

# Harambee House Manifesto

## Preamble

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

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

Hereby create this constitution to govern over the Harambee House Cooperative

## Article I: Definitions

1. **1.** 'Constitution' shall refer to this document in its entirety.
2. **2.** 'Harambee House Cooperative,' 'Harambee House,' 'Harambee' and 'house' shall be defined as the building located on the property: 427 Hillsdale Street, Lansing, Michigan 48933
3. **3.** 'Spartan Housing Cooperative,' and 'SHC' shall refer to the body that owns the Harambee House Cooperative.
4. **4.** A 'member' is any person who has ever held a valid contract with Harambee House Cooperative.
5. **5.** An 'active member' or 'house member' is any member currently living in Harambee House privy to the following conditions
  1. **a.** Has a valid contract with SHC.
  2. **b.** Is currently in good financial standing with SHC.
6. **6.** A 'guest' is anyone staying at Harambee House for any length of time without having signed a contract.
7. **7.** 'Active membership' or 'membership' is the total number of individuals who are active members, or the entire group of active members.
8. **8.** A 'house meeting' shall be defined as a congregation of house members assembled to transact business pertaining to the internal operation of Harambee House subject to the rules and regulations set forth by this constitution.
9. **9.** 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. **10.** The term 'personal living space' is defined as the individual room that an active member lives in.
11. **11.** A 'common room' shall be defined as any room that is not an active member's personal living space.

## Article II: Scope

1. **1.** 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 Lansing.
2. **2.** This constitution shall be subject to all rules and regulations set forth by the Spartan Housing Cooperative (SHC) and all its respective governing bodies.
3. **3.** 'This constitution shall supersede and nulls all previous constitutions initiated by Harambee House Cooperative.
4. **4.** This constitution shall supersede any rules or regulations that were implemented under the governance of this constitution.
5. **5.** 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. **1.** All rules and regulations imposed upon the members and guests of Harambee House shall be adopted at house meetings or be stated within this constitution.

## Article IV: House Meetings

1. **1.** A Regular House Meeting shall be composed of the active membership subject to the following:
  1. **a.** Quorum shall consist of  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the active house membership, rounded up to the nearest whole number. In the event that quorum was not achieved at the preceding Regular House Meeting, quorum shall be  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the active membership, rounded up to the nearest whole number for the latter meeting only.
  2. **b.** House meetings will take place at least once per month.
  3. **c.** A facilitator and note taker will be decided at the beginning of each meeting.
  4. **d.** The standing agenda for house meetings is as follows:
    1. **i.** Committee Meeting Review
    2. **ii.** Officer Reports<sup>1</sup>
    3. **iii.** Member time
  5. **e.** All house members will have the ability to vote on any business that concerns Harambee House.
  6. **f.** Decisions at a house meeting will pass by a majority vote, unless otherwise described in this constitution.
2. **2.** All house meetings are mandatory. If a member has to miss a meeting, they must give notice to rest of the active members at least 30min before the meeting.

<sup>1</sup>Can also be found in the reporting channel in the house

## Article V: Rules

1. **1.** All members and guests are expected to read and heed all rules implemented in the manner dictated in Section 3 of Article V.

2. **2.** Fines may be administered due to broken rules as agreed upon at a Regular House Meeting
3. **3.** Rules shall be implemented in the following manner:
  1. **a.** Suggested rule is brought up during a Regular House Meeting
  2. **b.** Is passed in the manner prescribed by Article IV, Section 1, Subsection F.
  3. **c.** Is written, posted, and added to the addendum section of this constitution.
4. **4.** Any Rule not added to the official constitution addendum shall not be enforced.

## Article VI: Standing House Rules

1. **1.** Smoking
  1. **a.** There is no smoking of any kind within Harambee House
  2. **b.** Smoking is allowed outside of Harambee House.
2. **2.** Room Picks
  1. **a.** Room picks will be based on contract signing date and availability.
3. **3.** Guests
  1. **a.** Members may have guests at Harambee House a maximum of 3 days per week, 2 of which may be an overnight stay (unless otherwise agreed upon by the house)
  2. **b.** Members must inform housemates of when they have a guest via the Discord Chat.
  3. **c.** House must vote on accepting guests staying longer than 3 days.
  4. **d.** Guests staying long term may stay no longer than 30 days.
  5. **e.** Guests staying long-term will be charged \$25 each week.

