

## **Draft Minutes of the Tuesday, March 31, 2026 Park Slope Food Coop General Meeting**

The monthly General Meeting (GM) of the Park Slope Food Coop (PSFC) was held at the Prospect Park Picnic House and over zoom on Tuesday, March 31, 2026, beginning at 7:00 PM. An announcement about the scheduled meeting was posted on the PSFC website, [foodcoop.com](http://foodcoop.com), inviting members to participate. Meeting materials were made available to all Coop members by email before the meeting, as well as screen-projected during the meeting. Chair Committee members Josef Szende and Maribeth Batcha and served as chair and secretary, respectively. Genevieve Yue acted as parliamentarian. Charlie Rogers and David Moss were at the table. Sofia Montgomery served as zoom moderator. 234 members were in attendance in person; 782 people attended over zoom.

### **Open Forum**

Issues raised by members included: how our common appreciation of good food should not be broken by broaching the subject of Israel/Palestine, an issue where our actions will have little effect; how an ICE attorney has joined the Coop: what are we doing to get them out; a process question about how much time is available on the April agenda to discuss weighty topics; encouragement to use AI to develop an inventory of what is in stock for members to access; a request for the legal opinion regarding how the Coop can have hybrid meetings without amending the bylaws.

Note: After the first issue, Chair Josef Szende instructed members to use the open forum for subjects not related to the items on the agenda.

### **Financial Report and General Coordinators' (GC) Reports**

General Manager (GM), General Coordinator (GC), and Treasurer Joe Szladek presented an overview of the Coop's fiscal year. (The numbers may change slightly after the auditor completes the audit.)

He described how most grocery stores rotate stock on 12-15 times per year whereas the Coop rotates stock 67 times per year. Our net sales increased 5.3% between last fiscal year and the current fiscal year (from \$60.0M to \$63.2M) while our operating expenses increased 6.6% (from \$12.2M to \$13.1M). At the end of the previous fiscal year, the Coop's net income was a loss of \$310,311; this year we are closer to breaking even with a loss of \$226,698.

Three hundred members work per day but paying people is still the Coop's highest cost. There was a 5% cost of living adjustment this year. The Coop's healthcare provider anticipates that the costs will greatly increase this year but there have been some changes to the plan to mitigate this and the Coop is monitoring it. Other costs of note this year included: consultant fees (to conduct the search for the new GM, to provide IT services after a staff retirement, to provide financial counsel after Joe Holtz retired, and to provide executive coaching to the new GM), business insurance, debit card processing fees, legal fees, and electronic shelf labels. Masks cost \$15K. Money was earned from sources including the National Co+op Grocers (NCG) membership (\$104K) and interest-bearing accounts (\$289K).

The Coop ended the fiscal year with \$6.4M in cash and \$1.6M in cash equivalents (there was a change in accounting practices from 2025 where 6 month or 1 year CDs are now considered cash equivalents; the total amount is consistent with the previous fiscal year) which gives the Coop flexibility in case of an emergency. (The Coop spent \$7M during Covid and we don't anticipate that grocery stores would receive the same level of government support in a future pandemic.) We owe \$2.7M to our suppliers. Members' shares account for another \$2M. The

Coop is in good financial shape but we need to: manage expenses carefully, use member labor as much as possible, streamline processes, and increase sales by providing options in underserved categories like sandwiches and salads (Court Street sandwiches account for 1% of total sales) and expanding hours.

Membership asked questions about: whether the Coop tracks donations or support provided to other organizations like CHIP (cash donations are made to OrganicEye, The Cornucopia Institute, and Food Co-op Initiative; food donations are made to CHIPs daily but not tracked; 5% of member labor is also donated to CHIPs; and \$10K in member donations collected for fellow members affected by the pause to SNAP benefits was donated to CHIPs after SNAP was reinstated); whether the Coop benefited by extending the hours from 8 P.M. to 9 P.M. Monday-Saturday (sales increased 2.5% year-over-year); how much of the \$30K increase to legal fees was from members opposed to boycotting Israeli products (disputes in the Coop have resulted in legal fees to process the disputes properly through the Dispute Resolution Committee; the Coop is facing a number of lawsuits, not all are related to the boycott); and whether any of the consulting fees were related to the boycott (no).

### **Member Committee Reports**

Lois Wilcken from the Plastic Reduction Committee reminded members to take [the survey about plastic reduction](#). The link is in the Linewaiters' Gazette (LWG). They are posting flyers and planning to table.

