

## **Bower House Constitution**

Date of Last Revision: 2/04

Preamble:

We, the members of Bower House Cooperative, hereby set forth this constitution with the intent of obtaining the following objectives:

1. to promote a clear awareness in our membership of their responsibilities and obligations towards the house.
2. To ensure that said responsibilities and obligations are discharged in a manner efficient, practical and harmonious.
3. To maintain Bower House financially and physically in the soundest possible condition.
4. To generally act in accordance with the Rochdale principles.

### **ARTICLE I: GOVERNANCE**

A. The operations and activities of Bower House shall be governed by rules, regulations, and decisions proposed and adopted at house meetings.

1. 'House Meeting' is defined as a congregation of house members assembled to transact business pertaining to the internal operation of the house, the external condition and relations of the house, and other matters, as seen fit.

## B. House Meetings

1. The facilitator of the meeting shall be selected at the end of the preceding meeting on a rotating basis.

a. The facilitator of the first meeting of a given contract period shall be the interim coordinator, who is delegated by the SHC Vice President of Membership at the appropriate time.

2. A quorum for a house meeting shall consist of  $2/3$  of the active membership. Meetings held without a quorum have no official standing, except when the preceding meeting failed to achieve a quorum, despite announcement given three (3) days in advance.

3. Decisions at a house meeting are made by majority vote of those present, unless otherwise described in this constitution.

4. It is hoped that meetings will be conducted informally and cooperatively, but Robert's Rules of Order may be imposed. The facilitator has authority and responsibility to decide the procedures to be followed at the meeting, and to enforce them. The facilitator must layout the rules for the meeting before it begins.

C. Decisions of a regulatory nature are to be recorded separately from the minutes and posted (See Article III, section D, number 8.)

## ARTICLE 11- SPECIFIC POWERS OF THE MEMBERSHIP

A. The membership is empowered to determine the work credit obligation of members and to establish the rating for a given job, including officers.

B. The membership is empowered to impose sanctions as outlined in this constitution in the event of non-performance of work duty on the part of a member or a consistent delinquency of payments.

C. The membership is empowered to recall a house officer by a 2/3 vote of those present at a house meeting in the event of unsatisfactory performance of said officer.

D. The membership is empowered to evict a member as outlined in the SHC Code of Operations.

## ARTICLE III- OFFICERS AND OTHER HOUSE LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

A,. Bower House shall have the following elected officers: Membership, Education, Treasurer, Maintenance. Other elected leadership positions Include Steward, Work Manager, and Secretary.

B. Elections for a given term are to occur at the first house meeting of that term.

1. Elections shall be held at the first house meeting of each semester where normal quorum and majority rules are operative. In the event of multiple

seekers of the same office, the lowest vote receiver will be dropped after a ballot and further ballots taken until one person achieves a clear majority.

2. The authority of newly elected officers begins immediately.
3. Special elections may be held if an office becomes vacant in the middle of a term.
4. Officers may be reelected.

#### C. Descriptions of officer and leadership duties

##### 1. Membership Officer: Elected at the beginning of fall, spring and summer terms.

- a. Maintain membership records in an efficient and timely manner.
- b. Strive to maintain the house at full capacity. During those times of the year when many contracts expire, this may require advertising and extensive correspondence with out-of-town prospective members.
- c. Give house tours to prospective new members.
- d. Coordinate room picks. (see Article V for guidelines and procedure)
- e. Mediate irresolvable conflicts between house members as they arise. If the conflict cannot be solved at the house level, the Membership Officer is responsible for bringing the matter to the attention of the SHC Vice President of Membership. Issues of sexual harassment are to be brought directly to the SHC Executive Director. THESE ARE NOT TO BE DEALT WITH AT HOUSE LEVEL.
- f. Represent Bower House at SHC Membership Committee meetings.

2. Education Officer: Elected at the beginning of fall, spring and summer terms.
  - a. Make sure at least one person from the house contributes to each issue of the Pine Press. The officer is responsible for contributing if no one else **does**.
  - b. Updating and organizing House Constitution and House Archives. (for amendments to the House Constitution, see Article V)
  - c. At the end of each term, review the house meeting minutes and summarize important policies and regulations that have been adopted. This summary should be posted in a designated area. Applicable changes should be added to the Constitution on a semesterly basis.
  - d. Represent Bower House at SHC Education Committee meetings.
3. Treasurer: Elected at the beginning of fall, spring, and summer terms, but it is recommended that the Treasurer serve for a full year.
  - a. Submit a budget proposal for the following term at the end of the current term. The SHC Corporate Treasurer will assist in this process.
  - b. Maintain the house fiscal records in an accurate and timely manner.
  - c. Keep house members informed of the status of all house accounts including, but not limited to, posting house charges sheets monthly.
  - d. Pay all house bills using house funds.
  - e. Issue member fines as directed by the Work Manager.
  - f. Represent Bower House at SHC Finance Committee meetings.
4. Maintenance Officer: Elected at the beginning of fall, spring and summer terms.

