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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; To protect all members from non-consensual decision making and unjust rules.

1. **E.** To ensure the safety, health, and comfort of all current and future members of Bower House.

We 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 property number 284227, which is Zoning Designation RM32 and lot number 80.

Bower is located at 127 Whitehills Drive, East Lansing, Michigan 48823.

1. **C.** 'Spartan Housing Cooperative,' and 'SHC' shall refer to the body that owns the Bower House Cooperative.
2. **D.** An 'member,' or 'house member' is any member currently living in Bower House privy to both of the following conditions:
 1. **1.** Has a valid contract with SHC.
 2. **2.** Is occupying their personal living space
3. **E.** A 'guest' is anyone staying at Bower House for any length of time without having signed a contract.
4. **F.** 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.
5. **G.** The 'constitutional addendum,' or 'addendum' will be where passed rules and regulations will

be placed. The addendum is not a part of the constitution, but a supplement to it.

6. **H.** The term 'personal living space' is defined as the individual room that a member lives in.
7. **I.** A 'common room' shall be defined as any room that is not an active member's personal living space.
8. **J.** 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 Spartan Housing Cooperative 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 III: 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 IV: House Meetings

1. **A.** A Regular House Meeting shall be a house meeting composed of the membership subject to the following:
 1. **1.** Quorum shall consist of 1 member more than $\frac{1}{2}$ of members.
 2. **2.** Will be held every other week as it is agreed upon the house, barring school breaks and major holidays.
 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 volunteer to whom no member objects shall facilitate.
 4. **4.** Will have the ability to vote on any business that concerns Bower House.
 5. **5.** Decisions at a house meeting will pass by $\frac{3}{4}$ of a quorum as defined above, unless otherwise described in this constitution.
 6. **6.** An Emergency House Meeting shall be a house meeting composed of members subject to the following:
 1. **i.** A minimum of 18 hours notice will be given to all members. When called, a brief agenda must be announced
 2. **ii.** Members will not be fined for missing an emergency meeting.
 3. **iii.** Will have the ability to vote on any business that concerns the structural integrity of Bower House, legal issues, or SHC decisions.
 4. **iv.** Shall not have the ability to implement new rules, regulations, or fines.
 5. **v.** All decisions made at an Emergency House Meeting shall be subject to review at

the following Regular House Meeting.

6. **vi.** Can be called by any member of the house.
2. **B.** All members occupying a space in the house are required to attend all house meetings, with the exception of personal time conflicts or emergency/special circumstances. The facilitator must be informed of an absence before the meeting begins, or contract members will be fined \$10.
 1. **1.** Members with permanent time conflicts are encouraged to change their schedules if possible, or the house should reevaluate meeting days/times to accommodate for all members.

Article V: Rules

1. **A.** 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 IV, I(E).
 3. **3.** Is written, posted, and added to the addendum section of this constitution.
2. **B.** All members and guests are expected to read and heed all rules implemented in the section immediately above.
3. **C.** Any member or guest who violates a rule is subject to a fine as prescribed by that rule and/or this constitution.
4. **D.** Any rule not added to the official constitution addendum shall not be enforced.

Article VI: Standing House Rules

1. **A.** Smoking
 1. **1.** There is no smoking of cigarettes, cigars, or other tobacco products 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 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.
 3. **3.** 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.** For members already living in the house, seniority is determined by the members' move-in dates.
 2. **ii.** For new members moving in, seniority is determined by their contract signing date.
 3. **iii.** If seniority between multiple members is the same, then an impartial manner (such as drawing straws, flipping a coin, or rolling dice) 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 on seniority.

3. **3.** Occupancy of Picked Room

1. **i.** 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.** 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.** Members using a space heater will be subject to an additional per month charge each month of use as agreed upon by the membership.
 4. **iv.** Charges will be waived for rooms deemed uninhabitable without heaters.

