

# Bower House Constitution

## Preamble

We the members of Bower House Cooperative, in order to form a sustainable and just cooperative recognize that it is necessary:

1. **A.** To promote a clear awareness to the membership of their responsibilities and obligations towards the house and surrounding ecosystems; furthermore
2. **B.** To ensure that said responsibilities and obligations are discharged in a manner efficient, practical, and harmonious; also
3. **C.** To maintain Bower House financially and physically in the soundest possible condition; moreover
4. **D.** To protect the individuals, living in the house, of minority opinion from harsh and unjust rules;

Hereby create this constitution to govern over the Bower House Cooperative:

## Article I: Definitions

1. **A.** 'Constitution' shall refer to this document in its entirety.
2. **B.** 'Bower House Cooperative,' 'Bower House,' 'Bower,' and 'house' shall be defined as the building located on the property: 127 Whitehills Drive, East Lansing, Michigan 48823.
3. **C.** 'Student Housing Cooperative,' and 'SHC' shall refer to the body that owns the Bower House Cooperative.
4. **D.** A 'member' is any person who has ever held a valid contract with Bower House Cooperative.
5. **E.** An 'active member,' or 'house member' is any member currently living in Bower House privy to the following conditions:
  1. **1.** Has a valid contract with SHC.
  2. **2.** Is currently in good financial standing with SHC.
6. **F.** A 'guest' is anyone staying at Bower House for any length of time without having signed a contract.
7. **G.** 'Active membership,' or 'membership' is the total number of individuals who are active members, or the entire group of active members.
8. **H.** A 'house meeting' shall be defined as a congregation of house members assembled to transact business pertaining to the internal operation of Bower House subject to the rules and regulations set forth by this constitution.
9. **I.** The 'constitutional addendum,' or 'addendum' will be where passed rules and regulations will be placed. The addendum is not apart of the constitution, but a supplement to it.
10. **J.** 'Meat' will be defined as an animal byproduct that is typically derived from the death of that animal.
11. **K.** The term 'personal living space' is defined as the individual room that an active member lives in.
12. **L.** A 'common room' shall be defined as any room that is not an active member's personal living space.

13. **M.** An 'Ecosystem' is a synthesis of all flora, fauna, and biological processes that interact with and are affected by membership of Bower house.

## Article II: Scope

1. **A.** This constitution shall be subject to all laws and regulations set forth by the United States of America, the State of Michigan, and the City of East Lansing.
2. **B.** This constitution shall be subject to all rules and regulations set forth by the Michigan State University Student Housing Cooperative (MSU-SHC) and all of its respective governing bodies.
3. **C.** This constitution shall supersede and null all previous constitutions initiated by Bower House Cooperative.
4. **D.** This constitution shall supersede any rules or regulations that were implemented under its governance.
5. **E.** All rules and regulations made under the governance of this constitution shall be placed in the addendum section of this constitution upon the approval of the active members during a Regular House Meeting.

## Article IV: Governance

1. **A.** All rules and regulations imposed upon the members and guests of Bower House shall be adopted at house meetings or be stated within this constitution.

## Article V: House Meetings

1. **A.** A Regular House Meeting shall be a house meeting composed of the active membership subject to the following:
  1. **1.** Quorum shall consist of anyone who attends the meeting.
  2. **2.** Will be held on the first, third, and fifth (when applicable) Sundays of each month during the periods of time when Michigan State University classes are in session.
  3. **3.** A facilitator for a meeting shall be selected at the previous house meeting. In the event that no facilitator was selected at the previous house meeting, a vote of active members will determine the current meeting facilitator.
  4. **4.** The agenda for the meeting shall be distributed all house members a minimum of 48 hours prior to meeting time.
  5. **5.** Will have the ability to vote on any business that concerns Bower House.
  6. **6.** Decisions at a house meeting will pass by a majority vote, unless otherwise described in this constitution.
2. **B.** An Emergency House Meeting shall be a house meeting composed of active members subject to the following:
  1. **1.** A minimum of 48 hours notice will be given to all active members. When called, a brief agenda must be announced.
  2. **2.** Will have the ability to vote on any business that concerns the structural integrity of Bower House, legal issues, or SHC decisions.
  3. **3.** Shall not have the ability to implement new rules, regulations, or fines.
  4. **4.** All decisions made at an Emergency House Meeting shall be subject to review at the following Regular House Meeting.
  5. **5.** Can be called by any member of the house.
3. **C.** All house meetings are mandatory. If a member does not receive approval from the

facilitator to miss a given meeting, then they shall be fined \$10.

## Article VI: Rules

1. **A.** All members and guests are expected to read and heed all rules implemented in the manner dictated in Section C of Article VI.
2. **B.** Any member or guest who violates a rule is subject to a fine as prescribed by that rule and/or this constitution.
3. **C.** Rules shall be implemented in the following manner:
  1. **1.** Suggested rule is brought up during a Regular House meeting.
  2. **2.** Is passed in the manner prescribed by Article V, Section A, Subsection 6.
  3. **3.** Is written, posted, and added to the addendum section of this constitution.
4. **D.** Any rule not added to the official constitution addendum shall not be enforced.

