



Helen's Court Co-op Handbook

Section 07. Membership Committee

MISSION STATEMENT

To be guided by the co-op principles of non-discrimination and equality; to interact with others respectfully; to be fair and unbiased when selecting new members or participating in internal relocations. To find new members who understand and support the principles of affordable housing (non-profit housing); to find members who understand the principles of cooperative living; and are committed to being active, co-operative members. To foster an understanding of the above principles.

GUIDELINES FOR MEETING CONDUCT (Added April 2012)

- Encourage everyone to participate
- Avoid side conversations
- Stick to the topic
- Value others and their right to express ideas
- Pay attention; listen to what people are saying
- Talk about issues, not people
- Ask if you don't understand
- Arrive on time
- Do not use smart phones recreationally.
- If you must send regrets, inform the Chair or Secretary of the status of your tasks
- Laugh, learn, and enjoy

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITMENT

In all situations that require formal communication of a decision or an inquiry between the Membership Committee and an individual member, the Membership Committee will, in a timely fashion, make personal contact with the member and deliver a copy of the communication. Follow-up may also be done by phone or email. In all instances, we will do our best to ensure that the member has received the communication, and there must always be a record of the written communication. A hard copy of all written communication from the committee and to the committee will be kept on file. If the committee does its due diligence to contact the member and the member is unavailable and has left no alternative contact, the responsibility for the incomplete communication rests with the member.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Process and update applications
- Conduct interviews and recommend new members to the Board of Directors
- Orient applicants and integrate new members into the Co-op by the following means:
 - (a) Gatherings to welcome new members, during which the new member(s) will sign the Occupancy Agreement and be introduced to Co-op members as well as members of committees in which they have expressed interest;
 - (b) Mentoring programs where experienced committee members actively support new member attendance of meetings and participation in committee activities (e.g., accompanying new members to meetings and introducing them);

(c) Development of a brochure outlining the obligations and rights of membership, to be distributed to new roommates. (Passed Feb. 19/06)

- Select candidates for Internal Relocation and recommend them to the Board
- Organize educational workshops related to the mandate of the committee
- Hold monthly meetings (or more often, as needed)
- Encourage member participation
- Maintain confidentiality of issues discussed
- One member of the membership committee will sit on the Community Committee which tracks member participation in the Co-op (Passed Feb. 19/06)

COMMITTEE SIZE

The Membership committee operates best with 6-7 active members.

RESIDENT CATEGORIES

Residence

Membership in the Co-op is limited to persons who live in the Unit in the Co-op on a full time basis as their principal residence; however, the Directors may exempt, in their discretion and upon the terms they see fit, an existing member from the application of this Rule. (From New Rules)

A person is considered a resident of Helen's Court if they spend at least half of their time here over a period of more than four consecutive months. A person is considered a non-resident of Helen's Court if they spend less than half of their time here over a period of four consecutive months and have not arranged a sublet or a long-term absence agreement. Dependent children are exempt from these definitions.

This is a point of interest. Helen's Court applies for a Homeowner's Grant on behalf of every household. No individual may apply for more than one Homeowner's Grant. One member of each household must commit their Homeowner's Grant to Helen's Court. (Sep. 19, 2006)

There are seven categories of Helen's Court residents:

- Principal Member (Principal Member)
- Associate Member (A/M)
- Alumnus
- Roommate (RM)
- Dependent
- Guest
- Sublettor

There shall be no joint membership. (From New Rules)

1. Principal Member There will be one, and only one, Principal Member for each unit.

(a) How to become a Principal Member

One becomes a Principal Member on moving into the co-op and purchasing, or arranging with the Finance Committee to purchase, the appropriate shares in Helen's Court Housing Co-op.

The Principal Member also pays a \$10 membership fee.

(b) Rights and Obligations

- Principal Members have ultimate responsibility for their units.
- Principal Members have full rights and privileges and can vote at all Co-op meetings. He or she can serve on the Board or on any committee.
- Principal Members have complete relocation privileges as per the Co-op's Internal Relocation Policy.

(c) Associate Member Status on Principal Member Move-out

If a Principal Member leaves a unit, an Associate Member in that unit has the following options:

In a case where the Associate Member has lived in Helen's Court for ten years or more, he/she may apply to the Membership Committee and Board to stay in the unit as the new Principal Member.

2. Associate Member

(a) How to become an Associate Member

To be an Associate Member one must live at Helen's Court, sharing a unit with a Principal member.