5. **E.** Voting in New Members

1. **1.** Voting in new members requires the consensus of all house members.
2. **2.** A single “no” vote of any member may block the prospective member.
3. **3.** A revote of $\frac{3}{4}$ of the house in favor of allowing the prospective member to move in, and not simply quorum, may overturn the “no” vote.
4. **4.** Votes on prospective members may not be made while they are present in the house.

6. **F.** Bower Parking

1. **1.** Parking seniority in the Bower parking lot (and other spaces guaranteed to the house by the SHC) will be determined by two factors: whether a member has a vehicle upon their move-in (or renewed contract start) date, and their signing date. Members who will have a specific vehicle by the time of said move-in/renewed contract start dates will have the priority to access parking for the remainder of their contract, but if there are more members with vehicles, then access will be based on the earliest signing date.
 1. **i.** Exception: If a member has physical limitations or needs to have a vehicle in the lot for their personal health and/or safety, then such members will have top seniority for a parking spot in the Bower parking lot.
 2. **ii.** Exception: If a member has possession of a vehicle that is not with them physically or has a proof of a definitive plan to own a specific vehicle within three months of their contract start date, they can request to have a parking spot held in the lot up until the end of the third month. If by then they do not have said vehicle they will revoke their parking spot. During the period that this spot is empty, members next in line of seniority may use this spot until the original member has their vehicle.
 3. **iii.** If there are any extenuating circumstances, additional accommodations can be made.
 4. **iv.** Exception: If two members are fighting over parking spots they will drag race in drag. An arbitrary third party will act as referee for a race that spans across the Bower/Haven House lots.
2. **2.** Guests may use the Bower parking lot to park their vehicle if at the time there are more parking spots than members with vehicles. Otherwise, guests must find a different spot to park their vehicle(s).
3. **3.** Assigned parking spots (a specific physical area for a specific person’s vehicle) are determined by current members, yet members do not need to assign spots if they decide this as a house.

Article VII: Specific Powers of the Membership

1. **A.** The membership is empowered to determine the work obligation of members and to establish the rating system for each given job.
2. **B.** The membership is empowered to impose consequences 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.
3. **C.** The membership is empowered to recall a house officer by a majority vote of the membership at a Regular House Meeting, in the event that said officer has been negligent in their duties.
4. **D.** The membership is empowered to evict a member as outlined in the SHC Code of Operations.

Article VIII: 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.** Regularly assigned work duties.
 2. **ii.** Work Weekend tasks chosen from work weekend task lists
 2. **2.** Final responsibility for assigned work rests with the members who originally signed up for the job. If a member cannot do a job, they may exchange duties with another member if both members agree to the conditions of exchange.
 3. **3.** Any member who fails to do assigned work within the specified time will be fined; this is in effect for house officers as well.
2. **B.** Financial Responsibilities: Contracts, Charges and Shares.
 1. **1.** Any fines imposed by the membership for violating house rules, non-performance of assigned work, or other offenses shall be added to the member's house charges.
 2. **2.** Openings due to a vote to release a person from a contract must be filled by that member.
 3. **3.** If a contract is broken:
 1. **i.** If a member finds an acceptable applicant through their own advertising efforts, then that member will be released from their contract when their applicant's contract is finalized.
 2. **ii.** If there are no vacancies except those resulting from broken contracts, the broken contracts will be filled by prospective members that contact the house through the regular membership process. Such contracts will be filled in the order that departing members signed their release forms with the SHC office.
 4. **4.** 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. **A.** Bower House shall have the following elected officers: Papa (Membership), House Scholar (Education), Keeper of the Keys and Fixer of Shit (Facilities), Guardian of the Vault (Finance) and Colin Robinson (Board Representative).
2. **B.** Elections for a given term are to occur at the first Regular House Meeting of each semester with the following constraints:
 1. **1.** A list of each service position shall be provided for all members to view.

