



SARCEE MEADOWS HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE LTD.

Operations Policy

Subject:	Grievance and Resolution Committee Procedures
Original Date of Approval	February 1998
Approved By:	Board of Directors
Date of Amendment or Replacement:	<u>March 1998, May 1998, January 1999, March 2000, February 2003, June 2004, November 2007, June 2009, April 2018, February 2023</u>

For the purpose of these procedures the definition of a grievance will be any dispute between member[s] living in different units and that do not pertain to the following: pets, parking, unit inspections and termination of membership at a members meeting.

All members of this committee are required to read and abide by the Ethical Conduct Policy and sign the Ethical Conduct Agreement.

The chairperson and vice-chairperson are appointed annually by the Board of Directors. The committee will recommend a chair and vice chair from its members who have served on the committee. The Board may approve or reject the committee's recommendations. If the Board rejects the committee's recommendation, the Board must make the appointment.

It is imperative for credibility that grievances will be handled in a timely fashion.

All home visits will be conducted by two members of the grievance committee.

Conflict of Interest for Committee Members:

Members of the committee will decline dealing with a grievance[s] that put them in a position of conflict of interest, or conflict of loyalties, as outlined in the Ethical Conduct Policy.

Where a member of the committee is party to a written grievance, he/she will not be involved in any committee discussion about the complaint and will physically leave the room during discussion and decision making on the matter.

Grievances:

The written grievances of individual members are confidential and should be submitted directly to the committee via the locked grievance box inside the entry way of B50.

- Written grievances regarding a **member and staff** are directed to the General Manager with an option to have a Grievance Committee member present if the member wishes.
- Written grievances regarding a **member and the General Manager** are directed to the Governance & HR Committee with an option to have a Grievance member present if the member wishes.
- Grievances are **disassociated from administration and the board** until such time as the Board's attention is required.

- In most cases the members of the committee will **be the only persons to see the original** signed member complaint forms.
- Valid current grievances will be kept by the chairperson of the committee in a **confidential file**.

Inappropriate/ Frivolous Grievances:

If the committee, as a whole, determines that a grievance is frivolous or inappropriate, they may determine that it will not be dealt with. The member[s] who has submitted the grievance will be so advised.

How to File a Grievance:

Grievances are to be submitted to the Grievance and Resolution Committee via the locked grievance box in B50.

Members filing a grievance will submit, in writing, a letter to the committee outlining:

- The grievance, and providing as much information as possible such as the date, time, name of the offending member (if known),
- The unit number of the offending member (if known)
- The circumstances of the grievance (what happened).

Members may also file a grievance using the “confidential member grievance form”.

After a grievance is retrieved from the grievance box, it will be attached to a “confidential member complaint form.” The form will be completed by the committee person who retrieved the grievance from the grievance box.

The grievance box will be checked once a week by the committee; chairperson, vice-chairperson or designate.

The chairperson will provide the vice chairperson with a photocopy of all complaints that will be stamped “copy”.

Validating the Grievance:

The committee will validate the grievance by:

- Contacting the author of the grievance to enable the Grievance and Resolution Committee members to have a thorough understanding of the concern.
- The other party will be visited, or telephoned and informed of the grievance but **not** of the author of the grievance.
- If a home visit is required, it will be done in teams of two.
- After discussions with the involved members, the two committee members will provide a written report on the visit, to the committee. In all cases a written report will be presented at the next committee meeting.
- **Minors:** When there is a grievance that involves young people i.e. teenagers, the young people should be present when the committee visits the member household.

Dealing with the Grievance:

The members of the committee handling the grievance will:

- Establish a good rapport with members by being cordial and listening to both sides impartially.
- Identify the problem.
- Invite suggestions for a reasonable solution.
- Present some recommendations or alternatives if they feel this is desirable.
- In negotiating with members, it may be necessary to suggest that outside community services be used.
- Note the member(s) response for the written report.

