

# Howland House Constitution

This constitution is established by the undersigned for the purpose of continuing the organization known as Howland House Cooperative.

The house is named for Arthur Howland, a former MSU extension specialist who from 1927-57 played a major role in revitalizing Michigan's farm cooperatives and reorganizing them along more democratic lines.

Howland House Cooperative was founded in 1948. As part of its members' agreement when joining the MSU Student Housing Cooperative, its members shall fulfill the following requirements in perpetuity:

- The name shall remain "Howland House Cooperative."
- Annually, the current members shall host an event on the property for the alumni members of Howland House Cooperative.

## Purpose

1. **The primary purpose** of this organization is to provide sustainable low cost housing for its members.
2. **The Secondary purposes** of this organization shall be promoting the social and educational goals of its members.
3. **The Third purpose** of this organization is to be inclusive of the underrepresented and provide security for all that live in Howland Cooperative House.

## Article I: Member Rights

1. **Section I.I:** Members have the right to feel safe and secure in their own spaces.
2. **Section I.II:** Members have the right to determine a budget and financial officer as long as it is in compliance with the Spartan Housing Cooperative Bylaws.
3. **Section I.III:** Roommate Bill of Rights. Any persons sharing a bedroom have the right to;
  1. Equal space and use of the bedroom.
  2. Sleep in the bedroom at any given time.
  3. Feel comfortable and safe in their bedroom.
  4. Any person sharing a bedroom that would like to have an overnight guest must obtain clear, explicit, non-coerced permission from their roommate; and must be upfront with how long the guest will be staying.
  5. Any persons sharing a bedroom must obtain clear, explicit, non-coerced permission from their roommate to smoke or do related activities in the bedroom.
  6. Any persons sharing a bedroom must agree to live cooperatively and communicate when issues arise.

## Article II: Member Requirements

1. **Section II.I:** Members of Howland House Cooperative shall fulfill the requirements defined by the Spartan Housing Cooperative
2. **Section II.II:** No person shall take over a current member spot without going through the membership requirements defined by the MSU Student Housing Cooperative
3. **Section II.III:** Friendship Clause: If any prospective member is friends with a current housemate who will be renewing their contract for the same year as the prospective member, the house holds the right to deny this potential member on the basis of the friendship clause. Additionally, if two or more prospective members are friends, the house holds the right to approve membership to the prospective member who contacted the membership officer first, and then deny the other potential members. Friendship is determined by the house and these situations will be voted on a case by case basis. This is to preserve the community style culture cultivated in Howland, and to prevent clicking or “house take-overs”.

## Article III: Member Labor Contribution

1. **Section III.I:** Each member of Howland House shall be required to fulfill an approximately equal share of the labor required to maintain the house on a weekly basis
2. **Section III.II:** Unfilled member labor shall be subject to fines at a rate determined by members
  1. Weekly Chores are subject to a fine of 10 dollars
  2. Work Day chores are subject to a fine of 50 dollars
  3. Party Chores are subject to a fine of 30 dollars
3. **Section III.III:** If a member has accumulated more than 80 dollars in fines, they are subject to eviction, and can be voted out by the majority of the current house members at a house meeting. This topic can be brought up by any member of the house, or more specifically the chore checker.
4. **Section III.IV:** Typical member labor (chores) can be subsidized if a member takes upon an officer role. Officer roles have been established by the Spartan Housing Cooperative. They are as follows; Board Representative, Education, Membership, Facilities, House Stewards, Chore Checker, Finance, and meeting facilitators.
5. **Section III.V:** Any officer may be recalled by a majority vote if the issue is announced on a meeting agenda. At the meeting, members must express their grievances regarding the performance of the officer in question. The officer in question may not facilitate the meeting. All recall votes shall be anonymous.

## Article IV: House Meetings

The members are empowered, through house meetings, to make decisions about the function of the cooperative and the rule its members abide by.

1. **Section IV.I: Requirements for a House Meeting**
  1. For a house meeting to be valid, the meeting must be announced 24 hours in advance, and an opportunity for members to bring up topics prior to the meeting must be provided.
  2. Quorum, required to take any action at a house meeting is defined as half plus one of the number of current Howland House members.
  3. A simple majority shall be required to take any action at the house meeting unless the

code of operations or this constitution declares a different requirement.

4. **4.** "Emergency meetings" can only occur when there is a direct threat to the safety.
5. **5.** Meeting topics can only be addressed a second time if the method of the vote is in question or new information has come to light.

1. **Section IV.II:** Attendance for house meetings is required for all current members of Howland House.

1. **Section IV.III:** Members shall be subject to a 10-dollar fine for each meeting they miss unless they previously have spoken and made an agreement with a Meeting Facilitator.

