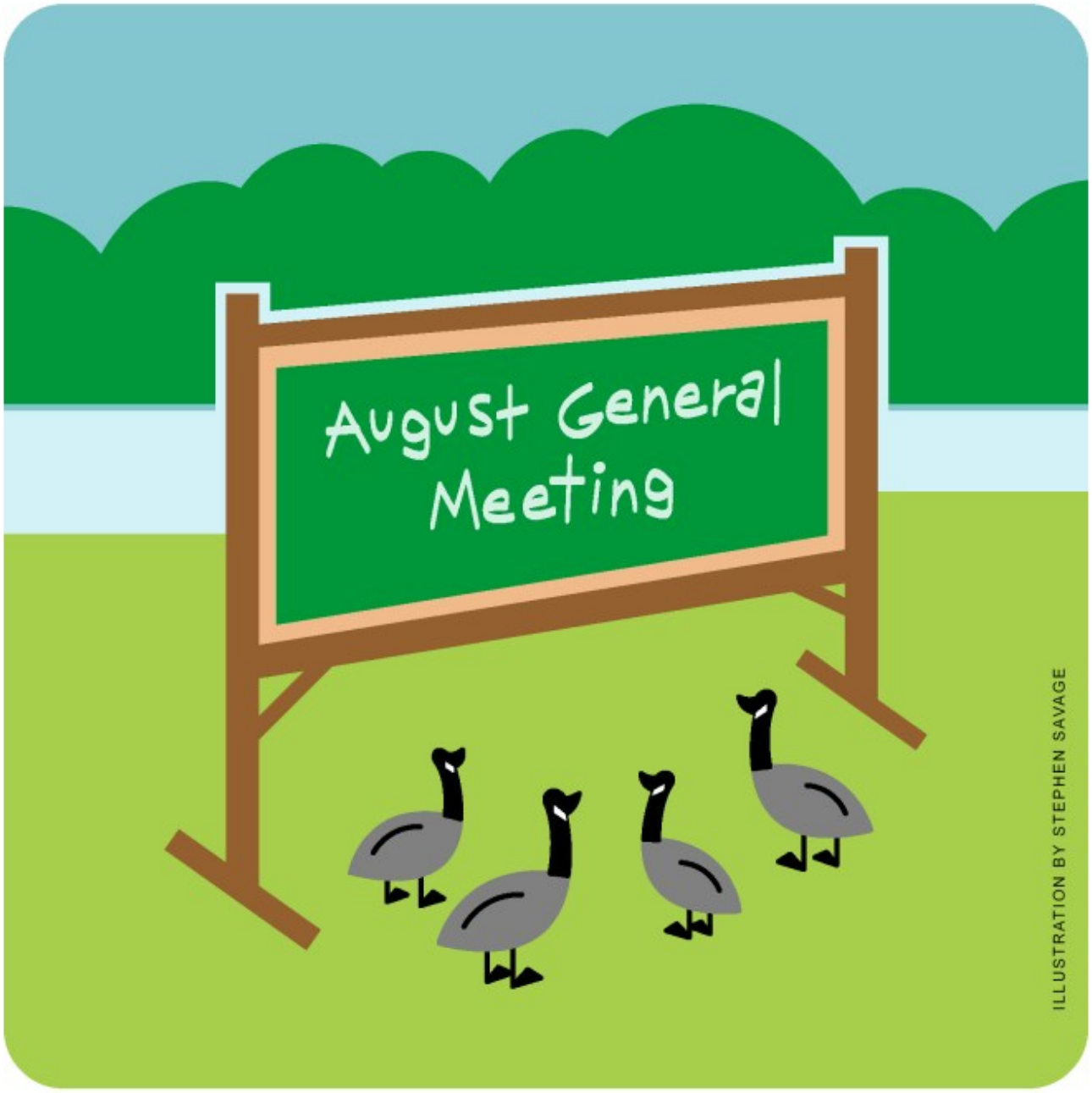
AUGUST GENERAL MEETING: NEW APPOINTMENTS AND DEBATE OVER HYBRID MEETINGS

October 7, 2025



October 7, 2025

By Dan Bergsagel

With the end of summer on the horizon, more than 100 Coop members attended the August General Meeting at the Picnic House in Prospect Park, where they approved a slate of new appointments. The Coop's board also debated a contentious proposal about moving toward a hybrid meeting structure next year.

OPEN FORUM

The meeting started with Open Forum statements. Some were straightforward, such as member requests to make the cilantro and parsley less wet and reinstate work credit for attending General Meetings.

Others were written statements that called on the General Coordinators to share the legal opinion that upheld the Coop's Board of Directors actions in the April 2025 General Meeting, when they voted to approve a referendum on hybrid meetings.

One member, Pam Thomas, presented an idea for a new kind of boycott, against LesserEvil popcorn, whose CEO, Charles Coristine, is the father of a staffer of President Trump's DOGE initiative, Edward Coristine.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Joe Szladek, the Coop's new general manager, reported that the Coop's year-to-date sales through July 20 were up 9.3 percent over the previous year.

He attributed the increase to longer opening hours, growth in membership and inflation. The Coop's gross margin—the money left over after subtracting the cost of goods from sales—increased by about $600,000. However, operating expenses have gone up a little more, by about $700,000.

The increase in operating expenses is partly related to one-off expenditures, such as the roll out of the new electronic shelf price labels, which make it easier to update prices, for approximately $50,000 and an increase in electronic payment service charges from our current provider of approximately $40,000.

MEAT REPORT

Masha Bezlepkina, the Coop's meat and prepared food buyer, presented a summary of recent farm visits, which were an opportunity to review practices at our supplying farms.

Interestingly, she noted that she is a vegetarian.

"So I knew nothing about meat, but I can differentiate between steaks now," she joked. "These farm visits were very educational for me."

The Coop strives to source meat from small farms and small farm partnerships. Bezlepkina explained that "the idea is that when you support small family farms, you allow them to make more profit. If farmers are more profitable that means they will care about the soil, and that means the animals will be healthy and the meat that comes from these animals will be more nutritional."

Following a member vote in 2002, the Coop can sell only 100 percent grass-fed and grass-finished beef. Bezlepkina reported that this typically requires around one acre per animal in a herd. For example, Slope Farms—a longterm farm partner of the Coop—has a herd of 100 to 120 animals located on its 97 acre farm.

Bezlepkina said a new partner for the Coop, Hickory Nut Gap Farms, sources beef from farms in North Carolina, Georgia and a few other southern states, where they can graze the animals year-round by moving them between mountainous regions in the summer, and coastal regions in the winter.

