The Shire Constitution

Preamble - Brief Synopsis

The Shire Housing Cooperative (subsequently described as “the cooperative”) is a member-owned housing cooperative that has existed since the purchase of the property of 5473 Okemos Road, East Lansing, by Rivendell Cooperative House in December of 2011. In September 2017 The Shire became a member of Michigan State University Student Housing Cooperative (MSU SHC) now known as Spartan Housing Cooperative (SHC). As a cooperative, members (occupants) take partial ownership of the property and are expected to contribute to the maintenance and upkeep of their respective house during the duration of their stay. Members strive to pursue a low-impact, ecologically-friendly lifestyle. As a member residents are expected to fully participate in the decision making process as it pertains to the health of the cooperative. All decisions made by the cooperative will be reached through consensus; that is, all members of the cooperative must agree on any changes or policies adopted by the cooperative. All members of the cooperative hold equal standing in the decision-making process.

Article 1 - Adherence to Member Agreement, Bylaws, and Cooperative Policies

Members of The Shire Housing Cooperative agree to adhere to the policies and practices established in the Member Agreement, the cooperative’s Bylaws, and all policies (whether verbal or written) established by the cooperative. A signed copy of this agreement for each member, as well as all other written cooperative policies, will be kept in an accessible location within the house. Any changes to the Member Agreement, Bylaws, or other cooperative policies (either verbal or written) must be approved by the membership through consensus.

If a member fails to adhere to the policies and practices established by the cooperative, the cooperative reserves the right to levy any penalties against the member subsequently described in this document. Contingent on the severity of the situation, the cooperative also reserves the right to hold a meeting with any member found to be in violation of the Member Agreement to discuss the member’s continued residency and membership in the cooperative.

Article 2 - Adherence to Cooperative Principles

Members of Rivendell Housing Cooperative agree to adhere to the cooperative principles adopted by the International Cooperative Alliance in 1995 (see: http://www.nasco.coop/node/22):

-Voluntary and open membership -Democratic member control -Member economic participation -Autonomy and independence -Education, training and information -Cooperation among cooperatives -

Concern for community

Article 3 - Non-Discrimination Policy

The Shire Housing Cooperative will not discriminate against any member or potential member in regard to race, ethnic background, religion, national or political affiliation, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, weight, or disability. Any person capable of fulfilling their responsibilities to the cooperative may apply to become a member without discrimination.

Article 4 - Safer Space and Sexual Harassment Policy

Harassment is any kind of behavior towards a person which impairs their full enjoyment of the benefits, climate or opportunities of the Shire Cooperative and the SHC. This definition includes sexual harassment. Harassment may include (but is not limited to):

a. malicious remarks or behavior toward another person. This could include:

1. discriminatory physical behavior – for example, when harassment is in an active form such as pinching, caressing, touching, vandalism, etc.

2. discriminatory verbal or written insults or manipulative behaviors including, but not limited to, discriminatory, offensive, or obscene remarks. For example, gaslighting or the writing or speaking of derogatory names or comments that refer to an individual’s race, creed, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

b. explicit verbal threats where an individual’s personal safety is put in jeopardy by the language of another. For example, “I will hit you if…”, “You had better… or else…”, “If you do not do what I say, I will hurt you”.

c. physical intimidation, including manipulative or otherwise inappropriate behavior. Intimidation includes offensive advances (e.g. sexual proposition) or inappropriate behavior (e.g. touching, kissing, caressing). This includes action with or without threat of punishment for non-compliance and with or without the promise of reward for compliance.

d. unreasonable invasion of a person’s privacy, including taking photos, recording video or audio, or otherwise gathering personal information without warning or consent with full disclosure.

e. any act of vandalism towards a person or their property.

f. assault, including any type of physical violence.

Consent

For the success of any inclusive organization there must be in place a clear definition of consent. For the purposes of this constitution consent is defined as the giving of permission for something to happen. Consent is important in any context. 5 important properties of consent are marked below:

Freely Given (the person giving it is not under duress or being coerced)

Reversible (consent can be revoked at any time and must be respected even if something has been

done before under similar circumstances)

Informed (the person giving consent is of able mind to be making such a decision in that moment)

Enthusiastic (The person giving consent must be showing clear affirmation without any way to misinterpret)

Specific (The person giving consent is aware of what exactly they are consenting to and nothing else.)

Consent must be respected and adhered to. It is the responsibility of all parties involved to ensure that every participating member of a conversation or activity is consenting to their involvement. Consent is about communication and therefore frequent check-ins with involved parties is expected.

Article 5 - Membership Dues and Responsibilities

1. Take an active part in the operation of Shire House

2. Promptly pay monthly charges

3. Attend all House meetings, unless excused for valid reasons

4. Make proper use of House facilities

5. Clean up all personal messes left in common areas, and wash any dish they used.

6. Actively participate in physical upkeep of the house

7. Obey all rules and policies that Shire House sets

8. Abide by the norms reviewed and affirmed at the beginning of each audit period

9. Repeated violations of the house norms are grounds for a house-assessed fine, or further disciplinary actions should the need arise.

