

Northeast Ursamen, Inc. Bylaws

List of Articles and Appendixes

1. **Article 1:** Definitions
2. **Article 2:** Name, Purpose & Goals
3. **Article 3:** Membership
4. **Article 4:** Application, Dues, & Resignation
5. **Article 5:** Revocation of Membership
6. **Article 6:** The Board
7. **Article 7:** Elections
8. **Article 8:** Financial Matters
9. **Article 9:** Bylaws & Amendments
10. **Article 10:** Dissolution
11. **Appendix 1:** Ratification & Amendment History

ARTICLE 1: DEFINITIONS

Section 1.0 Definitions

1.1 The word Club is used to denote The Northeast Ursamen, Inc.

1.2 Members refers to all members of the Club.

1.3 Board refers to the Board of Directors.

1.4 Board Meeting refers to an open public meeting of the Board.

1.5 Executive Session or Executive Meeting means a closed meeting of Board Members only.

1.6 Election refers to the vote of the membership to elect officers and vote on Bylaws and Policies and Procedures amendments.

ARTICLE 2: NAME, PURPOSE & GOALS

Section 1.0: General

1.1 The Northeast Ursamen, Inc. is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit incorporated in the State of Connecticut.

1.2 The Club is a democratic organization with the Board's power derived from the membership.

1.3 All Club activities will be conducted in accordance with the Code of Conduct as defined in the Policies and Procedures.

1.4 The primary objective of the Club is to provide bears and ursaphiles with the opportunity to meet and enjoy time together in a variety of environments, social and charitable activities.

1.5 The Club strives to provide a safe den, for singles and couples to socialize regularly, where all members shall treat each other with respect.

1.6 The Club is an independent, non-political organization, which will not affiliate itself permanently with any bar, café, or business establishment.

1.7 The Club recognizes that there are Members who are in recovery for drug or alcohol dependence. Therefore the Club will not participate in or sponsor any event that would require the Club to provide alcohol. Club Members may purchase alcohol at any event where it is available, or may bring alcohol for their own consumption if the event is designated as "bring your own bottle" (BYOB).

ARTICLE 3: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1.0: Membership

1.1 Members are expected to participate actively in the club.

1.2. Members may participate in board meetings, however, members do not have the right to vote.

1.3 Members are encouraged to attend any and all events that the club holds. Any club member is encouraged to host an event of their own with approval from the Board of Directors.

1.4 Members of the Club are entitled entrance into our signature events free of charge.

Members will be required to identify themselves with either their Northeast Ursamen Badge or other proof of membership. **Revisit**

1.5 Members are expected to conduct themselves in an acceptable manner of dignity, decorum, and responsibility, and will adhere to the Code of Conduct and Non-Discrimination Policy. This includes when attending club functions and anytime a member is wearing club paraphernalia or representing the club in any fashion. Failure to do so is considered a misrepresentation of the club and is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including membership revocation.

1.6 Members may not use the name of the Club or logos for their own personal gain. Abuses of this are grounds for immediate revocation of membership.

1.7 Members are expected to promote and maintain a harmonious relationship with all members of the Club. Disruptive and/or offensive behavior and actions that are not in the interest of the Club, as determined by the Board of Directors are grounds for revocation of membership or other disciplinary action.

1.8 Members are required to sign, either physically or electronically, the Code of Conduct and Non-Discrimination Policy each year at the same time they pay dues.

1.9 If a member has any disagreement with any policy or procedure of the Bylaws or Policies and Procedure manual, or directive of the Board of Directors, or the General Membership, they may grieve such issue through the Member-at-Large or, in their absence, another Board member. Their grievance will be placed on the agenda for the next board meeting, to which they will be invited.

1.10 A member can report an incident by contacting a member of the Board of Directors in writing through email, to the Club PO Box, or via the “Contact Us” page on our website. Instructions for anonymous contact are included on the webpage. The Club PO Box is at the following address:

Northeast Ursamen Inc.
P.O. Box 2043
Hartford, CT 06101

ARTICLE 4: APPLICATION, DUES, & RESIGNATION

Section 1.0: Application

1.1: Applicants must be informed that the Club is to promote and support the Bear community. Events encourage camaraderie and connection for bears. Anyone from the LGBTQAI+ community and allies are welcome to become members.

1.2 All applicants must be 21 years of age or older.

1.3 All applicants must complete a membership application. The application is intended as a vehicle for outlining the purpose and goals of the Club and to obtain pertinent applicant information (e.g. name, legal name, address, telephone number, birth date or age, etc.) It is not to be used to screen potential applicants.

