



Member Relations By-law (By-law #38)

This By-law replaces the Grievance Procedure (Member Related Policies) as amended January 24, 1995.

PREAMBLE: Our Vision and Goals

Hugh Garner Housing Co-operative is a non-profit organization that provides affordable housing for people of different backgrounds, needs and talents. When we join the Co-op, we join a community. Members work toward building a caring community which believes in the dignity and value of each person. We live side by side with other members and non-members.

The members have put in place reasonable standards to live by. These standards are outlined in the Co-op's By-laws (e.g. the Occupancy By-law, etc.). Usually our members follow these rules. We try to be good neighbours. But sometimes conflicts can happen. Sometimes neighbours have differences that need to be sorted out. This is why we want to have a process for dealing with conflict.

We commit ourselves to be a community in which we:

- i) listen to each other and try to understand how others feel
- ii) communicate with each other
- iii) support majority decisions, even when we disagree with them
- iv) treat each other with respect
- v) welcome and respect individual differences
- vi) agree to act co-operatively in support of a safe co-op environment.

We support the process for managing conflict set out in this By-law. The Co-op has put in place this Member Relations By-law to offer members a way to deal with problems and conflict.

Article 1. Member Relations Committee (formerly the Rules Committee)

The Member Relations Committee helps members understand the importance of a good co-op community and what makes for a good community. The committee will help members to prevent and to deal with conflicts that may disrupt the community.

The Member Relations Committee will investigate only those grievances which have been submitted to the Co-op office in writing, on the form

provided and have been signed. The Committee is responsible for dealing with problems concerning breaches of the By-laws or Rules of the Co-op involving problems that members may have with other members or members' families or guests.

Article 2. *Member Relations Education*

The Co-op recognizes that education is necessary if members are to live up to the goals we have set for our community. The Co-op will offer members relations education as part of its annual program. Each member will receive a copy of this By-law.

Article 3. *Member Relations Process*

- a) In the case of a grievance originating with an individual Member, the Member registering the grievance must have made at least one attempt to deal with the problem personally and where there is no resolution, the Member Relations Committee will take the matter under consideration. Exceptions to this are those cases such as listed below:
- i) a threat to personal safety or Co-op property
 - ii) a serious abuse of alcohol or drugs or drug dealing
 - iii) serious psychiatric problems
 - iv) harassment of members or staff or illegal acts as set out in Article 5.3 of the Co-op's Occupancy By-law, or
 - v) other serious breaches of the Co-op's by-laws.

If the problem originates with a child of a member, the member affected must try to resolve the problem with an adult member of the household responsible for the child instead of approaching the child directly, except in the case of an emergency.

In cases where a problem stems from a guest of a member the member affected should contact that member directly.

- b) All grievances referred to the Member Relations Committee will be investigated by the Committee to determine whether or not they are valid and whether or not a Co-op By-law or policy is being violated. The Member Relations Committee will interview the Member(s) registering the written grievance, as well as the Member being complained about or take such other action as it feels necessary to evaluate the problem.

Members of the Member Relations Committee will respect the confidentiality of matters considered by the Committee or coming to their attention as Members of the Committee. All documents of the Committee will remain confidential. Meetings of the Committee involving grievances are not open to the general membership.

- c) Interviews will always be conducted by at least two members of the Member Relations Committee. Interviewers will keep a written record of all interviews. Interviewers should conduct themselves in as considerate a way as possible, while remaining objective. It is the responsibility of the Committee to ensure that the two Members assigned as interviewers are unbiased on the matter.
- d) The Member Relations Committee may refer the grievance to the Board of Directors directly without interviewing the parties involved in cases such as the following:
 - i) a threat to personal safety or Co-op property
 - ii) a serious abuse of alcohol or drugs or drug dealing
 - iii) serious psychiatric problems
 - iv) harassment of members or staff or illegal acts as set out in Article 5.3 of the Co-op's Occupancy By-law, or
 - v) other serious breaches of the Co-op's By-laws.
- e) The Committee will investigate and deal with all grievances as outlined in this Article. When it has been determined that a Member is failing to carry out certain Co-op responsibilities or is not behaving in accordance with By-laws of the Co-op, the Member Relations Committee will attempt to ascertain the reason for the problem and explore possible resolutions with the Member.

In cases where the long-term resolution of the problem seems to require professional help (social, medical or legal) the Committee should bring the situation to the attention of the Co-ordinator. In no case should the Committee or its Members attempt to directly provide such help.

- f) the Member Relations Committee will attempt to find a resolution to a problem that is acceptable to all the parties involved. During the process:
 - i) A Member (griever or grievée) or a Committee member may ask that the case be referred for outside mediation (if griever and grievée are willing).

- ii) A Member (griever and grievée) or a Committee member may ask that the case be referred to the board (if griever and grievée are willing).
- iii) If a mutually acceptable resolution is not possible the Member Relations Committee, having reviewed the matter, will make what it consider to be a fair resolution and will communicate the decision in writing to the parties involved
- g) Either party in the grievance has the right to appeal any decision of the Member Relations Committee by submitting a letter to the Board outlining the grounds for the appeal.
- h) The Member Relations Committee will monitor the situation to ensure that the problem has been resolved.
- i) The Member Relations Committee may recommend termination of occupancy rights in accordance with the By-laws, but the decision to terminate occupancy rights rests with the Board of Directors and the membership upon appeal.

Article 4. Confidentiality

The board will require members of the Member Relations Committee to sign a declaration of confidentiality.

Statements about conflict that do not identify any party and are general do not breach confidentiality. All other references, minutes, meetings and information about any matter the Committee deals with are confidential. The board will remove any Committee member who breaches confidentiality. The board and staff will keep confidential any information about the activities of the Committee.

Article 5. Conflict of Interest

Any member of the Member Relations Committee who has a conflict of interest must declare it and withdraw from the process. The Committee will refer any failure to declare conflict of interest to the Board and ask the member to withdraw from the Committee.

Approved by Board: Approved by the Board of Directors October 22, 2003

Approved by Membership: Approved by the General Members January 12, 2004