

Madison Tenant Power Constitution

Effective December 2, 2019

Statement of Purpose

This document outlines the official structure and rules of Madison Tenant Power, hereafter MTP. MTP is a tenant union formed to defend, agitate for, and build the strength of tenants in Madison, Wisconsin.

Under capitalism, the interests of tenant and landlord are irreconcilable, and the state fundamentally represents the interests of the landlord, negating the rights of the tenant whenever possible. Only the power of a united and organized body of tenants can bring lasting improvements in our dignity and quality of life. MTP resolves to build this power in Madison, Wisconsin, by organizing tenants so they can fight—and win—together.

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Article I. Membership

Section 1. Membership criteria and privileges

A member of MTP will be any person who meets the following criteria:

- 1) Requests membership and submits their name and contact information (including email address if available) to the MTP secretary;
- 2) Pays dues according to the MTP dues structure;
- 3) Does not own or manage rental housing

Member status confers the following privileges:

- 1) Right to be considered for participation in MTP organizing, including responding to emails and meeting with tenants;

- 2) Voting at MTP meetings; and
- 3) Eligible for election to executive positions.

An exception to these privileges exists for homeowners or anyone else who could be reasonably described as owning and controlling their housing situation. Such persons are welcome as members but do not receive voting privileges or eligibility for executive positions.

Section 2. Dues

- 1) A dues structure must be set forth in the MTP Bylaws.

Section 3. Exclusion

A member may be expelled from MTP by a vote of $\frac{2}{3}$ at any membership meeting where the number of members in attendance is equal to quorum times $1\frac{1}{2}$.

Article II. Executive Officers

Section 1. Positions, their Roles and Powers

MTP recognizes three executive officers: Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer, each serving for a term of one year. They may fulfill the roles and responsibilities of their office directly or through delegation as needed. Their roles and responsibilities are as follows:

The Chair is responsible for:

- 1) Leading MTP meetings, including the process of voting on MTP affairs;
- 2) Managing social media and email accounts; and
- 3) Representing MTP to media outlets and all non-MTP entities.

The Secretary is responsible for:

- 1) Drafting meeting agendas;
- 2) Compiling and emailing out meeting minutes;
- 3) Obtaining new member information; and
- 4) Maintaining a database of member status and attendance.

The Treasurer is responsible for:

- 1) Managing MTP's funds and financial records;
- 2) Ensuring membership dues are paid up to date; and
- 3) Preparing an annual budget and financial report for the organization

All executive officers are responsible for fulfilling their roles in the MTP grievance procedure as outlined in Article IV, Section 3.

Section 2. The Executive Committee

An Executive Committee will be formed consisting of the three executive officers. This committee will be responsible for:

- 1) Managing the administrative and logistical needs of the organization;
- 2) Overseeing the enforcement of the MTP Constitution, Bylaws, and decisions made at membership meetings; and
- 3) Acting on the membership's behalf between membership meetings, including acting on matters which require urgent attention.

All decisions by the Executive Committee must pass by an internal vote of at least $\frac{2}{3}$.

The executive committee will hold meetings on an as-needed basis. Any member of the Committee may call a meeting with at least 3 days' notice, or 24 hours under emergency circumstances. All three members must be present for an Executive Committee meeting.

Notes of Executive Committee meetings and decisions will be kept and distributed to the membership in a timely manner. Any MTP member who requests to observe the next available Executive Committee meeting may be allowed to do so, and must be given the same advance notice as the Committee members. However, the Committee can decide to make an Executive Committee meeting (or any portion of one) closed to the membership, in order to discuss sensitive matters.

Section 3. Elections

Elections will be held at a meeting where quorum is present, either at a yearly meeting or at a regular meeting in emergency cases. Members may submit themselves for nomination at least one week prior to the election. Elections will be administered by two active members not running for a position (the election committee). Elections will be conducted by secret ballot, and counted independently by each election administrator. Results will be announced promptly online or at the next meeting.

Section 4. Removal

Any executive officer may be removed from office by a vote of $\frac{2}{3}$ at any membership meeting where the number of members in attendance is equal to quorum times $1\frac{1}{2}$. The remaining officers will oversee the removed officer's responsibilities until a new election can be held to fill the vacant position.

Article III. Local Association Structure

Section 1. Definition and formation

MTP recognizes Local Associations, hereafter locals, as its fundamental unit of organization. A local is a group of tenants, of whom at least two must be MTP members, and who live in properties managed by the same landlord.

In order to become a local, such a group must:

- 1) Agree to abide by the MTP Constitution and Bylaws;
- 2) Apply to MTP for recognition as a local; and
- 3) Be recognized by a majority vote at an MTP membership meeting. .

There is no upper limit on the number of tenants who can join a local, but they must all be tenants under the same landlord, except in special circumstances.

Special circumstances include:

- 1) Multiple landlords or management entities operating within one building; or
- 2) Other special circumstances as determined on a case by case basis by MTP

Tenants do not need to agree to form a local with MTP for MTP to organize with them. Incorporation as a local is entirely voluntary and can be terminated at any time, by either the members of the local or the membership of MTP.

Section 2. Membership

A local member will be any tenant in the same property (or properties) represented by the local who contacts their local co-chairs requesting membership in the local and providing contact information. Local members who are not MTP members are not afforded the privileges of MTP membership beyond what is granted to members of locals.

Section 3. Meetings

Local meetings are to be held on a basis determined by the local. Meeting times and locations must be publicized to members at least 7 days in advance, or 24 hours in emergency circumstances.

