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STR Ad Hoc Committee September 25th, 2023 Public
Hearing Minutes

Minutes of EAST LYME SHORT TERM RENTALS AD HOC COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING - 09/25/23

Date and time: 09/25/23 7:00 PM to: 09/25/23 8:34 PM

Present: Brooke Stevens, Recording Secretary, Anne Santoro, Anne Thurlow, Paul Formica, John Cellino, Gary Cicchiello, Greg McIntire, Gary Farrugia, Daniel Beachy

CC: Mark Zamarka, Town Attorney

Location: East Lyme High School, 30 Chesterfield Road, East Lyme, CT, 06333

Link: <https://app.meetingking.com/meetings/405111>

Topics

1. Call Meeting to Order/Pledge

Note Co-Chair Santoro called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led those assembled in the pledge of allegiance.

2. Public Hearing

Note Ms. Santoro noted the following:

The purpose of this Public Hearing is to receive comments concerning our town's possible regulation of short-term rentals.

The Public Hearing notice was approved by the Committee on September 12th, filed with the Town Clerk on the 15th of September, and published in the New London Day newspaper on the 16th of September. She's very happy to see everyone here this evening and they look forward to hearing their comments.

Note Ms. Santoro invited members of the Public to come forward and speak.

2-1. James Hamlin of 10 Cavasin Drive

Note Mr. Hamlin asked what the proposed regulations are, and Ms. Santoro replied they're here to receive comments regarding the possibility of establishing regulations for short-term rentals.

2-2. Debbie Jett-Harris of 19 Center Street

Note Ms. Jett-Harris offered some of the following comments:

She wants to thank the Subcommittee Members for their hard work, dedication, and for taking the time to try and get something resolved with this issue.

Since this use is not recognized as a permitted use, and allowed in town right now, she would like them to consider a cease-and-desist order for all short-term rentals.

We have approximately 200 of them in town.

They're also not in compliance with the Department of Revenue Services.

A room tax is 15% per night, unless they stay more than 30 days.

She lives in Pine Grove, which is a small community, and the towns are very close together.

She thinks the public needs to understand the difference between regulations and a code of ordinances.

Ordinances give us more power to decide which parts of town that we would possibly allow them to exist.

Ordinances can set limits on spacing, limit visitors, and require neighbor notifications.

Zoning regulations can't require these same limitations.

We have 12 designated districts in town and two of them are residential.

They've had two unpleasant experiences in Pine Grove, one of which ended tragically.

The Zoning Department doesn't have the staff to help with enforcement, which is very much needed.

There's no way to vet an STR.

You don't know who's living there and you don't know who's coming and going.

She would like the Committee to consider having this item go to referendum so that the community as a whole can voice their opinion.

Massachusetts has banned STR's, and New York severely limits them.

This issue is coming before the Connecticut Supreme Court early next year.

She would like for a moratorium to be placed on the STRs at this time.

She would like the ones that have been doing it that haven't paid the 15% room tax be required to pay that tax now.

She would also like the Bed and Breakfasts in operation to pay the 11% tax they're required to, since that law was enacted on October 1st, 2019.

She wants the practice to stop since it's not yet a permitted use, which will give them time to figure this issue out.

She said the various associations in town have bylaws and asked how that's going to come into play with STRs.

If a business isn't permitted in a residential community, then how can a hotel type situation be allowed?

Note Ms. Santoro replied that they're here to receive comments and can't have a back-and-forth discussion, but she wants to clarify that they're a subcommittee of the Board of Selectmen, and their purpose and charge is to research, determine if there are problems, and if there are, suggest possible solutions; it's the Board of Selectmen who will make any final decision concerning short term rentals while they're an advisory board only.

2-3. John Schweitzer of 50 Shore Road

Note Mr. Schweitzer made some of the following comments:

23 years ago, he was blessed to find a home in Oak Grove Beach.

Over the past few years, things have really fallen apart in his neighborhood.

There are 7 rentals on his street out of the 20 on the water.

It's the shorter stays, specifically the overnights that pose the problem.