## Article IX: New Members

1. **1.** Potential members of Harambee House must complete an the SHC Application, House Tour, and Interview in order to be accepted in the House.
2. **2.** Membership will vote on accepting a new member. Quorum ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) must be reached for acceptance.
3. **3.** If all rooms are full, members may be accepted and placed on a waiting list.

## Article X: Responsibilities of Membership

1. **1.** Work Responsibilities
  1. **a.** All active members of Harambee House are required to perform duties as decided upon by the house.
  2. **b.** 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.
2. **2.** Financial Responsibilities: Contracts, Rent Payments, and Deposits
  1. **a.** Dues and deposits required by Harambee House and MSU SHC must be paid before a new member moves into the house.
  2. **b.** 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. **c.** The Membership Officer will fill house openings.
  4. **d.** Openings due to a vote to release a person from a contract must be filled by that member.
  5. **e.** 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. **f.** All house expenditures not accounted for will have an immediate stop payment put on them by the Finance Officer.

## Article XI: House Officers and Other Leadership Positions

1. **1.** Harambee House shall have the following elected officers: Membership, Education, Finance, Facilities, and Board of Directors Representatives.
2. **2.** Harambee House shall have the following leadership positions: Steward, Work and Secretary
  1. **a.** These positions may be left vacant as the house permits.
3. **3.** Descriptions of officer and leadership duties:
  1. **a.** Membership Officer
    1. **i.** Maintain membership records in an efficient and timely manner.
    2. **ii.** Strive to maintain the house at full capacity.
    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 Harambee 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 at a house level.
  2. **b.** Education Officer
    1. **i.** Update and organize the House Constitution and its respective Addendum. These documents should be updated in both paper and electronic form as changes occur.
    2. **ii.** Represent Harambee House at SHC Education Committee meetings or find a house member to act as proxy.
  3. **c.** Finance Officer
    1. **i.** Maintain the house fiscal records in an accurately and timely manner.
    2. **ii.** Keep house members informed of 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 Work Manager.
    5. **v.** Represent Harambee 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.
  4. **d.** Facilities Officer
    1. **i.** See to the corrective and preventative maintenance of the house and the surrounding ecosystems.
    2. **ii.** See that all fire alarms and extinguishers are functional and stage a fire drill at

- least once a term or as prescribed by law.
3. **iii.** Complete specific tasks as requested by the membership.
  4. **iv.** Report to members at house meetings on maintenance problems and their suggested solutions.
  5. **v.** The Maintenance Officer may not spend more than \$25 on a single item that is neither specifically budgeted for nor approved by the house, except in the event of an emergency.
  6. **vi.** Will represent Harambee House at SHC Facilities Committee meetings.
5. **e.** SHC Board of Directors Representative
    1. **i.** Will Represent Hillsdale House at SHC BOD meetings, and any other organizations that house may have collectively joined.
    2. **ii.** Must give notice to house of the affairs of these organizations during every Regular House Meeting.
  6. **f.** Office Laborer
    1. **i.** Provide two hours of labor each week to the SHC on behalf of Harambee House.
  7. **g.** Steward
    1. **i.** Take inventory of food and kitchen supplies and work with house shoppers to make sure the food supply is sufficient.
    2. **ii.** Work with the house cooks to prepare a shopping list for the house shoppers each week.
    3. **iii.** If applicable, coordinate bulk order and arrange smooth pickup and delivery of the supplies.
    4. **iv.** Work with the Finance Officer to keep track of the food budget and stay within said budget.
    5. **v.** Maintain communication with the membership about food preferences, and take these preferences into account when preparing shopping lists.
  8. **h.** Work Manager
    1. **i.** Will prepare and post 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, efficient fashion.
    3. **iii.** Establish fining system (if necessary) to be voted on at Regular House Meetings.
    4. **i.** House Secretary
    5. **i.** Make sure house minutes for each house meeting are placed accordingly within the Meeting Minutes Notebook.
    6. **ii.** Maintain a forwarding file of addresses of members who have moved out of Harambee House and forward any mail for those members who moved out less than one year ago.
    7. **iii.** Retrieve and sort mail daily.

## Article XII: Fines, Penalties, and Expulsions

1. **1.** House destruction and blatant disregard for rules will be fined in the following manner unless otherwise described in this constitution:
  1. **a.** The membership will hear complaints about the member who has purposefully destroyed an item belonging to the house during a Regular House Meeting.
  2. **b.** 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 questions, then the fines shall be levied between \$10 and \$60 for that member. This will be determined by another vote, and only if a fine has not been previously designated in the Constitution or its

respective addendum.

