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April GM

By Zoe Singer

With more than 200 Park Slope Food Coop members in attendance, the April General Meeting (GM) via Zoom reflected the anticipated restoration of member labor in July, and concerns about how to return the Coop to sustainability. Attendees voted in a new committee member and gave preliminary support for the Hudson Valley Farm Coop.

Dan Hegwood of the Chair Committee opened with an overview of procedures, and announced that the Chair Committee is seeking new members who “reflect the diversity of the Coop.” Those interested should email psfcchair@gmail.com. The meeting then turned to an open forum.

GM Procedures

Member Rachel Porter said an item she proposed didn't get put on the GM agenda because she wasn't able to pick up the phone when the Agenda Committee called. “This process needs to be revised,” she concluded. Member Cheyenna Weber reiterated a prior suggestion that the Agenda Committee share out the proposed items they receive. “This could ease a lot of conflict.” Maitefa Angaza, co-chair of the Diversity and Equality Committee, announced that the committee retains its purpose but is now the Equity, Access, and Culture Committee.

Shopper Requests

A member requested unit prices for salad in clamshells and Elinoar Astrinsky, General Coordinator, said this will be possible when the new inventory system is complete in one to two years. Similarly, we could highlight some non-produce prices online at this time, but the whole list, which can reach 10,000 items, is “not currently technologically possible—though many have asked!” Another member called for a reminder that the two numbered spots in front of the Coop's main entrance should be filled by the first two line waiters. Everyone else should join behind the sign located further up Union Street.

Treasurer's Report

Joe Holtz, Coop General Manager, General Coordinator, and Treasurer, presented preliminary financial statements for the eight-week period ending March 28th, 2021. During this period the gross margin (net sales minus the cost of goods sold) totaled \$1.325 million, and expenses were \$1.92 million, resulting in a negative bottom line of \$571,540. The difference would have been greater by \$200,000 had we not raised the Coop's mark-up from 21% to 25%.

Personnel accounts for 88% of our expenses, and is significantly higher due to the pause on member labor. Meanwhile, average weekly sales, compared to the prior year, are \$356,000 lower, a dramatic reduction. A second Federal Paycheck Protection Program loan of nearly \$1.7 million, received in March, has helped with cash flow, and we began the year with \$2.4 million carried over from the prior year. However, if nothing else was to change, at the current rate of loss the Coop would run out of money in 38 weeks. Holtz described responses that are planned or underway:

- Bringing back member labor to reduce personnel costs;
- Re-starting new member orientations;
- Encouraging members who have stopped shopping at the Coop to come back; and
- Continuing to pursue federal Employee Retention Tax Credits.

Other initial responses include increasing shopping hours after member labor returns and further increasing the number of shoppers allowed in the store, safety permitting. Other options (described as “things we'd rather not do,” and won't initiate without future discussion) include:

- Another campaign to encourage increased member investments;
- Raising the required member investment;
- Reducing expenses related to staffing; and/or
- Taking on debt through a new member loan program, mortgaging the building, or securing a line of credit.

Holtz closed by saying “do you know a member who hasn't been shopping? Urge them to shop!” Member questions elicited the following responses:

While average transactions are up to \$116 per shop versus \$68 two years ago, we are seeing about two-thirds as many unique shoppers (vs. 2019), resulting in the significantly lower margin described above. Another price mark-up could help, but Holtz questioned whether some members would be able to afford this and whether some would shop elsewhere. We could also consider a targeted price increase on “luxury” products.

Facilities Upgrades

Elinoar Astrinsky, General Coordinator, described recent improvements to air quality in the Coop including installing UV lights in our air handlers, and improving our fresh air dampers. Next, we're installing a large awning in front of the store, which should decrease rainy day crowding.

Resuming Member Labor

General Coordinator Jess Robinson reported that the return-to-work survey garnered a robust 4,500 responses, one-third of active members. Results will be on the website in the coming weeks. When member labor resumes mid-July, the Coop will once more rely entirely on members to staff the store, so an accurate member count is crucial.

Creation of a virtual new-member orientation is in process. Before the pandemic there were times, like Friday and Saturday nights, when it was hard to fill shifts. Robinson encouraged members to “plan ahead, think about whether you can work, including possibly at some of your less favorite times. And if you're not able to work, please go on temporary or permanent leave.”

To sign up for shifts, go to <https://www.foodcoop.com/>, login to Member Services, select Virtual Office, then sign up using the Shift Calendar.

Dispute Resolution Committee Election

Grace Protos of the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) described the committee's purpose: to review, investigate, and resolve issues related to member misconduct such as harassment, violence,

time theft, or vandalism. The process for bringing on a new member includes an interview by the committee, an election at the General Meeting, and a period of mentorship. A DRC term is three years, with an option to run for re-election. At any time, members of the committee can review each other anonymously.