There are parties all over the place, that go on till all hours of the night, and illegal parking on the seawall.

It's a residential neighborhood and should therefore not have a hotel like atmosphere.

The police are called all the time.

Last year there was a big flood, and he and some of his neighbors were out cleaning out the basins, and the people occupying these rentals short-term have no interest in the neighborhood.


They fill his and his neighbor's garbage cans since they don't have access to their own.

There are often disruptions in the whole neighborhood.

He feels strongly that a regulation is needed especially since Oak Grove is regulated by the town, they don't have their own zoning like many of the other beach communities.

2-4. Sue Spang of 12 South Washington

Note Ms. Spang read her attached letter regarding short-term rentals into the record.

 [3293_001.pdf](#)

2-5. Frances Violante of 181 Main Street

Note Ms. Violante offered some of the following:

She's a proprietor and pays all the tourist taxes and federal taxes on her property at 181 Main Street.

She sent a letter to the First Selectman around a month ago stating that concerns regarding short-term rentals aren't as simplistic as they may originally appear.

She has owned and rented four houses in Niantic on a short-term basis for more than 20 years.

During Covid, the short-term rental business was very active but has slowed considerably since people are now able to move about more freely.

She has provided short-term rentals to a Navy Officer who was training to be a Captain.

To scientists who needed temporary housing when Pfizer was more active.

As a respite for a person struggling with the emotional and physical effects of cancer.

She has also provided housing for several families while their homes were being renovated or remodeled. Her homes have served as temporary housing for families facing a challenging time while they are waiting for an opening at the state facility.

As a safe place for battered women.

As housing for academics and nursing students.

As accommodations during holidays for families visiting Niantic.

As accommodations for families visiting for Coast Guard and Connecticut College graduations.

As interim housing for families relocating to Niantic for their jobs.

As affordable vacation accommodations on the shoreline.

She suggests they approach this issue in a positive and collaborative manner by requiring landlords to provide heat and hot water, fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, the handrails for steps, appropriate garbage removal, security, first aid kits, designated parking, and rules for excessive and untimely noise.

She hopes they see the need for short-term rentals and that the regulations or ordinance crafted takes all these things into consideration.

2-6. Lori Shed Nickerson of 5 Spring Street

Note Ms. Shed Nickerson said some of the following:

She's been listening to the comments and thinks there is a clear difference between academic rentals and rentals by people who are here for 1-3 days, and here to have a party.

The latter has a bad vibe to it.

Most of the renters she communicates with have children and/or are seeking academic rentals and the like. A person seeking an academic rental is more likely to get involved in your neighborhood, to get to know the neighbors, and to spend time with them.

She thinks that the resources in the tiny community of Pine Grove have been greatly impacted.

They pay for the maintenance for their playgrounds, common grounds, and the like.

They have a big turnover of people coming in and out, and that definitely affects what they're doing in their community.

They don't have people enforcing our zoning, and they've complained, and nothing is done.

She's seen teenagers and children running around unsupervised and being so disruptive that the police ultimately had to be called.

They were dropped off by themselves, and community members actually have photos of them walking by themselves with their suitcases from Pine Grove, back to town.

Is this practice is going to be allowed, she agrees that a referendum should be held so that everyone can vote on the matter.

2-7. Robert Vancour of 107 South Beechwood

Note Mr. Vancour offered the following remarks:

He thinks short term rental housing in an otherwise residential zoned area must be considered a commercial operation, which needs to be regulated by the town of East Lyme.

The occupancy should be limited by the size of the dwelling and adequate off-road parking should be available.

The use should not impede the right of quiet enjoyment by other residents.

Short-term rental housing must comply with basic safety requirements.

Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms should be in working order.

Water should be safe for consumption and in adequate quantities, either from well or municipal supply.

Plumbing should be in good repair, and no mold or mildew should be present.

Agents of the town of East Lyme should inspect short term rental housing for compliance with these requirements.

Reasonable fees could be charged to the property owner to defray the cost of these inspections.