Bart DeCoursey from the International Trade Education Committee (ITES) discussed the Supreme Court's recent 6-3 decision declaring Trump's tariffs unconstitutional. Fedex and Costco are suing the federal government to get reimbursement from the tariffs. Temporary tariffs are still in place under the authority of section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974. Costs of groceries will not go down; we are involved in a new war that is causing the cost of shipping to increase. ITES will be screening the documentary WTO/99 at the library.

### **Agenda Item 1: Presentation of the Board of Directors Candidates and Q&A**

The following members presented themselves as candidates for the Board of Directors and answer questions from the audience: Serko Artinian, Joe Holtz, Tim Hospodar, Rex Ledesma, Barbara Mazor, Taylor Pate, and Ralph Yozzo. All candidates are running for one open seat on the board.

Artinian described the coop as a second home with unrealized potential, said that it is a problem that members don't buy all their groceries at the coop, and that members should vote with their carts. Pate expressed her commitment to the solidarity economy and said that cooperative decision-making strengthens democracy. Mazor emphasized fiduciary responsibility. Ledesma talked about empowering community through convenience—he made and maintains the foodcoop.news website—and transparency—mentioning the produce search catalog and historical price comparison available on his site. Holtz said he believes in direct democracy and wants to keep the Coop flame going. Yozzo said he voted for a vote on BDS; he also wanted to share a video about the danger of AI. Hospodar, as a current member of the board, directed members to read his letters and candidate statements in the LWG.

Membership asked questions. Candidates were each restricted to 3 minutes of speaking time in total. Questions asked of the candidates included:

- What they thought was the most important issue for the next 50 years:
  - Mazor: Rebuilding a sense of community and trust. People should meet with

each other. Coop for Unity has been begging Park Slope Food Coop Members for Palestine to meet for two and a half years.

- Holtz: The Coop should pay a tremendous amount of attention to the International Principles of Cooperation beginning in 1844 in England.
  - Yazzo: Low prices and high quality food through cooperation.
  - Ledesma: Sustainability of our community, embracing technology, and modern conveniences.
  - Pate: Ensuring the Coop remains affordable for people who need affordable food; a strong participatory democracy, where cooperative principles are respected and not abused.
  - Artinian: Focus for the next five years is unifying our membership and educating our users to explain how tools like AI and AGI could impact our community; preparing our infrastructure to be more resilient to these technologies and to empower our members.
  - Hospodar: Last mile transportation—how long before trucks stop being allowed on Union Street, before the BQE goes away, before we start to think about coastal locations?
- What can we do to make sure elections going forward are free from tampering? (Note: This relates to concerns about hybrid meetings and also followed a question about Holtz's use of the Coop's email account in his capacity as GM to share his opinion about board candidates on May 23, 2025 for which he stated he received no complaints.)
    - Artinian: We should double check the vote counts.
    - Ledesma: There should be a committee to monitor the elections.
    - Yazzo: Voting analysis is a good idea because there used to be only 200 votes.
    - Hospodar: Fairness of elections is not just "one member, one vote." (Hospodar explained that when he abstained from a vote in a board meeting, it was perceived to be improper and he was chastised by the GM at the time.)
  - People are promoting BDS. Why do you think it is in the best interest of the cohesiveness, fiduciary health, and future of the coop?
    - Pate: The boycott of Israeli products is not the first, it is the 20th. Nothing more needs to be said when there is a genocide being committed against Palestinian people.
    - Artinian: There is more than just a genocide of Palestinian people. We should follow the laws of the Coop.
    - Mazor: The boycott is bad for the Coop. A synagogue was targeted with explosions to kill Jewish babies. BDS accuses Jews of being uniquely evil. This is libel about Jews. People will leave the Coop or stop shopping.
  - On the questions of whether the candidates would respect the democratic decision of the membership regardless of the issue or outcome and their ideas to make the Coop more affordable:
    - Ledesma believes in the self-determination of the Coop and says we need transparency and price-tracking to let people know if they are getting a deal or not.
    - Serko would stand behind the process. He would work together with other coops here and abroad to exchange ideas.
    - Pate would vote with the will of the membership. She would encourage more bulk-buying and benefiting from our scale and our relationships with local producers.
    - Yazzo said he could not answer the question because of the fiduciary responsibility.
    - Mazor emphasized fiduciary responsibility and said the Coop could improve

affordability through increasing the volume of sales by strengthening the community.

The Chair reminded members attending online that they would be removed from the meeting if they continue to use emojis.