2. **2.** Any member may run for any given position.
3. **3.** A vote will occur for each position. In the event that multiple members wish to hold a position: the house will use ranked choice voting The lowest vote receiver will be dropped after a vote, and further votes will be taken until one person achieves a clear majority.
4. **4.** The newly elected members shall take charge of their respective positions immediately.
5. **5.** The newly elected active members shall take charge of their respective positions immediately.
3. **C.** Descriptions of officer and leadership duties:
 1. **1.** Papa (Membership Officer)
 1. **i.** Maintain membership records in an efficient and timely manner.
 2. **ii.** Strive to maintain the house at full capacity, including in cases of eviction.
 3. **iii.** Advertise and actively recruit prospective house members.
 4. **iv.** Give house tours to prospective house members.
 5. **v.** Coordinate room picks.
 6. **vi.** Mediate conflicts between house members, as it is needed.
 7. **vii** Represent Bower House at all SHC Membership Committee meetings or find a house member to act as a proxy.
 8. **viii** 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. **2.** House Scholar (Education Officer)
 1. **i.** Shall do everything in their power to discontinue the Pine Press.
 1. **a.** While indeed said officer must familiarize themselves with the Pine Press in order to better understand the tactics required to undermine it, for the meantime their duties are to pretend to support the Pine Press and write/edit it per the Vice President of Education's discretion.
 2. **ii.** Update and organize the House Constitution and any respective Addenda. These documents should be available to members in an up-to-date form. and on the SHC wiki.
 3. **iii.** Represent Bower House at SHC Education Committee meetings or find a house member to act as a proxy.
 4. **iv.** Maintain responsibility for Bower house community outreach and the preservation of Bower house history.
 5. **v** Mediate conflicts between house members, as it is needed.
 3. **3.** Guardian of the Vault (Finance Officer)
 1. **i.** Maintain the house fiscal records in an accurate and timely manner.
 2. **ii.** Keep house members informed of the status of all house accounts, including, but not limited to posting house charges monthly.
 3. **iii.** Pay all house bills using house funds.
 4. **iv.** Issue member fines as directed by the Chore Checker.
 5. **v.** Represent Bower House at SHC Finance Committee meetings.
 6. **vi.** Submit a budget proposal to the SHC Corporate Treasurer for the following term at the end of the current term.
 7. **vii.** Complete duties as assigned by SHC Corporate Treasurer.
 4. **4.** Keeper of the Keys and Fixer of Shit (Facilities Officer).
 1. **i.** See to the corrective and preventative maintenance of the house and the surrounding ecosystems.
 2. **ii.** Organize and supervise each semester's Work Weekend.
 3. **iii.** 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. **iv.** Complete or delegate specific tasks as requested by the membership.
- 5. **v.** Report to members at house meetings on maintenance problems and their suggested solutions.
- 6. **vi.** The Maintenance Officer may exercise autonomy over the monthly maintenance budget, only spending beyond that amount with the authorization of a house vote or in case of emergency.
- 7. **vii.** Will represent Bower House at SHC Facilities Committee meetings.
- 5. **5.** Colin Robinson (Board Representative)
 - 1. **i.** Will Represent Bower House at SHC BOD meetings, and any other organizations the house may have collectively joined.
 - 2. **ii.** Must give notice to the house of the affairs of these organizations during every Regular House Meeting.
 - 3. **iii.** Secure the membership's vote and/or opinion on current issues requiring the SHC BOD Representative's vote at an SHC BOD meeting.
- 6. **6.** Chore Checker
 - 1. **i.** Will prepare and post a list of all house jobs and the members assigned to do them.
 - 2. **ii.** Develop a system to make sure the house jobs are being done on a weekly basis in a timely and efficient fashion.
 - 3. **iii.** Fine those who are not doing their housework according to the rules laid out in Article X.
- 7. **7.** House Scribe
 - 1. **i.** 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 in printed form can be requested if needed.
- 8. **8.** Dish and Kitchen Sheet Maker
 - 1. **i.** Ask for availability of membership in the discord for the dates of the next Kitchen and Dish sheets.
 - 2. **ii.** Accommodate unavailability as best as possible when creating Dish and Kitchen Sheets.
 - 3. **iii.** Post Dish and Kitchen sheet lists in the kitchen channel in the discord. Additionally, place Dish and Kitchen sheets with specific chores, conditions, etc. in the kitchen near the Dish and Kitchen duty instructions.
- 9. **9.** All other house chores will be listed and described in length, in the Bower Norms house document which is located in The Big Bower Folder google drive.