1.4 All applicants must agree to abide by the bylaws, the code of conduct, and the non-discrimination policy, found in the Policy and Procedures Manual.

1.5 All Applicants must pay the full amount of dues.

1.6 Former members who rejoin the club shall for all purposes be considered new Members.

Section 2.0: Dueslaw

2.1 All Club memberships run from October 1 through September 30.

2.2 Dues shall be paid by 1 September of each calendar year.

2.3 A member who fails to pay dues by 1 September will lose good standing. If the member fails to pay their dues within 30 days, the member loses their membership.

2.4 Annual membership dues are determined by the Board prior to the new fiscal year.

2.5 Dues are to be paid in full when the membership application is submitted, regardless of when they join.

2.6 Dues Calculation:

- The Club's membership year is from October 1st to September 30th.

- Dues for membership are calculated quarterly, starting at \$40 and decreasing by \$10 each quarter. A quarter spans 3 months.
- New members pay dues based on the remaining months in the current membership year.
- Joining in quarter 4 (July-September) requires an initial payment of \$40.
- This payment covers the remainder of the current membership year and the entire following year.
- Members joining in quarter 4 do not need to renew their membership until the end of the subsequent membership year.

2.7 The Board may, at their discretion, award a member for exceptional service to the club by waving said member's annual membership dues for the next year.

2.8 At the Board's discretion, they may award a member or non-member an honorary membership. An honorary membership is the same in every way to a regular membership, except that it is exempt from dues for the year. The person to whom the honorary membership is awarded must agree to abide by the bylaws, the code of conduct, and the non-discrimination policy.

Section 3.0: Resignation

3.1 A Member may resign from the Club any time. Members will submit a letter of resignation to the Vice-President through email or mail to inform the club of said resignation.

3.2 No dues will be refunded in the event a Member resigns from the Club.

ARTICLE 5: REVOCATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Section 1.0: General

1.1 Revocation of membership and other disciplinary action by a Board of Directors vote is taken very seriously. All member's voices and feelings of the Club are taken into consideration when a vote for revocation is brought to a Board meeting.

1.2 Any Member who misrepresents their identity or age on their membership application shall have their Membership revoked immediately.

1.3 A Board Member must petition the Board at least 21 days before a Board meeting to revoke a Member's membership.

1.4 The Member shall be notified, no less than two weeks prior, by the Secretary via email or certified U.S. Mail of the petition. The Member shall be encouraged to attend the Board meeting.

1.5 The Board will discuss the petition, and solicit input from the Members present.

1.6 The Club Secretary will inform the Member of the Board's decision by email or certified U.S. Mail.

1.7 The petition must describe the infraction and detail why it is not in keeping with the Code of Conduct or Non-Discrimination Policy, as defined in the Club's Policies and Procedures. The Board will decide what is considered conduct unbecoming that is not specifically called out in the Code of Conduct or Non-Discrimination Policy. This may include egregious violations of state or federal law.

1.8 Failure to pay dues is considered grounds for revocation of membership.

1.9 The Board will be required to vote, in executive session, whether to revoke the membership. The vote will be decided by simple majority.

1.10 If the Member is a Board Member, they will not participate in the vote and will not attend the executive session.

1.11 In case of multiple petitions, a separate vote will be required for each petition.

1.12 A former Member who has had his membership revoked by a vote of the Board must petition the Board before they can reapply for membership

1.13 A unanimous vote by the Board of Directors will be required under executive session whether to allow a former member to reapply.

1.14 If permission is granted by the Board, a former member may rejoin by completing a membership application and paying all applicable dues.

1.15 As an alternative to revocation, the Board may instead place a member in bad standing. Such members are entitled to no voting rights nor discount on club events. The member will be issued a written warning by the Board.

1.16 The Board may vote to return a member to good standing at such time that the Board feels the issue(s) that placed the member in bad standing have been resolved.

1.17 If the member disagrees with the decision of the Board, they can appeal the decision within 30 days. Upon request of appeal, the member will have the ability to present their issue to the general membership (either by themselves or with the assistance of an Advocate speaking on their behalf) as will the Board of Directors of the facts uncovered and the reasons for the decision. The general membership will vote, by simple majority, to either accept the ruling of the Board or overturn it.

1.18 An Advocate, speaking on behalf of the member, should do their best to present matters from the member's point of view. An Advocate, arguing in bad faith to the member, may be removed or replaced at the member's request.