The number of occupants of any short-term rental shall be limited by the number of bedrooms.

A two-bedroom house should not have more than four occupants.

Short term renters should receive copies of all applicable Connecticut statutes and ordinances of East Lyme including noise, vehicle, and golf cart ordinances where applicable.

If they are within a beach association that's chartered by state, they should also receive a copy of the association bylaws and ordinances that are applicable.

2-8. James Hamlin of 10 Cavasin Dr

Note Mr. Hamlin said he's been renting for over a year now without incident, and lives within the same home he rents out. He added that this gives him the unique opportunity to recommend local restaurants and businesses to his visitors. Mr. Hamlin noted that visitors need to respect the homes they stay in and that associated regulations are fine, but the entire practice should not be stopped.

2-9. Kimberly Barrett McCord of 22 Atlantic Street

Note Ms. McCord offered some of the following:

Her permanent residence is in Granby, Connecticut.

Two sets of her great grandparents bought second homes at Crescent Beach more than a century ago.

And the beautiful beach community resulted in her grandparents meeting as babies.

Their family homes have endured World Wars, have been torn apart by hurricanes and rebuilt, and have been filled with the laughter and sounds of family and friends, enjoying each summer together, for five generations.

From those two sets of great grandparents, at least 10 homes are now owned by their descendants in Niantic, and hundreds of their family members have enjoyed making memories here ever since.

Some family members who now no longer own properties continue to come back to Niantic each summer by renting for a week or two.

In terms of the home located at 22 Atlantic, the home was built around 1850 and has never been winterized.

The first two generations were fortunately able to afford owning a second home, but as time went on and more family members tried to navigate the complicated financial decisions of sharing a family cottage, it became necessary to get creative to save their family cottage.

Some family members bought out others.

They set up an LLC and they began renting the cottage out on a very limited basis back in 2020.

The rental process has been streamlined through VRBO and it has been a smooth and positive experience.

They have had Coast Guard graduation groups, wedding parties, big milestone birthday gatherings, college reunions, and simple family vacations all take place in their home.

In three years, they have not had a single problem.

The revenue generated from renting has helped our family pay some of the expenses of the house, including insurance and property taxes.

It also enables them to make important safety and aesthetic upgrades to the house.

A committee member challenged them in the last meeting to come up with what short term renters bring to East Lyme.

She's given this much thought.

She has come up with three things- business, diversity, and most importantly, joy.

She knows from talking to their happy guests, that they frequent many of our amazing restaurants and shops while they stay here.

The economic impact of restricting short term rentals would be significant for both business owners and their employees, many who live here in town.

Their guests have come from many other states and backgrounds.

She believes diversity is as American as apple pie and enriches the community beyond measure.

There is plenty of data as to the economic value of tourism in a community.

She feels fortunate to have grown up here and feels obligated to share it with others.

Seeing magnificent homes and neighborhoods sitting idle and vacant during the peak of summer has always made her sad.

Rather than penalizing the many because of a few isolated incidents at specific properties, she would ask that the Committee, and ultimately the town, collect comprehensive data and survey all property owners regarding their perspectives on short term rentals.

She would then ask that any specific problems be addressed through reasonable and enforceable means.

Any comparison to other towns that have recently addressed short term rentals needs to be done in an apples-to-apples way.

Comparing East Lyme to Simsbury or New York City would be flawed.

2-10. Margaret Puzzo of 15 Bayview Road

Note Ms. Puzzo said some of the following:

As we see in the news, New York City is dealing with this.

Cities and towns all through the United States and Europe are starting to address the issue of short-term rentals.

One of the things she's heard several times throughout the last few years is that investors are starting to buy up the homes in Niantic and turn them into Airbnb's.

She looks at this as a commercial and not a residential endeavor.

She lives in Giants Neck Heights which is a residential zone in town.

When it was first developed, most of the houses were summer cottages, so the streets are small and narrow.

Overtime, most of the homes were winterized.

They would like the charm of the small community to be retained.

When Airbnb's are renting to 12, 14, 16, or 18 people instead of a family of 5 or 6, it can become problematic.