House Hours

Section 1: Officers The officers of this organization shall consist of: Treasurer, Secretary, Maintenance, Education, Membership, and SHC Board Representative.

Section 2: Philosophy of Jobs All members shall be responsible for promoting the purpose and spirit of the house; shall cooperate in assisting any officer seeking advice or needing help when their job becomes overwhelming. Shall try to eliminate internal problems, whether they are personality conflicts or something more tangible, and shall provide a healthy living environment for other housemates by being empathetic to each other’s needs without infringing too much on your own.

Section 3: Point System All members of The Shire must fulfill equal job points weekly. A member shall have as many jobs as is required to meet this criteria. The needs of the house may change over time and for that reason the amount of points and responsibilities assigned to each job may be adjusted at a house meeting as members see fit and voted into effect by a simple majority.

Section 4: List of Jobs, Job Descriptions, and Point Values *see jobs doc

Section 5: Officer descriptions and duties:

BOARD REP: The board rep will represent The Shire as SHC board meetings as needed/fitting. The board officer speaks for the house and house decisions.

TREASURER: The treasurer shall be selected. The duties of the treasurer are as follows:

A. Submit a proposed budget for the term one week after the first house meeting. The budget is subject to amendment and approval by a majority vote of the members of the house.

B. Maintain the house financial records in an accurate and timely manner. The financial records are to contain revenue and expense journal, revenue receipt book, deposit records, expense receipts for all purchases made by the house, and member accounts.

C. Submit a budget variance for the previous term at the first meeting of each term.

D. Pay bills for the house on time.

E. Collect monies owed to the house.

F. Keep the members informed of the status of their accounts and post rent lists in a public place in a timely manner.

G. Record fines on member accounts as directed by the facilitator.

H. Bring any member's large balance to the attention of the house.

I. Represent The Shire at SHC Finance meetings

MAINTENANCE: The maintenance officer is selected for one term. The duties are:

A. Initiate and implement a predictive and preventative maintenance program within the house.

B. Submit a list of maintenance projects that are to be completed during the term at the second house meeting of the term and every meeting thereafter give a report as to the status of this list.

C. Coordinate and supervise work weekends, which are general house maintenance projects. House members become secondary maintenance workers in the house. The head maintenance officer must see that projects are completed within the prescribed time period. Work weekends shall be scheduled within the first two months of the semester at the decision and agreement of the majority of the house.

D. Is responsible for preparing the house for any inspections.

E. See that fire alarms and extinguishers are functional and fully recharged. A smoke detector inspection shall be done once a term.

F. Represent The Shire at SHC Physical Development committee meetings.

MEMBERSHIP: The membership officer is selected for one term. Duties include:

A. Maintain the house at full capacity. This may require extensive correspondence with prospective members. The membership officer will arrange house tours and dinners for prospective members. It is suggested that the membership officer use the resources of SHC to aid the membership process.

B. Coordinate room assignments.

C. Be responsible for systematically distributing and labeling house keys and room keys to new members and gathering them from departing members.

D. Orient new members as to the rules of the house within one week of their arrival.

E. Maintain membership records on all current and last year's members. The membership officer is responsible for insuring that a permanent record of all last year's members is kept at the SHC office.

F. Maintain a file of forwarding addresses of members that have moved away.

G. Coordinate The Shire involvement in SHC 'AMPOs.

H. Represent The Shire at SHC Membership Committee Meetings.

EDUCATION: The education officer is selected for one term. Duties are:

A. Submit or collect submissions for the SHC newsletter Pine Press.

B. Educate house and community about SHC and The Shire.

C. Maintain a revised copy of the house constitution.

D. Assist Education Committee in coordinating MSU-SHC events.

E. Represent The Shire at SHC Education Committee meetings.

SECRETARY: The secretary is selected for one term. Duties include:

A. Recording the minutes of the house meetings in a neat and orderly manner and posting them soon after the meeting. Following approval of the minutes, they should be stored in the house files.

B. At the end of the term, the secretary shall review the minutes with the Education officer and record changes in house documents with SHC. Copies of the documents shall be posted upon revision.

C. The secretary is responsible for keeping phone areas supplied with paper and writing utensils.

D. Sorting and distributing daily mail.

E. Forwarding old member's mail.

F. Tidying mail area. This includes sorting excess paper for recycling.

Article 6: Fines and Penalties

Section 6.1: Any member may initiate the fines procedure. These positions will administer fines in the Shire House: Secretary, Maintenance, Membership, and Finance.

Section 6.2: The above officers will be responsible for monitoring each other and the other House Officers. If a House Officer is not completing their job, they will be fined. A second offense will call for a vote by the House to recall the Officer. An officer may be fined for not fulfilling officer duties by any 2 other officers.

Section 6.3: Fines are allocated to those members who do not report completion or are neglecting

their House jobs or not attending House Meetings.

Section 6.4: Each point of a job is worth $5; that is, a 2 point job is worth $10, a 4 point is worth $20, etc. Fines for failure to complete jobs once follow this rule. Fines for failure to complete any job, regardless of point value, will continually compound by $10 for each additional week that the job is not completed up until the fourth consecutive week. There is a fine limit of $20 additional dollars on every job; the maximum fine for 2 point jobs is $30, the maximum for 4 point jobs is $40, etc. That maximum fine remains constant and is imposed every week until the job is completed, at which point the compounding fine is cleared.

