



Helen's Court Co-op Handbook

Section 07. Membership Committee

(Final copy resides with Communications Committee in Handbook folder)

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

Short term sublet (2 months or less)

Helen's Court Housing Co-op does not allow commercial, short-term rentals through Airbnb or any similar platform. The total cumulative time for short-term sublets for any household is two months per year, although the household may apply to the Membership Committee for an exemption. Short-term sublets must be not-for-profit: the member cannot charge the short-term resident an amount greater than the member's occupancy charge plus the member's telecommunications and insurance costs for the unit. For periods of less than a month, the sublet fee must be pro-rated. With all short-term sublets, the member must introduce the short-term resident to the community through email or by other generally accessible means. (Passed June 2018)

Long-term sublet (two to 12 months)

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 sublettor, 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 Sublettor 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 Sublettor 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 subletors 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://helencourt.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 WAITLIST POLICY (approved October 2023)

The purpose of the Internal Waitlist Policy is to provide a maximally transparent, fair and timely process for co-op members to request internal relocations within the co-op.

Waitlist Creation and Eligibility

All current co-op members can join the internal waitlist. Once the new policy is approved, co-op members will get an invitation to submit their requests to be added to the waitlist for specific units or types of units. They can choose based on their preferences and household size. The initial internal waitlist will be created using two criteria: a) seniority, which is based on the applicant's original move-in date, and b) the appropriate household size for the requested unit(s). This initial waitlist will be used as the basis for subsequent iterations.

Subsequent to the creation of the initial internal waitlist, members can ask to be added to the waitlist or to update their specific unit preferences at any time by contacting the Membership Committee. Their position on the waitlist, in relation to new or updated requests, will be determined by the time of their request, not by

seniority as defined above. Members can request information regarding their numerical place on the list, but the list itself will remain confidential.

Unit Allocation

The Membership Committee will announce when a household has given leave. When a unit becomes available, the first participating member(s) on the waitlist with the correct household size for the unit will be offered the opportunity to move, unless it would result in the household being overhoused. If a member refuses the unit, they will still retain their same status on the list. If there is no internal interest for a unit, alums (with the appropriate household size for the unit) will be invited to apply. Unit allocation may be impacted by priority considerations, as outlined below.

Participation and Membership Standing Assessment

When a unit becomes available, the Membership Committee will review the previous two years' participation of the eligible applicant(s). If they have sublet or taken leave, the committee will review their participation during the two years prior to the sublet/leave. If the applicant is an alum the committee will consider their participation during their last two years of residence in the co-op, plus any subsequent contributions. The committee will conduct this participation assessment to confirm the member(s)' good standing, not to compare their participation with other waitlisted members.

Priority Considerations

The internal waitlist may prioritize members who want or need to downsize, at the discretion of the Membership Committee and the Board. Additionally, families going through separation and members with mobility concerns may receive priority. Members are encouraged to notify the Membership Committee if they would fall under these priorities for upcoming moves.

PARTICIPATION AND MEMBERSHIP STANDING (approved October 2023)

The healthy functioning of our co-op relies on membership participation. Active and voluntary participation also benefits individual members: it yields a sense of accomplishment and a greater sense of connection to our community.

At Helen's Court, we encourage all members to participate according to their ability.

Good Standing

To encourage maximum member participation, Helen's Court has created the status "member in good standing".

Being a member in good standing in Helen's Court involves making regular and consistent contributions of time and labour to the community. The criteria include:

- attending general meetings
- serving on committees and/or contributing in other ways
- fulfilling other obligations (i.e. signing confidentiality agreements and filling out the occupancy record).

Members should be in good standing to be eligible for internal relocation. Members in good standing will generally be given preference in matters of parking and permission to sublet. They may also be given preference in the case of extraordinary requests. In exceptional circumstances, such as a member's need to

downsize or move due to mobility concerns or a family break-up, priority may be given to that member regardless of their standing.

Roommates that participate will be given preference when it comes to applications for membership. With any of these applications or requests, the Membership Committee will ask the Board Secretary and relevant committee secretaries to comment on the member(s)' levels of participation using the guidelines below, and the Membership Committee will take this information into account in its decision-making process.

General Meetings

All members are expected to attend general meetings. If a member is unable to attend a meeting, it is the member's responsibility to send regrets to the Board Secretary.

If a member regularly misses general meetings without substantial reasons for doing so, such as illness, work obligations, or a family crisis, they will not be considered a member in good standing.

Committee Participation

To be considered a participatory committee member, a member must maintain regular attendance at committee meetings and carry out their assigned tasks. If a member is unable to attend a meeting, it is their responsibility to send regrets to the committee secretary. Note: if a member continually sends regrets without substantive reasons for doing so, they will not be considered a participatory committee member. If a member is absent or sends regrets for three meetings in a row without substantial reasons for doing so, they will not be considered a participatory committee member.

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

If a member's assigned task is repeatedly carried over without reasonable progress, the task will be assigned to another committee member. Failure to complete tasks is not a sign of active committee participation. Helen's Court recognizes that availability to participate changes over time, and that it's perfectly okay to take a break from, leave or change committees.

Other Forms of Ongoing Participation

Some people prefer not to or are unable to participate in committee work. There are many other ways to regularly and consistently contribute to the wellbeing of Helen's Court.

These contributions might involve, but are not limited to, the following:

- initiating or participating in projects for the benefit of the co-op and its members
- regularly participating in seasonal Helen's Court clean-ups
- providing time and labour to support fellow members who are experiencing difficult life situations
- organizing and attending social events and activities such as potlucks, game nights, or holiday parties
- contributing to the co-op's newsletter on a regular basis
- organizing and/or participating in educational or skill-building opportunities for co-op members. These might include but would not be limited to workshops, classes, or peer-learning groups.
- engaging in political or social activism in support of the co-op and/or affordable housing, such as attending rallies or protests, contacting elected officials, or participating in community organizing efforts.

Other Obligations

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

One must also fill out the Annual Occupancy Record. These records help the Membership Committee maintain up-to-date information on members' living situations and participation in the co-op.

Sharing Expectations about Participation

To make the invitation to participate clear, we ask committee chairs to share the criteria for the member-in-good-standing designation with their committees, especially when a new member joins.

The Membership Committee will also present these expectations to outside applicants when inviting them to be interviewed.

Community Enrichment

Besides these criteria for maintaining the status of “member in good standing”, there are many ways to enrich the community that don't involve significant commitments of time and labour. These initiatives will not be considered in the assessment of membership in good standing, but they are also valued. They include but aren't limited to:

- encouraging others, for instance, family members, members of one's household, or friends in the co-op, to volunteer their time and labour to ensure the successful functioning of Helen's Court
- welcoming new members
- being a friendly and supportive force within the community.