

# 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.
5. **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: Name

1. **A.** This organization shall be known as Bower House Cooperative.

## Article II: 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 III: 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 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: Membership

1. **A.** Prospective members shall become members upon full payment of their dues and shares and upon signing a membership agreement. Members must also become full members of the MSU SHC and agree to obey its policies and procedures. A member is considered to be in good standing with the House as long as they are less than 30 days behind on their rent.
2. **B.** Any person wishing to become a member of Bower Cooperative House must first tour the house, attend a house meeting, and participate in a house event (such as game night or house dinner). Once a prospective member has completed these steps, the current members of the house will vote to approve or deny their membership. A prospective member may be denied if their behavior contradicts the outlined values and norms of the house, such as a demonstrated unwillingness to participate in communal responsibilities or a pattern of disruptive or disrespectful conduct.
3. **C.** In accordance with the Fair Housing Act, no applicant may be denied on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, or familial status. Any decision to deny membership must be based on legitimate concerns related to the cooperative's functioning and values, not on personal biases or discriminatory reasons.
4. **D.** No one may live in Bower Cooperative House without first signing a valid contract, except temporary guests of members of Bower, who must abide by the guest policy as outlined in Article IV of this constitution.
5. **E.** New members will be charged a membership fee and a house share. The share will be returned to a member in a timely manner after they no longer reside in the House. An account will be considered closed when all costs are paid, including fines, rent, and room damages, and

when the member's room and/or house keys have been returned. Any outstanding debts will be subtracted from the house share.

6. **F.** Members are required to sign full contracts. Members who join after the beginning of the school year will pay the complete membership fee, but other charges will be made proportional to the amount of time left in the year.
  1. 1. Seniority. If a member of the Haus would like to move rooms during the contract cycle, it will be based on seniority of the signed contract date of the specific member(s).
7. **G.** If a member of the Haus terminates their contract, they are responsible for advertising their vacancy to ensure the spot gets filled.
  1. 1. Members who buy out of their contract are still responsible for three months' carrying charges, in accordance with SHC policy. However, their house charges may be waived through a quorum house vote. Whether to waive these charges should be based on the member's effort to fill their vacancy.
8. **H.** Changing contracts within the House during the cycle (i.e. changing from a double to single/single to double) requires notification of the membership officer. The member changing contracts will still be responsible for advertising their vacancy.
9. **I.** Members are required to:
  1. 1. Understand and promote the purpose of the House as outlined in the SHC Articles of Incorporation.
  2. 2. take an active part in the affairs of the House.
  3. 3. attend House meetings.
  4. 4. maintain House facilities.
  5. 5. obey all rules and policies, values and norms that the House sets.

## Article VI: 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 (10).
  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 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 VII: 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 VII - Expulsion

1. **A.** Expulsion should be treated as a last resort measure in any situation. Expulsion proceedings should be pursued only after the Vice-President of Membership has been notified and all other attempts to deal with the issue have failed.
2. **B.** Reasons for expulsion include:
  - **\*1. a. continued nonperformance of House duties. 2. b. malicious destruction of House or members' property. 3. c. use of violence, force, or threats, including harassment as described in Article IX, against House members or guests. 4. d. nonpayment of money owed to Bower 5. e. continuous violation of House rules. 6. f. discrimination against any person. 7. g. violation of city, state, or federal law. - C. The accused member shall be personally notified both orally and in writing of the charges citing appropriate grounds for expulsion and shall be given a chance to respond at a House meeting before an expulsion vote is cast. Both oral and written notification must be approved by a majority of House members. - D. An expulsion vote may only take place at a scheduled House meeting where at least  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the membership currently residing in the house is present (13 members), following the posting for one week of signed charges citing appropriate grounds for expulsion. These charges must include specific details of the alleged violations, along with the name of at least one witness. - E. Upon passage of the motion to expel, the person expelled shall be given 24 hours to indicate when, within no more than seven days, they will be leaving. If the person refuses to leave the House, the Membership Officer shall ask the SHC Vice President of Membership to initiate formal eviction proceedings in court. - F. During the eviction proceedings, the rights of the expelled member shall be scrupulously protected by the House members. =====Article VIII - Guest Policy===== - A. A guest may stay in a resident's room for up to two weeks. After two weeks, the guest must be voted on and pass with quorum (half of membership +1) or move out. - B. A guest may stay in the common room for up to three nights, the membership is to be informed of the guest through facebook, groupme, or other social media outlet. A guest staying longer than three nights will**