## Article V: Determining Seniority

1. **Section V.I:** Room assignments and parking spaces in Howland House will be based on seniority, and the following factors determine seniority,

1. **1.** Semesters lived in Howland House in the past three years at the time of the room picks meeting. No future semesters shall be considered in the room picks. No member who has not lived in Howland House can attain a higher room pick than someone who lives there currently. Semesters who lived in Howland House more than three years ago do not count towards seniority.
2. **2.** For members who have lived in Howland House for the same number of semesters, the contract signing date for the upcoming term contract will be used to determine seniority.
3. **3.** For members that have not lived in Howland House but have lived in other MSU Spartan Housing Cooperatives, seniority will be determined by how many semesters lived in the other sister cooperatives.

2. **Section V.II:** If a member obtains a contract release for part of the contract period or after the beginning of the contract period, the room that the member has chosen will stand, and they may offer it to the person who fills the release. The person who fills the release does not keep the former member's seniority.

## Article VI: Room Picks

1. **Section VI.I:** Room Assignments in Howland House will be based on seniority.

2. **Section VI.II:** Residents are eligible for squatters' rights if they have earned a room through traditional seniority room pick and have not taken over a prior contract.

3. **Section VI.III:** A signed release request transfers the right of a room to a new member unless there is an agreement between two housemates. Such agreement must be ratified and noted during a meeting.

4. **Section VI.IV:** A member may not lay claim to a room that they will be occupying following a room picks meeting. IE summer months.

5. **Section VI.V:** If a member obtains a contract release for the entire contract period after room picks have taken place but before the beginning of the contract period, the room that the member chose may be re-picked by the remaining members in order of seniority. The person who fills the release does not keep the former member's seniority or get the former member's chosen room.

## Article VII: Parking

Howland House has a parking lot of 16 designated spaces. An additional 17th spot is available in the

southwest corner that will be kept as an “emergency spot.” This spot will be given out to a member in times when a car is necessary, such as injury or family emergencies. The member who uses this spot shall be made aware that the spot is not recognized by the Police Department and they may be subject to fines. This fine shall be the car owner’s sole responsibility.

1. **Section VII.I:** At the start of the contract period, parking will be decided for the remainder of the contract period. The members who get cars will be determined by seniority, as defined by ARTICLE V. In order, Members with the highest seniority will claim the spot they wish to have for the contract period until there are no spots remaining.
2. **Section VII.II:** A member is responsible for contacting the membership officer if they will yield the rights to their parking spot. Any member who is moving out yields their right to a parking spot when they leave.
3. **Section VII.III:** If a member no longer needs their parking spot, the membership officer will announce the opening of the spot at a meeting. Members wanting to claim this spot must announce their interest at the same meeting. The parking spot will be awarded to the person who has the highest seniority and is interested in claiming the spot.
4. **Section VII.IV:** It is the responsibility of a member who wants to claim a parking spot to inform the membership officer. They must inform the officer when their car is coming, or when the member wants the spot. If they currently do not own a car, they must own a car in one month in order to lay claim to a spot. Should the member fail and the process is repeated with the next highest seniority.
5. **Section VII.V:** If a member is designated a parking spot, then they are guaranteed that spot for the rest of the contract period, and will not be pushed out of the lot by a more senior member.

## Article VIII: Uncaged Pets

1. **Section VII.I:** If a member wishes or needs to get an uncaged pet at Howland House, that first must register the animal through SHC and have it approved by the house members for a 2-week trial. After the trial, the current members of Howland may vote it in permanently.
2. **Section VIII.II:** All Animals are subject to reapproval by the house and can be voted out by a 3/4ths majority.
3. **Section VIII.IV:** Grounds for pet removal are; bullying, unmanageable mess, biting housemates maliciously, or other unacceptable behavior.
4. **Section VIII.V:** Per SHC policy, Houses can only have 1 uncaged pet per 7 members. Dogs are not allowed in SHC houses. Howland House has a limit of 4 cats. However, the current members can apply to the Vice President of Facilities after a unanimous vote to have a 5th cat.

## Article IX: Amendments

1. **Section IX.I:** The current members of Howland House may amend this constitution with a three/fourths majority vote of the entire membership of the house.
2. **Section IX.II:** Amendments must be proposed to the entire membership at least one week before being voted on
3. **Section IX.III:** When the constitution is amended, the new constitution shall be provided to the Spartan Housing Cooperative.

## Appendix A: SHC policies

Howland House Cooperative, as part of the MSU Student Housing Cooperative, follows the direction of the Code of Operations. The Membership and House Operations titles of the Code of Operations define the following processes, which we include here for reference:

1. **Appendix A.I** In the case that the House wishes to remove a member before the end of the current contract period, members should follow the guidelines in the Code of Operations titled Expulsions.
2. **Appendix A.II** In the case that the House wishes to prevent a member from living in the House in future contract periods, members should follow the guidelines in the Code of Operations titled Member Referral Process.
3. **Appendix A.III** Smoking cigarettes, parties, guests, pets, member room damages, lofts, and PACE violations are all addressed in the House Operations title.

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