ARTICLE 6: THE BOARD

Section 1.0: General

1.1 The Board is responsible for making decisions and formulating policy to enable the Club to function and thrive.

1.2 The decisions of the Board must be consistent with the Bylaws and the Policies and Procedures Manual. Precedents from previous decisions should be considered. All decisions should foremost consider the wellbeing of the Club and its Members.

1.3 The Board should be cautious of any conflict of interest or the effects of setting bad precedent. Board Members must make decisions in good conscience and try to obtain as much data as possible before making decisions.

1.4 Board Members may enlist volunteers from the Members to aid and assist them in their duties.

1.5 It is understood that the old Board will help the newly elected Board in assuming its duties.

1.6 The Board is empowered to create appointed positions on an as needed basis.

1.7 Board Meeting minutes can be reviewed by any Member by a special request to the Secretary.

Section 2.0: Meetings

2.1 Board Meetings shall be scheduled regularly. A meeting shall be scheduled at least once every two months.

2.2 Board meetings are open to the general membership. However, the general

membership may not participate in the meeting unless specifically requested by the Board. This is not to exclude the membership from decisions made for the club. This is to allow for an orderly meeting, after which decisions will be brought to the membership at general membership meetings. There they are free to provide feedback, which the board will use to reconsider any relevant decisions.

2.3 Only Board Members may vote at Board meetings.

2.4 In addition to the regularly scheduled meetings, Board Members may call additional Board or executive meetings at any time.

2.5 In the event that a Board Member is absent from a Board meeting, another Board Member will assume the duties of the Board Member not present.

2.6 All Board Members have equal voting power, except the President, who shall not normally vote except to break a tie.

2.7 A quorum for a Board Meeting is defined as 75% of the Board Members.

2.8 No vote will be considered valid without a quorum.

Section 3.0: Officers, Terms, and Resignation

3.1 The Officers of the Board of Directors are the President, Vice-President, Director of Events, Secretary, Treasurer, Member(s)-At-Large, Media Coordinator. The duties of each Officer are defined in the Policies and Procedures Manual.

3.2 The term of office for the President, Vice-President, Director of Events, Secretary, Treasurer, Member(s)-At-Large, Media Coordinator, and General Board Member is two years.

3.3 An Officer may resign from the Board at any time. The Officer will submit a letter of resignation to the Board through email or mail to inform the club of said resignation.

3.4 While not an Officer of the Board, the current holder of the CT Bear title will act as an advisor to the Board and be invited to all Board meetings during their title year. This position is purely advisory, and does not give the titleholder voting rights at a Board meeting.

Section 4.0: Impeachment

4.1 An Officer will be automatically impeached if they are no longer a Member.

4.2 An Officer may be impeached by a majority vote of the Board if they miss on average at least 50% of Board meetings in any six-month period.

4.3 An Officer may be impeached for financial impropriety, miss-handling of club resources, or general violation of the Club's Code of Conduct or discrimination policy.

Section 5.0: Vacancies

5.1 The Board, through executive session, may decide to either fill a vacant position or keep the position vacant.

5.2 All remaining Board Members must attend in person or virtually to vote on the candidates for the vacant position(s).

5.3 The candidate will be elected by a simple majority of voting Board Members.

5.4 If there is an even number of remaining Board Members, the President shall be considered a voting member instead of only a tie breaker.

5.5 Anyone appointed to fill a vacant position will hold that office until a formal vote can be held at the next general membership meeting.

5.6 That office will then be scheduled for election by the membership regardless if it were due for election or not that year. The duration of the office shall be such that it returns to its normal election schedule.

5.7 Member-at-Large position(s) may be filled by Board election if the current number of club members, based on the Secretary's previous club membership count, supports keeping that (those) position(s).

5.8 The Board shall re-address each vacancy at every Board meeting until such time the decision is made to appoint or elect a club member to fill the position, or to eliminate the position and re-evaluate the needs with the next scheduled club member count.

ARTICLE 7: ELECTIONS

Section 1.0: Oversight and Execution

1.1 The election shall be overseen by the Election Committee, and executed in accordance with the guidelines of the Policies and Procedures manual.

Section 2.0: Election Timeline

2.1 The Board is chosen at the Election. The election shall be held in September.

2.2 Voting shall be open for the last two full weeks of September.

2.3 If multiple candidates are running for the same position a caucus will be held during the week prior to the opening of voting.

2.4 Nominations shall be for the duration of the two weeks prior to the opening of voting.

Section 3.0: Offices on the Ballot

3.1 The President, Secretary, and Director of Events are elected in even numbered years.

3.2 The Vice-President, Treasurer, and Member-At-Large are elected in odd numbered years.

3.3 Board vacancies must be filled as soon as possible, regardless of year.

ARTICLE 8: FINANCIAL MATTERS

Section 1.0: General

1.1 The Club fiscal year is from 1 October to 30 September, in keeping with the federal fiscal year.

1.2 No part of the income, or assets of the club shall ever be distributed to its members, Board Members, or private individuals except for use in prescribed purposes approved by the board.

