

Eugene V. Debs Cooperative House House

Constitution (As of April 2, 2018)

We, the members of Debs House, associate ourselves in accordance with the spirit of the Rochdale Principles or the purpose of providing room and board cooperatively to the students of the University of Michigan. As members of the Inter-Cooperative Council (ICC), a mutual housing association, we subscribe to the following principles and values:

1. **Open Membership**: there shall be no restrictions of membership for any reason other than availability of the room in the House and the ability and willingness of the individual to honor one's duties and obligations as a member of the Debs House and the ICC. Specifically, but not exclusively, the House will not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender/sex, citizenship, student status, political/religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or handicap as long as they do not prevent the prospective member from fulfilling their cooperative duties as a member of the House.
2. **Democracy**: Each member has exactly one vote, regardless of their investment; all members together govern the organization and function of the House, and furthermore the ICC. Each member shares equally in house duties, house responsibilities, and in all benefits derived from house operations.
3. **Education**: The House will be a working example of cooperative living and will educate its members and others on campus in the principles of cooperatives.
4. **Neutrality**: The House itself will be neutral in all religious affairs and nonpartisan in all political affairs.
5. **Expansion**: Through the support of the Inter-Cooperative Council, the House shall further the cooperative movement.

ARTICLE ONE: GENERAL

Section 1) The name of the group which operates under this constitution is the Eugene V. Debs Cooperative House, hereinafter referred to as the House.

Section 2) The House is a member of and abides by the standing rules of the Inter-Cooperative Council, referred to as the ICC, unless otherwise stated within this constitution.

ARTICLE TWO: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1) Requirements for membership shall be:

- a) Acceptance by the ICC according to the standing rules and procedures set by the Board of Directors
- b) Signing of an ICC contract, payment of a membership fee, and the purchase of required shares
- c) Assignment by the ICC to the Eugene V. Debs Cooperative House

Section 2) The duties and obligations of members are as follows:

- a) Each member is personally responsible for the work assigned to them by the work manager
- b) No member may hire someone to do their work
- c) House members are responsible for the content of posted notices, signs, etc.
- d) Members must abide by this Constitution and all House and ICC rules and bylaws
- e) A member who cancels his/her contract after the contract period has begun may be held responsible for the remainder of the contract period. Upon House vote, a member may be excused from all or part of his/her House charges and contractual obligations for the following reasons: leaving Ann Arbor, severe personal problems, financial difficulties, health problems, or anything reasons deemed acceptable by the House. ICC charges, however, are decided by the ICC Membership Committee.
- f) Attend and participate in House meetings (see Article Three)

ARTICLE THREE: HOUSE MEETINGS

Section 1) Process

- a) The decisions voted on by the House at the House meetings are the highest authority within the House, and may overrule all other decisions
- b) A quorum shall consist of three fourths of the total membership
- c) House meetings are compulsory for members for all members, unless excused by the House President. Members who cannot attend a house meeting must let the House President know at least 48 hours in advance. It is at the discretion House President to assign makeup work for missed meetings. Members who consistently miss meeting will be referred to Article Seven.
- d) General, short term House proposals shall be passed by a majority of present members;

considerable, enduring House changes shall be passed only by an 85% majority vote, as following the ICC Standing Rules of Kwunsenus. is at the discretion of the House President to decide which category proposals fall under.

e) House meetings shall be called at a convenient time by the President with input from the House members, at least once a month, with notification and a brief agenda sent out via email beforehand.

f) In the event of urgent business, emergency House meetings may be called by the President twenty four hours in advance. Agendas for these meetings may be posted by the President or decided in the form of a petition, signed by at least five members of the House. No business other than that on the agenda may be discussed at emergency meetings. Attendance at these meetings is still mandatory.

g) For simple procedural matters, the house will use a majority voting system. Each member has one vote, there is one round of voting, and the item with most total votes wins. For more serious matters, such as house officer elections or policy changes, the house shall use a single transferable vote (STV) system. Under STV, each house member has a single vote that is initially allocated to their most preferred candidate/item. In each round of voting, the candidate/item with the least amount of votes is eliminated. In the next round, each house member can revote for their next preferred candidate. It is upon the House President's discretion to decide what type of voting system is used.