The area is tight and doesn't allow for public parking to support that larger number of people.

Investors often pay cash for their homes which has caused homes in the area to be overpriced.

During Covid, they saw many New Yorkers come to town, who paid cash for their homes and that combined with a lack of inventory has caused the housing prices to raise dramatically.

On one hand it's nice that the worth of one's home has risen, but it also prevents young people who have grown up here from being able to afford buying here.

All of this has contributed to the area becoming more of a commercialized one.

2-11. Bonnie Smithers of 14 Great Wight Way

Note Ms. Smithers noted some of the following:

There is this perception that people that rent their house make a boatload of money, and that has not been her personal experience.

Homes are often rented out so that owners can upgrade the property, pay the taxes, cover insurance costs, and cover the costs associated with maintaining an older home.

There should be a discussion on how to enforce rules for short-term rentals and the reported problem areas should be looked at closely.

2-12. Joe Malerba of the Niantic Inn

Note Mr. Malerba shared some of the following:

He along with his mother and business partner, are the new owners of the Niantic Inn.

They also own a local Airbnb in town.

He's a local realtor, and an investor.

They've all been in love with Niantic for years and are always here.

He has a lot of experience as a landlord and bought his first property in 2005 at the age of 21.

He can tell you them with certainty that the problems he has dealt with, with long term tenants has been far worse than what he has dealt with in terms of short-term tenants.

The Inn has 24 rooms.

Some of his guests come in and they don't behave like they should.

Some guests come in and they're spectacular.

He does his best to not allow poorly behaved guests back.

He owns short-term rentals in many towns other than East Lyme.

The purchase of Airbnb is not strictly for monetary purposes, although they do own an LLC to limit their liability.

Short-term rentals enable him to have a place to bring his four children, all who are under 6 years of age.

It's not realistic for him to go to a regular hotel room anymore with his family.

When they travel, they need a little bit more space.

What he's noticed in his many hours of research is that in order to make more rules, it's going to actually create a greater burden on the town, because enforcing the bad behavior will fall to somebody in your town.

That ends up being an additional financial burden on the town.

He personally thinks it would work to have a cost for an Airbnb license.

That cost would go towards a position in the town.

The LLC or owners of record could register names with the town, and if there is an issue, there would be someone on record to contact.

The cost of that license would eliminate poor behavior.

You could have like a three strikes a year rule, or something like that.

So, if somebody was consistently bringing poor guests in, then it would be easier to mediate that poor behavior.

He started doing Airbnb's in Ledyard in 2015, and quickly realized that managing was a full-time job, so they actually hired a manager to manage them for them.

He can tell you with certainty that Airbnb does a fabulous job at telling you who's supposed to be arriving.

Sometimes the person who books your Airbnb isn't the person that shows up, but it's much easier for him to get that person out if they're poorly behaved than it is to get a long-term tenant to leave.

He has had long term tenants destroy his property and do thousands of dollars of damage.

The cops have been able to do literally nothing, and he has been forced into lengthy eviction processes.

We're all here because we love this town.

We may have all slightly different ideas of how to manage it.

He thinks by being respectful neighbors, they can come up with a great solution.

2-13. Bob Mills of 71 Oakwood Road

Note Mr. Mills offered the following:

A number of years ago he started doing Airbnb's around the country, around Europe, and other places. He has discovered that it's the only way he wants to travel.

More recently he rented a VW and went across Montana and went through Glacier National Park.

It was a similar operation to an Airbnb and results in a kind of shared economy.

He believes it's the way of the future.

He began renting out his own property as an Airbnb and he has a lot of experience in construction and maintenance, so he's comfortable with taking care of the property and making sure it's in good shape.

It's a small two-bedroom, one bath facility.

It's a very small and cozy cottage and has off street parking for two vehicles.

If you have more than two vehicles, you don't belong at this property.

His experience for the last two years has been exclusively with Airbnb, but this year he signed up with VRBO as well, but his knowledge of that company is limited.

Airbnb offers the owner a million dollars of insurance against damages and problems to the house.

