

HOUSE CONSTITUTION

Ruths' House, 321 N. Thayer, Ann Arbor, Michigan

We, the members of Ruths' House Cooperative, associate ourselves in accordance with the spirit of the Rochdale Principles for the purpose of providing cooperative housing. The Rochdale Principles and cooperative standards we adopt are as follows:

1) Open Membership--this house was organized with a purpose of “offering low-rent housing to all University students, regardless of race, creed, color or national origin” Art. II (A) (1) of the Inter-Cooperative Council Articles of Incorporation). The ICC also prohibits discrimination on the basis of affectional preference. As such, membership is open to persons who are:

- a. college students attending school at least 3/4 time,
- b. former members in good standing of NASCO affiliated student housing co-ops,
- c. currently associated with a recognized college student group, or
- d. currently associated with the cooperative movement.

Persons not falling into one of the above classes may be voted into the house as detailed in the constitution. The only other restriction on membership shall be the ability to complete duties of a members, as detailed in the constitution.

2) Democratic Participation. Each member will have one and only one vote, and each will share equally in House duties, House responsibilities and in all benefits derived through House operations.

3) Education. The House will be a working example of cooperative living and will educate its members and others in the principles of cooperation.

4) Neutrality. The House shall be a member of no organization other than cooperative societies, nor shall in endorse any political candidate.

5) Expansion. Through support of the Intercooperative Council, the House will further the cooperative movement in general.

6) Distribution of Economic Result. The year-end savings of the House shall be distributed as a refund to the members of the House.

ARTICLE I. GENERAL

Section A The name of the group which hereby operates under this Constitution shall be called Ruths' Cooperative House. Hereafter the term “House” shall refer to Ruths' Cooperative House or its constituent members.

Section B The House is a member and abides by the rules of the Intercooperative Council.

ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP

Section A Requirements for membership shall be:

- 1) acceptance by the ICC according to the rules and procedures set up by the Board of Directors,
- 2) signing of an ICC contract and payment of a membership fee and purchase of required shares, and
- 3) assignment by the ICC to this particular House.

Section B Duties/Obligations of members:

- 1) Members are personally responsible for work assigned to them on the work schedule.
- 2) Members must pay House and ICC charges on time.
- 3) Members must abide by ICC rules, ICC by-laws, House rules, House by-laws and this Constitution.
- 4) Members must attend House Meetings.
- 5) Members must behave in a manner conducive to fairness, cooperation and a comfortable atmosphere.

ARTICLE III. HOUSE MEETINGS

Section A The House Meeting shall be the highest authority in the House.

Section B Attendance

- 1) All members are required to attend all Meetings unless previously excused by the House President. 2) A quorum of one-half of the members shall be necessary for any vote taken.

a. Expulsion hearings require a quorum of three-fourth of the members.

Section C Frequency

- 1) The first House Meeting shall be held during the first two weeks of the term. Before the first meeting, all members shall receive a copy of the constitution.
- 2) Subsequent meetings shall be held regularly throughout the term. The meeting schedule will be determined at the first House Meeting of the term. Also to be determined at the first meeting: officers, work holiday, and quiet hours.
- 3) A "New Members" Meeting shall be held in April. Current members and those people with contracts for the upcoming Spring, Summer and Fall-Winter contracts shall be invited to attend.
 - a. The year-round President shall be elected.
 - i. If absolutely necessary, a Spring/Summer President and a Fall/Winter President may be elected instead of a year-round President.
 - b. Room picks shall occur.
- 4) Additional meetings may be called by the President or by a petition signed by three members. Such meetings must follow the same rules and procedures as regularly scheduled meetings.

Section D Procedure

- 1) Agendas for HM shall be posted at least 48 hours before the meeting. Only items posted on the agenda may be voted on.
- 2) Voting shall be by majority rule.
- 3) A neutral facilitator may be requested by any members.
 - a. The facilitator must be accepted by all members as neutral.
 - b. The facilitator must be a member of the House, the ICC Board of Directors, or the ICC

staff.