The farm partnership is interested in better making the nutritional case for its 100 percent grassfed beef. "They talk a lot about nutrition," Bezlepkina said. "However, they are very interested in actually testing it. They submitted some of their meat samples to organizations for testing, and they would like to develop standard tests." These tests will aim to demonstrate the nutritional benefits of grassfed cattle.

Member Robbie Gottlieb asked about whether the Coop was also selecting farms based on how they treat workers. Bezlepkina stressed that the Coop sources meat from “super tiny” farms, often only run by one person, where “these farmers are fanatics. It is really hard, but they love their jobs.”

The least encouraging outcome from the educational visits was on the outlook for the price of beef. “Usually the markets go up and then they come down,” said Bezlepkina, “but this market is just going up and up.”

COMMITEE REPORTS

International Trade Education Committee member Bart DeCoursy provided a brief narrative of what he believes are the negative impacts of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and its successor, the United States–Mexica–Canada Agreement (USMCA). He said the pacts have resulted in a “a dramatic increase in the agribusiness market share concentration and, as a result, small farmers were hit the hardest.”

NEW COORDINATING EDITORS FOR THE LINEWAITERS’ GAZETTE

The first agenda item was the election of Co-Coordinating Editors for the *Linewaiters’ Gazette*. Petra Lewis, an editor for the Gazette since 1999 and a member since 1994, explained the role. “Coordinating editors are responsible for overseeing the Gazette’s editors, writers, art directors, photographers, illustrators and production teams,” she said. “They play a crucial role in the quality, content and overall direction of the Gazette.”

Six candidates responded to a job posting in November, of which three were presented for election for the Co-Coordinating Editors roles: Eric Baldwin, Lily Rothman and Whitney Curry Wimbish. (Rothman is the managing editor of *Time* magazine.)

In response to questions about how the Co-Coordinating Editors would review guidelines for selecting submitted work for publication, Baldwin said they do not want to

“be the voice of the Gazette, but to guide that process. I believe that all of us are in agreement that that’s the role of an editor, to shepherd along your voices and make sure that this is a communal plural voice.”

All three candidates were elected.

ELIGIBILITY FOR POSITION OF TREASURER

Bookkeeping Coordinator Terry Meyers—along with Membership Coordinators Jana Cunningham and Yuwie Tantipech—led a presentation for the second agenda item: a vote to modify the language in the PSFC Guide to General and Annual Meetings to tighten the eligibility requirements to be elected as Treasurer of the Coop. The suggestion would specify that any candidate for the position “must, at the time of the election, be an upper-level management staff person who is chiefly responsible for the financial operations of the Coop.”

The item was presented as a common sense clarification of existing precedent: for the past 25 years of the Coop, the Treasurer has been an upper-level management staff person. Meyers said that “for the bookkeeping department in particular, having a member worker in the role of treasurer and thus not fully versed in all the financial aspects of the Co-op and only on site intermittently would be untenable. It would simply make the smooth functioning of the Coop impossible.”

Many members spoke in support of the motion from the floor; however, there were some comments with a note of caution. Adam Rosenberg was concerned that the candidate pool for treasurer would be overly restricted by the motion.

The proposed motion was voted by members to instead be considered an amendment to the Coop’s bylaws. It passed by a vote of 97 to 35, more than the threshold for a bylaw amendment, which requires a two-thirds majority.

HYBRID MEETINGS

Most of the drama occurred after the monthly meeting, during the board meeting that followed.

The procedural wrangling began with a complicated dispute between a Coop member and the Coop's corporate secretary about the previous monthly meeting's draft minutes, which led to those minutes not being approved.

The draft minutes will be amended and then presented again for a vote at the September meeting.

The discussion then turned to an issue that has roiled the Coop over the last year: whether to adopt a hybrid meeting format. Board President Brandon West took the stage.

"I know there's been a lot more conversation at the board meetings than usual, but I wanted to take this time to do this one more time and talk about something that's very pertinent and important to everyone at the Coop," he said.

West noted that a recent referendum about hybrid meetings reached a simple majority typically needed to pass motions, but fell short of the supermajority that would be needed to amend a bylaw.

West continued: "We need to be able to come to a decision about how we conduct a general meeting and it needs to not be weighed down by the conversation about BDS to the point that it shuts down our ability to function as a Coop."

BDS is the movement to boycott products from Israel, and questions have been raised at past general meetings about whether the hybrid meeting proposal is an effort to promote a BDS vote at the Coop.

West said that, after consulting with General Manager Szladek about the set of proposals, some Board members decided to make a motion to direct that general meetings be in hybrid format beginning in January 2026. West then explained a process for appointing a Hybrid Meeting Subcommittee to present the proposed details to the membership.

Szladek later clarified to the Gazette that his role was not in initiating or authorizing the decision, but in serving as a reference point for Board members on the governance lawyer's advice, as previously shared in an email to the membership sent on May 23 by Joe Holtz, Szladek's predecessor.

That email noted that such Board actions are legally allowable, though far outside the nearly 50 years of General Meeting precedent.

There was some confusion over the details for how this Subcommittee would be established, and concern about the limited consultation that the Chair Committee had in supporting this process. Members of the Chair Committee objected to the lack of consultation.

Fellow Board Members Tess Brown-Lavoie and Keyian Vafai, as well as Szladek, voiced support for the proposal, but collectively the Board agreed to continue discussion for another month and present the directive to a Board Vote at the next General Meeting, an approach suggested by Szladek.

Dan Bergsagel is a structural engineer from London. He likes to talk about the unexpected things hiding in plain sight.

MARCH GENERAL MEETING: SPRING PRODUCTS, BOARD CANDIDATES

AND MORE

October 7, 2025



April 22, 2025

By Zach Schiffman

As attendees entered the Picnic House on March 25, the sidewalk was flanked with members advocating for various causes, handing out info sheets about hybrid meetings or QR code slips introducing candidates up for election. On one side of the immediate entry, members offered “halvah from Israel,” while on the other, a table with a handful of food options featured literature with voices from Gaza. The competing efforts outside the Picnic House foreshadowed what would come in the well-attended meeting, with the issues spilling into nearly every aspect of the agenda.

OPEN FORUM



Members turned out for the March General Meeting.

The Open Forum began with a member asking the Chair Committee to clarify the policy around open forum rules, pointing out that past meetings have allowed topics unrelated to Coop operations, with speakers granted longer than one minute. Chair Committee member David Moss responded that the committee uses a document called the Park Slope Food Coop Guide to General and Annual Meetings, which does not limit topics to Coop operations. He added that the one-minute rule is interpreted flexibly, depending on the needs of a particular meeting.

While some brought up items of general interest to the membership—honoring the anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist fire, increasing the amount of meetings eligible for work credit, a plea to stop members from eating while working the checkout shift—speakers continued to challenge the transparency of the general meetings.

