, I worried about it contaminating my food and affecting my body. I helped found the Plastic Reduction Committee because I believe we can make plastic-free, affordable food options more accessible to all Coop members.

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON PLASTIC AT THE COOP

We created a survey for members' feedback on plastic use at the Coop. Over 70% of those who have filled out the survey so far report being at least moderately concerned about plastic use at the Coop, and nearly 40% are very or extremely concerned. Plastic packaging is impacting members' buying choices. As one member shared, "I love berries but hardly ever buy them because of the plastic containers."

Thank you to the 400+ members we have heard from so far. We feel your enthusiasm for plastic reduction and love your many great ideas! If you haven't filled out the survey yet, please take a few minutes to do so. We are accepting responses through the end of May. Access the survey here.

Our email: ReducePlasticPSFC@gmail.com

Zoe Kaplan-Lewis and Lois Wilcken are two founding members of the Plastic Reduction Committee, established in 2025.