Section E Committees

- 1) Any issue raised at a meeting may be given to an ad hoc committee for deliberation or action.
- 2) Membership on committees shall be decided at House Meetings and shall be unrestricted and voluntary (i.e. no work credit will be granted).
- 3) Committees shall have no authority save what is explicitly vested in them by members of the House during a House Meeting.

ARTICLE IV. REFERRAL, EXPULSION, RELEASE FROM CHARGES

Section A Current Member Referral (CMR)

1) General

a. Current Member Referral serves as a warning but does not effect any presently held
ICC contract.

b. Members remaining on CMR may not sign any additional or upcoming ICC contracts. All advance contracts already signed are voided if a member is placed on CMR.

2) The grounds for expulsion shall be:

- a. nonpayment of House and/or ICC charges,
 - b. failure to do assigned work,
 - c. uncooperative behavior, and
 - d. other violations of article II-B, "Duties of Members".

3) Procedure. A member may be placed on CMR by the following methods:

- a. By the House Treasurer and one other House member, for non-payment.
- b. By the Work Manager and another House member, for non-work.
- c. By any three House members for any of the following:
 - i. Failure to sign a membership contract.
 - ii. Actions prohibited in the contract, ICC rules, or House rules.
 - iii. Actions which constitute a significant threat to the health, safety or welfare of House members.
 - iv. Not following any of the "duties" listed in this

Constitution, section

II-B.

d. By a simple majority of House members, for generally uncooperative behavior.

4) Removal from Current Member Referral:

- a. must occur at a House Meeting with a quorum,
- b. may be initiated by any one member of the House, including the member on
CMR,
- c. may be by secret ballot at the request of a single member, and,
- d. must be approved by a *simple majority* of the House.

5) Notification. When a member is put on CMR or removed from CMR, the house President must notify the member in question, the House and the ICC office staff within 2 working days.

Section B Automatic Referral (AR)

- 1) Description. A person on AR cannot become a member of the House without the approval of the House's membership.
- 2) The following people shall be placed on AR:
 - a. Anyone moving in thirty days after the first day of the House contracts for the term.
 - b. Non-students.
 - c. Anyone who has been evicted from a residence hall.
 - d. Anyone on "Current Member Referral" at another ICC House.
- 3) Removal from AR: happens automatically after the person lives in the House for three months.
- 4) Accepting a person on AR into the House membership:
 - a. must occur before a person on AR can move into the House,
 - b. must occur at a House Meeting with quorum, and
 - c. must be approved by consensus of the House.

Section C Expulsion

- 1) Grounds: violations of Article II, section B.
- 2) Procedures:
 - a. An expulsion hearing may be called by the same combinations of House members listed under Article II.A.3.
 - b. Once expulsion proceedings have been properly initiated, an open hearing must be held at a House Meeting.
 - i. The hearing must be posted 4 days prior to the Meeting.
 - ii. The Executive Director of the ICC must be consulted before the hearing.
 - iii. The member in question must be able to attend.
 - iv. Three-quarters of the House must be present at the hearing.
 - v. The accused must be able to defend himself.
 - vi. Witnesses may be called upon, submit written statements or present themselves.
 - c. Decision must be made by secret ballot at the hearing.
 - d. Two-thirds of the entire House must vote in favor of expulsion for expulsion to occur.
- 3) Notification: When a member is expelled, the House President must notify the member in question, the House and the ICC office staff within 2 working days. Also, documentation for expulsion and corresponding House minutes shall be sent to the ICC office.
- 4) Hearing by Committee: The ICC Membership Committee may hear an expulsion in lieu of the House in certain circumstances. See ICC Rules 2.66.
- 5) Appeals: An expulsion decision may be appealed to the ICC President. See ICC Rules 2.67.

Section D Release From House Charges

- 1) General:
 - a. Release from House charges must precede any attempt of a member to gain release from ICC charges.
 - b. Cases should be judged on the basis of the:
 - i. effort made by member to fill her spot, keep the House informed of situation and minimize inconvenience to the House, and,
 - ii. extent to which circumstances forcing the member to seek release from House charges were out of his control.

c. House members can only release someone from her charges by agreeing to take responsibility for these charges themselves.

2) Grounds:

- a. death,
- b. pregnancy,
- c. flunked out of school,
- d. draft, or
- e. extenuating circumstances (considered case by case).