Coop member Josh Geller flagged how he was not on the ballot for the evening's dispute resolution community, while member Noah Potter questioned how his agenda item had not come up, despite requesting it to be expedited. "I've been ghosted. I think it's inappropriate," Potter said, in the first of many comments he would make throughout the meeting.

One member asked if the June 24 General meeting date could be moved to avoid conflicting with the New York State and City primary elections, but outgoing General Coordinator Joe Holtz said that wasn't possible due to the timing of the annual financial audit.



Member Adam Tager asked the candidates some questions.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Holtz, who also serves as Treasurer, reported on the four-week period ending 3/2/25,

with a presentation of the top-line details and a full report sent to members' inboxes the previous week. The report compared the first four weeks of the current fiscal year to the same period last year, noting that the previous fiscal year ended in January 2024. Holtz pointed out that last year's gross margin for this period was unrealistically high due to error, ("The first four weeks last year had an unreasonably high gross margin that was unrealistic. So I didn't bother to write it down because it sorted itself out by the eight-week statement.") but that this year's data was more reliable, with a positive swing in bottom-line income from negative $35,000 to positive $33,000. He noted a rosy outlook, with sales up 10.4 percent, and an increase of $182,000 cash on hand, the most vital asset in the Coop's finances. The overall financial stability of the Coop is underscored by the increase in base markup from 24 percent to 25 percent.

As of February 25, 2024, total liabilities were $5.22 million, while total member equity—including member investments, paid-in capital and retained earnings—was $8.64 million. He explained that member equity includes all member investments and the Coop's retained earnings, and that donated investments are categorized as additional paid-in capital. He walked members through other financial statements, including a cash comparison from the beginning of the fiscal year.

The final portion of the report introduced a new feature: comparing projections for the year with the annualized actual results for the four-week period. Holtz noted that the Coop had projected $62.8 million in annual sales, but if current trends continue, sales could exceed $63.8 million. Expenses and gross margin were also slightly better than projected. He clarified that these annualized figures are theoretical and could shift. "The slow summer months are not yet included and therefore the projected variance could be overstated," he said. Holtz closed by explaining how annualization works mathematically. A member then raised a concern about whether the financial statement had been received by email (it had), and another asked about the backlog of new member applicants.

GENERAL COORDINATOR REPORTS

Joe Szladek, one of the general coordinators, began with a few announcements. He shared that the April General Meeting will be held at a new location: The theater at City Tech, located at 275 Jay Street in Brooklyn. The venue change was made “to accommodate the anticipated larger audience” for the discussion and a vote on the hybrid general meeting proposal. Szladek also announced two staffing updates: Guillermo Rojas Hernandez has started as a developer/programmer, and Eric Alger, a receiving coordinator, has left Coop employment. Szladek reminded members that the Coop’s hours had been extended.



Produce Buyer Cecelia Rembert asked for feedback.

Cecelia Rembert, one of the Coop’s two produce buyers, shared seasonal highlights: “The citrus season is wrapping up, so if you have been enjoying the California citrus, do it now,” she said, highlighting the Oro Blancos and mandarins.

She mentioned that berries are “mostly out of Mexico except for some blueberries from Chile,” and while pricing deals aren’t yet available, “look forward to that in a month or two, maybe in April and going into May.” Apples are also winding down and will be replaced by New Zealand apples in the summer. Rembert also gave a grape outlook: Grapes are currently out of South Africa right now but will soon move to Mexican grapes, with California grape season beginning in June. Local vegetables are just beginning to arrive, including “some little gem lettuce from Lancaster next week,” and “head lettuces coming the week after that.”

She highlighted California-grown Delta Queen asparagus and noted they are “on the lookout” for sustainably harvested ramps: “There aren’t that many farms that do that that we feel comfortable with.” Fiddlehead ferns have arrived as “a good sign of spring,” and she reminded members, “Make sure to cook them.”

Rembert also shared that the Coop has seeds in soil right now, and a new pallet of soil will arrive mostly on Thursdays over the next six or seven weekends. The Coop will also be running its small plant program through the spring, which she described as “really fun.” During the Q&A, member Serko Artinian raised concerns about the freshness of the raspberries. Rembert explained: “Raspberries have the highest sugar content, and they mold the fastest; sometimes, there’s more age on them than we would like.” Another member asked about reduced plastic packaging and lower-quality organic produce coming to the Coop. Rembert responded, “No, I haven’t noticed that,” regarding suppliers dumping poor-quality items at the Coop.

Dory Kornfield, a member of the Equity, Access and Community Committee (EACC), announced the upcoming launch of the Coop’s first-ever member demographic survey. The goal is to gather basic information about the Coop membership through a quick 15-question, five-minute survey. She emphasized that this is “not a household survey,” it’s an individual survey for people 18 and over. The questions will cover neighborhood, household composition, disabilities status, as well as some general demographic questions: age, race, gender and sexual orientation.

“The reason we are doing this is because the Coop doesn’t collect any of this information and we don’t know who we are or enough about ourselves to know if we are as diverse and welcoming as we say we are,” she said, noting that the data could help “inform and guide policy decisions, processes in the Coop.”

She cited childcare as an example: “Childcare has been a hot topic for a couple of years now, but we actually don’t know how many members have kids.”

Dan Weiss, a member of the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) since 2017, gave an overview of the committee’s role and process. “The Dispute Resolution Committee—our charge is to facilitate the resolution of disputes among members.” Weiss explained the committee handles “complaints of member misconduct,” including “conflict, goods, shopping for businesses, masking violations, violations of personal space, intimidation, harassment, incomplete work on shift.”

He described the work as consensus-based and guided by “GM-approved resolution procedures,” with two membership coordinators serving as liaisons. Weiss emphasized the committee’s standards: “Our members approach their work without prejudice. We set aside our political opinions to ensure the fair and equitable process for our membership.” He also addressed a recent development: “This month, we made a difficult decision to halt certain types of cases involving political issues at the Coop. We’re in the midst of legal proceedings related to these matters.”

Until a “reasonable framework” is developed, those cases will remain on hold, which he said has precedent: “We’ve had legal proceedings in the past involving civil rights issues, and we’ve had to pause on those cases.”

Bart DeCoursy from the International Trade Education Squad (ITES) reported that the group had signed on to a USMCA review organizational letter ahead of the mandatory six-year review of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement. He outlined their hopes for renegotiation: “End the offshoring of good-paying jobs, raise wages, strengthen rural communities, stop abuses of big tech, make medicine more affordable.” DeCoursy also

warned of the Trump administration's announcement of "reciprocal tariffs" beginning April 2, including a "25 percent tariff on all goods from any country that imports Venezuelan oil." He joked, "Almost by threatening one thing and walking it back, he could manipulate the market, but who's to say—he also just might not know what he's doing." He encouraged members to follow the squad on Bluesky to keep up on all things international trade.