Protos introduced candidate Elena-Margarita McCalla, who then spoke, describing that she first became a Coop member in 2008, and is currently employed part-time at the Coop in Produce and Receiving. McCalla's background is in conflict resolution and mediation and she has co-trained NYPD lawyers and others in de-escalation skills. She is interested in joining the DRC “because disagreements are a part of everyday life, as is striving for resolutions and moving forward.”

When asked whether she would use mediation techniques if elected, McCalla replied that it would depend on the situation, procedures, and whether mediation was requested. Asked whether being a temp worker at the Coop has influenced her, McCalla said “there definitely is conflict that happens on the floor. I usually don't get involved but it has made me aware that very slight things like someone bumping someone could escalate. But my interest in joining the DRC stems more from my background in conflict resolution.”

McCalla was approved with 164 YES votes and 0 NO votes.

The Hudson Valley Farm Coop

The final item on the agenda was a proposal by Jonathan Farber who introduced himself as a member of the Coop for almost 30 years. He presented what he described as “agricultural triage meets hippie Coop capitalism”: A proposal to sponsor a new separate business called the Hudson Valley Farm Coop (HVFC) that will acquire, improve, and operate 15 farms for the benefit of its shareholders and the wider community through a \$30 million budget raised via direct public offering.

The Coop would not assume liability for this separate cooperative corporation or be obligated to enter into any agreements with the HVFC. Up for vote was approval of a Coop committee of up to nine members as well as the General Manager (Joe Holtz) to draft the HVFC business plan, prepare the financial offering, and recruit additional project sponsors from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. The proposal includes a provision for the Coop to invest up to \$10,000 in shares (expected to earn dividends) at the discretion of the committee.

Farber described the HVFC as a way to invest in creating “safer and saner” farming systems in “response to climate change and the dire state of agriculture.”

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**See Candidates for
the Park Slope Food Coop
Board of Directors
on Pages 2 and 3**

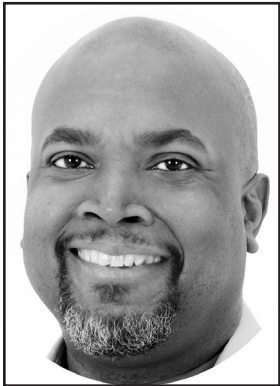
Candidates for Board of Directors of the Park Slope Food Coop, Inc.

Two three-year terms on the Board are open.

Voting for the Board of Directors candidates will happen by proxy beginning in late May or in person at the Annual Meeting on June 29, 2021.

You will have the opportunity to meet the candidates at the March 30 General Meeting. Candidate statements follow.

Frank Bradshaw



Why does Frank Bradshaw want to be on the board...I've done just about every job at the Coop.

From my early days almost 15 years ago in Receiving, working under Alexis' guidance (RIP, I miss you brother), I began to get a deeper understanding of how important our

food and where it comes from is.

When I moved over to Orientation, I kept one foot in the Receiving world as I tried my hand at everything.

The only thing that I haven't done is Office work and Food Processing (I couldn't cut a straight line in cheese if you gave me a guillotine).

Then the pandemic hit.

Much to my wife's chagrin, I dutifully shopped. Even when the line snaked around to President St. and I brought my own folding chair for the 2 hour line, I shopped.

And it's clear...

We need fresh eyes, a fresh vision.

Our Coop is in trouble and we have to change course. Find new and fresh ways.

I want to be a catalyst for some of that change.

Part of that fresh vision is one of a different perspective.

Our Coop should reflect the racial, gender, gender identity, age and socio-economic diversity that is our Coop.

We talk about inclusion...

Let's not talk about it, let's be about it!

I am ready to help our Coop grow out of the ashes that is the post-COVID-19 world we are in and become the phoenix we can be!

"E pluribus unum sumus" ■

Timothy Hospodar



When I joined the Park Slope Food Coop 10 years ago, already there were debit card transactions, cart return, and beer for sale. This is to say I did not witness our Coop's significant growth over its first 40 years. I acknowledge, nevertheless, the countless changes implemented at our Coop that have trans-

formed it into a large thriving market and secured it as a hub of community that I have come to know and cherish. Noting that our dear Coop has been disrupted by these unprecedented times, I anticipate further change, and I seek a participatory role

during our Coop's post-pandemic growth.

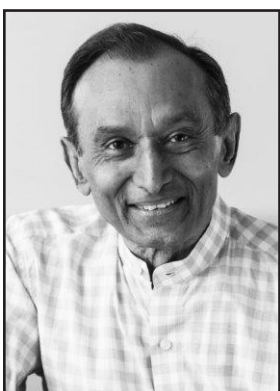
When I'm not shopping or returning to work on an early-morning truck-unloading shift, I work for a big auditing firm. I am not an accountant, however, I am a computer scientist. In other words, I'm an analyst who is passionate about process, order of operations, and continuous improvement. And in the last decade, I have familiarized myself with how clients are leveraging "Data and Analytics" to drive change and growth. That's been my day job, first at tech companies and now at a consultancy.