Local members may enact decisions by vote at any meeting where quorum is met. A simple majority suffices for a motion to pass, and a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority is required for protest action.

The quorum for local associations is:

- 1) $\frac{1}{4}$ of the local membership, for locals with 20 or more members; or
- 2) $\frac{1}{2}$ of the local membership, for locals with 19 or fewer members

Section 4. Executive officers

Locals have two executive positions: two independently elected co-chairs. The tenant(s) who contacted MTP are acting co-chair(s) until ones can be elected.

Co-chairs are responsible for:

- 1) Keeping up-to-date local membership rolls and providing these to the MTP Secretary
- 2) Representing the local to the MTP executive officers and membership
- 3) Organizing local meetings and keeping minutes
- 4) Acting on the local's behalf in response to time sensitive matters

Co-chair elections will be held every year at a meeting in which a quorum is present.

Co-chairs may be removed by a vote of at least $\frac{2}{3}$ at any local meeting where at least $\frac{1}{2}$ of all local members are in attendance.

Article IV. Code of Conduct and Grievance Procedure

Section 1. Code of Conduct

All MTP members are required to abide by the Code of Conduct at all times. The following speech or actions are violations of the Code of Conduct:

- 1) Discrimination or harassment because of identification with a particular group;
- 2) Speech, behavior, or demeanor -- verbal, electronic, or written -- that is harrassing, intimidating, hostile, threatening, or offensive, or that is intended to make a member feel uncomfortable or unsafe;
- 3) Sexual assault, threat of sexual assault, or unwanted physical contact;
- 4) Physical violence or threat of physical violence;
- 5) Deliberate attempts to derail or diminish the aims of MTP as listed in the Statement of Purpose.

While the above list cannot describe every situation, the general rule is that members will treat each other with consideration and respect and will not engage in unwanted behavior.

Section 2. Harassment and Grievance Officers

The organization will elect at least one and up to two Harassment and Grievance Officers (HGOs) by the same process described for electing executive officers in Article II, Section 2. HGOs will serve for a term of one year.

HGOs are responsible for properly administering the MTP grievance procedure.

Any HGO may be removed from office by a vote of $\frac{2}{3}$ at any membership meeting where the number of members in attendance is equal to quorum times $1\frac{1}{2}$. The remaining HGO, or the executive officers if no HGO remains, will oversee the removed officer's responsibilities until a new election can be held to fill the vacant position.

Section 3. Grievance Procedure

If a member is a victim of a Code of Conduct violation by another member(s), or if a member feels another member(s) is in violation of point 5 of the Code, they may submit a grievance to the HGO(s). If the grievance involves the HGO(s), the concerned member may submit the grievance to any executive officer instead, and that officer will assume the responsibilities of an HGO for the duration of the grievance procedure.

Grievances submitted to the HGO(s) must contain details about the date, time, and location of the infraction and must state clearly the name of the parties involved. Since this procedure is internal, non-members are not allowed to represent.

Grievances must be handled according to the following steps:

1. **If a member feels comfortable/able**, they should "call in," which is when the concerned party approaches the other party in good faith and lets them know the specific action that offended them. At this point, the party who made the error should cease the problematic behavior. If the call-in procedure does not resolve the issue to the offended party's satisfaction, or if they believe that a call-in is not appropriate, they can file a grievance.
2. The offended party will submit a grievance to the HGO(s).
3. The HGO(s) will address the grievance at their discretion. Grievances should be dealt with by HGO(s) within 30 calendar days. In cases where more time is needed, the HGO(s) will inform the complainant. Complainants may take their grievance to the next step within 15 days if they are unwilling to accept the extension. In keeping with the values of restorative justice, mediation will be emphasized whenever appropriate. Potential courses of action include:
 - a. Mediation
 - b. Education
 - c. Recommendation of discipline
 - d. Recommendation of no action
4. If discipline is recommended, the recommendation will be reviewed by the executive officers. Alternately, if the concerned party is not satisfied with the recommendation, they can request a hearing with the relevant parties, the HGO(s), and the Executive Committee. This step shall end with the decision to accept or reject the recommendation by the Executive Committee. Potential disciplinary actions include (but are not limited to):
 - a. Formal reprimand
 - b. Suspension

c. Expulsion

Article V. Privacy Standards

MTP will develop policies and procedures to provide members and prospective members with reasonable protection from unwanted and unintended member information exposure.

Article VI. Membership Meetings

Section 1. Scheduling and Purpose

MTP will hold regular membership meetings. The Secretary is responsible for scheduling the meeting, arranging a suitable location drafting the meeting agenda and communicating all of this information to the membership at least 7 days before the meeting date.

Membership meetings will consist of activities, discussions and presentations on matters relevant to MTP and will act as the legislative body of the organization.

Members may enact decisions via vote at any membership meeting where quorum has been met. Votes may be conducted by secret ballot upon the request of an attending member plus a second.

Section 2. Quorum

A quorum of $\frac{1}{4}$ of members (but no less than 6) is required for membership meetings to transact business.

Article VII. Procedure for Constitutional Changes

Constitutional amendments may be enacted by a vote of $\frac{2}{3}$ at any membership meeting where the number of members in attendance is equal to quorum times $1\frac{1}{2}$.

Article VIII. Bylaws

MTP will maintain a set of Bylaws. Bylaws may be enacted, amended or stricken by a vote at membership meetings, and are binding on all members.