A representative from the Personnel Committee gave a brief update, noting that the committee currently has only five members instead of the usual seven. They announced that in the April 1st Gazette, there will be an ad asking for more members, and encouraged anyone with experience in employment law, general management, staffing or conflict resolution to apply. The committee is also continuing the search for a new general coordinator to replace Joe Holtz: "Four people have been interviewed, and there's one or two more to be interviewed, and that's ongoing."

DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE ELECTION

Existing DRC committee member Christopher Cox presented two new members up for election, Dorothy Lund and Olivia Goldberg, and four members who are up for reelection: Deb Magocsi, Lee Bantle, Melinda Daniels and Grace Protos. Cox noted that the committee received dozens of applications for these spots, "definitely more than we could handle," and emphasized that this was "just the first step in helping rebuild the committee to handle our caseload."



Dispute Resolution Committee candidate Olivia Goldberg addressed the meeting.

New candidate Olivia Goldberg shared her long-standing Coop connection: “My parents met at the Coop’s 16th anniversary party in 1989, so I might not actually exist without the Coop”—and cited her professional experience in early childhood education, the tree care industry and food service. Dorothy Lund, a law professor at Columbia University, touted her work studying how organizations manage conflict, saying her skills could help people “feel like they’ve been seen and heard.”

Returning members emphasized commitment, collaboration and deep Coop knowledge. Deborah Magocsi recalled joining when the committee’s name changed from “Disciplinary” to “Dispute Resolution” and said she strives to “listen with an open mind and an open heart.” Grace Protos said she valued being part of a process where “people feel as if they’re actually seen,” and noted that the work “comes in emails and phone calls and committee meetings” beyond standard shift hours. Melinda Daniels said she brings “patience, empathy and problem solving” and called it an hon-

or to continue the work. Helen Koh read a statement from Lee Bantle, who was absent, in which he said his goal was “to take down the temperature when members are in conflict.”

During the Q&A, members raised serious concerns about the committee’s recent decision to pause certain politically sensitive cases. One asked: “If a member punches me and said it’s because I’m calling for a boycott, will your committee decline to consider my complaint?” Other questions addressed transparency, the onboarding process, and whether incumbents disputed how only six candidates were advanced. In response, Magocsi explained: “We can only bring a couple of members on at a time because it is a lengthy onboarding process.” Current members of the committee emphasized their hope to grow the DRC to 16 members, doubling the current size. The vote followed, with all six unopposed candidates elected to the board.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATES

The Board of Directors candidates all presented statements explaining why they should be elected. Dan Kaminsky submitted a video statement because he was attending “the biggest event in the pizza world… the Pizza Expo.” In his recorded statement, Kaminsky said he has been a Coop member since 2018 and is currently completing a master’s in social work: “Quite literally, my master’s degree is in the study and practice of Cooperation.” Other candidates introduced themselves in person, including Serko Artinian, who presented data from his informal poll of members, attempting to find out what percentage of people exclusively shop at the Coop and identifying pain points that members raised.



Board candidate Taylor Pate spoke at the meeting.

Lynn Husum, a Carroll Gardens resident who successfully sold her company last year, said she hoped to use her business acumen to serve the Coop. Taylor Pate highlighted her experience on nonprofit boards and at other food coops: “I believe that the solidarity economy and Cooperative movements are how we build community power.” Brandon West, the current board president, stressed his “institutional memory,” having the best record for GM attendance of any current members. He also hopes to make the Coop more democratic, easier to understand and less volatile. Ralph Yozzo advocated for term limits and listening to members. Noah Potter invoked our current president, saying he hopes to “Make the Coop Cooperative Again.” Elizabeth Tobier, the current Coop secretary, emphasized the importance of attendance at the General Meeting in her statement.

During the Q&A, candidates were asked to share what makes their platforms unique. Pate noted her “deep knowledge of supply chains” and experience with leadership

transitions (something the Coop currently faces with the departure of Joe Holtz), while Potter sought to facilitate “intramembership communication” and update bylaws. Artinian proposed “building coalitions with other coops” and using tech to bring the Coop into the future.

Candidates also discussed Coop challenges. Tobier said the hardest part is learning “how to communicate Cooperatively.” West cited structural tensions: “There are now differing ideas about what the board should do.” Several, including Yozzo, stressed the importance of preserving the Coop’s Cooperative spirit: “It means we cooperate, not rip ourselves apart.”

Members also raised concerns about candidate affiliations. One member asked the candidates to disclose endorsements, with Potter and Yozzo confirming they were endorsed by Coop for Unity. Another member asked if candidates aligned with Coop Members for Palestine, which Tonier dismissed as irrelevant, adding that it “has nothing to do with being a board member.” Finally, candidates responded to a question about hybrid meetings. Most supported the idea, while Tobier reiterated her view that board members should remain neutral on any upcoming votes or agenda items: “Our personal feelings as members would not come into play.”

A question about favorite Coop products offered a reprieve: For Serko Artinian, the heirloom organic oranges and for Ralph Yozzo, the gluten-free bread that’s not frozen—“Literally my family went up to Chatham, New York where they come from and we bought it there and it costs less at the Coop than right at the warehouse.”

Noah Potter refused to answer, “Just one? I don’t know if I can do that.” Lynn Husum shouted out the chickpea salad and the quiches that are no longer sold—“What happened to the quiches?” Taylor Pate said the White Mustache yogurt. West and Tobier both highlighted the beer selection.

Zach Schiffman is a social editor and writer at New York *magazine, comedian and Park Slope local.*

A SODASTREAM MYSTERY, HR REFORMS, AND MELONS GALORE! NOTES FROM THE JULY GENERAL MEETING

October 7, 2025



By Liz Welch

September 4, 2024

The evening of Tuesday, July 30, was hot and sticky and my first time attending an in--person Park Slope Food Coop General meeting in *years*. (The last time had been pre--pandemic, back when the meetings were held at Congregation Beth Elohim.) This one was at the Picnic House in Prospect Park which meant walking through a cluster of trees, via the 5th street entrance, and crossing the busy bike and runners path to the stately brick building where the assembly started promptly at 7 p.m.

General Meeting Committee chair David Moss welcomed everyone with a land acknowledgement (Lenni Lenape) and the Open Forum began, where members were given the opportunity to ask questions. Queries ranged from: “Why are we still using clam shell containers and plastic bags?” to “Why aren’t these meetings hybrid?”