A member asked if candidates supporting BDS could raise their hands; only Pate raised her hand. A member asked what a board that doesn't honor member decision-making would do to the sense of cohesiveness and community; no one answered and the candidates waived their remaining time.

## **Agenda Item 2: Boycott of Israeli Goods at the Park Slope Food Coop**

Alyce Barr, Naomi Brussel, Osama Aduib, Mirene Arsanios, and Rachel James presented a proposal:

*Until Israel complies with international law in its treatment of Palestinians, the Coop will not sell goods produced in Israel (pre-1967 borders) or in Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.*

The members presenting the proposal shared excerpts of the Coop's Mission Statement, reviewed the history of boycotts at the Coop, described the character of Israel's occupation of Palestinian Territories, compared the Israel's laws and government to those of apartheid South Africa's, and detailed the genocide of the Palestinian people that has been directly supported by the US government and our taxes. They provided a short history of the Boycott, Divest, and Sanction (BDS) movement, describing it as a non-violent tool to apply economic pressure on Israel in solidarity with Palestinians.

Membership asked questions including why the proposers chose to focus on this genocide and Israel specifically. In response, the members presenting the proposal encouraged fellow members to suggest products for boycott and referenced the [February 25, 1988 Linewaiters' Gazette](#) article where Joe Holtz argues that it makes sense to decide whether to engage in a boycott when another institution asks and not to institute boycotts ourselves. When asked about how the proposers think about how divisive the proposed boycott seems to be, they responded that the discussion ignores what it is like for Lebanese, Yemeni, Iraqi, and Palestinian members of the Coop. A member said that the boycott ignores Palestinian violence toward Israelis and that the issue is very complex. A member asked whether we could create guidelines that would make a state eligible for a boycott and said it would be ridiculous to propose a boycott against Israel when all nations could be boycotted. A presenter replied that they support a boycott because Palestinians are their people and they believe no one should be subjected to an apartheid and oppression, not their generation nor their parents' generation, and that economic pressure works.

Membership commented on the proposal. Comments in support of the boycott included: that the distinction between this genocide from others is that Coop members cannot stop funding the genocide as US taxpayers but we can boycott the products; that the boycott is more important now as we have Israel's War on Iran and the occupation of southern Lebanon; that no other country gets \$4 billion of aid from the US government, making it a unique and critical issue about fair trade and ethics; that Coop members should listen to Palestinian-American members and the descendants of Jim Crow telling us to stop selling Israeli products; and that the boycott is not an anti-Jewish thing—it is opposing state horror.

Questions included: how a boycott would affect the ability of the Coop to stock kosher products and products related to Jewish holidays and what Israeli products the Coop sells. A

list of Israeli products was shared: produce (peppers, persimmons, etc.); Al Arz tahini; Dorot Gardens brand frozen herb/garlic cubes; Ecolove shampoo, conditioner, and hair mask; Equal Exchange olive oil; Mooosh plant fiber snack; Osem Bamba peanut-flavored corn puffs; Seed and Mill tahini; and Soom tahini.

Concerns raised included: that while Palestinians deserve to be free, a boycott makes the Israeli government stronger and we should support people on the ground and buy products specifically made by Palestinians and Israelis together instead; that people do not join a coop because of products not sold and that it is wrong and detrimental to ignore the feelings of Jews; that members might leave the Coop because we “fly the BDS flag”; that there is not a clear off ramp for when the boycott would end; how troubling it is that people are being unpleasant and that members are taking offense at the sight of certain Jewish symbols and products that a member uses; and that anti-Zionism is being conflated with anti-Semitism.

GM Joe Szladek observed that [there was a vote to have a referendum on a boycott of Israeli products in 2012](#). He asserted that we should follow that process again: that the boycott should be voted on as a referendum to get the broadest sense of support.

### **Presentation of Minutes**

Secretary Rebecca Schoenberg-Jones presented the minutes of the February 24, 2026 GM for approval. Meeting minutes were approved by general consent.

### **Board of Directors' Meeting**

Brandon West chaired the Board of Directors' meeting. All board members were present: Tess Brown-Lavoie, Tim Hospedar, Joe Szladek, and Keyian Vafai were present in person; Lynn Husum attended virtually.

All members of the board voted in favor of accepting the advice of the members on the minutes of the February 24, 2026 General Meeting.

There were no other Board actions.

The meeting concluded at 9:17 PM.

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Rebecca Schoenberg-Jones, Secretary  
Park Slope Food Coop  
Brooklyn, NY