I've been lucky to have been placed on an advisory team that works closely with the C-suites of many of my employer's clients, mostly in the Fortune 500. Running our firm's Innovation Center, the team hosts collaborative sessions charged with facilitating clients' data-driven decision-making at the executive level. As part of our firm's advisory practice, client solutions might employ "workforce

analytics," feature "intelligent revenue forecasting," or simply parlay "market signals" to transform a client's operating model. I recognize that the job is loaded with consultant slang and that implementing these solutions at the Coop isn't possible, yet I'm excited for the Coop's continued innovation to carry it through the challenging times.

My role at work found me in Chicago for a year and naturally missing the Coop. When thinking about being back in New York, my thoughts often returned to our Coop as one place I would hasten to visit. I think there is an analogy here, trusting that many members of the Coop are currently missing the Coop. Even as an active shopper, I am eager for the Coop's return and confident that the current detour will route us to a better, even innovative, place. This returning will require enormous direction by the General Meeting, and I request the opportunity to represent our Coop's members at our meetings. ■

Viren Mehta



My Park Slope Food Coop membership of over a decade continues to be a privilege. Not only do I benefit from excellent groceries, but more importantly, I have become a part of our community of diversity, cooperation, and participation. My professional work in global healthcare leads me to meet and work with many interesting people, but meeting

Coop members with a wide range of interests and

experiences from so many walks of life is especially enriching. My experiences include work on boards of for-profit and not-for-profit organizations in several countries, and now I would like to bring these experiences to the Coop as a board member, and do so while enhancing our unique governance and culture. The shock of the pandemic on the Coop makes this a delicate moment in the life of our very special organization with unique reputation and a strong brand—a real force not only in our community but throughout the state, and in many parts of the country. I would like to contribute to strengthening it further.

The pandemic has made me realize how much I look forward to and value the time I spend working at the Coop, and more recently I've been grateful for the opportunity to volunteer with the excellent staff on sev-

eral evening shifts to help keep things running smoothly and efficiently as we work towards a return to normalcy.

The Coop is required to constitute a board of directors, but we have made it into a special strength in an unusual forum for governance guided by the Coop members' input. I would strive to strengthen these democratic processes while ensuring that the board fulfills its fiduciary obligations, including all the advice and input from members so that the Coop fulfills its potential. Every member knows and expects that each board member acts for the benefit of the Coop as a whole. I as a board member would vote to ensure that the Coop continues to thrive without undue financial or legal risk. I will be honored to join the Board of Directors with its diverse talents and dedicated people, and I request your support. ■

SEE MORE CANDIDATES ON FOLLOWING PAGE

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Why the Coop? Farber replied that "we're already a robust institution with a progressive membership, we ... vote with our grocery dollars, forks, investments, and membership, and we have incredible talent in our members and staff to build a better world."

Member concerns (Is this venture capitalism? Shouldn't you center racial equity?) prompted Farber to describe that the direct public offering is an Obama-era financial tool enabling a company to sell stock directly to inves-

tors, and that farming is in decline because farmers face financial challenges. Farber also described a commitment to "racial, economic, and animal justice." Co-sponsor Onika Abraham, the Director of Farm School NYC, added that "holding cooperative values is anti-capitalist in its own right," and that the co-sponsors share the value of being "really intentional around racial justice."

Asked whether the HVFC would compete against farms with which the Coop has relationships, Farber replied "The market is wide open. The Coop is very important for mid-size

farmers." The HVFC would include many such farmers as advisors, all of whom "have some interest and skin in the game." Farber described plans to start ancillary businesses to house farm workers and provide services like fixing tractors or butchering meat as "a boon for the region."

Member responses included the following:

Susan Metz raised a procedural concern regarding requirements for new Coop committees. Joe Holtz confirmed this, but said a vote for "provisional approval" could take place. Metz also stated: "this extravagant, brilliant,

and huge undertaking is not right for the moment."

Similarly, Rachel Porter, who founded and runs the Coop's Revolving Loan Committee, said: "It's enormously difficult to run a coop. I don't understand how we could do all this work of developing the business plan, etc., with just nine members."

Elizabeth Peters said: "I appreciate the passion and I deeply support regenerative practices. I worked on a farm for many years... This work is important but difficult. It's a large leap of faith and maybe not the moment for the Coop to

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Tomek Miernowski



Dear fellow Coop members! My name is Tomek, and I submit my nomination for a Board of Directors position as an anti-capitalist interested in the scalability of our Coop model to both

smaller and larger communities, particularly into our civic systems, for example on a city council district level. Despite facing enormous challenges, our Coop's swift and effective response to the Covid pandemic shows that it is a structure capable of adaptability, and its long history shows that the social fabric it creates is lasting. In a time that demands systemic change in so many arenas, I'm interested in learning the most I can about the ins and outs of

our Coop structure and operation. I think it provides a shining example of what can come from a community acting for its mutual benefit, without financial profit motives.