They get 15% of the fee, but you get that level of insurance.

There is prescreening, people have ratings, and your able to set the standard you want to have.

For their home, they have the highest level you can assign.

They only accept guests who have 4 1/2 or 5 stars.

They also require a photo ID.

He wants to know who their guests are and how many people are coming.

He went to his neighbors and told them of his plans prior to beginning the rentals.

He also did his research beforehand.

He found that people who have two-bedroom properties have had great experiences while the large 5- or 6-bedroom homes who have limited parking, have had nothing but problems because they become the party houses.

For his home, their house rules are no parties, no unregistered guests, no on street parking, and no pets.

The only thing they ask people to do is pick up the trash and recycling and put it in town provided receptacles.

He also has neighbors who if he misses the trash day, they put the cans out and they bring them back in.

He tells his neighbors when the season is beginning, when it's over, and inquire how it's going through the course of the season.

Note Mr. Mills detailed the many wonderful guests they'd had and the numerous reasons they've had for staying at his rental. He added that their main objective is to have a property they can move back into after it's rented.

2-14. Phillip Bucchi of 65 Bay View Road

Note Mr. Bucchi shared how he's a teacher in Weathersfield and came down here tonight for this meeting, and to clean his short-term rental, since he had weekend guests that left. He read the following into the record, which his wife wrote:

"I have lived in Giants Neck Heights for 54 years, and this is my second summer owning an Airbnb.

Not only do we rent our property, but we do so responsibly, with our community in mind.

On Airbnb, we're considered a super host.

I stand here telling you this not to pat myself on the back, but rather to explain what that means in general and more specifically, in terms of short-term rentals.

We are rated by our guests for various reasons such as cleanliness, communication and location.

We received high scores on all these because not only do we maintain meticulous property, but our guests, which we are allowed to limit how many people come in, have left the property clean, tidy, and party free.

In terms of communication, we pride ourselves on ensuring our guests are just as aware of all the beach and association rules, just as the other residents are.

Lastly, and this is the one with the most pertinent to this meeting, is location.

Our location is rated highly because our guests are attending local restaurants, visiting the Children's Museum, browsing the aisles of the Book Barn, shopping at Grace, eating dessert at Gumdrops and Lollipops, and ultimately helping these small businesses stay afloat.

Our investment in this property is clearly an investment in this community.

Our short-term renters are not going to be loading the refrigerator with the basic ingredients to have three hearty meals a day.

Instead, they're going to visit the restaurants and make the best use of their time spent in East Lyme.

We give them local recommendations, in turn, they give our community business.

If changing the makeup of this quaint community is of concern than the battle is against other people, but not against the small businesses who are just trying to put a little extra money in their pocket."

Note Mr. Bucchi added that people have said they prefer long term renters, and they have zero people that go to the East Lyme Schools; if you switch that over, that's a lot of extra students to go into the community, which will require a lot more funding.

2-15. Jason Archer of 23 Damon Heights Road

Note Mr. Archer said some of the following:

In addition to owning a home at 23 Damon Heights Road, he also owns and operates PMI East Lyme, which is located at 25 Chesterfield Road in East Lyme.

They're a residential property management company.

They've added residential properties, single-family and multi-family homes.

Their clients hire them to handle all aspects of management from marketing, leasing, maintenance, and so forth.

They currently manage about 100 units located within East Lyme, New London County, and Southern Middlesex County.

He's here to express his personal and professional stance on property regulations and his general approach.

He's for responsible and legal use of property and using regulations to solve real problems.

He hears people speaking about the need for regulations for fire inspections and the like for short term rentals, but you don't hear about that for long term rentals or even resident occupied homes.

Does that mean that the long-term rental property of their residents or people who reside in them are less important than the short-term rental property or their guests?

During the last meeting with the Committee, Mr. Bundy, our East Lyme Fire Marshal, was asked by the STR Ad Hoc Committee if he thinks it's a good or bad idea for fire inspections on short term rentals, and he replied that he personally thinks it's a good idea because you're dealing with people's lives, people's souls.