The former inquiry echoed many members’ concerns about how to lower the Coop’s dependence on single use plastic, from packaging to produce and bulk bags. The latter is another perennial issue in our post-Covid era. Several speakers chimed in to state that Zoom is a dependable technology and would foster higher participation in GMs. Making at-home participation would also be a thoughtful offering to members who cannot travel (into the park and across a bike lane no less) to in-person meetings. Most members who commented were in favor of a hybrid option, prompting Moss to explain that the Coop’s bylaws require in-person meetings. He assured the group that this concern and the one about plastic use were ongoing issues that the Coop will continue to address and explore.

> “OUR INCOME DIPS THROUGHOUT THE SLOWER SUMMER MONTHS, BUT IS EXPECTED TO BOUNCE BACK BY THE END OF THE FISCAL YEAR.”

The Treasurer’s Report was the next item on the agenda. General Manager and Treasurer Joe Holtz explained why the Coop shows less income this year than it did last year. “Markup was raised from 21% to 25% during Covid,” Holtz explained. “Then, just before the beginning of the current fiscal year, we lowered it 24%.” In a follow-up, he explained that the power to lower it was given to the General Coordinators by the General Meeting. Holtz also noted that the Coop’s income will bounce back by the end of the fiscal year and explained, “Our goal is to make food affordable, and break even.”

Other highlights from Holtz included news that the Coop has engaged a company to study and draw a design for a new heat pump system to replace the air conditioner

originally installed in 1991. The cost for this will be approximately $700,000. And overall, the Coop's cash and cash equivalents equal $8 million. "To be prepared for the next pandemic," Holtz added, "we need between 7.5 and 10 million."

During the General Coordinators' reports we learned that summer is a great opportunity for teens to get work experience at the Coop. The minimum age is 14 and working papers are necessary. Attendees also heard about a fleet of new shopping carts and salad bins (to prevent wilting), as well as a "findability" search for the health and beauty aisle, which you can access on the price look up computer on the side of the ice cream case. Basically, you can type the name of the product you are looking for and it will tell you the precise location.

Then there was a pop quiz: how many kinds of melons were sold in late July? Correct answer: 14! Melon types included Snow Leopard, Cavaillon, Picasso and four different kinds of watermelon. A member asked: "What happened to the vegan gluten-free pound cake?" Alas, Margaret Palca, who made those and other beloved baked goods, has retired and closed her beloved Columbia Street waterfront bakery after 40 years!

Another fascinating factoid: the Coop hands out 3,000 masks weekly. Attendees learned this when Holtz explained the snafu the last week of July when a delayed mask delivery resulted in mask-only Wednesday and Thursday shopping days not being honored.

The last item to bubble up for discussion was why the Coop no longer sells SodaStream products. The answer has nothing to do with boycotting Israeli products, Holtz explained. "[The company has] been denying credit to us—and barely communicate nor respond to the issues we raise." Hence, the Coop has parted ways with the manufacturer.


AUGUST 15TH
DEADLINE FOR
SODASTREAM DEPOSITS
LOOK OUT FOR NEW LOCAL BRAND:
STAY CARBONATED
AMY'S BREAD
PHOTO BY JENNIFERMACFARLANE

There was a shoutout to Matt Hoagland who, after 19 years as a membership coordinator, has been hired as a general coordinator. This announcement was followed by a supercool presentation of an interactive map called Seeding Solidarity, which shows every co-op, community refrigerator, garden, credit union and other "cooperative and democratic entity" in New York City. This presentation was made by a representative from Cooperative Economic Alliance of New York City (CEANYC). Those interested in participating in the project can learn more by emailing mapcoopnyc@gmail.com. Their next meeting is on October 8, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

All of the above were the equivalent of warm-up bands to the evening's rousing headliner: "Urgent Resubmission of Personnel Committee Proposal."

Membership Coordinator Karen Mancuso took the stage with Membership Coordinators Jana Cunningham and Mae Frankeberger, who together had collected 50 staff signatures in favor of a proposal that outlines a new approach to Personnel Committee responsibilities. To recap: "Area Coordinators" is the umbrella term for staff who are not General Coordinators. Receiving Coordinators, Membership Coordinators, Bookkeeping Coordinators, and the IT Department are all considered Area Coordinators. The General Coordinators are the supervisors of the staff of approximately 75 Area Coordinators. The Personnel Committee (PC) is composed of PSFC members who are responsible for hiring, firing and disciplining the General Coordinators. This group operates with out-of-date policies that are deficient in addressing the current workforce. When the committee was formed in 1981, there were only 1,000 members at the Coop. Now that the Coop has vastly grown—in membership and staff—the authors of the proposal laid out a need for functional HR practices and policies. As Mancuso explained, "without an empowered PC, the Coop is unable to fairly mediate any grievances."

> "THE COOP IS THIS AMAZING PLACE WHERE WE ALL LOVE TO SHOP AND WORK AND COME TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY. WE NEED TO PROTECT IT."

During the subsequent Q and A session, most of the members who commented agreed that we must protect our staff at all costs. During the vote an overwhelming majority shot up their hands in favor of this new proposal.

As Mancuso stated, “the Coop is this amazing place where we all love to shop and work and come together as a community. But to this group, it is our employer and our livelihood. We need to protect it.” The motion was passed unanimously.

Liz Welch is a journalist, memoirist and book collaborator.

MAY GM: MEMBERS DIVIDED ON ISRAEL, ALIGNED IN DISDAIN FOR PLASTIC WASTE

October 7, 2025



By Leila Darabi

The May General Meeting kicked off on May 28 at the Prospect Park Picnic House with a charged open forum focused not only on members' differing views on the Israel-Hamas War, but on how those views are communicated. The chair committee reminded members throughout the evening that singling out other members in their statements would not be tolerated and repeatedly asked members to refrain from shouting out comments from the audience.

Members also discussed a proposal to bring back the print edition of the *Linewaiters' Gazette* and a proposal to create a new committee to reduce the Coop's plastic use.

OPEN FORUM

During the open forum, several speakers called on fellow members to embrace civility. (Note: Coop members are not required to share their full names during the open fo-

rum.)

Seth Pollack shared that he felt some materials being circulated ahead of the Park Slope Food Coop Board of Directors elections reflected the division among members and stated “the very, very least that I feel we can do is answer the call of civil society groups and join the BDS movement” referring to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign.

> ONE MEMBER REPORTED THAT LABELS OF ISRAELI PEARLED COUSCOUS HAVE BEEN DEFACED ON THE COOP SHELVES AND CALLED THE BEHAVIOR “PETTY AND UNCOOPERATIVE.”

Jonathan T. claimed that another Coop member had been called a Nazi by another member and that “hate has no place here and neither does BDS.”

