

SECTION VI

STRUCTURE

In This Section:

The various positions held by members of the Board of Directors are described, as well as the many Committees made up of and run by members. Office staff positions are also described, including their duties as employees of the Co-op.



SHAMROCK CO-OPERATIVE HOMES INC.
MEMBER HANDBOOK - SECTION VI - STRUCTURE





SHAMROCK CO-OPERATIVE HOMES INC.
MEMBER HANDBOOK - SECTION VI - STRUCTURE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Structure and Organization.....	1
A. The General Members.....	2
B. Board of Directors.....	4
C. Officers.....	5
D. Committees.....	7
E. Staff.....	9



SHAMROCK CO-OPERATIVE HOMES INC.
MEMBER HANDBOOK - SECTION VI - STRUCTURE





STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

A co-op can depend on the members' volunteer efforts for many of the day-to-day operations. It is helpful, however, if someone can be hired to co-ordinate the work of the Board of Directors and committees, to make sure that each is reminded of deadlines and to provide assistance. Each co-op group has a different set of skills and abilities, so the requirements for staff in each will vary according to the strengths and weaknesses of the volunteers.



SHAMROCK CO-OPERATIVE HOMES INC.
MEMBER HANDBOOK – SECTION VI – STRUCTURE



A. THE GENERAL MEMBERS

A co-op is a democratic organization. It operates on the basis of one member, one vote. The general membership has ultimate responsibility and control over the affairs of the co-op. It is a group power, exercised at general members meetings in formal sessions called to deal with the organization's business.

Several general meetings are usually held each year, but one, the annual meeting, is mandatory. At that meeting, the membership elects the Board of Directors and receives the audited financial statement that sets out the financial position of the co-op.

The Ontario Co-operative Corporations Act guarantees a co-op member the right to:

1. *Discuss and determine policies;*
2. *Elect the Board of Directors at a meeting called for that purpose;*
3. *Stand for election for the Board of Directors;*
4. *Be informed about the co-op's financial affairs and to receive the audited statement each year;*
5. *Appoint the Auditor;*
6. *Propose that a special meeting of the general membership be held to debate and to take action on any subject regarded as essential to the Co-op;*
7. *Remove at a special general members meeting all or any member of the Board of Directors for failure to fulfill their mandate;*
8. *Request that items be added to the agenda of general members meetings;*
9. *Participate fully in discussion and decision making;*
10. *Withdraw from membership and vacate the assigned unit after giving the appropriate notice;*
11. *Share in the use of the Co-op's common facilities and resources;*
12. *Treat the unit assigned as the family home.*



SHAMROCK CO-OPERATIVE HOMES INC.
MEMBER HANDBOOK – SECTION VI – STRUCTURE

Along with these rights go certain responsibilities. A good Co-op member is one who will:

1. *Pay the monthly housing charge on time without having to be reminded;*
2. *Maintain the unit and any grounds associated with it in good condition;*
3. *Treat fellow members with respect;*
4. *Attend general members' meetings in order to be informed on matters of concern to the Co-op;*
5. *Take part in the committee work best suited to individual talents and abilities;*
6. *Take part in special projects which may be undertaken by the membership from time to time, such as Spring and Fall clean-up;*
7. *Contribute to the Co-op's efforts to find fair and equitable solutions to problems;*
8. *Encourage the volunteer efforts of other members and give praise when it is deserved;*
9. *Report any damage to Co-op property to the appropriate person as soon as it is noticed.*

The members' day-to-day control is exercised by participating on committees such as those outlines later on in this Section.



SHAMROCK CO-OPERATIVE HOMES INC.
MEMBER HANDBOOK – SECTION VI – STRUCTURE



B. THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

When the members elect the Directors, they give them the authority to administer the co-op according to the Co-operative Corporations Act, the Charter, and the Bylaws.

The Board of Directors are all unpaid volunteers. The Board must act on information received from the staff and committees, and such action must be in accordance with the objectives expressed in the policies approved by the membership.