Does that mean that these inspections are good for all occupied properties regardless of their occupancy classification?

He thinks so, and that if you made these suggestions to the entire town, regardless of their renting or not, you might be surprised by the uprising of hands.

He's against creating regulations that don't solve real problems or applied disproportionately throughout, or against the negative generalization of what has happened in one short-term rental.

These generalizations are often born out of irrational or negative feelings based on a small group for some specific effects.

His company has managed 21 short term rental properties over the last two years.

Across these 21 properties they've had over 586 stays, with more than 3,000 tests.

These 586 days took place over 6,301 nights and he's aware of three incidents where the police were called.

That means 99.6% of the time our short-term guests don't have events that result in the police being called.

In terms of long-term rentals, the staff have a significantly more problematic view of the rental community.

His company also collects and remits the room occupancy and with direct bookings they've collected over \$88,000.

If he adds in what Airbnb collects on the units on their behalf, they've generated nearly \$200,000 of income for the State of Connecticut over those past 20 months.

When you're listening to the short-term renters speak about their experiences, you'll hear that they're more involved on who stays at their property, what the guest's reputation is before coming to the property, their focus on development of house rules, pushing quiet hours, parking rules, what to do in the area, and providing safe legal and responsible short-term status.

When was the last time you heard that for a long-term rental, essentially having public hearings and creating an Ad Hoc long-term Rental Committee?

Crafting regulations is less about solving real problems, less about protecting real property and less about protecting real people.


At the end of the day, if these were real problems, we'd be talking about solving them at much higher level and not seeming singling out a very small demographic.

Our community is made up of people who truly care about East Lyme, and if you listen when they speak, he believes they'll hear that in their comments.

He thanked them for the time to comment and said he's happy to answer any questions.

2-16. Nick Vafidis of 44 Shore Road

Note Mr. Vafidis provided the attached handout.

 [3352_001.pdf](#)

Note Mr. Vafidis said some of the following:

He's also speaking on behalf of his uncle who is the longtime owner of Ocean Pizza in New London, and who has been in operation since 1962.

His uncle is an immigrant from a small fishing island and in preparing for retirement, one of his goals is to settle into his beachfront home in Oak Grove Beach because it reminds him of his childhood days spent in Greece.

In order to offset the exorbitant cost of owning this particular home, they've opted to utilize the method of hosting their property for beachfront rentals.

As many of us can see, downtown Niantic is growing and flourishing with the additional local shops, restaurants and housing complexes.

When a town like Mystic comes to mind as a comparison, it is really thriving with business tourism and rental units.

For the past three years, our rental guests have unequivocally proven that they do not travel to our town to disrupt the community in any way, shape, or form.

We also want to strongly stress that they care about their home, our neighbors, our community, Oak Grove Beach, Niantic, and East Lyme.

The development of this STR Ad Hoc Committee was designed to address the specific problems.

Conversely, they're here to convey that there is no such evidence of problems.

He encourages everyone to look through the handout they provided.

From the beginning of their purchase of 44 Shore Road in 2020, their neighbor who resides at 45 Shore Road, has been a cause for concern.

Surprisingly, the neighbor is also a rental landlord at 42 Shore Road in the same Oak Grove Beach Association.

Disappointingly he has not acted in a very kind neighborly way since their arrival in the neighborhood.

Note Mr. McIntire said he doesn't think that's appropriate, and Mr. Vafidis replied that it pertains to substance of what they're speaking about, 100%.

Note Ms. Santoro asked Mr. Vafidis to avoid comments and conversation about a particular person and Mr. Vafidis replied that he will simply say "neighbor."

Note Ms. Santoro said she would prefer that he get to the heart of the matter and Mr. Vafidis said he is and asked if he could get his time back.

Note Mr. Cicchiello asked that he not speak over them when they're speaking. He added that we're here to respect one another, they will allow him to speak, and in turn he will allow them to speak.

Note Mr. Vafidis had the following remarks:

The neighbor has displayed a very vindictive attitude upon their move into the neighborhood.