- a. See to the corrective and preventative maintenance of the house and the surrounding ecosystems.
- b. Prepare a list of Work Holiday tasks for the members to perform. each list shall be approved by the membership. The Maintenance officer shall supervise the work and in cooperation with the work see that it is completed in the prescribed period. The work holiday must take place by the sixth week of the term (MSU) except when the house votes to grant an extension. The extension then must be completed before the second to last week of the semester.
- c. See that the fire alarms and extinguishers are functional and stage a fire drill once per term or as prescribed by law.
- d. Complete specific tasks as requested by the membership.
- e. report to members at house meetings on maintenance problems and their solutions.
- f. The Maintenance Officer may not spend more than \$25 on a single item that is neither specially budgeted for nor approved by the house, except in the event of an emergency.
- g. Ceilings may only be walked on in the event of a breakdown of the house artificial gravity machine.
- h. Represent Bower House at SHC Physical Development Committee

5. SHC BOD representative: Elected at the beginning of fall, spring and summer terms, but it is recommended that the Board Rep. serve for a full year.

a. Bower House at SHC BOD meetings, and any other organizations the house may collectively join.

b. Give notice to the house of the affairs of these organizations by periodic at house meetings and post announcements.

c. Secure the house's vote and/or opinion on current issues requiring the Board Rep's vote at an SHC BoD meeting.

d. Specific activities when so directed by the membership.

6. Steward: elected at the beginning of fall, spring and summer terms, but it is recommended that the Steward serve for a full year.

a. take inventory of food and related supplies and work with house shoppers to make sure the food supply IS adequate.

b. work with the house cooks to prepare a shopping list for the house shoppers each week.

c. If applicable, coordinate bulk order and work with the purchasing agents to arrange smooth pickup and delivery of supplies:

d. Working with the House Treasurer, keep track of the food budget and strive to stay within the limits set by the membership.

e. Maintain communication with the membership about food preferences, and take these preferences into account when preparing shopping lists.

7. Work Manager: Elected at the beginning of fall, spring and summer terms.

a. prepare and post a list of all house jobs and the members assigned to do them

b. Develop a system to make sure the house jobs are being done on a weekly basis in a timely, efficient fashion. c. Fine those who are not doing their house work according to the rules laid out in Article IV, Section F.

8. House secretary: Elected at the beginning of fall, spring. and summer terms.

a. Take the minutes of each house meeting, rendering them into an intelligible form, and posting them within 48 hours of the house meeting in the specified place on the bulletin board.

b. maintain a forwarding file of addresses of members who have moved away; forward mail.

D. If any person in any of the above positions becomes unable to fulfill her assigned duties, that person may appoint a temporary replacement, subject to the advice and consent of a house meeting, at which time a special election may be held for the replacement.

ARTICLE IV -MEMBERSHIP AND MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

## **A. Definitions**

1. A 'member' is anyone who has ever held a valid contract with Bower House Cooperative.

2. An 'active member' is any member currently living in Bower hous. No one may live in Bower House without signing a contract first, except temporary guests or minor children of active members. Minor children living in the house will be considered as being covered by their parent's contract and must be approved for membership by the house

3. A 'guest' is anyone staying at the house for any length of time without having signed a contract.

- a. Food must be paid for from the beginning of the visit.
- b. Guests must pay for their stay after 10 days, the amount being the same as members, minus SHC assessments.
- c. After 10 days, visitors are required to give the house five (5) hours of work per week.
- d. after 30 days the house must follow the guest policy in the SHC code of operations.

## **B. Work Requirements**

1. active members of Bower House are required to perform work duties as decided upon by the house. These include:

- a. Weekly work duties chosen either when the work schedule is drawn up, or when exchanged with another member.
  - b. A 'Work holiday' task chosen from a list composed by the maintenance officer and approved by the house for each term the member resides in the house.
  - c. Extra work may be assigned by the work manager to make up for missed work or failure to attend regular house meetings scheduled at least three days in advance.
2. Final responsibility for assigned work rests with the member who originally signed up for the job. If a member cannot do a job, s/he may exchange with another member. However, the member who agrees to substitute will be held responsible for doing so by the house ONLY if the agreement is written down and a copy is given to the work manager.
3. Any member who fails to do assigned work within the specified time will be fined.(see Article IV, Section F)

#### C. Financial Responsibilities:

1. Dues and deposits required by Bower and MSU SHC must be paid before a new member moves into the house.

2. If rent is paid late or not at all, refer to SHC's bad debt policy for regulations and procedure.

3. Any fines imposed by the house for violating house rules, nonperformance of assigned work that has not been made up, or other offenses shall be added to that member's share of expenses.

a. At the next regular house meeting, the member being fined will have the opportunity to show cause why s/he should not be fined. A majority vote of those present shall be required to dismiss the fine.