As a professional musician, I bring a team-oriented enthusiasm for learning and service, and as someone who dearly loves the Coop and depends on it almost daily, an eagerness to be helpful however I can. Thank you! ■

Shayna Moliver

I'm Shayna Moliver and I am running for a seat on the Coop Board of Directors. As other Board members have said, the role of the Board is to affirm the decisions of the membership. Not to make our Board of Director's voice heard, but to make your voice chart our path forward.

Food has always been my most enduring passion. Raised by New Yorkers who were members of coops and Health Clubs, I grew up learning to love and appreciate the community that seems to naturally

come with a focus on healthy food. My first job was on a farm and I spend time each month volunteering to help feed the food insecure in our community. Since the farm, I've worked in conflict resolution and counseling, and in operations for education and tech. I've learned how to stay calm and empathetic, work with and encourage diverse points of view, and balance the needs of competing interests. I'm even-tempered, able to think critically, and not afraid to question.

I believe Board Members should be a conduit for the voice of the overall membership. The Board's work is to ensure that we continue to financially, legally,

and cooperatively comply with the charter of the Coop. The Coop, like our City, is in uncharted territory. We're going to need every member to help keep the Coop afloat in these turbulent times. While working FTOP shifts as a walker during the pandemic, I've had the opportunity to speak with a lot of you, and hear our hopes and fears for the future. Despite everything this past year, every member has expressed deep gratitude for the Coop's perseverance. We've relied on each other and that, to me, has always been a part of the Coop's enduring legacy. I'm excited to see us weather this storm together. ■

April GM

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be putting resources into this."

Ned Lochaya was enthusiastic: "This is a miniscule cost compared to the operating budget of the Coop. You've really thought this through. How could you carry this to other places if it goes forward?"

Clare Mifflin said "I realize how important regenerative farming is and think this is a small investment for the Coop. I can't see why we'd be against exploring this option more. It's a tough time for the Coop but an important time to make change, and I think the co-supporters strongly show that this has been thought out."

Coop member and staffer Kris Marx emphasized that members of the sponsoring group should not stand to benefit from the initiative, and that before the Coop exercises the option for a \$10,000 investment, the GM should vote on a business proposal.

Joe Holtz closed: "I'm co-sponsor-

ing for two reasons that started in the 1970s. Our Coop has been an active participant in, international coop principle #6, which is 'cooperation with other cooperatives.' And we've supported local farms. The HVFC combines these. As General Manager I'd be on the temporary organizing committee. If the Coop does vote to get involved, I will advocate that the business is a true coop for both workers and investors, that the land remain farmland in perpetuity; and that we not release funds until those issues are resolved."

Following reading of the full published proposal, 91 YES votes and 74 NO votes were cast, resulting in provisional approval for four months.

The standard Board of Directors vote was held, resulting in approval of the Dispute Resolution Committee election, the Hudson Valley Farm Coop preliminary approval, and the prior GM minutes, all by votes of 5-0. The meeting adjourned with the click of a mouse. ■

PSFC JUNE 2021 ANNUAL AND GENERAL MEETING Tuesday, June 29, 7:00 p.m.

- Meeting presented on Zoom. You must register for the General Meeting to receive the Zoom invite: <https://www.foodcoop.com/gmsignup/>
- You must be a Park Slope Food Coop member to attend.
- Times in parentheses are suggestions. The Chair has the discretion to change the order of the agenda or the time allotted to each item.

I. Member Warm-up and Chair Committee Introduction

II. Annual Meeting

Item 1: Presentation of the Audited Financial Statement

Report and Vote: Representatives from Cornick, Garber & Sandler, LLP, the Coop's outside auditing firm, will present the audited financial statement for the fiscal year ended January 31, 2021. Members will have the opportunity to pose questions to the auditors following their presentation. Members will vote whether to accept the audited statement.

Item 2: Board of Directors Election

Election: Two three-year positions are open for the Board of Directors. The candidates will make a brief presentation to the meeting prior to the vote.

III. General Meeting

Item 1: Renewing the Services of the Auditor

Proposal: To retain the services of Cornick, Garber & Sandler, LLP, to perform an audit of the Coop for the fiscal year ending February 2, 2020.

Item 2: Election of Officers

Election: Following the election of members to the Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting, the General Meeting will elect Officers of the Corporation: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary. The President and Vice-President shall be, at the time of election, members of the Board of Directors. The positions of Treasurer and Secretary can be elected from the membership at large.

IV. Board of Directors Meeting