Amos reported that labels of Israeli pearled couscous have been defaced on the Coop shelves and called the behavior “petty and uncooperative.”

Several members addressed the ongoing debate around whether the Coop would need to change its bylaws to permit virtual or hybrid meetings and voting by proxy.

Dena Beard stated that she works for the Tow Center for Performing Arts at Brooklyn College, a potential venue to host a GM that included a BDS discussion or vote, and that she felt threatened after receiving a voicemail from a member warning her that hosting such a meeting would incite violence. Tensions peaked when Beard said that one voicemail had come from a member whom she mentioned by name.

MJ reported that Professor Michael Haber had, pro bono, drafted a legal memo after reviewing the Coop’s bylaws and that in his opinion the Coop would not need to change bylaws to legally host hybrid or virtual meetings.

Alex also commented on the benefits of virtual meetings, noting that virtual meetings and votes worked well throughout the pandemic.

In response to the open forum, General Coordinators offered some clarifications:

Joe Holtz shared that the Coop's lawyer had reached the opposite conclusion and thought the bylaws would indeed first need to change before a virtual or hybrid meeting could be considered. He noted that the Board had received both decisions.

> GENERAL COORDINATOR ELINOR ASTRINSKY REPORTED THAT THERE HAS BEEN AN UPTICK IN NON-MEMBERS ENTERING THE STORE AND CAUTIONED SHOPPERS AND WORKERS TO KEEP THEIR VALUABLES CLOSE AT ALL TIMES.

Ann Herpel also clarified that Brooklyn College had offered to host a GM where a BDS vote could take place but that, before signing a contract, the General Coordinators asked the agenda committee to contact the four members who had previously submitted items related to a vote on the boycott of products from Israel to confirm that these items could be brought to the May GM. Herpel shared that:

"All four members declined the May 28th date and instead requested to postpone their items until after another pending agenda item about changing the 75% supermajority currently needed to approve a boycott was discussed and voted on," and closed stating: "Though it took more years than many would have liked, the [General Coordinators] did fulfill our commitment to secure a location."

TREASURER'S REPORT

Holtz also reviewed the 12-week financial statement shared ahead of the meeting covering the period from April 21 through May 28, 2024. He shared that there has been a 7.65% increase in average weekly sales compared to the previous year, but that he

expected this average to fall to around 5% by the end of the year.

Holtz also took questions, clarifying that the Coop currently marks products up 24% over wholesale, a 1% decrease from the previous year, which impacts profits.

COORDINATOR'S REPORTS

General Coordinator Elinor Astrinsky shared what she called a "nuts and bolts" report with updates across a range of topics. Among these, she reported that there has been an uptick in non-members entering the store and cautioned shoppers and workers to keep their valuables close at all times. She also stressed than anyone working a shift should wear close-toed shoes.

> ALEX GODIN SHARED THAT "THE COOP FEELS MORE AND MORE LIKE A WHOLE FOODS AND LESS LIKE A COMMUNITY," LAMENTING THE LOSS OF FREE CHILD-CARE AND THE STORE BULLETIN BOARD.

Herpel read a statement from the General Coordinators taking issue with how their views were characterized during the April GM during a vote on the Coop's HR policies.

COMMITTEE REPORT

Bart DeCoursy of the International Trade Education Squad gave the lone committee report sharing awareness that hearings are ongoing to settle Mexico's ongoing dispute with the U.S. over corn. Mexico refuses to import genetically modified corn, which accounts for most corn grown in the U.S.

NOSTALGIA FOR A PRINT EDITION OF THE *LINEWAITERS' GAZETTE*

For the first of two agenda items for discussion, Alex Godin shared that "the Coop feels more and more like a Whole Foods and less like a community," lamenting that

the loss of free childcare and the store bulletin board during the pandemic also contributed to this feeling. The proposal: reinstate a print version of the Coop's newsletter, the *Linewaiters' Gazette.*

Eric Lewis, a former co-coordinating editor of the *Gazette* voiced enthusiastic support and suggested investigating ad sales as a way to cover costs and testing out a new print version for a year to see what worked. The *Gazette*, he said, "is a place for budding journalists… and deepens and strengthens the sense of community [at the Coop]"

Coop member Morgan also shared, in support of the proposal, "print ephemera is an amazing way to create an embodied sense of community."

Coop member Kian asked what the cost would be to reinstate a print edition. In response, Herpel shared that in the last 30 days, the online *Gazette* has received 31,000 views of articles and 10,000 visitors. She also said that to revive the print edition, the Coop would need to replace several computers, resubscribe to Adobe software and cover the cost of printing.

Staff member Jana Cunningham shared that the Coop is working on adding classified ads to the digital *Gazette.*

Coop member Yasmine also voiced support, noting that digital news can be changed but that "in print, the work of journalists is set in stone."

TRACY FITZ PROPOSED THE CREATION OF A COOP CLIMATE CRISIS COMMITTEE AND COLLECTED EMAILS FROM MEMBERS WHO WOULD BE INTERESTED TO JOIN.

In response to a question about the kind of paper used to print the *Gazette,* Herpel clarified that the prior *Gazette* was printed on post-consumer newsprint by a union print shop.

The second and final agenda item, introduced by Tracy Fitz, proposed the creation of a Coop Climate Crisis Committee (4Cs) and collected emails from members who would be interested to join.

“In 2019, the Coop went through 49,000 plastic produce bags a week. We now use 57% of that, 28,200 produce bags a week because we have clamshells instead!” In a lively presentation, Fitz pulled sample bags and plastic clamshells out of a bag and waved them around, inspiring laughter across a room that an hour earlier had felt quite tense. “We’re all addicted, [to plastic]!” she cried. A suggestion to wrap General Coordinators in plastic as an artistic action drew applause.

During the discussion that followed, no one disagreed, but members shared additional thoughts on ways to reduce plastic.

Zoe added that compostable bags also include fossil fuel and aren’t necessarily a safe alternative.

Sunny shared that she had a similar idea to create a committee and asked interested members to email plasticfreefoodcoop@gmail.com to join, noting that she was open to joining forces and creating a single Coop Climate Crisis Committee.

Lois Wilken urged people to read her recent *Gazette* submission “Love Letter from a Mermaid: On Plastics and Your Health.”