4. Contracts must be for fall and spring terms, remainder of a term contract, or summer.

5. Openings due to eviction will be filled by the Membership officer. Openings due to a vote to release a person from a contract must be filled by that person.

6. If a contract will be broken:

a. And there is more than one person which will be released from their contract, the rooms will be filled by prospective members that contact the house independent of an individual's advertising efforts, in the order that the departing members signed release forms at the SHC office.

b. If a member finds an acceptable applicant through their own advertising efforts, that member will be released from her contract when the new contract is finalized.

7. House checks not properly entered in the checkbook will have a stop payment put on them immediately by the treasurer.

#### D. House Meetings

1. Regular meetings will be held bimonthly.

2. The facilitator will call house meetings. The agenda for the meeting shall be posted one (1) week in advance in a specified place visible to all members.

3. Attendance at all house meetings is required of all active members of Bower House. Failure to attend any regularly scheduled house meeting for which three (3) days prior notice has been given will result in a \$5 fine.

4. Members may miss one house meeting without penalty each semester.

5. Anyone who notifies the facilitator 24 hours before a house meeting of their inability to attend will not be fined if the excuse given is reasonable.

6. Anyone who misses a meeting must read and initial the minutes of that meeting. The Work Manager is responsible for verifying that everyone who was not at a given house meeting has read and initialed the minutes.

7. If necessary, an emergency house meeting may be called. Attendance is required if the meeting is announced at least 48 hours in advance. Fining procedure for absence from emergency house meetings follows the rules outlined above.

## E. House Rules

1. All members are expected to read and heed all house rules passed by a majority vote of those present at regular house meetings.
2. Anyone who violates a house rule is liable to be fined.

## F. Fines, Penalties, and Expulsions

1. In the event that a member shows blatant disregard for the rules laid out in this Constitution or the rights of their fellow house members, s/he may be fined or expelled.
2. Fines will be levied in the following manner:
  - a. Every hour of work missed necessitates a \$5 fine.
  - b. If the same job is missed two or more consecutive times, a progressive fining will begin. The fines will be doubled each week up to \$40.
3. Grounds and procedures for expulsion are outlined in the MSU SHC code of operations.

## G. Smoking

1. No cigarette, cigar, or pipe smoking is allowed in the house.

## H. Meat

1. Meat is defined as: beef, poultry, fish, or other disgusting nasty flesh of innocent murdered animals or humans

2. No person shall prepare, store, or consume meat in the common areas of the house.
3. A person may prepare, store and consume meat in their room, but may not use house utensils to do so.

## ARTICLE V – ROOM PICK GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURE

A. Room picks will be decided by seniority. Overall, the member with the most seniority will get first room pick, the second highest will get second, third highest will have third, and so on down the line. However, there are other considerations that will be taken into account as well. The process is outlined here and goes as follows.

### 1. WHEN ROOM PICKS ARE TO BE DONE:

- a. For fall/spring contracts: room picks are to be done by the end of the preceding spring semester. Room picks are set until May, though alterations are possible if members move out during the contract period.
- b. Summer semester: Room picks for summer semester are to be done after the fall/spring picks for the following school year, but must be done at least two weeks before the summer contract period starts (this is so those moving in will know which room they will have).

### 2. DECIDING SENIORITY:

- a. Seniority should first be decided by the point system. The fall/spring semesters are worth two points each, while the summer semester is worth one point. These points apply to bower house only – points do not transfer between SHC houses.

- b. If points are equal, seniority will be based on member's original house contract signing date.
- c. If points are equal and sign date is the same, seniority will be decided in an impartial manner, such as drawing straws, flipping a coin, or rolling a die.
- d. If a member leaves in the middle of a contract period and then returns, they are not guaranteed their old room back, but they do keep their seniority points.

### 3.SQUATTER'S RIGHTS

- a. Squatter's rights are in effect. Members have the right not to be kicked out of the room they are currently inhabiting, even if someone has higher seniority than them.
- b. EXCEPTION: summer semester. The summer semester room picks do not carry over in to the school year (this is due to people moving out for the summer and returning in the fall). The room picks decided the preceding spring hold precedence. However, a member inhabiting a room over the summer must be notified before they move in that they will have to move once the school year starts.

### **ARTICLE VI- AMENDMENTS**

A. This constitution may be amended by the following procedure:

- 1. A committee or house member writes the amendment.

2. The house approves the amendment by 2/3 vote in a regular house meeting.
3. The Education Officer adds it to the constitution at the SHC office.

## **ARTICLE VII- SCOPE**

This constitution supersedes all previous constitutions and all policies at variance with it. Except where determined in this constitution, the membership is generally empowered to make all decisions and policies on house matters.