Unbeknownst to them, it actually stems from his interest in acquiring their property.

This information was relayed to them by the real estate agent who sold them the home.

The irony of the neighbors' concerns is that he himself has and currently operates a beachfront rental directly next door to them.

It's very hypocritical because there's clear indication that if he was able to purchase their property, he would have operated an additional beachfront rental.

The neighbor continues to be a driving force behind what he believes, how they should manage their home.

There are seven short term rental properties in Oak Grove Beach Association.

East Lyme police records show only one disturbance call made across all short-term rentals for the past three years.

Police were contacted for a noise violation which resolved immediately and amicably.

Trying to change short term rentals to a seven-day minimum would not make any sort of difference, whether just rent for two days, three days, five days or seven days.

They have proven with the evidence that there's zero negative effect on the Oak Grove Beach community.

There are no parking violations.

There are no ongoing noise disturbances.

Based on the perpetual rising cost of living goods and services and taxes, amongst other things, they kindly ask who is going to help pay their taxes and mortgage if short term rentals are not permitted?

One of the greatest rewards they have come to appreciate as rental hosts are the wonderful people from all walks of life, who have given them feedback.

Each and every guest raves on how they immensely enjoy the time spent in Oak Grove Beach, Niantic, and East Lyme.

Note A 5-minute break was taken from 8:05 p.m. to 8:10 p.m.

2-17. Isabel Georgian of 27 Bayview Road

Note Ms. Georgian said some of the following:

She thinks the answer to what, if anything, should be done around short-term rentals goes back to the definition of transient.

In her 18 years of living here, transient would be how she defined regions that's don't include the one that she lives in.

Before the invention of Airbnb, people would roll in in the summer, constant activity, noise, everything going on at all hours of the night, but then it quiets right down after Labor Day.

This is still true today.

So, the STR has not really changed our community but is rather maintaining the traditions of our town.

Gathering data from other towns and cities like New York and Simsbury does not do justice to the specific needs of our county.

She believes ski towns in Utah have a closer representation for our seasonal and transient community questions.

Any concern about taxes to the state or the town are really not valid because they are clearly paid through online platforms like Airbnb and VRBO.

In terms of requiring limits to the number of people who can stay based on bedrooms, does this mean that a family could rent the vacation home one month but not be able to have a family member stay with them when they return since they don't have enough bedrooms?

She doesn't think anyone wants to lose their freedom to gather in their own home or use their property as they see fit.

Developing specific and targeted growth is the pathway forward.

The Committee would have to consider numerous scenarios which could result in a lot of regulations, as well as the need to enforce them.

STRs bring revenue to our town.

Taxes are paid and properties are maintained.

As an East Lyme teacher who was only given 20 to 30% of the agreed supplies she needs for her students, it's no longer going to further tax the town who has a severely underfunded education budget.

2-18. Emily Gianquinto of 36 Central Ave

Note Ms. Gianquinto conveyed some of the following:

She is actually a full-time resident of Hartford, but her and her husband bought a home on Central Avenue with some friends of theirs.

They were able to invest in a vacation home of their own, and both couples use the home, and they rent it out when neither one is using it.

Even when the home is turned over during the summer to a new rental each week, she is usually in town to handle the check out and make sure everything is okay.

She has made an effort to make sure she knows their neighbors.

Currently, the short-term rentals are being damaged by enforcing precedent, but she thinks we have an advantage over some other communities.

She has had short-term landlords, and she understands the concerns of full-time residents.

Having a short-term rental is investing in the community.

A property in Crescent Beach is unique since they have their own zoning regulations and no on street parking.

A registration and licensing fee makes sense, but with a sliding scale based on the nights of revenue.

They're talking about property rights, and those are sacred.

One thing that disturbed her a little bit were the comments made at the last meeting about maintaining the character of the town.

Perhaps it's because she lives in Hartford, but to her that is coded language for keeping people out.

In considering these regulations the Committee should be careful about that conception given history and access to the beaches.

