

How to Develop an Agenda Item for the General Meeting

The Agenda Committee was created to improve the operation of the General Meeting (GM) as a forum for discussion and decision-making among members of the Coop. To that end, the Agenda Committee assists members in preparing discussion items or proposals for presentation at the GM.

You have an idea, a suggestion, a plan that you believe would make the Coop a better place: friendlier, more economical, healthier, smoother running, ecologically sounder, etc. You want to bring it before the membership at a General Meeting (GM), but are not sure how. There is no one perfect way to do this, but listed below are some steps that have worked well before.

Write out your proposal or discussion item and check it for clarity.

See if you can state the substance of the idea in three sentences. Here's a simple example:

Proposal: To paint the wall next the checkout counters light blue.

Explanation: Many psychological studies have shown that color can affect mood, and blue is known to lessen tension and anxiety; light blue will still reflect a lot of light and not cause a waste of electricity. This will make for a happier shopping and working experience for Coop members.

Seek background information.

The Coop coordinators will welcome your call and are an excellent source for historical information and context. They may be able to refer you to other helpful people or sources of information. Not every change requires a vote of the GM; a coordinator might be able to implement your idea. Find out if the subject of your proposal has already been, or is about to be, addressed by the staff.

Find out if a similar proposal has already come before the GM.

If it has not, perhaps the GM previously considered a similar plan. If it has already been on the agenda, is there a basis for bringing it up again?

Publicize your idea.

Announce it at your squad meeting the next time you work and seek their input. Write a letter or article for the *Gazette*. The publication schedule appears in the center of every issue. You may have to start a month or more in advance to

reach interested members before the GM. The more far-reaching or important the issue, the earlier you want to start your efforts to communicate.

Ask for feedback.

Call up some (Coop) friends and ask them their reaction to your idea. They may offer you advice to make it a stronger and clearer proposal. They may even join you at the GM.

Seek out others who may agree with your suggestion.

For example: talk to the Construction Committee about light blue paint. Or, talk to checkout workers who would be affected by the change.

Submit your agenda item to the Agenda Committee.

A calendar of General Meetings and Agenda Committee meetings appears in the center pages of every *Linewaiters' Gazette*.

Blank Agenda Item Submission forms are available at the Coop in the literature rack in the elevator lobby, from the Coop's website – www.foodcoop.com – and from the Membership Office. You may drop your item in the mail slot just outside the Coop door, mail it to the Coop or bring it in person to the Agenda Committee. The Agenda Committee will confirm the receipt of your item.

The committee reserves time at their meetings from 8:00-8:15 PM to receive new agenda items in person, during which you will be able to give a few words of explanation. The meetings are closed to new agenda proposals after 8:30 PM.

GM agendas are prepared on the first Tuesday of the month by the Agenda Committee for the General Meeting that is held on the last Tuesday of the month. The agenda will be posted on the Coop Community Corner bulletin board the day after the AC's meeting and will appear in the next *Gazette*, as well as on the website (www.foodcoop.com).

You are not required to be present at the Agenda Committee meeting in order for your item to be considered for placement on a General Meeting agenda (most people are not), but you must leave a phone number where the committee can reach you on the night of the committee meeting.

You must be present at the General Meeting on the night that your agenda item is scheduled for discussion to present it to the members in attendance.

The Agenda Committee will attempt to place your item on the agenda of the next meeting (or the meeting you request) whenever possible. However, they place the majority of items onto the agenda for a GM in the order that they were received. Generally, a submitted item will be placed a GM agenda within two months of its submission, though there are exceptions.

A few days after the Agenda Committee meeting a member will call by telephone to inform you if your item is on the General Meeting Agenda for that month. If your item is not on the current month's agenda, the committee will confirm your availability before scheduling it for a future GM.

Prepare your presentation for the meeting in advance.

Research the ramifications of your proposal and be prepared to explain and discuss them. Before voting on an item, members will want to know how much, if anything, your proposal will cost the Coop. How will it be implemented, and by whom? Some ideas are more complicated than others. Why should the Coop make the change you are suggesting? If

your idea is suggesting a change to an existing Coop policy or document, show the existing wording next to the new, improved wording.

You might consider writing a detailed proposal as a hand-out for meeting attendees and attaching an explanation of why you think it's important. With a week's notice the Coop paid staff can get copies of your handout made for the meeting.

Try to predict arguments and questions people may have, and formulate your responses. If important information is lacking, the GM might have to postpone voting on your proposal until you come back with the information. How will the ideas be implemented?

The members of the Agenda Committee can sometimes be helpful in practical matters, but they will not be involved in crafting the content of your item. Attending GMs so you know how they run is extremely helpful. At a GM before your item is scheduled you can use the warm-up period at the beginning to "lobby" people about your ideas or to ask for help in publicizing it.