## Article VII: Standing House Rules

1. **A.** Smoking
  1. **1.** There is no smoking of cigarettes, cigars, or other tobacco paper rolled paraphernalia within Bower House.
  2. **2.** Smoking is allowed outside of Bower House.
2. **B.** Meat
  1. **1.** Meat is hereby allowed to be prepared, cooked, consumed, and stored in common areas and house member personal living spaces.
  2. **2.** House members are expected to keep in mind both the diets of their fellow house members and the history of
  3. **3.** Bower House with its relation to meat; and therein keep their actions respectful in this regard. This includes dishes used with meat being washed thoroughly.
  4. **4.** House money shall not be used to purchase meat.
3. **C.** Room Picks
  1. **1.** Room picks will be based on seniority. Overall the member with the most seniority will get the first room pick, and the second highest will get second, and so on and so forth. Seniority will be decided as follows:
    1. **i.** The person with the highest points has the highest seniority.
    2. **ii.** For each fall or spring semester living in Bower, the active member will be assigned 5pt.
    3. **iii.** For each summer semester living in Bower the active member will be assigned 3pt.
    4. **iv.** For each fall or spring semester living in SHC outside of Bower, the active member will be assigned 2pt.
    5. **v.** For each summer semester living in SHC outside of bower the active member will be assigned 1pt.
    6. **vi.** If point totals are equal for the two active members, then their signing dates will be used to determine whose seniority is higher. If that is the same, then an impartial manner such as drawing straws, flipping a coin, or rolling a die will determine who has higher seniority for those individuals.
  2. **2.** When room picks are done:
    1. **i.** For fall/spring semesters, room picks are done by the end of the preceding spring semester. Room picks are set until May, however if a room becomes empty, that room will be available for any member to move into based off of seniority.

2. **ii.** For summer semester, room picks are done after the fall/spring picks of the following school year, but must be done at least two weeks before the summer contract period starts.
3. **3. Squatter's Rights**
  1. **i.** Squatter's rights are in effect. Active members occupying a room have the right to not be kicked out of the room they currently inhabit.
  2. **ii.** Exception: Summer semester. The summer semester room picks do not carry over into the school year. The room picks decided the preceding spring hold precedence.
4. **D. Energy Consumption**
  1. **1.** Window-mounted air conditioning units are banned from use in any personal living space.
  2. **2.** Personal refrigeration units in personal living spaces will be charged an additional \$10 per month.
  3. **3.** Space Heaters in personal living spaces:
    1. **i.** Space heaters must be newer than 5 years old
    2. **ii.** Maximum energy usage for a space heater is 1000kWh
    3. **iii.** Active members using a space heater will be subject to an additional \$20 per month charge each month of use.
    4. **iv.** This charge is based on whether or not there exists a space heating unit within an active member's personal living space, not if they claim to be using it or not.

## Article VIII: Specific Powers of the Membership

The membership is empowered to determine the work obligation of members and to establish the rating system for each given job. 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. The membership is empowered to recall a house officer by a 2/3 vote of those present at a Regular House Meeting, in the event that said officer has been negligent in their duties. The membership is empowered to evict a member as outlined in the SHC Code of Operations.

## Article IX: Responsibilities of the Membership

1. **A. Work Responsibilities**
  1. **1.** All active members of Bower House are required to perform work duties as decided upon by the house. These include:
    1. **i.** Weekly work duties.
    2. **ii.** Work Weekend tasks chosen from the approved lists.
  2. **2.** Final responsibility for assigned work rests with the active members who originally signed up for the job. If an active member cannot do a job, they may exchange duties with another active member if both active members agree to the conditions of exchange.
  3. **3.** Any active member who fails to do assigned work within the specified time will be fined; this is in effect for house officers and house leaders as well.
2. **B. Financial Responsibilities: Contracts, Rent Payments, and Deposits**
  1. **1.** Dues and deposits required by Bower House and MSU SHC must be paid before a new member moves into the house.
  2. **2.** Any fines imposed by the membership for violating house rules, non-performance of

assigned work, or other offences shall be added to the member's share of expenses. The member in question must pay these.

3. **3.** The Keeper of the Keys will fill openings due to eviction.
4. **4.** Openings due to a vote to release a person from a contract must be filled by that member.
5. **5.** If a contract is broken:
  1. **i.** 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 their release forms at the SHC office.
  2. **ii.** And an active member finds an acceptable applicant through their own advertising efforts, then that active member will be released from their contract when the new contract is finalized.
6. **6.** All house expenditures not accounted for will have an immediate stop payment put on them by the Guardian of the Vault.