h) It is at the discretion of the House President to vote on issues, and the President must always vote impartially as a member of the House. The President shall have only one vote, and is encouraged to reserve the vote for the case of a tie, while still living cooperatively.

i) At the first House meeting of the term, the following shall be voted upon and discussed:

I. A House Secretary, elected at the start of the meeting for the purpose of taking Meeting Minutes

II. All other House officers, including, but not limited to: Food Steward(s), Treasurer, Maintenance Manager(s), Work Manager(s), Sustainability Steward, Kitchen Manager(s), Social Chair,

III. Meeting scheduling

IV. Quiet Hours and Smoking Policy

V. Guest Policy, Dinner Time, Work Fines, Meat Cooking Policy

VI. Safety rules and regulations

VII. Explanation of House rules and culture for new members

ARTICLE FOUR: HOUSE OFFICERS

Section 1) The officers of the House, with the exception of House President and Board Rep, shall be elected at the first house meeting, within the first three weeks of each semester. The President and Board Rep shall be elected at the Room Pick Meeting for the coming year, held in the winter semester. In the event that less than half of the House is filled by the time of room picks, the President and Board Rep shall be elected at the first House meeting in the fall. Officers to be elected at the first House meeting are outlined in Article Three, Section One. Officers shall receive the following work hours:

- i. President, full work hours
- ii. Board Rep, full hours
- iii. Treasurer, half work hours
- iv. Maintenance Manager, full work hours
- v. Work Manager, full work hours
- v. Food Steward, full work hours or 3 hours if split
- vi. Sustainability Steward, half work hours.
- vii. Kitchen Manager, full work hours or 3 work hours if split
- ix. Secretary, one work hour
- x. Social Chair, one work hour

If the House deems necessary to modify the amount of hours assigned to a position during a term, a majority vote must be taken during the House officer election. In the event of split officer positions, the House may decide on the amount of work hours credited to House officers.

Section 2) The President and Board Rep shall hold their position for both the fall and winter semesters, unless they are unable or unwilling to perform the necessary duties of the position. Officers other than the President and Board Rep shall hold office for one semester and are elected by a simple majority at the first House meeting of each term. Members may not hold more than one house officer position, and may succeed themselves in office.

Section 3) In the absence of the House President, the House Secretary shall facilitate House meetings.

Section 4) Duties of House officers. All officers are responsible for performing all duties outlined below as well as all duties which may be assigned to them by the members of the House. House officers shall attend all appropriate meetings and training sessions held by the ICC.

a) House President:

- i. Is the Chief Executive Officer
- ii. Has overall responsibility for House operations
- iii. Is a liaison between the house and the ICC and participates in all mandatory House President trainings and meetings
- iv. Plan and distribute meetings agendas and coming elections at least 48 hours in advance
- v. Facilitate House meetings. The President may ask another officer, house member, or outside facilitator in cases where there is a conflict of interest for the President to act as a facilitator
- vi. Facilitate referral appeals and expulsion hearings, except in cases of conflict of interests
- vii. Coordinate officer activity and act as a liaison between House members and officers when necessary
- viii. Call open meetings of all House officers at least once per month
- ix. Supervise and coordinate all other House officers
- x. Announce and post ICC ideas, policies, problems, and events to the House
- xi. Shall be in charge of all room assignments, keep room keys, and be aware of membership and monitor StickerBook
- xii. Communicate House needs to ICC officers or the appropriate committee
- xiii. Collect house officers updates and send out a house officer report each week. Compare house officer memos with chores descriptions and meet with officers if not performing duties
- xiv. Organize tours for prospective members in a timely manner
- xv. Mediate internal house conflicts or ask for help from an appropriate ICC committee

b) The Treasurer

- i. Prepares and submits the House budget for member consideration at the second House meeting of each term
- ii. Makes financial reports at regular House meetings and when otherwise necessary. Reports must include the names of everyone (current and non-current members) in debt to the

House

- iii. Send regular reminders for members to pay House charges, reimburse members for expenses on House goods, keeping a record of all transactions
- iv. Post budget variance each month and notify the House of any surpluses or deficits
- v. Be in communication with members as officers as necessary to monitor expenses
- vi. Attend ICC finance meetings to regularly assess financial situation of the house.