All non-principal adult members of the household who participate in the entry interview and fulfill the Co-op's selection criteria will be automatically granted Associate Member status upon move-in. (Passed Feb. 19/06)

In other cases, adult residents (Roommates) may apply for Associate Member status after living in Helen's Court for one year. The Membership Committee may recommend that the Board approve the application on the basis of an entry interview with the Membership Committee and observed participation, or may recommend an internship after which the applicant may reapply. (Passed Oct. 18, 2006)

For criteria to become an Associate Member see PARTICIPATION AND MEMBERSHIP STANDING. (Passed Jan 2014)

Dependent residents may apply for Associate Member status anytime after their 19th birthday and one year's residency in Helen's Court. The Membership Committee may recommend that the Board approve the application on the basis of an interview and observed participation, or may recommend an internship after which the applicant may reapply. (Passed Oct. 18, 2006)

(b) Rights and Obligations

The Associate Member must pay a \$10 fee.

An Associate Member has full rights and privileges and may vote at all co-op meetings. He or she may serve on the Board or on any committee.

Associate Members have complete relocation privileges as per the Co-op's Internal Relocation Policy.

3. Alumnus

When someone moves out of the co-op his or her membership is automatically relinquished. Alumnus status is for a co-op member who moves out of Helen's Court but wishes to remain involved in the co-op, or to return at a later date.

(a) How to become an Alumnus

A Principal or Associate Member who has participated actively in Helen's Court for at least two years may, upon moving out, apply for Alumnus status. This application must be made within six months of moving out.

To retain Alumnus status, the Alumnus must re-apply annually. (Passed January 7, 1990)

(b) Rights and Obligations

Alumni may serve on committees with the exception of Membership and Finance. They may not serve on the Board. They may attend general meetings but may not vote.

Alumni's applications to return to Helen's Court will be considered at the same time as internal applications for relocation.

4. Roommate

(a) How to become a Roommate

Roommates attain Roommate status upon moving into the co-op. The Principal member must put a Roommate Agreement in place before the Roommate moves in.

If a Principal Member leaves their unit for 1 month in the charge of a Roommate a sublet agreement must be put in place according to Section 6 under Sublettor.

(b) Rights and Obligations

The financial responsibility for the unit ultimately lies with the Principal Member.

Roommates may serve on committees with the exception of Membership, Finance and the Board. They may attend general meetings but may not vote.

Roommates have no relocation privileges. They may apply for a place on the External Waiting List, but being an Roommate gives no special access to the list.

Roommates will receive a handout outlining the process required to attain Associate Member status.

5. Dependents

Dependent residents who come of age (19 years) may apply for A/M status anytime after their 19th birthday and one year's residency in Helen's Court. The Membership Committee may recommend that the Board approve the application on the basis of an interview and observed participation, or may recommend an apprenticeship of one year. (Passed Oct. 18, 2006)

6. Sublettor

If a member wishes to be away from their unit for more than 2 months they must inform the Membership Committee in writing. If the member wishes to sublet their unit for 2 months or more they must apply to the Membership Committee two months in advance, who will pass their recommendation on to the Board. Upon approval the Membership Committee will draw up a sublet agreement between the subletter, the Principal Member, Finance Committee and Membership Committee.

A unit may be sublet for up to a year. If a Principal Member wants to sublet for more than one year (e.g., 12 months x 1; 6 months x 2) or to extend a sublet beyond one year, the Principal Member must apply to the Membership Committee, which will pass its recommendation on to the Board.

The Membership Committee must interview all members of a subletting household before the sublet is approved. The Principal Member is responsible for leaving enough time for the interview to take place, understanding that the Membership Committee might turn down the potential sublettor. The entire subletting adult household must be present for the interview. If the sublet is approved, it is the responsibility of the Principal Member to introduce the sublettor to the community.

All subletting households must be stable households (i.e. groups of people who have a demonstrated commitment to living together long-term.)

The Principal Member must leave contact information for the period that they are away. All responsibilities remain with the Principal Member.

Principal Members pay the maximum housing charge for the unit.

It is strongly suggested that the Principal Member require the Subletter to obtain content insurance.

In cases of subletting, the Membership Committee encourages the policy of one person per bedroom as a goal. Where this is not possible, exceptions may be made.