need approval of a majority of members. This can be accomplished by either a vote at a House meeting or a social media post. - C. A guest may stay and attend house meetings in their entirety until open floor discussion, any guest, potential housemates, significant others of housemates are expected to leave the room for this part of house meetings. =====Article IX - House Officers===== A. Jobs Manager (Chore Checker) - 1. The Jobs Manager is elected at the first House meeting at the beginning of MSU's fall semester for the rest of the contract period. - 2. The Jobs Manager must propose a work schedule to the House at the first House meeting of each MSU semester. The schedule should take into account the number of members present in the House for that semester and should be considerate of members' school and work schedules. - 3. The Jobs Manager ensures that every member is properly trained in performing their House jobs and duties. - 4. The Jobs Manager is responsible for issuing warnings and fines (to be voted on at the first House meeting of each MSU semester) to members who fail to perform jobs or who perform jobs poorly. - 5. The Jobs Manager works with the Facilities Officer to organize "Work Week" and issues fines to members who fail to participate. B. Board of Directors Representative - 1. The Board of Directors Representative shall be elected at the first meeting of the House during the MSU fall semester for the duration of the contract period, insofar as possible. - 2. The Board of Directors Representative will represent Bower House at the Board of Directors meetings of the SHC, and is charged to act in the best interest of the House and the corporation. Any fines assessed to the House due to non-attendance at these meetings will be charged to the Board of Directors Representative's account. - 3. The Board of Directors Representative will post a copy of the report from each Board meeting in a common area of the House in a timely fashion for review by House members. - 4. The Board of Directors Representative will report on Board meetings at House meetings and obtain the vote or opinion of House members on issues of the Board that will require the Board of Directors Representative to vote. - 5. The Board of Directors Representative will fulfill any other duties as assigned by the SHC Articles of Incorporation or by the Board of Directors. C. Facilities Officer - 1. The Facilities Officer shall be elected at the first meeting of the House for each MSU semester. - 2. The Facilities Officer is responsible for seeing that all House duties which involve general Facilities are done in a proper fashion that promotes good stewardship of the House. - 3. The Facilities Officer will keep track of all House Facilities work and repairs and report any irregularities to the SHC Vice-President of Physical Development or to the SHC Facilities Employee/Coordinator. - 4. The Facilities Officer will report on work accomplished, work required, Facilities problems with the House, and information from Physical Development Committee meetings. - 5. The Facilities Officer will attend all SHC Physical Development Committee meetings. Any fines assessed to the House due to non-attendance at these meetings will be charged to the Facilities Officer's account. - 6. The Facilities Officer will notify the SHC Facilities Employee/Coordinator of any Facilities problems which the House is unable to resolve within its own budget and labor/skill pool. - 7. The Facilities Officer will consult with the House treasurer to determine the size of each MSU semester's Facilities budget. - 8. The Facilities Officer will prepare, with the Jobs Manager, a "Work Holiday" list of general improvement tasks for the House by the second House meeting of each semester, and set a timetable for their completion. If a job must be completed by a specified time, the Facilities Officer must justify this date. - 9. The Facilities Officer is responsible for all House tools, including loaning them to and collecting them from members. The Facilities Officer must take an inventory of all House tools at the beginning and end of each MSU semester. - 10. The Facilities Officer must keep a

**Facilities log that records all of the work done and repairs made to the House. - 11. The Facilities Officer must inspect and take inventory of every room's condition between occupancies. - 12. The Facilities Officer will make certain that all members have keys for their room and for the House. The Facilities Officer must keep a complete and easily identifiable duplicate set of keys in cooperation with the Membership Officer. The Facilities Officer will be responsible for any other duties assigned by the SHC Membership Committee or the SHC Articles of Incorporation. - 13. The Facilities Officer must complete any other duties assigned by the Physical Development Committee or the SHC Articles of Incorporation.**

**D. Membership Officer - 1. The Membership Officer shall be elected at the first House meeting of each MSU semester. - 2. The Membership Officer will strive to ensure that the House operates at full membership capacity (19 members). During those times of the year when many contracts expire, this may require advertising and extensive correspondence with out-of-town prospective members. This will require cooperation with the SHC officers. - 3. The Membership Officer will see that prospective members meet the qualifications for membership and understand costs and responsibilities. - 4. The Membership Officer will coordinate with the Education officer to organize a new member orientation packet for new members within one week of their arrival. This packet shall include a copy of the Bower Cooperative House Constitution, the MSU SHC Code of Operations/Articles of Incorporation, a list of House duties, and an information sheet/welcome letter. - 5. The Membership Officer will coordinate room changes among members. - 6. The Membership Officer will attend all SHC Membership Committee meetings. Any fines assessed to the House as a result of non-attendance at these meetings will be charged to the Membership Officer's account. - 7. The Membership Officer will report to the House during House meetings about the happenings of SHC Membership Committee meetings. The Membership Officer will get the House's input on decisions being made at the SHC Membership Committee meetings.**