1.3 The Club may not be committed to any function or financial obligation without the approval of the Board of Directors.

1.4 The President, Vice-President, Director of Events, and Treasurer have access to the Club's financial information and the authority to oversee and authorize disbursements from the Club bank account.

1.5 Club assets are to be used solely for the benefit of the members, in a manner deemed equitable by the Board.

1.6 Within 30 days of the end of the fiscal year, the Treasurer will prepare a financial statement detailing revenues, expenditures, membership data, and opening and closing balances of Club accounts.

1.7 It shall be the responsibility of the Board of Directors to ensure that each member receives the annual financial statement at least fourteen days before the election.

ARTICLE 9: BYLAWS & AMENDMENTS

Section 1.0: General

1.1 Members may submit to the Secretary, in writing or by email, Bylaw amendments for consideration by the Board.

1.2 The Board may vote to amend the Bylaws at any Board meeting. A quorum is required for the Board Members to vote.

1.3 Amendments accepted in this way shall be considered interim. Interim amendments will be voted on during the next board meeting. Interim amendments will take effect immediately upon acceptance.

1.4 Interim amendments are ratified by referendum during the Election.

1.5 Amendments not made interim will be voted on during the Election in the same way as interim amendments.

1.6 Members must be notified at least fourteen days before the Election that there will be a referendum to ratify the Bylaws. They will also be provided a copy of the Bylaws at least fourteen days before the Election.

ARTICLE 10: DISSOLUTION

Section 1.0: General

1.1 The Northeast Ursamen Inc. may be dissolved by unanimous vote of the Board following any Meeting in which a quorum of members was not represented.

1.2 Upon dissolution, assets of the Club remaining after payment of all liabilities shall be distributed to another 501c3 charity organization as outlined in Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code and when you file the 990 tax return, you will inform the IRS at this time that the organization has been terminated.

1.3 The President, Vice-President, and Treasurer will be responsible for ensuring that the assets are properly distributed within 180 days of dissolution.

APPENDIX 1: RATIFICATION AND AMENDMENT HISTORY

1. Interim Bylaws unanimously approved by the Board of Directors on Friday, 26 August 1994 in Hartford, Connecticut.
2. Interim Bylaws ratified by the membership at the Annual Meeting of the Northeast Ursamen, Saturday, 15 October, 1994 in Hartford, Connecticut.
3. Interim Amendments unanimously approved by the Board of Directors on Sunday, 24 September 1995 in Springfield, Massachusetts.
4. Interim Amendments ratified by the membership at the Annual Meeting of the Northeast Ursamen, Saturday, 21 October, 1995 in Hartford, Connecticut.
5. Interim Amendments ratified by the membership at the Annual Meeting of the Northeast Ursamen, Saturday, 23 October, 1999 in Hartford, Connecticut.
6. Interim Amendments unanimously approved by the Board of Directors on Wednesday, 23 August 2000 in South Windsor, Connecticut.
7. Interim Amendments ratified by the membership at the Annual Meeting of the Northeast Ursamen, Saturday, 21 October 2000 in East Hartford, Connecticut.
8. Interim Bylaws were approved in Manchester CT July 30, 2001 for the bylaw changes on illegal substances/acts.
9. Interim bylaw changes were approved in Manchester, Connecticut, September 19, 2001 for article format.

10. Proposed Amendments were ratified by the membership at the Annual Meeting, Saturday, October 20, 2001 in East Hartford, Connecticut.
11. Interim Amendments were unanimously approved in Manchester, Connecticut, August 29, 2002 for Annual meeting voting changes and number of publications of the club newsletter each year.
12. Interim amendment on change of publication of the Northeast Ursamen “Bears and Hunters” from bi-monthly to quarterly was approved in Hamden, CT October 19, 2002. The interim amendment for redefining quorum for the Annual Meeting, was not approved at the October 19, 2002 Annual Meeting in Hamden, CT.
13. Interim amendments were unanimously ratified by the membership in attendance at the Annual meeting, 2020 in Portland, CT.
14. Proposed Amendments were unanimously approved in Wethersfield, CT October 1, 2021.
15. Proposed amendments were ratified in Hartford, CT October 1, 2022.
16. Proposed amendments were ratified in September 30, 2024 during the online election cycle.