Sublettors have no relocation privileges. They may apply for a place on the External Waiting List, but being a Subletter gives no special access to the list. They may attend general meetings but may not vote.

From the Occupancy Rules

1. SUBLETTING

- 1. The member agrees not to sublet the unit or any portion of it, except with the prior written approval of the Board of Directors of the co-op.*
- 2. The maximum sublet period shall be one year, but can be extended in certain circumstances.*
- 3. Members wishing to sublet must submit request to the Board two months in advance.*
- 4. All prospective sublettors must be interviewed and approved by the Membership Committee.*
- 5. The Sublettor's occupancy charge will be determined by the Finance Committee in each individual case.*
- 6. The co-op member is responsible for damages or unpaid housing charges should the Sublettor fail to abide by the signed agreement with the co-op member. (The Membership Committee will provide form copies of this agreement).*

7. Guest

Non-paying guests are allowed to stay in Helen's Court for a period no longer than 2 months. After two months, if that individual continues to live at Helen's Court, the Principal Member must notify the Membership and Finance committees that the guest wishes to change his/her Guest status to Roommate status.

The Principal Member and guest may also come before the Board and explain why guest status might be extended.

We urge members who have guests staying for an extended period of time to introduce them to the Community via the Membership committee.

8. Bereavement Status (Passed January 13, 2014)

Upon the death of a Principal member, any surviving dependent or dependents may be allowed to remain in the unit for a period of up to one year. They may also apply for and receive subsidy, if they are income-tested. This privilege may also be granted to a roommate, who was in a family or other close relationship with the deceased, depending on the circumstances and upon the recommendation of the Membership Committee.

During the Bereavement period the dependent or roommate is advised to apply for Membership status if they wish to stay at the co-op. If membership status becomes dependent on an internship period and that period extends beyond the initial Bereavement period then the Bereavement period can be extended. At some point the individual will either be given Membership Status and the right to apply for a unit (the surviving member may not be appropriately housed in the unit in which they currently reside) or they will leave the co-op.

If the Principal Member is survived by an Associate Member, the survivor will become the Principal Member. If they are overhoused they may receive subsidy for up to one year, after which time, they will be expected to pay maximum housing charges if they remain overhoused.

If a Roommate, Associate Member, or Dependent dies, leaving a Principal Member overhoused, the Principal Member may be allowed to apply for and continue to receive subsidy in the unit for a period of up to one year.

POLICY RE EXTENDED ABSENCE (Passed Nov. 4, 2001)

When a Principal Member plans to be absent (not subletting) for over two months he or she must apply to the Membership committee for an Agreement of Absence. Members have the right to be away for up to one year. In some circumstances, a second year may be granted. If a member is going to be away for more than two years, the Membership Committee asks that the member reconsider his/her membership status and co-op commitment by staying, applying to the Board for share transfer to an A/M, or giving up their shares and moving out. In extenuating circumstances a further extension may be granted. As always, decisions may be challenged at a General Meeting. The purpose of this addition to the Membership Policy is to ensure member responsibility and commitment to Helen's Court.

POLICY RE UNITS FOR FAMILIES

The Co-op wants to maintain a balance between family households and adult households. We would like to have:

- Families occupying a minimum of 25 units. (This is 71% of our two and three bedroom units, or 57% of the total units in the co-op).

Accordingly, when a vacancy leaves us with fewer than 25 families, family households on the External Waiting List will be given priority. In exceptional circumstances, the Membership Committee may recommend to the Board that the quota be waived e.g., in the case of an application by senior citizens.

For families splitting up, please see our Internal Relocation Policy.

Note: This policy DOES NOT affect Internal relocations.

OVERHOUSING POLICY (Passed September 18, 2011)

Effective April 1, 2012

1. As long as a household has one person per bedroom, it is NOT over-housed. A member is over housed when there are less than one person per bedroom or under housed when there are more than one person per bedroom.

2. Over-housed units are permitted, as follows:

DEPENDENTS: In the event of a dependent moving out of Helen's Court, the household may continue to inhabit the same unit without being considered over-housed for up to six months from the date the dependent leaves, or until the dependent reaches age 23, whichever comes first. No more than one spare room may be held for absent dependents, even if additional dependents move out. The Principal Member must notify the Membership Committee of the dependent's departure within 30 days. (Passed January 7th, 1990) The Principal Member must also notify the Membership and Finance Committees in writing when a dependent reaches their 23rd birthday with plans to stay at Helen's Court and has not yet become an associate member. That dependent then falls under Roommate status and may apply for membership. (See How To Become an Associate Member.)