2-19. Jill St. Clair of Canterbury

Note Ms. St. Clair offered the following remarks:

She has an interest in two properties within East Lyme.

She's here more on behalf of the tourism district.

She's Vice Chair of the Eastern Regional Tourism District.

She grew up here and has a great interest in this community.

East Lyme is a recreation town.

It has five campgrounds and a boardwalk.

We create events to bring people into that sphere of recreation of hospitality.

26% of our economy is based on tourism- accommodations, restaurants, and retail.

When we talk about short term rental, yes, the property owners are making out, but the community is making out as well.

Every dollar that you spend in a rental unit, 1.5 dollars is put back into the community.

We live in a shared economy, but the benefit is shared for all.

Note Ms. St. Clair further discussed tourism and noted that they're thinking about restrictive policies, and that is in direct contradiction with the East Lyme Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD.)

2-20. Kimberly Barrett McCord of 22 Atlantic

Note Ms. McCord offered the following:

A lot of people bring up the topic of LLC(s) as if it's a bad thing.

Somebody earlier said there are 200 of them in town.

LLC(s) are a way to protect assets and protect family members.

There is a very good book that she thinks is relevant to a lot of people who own family homes in a tourist community, called 'Saving the Family Cottage.'

And the number one piece of advice is set up an LLC if you have shared family or if you have family members who are co-owning a property.

2-21. Thene McIntire of 41 Shore Road

Note Ms. McIntire said the following:

They're looking for some type of regulation in terms of the number of people allowed to stay, and parking. She wants to know if the people who own short-term rentals in their community have a neighbor who says they can sleep 14 people in a 3-bedroom house.

This is what they're dealing with in their community.

There are very few places to park in Oak Grove Beach.

People park on the side of homes, all the way up the seawall, and cars are everywhere.

There are 7 rentals and the majority of the people in Oak Grove are a year-round residents.

Her family has owned in Oak Grove for 6 generations.

They've been summer people and winter people, and it has never been like this.

Jet skis go in and out of the swim area.

This is not how people in Niantic want to live.

2-22. Frances Violante of 181 Main Street

Note Ms. Violante noted the following:

She uses 4 different websites to rent her property.

She wants to strongly urge that they go to those websites and see how the host goes about vetting their guests, and vice versa.

In addition to Airbnb and VRBO, there is Furnish Finders who rents to many visiting nurses.

There is also Military Housing who sends a representative to do a rigorous inspection of your home.

She thinks these sites might be a good research possibility for the Committee.

2-23. John Diamantakos of 42 Indian Woods Road

Note Mr. Diamantakos shared some of the following:

His rental has 85 glowing reviews.

He does a rigorous screening process which ensures every guest respects our community's ethos. It's more than just a transaction, it's about mutual trust and shared values.

Many guests can't afford extended stays and requiring longer durations may direct potential business elsewhere.

Decisions have ripples, let's make them count positively.

2-24. Lynn Caulkins of 19 & 21 Saunders Drive

Note Ms. Caulkins reported the following:

She lives at 21 Saunders Drive and rents out 19 Saunders Drive.

They have rented the home out for 30 years on a long-term basis.

They've had people steal from their shed, cause a fire, and smoke so much that they severely damaged the home.

It cost them \$60,000 to repair the home, so they've been doing short-term rentals for the last year, and it has been an extremely pleasant experience.

The key is the ad you write and the parameters you put around your property help dictate who you get.

Many people are looking for a romantic getaway for the weekend or for a weekend break and aren't looking to stay for a week.

They deal with a broad section of the population.

She'd hate to see them do something drastic that changes the tone of the town.

Note Ms. Santoro noted they also received a lengthy communication from Jim Capodiece of 45 Shore Road, which she will attach to the meeting minutes.

3. Adjournment

Decision MOTION (1)

Mr. Beachy moved to close the East Lyme STR Ad Hoc Committee Public Hearing at 8:34 p.m.

Mr. Farrugia seconded the motion.

Motion carried, 8-0-0.

Note Respectfully Submitted,
Brooke Stevens, Recording Secretary