c) Maintenance Manager

- i. In charge of maintaining and improving the physical condition of the House
- ii. Serve on the ICC Maintenance Team and attend all related meetings
- iii. Report on projects completed
- iv. Prepares the House for all inspections to ensure the House meetings the standards of the Ann Arbor city code
- v. Shall carry out regular service on House appliance, and monitor the condition of the fire alarm, water heater, and heating system each semester
- vi. Work with the Work Manager to organize and conduct the Work Holiday
- vii. Attend bi weekly training sessions
- viii. Respond to house member maintenance requests within 48 hours. If a house member's request cannot be completed, will submit an RFAs in a timely manner
- ix. Complete one major project each semester as determined by house needs

d) Work Manager

- i. Shall assign in a fair manner the work necessary for the efficient and sanitary function of the House
- ii. Make and post a work schedule and ensure that all work is being performed to an acceptable standard
- iii. Work with the Maintenance Manager to organize and conduct the Work Holiday projects
- iv. Shall assign make up hours and assess fines according to the rules outlined in Article Five
- v. Shall assign at least 4 work hours and at most 5 work hours to every House member. If a house officer position is split, the work manager shall reasonably assess how many additional work hours to give to the split individuals
- vi. Shall send out weekend lunch clean reminders
- vii. Shall check chores for completion every week

viii. Shall update house members and give fair warning on uncompleted chores each week. Will post a makeup chore calendar so that it is available for all house members to view

ix. Conduct a mid-semester check-in survey and reassess chores if necessary

e) Board Representative

i. Shall act as a liaison between the House members and the ICC Board of Directors

ii. Shall ensure that House needs and concerns are raised at the meetings of the ICC Board of Directors

iii. Shall attend and participate in all ICC Board of Directors meetings

iv. Shall remain in communication with the House to accurately convey member concerns at the Board of Directors level

v. Shall post the minutes of the Board of Directors meeting and keep the House up to date with proposals and changes made by the Board

vi. Send house members a weekly update of ICC meeting

f) Food Steward

i. Shall ensure that the House has sufficient supplies of guff food while remaining within the House budget

ii. Shall purchase food items in accordance with the social and ecological principles outlined in Article Eight

iii. Shall purchase in advance the necessary items for House dinners to be completed on time and maintain communication with Dinner Cooks

iv. Shall post a list of grocery requests and turn in a copy of each receipt to the House Treasurer

v. Shall ensure that the House is consistently stocked on items that are bulk ordered

vi. Shall make the food budget publically available for all house members

vii. Shall send out a weekly list of foods that were purchased for the week

viii. Shall put food into pantries and fridges

g) Sustainability Steward

i. Shall report energy usage to the House and to the ICC Sustainability Committee

ii. Shall attend monthly meetings of the ICC Sustainability Committee

iii. Attend relevant Maintenance trainings (e.g. faucet/toilet repairs)

iv. Shall educate the House members on issues of sustainability and encourage and facilitate sustainable living, energy use, and consumption

v. Shall identify and address areas of wasted energy or resources and plan sustainability projects where necessary

vi. Shall bring house trash and house recycle bins to curb for pickup before Tuesday mornings and bring back to driveway Tuesday afternoon

Vii. Shall bring recyclable cans to store biweekly

viii. Shall identify and plan one sustainability project each semester

h) Secretary

i. Shall record notes at house meetings and send meeting notes to house members in a timely manner

ii. Shall sort mail into house members mailboxes and a place for packages

iii. Shall send mail to old house members upon request

h) Kitchen Manager

i. Shall organize the pantries, spice drawers, fridges, tupperware, and utensils at least once week. Will compost, freeze, throw away any rotten foods that are found.

ii. Shall bring food from storage areas into kitchen fridges and pantries when needed. Will restock any spices when needed.

iii. Shall clean cast irons, cutting boards, kitchen surfaces, drying racks, and appliances at least once a month

iv. Shall pick up bread bread from Lester every Friday and place into Tupperware

v. Shall make weekly guff food for house members.

i) Social Chair

i. Plan a biweekly event for house members with at least non-party related activity per month.

ii. Send bi-weekly calendar updates of events, both in the house and on campus

iii. Shall coordinate with other ICC houses for combined events

iv. Shall create a plan at the start of each semester for party setup, party teardown, and sober monitors. Assigns responsibility for roles before each party.