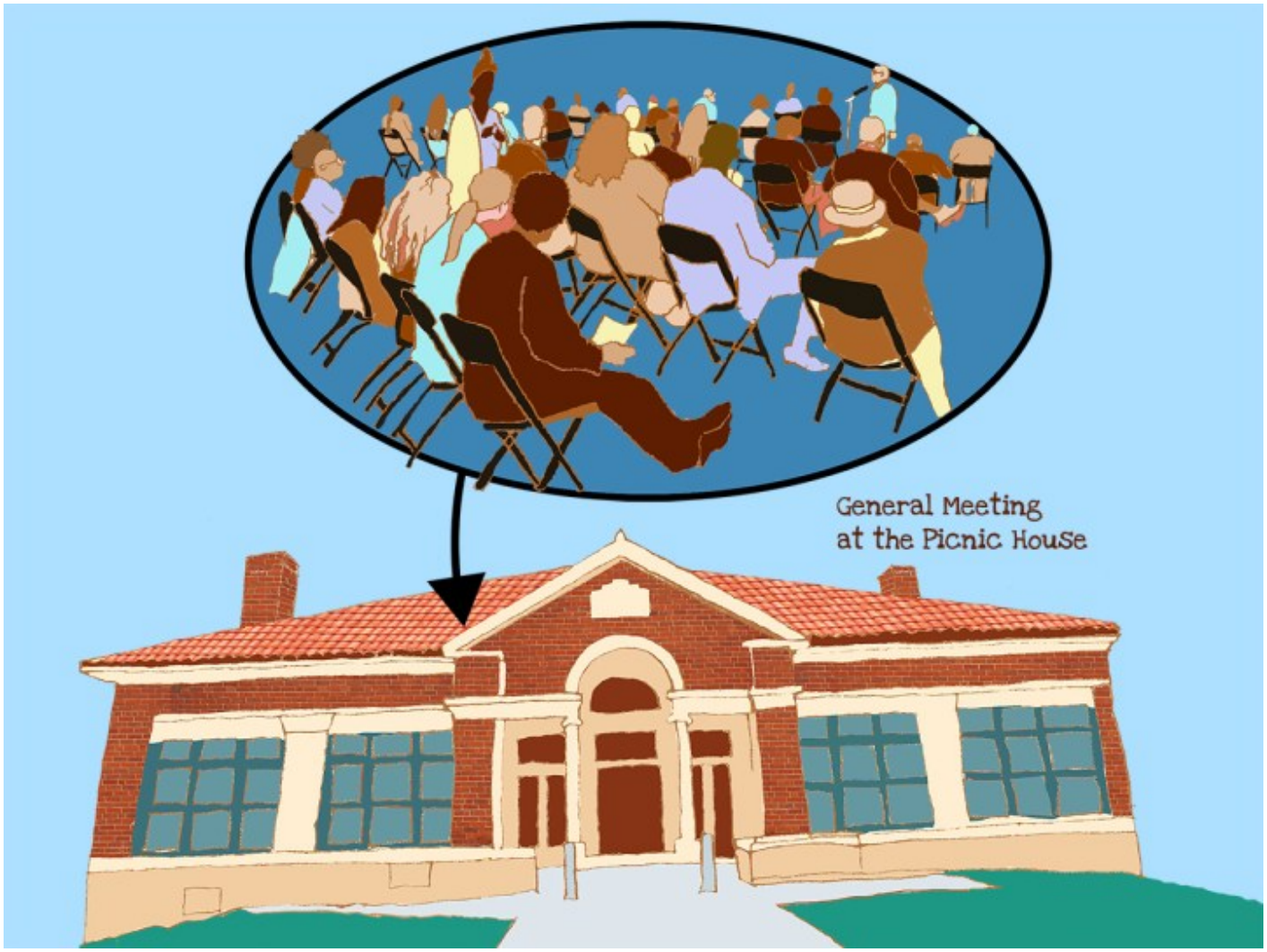
For historical context, Holtz shared that the Coop had in the past banned plastic produce bags, then brought them back. “There’s a lot of education to do,” Holtz said. “We also sell something in aisle four to wash and reuse plastic bags.”

CLOSING

Board member Brandon West called a vote to close the meeting during which the board voted to accept the minutes from the April GM.

TWISTS AND TURNS OF ROBERT'S RULES AT THE FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING

October 7, 2025



By Jess Powers

The General Meeting (GM) held its February 27 gathering in person at ShapeShifter Labs, a performance space diagonally across the street from the Park Slope Food Coop. Roughly 132 members attended that rainy evening.

OPEN FORUM POLITICALLY CHARGED BUT RESPECTFUL

The Open Forum began with questions about securing a larger meeting space, so the

Coop can hold a vote on a proposal to boycott Israeli goods. Past votes drew large crowds and led to a rules change requiring a supermajority for boycotts. The current venue doesn't have sufficient capacity to house the vote.

> FLEX WORKER CAROL WALD'S REMARKS ELICITED BOTH APPLAUSE AND A REMINDER FROM CHAIR COMMITTEE MEMBER IMANI Q'RYN THAT APPLAUSE AND BOOS ARE DISCOURAGED AT THE MEETING.

Carol Wald, a flex worker, acknowledged strong feelings on the subject as "a proud Jew, whose grandfather and uncle were killed in Auschwitz. The rage and grief and trauma that propels so many to work against the boycott," she said, "[is what] compels me to work with Palestinian people against genocide." She called for mutual respect as debate continues. Her remarks elicited both applause and a reminder from Chair Committee member Imani Q'ryn that applause and boos are discouraged at the meeting.

Coop member Sophie Glickman spoke of a strategic boycott as the civilian death toll in Gaza exceeds 30,000, many of the victims women and children. She continued that Israel is using starvation as a tactic—a war crime—and that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has openly stated his opposition to Palestinian statehood. She did not wish to "[make] fellow Jewish Coop members uncomfortable" but inquired about the location for the vote.

Outspoken Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) critic, Jesse Rosenfeld said that Coop members who support Palestine support BDS, and that BDS supports violence. He stated that the BDS website itself describes "armed resistance" and "any action, whether one considers it legally or ethically justifiable." [Note: This reporter's review and fact check of the BDS website did not find these words; rather, "non-violence" and opposition to "discrimination, including anti-Semitism."]

Rosenfeld continued, “October 7, rape, infanticide… when will the Chair Committee clamp down [against BDS]?” His comments were also met by applause—and another reminder from Chair Committee member Q’ryn about applause and boos.

Brian Shuman, a food processor, expressed appreciation for Carol Wald (who spoke earlier), even though he disagreed with her position. He supports Anera (American Near East Refugee Aid), which provides immediate emergency aid and he “opposes BDS, which does not acknowledge Israel’s right to exist and is anti-Semitic.”

In response, someone in the audience called a point of order, asking whether clarification can be made if a point made is based on fact or opinion.

GENERAL COORDINATOR UPDATES ON SPACE FOR BDS VOTE, CHILDCARE AND FLYERS IN THE STAIRWELL

Ann Herpel provided updates as one of five General Coordinators. Regarding the larger space for a BDS vote, “we are making progress,” she said. The Coop is negotiating with a venue, and although an agreement isn’t finalized, “it looks promising… hopeful,” she continued.