3) Procedure:

a. Release from House Charges can only occur at an open hearing at a House Meeting, which:

- i. must be posted four days in advance
- ii. the member in question must be able to attend, send a proxy or

willingly waive the

- right to attend, and
- iii. has quorum present.

b. The decision to release someone from house charges:

- i. May be by secret ballot at the request of a single member.
- ii. Requires the support of two-thirds of the House to pass.

ARTICLE V. HOUSE OFFICERS

Section A General

1) The House Officers shall consist of President, (full credit), Work Manager, (2 credits), Secretary, (1 credit), Treasurer, (3 credits), and Maintenance Manager (full credit).

2) The House may change, add, remove or modify officer duties and work credit, with the exception that mid-term changes shall require the consent of the officer in question. The changes shall apply only to the officer term in question.

3) All officers must appoint temporary officers if they are to be absent.

4) A member may hold more than one officer position, provided the number of credits total 4.

5) Attend ICC training sessions.

Section B Elections

1) House officers, except the President, shall be elected at the first House meeting of the semester and serve for the entirety of that term.

2) President

a. The Fall-Winter President shall be elected by current and upcoming fall House members at the “New Members” Meeting in April. The President shall serve for one full year and take office immediately upon election.

b. The President may request that a Spring-Summer President be elected to serve in place of the President during the Spring-Summer term.

c. If the President will not live in the house during the Spring-Summer term, then a Spring-Summer President who will be resident must be elected.

3) Qualifications

- a. Any member of the House shall be qualified to vote and to hold an office.
- b. Future members who have already signed their contracts are qualified to vote and run in the “New Members” Meeting presidential elections.
- c. Members may nominate themselves.
- d. Absentee ballots may be cast for candidates by informing the current President of choices in writing.

4) Voting

- a. Candidates shall leave the room for final discussion and vote.
- b. A simple majority of the votes cast is sufficient to elect all House Officers.
- c. The current President shall not vote except to decide a tie.
- d. If there are three or more candidates and no one receives a majority, a run-off election shall occur between the two candidates with the most votes.

Section C Duties

1) House President shall:

- a. Be official representative of the House.
- b. Be the official ICC information resource.
- c. Serve as liaison between the membership committee and the House in regards to House vacancies.
- d. Serve on the ICC Board of Directors, attend Board of Director training, and participate in one ICC committee.
- e. Serve as a default facilitator at House Meetings.
- f. Maintain a running agenda for House Meetings.
- g. Oversee, in conjunction with the Work Manager, all other House officers.
- h. Mediate personal disputes within the House at the request of the Work Manager or any of the parties involved.
- i. Keep House Constitution up to date and distribute a copy to each member.
- j. Oversee the interim periods of House operations, including move-in and move out of members.
- k. Help orient new members.
- l. Distribute and collect house keys.
- m. Inspect members rooms upon departure and hire someone to bring the room up to ICC standards if necessary at the expense of the previous member.

2) Treasurer shall:

- a. Keep the House finances in good order.
- b. Educate the House regarding House and ICC finances.
- c. Prepare the House budget and submit for House approval.
- d. Collect charges from members, keeping account of each transaction.
- e. Pay all House bills, including refunding members who have made House purchases.
- f. Prepare financial statements as required by the ICC.
- g. Assist with closing House books from the previous term and rebate or assess pervious members if necessary.
- h. Serve on an ICC committee, to be assigned by ICC Treasurer.
- i. Notify the House if the budget seems inaccurate and propose appropriate revisions (to be modified and approved by the House).