3. Units that are over-housed will pay the maximum housing charge for the unit regardless of income.

Principal Members who have financial difficulty with housing charges have the option of bringing in a roommate or downsizing to a smaller unit when one comes available. (Any appropriately housed household is eligible for subsidy.) They can also notify the Membership Committee of their desire to downsize, in which case the Membership Committee will inform the general membership and invite applications for a unit exchange. In any case, the Principal Member remains financially responsible for the housing charge for the unit as long as they are over-housed.

4. Principal Members are responsible for informing the Membership Committee of all changes in household size that result in being over housed. If a member does not notify the Membership Committee when they become over-housed, the member will pay the maximum unit housing charge retroactively to the time of the previous income verification if they cannot prove when they became over housed.

In the event a roommate moves out and the member has difficulty finding a new roommate, the over housed member may apply to the Finance Committee for subsidy for one month within a one-year period.

This policy does not supersede the existing policy on bereavement as it applies to over housing.

5. The Membership Committee will always strive to avoid setting up over-housing situations when assigning units for internal relocation and when filling units externally. When filling units externally, the committee will endeavour to bring members into the co-op that support all the values that are important to the community.

6. Lower Two Bedroom Units

In cases of internal relocation, the Membership Committee may allow existing individual members of Helen's Court to move into lower two bedroom suites as one-person households. Those members would be considered overhoused, but could live in the unit paying maximum housing charges. If the household expanded, the household would no longer be considered overhoused and would be eligible for subsidy. When accepting applicants from the external waiting list, the Membership Committee will continue to follow the principle of

endeavouring not to move overhoused households into any units, including the lower twos.

PROCEDURE FOR PROCESSING EXTERNAL APPLICATIONS

When the current number of application forms on our External Waiting List is low, the Membership Committee opens the waiting list for 1, 2 and/or 3 bedroom units as needed. Generally, one application form is given to each of the 44 units in Helen's Court for members to pass on to appropriate candidates/families for residence here. The Membership Committee may also send application forms to some of the many enquiry letters on file.

Application Selection

1. Once a unit becomes available, the Membership Committee reviews the application forms on file. Note that the outgoing member must give 2 months notice to the Membership Committee.

Each application form is examined for interview suitability:

- Appropriate finances (often subsidy is not available)
 - Family—if our family quota is filled or not
 - 1 person per bedroom criteria met
2. The Membership Committee chooses 4-5 persons/families to interview. Prior to the interview, the applicants are shown the available unit.
 3. Generally 5-6 members of the Membership Committee attend the set of interviews held over 1-2 sessions.
 4. Potential members are interviewed in terms of:
 - Commitment to co-op principles and a willingness to participate in co-op activities and decision-making (i.e., attending meetings, serving on committees, other positions or tasks)
 - Demonstrated financial responsibility
 - Indications of long-term commitment to the co-op
 - Likelihood of being a good resident who will: (a) maintain co-op property in good condition; (b) live co-operatively with respect for the rights of others; (c) have a positive attitude towards neighbors from a variety of social, economic and cultural backgrounds and abilities/disabilities
 - Present living situation
 - Need
 5. The Membership Committee's recommendation of the successful applicant must be approved by the Directors.
 6. Membership is effective on the day the Directors approve the application for membership. (From New Rules)

STEPS FOR APPROVING NEW MEMBERS (approved November 2016)

1. Once the Membership Committee has chosen a potential incoming household, the Secretary of the Membership Committee will contact the Board of Directors to make its recommendation.
2. If the Board approves the recommendation, the Secretary of the Membership Committee will inform the household that their application has been accepted pending a review of income by the Finance Committee. The potential incoming household will be asked to provide income verification in the form of the most recent Notices of Assessment for adult members of the household. The Secretary will tell the household to provide this information directly to the co-op's Financial Manager.
3. Once the Finance Committee verifies the potential household's income, the Secretary of the Membership Committee will notify the household with a welcome letter giving them instructions on who to contact to plan their move-in.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MENTOR