## **Article IX: House Officers and Other Leadership Positions**

1. Bower House shall have the following elected officers: Keeper of the Keys, House Scholar, Guardian of the Vault, and Maintenance.
2. Bower house shall have the following leadership positions: Steward, Work Manager, House Scribe, Groundskeeper, Guff Manager.
3. Elections for a given term are to occur at the first Regular House Meeting of each semester with the following constraints:
  1. The previous semester's Work Manager will facilitate the election process.
  2. A list of each job position shall be provided to all members to view.
  3. Any active member may run for any given position.
  4. A vote will occur for each position, in the event that multiple active members wish to hold a position. The lowest vote receiver will be dropped after a vote, and further votes will be taken until one person achieves a clear majority.
  5. The newly elected active members shall take charge of their respective positions immediately.
4. Descriptions of officer and leadership duties:
  1. Keeper of the Keys
    1. Maintain membership records in an efficient and timely manner.
    2. Strive to maintain the house at full capacity.
    3. Advertise and actively recruit prospective house members.
    4. Give house tours to prospective house members.
    5. Coordinate room picks.
    6. Mediate conflicts between house members, as it is needed.
    7. Represent Bower House at all SHC Membership Committee meetings or find a house member to act as a proxy.
    8. Notify the SHC Vice President of Membership of any issues that cannot be resolved; and any issues that deal with sexual harassment, intimidation, or anything potentially criminal. These are issues that are not to be dealt with at a house level.
  2. House Scholar
    1. Shall do everything in their power to discontinue the Pine Press
    2. Update and organize the House Constitution and its respective Addendum. These documents should be updated in both paper and electronic form as changes occur.
    3. Represent Bower House at SHC Education Committee meetings or find a house

- member to act as a proxy.
- 4. Maintain responsibility for Bower house community outreach and the preservation of Bower house history.
- 3. Guardian of the Vault
  - 1. Maintain the house fiscal records in an accurate and timely manner.
  - 2. Keep house members informed of the status of all house accounts, including, but not limited to posting house charges monthly.
  - 3. Pay all house bills using house funds.
  - 4. Issue member fines as directed by the Work Manager.
  - 5. Represent Bower House at SHC Finance Committee meetings.
  - 6. Submit a budget proposal to the SHC Corporate Treasurer for the following term at the end of the current term.
- 4. Maintenance Officer
  - 1. See to the corrective and preventative maintenance of the house and the surrounding ecosystems.
  - 2. Organize and supervise each semester's Work Weekend.
  - 3. See that all fire alarms, smoke detectors, and extinguishers are functional and stage a fire drill at least once a term or as prescribed by law.
  - 4. Complete specific tasks as requested by the membership.
  - 5. Report to members at house meetings on maintenance problems and their suggested solutions.
  - 6. 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.
  - 7. Will represent Bower House at SHC Facilities Committee meetings.
- 5. SHC BOD (Board Of Directors) Representative
  - 1. Will Represent Bower House at SHC BOD meetings, and any other organizations the house may have collectively joined.
  - 2. Must give notice to the house of the affairs of these organizations during every Regular House Meeting.
  - 3. Secure the membership's vote and/or opinion on current issues requiring the SHC BOD Representative's vote at an SHC BOD meeting.
- 6. Steward
  - 1. Take inventory of food and kitchen supplies while working with house shoppers to make sure the food supply is sufficient.
  - 2. Work with the house cooks to prepare a shopping list for the house shoppers each week.
  - 3. If applicable, coordinate bulk orders and arrange smooth pickup and delivery of bulk supplies.
  - 4. Work with the Guardian of the Vault to keep track of the food budget and strive to stay within said budget.
  - 5. Maintain communication with the membership about food preferences, and take these preferences into account when preparing shopping lists.
  - 6. Organize and maintain the pantry in a cleanly manner.
- 7. Work Manager
  - 1. Will prepare and post a list of all house jobs and the members assigned to do them.
  - 2. Develop a system to make sure the house jobs are being done on a weekly basis in a timely and efficient fashion.
  - 3. Fine those who are not doing their housework according to the rules laid out in Article X.

## 8. House Scribe

1. Take minutes for each house meeting, place them into an intelligible form, and post them within 48 hours of the house meeting. Copies of minutes will be provided to those who ask.
2. Maintain a forwarding file of addresses of members who have moved out of Bower House, and forward any mail for those members who moved out less than one year ago.
3. Retrieve and sort mail daily.
4. Recycle all solicitations for members more than one year moved out

## 9. Groundskeepers

1. Will maintain, clean and organize the exterior property and surroundings of Bower House while:
  1. taking steps to ensure the viability of the ecosystems in which Bower House resides.
  2. adjusting for, and being prepared for the seasonal demands of exterior cleanup
2. Shall update the house members on all affairs involving the external property of the house
3. The groundskeeper shall work in conjunction with the Maintenance Officer
4. Shall be responsible for planning the Bower House Garden during the off season
5. Shall make all provisions to save the seeds that are produced within the Bower House Garden
6. Shall ensure that Harvests of food from the Garden shall be executed
7. Shall send all funding requests through the Maintenance Officer

## 10. Guff Manager

1. The guff manager shall organize and maintain all GUFF designated areas on a weekly timeline
2. Shall use discretion on when and how to remove GUFF items from the house
3. Shall update the house members at the house meetings on all GUFF related issues.

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