- j. Make a regular financial report of House Meetings and when otherwise necessary. Reports shall include the names of everyone (current and non-current members) in debt to the House.
 - k. Manage the phone bill, posting and collecting long distance charges.
- 3) Secretary shall:
- a. Forward mail.
 - b. Take complete and accurate House minutes, to be typed and posted within a week following each Meeting.
 - i. Forward one copy to the ICC office.
 - ii. Retain past minutes in the House file.
- 4) Work Manager shall:
- a. Formulate a work enforcement policy at the beginning of the term to be posted near the work schedule. Work Manager should consistently enforce his/her authority on the basis of this policy without discrimination or favoritism to any members.
 - b. Be responsible for the organization of House work including:
 - i. Determining work schedule and credit assigned each job.
 - ii. Organizing work holidays (at least one each term, in which all members must participate).
 - iii. Organizing interim schedules over breaks and between terms.
 - iv. Establishing and explain performance standards at the beginning of each semester for each job.
 - v. Inspecting work on a daily basis and offering feedback/enforcing accordingly.
 - vi. Recording unsatisfactory or incomplete work as work debt: and arranging other jobs or fines to absolve each member's work debt as soon as possible.
 - vii. Reporting regularly at House Meetings. Report the names of any person accumulating 5 or more work debt hours to the House.
 - c. Overseeing, in conjunction with the President, all House Officers. Work Manager shall be empowered to reprimand officers for non-work by assigning fines and/or extra work for offenders.
 - d. Determining the need for House supplies and purchase them as necessary, including paper supplies and cleaning products.
 - i. Seek out environmentally sound products for purchase.
 - ii. If economical, make purchases from other cooperative organizations.
- 5) Maintenance Manager
- a. Be responsible for House maintenance and repairs.
 - b. Coordinate the work of the "maintenance bunny" in conjunction with the work manager.
 - c. Serve on the ICC Maintenance Projects Committee.
 - d. Research House improvement projects, propose them during House Meetings, and organize their completion if approved.
 - e. Determine the need for and purchase all maintenance and repair supplies and parts.
 - f. Seek funds from the Maintenance Projects Committee when necessary.
 - g. Post a maintenance needs/requests list.

Section E Recall and Resignation of House Officers

- 1) Any officer (including the President) may be recalled by a two-thirds vote of all House members at a House Meeting.
- 2) Recall must be posted as an item on the agenda at least four days in advance.

- 3) The resignation of an officer must be announced at a House Meeting.
- 4) If an officer resigns or is recalled, a replacement must be found within 2 days.

ARTICLE VI. WORK

Section A All House members shall contribute an equal amount of “work credits” to the House. Jobs shall be assigned by the Work Manager at the beginning of a term in an equitable manner and undesirable jobs may be rotated between all House members.

Section B Work must be completed satisfactorily and promptly, as determined by the Work Manager. Non-work is grounds for fines, referral, or expulsion.

Section C All members will participate in House Work Holidays, which shall be scheduled to occur during the first month of each term.

Section D A member may not hire someone to do assigned work.

ARTICLE VII. FINANCE

Section A Extending credit to a member is a House decision. It must be decided during a House Meeting.

Section B Budget

- 1) A proposed budget for the contractual term shall be prepared by the Treasurer and presented to the House for approval within three weeks of the beginning of the term.
 - a. House members may propose amendments and alterations to the budget.
 - b. The budget must be approved by majority vote.
- 2) The budget may be altered as necessary throughout the contractual term, with House approval.

Section C Rebates and Assessments

- 1) Assessment. If expenditures exceed the amount budgeted in a contractual term, members will be accordingly assessed.
- 2) Rebates. Rebates will be by check only if accounts are paid in full and the member is not returning to the House. Otherwise, rebates will be applied to the member’s account at Ruths' House.

ARTICLE VIII. ROOM PICKS

Section A “Squatters Rights”

- 1) House members can stay in the same room for a maximum of four consecutive Fall and Winter terms.
- 2) After four consecutive terms in the same room, a member no longer holds “squatters rights” to that room. Thus, after four terms, another member with higher seniority could choose that room.
- 3) Even if the time limit in either #1 or #2 above expires midterm (in January), no House member can be forced out of his room until the end of the contractual period (May).
- 4) Spring/Summer terms count towards seniority only, not for other counts.

5) A person may “squat” in a room from Fall-Winter into the term and from Spring term into Summer term. However, a person may not “squat” from Summer term into Fall term.

Section B Fall, Spring and Summer Room Picks

1) Timing.