ARTICLE FIVE: MONETARY REGULATIONS

Section 1) House finances shall operate in accordance with ICC Standing Rules

Section 2) Late payments and failure to pay House charges shall be handled in accordance with the ICC Standing Rules

Section 3) Fines

- a) The Work Manager shall have the power to assign make up work for members who do not do satisfactory work. Each House member will be allowed a total of 2 strikes. Every time a house member's work is uncompleted or unsatisfactory, the work manager will give a strike. It is the work manager's discretion to assign make-up hours for the missed work. Members who complete the make-up work assigned will their strike removed.
- b) If substandard or missed work persists beyond 2 strikes, the Work Manager may assess fines for each missed hour of work in addition to make-up work. The amount of the fine shall be voted on by the House in the first meeting of both the fall and winter semester
- c) If a member continues to fail to complete their House chores and duties, the Work Manager along with one other House Officer may put the member on referral (see ICC Standing Rules Chapter 6.7.6)

ARTICLE SIX: ROOM PICKS

Section 1) The President shall be responsible for accurately conveying seniority of House members via the ICC and see that Room Picks are carried out accordingly.

Section 2) Seniority System

- a) The member with the highest seniority within the House picks their room first, and so on, descending from most to least member seniority.
- b) Seniority is defined by the following groups:
 - i. Continuing members have the highest seniority. Within this group, seniority is decided by number of seniority points (more points = higher seniority). Points are determined through the following:
 - o 1 point per month for members with a Debs contract who contribute to House work hours
 - o .5 points per month for boarders who contribute to House work hours
 - o .5 point per month for members with a Debs contract who do not actively contribute to at least half of monthly work hours (eg: have a contract, but spend more than half of contract period traveling)All continuing member points expire after 1.5 years without a Debs House contract.
 - ii. ICC members have next highest seniority. Within this group, the members with the highest number of total house contract terms in another ICC House have the highest authority. Fall/Winter both count as 1 term, and Spring/Summer count as .5 terms.

- iii. People from other Cooperatives have the next highest seniority.
- iv. New members have the lowest seniority.

The House President is responsible for accurately calculating the appropriate amount of seniority points for each house member.

- c) Should any members have equal seniority within one of the following groups, then the following process will be followed:
 - i. The President will group together House members who signed a most recent term contract within five days of each other. (eg: any contracts signed from Oct 20th – 25th will be grouped together). Groups who signed a most recent term contracts first will have higher seniority.
 - ii. The President will determine relative seniority within each group by randomly drawing names. The first name drawn will have the highest seniority in the group, the second name drawn will have the second highest seniority, and so on.

Section 3) Room Picks

- a) Room picks for the Fall/Winter contract period are held in the Winter semester by the current House President. In the event of room vacancies during the year, current House members shall be allowed to change rooms in accordance with the previously outlined seniority rules. All room picks shall be carried out in accordance with the seniority rules outlined in this Article.
- b) Any member moving out for the winter term may not advertise their specific room in the House, but rather may only advertise a space in the House, not guaranteeing any specific room to prospective members.
- c) Future contracts house contracts do not count for determining seniority points. Seniority points are only determined by the amount of months already lived at Debs or terms already lived at another during the time of room picks.
- d) Members with higher seniority have the option to choose a roommate that has lower seniority to be their roommate.

Section 4) Squatter's Rights

- a) House members may only stay in one room as long as allowed in the ICC Standing Rules
- b) Once a room is chosen by a member or members during the fall room pick meeting, that room may not be picked away from them during winter room picks.

ARTICLE SEVEN: REFERRAL, EXPULSION, AND DEPOSITION

Section 1) Referral of current House members shall be carried out in accordance with the ICC

Standing Rules (Chapter 6.7), which may be perused on the ICC Website. Referral is a temporary probationary process that seeks to notify a House member of behavior not in accordance with the House rules or ICC Standing Rules, and change this behavior for the better in a cooperative way. Referral should only be considered in cases of uncooperative behavior, damages to the house, repeated failure to complete House duties, any sort of abuse towards fellow members, failure to comply with the rules set by the House constitution, or other reasons deemed as mandating referral by members of the House. Please refer to the ICC Standing Rules, Section 6.7 for further information.