1. As soon as the incoming household has been approved, the mentor will identify themselves to the household.
2. The mentor will make sure that the household has access to the Helen's Court Handbook (posted on the co-op's website <http://helenscourt.org>). The mentor will also make sure the incoming members submit signed copies of the Confidentiality Agreement to the Secretary of the Membership Committee.
3. The mentor will ask the household to supply a photograph of the household that can be shared electronically with the rest of the co-op. If it's okay with the household, the mentor will post that photo.
4. The mentor will take the household on tour of the laundry room, recycling area, common room, etc.
5. The mentor will identify holders of the master key.
6. The mentor will have the incoming household over for tea (or equivalent) and introduce them to some of the other members of Helen's Court.
7. The mentor will make herself or himself available to answer any questions the incoming household may have.
8. The mentor will introduce the new members at the first general meeting following their move-in.
9. The mentor will make sure that the incoming members are participating on committees within the first two months after moving into Helen's Court.
10. The mentor will inform the incoming household of the quiet hours.
11. The mentor will send the contact information of the incoming household (email addresses and phone numbers) to the Chair of the Communications Committee and request the Helen's Court contact list be updated and distributed to the membership. (drafted May 2018)

INTERNAL RELOCATION POLICY (approved November 2016)

When it is known that a unit is becoming vacant, the Membership Committee notifies all co-op members. Anyone who would like to move to the available unit must then write a letter to the Membership Committee expressing their interest and detailing their co-op participation. No member in arrears may apply for Internal Relocation.

Once they receive the written requests, the Membership Committee will decide among the applicants using the guidelines listed below.

1. **Member participation:** Applicants who are active and contribute within their abilities to HCC are given priority.
2. **History of relocations:** How long has it been since a member moved within the co-op? How many times has he/she moved? Has one of the applicants been passed over in previous moves? Preference should be given to members who have not had an opportunity to relocate.
3. **Housing need:** If a family is separating, the needs of the kids will be a priority. A family who is under-housed is a priority. An over-housed situation is a priority. A member who needs to move because the present unit charges are not affordable is a priority.

All other factors being equal, seniority will be a consideration. Seniority is determined from the date the member first moved into Helen's Court.

These guidelines are not meant to be exclusive. Others will no doubt arise. We must rely on common sense. For instance, the Membership Committee may request short written assessments or examples of participation from committees in order to evaluate the member's contribution.

In cases of Internal Relocation when a family with children is splitting up, and all family members wish to stay in the co-op, the needs of the family will take priority over our # of units with children quota. (May 3, 1999)

PARTICIPATION AND MEMBERSHIP STANDING (passed January 2014)

In order for the co-op to be viable as a self-determined community, all members must contribute their time and knowledge.

Being a member in good standing in Helen's Court requires active participation, which involves several things:

As a member of Helen's Court, you must attend general meetings. If you're unable to attend a meeting, it is your responsibility to send regrets to the Board secretary. If you miss three meetings in a row without a valid (and temporary) reason for doing so you will not be considered an active member of Helen's Court.

You must also either participate on a committee or find another way to contribute to the co-op on a regular basis. If you choose not to join a committee, it is your responsibility to report the nature of your contribution to the Membership Committee.

To be considered a member in good standing, you must maintain regular attendance at meetings and carry out your assigned tasks. If you are unable to attend a meeting, it is your responsibility to send your regrets to the committee secretary. Note: if you continually send regrets and rarely or never attend meetings you will not be considered an active committee member

If you must miss a meeting, it's your responsibility to either send an email prior to the meeting reporting on the status of your assigned tasks or get another committee member to report to the meeting on the status of those tasks.

If you miss three meetings in a row without a valid (and temporary) reason for doing so, you will not be considered an active committee member.

If your assigned task is carried over twice without reasonable progress, the task will be assigned to another committee member. Failure to complete tasks is not a sign of active committee participation.

There are several benefits to participation. Active members, members in good standing who volunteer their time, are highly valued and experience a sense of belonging. Members in good standing will also be given preference over other members when it comes to applications for: associate or primary membership status, internal relocation, parking privileges, and permission to sublet. Members in good standing may also be given preference in the case of extraordinary requests.

With any of these applications or requests, the Board will direct the Membership Committee to ask the pertinent committees and Board Secretary to comment on the resident's or residents' levels of participation using the above guidelines—and will take that participation into account in their decision-making process. To this end, all committee chairs will present these requirements to committee members for discussion and revisit them on a regular basis, especially when a new member joins the committee. The Membership Committee will also present these requirements to outside applicants during the interview process.

A member in good standing must have filled out the Confidentiality Agreement.