Section 6.5: House members can only receive $10 in credit for picking up another member's job at any time; the additional compounded fines go toward House funds.

Section 6.6: All members have the right to explain their circumstances at a House Meeting if they feel they are innocent. The majority vote is needed to repeal a fine

House Meetings

Members of The Shire Housing Cooperative will hold regular house meetings between residents of The Shire. The time and place of the meeting will be agreed upon by the membership and a meeting agenda posted at least 72 hours prior to the meeting. House meetings will be held at least monthly.

Attendance at house meetings is mandatory, excepting instances in which a member is ill, must be at work, or has another important obligation which cannot be rescheduled. If a member must miss a meeting, they should give at least 24 hours notice to the cooperative, except in cases of personal emergency. Any member with an unexcused absence will receive a fine as defined below. The amount of missed meetings will be reset January 1 of each year.

Section 10.8 Meeting fines are as follows:

A. First missed meeting = "freebie"

B. Second missed meeting = $10 fine

C. Third missed meeting = $15 fine

D. All following missed meetings will bring fines increasing by $5 each miss (i.e. $15, $20, $25…)

A house meeting is not considered official or binding unless quorum is met (see Voting).

Voting

Any issue that arises that is not covered in this constitution may be brought to a house meeting to be voted on and may be approved by a majority of ballots cast so long as quorum has been met. A ballot not cast is a vote not counted.

Quorum is defined as ½ plus 1 of the total current house membership. (e.g. 3 out of 5)

Supremacy Clause

Part A: This constitution shall be the supreme document to define the operation of The Shire Cooperative. The membership may choose to suspend, make an exception, or amend the constitution as defined by the constitution.

Part B: Suspensions The house may suspend any part of this constitution for no more than fourteen days with a majority of votes cast at a house meeting.

Part C: Exceptions The house may make an exception to any part of this constitution expiring at a defined time with a quorum vote of the membership at a house meeting. The exception may be overturned with a majority of votes cast at a house meeting.

Part D: Amendments A modification or an addition to the house constitution shall not be made:

· Outside of a house meeting

· If a proposal for the constitution amendment did not appear on the meeting agenda 48 hours before the meeting.

· Unless amendment is approved by quorum.

Physical Maintenance of Cooperative Property
Members agree to keep both their rooms and common spaces of the house in compliance with any applicable building or fire codes and in good physical condition, excepting normal wear-and-tear to the property. Additionally, members agree to keep common spaces, including the living room, dining area, kitchen, storage space, and laundry area reasonably tidy and clean. If the actions of any cooperative member, that member's guests, or that member's pets lead to damage to the property beyond normal wear-and-tear, the member agrees to make or pay for any necessary repairs of the property and/or forfeit all or part of their security deposit.

Pets
Members of The Shire Housing Cooperative may have pets in their house given that all other members of the house agree to the presence of the member's pet.\

The membership reserves the right to fine a member for any damages by the pet. A vote may be held to remove the pet from the house if the pet is receiving inadequate care or causing health or safety concerns for the membership. A minimum of 24 hours must be given for the removal of the pet. The pet owner may ask the membership for additional time.

Any member with a cat agrees to keep the litter box in their room and provide reasonable accommodations such as scratching posts to prevent damage to the cooperative or cooperative property.

Room Assignment
Room assignment in each house is based on each member's seniority in the cooperative. Members with seniority get first choice of rooms in the house if a room becomes vacant.

Move-Out Procedures

Definition of Fair Notice ·In the contract (current) A member shall receive a vote for reapproval 2 months before the end of the first contract period.

General Expectations

· Room swept and mopped

· All personal property removed from the room

· Report damage to the maintenance officer

· Return key

Procedure

At a mutually agreeable time between a duly designated house officer and the housemate before a housemate leaves their room, the membership and maintenance officers will review the housemate's room to ensure it has been left in good condition, as defined by the SHC, for the next occupant. The member leaving has a right to be present during this review. If the membership or maintenance officer is, for good cause, unable to review the housemate's room, the officer may appoint another housemate to perform the work in their stead. In this case, the maintenance officer is required to thoroughly communicate what is required of the duly appointed representative.

Penalty

If the membership or maintenance officer, or their duly appointed representative, determines that a room has not been left in good condition for the next occupant, the membership or maintenance officer will communicate the needed changes to the housemate at least one week before the housemate moves out. The housemate will have until they leave their room to make those changes. If the housemate fails to make the needed changes, a housemate can clean the room and the housemate that cleans the room will be credited $15/hour of industrious labor which will be paid by the leaving housemate as a fine. A housemate that is penalized will only be penalized once – either by the SHC or the Shire, whichever cost is greater.

Personal Items Left Over

A housemate that intends to leave personal items from their room at the house, or to give the items to the house must receive house approval. Housemates that leave items without house approval will be fined at the labor rate to remove/dispose of the items as well as any removal fees. If the items cannot be easily removed or disposed of, the house may determine its own penalty or solution.

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