Section 2) Expulsion shall be carried out in accordance with the ICC Standing Rules, Section 6.8. Expulsion is the severest penalty that can be exacted by the ICC and is reserved for extreme cases of uncooperative behavior. Please refer to the ICC Standing Rules, section 6.8 for more specific information about and consequences of expulsion.

Section 3) Deposition of House Officers

a) The only grounds for deposition of a House officer shall be failure to adequately perform the duties of the office, use of power for personal interests, or use of power for ideas contrary to those of the House, the ICC, or Rochdale Principles. House members shall bring issues with a House officer to the House President. If there is an issue with the House President, house members shall bring issues to other House officers or ICC staff.

b) Any officer may be recalled only by a two-thirds majority of the entire House membership

ARTICLE EIGHT: SOCIALLY AND ECOLOGICALLY CONSCIOUS PURCHASING

Section 1) Commitment to socially and ecologically conscious purchasing: the members of Eugene V. Debs Cooperative House empower the Food Steward, Maintenance Manager, and anyone else who purchases food, supplies, equipment, etc. for the House to consider the social and ecological impact of their purchases (in addition to cost, availability, member preferences, etc.) in making buying decisions. Wherever possible, the House is committed to buying local and organic produce and other items.

Section 2) Commitment to using House funds only for vegetarian goods: Insofar as the members of Eugene V. Debs House wish to promote ecologically sustainability food production, social justice, worker safety, equitable distribution of food, and animal welfare, we commit as a House to buying no meat (beef, pork, poultry, game, seafood, etc.) as a House. Members are not

restricted in any way in regards to which foods they may buy, store, or cook in the House using their own funds. We seek to promote the aforementioned ideas as much as possible and encourage equal, sustainable living worldwide.

ARTICLE NINE: SMOKING

Smoking of tobacco is not allowed in the House. Smoking is allowed on the porch and outside of the House. Member that violate this policy will be referred to Article Seven.

ARTICLE TEN: CONSTITUTION AND HOUSE RULES

An up-to-date Constitution shall be posted and made available to members. The Constitution may only be amended by two-thirds majority of the entire House membership. Amendments must be presented as a proposal at a House meeting and may be altered on the floor by members in attendance. The final form of an amendment shall be posted in its final form at least four days before the next House meeting, and may be written in if approved by the House.

General house rules shall be voted on by a majority vote during the start of each contract term. These include, but are not limited to, quiet hours, fine amount, guest policies, nudity, dinner time, etc. Amendments to these rules must be presented as a proposal at a House meeting and may be altered by members in attendance through a vote.

ARTICLE ELEVEN: PET POLICY

The Eugene V. Debs Cooperative House is a pet free house in accordance with the ICC Standing Rules regarding pets in ICC houses, outlined in Chapter 8, Section 5. Only fish may be kept in the House as pets in aquariums less than twenty (20) gallons in capacity. This status is frozen for three years after taking effect and may be changed only with an 85% majority vote of total membership.

ARTICLE TWELVE: CONSCIOUS COOKING

The Eugene V. Debs Cooperative House is committed to buying no meat products as a House. House members that wish to cook personal meat products in the house should be conscious of effects on other house members. Thus, cooking meat products shall be limited to specified dishes and utensils that will be decided by the House at the first meeting of the term. In deemed necessary by the House, individuals shall notify other house members before cooking meat products. It is upon House members to vote on the specific policies for each term.

ARTICLE THIRTEEN: COOPERATIVE LIVING

Every member of the House shall make an effort in quotidian life to act cooperatively and respectfully towards fellow members of the House. As a member of the House, one is a member of the House family, and should treat others as such and be treated as such. It is of utmost importance that every member feels comfortable and safe in the House, and every member should feel free to raise concerns, problems, or ideas to the House at meetings, or to bring issues to the attention of House officers, with no worry of judgment or negative reaction. It is the responsibility of every member to strive to realize these ideas, to make every member of the House feel at home, and to treat the House as a cooperative living space.

The House is a magical community, where all belong, all are loved, and thus shall it ever remain. Such ineffable bonds can only be formed in truly wonderful places, and this House is a place that will eternally stand in the hearts, minds, and lives of its members — past, present, and future. Words will never do it justice.

For a happy, loving home we strive, keeping the dream of Debs alive!

Peace, love, and vegetables, The Eugene V. Debs Cooperative House

hot and sticky, baby