

Milwaukee Autonomous Tenants Union Bylaws

V 1.0

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Preface

The Milwaukee Autonomous Tenants Union (MATU) is an organization of committed, community-based tenants who are tired of the effects of historic redlining, displacement, gentrification, rising rents, abysmal housing conditions, evictions and harassment at the hands of landlords and management companies. These landlords extract wealth from Milwaukee's working class communities -- buying up properties, often doing little to fix them up, to rent them out to tenants who need housing. Often, these properties are bought by landlords living outside of Milwaukee who then draw passive, rent-produced income that they take out of our city to benefit the suburbs and the wealthy who live there. The courts tend to favor landlords due to the power of capital that they possess. These landlords often make their invested money back in the first year or two of renting these properties. Milwaukee has some of the worst and longest standing history of redlining, racial covenants, deindustrialization, and white flight which helped to create the majority white suburbs. We are sickened by exploitative landlords, developers, police, and a bloated criminal justice system that unfairly penalizes working class communities, particularly communities of color.

We understand capitalism as a political-economy that drives private profits into the hands of owners, bosses, landlords and developers at the expense of the majority working class. Predatory banking practices, labor exploitation, ecological destruction, cycles of displacement, gentrification, and subpar housing are what this system offers us. The capitalist class massively profits while we suffer; a system that exploits our basic needs for housing, food, clothing, education and health has no ethical justification and must be transformed. It is when we act together that we can help make this transformation happen, collectively building power through direct action, carving out spaces of liberation. When we care for each other, we are stronger. When we see our class interests as unified, we are unstoppable. Solidarity is evidenced through our collective strength, mutual aid is how we care for one another, and the institutional organization of tactics is what continues the struggle until full societal transformation.

Points of Unity

We hold the following as guiding principles, to unify us in action and intent.

1. Housing is a fundamental human need and is therefore a human right.
2. All people deserve a safe, comfortable, private, and permanent residence.
3. We seek to attain safe, comfortable, permanent housing for all Milwaukeeans at a sustainable/low cost, with the ultimate goal of decommmodifying housing altogether.
4. The Milwaukee Autonomous Tenants Union is not officially affiliated with, nor do we endorse any political party or political organization.
5. We recognize that the interests of landlords are directly opposed to the interests of renters and we seek to mitigate and ultimately remove that contradiction.
6. MATU is committed to creating a space that is welcoming and inclusive to members of all genders, races, and faiths where everyone is able to organize without fear of harassment, abuse, or harm. We strive to create a space where everyone's voice can be heard and everyone is able to organize without fear of harassment, abuse, or harm. Abusive language and bullying will not be tolerated and we encourage members to consider one another's viewpoints with respect and engage in dialogue with one another aimed at finding common solutions to our differences.

Membership

MATU is a membership organization, allowing for the full democratic participation of anyone who does not fall under any of the following categories:

1. A property owner or manager who leases or rents housing property/ies to tenants
 - a. An agent or proxy of such a property owner
2. Anyone working in the sector of real estate speculation
3. Any member of state security forces (local and state police, federal level agents)
4. Lawyers that represent landlords in court.

Full and equal membership shall be granted to private home owners who do not fall into any of the above excluded categories.

Private home owner members will be expected to recuse themselves from matters of union operations which may result in a conflict of interest.

Any MATU member may request a private home owner member to recuse themselves.

Membership in MATU is dues-based. To be considered in “good standing,” a member shall remit an amount of their choosing *greater than or equal to \$1* per month to the current MATU Treasurer.

Members shall be considered in “bad standing” if they have failed to remit an amount *greater than or equal to \$1* per month for a duration of 2 months.

Members shall be permitted to pay multiple months of dues in advance.

MATU shall make available means by which members may pay dues electronically and physically.

Members who are experiencing unemployment may be exempt from the payment of membership dues for the duration of their unemployment.

Meetings

Schedule

MATU will hold at least one full membership meeting per calendar month, with the understanding that more full membership meetings may be held as necessary.

Working groups may schedule meetings on their own as they see fit.

Order

MATU meetings will operate using a facilitated, progressive stack method. Each meeting shall have the following rotating, voluntary roles:

- At least one *Facilitator*, with a *co-facilitator* as appropriate
- At least one *note-taker*, with additional help for busy meetings

At any time during the proceedings, any member may motion to adopt [Rusty's Rules of Order](#) for the remainder of the meeting.

Resolutions and Voting

Any member may propose resolutions, actions and procedures during a meeting. Facilitated discussion will commence in good faith in an attempt to gain consensus. Friendly amendments may be made and further discussed.

If consensus cannot be achieved on a resolution or proposal, any member may call for an official vote to decide the union's position on adoption of the resolution.

A resolution shall pass and be adopted if 50% + 1 of voting members vote in favor of the resolution.

Officers

MATU shall have a number of administrative officer positions as necessary to complete tasks and ensure smooth operations.

Officers shall be nominated and elected by membership in accordance with MATU [voting procedure](#).

New officer roles may be added, combined or removed as necessary in accordance with MATU [resolution process](#).

Clause: To best reflect the values of direct democracy, mutual aid, freedom, and solidarity, no hierarchical system of leadership shall be established. The role of elected positions in MATU are not political but administrative. MATU leaders are not political decision-makers, but are tasked with ensuring that the organization runs smoothly. All positions are subject to recall at any time. Any member of the MATU may take on a task-oriented role to complete specific goals. Such roles may arise spontaneously, are temporary in nature, and are taken on with the mutual consent and for the mutual benefit of the MATU. Members of the MATU may also organize working groups and initiatives, to facilitate work delegation to complete specific goals. Working groups and initiatives shall also be non-hierarchical, and include temporary, task-based roles that any member of the MATU may perform.

Roles

Treasurer/s: Responsibilities shall include but not be limited to

- Collection of monthly dues from all members
- Maintaining and providing an accurate account of all dues transactions and funds currently held by MATU
- Maintaining an accurate account of members in “good standing” and “bad standing”
- Reporting on MATU fund status at every monthly meeting

- Allocating funds to working groups and individual members as resolved by MATU procedure

Secretary/ies: Responsibilities shall include but not be limited to

- Maintaining an accurate account of membership...
 - Count
 - Individual contact information
 - Individual responsibilities
- Scheduling monthly all-membership meetings and completing necessary tasks to realize scheduled meetings, such as creating a Zoom session.
- Reporting on MATU membership status at every monthly meeting

Intake Coordinator/s: Responsibilities shall include but not be limited to

- Contacting and on-boarding new members
- Connecting new members with Treasurer and Secretary roles to smoothly integrate membership
- Work against gatekeeping through transparency to the whole of MATU and by democratically sharing responsibility of on-boarding with existing members with greetings, add to email list, discord, zoom meetings and any actions planned.

Outreach Coordinator/s: Responsibilities shall include but not be limited to

- Working with all members to democratically work to bring new tenant organizers into MATU
- Ensure fluidity and ease of communication between outreach coordinators and intake coordinators
- Develop strategies for broadening relationships into tenant communities throughout City
- Help coordinate communication and tactical discussion between MATU and any councils that are created.
- Maintain relationship and communications with Autonomous Tenants Union Network.

Funds

MATU shall retain the right to collect dues from members in accordance with MATU [membership policy](#).

Union funds shall be kept in a communal reserve and overseen by the [Treasurer/s](#).

Union funds shall be made available to working groups and individual members as resolved by membership.