- the
- a. Room picks for the Fall will occur in April at the New Members Meeting, amongst all people who have signed contracts for the next fall.
- b. Spring room picks will occur at the New Member Meeting amongst all the people who have signed contracts for the Spring.
- all
- c. Summer room picks, if necessary, will occur at the last Meeting of Spring term among those people who have signed contracts for the Summer.
- Member
- d. Only those members who have signed contracts may choose a room at the New Meeting. Members will be given the opportunity to make their choices in absentia. Once picks are finished, a member may not subsequently be "bumped" from a chosen room by a person who signs at a later time.
- e. The double shall go to the person with the lowest seniority; the other occupant shall be the least senior of the remaining same-sex members.

2) Seniority: The person with the highest seniority picks her room first, and so on. Seniority is determined according to the following rules:

- a. Members who have been away from the House for no more than one year for academic reasons and current House members have the highest priority. This is the Alpha Group.
- April
- b. Members (roomers or boarders) of another ICC co-op at the time of the meeting in are the Beta Group, and have the next highest priority.
- c. All other members comprise the Omega Group, with the lowest seniority.

3) Procedure: To determine rank within each group, the following point system will be used, with the largest number of points conferring the highest seniority. Point totals are to determine rank only within a group, and will never enable a member of one group to surpass a member of a senior one.

- every
- a. FOUR points shall be given for every Fall or Winter term, and one HALF point for summer month lived at Ruths' immediately previous at the April meeting.
- and
- b. TWO points shall be given for every Fall or Winter term lived at another ICC co-op, one FOURTH point for every summer month lived at another ICC co-op more that one term ago.
- c. Only past or present residence shall be taken into account in the above calculations. Intentions to reside in a co-op during summer months will have no bearing on the Fall's room selection.
- d. For members new to the ICC, seniority will be based upon contract signing date.
- e. In case of a tie, seniority will be determined by a random draw.

Section C January Room Picks: Should a spot in a room open up during the Fall/Winter contractual term, room pick procedures will be identical to Fall room picks with these exceptions:

- 1) January Room Picks shall occur at a House Meeting in December. All people with contracts for the Winter term shall be present.
- 2) The Alpha Group shall be subdivided in to two groups:

- a. Alpha-1: Current House members have absolute highest priority.
- b. Alpha-2: Members who have been away from Ruths' House for no more than one term will be a separate group, with the second highest priority (ranked between

Alpha-1 and the Beta Group).

ARTICLE IX. AMENDMENTS TO THIS CONSTITUTION

Section A No amendment contrary to the Rochdale Principles or the ICC Constitution shall be enacted.

Section B Quorum will be 3/4 of the house members.

Section C Enactment of Amendments

- 1) Amendments must be presented as a proposal at a House Meeting, and may be altered on the floor by a simple majority of those voting.
- 2) The final form of an amendment shall be posted, as passed, at least four days before the next meetings. At this second meeting, the membership will decide whether to enact it.
- 3) The final form of an amendment may be written into the Constitution only by 3/4 vote of the entire house membership.

AMENDMENT I. CAT POLICY

Approved at 6/28/95 House Meeting

SECTION A "Cat Residence"

1) Ruths' House is allowed one cat. The cat must meet all criteria and rules made by the House that applies to it, including, but not limited to, those in this Article of the Ruths' House Constitution. The cat will hereafter be called "Resident Cat".

2) If a member intends to bring a cat, s/he must sign up for the cat in the designated cat spot in the book in the ICC office. The cat spot will be filled on a first come, first served basis.

- a. Any house member with a roommate must obtain their roommate's permission to bring a cat into the room.

3) A Resident Cat can be homesteaded. It may only be homesteaded by its owner, and only if its owner is already homesteaded. The homesteaded Resident Cat must meet all rules of homesteading, including the deadlines, unless that rule specifically exempts Resident Cats.

4) Once the cat spot is filled, any extra cats will have to be voted in by two thirds of the whole house that would be living with the cat (i.e. a potential member who owns a cat wishing to sign a contract for fall semester must be voted in by the fall house).

5) If the cat spot is not already filled, a House, at a House Meeting, may choose to establish a by-law that prohibits any cats from residing at the house. This by-law can only apply for that house's term of residence; thus the cat spot is automatically opened again for the next house.