The Board must organize and appoint ad hoc committees; it must set the budget and present it to the members for approval. It must meet all of the Co-op's legal obligations. It must strive for good public and neighbourhood relations for the Co-op. It must provide leadership and open lines of communication. And through all of the above, it must be fair, reasonable, just, and democratic.

The Board stands in place of the real owners of the Co-op, the members. As individuals, the people elected to the Board have no more power or authority than any other member of the Co-op. What they do have is more direct access to information and a mandate from the members to undertake certain action and certain decisions. In general, the Board of a Co-op is accountable to the members for these responsibilities:

1. *To direct activities according to the laws, Bylaws and agreements that govern the operation of the Co-op;*
2. *To elect officers from among themselves;*
3. *To establish objectives and goals;*
4. *To allocate money for expenditures;*
5. *To review progress and performance of committees;*
6. *To arrange for special meetings of the members as needed;*
7. *To recommend appropriate policies and procedures;*
8. *To recommend activities;*
9. *To determine and recommend relationships to other co-ops and organizations;*
10. *To conduct the co-op's business in a timely and orderly manner;*
11. *To be responsible employers.*



SHAMROCK CO-OPERATIVE HOMES INC.
MEMBER HANDBOOK – SECTION VI – STRUCTURE



C. OFFICERS

The Bylaws require the Board of Directors to elect or appoint four officers who are technically responsible to fulfill certain specified duties. Any one of these duties, however, may be delegated to someone else, except in the case where a signature of a particular officer is required in a transaction.

In some co-ops the members attach no particular significance to a title. They have the opinion that all members are equal, and they confer titles only in order to comply with some requirements of an agency outside the co-op. Other co-ops take the titles somewhat more seriously but vary the job descriptions attached to each.

It is appropriate for each newly-elected Board of Directors to discuss, consult with the membership, and agree on the role of the Board and the Officers.

The following descriptions may be used, adapted, and amended to suit the nature of our Co-op as it develops over time:

PRESIDENT:

The President often acts as the spokesperson for the co-op, particularly with outside groups or agencies who are accustomed to dealing with "leaders" or "heads of state". It is often the President's duty to chair the Board and general membership meetings, although this may be delegated to another person or alternated among several. It is the chair's duty to organize and guide the meetings by use of agreed-upon procedures, to conduct them in a business-like and democratic fashion.

The Bylaws provide that the President is an ex-officio member of all committees and as such should have an overview of all the co-op's activities. The President must also be a signing officer.

VICE-PRESIDENT:

The Vice-President stands ready to assume the duties of the President when called upon, to help and advise and to chair meetings when necessary.

CORPORATE SECRETARY:

The Secretary consults with the President to propose the agenda for each meeting and oversees: proper notification of meetings; recording, preparation, and distribution of minutes; maintaining of permanent records; and initiating and answering correspondence; fulfilling the function of Corporate Secretary under the Co-operative Corporations Act of Ontario.



SHAMROCK CO-OPERATIVE HOMES INC.
MEMBER HANDBOOK – SECTION VI – STRUCTURE



TREASURER:

The Treasurer must ensure that accurate financial records are maintained and interpret to the Board the financial statements, budgets, and reports prepared by the Finance Committee and Auditor. The Treasurer should be able to advise the Board of the possible consequences of any financial step that is contemplated.

GENERAL MANAGER:

This is the corporate title for the Project Co-ordinator of the Co-op, who will have an employment contract which sets out the detailed job description, remuneration, and benefits.



D. COMMITTEES

The Co-op will create as many committees as it needs. Some are "standing" committees that deal with ongoing considerations like finance, maintenance, and membership. Others are "ad hoc" committees that are established for specific, short-term purposes and disbanded when that purpose is served.