Timely Follow-up:

The committee members involved with handling the complaint will:

- Communicate with the author of the complaint, telling him/her how it was handled within 72 hours of the committee member's interaction (phone call or home visit) with the other member.
- Present a report on the matter to the next Grievance and Resolution Committee meeting.

Documentation:

Well-kept records are a protection for all parties since certain disputes may have to be settled through the legal process. The following process will be followed by the committee members handling the complaint:

- **The original complaint form WILL NOT be taken to the involved members' home.**
- Record the date, observations, and comments of each contact with members.
- **Members of the Grievance and Resolution Committee team will both sign the report and the original complaint form.**
- Reports will be attached to the form when follow through on the complaint is completed.

Defining & Handling a Chronic and /or Serious Grievance(s):

Generally speaking, a too rigid definition of a chronic and/ or serious grievance creates difficulties. However, following the guidelines will be helpful and will be carefully considered by the committee in determining when a matter needs board action.

The final assessment as to whether or not a grievance requires board action will be at the discretion of the committee. The following guidelines will be taken into consideration when determining if a grievance requires board action:

Guidelines:

- There are three [3] legitimate grievances on file, this is not mandatory.
- The grievances may differ in nature or they may refer to the same ongoing offense.
- The grievance may originate from the same or different source.

Referring Grievances to the Board:

Once the committee determines a grievance requires board action the committee will prepare a written history of the grievance. This report will be presented to the Board.

The committee chairperson or the vice chairperson will contact the member[s] to inform him/her/them that the committee is forwarding the matter to the attention of the Board of Directors.

The committee will prepare a specific recommendation for the Board's consideration such as having an outside professional mediator become involved, seeking legal action etc.

If a member[s] is called before the Board regarding a grievance; refer to the Member Visits in the Boardroom section of the Grievance and Resolution Procedures.

Exceptions:

When a situation results in a physical altercation, police intervention will be encouraged and the matter will automatically be referred to the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors will be informed of any situation the Grievance and Resolution Committee is dealing with concerning any illegal activities. These activities include but are not limited to: drugs, theft, sexual harassment etc.

Grievance Role in the Boardroom:

Members of the Grievance and Resolution Committee will receive the same reports received by the board members, except for Governance & HR Committee reports and other reports that may be determined by the Board to be confidential.

Members of the Grievance and Resolution Committee will remain in the board room at all times during the board meeting except: during the presentation of the Governance & HR Committee report, board only sessions and/or in the case of a Conflict of Interest.

The objective of the Grievance and Resolution Committee chair/vice chairperson or designate in the board room is to ensure that the rights of all parties are protected.

Those rights include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ensure that all parties adhere to SMHC policy
- all parties show mutual respect - this includes acceptable behaviors
- everyone must be treated fairly and be given a reasonable opportunity to state their position

All parties include the following:

- members
- Board of Directors
- committee reps
- guests
- staff

The role is not to judge or take sides in the resolution of any conflict. The role of the Grievance and Resolution Committee in the boardroom is to assist in mutually agreed upon resolutions to problems.

The attached “**Discussion Rules**” will apply, in all instances.

It is acknowledged that the dynamics of any group can result in conflict. Different personalities, different values, different points of view can contribute to differences of opinion. Mutual respect requires that these differences be respected.

At any time during a board meeting, the following will apply:

- The Grievance and Resolution Committee representative will always have “right of voice”, but not of vote.
- The board meeting facilitator will acknowledge the presence of the Grievance and Resolution Committee representative at the beginning of each board meeting.
- If the Grievance and Resolution Committee representative feels that adequate discussion on an issue has not occurred, he/she has the right to ask for a “**round table**” discussion.
- When a “round table” discussion takes place, the Grievance and Resolution Committee representative will be asked to contribute to the discussion.
- The Grievance and Resolution Committee representative will have the authority to call a “**time out**” when, in his/her opinion, there is attacking, hostility, anger, or aggressive behaviour going on between participants. When the “time out” is called, the Grievance and Resolution Committee representative will explain why she/he is making the call. Everyone will be reminded that it is imperative that all those present be treated with respect and dignity.