SECTION B Owner Responsibility

1) Every Resident Cat must belong to one specific member of the House who takes full responsibility for it, called the Cat-Owner. The Cat-Owner's responsibility includes, but is not limited to, those responsibilities described in this Article.

2) The Cat-Owner is responsible for the behavior of his or her cat. If the cat is uncooperative in any way, the *house can vote to expel the cat*. The cat's owner must also pay for any and all damage caused by the cat, or as a direct result of the cat's presence.

by a a. The cat can be expelled by any procedure that could expel a house member, or majority at a house meeting.

potential b. The cat's owner must pay a \$50 security deposit to the house treasurer to cover damage caused to the house. The security deposit only exists as a safety measure that protects the house funds, and the balance should total at least \$50 at all times. The owner shall pay for damage directly, and not by using the balance of the security deposit. The balance of the deposit will be returned to the owner within one month after the cat moves out of the house. This clause in no way limited the liability of the cat owner.

3) Every Resident Cat must be reasonably clean in every way before it enters the house, and throughout its residence at the house. The Cat-Owner is responsible for ensuring that this rule is followed. This rule includes, but is not limited to, the following:

If fleas are a. The cat must be thoroughly checked for fleas *before it is allowed in the house*. found, all fleas and flea eggs must be removed from the cat and the cats belongings before it can enter the house.

b. The owner is responsible for the cost and work involved in keeping the house as flea free as possible.

4) Every Resident Cat must be reasonably healthy and pose no health hazard to the members of the house, or any other Resident Cats, before it enters the house and throughout its residence at the house. The Cat-Owner is responsible for ensuring that this rule is followed. This rule includes, but is not limited to the following:

a. The cat must have had all of its shots including, but not limited to, rabies and distemper. Proof of this in the form of a receipt is required.

5) The Cat-Owner is responsible for the care and feeding of his or her Resident Cat.

6) The Cat-Owner is responsible for making sure that his or her Resident Cat is litter box trained before it enters the house, and throughout its residence at the house.

SECTION C Other

1) Every Resident Cat is allowed in common areas of the house.

Amendment II. Paint Policy
Approved at 4/10/01 House Meeting

1) No one shall paint any molding or any part of the windows because it damages them and they are very expensive as Ruths' is in the historic district. This shall also apply to exterior doors.

2) If someone disobeys this policy they must either sand down and refinish the window or door or pay a fine of \$50 per window or door.

BY-LAWS

1) SMOKING. No smoking of any form is allowed anywhere inside of the House.

2) FINES. Fines shall be levied only by the Work Manger, President or Treasurer. This does not include assessments & or property damage.

3) QUIET HOURS. Quiet Hours shall be determined at the first House meeting of each semester. No phone buzzing or loud and unruly behavior shall be allowed after quiet hours. As a general rule, noise must not be audible outside members' rooms during quiet hours.

Quiet Hours for: _____: Sun-Thurs = _____ Fri and Sat = _____

4) WORK HOLIDAY. The House shall hold at least one Work Holiday per term, coordinated by the Work Manager. All House members shall attend and the purpose shall be to clean, repair, maintain and organize the House as well as to complete special "improvement" projects.

5) HOUSE CHECKS. The President and the Treasurer shall be authorized to individually sign on the House checks. No officer may spend more than fifty dollars on a single item without the approval of the House at a House meeting.

6) BOUNCED CHECKS. If a member's check for House and ICC charges bounces, that member will be required to repay that check and any bank fines and pay the next month's charges in the form of a bank check or a money order.

7) GUESTS. Member must have the informed consent of their house mates (if applicable) to have an overnight guest in their room. No member shall have more than two overnight guests simultaneously, nor shall have guests stay in house common areas, without prior consent from the House, or if that is impossible, the consent of at least two House officers.

8) REIMBURSEMENTS. Members shall present receipts for any item for which they wish to be reimbursed. All items under \$20 must be approved by the Treasurer. Purchases over \$20 shall be approved by the House during a House meeting.

9) FINLANDIA. Finlandia shall be the officially endorsed drink of house meetings.

The By-Laws are subject to change annually by majority vote of House members at a House Meeting.