A well organized committee structure does four things for a co-op:

1. *It spreads the work around, thereby increasing the productivity and efficiency of directors and staff. It relieves them of hours of fact finding and deliberation.*
2. *It provides a variety of ways for members to become involved, matching as much as possible their individual skills and personalities to a particular interest area.*
3. *It helps the members to get to know one another by working together toward common goals.*
4. *It saves the co-op money by providing a pool of volunteer labour.*

A job description will be agreed upon by the Board of Directors in consultation with committee members to help the committee focus its attention. It will outline the duties performed, the extent of the committee's authority, the deadline or schedule for completion and the method and channel for reporting. The following are brief descriptions of the Co-op's main committees.

1. MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Markets the units. Monitors move-ins and move-outs. Makes recommendations regarding development and refinement of membership selection criteria. Interviews prospective members and recommends to the Board for acceptance or rejection of applicants. Conducts orientation sessions for new and potential members. Proposes and oversees member education program.

2. FINANCE COMMITTEE

Works with the Treasurer, the auditor, and staff in financial management, including preparation of annual budgets and financial statements. Proposes policies and procedures to ensure effective financial management. Liaises with staff and directors to ensure the orderly collection of housing charges and administration of income-tested subsidy. Oversees and suggests expenditures.

3. MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE

Responsible for the upkeep and repairs of the buildings. Co-ordinates cleaning, painting, and inspections. Establishes emergency procedures. Maintains inventory of equipment and supplies. Proposes and administers maintenance operating budget and reserve fund. Organizes volunteer labour.



SHAMROCK CO-OPERATIVE HOMES INC.
MEMBER HANDBOOK – SECTION VI – STRUCTURE

4. LANDSCAPING COMMITTEE

Responsible for the upkeep and enhancement of the exterior common elements. Advises members of the appropriate care of their individual yards. Maintains inventory of equipment and supplies. Proposes and administers landscape budget. Organizes volunteer labour.

5. NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Publishes the co-op newsletter: proposes policy related to information exchange. Keeps membership informed and connected.

6. SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Plans social activities for all age groups. Sponsors special events such as the official opening and fund raisers for local charities. Liaises with municipal recreation and parks programs.

7. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Administers the employment contract. Conducts performance and salary reviews. Participates in staff selection and job description. Acts as liaison between the staff and the membership.

8. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND PARTICIPATION COMMITTEE

Usually an ad hoc committee formed to investigate the extent to which members are participation in the co-op's activities and the satisfaction and/or results of that participation. Proposes policies related to participation and member development.

9. ELECTION PLANNING COMMITTEE

Established each year as an ad hoc committee to plan the Annual General Meeting of members. Recruits candidates for the Board. Sponsors all-candidates; meetings and orientation. Conducts elections. Organizes election day.

10. OTHER AD HOC COMMITTEES

From time to time special committees may be formed to consult in the formation of certain policies and procedures; for example, pet control, parking, fencing, response to local issues, etc.



SHAMROCK CO-OPERATIVE HOMES INC.
MEMBER HANDBOOK – SECTION VI – STRUCTURE



E. STAFF

The staff is hired by the Board of Directors and delegated the authority to act in the day-to-day administrative operations of the co-op. The success or failure of this relationship depends largely on mutual respect and on the ability of the Board and staff to work as a team. Positions such as co-ordinator, bookkeeper, janitor may be created. However, this largely depends on the size of the co-op, the amount of work required, and the funds available.

In a co-op, the staff has many responsibilities, often including but not limited to the following:

1. *Make complete, impartial, and honest reports to the Board about the operation of the co-op;*
2. *Implement decisions of the Board;*
3. *Advise on any policy limitations affecting the operation;*
4. *Advise on improvements to methods and procedures;*
5. *Keep accurate records of fiscal, administrative, and financial transactions;*
6. *Fulfill reporting requirements of each level of government having authority of various aspects of the co-op's operation;*
7. *Manage the co-op office;*
8. *Provide information and support to co-op committees;*
9. *Maintain liaison with committees, trades, and service people.*

In return, the Board of Directors is mandated by the membership to employ the services of staff in a manner which promotes a climate of collegiality and co-operation. It does this by giving credit and praise when they are due and offering honest and fair criticism when necessary. In short, the Board is called upon by the members to be good employers of co-op staff.