**E. Education Officer - 1. The Education Officer shall be elected at the first House meeting of each MSU semester. - 2. The Education Officer is responsible for representing the House at meetings of the SHC Education Committee and reporting back to the House any important information. Any fines assessed to the House as a result of non-attendance at these meetings will be charged to the Education Officer's account. - 3. The Education Officer is responsible for reviewing and updating the House constitution, as needed. - 4. The Education Officer is responsible for writing articles for the SHC newsletter, the Pine Press. - 5. The Education Officer is responsible for ensuring that members are educated in the principles of this House and this Organization. - 6. The Education Officer is responsible for any other duties assigned by the SHC Education Committee or the SHC Articles of Incorporation.**

**Meeting Facilitator - 1. The Meeting Facilitator is represented by the Education Officer or a member designated at the previous meeting. - 2. The Meeting Facilitator is responsible for calling and facilitating House meetings in accordance with this document. The Meeting Facilitator is to post an agenda at least 72 hours in advance of regularly scheduled meetings. In the case of an unscheduled emergency meeting, the agenda must be posted at least 24 hours in advance. Any member may call for the Meeting Facilitator to hold an emergency meeting of the House. Any member may add items to meeting agendas. - 3. House meetings will be run according to a simplified Robert's Rules of Order. The Meeting Facilitator should attempt to encourage relevant discussion, facilitate organized problem solving, and demand that disputes be settled with civility. - 4. If the Meeting Facilitator cannot attend a House meeting, the Jobs Manager will chair the meeting. -**

5. Quorum is  $\frac{1}{2}$  + one of current House membership. If quorum is not achieved in a regularly scheduled meeting, the Meeting facilitator must reschedule a new meeting within one week. - 6. The Meeting Facilitator is responsible for issuing fines (determined by vote at the first House meeting of each MSU semester) to members who fail to attend a meeting without a valid excuse. - 7. The Meeting Facilitator shall record the minutes of all House meetings and post them in a common area or in the house Discord. The posted minutes are to be read and initialed (virtually signed) by any members who failed to attend the meeting. Any correction to these minutes will be corrected at the next House meeting.

F. Finance Officer - 1. The Finance Officer shall be elected at the first House meeting of each MSU semester. - 2. The Finance Officer shall maintain the house fiscal records in an accurate and timely manner. This includes keeping house members informed of the status of all house accounts, including, but not limited to posting house charges monthly. - 3. The Finance Officer shall pay all house bills using house funds. - 4. The Finance Officer shall issue member fines as directed by the Jobs Manager. - 5. The Finance Officer shall represent Bower House at SHC Finance Committee meetings. This includes submitting a budget proposal to the SHC Corporate Treasurer for the following term at the end of the current term. - 6. The Finance Officer shall complete duties as assigned by SHC Corporate Treasurer

G. Kitchen Steward - 1. The Kitchen Steward will be elected at the first House meeting of each MSU semester. - 2. The Kitchen Steward will keep tabs on the cleanliness and operational capability of the kitchen and work with members to return it to ideal conditions when they are subpar. - 3. The Kitchen Steward will take a master inventory of food and related supplies as necessary and procure sufficient quantities so that semesters may begin and end with reasonable meals and minimal rancor. - 4. The Kitchen Steward will work with the House cooks to arrange for appropriate menus for meals with due consideration for dietary foibles and preferences of the membership. - 5. The Kitchen Steward will help coordinate the food and work with the purchasing agents (House shopper) to arrange smooth pick-up or delivery of supplies. This requires knowledge of the current inventory of food and leftovers. - 6. The Kitchen Steward will work with the House treasurer to set up budgets for food and supplies. - 7. The Kitchen Steward cannot purchase meat or seafood products with House funds.

H. Interim Coordinator - 1. The Interim Coordinator for the transition to the next SHC contract period will be elected at the last House meeting of the contract period (usually the last House meeting of the MSU Spring semester). The Interim Coordinator should be a member that is returning for the next contract period. The Interim Coordinator will collect all House and room keys from leaving House members and keep track of all keys not turned in. The Interim Coordinator will provide the House treasurer a list of all House members who have not turned in their keys so that they can be charged accordingly. - 2. The Interim Coordinator will be responsible for giving House and room keys to all new House members at the start of the next contract period. - 3. The Interim Coordinator will set the agenda for and facilitate the first House meeting of the new contract period.

====Article XII: 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 minimum vote requirements/restrictions described in I(E) of Article IV during a Regular House Meeting. - 3. The House Scholar adds it to the constitution at the SHC office. - B. Vote Requirements/Restrictions - 1. Article VI: Standing House Rules requires an 80% vote of the membership. - 2.\*\* All other articles require  $\frac{2}{3}$  of those present at the Regular House Meeting.

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