2. **ii.** If the vote is not in favor of fining the member in question, then the issue will be considered resolved.
2. **2.** Grounds and procedures for expulsion are outlined in the MSU SHC Code of Operations.
3. **3.** Fines may be removed if a majority of the active 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 XIII: House Events and Comradery

1. **1.** Work Weekend
  1. **a.** The purpose of Work Weekend will be to clean Harambee House and complete projects that add value to Harambee House.
  2. **b.** Will be held twice a year.
  3. **c.** The Facilities Officer and Work Manager will be in charge of scheduling, organizing, facilitating, and supervising Work Weekend.
  4. **d.** 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 Facilities Officer and Work Manage.
    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.
2. **2.** House parties
  1. **a.** The purpose of a house party is to allow for the social outlet of the active members.
  2. **b.** This event requires the following.
    1. **i.** A sober active member to facilitate the party.
    2. **ii.** House money will not be used for any party or damages/fines that result from the party.
    3. **iii.** A written plan that addresses all concerns the active membership must be brought up at the Regular House Meeting prior to the date of the party.
    4. **iv.** A unanimous vote of the active membership is required for any party to occur.
  3. **c.** All members that approve/attend the party will be responsible for the damages/fines as well as cleanup that result from the party.
3. **3.** Bonding time
  1. **a.** House members are encouraged to spend time with their housemates and participate in house bonding activities.

## Article XIV: Fire Safety

1. **1.** Equipment Maintenance:
  1. **a.** All fire alarms, smoke detectors, and fire extinguishers will functional and fully charged. The house will conduct a smoke detector inspection once a term or as

- prescribed by law.
- 2. **b.** Each occupant is obligated to notify the facilities officer of malfunctioning fire safety equipment located in their bedroom.
- 3. **c.** Always have a fire extinguisher present in designated areas.
- 2. **2.** Fire Drills and Emergency Procedures:
  - 1. **a.** The house will stage a fire drill at least once a term or as required by law.
  - 2. **b.** In the event of a fire alarm, the designated “sober representative” shall communicate with the fire department. This individual is also responsible for speaking to the police if they arrive.
- 3. **3.** Inspections and Compliance:
  - 1. **a.** The house will prepare for fire and city inspections by attending inspection dates with city officials. Ensure the house meets all compliance requirements.
  - 2. **b.** All house members will be informed of emergency procedures and an emergency fire escape plan will be posted in a common area at all times for reference.

## Article XV: Amendments

- 1. **1.** This constitution may be amended by the following procedure:
  - 1. **a.** A committee or house member writes the amendment.
  - 2. **b.** The house approves the amendment by minimum 2.3 vote.
  - 3. **c.** The Education Officer adds it to the constitution at the SHC office.
- 2. **2.** Vote Requirements/Restriction
  - 1. **a.** Article XII: Amendments can be amended with 80% vote of the active membership.
  - 2. **b.** All other articles require  $\frac{2}{3}$  of those present at the Regular House meetings.

## Article XVI: House Norms

- 1. **1.** Communication:
  - 1. **a.** Discussion between housemates whether it is face to face, discord, text, or direct messaging, should remain respectful. Passive aggressive and belittling comments are not allowed.
  - 2. **b.** Politics of any sort are not to be discussed on discord or any internet platform we use.
  - 3. **c.** Members should prioritize house voting and scheduling availability for house meetings. Responses should be made no longer than a week after posting in the discord server.
  - 4. **d.** If any members have an issue with another housemate there should be an attempt to resolve the conflict privately first. If it can't be resolved privately, then we can discuss it in a house meeting or on discord.
- 2. **2.** Consent:
  - 1. **a.** Respect the physical, sexual, and emotional boundaries of all housemates. Ask permission before discussing sensitive subjects such as politics or religion, even if it is a private one-on-one conversation.
  - 2. **b.** Every housemate has the ability to revoke their consent at any time, even if it was initially given.
- 3. **3.** Culture:
  - 1. **a.** Members will not engage in sexist, homophobic, transphobic, racist, ableist, or xenophobic behavior.
    - 1. **i.** This includes micro aggressive comments and “jokes” relating to someone's gender, culture, vernacular, or physical characteristics.

## Addendum

New members must have a tour and interview scheduled by the membership officer

If there is more applicants than rooms to fill, the membership officer may declare a cut-off day to be decided by the house.

Membership will review applicants.

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