Article X: Fines, Penalties, and Expulsions

- 1. **A.** Weekly work will be fined in the following manner by the Chore Checker:
 - 1. **1.** Every hour of weekly work missed necessitates a \$15 fine.
 - 2. **2.** If the same job has been missed two or more consecutive times the fine will be doubled.
- 2. **B.** House destruction and blatant disregard for rules will be fined in the following manner unless otherwise described in this constitution:
 - 1. **1.** The membership will hear complaints about the member who has purposefully destroyed an item belonging to the house during a Regular House Meeting.
 - 2. **2.** The membership will vote on whether to fine the individual in question after both sides are heard.
 - 1. **i.** If the vote is in favor of fining the member in question, then fines shall be levied

based on the value of said destroyed item.

2. **ii.** If the vote is not in favor of fining the member in question, then the issue will be considered resolved.
3. **3.** Grounds and procedures for expulsion are outlined in the SHC Code of Operations.
3. **C.** Fines may be removed if a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority of the membership votes to remove the levied fine during a Regular House Meeting or if the SHC Grievance Committee determines the fine to be unfair.

Article XI: House Events

1. **A.** Work Weekend
 1. **1.** The purpose of Work Weekend will be to clean Bower House and to complete projects that add value to Bower House.
 2. **2.** Will be held once a semester.
 3. **3.** The Keeper of Keys and Fixer of Shit (Facilities Officer) will be in charge of organizing, facilitating, and supervising Work Weekend.
 4. **4.** The following items must occur prior to Work Weekend:
 1. **i.** List of jobs will be completed and receive approval during a Regular House Meeting by a vote.
 2. **ii.** House members will choose the jobs they will complete from the approved list with facilitation from the KKFS (FO) and Chore Checker.
 3. **iii.** Times and dates for the work to be completed will be established and approved during a Regular House Meeting by a vote.
 4. **iv.** House members unable to attend Work Weekend must notify the Facilities Officer and negotiate a project to make up for that house member's absence.
 5. **v.** The Facilities Officer will acquire all tools, supplies, and permits necessary to complete work weekend.
 5. **5.** This event is mandatory for all house members.
2. **B.** House Parties
 1. **1.** The purpose of a house party is to allow for the social outlet of the members.
 2. **2.** This event will require the following:
 1. **i.** A sober member to facilitate the party.
 2. **ii.** House money will not be used for alcohol or other recreational drugs, or for any damage that results from the party.
 3. **iii.** A written plan that addresses all concerns the membership must be brought up at the Regular House Meeting prior to the date of the party.
 4. **iv.** A vote of consensus of quorum is required for any party to occur.
 3. **3.** All members that approve/attend the party will be responsible for the damages/fines, as well as cleanup, that result from the party. You must sign up for party chores if you are attending a party.

Article XII: Amendments

1. **A.** This constitution may be amended by the following procedure:
 1. **1.** A committee or house member writes the amendment.
 2. **2.** The house approves the amendment by minimum vote requirements/restrictions described in I(E) of Article IV during a Regular House Meeting.
 3. **3.** The House Scholar adds it to the constitution at the SHC office.
2. **B.** Vote Requirements/Restrictions

1. **1.** Article VI: Standing House Rules requires an 80% vote of the membership.
2. **2.** All other articles require $\frac{2}{3}$ of those present at the Regular House Meeting.

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