> “CHILDCARE WILL NOT BE RETURNING TO THE COOP,” ANN HERPEL ANNOUNCED. THOSE INVOLVED HAD BEEN WAITING TO HEAR BACK FROM A FINAL INSURANCE BROKER AND WERE UNSUCCESSFUL IN SECURING COVERAGE.

“Childcare will not be returning to the Coop,” Herpel announced. Those involved had been waiting to hear back from a final insurance broker and were unsuccessful in securing coverage. The “landscape around insurance has changed dramatically,” she continued, and “would now require a license to operate [childcare].” The Coop will repurpose the room for operational needs.

In another shift from pre-pandemic times, the stairwell leading up to the office used to be covered in flyers announcing things like shows, rooms for rent and kombucha SCOBYs to share. That practice is not going to return, Herpel declared. The New York City Fire Department (FDNY) and New York State Insurance Fund (NYSIF—which the Coop gets inspected by) declared that fire exits have to be "unobstructed."

Herpel is working with the staff liaison to the *Gazette* to create a digital listing for community events, things for sale or trade, etc.

TREASURER'S REPORT

General Coordinator Joe Holtz presented the preliminary 52-week Financial Statement, provided online with the agenda for the GM. He explained that the financial statement needs to be audited, and there are usually not many changes.

> ONE OF THE "EXTRAORDINARY THINGS" ABOUT THE COOP, GENERAL COORDINATOR JOE HOLTZ EFFUSED, IS THAT WE HAD A COMPLETE INVENTORY TURNOVER OF 62 TIMES THIS YEAR. PLENTY OF STORES HAVE TURNS OF 14 TIMES A YEAR.

One of the "extraordinary things" about the Coop, Holtz effused, is that we had a complete inventory turnover of 62 times this year, exceeding the year prior. Plenty of stores, he continued, have turns of 14 times a year. "Our dried mangos are less hard," he mused.

REPORT ON NEW LABELS AND FUTURE NCG SAVINGS

General Coordinator Joe Szladek explained that new electronic shelf labels appearing in the produce aisles (and soon to spread throughout the store) will provide more accuracy in pricing, as prices change often. This is due to purchasing from a vendor at a different wholesale price or when United Natural Foods, Inc. (UNFI) has a deal on some items.

Szladek continued that he hopes the electronic shelf labels will save a few hours a day of staff time daily by not having to reprint and post new labels. He also expects the Coop to implement a National Cooperative Grocer program called Coop Deals after the deployment of electronic shelf labels is complete throughout the store. With Coop Deals, members will see savings on particular items of 20–30% off every two weeks, from Kettle brand potato chips to yogurt. Currently, staff are "too busy to handle all the labels" in order to comply with requirements NCG has set, but electronic shelf labels will solve some of those issues. Additionally, utilizing NCG resources would save staff time previously spent negotiating prices.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE PRESENTS REVISED RULES

Deb Magocsi, Helen Koh, and Grace Protos from the Dispute Resolution Committee presented the sole proposal on the agenda, "Revisions to the Procedures that Govern the Coop's Disciplinary Process."

Magocsi explained that the original rules were written in 2005, revised in 2012, and again in 2018. The nature of disputes has changed and committee members have "seen many opportunities to make the process better," she continued. She described the process as unnecessarily adversarial and legalistic, and the intent of the new rules to be "more reflective of a cooperative institution."

> DEB MAGOCSI FROM THE DISPUTE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE DESCRIBED THE HEARING PROCESS AS LONG, "ARDUOUS AND PAINFUL FOR EVERYONE," "HUMILIATING FOR THE ACCUSED," AND SHARED THAT THE "HEARING GROUP FELT IT WAS A WASTE OF TIME AND ENERGY."

The disciplinary process involves the Dispute Resolution Committee, which investigates complaints and recommends actions; the Hearing Administration Committee, which organizes and administers hearings; and the Hearing Officer Committee, which

runs hearings. In summary, when the DRC receives a report of member misconduct, it assigns a member to investigate, and the full committee decides by consensus how to respond, typically a warning letter—but potentially the maximum penalty: being asked to resign. See also: How the Dispute Resolution Process at the Coop Works; Inside the Coop Hearing Process; and Coop Member Expelled After Repeated Mask Wearing Violations.

The goal, Magocsi explained, is to use "more accessible language," to have a "clearer definition of member misconduct," and to recommend "mediation as the first option" thereby "[avoiding] hearings and judicial style process." Hearings would still be available to members wishing to appeal serious DRC decisions, but the rule change would mean instead of the hearing group, three members of the HOC would determine whether the misconduct took place, rather than Coop members selected at random.

Magocsi described the hearing process as long (up to five hours), "arduous and painful for everyone," "humiliating for the accused," and shared that the "hearing group felt it was a waste of time and energy."

Jesse Rosenfeld then proposed an amendment to "various '-isms'" in Article III sec D Part 6, which reads: "Racist, sexist, homophobic, ageist, discriminatory, or other harmful conduct." He said that "harmful conduct is a good start" but urged the members to "add to it" after the "Trump administration normalized a lot of hatred." Specifically, he asked to add: "xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia."

Member Abdi, who is Muslim and Somali, countered that he "[feels] protected by the amendment as is." Others chimed in for or against. A vote on the amendment was held and the "nays" had it.

The meeting then returned to discussion of the proposal of the Committee. George, a floor monitor, argued that we "need a process that allows more informed, deliberative decision-making."

There was a move to table the vote, followed by a Robert's Rules check. (Robert's Rules of Order are the parliamentary procedures used by many voluntary organizations for governance of meetings.)

A point of information was made and Koh explained that the agenda item was presented for discussion at the previous meeting. A vote to table was held, and the "nays" had it again. Discussion continued on the proposal.

David Moss of the Chair Committee argued that it's a "good proposal and there's no f—ing way to get a group of people to read 20-page documents before they come to the meeting." Member Jim concurred that there are "a lot of holes in the democratic process overall," but he believed that it's important to be fair to those who invested time in the agenda item. "In a democracy," he continued, "it's on us to be informed and to come to the meeting prepared. As we move forward, there are a lot of discussions to be had about procedures." Dan agreed and reminded the room of the process already in place: Vote on the item tonight, propose an amendment if there are any issues, and resolve those later.

In the end, 115 voted in favor of the new guidelines and five opposed. The Coop board accepted the advice of the members and the meeting was adjourned.

Jess Powers works in emergency management and enjoys adventures in nature and cooking. She's on IG @foodandfury.