Member[s] Visits in the Boardroom:

When a member[s] is requested to attend the board meeting, the Grievance and Resolution Committee representative will be informed of same. The committee representative will receive the same documentation the board members receive.

When the letter has been sent to the member[s] requesting them to attend the board meeting, or when a member[s] makes the request, the committee representative will proceed as follows:

- The committee representative will **contact the member[s]** and offer to meet them to prepare for the board meeting. i.e. make the member[s] aware of relevant policies or by-laws, review procedures when a member[s] attends a board meeting. **The member[s] will be made aware of the time allotted to them at the board meeting. The maximum allotted time will be ten minutes. The board’s decision will be made after the member[s] has/have left the meeting.**
- The committee representative will **offer to meet the member[s]** in the foyer and go up to the board room with them. A chair [or chairs] will be available for the member[s] next to the committee representative at the board table. The committee representative will introduce the member[s] to the board members.

When the member[s] is in attendance, the committee representative will ensure the following:

- Both the board and the member[s] will be given sufficient time, within the agenda time assigned, to define the grievance[s].
- That mutual respect is maintained by all parties. That is, no judgments, anger, hostility, verbal abuse, threats, instances of “good cop” - “bad cop” will be allowed.

- That the member[s] is dealt with **directly and specifically**.
- Ensure that there is no controlling or manipulating by any parties.

When the board's decision is discussed, the committee representative will assist in the discussion by helping to ensure that the outcome is in the best interests of all parties.

Minutes/Reports:

A written report, in the form of minutes of all committee meetings and grievances will be forwarded to the Board of Directors as necessary. The committee meeting minutes will not mention names or specific circumstances which might in any way affect the confidentiality of the committee's work. The grievance reports that are submitted to the board will contain all the necessary information to allow the Board to make an informed decision.

Discretion of the Committee:

Grievances on file are available at any time to the Board as a whole, when requested in writing from the Board as a whole. If, at the discretion of the committee, providing the information is not in the best interests of the member[s], by a majority vote of the committee, the information will not be made available to the Board.

Destroying Grievances:

When a member moves out, anything other than chronic and/ or serious grievance information will be destroyed by shredding. Chronic and/ or serious grievance information will be turned into the office to be stored in the member's permanent file.

At the end of each board year [February 1st to January 31st] the chairperson, in consultation with the committee, will review all grievances to determine their status – chronic, serious or irrelevant. If a grievance is considered irrelevant it will be destroyed by shredding. If a grievance is considered chronic and/or serious, appropriate action will be determined, as follows:

- the age of the grievance
- the number of grievances on file
- the outcome of action originally taken by the committee.

Grievances that were considered to have been chronic, but that have been resolved, will be destroyed by shredding after they are **three years old**.

Chronic grievances that have been referred to the Board of Directors and considered to be in the **Board's jurisdiction** will remain on file.

Conflict Resolution Options:

The Grievance and Resolution Committee may also recommend:

- an outside facilitator
- SMHC legal counsel to act as a mediator
- a central arbitrator, i.e., BBB dispute settlement
- that the committee itself mediate

DISCUSSION RULES

Guidelines

1. No threats during the discussion
2. No blanket or labeling judgments
3. Stay on topic
4. You cannot interrupt
5. Stay in the present tense - no past baggage brought along
6. Don't walk away
7. No finger pointing or lecturing
8. Take responsibility for change
9. Take responsibility for feeling the way that you do
10. Over dramatization is not helpful
11. Each person has time to collect their thoughts
12. Know what you are talking about - what is the real issue
13. Approach the issue with a problem solving attitude
14. Don't store up feelings
15. Approach the issue with the idea that everyone will win and no one will be harmed.